

3) Puppets of Doom?

by James F. Colaianni

AT THE END OF SESSION TWO the usual evaluation of the performance of the American bishops at the Council went something like this: Few had understood, even remotely, the meaning of Pope John's call to inner renewal and reform. Few saw any necessity for a personal response. Few saw any reason to prepare themselves intellectually. Most proceeded to the eternal city under a vague impression that they had been called together for a special rendition of the usual blind obeisance to the Pope and the Roman Curia. Some seemed genuinely excited over the prospect of an historic rubber-stamping of whatever might be put before them for ratification.

The general attitude was summed up by Bishop James McNulty who, in an interview before his departure for the first session, told the faithful of his Paterson (N.J.) diocese that for him the most significant thing about the Council was the "opportunity to participate in authority."

In his book *The Open Church* (Macmillan) Michael Novak reported from Rome, after the second session, that "many of the American bishops in truth didn't know what was going on and, even when they began to suspect it, wanted no part of it. They seem to share the idea of many Americans that politics is 'dirty' . . . they still manage to retain in their thinking a theory of Christianity which separates what can be criticized and talked about from what can't . . . One archbishop admitted that it is a struggle for him to be honestly critical of the Church and especially of the Pope, even when he knows he should be critical . . . (they) seem extraordinarily given to trying to put a good face on things . . . extremely afraid of 'giving

scandal' . . . they seem in general to have been sheltered for many years from criticism 'from below' and from disturbing views."

At the end of session three it was obvious that, with a handful of exceptions, nothing much had changed. Perhaps if Pope John had lived, the spirit of his open mind and heart would have had a profound, enriching effect on the American episcopacy. But this was not to be. The present mood of the American bishops is to be done with it and get back to the business of "running the diocese."

If one were to be brave enough to try to select a "typical American bishop," the choice might well be Archbishop Joseph T. McGucken of San Francisco. He enjoys his self-determined role of "corporation executive." (According to his secretary, "this is what he and most of the other bishops love to do best.") He is never critical of authority above and he resists criticism from below. He runs a tight ship, surrounded by "safe" people who constitute the break in communications between pastor and flock. He has remained remote from all theological controversy, except birth control ("the Church will never change her teaching").

His major preoccupation has been fund-raising and school-church building programs. His most common method of communicating with Catholics in his diocese is the frequent pastoral letter which almost always is an appeal for funds. He sees no anomaly between a pastoral letter calling attention to the plight of millions of poor and needy all over the world and his arbitrary assessment of some \$9 million to build a pretentious cathedral. His early enthusiasm for the Council has deteriorated into a

marked cynicism which he has been unable to conceal.

Between sessions he was an honored guest at an Episcopalian anniversary celebration. The Protestant brethren learned first hand that night that the Catholic archbishop was all for ecumenism, Christian unity, and all that. Privately, however, he revealed his honest face. "When I looked out at all those Protestant ministers and thought of the prospect of trying to get them all to act like priests, my ecumenical spirit went way down." The two monsignors present laughed with conviction.

He counsels his seminarians against reading "dangerous" books by Gregory Baum and Hans Kung; he counsels his priests against the dangers of "existentialism" as typified by RAMPARTS' Senior Editor John Howard Griffin (who has given his life over to the causes of racial justice in the United States and world peace). He angrily condemned an article by Catholic author Daniel Callahan suggesting certain changes in seminary curriculum and discipline: "What does a layman know about running a seminary," he told a large audience of priests. "We've been running seminaries for all these years. How can he claim to know more about it than we do?"

The mood of the San Francisco archbishop is mirrored in the between-sessions public utterances and overt acts of many of his colleagues:

JAMES E. KEARNEY, Bishop of Rochester:

"We know only too well that the 'opening of the windows,' as Pope John expressed it, has had some weird results. What concerns us especially is the danger of injuring the traditional sturdy confidence of our people in their faith. Extreme ecumenical writers ask us to soften the concept of heresy. Extreme modern theologians ask us to soften the concept of sin. Extreme liturgists ask us to minimize devotion to Mary and the saints.

