

# The Bostdorfs and Chris, No Room for Bias

Catholic Press Features

Harrisburg, Pa.—"I have gone to the homes of all Christ's playmates and have explained to their parents that he is our child and that we love him."

That's the most important thing they've done for Chris, 5-year-old son of racially mixed parents, according to Mr. and Mrs. Marlin Bostdorf, a white couple who just adopted him.

"Chris has been with us since he was 2 weeks old," said Mrs. Bostdorf, who with her husband welcomed him into their home as a foster child from Catholic Charities. "He'll be 6 in July. We got the adoption decree on Oct. 25. We have three other children, one boy and two girls, and they feel the same way about him as I do—it's a little more strongly. He's a lovable child. You can't help but like him. God really looks out for him, and He's given him a wonderful disposition."

But Mrs. Bostdorf, whose husband has been serving in Saigon the past three years as a civilian with the Air Force, takes no chances that other people will have a "wonderful disposition" toward Chris, particularly parents of Chris' white playmates.

"If they don't want my son playing with their children, they're not hurting my feelings in any way," Mrs. Bostdorf said, "but they shouldn't abuse the child. They should just tell me."

"People seem to think he's no different from their children though. I haven't had a bit of trouble with the neighbors. When Chrissie makes a



Mrs. Marlin Bostdorf and her sons—Marlin Jr. and Chris—join their dog King for an evening of TV.

new friend, I ask him to bring his friend home. Then I take the child to his house and I talk to the parent along with him. I find that people are adjusting to this matter of race more and more. You just can't hide it, and I don't see why anyone would want to, really."

There have been some problems, but Mrs. Bostdorf has always acted on them quickly, like the time that operators of a swimming pool would accept Chris as a guest and not as a member of the family.

"I said, 'Forget it.' This doesn't bother me. What's good for one child is good for all of them. I don't belong. I can get down to another pool. I can get a membership there, for the same amount."

And there was the time that the two Bostdorf girls took Chris out to buy some clothing. "People really stared. They looked at the girls and they looked at him, and they looked back at the girls. The girls just ignore that sort of thing, really,

because it doesn't pay you to say anything to people like that. It's more curiosity than anything else anyway."

Even so, Chris is just another child, and the Bostdorfs can't discriminate. "We love children around. That's why we've had so many foster children here."

Just how many have there been, she was asked. "Oh, golly," she answered. "You can say about one hundred. It's probably more."

## Father Cushing To Lead Group On Pilgrimage

A Rochester priest has been chosen spiritual director of a new pilgrimage-tour of Europe.

Father Water F. Cushing, associate director of the Family Life Bureau and chaplain of St. Agnes High School, will be on a three-week air journey that will take off Aug. 1.

From Rochester, Father Cushing and his group will fly via New York to Lisbon where they will view the city and its vast harbor from atop a 600-foot statue of Christ the King on the opposite shore.

On their way to the shrine of Fatima, the group will visit the colorful fishing village of Nazare, where each fishwife proudly wears seven petticoats.

By way of Madrid and Barcelona Father Cushing and his party will join thousands of other pilgrims at Lourdes, where more than three million of the faithful come each year.

At Paris they will visit the Louvre, the Cathedral of Notre Dame, and the palace of Versailles.

"We hope to see everything," said Father Cushing, "from the Eiffel Tower to Monte Carlo and the splendid Basilica of Sacre Coeur. But I have also reserved enough time to sit and relax in one of the traditional sidewalk cafes."

The party will also visit Venice, Florence, Padua, Bologna, Pisa, Assisi and Rome.

## Business World U.N. Trade Meeting Criticized

Vatican City —(RNS)—The second United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) "must be counted as a failure which will have disturbing consequences on world development," Vatican Radio said in a special broadcast here.

The broadcast followed closely on the end of the six-week meeting in New Delhi. It echoed warnings which had been sounded earlier by Father Henri de Riedmatten, one of the Vatican observers at the conference, and other religious spokesmen.

Vatican Radio—enumerated four reasons for "failure" at New Delhi:

"1. The preoccupation of industrial nations with their own domestic problems. The United States of America was deeply troubled over its balance of payments and the world was worried over the question of international monetary reserves.

"2. The people of the richer countries have not yet shown a really resolute concern about the problems of the poor of the world.

