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Center for the Study of Contemporary  
Belief  
Box 4728  
Santa Barbara, California 93103

Dear Mr. Berman:

Enclosed is my contribution to BELIEF IN ACTION. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

*E R Zumwalt Jr*  
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Enclosures

In June 1938 at age seventeen, at my high school graduation, I gave the following valedictorian address:

"As we survey the world upon this commencement evening which marks the beginning of our individualistic program toward success or failure, we see a strange agglomeration of problems. With the problems themselves and their causes most of us are acquainted. Greater minds than ours have outlined them too indelibly for us to be unaware of their existence. Tonight as we consider the attitudes produced by these problems in the minds of the masses, we feel the necessity for building sound well-balanced lives to combat them, for developing a genuine appreciation of intrinsic values. Surely by nourishing all that is ideal and beautiful in life, we can hope to attain the quintessence of progressive civilization.

"Economically, politically and socially the world has developed into an unsatisfactorily complex jumble of attitudes. We have advanced marvelously from the standpoint of science and pure academic knowledge. Sadly enough, we have failed to apply the benefits to the principles of Christian living.

"The first and most outstanding problem, from the standpoint of resultant attitudes, is the threat to democracy. Every continent on this earth has at least one country under the oligarchial regime of a dictator. Over three-fourths of the European continent has succumbed to modern dictatorships.

"Several deplorable attitudes are bred by these dictatorships. The people are taught to love and hate just as their dictator would have them love or hate. Reading nothing except governmentally controlled news organs, these masses become gradually converted to the beliefs of their fanatical leaders. When desires such as these become foremost in the minds of a whole citizenry, the principles of democracy are forsaken. Education no longer offers opportunity for academic research and altruistic betterment. Family ties and pride are crushed out. War crushes the remnants of individualism and strengthens unitary nationalism. All these conditions are tragic, but they combine to produce those attitudes which are much more tragic. Imposition of dictatorial aims upon humanity produces in addition the complete degradation of hope. The horrors of war, the cheapness of life, the lack of spiritual belief creates a fearsome animal-like helplessness in the masses which reduces them to the equal of beasts. Russia presents the most marked example of this disintegration of human spirit.

"The second problem of importance is poverty and unemployment. These figures are appalling. It is terrible to think that millions are suffering from lack of proper food and clothing, but how much more terrible it is to view their mental demoralization. According to the reports of the Federal Welfare Bureau, these millions of unemployed are rapidly becoming universally unemployable. So great is their loss of ambition that they have no desire to work.

"It is not hard to picture the devastating effect of these increasing millions upon civilization. If the "I don't care" attitude continues, especially if it is assimilated by the youth of this nation, the very structure of civilization will be damaged. Once more a dangerous attitude must be corrected if our people and the world in general are to escape the animalistic antipathy existing in Russia and the war-ridden countries of China and Spain.

"Third there is the problem of crime. Last year in the United States alone, there were 500,000 burglaries, 3,000 kidnapings, 125,000 armed robberies, 75,000 armed assaults, 5,000 incendiary fires and 1,500,000 other major crimes. These figures, according to the F.B.I., show great increase over crimes per capita in previous years. Another startling fact--over 20 percent of these crimes were committed by youths under 25 years of age. Forty percent of the 200,000 inmates of prisons and reformations are under 25. These figures indicate a complete loss of moral principle and sense of decency on the part of criminals in their early youth. Let us examine their attitude. Unemployment, and the resultant poverty, has prevented honest endeavor. The loitering street corner gangs that go hand in hand with poverty destroy whatever character may have been instituted by parents and early training. Crime assumes the role of an easy, pleasant and strangely romantic occupation to these youths. No one can be blamed for entering a romantic and pleasant life's work. Once more it is a dangerous attitude built upon misconceptions that must be corrected.

"The fourth attitude to be feared today is engendered by the struggle between classes, Capitalism versus Labor, rich versus poor. The capitalistic interests have had the selfish practice of taking all they could get at the expense of labor. Labor, in recent years, has gone to the other extreme, making radical demands and costly strikes at every opportunity. The solution is obviously peaceful arbitration but before this can be brought about, we must affect a change in attitude. Selfishness, greed, hate and egotism--all contribute to the present stalemate in class struggles. Each class refuses to see the worth and necessity of the other class.

"There are other great problems which we have not time to discuss. The problems of marriage and divorce, business zeal, religion, etc. all produce attitudes which should be considered. However, for our purpose tonight, enough have been presented.

"Thus far, we have considered the attitudes prevalent among our people as a whole. However, every one of these attitudes will react upon us individually. It is going to be the individual decision of every graduate here tonight whether or not he accepts these majority and minority attitudes as he contacts them. Should we recognize their undesirability at some later date, different circumstances might make them seem acceptable. Our only protection is to build planned, well balanced lives as individuals which will survive the battering ram of dangerous attitudes. Let us outline the attitudes that we must develop individually in work, play, love and worship in order to combat the destructive attitudes of the world in general.

