

FAITH-BASED PARTICIPATION IN THE WORK OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR

By R. Lawrence Barbuto
Cardinal Stepinac High School

President George W. Bush has put the national spotlight on the participation of faith-based associations in the social work agenda, or entitlements programs, of government. The place of these not-for-profit groups in such work was mentioned by Alexis de Touqueville in his *Democracy in America*, where he referred to them as part of the “Third Sector” — not the commercial, nor government, sectors. And, more recently, Vice President and presidential candidate, Albert Gore, aggressively supported and pursued such programs, following from the fact that the Clinton Administration’s Housing Secretary, Andrew Cuomo, had brought such programs with him from New York. When the latter was in his father’s administration, he initiated and expanded much collaboration with what we now are calling, “faith-based” organizations!

Interestingly, the left wing of the Democrats has been as nervous as the right wing of the Republicans (as seen in the reaction of “700 Club” host Pat Robertson) about such threats to America’s “separation of church and state.” To many on both sides religion in the “government’s” business is likened to the “camel’s nose in the tent”: Keep them far apart.

My concern is not with this collaboration per se, nor that social work involvement will cause the same compromises as “faith-based” cooperation with governments on education and health care. The camel’s nose concern goes both ways; vigilance must be maintained by both institutions.

What concerns me is that the Christian institution of “church” will get even more of a social work cast than it has already! Specifically, more into our “pastoral care” calling and function, and even less into that “sixth essential of evangelization: The Transformation of Social Structures.” My reference here is to both the encyclical of Pope Paul VI, “The New Evangelization,” and to the twenty year retrospective speech and article in 1986 by Avery Cardinal Dulles, “The Seven Essentials of Evangelization.” And the more our temples/churches/mosques — that Third Sector - support and prop up both the commercial (a.k.a., “the Capitalist West, and First World”) and the government

sector (a.k.a., “the Socialist East, and Second World”), the less likely we, who seek “God’s will on earth as it is in Heaven”, are to have the resources, human and material, to initiate and develop what Pope John Paul II has been promoting and pleading for: “A Third Way” to accomplish “populorum progressio - Peace, as the integral human development of peoples.”

Social structure change will not be forged, and “transformation” will surely not occur, with evermore close working relationships with the “powers-that-be,” whose stake in the status quo, or “the system,” is intractable. “Unless I am, or WE are, in on it - nothing moves!” For a Third Way, moreover, to be the work of the “Abramic Peoples,” as the late Brazilian Bishop, Dom Helder Camara, referred to the threefold faithful of the One God, a transformation in the “social” aspect of “Church” (apart, but not separate from, its ecclesial and divine character) needs also to be accomplished.

In examining these “Seven Essentials,” particularly when for nearly six (6) years (1994-2000) I served on a New York Archdiocese Vicariate (of 24 parishes in Northern Westchester-Putnam) and as chairman in the last two years, it dawned on me that we, clergy and the Lay Faithful, ought have a formal division of labor. The Seven Essentials provided me with just the structural motif to lay out all of our activities “as Church” and to suggest a new allocation of duties between our two parts of the Mystical Body. As a firm believer in the stark separation of these so-called societal sectors (government/business/charitable), why not some “opposition and solidarity” - as it was put in 1969, by then-Bishop Karol Wojtyla, and then published in 1979, by Pope John Paul II in his *The Acting Person*—between our clergy and laity.

In short, the “first essential of evangelization,” or the “Inclusive: a. Proclamation of the Word; b. Catechesis; c. Sacramental Life; and d. Pastoral Care”, is the Leadership and “Final Word” domain of our clergy. Whereas, the “sixth essential of evangelization - The Transformation of Social Structures” is the prerogative, responsibility - under the authority of, the Lay Faithful. As to all of the rest, to return to *The Acting Person*, and its two Chapter 7’s on “Acting with others,” clergy and laity would work “intersubjectively by participation”. The second essential is “Participation”; the third, “Evangelization of Cultures”; the fourth, “Religious Freedom”; the fifth, “Dialogue”; and the seventh, “Use of the New Media.”

