

A STORY: The man who released the PENTAGON PAPERS
A SURVEY: "What I Believe"

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"John McNaughton" is the signature on a copy of "WHAT I BELIEVE: Annual Report: COMMUNITY CHURCH, 1955," a data-gathering instrument I mailed to my people (& some others, Jn. being one) in preparation for the church's annual meeting....A few years earlier, I met Jn. at Horsethief Lake (S.D.), where our families were camping. When we were fishing, I commented that his aggressiveness (eg, in attacking a line-snarl) was probably of a piece with how (I surmised) he did law, & he laughed "Yes!" In the U.S. Department of Justice, he was a total-disclosure, the-whole-truth lawyer--so I wasn't surprised that he released the Pentagon Papers to an understudy (Dan. Ellsberg) for publication....Not long thereafter he became a Harvard Law School professor, & Loree & I visited him in his Cambridge home. Sadly, not long after that, he & his family (except Alex) died in a private-plane crash.

That's the skeleton of the **story**. Now here's the whole **survey**, together with his responses:

If you were a Communist, I would not be asking you what your convictions are: I could write them all down and hand them to you, rubber-stamp....BUT if you are a Christian, you are conscious of your responsibility to THINK for yourself, rising above mere prejudice (unexamined but emotionally charged ideas) and opinion (unexamined but indifferently held ideas) to the level of conviction (examined, tested, positively-held and lived-by ideas and ideals). AND you will want to share your convictions....This annual "theological examination" helps you to clarify your convictions and guides your pastor in his preaching and teaching ministry to you. UTTER HONESTY is absolutely needed.

INSTRUCTIONS*

1 Do not sign your name unless you wish to, but BRING the result to church and put it on the plate--or mail it to the church.

2 In the space in front of each statement, put the letter(s) which express your present conviction, as follows: **BS** = believe strongly

B = believe (but not strongly)

U = undecided (can't make up my mind)

D = doubt (but am not sure I'm against)

BW = believe wrong

The survey was on 1 page, with no room for writing. But Jn. wrote small, & his words here are in "'". His personality was aggressive-decisive, but he was somewhat self-critical about it: this in a margin: "Please note that I have shown little 'doubt' in the answers. In fact, I am very 'doubtful'."....I've put his letter-responses after each statement....Here are the statements, in the original order:

+ + +

1 The Republicans are more Christian than the Democrats. BW "This does not mean I believe the converse to be true!"

2 By nature people are bad, and only the grace of God can make them good. BW

3 Jesus Christ is Lord--Lord of the Church and my Lord. ? "Don't know your meanings." Hear him. "Jesus is Lord" was the earliest Christian confession & remains the confessional heart of the Faith, yet this brilliant American can't make sense of it. His contact with the Christian Faith had never been more than glancing, including some childhood experience in a Unitarian Sunday school (where doubtless he wasn't taught "Jesus is Lord"). To surrender "Lord" because the likes of him don't understand it would be to sell the store. Rather the Christian response must be (1) to tell the Story & (2) invite the listener into the community of the Story, where it's words will gradually make sense, indeed the best sense in the world. (Class is a factor? He grew up upper-class.)

4 All religions agree on belief in God and in reciprocity (the Golden Rule). BW

5 To be a Christian, one must be certain about everything. BW

6 It is possible to combine the central values of all the forms of Christianity into one Church. BW

7 In Christ the Old Testament Law has been done away. BW

8 God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit--one God. ? "Don't know your meanings." Again the suppressors/supporters division (which I expounded in #2947

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* Before you read Jn.'s responses, please follow Instruction 2....Possibly useful in some group you're in (your revision)?

vis-a-vis our religion's pronouns for God). My opportunities for Christian witness to Jn. were few. To bridge, I used both common (secular) speech & special (Christian ["Lord," "Father/Son/Holy Spirit," "he"]) speech, as I always do with outsiders to the Faith. (I am an apologist, not an apologizer.) He was interested enough to fill in the survey. (Maybe it was more something I did than what I said: When I introduced myself, he immediately associated my name with an article he'd read in his father's newspaper & in TIME--something creative I'd done for the poor.) As you read his responses, do you agree that he might have opened himself wider to the gospel if he hadn't soon died? My first impression of him was that he was in Schleiermacher's category of "cultural despisers" of Christianity; but his survey responses seem to show some movement (or is that wishful thinking?).

9 Moral values are relative to human happiness and human comfort; so that, if a thing involves suffering, it must necessarily be evil. BW "First half YES; second half NO."

10 Competition, not cooperation, is the main human drive, and "the survival of the fittest" is the fundamental principle of progress. BW "What is 'progress'?"

11 It is wrong to ask questions about religion. BW

12 Science is somewhat a friend, but mainly an enemy, of religion. BW

13 The Bible does not have many mistakes in it, but we do disservice to the truth if we insist that it has none at all. ? "Depends on meaning attributed to its passages."

