

JOSEPH BREIG SAYS Episcopalian: Abortion Is Murder



In this column I conclude my quotations from the open letter on abortion sent to each bishop of the Episcopal Church by an Episcopalian laywoman, Mrs. Henry J. Sava of Coral Gables, Fla.

Mrs. Sava was shocked by a resolution on loosening of abortion laws, adopted by the House of Bishops. In her letter, she asked whether, "the Church of Christ is now so sophisticated that it cannot any longer be concerned over the eternal salvation of fetal life." She continues:

"Here is the heart of the matter. Is fetal life precious human life or is it just a bit of 'glop' that has no more value than garbage?"

"It is one or the other, and the Christian conscience today should proclaim the Christian values of life exemplified in the life, words and redemptive sacrifice of Christ.

"For one, I cannot see how your Episcopal statement on abortion can be reconciled with traditional Christian truths, Christian spiritual and human values. Rather I see your position as one which contributes to the further de-Christianizing of society.

"Instead of promoting a Christian milieu in which men may advance in the perfection of charity toward all their neighbors, our bishops seem to have compromised the Christian

position to that of the material and secular world about them . . .

"Over and over again the arguments in favor of liberal abortion laws favor the temporal advantages accruing to everyone — the family, society and even to the deformed . . . But at what cost? In the moral sphere the act of abortion is an act of murder, snuffing out the innocent life of the unborn . . .

"The liberalizing of the abortion laws would extend to three cases about which many people say that 'a good God just couldn't possibly want us to let this happen . . .'

"The first case concerns a woman who conceives a child through rape or incest. Now if, as Christianity teaches, our lives are to be dominated by charity, let us ask ourselves what this virtue demands in this circumstance.

"Am I to infer from the Episcopal resolution that charity in this instance demands 'Destroy the life of the unborn child'? Does charity ever say, 'Kill innocent life'? Rather isn't it the dictate of charity to do everything possible to see that the child is placed in the home of parents who by adoption will love the child . . . and to do everything possible through medical and psychiatric care to help the mother?"

"The second case concerns a pregnant mother of several children whose physical and mental health would be endangered by the birth of another baby. It is said, 'We have a responsibility to her husband and children. You bet we have . . . to act in charity as Christians . . . to love, and to see to it that all needs, material, physical and spiritual, are provided for.

"Finally, there is the monstrosity that might be born, whose life our civilized society doesn't want to tolerate, but which prompts me to inquire if any poll ever asked the deformed and the retarded if they preferred to have been murdered . . . Might we not be the monstrosities in God's eyes, with our souls stunted for lack of fraternal charity to our unfortunate little ones?"

"That man (in the Scriptures) was born blind — was it not that the works of God should be made manifest in him?"

"The supporters of liberalized abortion laws are not striving to eliminate suffering as much as to eliminate the sufferers. How far this is from the mind of Christ who exhorted us to practice the spiritual and corporal works of mercy to the poor, the ignorant, the deformed, the social outcasts."

ON THE RIGHT SIDE

The Lord is TRULY Risen

By Father Paul J. Cuddy



In 1936 I was assigned to be civilian chaplain to the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), which had a game preserve at Howland's Island, 13 miles north of Auburn. The work was so new that there were no guide lines of what to do.

These would have been helpful, since wise men learn from the successes and failures of others. So I had to fumble along in foggy experimentation.

The Commanding Officer was an admirable man. He was a Captain de Graw from the mid-west: thirty-ish, handsome, single, intelligent, an engineer by profession, a religious sceptic but of great personal integrity.

After he discovered that my agenda consisted pretty much in making friends with the boys as a witness to stability, visiting the barracks and giving a weekly talk on morality, he bent over backwards to help.

One noon I had lunch at the Camp with a young minister who had been graduated from Auburn Theological Seminary. We were discussing scripture amiably, when he said with an indulgent smile: "Our Men's Bible Class met last Thursday. They came to the passage on Lazarus (John XI) and interpreted it as if Lazarus were really dead."

I was appalled. "Don't you think he was?" With sincere surprise he said: "Why, no. Do you?" With un-Christian irritation I replied: "Of course! The Bible says so clearly. Don't you believe Jesus Christ rose from the dead?" The reply came: "Jesus rose spiritually!"

Heresy always stimulates my adrenal glands. My blood pressure began to rise. "Your Church recites the Apostles Creed. It states clearly: 'I believe in Jesus Christ . . . The third day He rose from the dead.' The Scriptures are clear that Jesus rose from the dead. How can you doubt or deny it?"