The concern I expressed above about State and Faith-based Associations being too cozy is not for fear of the “pastoral, *nee* social, care” that both can do together. Let the clergy do so, necessarily inviting lay participation in such work. (But not in the way, say, that Red China has refused to allow any “religion”, unless it serves its people and submits itself to the control of the State - as “patriotic.”) The unions of America almost disappeared with the New Industrial Policy of its so-called “friends” — the Democrats. The latter had

government-labor-business all together as one social structure. After being so sandwiched-in and picked-at by both of its natural enemies, politicians and profiteers, labor has been marginalized as a force in society. That marginalization can happen to Faith-based groups, as well.

Christian clergy, especially, in its leadership and understanding of the limits of its “Pastoral Care” resources, must make the deals and the contracts, now also to include competitive bidding with the private, for-profit, sector as well. It will be in less of a position, than will the lay faithful - free of such board room and public policy councils — to press for new structures outside the status quo system controlled by globally operated governments and private and public holding corporations. The Courts of the Kings are not the place for people, both who know the King of all kings, and who, while “rendering unto God and Caesar” their due, have an eye - in their “temporal responsibilities and as members of all professions”, as the Church’s 100 years of Social Concern teachings insist we have — to replacing both them, through our “self-evident” political liberties, and their trading partners, with our natural economic liberties.

William of Orange set out in a kind of transformative manner, when he allotted land and its income among the social sectors of his day. Each sector, however, had a duty attached to its holdings - a sort of social responsibility mortgage. He was atop it all, as follows: The courtiers, or royalty, had to administer the realm; the barons had the King’s wars to provision and fight; and the Church had to educate, hospitalize, and care for those at the margins who were not otherwise provided for. Those “mortgages” have long-since been burned by those in power. As have “The Commons” been enclosed. Those who have succeeded them, the “socialists”-the government sector-and capitalists-the commercial sector—, respectively, provided much rhetoric and spin about “Trickle Up” or “Tickle Down”, liberal or conservative blah blah blah, but it is those in that “Third Sector” who are the ones who really care and will “keep on truckin” at the duty we feel as brothers and sisters of all of God’s children!

In the late sixties, I researched and wrote a paper that was submitted by Blessed Terence Cooke, then-Archbishop of New York, to President Nixon: “The Cinderella of Development: The Third Sector.” It was clear that Catholic Relief Services, et al, were doing excellent work for the poor of the world. In the early seventies, I helped to start the Christian lobby, Bread for the World. Lutheran minister, Rev. Arthur Simon, BFW founder with his brother Senator Paul Simon, knew we were not about justice; but he insisted that people must pick the crumbs from the tables (the oranges left to rot on hillsides to prop up market prices) for the poor. Then, in the early eighties, I worked with Metropolitan Action Institute - famous (or “infamous”, depending on the attitude of one’s heart) for its Mt. Laurel and Yonkers lawsuits for housing.

High church positions; the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of our governments at all levels, respectively. All have been the venues I have known and worked in for social change, including ten (10) candidacies for elective office, including Congress in 1990 and winning but one: as a trustee for my village. We, the People, still are no better structured!

A “Third Way” is the only way. Such a “way,” having been pointed to by our clergy, by Church qua church teachings, our lay faithful, separate, but not apart - as members of the Body of Christ ought, finally to lead as Church in the socio-economic worlds. Our lay faithful, by their free action as Catholics-not by clergy-led, or clergy-”barriered” “Catholic Action” models, and not separate, but clearly apart, from our respective ruling classes and powers-that-be-ought to insist on their readiness both to lead and to follow, she who has visited our Earth often enough in our Age, the “Leader of the Way” (as the icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help was earlier called). In other words, the laity certainly need to look to the Church for spiritual and moral guidance, but should take the lead on social concerns. The clergy should be in the forefront, in politics and otherwise in social efforts, only in extraordinary circumstances. And in our social efforts we should always prayerfully seek Mary’s intercession.

