Bishops

Washington, D. C., November 16 - (NC) - The Catholic Bishops of the United States, at the close of their Annual Meeting here, November 12-14, issued the following statement. It was signed in their names by the Administrative Board of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, whose members are: Edward Cardinal Mooney, Detroit; Samuel Cardinal Stritch, Chicago: Francis Cardinal Spellman, New York; Francis P. Keough, Archbishop of Baltimore; John J. Mitty, Archbishop of San Francisco; Richard J. Cushing, Archbishop of Boston; Joseph E. Ritter, Archbishop of St. Louis; Patrick A. O'Boyle, Archbishop of Washington; Karl J. Alter, Archbishop of Cincinnati; John F. Noll, Archbishop of Fort Wayne; Emmet M. Walsh, Coadjutor Bishop of Youngstown; Thomas K. Gorman, Coadjutor Bishop of Dallas; Matthew F. Brady, Bishop of Manchester.

RELIGION, OUR MOST VITAL NATIONAL ASSET

As Bishops of the Catholic Church, we are intensely concerned that the teachings of Jesus Christ, Our Lord and God, will bless and sanctify our country. As American citizens, our concern extends to those blessings which only true religion can bring to our beloved land. Our national spiritual assets must be greater than the national material assets which are so evident everywhere.

These material assets have brought a standard of living and a degree of comfort never before attained by so many people in any nation. With them has come a position of preeminence in the world hitherto unachieved by peaceful means.

In the wake of such unprecedented prosperity a deep sense of security, a national optimism might have been expected. In its stead the temper of the country would seem to be one of restless foreboding and deep insecurity.

It cannot be denied that this gloomy and depressing atmosphere is largely a reflection of so much suffering and hopelessnes in other parts of the world. Yet it must be affirmed with equal insistence that there is a lowering of vitality in our social institutions, a deplorable pessimism that signals the presence of a cause as dangerous as it is profound.

The history of mations teaches us that ultimately it is spiritual losses rather than material reverses that lead to moral bankruptey and national ruin. Across the centuries, strewn with the wreckage of once flourishing realms, the words of the Lord of Nations echo a warning in our cars: "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His justice and all these things shall be given von besides." The corollary is inescapable: If you seek not the kingdom of God, all these things will be taken from you.'

Religion makes man a citizen of the Kingdom of God; for it. it through religion that man gives his allegiance to his Maker. Viewed in its entirefy, religion is the system of beliefs and practices by which man eomes to the knowledge of the one true God, by which he gives to God the worship which is His due, by which he renders thanks for all he is and has, acknowledges and expiates his own guilt, and begs the grace that makes it possible for him to attain his true destiny.

As an act, religion is the communion of man with God, the source of all life. It is this that explains the essential importance of religion to man both as an individual and as a member of society, a citizen of a nation. Heligion, then, is not only the individual's most precious possession, it is also a nation's most vital asset.

MAN'S NEED OF RELIGION · Mars, as an individual, needa religion. He needs it for many reasons. He needs it because he is a creature of God, entirely dependent on his Creator, and hence must acknowledge his obligation of adoration and love. He needs it to give meaning to his present existence; for without religion this life, with its disappointments, its uncertainty, its cruelty and its suffering, becomes "but a walking shadow. a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more . . . a tale told by an idlot full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

Again, man needs religion to give him that sense of responsibility which prevents human existence from becoming a Wilderness of warring passions and aimless strivings. He needs religion because, apart from God, man is lonely and he can never find in himself or in the institutions which bear his image the means to fill up that vold of loneliness which is in

the human heart. Man needs religion because he is weak, and in his weakness he must have access to the Source of all strength. Man needs religion because without the hope that religion alone can give, he cannot rise above that pessimism, that sense of despair, which threatens to engulf the whole of our civilization.

Man needs religion because he has an impelling need to worship, and if he does not worship God he will direct his worship to base objects that pervert his mind and heart.