My friend replied: "Oh, but Jesus rose spiritually." "What do you mean?" "That Jesus died; He was buried in the tomb. But the resurrection was that of His spirit of love

which rose from His grave and spread throughout the world. It was not a resurrection of His body, but of the spirit of Jesus."

"It was fall. Football was in the air. I had visions of the mobs of Notre Dame football rooters screaming with great enthusiasm. Yet I asked calmly enough: "Then what happened to His body?" His reply was classic. "That's it. What did happen to it?"

"I'm afraid that my reply had equal parts of indignation and conviction. "It rose from the tomb. The Scriptures tell us so. The Apostles and disciples beheld the risen Christ. St. Paul said that the risen Christ was seen by 500 persons at one time. The preaching of Paul and the Apostles in the Acts of the Apostles are all predicated on the FACT of the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ. My earnest companion said soberly: "I think that's what Professor X believed, too. But he never came out and clearly said so."

I was saddened that a good man, a faithful pastor, should himself be so unbelieving of a basic foundation stone of Christian Faith. I was glad that the people of his Church retained orthodox Christian faith so strongly.

Thomas Aquinas stated clearly what is Christian teaching, embraced by Catholics, Orthodox and most Protestant Christians: "Christ made known

the fact of His resurrection by showing that He, the very one who had died, rose again both in His nature and in His suppositum. As regards nature, He showed that He had a true human body when He offered Himself to be touched and seen by the disciples, to whom He said: 'Handle and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see Me to have' (Luke XXIV: 39).

He gave further evidence of the same by performing actions that belong to human nature, eating and drinking with His disciples, and often conversing with them and walking with them. These are actions of a living man . . .

There are some weird scriptural ideas being gradually insinuated into the minds even of faithful Catholics. On Easter Day it is good to recall the charge of St. Paul to Timothy:

"Before God and before Christ Jesus . . . I put this duty to you, proclaim the message—and welcome, or unwelcome, insist on it. Refute falsehood, correct error, call to obedience—but do all with patience and with the intention of teaching. People will be avid for the latest novelty and collect themselves a whole series of teachers according to their own tastes; and then, instead of listening to the truth, they will turn to myths . . ." (II Tim. IV 1-4)

Happy Easter!

LITURGY

The Meaning of Holy Week

Modern advertising thrives on the principle of repetition. If you say something often enough, people will begin to hear what you are saying.

This principle is capitalized on in the Liturgy of Holy Week. There is one text that threads itself through Holy Week. It occurs in the Masses and in the Office of Holy Week no less than 22 times.

This all-pervasive text is the 2nd chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians, v. 5-11. Scripture scholars today are quite generally agreed that these verses of Philippians were not the original composition of St. Paul, but rather that they represent a very primitive liturgical hymn—a hymn used in the Liturgy of apostolic times. This text, therefore, gives us a link with the primitive Christian community as it celebrated the Liturgy.

Holy Week Theme

The words of this apostolic hymn: "Christ became obedient to death, even to death on a cross; for this reason God has exalted Him and given Him the name that is above every name"—express the meaning of Holy Week. They set forth its basic theme. They summarize St. Paul's theology of redemption.

For Paul redemption was achieved in two stages: a downward movement and an upward movement.

Downward Movement: Jesus Christ, the Son of God, emptied Himself. He voluntarily gave up the glory due to His humanity as the humanity of a divine Person. He took His place in human history—at man's side. In doing so, He took on the conditions of our sinful existence: He became subject to suffering and death.

This self-abasement of Jesus (His

kenosis) reached its climax in His death. He goes to the extremes of death on a cross.

Upward Movement: This death on the cross which represents the lowest point of His descent into the human condition was also the starting point of the upward movement of redemption. It was the beginning of Jesus' ascent to the Father.

The early Church saw Jesus' mounting of the cross as the beginning of His return to the Father. For the early Church did not lay so much stress on the sufferings of Jesus, as did a later piety. Rather the stress was on Jesus' exaltation to glory growing out of His death. (Note the casual relation that St. Paul establishes between the humiliation of Jesus and His exaltation.)

This is the essential meaning of Holy Week. This is what give it unity: It is the Week of Jesus' Passover.

Jesus' Passover was prefigured in the Passover of the Israelites. Their Passover meant their passage from the slavery of Egypt to the dignity of the Chosen People of God.

So, the Passover of Jesus, His Paschal Mystery, means His passing over from the life of suffering and death into a new existence—a new life for His humanity—a risen, immortal life in glory.

Already we live the life of risen men and women. Our task is to let the resurrection of Jesus more and more dominate our lives—so that each day we try to die a little more—die to sin and selfishness—but always in order that the life which Christ gives us, the share in His risen life, may dominate our existence.

