

The Prince of This World

THEOLOGY OF THE WORLD

From The World

(Thirteenth in Series)

By BISHOP FULTON J. SHEEN

"A whole nation of eyesless men, Dark bipeds not aware of how they were maimed—"

"Country of the Blind," by C. S. Lewis

The most popular word in advertising is "new", whether it be a detergent or a drip-dry. The "latest" means the "best". What previous ages called "permanent" is now spurned as "stagnant". No work on theology is acceptable unless it has appeared within the last year. The "Fathers of the Church" are unread in the wild dash to keep pace with "chronological snobbery". The peoples of other days approached God as guilty before a Judge; the modern man puts himself on the judicial bench and judges God, and even pronounces on Him a death sentence. The Church who forgave them their sins is now denied forgiveness and dismissed without absolution, even stoned for being a Rock. Innovations are loved for they show the "power" of those who break the law, like making a touchdown by running outside the side lines.

These are forms of worldliness which are quite distinct from the saeculum or the world in which God reveals Himself in nature and by grace. The ability to make a clear distinction between "being in the world" and "being worldly" is the key to understanding the Church in the present crisis.

The Church Was Too Alienated

The Church in the past few hundred years has been too separated from the world. Overemphasizing the distinction between nature and grace, the Church and the world, contemplation and action, the secular world was almost identified with the non-religious, and the Divine with the non-secular. Salvation became an individual affair, while social justice was too often left to non-religious forces. The organization of labor unions was due in large part to non-religious or secular forces. A great change has taken place, however, since the Vatican Council for it has been religious leaders who have been in the foreground for racial justice.

The Church in the past was indeed a "ghetto", it was too insular, a kind of igloo giving protection against icy blasts of the world. The Vatican Council admitted this mistake, and in that famous Decree on the Church and the World took a new stance:

"The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community composed of man. United in Christ, they are led by the Holy Spirit in their journey to the kingdom of their Father, and they have welcomed the news of salvation which is meant for every man. That is why this community realizes that it is truly and intimately linked with mankind and its history."

(Church in the Modern World #1)

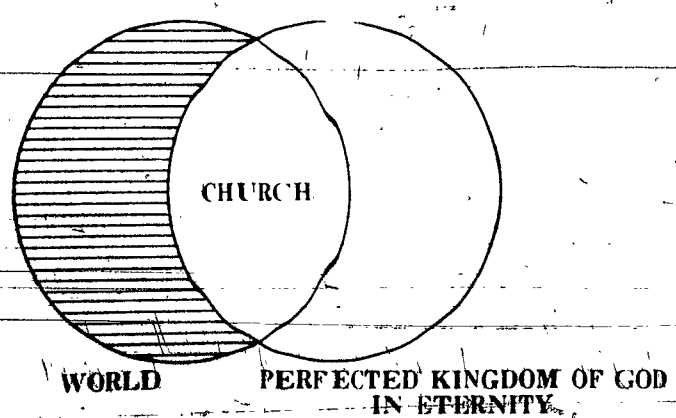
But many preferred to ignore the Church's new attitude and contented themselves with abusing the Church for the mistakes of the past. Unfortunately, about 80% of the books on the Church since the Vatican Council have been dipped in critical ink, charging the Church for not being "committed" to the world. Catholics particularly seemed to delight in proving they had "come of age" by insulting their mother. It was done not as by one belonging to the Church, as a brother might chide brother, or a grown son rebuke a father. Even if the Church's separation from the world was the "Grave of God", why use so many pages to turn us all into professional mourners, doing naught but shedding tears over a sepulchre. The ghouls of cemeteries, the dwellers in the tombs who first bury the Church and then go into the "Dance of Death" over her remains, help neither the Church or the world. If they used the same tactics toward an individual sinner, there would never be repentance. The sinner would be so constantly reminded of his guilt that he could look forward to nothing else than to be branded with the Scarlet Letter as in Hawthorne's novel.

The criticism of religion from both outside and inside, however, helped the Church to examine her conscience. Often the world is right in her protest against Christianity at certain periods of history. The Church is always in need of reformation, but more often a reformation of morals rather than of faith. Violent reformations concentrate on changes in doctrine rather than morals.

