

# Psychology of Worldliness

THEOLOGY OF THE WORLD  
(Twenty-third in Series)  
By BISHOP FULTON J. SHEEN

The last article treated the Theology of Worldliness. The burden of this one is the Psychology of Worldliness. What are the motivations behind Christians that make them confuse the saeculum, or the world, and the spirit of worldliness?

In the original Pentecost the disciples of the Lord, who went into the whole world, never lost the vision of the Cross. Why today does "engagement" with the social order so often result in "disengagement" from the Spirit of Christ? What hidden psychic promptings urge the Christian who rightly becomes concerned with the horizontal, or man in the world, to alienate himself from the vertical, or concentration on the scars of Christ? Three explanations may be given for the decline of spirituality, as concern for the secular turns into secularism.

## I. REFUSAL TO RECEIVE

Our Blessed Lord never told us to "give up anything". He told us to exchange one thing for another: "What exchange shall a man give for his soul?" (Mat. 16/26; Mark 8/37). Exchange is based upon two factors: those things which we cannot get along without, and the things which we can get along without. We can very well get along without a quarter, but we cannot get along without the bread which that will buy, so we exchange one for another. He who loves feels that he can get along without his individual freedom, but he cannot get along without the freedom to serve another in love, so he gives up one for the other.

But exchange implies that we already possess something. Giving depends upon a prior act of receiving. Before we can give life, we must receive it from parents; before we distribute food, we must receive it from the earth, and it must receive oxygen from the air; before we can teach, we must be instructed. The mirror receives the light before it reflects the image: "God first loved us" (1 John 4/19).

The first characteristic of the Psychology of Worldliness is the refusal to receive. Some Christians regard themselves as autonomous sources. In religion one notes it in the refusal to accept Truth from the Church and from tradition; they "make truth"; they confess their own liturgy, and if anyone reminds them that we should not celebrate Holy Mass in a bar, they say they are "winning over people." St. Paul found the same pride among the Galatians: "It is a good thing to win people over — but it must be for a good purpose." (Gal. 4/18)

In the realm of morality there is a refusal to accept a norm, or the guidance of the Holy Spirit, or the inherited values of the centuries. The giving starts with the individual, not with God: "I feel it in here". In action, "love" is given to neighbor, or to friend without ever having acknowledged that it came from God. The rays of sunlight do not come from the sun, they radiate from that which reflects it.

## Satan and Denial Dependence

This worldliness which assumes that nothing has been given us, was the characteristic note of Satan as portrayed by Milton in Paradise Lost. Satan and his angels will not consent to the fact that they are derived from God. This hidden intellectual rope trick by which men make themselves ropes suspended in the air eventually becomes reinforced with an emotional aversion to parents, in the case of teen-agers; to tradition in the case of theology; to objective norms outside of individual sentiment, in the case of morality. To accept derivation and dependence would require humility, and this they will not do.

Obedience is the rarest of all virtues because obedience implies acknowledgment of dependence.

What is forgotten is that every declaration of independence is also a declaration of dependence. In the legal document of our country, it is stated that our rights have come to us from God; once, as citizens, we acknowledge that we are pendulums supported on the clock of the Creator, then we are free to move with the freedom of free men. We are only carbon copies; to affirm ourselves as the original, by denying conditioned relationship to another is the sin by which the angels fell.

Some minds feel ashamed when they should feel humble; some people blush to admit that a lunar module is dependent on a space capsule. The "show-off" items a decade ago were physical, such as the outdoor barbecue pit, a split-level house where you almost broke your neck thinking everything was "on the level", a mink stole and an outdoor swimming pool.

The physical has now become the mental. The "show-off" today vaunts his superiority by a kind of a blindly conceived intellectual sovereignty, by a denial of true marriage relationships: "As long as I am faithful to my wife, she has no say in my affairs." When caught in a net of bad habits, the modern worldly resent counsel: "I will work this out by myself". The refusal to pass through the narrow gate of humbly admitting one is drowning, keeps one on the "broad way to destruction" (Matt. 7/14).

