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DETENTE RECONSIDERED: PRELUDE TO ANTICHRIST

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In the exciting and provocative essay that follows, Fr. Vincent Miceli, S.J. reintroduces into Western consciousness the vision of the last age and the coming of Antichrist. Written in the format of a political critique directed against contemporary policies of detente, the article is most deeply an apocalyptic call to repentance which deserves a decisive response from all of us. The author's delineation of the basic problem of human life today sweeps away the superficial diagnoses and patent medicines characteristic of a faithless age. Only when men return to Christ, he suggests, can they even hope to attain true peace among nations. And only when the West responds to grace can it hope to regain its dissipated strength.

Call not alliance what this people calls alliance,
and fear not, nor stand in awe of what they fear.
But with the LORD of hosts make your alliance
for him be your fear and your awe.
--Isaiah (8:12f) to Judah (c.730 B. C.)



ODAY POLITICAL DETENTE MOST OFTEN MEANS MERELY A SLOW MANEUVERING for sly surrender to tyrants. It is a policy instrument that degrades the art of home and foreign politics by dragging both into the dust and dreariness of defeatism. Vainly hoping to relax international tensions and avoid nuclear war, the free West regularly succumbs to the demands of the monolithic East. This policy of detente is one of tragic self-delusion; it dissipates no dangerous tensions. It is bound to be a failure on the political, economic and military level because it was, and is, a continuing betrayal on the moral and religious level of human relations. It is a superficial, simplistic policy, lacking vision and depth. For this tactic of detente is doing nothing to reinforce the foundations below that are crumbling away and threatening a sudden collapse of the Western world. Attempting with detente to treat merely the symptoms of the sick society, the leaders of the West do not yet realize that spiritual detente itself is the essential virus in the West's own malignant sickness.

THE ROOTS OF DETENTE IN THE AGE OF ANTICHRIST

The root evil of the tactic of political detente is to be found deep in man's metaphysical rejection of God. For man's social attitudes on the fundamental relations of community life, his just claims and moral obligations, are determined by his care or carelessness about his relationship to God. Even Socialist Proudhon had to marvel at

how political problems were assumed into theology. In his *Confessions of a Revolutionary*, he said: "It is a cause of wonderment to see how in all our political problems we invariably stumble up against theology." But Donoso Cortes, in his *Essay on Catholicism, Liberalism and Socialism*, commenting on Proudhon's wonderment at God's presence everywhere in politics, wrote: "There is nothing here that should cause surprise except the surprise of Proudhon. For theology, by the very fact that it is the science of God, is the Ocean that contains and embraces all the sciences, just as God is the Ocean that contains and embraces all things."¹ And it was the great St. Augustine who said that in its roots every serious political problem has a causal nexus with faith or lack of faith in God. The Psalmist long ago had written: "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it."² This is a truth that applies to nations as well as to families and the Church.

Thus the fundamental evil of political detente is that man has abandoned faith in and love for God. In both East and West atheistic humanism has become the State religion. And both of these systems of secular humanism eclipse the person, eliminate his freedom, deny his human-divine value and subject him to the tyranny of technological impersonalism. Thus the alarming signs of the times testify to a fierce and advancing spirit of evil, and we are forcefully reminded of St. Paul's warning to the Thessalonians that in the last days there will be an awful, unparalleled outbreak of evil everywhere. This will be called the Great Apostasy. In the midst of this general falling away a certain Man of Sin, having the image of Satan and breathing hatred toward God and man, will appear. He will exercise frightening preternatural powers of destruction against the just. This Child of Perdition will be so special and singular an enemy of Christ that he will be called Antichrist.³ For just as types of Christ went before Jesus, heralding his coming, so shadows of Antichrist have already preceded him. St. John the Evangelist warned Christians of his day thus: "Little Children, it is the last time.. .even now there are many Antichrists whereby we know it is the last time." But compared to the final Antichrist all forerunners of him were so many mini-antichrists. This Arch-Antichrist will orchestrate revolutions so expertly that the very framework of society will shatter into pieces under his wicked wand. In a stunningly evil way, he will knit together his totalitarian rule of heresy, sedition, revolution, schism, war-indeed of every evil movement-and hurl them effectively against the Church.⁴ Preceded by apostasy, conceived in apostasy,

gestated in apostasy, born in apostasy, the Man of Sin will come to total power through a General Apostasy (see note 3). In other words, Antichrist can never exist except for the decision of the majority of persons in East and West to apostatize from God and to join the forces of atheism.

