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The Pope's Council

Pope John XXIII is calling an ecumenical council—a wise move on his part. Ecumenicity is popular. People are talking about it. The pope's council will claim its share of the conversation. Rome never misses a chance for favorable publicity. In this case it is spiced with the prospect of others, besides Roman Catholics, being invited. Who will it be? No matter, the pope's council will not, and cannot, be a free council, for at best the erring children of the non-Roman churches can be invited to return to the bosom of the mother church.

"I verily desire to see a truly Christian Council, in order that many matters and persons might be helped. Not that we need it, for our churches are now, through God's grace, so enlightened and equipped with the pure Word and right use of the Sacraments, with knowledge of the various callings and right works, that we on our part ask for no council, and on such points have nothing to hope or expect from a council." Thus Luther wrote more than four centuries ago (Introduction to the Smalcald Articles). Eventually the Council of Trent met, but Luther did not live to weep over its anathema on the doctrine of salvation by grace alone. The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent fixed the Roman aberrations from the truths of God's Word for all times. Subsequent councils of various kinds have not improved matters. What will it be this time? The doctrine concerning Mary as the mediatrix of all graces is clamoring for recognition as a dogma. Will the council fortify this additional wall between the sinner and the Savior? Time will tell.

Luther, however, continued: "But we see in bishoprics everywhere so many parishes vacant and desolate that one's heart would break, and yet neither the bishops nor canons care how the poor people live or die, for whom nevertheless Christ has died, and who are not permitted to hear Him speak with them as the true Shep-

herd with His sheep. This causes me to shudder and fear that at some time He may send a council of angels upon Germany utterly destroying us, like Sodom and Gomorrah, because we so wantonly mock Him with the council." What Luther said about Germany, he could today say of the world. Christians all over the world could well have a council to plan their strategy for the preaching of the Gospel to every creature and for making disciples of all nations by baptizing them in the name of the Holy Trinity. If that were the pope's concern we could wish him well. That concern alone can make a worldwide council worth the time and effort and deserve the acclaim of God's people.

L. W. SPITZ

CATHOLIC INTEREST IN MATTERS BIBLICAL

The *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* (January 1959) announces that the picturesque site of Sardis near Smyrna, excavated in 1910—58 by various scientific expeditions, has yielded some important archaeological finds. The excavation area of Sart, by which name the site of the former Sardis is now known, is about three miles in perimeter, even without the steep climb to the Acropolis or the theater area, but attention centers in the neighborhood of the standing Artemis Temple columns. In the large structure, popularly considered the palace of Croesus, a magnificent inscription referring to the Emperor Lucius Verus (A. D. 161—169) and some reliefs of the local Artemis and the goddess Cybele were found. Other finds were fine Roman bronzes, including a bronze dish which may have been used for charcoal or incense in Christian worship, and some very beautiful pottery. Much effort was spent on a monumental city gate apparently of pre-Christian Roman times. The excavations also brought to light some ancient tombs. According to Rev. 3:1-6, the congregation at Sardis was a dying church, though there remained a few that had not defiled their garments. The troubles of the church seem to be reflected in the pagan finds made there.

More important is the announcement in the same periodical of a new Spanish Bible translation and commentary to be published by the *Biblioteca de autores cristianos*. The work is to be prepared by Spanish and Latin American Jesuits. It will consist of five volumes for the O. T. and two for the N. T. The Bible text will be newly translated from the original languages. The first volume (N. T.) is expected to be ready for the printers by the end of 1960. The commentary will be given under the Scripture text.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER