

The Second Vatican Council

**Declaration on
Religious Liberty**

and

**Declaration on the
Relationship of the Church
to Non-Christian Religions**

The John LaFarge Institute

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With Introduction and Marginal Notes by John Courtney Murray, S.J.
and Robert A. Graham, S.J.

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**Declaration on the Relationship of
the Church to Non-Christian Religions**

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Declaration on Religious Freedom

Meaning of the Document

On November 19, 1963, the first schema (draft-text) on religious freedom was presented to the conciliar Fathers by the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity. In the course of the following two years, five corrected versions of that text appeared in print, each being the work of many revisions within the secretariat. Three public debates on it were held in the Aula, during which some one hundred and twenty speeches were made. Some six hundred written interventions were sent to the secretariat, many of them signed by groups of bishops. Moreover, critiques of the successive schemas were made, either orally or in writing, by a considerable number of bishops and theologians whom the secretariat consulted. Also consulted were a number of the observers at the Council. Before the final vote was taken, more than two thousand *modi*, or suggested corrections, had been considered—though many of them, of course, were identical.

Thus, the greatest argument on religious freedom in all history happily broke forth in the Church. The debate was full, free and vigorous, if at times confused and emotional. Out of it came the sixth and final text, here presented.

CONTENT IS DOCTRINAL

The first text had appeared as Chapter V of the Decree on Ecumenism. The second text had appeared as a Declaration, but in an appendix to the Decree on Ecumenism. With the third text, the Declaration assumed independent status. From the outset, its intention was pastoral—as was the general intention of the Council in all its utterances. This, however, does not mean that the Declaration contains simply practical advice. Its content is properly doctrinal. In particular, three doctrinal

tenets are declared: the ethical doctrine of religious freedom as a human right (personal and collective); a political doctrine with regard to the functions and limits of government in matters religious; and the theological doctrine of the freedom of the Church as the fundamental principle in what concerns the relations between the Church and the socio-political order.

It can hardly be maintained that the Declaration is a milestone in human history—moral, political or intellectual. The principle of religious freedom has long been recognized in constitutional law, to the point where even Marxist-Leninist political ideology is obliged to pay lip-service to it. But in all honesty it must be admitted that the Church is late in acknowledging the validity of the principle.

DEVELOPMENT OF DOCTRINE

In any event, the document is a significant one in the history of the Church. It was, of course, the most controversial document of the whole Council, largely because it raised with sharp emphasis the issue that lay continually below the surface of all the conciliar debates—the issue of the development of doctrine. The notion of development, not the notion of religious freedom, was the real sticking-point for many of those who opposed the Declaration even to the end. The course of the development between the *Syllabus of Errors* (1864) and *Dignitatis humanae personae* (1965) still remains to be explained by theologians. But the Council formally sanctioned the validity of the development itself; and this was a doctrinal event of high importance for theological thought in many other areas.

Moreover, in conjunction with the Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, the Declaration opens a new era in the relations between the People of God and the People Temporal. A long-standing ambiguity has finally been cleared up. The Church does not deal with the secular order in terms of a double standard—freedom for the Church when Catholics are a minority, privilege for the Church and intolerance for others when Catholics are a majority. The Declaration has opened the way toward new confidence in ecumenical relationships, and a new straightforwardness in relationships between the Church and the world.

Finally, though the Declaration deals only with the minor issue of religious freedom in the technical secular sense, it does affirm a principle of wider import—that the dignity of man consists in his responsible use of freedom. Some of the conciliar Fathers—not least those opposed to the Declaration—perceived that a certain indivisibility attaches to the notion of freedom. The word and the thing have wrought wonders in the modern world; they have also wrought havoc. The conciliar affirmation of the principle of freedom was narrowly limited—in the text. But the text itself was flung into a pool whose shores are as wide as the universal Church. The ripples will run far.

Inevitably, a second great argument will be set afoot now—on the theological meaning of Christian freedom. The children of God, who receive this freedom as a gift from their Father through Christ in the Holy Spirit, assert it within the Church as well as within the world, always for the sake of the world and the Church. The issues are many: the dignity of the Christian, the foundations of Christian freedom, its object or content, its limits and their criterion, the measure of its responsible use, its relation to the legitimate reaches of authority and to the saving counsels of prudence, the perils that lurk in it, and the forms of corruption to which it is prone. All these issues must be considered in a spirit of sober and informed reflection.

The issue of religious freedom was in itself minor. But Pope Paul VI was looking deep and far when he called the Declaration on Religious Freedom “one of the major texts of the Council.”

JOHN COURTNEY MURRAY, S. J.

**PAUL, BISHOP
SERVANT OF THE SERVANTS OF GOD
TOGETHER WITH THE FATHERS
OF THE SACRED COUNCIL
FOR EVERLASTING MEMORY**

Declaration on Religious Freedom

on the right of the person and of communities
to social and civil freedom in matters religious

1. Cf. Encyclical of John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, April 11, 1963: *AAS* 55 (1963), p. 279; *ibid.*, p. 265; Pius XII, *Radio Message*, Dec. 24, 1944: *AAS* 37 (1945), p. 14.

2. Vatican II has been characterized by a sense of history, an awareness of the concrete world of fact, and a disposition to see in historical facts certain "signs of the times." Hence the Declaration begins by noting two facts. The first is the recent rise of man's personal consciousness, his sense of selfhood. This increasing awareness of the dignity of the human person marks a progress of civilization. It is the good that has come out of the great evil of totalitarianism, which brutally refuses to acknowledge the reality of man's selfhood. The second fact is the related rise of man's political consciousness, his aspiration to live as a free man under a limited government that puts no obstacles to his pursuit of truth and virtue, and, in particular, leaves him unhindered in the free exercise of religion in society. (Happily, the Declaration adopts the classical phrase that the Founding Fathers likewise adopted when framing the First Amendment in 1791.)

In thus acknowledging certain realities of contemporary life, the Declaration also establishes direct continuity with two basic doctrinal themes of John XXIII in his encyclical *Pacem in Terris*: the dignity of the human person and the consequent necessity of constitutional limits to the powers of government. The language of these opening sentences is, in fact, taken from this great encyclical.

1. A sense of the dignity of the human person has been impressing itself more and more deeply on the consciousness of contemporary man.¹ And the demand is increasingly made that men should act on their own judgment, enjoying and making use of a responsible freedom, not driven by coercion but motivated by a sense of duty. The demand is also made that constitutional limits should be set to the powers of government, in order that there may be no encroachment on the rightful freedom of the person and of associations. This demand for freedom in human society chiefly regards the quest for the values proper to the human spirit. It regards, in the first place, the free exercise of religion in society.² This Vatican Council takes careful note of these desires in the minds of men. It proposes to declare them to be greatly in accord with truth and justice. To this end, it searches into the sacred tradition and doctrine of the Church—the treasury out of which the Church continually brings forth new things that are in harmony with the things that are old.

3. The issue of religious freedom arises in the political and social order—in the order of the relationship between the people and government and between man and man. This is the order of human rights, and in it the principle of freedom is paramount. However, man's life is also lived in another order of reality—in the spiritual order of his relationship to what is objectively true and morally good. This is the order of duty and obligation. In it a man acts freely indeed, but under moral imperatives, which bind in conscience. No man may plead "rights" in the face of the truth or claim "freedom" from the moral law. The distinction between these two orders of reality is admitted by all men of good sense. The underlying intention of these two paragraphs of the Declaration is to make this distinction clear, lest religious freedom be made a pretext for moral anarchy.

However, the distinction is stated in Catholic terms. For the Catholic, the "truth" is not a vague abstraction; it subsists in the Church, is taught by the Church, is believed by the Church. Moreover, this truth about God and about His will for men is not the private possession of a party or sect; it is to be taught to all men, and all nations are to be its disciples. It is not to be thrust by force upon any man; in the order of man's relationship to truth, coercion has no place whatsoever. Consequently, as the Declaration will later make clear, religious freedom is an exigence of religious truth as conceived by the Church.

On the other hand, no man may say of the religious truth that subsists in the Church: "It is no concern of mine." Once given by Christ to His true Church, the true religion remains the one way in which all men are bound to serve God and save themselves. Consequently, religious freedom is not a title to exemption from the obligation to *observe all things whatsoever I have enjoined upon you*. In fine, a harmony exists between man's duty of free obedience to the truth and his right to the free exercise of religion in society. The duty does not diminish the right, nor does the right diminish the duty.

ONE FAITH

First,³ the Council professes its belief that God Himself has made known to mankind the way in which men are to serve Him, and thus be saved in Christ and come to blessedness. We believe that this one true religion subsists in the catholic and apostolic Church, to which the Lord Jesus committed the duty of spreading it abroad among all men. Thus He spoke to the apostles: *Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have enjoined upon you* (Mt. 28:19-20). On their part, all men are bound to seek the truth, especially in what concerns God and His Church, to embrace the truth they come to know, and to hold fast to it.

IMMUNITY FROM COERCION

This Vatican Council likewise professes its belief that it is upon the human conscience that these obligations fall and exert their binding force. The truth cannot impose itself except by virtue of its own truth, as it makes its entrance into the mind at once quietly and with power. Religious freedom, in turn, which men demand as necessary to fulfill their duty to worship God, has to do with immunity from coercion in civil society. Therefore, it leaves untouched traditional Catholic doctrine on the moral duty of men and societies toward the true religion and toward the one Church of Christ.

This frank profession of Catholic faith, at the outset of the Declaration on Religious Freedom, is in no sense at variance with the ecumenical spirit, any more than it is at variance with full loyalty to the principle of religious freedom. Neither the spirit of ecumenism nor the principle of religious freedom requires that the Church refrain from stating publicly what she believes herself to be. The demands of truth are no more opposed to the demands of freedom than they are opposed to the demands of love.

4. In no other conciliar document is it so explicitly stated that the intention of the Council is to "develop" Catholic doctrine. This is significant, since it is an avowal that the tradition of the Church is one of progress in understanding the truth. The basic truth here is the concept of the "citizen" as stated by Pius XII—the man who "feels within himself a consciousness of his own personality, of his duties, and of his rights, joined with a respect for the freedom of others" (*Christmas Discourse, 1945*). This concept, as the Declaration will say, is deeply rooted both in the Christian tradition and in the tradition of reason. In recent times, it was Leo XIII (in *Rerum Novarum*) who first began to move it, as it were, to the forefront of Catholic social teaching. Pius XII continued this development, drawing out the implications of the dignity of man in terms of his duties and rights. He also brought forward the correlative truth, that the primary function of government is to acknowledge, protect, vindicate and facilitate the exercise of the rights of man. Both of these truths were taken up by John XXIII, chiefly in *Pacem in Terris*, in which they are given an almost systematic form of statement.

However, in regard to the right of man to religious freedom, even *Pacem in Terris* is unclear and even ambiguous. What precisely does religious freedom mean? Does it find place among the inalienable rights of man? These are the questions to which, for the first time, the Church gives an unmistakably clear and entirely unambiguous answer.

