

DATE: March 8, 1970

SUBJECT: "Things that Make For Peace" 'the voice of the turtle'

For low the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, and the birds are singing, and the sound of the turtle is heard in the land. Such a day as this elicits that kind of song. A burst of enthusiasm and new life. A vision of the new overwhelms that which is done.

Human history is recorded best in its songs. The old testament is filled with the yearning of the human soul. And the triumphant shouts of that which has been done.

When our country was in its infancy, the appalachain mountaineer that moved out into this region of the land carried with him the songs of the old country to remind him of that which is richest in his memory, that which he cherished above all else in his heritage. But he did not live simply within that which he had brought with him, he gave birth to new songs. Living in the remote regions that he did, he fashioned a dulcimer and sitting at dusk, he sang from the depths of his heart. The dreams of things that were past and the hope of things yet to come.

And there was that moment in our history when we enslaved another race of men to do our work. They, no more than slaves, have hearts and yearnings and dreams. And out of that great period in history came the great negro spirituals. Which perhaps above any other song to be sung is an element of theology in life. Little superficial here because they were faced with reality.

I noticed in a paper last week where a state representative in the general assembly of Virginia had made an attempt to replace 'Carry Me Back to Ole Virginia' as the state song because of its reflection upon a part of his people's history that they chose to forget. But the negro race will be a far lesser race if they forget. For it was this period of their lives that they came to grip with realities, it was in their depth that they discovered what was meaningful in life. And they captured it for ages yet to come.

Back in the twenties after we had come through World War I there was a time of abandon and the music reflected that time - the Charleston, of the happy hours upon the dance floor with the dance marathons extending into the extremes. The spic-easys, all of this reflected a period of mans history.

Do you know what they are singing now? Take a look at the songs that are being sung. And find our place in the sun. Can we discover here what is needful and what is pretense? The direction that we are moving, the

standards that we have adopted. Listen to one of them.
From the canyons of the mind, we stumble on and wander blindly.
Through the often tangled maze of starless nights and sunless days.
While asking for some kind of clue or road to lead us to the truth,
But who will answer.

On a strange and distant hill a young man lying very still.
His arms will never hold his child because a bullet ran wild and
struck him down and now we cry,
Dear God, Oh, Why, Oh, Why.

But who will answer.

If the soul is darkened by fear it cannot but tame,
If the mind is baffled when the rules don't fit the game,
Who will answer.

Is our hope in walnut shells worn round the neck with temple bells
Or deep within some cloistered walls where hooded figures pray, in halls,
Or from old books on dusty shelves,
Or in our stars or in ourselves?
Who will answer?

Well for many in our modern generation the answer lies in the stars, in the
cloistered walls, in the walnut shells hung round the neck like temple
bells. For this is the age of the garros, the Timothy Oliers, those who
have a pretense upon the throne of insight and wisdom. They have become
the prophets of this day to many who are lost in the maze wandering who
has the light, who can open the road, who will answer.

And so it was that a young man following in the way of one of these
expanded his mind until he no longer knew what was real and what was
unreal. He came to a crossroad in his life and he chose to end it all,
taking a little tape recorder and he drove out into a place that was silent
from men. And there wandering back through his mind, trying to analyze
and find himself, he took his own life. Because he found no way to go.
And the dilusion of so many others as one after another. We read in the
newspapers of young people, just at the launching place in their lives,
throw themselves our of hotel windows. Having gone on a trip from which
there was no return.

These are terrible days when we come to grips with the fact that in the
searching for some meaning and some reality the only way that seems to
be open is through some acid or through some hulicinary drug that will
expand the comprehension of the mind, but rather than expand it in the way
of truth it distorts it until confusion reigns and death liers and louves as the
only alternative.

I wish it were forced reading, that everyone read the article in the December
issue of Readers Digest. A mother tells about her son. He was a brilliant
student, a cadet at West Point. He notified his parents one day that he had
dropped out of school because he didn't like the discipline that was there.

They awaited his coming home and when they greeted him at the door he was leaning upon the arm of a friend, disheveled, bearded, his clothes as though he had slept in them for weeks. With a silly grin upon his face falling into his mothers arms, he said, "I'm loved." And she said, "You've always been a happy child, you've always been loved." And he said, "Not like this." I've found love for the first time. That love was a chemist's love, hallucinatory in his mind; for what he had become was alien to human dignity, without the repour with the beautiful and meaningful things of life.

This would not be so disturbing if just within the last two weeks the city of New York had not purchased a hospital to be used for one reason and that - to treat teen age adicts - no other use. And the news commentator in telling about the hospital said that the use of heroin in New York City had reached epidemic proportions. And who will answer. Certainly not the garos of this generation who are leading down blind pathways to human anilation.