RELIGION A FUNDAMENTAL

NEED OF SOCIETY Religion, necessary to individual man, is necessary alsoto human society. From the very beginning the family, the primary unit of society, has been intimately dependent on religions and from it has drawn its unity, its stability and its holiness. Apart from its divine origin and sanction, parental authority, upon which the family is founded, becomes but an arbitrary application of

force to be superseded by any

stronger power. Where religion has grown weak the family has shown a corresponding tendency to disintegrate. When religion remains strong, it stands as a protective armor, safeguarding both individual and family. Unique as a compelling ideal is the Holy Family of Nazareth with the striking lessons of love and obedience it teaches.

More than the knowledge of all the abstract principles of ethics and sociology, the example of this perfect fulfillment of God's plan has through the Christian tradition strengthened and protected the primary unit of society.

Nor is the civic community less dependent on religion. Men are indeed forced by the conditions of human nature to unite and cooperate in the fulfillment of their common needs, But union and cooperation can continue to exist among free men only when justice and charity, universal in their binding force because imposed by God Himself, are embodied in law. While civic authority may have its immediate source in the consent of the governed, that authority must be recognized as

upon Whom all men depend. Unless religion with its binding force in justice and charity supplies the foundations of law and authority, there remains only human convention or brute force as the unifying element

in society. In the last analysis there is no society of free-men without the creative and sustaining force of religion. Civic society received its most effective support from Him Who taught us to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's.

Nor is religion less important to the complex modern state than to the more primitive social structure. In the measure the State has excluded religion, it has shown a tendency to become an instrument of tyranny. The irreligious state sets itself up in the place of God, substituting its own arbitrary dictates for the decrees of eternal Wisdom. It demands an absolute loyalty such as can be claimed only by Truth itself, and it has no effective deterrent from violating its soleme treaties and from waging unjust and aggressive wars.

Since religion is what contemporary fyrannies are attempting first to shackle and then to destroy, one can rightly conclude that it is the one thing most necessary for the preservation of free nations.

Religion then is of the utmost importance to society in all its aspects and in all its stages of development. It is like the rays of the sun, bringing the light of God's wisdom and grace into man's whole social life. It lights up and purifles the City of Man and turns it into the City of God. Without these sustaining influences, the City of Man is gradually overrun by a Mayan-like jungle of human passions, in whose rank undergrowth of greed and cruelty and every other vice man lives his life in terrorand in the end perishes.

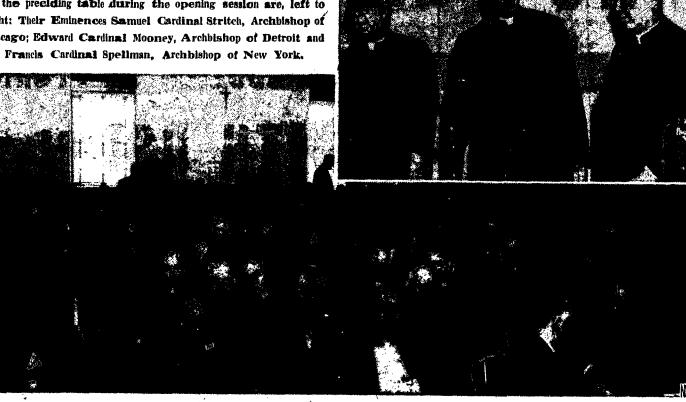
BELIGIOUS INFLUENCE

IN AMERICAN TRADITIONS All society, particularly our own, is intimately dependent on religion. In the beginning of our own nation, at the very time when the revolutionary movement on the Continent of Europe was planning to destroy all influence of religion on public life, it is a remarkable fact that our Founding Fathers based their own revolutionary action on the rights inherent in man as a creature of God, and placed their trust in His

divine providence. The concept of man, which they set forth in the Declara-

Statement Stresses Religion As Our Most Vital More than 150 Archbishops and Bishops attended the annual General Meeting of the United States Hierarchy (lower photo) at the Catholic University of America, Washington, D. C. Shown

At the preciding table during the opening session are, left to right: Their Eminences Samuel Cardinal Stritch, Archbishop of Chicago; Edward Cardinal Mooney, Archbishop of Detroit and



tion of Independence and on which they based the Constitution and our Bill of Rights, is essentially a religious concepta concept inherited from Christian tradition. Human equality stems from the fact that all men have been created by God and equally endowed by Him with rights rooted in human nature itself. Against any other background, human equality

has no meaning. Freedom, too, is essentially bound up with the religious concept of man. In any context that separates man from the creative and sustaining Hand of God, there can be no freetiom. The same is true of all man's inalignable rights. The enjoyment of such rights is safe only in a society which acknowledges the supreme and omnipoterit God.

