

IS IT ANOTHER RENAISSANCE?

BY HALCYON M. THOMAS

THE eagerness with which the reading public gives attention to all religious material, be it the daily press or the monthly magazine or church periodical is a certain indication that we are giving more thought to religious matters. It also indicates a strong desire to find out "what there is in religion" as the non-church going man puts it.

We have wandered in the wilderness of apprehension and through the valley of doubt with a close-up of the slough of despond and now as a people we are on the road to the solution of our problems. It is a long journey to be sure, but the Marathon runner learned to run by degrees, indeed his first venture was to creep.

For generations we have been aware of the great part religion has played in the world in which we live. The old master pieces of art are due in large part to religious inspiration. The pictures that stir us to noble desire are those pictures that tell by paint and brush the stories of His Birth, the Wise Men, the Madonna, Crucifixion, Last Supper, Resurrection. Great dramas that move us are full of the principles He taught. Busied with the world war, its problems and its aftermath we lost contact for a while with the nobler things.

A Newspaper announced that it would carry daily articles, by a layman, on "Religion and the Newspaper." From the beginning these articles were the subject of unusual discussion, not around the dinner table at night, in the bosom of the family, but on the trains by the commuters as they went to work in the early morning. There was a time when any paper undertaking such a project would have met with severe criticism or at least would have wakened only a mild curiosity. Now men with red corpuscles are anxious to know

what religion has to offer and through what channel that offering will come.

Men who are not affiliated with any church, who hold to no creed, who are pleased to live by what they term the "moral code" evince an interest in religious matters. They may hide behind the attitude of enjoying the argument but in reality they are hunting for the foundation of that moral code. We draw inspiration only from that which is higher than ourselves and the moral code cannot stop with itself. It is impossible to follow the Golden Rule in every avenue of life and not follow the Sermon on the Mount. The man with the moral code says "Give me St. Paul and his philosophy." But what was the back-ground of Paul's philosophy? Was it not, "I preach Christ and Him crucified?" The moral man is in truth seeking the cause that produces the effect.

This trend to religious thought showed itself in literature even before the public knew the trend was there. Reviewing a book a publishing house said, "It is a deeply pious book, the story of a strong Scotch Conventer family and its publisher are glad to add it to a list of publications made by them in the last 117 years."

The trend has crept into the theatre. "Escape" taught its lesson in the last few lines, "'Tis one's own self one cannot escape," says the convict. "Porgy" left one with a sense of religious flavor, not for its spirituals alone, but, what was Porgy's spirit but the spirit of Him who said, "Neither do I condemn thee, go sin no more." The world is getting better by leaps and bounds for such a play would have had no audience even five years ago.

In a monthly magazine an influential non-church going man writes, "I crave the faith of the Fathers. I regard the Christian church in its entirety—including both Catholics and Protestants as the most effective organization society has yet devised for the promotion of altruism and morality, I believe the world has been made a better place by the advent of Jesus Christ."

Business men give the history of their successes to the magazines and openly admit that they tithed for they "believed it a good business principle." Nor do such men walk our streets labeled a "peculiar people."

The two pictures, "Ten Commandments" and "King of Kings" stand as further proof of the trend toward religious thinking. All clergymen did not agree on the propriety of presenting these stories

in the "movies." Results however prove that the project was well timed and appreciated for its true value. After the showing of the Ten Commandments one young man whose religious training had not been entirely neglected said, "Miriam wasn't so young and beautiful as that when she danced around the Golden Calf." His buddy replied, "Miriam's age isn't the most important part of the picture."

Following the King of Kings two young men of about eighteen years whispered as they went down the aisle. Said one, "I didn't know religion made you feel this way and isn't it quiet in the theatre."

Those two pictures would not have found an audience even three years ago.

At a conclave of doctors held in the West a tribute to the Doctor was read. Searching for a title to her preachment the speaker used the words, "Luke is with me." Again we find the religious flavor. Later editorial comment on her tribute carries weight and interest. "The reading of this appreciation has given us a new incentive to accomplish our duties in such manner that our patients may be conscious of a feeling of security when they say, 'Luke is with me,'"

National leaders find security in religion, nor are they slow to voice their opinions. Brought suddenly to the responsibility of leadership in our great nation our president found strength for himself and gave confidence to his people when he said, "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."

Again may we quote from an editorial of a daily paper, thus giving further proof of the deepening of spiritual life and religious awakening among the rank and file of life's hustlers. "We do not need more national development, we need more spiritual development. We do not need more intellectual power we need more knowledge we need more character. We do not need more of the things that are seen we need more of the things that are not seen."

It would seem that we are following the advice of the rich and wise Solomon when he said, "With all thy getting, get understanding."