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Antonio V. Romualdez

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# The Constitution on the Laity: A New Insight\*

ANTONIO V. ROMUALDEZ

**I**N his "pre-notes" for a reading of the Vatican Constitution on the Church, Father Arevalo, discussing the Church after Vatican II, pointed at the Council's dynamism in terms of what he referred to as a "multi-phased theological thrust": it is "the multi-phased theological thrust that [is] at once inwards toward the center (toward the Risen Christ, Christ living in the Church, present and active in word and sacrament), and outwards from the liturgy and the sacramental life to the task of the Church and the Christian in the world, outwards toward the great opening of doors and reaching out of minds which the ecumenical movement has become, and then as it were all at once—centrifugally—into a new understanding of the Church's relationship with all of mankind, with mankind's unfolding history and with all of terrestrial reality, into a new realization of the pilgrim Church's eschatological dimension as Kingdom of God. . . ."<sup>1</sup> This multi-phased thrust, Father Arevalo remarked, is well summed up in a commonplace today, that the Council has shifted the Christian's orientation "from a juridical and apologetic view of the Church to an ecclesiology that is resolutely trinitarian, Christocentric, pastoral."<sup>2</sup> If it is true, as has been claimed,

\* This article was one of the Lenten Lectures sponsored by the Ateneo de Manila University in March 1966.

<sup>1</sup> C. G. Arevalo, S.J., "Prenotes for a Reading of Vatican Council II Constitution on the Church," *Philippine Studies*, 13 (1965), 610.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by C. G. Arevalo, S.J., *ibid.*, 609.

that Vatican II marks the decline of an epoch often labelled as Tridentine in the Church's history, it must be so because it has moved away from the emphasis of Trent on the institutional structure of the Church to an emphasis, best exemplified by the person of John XXIII, on the communal life of the Church.<sup>3</sup>

Inevitably, in the context of this pastoral reform, which would stress life rather than institution, service rather than power, theologians must attempt a deepening of the Christian understanding of the layman in the Church. It is no longer enough to state that the lay people are those "allowed to possess temporal goods, but only what they need for use. . . [those] allowed to marry, to till the earth, to pronounce judgement on men's disputes and plead in court, to lay their offerings on the altar, to pay their tithes: and so they can be saved, if they do good and avoid evil."<sup>4</sup> A more positive notion of the laity is required than the legalistic definition that the layman is he who has no "part in the power of jurisdiction and, especially, of holy order."<sup>5</sup> Because to be pastoral is principally to see the Church not only as the static instituted source and minister of the sacraments and the deposit of faith and of apostolical powers, but also as a dynamism of grace reaching out in time to all men and the world, the reforms of Vatican II have revealed that the Fathers of the Council deeply appreciate the role of the laity in the Church. In a large measure, it can be said, especially of our own day, that in and through the laity is realized the fulfillment of the Church's mission "to make of men and a reconciled world the community-temple of God."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Giuseppe Alberigo, "The Council of Trent: New Views on the Occasion of its Fourth Centenary," *Concilium*, 7 (September, 1965), 38-48.

<sup>4</sup> These are Gratian's words "in a canon of which he makes St. Jerome the father," quoted by Yves Congar, O.P., *Lay People in the Church*, tr. by Donald Attwater (London-Dublin: Geoffrey Chapman, 1965) rev. ed., pp. 9 and 11.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted by Yves Congar, O.P., *op. cit.*, p. 17.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 262. See also the *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*, art. 1.

The Constitution *On the Church (Lumen Gentium)*<sup>7</sup> opens the discussion on the laity with the statement that "everything that has been said [in the Constitution]...concerning the People of God is intended for the laity, religious and clergy alike" (art. 30). Any study, therefore, of the laity in the context of Vatican II must begin with a treatment on the People of God: its constitution, its dynamic orientation, and its mission.

#### THE PEOPLE OF GOD

The Council Fathers state that they constitute the People of God "who believe in Christ, who are reborn not from a perishable seed but from an imperishable seed through the word of the living God (cf. I Pet. 1, 23), not from the flesh but from water and the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn. 3, 5-6)." They are, we are told, "established as a 'chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people' (I, Pet. 2, 9-10)" (art. 9). All baptized Christians, therefore, by their very baptism are joined to the People of God: the Catholic faithful who, "possessing the Spirit of Christ, accept her entire structure and all the means of salvation established in her, and are united with her as part of her visible social body and through her with Christ, who rules her through the Supreme Pontiff and the Bishops;" catechumens, "who, moved by the Holy Spirit, seek with explicit intention to be incorporated into the Church;" and, "in some real way," non-Catholic Christians too, who "honor Sacred Scripture, taking it as a norm of belief and a pattern of life. . ." and who, showing "a sincere religious zeal," . . . "lovingly believe in God the Father Almighty and in Christ, the Son of God and Savior" (arts. 14-15). The people of God, however, do not constitute a ghetto, nor should it encourage a ghetto mentality. "All men are called to belong to the . . . people of God" (art. 13). For

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<sup>7</sup> All references to this Constitution are from the translation published by St. Paul Publications, Pasay City, Philippines, which is itself based on the unofficial English translation released by the National Catholic Welfare Conference of the Bishops of the United States of America. *Constitution on the Church: Lumen Gentium* (Pasay City: St. Paul Publications, 1965), 98 pp.

this reason, the Fathers remind Christians that "those who have not yet received the Gospel are related in various ways to the People of God" (art. 16).

