

Christianity and Culture
C. S. Lewis
Theology 1940 40: 166
DOI: 10.1177/0040571X4004023702

The online version of this article can be found at:
<http://tjx.sagepub.com/content/40/237/166.citation>

Published by:



<http://www.sagepublications.com>

On behalf of:



[Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge](#)

Additional services and information for *Theology* can be found at:

Email Alerts: <http://tjx.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

Subscriptions: <http://tjx.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

Reprints: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

Permissions: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

>> [Version of Record](#) - Mar 1, 1940

[What is This?](#)

Christianity and Culture

“If the heavenly life is not grown up in you, it signifies nothing what you have chosen in the stead of it, or why you have chosen it.”—
WILLIAM LAW.

At an early age I came to believe that the life of culture (that is, of intellectual and æsthetic activity) was very good for its own sake, or even that it was the good for man. After my conversion, which occurred in my later twenties, I continued to hold this belief without consciously asking how it could be reconciled with my new belief that the end of human life was salvation in Christ and the glorifying of God. I was awakened from this confused state of mind by finding that the friends of culture seemed to me to be exaggerating. In my reaction against what seemed exaggerated I was driven to the other extreme, and began, in my own mind, to belittle the claims of culture. As soon as I did this I was faced with the question, “If it is a thing of so little value, how are you justified in spending so much of your life on it?”

The present inordinate esteem of culture by the cultured began, I think, with Matthew Arnold—at least if I am right in supposing that he first popularized the use of the English word *spiritual* in the sense of German *geistlich*. This was nothing less than the identification of levels of life hitherto usually distinguished. After Arnold came the vogue of Croce, in whose philosophy the æsthetic and logical activities were made autonomous forms of “the spirit” co-ordinate with the ethical. There followed the poetics of Dr I. A. Richards. This great atheist critic found in a good poetical taste the means of attaining psychological adjustments which improved a man’s power of effective and satisfactory living all round, while bad taste resulted in a corresponding loss. Since his theory of value was a purely psychological one, this amounted to giving poetry a kind of soteriological function; it held the keys of the only heaven that Dr Richards believed in. His work (which I respect profoundly) was continued, though not always in directions that he accepted, by the editors of *Scrutiny*,¹ who believe in “a necessary relationship between the quality of the individual’s response to art and his general fitness for humane living.” Finally, as might have been expected, a somewhat similar view was

¹ I take *Scrutiny* throughout as it is represented in Brother Every’s article. An independent criticism of that periodical is no part of my purpose.

expressed by a Christian writer: in fact by Brother Every in *THEOLOGY* for March, 1939. In an article entitled "The Necessity of *Scrutiny*" Brother Every inquired what Mr Eliot's admirers were to think of a Church where those who seemed to be theologically equipped preferred Housman, Mr Charles Morgan, and Miss Sayers, to Lawrence, Joyce and Mr E. M. Forster; he spoke (I think with sympathy) of the "sensitive questioning individual" who is puzzled at finding the same judgments made by Christians as by "other conventional people"; and he talked of "testing" theological students as regards their power to evaluate a new piece of writing on a secular subject.

As soon as I read this there was the devil to pay. I was not sure that I understood—I am still not sure that I understand—Brother Every's position. But I felt that some readers might easily get the notion that "sensitivity" or good taste were among the *notes* of the true Church, or that coarse, unimaginative people were less likely to be saved than refined and poetic people. In the heat of the moment I rushed to the opposite extreme. I felt, with some spiritual pride, that I had been saved in the nick of time from being "sensitive." The "sentimentality and cheapness" of much Christian hymnody had been a strong point in my own resistance to conversion. Now I felt almost thankful for the bad hymns.¹ It was good that we should have to lay down our precious refinement at the very doorstep of the church; good that we should be cured at the outset of our now inveterate confusion between *psyche* and *pneuma*, nature and supernature.

