

# Post-Conciliar Movements: Ideas In The Making

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This is the epoch of phrase making. Hundreds and even thousands of eye catching phrases, symbolizing new ideas, are sprouting like mushrooms. This post-conciliar era seems to be a happy hunting ground for new labels. The Second Vatican Council confronted the modern world and passed judgment over many of its problems and palpitant issues with clarity and down to earth objectiveness as never before. Now the world is turning its face back to the Church and is attempting to size her up and judge her realities and possibilities in the light of the present-day theses and hypotheses. Since the world contains all kinds of human beings, just as the Ark of Noah was the refuge of all "species" of animals, the Church is confronted with all sorts of moot points, real and unreal, mundane and spatial, and is being placed under a microscopic scrutiny where her doctrines are re-examined, her functions critically reassessed, her organization and ministerial rites re-evaluated, in an attempt to have her component elements refurbished, streamlined, made easier, more glamorous, with greater popular appeal. The secular press voices these novelties, whether they be ideological or merely phra-seological, and some Catholic writers reverberate them or vice-versa.

Although St. Thomas conceives the Church as the mystical body and taken it in an almost biological sense as "a multiplicity organized into unity by the collaboration of different activities and functions".

## Some Novel Notions

Even among the People of God, some harbor bizarre notions about Church organization, that scandalize the timorous with their brazen innovations, e.g.:

1. Why shouldn't priests have some say, at times final, in the policies of the diocese and be able to share power with their bishop just as the bishops share collegial rule with the Pope? ("After all, the priests are closer to the needs of the parish and know its pulse better than the bishop in his ivory tower.")
2. Wherefrom the obligation of the priest or subject to obey his bishop or superior comes? Are not the prelates, servants of their flocks? Why shouldn't they obey rather than command? (A Dutch theologian makes the enlightening remark that obedience comes from the Latin "ob-audire"—to listen and draws the conclusion: *therefore* the superiors should listen to their inferiors; therefore obey also? not vice-versa?

Why not have the bishops be elected by the faithful as was done at times in primitive Christianity? ("The Church was conceived as a democratic assembly not as a monolithic monarchy.")

3. Why is the rule of celibacy for priests not modified or abolished in the Church? ("The obligation of clerical celibacy has been imposed upon him, not by the contemporary demands of the Gospel or Christian doctrine, but by an arbitrary and artificial fact of law," says the "suspended" priest of Los Angeles, Du-bay.)
4. Why shouldn't diocesan priests form unions like employees under episcopal management so that they demand better working conditions and treatment with the right to go into strike? Why can women be not ordained priests, make the Church recognize their equal status with men and help solve the problems of diminution of priestly vocations? (The Swedish Parliament has licensed the Lutheran Church to ordain women as ministers.)

5. Why not hark back to the pre-Constantinian customary rule and the Church, being a communal Church, use its wealth to build community centers or provide for the needs of the poor "rather than construct lavish tribal cathedrals?" ("Burn down the church," says one priest, "for a church is something *to be* rather than some place to go to."). The Church should return to the simplicity of the Gospel pruning it from the doctrinal and ritualistic accretions that are encumbering it now.

(Many of the advocates of the return to the primitive of early Christianity if they are clergymen they wear well-pressed, well-cut cassocks of the best material; if they are lay men their clothes are well-fitting, costly suits; if they are lay women they strive to look rejuvenated with made-up faces and minimal expensive dresses. Why don't they return to the simpleness, unpretentiousness or rusticity of their great-great grandfathers if not to the piety and mortified lives of the early Christians? Why don't they sell their cars, T.V. sets, golf clubs, mansions, perfumery and jewelry and help the naked, hungry, homeless people of the slums?)

These are some of the many novel ideas advanced in the canonical and structural field. In the realm of doctrine or dogma, they are no less newfangled, such as:

- a) The laity are endowed with a priestly character not very dissimilar from that of the ordained priest;
- b) The Mass is hardly anything but a eucharistic rite, merely an act of thanksgiving; and scarcely a sacrificial oblation.
- c) A famous theologian of St. Michel's College, Toronto argues that since the question of contraceptives is under study, it is a debatable issue and therefore doubtful. Now doubtful laws are not necessarily binding and parents may in good conscience make use of contraceptive means. How the good Father has commented the recent statements of Pope Paul VI, which are nothing but restatements of former declarations, I do know yet.

