Some Aspects Of Religious Ideology As Revealed In The Interview Material

T. W. Adorno

Chapter XVIII from *The Authoritarian Personality*

A. Introduction

The relationship between prejudice and religion played a relatively minor role in our research. This may be due in a large part to the nature of our sample. It did not include any specific religious groups nor was it drawn from geographical areas such as the Bible Belt or cities with a heavily concentrated Irish-Catholic population in which religious ideology has considerable social importance. If research along the lines of the present work should be carried through in such areas, the religious factor might easily come to the fore to a much greater extent than in the present study.

Apart from this limitation, there is another and more fundamental one. Religion does not play such a decisive role within the frame of mind of most people as it once did; only rarely does it seem to account for their social attitudes and opinions. This at least was indicated by the present results. The quantitative relationships obtained (Chapter VI) are not particularly striking, and although part of the interview schedule was devoted specifically to religion, it cannot be said that the material gathered in this part of the interviews is very rich. On an overt level at least, religious indifference seems to put this whole sphere of ideology somewhat into the background; there can be no question but that it is less affect-laden than most of the other ideological areas under consideration and that the traditional equation between religious "fanaticism" and fanatical prejudice no longer holds good.

Yet, there is reason enough to devote some close attention to our data on religion, scarce though they may be. The considerable part played by actual or former ministers in spreading fascist propaganda and the continuous use they make of the religious medium strongly suggest that the general trend toward religious indifference does not constitute altogether a break between religious persuasion and our main problem. Although religion may no longer stimulate open fanaticism against those who do not share one's own belief, we are led to suspect that on a deeper, more unconscious level the religious heritage, the carry-over of old belief and the identification with certain denominations, still make themselves felt.

Our approach was guided by certain theoretical considerations inherent in our general frame of reference. In order to give relief to the focus of our observations, it is appropriate to indicate the more fundamental of these theoretical reflections.

It was expected from the very beginning that the relations between religious ideology and ethnocentrism would be complex. On the one hand the Christian doctrine of universal love and the idea of "Christian Humanism" is opposed to, prejudice. This doctrine is doubtless one of the major historical presuppositions for the recognition of minorities as sharing equal rights with majorities "in the sight of God." The Christian relativization of the natural, the extreme emphasis on the "spirit," forbids any tendency to regard natural characteristics such as "racial" traits as ultimate values or to judge man according to his descent.

On the other hand, Christianity as the religion of the "Son" contains an implicit antagonism against the religion of the "Father" and its surviving witnesses, the Jews. This antagonism, continuous since St. Paul, is enhanced by the fact that the Jews, by clinging to their own religious culture, rejected the religion of the Son and by the fact that the New Testament puts upon them the blame for Christ's death. It has been pointed out again and again by great theologians, from Tertullian and Augustine to Kierkegaard, that the acceptance of Christianity by the Christians themselves contains a problematic and ambiguous element, engendered by the paradoxical nature of the doctrine of God becoming man, the Infinite finite. Unless this element is consciously put into the center of the religious conception, it tends to promote hostility against the outgroup. As Samuel (101) has pointed out, the "weak" Christians resent bitterly the openly negative attitude of the Jews toward the religion of the Son, since they feel within themselves traces of this negative attitude based upon the paradoxical, irrational nature of their creed — an attitude which they do not dare to admit and which they must therefore put under a heavy taboo in others.

It is hardly an exaggeration to say that many of the usual rationalizations of anti-Semitism originate within Christianity or at least have been amalgamated with Christian motives. The fight against the Jews seems to be modeled after the fight between the Redeemer and the Christian Devil. Joshuah Trachtenberg (119) has given detailed evidence that the imagery of the Jew is largely a secularization of the medieval imagery of the Devil. The fantasies about Jewish bankers and moneylenders have their biblical archetype in the story of Jesus driving the usurers from the Temple. The idea of the Jewish intellectual as a sophist is in keeping with the Christian denunciation of the Pharisee. The Jewish traitor who betrays not only his master but also the ingroup to which he has been admitted, is Judas. These motifs are enhanced by more unconscious

trends such as are expressed in the idea of the crucifix and the sacrifice of blood. Although these latter ideas have been more or less successfully replaced by "Christian Humanism," their deeper psychological roots have still to be reckoned with.[1]

In attempting to evaluate the influence of such elements of religion upon the existence or absence of prejudice today, one has to take into consideration the position in which Christianity presently finds itself: it is faced with an "indifference" which often seems to make it altogether unimportant. The Christian religion has been deeply affected by the process of Enlightenment and the conquest of the scientific spirit. The "magical" elements of Christianity as well as the factual basis of Christian belief in biblical history have been profoundly shaken. This, however, does not mean that Christian religion has been abolished. Although largely emasculated in its profoundest claims, it has maintained at least part of the social functions acquired throughout the centuries. This means that it has largely become *neutralized*. The shell of Christian doctrine, above all its social authority and also a number of more or less isolated elements of its content, is preserved and "consumed" in a haphazard way as a "cultural good" like patriotism or traditional art.

