

# The Vanguard American

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## American Nomadism

HAROLD PETERSEN, Ringsted, Iowa

At long last, our boys are coming home. For months the cry has come from army camps and distant battlefields, "We want to go home." Probably never before in our brief American history has this cry been more pronounced. Even our pioneer forefathers separated as they were from their native land were spared some of the longing for home in their intense preparation for new homes in the new land. It is certain that never before in our history have there been so many who have realized that the United States is their Land, that some spot in this country is home, that some landscape is dearer than all the beauty spots they may have seen, and that some people in some community is their people.

It seems strange that this great land of ours which not long ago was settled by men and women who were seeking a new freedom and a home to call their own has witnessed an amazingly great multitude of nomads. Nomadism is certainly a distinctive American trait. However, in our earlier history the wandering multitude was largely seeking to find a home. And they did find it and settled down and American communities were founded. In the past few decades, however, something else has prompted the great mass migration of people. The spirit has not been to build homes, it has had no concept of community life; it has seemingly been that of gaining a fortune in a hurry, be independent, and live on Easy Street. The early nomadism had as its goal, "Every man a kingdom." The latter has rather followed the pattern of the late Huey Long, "Every man a king." To become a king, the value of home, mother earth, community, and one's own people have been defied. In these years while the boys far away began to realize what home meant, the nomadic fever here at home reached an all time high pitch. Everywhere people were pulling stakes rushing for the alluring pay checks of government jobs. That, united with the long education of getting away

from the soil to live in cities, has been a severe jolt to American community life and to America. Community life and Americanism belong together. All the noble visions inherent in American life have been fostered by an earth bound people who sensed the meaning of "My home, my community, and my people."

Therefore, the cry for home from the distant battlefields came to us like a new song full of life and promise. Was this cry, perhaps, an American cry? Is it probably not also a cry which long has been checked in the hearts of many who have fallen for the alluring advertisements of easy life in the midst of bright city lights? How many haven't gone year after year wishing they were back home and have not dared to express it? How many a man has there not been who ached to feel the good earth between his fingers again? Is it possible that this cry of the American G. I. will sink into the heart of the roaming, restless millions of American citizens who long have lived in apartments or in trailer camps; who have not known neighbors and who have not had a spot to call their own?

Nomadism has been strong in America but it is not that type of freedom which has built America. The true American soul is rooted in the American soil. It is the lofty American dream of freedom and equality married to the New England woods, the southern plantations, the plains of the middle west, and the great ranches of the far west, which gave birth to American democracy, the American creed of liberty and justice for all, and the noble leaders of whom we are justly proud.

Long ago the American people learned to stand together as one when it came to fighting any power from the outside which threatened our freedom. But we have not been quick to observe the menacing tentacles of big business with its corporations, glaring advertisements, and educational propaganda within our own borders which gradually has reached out into every distant American community to draw them unto itself. While land was still plentiful the tendency was to pull stakes and move west to start over again. This habit of running away became the eventual doom of the American community and with it also the spring-board for American democracy. While Americans were running away from home (a home often

mortgaged for big business) the forces in America which sought only its selfish ends were gaining more and more ground. The day came when too many Americans believed that they, too, could become the big fellows by getting a high school education and a city job. The city with its false promises gobbled up American youth. There the old spirit of working together and living together was lost in the big business attitude of every man for himself. Gradually this city spirit worked its way into the rural communities. Not only were the cities taking away the men of the soil, they were also bringing big business to the country. The big city with its money-bought attractions, its bright and gay lights, and all its sensuality became the pattern for American life. The city in the new era of the automobile was never far away.

Let us look at some of the results. First, community life has all but disappeared. Until our boys began speaking of home a large percent of our people had forgotten that they belong to a community. They had just been in the habit of going—spending money on gas, movies, hundred dollar dance orchestras, and road houses. Seldom do people get together anymore as a community group. Community characteristics have disappeared and all have become city modeled—or Hollywood modeled.

Our pioneer forefathers understood the richness of community life. When they came to America they carried their old community habits with them. But they did more—they settled in new communities and there developed new modes of life, a new culture, and new patterns. In the Danish communities the Danish language was predominant and also certain traditions and ways of life. Yet, it was definitely no longer Denmark. Let us note that while these Danes carried a wealth of songs from Denmark, they were not satisfied in singing the old songs; they sang the new ones born out of the new and living community life in which they had their homes. The songs of F. L. Grundtvig, Dan, and Ostergaard, while written in Danish, were expressing the new spirit of the new community. The tragedy today is not that we no longer sing our Danish songs; the tragedy is that our community life is no longer strong enough to create new ones. Our community life has not grown to new heights with new songs.

