Ecumenical Movement Needed

By DICK VIEBIG, Thresher Religion Editor

Throughout Christendom today there is increasing interest in the ecumenical movement. All types of Christians, from Pope John XXIII to the pastors of small congregations, seem to feel the need for a better understanding of the work of all the branches of the Christian Church. Many people are talking of the possibilities of reuniting the several denominations that have grown up within Christendom through the centuries.

Church of South India

Perhaps the most inspiring example of the ecumenical movement has been the success of the Church of South India. This Union unites “within one Church the English Congregationalists, Reformed Church of America, Scotch Presbyterians, Australian Presbyterians, American Congregationalists, the Methodists, and the Church of England (Anglican). It means full organic union between Congregationalists, Presbyterians and Episcopalians, based on the Historic Episcopate in a constitutional form, something which has never been achieved before,” says Van Dusen in World Christianity.

Rev. Harry Daniel

Many people at Rice had the opportunity of seeing an example of the living strength of this Church a few weeks ago when the Rev. Harry Daniel visited the campus. Mr. Daniel is a minister of the Church of South India and General Secretary of the Student Christian Movement in his country. In the hours that he spent talking with students and faculty and representatives of the religious organizations at Rice, it was obvious why he is a leader in his church and in the ecumenical movement of the Christian Church.

Reconciliation

Mr. Daniel fittingly spoke on the ministry of reconciliation at the chapel service on November 5, using as his text a verse from the Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, “All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.” Using the cross as a symbol, he spoke of three types of reconciliation.

The cross points upward, reminding us of the covenant relationship between God and man. In this relationship man cannot earn salvation for himself, but must realize that God has offered us a free gift in Jesus Christ that must be accepted if our lives are to be reconciled.

The cross points outward, demonstrating the need for us to reconcile our lives with the world in which we live. We must learn to live as Christians whether we be in the academic community or anywhere else in the world, thereby offering leadership in truth to the world.

The cross also points downward, where in our inward beings there must be reconciliation so that we can respond to the love given us by God. This response is realized through having the courage to be ourselves and in living the full and meaningful life that is possible through personal knowledge of God.