This neutralization of religious beliefs is strikingly exemplified by the following statement of *M109*, a high-scoring Roman Catholic who attends church regularly. He writes on his questionnaire that he considers religion a

> "thoroughly important part of existence, perhaps it should occupy 2 to 5 per cent of leisure time."

The relegation of religion, which was once regarded as the most essential Sphere of life, to "leisure," as well as the time allotment made for it and, above all, the fact that it is subsumed under a calculated time schedule and referred to in terms of per cent is symbolic of the profound changes which have taken place with regard to the prevailing attitude towards religion.

It may be assumed that such neutralized residues of Christianity as that indicated in *M109's* statement are largely severed from their basis in serious belief and substantial individual experience. Therefore, they rarely produce individual behavior that is different from what is to be expected from the prevailing patterns of civilization. However, some of the formal properties of religion, such as the rigid antithesis of good and evil, ascetic ideals, emphasis upon unlimited effort on the part of the individual, still exercise considerable power. Severed from their roots and often devoid of any specific content, these formal constituents are apt to be congealed into mere formulae. Thus, they assume an aspect of rigidity and intolerance such as we expect to find in the prejudiced person.

The dissolution of positive religion and its preservation in a noncommittal ideological form are due to social processes. While religion has been deprived of the intrinsic claim of truth, it has been gradually transformed into "social cement." The more this cement is needed for the maintenance of the *status quo* and the more dubious its inherent truth becomes, the more obstinately is its authority upheld and the more its hostile, destructive and negative features come to the fore. The transformation of religion into an agency of social conformity makes it fall in line with most other conformist tendencies. Adherence to Christianity under such conditions easily lends itself to abuse; to subservience, overadjustment, and ingroup loyalty as an ideology which covers up hatred against the disbeliever, the dissenter, the Jew. Belonging to a denomination assumes an air of aggressive fatality, similar to that of being born as a member of one particular nation. Membership in any particular religious group tends to be reduced to a fairly abstract ingroup-outgroup relationship within the general pattern brought out by the foregoing discussion of ethnocentrism.

These theoretical formulations are not intended as hypotheses for which crucial tests could be provided by our research; rather, they furnish some of the background against which the observations now to be reported may plausibly be interpreted.

B. General Observations

There is much in the interview material to support the view, suggested by findings from the questionnaire, that the more religion becomes conventionalized, the more it falls in line with the general outlook of the ethnocentric individual. An illustration of this point is afforded by the following excerpt from the interview of *F5054*, a woman who scored high on the ethnocentrism scale.

> The subject seems to have accepted a set of rather dogmatic moral codes which makes her regard people, especially "youngsters who call themselves atheists" as falling outside the circle in which she wants to move. She made a point of admitting (confidentially) that one of the main reasons she was looking forward to moving away from Westwood was that she could thereby get her youngest daughter away from the influence of the neighbor's boy, who is an atheist because his father tells him "religion is a lot of hooey." She is also distressed, because her eldest daughter "just won't go to church."
>
> From the above it is evident that she is quite in agreement with organized religion and tends to be a conformist in religious matters. Christian ethics and its moral codes are regarded as absolutes; and deviations are to be frowned upon or punished.

This account suggests that there is a connection between conventional religious rigidity and an almost complete absence of what might be called personally "experienced" belief. The same holds for the high-scoring man *5057*, a person who sticks to the Church although he "does not believe in a personal God."

> The subject believes that most Protestant religions are very much the same. He selected Christian Science because "it is a quieter religion than most." He started going to Unity Sunday school while living with his grandparents and liked the Unity Church, which, in his estimation, presents a mild form of Christian Science. He joined the Christian Science Church when he married, inasmuch as his wife's family and his wife are all Christian Scientists. "Religion should not be allowed to interfere with the ordinary essentials. However, religion should restrain you from overindulgences of any kind, such as drinking,

[1] A detailed theoretical analysis of the relationship between Christianity and anti-Semitism has been contributed by Max Horkheimer and T. W. Adorno (53).

gambling, or anything to excess."

