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Elsie Questionnaire

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monument to what used to be. "In your home, in your life -- is it?"

And those old enough to remember what used to be knew that it is not.

Such support as our churches manage to get, comes very largely from the make-believe believers whose make-believe deceives themselves. They value religion as a sentimental indulgence. Even to people who know nothing about the genuine Christian way of life, "God" may have great esthetic value in literature, poetry and art -- and also in church. It is possible to enjoy going to church on a Sunday much as one would go to a concert, without in any way making "God" the central fact of existence about which the entire life is organized and integrated.

I am reminded of Elsie and the questionnaire!

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watching Elsie, a high school girl, as she busily complied. Hardly appearing to read the questions much less ponder them, she was rapidly writing, Yes, and Yes, and Yes.

"Just what do you believe, Elsie?" I inquired, wondering if I could make her think. "Do you believe in a personal God, or merely in an impersonal Creator, or what?"

"I don't know," she replied cheerfully. "I just believe in God."

"Yes, but how do you think of God? Spencer you know thought of Him as the Unknown Cause, Spinoza as the Majestic Law. Exactly what is it you believe in?"

"Just ~~plain~~ God! Certainly I believe in God! I'm no atheist! And I believe in immortality, and I say my prayers. At least I do sometimes."

"Why do you -- when you do?" I asked, surprised, for I would not have thought it.

"Oh, Mother had me say 'em when I was little, and I've sort of kept it up more or less. It's nice, don't you think? I like to say prayers -- when I'm feeling kind of righteous."

"How about it when you're feeling kind of wicked? Do you ever pray for divine guidance?"

"I don't feel wicked! Why should it? I believe in Jesus and the Bible and everything."

"Do you read the Bible?"

"Sure -- in Sunday school, when I go. And any way, I'm a church member."

"Do you go to church?"

Christianity at Roosevelt

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"Yes indeed -- quite often, if I'm up in time."

"Why do you go -- when you're up in time and do?"

"Well -- A person really out to go to church more or less don't you think? Any way, I rather like it. The music is nice, makes you feel kind of holy, and you meet lots of lovely people." Her eye was passing on to the next question. "Naturally I would not want to live in a community with no church! Who would? All the best places to live have churches."

"But you've written 'Yes' for number nine! Do you really have family worship in your home?"

"Why I -- What do they mean by family worship?"

I told her what family worship used to be in my childhood -- how we all knelt together in prayer before separating for the day, how general the custom was of beginning each day with devout religious observances.

She was much amused. "Well naturally," she laughed, "we don't do anything like that! You couldn't get our family together long enough morning or evening. But Grandfather always asks the blessing at meals when he's here, and I guess that'll do for family worship. And I've been brought up in a religious home, wouldn't you call it? Of course Father -- But Mother's a church member."

"Does your mother go to church?"

"Not so very often, but she likes us to go, and she makes cakes and aprons and things for the church sales and helps with the church dinners, and --" Her voice faded as she turned to the eleventh question, about sending her children to Sunday

school. "Certainly if ever I have any children they'll go to Sunday school, so that 'Yes' is all right -- and this last one too! Of course I think religion in some form is necessary for the individual and for the community! I'm no atheist!

And so a sentimental little conformer with about as much religion as an Easter rabbit went to the letter box to file a one hundred percent testimonial for Christianity! There are hosts of Elsie's, and the results of the questionnaire were most gratifying to its sponsors, convincing them that the religious pulse of Christendom is more than vigorous.

Christendom is confused by the true unbelievers whose real interests are wholly nonreligious, but who pose as Christians by their church membership. When religion is real it is never casual, something you do on Sunday morning if you wake up in time. Real Christianity is passionate and gripping, and affects every phase of life seven days in every week.

That church people do not know this, that the Elsie's are permitted to believe themselves Christians, that such a questionnaire could have been taken seriously by so many people, could be given such wide publicity without being challenged as superficial and worthless, is in itself a sufficient proof that the religious pulse of Christendom no longer flutters.

Date

Since there is nothing about Elsie's way of life to bring Jesus Christ into her thoughts twice a week, since the "God" in which she so cheerfully believes is no more to her than a theory, and serves no purpose but to keep her from being an atheist, she obviously has never been a Christian, and knows nothing of the Christian way of life. She would be more of a person if she knew this.

Not that her superficial pretensions matter greatly. There is certainly no fanaticism about them, and they are too shallow to do any harm. But she should know what her real religion is! She should understand her own way of life -- what her real salvation is and from what it saves her. Whether we worship a symbol or one or another of the worldly godlings of the natural man, we should know what we worship and be prepared to defend our faith.

Exactly what your religion is matters less than that, whatever it is, you frankly acknowledge it, and live by it without self-deception. That is to say, it is more civilized to be an apologist than a naive and primitive true believer, whatever sits upon your throne of god.

Suppose for example that Elsie had had the self-understanding and the frankness to state honestly in that questionnaire: My religion is the religion of Fellowship. My hell is loneliness. I adore people, for people are my salvation from my hell.

That would have been a loyal acknowledgement of the core about which her life is being shaped, her character integrated. It would have been a sincere confession of what she lives by and believes in with all her heart and mind and soul -- of the religion ~~she~~

by which she is finding salvation from childhood.

