

A RELIGION IN BRIEF

J. V. NASH

FROM time to time, I have been asked by friends who know of my Roman Catholic antecedents, of my subsequent contact with other churches, and of my varied studies in the field of comparative religion, to set forth the principles of the faith which I now hold.

Heretofore, I have begged to be excused, feeling as I did that any statements I might make of my spiritual philosophy would limit rather than explain my views; in short, would be likely to cause misunderstanding rather than understanding of them, and the more detailed my exposition, the greater the danger of getting lost in the bogs of metaphysics, whose illusive will o' the wisps lure the unlucky adventurer on into the pitfalls from which there is no escape.

Just the other day, however, when reading "The Strange Notes of Samuel Butler," in a little pocket volume, my attention was arrested by a significant paragraph:

"Any religion that cannot be founded on half a sheet of note-paper will be bottom-heavy, and this, in a matter so essentially of sentiment as religion, is as bad as being top-heavy in a material construction. It must, of course, catch on to reason, but the less it emphasizes the fact the better."

This came to me as a challenge. If the religion which, at the cost of so much tribulation, I have evolved for myself, is really worth anything, it should be capable of being expressed on a half-sheet of note-paper. And so, on Sunday morning, April 5th, lying on my couch, while the church bells were calling the True Believers of the various contradictory sects to their places of worship, I jotted down the essence of my spiritual philosophy.

It may cause wonderment to some to note that I have not attempted to define God.—This is not an oversight. "I will accept your God," said Voltaire to the priests, "if you will only not try to define Him!" The attempt to define God has been the rock on which every

great religion has made shipwreck of its true spiritual inwardness and become fossilized into an orthodoxy.

And so here is the statement of my philosophy of religion:

The whole universe, to the eye of ordinary consciousness, consists of just two things: self and not-self. As man, through spiritual realization, approximates to God consciousness, self and not-self merge into one, as hydrogen and oxygen coalesce in crystal water; and that One is eternal, all-knowing Love, unconscious of self, for the essential nature of Love is unselfishness. The ego—the little individual self—disappears through perfect union with the Higher Ego—the great Social Self, in which and through which it now manifests its qualities and its purposes.

Love is the only path to immortality, just as the immortality of Love is the only immortality. What must we do to be saved? Love. The devil, according to tradition, is an excellent theologian; his knowledge of the creeds and of the Bible is unsurpassed. He is certainly no atheist or agnostic, for he firmly believes in the existence of God and freely proclaims his belief. Yet he is hopelessly damned, for he does not and will not manifest Love. In the matter of belief, the devil is a 100 per cent Fundamentalist, while, *pari passu*, Jesus, who cared nothing for dogma and never heard of the Christian creeds, but preached love of the brethren, is the perfect Modernist.

He that *loveth* not shall be damned, though he can recite the Athanasian creed backward. And the Love by which we are saved lives not in dogmas or ceremonies or temples. It is the common, everyday Spirit of Service, to one another, and to the group in which we live, and move, and have our being.