A high-scoring young woman, *F103*, says "My parents let us make our own choice; just so we go to church." There we see the lack of any interest in the content of religion; one goes to church because "it's the thing to do" and because one wants to please one's parents. A final example is afforded by an-other prejudiced young woman, *F104*, who remarks "I have never known any people who were not religious. I have known one fellow who was wavering, and he was a very morbid person." The idea here seems to be that one goes to church in order to express one's normality or at least to be classed with normal people.

These examples help us to understand why persons or groups who "take religion seriously" in a more internalized sense are likely to be opposed to ethnocentrism. What proved to be true in Germany, where "radical" Christian movements, such as the dialectical theology of Karl Barth, courageously opposed Nazism, seems to hold good beyond the theological "elite." The fact that a person really worries about the meaning of religion as such, when he lives in a general atmosphere of "neutralized" religion, is indicative of a nonconformist attitude. It may easily lead toward opposition to the "regular fellow," for whom it is as much "second nature" to attend church as it is not to admit Jews to his country club. Moreover, the stress on the specific content of religion, rather than on the division between those who belong and those who do not belong to the Christian faith, necessarily accentuates the motives of love and compassion buried under conventionalized religious patterns. The more "human" and concrete a person's relation to religion, the more human his approach to those who "do not belong" is likely to be: their sufferings remind the religious subjectivist of the idea of martyrdom inseparably bound up with his thinking about Christ.

To put it bluntly, the adherent of what Kierkegaard, a hundred years ago, called "official Christianity" is likely to be ethnocentric although the religious organizations with which he is affiliated may be officially opposed to it, whereas the "radical" Christian is prone to think and to act differently.

However, it should not be forgotten that extreme religious subjectivism, with its one-sided emphasis on religious experience set against the objectified Church, may also under certain conditions fall in line with the potentially fascist mentality. Religious subjectivism that dispenses with any binding principles provides the spiritual climate for other authoritative claims. Moreover, the sectarian spirit of people who carry this outlook to an extreme sometimes results in a certain affinity for the aggressive ingroup mood of movements generally condemned as "crack-pot," as well as for those underlying anarchical trends which characterize the potentially fascistic individual. This-aspect of religious subjectivism plays an important role in the mentality of fascist agitators who operate in a religious setting.[2]

Among those who *reject* religion, a number of significant differences may be noted. As our quantitative results have shown, no mechanical identification of the non- or anti-religious person with the "low scorer" can be made. There are, to be sure, "agnostic" or "atheistic" persons whose persuasions are part and parcel of a universally progressive attitude which holds for minority questions. The actual meaning of this "progressiveness," however, may vary widely. Whereas anti-religious progressives are definitely opposed to prejudice under present conditions, when it comes to the question of susceptibility to fascist propaganda, it makes all the difference whether they are "ticket thinkers" who subscribe wholesale to tolerance, atheism, and what not, or whether their attitude toward religion can be called an autonomous one based on thinking of their own.

Moreover, it may turn out to be an important criterion of susceptibility whether a person is opposed to religion as an ally of repression and reaction, in which case we should expect him to be relatively unprejudiced, or whether he adopts an attitude of cynical utilitarianism and rejects everything that is not "realistic" and tangible, in which case we should expect him to be prejudiced. There also exists a fascist type of irreligious person who has become completely cynical after having been disillusioned with regard to religion, and who talks about the laws of nature, survival of the fittest and the rights of the strong. The true candidates of neo-paganism of the fascist extreme are recruited from the ranks of these people. A good example is the high-scoring man *5064*, the Boy Scout leader, discussed in Chapter XVI. Asked about religion, he confesses to "worshiping nature." He exalts athletics and camp collectivity, probably on the basis of latent homosexuality. He is the clearest example we have of the syndrome involving pagan pantheism, belief in "power," the idea of collective leadership, and a generally ethnocentric and pseudo-conservative ideology.

It is against the background of these general observations on the structure of the relationship between religion and modern prejudice that the following, more specific observations may be understood.

