

R.D. 1/2 magazine
ESCAPISM: IS ~~BEING~~ IT... 96 OKAY, BUT IT CAN
BE DANGEROUS

Reality is of such nature that it cannot be looked at for long without flinching. It is that from which most of us must turn away on regular occasions in order to survive.

Reality includes not only rest and daily bread and the use of our limbs and faculties but danger, pain, loss, temptation, *duty*, doubt, fear, and anger ---to name but a few of its ingredients. The awful possibilities and solemn certainties of existence have always frightened the bravest of men ---if they took time to think --to look.

What is escapism? Look around you. It is the pursuit of pleasure or unholy ambition. It is engrossment in any activity not significantly fruitful in itself; it can be particularized by reference to a thousand popular idols, by considering some things that are legitimate at the right time, place, and used in the right manner, but wrong when they swallow up one's life. ~~Alcoholism,~~ *Alcoholism,* drug addiction, sport, money-making, the pursuit of power, ~~etc etc~~ spring to mind. *Even some forms of religion (don't do them) can be*

75,000,000 people in USA
75,000,000 people have a family member who is an alcoholic in ~~USA alone~~, and the figure is conservative based on the statistic of at least 11,000,000 alcoholics while the real number may be much greater. Why should one put that into his stomach which is sure to steal away his brains? Because it offers escape. It offers a temporary anesthetic to the wounds of life. It offers forgetfulness. It promises a time of joy and satisfaction.

Of course we have all heard a thousand times that people who hope to drown their sorrows in alcohol find they are good swimmers. They are still there when the hangover has gone. The bottles or cans go away but not the awful realities of life such as duty.

On a much larger scale, warfare has been a favorite way of escape. Nations in social or economic or political dilemmas have often chosen war despite the inevitable cost. Believe it or not when World War 1 began, crowds cheered in the major cities of Europe-- London, Berlin, Paris. Millions of young men saw in it a way of escape from boredom. Rupert Brooke the poet thanked God that he had been born at the right time. A few years later he was dead. Many who cheered died with him, others returned to civilian life with amputated limbs, or gassed lungs. The trite definition-- war is hell-- like most platitudes is true, but again as with other platitudes, its truth is learned by bitter experience.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century society created and fostered sports on a large scale. The surplus energy of young men would thus be consumed without real danger to others, and physical health would be gained. Besides that, once sport becomes an idol of the masses it creates wealth---public utilities are needed for transport, health specialists are needed to care for wounds, ointments etc are offered as panaceas, special items of clothes and footwear become popular. *2000-11-11*

2. Freedom and self-interest

The British have s saying that their great wars were won on the sports fields of their great schools. It is also true that those same wars often began there.

Take the Whodoneits. Many intellectuals as well the hoi polloi have bought these by the cartload. Sir Bertrand Russell was in the habit of buying them four at a time and speeding reading each one in approximately fifteen minutes. The Roman Catholic apologist, genial G.K. Chesterton did similarly. Agatha Christie has been the right way to spell escape for millions for decades, *and* *to mention Conan Doyle.*

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Some handsome rakes, and some careless madonnas, have found in sex their escape. But what began as a ball often ended as a funeral, or if not that, unwanted recurring medical treatment. Sexual promiscuity affords one of the very best illustrations of the biblical proverb that whatever a man sows that shall he reap. Aids, though an undeserved plague for ~~some~~, is but the most recent instance of this rule.

There are forms of escapism which most people count as innocent. Being a workaholic is one of them. Choosing always the comforts *of* of undemanding traditionalism is another. *Conformity to a limited or a dangerous escapism. Introduction 6, Feb. 23/2-30*

It was in 1871 that in Britain by legislation holy days became holidays. This gave escape to millions but often at the cost of church attendance and culture of the soul. The almost universal disregard of the principle of the fourth commandment dates from this

Just as genius is a tumour on an ordinary faculty, so much that is evil is parasitical and draws its life from the good it counterfeits. So in this matter. The Christ who said: "Come ye apart and rest awhile" was offering true escapism. The Sabbath is another form of the same same and has been *seen to* ~~inexistence~~ from the foundation of the world. The most obvious is nightly rest: death of each day's life, sore labor's bath, great nature's second course, chief nourisher in life's feast---according to William Shakespeare.

There is a form of escapism written within our nature-- our penchant for laughter. You remember that Lincoln once excused his joking to his military cabinet by saying: "Gentleman, if I couldn't laugh, I would die." People who can give mirth without wounding are very special people and should be highly esteemed. During the Middle Ages it was said "One good clown does more good than twenty donkeys laden with medicines." If you doubt this, read Norman Cousins "Anatomy of an Illness", and if you don't doubt it, read the book anyway. "He that is of a merry heart has a continual feast" for "a rejoicing heart does good like a medicine" wrote Solomon.

According to Nietzsche, if we persist in gazing into the abyss the *tiem* will come when the abyss will gaze into us. It does not pay to forget our mortality and fragility. We are not little gods. It is possible to be solemn overmuch as the book of Ecclesiastes hints.

Is there a supreme form of escapism that is both legitimate and effective? Yes, but its both harder and easier than all the other methods. It is the way of faith, trusting God, resting in Him, believing He knows all about us and is supremely concerned with our well-being, only permitting those blows to rain upon us that ultimately will work together for good. *It means refusing to play as being good.*

Christ used this continually, and especially on the Cross. In Gethsemane He softly murmured: "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" Note, he didnt say, the cup which the Jewish leaders have given me, or "the cup which Judas hath given me." *And won't Jesus be beyond the power and love of the Father says with "Father".*

Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "All things are yours. . . the world, or life or death or the present or the future, all are yours; and you are Christ's and Christ is God's." 1 Cor 3:21-22.

And on another occasion he gave that wonderful recipe for equanimity: Be anxious about nothing, be prayerful for everything; be thankful for anything. See Phil 4:6-8.

The true Christian is hilarious. In the laughter of faith he or she finds the best escape. They cast all their care upon God, for He cares for us. 1 Pet 4:7. Every sacrifice is rendered with a light heart. Says Scripture about the man who has found in the field of Scripture the treasure of the gospel: "for joy thereof he sells all that he hath and buyeth that field." Mt 13:44.

It takes practise. I'm convinced that I am barely out of kindergarten in the school of faith. But practise does make perfect. To him that hath will be given. "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God." Rom 10:17.

So, dear friend, God has shut us all up to faith. Its the only door out from the room of guilt and depravity, but its also the only door ~~of~~ to escape from the realities of life's stupendous pressures. *Christ himself is our peace as well as our righteousness (see Eph 2:14). But the first escape is saying "When I look at myself I do not see how I can ever be saved, but when I look at Christ, I do not see how I would ever be lost." Escape, therefore, TO CHRIST. All other "ways" can be dangerous*
