ROY AND HIS "APOSTLES OF DISCORD"

Dr. McIntire has had a personal encounter with Ralph Lord Roy. He reported it in Chapter 12 of his book, *Servants of Apostasy* (pp. 237-240), as follows:

It was the usual hot, humid Labor Day weekend. There arrived early Sunday morning, September 2, 1951, at the Sunday school of the Bible Presbyterian Church of Collingswood, a young man, Ralph L. Roy, fair complexioned, with a bright eye and a ready tongue. He said that he was a student at Columbia University, working on his Master's degree, and that he wanted to write a story about the movement of which the Collingswood church and its pastor were a part. He had contacted the *Atlantic Monthly* and *Harper's* and had received approval from them, he explained, provided his article was satisfactory. He represented himself as being sympathetic. He was introduced to various officials and welcomed at the church as visitors are always welcomed. He said that his grandmother was an old-fashioned Methodist in Vermont and that, though he preached in his own church, he really was not a licensed Methodist preacher. But his story varied some.

He expressed surprise at what he saw in Collingswood, at the work which was being done in the church and Sunday school. He returned again on Sunday evening. Afterwards he expressed a desire to visit Harvey Cedars, the Bible Presbyterian Conference at the seashore, for the Labor Day meetings where I was to speak. I arranged to take him to the seashore the next day with my family in our car. On the way, we conversed at length. He reported that he had visited the New York headquarters of the National Council of Churches, and they did not want to say very much to him about us. He had been to the World Council's headquarters and they had given him all the material they had about the International and American Councils of Christian Churches. He said they had referred him to the Friends of Democracy of which the late H. L. Birkhead was the director. He had interviewed Birkhead and others at length, he said, about our movement.

It was clear in talking with him that he did not believe in Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour as the Scriptures teach it. On the return trip we spent most of the time explaining to him the way of salvation and endeavoring to lead him to accept Christ as his personal Saviour. He seemed to know all the answers. He was steeped in the whole higher critical theory and was interested in building a "Kingdom of God" on this earth. We explained to him repeatedly the way of eternal life. He told us that it was a wonderful thing to believe, if one could believe it, but that he could not conceive of a God making such a free gift to man.

Later, he wrote us a letter dated September 12, 1951, from Swanton, Vermont, saying:

> "Please accept my manifold thanks for your hospitality and assistance in clarifying many of the issues that were in my mind. I am still not perfectly clear on several points, but the conversations with you enabled me to look at your endeavors with greater objectivity than before.
>
> "God bless you, your wonderful wife and family, and may He give you new visions of His Truth and His Beauty."

After his departure on Monday, in a lengthy memorandum which I prepared, I wrote, "It looked to me as though here was a young man who either has been assigned or has set out on his own to write one of these colorful smear-type of stories."[1]

His story came repeatedly and in various places. "Ministry of Schism" was the title of an article on the American Council of Christian Churches appearing in *The Pastor*, October, 1952, reprints of which were immediately distributed "as service of the Commission on Public Relations and Methodist Information." It was announced that he was a graduate student at Union Theological Seminary, New York. The *Christian Century* carried several articles by him, attacking Carl McIntire, the American and the International Councils of Christian Churches, and the *Christian Beacon*.

"Ministry of Disruption" was the title of a 20-page mimeographed document "for private circulation" issued by the "Division of Literature and Publications, The Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 156 Fifth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y." The subtitle read, "A brief study of the activities of Carl McIntire and the American Council of Christian Churches," with the information that "this study has been compiled by Ralph L. Roy." This document was sent to mission stations throughout the world and turned up in various conferences where missionaries gathered to talk.

These articles were, in fact, sections or rewrites of material in the book which was to appear in 1953 entitled, *Apostles of Discord*. "Protestant fringe groups promoting hate and disruption" was the subtitle of the book with the following commendation on the front jacket: "BISHOP OXNAM: 'An extraordinarily valuable piece of work.' REINHOLD NIEBUHR: 'Ralph Roy has performed an important task in his careful analysis.'" Here it was learned that Roy had been working under consultation and guidance of John C. Bennett of Union Theological Seminary, the author of the World Council's pronouncement on "The Church and the Disorder of Society," adopted in Amsterdam in 1948, and which the former editor[2] of the *Christian Century* said was "overloaded with communist sympathy." The main thrust of the book, without question, is against the Twentieth Century Reformation Movement represented by the separatist movement in the United States and its expanding development as it took shape in the world-wide International Council of Christian Churches.

The book is divided into two sections, "The Ministry of Hate" and "The Ministry of Disruption." In the introduction Roy wrote:

> "While 'Apostles of Discord' has been selected as an over-all label for the Protestant malcontents discussed in this study, some groups and individuals in the ministry of hate collectively may be characterized as the 'Protestant underworld.' There are obvious problems arising from the use of this term. It does not intend to suggest that its members are involved in criminal activity—though often they are. The label does not seek to convey the idea that the Protestant underworld operates furtively—though it sometimes does. The phrase 'Protestant underworld' is used to describe the activities of those who espouse ideologies which are immoral, undemocratic, and subversive of the Christian faith."

