

## NON-VIOLENT RESISTANCE

WHICH are the *important* books? A reviewer has his opinions, of course, but they can hardly be rigidly fixed opinions. Then there is his estimate of what his readers think about this question. What do they want to read? Is there a distinction between what they want to read and what they ought to read? Is it any of the reviewer's business to make this distinction? This last problem is no doubt properly solved when the reviewer gets to work on a book that has the power to claim his attention because of its engrossing content. Nevertheless, these questions are bound to pass through the reviewer's mind and exert an influence upon what he does.

A book especially likely to provoke such thoughts is the second revised edition of Richard B. Gregg's *The Power of Nonviolence*, with a new Foreword by Martin Luther King, Jr., issued late last year by Fellowship Publications (\$2.50). This book has deservedly been a pacifist classic since it first appeared in 1935. The author was led to write it after reading an article on Gandhi which interested him so much that he eventually went to India, where he stayed for four years, seven months of which he spent at Gandhi's ashram, in close contact with the Indian leader. To his study of the power and methods of nonviolence, Gregg brought a background of experience in the practice of corporation law and in his work as a consultant and adviser in industrial relations. He was concerned with the problems of a railway strike in Chicago in 1925 when he first learned of Gandhi's efforts to replace violence with other means of resolving human conflicts.

Since the appearance of the first edition of *The Power of Nonviolence*, the entire world has become aware of at least the possibility of this alternative to war. The most dramatic instance of the use of nonviolence in the United States has been the Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott, begun on Dec. 1, 1955, when a Negro seamstress, Mrs. Rosa Parks, sat down in a Montgomery bus in the section

reserved for whites. This simple action touched off a great movement which finally ended segregation in the bus transport of Montgomery. At the present time, in many cities of the South, Negro students are conducting a nonviolent campaign for unsegregated service to Negroes at lunch counters. The students take seats at the counter intended for "whites only" and wait to be served. When they are not served, the counter does no business at all, and the students just "sit."

The "sit-in" movement, according to reports, has been entirely planned and executed by the students themselves, "without outside advice or even contact between schools except by way of press and radio news." A *New Republic* (April 25) article on the "Sit-Ins" relates:

When it came time to decide this year how to express their protest, there was no argument among Southern students. Every Negro old enough to have heard about the Montgomery boycott in 1956 accepts non-violence as a part of his way of life. "It works," they tell you over and over. (No one seems to remember that it was not the boycott but a court order that finally brought victory there.) And they remind you proudly that Montgomery proved a Negro community could stand united for 381 days, resisting every provocation to violence and never committing a retaliatory act. That example and Martin Luther King who led it are the educated young Negro's touchstone for the good, the true and the beautiful.

It is true that the final settlement of the issue came with the Supreme Court ruling which upheld the Federal Court decision that racial segregation in the busses was unconstitutional, but it seems more important to acknowledge that the Montgomery busses would still be barring Negroes from the "white" seats, if Montgomery Negroes had not used the boycott to secure their constitutional rights. There was an outbreak of violence by the whites after the legal decision by the Courts, but this soon died down.

While American Negroes are well on the way to establishing a tradition of nonviolent action in the United States, it has been known and practiced much longer in Asia, by the people of India in their struggle against British rule, and to some extent in Africa, where Gandhi began (in South Africa) his first "experiments with truth." Mr. Gregg gives a number of illustrations of the use of nonviolence by European peoples. In Italy today, Danilo Dolci, called "Italy's Gandhi," is training wretchedly poor and outcast Italians to practice nonviolence as their means to social justice. (See *Report from Palermo* by Dolci, just published by Orion Press.) A British military commentator, Stephen King-Hall, in *Defense in the Nuclear Age* (Fellowship Publications, Nyack, N.Y.), proposes that Britain adopt a policy of unilateral disarmament and train her people for nonviolent resistance against attack, as the only sensible course for the British Isles.

In general, then, it may be said that the idea of nonviolence is slowly taking hold in the modern world, and that the interest in its potentialities for minority and even national defense has already assumed the proportions of a "movement." A growing number of people regard nonviolence as a great revolutionary and transforming conception of the age.

What about the general reader, in relation to a book such as Richard Gregg's *The Power of Nonviolence*? While many people have a natural interest in pioneering endeavors of this sort, others, perhaps most, feel a certain reluctance toward investigating the subject. What is the foundation of this reluctance? Setting aside all simplified explanations, such as saying that those who are disinclined to read such a book are selfishly indifferent to the world's problems and the sufferings of others, there is the not unnatural point of view that man ought to be able to live a good and constructive life without becoming involved in "movements" or "crusades." Movements are famous for having "lunatic fringes" and often seem to distort the lives of their most ardent followers. A man may feel that he has his own important work to do and be unwilling to change the sharp focus of his interests to the extent that concern with nonviolence would seem to

involve. Suppose he picks up the Gregg book and opens it to the page which quotes from Negley Farson's 1930 report to the *Chicago Daily News* on the lathi charges—police actions commanded by the English against Indian National Congress volunteers—Hindus and Sikhs—who were marching in nonviolent protest to British rule. How will he react to this?

