

cal context: that has been robbed of its structure by the theological adaptation. It is only this travesty of Aristotelianism, this hypostatization of actuality and potentiality, of substance and accident, that gives the traditional theology of the eucharistic change whatever content it appears to have. The hypostatizing account is indeed a travesty, but it at least offers a picture. The supposedly respectable account does not even do that. It is bankrupt; it can survive only by living off the immoral earnings of a disowned relation.

*(The second part of this article will appear next month)*

## Collusion Course

### by Denis Rice

The recent coadjutor appointment in Nottingham diocese met with some criticism. I could sympathize with the critics—and with the chosen candidate. However, the situation was more than an example of non-consultation about episcopal selection.<sup>1</sup> Clouds of debate and confusion around the freshly-embroidered mitre obscured something deeper, farther back in time.

For some years, the Ordinary of the diocese has been a target of comment for allegedly rigid views and activities.<sup>2</sup> In particular, his stance on *Humanae Vitae* (*H.V.*) was strict in its expectations of what priests should teach about the encyclical. Five priests were suspended on the issue. In 1968 and 1969, widely-reported arguments and public meetings were held in the diocese about *H.V.* and its aftermath.

I chaired one of these meetings in March 1969. It was attended by four hundred people. Many of them were *for* liberal interpretations of *H.V.* and *against* the Bishop's sanctions on priests who did not accept his line.<sup>3</sup> Some in the audience were supporters of the growing Renewal Movement. Many more people were concerned about the need for an articulate but critical lay voice in the Church. I directed part of my summing up at the meeting to these groups. I suggested that, perhaps, enough had been said and done locally about *H.V.*; that attention should be turned to more important, if less exciting, issues. The example I offered was the manner of appointment of Bishops. I said that, in Nottingham, discussions or protests about this would be too late after a retiral or death. As far as I am aware, nothing was done from that time in 1969. Yet when Mgr McGuinness was appointed in 1972, the protest was strident.

I believe that one way of understanding and learning from this situation is to see it as an example of collusion. By three years'

<sup>1</sup>*The Nottingham Consultation*, by Patrick Tierney & George Towler. Pastoral Development Booklets, 1972.

<sup>2</sup>See, e.g. *Irish Times*, 6-8 January, 1969.

<sup>3</sup>*Four Honest Men*, by the Committee of the Nottingham Catholic Renewal Group, 1969.

inactivity, the protestors had colluded with the traditional selection procedure however brave and loud their protest at its fairly predictable outcome. In this paper, I want to discuss collusion and some related tendencies in behaviour which help to clarify for me the current position in the Church. I do this in no detached sense: awareness of these tendencies aids my understanding of my own involvement in the Church's life.

The concept 'collusion', as I use it here, has several aspects. Analysis of these will follow four more Church examples of what, I think, is helpfully understood as collusive behaviour.

When Pope Paul issued *H.V.* in 1968, one objection was that he had made a 'one-man' decision. That particular objection was unjustified. The time to object to a solitary papal decision on contraception was not when the encyclical appeared. The time to object was in 1964 when the Pope indicated he was taking the matter to himself. Though commissions were at work, I believe there was, for years, a general collusion with the Pope's making a one-man decision. *Post*-encyclical objections to it do not invalidate that interpretation.

A second, more general, example is lay collusion with clericalism. Pope, Bishop or priest is criticized for being remote, out of touch with the real world, surrounding himself with pomp and status. Often, one is aware that the lay critic (though he can be another cleric) is accepting what he attacks. Whether the symbol is ring-kissing or 'Yes Father, yes Father, three bags full Father', the objector may be regularly observed going along with what his objection denounces. One meets the lay actionist who complains about clerical domination in the Church one moment; next moment, he begins his sentence with: 'Why doesn't the Church (i.e. Pope, Bishop, priest) do something?'. Catholics in Hitler's Germany, who waited for papal or episcopal condemnations of Nazi actions, were colluding with clericalism and worse. Hochhuth's play can be seen as an attack on that, rather than on Pius XII.

In exploring the related field of authority in the Church, the notion of collusion is at its most helpful. A seminary rector once said to me: 'The Catholic Church is a body dedicated to the avoidance of real selection'. In the Church we do seem adept at putting people into authority to do impossible jobs; we can then criticize them for failing. I believe that what is required of a Bishop in some dioceses, or of a priest in some parishes, is already at this impossible point. The 'fate' of recent Archbishops of Westminster would lead me to assert that that post is an impossible one. Rather than criticize the failure of authority figures we might better examine our collusion with situations in which their failure is certain. In convents I am frequently told of superiors who do not consult their sisters. Invariably I ask whether sisters have asked to be consulted. Commonly I am told that no approach has been made to the superior. The critics have not even taken steps to achieve what they complain of