A man is never so proud as when striking an attitude of humility. Brother Every will not suspect me of being still in the condition I describe, nor of still attributing to him the preposterous beliefs I have just suggested. But there remains, none the less, a real problem which his article forced upon me in its most acute form. No one, presumably, is really maintaining that a fine taste in the arts is a condition of salvation. Yet the glory of God, and, as our only means to

¹ We should be cautious of assuming that we know what their most banal expressions actually stand for in the minds of uneducated, holy persons. Of a saint's conversation Patmore says: "He will most likely dwell with reiteration on commonplaces with which you were perfectly acquainted before you were twelve years old; but you must . . . remember that the knowledge which is to you a superficiality is to him a solid" (*Rod, Root and Flower, Magna Moralia* xiv).

glorifying Him, the salvation of human souls, is the real business of life. What, then, is the value of culture? It is, of course, no new question; but as a living question it was new to me.

I naturally turned first to the New Testament. Here I found, in the first place, a demand that whatever is most highly valued on the natural level is to be held, as it were, merely on sufferance, and to be abandoned without mercy the moment it conflicts with the service of God. The organs of sense (Matt. v, 29) and of virility (Matt. xix, 12) may have to be sacrificed. And I took it that the least these words could mean was that a life, by natural standards, crippled and thwarted was not only no bar to salvation, but might easily be one of its conditions. The text about hating father and mother (Luke xiv, 26) and our Lord's apparent belittling even of His own natural relation to the Blessed Virgin (Matt. xii, 48) were even more discouraging. I took it for granted that anyone in his senses would hold it better to be a good son than a good critic, and that whatever was said of natural affection was implied *a fortiori* of culture. The worst of all was Philippians iii, 8, where something obviously more relevant to spiritual life than culture can be—"blameless" conformity to the Jewish Law—was described as "muck."

In the second place I found a number of emphatic warnings against every kind of superiority. We were told to become as children (Matt. xviii, 3), not to be called Rabbi (Matt. xxiii, 8), to dread reputation (Luke vi, 26). We were reminded that few of the σοφοὶ κατὰ σάρκα—which, I suppose, means precisely the intelligentsia—are called (1 Cor. i, 26); that a man must become a fool by secular standards before he can attain real wisdom (1 Cor. iii, 18).

Against all this I found some passages that could be interpreted in a sense more favourable to culture. I argued that secular learning might be embodied in the Magi; that the Talents in the parable might conceivably include "talents" in the modern sense of the word; that the miracle at Cana in Galilee by sanctifying an innocent, sensuous pleasure¹ could be taken to sanctify at least a recreational use of culture—mere "entertainment"; and that æsthetic enjoyment of nature was certainly hallowed by our Lord's praise of the lilies. At least some use of science was implied

¹ On a possible deeper significance in this miracle, see F. Mauriac, *Vie de Jésus*, cap. 5, *ad fin.*

in St Paul's demand that we should perceive the Invisible through the visible (Rom. i, 20). But I was more than doubtful whether his exhortation, "Be not children in mind" (1 Cor. xiv, 20), and his boast of "wisdom" among the initiate, referred to anything that we should recognize as secular culture.

On the whole, the New Testament seemed, if not hostile, yet unmistakably cold to culture. I think we can still believe culture to be innocent after we have read the New Testament; I cannot see that we are encouraged to think it important.

It might be important none the less, for Hooker has finally answered the contention that Scripture must contain everything important or even everything necessary. Remembering this, I continued my researches. If my selection of authorities seems arbitrary, that is due not to a bias but to my ignorance. I used such authors as I happened to know.

Of the great pagans Aristotle is on our side. Plato will tolerate no culture that does not directly or indirectly conduce either to the intellectual vision of the good or the military efficiency of the commonwealth. Mr Joyce and D. H. Lawrence would have fared ill in the Republic. The Buddha was, I believe, anti-cultural, but here especially I speak under correction.

