

FR. HENRY ATWELL

## Toward Tomorrow



I was asked recently, "What is the difference these days between the Catholic and Protestant churches?"

One way to answer that question would be to compare the official statements or creeds of the different churches. In addition to the basic Christian beliefs about God, Jesus and the Bible, the various denominations would then add their own specialties, as, for example, Catholics would add such items as papal infallibility, Purgatory, the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, confession.

That's the way a theologian would probably reply.

Most people aren't theologians, however, and if we took people instead of documents then I suspect the reply might be quite a bit different.

And the reply of the people, I think, would show not so much a difference between Catholics and Protestants as that there is quite a difference between Catholics themselves as also within the ranks of Protestants.

Neither Catholics nor Protestants are any longer neatly packaged, labeled and contained.

Perhaps the symbol of an old-fashioned picket fence might illustrate what I mean.

In previous generations, each denomination was like one of the slats of the fence — Catholics, Lutherans, Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, Episcopalians — each had a clear, separate identity, a proper place and position, each obviously a safe distance from all the others, and if one slat were broken or even removed, the rest remained untouched and undisturbed.

Now picture a man with a wide brush painting one long horizontal red stripe across the top part of all the slats in the fence, then below that a bright orange stripe and at the bottom a wide green stripe. Each stripe can represent three basic ways of looking at most every aspect of religious life — the red stripe, the ultra-left or liberal viewpoint, and the green can be the far-

right or self-styled 'traditionalist' position, with the orange a somewhat in between, sometimes left, sometimes right-wing attitude.

The 'red' Catholics — like the 'red' Episcopalians, Presbyterians and Methodists — would find much more congenial companions all along the red stripe rather than with 'green' or 'orange' members of their own church down along the same denominational slat.

A good example of this is the present discontent and turmoil in both Roman Catholic and Episcopalian churches on the subject of liturgy revisions. 'Traditionalist' Catholics want the old Latin Mass back again. 'Traditionalist' Episcopalians want their old Book of Common Prayer back again. The progressive or left-wing Catholics, like their counterpart 'red' Episcopalians think even the existing new liturgies aren't radical or progressive enough.

Another example is the way Catholics and Protestants read the Bible. 'Traditionalist' or 'green' Catholics continue to consider the Bible an arsenal of quotations to demolish Protestant heresies just as Protestants of a similar stripe also use the Bible to demolish Catholic distortions. But both Catholic and Protestant liberals prefer to take the Bible more as a totality, a record of mankind's everlasting search for truth and, therefore, not a handy-answer book but an encouragement to continue that quest in our own way today.

Some writers have claimed we are in the midst of a new Reformation, a new grouping of Christians into new clusters or communities. Some, of course, think all this is but a further fragmentation of the Church. Others, more hopefully, see this trend as part of God's unfolding plan, a way to revitalize and personalize the faith of all who want to be Christian people, a vocation so wonderful and so vast that diverse insights strengthen rather than weaken the total Church. Perhaps this is the way that God is guiding his Church to be more completely catholic, just as we always have need for the Church to be more completely holy, more truly one.

FR. PAUL J. CUDDY

## On The Right Side



Father Richard Nangle, one of the best catechists in the diocese, invited me to the Forty Hours at St. Gregory's Church, Marion. After the devotions, the get-together of priests was especially stimulating, with a gamut of some 20 priests from the youthful Father Bob Hammond to the ever optimistic Msgr. John Duffy. This is a note of thanks.

Caro Ricardo,

The clerical gathering after devotions was a joy. To meet with confreres who love the Church and are so intensely concerned about their people is a good counteraction to the dismal reports that ooze from the anti-clerical Catholic press, and from TV talk shows. (Did you see Sunday's review of Garry Willis' book against the Church in the New York Times?)

I was especially glad to see Father Jack Klientjes, and remember his dismay at a sermon given in his church a couple years ago. Do you remember it? The preacher took the occasion of the feast of St. Michael the Archangel, in the parish church of the Guardian Angels, to inform a puzzled congregation that angels did not exist; but rather they were the mythological creations of the Semitic mind! The poor people! What recourse do they have?

Anyway I said to Father K: "Do you get the English edition of L'Osservatore Romano?" "No." "There is a good article on angels by Cardinal Wright in the Oct. 10 issue. I'll send it to you." "Wonderful. I might even run it as a serial in our bulletin." I sent it yesterday.

Stayed with Father Gene McFarland in Macedon overnight, so I could be near Holy Cross for Father Foy's father's funeral in the morning. Fr. Gene sends people away smiling: a great charity.

At your rectory I promised to send The Decline and Fall of Radical Catholicism by Hitchcock to your brother, Dr. Gerard and his wife, and to the Halls, so I stopped at Trant's on the way home and found two copies.

When Al Walz came along I said: "Al, this is a great book, but it crushes my

soul to have to pay \$6.50 a copy. However I need two for two couples who will profit by the book, so it's a good investment." He said: "I have good news. Image Books just came out with a paper back edition for \$1.25." So instead of getting two hard covers for \$13.00 I bought eleven paper backs and am sending two for you to give to your folks and the Halls.

However, before you give them away, read a copy yourself. Our poor Catholic people have been knocked punch-drunk by the assertions, denials and infidelities of so many radical Catholic elitists. Precious little has been written to expose their double-dealing. Our poor people have been puzzled by an articulate, sophisticated elite who slither from one claim to another, disregarding Divine Revelation, history and the spiritual needs and feelings of The People. Hitchcock writes of the manipulations of radical, influential Catholics.

"Much innovation in the Church has been legitimized in the following manner: 1) appeals to the decrees of Vatican II. When certain of these decrees are discovered to be rather conservative, this shifts to 2) appeals to the 'spirit' of Vatican II, which did not get embodied in all the decrees, or to 3) the 'spirit of Pope John' whose intentions were so radical that the Council did not begin to probe them. When faced with the traditionalism of this Pope on many questions (see The Journal of a Soul), refuge can be sought in 4) Scripture, whose authority exceeds that of all popes and councils. When inconvenient passages about hell of the physical resurrection are brought forward, these are explained as peculiarities of the Semitic mind and the burden is shifted to 5) the needs and beliefs of modern man. By this process . . . the radical leaves himself free to go wherever he chooses."

And, Ricardo, from my own observations, the radical progressives frequently stir up ructions in the Church, then "go where they choose." And frequently what they choose is to quit a religious vocation; or even to quit the Church, the Community about which they palavered with such enthusiastic emotionalism. I do hope you will diligently spread the book among our terribly hurt people.

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