To be one of God's people is not to be swallowed up into a homogeneous social body where all must think, speak and live uniformly. The Council Fathers recognize that a diversity of men possessing a variety of gifts form the unity of this people. The grace of membership does not in any way destroy—it rather builds on—the unique structure of each human personality brought into the Church. The peculiar points of view, for example, by which a person—or an entire culture—encounters the world of both things and other men are not annihilated by grace; by these, indeed, the experience of the Church in the world is all the more made relevant, vital and enriching. It cannot be gainsaid that not a little of what was successfully recommended in the sessions of Vatican II were fruits of fresh insights into the human situation. The Fathers consequently state that "in virtue of [the Church's] . . . catholicity each individual part contributes through its special gifts to the good of the other parts and of the whole Church. . . . Not only, then, is the People of God made up of different peoples but in its inner structure also it is composed of various ranks. This diversity among its members arises either by reason of their duties. . . . or by reason of their condition and state of life" (art. 13).

The dynamism of the Christian life and apostleship is given orientation by the threefold functions of Christ as Priest, King and Prophet. By sharing in the priesthood of Christ, all Christians have been granted the privilege of entering into the presence of God and of gaining through involvement in a sacramental life and an ecclesial sacrifice His grace and fellowship; by participation in the kingship of Christ, the privilege of both ordering all creation, each as its specific laws demand according to the divine economy, and, in a real sense, sharing in the government of the Church; in the prophetic office, that of holding, professing and somehow teaching the Word of God with infallibility.

According to the Constitution, "the baptized, by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated as a spiritual house and a holy priesthood, in order that through all those works which are those of the Christian man they may offer spiritual sacrifices and proclaim the power of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvelous light (cf. I Pet. 2, 4-10)" (art. 10). All the faithful, therefore, laity as well as clergy, are endowed with the privilege of offering both personal and ecclesial sacrifices to God, and these efficaciously toward uniting themselves with Him, corporately and singly, and toward redeeming all creation. Also granted to all the faithful is the privilege of participating actively in the sacramental sacrifice of the ordained priest at the altar. Though from the point of view of sacramental institution only the ordained priest is needed for the Mass, from the point of view of life, of a realized mission, there is need for the rest of the faithful. This emphasis on the priesthood of all the faithful explodes the myth held still by many in our midst that the layman can achieve holiness only if he were to attach himself to specifically religious organizations, or only if he were to introduce into his profession or occupation pious articles or practices — an ecclesiastical environment — though these be alien to it. His total self, rather, is what brings holiness to his works, because he shares really in the priesthood of Christ.

In his book *Lay People in the Church*<sup>8</sup> Father Yves Congar speaks of two ways of understanding the faithful's participation in the kingship of Christ: kingship as a form of life and kingship as a form of power. The first is closely associated with the priesthood, and is expressed by the biblical phrase: royal priesthood. It refers to the Christian's rule over himself and over creation; it involves the ordering of the self through struggle against sin and the ambivalence of fallen man, and the ordering of the created universe to its proper end in Christ, an ordering that finds in the specific structures of things the basis for understanding their functions in the universe of God. To appreciate this latter meaning of the faithful's participation in the kingship of Christ is to discover the solution to the Christian dilemma implied in a charge made by

<sup>8</sup> Yves Congar, O.P., *op. cit.*

Maurice Merleau-Ponty concerning what seemed to him to be the "ambiguity of Christianity on the political plane." He wrote: "the Christian is a nuisance to the Establishment because he is always somewhere else and one can never be sure of him. But the Christian makes revolutionaries uneasy for the same reason: they feel that he is never completely with them. He is a poor conservative and an unsafe bet as a revolutionary."<sup>9</sup> This very same charge was hurled against Pius XII in less sober tones in the play *The Deputy*. This same charge too is what many Catholics in the United States have succeeded in proving false by their commitment to such movements as those on Civil Rights and on the opposition to the Vietnam War.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, a proper understanding of the Christian's participation in Christ's kingship does permit whole-hearted commitment to the demands of secular professions and occupations.

The second way of understanding the Christian's participation in the kingship of Christ is as a form of power, a sharing, that is, in the governing authority among the People of God. This aspect of Christian kingship has been most neglected in Christian doctrine since the Reformation. For discussing it lengthily in his *Rambler* essay in July 1859 entitled "On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine," Cardinal Newman was opposed by several bishops and cardinals in England and in Rome.<sup>11</sup> It was in opposing Newman's views that Mgr. Talbot wrote his famous statement about laymen: "What is the province of the laity? To hunt, to shoot, to entertain. These matters they understand, but to meddle with ecclesiastical matters they have no right at all."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Faith and Good Faith," *Sense and Non-Sense*, trans. H. C. Dreyfus and P. A. Dreyfus (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), pp. 177-178.

<sup>10</sup> See reports in the *National Catholic Reporter* issues in December and January (1965 and 1966 respectively).

<sup>11</sup> John Henry Newman, *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine*, ed. John Coulson (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1961), 118 pp.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in the introduction to John Coulson's edition of Newman's *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine*; see note 11 above.

While I must emphasize here that I am in no way suggesting that hierarchical acts of sacramental worship and decisions on matters of doctrine have no validity without consultation from the rest of the faithful, I must say, however, that, as Fr. Congar puts it, the realization of the Christian life and the fulfillment of the Church's mission require it. I am also suggesting that, if in many respects the hierarchy has not succeeded as much as they should in realizing the Church's mission in this country, perhaps one of the reasons is their failure to "consult" the faithful enough. It is, at least, worthwhile to find out if this is so.

