

Concordia Theological Monthly

Volume 17

Article 49

8-1-1946

Miscellanea

Charles Clayton Morrison

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm>



Part of the [Practical Theology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Morrison, Charles Clayton (1946) "Miscellanea," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 17 , Article 49.
Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol17/iss1/49>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Print Publications at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Concordia Theological Monthly by an authorized editor of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact seitzw@csl.edu.

Miscellanea

The Roman Menace

In his notable series of articles having the heading "Can Protestantism Win America?" Charles Clayton Morrison, editor of the *Christian Century*, discusses in the issue of May 8 the topic "Roman Catholicism and Protestantism." The whole article deserves careful reading. We reprint from it several important paragraphs.

"The most daring political activity of the hierarchy reached a dramatic achievement in 1939. After years of manipulation and pressure, it succeeded in gaining recognition of the Vatican by Mr. Roosevelt's appointment of a 'personal ambassador' to the Holy See. This was a clear violation of constitutional procedure in such matters and of the democratic principle embodied in the constitutional provision for the separation of Church and State. The thin deception under which Mr. Roosevelt, characteristically, sought to disguise the real nature of his action, by coupling with it an invitation to the Protestant president of the Federal Council of Churches to come up and see him some time, was nothing less than an insult to Protestantism.

"After the death of Mr. Roosevelt, it was hoped that this illegal relationship would be quietly allowed to lapse. But the Vatican and the American hierarchy had other thoughts. President Truman, in a recent action, so casually taken that he deemed it unnecessary to offer an explanation, has reappointed Mr. Roosevelt's 'personal' ambassador, this time as 'the President's' ambassador.

"The issue, thus aggravated, again confronts the American people. It involves the whole question of religious liberty, of the equality of all churches before the law, of the separation of Church and State, of the denial of special privilege to any Church, and of the constitutional provision requiring confirmation by the Senate of all ambassadorial appointments. It involves, too, in the long run, the question whether the Catholic hierarchy shall be thus given a special access to the supreme centers of power in the American Government to manipulate them in the interest of winning America to the Catholic faith. The *Christian Century* recently published an extended editorial exposition of this subject which concluded with these words: 'If American citizens of every faith do not make the welkin ring with their indignation, they will deserve to lose the religious liberty they are too supine to defend.' . . .

"The growth of Catholic power is manifested in its intelligent approach to two large populational blocs — organized labor and the Negroes. In his series of articles 'Can Catholicism Win America?' Harold E. Fey brought forward much valuable information on Catholic activity in both these groups. The Catholic Church is far ahead of Protestantism in establishing working relations with labor

organizations. It has created a labor organization of its own inside the unions, composed exclusively of Catholic members of the unions. It is called the Association of Catholic Trades Unionists — Actu, for short.

"Membership in Actu is limited to devoted Catholics. The endorsement of a priest or of two members is necessary for admission. The Actu does not permit non-Catholics to join, because its fundamental purpose is to spread the teachings of the Catholic Church," says an official publication of the organization. By this wise course the Church retains its hold upon its own members, gains respect among the mass of workers which Protestantism does not command, and at the same time maintains a missionary agency whose fruits in converts to the Catholic Church must be considerable.

"The duty of winning the Negro to the Catholic faith has been repeatedly pressed by the Vatican upon the American hierarchy. The latter was cautious in responding in a large official manner until it had sufficiently consolidated the Church's position in white America to be able to risk the racial prejudice which a large influx of color into the Church might arouse. This hesitation is now a thing of the past. Certain influential sections of the Catholic press advocate an aggressive policy. Missionary and educational operations are already well developed by religious orders. The Catholic Negro membership is now about 300,000. Negro priests are being trained and already some have been ordained. Championship of certain political interests of Negroes has won favor for the Church among them. The Church has plans well formed which it believes will present to the Negro 'an intelligent religion of the kind he will not find in his roaring, ranting Protestant meetinghouses.' . . .

"Roman Catholicism is a self-enclosed system of power, resting upon the broad base of the submission of its people, whose submission it is able to exploit for the gaining of yet more power in the political and cultural life of the secular community. Its power is exercised through a sacrosanct ruling class marvelously knitted together in a descending scale of power from the Papacy down, the Pope himself receiving his power from Jesus Christ, whose vice-regent on earth he claims to be. From the sublime sanctions with which its power is clothed there is derived, not only the right, but a sense of obligation, to seek yet more power on the assumption that it thereby brings more honor to Christ.

"These same sanctions inevitably blind the Church to the moral implications of its methods in gaining and administering its power. In countries where Catholicism has the right of way, its methods lead to the political phenomenon known as clericalism. 'Clericalism,' says John A. Mackay, 'is the pursuit of political power by a religious hierarchy, carried on by secular methods and for purposes of social domination.' It is an attempt on the part of an ecclesiastical system to use the state as an instrument of its will. Clericalism is becoming more and more manifest in America

despite the counterbalancing presence of Protestantism and the as yet unshaken tradition of democracy."

Roman Catholics, of course, deny that their course constitutes a peril for our country. One of their leaders, the very Rev. Ignatius Smith, O. P., dean of the Catholic University School of Philadelphia in Washington, D. C., stated some time ago: "While some of us have been working side by side with representatives of other creeds to promote better understanding, a fanatical Methodist bishop has been parading around the United States as head of the Federal Council of Protestant churches, and in every city he has visited, has polluted, contaminated, and has done his diabolical darndest to stir up enmity against the Catholic Church and to distort our motives. He is a sounding board for a great many who are fearful of our strength and who are determined that we shall not expand." (*R. N. S.* for April 29.) The article of Dr. Morrison ably shows that the fears of Protestants are well founded.