"What aggravates the situation is that the extremist always has a good press coverage. Unfortunately, too, some of the articles appearing in so many magazines, supposedly Catholic, remind us of the words of 'Hamlet':

*"The time is out of joint, O cursed spite
That ever I was born to set it right."*

JOSEPH M. MUELLER, Bishop of Sioux City:

"Bishop Joseph M. Mueller of Sioux City has protested teachings on theological and moral matters of self-appointed experts who, he said, have created 'a general state of confusion' in the minds of many Catholics.

"Bishop Mueller said in a Lenten pastoral letter that 'the publishers, clerical and lay, who spread these pernicious theories and opinions, and in doing so pride themselves as being champions of the freedom of the press, are totally blind to their greater obligation not to scandalize God's children.'

"In spelling out the teachings to which he objected, the bishop referred to 'the many things that are being said and written about man's personality development, the understanding of his psychological process, about sexual behaviour in and out of marriage, the emphasis upon community

and the de-emphasis of individual responsibility, the minimizing of sin, the stressing of God's mercy to the point of rejecting His justice and the existence of hell.

"These things, he said, 'are more than disturbing; they are frightening. How many souls have suffered major spiritual damage, formed an erroneous conscience and left the path of virtue because of such opinions, no one knows.'" (National Catholic Reporter, July 10, 1965.)

JOSEPH P. HURLEY, Archbishop of St. Augustine:

"The Church of God has passed through severe and agonizing trials during these past few years.

"The continuing persecution behind the Iron Curtain was a tragedy in itself. This tragedy is now compounded by the storm of contention and wrangling which has broken out inside the Church.

"There has been a time of cross-purposes, of shrill controversy, of charge and countercharge. Our priests and our people were at times confused by the din of strife. Moderate voices could not be heard above the shrieking of the winds.

"Thank God the calm and reassuring voice of the Pope has now been heard. He has calmed the storm and the troubled seas are dying down.

"I, for one, express the devout hope that there may now be a moratorium, not of course of discussion, but at least on public doctrinal controversy by highly-placed persons in the Church.

"There can be no question about the seat of authority in the Catholic Church. It is the Pope, the vicar of Christ, the successor of St. Peter. The Pope, like Peter, is the rock of truth. The bishops succeed the Apostles and have their own divinely established position, as laid down in the Constitution on the Church. But the final authority in the Church is the Pope.

"To think with the Church means, in the last analysis, to think with the Pope. Where Peter is, there is the Church. Hear ye him."

ALBERT R. ZUROWESTE, Bishop of Belleville (Ill.):

"Let me assure you, these liberal thinkers and new age theologians, these liberal writers and so-called experts, who have confused you, are not the official voice of the Church. They do not comprise the teaching body of the Church and may be questioned by any member of the Church. The writer or speaker who does not express an extreme opinion gets no press coverage. Some editors are interested only in the sensational and do not publish sane and serious interpretations of the council's work.

"On the other hand, the writing and opinions of those who are considered the liberal thinkers, the new age theologians, comprise the editor's dish, and he will dish it out in bold and even exotic headlines and paragraphs. The result is doubt and confusion for the sincere Catholic.

"The source of current criticism of the Church is pride, a pride born of a desire and hope that the Church will change its divine doctrine. But sin will always be sin and virtue will always remain virtue.

"There is no need for alarm although the present moment

may be one of confusion. It is confusion resulting from those who are attempting to usurp the teaching authority of the Church.

"When all the decrees of the council are promulgated and the post-conciliar explanations and statements issued, then we will be in a position to judge in proper focus Vatican Council II."

PATRICK O'BOYLE, Archbishop of Washington, D.C.:

"Shortly after my return from Rome, I was surprised and disappointed to read certain statements reflecting on the authority of the Holy Father which, in my estimation, were not only disparaging but untrue."

"In my opinion, those who hold such views do not understand the doctrine of collegiality as approved by the council. The Constitution on the Church in no place states that the Pope in any manner or respect is subordinate to the bishops, not even during the council. From the days of Peter to Paul VI the Primacy of the Roman Pontiff has been the bulwark of the stability and strength of the Catholic Church. Let us always remember that it was Peter whom Christ made the head of the Church and the faithful Catholic sees Peter in Paul."