"First, we must begin now to develop the correct attitudes towards work. Humanitarian opportunity should be the prime requisite considered in choosing an occupation. Too many have lost their youth in a struggle for material wealth, only to discover in old age that they had misunderstood the true values of life. The only way to avoid disillusionment is to recognize the real purpose of life at this point, in our youth. When we realize that the only secure happiness lies in working at an occupation which satisfies our personal inclinations and at the same time offers altruistic opportunity, we will have become immunized to four dangerous attitudes--those of the criminal, the unemployable, the advocate of dictatorship, the unprincipled capitalist and the unprincipled laborer. A boy who has the true conception of life and work could not be fooled by the seeming pleasantries and romanticism of crime to which we attributed the downfall of the average youth. The attitude of the unemployed which we discussed was that life was useless and futile so why work. The truly informed youth would see the fallacy of that attitude, thus becoming protected against its contamination. We saw that those who advocated dictatorships were placing material wealth and power above humanitarian interests. Once more a youth who recognized the true purpose of a life work would not become reconciled to this false materialism. We saw that the dangerous attitude of the capitalist and laborer was born of selfishness, greed, hate and egotism. Our same youth would be inoculated against these motives for class struggle. Thus, by developing a healthy attitude merely toward our life work we have eliminated forever the shame of being influenced by four dangerous attitudes.

"Second, we must develop a correct attitude towards our play. It should be made an opportunity for relaxation and for genuine enjoyment of life. In America it has been our tendency to develop the competitive spirit to a marked degree in our sports. We must learn to place relaxation and enjoyment ahead of the desire to win prizes or fame. Once more the failure to do so leads to the dangerous materialism. Our relaxation should lead us into the field of useful hobbies, reading, plays, art, etc. It is the development of these particular fields that leads us to a true appreciation of life. It is obvious that this attitude protects us from the dreaded descent to the animalism that we witness in Spain, Russia and China and in lesser degrees all over the world. This animalism is caused by complete hopelessness and the fact that life seems so cheap. When we are acquainted with art, books, and so forth, we have become imbued with such appreciation of life's intrinsic worth that this spiritual disintegration becomes impossible.

"Third, we should devote a part of our lives to worship. This is a field which must be absolutely individual. We must not accept a doctrine or belief because of our parents or friends. We must accept only that into which we can put our faith with heart and soul. There are times in our lives when only our faith makes existence bearable. To be without some spiritual anchor at times like these causes the development of complete despair or cynicism. Of course, it is obvious that those who possess a definite faith will be immune to all the selfish, undesirable attitudes so prevalent today.

"In concluding this outline of a satisfactory life, I shall discuss a quality which might be considered the essential part of worship. However, worship in a general sense varies greatly with individuals. The quality of love is or should be constant in the mind of everyone. In the final analysis, true love is the most important of our four arbitrary divisions of life--work, play, worship and love. If we have a true measure of every phase of love, we will need no education in the field of work or play or worship. Following through the stages of life, our first love should be love of family. The ties of devotion in the family are crucial for it is these that elevate us to all that is good in life. Through our devotion for our family we are led gradually into a broader vista of love--love of mankind in general. Those unfortunate cases who fall into crime, cynicism or other dissolute ways represent, in the majority, cases where there was no family love to bridge the gap between youth and wisdom. After we have learned to appreciate humanity and love the things for which it stands we have developed the capacity

for a third love, that of friendship. The privilege of friendship is perhaps one of the keenest pleasures given to man. To have the capacity for making friends requires all the understanding, sympathy and toleration that love is capable of giving. The fourth love that we must understand and safeguard is the real love of marriage. Upon the strength of this love is based the fundamental integrity of our nation.

"All these phases of love depend upon attitudes. Our family devotion develops our minds to the point where we are ready to appreciate humanity in general. Our love of mankind gives us the capacity for attitude or frame of mind in which we are able to know genuine friendship.

"With the field of love completed within us we are spiritually impervious to the dangerous attitude of our world. This quality eliminates the personal problem of divorce and broken family circles. True love will not permit the reign of dictatorships which destroy the family and the institution of marriage. True love eliminates greed, hate and selfishness and provides for real happiness.

"And so, we finish a glimpse of the vast problems that face us--dictatorship, poverty, crime, class struggle, etc. We have dealt chiefly with the attitudes engendered by these problems and a life arranged to neutralize them. What is our assurance that we shall succeed--just that we are a nation of pioneers. For generations the American pioneer has conquered the well-nigh insurmountable perversities of our wilderness. We face the wilderness of the future with the strength of a pioneer birthright. We stand at the threshold of a strange, new world.

"With the light hearts of youth, with the joy of righteous struggle, we shall plunge into the intangible wilds, resolving that courage, eagerness and intelligence--the heritage from a pioneer past--shall continue the progressive civilization of our America."

If now, forty-five years later, I were to write again on these subjects

--I would try to express my thoughts somewhat more elegantly,

--but the problems of this globe which concerned me then have changed so little

--and the balance which I suggested then among work, play, worship and love have served me so well

that I shall let stand my words of long ago.