

Free Expression

"God created every person to be a special kind of Saint." Father Thomas Merton remarks in one of his numerous books. One of the unrecognized wonders of God's creation is the unique individuality of the human person. Of the billions of people now existing—and of all who ever existed—no two are totally alike. Any reasonable organization of human society must take into account the Divine gift of the matchless individuality of each person. The personal calling and singular set of talents inherent in each man provide a variety of viewpoints to every topic that confronts human society.

Personal vocation and individual talents cannot flower except in an organized society; thus the principle of authority is a natural corollary to personal fulfillment. There must be a center about which man can organize and exercise his God-given talents. The delicate balance between authority and authoritarianism, between individual and community is difficult to achieve and maintained only by experiment, patience and charity. The flow of time, the force of history and technological achievements constantly demand the creation of new approaches and structures that will foster human development in an orderly manner. The Church is now in an age when major changes in government, liturgy and organization are being made to meet the changing times. There remains that immutable command to preach Christ and to serve the needs of the people He created; but equally immutable is the command to adapt and be relevant to the culture and the age in which we live.

One of the areas in which the adjustment is gradually taking place is that of expressing viewpoints which may differ from that of ecclesiastical authority. The "Wall Street Journal" in a front page article alludes to this new development within Church publications. And this refers not only to Catholic publications but papers and journals within all denominations are using this new found freedom to be outspoken on controversial issues. Like any freedom it must be exercised in a responsible manner; it must have as its basic aim the encouragement of community and personal development. Whatever the differences may be about its manner and the substance of the issues discussed, in an age when communication is so instant and available the full expression of individual views cannot be denied. The action of Cardinal Concha of Colombia reported by the NCWC News Service on this page is an anomaly in our age. Viewpoints may be argued, they may be condemned, they may be exposed as fads, but the expression of them cannot be denied.

We can be proud of the efforts that the Church in the United States has made to adjust to this new reality in our society. There is still progress to be made but there is available within the structure of the Church itself some organ where the major political and theological viewpoints—and their various shadings—find some expression. Our efforts should not be directed to suppression and elimination but to understand the thoughts of our brothers within the Church.

Rights Demonstrations A Danger to Freedom

DALLAS — (RNS) — The president of the nation's largest Negro denomination, assailing "so-called non-violent" civil rights efforts, charged that they have endangered basic freedoms. He also claimed that recent demonstrations in Chicago set back race relations there 50 years.

Dr. Joseph H. Jackson of Chicago, president of the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc., told a press conference held in connection with the denomination's annual convention here that "some historic gains in the civil rights struggle and in the victory for freedom have been made in the last 12 years." But, he added, "we have also witnessed the use of some methods that have disregarded the just laws of the land, and have in some cases tended to deny and negate some of the historic freedoms that we already possess."

In a prepared statement, Dr. Jackson attacked "some so-called militant groups who demand that the patriotism of all Americans be determined by their attitude towards direct action or demonstrations. People who are not committed to the above are frequently denied the right and the freedom of speech. They may be picketed, interrupted in their speech on public platform, threatened by a mob, villified and given many debasing titles because they insisted on the freedom of speech."

Similarly, he continued, "churches are being attacked and picketed because there are preachers in the pulpit who will not use their religious faith to help certain people raise money to carry on programs of direct action against other segments of the community."

According to Dr. Jackson, "Many people talk quietly against certain extreme demonstration, but they are afraid to make their position known" for fear of reprisals against their business, their homes or even their person."

