

Msgr Raymond T. Bosler at the Second Vatican Council, 1962-1965, and After

“Have no fear; once the talk ceases and the bishops depart, we will change everything back to the way it was.”

Cardinal Paolo Marella, to a reporter at the end of the second session.

“In a higher world it is otherwise, but here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have to change often.”

John Henry Cardinal Newman.

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On 28 October 1958, Angelo Guisepe Roncalli became Pope John XXIII. At age 76, his reign was expected to be short, his role a mere placeholder. Three months later, “trembling a little with emotion” but “with a humble resolution of purpose,” he shocked many and surprised everyone when he announced his intention to hold an ecumenical council. Asked what he had in mind, Pope John used the term “*aggiornamento*,” literally, to make things ready for today, its needs, the times. Going to a window he opened it wide saying he expected the council “to let some fresh air into the Church.”¹

He was himself a fresh breeze: He ended the practice of Vatican officials kneeling in his presence, held the first papal press conference, the first pope since 1870 to travel outside Rome, the first to make pastoral visits—hospitals, orphanages, prisons. Driven around Rome he would stop the car to greet people. As an auger of the future, passing Rome’s Great Synagogue one day, he blessed the people coming out; after a moment of bewilderment, they crowded around applauding enthusiastically. The rabbi, an eyewitness, called John’s action “the first real gesture of reconciliation.”² Earlier, a sign of the difference his papacy would make, at his first Good Friday service as pope he dropped the prayers “for the perfidious Jews,” substituting “Let us pray also for the Jews to whom God first spoke.”³ John would be ecumenical: he met with the Archbishop of Canterbury, December 1960, six months later he received the Anglican personal representative to the Vatican and invited non-Catholics as council observers. In naming the first cardinals from Japan, Africa, and Mexico, John XXIII foreshadowed the council’s intention to decentralize and de-Italianize the Church.

To prepare for the council, in June 1959, letters to over 2,800 ecclesiastics and heads of institutions around the world stated that the pope wanted to know the opinions, suggestions, and “wishes of their excellences.”⁴ They were to offer their ideas “with complete freedom and honesty,” about issues the council should deal with. The 2,100 responses filled twelve large volumes, more than 5,000 pages.⁵ Overall, the suggestions were quite conservative and a poor guide to what would happen at the council, being mostly condemnations of modern evils, such as Communism, and to reassert tradition and doctrine, especially relating to the Virgin Mary. The more liberal asked for a greater role for the laity and use of the vernacular in the liturgies. The gathering process ended in early June 1960 with the Central Theological Commission setting up ten sub-commissions, each headed by the prefect of the corresponding congregation of the Roman Curia; these would produce the initial drafts for the council’s consideration. The pope had admonished its members to work together with “brotherly concord, moderation in proposals, dignity of

¹ Thomas Cahill, *Pope John XXIII* (Doubleday: New York, 2002), 175.

² Michael A. Hayes, “From *Nostra Aetate*” to “We remember,” 426.

³ Cahill, *John XXIII*, 175.

⁴ Italy was first in number of bishops with 367; United States, 216; Brazil, 167; India, 80.

⁵ John W. O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2008), 19.

discussion and wisdom of deliberation,” using a “pastoral” approach rather than “condemnations.”⁶ Meeting behind closed doors, the hundred or so high ecclesiastics collating the responses divulged little information and *L'Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican newspaper, gave the impression that all was “sweetness and light.” In fact, the meetings proved highly contentious as the minority of liberals disputed with the conservatives over collegiality, liturgical reform, and the desirability of yet another condemnation of Communism. This absence of “brotherly concord” made the preparatory commission “a dress rehearsal for the real thing.”⁷

In the nearly three years between the announcement of the council and its opening, 11 October 1962, the Vatican’s heavily Italian bureaucracy made its fierce opposition to a council manifest, and Pope John resented it. Having told the gathered of his hope that that the council would help the Church “to face the future without fear,” *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia* (“Mother Church rejoices”), he then voiced his displeasure with the Curia for having had to listen “to persons, who, though burning with zeal,” lack “discretion or measure,” and see “nothing but prevarication and ruin” having “learned nothing from history, . . . [W]e must disagree with these prophets of gloom who are always forecasting disaster, as though the end of the world was at hand.” Producing his own guidelines for the council, Pope John said the council’s purpose was not to discuss one or another fundamental doctrines--“for this a Council was not necessary,” but to study and expound doctrine “through the methods and through the literary forms of modern thought. The substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith is one thing, and the way in which it is presented is another.” As to errors, they always abound, but “nowadays,” rather than “condemnations,” the Church “prefers to make use of the medicine of mercy rather than severity.” “That being so,” she “desires to show herself to be the loving mother of all, benign, patient, full of mercy and goodness toward the brethren who are separated from her.” Far from condemning the contemporary world, the pope held out the prospect that “Divine Providence is leading us to a new order of human relations,” which, through men’s efforts, unknowingly, “are directed” toward fulfilling God’s “inscrutable designs; and everything, even human differences, leads to the greater good of the Church.”⁸ Implicitly, Pope John turned away from triumphalism, from condemning the world, from punishments, and not least, punctured the notion that high church officials were not as other men, unreal, incorporate spirits free from ordinary human failings. Pope John, nobody’s fool, his address was pastoral, open to change, ecumenical and modern, as the American Bishop Robert Tracy later wrote, it was the first glimmer that the bishops had not been “called to Rome simply to exhibit our solidarity with the ‘approved authors’ and with the Holy See.”⁹

Msgr. Ray T. Bosler, at one with Pope John’s hopes for the council, identified the foot draggers for his readers as men who see in “the secularization of society” “a corruption of what was once a glorious Christian civilization” and “Communism” as secularism’s “logical evil expression.” It followed that clergy and laity, for their own

⁶ *Criterion*, 19 Oct 1962.

⁷ *Criterion*, 19 Oct 1962.

⁸ “R.T.B.,” *Criterion*, 19 October 1962, 4; Walter M. Abbott, gen. ed., *Documents of Vatican II* (Herder and Herder: New York, 1966), 712.

⁹ Robert E. Tracy, *An American Bishop at the Vatican Council*, (McGraw-Hill: New York, 1966), 34.

protection, should have as little to do with secular society as possible and “the ideal to be striven for once again” is the restoration of the “medieval union of Church and State.” Fearful of efforts to express “the beliefs of the Church in modern language more intelligible to men of today,” they would have the council repeat “the dogmas of faith in their ancient language.”¹⁰ They wanted a doctrinal council drawn from the teachings from Leo XIII to Pius XII. Suspicious of scripture scholars, they defended papal power and saw themselves as defenders of orthodoxy.¹¹ It would not be an exaggeration to say that the 1910 anti-modernist oath, still in effect, remained a fair description of their views: Required of all clergy upon taking minor orders, as well as office holders, and professors at the beginning of each academic year, the oath emphasized the fixity of doctrine “transmitted to us in the same sense and meaning from the Apostles,” “the absolute and immutable truth first preached by the Apostles.” One swore submission and adherence “wholeheartedly to the condemnations and all the prescriptions” contained in Pius X’s encyclicals *Pascendi* and *Lamentabili*, “especially those which bear on the history of Dogma.”¹²

At first, things looked promising for the standpatters: The council’s general secretary was a curial cardinal as were the presidents of the ten preparatory commissions (except the Commission on the Apostolate on the Laity which, being new, lacked its own curial congregation), and many of the commissions’ secretaries were curial theologians. As the preparations for the council was the bureaucrats’ business, curial conservatives and their allies were wildly over-represented on the various commissions. These were the people whose experts would write the initial schemata. And by excluding some of the most outstanding theologians—John Courtney Murray and John L. McKenzie of the United States, Karl and Hugo Rahner from Bavaria, from France Henri de Lubac, Jean Danielou, Yves Congar, and Marie-Dominique de Chenu, recent biblical scholarship was marginalized. Besides producing the first drafts, the conservatives wrote the procedural rules and set the daily rota of speeches in the aula. They controlled the Vatican weekly, *L’Osservatore Romano*, and by barring the press from the debates in St. Peter’s, leaving reporters dependent on unhelpful summaries, they expected to manage the news. Under the circumstances, they were confident they would succeed in crafting a short, harmless council.

It could never be said of the conservatives that they didn’t understand the stakes: Having failed to prevent the council, they worked to render it innocuous. Fearful of losing curial clout to conciliarism—a bishops’ parliament enacting changes affecting the papacy and particularly themselves—the Curia—they put every obstacle in the way of renewal. While a minority in the council of only about ten to fifteen percent (about 200 to 300 in all), the Curia and its intransigent allies (largely Italians, Spaniards, and Poles), used the time to ensure as little as possible would

¹⁰ Criterion, 19 October 1962, 4.

¹¹ O’Malley, *Vatican II*, 111-113.

¹² Peter Hebblethwaite, *Pope John XXIII: Shepherd of the Modern World* (Doubleday & Company: Garden City, New York), 66, 67.

change—ideally, nothing. They wanted a short council on the lines of the First Vatican Council, one that simply reiterated accepted doctrine and papal pronouncements from Leo XIII to Pius XII. They didn't play fair: they stalled--for instance, the theological commission, which claimed the right to vet all schema drafts, met only once a week rather than every day. When the tide turned against them, they used intimidation, leveled charges of heresy, and clung to absolutes and scholasticism. They fell to mistranslating documents, even to changing the words themselves. If critics found such tactics unworthy, their justification was "this accursed council is ruining the church."¹³ For them, the Pope, the Curia, and the Roman bishops were the Church. After more than two years to prepare, only seven of some seventy schemas were ready for the first session, and of these only the liturgy schema proved worthwhile; the rest simply repeated the old theology manuals. There was neither freedom of conscience for the laity nor development of doctrine. The progressive bishops also "discovered that the Roman Curia has often kept them separated from the Roman Pontiff." Many regarded its maneuvers and violations of the rules as "a tactic of deception."¹⁴ Resentment at the conservatives' hard ball habits became a running sore during the council, alienating many, including the editor of the Criterion.¹⁵

From the preparatory commission in 1960 the conservative defenders of the *status quo*, out of exaggerated confidence, relied on the Curia's four centuries of dominance, its superior access to influential circles, its plentiful financial resources. Alarmed at the first session's results, however, for the second session they hired staff, bought a printing press, and organized as the *Coetus Internationalis Patrum* (Union of International Fathers). Yet fatal to its cause, compromise was not a CIP option, nor consensus a goal: It was anti-collegial, suspicious of episcopal conferences (they take away papal power and were themselves a threat), with the result that it was isolated. Unable to reach and organize potential allies in significant numbers, its meetings gathered few participants.¹⁶ What effectiveness the CIP would have was not in mustering the support of like-minded bishops, but in pressuring Paul VI to qualify council decisions. On his own, a pope can insist that a council discuss an issue or not discuss it--as Paul VI did with birth control and priestly celibacy; he can veto an approved schema or have its drafting committee amend it--as he did with collegiality; he can draft his own statement on matters with which he disagrees--as he did in referring to the Virgin Mary in terms the progressives had kept out.¹⁷

If the conservatives were too few and overconfident, the progressives brought real strengths which they only gradually realized they had. More wedded to collegiality, they proved more flexible, more successful at compromise and consensus. Having judged the first prepared schemas inadequate, recall that the French, German, Dutch, and Belgians circulated their own drafts before the council ever convened. Some council arrangements unintentionally

¹³ Tracy, An American Bishop at the Vatican Council, 32, 33, 153. Citing Yves Conger's journal, they found justification in their belief that "this accursed council is ruining the church." O'Malley, What Happened at Vatican II, 114.

¹⁴ Fr. Robert J. Nogosek, C.S.C., America, (October 1, 2012); Criterion, 14 December 1962, 4.

¹⁵ Bosler's self-published memoir, New Wine, 74, 79.

¹⁶ Melissa J. Wilde, Vatican II: A Sociological Analysis of Religious Change (Princeton University Press: Princeton, New Jersey), 70.

¹⁷ Wilde, Vatican II and Religious Change, f.n. 16, 144.

favored collegiality, such as seating the bishops in the aula by seniority rather than region, produced more wide-ranging cultural exchanges, as did the coffee bars--Bar Jonah and Bar Mitzvah—the sites for what George Weigel called the “crucial ‘secondary Council’ of informal conversation and personal encounter”¹⁸ The germ of what would become a collegial juggernaut was the agreement a few weeks into the first session of two Latin Americans and a few French bishops to meet regularly to “inform and help each other.”¹⁹ From this small beginning, midway through the first session a formal organization emerged. Meeting weekly at the *Domus Mariae*, a hotel a 35-minute walk from St. Peter’s, it was a “participatory democracy” with, in time, the ability to reach some 1,900 council bishops through its 22 core individuals representing the various national episcopal and regional conferences. Ideas were debated and compromise the order of the day. Once consensus was achieved, the *Domus Mariae*, speaking in the name of 127 conferences from the five continents, could rapidly communicate its decisions. In addition, reform-minded bishops, as Archbishop Schulte put it at the first session, went “off to school again” at evening presentations by theologians organized by *Domus Mariae*.²⁰

American Bishop Earnest Primeau, one of the 22 *rapporteurs*--testified to the DM’s effects. As the liaison to the American bishops’ National Catholic Welfare Conference, Primeau met weekly with the other core members, corresponded with other bishops, attended meetings where the final details of schemas were agreed upon, and kept DM members abreast of developments. The DM “widened my horizons, made me more appreciative of the ideas and problems of others, more sensitive to their needs, spiritual and material. . . . Before collegiality [was] formally approved at the council, I had already profoundly experienced it.”²¹

The council years proved to be “the most thrilling” of Bosler’s life, intellectually stimulating as nothing before or since.²² Looking back to his ordination in 1938, he described that newly minted priest as an “ultra-conservative, Biblical fundamentalist” given to “the old heartless rationalistic theology” of the scholastics, one “who idolized the pope.” That cleric was a casualty, in part, of his doctoral research in the documents of the First Vatican Council: Discovering the bickering among the bishops and the way Pius IX rammed papal infallibility through convinced him of the need to reduce papal power through episcopal collegiality. Made a *peritus* (expert) within a week of his arrival in Rome by the efforts of a friend, Bishop Primeau, Bosler was one of 22 Americans among the first 244 *periti* named by the pope.²³ As a *peritus* he had a ringside seat in the aula whenever he wanted it.

¹⁸ *First Things*, 67 (November 1996), 54-56.

¹⁹ Wilde, *Vatican II and Religious Change*, 7, 63, 64.

²⁰ *Criterion*, 16 November 1962, 4; Wilde, *Vatican II*, 41.

²¹ Wilde, *Vatican II and Religious Change* 68.

²² *Criterion*, “Only in America,” 24 May 1963, 4; *New Wine*, 66.

²³ St. Louis Archbishop Joseph E. Ritter asked him to serve as his theologian, but Schulte, hearing of it, told Bosler that he would accompany him.

Charged with answering John XXIII's call for suggestions for the council's work by Archbishop Paul C. Schulte, Bosler and canonist Msgr. Charles Koster had two years to think about the council. (Bosler viewed their effort as too safe, but one who reviewed it in the 1990s told him that the Indianapolis' effort was "among the best." Rome received some 3,000 such submissions.²⁴ Bosler's first dispatch from the council showed him to be desirous of change and anxious to open windows: he wanted a horizontal, democratic church rather than a vertical, hierarchical one; opposed to clericalism and appreciative of the laity's gifts, he wanted their competence in practical affairs put at the service of the Church; he was for individual conscience over universally applicable rules, the spirit over the letter, and an openness to change which required that doctrine develop. Specifically, there was the "American schema" on religious liberty, ecumenism, and the Church's relation to the modern world. Embarrassed by the Church's history of anti-Semitism and its history of condemnation and censorship, above all he wanted Church renewal, and for that to happen the power of the Curia had to be broken in favor of the bishops. Collegiality—the world's bishops working closely with the pope in governing the Church--was "the "great issue," "the most crucial," "the most important thing the council has to do. It will be a failure if it does not accomplish it."²⁵ For example, much of liturgical reform, being focused on a devolution of power to the bishops and away from Rome, won Bosler's praise for increasing a bishop's discretion in running his diocese. Such "decentralization" was a close relative of collegiality.

By 1962 Bosler had had fifteen years as editor of the archdiocesan newspaper and it was through his journalist spectacles that he viewed its doings, albeit a priest with a heavy stake in its outcome. Recall that his condition for taking the job was Schulte's promise of independence. Many American bishops, to say nothing of the Romans, believed that to apply ordinary political categories to this most solemn of religious gatherings was impious and they resented the press for revealing the existence of council factions. Bosler disagreed: The council was a parliament--with over 2,000 participants, a very large one. Bishops are human; those who think alike naturally form groups to promote their agenda. They are "jealous of their own opinions, are stubborn, petty, domineering," as well as "generous, magnanimous and open to conviction and compromise." Hence, reporters were justified in finding at Vatican II a like dynamic at work. But under the rules secular journalists were banned from St. Peter's, leaving them dependent on council press office handouts which tilted toward the conservative. For example, a press release on the

²⁴ New Wine, 66.

²⁵ Criterion, 5 October 1962, 4; 12 October, 4, 9; 19 October, 4, 9. Of some thirty-five council dispatches, collegiality was his chief concern, with fourteen columns, wholly or in part, devoted to it, followed by religious liberty with ten, the laity, nine, and a declaration on the Jews, five. Even when not the main subject of a column, its impact on collegiality might be Bosler's major interest:

use of the vernacular in liturgy listed four reasons against and only one in favor, exactly the reverse of the views expressed in the aula.

For the real news of the council, Bosler much preferred the secular press over the Catholic religious press. At the first session, “hampered by the Anglo-Saxon bishops and theologians who keep secrets, if labeled as such,” “our Catholic News Service” in Rome “sends little more than the council’s official communiqués,” and “never any idea of what’s behind the discussions” Being short-changed on council coverage, while the Romans were quite willing to talk, though “not for attribution,” Bosler instructed the Criterion staff to rely less on the U.S. bishops’ news service and more on the Religious News Service, which was not church-owned and served a wide spectrum of religious and secular publications.²⁶ Fortunately, the enterprising American secular press was filled with good information. His own weekly dispatches, “editor’s comments from Rome,” benefited from daily discussions with confreres and knowledgeable friends in both camps, including some in the Curia. His lengthy reports might run to 3,000 words. Besides his first-hand observations and sources across the ideological spectrum, Bosler read the French and Italian newspapers and other publications where the real news of the council could be found.²⁷

Unfortunately, the council’s participants—the bishops, the *periti*--were sworn to *Secretol*, not to reveal anything that is said or done in the aula and the commission meetings. The picture of the Church the Curia worked to portray was one of unity and unchanging doctrine. In the manner of authoritarians everywhere, any hint of disagreement had to be kept hidden, lest scandal be given. Airing differences is unedifying and confuses the faithful. The experts came in for special attention: They were restricted to answering questions the bishops asked; outside the commissions, they were not to promote their opinions in interviews, criticize the council to the press, or disclose inside information of council doings. Naturally, the *periti* felt insulted.

Almost from the start, that horse was out of the barn. There was no real way to keep secrets among the more than two thousand bishops and hundreds of others--theologians, guest observers, staff, and others with inside knowledge. That, and the heated nature of the disputes, rendered secrecy hopeless. Then, too, non-Roman bishops and theologians came to see the press as an ally in Church renewal: Francis X. Murphy, C.S.S.R., a teacher of moral theology at the Redemptorist Academy in Rome during the council’s preparations, was busy “compiling notes about the intrigues and secretive manipulations by a number of prominent prelates.” The New Yorker magazine began publishing his “Letter from Vatican City” in time for the council’s opening.²⁸ The articles created a firestorm of controversy. Under advice, Murphy used a pseudonym, (his middle name and mother’s maiden name). When asked

²⁶ Criterion, 30 November 1962, 4, 12. The two principal national and international news sources were received as packets daily at the Criterion; the Catholic News Service (CNS) from the NCWC in Washington, D.C. and the Religious News Service (RNS) from New York City. The latter was not church-owned and served a wide spectrum of religious and secular publications. The lengthy articles on the council sessions by the Benedictine, Placid Jordan, a Swiss-American representing the RNS, appeared weekly in the Criterion.

²⁷ Criterion, 30 November 1962, 4, 12.

²⁸ Francis X. Murphy, “Out of the Catacombs,” America (September 11, 1999), 15-17. The articles were later gathered in four volumes. Vatican Council II (Farrar & Giroux, 1968).

if he was “Xavier Rynne,” using casuistry, he’d reply “I am Francis Murphy.” But as a well-known journalist who’d published in The New York Times, The Los Angeles Times, and in magazines, his identity became an open secret: During the third session the Criterion published his photograph on page one with the caption, “identified in some circles as the mysterious Rynne”²⁹ Ironically, through the efforts of a fellow Redemptorist, the bishop of Monterey-Fresno, and a close friend of Cardinal Amleto Cicognani, the Vatican Secretary of State, Murphy was made a *peritus*. In another secrecy breach the French-Canadian superior-general of the Holy Cross fathers gave his *peritus*, Fr. Robert J. Nogosek, C.S.C., all the documents as they were discussed and revised.³⁰

All in all, Bosler thought the press did a “creditable job.” Outside observers were impressed with the freedom of debate and by “how much the bishops differ,” exactly what bothered the conservatives and many another bishop.³¹ By the second session useful summaries of what was said in the aula were provided, for example, the American bishops published a Council Daybook, and held regular press conferences. The combination of immense world-wide interest and innumerable secular press outlets led Bosler to say “there are no secrets.”³² While this was an exaggeration, what the effort to maintain secrecy revealed was the chasm between the curial mentality and the day-to-day realities of modern journalism.

Back in Indianapolis the Criterion carried extensive coverage of the council—the background, analysis, and lengthy excerpts of documents as they became available. It was not uncommon for the paper to run two, three, four council articles on page one, with four or five more on the inside on as many aspects and from as many points of view. The reporters and regular columnists ran the gamut from conservative to moderate to liberal, clerical and lay—among them weekly columnists Fr. John Doran, Placid Jordan, O.S.B, and layman Gary MacEoin; frequent contributing clerics were Andrew Greeley, George Higgins, Fulton Sheen, Gustave Weigel, S.J.; and laymen, such as John Cogley and Michael Novak. An attentive reader of the Criterion was well-informed on the doings in Rome.

During council sessions Schulte and Bosler stayed at the *Istituto San Tommaso di Villanova*, a comfortable pension on the *Via Romania* run by French Augustinian nuns. The Villanova became notable, even notorious, as a gathering center for progressives seeking real change in the Church; the Americans called it “the rebels’ roost.” At the fourth session Bosler wrote that to live at the Villanova was “itself an education and quite possibly the best means of knowing from day to day what goes on . . . in St. Peter’s or behind the scenes.”³³ Part of the reason was the variety of

²⁹ Criterion, 23 October 1964, 1.

³⁰ America, (October 1, 2012).

³¹ Criterion, 16 November 1962, 4.

³² Criterion, 27 September 1963, 1, 9.

³³ Criterion, 1 October 1965, 1.

minds and experience present: Some two-dozen bishops were usually in residence, along with a slightly smaller number of *periti*. For example, at the third session eleven U.S. bishops, ten Italians, four French, an Australian, and some Eastern European bishops lived there. Of the Americans, New Hampshire Bishop Earnest Primeau, thanks to his many years in Rome, was particularly influential. He knew the curial movers and shakers and became one himself, as a member of the council's preparatory committee, 1960-1962. Of greater importance was Primeau's membership on Cardinal Bea's Secretariat for Christian Unity (SCU) (which dealt with ecumenism, the declaration on the Jews, and religious liberty), and as the U.S. bishops' representative--one of its 22 core members--of the international committee, the *Domus Mariae*. The DM was the progressives' umbrella organization which acted as a clearing house for over a hundred national episcopal conferences.

Of the fifteen or so *periti* at the Villanova during the third session were nine Americans, three French, and one each English, Belgian, and Swiss. Besides Primeau (who had offered to take Bosler as his *peritus* before Schulte decided to do so), was the American labor priest and regular Criterion columnist, George Higgins, head of the American episcopal conference's social action department, who served on the joint commission responsible what became *The Church in the Modern World*; Canadian theologian and sociologist, Gregory Baum; and the well-known *enfant terrible*, Hans Kung; Bosler rated Msgr. William Onclin very highly--a Louvain University professor ("fine canonist, good theologian, excellent Latinist") and, as the principal drafter of the Pastoral Office of Bishops, "more than anyone" responsible for the new synod of bishops. From the second session on, John Courtney Murray, S.J. was in residence.³⁴ Heretofore forbidden to write or lecture on religious freedom and separation of church and state, his area of expert knowledge, he was made a *peritus* and a member of the SCU. During sessions Murray lectured bishops' national conferences, circulated briefs and memoranda, and led the drafting of what became the Declaration on Religious Liberty (*Dignitatis Humanae*). Visitors to the Villanova who became notable or notorious included Malachi Martin (Cardinal Bea's *peritus*), "Xavier Rynne," and Msgr. Paul C. Marcinkus, later involved in the 1980s Banco Ambrosiano scandal. Even the founder of *Opus Dei*, Jose Maria Escriva, dropped in one evening.³⁵ Wrote John Cogley in Commonweal, "To be anything in Rome is to be at the Villanova."³⁶

Conversation, in English, continued at noon after dinner in the common room (dubbed the "Truth Room"), where residents "meet for preprandial refreshments and arguments each noon and evening" with as many as twenty participants--bishops and *periti*, "battle it out on equal terms."³⁷ Many of the bishops went to bed early, leaving "the floor to the *periti* who often talked until after midnight." Kung remembered "The atmosphere [as] always lively and

³⁴ Brought to the council as a *peritus* by Cardinal Spellman.

³⁵ Fr. Andrew Greeley's autobiography, Confessions of a Parish Priest, (1987), 236, 239.

³⁶ Criterion, 1 October 1965, 1, 9. New Wine, 77, 78.

³⁷ Criterion, 29 October 1965, 1, 9.

friendly, uncomplicated in a way which is unusual among German professors.”³⁸ In Rome during the third session doing research for his Ph.D dissertation, Fr. Charles Frazee of Marian College, Indianapolis, found the talk “delightful.” Forty years on he recalled, “The real drama came from the discussion on how to get around the Curia men who were bent on keeping the church in their mold,” a topic driven by “the theologians from France, Germany, and Belgium.” “Strategies to push the progressive agenda were planned . . .” (Murray, who had the room next door, asked Frazee to translate the Latin first draft of the religious freedom document for the English-speaking bishops.)³⁹ The Americans provided the amenities: five or six morning Roman newspapers, an ice machine from home, and the liquor.⁴⁰

Daily interaction over months among the resident moderates and progressives produced a “Villanova effect.” The experts listened and learned from each other and minds were changed: Birth control, at first no part of the council’s agenda nor the American bishops’, but the Europeans were thinking about it and it was much discussed in informal conversations at St. Peter’s and at the pension on the *Via Romania*. Chicago Msgr. John Egan remembered a discussion in 1964 in “the Villanova common room that changed his whole attitude” on the issue. Present were theologians Murray, Baum, Charles Davis and, Egan thought, Bernard Cooke. All four, he recalled forty years later, agreed that a married couple for good reason could licitly use contraception. Conscience was determinative. Egan was persuaded by the quality of the theologians involved; “That solved it for me. I had at least a strong probable opinion.”⁴¹

On the council’s first working day, 12 October, the Curia’s gambit was to require each bishop to select sixteen members for each of the ten commissions--160 in all, aided by a list of those who had served on the preparatory commissions and had written the schema drafts.⁴² Of course the average bishop could know little, if anything, about the vast majority listed. While he could consult a booklet listing all the 2,500 council bishops, absent the possibility of consulting with others this meant little. While the American bishops were still getting their bearings,

³⁸ Kung, *My Struggle for Freedom* (2003), 403, 404. In 1960 his *The Council, Reform, and Reunion* appeared. Translated into eight languages, it was the most important pre-council publication. Kung mentions Schulte in his *Memoirs*. [[check this]] O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 35.

