

# The Vanguard American

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## A Future Folk School In America

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The Folk School is a Danish creation. It grew from three factors: (a) the need for adult education; (b) the inspirational genius of N. F. S. Grundtvig; (c) the creative educational ability of leaders such as Kristen Kold, Ludvig Schrøder, and others. Through its work, first as a challenge and then as a supplement to a progressively excellent school system, it has helped raise the Danish people to a very high standard of culture and practical achievement. From the confines of a small Scandinavian country its influence has spread throughout the world. In this country it has written an excellent chapter within the Danish immigrant groups, but it has failed as yet to impress a people which has been forging ahead in the development of institutionalized education. It is apparent now, however, that the need for a supplementary educational program is great in the United States. The question then becomes pertinent: Can the Folk School, as developed in Denmark, supply what is needed in this country? The year 1944 marked the one hundredth anniversary of the Folk School. Will the second century see its growth in the United States?

In order to say anything about a future Folk School in the United States it is necessary to specify just what is meant by a Folk School. The Danish Folk Schools have very definite characteristics and they must not be confused with adult education in general. Our theme does not call for a general discussion of adult education; it calls for a statement concerning the future of the Folk Schools of the Danish type. We must therefore describe these, and having described them we shall undoubtedly have answered the major part of the question we have put.

The Danish Folk School is a school for adults. This needs to be said, because the schools are often called Folk High Schools. They are in no wise, however, to be compared with American high schools nor do they appeal to

the same age group. It was Grundtvig's idea from the beginning, and it has since been the practice of the Folk School leaders, that the students should be beyond the age of adolescence. Only then are their minds and interests mature enough to grasp the significance of the manner and content of the teaching.

The Danish Folk School is a free school. This means primarily that it has no entrance requirements save a genuine interest in the school. It gives no examinations nor does it grant credits or certificates of any kind. Such impediments offer no advantage and only tend to obscure the real purpose. And while the designation "free" does not mean "gratis" in this connection, the Folk Schools are naturally inexpensive so that finances form as small a hindrance as possible to the attendance. The teacher is free to conduct the school as he wishes, but unless the instruction follows a certain general pattern, the school would not be called a Folk School. It may be a good school and it may serve an excellent purpose, but it is not a Folk School. Needless to add, there is no freedom from exertion nor from orderly conduct.

The primary purpose of the Folk School is that of inspiration and awakening. This does not mean that it holds information or the work of study in contempt, to the contrary. It means that the school emphasizes interpretation rather than the conveying of facts. Interpretation is vain without facts but its emphasis is on their meaning. Furthermore, a genuinely inspired or awakened person will get the facts and the tools he needs. The emphasis is therefore on insight and understanding and the result is commitment. The Folk School students are "wound up" so that they never stop.

The basic means of achieving the inspiration has ever in the Folk School been the use of history and literature. Practical subjects have been used as good supplementary material, which has served a purpose, and social problems, natural science historically approached, physical education, music and singing, folk games and recreation have had an important part in a well-rounded curriculum, but the inspiration of history and literature has ever been supreme. Through these means all human interests and problems can be reached and by them they are placed in their right setting. The Folk School has never been the advocate of special interests, and it would be fatal to the

Folk School idea to make the instruction serve a limited purpose, conservative or radical, be it ever so good and necessary. In the narrow confines of propaganda it would lose its soul.

The methods and technique of the Folk Schools are important. It is recognized by them that the way of conveying its message lies in personal relationship, the impact of personality on personality. As originally claimed by Grundtvig, the spoken word is the "living word" in contrast to the "deadness" of the printed page. This is not to be taken as an indication of a superior attitude toward written material, for most Folk School directors are great readers and encourage reading. It is merely an emphasis upon a highly superior method of conveying information as well as understanding and appreciation. Therefore, the lecture method is mainly used, at least in the principal periods of instruction, and free discussion and intercourse of ideas is encouraged. The results have proved to be excellent. The doctrine of the "living word" in the Folk School is no mere theory; it has definitely proved its quality.