14 In an orderly universe, there is no room for either freedom or miracle. BW Jn. put "?" after each of these words: "orderly," "freedom," "miracle." The three words are interdefining within a paradigm, a way of seeing/understanding the world. I think that had he lived, I'd've tried to come in on his paradigm, which I could see/understand/critique-in-Scripture-light if he were to tell me what order, freedom, & miracle mean to him. I would try to get him to read C.S.Lewis, a master Christian apologist on these themes.

15 In our culture, the more knowledge a person has about the world the less apt is he to believe in God and the Church. B "Up to a point. Then, as in the supposed conflict between science and religion, more knowledge breeds renewed belief in some Greatness." Excellent penmanship, so no doubt Jn. capitalized "Greatness," for him a verbal signal of transcendence. Another wide door of entrance for the gospel! "What is great?" is a Rorschach on the soul, one's deepest values, commitments, convictions.

16 Ours is a Christian civilization. BW

17 There are too many persons in the universe for God to be interested in each individually. BS "But not because there are too many; rather because He is not a 'personal' God." QUESTION: Could God be personal without being personally interested in each one of us? Jn.'s not "personal" God is nevertheless "He."

18 The churches will never get together in faith, order, life, and work. BS

19 Knowledge of the natural world gained through scientific discipline is THE essential of the good life. BW See also 27.

20 Christianity is the only religion that has a sacred scripture. BW "Not because others have one, but because we do not have one."

21 "I believe in...the resurrection." (from the Apostles' Creed) ? "Meaning?"

21 "I believe in...the Holy Catholic Church." (from the Apostles' Creed) BW

22 I am certain to glorify God more by success in this world than by failure. B But Jn. has "?" after "glorify God," "success," "failure." Thoughtful & (?) open.

23 Christian missions provide the world's best hope for peace. BW

24 Prayer changes the one who prays, those for whom he prays, and the circumstances regarding which he prays. B "'Prayer' or similar reflective, contrite accounting affects others and circumstances by way of its effect on the one praying."

25 The next world will be a continuation of this one, open to possibilities of growth and deterioration: an unbroken line of development spans the worlds. BW

26 I need to study more, privately and in groups, to understand my faith better. B Another hopeful sign in Jn.

27 The only trustworthy guide to knowledge is reason working on facts. BW So Jn. is at least a slightly post-Enlightenment man.

11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100 101 102 103 104 105 106 107 108 109 110 111 112 113 114 115 116 117 118 119 120 121 122 123 124 125 126 127 128 129 130 131 132 133 134 135 136 137 138 139 140 141 142 143 144 145 146 147 148 149 150 151 152 153 154 155 156 157 158 159 160 161 162 163 164 165 166 167 168 169 170 171 172 173 174 175 176 177 178 179 180 181 182 183 184 185 186 187 188 189 190 191 192 193 194 195 196 197 198 199 200 201 202 203 204 205 206 207 208 209 210 211 212 213 214 215 216 217 218 219 220 221 222 223 224 225 226 227 228 229 230 231 232 233 234 235 236 237 238 239 240 241 242 243 244 245 246 247 248 249 250 251 252 253 254 255 256 257 258 259 260 261 262 263 264 265 266 267 268 269 270 271 272 273 274 275 276 277 278 279 280 281 282 283 284 285 286 287 288 289 290 291 292 293 294 295 296 297 298 299 300 301 302 303 304 305 306 307 308 309 310 311 312 313 314 315 316 317 318 319 320 321 322 323 324 325 326 327 328 329 330 331 332 333 334 335 336 337 338 339 340 341 342 343 344 345 346 347 348 349 350 351 352 353 354 355 356 357 358 359 360 361 362 363 364 365 366 367 368 369 370 371 372 373 374 375 376 377 378 379 380 381 382 383 384 385 386 387 388 389 390 391 392 393 394 395 396 397 398 399 400 401 402 403 404 405 406 407 408 409 410 411 412 413 414 415 416 417 418 419 420 421 422 423 424 425 426 427 428 429 430 431 432 433 434 435 436 437 438 439 440 441 442 443 444 445 446 447 448 449 450 451 452 453 454 455 456 457 458 459 460 461 462 463 464 465 466 467 468 469 470 471 472 473 474 475 476 477 478 479 480 481 482 483 484 485 486 487 488 489 490 491 492 493 494 495 496 497 498 499 500 501 502 503 504 505 506 507 508 509 510 511 512 513 514 515 516 517 518 519 520 521 522 523 524 525 526 527 528 529 530 531 532 533 534 535 536 537 538 539 540 541 542 543 544 545 546 547 548 549 550 551 552 553 554 555 556 557 558 559 560 561 562 563 564 565 566 567 568 569 570 571 572 573 574 575 576 577 578 579 580 581 582 583 584 585 586 587 588 589 590 591 592 593 594 595 596 597 598 599 600 601 602 603 604 605 606 607 608 609 610 611 612 613 614 615 616 617 618 619 620 621 622 623 624 625 626 627 628 629 630 631 632 633 634 635 636 637 638 639 640 641 642 643 644 645 646 647 648 649 650 651 652 653 654 655 656 657 658 659 660 661 662 663 664 665 666 667 668 669 670 671 672 673 674 675 676 677 678 679 680 681 682 683 684 685 686 687 688 689 690 691 692 693 694 695 696 697 698 699 700 701 702 703 704 705 706 707 708 709 710 711 712 713 714 715 716 717 718 719 720 721 722 723 724 725 726 727 728 729 730 731 732 733 734 735 736 737 738 739 740 741 742 743 744 745 746 747 748 749 750 751 752 753 754 755 756 757 758 759 760 761 762 763 764 765 766 767 768 769 770 771 772 773 774 775 776 777 778 779 780 781 782 783 784 785 786 787 788 789 790 791 792 793 794 795 796 797 798 799 800 801 802 803 804 805 806 807 808 809 810 811 812 813 814 815 816 817 818 819 820 821 822 823 824 825 826 827 828 829 830 831 832 833 834 835 836 837 838 839 840 841 842 843 844 845 846 847 848 849 850 851 852 853 854 855 856 857 858 859 860 861 862 863 864 865 866 867 868 869 870 871 872 873 874 875 876 877 878 879 880 881 882 883 884 885 886 887 888 889 890 891 892 893 894 895 896 897 898 899 900 901 902 903 904 905 906 907 908 909 910 911 912 913 914 915 916 917 918 919 920 921 922 923 924 925 926 927 928 929 930 931 932 933 934 935 936 937 938 939 940 941 942 943 944 945 946 947 948 949 950 951 952 953 954 955 956 957 958 959 960 961 962 963 964 965 966 967 968 969 970 971 972 973 974 975 976 977 978 979 980 981 982 983 984 985 986 987 988 989 990 991 992 993 994 995 996 997 998 999 1000 1001 1002 1003 1004 1005 1006 1007 1008 1009 1010 1011 1012 1013 1014 1015 1016 1017 1018 1019 1020 1021 1022 1023 1024 1025 1026 1027 1028 1029 1030 1031 1032 1033 1034 1035 1036 1037 1038 1039 1040 1041 1042 1043 1044 10

