

Ongoing Reform of the Church C 73 1972

Thomas O'Dea, "Church Reform and Society in Evolutionary Perspective"

p 13 'The sociologist may distinguish here four foci of response around which crystallize orientations and institutions.'

(interpersonal, environmental (economic technocratic), community-power-authority, transcendent)

p 15 'All institutions are ~~x~~ subject to the dilemma of mixed motivation. An institution provides a stable context for life because it can elicit behind its aims and practices not only idealistic but material and self-interested motivation.'

p 17 'Reform of the ~~EMNK~~ Church is not to be confused with superficial accomodation to the "secular city." Indeed, withdrawal proved to be the successful form of response for the early Church.'

'Vatican II made it abundantly ~~xxxxxxx~~ clear that the Church must abandon its counter positions and join in the quest of modern man for human brotherhood upon a livable earth.'

p 18 'Here the lines drawn by Augustine represent the perennial Catholic position. /19/ The vocation of the city of man is seen in terms of the second and third foci we have delineated above; that of the Church with the fourth. The city of man so conceived is not simply the "earthly" city, nor is the Church simply the City of God. And the love of self infects both.'

p 19 'They are both communities of vocation that call to men in depth. When either of them is pursued professionally, mixed motivation enters in. As a consequence the two cities are commingled here below.'

p 22 'Catholics too long refused to face the implications of moulting. They refused to face the meaning of what Tillich called the "Protestant principle." No human institution can successfully wholly embody the relation to ultimacy. ~~x~~ Social forms come into existence, change, and pass out of existence. Now they have recognized these things. Yet now they face the danger of substituting for their former over-absolutization of historically specific forms an equally spurious over-relativization that loses its grip on timeless essentials.'

p 23 'The veritical dimension is a relation to Transcendence, but its institutional embodiment remains ever relative.'

p 23 'Emerging out of a situation of fixity of forms and of constraint, Catholics are now subject to the kind of swing from one

extreme to another so characteristic of human affairs, and are in serious need to guard against it. The cross is still the symbol of Christianity; the pendulum cannot be substituted for it.'

Stephan Pfürtner, "Pathology of the Catholic Church"

p 25

'Christ summons the Church, as she goes her pilgrim way, to that continual reformation of which she always has need, in so far as she is an institution of men here on earth" (Vatican II: Ecumenism, 6).... In the present context it means that no existing Church structure is withdrawn from reform in the light of the experientially believed Gospel, and may be presented as enjoying divine sanction pure and simple.'

Ecumenismo 6: 'Ecclesia in via peregrinans/a Christo ad hanc perennem reformationem qua ipsa, qua humanum terrenumque institutum perpetuo indiget; ita ut si quae pro rerum temporumque adiunctis sive in moribus sive in ecclesiastica disciplina sive etiam in doctrinae enuntiandae modo -- quae ab ipso deposito fidei sedulo distingui debet -- ...' vocatur

p 25 'Of course, attacks on social structures in the Church are not less explosive than in the secular or political world. For in the case of social structures we are always faced with an institutionalization of the distribution of power and the exertion of power. It is a matter of claims to "mandatory power" over the led claimed by the leaders. It is a matter of the freedoms and rights of the leaders and of the restrictions of freedom and power of the led -- in the name of existing orders or by means of a false appeal to them.'

p 26 'Of course defenders of the existing ~~XXXXX~~ conditions of office and power do not context that there was a misuse of power in the Church. But they attribute it to the sinful ~~weakness~~ weakness of individuals and refuse to derive ~~from~~ it from the ecclesiastical structures -- since they are possessed of a "divine right." But how do things look when the existing structures of the Church, which perhaps enjoyed some reasonable justification in the past, have become in the meantime ways of access to the misuse of power, or even expressions of institutionalized domination? Can the corresponding structures then really still base themselves on "divine right"?

Here, to dominate men means to deprive them of their basic rights to freedom and self-determination, as these rights have in the meantime asserted themselves and been recognized historically in our moral consciousness, and thus to rob them of their human dignity. To exercise dominion of this kind is to do injustice. Should ecclesiastical structures be shown to have functions of this kind, then, whether convenient or not, they must be exposed as ideological partisan positions serving to defend unjust power privileges.'

II. Human Rights -- The Decisive Criterion

p 26 'Is there an institutionalized misuse of power in the Church? All Church reform must be oriented by the answer to this question. Respect for basic human rights should be the criterion for the theological quest for truth that we undertake here. For human rights afford us something ~~is~~ obviously valid, injury to which is /27/ incontestably injustice. Of course it cannot be denied that there are systems in the Church which are founded upon divine right. Yet their actual interpretation is a matter of social history and far too easily falls victim to ideological claims. All religious office holders, even those of Christianity, have ~~x~~ in the course of human history raised claims upon the basis of the authority given them by their office, which were later shown to be inimical to religion. Hence the difficult task of reaching judgement in this context requires yardsticks whose validity is incontestable.