missing. At a time when more people are being consulted about the election of superiors one point needs emphasis. The choice of the wrong person, the giving of unreal authority, may be subtle attacks, collusively destroying authority itself. We have elected the wrong man *and* destroyed the office if our Bishop 'will never hear the truth again'. Those who may appear to respect authority in reverential silence or double-talk are engaged collusively in destroying the very authority they claim loudly to uphold. A final illustration in the area of authority is topical: the construction of parish and diocesan committees. In the energetic founding of democratic procedures one can collude with the failure of democracy. A committee with all the apparatus of consultation may be cover for, and guarantee of, the old autocratic ways. Without deliberate intent, the enthusiastic setting up of committees may be colluding to demonstrate that consultation is useless. 'We have a committee' is thin evidence that democracy has infiltrated a parish.

My fourth and final example of collusion shows similarities to the previous one. Liturgical reforms and experiments are sometimes attacked on the grounds that they have not worked. The attackers speak of the people 'not liking' or 'not taking to' the new liturgy. It is sometimes observed that liturgical reform has not improved Church attendance. (For present purposes, I accept the attacks; I leave aside questions about how liturgical effectiveness is measured, and over what time-scale.) It is fair to say that many laity, priests and Bishops have been in collusion with the failure of the new practices. Some clerics have implemented liturgical change in ways that have acted against its success, even as they apparently welcomed the change.

The word 'apparently' at the end of the previous paragraph bears no accusation of hypocrisy or dishonesty. It is an important clue to the sense in which 'collusion' is being discussed. Initially three aspects of the word's common meaning can be noted. One colludes when one acts in concert with another person. So, two people collude when they play into one another's hand. A second aspect is the presence of secrecy or covertness. This begins to introduce an evaluative element strongly suggested, but not necessarily implied, by the first aspect. So, collusion is a secret agreement. Thirdly, there is, explicitly, the sense of fraud and deception. A specific example of collusion is a secret pact between ostensible opponents in a lawsuit. In the present discussion, an extended sense of 'collusion', familiar in the fields of social psychology and psychiatry, is being explored. It involves a fourth aspect: that one may act in concert, or aid and abet, without being fully aware of what one is doing. This fourth aspect gives the covertness of collusion a new dimension. It implies that the moral ascription of fraud or deception may not be justified. Where a person is not immediately conscious of what he is doing, he cannot lightly be judged guilty of deceit. The extended sense of 'collusion'

allows one to speak of being in collusion with behaviour, or even with an outcome rather than with a person or persons. So, one may be in collusion with outcome X if one fails to engage in activities which might prevent X. To engage in side-issue activities before X, or protest activities after X, is no proof that one has not colluded with X. One's support of X may exist though hidden even from oneself.

This last aspect of collusion—that one may not immediately know or feel one is colluding—makes people unwilling to accept the notion. They will ask: 'How can you say I co-operated with, aided and abetted X, when I am now actually protesting against it?' Specifically, the parish priest may demand: 'How can you say I was in collusion with the failure of the new liturgy when I was supporting the reforms in my sermons?' The answer suggested here is that his support was only apparent. This is not to say he was dishonest; his collusion with failure was not entirely open to himself.

At first sight, this approach to understanding behaviour may seem too complex. It is important, however, to see it *as* an approach to understanding, and *not* as a complete causal explanation. The notion of collusion is not offered as a total answer to the complexity of social behaviour. It is better seen as an interpretative device which probes the complexity of social behaviour and draws attention to some areas which might otherwise be overlooked. In our present context, collusion is a notion which directs one firmly to an examination of one's involvement in and contribution to particular outcomes. It is, in Christian terms, an enhancing notion; that is to say, it presses a man better to examine the complexity of his own behaviour and accept his responsibility for the consequences of his actions and non-actions. The Christian has to consider that he may collude with outcome X (even as he protests about it) by engaging in behaviour which co-operates with X. Or, negatively: he may collusively destroy Y (even as he supports it) by engaging in behaviour which undermines Y. In handling the tendency to collusion one has to become aware, literally, of what one is up to. A useful initial exercise is to examine the nature of one's protesting or supportive behaviour: not its surface appearances, the loudness of its slogans, nor the smartness of its banners; but its likely realistic results.

Closely linked with collusion is the phenomenon I will call *polarization*. A good starting point is the work of Wilfred Bion.<sup>1</sup> Observing the behaviour of individuals in groups, he posits a 'split' in each individual which is acted out as 'schism' in groups. Bion suggests that there is in each person a more or less *progressive* part and a more or less *conservative* part. This represents in each of us a possible conflict: between, on the one hand, the excitement of the new and interest in development; and, on the other hand, adherence to the familiar and loyalty to tradition. Here lies a caution for the

<sup>1</sup>*Experiences in Groups*. Tavistock Publications, 1961. See, in context, pp. 127-8.

progressive. By becoming a protestor he has not destroyed his conservative bit. He often makes his progressive demands so sweeping that he will never recruit enough supporters. He will not gain enough power to have his demands listened to or met. The results of the progressive case for all its noise may be conservative: no change.

The link here with collusion is obvious. The progressive sometimes colludes with conservatism by a progressiveness that gets no power to alter anything. The loud progressive is only masking his conservative part; it unconsciously, but nonetheless effectively, expresses itself. If Bion's theory is complex, in need of precision, and open to questions, experience gives it some backing. Revolutionaries become dictators; student rebels become establishment employees; Renewalists in the Church have, at times, simply ensured that change would be slower and more difficult.

A second observation based on Bion's work brings us fully into the discussion of polarization. He notes that in group life two sub-groups, conservative and progressive, may represent the split or 'schism' in each person. Rather than face the conflict in oneself one may allow it to be carried on between the two sub-groups. It is as though one avoids the clash of opposing tensions in oneself by placing at least some of the opposites outside. If one's valency, one's tendency, is to be progressive, one can heap one's conservative bit on to conservative opponents. One often does this by seeing them as extreme larger-than-life conservatives. It is as though they carry for me the responsibility for, the consequences of, that conservative part which I reject in myself. I 'thank' them by distorting the reality of their position, by attacking, even ridiculing them. In a group, in the Church, one finds the polarization of views and of people. What one sees is not a grasp of real issues, but a clutching of hardened positions. One has not got a picture of real people, who have more or less of both tendencies within them. One has, instead, an exaggerated picture of a Church, split between extremes, poles apart, conservatives and progressives.

Sub-groups representing a particular extreme view or attitude will not always be equal in number. Sometimes, one person will 'carry' a position alone, yet for his group. One is then vividly aware of the meaning of 'scapegoat'. In an insightful article on the Last Supper, Una Maguire drew attention to Judas.<sup>1</sup> He is seen as *the* traitor, yet he carried the treacherous tendency in all the Apostles. Their behaviour in the next day showed their betrayal: the sleeping in the Garden; the desertions; the denials. Though warned by Christ during the Supper, not one of the Apostles pursued Judas to see what he was about. Their subsequent actions allow that to be interpreted as collusion with Judas' betrayal.

Topically, Pope and Cardinal have referred to the departing priest as *Judas*. Is the priest who leaves perhaps carrying something for

<sup>1</sup>*New Blackfriars*, Vol. 49, No. 580, September, 1968.

many more than himself? The need to describe him, to 'polarize' him as *Judas*, may indicate a wish to deny the uncertain, betraying part in ourselves. In more direct terms: a departing priest tells you as much about the Church as about himself. 'Judas' is less an apt description of his behaviour than a timely sign that we should be scrutinizing our own behaviour. A priest who leaves the priesthood but not the Church may, for that reason, be much more of an irritant than one who quits the Church.

The mechanism whereby one person carries an extreme view for a group may be observed in the national hierarchy. An extremely conservative Bishop is less interesting in himself than in how he is used to carry unfashionable conservative bits for everybody else. He literally *frees* others. If he behaves like a deposit of faith it is because he is that for many of the other Bishops. There can be no progressive Bishops without somewhere a conservative Bishop to hold the ring. Tentatively one ponders here, whether some Bishops organize the progressive/conservative conflict in themselves more on an international basis: progressive at Council and Synod; conservative at home in the diocese.

To polarize extreme positions and to allocate matching labels to groups and individuals is a tendency to oversimplification. I am not, here, supporting some Bishops who dismiss the use of terms such as 'conservative' or 'progressive' in understanding the contemporary Church. The tone of such disapproval seems to be an attempt to play down the problems in the Church. My caution against these labels is an attempt to make the conflict explicit. The fault of the labels is that they obscure the conflicts by presenting them in the tidy unreality of simple extremes. Conflicts in the contemporary Church are complex, many of them uncomfortably so. They concern issues in theology, morals, Church government, liturgy which are urgently modern, but rooted in history and habit. Black/white representation of such issues is the approach of those who want to avoid complexity. Conflict, doubt, mixed evidence, qualifying considerations can be dodged only at the cost of answers which distort reality by oversimplifying it. Neat, no-argument policies and solutions are too often hostages to the real world. The purveyor of them, Bion would caution, is the man with no realistic plans, with no wholehearted wish for results. His is the world of labels and slogans, not the world of reality. Winning the argument and the fight for some Christians becomes more important than redeeming the world. For them, an opponent heard and understood is less important than an opponent labelled and bludgeoned.

