

The Church 1976



Fr. Andrew Greeley

For a long time ecumenism has had a low profile in the American church. The Holy See is clearly uneasy about the Protestant influence that it seems to think is the cause of many of our problems (not mind you, Vatican mistakes—unthinkable!). The hierarchy has never really been at ease with it. As one bishop told me, "Ecumenism doesn't work, Father." (By which he meant that it cost money instead of making it.) Ecumenists are usually

Father Trisco, Historian, to Speak Here

Prof. Robert F. Trisco of the Catholic University of America will deliver a bicentennial lecture, "The Americanization of the Catholic Church, U.S.A.," at St. Bernard's Seminary, Tuesday, Oct. 12.

Father Trisco, associate professor of Church History at the Catholic University in Washington, D. C., also is editor of the Catholic Historical Review. He specializes in the story of American Catholicism during its formative decades, and he is writing a history of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

Since 1966, he has been a member of the United States Bishops' Ecumenical Commission that deals with Baptist-Roman Catholic relations.

Author of an important study on early Catholic growth in the Midwest, and of many articles in numerous periodicals and the Encyclopedia Britannica and the new Catholic Encyclopedia, Dr. Trisco is internationally known as a scholar and editor of distinction.

Father Trisco's Bicentennial lecture will have a wide appeal to all who are interested in American religious history. It will begin at 7:30 p.m. The public is invited, free.

Newark Parish Plans Bazaar

Newark — The folks at St. Michael's Parish already are looking forward to Christmas.

"A Christmas Carol" is the theme they've selected for parish bazaar this year, to be held on Dec. 4 from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

The festivities will feature a visit from Santa Claus who will pose for snapshots with the children. Also planned are morning coffee and confections, lunch and dinner, and babysitting services.

Planners have asked interested persons for donations of foods, especially frozen foods. Persons interested in volunteering for, or contributing to, the bazaar have been asked to call Ada McBride, 331-1081.

HARLEY PROGRAMS

The Wilson Arts Center at the Harley School is offering two programs for adult education this fall. A series of four experts will speak on various topics in a lecture series presented at the Wilson Center. Adult art courses will also be offered. Anyone interested in further information may contact The Harley School, 442-1775.

serious professional scholars at a time when ideas are dismissed as unimportant and people would much rather speak with tongues than think.

Oddly enough—or perhaps not so oddly—the ecumenical dialogue has been carried on with the highest professional competence from the Catholic side. Of course, you don't get many points in the anti-intellectual and enthusiastic American church just now for that.

How far ecumenism has come in a little over a decade is clear in a remarkable paper delivered at the Eucharistic Congress. It was entitled, "Christian Dialogue and the Eucharist" by John Hotchkin, the director of the Bishop's Ecumenical Office.

The paper contends, with overwhelming evidence, that a broad consensus on the Eucharist has emerged among Catholics, Orthodox, Anglicans, Lutherans, and Reformed. The disagreements of centuries have vanished in a rather short time and everyone's understanding of the Eucharist has been deepened and enriched by the joint contributions to the discussion.

I will not attempt a precise and accurate summary of a complex and nuanced paper, but it would appear that all the groups involved accept the notion of the Eucharist as a action which represents but does not repeat the sacrifice of the cross. There is also common agreement that the real presence results from an "ontological" change in the bread and wine but not a "physical" change—not the kind of change that a microscope would reveal, for example.

If agreement on the issues of sacrifice and sacrament that have rent Christianity for centuries was so easy to reach, how come there was disagreement in the first place? Father Hotchkin argues persuasively that the split came because in the Middle Ages contact was lost with the Jewish notion of sacrifice, which had been the matrix out of which the theories of the Christian Eucharist had grown in the early church. Cut adrift from such moorings Christians fell to squabbling with one another over disagreements which were mostly misunderstandings.

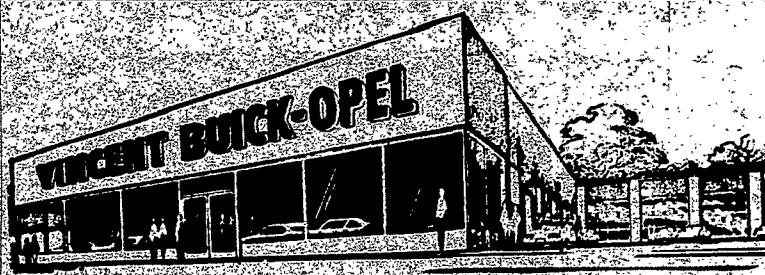
I'll confess that I was astonished—and delighted—to discover how far the dialogue had come. But I wondered (just as I had after I read the recent collection of articles on the papacy) how these new and perhaps threatening agreements were going to be translated to the clergy and the faithful.

In response to my question, Father Hotchkin observed that he thought truly ecumenical education should stress what we are and not what we are not. We should never try to define our position, he said, by describing how it is different from the positions of others. If we do that we will easily assign to others positions they do not necessarily hold so that we can in fact be different from them.

There are presumably real differences still existing among the Christian denominations. But it is also clear that many of those that we thought were most important can be readily resolved when we pursue such a technique of defining what we are instead of what we are not.

Hotchkin's paper received considerable notice in the daily press—even in the lofty New York Times. Yet it went mostly unnoticed in Catholic papers. I would have thought that such a remarkable announcement would have been front-page headlines. [Editor's Note: The Courier Journal led its first page of Aug. 18 with a report on Father Hotchkin's paper.]

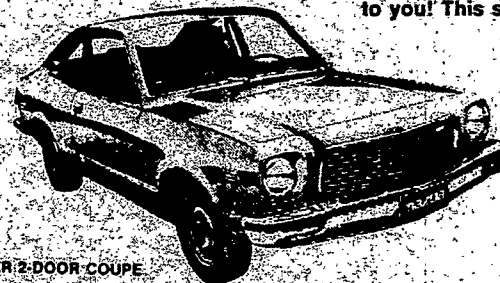
Maybe we don't care about agreement over the Eucharist—or even about the Eucharist at all. Speaking with tongues—or denouncing the cash-register mentality of American farmers seems to be a lot more important.



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