

Pope's Message a Key to Future Policy?

By FATHER ROBERT A. GRAHAM

Vatican City — (RNS) — On the fifth anniversary of the end of Vatican II, Pope Paul sent to all the Catholic bishops a letter that turns out to be just what it was entitled—"An Apostolic Exhortation."

A News Analysis

He strove to stiffen the backs of his brothers in the episcopacy in their role as heralds of the faith and guardians of the apostolic tradition.

The Pope said that, while in these days a special effort has to be made to present Christianity to modern man in an intelligible way, this does not exempt them from the duty of preventing ambiguities and errors from slipping into the community of believers.

With repeated references to wildcat theoretical speculation, he set the theological profession down a peg by reminding the bishops pointedly that it is they and not the "savants" who are responsible for what the Catholic Church teaches.

Newspapers summarized the letter as "a call to strict obedi-

ence." A close look at the papal exhortation reveals it to be more of an appeal to the bishops to emancipate themselves from popular opinion and above all from the theologians and exegetes.

The Pope did not command them to do anything but their own individual or collective duty.

A Vatican spokesman drew attention to the "new style" of the document. It was written by Pope Paul not as a supreme pontiff so much as one bishop to another. Missing was the triumphalistic tone that papal stylists used in the past. But by being plain-spoken, the Pope also was sharper than usual in his remarks.

Paul VI's text, so to speak, was the Message to the World that the council Fathers in October 1962 issued shortly after the council opened. This particular statement got little attention at the time, for the importance of the council hadn't yet dawned on observers outside the Church. The Pope has drawn from this little-known document this pledge: "We will seek to present to men of today the truth of God in its integrity and its purity so that it can become intelligible to

them and they will accept it willingly."

But the process of adapting divine revelation to contemporary conditions has come up against real difficulties in the post-conciliar years. In trying to become intelligible to the unbeliever, the Pope seems to say, we have become less credible to the believer.

"Many of the faithful," wrote the Pope, "are disturbed in their faith by a mountain of ambiguities, uncertainties and of doubts that touch the faith in its essentials."

He listed the following areas in which — though he does not say it in so many words — he doubts seriously that orthodoxy has been preserved by some Catholic writers: the Trinity, Christology, the mystery of the Eucharist and the Real Presence, the Church as an institution of salvation, the priestly ministry among the people of God, the value of prayer and of the sacraments, moral imperatives in such matters as the indissolubility of marriage or respect for human life.

"The point is even reached," he concludes his enumeration, "of calling into doubt the divine authority of Scripture in the name of a radical demyth-

ologizing." The result of these trends is to create "a Christianity torn from the uninterupted Tradition that links it to the faith of the Apostles and a Christianity bereft of any religious element."

This, he commented, despite many positive and encouraging post-conciliar developments, when the proclamation of the word of God has received a marvelous rebirth in the liturgy, when the use of the Bible is becoming more familiar, and catechetical advances open great possibilities for evangelization and when biblical, patristic and theological research often make precious contributions to the living expression of revealed data.

The bishops, he went on to remind them, in terms taken from the council's decree on the Church, have as their main duty that of preaching the Gospel. They are the "heralds" of the faith, and the "authentic doctors" clothed with the authority of Christ.

In this task of explaining the Gospel, the professional theologians have of course an important role. But have they stayed within bounds?

The Pope commented: "Necessary as is the function of the

theologians it is not to the savants to whom God has confided the mission of interpreting authentically the faith of the Church. This resides in the life of a people for whom the bishops are responsible before God. For it belongs to them to announce to the people of God what God commands them to believe."

In the context of the papal letter, Paul VI evidently judges that some professional theologians are abusing their position to take arbitrary and dangerous liberties with the content of Revelation.

Does the Pope's statement represent a concession to those advisers or critics who think he has been lax in allowing too much free play to new ideas on the part of theologians and exegetes? Does Paul simply want to go on the record as warning the bishops to be more careful of faith (and also disciplines, though there is no word about this in the letter)? What concrete moves are in the making to implement, if at all, the strong statements contained in the letter?

Paul VI begins the new year with a strong and frank document and the months ahead will tell what lies behind it.



MRS. KING



MRS. WEDEL



MRS. WEXLER

'Most Important' Women

New York—Prominent church women have been named to lists of "most important women" and "women in touch with our times" by two leading women's magazines.

Mrs. Coretta Scott King, widow of the slain civil rights leader, and Mrs. Cynthia Clark

Wedel, president of the National Council of Churches, were named in the "most important" list proposed in Ladies' Home Journal and the "women in touch" list in Harper's Bazaar.

The Journal list also included Mrs. Jacqueline Grennan Wexler, former nun and president of New York's Hunter College,

and Miss Teresa Hoover, a Board of World Missions executive with the United Methodist Church.

