

## Laymen Included In Church's Tasks

Lay people are likely to think the Vatican Council's first topic has little relevance to them. Much of the discussion is bound to be about the role of bishops in the Church.

Some people are puzzled that after twenty centuries this role still needs clarification. Others wonder why with all the emphasis on the laity, the Council at lots so much time on the higher ranking clergy.

Actually the lay people are as much involved as are the bishops in what will probably turn out to be the Council's key topic — "De Ecclesia — About the Church."

Up until recent times, the Church has often been pictured as a parallel to government organizations — with a king at the top, a parliament which agreed with him, an army to enforce his decrees and a docile peasantry to obey the laws and pay the taxes.

Scripture uses 40 different examples to describe the Church — it's like a field, a seed, a net, a vineyard, a banquet — but the one that is most frequently used these days is to describe the Church as the "mystical" body of Christ. According to this viewpoint, all that Christ our divine Lord did for our salvation while on earth in a physical body He now continues to do — as Pope Paul told the bishops at Sunday's Vatican ceremony — in the "visible and mystical body of the pilgrim, militant church on earth."

Christ was the revealing prophet, the king and priest, redeemer, healer and judge. Within the limits any example can permit, the Church today has these same characteristics.

Definitive truth came from Christ; now it comes from the Church. The way of true conduct was announced by Christ; now it's announced by the Church. Spiritual strength and forgiveness from sin was the gift of Christ; now it's the gift of the Church.

The Church does not take over the work of Christ, however, nor stand between the Christian and His Saviour. The Church, quite simply, is Christ today in a different guise but still at the same task.

This poses the same test of faith as others had when Christ journeyed poor, tired, depressed and persecuted along the dusty roads of Palestine. He didn't look like God and only those who were blessed with a revelation from His Father were able to know Him for what He really was.

The Church today is wrapped in human frailty and its robes at times have been frayed and soiled. Again only those who have faith can know the reality of what they see.

And there is this added aspect of the analogy — just as the disciples could comfort the Saviour with their companionship and the simple food they prepared for Him, so in our day, we can best serve and strengthen the Church — not by blinding ourselves to its weakness (Pope Paul used that word in his talk to the bishops) — but by "stripping it of what is unworthy or defective so that it may be rendered firm and fruitful."

This is the task of the Council. "The Council aims at renewal — a rejuvenation both of the interior forces of the Church and of the rules by which her canonical structure and liturgy are governed," said the Pope.

If the Church is indeed a body, it is not, however, merely an undifferentiated glob of protoplasm. As our own human body has an eye to see, a tongue to speak, hands to write and work, feet to walk, so the Church has different members with different tasks but all united in the Church's basic work for souls. This is the "multiplicity in the unity of the Church" which Pope Paul spoke about — a multiplicity which admits of a wide variety in ways of worship or in projects and movements and organizations.

The Council will also seek to modernize the ancient formulas of faith not by changing doctrine but by making it more understandable for men of the modern world.

Methods which might be very effective in America could prove utterly unrealistic in Africa — and methods there (like drums at Mass) would shock congregations here.

So here is the need for great flexibility in the Church's apostolate — with on-the-spot decisions to be made by bishops who know the situation first-hand. We are, therefore, passing out of a rigid era of uniformity (if we ever really were in it) into an era of certainly greater variety.

As the Great Fisherman stands at the helm of Peter's ship poised on its hazardous course, little wonder the Pope emphasized, "Let no other light be shed by this Council but Christ the light of the world; let no other truth be of interest to our minds but the words of the Lord, our only Master; let no other aspiration guide us but the desire to be absolutely faithful to Him; let no other hope sustain us but the hope that, through the mediation of His word, strengthens our pitiful weakness."

—Father Henry Atwell



October — month of the Rosary. Catholics for centuries have dedicated the month of May (May) and the month of harvest (October) to devotions honoring the Blessed Virgin Mary. These devotions have each received papal approval — Pope Leo XIII directed that every parish church should assemble its people daily in October for the Rosary and our Lady's litany, Pope Pius XII "canonized" May devotion by establishing the feast of Mary our Queen for May 31st. Catholics this year are particularly urged to pray this October for the success of the Vatican Council one of whose goals is the unity of all Christians. This was also one of the intentions listed by Pope Leo when he called for universal observance of October as the month of our Lady's Rosary.

