

# Cooperation

By HARRY WOODS KIMBALL, D.D.



*With highest esteem and most cordial personal greetings, I am  
Your devoted friend  
(Signed) R. J. CUSHING  
Archbishop of Boston*

This is a most irenic and yet emphatic statement. The Archbishop's words, I feel, should compel constant study of the possibilities of cooperation. However, if this union of forces which all sincere Christians desire is

to come about, certain obstacles must be cleared away.

Lord Tweedsmuir once remarked that "nothing is more divisive than a common faith held with differences." This sometimes seems to be all too true regarding Protestants and Roman Catholics. Too often the two groups emphasize their differences rather than the common faith. Is it not time to stress more the unity of purpose?

Recently—on the eve of the elections in France and Italy—the Holy Father pointed out the fundamental issue—whether those nations would "continue to rest on the firm rock of Christianity, on the acknowledgement of a personal God, on belief in the spiritual dignity and the eternal destiny of man," or whether they would entrust themselves "to the unfeeling omnipotence of a materialistic state without any ideal beyond this world, without religion, without God?" That question every Protestant can echo with fervor.

**WATCH FOR**  
**The Answer to this Article**  
**By FATHER LAFARGE**  
*Editor of the Respected*  
*Jesuit Weekly*  
**AMERICA**  
**In Our Next Issue.**

—Ed.

We all know that cooperation is needed—but how can we proceed to achieve it?

#### DIFFERENCE TO BE RECOGNIZED

First of all, preliminary to plan for unity of action based on this common faith, there must be a recognition of that fact that there are differences in belief. For a Roman Catholic the seat of authority lies in the Holy See and the Councils of the Church, and, indeed, in the ordinary teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. Whatever is set forth by these is accepted as the truth. For a Protestant, on the other hand, the seat of authority is the individual conscience, and the ideal church is a self-governing fellowship of Christian believers.

Here, then, Protestants and Roman Catholics do not part company. There can be no question that this is a fundamental difference in the conception of a church. This fact must be accepted, and it does not do much for good for the two groups merely to wrangle about it. Heated argument only increases the tension. Meanwhile, both protestants and Roman Catholics might well "agree to disagree" on some points, and seek for a common group on which they can cooperate to fight the materialism and atheism which are so strong in the world today.

While the above-mentioned disagreement on the concept of authority is most fundamental, there are other differences which in the interest of united action should be minimized.

One of these other differences concerns education. At the present moment the place of religion in the education of our children is being widely discussed and, of the lesser differences between Roman Catholics and Protestants, the question of aid to parochial schools is the most important. Our public schools may not be godless, as is sometimes claimed, but most certainly they do not even remotely teach any religious faith. Roman Catholics believe—and with this most Protestants will agree—that a sound training in the essentials of religion is a necessary part of any real education. Our children do not get this in the public schools today, or in the average Protestant Sunday School with its less-than-an-hour-a-week of casual instruction. That is why Catholics have parochial schools, where religion is an essential part of the whole curriculum.

Without a bit of grumbling, Roman Catholics pay taxes for the support of the Public Schools possible. Such a sacrifice deserves the highest praise. The enrollment in Catholic schools has more than doubled in the past twenty years, and today millions of dollars are being spent for the erection of a new building. Roman Catholics are evidently determined that their children shall have an adequate training in the essentials of the Christian faith.

Catholics must bear this extra cost in education because of the interpretation of the phrase "separation of Church and State." "Separation of



Church and State" is apparently an American point of view. But just what that phrase means is a matter of judgment. It certainly suggests that religion in any form shall never control the state.

The Federal Government cannot, under the Constitution as interpreted by the Supreme Court, provide funds for the maintenance of private school buildings, or for the payment of teachers in private schools. It can, however, do its part toward protecting the health and general security of all children, regardless of what school they attend or what faith their parent profess.

It is therefore straining at a gnat when this pronouncement is used to condemn any protection or care by the state of children who may be in private or parochial schools. For the state to provide free bus transportation, or lunches, or health care, or even nonreligious textbooks for the children in these schools, is surely not in any way linking the state with religion. Cardinal Spellman has said that the Roman Catholic objectives regarding Federal aid are limited to the items suggested. If this common-sense attitude could be accepted by Protestants, this controversial difference might become a minor one indeed.

Another point on which Roman Catholics and Protestants are not agreed is the question of birth control. The Roman Catholic Church is against contraceptives as an artificial means of preventing conception, and

for this stand it has good Bible backing. The Roman Catholic Church therefore condemns birth control, except through a knowledge of the natural rhythm of fecundity.

Protestants, on the whole, believe that planned parenthood makes for health and a proper care of children. Since the two viewpoints do not seem reconcilable, it would appear wise to let each group follow its own convictions in the matter, and leave to a decision by the voters at the polls what the attitude of the state shall be. We have done this in Massachusetts.