Lest, as in the case of Newman, there be confusion over the word to *consult*, let me quickly define it here, as in Newman, as not so much to ask advice or opinion or judgment, as to ascertain the fact of belief in matters of doctrine, or to seek the faithful's consensus in matters of episcopal election, or to seek useful information in matters of direct concern to them as in love, courtship, and marriage, or concerning the reformation of abuses or the efficacy of pastoral work. That these forms of sharing in Christ's kingly authority belong to ecclesial tradition is adequately demonstrated not only by Newman in 1859 but also by Congar almost a hundred years later in 1951.<sup>13</sup>

The faithful, according to the Council Fathers, exercise the prophetic office of Christ by being living witnesses to Him "especially," we are told, "by means of a life of faith and charity and by offering to God a sacrifice of praise" (art. 12). Here we see too the prophetic significance of the liturgy; we realize too the scandal that may result from Christian indifference toward the liturgy, an indifference that can be encouraged by the clergy's failure to instruct the laity in it, or by their recklessness in the performance of it.

The Constitution further states that participation in Christ's prophetic office means too that "the entire body of the faithful, anointed as they are by the Holy Spirit (cf. I Jn. 2, 20-27), cannot err in matters of belief. They manifest this special property by means of the whole people's superna-

<sup>13</sup> Yves Congar, O.P., *op. cit.*, especially pp. 234-270.

tural discernment in matters of faith when 'from the Bishops down to the last of the lay faithful' they show universal agreement in matters of faith and morals" (art. 12). That this in turn is related to that aspect of the kingly office referred to above as the consensus of the faithful seems fairly clear. Indeed it has been defined that the infallibility which is possessed by the pope is that "with which the Redeemer wished His Church to be endowed."<sup>14</sup>

To be numbered among the "messianic people," whose head is Christ, is to be admitted from estrangement to divine sonship, to become once again a temple of the Holy Spirit and to be filled with the dynamism of Christ's love. For, according to the Constitution, "the state of this people is that of the dignity and freedom of the sons of God, in whose hearts the Holy Spirit dwells as in His temple. Its law is the new commandment to love as Christ loved us" (art. 9). Because all of its proper energies are derived from Christ himself, the life of God's holy people is not self-enclosed; rather it is dynamic: "its end is the Kingdom of God, which has been begun by God Himself on earth, and which is to be further extended until it is brought to perfection by Him at the end of time, when Christ, our life (cf. Col. 3, 4), shall appear, and 'creation itself will be delivered from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the sons of God' (Rom. 8, 21)" (art. 9). That is why, though "established by Christ as a communion of life, charity and truth, it is also used by Him as an instrument for the redemption of all, and is sent forth into the whole world as the light of the world and the salt of the earth (cf. Matt. 5, 13-16)" (art. 9). To be one of God's holy people is consequently to be called not only to divine fellowship but also to Christian apostleship.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Robert North, S.J., "The Scope of Infallibility," *Continuum*, II (1965), 555-74. See especially the section of this article which explains the statement that "ultimately the Pope gets his infallible information by *interrogating the Church*" (pp. 567-71). What Father North failed to emphasize and explain in this article is that aspect of the doctrine which deals with infallibility in papal judgment on matters pertaining to revealed truth on faith and morals.

## THE LAITY

By issuing a decree exclusively on the apostolate of the laity, the Council Fathers have called attention to what they previously declared in the Constitution, that while all the faithful share in the common privilege of divine fellowship and in the common mission of Christian witness, they differ, one from another, in their manner of witness. The decree states that "in the Church there is a unity of mission, but many kinds of ministry" (*Ap. L.*, art. 2). Likewise in the Constitution we are told that the Holy Spirit "distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank. By these gifts He makes them fit and ready to undertake the various tasks and offices which contribute toward the renewal and building up of the Church" (art. 12). The decree in turn refers to these same gifts stating that "by possessing these charisms, even the ordinary ones, there arises for each of the faithful both the right and duty to use them in the Church and in the secular order for the well-being of mankind and the growth of the Church" (*Ap. L.*, art. 3). Thus, the Constitution reads, "if . . . in the Church everyone does not proceed by the same path, nevertheless all are called to sanctity and have received an equal privilege of faith through the justice of God (cf. II Pet., 1, 1)" (art. 32). Apropos of the life and apostleship of the laity, who at first are described as "all the faithful except those in Holy Orders and those in the state of religious life approved by the Church" (art. 31), the Fathers teach that "there are certain things which pertain in a special way to the laity, both men and women, by reason of their condition and mission" (art. 30).

The areas of the lay apostolate are many. The *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity* calls our attention to five: Church communities, the family, the youth, the social environment, the nation and the international community (art. 9). These are, it seems, "the more important ones" in the contemporary scene. Here I have chosen to discuss at some length the area of the social environment for two reasons. First, because much has been said in many places about Christian apostleship in Church communities, in the family, and

among the youth; whatever is said about the apostolate in the social environment must provide the groundwork for apostleship in the national and international order. Second, because in the past much of the attempts, of Christians to "transform" the social environment in the Philippines has been characterized by a pietism that disregarded or even did violence to the proper structures and laws of social institutions. In a small way, an attempt will be made to contribute a little toward filling the need underscored by Mrs. Theodore O. Wedel, the associate general secretary for Christian Unity, World Council of Churches, in her commentary on the *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*. She observed that the decree had failed to provide a "serious discussion of the dilemmas of the modern Christian in his daily work. He is exhorted to be a Christian in all that he does, but there is little overt recognition of the fact that this is often perplexing advice."<sup>15</sup>

According to the decree, by the apostolate in the social environment "is meant the effort to touch with the Christian spirit the attitudes, morals, laws and community structures in which one lives" (art. 13). The Council Fathers emphasize the fact that "this apostolate is so much the province and function of lay people that it should scarcely ever be attempted by anyone else" (*ibid.*). For, we are told, in this area the laity "are the ones best able to assist their brother whether the apostolate be one related to work, professional or academic life, the neighborhood, recreation or community activities" (*ibid.*).

The problem, of course, is how: how should the Filipino laity "touch" his social milieu? The decree provides several guidelines by which this can be accomplished:

First "by that inner consistency of works with faith by which they become the light of the world;

Second, by a constant integrity of life which attracts others to love what is true and good, and eventually brings them to Christ and the Church;

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<sup>15</sup> *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. by Walter M. Abbott, S.J. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966), p. 524.

