

a great campaign called the "total mobilization of the spirit," tapping what was the biggest reserve force of the people for centuries—morality—and it acted as a kind of artificial stimulant. There seemed to be a contest to see who could survive longest on the least material sustenance before giving up the ghost. This perverse morality was slowly and virtuously choking us to death.

This is not to suggest that the novel is a moral tract. These reflections are part of the fabric of an immensely entertaining story which brings the hero to the U.S. in the years before the war, then to wartime China, and back to America again. Lin Tai-yi's America is not altogether convincing: the Pagoda restaurant and Mott Street shimmer like Chinese paintings. But when she writes about Chungking, Kweiyang, and Chengtu, we believe in her characters completely.

Her thinly disguised portraits of Kuomintang officials, fiddling with banknotes while Chungking burns, carry authority. We recognize the esthetic magazine editor who achieves fame by keeping up an interminable correspondence with Bernard Shaw, as we recognize the ineffable Madame Kuan, who is so high up in the hierarchy of government that she wonders what China would do without her, and is so dazzled by her own magnificence that she does nothing at all, thinks only about her bridge-partners, and happily consigns China to perdition when she sees the rot spreading around her. They are not pretty portraits, nor are they final ones: we still await the Chinese Tacitus who will paint the poison in the appropriate colors.

Mostly it is the story of a love affair—Shutung's continual love affair with the world, described with tenderness and gaiety. Shutung's love for the rich beauty Feina, dying of tuberculosis, belongs to the classic tradition; so too does his affection for

the Buddhist monastery on Mount Omei, which is richly described. Like many heroes from Chinese novels, Shutung has affinities with the famous Pao Yu of "The Dream of the Red Chamber," but he is none the worse for that.

At a time when we are beginning once more to remember that China exists, it is worth while to read a novel which explores with subtlety and conviction why, ten years ago, China went crashing to its downfall.

OF LATHES AND LOVERS: Tidily arranged in the background of Joseph Whitehall's first novel, "*The Angers of Spring*" (Atlantic-Little, Brown, \$4.50), are a number of wholesome, average citizens: a young engineer just out of school and sizzling with all the fires that burn at twenty-two; a deep-chested office girl only waiting to tend the right young man's vernal fires; the whimsical owner of a precision-tool factory; his prim accountant; a salty machinist. These people are all given credible names, lively things to say, and enough thumbnail characterization to keep them distinguishable, but unintrusive. Then, in the foreground, the book's real subject relaxes: a bright, clean, orderly machine shop, with lathes, bending brakes, blueprints, tool crib, galvanometers, and odor of scorching oil—all described with zest and authority. Though Mr. Whitehall acknowledges people, his heart and insight really belong to his oscilloscopes, capacitors, and geophones. His descriptions, for instance, of a turret lathe operator at work, are alive and communicate genuine feeling.

Alas, Mr. Whitehall also feels obliged to tell us what his characters do when they go home. These chapters are dutiful (and in one of them, a seduction scene, the exactness of the observation is again impressive), but they only mark time until we are back in the shop and someone can say, "You're talking about a solenoid

actuator. This thing is a variable inductance. They use them in the 60-cycle rejection filters in the galvanometer amplifiers."

An honest book, but perhaps best recommended to undergraduates at MIT. Mere novel-readers, who are curious about the insides of human beings, had better forage elsewhere.

—ROBERT PHELPS.

SHADY SIDE: Peter Vansittart is an upper-class angry young Briton with an excellent subject and, as yet, not enough literary skill to bring it off. In his morality novel, "*Orders of Chivalry*" (Abelard-Schuman, \$4), he takes for a ride the whole of English semipublic life: press lords, shady tycoons, cultural climbers, professional wits, TV pundits, and elegant do-gooders. Though his observations are sharp and often funny, the book as a whole does not succeed, because Mr. Vansittart has overloaded it with characters and situations, as well as with metaphors and images.

"Orders of Chivalry" is about a monumental pageant called "The Festival of London." The principal characters are an ambiguous Hungarian refugee millionaire and his wife, a sensitive siren, who turns out to have Negro blood; a TV funnyman; a professor with a knack for money, and a juvenile delinquent—characters who stand for Violence, Beauty, Frivolity, Deceit, and Anarchy. Virtue is represented by an ex-army officer, who is so grieved with the postwar world in general and the goings-on at the Festival preparations in particular that he retires to Africa to forget.

The circumstances that lead to the downfall of the shady Hungarian millionaire are rather cleverly developed, but their effect is spoiled by compassion creeping in where it does not belong. The resulting book is neither straight novel nor satire. This is a shame, since Mr. Vansittart has talent, industry, scope, and imagination.

—NIKA S. HAZELTON.



THE NOBLE ARCHERS of Assyria from the ninth century B.C. gates of one of its rulers appear in Albert Champdor's richly illustrated "*Babylon*" (Putnam, \$5.95). Now buried in the sand and ancient quiet of the Mesopotamian desert,

the relics of Hammurabi and Nebuchadnezzar are recreated in the story of Babylon's brilliant civilization, its wisdom, and the gods it worshipped. The book is the second in the series "Ancient Cities and Temples."

