

Religion. *If you believe that ideas can influence men's actions as concretely as the snowstorm that keeps you at home or the broken leg that sends you to a hospital, then you will agree with Horace Kallen that Harry Wolfson's "Philo," which he reviews below, "is an event in the history of ideas." For many signs today point to the end of a period of rationalism in thinking which began, according to Wolfson, with Spinoza. Whatever form our ideas take in the coming years will help to determine the shape of our future. Reason has today become so subtle that the line between the spiritual and the material is blurring; there is room more than ever for religion, whether in new terms or old. . . . For a roundup of recent religious books, see elsewhere in this issue.*

Harmonizing Reason with Revelation

PHILO: *Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.* By Harry Austryn Wolfson. Cambridge: The Harvard University Press. 1947. 2 vols. 993 pp. \$10.

Reviewed by HORACE W. KALLEN

THIS exciting book is an event in the history of ideas. Its argument deserves the most extended analysis and discussion, but the space I am allowed permits only calling attention to the main points of the author's elaborate and persuasive demonstration of his thesis.

Dr. Wolfson takes as his point of departure the familiar fact that for more than seventeen hundred years the prevailing philosophies of the Western world have owned a common character. Whether Judaist, Christian, or Moslem, whether expressed in Greek or Latin or Syriac or Arabic or Hebrew, they have built upon an identical doctrine and expressed it in very similar if not identical literary modes. Their substance and form are consequences of an effort to assimilate the philosophic teachings of the Greeks to the content of the Old Testament of the Jews, the New Testament of the Christians, and the Koran of the Moslems. These true believers undertook to harmonize reason with revelation, but with revelation as ruler and reason as subject, revelation as end and reason as instrument.

In the works of the Church fathers, in the Arabic, Jewish, and scholastic philosophies of the Middle Ages, reason is consistently treated as the handmaiden of revelation. Revelation is the word of God to man. Its vehicle is Scripture. It announces to man the authentic being of God, the origin and history of creation, man's own nature and destiny as that follows from his obedience or disobedience to God's will. Scripture alone is truth, and that which conflicts with



Scripture cannot be true. Right reason never conflicts with Scripture. If on occasion reason seems to, it is because Scripture has been misread or reason has strayed. Scripture reveals, for example, that God is spirit, one and eternal, and that He created the world of nature out of the void; reason, however, cannot reconcile the created with the eternal, so that the pre-Scriptural philosophies of the Hellenistic world hold nature to be co-eternal with God, even identical with God. Scripture, again, reveals that the unique eternal spirit who is God Almighty, is free to create or not to create, to destroy or not to destroy; to interpose His grace on the workings of natural law, and to intrude His miracles into the chain of necessary causation; reason cannot reconcile divine grace with natural necessity, freedom with eternity, miracle with law and order. Scripture, once more, reveals that man's will is free to obey or not to obey the rules Almighty God gave him for his salvation; reason cannot make consistent such freedom in the creature with omnipotence in his Creator. Finally, Scripture reveals that the human soul has an immortal destiny, with which God's grace rewards those who have earned

it by their obedience to God's will; reason cannot reconcile created being with immortality. For reason, whatever begins, must end; Reason is logic; its principle is consistency; it requires that conclusions shall contain nothing not already given in their premises. Revelation, per contra, uncovers conclusions not given in their premises—grace, freedom, and miracles.

Now, until Philo of Alexandria, classical philosophy had sought self-consistency and rationality. The Stoic practice of treating the lives and labors of all the gods of all the peoples as allegories for the sequences and laws of nature had been one form of the effort to establish the rationality of existence. Philo Judaeus was, however, no Greek, although Greek was the language of his community, his daily life, and his literary expression. His Bible was the Septuagint and it is not certain that he knew Hebrew. His writings give evidence, if not of the scholar's knowledge, of the educated man's awareness and appreciation of the great Greek systems of thought, and embody emulations of what he held to be their virtues. An observant Judaist, convinced beyond all question of the truth of the Torah and the superior wisdom of Moses and the prophets, he concedes nothing of the doctrine and discipline of Scriptural revelation to the philosophic reason. He employs allegory to vindicate faith, not to appease reason. He composes homilies; he produces commentaries on Scriptural passages, but he does not employ the forms of expression and discourse which prevail in the Hellenistic culture. What Philo does and how he does it initiate a set of ideas and a way of thinking that dominate the philosophy of the Western world from his day to Spinoza's.

