

PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

Who is Duped? Who Spirit-Led?

Part II

The title for this article is taken from a chapter of a recent book, *The Conspiracy of God* written by Father John Haughey, SJ, an associate editor of *America*. Cardinal Suenens has described the book as the best in the English language that he has read in recent years on the Holy Spirit. I have recommended it to some of the local leadership in the growing phenomenon of the Catholic Pentecostal Movement. Thank God, these people are looking for guidance. And the Church has always sought to give direction to the well-intentioned lest they be deceived. We have always known that wolves can be dressed in the clothing of sheep. The Lord Himself warned us to be on our guard lest we be duped by the forgery of teaching presented as bearing the stamp of His Approval, but whose message is foreign to His Spirit of truth and unity.

Father Haughey's book does uncover what has been buried for ages in the dust of manuals of spiritual theology which seldom made their way into the hands of those other than priests and religious. These classic volumes always addressed themselves to the topic, "Discernment of spirit" — i.e., who is leading us — the Spirit of God, the spirit of evil, or the spirit of self-promotion.

Early in the Church's history, St. Paul encountered factions and divisions in the Christian community of Corinth. While he never denied the diversity of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, he had to remind his people that the Spirit was sent to be the source of unity and not of factionalism — and that no one was conspiring with the Spirit of Jesus unless his life manifested the spirit of charity. (cf. 1 Cor. XIII)

"The present confusion and polarity in the Church points to the need to be more discriminating about the many voices that

claim to be on the side of God and Gospel," Father Haughey observes. Just as I truly believe that the Holy Spirit was the inspiration for the convocation and the directives of Vatican Council II, so I believe that the Spirit has promoted the creative tensions that have been going on in the Church ever since the council. Notice that I said the **creative tensions** — the pains of growth that are necessary companions of the maturing process. Spiritual growth involves the process of making Christian values our own and of living out their painful personal demands. This renewal of heart and the destruction of our religious idols (the external props which so many leaned on) is the work of the Spirit. "I shall cleanse you of all your defilement and all your idols. I shall give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you . . . I shall put my Spirit within you" (Ezekiel 36:25-27)

Here are some criteria to test the source of our inspirations:

1. The Holy Spirit will act in us as **he is**. Since he is the Spirit of Truth and Love, he will speak the truth to us, come to us in love, and lead us to the love and understanding of God, of ourselves and others. Since he is the Spirit of Christ, he will relate us more closely to the person of Jesus, by deepening our prayer life which is our sole means of hearing the Lord's voice.

2. Then we look to find the effects of the presence of the Spirit in the life of a person. The Spirit confronts those who have followed the path of evil and stings them with shame and remorse. For those who abide in God, there should be a sense of joy, a desire to praise Jesus rather than ourselves, and a manifestation of charity towards our brothers. How profitable it would be for all of us to reflect on what St. Paul had to say about charity: 1 Cor. 13:4-7. I believe he is telling us the most easily detectable sign of the Spirit's presence: "real love is patient and kind, never jealous, boastful or conceited; never rude or selfish, nor

does it take offense nor delight in other people's sins, but only in the truth; it is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope and to endure whatever comes." Paul tells us that the polarity of today which expresses itself in rudeness, selfishness, in conceit, in offensive accusations, is not the work of the Spirit. What **builds** the community is of the Spirit, what **tears** it apart cannot be.

3. All activity of the Spirit reinforces God's plan for our **personal integrity** which has been won for us in Christ. Jesus showed us his Father's will for all of his children. He cursed the fig tree that was unproductive; he repudiated the man with one talent because he buried it. Where there was human paralysis, he revived faltering limbs; blindness became new vision; hunger was fed with bread; life returned where it had been lost.

Some pain and death always stands between the incomplete reality of ourself of this moment and the glorious wholeness that God intends for us. If we are open to the Spirit, he will revive our sagging spirits, and prompt us to take the painful paschal steps that are the prelude to our glory.

Come, Holy Spirit, our inmost beings fill.

Send your light into the darkest corners of our hearts.

Where you are not, there is only our blindness, our paralysis, our unproductive selfishness.

Renew our strength, bend our stubborn will,

Warm the coldness of our hearts.

Come, Holy Spirit, our hearts' most welcome guest!

vatican news

Italian Divorce Vote May Alter Church Status

Rome [RNS] — The amazing scope of this nation's vote to uphold divorce could spur a review of the Vatican's Concordat with Italy.

