

'Control' Widens Churches Rift

The birth control issue has widened the chasm already dividing Catholics and Protestants in America.

Following the U.S. Catholic Bishops' statement at their November meeting in which they struck out against proposed federal funds for artificial birth control programs, especially in underdeveloped countries, spokesmen with other opinions promptly voiced their views.

Widely quoted in the secular press was ex-Catholic, currently an Episcopalian, Bishop James A. Pike of California. He added to the moral issue a political angle by asking if Catholics in governmental positions are bound to the Church's stand on the matter.

He also pointed out that many Catholics disregard the Church's opposition to artificial birth control and practice in their own lives what the Church brands as sinful.

David Lawrence in his syndicated column this week expressed his regret that Dr. Pike turned the debate into a political hassle. Lawrence pointed out that Catholic leaders did not do the same when some Protestant groups recently urged recognition of Red China. Thus far Protestant candidates have not been queried if they will determine their political policies on the basis of these Protestant groups' recommendations.

Reporters were quick, however, to follow Dr. Pike's suggestion, and piled prospective candidates for next year's presidential race with birth control questions.

There is no point in our attempting to answer Dr. Pike in this column. The Catholic Church's position has been stated by competent theologians and by the popes themselves why artificial birth control is morally wrong.

We regretfully admit that some Catholics do fail to follow the Church's guidance in this delicate subject. We are also acutely aware that not only Catholics but Christians of other denominations violate not only this moral law but, unfortunately, others as well.

Sin has been quite universal and consistent in human history. No denomination to our knowledge has been preserved immune from it.

This is the first time, however, that we have ever heard of a religious leader urging a church to change its ideals simply because some of its members fail to achieve them. On this basis, churches would all soon be in line to approve theft, adultery, deceit and the whole litany of perversity and weakness which flesh is heir to.

We were of the opinion that the role of religion is to tell men what they should do, not applaud them in their errors.

Dr. Pike is not alone in this unfortunate process of surrender to a skidding moral standard. A glance at the history of the Anglican tradition, with which the U.S. Episcopalian group is linked, reveals a complete reversal within the past fifty years.

At the Lambeth Conference in 1908 and 1928, Anglican prelates denounced artificial contraception outright. In 1930, the Conference adopted a "grudgingly permissive" attitude and last year, with American prelates approving, the Conference endorsed as "morally acceptable" what it ruled out in 1908.

It is also interesting to recall that Episcopalian Bishop Charles Brent of Buffalo in a 1926 sermon at Rochester's Christ Church on East Avenue termed birth control propaganda "damnable."

This week Dr. Richard M. Fagley of New York, an officer of the Commission of Churches on International Affairs, admitted the majority of Non-Catholic Churches now hold a position opposite to the Catholic Church on the birth control question although a generation ago they mostly all agreed with the Catholic stand.

Apart from the moral issue involved, we can't understand why otherwise reasonable people panic into the birth control solution as soon as the "population explosion" is mentioned.

Gilbert K. Chesterton once commented that if he had five boys and four hats he certainly would not lop off one of the boy's heads but rather would purchase an additional hat.

We thought his example could be updated to present day traffic jams — why not dig a big hole, with federal funds, drive in all new models and, as antique vintage cars wear out, the highways will be roomy enough for the surviving autos. Quite obviously this ridiculous notion would never win a vote in its favor; the unavoidable remedy is to build more and wider roads.

But then when serious minds start to ponder how to solve the needs of starving, overcrowded people, the impetuous answer is, "Eliminate the excess people." All the while, we store up or plow under surplus food supplies and build faster planes to span the vast, uninhabited areas of this nation.

Dr. Pike, we are confident, is both wise and learned enough to realize America's Catholic Bishops issued their statement after sincere prayer and counsel from competent authorities. The population problem, the birth control question and other issues of our times will be solved not by debate or side-taking but, we are convinced, by fidelity to God's law and wise use of abundant resources already available.

The Bell Tower

• Sign on a battered truck rolling down a Georgia highway: "This truck has been in eight accidents and ain't lost any."

• A small boy was dolefully practicing his piano lessons when a salesman knocked at the door. "Good morning, sonny," the man said brightly. "Is your mother at home?" "What do you think?" was the boy's grim response.

• Look before you lip.

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Freedom and Peace Communism Said Main Threat To Peace

Joseph Breig
Pope's Big Work

The Catholic Bishops of the United States at the close of their annual meeting here, Nov. 18-19, issued a statement titled "Freedom and Peace." Following are excerpts from that statement.

With the hope that it will be of service to readers, allow me to give a brief report on the status of Pope John's movement for better understanding among Christians, and for their eventual reunion.