Darkfaced Mahratti policemen in their yellow turbans marched along in column led by English serjeants across the field toward the waiting crowd. As they neared it the police went faster and faster. The Hindus, who may be willing to die but dread physical pain, watched them approach with frightened eyes. Then the police broke into a charge.

Many Hindus at once ran, fleeing down the streets—but most stood stock still.

Crash! Whack! Whack! Whack! At last the crowd broke. Only the orange-clad women were left standing beside the prostrate figures of crumpled men. . . .

Then came a band of fifty Sikhs—and a heroic scene. The Sikhs, as you know, are a fierce fighting brotherhood. As soon as he can raise one every man wears a beard. . . . These Sikhs were Akalis of a fanatic religious sect. They wore the kirpan, or sacred sword. With them were fifteen of their young girls or women. . . .

Coming from all districts as representatives of the fighting Punjab, these Sikhs swore they would not draw their kirpans to defend themselves, but they would not leave the field. They did not.

"Never, never, never," they cried, to the terrific delight of their Hindu brothers, in Swaraj. "We will never retreat. We will die, we will!" The police hesitated before hitting the Sikhs. They asked their women would they not please, please leave the field.

"No!" said the women, "we will die with our men."

Mounted Indian policemen who had been galloping across the field, whacking heads indiscriminately, came to a stymie when they faced the little cluster of blue Akali turbans on the slender Sikh men.

"The Sikhs are brave men—how can we hit them?" It was not fear, but respect.

But the police, determined to try to clear the field, at last rushed around the Sikh women and began to hit the men. I stood within five feet of a

Sikh leader as he took the lathi blows. He was a short, heavily muscled man.

The blows came—he stood straight. His turban was knocked off. The long black hair was bared with the round topknot. He closed his eyes as the blows fell—until at last he swayed and fell to the ground.

No other Sikhs tried to shield him, but now, shouting their defiance, they wiped away the blood streaming from his mouth. Hysterical Hindus rushed to him, bearing cakes of ice to rub the contusions over his eyes. The Sikh gave me a smile—and stood for more.

And then the police threw up their hands. "You can't go on hitting a blighter when he stands up to you like that."

Mr. Gregg comments:

In 1947, after twenty-six years of nonviolent struggle under Gandhi's leadership, India won her political freedom from Britain. Not a single Briton, so far as I know, was killed by Indians as part of this struggle. It was the Indians who voluntarily endured the necessary deaths and suffering. This was the first time in the history of the world that a great empire has been persuaded by nonviolent means to grant freedom to one of its subject countries. Of course, as in all great and complex events, there were many reasons for the result, but the nonviolent method is what eventually unified all Indians and gave them the necessary self-respect, self-reliance, courage and persistence, and also resulted in mutual respect and good feeling between Great Britain and India at the end.

The typical American reader, coming across this passage, is likely to be puzzled and a little astonished. His recollections of revolutionary valor and the ordeal at Valley Forge will make him say, "What a strange way to win your freedom!" And then he may add that nonviolence is probably "all right" if you can't get the necessary weapons to fight a "regular" war.

Of course, if he had a dark skin and lived in South Africa, or even in Alabama, he might look at the matter differently. As it is, he finds it difficult to imagine himself in a fix where nonviolence seems indicated. But perhaps he ought to read the book carefully, anyhow. Not just American readers, but readers everywhere, may need to consider seriously, as Margaret Mead says, "how the present situation of

mankind differs from the past, and set to work creating the necessary intellectual and moral climate for the solution of the problems that face us."

It may be admitted that standing up to lathi charges is not a very "natural" thing to contemplate doing. No one would want to build his life around such a project. What is perhaps hard for us to understand, however, is that the world we live in, as it has become, or as we have made it, is itself no longer a very natural sort of world. For evidence of this, if we need evidence, we take the closing words of John Scott's new book, *Democracy Is Not Enough*. Mr. Scott is not some disaffected "radical," but assistant to the publisher of *Time* magazine. (In some ways his book recalls the earlier work of another *Time* employee, *Our Waist-High Culture*, by Thomas Griffiths.) Mr. Scott writes:

We are overfed, overindulged egocentrics. We are pampered, petulant, and selfish individualists, suspended in a state Reinhold Niebuhr calls "sophisticated vulgarity." We are unwilling to implement the ritual we mouth on Sundays and share with our neighbors. We have contrived a series of deals with pseudo-truth which has left us bloated with food and drink but ideologically naked.