A further point of difference concerns mixed marriages. On the whole, neither Protestants nor Roman Catholic believe in mixed marriages, for no doubt the greatest barrier to unity of mind and heart is a difference in religion.

Moreover, many of these marriages result in loss of interest in religion and neglect of the church on the part of both parties. They become indifferent, and often fail to give their children any religious education at all. The fact that the Roman Catholic Church insists that all children born of mixed marriages be brought up in the Roman Catholic faith may seem narrow to other than Roman Catholics but it surely indicates a sincere attempt to see that such children do not become heathens.

#### GROUND FOR AGREEMENT

These differences regarding schools, birth control and mixed marriages should be removed, as far as is poss-



ible, from becoming sources of continual dispute. For they are certainly overshadowed by the need of unity against the materialism of the age, and its twin brother, atheism.

The need for unity of action between Protestants and Roman Catholics is very plain. A crucial task confronts the churches. The life of the modern world is largely pagan, both in its philosophy and moral conduct. Christianity faces a cultured and sophisticated materialism. It has taken over some of the temper and ethical impulses of Christianity, but it is none the less pagan in its life pattern.

President Conant of Harvard University said recently: "Almost everyone who has been immersed since childhood in the cultural stream of twentieth-century America carries with him a universe of moral and spiritual values from which he will have great difficulty in escaping." Surely for a careful analysis of morals among individuals, and especially in politics, is convincing proof that materialism, selfishness and ungodliness are rampant.

Both Protestants and Roman Catholics want decency and morality, and this common aim can be a ground of real cooperation. Roger Babson, well-known financier, said a short time ago: "Catholics are now doing practically all the protesting against questionable movies, indecent divorces and other public sins." But Protestants, too, are becoming vocal.

Recently in New Orleans the City

Council of Protestant Churches protested against the abortion practices in the city. Archbishop Joseph Rummel at the same time condemned the ease with which these illegal practices were carried on and called them "an assault on public morality." Elsewhere, also, there is evidence of a meeting of minds.

In Great Britain a Christian Frontier Council has been formed which includes Catholics like Barbara Ward. "A sense of common danger," say members of this group, "is drawing Christian communities together." Many Protestants agree with the statement of Cardinal Stritch of Chicago: "It is a time when all of us must stand conscious of our responsibility to God." This is especially true regarding atheistic communism. To fight this common foe Roman Catholics and Protestants can certainly stand shoulder to shoulder.

On this question of communism, Christians are not primarily concerned over the difference between socialistic and capitalistic forms of economics. The danger lies in the fact that Soviet influence everywhere is directed toward the total strangulation of all religious life. What has happened in one country—Czechoslovakia—is typical. About 75 per cent of the Czech people are Roman Catholics, yet the communistic regime at Prague is attempting to break the Church completely.

Recently the Commissar of Education in the Soviet Republics wrote: "We hate Christians. Even the best



of them must be regarded as our enemies." The state not the Christian faith and ethics, must prevail. "Those men who are not governed by God must be ruled by tyrants," said William Penn. Can there still be any doubt that all protestants should align themselves with Roman Catholics in a wholehearted defense of the Christian faith?

### UNITED FRONT AT HOME

It is not only abroad, either, that Christianity needs a united front. Even our own United States is still far from being a Christian land. In 1949 the census reported some 80 million church members—a figure that leaves at least half of our population outside any church. In his remarkable book, *Peace of Soul*, Msgr. Fulton J. Sheen says: "Modern man has locked himself in the prison of his own mind. Only God can let him out." This is all too true. Cooperation between Protestants and Roman Catholics can help to liberate the souls of all of us.

That cooperation is being welcomed by both sides is evidenced many times. Last June Catholic and Protestant leaders of North America and Western Europe met in Paris and set up a new organization, the World

Organization for Brotherhood. From the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Paris, the Most Reverend Maurice Feltin, came a message of welcome, hailing the group as "a rallying of the most outhentic spiritual forces."

Another group, mostly Protestant, has started a campaign called Religion in American Life, and the Roman Catholic Bishop of Rhode Island has issued a statement endorsing this movement "to make all people more and more conscious of the Divine Presence, and the duty of all to praise and worship Him."

The need for the unity of which Archbishop Cushing spoke in his letter is then beginning to be recognized, and his spirit is winning friends in Protestant circles. Bishop Oxnam of the Methodist Church has said of Archbishop Cushing: "I am caught by his friendly spirit, the charm of his personality, which carries into our American life some of the winsomeness of the Emerald Isle." But that genial word does not go far enough. Archbishop Cushing is a real statesman, and I believe that Roman Catholic churchmen with his breadth of vision could lead both Protestants and Catholics in a mighty defense of the Christian faith.

—America—1/6/51

### SPACE FOR MORE

From Quote comes the following descriptive indictment, which originally appeared in the Boston Journal of 1855:

"Among the curiosities lately placed in a museum is a mosquito's bladder, containing the souls of 24 misers and the fortunes of 12 printers. It is nearly half full."