In closing, I have been, in the last few years, suggesting a new mode of organization for both the Third Sector and “the People”. It is one which ought to be built out of the concept for it that lies in the name that Thomas Jefferson gave the People: the Fourth Branch of Government. This “branch,” Jefferson explained, was the one which convened the Constitutional Convention, and which inspired him to write the “Declaration of Independence.” It is the Fourth Branch, which oversees, perpetually, the other three branches that it, itself, set up — established provisionally, not in perpetuity. Provisioned on its success in assuring that we, the People continue, with these three branches and with the laws that they are to set and administer under our Constitution, in “the pursuit of life, liberty, and a property/happiness.”

I close, now, by telling of my experience since 1981 as a confirmed “Georgist.” (a person who has been moved by the life and works of Henry George, an itinerant economist and politician - but, mostly, an early evangelist of the Glad Tidings of Our Lord’s Prayer that “God’s will be done on earth.” One of his last social concern skirmishes occurred in my birthplace of New York City. And both he and his Catholic priest colleague, Rev. Edward McGlynn of St. Stephen’s Church, did not fare well under the church-state establishment in which they found themselves. They had set up an “Anti-Poverty Society” for the “abolition” of poverty; they had taken on Tammany Hall and the business tycoons (who used the candidacy of “Big Stick Teddy” Roosevelt to defeat Henry George’s chances to be Mayor of New York); and, more than anything, they had upset the alliance among these two powers with Church powers-that-

be, and their mutual involvement with the burgeoning consumer and immigrant constituency.

But, there is no denying the impossibility — from a professional and temporal standpoint - of our Church leading a “Third Way” with our lay faithful in either a conservative “May I, Father,?” or a liberal “Move over, Father.” There is no dogma in these matters. Our Holy Father has proved the viability of us, Christian lay faithful, of all people of the Abrahamic G-d, to be both “conservative” (Heaven forbid!) in their trust of our hierarchy in spiritual and moral matters - “in first things”, and “liberal,” if you will, in following the Magisterium’s teaching about the human person, our environment, and our socio-economic life in community. (*Gaudiam et Spes*; *Pacem in Terris*; etc.) The institutional Church can only teach the ruling moral principles in this area; she cannot lead reform efforts in society. That is up to the laity.

I was very comforted, despite my obvious past misgivings, by the words of, and about, many of the new Cardinals of the Third Millennium. I saw a distinction being made as to the focus of their apostolic efforts: An emphasis was expressed about the doings of our community of faith, not the public square. Pope Paul VI lamented the departure from politics of his own father, done for love of the Church and in obedience, (and deference) to the clergy of his time (on the Roman Question). But he himself was given freedom by the Church (as Msgr. Montini) to lead the “religious” campaign in support of Italy’s first free government after World War II. But Pope John Paul II showed a new way, which one newspaper described very simply: Soviet-Polish Communist leaders in one corner; Solidarity member-workers in another; a confessor-priest in another - with negotiations about Gadansk Shipyard conditions going on at the center of the room. The results of that new way of John Paul II have begun, only just begun, to transform the world’s social structure.

We must maintain distinctions between societal sectors: Faith-based associations must remain based in faith - not in the largesse of “pastoral care” contracts. They must help a movement of persons, in the manner of Jefferson’s “Fourth Branch of Government,” to take shape. It is the latter, hopefully led by the lay faithful of the G-d of Abraham, who, as “neighbors acting with others” (per *The Acting Person*), responsible and guided by their consciences, under G-d, for its governments and its laws. These are some of the societal actions and principles that I suggest that we, as Church, consider, as America moves into the 21st Century.

PART 5•DOCUMENTATION

