

THIRD NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EXCHANGE OF PERSONS

January 28-31, 1959, Washington, D. C.

Report of Workshop #I-11: Philosophy and Theology

Chairman:

A. Burns Chalmers

Director, Davis House; Secretary of Education, American Friends
Service Committee

Rapporteur:

J. Benjamin Schmoker

General Secretary, Committee on Friendly Relations Among
Foreign Students

The members of the panel view Theology and Philosophy in light of the crisis and tension of the modern age. We consider the exchange of persons in a period we characterize as a scientific age. A scientific age is a neutral age. It gives the clues, the insights, but it does not tell you the ultimate values of life.

In reality we were not concerned with the exchange of persons. The concern was with the exchange of ideas. Conversation has been the cradle of all great cultures. It is entirely possible that international exchange students may have had their more significant learning experiences through "coffee house" conversation. In our own contemporary culture, conversation has become a lost art. When one talks one does not always look for agreement; one does not look for those things that are held in common, but for differences. We talk to see what we have, and prerequisite to the art of conversation is the art of listening.

There does exist an exchange in the fields of philosophy and theology. Within the Leaders program of the Department of State single individuals are brought usually in an area not exclusively related to religion. In programming an opportunity to meet leaders in the field of religion, the efforts of the Catholic Church have been somewhat sporadic, but there is a planned program now in effect. The Protestant Churches have their own programs and the National Council of Churches usually brings theologians and religious scholars for a one-year period and for graduate work.

With agreement that an increasing exchange is desirable the question was raised as to whose task it is to facilitate the program. There is a need for more careful design, more careful planning, more adequate financial support.

Understanding can be furthered by persons who share a common religious and philosophical outlook. There is a "blood relationship" between differing religions and theologies. Such exchange should not omit literature. Exchange should also be concerned on a "two-way street" basis. Respect for persons, always the prerequisite for understanding, is rooted in our religious tradition.

There should be concern lest leaders who pursue their professional training outside their home country find they have become alien to their own culture. It is easy to generalize on this problem, but it is likely that we do not now have the facts.

There was complete agreement that religious organizations should support exchanges of lay as well as clerical persons and this is current practice.

There is merit in international congresses of philosophers and theologians but the exchange of individuals has the greater significance.

of the crisis and tension of the modern age. We consider the exchange of persons in a period we characterize as a scientific age. A scientific age as a neutral age. It gives the ideas, the methods, but it does not tell you the ultimate values of life.

In reality we were not concerned with the exchange of persons. The concern was with the exchange of ideas. Conversation has been the cradle of all great cultures. It is entirely possible that international exchange students may have had their own significance. Learning experiences through "college houses" organization. In our own country, the "college houses" have become a fact of life. When one talks, one does not always look for agreement; one looks for those things that are held in common, but for differences. We talk to see what we have, and prerequisites to the art of conversation. It is the art of listening.

There does exist an exchange in the field of philosophy and theology. Within the leaders' program of the Department of State single individuals are brought usually in an area not exclusively related to religion. In programming an opportunity to meet leaders in the field of religion, the efforts of the Catholic Church have been somewhat sporadic, but there is a planned program now in effect. The Protestant Churches have their own programs and the National Council of Churches usually brings theologians and religious scholars for a one-year period and for graduate work.