At first blush one may think that a journey through a century of Church documents would be a dreadful or dull experience. Dorr's treatment is anything but tedious. He has a pleasant way of making these documents come alive by combining serious analysis, honest criticism, and practical application. Dorr readily interprets his sources in the light of today's global needs, showing their achievements, limitations, and possibilities for the Church at the service of the poor of the world.

This work, which seeks to portray "an organic tradition of teaching by the Church on social issues" (p. 10), succeeds in its intent. Though ideas and contents change and develop, Dorr shows that the Church does have a consistent and developmental platform for social justice and its option for the poor. Readers are challenged to discover their own obligation and commitment and to make an individual and social "option for the poor."

This lengthy work concludes with a synthetic and insightful "evaluation" chapter. Dorr's nuanced presentation of the strengths and limitations of Catholic social teaching manifests his insightfulness and comprehensive vision. His conclusion affirms that, despite inadequacies, "Catholic social teaching provides support and inspiration for Christians in their efforts to bring justice to the world" (p. 379).

Some brief evaluative comments seem appropriate. This 1992 revised edition of the 1983 original is truly a comprehensive revision. Significant portions have been revised or expanded; new sections and entire chapters have been added and updated; Dorr's treatments of the themes of colonialism and ecology are welcomed additions.

In designing this as a "study edition," Dorr has added chapter summaries, questions for review and reflection as well as issues for further study; these prove moderately helpful. This second edition (over 100 pages longer) includes an expanded bibliography; yet surprisingly, not one Asian author/resource is cited. The new index is comprehensive and truly facilitates the critical use of the material. In a word, here is a valuable resource which is a masterful presentation of what has been called "the Church's best kept secret" — her heritage of social teaching.

James H. Kroeger, M.M.


There is a trend of thought that saw Vatican II as having inspired numerous
opportunities for experimentation. Somewhat akin to the earthshaking changes in China during the Cultural Revolution, such experimentation was a counsel expressed in the adage: ‘Let a hundred flowers bloom’.

In the matter of parish councils, Kim Se-Mang argues that the time allotted to such experimentation should now be ended. More than 25 years after the conclusion of that Council, it would be salutary to bring together the fruits of diverse initiatives in order to clear the air of confusion and of lack of direction in pursuing the noble objectives set for these councils.

Methodologically, the study is an exercise in applied sociology with two main parts. Each part follows the pastoral methodology, first proposed by a Belgian Cardinal for Catholic social action and later enshrined in the documents of Vatican II and subsequently known as ‘signs of the times’. The interrelated activities are thus: to see, judge, and act; in this study, these are to investigate and consider matters relating to pastoral activity as well as to formulate practical conclusions concerning them. For each part then, there are three corresponding subdivisions: investigations, considerations, and practical conclusions.

The first part investigates selected literature related to such councils by presenting some essential concepts of parish and of co-responsibility in view of Vatican II and other developments since that Council, as well as from a sociological, particularly a systematic, viewpoint. From a critical consideration of the literature, certain issues are then brought to the fore, notably mission development and implementation and pastor-council relationship. In summing up such considerations, sixteen working assumptions are presented as practical conclusions under these headings: identity of councils, strategic planning and management in councils, pastor-council relationship, and developmental needs of councils.

In the second part, the same headings are used to present the findings from which some considerations are singled out and thus practical conclusions eventually drawn. On the whole, the author finds existing parish councils to be oriented to the parish environment, thereby giving emphasis to coordination of activities, and to financial matters and administrative concerns. He also points out that the pastor-council relationship indicates differing perceptions and practices, and thus the likelihood of conflict-laden relationship. With such a poor identity of councils and the lack of a pronounced mission orientation, he advocates the idea of parish councils as “artisans of a civilization of love.” Strong in conserving and integrative functions to maintain parish life and ministries, but weak in interacting with and adapting to social situations, these councils are seen by the author as faced with obstacles needing a new model of interacting councils. Thus, he finally presents a new model of
three kinds of councils, as well as guidelines for implementing the model. Moreover, with some feedback from some pilot parishes, he also comes up with some revisions of the proposed model, notably in the area of the role of the pastor in the councils.

Two useful guidelines are likewise included for use in the process of implementing the model. These are: (1) the process of consensus-building, and (2) the process of communal discernment. It may also be mentioned that, in view of the desirability of initiating changes concerning parish councils on the diocesan level, the author wisely sought the prior approval and support of the local Ordinary. This is usually neglected in parish-based efforts, and is useful to note for those concerned with social change.

One may note that the sixteen working assumptions drawn from a critical consideration of existing literature on parish councils are a useful listing of "ideal-type" characteristics of such councils. However, one may ask how accurate it is to use such characteristics to measure the actual praxis of existing councils? After all, it is not evident that the present councils operate on the basis of such "ideal-type" characteristics in the first place? For the same reason, most of the findings presented in the second part give the impression of being failures to live up to idealized characteristics described by the author.

One wonders whether it would not have been a more apt strategy for the author to have first presented the findings as descriptive of existing parish councils, most of which are focused on the coordination of parish activities and on financial and administrative matters. Then he could have presented his critical reading of selected literature, particularly on the basis of conciliar and post-conciliar documents, as well as of the 1983 Code of Canon Law, which mandated such parish councils. From such a reading would emerge the sixteen working assumptions which form the basis of his proposed model. The new model of three interacting kinds of parish councils would thereby represent a vast improvement of existing councils, especially in view of the desired character of such councils as being in mission.

Finally, the same model of interacting parish councils proposed by the author rightly stresses the crucial importance of the formation of their members. The challenge becomes, then, one of creating an atmosphere of prayer and discernment within the councils, as well as streamlining the structures of collaboration among them. Only in this way would parish councils indeed become truly in mission. How do we sustain such a discerning mode of proceeding within the BECs, beyond the pool of formal leaders who constitute these parish councils? It is this concern which has become the problematic of basic ecclesial communities in
differing contexts in the formation of the leaders and of the communities themselves.

Renato A. Ocampo, S.J.


The editors of this revision deserve congratulations for achieving the monumental task of re-editing a monumental work. This reviewer has not yet succeeded in reaching the top of the monument. I confess that in the 30 years that I have been trying off and on to understand the 748 pages of the 1957 edition, I have failed to read more than half of these. And I have had to read these over and over again. Let me explain.

Sometime after the discovering the inability of Aristotelian cosmology to answer questions arising from modern mathematics and physics, my search for promising alternatives led me to emergent probability and relativity of space-time in chapters 4 and 5. To understand these, I discovered my need to read the first 3 chapters too. And now I learn from the editors of this 1992 edition that an oral tradition reported by Fr. Thomas Daly indicates that chapters 1 to 5 "came last" (p. xxii). I firmly believe this, for it is consistent with internal indications that Lonergan appropriated his own intellectual and rational self-consciousness not linearly but in a self-correcting spiral.

My own agonizing spiral began with the section on emergent probability and, with the help of the alphabetical index of over a thousand topics, I slowly worked my way through his philosophical reflections on ontology, ethics, epistemology and theodicy. My choices of topics were not in systematic sequence. The actual sequence was dictated by the random events emerging non-systematically in my intellectual and rational self-consciousness. No wonder 30 years were not enough.

This cognitional process of mine, peculiar to some but probably familiar to others, shows the importance of the alphabetical index. For me, this is vastly more important than the textual revisions considered "crucial" by the editors (p. xv). The textual revisions may be crucial to those who have already mastered the contents of all the 770 pages of the 1992 edition. But for beginners like me, some instruction manual that could be