³⁹ Fr. Charles Frazee email to author, 15 August 2005. French because a modern document required a modern language and it is the language of diplomacy.

⁴⁰ *Criterion*, 1 October 1965, 1. A Chicago monsignor had the job of supplying the refreshments.

⁴¹ Leslie W. Tentler, *Catholics and Contraception: An American History* (Cornell University Press: Ithaca, New York, 2004) 248.

⁴² Italy ended up with the most commission members, 51 (32 by appointment), the U.S. with 21 was second (only three were appointed). France had 20, Spain, 18, Germany 12, Canada 11. *Criterion*, 2 November 1962, 1, 9. Presiding over the Theological Commission was Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani, who held that it had the right of veto over everyone else because the congregation to which it corresponded, the Supreme Congregation of the Holy Office, its formal title, was the most powerful.

the Germans, French, Belgians, and the Dutch, unhappy with the schemas produced, refused to accept the ballot as it stood. A French cardinal moved and a German seconded a motion to delay the vote so that the fathers could meet as national conferences to propose additional nominees. In the straw vote that followed, some 1,700 progressive votes overwhelmed the opposition by more than three to one. In the end, sixty-four new names won election, a sign that the bishops were determined to run their own business. Put another way, 65 percent of the Curia and 40 percent of the Preparatory Commission's list were Italian; after the vote on the new slate only 17.6 percent of the commission members were Italian.⁴³ Bosler drew the lesson that the Curia was not the only group ready "to promote its own plan and ideas" and that the council would not "rubber-stamp" the conservative agenda.⁴⁴ Still, many members of the Curia and its allies were also elected, making up about half of the 160.⁴⁵

The Central Preparatory Committee had identified an untidy list of some seventy different subjects for council consideration, but only seven schemata were ready for the first session (revelation, deposit of faith, moral order, the family, social communication, church unity, and the liturgy). Of those, only *Sacrasanctum Concilium*, the schema on liturgical reform was of any substance, and the only commission not dominated by the curialists. The drafters' intention was to execute changes making "the mass more modern and participatory" by eliminating the requirement that it be said in Latin. The opponents of change, fearing that diversity of prayer would lead to diversity of belief, argued that the Latin liturgy was sanctioned by the usage of centuries. The progressives, thinking pastorally, believed it important that the laity understand what is said. As Bosler saw it, the larger issue was one side wants everything regulated by the Holy See to preserve unity, the other wants more authority held by the bishops through their episcopal conferences. The question is, will there be more independence for the bishops and "decentralization of the Church." It's "the big issue," "a discussion that will dominate the council."⁴⁶

Struck by the world-wide nature and variety of the Church on display at the council's ceremonial opening, Bosler concluded that the Church's insistence on Latin was a barrier to ecumenism for the separated brethren." The real pressure for using the vernacular came from the missionary territories: The Africans were adamant in wanting their own liturgies in their own languages, as were the bishops of Asia and India who pleaded for relief "from the burdens of a Latin mentality and language" for one that "our people can understand and pronounce." A Japanese bishop, noting that his people couldn't pronounce the "Our Father" in Latin, let alone understand it, hoped and prayed

⁴³ Religious News Service, October 31, 1962, cited in Arthur Gilbert, The Vatican Council and the Jews (World Publishing Company: Cleveland, 1968), 73.

⁴⁴ Criterion, 26 October, 4; O'Malley, Vatican II, 97.

⁴⁵ Melissa J. Wilde, Vatican II and Religious Change, 146, f.n. 28.

⁴⁶ Criterion, 9 November 1962, 4. Bosler was right, "collegiality" proved to be central.

the council recognized this.⁴⁷ It did: By a vote of 2,162 in favor to 46 against, the national bishops' conferences were authorized, on a trial basis, to make use of the vernacular to better adapt "to the culture and conditions in their own nations or territories." While not yet formally adopted, parts of the liturgy schema were put immediately into practice, indicating that "windows" would be opened.⁴⁸

The progressives were divided, some doubtful that anything would change, some expecting great things.⁴⁹ The American bishops, with few exceptions, at first showed little interest or understanding of the issues. Many sat in their hotels during the first session, complaining of the waste of time and left Rome "almost as uninformed as they were upon arrival." "[T]he Holy Spirit came and parted at the Council and some of these people never even dreamed He had been there." An American bishop observed that "the Germans and French came with briefcases full of plans and prepared statements, while all we brought with us was our return tickets."⁵⁰ The Americans were so quiet the first two sessions that some called them the "Church of Silence."⁵¹ Like his colleagues, Archbishop Schulte expected little of importance from the council. True, it might be necessary to clarify the application of "age old principles to changing problems." And it could not be denied that there had been tremendous changes in the world since the First Vatican Council, 1870, so that while "the immutable truths and laws of God are inviolable, the scope of things that may come under the scrutiny . . . is otherwise almost limitless." But he saw no "arguments" regarding truth that "needed to be settled by this Council" as the Church had "infallibly settled [them] in the Councils of the past."⁵² By the eve of the 1963 session, however, Schulte admitted to an awareness of "the tremendous field for change and advancement that lay before us." What he had seen and heard last autumn led him to believe "this Council will not only be different, but in many ways greater than any" of its twenty ecumenical predecessors.⁵³ At the council's end, Schulte will declare Vatican II "in many respects the greatest Council in the history of the Church."⁵⁴

The day of the liturgy vote Cardinal Ottaviani's Theological Commission produced *De Fontibus Revelationes* (on the sources of revelation), which emphasized both tradition and scripture as sources, with the "magisterium" as the final authority (Pope and Curia), and the inspiration of the authors as from God. It condemned any questioning of

⁴⁷ Criterion, 16 November 1962, 4.

⁴⁸ Criterion, 2 November 1962, 1, 9.

⁴⁹ "Editor comments from Rome," Criterion, 19 October 1962, 4.

⁵⁰ Criterion, 26 October 1962, 1.

⁵¹ Xavier Rynne [Fr. Francis X. Murphy], *Vatican II* (Straus and Giroux: New York, 1968), Vol. II, 106.

⁵² Schulte letter, 22 February 1962. Indianapolis Catholic Archives.

⁵³ Schulte letter, 23 September 1963, Indianapolis Catholic Archives. St. Louis archbishop, Joseph E. Ritter, Schulte's predecessor, was probably the most frequent intervener among the Americans. Schulte never spoke and does not appear in the index of Msgr. Vincent A Yzermans, *American Participation in the Second Vatican Council* (Sheed and Ward: New York, 1967), nor in Xavier Rynne's four volume work, *Vatican Council II*, 1968.

⁵⁴ Schulte papers, Indianapolis Archdiocesan Archives, Box 31, 8 December 1965. Schulte was assiduous in attending council sessions and the American bishops' meetings, but like fully half of the American bishops, never spoke in the aula, nor drew attention to himself in any other way.

the historical accuracy of the scripture accounts, asserted that the Old Testament found completion in the New, and ruled out a sympathetic hearing from either Protestants or Jews. In presenting it, Ottaviani said that since the pope had already approved the text, the bishops should agree to it. This was not well-received: eight cardinals, among them former Indianapolis Archbishop Joseph E. Ritter of St. Louis, immediately asked that it be rejected. Prepared without any participation by progressives, stuffed with condemnations, it was neither pastoral nor in the spirit of *aggiornamento*. The ensuing fight was the first battle in an extended war involving the Holy Office, the Sacred Congregation of Studies and Seminaries, and Lateran University on one side, versus the Pontifical Biblical Institute and the Germans, French, Belgians, and Dutch on the other.⁵⁵ The latter favored ecumenism with Protestantism, deemphasizing the role of tradition, and opening the way for Biblical archeology and other sciences. It was at base a question of authority—who would rule, the commissions dominated by the Curia or the overwhelming progressive majority of the council? Bosler expected progressive theologians would subject the schema to a “severe artillery shelling.”⁵⁶

Bosler identified the heart of the progressives’ disagreement with the proffered text as the “contradiction between” the council’s purpose of “bringing-up-to-date” and the retrograde schema. The conservatives saw no problem with it, being “just what we studied in our seminary dogma books.” Exactly so. The progressive majority blamed the Doctrinal Commission for presenting revelation “in the language style, and thought of the remote past,” “for being negative,” “for denouncing error instead of presenting truth in attractive form,” for failing to take account “of important advances in theology and Scriptural interpretation since the last Vatican Council.” “Above all for lacking an ecumenical tone and for ignoring “entirely the desires and feelings of the Protestants and Orthodox.”⁵⁷

In light of such a catalog, after five days of debate the council’s general secretary, Cardinal Pericle Felici, tried to save the schema by holding a vote on “should the discussion be interrupted?” There was confusion over the balloting in that “*placet*” (it pleases) was a vote against the schema and “*non placit*” a vote to continue its consideration. (Bosler, already suspicious of the Romans, believed the confusion intentional and that at least half of the votes to continue discussion were really for rejection.) The vote to reject was a healthy 1,368 to 822, but 105 short of the two-thirds needed to do so. Sending it back to the theological commission would solve nothing. In the council’s second great turning point (rejecting the initial ballot for commission members being the first), Pope John withdrew the schema and called for a new commission co-chaired by cardinals Alfredo Ottaviani and Augustin Bea. Composed equally of members of the Doctrinal Commission and Bea’s Secretariat for Christian Unity (the group

⁵⁵ As an example of the mindset of the conservatives, Bosler cited the congregation’s issuance, May 1963, of a decree forbidding Catholic colleges and universities from granting honorary degrees without Rome’s approval [St Louis University had recently given one to Hans Kung]. Then, as the second session opened, Rome’s chancery office banned three authors—the writings of the deceased Teilhard de Chardin, “Xavier Rynne,” “Letter from Rome,” in the New Yorker magazine, and journalist Robert Kaiser, for Pope, Council, and World. Criterion, 11 October 1963, 4, 9.

⁵⁶ Criterion, 30 November 1962, 4, 12.

⁵⁷ Criterion, 7 December 1962, 4.

charged with communicating with Protestant observers at the council), it was to re-study the matter and avoid condemnations.⁵⁸ The rejection of the revelation schema established the council's power to reject others, a necessity if the documents were to represent the thinking of the majority. The victory produced a "collective effervescence" among the progressives, a sense of community. Heartened, they realized they weren't alone.⁵⁹ Bosler heralded 21 November 1962 "an historic day in the annals of the Church"--the day Pope John intervened "to help the progressive forces break a stranglehold applied by a small bloc of reactionaries."⁶⁰

What became of the revelation schema is quickly told: Renamed *Dei Verbum*, it was ready for the 1963 session but not presented. Voted on in 1964, more revisions were made and many amendments (*modi*) proposed. But *Dei Verbum* is largely absent from Bosler's dispatches from Rome, except for a brief mention of a rumor as the council wound down that those still trying "to curb the Scripture scholars may get some changes in the text repudiating what modern scholars say about the relation of Scripture and Tradition." "Blood pressures rise; bull sessions get noisier."⁶¹ Last minute corrections were made, some at the pope's request. In the end, the final text received near unanimous approval. With the Constitution on the Church, *Dei Verbum*, though short, is often judged the most fundamental documents of Vatican II. It is said to be less philosophical, more biblical and historical, with more stress on modern methods of interpreting scriptures; on balance, it was a victory for the progressives.⁶²

Although the first session produced only the insertion of St. Joseph's name in the Canon, a brief preface, and a first chapter of the liturgy schema, Bosler judged the session's results far from meager. Liturgical reform not only opened a path toward a wider use of the vernacular, but invited the world's bishops power to experiment. It was a step toward the "decentralization of the Church," signifying the bishops' new awareness of themselves as the "successors to the Apostolic College" and their right to "rule and govern the Church together with the Pope as the Apostles did with Peter." "Just being together in Rome" with fellow bishops "from every nation and race, praying together, working together, chatting together in the coffee bars, . . . has given the bishops a new insight into their office and function within the Church. They are conscious now of their membership in the College of Bishops that is the successor to the Apostolic College." The bishops went back to school, tutored by theologians in conferences on the issues. All in all, wrote Bosler, a "revolution was set in motion" at the first session and neither the bishops nor the Church would ever "be the same again." That the council was a hit with world opinion—Protestants, the Orthodox, even the communists gave it a good press, was a bonus.⁶³

⁵⁸ Criterion, 30 November 1962, 1, 12; 7 December 1962, 4.

⁵⁹ Wilde, *Vatican II and Religious Change*, 22-24.

⁶⁰ Criterion, 7 December 1962, 4.

⁶¹ Criterion, 8 October 1965, 1, 9.

⁶² Abbott, *Vatican II Documents*, 107.

⁶³ Criterion, 14 December 1962, 4; Hebblethwaite, *Pope John XXIII*, 314.

With Pope John's death four months before the second session the question of questions became "What would happen to the council?" "Did Montini share Roncalli's vision?" Bosler had used the two days before the session to canvass his Roman friends on the issue that concerned him most: Would the Curia continue to "dominate the bishops" as the pope's right arm or will the bishops "in union with the pope" direct the Curia? The pope as "monarchical ruler" or as "chief bishop of the college of bishops?"⁶⁴ He discovered that for some weeks the reformers wondered if Paul VI would prove "a Hamlet," indecisive, agonizing over decisions (as many would later conclude).⁶⁵ Bosler was also troubled by the "strange and devious moves" by curial conservatives which "have alarmed" many council fathers. It was "an open secret" that the Curia used delay in the first session in the hope that nothing would be ready for a vote. "The same tactics" were being used by the theological commission with the schema on the Church. Even more "sensational and harmful" was the decree of the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries and Universities forbidding the granting of honorary degrees without Rome's consent (St Louis University had given one in May to Hans Kung). Then, as the session began, at the instigation of the Holy Office, Rome's chancery office directed Catholic booksellers not to display "Xavier Rynne's" articles in the New Yorker magazine, works by New York Times reporter, Robert Kaiser, nor the writings of the deceased Teilhard de Chardin. In partial amends, Paul VI appointed Cardinal Bea to the Holy Office to balance Ottaviani. For Bosler all this was further proof that "Bishops' role in the Church seen great issue of 2d council session." Put another way a week later, "Reformation of the curia is the most crucial issue facing the council."⁶⁶

Paul VI's opening address brought Bosler some comfort. While emphasizing his position as Peter's successor, the pope seemed to allay any doubts about being a reformer: On a central question, "does doctrine develop," he said the Church is "ever susceptible of new and deeper investigation." Man advances "from empirical observation to scientific truth It is thus that thought evolves." Even more to Bosler's liking, the pope called on the council to work toward defining the nature of the Church and to look for "a more effective and responsible collaboration" between bishops and the papacy. On renewal and restoring the unity of Christendom, the pope "humbly begged God's forgiveness and asked pardon" of the separated brethren for any contribution the Church may have contributed to the division. "Let the world know" that despite the "evils of the day" the Church "looks at the world with profound understanding, with sincere admiration and with the genuine intention not of conquering it but of serving it; not of despising it but of appreciating it; not of condemning it but of strengthening and saving it."⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Criterion, 4 October 1963, 4.

⁶⁵ Criterion, 4 October, 1963, 4. Years later Paul VI sympathetic biographer found Montini had a reputation for "inconstancy." Never wanting to be pope, feeling his inadequacy, he saw the purpose of his pontificate was to show by his suffering that it is the Lord who guides and saves the Church. **Peter Hebblethwaite, Pope Paul VI: The First Modern Pope (Paulist Press: Mahwah, New Jersey, 1993), 328, 329.

⁶⁶ Criterion, 4 October 1963, 4; 11 October 1963, 4.

⁶⁷ Criterion, 4 October 1963, 1, 9.

Seizing on the pope's words, Bosler exulted, "There can be no doubters now." Paul's "magnificent speech" had opened the windows "even wider than John left them." On the "great issue," the pope wants the council to reform the Curia so it will be clear "that the bishops together with the Pope govern the church." Paul "does not consider the papacy something apart from, nor above; he is within the college of bishops of which he is the chief." What the pope wants is "a mechanism" for a "more effective and responsible collaboration with our beloved and venerable brothers in the episcopate." He'd exhorted the Curia to cooperate with the council fathers, and while the "Curia itself would formulate and promulgate its own reform," he made it clear that reforms "were needed." The session "is off to an exciting start."⁶⁸

The progressives wanted to restore what they believed was the collegial practice of the early Church in which Peter sought his fellow bishops' advice. Peter was himself a bishop and there was "abundant proof in the Scriptures that the early Church was founded upon the Apostles," with Peter "as their head." "Peter with," "not apart" from the Apostles. The large majority of the council "want to regain for themselves many of the powers . . . that a local bishop or a group of bishops of the same nation . . . can best decide how to use." History, having shown that ecumenical councils did indeed decide things, so might this one, the twenty-first in the series. Conservatives saw this as "close to heresy" and a plot to weaken the papacy; for them, "Peter alone" is the rock, the founder, the pope a monarch "from whom all authority in the Church descends" and itself as his right arm. Therefore, bishops stood to the supreme pontiff as parish priests to bishops, having no authority beyond their diocese, just as a pastor's was limited to his parish. Accordingly, even an ecumenical council decides nothing except what is submitted to it by the pope, nor did its decisions have value unless sanctioned by him.⁶⁹

For Bosler, the real question was not "Was the Church founded on both," but "How do bishops share in the pope's authority?" The great accomplishment of the first session was to waken the world's bishops "to their true role in the Church." Now he looked to the development of "an effective mechanism for the bishops to cooperate with the Pope in ruling the universal Church," ideally, a "bishops' commission" to periodically advise the pope and help in directing the Curia. Bosler pointed out that Paul VI, in his opening address, expressed a desire for a "more effective and responsible collaboration" with the bishops. "This is the most important thing the Church has to do. {The council] will be a failure if it doesn't accomplish it."⁷⁰

The first great clash between the two sides occurred in mid-October at the second session, when the moderators chairing the session were forced to cancel a straw vote on what would later emerge as the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church—*Lumen Gentium*. This first draft from the theological commission came right out of the

⁶⁸ Criterion, 4 October 1963, 1, 9; 11 October 1963, 4.

⁶⁹ Criterion, 11 October 1963, 4, 9.

⁷⁰ Criterion, 18 October 1963, 4, 9.

manuals written between the two World Wars with their emphasis on hierarchy, juridicism, and papal supremacy. The reformers saw the chapter on the hierarchy as out of keeping with the warm, pastoral tone of the rest of the text. In reflecting “centuries of anti-Protestant polemic,” it was the last thing the progressive majority wanted. There were rumors of conspiracies against the council’s freedom and growing resentment of the Curia as the chief suspect.⁷¹

To break the log jam, a besieged Paul VI established an *ad hoc* committee which decided to let the council vote by secret ballot on five questions: Should the schema assert that episcopal consecration is the supreme grade of the sacrament of Orders; every consecrated bishop is in communion with other bishops and the pope is a member of body of bishops; the “College of Bishops in its evangelizing, sanctifying, and governing task is successor to the original College of the Apostles and, always in communion” with the pope, “enjoys full and supreme power over the universal church”; the power of the College of Bishops, united with the pope, belongs to it by divine ordination, not through papal delegation; finally, is it opportune to reinstate the permanent diaconate as a grade of sacred ministry, “according to the needs in different parts of the church?” Each query was affirmed by over 2,100 votes with the negatives from first to the fifth question ranging from a low of 34 to 525.⁷² This unexpected landslide was met by an explosion of applause in the aula. Seen as the third turning point of the council, it revealed the numerical dominance of the reformers. The theological commission was instructed to prepare a new schema reflecting the bishops’ wishes. For Bosler, 30 October 1963 was the day “Pope Paul’s council really began.”⁷³

At stake was the centuries-long process of centralizing power in Rome. Bosler traced the roots of curial power to the Council of Trent’s reaction to the Protestant Reformation. Beginning as an essential bureaucracy to centralize and establish standards, erect seminaries, and carry the Church through the crisis of the rise of nationalism, the Enlightenment, and the democratic revolutions, it led to the bishops’ habit of looking to the Vatican bureaucracy for permission to act. Eventually, the episcopate appeared as mere “deputies of the Pope in charge of a small part of the Church called a diocese.” The First Vatican Council defined papal infallibility, but cut short by the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War it failed to take up the question of the bishops’ authority. In Bosler’s telling, this brought new problems: ecumenically, the present arrangement was too monolithic for Protestants and an obstacle to reestablishing unity with the Eastern Orthodox whose bishops had greater status than in the West. “If the Church is not a monarchy, but a college or body in which the bishops with and under the Pope have authority over the whole Church, then this must be brought out clearly.” The progressives applied pressure and “had prevailed.” The suddenness with which their views became the council’s majority, Bosler took as a sign of the working of the Holy

⁷¹ Criterion, 25 October 1963, 4.

⁷² O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 184.

⁷³ Criterion, 8 November, 1963, 4.

Spirit. As the successors of the Apostles, the Senate would stand above the Curia. Collegiality, he was sure, will show it is “possible to have unity under one central authority without uniformity.”⁷⁴

Yet he had to admit that Curia members remained in the controlling positions of authority on the commissions. The opposition argued that the five votes were merely advisory suggestions and not binding. Cardinals Ottaviani and Browne, president and vice-president of the theological commission, respectively, “convinced” that “the majority were in theological error,” “made it clear they would not abide by the vote on the five propositions.” Their position was strengthened when the majority showed uncertainty on how collegiality was to be exercised. And when the progressives appealed to the pope for his views on how the bishops might cooperate with him, they were surprised when Pope Paul turned them down.⁷⁵

There were other obstacles: One that Bosler headlined a month into the second session was that “Lack of organization is crippling the American bishops at council.” As representatives of the greatest world power the American failure to lead was especially galling, given that the Church’s influence in the United States was substantial. The difference was that in the aula the national churches of Europe, South America, and the mission territories spoke with one voice, while the U.S. bishops “speak as individuals and never as a group.”⁷⁶ Their organization, the National Catholic Welfare Conference, never had real authority over individual bishops; it couldn’t bind them and lacked real representation at the Roman Curia.

“Perhaps the greatest obstacle” was the conviction of many U.S. bishops that forming a political bloc “in anything so sacred as an ecumenical council” was somehow impious and unseemly. [A cynic might object that for a bishop to be scandalized by the notion that politics is at work at a religious conclave shows a striking lack of self-knowledge, given that a bishop’s career commonly depended on the assiduity with which he played ecclesial politics.] Bosler felt that the Americans--mostly canon lawyers used to taking directives from the Curia, pastoral in approach, too few of them theologians--were simply unprepared to lead.⁷⁷ In an article in the Criterion, the then liberal Michael Novak attributed the American bishops’ docility to the Curia to their naiveté as to how the world really works. Novak dubbed it “Angelism,” the belief “that noble or religious deeds are done in a non-human fashion,” not through men as they are--temperamental, with their own habits of thought, preferences, prejudices, and the rest. Believing politics a dirty business and the council God’s business, they expect the Holy Spirit to produce results. In reality, “if men leave

⁷⁴ *Criterion*, 15 November 1963, 1.

⁷⁵ Bosler signed editorial. *Criterion*, 6 December 1963, 4.

⁷⁶ *Criterion*, 1 November 1963, 4.

⁷⁷ *Criterion*, 25 October 1963, 4.

something undone, it usually stays undone”; anyone who knows Rome “knows that the Church is not run by angels.”⁷⁸

A week later Bosler reported that the U.S. bishops were finally working together: On successive days in late October three spoke in the name of all their American colleagues: Baltimore’s Sheehan, of the need for a strong statement on “religious freedom”; New Hampshire’s Primeau, for the council to heed the wishes of the laity for a greater role in the Church; and Louisiana’s Tracy, for a proclamation on equal rights for “men of all races.”⁷⁹ In another boost to progressives’ morale, at the late October memorial Mass for John XXIII, Cardinal Suenens, in eloquent French, sought to revive the spirit of *aggiornamento*: Quoting Pope John’s admonition, “We have no reason to be afraid; fear comes only from lack of faith,” his eulogy received great applause, proving to Bosler that the “council is still inspired by the spirit of good Pope John.”⁸⁰

The second session half gone, Bosler, thinking the council was “in grave crisis.” Beyond the a “morass of long-winded oratory,” there were conflicts over Communism—continued Church enmity or more openness? The theological commission “has absolutely done nothing,” and the schemas do not “represent the thinking” of the progressive majority. The strategy of the Holy Office, which dominates the commissions, “seems to be to delay and leave everything as it was before.”⁸¹ The accumulated tensions exploded in a public donnybrook between cardinals Joseph Frings of Cologne and Alfredo Ottaviani of the Holy Office. The question was whether the powers exercised by the Curia should be returned to bishops of dioceses. According to the Criterion’s account, in a speech written in part by Joseph Ratzinger (at the time, a council progressive), Frings wanted bishops to function as bishops, not holding a curial office as some sort of honor, but put to work; he even held that many curial jobs could be done by laymen. And he attacked the Holy Office’s schema on the bishops for its centralizing, anti-collegial tendency and “vigorously objected” to “curial procedures” that denied due process as “out of harmony with modern times,” “a source of harm to the faithful,” and “of scandal” to non-Catholics. No Roman congregation should have the authority the Curia claimed “to accuse, judge, and condemn” a person “who has no opportunity to defend himself.” In defiance of council rules, his remarks were met with great applause in the aula.⁸²

An angry Ottaviani denied that anyone was condemned without thorough investigation by competent consulters and experienced specialists or without the approval of the pope. As the pontiff was the prefect of the Holy Office, such criticisms were an attack on the Holy Father himself! Since bishops were the sheep along with everyone

⁷⁸ Criterion, 8 November 1963, 2.

⁷⁹ Criterion, 1 November 1963, 4.

⁸⁰ Criterion, 8 November 1963, 4.

⁸¹ Criterion, 1 November 1963, 4.

