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A PLAIN MAN'S GUIDE TO RELIGION

JUDGING from the correspondence received by MANAS, a fair proportion of the readers of this journal are deeply interested in the quest for religious truth. The letters evidencing this interest usually come after the appearance of some article which was put together by the editors with a somewhat guilty feeling of exercising their own predilections, there seeming to be only a small chance that very many others would care much for wonderings about the monads of Leibniz, or about the transcendental notions of Proclus concerning the ascents and descents of the soul. But the letters do come, bringing to the editors a measure of the consoling feeling, "We are not alone."

Thinking about these matters, it occurred to us that it might be useful to ask whether there are any "rules" that ought to be followed in seeking the ground or neighborhood of religious truth. "Rules" is probably not the best word to use. Rather, the idea would be to make up a kind of inventory of some of the questions a person ought to ask himself while pursuing this search.

Needless to say, there will be absolutely nothing new about any of these questions. The search for truth is no doubt as old as man, and all the basic questions have almost certainly been asked time and time again, by countless thoughtful and aspiring men. If there is any contemporary contribution to be made to this inquiry, it will be by way of a certain light cast—a light peculiar to our age, which has the effect of making the questions seem, if not new, at least different. It may even be that the only real progress which men can share with one another in the quest for religious truth lies in the way the questions are asked, since finality of truth (or answers), as numerous philosophers have pointed out, cannot possibly exist *in time*. But to say this is already to have set up a kind of "rule."

It seems important to declare at the outset that no one can undertake a search of any sort without adopting, at least tentatively, *some* position. If we ask ourselves why this should be, we are obliged to admit that some inward drive in us wants to know "something," and that this drive is the reason for the whole inquiry. This we must take as given, even if we are to go back to it later on, for a second look. And in order to look for something, you have to stand somewhere. That somewhere is the first position.

It is now time to turn on that "certain light" which is peculiar to our own age. For most of the positions a person can take in starting out on the search for truth, there are at least two reasons for taking it. There are, let us say, a good reason and a bad reason.

For example, there is the position which results from joining with others who have decided to seek for the truth in a particular way. A good reason for taking this position would be that human beings learn from one another, that a single individual has small chance of finding out the truth unaided, and that a beneficent reciprocity should arise from the association of the many in pursuit of a common goal. The bad reason for seeking such an association would be to do it out of fear, from a personal unwillingness to make any important decisions—in order to shift the responsibility of deciding on "the truth" to stronger shoulders.

But isn't this, someone may say, the *same* reason although expressed in different words? We should answer, No, it is not. There is a radically different moral coloring between these two reasons—a coloring which may be the most important quality in the life of the individual. For the one man, it represents an honest search, for the other, flight.

How would we "prove" this? We wouldn't attempt it, since if such contentions could be proved, the path to truth would have long ago become a well-marked highway. But we would be inclined to suggest that the groupings of human beings in

various bodies ostensibly devoted to truth fall into certain inevitable categories as a result of this moral coloration.

What is the gamut of "group opinions" concerning truth, its existence and availability? The gamut runs all the way from the declarations of the Fundamentalist sects, which declare that the truth is unequivocally revealed by God, to the negations of the Positivists, who say that the truth is that there isn't any truth, except for instrumental or working truths men derive from experience. You can run the gamut off in other directions, of course—making one extreme the Fundamentalists who get the whole truth from God, and the other the mystics who affirm much more quietly that truth arises from inner realization and that it is communicable only in symbolic terms, and barely so, at that.

What is the point of this argument? It is that in his first step toward adopting a position for the search for religious truth, a man delivers some kind of judgment of himself and his capacity to know. Every position that he can take implies such a judgment. The point is that the seeker needs to realize what that implicit judgment is and to realize that he has made or is about to make it.

A second point would be that this is not a judgment that a man can avoid making. To look, you have to take a position, and the position you take is a judgment on your own capacity to see, as well as a judgment on the sight of others and how it may or may not contribute to your own seeing.

There are endless permutations of this basic situation. Whole batteries of motivation affect our judgment, which is never a nakedly rational decision. Love, sympathy, joy, guilt, contribute to our inclinations. We may not be able to change—certainly, not all at once—the inclinations produced by these spontaneous feelings; nor, sometimes, would we wish to, since we may decide that they are good. Yet to recognize that the feelings exist and to distinguish between them is surely a part of the religious quest.

Nor is there any particular certainty that once we isolate influences of a given character, we can thereby become altogether immune to them if we will. Independence of influences is plainly a *relative* condition. It seems likely that the man who could make himself wholly independent of the influence of love would at the same time render himself incapable of loving. We would not want that.

Yet the study of our feelings is a religious necessity, since there are good loves and bad loves.

One thing, however, that we may have learned from the common experience of our times is that there is no use in trying to set intellectual traps for religious truth. There may be some truths which can exist in captivity, but there are others—the most precious kind—which are either never caught, or, if caught, at once wither and die. Religious truth is probably something like perpetual motion—it exists all about us, but only in a free state. If you try to collect it and put it into some kind of machine, it disappears altogether. And then, if you find this discouraging, or think it will be discouraging to others, you may attempt some pious fakery and print up labels for the machine which say that people have to have a special gift to recognize the perpetual motion and get the good out of it—a gift of "grace," or something like that. Maybe something exists like this quality of "grace," but whatever it is, it won't help you to break the laws of nature. The best that any quality which contributes to knowing the truth can do is to illuminate, not violate, the laws of nature.

The laws of Nature! What a football this idea has been in the argument about religious truth! A man in search of any kind of verity can hardly ignore the centuries-old conflict between science and religion—science the champion of the "laws of nature," religion pleading the case for supernatural reality and causation. The difficulty in a useful analysis of this great controversy lies in the hidden intuitions which operate on both sides. In the best of the scientifically-oriented arguments is an implicit pantheism which has only a muted voice in order to avoid any possible identification with the theological deity. Then, in the honestly inspired religious argument, the supernaturalism may be only a higher rationalism which insists upon a range of action which is imperceptible to the coarse instruments of scientific investigation. On this basis, both

arguments are a response to violated intuitions—intuitions which have been left unacknowledged in the polemical arena.

Since there has been no satisfactory public resolution of the conflict between religion and science, what might be the plain man's attitude toward this issue? He can, of course, say that so far as he is concerned, the conflict does not exist—that *he* is able to think of science and religion as coexisting in perfect harmony. And maybe he is. But there is always the danger, in any such simple solution, that he has only a superficial understanding of science and religion.

Actually, the knottiest problems of human existence are locked up in this controversy and a man would do well not to pass them by too easily. The balance a man makes between his ideas of science and those of religion will probably determine what he thinks about questions which once occupied the foreground of the great religions of the past—whether or not there is a soul, or *ego;* whether or not there is a life after death; and if there should be a life after death, what account is given of its character and meaning; whether or not we may say with reason that there is a moral law at work in the universe and in human affairs.

Now if a man decides that these are unimportant, then he can remain indifferent to the gap between science and religion; or if he decides that his convictions regarding these questions are so strong that he can afford to ignore what other men think about them, then he can for other reasons neglect the historic controversy. But if his perception of the failure of the modern world and modern world culture is such that he feels unable to ignore the conclusions of the high religions of the past; and if his feeling of fraternity for his fellows compels him not only to seek his own kind of truth, but to understand, as well, *their* thinking on the subject, he will be obliged to entertain and try to deal with the great intellectual and moral dilemmas of the present.

What are the elements of this controversy? First and most obviously, there is the idea of Reality. Both science and religion claim to be concerned with reality. The scientist—or, more properly, the scientific ideologue proposes that the primary reality is the world that the scientist is able to observe, either directly or indirectly. The main lines of the controversy are further drawn by his insistence that there is no other world that we can fairly say exists, since if we cannot look at it with scientific discipline, nothing we may say about it has any real standing. So why bother? Not all scientists say this, and to the extent that this claim is relaxed, or not made at all, the lines of the controversy are blurred. Nonetheless, it has been said, and with a great deal of certainty and fervor, so that this claim may be repeated in order to set the problem.

The religious account of reality is commonly a declaration of the supreme importance of another kind of testimony—the testimony of man's moral perceptions. In saying this, however, we probably do too much credit to the historical religions, for there is no overt clash between this idea and the conceptions of science. The above account of reality is more like what should be expected from an empiricist of consciousness, and the historical religions have only incidentally reflected this point of view. Too often, the religious definition of reality has been of a Being or of a category of existence which is inaccessible to the immediate experience of man, and also inaccessible, one might argue, to the *remote* experience of man. This dogmatic element exists in many religions. In fact, in the religions known to Western man, the dogmatic element is the chief and decisive element. What does this mean? It means for man exactly what the idea of dogma means for man—dependence for what he can know of truth upon some outside authority.

So, the question arises: How much of the scientific idea of reality results from a rebellious reaction to the religious claim of exclusive access to the truth?

Do we need to answer this question, which is obviously a very difficult one, since it involves endless subtleties of human motivation? Perhaps we don't need to answer it with appreciable accuracy, but we certainly need to *raise* it.

There is some artificiality in the question, since the scientific conception of Reality, should it ever be stated, would be a metaphysical proposition about the nature of things, and for a generation or so no scientist has been willing to expose himself as an amateur metaphysician. Further, the scientist's methodological universe is a different place from his private, metaphysical universe, constituted of his own religious and philosophical wonderings. What is of value in the question, however, is that it gets these matters out into the open, encouraging, finally, uninhibited philosophizing. The religious quest needs a sympathetic cultural environment, and uninhibited philosophizing helps to produce such an environment.