Over and above all this, in taking up the matter of religious freedom the Council intends to develop the doctrine of recent Popes on the inviolable rights of the human person and on the constitutional order of society.⁴

The General Principles of Religious Freedom

5. The doctrinal substance of the Declaration is stated in this paragraph, which defines what religious freedom is and affirms its status as a human—and therefore civil—right. A right is a moral claim made on others that they either give me something or do something for me or refrain from doing something. Two questions always arise. First, what is the moral claim I make on others, or in other words, what is the object or content of my right? Second, on what grounds do I make this moral claim, or in other words, what is the foundation of my right?

The Declaration first defines religious freedom in terms of its object or content. The moral claim that every man makes on others—on individuals, groups, political or social powers—is that they refrain from bringing coercion to bear on him in all matters religious. This claim is twofold. First, no man is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his personal beliefs; second, no man is to be forcibly restrained from acting in accordance with his beliefs. The affirmation of this latter immunity is the new thing, which is in harmony with the older affirmation of the former immunity.

It is to be noted that the word “conscience,” found in the Latin text, is used in its generic sense, sanctioned by usage, of “beliefs,” “convictions,” “persuasions.” Hence the unbeliever or atheist makes with equal right this claim to immunity from coercion in religious matters. It is further to be noted that, in assigning a negative content to the right to religious freedom (that is, in making it formally a “freedom from” and not a “freedom for”), the Declaration is in harmony with the sense of the First Amendment to the American Constitution. In guaranteeing the free exercise of religion, the First Amendment guarantees to the American citizen immunity from all coercion in matters religious. Neither the Declaration nor the American Constitution affirms that a man has a right to believe what is false or to do what is wrong. This would be moral nonsense. Neither error nor evil can be the object of a right, only what is true and good. It

2. This Vatican Council declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom.⁵ This freedom means that all men are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power, in such wise that no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his beliefs, nor is anyone to be restrained from acting in accordance with his beliefs, whether privately or publicly, whether alone or in association with others, within due limits. The Council further declares that the right to religious freedom has its foundation in the very dignity of the human person,

is, however, true and good that a man should enjoy freedom from coercion in matters religious.

This brings up the second question, concerning the foundation of the right. The reason why every man may claim immunity from coercion in matters religious is precisely his inalienable dignity as a human person. Surely, in matters religious, if anywhere, the free human person is required and entitled to act on his own judgment and to assume personal responsibility for his action or omission. A man's religious decisions, or his decision against religion, are inescapably his own. No one else can make them for him, or compel him to make this decision or that, or restrain him from putting his decisions into practice, privately or publicly, alone or in company with others. In all these cases, the dignity of man would be diminished because of the denial to him of that inalienable responsibility for his own decisions and actions which is the essential counterpart of his freedom.

It is worth noting that the Declaration does not base the right to the free exercise of religion on "freedom of conscience." Nowhere does this phrase occur. And the Declaration nowhere lends its authority to the theory for which the phrase frequently stands, namely, that I have the right to do what my conscience tells me to do, simply because my conscience tells me to do it. This is a perilous theory. Its particular peril is subjectivism—the notion that, in the end, it is my conscience, and not the objective truth, that determines what is right or wrong, true or false.

6. Cf. *Pacem in Terris*, pp. 260-261; Pius XII, *Radio Message*, Dec. 24, 1942: *AAS* 35 (1943), p. 19; Pius XI's encyclical *Mit Brennender Sorge*, March 14, 1937: *AAS* 29 (1937), p. 160; Leo XIII's encyclical *Libertas Praestantissimum*, June 20, 1888: *Acts of Leo XIII*, 8 (1888), pp. 237-238.

as this dignity is known through the revealed Word of God and by reason itself.⁶ This right of the human person to religious freedom is to be recognized in the constitutional law whereby society is governed; thus it is to become a civil right.

DEMANDS OF TRUTH

It is in accordance with their dignity as persons—that is, beings endowed with reason and free will and therefore privileged to bear personal responsibility—that all men should be at once impelled by nature and bound by a moral obligation to seek the truth, especially religious truth. They are also bound to adhere to the truth, once it is known, and to order their whole lives in accord with the demands of truth. However, men cannot discharge these obligations in a manner in keeping with their own nature unless they enjoy immunity from external coercion as well as psychological freedom. Therefore, the right to religious freedom has its foundation, not in the subjective disposition of the person, but in his very nature. In consequence, the right to this

7. It was necessary for the Council to present an argument for the principle of religious freedom, lest anyone should mistakenly think that the Church was accepting religious freedom merely on pragmatic grounds or as a concession to contemporary circumstances. However, it was not the intention of the Council to affirm that the argument, as made in the text, is final and decisive. Complete and systematic study of the arguments for religious freedom is a task left to the scholars of the Church, working in ecumenical spirit with scholars of other religious communities, and in humanist spirit with scholars of no religious convictions who are concerned with the exigencies of human dignity. The Council merely presents certain lines or elements of argument. It will be sufficient here to indicate the structure.

First, in this paragraph, the objective foundation of the right to religious freedom is presented in terms that should be intelligible and acceptable to all men, including non-believers. The simple essence of the matter is that man, being intelligent and free, is to be a responsible agent. Inherent in his very nature, therefore, is an exigency for freedom from coercion, especially in matters religious. Thereafter, in the following three paragraphs, an argument is suggested that will appeal to those who believe in God, in the objective order of truth and morality, and in the obligation to seek the truth, form one's conscience and obey its dictates. To the man who so believes, it will be evident that no one is to be forced or constrained to act against his conscience (here conscience has its technical meaning).

Two further arguments are advanced to show that a man may not be restrained from acting according to his conscience. First, by reason of man's social nature, inner acts of religion require external expression; hence their external expression enjoys the same immunity from coercion as the inner acts themselves. Second, there is the "further consideration" that no right resides in government to command or inhibit acts of religion, which by their nature lie beyond government.

immunity continues to exist even in those who do not live up to their obligation of seeking the truth and adhering to it; and the exercise of this right is not to be impeded, provided that the just requirements of public order are observed.⁷

PERSONAL ASSENT

3. Further light is shed on the subject if one considers that the highest norm of human life is the divine law—eternal, objective and universal—whereby God orders, directs and governs the entire universe and all the ways of the human community, by a plan conceived in wisdom and love. Man has been made by God to participate in this law, with the result that, under the gentle disposition of divine Providence, he can come to perceive ever more fully the truth that is unchanging. Wherefore every man has the duty, and therefore the right, to seek the truth in matters religious, in order that he may with prudence form for himself right and true judgments of conscience, under use of all suitable means.

Truth, however, is to be sought after in a manner proper to the dignity of the human person and his social nature. The inquiry is to be free, carried on with the aid of teaching or instruction, communication and dialogue, in the course of which men explain to one another the truth they have discovered, or think they have discovered, in order thus to assist one another in the quest for truth. Moreover, as the truth is discovered, it is by a personal assent that men are to adhere to it.

WORSHIP IN PUBLIC

On his part, man perceives and acknowledges the imperatives of the divine law through the mediation of conscience. In all his activity a man is bound to follow his conscience, in order that he may come to God, the end and purpose of life. It follows that he is not to be forced to act

American theorists are generally disposed to relate religious freedom to a general theory of constitutional government, limited by the rights of man, and to the concept of civic equality. The Declaration, however, lays less stress on this political argument than it does on the ethical foundations of the right itself. In any event, the elements of the political argument are stated in later Articles (6 and 7). And one is free to construct the argument in the form that may seem more convincing.

8. Cf. *Pacem in Terris*, p. 270; Paul VI, *Radio Message*, Dec. 22, 1964: *AAS* 57 (1965), pp. 181-182.

9. The freedoms listed here are those that the Catholic Church claims for herself. The Declaration likewise claims them for all churches and religious communities. Lest there be misunderstanding, however, it is necessary to recall here the distinction between the content or object of the right and its foundation. The content or object always remains freedom from coercion in what concerns religious belief, worship, practice or observance, and public testimony. Hence the content of the right is the same both for the Catholic Church and for other religious bodies. In this sense, the Church claims nothing for herself that she does not also claim for them. The matter is different, however, with regard to the foundation of the right. The Catholic Church claims freedom from coercive interference in her ministry and life on grounds of the divine mandate laid upon her by Christ Himself (cf. below, note 13). It is Catholic faith that no other church or community may claim to possess this mandate in all its fullness. In this sense, the freedom of the Church is unique, proper to herself alone, by reason of its foundation. In the case of other religious communities, the foundation of the right is the dignity of the human person, which requires that men be kept free from coercion when they act in community, gathered into churches, as well as when they act alone.

in a manner contrary to his conscience. Nor, on the other hand, is he to be restrained from acting in accordance with his conscience, especially in matters religious. The exercise of religion does indeed, of its very nature, consist before all else in those internal, voluntary and free acts whereby man sets the course of his life directly toward God. No merely human power can either command or prohibit acts of this kind.⁸ However, man's social nature requires that he should give external expression to his internal acts of religion; that he should share with others in matters religious; that he should profess his religion in community. Injury, therefore, is done to the human person and to the order established by God for human life, if the free exercise of religion is denied in society, provided that the just requirements of public order are observed.

GOVERNMENT'S HELP

There is a further consideration. The religious acts whereby men, in private and in public and out of a sense of personal conviction, direct their lives to God transcend by their very nature the order of terrestrial and temporal affairs. Government, therefore, ought to take account of the religious life of the people and show it favor, since the function of government is to provide for the common welfare. However, it would clearly transgress the limits set to its power, were it to presume to command or inhibit acts that are religious.

RELIGION'S PROPER FIELD

4. The freedom or immunity from coercion in matters religious which is the endowment of persons as individuals is also to be recognized as their right when they act in community. Religious communities are a requirement of the social nature both of man and of religion itself.⁹

Provided the just requirements of public order are observed, religious communities rightfully

claim freedom in order that they may govern themselves according to their own norms, honor the Supreme Being in public worship, assist their members in the practice of the religious life, strengthen them by instruction, and promote institutions in which they may join together for the purpose of ordering their lives in accordance with their religious principles.

ITS REQUIREMENTS

Religious communities also have the right not to be hindered, either by legal measures or by administrative action on the part of government, in the selection, training, appointment and transferral of their ministers, in communicating with religious authorities and communities abroad, in erecting buildings for religious purposes, and in the acquisition and use of suitable funds or properties.

Religious communities also have the right not to be hindered in their public teaching and witness to their faith, whether by the spoken or written word. However, in spreading religious faith and in introducing religious practices, everyone ought at all times to refrain from any manner of action that might seem to carry a hint of coercion or of a kind of persuasion that would be dishonorable or unworthy, especially when dealing with poor or uneducated people. Such action would have to be considered an abuse of one's own right and a violation of the right of others.¹⁰

OUTSIDE THE SACRISTY

In addition, it comes within the meaning of religious freedom that religious communities should not be prohibited from freely undertaking to show the special value of their doctrine in what concerns the organization of society and the inspiration of the whole of human activity.¹¹ Finally, the social nature of man and the very nature of religion afford the foundation of the

10. It is customary to distinguish between "Christian witness" and "proselytism," and to condemn the latter. This distinction is made in the text here. Proselytism is a corruption of Christian witness by appeal to hidden forms of coercion or by a style of propaganda unworthy of the gospel. It is not the use but the abuse of the right to religious freedom.

11. Implicitly rejected here is the outmoded notion that "religion is a purely private affair" or that "the Church belongs in the sacristy." Religion is relevant to the life and action of society. Therefore religious freedom includes the right to point out this social relevance of religious belief.

