

Protestants View Vatican Council As Urgent Need

4 COURIER-JOURNAL
Friday, July 7, 1961

By DR. CLAUDE D. NELSON
(Special from Rome)

Rome — (RNS) — Protestants leaders, by and large, have welcomed the Second Vatican Council not only as a potentially valuable stimulus to the movement for Christian unity and understanding, but as something that has been long overdue.

Even before the inspiration came to Pope John XXIII to summon an Ecumenical Council, Protestant churchmen — in Italy and France, especially — had suggested that the time was ripe for such an event.

In this connection, it is interesting to recall that as far back as 1922, Pope Pius XI, in his first encyclical, *Ubi Arcano Dei*, hinted at the need for a Council. Furthermore, this correspondent is informed, a suggestion that he summon a Council was made during the pontificate of Pope Pius XII by Ernesto Cardinal Ruffini, Archibishop of Palermo.

It is hardly necessary to stress that the need for a fresh approach to the problem of Christian division has been felt for some time by

Roman Catholics in increasing numbers.

A Waldensian lawyer called my attention to an article, "At What Point is the Ecumenical Movement?", published in the Catholic-oriented *Il Quotidiano di Roma* on Jan. 21, 1959 — four days before Pope John's historic announcement.

The article was written by Father Charles Boyer, S.J., founder of Unitas, a Catholic postwar movement for the reunion of all Christians. The author spoke of Pope John's 20 years of activity in the Near East as a former Vatican diplomat and his deep concern over Christian unity, which he was to voice on his election to the papal throne. In Father Boyer's opinion, the advent of the new pontificate at a time of "full ecumenical movement" was "truly providential."

In its issue of February, 1961, the French Protestant publication, *La Revue Réformée*, expressed the thought of a multitude of Protestants both in France and abroad that Pope John had introduced a new tone into the ecumenical dialogue, without, however, modifying Rome's

claims or demands in regard to unity.

Published in the magazine was a 70-page article in which Pierre Bourguet, its editor, said he found three possible motives for the calling of the Second Vatican Council.

One motive, he suggested, stemmed from the pressure of internal problems, among them a French Catholicism that sometimes was too adventurous for the Roman Curia's peace of mind, as in the case of the worker-priests a few years ago.

For the second motive, he pointed to the growth of the non-Roman ecumenical movement, now assuming new importance with indications that the Russian Orthodox Church and the World Council of Churches are drawing closer together. The third motive, in the editor's opinion, may have been the Catholic Church's concern over ground lost in the East during the past several years.

The recent announcement that the Russian Orthodox Church has applied for membership in the World Council brought no negative Catholic reaction here, so far as

this writer would find. However, a German Protestant publication, *Christ und Welt* (The Christian and the World), in its May 3 issue, reported that "Catholic circles" in Germany viewed the Russian move as "an affront to the Pope," who was "well known" to have had in mind closer relations with the Orthodox.

The writer of the article speculated whether Rome will now assiduously cultivate Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras in Istanbul, or become "more absolute than ever."

According to the writer, the Russian Church's move was a clever strategy in a policy aimed at strengthening its influence throughout the Orthodox world. However, he believes that nevertheless it constitutes a step toward the widest possible Christian unity.

Reactions of the World Council of Churches to the Second Vatican Council appear to be still much as they were when the organization's Central Committee met at St. Andrews, Scotland, in the summer of 1960.

The WCC finds the creation

of the Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity — set up by the Pope as preparations for the Council began — of great significance. The reason given is that it denotes a marked change from the "wholly negative interpretation" of the ecumenical movement provided in the encyclical, *Mortalium Animos* (Promotion of True Religious Unity), issued by Pope Pius XI in 1928.

Now, as the WCC sees it, the Vatican has "decided to become active in the ecumenical conversation," no longer leaving it to "individual Roman Catholics."

"The full meaning of the new secretariat . . . will become clear in the coming years, the Central Committee declared in regarding its reaction in five points, whose substance may be summarized as follows:

1. Dialogue is welcomed. 2.

It is too early to abandon informal discussions; they help to remove misunderstandings. The WCC is prevented by its constitution from speaking for its member Churches in matters concerning church union; each must speak for

itself. 4. But the WCC may properly make known to the new Vatican secretariat "certain basic convictions which have been expressed by the WCC Assembly or its Central Committee" (for example, on the issue of religious liberty, Christian social action, etc.). 5. The creation of the secretariat "does not mean that any of the fundamental differences . . . have been solved. The change is a change in procedure and in climate. The opportunity for dialogue is to be grasped."