Third, by that fraternal love which makes them share in the life, labors, sorrows and aspirations of their fellowmen and thus gently dispose their hearts for the workings of grace;

And finally, by that mature awareness of their role in building up society which motivates them to carry out their domestic, social and professional functions with such Christian generosity that slowly their very manner of acting penetrates the environment in which they live and work." The first three, it seems, are best grasped in the light of St. Peter's advice to the Christians of his time: he wrote: Behave yourselves honorably among the pagans; that whereas they slander you as evildoers, they may through observing your good works, glorify God in the day of visitation (I Pet., 2: 12). The fourth can be better understood in the context of the orientation of the chapter on the laity in the constitution and of the decree.

The laity, according to the Constitution, are specifically set apart by their "secular character" (art. 31). Their vocation is to "seek the Kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs . . . ordering them according to the plan of God" (*ibid.*). The decree also points out that "it is the particular calling of lay people to be immersed in the secular world and its activities: and so they have a God-given vocation to cultivate a fervent Christian spirit and to act as a yeast in the secular order" (*Ap. L.*, art. 2). The layman therefore lives in the world, in "each and in all of the secular professions and occupations" (art. 31). The Council Fathers state also that "by exercising their proper function and led by the spirit of the Gospel they [the laity] . . . work for the sanctification of the world from within" (*ibid.*). Especially noteworthy in the Constitution is the exhortation that "in secular affairs, by their competence and by their activity, elevated from within by the grace of Christ, [the laity] . . . vigorously contribute their effort so that created goods may be perfected by human labor, technical skill and civic concern for the benefit of all men, according to the design of the Creator and the light of His Word" (*ibid.*). The apostolate of the laity, then, the layman's participation in the salutary mission of the Church, involves a total commitment to the world. Because his is a calling, a vocation, the layman's choice of life and

manner of witness requires renouncement and total consecration no less than the calling to the sacramental priesthood.

The layman's involvement in the world is not a tactical maneuver by which the men of the world are supposed to be deceived into acceptance of Catholics; it is not a form of infiltration such as that practiced by the communists; it is not to be a politician in order to be able to defend the interests of the Church in matters legislative or even to be able to discuss religion and holiness with other politicians; it is involvement, rather, because there is in the world itself—in politics itself—something of value to Christ, the beginning and end of all things. "Christ's work of redemption," we are told in the Decree on the lay apostolate, "is directed both toward the salvation of men as individuals, and at the renewal of the whole secular order" (art. 5). Indeed, the Decree points out, "All that makes up the secular order . . . have a validity of their own . . . established in them by God" (art. 7). For this reason, in passages reminiscent of the "Law of Incarnation" formulated some years ago by Emmanuel Cardinal Suhard in connection with Christian witness,<sup>16</sup> the Fathers admonish all the faithful to "learn the deepest meaning and value of all creation" (art. 36). The decree underscores the fact that "neither family responsibilities nor any other concerns of secular life should be extraneous to the conduct of our spiritual lives" (*Ap. L.*, art. 4).

To be laity, therefore, is not to live a compromise: a half-hearted secular commitment along with a half-hearted religiosity. To be laity is to be Christ immersed in the world. It is to engage wholeheartedly in human affairs—political, economic, social, cultural and professional. In his total commitment to the business of the world lies the layman's salvation. For one called to the vocation of the laity, Teilhard de Chardin writes, "the most direct way to heaven is not to let go of earth as quickly as possible, as could sometimes appear, but to bring this earth to fulfillment, since we see it now as

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<sup>16</sup> Emmanuel Cardinal Suhard, "Growth or Decline?" *The Church Today: The Collected Writings of Emmanuel Cardinal Suhard*, edited by Rev. Louis J. Putz, C.S.C. and Vincent J. Giese (Chicago: Fides Publishers, 1953), pp. 91-170. See especially pp. 149 ff.

much vaster thing, more unfinished than we ever suspected."<sup>17</sup> The decree on the lay apostolate makes the same observation: "God's plan," we are told, "for the universe calls for men, working harmoniously together, to renew the secular order and continuously improve it" (*Ap. L.*, art. 7). This renewal of the world which the laity are called to undertake neither destroys nor distorts the world; it transforms the secular order "without violence to the integrity of its own laws; it is brought into harmony with the deepest principles of Christian living, and made to conform to the human needs of our varying localities, times and peoples" (*Ap. L.*, art. 7).

In view of the Council's emphasis on the layman's commitment to the secular order, a commitment characterized by "competence and activity," it seems clear that lay spirituality should somehow be determined by the exigencies of the lay vocation. Recognizing this, the Fathers have written in the decree that "the spiritual life of lay people . . . ought to take its distinctive qualities from their marriage and family life, their single or widowed state, their conditions of health, and from their involvement in their own professional and social lives. They should be earnest then in cultivating the qualities and talents that fit these states of life, and they should make use of the gifts which they themselves have received from the Holy Spirit" (*Ap. L.*, art. 4). The Council Fathers seem here to be encouraging laymen not only to excel in whatever, profession or occupation they hold, but also to take all means within their grasp by which excellence and competence can be maintained or improved. Generally, I daresay, professional organizations constitute such a means which laymen cannot ignore. If we are to follow the admonitions of the Fathers, membership in professional organizations would seem to be a constitutive element in the laity's spirituality. By professional organizations is not meant those sectarian in character which tend rather to isolate Catholic professionals from, than to associate them with, their non-Catholic and non-Christian colleagues. The Christian's answer to Mrs. Wedel's question is

<sup>17</sup> *Quelques réflexions sur la conversion du monde* (1936), pp. 6-7, quoted by Christopher F. Mooney, S.J., "Teilhard de Chardin and the Christological Problem," *The Harvard Theological Review*, 58 (1965), 91-126. Quotation is on pp. 91-92.

simple: he has simply to be himself—one who, because he participates in Christ's priesthood, kingship and prophetic office, and because he commits himself wholeheartedly to the business of the world, brings Christ to the world by *being* himself. And he is *being* himself not statically but actively—in his simple presence, in his state, and in all his action.<sup>18</sup> He is being in the world, he makes himself present to the world by his very *being*, which realizes itself in his activities. How he makes his presence real or felt—how he *is* therefore—in the world is chiefly through his professional activities and in the variety of actions that make up his state in life.

