large equal religious communities, but it would be erroneous to conclude that these three religious groups have exercised a uniform influence on American culture.

Whatever the future may hold, up to the present American religion as a cultural influence has been chiefly Protestant.

These historical factors have conditioned the beliefs and practices of all religious groups in America. The spirit of tolerance (at least as an ideal), the respect for efficient action, the concept of social utility which maintains that religious behavior and attitudes making for the harmonious functioning of people in society are most important, the comparative isolation of the two major religious minorities, are all specifically American phenomena which have drawn comment from foreign and native observers alike.

However, what we need to know is to what extent the actual beliefs, practices and attitudes of the adult population really reflect this historical conditioning. Behind this problem, of course, looms the more significant question concerning the degree to which the American people have lost sight of their traditional spiritual foundations.

These problems will be treated next.

(To be concluded)

. . . just a few things:

OUR expert on MRA is completing doctoral studies in Europe. His article — one of our longest ever — draws on a report requested by an American prelate. The footnotes furnish fascinating sidelights!

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THE PIECE ON AUTOMATION covers briefly but accurately views of the experts; its author teaches economics at Loras.

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DR. WILSON (University of Illinois) discusses a provocative subject.

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FROM A FORTHCOMING book on American religious data compiled by a colleague, Father Thomas gives some interpretations — more will come in our next (September) issue.

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AT SHREVEPORT a remarkable development stimulates intellectual life in a suburban Catholic parish. Here its initiator recounts aims and highlights.

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EXCERPTS from three letters provide footnotes on current race relations. The writers: a Chicago housewife, a Los Angeles secretary, a Saint Louis librarian-student.

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A LONGER PIECE on Protestant race relations work and interest by the managing editor is generally confirmed by three Protestant observers.

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DESPITE the pessimism in the letter on Catholics and serious thinking (p. 296), we got a nice response from readers whose aid we asked in extending SOCIAL ORDER readership. But as we *haven't* doubled our circulation, we still would appreciate your cooperation and suggestions!

R.B., S.J.

V. 6, No. 6

Catholics and "the New Conservatism"

FRANCIS G. WILSON

A CATHOLIC CAN HARDLY admire history, or even a considerable portion of it. Must we not see the unhappy persecutions and the numberless martyrs of our times as a condemnation of much of history through which we are living? Is not our day like the age of persecution of the early Church? Must we not approve revolutions which will halt or even reverse the oppressive trend?

Any conservative is at times a revolutionary, and a Catholic conservative can be a revolutionary perhaps even more frequently. T. S. Eliot once remarked that a tradition must be associated with an orthodoxy by which it can be judged. Thus, it is not the mere formality of the revolution, but why the revolution comes that is crucial. Any appeal to the people for support is not Jacobinical, but only certain kinds—appeals for the destruction of the Great Tradition of Institutional Christianity and Christian philosophy. For these are judges of tradition. Institutions are to be judged by both philosophy and experience. American traditions and our political systems are surely not worthy of defense just because they exist.

Catholics objected to the French Revolution on a variety of grounds, but objection to the French Revolution, its successors on the continent and the socialist revolutions fortified by the Russian regime has been a hallmark of Catholic conservative thought and of conservatism in general. Liberals have called Catholic opposition to the French Revolution "feudal Catholicism," and Reinhold Niebuhr recently contrasted feudal Catholicism with the more recent Catholic social movement. Still, the revolutions have been criticized because they were first of all destroyers of Christian society. They have been determined to substitute, as Lubac has said, the atheistic humanism of Feuerbach, Nietzsche and Comte for a Christian humanism. It was such men as those who, in the nineteenth century, turned political anticlericalism into philosophical atheism. They prepared the way for the reception of others like Wagner, Marx, Darwin and Freud.

Against all of these trends the great Catholic conservatives of the last century made little headway. It was hard swimming upstream against the revolution in philosophy so long as the new philosophy was associated with a revo-

Natural law has served as a criticism and criterion of events in an imperfect world. Has it given more comfort to revolutionary or reactionary?

lution against institutions difficult to defend. Metternich has been subjected to a century of ridicule; Donoso Cortés has been forgotten by all but Spaniards and a few Germans; Bonald and Maistre have been distorted so that ideas either in agreement with Burke or with current conservative views are ignored; and the whole Catholic criticism of the revolution was named by the liberals "the Catholic reaction."