C. Specific Issues

1. The Function Of Religion In High And Low Scorers

Evidence in support of our hypothesis concerning "neutralized" religion is offered by a trait which seems to occur rather frequently in our interview material. It is the disposition to view religion as a means instead of an end. Religion is accepted, not because of its objective truth, but on account of its value in realizing goals that might also be achieved by other means. This attitude falls in line with the general tendency toward subordination and renunciation of one's own judgment so characteristic of the mentality of those who follow fascist movements. Acceptance of an ideology is not based upon understanding of or belief in its content but rather upon what immediate use can be made of it, or upon arbitrary decisions. Here lies one of the roots of the stubborn, conscious, and manipulative irrationalism of the Nazis, as it was summed up by Hitler's saying: "*Man kann nur für eine Idee sterben, die*

[2]The interaction between revivalism, religious subjectivism, and fascist propaganda has been analyzed in detail by T. W. Adorno (3).

man nicht versteht." (One can die only for an idea which one does not understand.) This is by its intrinsic logic tantamount to contempt for truth *per se*. One selects a "*Weltanschauung*" after the pattern of choosing a particularly well advertised commodity, rather than for its real quality. This attitude, applied to religion, must necessarily produce ambivalence, for religion claims to express *absolute* truth. If it is accepted for some other reason alone, this claim is implicitly denied and thereby religion itself rejected, even while being accepted. Thus, rigid confirmation of religious values on account of their "usefulness" works against them by necessity.

Subordination of religion to extrinsic aims is common in both high and low scorers; by itself, it does not appear to differentiate between them. It seems, however, that prejudiced and unprejudiced subjects do differ with respect to the kinds of goals that are emphasized and the ways in which religion is utilized in their service.

High scorers, more often than low scorers, seem to make use of religious ideas in order to gain some immediate practical advantage or to aid in the manipulation of other people. An example of the way in which formalized religion is adhered to as a means for maintaining social status and social relationships is afforded by the highly prejudiced young woman, *F201*, who is very frankly interested in "a stable society" in which class lines are clearly drawn.

> "I was brought up in the Episcopalian Church through going to a school for girls. It's nice. My friends go. It's more of a philosophy (than Christian Science); it raises your standards. The philosophy of the Episcopalian Church follows the pattern of all Protestant churches. It takes in the upper classes and gives them a religion or makes it a little nearer."

Ethnocentric subjects frequently think of religion as a practical aid in the mental hygiene of the individual. The statement of *F109* is characteristic.

> "I don't understand religion. It's like a fairy tale to me. I don't know if I believe in God. There must be one but it is hard to believe it. Religion gives you something to hold on to, to base your life on."

If religion only serves the need for something "to hold on to," this need may also be served by anything which provides the individual with absolute authority, such as the fascist state. There is a strong probability that fascism played exactly the same role with German womanhood which was formally exercised by their belief in positive religion. Psychologically, fascist hierarchies may function largely as secularizations and substitutes of ecclesiastical ones. It is not accidental that Nazism arose in Southern Germany with its strong Roman-Catholic tradition.

M118, a moderately high scorer, shows clearly the element of arbitrariness in his religious belief, mixed up with pseudo-scientific statements which take the stamina out of this belief.

> "I am willing to believe in the existence of a God. Something I can't explain anyway. Was it Darwin who said the world started with whirling gas? Well, who created that? Where did the start of it come from? That of course has little to do with church ritual." (He has stated just before that the church "is pretty important.")

There is no logical interconnection between this reasoning and the subject's adherence to positive Christianity. Consequently the continuation of the passage reveals by its sophistry the aspect of insincerity in conventionalized religion which leads easily to malicious contempt for the values one officially subscribes to. *M118* goes on to say:

> "I believe in the power of prayer even if it's just in the satisfaction of the individual performing it. I don't know if there is any direct communication but it helps the individual, so I'm for it. It's also a chance for introspection; to stop and look at yourself."[3]

The approach to religion for extraneous reasons is probably not so much an expression of the subject's own wants and needs as an expression of his opinion that religion is good for others, helps to keep them content, in short, can be used for manipulative purposes. Recommending religion to others makes it easier for a person to be "in favor" of it without any actual identification with it. The cynicism of the central European administrators of the nineteenth century who taught that religion is a good medicine for the masses, seems to have been to a certain extent democratized. Numerous members of the masses themselves proclaim that religion is good for the masses, whereas they make for themselves, as individuals, a kind of mental reservation. There is a strong similarity between these appreciations of religion and a trait which played a large role in Nazi Germany. There, innumerable persons exempted themselves privately from the ruling ideology and talked about "they" when discussing the Party. The fascist-minded personality, it seems, can manage his life only by splitting his own ego into several agencies, some of which fall in line with the official doctrine, whilst others, heirs to the old superego, protect him from mental unbalance and allow him to maintain himself as an individual. Splits of this kind become manifest in the uncontrolled associations of uneducated and naïve persons, such as the rather medium-scoring man *M629*, who is serving a life sentence in San Quentin prison. He makes the extraordinary statement:

> "I believe, personally, I have a religion that hasn't been defined so far as I know in any books yet. I believe that religion has a value for people who believe in it. I think it's used as an escape mechanism by those who use it."

