

Ten years on - the significance of *Outlook*

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Ten years ago, *National Outlook* came rolling into this world before the proud gaze of its progenitors, its hopeful face a little too liberally patterned with printers' ink. As one who assisted at its birth, I have been invited to reflect on the meaning of this now teenage progeny.

The immediate significance of *Outlook* is obvious: it is an independent journal of Christian inspiration offering a forum for debate on religious and political issues. In this it is not dissimilar to other earlier publications, especially the old *Catholic Worker*. What makes *Outlook* different is that it also aims to be genuinely ecumenical, and to bring the major Christian traditions into a debate on social issues.

However, I believe *Outlook* bears another level of significance which is not so obvious in Australia, and here I ask your permission to develop my line of thought from explicitly within the Catholic tradition. Brevity risks caricaturing more complex and nuanced positions, but I ask your indulgence on this too, as some simplification can help clarity.

It would be interesting to do a parallel reflection from the point of view of the Anglican or Protestant social traditions, but I do not feel equipped to do that myself.

INTEGRALISM

I consider that *Outlook* articulates a viewpoint which could be described as anti-integralist. What is integralism, especially in the Australian context? Integralism was a religious-political movement in the Catholic Church which took many forms early this century. While Pius X was pope, it embarked on a heresy-hunt against modern Catholic scholarship for so-called "Modernist" influences which it thought were undermining the Church's authority, dogma and tradition.

Though it was itself later condemned for its exaggerations, intimidation, accusations and misuse of Church authority, integralism remained a powerful underlying mentality in Europe especially.

It could be characterised as exaggerating the role of the Church in the world, claiming for theology a dominance over other disciplines at the expense of Church history, method in Scriptural studies and attention to the findings of the social sciences. It stressed external conformity or obedience to Church directions even beyond their legitimate realm, at the expense of the development of personal conscience and freedom. It claimed for the Church an exaggerated authority over temporal affairs, did not listen

closely to the needs and problems of the secular world, and sought to confine Catholics to a narrow, ecclesiastically dominated Church culture or ghetto.

The debates over the Second Vatican Council could be described as basically between those of an integralist mentality, and others who favoured greater recognition of the autonomy of the secular and a wider role for the laity.

Yves Congar OP, in an interesting little essay, "Outlines for a Theology of Catholic Action", in *Christians Active in the World* (1968), himself categorised the great division within Catholicism as between the "integralists" and the "progressives" (p. 70). The division had been endemic in the French Church especially, with integralism a notable element in the proto-Fascist *Action Française*, while elsewhere it influenced the conservative wings of the Catholic world, including Australia where it was never clearly identified or seriously challenged. In the Vatican Council, the "integralist" wing was led by some of the leading cardinals, especially Ottaviani, Siri and Lefebvre.

The world view of integralism was based on a nostalgia for the past, viewing the organic society of the Medieval world as somehow to be emulated in the modern context. It sought to recover Church hegemony over the cultural world, turning the tide against secularism and re-establishing a Christendom around a renewed consensus about Catholic moral values and judgments. Its political ideal in Europe was generally that of the confessional Catholic state and its favoured mode of government tended to be authoritarian. Its dominant intellectual endeavour was an apologetical defence of its perception of Catholic interests.

THE "PROGRESSIVE" ALTERNATIVES

Opposed to the integralist conception, the liberal or "progressive" wing in the Catholic Church argued for a more restricted role for Church authority, and recognition that the secular world had a proper autonomy from the Church. In particular, the sciences and academic disciplines had to be taken more seriously in a dialogue which would lead to a major recasting of theology and scriptural studies, not to mention moral theology and the social teaching of the Church. The liberal wing thought a return to a Christendom modelled on the past was impossible and indeed dangerously misleading. Moreover, it recognised that the role of the laity had to be expanded and many Church attitudes and structures declericalised. It ar-

gued that the Church also had to work within democratic structures and to encourage the laity to act on their own initiative independently of the clergy.

The role of the Church was then to help educate the laity and support them more vigorously to transform the world into a place of peace and justice. The Church was not to provide a safe or sentimental haven from the onerous tasks of building a world where every person had a decent life and enough to eat; rather the Church was to act as an energising centre for evangelising and civilising love.