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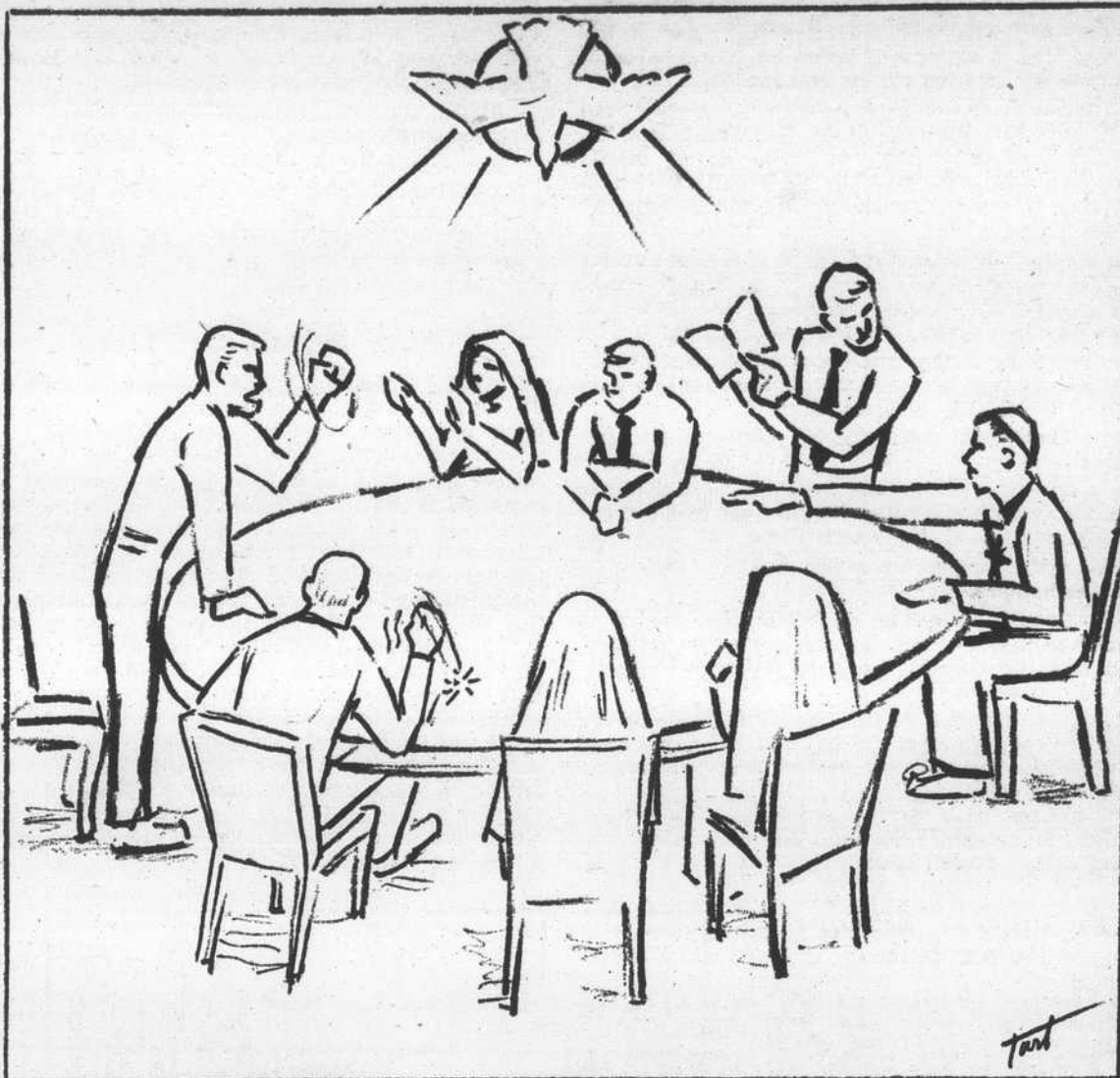
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"... when you assemble as a Church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and I partly believe it, for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized." I Cor. 11-18



Colombia Cardinal Closes Paper

By Jose Ignacio Torres
(N.C.W.C. News Service)

BOGOTA, Colombia — Luis Cardinal Concha Cordoba of Bogota ordered the unprecedented closing of Colombia's most authoritative and important Catholic paper, El Catolicismo.

