

" SPIRITUAL VALUES AND HUMAN RELATIONS "

**Religious Emphasis Week
1962**

MONDAY, February 5, 1962

12:00 Noon - THE SKEPTICS HOUR Rm. 158, Aud.

"Is it for Real?"

Are religious principles valid in modern affairs?

Is there such a thing as absolute right and wrong?

Do I need religious authority to live a meaningful life?

When should I stop praying and go to living?

These are but a few questions that will be asked and answered in the SKEPTICS HOUR today in Room 158, Auditorium Building at 12:00 noon. The Reverends James Gunn, Chaplain for the Presbyterian Students and Julius Scott, Campus Pastor for the Methodist Students, along with Kenneth Tollett, Dean of Law School, will be on hand to give assistance.

This meeting is organized and sponsored by the

VETERAN'S CLUB OF TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

7:45 p.m. - FACULTY FORUM Rm. 158, Aud.

"Is it our Responsibility?"

All faculty and staff members are invited to attend the forum and open discussion to be held in Room 158 of the Auditorium Building at 7:45 p.m. this evening. The discussion will center about the controversial fourth "T", Religion. Mr. Luine Bickham, Member of the University Religious Council, will serve as moderator. Rev. Milton Mayer, Pastor of Lutheran Students and Judge J. Stovall, District Judge, will be present as resource persons.

An opportunity for fellowship will follow with refreshments provided by the University Dames.

All faculty and staff are urged to attend.

RELIGION: "IS IT FOR REAL?"

I am placed in a somewhat precarious predicament. This is supposed to be the Skeptics~~W~~ Hour; but if you will pardon me, I am a trifle skeptical about that, for there are two men of cloth among the Resource Persons. I am afraid the selection of me to chair this discussion is an invidious honor. Certainly, it would be as shocking as surprising if Reverends Scott and Gunn turned out to be skeptical about religion. The implication is almost ir-
regarded by some as
resistible that I must be, at least, /skeptically inclined. To appreciate this all you have to do is to visualize, say, a Family Emphasis Week with two fathers on a program who have eight or ten children and a bachelor chairman who was to chair a discussion entitled, "Children Haters! ~~or 'Wife Beaters.'~~ or "The Case Against Matrimonial Family Life." I am sure the purpose of this program is probably to dissolve with the cooling and refreshing solvent, water, any skepticism vis à vis religion among you, surely, not to weaken faith with sketp^{ca} acid. So what would you do if you were in my position?

I propose to make a few statements regarding the place and value of religion in life, both ~~xxxx~~ personal and social, in order to set a frame of reference for discussion and reaction by the audience and my co-panelists, men of the cloth. I have been told that I may be as offensive and provocative as I like. It should be no difficulty to be the former, but I will strive in my limited way to be the later. First, to get the record straight, I have no desire or inclination to debunk religion any more than I desire or am inclined to go preaching to young boys and girls that there are no fairies or that Santa Clause~~x~~ is a benign fraud or hoax. In fact, I doubt that I would ^eenhance my tenure at this University by so talking. Yet I am constrained to say ~~sz~~ that I do not

propose to feed you any ~~placid~~ platitudinous pabulum about religion. (I should express my apologies for the use of the first person so much. This would be an almost intolerable mode of discussion in law or a court ~~where~~ ⁱⁿ where you are interested ~~at~~ getting at facts and more or less ascertainable principles, but it is quite proper in religious discussion where bald facts are frequently ignored and principles are piously preached.)

Before we can place and value religion, I should first do a rather foolhardy ^{early} thing, ^{try to} /define it. A safe and simple, though some ³ what ambiguous, definition ⁴, I believe, is that ~~it~~ is an institutionalized concern with ultimate questions, or more briefly it is the concern with ultimate questions. It deals with the meaning and, perhaps, the value of life. It strives to pinpoint purposes and points of value in the panoramic flux of life or bring a kind of ¹ meaningful order to the chaos of human activity. Paradoxically, ^x it is more concerned with the inner life ~~more so~~ than with the outer mundane activities of existence. Yet I should quickly add that some ~~xxx~~ theologians who are more sophisticated, though not less vague, would ~~add~~ say religion properly understood or viewed is concerned with the aspect of all being. This latter view is at once closer to a concept of God but at the same time somewhat pantheistically ontological, that is, such religious thinkers would define God as an aspect of all being. A skeptical philosopher would ^{3c} ~~hear~~ suggest that God so defined is rather vague and would further urge that really God like religion is one being among many just as religion is one institution among many. Of course, religious believers would not accept the skeptical philosopher's statement of the question, for it not only would take the dignity and glory from God and religion but it would also subject ^{them} ~~it~~ to the same kind of probing and critical scientific inquiry other ~~xx~~ ^{so called} institutions and/beings are daily and routinely exposed ~~to~~. Religion would then be

them

involved in

~~into~~/garnering and collecting mundane evidence and facts to support its claims and assertions. This practice is not very compatible to a religious mind, that is, such an inquiry into the evidence and facts that support religious dogma. ~~Obviously~~ Obviously, many great scientists have been intensely and deeply religious and not just about their scientific pursuits. I can hear my co-panelists saying under their breaths, ah ha, you have implied if you have not expressly said that scientists may approach scientific inquiry religiously. But I will let them speak for themselves and answer ~~this~~ the challenge of this observation if it is raised.