Some of the characteristics of the Folk School are distinctly Danish and should be mentioned only for completeness. It must not be imagined that they are essential to the transplanting of the Folk School to other countries. Naturally, one of these features is the love-of-country which has helped Denmark grow. This love will naturally find its expression in varying ways in other countries, and it should not necessarily include the features indigenous to Denmark. Another characteristic is the popular form of boarding school which has grown naturally in a small country. There are great advantages in this form, because it can sponsor an intimate form of home-like fellowship which has great value. But the requirement for such schools is a small country where young people readily and eagerly travel to school removed from their own community.

Such a characteristic may well be valuable in another country, but it must not be understood as an essential requirement of the school. It has proved most valuable in Denmark, but it may be a handicap to development in this country if it is absolutely insisted upon.

Another distinctly Danish item is that the Folk School has been a school based on the Christian faith although not directly religious in its expression. Religious exercises have always had an essential part, and religious commitment has been understood to be a necessary requirement for the teacher. The Danish Folk Schools would lose their character without this feature, but again it must be pointed out that Denmark is a country in which one denomination includes practically the whole population. Religious controversy is practically non-existent in the schools, but denominational and even religious differences in the United States would make a severe handicap, if a definite religious commitment was insisted upon.

In adapting the Folk School to another country distinction must be made between the essential features which can be transplanted and adopted in other places and those which are and must be peculiar to the life of a distinct and smaller nation. We must look for essential qualities which have the possibility of realization in our country. Personally, I am not in doubt that a transplanting or an adaptation to American needs can be made. The Folk School is far greater than its distinctive Danish pecu-

liarities. It is universal in its scope, and its ideal and methods not only can but should be given growth in America.

The question is: How is this to be done? The answer is that it must primarily be done by the initiative of individuals and groups who see its value. A personal form of education can never be begun without personal commitment, and such commitment cannot be predicted. It can only be believed in and hoped for. Government and institutional aid is helpful and it may be necessary, but such aid and sponsorship can never create a Folk School without the understanding, inspiration, and ability of individual educators.

Folk Schools may grow up around or as part of established seats of learning. They may be a part of a larger educational program, as it has already been demonstrated through the efforts of some educators, connected especially with farm schools in the Middle West. They may also well become an extension work of such institutions, both as courses in farm communities and as day and night classes in the cities. They may be sponsored by social groups in this country, by labor unions, by cooperatives, by farm groups, and even by industries. But it must be definitely understood that unless sponsors abstain from propaganda or from the insistence upon the inculcation of special ideas the essential free character of the Folk School will be lost. Then a good school might be created, but it will not be a Folk School after the Danish pattern.

I look, however, for the Folk Schools of the future in this country primarily to be community schools. They will not be schools where students will travel great distances, because the appeal must be made to those who need the inspiration to seek education and not to those who already have that inspiration. For the latter we already have many excellent schools in America. The Folk School must be brought to the people and its benefits must be demonstrated to the people who need it. The community may be a community in a narrow sense and it may be a sectional matter. But the school must adapt its life to some extent to the needs of a group, and if it is to be a living thing, it must live in close contact with the people it serves. This has been successfully and ably demonstrated by the Campbell Folk School in North Carolina which has, I believe, set a general pattern of adaptation which promises well for other future institutions. If such schools are to grow, they must, however, not have to rely on the limited means of the educators. Their growth depends upon the financial support of far-sighted individuals and groups, but **THERE MUST BE NO STRINGS TO THE MONEY.**

Folk Schools may be created in many ways. They may come as day and night classes in large cities. They may come as community undertakings or they may be sponsored by groups and institutions. They may be, and perhaps they preferably should be, regularly defined boarding schools, and they may be the educational nucleus of a larger undertaking. But they must contain the above-mentioned characteristics or they will not be Folk Schools. The initiative will rest upon inspired and devoted individuals of ability and the support will come from funds given without ideological qualifications. And they will come, for they are not only possible; they are greatly needed.

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Columbus, Ohio.

## This Church Cuts Through Prejudice

By THOMAS H. SIMPSON

That Negroes and whites can become one in the most intimate and sacred areas of life is being proved in a new and creative venture in church organization now well in its second year in San Francisco. The Fellowship Church of All Peoples is no longer an experiment; it is an achievement of great significance.

