

Ecumenical and Missionary

By REV. ALBERT SHAMON
St. Patrick's, Victor

The Church is a dynamic sign. She is full of life. Her people of God live not merely with human but with divine life. She is a sign that lives!

A living person must live; must grow, must speak, must act! When these cease, a person dies. That is why the Church has the Gospel, she must speak; that is why she has the sacraments, she must act; that is why she is by her nature missionary, she must grow. So full of life is she, that like the tiny blade of grass that bursts the strong macadam, she must "spread abroad" to the right and to the left" (Is. 54:3).

Take a pie; cut it into four quarters. Try to realize that only one of these four quarters is Christian, has had the Gospel preached to it. The other three quarters have not. It stands to reason that the Church's activity in regard to the Christian quarter would be markedly different from her attitude toward the three non-Christian quarters.

That was why Vatican II issued two different decrees: the Decree on Ecumenism regarding Christians and the Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity regarding non-Christians. To the Christian, she is ecumenical; to the non-Christian, she is missionary.

The Church's activity regarding other Christians is ecumenical, not evangelical; she seeks their reunion, not their conversion. "Not compromise, not conversion, but convergence" was the way Baum put it. This fact, astounded (as it did us at first) the Protestant observers at Vatican II. Wrote the Lutheran O. Cullman: "The goal of ecumenism is no longer our 'return'." For pieces of gold-bearing rock themselves bear gold; that is, other Christian Churches, derived as they are from Christianity, have much in them that can save. Other Christians believe in God the Father Almighty and in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord; they pray; they enjoy the word of God in the Sacred Scripture which they honor; some rejoice in a hierarchy (as do the Episcopalians), receive baptism, celebrate the Holy Eucharist, some honor even the Mother of God (On the Church No. 15). Of such as these, the Council has said that they "are brought into a certain, though imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church" (On Ec. No. 3). And so she "accepts them with respect and affection as brothers" (idem).

For this reason she has abandoned a polemic theology for an irenic one. Polemics is an argumentative and defensive brand of theology. It seeks to prove or disprove; argues as though we were always right and they were always wrong. It sees other Christians as enemies. It emphasizes what separates.

Irenics, in contrast, is a conciliatory theology. It looks on other Christians as brothers, albeit separated. It seeks unity by stressing what unites us rather than what separates us.

For fifteen hundred years all Christians shared a common heritage. Surely four hundred years of separation could not have dissipated all of it. Thus, speaking of Christian division, the Council wrote humbly: "Men of both sides were to blame" (On Ec. No. 3), then in a most conciliatory manner, it continued further on: "In humble prayer, we beg pardon of God

and our separated brethren, just as we forgive those who trespass against us."

The great danger of ecumenism is a false irenicism (On Ec. No. 11). This is the tendency to dissimulate what separates us. To shift the emphasis of any truth ever so slightly just to make it more acceptable to the other is to damage the cause of ecumenism. It will merit the condemnation of all-dishonesty.

The only avenue to reunion is honest, frank and sincere dialogue. Ecumenical dialogue is not a matter of merely getting to know each other better or recognizing one another for what one is with the thought at the back of one's mind that we are nevertheless right in spite of everything.

To smile at each other and exchange amiable platitudes is to light a fire of straw—it will soon burn out. "True dialogue

consists in listening to the questions, put by the other with the same intensity and disinterestedness with which we would like him to listen to ours and allowing each other's position to be put to the test by a clear reference to the demands of Christ in the light of one and the same criterion which must ultimately be Holy Scripture (emphasis mine). Only in this way can we hope to start on the road to an ecumenical theology together, each with an eye on the position of the other" (Concillium, vol. 14:128).

To get us thinking this way, the Council advised us to pray. "Prayer is the soul of the ecumenical movement," said the Council Fathers. For it alone can effect the change needed to help us act maturely and the holiness of life that will enable us to grow in mutual brotherly love. (On Ec. No. 8).

To our separated brethren,



Never too Old to Learn

Steelton, Pa. (RNS) — Mrs. Sara Bridges of Steelton, Pa., who is either 106 or 109 years old, wants to learn to read and write so she can study her Bible and be "nearer to God." Daughter of slave parents, she claims 109 as her age, but friends say she is only 106. In any case, she says, she is never too old to read the Bible.

exercised among the faithful, as well as from undertakings aimed at restoring unity among Christians" (On the Church's Missionary Activity No. 6). Her work among the nations, among the three quarters of non-Christians in Asia, Africa, Oceania, who have not had the Gospel preached to them, is strictly missionary, is specifically one of evangelization. Her endeavor here is conversion; to sow the seed of the Gospel and plant the Church among them, so that the sign of salvation, the light of truth, may shine on new peoples. The mandate of Christ and the nature of the Church demand this.

As the Word once became flesh, so must the Church once become flesh in the body of every tribe, race and nation. When the Church has once been firmly set up among a people, her missionary task there is over.