John Lee in his "News and Views" in the *Commonweal* (Apr. 15, 1966) transcribed a paragraph from the *Tablet* of

London in which Card. Dopfner of Munich was allegedly made to say that he approved contraceptive marital intercourse by responsible parents under conditions. Few days later I read in the Tablet a correction stating that the Cardinal had been misinterpreted. If the Commonweal has reproduced the retraction I have failed to see it. May be John Leo has not seen *that* Tablet issue. I have read so many of his views always in favor of his colleagues or against those of different tendencies (Cardinals, bishops, priests and faithful) that I am asking the Good Lord to forgive me if a temerarious judgment has crossed my mind. (Lately I have seen an issue where he is making an attempt to give both sides)

Dr. John T. Noonan, not *the* consultant, but one of the many periti to the commission appointed by Paul VI to study and advise on family problems and contraceptives, in his speech delivered at the 20th World Medical Congress held in Manila last month, was reported to have stated that "strong indications that the Catholic Church would soon lift the ban on artificial birth control" and that "the Vatican was considering changing the stand of the Church on the issue." Dr. Noonan is not a physician, as many thought, but a Catholic lawyer and director of the Institute of Natural Law of Notre Dame University.

The newspaper account adds that "although the Church had always been sternly against artificial birth control, Noonan said the Church had seen the need for changing its stand". (Daily Bulletin Nov. 11, 1966)

- d) There was never any Adam and Even in the natural state of grace. Regardless of whether "Adam" was in fact one or—"what is more scientifically correct—polygenic," he is nothing but a symbol that need not be an exact equivalent of the person symbolized, and "literal and mathematical minded modern westerners seek an exact equation—real man 'Adam' against the real Jesus Christ:" Paul's Adam is such a symbol and his "analogies are often forced: he does not scruple to accommodate texts wrenched from the original contexts and at times given mean-

ing clean contrary to what they had before." (J.L. Delapine in London's *Tablet*, Aug. 6, 1966). Adam's and Eve's primitive state of grace from which they fell, is not a thing of the past but of the future when, as a final stage of evolutionism, man will attain the summit of perfection, the Omega point, the real glorification of the new Adam and Eve. The present misery of mankind resulting from the all accumulated past failings of man is the only original sin that has ever been committed. ("This interpretation of original sin appears in certain expositions of the thought of Teilhard de Chardin and has provoked many serious objections." Maurice Flick, S.J. in *The Tablet* of London, Sept. 10, 1966).

Pope Paul VI's interpretation seems to be at variance with this novel doctrine. "The explanations of the original sin given by some modern authors will seem to you irreconcilable with the Catholic doctrine.... Starting from the undermonstrated premise of polygenism, they deny, more or less clearly, that sin was first of all the disobedience of Adam, first man..... Consequently, these explanations do not agree with the teaching of Scripture, of sacred tradition and the Church's magisterium...."

"Even the theory of 'evolutionism' favored today by many scientists and not a few theologians owing to its probability will not seem acceptable to you where it is not decidedly in accord with the immediate creation of each and very human soul by God and where the disobedience of Adam, universal proto-parent did not make him lose the holiness and justice in which he was constituted." (Allocution to the theologians who took part in a symposium on the Original sin, July 15, 1966).

These and other not less novel audacious blue-prints for church reform are exhibited in some Catholic and clamorously commented by the secular press.

### **New Labels**

If we pass from the level of new ideas to the plane of new labels - which are generally meant to convey new doctrines - we find that many of them may be only half truths and even one third truths. They may be

orthodox if correctly interpreted but they also may be easily misunderstood. Take the following slogans as samples:

*\*The laity is the church.* ("The laity is not an appendage of the church: it is the Church," Hans Kung, *Structures of the Church*, p. X.)