Secondly, the home has lost its importance. The high divorce rate may be alarming but still more serious is the fact that in a large percent of our homes there is no home life. We cannot build a home if we never live there. There is little to choose between a trailer house and an apartment except, perhaps, the latter has room for better beds. Man, uprooted, does not build a home. A home is also earth bound—so much that man wants to be there, live there, gather his family there, work, and even die there. Moving from one furnished apartment to another never creates roots that can build future generations. Common home backgrounds mean far more for the welfare of the future generation than our big business culture will admit. Much attention is given to children receiving orange juice and vitamins, school training and a bit of Sunday school but little attention is given to the task of providing a home atmosphere and a home culture for them. One cannot give such if one is nearly always away from home.

My third glaring observation pertains to the breakdown of morals. I do not believe that the most eloquent, moralistic sermons, the most stringent laws nor the best

lessons in psychology will turn the tide before we get back to community pride with its community responsibility. Community life creates community pride, community pride creates a pride in ones self. To be stationed in a community only for a short period generally means to get all one can for himself and give nothing. If we regain the true sense of belonging to a community we will regain the desire to build that community to where it stands as a proud example to any in the world. Only such an attitude can bring a change in our present loose morals.

A fourth result has been the disappearance of a forceful religious note in America. The religious note was strong in our earlier history. Today American churches are fighting for their existence and spending great sums to build up in outer appearance to make up for what they lack in inner vitality. Thus the spirit of "big money" which did so much to draw people away from their communities has also gained control of the churches. Neither a dominant city culture nor a roaming, irresponsible population develop religious depths. As man is earth bound, so is also the church. There cannot be a living church without a living community. The church has been a dominant factor in shaping the American way of life. It is because it was in the center of our communities. There an already existent earthly fellowship found its fullest expression. Fellowship means human hearts drawn close together; Christian fellowship is our human fellowship awakened to God's love for all mankind. Our churches today reflect so little life largely because men are strangers to one another. A need for common worship can only grow out of a common struggle with the forces of life about us. I still believe that the living church will find sinners, poor folks, and the men of earth finding their way to an acknowledgements of God's love and grace before those who pay for the nice pews and pipe organs.

The American Church at its best has always been a community church. It makes little difference whether we call it Danish or German, or Lutheran or Methodist. The point is that it was the religious expression of a people closely knitted together in community living. I am Danish Lutheran only because I lived in a Danish Lutheran community. To break with it and suddenly join another would be to break with the roots that have nourished me. If there is ever to come a new religious movement in America which will unite the people it will have to be in harmony with the deep religious tones of the past as well as in harmony with the community living which I am confident will prompt it. Personally, I do not believe that denominationalism can survive if a new and strong community life comes. Only the community church gives me hope for a new religious emphasis in America. The community church may some day lay the foundation for an American folk church.

The emphasis of home and community has been strong in American pioneer life. The cry from the battlefields may be the first strong note designating that we, the people of America, are, after all, rooted somewhere to some definite place and people. To thousands, the city is no home, it is some spot far away with a bit of land and trees. The apartment house is a lodging but not a home. The golf course is a place for exercise but not the hills and the creeks where we once found life so beautiful. Some day, I believe, the migration will be back to the land—back to the very spot which always seemed so dear to Father or Grandfather—

back to the spot which they left when the city offered so much. Back there in the good earth lies a history, the history of the pioneer. There, too, lies the songs now forgotten in the jazz which must sell. There on the land man may again get the feel of the good earth, the feeling that this is my land, my home, my people. Here we may regain the passion for life, the desire for real freedom, the real feeling of wanting to live there and to die there.

That fervent longing for home from our American G. I.'s may only be a beginning. It may take generations to get back. But it may yet prove that the beginning is here. It may be a new awakening of the dignity of men. The feeling of having a place to call one's own—a home and a plot of land—is so great that if the movement once comes it will gain speed. The big corporations and the money powers which long have ruled will then be doomed. The American city will again be sparked by a live rural community. Some day we will cease running away but fight for what we feel is rightfully ours—our homes and our communities.

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## Corruption at the Source

Cpl. OTTO N. LARSEN, Lowry Field, Colo.

"... Are we working as hard to increase the standard of living of our own people as we did to destroy the cruel might of the master racist aggressors?"—Henry Wallace.

Has anyone here seen Hipi?

He's the biased boy whose purple tongue utters with invective such terms as "dago", "kike", "limey", "hunky" and "suarehead." Often, however, his poisonous message is introduced in much more subtle expression.