"3. Unfortunately, developing nations often justify the apathy of the richer ones towards aid, partly because they waste aid in some ways and, in general, because they have not established leaderships capable of mobilizing their countries' resources.

"4. Apathy on the part of all was the main explanation, in the view of the retiring president of the World Bank, George Woods. He said, 'inertia can only be overcome by perception. The leaders of both the poor and the prosperous countries must grasp the nature of the situations confronting them.'"

"Given the complexity of the problems faced at New Delhi and the apathy about their solution," the Vatican Radio said, "one begins to ask whether the world can move men to action and create the kind of structure which will channel international cooperation towards development."

"One must create a set of institutions with the authority to urge agreements and to force necessary compromises," the broadcast said.

Or, it added, at least a way must be found to give binding force to agreements already contracted.

## Parish Worried About Windmill

MOSQUERO, N.M. (RNS)—Catholic parishioners here are wondering what to do about an old wooden windmill near the rectory of St. Joseph's.

The windmill is inoperative but as a well known landmark and symbol of the Old West it is of sentimental value to the townspeople.

Father William Savard of St. Joseph's, however, fears there is a danger that the windmill may topple onto the rectory. He is asking his parishioners to vote on the problem and says he will abide by the majority decision.

One Mosquero merchant in this small northern New Mexico community reportedly offered \$100 for repairs.

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## International Government Official

### Czech

By PATRICK RILEY (NC News Service)

Prague, Czechoslovakia — head of this country's religious affairs department has declared its government is ready to redress the country's grievances of the country's and redress the most pressing.

Dr. Erika Kadlecova told N. Service that the Catholic East church—which was forcibly closed by Czechoslovakia's Stalin game in 1950—"may be restored."

She said that her department formally petitioned for the release of imprisoned priests whose had been motivated by religious views of religious obedience for those already out of jail, that rehabilitation proceedings be begun in behalf of priest laymen who had been imprisoned.

He hesitates to return to the hood because he wonders the present liberalization process Czechoslovakia will ultimately religious freedom "in fact or theory?"

He thinks "he is good in trade."

Dr. Antonin Dvorak, 59, a and—until his arrest in 1950, of the Olmouc archdiocese, telephone repairman in Prague.

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Dr. Dvorak was interviewed for Jan Kasten of Lidova Den, a daily which nominally bears the People's Party but for all decades reflected the views of Communist regime. The newspaper has changed notably since the den democratization of the movement which started early and led to the end of the shroud of Christ, was much taller than 5 feet 3.

The Holy Shroud, a relic preserved in a church in Turin, a long linen cloth bearing the marks of the likeness of a man who was scourged, crowned with thorns, crucified and whose side was pierced by lance. It has long been thought piously that this is the sheet which the body of Christ was wrapped after He was taken from the Cross. However, other scholars have objected to authenticity since it was generally known until the 13th Century.

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of the author of the article is a "moving and tragic fate" n

## 'Holy Sh'

ROME—Two Italian experts have determined that the man who was wrapped in what known as the "Holy Shroud" believed by many to have been the shroud of Christ, was much taller than 5 feet 3.

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## Make Vocations Religious Heads

Milwaukee — (RNS) — Religious superiors should strive to make vocations more attractive to young people by eliminating authoritarianism — at least, assuring them personal liberty and democracy, and developing more relevant roles and duties, a psychologist said here.

Anthony Kuchan, professor of psychology at Marquette University, said such steps are necessary to satisfy the basic needs of youth for personal identity, security, mastery and esteem.

Kuchan spoke at a communications seminar for vocation directors sponsored by the Bernardine Guild of Milwaukee. The third annual event of the type, attracted about 200 religious order representatives from 20 states.

The speaker gave participants a psychological explanation why religious orders have been more attractive.

He described several "forces" which have been responsible for drawing youth away from religious vocations and his suggestions on how the situation might be improved.

Kuchan said religious superiors must ask themselves how they and others in positions can create a sense of personal identity among their candidates.

Kuchan proposed other questions which religious superiors should consider:

"How can I develop a trust in an eternal capacity for freedom and choose to move away from authoritarianism?"

"How do I democratize organization of mine? How I love each person to have or her say in the community is as much his or hers as any others?"