Spinoza, in Dr. Wolfson's judgment, is the first of the moderns to challenge the seventeen-hundred-year-old tradition and to restore to reason the sovereignty and independence it had lost to revelation. The Philonic system, far from being the mere postscript to ancient Greek philosophy that the learned judge it to be, is a new and unprecedented turn in philosophic thinking, the spring and matrix of all subsequent systems till modern times.

Such, very broadly, is Dr. Wolfson's thesis. He establishes it by a detailed, almost miniscule, collation of texts and terms in the Greek, Hebrew, Latin, Syriac, and Arabic sources, with both direct and oblique references to the historic and social setting in which they occur. He does it, moreover, with a dramatic feeling and a literary style altogether unusual in a semantic undertaking of this type. The educated layman will find his Philo as intriguing as the specialist must find it challenging.

The Hunters and The Hunted



By
SACHEVERELL
SITWELL

Here the youngest Sitwell defends style and *décor* as the essence of civilization, and celebrates some of the most splendid examples. Hauntingly beautiful, this is a pilgrimage through the rare and recondite in Byzantine, Gothic, French, Etruscan, Japanese art, and in nature and music. With 16 full-page illustrations. \$4.00

This is a book of major importance, about a young man with a shadow on his mind. Roy Calvert moves in brilliant society, plunges into love affairs, seeks God, tries to lose himself in a cause. The women who love him try in vain to save him. This book has been hailed as a masterpiece, its author called "a Proust without the floral decorations, vivisectioning his hero to the last raw filament of nerve." \$3.00

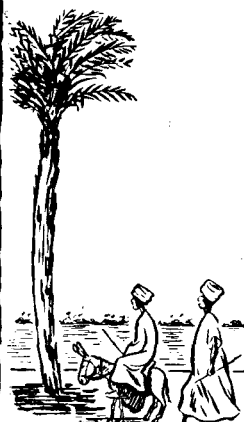
The LIGHT and the DARK

Northwest Harvest



Edited by V. L. O. CHITTICK

This "regional stock-taking" is a discussion of the Northwest, its past and future and its relation to the rest of America, by some of its outstanding writers. Among them are Peter Odegard, Ernest Haycox, Stewart Holbrook, Joseph B. Harrison, Horace R. Cayton, and others. For all who are interested in regionalism, in American literature, or history. \$4.00



Africa, I Presume?

By ALAN REEVE

Glamour and squalor, the beautiful and the grotesque, exotic sights, sounds, odors, appear in this book by an able artist and newspaperman who made a 20,000-mile safari through Africa. He has caught in words and drawings all the color and adventure of the Dark Continent. "Highly entertaining." — *The Cleveland Press*. \$3.00

Remembered Weather

By LEONE RICE GRELLÉ

This gracious poetry paints the New England scene and sings of emotions everyone knows and understands. *Wings* says this poet's work is "... always filled with authentic pictures and impressions and endowed with a calm loveliness." \$2.50

A great modern
novel . . .

By
C. P. SNOW

A History of The Times

VOLUME III—1884-1912

This fascinating volume, the third in the history of the great London newspaper, reveals the conversations, correspondence, and machinations of emperors, kings, and chancellors, leading to two World Wars. \$6.50

The Future of the American Jew

By MORDECAI M. KAPLAN

A philosophy for Jewish life in the contemporary world, discussing how Israel may justify its existence as a separate group and still contribute to the common good of society. "—a master work of religious thought . . ." —Joshua Loth Liebman. \$6.00

The Russian Idea

By NICOLAS BERDYAEV

Berdyayev, whose name has been linked with Kierkegaard's, analyzes the thinking of Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Bakunin, Belinsky, and many others, and helps make clear the true Russia, the Russian Church, and the soul of the Russian peoples. \$2.75

MACMILLAN

Saki to Saroyan

THE QUESTING SPIRIT: *Religion in the Literature of Our Time.* Edited by Halford E. Luccock and Frances Brentano. New York: Coward-McCann, Inc. 1947. 717 pp. \$5.

Reviewed by WILLIAM S. LYNCH

NOW THAT we are hearing so much about affirmations it is inevitable that we should have an anthology of this type—"400 short stories, poems, plays, and affirmations, 700 pages from outstanding American and English authors, chosen to provide inspiration, reflection, and enjoyment for readers of every age and every taste." Dr. Luccock, a professor at the Yale Divinity School, and Frances Brentano, critic and writer, have teamed up to assemble selections from present-day reading which deal with religion and which, they feel, are at the same time good literature. "Religion," incidentally, is for their purpose interpreted as that of the Hebrew-Christian tradition.