Army orientation audiences are getting acquainted with this character who had become a symbol of bigotry in America. Hipi is portrayed as a green monster with a large nose—for other people's business. He has big ears—to catch every rumor, and a big mouth to pass the rumors along. His eyes are beady and his hair is on end with emotion.

The birth of Hipi is dramatized in readily understandable (and some would say significant) terms. A scientist had distilled in bottles the essence of four base elements: Hate, Ignorance, Prejudice, Intolerance. An assistant accidentally mixes the four. And Hipi—his name compounded from the initial letters of the four elements—is born in a clap of thunder.

He proceeds at once to dirty work, sowing seeds of misunderstanding, unreasoned hostility and blind prejudice. He starts trouble between employers and workers, between soldiers and civilians, between minority and majority groups. His combustion creates tension great as any faced by mortal mind.

How to eliminate the contagion of Hipi's "maginot mentality" is the most challenging problem in our land today!

The outlook is not bright. Under the cloak of official immunity a U. S. Senator writes insulting and cowardly "My dear Dago" letters spreading a divisive gospel at public expense . . . A large Eastern University announces a "quota system" which strictly limits the number of Jewish

students who are permitted to enroll . . . West Coast racists, economic opportunists, and bar-room vigilantes continue incidents of violence against returning Americans of Japanese descent . . . As the ranks of the unemployed grow race tension mounts in cities like Detroit and Philadelphia; INSECURITY WILL ALWAYS FIND A SCAPEGOAT . . . High school students in Chicago and Gary, Ind., go on strike for Jim Crow schools . . . Both major parties endorsed a permanent FEPC during the last election and yet no Congressional action . . . Less spectacular incidents could be cited, incidents that involve you and me, in our homes, on the streets, and even in our places of Worship . . .

Unless there is more "conversion" in reconversion to peacetime America another "lost generation" will repeat the failures of the '20's and '30's in more disastrous cycles!

The war was not fought to "preserve" democracy, and our way of life is not "safe" because the victory is won. We have but gained another chance to adapt the practices of democracy to the realities of the world modern technology has created.

Can we discover in our own experiences that which was revealed to the world centuries ago: the brotherhood of man?

Just as the terrible potency of the atomic bomb is harmless without the intervention of human energizing will, so it is equally true that the vapid furies of human hatred, greed, and jealousies are similarly impotent without the tacit or expressed power imparted by human thinking or human action.

Men are now eagerly awaiting their turn to be discharged from the service. In evaluating their many experiences the most marked general observation is how, in spite of differences, they have learned "to get along with the next fellow." However, the fear expressed most often is that this sense of unity will soon be lost when each individual is returned to a highly competitive, pressure-group, civilian environment.

The veteran of this war knows from intimate acquaintance that the victory was won by the combined efforts of men from every race, color and creed. He knows that the massiveness of American power is the great new fact of the modern world. And he will give hearty support to any program that will protect this power from being corrupted at its source.

The practice of discrimination against racial and religious minorities and the atomic bomb cannot long co-exist.

If we do not destroy the one, the other will destroy us all.

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## Baccalaureate Sermon

AAGE MØLLER, Solvang, Calif.

Delivered at Veteran Hall, Solvang, Calif., May 27, 1945

Luke 24:13-32

An American preacher has written a book called "Christ on the American Road." I have taken possession of that title and will use it tonight. We are all walking or driving on the American road, and our minds are far ahead of our

bodies and vehicles. My mind has always been a migrant. The homes, communities, and institutions to which I have belonged have tried to check and hold it; but they failed. What little property I had was taxed, but not so my mind.

I sat in a class room one day. The most capable teacher of the Teachers College was teaching constitutional history. He was adept at tracing constitutions back to their primitive origin and he mixed dry facts with juicy wit. The dear professor could, however, not arrest my mind, nor could my sense of duty. It went its own way. All of a sudden I heard faint music. Gradually it became more audible. Discovering that a tune which I heard in childhood was played I gave up constitutional history for good.

It is possible that my mind was homesick and sought a bit of memory which could soothe it. Or it is possible that it had come to a fork where it had to choose between jurisdiction and poetry. Whichever it was, it was out hunting and it found what it wanted.

Many other examples of the roaming mind could I give you; but this one example is relevant to you. I hear and read much to the effect that in spite of all optimism there is an embryonic renaissance in the minds of American youth at the present time. Renaissance means that we go back to discern something which we forgot, neglected or refused to take along. We realize that we cannot progress unless we find it and take it along. The era of rationalism had to go back a thousand years to find poetry. People would have succumbed to drouth if they had not made the find. Pre-reformation people had to go way back in order to find the rudiments of art and the New Testament.