Dr. W. A. Visser 't Hooft, the World Council's general secretary, emphasized in conversations with this correspondent in Geneva, as he did at St. Andrews, that the WCC is "body sui generis which refuses to become the adversary of any Church or group of Churches, 'because it stands for unity and is not a rival or a counter weight to the Roman Catholic Church."

Nor, added Dr. Visser 't Hooft, can the World Council disown part of its ancestry (inter-church bodies devoted to missions and to "life and work") to dedicate itself exclusively, as some Roman Ca-

tholic ecumenists think it should, to "theological study and conversation about the issues of reunion of the Church."

There is a clear implication here, as there is in many statements by Pope John concerning the Second Vatican Council, that the small practical steps in the direction of unity that are now conceivable will, if taken, prepare and disclose the way to larger steps and greater progress.

The issue of religious liberty to which the WCC Central Committee referred is of very special concern to ecumenically-minded Protestants, and nowhere more so than among the Waldensians, followers of Peter Waldo, who separated from Rome several centuries before the days of Martin Luther.

The Italian counterpart of the Presbyterians, the Waldensians — or, more specifically, some of their leaders with whom this writer has conversed — have found some encouragement in the announcement of the Second Vatican Council and particularly in the creation and ac-

'Massive Surge' Common Sense Or Bias?

Vatican Paper Marks Century

Vatican City — (RNS) — *Osservatore Romano*, Vatican City newspaper, is now 100 years old.

One of the world's most widely quoted periodicals, and also one of the most intensively read, *Osservatore* is not an official Vatican organ, but it is generally regarded nevertheless as the voice of the Church.

The Vatican Post Office is issuing a new series of postage stamps commemorating the paper's centenary. Meanwhile, the Vatican Radio, in a special broadcast recalled that *Osservatore*, as a staunch upholder of human dignity and moral values, had attracted particular attention in recent decades for its fearless opposition first to fascism and nazism and now to communism.

The Vatican station recalled that Italian Black Shirts once publicly burned copies of *Osservatore Romano*. Today, it said, the paper is repeatedly assailed by the Communist press and radio.

Dignified, austere and marked by a style of high literary quality, *Osservatore* has pursued its career unperturbed by the clash and violence of modern history.

The day after the Allied liberation of Rome in 1944 only one of the free world's newspapers did not come out with an eight-column spread over the front page. *Osservatore* tucked the news away on the last page and condensed it into a few lines. A major religious ceremony in St. Peter's Basilica was given top treatment.

The then editor-in-chief of *Osservatore Romano*, dynamic, cultured and hard-working Count Giuseppe Dalla Torre, did not wish to snub the liberators. What he wanted, and succeeded in doing, was to show the world that wars are won or lost, empires rise or crumble, regimes flower or decay, but the Church is eternal because its power is spiritual and not material.

In 100 years of publication, *Osservatore* has maintained the same attitude.

Anti-Communist, anti-materialistic as it is, and reflecting not only the opinions of the Roman Curia and the Supreme Pontiff, but also its own editors — their freedom of expression has grown con-

siderably over the years — *Osservatore* has stood firmly on the side of God against every encroachment of Caesar on the human and spiritual rights of man.

Director of the Vatican daily for over 40 years and through five pontificates, Count Dalla Torre maintains a completely objective viewpoint on world events.

He was so respected as a journalist and student of world affairs that, after the liberation of Rome, he even received a special pass from an underground Communist group, the Morelli unit. "I shall keep it," he said. "You never know what may happen."

During the final phase of the battle for Italy, Count Dalla Torre was called upon to report on the Italian political leaders most likely to govern the country after its

liberation. He included in the report a biography of the late Alcide de Gasperi that so impressed President Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and a Free French representative that the future Premier of Italy won their full support.

Count Dalla Torre's fame was so well established that when he was introduced to President Charles de Gaulle of France, the latter nodded knowingly and said: "Of course, it's you!"

Does *Osservatore*, whose staffers still write with pens, never typewriters, represent the thoughts of the Holy See?

The question was answered by Count Dalla Torre shortly before he resigned last year and was replaced by 62-year-old Raimondo Manzini, another famous Italian journalist and a noted Christian Democ-

rat. The editor-in-chief of *Osservatore* was started by two political refugees — Nicola Zanchini and Giuseppe Bastia, both lawyers — who came to Rome after King Victor Emmanuel II's Italian nationalism had brought about the downfall of the Papal States. They sought permission to publish a daily paper for the papal government which then ruled Rome and the surrounding Lazio province.

