

The Church: 1970

'Academic' Questions

By Fr. Andrew Greeley



One might well ask why many college professors and their students are so totally unaware of the realities of American politics. Why do they engage in behavior which almost certainly is going to be injurious to the causes they support? Perhaps the best answer to that is to say that universities are very unreal places.

They have been made unreal for certain highly specific and important social purposes, but such unreality can be a disaster if the citizens of the university community decide that they are going to engage in political activity.

Those who work at the university are essentially men who deal with the manipulation of words and ideas and they are terribly skillful at it. But an apparently inevitable consequence of this skill is a lack of respect for any other kind of human activity and a feeling of vast intellectual and moral superiority over those who engage in other activities.

With their immense intellectual skills, college professors are strongly tempted to assume a pose of superior morality. They know what's wrong with the world and they have solutions to what is wrong. If others do not agree with these solutions it is either because they are stupid or immoral; in either case they should repent of their sins and follow the advice of their betters.

It may seem like a harsh caricature, and of course many, perhaps even most college men, are not of this sort; but enough are to have considerable influence on the intellectual and moral atmosphere of a college campus.

I remember recently one such academic saying on television, "The public must be made to understand that students are angry. The public must be made to understand that the blacks must have justice. The public must be made to understand that the war is immoral."

Who is going to make the public understand he did not say, nor obviously had it occurred to him that there was even a question of persuasion, of dialogue, of political rhetoric, of fashioning coalitions and alliances.

Because of his superior intelligence, his great skills at manipulating words, and his presumption to moral superiority, the average academic is apt

to have a greatly exaggerated idea of his own importance. He therefore is persuaded that the things he says and the resolutions he votes on are taken seriously by those beyond the university campus. Thus, many faculty members agonized at great length over the exact wording of their resolution decrying the Cambodian involvement. Many who were opposed to the involvement were also opposed to the resolution on the ground that it involved the university in a political position which was foreign to its nature as a place of detached and disinterested research. Others argued that such academic detachment was immoral and that it was time that the university became involved and relevant. It apparently occurred to a very few that as far as the rest of the country was concerned, any stance that the university faculty took was strictly academic.

The typical faculty member also takes great delight in hearing the sound of his own voice. Faculty meetings are frequently nothing more than a parade of statements. One of the unexpected impacts of letting students attend faculty meetings is that the students, not yet being full-fledged academics, frequently see through the unreality of faculty verbalizations. A great deal of time is consumed on the college campus in talk. An immense amount of time was spent arguing about the exact wording of a resolution which nobody was going to take seriously, not even the voters themselves, the day after the resolution was passed.

The academic believes that he is a privileged person. He is astonished when he is told that if he bites the hand that feeds him, the hand might be withdrawn. Of course he is going to be paid his salary even if there is a strike, and of course the students are going to get grades even if they don't attend class (it might be noted that it is a strange kind of revolution in which the revolutionaries worry about their grade point average). And of course the state legislators are going to continue to expand the higher education budget, even though a faculty member has announced that the university now is a center for revolution. And of course private contributors are going to continue their contributions even though students burn down buildings and block highways. Why in the world should they behave any differently?

Those whom the gods destroy they first make mad.

WHO NEEDS HIM?



"I think the greatest pleasure he gets out of his vacation is needling us!"

Courier-Journal

On The Right Side

Don't Worry... It's Only Murder

By Father Paul J. Cuddy



Last week I wrote a letter to the Editor of the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle about two editorials in his paper. This is my letter:

EDITOR:

Presumably letters to the editor are a means of expressing reaction to your editorials. I ask your indulgence and publication.

July 1 brought the fruit of your campaign to abort the unborn with the blessing of the law. Your lead editorial (D & C, July 1) was headlined a triumphant: "Historic Day: Abortion Law Now in Force." Your secondary editorial was headlined a grim "Jail the Gamblers."

In a recent cartoon, Dennis the Menace was describing a Western TV show to his prissy Sunday School teacher. "An' the cowboy went into the saloon, an' . . ." Noting the distress on the face of the teacher, Dennis editorialized reassuringly: "Oh, don't worry. He didn't go in to get a drink. He just went in to shoot a guy."

During WW II I was a chaplain with the Air Corps. With Germany's capitulation I was transferred from France to Germany, July 1945. At that time

it was common to hear: "The only good German is a dead German." The number one reason was the revelation of the hellish concentration camps, the death houses of 6 million Jews and millions of Gentiles. In the emotion of the time, GIs commonly considered every German personally responsible.

In October 1945 I went through the concentration camp at Dachau, near Munich. The guide was a former inmate. He was a Polish seminarian. His English was good. His faith and amazing serenity did not minimize the ghastliness of what the Nazis had perpetrated.