For too many of us the brotherhood of man has degenerated into a glorification of the rugged individual and his ability to acquire and keep more material goods than the neighbor he does not love.

The implicit moral of this passage is that people to whom this description applies can hardly expect to enjoy the respect of the rest of the world nor to escape some measure of violent response. We could put together a lot more quotations from careful observers to show the extent of the mess the world is in, but perhaps this can be taken for granted. What is at issue, now, is the kind of reading and thinking that we need to do, in connection with the human longing for a natural life.

The difficulty is that when conditions reach a point where an ordinary sort of recovery seems impossible, the urgent need for some special form of action begins to be apparent. Some men see this need sooner than others. Take Gandhi, for example. He found the mistreatment of the Indians in South Africa intolerable and he felt obliged to do something

about it himself. Quite possibly, what he did marked a great change in the historical affairs of men. But quite certainly, also, while there were many men who joined with Gandhi and helped him, others felt that what he was attempting would be a serious intrusion on their private lives, were they to take part. How do you decide these things? Do you wait until you feel a personal necessity to "do something," or do you try in some way or other to participate in the great historical currents of the times? This is a hard question.

At root it is a question of what *is* a natural life. Probably many people will think of Henry David Thoreau and his retreat at Walden Pond as at least one reference-point for an account of the natural. But then you recall that Thoreau wrote an essay on Civil Disobedience and that Gandhi obtained considerable inspiration from the lonely New England philosopher. It is likely that the definition of the natural, if it is to have any accuracy at all, will have to be a very general formula, leaving room for extreme variation among individuals. Does Schweitzer live a "natural" life? What shall we reply to the Communist poet who asked,

... when at last it comes to pass  
That man can help his fellow man,  
Do not judge us  
Too harshly.

This is his confession of longing for the natural.

Somewhere, for every man, there is a "natural" balance between what he needs to do as his own work and what he needs to do as a citizen of the world, a man of the community. This balance is no doubt different for each one, and no man, surely, should allow his inner life to be swallowed up in a historical movement. This sort of sacrifice is the requirement of the Omnipotent State and of any form of Totalitarian social order.

There is this, however, to be said for the nonviolent movement, and for other activities of a related character—they depend very largely for their success upon the inward strength of the individual. They are not really "mass" movements in the familiar sense, but grow quite slowly, if surely, upon a

foundation of individual attitudes. Toward the end of his book, Mr. Gregg writes:

Before a person can influence or change another person, he must, unless a born genius, first change himself. This, of course, is true also among groups. Marxians profess to believe that the only important influence is that of institutions and that our efforts must be devoted entirely to changing our institutions. But the Communists in Russia took good care to kill the Tsar, and the Stalinists "purged" and executed numerous former party leaders and drove Trotsky clear to Mexico and finally killed him there. By doing so these prominent Marxians tacitly admitted the primary influential power of disciplined individual persons. Institutions are group habits of persons. Before there can be institutions there must be individual persons. A change of character or of abilities can be secured only by training and change of habits. Newton influenced other men of science only after he had, by hard work, altered his own concept of the mechanics of the solar system. Lenin influenced other people only after a long period of thinking and self-discipline.

A final conclusion of Mr. Gregg is this:

Since the innocent common people always suffer for the mistakes and greeds of their rulers, political or economic, it is up to the innocent to control their rulers. In our increasingly centralized society, public affairs are so complex, the scale of political organization is so great, and daily work is so absorbing and pressing that the common man has no time to examine all proposals, make decisions and lead in public affairs. He must delegate that to specialists. And because of the inevitable poison of power, such delegates often become selfish or corrupt. Propaganda is so pervasive and bewildering, and the machinery of voting and representation so complex and warped, that real control by the people in matters of ultimate power is nearly impossible with that machinery. The only power left to the people is the power of veto, and in ultimate matters that can be exercised effectively only by mass nonviolent resistance. Hence the people must thoroughly learn this method.

Mr. Gregg is no doubt right. But only the uncommon people will make a beginning at doing what he says.

## *REVIEW*

### "THE RELIGIONS OF MAN"

HUSTON SMITH'S remarkable book of this title (Harper, 1958; Mentor, 1959) is one of the most enlightening volumes on comparative religion we have ever encountered. Prof. Smith is indeed another of those rare philosophers "who have seen the world." Born in Soochow, China, early made aware of the discrepancies between popular conceptions of Taoism and Confucianism and the profound concepts and values implicit in these traditions, and finding the same discrepancies in Christianity, Prof. Smith developed an interest in clarifying "the good, the true, the beautiful" in each tradition of world faith—an interest which gains final expression in the present work.