Learning is possible only when one admits that the teacher is wiser than the student. This admission leaves the student no longer "free" to believe any longer that Shakespeare was born in 1224 and Thomas Aquinas was born in 1564. The astronomer learns the laws of the heavens by patiently sitting at the feet of nature and listening to its whispers. In like manner, to be free means not only being free from something, but also being free for something. The thing that we are free for is prior to our willing and wishing.

Charles Williams says Satan "... can never be reconciled to Love because he hates Love. He cannot hope; he will not fear. There can then be no change but to plunge from agony to agony and thence to despair which is complete hell and yet opens on deeper hells. 'All good to me is lost'."

Homosexuality, which St. Paul says is very

closely related to atheism, is a perversion because it is an adoration of self, a denial of that disjunction which is necessary for love and which is built into human bodies by God.

The denial of dependence is also a perversion and is inseparable from a spirit of criticism and a contempt of others. Assantu, in The House of the Octopus, describes it as the passion to devour others.

"I wish not to be eaten, but to eat others; I wish to grow great and thrive on others; And if others will not, I wish them to be compelled. I will be a belly to them and they food to my belly."

## Follow Church or Church Follow Me?

An example of the pride which was not born of any moral reasons, but wholly of a critical spirit, is that of Felicite Lamennais (1782-1854), a precocious priest who first wrote brilliantly against the Church, and so annoyed Napoleon that he had his book mangled for pulp. Then he faced up to this challenge: "Shall I follow the Church, or will the Church follow me?" Renan said of him that all of the restrained, all of the disciplined fervor and all the tenderness and piety that had lived in his soul became a witches brew of hate. He had expressly forbidden that the cross be put over his grave so that he might soon be forgotten.

It is not always easy to admit that we have received, even from Christ: "You must live your whole life according to the Christ you have received" (Col. 2/6). Plate could not accept the words of Our Lord that he would not have power unless it was given to him from above, but insisted that he have the power to put Him to death (John 19/10). Here was the basic issue: does power come from above, or does it come from below? Is it from the masses who organize dissent, or is every blessing from above?

To say that Christ did not receive power from His Father would mean also that the disciples did not receive it from Christ, and the Pope and the bishops and the priests did not receive it from Him and the apostles. Once this is granted, mission does not exist; no one is sent.

Refusing to admit they receive Love, they cannot give it; having never been redeemed, they deny the need to sacrifice; having no communion with heaven, they cannot recommend prayers to others. If they had been humble enough to admit that they received, they would be delighted to become weaker and weaker in their ego, that God might become stronger and stronger in their souls. Reversing the spirituality of John the Baptist, they say to Christ: "He must decrease; I must increase". This is the Psychology of Worldliness which forgets: "What do you have that was not given to you? And if it was given, how can you boast as though it were not?" (1 Cor. 4/7).

## II. LOSS OF HUMOR

In order to understand how the decline of spirituality results in a loss of humor, it is well to know that God made the world with a Sense of Humor. A Sense of Humor is described as the ability to "see through things." Humor is transparency, like a window pane; and want of humor is an inability to see through things, or an opaqueness like a curtain.

God made the world with a Sense of Humor inasmuch as the visible things of the world were meant to be a tell-tale of the invisible (Rom. 1/20). A mountain is not just a mountain, but a revelation of the power of God; to the poet, with his sense of invisible, the sunset is not just a sunset, but "a flaming monstrance". There was even a transparency about the Incarnation, for through the humanity the Divinity was revealed.

All the parables implied humor: nothing was taken seriously, whether it was a camel, an eye of a needle, a patch on new clothing, wine in old bottles, sheep, goats, mills and merchants. Our Blessed Lord implied that amongst some there was a certain seriousness, or an inability to discern the mystery behind things, "for seeing, they do not see." Suffering, too, has a transparency to a man with faith, for one sees in it the summons to continue the Passion of Christ.

