

The Bishops And a Pair Of Pundits

Clarence A. Amann is associate professor in Humanities at St. John Fisher College and an occasional contributor to the Courier-Journal. In the first of this two-part series, Amann caustically comments William Buckley Jr. and George Will for their intellectual and secular criticisms of the upcoming letter by the U.S. bishops on American economics.

Second in a two-part series
By Clarence A. Amann

The bishops can legitimately claim at least one professional expertise that the William Buckley and George Will, however shrewd their lay observations, do not possess. The bishops are students, scholars of scriptural exegesis, and as such are competent to bespeak the meaning of God's Word. Incumbent upon them, more than is incumbent upon columnists allowed the privilege of prejudiced opinion, is a clear and objective understanding of sacred writ. Buckley from his Catholic indoctrination and Will from his conservative rearing both know well the necessity of a decisive authority to secure the unity of truth. The bishops are, in addition, charged with studying the current scene with a perceptive eye, even as behoves the columnist, and to supply with serious care the Christian scriptural perspective. To do less would be a serious dereliction of office and vocation.

The observer's trust must run to the competency and experience of Bishop William Weigand of Salt Lake City, member of the authoring committee of the bishops' pastoral and an erstwhile missionary to Latin America, whose economic problems have left him intolerant of communism, yet able to fault "the evils and aberrations of capitalism" as the *raison d'être* of communism's successes, actual and threatened. Much more reliable than

even pragmatically, are the reactions of these pastors, morally responsible for less than the academically detached and the polemically partisan observations of the pundit. The bishops' stance is a necessary and appropriate response to the attacks who accuse their presumed Churchmen of ignorance and folly, as both Buckley and Will have done.

Strictly reasonable men have for ages been producing calamities of all kinds. If the strictest rationalist reasoning are not observed, Cypriote and American, even modest reasoners, refusing to recognize the distinction between virtue and license. The bishops learn from the precedents set by the Church of England, the Wright brothers, and the American Revolutionaries, black and white, of the need for a thoughtful calculation is needed to judge how to proceed.

I know of no other way to reach the world than by the way of the cross. It was never intended to be ordinary. It was intended to be an "let alone" and "let alone" would not have lasted such a long time, especially with even a modest understanding of the world. It is the duty of the bishops to follow him; nor would he have been able to do so if he had not been a man of virtue who was not arrogant, eloquent but humble.

When Christ went to the hill to proclaim the new law complementary to the decalogue of the old, he was proposing an incredible and impractical set of altruistic counsels for a world of self-serving pragmatists. He was not speaking precepts for that same world to wrench out of all shape in the name of human accommodation. Nor was he asking a human legend to presume perfect men. He was asking those of intelligence, integrity and foresight to recognize the inadequacies of fallen man. He was commissioning men and women of honesty and selflessness, who possessed the will to know him, to supply for the world's terminal bias by an overbalance of generosity, of sacrifice, of risk, of love, and by taking seriously those impractical virtues rooted in faith that transcend the utilitarian understanding of even the best informed secularist commentators.

Nor should it matter that in a sort of pilgrim hypocrisy, the bishops may seem at times the worst offenders in not perfectly "recking their own road" of sacrifice and magnanimity. That, I submit, is what saints are for, such as Francis of Assisi, Mother Cabrini and Sister, the martyred sisters of El Salvador, Mother Teresa and Father Jerry

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Steam Still Simmering Over U.S.-Vatican Tie

Washington (NC) -- The slowly simmering dispute between the U.S. government and challengers of its decision to exchange ambassadors with the Vatican boiled up again in late 1984 and early 1985 as both sides let off a little steam trading new comments.

Moreover, the brief argued, the relationship with the Vatican involves the Holy See's diplomatic and international roles, not its religious beliefs, just as the exchange of



Old Friends and New

Photos by Alan T. Sturm RN

More than 340 people turned out to wish Father Lawrence Murphy, above and below left, bon voyage as he departs the chaplaincy of the hospital for sabbatical studies. Above, Rev. Horace "Hoot" Hooten, a founder, with the priest, of the hospital's permanent chaplaincy program, flew in from retirement in Boulder, Colo., for the event. Below, Father Murphy hugs Arnold W. Pegish, a patient at the hospital for many months in 1984. Though Pegish is Protestant, the priest visited and prayed with him nearly every day during his convalescence. The crowd was the largest assembly for such an event, in the estimation of of at least one 25-year employe of the hospital.



