

Save

SKANDAWON

Volume I, Number 15

July 27, 1963

Ut omnes unum sint

During his papal reign, Pope John XXIII promoted a spirit of reconciliation between the Roman Catholic Church and the other communions of Christendom. Despite his death, his plans for the reconvening of the Ecumenical Council will be carried out by his successor, Pope Paul VI. For the first time in generations, the divisive factors of the Christian church are being examined with a feeling of mutual understanding and concern never before experienced. This spirit may be accounted for by an increased desire on the part of all Christians to relate themselves to the world and to each other.

The term "ecumenical" encompasses three aspects of the life of the Church: church reunion, church renewal, and church mission. The first, church reunion, fires the popular imagination the most. However, it appears most unlikely that members of the Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox traditions will achieve organic unity within the near future. There are so many problems in church polity and practice that it will take a long time before a unified church could ever materialize. However, this does not mean that the ecumenical movement is a failure since there are many other useful and constructive paths that it has and will follow.

The term "church renewal" refers to a return to the prophetic note within the Church. In other words, it is the realization on the part of Christians that they must witness to the need for social justice and equality throughout the world. It is not enough for the Church to be a mute observer of the dilemma of our times, it must be committed and involved in its solution. The ethical problems of our society thus become the passionate concern of all members of the community of faith.

The final thrust of the ecumenical movement is a concern for the mission of the Church in the world. While a super-church may not be formed, still it is possible for various Christians to participate in the many facets of Christian activities throughout the world. Certainly the appeal of Christ to "love thy neighbor" does not follow sectarian lines. To perpetuate a system of separate, over-lapping institutions for the purpose of helping mankind is scandalous to all Christendom and is an offense to the spirit of the Church.

The tragedy of the ecumenical movement at this time is the failure to find any real voice on the local level. Too often people are so involved in the intricacies of their own denominational system that they become spiritually myopic. Unless members of various communions can transcend the various claims of superiority, then no real progress will be made "so that they all may be one."

Editor

A RAINY SUNDAY AFTERNOON

A courageous man like Medgar Evers, the NAACP worker in Jackson, Mississippi who risked and lost his life fighting for the causes of civil rights and human dignity, should be honored, and the ceremonies held in front of the New York State Capitol on Sunday afternoon, July fourteenth, gave us in this area an opportunity to honor him and to express our own dedication to the causes for which he lived and died.

I for one was glad that I could devote a little part of a summer afternoon to this purpose, and I was also glad to find around six hundred of my fellow citizens there (Why not more?). Many of the words spoken (not all) seemed like good and appropriate words, and yet I felt vaguely uncomfortable and unhappy, and not just because of the rain that was running down the back of my neck.

The speakers' platform, erected under the tail of Phil Sheridan's horse, was well-stocked with representatives of the state and city governments, and there were also statements from a number of clergymen, representing the "major faiths." It was a proper memorial ceremony, sanctioned by both Church and State. And yet I don't want to give the wrong impression--it was not all sham and empty show. I repeat that a

number of the speakers were quite sincere, and the singing was good.

What then was wrong, or, if not wrong, inadequate? Perhaps only a note of contrast--Medgar Evers fighting alone in the Southern night, with the whole society in which he lived solidly, deeply, malevolently, and unrelentingly against him, as contrasted with this scene--open, free, risking only the crease in our pants, and the organized might of State and Church apparently on our side.

The hypocrisy was not so much in the speakers on the platform as in the audience, including myself. There was self-deception in our notion that through this ceremony we were really identifying with the Medgar Evers of our world, the lonely fighters on the frontiers of man's conscience. When the representatives of the entrenched institutions of organized society appear publicly in behalf of a cause, we are celebrating not the struggle but only the victory, and it must be a victory that at least some people think is already secure.

But in causes like that for which Medgar Evers gave his life, the real battle must go on without end, and the victories are much less than they may seem to be. Indeed, the very blessing of a cause by power and authority makes its genuine pursuit in some ways harder. Surely, many of us at these ceremonies realized, at least in the shadow areas of our minds, that with in sight of our elevated position on the Capitol steps were parts of our own city where there is hard evidence that human rights and humane values are still being denied. To demand greater performance in the service of ideals to which those in positions of power already give loud and fairly convincing support, seems ungrateful and uncompromising. It is the attitude of the malcontent, the chronic rebel, the inconsolable. But it is also the position of the sincere and the committed and those who choose and act on the basis of their own convictions rather than on the basis of what may be the currently popular cause. Such people will always be the lonely few, and we will not hold public testimonials for such people, except maybe after they are dead and the really hard part of their battle seems to have been safely won.