The phrase wrenched from its context sound as illiberal as the other fragmentary half-truth, "The Church is the hierarchy and clergy." King uses two lines before a more correct expression than laity, 'congregation fidelium.' Neither the laity nor the clergy are mere appendages. The surprising thing is that on page 86 of the same book King transcribes a passage of an address of Pius XII in 1946 wherein in crystal clear words the Pope speaks of the elements that compose the Church:

The faithful — more precisely, the laity — stand in the front line in the life of the Church; through them the Church proves herself to be the life-principle of human society. Hence it is they especially who must arrive at an ever-clearer awareness: we not only belong to the Church: but *we are* the Church, the community of the faithful on earth under the common supreme head, the pope and the bishops united with him. *They are the Church.* (l. c. p. 86).

*\*Marxism and Christianity are not necessarily incompatible.* According to Marcel Reding, professor of Catholic theology at the Berlin University, "the law of history itself, the core of Marxism, its essence, is not atheistic, "although" in regard to its practical attitude toward religion, we have enough information to say that it would be an illusion to entertain any doubt about it." By a curious contrast, Roger Garaudy, Director of Marxist Studies in Paris, confronted his opponent Reding in the *Paulusgesellschaft* convention at Salzburg with the surprising rejoinder: "atheism is one of the essential implications of dialectical materialism," although "the Marxist alternative to religion is not a materialistic atheism but a humanism involving man's total existence." (Ingo Hermann in *Concilium*, Vol. 16, May 1966, pp. 160-161). Do these statements mean that, according to a Catholic scholar, atheism and Christianity are of their nature reconcilable and, in the opinion of a Marxist savant, religion necessarily excludes materialistic disbelief? This sounds as paradoxical as the discussion by theologians about God's death or of

so-called Christian philosophers who do not believe in Christianity or those who profess that the Gospel should be disassociated from religion.

A prolific theologian and liturgist, Father George Tavard makes the astounding statement that we must "rid our mind of the fear of communism and admit the right of the people to choose a Communist from of social order if they wish so" (*The Sign*, Aug. 1966); therefore also atheism which is considered by Marxists themselves an integral part of "their social order"?: therefore we have no right to fear and reject evil? You are so *ergotist!*, the progressives may argue. A theologian who does not believe in God's existence would be as incongruous as an astronaut who is trying to get to the moon convinced that there is no moon at all or a "stupendous stupidity" cracking a Chestertonian witticism.

*\*Evolutionism is the religion of atheism.* This phrase has been coined in the campus of evolution. The prophet of this new religion is Julian Huxley who calls it also *evolutionary humanism*. (Cfr. R.J. Nogar, O.P., in *Concilium*, May, 1966). Evolution must not stop at the biological anthropological sciences; it has attacked the roots of religion by dealing a death blow to the dualism of matter and spirit, the natural and supernatural. All matter is spirit and all spirit is matter, just as the natural and the supernatural coalesce in evolutionary humanism. Huxley and some of his *coreligionists* have extolled the cultural and humanistic evolutionism of Teilhard de Chardin as if he (the controverted Jesuit) had been their forerunner. Some of his critics may disagree with him on a number of questions and may consider a lot of his points as visionary or objectionable or even unorthodox; but his life and motivations reveal him as a deeply believing pious soul.

*\*Dogma does not violate the conscience.* Hans Kung reasons out this apothegm with a strange kind of syllogism. "A Catholic is convinced that there is no real conflict between the Church's dogma and his own conscience. But it is also true that dogma does violate the conscience, it respects the conscience. This means that a Christian must never accept a dogma of the Church if it is against his conscience". (*The Church and Freedom*, p. 131).

We declare that we are unable to solve this riddle: How is it that there cannot be a real conflict between dogma and conscience and at the same time a Christian may refuse to accept a dogma if it is against his conscience? How can the general term Christian in the conclusion, be derived from a more particular term Catholic in the major premise? Maybe only a dialectic old fashioned scholastic may detect an illogical illation or Aristotle may have become obsolete and discarded. Kung is, of course, aware of the truth of the two propositions:

- a. A Catholic who admits the infallibility of the Church cannot in good conscience reject a dogma defined by her and remain a Catholic.
- b. A non-Catholic cannot "be forced against his will into acceptance of the Catholic faith," for he himself quotes this Canon 1351. If the ears of English purists would not be scandalized, a better expression would have been: "A Catholic conscience cannot be violated by dogma," for the moment he denies a dogma he ceases to be a Catholic. It is just inadvertence or itching for cliches,

After his citation of the Canon, he adds: "In the few countries such as Spain, etc., where there is still not full freedom of conscience, religion and worship. . . ." In about one half of the 25 European countries and a little over one dozen of the other almost one hundred member nations of the U.N., there is much less freedom of conscience, etc., than in Spain. Of course, Spain is the classical model or scapegoat when certain writers give us a sample of religious intolerance or is there fuller freedom of religion etc., in Poland, Hungary, Yugoslavia, the Arab, African, or Middle and East States?

