

Editorial

When foundations rumble and walls shudder there is always cause for alarm, particularly if such occurrences take place within an overly-secure structure of traditions. If new and dynamic forces begin to play upon old forms and thereby give rise to unprecedented directions, then these so-called "novelties" can become the occasion of scandal. But this is not the true scandal that deliberately steers innocent people away from what is true and good. Rather, it is a false kind that arises when unprepared and, perhaps, unwilling minds are confronted with a rethinking that is brought about by moral crises, economic situations, social developments and political pressures.

Of course, I am speaking of the reappraisal that the Church is presently undergoing as it is evidenced through the second Vatican Council. In an attempt to meet the demands of a rapidly changing, pluralistic culture the Church has responded in a fresh atmosphere of freedom and openness. As dedicated bishops, theologians and laymen respond to the present situation, many of the faithful are perplexed and sometimes shocked at solutions which sharply depart from the past. In the area of worship-renewal the Christian community has been called upon to leave behind a rather secure but passive role in order to enter upon a more dynamic one. Scriptural and theological reflection have broken the secure bonds of the classroom and have reached the people, thereby becoming *their* affair. Even moral attitudes long considered to be crystallized and incapable of further development have been brought down from their dusty shelves for a re-examination in the light of socio-economic tensions and scientific advances. Ecumenical efforts have generated a fear that truth will be compromised and syncretism adopted. In short, crisis elicits response, and the response arouses a reaction that looks towards the Church's contemporary adaptation as subjective pragmatism.

There is, however, no real cause for alarm, no true scandal generated by a "betrayal" of Christ's Church. The scope of a formerly exclusivistic, unintelligible liturgy is being widened to a horizon that embraces the entire body of believers. A revitalized theology has attempted to answer the challenge of problem-confrontation and, at the same time, has endeavoured to make the Christian life more meaningful for all rather than remaining the

reserved domain of a well-educated few. The movement towards a united witness of all Christians stands out in sharp contrast to a long-prevailing apologetic frame of mind that vigilantly defended Catholic purity and attacked non-Catholic "impurity." But how can we truly love our neighbor if Christians are denouncing one another? Until now falsity was always rejected as totally false. But is there not always at least a partial and profound truth in the teaching of our brothers? Did not Pope Paul himself say: "If we are in any way to blame for that separation, we humbly beg God's forgiveness. And we ask pardon too of our brethren who feel themselves to have been injured by us."

The Christ-Witness which has been proclaimed unceasingly for centuries still has not exhausted its throbbing power for giving men the truth and love to live by. Yet this same Christian testimony today finds itself with new forces for the proclamation of that truth and love. Christians are now facing existentially the naked truth: They are not alone in the world in its movement. Open congregation with separated brothers toward moral betterment and free collaboration with society toward social progress are just two powerful programs which, with wise foresight and planning, can set the stage for the world's change of heart. It is in a pluralistic world that the need of Jesus' message must be planted; it is to a divided world that the words of Jesus must be proclaimed. The Catholic ghetto must be broken up so that they "... should not exhaust themselves in interminable discussion and, under pretext of the better or the best, omit to do the good that is possible and is thus obligatory. . . . In these circumstances (of socio-economic activities), our sons should be very careful that they are consistent and never make compromises on religion and morals. At the same time let them show themselves animated by a spirit of understanding and disinterestedness, ready to cooperate loyally in achieving objects that of their natures are good or at least reduceable to good . . ." (John XXIII).