We thought we could fly and jump ahead, using the fabulous amount of power, which was made available, without taking moral principles along and without knowing our own lineage. Now we find that power cannot be used unless we give justice in human relationships a first place. It is also clear that we must know ourselves better if we are to use and control power. So we journey back, seeking values and lost trails. One of the Negro leaders tells us in his biography that that he had only one clue to his own lineage. It was a little song of grace in the old vernacular. It aroused in him a nostalgia, and when he found the little African village from which he presumably stemmed, he experienced a sense of wholeness and equanimity which he hitherto had lacked. It was that experience which made Du Bois a great American. A teacher at our college (Santa Barbara) told me that in his Missouri boyhood he could utter only one Norwegian sentence "Tak for Maten." It was enough to evoke a quest for knowledge about himself. What a release it was when he did find the life line in his own being.

It is fifty-four years ago since I started to go to school. I keenly remember that in those days the policy of schools was to wean children away from their background. From the standpoint of American unification the policy was feasible and justifiable, but in the course of time there is no policy, no law and no institution which can stop the mind from judging and knowing itself. Therefore it is natural and inevitable that we journey homeward for a while.

You hear about the so-called middle ages. From 500 to 1000 B. C. European people moved away from the culture of the Roman Empire forming a new culture. As soon

as they got on their way they simultaneously started to make staffs for a return pilgrimage. We resemble them, but it is not necessary for us to travel back to villages and cities in Europe, Asia and Africa. We can find our past at home. Anyone who will steadily take a dive in the American river can find himself in it. It has all been deposited in that river. We can find our Asiatic, African and European heritage in the American language, music, literature, social science and folk-ways. We can also find the God who is not a magician but a moral God in that river.

If we are to become American citizens who are so wholesome, that we do not have to advertise ourselves, we must get into the habit of taking that dive. We do form a new type and we are a part of it; but we need much more dignity and much more homology. A person who is at home and rooted is free to go ahead. I know that sounds odd, but it is true. Having found ourselves, we can make progress in harnessing the rivers, restoring the soil, fitting our economy to the grass roots of democracy, adjusting schools to basic needs and sweeping our race inferiority complexes away. We can also attain freedom to fly over our constitutional borders into all parts of the world, trying to understand all the peoples sympathetically. The reason why Willkie and Roosevelt could do that was that they were at home in America.

Even all that will not satisfy the mind. It will keep on traveling. Such is the human mind. It seeks that which the brains cannot comprehend and that which to the rational thinker is unattainable, the realm of the spirit.

In our scripture lesson we read about two men walking on the road. They talked intimately about the events of their days and they were sorely perplexed, alternating between gloomy pessimism and quivering hopes. The Christ of Authority came to them. They did not know him at first, but he gave them what they needed, understanding of history, clarity and vision in regard to the future, conviction in regard to the power of God.

Thus will Christ come to you on the road. Where a person is trying to know himself, there is Christ. Where he seeks freedom from the false kind of bondage, there is Christ. Where man seeks energy and courage to take one step ahead, there is Christ. I am speaking about the Christ who has authority to say "You are ransomed."

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## A Folk-Life Fellowship

MARI STØTTRUP

Once a month the past year I have been given a refreshing renewal as a child of the Scandinavian people who came to the land of opportunity with work-willing hands and a singing heart, and therefore easily became an integral part of this country.

I thank Kochs for their earnest desire to help us to re-dedicate ourselves in the effort to serving and uniting with all Americans in the task that now is ours toward a better understanding of freedom and dignity of all men and women in the whole world.

Kochs have asked me to write about one of the new ventures which I am happy to have taken my share in as a member for the past year and a half.

Alfred Fisk, a teacher of philosophy in the S. F. School of religion, a world traveler, and a Rhodes scholar, and several friends felt a need was growing urgent, as the war progressed and hatred flared to further the war effort, for the church to take a leading stand in bringing together the many races and religions of this seaport, where people from all over the world were living as Americans and yet unhampered in their many different folkways. A call was sent out for all who wished to take part in the unfolding of such a new fellowship of all creeds and colors in a local paper and a group met for the first time the 10th of December, 1943, in a house vacated for the duration of the war by a large family of Japanese people who had been pastor of a Christian group with the first floor of what had 50 years ago been one of the fine residences for church auditorium or assembly room.

The Presbyterian church financed this for the first year and one half when it was unanimously voted to go on as an unaffiliated church group, that we might grow freely and develop without any restrictions. It seemed a foolhardy thing to do. And it caused a few gasps of apprehension to think that we were cutting off a flow of some \$4,000 and we were all in need of drawing closer together.

