"The Church in the World": a Contribution to Pluralism

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WHEN HIS HOLINESS, Pope Paul VI, personally addressed the General Assembly of the United Nations on 4 October 1965, the Secretary-General, U Thant, hailed it as a historic occasion for all those working for the aims of the Organisation, to whom it would be an inspiration—at the time and for long afterwards—in their constant efforts for peace and human well-being.

These were courteous words of welcome, to be sure, but they were also intended to mark the deep significance of an event that joined in communion of thought the spokesman for the hopes and aims of the great family of nations united in a universal organisation and the representative of a Church whose leaders had for seven years been examining the problems with which it is faced in the world of today in an attempt to bring about its " aggiornamento ", to use the expression of John XXIII.

Two encyclicals, *Mater et Magistra* in 1961, and *Pacem in Terris* in 1963 [2], had already shown in what general direction this work should proceed: if the Catholic Church was taking stock, it was not for the purpose of perpetuating itself as a body somewhat remote from contemporary society, but in order to fit itself to be counted among the manifold social forces that are daily transforming that society. The word " dialogue " was chosen to designate this manner of conducting the Church's relations with the world, and Pope Paul VI developed this theme at length in the first document which he issued during his pontificate, the encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* (1964).

The object of this article is to assess these events as a whole and to define their meaning for the contemporary world.

It has been said of the encyclical *Pacem in Terris* that it marked the culmination of a process of evolution and the beginning of a new chapter

[1] International Labour Office.

[2] See J. JOBLIN: " The papal encyclical ' Mater et Magistra ' ", in *International Labour Review*, Vol. LXXXIV, No. 3, Sep. 1961, pp. 127-143, and idem: " The papal encyclical ' Pacem in Terris ' ", ibid., Vol. LXXXVIII, No. 1, July 1963, pp. 1-14.

in the relations between the Church and the world. In fact, it glimpses the possibility of closer and more sincere collaboration between Christians and non-Christians in their quest for peace and social justice. The results of the Vatican Ecumenical Council not only confirm this view but broaden it and deepen its significance, since many of the decisions taken during the Council give a very exact philosophical basis to this collaboration, seeing in variety of experience a source of spiritual enrichment and of progress. Whereas past centuries regarded each social force as complete in itself, though it might be obliged to tolerate the existence of other forces alongside it, modern thought conceives them all as " convergent " [1] and thus able to supplement each other and to hasten the time when the objective will be reached.

This pluralistic approach is inherent in the work of the Council. Not only are the aims it defined those of the United Nations also, but the Council reorganised the Church's forces in order to make them more effective. Finally, it opted for a policy of co-operation based on the affirmation that a common undertaking should be the work of all, and did not hesitate to reappraise its attitude towards the other social forces. By its acceptance of the pluralism of modern society, the Church has marked its intention to play a part in the world.

The main tasks of the contemporary world

One of the documents of the Council was devoted to an analysis of the basic problems of the world of our times. This is the Pastoral constitution on the Church in the world of today, more generally known as Schema (or draft) XIII.

History and general spirit of the document

When John XXIII convened the Council so that the traditional doctrine of the Church might be " thoroughly studied and expounded in the way that our times demand " in order better to enable the Church to " meet the needs of present-day humanity " [2], among the many texts that had been prepared there was none on the relations between the Church and the world.[3] Only at the end of the first session was it decided, at the request of a great many bishops, to introduce a schema to deal specifically with the question. This was a great innovation. For the first time a meeting of the Council was not to limit its work to discussions on the nature of

[1] Paul VI, in his address to the Council on 7 December 1965: " [During the Council] religion and human life have reaffirmed their alliance and their convergence towards a single human reality." See also the encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* (1964), Part III.

[2] John XXIII, opening speech at the Council, 11 October 1962.

[3] Seventy-three schemata had been prepared for submission to the Council. As from 5 December 1962 the Pope decided to limit their number to 20.

the Church. its doctrine, its internal life, its liturgy. It would deal with problems affecting humanity, with the meeting of civilisations, the hopes and needs of contemporary man, the transformation of society under the influence of science and technical progress, and the new structure of social relations; it would contemplate the awakening of the so-called underdeveloped peoples and their entry into history; and it would turn its attention to poverty, hunger, fear of war and the yearning for peace and unity—so many matters preoccupying the whole of mankind in spite of deeply rooted differences and antagonisms among its individuals and among its peoples.

In the face of these objectives the Council felt it necessary to remind Catholics of their responsibilities and duties in this respect, as well as to tell all mankind " how it envisages the presence of the Church in the modern world ".[1]

The manner in which the schema on the Church in the world of today is drafted stems from the main idea that inspired it. Its authors were careful to distinguish statements of doctrine from the practical guidance given in connection with certain particularly urgent problems. The content of this second part is so different from any other text issued by a Vatican Ecumenical Council throughout the whole of Christian history that at one time its separate publication as an appendix was contemplated. That, however, might have given the impression that the Church attaches less importance to action aimed at curing the evils of modern times than to the intellectual consideration that diagnosed them. The world that is coming into being, the changes in social order as well as in psychology and moral and religious behaviour, the many instances of inequity between races, classes, and countries, the opposition between international organisation and the egoism of national communities—the sources of so many conflicts and failures—are symptomatic, that is to say, they constitute so many calls to action.