(Photographed from New York *Times* Book Review of November 20, 1960; rearranged)

An Attempt That Failed

COMMUNISM AND THE CHURCHES. By Ralph Lord Roy. 495 pp. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. $7.50.

By HAROLD E. FEY

DID the Communist party attempt to infiltrate the American churches? Readers of Ralph Lord Roy's definitive book will know that the answer is, "Yes." After several years devoted to careful historical research on this highly contentious question, the author of this substantial volume accurately gives names, places and dates. He describes the methods that were used and the organizations that became special Communist targets. He assesses the results, which he finds extraordinarily meager.

Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam clashes with the House Un-American Activities Committee on the issue of communism in the churches, July, 1953.

Without bias except toward truth and charity, in that order, Mr. Roy methodically explores an aspect of the social experience of the last generation that has not previously been the subject of systematic inquiry by a competent writer. His book illuminates a baffling and irritating set of questions and will, I believe, honorably withstand the barrage of criticisms certain to be directed against it. Mr. Roy is a Methodist minister, a teacher at Mills College and the author previously of "Apostles of Discord."

The communism under study is not the sort of utopianism that has occasionally cropped up in America, but the kind that has stirred up the world since Lenin arrived in Russia. Through many twists and turns, Mr. Roy follows the changes in Communist policy toward United States religious organizations. In the first phase, the Communists attacked religion as the opium of the people. Later they turned to trying to exploit it for their own ends. A virtue of the author's method is that he traces each major development through to its conclusion before turning to the next subject.

His chapters discuss Communist exploitation of the social concern of churchmen during the depression, of their interest in the civil war in Spain, of the people's dread of involvement in World War II. He describes the invention of the "united front" and shows how various fronts were manipulated. When wartime cooperation gave way to cold war antagonism, Communist efforts switched to various causes. A major promotion was the so-called Stockholm peace pledge. No large religious grouping was left untempted. Protestant, Catholic and Jew all have reason to study this book with some care.

Mr. Roy diligently examines the record of the House Committee on Un-American Activities and the records of the former Communists employed by this body as witnesses. His detailed examination of the research done by the staff of the committee scores it for incompetence. His investigation of the records of many of its witnesses gives reasons why their credibility as witnesses against churchmen is subject to legitimate doubt. Nevertheless, he does not challenge the legitimacy of investigations of Communist activities. He lauds the counter-attacks staged by Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam and other religious leaders against the misguided efforts of anti-Communists and the more recent successful rebuttal by the National Council of Churches against charges raised in an Air Force manual.

Among the denominations whose leading personalities, parishes, organizations or papers were at one time or another targets of the Communists were the Methodist, Episcopalian, Baptist, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Unitarians, Jews, Orthodox and Armenian. Each of these efforts is analyzed. The Communists sought, usually by deceptive means, to enlist churchmen in behalf of the Scottsboro boys, or "peace," or "democracy," or the Spanish Loyalists, or the Rosenbergs, or the victims of the Smith act. During World War II cooperators were not hard for them to find; after the Korean aggression they were recruited with increasing difficulty. Even among Negro clergymen, who are reported here to fall victims of Communist suasion somewhat more readily than do whites, contacts are scarce and cooperation soon ends.

In conclusion, Mr. Roy brands as "absurd" the idea that American churches and religious leaders have been significantly influenced by Communists or Communist sympathizers. He contends that while various specific drives have been made, the Communist party never undertook a full-scale campaign to influence the churches, as it did to infiltrate the labor unions.

He estimates that in the last forty years not over 200 and possibly as few as fifty clergymen ever joined the Communist party. Since there were 500,00u clergymen during that span of time, this would reduce to something like one in 10,000. While several thousand found their names on mailing lists because they had signed protests or had joined some front organization for what seemed a laudable purpose, these ties were usually ephemeral. Most of the men who engaged in Communist activity were not even pastors of local churches. He could find no evidence that any penetrated to high denominational or interdenominational offices.

One important development however did emerge from the efforts of Communists to infiltrate the churches and of anti-Communists to keep them out. Between them they made it infinitely more difficult for religious people to advocate legitimate social changes or to protest against admitted evils. That the churches have been crippled as instruments of social reform is clearly evident. He says: "While Marxist communism has been an outspoken foe of religion, ironically, more damage has perhaps been done to America's churches by the noisiest antagonists of communism. In their efforts to protect religion from 'Red atheism' too often they have directed their fire instead against the legitimate social concern of both Christianity and Judaism."

Mr. Fey is editor of The Christian Century, an independent weekly.

ROY AND HIS "APOSTLES OF DISCORD"

(*Continued from preceding page*)

The publishers of the book[3] promised that any errors which would be called to their attention, since it was being offered as a factual report, would be corrected and an additional printed memorandum sent to all purchasers. George Peck, a weekly columnist and chairman of the board of the National Labor-Management Foundation, entitled one of his columns, "Apostles of False Record," and listed specific instances in which Roy was in error as they related to the Laymen's National Committee. Peck further commented, concerning the endorsement of Bishop Oxnam and Reinhold Niebuhr, "To anyone acquainted with these two, perhaps well-intentioned, but fuzzy-thinking clerics, their recommendations should be sufficient to discourage a purchase of *Apostles of Discord*."