Saturday Review

Editor: NORMAN COUSINS

Publisher: J. R. COMINSKY

Associate Editors: HARRISON SMITH, IRVING KOLODIN

Associate Publisher
W. D. PATTERSON

Science Editor
JOHN LEAR

Poetry Editor
JOHN CIARDI

Editorial Production
DOROTHY C. KNIGHT

Book Review Editor
ROCHELLE GIRON

Art. Book Review Editor
ROLLENE W. SAAL

Editors-at-Large
CLEVELAND AMORY
HARRISON BROWN
JOHN MASON BROWN
JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH
WALTER MILLIS
ELMO ROPER
JAMES THRALL SOBY
JOHN STEINBECK



Contributing Editors
HOLLIS ALPERT
HENRY HEWES
GRANVILLE HICKS
ARTHUR KNIGHT
GILBERT SELDES
ROBERT LEWIS SHAYON
HORACE SUTTON
JOHN T. WINTERICH

Contents Copyrighted, 1959, by Saturday Review, Inc.

"Is God a Christian?"

THE question came up during a conference session at which students of the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, Calif., could question the Earl Lecturer. Part of the talk had been concerned with man's relationship to an expanding universe as he prepared to embark on the great adventure into outer space. The lecturer had called attention to the prodigious implications on man's religions of a world that was literally bursting its bonds. The adjustment that man had to make centuries ago when it was proved that the earth was not the center of all things was nothing as compared to the size of the adjustment required by an open and traversable universe in which life, as sacred as man's, existed on perhaps billions of planets. One had only to stretch his idea of infinity far enough to cover the reappearance of the unique in order to comprehend the reality of endless recurrence.

The principal obstacle to the extension of man's reach beyond the earth, the lecturer had added, was not represented by a potential shortage of knowledge or facilities, but by the fact that man might perish on this planet even before he could take off for other ones. The environment man had superimposed on nature was rapidly becoming hostile to his own survival. There was no doubt that he could invent virtually everything he needed—everything except the means of preventing war. Nor was there any doubt that man now had available to him the engines for the massacre of his own species. Thus the world had suddenly become too small for the sharp points of conflicting ideologies or theologies; too small, in fact, for anything except some unifying ideas.

The resulting challenge to theologians, whether they called themselves Protestants or Catholics or Jews or Buddhists or Moslems or Hindus, was to serve man in the way man now most needed to be served; namely, in those vital things that were beyond his differences, in the things that could pull him together at a time when his existing institutions were serving to pull him apart. If man's contrasting views of God, as represented by different theologies, prevented him from mobilizing his spiritual resources in the fight to survive, then there was something clearly inconsistent between the nature of his beliefs and the cause of his destiny.

It was not necessary, the speaker had said, for man to improvise the means for a larger unity. The unity existed in his own oneness. It was this point that prompted the student's question.

"Anyone who believes in the oneness of God and therefore the oneness of man would have no difficulty, at least theoretically, in accepting what you say," he began. "But I suspect we will run into trouble when each theology begins to act on the basis of its own detailed definition of that oneness.

"I'm no exception. While you were giving your lecture, I kept thinking of Christianity as the only great unifying idea. If someone had asked me, 'Is God a Christian?' my answer would be an immediate and doubt-free yes. Now, how do I go about getting all the others to agree? And what do I do when the others counter by asking me to agree with *them*?"

I respectfully suggested that this wasn't the kind of unity I had been talking about in the lecture. If Chris-

tians insisted on an affirmative answer to the question: "Is God a Christian?" as a pre-condition for a unified approach to the overriding needs of our time, then they were apt to discover that the large majority of God's children didn't agree with them. For the combination of man's sovereign individuality and his geographical separation had produced a glittering variety of religious experience. Up to now, remoteness had made possible Great Separations. But a suddenly compressed world had now made mandatory a Great Confrontation—for religion and everything else and what was required today is not the absorption of all religions into a common theology but a common resolution to mount a common attack on a common problem in a common cause.

If what we seek to do is to utilize the spiritual resources of men in meeting their problem at its largest, then those resources will have to come from Christian and Jew, from Moslem and Hindu, from Buddhist and Taoist, from Confucian and Ba'ha'i. But if the individual representatives in this grand spiritual concourse draw away the moment there is a variance from a particular theology, then the possibility of common action is destroyed.

WE MAY not be able to persuade Hindus that Jesus and not Vishnu should be paramount on their spiritual horizon, nor Moslems that Lord Buddha is at the center of their spiritual universe, nor Hebrews that Mohammed is the major prophet, nor Christians that Shinto best expresses their spiritual concerns, to say nothing of the fact that we may not be able to get Christians to agree among themselves about their own relationships to God. But what we can do is to try at least to get all to agree to the human proposition that spiritual resources are inherent in all men, that these resources, when summoned, can bring them closer to one another, and that the sacredness of life is not peculiar to any one creed.

In short, man must now be brought together in those higher ways in which he is by nature fundamentally related. He requires a new scale of values by which his differences are seen in perspective and in proportion to the things that are now common to his meaningful destiny.

Religion need not turn against itself to do that which is now necessary. A basic unity already exists. That unity resides not in doctrine but in man himself. The existence of the human conscience is a prime element of that unity. Theology cannot survive without man. Theology therefore can transcend itself in the cause of man.

—N. C.