A woman of Quaker background was sure that if this was work dedicated to God's work among his many children we would not be left waiting and vanquishing any more than the Hebrews in front of the waters of the Red Sea. And we chose a committee of nine men and women to work out a commitment and stayed after church a half hour the following Sundays to hear what they had deliberated during their weekly evening session. It was very interesting to note how earnestly they had labored—and also that this was only a beginning—it was as a life expression which they realized would probably sooner or later be outgrown—Without vision the people perish!

You may ask why this work should be so expensive an undertaking? For this reason. Two pastors were needed so that colored and white would feel at home—all races must meet under equality and cooperation. Therefore a guest speaker this summer called it the only church of its kind in America—and possibly the world. All races meet there on equal ground.

It is stressed repeatedly. Speakers from other denominations are frequently asked to address the group on Sundays and our monthly evening dinners. During the conference of fifty nations this past summer we met and heard many of the leading men from other countries. You may see pictures in Life magazine some time taken as we were assembled for our morning worship with one of these men as guest speaker.

The choir is also mixed—the solo each Sunday is sung by some one of the same shaded skin as the pastor's who preaches the sermon. We enjoy the whole service. The Lord's Prayer being the center of our prayer service which is always conducted by the other pastor who takes the sermon service the next Sunday.

Never has "Our Father" been shared so warmly and fervently as by this group of all races.

The last few months has seen more and more Japanese young people attend. The secretary of the church is a young Japanese Nisei woman. One of the most radiant faces is that of Totamo—father of three lovely children, two of whom were born in a relocation center in Utah.

Rev. Kawamorita who filled the pulpit and told the story of one of his friends, who begged his parents to let him enlist and fight for his country, spoke with a distinct accent, but all were deeply moved at the heroism and understanding of this young Nisei who gave his life for the cause which so many of our young men of Danish parentage also laid theirs for as an offering. Hearing about and meeting people of Japanese ancestry assures us that we have so much in common that we need not fear but rather look forward to a much better world if we do not withhold our understanding and cooperation in getting them to feel at home among us.

The fellowship teaches us something that we would eventually learn, but why deprive ourselves of the wonderful experience? Many may say: I don't know how to get experience. Yes, you can do it through reading. And I can't help myself in suggesting to you to try finding a quarterly magazine called "Common Ground," 222 Fourth Ave, New York 3, New York. Here we may read about our neighbors of all races. There is a brand new semi-monthly paper called "Now," 1899 W. Jefferson Boulevard, Los Angeles 7, Calif., price 2.50—\$2.00 a year. It makes a good present for any of our young folks, and I believe here is one place where young and old will meet on common ground.

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## Bon Voyage, Arild, and Good Luck!

(The following is an excerpt from a letter to the editor from C. Arild Olsen, who is about to embark for Germany with a personal message from that America which believes that whatever hope there may be for mankind in the future must be based on mutual good-will and understanding at home and abroad.)

As you may know, I've been asked to accept a task related to problems of rebuilding what we have been engaged in destroying. I have been urged to accept this task because of certain beliefs I have and experiences I've shared. I believe that at the core of reconstruction lies the need for a new heart and a new mind, that the resources for rehabilitation lie not in the hands of civil or military administrators, but in the light, the love, the power revealed and provided in life lived in the spirit of fellowship and community. I believe that what happens in Europe tomorrow is crucial, but no more so than what takes place in the communities of America today. Fellowship is one and indivisible. We have a world mission but it cannot be realized in Germany unless it is realized here. We cannot prescribe directives for "conquered" peoples which do not also bind us. And our means must be similar in spirit and method to the ends we seek, non-violent, if it is to be a peaceful world, righteous, if it is to be just.

I know that I face many difficulties, and I have been encouraged to believe that our fellowship is larger and more vital than we often realize. I have discovered these last months that the democratic leadership within Germany looks to the regeneration of community life on a democratic basis in all aspects as the pathway to the new life which will arise.

May your continued efforts be fruitful and reach an ever-increasing number of homes and communities.

Arild.