12. The internal structure of family relationships and the general style of family life vary widely throughout the world. Still greater variety is exhibited in the organization of school systems, in their relation to the family, to society and to government, and in the religious and ideological content, or lack thereof, of their teaching. In consequence, the Declaration had to confine itself to a few principles of universal import, which would enforce its doctrinal line—freedom from coercion. To descend to further detail would be to enter the realm of policy, in which contingent circumstances play a determinant role.

13. Cf. John XXIII's encyclical *Mater et Magistra*, May 15, 1961: *AAS* 53 (1961), p. 417; *Pacem in Terris*, p. 273.

14. The development of Catholic doctrine that the Declaration promised has already shown itself in the clear definition of religious freedom as a human right and in the firm claim that all churches and religious communities are entitled to equal freedom from coercion in what concerns religious belief, worship, public testimony, practice or observance, and the internal autonomy of the community itself. Correlative with these developments is the doctrine stated here with regard to the functions and limitations of government in what concerns religion in society. The pivotal notion is the concept of the common welfare that Leo XIII began to put forward in *Rerum Novarum*, which Pius XII strongly developed, and which John XXIII defined with greater precision. The common welfare "chiefly consists in the protection of the rights, and in the performance of the duties, of the human person," who is to be the agent of the processes of society and their beneficiary. The care of the common welfare is the common task of all elements within society—individuals, groups, religious bodies, government—each in the manner proper to itself.

In a special way, the care of the common good—that is to say, the care of the rights of man—devolves

right of men freely to hold meetings and to establish educational, cultural, charitable and social organizations, under the impulse of their religious sense.

RIGHTS OF PARENTS

5. The family,¹² since it is a society in its own right, has the right freely to live its domestic religious life, under the guidance of parents. Parents, moreover, have the right to determine, in accordance with their religious beliefs, the kind of religious education that their children are to receive. Government, in consequence, must acknowledge the right of parents to make a genuinely free choice of schools and of other means of education, and the use of this freedom of choice is not to be made a reason for imposing unjust burdens on parents, whether directly or indirectly. Besides, the rights of parents are violated if their children are forced to attend lessons or instruction that are not in agreement with their religious beliefs, or if a single system of education, from which all religious formation is excluded, is imposed upon all.

A COMMON RESPONSIBILITY

6. Since the common welfare of society consists in all those conditions of social life under which men can achieve their perfection in a certain fullness of measure and with relative ease, it chiefly consists in the protection of the rights,¹³ and in the performance of the duties, of the human person. Therefore, the care of the right to religious freedom devolves upon the people as a whole, upon social groups, upon government, and upon the Church and other religious communities, in virtue of the duty of all toward the common welfare, and in the manner proper to each.¹⁴

upon government. Consequently, in what concerns religion in society, government has a duty that is twofold. The first duty is to acknowledge the human right to religious freedom, and effectively to protect it and vindicate it against violation. The second duty derives from the general duty of government to assist the people in the performance of their duties; in the case, it is to show a general and indiscriminating favor toward religion in society (cf. above, note 3, at the end) and to assist in the creation of conditions that will help, not hinder, the people in the exercise of their religious rights and in the performance of their religious duties. This latter duty is stated with considerable generality, because the appropriate means for its performance will vary within diverse circumstances.

The concern of the Council was, first, to make clear the duty of government toward religious freedom as a human right, and secondly, to make sufficiently clear the function of government with regard to religion itself as a perfection of the human person and as a social value. This latter function is not easy to define with precision. It is chiefly a matter of avoiding extremes. On the one hand, government is forbidden to assume the care of religious truth as such, or jurisdiction over religious worship or practice, or the task of judging the truth or value of religious propaganda. Otherwise it would exceed its competence, which is confined to affairs of the temporal and terrestrial order. On the other hand, government is likewise forbidden to adopt toward religion an attitude of indifference or skepticism, much less hostility. Otherwise it would betray its duty both to the human person, for whom religion is the highest good, and also to the temporal and terrestrial welfare of society, whose content is not merely material but also moral and spiritual.

15. Cf. *Pacem in Terris*, pp. 273-274; Pius XII, *Radio Message*, June 1, 1941: *AAS* 33 (1941), p. 200.

16. Cf. Leo XIII's encyclical *Immortale Dei*, Nov. 1, 1885: *AAS* 18 (1885), p. 161.

GOVERNMENT'S ROLE

The protection and promotion of the inviolable rights of man rank among the essential duties of government.¹⁵ Therefore, government is to assume the safeguard of the religious freedom of all its citizens, in an effective manner, by just laws and by other appropriate means. Government is also to help create conditions favorable to the fostering of religious life, in order that the people may be truly enabled to exercise their religious rights and to fulfill their religious duties, and also in order that society itself may profit by the moral qualities of justice and peace that have their origin in men's faithfulness to God and to His holy will.¹⁶

WHAT ALL MAY CLAIM

If, in view of peculiar circumstances obtaining among certain peoples, special legal recognition is given to one religious community in the constitutional order of society, it is at the same time imperative that the right of all citizens and religious communities to religious freedom should be recognized and made effective in practice.¹⁷

NO DISCRIMINATION

17. This paragraph is carefully phrased. The Council did not wish to condemn the institution of "establishment," the notion of a "religion of the state," for a respectable opinion maintains that the institution is compatible with full religious freedom. On the other hand, the Council did not wish to canonize the institution, for a respectable opinion holds that establishment is always a threat to religious freedom. Furthermore, the Council wished to insinuate that establishment, at least from the Catholic point of view, is a matter of historical circumstance, not of theological doctrine. For all these reasons the text deals with the issue in conditional terms.

18. This statement about equality before the law as an element of the common welfare has an accent of newness in official Catholic statements. It is important for the construction of the full argument for religious freedom.

19. This condemnation of religious persecution is couched in temperate terms and without naming the guilty. However, the reference to totalitarian regimes of Communist inspiration is unmistakable.

20. It is a matter of common sense that the exercise of all freedoms in society must be subject to certain regulatory norms. The Declaration states first the moral norm—the principle of personal and social responsibility. Its restraints, of course, are self-imposed. More difficult is the question of the judicial norm that should control the action of government in limiting or inhibiting the exercise of the right to religious freedom. (Note that the right itself is always inalienable, never to be denied; only the exercise of the right is subject to control in particular instances.) The norm cannot be the common welfare, since the common welfare requires that human rights should be protected, not limited, in their exercise. Hence the Declaration adopts the concept of public order. The concept has good warrant in constitutional law. However, it is more frequently used than defined. The Declaration undertakes to define

Finally, government is to see to it that the equality of citizens before the law, which is itself an element of the common welfare, is never violated, whether openly or covertly, for religious reasons.¹⁸ Nor is there to be discrimination among citizens.

It follows that a wrong is done when government imposes upon its people, by force or fear or other means, the profession or repudiation of any religion, or when it hinders men from joining or leaving a religious community. All the more is it a violation of the will of God and of the sacred rights of the person and the family of nations, when force is brought to bear in any way in order to destroy or repress religion, either in the whole of mankind or in a particular country or in a definite community.¹⁹

MUTUAL RESPECT

7. The right to religious freedom is exercised in human society; hence its exercise is subject to certain regulatory norms.²⁰ In the use of all freedoms, the moral principle of personal and social responsibility is to be observed. In the exercise of their rights, individual men and social groups are bound by the moral law to have respect both for the rights of others and for their own duties toward others and for the common welfare of all. Men are to deal with their fellows in justice and civility.

PUBLIC ORDER

Furthermore, society has the right to defend itself against possible abuses committed on pretext of freedom of religion. It is the special duty of government to provide this protection. However, government is not to act in arbitrary fashion or in an unfair spirit of partisanship. Its action is to be controlled by juridical norms that are in conformity with the objective moral order.

it. In doing so, it makes a contribution to the science of law and jurisprudence.

First, the requirements of public order are not subject to arbitrary definition—at the hands, say, of tyrannical governments, which might abuse the concept for their own ends. The public order of society is a part of the universal moral order; its requirements must be rooted in moral law. Second, public order exhibits a threefold content. First, the order of society is essentially an order of justice, in which the rights of all citizens are effectively safeguarded and provision is made for peaceful settlement of conflicts of rights. Second, the order of society is a political order, an order of peace (“domestic tranquillity” is the American constitutional phrase). Public peace, however, is not the result of repressive action by the police. It is, in the classic concept, the work of justice; it comes about, of itself, when the demands of justice are met and when orderly processes exist for airing and settling grievances. Third, the order of society is a moral order, at least in the sense that certain minimal standards of public morality are enforced at all.

Public order therefore is constituted by these three values—juridical, political, moral. They are the basic elements in the common welfare, which is a wider concept than public order. And so necessary are these three values that the coercive force of government may be enlisted to protect and vindicate them. Together they furnish a reasonable juridical criterion for coercive restriction of freedom. The free exercise of religion may not be inhibited unless proof is given that it entails some violation of the rights of others, or of the public peace, or of public morality. In these cases, in other words, a public action ceases to be a religious exercise and becomes a penal offense.

21. Secular experts may well consider this to be the most significant sentence in the Declaration. It is a statement of basic principle of the “free society.” The principle has important origins in the medieval

These norms arise out of the need for effective safeguard of the rights of all citizens and for peaceful settlement of conflicts of rights; also out of the need for an adequate care of genuine public peace, which comes about when men live together in good order and in true justice; and finally out of the need for a proper guardianship of public morality. These matters constitute the basic component of the common welfare: they are what is meant by public order. For the rest,²¹ the usages of society are to be the usages of freedom in their full range: that is, the freedom of man is to be respected as far as possible and is not to be curtailed except when and in so far as necessary.

FREEDOM VS. ANARCHY

8. Many pressures are brought to bear upon men of our day, to the point where there is danger that they may lose the possibility of acting on their own judgment. On the other hand, not a few can be found who seem inclined to use the name of freedom as the pretext for refusing to submit to authority and for making light of the duty of obedience. Wherefore, this Vatican Council urges everyone, especially those charged with the task of educating others, to do their utmost to form men who will respect the moral order and be obedient to lawful authority, and who will also be lovers of true freedom—men, in other words, who will come to decisions on their own judgment and in the light of truth, govern their activities with a sense of responsi-

tradition of kingship, law and jurisprudence. But its statement by the Church has an accent of blessed newness—the newness of a renewal of the tradition. The renewal, already hesitantly begun by Pius XII, was strongly furthered by John XXIII. Catholic thought had consistently held that society is to be based upon truth (the truth of the human person), directed toward justice, and animated by charity. In *Pacem in Terris*, John XXIII added the missing fourth term, freedom. Freedom is an end or purpose of society, which looks to the liberation of the human person. Freedom is the political method par excellence, whereby the other goals of society are reached. Freedom, finally, is the prevailing social usage, which sets the style of society. This progress in doctrine is sanctioned and made secure by *Dignitatis Humanae Personae*.

22. The Council calls attention to the paradox of the moment. Freedom today is threatened; freedom today is itself a threat. Hence the Council calls for education both in the uses of freedom and in the ways of obedience. When freedom is truly responsible, it implies a rightful response to legitimate authority.