The Church of America has often been accused of being the outstanding "jim crow" institution of the nation. Even in the north and west where there has been no racial segregation in schools, play-grounds, public carriers, libraries or stores, there has been an almost universal pattern of race segregation in the church. Dr. Charles Johnson, noted sociologist of Fisk University, has said, "The church is the most completely segregated institution in America." In a recent magazine article Pearl Buck said, "The criticism of the church which the world makes today is that organized religion preaches the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, and does not practice these teachings."

Mrs. Euck and other critics would grant, of course, that there are exceptions to the trends they condemn. One of the most notable of these began two years ago in San Francisco. A young Presbyterian clergyman of that city, Dr. Alfred G. Fisk, who is chairman of the department of psychology and philosophy at the San Francisco State College, so forgot the established pattern of our social mores as to propose a church based on the principles of Christian brotherhood.

### OF, BY AND FOR ALL PEOPLE

War industries around the city had drawn Negro migrants in large numbers into the area. The small number of old Negro residents which had reached some sort of *modus vivendi* in adjusting to the community at large was suddenly increased by about 400 percent. Tensions increased. Problems of housing, police brutality, discrimination in public services, etc., mounted. Rumors spread. People were afraid to go into the "Negro community."

It was then that Dr. Fisk came forward with the suggestion of organizing an interracial church. Not, however, along the lines of the usual "mission" project. "We should not have a church run by whites 'for' Negroes," said Dr. Fisk, "or one in which Negroes will merely be welcome to participate. We should establish a church which will be of and by and for both groups."

A very important feature of this shared participation is the co-pastor arrangement of leadership. From the very first there have been two pastors, one white, the other Negro. They have absolute equality of status and alternate in all of the functions of the ministry. One preaches one Sunday, the other the next; the one who does not preach leads the worship, so that in each service there is shared participation.

### BROTHERHOOD UNLIMITED

The church itself is interracial in all its organizations—the Primary Department, the Young People's Society, the Choir, the Sunday School staff, the church boards. Mem-

bers of the two races, unconscious of color, mingle and work together freely. They sit together, share hymnals, talk together after meetings—and like it.

When asked if there has been any trouble concerning the interracial basis of his project, Dr. Fisk replied, "We have had all sorts of problems and an enormous amount of hard work, but we have not had any trouble, concerning the racial issue. In the Young Peoples Society our socials and folk dancing has gone without a hitch, and our fellowship dinners are just like big family gatherings. What pleases me most is the perfect naturalness with which we work together.

The church now has a Nisei office secretary and the newly appointed director of youth activity is a Nisei.

So far, the Fellowship Church has kept an even balance in its constituency—about the same number of whites and Negroes attending with some Filipinos, Mexicans, Chinese, and an increasing number of Nisei. That this plan of organization is sound seems to be indicated by the fact that many groups in the country are communicating with Fellowship Church, and similar projects are growing elsewhere. In Berkeley an interracial church which had started on a different basis has adopted the co-pastor plan of leadership.

### DR. THURMAN

When Dr. Howard Thurman, Dean of the Chapel at Howard University and one of the leading Negroes of the nation, heard of the plan of this church he said that it seemed to him "the most significant single step that institutional Christianity is taking in the direction of a really new order for America." So significant did he feel it to be that he has taken a year's leave of absence from Howard University and is now co-pastor with Dr. Fisk of the Fellowship Church.

The coming of Dr. Thurman has given national significance to the project. Dr. Thurman is one of the very rare minds of our generation, a truly creative and original thinker of the first order. He speaks with dramatic power and inimitable persuasiveness, and is known throughout the nation where he has spoken in most of the universities and colleges, and where he is in constant demand as a conference leader and lecturer.

A reporter from a national magazine who came to investigate the project said, "Anything which can take Dr. Thurman across the continent must be important." Before leaving Washington, Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt and Dr. Mordecai Johnson spoke at a testimonial dinner where church notables had gathered to wish Dr. and Mrs. Thurman God-speed on their great Christian adventure. Soon after the arrival of Dr. Thurman in San Francisco, Fellowship Church moved to larger quarters, so great was the increase in attendance. Now the church is looking for a still larger place.

