

Bishop Sheen Discusses Modern 'Repression' of Religion

All Sy

By ARTHUR P. FARRAN

With no apparent lessening of miasm or activity, Bishop Fulton Sheen this month began a third year as Shepherd of the Diocese of Rochester.

He continues to innovate many changes for shifts in emphasis, continuing with pleas for urgency — winds which cause waves of imper change throughout the 12-county diocese.

As with most leaders continually in the go, Bishop Sheen has attracted great admirers and encountered critics. For most everyone, however, he has lost little of that personal charm which has distinguished his illustrious career.

It is readily discernible that the jostling of critics quarrel little of all with his aims and motivations about his concern and dedication. do not always agree about the methods of some of his proposals.

In any case, most observers agree that the "little Diocese of Rochester" upper New York State, continues to be a catalyst of post-Vatican Council renewal, and many of its Bishop's nouncements still make national headlines.

In a recently-published book, "Catholic Revolution," author Dr. Roche devotes a full chapter to the Diocese, and states:

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The New Repression

A housewife will open a door leading to the cellar and throw down the stairs dirty linen, old boxes and broken toys to get them out of view. The mind also, knowingly or unknowingly, often banishes to the subconscious impulses and emotions which it finds embarrassing to the conscious. This is what is called "repression," or a process by which we eject from our consciousness those things which society regards as taboo or which we find unpleasant.

During the last fifty years what did the human mind, ordinary conversation and parlor conversation most often repress? Sex. The Victorian era brought to the forefront of consideration such ideas as "God", "Lord", "work", "honesty" and "public decency". Then Freud came along to remind us that the Victorians were excessively repressing the idea of sex.

All the neuroses caused by stifling sex, he believed, could be cured by self-expression. Well! Now the cellar door was opened and "nothing was hidden that was not revealed." The mass media, television and the theater have not only emptied the cellar, but even the gutter. Now sex becomes so important that even an automobile advertisement cannot be written without a heavy dose of eroticism. The myths of the "birds and the bees" were banished; the "new morality" created a license in which one out of every six births in New York was out of wedlock.

The three basic principles of the new morality were:

1. Permissiveness of anything, if it is done with affection.
2. "Luv" justifies pre-marital relations.
3. Nothing is wrong and, much less, sinful if you "feel it is right."

What Is Repressed Today

Society is always on a teeter-totter; it is rarely at center. Nothing is ever up, but something is down. If I express the desire to rob banks, I must repress honesty. Now that the emphasis is on carnality, what is thrown down the cellar of sub-consciousness? What are we hurriedly stuffing into a closet lest it be offensive to a visitor from the Secular City? We are repressing God, religion, morality, discipline, law, order and penance.

Spirituality is the "taboo" of our times as sex was the "taboo" of former times. Political diatribes replace a summons to penance; the humiliation of confession is minimized; sin is never spoken of in polite society; students revolt on Catholic campuses for the elimination of courses in philosophy and theology; Christ they do not want to hear about: "I heard about Him in the eighth grade." Religious want to be "persons," rather than children of God; giving up a sacrificial unity with Christ and His mission, they ask:

"What is my role in life", just as a clock would ask that question if it lost its mainspring.

Four other notable signs of the repression of the Divine in this day of flesh are:

1. BLASPHEMY — There is an increase of cursing and vulgarity among the young and especially with women.

One psychologist found that girls swear more than boys. A printer of a Catholic women's college magazine declared that ten years ago he would have refused to print vulgarities which are handed to him in each issue of the periodical. A Vassar graduate explained the cataract of blue talk and blasphemy as a desire for equality with men. Once they had to smoke to be like them; then they had to drink to catch up with them; now they have to blaspheme to do so.

A psychiatrist from Emory University is much more profound in his analysis of the unbuttoned lips of today; to him they are a symbol of rebellion. But a rebellion against what? Against religion and morality.

Repression of faith, duty and conscience provoked blasphemy by St. Peter. Why did he, who a year before said, "Christ is the Son of the Living", now curse and swear that he "... knew not the man"? It was because he feared the penalty of being accounted a disciple of Christ when the Secular City about him was anti-Christ.

Blasphemy is not always a desire for expression, but a hidden desire for repression of the Divine. It increases in those moments of history when the Divine is on the defensive, when to be prayerful and mortified is "out", when to be spiritual is to be "square" and when to be contemptuous of the Church is "in".

2. HIDING THE DIVINE — A second indication of the repression of the Divine is the hiding of it, lest it be not understood or ridiculed in the society in which we move.

God is not Dead. He has been driven underground. The modern taboo is not sex; it is religion.