⁸² Criterion, 15 November 1963, 1; Floyd Anderson, ed., Council Daybook, Vatican II, session 2 (National Catholic Welfare Conference: Washington, D.C.), 1965, 247-249, a highly informative source on the council.

else, collegiality treaded on the pope's power as shepherd. Cardinal Ritter, chiming in on Frings' side, attacked the Curia as having no autonomous existence and called for the restoration of bishops' powers, which "are basically of divine origin."⁸³ Affronted, Ottaviani chastised the moderators for exceeding their authority and affirmed the competence of his commission to deal with collegiality as it wished. Angered in turn by Ottaviani's public scolding of the moderators, many bishops petitioned the pope to dismiss him. The dispute had the virtue of clarifying the main issue: should top down, centralization, hierarchical governance--business more or less as usual—continue or should there be change toward a horizontal model of broad consultation, shared responsibility, and democracy?⁸⁴ As ever, the "ultimate council question" for Bosler was, do the bishops or the curia "have precedence?"⁸⁵

The key to collegiality lay in Paul VI's hands. Hundreds of bishops petitioned him asking what sort of senate or college he wanted, but for weeks nothing happened; rumor had it that he had capitulated to the small minority of *immobiliares*--the curial cardinals and the Italian and Spanish bishops. Cardinal James Francis McIntyre, breaking with his American colleagues, told the pope that the council was moving too fast, leaving the laity confused and authority endangered. In the end, under tremendous pressure to close windows in favor of re-emphasizing tradition, Paul VI said it was not the time for change. Instead, he memorialized Trent's 400th anniversary and, by visiting St. John Lateran (the popes' church as bishop of Rome), emphasized his role as Peter's successor at the cost of ecumenism. With the pope now grown close to the conservative minority, little wonder that Bosler confessed that conversation among progressives at the end of the day had become "wakes where the council is buried." "It's hard to decide just where the council is going."⁸⁶

Bosler's verdict on the session came a week later: "All the hopes raised by Pope Paul's" opening address "have been shattered." Although the theological doctrines of the Church have "the possibility of magnificent development," the effort to develop "the doctrine of the episcopate, its function and its relationship with Peter" never went anywhere. Why didn't the pope act on his expressed desire for "a more effective and responsible collaboration with our beloved and venerable brothers in the episcopate?" Bosler offered two possibilities: the conservative minority sowed doubts in the pope's mind regarding the orthodoxy of collegiality (and religious liberty), and that a progressive victory would encourage Italy's political left and weaken the Christian Democratic Party, Italy's bulwark against Communism.⁸⁷ Having fallen under conservative influence, at the last minute before the vote on ecumenism Paul VI ordered a series of changes: one was offensive to Protestants who were said not to "find" God in the scriptures but only "seek" him there; postponement of a vote on religious freedom led over a thousand bishops to protest; and, contrary to the bishops' "explicit will," the pope promulgated the title "Mother of the Church" to Mary.

⁸³ Criterion, 15 November 1963, 1.

⁸⁴ O'Malley, What Happened at Vatican II, 193; National Catholic Reporter, 50th Anniversary Issue, 11 October 2012, O'Malley, "Collegiality becomes a lightning rod," 8.

⁸⁵ Criterion, 15 November 1963, 4.

⁸⁶ Criterion, 29 November 1963, 4, 9.

⁸⁷ Criterion, 6 December 1963, 4.

Still, Bosler insisted, the council was not a failure. If it never reconvened the bishops had been enriched by a new awareness of their role. They had taken the measure of their colleagues and of the Curia and Protestants and other observers could attest “that there is freedom of speech and diversity of opinion within the Roman Catholic Church.” [The Curia would likely equate the first with indocility and the second as indifferentism and heresy.] Above all, by voting overwhelmingly for liturgical reform, 2,178 to 19, on 22 November (the day of President John F. Kennedy’s assassination), Bosler believed the process of decentralizing the Church had begun. The bishops’ national conferences would decide on how much vernacular to allow and what adaptations for national and local customs permitted. Perhaps that was all that was needed for decentralization.⁸⁸

In the run up to the third session Bosler’s morale had fallen so low that he “dreaded” leaving his parish to return to Rome with its “interminable speechmaking,” formal receptions, and “theological bull sessions.” On reading the newly prepared schemas, however, he found them pastoral--nothing like the “pompous and sometimes scolding tones” of previous drafts, and his spirits revived. Other signs were good: Paul VI again stated that the role of the bishops must be clarified (that the Holy Father was scheduled to concelebrate Mass was another step in partnering bishops with the pope); and as Cardinal Leo Suenens had asked, the pope announced that women would join the council, at least for some deliberations, another step, however small, in recognition of the other half of humankind. Foreseeing substantial action and the possibility that the session might be the last, Bosler became eager to return.⁸⁹

In opening the session, however, Paul VI did not use the term “collegiality,” though it was thought that he favored it. Even less promising was on the eve of the third session twenty-five cardinals (sixteen from the Curia), warned the pope of the dangers of collegiality and of his need to oppose it, pressure the pope did not find agreeable. Religious liberty faced repeated condemnation for separating church and state, although the bishops behind the Iron Curtain favored it as protection against their communist regimes. More controversial still was non-Christian religions, at this point exclusively focused on the Jews. On revelation the sticking point was: are there truths required for salvation not in scripture, but found in tradition? As for the legitimacy of the historical-critical approach to Bible texts, it would be sent back for revision. Added to these, contrary to the announcement that strict secrecy had been dispensed with, Cardinal Felici began the session lecturing the bishops like a short-tempered school master talking to errant boys. He drew attention to norms handed down previously forbidding *periti* “to criticize the council,” or organize “currents of opinion or ideas,” or “hold interviews,” “or defend their personal ideas about the council.” *Periti* who ignored the rules were threatened with dismissal.⁹⁰ Cardinal Cicognani of the theological commission seconded Felici

⁸⁸ Criterion, 6 December 1963, 4.

⁸⁹ Criterion, 18 September 1964, 1.

⁹⁰ Criterion, 25 September 1964, 4.

with a letter telling the *periti* to be quiet and reminding the bishops that they, too, were bound to secrecy. Documents were not to be publicly circulated nor the laity to know what was said in the council hall. In the same vein, the Congregation of Seminarians and Universities issued instructions that *periti* were not to be invited to speak to seminarians and forbade the latter from attending “expert lectures” off campus. Bosler thought this strange since it was the experts who wrote the bishops’ speeches and the schema redrafts.⁹¹ Most revealing of the attitude of the conservatives came on the tenth day of the third session, when, in a papal audience, the question was raised, “When should the council end?” A member of the council’s board of presidents and determined opponent of collegiality answered, “*Se possibili subito*”—“if possible, immediately.”⁹²

Bosler still found reasons for hope on collegiality: In voting on chapter three on the bishops in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*), the council “overwhelmingly proclaimed their conviction” (only 328 *non placets* of 2,200 cast), that they “share in the supreme authority of the Pope.” Bosler highlighted the schema’s declaration that episcopal consecration is “a fullness of the Sacrament of Holy Orders” by which Christ makes a man a successor to the Apostles, conferring the ability to sanctify, teach, and “rule the Church” as a member of the college of bishops, together with the Pope and under him governing “the universal Church.” Episcopal powers come directly from Christ through the Sacrament, not by papal delegation; thus, bishops are not merely “a sort of district manager assigned to represent the Pope in a given territory.” As Peter and the Apostles formed a college, their successors are united in the same way. Still, as head of the college, the Pope “determines for the good of the universal Church the use of episcopal power, when, where, how much.”⁹³

Despite that bottom line assertion of papal dominance, to Bosler at least “it seems certain” that the way was open to “reform the organization of the Church” and that Paul VI was determined to do so by setting up a bishops’ senate representing the world’s bishops. Elected by their national conferences, senators would come to Rome periodically to advise the pope and with him, “perhaps,” “form the legislative body of the Church.” Placed under the senate, the curia would administer the senate’s laws and directives. Letting his mind run free, Bosler entertained rumors that the senate might elect the pope, thus eliminating the College of Cardinals! With the cardinals gone, the office of patriarch might be revived in the Latin Church, the title bestowed on the elected presidents of the national conferences. This would be more representative and would put an end the Italian domination of the papacy. He likened it to encouraging frequent communion sixty years before—as “a restoration . . . of a truth obscured because other truths had become overstressed.” As for the Curia members, they were understandably “disturbed” by collegiality and the changes it would bring; they have vested interests and believe it “may be heretical.” Trained in the juridicism of Canon Law, they ask “how can there be two supreme powers in the Church.” How can you have a king with supreme power if the power is shared? For Bosler the answer suggested itself: the pope isn’t an absolute

⁹¹ Criterion, 25 September 1964, 4.

⁹² Guiseppa Siri, council board of presidents and member of the conservative bishops’ lobby, *Coetus Internationalis Patrum*.

⁹³ Criterion, “Why collegiality vote . . . historic,” 2 October 1964, 1, 9.

monarch. "We'll never understand [what the Church is] by comparing it with [the] power of a king in a monarchy or the power of representatives in a democracy." The Church "is a mysterious union fashioned after the Holy Trinity."⁹⁴

On 4 November, amid the council debates on collegiality versus papal power, Paul VI chose a general audience to emphasize his authority as "visible head of the Church." He reminded everyone that there exists "in the Church a supreme power which is a personal prerogative, having authority over the whole community gathered in the name of Christ," a power "that is not left to the optional election of the faithful . . . and which does not derive from the Church, but from Christ and God." Namely, the pope.⁹⁵ That message—the pope was still in charge—was driven home by the adoption of an amended chapter III of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*. The problem was conservative fears that the use of the words "college of bishops" opened the door to "conciliarism," a five centuries' old idea that councils were superior to the pope. As Bosler explained, the conservatives, understanding that collegiality "would change the whole governing structure" of the Church, moved to ensure that that would not happen. Their strategy "has been to bog down the theological commission" under hundreds of requests for textual revisions (*modi*), which the commissions must accept, reject, or present to the council for a vote. Critical of the "extreme conservatives" for opposing everything that smacks of "what they call the new theology," they say "The world is the enemy; it must be denounced and the faithful warned against it."⁹⁶

On 16 November, 322 bishops voted against collegiality, and nearly 50 amendments proposed. The next day, at Paul VI insistence, a *nota praevia explicativa* (preliminary explanatory note) was added to the chapter reaffirming papal primacy; bishops could only act with the assent of the pope, who "can always exercise his power at will . . ." while bishops only act as a college from time to time and "only with the consent of its head." Reassured, the opposition's *non placets* fell to 46, and on the final vote to only five. The central point of the schema adopted five days later was that while the bishops constitute a college in the same sense as the original apostles, together with the pope "and never without" the pope, "the episcopal order is the subject of supreme and full power over the universal Church," a power exercised "only with the consent of the Roman Pontiff." As "Vicar of Christ," the pope "has full, supreme, and universal power over the Church. And he can always exercise this power freely."⁹⁷

The last weeks of the third session were harried and eventful. Final approval of the schema on the collegial nature of the hierarchy was obtained as well as one on relations between Catholics and non-Catholics and with Eastern Rite Orthodox Christians. The council voted "in principle" that the Jews were not all guilty of "deicide," but Pope Paul refused to promulgate it.⁹⁸ The pope also postponed a vote on religious freedom (leading over a thousand council bishops to protest).

⁹⁴ Criterion, 2 October 1964, 1, 9.

⁹⁵ Criterion, 13 November 1964, 7.

⁹⁶ Criterion, 23 October 1964, 1, 7.

⁹⁷ Abbott, *Documents of Vatican II*, *Lumen Gentium*, ch. III, 43.

⁹⁸ Criterion, 27 November 1964, 12.

Paul VI refrained from discussing any issue before the fourth session except to state that he would soon establish an “episcopal synod.” He was careful to say that the papacy needed the Curia, a body “to which we owe so much gratitude for its effective help.”⁹⁹ On the session’s second day, by *moti propria* (on his own initiative), the pope issued *Apostolos Sollicitado*, creating a council of bishops drawn from all over the world, with a majority of its members elected by their national conferences. It was not what the council majority wanted--“a senate or group of bishops,” meeting periodically with the pope to help him direct the Church, and “presumably give direction to the Curia.” The pope had ceded nothing, yet Bosler pronounced *Apostolos Sollicitado* a major reform, “the most significant and historic action of the council.” It has “accomplished what even the most optimistic felt would not take place until sometime” in the future.¹⁰⁰

His enthusiasm is hard to explain. The proposed synod was not a continuing group nor was a *moti propria* the stuff of collegiality. There were no guarantees, “no telling how far-reaching” [or limited] the synods would be. But Bosler saw its saving grace as a “council in miniature,” giving the world’s bishops a continuing voice in Church governance. It made “frequent, streamlined councils” possible, replacing the unwieldy 2,000 plus gatherings of Vatican II. The synods would strengthen the national episcopal conferences and lead to new ones where they did not exist, marking another step in ecclesial decentralization by introducing “a form of representative government” into Church governance. The pope could choose up to fifteen percent of the synod, among them perhaps special experts—non-bishops—even laymen and women. As no nation could have more than four synod members, Italian representation would be reduced, a real benefit in Bosler’s eyes. Thanks to *Apostolos Sollicitado*, no matter what else happens, the council “must be considered a success.” The bishops’ synod, a “capstone of Vatican II,” “changed the atmosphere” of a “gloomy group of bishops and heads of religious orders.”¹⁰¹

He was ignoring the document’s plain language: Synods were “directly and immediately subject to Our power,” able to make decisions only “when such power is conferred upon it by the Roman Pontiff” to whom belongs the power “to ratify the decisions of the Synod.” Among the fifteen percent of the synod body the pope chose would be *ex officio* curial cardinals in charge of the congregations. Even calling it a “synod” suggested impermanence as it was neither a continuing body nor a senate of advisors counseling the pope and overseeing the Curia. The pope calls it, defines the agenda, appoints the leader (or presides himself), and confirms those elected. Synods have no power to make decisions, only to inform and advise. Without the pope, the bishops cannot act.¹⁰²

So it proved under Paul VI and John Paul II, whose synods were far more akin to a cap gun than a capstone. Hans Kung called them a “collegial fig-leaf for naked papal absolutism.” They “were often an

⁹⁹ Criterion, 17 September 1965, 1, 9.

¹⁰⁰ Criterion, 24 September 1965, 1, 9.

¹⁰¹ Criterion, 24 September 1965, 1, 9.

¹⁰² Criterion 24 September 1965, 12.

embarrassment,” with bishops quoting the pope to himself to prove their loyalty to the Vatican.¹⁰³ The first three synods--1967, 1969, 1971--issued their own reports and published them, but the 1974 report (evangelization) and subsequent reports were submitted to the pope who decided what to reveal. The process was stage managed by the curial cardinals and the bishops told what topics to avoid, “removing from their agenda . . . the very things their participants wanted to discuss—contraception, women priests, married priests, improved dialogue, lay participation.”¹⁰⁴ At the 1980 Synod on the Family the selected lay invitees praised natural family planning; this, at a time when lay Catholics had long since embraced birth control. When San Francisco Archbishop John R. Quinn spoke frankly on the matter, he was slapped down, and denied the red hat traditionally due the archbishop of San Francisco.

Pope Francis has called for an openness previously unknown. For his first synod, “Marriage and the Family,” in 2014, he decried the idea that the cardinals might hesitate to say something that he might not agree with: “This is not good. This is not *synodality*, because it is necessary to say all that, in the Lord, one feels the need to say, . . . without polite deference” or “hesitation.” “And to listen with humility and welcome with an open heart, what your brothers say.”¹⁰⁵ Taken at his word, participants reported that his two synods on the family were both “contentious” and “enlightening.” In another break with the past, the final reports of both were written by the bishops themselves. Pope Francis drew on them in his own lengthy exhortation on family life, *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love), April 2016. There the pope wrote that countries and regions “can seek solutions better suited to its culture and sensitive to its traditions and local needs.” Equally important, Francis resurrected the decentralized collegiality of the national bishops’ conferences pursued by the progressives at the Second Vatican Council. In the words of one analyst, the pope “effectively devolved power.” The marriage annulment process was streamlined, and in places where it was acceptable, priests could use the “internal forum”—the “good conscience solution”—for the divorced and remarried. Sounding like Pope John, Pope Francis said what is wanted is “a church that greets families with empathy and comfort rather than with unbending rules and rigid codes of conduct.”¹⁰⁶

Problems remain: At the October 2015 synod on the family, when a lay auditor raised the issue of *Humanae Vitae* she was ignored. In his address at its conclusion, the pope was clear that the Church is a Church of the poor in spirit and sinners seeking forgiveness, not simply of the righteous and the holy. . . . True defenders of doctrine are not those who uphold its letter, but its spirit.” Fr. Thomas Reese, S.J., believes that to reform the synod the laity ought to be included, but which ones? And since most bishops are pastoral and ill-equipped theologically, the biggest need is

¹⁰⁴ Wills, *Why I Am a Catholic*, 242.

¹⁰⁵ Wills, *Why I Am a Catholic*, 242; Richard R. Gaillardetz, *An Unfinished Council: Vatican II and the Renewal of Catholicism* (Liturgical Press: Collegeville, Minnesota, 124, 125.

¹⁰⁶ *New York Times*, 9 April 2016, A1, 8.

to invite the theologians “to the party,” as happened at Vatican II. Reese believes that the membership also needs to be changed by eliminating curial officials and forming committees—all things Bosler would have supported.¹⁰⁷

Bosler would also approve of Pope Francis, who, having noted the tense relations of bishops conferences with the Congregation for Divine Worship on translations of text, issued *Magnum Principium* which shifted the balance toward the bishops. Effective 1 October 2017, the Vatican will no longer “review” the translations, but “recognize” them, leaving the bishops not only to “prepare” them, but to “approve” them. This was to recognize the “great principle” of Vatican II, “that the liturgy should be understood by the people at prayer, . . .”¹⁰⁸ It was Francis’ entry into the liturgical wars, his response to both John Paul II’s and Benedict’s “reform of the reform” on the subject. His efforts have met opposition from the same quarter that was active at the Second Vatican Council.

Any ecumenical religious council taking stock of the world situation after the two great wars—some long neglected, some novel--would have to give due consideration to the laity. Two weeks before the council opened Eucharist Magazine, with the cooperation of twenty U.S. Catholic weekly newspapers (the Criterion was one), published a survey, “The Laity Reveal Their Hopes.” More than 2,000 laywomen and laymen responded to a 24 item questionnaire: Ninety-one percent thought the need for change in the Church was either very urgent (47 percent) or moderately urgent (44 percent). Asked to list three things most in need of reform in life and practice, the liturgy (in English, greater participation), holiness (desire for a deeper spiritual life), trust in the laity’s talents (consult, share in administration) came one, two, three, followed by better sermons, less authoritarian clergy, more friendly relations with other religions, and birth control. The laity wanted “arbitrary barriers to the reunion of neighboring Christians” removed and greater stress put on the Bible (88 percent). There was a great need for raising some married men to the diaconate, modernizing religious garb, and relaxing celibacy for Christian minister-converts. Most didn’t want any new dogmas, a bare majority wanted the Church to clarify its stand on nuclear warfare. Although women were 54 percent of the respondents, the questionnaire constantly used “laymen,” a dismissive practice still taken for granted.¹⁰⁹

Bosler had long wanted to see more responsibility ceded to the laity. He was a founding member of the Indianapolis chapter of the Catholic Interracial Council, 1953, a lay-run organization integrated racially and by gender. Before the council opened, in January 1962 he spoke on “The Challenge to the Apostolic Layman,” on NBC radio’s

¹⁰⁷ Thomas Reese, National Catholic Reporter, November 20--December 5, 2015, 20, 21; Gary Wills, “The future of the Church with Pope Francis,” Why I am a Catholic, 232, 233.??**

¹⁰⁸ Criterion, 13 September 2107, 1.

¹⁰⁹ Criterion, 28 September 1962, 2.

“The Catholic Hour.” It attracted so much national attention that it was rebroadcast. The “challenge,” he argued, was how to make Church “relevant.” The great obstacle to democratizing the Church was that it carried the imprint of past ages—the Roman Empire, feudalism, monarchy--so that “the modern democratic form of government and living” has “failed to make an impression” on it. He saw no reason why “the Church cannot take to itself modern democracy” just as it took to previous regimes. There are ways “to grant representation to the people” who, thanks to modern education, are prepared for more responsibility. Government cannot be organized from the top down, but must spring from the grass roots. . . .” Therefore, proper representation of “the layman” must also exist in the diocese and in the parish. “It’s time for democracy in the Church.” “No group is better fitted to do this than the U.S. bishops.”¹¹⁰

When the bishops “severely criticized” what was proffered on the lay apostolate at the third session as “too clerical,” Bosler took as evidence that the bishops had “come a long way.” Fortunately, an alternative existed in the lay sections in the schema that became the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*: it emphasized the laity as equal members of the Church “assigned by the Lord himself by baptism and confirmation” to share “in the Church’s salvific mission” No longer is the Church presented as a juridical institution in which pope, bishop, priest, and religious carry on the mission of Christ with an assist or two from the laity, but first of all as the “People of God, in each member of whom the Holy Spirit dwells.” It is “precisely” because the laity are in the world, they can reach others in a way clergy and religious cannot. Whatever “skill, competence and eminence” laymen enjoy in their field, they “are entitled, and have the duty, to offer their opinions concerning “the welfare of the Church.” Let the pastors listen to them in temporal matters.¹¹¹ If they meet resistance, let the faithful “take matters into their own hands according to the dictates of their own conscience” aided by “all the human sciences.” As for pressing “problems”--birth control, ethics, just war theory in a nuclear age, poverty amidst plenty--the dynamic between clerical and lay had to be turned topsy-turvy: It is the laity’s “solutions” that will be studied by the theologians and, in due course, submitted to the magisterium. *Lumen Gentium*, he thought, will inspire new texts: “We can expect great changes in the life of the Church.”¹¹²

A week later Bosler found the same emphasis on the potential for lay leadership in Schema 13, “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World,” *Gaudium et Spes*; the schema “that will arouse the interest of the world. . . . Here the council at last speaks to men about that which most interests them”—poverty, marriage, nuclear warfare. Naturally, there was strong opposition from “the same extreme conservatives who have opposed everything inspired by what they call the new theology.” Where the progressives saw the need for the Church to dialogue with

¹¹⁰ Criterion, 25 October 1963, 4.

¹¹¹ Criterion, “Dramatic lay role seen in aftermath of the council,” 16 October 1964, 1, 9.

¹¹² Criterion, 16 October 1964, 1, 9.

the world or suffer irrelevance, the opposition sees the world as the enemy which must be denounced and the faithful warned against “that godless movement [Communism] that destroyed Christendom and the Church’s dominance of society.” As in *Lumen Gentium*, Schema 13 “admits that the Church” doesn’t have all the answers, nor should the faithful think “their pastors are either competent or called” to give them answers to “even the serious questions” “and tell them what has to be done here and now.” When complicated and novel questions arise which do not lend themselves to ready answers, let the faithful “take matters into their own hands according to the dictates of their own conscience,” guided by Christian prudence and “all the human sciences” bearing on the problem.¹¹³ As a practical matter, democracy in the Church would be served through diocesan pastoral councils of clergy, religious, and “laymen.” Presided over by the bishop, the councils would investigate and study pastoral problems and act on what is discovered, thus extending and broadening collegiality to all the faithful. It recommends that the Curia confer and seek advice from qualified “laymen,” “outstanding for their virtue, knowledge, and experience,” before making decisions so that they, too, “will have an appropriate share in Church affairs.”¹¹⁴

That laymen could discover truths that the Church doesn’t know the Ruffinis of the council found “absurd.” Bosler saw their mistake as forgetting that the Church isn’t just the pope and the hierarchy, but that the Holy Spirit resides in the “layman” as well. He lives in the world while the hierarchy, Bosler implied, did not. “Eventually,” it is the layman who will provide solutions, and these “will be studied by the theologians and submitted to the magisterium—the teaching Church.” As one bishop put it, far from having to wait to be told what’s what, in secular life it is the layman as doctor, mayor, police “who has authority” over the bishops. “In other words, there is no reason for a Christian civilization to be ecclesiastical, much less clerical.” To paraphrase Bosler, the Europe that was once Christendom was created by the Church, but that world is gone. The Church needs “to find out what she must be in the civilizations already formed apart from her.” That was what the council is attempting to do in Schema 13. To be relevant the Church “must recognize the values” in the various civilizations that exist. “She must show an interest in the sufferings” of the world,” humbly offering her services and her knowledge of man derived from revelation.”¹¹⁵

In the three-week debate over “The Church in the Modern World” that ensued, the progressives fired a heavy barrage against the Church for its “faults and failures.” The bishop of Metz blamed it for not understanding that over the last four centuries the world had become global not sectional, universal not western, dynamic not traditional, historical not cyclical. The world had progressed without the Church. When one of the four council moderators said, “The Church must break her ties with past cultures in order to be open to all contemporary cultures” and humbly

¹¹³ Criterion, 23 October 1964, 7.

¹¹⁴ Decree on the Bishops’ Pastoral Office in the Church, *Christus Dominus*.

¹¹⁵ Criterion, 30 October 1964, 1, 9.

admit its faults, Bosler intoned: “This is a most significant observation.” Another bishop, holder of a doctorate in nuclear physics, criticized the Church for speaking an archaic language unsuited to modern science. What the Church understood about “matter,” “cause,” “substance,” “finality,” “life”—are now so modified by science that the Church is not in real conversation with the modern world. Having moved on from Aristotle and Aquinas, philosophers and scientists call for the “freedom and autonomy of scientific investigation” and especially freedom in education. Another blamed the Church’s history of abuse of authority for its having missed the signs of the times—which Bosler identified for Criterion readers as the Enlightenment, the democratic revolutions, modern science—and its misuse of authority in opposing new developments with “old-fashioned rationalistic ways.” The council fathers were saying in public what younger scholars and theologians were saying “timidly and usually privately. Now the windows of the Church have been opened, as Pope John requested.”¹¹⁶ Bosler was elated by the bishops’ candor for having favorably impressed the council’s guest-observers.

Sibling to *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes* in its embrace of modernity is *Dignitatis Humanae*, the “Declaration on Religious Freedom.” Known as the “American schema,” thanks to its major mover, John Courtney Murray, S.J., and its greatest supporters, the U.S. bishops, its impact would be felt in ecumenism, human rights, foreign policy, and international affairs. In its respect for, and acceptance of, the legitimacy of other religious traditions, it broke with the ignoble tradition of the “thesis.”

Religious liberty as a question erupted in Europe in the early sixteenth century with the fragmentation of Christianity and the appearance of modern nationalism. A partial *modus vivendi* came with the Treaty of Augsburg, 1555, via the formula *cuius regio, eius religio* (“whose kingdom, his the religion”), that is, the religion of the ruler determines the religion of the realm. Other sects, at best, might enjoy toleration, but not privilege. Pius IX’s “Syllabus of Errors,” 1864, explicitly condemned the proposition that “Every man is free to embrace and profess that religion which, guided by the light of reason, he shall believe true.”¹¹⁷ In the United States, from its first Catholic bishop, John Carroll, 1789, to the Americanist bishops of the late 19th and early 20th century, the Church lauded the Constitution’s “no establishment clause” and the principle of separation of church and state. Pope Leo XIII, in *Logiqua Oceani*, 1895, reproved them for such neutrality as being “very erroneous to draw the conclusion that in America is to be sought the type of the most desirable status of the Church, or that it would be universally lawful or expedient for State and Church to be, as in America, dissevered and divorced.”