The meeting of civilisations

The diversity of economic and political systems is a major feature of the world today. Their encounters lead to innumerable misunderstandings which hamper international co-operation and give urgency to the task of the United Nations family of thinking out the common bases of a new humanism. These bases, we know, are not sought in the superiority of one group imposing its views on the others. Each international institution is a meeting place where, as Paul VI said in New York, " you make yourselves equal ". From the confrontation of different ideas and different interpretations of the same ideals springs the discovery of a higher

[1] Pastoral constitution on the Church in the world of today (cited hereafter as: Pastoral constitution ...), para. 2.

truth, hitherto hidden or unknown. Dialogue is the only path that can lead mankind to a unity that respects differences. In 1957, Mr. David A. Morse, Director-General of the I.L.O., brought this problem to the attention of the International Labour Conference [1] and analysed the concrete form it took for an international institution. As he had occasion to remark again in 1965 [2]: " Political tension . . . is . . . a basic problem which still remains to be solved." The impossibility in which we still find ourselves of reconciling the universality of an organisation with the particularities which may arise from division into blocs and groups comes from man's lack of maturity in the face of his social responsibilities: " We have not yet learned to live with each other as a tripartite organisation in conditions of confidence and mutual respect." [3]

This new concept of the complementarity of civilisations and of the riches it offers has not yet become an inherent part of the thinking of modern man. It implies a revolution in social relations which raises serious problems, particularly for the Church. During the first two thousand years of its existence, the message of Christianity has been considered in the human and historic environment in which the Church was established. It developed in a world which itself had inherited three previous cultures—Jewish, Greek and Latin—and a commonly accepted conception of man's knowledge of himself and of his relation to the world is expressed in the synthesis of these cultures. The culture which resulted was marked by intellectualism. True and final knowledge was not the fruit of scientific observation; deductive reasoning, that is to say starting from sure principles to reach a sure conclusion, was the normal means of attaining it. In taking its place in this pre-scientific world—the only one then existing—not only did the Church help to save it, to give it harmony, to balance its constituents according to the comprehensive vision of the world which is the Church's own; it also to some extent identified itself with the world, adopting a mode of existence that necessarily derived in part from this epoch and this situation in time and space.

The " modern world " presents a completely new situation which has two distinguishing features: it is technological and it is universal.

It is a commonplace to call modern civilisation technological. " New ways have been prepared " the Council acknowledges " by a considerable advance of the natural, human and social sciences, by the progress of technology and by the vigorous development and organisation of the media of communication of man with his fellows." The Church is faced with the problem that this process often " assumes such forms that it

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[1] International Labour Conference, 40th Session, Geneva, 1957: *Record of Proceedings* (Geneva, I.L.O., 1958), p. 450. Reply of the Director-General following the discussion of his Report.

[2] Idem, 49th Session, Geneva, 1965 (Geneva, I.L.O., 1965), p. 410.

[3] Ibid.

saps the spiritual heritage of the most ancient civilisations ". The Church therefore sees in this a challenge to prove its ability to help man in his present circumstances, as it did in past centuries.

Modern civilisation is, moreover, universal; hence the need to reappraise the appropriateness of the original contribution of the Church, which was strongly marked by the West, to the world of today. Increased intercourse among the various nations and peoples is revealing the treasures of the different civilisations to all.

The Council was not unprepared when it approached the problem. Hardly a non-governmental Catholic organisation but had, in one form or another, put this matter on its agenda during the past few years; and the conclusions reached were compared at a general meeting in Vienna in the spring of 1965. This thorough examination, combined with various studies in the committees of the Council, was necessary in order to make the problem clearer. The question arose, however, whether the Church, faced by the technological world and open to the multiplicity of experiences, would try to resist change and preach a return to a past that had been the basis of its settlement with the world, or whether, recognising the enormous cultural change required by the upsurge and the meeting of civilisations, it would affirm its readiness to play a part in it. There would not then be any question of the Church's seeking a compromise or making concessions in order to render its present style of life more acceptable to other civilisations. It would have to gamble on stripping itself of everything not essential to its message to the world, so that it might implant its own inspiration in the different civilisations in order to help them to build a new humanity.

