

and our forest trees, let us not, pray, turn out those "contributions" which have no purpose but to get ourselves promoted. Here I trust the publishers will aid us by declining to print what we should not have written. If the great work is in us, it will be done for love. If it is not there, let us live in an obscurity which will at least be harmless.

I am going to say one thing more, which is specific to our times. All of us are justly anxious for the state of the world, which now moves, seemingly helpless, from crisis to crisis while disaster lurks around the corner. The historian will take what comfort he can, remembering that the barbarians have been always with us, and that the assault on liberty has been perennial. But he is more vulnerable than most, for his heart is more involved. His life is committed to inherited values now gravely threatened. He has formed a professional attachment for monuments and archives which he knows are too often the first victims of war. The center of his world is apt to be Oxford or Paris, and he knows that next time it may be this place, his own private Jerusalem, which is destroyed.

Yet he has work to do, and it is important work. To do it he must discover, somehow, a Stoic peace of mind. Here, by way of suggesting that our plight is not unprecedented, I am going to close by quoting—with the change of a single word—part of a message by Governor DeWitt Clinton to the New York legislators in 1814. They were asked to vote money for the ordering of their archives and the copying of relevant documents abroad. Meanwhile their state was about to be invaded by British troops.

Clinton wrote, "Genuine greatness never appears in a more resplendent light, or in a more sublime attitude, than in that buoyancy of character which rises superior to danger and difficulty; in that magnanimity of soul which cultivates the arts and sciences amidst the danger of war; and in that comprehension of mind which cherishes all the cardinal interests of a country, without being distracted or diverted by the most appalling considerations."

As Clinton then, so we now, must embody in our work an act of faith. Faith in these labors, that they will be relevant to our children. Faith in ourselves, that we shall somehow guide the present. Faith in our inherited ideals, that they will possess the future. For by the light of faith we shall find courage in our hearts now. And in the strength of inward peace we shall yet, as I trust, break through the way to some outward and material peace for our descendants.

Books

DISCOURSES ON RELIGION. By *Gustav E. Mueller.* *Bookman Associates, New York, 1951.*

The Significance of Religion in Human Experience

By J. CLAYTON FEAVER

Discourses on Religion is made up ostensibly of five monologues, but it soon becomes apparent that it is basically five dialogues, each speaker in dialogue with the one before him or with the reader. In its monologue form, the speaker voices his response to and understanding—sometimes misunderstanding—of religion. In its dialogue form, each succeeding speaker examines and makes reply to the questions, doubts, and objectives of the preceding speaker. Also each speaker seems to be conversing with the reader. As I read these discourses, I found myself engaged in conversation with the speaker. Sometimes the conversation took the form of a sharp debate: I disagreed with the speaker or pleaded for clarification. At other times I agreed with his point of view, or was amused with his illustration, or was thrilled with his insight. Whatever the turn of my response, however, I was stimulated to carry on a conversation, as it were, with each of the five participants.

Probably the chief design of the *Discourses* is to stimulate interest and thought in the field of religion. The book is not primarily a source reference, though it speaks wide study and knowledge of religion. It is not a history of religion or an analysis or defense of religious practices and ideas. Rather I believe it might best be described as a poet's effort to make articulate deep insight into the meaning and significance of religion in human experience. To be sure, Dr. Mueller has injected a good

bit of constructive criticism into his *Discourses*; but his main accomplishment, achieved with enthusiasm and good humor, lies in his ability to prompt in the reader both a feeling for religious truth and a decision to investigate its importance to human life and achievement. I should judge that the book will appeal both to those with extensive training in religion and to laymen. Those with special training will find a certain fascination in the wide variety of religious experience which the *Discourses* suggest, and the layman will be stimulated to re-think his own religious presuppositions and to open his mind to wider interpretations.

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The Poet's Birthday . . .

in 1592. Sonnet LX was likely written c. 1592–1593. If he were forty years old then, Spenser was born in 1552 or 1553.

Chaucer had been dead for a hundred and fifty years, and the state of English poetry was so deplorable that some questioned whether great poetry could be written in the English language. *The Shepherdes Calendar*, in 1579, helped to put an end to such conjecture. In an epistle prefixed to the twelve pastorals which make up *The Calendar*, Spenser is called "the new poet," a title which has followed him down the centuries because of its appropriateness; for, Spenser, from his first verses to his last, was an experimental poet. He never ceased to innovate. His experiments in language, rhythmic patterns, and subject matter not only re-invigorated English poetry but changed its trend completely. Is it so surprising, then, that he should have believed that he could move the hearts of his countrymen to greatness in living through the beauty of poetry?

Of Chaucer, Spenser said,

well of English undefyled,

On Fames eternall beadroll worthie to be fyled.

What better could we say of Spenser on his four-hundredth anniversary?

About the Author



Dr. Feaver joined the faculty in 1951 as Kingfisher College Associate Professor of the Philosophy of Ethics and Religion, the first endowed professorship in the University. He had previously held the pastorate of the Bridgeport Memorial Church, Bridgeport, Connecticut, and had taught at Berea College. Dr. Mueller is a poet and philosopher with many publications to his credit both in the United States and Europe.