

Dissent document may be counterproductive

By Father Richard P. McBrien
Syndicated Columnist

The Vatican's new document on dissent in the church may prove to be counterproductive.

It sets out, first, to place a shroud of secrecy over intra-church conflicts and debates because, it is asserted, such public controversies confuse the faithful.

And yet the Vatican released the document to the media, thereby provoking yet one more public controversy.

The document may also prove to be counterproductive because, in its attempt to show the church as a strong institution in full control of its own affairs, it advertises instead the church's problems and weaknesses.

No organization or community that is in robust health needs to worry about the free

expression of dissident ideas, much less threaten to suppress them or curtail their dissemination.

The document may prove to be counterproductive for a third reason. Although it seeks to underscore the pastoral task of the church's hierarchy, the document's concept of the "pastoral" may only alienate many of those who actually do the pastoral work of the church.

Pastors console, sympathize with, encourage, support, motivate, assist, celebrate, rejoice with, guide, advise, and counsel.

"Vigilance" would be a pastoral priority only in those unfortunate circumstances where pastors and people are alienated from one another and where bonds of mutual trust and respect have been severed.

And yet that is how this new instruction of the ecclesial vocation of the theologian states the case: "The pastoral task of the Magisterium is one of vigilance."

The new instruction calls upon theologians who may disagree with certain teachings and policies of the church to "suffer for the truth, in silence and prayer, but with the certainty that if the truth really is at stake, it will ultimately prevail."

But haven't theologians already passed that test? Yves Congar, Karl Rahner, John Courtney, M.D. Chenu — great and saintly theologians all — suffered for the truth during the 1950's "in silence and prayer, but with certainty that ... the truth ... will ultimately prevail."

One would have thought that the Second Vatican Council settled all this. It ended the censures and the silencings and the



ESSAYS IN THEOLOGY

secrecy and the obsessive fear of the media. And the truth did ultimately prevail.

Isn't it time now to go on with other matters — important matters like trying to reinstall a sense of the sacred in the modern world, or igniting the fire of love, compassion, and justice in those who have become hardened in affluence, or restoring a spirit of hope and purpose in the lives of ordinary people?

The church, like Jesus, calls the world not to "loyalty" and "obedience" and "submission" to mortal men, but to a life of sacrifice on behalf of others.



THE BIBLE CORNER

will forget all about God."

The strangers persuaded Lot, his wife and daughters to follow them out of the city. When the small group came to a certain point, the two men said: "We must leave you now. Remember what we have told you. Flee for the mountains. And don't look back!"

"God has shown us mercy," Lot said to his family. "Let us do now exactly as they have said."

All four of them ran for their lives. They heard an explosion and they could feel the tremors beneath their feet.

Just for a brief moment, Lot's wife stopped, saying, "Such a waste." She looked wistfully back at the fire that was raging. There she remained, frozen in time, a pillar of salt.

Today, all that remains of Sodom and Gomorrah is the hardened sulphur that lies beneath the waters of the Dead Sea.

Scripture Reference: Genesis, Chapter 19:1-30.

Meditation: "Jesus replied, 'No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the Kingdom of God.'"

Lot forced to choose between God and the world

By Cindy Bassett
Courier Columnist

"Come with me to my house," Lot said to the two strangers who were just about to enter the city of Sodom. "It's much too late in the day to continue on your journey. My wife will prepare a meal for you."

The two men refused at first. Lot kept urging them, saying, "You'll find that my house is equipped with all of the latest comforts."

At last they relented and followed Lot. The house on the hill belonged to a man of considerable wealth.

"How did you come to live in such a place?" one of them asked Lot after dinner.

"It's amazing isn't it?" Lot said proud-

ly. "To think that I used to live in the rough, out on the plains with only a tent as my shelter. That was back in the days when I was a shepherd with my uncle Abraham."

The two men exchanged knowing glances and waited for Lot to continue.

"Uncle Abraham and I both became very prosperous. Each of us had many sheep to manage — so many that our herdsmen began to quarrel over the land on which to graze them.

"It was Abraham who suggested that we separate. He allowed me to choose first whichever land I wanted," Lot continued. "I'm no fool. Why shouldn't I choose the best land for myself? Here, just outside of Sodom, the land is fertile. I've prospered even more. My wife and my two daughters want for nothing. Isn't that what life is all about?"