Now a professor of philosophy at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Prof. Smith has awakened a fresh interest in the subject on many different occasions. In the spring of 1955 he gave a course on "The Religions of Man" over station KETC, a St. Louis educational television station. Response was rather surprising: more than 1,200 men and women in St. Louis enrolled as tuition-paying students, while the viewing-audience finally reached nearly 100,000. Letters from all over the country arrived asking for transcripts for one or another or all of these lectures. (The series was subsequently shown by Kinescope in some twenty other cities.) Later Prof. Smith was invited to give six lectures on Hinduism at Harvard Divinity School, with notable response from the students. Prof. Smith concluded that there was a vital demand for a book, not over-burdened with scholarship but essentially informed, which would "carry the intelligent layman into the heart of the world's great living faiths to the point where he might see and even feel why and how they guide and motivate the lives of those who live by them."

A brief review of *The Religions of Man* will perhaps serve the reader best by providing quotations from the opening chapter, "Point of

Departure," and from the conclusion. At the outset Prof. Smith explains his effort to "enter into" the concepts of each tradition:

This book is not a balanced view of its subject. The warning is important. I wince to think of the shock if the reader were to close the chapter on Hinduism and step directly into the Hinduism described by Nehru as "a religion that enslaves you": her Kali Temple in Calcutta, the curse of her caste system, her two million cows revered to the point of nuisance, her fakirs deliberately offering their bodies as living sacrifices to bedbugs. Or what if he were to find himself in the streets of the leading city of Bali with one of its two movie houses named the Vishnu-Hollywood after the second god in the Hindu trinity and bookstores doing brisk business in *KLASIK COMIKS* in which Hindu gods and goddesses mow down hosts of unsightly demons with cosmic ray guns? I know the contrast. I feel it vividly between what I have written of Taoism and the Taoism that surrounded me during the years of my youth in China: its almost complete submergence in augury, necromancy, and superstition. It is like the contrast between the Silent Christ and the Grand Inquisitor, between the Sermon on the Mount and the wars of Christendom, between the stillness of Bethlehem and department stores blaring "Silent Night" in the rush of Christmas shopping. The full story of religion is not rose-colored. It is not all insight and inspiration. It is often crude; charity and wisdom are often rare, and the net expression bizarre when not revolting. A balanced view of man's religions would record its perversions as well as its glories. It would include human sacrifice and scapegoating, fanaticism and persecution, include witch hunts in Massachusetts, monkey trials in Tennessee, and snake worship in the Ozarks—the list would have no end.

Why then are these things not included in the pages that follow? My answer is so simple that it may sound ingenuous. This is a book about values. Probably as much bad music as good has been written in the course of human history, but we do not ask that a course in music appreciation give it equal space. Time being limited, we expect no apology for spending it with the best. I have taken a similar position with regard to religion. A recent book on legal science carries the author's confession that he has written lovingly of the law. If something as impersonal as the law has captured one author's love, it should be no surprise that religion has captured another's. Others will be interested in trying to balance the record to determine if religion in its

entirety has been more of a blessing than a curse. This has not been my concern.

MANAS readers will be particularly interested in the part of the section on Buddhism which explains Buddha's refusal to be responsible for a new set of doctrines and dogmas: Buddha preached a religion devoid of authority, a religion devoid of ritual, and a religion devoid of *official* speculation. One of his disciples once complained: "The Lord does not explain to me. And that he does not explain . . . to me does not please me, it does not suit me." Prof. Smith adds: "There were many it did not suit. Yet despite incessant needling, he [Buddha] continued his 'noble silence.' His reason was simple. 'Greed for views' on questions of this sort 'tends not to edification'."

In other words, the Buddha was pointing to a faith that led beyond doctrine and dogma, and which required individual meditation and individual disciplines. Prof. Smith continues:

Buddha was calling attention to the fact that there are some problems which our language poses so clumsily as to admit of no solution in the terms in which they are stated. The question of the illumined soul's existence after death is such a case. If Buddha had said, "Yes, he does live on," his listeners would have assumed a continuation of personal experiencing which Buddha did not intend, for there is nothing in man which entitles him to say, "I am this and you are that" through all eternity. But if he had said, "The enlightened one ceases to exist," his hearers would have assumed that he was consigning him to total extinction, which equally he did not intend. On the basis of this rejection of extremes we cannot say much with certainty but we can venture something. The ultimate destiny of the human spirit is a condition in which all identification with the historical experience of the finite self will disappear while experience itself not only remains but is heightened beyond anticipation. As a minor dream vanishes completely on awakening, as the stars go out in deference to the morning sun, so individual awareness will be eclipsed in the blazing light of total awareness. Some say "the dewdrop slips into the shining Sea." Others say the metaphor would be more accurate if it pictured the ocean as entering the dewdrop itself.