## For Meditation

Dr. HOWARD THURMAN

The quest for freedom looms larger and larger on the horizon of modern man. It is brought more sharply into focus than ever before perhaps, because of the ever tightening grip of the machine. Vast areas of life that once were fashioned and operated by a kind of rough creativity on the part of man are now completely routinized by the machine. Leisure is becoming more and more inescapable and compulsory. Because it is compulsory, leisure is apt to be tyrannical and boring. To be able to win a span of leisure by juggling one's responsibilities and choosing here and rejecting there, all of this yields a certain fundamental sense of freedom for the individual. Basically, freedom is a sense of alternatives. Where there is no alternative, there is no freedom. It means the privilege of option. Note that I say the privilege of option. The option need not be taken, for it may often be sufficient to know that one has an option. It is this sense of alternative that is freedom. If I had no alternative then I could not be free. Therefore, if my freedom were perfect, absolute, it would be equivalent to slavery. Wherever human beings are denied the exercise of option, they are not free. It is confined to no particular aspect of life but is quite inclusive. "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." The spirit of truth and the spirit of freedom are the same; for the truth is found only in the presence of alternatives. At long last it may be terribly accurate that paradox is the test of reality.

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## The Fellowship Group as the Way to a New Society

ARTHUR E. MORGAN

The primary group is the ancient and original unit of society. Its development and persistence is strikingly similar to that of a cell. Just as complex plants and animals have developed, not by dissolving the individual cells into large masses of protoplasm, but by maintaining the identity of the structure and the functions of the individual cells, and by bringing about their interrelation and unity; so the larger units of society generally can be sound only as the identity and normal life of primary groups is maintained in full health and vigor. For the primary group to disintegrate is disastrous both for the individual and to society. A person needs the primary group to give him an intimate sense of fellowship, an emotional security, and a feeling of significance. Society needs the primary group because that is where good citizenship, ethical standards, and emotional poise are born and nurtured.

The small community is the greatest conserving force in human affairs, preserving the existing basic culture from generation to generation. The fellowship group, on the other hand, is committed to achieving some distinctive purpose or a distinctive way of life not yet accepted by society in general. It has been one of the chief means by which new concepts of life and culture have been in-

roduced into the prevailing mores. What the fellowship group achieves and introduces into the social mores, the small community treasures and preserves.

To a degree which is not generally recognized it has been by the fellowship groups that society has been changed, religiously, politically, and socially. Not only are ideas altered, but concepts have been given emotional vitality by the shared convictions of the small group.

In the fellowship group we have a method, deeply rooted in the fabric of humanity, for working out a way of life as it relates to the individual, the family, the community, the state, and to the community of nations. The great value of this method has not been generally recognized, and is only gradually being discovered. In it we have a fundamental and powerful instrument for desirable social change. The conscious development and wide use of fellowship groups can become a chief method of democratic social evolution.

We need not mourn that we are not in the seats of the mighty, or that our careful, thought-out letters to Presidents and Congressmen only count in the adding machine totals for and against. In the primary group we live at the source of society. Any few of us through a fellowship group can work at defining and putting in practice a way of life adequate for the new day. In association with other such groups we can develop a network of relationships which, so far as it has worth and vigor, may become the fabric of the new world.—From lecture delivered at Conference of the Post-War American Community at Antioch college, Yellow Springs, Ohio, July, 1945.

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## The Sermon on the Mount

AAGE MØLLER

There was panel discussion at Union High School on the proposed compulsory military conscription. All the conventional arguments were called in on the arena. A year of military service will be so beneficial to young men. They will get a chance to see the world and mingle with people from all parts. To make the camps safe the churches and other institutions must get busy building a moral fence around them. Military conscription is one way of solving unemployment. We do of course expect a world authority to be established but until that happens we must certainly be prepared to the hilt.

Amidst all the argumentation a woman reminded us of Pearson's suggestion that we could start to use the sermon on the mount. Another party on the panel took it up and linked it with the atomic energy. It could be that the two belong together. It has now happened that unmeasurable new energies have been handed to man for weal or woe, for annihilation or resurrection. It could be that those energies come from the same source as does the sermon on the mount, and that they are inseparable. It could be plain common sense to say that those energies can be used only in the atmosphere of the sermon. It could be that now the energies have been released the time has come for using the sermon.

Can we use the energies unless a social moral science surpasses our technical skill, and what else can such science do than substantiate what Jessu said. The indestruc-

tible laws of a moral life must be heeded if we are to enter a realm of goodness. We must heed them as we heed gravitation. The pretentious attitude of the Pharisee is invalid.

It is needful to come to terms with enemies. Once we have fully admitted that any human being is a human being, we can creep out of our prejudices and start to find out what are the motives of our enemies. Again and again will we find new regions and make new discoveries.

In order to do that it is needful to transcend animalism in sex life, everywhere. And among all people. Else we sink down into a pool of filth in which all capacity for understanding disappears. No longer can we use the degradation of sex which goes with militarism.

Can atomic energy be positively used except by people who have become scientific in their expression, so that a yes is a yes and a no a no. Words may err; but the author is reliable, for he is at any moment ready to admit the error.