(Prepared by the Diocesan Liturgical Commission)

U.S. Church Seen as Innovative

By GARY MacEON

How serious is the rift which has developed within the Catholic Church in the United States since Vatican Council II? Dutch theologian Edward Schillebeeckx, O.P., said recently after a 2-month tour that the situation is alarming and that there is a danger of schism. Negative reaction from priests, nuns and lay people in the press to the bishops' pastoral letter in January would seem to support

the existence of acute tensions is beyond dispute. The bishops themselves recognize them in their pastoral. They emerge, however, in a somewhat different context in a study by two sociologists of religion, Father Rocco Caporale and Mr. Ivan Vallier, made under the auspices of the Institute of International Studies at the University of California at Berkeley.

The study examines the post-conciliar conflict situation in three widely differing countries, Chile, France and the United States. At first sight, it says, and using the criteria that churchmen themselves would use, the Church seems to have made more progress in France and even in Chile than in the United States. The laity in France have acted as the spearhead of ideological innovation and organized action. The forces of revolutionary change in Chile have pushed the Church into an unprecedented progressive posture, so that it seeks to transform the country's structures. In the United States, the stress seems to have been mainly on liturgy and internal organization.

Below this surface, however, the authors see developments which they consider more significant. It is true that many Catholics "remain exclusively parochial, deeply loyal to the pastor, ritually oriented, content with being the typical clerical clientele of former days, keen to maintain distinct group identification and Catholic values." It is also true that the bishops have been "almost consistently preoccupied with this rank-and-file parochial constituency which forms the mainstay of Sunday congregations and Church support."

Nevertheless, they say, an increasing number of educated lay people of the middle and professional classes think in terms of the whole society and of key social issues. They seek to contribute to the solutions of problems of the total society to be agents of social integration and generators of adequate Christian values.

Get into Issues, Churches Told

New York — Each church should "take its stand" on the "battlefields of civic, state, national and international issues," Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey said in an article published here.

The vice president discussed "Stewardship for Human Progress" in Stewardship Facts, an annual publication of the National Council of Churches.

His article noted that the question is raised whether the church should become directly involved in "headline issues." Stating that it is already involved in many areas, Humphrey went on to say that some feel there is already over-commitment to material affairs.

"I respect, although I do not subscribe to such views," he said. "No man has a right, I feel, to impose his will on another, least of all in the sphere of individual view, as to spiritual-temporal policy.

"But as for my own belief, living Christianity requires the church to be in the vanguard for human progress."

Arnold Toynbee

Pope's Moral Power Revived

The ancient role of the Papacy as peace-maker and moral arbiter is seen by historian Arnold Toynbee as restored and strengthened throughout the world.

Once again, he says, the Papacy symbolizes unity—not merely Christian, but human unity, and the Roman See has regained the world-wide moral authority that it exercised in the constricted world of the Middle Ages.

The famed British writer outlined these views in a paper he sent to a Boston College forum on "The Vatican and Peace."

He said that the peace overtures of Pope John XXIII and Pope Paul VI among the powers and the religions of the world had won them the gratitude of all mankind. The task demands "all the energy, pertinacity, courage, hope and faith with which Pope Paul has dedicated himself to his beneficent task."

He also declared: "Since the starting of the Aggravamento, the Roman see has regained—and this time throughout the wide world—the moral authority that, for a period in the Western Middle Ages, it possessed and exercised within the medieval domain of the Roman see, that is, to say, within the bounds of Western civilization."

For "unfortunately a rather brief time"—he said, the temporal rulers of Europe had been subject to the "non-material" power of the Popes, who could place the state under in-

terdict and release the people from allegiance to their princes.

"This tempering of the political independence of local secular states . . . was perhaps the most promising creative achievement that our Western World has accomplished, so far, in the social and spiritual fields—more promising, for instance, than the more recently invented parliamentary representative form of government."

The causes for the loss of papal leadership, according to Mr. Toynbee, rested on the papacy's yielding to the temptation to be drawn into the "sinister game of secular power politics." The Holy See lost its function as a focus of unity in the Great Schism of the 15th Century and the Reformation of the 16th Century, he said.

This loss of unity was succeeded by new "quasi-religious" forces, among which nationalism is the most "potent" and "self-destructive" today.

Particularly striking to Professor Toynbee is that the reconciliation work of the papacy extends even into the Moslem and Hindu world.

The Pope was welcomed by Hindus on his visit to India and by Moslems in the Middle East, Professor Toynbee said, because "they recognize that the Pope feels that his function, as head of the Catholic Church, includes, ex officio, a concern for the whole of mankind."

"In his work for peace," he said, "the Pope has the whole world for his parish and the whole human race for his flock."

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DAY & NIGHT



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