St Augustine regarded the liberal education which he had undergone in his boyhood as a *dementia*, and wondered why it should be considered *honestior et uberior* than the really useful "primary" education which preceded it (*Conf.* I, xiii). He is extremely distrustful of his own delight in church music (*ibid.* X, xxxiii). Tragedy (which for Dr Richards is "a great exercise of the spirit")¹ is for St Augustine a kind of sore. The spectator suffers, yet loves his suffering, and this is a *miserabilis insania . . . quid autem mirum cum infelix pecus aberrans a grege tuo et impatiens custodiae tuae turpi scabie fœdarer* (*ibid.* III, ii).

St Jerome, allegorizing the parable of the Prodigal Son, suggests that the husks with which he was fain to fill his belly may signify *cibus demonum . . . carmina poetarum, sæcularis sapientia, rhetoricorum pompa verborum* (Ep. xxi, 4).

Let none reply that the Fathers were speaking of polytheistic literature at a time when polytheism was still a danger. The scheme of values presupposed in most

¹ *Principles of Literary Criticism*, p. 69.

imaginative literature has not become very much more Christian since the time of St Jerome. In *Hamlet* we see everything questioned *except* the duty of revenge. In all Shakespeare's works the conception of good really operative—whatever the characters may say—seems to be purely worldly. In medieval romance, honour and sexual love are the true values; in nineteenth-century fiction, sexual love and material prosperity. In romantic poetry, either the enjoyment of nature (ranging from pantheistic mysticism at one end of the scale to mere innocent sensuousness at the other) or else the indulgence of a *Sehnsucht* awakened by the past, the distant, and the imagined, but not believed, supernatural. In modern literature, the life of liberated instinct. There are, of course, exceptions: but to study these exceptions would not be to study literature as such, and as a whole. "All literatures," as Newman has said,¹ "are one; they are the voices of the natural man . . . if Literature is to be made a study of human nature, you cannot have a Christian Literature. It is a contradiction in terms to attempt a sinless Literature of sinful man." And I could not doubt that the sub-Christian or anti-Christian values implicit in most literature did actually infect many readers. Only a few days ago I was watching, in some scholarship papers, the results of this infection in a belief that the crimes of such Shakespearian characters as Cleopatra and Macbeth were somehow compensated for by a quality described as their "greatness." This very morning I have read in a critic the remark that if the wicked lovers in Webster's *White Devil* had repented we should hardly have forgiven them. And many people certainly draw from Keats's phrase about negative capability or "love of good and evil" (if the reading which attributes to him such meaningless words is correct) a strange doctrine that experience *simpliciter* is good. I do not say that the sympathetic reading of literature must produce such results, but that it may and often does. If we are to answer the Fathers' attack on pagan literature we must not ground our answer on a belief that literature as a whole has become, in any important sense, more Christian since their days.

In Thomas Aquinas I could not find anything directly bearing on my problem; but I am a very poor Thomist and shall be grateful for correction on this point.

¹ *Scope and Nature of University Education*. Discourse 8.

Thomas à Kempis I take to be definitely on the anti-cultural side.

In the *Theologia Germanica* (cap. xx) I found that nature's refusal of the life of Christ "happeneth most of all where there are high natural gifts of reason, for that soareth upwards in its own light and by its own power, till at last it cometh to think itself the true Eternal Light." But in a later chapter (xlii) I found the evil of the false light identified with its tendency to love knowledge and discernment more than the object known and discerned. This seemed to point to the possibility of a knowledge which avoided that error.

The cumulative effect of all this was very discouraging to culture. On the other side—perhaps only through the accidental distribution of my ignorance—I found much less.

I found the famous saying, attributed to Gregory, that our use of secular culture was comparable to the action of the Israelites in going down to the Philistines to have their knives sharpened. This seems to me a most satisfactory argument as far as it goes, and very relevant to modern conditions. If we are to convert our heathen neighbours, we must understand their culture. We must "beat them at their own game." But, of course, while this would justify Christian culture (at least for some Christians whose vocation lay in that direction) at the moment, it would come very far short of the claims made for culture in our modern tradition. On the Gregorian view culture is a weapon; and a weapon is essentially a thing we lay aside as soon as we safely can.