A decade before the council, however, the American Jesuit John Courtney Murray argued otherwise, which led to a theological dispute over religious liberty between Murray and his detractors. The Holy Office took note and

¹¹⁶ *Criterion*, 13 November 1964, 1, 9. “Schema 13 has opened windows of the Church.”

¹¹⁷ Dom Alberic Stacpole, O.S.B., ed., *Vatican II Revisited, by those who were there* (Winston Press: Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1986), 291, 292.

successfully pressured Murray's Jesuit superiors to silence him. In March 1953, Cardinal Ottaviani, prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Evangelization, without mentioning Murray, thought it necessary to restate the tradition: Since only the Catholic Church has the truth, only she has a right to religious freedom. Where Catholics are the majority, the state is obliged to acknowledge God in Catholic worship. When a minority, Catholics have a right to religious freedom through natural law. On the assumption that other faiths are held sincerely, they have a right to tolerance and understanding. Then, in 1960, Pope John XXIII called for an ecumenical council and John F. Kennedy asserted his freedom from episcopal domination in his campaign for the American presidency. It meant that religious freedom, at the least, would have to be considered at the council. Naturally, the conservatives joined Ottaviani in insisting on "the thesis," fearful that were tolerance to go too far it would lead to religious indifferentism, state neutrality, or even antagonism to religion. A year or two later an official at the Holy Office reiterated Ottaviani's 1953 statement that if the Catholic faith became the majority in the United States, the Church would work for union of church and state--just what American Protestants had always feared.¹¹⁸

As with bishops sharing power with the pope, new discoveries on revelation, unleashing the laity, a declaration on the Jews--religious liberty as an individual's right would be a tough sell. Those favoring it would have to bring out of hiding those occasions when the Church supported something like it for non-Catholics. At the second session, in an article carried in the Criterion, Cardinal Joseph E. Ritter made a beginning: He recalled that Pope Innocent XI (1676-1689), beatified in 1956, openly opposed Louis XIV for forcing the Protestant Huguenots to convert. Told that 400,000 had done so, the pope replied that converts were not made by armed Apostles nor had Christ used such methods, and he honored those French bishops who had protested such brutal suppression. Pius XII had distanced the Church from extreme claims of religious dominance in *Mystici Corpus*, 1943, making the same point as Innocent XI: although man may be compelled in religion, compulsion does not make "true Christians . . . for faith must be an entirely free [act] of the intellect and will." Consequently, religious error must be tolerated and theologians must take into consideration what is good in the religious beliefs of other communities, their "worship and observance." In 1953, the year of Ottaviani's restatement, Pius XII told a national assembly of Italian jurists that while toleration of error and sin is immoral, God has not given to human authority "absolute and universal command in matters of faith and morality." Thus the Church is led to tolerance "out of regard for those in good conscience [who] are of a different opinion." And less than two months before his death, Pope John XXIII declared in *Pacem in Terris* that "Every human being has the right to honor God according to the dictates of an upright conscience and therefore the right to worship God privately and publicly." Ritter did not scant the difficulties: He found no easily cited principle of religious freedom extant, "rather certain unresolved dialectical tensions between human free will and Divine predestination, between freedom of conscience and the individual's obligation "to assent to revealed truth," between society's duty to safeguard individual rights and its obligation to honor God according to revealed truths.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Stacpole, Vatican II Revisited, 246-286, 293.

¹¹⁹ Criterion 25 October 1963, 2.

But if we move from Europe to America, beginning with Bishop John Carroll, from the 1790s through the 1960s we find the American hierarchy comfortable with the U.S. Constitution's religious neutrality. At the council itself, the 200 plus U.S. bishops united in support of religious liberty as on no other issue.¹²⁰ Still, many progressive bishops had a hard time embracing the notion that the signs of the times required jettisoning the dictum that "error has no rights." Besides being long-held tradition, on a practical level the Church in Latin America suffered from the keen competition of evangelical Protestants. With such behavior how ecumenism, let alone religious freedom? And so, as with other preparatory drafts, the one on church-state relations, *De Ecclesia*, argued that the state is obligated to support the Catholic Church and prohibit all others. Insofar as it mentioned religious freedom, it was to condemn the views of the progressive theologians of the day.

As the second session opened Bosler despaired of religious liberty's prospects. Even getting a hearing proved difficult: It was not on the council agenda until it appeared under the auspices of Cardinal Bea's new Secretariat for Christian Unity as Chapter V of the ecumenism schema, which itself arrived in the hall with less two weeks left in the session. Submitted to the Theological Commission for doctrinal vetting, religious liberty "somehow"--Bosler's word, got lost. The curial members of the commission were said to be against any "consideration of religious liberty." But the American bishops, "determined" and "unanimous" for a strong statement, petitioned the pope, the secretary of state, and the president of the Theological Commission; "They "applied pressure everywhere. And they prevailed" when Paul VI forced the commission to vote on whether to print and present the statement to the council; it passed 18 to 5, and "religious liberty" made it to the council's agenda.¹²¹

By the session was running out of time, and there were reasons to hesitate: some felt chapters IV (on the Jews) and V didn't fit with ecumenism. There were fears that religious liberty would promote indifferentism and it clearly meant development of doctrine. Some thought Ottaviani, Siri, Ruffini, and Company persuaded the pope that neither religious liberty nor collegiality were orthodox. Others worried that a progressive victory on those issues would throw Italy politically to the left, hurting the Vatican's political ally, the Christian Democrats. Some attributed to the pope the feeling that the council's 2,000 plus membership was too "unwieldy to produce practical results" and would fall prey to "mob psychology." Bosler was bothered by a "hastily arranged program" honoring the 400th anniversary of the Council of Trent, seeing it as a kind of unwanted "symbolic" return to the sixteenth century. In the end, the pope allowed only three chapters of the declaration on ecumenism to be voted on, denied a vote on the declaration on the Jews, and delayed a vote on religious freedom until it was too late for discussion. Progressives had to be contented with Cardinal Bea's promise that religious liberty would be discussed at the third session.¹²² As the text underwent a "remarkable improvement" during the 1964 session, Bosler would come to see the delay as a blessing.¹²³

¹²⁰ Stacpole, *Vatican II Revisited*, 294.

¹²¹ Criterion, 29 November 1963, 4, 9; 6 December 1963, 4.

¹²² Criterion, 6 December 1963, 4.

¹²³ Wilde, *Vatican II and Religious Change*, 94, 95, f.n., 97; Criterion, 29 November 1963, 4, 9.

Bosler had noticed that between council sessions--when the commissions presided over the work of the sub commissions and called the tune on redrafts--the opponents of renewal seem to be at least half the council. But once the bishops returned to Rome the progressives' numbers manifest themselves and "the spirit of Pope John grips them and they speak out for stronger statements, and before you know it, the opposition has all but disappeared."¹²⁴ This held true for religious freedom. Now detached from the ecumenism schema, in the debate "On Religious Liberty," 23-28 September 1964, the Americans "marshalled their largest number of speakers" in favor. Though the pros and cons were equal, Bosler judged the speeches in support much the stronger, for while those opposed spoke in their own capacity, those in favor were given in the name of large groups—Boston's Cushing for "almost all" U.S. bishops; England's Heenan for most of the British Commonwealth, as well as Scotland, France, Belgium, and most of Ireland; Africa for many Africans, and so on. Although the Spaniards and the Italians were divided, he thought most of the rest of the world would be favorable. It gave Bosler confidence that a strong religious liberty statement would be adopted. Crucial support came from Auxiliary Bishop Carlo Colombo of Milan (the pope's personal theologian). Colombo founded religious liberty on: man's natural right to search for truth, especially in religion, which required freedom to search and to express one's thoughts "by dialogue and exchange of ideas with his fellow man"; on the obligation to follow one's conscience; and on "faith which requires that one freely believe." The "greater the freedom the more genuine the faith." Since truth cannot be "communicated with political force," public authority must allow "the greatest possible liberty in religious matters not in conflict with the natural law." It helped that Colombo's closeness to Paul VI was taken as a signal that the pope generally approved.¹²⁵

Ten days after the great debate, however, the opposition struck in the person of council secretary Pericle Felici. Anxious to derail it and the declaration on the Jews and non-Christian religions, in separate letters to Bea, Felici stated that both documents were to be removed from the exclusive control of Bea's Secretariat (SCU). The pope wanted religious liberty given to a new, weighted joint commission made up of three members chosen by the theological commission, three from the SCU, and four others named by Felici. Bosler was disturbed on a number of grounds: It was contrary to settled practice by which redrafts were left with the commission that presented it; it was done without consulting or informing the council moderators; and with three of Felici's nominees (the exception was Colombo) known "for their intransigent opposition" to religious liberty, it would give the joint commission a ready-made conservative majority of six to four. Seen as an arbitrary action limiting the freedom of the council, it caused an uproar. The progressive majority felt insulted. And they acted.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Criterion, 9 October 1964, 1, 9.

¹²⁵ Criterion, 9 October 1964, 1, 9.

¹²⁶ Criterion, 23 October 1964, 1, 7; John W. O'Malley, What Happened at Vatican II (Harvard University Press, Boston, Massachusetts, 2008), 224.

In Bosler's telling, the French and Americans at the Villanova received word of Felici's designs on a Friday evening and immediately "organized resistance." Progressive bishops, *periti*, and a group of cardinals led by the German Frings and the Americans Meyer and Ritter, moved to thwart the scheme. By Sunday, an angry Bea had rallied sixteen fellow cardinals to sign an appeal to the pope to safeguard "the rights of the council and prevent interference liable to stall its progress." Were the public to learn of it, they warned, world opinion "would not be kind to the Church." Specifically, the statement on the Jews should not be reduced and religious liberty should be left "in the hands of those who understand what religious liberty means." Paul VI's answer was to order Cicognani to suggest to Bea that the mixed commission be limited to advisory opinions, not to reformulate—rewrite--the religious liberty schema and to assure the protesting bishops that the statement on the Jews would remain intact. Within days Felici backed down: religious liberty would stay with the SCU and, while the declaration on the Jews would reflect the strong statement of 1963, it might be moved to the Church schema. (If so, Bosler thought, that would turn it into a theological matter which might help with the Arabs). The council had "survived a crisis."¹²⁷

Having been approved by all thirty of the bishops of the Secretariat on Christian Unity, a religious liberty text was ready for a vote by the theological commission, the normal procedure to test for orthodoxy; the vote was 12 *placet*, 6 *non placet*, 9 *juxta modum* (yes with reservations), and one abstention. Since the *modi* presented only minor problems of wording, the SCU handled them and the text given to the printers the next day.¹²⁸ Matters seemed well in hand when, on Monday of the session's last week, Paul VI roused liberal anger by intervening on three schemas and issuing a proclamation: He insisted on nineteen changes to *Unitatis Redintegratio*, the ecumenical decree already approved by the council--for example, Protestants don't "find God" in the Scriptures, "but only seek Him"; issued an explanatory note providing his own interpretation of collegiality in *Lumen Gentium* (undermining the council's interpretation already voted on); postponed the vote to accept the religious liberty text as the base text; and proclaimed Mary "Mother of the Church," an echo of Vatican I that went against the council's will and seen as another blow to collegiality--even the conservatives were opposed to this as not tradition.

Two days before the session's end, in response to petitions from some 200 prelates who argued that the many amendments to the religious liberty schema made it a new document requiring more time for study, Cardinal Tisserant, speaking for the Council of Presidents, canceled the vote. Within hours more than a thousand bishops urged the pope to intervene. When Bishop de Smedt went ahead and read the religious liberty schema in the aula, he met constant interruptions of applause and received an unprecedented thunderous ovation at the end. Unmoved, Pope Paul refused to intervene in the council's procedures, but did promise that religious liberty would be the first item at the next, last session.¹²⁹ "Black Week" left a bad taste and the pope under suspicion. Carried out on the papal

¹²⁷ Criterion, 23 October 1964, 1, 7.

¹²⁸ Criterion, 20 November 1964, 1,9; Gilbert, *Vatican II and the Jews*, 159, 160, 161.

¹²⁹ Criterion, 23 October 1964, 1, 7; John Connally, *From Enemy to Brother: The Revolution in Catholic Teaching on the Jews, 1933-1965* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2012), 258.

throne at the session's end, the pope received only perfunctory applause; Once again, however, as with other council controversies, the delay over *Dignitatis Humanae* turned out to be providential.

What the pope would do at the final session about religious liberty would be crucial. A possible harbinger came at a weekly audience, June 1965, when Paul VI emphasized that Christ's words, "Come to me all," was an invitation, not a command or threat, for it is man "who must decide for himself." The pope summarized "this paramount doctrine regarding faith" as "let no one be hindered, let no one be forced."¹³⁰ True to his promise, on the session's first business day the bishops turned to *Dignitatis Humanae*. Among those in support over the three days were Spellman: "very pleasing, timely," "outstanding based on the dignity of the human person"; Urbani of Venice, speaking for 32 Italian bishops, found the schema "substantially satisfactory," "opportune," and "true." It will promote peace and concord; and Boston's Cushing, who emphasized freedom of religion from all coercion. Ruffini held to "error has no rights" and in criticizing the notion that the state is "exempted from any religious duty," averred "It is still obligated to worship God and to protect and aid religion." In light of the 1929 concordat with Italy by which Catholicism is the state religion and the only one, Ruffini was "dismayed" that the declaration will mean "the complete separation" of church and state. Spain's Cardinal Arriba affirmed that only the Catholic Church has the right to preach the Gospel, and therefore wanted no declaration on religious liberty. The next day, Ritter said the schema left "nothing to be desired" except a "prompt approbation and promulgation." "Charity, justice and fidelity forbid our delay."¹³¹

On important, contentious issues, Bosler's practice was to provide lengthy explanations of the issues involved; for *Dignitatis Humanae* he told his readers that John Courtney Murray, S.J., its lead author, had worked for years to convince conservatives that religious freedom and the separation of the Church from the power of the State is a boon to religion, as the Americanists had held, not a hindrance. Bosler deemed Europe's experience with religious freedom "unfortunate" in being introduced by the free-thinkers and agnostics of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution which followed. Under such auspices people thought it meant freedom from organized religion, from religious influence in education, from civil life, and from "superstition and pie in the sky." It was freedom to think whatever one pleased. Similarly, justifying such freedom can be "one religion is as good or as worthless as another," or no one can claim "to know the truth about anything," or "faith must be free from all coercion," or "the dignity of man demands it." And would not declaring "the state has no competency in religious matters" end the financial support the Church and its clergy receives under its concordats with Italy, Spain, and Columbia? And if such liberty is based on the "dignity of man" will not both people and clergy argue "for more freedom" in the Church? In light of such

¹³⁰ *Criterion*, 2 July 1965, 1.

¹³¹ Floyd Anderson, ed., *Vatican II Council Digest, 1965* (National Catholic Welfare Conference: Washington, D. C.), 9-11.

complications, there is “strong opposition from a powerful minority at the council” fearful of embracing what the Church had so roundly condemned in the last century.¹³²

He worried, rightly, that *Dignitatis Humanae* “will be changed so much that the Spaniards will demand” it be discussed anew, leaving no time to vote on it.¹³³ Another danger was that the conservatives “kept frightening the pope with the prospect of a thousand votes” against it, embarrassing him just before his speech to the United Nations. They succeeded in persuading the majority of the council’s governing officials to postpone a preliminary vote, but “at the last moment,” the pope, importuned by Bea, insisted that the vote be held. (Absent a vote, the declaration could have been taken from Murray and De Smedt and “radically” rewritten by a conservative group where it would die.) Bosler was overjoyed: It “marked the first time that Paul VI has stood firm against the powerful leaders of the Curia.” On the question of accepting the schema as the basis for a final version to be voted on later, the council voted 1,997 *placets* to 224 *non placets*, a great first week progressive victory. As one of a handful of issues discussed incessantly at dinner and into the late hours in the Villanova common room, when it passed “champagne flowed at the Villanova.” The residents, including the ten resident Italian bishops who voted *placet* that day, “celebrated with so much joy.”¹³⁴ The final vote, 7 December, was an even more robust 2,308 to 70.

Dignitatis Humanae meant discarding the old thesis/hypothesis according to the formula “intolerance whenever possible, tolerance whenever necessary.” Instead, the council declared that religious liberty requires that “if special civil recognition is given to one religious community, . . .” the right of all citizens “to religious freedom must be recognized and respected as well.” “All men,” being “endowed with with reason and free will,” are obligated “to seek the truth, especially religious truth.” To do that, “in religious matters every form of coercion by men should be excluded.” A person “must not be forced to act contrary to his conscience.” Religious freedom is to be protected and furthered by society, state, and church. Worth noting is that Fr. Murray saw *Dignitatis Humanae*’s development of doctrine and its wider application as its real significance, not religious freedom in itself.¹³⁵

Vatican II opened only two decades after the horrors of the Jewish Holocaust began. Now, more than a half-century later people might assume that the council’s effort to dispense with the long-held teaching of Jewish deicide was due to a widespread, slow-building, fifteen-year moral recoil and the guilt that Christians carried for having done so little to stand against it. At the end of World War II, however, such remorse described only a tiny minority in the West. Instead, the Europeans persuaded themselves that they, too, were victims. Under Nazi domination, they could have done little to help the Jews and therefore deserved little blame. Quite the contrary, rather than contrition, as late

¹³² Criterion, 1 October 1965, 1, 9.

¹³³ Criterion, 8 October 1965, 1, 9.

¹³⁴ Criterion, 1 October 1965, 1, 9.

¹³⁵ Stacpole, *Vatican II Revisited*, 292.

as 1959, in one two-month period more than 2,000 anti-Semitic outrages—defacements of synagogues, cemeteries, and sundry attacks against Jews—erupted in nearly forty countries, some 800 in West Germany and almost 700 in the United States. As for Jewish material loss—houses, art works, bank accounts, professions, businesses—there was little sympathy for any sort of restitution, even less for punishing those chiefly responsible. And after all, just because the Jews were targeted by the Nazis didn't mean that you could "suddenly rewrite the Bible" to supplant a "teaching going back to the second century" that Jews must "suffer until they turned to Christ."¹³⁶ For this to change, centuries-old Christian theological anti-Semitism would have to undergo an exegetical revolution, but how? The way forward was to return to the sources (*nouvelle theologie, ressourcement*), using the past as a lens to understand the present. It meant a reformulation of new teachings on texts written just after Christ's death, "without which the Church would have no language to talk about the Jews in the aftermath of Auschwitz."¹³⁷

The answer was found mainly in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, chapters 9 to 11. Paul begins by declaring that his love for his Jewish kinsmen is so great that he is willing, for their sake, to suffer anathema. God, not being tied to any nation by birth or merit, "but find[ing] all involved in sin," by his free grace could raise up children of faith to Abraham and Israel "from among the Gentiles, and prefer them before the carnal Jews." Having mercy on whom he will, he delivers some, "but his justice not others." Paul wills that the Jews be saved, but not knowing the justice of God and seeking to establish their own, [they] have not submitted themselves, in word and heart" to God's justice. Only believe in Christ and in his resurrection and "thou shall be saved." As a Jew and a Christian, Paul was proof that God has not cast off his people. Then and now, "there is a remnant saved according to the election of grace." "Israel is not cast off forever without remedy, but only in part." "But by [Israel's] offense salvation is come to the Gentiles." God does not repent of his gifts and his calling, "for the promises of God are unchangeable." Those "who abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in And so all Israel should be saved, as it is written: There shall come out of Sion, he that shall deliver and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. And this to them my covenant; when I shall take away their sins." As concerning the gospel, indeed, "the Israelites are enemies for the Gentiles sake: but as touching the election, they are most dear for the sake of the fathers."

This new way of looking at the scriptures was key, but more was needed--proponents who had emerged from the catastrophe of World War II with their reputations intact. These would be the small number of European religious activists with solid anti-Nazi credentials who appeared in the 1930s--Protestants, Jews, and Catholic converts, most of the latter from Judaism, some from Protestantism. Not a few became priests: "Without converts to Catholicism, the Catholic Church would never have 'thought its way' out of the challenges of racist anti-Judaism." It was this "legacy of the small groups of Catholic rescuers" that supplied whatever "fragment of credibility that Christianity retained, . . ."¹³⁸ Clergy or lay, men and women, they evaded the Nazis, resisted, and hid Jews. After the

¹³⁶ Gilbert, *Vatican II and Jews*, 34, 35.

¹³⁷ John Connally, *From Enemy to Brother*, 242.

¹³⁸ Michael Phayer, *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust, 1930-1965* (Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 2000), 225.

war they published newspapers and journals refuting Christian anti-Semitism and met in seminars, workshops, and at international conferences with the goal of transforming Christian understanding of the role of the Jewish people as described in the scriptures.¹³⁹ “Once Christians began talking to Jews about theology,” the hateful quality of the traditional teaching against Judaism first became an embarrassment, then a cause for shame.¹⁴⁰

The first major international conference on the religious response to anti-Semitism took place at Seelisberg, Switzerland, August 1947. Attracting some sixty-seven attendees, nine of them Catholic, it was notable for its pioneering ten point theses: the same God speaks to all in both the Old and New testaments; Jesus was born of a Jewish virgin and His love embraces his own people and all the world; the disciples and all the first Christians and martyrs were Jews; the injunction to love our neighbor is found in both testaments and obliges Christians and Jews in all their human dealings; avoid debasing Biblical or post-Biblical Judaism in order to elevate Christianity; avoid equating “Jew” as “enemies of Jesus”; avoid presenting the Passion so that the odium of the condemnation of Jesus falls only on the Jews; Jesus’ “Father forgive them for they do not know what they do” prevails over the crowd’s shout in the temple courtyard to accept the responsibility for the crucifixion; withhold credence to the opinion that the Jewish people are “reprobate, cursed, or destined to suffer”; avoid speaking of the Jews as if they were not the first Christians.¹⁴¹

Karl Thieme and Gertrud Luckner, founders of the *Freiburger Rundbrief*, in 1948, were another pair of philo-Semites aiming to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive and “awaken” in ourselves “our duties and responsibilities toward our Jewish brothers.”¹⁴² The *Rundbrief’s* anti-Nazi reputation attracted Jewish readers living in Germany willing to dialogue in its pages--Martin Buber was one. The resulting Freiburg Circle had regular contact with Augustin Bea, Yves Congar, Jacques Maritain, Jean Danielou, and other council notables, and helped shape the views of the young German bishops appointed after Pius XII’s death. Other journals devoted to Catholicism’s relations with Judaism were Paul DeMann’s *Cahiers Sioniens*, 1947, a converted Hungarian Jew and a Father of the Order of Sion; Fr. John M. Osterreicher, a convert from Judaism who published *The Bridge* in the United States; and Jacques Maritain, a convert from Protestantism, published *Sens*, the Paris-based study group of Jews and Christians, *L’Amitié Judeo-Chretienne de France*, 1948. Debates aired in the *Rundbrief* sparked the formation of the Apeldoorn group, the Freiburg Circle in all but name. An international group of priests and laymen—Dutch, German, French—it met annually in the 1950s at the Utrecht diocesan seminary to urge changes in teaching and catechesis regarding

¹³⁹ Connally, *Enemy to Brother*, 287.

¹⁴⁰ Connally, *Enemy to Brother*, Chapter 6, “Conversion in the Shadow of Auschwitz.”

¹⁴¹ Phayer, *Catholic Church and Holocaust*, 206; Connally, *Enemy to Brother*, 177, 178.

¹⁴² Phayer, *Catholic Church and Holocaust*, 186; Connally, *Enemy to Brother*, Ch. 8, “Second Vatican Council.”

Judaism. In sum, Judaism was an old but still living tradition upon which Christians depend for core beliefs, not least, love your neighbor. These ideas began to penetrate the theology taught in the seminaries.

And yet, as far as preparation for the Second Vatican Council was concerned, Seelisberg, Freiberg, and Apeldoorn resonated but faintly. Hardly any of the bishops and theologians canvassed for topics during the council's preparatory period listed the Church's relations with the Jews. Even Pope John, who as papal nuncio in Turkey provided many thousands of Jews with identity papers, money, and clothes to escape the Holocaust, hadn't thought to put the Jews on the agenda. Enter Jules Isaac, a survivor who had lost wife, daughter, and son-in-law at Auschwitz. A moving force behind Seelisberg and the principal founder of *Amitie Judeo-Chretienne*,¹⁴³ he was a French-Jewish scholar of education known for his work on the history of anti-Semitism and for his book, *Jesus et Israel*, published in 1959. In that work he addressed the question "Why was it possible in Christian Europe for such inhumanity toward Jews to be tolerated?" His answer: Anti-Semitism "had been engrafted on a stock of contempt for the Jews preserved by centuries of Christian teaching."¹⁴⁴ Sufficiently well-known to be granted a private audience with Pius XII in 1949, Isaac spoke of ways to uproot anti-Semitism and what he saw as the myths bedeviling Jewish-Christian relations. Pius received Isaac cordially but, worried that changing the teaching to support Israel and fight anti-Semitism would encourage religious indifferentism, in October 1950, he issued a *monitum*, a warning, against such work. Ironically, he appointed Bea and two others to investigate the people behind the *Freiburger Rundbrief*.

John XXIII was different: As the apostolic delegate to Turkey during World War II, he had saved thousands of Jews by issuing them Baptismal papers. Besides dropping "perfidious Jews" from the Good Friday rite, he rid the liturgy of negative Jewish references--their "veiled hearts," their "blindness," etc., substituting "The people to whom God first spoke." Meeting American Jews come to thank him at the Vatican for his efforts during the war to rescue Jews, John greeted them with "I am Joseph, your brother."¹⁴⁵ In June 1960 Isaac met with Pope John to reprise the issues he'd raised with Pius: rectification of the Church's teaching on the Jews, an account of the theological myths (dispersion of the Jews, the Jews as cursed, etc.), and evidence from the Council of Trent demonstrating that the charge that Jews are deicides was contrary to Church tradition.¹⁴⁶ He asked if something might be done about "the Christian teaching of contempt for Jews and Judaism," suggesting that a council subcommittee be formed to study such teaching. Pope John replied "You have right to more than hope," but that study is required. Having just created

¹⁴³ Thomas Stransky, "The Genesis of Nostrae Aetate," *America*, (October 24, 2005), 8-12.

¹⁴⁴ Gilbert, *Vatican Council and the Jews*, 27. Isaac's examination of textbooks for anti-Semitism stimulated efforts by other interested parties.

¹⁴⁵ Phayer, *Catholic Church and Holocaust*, 204-209.

