

Speculation Isn't Doctrine

By Fr. Andrew Greeley



One certainly can rejoice that the Roman Curia has given up its ancient practice of condemning theologians as heretics.

However, not everyone is yet ready to give up the hurling of anathemas. Just as Rome abandons the "heresy" thunderbolt, Frank Morriss, one of the more shrill of the right wing Catholic journalists, announces to his faithful readers that Hans Kung is in the "sorry company of anti-papal heretics."

One wonders how Mr. Morriss knows. The English edition of Father Kung's book has yet to be published. Perhaps Mr. Morriss has read the advance galleys, or maybe he has even studied it in the original German.

Many American Catholics are inclined to write off the debate between Father Kung and his theological colleagues as irrelevant. "Infallibility" is a conservative issue, according to these observers, in the sense that only conservatives could care about it. As one prominent Catholic layman put it to me, "After the Humanae Vitae fiasco, who cares about infallibility?" I pointed out to him that no one had claimed that the encyclical was an exercise of the infallible authority of the Pope or the Church. "If you can't be infallible on something that important," he snorted, "then what good is it to be infallible?"

It is to such questions that Father Kung is addressing himself; and I think the issue can be rephrased in a way that its relevance does become obvious.

There are two facts which we cannot deny. Jesus commissioned his followers to go forth and proclaim the good news of God's saving love, and promised to sustain them in that effort. On the other hand, from Peter on, His followers have been sinful, misguided and ignorant

men. Mistakes, blunders, to say nothing of selfishness, ambition, pride and greed, have been part of the life of the Church from the beginning. The parables of the kingdom make clear that there is no reason to expect otherwise until the End.

The fundamental question then is how we can reconcile the divine element in the Church—that is, the Church's role as the herald of the kingdom—and the all too obvious human element. Such a question is unimportant only for those who consider the message of the kingdom unimportant—and these have ceased to be Christian.

Father Kung's book on infallibility is an attempt to wrestle with that very difficult issue. Unlike Frank Morriss, I am not qualified to pass theological judgment on the book (and I have read it). Father Kung makes it quite clear that he is engaging in tentative theological exploration, not in laying down norms of faith. Both right wing adversaries and left wing enthusiasts seem incapable of distinguishing between scholarly discussion and popular religious instruction.

But there is little reason for having theologians if we are not going to let them speculate on difficult and complicated questions. Many of the problems the Church faces today can be traced to our reluctance in days gone by to tolerate theological speculation on anything but the safest and easiest issues.

Whatever the final conclusion of theologians, however, anyone who has read Hans Kung's work—both scholarly and popular—ought to have little doubt that he is a man of faith and a loyal son of the Church. He will be remembered long after loud mouth critics like Frank Morriss are forgotten.

RACL Viewpoints

The School Issue

A position paper from the Rochester Association of Catholic Laymen:

RACL is not, at this time, proposing any position for or against parochial elementary schools or Catholic high schools.

In May, 1970 we submitted a position paper in which we indicated our reservations concerning a continuation of the practice wherein parishes spend the vast majority of their budgets to educate a minority of their children while neglecting the pressing educational needs of the rest of the parish, particularly adult education.

Our position at this time concerns the use of public funds (direct and indirect, local, state and federal) in support of parochial schools.

As Catholic laymen, we cannot in conscience approve public funds in support of private or parochial schools, until two conditions have been fully and publicly satisfied by the administrators of those schools:—

1. The parochial schools must not be allowed to become a haven for children and parents seeking to avoid the community effort to promote full quality integrated education for all its children. We feel that the parochial schools must be at least as concerned for the disadvan-

taged as the public schools. Therefore, the Catholic school administration must publicly guarantee at least the following:

a) that an effective ban will be continued to prevent children from transferring to Catholic schools in avoidance of the vital public program.

b) that no parish school with vacancies may reject children of minority groups for reasons of religious affiliation or national background. Effective guarantees must prevent tuition barriers from being raised as a subterfuge.

c) that an area-wide diocesan program of integration to supplement the public program will be instituted immediately and that a strict public supervision of the whole program will be provided and continued for the foreseeable future.

2. In accordance with the stand of the National Association of Laymen (June, 1970) we expect a full public disclosure of the parish and diocesan use of all funds for the conducting and administering of their schools. We would expect every legislator before voting for public aid to demand such an accounting.