There is a parallel, but also a divergence between legal abortion functioning and the Dachau functioning. The slaughter of the unborn is the decision of our elected legislature and governor, representing the people. The slaughter of Dachau was the decision of one Evil Genius and a few evil advisors.

In the same D and C edition, reporter Kathy O'Toole wrote of interviews with Catholic doctors. The headline read: "Catholic Physicians Face Agonizing Moral Issue." I read Miss O'Toole's report. There was no agony at all! Rather there was a sane deliberate conviction that

evidenced reverence for God and for human life.

The closest to agony in the text was the concern about the mentality of the legislators. Dr. John Whelan said he "wondered about the sanity of the legislators who voted for abortion." Dr. Gormican evinced no agony as he said: "I don't think it even logical to say only Catholic doctors have made it, (i.e. an individual determination). As a doctor, you're trained to save life." Your headline perverted the facts.

Good doctors do not agonize over the preservation of life. It does seem to me that medical men and their assistants, including nurses and aides, who do not agonize after the butchery of an unborn child, have departed from humanity and have become as dehumanized as their Hitlerian counterparts.

I do not believe that the abhorrence at the destruction of the unborn is peculiar to Catholic physicians. Shysters and money-grubbers are in all professions. I do believe that most doctors, Protestant and Jewish, are not so dehumanized and so jaded toward recent history that they would be willing to sit in a medical pantheon with those famous architects of death, Hitler and Stalin, arbiters of life — and of death.

The Morriss Plan

Is the War A Moral Evil?

By Frank Morriss



The current attempts to make this nation's Catholic clergy into a lobby against our military presence in Southeast Asia are open to question on a number of points. Prescinding from that of sincerity, which I have no reason to raise, there is one of propriety.

Actually, the propriety of a mass enlistment of the Church's ministers on one or another side of a national policy hinges on what evidence there is that the priests are correct in condemning that policy as a moral evil.

If the evidence is strong that this is the case, then it is proper for Catholic priests to speak out, both alone and in concert. But if the evidence is doubtful, or perhaps even faulty or lacking, then the priests must be aware of Christ's admonition against wrongly burdening the consciences of the people.

It is, therefore, to the evidence these priests are presenting that I would like to address myself. The one point stressed both by Jesuit superiors who recently condemned the war and by priests now circulating an anti-war appeal to all of their fellows in the United States is that the results are no longer proportionate to the evil involved. I think there is far less evidence that this is true than that some of the priests involved are unwilling to weigh the matter objectively.

For example, the letter sent to all priests says: "In addition to objecting to the indiscriminate killing of civilians, we deplore the devastation and death that have been inflicted on the people of Vietnam, it bears no proportion to the benefits we

hope to insure as a result of the war."

I do not think we need consider "indiscriminate killing of civilians" as logically pertinent, since this is a mere allegation on the part of the priest-letter writers. There is no evidence whatsoever that indiscriminate killing of the innocent has taken place on a scale that would unbalance our right to defend a nation of several millions against an absolutely certain enslavement if we deserted the effort altogether. In order to make our efforts immoral on that score it would have to be shown either that it was the policy of our military indiscriminately to kill civilians, or that our troops were so out of control that our policy against such crime was futile.

It is the "death and destruction" that are quite real, and which we must balance against the results of the war. Death has come, not indiscriminately, but accidentally to some Vietnamese non-combatants. And I am sure there has been considerable destruction of villages, crops and other properties. If the South Vietnamese themselves thought these physical evils were such as to render the struggle useless, the war would long ago have been lost and we would have been driven out. It is certain that the North Vietnamese view their cause as worth the sacrifice in blood and treasure that it is costing them.

Actually, the morality depends upon the results to be obtained. First, are these results merely a "hope"? No, indeed. One result already obtains. A people, including thousands of Christians, is still free, posses-

sing therefore the greatest natural good men may have — that of determining their own destinies.

Possible future results are even greater. Not only will these people remain free of Communist tyranny, but it is quite likely a whole area will have been rescued from war; in fact, the third World War could have been averted, since it is historical fact that nothing encourages an aggressor more than piecemeal surrender to his demands.

Despite the horror of war, the horror of surrender in regard to this war is far worse; despite the evils involved, the evil we are holding back is deeper.

The priests add the point that what we are doing is somehow causing disunity and destructive tensions at home. I suggest these do not result from what we are doing, but because we are doing what the peaceniks of our day do not wish us to do.

Father William F. Nerin, with the backing of Bishop Victor J. Reed of Oklahoma-Tulsa, is the main instigator of the present drive to unite our priests against the Vietnam war. It is not unrelated to point out that Father Nerin is as uncertain about a definite point of Catholic teaching as he is certain about this indefinite point of the morality of the Vietnam war. I heard Father Nerin, long after Pope Paul VI had decided the matter to the contrary, lecture strongly against the concept of transubstantiation and in favor of the terms "transfinalization" and "transignification" in regard to the Eucharist.