

# Criticism of Controversial Articles Hitherto

I was pleased last Wednesday to pick up the Oct. 16th edition of the Cadre and find a number of controversial and thought provoking articles. Certainly a student newspaper can do little better than exploring issues that are basic to all of our lives (e.i. religion, politics, educational institutions) and offer critical and hopefully constructive commentary. On this, I offer congratulations to Stan Dalton, Joel Hansen and Don M. Cregier. All have shown, by their writing, a conviction of views that are often unpopular and certainly sceptical of commonly accepted facts of life. Scepticism is, of course, a healthy sign in the world of academics but as a personal view, I feel that all three writers have advanced a little further than need be in their articles.

First, I would like to comment on Stan Dalton's two editorial pieces. In his lead editorial on "Suicide and Xianity(?)" he has shown a comparison of the sudden transformation of near suicidal from a state of depression to that of euphoria, and members of the "Jesus Movement" from a similar "drole", "meaningless" existence to an enthusiasm, even exuberance, for dedicating their lives to Christ. This, he feels, is dangerous in that like the suicidal, Christians have only sought an escape, a "safe escape" at that, from their own weaknesses. Having failed to alleviate their weaknesses these people are then relatively powerless to assert themselves in the power struggle of life. Thus, they can allow themselves to be exploited and oppressed by an economic system in which the few strong dominate the many weak. The argument is obviously very complex and with the limited space of one editorial, Stan did not have the opportunity to fully explore his interesting thesis. Hopefully, a number of rebuttals from other writers may have been offered by this time but allow me to add to them my own humble comments.

To begin with, the first part of the argument I feel that Mr. Dalton makes too much of a sudden, almost incomprehensible change in the lives of both suicidal and the "Jesus people". The change may seem sudden, of course, but in both cases it has been building up over a considerable period of time. As it takes place it is accompanied by a fundamental change, or series

of changes, in the individual. In the case of the suicidal, he (I will use the masculine form for convenience) has faced a traumatic experience, and has had to rethink the value and purpose of his life. Having decided under extreme pressure, then, if he so decides, that there is something within himself that is positive enough to sustain his desire to live, he has made a fundamental adjustment of his perception of life. The grain of truth in Stan's argument is that this readjustment may lead to escapism in some cases but surely in the majority of cases the experience has made the individual firmly and dramatically face life in all its reality. Thus, the fact that he has finally confronted the meaning of life, and made an affirmative decision to face it, gives that person new strength to go on. The finding of this strength is the reason then, that many problems seem smaller and are thus "lifted from his shoulders". The point is that the individual is now stronger, not weaker than before his experience.

Now we must decide if this phenomenon of the suicidal person is similar to the person finding Christ. Personally, I feel the two are quite different experiences which are similar only in their result; a reaffirmation of the value of life. However, to follow Stan's example, I will try to draw the analogy.

That many people find their lives "meaningless" and unhappy before finding God is undeniably true. Undoubtedly the acceptance of Christ is a major step in their lives and can, of course, lead to great jubilation. The change is sudden in many cases. Or at least it seems that way. I wonder, however, at the length of time that such people ponder committing their lives to the Lord. Surely the seeds of conversion have been sown long before they bear fruit. Long years of debate and inner turmoil, much of it leading to this "drole" state, precede the "sudden" but eventful revelation of life. One must often question Christianity, be sceptical of it and be critical of its followers for many years, debating its usefulness and value in intellectual terms before realizing that Christianity is a belief of the heart as well as the mind. The realization of faith then is long proceeded and when it strikes it does so with tre-

mendous force for all of a sudden one can see further than ever before, feel deeper and understand more fully. As with falling in love the heart has found its answer and the answer is love. The conversion then is very deep in the mind, heart and soul. The transformation shakes the very foundations of the individual.

Is this transformation escapism? I think not. In the sincere individual (and granted not all Jesus people are sincere) the conversion prompts one to face life, not to escape it. It calls for a reaching out to others, a calling to do you share, to carry your load in service of Jesus. In a society sceptical of religion (or at least the Christian religion) this also calls for fighting for a cause that is not entirely popular. It calls for bravery in the face of mockery. It calls for "guts". It is not the "in" thing to do.

Perhaps then, becoming a committed Christian means that one is escaping in the sense that one is putting his life in someone else's "hands." Yet is this action escaping? It also means making a commitment, a deep and evaluating one. If giving of oneself is escapism then perhaps the question we might ask is whether escapism is really bad?

Having committed one's life to Christ we must now consider whether that person has justified his weaknesses by envisioning himself as being strong. We, as humans, all have weaknesses, that we cannot be denied, but these weaknesses are not, as Mr. Dalton implies, unchanging over time. The conversion to God is a fundamental change, one which alters our whole being. Strength is created for now one has a strong partner in life for one now has strength and one now has mission. With new inner strength one can now better face the world. Why then must Christians be "oppressed" by capitalism? Because in an ever changing society capitalism is the economic system we now live under. But just as Christians were at the forefront when feudalism was overthrown so will they be at capitalism's demise. It is not uncommon to note very religious persons both from within and from outside the Church who have led the way to political reform. Many Christians do support the present "system" but what they support is

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