The list of acknowledgments and the table of contents prove they went to considerable lengths to see that the more vociferous sects, Protestants, Catholic, Jewish, agnostic and atheistic, were represented. And on the jacket are the enthusiastic and inevitably laudatory comments of denominational readers.

It is an amazing collection really. The list of authors is perhaps the

most fascinating part of it—Saki to Saroyan, Lloyd Douglas to John Dewey. You won't be surprised to find Chesterton or Harry Emerson Fosdick or even Walter Lippmann, but you will be tempted to raise an eyebrow when you see Dorothy Parker and Joyce Kilmer side by side, and H. G. Wells caught between the covers of the same book with C. S. Lewis. The supposedly sardonic Dorothy, by the way, is represented by two lovely, tender Christmas poems. Wells gives us the old one of a Christ, a twenty-first century reformer, born in advance of his time and ours.

For the rest, each writer has been chosen for something he has had to say which remotely or closely touches on some phase of that most bewildering and haunting part of the thought of man—his spiritual and religious belief. Some do it with humor—Fr. Leonard Feeney's parody of Noel Coward, for example; others with reverence and an eye to the current scene, as Maxwell Anderson in his "Journey to Jerusalem"; still others with the social consciousness of Countee Cullen in his "The Litany of the Dark People."

The last section, "Affirmations," will be a quarry for quotes in innumerable sermons and speeches. While interesting for its thought content, it lacks the deeper feeling of the story and poetry sections.

The whole anthology is useful and worthy—a high compliment to any anthology. Individual pieces unquestionably will appeal to a wide range of readers. And yet it lacks something we need in finding or losing a belief. Perhaps it is too much to expect mystical exaltation in the present generation; perhaps, too, it is too much to find tortured disbelief. It's all so watered down. As reflected here religious ecstasy seems no more than what can be found in the unexplained phenomena of a spiritualist's seance. Denial appears petulance at social injustice or simply the indifference of lazy minds.

Twofold Fight

THE MACCABEES. By Elias Bickermann. New York: Schocken Books, Inc. 1947. 120 pp. \$1.50.

Reviewed by ROBERT PICK

AMONG the nine champions of impeccable knighthood whose statues still adorn the *Schöne Brunnen* in Nuremberg, its fourteenth-century master also included Judah Maccabeus. It is hardly likely that any of the Hitlerites who strutted by that German Gothic marvel in the days of their Nuremberg glory, recalled the deeds which lifted the Jewish warrior onto the plane of medieval legend. For what the Maccabees did—stripped of all legend and lore—was to preserve Judaism, and carry the flame of monotheism through the last century and a half of the pre-Christian era into the Messianic period.

The present little book tells their amazing story in the light of modern research, without ever stressing its modern implications. The Maccabees waged a twofold fight: on the one hand there were the violent *gleichschaltung* tendencies of the Oriental rulers under whose suzerainty the Jews lived, on the other the lure of Hellenization sweeping the entire Near East.

The armed insurrection which the first of the Maccabees, a provincial priest by the name of Mattathias and his five sons raised against Syrian persecution became a symbol of active opposition against governmental interference with questions of faith. As such it lives in our memory. The far more complicated story of the internal Jewish struggles revolving around the Hellenistic Emancipation is less commonly known among laymen. Very few, I suppose, are aware that "the accommodation of Hellenistic civilization to the Torah, begun by the Maccabees . . . , gave Judaism the form that it was to have for centuries."

Word

By Robert P. Tristram Coffin

BARE willows by the pasture bars
Are budding out with furry stars,
Though ice still locks the woods, the sun
Sets a warm large Summer one.

Not a blossom, not a bird,
Yet sudden everywhere is the word
This northern world has entered the clear
Leafy green half of the year.

The word is raucous throaty words,
And down the cold green sky slant birds,
Each with a promise in the mouth,
Each with beak full of the South.

Every bird with the silver ring
On his neck is bringing Spring,
His neck so lengthens towards his tryst
His words come down ventriloquist.

The sounds come on ahead of the wide
Spear that enters twilight's side,
And before the whistling wings can pass
Pale ghosts stir deep that will be grass.