

New Tasks for Churchmen in Ecumenical Era

By MONSIGNOR WILLIAM SHANNON
Nazareth College

"The world awoke one day and found itself Arian." So wrote St. Jerome, in the fourth century, about the sudden emergence of Arianism as a popular and fashionable religion in his day.

In no less dramatic terms a twentieth-century Roman Catholic might describe the sudden explosion of the ecumenical movement within his Church: "The Church awoke one day and found itself ecumenical." And that day was November 21, 1964, the date of the promulgation of the decree on Ecumenism of Vatican Council II.

Once drawn, however, the parallel between Jerome's words and the hypothetical statement of a contemporary Roman Catholic breaks down very quickly. For Jerome must have penned his words with bitterness and anxiety, seeing, as surely he must have, the widespread acceptance of Arianism as a repudiation of the Gospel. Today's Roman Catholic, on the contrary, if he is aware to the signs of the times, will see the involvement of his Church in the ecumenical movement as a powerful sign of a renewed commitment to the Gospel, about which he can only speak with joy and with hope for the future.

Vatican II and the Unity Movement

However, the individual Roman Catholic views the entrance of his Church into the ecumenical picture — whether with joy or with apprehension — he must face the fact that the decree on Ecumenism officially and irrevocably commits his Church and himself as one of its members to involvement in the ecumenical movement. And equally he must face the fact that this is an entirely new position for the Roman Catholic Church — so new indeed that for some it may seem, initially at least, an uncomfortable position.

It is true that in the past there have been official Church documents that spoke about the ecumenical movement. Pius XI's encyclical *Mortalium Animos* (1928) and the Instruction of the Holy Office (1949), the first repudiating the ecumenical movement as it then existed, the second giving guarded approval to participation in it. But still it must be said that the decree on Ecumenism of the Second Vatican Council is the first Roman Catholic document that is not only about the ecumenical movement but is itself ecumenical in spirit. And this document is but two years old.

Theology in Ecumenical Perspective

The very suddenness with which the ecumenical movement has come upon us poses



Pope, Prelate, Meet in Rome

Vatican City — (RNS) — Archbishop Arthur Michael Ramsey of Canterbury gives Pope Paul a gold pectoral cross in an exchange of gifts following their first meeting a year ago in the Sistine Chapel. The British Anglican Primate also presented a collection of his writings to the pontiff. Pope Paul gave his guest a 12th Century fresco of Christ and a complete series of 25 volumes containing the acts of all the Councils of the Church through Vatican I (1869-70).

unique problems for us Roman Catholics — problems we have never had to face before. Many of us, in terms of our past training, are inadequately prepared for the adjustments which wholehearted ecumenicity will demand of us. Until very recently Catholic theology has been largely polemical and apologetic in tone rather than ecumenical.

In our relations with other Christians we were primarily concerned to prove that we were right and they were wrong. The structure of our presentation of theology, as we so often taught and learned it, followed a stereotyped pattern. We began with a not very sympathetic presentation of the errors of our "adversaries." (High on the list of these "adversaries" were those whose "heresy" — the ecumenical embrace we are referring to — our "separated brethren.") Then there followed a presentation of Catholic belief, proved from Scripture, the Fathers and reason. Finally, we concluded with a refutation of the errors of the

above-mentioned "adversaries" (who were never given an opportunity of explaining or defending their positions).

Such an approach to the teaching and learning of theology showed little inclination to seek common ground or contact and agreement with other Christians. We tended all too often to overlap our own certainty and insight into divine revelation and to underplay the Christian faith of others and even the sincerity of their commitment.

The first step, therefore, toward Roman Catholic involvement in ecumenicity is an honest effort to move away from this mentality in our teaching of the Catholic faith.

Contemporary Catholic theology must show a greater sensitivity to the thinking and feelings of other Christians. It must develop a sincere desire to find common grounds of belief with them. In this search for mutual understanding and respect, mutual acknowledgment, as the decree on Ecumenism encourages us to do, that there is a hier-

archy among the truths to which we are committed: some are closer to the heart of the Christian revelation than others; unity is necessary only in the things that are necessary.

In a word, Catholic theology must become increasingly a theology that is open to dialogue — and a dialogue in which the goal is not the conversion of the partner in dialogue, but deeper understanding. One comes out of a dialogue, not a winner or a loser, but a fuller person, enriched with a deeper understanding of how another person thinks and why, enriched also in the sense that the mutual give and take of dialogue sharpens one's understanding of his own position. We must believe that in dialogue God can speak to us through others.

This means that ecumenicity must become, not simply a new tactic in our theology, not merely an emergency measure resorted to in times of crisis, but an essential dimension of that theology. More and more we must teach and learn theology in dialogue. We must learn to combine the

alty and love for our own tradition with a genuine openness to the traditions of others — and this not only for the sake of ecumenicity, but for the sake of theology.