Will anything less suffice in my relationship with enemies than a generosity which can take more spite than they can hand out to me.

An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. That is the military code. It doesn't work any more, and it is unuseable in conjunction with atomic energy. Gandhi has understood this quite well. He does not sick the policemen

on people who have stolen his chickens, for he finds that he is the most guilty. He never fabricates a scapegoat.

The competitive parade is out of place among brothers. People who work together do not placard their good deeds in order to outnumber the other party. There is a satisfaction in cooperation, which makes the show an absurdity.

There is no room for almsgiving among people who recognize that they are basically equals.

With the use of atomic energy we will have to be united in a good creative will. Only thus can we anticipate a spiritual realm in which the old curse called debt is not to be found.

Money and atomic energy cannot collaborate. The religion of mammon excludes the gift of healing, music, science, teaching, prophecy. It prevents man from living with plants, stars, animals, human beings and the unseen world. It is destructive. If we are to use atomic energy we must cease to use our monetary system.

The nationalistic military way of looking at the speck in the enemies' eyes ignoring the beam in one's own eye, will not do in an atomic age.

Are we to use the new energies we must seek, search and knock on the door which leads into unknown areas. An ever growing knowledge of man himself, of all ethnic groups, of the spiritual realm is an imperative necessity.

## According to the Spirit

HOLGER J. KOCH

Marvelous and foresighted nature provides man not alone with a body but with all the necessary automatic mechanisms and instincts for its growth and preservation. A minimum of responsibility is left to the discretion of the individual, otherwise he does best to keep out of nature's way and not to botch her work with clever and dangerous improvements. From its inception to its end the body will make its wants known, and to satisfy them nature has made ample provision. Except for the fact that man in the course of his development has added a considerable number of elements to his natural wants, some unnecessary, some downright detrimental to his well-being, his physical existence would require only a minimum of labor and attention and free him for the far more important function of developing a spiritual personality and an organic and harmonious society which obviously is his destiny, even if his behavior at present seems to deny any such implication. Feeding his body and supplying all its wants can never make it more than an efficient dwelling place for his spirit; pampering and the creation and satisfaction of artificial wants only tend to destroy its efficiency and to change a willing servant into a domineering master whose every whim must be honored until even man's spirit must be pressed into service to minister to its mounting demands.

Relieved of such unprofitable and needless responsibility man's spirit should likewise grow and unfold with a similar simplicity of needs and economy of wants of his body. To grow in spiritual quality and stature, THAT is the object of his living; when he loses sight of that he forfeits his right to his place of eminence in creation as in the

scheme of things. As a spiritual being he is not only unique in creation but in harmony with himself, happy, generous and without fear, master of himself and keeper of his brothers.

This spiritual world of imagination, idealism, beauty, truth, compassion, fellowship, creative activity, is as richly abundant in fruitfulness as the good earth in food for the body, far more satisfying and with no bitter dregs on the bottom of the cup. And yet, man dares not free his spirit for this experience to which he is created. He is so beset by elemental fears for his corporeal security that he dares not shift his gaze from the material things upon which his body depends for fear that they vanish and leave him without bread, or that his neighbor steal a march on him unbeknownst. So rather than risk material insecurity he employs his gift for sublime spiritual activity to no greater purpose than to gild and garnish the food upon his table and calls it a "standard of living".

Having thus first robbed himself of the goodness of life, man then turns to rob his fellow-men; untrue to himself he must then be false to every man. His every anti-social act and attitude: his fears, suspicion, envy, hatred, greed and injustice all spring from this initial betrayal of his own spirit. After this every plan, every scheme to create justice, harmony and fellowship among men on the basis of individual self-interest must fail and fail again until man makes his peace with himself by freeing his spirit from materialistic slavery. Having shackled his spirit to his fear and greed he is unable to give; being unable to give he cannot receive, thus heaping poverty upon poverty. Man's inhumanity to man is the bitter fruit that springs from his disloyalty to himself.

It is a vicious circle and a dead-lock; but it can be broken. The evil is at least within reach and we know what it is. Had man been up against a normal, essential condition in life all the odds would have been against him; but he is not. He is in the throes of a transition from one loyalty to another, reaching for the stars with his feet clinging to the clay.

The human soul itself gives ample proof of the urge toward freedom from earthbound immobility. Early in life it asserts its independence by exhibiting an imagination that mocks the stuffy conventionalities of natural law. The world of Make Believe is the Eden of the human soul. The world is enchanted. All things are possible. Natural law bows to the magic of the spirit; the wish is the creative principle. The spirit tries its wings. It creates a new world; friendly, sympathetic, congenial,—just to see what can be done with it.