Dag Hammarskjold illustrated this. As the head of the United Nations, he was regarded as the typical secular man with a really up-to-date "commitment to the world". In none of his speeches before the assembly, in none of his conversations with diplomats was there ever a suspicion that he thought about religion. But after his death volumes began to appear about his prayer life, his meditation, and his long hours of reflection about the meaning of life. Along with the Journal of Pope John XXIII, his "Markings" is one of the great spiritual testaments of our times. But he repressed piety in an impious world. The Divine went underground. His death was not a burial, but in a certain sense a resurrection of his thoughts.

3. VIOLENCE — Another example of repression is violence against religion, and here we

refer not to the verbal side which is often blasphemous, but rather physical violence and base ridicule. Why, for example, did the soldiers strike, buffet and spit in the face of Our Lord? There is no evidence they did that with the two thieves. It was because His nobility was a reproach to them! They felt it necessary to desecrate the holy of holies, for the same reason an unfaithful husband is often cross and angry with his faithful wife, because she is a reproach to his conscience. The more contemptuous he is of her, the more he feels justified in his adultery.

In like manner, once the ego sets itself up as Pope any challenges for that magistral office must be denounced. Likewise the burning of synagogues, the planting of bombs in the gasoline tanks of police cars, the incessant sniping at any group or race or class mean that the uneasy conscience is seeking to purge itself by being violent against others, rather than violent against itself. A sword that swings outward in hate is repressing the unconscious moral conviction that the sword should first cut rottenness out of one's own soul.

4. TURNING OFF — A final evidence of repression is "turning off". Everyone hears it said that as soon as you talk religion to youth they "turn you off". This is nothing new in religious history except the name. The Biblical name for "turning off" was "hardening of the heart". The invention of the electronic and radio dial produced the new metaphor of "turning off".

Our Lord used the example of hearts being like "rocky ground" which meant they "turned Him off". Quoting Isaiah, he described the same phenomenon:

"The people honoreth Me with their lips
But their heart is far from Me".

In the synagogue of Capharnaum the people "turned Him off" as "He looked round on them with anger, being grieved at the hardening of their heart". But this was not the only time He was "turned off". The classical example of a whole culture switching off the Divine is to be found in the first chapter of Romans and in the fifth verse of Chapter 2.

The newness of the phrase must not blind us to the antiquity of the practice. Nor is it only the young who cut off the current; there is no generation gap in hardening of the heart. The adults do it too but they more quickly return to their sanity when challenged. When the Lord faced the men who were about to stone an adulteress, He charged them: "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone". Whose conscience was first pricked? The young or the old? The old: "And when they heard it, went out one by one, beginning from the eldest, even unto the last" (John 8/9) It could be because the elders were the most guilty or because the buffeting of life and conscience made them more sensitive to their guilt.

The tragedy of it all is that while both young and old were ashamed, they left Christ Who alone could bring them forgiveness. Repression still went on in them as it did with Saul who prayed so foolishly: "I have sinned, yet now honor me, I pray".

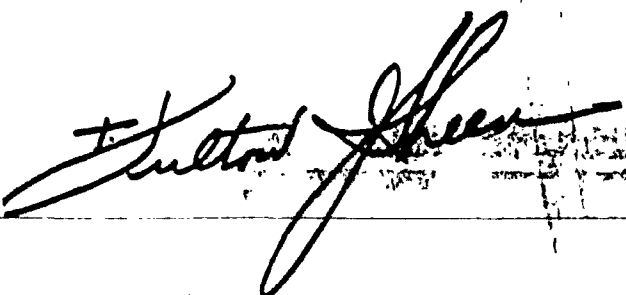
Conclusion

Anyone who knows history and the ebb and flow of human passions is not discouraged by what is happening today. Certainly these are unhappy times because we are in a trough. As sex was repressed in one age, so now religion is repressed. "The flesh militates against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh". One cannot have a sensate age without a God-is-dead age. The two go together. The selective inattention to the Divine is not because the Divine is irrelevant to youths and others; it is too relevant. So it is repressed, "turned off" or the heart is hardened.

Within a few decades we will see an explosion of religion as there is an explosion of sex now. Those who have left the Church will be flocking to get back in; those who identified theology with sociology will be as anxious to be saintly as they are now anxious to be secular; the youths whom we now allow to ignore Christ for the sake of dialoging about "what bugs you", will become our just accusers. Vocations will multiply; the Church will no longer be the subject of nasty cartoons in morning newspapers, but will be the haven of sinners and the hope of the afflicted.

So for the present we must be patient and long suffering with those who no longer want Christ in the public inn, and, understanding their psychology of repression, we will know what hidden treasures are buried in their subconsciousness. Whether this religious explosion will come just from cultural change, I gravely doubt. There may have to be some kind of calamity first which will bring us to our senses and soften our secularized hearts. In the words of the Christmas Message of Pope Paul VI: "The use which modern man can make of the murderous forces which he has mastered raises on the horizon not hope but heavy clouds of terror and disaster".