The whole idea of government, dedicated to the welfare of the human person, in the common good and subject to God's Eternal Law, is derived from the religious concents of man and society which our Founders inherited from their Christian tradition.

The Founders of this counthis debt to religion. The long deliberations to which they submitted the First America. ment to the Constitution and the many revisions it underwent before adoption bear witness to the important place religion occupied in the minds of the first Congress, Certainly it was not their purpose to climinate the influence of religion on public life. On the contrary it was their intention to guarantee to religion its essential freedom.

In a country of divided religious allegiance, the Federal Government was indeed prohibited from setting up any established religion; but it was also prohibited from interfering in any way with any religious institution or with the freedom of the individual in the practice of the religion of his conscientious choice.

That nothing other than this was intended that the Federal Government was not prevented from encouraging and even alding religion, so long as no particular form of religion thould be established by the State, is clear not only from the wording of the First Amendment but also from the fact that from the beginning. under the Constitution and its Amendments, many practices. have flourished which have continued to give great help to

religion. Apart from the record of deliberation and the wording of the First Amenement itself. there is abundant evidence that this carefully thought out solution was not indicative of indifference and still less to hostility to religion, Both the Northwest and Southwest Ordinances, passed by the very men who were responsible for the Amendment, speak of religion and morality as "necessary for good government and the happiness of mankind."

And even more pointed are the words used by our first President in his Farewell Address: "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports . . . Reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevall in exclusion of religious

principle." Such were the prevailing convictions of the Founders of this country? Such too were the traditions which have in large measure determined the course of its development. No one has better expressed American traditions or has contributed more to their development than Abraham Lincoln. Eight times during the term of his presi-

dency he issued proclamations of thanksgiving and of days of prayer and fasting which strongly emphasize this na-

tion's need of religion. The proclamation of March 30, 1863 seems even more pertinent today than it was at the time it was issued.

"We have been the recipients

of the choicest bounties of Heaven; we have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity . . . but we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have valuey imagined, in the deceltfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own, Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to, the God that made us."

THREAT OF SECULARISM These words of Lincoln not portance of religion; they also remind us of the constant temptation for this Country to turn away from God and to be come immersed in material pursuits. In our own day wide spread yielding to this temptation has given rise to an even greater danger-the way of life we call Secularism.

Those who follow this way of life distort and blot out our religious traditions, and seek to remove all influence of religion from public life. Their main efforts are centered on the divorce of religion from education. This strategy seems to be: first to secularize completely the public school and then to claim for it a total monopoly of education.

To teach moral and spiritual values divorced from religion and based solely on social convention, as these men claim to do, is not enough. Unless man's conscience is enlightened by the knowledge of principles that express God's law, there can be no firm and lasting morality. Without religion morality becomes simply a matter of individual taste, of public opinion or majority vote. The moral law must derive its validity and its binding force from the truths of religion. Without relizious education, moral education is impossible.

In criticizing this secularist trend in education, let it not be said that we are enemies of public education. We recognize that the State has a legitimate and even necessary. concern with education. But if religion is important to good citizenship-and that is the burden of our mational tradition—then the State must give recognition to its importance in public education.

The State therefore has the duty to help parents fulfill their task of religious instruction and training. When the State fails in this help, when it makes the task more difficult and even penalizes parents who try to fulfill this duty according to conscience, by depriving their children of their right under our Federal Constitution to auxiliary services, this can only be regarded as an utterly

unfair and short-sighted policy. Even more alarming are the efforts to create a monopoly of education for a secularized public school. To one who cherishes the American tradition, it is alarming to hear all nonpublic education denounced as divisive. Not all differences are divisive, and not all divisions are harmful. There are political and social differences and divisions which are simply the

manifestations of our furadamental freedom.