His time may well be at hand, for everywhere in the world, but quite visibly and formidably in the most powerful and civilized nations, there is a supreme effort to govern men and dominate the world without Religion. It is already an accepted and spreading dogma that nations should have nothing to do with Religion, that Religion is merely a private matter, and affair of one's own conscience. In effect it is widely accepted that Truth is neither a personal nor a social need and, therefore, society ought to allow Truth to fade from the face of the earth. It is considered futile social action to continue to advance a system of Truth and absurd to attempt to hand it on further developed to our posterity. Again in almost every country there is a united, powerful movement to crush the Church, to strip her of power and place. Everywhere we discover a feverish, litigious endeavor to get rid of Religion in public activities-in schools, in mass media, in social transactions, in political affairs. Societies are said to be built on the principle of Utility not on the principle of Truth. Again, Experience, not Truth or Justice, is accepted as the end or rule of State activities, enactments of law included. Numbers not Truth is the final ground for maintaining this or that creed, morality or law, it being practically believed that the many are always in the right, the few in the wrong.⁵ Even the Bible is given so many meanings over and against its obvious one that it is reduced to having no meaning at all, at being at best a pleasant myth, at worst a dead letter. In the end Religion is denied any objective, historical reality such as is displayed in written dogmas, ordinances and sacraments. Rather religion is confined to each person's inner feelings, experiences and psychological reactions. Thus cast into the dark world of variable, evanescent, volatile feelings, Religion indiscredited in the minds of many when, in fact, it is not already destroyed.

It must be admitted that in the West the conflict between the children of the New Humanism and the faithful is escalating in ferociousness. The offspring of the New Humanism are agnostics, atheists, apostates and lovers of this world, immersed in materialism with hearts riveted to the vagaries of this time, and with minds moulded by vanities of passing pleasure. They exhibit a

haughty contempt for the Church, her ministers, her sacraments, her devotions, and her lowly faithful, with a lust for rank and station, an ambition for the splendor and fashions of the world, an affectation for refinement, a dependence upon their own powers of reason, an habitual self-esteem and finally an utter insensibility to the heinous sins they are committing against God and man. Such rebels bear the characteristic mark of Antichrist identified by St. John himself: an open denial that our Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that he came to redeem men.⁶

THE ANTI-SPIRITUAL ASSAULT

It is hardly surprising that the City of Satan, in its attack on the Catholic Church, would concentrate on two major doctrines that constitute the heart of the Catholic faith: 1) the Eucharist as the real substantial presence and true eternal sacrifice of Jesus Christ in the consecrated host; 2) the Virgin Mary as Mother of God. Both these mysteries are reduced to being Christian developments of old pagan myths, fables which attempted to explain the origin of the universe through monistic and cosmological forces. Daily within the Church one is saddened at the waning reverence for the Eucharist and shocked at the growing blasphemies against the Eucharist and the Mass. Such outrages find a psychological basis in the theory of Blas Roca, as expressed in his book *Glorieux Centenaire*. According to this ex-canon, the mystery of the Incarnation was not an assumption of a human nature by Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity. It was merely “an inoculation of the divine into the human.” In the rites of the Church, this divine inoculation is admirably symbolized in the ceremonies of baptism, the Eucharist and the other sacraments. The Eucharist considered as a rite is merely a symbol, but considered as the expression of a cosmological reality it is the presence of the Cosmic-Christ, of the Christo-humanity in everything. Therefore, in reality transubstantiation is only the presence of Christ in the human. Civilization, in the flow of history and human communications, will become “communion” for everyone through an osmosis of cosmic dimensions. This is a species of Christo-genesis rooted in evolution.⁷

This mythical “Eucharistization”, drawn ultimately from the theories of Teilhard de Chardin, is supposed to be the phenomenon through which Christ assimilates to himself humanity and, through humanity, the universe itself. This transubstantiation, by divinizing the

universe, enlarges and prolongs Christ’s incarnation. The Word thus inserts itself into the cosmic elements and what the Council of Trent defined as “the immediate and individual presence of Christ in the consecrated host” can no longer be clearly distinguished from the original, creative, universal presence of God in all things. From such a theory, one gets the impression that “cosmic holy communion” is a real possibility and that sacramental transubstantiation is merely its symbol. Thus the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist is counterbalanced with the idea of the communion of all men among themselves, this being considered the real holy communion in the “Christo-Social-Spirit”. We read Roca again:

This holy communion for all men takes the place of sacramental communion and it can happen that transubstantiation operates in all men more rapidly than in so-called Christians who accept the empty formula and dead letter of the Sacrament of the Eucharist.... Here is what I call transcendental and rational theology. The theologians of the future will accept this explanation and type of theology.⁸

Such variations on gnosticism, symbolism and modernism attack the authentic teaching of the Magisterium on the Holy Eucharist. They are to be rejected with zealous contempt.



Three errors concerning the Blessed Virgin can be drawn from the above theories. Just as Christ is not the Son of God, but an inoculation of the divine into the human, so Mary is not the Mother of God. Rather she is the key of all cosmogonies, i.e., the fulfillment of all goddesses created by the pagans to explain the origin of the universe, the fulfillment of Gaia, Demetra and Iside. Mary thus represents the living, Feminine Principle or Immaculate Wisdom incarnated and united with the Masculine Principle, the Celestial Divine Spirit, from whose spousal union a new divine race of men comes forth. Mary thus received a priesthood, which, however, has remained hidden up to our times. Today, as knowledge of women has developed, women may in consequence of Mary’s priesthood become priestesses themselves and even Papal consorts in the Church of the future. Roca concludes as follows:

Thus under two parallel tiaras and in a cloud of incense men will behold the Pope and his Consort pontificating together as spouses, symbols of the sacred, divine Duality-the Power of Masculinity and Femininity, the Spirit and the Anima, the two universal principles of the celestial Diade and of the androgynous [hermaphroditic] priesthood.⁹

These fables are nothing but a marvelous mixture of the theories of updated Gnosticism, Catharism and Cabalism, all occult religious philosophies condemned as heresies by the Church.

THE DEMISE OF LITURGY AND OF FAITH

More than a century ago, John Henry Cardinal Newman, with the vision of a prophet, predicted the desolation of the 1970's: "Surely there is at this day a confederacy of evil," he wrote, "marshalling its hosts from all parts of the world, organizing itself, taking its measures, enclosing the Church of Christ in a net, and preparing the way for a general apostasy from it." Newman pointed out that we cannot know whether this same apostasy will give birth to the Antichrist or not, but, he said, "this evil apostasy and all its tokens and instruments are of the Evil One and savour of death."¹⁰ One of these instruments, according to Newman, is liturgical tampering. He warned Christians against innovators who would relax Christian forms and usher into the Church liturgical frenzy. Such devotees of change question every Christian form of prayer, every posture of devotion, every devotion itself and the very personal or traditional symbols of the faith. Their lust for innovation is used as a battering ram against the stability of long-established sacred rites, which have been witnesses and types of precious Gospel truths for Christian communities. Hurriedly, even violently, they replace divine forms with new diluted Masses, new prayers, new sacraments, new churches-all of which confuse the faithful. Newman wrote:

No one can really respect religion and insult its forms. Granted that forms are not immediately from God, still long use has made them divine to us; for the spirit of religion has so penetrated and quickened them, that to destroy them is, in respect to the multitude of men, to unsettle and dislodge the religious principle itself. In most minds, usage has so identified them with the notion of religion, that one cannot be extirpated without the other. Their faith will not bear transplanting... Precious doctrines are strung out like jewels upon slender

threads.¹¹

Moreover, the new forms are without splendor, flattened, undifferentiated. To cite one example, kneeling is out of fashion despite the fact that Jesus Himself fell on his knees and on his face as he prayed to his heavenly Father. Then too the new forms are the result of experimentation. But one experiments with objects that one wants to analyze, whereas liturgy is full of mysteries, of realities in which one must participate. The wretched idolatry of tinkering with sacred realities has, unfortunately, penetrated the Church and produced a mediocrity-ridden liturgy, a show for spectators that distracts from the holy, frustrates intimate communion with God and vulgarizes, where it does not suppress, sacred actions, symbols, music and words.¹²

In our times it is no secret that the enemies of the Church want to destroy belief in the divinity of Christ. Once the liturgy is humanized, Christ the Center and Object of it becomes the humanist par excellence, the liberator, the revolutionary, the Marxist ushering in the millenium; he ceases to be the Divine Redeemer. We must be alerted to those who plan, by convincing us to abandon our sacred forms, at length to seduce us into denying our Christian faith altogether. Violate the *lex orandi* and you must inevitably destroy the *lex credendi*. That is why the faithless tinkers rail against so many devotions as superstitions; why they propose so many alterations and changes, a tactic calculated to shake the foundations of faith. We must never forget, then, that forms apparently indifferent in themselves become most important to us when we are used to using them to nurture our lives in holiness.