Our thesis is that while the Church is now going into the saeculum, or the world, its greatest challenge is from the spirit of the world, or worldliness. It is so difficult to be in the world, but not of it, or to keep that balance so well expressed by Daniel Jenkins in his Beyond Religion: "The action of the Church will be sheer worldliness however much it may be dressed up in religious garb, unless it is covered with the holiness of Christ, and the holiness of Christ is always found on earth in the form of the suffering servant."

True Relation Between Church and World

The relation between the Church and the world may be expressed by two intersecting circles:



The first circle is the world, the second is the perfected Kingdom of God in eternity. The world

is the whole circle, but the shaded portion of it is worldliness.

The Church has already sanctified some of the world by being in it, and especially through her sacraments, technology done in God's Name, and by using creatures as a scaffolding to heaven. But the whole of the Church is not embraced in this world, for she extends to the clear portion in the next world, where she is to be "glorious with no speck or wrinkle or anything like that but holy and faultless", (Eph. 5/27) as the Bride of Christ espoused to Him as a chaste virgin. (2 Cor. 11/2)

In these two areas, the shaded and the unshaded, two spirits are at work: the Spirit of anti-Christ and the Spirit of Christ. The Church is guided by the latter, but not all who claim to be hers are so in the eyes of God. Sheep and goats, good fish, bad fish, Apostles and Judas, Paul and Demas, mingle together until the final separation. The faithful members of the Church (and this includes more than those who are active or conscious members) are constantly being buffeted by these evil powers. Hence, the warning: "Make sure that no one traps and deprives you of your freedom by some secondhand, empty, rational philosophy based on the principles of this world, instead of on Christ". (Col. 2/8)

The field of battle in the present hour of the Church's history is within the first circle, at that fine line between the light and shaded lines. There is a constant shift going on between one and the other; some leave the light for the shadows, others, reversing the process, turn from worldliness to the Church. Renan left the Church; Newman was received in; Mathias took the place of Judas.

Being in the Church does not give immunity from conflict with worldliness; it may even intensify it. The moment Peter was given the keys of the Church, he had instant contact with Satan (Matt. 16/16). St. Paul, recounting his conversion, (Phil. Chap. 3; Romans, Chap. 7) speaks of the battle within his own soul and then reminds his people of the actuality of this conflict in each one: "With tears in my eyes, there are many who are behaving as enemies of the Cross of Christ. They are destined to be lost... the things they think important are earthly things". This proximity of good and evil is evidenced, too, in the Old Testament. "And he showed me Joshua, the high priest, standing before the Angel of the Lord and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him". (Zech. 3/1)

Worldliness, or the love of the world to the exclusion of the Ultimate by the affirmation of the ego, has as its guiding spirit the one about Whom Our Lord warned us, "The Prince of this world". (John 12/31; 16/11). St. Paul calls him the "god of this world" (2 Cor. 4/4) and "world ruler of the present darkness" (Eph. 6/12) When Our Lord was offered all the kingdoms of the world if He would take another path of saving men than dying for their sin, He did not reply: "These kingdoms are not yours to give". He did not deny Satan's claims. St. John implicitly admits it: "The whole world hath in the evil one." (1 John 5/19). St. Paul adds to this that the course of this world is governed by the Prince of this world who creates its atmosphere or spirit. But who believes in the Devil? As Dan Crawford put it:

"And so they've voted the Devil out. And of course, the Devil's gone; But simple folk would like to know Who carries his business on?"

The Demonic

The devil is powerful today because few believe in him. God's definition of Himself is: "I Am Who Am". The devil's definition of himself is: "I am who am not". The "Screw-tape Letters" of C. S. Lewis are an imagined correspondence between Screw-tape, a high official in hell, to Wormwood, his young nephew devil on earth. The former tells his pupil how to win over a young man to himself against the Enemy — the Enemy of course, is God.