"Didn't you stop to consider what kind of place Sodom is?" one of his guests responded. "The people of Sodom have no regard for God. They merely choose to do whatever pleases them. And, still, you have chosen to live among them."

Lot looked as if someone had hit him with an arrow. "It doesn't matter to me what other people do! Even here, in Sodom, I've tried to be faithful to God, no

matter what you two might think!"

"That is why God has sent us up here to warn you," the stranger told him.

"Warn me about what?"

"God is so disgusted with the people in Sodom and Gomorrah that he is going to destroy both cities," he explained. "All of their clamoring after sinful pleasures will come to nothing."

"I can't believe it," Lot stammered. "Everything that I worked for will be destroyed?"

"Pack up whatever you can carry with you and escape with your life first thing in the morning," the stranger advised.

Despite the warning, it was midday before Lot even managed to tell his wife and two daughters the news about the coming disaster.

"You expect me to leave my beautiful house and clothes because of some weird message!" Lot's wife shrieked.

"How will we ever find husbands away from the city?" whined Lot's daughters.

Lot hesitated. "I don't see that it matters if we stay as long as we avoid the people here," he said to the two strangers.

"Don't you understand yet?" one of them asked. "It is impossible to focus on two things at the same time. If you are drawn to the things of the world, soon you

Rochester Monument Co., Inc.
Formerly Located at
1575 Clifford Avenue
Over 50 years of Service

All Work done on premises
by Master Stone Carver
Robert Micoli-President

1130 Ridge Rd., Webster
872-1827

FUNERAL DIRECTORS OF THE ROCHESTER DIOCESE

The funeral Directors listed herein offer pre-need and at-need services and counseling in accordance with the Catholic faith.

ROCHESTER

NULTON FUNERAL HOME
Penfield, New York 14526
(716) 381-3900



Malcolm M. Nulton
ASHTON-SMITH FUNERAL HOME
Rochester, New York 14609
(716) 482-6260

MATTLE FUNERAL HOME
Rochester, New York 14609
(716) 482-2440



James R. Gray
WOOD FUNERAL HOME **PAYNE-NULTON FUNERAL HOME**
Rochester, New York 14624 (716) 247-6360
Macedon, New York 14502 (315) 986-7781

Set your mind at ease...
Make your Funeral Arrangements
with our Funeral Specialists

GATES

Crawford Funeral Home, Inc.
"Our Family Serving Your Family"
Located at 495 N. Winton Rd.
(Between Atlantic & Humboldt)
(716) 482-0400

DiPonzio Funeral Home, Inc.
(Across from St. Theodore's Church)
219 Spencerport Road
Rochester, N.Y. 14606
254-6672

GREECE

Arndt Funeral Home
1118 Long Pond Rd.
(south of Maiden Lane)
Parking for over 100 cars
Greece, N.Y. 14626
Ronald John Arndt
(716) 225-6350

Vay, Schleich and Meeson Funeral Home Inc.
"Greece's Largest and Most Complete Facilities"
2692 Dewey Avenue
1075 Long Pond Rd.
(716) 663-2100

IRONDEQUOIT

Paul W. Harris Funeral Home Inc.
Richard P. Harris Charles E. Davis
570 Kings Highway S.
(corner Titus)
(716) 544-2041

May Funeral Home
George L. May Jr., Raymond L. Welch
2793 Culver Rd.
Rochester, N.Y. 14622
(716) 467-7957

McLaughlin Funeral Home Inc.
John J. McLaughlin
871 Culver Road
Rochester, NY 14609
(716) 482-1847

Schauman-Suiewski Funeral Home Inc.
Edwin Suiewski
2100 St. Paul Street
Rochester, N.Y. 14621
(716) 342-3400

Michael R. Yackiw Funeral Home
1270 Norton Street
Rochester, N.Y. 14621
(716) 544-5000
If no answer 342-9300

This Space
Is Available

MONUMENTS

HART MONUMENT CO.
2301 Dewey Avenue
Opposite Holy Sepulchre Cemetery
Since 1856

865-6746

REICHART MONUMENT CO.
348 Crestwood Blvd., Rochester, N.Y. 14624
(off Buffalo Rd. one block east of Howard)
235-4490