Not only would she be more of a person had she been able to formulate and state her real faith, but that would have been more of a questionnaire had it helped her to do so,--and shown her the difference between the Christian way of life and her own.

I have already given you a questionnaire ~~which~~ for the testing of your own integration which might be modified to meet the needs of those who take their type ~~worships~~ for granted and have not yet questioned their type faiths. We might ask:

In whose image are you being created -- that of the pleasure-seeker, or the opportunist, or the ~~sentimentalist~~, or the critic? Exactly what sits upon your throne of god giving you your sense of security: Sensation? Intuition? Feeling? **THINKING?** What is uppermost in your thoughts -- your last thoughts at night, your first in the morning? For what do you sacrifice easily and labor diligently? Do you like the world as it is and wish only to enjoy and experience it? Or do you find it unsatisfactory, and wish only to change it, to create, invent, initiate and promote some new thing? Or do you find your salvation in human relationships, caring only for people and not for things? Or do you find both people and things in great need of intellectual criticism, with no hope but the great god reason, and the life of reason?

That would make a good beginning. But it is not a questionnaire to be dashingly filled in, "Yes or No!"

Date

Elsie is being created in the image of the sentimentalist. The great god Feeling sit on her throne ^{Life} of god giving her her sense of security. People are always uppermost in her thoughts -- as she goes to sleep at night, and as she wakes in the morning. She sacrifices easily for her many many friends, and will cheerfully work her pretty little head off in their service -- harmonious feeling relationships being her ample reward.

~~When Elsie appears to be a pleasure-seeker, the pleasure she seeks is in the service of fellowship, and excuse for getting the crowd together. She will never be primarily~~

Elsie will never be primarily a pleasure-seeker, in pursuit of concrete experience for its own sake. Her pleasure-seeking will be much less for its own sake than ~~for~~ an excuse for getting the crowd together -- in the service of fellowship. And the opportunities and possibilities she sees -- with such intuition as she happens to develop -- will also be in the service of fellowship and harmonious feeling for its own sake. She is charming and tactful, and aims to please, and sensation and intuition will have a place in her consciousness just in so far as they work for that aim. But they are destined to be the servants of her feeling life, and will have upon them the stamp of servitude.

The critic in Elsie, the thinker, will slumber in the ~~unconscious~~ unconscious for many a long year. Thinking is merciless, uncompromising, a disturber of harmonious feeling, and her adventure with the questionnaire shows how easily she keeps it down and out of the conscious situation. No amount of schooling is likely to make anything but an obsequious flunky of the thinker doomed

to a meager, underprivileged life in the dungeons of her being. She is a pronounced extraverted feeling type, and her way of life saves her from her hell by keeping her in a happy little heaven of affectionate and loyal comradeship. At her age and in her case it is all right. It works. It keeps her growing happily into the ~~only~~ type of woman she is destined to become.

The extraverted feeling type is strong wherever loyalty and sympathy and tactfulness are most needed, or where human emotions need to be sympathetically understood and shared. A woman of this type may excell in social service of any sort; or as an interpretive artist -- musician, actress, public speaker; or as the ^{or wife} ^{in need of a} loyal secretary/of some opportunist or thinker/~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ helper who agrees without argument and believes him right without question. But there is no place in scientific research for the feeling types.

Unfortunately for "scientific psychology" the feeling types are not aware of their own limitations, and psychology being of vital importance to people and to social service attracts the nonthinkers who would never dare to undertake the rigors of real scientific research in chemistry or physics.

I once heard a ^{charming} woman of this type lecture before a woman's club on "scientific psychology." She was very insistent that psychology must be a science like physics and chemistry, and lest we should be unscientific about it, she warned in closing. "I have shown you how carefully we keep our records on these filing cards. Don't ever call anything "science" unless it is recorded on cards in this way."

Not used

income, a communist is a man toying with a dream of childhood. He may be an enchanted one who would like to be fathered by GOVERNMENT as in childhood he was fathered ~~by his~~ and mothered by his natural parents, or an equally enchanted one who ~~is too~~ is too tenderhearted to ~~accept~~ accept the hard realities of evolutionary processes that involve the suffering of his fellow men, and wants GOVERNMENT ^{- the abolitions} to father everybody and abolish poverty. Or ~~he~~ may be an ambitious/^{and power-hungry} but wholly unenchanted politician who merely wants to exploit the enchantment of others and profit by the abolitions of the "profit system".

communism like the other Maxian delusions

In any case, ~~communistic~~ ideas tend inevitably toward totalitarianism because communism is very definitely not what happens when men are free. Since it is not what happens when men are free, it can exist only where men are not free. It has to be enforced, dictated by the higher power which does the fathering. It is indeed so unnatural to adult types, to people who as have developed beyond the primitive state of childhood, that ~~it~~ is a form of ~~government~~ government it can exist only under a totalitarian dictatorship such as we see in Russia, and all dictatorships are alike in this; they reflect the dictator not the people. They desires -- benevolent or brutal, according are what the dictator ~~wants~~ as the dictator is benevolent or brutal. The people are but body cells to his brain cells, and his whim of the moment is their law. You may call the New Social Order communism, or socialism, or fascism, or what ^{ever} you like, the odor ~~of~~ ~~paternalism~~ of paternalism, is autocratic, monarchial.

There are in the last analysis only two kinds of government: The democratic in which the people father themselves and the politicians are public servants; and the autocratic in which the