*\*The Church is a mystery. The Church is the People of God. The Church is a Sacrament.* These are but random samplings of the many new mottos. They are officially accepted and embodied by Vatican II in her terminology, (Constitution on the Church), and explained in what sense and to what extent they may be given an authentic interpre-

rations. (However, the phrase, The Church is a sacrament, is qualified by a modifier: "The Church is, in Christ, like a sacrament. . . . .")

The Council has planted these and other seed-ideas in the expectation that they would grow and mature into a fuller Christian life and action. But their growth must follow a homogenous development, not an explosion of confusion as a result of sudden break from most traditional beliefs and practices and their substitution by novel interpretation of teachings, not intended by the Council.

If emphasis on the first two elements of the Church, i.e. as a Mystery and the People of God, described by the Constitution *De Ecclesia* is done with a purpose: to de-emphasized the juridical character of the Church under the allegation that up to now the laity was considered only an "appendage" and that the hierarchical structure had been over-emphasized, the stress may be well placed; but if it is toned down under the pretext that our conciliar times demand that a liberal Christianity should replace the brick-and-mortar ecclesiasticism and that the juridical element has become a secondary, non-essential component part of the Church, then the phases may become one third truths. As a reaction against some ecclesiologists who placed on undue stress on the hierarchical aspect as though the Church were constituted merely by the clergy (the laity, some are supposed to have said, are merely to obey, to pray, and to pay) or as though every papal utterance were stamped with the seal of infallibility, the new theologians who are trying to present Catholic doctrine in a silver plate to Protestants or make it more palatable to all dissenters assert that, as a post-tridentine reversion against the Reformation, the Papacy was ascribed too much juridical power, that it assumed too great an importance and exerted a domineering influence. (As if in centuries before Luther Popes Gregory VII, Innocent III, Boniface VIII and other medieval Pontiffs had not dominated the ecclesiastical as well as the secular spheres)

"*Authority in the Church means service and love, not power to command.* This cliché will help, according to some, to solve the "crisis of authority," that has become too authoritarian. Others see in it a "crisis of obedience" that is being challenged or denied by clergy and religious.

The last attitude is exemplified in an increasing number of cases, (There is no doubt that priests and religious have abused their freedom just as some prelates may not have acted very judiciously.)

New directives by Vatican II are cited to show that there must be a new approach to authority. (*"Ecclesiastical office is not dominion over the Church but service to the Church as the community of the faithful. Bishops, as members of the episcopal college in union with the Pope, have a duty and function of service in the guidance of the universal Church. The Petrine Office means not absolute power over the Church but, in union with the college of bishops, selfless and loving service,"* Hass Kung, *Structures in the Church*, p. X. Italics by the author). "The base of authority in the New Testament is love, not the power to command or the power to coerce." John L. McKensie, S.J.).

The Constitution "De Ecclesia" devotes the whole Chapter III to enumerate, describe, and emphasize the Pastoral Office as a ministry of service, love, duties, "truth and holiness," but it also mentions that it does have the power and the right to govern. ("In virtue of this power, bishops have the sacred right and duty before the Lord to make laws for their subjects, and to pass judgment on them, and to moderate everything pertaining to the ordering of worship and the apostolate.").

Authority and obedience are undergoing a crisis. They are being given a new meaning and different implementation from that of former times—the age of blind obedience. Bishops and major superiors used to announce new assignments or destination of their subjects, priests or religious like an order of the day of a military officer without hardly any previous consultation with the person affected. Now they have to proceed with greater cautiousness and take into account the wishes if not the whims of their subjects by following the new claims to "dialogued obedience." Even in the field of education, this range of authority of prelates 'over the appointment, or reassignment of priests and religious of both sexes on the teaching faculties of Catholic schools or colleges has been challenged.' A typical case is that of a priest-professor who was given a teaching position in another town by his superior who assigned another no less competent to take his place. The lay head of the department remonstrated that he and his colleagues should not in principle accept the change. (Cf. *America*, Oct. 1, 1966, p. 365).