In the seventh letter to Wormwood, Screw-tape writes: "I wonder you should ask me whether it is essential to keep the patient in ignorance of your own existence. That question, at least for the present phase of the struggle, has been answered for us by the High Command. Our policy, for the moment, is to conceal ourselves. Of course, this has not always been, so we are really faced with a cruel dilemma. When the humans disbelieve in our existence, we lose all the pleasing results of direct terrorism and we make no magicians. On the other hand, when they believe in us, we cannot make them materialists and sceptics... The fact that 'devils' are predominately comic figures in modern imagination will help you. If any faint suggestion of your existence begins to arise in his mind, suggest to him a picture of something in red tights and persuade him that since he cannot believe in that (it is an old textbook method of confusing them) he therefore cannot believe in you."

As Denis de Rougemont writes: "If there is no heaven, Satan tells us, neither is there any hell or master of hell. If there is no judge, neither is there any fault nor any author of evil. If there is no truth, neither is there any lie or liar. If there finally is no one, neither is there He! Thus, the more he prevails in our lives the less we are able to recognize him. The more effective he is, the less dangerous he appears. His own activity conceals him from the eyes of the one that dominates. He vanishes in his success, and his triumph is in his incognito."

Why Is The Demonic Denied?

We live in what Sorokin has called a "Senseate Culture": the only truths we admit to our minds are those which we can see and test and particularly feel. Technology has reinforced this idea, for modern man, having learned how to control nature and predict its activity, easily falls into the belief that there is no knowledge in the world except the scientific and immediate.

Another reason for this denial of the demonic is the rejection of sin and guilt. Conscience, today, almost everyone understands, is that which tells them that they are right; it never tells them that they are wrong. About the only guilt that exists

(Continued on Page 16)

LETTERS

to the editor



Content 'Excellent'

Editor: We have three children in Holy Ghost School in Gates. Last December our pastor, Father Edward Steinkirchner, and the school faculty invited parents to a meeting where we could become acquainted with the sex education program which was being added to the school curriculum.

Many of our parishioners attended this meeting with us. The material was prepared for three different age levels of elementary school students and we were asked to view all three programs. A discussion by the faculty and parents followed each of the viewings. The teacher explained that the material was carefully designed to fit the various age levels and that it would be gradually assimilated into the curriculum. They said it would be taught along with appropriate subjects without undue emphasis so that it would become a natural part of the educational program for the children.

In our judgment the content and method of presenting this sex education material at our school is excellent. We feel strongly that such instruction in the home should be supplemented in the school — that when it is presented with proper Christian motivation as a natural part of God's plan it will be accepted by children in the same light. When made taboo, children then start attaching to it undue significance. All too often parents neglect to instruct their children soon enough and their children become "educated" on street corners.

Pope Paul Plans Visit To Africa

Vatican City — (RNS) — Pope Paul VI announced here that he will make a "rapid" visit to Kampala, Uganda during the latter half of July to dedicate an altar to the 22 martyrs of Uganda and address a meeting of African bishops.

It will not be his first visit to Africa, but it will be the first by any reigning Pope.

He made the announcement in St. Peter's Basilica during a Mass in honor of St. Joseph.

He said that he would be accompanied by a number of Anglican converts between November 1965 and January 1967 during a persecution of Christians by King Idrissa of Buganda, known as the African Nero. Pope Paul canonized them in October 1964.

The African trip will be the Pope's seventh journey outside of Italy. When he reaches Kampala, he will have visited every inhabited continent except Australia since assuming the Papacy.

Other visits have been to the Holy Land, India, United Nations headquarters in New York, Fatima, Portugal; the Eastern Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul, and the 39th International Eucharistic Congress in Bogota.

His last visit to Africa was in 1962 when he was the Archbishop of Milan. Last year, in a letter to the peoples of Africa, he recalled that visit and he has also mentioned it frequently in his appeals for peace in Nigeria, one of the countries he visited on his 1962 tour.

with half-truths from other ill-informed youngsters.

It is too bad that many people with strong feelings against this program haven't taken advantage of, or perhaps haven't had, opportunities to see this program for themselves. It is unfortunate that some have not raised their objections through more discreet means than loud, vocal protests, which undermine attempts to present this material to youngsters in a properly motivated manner.