And so I am glad that at least it rained on us all--a somewhat cold and pelting rain, for this gave a slight touch of iron to an otherwise somewhat flabby occasion. We stood our ground and did not break and run, even when it poured, but was this because we wanted to express our devotion to the cause of resolute action in the face of overwhelming opposition, or merely because we felt the pressure of the others present, especially that of our duly constituted leaders?

W. H. Leue

Staff:

Editor: Alan Minarcik
Associate Editor: Tom Bartlow
Typist: Linda Van Buron
Sponsor: Campus Christian Council

Calendar of Events:

July 29--Mr. John Jennings, regional director of the State Commission on Human Rights will speak on the Black Muslim Movement at 8 p.m. at Brubacher Hall.
August 5--Pastor Walter Bouman of St. Matthew's Lutheran Church will speak on the Ecumenical Movement within the United States.

Skandalon is the journal of the Campus Christian Council during the regular session of the academic year at State. Its aim has been to present articles that were of interest and of concern to the community of faith within the university community. It has welcomed articles from all members of the academic community. If sufficient interest is shown, one more issue can be published during the summer session. All contributions may be submitted in the Student Mail (in lower Draper near the Co-op) for the editor, Alan Minarcik, or by calling him at HE 6-8948, or by leaving them at his apartment at 457 State Street.

FOR GOD SO LOVED 75% OF THE WORLD

It has been suggested that one way to meet the problem of racial discrimination in employment is a quota system which would assign jobs to the different races on a percentage basis. Such a system maintains the false position that skin color makes a difference in the way a man ought to be treated. The problem of racial discrimination in employment will not be met until we realize that race is completely irrelevant to ability to do a job. The quota system does not meet the problem; it circumvents it and replaces one form of discrimination with another.

DR. BOUMAN TO SPEAK ON ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

Dr. Walter R. Bouman, pastor of St. Matthew's Lutheran Church in Albany, will speak to students and faculty of the University on the topic "The Ecumenical Movement in the American Church" August 5th at 8:00 p.m. in Brubacher Hall.

Dr. Bouman has recently received his Ph.D. degree from the University of Heidelberg, Germany, where he majored in ecumenical studies. He is currently representing the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church at the fourth World Faith and Order Conference in Montreal where he has remarked that "It is a sad commentary on the ecumenical movement that it has not yet found real voice in the local situation."

Dr. Bouman's lecture will be sponsored by the Campus Christian Council.

THE SUPREME COURT AND US

The "Great American Ideal" is often cited as a source of inspiration for and motivation to action in this country. While we are continually assured of the existence of such an ideal there seems to be no consensus on a definition of it. Many people have no idea what this ideal might be and those who do can't agree. I would define it as follows: The Great American Ideal is the belief that no person or group of persons has sufficient insight and judgment to be able to determine the proper mode of belief and action for all other persons or groups of persons. It is this ideal which is the basis for the First Amendment prohibition against establishment of religion and the guarantee of religious freedom.

Then the recent Supreme Court decision on prayer and Bible reading in public schools was correct both legally and idealistically. The constitutional ban against religious establishment implies the illegality of any kind of government support of any religious group. To use Justice Tom C. Clark's words, "In the relationship between man and religion the state is firmly committed to a position of neutrality." In the recent cases (Abington School District v. Schempp and Murray v. Curlett) the state was on the side of those who believe in God, especially those who regard the Bible as holy scripture--Christians and Jews. In violation of the American Ideal the governments of Pennsylvania and Maryland asserted, through laws providing for Bible readings and prayers, that Christians and Jews do have sufficient insight and judgment to say that their beliefs are right for all men.

While the decision was a correct one, it was not a very happy one for Christians. We do assert that our faith is right for all men and that we have the responsibility to say so whenever we have the opportunity. The Supreme Court has said that we will not get that opportunity in the public schools. We must seek it elsewhere.

We are particularly interested in finding ways to train our young people in the Christian faith. There are three obvious institutions for such training: the home, the church, and parochial schools. The home is potentially the most powerful. Children spend most of their time at home and gain many attitudes, prejudices, and beliefs from their parents. The major problem is that the home must be Christian in order to raise Christian children. The church can contribute to the job of raising Christian youth because it is the institution most directly concerned with articulating Christian belief and practice. But the church often does a poor job of articulation and often is not heard. Parochial schools have the advantage of combining secular and religious education but has the disadvantage of high cost.

We cannot condemn the Supreme Court for prohibiting us the use of a platform which was not constitutionally ours. That is its job. Our job is to make the fullest use of those platforms--home, church, parochial school--which are rightfully ours.