Then we have those who answer with the often thought easy solution - the Bible has the answer. The little lad was given the Bible with the admonitdon that this Bible contains all the questions that people will ever ask. And he took hold of the book and said, "Are the answers in the back?" We all know that the questions are there, but how do we get to the answers. The conclusion that has come to so many of us today is that ours is an ir-religious society. That we must reject that which is a part of our spiritual heritage and find new ways of expression - find new values by which we are to live.

About a year ago at this time I quoted to you a result of a Gallop survey in which it was revealed that 70% of the people interviewed said that religion was loosing its influence. This was compared with a figure in 1958 in which 14% of those interviewed said religion was lossing its influence. From 1958 to 1959 from 14% to 70% there was a conviction that religion was loosing its influence. And then just last week the latest gallop pole came out and it had grown 5% in just one year. Now 75% of the people were saying that religion had lost its influence. There isn't much more distance to cover until we are completely ir-religious. Now certainly this is not to say that religion has lost its validity, its true. Its on the receding end. Those of us who are part of a religious society, we are the ones. Those of us who are outside of religion altogether, we are the ones; who are saying that religion no longer has influence upon my life. What a tragedy it is to find oneself caught up in the mystery of life and unable to relate himself to that which is other worldly - that which is powerful beyond man's own power and influence. For to live in a ir-religious society is to understand that the world is notmore than the physical elements which comprise it. Life is fabricated only of those things that are physical in our apprehension. But there's no spiritual counterpart that has any meaning. To live in an ir-religious society is to be subjected to the shallows, that sur- face of ones life, because only here in an ir-religious society does reality exist. It is coming down into the very depths that one discovers God, and the meaning of God in his life. And at some time

or another every one of us will discover that deep yearning, those depths to which we are loathed to go. It comes at a time of profound love. We can understand love as simply a physical attraction of one person to another and love does exist in that form. But there's a greater more meaningful concept of love than that. There is a love that exists between parent and children. A love that cannot be understood without going down deep within the relationship between the two. Much of the misunderstanding that exists today between parents and children is the fact that it is understood and comprehended only on the surface, without an attempt to understand. Without an attempt to clarify the position of one against the other. But when we do, when we have a parent that has played strongly upon our lives so that for every year that we live there will be that growing influence, that is a depth. Something that cannot be understood simply by the surface and the superficial explanation of life. There's a love between friends where in conversation and in communication together there is a going down where the harmonies exist and lives are influenced by having come in contact with others.

Perhaps we understand it best in the love between man and wife. Which brings sacrificial living to the fore. There's a understanding within such a realm that there is no physical answer for us. Apart simply from the physical attraction for one another but something that is deep within that intertwinds two people together until they are able to face all the adversities of life, and overcome. And we understand the depths of living when we come into deep love. And we understand it when we come into deep tragedy.

Most of us have been spared the tragedy that we read about that happens to so many people around the world. But eventually one kind of tragedy or another intrudes into one of our lives. And it is then that we are forced to draw upon a depth that otherwise is not visible, that otherwise is not apprehended. When one sees problems surmounting all about him and he is unable to overcome them, unable to face up to them properly. Then there is a time to draw strength deep within to enable to draw any meaning out of it at all and to be able to go with renewed strength and very and vitality. And that's one of the depths when we are confronted with something more than just the surface, the shallows of life. And it comes with moral meaning. Someone said that people go about leaving evidence of his morality just as he leaves of his physical presence. And whereas detectives by checking finger prints and the fiber of his clothing, footprints, one way or another can discover that someone has been here. In the very same way we carry our morality with us and by our relationships with one another, by what we stand for and what we do, we give evidence of our having been here, of what we are.

Sometime ago a hotel maid coming into a room found that a young man had taken his own life. He left a note under the pillow, in it he called the names of his parents, his friends, his wife, his children. After the names of each he enumerated the ways in which he had failed them. But he came to the final expression of his plight. I find no direction in my life at all, I'm completely lost. And with that he took his own life. A deep moral need that was not answered, that brought him face to face with one of the great needs that is apparent in all of our lives.

Graham Green wrote about people like that and people like us who are unable to fathom life and lay hold upon the deep resources that will enable us when so many questions are being asked and so few answers are forthcoming. And he called it people with burned-out lives. He told about an architect who had gained fame in his profession. Had made many contributions to the world in the field of architecture, but found that in spite of his success and the acclaim of his peers, that his life appeared to be useless and was accounting for nothing. And so finally he decided to just disappear altogether from everyone that knew him and to gain an anonymity in the darkness of Africa. And there he went. And he lived there to himself. He discovered that he had carried his emptiness with him and it was not dispelled simply by his having left the environment where he was living and having gone into another until one day he stumbled upon a leprosy colony that was being run by some Dominican brothers. And there he saw these pathetic creatures whose flesh had been eaten away by the dread disease. Whose arms and legs were shortened by the decay of flesh and bones. He looked into their eyes and saw the emptiness of any physical pleasure and he called them people with burned-out lives. And suddenly a light illuminated within his own brain and he thought this is exactly what I am spiritually, I'm a leprosy spiritually. For I have burned out spiritually. For that happens to many of us.