In Milton I found a disquieting ally. His *Areopagitica* troubled me just as Brother Every's article had troubled me. He seemed to make too little of the difficulties; and his glorious defence of freedom to explore all good and evil seemed, after all, to be based on an aristocratic preoccupation with great souls and a contemptuous indifference to the mass of mankind which, I suppose, no Christian can tolerate.

Finally I came to that book of Newman's from which I have already quoted, the lectures on *University Education*. Here at last I found an author who seemed to be aware of both sides of the question; for no one ever insisted so eloquently as Newman on the beauty of culture for its own sake, and no one ever so sternly resisted the temptation to confuse it with things spiritual. The cultivation of the

intellect, according to him, is “for this world”:¹ between it and “genuine religion” there is a “radical difference”;² it makes “not the Christian . . . but the gentleman,” and looks like virtue “only at a distance”;³ he “will not for an instant allow” that it makes men better.⁴ The “pastors of the Church” may indeed welcome culture because it provides innocent distraction at those moments of spiritual relaxation which would otherwise very likely lead to sin; and in this way it often “draws the mind off from things which will harm it to subjects worthy of a rational being.” But even in so doing “it does not raise it above nature, nor has any tendency to make us pleasing to our Maker.”⁵ In some instances the cultural and the spiritual value of an activity may even be in inverse ratio. Theology, when it ceases to be part of liberal knowledge, and is pursued for purely pastoral ends, gains in “meritoriousness” but loses in liberality “just as a face worn by tears and fasting loses its beauty.”⁶ On the other hand Newman is certain that liberal knowledge is an end in itself; the whole of the fourth Discourse is devoted to this theme. The solution of this apparent antinomy lies in his doctrine that everything, including, of course, the intellect, “has its own perfection. Things animate, inanimate, visible, invisible, all are good in their kind, and have a *best* of themselves, which is an object of pursuit.”⁷ To perfect the mind is “an object as intelligible as the cultivation of virtue, while, at the same time, it is absolutely distinct from it.”⁸

Whether because I am too poor a theologian to understand the implied doctrine of grace and nature, or for some other reason, I have not been able to make Newman’s conclusion my own. I can well understand that there is a kind of goodness which is not moral; as a well-grown healthy toad is “better” or “more perfect” than a three-legged toad, or an archangel is “better” than an angel. In this sense a clever man is “better” than a dull one, or any man than any chimpanzee. The trouble comes when we start asking how much of our time and energy God wants us to spend in becoming “better” or “more perfect” in this sense. If Newman is right in saying that culture has *no* tendency

¹ *Op. cit.*, VIII, p. 227, in Everyman Edition. ² VII, p. 184, 5.
³ IV, p. 112. ⁴ IV, p. 111. ⁵ VII, p. 180. ⁶ IV, p. 100.
⁷ IV, p. 113. ⁸ IV, p. 114.

“to make us pleasing to our Maker,” then the answer would seem to be, “None.” And that is a tenable view: as though God said, “Your *natural* degree of perfection, your place in the chain of being, is my affair: do you get on with what I have explicitly left as your task—righteousness.” But if Newman had thought this he would not, I suppose, have written the discourse on “Liberal Knowledge its Own End.” On the other hand, it would be possible to hold (perhaps it is pretty generally held) that one of the moral duties of a rational creature was to attain to the highest non-moral perfection it could. But if this were so, then (a) The perfecting of the mind would not be “absolutely distinct” from virtue but part of the content of virtue; and (b) It would be very odd that Scripture and the tradition of the Church have little or nothing to say about this duty. I am afraid that Newman has left the problem very much where he found it. He has clarified our minds by explaining that culture gives us a non-moral “perfection.” But on the real problem—that of relating such non-moral values to the duty or interest of creatures who are every minute advancing either to heaven or hell—he seems to help little. “Sensitivity” may be a perfection: but if by becoming sensitive I neither please God nor save my soul, why should I become sensitive? Indeed, what exactly is meant by a “perfection” compatible with utter loss of the end for which I was created?