If humor means the ability to see the Divine through the human, the Eternal through the temporal, the Invisible through the visible, if, in a word, the whole universe is sacramental, it follows that with the loss of faith and spirituality, life becomes very serious. Gravity takes over, and just as gravitation pulls things to the earth, so an undue seriousness clouds out the heavens. It has been often noted today that the worldly priest has an undue seriousness, rarely smiles unless it be cynical, is given to a frowning of the brow and a glumness of the spirit which completely alienates him from that spiritual joy which was always associated with the priesthood.

What a difference there is between the happy priest in the movie, Going My Way, and the sad priests in the novels of Graham Greene. Many a priest and religious has brooded himself or herself into a corner so that the only escape from what they believe is to de-sacrilize the self. The gloom which is characteristic of modern literature in touching the religious life has invaded the last threshold of humor, which is the priests and religious who are summoned to be the salt of the earth.

## Contempt of Any Sign of the Divine

This opaqueness, which fails to see significance and meaning, often becomes a perversion and even a contempt of the Divine. The Roman collar for example, and clerical dress are sacramental signs of the priest's humanity in relationship to Divinity. Not often, but occasionally, one will find a subconscious rebellion against this sign by the wearing of a sweater to Mass, and as was seen in a recent instance, the wearing of the collar at a marriage. The laity are beginning to see through that want of proportion and good taste as when the priest takes off his collar while teaching Catechism to the children of an automobile agent, and then puts it on when he asks the agent for a reduction on the price of a new car, or when he

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# THE HOLY FATHER

## Youth, Put Your Idealism to Work

Following is the text of a translation (from the Italian) of an address Pope Paul VI gave to a large number of young people gathered in St. Peter's Square March 30 for the Blessing of the palms.

Tell us, beloved youths, are you not conscious within yourselves of a need for clarity, of this need to know if and what purpose, what value, what goal deserves to give meaning and direction to our lives?

As everyone knows, and you yourselves may perhaps have experienced it, there is great unrest in youth today, a great liveliness of energy and aspirations which explodes in exuberant and often violent forms.

It is almost always against something: against other peoples' ways of living and thinking, against the customs of yesterday, against prevailing laws, against institutions inherited from the past.

Yes, an overbearing need for novelty, for originality, for freedom, urges the soul of the youth, and today often in rebel manner.

The vitality of the youth expresses itself in a negative manner, and almost finds satisfaction in the disorders which it can provoke and in the problems which it can give rise to, as well as in the positive sense of its surging presence in the social context, which public opinion calls the established order.

However, this is not what we want to speak to you about at this time. We only made mention of it in order that you may know that the Church too keeps its eyes open, sees and considers with loving and anxious watchfulness the great phenomenon of youth's restlessness, and the Church has in her heart many things to be said and to be done in reference to it.

Hear us well; it is up to the youth today to disclose to the world that Christ, the true Christ, the Christ ever living in the Church which preaches Him, which personifies and communicates Him; that, we affirm, Christ is the Saviour of the world.

It is up to you, beloved sons and friends. You have a mission. You

have a service to perform in this society of ours which is so exuberant in riches, in energies, in marvels, but also so bewildered in reference to the true and irreplaceable ends to pursue, so proud and so discontented with itself; so cultivated and intelligent and so corroded by doubt and so blind as to the right roads to its happiness; so highly organized and so threatened by its very organization; so filled with expectations and anxieties, and basically so disheartened, skeptical and despairing; so subtle in each of its manifestations, and at the same time so impassioned and corrupt.

You, we say, are children of our present period, highly perceptive with regard to its language, its genius, its spirit. But, you are also pure, free from its contaminations; you are adolescents, mature youths, prodigiously handsome, most pleasantly unblemished, so determinedly simple, logical and straightforward; you are joyful and lively, free and docile; you are not intolerant, but welcome the wisdom of your families; you grew up in the faith and in prayer; in a word, you are the disciples of Christ.