Particularly ~~xxx~~ living in an age that we are living in today. There is an enhancement of that which burns us out spiritually. For one thing there is an heightened sensitivity. We are constantly being battered by jack hammers that beat upon our nerves. We face problems every day, if we try to keep up with affairs of the world, we face problems that seem to have no solution. We watch violence on television for entertainment. We heard the overwhelming sound of music that's driving many deaf according to experts. We are being oversold on the luxuries of life as through advertising we are being drawn first in one direction and then another in finding ways to satisfy our needs and bring joy and contentment in our lives. And finally we come to the point that we are being beaten upon from so many quarters that we have come to the end of our comprehension of things that are valid and real and moral in all the abnormalities that are forced upon us. That causes burned-out spiritual lives. ~~and~~

And then there's a lack of depth which is a mark of our present day society. In ancient times the comprehension of the ~~times~~ world was in a vertical state, the earth and then the heaven above it and we look upwards to find the expansion of our souls and life. But in today's society it's not so much vertical as it horizontal, somehow we get the attitude that we've got to go first in one direction and then another. It is a spreading of ourselves horizontally with speed and greater speed and more speed to get to different places and more places to find fullness of living. But while we are spinning upon the surface of life it is down deep in the depths that life is waiting to be discovered, and experienced. And because we are living horizontally rather than vertically today then our spirits soon become burned out.

And then as Christians particularly, as opposed to those who make up the irreligious portion of our land, there is an inheritance of a religious form of which we have not yet become inhabitants. We have not lived within the forms that we have inherited. There's some validity for those who are critical of the church today because its outdated. And those in the Gallup survey who said that the church had lost its influence gave as their primary reason the fact that it was out-dated and was not relevant to today's world. And there is some justification for a criticism of a church that is out-dated. But the out-dated church exists only in the fact that we have not made them come alive, we have left them to live in ages past. To be remembered, to be revered but not to become living forces and living facts in a vital day.

We can't ignore the fact that we have had spiritual giants in every generation of men who have left a great legacy. We can ignore them that this is of a time past and it has no relevance for us, but the more truthful fact is that these forms and these experiences for us to inhabit with our own lives. We can bring them alive and we can make them valid. We can engender a fiber that presently is not there. By inhabiting, rather than simply looking upon, as a form no longer relevant. These caused burned out lives. The loss of direction. A crying out in anxiety, who will answer these needs without knowing where an answer will come from.

But there is an answer and an answer that can be heard. And it comes from you. It is a discovery of your own life and a renewed concept of what living for you entails. For one thing we must remember that Jesus said, "There is a narrow way through which those who discover the meaning of life must pass." We live too broadly, we want to tour all the continents of Europe in two weeks. We want to hear all of the operas in a season. We want to drive all of the automobiles that attract our attention. We want to experience every new thing and we are always searching for something that is different and new. And we're just skimming over the surface of each one of them not trying to see what can be had from going down. To specialize in certain interests and activities is to make them become real and vital in your own living. There are certain adventures in life that Jesus has interpreted for us that can bring this fullness and can bring this understanding but so often we reject them because we have only looked at them on the surface, we have not specialized in them. We need to take off our minds off the broadening of life so that we're broader and broader but to pin point our interests, to become single-minded about certain things and let them become vital as they ought to be.- the narrow way. We thought to specialize in the thought patterns which form our philosophies of life. We entertain so many various viewpoints that we never come down to accepting one thing as vital to our own thinking and living. When asked to elaborate on what we believe and what we hold to be true, we really don't have any answer to give, we can play one against the other, we can offer the alternatives; but when it comes to saying this I believe and I believe overwhelmingly, it is something that we have not yet experienced in our own lives. We have not specialized in Thought Pattern that can become the ~~philosophy~~ foundation of our philosophy of living.

We need to differentiate from the physical and the spiritual. So that we can relevant each to its place. There is satisfaction and joy from that which is spiritual as well that which is physical and enhances our senses.

Thomas Wolfe wrote in one of his books - before I die I want to ride every train, read every book and sleep in every bed. What a shallow philosophy for living. Well there's one final thing that must be said. And that is - a new life, a new day, a new birth. Just as the writer in the old testament spoke of the winter being past and the rain over and gone and the flowers blooming and the birds singing and now the voice of the turtle is heard in the land, that new life can come to you