A communication from the cardinal arrived at the weekly's editorial offices shortly after the latest edition had come from the presses. The prelate's note ordered the paper closed down and demanded the resignation of its two directors, Fathers Mario Revollo Bravo and Hernan Jimenez Arango.

Cardinal Concha, editor of the paper during the 1920's, accused the paper of causing "real evil" among the Catholics of the country, and added that it was "growing increasingly improper." The cardinal continued:

"Many times there have come to my ears echoes of the surprise, uncertainty, and anguish caused among many Catholic readers by the attitude of articles regularly published in El Catolicismo. These articles become more pointed when we realize that the paper is generally considered as the voice of the archbishop of Bogota."

"It is clear," the prelate told the priest-editors, "that the ideological orientation which you have given to the newspaper recently has grown increasingly improper, and as archbishop I feel it my duty to intervene."

"You know too that I am in serious disagreement with you over those points that are upsetting the faithful. In my role as teacher, which has been given to me by the Church and ratified by the Second Vatican Council, I have the duty and the right to impede any publication causing evil among Catholics."

The action by Cardinal Concha has caused an uproar in Colombia, and has produced much comment in the secular press. Every newspaper has registered its surprise at the closing, and public discussion has spilled over into radio and television.

Noted now for its progressive content and its eagerness to apply the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, the paper has been part of a sharp division splitting the Colombian Church.

Explicit in its commentaries on what it believes to be the Church's shortcomings, El Catolicismo criticized the cardinals recent visit to Colombia's President Carlos Lleras Restrepo.

Neither the cardinal nor the president has made any move to revise the Concha Law, one of the matters dividing Catholics here. The law, drawn up by the cardinal's father while serving as ambassador to the Holy See, demands that Catholics who marry outside the Church be reported to Church authorities by the official performing the marriage. Formal excommunication follows.

Cardinal Concha, described by some as the most conservative of Latin America's prelates, is thought

by some Colombians to be heavily influenced by a small group of intransigent advisors.

Approaching his 75th birthday, the cardinal is continuously affected by illness. His age and health prompted some papers to speculate that he might retire at 75 in accord with Pope Paul VI's recommendation in the motu proprio, Ecclesiae Sanctae. Cardinal Concha quashed the rumors with the terse announcement, "I have not given, nor will I give, any thought to retiring."

Notice of the closing of El Catolicismo has brought together a group of prominent lay Catholics eager to enlist both laymen and priests in the founding of a new Catholic journal devoted to furthering the teachings of the Second Vatican Council in Colombia.

Interviewed after the announcement of El Catolicismo's closing, its directors said that they in no way felt any guilt over the paper's policies or articles.

Father Mario Revollo Bravo commented to an interviewer, "Don't ask me how I feel as a journalist; just ask me how I feel. I am completely at peace, because I have worked in accord with my conscience."

Censorship Needed

SYDNEY — (RNS) — Roman Catholic bishops of Australia, in a joint pastoral letter, condemned "enticements to evil" tempting youths and urged "watchful and reasonable" state censorship of books, magazines and films.

They said that a censorship agency is necessary "to supplement the efforts of family, school, church and similar groups."

The letter was entitled "The Moral Code" and emphasized the observance of the Ten Commandments. In it the bishops also referred to:

—Widespread indulgence in alcoholic liquor that cannot be regarded as "an intelligent use of a dangerous thing."

—Modern society's encouragement of young people to abandon chastity rather than to value it.

—The right of the state to inflict capital punishment or to engage in a just war.

—The alarming fall in the Australian birthrate and the sharp rise in the sales of "the so-called birth-control pill."

Concerning censorship, major subject discussed by the bishops and a controversial topic throughout Australia over the last few years, the letter observed that "parents and teachers find it most difficult to train children and young people to decency and purity while enticements to evil are spread before them on all sides."

The bishops cited the press, television and movies as being "all guilty in this matter and having grave responsibility."