Yes, yours is the mission to announce to today's world the true Messiah, the authentic Christ, the irreplaceable Saviour. You must show to the people of our times the luminous countenance of Jesus, luminous because of the profound mystery of His true divinity and because of evident mystery of His incomparable humanity.

But you will say to us: this message is the one intended for apostles, for ministers of the Gospel, for teachers of the Church. Yes, this is their specific office, their ministry. But today, now, this is also your message! This is the novelty of our times; this is the index of the spring

time of the present age; this is the act of faith which the Church makes to the Catholic laity, which she makes especially for you, the youth.

Do you recall the council: "Young persons exert very substantial influence on modern society... Their heightened influence in society demands of them a proportionately active apostolate... Children also have their own apostolic work to do" (Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, No. 12).

And you will still say to us: but how may we carry out a mission so delicate, so difficult, so unpopular?

Yes, you are right in noting the difficulty of the Christian witness in our society. But, hear us further. Do you young people like things that are easy or things that are difficult? Does your empathy extend toward the weak, those who are fearful, the opportunists, the cowardly, or does it extend to the strong, the courageous, the heroes?

Do you wish that your Christian vocation today might make you timid, faint-hearted, egotistical, or make you full of conscious energy, of loving daring?

Was it not perhaps the lack of a certain education which mistook goodness for weakness, piety for human consideration, the Christian faith for private interest?

And furthermore: what is asked of you? Miracles? Extravagant and uproarious actions? No, you are asked to be what you are: youths and Catholics. We will say it with a German author: "You Christian, be a Christian." But a true, authentic, dynamic Christian, full of ardor, of imagination, of love. In other words, full of that Christian youthfulness, which the Church has been giving rise to, recruiting and giving its blessing to.



# Nazareth Its Largest Class in 45-Year History

Nazareth College's largest class in its 45-year history was held Sunday when Bishop Sheen conferred degrees on young women.

More than 500 persons in the ceremonies, held at East Avenue campus. Dr. Gillick, president of Keuka College, presided at the commencement.

Bachelor of arts degrees were conferred on 190 students, and science degrees to 87.

Among recipients were Masahiyama of Japan, who journeyed from Tokyo to graduation; Pamela Merck who shared the occasion with a year-old child, and Laura Linda Radtke, twins, who graduate work together.

Dr. Gillick contended that Nazareth is the sole hope which is becoming polarized into right and left. Trustees, administration, students, he indicated, must share views with of candor, and with an attitude of understanding.

Candidates for degrees sent by Sister Saint SSS, dean of the college, include honors by Sister H. president, and Mrs. Kennel, regent.

Graduating magna cum laude were Jane Feldman, Gail K. Kusak, Margaret Levick.



POLICE HOLY NA annual breakfast Monday; Monroe County Whelan, CSSR, rect honored guest; stand Public Safety Commission; Bonaigione, retiring Zenk, State 1

## Commencement Sunday at Fishers

Canadian Dr. Marshall termed this century's "high communications," with principal address at St. John's College's 15th commencement p.m. Sunday, June 8.

He will be granted a degree in humane letters by the college and sixty-three will receive degrees.

Graduates, trustees, faculty, administration, parents and friends attend a baccalaureate 8 a.m. in the Athletic Center will be Father William president of LeMoynes College.