My researches left me with the impression that there could be no question of restoring to culture the kind of status which I had given it before my conversion. If any constructive case for culture was to be built up it would have to be of a much humbler kind; and the whole tradition of educated infidelity from Arnold to *Scrutiny* appeared to me as but one phase in that general rebellion against God which began in the eighteenth century. In this mood I set about construction.

1. I begin at the lowest and least ambitious level. My own professional work, though conditioned by taste and talents, is immediately motivated by the need for earning my living. And on earning one's living I was relieved to note that Christianity, in spite of its revolutionary and apocalyptic elements, can be delightfully humdrum. The Baptist did not give the tax-gatherers and soldiers lectures on the immediate necessity of turning the economic and military system of the ancient world upside down; he told

them to obey the moral law—as they had presumably learned it from their mothers and nurses—and sent them back to their jobs. St Paul advised the Thessalonians to stick to their work (1 Thess. iv, 11) and not to become busybodies (2 Thess. iii, 11). The need for money is therefore *simpliciter* an innocent, though by no means a splendid, motive for any occupation. The Ephesians are warned to work professionally at something that is “good” (Eph. iv, 28). I hoped that “good” here did not mean much more than “harmless,” and I was certain it did not imply anything very elevated. Provided, then, that there was a demand for culture, and that culture was not actually deleterious, I concluded I was justified in making my living by supplying that demand—and that all others in my position (dons, schoolmasters, professional authors, critics, reviewers) were similarly justified; especially if, like me, they had few or no talents for any other career—if their “vocation” to a cultural profession consisted in the brute fact of not being fit for anything else.

2. But is culture even harmless? It certainly can be harmful and often is. If a Christian found himself in the position of one inaugurating a new society *in vacuo* he might well decide not to introduce something whose abuse is so easy and whose use is, at any rate, not necessary. But that is not our position. The abuse of culture is already there, and will continue whether Christians cease to be cultured or not. It is therefore probably better that the ranks of the “culture-sellers” should include some Christians—as an antidote. It may even be the duty of some Christians to be culture-sellers. Not that I have yet said anything to show that even the lawful use of culture stands very high. The lawful use might be no more than innocent pleasure; but if the abuse is common, the task of resisting that abuse might be not only lawful but obligatory. Thus people in my position might be said to be “working the thing which is good” in a stronger sense than that reached in the last paragraph.

In order to avoid misunderstanding, I must add that when I speak of “resisting the abuse of culture” I do not mean that a Christian should take money for supplying one thing (culture) and use the opportunity thus gained to supply a quite different thing (homiletics and apologetics). That is stealing. The mere presence of Christians in the ranks of the culture-sellers will inevitably provide an antidote.

It will be seen that I have now reached something very like the Gregorian view of culture as a weapon. Can I now go a step further and find any intrinsic goodness in culture for its own sake?

3. When I ask what culture has done to me personally, the most obviously true answer is that it has given me quite an enormous amount of pleasure. I have no doubt at all that pleasure is in itself a good and pain in itself an evil; if not, then the whole Christian tradition about heaven and hell and the passion of our Lord seems to have no meaning. Pleasure, then, is good; a "sinful" pleasure means a good offered, and accepted, under conditions which involve a breach of the moral law. The pleasures of culture are not intrinsically bound up with such conditions—though of course they can very easily be so enjoyed as to involve them: Often, as Newman saw, they are an excellent diversion from guilty pleasures. We may, therefore, enjoy them ourselves, and lawfully, even charitably, teach others to enjoy them.

This view gives us some ease, though it would go very little way towards satisfying the editors of *Scrutiny*. We should, indeed, be justified in propagating good taste on the ground that cultured pleasure in the arts is more varied, intense, and lasting, than vulgar or "popular" pleasure.¹ But we should not regard it as meritorious. In fact, much as we should differ from Bentham about value in general, we should have to be Benthamites on the issue between pushpin and poetry.