¹⁴⁶ Rene Laurentin and Joseph Nuener, S.J., commentary, *The Declaration on the the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions* (Paulist Press: Glen Rock, New Jersey, 1966), 19.

the Secretariat for Christian Unity (SCU) to help other Christians “follow the work of the council,” the pope sent him to Cardinal Bea, its head, with the message to include the Jews in the council’s work.¹⁴⁷

Three months after meeting with Isaac, John met with Bea to outline the basic approach for a declaration on the Jews. Bea began by appointing like-minded individuals from Freiburg, Paris, Apeldoorn, and elsewhere, among them three refugee-converts from Judaism, Fr. John Osterreicher, the leading American expert on Christian-Jewish relations, Fr. Bruno Hussar of the Order of Sion, and Fr. Gregory Baum. Baum was tasked with producing a survey focusing on the close connection of the Church with Old Israel. Pope John, told just before the council opened that he had a fatal disease, made it clear to Bea that he supported him on the Jews and to proceed. Thus was set in motion the shortest, most divisive, and one of the most important documents of the Second Vatican Council. As a leading historian of the council has put it, “No schema roused greater anxiety in the pope, the Secretariat of State, and the Secretariat for Christian Unity” than the statement on the Jews.¹⁴⁸

Given the mandate, the SCU’s two full-time staffers, fifteen bishops, and twenty expert consultants (*periti*), expected to work with the theological commission. They produced a set of papers in August 1961, but Ottaviani refused to accept them on the grounds that the SCU was merely a pastoral commission, not a theological one. Notwithstanding the setback, Bea’s secretariat went ahead and produced *De Judaeis* (On the Jews), in 1962 in time for the second session. The warmest of what would become four versions and the final text, it reflected Seelisberg and Apeldoorn in its condemnation of calling the Jews a “deicidal people.”

Ray Bosler viewed the anti-Semitism found in the United States as “mostly a cultural or sociological problem” rather than religious or political one. While many Americans, “not knowing any better,” embrace the stereotype of Jews as “loud-mouthed, money-mad pushers” responsible for all the world’s problems, even so, they don’t think of the Jews as “cursed by God for the crime of God-killing deicide.” Nor was it an issue in Asia and Africa, but in Europe, the Middle East, and especially among the Eastern Orthodox, it was. He traced “Jewish-Christian animosity” to the fourth century, noting that in 1095, Pope Urban II’s crusaders in the Holy Land turned on the Jews first, rather than the Muslims.¹⁴⁹

His own philo-Semitism was never in question. In a reminiscence of his seminary days, he recalled bicycling along the Rhine into Holland with three other seminarians, in 1937. It was a foundational experience: Available everywhere they went were “two long-forgotten, anti-Jewish tracts by Martin Luther and the Protocols of the [Elders of] Zion (the forgery that purported to be a Jewish plot to take over the world), as well as finding Der Sturmer, the

¹⁴⁷ Phayer, Catholic Church and Holocaust, 208; Thomas Stransky, “The Origins . . . of Nostra Aetate,” (America, October 24, 2005).

¹⁴⁸ O’Malley, What Happened at Vatican II, 250.

¹⁴⁹ Criterion, 22 October 1965, 1, 9.

infamous Nazi newspaper, displayed in glass cases at bus and tram stops. In Frankfurt they asked a man to point out the House of the Rothschild; he gave them a surprised look, grunted “Judens,” and spat on the sidewalk. Others when asked “stared at us as if we were out of our minds.” He “remembered vividly” his shock at “the open anti-Jewish prejudice of the pious Catholics of Oberammergau and by what ardent Nazis they were,” the result of centuries of passion plays portraying “the Jews as God-killers.” At the council itself, anti-Semitism intruded from the start: Bosler might well have experienced *déjà vu* in recalling that the day after bishops arrived for the opening session they all received a large, expensive book, “The Plot against the Church,” in Italian, containing the Protocols of Zion with an introduction tying it all to Communism. Some thought Arab money behind it.¹⁵⁰

As noted above, the statement on the Jews (ch. IV, “Catholic attitude toward non-Christian religions, especially the Jews”) arrived late in the 1963 session. The debate over absolving the Jews of what “happened in Christ’s Passion” would become fixated on the “deicide” charge, namely, to condemn its application to Jews then and now, or only some then, and whether to use the word itself. It would be put in, dropped, and reinstated, before being suppressed for good in the final text. But when it was reinstated at the third session and its use against the Jews in the past and in the present explicitly condemned, this went too far for those bishops who remained under the old assumptions. Beyond the doctrinal change it would require, there was the immediate opposition from the Eastern Orthodox, among whom anti-Semitism was, as Bosler put it, “an intellectual and theological conviction.”¹⁵¹ Outside the council, but a great concern within, was that Christians living under Islamic governments, especially in Arab lands, had reason to worry about retaliation; such threats were already being made. The Arabs regarded any overture to Jews as political, pro-Israel, and not to be borne. More important than any of these was the New Testament’s condemnation of the Jews for refusing to recognize Christ as the Messiah: John’s Gospel, which depicts Jews throughout as enemies of Jesus, and Matthew (27:25), who recounts their acceptance of responsibility for the crucifixion--“His blood be upon us and upon our children.” That Jews bore the essential blame for Christ’s suffering and death was unquestioned Christian tradition dating from the late first century.

A new factor was Rolf Hochhuth’s play, “The Deputy.” First performed in West Berlin, February 1963, it depicted an uncaring Pius XII as doing less than nothing to help the Jews during the Shoah—the “catastrophe.” An immediate *success de scandale*, before the year was out it opened in Sweden, Switzerland, Denmark, Finland, France, and England. A September London production sparked enormous discussion and press controversy. In February 1964 a condensed version opened in New York City to riot and picketing sparked by what the Criterion called “American Nazi punks” defending Pius XII! In a remarkably balanced article, the Criterion observed that while “Pius XII bore a lonely burden of delicate decisions, unique beyond the comprehensions of most of us,” many Catholics “were disturbed by the pope’s failure to speak more plainly.” Calling the play “confused and confusing” and a “slander,” yet it found “elements in the play deserving a hearing.” Catholics did share responsibility for “Hitler and his vassal, Mussolini.” In their “hundreds of thousands” many saw no contradiction between “Being good Catholics

¹⁵⁰ “When I was a young seminarian,” Notre Dame University Archives.

¹⁵¹ Criterion, 22 October 1965, 1, 9.

and also enthusiastic, bloodthirsty Nazis and Fascists.” The editorial concluded, If Hochhuth’s “blighted play” wins converts to peace, “the whole will have been worth while.”¹⁵²

As a measure of the play’s impact, at the council Bishop Josef Stangl, Wurzburg, Germany, was led to demand *Nostra Aetate’s* (In Our Day) immediate promulgation: “Can we really justify Pius XII?,” he asked: “Has not the Church been walking the way of the children of this world, who calculate and follow earthly considerations?” “If we speak in the name of God, in the name of Jesus Christ, as his representatives, our speech must be [a clear] Yes [or] No, that is, truth not tactics,” for “anything more than this comes from evil.” (Mathew 5:37).¹⁵³ Stangl’s outburst had an electric effect on progressives, by this time the overwhelming council majority. They wanted a strong statement and an end to the deicide charge. Thanks to Hochhuth, many council fathers “could have no illusions regarding the response of world opinion if the Council was silent on the Jews.”¹⁵⁴

When it appeared at the 1964 session as “On the Jews and Non-Christians,” Bosler told readers that the Secretariat for Christian Unity’s (SCU) proposed text had been “watered down.” It was rumored that “powerful forces in Rome” were determined to render the Jewish statement “innocuous or even eliminate it.”¹⁵⁵ The culprit this time was Cardinal Amleto Cicognani, secretary of state and head of the coordinating commission. Without Bea’s knowledge, the text had been shortened and a sweeping condemnation of applying both “deicide” and “accursed” to the Jews dropped. In their place was “everyone should take care not to impute to the Jews of today that which was perpetrated in the Passion of Christ.” The revised version included that part in Romans which foresees the day when the “Jews would give up their religion to join with Christians to form one perfect Church.”¹⁵⁶ In effect, Judaism was to disappear. A distinguished rabbi, Abraham Joshua Heschel (with whom Bea frequently consulted), protested that faced with conversion or death he’d choose Auschwitz. Bosler agreed that “The Jews are rightly incensed by the revised schema” for its failure to “absolve them of the crime of deicide,” the accusation used by Christians “to justify gross injustices against them.” If not changed it “could make the council look ridiculous.” No such claim of conversion is asked of the Orthodox, Protestants, or any other non-Christian. Heartened by the speeches, Bosler was confident that the declaration “will be improved and greatly strengthened.” And for that, the Jews “could thank the U.S. bishops. Theirs was the leadership and theirs the strongest speeches.”¹⁵⁷

The upshot was that at the 1964 session the declaration was amended according to points raised in the debate. “Deicide” was put back (“The Jewish people never should be represented as rejected or accursed, or guilty of

¹⁵² *Criterion*, 6 March 1964, 4. As per policy, the editorial was unsigned.

¹⁵³ Connally, *Enemy to Brother*, 212.

¹⁵⁴ Connally, *Enemy to Brother*: 263, 264, 270.

¹⁵⁵ *Criterion*, 9 October 1964, 1, 9.

¹⁵⁶ Stransky, “Genesis of *Nostra Aetate*.”

¹⁵⁷ *Criterion*, 9 October 1964, 1, 9.

deicide”) and the positive values of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam amplified. It avoided seeming to favor Israel “by making overtures” to both Moslems and Jews. Crucially, it held that censure of the Jews was not biblically founded, instructed the faithful to avoid anything that might engender hatred and contempt for Jews, and explicitly mentioned anti-Semitism.¹⁵⁸ As a nod to the conservatives, the part played by the Jewish leaders in Christ’s death was added, no mention of the Jewish people or community was made (thus obscuring the denial of collective responsibility), and it was made clear that the Catholic Church was the new people of God. Although “The Jews” were now absent from the title, “A Declaration on non-Christian Religions,” on balance the text was strengthened in accord with the wishes of the progressive majority.¹⁵⁹ “Deicide” was dropped and “Christian preachers and teachers told never to speak of the Jews as cursed” or those of today blamed for the crucifixion 2,000 years ago. The vast majority of the council demanded the rejection of the accusation of deicide be put back, which was done. However, no longer was it called an injustice to speak of deicide; it simply forbade speaking of it. On 20 November 1964, the vote stood 1,651 yes (95 percent of the council), 242 *placets* “with reservations,” and 99 *non placets*. Citing a Bologna newspaper as his source, Bosler reported that “council seems to have passed through a crisis.” Whether the Jewish statement was moved to the Church schema or not, it “will reflect the strong statement of last year.”¹⁶⁰

Progress was made, but the opposition was resourceful and a declaration on the Jews remained far from home. The same day the Criterion carried Bosler’s expression of confidence regarding the Jewish statement, Felici launched his double-barreled attack on religious liberty and the Jewish declaration. As we’ve seen, a baker’s dozen of the bishops, among them the Americans Ritter and Meyer protested to Paul VI that the statement on the Jews “not be reduced to something meaningless,” and they called on him to intervene. Bea received the pope’s assurance that the declaration would not be “amputated nor diminished,” but would become the heart of separate declaration on non-Christian religions.¹⁶¹ On the last working day of the third session a much revised draft, “On the Jews and Non-Christians,” passed with a large majority, but with 242 “reservations.” These would have to be taken into account for the final version.

For the 1965 session Bea’s secretariat readied a new draft of five short chapters—an introduction, favorable remarks on Hinduism and Buddhism (about three lines each), other religions (six lines), looked “with esteem” on Islam (about nine lines), on Judaism (thirty lines), ending with a rejection, “as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against men” based “on their race, color, condition in life, or religion.” Bosler assured readers that the new version “on the Jews is a good one, whatever the press says.” Though “deicide” no longer appears, the text “is stronger than before for it now says that from Scripture it is impossible to show that Jews are reprobated by God for the death of Christ.” This “cuts out the roots of Christian anti-Semitism and the accusation of

¹⁵⁸ Stransky, “Genius of Nostra Aetate,” 39-42.

¹⁵⁹ Criterion, 23 October 1964, 1, 7.

¹⁶⁰ Criterion, 23 October 1964, 1, 7.

¹⁶¹ Laurentin and Neuner, Declaration on the Church to Non-Christian Religions (Glen Rock, New Jersey; Vatican II Documents, Paulist Press, 1966), 32.

deicide.” All the council’s progressive leaders and the American bishops who fought hard for “a good statement deploring anti-Semitism” are “completely satisfied with the present text.”¹⁶²

Two weeks later Bosler conceded that *Nostra Aetate* was less “warm and friendly” on the Jews than the November 1964 text. Weakened in parts, with the condemnation of “deicide” dropped and “deplored” substituted--because to “condemn” was to admit that former popes were guilty of error. Also missing was an acknowledgement of the Church’s Jewish roots. Bea’s secretariat had had to consider the 242 suggested changes to the previous text. These came not just from conservatives, but progressives, too, even some who worked for amity with the Jews, yet believed the deicide charge is tradition and “theologically correct.” Consequently, the Secretariat on Christian Unity “did change the tone somewhat, did weaken it, did drop the word ‘deicide’ for which it had previously fought so strenuously.” Simply put, a good many council fathers hesitated over making such a huge change in Church teaching. What held back drawing closer to the Jews, Bosler explained, was the spirit of ecumenism--the movement for Church unity with both the Orthodox and Protestants. It was an “open secret” that the pope wanted “deicide” dropped, perhaps to placate the Arabs, but principally to “appease the Orthodox.” To the early Church fathers, such as John Chrysostom, the curse of Jewish deicide was embedded in Orthodox liturgy, especially its Holy Week rites. The Eastern patriarchs made it plain that if the council rejected the deicide accusation, “all possibility of unity talks would be off indefinitely.” Despite overwhelming support at the council for a stronger statement, these factors could not be overcome.¹⁶³

As a doctor of sacred theology, S.T.D., in his last column on the subject Bosler took a turn at bat himself. Yes, the Scriptures record that the Jews’ religious leaders condemned Christ and “prevailed upon the Romans to put Him to death.” “The crucifixion was an act of deicide or God-killing. It won’t do to deny this on the grounds that you can’t kill God, for God can’t die and therefore that it was not Christ as God, but Christ as man who died. It is the Christian belief that God became man so that he could die for us in an extreme act of love. It is the person who experiences the separation of body and soul that is death, and in Christ there is only the one person, the divine. . . . [To] condemn the use of deicide is to deny divinity and unity of Christ.” Considering the act itself, however, apart from the intentions of those who participated, one could call the crucifixion “a crime of deicide” and apply it to the Romans as well. But considering intentions, “had they known who Christ was the Jews would not have condemned Him nor the Romans executed Him.” As Augustine wrote: “They had crucified Him without understanding,” but later they believed “and that great offense has been forgiven them.” The “blood they spilled through folly they have drunk by grace.” Ignorant at first as whom Christ was, their crime was homicide not deicide. How did the SCU remain faithful to Augustine’s teaching, the 1964 text, and the appeasement of the Orthodox? As Scripture testifies,

¹⁶² Criterion, 8 October 1965, 1, 9.

¹⁶³ Criterion, 22 October 1965, 1, 9.

Jerusalem did not recognize the time of its visitation, nor did the Jews, for the most part, accept the Gospel; indeed, many opposed its spreading. . . . Although the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ, nevertheless, what happened to Christ in His passion cannot be attributed to all Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor to the Jews of today. Although the Church is the new people of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected by God or accursed, as if this followed from the Holy Scriptures, (1 Cor 2:8); Christ's words, "father forgive them for they do not know what they do," (Lk 23:34); and Peter's sermon, "It is through ignorance that you have acted, and your chiefs as well," (Acts (3:2, 17).

This "strikes at the root of theological anti-Semitism." "As to the act itself apart from the intention of those who committed it, we could call the crucifixion a crime of deicide" applicable to both the Jews and the Romans. But considering their intentions, we deny it was deicide "for had they known who Christ was the Jews would not have condemned Him nor the Romans executed Him."¹⁶⁴

There was no open debate before the final session vote on *Nostra Aetate* (In Our Time), only Bea's presentation and voting on specific questions. It was adopted, 2,221 for to 88 against, the largest number of *non-placets* for any of the sixteen council document, but one.¹⁶⁵ On 28 October, five weeks before the end of the council, the pope promulgated it. The shortest of the sixteen documents produced by Vatican II, besides being the most controversial, it was also noteworthy for the discussions and new thinking it provoked in other schemas as it was shifted from ecumenism, to shared billing with religious freedom, to the Church schema, before finally resting in non-Christian religions.¹⁶⁶

Bea hailed the expansion of the declaration to include other non-Christian religions as "providential," "the first time in history" that the Church proposed "brotherly dialogue with non-Christian religions." The cardinal was sure that Pope John rejoiced at the declaration's passage, fittingly, on the seventh anniversary of John XXIII's election as pope. An important improvement over previous drafts, in the final version there was to be no "discrimination" or "harassment of men because of race, color, condition of life, or religion." That was why *Nostra Aetate*, after rejecting "nothing which is true and holy" in Hinduism and Buddhism, included an overture to Muslims.¹⁶⁷ Why not? Muslims are monotheists, revere Jesus as a prophet, honor Mary, and await Judgment Day. This was in accord with Bea's

¹⁶⁴ Criterion, 22 October 1965, 1, 9.

¹⁶⁵ *Inter Mirifica*, an inconsequential statement on the press which had 164 votes against. The "Church in the Modern World" garnered 75 final votes against, religious liberty, 70. The *non placets* of other documents were typically in the single digits.

¹⁶⁶ Laurentin and Neuner, Declaration on the Church to Non-Christian Religions, 35.

¹⁶⁷ Criterion, 22 October 1965, 9.

“basic principles” announced in April 1962 by which in the council’s “quest for unity” with the “separated brethren” included “mutual respect and esteem.”¹⁶⁸ Now extended beyond Protestants, it was witness to the sensibility that led to the more than two dozen centers devoted to Catholic-Jewish understanding at American Catholic universities, such as Seton Hall University’s Institute of Judeo-Christian Studies, established in 1953 by the Jewish convert and SCU member, Fr. John Osterreicher. Such centers publish documents promoting understanding and respect between Christians and Jews and the participation of rabbis in priest formation in Catholic seminaries.

Naturally, the Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox branches of Judaism differed in their reception of *Nostra Aetate*, with the Reform being the most positive and the Orthodox critical of the whole enterprise. A good many Jews were genuinely pleased: One rabbi called it a “Magna Carta” for breaking new ground; to another it was a “Copernican revolution.”¹⁶⁹ The chairman of the Indianapolis chapter of the American Jewish Committee applauded its “rejection of Jewish collective guilt for the Crucifixion and its repudiation of anti-Semitism; it constituted a “turning point in 1,900 years of Jewish-Christian history.” Praising the efforts of Cardinal Bea and the American bishops to secure the declaration, it won “for them the friendship and confidence of all men of good will” and an “honored place in the history of Jewish-Catholic relations.”¹⁷⁰ The Jews Bosler talked to complained, but admitted that had they not had the 1964 text they would be satisfied with this final text. Overall, Bosler thought it was a good compromise for the substance of the 1964 text was preserved. What the Arabs would make of it he didn’t know. The Orthodox and “our own Eastern Rite bishops” seemed to be satisfied, but it is “the maximum they could admit in favor of the Jews.”¹⁷¹ Actually, in addressing his flock, Patriarch Maximos IV took a very jaundiced view: In his eyes, in recognizing that the Catholic Church is the People of God it followed that the Jews, in claiming part of the Holy Land, are “usurpers.” While it declares them innocent of the “blood of Christ,” the Jewish authorities and those gathered “instigated the death of Christ.” And even though “deicide” was dropped, “The Jews will continue to be marked by their crime.”¹⁷²

What the four-year struggle over a Jewish declaration revealed to Bosler was “the frightening” amount of Christian anti-Semitism. “Here is proof enough for the need for a Declaration on the Jews.”¹⁷³ Over the life of the council anonymous anti-Semitic publications, thought to have originated from Arab sources, were mailed to all the council fathers from time to time.¹⁷⁴ Even at the the last session three such brochures circulated, one which warned that “One should not label as anti-Semitic the just measures for legitimate defense of the Church and so many peoples . . . against the conspiracies, aggressions and other crimes committed by the Jews, causing the greatest

¹⁶⁸ *Criterion*, 20 April 1962, 2.

¹⁶⁹ Connally, *Enemy to Brother*, 267, 268.

¹⁷⁰ *Criterion*, 5 November 1965, 9.

¹⁷¹ *Criterion*, 22 October 1965, 9.

¹⁷² Laurentin and Neuner, *Vatican II*, 100, 101.

¹⁷³ In his *The Vatican Council and the Jews*, 1968, Rabbi Arthur Gilbert praised Bosler for having “sounded a keynote to the importance” of the declaration “and the need for further work.”

¹⁷⁴ *Criterion*, 22 October 1965, 9.

injury to the Church and so many people.”¹⁷⁵ Anti-Semitism remained rife among Catholic churchmen, including, Bosler counted, “several persons” high up in the Curia who subscribed to the collective guilt of the Jews. Bishop Luigi Carli, Segni, Italy, was one: In a respected clerical journal, February 1964, like Maximos IV, Carli held that though only the Sandhedrin and a small group of Jews “materially committed the crime” of deicide, the Jewish people even today stood guilty of it.¹⁷⁶

Many Catholics, even progressives, harbored anti-Judaic feelings. That Cardinal Bea himself hesitated over *Nostra Aetate*, showed that fewer minds were changed than we think, just as the election and reelection of Barack Obama was supposedly proof of a “post racial America.” If Bea and others didn’t seem to grasp the fullness of what was required—giving up deicide and its curse, Paul VI was another. In a shocking 1965 Lenten sermon, the pope, refusing to make distinctions, bluntly stated that the Jews did “not recognize [Christ], but fought him, slandered him, and injured him, and in the end they killed him.”¹⁷⁷ In 2008 Benedict XVI reopened the issue of proselytism in amending the Good Friday prayer to read, “Let us pray for the Jews, that God our Lord should illuminate their hearts, so that they will recognize Jesus Christ, the savior of men.” Two years earlier, in a lecture before a German university audience, Benedict, far from showing Islam “respect and esteem,” quoted a late 14th century Byzantine emperor: “Show me just what Muhammad brought that was new and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached.”

In his last dispatch from Rome Bosler credited whatever success the council had to the public criticism from the bishops, the desire of the liturgists for the vernacular, and especially the secular press for its “criticism of the council itself.” These saved the council “from being an ineffectual exercise” and for bringing “on the changes in practices and attitudes we now experience in the Church.” He put his hopes for the future in the “magnificent passages in the “Constitution on the Church” to produce what “Christian authority ought to be” and for the seriousness with which the laity should be treated. Citing Chapter IV of the Constitution on the Church, the laity “have the right of making known to the sacred pastors their needs and desires with the confident liberty which suits them as children of God.” What qualifies them to do so is their “knowledge, competence, [and their] position” in the world which “gives them the means, or rather, the duty at times of making known their opinions on matters which envisage the good of the Church.” In modern democratic nations, public criticism is seen as desirable and does not undermine authority, as it does in say, “feudal Spain.” Efforts to repress criticism in the Church “will only increase it and turn it into something evil” by driving out “the best educated of her members.” As yet, the Church isn’t a place where one can be free to “express himself, where he can be himself,” but one day it may be.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ Laurentin and Neuner, Declaration on Non-Christian Religions, 56.

¹⁷⁶ Criterion, 22 October 1965, 9.

¹⁷⁷ Connally, Enemy to Brother, 269.

¹⁷⁸ “How to tell the bishops from the periti,” Criterion, 29 October 1965, 9.

To illustrate the contention between freedom of expression and its suppression at the last session, Bosler used two council newcomers--Pedro Arrupe, recently named Father-General of the Jesuits, and Turin's Archbishop-elect, Michele Pellegrino. Having spent the previous three years in Japan, Arrupe stood for the old way, warning of "a new godless society" holding "almost complete sway" in international organizations, finance, and in mass communications.¹⁷⁹ A few weeks later Arrupe proclaimed his "strict opposition to any criticism of the Church." It was "intolerable that any defect of the Church, however real, should be broached publicly by individuals or groups, regardless of the good will [such critics] might have," "Intelligent" critics will see "that the best solution will be either to keep silent and wait . . . or meekly bring the defects to the knowledge of the proper authority." He was sure no changes in the Church would "take place," but if so, any reforms "will be done by the duly constituted hierarchy." Otherwise "confusion" results and "the work of the Church on behalf of all" obstructed.¹⁸⁰ Besides having some fun at the expense of his liberal Jesuit friends, Bosler charged Arrupe with subscribing to a "conspiracy view of history," one that "smacked" of "the thought patterns of the sixteenth century."¹⁸¹ The Jesuit's insistence that reform was a monopoly of the hierarchy failed the Villanova's "truth room" test; there the near-unanimous view was that without criticism there is no change. True, "there is a spirit of criticism within the Church today," but attempts to suppress it will "change it into something evil" and will drive from the Church "the best educated of her members."¹⁸²

Contrary to Arrupe's worries of secular conspiracies, Pellegrino "surprised the council with a ringing . . . defense of freedom of research and scholarship not only for laymen but for priests." Deploring the repression of the modernists at the turn of the century, the Turin archbishop asserted that such censorship was still going on: Even in theology "many things must be subjected to revision with the progress of research" and the "sphere of things" open to "various opinions" is "much broader" than non-scholars "may think." If scholars know they are "permitted to express opinions with wholesome freedom, [they] will act with [the] straightforwardness and sincerity that should shine in the Church; otherwise the abominable plague of dishonesty and hypocrisy can hardly be avoided." Beyond his call for scholarly independence, Pellegrino's statement was a resounding affirmation that doctrine developed. Bosler: "Would that there were more American bishops speaking out in this fashion."¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ *Criterion*, 8 October, 1965, 1, 9, a none too subtle reference to "international Jewry's conspiracy."

¹⁸⁰ *Criterion*, 29 October 1965, 1, 9.

¹⁸¹ *Criterion*, 8 October 1965, 1, 9.

¹⁸² *Criterion*, 29 October 1965, 9. Under the influence of Jesuits such as Rahner, Bea, and Murray, Arrupe soon became a progressive, earning stiff rebukes from Paul VI for permitting undue experimentation and loose discipline, and from John Paul II, for the Order's "secularizing tendencies" and for "causing confusion" among "the laity." When Arrupe died, instead of the Jesuits choosing his successor, the custom since the order's founding 141 years before, John Paul II put his own man in.

¹⁸³ *Criterion*, 8 October 1965, 1, 9.