The differences which are harmful to our country are those which divide our peo-ple in their duty to loyalty, pair iotism and good citizenship. Education of children in schools under religious auspices has no such effect. On the contrary, the religious instruction children receive in such schools inculcates the duties of loyalty, patriotism and civic service based on love of God of neighbor and country. Education that is truly religious is theen a unifying rather than a dividing force.

Particularly difficult to tansome few who, while occupying positions of leadership in various religious groups, yet, in almost every question involving the influence of religion in public life and education, throw the weight of their influence behind Secularism. In the days when Communism was posing as a new and advanced kind of democracy, some of these persons were loud in their praise of praconly recall to us our national ically everything that carne

Of the real

and tyranny, Now that it is no longer fashionable to regard Communism as other than the avowed enemy of our own country, they indeed maintain a discreet silence on the subject of Cornmunistic virtues, but they still throw the weight of their influence behind such totalitarian movements as an all-embracing state-controlled school system and education completely devoid of religion. Although they often lay claim to the title of Christian, they are rather devotees of the pseudo-religion of progress; and they always think of progress in terms of materialistic or secularistic evolution.

Consciously or unconscious ly, in eliminating the influence of religion and in working for the absolutism of majority vote, they are promoting thee disintegration of those social institutions whose foundations are in religion - freedom, husman dignity, equality, the atmble family, and that constituttional democracy which has been characteristic of this-

IRRELIGION, OUR REAL DANGER

The real danger to our courstry comes not from any division likely to result from religious education or professions. It comes rather from the threatening disintergration of our social life, due to the weakening of religion as a constructive force. With the decline of religious belief, the increase of divorce and family disinterration has become a national scandal. With the break-up of the family, juvenile delinquency has shown an alarming increase.

Consequent upon the weakening of religion there has been a lowering of moral standards which has resulted in public corruption—and this in turn threatens all respect for law and public authority. The imminent threat to our country comes not from religious divisiveness but from irreligious social decay. The truly religious man is certain to be one who treasures all those ideals which religion helped to build into this nation.

To the man who is lacking in religious belief, nothing in the end is likely to be sacred, nothing worth preserving. In that direction lies the real danger to our country:

FUNDAMENTAL OBLIGATIONS OF A RELIGIOUS PEOPLE

Although there have been many evidences of the weakening of religion armong our

people, in recent times there of a renewed religious interest. The number of religious books which have attained wide circulation, the frequent serious discussion of religious topics in the daily papers and influential periodicals, the reported increase everywhere in Church attendance, the frequent and effective use of radio and \television for religious programsall these are encouraging

Signs. Moreover the vitality of the religious tradition in our Country has recently been attested by the Supreme Court, when in its majority opinion it stated derstand is the attitude of that "We are a religious people whose institutions presuppose Supreme Being," and when it declared that "when the State encourages religious instruction or cooperates with religious authorities . . . it follows the best of our traditions."

But our best religious traditions are not fulfilled by mere theoretical acknowledgment of religion as a possible aid in solving our problems, or by-a perfunctory attendance at Sunday devotions, or even by still bory ore the mart of Covernment in the general direction of God. If our Country is truly religious, the influence of religion will permeate every part of our national life. The State will not merely tolerate religion; it will honor and welcome it as an indispensable aid in building the complete good life of its chizens—much as the influence of religion has been welcomed in our Armed Forces.

In its internal and external affairs the State will uphold, and it will expect its citizens axid its officials to exphold, that standard of morality which flows necessarily from belief in God and in God's law. From its own officials and employees it will demand an even stricter observance of the moral standard than, it can enforce upon individual citizens or business in stitutions.

In dealing with the latter. the State is often using its police power, rightly restricted by constitutional and other legal guarantees. In the case of puzblic servirats the State is dealing with Individuals whose public employment is conditioned on their honesty, their honor, their truthfulness, their efficiency and their devotion to the national wellare and the public good.