The choice made by the Council is clear. " The Church " it is stated " is not linked exclusively and indissolubly with any race or nation, any particular way of life, any ancient or recent custom. . . . It can commune with the various civilisations, and from this flows enrichment for itself and for every civilisation." This statement of principle is backed up by a practical directive. Christians must give this choice concrete effect, particularly by upholding a policy aimed at giving all peoples and all men the means of making a positive contribution to the meeting of civilisations. Today this aim can be realised. The scourge of poverty and ignorance, which has for long denied a large proportion of the human race its right of playing a part in working out its own destiny, can now be wiped out. If the tasks on which this depends are carried out, every people will be able to attain its full development in conformity with its own qualities and traditions: " The aim should be to give those who are gifted the possibility of following higher studies; but in such a way that as far as possible they can fill positions and play a part in society suited both to their natural aptitudes and to the skills they have acquired." This education should be extended to the whole population, at least by means of fundamental education providing each with a fair share of the benefits

of culture so that each can make a contribution to the common good in true accord with his nature as man.

The Council anticipates that a culture proper to technological and universal civilisation will spring from the peaceful confrontation of economic and social systems; but this will be made possible only once the vast problem of underdevelopment has been solved; hence the new meeting ground of the United Nations and the Church, that of economic and social life.

Economic and social life [1]

On many occasions during the past 25 years the Popes have dealt with the problems of economic and social life. Pius XI, in *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), Pius XII, mainly in his messages issued during the war, John XXIII, in *Mater et Magistra*, examined the contemporary evolution of social life, underlining its permanent constituents and calling on societies not to cease in their endeavours to improve " their customs and institutions in order to meet people's legitimate demands ". It is therefore not surprising that the Council placed this question among the most urgent problems of our times. But whereas during the immediate post-war years the stress was laid on the problems of reconstructing and reshaping Western societies, now attention is fixed—doubtless for many decades—on the distressing question of underdevelopment.

Economic development

One cannot in good conscience accept the inequality of peoples in regard to conditions of life, food, health and education, nor that of societies in the face of development opportunities, when one knows the resources of the developed world, the expenditure on armaments which it does not know how to escape, and the indifference in practice to the human problem of destitution.[2] So long as no step has been taken to solve, or to begin to solve, the problem of underdevelopment, one of the most fundamental requirements for the harmonious and peaceful evolution of the world of today will be neglected. World unification will go hand in hand with a growing acceptance of social solidarity. Each and all must accept the fact that their rights and duties go beyond the small groups to which they belong " and must extend little by little to the entire universe ".

Stress is laid on three objectives which coincide to a remarkable degree with those of the United Nations and the International Labour

[1] Pastoral constitution . . . , Second Part, Ch. III.

[2] " Even among those who profess broad and generous ideas there are some who none the less in practice act as though they care nothing for social solidarities." (Pastoral constitution . . . , para. 30.)

Organisation. The collective responsibility of institutions with regard to development finds a first field of application in the problem of the latifundia, those " large and even vast rural estates, poorly cultivated or left lying idle, while the majority of the population is destitute of land or has only a derisory amount ".[1] Their existence is a repudiation of the social function of all property. Reforms are imperative, therefore; man will be their object; man—as we shall see—will be their agent.[2]

This reciprocal solidarity will have a further sphere of action: international trade. The different nations will increasingly be embraced in one universal economic and social system, but the inequality of their strength is felt very greatly by the weakest. The sale of their goods too rarely procures for them a basic subsistence, whereas in a humanitarian world it should enable their economies to grow harmoniously. " It is therefore necessary to establish institutions capable of regularising international trade and of compensating the effects of the unequal strength of nations." [3]

A third field in which co-operation among members of society should make itself felt is industrialisation. Although the introduction of new industries may be beneficial when it stimulates development, it nevertheless gives rise to imbalances of many types by resulting in inequalities of income, provoking excessive internal migration, and causing the decline of long-established undertakings whose workers are reduced to unemployment. This problem, which affects the highly developed countries also, is among the most engrossing of our time. It is so much in the forefront that the United Nations is devoting special study to it and the Director-General of the I.L.O. has made it the subject of his report to the 1966 Session of the International Labour Conference. Development and industrialisation are generally linked; both should be devoted to the service of mankind.[4]

Man, the agent of economic life

If the object of development is the good of mankind, it is from man that it draws its impetus, from man's ability to shape and to organise social life. Would it not, in any case, better accord with the desires of all if it resulted from a common effort? Although development must be protected from domination by economic interests and placed permanently " under man's control ", the principle is laid down that it must not be left

[1] Pastoral constitution . . . , para. 71.

[2] See I.L.O.: *Agrarian reform, with particular reference to employment and social aspects*, Report VI, International Labour Conference, 49th Session, 1965 (Geneva, 1964), especially pp. 42 ff.

[3] Pastoral constitution . . . , para 86.

