

## MORE FROM "RESOURCES ON WORLD RELIGION"

*by Peter Barry*

In issue #4 of Tripod (publishing date: 24 August 1981), Father Patrick Taveirne, CICM, authored an article introducing the Chinese journal on religion Resources on World Religions to Tripod's readers. In his article, Father Taveirne described the contents of the four issues of the review for 1980 and the first two issues of 1981. He also listed for us the titles of those articles dealing with Christianity. Here we consider the contents of the last two issues of 1981, again pointing out those concerned with Christianity. We also include a translation of the description of Vatican Council II from "The Twenty-one Ecumenical Councils of the Roman Catholic Church" by Sun Qingfen, Resources on World Religions, #4, 1981, pp. 55-61.

Issue #3, 1981 contains altogether 22 translations, original articles or short notices. Of these only three pertain directly to Christianity: a translation of Martin Luther's "Arguments Concerning the Effects of Indulgences," "A Brief Introduction to the Christian Bible," and "'Indulgence' or Certificate for the Remission of Sin." Of the 17 articles in issue #4, 1981, eight are concerned with Christianity: "The Duty of Theologians," "Christianity is not Mysterious" (both being translations of articles originally published in England), "Christianity in the Philippines", "The Anglican Church," "The Salvation Army," "25 Years of the Latin American Bishops Conference" (translation of an article originally published in Colombia, S.A.), the above-mentioned article on the ecumenical councils, and "The Origin of the Infallibility of the Pope."

The following is a translation of the section on Vatican Council II from the article on the Twenty-one ecumenical councils of the Catholic Church:

### The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965)

Pope John XXIII convened the council at St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican. After Pope John died in June, 1963, the council was continued by his successor, Pope Paul VI. 2540 bishops, 201 theologians and 40 observers (Protestant, Orthodox and delegates from other religions) attended the opening ceremony. For the first time, the Russian Orthodox Church sent delegates to participate in the council.

This was a religious meeting in which the Vatican in all aspects, from its political affairs to its organizations, would carry out a great readjustment. In January, 1959, after John XXIII had been Pope for only three months, he issued the edict convoking Vatican Council II. The Pope pointed out that the Vatican "is living in a time of great crisis when human society is undergoing great change," and that through the spirit of renewal brought by the council, the church "would adapt to the needs of the times and demonstrate its ability to deal with modern thought." The Pope also called on all Christian churches to unite.

The council opened on October 11, 1962. In April, 1963 when Pope John XXIII published his famous encyclical, "Pacem in Terris," it immediately became the fundamental theme of the council. For two months every year plenary sessions were held in Rome. During recesses, fifteen separate committees continued working. The council lasted for four years, and drew to a close in December, 1965. It passed the following declarations: "Declaration on Religious Freedom," "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," "Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity," "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church," "Decree on Ecumenism," and "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy," altogether sixteen documents.

During the council a debate arose between the so-called "enlightened party," led by the Secretary of State, Montini, and the conservative party, led by the head of the Holy Office, Ottaviani. In the end, the views of the Montini party prevailed.

The council discussed the question of the attitude one should have towards Communism. The council departed from the church's past manner of denouncing Communism, and called for detailed research into atheism. It made a distinction between a so-called "atheistic country and an atheist." "It is necessary to establish the basis for effective dialogue (with atheists) as soon as possible. The Vatican, bishops' conferences, clergy, theologians and the laity should all work hard for this."

Regarding the Third World and movements of national liberation, the council especially discussed "problems of universal poverty and starvation," and proposed that the church 1. Increase "social service;" 2. Improve missionary work; 3. Improve the training of the clergy and enlarge its ranks; and 4. Promote "the laity's role in evangelization." It also urged the adoption of various methods, such as, establishing "lay mission groups," "the Legion of Mary," "Catholic labor unions," and the organization of Catholic professional groups, as for teachers, doctors and nurses. Through such organizations the church would be able to enter all levels of society.

In order to implement the above-mentioned methods, certain organizations underwent a re-adjustment. The authority of the Secretariat of State was expanded. The re-organization of the Council for Public Affairs (Diplomatic Corps), the Sacred Congregation for Evangelization of Peoples and other curial congregations also took place. Local bishops were drafted to participate in the Vatican's work, thus allowing for more democracy and internationalization among Vatican workers. The council also decided to set up a worldwide synod of bishops to act as a permanent body of advisers to the Pope.

In order to uphold the influence of religion in the world, the council refrained from labeling the Protestant and Orthodox churches "schismatic" or "heretical," but called them instead "separated brethren." It declared that "Christian unity was essential in order to cope with Communism" (the words of John XXIII). The council decided to establish a "Secretariat for Christian Unity" and a "Secretariat for Non-Christians" to carry on dialogue with other religions. It also set up a "Secretariat for Non-Believers" with the special task of researching atheism and coming into contact with Communists of every country. The council especially emphasized the implementation of a religious infiltration of ideology and for expansion in all forms of mass communications work: the printed word, movies, broadcasting and television.

This council was of great significance for the modern history of the Catholic Church. The present Pope has declared that he will rule the church in accordance with the spirit of this ecumenical council.

(Resources on World Religions, #4, 1981, p. 61)

On the back cover of Resources on World Religions, #4, 1981, the editors list the requirements for submission of manuscripts, and express the hope that they can "expand scholarly exchange" in the field of religion. They apparently do not exclude the contribution of manuscripts from abroad. If so, then the journal could perhaps serve as the vehicle for the dialogue on religious matters between Chinese and western scholars, which was emphasized by Vatican Council II, and mentioned by Sun Qingfen in his article.