This is not despair, but the beginning of true hope. As Our Lord said: "When all this begins to happen, stand upright and hold your head high because your liberation is near".



Letters to the Editor

Editor:
Feeling that I have a kindred spirit in Mrs. Herbert J. Seuhart of Penfield, I should like to add a few thoughts of my own to her admirable letter in the 12/13/68 Courier-Journal.

My mind is constantly drawn to the words of St. Paul in his second letter to Timothy: "For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths."

I believe these three verses from God's Holy and Inspired Word have a deep meaning for both the factions that have appeared in the Church and for the "silent people," who although holding the Faith, say little or nothing.

To those who wish "to throw the baby out with the bath water," I would say, "beware!" You have had your say and no doubt will continue to shout as loudly as ever, — now is the time for faithful sons and daughters of the Church to have theirs. You are only bringing back heresies against which orthodox Protestants have been fighting for decades. They have been fighting the subjective theology of Buttmann, Tillich, Barth and Niebuhr. Now we must take up and fight with equal vigour and cast out those who would drag us down with them.

So much today is said and done in the name of freedom of conscience! In the name of "conscience" we can deny the Virgin Birth, the Divinity of Christ, the Resurrection, the realities of Heaven and Hell, the Infallibility of the Pope and the authority of our own Bishop!

In fact, what we are doing is denying the Church; what it is and what it stands for. We are denying its divine origin, its uniqueness as the one true Church, containing "the fullness of truth".

To the "silent people" and the "Donkeyites", I would say, embrace Vatican II with all your hearts and minds! Don't be afraid of it for we cannot fight against the Holy Spirit. Don't confuse the changes in the Liturgy with the "new" theology. Buy and read Fr. Hugh J. O'Connell's little book in the "Catholic Living Series" called "Keeping your balance in the Modern Church".

As St. Paul says, "Be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." The success of the "Left Wing" is due to

our own silence; perhaps we are steady and endure spiritual suffering, but are we doing the work of an evangelist or fulfilling our ministry? Let every Catholic loyal to the Holy

Father and our own Bishop speak out! Don't just bemoan what is happening in the Church, do something about it. — Roman Catholic (name and address supplied)



"LET 'EM HAVE THE PILL!"

Editor:
A recent letter to the Courier-Journal questioned the right of the Rochester Association of Catholic Laymen, a group neither established nor directed by the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, to use the word Catholic in its title.

The writer went on to object to efforts on the part of the Association to be a voice within the Church — on the grounds that no assurance could be given that its statements would be representative of majority opinion among the laity or that they would be theologically impeccable.

I think it worth pointing out, first of all, that in using the word Catholic the group does not pretend to any official status within the Church. Rather, the term simply describes

the membership of the group — persons considering themselves Catholics who have freely banded together in order to speak out more effectively on important issues.

Neither does the group pretend to speak for all Catholics. While the membership is open to all Catholic laymen and includes members from many different educational and social backgrounds, age groups, religious orders, and occupations, the association speaks only for its members.

Nor does the group pretend to infallibility. As your writer suggests, it may err theologically, for the Spirit is not with this group in the full sense in which He is with the whole Church.

But the group considers it prefer-

Underground Church

One of the national magazines recently promoted an article on the so-called Underground Church. For the most part, it retells stories that have already received publicity elsewhere, but adds a certain amount of commentary by priests and lay people who have been involved in clandestine Masses celebrated under unusual conditions and in a somewhat bizarre manner.

Many people will find the article unsettling, and with good reason, for it describes religious worship that is clearly outside of the church and its laws, and gives this at least a nod of approval. The subtle suggestion is that the "underground" services have found a way to involve people that the traditional worship most often leaves cold, that in their own phrase, they are "turned on" by a liturgy that is highly personalized and unstructured.

It stands to reason that novelty of this kind will make an impression on the observer, at least for a while, and even excite new interest and possibly devotion as well. It has what must be called a shock factor which of its nature wears off, and then some new eccentricity must take its place, until the absurd is reached.

The appearance of the "Underground Church" may be a reaction against a liturgy which was so long static, distant and, to some people at least, partly unintelligible. If this is so, it comes at a time when all this is being changed, it rebels against a situation which is disappearing as new liturgical developments invite the people to participate more intimately in the Mass and become more meaningfully involved in it.

This suggests that the answer to the "underground" is really the liturgy itself. If all our efforts are given to the task of authentic liturgical reform, if we take seriously the directives already provided, along with new ones as they appear, the Mass itself will make its claim upon the Christian who will then not seek after aberrations, or novelty, or shock liturgies.