On the other side, the intelligent religionist of today fears to sacrifice his institutional alliances. Just what, exactly, he wonders, will be left of religion without *any* voice of traditional authority? The private intuitions of separate men may leave us impoverished of any authoritative body of doctrine. Isn't there some sense in which we *are* our brother's keepers?

We shall probably have no answer to this question until we find some scheme of meaning which provides an explanation for the fact that some men, the few, are able and willing to be the helpers of the many, who by and large need to be helped. And explanation for the additional fact that the capacity to help, when turned around, may become the capacity to exploit and betray. The problem of the differences among men is closely related to the problem of evil. It is a problem any serious religious inquiry must face.

But if it is the scientific man's duty to find a way of graciously withdrawing from his imperialism—from his claim that the world is wholly his oyster, which no one else can open—there is the corresponding problem of the religious man: what will he do with all this restored territory, relinquished to him by science? Now that he has back the world of moral experience, of good and evil, of aspiration and transcendental possibility, what will he do with it?

Before the man of religion lost this territory, it had become a wilderness of the disordered psyche, filled with signs and wonders, miracles and superstitions. He lost it for two major reasons: The use he made of it insulted the rational faculties of human beings, and those who were unable to feel the insult found themselves enslaved.

Obviously, there should be no repetition of this outrage, and whatever rules we make concerning the trans-physical world must guard against it.

One resolve that would be helpful in this respect, and vastly clarifying in all other respects, would be the determination to find out, as well as we can, what men can do together to find or at least *approach* religious truth, and what they must do separately, as private individuals who are on their own. Some profoundly important principle is at stake in this question. Understanding this principle would probably make all the other questions and rules unimportant.

Letter from **ISRAEL**

JERUSALEM.—My first visit to Israel in nine years began in the midst of three events of major importance, The "khamseen," or hot, dry wind out of the deserts, was already in its third day, bringing close to 100-degree temperatures. An American company was shooting a film from the novel *Exodus,* which I had just finished reading. Thirdly, the *Jerusalem Post* was jubilating at the arrival in Israel of one Adolf Eichmann, ex-Nazi said to bear major responsibility for execution of Hitler's Jewish extermination policy.

Of the first, one can say almost nothing. The khamseen wind must be experienced to be appreciated. The long-drawn out agony of Ramadan, the Moslem month of fasting, is the only influence in the Middle East so abominably capable of producing frayed tempers and suicidal impulses.

The second clearly is an event. *Exodus* treats of the beginnings of Zionism in its political phase, of the persecution of the Jews of Europe, and of the establishment of the State of Israel. It has sold millions of copies, and is now responsible for bringing flocks of tourists to Israel, who gape at spots made famous by the book.

In my opinion it is a dreadful book, but gripping. I felt unclean as I read parts of it, but it was hard to lay down. Whether it is literature is a question I am not competent to answer, but it is harsh, crude, and it hammers at its points with all the subtlety of a repetitive radio announcement. It employs a cleverly high-pointed black-and-white view of the problems it deals with. The British and the Arabs are all black: which the blacker I am not sure. The whiteness of the founders of Israel, in whom destruction, deceit, chicanery, plotting, murder and subversion are sanctified by their purpose and need, is positively blistering. It should be added that neither the massacre of the population of the Arab village of Deir Yassin nor the murder of Count Folke Bernadotte is mentioned.

Too much of what the book has to say about the Arabs and Arab society is true. Their failings, personal and social, were courageously described to the Arabs by one of themselves, Dr. Constantine Zurayk, of Beirut, in a pamphlet published shortly after the war of 1948-9. But in *Exodus* they are written out so blackly as to condemn the Arab opponents of Zionism beyond all opportunity for rehabilitation. All this must be said without detracting from the dedication, the grit, the muscle and the blood which has created Israel. And it is an almost fabulous creation. To one who has lived in the Arab world, the new Hebrew University in Jerusalem, spread over an area which was until very recently only an ordinary, rocky, hard-bitten piece of Palestine, is almost unbelievable. Nearby the University's modern architecture, its fountains, flowers, lawns and colorful murals, rise new Government structures in various stages of incompletion, a great Exhibition Hall, and the Parliament. Here too will be the President's mansion, set in a great garden.