The relevance to Westerners of this analysis is also considered:

No teacher has credited the mind with more influence over life than did Buddha. The best loved of all Buddhist texts, the *Dhammapada*, opens with the words, "All we are is the result of what we have thought."

Of all the philosophers of the West, Spinoza stands closest to Buddha on this question of the mind's potential. "To understand something is to be delivered of it"—these words come close to summarizing Spinoza's entire ethic. Buddha would have agreed completely. If we could really understand life, if we could really understand ourselves, we would find neither a problem. Contemporary psychology proceeds in the main on the same assumption. When man's "awareness of experience . . . is fully operating," writes Carl Rogers, "his behaviour is to be trusted." For in these moments the human organism becomes "aware of its delicate and sensitive tenderness towards others." It is ignorance, not sin, that struck Buddha as the offender. More precisely, insofar as sin is at fault it is prompted by a more fundamental ignorance.

After a similarly sympathetic inquiry into the values found in each of the leading religious traditions, including that of Christianity, Prof. Smith concludes his final chapter by saying that the greatest need in the world is that of *listening*—listening to and entering into, as far as possible, the convictions of others:

We must listen in order to further the understanding the world so desperately needs, but we must also listen in order to practice the love which our own religion (whichever it be) enjoins, for it is impossible to love another without listening to him. If then, we are to be true to our own faith we must attend to others when they speak, as deeply and as alertly as we hope they will attend to us. We must have the graciousness to receive as well as to give. For there is no greater way to depersonalize another than to speak to him without also listening.

## **COMMENTARY**

### **THE CALIFORNIA PRESS**

ONE encouraging symptom of the decline of the commercial press is the appearance of small, often one-man newspapers and periodicals which represent the determination of a few rebellious and responsible journalists to be heard. One such paper, Lyle Stuart's *Independent*, published monthly (225 Lafayette Street, New York 12, N.Y., \$3 a year), keeps up a running fire of criticism of current journalistic practices in a regular column, "Inside the Nation's Press." The situation to which these maverick papers are reacting is well described in the April *Independent*:

No honest survey of daily newspapers could contradict this statement: Newspapers are designed to mislead their readers. They are designed to be read, to be entertaining, to fortify general misconceptions, and to mislead. The misleading comes about in the position and space accorded "news" stories.

More than half of the "news" stories in the average paper are not "new" but press releases, planted publicity stories and feature articles.

The "slanting" of stories by the commercial press is notorious, also the neglect of events which the publishers decide should not be reported. A striking instance of suppression of news occurred on the West Coast early last year, when with one exception the newspapers of this area totally ignored the march of three thousand anti-war demonstrators from the British Atomic Weapons center at Aldermaston, to Trafalgar Square in London, fifty-three miles away. By the time the demonstrators reached their destination, on March 30, they had swelled to fifteen thousand. The *New York Times* gave full and even sympathetic coverage to the mass protest, with pictures, while the *Manchester Guardian* said that the Aldermaston March was possibly the biggest demonstration that has occurred in twentieth-century England. But except for two small stories in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Pacific Coast newspapers paid no attention to it at

all, despite the fact that the report came to them all on the AP wire, marked as a "Class A" story.

Now, in another "independent" monthly, *The Californian*, the first issue of which appeared in January, 1960, comes evidence of even worse practices than simple omission of important news. The May number of *The Californian* presents "The Chessman Case: A Study in Mass Deception," by a Los Angeles reporter writing under the pen name of Mark Davidson. An editorial note says that this reporter "was named a Sackett scholar by Columbia University for his academic work in the fields of newspaper law and freedom of the press." The article is sober, analytical, and shocking. It is filled with examples of misrepresentation of the facts of the Chessman case, as reported in the Los Angeles newspapers and by national news magazines. A former Los Angeles Court Commissioner told Davidson, "If Chessman dies, he will have been killed by the press." It is difficult for the reader of Davidson's article to disagree. The article begins:

Irresponsibility in the use of freedom of the press can be as grave a threat to American democracy as the attempts to curb that freedom. The Chessman case is a striking example of how that can be true and how the nation's press can make a mockery of its constitutional rights.