### PRACTICING BROTHERHOOD

An illustration of the effectiveness of the concept of Christian brotherhood as it works at Fellowship Church is an incident that occurred there recently. An appeal had come and was announced from the pulpit, stating the need in a Negro family for someone to care for two small children while the mother went to the hospital to have another child. A white couple in the church who have one child of their own volunteered to take the Negro children, postponing their own vacation to do so. This couple live in an ex-

clusive neighborhood, and the coming of the Negro children caused a sensation, not to say consternation among the neighbors—one neighbor even complained to the head of the company by whom this church member is employed, indicating that the company should know the outrageous conduct of its employee.

For two weeks, however, these members of Fellowship Church witnessed their convictions—and had, they say, a simply grand time with their Negro children (and so did the other children on the block.) To top it all off, when the Negro mother came back from the hospital this couple from Fellowship Church took their own beautiful bassinet—blue ribbon and all—and lent it to the Negro family for their new baby in a defense housing unit. The white couple hope to use the bassinet next year themselves, but they are happy in the thought of the little Negro child in it now.

Much credit is due to the Presbyterian Church and its national board for their sponsorship and generous support of this project. Institutions often move slowly, especially when group prejudices that are widespread are involved; but here one of the great denominations of the Protestant church of America is taking a step of leadership which must surely have its effect upon the church life of the nation.

When asked what kind of people are interested in the project, Dr. Thurman replied, "Ten years ago it would have been easy to answer such a question. The answer would have been: a certain small segment of the population generally known as the more liberal minded. Today, however, individuals of many groups, classes and occupations are interested because they are aware of the fact that something effective must be done quickly if civilization is going to survive. Even the average man who is not ordinarily much concerned with different social and economic problems is beginning to sense the fact that something must be done to relieve social tension, and that it must be done now.

"Our Sunday attendance is a good cross section of the people in the San Francisco Bay area. People do not come to help the idea along, but to get their cup filled. They expect to get here the kind of creative experience of worship that would be as significant as any they would find anywhere else. They come to get, more than they come to give. That lifts the level of the whole undertaking and keeps down the spirit of condescension which under other circumstances might creep in."

#### CHURCH'S OPPORTUNITY

Dr. Thurman believes that the church more than any other institution in society can do this thing of bringing the races together on the deepest level. "If the church misses this opportunity, the moral initiative will slip from its hands—and some other force or institution will capture the loyalty of the masses and do this thing. That is the handwriting on the wall, and an increasing number of church people are reading it."

That Fellowship Church is laying a broad foundation for the movement, with expectation of national as well as local growth is shown by the fact that membership participation in the project is provided for those living at a distance, and such associate members are constantly being enrolled from various parts of the country. This not only helps to support the local phases of the work, but prepares the soil for it to take root in other fields.

When asked as to whether there has been any opposition to the formation of this church or any hostility on the part of any certain elements in the community, the co-pastors agreed that San Francisco had given them and the idea a remarkably gracious reception. As to overt opposition there has been none whatsoever. But Dr. Thurman adds, "If the plan succeeds and spreads to other parts of the country, knowing human nature as I do, I shall not be surprised if such opposition develops. But the power inherent in the idea and the stark necessity of its success will, I believe, take care of any such situation as may arise."

Dr. Fish similarly expressed his belief in the validity and force of the principles involved in the project. "I believe that the deepening of mutual understanding and appreciation which comes with honest Christian fellowship across nations, class and race lines, has power to bridge the chasms of fear and hatred which now separate men from their brothers. In a world torn and bleeding from the ravages of hatred, I still believe that faith in the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man will prevail despite all obstacles and will lead to the final unity of all men, of all nations and races and cultures."

Much remains yet to be done at Fellowship Church. The co-pastors feel that they have barely made a beginning. They plan a series of lecture-recitals at which outstanding artists representing various culture and nationality groups will present for appreciation (not for argument) the artistic contribution of varied peoples. They hope to establish a library with books and current periodicals published by various racial and study groups. Other interests and study groups may be included as the total church program unfolds.