In the idealism of youth the reality of "things" is acknowledged but not their sovereignty. If a better life can be thought then a better life can be created. If the conditions in the world are uncongenial, insists the spirit of youth, then change the conditions. But already those who are at the controls have bowed to the "inevitable" and admitted defeat at the hands of the flesh, so there is no apparent change; but the foundation of the "real" world is crumbling and some day youth will carry the ramparts!

Later comes the more mature and conscious liberation of the spirit. The world and the flesh have been tried and found wanting. Fame, riches, position, prestige turn to ashes. Only the need for personal integrity, for inner harmony, for self-realization remains. Let the body survive or perish, the spirit claims its birthright and will not be denied. The right to be whole and free; the right to be generous without fear and sincere without apprehension. A new world emerges out of the mist. A world in which all things are free because the joy of creating is even greater than the joy of possessing. The artist, the poet, the prophet will testify that it is this giving without stint which makes living so good. When man begins to give, to create, not because of a sense of duty or in expectation or reward, but because he must give or wither, only then does he begin to live. Whether the gift is accepted or not is of secondary importance. The need of the spirit is to create as it is the need of the body to breathe. As it is the body's greatest tragedy not to have, so it is the spirit's greatest tragedy not to give. Selfishness on the physical level means to covet, to hoard, to kill; selfishness on the spiritual level means to grow rich by giving lavishly and creating abundantly.

Man's selfhood can never be destroyed, and should not, but for the sake of his happiness and the salvation of his very existence it must be turned from the principle of survival by possession into the principle of survival by creation. At this point true self-realization becomes synonymous with true altruism and every cause for rivalry, conflict and war disappears.

Let me try to state this in simpler terms. We are selfish in thought and deed because nature has endowed our bodies with certain instincts for self-preservation common to the entire animal kingdom. We do not have to be taught that our bodies need food, water, shelter and safety; hun-

ger, thirst, chills and fear drive us to find these things which are necessary for existence. These instincts have no code of morality; they will drive us far beyond the limits of decency and humane behavior to satisfy their demands. They may drive us to commit all the crimes from ordinary cheating and petty larceny to cannibalism,—the eating of human flesh. The instincts concern themselves only with the preservation of the individual, his mate and offspring; all other persons are feared and mistrusted because they are possible competitors in the struggle who must be resisted and, if necessary, killed to make the world safe for the individual. This works out not too badly among the animals because they have no other object or desire than to stay alive; but among human beings it creates a terrible situation because they also have the human and spiritual desire to live in peace and harmony with their fellow-men; they need to love and be loved. We cynically say, "You can't change human nature." But what we really mean is that we can't change animal nature. It isn't human nature that makes us cruel, treacherous and selfish. Brutes must be that to live; but we, to be human, must be generous, considerate, helpful, unselfish. I am sure we don't want to change human nature, we just want more of it. How to have more of it is my theme.

We find that we are happiest when we create something that gives pleasure: a melody to sing, a beautiful picture, a thought, a poem, a ballet, beautiful things made in cloth, wood, stone or precious metals, a flower garden, a well-tended field, or any other thing we make with loving care. Having made them, our first instinct is to share them with someone. To show them to other people and witness their pleasure, to offer them as a gift to someone and bask in his happiness. It follows then, that to be human is to CREATE and TO GIVE. (I doubt if any person is so inhuman as to be entirely bereft of this feeling so let us damn no one.) But if creating and sharing constitutes the truest, most pleasure-giving function of the human personality, then we have in reality solved the two-fold problem which is driving us to mutual destruction: to achieve the most complete self-realization and to live in complete harmony and cooperation with our fellow-men. We have no other problem than this; we readily agree that the earth provides abundantly for our bodily needs, and unlimited natural forces may be harnessed for our service. What we are waiting for is the complete humanization of man. With all the means at our disposal must we wait indefinitely? We all create a little, we all give a little, what's to keep us from doing it wholeheartedly?

So far man's spiritual activities have largely been in the nature of haphazard leisure-time pursuits of hobbies and "interests", indulged in when the primary, more pressing and more "important" business of making a living permitted. Man's spiritual activity has been carried on only at the sufferance of the flesh which has no use for it and only grudgingly permits this useless waste of time. There is no reason why man's spirit should be so cowed by the flesh that it behaves with the cringing, self-effacing humility of the slave in the presence of his master. The time is ripe for the spirit's declaration of independence and its ascension to the lordship over all things before the flesh carries us over the brink of utter destruction by its insane fear for its life.