

VATICAN II...10 Years Later

Primate Sees Ecumenism As 'Greatest Blessing'

Birmingham, England (RNS) — Cardinal John Heenan, Archbishop of Westminster, believes that "ecumenism" is the "greatest blessing" that has come from the Second Vatican Council.

At the same time, however, he feels that the thrust of the ecumenical movement is in danger of being blunted by a proliferation of inter-Church discussions that lead "just to more talking."

"I sincerely believe," he says, "that in addition to sapping physical energy, the present burden of talk induces a weariness of the spirit leading to narcissism and neglect of personal prayer."

The Roman Catholic Primate of England and Wales appraised Vatican II at a recent conference of church leaders of all denominations at the Selby Oaks Theological College.

"I regard ecumenism as the greatest blessing to have come from the Council," said Cardinal Heenan. "There were other benefits, but most of them — for example, the impetus to further Biblical study — were the fruit of the ecumenical outlook. Catholics now see that something can be learned from their separated brethren."

"The Churches of tomorrow will, I believe, grow closer together," he continued. "In God's good time we shall talk not of the Churches, but of the Church. Christians will never



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return to the old rivalries and enmities. As religious belief declines in the West, they will unite in an evangelical spirit to preach Christ to their brethren and lead them to the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church."

He warned, however, that the ecumenical movement would suffer if different denominations indulged in "too much talking before taking action."

Linking ecumenism with inter-Church talks, as fruits of Vatican II, the cardinal said, "Of the two, discussion has had by far the greater impact. Ecumenism properly practiced is uniformly good. Discussion is good only if it is productive. It is bad if it

leads to paralysis or just more talking."

Cardinal Heenan also said it was "fatally easy" for priests and nuns to become so concerned with their own "self-fulfillment" that they forgot their "primary duty of self-giving and self-denial." He said he thought that many who had left the religious life would still be with the Church, if they had not "dissipated" their zeal in "endless talking."

In the Church of tomorrow, he said, "Ecumenism will obviously have its effect on theological trends in all religions — indeed, that is one of the primary objects of ecumenism."

"It has already altered Catholic thinking, but it may bring another kind of development."

"Since authority and every kind of establishment have become universally unpopular, the climate is never more favorable for a renewed attack on the authority of God and the magisterium of the Church."

"The Resurrection of Jesus, the Blessed Trinity, the immortality of the human soul, the Sacraments, the sacrifice of the Mass, the indissolubility of marriage, the right to life of the unborn, the senile, and the incurably sick — all these doctrines, taken for granted by Catholics until now, are likely to be attacked from within the Church of tomorrow."



Pope Paul gives his apostolic blessing at the closing ceremonies of the Second Vatican Council.

Roman-Anglican Relations Closer

London (RNS) — Archbishop Michael Ramsey of Canterbury, spiritual head of the Anglican Church declared here that the whole Christian world had reason to be grateful for the Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church.

In a statement marking the 10th anniversary of the opening of Vatican II, the archbishop said, "All Christendom has cause for gratitude for the Second Vatican Council and especially for the vision of Pope John XXIII in linking the themes of unity and renewal."

"Pope John saw that Churches will be drawn closer together by the deepening of their allegiance to Jesus Christ. In this way, Vatican II has had an influence far beyond the Roman Catholic Church."

Relations between the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches, on the highest level, have been steadily growing closer since the late Lord Geoffrey Fisher, then Archbishop of Canterbury, visited Pope John in 1960.

The precedent-shattering visit marked the first time an Archbishop of Canterbury had met a Pope since the Reformation.

In 1966, Archbishop Ramsey met in Rome with Pope Paul VI and the two leaders announced their intent to establish "serious dialogue" to explore the possibilities for the eventual reunion of the two churches.

They issued a common declaration which said that in order to develop to the full "sentiments of respect, esteem, and fraternal love," between Catholics and Anglicans, they intended "to inaugurate between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican communion a serious dialogue which, founded on the Gospels and on the ancient common traditions may lead to that unity in truth for which Christ prayed."

"The dialogue," the joint statement said, "should include not



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only theological matters, such as Scripture, tradition, and liturgy, but also matters of practical difficulty felt on either side."

In October, 1966, a special Anglican Study Center was inaugurated in Rome and welcomed by Pope Paul. The center also serves as the residence of a personal representative of Archbishop Ramsey at the Vatican.

