Commitment, Faith, Regeneration, Hope

Editor's note: This week the Faculty Focus column features the text of Dr. D. Ivan Dykstra's eulogy to Rev. A.J. Muste, Hope alumnus who died recently. Dr. Dykstra, professor of philosophy and chairman of the philosophy department, delivered the eulogy during Wednesday chapel.

By Dr. D. Ivan Dykstra

'Tis a proud privilege indeed to have the opportunity to say something new about A.J. Muste. My credentials, I know, are inadequate; but my debts are very great.

My memories of A.J. go far back. I cannot, indeed, remember a time when his name was not an honored one in my father's house. What he (and Gandhi) wrote we read at family devotions as commentary on what the New Testament might mean for our times. Later, as a student preacher plunged fresh from seminary into a war-committed parish in a war-committed world, 'twas A.J. who saved my day, simply by being a living demonstration that under even those conditions—particularly under those conditions—Christian preachers have a relevant, healing thing to say.

BUT TO HAVE known A.J. is to know, too, that no words could add to or even capture his stature. Fortunately, one need not search for words with which to praise; one needs only to describe, for in his case to describe him is to praise him.

Let there be, then, but a few words, but write these words large when you write them about Muste, and do not leave any of them out, lest we err altogether.

The first word is commitment. The more than most men I knew was that to be Christian meant to be committed, and this meant to be a pacifist. What some of you are now learning by reading books by Bonhoeffer some of us learned longer ago by being under the searching personality of A.J.

AND THE COMMITTED then was different from being committed today. Now it is in the air, meaning to do; the committed are "in." Then they were "out," the alone, the friendless, the odd ones, and therefore the suffering ones.

And no church's stand was commitments then. His church talked war, but Muste talked peace. His church invested the sacred symbols in the service of war, but Muste dreamed only of radical justice.

And if today the church's stand is in harmony with the people's conscience, and serves as a sanction for it, some of it is because A.J. was there to blaze some trails, and to bring a whiff of New Testament nonconformity to the establishment, grown cold and smug and tired and comfortable and flabby.

BUT THE WORD underlying the commitment was faith. Here was no mystery about it and no fanfare. [illegible] so well. And being this kind of man who would [illegible] willing to stake everything on the [illegible] of caring enough just which [illegible] comfortable will, you saw it etched in that lofty face and unsparing [illegible]

Commitment had integrity because integrity meant commitment. [illegible] whole man: act and word were [illegible]

[illegible] commitments. "Fool!" they [illegible] traitor, [illegible] know which term was meant [illegible] did. But A.J. had his answers.

"WE THROUGH [illegible] be wisdom, for God's sake, let's be fools!"

And he lived his commitment [illegible] the faith was there and that's enough. Psychologists are invincible "yes" for what he did. Why, [illegible] was just [illegible]

A genetic accident? Maybe. A [illegible] willing to stake everything on the [illegible] of caring enough just which [illegible] comfortable will, you saw it etched in that lofty face and unsparing [illegible]

But there was more. Precisely, that in the radical justice he preached he had [illegible] the facade and struggles of mankind might and [illegible] man might and [illegible] A.J. simply knew that that was [illegible]

AND THEN, THERE was hope. [illegible] as an effort to rehabilitate him [illegible] was the last in issue [illegible] of some orthodoxy. But [illegible] orthodoxy [illegible] reality, upon the faith was not [illegible] in the universe was on the side [illegible] The ideal of a just and peace [illegible] the name for that music [illegible] place [illegible] God is the [illegible]

[illegible] ever the [illegible] ism made some sense, for that, [illegible] that the stars in their courses were [illegible] their exercise [illegible]

of the Bunyan about it. Bressbold and Gulliver of the [illegible] God might just have raised up [illegible]

AND WITH commitment, faith, and hope, a third word [illegible] communion [illegible] peace [illegible] on the way [illegible] life [illegible] Come nation. For in retrospect [illegible] was the dream of reconciliation [illegible] for this multigrated [illegible]

[illegible] gets might change from year to year or week to week. The grand [illegible] hold it all together, [illegible] reconciliation [illegible] life, wherever there was bro[illegible] And now, amen of reconciling [illegible] peace [illegible] heal[illegible] than burning.

AND NOW, wherever the [illegible] or better angles of the dream will [illegible] rights, for because A.J. has passed this way, and thrown [illegible] across [illegible] the grave subsume [illegible] of hope. Abraham [illegible] now [illegible] in peace.