[4] The object of economic development is to be " at the service of man, of the whole man—taking account of his material needs and of his intellectual, moral and spiritual aspirations—of every human group without distinction of race or continent ". (Pastoral constitution . . . , para. 64.)

to the discretion of a few initiates, of a few privileged groups or more powerful nations, but that the greatest possible number of men, at all levels, and the nations as a whole at the international level, must be able to take an active part in guiding it.[1]

As regards giving to the greatest possible number of those concerned a share in the responsibilities of the undertaking, " all must be able to share in its life, its management and its fruits ". As to the higher institutions that make the economic and social decisions on which the future of workers and their children depend, the workers " must share and even actively participate in the organisation of economic development as a whole, either themselves or through freely elected representatives ".[2] This is a continuation of the line traced out by Pius XII and John XXIII, who both wanted such collaboration to be extended to the international sphere and saw in the International Labour Organisation the means of achieving it at that level. After dealing at considerable length in *Mater et Magistra* with the participation of workers in economic life, John XXIII declared[3]: " We are . . . happy to express heartfelt appreciation to the International Labour Organisation, which for decades has been making its effective and precious contribution to the establishment in the world of an economic and social order marked by justice and humanity and in which the legitimate demands of the workers are also given expression."

Maintenance of peace and construction of a community of nations

The last chapter of the Pastoral constitution on the Church in the world of today is entitled " The maintenance of peace and the construction of a community of nations ".[4] The burning questions it deals with were the object of repeated debate and controversy in the Council, and time and again it was redrafted.

To introduce such a subject for discussion in an assembly of over 2,000 persons drawn from almost every country in the world was a bold venture. It might well have been expected that each individual taking part would necessarily bring to it his own prejudices and those of his nation, that personal preoccupations would prevail and so prevent attainment of a substantial majority on the most controversial subjects and jeopardise the adoption of a single text satisfactory to all. But the challenge was met and the chapter was adopted by an overwhelming majority and the schema as a whole by 2,309 votes to 70.

Peace, which is the constant preoccupation of all men, is a blessing difficult to attain. It should be the expression of " the state of a human

[1] Pastoral constitution . . . , para. 65.

[2] Ibid., para. 68.

[3] *Mater et Magistra*, para. 103. See also Pius XII, Address to the Members of the Governing Body of the I.L.O., Rome, 19 Nov. 1954.

[4] Pastoral constitution . . . , paras. 77 to 90.

society in which each nation receives its due in every field, as does each citizen within it ". But what is just—apart from the fact that views on that point differ—varies constantly in line with social relations, political requirements and the changing possibilities of using the riches of the world. Thus men, and the pressure groups they constitute, are endlessly torn between a desire to " collaborate with all sincerely peaceful men in order to establish the conditions without which there will not be real peace on earth " and an impulse to revolt against the present state of affairs, actuated as they are by exclusively personal interests or by the basic need, bound up with their self-awareness, to wipe out the injustices from which they suffer—by violence, if need be. For this reason the chapter on peace is divided into two parts. One deals with the means of constructing peace and preventing tensions from degenerating into war; the other raises the question of how war and those who go to war should be judged, since history teaches that humanity has still not discovered how to free itself from this " ancient servitude ".

THE MAINTENANCE OF PEACE

The encyclical *Pacem in Terris* had already stressed the need to set up a world authority.[1] The Council again stresses the urgency of organising an " effective " power at the international level. This authority should be able to intervene " in an effective manner " in disputes arising among nations. It would have a part to play in the progressive reduction of armaments and should be in a position to re-establish order if anyone disrupts it. That, however, may be regarded as the negative aspect of its responsibility for peace. Peace is " the work of justice ". Thus the primary mission of this authority is to create the essential conditions for the establishment of just and equitable relations among men; to set the peoples on the road to universal brotherhood.[2]

The greatest obstacle to the harmony of wills, the greatest fermenter of tensions and dissensions in the world of today lies in the inadequacy of international co-operation among peoples; or more exactly, such co-operation as does exist is neither equalitarian nor universal. " There are peoples who, even if they work desperately hard, are ground down by hunger and poverty, to such a degree that sometimes the life they lead can hardly be considered human." Their " state of intolerable destitution " demands of the universal community of peoples that no one shall arbitrarily be excluded from its active solidarity and that effective institutions, adapted to the circumstances, shall be set up.

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[1] *Pacem in Terris*, para. 137.

[2] The words of Pope Paul VI to the United Nations are particularly cogent here: " You are an Association. You are a bridge between the peoples. You are a network of relations among the States. . . . The world looks to you as to the architects, the builders of peace."

Pope Paul VI made a point of dealing explicitly with these two problems in his address to the General Assembly of the United Nations.[1] He treated the United Nations vocation to universality as one of its most original and fundamental features; if the United Nations renounced this purpose it would lose its identity and reason for existence: " You. . . work to unite the nations . . . to bring together *one and another*." For anyone who knows what the Church's claim to be catholic, that is to say universal, means to it, it was particularly significant to establish a parallel on this point between the two bodies. As the Pope said: " . . . your character in a sense reflects in the temporal order what our Catholic Church seeks to be in the spiritual order—unique and universal "; and as the Church's ambition is to call all men together in awareness of one God, so the United Nations has a similar role " in the ideological formation of mankind. . . . Your vocation is to bring not only some of the peoples, but all of the peoples, to fraternise. " And the Pope went on: " A difficult undertaking? No doubt. But such is the undertaking. . . . Strive to bring back among you any who may have left you; consider means of calling into your pact of brotherhood, in honour and loyalty, those who as yet have no share in it."