Catholic conservatives are not likely to support today a crusade in defense of those who championed the Church in her French revolutionary hour of peril. The issues of the present will hardly permit such an antiquarian luxury. Donoso must surely remain a Spanish figure, and some Frenchmen may read Bonald, Maistre, Chateaubriand and others. It is no doubt to Burke, one of the veritable founts of modern conservatism, that a Catholic must turn. It must have been some such impulse that led the scholars at Fordham University some time ago to take an exceptionally keen interest in Burke. Yet Catholic conservatives are not, any more than Burke, mere defenders of historical situations. Some history must be defended, some condemned. It is the basis on which any history is defended or condemned that makes any man either a conservative or a liberal revolutionary. It is the orthodoxy judging the tradition that is all important.

Every turn in intellectual history is contested today almost as vigorously as it was first propounded. Much contemporary conservatism must, in the nature of intellectual dialectic, be expressed in such arguments. They range far and wide over Western history, but they return to the center of disturbance in Western Europe and particularly to the French upheaval. Conservatives tend to see continuity in revolutions; they see the destructiveness of the French Revolution flame up again in 1848, and again in Russia in 1917.

Now it seems that many liberal thinkers do the same in defense of the revolutions, and in this they confirm while they reverse the conservative argument; from such a reversal emerges the "liberal line," as Willmoore Kendall labels it in the *National Review*. A conservative will, no doubt, see more than a liberal in historical precedents. But he will see much that deserves condemnation and much that deserves praise. One learns from history what not to do as well as what is sometimes possible. Liberals—like Harry Elmer Barnes—have said that the only lesson of history is that there are no lessons.

A Catholic conservative will say that natural law is the rational criterion of history. It is with the help of natural law that politics must be judged. It has been said that Catholic thought has recovered the consciousness of the Mystical Body and that now it is on the way to the recovery of the sense of original sin. With the sense of the Mystical Body one combines Leo XIII's statement that a man is *civis idem et christianus;* he is a citizen in the Mystical Body while he may yet recognize the finality of the state. Conservatism is primarily a problem of the *civis* as he is united with the Christian. A consciousness of the Mystical Body of Christ, of original sin and of natural law will surely illuminate the Catholic judgment of the past, the hope of an attainable human future, the sense of social responsibility and the prudential judgment of the present.

Yet there may be differences; for natural law has served as a criticism and criterion of events in an imperfect world, and it has given little comfort to the utopianism of the liberal and socialist revolution. But neither has it supported a reactionary or archaic view that some past situation was perfect enough to merit its restoration. And original sin in Donoso's magnificent conception of charity was the very basis of brotherhood and love among imperfect men who live in imperfect states.

The import of the conservative Catholic attitude at this point, however, may be something like the following. Neither the Mystical Body nor natural law nor original sin as the basis of brotherhood gives one the right to assume that a perfect political society can be realized within history. Progress, yes; reform, yes; but revolution to attain complete earthly justice, hardly. Gradualism in political action, resistance to the secular revolution, perhaps even against the protagonists of dialectical materialism, are surely among the major tasks of the Catholic conservative in our day. He has come to judge and to make history, not to praise it. From natural law we draw a muscular attitude toward history; from the impact of sin there may be a recession of effort, but with no diminution of love. Through the concept of the Mystical Body we may love our neighbor as we may hope for life eternal that stands above all history, all reform, all maintenance of human order, all revolution or counter-revolution and all progress. Through these perceptions the meaning of history will emerge and the individual can comprehend the meaning of his own existence within both a political order and the spiritual order.

Attitudes to Liberals

Catholics have two attitudes toward the liberals. One view is irenic, which is the effort to reach as full an agreement as possible with them, while retaining the meaning and identity of a Catholic position. In contrast, one may seek first to indicate differences, to sharpen them, and to seek, indeed, a kind of rapprochement with the conservatives as the necessary means of preserving a Catholic identity.

Obviously, much of the ordinary activity of a community does not involve ideological positions, for much civic activity might readily be classified as housekeeping within large areas of consensus. But even in collaboration for practical ends over which there is no controversy, the communication between the Catholic and the ordinary political liberal is seldom complete and candid. Both Catholics and liberals must hold in the end that more than the mere mechanisms of politics are involved in the application of law to social life. Purpose, policy and value-judgments are also at stake.