Religion requires that Justice, tempered by charity, must prevall in the Siste's legislation and policy relative to economic groups. It will also inspire and guide the employer in the fulfillment of his duties towards his comployees in the sparit of justice and charity. In the workingman struggle for his rights, his religious committence of the nation was not among the least of the for ces that sustained him. Now that those rights have been largely vindicated, religion still instals on his responsibility to his employer and to society in the achievement of a right econoratio solidarity.

Religion will lead a nation not only to hold forth its bounty to the needy of other nations but also, in a spirit of charity and justice, to do its part to alleviate the plight of the homeless and dispossessed of other lands.

A religious people is a people which prays. If the spirit of religion has declined in our times, it is because many, irnmersed in worldly pursuits. have ceased to pray. Most earnestly, therefore, we targe a return to a like sanctified by prayer. But prayer itself can be effective only when it is the fruit of talm and ordered reflection on the great spiritual realities which under its our

portunity of such reflection was afforded largely by the of religious truth in its full reverent observance of Sunday, the day of the Lord. We call upon our people to return to the proper religious observance of the Lord's day and the practice of family-prayer.

It is a cherished tradition for our government to call its citizens to prayer and public worship. Too often the proclamation of days of prayer, traditional in our Country, has come to be regarded by many as a plous formality. The re-Almighty God, the further re- marked human history. alization that only under God's guidance can we hope to solve our problems and overcome our perils will restore to these days their sacred character. The truly religious observance of such days as our religious feasts and national holidays will deepen and enrich the spiritual life of the whole nation.

THE ROLE OF CHRISTIAN FAITH

One of the constant dangers to the religious spirit in a have been unmistakable signs Country such as ours is the tendency to regard religion itself simply as the fruit of plous sentiment; or to hold, as the doctrinal basis of religion, what we may call the common factor in the religious opinions held by various groups; or to be content with the great religious truths of the natural order which can be known by unaided human reason.

It is true that the Founders of this Country, in their public utterances, gave as the religious foundation of their work only the truths of the natural order - belief in God as the Omnipotent Creator; belief in man as God's free creature endowed with inalienable rights: belief in the eternal truth and universality of the moral law. But it is also true that theme convictions were part of their Christian tradition.

Historically these truths had been received and elaborated by intellects illumined by faith and guided by revelation. It would be wrong to imagine that these truths are sufficient for the religious life of the individual, or that they can of themselves guaran foundation of society. After all, the truths which can be known by reason are but a part of religious truth. It is through su-

pernatural latth alone that man comes to the knowledge rieŝs.

Man is not free to pick and choose among the truths God. has made known either through reason or revelation. His Obligation is to accept the whole of God's truth.

Man himself is not merely a creature of the natural order, At the moment of creation ha was elevated by God to the supernatural state and destined to an everlasting and supernad tural life. To the fall of man alization of the immeasurable. from his high estate are trace. benefits we have received from able all the woes which have

To save man from the sternal consequences of his fall, to pay the penalty of his sins and to restore him to his supernatural. state and destiny, the Son of God became man, suffered and died on the Cross for the salvation of all manking. In the accomplishment of the work of Redemption Christ has given us the fullness of God's revelation. To attain to his destiny, therefore, man needs not merely the truths which reason can discover; he needs also the truths which Christ has revealed; he needs the Church which Christ has established.

All the religious truths, natural and supermatural, are parts of one integral whole, Ultimately in man's mind they must stand or fall together. Subtract one part and you distort the rest; deny one part and in the end you deny the whole Nor, in the light of Divine Révelation, can the principles of natural ethics be separated from the principles of Christian morality. Only the life of Christian faith care great antee to man in his present state the moral life; and the Chrislan life is lived in its entirety only through the one true Church of Christ.

In our present day world it has become clear that denial of supernatural truth tends finally to the denial of all religious truth. "I will show you the truth and the truth will make you free." In Christ's dealers timils and freedom stand to gether. If today Christianity asands for freedom, it is because Christianity is truth.



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