The Chessman case is a study in mass deception. As such its significance extends far beyond the boundaries of criminal justice. A press that will distort and lie about the story of the world's most famous prisoner may not be so careful about other newsworthy topics—weather, science, medicine, politics, war and related matters of human survival.

The article is long, its citations numerous, the indictment unemotionally factual. We have space for only a single illustration of the writer's method:

Perhaps the most serious lie in the press' reporting of the Chessman case is the description of the prisoner as a murderer despite the fact that he was sent to San Quentin's Death Row on technical charges of kidnaping arising from armed robberies in which female victims were sexually molested. This lie appeared as recently as Feb. 21, 1960, in a Los Angeles *Examiner* story depicting Chessman as a

"convicted rapist-killer." The "rapist" part of the phrase is as much a lie as the "killer" part because Caryl Chessman was never convicted of rape. He was not sentenced to die because of rape or murder. Yet these basic inaccuracies have become part of the folklore of the case. Sheer repetition of them by the press has given the fantasies a reality of their own.

Everyone interested in the processes of justice in California, and in the United States, ought to secure a copy of the May *Californian* (25 cents, 1628 Balboa Street, San Francisco 21; subscription, \$3 a year) and read the Davidson story in full. This writer's explanation of the puzzling hatred manifested toward Chessman by the press is probably the best that can be had, but more important is the fact that the newspapers are able to indulge such hatred without restraint, even when a man's life is at stake. Meanwhile, a paper like Burton Wolfe's *Californian* deserves full support for bringing facts of this sort before the public.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves COMPULSORY EDUCATION

[This communication is a result of our recent report of Benjamin Shinn's long contest with a local board of education in behalf of home training for his apparently talented children. As we have before suggested, it is not necessary to join a movement for revision of the compulsory education law in order to appreciate the value of constructive experiment—even when the technicalities of a well-intended law are violated. The present writer, Dr. Glenn B. Haydon, an M.D. as well as something of a crusader in the educational field, indicates his desire to help improve the philosophical capacities of school boards and, eventually, the psychological standards of public education. By serving on the board in his own locality, he has avoided the appearance of being simply "critical" of the schools.]

YOUR remarks on Dr. Shinn prompt these comments:

To improve the local education I have been elected to the local school board. I have found more problems than I had imagined possible. But from this position I feel that, though out-voted 4 to 1 on many issues and placing everyone on the defensive, progress is being made. The ideas of Dr. Shinn are powerful because the time is approaching. You should certainly be acquainted with the Council for Basic Education, the series of articles in the Wall Street Journal during February, and particularly the interest in Los Angeles, which suggest the time.

The problems are far beyond the public schools. your continued refreshing comments touch on many of the issues as in "Questions for Planners." Without building up the case I would like to call to your attention several interesting aspects.

The Education Code, Chapter 6 Compulsory Full-Time Education, Article 2 Persons Exempt, Sections 12151 through 12160 in the revised code of 1959, leave considerable freedom to the individual with the power of his convictions to interpret them in a favorable way. Particularly Section 12152, which states only that a school district may require evidence that there is a physical or mental condition such as to render it inadvisable for a child to attend school.

If Dr. Shinn has his boys through the high school work by age eleven, they are certainly through

grammar school by age eight. He does not by law have to send them to school until they are eight. If, then, the elementary schools can not place him with his social group and at the same time have him doing academic work at his level of achievement, there is without question, at least for a substantial legal argument, a mental condition rendering attendance at school inadvisable.

I have myself taken an approach somewhat similar, and have been quite satisfied with the results. I have encouraged many parents in our district to exercise their convictions and think that in the next year or two we may have a growing number. In the end, I am sure that our children will be better educated, and the public schools will improve. As late as yesterday, one parent tells me he was advised by his principal to keep his child out of the first grade next year because he can already read.

Furthermore, I am Chairman of the San Mateo County School Board Association Curriculum Study Committee. From this vantage point additional pressure can be brought to bear. The big problem is that there are not enough hours in the day. I wonder if I have spent as much time in my profession as I have on the school board, the last year or so. Fortunately, I am able to make out with the family of six—a problem not to be overlooked.

You might also be interested in the Legislative Advisory Committee's report earlier this year. A rump group of three have circulated to some extent a dissenting opinion which is most interesting. Mr. McArthur, publisher of *Affairs of State*, if I remember correctly, could perhaps help you find a copy. Also a report from the survey of the San Francisco School System by a selected group of University people, might be of interest, though I have not yet been able to get a copy myself.

GLENN B. HAYDON, M.D.

This correspondent's reference to the Council for Basic Education makes it necessary to explain that MANAS does not endorse the obvious partisanship of the CBE Bulletin, which makes a sort of "pressure" approach, concentrating on criticism of what one faction of opinion has identified as "educationists" in the public school system. Feeling runs high when liberal teachers, especially followers of Columbia's Teachers College, run up against such aspersions as those

characteristically made by the CBE. Partisanship in these matters helps no one.