In discussing the apostolate of the laity, the Fathers state that besides the lay vocation to be immersed directly and decisively in the secular order, other ways of apostleship are open to laymen. We are told that "the laity can also be called in various ways to a more direct form of cooperation in the apostolate of the hierarchy" (art. 33). The Fathers single out in the decree the way of Catholic Action as one worthy of attention and praise. It might be appropriate here to note, however, that perhaps because of the extraordinary need for this form of apostolate in the Philippines, the tendency has been among many to see in Catholic Action *the only* way by which laymen may fulfill their duty of Christian witness. While in itself a situation like this is not evil, it can nevertheless produce unfortunate results, especially in our age when, as the decree states, "the modern situation demands of lay people an even more intense apostolate and one broader in scope . . . (in which there is generally no substitute for the lay person)" (*Ap. L.*, art. 1). In several sectors of the country, for example, while Catholic Action seems to thrive, the work of Catholics in professions and occupations seems sadly neglected, seems characterized by mediocrity. The danger this state of affairs poses for the Church lies in that because of it the Church, both clergy and laity, "risks above all a spiritual failure. What must be feared [then] is not so much . . . that it shall suffer as that it might fail; not so much that the world

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<sup>18</sup> I have yet to develop this insight in full but the philosophical basis for it can be found in Emerich Coreth, S.J., *Metaphysik*, Part III, ch. 2, 830 ff.

might crush it as that the world might pass it by; not so much that the Church's mission might be opposed by others as that it might be left unfulfilled by us."<sup>19</sup>

The distinction between their manner of witness does not, however, imply absolute autonomy of the laity from the clergy. The Fathers tell us that "the distinction which the Lord made between sacred ministers and the rest of the people of God bears within it a certain union, since pastors and the other faithful are bound to each other by a mutual need" (art. 32). Though the laity make the Church "present and operative in those places and circumstances where only through them can it become the salt of the earth" (art. 33); though indeed "upon the laity . . . rests the noble duty of working to extend the divine plan of salvation to all men of each epoch and in every land" (*ibid.*), the laity must still depend on the clergy for their divine dynamism. For the Christian life is a life led according to God's incarnate Word, a life informed, therefore, by scripture, confirmed by tradition and nourished by the Eucharist. The Christian life is life united with the mystical Body of Christ and his Church in the celebration of a communal liturgy. Only through the hierarchy is the Word of God—both as doctrine and sacrament—made available to the laity. Priests, the Constitution states, have been "consecrated to preach the Gospel and shepherd the faithful and to celebrate divine worship" (art. 28). "They are united with the bishops in sacerdotal dignity" (*ibid.*). "By reason of their particular vocation [they are] especially and professedly ordained to the sacred ministry" (*ibid.*). The lay apostolate, therefore, cannot succeed unless the laity maintain an effective contact with the hierarchy.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Leslie Dewart, *Christianity and Revolution: The Lesson of Cuba* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963), p. 185.

<sup>20</sup> On the points made in this paragraph concerning the relation between the layman and the clergy and the parish, see *The Liturgy and the Word of God* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1959, especially the paper by Francois Coudreau, S.S., "The Bible and the Liturgy in Catechesis," pp. 98-118. In this section, I was tempted to refer to parishes, but preferred to leave it for the while realizing that at this period in our history, perhaps the very notion of the parish needs to be reexamined in the light of basic changes in structures of societies.

Because mutual dependence characterizes the relationship between them, the laity cannot be subservient to the clergy in all matters. Pastors are consequently urged by the Fathers to "recognize and promote the dignity as well as the responsibility of the laity in the Church . . . , willingly [to] make use of their prudent advice" (art. 37). For "the laity have the right, as do all Christians, to receive in abundance from their pastors the spiritual goods of the Church, especially the helps of the Word of God and of the sacraments" (*ibid.*). Laymen in turn are encouraged "openly to reveal to their pastors their needs and desires with the freedom and confidence which is fitting for children of God and brothers in Christ. They are, according to the knowledge, competence or outstanding ability which they may enjoy, permitted and sometimes even obliged to express their opinion on those things which concern the good of the Church" (*ibid.*). The laity and the clergy seem here to be enjoined to recognize the need for both to suffer criticism from each other. By criticism is meant the constructive appraisal of each other's needs and shortcomings, done in the spirit of Christ's charity, in order that the growth of Christ's Body be accomplished.