4. It was noticed above that the values assumed in literature were seldom those of Christianity. Some of the principal values actually implicit in European literature were described as (a) honour, (b) sexual love, (c) material prosperity, (d) pantheistic contemplation of nature, (e) *Sehnsucht* awakened by the past, the remote, or the (imagined) supernatural, (f) liberation of impulses. These were called "sub-Christian." This is a term of disapproval if we are comparing them with Christian values: but if we take "sub-Christian" to mean "immediately sub-Christian" (*i.e.*, the highest level of merely natural value lying immediately below the lowest level of spiritual value) it may be a term of relative approval. Some of the six

¹ If this is true, as I should gladly believe but have never seen proved.

values I have enumerated may be sub-Christian in this (relatively) good sense. For (c) and (f) I can make no defence; whenever they are accepted by the reader with anything more than a "willing suspension of disbelief" they must make him worse. But the other four are all two-edged. I may symbolize what I think of them all by the aphorism "Any road out of Jerusalem must also be a road into Jerusalem." Thus:

(a) To the perfected Christian the ideal of honour is simply a temptation. His courage has a better root, and, being learned in Gethsemane, may have no honour about it. But to the man coming up from below, the ideal of knight-hood may prove a schoolmaster to the ideal of martyrdom. Galahad is the *son* of Launcelot.

(b) The road described by Dante and Patmore is a dangerous one. But mere animalism, however disguised as "honesty," "frankness," or the like, is not dangerous, but fatal. And not all are qualified to be, even in sentiment, eunuchs for the Kingdom's sake. For some souls romantic love also has proved a schoolmaster.¹

(d) There is an easy transition from Theism to Pantheism; but there is also a blessed transition in the other direction. For some souls I believe, for my own I remember, Wordsworthian contemplation can be the first and lowest form of recognition that there is something outside ourselves which demands reverence. To return to Pantheistic errors about the nature of this something would, for a Christian, be very bad. But once again, for "the man coming up from below" the Wordsworthian experience is an advance. Even if he goes no further he has escaped the worst arrogance of materialism: if he goes on he will be converted.

(e) The dangers of romantic *Sehnsucht* are very great. Eroticism and even occultism lie in wait for it. On this subject I can only give my own experience for what it is worth. When we are first converted I suppose we think mostly of our recent sins; but as we go on, more and more of the terrible past comes under review. In this process I have not (or not yet) reached a point at which I can honestly repent of my early experience of romantic *Sehnsucht*. That they were occasions to much that I do repent, is clear; but I still cannot help thinking that this was my abuse of them, and that the experiences themselves contained, from the

¹ See Charles Williams, *He Came Down from Heaven*.

very first, a wholly good element. Without them my conversion would have been more difficult.¹

I have dwelt chiefly on certain kinds of literature, not because I think them the only elements in culture that have this value as schoolmasters, but because I know them best; and on literature rather than art and knowledge for the same reason. My general case may be stated in Ricardian terms—that culture is a storehouse of the best (sub-Christian) values. These values are in themselves of the soul, not the spirit. But God created the soul. Its values may be expected, therefore, to contain some reflection or antepast of the spiritual values. They will save no man. They resemble the regenerate life only as affection resembles charity, or honour resembles virtue, or the moon the sun. But though “like is not the same,” it is better than unlike. Imitation may pass into initiation. For some it is a good beginning. For others it is not; culture is not everyone’s road into Jerusalem, and for some it is a road out.

There is another way in which it may predispose to conversion. The difficulty of converting an uneducated man nowadays lies in his complacency. Popularized science, the conventions or “unconventions” of his immediate circle, party programmes, etc., enclose him in a tiny windowless universe which he mistakes for the only possible universe. There are no distant horizons, no mysteries. He thinks everything has been settled. A cultured person, on the other hand, is almost compelled to be aware that reality is very odd and that the ultimate truth, whatever it may be, *must* have the characteristics of strangeness—*must* be something that would seem remote and fantastic to the uncultured. Thus some obstacles to faith have been removed already.