The following paragraphs from the *CBE Bulletin*, however, printed in June 1959 as part of a "reprint series," provide a basis for arguing educational theory out at the level of the school boards:

Whatever a community may call its local authority—School Committee, School Directors, School Board—the chances are that it qualifies very imperfectly for the title most appropriate to its essential function: Board of *Education*. In how many communities does "The Board" devote as much as ten percent of its time to education, as distinguished from the mechanics of operating schools? Statistics on this, we suspect, would be dismaying.

The local Board is an essentially American institution, and in it we take a justifiable pride. Our praise and support should go to the civic-minded Board Members all over the country who are wrestling, often heroically, with the gigantic problems of classroom shortages, teacher shortages, money shortages. These are times to try men's (and women's) souls when we elect them to speak and act for us "on the Board."

Yet this preoccupation with bond issues and staff recruitment, with salaries and coal bills, is still not enough. We must yet demand that the Board devote much time and hard thought to what kind of education it is paying for, what standards are maintained in the buildings so hard come by, what curriculum is enforced after all the effort to provide decent housing and a good staff.

The trouble, though, is that men with leisure to serve on school boards are often simply successful, nearly retired businessmen. Their civic mindedness may be laudable in principle, but their attitudes in respect to the inevitable problems of psychology and sociology in the present school situation seldom reflect either much thinking or much reading. *If* the majority of school board members were participants in Great Books seminars, we would be willing to endorse their efforts to counsel or direct a certain number of school policies, and *if* the majority of hastily-trained teachers and administrators were similarly conditioned by philosophical influence, there

would be little difficulty in procuring a meeting of minds.

The danger in extended school board influence on matters of policy—which the CBE seems to favor—is that liberal experiments in the classroom are apt to be discouraging. At a time when our high school students, especially, need opportunity to discuss controversial social, political, and ethical issues in the classroom, and when many teachers see this need, the temperament of the average school board seems to be against public school recognition that marked differences of opinion and viewpoint are part of the structure of the thinking life in our world.

The present reason, then, for printing our correspondent's communication entire is because this "critic" has *joined* the school board—in which capacity he will meet extremes of viewpoint in both school administrators and in the other members of his own board. And such a man would also be one with whom an administrator could *work*, without feeling a breakdown of communication respecting the theories and issues involved.

## FRONTIERS

### The Death of Caryl Chessman—Perspective

ON May 2 at 10:10 A.M. our little-used radio borrowed time from a commercial to announce—"Caryl Chessman is dead!" Subsequently a blythe voice reminded listeners of the incredible delights to be encountered by patrons of Wil Wright's ice cream parlors and, in nice homey fashion, added a reminder that Mother's Day was just around the corner.

Shortly after the completion of Chessman's execution, and in the normal process of getting from one place to another, we encountered a bus driver, a Mexican service station attendant, and a garage owner, all of whom wanted to talk about Chessman. There was no variation in the reaction: these comparatively uneducated men were disturbed; they didn't think that Chessman should have been killed; and they were also now ready to announce a strongly-felt opposition to capital punishment under any circumstances.

Some two months ago, MANAS attempted to point out the ridiculous nature of one argument favoring Chessman's death—an argument used to justify a reversal of opinion on the part of two California state legislators who had previously been prepared to support a bill outlawing the death penalty. These legislators maintained that they would not oppose capital punishment *until* Chessman had gone, because, they said, present agitation against capital punishment was largely based on an emotional response to Chessman's predicament. But the real fact of the matter was and is that the only "emotions" one need worry about in connection with such a debate are those which flow from self-righteousness combined with an amorphous desire to see punishment serve the requirements of societal revenge. Our three lower echelon members of society occupied no pinnacle from which they could assess judgment or wish for retribution—they were simply human beings responding naturally to a situation with a more genuinely "Christian" reaction than that evidenced by many occupying privileged and responsible positions.

The *New Republic* for March 28 carried an editorial titled, "Must Chessman Die?" which spoke clearly to this point. The writer first quotes from the Los Angeles *Times* a statement of what the *Times* obviously regards as the central issue—that "one atrocious and clever criminal has called into question our judicial system and brought discredit to our laws." The *New Republic* comments with irony:

Consequently, it is no longer necessary to kill Chessman merely because he must in dying expiate robbery, near-rape and other indecencies and be a deterring example to others: it is now essential to kill him in order to revalidate our system of justice that he has brought into disrepute by his stratagems. He must die that we the people may remain content with our laws and our courts.