Let me illustrate briefly how the laity can help the hierarchy if only they would let them. Take preaching. In this country, more often than not, preaching has been ineffective. It has been so for many reasons not the least of which is the laity's own indifference. But the hierarchy has not been entirely blameless. First: among the outstanding reasons for the failure of preaching have been the faulty acoustics and sound systems of our churches. Our hierarchy, who should know better, have, by their apparent indifference in the face of the problem, relegated to insignificance—or at least, have in effect done so—the role of preaching in the Church; it must be concluded that they have done so because after all these years, even as new churches are built, the problem remains. The same shortcomings in acoustics and sound systems remain. Second: our hierarchy seem to disregard some of the most fundamental rules of pedagogy when they seem to permit stereo-typed sermons and above all when they seem to condone the lack of coherence, unity and continuity

of preaching from Sunday to Sunday to Sunday. Direction is always an essential element of instruction. If the laity were consulted, perhaps they could on the basis of their needs suggest some sort of schema for seasonal preaching. The hierarchy, for example, were provided a golden opportunity in 1965 for instruction in depth on the liturgy, when the reforms were promulgated. Had the year's preaching been organized so that they could from week to week give the laity unified instruction about the liturgy, progress toward the full execution of the reforms would have been achieved even as the laity grew in their understanding of the liturgy. Perhaps, because of the deepening of their understanding of the liturgy, the faithful would have been in a better position to cooperate with the hierarchy's attempts at liturgical reform. Then too, many would have participated in the liturgy not because the parish priest had very authoritatively told them that Mother Church expected all to participate, but because of a deepened faith and a more profound love.

Indeed, whatever problems exist in the Philippine Church today, the answers to them cannot be found unilaterally by either the clergy or the laity. They can be arrived at only through genuine rapport and dialogue between them. The Council Fathers have written that "a great many wonderful things are to be hoped for" from the rapport and dialogue of the laity and the hierarchy: "in the laity a strengthened sense of personal responsibility; a renewed enthusiasm; a more ready collaboration in the projects of their pastors. The latter, on the other hand, aided by the experience of the laity, can arrive at clearer and better decisions regarding both spiritual and temporal matters" (art. 37).

Rapport and Dialogue are therefore necessary between clergy and laity. These are elements it must be understood that thrive only where authority is not made manifest too often in terms of juridical power, where there is no jealousy for power, and where there is a willingness to admit human limitations. The time and the place for dialogue and rapport cannot be decreed; they presuppose a habitual openness. While it cannot be too strongly affirmed that the exi-

gencies of their functions and vocations as especially ordained teachers, priests and rulers in the Church have placed the hierarchy in a position of considerable power, it must be stressed that power is theirs in order that their service may be better exercised. For authority is primarily service. Biblical scholars have of late reminded us that the vesting of authority in scriptures signified a call to service. Attention has been called, for example, to the fact that "the Gospel makes use of two important words for the notion of authority, *diakonia* and *exousia*, i.e., service, and . . . the potential and presence of Christian love and authorship."<sup>21</sup>

#### THE EDUCATION OF THE LAYMAN

The sixth chapter of the decree on the apostolate of the laity deals with the formation of the apostolate. To this let us now turn our attention. It can rightly be said that herein are given some guidelines for Christian education. We are told here that "the apostolate can be fully effective only if there is a multi-faceted and integrated preparation for it" (*Ap. L.*, art. 28). Because the laity have their own role in the Church's mission, "their apostolic formation takes on a distinctive quality from the specific and peculiar character of lay life and the spirituality proper to it" (*ibid.*, art. 29). In this same article the guidelines are set as follows: "Apostolic formation presupposes an integrated human formation in keeping with the talents and situation of each person. For the lay person should thoroughly understand the modern secular world. He ought to be involved in his own society and capable of adjusting himself to its special character and culture" (*ibid.*). Christian education, therefore, should produce a lay person able to involve "himself vigorously and completely in the reality of the secular order and effectively undertake his role in its affairs" (*ibid.*).

The end of Christian education, therefore, in the light of the decree, is the cultivation of man in the context grace. This is not entirely revolutionary. Pius XI not long ago

<sup>21</sup> F. Joseph Smith, "The Demands of Honesty," *Continuum*, II (1964), 212. See also Yves Congar, O.P., *Power and Poverty in the Church*, translated by Jennifer Nicholson (Baltimore, Md.: Helicon Press, 1964), 157 pp.

wrote that Christian education "consists essentially in preparing man for what he must be and for what he must do here below."<sup>22</sup> By it, according to Pius XII, "the Christian, as such, [should] be in condition to face and to overcome the difficulties and to correspond to the demands of the times in which it is his lot to live."<sup>23</sup> Christian education consequently aims immediately at perfecting according to the exigencies of their proper structures all those powers, especially the intellect and will, by which man is and acts in the world. It means also, Pius XII wrote, "that the work of education, since it must be carried on in a specific environment and for a specific milieu must constantly adapt itself to the circumstances of this milieu and of this environment wherein this perfection has to be obtained and for which it is destined."<sup>24</sup> Salvation is not its aim; rather, it is the human development of the Christian. Indeed, the business of Catholic education is not to enumerate for young Catholics all those things which are good or bad, or right or wrong; it is rather to so develop students that they themselves will be able to exercise judgment in determining what is right or wrong, and to practice wisdom in preferring what is good to what is bad.

In the light of the guidelines set by the Council Fathers, Christian education in the Philippines seems to need much rethinking. Let us now see why and along what lines our second thoughts should be channeled.

In general, it can safely be said that beyond the high school level, Christian education in this country has been more suppressive than creative; it has stifled rather than encouraged growth and creative leadership; it has in much too many cases reduced those who have come under its influence to passivity

<sup>22</sup> Pius XI, *Christian Education of Youth* (Encyclical *Divini illius magistri*), December 31, 1929. (Washington D.C.: NCWC, 1936), pp. 4-5.