Places consecrated to God's honor, clergy carefully set apart for his service, the Lord's Day piously observed, the public forms of prayer, the decencies of worship, these things, viewed as a whole, are sacred relatively to the whole body of the faithful and they are divinely sanctioned. Rites sanctified by the Church through ages of holy experience, cannot be disused without harm to souls. Moreover, in the words of Newman, "Liturgical reformists must ever be aware of the following truth: Even in the least binding of sacred forms, it continually happens that a speculative improvement becomes a practical folly, and the wise are taken in by their own craftiness."¹³

Bishops would be wise to follow Newman's conclusions in this war on the sacred liturgy.

Therefore, when profane persons scoff at our forms, let us argue with ourselves thus-and it is an argument which all men, learned and unlearned, can enter into: "These forms, even were they of mere human origin (which learned men say is not the case, but even if they were), are at least of a spiritual and edifying character as the rites of Judaism. And yet Christ and his Apostles did not even suffer these latter to be irreverently treated or suddenly discarded. Much less may we suffer it in the case of our own; lest stripping off from us the badges of our profession, we forget that there is a faith for us to maintain and a world of sinners to be eschewed."¹⁴

The Fathers of the Church emphasized the corruption of the liturgy that will prevail at the last days. As the end draws near, the Church will be subjected to a fiercer, more diabolical persecution than any previously suffered. There will be a cessation of all religious worship. They shall take away the daily sacrifice.¹⁵ Some Fathers interpret this to mean that Antichrist will suppress for three and a half years all religious worship. Others remind us that Antichrist will set up his throne within the temple of God and demand worship of himself from his depraved followers. St. Augustine wondered whether Baptism would be administered to infants. The reign of Antichrist will be supported with a galaxy of miracles, such as the magicians of Egypt effected before Moses and Simon the Sorcerer displayed before Peter and John (see note 3). St. Cyril wrote: "I fear the wars of the nations; I fear divisions among Christians; I fear hatred among brethren. But enough! God forbid that it should be fulfilled in our day! However, let us be prepared."¹⁶

POLITICS AGAIN

In the presence of this terrifying prospect, what Christian can look for salvation from politics? The problem of political detente assumes its true dimensions in the war of Antichrist. Hope for peace from a balance of powers, a nuclear stand-off, an appeasement through economic favoritism and a piecemeal surrender to the enemy's plan for global conquest is nothing but a form of foolish whistling-in-the-dark. Such political tactics of defection are the inevitable evil fruits of religious forms of disruption that have previously dethroned God, the Church and the world of sacred values. Peace will never be the result of policies that promote commerce, cultural exchange and many varieties of communication. Such policies are like cheap cosmetics beautifying a dying body in preparation for its burial. But in the realm of the

spirit, fighting for the victory of Truth and Justice is a necessary condition for victory; faith and courage pave the path to peace; fortitude in trials of strength is the guarantee of life and liberty. Our actions and loyalties in this struggle, though performed in time, are determining our eternal as well as temporal destiny. There is a radical, most important nexus between spiritual health, with its will to win, and the material forces at hand for victory. Without spiritual health, the overwhelming resources for victory will be dissipated in the feeble hands of a sick nation that draws back because its heart is cowardly, its head confused, its vision blurred, its hearing dulled, its attention flagging and its feet slipping. Such a nation may rattle its armaments in comic bravado, but it frightens no tyrant. Such a nation plays the international clown, for, though it arms, it is not prepared to draw and, though it draws, it is powerless to shoot.