The Second Vatican Council closed on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. The day before, the “Declaration on Religious Liberty” and the “Constitution on the Church in the Modern World Today” were adopted. Bosler was certain that the windows Pope John had opened would remain open. (Note that John is back opening windows, not Paul.) The “old Church no longer considers herself a besieged fortress, but the home of all mankind.” Added proof was the replacement of the Holy Office with the new Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: In Pope Paul VI’s words, while the CDF “will still correct errors and gently recall those in error to moral excellence, new emphasis is to be given to preaching the gospel” and promoting doctrine. To Bosler, ever open to optimism, it meant that the Holy Office, “the old bastion of feudalism” given to “the ferreting out of heretics,” would be replaced by “a new institution that refuses secrecy and respects the principle of the right of appeal and of judicial representation for all those whose teaching or writing may be questioned.”¹⁸⁴

A discordant note and a cautionary one for the future, however, was the accompanying announcement of a jubilee decree giving confessors power to absolve those who committed heresy, or read forbidden books, or joined the Masons or like organizations, all matters out of keeping with the council’s spirit of Pope John. Disappointed with its pre-conciliar “language and attitude,” Bosler suggested that the decree was a “consolation gift to the old guard in the Roman Curia.” It ran against the grain of the “vast majority” of bishops [who] wanted censures and ecclesiastical penalties eliminated as “ineffective and meaningless” in today’s world.¹⁸⁵ In this curial “reform,” as with the failure of the bishops’ synods to develop into genuine collegiality with the pope, Bosler would be grievously disappointed. A fortnight later the secretary for the new Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith provided another example of outmoded “language and attitude”: in an interview by the Madrid Catholic daily, *Ya*, Cardinal Ottaviani sounded like Arrupe in expressing his unhappiness with “priests and laymen” who were embarked on a “dismal mission” of criticism of the Church, indeed, “an anti-Christian one.” They “sow confusion and prevent the word of God from being spread.” He was sure the hierarchy could be relied on to “provide remedies with meekness, goodness, effectiveness and a spirit of truth.” Ottaviani, whose motto was *Semper Idem*, “always the same,” praised the Spanish Church and *Opus Dei* for “carrying out a great necessary work.” He was sure that while the Index of Forbidden Books would be reformed, “it will never disappear.” This was the Ottaviani who prayed to God “that I can die before the end of the Council—in that way at least I can die a Catholic.”¹⁸⁶ Clearly, clericalism wasn’t dead.

Recall that a good many council fathers resisted the notion that an ecumenical council would or should exhibit the motivations and behaviors common to secular parliaments; a Catholic religious congress must prove edifying in process and product. But from the start Bosler complained of the conservatives’ “strange and devious moves” and general foot-dragging. Felici, Ottaviani, and others used their positions to thwart renewal, and before second session adjourned, the new pope had moved into their camp. Only at the 1965 session did Bosler find that the fathers were “satisfied that the commissions are representing fairly the different points in proper proportions, and

¹⁸⁴ *Criterion*, 10 December 1965, 4. Unsigned editorial, but almost certainly Bosler’s.

¹⁸⁵ *Criterion*, “Vatican II,” 10 December 1965, 4.

¹⁸⁶ *Criterion*, 24 December 1965, 2.

are quite willing to accept whatever changes are proposed. So there's no suspense, no back-stage maneuverings."¹⁸⁷ Previously, conservative machinations made a bad impression on those council participants disposed to be critical of clericalism and immune to *Romanita*. Among these, the aura of the Church's sanctity suffered a wound. And when both clergy and laity divided among themselves and each other over the merits of the Second Vatican Council, unity became another casualty. An important part of the motivation for renewal was the embarrassment of the progressives—even shame—at the Church's triumphalism. The stand-patters held to the belief that adherence to the Catholic Church was the one sure way to paradise, certain that as deicidists the Jews had permanently condemned themselves, and unembarrassed by the "heads I win, tails you lose" formula of the "thesis" on church and state.

To understand how the progressives got so much of what they wanted, more needs to be said: In defending the *status quo* the conservatives initially relied on the Curia's four centuries of dominance, its superior access to influential circles, and its plentiful financial resources. That confidence was shaken at the first session by the support for the liturgy schema and the dismissal of the schema on revelation. Alarmed at the progressives' influence, early in the second session they hired staff, bought a printing press, and organized as the *Coetus Internationalis Patrum* (Union of International Fathers). Fatal to its cause, however, the CIP was anti-collegial, suspicious of episcopal conferences (they take away papal power and were a threat to the Curia), and isolated.¹⁸⁸ Unable to reach and organize potential allies in significant number, its meetings gathered few participants. As progressive influence waxed, the conservatives reasserted hierarchy, papal primacy, and insisted that votes were not binding. Since the pope had approved the initial schemas, they argued that changes would undermine papal authority. For conservatives, compromise was not an option, nor consensus a goal.

What effectiveness the CIP had was not in mustering the support of like-minded bishops, but in pressuring Paul VI to qualify council decisions. On his own, a pope can insist that a council discuss an issue or not, as he did with birth control and priestly celibacy. He can veto an approved schema or have its drafting committee amend it, as he did with collegiality. He can draft his own statement on matters he disagrees with, as he did in referring to the Virgin Mary in terms the progressives had kept out.¹⁸⁹ By the end of second session the CIP had hints of an organized opposition; by the end of the third session it was convinced that a progressive conspiracy subversive of doctrine existed.¹⁹⁰

If the conservatives were too few and too late to be effective, the progressives were many and early. Having judged the initial schemas inadequate, the French, German, Dutch, and Belgians circulated their own drafts before

¹⁸⁷ *Criterion*, 22 October 1965, 1, 9.

¹⁸⁸ Melissa J. Wilde, *Vatican II: A Sociological Analysis of Religious Change* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, New Jersey, 2007), 70.

¹⁸⁹ Wilde, *Vatican II and Religious Change*, f.n. 16, 144.

¹⁹⁰ Wilde, *Vatican II and Religious Change*, 69. [see Rynne, vat c II, 407.]

the council even opened. A few weeks into the first session two Latin Americans and a few French bishops agreed to meet regularly to “inform and help each other.”¹⁹¹ From this small beginning, midway through the first session a collegial organization officially formed, a “participatory democracy” with the ability to reach some 1,900 council bishops through its 22 core individuals representing the various national episcopal conferences. Bishop Ernest Primeau, one of the 22, was the liaison to the American bishops’ National Catholic Welfare Conference. Meeting weekly at the *Domus Mariae*, a hotel a 35-minute walk from St. Peter’s, ideas were debated and compromise reached. Once consensus was achieved by the 22, decisions could be rapidly communicated by the *Domus Mariae*, the twenty-two secretaries speaking in the name of 127 episcopal conferences from the five continents.¹⁹²

Other council practices also favored collegiality, even the seating of the bishops in the aula by seniority, not region, produced more wide-ranging cultural exchanges. As did the coffee bars--Bar Jonah and Bar Mitzvah—the sites of what George Weigel called the “crucial ‘secondary Council’ of informal conversation and personal encounter . . .”¹⁹³ In addition, reform-minded bishops attended evening presentations by theologians organized by *Domus Mariae*. As Primeau testified, meeting weekly with the other 21 core members, corresponding with other bishops, attending meetings where the final details of schemas were agreed upon, keeping DM members abreast of developments “widened my horizons, made me more appreciative of the ideas and problems of others, more sensitive to their needs, spiritual and material. . . . Before collegiality [was] formally approved at the council, I had already profoundly experienced it.”¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹ Wilde *Vatican II [and] Religious Change*, 64.

¹⁹² At the 1964 session Bosler referred to the recommendation of the “international committee”—the *Domus Mariae*--that schema 13 be accepted as the basis for the council’s discussion. *Criterion*, 6 November 1964, 1, 9.

¹⁹³ *First Things*, 67 (November 1996), 54-56.

¹⁹⁴ Wilde *Vatican II [and] Religious Change*, 68. Her study is based on transcripts of interviews with more than eighty of the most important council bishops and theologians, conducted by Rocco Caporale, a doctoral student, primary documents, archives, and computer analysis of the voting via an electronic data base. The council bishops divided into four geographical groups based on whether Catholicism of a nation or area was high or low in stability and in diversity. For example, in Spain, Italy, Portugal, and Ireland (20 percent of the council), the Church enjoyed a religious monopoly. Being high in stability and low in religious diversity, they opposed collegiality, ecumenism, and renewal. The non-monopolistic, but stable and religiously diverse Northern Europeans and North Americans (25 percent), prioritized ecumenism and renewal. Latin America (22 percent), rating low in stability and diversity, faced a rising tide of Protestant evangelicals and Marxist inroads into their laity. Suspicious at first of ecumenism, the Episcopal Conference of Latin America, CELAM, emphasized economic justice, the poor, and the unchurched. The bishops of the low stability, highly diverse, emerging missionary fields of Africa (FACE) and Asia supported ecumenism and social justice and were oriented toward growing the Church in their areas. In the end, superior organization and collegiality was the glue unifying all three progressive areas.

Bosler's chief worry after the council was how to get "the folks back home" to understand the documents. For that to happen, they "must reach the pulpit, schools, and the press." New catechisms, religious textbooks, and theological manuals "must be written" reflecting "the spirit of the council." While the documents were not revolutionary and "do not reflect" the desires of the large progressive majority, they "do contain the germs for a future development that could be magnificent." His hope was that the council is "only the beginning of a reform within the Church that will go on for years."¹⁹⁵ His contribution to such development were years spent giving talks on the council's accomplishments and meaning, reprising what he'd experienced. One talk was at a suburban Cincinnati parish, probably in late summer, 1968, a time when priests and nuns were leaving in numbers and of widespread dissent by the laity, many clergy--even bishops--over Paul VI's birth control encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*. Focusing on three council documents--the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*), the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei Verbum*), and the Declaration on Religious Freedom (*Dignitatis Humanae*). His theme, three years after the council, was not Church reform "that will go on for years," but "the "profound, drastic, revolutionary change" the Church "was going through."¹⁹⁶

The "old Catholic Church," the one before the council, had provided a "security blanket," "our bulwark of defense" against modernity. Now, after the council, "respected theologians and even some bishops" were questioning "traditional doctrine . . ." Citing *Gaudium et Spes*, the cause was science--"the dramatic breakthroughs of knowledge" which required "a more critical ability to distinguish religion from a magical view of the world and from the superstitions which still circulate . . ." "Vatican II alone did not cause the present "ferment," but rather "the human intellect . . . broadening its dominion over time." "Thus, the human race has passed from a rather static concept of reality to a more evolutionary one," a sentence Bosler repeated for emphasis. Similarly, the Declaration on Religious Freedom spoke of the growing demand "that men should act on their own judgment, enjoying and making use of responsible freedom, not driven by coercion, but motivated by a sense of duty." This, the council declared, is "greatly in accord with truth and justice."¹⁹⁷

What it came down to was that during the council "our Church suddenly grew up." Until then modernity had "developed apart from the Church," "often in opposition to, or in revolt against the Church," and the Church reacted by denying that anything good came from the world, only evil. Sadly, listed among the evils were "some very wonderful things"--democracy, religious liberty, freedom of the press and of assembly. John XXIII broke with this habit of

¹⁹⁵ *Criterion*, 22 October 1965, 1, 9.

¹⁹⁶ Lecture on Vatican II at suburban Catholic parish in Cincinnati, 1968? Raymond T. Bosler Papers (BOS), CBOS 2/01, University of Notre Dame Archives (UNDA), Notre Dame, IN 46556. The talk, double-spaced, is 23 pages long; the Q and A that followed runs to 20 more. Fr. George Higgins, the labor priest, partnered with Bosler at the two-day program.

¹⁹⁷ Cincinnati talk, Bosler Papers, next five paragraphs.

condemnation, as did Paul VI, who, in opening the second session—his first--said: "Let the world know this, the Church looks at the world with profound understanding, with sincere admiration and with a sincere intention not of conquering it, but of serving it." In effect, by embracing certain Enlightenment Era values—reason, science, toleration, freedom of expression, freedom of conscience, the Second Vatican Council had worked "a mighty reversal."

Bosler would remind his audiences that the bishops went to school to the theologians, historians, and other scholars, who themselves had gone back to the sources and practices of the early Church. Scriptural interpretation underwent fundamental change. One of the "real great things" the council did in the Constitution on Revelation "was to point out that all of us, all the faithful, not just the pope and the bishops and the theologians, but all the faithful, contribute to a better understanding of the revelation that God has given us." God taught so that the people of any time and place, whatever their limitations, could understand. Now we know so much more; why limit ourselves to the understanding of the people at the time of the councils of Nicea (4th century) or Trent (16th century). The "child or childlike adult" is satisfied "with the precise formulas from the catechism," while the mature adult finds these "pat formulas and the certitude they afford almost empty." The "great real change" brought by the council came when the bishops "began to be dissatisfied with the old formulas and began to ask questions, then man really arrived at his adulthood in the Roman Catholic Church" and "our church suddenly grew up."

Unfortunately, not everything had changed: The Church of the 1960s still bore the marks of the past—of ancient Rome, of feudalism, of absolute monarchy. Thanks to the council, "we can experiment with democratic forms that afford more freedom, . . . more expression of the maturity and dignity of the individual" by granting more responsibility to the laity in "the parish, the diocese, and the worldwide Church." "The Church in the Modern World" says the laity should not imagine that "their pastors have the answer to every question," but that they themselves through "the helps of the truths of faith," their own "practical knowledge," and "everyday living" understanding may come. In line with the best practices of science, the Church must shift from a mentality of certainty "to a mentality satisfied with scientific probability." It must more often admit "we don't know."

For "the first time in years, and years, and years," there is "the sense of freedom," with "scholars, theologians, and lay people" telling the bishops and the pope their ideas. True, the laity's assertiveness had so alarmed the bishops that they are "less courageous" than they were at the council--not as progressive, "holding back." But this, too, is a good thing: It was the absence, the lack of tension before Vatican II "which was really an evil thing." It is also true that while much can be learned from the world, "there is much to be feared from too much adulation of modern culture and knowledge." Paraphrasing Chesterton, Bosler said there is still the need for the "democracy of the tombstones"--the contributions to knowledge of "the great men" of the past. There is a "voice that will help us make our decisions today." Striking an ecumenical note, before the council the Church, certain that it had all the answers, failed to see the value in the Protestant element—the importance of the individual. Protestantism suffered its own loss in breaking away "from that other part of the Church which stands for authority . . ." Both must exist for creative tension. Conservatives and progressives alike forget "that the Church is a very human institution," and therefore itself "a great test of faith." Citing Pope Pius XII that many members of the Church "suffered from spiritual infirmity is no reason for us to lessen our love for the Church, rather it is an occasion for us to feel deeper sympathy with its members."

But the Church seemed to be foundering. There is a “new spirit of criticism in the Church that frightens” some and helps others “to find all sorts of things wrong” More and more people are aware that the papacy has been both a rock and a scandal; that the bishops, let alone the priests and laity, divide over the birth control encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*; that conservatives and progressives want too much and so there is the sense that the Church is doing too much or not enough. The problem was the need to do much more: What is “the Church and what are we” going to do about racism, the global have-nots, about “tawdry middle class materialism?” What is needed is a real love for the Church in all its imperfections, and real faith. Only when one recognizes “how weak and human and full of fault the Church is” can one “really make a true act of faith.” We need to be adults. If the Church was perfect, what need of faith?¹⁹⁸

Talking to a gathering of nuns, Bosler sounded like an *agent provocateur*. The Church was going through a painful, dramatic change, and the nuns were the vanguard for renewal. Invited by the Church to lead, they were “empowered to change and experiment on your own without seeking authorization from the local bishop or the authorities in Rome for the steps you take.” “No one else in the Church has the same opportunities—not even the bishops!” There’s a new attitude to the world; the Church is “no longer the fortress,” the “bulwark against evil.” *Gaudium et Spes* “took a new look at the world and found much good there,” among them the “rights and dignity of man,” of conscience, and the need to understand the world. “Accepted values are called into question, . . . especially by the young. The institutions, laws, and modes of thinking and feeling as handed down” are not always “well adapted” to contemporary life. The old juridical Church no longer fits needs. The religious nuns “have been asked to lead the way. They alone have the opportunity.” As the Church still bears the marks of the Roman Empire, feudalism, absolute monarchy, [and in pen in the typescript] outmoded “attitudes toward women”], it was time to “experiment in democratic forms” that afford more freedom, responsibility, and the “dignity of the individual.”¹⁹⁹

Within a few years of the council’s close Bosler concluded that its promise was going unrealized. The council had called for internationalism, collegiality, and decentralization of power in the Church. Although many American council fathers and others had been willing to listen to the theologians, and while the documents held the promise of a dynamic future, as soon as the bishops got home they became polarized. Less than four years after the council he told the local Serra Club that the council’s “documents now appear to be ancient history.”²⁰⁰ Although the Church had promised renewal, ten years after the council it “takes two steps backward for each one forward.”²⁰¹ In 1992, two years before his death, he mused that “Rome and many of the world’s bishops” had been “frightened by the aftermath” of the council. As he had said at that suburban Cincinnati parish, perhaps things had needed to be slowed down; still, the old *status quo* could not stand and the council’s “orderly study of theological and Biblical sources and [its] systematic reappraisal of the Church’s needs and opportunities” were all to the good. All in all, Vatican II had “served as a providential safety valve that made it possible, . . . to forestall a disastrous explosion in

¹⁹⁸ Cincinnati Talk, Bosler Papers.

¹⁹⁹ Indianapolis Catholic Archdiocesan Archives, Bosler Box. Typescript: Talk to nuns on their opportunity to reform. Lacks date, place, or religious order[s] addressed, but shortly after the council.

²⁰⁰ Biskup papers, Indianapolis Archdiocesan Archives, Serra Club notes file, 1969.

²⁰¹ Criterion 19 January 1975, 5.

the life of the Church.”²⁰² Certainly Pope Paul VI had been frightened by the progressives’ efforts to bring change. Bosler wasn’t frightened, he was liberated, as his post-Vatican II editorials and Question Box answers would show.

For an editor of an archdiocesan newspaper like Bosler, it was more true than ever that post Vatican II there was no place for the “old-fashioned comfortable’ Church papers.” The Catholic press must reflect “the restlessness, the frustrations, the bad news as it is,” to fulfil its “inescapable obligation to be a disturbing element in the life of the Church.”²⁰³ The “Question Box” would be his vehicle. The “Box” first appeared in the archdiocesan newspaper without a byline until March 1951, when it was assigned to Fr. James D. Moriarity of Our Lady of Fatima parish.²⁰⁴ Later conducted by Msgr. John Conway, it appeared under Bosler’s byline from January 1967.²⁰⁵ That year two University of Notre Dame graduates asked to include the Question Box as part of a newspaper syndicate they were putting together, and by 1973 it ran in 29 newspapers.²⁰⁶ Seeing his role as sparking discussion between bishops and laity,²⁰⁷ as a doctor of sacred theology Bosler’s strength was the sophistication with which he discussed doctrinal issues. Neither mincing difficulties nor talking down, bringing theology, philosophy, and history to bear, he was confident that the laity was capable of understanding abstruse topics.²⁰⁸ The renowned Biblical scholar, Fr. Raymond Brown, S.J., well aware of the brickbats thrown Bosler’s way, praised the quality of his answers on difficult theological

²⁰² *New Wine*, 109, 110.

²⁰³ *Criterion*, 7 February 1969, 4.

²⁰⁴ *Indiana Catholic Record*, March 1951, 4.

²⁰⁵ Msgr. Conway died in March 1967. [See if his mea culpa column can be found.] Bosler would write the column until June 1984. Note, the *Criterion*’s review of its history, 8 October 2010, 9, has Bosler conducting the column for only ten years, from 1974 to 1984.

²⁰⁶ *Criterion*, 13 April 1973, 7. Two collections of Bosler’s Question Box columns were published: *What a Modern Catholic Believes About Moral Problems* (Thomas More Press: Chicago, 1971) and *What a Modern Catholic Believes About Marriage* (Ava Maria Press; Notre Dame, Indiana, 1975). Each collects about five years of columns. They were part of a four book series “written by eminent thinkers and scholars,” Fr. Andrew Greeley, *What a Modern Catholic Believes About God*,” Fr. Eugene Kennedy, *About Sex*”; and John Shea, *About Sin*.

²⁰⁷ *New Wine*, 95.

²⁰⁸ *Criterion*, 26 May 1972, 7.

subjects and the courtesy and respect he showed readers.²⁰⁹ The new learning was hard and the resistance comparably intransigent. The central issue was the nature of authority in the Church.²¹⁰

Had Bosler made bishop (a goal he evinced no interest in reaching), his episcopal motto might well have been “The days of the ‘Catholic Answer Man’ are gone forever”--the title of his first Question Box column. Citing *Gaudium et Spes*, the laity was “not [to] imagine that his pastors are always such experts that to every problem which arises, however complicated, they can readily give him a concrete solution, or even that such is their mission.” In other words, avoid laying down the law, modesty is the needed virtue. The spy novelist known as John le Carre put it this way: “Moral clarity is diminished by increased understanding. The harder you look for absolutes the less likely you were to find them.” Bosler: “We Catholics no longer imagine revelation to be a collection of precisely formulated truths handed down to be memorized by generation after generation.” Rather, it is a “living, on going experience of God.” As such, each generation had something to say about it and its relationship to its time. Even more, faith is not just accepting as true what the Church teaches through its pastors, “but the loving submission and listening to the living God personally revealing himself to the individual through these teachings.” “Submission” must include a response, “a striving to understand and to carry out in life what is heard. It is this response of all believers which increases and advances the Church’s knowledge of revelation and how it applies to right living.”²¹¹

Theologians strengthen the authority of pope and bishops when they bring “biblical, historical and scientific knowledge the popes and bishops need to clarify and develop their teaching.” With the laity unaware of this before the council, some found it “shocking,” others “thrilling,” to discover that the Church was not a monolith: Instead, there is Augustine’s “pilgrim church,” one that struggles to discover its way through trial and error, one that the Holy Spirit inspires the laity with gifts as well as the hierarchy, with a need for dialogue within and without the Church and for knowledge of science and modern philosophy to understand the world. It would not be easy, but Bosler expressed confidence in its possibility.²¹²

While the laity might be the best educated in history, judging by their questions many readers were confused by Vatican II and mystified with his answers: One “often raise[d] her eyebrows at his responses; they seem so often at variance with the teachings of the Church.”²¹³ She wasn’t alone. Question: What was serious sin? Answer: The gravity of a sin is measured by “the extent of the disorder and aversion to God caused by the sinful act and its

²⁰⁹ *Criterion*, 23 June 1972, 7. Bosler revealed Brown’s name in his memoir.

²¹⁰ *Criterion*, 6 June 1969, 5.

²¹¹ *Moral Problems* (1967-1971), 5, 6.

²¹² *Moral Problems* (1967-1971), 8.

²¹³ *Criterion*, 17 September 1976, 5.

consequences and also by the disposition of the sinner.”²¹⁴ In short, it depends. “What about missing Mass?” Bosler let the laity in on the secret that “Roman laws are written overly strict on the assumption that dispensations from them will be granted and individuals may readily find excuses for judging they do not apply in given circumstances.” The “Romans” (the Italians, clergy and lay), don’t regard missing Mass a serious sin.²¹⁵ The implicit message, “Grow up.”

Having moved out of the Catholic ghetto, himself, he enjoined readers to do likewise. To one who thought teaching non-Catholic theology courses at a Catholic university a bad idea, he drew attention to the council’s document on ecumenism and noted that Catholics had learned a great deal from Protestant and Jewish scripture scholars and theologians.²¹⁶ To another retailing the old canard that Luther was merely a sex-obsessed, disobedient, self-aggrandizing monk, Bosler set the record straight, giving the details of Luther’s life and marriage.²¹⁷ Typical of his common sense was his answer to the query: “We are Catholic and are invited to a Protestant wedding. Is it wrong to go? They are the best of friends and neighbors.” A: “They won’t be, if you don’t act like a friend and neighbor. Go to the Wedding.”²¹⁸ A mother wrote that her daughter is marrying in their Catholic Church a “very nice” Jewish boy she met in college, but the father threatens to disown her. Her husband was “a good Catholic” and read the Question Box every week. “Maybe you can enlighten him.” Bosler: “You flatter your husband . . . if his opposition . . . springs from prejudice against the Jews.” Perhaps the man didn’t know that “Jews are noted” for “stable marriages and strong family ties” and that Catholic-Jewish marriages “can be most successful. I don’t know what to say to your husband other than to remind him that he will be facing another Jew on judgment day.”²¹⁹

He could be funny: A husband wrote that his wife wanted to know when a widow remarries “who is the man she spends eternity with?” Bosler recalled that the Sadducees had posed a variant of the question to Jesus: If a woman married seven brothers over her life, at the resurrection (in which the Sadducees disbelieved) to whom would she be wife in heaven? Jesus answered, the resurrected do not marry (Lk 20:27-37). “So keep your chin up,” wrote Bosler, “You and any possible successor are not apt to be rivals in heaven. But just what is on your wife’s mind?”²²⁰

A reader wondered, “What happened to the changeless church?” Bosler agreed that until recently the understanding had been that the Church was “the one stable, almost perfect thing that bolstered our lives. The Church was always right and had all the answers.” But in light of Vatican II this is mere triumphalism. With man

²¹⁴ Moral Problems, 11, 12.

²¹⁵ Moral Problems, 18.

²¹⁶ Criterion, 22 March 1974, 7.

²¹⁷ New Wine, 98.

²¹⁸ About Marriage, 40.

²¹⁹ About Marriage, 65.

²²⁰ About Marriage, 257, 258.

walking on the Moon and the knowledge that there are billions of stars, the old formulas--the primitive explanations in the Bible, are no longer adequate. "We must attempt to understand all this in the light of the knowledge that overwhelms us today."²²¹ "The progressives"--Bosler was one, "are excited that the Church has awakened from a long sleep and is now aware of the modern world." There is a new spirit of freedom, a new theology, and more change to come in the Church's structure.²²²

Much of the anxiety over change and the divisiveness it produced he attributed to ignorance of history. He pointed to the Church's continuous, age-old conflicts between conservative and progressive camps in the Church. The Acts of the Apostles was filled with the disagreements among Jews, Greeks, moderates, and liberals; Church history was replete with unsavory battles between Jesuits, Dominicans, and Franciscans (after his death even Aquinas was condemned by the University of Paris). Multiple councils--not least Trent and both Vatican I and II--saw deep divisions among the participants. As for change, as recently as 1900 Communion was to be taken but once a year, the pope had no time for Catholics outside Italy, and it was the exception, not the rule, that bishops were nominated from Rome.²²³ "Prior to [Vatican II] the Church was looked upon as a bulwark protecting the faithful from the dangers of modern thought and the evils of secular society." Citing Galileo and Darwin, "the Church esteems men of science"²²⁴ and "has nothing to fear from modern science and knowledge, but much to learn that will help her understand what God has revealed in His Word." This was the important truth of Vatican II.²²⁵

What of the Church's authority? While "still intact," it was "somewhat wobbly because those who exercise it and those who obey it have not yet learned how to make the change from a highly regulated, closed society of uneducated peasants or immigrants to an open, democratic society of self-reliant, educated citizens brought up to make decisions for themselves."²²⁶ (Here Bosler was as much expressing a wish as stating a fact.) New knowledge, new understandings, meant that Church doctrine develops. As for *nulla salus extra ecclesia*--no salvation outside the Catholic Church, he quoted a 1952 commentary on Canon Law on the question of saying Mass for a non-Catholic that held that while many Protestants merely followed the religion of their parents and "not from any spirit of opposition to the Catholic Church, still the fact remains that they're in the enemy camp just like aliens during a war. The Catholic Church cannot recognize them as members of the saved without sacrifice of principle." Bosler's response, "Isn't that unbelievable?"²²⁷ Yes, the Church of Christ "subsists" in the Catholic Church, where God's plan is best embodied, but other churches and religions--even non-Christian ones, share in this. Thus, many elements of

²²¹ Criterion, 12 December 1969, 5.

²²² New Wine, 97, 98.

²²³ Criterion, 5 April 1974, 7.

²²⁴ Criterion, 1 July 1977, 5.