23. Religious freedom is not an end in itself, but a means for the fulfillment of the higher purposes of man. Its religious purpose is clear. But here the Council notes its social purpose. Respect for religious freedom rises out of a consciousness of human dignity; but this consciousness itself confronts man with the responsibilities that his freedom entails. And these responsibilities pervade the whole of community life.

24. The Declaration is the only conciliar document formally addressed to the whole world—Christian and non-Christian, religious and atheist. Therefore, it first considers religious freedom in the light of reason. Moreover, in so doing it follows the structure of the problem itself, both theoretical and historical. Both as a principle and as a legal institution, religious freedom is less than two hundred years old. The First Amend-

bility, and strive after what is true and right, willing always to join with others in co-operative effort.²²

Religious freedom, therefore, ought to have this further purpose and aim, namely, that men may come to act with greater responsibility in fulfilling their duties in community life.²³

CHAPTER II

Religious Freedom in the Light of Revelation

9. The Declaration of this Vatican Council on the right of man to religious freedom has its foundation in the dignity of the person, whose exigencies have come to be more fully known to human reason through centuries of experience. What is more, this doctrine of freedom has roots in divine revelation, and for this reason Christians are bound to respect it all the more conscientiously. Revelation does not indeed affirm in so many words the right of man to immunity from external coercion in matters religious. It does, however, disclose the dignity of the human person in its full dimensions; it gives evidence of the respect that Christ showed toward the freedom with which man is to fulfill his duty of belief in the Word of God; and it gives us lessons in the spirit that disciples of such a Master ought faithfully to make their own. Thus, further light is cast on the general principles upon which the doctrine of this Declaration on Religious Freedom is based. In particular, religious freedom in society is entirely consonant with the freedom of the act of Christian faith.²⁴

ment may claim the honor of having first clearly formulated the principle and established the institution. Only through centuries of experience, as the Declaration says, have the exigencies of the human dignity disclosed themselves to reason. Nevertheless, the question remains, in what sense may religious freedom be called a "Christian" principle? The Council answers by saying that the principle has its "roots in divine revelation." These roots are explored in the second part of the Declaration.

25. Cf. *Codex Iuris Canonici*, § 1351; Pius XII, *Allocution to Prelate Auditors and Other Officials and Administrators of the Tribune of the Holy Roman Rota*, Oct. 6, 1946: *AAS* 38 (1946), p. 394; Pius XII, encyclical *Mystici Corporis*, June 29, 1943: *AAS* (1943), p. 243.

26. The unwavering Christian dogma that the act of Christian faith must be a free response to the Word and grace of God reveals the divine respect for human freedom and for man's inalienable responsibility toward the direction of his life. The constitutional principle of religious freedom is not a conclusion from this Christian dogma. The connection is rather more historical. That is to say, given the Christian doctrine of the freedom of faith, men would gradually come—as over the centuries they have come—to realize that man's religious life is an affair of responsible freedom, from which all coercion is to be excluded. Given this Christian appreciation of the value of freedom (and given also the growing secular experience of freedom as a social value and a political end), men could not fail to become increasingly conscious that religious freedom is an exigency of the dignity of the person, as this dignity is disclosed by the revelation that man is made in the image of God. Moreover, experience would also make it clear that, where religious freedom prevails, a climate of freedom is created in society that itself favors the free preaching of the gospel and the free living of the Christian life.

THE FATHER DRAWS US

10. It is one of the major tenets of Catholic doctrine that man's response to God in faith must be free. Therefore, no one is to be forced to embrace the Christian faith²⁵ against his will.²⁶ This doctrine is contained in the Word of God and it was constantly proclaimed by the

27. Cf. Lactantius, *Divinarum Institutionum*, Book V, 19: CSEL 19, pp. 463-464, 465: PL 6, 614 and 616 (ch. 20); St. Ambrose, *Epistola ad Valentinianum Imp.*, Letter 21: PL 16, 1005; St. Augustine, *Contra Litteras Petilliani*, Book II, ch. 83: CSEL 52, p. 112: PL 43, 315; cf. C. 23, q. 5, c. 33, (ed. Friedberg, col. 939); idem, Letter 23: PL 33, 98; idem, Letter 34: in PL 33, 132; idem, Letter 35: in PL 33, 135; St. Gregory the Great, *Epistola ad Virgilius et Theodorum Episcopos Massiliae Galliarum*, Register of Letters I, 45: MGH Ep. 1, p. 72; PL 77, 510-511 (Book I, ep. 47); idem, *Epistola ad Johannem Episcopum Constantinopolitanum*, Register of Letters, III, 52: MGH Letter 1, p. 210: PL 77, 649 (Book III, Letter 53); cf. D. 45, c. 1 (ed. Friedberg, col. 160); Council of Toledo IV, c. 57: Mansi 10, 633; cf. D. 45, c. 5 (ed. Friedberg, col. 161-162); Clement III: X., V. 6, 9; ed. Friedberg, col. 774; Innocent III, *Epistola ad Arelatensem Archiepiscopum*, X., III, 42, 3: ed. Friedberg, col. 646.

28. Cf. Eph. 1:5.

29. Cf. Jn. 6:44.

30. The major purpose here is to show, from the example and teaching of Christ Himself, that coercion in matters religious is alien to the spirit of the gospel. The ways of God with men are not coercive. They are the ways of faithful love. And their supreme illustration is the cross. Rather than impose the truth upon men by force, Christ willingly accepted death at their hands. The way of Christ became the way of His first apostles, whose reliance was on the power of the Word of God, never on earthly forces.

31. Cf. Jn. 13:13.

32. Cf. Mt. 11:29.

33. Cf. Mt. 11:28-30; Jn. 6:67-68.

34. Cf. Mt. 9:28-29; Mk. 9:23-24; 6, 5-6; Paul VI, encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*, Aug. 6, 1964: AAS 56 (1964), pp. 642-643.

35. Cf. Mt. 11:20-24; Rom. 12:19-20; 2 Th. 1:8.

Fathers of the Church.²⁷ The act of faith is of its very nature a free act. Man, redeemed by Christ the Saviour and through Christ Jesus called to be God's adopted son,²⁸ cannot give his adherence to God revealing Himself unless, under the drawing of the Father,²⁹ he offers to God the reasonable and free submission of faith. It is therefore completely in accord with the nature of faith that in matters religious every manner of coercion on the part of men should be excluded. In consequence, the principle of religious freedom makes no small contribution to the creation of an environment in which men can without hindrance be invited to Christian faith, and embrace it of their own free will, and profess it effectively in their whole way of life.

CHRIST INVITES US

11. God calls men to serve Him in spirit and in truth; hence they are bound in conscience, but they stand under no compulsion.³⁰ God has regard for the dignity of the human person whom He created; man is to be guided by his own judgment and he is to enjoy freedom. This truth appears at its height in Christ Jesus, in whom God manifested Himself and His ways with men. Christ is our Master and our Lord;³¹ He is also meek and humble of heart.³² And in attracting and inviting His disciples He acted patiently.³³ He wrought miracles to shed light on His teaching and to establish its truth; but His intention was to rouse faith in His hearers and to confirm them in faith, not to exert coercion upon them.³⁴ He did indeed denounce the unbelief of some who listened to Him; but He left vengeance to God in expectation of the day of judgment.³⁵ When He sent His apostles into the world, He said to them: *He who believes and is baptized will be saved; he who does not believe will be condemned* (Mk. 16:16); but He Himself, noting that cockle had been sown amid the wheat, gave orders that both should be allowed

to grow until the harvest time, which will come at the end of the world.³⁶ He refused to be a political Messiah, ruling by force;³⁷ He preferred to call Himself the Son of Man, who came *to serve and to give his life as a ransom for the many* (Mk. 10:45). He showed Himself the perfect Servant of God,³⁸ who *does not break the bruised reed nor extinguish the smoking flax* (Mt. 12:20).

He acknowledged the power of government and its rights, when He commanded that tribute be given to Caesar; but He gave clear warning that the higher rights of God are to be kept inviolate: *Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's* (Mt. 22:21). In the end, when He completed on the cross the work of redemption whereby He achieved salvation and true freedom for men, He also brought His revelation to completion. He bore witness to the truth,³⁹ but He refused to impose the truth by force on those who spoke against it. Not by force of blows does His rule assert its claims;⁴⁰ it is established by witnessing to the truth and by hearing the truth, and it extends its dominion by the love whereby Christ, lifted up on the cross, draws all men to Himself.⁴¹

EXAMPLE OF THE APOSTLES

Taught by the word and example of Christ, the apostles followed the same way. From the very origins of the Church, the disciples of Christ strove to convert men to faith in Christ as the Lord—not, however, by the use of coercion or by devices unworthy of the gospel, but by the power, above all, of the Word of God.⁴² Steadfastly they proclaimed to all the plan of God our Saviour, *who wills that all men should be saved and come to the acknowledgment of the truth* (1 Tim. 2:4). At the same time, however, they showed respect for those of weaker

36. Cf. Mt. 13:30 and 40-42.

37. Cf. Mt. 4:8-10; Jn. 6:15.

38. Cf. Is. 42:1-4.

39. Cf. Jn. 18:37.

40. Cf. Mt. 26:51-53; Jn. 18:36.

41. Cf. Jn. 12:32.

42. Cf. 1 Cor. 2:3-5; 1 Th. 2:3-5.

stuff, even though they were in error; thus they made it plain that *each one of us is to render to God an account of himself* (Rom. 14:12),⁴³ and for this reason is bound to obey his conscience. Like Christ Himself, the apostles were unceasingly bent upon bearing witness to the truth of God, and they showed the fullest measure of boldness in *speaking the word with confidence* (Acts 4:31)⁴⁴ before the people and their rulers. With a firm faith they held that the gospel is indeed the power of God unto salvation for all who believe.⁴⁵ Therefore they rejected all *carnal weapons*.⁴⁶ They followed the example of the gentleness and respectfulness of Christ. And they preached the Word of God in the full confidence that there was resident in this Word a divine power able to destroy all the forces arrayed against God⁴⁷ and to bring men to faith in Christ and to His service.⁴⁸ As the Master, so too the apostles recognized legitimate civil authority. *There is no power except from God*, the Apostle teaches, and thereafter commands: *Let everyone be subject to higher authorities . . . : he who resists authority resists God's ordinance* (Rom. 13:1-5).⁴⁹ At the same time, however, they did not hesitate to speak out against governing powers that set themselves in opposition to the holy will of God: *It is necessary to obey God rather than men* (Acts 5:29).⁵⁰ This is the way along which the martyrs and the faithful have walked through all ages and over all the earth.

UNCHANGING PRINCIPLE

12. The Church therefore is being faithful to the truth of the gospel, and is following the way of Christ and the apostles when she recognizes, and gives support to, the principle of religious freedom as befitting the dignity of man and as being in accord with divine revelation. Throughout the ages, the Church has kept safe and handed on the doctrine received from the Master

43. Cf. Rom. 14:1-23; 1 Cor. 8:9-13; 10:23-33.

44. Cf. Eph. 6:19-20.

45. Cf. Rom. 1:16.

46. Cf. 2 Cor. 10:4; 1 Th. 5:8-9.

47. Cf. Eph. 6:11-17.

48. Cf. 2 Cor. 10:3-5.

49. Cf. 1 Pet. 2:13-17.

50. Cf. Acts 4:19-20.

51. The historical consciousness of the Council required that it be loyal to the truth of history. Hence the Declaration makes the humble avowal that the People of God have not always walked in the way of Christ and the apostles. At times they have followed ways that were at variance with the spirit of the gospel and even contrary to it. The avowal is made briefly and without details. But the intention was to confess, in a penitent spirit, not only that Christian churchmen and princes have appealed to the coercive instruments of power in the supposed interests of the faith, but also that the Church herself has countenanced institutions that made a similar appeal. Whatever may be the nice historical judgment on these institutions in their own context of history, they are not to be justified, much less are they ever or in any way to be reinstated. The Declaration is a final renouncement and repudiation by the Church of all means and measures of coercion in matters religious.