As to Eichmann, one's immediate reaction (this is written on the plane, leaving Israel) is to ask how the Israeli Secret Service men got him here, and from where. Israeli papers quote the approving comments from the world's press, heavily British and French. The capture of this person, apparently deeply involved in the most despicable of crimes, has quite overshadowed, for the time, the methods employed. The law which made the operation possible dates from 1950, and is designed to allow the Government of Israel to punish those who have committed crimes against the Jewish people. If the present instance is a fair example, one concludes it may be a more effective measure for punishment than, say, the United Nations agreement to outlaw genocide. But also, if the present instance is a fair example, it raises ghosts. Eichmann, by the Israeli Government's own announcement, was brought from a foreign

country, but was not extradited. Obviously, he didn't come of his own free will. What then? Cloak and dagger stuff. Kidnapping, bribery, violation of national sovereignty.

The affair even raises legal ghosts. Laws with retroactive effect arouse distrust. Should a law passed in 1950 be allowed, in 1960, to punish acts, however heinous, committed in the 1930's? Extraterritoriality is another consideration. Should a law passed by one nation be allowed to punish acts of the citizen of another nation, committed in the other nation?

A sensitive foreign observer of the Israeli scene told me last night that there is an acute sense of embarrassment in Israel over the Eichmann affair. What will a show-trial, even a "fair" trial, do to world opinion of Israel? What good will it do to rake over the ashes of Hitler's extermination policy, opening the sorest of all wounds? Will a trial further arouse Arab-Israeli enmity? Already the Arab press is weeping crocodile tears over Eichmann, and the Israeli press points out that Haj Amin el Husseini, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, cast by Israel in the role of the greatest Arab war criminal, "was closely associated with Eichmann."

This observer said, further, that while the Secret Service action was indubitably official Israeli Government action, the only group now really happy about it is the Herut, a small, non-responsible political party known primarily for its intransigent attitude toward the surrounding Arabs.

Inevitably, at a time like this, one wonders about means and ends. Have the Israeli got them mixed? One keeps alive the aching hope that a group of human beings so sinned-against for centuries as the Jews, and so capable of stirring achievement as the Israeli have shown themselves, will be leaders for the better in international life, rather than followers in the uncreative ways of others.

ROVING CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW
ISSA'S MOST ACCOMPLISHED YEAR

So far this year, few outstanding works of Asian literature in translation have been published. Of these few, however, the best may well turn out to be Nobuyuki Yuasa's translation of Issa's *Oraga Haru as The Year of My Life* (University of California Press Paperback Original, $1.25). For a growing number of readers concerned with problems of achieving and maintaining an integral selfhood in a self-threatening world, Issa's autobiography should prove enlightening.

Three values inherent in the work help explain for Western readers how, in little more than a century, *The Year of My Life* has become a classic of Asian literary art. First, its author-subject—one of the master-spirits of Japanese *haiku*—expresses wittily and insightfully what he heard, saw, felt, and hoped for in the year 1819. But 1819 meant more to Issa than a span of happenings. As Mr. Yuasa points out, Issa's intention is not purely auto-biographical:

> . . . he has woven into the fabric suggestions and experiences which come from other years and other areas of his life and mind—if indeed some of them be not pure fiction. He has, with the instinct of the real artist, shaped this year so that it may more fitly reveal the truth of him as a man than any one year, historically considered, could possibly do. He has transformed it, so to speak, from a year to *the* year—the year that best speaks for his entire life. In this instance fiction may be said to be truer than fact. Issa has created for us the year that art demands of truth.

This shaping of events in order to reveal an a-historical truth gives the work its distinctive quality; for in a sense what "happens" to Issa in 1819 must happen to all humane and compassionately involved men. If we seek to define this quality further, we may say that Issa renders here his experience of *awakening:* his biting, abiding awareness that (as this reviewer put it in another connection) Need is the nickname of this world. That this experience occurs *in time* seems an accident of our finitude; like Issa, we may come to realize it is not time-centered, only time-conveyed. All men need all men; this may be always so, yet, as Issa shows us, not always known.

To articulate such an experience (and this is the second of the values we mentioned), Issa's most accomplished year demands a distinctive form. Ever the poet, Issa nevertheless "intentionally keeps one foot planted in the dust of the world." He chooses to render his account of the year through *haibun:* a mixed genre of prose and *haiku.* This allows him to develop sharp, sudden, memorable contrasts between "the sacred and the secular, the comic and the tragic, the beautiful and the ugly." Issa's versatility in the *haibun* genre can be seen throughout *The Year,* but perhaps nowhere more clearly than in his account of his two-year-old daughter's death:

> It is a commonplace of life that the greatest pleasure issues ultimately in the greatest grief. Yet why—why is it that this child of mine, who has not tasted half the pleasures that the world has to offer, who ought, by rights, to be as fresh and green as the vigorous young needles on the everlasting pine—why must she lie here on her deathbed, swollen with blisters, caught in the loathsome clutches of the vile god of pox? Being, as I am, her father, I can scarcely bear to watch her withering away—a little more each day—like some pure, untainted blossom that is ravished by the sudden onslaught of mud and rain.
>
> After two or three days, however, her blisters dried up and the scabs began to fall away—like a hard crust of dirt that has been softened by the melting snow. In our joy we made what they call a "priest in a straw robe." We poured hot wine ceremoniously over his body, and packed him and the god of smallpox off together. Yet our hopes proved all in vain. She grew weaker and weaker, and finally on the twenty-first of June, as the morning glories were just closing their flowers, she closed her eyes forever. Her mother embraced the cold body and cried bitterly. For myself—I knew well it was no use to cry, that water once flown past the bridge does not return, and blossoms that are scattered are gone beyond recall. Yet try as I would, I could not, simply could not cut the binding cord of human love.
>
> The world of dew
> Is the world of dew,
> And yet . . .
> And yet . . .

Related to the thematic and formal values of *The Year* is a third value for which, in these days of literary and philosophical gang-wars, we often forget to ask. This is the outlook of broad, generous humanity we like to call "universal," felt as an undertone permeating and sustaining Issa's treatment of whatever, at the moment, concerns him. We feel it in his *haiku:*

> What is it, moonlight,
> Shining bright
> Upon the plum tree—
> Must I steal the blossoms, too?
>
> Indifferent to curses,
> The white walls of the rich
> Sit at their ease
> In the misty air of spring.
>
> Go lightly
> In your summer robes,
> But watch your head
> As you go through the gate.
>
> A cricket
> Hops
> In the golden dust
> Of a winnowing machine.

And we sense it in a prose passage like the following Issa has just told the story of a priest who wept with joy on New Year's Eve after receiving a message, presumably from Amida of the Pure Land of the West, which read:

> "Come quickly to my paradise,
> The world is full of anguish and despair.
> I shall surely come to meet thee on the way
> With a host of blessed saints."

Issa comments:

> This story may well strike you as being rather odd, for certainly no ordinary person would choose to greet the New Year, his sleeves wet with weeping—his eyes flowing tears that he himself had deliberately provoked. Yet I can imagine no better way for a priest—whose primary duty is to teach the word of Buddha to his people—to celebrate the festival of New Year's Day. My own way. . . is somewhat different, since the dust of the world still clings to me. Yet I am like him still in this:—I, too, forbear to use the commonplace congratulations of the season . . . (I will not) set the customary pine beside my door, nor sweep the dust out of my house, for I live in a tiny cottage that might be swept away at any moment by a blast from the wild north wind. I will leave all to Buddha, and though the path ahead be difficult and steep, like a snow-covered road winding through the mountains, I welcome the New Year—even as I am.

It is only right, in concluding this review, to acknowledge the virtues of Mr. Yuasa as Issa's translator. MANAS readers may know his accurate, delicate renderings of *haiku* and *tanka* included in Josephine Miles' *The Poem: A Critical Anthology*. Here, however, Mr. Yuasa took up a more extended challenge. Although this reviewer, for one, finds it difficult to grant the necessity of his "bold departure from tradition in endeavoring to translate Japanese *haiku* into a four-line English form," it should be admitted that Issa's work suffers little from the process. On the whole, though, Mr. Yuasa achieves that rare "merger of intentions" between author and translator. He does not do justice to Issa; better, he allows Issa to do justice to himself. His quiet joy in making *The Year of My Life* available to us is evident from his preface:

> To bridge the Pacific mechanically is a task that today's engineers have not quite accomplished. To do the same politically is of paramount interest and importance to all people of the world. But to bridge the Pacific culturally is far more difficult than either of these, and only in recent years have attempts been made in this direction. I am not at all certain that my translation of this little book of *haiku* will serve this purpose, but if it should by chance bring the two coasts of the Pacific any closer together, I should be very happy.

COMMENTARY
REXROTH ON YOUTH

ONE Of the best things about the *Nation,* these days, is the *articles* in it by Kenneth Rexroth. In "The Students Take Over" (*Nation* for July 2), Rexroth points out that the "silent generation" is no longer silent, and the rebels are beginning to find causes. The young, he reports, are "fed up" with capital punishment, with war and talk of war, racism, and the whole disgusting mess of the present.