The concept the Church has of the mission and work of the United Nations is exalted; the tasks the Church hopes to see the organisation accomplish are immense, so immense that its means must be diversified. Only such " specialisation " in responsibilities, in the face of world instabilities, will enable it " to render help to Governments which need it to speed their economic and social progress " and " to put at man's service the marvellous resources of science and of technique of organisation "; in a word, to make the new possibilities which flow from it contribute to the " material well-being " and " spiritual development " of human beings.[2] " The international institutions " the Council says in another connection " should, each within its sphere, meet man's various needs, both in the field of social life—education, food, health, work—and in order to deal with the many special circumstances which arise here or there." [3]

THE AVOIDANCE OF WAR

To avoid war: that is the hope of all men. Beyond doubt Paul VI expressed the desire of mankind when, addressing the delegations assembled in New York, he declared: " Never again war, war never again! Never again one against another, never, never again! " But was

[1] Pope Paul VI's address to the General Assembly of the United Nations was included in the Council records by decision of the Council Fathers on 5 October 1965. See " Un segno dei tempi: il Sommo Pontefice all'O.N.U.", in *Osservatore Romano*, 16 Oct. 1965.

[2] Constitution of the I.L.O. (Annex: Declaration of Philadelphia).

[3] Pastoral constitution . . . , para. 84.

this not merely one more condemnation added to the list, already long, of appeals for the maintenance of peace?

The texts of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council defining the Church's stand in regard to this objective bear the stamp of realism.[1] The Church well knows that it cannot by itself play the part of an effective authority capable of intervening and preventing men from resorting to arms. It knows on the other hand that men expect of the Church something other than an abstract condemnation and that in the second half of the twentieth century diplomatic action, even at the highest level, is not enough. It is aware that it must urge all the faithful to engage in the " fight for peace ". But how? The Pastoral constitution on the Church in the world of today [2] defines three possible fields of action.

First, all must respect the forces of peace; and among these forces are those men who, seeing in the obligation to achieve peace an absolute moral imperative, dedicate their whole life to it. That is the meaning of the passage on conscientious objection. In all countries today there are men who, with courage and self-sacrifice, refuse, for reasons of idealism, to carry out any form of military service. Let society recognise them to be something more than rebels. They are witnesses to the end to be achieved, and hence deserving of respect. Governments should therefore draw up a legal constitution for them that will bring them back within the framework of the law.

This " humanitarian " measure devolves on the political authorities, for it is they who have to lead their peoples in peace and sometimes in war. Breaking with centuries of tradition at this point, the Council chose not to resort to the " classic " distinctions of the just and the unjust war, limited and generalised war. It points out that in the present situation no statesman can proclaim, and none has ever proclaimed, that he will never have recourse to war. That is the hard fact that conditions the Council's observations, which therefore take the form of certain proposals recalling the duty of not resorting to war except in the last extremity and for a just cause, of preferring sometimes to suffer injustice rather than try to obtain redress, of refusing in all circumstances to cause the massive destructions which, by reason of their spread and their cruelty, are a crime against humanity.[3]

But the foremost aim of governments should be to eliminate the causes of war. For this purpose their actions should be governed by a will to solidarity, along the lines described above; in addition they should create conditions conducive to genuine disarmament.[4] But governments

[1] See R. Bosc: " Les armements, la guerre et la paix ", in *Projet* (Paris, " Action populaire "), nouvelle série, No. 1, Jan. 1966, pp. 3-14.

[2] Second Part, Ch. V.

[3] Pastoral constitution . . . , paras. 80-82.

[4] This last point is considered so important that Paul VI had already raised it in the United Nations: " We must resolutely take the road towards a new history, a peaceful

have been studying this problem for over 50 years. For long public opinion has watched with growing scepticism while they struggled in impotence; it was kept in the background, never associated with the efforts made, whereas in order to succeed it would have been necessary to change " the exclusive and bellicose state of mind which up to now has woven so much of [world] history ".[1] The Council called on clergy and laity to create and strengthen a " public opinion " favourable to peace, in particular in order to wipe out " the feelings of hostility, contempt and mistrust, the racial hatred and ideological prejudice [which] divide men and set them at variance " [2], to promote the " interior, spiritual and material reappraisals necessary for universal co-operation ".[3]

This consideration of movements for peace is among the original features of the Second Vatican Council, allying the Church with a struggle which should be that of all mankind.