52. Cf. Leo XIII, letter *Officio Sanctissimo*, Dec. 22, 1887: *AAS* 20 (1887), p. 269; idem, letter *Ex Litteris*, April 7, 1887: *AAS* 19 (1886), p. 465.

53. This statement, together with the declaration of religious freedom as a human right and the enunciation of the principle of the free society, must rank as one of the central doctrinal utterances of the Declaration. Its importance is emphasized by the fact that Paul VI quoted it in his address on Dec. 9 to political rulers: "And what is it that this Church asks of you, after nearly two thousand years of all sorts of vicissitudes in her relations with you, the powers of earth? What does the Church ask of you today? In one of the major texts of the Council she has told you: she asks of you nothing but freedom—the freedom to believe and to preach her faith, the freedom to love God and to serve Him, the freedom to live and to bring to men her message of life." This doctrine is traditional; it is also new. Implicit in it is the renunciation by the Church of a condition

and from the apostles. In the life of the People of God, as it has made its pilgrim way through the vicissitudes of human history, there have at times appeared ways of acting that were hardly in accord with the spirit of the gospel and even opposed to it.⁵¹ Nevertheless, the doctrine of the Church that no one is to be coerced into faith has always stood firm.

CONSTANT URGENCY

Thus the leaven of the gospel has long been about its quiet work in the minds of men. And to it is due in great measure the fact that in the course of time men have come more widely to recognize their dignity as persons, and the conviction has grown stronger that the person in society is to be kept free from all manner of coercion in matters religious.

CHURCH NEEDS LIBERTY

13. Among the things that concern the good of the Church and indeed the welfare of society here on earth—things therefore that are always and everywhere to be kept secure and defended against all injury—this certainly is pre-eminent, namely, that the Church should enjoy the full measure of freedom that her care for the salvation of men requires.⁵² This freedom is sacred, because the only-begotten Son endowed with it the Church that He purchased with His blood. It is so much the property of the Church that to act against it is to act against the will of God. The freedom of the Church is the fundamental principle in what concerns the relations between the Church and governments and the whole civil order.⁵³

In human society and in the face of government, the Church claims freedom for herself in her character as a spiritual authority, established by Christ the Lord, upon which there rests, by divine mandate, the duty of going out into the whole world and preaching the gospel to every

creature.⁵⁴ The Church also claims freedom for herself in her character as a society of men who have the right to live in society in accordance with the precepts of Christian faith.⁵⁵

HAPPY OUTCOME

In turn, where the principle of religious freedom is not only proclaimed in words or simply incorporated by law but also given sincere and practical application, there the Church succeeds in achieving a stable situation of right as well as of fact and the independence that is necessary for the fulfillment of her divine mission. This independence is precisely what the authorities of the Church claim in society.⁵⁶ At the same time, the Christian faithful, in common with all other men, possess the civil right not to be hindered in leading their lives in accordance with their conscience. Therefore, a harmony exists between the freedom of the Church and the religious freedom that is to be recognized as the right of all men and communities and sanctioned by constitutional law.

DUTY OF THE CHRISTIAN

14. In order to be faithful to the divine command to *Teach all nations* (Mt. 28:19-20), the Catholic Church must work with all urgency and concern *that the word of God be spread abroad and glorified* (2 Th. 3:1). Hence the Church earnestly begs of her children that *first of all, supplications, prayers, petitions, acts of thanksgiving be made for all men. . . . For this is good and agreeable in the sight of God our Saviour, who wills that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth* (1 Tim. 2:1-4). In the formation of their consciences, the Christian faithful ought carefully to attend to the sacred and certain doctrine of the Church.^{57, 58} The Church is, by the will of Christ, the teacher of the truth. It is her duty to give utterance to, and authoritatively to teach,

of legal privilege in society. The Church does not make, as a matter of right or of divine law, the claim that she should be established as the "religion of the state." Her claim is freedom, nothing more.

54. Cf. Mk. 16:15; Mt. 28:18-20; Pius XII's encyclical *Summi Pontificatus*, Oct. 20, 1939: *AAS* 31 (1939), pp. 445-446.

55. Cf. Pius XI, letter *Firmissimam Constantiam*, March 28, 1937: *AAS* 29 (1937), p. 196.

56. Cf. Pius XII, allocution *Ci Riesce*, Dec. 6, 1953: *AAS* 45 (1953), p. 802.

57. Cf. Pius XII, *Radio Message*, March 23, 1952: *AAS* 44 (1952), pp. 270-278.

58. The Council directs a word of pastoral exhortation to the Christian faithful. They are urged, in particular, to form their consciences under the guidance of the authority of the Church. It might be noted here that the Council intended to make a clear distinction between religious freedom as a principle in the civil order and the Christian freedom that obtains even inside the Church. These two freedoms are distinct in kind, and it would be perilous to confuse them. Nowhere does the Declaration touch the issue of freedom within the Church. Undoubtedly, however, it will be a stimulus for the articulation of a full theology of Christian freedom in its relation to the doctrinal and disciplinary authority of the Church.

that Truth which is Christ Himself, and also to declare and confirm by her authority those principles of the moral order that have their origin in human nature itself. Furthermore, let Christians walk in wisdom in the face of those outside, *in the Holy Spirit, in unaffected love, in the word of truth* (2 Cor. 6:6-7), and let them be about their task of spreading the light of life with all confidence⁵⁹ and apostolic courage, even to the shedding of their blood.

The disciple is bound by a grave obligation toward Christ his Master ever more fully to understand the truth received from Him, faithfully to proclaim it, and vigorously to defend it, never—be it understood—having recourse to means that are incompatible with the spirit of the gospel. At the same time, the charity of Christ urges him to love and prudence and patience in his dealings with those who are in error or in ignorance with regard to the faith.⁶⁰ All is to be taken into account—the Christian duty to Christ, the life-giving Word that must be proclaimed, the rights of the human person, and the measure of grace granted by God through Christ to men, who are invited freely to accept and profess the faith.

A GROWING LIBERTY

15. The fact is that men of the present day want to be able freely to profess their religion in private and in public; religious freedom has already been declared to be a civil right in most constitutions, and it is solemnly recognized in international documents.⁶¹ The further fact is that forms of government still exist under which, even though freedom of religious worship receives constitutional recognition, the powers of government are engaged in the effort to deter citizens from the profession of religion and to make life difficult and dangerous for religious communities.⁶²

This Council greets with joy the first of these

59. Cf. Acts 4:29.

60. Cf. *Pacem in Terris*, pp. 299-300.

61. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 295-296.

62. At the end, the Council turns once more to the world at large. Two facts claim its attention. First, the principle of religious freedom is widely recognized; this fact takes its place among the signs of the times. Second, the principle of religious freedom is also widely violated; this fact can only be deplored. Then the Declaration, which has stated its argument in terms of principle, turns to the pragmatic aspect of the issue—the practical value and necessity of religious freedom in the world today. It is a world of diversity that is striving toward some measure of unity; it is a world of conflict that is yearning for peace; it is, above all, a world in which a new consciousness of human dignity struggles to find expression in social institutions that will guarantee to men the freedom that is due to them in justice. Most necessary of all is freedom of religion. Where it is safe, the way is open for the *glorious freedom of the sons of God* to come to men as God's gift through Christ in the Holy Spirit.

two facts, as among the signs of the times. With sorrow, however, it denounces the other fact, as only to be deplored. The Council exhorts Catholics, and it directs a plea to all men, most carefully to consider how greatly necessary religious freedom is, especially in the present condition of the human family. All nations are coming into ever closer unity; men of different cultures and religions are being brought together in closer relationships; there is a growing consciousness of the personal responsibility that weighs upon every man. All this is evident. Consequently, in order that relationships of peace and harmony may be established and maintained within the whole of mankind, it is necessary that religious freedom be everywhere provided with an effective constitutional guarantee, and that respect be shown for the high duty and right of man freely to lead his religious life in society.

May the God and Father of all grant that the human family, through careful observance of the principle of religious freedom in society, be brought by the grace of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit to the sublime and unending and *glorious freedom of the sons of God* (Rom. 8:21).

Each and every one of the things set forth in this Declaration has won the consent of the Fathers of this most sacred Council. We too, by the Apostolic authority conferred on Us by Christ, join with the Venerable Fathers in approving, decreeing and establishing these things in the Holy Spirit, and We direct that what has thus been enacted in synod be published, to God's glory.

Rome, at St. Peter's, December 7, 1965

I, Paul, Bishop of the Catholic Church

There follow the signatures of the Fathers.

READING LIST

BOOKS

American Pluralism and the Catholic Conscience, by Richard Regan, S.J. Macmillan. 1963. Chapters two and three present a clear statement of the relation between personal liberties and a democratic society.

The Basis of Religious Liberty, by A. F. Carillo de Albornoz. Assn. Press. 1963. The book is meant "to stimulate discussion within the World Council of Churches—and the churches themselves—on problems of religious liberty."

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ARTICLES

"Religious Freedom," by Cardinal Bea. In *Catholic Mind* (May, 1964 [62], 4-15). This address, given to the convention of Italian Catholic Jurists, cites with approval Pope John's statement that the common good is safeguarded when personal liberties are guaranteed.

"A Protestant Views Religious Liberty," by John C. Bennett. In *Catholic World* (Sept., 1965 [201], 362-8). The author discusses the differences between "common good" and "public order" as basis for limitation of religious liberty and comments on the theological and juridical approaches to religious liberty. He concludes with specific observations on First Amendment problems.

- “The Declaration on Religious Liberty,” by Francis Canavan, S.J. In *America* (Nov. 20, 1965 [113], 635-6). Here is a concise commentary on the schema approved by the Council.
- “Freedom of Religion and the State,” by Orio Gracchi. In *Catholic Lawyer* (Autumn, 1965 [11], 271-284). The article maintains that both the confessional state and the lay state repress true religious liberty because both have an erroneous theory of unlimited sovereignty.
- “Religious Tolerance in Catholic Tradition,” by Cardinal Lercaro. In *Catholic Mind* (Jan., 1960 [58], 12-24). This essay (also available in a 15¢ America Press pamphlet) contains a pre-Council defense of religious liberty, in which the author insists that the Church’s interest in this question is not a matter of expediency.
- “The Right to Religious Freedom,” by Anthony Levi, S.J. In *The Month* (Nov., 1964 [32], 239-246). The writer discusses ramifications of the theory that government is incompetent to discern the authenticity of religious claims. He sees no danger to the divine mission of the Catholic Church because, if she is true to herself, her teaching and activity will necessarily correspond to the universal human quest for self-fulfillment and self-completion.
- “This Matter of Religious Freedom,” by John Courtney Murray, S.J. In *America* (Jan. 9, 1965 [112], 40-43). A summary of several talks the author gave, as a *peritus*, to the Council Fathers.
- “The Nature of Religious Liberty,” by John B. Sheerin, C.S.P. In *Catholic World* (Sept., 1965 [201], 365-61). This wide-ranging article is intended to establish the philosophical and theological bases of religious liberty. It covers such questions as “error has no rights,” the juridical and theological approaches to religious liberty, and the difficulty in determining the “public order” concretely.
- “Religious Liberty,” by Emile de Smedt. In *Catholic Mind* (Feb., 1964 [62], 54-63). Here is his famous address to the Conciliar Fathers at the second session. Fr. de Smedt explains papal statements of the past and describes religious liberty in positive and negative terms. He fails, however, to stress the relation between religious liberty and a democratic society.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

(Letters of the alphabet indicate paragraphs under a number)

What is the distinction made, in the Declaration's subtitle, between "social and civil freedom" in matters religious?