On the other hand, the collaboration of Catholic liberals and Catholic conservatives involves another order of analysis, for there is a common foundation for all Catholics within the system of natural law and theology. Hence, there will be agreement on ultimates while there will be much prudential disagreement as to the proper instruments, policies or administrative decisions that will assist in the formation of the Catholic mind in a Catholic-leavened society. A political or economic system is largely an instrument to secure ends, and it is here that the argument may be most acute. The conservative will hold, first, that certain general political conclusions of a conservative order may be drawn from the Catholic tradition in relation to the state; and, second, they will urge that the preservation of a Catholic manner of living, whether or not a pluralistic society is involved, can best be achieved by policies conservative in nature. In other words, it will be argued that cooperation with liberals can never be completely harmonious because of the profound differences in the reasons advanced for a position and the difficulty of bridging this gap by discussion.

Beyond this, it seems clear that conservative practical politics will be more effective in maintaining a Catholic system than the types of reforms urged in America in the name of liberalism. Cooperation with conservatives is historically and immediately more sensible for Catholics than cooperation with either European or American liberals. For both of these types of liberals are determined that ultimately Catholic Christianity shall be destroyed.

Let us now consider briefly some of the questions related to the nature of the economic and political orders, though our attention will fall primarily on economic questions. As Father Land said in his review of Father Keller's defense of capitalism in the light of the social encyclicals, "as anyone who attempted the task knows, to apply Catholic social thought in criticism of the existing economic order and in proposals for its reform is an arduous and hazardous undertaking."[1] A writer has observed that "since the mid-nineteenth century Catholic thinkers have sought to evolve a middle course between the 'established disorder' of liberal capitalism and materialistic Marxism. . . . Catholic thinkers, especially in France, developed three main concepts: personalism, solidarism and pluralism. These, together with the papal social encyclicals, serve to guide the political, economic and social programs of Catholics."[2]

Morality plus Freedom

As not everyone is called to be an interpreter of encyclicals, whatever is here said is offered subject to caution and caveat. Encyclicals are often universal and timeless in import, and Catholic prudence in practical politics is complicated indeed. But some observations may be made. Father John Courtney Murray has suggested that throughout history the central demand of the Church has been its freedom. Might we not also say that the social teaching and prudence of the Church seeks the freedom of the person in both the political and economic order?

[1] *America*, March 6, 1954, p. 603.

[2] Emiliana R. Noether, "Political Catholicism in France and Italy," *Yale Review*, Summer, 1955, pp. 573-74.

Might we not also say that just as various forms of government are legitimate under given conditions, so different economic orders are legitimate under certain circumstances? The test of legitimacy of an economic order would be its fulfillment of primary moral conditions. It might seem, then, that a Catholic conservative may defend capitalism on the ground that it provides the conditions of a possible Christian life.

Temporal Rights

In the temporal order, then, in the broader scope of Catholic teaching a man is entitled to be free to be a Christian; he is entitled to participate in some sense in the government of his local community and his nation-state; he is entitled to live under a just regime; he has the right to be the founder of a family and to have legal protection in this status; he is entitled to own private property, and to use it for legitimate ends; he is entitled to be able to earn a living or a frugal wage; he may belong to organizations of professional men and workers and may thus engage in voluntary corporate or group activity; and there are numerous political and economic matters that could be mentioned at this point, including the question of the kind of moral and social legislation that will best implement the Christian conception of life.

These are surely objectives for the long run, and one should not assume that a Catholic may claim a revolutionary realization of these goals. A man has a right under the natural law, but wisdom and prudence may indicate the conditions and the extent to which it may be claimed in the actualities of politics. We have an obligation to obey the state, which is, perhaps, another way of saying that we do not have a right to a personal utopia. Just as people may consent to a form of government and thereby make its authority legitimate, so people may consent to an economic order such as capitalism. As Catholic conservatives we may legitimate the legislation and the institutions of the free-market economy, but we can expect of it a fair prudence in order to respect the moral rights of the citizen and Christian. The prudential argument for the free-market economy, the going-concern economy, is that it gives more effectively to the citizen the rights he might claim in an absolute sense in a perfect realization of a Catholic society. A Catholic conservative might also argue prudentially and with wisdom that the free-market system, or some form of capitalism, will provide and has provided elsewhere a basic economic protection of the family.

People are generally aware of the existence of controversy among Catholics both in Europe and America on these questions. It is clear that the terminology of Adam Smith is not the wording of the *Rerum Novarum* and the *Quadragesimo Anno*. It may be added that the terminology of the encyclicals is not that of the New Deal, the social service bureaucracy or of the pundits of socialism. These semantic problems make communication at times a perilous if not impossible effort.

