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I was recently reading an article about American agriculture.

The article sought to explain a paradox. On the one hand, Old Order Amish farmers who use nothing more than horses to till the land have once again doubled their productivity and doubled the number of people whom the land supports. On the other hand, it is predicted that in Iowa, where heavily mechanized farming is practiced, the top soil will be gone in 70 years.

The article pursued the reasons for these two phenomena in terms only an agricultural engineer would understand, and I found myself skipping most of the text and looking to the end for the conclusion. Interestingly, as far as I could understand it, the author was unable to explain exactly why the Old Order Amish farms were thriving while the "modern" ones were facing depletion. Something about the Amish farms was not reducible to the categories with which the writer's technical discipline could deal; something more than such factors as energy input per acre was involved in the Amish success. The writer surmised that it had to do with their attitudes—attitudes regarding the relationship among men and women and animals and the earth—and with their sensitivity to the interdependence of all these factors. It had to do with the fact that the Amish farmers, although hard working and diligent, nevertheless had a sense that nature cannot be hurried. It had to do with the fact that the Amish farms remained in the same family generation after generation, and that each generation, in exercising its custodianship for the land, had a lively sense of what it had been given, and of the trust it must pass on to others.

None of this seemed reducible to the kind of data with which agricultural engineer was used to dealing. Perhaps it behooves us to pray that agricultural engineers will find a way to come to terms with the Old Order Amish before the 70 year depletion period for Iowa elapses!

This article about old farming and new farming was brought to mind by a recent comment heard within the AFSC, where it was announced on very high authority that the organization had outgrown and moved beyond the insights of one of its great founders, Rufus Jones. This confident proclamation of advancement struck a wrong note with me, perhaps primarily because I am so belatedly making the acquaintance of Rufus Jones' thought, and had just recently been richly nourished by some of my researches. Indeed, I had just been contemplating Rufus' idea that it is unreasonable to expect that women and men can create a family, a community, an institution or a society which exceeds in wis-

dom and goodness that degree of wisdom and goodness which they themselves have a grasp of in their own hearts. From this, Rufus concludes that the first step in any rendering of service is the spiritual preparation of those who would serve.

What does it mean to outgrow an insight of this sort? With what shall we replace it?

Obviously, something more is required of us than the romantic notion that nothing was as fine as "the good old days." Surely we must not mindlessly mimic our forebears, whether they be Amish farmers or Rufus Jones, but rather we must strive to achieve a measure of wisdom and goodness which is suitable to our own time and place. Yet, we also sense that there is something wrong with too casual a dismissal of the ways of our those who preceded us. What is missing in this inclination mercilessly to override the past?

Humility comes to mind, as does a willingness to resist the habits of mind of a culture bent upon exploiting its own temporariness, a culture constantly devouring itself in the relentless pursuit of fads and of built-in obsolescence. For the effect of this merry-go-round is a breakdown in the capacity for love; a replacement of land, work, people, and community by the industrial categories of resources, labor, management, consumers, and government. It is the exchange of harmony for the harried labor of an industrial economy. This erosion of love affects not only our relationship with our contemporaries, but also builds a separation between us and the people of the past and the people of the future. We leave behind not only Rufus Jones, who died as recently as 1948, but also Dante, Homer and Plato. And with what have we replaced them? At the same time, we mortgage the future of our children and grandchildren, hoping in some vacuous way that the technology which we are pursuing today, and which will create so many problems for them tomorrow, will somehow transform itself in their hands to a technology which solves problems rather than which makes them. Is this reasonable?

It is the motion of love in our hearts which can re-establish community between ourselves and what is good and true in the Old Order Amish and in Rufus Jones. It is the motion of love in our hearts which allows us to develop our contribution to the human enterprise as something which adds to and completes their great work, rather than as something which ruthlessly tramples it down. It is the motion of love in our hearts which allows us to assume with magnanimity and devotion the place on which it is given to us to stand in the great chain of being.