—Mr. and Mrs. Ralph R. Simolo, Rochester.

Mothers Approve

Editor: We, the St. Anne's Mothers Circle of St. Margaret Mary Church, Rochester, wholeheartedly approve the sex education program now offered in the parochial schools of our diocese.

We, as mothers, feel that our children should learn about themselves and life in a wholesome atmosphere, whether it be their own home, or the classroom. We do not feel, as has often been said, that this is "pornographic material." These are biological facts correctly presented through the school curriculum.

The ages of our 55 children range from 2 to 20 years and we consider ourselves fairly knowledgeable on the subject of child rearing.

Mrs. Robert Kowalik, Chairman, 45 Carol Drive; Mrs. Ronald Butler, Mrs. Vance Carpenter, Mrs. Robert DePrez, Mrs. Edwin Fleche, Mrs. Robert Haehl, Mrs. David Kausch, Mrs. Bernard Manning, Mrs. Casper Paprocki, Mrs. Richard Scherberger, Mrs. Milton Schmidt.

Against Sex Course

Editor: I have followed closely the controversy over sex education in the Catholic schools.

After all the recent changes in the structure of the Catholic Church it

seems to me that the parents of children in Catholic schools should have a voice in their children's education. According to what we hear every Sunday, the church wants lay people to become involved.

After looking over the second grade syllabus, which we teach to our children in our home in a much more refined manner, all doubt in my mind is erased as to why the complete syllabus for elementary school will not be given to the parents. As to Father Edward Shamon, the "ostrich head in the sand attitude" he describes could be better fitted to some of our clergy than to the people, who for many years have been paying the bills.

To steal a phrase from last week's Courier-Journal — "Hopefully, the current controversy will prod" the clergy to look more fully at what the parents want, rather than what the clergy thinks they need.

—Stanley A. Finegan, Rochester.