In the forthcoming days of post-war reconstruction, Christian churches must spring up in all parts of America dedicated to the destruction of barriers which hitherto have separated men on the basis of color, culture or race. The development of such a church ideal as that of the Fellowship Church of All People in San Francisco will be one of the most challenging answers of Christianity and democracy to the rising tide of racial bigotry imperiling the common life. The experience of this church should prove that people are, on final analysis, just people, that racial and cultural differences are no longer barriers but broad bridges of intercommunication, that love and obedience to a common Father which all religion inspires should lead all peoples and all races into a common understanding of man's basic dignity and of men's kinship—each with the other—as we move forward into a better, braver, and we hope a happier world.

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## For Meditation

Dr. HOWARD THURMAN,

Co-pastor Fellowship Church of All Peoples, 1359 Pine St.,  
San Francisco, Calif.

When we pray—Thy kingdom come—it is important to remember that the very words assume that there are other kingdoms. Of course there are. There are kingdoms, political, economic—there are private kingdoms, there are ecclesiastical kingdoms.

The crucial question is—to what kingdom am I loyal? If my loyalty is to the kingdom of God I am faced at once with certain very persistent temptations. When I look at the tragedies, the deep abysmal results of human sin in the world of men and in my own life, I am tempted to expend all my energies in indignation. "It is terrible"—"It is awful"—"What an outrage!" I exhaust myself with outcries—my indignation may be righteous but without active repentance. I must not let alarm become a substitute both for repentance and for action. Another temptation is to reduce my exposure to the pain and misery of life by keeping myself from direct contact with it as far as possible. It is so easy to say that we cannot stand to look at ugliness and misery without a nervous breakdown or some other form of mild collapse.—Therefore we purchase our substitutes—special representatives such as secretaries, etc., who will prepare reports on the basis of direct contact. This is good—it saves us from the shock of direct contact. Again and again we are aware of human need without our being affected by it.

It is clear that we must find that which is big enough to absorb us from artificial and ineffective attempts to bring the kingdom of God. We must go beyond outcry and indignation to limitless questings, and validating, to the end that in what we do, where we are, there the Kingdom of God is at hand!

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This is copied from the back of our church bulletin from our morning worship Sept. 2. Dr. Thurman's sermon was "Deep River." The hymn was sung by Joseph James, a Negro with a fine voice and much understanding of the life of his people as an integral part of America. May their numbers grow! This Sunday service gripped us all, so that a French-Scotch friend of mine turned to me with eyes running over, "I can't help bawling," was her blunt excuse. A Negro woman of my own age said, "Now I know what I want, what I have longed for and sought expression for all my life. Deep River is life as it finds its way to the sea." Dr. Thurman is a very poetic nature and he can paint the most wonderful word pictures I have ever "laid eyes on." He has not in vain gone to India to visit and learn from Gandhi and Tagore.—Mari Støttrup.

### San Francisco Spearhead

We are indebted to Mrs. Støttrup for this vivid impression of an important thrust into enemy territory. The enemy being racial bigotry and intolerance. This particular sector of the battle line has long been taboo to practically all churches and their pastors (who might properly be charged with "cowardice in the face of the enemy".) It is obvious that the experience has given Mrs. Støttrup renewed zeal for the battle against injustice and complacency, which has always stirred her nordic blood, and a profound sense of the essential unity of the entire human race, which a life sheltered by mid-west self-sufficiency largely denied her.

Mrs. Støttrup continues in a private letter, which we—contrary to custom—take the liberty to quote in part:

"Dr. Thurman (Negro co-pastor of Fellowship Church) has been invited to lecture at Vassar for the last 10-12 years. Six years ago the college asked him to send them

Negro students. They realized that we must advance in that direction. The Thurmans' 17 year old daughter has now been awarded an \$800.00 scholarship from that institution; so we are moving toward closer collaboration between the races.

"It has been a delightful experience to meet the Negroes. The cultured ones among them are so refined and pleasant that one feels like a half-barbarian by comparison, and wishes one had some of their education and culture. And this is really the point: meeting these cultured Negroes, Japanese and other nationalities enables us to understand and appreciate them all and forget the differences which we thought were obstacles but now prove to be the very thing which makes the fellowship so wonderfully rich.—Now I really feel how closely I am bound to this land of my birth with all its colorful diversity.