(The Pilot, Boston, 12/14/68.)

able to risk mistakes in the cause of truth than to fail the truth through a kind of cowardly silence. And to affirm that laymen can have a responsibility, as well as a right, to make their views known, and felt, within the Church is hardly revolutionary; it is the teaching of Vatican II.

—J. Raymond Hensler, President, R.A.C.L.

Word for Sunday

Women: Always a Great Role

By Father Albert Shamon

The very beautiful infancy narrative of St. Luke ends with a very beautiful picture. It begins with an old woman, Elizabeth, and ends with an old woman, Anna. What wonderful women we meet in St. Luke's two chapters: Elizabeth, Mary, Anna!

Anna, "the gracious," as her name meant, was daughter of Phanuel. She was of the tribe of Asher, and therefore a Galilean. She had had seven happy years of married life. Then her husband died. That she never married again is mentioned by St. Luke as a tribute to her; she was "a widow indeed," according to St. Paul.

Very likely, after the death of her husband, instead of complaining, she left Galilee for Jerusalem in order to be near the Temple. She took herself and her sorrow to God. And there, a new love took hold of her. She would consecrate her life to the service of the Lord.

Year after year, Anna went to the Temple when needed. She was neither wretched, nor useless. God gave her the gift of prophecy. She saw what others could not see; she spoke what others could not hear. In peace, joy, charity—the gifts of the Spirit—she saw the years pass away till 84 had seamed her face and bent her body. She had lived through the years of war and conquest and oppression, which had intensified in every Jewish heart a yearning for national deliverance by the promised Messiah.

When He came, she and Simeon alone of all in the Temple recognized Him—for years of prayer and fasting had made them sensitive to the presence of God. But more gracious was Anna's response to that Presence than Simeon's. In his prayer there seems to

be a touch of self-consideration, as if he wished to be gone from the scenes that wearied him. But Anna, 84 years old, is content to linger longer.

Simeon prayed; Anna gave thanks. Simeon spoke of a sword of sorrow; Anna uttered words of comfort. She knew what it was to wait long; others were waiting still. She could not keep the good news to herself. She became the first evangelist and "talked about the child to all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem."

Women have a place in the work of the Church—an important place. In St. Luke's two chapters, it is women who hold the stage. Poor Zachary and Joseph pale almost into insignificance before them. What a part was theirs in the redemption! What a role is still woman's in the teaching mission of the Church!

In this age when youngsters quip, "Don't trust anyone over 30," we might reply, "Don't trust anyone under 50." What an accolade St. Luke pays to the aged — Elizabeth, Simeon, Anna.

Sometimes when the day is done, the sun seems to hang for a half hour on the horizon, only just to show how glorious it can be. It hangs there in the golden west, making everything look unspookably beautiful with the rich effulgence which it sheds on every side. So God seems to let some people, when their work is done, hang on in life so that men may look on them and see how beautiful old age is for those whose lives have been filled with the service of God. There was room in the Gospel for the aged—there is room in the Church for them. In Victor, we have many, many Simeons and Anns—and oh what a blessing they are to a parish!

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Eight of the nine children 20 to celebrate the 25th left are: seated — Sister Lynch, St. Plus X Parish Nativity Parish, Brockport Church, Penfield; Father Christopher Parish. Absent

State Hospital Construction

Construction of the new St. Jude's to be erected on the site of the Rochester State Hospital, and Elmwood Avenue, was way this week.

Father James L. Callan, hc chaplain, said he is hoping for a late summer or early autumn 1969.

Designed to seat 407 persons chapel will fulfill the religious of the approximately 1,500 patients at the state institution. olies comprise more than 40 per cent of the patients, a figure comparable to the Catholic percentage of total six-county population served by the hospital.

Constitutional barriers forbid state from constructing such a hospital for their use and will continue maintain and care for them once are constructed and are defunct.

There are approximately 16 St. Jude's chapels on state institutional grounds mostly downtown.

Father Callan noted that a campaign for funds conducted in resulted in cash and pledges amounting \$250,000. In a continuing effort, the campaign committee seek an additional \$100,000 in January and February to meet increased costs in building, furnishing and other expenses.

Ribson & Roberts, Rochester architects for the structure, an contract went to the lowest bidder P. Vassile & Son Inc., Rochester.

Architecture of the St. Jude's will conform to that proposed \$3,000,000 Patients' Rehabil Center complex to be constructed along Elmwood Avenue be existing hospital buildings and big Medical-Surgical Building.

A one-story structure, the proposed rehabilitation complex, will be 200 feet long and 100 feet wide, and can be reached from Elmwood or South Avenue.

By its center location among existing and proposed buildings, it will be a convenient focal point for all patients. It will be 98 feet in length, 50 feet wide, and much of the structure will be wide windows avoid any feeling of confinement.