



THE 39 HIGH SCHOOLERS WHO VISITED THE CAMPUS RECENTLY

## Religious Tolerance and the Christian-- by Robert Wright

The history of religious tolerance is a long and interesting one. The doctrine of tolerance is a direct outgrowth of the bloody religious wars that kept Europe during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in a state of turmoil. Everyone accepted the idea that there was such a commodity as absolute truth which God had seen fit to reveal to men. Each religious group was certain that it had the true religion and a monopoly on truth. Under such conditions conflict was inevitable. Some of the most ignoble crimes ever committed against humanity have, therefore, been committed in the name of true religion. Was not the most heinous torture justifiable if it meant the salvation of the victim's eternal soul? Apparently, these early Europeans thought it was; for thousands of devoutly religious men met death on the rack or at the stake for refusing to conform to the doctrines of the established church.

Eventually, the people became sick of the unending religious warfare, massacre and counter-massacre, and the resulting chaos. Tolerance emerged as the only possible solution, and was preached energetically — by the minorities in particular. America was being settled at the time — to a large extent by these dissatisfied minorities who brought with them the idea of tolerance. Yet, tolerance, as they practiced it, was singularly unsuccessful here, as witnessed by our witch-hunts and similar events. As soon as a religious group won recognition and power, it forgot its former idea of tolerance and endeavored, in one way or another, to force its "true" faith on all the people.

But do we not have religious freedom and tolerance of all faiths in America today? Does this fact not prove that the American Christian has learned to be tolerant of the faith of others? Have we not fought for this religious freedom that we enjoy today? My answer to these questions is an unqualified no. We owe the religious freedom of which we boast today not to the fact that we are any more tolerant, but rather to an almost universal indifference to religion of any kind. Partly because of the influence of the rationalist, most people today have

simply ignored even the idea of such a thing as absolute truth. It is not hard for a man who believes nothing to be tolerant of any man's faith, as long as it does not interfere with his freedom from any belief at all. Our attitude has changed from that of people who feel that it has the truth, all the truth, and the only hope of salvation now and in the hereafter, to that of a nation of skeptics who scoff at all beliefs, hold that all truth is relative, and therefore that any belief is as good as any other. As I said before, this is not tolerance; it is mere indifference.

The Christian, however, is of a different mold, and his very faith bars him from the easy way of solving the problem by hiding his head in the sand of indifference. For the Christian, there is a God who is the author of absolute truth, which is unchangeable. For a Christian to transgress this absolute truth as he understands it is the worst possible form of heresy and a sin against God Himself. How can a real Christian, therefore, accept the idea that everyone's ideas are equally right since this leads to the idea of relative truth? Can a man who feels that he knows the truth at all by and watch others go to their

doom for the lack of that very important truth? Has Christ not commanded him to convert the world? Can he then be tolerant and yet true to his religion and God? My answer is that he alone can really understand and practice tolerance, and I base my answer on the Christian faith itself.

A tolerant Christian is not one who puts all faiths on the level of his own and ascribes equal importance to them all. Instead he takes the stand that there is absolute truth given us by God, but that no man or group of men has a monopoly on this truth. Once this idea is accepted, tolerance becomes a possibility. Since none of us knows all the truth we are not justified in interfering with the faith of others, because they may also have an insight into truth, from another angle. No man can be a judge of other men, because he can never hope to know all the truth. That prerogative is reserved for God Alone.

Therefore, Communism and Catholicism are wrong not because they do not know any truth — they go, but because they refuse to admit that anyone outside their circle knows any of the truth. Once you accept this viewpoint, tolerance becomes a cornerstone of Christianity instead of a blot on its religious fervor of evangelical principles. Therefore, any totalitarian system imposed by a religious body (the Catholic Church, for example) would be as insufferable to a Christian as any regime that might be imposed by a Hitler or a Stalin. Tolerance does not deny the existence of an absolute truth given by God, but insists that there is an absolute truth and that man must be left free to pursue it in their own way, since no human or group can know it all. Lack of tolerance in the Christian sense, therefore, a sin, for if a man is tolerant he evidently believes that he or his sect has all truth and is implicitly claiming to be God. This assumption is not just a sin, as I see it, but the sin of all sins to be ever on the alert against.

## A LETTER HOME

(Continued from Page 4)

dadgum heap" (has been used) it. They claim it makes them feel better but fer me I can tell they ain't lookin' any fer the better. I feel shore it would do the miles less more good than the "stump water" and a "whipped lizard liver's" youns have a been used.

We had a womun here from the mountains 'toder day. She spake to us in the metin' house but they called it lyicum. She waz the fust body I have heard who knowed how to talk half decent.

Maw, I jest wanted you'ns to know that we air all ticked pink because Doc Dyer have come back from the horsepital. He wuz suffering from carbonated or dehydrated stomach er sompin.

We had a fessor wuz student ball game a 'toder night. It wuz more fun than punkin stein contest. Maw, some use the teachers wore overhauls and sun use um didn't.

What a shapz this here world is in!

What I wuz a firm' to tell you all back in the consenning use the letter wuz this: I wuz a bout to say that well hit ain't much important.

Spring has sprung down here, maw. The Lil birds give recitals in the trees, the flowers air a bloomin' and sun use the timber has buds a big as a squirrel's year. Maw, by the by, would you mind sendin me that thar lil tin can I used to keep worms in. Since I forgot to say goodby I will say hit now, Buy.

Your Lil yungun.

James Arthur (The Mountain Boy) Trantiam

P. S. What I wuz a goin' to tell you wuz that grades came out week a fore yesterday.

Mike—"I'd never want to be second husband to a widow."

Her—"I'd rather be that than her first."