*\*The Old Christian God is out of date.* "Modern world's discovery . . . contradicts the notions of a Supreme Being who governs man's affairs. Christians, it seems, have no choice but to abandon their household God or dam a future that will be forged without them."

We assume that *Newsweek* (Nov. 7, 1966) has faithfully interpreted this "dilemma described by Catholic philosopher Leslie Dewart in his brilliant new book, *The Future of Belief*, just published by Herder." Against the old "classical God" which he calls "absolute theism" he advocates a "conditional theism" wherein the "truth of Christianity is contingest factual temporal" because "contingency, factuality, and temporality are God's historical presence and self-revelation to man." One of the conclusions of Dewart's "conditional theism" is astounding for a Catholic philosopher. "It gently relegates such traditional Christian dogmas as the Trinity to the ash heap of history."

Herder and Herder, the publisher, announces and commends Dewart's work as "the first fully articulated attempt by a Roman Catholic religious philosopher completely to recast traditional Christian doctrine . . . a brilliantly original vision—the kind of theology Teilhard de Chardin would have applauded. . . 'Dewart is in many ways more radical than the death of God theologians'—Harvel Cox".

*\*Explosions of Confusion.* Some four hundred and fifty years ago, a challenger coined new phrases of slogans and hailed them on the door of a church in Wittemburg in the form of theses which he claimed he was ready to defend against all comers. "Justification by faith alone," "Popes are usurpers of all power" "Rome is Babylon" and "if the Pope is wealthier than Crassus why does he not himself build St. Peter's?", and ninety one other propositions were posted by Luther in his initial break from Rome. Today, not a few among the sophisticated experts in ecclesiological matters come perilously close to resuscitating the first Protestant "confessions" contained in those locutions. They show a marked tendency to stress the side of Christ's Church as an invisible communion of the faithful in order to reassert the salvific against the juridical element and the action of the Spirit in the communal life of the Christians which is as it should be as long as the invisible Head is visibly represented. In

the same breath other tenacious traditionalists are inclined to disregard liberty and kerigma for the sake of authority or to dichotomize kerematic and legal elements as if dogma and love and service and power were incompatible.

In this battle for positions, exaggerations may be committed by either side. The only way to turn a hyperbolic statement, like any error, into something fully acceptable and believable is to winnow the equivocal chaff from the sound and unquestionable ingredients. Laymen and even clerics who have as a rule felt so secured and stable in their teachings and piety, are now caught in the explosion of confusing, conflicting and even contradictory interpretations. This bewilderment is compounded because it is not a matter of choosing between two opposite camps; each side is getting lost in a labyrinthian maze of innovations. Catholics are disturbed because priests and religious are trying to create new bases for relationship with their Bishops and superiors to justify defying attitudes or their far out opinions while they are being cheered by "scholars" of all shades of a faith or of no faith. (As a reaction, they are occasionally and summarily being restricted by their prelates who in turn are impugned by partizan critics; for example: Fathers DuBay, De Paw, the Berrigans, Berryman, Oraison, etc.)

### Triple Testimony

It is an open secret that there prevails in several quarters of the Church an amount of nervousness and preoccupation about certain dangers to sound doctrine and about the orthodoxy of some faithful and scholars.

Cases are cited; diagnoses are pronounced; prognoses are announced. Let us cite three testimonies coming from the hierarchy that call attention to and try to allay this disquietude about some dangers in Church matters in this modern changing world.

French Catholics, a large number of whom have grouped themselves into two bickering factions on the verge of initiating a schism in their attitude toward the post-consiliar directives, have been sternly warned by their Episcopate against exaggerated and divisive postures and have been called to promote, in brotherly dialogue and with filial docility, the rene-

wal desired by the Council. The bishops affirm that a minority, backed up by an appeal to tradition, has the audacity of contesting the decisions on renewal agreed upon "with remarkable unanimity" by the Council Fathers. "Using as a pretext exaggerations or erroneous affirmations which the bishops are the first to deplore, these Christians generalize incorrectly from limited cases, launch an unfounded case against the episcopate, the priests and even the Holy Father himself, affirm that the authority of each bishop is minimized by the collective episcopate, the primacy of the Pope compromised by collegiality, the social doctrine of the Church falsified by 'progression' and the splicing of the liturgical constitution disputed, etc."