Robert J. Fien
Chairman,
Education Committee

On The Right Side

Interesting Reaction

By Father Paul J. Cuddy



My March 3 column narrated a Collegian's Dilemma. A collegian wrote: "The chaplain is an oddball. Sorry, Father, but that's the way I see it. . . . Instead of Our Lord we have Vietnam and all that's wrong with the U.S. We have racism stuck down our throats as if we were all a bunch of racists and he and his nutty disciples are the only Christians. . . . All this is jumbled up with exhortations to love and more love and to be concerned and all that."

I replied: "It leaves you in a dilemma only the chaplain's bishop can solve." Reaction was interesting.

From a parent in suburbia: "As a father of a small college contingent, I found the letter from a collegian quite the reverse of my own experience with Catholic collegians. . . . My own children are turned off completely by the Mass at our parish Church. They attend on Sunday, when at home, out of respect for us. They will not miss Mass on Sunday wherever they may be. . . . (However) they prefer and relate to the informality and simplicity of the campus-type Mass. The guitar-strumming, singing nuns, the priests without vestments, the basket of bread passed among the celebrants.

"One now is living in X City, travels across town on Sunday to attend Mass in a non-church. The congregation? Mostly ex-Jesuits and their wives and families. . . . Yet I wouldn't call my children 'weirdos' by any means. The Institutional Church, Vatican II, Vietnam and industrial pollution most certainly were not their doing. I am very proud of my children.

It is our pastor I worry about."

Reply: A few years ago I made my retreat at Auriesville. At the time I was concerned about the mentality which was much in evidence in the ultra-liberal papers, although I personally found it rarely. The retreat master was the Jesuit superior of a well known seminary. I broached him on the subject. He said: "This is what is called 'The Third Force.' It is composed of people who will not accept Catholic doctrine and discipline, nor will they leave the Church. They remain within it, as a Third Force, using what they like, rejecting what they don't like. It has quite some strength in Holland and France, and is gaining support in the United States."

While I admire your paternal devotion, I wonder at your satisfaction with your children's solutions. If the parish Mass is such a dissatisfying event for your children, may I suggest they go to Immaculate Conception Church, where the Mass celebration is ebullient enough to satisfy a need for a more free-wheeling camaraderie among those who find no comfort in their parishes. And please be understanding of your pastor. He carries burdens most people do not realize.

From an over-fifty priest: "I read your weekly column. . . . and I seldom agree with your opinions. . . . In the column (Collegian's Dilemma) I sensed a violation of justice as well as of charity. If you are guilty of this, and I believe you are, then you should be admonished to avoid this in the future.

"You made a judgment about

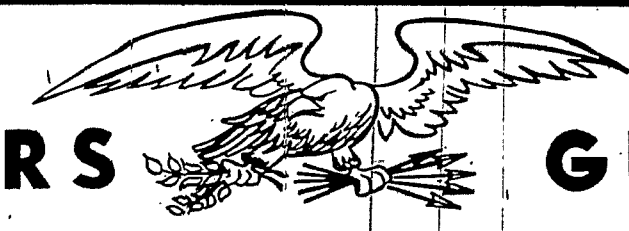
a brother priest solely on the basis of charges made by a collegian in a letter to you. The charges, none of them substantiated by any other evidence were leveled against his chaplain. . . . You accepted these charges at their face value as true and based your judgment on them. . . . You judge him unjustly—unless you have evidence of his guilt from other sources you did not divulge—and you treat him uncharitably. If this is typical of the way you pass judgment on anyone, even a brother priest, may God preserve me from being judged by you. . . ."

Reply: Who would cavil at a brother priest who admonishes his brother in the spirit of St. Paul? "If a man be overtaken in any fault, you who are spiritual, instruct such a one in the spirit of meekness. . . ." (Gal. 6:1). In all candor, however, I must confess a distrust of your indignant over-confidence regarding my limited source of information. The letter was no exaggeration.

From a well-known airway executive: "Your recent article 'A Collegian's Dilemma' is very much to the point. I might add that it is always refreshing to read your column and find the common sense that seems to be missing with a great many religious people."

Reply: Thank you for your note, I suppose both your business and your travels give you contacts with collegians and professors beyond the experience of most men. I am very grateful for your vote of confidence.

Why not send it to the editor?



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