# 24 Post By St.

Mother Agnes Cecilia superior of the Sisters of St. Rochester, announced 24 trative appointments this of them in parish grammar

She reported that one Mercy would become principal of three parochial schools including St. Patrick's, which Joseph runs operate. She reported Helen Therese superior principal at St. Patrick's

Sister Elizabeth will be the convent at Mt. Carmel School in Auburn, and Sister Ann will be vice principal at Sacred Heart. At move in with the St. Joseph at St. Alphonsus, releasing vent for use as a rectory. Sister will be Sacred Heart

At the Motherhouse in Sister Marie Emery will be Sister Eva Marie, who has administrative assistant at College, will become superior community's infirmary. Sister will be director of canonization

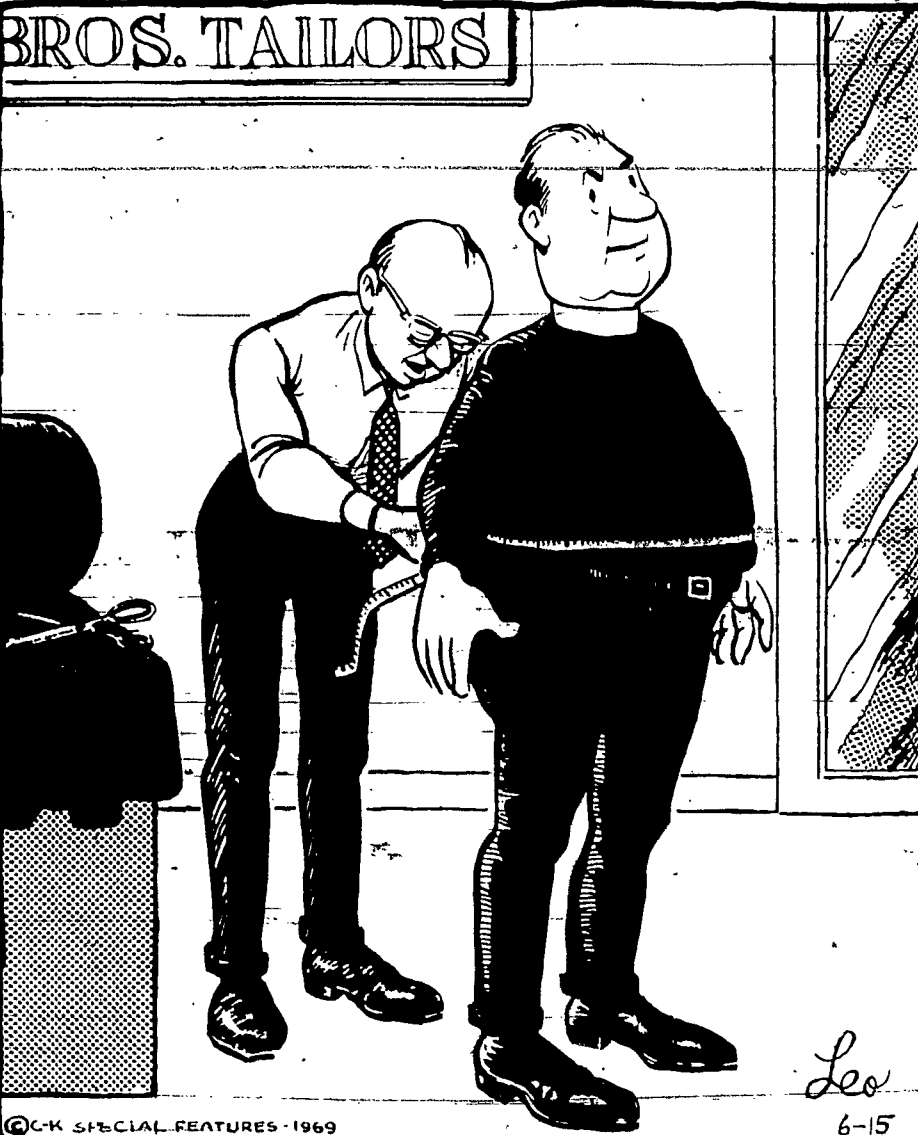
School appointments in Blessed Sacrament, Sister Michelle, superior and Naureth Hall Cadet School Raymond Mary, superior a pal; Our Lady of Perpetual ter Ambrosine, superior a pal.