Much caution, however, in the use of words is quite proper. Probably there has never been in existence a true *laissez-faire* system. Most *laissez-faire* literature has been written in protest

against what the government was actually doing to interfere with the market. Or it has been a criticism of the interference of monopoly, oligopoly or cartels with the free operation of the price system. Capitalism has existed as a set of institutions far-removed from a utopian *laissez-faire*. Neo-capitalism, as the word is used today, is further removed from a theoretical *laissez-faire* because of its assumption of many social responsibilities to workers and its support of the military activity of the modern state. Or, as Father Gannon said, because "as businessmen guided by the profit motive, they need our way of life."[3]

It seems obvious that a Catholic society would have a different public opinion than one that is pragmatic and secular. The laws would in many instances be different, though in many others there would be no desire for change. There is in many ways an easy adjustment of the Catholic conscience to American society, and the American capitalistic system is surely one of the foundations of such adjustment. The political system is clearly another, for American Catholics can sense harmony between ancient doctrines of popular consent and our democracy. Among "the new conservatives" there is a perceptible degree of sympathy for Catholics, ultimately because they also operate on the principle of an objective moral order and reject secularism based on pragmatic and neo-utilitarian philosophy. The Catholic conservative, who will in all likelihood approve of the existence of the American neo-capitalistic and competitive system, finds among "the new conservatives" a congenial political atmosphere.

[3] *America*, January 7, 1956, p. 393.

Thinking Parishioners

What happens when a community really wants to live intellectually

J. B. GREMILLION

SEVEN YEARS AGO my Bishop assigned me to establish an upper middle-class parish in a city of 160,000, a city typically Southern in religious and racial complexion, about seven per cent Catholic. It was to serve a new suburban community that included lawyers, doctors, engineers, geologists, corporation officers and department heads, educators, bankers, contractors, brokers, realtors, sales managers and top-level distributor-agents.

As I came to know these my people better, this striking fact stood out: a high percentage of them had college and university backgrounds. In order to seek the right direction in my pastoral work, we began to insert in the parish census certain questions about educational background. For a sociologist this would have been easy; for us, the surveys were amateurish, non-professional, inaccurate, doubtless, but sufficiently accurate to reveal a good overall picture.

Two seminarians made our best sampling, last summer. They called upon 160 families, approximately thirty per cent of the parish, for interviews of 30-60 minutes.

We discovered that of 160 husbands 123 had attended college for an average of three and a half years each. Among 160 wives, 73 had made college studies for an average of two and one-half years.

Of the total couples, 84 were mixed marriages. In our survey we interviewed non-Catholic spouses as well as Catholics. We found that among the 123 college men only fourteen (twelve per cent) had gone to Catholic colleges, while 109 (88 per cent) were products of non-Catholic campuses. A higher fraction of the wives (eighteen per cent) attended Catholic institutions.

If we take these as typical of the families who remove to suburbia, the present tenor of parish and Catholic community life offers little to the college person who would continue the quest of learning. And we have sought so hard to inculcate in students that education is a life-long process. Here rises a problem.

The graduate leaves an intellectual campus climate with its lectures and libraries, seminars and jam-sessions. The world he enters next, with its business and politics, diaper-changing and country-clubbing, is an intellectual wasteland. His mind is after all still a tender plant and finding no suitable environment, the life of the mind quickly withers and dies. He needs prepared ground to sink his roots, he needs nourishment, he needs communication with others for cross-fertilization.

You cannot expect to nourish the life of the mind in fifteen minutes of talk from a pulpit once a week. Pulpits often embrace a terribly wide range of subjects, necessitating a shallow treatment. Most of the study groups and discussion clubs a parishioner encounters are kindergartens. Pamphlets only whet the appetite or frustrate it. Our monthly Catholic culture series featuring big-name lecturers offer hors d'oeuvres, not meat and potatoes.

The Roots

To meet our own needs in this parish we experimented, and are still experimenting. We have brought together eventually a loose affiliation of men and women of the community who by associating wish to bestir their intellectual, cultural and vocational life as adults. This we have called our *Collegium*. Its roots go back some five years, when I began fortnightly chats with ten select men, with innate and developed traits of leadership, 30-40 years of age, who shared a common concern for the social problems of our city and our region: the integration of the Negro, labor-management relations, problems of the body politic, educational theory, family breakdown and so on.

These ten lawyers, doctors and businessmen had little knowledge of the encyclicals and the Church's social