

The Straight and Narrow Path to An Acceptable Americanism

THERE IS nothing which detracts quite so much from citizenship as does the erroneous idea of the individual that only some of our people are by race and religion endowed with the essential ingredients for its obligations. Cultivating the idea has brought some people in America beyond the pale of civic usefulness. Indeed some have become so obsessed with the idea that America is in danger because people of different complexion and different shades of religious faith hold citizenship and claim rights on a common level, that they no longer contribute to the common good of all, but are endangering the safety valves of the American reservoir of our **common civic faith**.

Some months ago former Secretary of State, Charles Evans Hughes—as a guest at a good will dinner, given by a large number of citizens of different races, at the Hotel Astor in New York—flayed these false pronouncements of Americanism, and in the following unmistakable language challenged their brand of sectional citizenship.

Ours is a Nation which was founded in neither race nor creed, but rather in the adherence to principles of liberty and brotherhood. From the earliest beginning of our history as a people it was our need and our privilege to invite all mankind to come and work together toward the building of a new world conceived in liberty and dedicated to equality. To this end our forefathers guaranteed to every man freedom of worship and the rights of citizenship, regardless of faith or place of origin.

It is fitting that we, the heirs, of a noble past, should remind ourselves, and our fellow citizens, of those great principles and that all should dedicate ourselves anew to observing them by mutual understanding, friendly accord and earnest coöperation for the common good.

It is a wholesome brand of Americanism this. Who is he who dares add anything to it or take anything from it? It nails the lie of the false contenders and puts every citizen on the same level irrespective of race, religion and nationality origin. What a wholesome conception of citizenship and what and who it embraces.

A little further on in his discourse he strikes at another manifest weakness by stressing this point in good citizenship:

The most important thing for us to do in this country now is to reaffirm our old ideal of American liberty. It is extraordinary that in this twentieth century we should see a recrudescence of bigotry, and that in the name of Americanism, which it soils. Let us take pride in our institutions of learning, the freedom of learning. A bigoted person is unintelligent. I get beyond the point of reasoning with him. We need an emancipation of culture.

The fundamental basis of Americanism is not of the flesh. It is of the spirit. Some are Americans the moment they land on these shores. Some never become Americans, although they

and their forebears have lived here for generations.

How beautiful are the ideals of America when arranged in the lingual coloring of a scholar and a master patriot? When we review the setting it seems as though the work of the traducers is almost necessary to quicken our senses so that we may enjoy a fuller measure of appreciation.

And again we are forcefully reminded that neither an American birth certificate nor a naturalization paper can furnish positive proof that a man is an American.

WHEN WE LEARN TO KNOW AND UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER?

WHEN THE Republic was established it was our greatest American, George Washington, in his address to the Jews of Newport, Rhode Island, who declared that, "All possess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship." It is now no more that toleration is spoken of as if it were by the indulgence of one class of people that another enjoys the exercise of their inherent natural rights... During the intervening years many Americans have fallen from the high ideals of Washington. In restoring this attitude of mind, that one religion or one class of citizens does not 'tolerate' another is in itself a sign of retrogression. Even before these utterances of Washington there were evidences of goodwill. It is extraordinary, when one considers the attitude in other parts of the world, that Jews contributed funds to the completion of the steeple of Trinity Church in New York in 1711 and that Christians under the leadership of so eminent an American as Benjamin Franklin aided in the maintenance of a Jewish synagog in Philadelphia some seventy years later. In endeavoring, as religious men and women, to re-establish this goodwill which has undeniably lapsed in many quarters, we are also serving the Republic which cannot exist in its broadest foundations if its citizens do not hold each other in mutual confidence and respect... When we get to know each other and understand each other, when we are willing to give full faith to the professions of one another, then indeed the era of ill-will will have disappeared; the greatly to be desired age of good will between Jews and Christians, between men all religions, will have arrived and we may look for the Kingdom of God upon earth. (Dr. Cyrus Adler, president of the Jewish Theological Seminary).

A PLEA FOR AMERICAN UNITY.

GROUP STRIFE is the rock upon which every civilization has split. The man who cherishes hate is part of the great conspiracy that draws us into universal struggle about every twenty years and that makes the white man the most dangerous being on all the earth. As affairs now stand we too often meet to emphasize our differences and minimize our agreements. Destruction lies that way. Our mission is rather to emphasize our agreements and respect our differences and labor for the development of a common mind. In the war we had it. If it was possible to find a common mind in the business of murdering, then surely it is possible to find a common mind in the business of peace. If it was possible for Locarno to declare the reign of peace over Central Europe, then it is more than possible for America to rally around the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man and declare peace and good will to all in our land. What shall be the central principle in this common mind of peace. Is it not that sublime gift from the genius of Israel that has made Catholic and Protestant alike her debtor: "The Lord, thy God, is one?" We must trust and believe in the diversified races that make up our land.

(From an address by Dr. S. Parkes Cadman, president of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America).