"A young Japanese family, returned from a camp in Utah, are especially charming. He was in Y.M.C.A. work before the evacuation. Of their three children two were born in the camp;—the sweetest little tots you can imagine, so lively and charming. . . . I am also greatly attracted by the Chinese children and youth; but they have their own groups so we see them less often.

"A Chinese woman of about 40 and her son took part in one of our services and a picnic afterwards in Golden Gate Park. We felt—at least I did—as if we had always known each other;—as if she might have been Danish! 'The dignity of man,' that is a wonderful objective, and worth our best efforts to bring about its complete realization.

"There is an enormous task before us; but what could be more desirable than to be a part of something with such great possibilities!—and so much work!—also, perhaps, much anxiety and heart-breaking toil."

MARI STØTTRUP.

Thank you, Mari!

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## Freedom

By AAGE MØLLER, Solvang, California

Freedom is the touchy problem in U. S., and that is very good. There was a time when our forebears did not care for freedom. They had assuaged themselves to slave psychology. The manor gave them enough to keep body and soul loosely together. The parson took care of their souls and the king had full charge of government. They were as reluctant in passing out into the fresh air of freedom as were the Israelites in Egypt. Freedom made existence much harder and more complex. As free men they had to take stock of the quality of their own being. They no longer could leave the welfare of their souls entirely to the priest. Choosing a mate became partly their own concern. They were obliged to do some individual thinking in regard to cultivation of soil rearing of children acceptance of philosophies, and management of government.

The food of freedom did not taste well to begin with, but by and by people began to relish the food and now it is bread of life, without which we cannot live. It does not bother us to exist on scarcity of sugar and butter, but we

cannot continue on reduced freedom. Should we sell freedom for comfort and medals we would be dishonest with ourselves.

It is our love of freedom which makes changes of culture form a very sensitive matter. Are we losing the costly pearl or are we securing it by passing into a different set up? What will the Tennessee Valley Association do with our freedom? That question is pertinent because we are rapidly progressing toward a civilization which is founded on that pattern. TVA is one of the most enticing things I know of in U. S. at the present time. Considering the habit mind of farmers, business men, politicians and experts, I must say that the event is incomprehensible. It did happen because new times are forceful, and new models are convincing. The administrators, technicians, laborers, farmers, teachers, etc., who constructed the TVA were by tradition individualistic in their ways, and they are being transformed into cooperators. The interests of farming, engineering, forestry, traffic, health, education, electric power, business, etc., were unified, giving free competition and enterprise a new chance. There is a nucleus in the whole project, that is the Tennessee Valley Authority and that is stronger than special interest. From that goes a line out to each individual.

Does such a collectivized enterprise curtail or stimulate freedom? That is the main question. As far as I can see that question has been the main consideration on part of the TVA builders. The objective has been more personal freedom. My impression is that the technicians and experts, who by profession were stereotyped specialists, gained enormously in freedom. They were released from a cell so that they could see the whole community. There was enlargement in finding their specialty as part of a context. They were set free to associate with people on all areas. Hitherto they had been observers of the game, now they could play in the game. The wholeness of the project helped them to see that their lives consisted of more than a segregated pinhead specialty. They could more readily react to water, woods, animals and human beings.

The farmers along the Tennessee river can enjoy more freedom than they could before. They were enslaved to a constantly increasing poverty, depletion of soil, isolationism and land monopoly. They are free to improve their soil, rebuild their homes, read books, attend meetings, commune with neighbors and develop dignity. They are no longer share-croppers but co-workers with all others, imparted to the association. The leaders have avoided the policy of patronization and coercion. They are now people with many responsibilities and that means freedom.

It is still true that equality and freedom are twin brother. The basis of TVA is land equality. There is no class distinction and monopoly idea in the soil. A rich man may treat his soil better than a poor man can do and get more out of it, but that does not change the nature of the soil. In this nature we find the grass roots of democracy. We must adjust our order to the fact of the soil. Recognition of that fact enhances freedom. It was always hard for class minded people to do that but in course of time it was learned that natural equality produced free diversity. Out of soil equality comes diversity both in plant and human life. That is a mystery; but it speaks for itself. It was equality which liberated people from the thralldom of the goosestep and mannerism. Fraternity is the antidote of

class constringency. Am I to keep my brother within a class enclosure I must impose class decorum on him, but realizing that the person who is next to me consists of the substance which is me, I will fight for him, when anyone tries to deprive him of freedom.