Tom Bartlow

The Trials and Perils of Giving Away Coca-Cola

or

I Was a Teen-Age Coke Shop

Every evening at 7:30 p.m. on Sunday through Thursday, two people work at a Coke Shop on Hamilton Street in the South End of Albany. The Coke Shop is sponsored by the Campus Christian Council and is available to all the teenagers of the neighborhood. Coca-Cola, dancing to records of varying quality, games, and the opportunity to get together, have been the primary enticements for the kids. For the participants of the program, the program offers a chance for participation and study on the problems of the Inner-City. The major need of the group is a few more volunteers for the remainder of the summer session. The time involved is two evenings a week for three hours an evening. If no new people join the group then it will be forced to curtail its efforts in the South End. Anyone interested may contact the Rev. Gerald Platz at either 463-8524 (his home) or at Westminster Presbyterian Church (HE 6-8544) or Tom Bartlow at his home (HE 6-8948).

(Editor's note: The following is a text from a symposium on the role of science in religion. This is part of the reply of Dr. Robert Rankin who is the Visiting Associate Professor of Sociology from Chico State College in Chico, California.)

This leads me to suggest that we cannot rest content here to define religion in this broad, functional sense. It is important to speak of a specific religious system. Let us take for example the religious system with which we are most familiar. We need not imply that it is the only functional religion--the only true religion--we only say that it is the most common religious expression in Western Civilization. I speak of the Hebrew-Christian religion. Since there are variations within this Western tradition, let me define it as it pertains to me personally. The Hebrew-Christian faith makes sense out of life for me in the following ways:

1. It leads me to affirm the worth of human personality. This is the basis of my value-judgments. That which enhances the human personality is "good"; and that which degrades it is "bad". Thus there is in my faith a strong prophetic note of challenge to the status quo; my religion produces pacifists in the time of extreme nationalism; Christian socialists in times of emphasis upon free enterprise and rugged individualism. . . . Wherever the status quo violates human rights, this religion is apt to embarrass the forces of conservation and call for reform. This emphasis upon the worth of human personality is an affirmation; not an empirical verification. . . . My scientific knowledge can help me to decide how best to protect this value--what makes for an organized person in a functioning society; and what makes for a disorganized person in a disintegrating society. My science cannot make the original decision as to what is of basic worth. This value-decision is not my scientific discovery; it is my affirmation as a moral man.

2. I might make the first affirmation as a humanist without any religious dimensions. . . . Even as such my science would not provide me the evidence for that affirmation; I would make that value-judgment as a moral man. My science would not provide for me the affirmation that life has worth and thus meaning. This is a kind of faith--albeit a humanistic faith. I move on, however, to make a second affirmation which the humanist does not make. I believe in the worth of the human personality because I believe in a universe which is friendly to the human personality. . . . This universe is not indifferent to the relationship of person to person which has the quality of creative love--indeed this relationship has not only human dimensions but eternal dimensions. . . . In short, man's purpose and meaning comes from the fact that he enters into relationships with other men and with eternal being. In traditional terms, I believe in God who is the "heart" of the universe.

I hasten to add that this is an affirmation and not a statement of verifiable knowledge. I can muster empirical evidence to show you that when men live as if this were so that they make adequate adjustments in their behavior when defeat and death and success and failure come. . . .

I believe in the worth of personality and I believe the universe is friendly to human personality. For me the two are related: one is essential to the other. These affirmations do not make it impossible for me to welcome scientific discovery so long as they remain flexible. They can be my working papers as life moves on and demands that I make some kind of value-judgments every moment--they are as much light as I have to go on at the present time. Nevertheless, I trust that they will remain sufficiently undogmatic for me to appreciate the exciting search for empirical knowledge in which we are all engaged in the world of science.

I do not mean to imply that be an undogmatic accommodation to new discoveries in science and changing needs of society that religious affirmation will one day be unnecessary. . . . It does not say "yea or nay" to man's persistent need for meaning. Scientific discoveries serve only to help man's religious affirmations make "better" sense all the time. I think this is happening in our own life-time. . . . About the time of Darwin, there was another scientific development which has been most significant to religion: this was the historical and sociological criticism of Biblical courses. It was discovered that the Bible stories of creation and the great flood and the Moses miracles were not historical accounts of actual happenings at all, but attempts of sensitive men in pre-scientific era to explain the beginnings of things. They are profound mythical interpretations of man's behavior. . . . The Bible does not pretend to give scientific explanations; nor does science pretend to grapple with the problems of meaning. As a result of the Biblical research which still goes on and which has been given recent encouragement in the Dead Sea Scrolls, many contemporary men of religion have come to realize that other parts of the Bible are likewise in the category of holy legend and myth.

I am suggesting that religion is man's attempt to establish affirmations about the meaning of life while science is the business of accumulating empirical knowledge of causation. I am suggesting. . . . that there may always be some tension between science and religion as scientific discoveries demand readjustments in religious affirmations. Such tension is not conflict in the usual sense, but is the price we pay for growth in wisdom and truth. Such tension is to be welcomed for the good of both science and religion. The only difference which may be defined as conflict is that between the findings of science and the dogmatic and unchanging assertions of some religion.