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# Chaplaincy Is Trialogue

REVEREND CHARLES CARROLL

When I was called to be the Protestant chaplain to faculty and students at the University of California Medical Center in San Francisco, one of the first persons upon whom I called was Father John Ring at the Newman Center. My reason for doing so was quite simple: I believe that at this time in the history of the Church we will either "hang together or be hanged separately." I am also convinced that the Church can no longer provide a divided witness to a divided world and be heard at all.

Father received me most graciously. Today I consider him a good and close friend. But he asked a question which I had not previously asked myself, "How do you envision your ministry on this campus?" My answer came surprisingly fast. Indeed I was a bit stunned to hear myself say, "To serve as a catalyst for dialogue." Since that time, however, I have had no reason to regret that answer.

The Church has too long accepted the gulf between science and religion, and for too long has failed to do anything about it. Men of science would build from their side. It is time that the Church begins to build from hers.

Gabriel Marcel said it well, "Today the first and perhaps the only duty of the philosopher is to defend man against himself: to defend

man against that extraordinary temptation toward inhumanity to which — almost without being aware of it—so many human beings today have yielded." This is the first duty of the theologian and priest. In short, it is the first duty of any man who considers his prior vocation that of being a human being.

Fortunately, the Church has not been without her prophets, her intellectuals, and her men of science. Teilhard de Chardin expressed a profound truth in saying, "Man is evolution reflecting upon itself." Any man in the academic world is aware of the enormous depth of this comment. Any man in the natural sciences would be pleased to engage in interdisciplinary dialogue with those in the social sciences about its implications. Seldom has man, whatever his interests, been faced with so many questions as today, and some questions man has never before faced in his long history on this earth. In the course of the recent abortion debate in the State of California, one question remained unanswered, "When does human life begin?" Another that soon will be asked is, "When does human life end?" These questions were asked time and again of the doctors tried by us at Nuremberg. No less relevant are the others that were asked, "What value is there to human life?" "What right do

we have to experiment upon a human being without his informed consent"? The drift in American medicine is clear. Men of moral concern and integrity will speak up and speak out or they will have only themselves to blame if men become victims of their own power.

Fortunately, at the University of California Medical Center, there are men of medicine, law and philosophy who would speak to these issues, and who would reach out to the men of the Church and ask them to engage in study with them. Only three months ago a group representing all these disciplines met at Stanford University to consider the question, "When is the patient dead?" Those who met at that first meeting asked to meet again. Now, every month at a seminary, college or university in the Bay Area, men of law, medicine, philosophy, and theology are facing the questions which medicine is confronting, questions to which men of medicine seek answers *in company with* their colleagues.

Professors and students at the center, however, look beyond these immediate concerns to the great questions which face us all in that larger community of the world as well. To that end a series of lectures has been devised for Sunday evenings, throughout the coming academic year, in which many of these problems will be considered by leading intellectuals within the Bay Area. That program would feature discussants outstanding in the fields of theology, medicine, sociology, law, education, and philoso-

phy. The subject material is timely and provocative, including consideration of such topics as the war in Viet Nam, The Ecumenical Movement, The Mystery of Death, and the need for Marxist-Christian dialogue.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who spoke of man's "coming of age," wrote shortly before his death—of the Church—that "She has not testified to the truth of God in such a manner that all science might recognize its origin in this truth." Ignace Lepp, the onetime French Marxist who became a distinguished Catholic priest, offered encouragement to those who restlessly seek the truth, knowing that God will confirm his truth in those who seek it in Him, through Him, and in prayer to Him. He wrote in an article entitled *The Holy Church*, "The perfection of the Church does not lie behind us but before us. It is in no sense a question of return to early Christianity, but a striving toward the Christianity of a matured mankind."

Any chaplain to faculty and students at a medical school or center today must serve not with his mind *or* emotions, but with his mind *and* emotions. Nothing less than a visceral theology will do, a theology based not upon intellectual assent to the articles of the faith, but a theology based upon a living faith in Jesus Christ, who is himself the Truth, who would reveal himself to all men. Finally, the chaplain must identify himself with all men, realizing that the questions which they ask are the ques-

tions which he must ask; the answers that they seek are the answers that he must seek, in company with them, turning toward the Source. Whatever name men individually give Him, He is for us who bear His name, Jesus Christ, "The same yesterday, today, and forever." To do this, the Church should give serious consideration to the establishment of an ecumenical institute, a "think tank," at which theologians of the major communions of the Church may be freed of all responsibility—save to think. This has been done by the Protestant and Catholic Churches of Europe, especially those of Germany in the immediate post-war years when the Church found it necessary to speak to public issues at the time of the German Constitutional Convention. It is no longer enough to speak to questions once they arise. The Church should anticipate questions and speak to

them *before* they arise. We have all too long exhausted some of our best minds by asking them to teach; to "publish or perish"; to serve as leaders of that communion of the Church of which they are members; and to serve as leaders of the whole Church in the whole world. If, as Saint Augustine suggested, we pray that we not be deceived by scripture or deceive out of scripture, then we too must pray that we keep reflection and action in balance, for reflection without action is denial of the call to witness Him and action without reflection is denial of His authority of our witness. Performing truth demands both. Indeed, it demands *trialogue*—man in prayer with God and in dialogue with his neighbor!

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