So let us indulge in the prayer, "Give us the bread of the coming day." True collectivism is the direct opposite of all kinds of Junkerism. The nature of soil is indogenous to the nature of the spirit. Let us not forget, however, that the faith of TVA is still a young man who must walk on a narrow ledge with howling wolves to both sides, and freedom is still a value which must be ransomed.

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## " - - According to the Flesh"

By HOLGER J. KOCH

Perhaps the greatest single cause for man's unhappiness in what he habitually refers to as "this vale of tears" has been his insistence upon being a thing apart from the rest of creation, of being by divine appointment raised above the functions of natural law, the immutable law of cause and effect. That there is that in man which permits him to live a life not of the flesh, not of the world; a soul, a spirit or by whatever name is obvious to most. It accounts for his religion, his philosophy, his hopes and visions; and, you may add: his salvation. But that does not change the fact that according to the flesh he is a true child of nature and as such, and within the bounds of his physical life, subject to all the laws and limitations governing natural existence. It is obviously a tragic misunderstanding when practically all religions ascribe to man an independent and privileged position within nature's domain by giving his very being, his every natural function as an organism: his birth, his growth, reproduction and death a special, extra-natural significance, governed by other laws,—superior and sometimes antagonistic,—to the natural law of the "lower creation". This misconception has placed him in the impossible situation of being both subject to and not subject to the laws of physical existence, of being slave and master, governed and governor all at the same time.

Since the day man became aware of his curiously unique position in creation, this attempt to view his entire existence, its fortunes and vicissitudes, as having special significance, as being "in the world" but not really "of the world", has caused him unending grief, confusion and inner conflict. As time passed he acquired gods and spirits who were to supervise and make such alterations in the functions of nature as best suited his purposes and physical well-fare, giving special attention to the fertility of his fields and flocks, to his fishing and hunting, and, generally to advance his private interests and confuse his rivals and enemies by scrambling all natural laws and picking out only such bits as served the immediate purpose. That, in effect, was the idea; but, of course, the system worked out badly; the gods proved to be no less fickle than unimproved nature, and had to be mollified; cajoled, bribed and flattered into taking an active interest in his fortunes,—and then gave him only the sketchiest of service anyway.

The centuries have done little to change this fond

dream of a preferred status for man in the scheme of things. Instead of numerous gods the so-called "Christian civilization" looks to a benevolent Providence to insure man's separatist position of special privileges in the midst of a world bound by iron law. An ironic twist is given the situation in that the same civilization's truly magnificent advances in scientific and technical discoveries and inventions are based in every respect on the absolute unchangeableness of natural laws. Even the minutest, unpredictable and unaccountable change in this law would throw the entire scientific system into utter confusion—and yet, for himself and his little private schemes, man expects this fine balance to be completely upset to serve his momentary needs. Fervent prayers are offered for special dispensations against draught, against floods and fires, and against every natural phenomenon which, at any given time, threatens the plans and well-being of the individual or the tribe; and, of course, at every point against the greatest of all threats against his fortunes: DEATH, until old age or misfortune makes life of such doubtful benefit that nature is at last and reluctantly permitted to take its course.

Some day man is going to have the intellectual honesty to take his place where he belongs, according to the flesh, as of one nature with all animal creation; subject to the same laws, the same blessings and misfortunes as all forms of life; to be born and to die on equal terms with all living things. The impossible situation which arises by denying man's essential kinship with nature, and his demand to have his existence governed by special "lawless" dispensation inevitably leads to such moral and intellectual confusion, such a feeling of warring against "the fates" that man for all practical purposes ceases to be a rational being. His days are wasted in false hopes and crushing despair. He accomplishes nothing by throwing his will and desires against unyielding universal order except partial or total intellectual and moral disintegration to which the present tragic state of mankind bears ample testimony.

The laws that govern all creation, including man's physical existence, are apparently amoral, neither "good" nor "evil". They are not malicious, but neither are they partial to man's wishes or idealistic ambitions. Nature has no sinister motive in not permitting every seed to reach fruition or in blighting man's fondest hopes. Death may come "untimely" to all forms of life in spite of all precautions;—so be it; it probably isn't important anyway.

