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The Nature of America by Dr. Milton M. McGorrill, Orono Church of Universal Fellowship

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SPEAKER: Good evening to you all. Were I to try to describe in one idea, the essential nature of America, I should say it this way. America is a vast experiment and experience in believing in people. Wherever you are tonight, think of the town in which you live and see its main streets. Your memory will bring back these pictures, your house and the houses of your friends, the church, the public school, the town hall, the farms, the stores, and the bank. These and many allied enterprises are all bound together in a cooperative relationship under the single idea that America values you as persons. Your home is the garden of your life, laws protect it, affection gives it spirit. The public school and all the vast superstructure of higher education are the whole country’s faith that you are worth educating and your children are to have a like treatment or better one if you will provide it. The church of your choice is there that you may freely, uncoerced, worship as you choose. The business enterprises bound together by the credit means of your bank are representative of your chance to choose a way of earning your living, to invest yourself and your funds. The town hall is the building where you register your judgement on public issues in voting and where you say what you will permit your government to do.

All of this is a tremendous experience in believing in one another. If America ever dies it will be because we lost faith in each other and thereby lost faith in the systems and institutions that give concrete reality to that faith. Back on the idea of believing in one another is the prior idea of whether each of us as a person is worth believing in. America’s idea is that we shall take the risk. Some persons will not measure up. They defy the cooperative relationship, they think law does not apply to them, they think no responsibility rests on them to make a successful society, but this whole faith in persons is also based on the sure knowledge that it takes a better person to live in a free society than it does to live in a totalitarian society.

Better in what way, someone asks. More alert to his opportunities, more willing to take risk and responsibility for his own actions. Do a better grade of thinking than if he had to obey only what someone had thought for him. Be more willing to remember what the consequences of his acts are for other people, for he is responsible for the power he wields. Tomorrow when you walk down the street of your town, think a little bit. Those homes you see are evidence of people who believed in each other enough to live together. That school is testimony that all of us and our children are worth educating. Those businesses and farms and professions are a faith in people’s honesty and stability. That bank is
the credit exchange where people together put their money, that the whole town may have a common medium of exchange. To trust others and to make ourselves worthy of being trusted, that is the real beginning in making a successful society. America is a great experience in believing in people. Goodnight.

[transcript ends]

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