To pin the labels, *conservative* or *progressive*, *right* or *left*, is inevitably to oversimplify persons. Evidence which does not fit the simple picture has either to be denied, ignored or explained away. Those dedicated to branding Cardinal Ottaviani arch-priest of the right, hardly will notice his stance on conscientious objection or his

interest in Taizé. Those uncomfortable with the warm peasant complexity of Pope John, destroy the man by canonizing him a progressive saint. By harsh contrast, his predecessor, Pius XII, is made a cold, aristocratic figure of fun. Yet, which Pope was more identified with old-style piety and with junior seminaries?

A position which has to select the evidence about heroes or opponents lacks secure conviction. Too much insecurity of view leads necessarily to the phenomenon *fantasy*: about oneself and about one's opponents. The position which lacks confidence, demands flight from the world of complex, sometimes contradictory reality, to the childish world of fantasy. Addiction to fantasy is one of the marks of immaturity. By addiction to fantasy I mean the unwillingness to put fantasies to the test. Most of us, however hard-headed or scholarly in some of our views, have other views held only by force of fantasy. Fantasies about one's own views and about the views of one's opponents are intertwined; fantasies about my opponents, support fantasies about myself. An opponent examined, his views tested, may lead me into painful and disturbing scrutiny of myself and my own views. Collusion with a fantasy world is difficult to break, sometimes painful.

Doctrinally we have had ample warning in the last two decades of clinging to childish fantasies about God and his relationships with the world.<sup>1</sup> A kind of Occam's razor has sharply reminded us that precision and certainty should not be multiplied beyond what the evidence will bear. Morally, a fairy-tale framework of exact little rules and matching dispensations has given way to an approach more demanding of personal reflection and responsibility. Ecumenically we have had to test long-standing, ghetto-held, fantasies about non-Romans and non-believers: fantasies supported by restrictive and minute regulation of joint Christian prayer and of decent human response. Yet untested imaginings about the world outside the ghetto still creep into the more insecure of Catholic views. As recently as *H.V.* a position was bolstered by untested statements about the opposite view. What evidence was offered for the 'grave consequences' of artificial birth control to which the encyclical devoted a section?

Today, perhaps the fantasies most in need of testing are those about others within the Church. As an example, the most serious and literal oversimplification is that called 'the good simple faithful'. That picture, untested, can be used to justify all manner of authoritarianism, resistance to change, and even adherence to episcopal palace routines and limousines. Yet, the collusion phenomenon is not absent here. Lay collusion with the 'good simple faithful' fantasy may have much to do with a wish to be relatively 'free': not to have to make moral decisions; not to have to understand God's

<sup>1</sup>See, e.g. Peter Fransen, pp. 78-104 in *Theology and the University*. Darton, Longman & Todd, 1964.

world; not to have to work at worship of God. Decisions about sin, hard thinking, the Church's prayer can be left to the priests. Priests rightly may feel they must resist this collusion. They must question this handing over to priests, by laity, of too much responsibility.

In the previous section, we have been exploring low toleration of complexity and of uncertainty; low acceptance of reality; and the tendency of flight into untested fantasy. We have noted that one's fantasies about one's environment, about one's opponents, indicate fantasies about oneself and one's position. A Christian response to this is to recall that it is the truth which sets one free. Commitment to the truth needs to be firm to match commitment to fantasies. They engage strong feelings about oneself, about others and about the world. Testing the fantasies requires a willingness to examine and learn about one's feelings and the feelings of others. It is an exacting examination, but it can begin in relationships which are open and trusting.

My own learning in the areas described in this paper was found not primarily in the Church. Adult Education offered me the opportunity to learn: in courses about inter-personal and inter-group relations.<sup>1</sup> These courses focus not on books or lectures (important though these are) but on guided learning by experience. In some ways the Scottish Catholicism of my youth, for all its riches, was a place of sad experiential deprivation. I find that many of my fellow Catholics fared no better at the levels of human experience. To learn experientially, in human terms, is to learn at the level of feelings as well as reason. Situations of collusion, polarization, oversimplification and fantasy will flourish when relationships are not examined and faced at this level of feelings.

In a community of believers, such an examination seems a basic requirement. In times of considerable change, as at present, the need is especially urgent. Change frightens and puzzles; it shudders and loosens familiar holds. The reaction to change is often an overtight clinging to the familiar and known. The challenge of change can be coped with in the Church. It demands, however, that awareness of feelings and understanding of behaviour are seen not as danger and threat, but as conditions for being human.

<sup>1</sup>Course programmes, including a bibliography, can be obtained from the Centre for Applied Social Research, Tavistock Centre, Belsize Lane, London. For a specific description see, *Group Dynamics for Religious*, in *Doctrine and Life*, Vol. 20, No. 3, March, 1970.