## The Poor Are Puzzled

### Black Muslims Thrive on Slum Frustrations

(The following article deals with the controversial Black Muslims, who are classed in a religious movement that is enigmatic to many Negroes, as well as whites. The author is a leader in the Catholic Interracial movement. He has been named executive secretary of the Catholic Interracial Council of New York and was housing supervisor for the Philadelphia Commission on Human Rights.)

By DENNIS CLARK  
(N.C.W.L. News Service)

In one big city after another, the Black Muslims have become a force to be reckoned with. These Muslims are part of the racial ghettoes of the nation.

They are affected today by all of the turbulent influences that are striking Negro life in this country. One of the most widely publicized forces of Negro protest is that of the Black Muslims, the "Nation of Islam," a militant religious group that preaches self reliance, race separation and a doctrine of Negro racial superiority.

What has been the impact of this group upon the religious consciousness of Christian Negroes? How has the vehement preaching of the Muslims affected the Catholics? It is difficult to answer these questions. The Muslims are in the Church and are establishing interracial understanding.

The actual numbers of those who are Muslims is not known. Estimates range from 20,000 to the group's own boast of 100,000. The group has a number of affiliates that run to six figures. In addition to various articles in the press

and magazines, there have been several scholarly studies of the Muslim movement. These indicate that the Muslims, even by a very generous calculation of their enrollment that places it at 50,000, constitute less than one quarter of one per cent of the nation's Negro population.

It is not the numbers that matter, however. Ideas and doctrines have a way of acting in defiance of statistics. Despite their meager propaganda impact upon the Negro, the Muslims have a way of acting in defiance of statistics.

Although the Muslims would regard the term "Black Muslim" as a contradiction in terms, like Elijah Muhammad, the prophet of the movement, they are tolerant of Muhammad's rhetoric. What Elijah Muhammad says in public is what many Negroes in isolation feel as they face the dogged struggle for equality in society.

The fury of the Muslims finds an emotional echo in the feelings of Negroes who are sick of passivity and postponement. They often feel that if society can afford extreme segregationists in the Senate and in state legislatures, then some Negro extremists can be tolerated. This may not be a good point of view, but it is understandable. Amid the heat and stress of our long-standing racial controversy, WHAT IS IT that the Muslims stand for? Their teaching falls into three categories.

First, there is the story commentary on American race relations that is their stock in trade. To hear their quick witted and demagogic leader, Malcolm X, launch into one of his bitter tirades on television is to see a gifted propagandist in action. The message is sharp, sloganized and startling.

While America has not in the past been used to Negroes forcefully indicting it and recasting its sins in partisan and inflammatory language.

The Muslims espouse Negroes to reject white society and seek personal and social salvation in a Negro state, to be carved out of America as "compensation" for the wrongs long inflicted on men of color. The propaganda line is that the Muslims are the "great" technique so diabolically used by Hitler against the Jews. All things white are bad. White men are the source of the Negro's problems. Only black men seek justice.

The second element of the Muslim creed is a body of religious beliefs. Their beliefs are violently anti-Christian. They are not orthodox Mohammedan teachings, and authentic Mohammedans repudiate the capricious and irregular Black Muslim ideas. The Muslims use the Koran, study bits of Arabic, and refer to "one Elijah Muhammad" as their leader, and see him as the spokesman of the wishes of Allah or God. The group repudiates life after death.

His teachers practice a cut and patch fundamentalism, with their quotes from the Koran. The religious teachings are pragmatic, confused and authoritarian.

I feel there is a little bit of hypocrisy in it all when you express the attitude that it is all right to trade with the Reds as long as "our side" benefits from it. There is a lot of selfishness in the political anti-Communism of many groups within this country. However, a fast buck is a fast buck, even if I am an anti-Communist, he thought goes.