Now I am moving slowly. However, I must add a related preliminary statement which is very relevant to our subject. I must elaborate my definition some by giving a thumbnail sketch of the origin and/or nature of religion. I really do not think religion is as old as man, although when man became distinctively man he already began to be religious in a manner of speaking. I doubt that even my ~~few~~ fellow panelists are so naive or fundamentalist that they believe religion, let alone the world, ~~was~~ began as it is so beautifully and poetically pictured in that great repository of Jewish folklore, Genesis. This is not to suggest that Genesis and certainly not the Holy Bible are valueless or have no place in our lives today. What I am really driving at is that animals, as far as we know, are not religious, and ~~they~~ believe the reason is simple and ~~is~~ plain. They cannot think discursively or even primitively. Religion requires a kind of, at least, primitive ~~or~~ systematic or critical thought. Religion and belief in God have developed, I believe, sort of on a ~~parallel~~ with the development of the more advanced and complexly functional mind. Indeed, I would and can argue that it developed coterminously with the development of language, and you know language is not older than man but younger.

parallel

I wish I had time to disclose to you the researched^s of that great German ~~ix~~ anthropological historian of religion, Usener.^s Cassirer in his Language and Myth uses Usener's findings^s to support the theory that the ~~x~~ impulses and instincts which caused myth-making also caused the development of language and he convincingly^{ly} ^{and} explains word-magic/as having a common source in ~~mythicism~~ "mythico-religious conceptions." He states that there are three stages~~ix~~ in the Evolution of Religious Ideas: The first and old stage^{est} was Momentary Deities. "Every impression that man ~~receives~~ receives, every wish that stirs in him, every hope that lures him, every ~~danger~~ danger that threatens him can affect him thus religiously. Just let spontaneous feeling invest the object before him, or his own personal condition, or some display of power that surprises him, with an air of holiness^{ss}, and the momentary god has, been experienced and created." (18) It is something that only exist here and now. Such experiences result in primitive or "pre-civilized men" positing ~~daemons~~ daemons. Such daemons or gods like primitive or earliest^{second} concepts or words are ad hoc and of transient value or relevance. The ~~third~~ stage is that of Special Gods. Ordered and continual activities of mankind result in him imposing^{ON} or recognizing in activity or the world~~x~~ periodicity: definite intervals, uniform cycles, etc. Here like in ~~momentary~~ momentary deities man is passively influenced by outer world phenomena, though in a sort of ~~Kantian~~ neo- or quasi-Kantian manner categories or faculties of the mind project primitive or rough concepts of order upon the outer world phenomena. Thus you have patron gods of harvesting not just for this year, here and now, but for the ~~regular~~ regular phenomenon of harvesting, seasons, etc., every year. Linguistically, I ~~might~~ hazard the suggestion^f that the parallel development in language was the naming of the properties of the world's furniture, which in later ~~times~~ times and developments^s resulted in^t classification of things with concepts

that abstract/^{ed}common properties. For rich examples of this second stage reflect upon Greek and Roman mythologies and deities. The final and supreme ~~xx~~ stage is the development of Personal Gods. The name for a special god loses its specialized referent and becomes a proper name--a proper name connotes a personality, not an activity, event, or process. Anthropomorphism sets in.

I have already talked longer than I hoped. What can be concluded from what I have said? The place and value of religion in life is its symbolism. I do not have time to rigorously show how the above abbreviated discussion leads to this, but I think it does suggest it. Animals can only "notice" just as primitive man only noticed transient experiences or activities which resulted in momentary ~~xxx xxx~~ deities. "Only symbolic expression can yield the possibility of prospect and retrospect, because it is only by symbols that ~~dis-~~ ~~xxx~~ distinctions are not merely made, but fixed in consciousness." Here I must talk impressionistically and sketchily. One thousand years before ~~xx~~ the Christian era it has been determined that God was conceived as a spiritual Being who thought the world before he created it, and used the Word as a means of expression and an instrument^{ment} of creation. Isis, the Egyptian goddess, inveigled Ra, the sun-god, into disclosing his name and learning his name she mastered him. Word magic and symbolism magic That is. The name and not ~~the~~ God himself is ~~x~~ sometimes thought to be the source of his efficacy. The vestige of this word-magic kind of thinking is manifested in Sunday before last's Sunday School's lesson where the Third Commandment was discussed--Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. It strikes me as presumptuous to think that God would be ~~x~~ offended by the way you use his name. Eskimos regarded three elements as constituting man: body, soul, and name. In Roman law a slave had no name since only a legal personality could have a name.

Among ~~xx~~ many "primitive" cultures, I believe, even today give boys new names at puberty rites, for they are boys no more. Those of you familiar with the practices of some current religions should be able to see the ~~xxx~~ obvious ~~six~~ comparable practices, which are probably vestigally related, though it not probably thought as being so simple or superstitiously minded. I could go on giving innumerable suggestive examples and parallels. How does the gospel according to Saint John begin? "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." There is, I believe, a recognizable slow process of transition from the belief in the power of words to belief in spiritual power.

Many of the familiar trappings of religion and spritualism have there beginnings in these forgotten stages in the development of man and his mind. Striking parallels of supporting thought could be recited from the great Jesuit Father Pierre Teilhard de Chardin in his criminally neglected The Phenomenon of Man. He demonstrates the evolutionary theory of the world and man. Only when the mind has developed to ~~ix~~ its ~~more~~ higher state of complexity (the "noosphere") does spirit develop or come on the world scene, although admittedly, I suppose he would say it ~~x~~ was always immanent or potentially here.

Let me close on this note. I agree with Tillich when ~~x~~ he emphasizes the symbolism of religion and suggests that symbols point beyond themselves to things that cannot be directly grasped but must be represented indirectly. Religion and belief in God are inextricably tied up with symbolism. But so is science, ~~xxx~~ mathematics, and, indeed, language and art. And if you subscribe to the thinking of the anti-empiricist esthete Sir Herbert Read, you may gain much comfort in his assertion that art is symbolic language which is a cognitive symbolic discourse that communicates or states fact with more accuracy and validity than science.