New means of action

Collaboration by individual Catholics in tasks of general interest is not enough to make the Church a real force in the world of today. It is also as a body that it must make its influence felt; and for the purpose it must transform its structure so as to fit its action in with that of other groups. The period of the Council was rich in initiatives to this end: machinery for consultation was set up, machinery for action planned.

Machinery for consultation

It is in this connection that the most advanced innovations were made, showing that the Church could draw the logical conclusions from the pluralistic outlook it had chosen to adopt. Collaboration with others is only possible if one knows them, meets them, learns from their experience. That is why the Council proposed the establishment of a secretariat for Christian unity, responsible for relations with the separated churches (1960), of a secretariat for non-Christian religions (1964), of a secretariat for non-believers (1965).

Contact is not sought only with the leaders of the different movements. John XXIII set up a link with public opinion through the institution in 1960 of a secretariat to deal with questions of modern communication media (press, radio, television, cinema, etc.); this step was confirmed

history. . . . The roads to it are mapped for you: the first is that of disarmament." Although it should be sought at all costs, it must not be achieved in a manner that would lead the weaker States to destroy the stronger. It is essential to " study ways of guaranteeing the security of international life without recourse to arms ".

[1] Paul VI, address to the United Nations.

[2] Pastoral constitution . . . , para. 82.

[3] Ibid., para. 86.

by Paul VI, who instituted in 1964 a Pontifical Commission for Social Communication Media.

The fact that these secretariats were established in Rome and are presided over by cardinals may give the impression that so far only a timid response has been made to the general desire for collaboration. But the opportunities offered are much wider and are likely to affect the Church at all levels. For one thing, similar liaison machinery can be set up by bishops at the diocesan level or by episcopal conferences at the national level; for another, authorisation has been given for resumption of the worker-priest experiment.

In the years following the Second World War the French bishops, aware that the life of the Church was somewhat remote from the modern world—a situation that they regarded as an anomaly—authorised some one hundred priests to work in factories and even to take part in trade union activities. The intention was not to invent a new form of proselytism but to show that the Church could share " the joys and hopes, the sorrows and anguish of modern man ".[1] So novel an experiment could hardly fail to lead to mistakes and misunderstandings, and it was suspended in 1954. The French bishops, however, were convinced that their idea had been a sound one and kept the question constantly under review in an attempt to overcome the drawbacks of the experiment. In authorising priests to work in factories once more the Council put the Church in contact, at the lowest level, with the social forces that play such a decisive part in the world today.

Machinery for action

The new machinery for action demanded during the Council is also under study and will certainly be established before long. Plans are in hand for two bodies that will influence the direction taken by the social activities of catholic organisations.

The Pastoral constitution on the Church in the world of today [2] calls for the establishment in Rome of a body for " the extension of justice and development in the world ". In his Christmas message in 1963 Paul VI expressed his desire to respond to the " cries of the masses who are still crushed by the burden of poverty ". Several bishops echoed this wish in their speeches at the Council and the idea took shape of setting up a secretariat whose principal work would be to inform, educate and inspire persons engaged in private activities or having some responsibility in the life of the Church, so that their endeavours would be based on a more accurate view of the needs of the times.

The second body for which provision was made is of a different nature. The social works of the Church are very numerous. For centuries

[1] Pastoral constitution . . . , para. 1.

[2] Second Part, Ch. V, para. 90.

in the countries which today are considered rich, and more recently also in many developing countries, the Church's contributions to the care of the sick, to teaching and to helping the poor, among other matters, have been considerable, sometimes unique. These works were well adapted to the needs they were intended to meet and served to mark a place for the Church in the world of the time. But circumstances change, while the institutions that spring from them endure, and their activities lag behind the new needs.

Paul VI's references to this problem in his address to the United Nations betrayed a certain admiration and envy of the Organisation's youth. Created to deal with clearly defined problems of the modern world, such as illiteracy, sickness (in particular the endemic diseases which decimate defenceless peoples), hunger, the protection of workers and improvement of their situation, the United Nations family has not yet experienced that condition of senescence in which an institution can survive even when it is no longer entirely adapted to its circumstances. The Pope intends to take action against this danger, which threatens some Catholic works, not simply to enable them to survive but to fit them to co-operate with all men in building up peace. " We wish to intensify the efforts of our charitable institutions against the world's hunger and to meet its chief needs. It is thus, and in no other way, that peace is built."