This, observers indicate, stems from the poor showing of the Vatican-supported Christian Democrats.

The party's secretary, Amintore Fanfani, had hinted such a development could happen in an interview given a week before 59 per cent of Italy's voters went to the polls to endorse a divorce law opposed by the Church.

Francesco De Martino, the Socialist Party secretary, in a post-election comment, said that the pro-divorce vote is likely to lead to a re-examination of the Concordat, under which the Vatican has the main responsibility for regulating Catholic marriages in Italy.

L'Espresso magazine, which is considered well-informed, said in its most recent edition that even while the anti-divorce campaign was at its highest pitch, a group was meeting in an ecclesiastical apartment in Rome to discuss the possibility of "including the hypothesis of divorce in the revised family rights law, should it happen that the 'anti-divorcists' won the referendum."

Father Mouned El-Hashem,

assistant Vatican spokesman, told RNS that he preferred not to comment on the story but that in a televised debate, two Christian Democrats had said that while they could not accept divorce for valid religious marriages, they could accept divorce for non-valid — civil marriages.

This would tend to indicate that the Vatican is prepared to be more flexible than believed.

Ugo La Malfa, secretary of the small but influential Italian Republican Party, has described divorce as the only real reform that the Italian Parliament had passed in the post-war years. The last speaker at the final pro-divorce rally before voting began on the bid to repeal the law, La Malfa said that repeal would be a great step backwards for the country.

It would seem that the Italians heeded his words. Final but unofficial results of the referendum on repeal showed that the public voted 59 per cent to 41 per cent to retain the 1970 law. There was an 88 per cent turnout among the 37.5 million voters, a bit lower than in the last parliamentary elections.

The reaction of party secretaries, when the strong pro-divorce trend became evident, was that the vote was not a

mandate for any party but a vote for "reason and liberty . . . civil rights and modernity, tolerance, and responsibility," and a bid "to become more European." One top party official said that maintenance of the divorce law "was not at the cost of disconcerting the Church but rather a vote in favor of the autonomy of the state."

Fanfani, of the Christian Democrats, who had rejected any attempts to compromise to avoid the referendum and was the prime political supporter of the anti-divorce move, showed no embarrassment that he might have been feeling, he said, that the Christian Democrats "had always supported the principle of having a referendum through which the people would have a voice." He expressed the hope of his party that in the new family law (which has been before Parliament for years) the rights of the "weaker" party and the children involved in a divorce would be better protected.

The results of the referendum will probably not have any immediate effects on the coalition of Premier Mariano Rumor, a Christian Democrat. Cabinet ministers have studiously avoided taking part in any pro or anti divorce rallies, leaving the talking to their party secretaries.

The long term results may show a change in the balance between the right, the left and the Church. Most clearly, the communists and the socialists on the left will likely feel more secure and press for many other reforms they see as overdue in Italy, the most immediate of which are family law and economic incentives.

On the strictly political level, the referendum split the Rumor

coalition of Christian Democrats and the two socialist parties. The latter campaigned with the Communists for divorce to be retained, as did the Republicans. The Christian Democrats were joined by the Ultra-right Italian Social Movement. However, many party officials said they would not vote with their party, and among these dissidents there seemed to be a great number of Christian Democrats.

Pontiff Sorrowed

Vatican City [RNS] — Pope Paul expressed "surprise and sorrow" over the fact that some Roman Catholic clergy and laity in Italy did not support the defeated referendum to repeal Italy's current divorce law.

"We would like to imagine, that they acted without being completely aware of the serious incidence of their behavior, although the authoritative and public statements (by the church) on the law of God . . . should not have left any doubt."

Commenting further on the vote, Pope Paul said "We all know about this recent event which was stirred up in this country concerning the question of indissolubility of marriage and we know that a large majority of the beloved Italian people pronounced itself in favor of the law which admits a certain easy possibility of divorce."

"Unfortunately for us," he continued, "this is an occasion of surprise and sorrow because the rightful solidarity of not a few members of the ecclesial community was lacking in support of a just and good thesis of indissolubility of matrimony."

Therefore, he added, "let us hope that they also (those who voted against divorce repeal) join the Church in promoting the true concept of family and of its authentic flourishing in life."