

Traveling Religionist Teaches God's Love

Boulder News Service

BOULDER, Colo — A spiritual renaissance is coming, according to Vern Bennon Grimsley, president of the Family of God Foundation, Berkeley, Calif.

That doesn't mean the world will be filled with peace and joy by next year, he says. But he expects the gradual acceptance of God in everyday lives of individuals to slowly produce a bigger change on the planet than any war or invention produced.

Grimsley, a Phi Beta Kappa graduate in philosophy and psychology from the University of Kansas, tours campuses and broadcasts on 55 radio stations throughout the world. He proclaims his message of "the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man."

The renaissance will come, he says, when people agree on the two basic tenets in Deuteronomy and Leviticus: "I am the Lord thy God," and "Love thy neighbor as thyself." "It really changes your day to walk down the street thinking you're a child of God and the people you see are your brothers and sisters," Grimsley said.

No radical religious freak, Grimsley, 32, speaks quietly and unhesitatingly, quoting his own poetry and writings, welcoming questions that "nail me to the wall." He is dressed in tie, shoes and straight pants and a leather jacket whose snaps jingle with his occasional gestures. His short, blond hair obeys the order imposed by a comb.

"We all contain a spark of spirit, a spark of the infinite, between our haircuts and our toenails," Grimsley said. To acknowledge that spark, to recognize guidance from God is "an audacious faith," he said. "To feel infinitely loved by God and valuable is a resolution of what Eric Erikson calls 'the identity crisis' in the highest conceivable way."

Grimsley's role as a "truth teacher," as he calls it, was arrived at after "voracious reading" in religion and philosophy and study under a grant from the National Science Foundation. "Anybody can ask God what to do and get guidance," he explained. His calling was to be a spiritual teacher.

In his studies he followed a "three-fold approach to reality," science, philosophy and religion. Science and religion, he says, are not contradictory, the former uses experiments, the latter experience, to reach truth.

He added, "most religion is in a chrysalis stage: it has not yet emerged."

Traditionally, he feels, religion has blocked change, or as he put it "thrown holy water on the status quo." But the great spiritual teachers spoke of growth and spiritual living! "Any religious institution could be of assistance to the world by following its original teachers."

Religions have to go beyond the spiritual chauvinism that has caused most of the planet's wars, he said. "If we can have wars over religion, there could be a magnificent peace over religion," he said.

The key, he said, is understanding God's love for all people and then the details will work themselves out. Instead, organized religions often lose themselves in the details, he said. Respecting one's self as a child of God is like buttoning a shirt correctly, he said: if you get the top button in the right slot, all the other buttons will line themselves up right, too.

Love of God to some people is like loving Pi-R-squared, Grimsley laughed. But, he added, it can be a vital, daily companionship.

This feature article on Vern was syndicated by wire service and appeared in newspapers across the U. S.