In a speech to the Council the Archbishop of Santiago de Chile, Cardinal Silva Henriquez, then President of *Caritas Internationalis*, a non-governmental Catholic organisation whose task is to organise aid throughout the world, gave some details on how this reform should be effected by the creation of " an international body entrusted with co-ordinating the efforts of all Christians on behalf of the poor ". As distinct from the Roman Secretariat for Justice, this organisation would undertake concrete action, by collecting alms and distributing them for the betterment and advancement of the poor and the eradication of the causes of poverty. Catholic in origin, this organisation should gradually become inter-denominational, with participation by Christians of all denominations.[1]

Acceptance of the pluralistic society

The foregoing is evidence that the Council endorsed some of the fundamental aims of the United Nations and laid the foundations for adaptation of the Church's structure to the requirements of the modern world. One question inevitably arises: what weight will these decisions really have? Is it not out of mere opportunism that the Church claims to have its place in a story of humanity that is at once universal and multiple, interwoven as it is by a series of distinct but mutually enriching

[1] *Documentation catholique* (Paris), 1964, column 1624.

experiences? What guarantee is there that the Church is prepared to enter into the play of free discussion, not animated by any spirit of domination? How can one be sure that this movement will not lose its impetus while Catholics are slowly assimilating the new social behaviour they are called on to adopt?

These questions are at the heart of any attempt at a serious assessment of the social impact of Vatican II. Time alone can supply a final answer to them. But, it does seem possible to affirm that the Council has laid the the foundations of the pluralistic society by coming out in favour of freedom of religion. This recognition of a legitimate diversity sanctions a deep-seated movement in the Church that cannot fail to spread, as was the case when, following the publication of *Rerum Novarum* [1], the Church opened its mind to modern social problems.

The beginning of an evolution

It fell to Pius XII to start the movement that awakened the Church as a body to the fact that the new social reality of which it was a part demanded a reappraisal of the attitudes it had inherited from previous generations. In 1953, when he received the Association of Italian Catholic Jurists [2], whose congress had taken as its theme " The nation and the international community ", the Pope congratulated them for studying " relations among individuals belonging to different peoples and among the peoples themselves " because such relations raised a new and grave problem. The Catholic jurist who proposes to " foster all that facilitates and makes more effective " the unity towards which societies are borne under the effect of an " immanent law of development " necessarily comes up against the difficulty arising from the " practical co-existence of Catholic and non-Catholic communities ". Considering the situation in which several States—some of them Catholic and the others not—co-existed in a community, the Pope asked himself whether a Catholic statesman could " tolerate " on his own territory, otherwise than for reasons of expediency, the exercise of a belief or religious practice of which his people disapproved. " A look at the facts " he said " leads one to reply in the affirmative ". Among the arguments which he invoked that which he drew from the Gospel seemed to him decisive.

In a parable which He puts before the people Christ tells the story of the man who sowed his field with clean seed. " But. . . an enemy of his came, and scattered tares among the wheat, and was gone." When his servants suggested that they should gather up the tares, he said " No; or perhaps while you are gathering the tares you will root up the wheat with

[1] See A. Le Roy, S.J.: " The fiftieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum* ", in *International Labour Review*, Vol. XLIV, No. 4, Oct. 1941, pp. 369-388.

[2] Address to the Association of Italian Catholic Jurists, 6 Dec. 1953 (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis* XLV-1953, 797-802).

them. Leave them to grow side by side till harvest ".[1] Pius XII concluded: " The duty of suppressing diversity of philosophical and religious beliefs, therefore, cannot be an ultimate standard of action ", thus recognising, after so many centuries during which religious unity and national unity had been judged indissoluble, that a new era had begun for mankind, an era characterised by a demand for supranational unity in spite of the philosophic and religious pluralism that is a feature of our times.

The Second Vatican Council took on the task of working out a doctrinal justification of this position in proposing to Christians that they should regulate their conduct according to the principle of freedom of religion.

Acceptance of the principle of freedom of religion

The " Declaration on Freedom of Religion " was among those whose drafting was most extensively discussed and most frequently reworded.[2] This is not surprising when one remembers that the principle of freedom of religion, as it has been understood, has had the most decisive influence on the situation of Catholics and of the Church in the world.

A few points should be made here. Pius XII was addressing a small group of listeners consisting exclusively of Italian Catholic jurists. The Council speaks to all Catholics and at the same time wishes its teaching to make its thinking on this point clear to non-Catholics. The 1953 speech was an address suited to the occasion in which the Pope, though with his inherent authority, set forth views that were not intended to settle once and for all the different opinions existing among theologians; the decree of Vatican II, adopted almost unanimously (2,308 votes to 70), commits the Church definitively and totally by placing it in a new relationship with the world.

The conciliar statement speaks of freedom of religious belief. The expression was not usual in Catholic vocabulary until the past few years. Its adoption presents a twofold advantage. It avoids numerous ambiguities by making it unnecessary to resort to the term " freedom of conscience ", which gave rise to so much controversy during the past century.[3] The expression furthermore brings the Council's thinking

[1] Gospel according to St. Matthew, xiii, 24-30.

[2] The first text was discussed on 19 November 1963. The declaration went through six versions before final adoption and promulgation on 7 December 1965.