The illogical way in which this man has made a sedative of religion can be accounted for without much psychological interpretation by the fact that he spent nineteen months in condemned row.

More sophisticated persons sometimes have to deal with the same conflict. An example is the moderately high woman, *5059*, who rejects atheism because "an atheistic funeral was so cold." She simply denies any contradictions between sci-

[3]This attitude, that of a homespun psychologist as it were, can also be found in low scorers. The characteristic configuration to be found in high scorers, however, seems to be the unresolved contradiction between a critical attitude toward religion as an objectivity and a positive attitude toward it for purely subjective reasons. It is characteristic of the prejudiced mentality as a whole that he stops thinking at certain contradictions and leaves them as they are, which implies both intellectual defeatism and authoritarian submissiveness. This mechanism of arbitrarily giving up processes by command of the ego, as it were, is often misinterpreted as "stupidity."

ence and religion, calling the idea of a contradiction a "malevolent invention," thus apparently projecting her own uneasiness about this conflict upon those who speak it out. This is similar to the mentality of the Nazi who puts the blame for social defects on the critique of our social order.

It must now be pointed out that low scorers also often accept religion, not because of any intrinsic truth that it may hold for them, but because it may serve as a means for furthering human aims. An example of such practical religion is the following excerpt from the interview with a woman student of journalism, *F126*, who obtained extremely low scores on both the A–S and the E scales.

> Family were moderate church-goers. She rarely goes now. However, she has much respect for religion and seems to feel that it might be developed into something that would give people that faith and understanding for each other that is lacking. "I don't know what else could give people something to hold onto, some purpose in life. They seem to need something to believe in. Some of us seem to have a love for people without that, but not very many."

In one sense this way of looking at religion has something in common with the externalized attitudes described above. However, it is our impression that when the practical approach to religion appears in the thinking of the low scorer its content, or its context, can usually be distinguished from what is found in the thinking of the high scorer. Thus, although the young woman just quoted believes that religion is good for people, gives them "something to hold onto," she seems to mean that they need it at least for a humane and ideal purpose, that is, so that they may have more "understanding for each other," not simply in order to get along better or to function more efficiently. Low as well as high scorers are likely to consider that religion contributes to the mental hygiene of the individual; but whereas the high scorers characteristically indicate that it is good for other people because they are chronically weak, and possibly good for themselves in times of acute external stress ("fox-hole religion"), the low scorers are more likely to think of religion in internalized terms, as a means for reducing hatred, resolving inner conflicts, relieving anxiety, and the like. Practically never do we encounter a low scorer who conceives of religion primarily in terms of external practical utility — as an aid to success, to status and power, or to a sense of being in accord with conventional values.

2. Belief In God, Disbelief In Immortality

The neutralization of religion is accompanied by its dissection. Just as emphasis on the practical uses of religion tends to sever religious truth from religious authority, so the specific contents of religion are continually submitted to a process of selection and adaptation. The interview material suggests that the tendency to believe selectively in religion is a distinguishing feature of our prejudiced subjects. A fairly common phenomenon among them is belief in God accompanied by disbelief in immortality. Two examples follow. In the case of *5009*, a devout Baptist, the interviewer reports:

> sincerely feels deeply religious, believes in God, but has, as an educated man, occasional doubts concerning the life after death.

And in the case of *5002*:

> still is a "Christian," believes in God, would like to believe in life after death, but has doubts and thinks that a sincere religious revival or a new religious myth would be a good thing for the world.

Particularly common are statements to the effect that interviewees regard themselves as religious, as followers of the church, but disagree with "some of its teachings," which sometimes refers to miracles, sometimes to immortality. This outlook seems corroborative of an underlying pattern of considerable significance the elements of which have been established in our psychological analyses. The abstract idea of God is accepted as an expansion of the father idea, whereas general destructiveness makes itself felt in a reaction against the hope for the individual expressed by the dogma of immortality. Subjects with this point of view want a God to exist as the absolute authority to which they can bow, but they wish the individual to perish completely.

The concept of God underlying this way of thinking is that of the absolute essence of punitiveness. It is therefore not astonishing that religious leanings of this particular brand are frequent in the high scorers among our group of prison inmates (cf. Chapter XXI).

M627, who is serving a life sentence for rape, is "having trouble with religion" and does not believe that "there should be a set way of worship." But he believes, in spite of an undertone of religious rebelliousness,

> "that every man should have his own way of worship as long as he believes in a power greater than himself."

This power has the form of external authority, but remains completely abstract, nothing but the projective concept of power as such.

