

Why did the hierarchy let these things go on? Some future scholar will have to wrestle with that question in regard to the situation in the Church in the 1970s.

I can give that historian, perhaps at this moment still in his or her playpen, little help with the answer. But here is some evidence that indeed there was an almost frightening silence of the hierarchy before the most overt and brash attacks upon Catholicity in the decade that followed that of the Second Vatican Council.

In San Diego, Bro. Gabriel Moran speaks under the auspices of the archdiocesan office. The CCD director points out he does so with the approval of the Ordinary of the Diocese, and in fact that works of Moran have been imprimatured, which, the director asserts, means they are doctrinally

correct. Moran in fact does not believe in objective truth, cares little or nothing for the institutional Church, and in sundry other ways completely undercuts the bases of faith.

In Montreal, the head of Canada's French-speaking theologians asserts that the Church should recognize divorce and hold to the indissolubility of marriage only "as an ideal." Fr. Roger Lapointe called on the Church to endorse the decisions of civil divorce courts or else let its own tribunals dissolve marriages. The Bishops of Canada were sent the recommendations. No notable rebuttal or rejection from the hierarchy was publicized (as of this writing, at least).

In Denver, the Archdiocese sponsored a talk by Episcopalian William Stringfellow which amounted to a personal and political judgment against America, including an ac-

cusation of "cruellest deception" being practiced by the Country's President.

Likewise, the Denver Archdiocese approved a "human development" grant to a political lobbying group called Common Cause, which promotes legislation of dubious intention and result. At the same time, a "catechism" series called *Conscience and Conduct* is allowed in the Archdiocese although it contradicts Catholic doctrine on a number of points, including one which has brought condemnation by the Holy See of certain Dutch catechisms — namely, that the Gospels do not recite historical events, but only the results of "faith."

Also functioning without open rebuke from authority in the Denver Archdiocese is the Society of Priests for a Free Ministry. The daily paper plays up statements by one of its officers, a

former priest married to a former nun, which assert that "we're not going to give up our ministry." Again, silence drapes the Chancery.

In Philadelphia, the Archdiocese lets Fr. Avery Dulles, S.J., tell its religious-education congress that changing means surrendering some of the "tremendously impressive body of doctrine . . ." but that such change is "healthy."

I have said I cannot provide that future historian with an answer as to the hierarchical reticence at being guardian and teacher of Catholic truth in the 1970s. But I pass on a hint from Fr. Bouyer, French theologian of that period: The Hierarchy is paralyzed a little the way a rabbit is paralyzed before a snake. The theological serpents frighten the Bishops in a field where those Bishops feel inadequate.