Our theology will become the better for this openness. Far from weakening our own belief, our commitment to them will become more vital, precise, and thought about in dialogue with the beliefs of others. Does not the contemporary Biblical Movement offer us empirical proof that this is true? No field of theology is more alive and influential today than the field of Biblical studies, and Biblical scholars of different confessions have for many years developed their thinking in living dialogue with one another.

It seems valid to draw the conclusion that more and more the theology departments of our seminaries and colleges must become ecumenical not only in course content but in faculty personnel. Honest commitment to ecumenism will eventually sound the death knell for the isolated denominational teaching of theology.

Areas of Disagreement

Someone has defined an ecumenist as a person who thinks that any other church is better than his own. The definition of ecumenicity, as it expresses the mentality that it expresses, would amount to a betrayal of the ecumenical movement. Authentic ecumenicity is built neither on compromise nor on a wavering commitment to one's own belief. Each partner in the ecumenical dialogue must reexamine his own position, not in order to conform it to the other's beliefs, but in order to be more faithful to the Gospel and to Jesus Christ.

Ecumenicity means more than good will toward other Christians; at its deepest level it is fidelity according to one's own faith, to the will of Christ. True ecumenicity, therefore, demands a total commitment to one's own tradition as well as sincere respect for the Christian traditions of other churches. Emphasizing the things that unite us as Christians must never lead us to underestimate the differences that divide us.

The reality of this ecumenical tension was well stated by Dr. W. A. Visser 't Hooft on the occasion of Cardinal Bea's visit to Geneva, February 1, 1965. In welcoming the Catholic prelate, Dr. Visser 't Hooft said: "It has struck me how often the words 'nevertheless' (nikhomina) and 'yet' (attamen) occur in the Decree on Ecumenism. This seems right to me. For true ecumen-

ism is an attitude that is marked by these words. We do not underestimate our differences. We do not know how to overcome them. Ecumenism does not rest on the assumption that the differences are on the point of vanishing. It is based on the conviction that, in spite of the differences, we must talk together and if possible work together. We take note of the fact that these differences exist and that they are as great as ever, but we add 'nevertheless'; because our common faith in the same God, the same redeemer and the same Holy Spirit urges us to understand each other, to live together, as Christians ought to live together."

Hence once our ecumenical initiative is over and we have grown comfortable in greeting and treating other Christians as brothers, we shall have to talk in all candor about the reality of our differences. We shall need to discuss the principle of authority in the Church — both the reality of authority and its proper exercise. We shall have to discuss the Marian doctrines and devotions of Roman Catholicism, asking ourselves if we have sometimes taught these doctrines in isolation from the total picture of God's revelation of Himself in Christ, and inviting our Christian brothers to ask themselves if at times they have been so intent upon rejecting the Mariology of the Roman Catholic Church that they have ignored the Mary of the Gospels and her place in the scheme of redemption — as the totally faithful one.

We shall have to talk about Roman Catholic legislation on mixed marriages, asking ourselves if the present legislation of the Church represents complete fidelity to our own expressed belief in freedom of conscience and in the redemptive significance of the baptism of other Christians.

We shall have to discuss worship: how we can better familiarize ourselves with one another's forms of worship, how we can collaborate in non-Eucharistic forms of worship. We shall need to discuss also whether or not Eucharistic worship together might become under certain circumstances an eventual possibility.

These and other matters of faith and order we must face in a spirit of honesty and good will, knowing that there are no easy or immediate solutions to our differences, yet wanting to open ourselves to the Holy Spirit as He speaks to us through one another.

Secular Ecumenism

Yet in our dialogue with one another we must be on our guard lest we concentrate our attention too exclusively on ecclesial problems, sitting at our right to me. For true ecumen-

COURIER-JOURNAL 138
Friday, May 12, 1967

Experimental Rites OK'd

St. Louis — (NC) — Special liturgical experiments have become effective for Masses celebrated in 12 St. Louis archdiocesan high schools and all private high schools represented in the High School Religion Council here.

The new practices include: — Permission for use of a votive Mass on days when the Mass from the preceding Sunday is normally said. — Permission for a girl to read the Epistle during a liturgy in an all-girls high school.

— Permission for a girl to read the Epistle during a liturgy in an all-girls high school.

Need HELP?

GENERAL MAINTENANCE
LAWN CARE
CLEANING etc.

C.Y.O.

JOB PLACEMENT

In cooperation with Inner-City Parishes the C.Y.O. will act as a clearing house between young men with working permits and prospective employers. C.Y.O. is not acting as employer and does not assume any obligations in employer-employee matters.

Those who wish to hire young men for a minimum of three (3) hours at the minimum wage of \$1.25 per hour are asked to call C.Y.O.

Phone 454-2030
Call Mon. thru Fri. between 9 and 5

Mr. Joseph Judge



Canterbury at Notre Dame

Paris — (RNS) — In an historic milestone for the Christian unity movement, Anglican Archbishop Arthur Michael Ramsey of Canterbury (left) kneels in prayer in the famed Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris. Kneeling with him before the altar at a unity service is Roman Catholic Archbishop Pierre Vuillot of Paris. Dr. Ramsey told the congregation of the "great danger we are in because of our unhappy divisions," and prayed that "we may henceforth be of one part and of one soul."