[3] In the course of a century this concept of freedom of conscience has undergone the very process that John XXIII outlined in regard to philosophical teachings (*Pacem in Terris*, para. 159): A movement cannot always be identified with the doctrines to which it owes its origin and inspiration. It evolves in terms of history and even if it continues to use the same words the content which it gives them is different. As was so rightly noted by a critic of the Council's work, on analysis the expression " freedom of conscience " is seen to be compatible in our day with Christian doctrine. " Admitting the existence of these changes, the Church also can change its attitude in regard to liberty, seeing not only the negative side of this notion but also and above all its positive content ". J. AUCAGNE: " La liberté religieuse ", in *Travaux et jours* (Beyrouth), No. 1, Jan.-May 1965, p. 64.

closer to that of the United Nations, which also holds freedom of religion to be one of the fundamental needs of the diverse yet unified world of our times.[1]

The point of departure of the Council's consideration of this matter is very different from that adopted in the last century. Instead of considering a situation judged to be ideal—that of an officially theistic society confined within a given geographical area—and asking how much latitude society can leave to error, nowadays reflection is based on the fact that diversity of religious belief exists among men and should be respected because it is inherent in human nature. This point of view tallies with the concept of " practical coexistence " of the various beliefs that Pius XII had allowed, but instead of giving it an extrinsic justification drawn from the parable of the clean grain and the tares, the Council bent its efforts to giving this coexistence what one might call legal vindication.[2]

In the opinion of the Second Vatican Council, human dignity demands that the individual shall be able to seek out the truth, adhere to it and live in conformity with it in a free and responsible manner. Therefore it should be admitted that he has a right in relation to society: not a positive right which would permit him to demand some specific aid in favour of one religion or another but rather, one might say, a negative right; the individual must be protected against intrusion on his rights by secular society or other citizens. " Man must not be forced to act against his conscience, but neither must he be prevented from acting in accordance with his conscience." [3] Such a principle provides a basis for the existence of pluralistic societies, by explaining why men holding different philosophical or religious beliefs necessarily live side by side in society.

Drawing the logical conclusions from this principle, the Council furthermore defined the new attitude that should be adopted in regard to movements of thought towards which the Church has hitherto been hostile. First of all this applies to relationships with other religions, Christian or non-Christian; two special secretariats are intended to strengthen these contacts with a view to establishing " collaboration ".[4]

Even towards atheism the Council Fathers adopted a similar attitude.[5] While a small group of them would have liked the faithful to be exhorted to maintain a constant fight against atheism and those who spread it, the Assembly preferred to define the universal task in harmony with the new

[1] Since 1962 a special commission has been working on the preparation of a convention on this point for subsequent submission to the General Assembly of the United Nations: Draft International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Religious Intolerance (Commission on Human Rights. Report on the Twenty-first Session, Geneva, 22 March-15 April 1965).

[2] See F. CANAVAN: " The declaration on religious liberty ", in *America* (New York), Vol. 113, No. 21, 20 Nov. 1965, pp. 635-636.

[3] Declaration on freedom of religion.

[4] Decree on ecumenism and declaration on non-Christian religions.

[5] Pastoral constitution . . . , Ch. 1, paras. 19-21.

active attitude which the present-day world calls for. " While rejecting atheism, the Church sincerely recognises that all men, whether believers or not, must live together in the same world and that all must work to build it."

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When at the end of the closing ceremony of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council the Pope received the delegations of 80 nations and international organisations that had asked to be officially represented at it, he made no attempt to conceal how greatly he had appreciated their presence, which he considered the best indication of the importance for the world of the Council's decisions. He stated that he himself saw in it the response of these high authorities to the hope he had expressed to the United Nations of seeing the Church authorised to collaborate for the good of mankind.

The impact of the Council from the point of view of society springs from the fact that in it the Church sketched the guiding lines along which it reckons to be able to play its part in a pluralistic society and that it called on its members to accept the rules laid down. The Church's message and mission remain unaltered, but the framework within which it has to deliver the one and accomplish the other has changed. It is because he had perceived this new reality that John XXIII invited the bishops to meet in order to make the necessary renovation. At the Council they learned by experience how to carry on a " dialogue ", that is to say how to reach near unanimity through free discussion. Beyond doubt the experience thus gained by them will profoundly affect their future attitude and actions.

Now that universal society is no longer conceived of as the sum of separate political, economic and cultural systems, but as a new reality born of mutual exchanges and mutual enrichment, the Church owes it to itself to enter this movement of international co-operation on pain of seeing itself condemned to remain on the sidelines and of failing to achieve that universalism to which it considers itself essentially called. It is also significant to note the deepening of this truth during the four years of the Council's meetings. Whereas at first a schema on the Church *and* the world was spoken of, the title finally chosen referred to the Church *in* the world of today, in order to mark the fact that the Church is one of its constituent elements. Contemporary conditions force on the Church a wager which it believes it can win, though others think that it may not. The Church awaits the demonstration of the truth of its conception of man and of the world, and of the service that conception will render to mankind in its quest for unity in justice and in peace.