Is it true that modern man's desire for freedom is strongest as regards the "values proper to the human spirit"? (1a)

Why does the Declaration begin, in this discussion of man's right to religious liberty, by mentioning his obligations? (1b)

In what sense does the affirmation of freedom in matters religious "leave untouched traditional Catholic doctrine on the moral duty of men and societies toward the true religion"? (1c)

Is the Declaration accurate in terming the right to religious freedom a "civil right"? (2a)

Give examples of what the Declaration means by "psychological freedom." (2b)

Who are the individuals or groups referred to as having a right to immunity from coercion in religious matters even though they "do not live up to their obligation of seeking the truth and adhering to it"? (2b)

In the statement that "every man has the duty, and therefore the right, to seek the truth," is man's right asserted to free inquiry and discussion in religious matters? (3a)

Are there limits to one's right to "give expression to his internal acts of religion"? (3c)

Does the U.S. Constitution forbid our government to "take account of the religious life of the people and show it favor"? (3d)

Does a problem of separation of church and state arise if individuals insist on their right to religious freedom "when they act in community"? (4a)

Which are the more important—and which the less important—of the religious rights listed in 4b-e?

Give examples of how, “in spreading religious faith,” one’s actions can “carry a hint of coercion or of a kind of persuasion that would be dishonorable or unworthy, especially when dealing with poor or uneducated people.” (4d)

Do parents in the United States enjoy the rights listed in the Declaration’s §5?

Does “equality of citizens before the law” (6d) exclude “special legal recognition given to one religious community” (6c)?

“Religious freedom is to be granted as far as possible and curtailed only when and in so far as necessary.” In what sense is this meant? (7b)

Can proper education instill into young people a sense of social responsibility regarding the religious rights of others? (8a)

In what three indirect but definite ways does revelation justify man’s title to freedom in religious matters? (9)

Cite some New Testament texts that establish the right to religious freedom. (10,11a) What were Christ’s own words in this respect? (11b) Do they seem to contradict the Declaration’s statement (9) that “revelation does not indeed affirm in so many words the right of men to immunity from external coercion in matters religious”? What was the practice of Christ’s apostles and disciples in this matter? (11c)

Has the progressive development of our understanding of Christ’s teaching made His doctrine on religious liberty clearer? (12a,b)

Is it an overstatement to affirm that “the freedom of the Church is the fundamental principle in what concerns the relations between the Church and governments and the whole civil order”? (13a)

What is the “stable situation of right as well as of fact” that the Church is said to succeed in achieving? (13c)

What are the two facts alluded to in §15, one of which the Council “greeted with joy” and one that it “denounces . . . as only to be deplored”? (15b)

Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions

Meaning of the Document

The history of the Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions begins with John XXIII. Pope John wanted the Council to make a statement on the Jews, and he asked Cardinal Bea to see to it.

The material of this Declaration was originally Chapter 4 in the schema of the Decree on Ecumenism. The early material on religious freedom was contained in Chapter 5. During the second session of the Council, the Moderators called for a vote on the schema's first three chapters; the other two were held over (for lack of time, Cardinal Bea stated).

Just before that, Cardinal Bea, in his address to the Council on November 19, 1963, introducing Chapter 4, revealed that it was Pope John who had ordered preparation of a text concerning the Jews. The Pope had, in fact, approved the basic lines of the document some months before he died.

THE JEWS

A number of bishops, before and after Cardinal Bea's talk, declared that the topic of Catholic-Jewish relations was outside the scope of the ecumenism schema. They urged that it should be made the subject of a separate document. Some, especially patriarchs of the Eastern Churches, did not want the Council to say anything about the Jews. They feared that Arab governments would consider such a statement a political move favoring recognition of the State of Israel, and that the Christian minorities in their countries would suffer reprisals.

During the period between the second and third sessions, the secretariat headed by Cardinal Bea worked out a new draft on the Jews and other non-Christians. Its contents became known throughout the world; the text was published in various newspapers. It put an end to the idea held by some Christians through the centuries that the Jews were a "deicide" people.

SOFTENING THE TEXT

When the Council Fathers returned to Rome for the third session, the text presented to them was not this text. In the new text, rejection of the charge of deicide had disappeared; the section on non-Christians other than Jews had been extended; special attention was given to Muslims.

Cardinal Liénart began the discussion by insisting that the deleted passages about the Jews be restored—a remarkable development, since he was the senior member of the Coordinating Commission that was said to have made all the changes. He was followed by a long line of cardinals from all parts of the world who, with the exception of Cardinal Tappouni, made the same request. They included Léger of Canada; Cushing, Meyer, and Ritter of the United States; Frings of Germany.

Cardinal Tappouni, speaking for himself and four other Eastern patriarchs, requested that the entire Declaration be dropped—not because they disagreed with what it said but because its adoption would impede the pastoral work of the Church. This reference to political complications was lost in the tide of three days' speeches by cardinals and bishops, who not only called for restoration of the earlier, stronger text but advocated adding to it a statement that would forbid Christians to justify persecution or hatred of Jews by appealing to Scripture. They called also for condemnation of all persecutions, and for insertion of a request for forgiveness from those who had been wronged by Christian persecution. Cardinal Bea stressed that the document was entirely religious in character and had no political implications, and it was evident that the entire discussion was religious in the best sense.

The final text was offered for vote at the fourth session of the Council. The statement on the use of Scripture contained in it (Article 4) affirmed so clearly the relationship of the Church

to the people of the Old Testament that any pretext for discrimination was excluded. The request for forgiveness was not inserted. Instead of looking to the past, the document looks forward by fostering and recommending “that mutual understanding and respect which is the fruit above all of biblical and theological studies, and of brotherly dialogues.”

The full story, with its details about the weekend when it seemed the statement on the Jews might be condensed to a single sentence (some newspapers carried headlines announcing that the entire Declaration had been shelved), would take many pages to recount. We may note here that in the important voting on the sections of the document in October, 1965, there were 2,080 Fathers voting on the proposition that the Jews are not to be regarded as rejected or accursed by God. There were 1,821 affirmative, 245 negative, and 14 invalid votes. One may perhaps legitimately add to this summary that on the proposition concerning universal brotherhood and exclusion of all discrimination (Article 5), 2,128 votes were cast: 2,064 affirmative, 58 negative, and 6 invalid.

A LASTING PRONOUNCEMENT

Some of the bishops objected that the text of the final version offered for vote would play down the differences between Catholicism and other religions, and would thus lead to indifference and the discouraging of missionary vocations. The great majority saw it otherwise, as the ensuing vote indicated.

ROBERT A. GRAHAM, S. J.

**PAUL, BISHOP
SERVANT OF THE SERVANTS OF GOD
TOGETHER WITH THE FATHERS
OF THE SACRED COUNCIL
FOR EVERLASTING MEMORY**

Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions

1. Originally a chapter in the schema on the Decree on Ecumenism, the material grew into this separate document. Pope Paul prepared for implementation of the Decree by setting up, on May 17, 1964, a secretariat for development of relations with non-Christian religions, headed by Cardinal Marella. The Secretariat for Non-Christian Religions has an episcopal committee of bishops from all parts of the world, consultants in Rome, and consultants throughout the world, including laymen. The secretariat's aims are to create a climate of cordiality between Christians and followers of other religions, to dissipate prejudice and ignorance, especially among Catholics, and to establish fruitful contact with members of other religions concerning questions of common interest.

2. The stress on what men have in common was one of Pope John's operative principles. As he often made clear, this approach does not deny or neglect differences; it simply gives *primary* consideration—as this Declaration says—to common goals and interests.

3. The solidarity of mankind was another of Pope John's guiding principles, evident from the very beginning of his pontificate and in his first encyclical. The teaching of this sentence of the Declaration has a detailed history in papal statements running back for decades.

4. The theme of light connects this document with the great Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* (Light of the World).

1. In our times, when every day men are being drawn closer together and the ties between various peoples are being multiplied, the Church is giving deeper study to her relationship with non-Christian religions.¹ In her task of fostering unity and love among men, and even among nations, she gives primary consideration in this document to what human beings have in common² and to what promotes fellowship among them.

UNITY OF MANKIND

For all peoples comprise a single community,³ and have a single origin, since God made the whole race of men dwell over the entire face of the earth (cf. Acts 17:26). One also is their final goal: God. His providence, His manifestations of goodness, and His saving designs extend to all men (cf. Wis. 8:1; Acts 14:17; Rom. 2:6-7; 1 Tim. 2:4) against that day when the elect will be united in the Holy City ablaze with the splendor of God, where the nations will walk in His light (cf. Apoc. 21:23 f.).⁴

QUESTIONS ALL MEN ASK

Men look to the various religions for answers to those profound mysteries of the human condition which, today even as in olden times, deeply stir the human heart: What is a man? What is the meaning and the purpose of our life? What is goodness and what is sin? What gives

5. These questions outline a number of the basic, common interests referred to in the opening paragraph of the Declaration.

6. The Declaration now considers a most basic and fundamental common interest of men. It speaks in the widest possible terms.

7. The Declaration selects certain key elements of Hinduism without attempting the impossible task of describing in a short space the complex nature of Hinduism, the distinctions between the Vedas (scriptures) and Puranas (lesser sacred books), the six philosophical systems, the innumerable sects, etc.

Mention might have been made of the similarities between Hindu and Christian beliefs in, e.g., God's appearance on earth, grace, the sacraments; and similarities between the Christian Trinity and the Hindu ultimate reality. But all this, it was legitimately felt, could be left to the work of dialogue that is endorsed and commended at the end of the Article.

8. As with Hinduism, so with Buddhism—a whole library of knowledge opens up at the mention of the word. Instead of attempting to give detailed summaries of the common areas of interest, the Declaration touches on general themes and leaves the rest to development in competent dialogue.

9. Bishops from Africa, and scholars of religion like Cardinal Koenig, of Vienna, asked that mention be made of a number of religions in Africa, etc. It was decided, however, to keep to the traditional idea of the great religions in the world (Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam), giving these explicit mention and referring to all the others in this general summary.