To begin with, the Holy Father wants to eliminate human fallings which might tend to keep any one from seeing the Faith for what it really is, in all its supernatural attractiveness.

Pope John expressed this desire by saying that he wishes to present the Church to the world "without spot or wrinkle," as the scriptural phrase goes. The first step is the synod in the diocese of Rome.

THIS WILL BEGIN, the pope has announced, Jan. 25 next — the feast of the conversion of St. Paul, and the final day of the yearly Chair of Unity Octave of Prayer for reunion of Christians.

Selection of this date gives every one a chance to make a real contribution by taking part with special fervor in the Chair of Unity Octave, which opens Jan. 18, the feast of St. Peter's Chair at Rome.

We can do our part also by learning from Pope John the gentleness and love — the unassuming love — which we should have for our fellowmen, especially for those who like us are believers in Christ.

OUT OF THE great heart of him, Pope John voiced this love and gentleness in beautiful words when he referred to Christians not united with Rome as "those peoples who under different names carry the sign of Christ on their forehead."

The purpose of the Rome synod is to renew the spiritual, moral and religious life of the Rome diocese, removing insofar as possible every stumbling-block between the see of Peter and "others who carry the sign of Christ."

This is the primary objective also of the world council of the Church, the date for which has not yet been fixed because preliminary arrangements are still being made.

CONCERNING the council, there was a perplexing problem about inviting persons of other denominations. If invitations were issued, to whom should they go, and how could selections be made without offending any one?

The only possible solution, it seems to me, was chosen. Domenico Cardinal Tardini, Vatican secretary of state, said the Church will announce that it expects whoever wishes to attend as an observer to do so.

"We are letting them know," he said, "that they are welcome and that they will be treated with due kindness and every possible regard. . . . We look on them as brothers because they are also the sons of God."

THIS METHOD, Cardinal Tardini remarked, will obviate "an unwelcome form of insistence." Those present from other denominations will have "opportunity to make known their views through personal contacts."

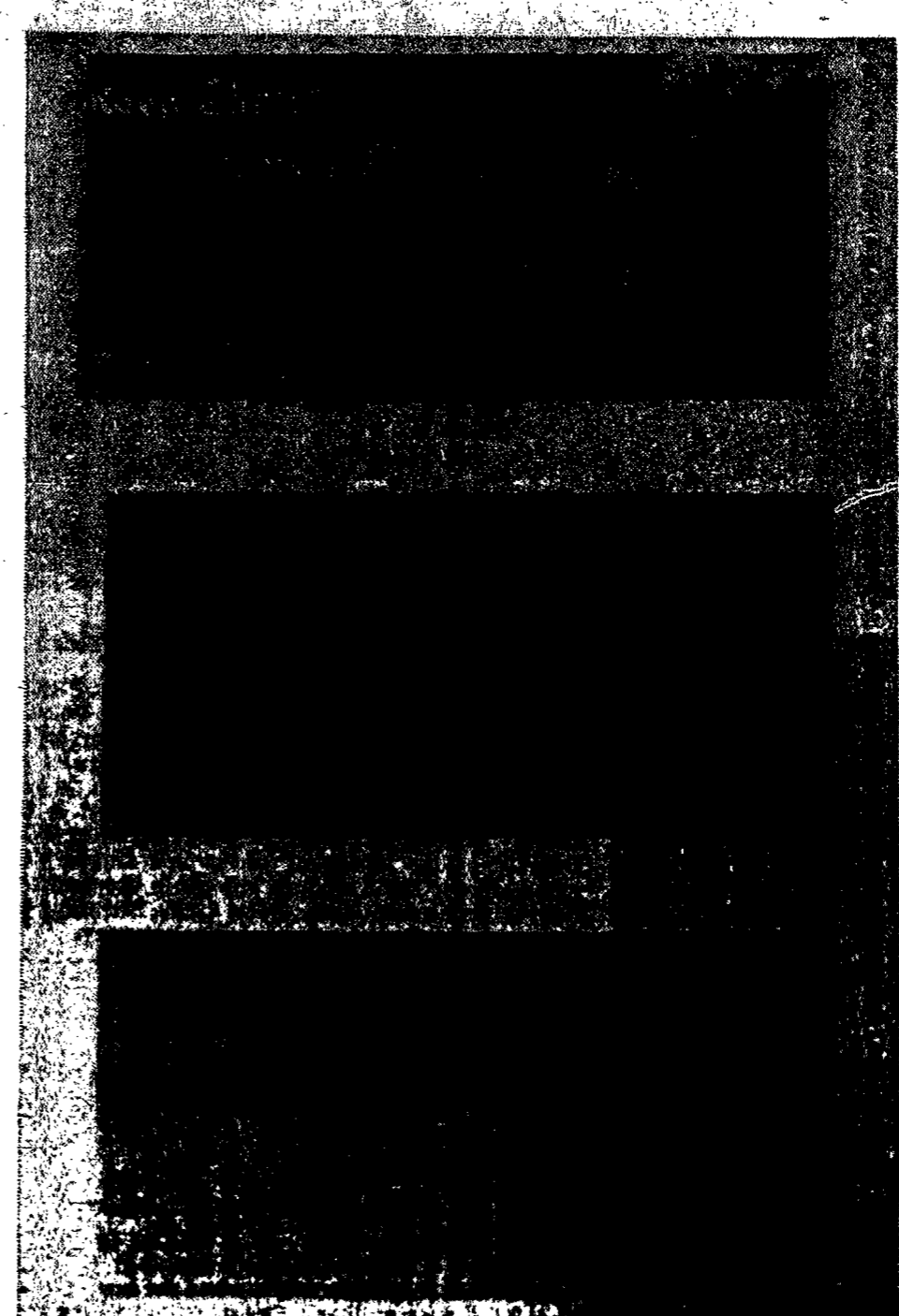
No longer will there be the problem of dealing with representatives of governments, as at other councils of the Church. Cardinal Tardini put the matter in this way:

"This time we shall do it alone. Times have changed. At one time, communications also depended on princes. But today the Church can move freely. The participation of heads of states would create a somewhat comic effect."

Whether bishops from iron curtain countries will be allowed by their governments to attend is not known. Every effort at least will be made to keep them informed.

Bishops all over the world are asked to suggest subjects for consideration. More than 1,600 responses already have come in, and are being catalogued.

Finally, a principal concern of the council will be the position of the laity in the Church, in view of the importance they have come to have in its organized life.



Keep Christ In Your Christmas

Chicago — These three posters are typical of 12 by 25 foot billboard messages to be displayed across the nation to emphasize the true meaning of Christmas. Churches, civic and business groups have made the posters an annual project since the Outdoor Advertising Association commissioned famed artist Edward Volkert to make the designs in 1913. (RNS Photo)

and the bitterness engendered by social injustice is their common lot. Embittered by the contrast between their own wretchedness and the wealth of the rich and powerful in their own lands, and between the nations, they are ripe for exploitation by both the communists and the extreme nationalists.

Nor can we be unmindful of the plight of the millions of refugees whose present status is a challenge to all who believe in freedom and peace.

Our attention is directed to the victims of totalitarian tyranny, deprived of family, of homeland, of liberty itself, they pose no threat to the peace and security of any land that may be their haven. But continued apathy to the problem of their resettlement is a reproach to the conscience of the free world.

We must also recognize that conditions at home which threaten our moral integrity seriously threaten the cause of freedom and peace.

Our attention is directed to the subversive and evil forces that may undermine the moral strength of the nation. Chief among these currently are racial injustice, laxity in home life and discipline, preoccupation with the sensual, selfishness and self-seeking in economic life, and the excessive desire for wealth and ease.

Reverence for God's law, the keeping of His commandments, the practice of self-restraint of justice and charity will contribute beyond measure to the strength and unity of our country, which are so essential to the maintenance of peace and freedom.

Council Takes Shape

By LUCIANO CASIMIRRI
Vatican City — (NC) — Five men working quietly in a 10-room office are laying the important foundations of the Second Vatican Council.

The five men form the secretariat of the Pontifical Antepreparatory Commission of the Council.

They are headed by Msgr. Pericle Felici, secretary of the commission, who works in constant and close collaboration with Domenico Cardinal Tardini, Vatican Secretary of State.

Basically, the function of this secretariat is to do the spadework in gathering, classifying and synthesizing the recommendations of the world's bishops for matters to be considered during the council.

This monumental task is being performed with incredibly simple means. Invitations are sent out by Cardinal Tardini to the bishops asking them to express their opinions on questions the council should consider.

There are no questionnaires. The bishops write freely. The letters are filed, the photostats are cut and then classified according to subject matter.

The scene of this operation is on the third floor of one of the new buildings built to house the Roman congregations which stand just before the entrance to St. Peter's Square. Inside the office one is struck by the great silence that predominates in contrast to the bustling activity.

Rarely does one hear the sound of a typewriter. This is because the bulk of the work consists in a studying and classification of the contents of letters.

The bishops' letters, written for the most part in Latin, number about 2,000 so far. Another 700 bishops are still to be heard from. In the spring of 1960 another group of letters will come from the theological universities which have been asked to express their opinions. About the same time the internal com-

missions of the 12 Roman congregations will also submit their suggestions.

The entire work is expected to result in a panorama of opinions and suggestions. An analysis of them will provide material then for the preparatory commissions which will organize and develop specific categories of questions.

