

Christian Unity Theme Of 2 Church Leaders

New York — (RNS) — An audience of almost 2,000 filled New York's Riverside Church to hear the Anglican Primate of England and the Roman Catholic Primate of Belgium make appeals for Christian unity.

Archbishop Michael Ramsey of Canterbury and Leo-Joseph Cardinal Suenens of Malines-Brussels lectured under the sponsorship of Union Theological Seminary. The two prelates, both 65 and close friends for many years, were in the U.S. to lead a seminar for Episcopal bishops at Trinity Institute.

In his introduction of the guests, Union President Dr. John C. Bennett noted historic dimensions in having Anglican and Catholic primates speak on the same evening, at the invitation of an interdenominational Protestant seminary, in a sanctuary having a Baptist background.

The broadly ecumenical audience at Riverside included some of the top religious leaders of America including Archbishop Iakovos, Primate of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of

the Americas, and Dr. R. H. Edwin Espy, general secretary of the National Council of Churches.

Archbishop Ramsey, dressed in the scarlet robes of his office as 100th Primate of the Church of England, appealed to Christians to put faith only in the "God of death and resurrection." He warned against trying to make the church credible on any other grounds. The church, he said, is a part of the faith and not just an instrument for conveying faith.

Cardinal Suenens focused on the church as a "pilgrim" with a yesterday, today and tomorrow. He urged believers not to ignore any of these historical expressions. Christianity, he said, finds its roots in facts located in the past: Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, as well as the Old Testament heritage of patriarchs and prophets.

But the Gospel loses its relevance, he continued, unless it is brought to the present, to "this humanity." Christians, according to the cardinal, must live so that people can "read

the Gospel" in them since so few will read the Scriptures themselves.

The Catholic champion of co-responsibility in ecclesiastical authority said that the church must also be understood in terms of the future — of the coming Kingdom of God. Cardinal Suenens said Christians must guard against "primitivism" and "presentism" — undue emphasis on either the past or the present — since the faith is "the hope for tomorrow." He quoted a Marxist writer who commented, "Where there is hope, there is religion."

Archbishop Ramsey said that religion can become a "self-contained realm with tacit acceptance" of ideas about human life which are not those of the New Testament. Such an attitude is one of the "false securities" he cited. Religion, he declared, must subject itself to criticism and to the Gospel. He scored attempts to "refurbish and protect" religion when the need is for God's judgment and resurrection power.

The archbishop encouraged the faithful not to be disturbed by clashes which occur before "Christ's final victory" and not to be uneasy because the Gospel divides mankind. If the church were more Christlike, he said, some in the church would be out and some out would be in. He suggested being alert to the new apprehensions which God may provide in the "secular city," in times of darkness and in catastrophes.



Archbishop Michael Ramsey of Canterbury, left, and Leo-Joseph Cardinal Suenens of Malines-Brussels share a light moment during their joint press conference at Trinity Institute in New York.

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Nine Churches Approve COCU Plan for Merger

By ROBERT J. BYRNE
NC News Service

St. Louis — By unanimous vote, the 90 delegates to the weeklong Consultation on Church Union here approved a plan which could result in the eventual formation of a single, 25-million-member Church of Christ Uniting.

Approval of the plan of union does not assure the merger of the nine participating Protestant denominations. Each delegation must take the plan to its own church for two years of study. The plan with any recommendations for change must be returned to the Consultation by January 1972 for further refinement.

As approved, the 145-page plan of union calls for a series of districts each com-

prising a number of local parishes which are strongly oriented to Christian social action.

Participating in the ninth annual COCU meeting here were the Episcopal Church, United Methodist, United Church of Christ, United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., Presbyterian Church in the U.S. (Southern), Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Christian Methodist Episcopal, African Episcopal and African Methodist Episcopal Zion.

The delegates agreed that the proposed church should be headed by a bishop, but a preliminary proposal that the first bishop be black was voted down after protests came from some Negro participants.

The Rev. Othol H. Lakey of Dallas, Tex., Negro pastor in the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church said the early proposal smacked of tokenism. He remarked that after the initial black bishop has retired, "a lot of us in the United Church will have integrated a lot of cemeteries before we get another black bishop."

In the revised version, the plan specifies no racial requirements for the first presiding bishop who can hold office for a maximum of eight years (two four-year terms). But each succeeding bishop must be of a different racial background — Negro, Indian, Oriental, etc., than his immediate predecessor, thus rotating the post among the races represented in the Church.

Other changes in the plan put greater emphasis on the pastoral functions of the office of bishop. Originally the plan conceived of bishops mainly as executive officers in the church.

The concept of parishes as the basic units of the church was endorsed. The parish—a cluster of congregations not necessarily geographic in makeup—would embrace task groups for particular social causes as part of its structure as well as residential groups of church members.