10. The reader of Christian classics will discern here an echo of the famous sentence in St. Augustine's *Confessions*: "Our hearts are restless and they will not rest until they rest in Thee."

rise to our sorrows and to what intent? Where lies the path of true happiness? What is the truth about death, judgment, and retribution beyond the grave? What, finally, is that ultimate and unutterable mystery that engulfs our being, and whence we take our rise, and whither our journey leads us? ⁵

RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD

2. From ancient times down to the present, there has existed among divers peoples a certain perception of the hidden power that hovers over the course of things and over the events of human life; ⁶ at times, indeed, recognition can be found of a Supreme Divinity, and of a Supreme Father, too. Such a perception and such a recognition instill the lives of these peoples with a profound religious sense. Religions bound up with cultural advancement have struggled to reply to these questions with more refined concepts and in more highly developed language.

Thus, in Hinduism men contemplate the divine mystery and express it through an inexhaustible fruitfulness of myths and a searching philosophical inquiry.⁷ They seek release from the anguish of our condition through ascetical practices or deep meditation or a loving, trusting flight toward God.

Buddhism in its multiple forms acknowledges the radical insufficiency of this shifting world.⁸ It teaches a path by which men, in a devout and confident spirit, can either reach a state of absolute freedom or attain supreme enlightenment by their own efforts or by higher assistance.

Likewise, other religions to be found everywhere⁹ strive variously to answer the restless searchings of the human heart ¹⁰ by proposing "ways," which consist of teachings, rules of life and sacred ceremonies.

KEEP WHAT IS TRUE

11. This paragraph presents an understanding that is traditional in the Catholic Church. One recalls, for example, Justin Martyr in the early Church attributing all the truths in non-Christian religions to the Word of God that enlightens every man who enters into this world—a concept found at the beginning of St. John's Gospel. Through the centuries, however, missionaries often concluded that non-Christian religions are simply the work of Satan and that the missionaries' task is to convert from error to knowledge of the truth. This Declaration marks an authoritative change in approach. Now, for the first time, there is recognition of other religions as entities with which the Church can and should enter into dialogue.

12. The Declaration gives a good example of prudence in putting aside, for the moment, elements in non-Christian religions that are repugnant to Christians (idolatry, etc.), in order to focus on the spiritual and moral *goods*. Also, there is here no undignified breast-beating, no protestation that Catholics were not responsible for unfortunate episodes in history, no exaggerated emotionalism—all of which would not have provided a good basis for persevering in dialogue.

13. Students of the history of relations between Christians and Muslims will find that this section reveals a remarkable change in the Church's approach. One thinks inevitably of the Crusades (but note that there were Muslim crusaders as well as Christian). Those were ideological wars. The Council, as it also makes clear in the Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, wants to disassociate itself from war.

Many readers will be surprised to see how much Christians and Muslims actually have in common in their beliefs. Many Christians have thought of Muslims as fanatical followers of a religion of power and ignorance, sexually excessive (polygamy, ideas about heaven), etc.

14. Cf. St. Gregory VII, *Letter XXI to Anzir (Nacir), King of Mauretania*.

The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions.¹¹ She looks with sincere respect upon those ways of conduct and of life, those rules and teachings which, though differing in many particulars from what she holds and sets forth, nevertheless often reflect a ray of the Truth that enlightens all men. Indeed, she proclaims and must ever proclaim Christ, *the way, the truth and the life* (Jn. 14:6), in whom men find the fullness of religious life, and in whom God has reconciled all things to Himself (cf. 2 Cor. 5:18-19).

The Church therefore has this exhortation for her sons: prudently and lovingly,¹² through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, and in witness of Christian faith and life, acknowledge, preserve and promote the spiritual and moral goods found among these men, as well as the values in their society and culture.

THE MUSLIMS

3. Upon the Muslims, too, the Church looks with esteem.¹³ They adore one God, living and enduring, merciful and all-powerful, Maker of heaven and earth¹⁴ and Speaker to men. They strive to submit wholeheartedly to His inscrutable decrees, as did Abraham, with whom the Islamic faith is pleased to associate itself. Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a prophet. They also honor Mary, His virgin mother; at times they call on her, too, with devotion. In addition, they await the day of judgment, when God will give each man his due after raising him up. Consequently, they prize the moral life, and give worship to God especially through prayer, almsgiving and fasting.

Although in the course of the centuries many quarrels and hostilities have arisen between

Christians and Muslims, this most sacred Synod urges all to forget the past and to strive sincerely for mutual understanding. On behalf of all mankind, let them make common cause to safeguard and foster social justice, moral values, peace and freedom.

THE CHOSEN PEOPLE

4. As this sacred Synod searches into the mystery of the Church, it recalls the spiritual bond linking the people of the New Covenant with Abraham's stock.¹⁵

For the Church of Christ acknowledges that, according to the mystery of God's saving design, the beginnings of her faith and her election are already found among the patriarchs, Moses, and the prophets. She professes that all who believe in Christ, Abraham's sons according to faith (cf. Gal. 3:7), are included in that patriarch's call, and likewise that the salvation of the Church was mystically foreshadowed by the Chosen People's exodus from the land of bondage.

The Church, therefore, cannot forget that she received the revelation of the Old Testament through the people with whom God in His inexpressible mercy deigned to establish the Ancient Covenant. Nor can she forget that she draws sustenance from the root of that good olive tree onto which have been grafted the wild olive branches of the Gentiles (cf. Rom. 11:17-24). Indeed, the Church believes that by His cross Christ, our Peace, reconciled Jew and Gentile, making them both one in Himself (cf. Eph. 2:14-16).¹⁶

A PEOPLE STILL LOVED

Also, the Church ever keeps in mind the words of the Apostle about his kinsmen, *who have the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenant and the legislation and the worship and the promises; who have the fathers, and*

15. The Declaration, in taking up the topic of the relationship between Christianity and Judaism, begins on a positive note. It probes to the root of what the two religions have in common: fatherhood in Abraham. In this, and in the acknowledgments of the following paragraphs, the Declaration presents an authentic tradition of the Church rooted in sacred Scripture. Besides this section of the Declaration, the Constitution on Divine Revelation is vital to the dialogue with Jews recommended in the middle of this Article.

16. In practice, at various times in the history of the Church, the facts set forth in this Article have been neglected or obscured by some Christians. Here the Church proclaims her unity with the Chosen People of the Old Testament. This, therefore, and not any other, is the authentic and approved tradition.

17. It was felt necessary by some of the Council Fathers to indicate the opposition of some Jews to Christianity—a fact that, among other things, partly explains the subsequent history of tension between Christianity and Judaism. The next two sentences of the Declaration present the Church's official attitude toward this fact.

18. Cf. Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, in *AAS* 57 (1965), p. 20.

19. A reference to "conversion" of the Jews was removed from an earlier version of this Declaration because many Council Fathers felt it was not appropriate in a document striving to establish common goals and interests first. The sentence as it now stands presents a summary of biblical understandings.

20. The word "mutual" indicates that the Council hopes for two-way communication. The Council Fathers here take an initiative (just as the Decree on Ecumenism urges Catholics to take the initiative in proposals for dialogue with other Christians) and hope for a response. The word also tactfully expresses the request of Cardinal Ruffini, of Palermo, that Christians should love Jews and that Jews should declare they will not hate Christians (he asked that certain passages in the Talmud be corrected).

Pope John's deletion of a word from the Good Friday prayer for Jews and Pope Paul's extensive revision of the prayer (now "For the Jews" instead of "For the Conversion of the Jews," etc.) were steps in the direction of mutual understanding and respect. Jules Isaac has related that, after representations made by him in a private audience in 1949, Pope Pius XII made a similar modification in the Good Friday liturgy.

Also, on the day this Declaration was promulgated, the Congregation of Rites issued a decree banning further veneration of Simon of Trent, a small boy allegedly murdered by Jews in 1475 in order that his Christian blood might be used in the synagogue during the Pasch. In-

from whom is Christ according to the flesh (Rom. 9:4-5), the son of the Virgin Mary. The Church recalls, too, that from the Jewish people sprang the apostles, her foundation stones and pillars, as well as most of the early disciples who proclaimed Christ to the world.

As holy Scripture testifies, Jerusalem did not recognize the time of her visitation (cf. Lk. 19:44), nor did the Jews in large number accept the gospel; indeed, not a few opposed the spreading of it (cf. Rom. 11:28).¹⁷ Nevertheless, according to the Apostle, the Jews still remain most dear to God because of their fathers, for He does not repent of the gifts He makes nor of the calls He issues (cf. Rom. 11:28-29).¹⁸ In company with the prophets and the same Apostle, the Church awaits that day, known to God alone, on which all peoples will address the Lord in a single voice and *serve him with one accord* (Soph. 3:9; cf. Is. 66:23; Ps. 65:4; Rom. 11:11-32).¹⁹

PLEA FOR MUTUAL LOVE

Since the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews is thus so great, this sacred Synod wishes to foster and recommend that mutual ²⁰ understanding and respect which is the

vestigation had shown that Simon was probably killed by non-Jews, who tried to blame Trent's Jewish community for the crime.

21. The Declaration endorses and promotes dialogue between Christians and Jews, just as the Decree on Ecumenism endorses and promotes dialogue between the separated Christian groups. On Oct. 1, 1965, in Rome, it was announced that the Catholic bishops of the United States had established a commission to discover ways to further the dialogue.

22. Some biblical scholars among the Council Fathers pressed for having on the record a reference to the Gospel accounts that relate involvement of Jewish leaders in the arrest and death of Christ. This involvement has, in fact, been a basic element in the thesis that the Jewish people therefore were guilty of the death of Jesus—a thesis held, and pushed to various consequences, by some Christians from early times to the present. In what follows here, the Second Vatican Council repudiates the thesis and its consequences.

The Council has been accused by some of "playing God" and "absolving," "forgiving" or "exonerating" the Jews of guilt for the crucifixion, and these terms were used in newspaper headlines describing this section of the Declaration. In fact, the Council simply repudiates the notion of a collective Jewish guilt, and instructs Catholics to eliminate false views that in the past have caused Jews to undergo discrimination and suffering. The element of forgiveness was capably handled earlier by Him who said: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

23. The phrase "or guilty of deicide" (*deicidii rea*) was dropped from this sentence before the present version of the Declaration came up for discussion and voting in the final session of the Council. Many newspaper accounts attributed the deletion to pressure from Arab governments, etc., but the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, chief architect of the document, explained that many Council Fathers asked for

fruit above all of biblical and theological studies, and of brotherly dialogues.²¹

NOT A REJECTED RACE

True, authorities of the Jews and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ (cf. Jn. 19:6);²² still, what happened in His passion cannot be blamed upon all the Jews then living, without distinction, nor upon the Jews of today. Although the Church is the new people of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God,²³ as if such

the deletion because the phrase was ambiguous and might even suggest to some people that the Church no longer regarded Jesus as God.

The secretariat agreed to drop the phrase since the idea is already found in the preceding sentence: "What happened in His passion cannot be blamed upon all the Jews. . . ." The secretariat recommended that the word "deicide" be eliminated from the Christian vocabulary; it has given rise to false theological interpretations that occasion difficulties in pastoral work and in ecumenical dialogue.

24. In some sermons of Fathers of the Church, notably the Greek Fathers (e.g., St. John Chrysostom), and various preachers in the history of the Church, there has been an attempt to base a pejorative attitude toward Jews on sacred Scripture. The Council here rejects the attempt. From now on, no Catholic may quote the Bible to justify calling the Jews an accursed or rejected people.