It is not yet known how long this office will operate, but it is almost certain to continue to function until the summer of 1960. When its work is done, the office will be replaced by the Preparatory Commission, a more complex organization. Priests of many countries will participate in the work of its various departments.

Msgr. Felici, 48, is the brilliant and dynamic director of the secretariat of the Antepreparatory Commission. When he was only 28 years old he became one of the judges of the Roman Rota, the Church's supreme court of appeal. He is a noted lawyer and theologian and a fine Latinist.

He works so closely and constantly with Cardinal Tardini on the work of the secretariat that he has even taken his vacation with the Cardinal so that the collaboration would not be entirely interrupted. With his increased responsibilities he has had to relinquish his role as spiritual director of the Major Roman Seminary.

Msgr. Felici's assistants are Msgr. Vincenzo Carbone, and Fathers Nello Antonini Emilio Governatori and Edmond Ulinski. In January they will be joined by Msgr. Achille Lupi, who until recently was a staff member of the Apostolic Delegation in Washington, D.C.

Msgr. Carbone, 40, was a professor of dogma at the regional seminary of Viterbo. Father Antonini holds degrees in philosophy, theology, canon law and letters. Father Governatori is archivist of the secretariate. Father Ulinski is a notary on the Roman Rota. Msgr. Lupi's contribution to the work of the secretariat will stem from his knowledge of languages and his diplomatic experience in Latin America and the United States.

The work now being done by these priests may not be told in the recounting of the history of the Second Vatican Council, but it is planting the seeds that will grow in the Church's future.

essential for effective leadership in the cause of freedom and of peace.

Although communism is the overriding danger to peace and freedom, our preoccupation with communism should not deter us from seeking to solve other problems that may endanger peace and freedom. The social and economic problems of the world, and particularly those of Asia, Africa, and some areas in Latin America pose a twofold challenge that can be met.

Our people have been generous in responding to the appeals of the afflicted victims of war and famine. But the needs of the world will not be met by charitable aid alone.

The greater charity is to help people to help themselves.

Programs of education, technical assistance, and developmental aid, now being carried out both by individual governments and by international bodies, can do much to build the foundations for prosperity and peace in nations suffering from poverty and hunger.

In the long run, at least, the cause of peace and freedom is intimately connected with the independence of nations would be better served if we could rely less upon programs of governmental aid and more on private investment and international trade adequately regulated for the good of all nations. In view of such serious problems as the pressure of population in some areas upon resources, the world needs every element of cooperation and good will to step up production and distribution of food and fibers.

The potential abundance made possible by modern technology should be made a reality, as a result of programs inspired by our love of our fellow man and the quest for peace and freedom.

In regard to communism, our goal is nothing less than the conversion of the communist world.

Our moral judgment is absolute: communism is godless, it is aggressive and belligerent, it is unbelievably cruel. Witness the communist system in China, Hungary and Tibet are but the most flagrant manifestations of its total disregard for human rights and human dignity. Nevertheless, conscious of Christ's example and the infinite power of grace, we pray for the Red persecutors and for the persecuted.

Even today there are signs that the tyranny of communism is not the same in every nation under its sway. There are indications that the spirit of man will not stay crushed. We should storm heaven with prayer and penance, knowing that what to man seems impossible, God will grant to those who pray to Him with humble hearts, free of hatred and a spirit of revenge.

In this spirit, statesmen of the world must continue their often dishonored quest for peace, reductions in armament, and the introduction of the rule of law into the society of nations.

They must be firm in upholding principle and justice, knowing that appeasement in such matters leads only to the peace of the conquered. It is a delusion to place hope in seeking real understanding often the true problem is a conflict of essential principles, not lack of understanding.

Ultimately, the problem of communism as a threat to peace and freedom will be met only when we re-explory the principles that we proclaim as Christian members of a nation dedicated to God's law. We cannot live as materialists and expect to convert others to our system of freedom and peace under God.

We have often acted in our international relations as if the products of industry and methods of production were our only contribution to the welfare of our neighbors. We have given the impression that material progress is our sovereign if not our exclusive concern. We have aimed our efforts at satisfying the body, and, paradoxically, have allowed the communists to capture the minds of men.

We must convince the world that our industry, our education, our technology are made not only to serve the body but the free spirit of man, that the grandeur of our heritage and extent of our contribution to the world is not measured in dollars and machines, but in the spirit of God's freedom and the dignity of the human person.

To accomplish this we must be totally dedicated to our beliefs in God, the source of freedom and peace. We must be ready to give our country's principles the same unlimited measure of devotion that led to the birth of our nation. Mankind will follow only those who give it a higher cause and the leadership of their dedication.