Americans United for Separation Sueing To Overturn Ambassadorial Agreement

The Justice Department presented its views in a brief it filed in November, urging court dismissal of the lawsuit brought by Americans United for Separation of Church and State opposing the diplomatic ties.

Americans United offered a rebuttal in the January issue of its magazine, Church and State.

As far as the Justice Department is concerned, grounds for dismissing the challenge exist in several areas:

- Americans United cannot demonstrate an injury to opponents of diplomatic ties;
- The issue is a political one, involving presidential power to conduct foreign relations, not a judicial problem; and
- Establishment of diplomatic relations does not indicate U.S. government favor for the Catholic Church.

The government's arguments are similar to those presented in the 98th Congress when the exchange of ambassadors with the Vatican was criticized in congressional hearings on the dispute.

Whether the court, like Congress, will decide that adversaries of the diplomatic relationship have no basis for their opposition, is open to speculation.

"For a variety of reasons, this action (case) should be dismissed," said the Justice Department in its brief, filed in Philadelphia with U.S. District Court.

The Justice Department rejected the claims by Americans United that remarks of Archbishop Pio Laghi, Vatican pronuncio, in a speech at the Catholic University of America, shows the Vatican is a religious institution.

Archbishop Laghi, in that speech, said that "the Catholic Church is the only religious body that I know of that engages in direct relations with various states." He added that "it is, therefore, the pope's religious authority which confers upon him the classical right of legation, a diplomatic standing in the world. Those who interpret papal diplomacy as emanating from temporal sovereignty are failing to understand the true nature of the mission of the Holy See."

As if answering both Americans United and Archbishop Laghi, the Justice Department maintained that source of the Holy See's right to diplomatic activity is irrelevant.

"The First Amendment does not require the president to ignore diplomatic realities in order to avoid contact with an internationally recognized entity that views its part in world affairs as primarily religious," the brief said.

It also discounted the claim that U.S.-Vatican ties violate the First Amendment's clause banning establishment of religion.

"Many states have a religious character, yet the mere fact that the United States conducts diplomatic relations with them cannot be considered an excessive entanglement," the government stated. It also pointed out that the United States and Vatican are signatories to a bilateral treaty on international monetary matters and that the first U.S. representative to the Holy See was named in 1797 -- a time when Congress included men who had helped draft the Constitution.

ambassadors with the Soviet Union is undertaken for diplomatic reasons, not because the U.S. government is fond of the USSR's Marxist-Leninist dogma.

Americans United, however, in Church and State magazine, informally responded to the Justice Department by again citing the words of the man who would seem to be its most unlikely "ally": Archbishop Laghi.

Quoting from the archbishop's Nov. 12, 1984 address to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' general meeting, Americans United said the archbishop has "diminished" the Justice Department's contention that the Vatican's "religious character" can be ignored in matters of state.

Archbishop Laghi told the U.S. bishops that "in no way and at no time does the representative of the Holy See, in this dialogue with the public authorities, take less than full account of the views, concerns and policies of the bishops. In this matter, my purpose is to foster coordination and convergence. Any notion to the contrary should be set aside firmly and unequivocally."

In its magazine, however, Americans United asserted "that (Archbishop) Laghi would not hesitate to press for the controversial views of the American bishops on issues such as arms control, abortion, population control, economic policy, tuition tax credits and liberation theology in his meetings with President Reagan and State Department officials."

Family Ministry

Meetings for persons interested in family ministry will be held both 7:30-9 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 4; and again, noon-1:30 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 5 at the Pastoral Office, 1150 Buffalo Road. Mrs. James O'Brien will present the Good Shepherd Parish Outreach of Compassion program. Mr. and Mrs. James Fitch will speak on the Retrouvaille/Rediscovery program, designed for troubled marriages. Further information is available by calling the Family Life Office, (716) 436-5450.

Blue Army Vigil

The vigil of the Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima will be celebrated 9 p.m. to midnight, Friday, Feb. 1 at Holy Rosary Church. Among the priests leading the rites will be Father William Endress and Father Frederick Bush. The public is invited to the vigil.

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