Religion--Rationalization Or Reason

MARION LOU SPEARS

I believe that God exists as the creator and ruler of the universe. I accept and uphold this belief with what I hope is near to pure rational thinking. I realize that I still hold to a few of the old concepts that I first had in childhood, but I feel that I have made great progress.

Being fortunate enough to have a mother who liked to have me go to church, I attended Sunday school, listened to the teaching of the lesson and took part in the annual Easter and Christmas programs. Yet something evidently was wrong with the way I absorbed the angelic stories of the Christ Child and the vague explanations of God. Still vivid in my remembrance is a certain Easter program of which I was a small part. As I sat in my crepe-paper flower costume waiting for the program to start, I looked up at the huge red velvet curtain stretched across the stage. Suddenly, my imagination conjured up a scene of the deacons of the church digging up Christ behind that crimson drapery! I retained that same horrible awe for Christ and God until I was nearly twelve years old. Without the least doubt, I accepted all the gruesome tales that only "hell-fire" evangelists can create. As for hell, I saw a fiery red pit filled with tortured people prodded by men with pitchforks. I had a vague notion that people climbed a ladder to a golden palace that was heaven. Once, oddly enough, I dreamed that I climbed that ladder, but how disappointed I was when I saw my goal as a flat garden with dry red grass growing on its sloping sides.

In my second year of high school, I began to shed the scales of ignorance and misinterpretation concerning religion. Partly through the companionship of Christian young people and partly through the intelligent approach of our kindly minister, I joined the church and was baptized. My ideas had changed and continued to change. I could no longer accept God as a mythical figure on a throne in the heavens, dealing out miracles and punishments to the sinful horde of people on earth. My increasing knowledge and awareness demanded reasons for things. If God sat in the heavens in a physical sense, why was he not seen? Even in my younger childhood I had lain on the ground and stared long and hard into the sky trying to see God and wondering how he could see everything on the earth at once.

In another year I began to pull new ideas together and to search the Bible for proof of what I had theorized. I didn't find the twisted interpretations that other people found; I found love and human companionship as the two components of the Christian religion. I knew how snobbish and yet patronizing church people could be to those whom they call "sinners," and I knew that they were wrong.

At present I find that my studies in philosophy and science have shown my conception of God ready for more broadening. Until now I believed that God was in the form of a spirit—that is an actual being outside of myself and the world. Now I am willing to accept God as a spirit of love, life and fellowship within the human heart. The powers of the humble insignificant man to raise himself from his depravity and ignorance are infinite in God. I hope that my last phrase has brought my belief out of the particular category of autonomy. I am still humble in the fact that
God makes free will possible and thus gives man the power of deciding his fate.

I must admit that although I have retained an open mind toward religion, I have done so only because the beliefs to which I was accustomed did not satisfy my own ego. I couldn't accept Calvinistic depravity and determinism because I desired freedom of will. Nor could I accept the Jonathan Edwards interpretation of "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" any more than I could accept a fairy tale or a pagan creed. Perhaps I am rationalizing, but if I am, I am satisfied that all the rest of the religious world rationalizes too.

Two Impromptu Compositions

A DIAGNOSIS OF MY COMPOSITION ILLNESS

GEORGE TRIPLETT

"My dear fellow, complete recovery from your disease rests entirely in your hands. There isn't much we can do for you."

That's what I've been told by many doctors. Don't get me wrong, these doctors are not M. D.'s. Usually they are Ph. D.'s who have majored in English, and by whom all students have been treated. Many students are successfully cured of needless errors in English composition and are sent on the merry, healthy road to better writing, but in my case, as the doctors say, it is entirely up to me.

What is this dread disease that none of the competent, well trained people can cure? It is thinking with my pen. It seems that I can't get an idea or dream up words to write until I take up my little maroon Eversharp and begin doodling on a piece of paper. As soon as this department store magic wand is in writing position, ideas flow fast and frantically through my brain.

Is this serious? Well, it would not be if the ideas were complete and well formed, but it seems when the pen stimulates the idea portion of the brain it numbs much of that organ's reasoning power, consequently the thoughts aren't in their best form. Thus, to make the written work acceptable, much revision and rewriting are necessary. What is more discouraging than rewriting a work many times?

It is up to me, they say, to force myself to think things out in my head instead of on paper. They certainly have never had this disease; it just isn't as easy as that. The pen is like a plug for an electric light—the light just will not shine until the plug is in the outlet.