Their application was strongly supported by Mariano Pacelli, grand-nephew of Pope Pius XI, who at the time was substitute Minister of the Interior of the papal government. The aim of the newspaper was officially stated as being "to denounce and refute all calumnies against Rome and its pontificate." In 1884, Pope Leo XIII purchased the paper from its two founders.

Osservatore has had seven editors-in-chief, all deeply committed to the defense of "law and justice as the solid foundation for the life of each human being." As a fighter for peace and understanding, the paper has held its own through World Wars I and II and the current Cold War, denouncing especially the threat of communism and the persecution of religion in Red-ruled lands.

Saints of Unity

ST. SIMEON STYLITES . . . is the best known of the Pillar Saints. He became a monk in a Syrian monastery while still a boy; later he was dismissed from another monastery for his imprudent austerities. After some years as a hermit, people used to throng to him, and to avoid them he took up his residence on a platform at the top of a pillar (stylus). Emperors, bishops and crowds of simple folk came to consult him. He died on his pillar in 459 A.D. His feast day is January 5.

Recaps at Random

Nazis Not Alone In Persecuting Minorities

By GERARD E. SHERRY
Editor, Central California Register

Adolf Eichmann tried to deny his guilt at his trial in Jerusalem for the mass murder of Jews. His defense laid the responsibility at the door of his superiors. Even his own signature authorizing executions was brushed aside as the responsibility of others.

What a different picture is presented by one of Eichmann's fellow countrymen. In Germany the Catholic Bishops recently issued a joint statement which recalled the Nazi War of genocide against the Jews and which urged their fellow countrymen to do everything possible to make restitution for the crimes committed.

The German hierarchy, far from repudiating responsibility for the anti-Jewish excesses committed by the German nation not only admitted that such crimes took place, but asserted that all Germans should share the blame.

They went further. They published a special prayer (see page one) both for the murdered Jews and their persecutors. They asked that this prayer be recited in all the

German Churches. They also called on the faithful in Germany to "implore God in a spirit of atonement to forgive the sins committed by the members of our nation."

Modern day Germans, we feel, has learned its lesson well. The Church there is especially concerned that youth shall learn from the crimes of the past; that it build new bridges of understanding in reparation for the horrors of Belsen and similar concentration camps.

What must never be forgotten, however, is that even at the height of persecution against the Jews, there were Germans willing to stand up against the crimes being committed in the name of the Fatherland. One has only to think of the late Cardinal von Preysing, Bishop of Berlin, who risked his life to help the Jews. There were many others, too, both Catholic and Non-Catholic who stood up to the Nazis.

The trouble is, there wasn't enough of them. And the Nazis continued their blood path until they met their own day of reckoning.

We here in America can also learn a lesson from this terrible era. We are the ones

to understand and recognize the Divine dignity and eternal destiny of every fellow human being, whatever his race, color or creed. We should be privileged to rise up in the defense of the persecuted minority. We should be ready to defend even the most insignificant person from injustice, exploitation and oppression.

In some parts of these United States the Jew is discriminated against, especially in relation to professional organizations and housing. The "exclusive neighborhood" policies of some real estate men is a case in point. Along with the Jew is the Negro, the Mexican, the Puerto Rican and other Spanish speaking.

Many of us not only don't want to associate with them — don't even want to recognize them as fellow humans born in the image and likeness of Almighty God.

Our extreme nationalism is creating neurosis. We seem to forget our own immigrant status of the past. Organizations have sprung up in various parts of the country which say in effect, "We're not welcome here." This is the same kind of discrimination that we ourselves suffered at the hands of our ancestors.

They look with suspicion and mistrust on anyone who looks foreign or has a foreign-sounding name. Yet, so many Americans are a mixture of so many races and nations.

Hitler tried the same thing in the 30's. But he got his comeuppance. Alas, it had to come from the outside for there were not enough Germans with courage to cry "halt" to the excessive nationalism. In like manner we have our Nazi style organization run by a gentleman called Rockwell. People laugh at him now, and say it can't happen here. They used to laugh at Hitler, but it did happen. We in this country have to be ever vigilant.

Let us not therefore look too severely at our German brethren. Indifference helped the Nazis liquidate millions of Jews. In this country the same dangers exist. Our task is to cease being indifferent. We must become concerned about minorities in our midst. We should welcome them in a real Catholic way. We should offer our services to them.

More important, we should pray for them. Finally, we should also pray that we will always have the courage to be with them in their hour of trial.

THE CATHOLIC
Courier Journal
OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE ROCHESTER DIOCESE

Vol. 72 No. 40

Friday, July 7, 1961

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