Having accepted these laws and limitations for his physical life with such good grace as he is capable of, man may then proceed, unhampered by despair and frustration, with his spiritual life: his religion and philosophy, his artistic creativeness and enjoyment, and, best of all, his absolute loyalty to moral or divine principles. He is here beyond the pale of natural law. He is a free agent,—at least as free as loyalty and faith can make him. He can be faithful and live or he can be faithful and die,—it's all the same; only the faithfulness matters.

Having unequivocally cast his lot with spiritual life and principles, man may cast off all bondage to natural law; but he must, of course, at the same time relinquish all claims to nature's ordinary solicitude for her own. Placing himself "above the law" he invites the punitive function of the same law visited upon every creature that

withdraws from its fellowship. Contrary to the usual wishful thinking this law is not interfered with by "superior" powers. Anyone risking his life—or being made to risk his life—in defense of his country or his principles will be held implacably to his bargain. His life is forfeit without immunity if the dice so fall. He accepted those terms and they are enforced impartially upon EVERYONE. No one can quarrel with the justice of that. In plain language: to invoke divine protection for the life of the soldier on the battlefield is a vain attempt to evade accepting the risk agreed upon, and it is as unworthy as it is useless.

War, of course, is a poor example of a physical risk accepted for a spiritual gain. The risk is sought reduced to a minimum by trading the possible spiritual gain for the most destructive means of self-preservation. So even in victory no spiritual end is gained.

But for those who wish to assert their freedom from nature's bondage—as a handful of magnificent persons have through history—there is complete freedom of opportunity. They are almost certain to die young, but what of it? The plight of the world has been caused by too many people living uselessly to a ripe old age!

Perhaps some day man will prove his vaunted "superiority" by rising above the lower creation's struggle for survival and live, not by bread alone, but by spirit and truth. He will have no need for violence then, nor for fear and jealousy and suspicion. Nothing "in the world" CAN harm him and nothing outside WILL.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Ritual, art, poesy, drama, music, dance, philosophy, science, myth, religion, are accordingly all as essential to man as his daily bread. . . . There is no poverty worse than that of being excluded, by ignorance, by insensibility, or by a failure to master the language, from the meaningful symbols of one's culture: those forms of social deafness or blindness are truly death to the human personality.

— From Lewis Mumford's "Condition of Man."

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## The Corn Song

At a time when the most frequently heard songs — dance music lyrics—vie for top honors in witless inanities we are happy to bring a little song which the farmer or the gardener can hum when they tread the soft, pungent soil of spring or gather in the earth's abundance at harvest time. It may help to remind them that the kernels dropped hill by hill are not so many slugs dropped in a slot machine in the hope of hitting the jack-pot, but a solemn act in the ritual of Life. It behooves the man of the soil to keep his thoughts pure and charitable when he invokes the earth to work again her miracle of fruitfulness.

The melody is composed by a full-time home-maker who, like the soil, enjoys nothing more than to create and to give. We look forward to the day when all artistic creations cease to be commercial products hawked on the market place and become free gifts, freely shared.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Corn

Lyrics by Lalia Mitchell Thornton

Music by Sylvia Schmidt Esbeck

Moderato

Fur-row by fur-row, the brown earth lies Un-der the blue of the spring-time skies,

Mea-sure by mea-sure, the ker-nels fall In soil made rea-dy to feed them all.

One for the ground damp, one for the drought, One for the bo-rer's ban-dit mouth,

One for the coun-tries that must be fed, and one for ma-king our own corn bread

Dews that shine in the morning sun,  
Showers that dance when the day is done,  
Heat that strengthens as summer goes,  
Stalks that tassel down even rows;

One for the field mouse, one for the crow,  
One that the pigs may fatter grow,  
One for a needy nation's weal  
And one for grinding to make us meal.

Leaves of the maple turning gold,  
Frost ere the month is ten days old,  
Nature's largess and toil of man,  
Shocks of corn where the furrows ran.

One for the silo, tramp it down,  
One for the country, one for the town,  
One for the hungry poor who roam,  
And one for the loaf we bake at home.

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