Statewide Pilgrimage Set To Auriesville Shrine

Rochester Branches, Catholic Central Union of America and National Catholic Women's Union, are participating in a statewide pilgrimage of more than a thousand persons to the Martyrs' Shrine at Auriesville on Sunday, May 21.

CSS.R., Spiritual Advisor of both organizations, will lead the local pilgrims and assist in the celebrated Mass.

Go Paddle Your Canoe!

Ottawa — (NC) — Twenty-four young Jesuits, mostly seminarians, will paddle the route of the Canadian Martyrs from Midland, Ont., to Montreal as their part in Canada's centennial voyageur canoe pageant.

The voyage will start Aug. 13 from Midland, site of the Canadian Martyrs shrine, dedicated to the honor of St. Jean de Brebeuf and his seven companions. They gave their lives for their Faith at the hands of the Iroquois in the 1640s and today are the patron saints of Canada.

Very Rev. John F. Clerkin.

A Special WANT AD FEATURE for Subscribers of The Catholic COURIER Journal

ONE DOLLAR

For 10 Words or Less
Each Additional Word 8¢

Yes, if you are a Subscriber to the Catholic Courier Journal you can purchase a 10-word Want Ad that will reach over 67,000 homes for only One Dollar.

The Only Requirements Are:

1. You must be a subscriber to the Courier Journal
2. Payment Must Accompany Order.

VALUABLE COUPON

Please Enter My Want Ad for _____ Weeks.

Enclosed is \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip _____

Copy: _____

Mail to: Catholic Courier Journal,
Want Ad Dept.,
35 Scio St.,
Rochester, N.Y. 14604

Mt. READ VOLKSWAGEN

This car has passed our rigorous safety and performance test

N.Y. State's Largest Selection Of Used Volkswagens
When you see this sticker on the windshield, it means the car has passed our tough 16-point safety and performance test. It means the car is fully reconditioned. It means we guarantee 100% the repair or replacement of all major mechanical parts for 30 days or 1000 miles. And it means you won't get stuck when you buy one.

This car has passed our 16-point safety and performance test

'60 FORD 4-Door Sedan, Gray, #7404, A-1	\$99	'59 CHEVROLET 2 Dr., White, A-1	\$99
'61 BUICK 4-Door, Gray, A-1	\$199	'59 CHEVY WAG'N Van, A-1	\$99
'61 VOLKSWAGEN White, 113, #7487-B, A-1	\$399	'59 CHEVROLET Wagon, Gray, A-1	\$99
'62 TRIUMPH A-1	\$399	'62 KARM.-GHIA Coupe, Tan, #7426-A	\$699
'60 VOLKSWAGEN 2 Dr. Sedan, Green	\$499	'63 CHEVROLET Bel Air Conv., Maroon	\$899
'64 CORVAIR Cpe., Blue, #7323-A	\$699	'61 VOLKSWAGEN Model 113, White, #2084-A	\$799
'63 OLDSMOBILE 88 4 Dr. Sedan, #7472-A	\$899	'63 VOLKSWAGEN Sunroof, Gray, #2025	\$949
'62 VOLKSWAGEN Sedan, Red, #7206-A	\$899	'64 TRIUMPH Roadster, White	\$999
'63 VOLKSWAGEN 113, Green 2 Dr., #7211-A	\$999	'63 VOLKSWAGEN 113, Black, #7470-A	\$999
'64 VOLKSWAGEN Convertible, Black, #7011-A	\$1099	'64 FAIRLANE 500 Spf. Coupe, White, V-8, Auto.	\$999
'63 BUICK Electra 225, 4 Dr. Htg., White	\$1199	'64 VOLKSWAGEN Sedan, 123 Red., #2035, #7146-A	\$1049
'65 VOLKSWAGEN Sedan, Red, (2) #7150-A #7210-A	\$1299	'64 VOLKSWAGEN 113, Gray 2 Dr., #7401-A	\$1099
'65 MUSTANG 2-Dr. Htg., 6 Cyl., 4 Spd.	\$1399	'64 VOLKSWAGEN Sedan with Air Cond., Red., #2033	\$1099
'66 VOLKSWAGEN 113 Blue, #7242	\$1499	'66 VOLKSWAGEN Sedans, Choice of (5) From	\$1349
'64 CHEVROLET Impala Conv. V-8 P.S. & B. Air Cond.	\$1599	'63 BUICK Electra 225 4 Dr. Sedan, Power Windows, Power Seat, Air Cond. Dual 90's, #7226-A	\$1399

"See Us First or Last, But Be Sure To See Us"

1765 Mt. READ BLVD.

BETWEEN DRIVING PARK AND LEXINGTON AVES. PHONE 254-7770