Other churchwomen named to the lists are Dr. Rosemary Ruehler, Sister Mary Luke Tobin, the Rev. Jessie W. Houston, and Sister Ida Gannon.

Pay Heed to Essentials, Pope Tells all Catholics

Vatican City — (RNS) — Pope Paul VI urged Catholics to take note of the "apostolic exhortation" he recently addressed to the world's bishops.

The 4,600-word exhortation, released by the Vatican on Jan. 4, was issued to mark the fifth anniversary of the close of the Second Vatican Council.

In the document, the Pope expressed grave concern over "ambiguities, uncertainties and doubts" among Catholics with respect to what he called "es-

entials" of the faith, and exhorted bishops to remain cognizant of their "grave and urgent duty" to proclaim authentic Christian teaching.

Pope Paul told the faithful gathered in St. Peter's Square on the Feast of the Epiphany (Jan. 6) to urge all Catholics, to become acquainted with the document.

"It is addressed," he said, "to the bishops and concerns their primary function of announcing and guaranteeing the authentic transmission of the faith — a function of prime importance."

"And that is why," he went on, "it (the document) is of interest to all the people of God. Every believer must affirm his or her own faith. Every Christian must be a witness of his or her own religion, and a missionary of the Gospel."

CATHOLICS IN ENGLAND

London — (RNS) — The Roman Catholic population of England and Wales rose by more than 16,000 in 1969 to reach a total at the end of the year of 4,106,057. The statistics were issued here by the Catholic Education Council.

Notre Dame, St. Mary's May Merge

Notre Dame, Ind. — (RNS) — A report recommending the inclusion of neighboring St. Mary's College into the University of Notre Dame framework as a "separate and distinctive entity" was released here for study prior to its submission to the boards of trustees in March.

The move, in effect, would be a pioneering effort to place a women's four-year college within a major men's university structure. However, the women's college would retain its academic autonomy.

Both Sister M. Alma Peter, C.S.C., acting president of St. Mary's, and Father Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., president of Notre Dame, emphasized that the action by both schools' boards of trustees is necessary before any recommendations are adopted.

Observing that there is no prior commitment by either school on the report's recommendations, the two presidents said they released the report so that it could be examined by students, faculty, administrators, friends and alumni of both schools.

Why 'Las Vegas' Won't Work Here

(Continued from Page 1)

mayors and party leaders would find all this a rich source of pork-barreling, and treasury-raiding that would bring a flush of shame to the bulbous cheeks of Boss Tweed.

Even if, miraculously, the goons left the state and permitted it to run wide-open gambling fairly and squarely, and the state got all the money that was coming to it, pretty soon it wouldn't be enough. History is laden with proof of that statement. A little more than 30 years ago, after much soul-searching and endless debate, plus gnashing of teeth and wringing of hands, New York voted to introduce the pari-mutuel system at its tracks. It meant the end of the colorful (and scrupulously fair and often generous) bookmakers who lent a certain romance to betting—because you were betting a human being, not a soulless computer.

Everybody whistled with amazement when the proponents of pari-mutuels promised that the state would be enriched each year to the tune of perhaps \$10 million. Three flat tracks alone — Aqueduct, Belmont and Saratoga—will turn over \$80 million to Albany this year, but lose about \$1.5 million, what with improvements, increased cost of labor, etc. Albany would like ten times that much.

New York will always need more than it gets from gambling, no matter how much it gets.

The voters probably will reject the proposal to rip the towns wide open. The banks, department stores, car dealers, apparatus complexes, food dispensers and a lot of ordinary people with moral rather than materialistic desires will cast a solid "Nay." The churches will, too, even those in the Bingo business.

One thing can be said about the proposal. Its sincere presentation brings into embarrassingly sharp focus the fact that the richest state in the richest country on earth is on its uppers.

Dutch Prelates Accept New Bishop

The Hague — (RNS) — Holland's bishops have agreed to accept a reportedly conservative priest as the new Bishop of Rotterdam.

Pope Paul's designation of Canon Adrien Simonis, 59, as the new head of the Rotterdam see had caused considerable stir. Priests as well as laity were divided on the merits of the papal appointment. Some feared that Bishop-elect Simonis would prove to be of an "extremely traditional mind and attitude" and would "slow down, counteract and obstruct the many developments in the Church." Others saw the appointee as "a true defender of the faith."

In a statement issued after a meeting in Haarlem, the seven Dutch bishops expressed grave concern about "the unrest and discord" that had arisen over the appointment. "In the intention of Pope Paul, the appointment had a definite character," and must be upheld for the welfare of the Church in the Netherlands, the statement said. "The bishops, therefore, receive Father Simonis as a new bishop in their college." They are "convinced that he is willing to cooperate."

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