> "Well, I have heard so many fellows talk about the powers they believed in … and I tried to recognize the power in myself and just couldn't … read all kinds of religious books … but still kind of foggy."

The same line of thought is expressed by *M656A*, who is serving a term for forgery, "Robert" in Chapter XXI.

> "Well, I'm not a man to discuss religion a great deal, because I don't know a lot about it. I believe in the Bible, I believe there is someone a lot bigger and stronger than anyone on this earth … I don't attend church often but … try to live the right way."

For this man all specific religious content is negligible compared with the idea of power and the closely related rigid, moralistic stereotypes of good and bad:

> "The Catholic religion, for example, is just as good as the one I believe in. They all are patterned after the same type of living, right or wrong. I'm the type of person that doesn't believe in any particular denomination."

This "abstract authoritarianism" in religious matters easily turns into cynicism and overt contempt for what one professes to believe. *M664C*, asked about his religious views, answers:

> "Oh, I don't pay much attention … I believe in God and all that stuff but that is about all."

The choice of the word "stuff" refutes the statement in which it occurs. One effect of neutralization in such cases is that little is left of God but the object of swearing.

The nihilistic aspect of the configuration here under consideration is clearly indicated in the case of the murderer *M651*.

> "The part I like about it is the fact that it makes other people happy, though it doesn't concern me, and you see so much hypocrisy…"

Asked what is most important in religion, he says:

> "Belief, I think that belief is everything. That is the thing that holds you together."

When this is pursued by the interviewer who wants to find out something about the subject's own religious feelings, he answers:

> "… I believe when you die you are through… Life is short and eternity is forever. How could God send you to Hell for eternity, just on the basis of a short lifetime's record … it doesn't seem to be either merciful or just."

This material is indicative of relationships among abstract belief in power, rejection of the more concrete and personal aspects of religion, particularly the idea of an eternal life, and thinly veiled impulses toward violence. As this violence is taboo within the individual, particularly in situations such as a prison, it is projected upon a Deity. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that an entirely abstract idea of the almighty Deity, as it prevailed during the eighteenth century, could be reconciled much more easily with the "scientific spirit" than could the doctrine of an immortal soul, with its "magical" connotations. The process of demythification liquidates traces of animism earlier and more radically than it does the philosophical idea of the Absolute.

It may be noted, however, that just the opposite tendency can be observed among addicts of astrology and spiritualism. They often believe in the immortality of the soul, but strongly deny the existence of God, because of some kind of pantheism which ultimately results in exaltation of nature. Thus, case *M651*, not quite consistently with his previous confession of religiousness for extraneous reasons, comes out with the statement that he:

> believes in astrology because he doesn't believe in God.

There is reason to believe that the ultimate consequence of this attitude is sinister.

3. The Irreligious Low Scorer

The difference between irreligious and religious low scorers may correspond to a difference between rational and emotional determinants of freedom from prejudice. Subject *M203* is characteristic of the former. He may be regarded as a genuine liberal with a somewhat abstract, rationalistic mentality. His anti-religious attitude is based not so much on political persuasions as on a general positivistic outlook. He rejects religion for "logical reasons" but differentiates between "Christian ethics," which he regards as falling in line with his progressive views, and "organized religion." Originally, his anti-religious attitude may have been derived from anticonventional rebellion: "I went to church because I was expected to."

This rebellion is somewhat vaguely rationalized as being of a purely logical nature, perhaps on account of some unconscious guilt feelings. (He is unemotional emotional and apathetic in a way suggesting neurotic traits, possibly a disturbance in his relation to objects.) His rational critique of religion is formulated as follows:

> "But I was always pretty skeptical of it; I thought it kind of phony, narrow, bigotted and snobbish, hypocritical … unsemantic, you might say. It violates the whole Christian ethics."

Religion is here experienced both as a humanizing factor (Christian ethics) and as a repressing agency. There can be no doubt that this ambiguity has its basis in the double function of religion itself throughout history and it should, therefore, not be attributed solely to subjective factors.

The term hypocritical, used by *M203*, occurs very frequently in the interviews of low scorers, and sometimes in those of high scorers, usually with reference to the organization of the church in contrast to "genuine" religious values. This expresses the historical emancipation of subjective religious experience from institutionalized religion. The hatred of the hypocrite, however, may work in two ways, either as a force toward enlightenment or as a rationalization of cynicism and contempt for man. It seems that the use of the term hypocrite, like that of the term "snob" obtains more and more the connotation of envy and resentment. It denounces those who "regard themselves as something better" in order to glorify the average and to establish something plain and supposedly natural as the norm.[4] The struggle against the lie is often a mere pretext for coming into the open with destructive motives rationalized by the supposed "hypocrisy" and "uppishness" of others.