It was the Christian's task not to withdraw from or despise the world, but to "seize the divine" in the temporal. The Church existed to serve the world and to be a sign and servant of the Kingdom which God in the fullness of time would give.

There was little place here for the triumphalism of the past, or a one-sided apologetics which ignored or down-played the human failings of the Church. Rather, the Church was to recognise its limitations and failures in history, not in a flagellating self-deprecation, but as a humble and real acknowledgement of the human failings of many of its members and officials.

In Europe, the integralist wing overplayed its hand, especially during the anti-communist campaigns of the late 1940s and 1950s, when some priests such as Fr Lombardi claimed papal sanction for a further centralisation of Church authority and its extension to the cultural and political fields. Lay people in this view were being reduced to cogs in an ecclesiastical conveyor-belt system of command not altogether unlike that of the totalitarian regimes. Pius XII's own views, of course, were considerably more sophisticated than those of Lombardi and others.

Reacting against this trend, scholars such as Congar vigorously defended the rights of lay people and developed their theology accordingly, finding solid support in history and tradition. It is perhaps not accidental that Congar was one of the founding fathers of modern Catholic ecumenism. Those anxious to turn back this tide of integralism were often regarded with suspicion or silenced, and went to complain to their friend and sympathiser in the Vatican, under-secretary of State, Archbishop Montini. Unable to do anything to change the situation, he encouraged these scholars to work on.

THE AUSTRALIAN SCENE

In Australia, we heard little of these struggles in Europe. The one notable event in Australia which rent Catholic unity, at least at the religio-political level, had been the Split in the Movement and the Labor Party of 1954 and its continuing aftermath. Till that time, Australian Catholicism had been remarkably uniform in culture, rather anti-intellectual, organisationally united around defence of Catholic schools and isolated from the wider Catholic world.

It was not till after the Second Vatican Council that it became clear to what extent many of the issues which had already appeared in Europe were also bubbling up in Australia. The cultural pattern of

clerical authoritarianism was suddenly and widely challenged. No longer content to "pay up and pray up", many lay people were dissatisfied with their role in the Church and demanded a major reshaping of Church structures and customs.

One special difficulty for us in Australia was that few people were able to disentangle sharply the integralist mentality from more liberal alternatives. The cleavages over the Movement disputes had opened along different lines and even the term integralism would have meant little to Australians. However many of the more recent debates in Australia have been basically about a rejection of this cultural integralism and a search for another style of Catholicism.

This search demands a deep reappropriation of the Christian tradition and a re-expression in ways more readily understandable today. It calls for a richer experience of faith, reflection in prayer and activity to build, in Pope John Paul's remarkably beautiful words, a civilisation of love.

All this touches on the task of *Outlook*, especially in the social sphere. It tries to engage in conversation the relevant disciplines about economics, political science, culture etc., and bring to bear a moral reflection based on faith and the Christian tradition, that readers might find a useful stimulus for action.

HEROES AND HOPES

Who do I see as *Outlook's* heroes in the Catholic tradition? I would hope to locate *Outlook* with the people of the intelligent Catholic left, like Ozanam, Ketteler, Camara, Maritain and so on, often misunderstood and experiencing much opposition in their times, but persevering trail-blazers for others to follow.

I especially revere Archbishop Montini, later Pope Paul VI, for his patience and fidelity in serving the Church, for encouraging the new shoots, for authenticating and recognising them at the Council, for gently trying to edge the Church from the deep treadway of integralism into a much more progressive journey.

Most of all, what gives our effort meaning is a sense of mystery before this outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the whole-hearted but veiled presence of the Holy One living among us who invites us into a community of believers as sisters and brothers. Such a sense of God-with-us opens Christians to a vocation to live as Jesus did, even to laying down our lives for one another, and in persevering, sometimes bumbling ways, to prefigure by our efforts the Kingdom to come.

These are extraordinary and daring words when we reflect on our belief that this great mystery of God's presence in the world has particularly enfleshed itself in the human reality of the institutional Church, without of course confining itself there. How do we celebrate this great mystery, mediated in a special way through the Church, so that the world will be transformed in solidarity and love? Is this not what *Outlook* wishes to speak about?