

FR. HENRY ATWELL

## Toward Tomorrow



Bishop Hogan remarked that he'd like to see all viewpoints in the Church reflected in the Courier.

Perhaps that wish prompted the Courier editor to ask me to write this column, and to locate it to the left of "The Right Side."

The Bishop's wish certainly reveals that whatever the Catholic Church might have been, or seemed to be, in the past, it most assuredly cannot be considered a thinking-man's strait-jacket any longer.

Like the spectrum of God's sunshine, the opinions of Catholics range today from radical left to rigid right, from ultra-liberal to ultra-conservative.

As much as I am most happy for such freedom and diversity, I think there is a hazard, however, in wanting a label for ourselves or for others.

Radicals as well as reactionaries are captives, they are not wholly free. Each is trapped by an ideology, each is as predictable as a computer. You don't even have to ask radical Abbie Hoffman or reactionary Spiro Agnew for an opinion on pot or the press. Their answers are already obvious. You don't have to ask a Black Panther or a Ku Kluxer for an opinion on integration. Their answers are already obvious. Each is a captive of his own fixed viewpoint.

To be a Christian, however, locates one in what I'd like to call "the dynamic center." Like the hub on a wheel, a Christian can go freely in any direction, up or down, left or right, depending on the issue of the moment — and yet remain free to return always to that dynamic center for reconsideration and the freedom to take a different direction.

Art Buchwald recently described this situation as that space of "moderate madness . . . that lies between Spiro and Abbie," but it is emphatically not the bland apathy of being "middle of the road."

Christianity and Crisis magazine

recently published an article by Gabriel Fackre titled "Celebrating the Center."

He coined the name "mid-lib" for those thus-far silent Americans who don't want to join the articulate ranks of either far left or far right.

These "mid-libs" in the "dynamic center," according to Fackre, have not been chained in any ideological prison and they refuse to be stamped by simple slogans which prescribe automatically what must be done and where.

A "mid-lib" in other words is a person who is liberated from any pre-fixed position. He wants to be free to stand in the middle and look at all sides of the question and then proceed to act according to the faith and common-sense God has given to him.

I think Jesus was a "mid-lib" like that. He didn't fit any of the neat categories in his day either. He wasn't the kind of Messiah he was expected to be. He wasn't the kind of a man he was expected to be either. His family, even his apostles, became exasperated with him. And he bugged his critics to the point they nailed him on a cross. And yet he promised those who believed in him that he'd make them free, and his whole life style revealed he enjoyed an inner freedom like no one else.

So many of us today are imprisoned in our thinking and our acting by black power, poor power, student power, woman power, money power — but the swing factor in all these issues is still unsapped power of the middle, who are so often frightened, puzzled, and in some cases just lazy.

If we can somehow nudge that vast bulk of our nation's people from dead center to "dynamic center" then the wheel of progress can begin to turn with a speed never before dreamed of. We can then also reconcile all these divergent and urgent viewpoints toward a goal that will benefit everyone.

FR. PAUL J. CUDDY

## On The Right Side



From a weary Pastor: "Regarding your column about the seminarian who just wants to do whatever his Bishop wants him to do: for God's sake kidnap the guy and bring him to Rochester . . ."

Comment: I'm afraid that's not the answer. In our diocese, appointments are practically made by a personnel board and ratified by the Bishop, who also may reject a recommendation. So better let our seminarian who is satisfied to find God's Will in his Bishop; and we must find His Will in our local priests' personnel board. Which is the better method for God to express His Will only time will tell.

From a Rochesterian: "I was happy to read the doctor's letter about his anger at the confusion in the Church, because now I know I'm not alone in my thoughts. And I am happy that you think the Church is returning to normalcy . . . However I am a very frightened person. Having a 'smidge' of Catholicism as a child, and a dose here and there of everything from Calvinism to Unitarianism, I really feel lost. I feel totally out of place in the Catholic Church yet ironically, that is the only place I feel that I belong . . ."

Comment: Why stay feeling so lost? There are many sound priests, nuns and laymen in Rochester who could help you if you could help you if you would seek help. Your letter sounds as if God is giving you a special grace. Why not use it? A non-Catholic friend of mine recently said: "I'm not a Catholic, but I stop in at St. Anne's Church (Hornell) nearly every day. It is so restful, and I feel so near to God." You know that the Blessed Sacrament is in our churches. Why not get into the habit of stopping to talk it over with Him? If I can help, do write again.

From an Ithacan: "I want to get The Decline and Fall of Radical Catholicism by Prof. Hitchcock, which you so heartily recommend. Can I obtain this from Trant's in Rochester? I am enclosing \$10 so you can

get another copy for yourself . . . I well understand that poor mother's anguish over her children . . ."

Comment: The reference to the mother's anguish concerns the California mother who wrote her sorrow at the weakness of faith of her children, thanks to a false concept of agiornamento. My reply: "Dr. Byrne taught us Scripture at Old St. Bernard's Seminary. He used to praise a book to the skies, and end up: Of course, it's out of print. I sometimes feel like that. At Trant's, Al Walz said: A lot of people will be mad at you. You recommended Muggeridge's Something Beautiful for God. It's already out of print. For a while we had a time keeping Arch Books for children in stock. Now Al keeps running out of Decline and Fall. I replied: I used to trade in a grocery store where they were always out of tomato soup. The manager explained: 'It's the most popular soup, and we keep running out of it.' There isn't an exact parallel between a sure sale, like tomato soup, and a pretty sure popularity of certain books; but please do try to hurry the books along.

Your letter is appreciated; and with your ten dollars I will send you a Decline and Fall; some Arch Books for your little ones, and two copies of the Scriptural Rosary which you will find devotional. Part of the discouragement of our people comes from the notion of some promoters that Catholicism is a Fun Religion instead of the preaching and practice of the life of "Christ and Him crucified."

From a friend to whom I gave a gift subscription of the Courier: "Enjoy the COURIER so much. In many ways it is our only connection with Rochester's news . . ."

Comment: Said friend was once a radical Catholic; has simmered to a liberal; and gives no nod of approval to this column. Oh, aching heart! But if the Courier means so much to her, why not subscribe to the paper for a relative or friend who might enjoy the news and views of the Diocese?

# Wouldn't it be a shame

## If there were some good news in the world and you missed it?

### and speaking of GOOD NEWS...



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THERE IS GOOD NEWS IN THE WORLD!  
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