As Cardinal Bea and others explained, *His blood be upon us and upon our children* (Mt. 27:25) is the cry of a Jerusalem crowd that has no right to speak for the whole Jewish people. The severity of Christ's judgment on Jerusalem (Mt. 23:37 ff., etc.) does not suppose or prove collective culpability of the Jewish people for the crucifixion. That judgment caps a long history of Jerusalem's disobedience to God, crimes against the prophets, etc., and it is a "type" of the universal, final judgment.

In 1 Th. 2:14-16, St. Paul angrily associates those who are persecuting him with the spirit of those Jews and their leaders in Jerusalem *who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets*. The Council's teaching on the interpretation of sacred Scripture, in the Constitution on Divine Revelation, is essential reading for all who wish to study this matter.

25. The spirit of Christ is one of love, not hate.

26. *Reprobat*. Cf. note 31.

27. A Latin phrase meaning "and it condemns" was dropped out at the request of Council Fathers who

views followed from the holy Scriptures.²⁴ All should take pains, then, lest in catechetical instruction and in the preaching of God's Word they teach anything out of harmony with the truth of the gospel and the spirit of Christ.²⁵

The Church repudiates²⁶ all persecutions against any man. Moreover, mindful of her common patrimony with the Jews, and motivated by the gospel's spiritual love and by no political considerations, she deplores²⁷ the hatred, persecutions, and displays of anti-Semitism directed

complained that the phrase would put the Council on record as repudiating discrimination against Jews more strongly than discrimination against anyone else. Others argued that "condemn" in a Council document should be reserved for matters of formal heresy, and Pope John explicitly had requested that this Council not engage in such condemnations.

28. In four of their seventy canonical enactments, the Fathers of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215 A. D.) dealt with the Jews: Christian princes must watch lest Jews exact from Christian debtors too high an interest rate; baptized Jews may not observe Jewish customs; Jews may not appear in public during Easter week; Jews must give tithes on their houses and other property to the Church and pay a yearly tax at Easter; no Christian prince may give an office to a Jew under pain of excommunication; Jews must wear a distinctive dress from their twelfth year to distinguish them from Christians. If there was anti-Semitism in these laws, it is here repudiated by the Second Vatican Council ("at any time and from any source").

29. This sentence, together with the preceding teaching, puts this declaration on the Jews into a *doctrinal* category. The Fourth Lateran Council's four discriminatory canons on the Jews were *disciplinary* laws. Disciplinary laws are changeable; the content of doctrinal statements is not changeable. The unfortunate laws of 1215 long ago fell into desuetude; the doctrinal statement of 1965, it is to be hoped, removes from the Church the remnants of the thinking that lay behind those laws.

It is curious that the Council makes no reference to the beautiful treatment of the Jews and of Christ's death given in the authoritative *Catechism of the Council of Trent for Parish Priests*, published by order of Pope Pius V in 1566. That catechism states that guilt for Christ's death "seems more enormous in us than in the Jews, since

against the Jews at any time and from any source.²⁸

Besides, as the Church has always held and continues to hold, Christ in His boundless love freely underwent His passion and death because of the sins of all men, so that all might attain salvation.²⁹ It is, therefore, the duty of the Church's preaching to proclaim the cross of Christ as the sign of God's all-embracing love and as the fountain from which every grace flows.

A UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD

5. We cannot in truthfulness call upon that God who is the Father of all if we refuse to act in a

brotherly way toward certain men,³⁰ created though they be to God's image. A man's relationship with God the Father and his relationship with his brother men are so linked together that Scripture says: *He who does not love does not know God* (1 Jn. 4:8).

The ground is therefore removed from every theory or practice that leads to a distinction between men or peoples in the matter of human dignity and the rights that flow from it.

NO RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION

As a consequence, the Church rejects,³¹ as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against men or harassment of them because of their race, color, condition of life, or religion. Accordingly, following in the footsteps of the holy apostles Peter and Paul, this sacred Synod ardently implores the Christian faithful to *maintain good fellowship among the nations* (1 Pet. 2:12), and, if possible, as far as in them lies, to keep peace with all men (cf. Rom. 12:18), so that they may truly be sons of the Father who is in heaven (cf. Mt. 5:45).

Each and every one of the things set forth in this Declaration has won the consent of the Fathers of this most sacred Council. We too, by the Apostolic authority conferred on Us by Christ, join with the Venerable Fathers in approving, decreeing and establishing these things in the Holy Spirit, and We direct that what has thus been enacted in synod be published, to God's glory.

Rome, at St. Peter's, October 28, 1965

I, Paul, Bishop of the Catholic Church

There follow the signatures of the Fathers.

according to the testimony of the same Apostle: *If they had known it, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory* (1 Cor. 2:8); while we, on the contrary, professing to know Him, yet denying Him by our actions, seem in some sort to lay violent hands on Him." Cf. edition by McHugh and Callan (New York: Joseph F. Wagner, Inc., 1923), pp. 50-61, 362-365.

30. The reader will still, no doubt, be thinking of the context of anti-Semitism from the preceding Article. As the next two paragraphs show, however, the Declaration has moved on to a more sweeping statement: the Church repudiates all discrimination against individuals or whole peoples because of race, color, condition of life, or religion.

31. The word *reprobat* used here is practically as strong as *condemnat*. It means "reprove," "repudiate"—words that are commonly understood to mean "condemn" for all practical purposes. Thus, although obviously trying to follow Pope John's directive not to engage in condemnations, the Council finds racial and religious discrimination too disturbing not to condemn it.

READING LIST

GENERAL STUDIES

The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology. Mircea Eliade and Joseph Kitagawa (eds.). Chicago U. Press. 1959. A valuable book that gives a survey of how the modern study of the world religions has developed.

A Guide to Oriental Classics. E. T. de Bary and A. T. Embree (eds.). Columbia U. Press. 1964. An excellent paperback guide to the religious literature of the Oriental world. It includes the works of Islam, India, China and Japan. Best translations and secondary readings are listed.

Religion and Culture, by Christopher Dawson. Meridian. 1958. A paperback introduction to the function of religion in the major civilizations of the world, with chapters on the sources of religious knowledge, sacred science, sacred law, and the way of perfection.

Concise Encyclopedia of Living Faiths. R. C. Zaehner (ed.). Hawthorn. 1959. This work provides a good survey of the living religions of the world done by competent persons.

The Religions of Man, by Huston Smith. Harper. A paperback study of all the world religions, clear in presentation, precise in understanding, marked with good judgment. An excellent introductory presentation for the general reader.

Man's Religions, by John B. Noss. Macmillan. 1963. This is widely used in classroom study of the world religions. It is substantial, reliable.

INDIVIDUAL RELIGIONS

The Encounter of Religions, by Jacques-Albert Cuttat. Desclee. 1960. A book with excellent insight into the differences between Christianity and the other religions of the world.

Christianity and the Other Religions, by R. C. Zaehner. Hawthorn. 1964. A valuable study by the Professor of Eastern Religions at Oxford. This is a volume in the Twentieth Century Catholic Encyclopedia.

- Hinduism*, by Louis Renou. Washington Sq. Press. 1963. This paperback contains selections from the religious scriptures of Hinduism. It is the finest collection now available in English.
- Hinduism*, by R. C. Zaehner. Oxford U. Press. 1962. An excellent companion volume to the above work. This presents the basic ideas of Hinduism.
- The Teachings of the Compassionate Buddha*. E. A. Burt (ed.). Mentor. 1955. A fine paperback collection of passages from the Buddhist scriptures. It portrays the fundamental thought and spiritual mood of Buddhism.
- A History of Zen Buddhism*, by Heinrich Dumoulin. Pantheon. 1963. The only good history of Zen Buddhism that is available, done by a scholar of distinction in Buddhist studies. An important work since, of all Asian spiritual traditions, Zen is the most influential on the West at this time.
- Zen Catholicism*, by Dom Aelred Graham. Harcourt. 1963. An impressive study of the possible communication that can pass between Zen and Christianity.
- The Analects of Confucius*. W. E. Soothill (trans.). Oxford U. Press. 1937. A good translation of one of the most influential of all Asian spiritual classics.
- Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching*, John C. H. Wu (trans.). St. John's U. Press. 1961. A remarkably fine rendering of the most mystical of all the Chinese spiritual writings.
- Mohammedanism: An Historical Survey*, by H. A. R. Gibbs. Mentor. 1949. This paperback provides the reader with the essentials in the historical development and doctrinal teaching of Islam.
- Islam in Modern History*, by Wilfred Cantwell Smith. Mentor. 1957. This paperback brings the story of Islam up to the present and studies the precise problems that Islam faces in its adaptation to the realities of the new age of science, technology and urbanization.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

(Letters of the alphabet indicate paragraphs under a number)

Give examples of what the Church has done, in the past decade and on a parish, diocesan, national and international level, to further “what human beings have in common and what promotes among them an identification of interests.” (1a)

Does every religion try to answer the question listed here concerning human destiny? (1c) How about religions that make no claim to having received a revelation from God?

In the great world religions—e.g., Hinduism, Buddhism, Mohammedanism—what are the “true and holy” elements that “reflect a ray of the Truth that enlightens all men”? (2e)

In your opinion, is there danger that unsophisticated Catholics will become indifferent if emphasis is laid on the positive aspects of other faiths? (2a-f)

Show how these passages dealing with the Muslims reveal a great desire, on the Church’s part, to achieve better understanding and bury the mistakes of the past. (3a,b)

What elements constitute the “spiritual bond linking the people of the New Covenant with Abraham’s stock”? (4a) Show the basis of this bond with future Christianity, in the early years of the history of the Chosen People and in its later development. (4b,c)

In the community where you live, is it possible to foresee “brotherly dialogue” with Jewish individuals and groups? (4f) What is needed to promote it? What are the principal obstacles?

Can the cry of Jews, “*His blood be upon us and our children,*” and Christ’s dire warning to Jerusalem, be construed as proving that the Jews as a group have been rejected? (4g)

It has been said that Vatican II is the first general council not to issue any anathemas, or condemnations. Is there a significance in the fact that precisely here, in this section, the Fathers came very close to uttering a condemnation of racial, social and religious discrimination? (5c)

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A Note on The John LaFarge Institute

DURING HIS LONG LIFE, Father John LaFarge, S.J., was acclaimed for his work in the fields of interracial justice and interreligious relations. He died in November, 1963, at the age of 83. Shortly afterward, the Jesuit editors of *America* magazine founded The John LaFarge Institute to continue the work of their former editor-in-chief. Its objectives are:

- To establish a forum, under religious sponsorship, that will be open to men of all races and creeds (discussion and confrontation will be directed toward understanding and mutual respect, and toward relaxation of present-day tensions in our racially mixed and pluralistic society).
- To further co-operation among men of various religious communities.
- To publish the results of Institute meetings and recommendations based on them.

By publishing the Declarations, the John LaFarge Institute hopes to promote the interreligious harmony that Father LaFarge so untiringly sought. The text used in this edition of the Declarations was edited by Msgr. J. Joseph Gallagher, priest of the Archdiocese of Baltimore and consulting editor of the *Baltimore Catholic Review*. The marginal notes were prepared by John Courtney Murray, S.J., and Robert A. Graham, S.J.