# On Being a Christian in the Contemporary World

The following "TIME ESSAY" which appears in the current issue of the news-magazine TIME, is a special means to be a Christian in modern times. The author speculates that Christianity faced with declining loyalties and rejections of authority may soon find a great opportunity: "the courage and zeal of the first despised minority which changed the history of the world."

"What is bothering me is the question what Christianity really is, or indeed who Christ really is for us today." So wrote the young Lutheran Theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer from his Berlin prison cell in April 1944, one year before he was executed by the SS for complicity in the plots against Hitler's life.

It is a question that today — for more complicated reasons — concerns countless thousands of U.S. churchgoers, who see about them a Christianity in the midst of change, confusion and disarray.

For Roman Catholics, the religious revolution set loose by the Second Vatican Council has changed many traditional patterns of worship and thought, and seemingly has opened a legion of priests, nuns and laymen who feel free to cast doubt on every article of defined dogma.

Protestants too have been stunned by the spectacle of an Episcopal bishop openly denying the Trinity and the Virgin Birth, and ordained ministers teaching in seminaries proclaiming the news that God is dead. On the theological right, evangelical preachers summon believers back to a strict Biblical orthodoxy. On the left, angry young activists insist that to be a Christian is to be a revolutionary, and propose to substitute picket lines for prayer.

Undeniably one of the most telling events of modern history has been a revolution in the relationship of religion to Western civilization. The churchgoer could once take comfort in the fact that he belonged to what was essentially a Christian society, in which the existence of an omnipotent God was the focus of ultimate meaning. No such security exists today, in a secular-minded culture that suggests the eclipse rather than the presence of God.

Science and technology have long since made it unnecessary to posit a creative Deity as a hypothesis to explain anything in the universe. From Marxists, existentialists and assorted humanists has come the persistent message that the idea of God is an intellectual bogey that prevents man from claiming his mature heritage of freedom.

In the U.S. which probably has a higher percentage of regular Sunday churchgoers than any other nation on earth the impact of organized Christianity appears to be on the wane. One problem for the future of the churches is the indifference and even hostility toward them on the part of the young.

Major Task

Undeniably, one major task of theology today is to define what it means to be a Christian in a secular society. For millions, of course, there is no real problem. Baptism and church membership are the external criteria of faith, and a true follower of Jesus is on from here and tries to live a decent, upright, moral life.

Yet to the most thoughtful spokesmen of modern Christianity, these criteria are not only minimal, they are secondary and even somewhat irrelevant. Instead, they argue that

faith is not an intellectual assent to a series of dogmatic propositions but a commitment of one's entire being; ethical concern is directed not primarily toward one's own life but toward one's neighbor and the world.

The mortal sins in this new morality are not those of the flesh but those of society; more important than the evil man does to himself is the evil he does to his fellow man.

Although the churches have always taught that Christ was both God and man, Christians have hardly ever seemed to accept his humanity. Historically, preaching has emphasized the Risen Christ, who sits at the right hand of God, and will come in glory to the Last Judgment. This is a basic premise of faith, but it is equally true that Jesus was emphatically a man—a lowly carpenter who walked the earth of Palestine at a specific moment in human history, and whose death fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy of the Suffering Servant. Jesus, as Bonhoeffer memorably put it, was "the man for others."

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For that reason, Dean Jerald Brauer of the University of Chicago Divinity School argues that churches should not necessarily be engaged in trying to hand down specific solutions to social and political problems from the pulpit. Christian creativity in trying to solve these questions, he says, "won't be a case of the churches poking their noses into areas where they have no right to be. Churches may have a special answers, although they certainly have a responsibility to sensitize their people to the questions. But the answers will have to be worked out by the body politic."

What this means, in essence, is that a commitment to love in worldly life cannot be separated from faith in Christ, who demanded that commitment. One argument against trying to build Christianity on moral action alone is that Jesus' teachings, unlike those of, say, Confucius, make sense only when understood in connection with the Resurrection, which is the cornerstone of faith; but how one defines this unique defiance of death is of less moment.

Change Needed

Even in the Roman Catholic Church, which has traditionally upheld the immutability of dogma, there is wide-spread recognition by theologians that all formulas of faith are man's "real and imperfect vessel for carrying God's truth, and are forever in need of reformulation."