In November, 1966, a joint Anglican-Roman Catholic Preparatory Commission was set up to inaugurate the proposed dialogue. It held its first meeting at Gazzada, in northern Italy, in January, 1967.

The third meeting of the commission, in September, 1971, unanimously adopted an "Agreed Statement on Eucharistic Doctrine," which received the authorization of Archbishop Ramsey and Pope Paul for "study and discussion."

At the time of the 1966 meeting with Pope Paul, Archbishop Ramsey emphasized that he and the Pope had "the vision of unity before our eyes."

Five years later, as a result of the dialogue he initiated with Pope Paul, he said, "I rejoice in the closer relations of Roman Catholics and Anglicans who increasingly see themselves as brother Christians striving to serve Christ together."

The Council and the Jews

BY RABBI MARC H. TANENBAUM

New York (RNS) — In terms of Catholic-Jewish relations, Vatican Council II continues to merit the judgment that I offered in Rome on Oct. 28, 1965, at the time of the adoption of the Declaration Christian Religions: the Council was an historic milestone, a decisive turning point in the 1,900 years of relationships between Jews and Christians in the Western world.

The most important net effect of the actions taken by the Council Fathers is that these have resulted in a profound change of Christian mentality toward Jews and Judaism on many levels in the Catholic Church. That alteration in Christian consciousness was a fundamental precondition to taking the first steps in creating a new Christian tradition incipiently characterized by a clear-cut repudiation of anti-Semitism, and a growing respect for Judaism as a living religion of permanent value.

One of the more significant achievements of Vatican II was adoption of *Nostra Aetate* which gave strong impetus to the serious process of removing the sources of anti-Jewish attitudes in Christian teaching.

That there exists today, a decade later, a network of scholars in Scripture studies, theology, church history, liturgy, and sociology engaged in creating a new Christian culture that is sympathetic toward Jews and Judaism is itself the most telling commentary on the historic value of the Council.

After 1,900 years of by-and-large tragic experience with Christian tradition and Christian society whose momentum moved horrendously in an anti-Jewish direction, the present reversal of field is inconceivable without taking into account Vatican II.

A balanced evaluation requires that we look also at the negative side of the Catholic-Jewish ledger and at unresolved issues that call for far more serious attention. These issues have been stated forthrightly by the Father Edward Flannery, executive secretary of the Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations in his November 1970 report to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. These problems still exist:



• Anti-Semitism, though mostly low-toned and unconscious, is still widespread and requires constant effort to detect and unmask its many disguises.

• Catholic scholars have not yet sufficiently pursued research into the renewal of theology regarding the place of Judaism in the divine plan, though the Vatican Council's statement on the Jews showed the way.

• The State of Israel has become a serious stumbling block in Jewish-Christian relations. Since Jews have in the vast majority identified with that state and see Zionism as central to Judaism itself and essential not only to Israeli but also Jewish survival, they consider it "as an ecumenical and a religious consideration which should be included in the dialogue."

The need to speed up the process of closing the gap between advances made by the scholarly elite and the people in the pew in relation to anti-Semitism, has assumed special urgency for the Jewish community in light of troublesome developments in recent months. The exploitation of anti-Semitism by the Soviet Union and some Arab propagandists have impelled many Jews to look to the Catholic community as an ally in combating this new wave of hatred toward Jewish people.

The forthcoming evangelistic drive of "Key 73" — paralleled by intensified mission-to-the-Jews programs — have also underscored the importance of Catholic and other Christian efforts to put an end once and for all to proselytizing the Jewish people.

And finally, the recent dastardly acts of murder and terrorism against Israelis, accompanied by the growing penetration of anti-Jewish Arab propaganda in Catholic and other church circles, have lent a sense of urgency in the Jewish community for Catholics to assume a more vigorous role in combating appeals of extremism and polarization and to engage together in effective works of reconciliation between Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the Middle East, and among all peoples everywhere.

Editor's Note — Rabbi Tanenbaum is the national interreligious affairs director of the American Jewish Committee, and is widely regarded as a leading figure in the advancement of Jewish-Christian understanding. He was the only rabbi present at the Vatican Council during the deliberations that led to the adoption of the Conciliar Declaration on Non-Christian Religions.