Salvation, of course, is possible outside the Church, but precarious. Pius XII spoke of those outside the Church as being in a "state in which they cannot be sure of their salvation. For even though unsuspectedly they are related to the Mystical Body of the Redeemer in desire and resolution, they still remain deprived of so many precious gifts and helps from heaven, which one can only enjoy in the Catholic Church" (Mystical Body No. 100).

In other words, the Pope argues that if it is difficult for the Catholic with all the Church's gifts and helps to live well and to avoid serious sin, how much more difficult for those without these gifts and helps! Thus St. Paul cried, "Woe to me if I preach not the Gospel" (1 Cor. 9:16). Without the preaching of the Gospel, the salvation of many will be in jeopardy—and our own, if the burial of our talents in any way impedes this preaching.

Power is dissipated through disunion. When the leaves of the forest cease to be all one green and fade into hectic reds and russets and jaundiced yellows and golds, this fragmentation is not the sign of life, but that the hand of death has touched them. It presages not growth but decline. For division tears down the sign, lessens the intensity of the light of revelation to the Gentiles. Fragmentation in the human organism is but the deadly and withering disease of cancer. Fragmentation in the military means destruction and defeat.

The awesome and sophisticated weaponry of the legions of Rome was fragmentation—"divide et impera"—divide and conquer." Fragmentation in the field of propaganda is the secret of success of diabolical Communism. Fragmentation in the field of religion is one of the major reasons why religion is so ineffective and irrelevant in the modern world today.

To the non-Christian world, however, the Church's activity "differs from pastoral activity

New Pamphlet Issued On English Liturgy

Washington—(RNS)—The International Committee on English in the Liturgy has issued a second booklet of sample translations for the Mass and it hopes that it will meet the same enthusiastic response as its forerunner.

"English for the Mass: Part II" follows by less than a year a similar titled booklet which had international distribution. The pamphlets have been authorized by Roman Catholic episcopal conferences in ten countries in an effort to stimulate discussion which would lead to the preparation of a uniform English version of all Latin Rite liturgical books.

Father Gerald J. Sigler, executive secretary of the international committee, said that the first booklet was distributed to 18,000 persons and drew responses from 4,000. The new booklet will have a distribution of 20,000. Recipients will be

asked to submit their comments by April 30.

The advisory committee of the international committee will examine the returns at a meeting here in May and then will take major steps toward commissioning translators for the texts of the Mass, according to Father Sigler.

The current booklet contains experimental translations of prayers, psalms, prefaces, and a survey of Biblical readings for the Mass. The first booklet had translations of the text of the Ordinary of the Mass and the general principles of translation.

In discussing the objective of the international committee, Father Sigler said, "The final translation cannot be in any particular 'idiom.' It must aim at good, straight, simple English which brings understanding to the unlearned and delight to the literate. Such writing demands the highest kind of literary art." The (advisory) committee appeals to those who have been given this gift to offer themselves for the work of translation.

The ten episcopal conferences represented on the international committee are from the U.S., Australia, Canada, England and Wales, India, Ireland, New Zealand, Pakistan, Scotland, and South Africa.



One of the by-products came as a surprise to many was the action taken in the form of a letter, had ever thought Dubay of Los Angeles priests.

At first glance it would be difficult to understand the for a priests' union. Higher wages, better working conditions would hardly be the objectives of such an organization. Why, then, the spreading of the word? The primary motive was and still is communication. Structures of Church in pre-Vatican II were far too often one of the former. Blind obedience to the top was a higher virtue.

I am well aware that by time some readers have all but bristled and have written them off as another attempt to degrade obedience as a virtue. Each priest and each man going his own way in a chaotic Church. Believe me, such an attempt is being made. Obedience is and must be a virtue among those who are sincere followers of Christ who "was obedient unto even the death of the Cross."

There can be no order in a society without obedience and as a former rector of a minor seminary used to say "Order leads to God."

The crux of the situation in the structure within obedience operates. We have insisted that the union by human beings must be human and personal, that should never be a simple matter of response. Obedience must also be human, personal, and not merely kind of response a mere makes to the demands of a master. Obedience in things must be an intelligent and free response if it have the name of virtue.

A few years ago, in an entitled THE BIG CHAIR, Frederick Allen treated attitudes of the great industrial barons toward their employees around the beginning of the century. When the unions were first being organized, one executive wrote great indignation that couldn't understand why laborers didn't realize that in his infinite wisdom designated the industrial to guide the destinies of a worker, and that whatever decided for the welfare of the worker was best. Just a few centuries ago kings took the same attitude toward the subjects. Perhaps some members of the hierarchy in the past few in the present have their lead from such things.

If we look back to Christ we find such an appeal to be a total contradiction. His Jesus did not say, "them observe," but "Teach them to observe," he commanded you," he said. "The rulers of the world lord it over them; not so among you. Let who rules be as him serves." The quarrel, then, not with the Divine Authority which bishops and pastors but rather with the which it is exercised.

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