

I Don't Belong To Anything

During Cardinal Koenig's talk concluding the recent Toronto Congress on the Theology of the Renewal of the Church, I chanced to sit next to the Anglican author-theologian, Rev. Dr. E. L. Mascall, and walked back to his residence with him. He is a gentleman-scholar of the old British tradition and is probably best known at this time for his book, "The Secularization of Christianity" which takes Anglican Bishop John A. T. Robinson to task for his questioning book "Honest to God."

Dr. Mascall asked me if I belonged to a religious order. I told him no. What diocese did I belong to? I told him, "Rochester — Bishop Sheen's Diocese." He might have been a bit vague as to his knowledge of the precise location of the city but he had no difficulty identifying the famous Bishop — whose image and reputation are perhaps even better known and respected by many who are not of our faith than by those who are.

Dr. Mascall's question about what order or diocese I "belonged to" was, I realize, chiefly for conversation and identification but that question about what I "belonged to" set me to thinking later.

I think too many of us equate "belonging to" and membership in the Church or a diocese or a parish or a religious group with "being" a disciple of the Lord.

Belonging to a church like membership in a club pulls us in, nails us down, charges us nominal dues and offers us considerable advantages — a chaplain to visit us when we're sick and encourage us over life's rough spots, it provides youngsters a program of sports, dances and picnics, older people meet congenial other people for study opportunities and lunches, dinners and other social events at moderate prices, and everybody gets the idea all this, being under church auspices, is for a good cause and is thereby helping the poor, educating the ignorant, converting the heathen and building a better world for the future.

Bishop Sheen pointed out in a recent talk, however, that Christianity is not an "in" thing but a "go" affair. His point is well made. Glance through the Gospels and notice how often Jesus told His disciples to go — Go preach . . . go sell . . . go into the highways . . . go into the next towns . . . go into the city . . . go into the village . . . go to my brethren . . . go call your husband . . . go and be reconciled . . . go and see . . . go quickly . . . go in peace . . . arise, and go!

Dr. Harvey Cox who will launch a young theologians colloquium at Colgate Rochester Divinity School this Sunday evening, in his still best-selling book "The Secular City," reminds us that Jesus was "born during a journey, spent His first years in exile, was expelled from his own home town, and declared that He had no place to lay His head." It was said of the first Christians that they had "no lasting city" and they were first known as "The People of the Way."

So many people today are mobile — commuters to work, to school, to restaurants, theaters, the homes of friends. Life no longer centers around the cracker barrel of the village general store but pulses along multi-lane highways, at jetports, in high-speed elevators, cars, boats and orbiting space vehicles. Mankind is on the go today and so also must the disciple of the Lord be on the go — to move among the people, as does Father James E. Groppi of Milwaukee (even though some of us wish he could do that and somehow

also stay within the bounds of the law), to listen for the sounds of loneliness, fear, the smashed hopes, guilt, anger, hunger which are the silent sounds of our throbbing mechanized cities.

The Church, it has been said, is more tied to its real estate than to immortal souls today. So much concern and energy is spent on property that we blind ourselves to individuals and their needs.

What Jesus said to His apostles is, therefore, equally valid for His Church — it should travel "light" — "Take nothing for your journey." He said, "no staff, no bag, nor bread, nor money; and don't have two coats either."

Much of the turmoil in the Church today is the result of this pull in two directions — toward bigger and better and richer agencies and edifices, and in the other direction toward a free-wheeling, unstructured religious life.

Somehow, I think, both aspects are necessary — not one against the other but one in service of the other, the structured Church with its historic rites and regulations to be like the steel-girders of a skyscraper, and the free spirits who are somewhat like clouds, always changing their shape and moving on.

Both the rigid and the free are shaped, however, by one common factor — Jesus of Nazareth. He still exerts a power over men and they are drawn to him as much by a baptism of the heart as by the more traditional baptism of water. It is, after all, to Him that we belong, not to any thing, no matter how holy and venerable it may be.

To belong to Him opens us to a vulnerability which mere membership in an organization can never do — but our wounds are then, like His, for the healing of others, and glorious.

—Faber Henry A. Atwell

View of Jews Better in Books

New York — (RNS) — Franz Cardinal Koenig of Vienna expects the current effort to eliminate negative references to Jews and Judaism in the religious textbooks used in Austrian schools to deepen Christian Jewish understanding in his homeland.

At a meeting here with officials of the American Jewish Committee the Austrian prelate said that the textbook commission, which for the past year has been reviewing religious materials used in all schools, public as well as parochial, will report shortly with its recommendations.

The textbook commission is under the direction of Professor Kurt Schubert, head of the Institute for Judaica at the Vienna State University.

"The work of the textbook commission," Cardinal Koenig said, "would provide the basis for more extensive programs covering the entire range of religious education, attitude formation, including teacher training, seminaries, colleges, adult

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Knights Stress Respect for Law

Montreal — (RNS) — Expressing concern over increasing lawlessness on the streets of American cities, the Knights of Columbus asked for the strengthening of law enforcement agencies as a deterrent to the rising crime rate.

At its annual convention here, the Roman Catholic fraternal society also passed a series of nine resolutions supporting President Johnson in his efforts to seek a just and honorable peace in Vietnam, and five resolutions urging Congressional action to stiffen the penalties for desecration of the American flag.

The resolution on lawlessness stated that "the streets of our communities are becoming more and more unsafe for all people." It declared that the K. of C. supreme council "opposes the indiscriminate freeing of criminals, the handcuffing of our law enforcement agencies, and urges more stringent laws and sterner punishment to offenders as a deterrent to this rising crime rate."

In asking that the government continue its policies in Vietnam, one of the nine resolutions recommended that the K. of C. leadership launch a "campaign to induce the news media to upgrade the picture of the United States and relegate to a minor position in the news the adverse publicity given by marches, speeches, pictures and articles."

Another resolution on the war in Vietnam urged the President to continue to resist "the pressures of the well-meaning but misinformed, the agitators for peace through surrender, the Communists and their fellow travelers, with the assurance that he has the confidence and support of the vast majority of his fellow Americans."

In discussing what it termed "an alarming increase of disrespect" of the American flag, the K. of C. members were urged to publicly respect and love their country and flag.

In other action, the K. of C. delegates:

Decisive Role
Rio De Janeiro — (RNS) — Latin Americans will play a "decisive role" in the future of the Roman Catholic Church, Leon Joseph Cardinal Suenens, Archbishop of Malines-Brussels predicted in an address at the Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro.

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