This is one of the reasons why I keep stressing that to be truly successful, anti-Communism must have a spiritual base. It certainly needs to be promoted in political

## Experts Differ on New Viewpoints

By MRS. JAMES T. TUCKER

Rome (NC) — Of the several topics anticipated for special discussion in the second session of the Second Vatican Council, the Council's approach to the Scriptures may be one of the most problematic.

In or out of the Council, the Sacred Scriptures have been the object of lively and scholarly debate for the past several years. Inside the Council, the debate will focus on the question of the source of Divine Revelation. Outside the Council, the debate has centered chiefly on the methods of exegesis or critical explanation of Bible passages.

Scripture scholars are aware of the danger of division in this. Apart from a few unfortunate lapses in the discussion of debate, the discussion in themselves, they have not been able to reach any vital and progressive Scripture studies in the Church.

The debate on exegesis, or critical explanation of the Scriptures, is divided broadly between what might be called the conservative school and the liberal school.

Generally speaking, those of the conservative school prefer exegesis, or the Gospels particularly, more in keeping with the tradition of the Fathers of the Church. They base their concept of the historicity of the scriptural accounts more upon the obvious meanings of the texts and seem to imply that there are the literal and historic meanings intended by the evangelists.

One might say here: What's the difference? Whether internal or external, the fact remains. But the debating scholars on the conservative side would probably reply that the obvious sense of scriptural interpretation has passed on to doctrine. They question in some instances, would pose the very serious question: Is this doctrine, or is it a literary form?

This particular debate has been aggravated and confused, some scholars complain, by the fact that it has not been limited to those persons who are competent to carry it on.

There is genuine fear on both sides that damage might be done by superficial writers publishing hasty and sensational conclusions in popular reviews, thus scandalizing the faithful. They would want the writings of scholars to be confined to scholarly reviews intended for the eyes of those who have sufficient background of studies, and would hope that serious studies not be published where they would be "too strong medicine" for the general reader.

Contrary to what many may believe, it is most unlikely that the debate will be decided in the Council. The two sides of the issue have not yet matured sufficiently. Many questions must be answered which require time for study, deliberation, research and peaceful and useful debate.

If the Scriptures scholars would have their way in this particular area, they would want from the Council only the most general principles which are sanctioned by the faith, leaving to the scholars themselves, under the Church's magisterium, her teaching authority, the necessary freedom and latitude to bring a study of the question to full maturity.

Inside the Council, the Scriptures are to be discussed in that scheme submitted by the Theological Commission which was first entitled "Sources of Revelation" and is now entitled simply "Revelation."

As the Council enters its second session, Scripture scholars here are optimistic. They believe that both sides of the issue will discover that they have been much closer than they ever thought.

With respect to its organization and code of procedure, the "Nation of Islam" does not differ too much from previous religious experiments that have animated the troubled world of segregated Negro life.

The movement of Father Divine, one time itinerant preacher, who attracted thousands to his religious and social enterprises with his claim actually to be God, is an example of a similar religious protest vehicle. The even more bizarre Daddy Grace built a network of institutions and an exotic claim to religiosity.

(Continued on Page 5)

## Reapings at Random

### Wheat Debate Reveals Hidden Selfishness

By GERRARD E. SHERRY  
Editor, Georgia Bulletin

The huge wheat deal recently arranged between Canada and the Soviet Union has revived talk in this country of a resumption of large scale, non-strategic material trade with Communist countries. It also points up a terrible fraud in relation to political anti-Communism.

One of the reasons why we have not encouraged trade with Red nations is because we have always had the feeling that it would help Communism to consolidate its position behind the Iron and Bamboo Curtains. Many people have thought the policy wrong, but have been afraid to express their views publicly, fearing the wrath and pressures of the political anti-Communists.

Readers will recall that suggestions were made a couple of years ago that our government should offer wheat to the starving people of China. There the Communists have made such a mess of their agricultural and industrial set-up that millions are deprived of subsistence. These suggestions were made on humanitarian grounds, but they got nowhere, because no responsible congressman or senator could risk his political future.