Dear Sir,
 I am very much interested in your work.
 Please send me your address.
 Yours truly,
 J. M. C.

Lucius Elliott

- BW*** The Republicans are more Christian than the Democrats. *I believe the converse to be true!*
- BW** By nature people are bad, and only the grace of God can make them good.
- ?** Jesus Christ is Lord--Lord of the Church and my Lord. *(Don't know your meanings.)*
- BW** All religions agree on belief in God and in reciprocity (the Golden Rule). *"You Guide"*
- BW** To be a Christian, one must be certain about everything.
- BW** It is possible to combine the central values of all the forms of Christianity into one Church.
- BW** In Christ the Old Testament Law has been done away.
- ?** God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit--one God. *(Don't know your meanings.)*
- BW*** Moral values are relative to human happiness and human comfort; so that, if a thing involves suffering, it must necessarily be evil. ** First half YES; Second half NO.*
- BW** Competition, not co-operation, is the main human drive, and "the survival of the fittest" is the fundamental principle of progress. *(What is "progress"?)*
- BW** It is wrong to ask questions about religion.
- BW** Science is somewhat a friend, but mainly an enemy, of religion.
- ?** The Bible does not have many mistakes in it, but we do disservice to the truth if we insist that it has none at all. *(Depends on meaning attributed to its passages)*
- BW** In an orderly universe, there is no room for either (freedom?) or (miracle?).
- B*** In our culture, the more knowledge a person has about the world the less apt is he to believe in God and the Church. ** up to a point. Then, as in the supposed conflict between science and religion, more knowledge breeds more knowledge.*
- BW** Ours is a Christian civilization. *(Science and religion, more knowledge breeds more knowledge.)*
- BS*** There are too many persons in the universe for God to be interested in each individually. ** But not because there are too many; rather because He is not a "personal" God.*
- BS** The churches will never get together in faith, order, life, and work.
- BW** Knowledge of the natural world gained through scientific discipline is THE essential of the good life.
- BW*** Christianity is the only religion that has a sacred scripture. ** Not because others also have one, but because we do not.*
- ?** "I believe in ... the resurrection." (from the Apostles' Creed) *meaning? same one.*
- BW** "I believe in ... the Holy Catholic Church." (from the Apostles' Creed)
- B** I am certain to glorify God more by success in this world than by failure.
- BW** Christian missions provide the world's best hope for peace.
- B*** Prayer changes the one who prays, those for whom he prays, and the circumstances regarding which he prays. ** Prayer is similar reflection; contacts a spiritual reality; affects other people; and sometimes even the one praying.*
- BW** The next world will be a continuation of this one, open to possibilities of growth and deterioration: an unbroken line of development spans the worlds.
- B** I need to study more, privately and in groups, to understand my faith better.
- BW** The only trustworthy guide to knowledge is reason working on facts.

Your co=operation is greatly appreciated. BRING or MAIL in time for the 16th!