In the light of Christianity's need to respond to the human needs of the earth, many of these ancient formulas have been rethinking. "The central axis of religious concern," notes Langdon Gilkey of the University of Chicago Divinity School, "has shifted from matters of ultimate 'salvation' and of heaven or hell, to questions of the meaning, necessity, or usefulness of religion in this life." In other words, the theological task is to justify Christianity in this world — and let God take care of the next.

The faith commitment of the Christian also implies the need for allegiance to a church — at least to some kind of community of faith. Theoretically, it may be possible for a Christian to survive without any institutional identity — but the majority of modern theologians would agree that to be "a man for others" there must be others to be with, and that faith is sustained by communal structure.

Churchmen would also argue that there is nothing obsolete about the basic necessity for worship and prayer. "Liturgy must be an expression of something that is happening in the community," says the Rev. David Kirk, a Methodist Catholic priest who is founder of a unique interfaith center in Manhattan called Emmaus House. "Without worship, the community is a piece of rubbish." On the other hand, there is little doubt that the churches are in deep need of new, this-worldly liturgies that reflect present needs rather than past glories.

What is important is not the doctrine of predestination. For example, by the mystery of man's relationship to God that lies behind it. A Christian must accept the incarnation — but there is room for differing

Since faith is primarily a way of life rather than a creed to be so proclaimed, it is not something that can be reduced to an articulated set of principles. In an age of ecumenical breakthrough and doctrinal pluralism, sectarian particularities of belief seem largely irrelevant — and even a little quaint.

Two Sides to Coin

Christian radicals — such as the young firebrands who dominated the National Council of Churches Conference on Church and Society in Detroit last fall — argue that the true follower of Jesus is the revolutionist, siding with forces and events that seek to overthrow established disorder. On the other hand, Protestant Theologian Hans-Joachim Margull of Hanburg University points out that it is not always so easy to identify the secular causes that Christians have a clear moral duty to support.

It is easy enough to argue that Christians have a God-given duty to work for racial equality, or for the eradication of hunger and disease in the world. The strategies to be followed in achieving these goals do not so easily acquire universal assent.



BISHOP PIKE

Interpretations of Jesus' unique relationship to God, the Resurrection, as St. Paul insisted, the cornerstone of faith; but how one defines this unique defiance of death is of less moment.

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Like a Trip

"Christianity is like a trip," muses Episcopal Bishop Edward Crowther, a fellow of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions at Santa Barbara, Calif. "The church is like a travel agent with a lot of pictures in her office describing what it's like. But either she's never been there, or was there so long ago that she doesn't remember what it was all about."

Methodist Theologian Van Harvey suggests that the church should not be "a place where men come to be more pious. The church is a place of education, where one comes to learn to be an honest-to-God person living in dialogue with others."

Faced with a choice between the church in its present form and the underground cell, it is likely that a majority of Christian thinkers would opt for the small, unstructured community as a likely model for the future.

Jesus never explicitly said that all men would be converted to believe in his word. Far more meaningful is his image of his followers as the light of the world — smiles suggesting that the status of Christianity, until God's final reckoning, is properly that of a band of soul brothers rather than a numberless army.

Despite the visible health and prosperity of existing denominations, there is a considerable number of future-oriented the-

While a church—in the sense of a community—may be necessary for a viable Christian life, institutional or denominational churches are not. Today it would be hard to find an atheist whose criticism of religion is any more vociferous than the attack on the irrelevance, stagnation and nonutility of organized Christendom offered by its adherents.

Strangely enough, there are any number of Christians who rejoice at this prospect rather than fear it. This is not because they want to see the faithless drift away into unbelief. Rather, they prefer that the choice of being Christian once again become openly, as Kierkegaard puts it, a leap of faith, an adult decision to serve as one of God's pilgrims on the road of life.

It is conceivable that Christianity is heading toward an era in which the will be akin to that of the despised minority who proclaimed faith in the one God against the idolatry of the Roman Empire. To be sure, the Christian burden in the future will be different from that of the past: less to proclaim Jesus by word than to follow him in deed and loving service. It may prove a perilous course, but the opportunity is great: the courage and zeal of that first despised minority changed the history of the world.

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