<sup>23</sup> Pius XII, *Education and Modern Environment* (Radio Address to American Congress on Catholic Education at La Paz, Bolivia), October 15, 1948. *Catholic Mind*, 47 (February, 1949), 119.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* It must be noted that here and in the preceding quotations from Pius XI and Pius XII, both popes continued their statements by relating man's final end to his work in this world and thereby to education. The fact, however, remains that both saw the *immediate* or *direct* end of education in the preparation of man for what he has to do here below—on earth.

rather than motivated them to action. It has tended rather to narrow than to widen and deepen the perspective of young Catholics. Its character has been the fear of error, not the love of truth. Truth in Filipino Catholic education has in a large measure lost the dynamism characteristic of that being of which it is the understanding, and has gained instead the inertness of formularies. In trying to avoid the Naturalism against which Pius XI had warned the faithful in the encyclical *Divini illius magistri*, Christian education in the Philippines has fallen into an error as debilitating as Naturalism, that of an irrelevant or an escapist Christianity.

Graduates of Catholic colleges and universities in this country may generally be classified three ways according to their attitudes towards the Christian life and the universe beyond the campus. There are those who, unable to be involved in the secular order without fear and suspicion, incapable of realizing for themselves the dynamism of reality and unused to the exercise of genuine freedom, are unwilling to think and act independently of the clergy. Theirs is what Cardinal Gracias once called a "philosophy of evasion." All creation in their eyes is a finished static thing with which one must fill one's idle moments between birth and death, and the value of which is derived totally from one's intentions in the use of it. Their speech is usually apologetic or polemic, and their society, the ghettos of religious organizations. There are others who, having been forced by their totally eschatologically oriented education into an apparently insoluble dilemma between commitment to their professions and commitment to religious activities, and their horizons having later been broadened considerably by further education in secular universities abroad, either ignore as childish or reject as superstitious that religion whose acknowledged leaders have, in their eyes, encouraged an education authoritarian and unrealistic in principle. There are still others who, surrendering to the demands of their worldly occupations and at the same time trying to perform salutary exercises, live their lives in unnecessary tension, split-personalities. Their spirituality is a watered-down monasticism. Utterly incapable of dedicating

themselves totally one way or the other, they are doomed to mediocrity in both.

The problem of Christian education in the Philippines is not merely practical; it is theoretical as well. It is not the lack alone of competent teachers and of adequate facilities; rather, it involves the very principles by which Catholic colleges and universities seem to operate. To this day, Christian education in this country has not outgrown its 'mission-school' orientation; it has been much too engrossed with the eschatological aspects of the Christian life. Because Christ's kingdom is not of this world, the tendency has been to dismiss this world as totally valueless in the Christian economy of salvation or often as even irremediably detrimental to salvation. The assumption in Christian education seems to be that the inaccessibility of man's supernatural end to natural human powers has rendered the natural development of the human person ineffectual and unnecessary in the education of the Christian.

These erroneous assumptions undermining Catholic education in this country, it seems, derive from two radically false notions: first, that Christian education has been established immediately for the salvation of man, and second, that the Christian's involvement in secular affairs is a necessary evil to be tolerated, but to be counterbalanced if the Christian is to survive, by activities properly religious in character. Both these assumptions have been recognized as invalid by the Council Fathers.

If Christian education, therefore, is to fulfill the expectations of the Council Fathers, and develop a clergy and a laity in this country capable of accomplishing the pastoral mission of the Church, its orientation must properly be that of the incarnationism of the Council. This is not to deny that the kingdom of God is not of this world; rather it is merely to point at a more meaningful approach to the life of the laity by insisting with St. Paul that "the whole of creation, man therefore included, . . . is the object of redemption,"<sup>25</sup> and

<sup>25</sup> Christopher F. Mooney, S.J., "The Body of Christ in the Writings of Teilhard de Chardin," *Theological Studies*, 25 (1964), 602.

that through men, the members of Christ's mystical Body, "redemption extends to the rest of creation."<sup>26</sup> It must be realized that if "in secular affairs," as has been shown, the laity "contribute their effort so that created goods may be perfected by human labor, technical skill and civic concern for the benefit of all men" by their "competence and activity," then the development of all human powers gains significance in the education of the Christian. Etienne Gilson put it well when he said: "To offer our knowledge to God is a good thing, but if something is genuinely and truly to be offered to God, the first prerequisite is that it really be knowledge."<sup>27</sup> The layman incompetent in his profession or occupation must ultimately face failure in his proper apostolate; the two cannot be separated.

Incarnationalism, it must be noted, would transform education not by destroying and re-structuring it but by re-inforcing and building upon it. Education would remain what it has always been in history, the task of preparing the young for participation in the work of preserving and enhancing their society and culture. It is partly accomplished by the transmission of the knowledge accumulated and the habits of mind developed by tradition to succeeding generations; and partly, in order that society and culture be perfected as well as preserved, by the study of the achievements and perspectives of other cultures and by the inculcation of a sense of wonder and inquiry.

In an incarnational context, Christian education cannot afford to remain a closed system. It needs to open itself to all sources of truth. While all truths necessary for salvation are indeed found in Christian belief, it cannot be gainsaid that the Church has no monopoly on those truths and exercises necessary for the proper development of the human powers of the Christian. Though Thomas Aquinas produced a Christian philosophy that is in many respects perennial, still his is not the perennial philosophy, his is not the philosophy to end

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Etienne Gilson, "The Intelligence in the Service of Christ the King," *A Gilson Reader*, edited by Anton C. Pegis (Garden City, New York: Image Books, 1957), p. 39.