There are always elections and the self-appointed patriots who oppose everything

could be charged to charge a legislator with being "ultra-liberal," "Leftist," or "soft on Communism." This fear of extremist denunciation has led to stagnation in many areas of international trade in which most of the benefits would accrue to this country.

I am reminded of all this on reading about Republican as well as Democrat legislators from our wheat-growing states perking up and showing interest in current suggestions that we get rid of our wheat surplus through trade with Russia and other Red countries. Even some of our farm groups, whose record in the past has been noticeable for its stress on ultra-conservatism and anti-Communism, have not come out with a flat "no" to the idea. In other words, their antipathy towards Communism and trade with Communism is tempered by selfish interest.

I feel there is a little bit of hypocrisy in it all when you express the attitude that it is all right to trade with the Reds as long as "our side" benefits from it. There is a lot of selfishness in the political anti-Communism of many groups within this country. However, a fast buck is a fast buck, even if I am an anti-Communist, he thought goes.

This is one of the reasons why I keep stressing that to be truly successful, anti-Communism must have a spiritual base. It certainly needs to be promoted in political

ways, but politics must never be the sole basis for our anti-Communist activities.

This is all the more so at present, when the initial skirmishes looking toward the 1964 Presidential election take place. There will be lots of charges and innuendoes leveled against honorable men on both sides of the political fence. At both ends of the political spectrum there are extremists ready to pillory good names with photostatic half-truths and distortions.

A sincere expression of sympathy for starving Chinese children will be derided as "un-American" and an appeal to Jew instead of war with the Soviet Union will be labeled appeasement; an expressed fear of radio-active fallout will be labeled cowardice; fervent exhortation for the granting of equal rights to Negroes will be construed as a Communist attack on States Rights; an appeal for government aid to the aged and needy will be labeled Socialism. All the steps will be pulled out in order that the vocal minority who promote this extremist propaganda can sabotage every step to ease international tensions and further steps being taken to achieve civic peace at home.

One would not mind the negative walling of the extremists, if it were not for the fact that they offer no alternatives other than the big stick and continued belligerency. One would wish that at least the Catholics among

them would sit down and make a serious attempt at studying the late Pope John's two famous encyclicals, Mater et Magistra and Pacem in Terris. The mandate to work for peace is surely in those documents; so is the mandate for assistance to the underdeveloped nations, the aged and the poor wherever they are, disarmament, the abolishing of nuclear warfare, strengthening the United Nations, and fighting for racial justice.

The trouble is the extremists listen only to men. They adhere to the principle that religion is for church, and has no bearing on everyday life.

One of these people told me recently that Pope John was a very sick man when Pacem in Terris was published. Hence, I should not really attribute to him some of the Socialist doctrine contained in it. "If he had been a well man, he would not have allowed them to publish it under his name." Unfortunately, the gentleman in question was a practicing Catholic who thinks that most Catholic editors and columnists in the Catholic press have been subtly brain-washed by Communist infiltrators who are in every sphere of Catholic life.

There is no doubt that we all need seriously to examine our consciences and strive to make our anti-Communism devoid of political quackery, heading the Church which was in this field long before most of our present day self-appointed patriots.

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JAMES E. KEANEY, D.D.,  
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Bldg., Lake St. RE. 2-5655 or RE.  
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**Outlaw Is  
Outcast**

Taquile Island, Peru — This primitive Indian island has no jails, police or courts. It doesn't need them. Law breakers are simply set adrift and not allowed to return.

Following a recent visit there, Father Peter J. Halligan, M.M., a former New York City policeman, reported that the islanders, although behind the times and off the beaten path, have life so well under control that they have no need for a law enforcement body.

"A trip to Taquile is like going back five centuries in time," says Father Halligan. "Because of the remoteness of the island (a seven hour trip by boat) a priest can only visit the island twice a year, yet the simple faith of the Indians keeps their centuries-old church in perfect condition. The Indians clean and maintain it for this day — the visit of a priest."