The execution of Caryl Chessman became a symbol, Rexroth suggests, of the outrage felt by the young from a multitude of causes:

> The Chessman execution provoked demonstrations, meetings, telegrams, on campuses all over the country. In Northern California, the "mass base" of all forms of protest was among students and the younger teachers. They provided the cadre, circulated petitions, sent wires, interviewed the Governor, and kept up a continuous vigil at the gates of San Quentin. All this activity was unquestionably spontaneous. At no time did the ACLU or the regular anti-capital punishment organizations initiate, or even take part in, any mass action, whatever else they may have done. Chessman, of course, had a tremendous appeal to youth; he was young, he was an intellectual, even an artist of sorts; before his arrest he had been the kind of a person they could recognize, if not approve of, among themselves. He was not very different from the hero of *On the Road,* who happened to be locked up in San Quentin along with him. As his life drew to a close, he showed a beautiful magnanimity in all he did or said. On all the campuses of the country—of the world, for that matter—he seemed an almost typical example of the alienated and outraged youthful "delinquent" of the post-World War II era—the product of a delinquent society. To the young who refused to be demoralized by society, it appeared that that society was killing him only to sweep its own guilt under the rug. I think almost everyone (Chessman's supporters included) over thirty-five, seriously underestimated the psychological effect of the Chessman case on the young.

In general, the thing that seems good about Rexroth is his sharp refusal to be taken in by any of the familiar frauds and pieties of the times, at the same time maintaining his freedom from any noticeable alliance with the currently available palliatives or panaceas. For these reasons, perhaps, his searching critical intelligence usually lights on the root of some evil, instead of lopping off a few branches. His writing seems a direct response to Norman Podhoretz' injunction:

> Do intellectuals wish to change the world? Then let them work on the consciousness of their age and forget about parties and movements.

Or to Kenneth Keniston:

> Our deepest need is not to propose specific reforms, but rather to create an intellectual and cultural atmosphere in which it is possible for men to attempt affirmation without undue fear that valid constructions will collapse through neglect, ridicule or their own inherent errors.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

"IDENTITY"—AND THE STAND FOR PRINCIPLE

DURING a discussion in the recent graduate seminar for high school teachers and administrators, a participant spoke of an unorthodox psychological technique employed in a local elementary school. The teacher involved apparently disliked the time-worn disciplinary procedure which involved isolating the errant child in some corner of the classroom. (Remember the cartoons showing a lonely young lad wearing a dunce cap?) This teacher felt that the quiet of being alone can have beneficent aspects, so she tried providing temporary isolation, not as a punishment, but as a stimulus to introspection, on the basis of some such formulation as: "I like to be alone, I like to be quiet, I like to be myself."

Properly understood, this view is easy to share, for, unless a child realizes that he can "stand alone," be happy and self-respecting, he is forever held down by the opinions of whatever group he belongs to. Much has been written during this past year on "the quest for identity," and one perception seems to be coming through clearly—that it is really the crowd that is lonely, and that only a spurious identity is gained by attaching oneself to the opinions of others. Members of "the lonely crowd" of university students tend to be essentially apathetic, and their lives suffer from lack of color, contrast or any strongly-held opinions. As often suggested, to some extent "beat" attitudes and behavior may be considered as simply uncouth protest against a dull conformity.

Here and there, however, one encounters intelligent rebellion among college students—a rebellion constructively expressed through participation in some sort of "direct action" in behalf of more enlightened social attitudes. We have a paper by a University of Wisconsin student who is pursuing the quest for his "identity" by defining what he thinks is good and true and what is not—and then taking his stand. He writes:

> "Everybody does it—why not me?" If you run across any problems, just leave them alone—they'll work themselves out. This I feel is the typical philosophy of the majority of the people in the United States. They will not accept the fact that ultimately, they are a cause of misery. They don't realize that if they would act on their convictions—accomplishments could be made. Being a student at the University of Wisconsin, I have had the opportunity of working with many of the students toward various goals. For instance, concerning segregation in the South. Students in the South, both Negro and white, have been conducting a campaign to rid the South of segregation. They have been conducting sit-ins at the lunch counters and picketing the various stores that discriminate. But what I would like to point out is that the students of the South have not been alone in their struggle. The students of the North have been backing them. They have their convictions and act upon them. At the University, we have been conducting a campaign of educating the students as to just exactly what the problem of segregation means. We have been picketing the chain stores which do discriminate in the South. It is true that these stores are integrated in the North, but they are run by the same people, and by applying pressure there—letting them know how we feel—we are helping the cause.
>
> Recently we invited and played host to about thirty students both Negro and white, from the South. We learned many things from them concerning not only segregation, but things which carry over in almost any field. We learned first of their peaceful methods—of the many beatings they took, because they refused to fight. They carried through Gandhi's ideas to the fullest—education, and peace. The important thing however is to at least take a stand, for if a stand isn't taken nothing can really be accomplished. The important issue is not the right or wrongness of the stand—because that will soon be revealed once people start thinking about it, clearly, without bias.
>
> Some of the older people in Madison say, "Isn't it kind of foolish to picket the stores here in Madison, when there isn't any segregation and discrimination?" Some of them say, "Those young fools, they think that they can change the world." All I say to them is that what we are doing is necessary, if anything is to be

accomplished. The students in the South need support and we give it to them. It is much easier to act—and more efficient, too—when there are many educated minds working on the problem. A movement starts with a few and spreads through education, and hard work. We educate the people at the University, through leaflets, debates, and the various papers. We educate them hoping they will act. We know, too, that there is discrimination in the North, and we work to overcome it. . . .

