

## PLANS

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No council has been better prepared.

Understanding of the historical perspective of the councils and the present general status of the Church should go a long way to comprehending the nature and probable content of Vatican II. Nevertheless there are other more specific influences current in the Church which should be examined.

**THE PRELATES** from Northern Europe and the U.S. have known the leading intellectual movements of the twentieth century. In this they are opposed by the numerous traditionalities from Italy and Spain. German, French, and Lowland bishops in particular are agitating for more episcopal freedom on the basis that the bishops are successors to the apostles and that Christ delegated authority to the Twelve as well as to Peter.

They will find obstacles in 231 Italian and curial ecclesiastics who are loathe to relinquish any central Vatican control. Then there are the missionary bishops who face unique problems in their lands which require special attention. Finally the council cannot ignore the increased influence of the laity.

**THREE YEARS** have been spent in preparation for Vatican II. Request for agenda items were sent to every bishop, religious, and theological faculty of Catholic universities. About seventy-five per cent of the clerics replied. During the summer ten preparatory commissions and two secretariats boiled this down to 129 specific topics for discussion. The first seven on the agenda are: the deposit of faith, Scripture and tradition, marriage, the moral order, communications media, church unity, and religious liberty.

Although no one outside of the Vatican knows the specific issues to be discussed, there are several, indicative of the current agitation in the Church, that have strong possibilities. These reform issues can be concisely grouped under several headings: episcopal, concerning non-Catholics, concerning the laity, and those involved in theology, Scripture, and the liturgy.

**CONCERNING EPISCOPAL** authority the council may act on to what extent the bishops share in the infallible authority of the pope, on how much the now highly centralized Vatican should be made more representative of the universal Church, and how much freedom should be relegated to individual bishops.

## FORUM

(Cont. from page 1)

ever information they wanted; news reporters dug up stories from all sorts of often unreliable sources. The end result "was neither secrecy nor publicity" — but rumor and suspicion. Newspaper accounts of the Council often contained fantastic distortions.

"Needless to say, the rule of secrecy has been again imposed on the proceeding of Vatican II," stated the speaker.

Certain aspects of the First Vatican Council may have helped the Church, Dr. Schmandt said, but in a wide sense, "as a historian, he could not call it a success."

**THE FAR-SEEING** bishops, he said even during the Council, were very critical. What if *Rerum Novarum*, issued years later, by a pope who had sat as a bishop at the Council, had proceeded from the 700 members of the Council, Dr. Schmandt asked.

A hard look at the past, he concluded, will keep present-day observers from being misled in their hopes by "all the fine rhetoric of the diocesan paper or all the pageantry to be spread across the pages of Life."

The panel who, with Dr.

ops and national councils of bishops.

Missionary bishops would like a relaxation of the rule that confines secular priests to their original dioceses in order to achieve a greater distribution of priests to help fill the mission needs. Moreover many bishops would like increased control over here-to-fore exempt religious orders like the Dominicans and Jesuits.

Finally the council may reorganize the structure of dioceses, breaking up the large ones and consolidating the smaller ones.

**FOR THE NON-CATHOLIC** the Church may make a statement on the non-judicial aspects of the mythical body and emphasize the relationship of all Christians and nonbaptized persons in good faith to the visible Church of Rome.

At the behest of U.S. bishops the council may go on and issue a decree on religious toleration to the effect that all men have an inherent right to worship God as they believe. Included in this may be some statement on Church and State relations. Finally there are some German churchmen who would like some modification of the canon laws on mixed marriage.

There is much that can be done to elevate the status of laymen. Their exact role in the Church, to which only three items in canon law have been previously directed, could be better clarified. New meaning may be given to the nature of the lay apostolate.

**MOST ASTOUNDING OF ALL** the issues concerning the laity is the proposal of some, especially the missionary bishops, for the reinstatement of the lay diaconate. This had existed in the early Church and would provide that certain laymen be given the orders of deacon for administering communion, baptism, the last rites and for conducting certain services short of saying Mass or hearing confessions. Missionaries find that the diaconate would allay the problems of few priests and a lack of native vocations.

There will, of course, be much theological and liturgical discussion. Among the possibilities will be proposals for increased use of the vernacular, or maybe the council will allow this to the individual discretion of bishops or national councils of bishops. In the dogmatic realm some Canadian and Mexican bishops are urging a definition of Mary as the "mediatrix of all graces." However the opposition is that the Church is not mature enough for such a doctrine.

**THESE, THEN,** are some of

Schmandt, answered questions from the audience, consisted of Fr. Edward H. Peters, C.S.P., department of theology; Dr. Edward T. Gargan, department of history; Dr. Schmandt; and Dr. Thomas R. Gorman, department of English.

**DR. SCHMANDT,** in response to questions about the majority needed for "passage" of a declaration at a council, said there was no definite precedent, that this was a point of dispute at the last council, and that he understood the Council now taking place would require a two-thirds agreement.