On these grounds I conclude that culture has a distinct part to play in bringing certain souls to Christ. Not all souls—there is a shorter, and safer, way which has always been followed by thousands of simple affectional natures who begin, where we hope to end, with devotion to the person of Christ.

¹ I am quite ready to describe *Sehnsucht* as “spilled religion,” provided it is not forgotten that the spilled drops may be full of blessing to the unconverted man who licks them up, and therefore begins to search for the cup whence they were spilled. For the drops will be taken by some whose stomachs are not yet sound enough for the full draught.

Has it any part to play in the life of the converted? I think so, and in two ways. (a) If all the cultural values, on the way up to Christianity, were dim antepasts and ectypes of the truth, we can recognize them as such still. And since we must rest and play, where can we do so better than here—in the suburbs of Jerusalem? It is lawful to rest our eyes in moonlight—especially now that we know where it comes from, that it is only sunlight at second hand. (b) Whether the purely contemplative life is, or is not, desirable for any, it is certainly not the vocation of all. Most men must glorify God by doing to His glory something which is not *per se* an act of glorifying but which becomes so by being offered. If, as I now hope, cultural activities are innocent and even useful, then they also (like the sweeping of the room in Herbert's poem) can be done to the Lord. The work of a charwoman and the work of a poet become spiritual in the same way and on the same condition. There must be no return to the Arnoldian or Ricardian view. Let us stop giving ourselves airs.

If it is argued that the "sensitivity" which Brother Every desires is something different from my "culture" or "good taste," I must reply that I have chosen those words as the most general terms for something which is differently conceived in every age—"wit," "correctness," "imagination" and (now) "sensitivity." These names, of course, record real changes of opinion about it. But if it were contended that the latest conception is so different from all its predecessors that we now have a radically new situation—that while "wit" was not necessary for a seventeenth-century Christian, "sensitivity" is necessary for a twentieth-century Christian—I should find this very hard to believe. "Sensitivity" is a potentiality, therefore neutral. It can no more be an end to Christians than "experience." If Philippians i, 9 is quoted against me, I reply that delicate discriminations are there traced to charity, not to critical experience of books. Every virtue is a *habitus*—*i.e.*, a good stock response. Dr Richards very candidly recognizes this when he speaks of people "hag-ridden by their vices or their virtues" (*op. cit.*, p. 52, italics mine). But we want to be so ridden. I do not want a sensitivity which will show me how different each temptation to lust or cowardice is from the last, how unique, how unamenable to general rules. A stock response is precisely what I need to acquire. Moral theologians, I believe, tell us to fly at sight from temptations

to faith or chastity. If that is not (in Dr Richards' words) a "stock," "stereotyped," "conventional" response, I do not know what is. In fact, the new ideal of "sensitivity" seems to me to present culture to Christians in a somewhat less favourable light than its predecessors. Sidney's poetics would be better. The whole school of critical thought which descends from Dr Richards bears such deep marks of its anti-Christian origins that I question if it can ever be baptized.

C. S. LEWIS.

Rosenberg's New Nordic Religion

THE military conflict in which we find ourselves unhappily involved to-day is concerned with the physical restraint of certain evil-doers. But it is really part of a much larger conflict, in which we war "not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." We are opposed to a vast intellectual and spiritual movement or group of movements, which, by debauching scientific method, falsifying history, and substituting bad and erroneous religion for that which is good and honest, is in danger of creating a belt of new paganism stretching from the Rhineland to the Pacific Ocean.

Let us at all costs refrain from deluding ourselves. No military victory can destroy these evils of the mind and spirit. They were growing up long before 1914. They were alive and working below ground between 1918 and 1934. They will still be there, even if the democracies inflict a defeat upon the Nazi arms. They can only be overcome if Christians meet them wearing the panoplia of Almighty God; and part of that equipment is *truth*, with which our loins should be girded.

I

There are numerous features in this vast movement, and it is not the purpose of this article and its sequel to deal fully with more than one. The false philosophy of dialectic materialism is at present less in our minds, although in the event of Russia's power continuing to increase we may hear about it again as much as we did nine years ago.