This phenomenon can be understood against the background of democratized culture. The critique of religion as "hypocritical," a critique which in Europe was either confined to small intellectual layers or countered by metaphysical philosophy, is in this country as widespread as Christian religion itself. Part of the ambivalence toward religion can be accounted for by the simultaneous ubiquity of both the Christian heritage and the "spirit of science." This double cultural ubiquity may favor an inconsistent attitude toward religion without necessarily involving the individual's psychological make-up.

The fact that America, for all its interest in science, is still close to a religious climate may help to explain a more general trait of irreligious low scorers: their actual or fictitious "negative" conversion. Thus, for example, *5028* and *5058*, like *M203*, report that they "broke away" from religion. In American culture one is rarely "born" as an irreligious person: one becomes irreligious through conflicts of childhood or adolescence, and these dynamics favor nonconformist sympathies which, in turn, go with opposition to prej-

[4] Cf. the section on F.D.R. in Chapter XVII. (Note by Adorno)

udice.

That a subject is consciously irreligious under the prevailing cultural conditions suggests the existence of a certain strength of the ego. An example is *M202*, our "conservative but not fascist" person (see pp. 649, 707), who scores extremely low on the E scale.

> As a child subject was very religious. He went to church with his family every Sunday and he would "fall on my knees in the street" to pray for something. At the age of 19 he changed. He became disgusted by the gossip in church. They would tell him things about someone that were "none of their damned business." Also these people would come and testify in church and do bad things again. He could not understand this inconsistency in their actions.

In this case the anti-religious attitude, as far as it goes, is overtly derived from resentment against outside interference with individual liberty and this, be it noted, is hardly less an element in American ideology than is Christianity itself. Here, as in many other respects, individual, psychological ambivalence toward religion on the part of the subject reflects objective antagonism in our culture.

M310, a genuine liberal, offers another example of the rebellious feature in irreligiousness. The subject, who rejects Christian tradition altogether, is the child of religious parents. He admits no open conflict with them, although relations with them were apparently very cool. In all probability he displaced his rebellion against the family upon their religion, thus avoiding the trouble of undergoing difficulties of a more personal kind. Often enough, strong ideological attachments or oppositions can be understood as such displacements of family conflicts, a device which allows the individual to express his hostilities on a level of rationalization and so dispense with the necessity of deep emotional entanglements — and which also allows the youngster to remain within the family shelter. It may also be in some respects more gratifying to attack the infinite father than to attack the finite one. It should be emphasized, however, that the term rationalization does not imply, here or elsewhere, the allegation *untrue*. Rationalization is a psychological aspect of thinking which by itself decides neither truth nor untruth. A decision on this matter depends entirely on the objective merits of the idea in which the process of rationalization terminates.

In contrast to those irreligious low scorers who underwent a "negative" conversion are *easy-going* low scorers such as *M711*. His negative attitude toward religion is marked not so much by opposition as by an indifference that involves the element of a somewhat humorous self-reflection. This subject professes rather frankly a certain confusion in religious matters but in a way which suggests that his apparent weakness is allowed to manifest itself on the basis of some considerable underlying strength of character. With people like him it is as if they could afford to profess intellectual inconsistencies because they find more security in their own character structure and in the depth of their experience than in clear-cut, well-organized, highly rationalized convictions. When asked about his attitude toward religion, he answers:

> "I don't really have any (laughs). More or less an absence of views. On organized religion I suppose I am confused (laughs) if anything."

He does not need to reject religion because he is not under its spell; there are no traces of ambivalence, and therefore no signs of hatred, but rather a kind of humane and detached understanding. The religious idea he accepts is tolerance, in a characteristically nonconventional way demonstrated by his choice of negative expressions rather than high sounding "ideals." "I think I became aware of intolerance." But he does not use this awareness for ego enhancement but is rather inclined to attribute his religious emancipation to external accidental factors:

> "If I'd stayed in Denver, I'd probably attended a church. I don't know. I don't think of it; I don't feel the need of organized religion particularly."

Interesting is this subject's discussion of prayer. He admits the psychological efficacy of prayer, but is aware that this "therapeutic" aspect of religion is incompatible with the idea of religion itself. He regards prayer as a kind of autosuggestion, which could "accomplish results" but "I certainly don't see there is anyone on the receiving end."