Just recently lunch counters in the South, where formerly a Negro could not eat, were integrated. We have made great strides forward and shall continue to do so. The young people seem to be thinking seriously in just about every field. We are not just a bunch of kids going off half-cocked, but rather, we have direction, we have thought seriously, we know that problems will not work *themselves* out, we are making efforts to find out just what is going on, we do not merely shrug these important issues off, we try to act in a patterned, educated, and in most cases peaceful, manner, trying to overcome these insidious matters which confront us. We try not to be like T. S. Eliot's "Hollow Men," we try to educate and to put a meaning into life.

As far as I am concerned, one of our biggest problems is the problem of religion. I do not condemn religion, unless it is used as a mere figurehead, the thing to do because everyone does it. As long as people think seriously about religion and try and understand it, and what it really does mean—not what they think it means, because Mr. Jones said so. Religion not used properly can block action and can still progress. It can keep people from thinking, which in my estimation is one of the pertinent evils in our society. Religion as it stands now seems to be massing together the people, keeping them from becoming individuals. In many cases it leads to the *indifference* I so often see. But I sincerely think that this will be remedied in time, for to me, if need be, "time is a thing that does not pass through boredom and the wishing, but must be fought with, rushed at, over-awed, and threatened with a sword."

Students of this sort have apparently discovered, pretty much on their own, the subtle "moral equivalent" to the challenge of war, of which William James wrote, and when a number who view life in this manner get together there is a fair chance that for each one a further "sense of identity" will emerge. There are groups and groups, and this one, to use the trite collegiate phrase of thirty years ago, is surely a "good group."

FRONTIERS

Aftermath on Chessman

A SURPRISTNG number of people from all stations of life participated in efforts—both collective and individual—to prevent the execution of Caryl Chessman. After radio networks around the world reported that Chessman had finally been killed by the state of California, opponents of capital punishment, quite naturally, felt let down by the defeat.

The *Manchester Guardian Weekly* for May 5 summarized the outlook of liberal English journalism:

> Caryl Chessman has been executed, and his execution will rightly outrage many consciences. But his execution is an outrage because capital punishment itself is an outrage, not because of the special circumstances of the Chessman case. Chessman's death was the last act of a prolonged and barbaric tragedy—but the barbarism lay in the final minutes in the gas chamber, not in the twelve years that led up to them. If Chessman had been executed immediately after his first conviction, if he had lacked the talent to sustain a brilliant legal delaying action, if he had never become a best-selling author, his death would have been as vindictive an indignity as it actually was. No one should blame Governor Brown of California for refusing to suspend the laws of his state in Chessman's favour—if anyone is to blame it is the people of California for keeping the death penalty on their statute books (and it is not for the people of Britain to blame them). Although Chessman's execution was, in essence, no more horrible than any other act of capital punishment it does serve to underline the absurdity of the death penalty. Any argument for the death penalty must assume that the condemned man is unworthy to live—and is bound to remain unworthy. The uses to which Chessman put his years in the condemned cell have refuted that assumption.

Asking in the May 21 *Nation*, "How Many More Chessmans?", Stuart Palmer calls attention to the issues which every death by execution should cause men to ponder. What, asks Mr. Palmer, is the real relationship between those of us who are not labeled "criminal" and those who have been convicted of serious crimes by "due processes of law"? Author of the recent book, *A Study of Murder*, and teacher of sociology at the University of New Hampshire, Mr. Palmer concludes that all criminals are strongly conditioned toward crime by their interaction with other people: "We and they are bound together; and in terms of the values we profess, we and they fail together. When we kill them, we slip down the slope of values we claim we hold dear. The executed are our scapegoats and by their deaths we admit failure."

From Mr. Palmer's standpoint, Chessman is an arresting symbol of this kind of failure and a symbol of the ambivalence in what we say we want from our penal system: "We say we want love for our fellow men. We say we want human decency, kindness. But it is only part of us that wants those. The other part wants a target for aggression. Chessman was such a target. Chessman was the focal point for men's battles with their consciences. His case brought into the open guilt about the use of capital punishment. Men showed identification with him and they also vented aggression upon him. The worst and the best in human beings—as that worst and best are defined by those human beings—were thrown into momentary focus by the fast-closing gap between Chessman and death." Mr. Palmer continues:

> Chessman's days of life dwindled and there were those of his countrymen who posed with renewed effort the question of cruel and unusual punishment as instanced by his long years of awaiting death. . . .
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> The ugly man moved with characteristic verbal articulation toward death. Although he remained a focal point, his countrymen in their own articulation gave scant notice to one possibility for progress toward solution of the range of social problems. Scant notice attached to the possibility of behavioral science as a means to objective understanding of how cultural and social experiences can generate within individuals unconscious motivations which in turn may lead to seriously negative deviant behavior. With this understanding and consequent making conscious of the unconscious might come the means for rational control of behavior. But the behavioral-science approach threatens men's defenses with

exposure. So the weight of fear closes the door on one avenue with high potential for solution. . . .