St. Anthony, Sister Ann principal; St. Monica Ann Regina, superior, a Hillside, principal; St. Theresia Sister Mary Elizabeth, both

Appointments outside of include: St. Anthony, Auburn, St. Elizabeth, superior and principal; Auburn; Sister Barbara Jordan and principal.

St. Mary, Canandaigua North, superior, and Sister Alma, principal; St. Mary, Sister Anna Gonzaga, both

## CHURCH HUMOR



"Yes we have special rates for men of the cloth, but we have a limit on the amount of cloth."

## Letters

### Supports 'Manifesto'

Editor: I think the demand of the Negro people for \$500 million for the white Christian population is proper. Anyone wishing to make reparation please send their payments to: Most Rev. Denis E. Hurley, OMI Archbishop of Durban PO Box 2164 Durban, South Africa Let us start now paying our debt. —Dominic Ignatius, Tertiary of St. Dominic

### Article Praised

Editor: Thank you for printing Herman Walz's considerations on due process. (Courier-Journal, 5/30/69).

It was an informative, forthright and stimulating analysis of an issue of vital importance not only to the renewal of the church but also to the renewal of our national life. —John Dash, Pittsford, N.Y.

## Word for Sunday

### Corpus Christi... the Answer to Our Woes

By Father Albert Shamon

On Oct. 18, 1968, the Sacred Congregation of Rites issued a declaration which stated that the feasts of Epiphany, Ascension, and Corpus Christi are now to be celebrated on Sunday in those countries in which these feasts are not holidays. That is why this year the feast of Corpus Christi will be observed on Sunday, June 8, in the United States.

At the time of the Reformation, when the doctrine of the Real Presence was being attacked, an artist painted a picture in the center was the picture of Christ and under it the words "This is My Body." On one side was a picture of Luther and the words, "This contains my body." On the other side, a picture of Calvin and the words, "This is the symbol of my body." In the background were inscribed the words, "Which of these three speaks the truth?" Of course we know the answer very well. And yet sometimes I wonder.

Just the other day a Catholic layman and I were talking about the Holy Spirit. Our talk drifted to the Pentecostal Movement. Then to my surprise, he admitted he had been going to some of their gatherings. I asked him why. He replied there was something alive about them. They seemed to have the Spirit. I asked him if he had read Keith Miller's book "The Taste of New Wine."

The very first chapter speaks of a new order of Christians transcending denominational and vocational lines. "There is no organization; there are no dues, no membership — in fact there is only one reason they can be called a 'band.' They have in common only the Lordship of Jesus Christ

and a deep conviction that His call is to the whole man — vocation and all... They are turning to the Living Christ as their Teacher and to the Bible as a valid revelation of the nature of God and man" (pp. 16-17).

I read him that passage, then commented, "Plus XII condemned a pneumatomachical church — that is, a non-visible church that worships God only in spirit and truth. Man is sacramental; he learns through signs and symbols. That is his nature. God has always respected that limitation in man: He uses signs and symbols — the sacraments. Corpus Christi is to remind man that God takes man as he is — a creature who communicates only through visible signs."

I said to my pentecostally-inclined friend, "Your faith is weak. You are seeking God in persons, you are seeking Him outside the visible Church."

Yet all the while He is present reality, truly, and substantially in the Eucharist. What more do we — or any one of us need? One greater than Solomon is in our midst. Need we look anywhere else?"

Paul Claudel was looking for a plan to save the world. One of his friends asked him to stop in Notre Dame Cathedral for Benediction. Paul did, sat in the last pew, and when the hymn "O Salutaris Hostia" (O Victim who saves) began, grace melted the heart of Claudel. He confessed, "Here we were, puny little men, seeking to save the world and all the while the Savior was here."

Yes, the most Holy Eucharist — the private visit, Mass, Holy Communion, Benediction — ah, here is the answer to all problems. No need for anything else or anyone else except — a Big "except" — faith!

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