The basic issue of detente, then, does not center on the West's domestication of Soviet totalitarian despotism, but rather on the West's reversal of its own moral perversity. For the West has lost its transcendent motive for "fighting the good fight", for finishing an honourable course. Not having kept the faith, it is now morally paralyzed, incapable of projecting a cogent politics of peace with dignity. When will it cease being unfaithful? When will it finally accept God's grace and justification as the only cure for its spiritual exhaustion? With the escalation of violence, crime, confusion, wars and rumors of wars" emanating from religious apostasy and political disengagement, the stage is being set for the Coming of Antichrist. True, his name and his time are known only to God. But the portents of his nearness are evident everywhere in the general desertion of the faith. Still, agnostic and atheist sophisticates will smile patronizingly at the prophecy of Antichrist's coming in a pestilence of heresies, preternatural heroics and wars. Progressist Christians¹⁸ will join the intellectual scoffers. It was thus in the days of Noe who was laughed to scorn as he built his ark of salvation.¹⁹ It was thus in the days of Abraham as he pleaded fruitlessly with Sodom and Gomorrah. It was thus in the days of Christ as he wept over the city of Jerusalem. All these skeptics were wiped out violently for their incredulity. It will be thus at the end of time. For the wicked are too proud to accept and understand the ways of God.

Indeed, only saintly Christians can give the example and inspiration needed for a universal reconciliation with God. Such faithful Christians form little islands of

holiness everywhere, but especially in their homes which will surely but slowly re-Christianize a neo-pagan society, even as the little band of original disciples Christianized the pagan Roman Empire. “When the Son of Man comes, will he find ...faith?” asked Christ concerning those last days.”²⁰ We Christians must be his eager heralds, watching for the morning, the light, the signs of His Second glorious Coming. For despite the general Apos-

tasy that will be prevalent at that time, the Lord will be welcomed in His Final Coming in power by the remnant of His faithful Christians.²¹ These will rejoice exceedingly, knowing that this Parousia will put an end forever to the despicable detente of sin, will gather in His elect and establish eternally that entente cordiale, that eternally loving communion with God, the Beatific Vision.



NOTES

1 Donoso Cortes, *Ensayo Sobre el Catolicismo, el Liberalismo y el Socialismo* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Americana, 1943), p. 23. “Mr. Proudhon ha escrito, en sus Confesiones de un revolucionario, estas notables palabras: ‘Es cosa que admira el ver de que manera en todas nuestras cuestiones politicas tropezamos siempre con la teologia.’ Nada hay aqui que pueda causar sorpresa, sino la sorpresa de Mr. Proudhon. La tologia por lo mismo que es la ciencia de Dios, es el Oceano que contiene y abarca todas las ciencias, asi como Dios es el Oceano que contiene y abarca todas las cosas.”

2 Psalm 127:1.

3 2 Thess. 2:1-1 L The ‘lawless one’ in Paul is identified as the ‘deceitful one’ or the ‘antichrist’ in I John 4:3 and II John 7. See also note 4, below.

4 1 John 2:18-25. See also Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21.

5 John Henry Cardinal Newman, *Discussions and Arguments on Various Subjects* (London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1888) pp. 59,60.

6 1 John 2:22. (On some of the sins of the evil ones, compare Romans 1:18-32)

7 Blas Roca, an ex-canon, *Glorieux Centenaire*, p. 537. Quoted by Si, Si, No, No, a monthly periodical published in Rome: March 1976, Vol. II, No. 3.

8 Ibid., p. 537.

9 Ibid., pp. 497, 506, 507.

10 Newman, p. 60.

11 John Henry Cardinal Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, Vol. II, Christian Classics, Inc. Westminster, Md., 1966, pp. 75,76.

12 Dietrich von Hildebrand, *The Devastated Vineyard*, Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago, 1973, pp. 70,71.

13 Newman, Ibid., p. 78.

14 Ibid., p. 78,79.

15 Danie18:11; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11.

16 Newman, *Discussions*, p. 102. Newman quotes St. Cyril’s Cateche. xv, 16,17.

17 Matthew 24:6.

18 On ‘progressist’ Christians see 2 John 9: “Anyone who is so ‘progressive’ that he does not remain rooted in the teaching of Christ does not possess God...” (NAB).

19 On the comparison between the coming of the antichrist and the Flood, see Matt. 24:36-39.

20 Luke 18:8.

21 Cf. Matthew 24:13; 2Thess.2:13-17; I John 2:20 and 4:4; and 2 John 9.