

The Church 1978

By Father Andrew Greeley

Dynamic Duo Needs Watching

It looks like we're going to have to put up with the Dynamic Duo of Peter Berger and Richard John Neuhaus for a long time to come. They have a huge sum of money from the American Enterprise Institute to do a five-year study on "empowering people." One can count on it, the Dynamic Duo which managed to garner an immense amount of national publicity off the Hartford Statement (attacking secularist theologians) will parlay this "mediating structures" project of theirs into an endless flow of statements that will attract publicity like honey attracts flies.

There are other problems with the Dynamic Duo:

1) You would think that their work that they thought up all the ideas they propound. Thus the Hartford Statement has no reference to those who were fighting the Harvey Coxes of the world while the Boy Wonder was marching on picket lines and Berger was preaching the decline of religion. Similarly, in their book "To Empower People: The Role of Mediating Structures in Public Policy," they propound the traditional Catholic social doctrine of subsidiarity without a single mention of Jacques Maritain, Yves Simon, John Courtney Murray, John Ryan, Pius XI or Thomas Aquinas. Their discussion of American pluralism (which they profoundly misunderstand) provides no reference at all to the political scientists and sociologists who have written about American

pluralism for the last several decades. If an idea is good, apparently, the Dynamic Duo are the ones who thought it up.

2) Not only do they not refer to the work of others, they also conveniently forget their own previous writings about which they have changed their minds. In his "Sacred Canopy," Berger propounded confidently and even dogmatically a doctrine of secularization—the decline of religion in the face of secular values. Now, without a single look backward over his shoulder, he observes that it is false to assume "that in the modern world allegiance to institutional religions must perforce decline. Public policies based upon that highly questionable if not patently false assumption will continue to be alienated from one of the most vital dimensions in the lives of many millions of Americans." Religion is now vital to millions of Americans. Nary a reference to the many empirical sociologists who argued with Berger and forced him to change his mind.

3) My biggest problem with the Dynamic Duo is that for all the self-confidence of their assertions they frequently do not know what they are

talking about! While the idea of mediating structures (between the state and the family) is surely a good one, their grasp of what it means is so shallow as to be dangerous. Like all true believers, the Dynamic Duo caricature the good ideas they have discovered. The most serious weakness in their new mediating structures book is their discussion of neighborhoods. They have clearly done no research on neighborhoods, have apparently read none of the literature on neighborhoods, and if they live in neighborhoods, they are certainly not sensitive to what makes them tick. Thus they tell us that it is "patently the case . . . that one of the chief determinants in shaping neighborhoods, especially in urban areas, is the racism that marks American life."

That assertion is just plain false. If there were no racial problems at all in America, there would still be neighborhoods and they would be indistinguishable from the neighborhoods we now have.

The Catholic social principle of subsidiarity does need to be revived (it was mentioned neither in the "Catechetical Directory" nor in the Call to Action conference); but if we are to revive it, let's do it right.

Insights in Liturgy

BY MSGR. WILLIAM H. SHANNON

Confirmation And Baptism Inseparable

Last week we posed the dilemma faced by the Confirmation Task Force: Is Confirmation a sacrament of initiation or a sacrament of maturity? This article will detail, briefly, how the Task Force resolved this dilemma.

The Task Force investigated the practice of the early Church and came to the conclusion that for more than a thousand years in the Church's history the notion of Confirmation as a sacrament of maturity simply did not exist. Confirmation belonged inseparably with Baptism as an integral part of initiation into the Church. This was especially true in the case of adults, but also generally true in the case of infants. Moreover, it has been the constant practice of the Eastern Church, both Catholic and Orthodox, from the beginning, as it still is today.

After the eighth century the rite of Christian Initiation was dismembered for reasons that were unfortunate but too lengthy to detail here. Confirmation began to exist on its own. Gradually, a theology developed to justify Confirmation as a separate sacrament. This "soldier-of-Christ" theology that developed in the late middle ages was the forerunner of contemporary attempts to view Confirmation as a sacrament of maturity.

The Task Force, in discussing these two divergent theologies of Confirmation, was quite conscious of the fact that theology is a developing and evolving experience in the Church. While primacy of place must

certainly be given to the earliest tradition of the Church, it is nonetheless possible that Christian experience and practice can lead to a new theological understanding of the sacraments. The Task Force did not underestimate the possibility of such development regarding the sacrament of Confirmation. Ultimately, however, the Task Force chose the theology of Initiation over the theology of maturity as normative in our day for the understanding of Confirmation.

What prompted the Task Force's choice was its detailed study of the "Praenotanda" (the Introductions) to the rites of Infant Baptism, Confirmation and the Christian Initiation of Adults. These "praenotanda", which express the theology embodied in the new rites, definitely opt for the theology of initiation as expressing the sacramental meaning of Confirmation. (The Task Force's study of the praenotanda is set forth in its position paper, which may be obtained by writing to the Pastoral Office.)

Since these new rites represent the way we celebrate the sacraments in the Church today, it does not seem logical for us to use these rites if we do not accept the theological understanding which they embody. The Roman Catholic Church, in the way it now celebrates Confirmation, understands it as a rite of Initiation. If we are to celebrate this rite with the Church, it would seem that we should accept this understanding of Confirmation as a normative theology for our pastoral practice.

We cannot catechize people one way about Confirmation and then celebrate the sacrament in another way.

Catholic Opposition To Ordained Women Stressed at Lambeth

Canterbury (RNS) -- Roman Catholic opposition to the ordination of women was reaffirmed when the Lambeth Conference of 440 worldwide Anglican bishops discussed the subject for three hours at a session described as historical and without parallel in the conference's history.

Twenty bishops and five observers spoke during the debate but no decisions or votes were taken. Discussion, however, revealed a division within the Anglican Church and other Churches and this was expected to be reflected in the conference's final document when it ends Aug. 13.

During the debate, Irish Bishop Cahal Daly of Ardagh and Clonmacnois spoke for the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity.

He reasserted firmly that Rome opposes the ordination of women and said the tradition on which his Church took its stand was unbroken and universal in East and West. It is a tradition so firm and decisive as not to have needed formulation or defense, he said.

Bishop Daly also reported the anxiety of the secretariat about "what seems to be a prevailing tendency" to regard his Church's position as unclear and somehow provisional.

This is not the case, he said, but the secretariat wishes to continue in the search for reconciliation in spite of this "new and grave obstacle." It was assumed he was referring to last week's report of an Anglican-Roman Catholic Consultation which raised the hopes of some for an ultimate

agreement between the Churches on the issue.

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