As originally proposed, laymen will outnumber ordained ministers by two to one at all decision-making levels of the church. Each church group is left free to use the Bible translation which it feels best expresses its own thoughts on a particular matter.

In a press conference at the conclusion of the session, Dr. George G. Beazley Jr., of Indianapolis, who was elected chairman of COCU for the next two years explained that it was now up to each denomination to study the plan.

"My profound hope, however, is that they will do this interdenominationally as we have done here this week," said Dr. Beazley. "Our experience working together here has been as important as anything we've done, and if everyone works together as we have they will get a foretaste of the Church of God United in Jesus Christ."

COCU Observer

Watch Development, Catholics Advised

St. Louis—(NC)—Catholics of the United States should be "carefully watchful" at the response which Protestants give to the Consultation on Church Union's plan of union, according to a Catholic ecumenical expert.

Father John F. Hotchkin, associate director of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' (NCCB) office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, said Catholics should watch "to see if there is a movement of the spirit to accept the plan. If it is received and developed and applied, that would be evidence that the Holy Spirit is using the plan for some intention."

Father Hotchkin, who spent the week at the COCU sessions as an official Catholic observer, said he was impressed with the placidity of the entire discussion.

The participants were certain that, by means of group discussions, all the necessary elements would be included

in the final plan, the priest said. "They were not introverted about it, nor did they worry much over each detail. It was a confidence that I felt and that caught up with everyone by the end of the week."

Father Hotchkin characterized the plan of union as one "which places its emphasis on efficiency in mission, especially towards social problems."

Father Hotchkin said a full report on the COCU plan would be made to Bishop Charles H. Helmsing of Kansas City-St. Joseph, chairman of the NCCB ecumenical committee. But the priest said that no specific Catholic decision or stand on the plan is expected.

Earlier, at a mid-week press panel, Father Hotchkin and Father George H. Tvard, visiting professor of religious studies at Princeton University, said the COCU talks were an asset, not a threat, to Protestant-Catholic relations.

Brazil Bishops Urge Probe

Sao Paulo, Brazil—(NC)—Despite denials by the government that its agents are torturing political prisoners, the Brazilian Bishops' Conference has decided to support an investigation of the torture charges.

The decision was made after the conference's permanent committee heard a report from the bishops' Justice and Peace Commission on its investigation of the alleged tortures.

Since the military regime assumed dictatorial powers over a year ago on grounds that subversives were trying to overthrow the government, hundreds of persons, including priests and lay leaders, have been arrested.

Aides of Brazilian president Gen. Emilio G. Medici, have consistently denied that the military government is torturing prisoners. In some areas, however, local authorities have admitted what they call isolated cases of torture. In December, Justice Minister Alfred Buzaid said the government is willing to examine any evidence of torture that might be submitted.

Archbishop Avelar Brandao Vilela of Teresina, however, has claimed that the question fully explained to the top of the tortures has not conscience of the nation."

At a meeting in Sao Paulo, the archbishop said that the claim that Church-state relations in Brazil are excellent is "farfetched optimism."

Archbishop Brandao Vilela is president of the Latin American Bishops' Council (CELAM).

"I am not an emotional man and I abhor injustice,"

he told the Sao Paulo meeting. "On this question of religious persecution in Brazil, the difficulty is not to condone or oppose it but to investigate

it more deeply. As a Brazilian and as president of CELAM, I want to know what is happening in my country, what is the range of this problem."

Ku Klux Klan Tactics in Brazil?

Rome, Italy—(NC)—The influential Jesuit magazine Civiltà Cattolica has reported the findings of several groups on alleged tortures of political prisoners in Brazil.

The magazine, a fortnightly review of the Jesuits' Rome province, quoted from French and Italian newspapers, as well as U.S. news sources, and called its summation "The Black Book of Tortures."

"It seems impossible . . . to attribute responsibility to one or the other police organizations," the article said, and then cited the comparison made by Archbishop Helder Camara of Olinda and Recife that the tactics of citizen harassment in Brazil are similar to the "wretched Ku Klux Klan of the United States."

The magazine said its reports came "from eyewitnesses, some of those tortured." But the publication said it could not give them in full because of space limitations. Then, expanding the subject to include other atrocities, Civiltà Cattolica recalled the two incidents at Recife which shocked public opinion in 1969:

● Student leader Candido Pinto, 22, was shot by unknown assailants through the chest and left paralyzed from the waist down.

● Father Henrique Antonio Pereira Neto, 28, a student moderator and professor at Recife university was abducted and killed after being tortured.

The magazine also recalled the appeals by priests to the bishops of Brazil asking them to protest and mediate in efforts to stop the tortures. (In Sao Paulo, the Bishops' Conference voted to support an investigation.)

The priests protested "atrocities, beatings and tortures of innocent citizens," the magazine said. "But they could not give the names of the prisoners for fear of reprisals on innocent families."

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