Asked about the precedent for declarations on social, economic, and political problems, Dr. Schmandt referred again to the medieval statements on usury and war. Dr. Gargan added that observers could expect that "some of the material in *Mater et Magistra* will be contained in the formulations of the Council."

One student quoted Dr. Gargan as saying that the people of his generation were intellectually sterile, and asked, if this were true, what could Dr. Gargan expect from the Council?

**DR. GARGAN** replied that he couldn't recall making such a statement but even if he had, no teacher should be held responsi-

ble in one class for what he states in another. He also said he was glad that the adjective "intellectually" had been used.

What might have been meant, he said, was that Christians had failed to make use of rich streams of thought outside the Church. Referring to the pastoral letter on the Council of the Dutch bishops, he said he thought this tendency might be ended at the Rome gathering.

In other answers, Dr. Schmandt stated, "I am dubious of how much can be accomplished by a gathering so diverse," and Dr. Gargan pointed out that the issue of communism will probably not be discussed by name, that instead the fathers will concentrate on the requirements of a Christian social order.

**THE SPEAKERS** were introduced by Fr. Francis L. Filas, S.J., chairman of the department of theology.

Fr. Filas pointed out that this was the first lecture to be held in the Georgetown room of the new University Center and that it was a "fitting baptism."

Next in the series will be "The Role of the Layman in Catholic Thought." The lecture will be given by Donald J. Thorman, director of development and publisher for the Spiritual Life Institute of America. The lecture is at 8:30 p.m. on Monday, Oct. 15, in the Georgetown room.



problems in the Catholic theology and Catholic life.

(1) The level of dogmatic theory. The essential point is that the relation of bishops to pope corresponds to the biblical relation of Apostles to Peter.

(2) The level of practical organization. The essential point here is a strengthening of interdiocesan and/or intermediate levels in the Church.

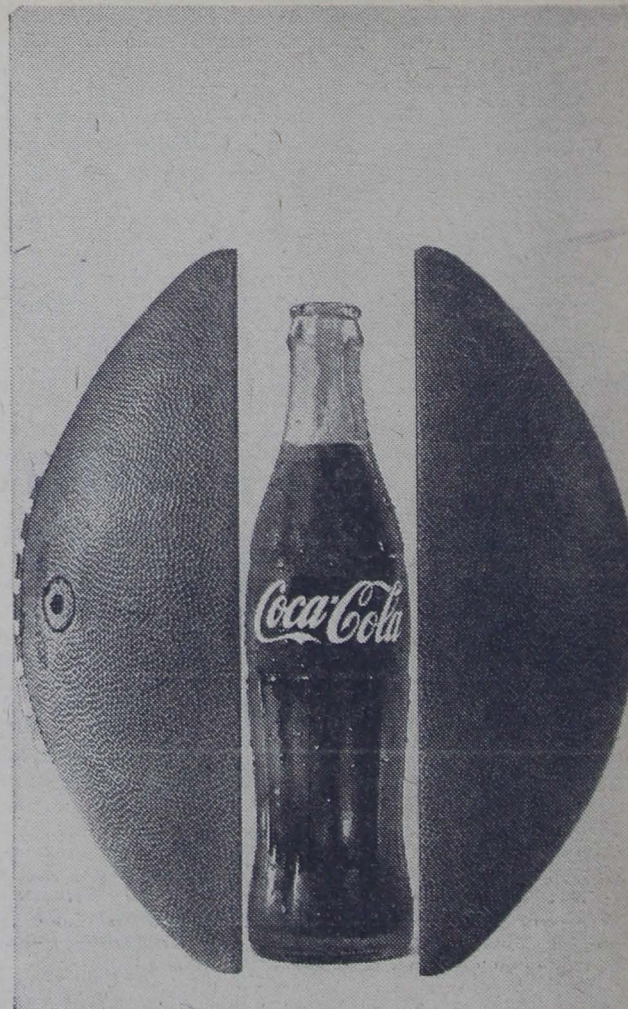
**HOW CAN Catholics and Protestants** come together? We said before, through a renewal of the Church. But this does not mean only a Catholic reform doing justice to all that is valid in Protestant demands. It also means a Protestant reform doing justice to all that is valid in Catholic demands. It does not mean playing down the truth, soft-pedaling our differences, making false syntheses and easy compromises, but self-searching, self-criticism, self-reform — in the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and with our separated brothers in mind.

**IF CATHOLICS** carry out

Catholic reform, and Protestants carry out Protestant reform, both according to that Gospel image, then, because the gospel of Christ is but one, reunion need not remain a utopian dream. Reunion will then be neither a Protestant "return" nor Catholic "capitulation," but a brotherly approach from both sides, with neither consciously calculating, on the other's behalf, which of them has more steps to take; an approach penetrated through and through with love, wholly determined by truth.

Will there be on both sides — among Church leaders, theologians, and lay-people — enough men of goodwill, ready to go, step by step, along a road which is going to be neither particularly short nor particularly easy? We can take courage and hope from the fact that some important steps have been taken already, even by the Catholic Church, long believed to be without any positive interest in the challenge of the ecumenical movement.

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