Dutch Catholic scholars have been conscious in public print for their advanced new theories and the Church of the Netherlands has been considered as being in an alarming state of perilous innovations by some commentators or a leader and model on how the Church should adopt itself to the modern world by others.

The Dutch hierarchy, after their meeting last August, issued a letter praising the fervid activity of theologians on the one hand and warning against certain practices and teachings too novel or radical. Among these strange points of doctrine they enumerate: 1) "the divinity of Christ as the only Son of God, but in a sense not "different from the way men are called 'children of God'"; 2) "the Holy Spirit had something to do with the birth of Christ—not necessarily excluding a human father"; 3) "Christ is somehow present in the Eucharist—the exact way does not make much difference"; 4) "the unity of man and woman is in itself a sign of holiness—hence there is no place for the Church to lay down rules for the sacrament of marriage". (These quotations are taken from a report by the Dutch Jesuit E. Schoenmaeckers in *America*, Oct. 8, 1966).

These and other stronger ideas have been advanced and defended the bishops attest; but the author of the report adds the saving assertion: "Actually, only very few priests or lay people hold these strange opinions; yet these few have managed to get control of most of the communication media. As a result, however, those who disagreed were (in Fr. Shillebeeckx' words) "slaughtered like vermin". (id, ib.).

Pope Paul VI, the Holy Father in his allocution (Oct. 1) to the closing session of the International Congress on the Theology of the Vatican II Council speaks to the theologians "of the tendency growing in some quarters to deny or at least to weaken the rapport of theology with respect to the magisterium of the Church". The Holy Father defines the role that theology is to play in the Church. "Theology maintains a two fold rapport with the Church's magisterium and with the entire Christian community. It is, to a certain extent, a mediator between the faith of the Church and its magisterium. . . . . theology must assess this faith as it is lived and its tendencies. . . . . in order to harmonize them with the word of God and tradition faithfully handed down by the Church" . . . . . On the other hand, "without theology the magisterium would lack the instruments for bringing about harmony of action and thinking which must rule the entire community so that it may think and live according to the teaching and precepts of Jesus Christ".

From this two fold principle the Pope elicits two reflections: The first concerns the spirit of service to truth; "Indeed, when they are officially entrusted with some teaching function in the Church they are, in a way, teachers of truth. Therefore, their supreme care will be that of being faithful to the truth of the faith and to the doctrine of the Church. Accordingly, they will avoid giving in to desire for easy acceptance and popularity at the expense of the sureness of the doctrine taught by the magisterium, which in the Church represents the person of Jesus Christ, the Teacher. . . . .

"The second reflection concerns the spirit of communion: communion with the entire Christian people, with the sacred hierarchy, brotherly communion among ourselves also. . . . If in your search of truth you wander away from this magisterium there will be danger that you will be teachers without disciples, separated from all, or that you will waste your labor without producing fruits. . . . It might even expose you to the danger of deviating from the right path choosing your own judgment, not the thinking of the Church ('sensus ecclesiae') as the criterion of truth. This would be an arbitrary choice—'airesis', the road to heresy".

Cannot we truly affirm that this is really plain talking? This admonition shows that the Pope feels uneasy about certain trends in some theological fields that may not fit in or equate satisfactorily with the Church's magisterium nor faithfully interpret its teachings to the Christian community.

Some Catholic writers are following the example of Episcopalian bishop Pike and other Protestant divines who begin by erasing the word "omni" (all) in the words omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent as applied to God and regard Adam as a symbol not a real person, the Trinity, as a "Committee God", The Virgin Birth of Christ as a pious legend, the Resurrection as a myth. . . . These and other ancient beliefs, product of ages gone by have to be demythologized and updated according to modern progressive ideas. They are aiming at setting a "sloganeering, Bathmannerly, instant-theology" that may be subscribed by men of all faiths. The net result—no faith at all.