This subject makes the bizarre but strangely profound statement:

> "My religious curiosity did not last very long. Probably took up photography (laughs) about that time."

Only an interpretation making full use of psychoanalytic categories would do justice to this sentence. The link between his early interest in religion and the later one in photography is apparently curiosity, the desire to "see" things — a sublimation of voyeurism. It is as if photography in a somewhat infantile way would fulfill the wish for "imagery" which underlies certain trends in religion and is at the same time put under a heavy taboo by both Judaism and Protestantism. This may be corroborated by the fact that the subject during his religious phase was attracted by theosophy, by religious ways of thinking which promised to "lift the curtain."

It should be noted that this subject's attitude toward atheism is no more "radical" than is his opposition to religion.[5] He says:

> "Well, I don't think any more about atheists than anything else. As a matter of fact I talked with several people who profess to be atheists and they don't even seem to agree. Perhaps I am an atheist (laughs) ... you get into semantics, really. Professional atheists ... just impress me as doing it because it seems to be a stunt. Don Quixote battling windmills."

This may be indicative of the easy-going person's suspicion of the "ticket," his awareness of the tendency of any rigid formula to degenerate into a mere piece of propaganda.[6]

Incidentally, the subject senses clearly what was formulated one hundred years ago in Baudelaire's Diary: that atheism becomes obsolescent in a world the objective spirit of which is essentially areligious. The meaning of atheism un-

[5] The "easy-going" low scorer is rarely radical in any respect. This, however, does not make him a middle-of-the-roader. He is persistently aware of the nonidentity between concept and reality. He is fundamentally nontotalitarian. This is behind his specific idea of tolerance.

[6] More material on this subject is presented in Chapter XIX. (Note by Adorno)

dergoes historical changes. What was one of the decisive impulses of the eighteenth century Enlightenment may function today as a manifestation of provincial sectarianism or even as a paranoid system. Half-mad Nazis such as Mathilde Ludendorff fought, besides the Jews and the Free Masons, the Roman-Catholics as an *ultra-montan* conspiracy directed against Germany, transforming the tradition of Bismarck's *Kulturkampf* into a pattern of persecution mania.

4. Religious Low Scorers

A clear-cut example of a religious low scorer is the somewhat sketchy interview of *F132*, a young woman brought up in India where her parents are missionaries. Her combining positive Christianity with an outspoken concrete idea of tolerance ("equality for everyone") is derived from "life experience with the Indians." She is passionate in matters of racial understanding. However, her church affiliations make it impossible for her to draw the political consequences from her tolerance idea:

> "I don't like Ghandi. I don't like radical people. He is a radical. He has done much to upset and disunite the country."

Her association with the church involves an element of that religious conventionalism which is usually associated with ethnocentrism. In spite of her closeness to the church and to theological doctrine, her religious outlook has a practical coloring.

> "It (religion) means a great deal. It makes a person happier — more satisfied. Gives them peace of mind. You know where you stand and have something to work for — and example to follow. Hope for an afterlife. Yes, I believe in immortality."[7]

This girl is probably atypical in many ways because of her colonial upbringing as well as because of the mixture of "official" religiosity and more spontaneous religious humanism. Her particular attitude is probably due, on the surface level at least, to her insight into ingroup-outgroup problems. However, this example seems to offer some support for the hypothesis that only fully conscious, very articulate, unconventional Christians are likely to be free of ethnocentrism. At any rate, the rareness of religious low scorers in our sample is significant. As indicated above, the composition of the sample itself may be responsible for this. However, this rarity suggests something more fundamental. The tendency of our society to become split into "progressive" and "*status quo*" camps may be accompanied by a tendency of all persons who cling to religion, as a part of the *status quo*, also to assume other features of the *status quo* ideology which are associated with the ethnocentric outlook. Whether this is true or whether religion can produce effective trends in opposition to prejudice, could be elucidated only after much extensive research.

[7] It would be a tempting task to analyze the change of meaning undergone by the word "belief." It illustrates most clearly religious neutralization. Formerly the idea of belief was emphatically related to the religious dogma. Today it is applied to practically everything which a subject feels the right to have as his own, as his "opinion" (for everybody is entitled to have opinion) without subjecting it to any criteria of objective truth. The secularization of "believing" is accompanied by arbitrariness of that which one believes: it is molded after the preferences for one or the other commodity and has little relation to the idea of truth. ("I don't believe in parking," said a conventional high-scoring girl in her interview.) This use of belief is almost an equivalent of the hackneyed, "I like it," which is about to lose any meaning. (Cf. the statement of Mack, given in Chapter II, "I like the history and sayings of Christ.")