It will be said that Chessman is not to be *killed*. That is a loaded word. He is to be executed. That, of course, is an emptied word, a euphemism.

The most comprehensive current book on penology in relation to capital punishment is Playfair and Sington's *The Offenders*. The authors go far back into the history of the Western mind to uncover the reasons why some people still feel justified in supporting the death penalty. They say:

Even if capital punishment is (potentially) a uniquely effective deterrent, it is manifestly not being employed for that reason. Nor is its deterrent quality, whatever that may be, being given in existing circumstances anything approaching a fair test. Retentionists carefully refrain from making this point, because they no longer have the courage of the second and key assumption upon which their whole deterrent argument is based, namely that the more fearful the legal consequences of a crime are made, the greater their deterrent effect must be. Nor is this any wonder. For the death penalty belongs historically to a purely punitive penal system, founded on the ecclesiastical notion of the expiation of crime and expressed chiefly in violence of an unspeakably brutal kind. This notion, during the past two hundred years, has been in full retreat everywhere before the advance of humanitarian and scientific influences.

Two months ago MANAS also remarked that unprejudiced popular opinion was concerning itself with Chessman as if he were in some way a martyr. And Chessman has become just that—for undefinable reasons so far as many of his

sympathizers are concerned, but for reasons quite apparent to students of penology and sociology. For Chessman was executed, not primarily because of the crimes he allegedly committed, but largely because of where he allegedly committed them. In the United States there is no equality before the law when it comes to the supreme penalty. Apart from the fact that six states of the United States have abolished the death penalty altogether, punishments for the offenses for which Chessman was convicted vary tremendously. In Georgia—hardly enlightened in respect to statutes often employed against Negroes—Chessman's penalty would have been somewhere between four and seven years. In Hawaii, our newest and most cosmopolitan state, the maximum imprisonment would have been a term of three years. California is one of the three states, including Arizona and Colorado, which would *allow* the imposition of the death penalty for the crimes specified in the Chessman indictment.

The federal government, through Supreme Court decision, has courageously decided that all citizens of the nation should enjoy a basic equality of educational opportunities; Negro-Americans may not be barred from the advantages of public education as enjoyed by white Americans. But when it comes to the matter of taking a man's life as punishment for a crime—hardly a less important issue—the same equality is not guaranteed. It ought to be. The Supreme Court could, however difficult and long the road, move toward decisions which would require each state to base capital punishment upon the same grounds. (Incidentally, there is no doubt in our mind that any discussion aimed at this end would hasten abolition of the death penalty throughout the country.)

The authors of *The Offenders*, who have surveyed legislation throughout the world as a background for their evaluations, show how a lack of uniformity in law confuses and brings out the worst responses of all concerned:

The whole situation in the United States—with its separate State jurisdiction—is inordinately complex and illogical, and shows the total lack—if the problem is viewed on a global scale—of any coherent philosophy regarding the use and

appropriateness of capital punishment. . . . Of the retention States, sixteen use capital punishment for first degree murder only. The remainder use it for various other offenses, ranging from one as in Ohio to ten as in Georgia. These capital offences, homicide of various kinds apart, number fourteen in all: namely, kidnapping; rape; train-wrecking; perjury in a capital trial; dynamiting; armed robbery, abortion or conniving at abortion; burning a railroad bridge; insurrection; castration; aggravated assault; arson; train robbery; and burglary.

Such illogicalities and discrepancies in the uses made of the death penalty throughout the world—and we have drawn attention to only a few of them—do not necessarily vitiate the argument that punishment by killing is a form of protection which some societies may need to employ against some crimes. On the other hand, if the illogicalities and discrepancies are looked at squarely, it is hard to see how the death penalty can be justified as a form of retribution. For instance, France is no more of a Christian country than Belgium. The social conscience is no more highly developed in the one country than the other; there is no greater respect for law and order, or greater abhorrence of crime. Why then should death be the retribution demanded for murder in France and not in Belgium? Or again, England has no less a detestation of treasonable espionage than the United States has, and it is no less a champion of democratic principles. But whereas Alan Nunn May, who handed over atomic secrets to the Russians during the war, could have been and—to judge from the later example of the Rosenbergs—might well have been executed in the United States, in England he was only liable to a determinate prison sentence. Nor was there any demand among the English afterwards for an amendment in their law, or any indication that their collective conscience was outraged by the sentence that May actually received, and has now served in full.

In short, if the death penalty were really necessary and appropriate as a form of retribution, one would expect, at least in countries that share the same religious and political ideals, some common standard concerning its existence in principle and some consistency concerning its employment in practice. But, as we have shown, there is neither.