"Some believe that the Church is prepared to reject some of the teachings of the past and substitute modern articles of faith adapted to present-day thinking of the secular world. For example, these persons believe that the Church may discard the doctrine of the Pope's supremacy and infallibility in matters of faith and morals, that she may downgrade the place of the Blessed Virgin Mary to the status of an ordinary good woman, and that she will stop saying that Catholicism is the one true religion."

"It is unfortunate some Catholics have fostered such ideas. Still more unfortunate is it that those who imply that the Church may change her doctrines in the future are regarded as great scholars and profound intellectuals from the very fact that they have something new and novel to offer."

Archbishop Krol of Philadelphia ordered the removal of Father Clement Burns from the faculty of La Salle College and from the archdiocese for taking part in civil rights demonstrations. The priest's contract with the college was simply ignored.

Archbishop Thomas J. Toolan of the Mobile-Birmingham diocese sent wires to several orders of nuns to advise that they were not welcome in his diocese — following the appearance of a few nuns in the Selma demonstrations for Negro equal voting rights. He said that the place for priests and sisters "is at home doing God's work." He castigated Dr. Martin Luther King for "hurting the cause of the Negro," and deplored "the injustice being done to the State of Alabama." He removed Father Maurice Ouellet from a mission parish which played a prominent role in the Negro registration drive.

James A. McNulty, Bishop of Buffalo, took clergy and laity alike by surprise in announcing that the diocese was in debt to the extent of \$30 million and stirred up deep resentment by announcing a \$30 million fund-raising

campaign aimed at assessing each parish for a fair share — without prior consultation. The faithful learned that Bishop McNulty's predecessor (now bishop of Paterson) had deceived them as to the financial condition of the diocese. Neither diocesan priests nor laity had ever seen a financial report.

Cardinal McIntyre of Los Angeles learned that Father John V. Coffield, a 50-year-old pastor, had joined other priests in protesting the Cardinal's racial policies. Father Coffield packed his bags and went to Chicago.

Cardinal Spellman of New York made a shambles of a nice try by Pope Paul to give his ornate tiara to the poor. Spellman smuggled it into the United States and dramatically exposed it for "veneration" at the Commodore Hotel. In one fell swoop he retrieved the gift back from the poor by identifying it as a gift to the American Church. The ugly, beehive-like headpiece is now on exhibition, giving all Americans the privilege of venerating a hat. So goes the Church's war on poverty.

It is probably true to say that the American hierarchy is a fair microcosm of American Catholicism. If the majority of laymen simply don't care or lack sufficient courage to insist on true reform, a minority exists who do care and are not afraid to speak out. And if a majority of the clergy and hierarchy don't care or are afraid, there is a minority to keep hope alive.

At the top of the list of bishops who act like they do care is Cardinal Ritter of St. Louis. He has been an energetic and enthusiastic spokesman for the forces of *aggiornamento* throughout the first three Council sessions. He has respected the people of his diocese by faithfully reporting the events of the Council without undue regard for the usual face-saving platitudes. For example, he was not afraid to confirm for his people the fact that the vote on religious liberty was "stalled by the delaying tactics of a very small minority." He is participating in a plan for "diocesan renewal" submitted by a committee of priests, nuns, and laity, which calls for a renewal of "Christian life coming from the free and open expression of public opinion reaching all levels of the archdiocese," the building of "a climate that will reassure all its people of a spirit of openness and concern," and "personal involvement in which each member of this archdiocese can feel that he is taking part." The plan includes a reevaluation of "every existing group and office in the archdiocese," as part of a "Dialogue Conference" between bishop, priests, nuns and laity.

The St. Louis archdiocese has put all of its annual purchasing power (over \$100 million) behind a campaign to insure the hiring of Negroes by all businesses contracting with the Church.

There are a handful of Cardinal Ritters in the United States — but only a handful out of 269. Hardly a working number capable of instilling optimism in the hearts of those who shared Pope John's vision of an updated Church, truly open to the challenge of Christian love.

4) 3 Views

One: A Jew's Lament

THERE ARE RUMOURS, sufficiently abundant and various in origin as to be given heed, that at the fourth session of the Vatican Council to open this fall, the famous Declaration on the Jews, provisionally approved on November 20, 1964, will be funnelled through a new debate, softened by pressure and minority opposition, perhaps even denatured or put aside. These are rumours. Obviously they are unconfirmed nor is it important for purposes of these remarks that they be confirmed. They are an occasion for reflection on old questions.