all philosophizing. Christian education must consequently overcome that fearfulness of error which has for many centuries characterized it. It must be realized that "we cannot have truth without risks." For, as the *Declaration on Religious Liberty* states, "'The truth cannot impose itself except by virtue of its own truth, as it makes its entrance into the mind at once quietly and with power" (DRL, art. 1). "Truth," the declaration continues, "is to be sought after in a manner proper to the dignity of the human person and his social nature. The inquiry is to be free, carried on with the aid of teaching or instruction, communication and dialogue, in the course of which men explain to one another the truth they have discovered, or think they have discovered, in order thus to assist one another in the quest for truth" (*ibid.*, art. 2). The commitment to truth that should be a mark of Christian education should not be trammelled by the constant threat of the hierarchy's displeasure. Because love for truth is a necessary constituent of education, any type of education, especially in our time, if it is to be successful, must love the truth with that dynamism proper to love; it must consequently be founded on the premise that every moment of encounter with the universe by Christian and non-Christian alike reveals a multitude of the profiles by which the mysteries of being reveal themselves to man. Thus the *Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* expresses the Fathers' hope that "the faithful, therefore, live in very close union with the other men of their time and may they strive to understand perfectly their way of thinking and judging, as expressed in their culture. Let them blend new sciences and theories and the most recent discoveries with Christian morality and the teaching of Christian doctrine... Let it be recognized that all the faithful, whether clerics or laity, possess a lawful freedom of inquiry, freedom of thought and expressing their mind with humility and fortitude in those matters in which they enjoy competence" (CMW, art. 62).

An incardinalist education should motivate Catholic educators in this country to change their attitude toward the courses of study in our colleges and universities. Principally, they must view a particular science or exercise not according to their own peculiar moralistic or eschatological prejudices

but according to its proper structure and according to the need for such a structure in the practice of education. Religious organizations on campus must help too in training students not in a monastic but in a lay spirituality. Where these considerations are ignored, there education becomes irrelevant. It fails in its purpose. If the failure is that of Christian education, the failure results in a passive and an unproductive laity; it results in a Church for those either not yet committed to the world or for those whom age and infirmity have placed on the periphery of the world: for children, therefore, and for old women and the sick. But is not the vocation of the laity, as Pius XII once write, "under the supernatural influence of grace, in the perfection of their personal dignity as sons of God and in the harmonious development of every human bent and energy, [to] build up the mighty framework of the community of men?"<sup>28</sup>

In the light of incarnationism, the humanities, the other sciences, and especially professional courses such as Commerce, Business Administration, Nursing and others will receive due attention and respect in Catholic educational circles. They will be regarded according to their proper structures, literature for example as the product of man's creativity, something that in its totality—in its intelligibility and specific beauty (which lies in the use of language) reveals to man both what is and what can be—and be from the point of view of a variety of cultures. The study of commerce and law and nursing will properly be appreciated as of intrinsic value in Christian life, because they directly prepare the young for "building up the mighty framework of the community of men." Consequently, the satisfaction with the mission-school mentality and with mediocrity in professional education currently found in many Catholic colleges and universities in this country will be rendered inexcusable.

This is not to deny the necessity and significance of the mission school. It is simply to remind ourselves that there is a difference between university and college work and mission school work. The matter of the former is the education of men;

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<sup>28</sup> Quoted by Yves Congar, O.P., *op. cit.*, pp. 48-49.

that of the latter, Christian doctrine. The purpose of the one is the preparation of the young for their role in society, and if it is a Catholic university or college, the preparation of the laity for their commitment to the secular order; that of the other, the propagation of the message of salvation. While both may be offered in one institution, one must not replace the other.

That these differences have frequently been ignored or over-looked in this country is attested to, it seems, by the proliferation here of small and in many cases inadequate Catholic colleges. The observer of the Filipino Catholic educational scene cannot but be left with the impression that the rationale behind the establishment of many of the Catholic colleges in this country has been the Christian commission to go and preach to all nations. While the intention is admirable, it must be pointed out, however, that the real issue of education, of the education of a vigorous laity, the preparation for the secular order, is not dealt with squarely. While many Catholics do graduate from college, their entire lives, their faith included, seem irrelevant to their own society. The apostleship of the laity is for them meaningless except in terms of participation in the work of the hierarchy, or worse, in terms of a constant battle against the world in total subservience to the clergy. As a result, in their own lives they deny the very catholicity of the Church; they succeed rather in establishing the Church as a ghetto.

Because it will encourage Christians to see the proper structures of things and not those aspects merely of pragmatic value to them, an education incarnationally oriented is realistic and, in the long run, genuinely salvific. It cannot but produce a Christian who can think independently, who is able to grasp a given situation, assess its diverse profiles, and react prudently and wisely. A laity capable of all these is invaluable towards the fulfillment of the pastoral mission of the Church, is the laity envisioned by the Fathers.

In conclusion, let me briefly sum up what I have said:

1. Vatican II has called the attention of the world to an aspect of the Church long overlooked because of the institu-

tional orientation of the Tridentine Council and the counter-Reformation: the pastoral, which lays stress on the Church's communal life and dynamism.

2. In the context of Vatican II's pronouncements, any understanding of the laity's role in the Church must be grounded on a profound understanding of the People of God of which the laity are members.

3. As People of God, the laity really partake in Christ's priesthood, kingship and prophetic office.

4. The laity's vocation is to commit themselves directly and decisively to the secular order. This involvement in the secular order has been called for because the world too must be taken up and redeemed in Christ. Their participation in the priesthood, kingship and prophetic office of Christ makes their very act of commitment to the world an act itself of consecration. Because this is a genuine vocation, the life of the laity is as much constituted of renouncement as the sacred ministry. It cannot, therefore, be said that to be laity is to be inferior, to be less perfect, to be less unselfish than to be priest or religious.

5. The laity and the hierarchy mutually need each other. Their relationship is not subservience but complementariness. The laity turn to the hierarchy for the ministry of the Word in doctrine and sacrament. The hierarchy look to the laity for the realization of the Church's life and mission.

6. Christian education which is really the education of the laity must be conceived of and practiced according to the exigencies of the life and spirituality of the laity, incarnationally as well as eschatologically.

As a Catholic layman confronted by these development in the Church, I must confess that looking at the immensity of such a task, at the responsibility it involves, I cannot but say with Oscar Wilde that "the only thing worse than not getting what you want is getting it."