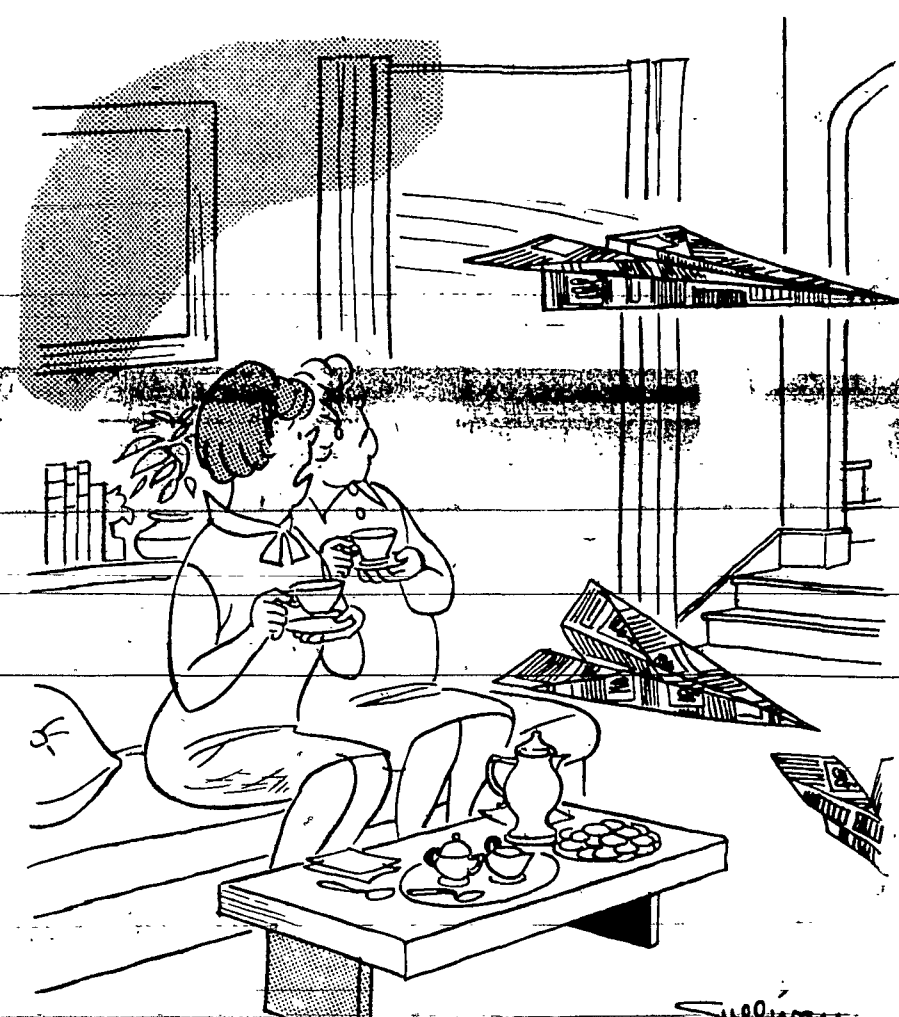
Program Defended

Editor: As a mother of five children, ages 12 to 21, and a third grade teacher in a parochial school, I heartily approve the Sex Education Program in our Catholic schools.

"Sex education" rightly begins long before the child enters school and continues until that child is ready to marry and begin his own family. This is a tremendous job to be done well and needs much communication between parent and child all through those precious years.

Many parents feel unable or unwilling to face up to this responsibility. With the school and the parents working together, we hope and pray that more parents will have the courage to guide their children in the right direction so that another generation will not be raised with the idea that "sex" is a dirty word instead of the beautiful act of love that God intended it to be.

—Mrs. John Morphy, Rochester.



Word for Sunday

The Words of Our Dying Lord

By Father Albert Shamon

Sunday's Gospel tells of the death of Jesus. In reporting the execution of the thane of Cawdor, Shakespeare said, "Nothing in his life became him like the leaving it; he died as one that had been studied in his death." Though Christ lived as a carpenter's Son, He died like a King! His first three words on the cross were spoken around twelve o'clock — for others. Then darkness and a three-hour silence ensued. Near three o'clock, the silence was shattered by a loud cry, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

The Father could not forsake His Son. The union of the divine and human in Christ is indissoluble. "This word," wrote St. Leo the Great, "is not a complaint, but a lesson." Actually it was a prayer. In the two darkest hours of His passion, Jesus prayed. In the Garden, "being in agony he prayed the more." On the cross, tasting the bitter dregs of desolation, He cried, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

These words are the opening verse of Psalm 21, which is the prophetic psalm describing the thoughts of Christ on the cross. It ends on a note of triumph. Now the sixth word of Christ was "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." These are the opening words of Psalm 30. Could it not be that in these dread hours, between this loud cry and His last word, Christ was praying Psalms 21 to 30?

As we enter Holy Week, could we not pray a psalm each day, beginning with Psalm 21. The psalms were written by many poets. Some go back to

King David (c. 1000 BC); some are later than the Captivity (c. 536 BC). They are poems, not doctrinal treatises, nor even sermons. They are poems intended to be sung. The word "psalm" is derived from the musical instrument — the zitherlike psalterium — which was used to accompany the singing of these poems.

The psalms must be read as poems, lyric poems — venting deep, deep feeling, often giving way to emotional rather than logical connections, to hyperbole, and to all the licenses proper to lyric poetry. I think high school students have found Cicero's Catalinian Orations so difficult to read, because more often than not they have treated them as narrative instead of orations. And often we miss what is in the psalms and think

to see in them what is not because we do not read them as poems.

Poetry is the expression of experienced thought — or feeling — in figurative language. That is why contemplative theologians, like Thomas Aquinas and John of the Cross, who experienced God and His mysteries in the depths of their hearts, were also great poets.

The psalms sing of the deepest thoughts and feelings that all men experience sometime in life — from highest ecstasy to deepest desolation. They are little incarnations giving body to what before had been invisible and intangible. Psalms 21 to 30 will let us see and feel Christ's passion, death, and resurrection. Read them and see for yourself.

COURIER-JOURNAL
PUBLISHED DAILY EXCEPT SUNDAYS AND HOLIDAYS

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