A number of years ago an editor of the Jesuit weekly, *America*, wrote an editorial essay which he called "Spiritual Semites" (August 3, 1957). I read that essay, confessedly, in rage. It was rage, neither anger nor indignation. Anger explodes and the object of anger is normally well-advised to seek cover, flee or be prepared to fight. Indignation is delivered with the imperium of power, from rostrum or pulpit; it is moral more usually than physical. But rage is helpless, impotent, perhaps even a little infantile. It is sometimes, as it was in my case, an unavailing display of truth, truth in the style of the maddened Don, breaking his lance on the indomitable, stone-faced windmill. I wrote out my rage, reasoned it to the end in a responsum "Semites According to the Flesh" (*The Christian Century*, September 18, 1957).

I said then, I would say now, and I would urge the Fathers of the Church to acknowledge, that the bone of God — the brittle hardness of his grace — catches in the throat of living men and betimes they die because of and for that grace. So it has been with the people Israel, a community like no other in that its natural existence amid history and the nations was conjoined by God with its supernatural covenant with him. This condition has made for uncomfortable theology. But more than the discomforts of theology, it has made for a miserable history. It is intolerable to the nations of the world that they should be obliged to deal with another nation — visibly like themselves, good and bad, gentle and rapacious, charitable and unjust, while at the same time having to acknowledge that this same nation is the uniquely bonded servant of He Who Spoke and Created the World (as the Hebrew Locution has it). And how much more so when this same nation, in its own ambiguous integration of its

natural life and its supernatural destiny (ordinary and extraordinary as these are) should have once, by the decision of a small minority of its community and by the instrumentality of its own oppressor, delivered to death one who believed himself to be the ransom of *their* captivity and, in later readings of his mission, the saviour of all history. How complex. How tragic.

Not so complex and tragic if God were a simpleton, for then either Israel would have succeeded in snuffing out the early Petrine Church, reabsorbed the Nazarenes and Ebionites, and thwarted Paul in the Diaspora or else the Church of Jesus Christ would have converted all Israel and the lambs would have gone off united to persuade the wolves who survive to this day. But God, however his silences and abscondite shyness, is no simpleton. He left the Church a panoply of power (and she who despised power once now rules with vast power) and Israel a dogged tenacity which has to this day, with cunning spirit and no power, endured — *endured, endured*. It should be recalled that God is more mysterious than either Church or Israel.

And so in this special time, the Church is asking itself *what* question? Alas, not the question it has asked. It is not asked by my Jewish self that the Church exonerate me and my brothers of deicide. This is a nonsense question. Who kills a God, *the* God, unless he be some minor Osiris we want annually shuttled betwixt quick and dead to aid crops or productivity. No. No. Let that God be God, Son of God, whatever, however. If Israel has slain a God, it has slain a fiction and history reads fiction by fashion. But if he was God and the Church wishes Israel to bear witness to God for its crime, for the sake of heaven stop killing our flesh and address our spirit. But all decretals, announcements, declarations on *my* ancestors' murder of *your* God won't do. Must I not laugh at such declarations and more, must I not laugh six million times, or even twice or three times six million for my new-found innocence.

It is Jewish tradition that at midnight each Jew should rise from his bed in the seasons of mourning and at the New Moon and, putting on sackcloth on his body and ashes on his forehead, should sing dirges of lament and sorrow that the Temple is no more and that the Divine Presence, alone as he is himself, should be a wanderer in the world. Bishops: Jews say this at midnight, alone and unobserved by press and the machinery of power. Our guilt and sadness is ours. But yours is yours and it is a guilt and sorrow of your visible power. I have no opinion of that guilt or of the extent of that sorrow, other than compassion or, perhaps, in the infinity of ironies, a laughter that you must one day hear.

Throughout the liturgy of the Day of Atonement the prayer "Our Father, Our King" is repeated. Near its close the extraordinary phrase appears: "Accept our prayer for your own sake, if not for ours." Fathers: for your own sake, if not for ours.

—Arthur A. Cohen