²²⁵ Criterion, 22 July 1977, 6.

²²⁶ Criterion, 4 April 1972, 7.

²²⁷ Moral Problems, 83-86. The commentary was Woywood/Smith, A Practical Commentary on the Code of Canon Law.

sanctification and truth are found outside the Catholic Church.²²⁸ The early church fathers had thought that they were the center of the world; then came the discovery of the New World. Reading scripture in that light, God wants all to be saved.²²⁹ Those who do not know Christ or his Church yet sincerely seek God and by grace strive to do His will through the dictates of conscience, can be saved, even atheists.²³⁰

Papal infallibility? To believe the pope incapable of error when he makes a formal, public statement on faith or morals is false. Rather, infallibility is the Holy Spirit's gift to the Church when all Catholics are in agreement. That occurs when the pope alone or with his bishops needs to clarify or define an issue and makes it clear that pope and bishops are doing it for the whole Church. Noting that Vatican II reversed papal teaching on freedom of religion, of speech, and of assembly,²³¹ the "Pope is infallible, free from error, we Catholics believe, when as head of the universal Church he formally declares that a certain belief is generally held to be true by the universal church and, therefore, must be accepted as true by all Christians." If no consensus exists, he cannot declare infallibly--not on revelation from God or of his own knowledge.²³² Challenged on this, he noted that in practice the pope consulted with bishops. "Validity of infallibility of his ultimate decision does not depend upon ratification by the [bishops] but by the special guidance of the Holy Spirit." Bosler's real feelings on infallibility came out when he was asked why the clergy were not more social justice conscious: The "leaders of the Church are human beings, victims--like everyone else--of the prejudices, the false ideas accepted as truth and the ignorance inherited from those who taught them." After all, St. Paul did not denounce slavery and Christ suffered betrayal by the Apostles.²³³

His impatience with letters asking about matters he thought trivial was palpable: A query about the proper disposal of religious articles—rosaries, scapulars--he dismissed as illustrative of the "faulty and useless" religious education of the previous twenty and thirty years. This "hasty and harsh" answer, he confessed, brought more complaints "than he had about everything else I have written put together" in his twenty-five years at the paper.²³⁴ When he wrote that the recitation of the rosary was declining he got more brickbats; one wrote, "I've got news for you brother. The rosary will be around for a long time after third rate hack priests like you are dead and buried." To this prediction, Bosler replied that facts were facts--the practice had declined.²³⁵ To a devout conservative who couldn't accept the changes in the Church, he had to "acknowledge" his own "inability to understand the extreme conservative mind."²³⁶ Bosler disparaged Fatima as "merely private revelations" in no way the standard of what one must believe

²²⁸ Criterion, 12 August 1977, 6. Bosler pointed to the council's "Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World": Those who do not know Christ or his church, but who strive to lead a good life, are saved thanks to Christ's grace. 24 March 1972, 7.

²²⁹ Criterion, 28 January 1977, 6.

²³⁰ Criterion, 20 May 1977, 5.

²³¹ Criterion, 2 June 1978, 4.

²³² Criterion, 25 August 1978, 4.

²³³ Criterion, 30 Sept 1977, 6.

²³⁴ Criterion, 5 May 1972, 7; 26 May 1972, 3.

²³⁵ Criterion, 12 May 1972, 7.

²³⁶ Criterion, 22 March 1974, 7.

and he confessed doubt that many souls were in hell--such matters must be judged by scripture and tradition.²³⁷ Sometimes his good nature failed: A woman complained of her retired husband and she wanted to retire, too--from cleaning, cooking, ironing, etc.--he replied that she should be glad to have a husband. This prompted another to write that "some lucky woman doesn't know how really lucky she is that you entered the priesthood and didn't propose marriage to her." Hurt, Bosler answered "Thanks. I must be slipping. Once I used to get compliments from women for defending the rights of women in the Church."²³⁸

He was never sure that marrying outside the Church or even apostasy was a sin. Circumstances changed cases and the person may never have been suitably instructed in the faith.²³⁹ A son having married a Methodist, shouldn't his mother see to it that her son's home has holy water, the needed articles for the last rites, and his wife told about Lenten observances? Answer, "most emphatically not." "You can best contribute" to the couple's harmony "by keeping mum on religion. Give witness to your religion by the loving generosity and kindness you show to your daughter-in-law."²⁴⁰ A teenager refuses to go to Mass? Besides prayer, the parents must examine their conscience. Were they excessively critical of the clergy? or the opposite, "an obsequious infantile attitude towards them?" The bottom line was that parents must respect the right of their children to make their own religious commitment and not nag them about going to church.²⁴¹ A daughter joined the Methodist Church of her husband. Is her soul lost? Bosler: "I'm sure Heaven has a large Methodist population, including, perhaps, some former Catholics." If she acted in good conscience "she could well be doing the will of God for her." Challenged to justify that answer, he replied that some children simply decide that Catholicism is not for them. And if "they honestly do what they think they have to do, then they do well and they would sin by going against their conscience." "It can happen."²⁴²

Divorce means automatic excommunication, right? No: The Church had no such general law. The third council of Baltimore imposed such a law, but it's "all but forgotten, primarily, . . . because it has no real meaning today." In any case, excommunication does not cut off one from associating with Catholics or the Mass or parish activities. Excommunicates cannot receive the sacraments, but neither can anyone in a state of serious sin. Good pastors recognize the difficulty of the divorced and remarried who, it may be, are raising the children in the Church. Bosler knew of a number of children from broken families who entered religious life, and knew of none of the divorced faithful who did not receive the sacraments before death.²⁴³ For Bosler what it came down to was that "textbook morality" was "sometimes inadequate for judging the unique experiences of real, live human beings." Admitting that

²³⁷ *Criterion*, 18 October 1974, 5.

²³⁸ *Criterion*, 24 March 1978, 12.

²³⁹ *About Marriage*, 73, 74.

²⁴⁰ *About Marriage*, 74.

²⁴¹ *About Marriage*, 77, 78.

²⁴² *About Marriage*, (Ave Maria Press: Notre Dame, Indiana, 1975).

²⁴³ *About Marriage*, 50, 51.

no one can know how God judges people, he was sure that “God is more merciful than moral theologians.”²⁴⁴ Another divorced woman in a second marriage who attends Mass wanted to know was she living in sin? According to Church law, yes, but really, since she hadn’t turned away from God, which is what sin is, how was she so sinful as to require condemnation? In true Roman fashion, Bosler wrote that there is the ideal and there is reality; he advised her, “Don’t be afraid.”²⁴⁵

On priestly celibacy Bosler hewed close to tradition, at least early on, but of course said little in print. As celibacy became widely debated, he continued to find value in priests freely giving up the right to marry. In 1978, when a woman confessed to being in love with a priest, he predicted that optional celibacy wouldn’t come in her lifetime, and advised her to “fish in other waters.”²⁴⁶ In his memoir, *New Wine*, he was more forthcoming: Celibacy had been a real struggle and at times wished he had a wife and children. Still affected by “bouncing breasts,” he wondered, “Would he do it again,” become a priest? He didn’t know, but his friendship with Protestant clergymen showed it was possible to be fulfilled by combining marriage with ministry. And times had changed: While the priesthood before World War II was a way for a working class boy to get an education and achieve high status, there were other ways to do that now. The Vatican Council had also improved Catholic understanding of marriage, shifting its meaning from a license to have intercourse for procreation and to “allay lust,” to a community of life expressed best through the marital act. Marriage was not a contract, but a covenant--a promise--a mutual giving and not, as heretofore, a second best. Vatican II had called for all to achieve perfection. It was this seeking for priestly perfection that was the principal reason for celibacy.²⁴⁷

The topic of sex was more fraught than either papal infallibility, the theological status of Limbo, the rosary, or Lourdes and Fatima. Bordering as it does on the prurient, the subject long remained too delicate for secular “family newspapers,” let alone a diocesan paper of decades ago. After all, the American bishops never publicly evinced doubt on sexual matters: premarital sex?—“contrary to Christian doctrine”; homosexuality?--“intrinsically disordered and can in no case be approved of”; masturbation?--“an intrinsically and seriously disordered act.” It was the habit of the hierarchy to insist that objective standards existed and they trumped motives or intentions. Minimizing what is grave sin “is rejected.” “A person sins . . . mortally not only when his action comes from direct contempt for love of God and neighbor, but also when he consciously and freely, for whatever reason, chooses something which is seriously disordered.”²⁴⁸

²⁴⁴ *About Marriage*, 53.

²⁴⁵ *Criterion*, 25 May 1973, 7. In another divorce case Bosler discussed at length the matter of external and internal forum, *WMCB*, 54-58. See below.

²⁴⁶ *Criterion*, 30 June 1978, 4.

²⁴⁷ *New Wine*, 14-16.

²⁴⁸ *Criterion*, 16 January 1976, 1.

But times were changing: In 1947, the year Bosler became editor, Sigma Delta Chi, Indiana's newspaper honorary society, bestowed a medal on Professor Alfred Kinsey for his book, Sexual Behavior in the Human Male, as the faculty member who "did the most to bring distinction" to Indiana University. The Indiana Catholic and Record condemned the choice, commenting that it should give Catholic parents pause as to the suitability of the university for their children's education.²⁴⁹ A year later, the IC&R took great exception to one of Kinsey's lectures, finding it "deplorable," a "bald-face attack [on] morality." To equate sexual morality with custom, associate with prostitutes, provide contraceptive information, "discuss the laws relating to bastardy and bigamy"—all charges it laid at Kinsey's door--such ideas "cannot exist without malice." Professor Kinsey, it complained, was at war with the family, morality, and purity.²⁵⁰ When *Sexual Behavior of the Human Female* appeared, in 1953, Archbishop Paul C. Schulte charged the sexologist with having "degraded science" by not circulating his findings among reputable scientists, rather than publishing them for all and sundry to read.²⁵¹ The IC&R wanted to know "What's Going On Down There in Bloomington, Dr. Wells?" Chancellor Herman B. Wells took the time to reply that the university was "firmly in support" of Kinsey's research. In February 1954, during the Army-McCarthy Hearings on communists in the military, while admitting that neither Kinsey nor Wells was a Communist, the IC&R bracketed Kinsey's views with those of Communists in that both saw man as merely an animal. In supporting the professor, the chancellor aided and abetted naturalism and materialism.²⁵²

Given its hostility to his work, the IC&R's irenic tone on the occasion of Kinsey's death, in 1956, was unexpected. It praised Kinsey's "unrelenting efforts, his patient, endless search, his disregard for criticism and ridicule, and his disinterest in financial gain," he was "a truly dedicated scholar." The IC&R would welcome scholars like Kinsey on its side. The editorial's generosity moved Chancellor Wells to "sincere appreciation." Wells admitted to frequent disagreements with Kinsey, but "always believed in his sincerity; his dedication to scholarship was complete. Your editorial . . . makes a real contribution to a better understanding of the importance of . . . the work of the scholar."²⁵³

The work of Kinsey and his associates opened a space for adult discussion of human sexuality and was soon reflected in letters to the Question Box. The letters could be quite frank and Bosler, sometimes reluctantly, responded in kind. He was always pastoral and over time nearly fearless. But the editor of the late 1940s was not the editor of the 1960s (although the later man could be seen in the earlier one): For instance, a front-page editorial of

²⁴⁹ IC&R, 14 May 1948, 4. The IC&R also condemned Ross Lockridge for "his obscene" novel, Raintree County. In the early days of Bosler's editorship, the paper used a conservative priest from Illinois for its editorials and until the early 1970s editorials were unsigned. Until he resigned from the paper in 1966, conservative editorials were likely Fr. Paul Courtney's.

²⁵⁰ IC&R, 13 May 1949, 4.

²⁵¹ IC&R, 21 August 1953, 1. There were reasons to critique Kinsey's data. See footnote 108.

²⁵² IC&R, 12 March 1954, 4. Again the editorial was more likely Courtney's than Bosler's.

²⁵³ IC&R, 31 August 1956, 4. In 1958 the Kinsey Institute admitted to the IC&R that Catholic women refused to be interviewed and therefore were under represented in the sample--ten percent rather than twenty percent of the population. IC&R, 14 March 1958, 5.

1948 was headlined forthrightly, "In Defense of Sex." This, Bosler granted, was a "Shocking sort of title for a Catholic publication." The 3,000-word effort was prompted by an article in Cosmopolitan magazine on the need for parents to stop shirking their duty to inform their children about sex. The title might be shocking, but the IC&R's treatment of the subject was quite traditional, even Victorian: Mere knowledge of the facts of life was not enough; it was necessary to put women on a pedestal and hold family life sacred, for chastity was the virtue "that preserved civilization."²⁵⁴

Twenty-five years later, women were off the pedestal and treated by Bosler with realism and sympathy. Beyond the Kinsey effect, what had changed was Vatican II, especially its raising of the unitive purpose of conjugal love to the level of the procreative. To get down to cases: What about "impure thoughts"? A mother, 53, with five children confessed to being troubled by them. Bosler ascribed her difficulty to faulty teaching. Sexual thoughts were not impure nor sexual acts immodest unless "misdirected." Sex, erroneously, had been seen as "dangerous, nasty, impure, that somehow became all right once a marriage ceremony was gone through." There had been no preparation of the young to enjoy and appreciate sex in marriage. "A mother of five without sexual thoughts would be a being from outer space." Bosler told her to ignore the thoughts that bothered her.²⁵⁵

Legions of readers wanted to know if masturbation is a serious sin. Bosler didn't think so. What of voluntary ejaculation for the purpose of artificial insemination? Citing Fr. Bernard Haring's Medical Ethics, he answered that despite the American bishops' guide to Catholic hospitals against it, enough theologians disagreed so that one may use it to achieve a pregnancy not possible or likely any other way.²⁵⁶ Among adolescents the practice was the rule, not the exception, and there was lots of temptation. [Here Bosler relied on the traditional "get out of jail card," pointing out that not every such act is a mortal sin, many theologians finding freedom of the will due to sleepiness, tension, etc., much reduced the evil and the blame.] Perhaps it was "merely" a bad habit. The real question is: "Is your life selfish?"²⁵⁷ A married woman had problems reaching climax in intercourse; might she masturbate to achieve it? This was a delicate question, but since the secular press deals with such matters so would he: "Moral theologians have long taught that it is not sinful for a woman to help herself to a climax after intercourse."²⁵⁸ This was news to many, clergy and laity alike. Some years later, a woman complained that her husband reached climax before she did, and she had to masturbate, as she put it, "completing the marital act." Her husband regarded her action as a mortal sin and won't speak to her afterwards. Bosler: "If there is anyone sinful, it is your husband for ignoring your needs." All the old Catholic moral theology books accepted that the woman had "a right to complete satisfaction in the marriage

²⁵⁴ IC&R, 13 February 1948, 1,4.

²⁵⁵ What a Modern Catholic Believes, 29, 30.

²⁵⁶ Criterion, 28 September 1973, 7.

²⁵⁷ Criterion, 29 October 1971, 7.

²⁵⁸ Criterion, 24 May 1974, 7.

act” and permitted masturbation. Bosler recommended The Freedom of Sexual Love as a book useful to others “who have asked questions too delicate to answer in this column.”²⁵⁹

Artificial birth control? A mother of three married five and a half years uses the pill because abstinence and rhythm didn't work. She doesn't feel she is doing wrong, but rather for her “children's sake, my own sanity and congeniality with my husband what we have decided together is for the best.” For the first time the family was “above water” economically, and “family unity has vastly improved because I'm physically and emotionally up to snuff.” She wanted “desperately” to receive communion, yet two priests had refused her absolution. In conscience she could not agree with the pope. Bosler advised her to read the whole of *Humanae Vitae*, and the American, Canadian, and French bishops' statements concerning the encyclical. “If you are convinced you are right you have no sin to confess.”²⁶⁰ A couple reached climax without the marital act--had they sinned? Bosler said it was up to them to decide.²⁶¹ While the “Church still teaches” that it is “an evil, theologians and national conferences of bishops have recognized that there are occasions and circumstances where couples may in good conscience decide that to avert the destruction of the marriage or harm to the children already born they may use artificial birth control.”²⁶²

As for abortion, after 22 January 1973 it became the issue of issues. Eleven months later, Bosler sat down with the chancery staff to discuss medical ethics. He told them if they hadn't read Fr. Bernard Haring's Medical Ethics, 1972, to do so, and proceeded to deliver a wide-ranging summary of the book: Sterilization should be allowed, semen gotten in usual way for fertility tests, and many other matters now forbidden allowed. A German doctor came to Haring with a case of a pregnant mother with unstoppable bleeding: The doctor would have to abort the fetus or decide the uterus was diseased and take it out, leaving no chance of a child in future if he did. He aborted. To Haring, for the Church to condemn the doctor's choice was “ridiculous.” Bosler was able to cite a half-dozen moral theologians who agreed with Haring, making it a good probable opinion. The problem was that the theologians who drew up the hospital code for the U.S. bishops were of the old school that physical evil was objectively moral evil. The crux is the intent and the two goods involved. Remember, “we've always said one could steal to keep your family from starving. If you disagree, you still have to let others use it. You have the obligation to tell doctors that it is all right. And if you can't do it in a Catholic hospital you have an obligation to say go to a non-

²⁵⁹ Criterion, 9 May 1980, 6. Joseph W. and Lois F. Bird, (Doubleday Image Books), 1970), a mature, comprehensive treatment of married sex. In 1960, Polish Bishop Karl Wojtyla published Love and Responsibility, containing “accurate information about female orgasm and how it may be achieved” Like Bosler, the future pope supported the equality of the spouses in marriage and the “man's responsibility to satisfy the woman.” Thomas Cahill, Pope John XXIII (Penguin Books: New York, 2002), 228.

²⁶⁰ About Marriage, 41-45.

²⁶¹ About Marriage, 45, 46.

²⁶² Criterion, 22 October 1976, 5.

Catholic hospital.” The old way was to identify a physical evil as an objectively immoral act. No longer. We’re not giving up our principles—or direct and indirect means [principle of the double effect], “but we want it properly understood.” “Killing is a physical evil but it is not necessarily an objectively evil moral act every time we do it. . . . We have misunderstood the interpretation of these principles.”

Bosler blamed the Church’s failure to panic as freedom and liberalism were emphasized in the larger world; Pius IX’s condemnations of modern political ideas—press, assembly, democracy—was one result. Theological research was clamped down, and after about 1850 “our theology got frozen,” stultified. At Vatican II cardinals stood and declared that under Pius X “we had a reign of terror in the Church.” “We began to be afraid of St. Thomas, we became afraid of everything. We could only quote the [theologians] who were the authorities and taught us in school.” This was the situation between 1850 to 1950. In his own case, he remembered doing graduate work in 1945 to 1947 at the *Angelicum*, “there was a reign of terror then.” We have to take into account the magisterium which has guidelines, but as the moral theologian Richard McCormick states, the magisterium has to be careful in giving moral directives. It shouldn’t do as *Casti Conubii* did in declaring artificial birth control a mortal sin. “It has no real authority to do this.”

The magisterium is there to help when you have extremes. In a hospital setting, “You have to act and you have to act right now” and theologians say you can follow “a good probable opinion.” If 50 percent of moral theologians concur, “you have more than a probable opinion.” “This whole problem shouldn’t be devastating to our faith.” The hospital’s ethics board should make the decision. Since the “great freeze” . . . “the faith has been presented as something that is absolutely certain and we all have to be in agreement.” That was a “fiction” that was kept up. “That fiction was destroyed by Vatican I in 1870 but people didn’t realize it.” “My great enlightenment came when I was doing my thesis and I had to read all of the documents of Vatican I and there I realized that important cardinals and bishops were getting up and violently disagreeing with one another.”²⁶³

What he told the chancery staff, Bosler told his readers: Three years after *Roe v. Wade*, a woman of 45, a convert with ten children, wrote that she had aborted a pregnancy at eight weeks upon advice from more than one doctor. She had been near death at her last delivery. What did he think? Bosler thought that the physicians’ pressure lessened her culpability. She had made a decision, a choice, and in his judgment she “did not seriously sin, if you sinned at all.”ⁱ Later he discussed abortion in the context of the principle of the double-effect. Using casuistry, he began by noting that an act can be good, bad, or neutral; for example, the quality of walking depends on whether one is visiting the sick, on the way to robbing a bank, or just moving from one place to another. There are times when good and bad are bound together. In such a case an agent knows that an evil will follow, thus intending the bad effect, but if a better way could be found she would use it. The good effect of the act flows as immediately as the bad effect, so that the good is produced by the good effect and not by the bad effect. Finally, the good effect is so important that it justifies allowing the bad effect, as in the case of a pregnant woman whose cancerous uterus is removed even though it means aborting the fetus. The good effect and the bad effect are simultaneous. As for the

²⁶³ Bosler chancery staff notes, November 1973.

tension between theologians and the hierarchy regarding medical and family problems, in Bosler's mind, the hierarchy, by stressing objective evil too much, scanted the intention of the actor and circumstances.²⁶⁴

A Catholic husband was troubled by his non-Catholic wife's unwillingness to accept the Church's position on the pill, sterilization, and abortion in the face of "physically and emotionally starved" children, "a burden on the overpopulated world." Bosler began by stating that the "Catholic Church is in no position to force its own members, much less non-Catholics, to do something they think is morally wrong. It has long been the [Church's] traditional teaching . . . that individuals must follow the decision they make for themselves with a properly informed conscience." Normally, this means seeking advice in difficult situations and the obligation to consider seriously Church teachings on the matter. The "church proclaims principles of morality and declares certain actions morally evil, but does not make applications to individual acts. Problems of morality arise for individuals when they are faced with a conflict of obligations or must choose between the lesser of two evils." At such times "the individual must make a decision for himself or herself and follow that decision even though in reality it be wrong. Though Catholics oppose the evil of abortion as a threat to respect for life and the dignity of man, they nevertheless hold that those who believe that in certain circumstances an abortion is something that must be done, or that sterilization is an obligation, must follow their own consciences." Those opposed to abortion "must do everything short of physical force" to end the practice, "but they may not force others to agree with them . . . for that is to destroy the very dignity of man which they strive to protect. So, in your case, you may not force your Catholic conscience on your wife, and for the sake of preserving your marriage you may have to permit her to do things which she thinks are right and you think are wrong."²⁶⁵

A reader took exception, arguing that not conscience but the Church's magisterium is the "final arbiter." Bosler reiterated that the magisterium cannot decide the morality of individual acts, "for this is determined by changing circumstances, the moral development and psychological conditions of the one who performs the act, and at times by a conflict of good things to be done or evils avoided, in which an individual must choose what seems the lesser of two evils." It is the individual who must decide what is the right thing to do. Quoting Vatican II's Declaration on Religious Liberty: "It is through his conscience that man sees and recognizes the demands of the divine law. He is bound to follow this conscience faithfully in all his activity so that he may come to God, who is his last end. Therefore, he must not be forced to act contrary to his conscience. Nor must he be prevented from acting according to his conscience, especially in religious matters." And again, in the Constitution on the Church in the World: "Conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of a man. There he is alone with God."²⁶⁶

Homosexuality emerged in the 1960s as part of the larger debate over sexual expression. Until then there had been little questioning of the consensus that the behavior was an evil practice of a small minority, sinful and repugnant. Early on, Bosler's position was indistinguishable from Church tradition. In 1967 he advised one writer to

²⁶⁴ Criterion, 21 October 1977, 6. In 2010 the Phoenix, Arizona bishop held that a nun had excommunicated herself by permitting an abortion of the sort outlined above. If you aborted, the mother would live; if not, both would die. As Bosler anticipated, many theologians and Canonists vigorously criticized the bishop's decision.

²⁶⁵ Criterion, 12 January 1979, 5.

²⁶⁶ Criterion, 11 May 1979, 8.

the Question Box to avoid others like himself if they were occasions of sin and to seek the society of “normal people.” Same sex preference was “an unfortunate tendency,” “an illness,” yet God tempts no one beyond one’s strength. “Fortunately,” today “theologians are aware that grace will not cure all physical defects, that homosexuality is primarily a problem for the psychiatrist whose help must be enlisted so that grace can be built upon nature.”²⁶⁷ None of this would have been of much help. Later that year a *Criterion* editorial showed little development: While remarking that homosexuals, for the first time, were getting a “modicum of compassion” from the churches--“a radical departure from traditional religious attitudes.” Still, the willingness of some Episcopalian clergy to place homosexual partnering on the same level with heterosexual ones was “unacceptable.” Such a view “is no service to the homosexual or to the emotional disorder with which he must live.”²⁶⁸ Compassion, yes, but not acceptance; pity the sinner, hate the sin. Five years on, while aware of the trend toward greater tolerance, Bosler continued to defend the Church’s opposition to homosexuality: To a 17-year-old, practicing Catholic, he offered that the Church was trying “to protect the likes of you from a life of frustration and unhappiness.” Suggesting that the writer might be merely “a late starter,” Bosler was sure that gays were few, inevitably unhappy, and “doomed to live a restricted, abnormal life.” Q: What do you tell a 20-year-old who is an active homosexual who does not feel he is doing wrong? A: “Urge him to see a psychiatrist.”²⁶⁹

One who did consult a psychiatrist thanked him for the understanding he had shown to homosexuals like himself, but confessed he had despaired of living a productive life: his fear of being found out, of being an outcast, never to have a family, children, the failure of psychiatry to change him, his discovery that “the neurosis was so deeply rooted there was no possibility of cure.” Fortunately, an understanding priest saved him from suicide by convincing him that he could be productive. It was time that the Church evaluated people for what they are as persons rather than some “reviled category”; perhaps time for men, homosexual or not, to “cease the self-loathing, the self-destroying sense of guilt, the self-pity, and to begin to live productive lives for the betterment of themselves, their society and the Kingdom of God.” Bosler responded: “Need anything more be said?”²⁷⁰

Bosler continued to oscillate between extending sympathy to gays and an inability to accept the practice. Asked in 1974 if it was possible for a homosexual to become a saint, he answered that with “God’s grace,” it was: A “true, inborn homosexual” could do so by directing his sexual energy to charity for others and following Church law by being celibate. Whether one could become a heterosexual, Bosler confessed, was beyond his competence; some psychiatrists believe that homosexuality is sometimes a phase, yet true, inborn homosexuals “are rarely helped.”²⁷¹ Two years later, “so that normal people can appreciate the misery that a homosexual must live through,” he published a letter from one who clearly regarded his orientation as a curse. In an attempt to provide solace, Bosler offered that

²⁶⁷ *Criterion*, 12 May 1967, 4.

²⁶⁸ *Criterion*, 15 December 1967, 4.

²⁶⁹ *Criterion*, 25 February 1972, 7. Published in [What to Ask About Marriage](#), 280-282. What do you tell a 20-year-old who is an active homosexual who does not feel he is doing wrong? Answer: “Urge him to see a psychiatrist.”

²⁷⁰ [What a Modern Catholic Believes](#), 33-35.

²⁷¹ *Criterion*, 12 April 1974, 7.