In the end, the weight of societal tradition had prevailed. But questioning of that tradition had been accelerated for a brief period. Now, with the body soon to be out of sight, the focal point began to lose its tangibility. Several hours after the execution, a few students on one university campus demonstrated against capital punishment. But there was little swelling of the ranks and enthusiasm dwindled rapidly. Here was a forerunner of the highly probable dissipation of interest in Chessman as a symbol.

Yet some who persisted in retaining their grasp on this symbol of the human dilemma might at some future time bluntly ask, "How many more Chessmans do we need?"

In the same issue of the *Nation,* Terry Southern considers that every pellet of cyanide used in execution is a "pellet of nihilism," and quotes the Sydney (Australia) *Sun* to the effect that "hardly anything can equal the cynicism which could reprieve Chessman two months ago for political reasons but allow him to die when those reasons no longer exist." But Mr. Southern adds:

As incisive an indictment as the above may be, it still seems mercifully wide of the mark. Surely it is inaccurate to describe this as a case of *cynicism* . . . An act of cynicism, because it is *immoral* rather than *amoral,* still carries the seeds of its own salvation; no matter how despicable, it is still the act of a *man.* The execution of Chessman, however, was an act of insect-mentality, carried out in a moral vacuum; it seemed to lack even the possible medieval dignity of vengeance or the possible sick strength of sadism; in terms of cultural tragedy, it felt like the last twist of the knife.

To kill in passion, whether through rage, fear, or madness is still in the realm of human affairs; but to kill in sheer indifference, as though there were nothing *better to do*—as though, after eleven years of torment and privation there were still nothing better or worse to do to a man than to idly kill him—this is beyond the pale. What we must think about now is: where do we go from here?

Finally, then, an evaluation of the Chessman case becomes an evaluation of the various levels of thinking which focus here. Before the execution, Richard Meister (Nation, Feb. 20) reported on Governor Brown's mail in regard to Chessman, noting: "Most of the anti-Chessman mail . . . is couched in the language of the unlettered. Attached to many of the letters are newspaper clippings—editorial attacks on Chessman, oversimplified or misleading 'news' stories, even comments from Hollywood columnists." Mr. Meister continues:

The written pleas to "Give him the hot seat!" came naturally from a public partaking of a daily diet of glorified violence and retributive justice via the mass media, from a society in which being "right" justifies killing, on the battlefield as well as m the gas chamber.

The basic myth that shores up capital punishment is in these letters, too: "All the law-enforcement men with whom I have spoken say, 'Revoke the death penalty and a green light goes on for more crime' "; "Is it any wonder that crime continues to increase, when our youth can point to Chessman and say he got away with it?" Ignored is the mass of statistics which show that capital punishment has nowhere proved a deterrent to crime. . . . Even politics appears in the letters. "I'm a Democrat, but not if you pardon Chessman"; "Think it over, Governor Brown, election day is not far away"; . . .

Carried to its logical conclusion, the disregard for basic legal rights apparent in the anti-Chessman letters would result in lynch law. That's exactly what at least one writer had in mind. "If you let him go," he wrote, "give him a pardon so the public can reach him."

There is only one thing to be proud of in regard to the whole ugly episode—that so many writers of talent, so many public figures, were willing to risk displeasure by cutting through newspaper and political propaganda to the uncomfortable truths. The New York *Herald Tribune* concluded an editorial before Chessman's execution:

Capital punishment creates a crisis of conscience for many who consider it a moral evil. It debases the community without protecting it. Its macabre drama makes heroes of hoodlums and martyrs of murderers. It introduces into our judicial system a brutal element of planned savagery.

> The fact that "the people ' may clamor for a criminal's life is no justification for taking that life. The same public clamor is the essence of lynch law, and reflects those passions the law is designed to curb.

And, last but not least, we quote from a manuscript (a brief withheld by the prison authorities) written by Chessman himself, who should, after all, have the last word:

> Fifty, one hundred, two hundred years from now, the legal scholar and the historian, will examine the Chessman case with shocked incredulity. Kill! Some day we will no longer put in authority the person who compulsively espouses the false social philosophy of naked retribution, however artfully it may be disguised as an instrument of justice. We will recognize his sickness for what it is, and we will refuse to be inflamed or blinded by either.