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**RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY**


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The U.S. Civil Rights Commission was critical of church leadership during the 1974-75 school year, finding it "not as effective as it could have been in identifying and supporting moral issues confronting Boston during Phase 1 desegregation." By the start of the following academic year, the stated position of the Church was clear; Cardinal Humberto Medeiros urged Bostonians to "actively, earnestly and courageously strive to insure justice, quality education and human dignity."

Written regulations forbidding the use of Catholic schools as havens from desegregation were issued to all pastors and principals. Auxiliary Bishop Joseph J. Ruocco wrote all the city's priests urging that they appeal personally to opinion-makers in the community and seek out young people to explain that the alternative to acceptance was "futile and self-perpetuating violence." Bishop Ruocco spent hours encouraging priests and nuns to deepen their involvement, and, in response, they spent thousands of hours in projects ranging from riding school buses to sponsoring informational gatherings.

The Boston experience, says Harris, shows that many Catholics have still not accepted the social teachings of the Church. Some priests disagreed with the court order and thus felt relieved of any further obligation to promote racial justice. Yet there were people who were seeking leadership in a troubled time and who now look to the Church for continued direction and support.

### *Religion-As-Illusion*

"Jesus in the Now: The New Revivalism" by Scott Edwards, in *The Humanist* (Sept.-Oct. 1976), 923 Kensington Ave., Buffalo, N.Y. 14215.

There is a strong spirit of revival stirring in America—one with links to the past but also imbued with elements which make it unlike all the revival movements that have gone before.

Edwards, a political scientist at California State University, Hayward, finds three things to note about the "New Revivalism": its essential harmony with the liberal ethos of our society; its adoption of mass communications and the moral outlook that goes with this technology; and its embrace of charismatic beliefs and practices.

The new revivalism is at peace with "the hazy liberalism that largely governs popular feelings in America about social and political matters." Its theology remains fundamentalist, but this does not prevent evangelist Oral Roberts from embracing modernism to the extent of offering TV specials with all the modes and rhythms of mass entertainment. Evangelism and popular culture have become so fused as to be indistinguishable, says Edwards.

In its use of electronic mass communications, the new revivalism has accepted a moral atmosphere which is congenial to pictures and sounds but not to language. Words like "praise the Lord" and "let Jesus into your life" have no meaning when displayed against a tele-

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vision background of mass fantasy. The tendency of the new revivalism to reflect, and perhaps even shape, popular consciousness is also found in its leaning toward the charismatic—a belief in special powers to heal, to communicate in unknown tongues, to experience ecstatic self-renewal.

The vigor of the new revivalism shows, among other things, that what Americans want is not a religion attuned to politics and social causes but a religion of immediacy and feeling. It rejects the intellectualism that has characterized much discussion of religion in recent years. The new revivalism, says Edwards, “announces the coming of religion-as-lifestyle . . . as packaged illusion.” Jesus is not the judge and renouncer of the world, he is simply “a helping friend, a friend with magical powers.” All that is required is to “smile, be happy, praise the Lord—and be sure of your place at the Rapture with Pat Boone, Johnny Cash, and the World Action Singers.”

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**OTHER NATIONS**

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*La Dolce Vita*

“The New Class” by Mauro Lucentini, in *Commentary* (Nov. 1976), 165 E. 56th St., New York, N.Y. 10022.

Italy has become the first major Western nation to produce a “New Class,” a “self-appointed, self-serving state elite,” of the kind described by the Yugoslav intellectual Milovan Djilas.

This New Class, says Lucentini, American correspondent for the Milan daily *Il Giornale Nuovo*, is the product of close cooperation between the Communists and the dominant left wings of the “Center-Left” parties that have ruled Italy for almost 15 years. A “miracle of political subtlety” has permitted these two, ostensibly hostile, elements to cooperate in transferring assets from private hands to the state and in distributing them among the New Class in the form of jobs, privileges, and subsidies.

The public payroll in Italy, poorest and least productive of the Western industrial nations, is 10 times as large, in proportion to its population, as that of the United States. “More than half of the total Italian labor force has already retired on official pension plans,” Lucentini reports. “Most Italian art, most Italian education, most of Italian culture is financed by the government and serviced by political proteges.”

With a strong boost from the “economic miracle” which saw Italy prosper in the late 1950s, the New Class grew strong when the Socialist Party was allowed into the government in 1961. As a result, a “full-fledged client system was initiated, with all bureaucratic and para-governmental positions, down to the last errand boy, being shared