Jesus was not ashamed of the writer: his “affliction” was an opportunity because, not being bound by family, he could serve others. “As in the case of dwarfs and crippled persons [!], homosexuals are usually endowed with exceptional talents.” He suggested that the writer sublimate his sexual energy by establishing a “homosexuals anonymous” in his city.²⁷² Such advice was well-intended, but would come to be seen as farcical. Later that year the American bishops issued “To Live in Christ Jesus.” While acknowledging that homosexuality was not chosen (a real advance), it remained “intrinsically disordered” and required celibacy.²⁷³ Although the bishops’ pastoral was praised by the Vatican as “providential and timely,” Criterion readers learned that 65 of the 227 U.S. bishops wanted a more pastoral approach and had opposed its issuance.²⁷⁴ Another sure sign that the ground was shifting in the mid-1970s was the formation of a Dignity USA chapter with the permission of the pastor, at St. Thomas Aquinas parish.²⁷⁵

In 1977 the Catholic Theological Society replied to “To live in Christ Jesus” with “Human Sexuality: New Directions in American Catholic Thought.” In the pages devoted to homosexuality the authors agreed that homosexual sex can be moral, as did the majority of its members. “Question Box” readers wanted to know what Msgr. Bosler thought. Still professing reluctance to discuss it, he noted that gays write to say he is ignorant and doesn’t understand, while others charge him with destroying morality and committing heresy. He remained essentially conservative on homosexuality, but pastoral not condemnatory: Convinced that God doesn’t punish men—“men do,” he thought it possible that homosexuals had something wrong in their genes or “more likely than not, . . . an overprotective father or mother.” But as Christ had associated with publicans and sinners--outcasts--today Jesus would associate with homosexuals. The problem was that homosexuals didn’t want sympathy they wanted their rights. But this threatened Church teachings and even national security (seen as a crime and an abomination, gays were viewed as blackmail targets). Those who “came out of the closet” lost their rights and their livelihoods. He thought gays ought to be quiet, but admitted they had the right to organize for protection. Can they change? “Sometimes,” he thought, “maybe,” but little had been done to help them do so. In the end, he confessed he didn’t “know what the answer is.”²⁷⁶

In November 1978 Criterion readers found more sophisticated answers in a new advice column by the Kennys, a Catholic husband and wife team from Rensselaer, Indiana. Jim, a psychologist and wife Mary, responding to a parent whose son was gay, explained that it is an inborn tendency and no reason to think that homosexuals were pederasts. It “may be partly instinctive” and “is not a matter of choice.” What is needed is “tolerance.” Allowing that “It may be immoral, but certainly homosexual tendencies are not. They are there. They are given, and they are hard

²⁷² Criterion, 13 February 1976, 5. Bosler observed that marriage was barred to homosexuals as was the priesthood and noted the terrible temptation that homosexuals posed in religious orders. For a man of his experience, he would have been well aware of homosexuals in the priesthood and in monasteries and convents.

²⁷³ Gillis, Roman Catholic, 177.???:

²⁷⁴ Criterion, 3 December 1976, 4; 17 December 1976, 1.

²⁷⁵ It meets there to this day.

²⁷⁶ Criterion, 29 July 1977, 5.

enough to deal with as it is.”²⁷⁷ In time, Bosler caught up with the Kennys: In 1982, asked by a husband and wife what they had done wrong to have a lesbian daughter, he answered “Nothing!” Why there were homosexuals was a disputed question, but they seem to be born not made. It used to be hidden, “but now gays wanted to be accepted and we’re surprised at their number. True, the Church “holds that objectively . . . full [homosexual] pleasure would be sinful . . . as for any single person.” But “If the relationships are sexual, God alone will decide whether or how much they are sinful.” Since the parents described their daughter as “very charitable,” Bosler admonished that she be accepted for what she is--“a good, generous, talented human being.” In this way, his views on homosexuality moved in parallel with the public’s, but more quickly.²⁷⁸

Some bishops marched with Bosler’s own evolution: In 1983 Seattle Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen welcomed the lay Catholic homosexual organization, Dignity, Inc., to his Washington State archdiocese; for doing so, and for his opposition to Washington State’s heavy dependence on defense contracts, the liberal Hunthausen was forced to accept the ignominy of a supervisory bishop and stripped of most of his authority. Some bishops didn’t evolve: New York Archbishop Terence Cardinal Cooke defended the teaching that genital sexual expression for gays could not be licit. To provide a spiritual support system for Catholic celibate homosexuals, in September 1980, Cooke founded “Courage.” His successor, John Cardinal O’Connor, strongly backed the organization and Pope John Paul II praised its work. In 1994, however, at Courage’s sixth annual conference, its priest-leader lamented that some clergy and even bishops “in their hearts” supported Dignity, Inc. He reported that the “prevalent view” among priests was that “Courage” was reactionary. . . . Such priests counsel” that homosexuals do not have to follow church teaching.²⁷⁹

By the mid-1980s the AIDS epidemic (Acquired Immunity Deficiency Syndrome) was well under way. Prominent fundamentalist Protestant ministers remained homophobic, seeing AIDS as God’s judgment on sinful man. In May 1986 Cardinal John Krol of Philadelphia called the disease “an act of vengeance” [presumably God’s] against the sin of homosexuality.²⁸⁰ That October, Joseph Ratzinger, head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), issued “Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexuals.” Insisting that departure from or silence about the teaching was unacceptable, priests must distance themselves from the “pro-homosexual movement” and its “deceitful propaganda.” It demanded that homosexuals who denied Church teaching be denied the use of Church property and all support withdrawn. Bishops were instructed to oppose gay rights legislation, and while “violent malice in speech or action” against gays was to be deplored, it was “understandable”

²⁷⁷ Criterion, 17 November 1978, 16.

²⁷⁸ Criterion, 24 September 1982, 10. It would take thirty more years for Pope Francis, in July 2013, to famously withhold judgment of homosexuals—“Who am I to judge?”

²⁷⁹ Criterion, 26 August 1994, 23.

²⁸⁰ Fox, Sex and Catholicism, 150, 151, 158.

why some people were aroused against them for their carelessness of the lives of others. Same sex orientation while not a sin, was “an objective disorder,” “a more or less strong tendency toward an intrinsic moral evil”²⁸¹

As a result of such hostility, many gay Catholics went on sabbatical or left the Church for good; Dignity Inc.’s membership dropped from 5,000 to 3,000. In November 1986, local Indianapolis clergy, nuns, and lay Catholics sponsored a seminar by the Catholic Coalition for Gay Civil Rights at which Fr. Robert Nugent, a Salvatorian, and Sr. Jean Grammick, a School Sister of Notre Dame, leaders of the homosexual apostolate in the American Church, criticized the Vatican document.²⁸² In May 1987 the archbishop of Washington, D.C., banned Dignity’s weekly Sunday Mass at Georgetown University, which had been held in the chapel for eleven years.²⁸³ All but a handful of dioceses fell into line, expelling the group from meeting at its parishes. Some progress appeared: In September 1997, the American bishops issued “Always Our Children,” a pastoral addressed to the parents of homosexuals; its message was that although the practice continued condemnable, since the orientation was not experienced as chosen, the children were to be loved.²⁸⁴

When Archbishop Schulte’s retired in 1970, the Criterion, “in thanksgiving,” remembered his consistent support. Bosler observed that the newspaper “has its share of critics, some of whom, from time to time, have sought to curtail its freedom, but [Schulte] would have none of it.”²⁸⁵ Archbishop George J. Biskup would be different: he had had three years as coadjutor (July 1967 to January 1970) to conclude that the Criterion aroused unwonted disunity in the archdiocese. Bosler’s preference for the views of some theologians over those of bishops and popes mightily displeased Biskup, who believed he confused and rattled the laity. Unwilling to give the editor the independence Schulte had, he communicated this early on in an eight-page “Overview” critique. His main concern was that people felt little connection to the paper:

Editorial policies in particular have alienated many of the more conservative readers. As a result the paper has a ‘liberal’ image that automatically estranges a certain segment of the readership The image is self-

²⁸¹ Criterion, 7 November 1986, 1; Hastings, Vatican Council II and After, 278; Fox, Sex and Catholicism, 136, 137. A week later a mother wrote of her gratitude at Ratzinger’s stand. Her son was trying to get rid of his homosexual feelings (feelings he says that “came so naturally to him”). She hoped that through effort he will be able “to have a normal relationship with a woman.” Her son was sensitive and “I think he has always felt he didn’t measure up to what a man should be.”

²⁸² Criterion, 21 November 1986, 3.

²⁸³ Criterion, 19 June 1987, 26.

²⁸⁴ Fox, Sex and Catholicism, 140-144.

²⁸⁵ Criterion, 23 January 1970, 4.

defeating insofar as it curbs communication with and from all the people. A greater diversity of views is needed. We intend to seek it out.²⁸⁶

As he had at times in the past, Bosler made an effort to placate his critics: In January 1970, the month Biskup became archbishop, in addition to the weekly columns by experts in theology, scripture, and Vatican II, the paper began a two-page "Know Your Faith" feature.²⁸⁷ In March 1971, a new weekly column, "For Catholics Only," ran on page one. Designed to reconcile Catholics with opposing viewpoints, it was an assignment, as an editorial noted, that might prove impossible.²⁸⁸ To give voice to traditionalists and progressives, the Criterion sometimes matched adversaries to debate an issue--"Belief and Unbelief," "Priesthood of the Future," and the like,²⁸⁹ though why Bosler would think that running conflicting views about such matters would allay Biskup's concerns is a mystery. By June 1971, responding to continued pressure from the archbishop, he promised a "New look-new outlook": he admitted that for years the paper had taken liberal, unpopular positions, disenfranchising those who did not agree with its editorials; readers "became disinterested, at best, in the publication's welfare" as conservatives and traditionalists became "estranged" from the voice of the archdiocese to the poverty of both readers and the newspaper. Since Catholics were so polarized, the paper would open its editorial pages "to a greater variety of conviction and sentiment." Editorials would be signed and reflect only the views of the writer. Opposing views would be solicited though, in fairness, anonymous letters would not be published. A new "board of advisors" would assume overall editorial direction and judgment.²⁹⁰ Although he continued to conduct the Question Box, from 1971 to the day he resigned as editor five years later, Bosler never contributed a signed editorial.²⁹¹ Also missing was the statement that the paper expressed "a Catholic viewpoint, not THE Catholic viewpoint." For Biskup, the only view admissible in

²⁸⁶ John Fink box, "Promotion" file. Produced during Biskup's tenure, carrying neither date nor author, the changes coincided with his becoming archbishop.

²⁸⁷ That it was ready as the change in archbishops took place indicates that Bosler was well aware that Biskup, in regard to the paper, was not Schulte.

²⁸⁸ Criterion, 26 March 1971, 1.

²⁸⁹ Criterion, 16 April 1971, 5; 28 May 1971, 5. Such point/counter point had appeared before (e.g., on the candidacies of Nixon and Kennedy), and would continue through the 1970s. The same thinking had been at work in 1967 when the weekly columns of the liberal columnist John Cogley was added to balance the conservative Fr. John Doran. The column by Dale Francis, editor-publisher of the conservative National Catholic Register, appeared after May 1974.

²⁹⁰ Criterion, 4 June 1971, 4. What's striking is how closely Bosler's *mea culpa* paralleled Biskup's "Overview" critique.

²⁹¹ The more conservative voice of B.H. Acklemire appeared and for a time it became the practice to run a single editorial--Mrs. Acklemire's. She stayed from 1969 to November 1975.

the paper was The Catholic viewpoint. Readers noted the changes, with liberals predictably morose and conservatives happy.

As the Criterion's continued to display the real divisions in the Church, keeping it open "to a greater variety of conviction and sentiment" was not what the archbishop had had in mind. In fall 1971, with Bosler away covering the Bishops Synod in Rome, Biskup called a series of meetings around the archdiocese inviting "priests and lay leaders" to look at new editorial policies and ways to improve the newspaper.²⁹² The meetings produced a board of lay and clerical advisors to "help the editors" make the publication more representative of the archdiocese. While retaining his belief in the value of a Catholic paper, for Biskup, if it was to instruct the people it must enter every home: "For that to be possible the paper must be acceptable to our people."²⁹³ Five months later, the archbishop found a Criterion more aware of its obligation to "present information in such a manner that the confusions of the past will not be created by them [sic]." But the praise was faint: While the paper was an important source of knowledge and much in it regarding faith was "valid," "[m]uch of the confusion" which "disturbs its readers" was caused by "the presentation of so much varied thinking about any Catholic subject." "Knowledgeable Catholics must distinguish between truth and the search for truth." It happens "all too often, that writers in their search for truth tend to sound dogmatic in their presentation."²⁹⁴ The differences between Bosler and Biskup were unbridgeable.

Circulation was another issue; the archbishop wanted the paper to start standing financially on its own. Instead, declines in circulation from 1972 to 1975 led to cost cutting with deep reductions in staff and the number of pages (the 1970s were not prosperous years).²⁹⁵ Moreover, as a full-time pastor at St. Thomas Aquinas after 1963, then at Little Flower, Bosler took his parish duties seriously, leaving fewer hours for supervising the paper. Grown weary of the disputes with the archbishop, he spent less and less time at the Criterion office until by 1975 he was seldom there, instead writing at home and handling "situations" by phone. Fr. Thomas Widner, named associate editor in 1975, mistakenly thought Bosler was on sabbatical.²⁹⁶ While even a long time staffer like Paul Fox could be "totally unaware of friction between editor and publisher, which was not dwelled upon or even mentioned,"²⁹⁷ friction there was. Biskup finally told Bosler straight out that he did not want him "to engage in controversy at the Criterion." Bosler resigned, 30 September 1976,²⁹⁸ ostensibly for health reasons. At the board's request, he remained for a time

²⁹² "Future of paper to be discussed," Criterion, 10 September 1971, 1.

²⁹³ Biskup binders, 1970-1972, letter to priests, 2 September 1971.

²⁹⁴ Biskup binder, 1970-1972, letter of 15 February 1972; Criterion, 25 February 1972, 1.

²⁹⁵ Criterion, 11 February 1972, 4; 10 January 1975, 4.

²⁹⁶ Widner interview, xxx. Criterion, 11 February 1972, 4; 10 January 1975, 4.

²⁹⁷ Paul Fox interview, June 2009.

²⁹⁸ Bosler left Little Flower parish after eleven years the following July 1977, and was granted early retirement "for reasons of health." Criterion, 1 July 1977, 4. He gave up the Question Box, June 1984, about the time John Fink replaced Fr. Tom Widner as editor. Was Bosler pushed or was it a good time to go?

as “editorial consultant” and continued the Question Box to June 1984, by then, syndicated to more than thirty diocesan papers.²⁹⁹

The young priest who had been uneasy entering the offices of the Church Federation of Greater Indianapolis (CFGFI) became the ecumenists’ ecumenist. For thirty-two years Ray Bosler was the archdiocese’s unofficial representative to the group, even serving a stint as its director. In 1960, he was one of only five Roman Catholic priest-experts with Vatican authorization to dialogue with Lutherans; five years later, in recognition of his fifteen years spent promoting interfaith dialogue, especially with Jews, he was named by the U.S. bishops one of ten to serve on a new sub-commission of its ecumenical affairs committee to establish formal relations with Jews.³⁰⁰ Named monsignor, in 1966, domestic prelate, 1967, and a papal chamberlain, Bosler was one of six Catholic theologians who met annually as a team with the Disciples of Christ (1966-1972). His service to the archdiocese included six years as notary, secretary, and judge of the Archdiocesan Matrimonial Tribunal. As St. Thomas Aquinas pastor he established one of the first Catholic parish councils in the country. After 1980 he was liaison to the Church’s charismatic renewal movement, archdiocesan director of ecumenism, and member of the ecumenical affairs department of the Indiana Council of Churches. Besides talks on television and radio, for over twenty-five years he was a frequent panelist on local television’s Focus on Faith, and for many years chaplain of the archdiocesan Council of Catholic Men (NCCM).

An active member of the Indianapolis Literary Club (1957-1994) and the Indiana Press Club, Bosler’s civic work included membership on the Indiana Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, the Indianapolis Health and Welfare Council, founding member of the city’s Catholic Interracial Council, the Mayor’s Human Rights Commission, a director of the Community Service Council, the Marion County Health and Welfare Council, and director of the Indianapolis Council on World Affairs.

In a long life few people are ever completely constant, all of a piece: After 1980, Bosler, the man of science and rationality, the enemy of “magical thinking,” became the archdiocesan liaison to the Catholic Charismatic Renewal movement. At one of its meetings he was “slain in the spirit”—an event when the Holy Spirit, through the

²⁹⁹ New Wine, 94^{Criterion}, 8 October 1976, 1, 7. Bosler lived another ten years in productive ministry as an active lecturer, speaking primarily on Vatican II and St. Paul. Paul Fox interview, June 2009. Archbishop Biskup was ill his last years and the archdiocese was run by the vicar-general, Msgr. Francis Touhy.

³⁰⁰ ^{Criterion}, 8 October 1965, 1, 9.

agency of a minister or priest, moves upon a person with such power that the person collapses to the ground, incapacitated. Catholic parishes who practice it hold prayer meetings outside Mass featuring prophecy, faith healing, and speaking in tongues. Since the mid-1960s, supported by Paul VI, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI, the movement has spread globally. A second surprise is that the Bosler who had worried at the council that the importance of the Blessed Virgin was being exaggerated, even to his being “disturbed . . . that [so many of] the great cathedrals of France were dedicated to Mary,” in a homily the year before he died he agreed with St. Bonaventure that as the Sun “excels and makes glorious” the planets, so Mary “excels and makes glorious the members of the whole church.”³⁰¹

Bosler was showered with honors: a partial list includes the Rabbi Stephen Wise Award, 1953, (given by the Indianapolis chapter of the American Jewish Congress for service in promoting human rights); City of Hope Good Citizenship Award for leadership in interfaith relations, 1960; “Citizen of the Year” from the Indianapolis chapter of Omega Psi Phi (national Negro fraternity) for “outstanding efforts” to promote interracial justice, 1963; “Man of the Year” of the B’nai B’rith Lodge of Indianapolis, 1966 (the “Woman of the Year” was the president of Planned Parenthood!);³⁰² and honorary doctorates from Marian College (he served many years as a trustee) and Christian Theological Seminary. In 1985 he was elected to the Indiana Academy, a society limited to 100 members for their “contributions to cultural, scientific, literary, civic, religious and educational developments within the State.”³⁰³ Editorship of the archdiocesan newspaper led to service as director and treasurer of the National Catholic Press Association.

In 1951, after only four years as editor, the newspaper began winning prizes: Catholic Press Association gold medal for editorial excellence over every Catholic newspaper in the country and placed second in the “religious teachings and exhortation division.” He was happiest over the latter award and mordantly humorous about the editorial prize (“Look What You Folks Have Been Swatting Flies With”). He attributed the gold medal to the “morose conviction” that since no one read the paper, it left “us free to say what we pleased.”³⁰⁴ The next year the IC&R again won the gold medal for best editorials over the more than 260 Catholic papers, and was judged fifth of twelve finalists as “most distinguished” for “overall excellence.” A third prize for best editorials followed in 1957, and in 1959 it won gold for typography and layout, its fourth first place CPA medal.³⁰⁵ Called the Criterion after October 1960, the paper continued to win CPA awards for excellence; in 1961 it received an award from the Journalism Department at

³⁰¹ Our Lady of Mt. Carmel,” Notre Dame Archives, Bosler papers.

³⁰² New Wine, 105; Criterion, 22 November 1963, 12.

³⁰³ Criterion, 21 June 1985, 2; Archdiocesan Archives, Bosler Box, program of Indiana Academy, 11 June 1985.

³⁰⁴ In August 1952, the IC&R columnist, Elyse (Elsie) Mahern won one of the 100 Christopher Essay prizes. IC&R, 27 June 1952, 1; 15 August 1952, 1. Paul Fox, 1959-1974 staff member, observed that the vast majority of readers did not read the editorials or letters, and few of the columnists, “except when name-dropping and local situations.” Paul Fox memo note to author, June 2009.

³⁰⁵ IC&R, 15 May 1953, 1; IC&R, 24 May 1957; 22 May 1959, 10. Under Fr. Thomas Widner the paper would continue to win CPA awards.

Missouri's Lincoln University (traditionally an African-American school), for pioneering racial justice (the other award that year went to The Saturday Review).

He had trouble meeting deadlines and often "had to fly out of his house" at 10:30 at night to get copy into the week's edition.³⁰⁶ He signed the paychecks and, "acutely aware" of the paper's financial limitations, "frequently apologized" to the small staff for the lack of periodic raises; by way of a bonus, checks for \$30 or so were given to all employees at the Christmas pitch-in," to which former staffers were invited.³⁰⁷ Necessarily, the staff had to wear many hats.³⁰⁸ On Wednesday, 8 October 1958, Pius XII died at the Vatican at 9:52 p.m., Indianapolis time. Having but one day to prepare, print, and mail the edition, the Indiana Catholic and Record was delivered as usual throughout the archdiocese on Friday, carrying a full page and a half summary of the pope's life, a half-page of photographs, and reaction statements from the archbishop, the governor, the mayor, and representatives of the Church Federation of Greater Indianapolis, the Methodist Church, and Beth el Zedick synagogue.

He had his detractors: Nationally, conservative bishops, pastors, and laity pressured their diocesan papers to drop his Question Box column. "This was especially true of my opinions on moral issues and mortal sins."³⁰⁹ Within the Indianapolis archdiocese, animosity tended to increase with distance from the more liberal city. Many rural and small town pastors hated the newspaper's drain on parish funds. Priests who differed ideologically and theologically resented his use of the editorial megaphone. Being human, some were jealous. Of course, he had his loyal followers, among them the many subscribers from outside the archdiocese. In the 1950s he gained a sort of fame when his picture appeared in Time magazine for taking a Spanish cardinal to task for that nation's continuing discrimination against its Protestants.³¹⁰

As a pastor he was well received at St. Thomas Aquinas in 1963; the relatively liberal intellectual climate that obtained there--Butler University was nearby, the Butler-Tarkington neighborhood counted many in the professions, and the interracial nature of the parish--some twenty percent African-American--seemed tailor-made for him. He was at St. Thomas just long enough to begin raising funds for a new church designed, in its three-quarter round amphitheater, a large red, empty "cross," and few kneelers to reflect the council's influence. At St. Therese of the Infant Jesus ("Little Flower"), (1966-1977) things were otherwise: There he followed a popular pastor who built the mammoth church to his own specifications, oblivious to the liturgical changes of Vatican II. According to one

³⁰⁶ Author's interview of Fr. Thomas Murphy, 6 March 2006.

³⁰⁷ Long-time staffer, Paul Fox memo, June 2009.

³⁰⁸ Paul Fox, hired full-time after graduation from Marian College, in 1959, worked on copy editing, reporting, wrote features and columns, photography, proofread and assisted in layout. Each week the office received copies of some 50 diocesan papers and selected a few for the editorial eyes; picked up the mailbag daily from the post office and sorted the mail. Made the rounds of the diocesan office for news--the Chancery, CYO, social services, schools, missions, etc.

³⁰⁹ Bosler, *New Wine*, 99.

³¹⁰ Bosler, *New Wine*, 59.

observer, Little Flower was a large Irish parish and Bosler was not Irish; there were no blacks, school problems were worrisome, his sermons were thought “too cerebral,” and his leadership was challenged.³¹¹ What was worse, as one parishioner recalled more than forty years later, Bosler got rid of Bingo, injuring the income of those who ran the game and the fun of its multitudinous devotees. Parish critics took to “parading around” the rectory in protest. His years at Little Flower saw controversies over civil rights and racial desegregation, the Vietnam War, and the Watergate scandal. Bosler later told a close friend that it “was his most difficult time as a priest.”³¹²

Late in life, Bosler convicted himself of a tendency to think he knew it all--his over-willingness to give advice, exasperation with incompetence, and a tendency toward hypercriticism. In 1972, he underwent open-heart surgery when that procedure was still something of a novelty. The six weeks leading to the operation concentrated his mind and he prayed for those he might have failed or harmed in his thirty-three years as a priest. Spiritually renewed more than physically rehabilitated, he said it was the best retreat he had ever made.³¹³ He retired at 65 in 1979, but into the late 1980s, residing at St. Joan of Arc, he remained active, gave homilies, and until 1992 ministered in rural parishes of Decatur County where he alternated with his friend and classmate, Msgr. Joseph D. Brokhage, who shared his views on the Church.

On 29 June 1984, after eighteen years, he stopped writing the Question Box column--about the time Fr. Thomas Widner, his successor as editor, left the paper (though Bosler continued on the Criterion board to 1987). In that last column, asked if the spirit of Vatican II was dead, he reflected that the conservatives at the council were needed to uphold the Church’s heritage—the importance of doctrine, respect for tradition, religious discipline, the majesty of the Mass. In 1990 he reverted to his Vatican Council days, telling the Serra Club that if one believed in ecumenism the structure of the papacy had to change. In early Christianity the people chose the bishops (later emperors and kings did), but it was only in the 1917 Canon Law did it become official policy that the pope did so. For Christian unity to become a reality, “the papacy itself must be reformed.” The problem was the conflict between the “institutionalist-hierarchical” model versus “the people of God”--a communion.³¹⁴ In 1990, Bosler joined 4,500 Catholics who signed an ad in the New York Times calling for women’s ordination, married priests, local church autonomy--all to make the Church less “authoritarian and hypocritical.” More work on the theology of sexuality was needed and the bishops were called on to consult with the laity.³¹⁵ Sixty-seven Indianans signed the broadside, among them, Sr. Carmel McEnroy, a theologian at St. Meinrad whose signature cost her her job,³¹⁶ and Sr. Joann Hunt, O.S.B., St. Christopher Parish, Speedway.

Msgr. Ray Bosler died 27 April 1994, age 79. He left a sizeable bequest to enable needy students to attend one of the eight Indianapolis inner city parochial schools, among them St. Joan of Arc, his alma mater.³¹⁷ A liberal journalist, public intellectual, church reformer, civic activist, ecumenist, moralist, philo-Semite, agitator for social

³¹¹ Paul Fox recollections; Fox worked at the newspaper 15 years during Bosler’s editorship.

³¹² Author’s interview, Fr. Thomas Murphy, 6 March 2006.

³¹³ Criterion, 27 Oct 1972, 2.

³¹⁴ Criterion, 30 October 1987, 9.

³¹⁵ Criterion, 9 March 1990, 24. The ad, “A Call for Reform in the Catholic Church,” was authored by Chicago’s Call to Action.

³¹⁶ Criterion, 29 April 1994, 2.

³¹⁷ Criterion, 8 March 1996, 10.

justice, especially for blacks, a scold--he had lived usefully. In weighing his contribution as a newspaperman, Fr. Widner wrote that Bosler not only had provided news of the archdiocese, "but also polemical discussions concerning" the national and international Church, making the Criterion "one of the most important Catholic periodicals" in the country.³¹⁸ Widner's successor, John Fink, wrote that Bosler became well known nationally "for his 'Catholic opinion,' which didn't always agree with that of many other Catholics," and that he was "noted for speaking his mind well before he got old." "Msgr. Bosler cannot be replaced."³¹⁹

³¹⁸ *Criterion*, 8 February 1980, 4.

³¹⁹ *Criterion*, 29 April 1994, 2.