'Of course, recourse to fundamental rights does not mean an advocacy of utopian demands for man....

'Nevertheless there are rights which civilized nations would accord to all men in the same way. The Church has long fundamentally acknowledged these rights. Yet it has not formed its own structures in accordance with the newly developed understanding of the individual and ~~his~~^{of} right. Hence the Church is in a state of self-conflict. It is torn between, on the one hand, the understanding of authority derived from classical antiquity, the Middle Ages and feudal times, and, on the other, the history of freedom in the modern age. The following are a few examples of impaired fundamental rights, which may stand for others and which are symptomatic of whole areas.'

- III. The Natural Right to Marriage (p 27)
- IV. The Right to Search for Truth (p 29)
- V. The Church a Religious Class Society (p 30)
- VI. No Division ~~of~~ or Control of Power (p 31)
- VII. The Gospel -- The End of the Epiphany Religions (p 33)
- VIII. Demythologization of the Hierarchy (p 36)

Yves Congar, "Renewal of the Spirit and Reform of the Institution"

p 41 'Since St Paul (Rom 12 2; Eph 4 23), there has always been an advocacy in the Church of a renewal of life by means of a transformation of the spirit....

'Yet this is not enough....

'... the unconditional defenders of authority... freely developed a theory which went like this: Reform yourselves and all will go well; then the most urgent problems are resolved. This may also be seen as one form ~~of~~ of a widespread tendency among Catholics (at least until their recent awakening....) a tendency to see only the moral aspect of problems -- or ~~rather~~ rather that part of their moral aspect /42/ deriving from intention and ~~the~~ purity of intention. Yet history already had some significant lessons to offer. Some Strong and pure reformist currents failed to be more effective because they stayed too much in a spiritual and private realm....

'Institutions have their own weight, density, and permanence. Even those of the Church depend on society as a whole... It is impossible to ignore the influence of political ideas and the of the social context as a whole on the conception of authority and the actual conduct of life in the Church....

'It is true that purely spiritual attitudes ~~is~~ also have ~~an~~ an impact of social structures: St Francis in rejecting oaths ~~and~~ recourse to arms challenged the social structures of his own time, The Pilgrim Fathers and other emigrants for conscience' sake helped to determine the spirit of the United States. This shows that the spiritual element does take effect. It is necessary; yet it is not sufficient. There is in fact a density proper to impersonal and collective structures which has to be reached: otherwise the most generous reformist intentions would exhaust themselves in a never-ending effort that the opposing structures, keeping their place, would condemn to remain only half effective.'

p 46 'The crisis [today] is of such a nature and the questions posed are so radical and so universal that one is permitted to ask whether an aggiornamento is enough and whether something more is not required. The question arises to the extent that the institutions of the Church are part of a cultural world which will no longer enjoy the same place in the new cultural world born of the hegemony of technology, mass media, the human sciences, and characterized by universal secularization.'

p 47 'Our epoch of rapid change and cultural transformation (philosophical ferments and sociological conditions different from those which the Church has accustomed itself to until now) calls for a revision of "traditional" forms which goes beyond the level of adaptation or aggiornamento, and which would be instead a new creation. It is no longer sufficient to maintain by adapting it what has been; it is necessary to reconstruct.'

Note 11 quotes Marcel Légaut, Etudes October 1970, :

p 48 '... this reorganization will be a veritable process of reconstruction, since it will not occur before the ruins have appeared...'

p48 'It is a question of transmitting, in new forms, the same faith, the same Eucharist, and the same prayer, the same ministry that the Church received and by which it has been constituted from the start. Christianity, in fact, is an "instituted" religion, in the sense in which Wach uses this expression in opposition to "natural" religion. It is essentially transmission -- "tradition." One can recreate only the forms of what one has already received. In order to make the paradosis -- the transmission -- effective and authentic, this or that form in which the transmission occurred in the past, but which would nowadays be an obstacle to its reality, must eventually be revised and renewed. This is why every reform requires not only an analysis of the situation and its demands but basic resources of a very pure kind in the form of knowledge of the indefeasible content of the Christian realities which are to be handed on.'

p 48 [re celibacy] On the one side, there is a total historicity, and on the other an a-historical position which inhibits perhaps legitimate or even necessary reforms in the name of unduly sacralized models, ~~or~~ of a legalism which absolutizes the ~~inflexible~~ rules acquired in the past. Catholics are led, even in social and political ~~and~~ matters, to believe that there are ideal, given models, whereas social forms are to be created in variable contexts.'