

Vatican II – Saturday Morning Sessions
Session 11: Saturday 14th September 2013
Feedback from Group Work

**Part 1: The Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to
Non-Christian Religions (Nostra Aetate)**

Group 1 Feedback:

Paragraphs 1-3

Question	Group's response
1. Drawing on paragraph 1, what are the deep human yearnings and questions that draw all women and men together in human unity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The group felt this was a “non-God” question. We start with our existence as human beings, what it is to realise our humanity and consider the questions that come forward from this.• We all have a need for basic security, safety and an inner sense of belonging to, for and with others. In attempting to do this, people are seeking the meaning of life, why we want to exist with others and not alone.• We want to be loved and to love in return.
2. Drawing on paragraphs 2-3, what are the elements of various world religions that connect Christians to them and them to Christians?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The group felt that the starting point was summed up in the various forms of Buddhism. When they talk about the current situation of life, as they see it, it is just not acceptable, it is insufficient. This is a starting point everybody could be comfortable with – Hindus, Muslims, Jews, Christians, etc.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To grow together demands that we dialogue, that we keep in touch and communicate our yearning for something more.• This yearning for something more takes us into the language of the divine. We recognise that we have different ways of doing this but they are all acceptable to each other.
--	--

Group 2 Feedback:

Paragraphs 4-5

Question	Group's response
<p>1a. Drawing on paragraph 4, what are the many connections between Christians and Jews?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have a common heritage. • Our story is rooted in the story of Judaism. • We talk of "our father Abraham" as the starting point of our knowledge of and relationship with God. • Jesus was a Jew and his mother, friends and disciples were Jews. • Our liturgy reflects and builds on many themes of Judaism – the Passover feast; we pray and sing the psalms; we listen to passages from the Old Testament; etc.
<p>1b. What is the attitude of the Council Fathers toward the Jews?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They were apologetic for previous negative views, attitudes and bad treatment of the Jewish faith / Jewish people. • There was a very strong condemnation of any anti-Jewish persecution. • The strength of the condemnation of anti-Judaism was probably a testimony to the fact that those under-currents of anti-Judaism were still prevalent in the Church and society at the time the document was written.

2. Drawing on paragraph 5, what is the final conclusion of the Council Fathers regarding non-Christian religions?

- The group were very taken by this section – they felt it was positive and contained a message for life and not just a message for how we should treat other religions.
- The document reminds us that our relationship with God is intimately linked to our relationship with those around us - how we view and treat other people.
- Our relationships need to be founded on LOVE; if they are, this will ensure that we treat everybody (including all other religions) with the dignity and respect they deserve.
- The final paragraph sums up the intensity of the Council Fathers' desire to promote understanding and respect: "We **beg** all Christians to be at peace and to maintain relationships with all peoples."

Part 2: The Declaration on Religious Freedom (Dignitatis Humanae)

Group 3 Feedback:

Introduction & Part 1 – General Principles of Religious Freedom - paragraphs 1-8

Question	Group's response
1. Say, in your own words, what the Council Fathers have as a goal in preparing this document. Try to limit this description to 20 or fewer words. (see paragraph 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Council Fathers' goal was to affirm the right of every individual, group and family to religious freedom by urging the Church and all people to work for this reality.
2. State clearly the principles which the Council Fathers set out for Catholics to follow in matters of religious liberty. (see paragraphs 2-8).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Council is looking at what is happening in the world, where people seek the right to act according to their own judgement.• Looking at our tradition, the Fathers affirmed the dignity of each human being. This leads us to work for religious freedom without coercion.• In discussion, our group felt the institutional Church has failed us in this regard.

Group 4 Feedback:

Part 2 – Religious Freedom in the Light of Revelation - paragraphs 9-12

Question	Group response
<p>1. Explain how the Council Fathers believe that religious liberty is rooted in the tradition and history of the Church. (See <i>paragraphs 9-11</i>). Once you have done this, if possible, have a stab at reducing it to a one-sentence statement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council Fathers believed that each person had the right to choose to believe or not to believe; also realising that each of us will have our own relationship with God and therefore follow our own conscience.
<p>2. Why do you think they need to include the point they are making in <i>paragraph 12</i>?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Church is making a public admission/statement that they had been wrong. • They recognised that down through the centuries the Church, in the name of Christ, had persecuted all those they thought didn't conform to the way they thought they should have been – e.g. the Crusades; the Spanish Inquisition; the things the Church knew were happening to the Jewish people but did nothing about. • They acknowledged that throughout time, although they were preaching that there should be no coercion, what they were actually doing was treating people in downright opposition to what the Gospels taught.

Group 5 Feedback:

Part 2 – Religious Freedom in the Light of Revelation - paragraphs 13-15

Question	Group response
<p>1. Paragraph 13, a key paragraph, was included because, in the 1960s, much of the world was dominated by Marxism and Communism, which often stripped the Church of its rights. What do the Council Fathers ask of the members of the Church in this regard? (see paragraphs 14-15)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pray steadfastly, consider the doctrines of the Church and give witness to this truth, using a balanced approach which is never incompatible with the Gospel. Also balance the innate freedom of those for whom the preaching was offered. • They acknowledged the fact that religious freedom is already being recognised by most governments and is the desire of all modern people, but forms of government still exist that do not allow it, and we meet this fact with sorrow. • The group talked then about two elements of how the Church actually operated – inter and intra. Did the Church live up to the high principles it had set? In some ways that challenge that was given to governments could equally be applied to the government of the Church. • If we look at the Church itself, looking at the inter approach, how the Church looks at itself within society. When the Church has been in a minority position, it has sought to claim those freedoms; but when it has been in the majority position it has often abused those freedoms. If we think, for example, about

Question	Group response
	<p>Franco's Spain where the Church was the power, it didn't necessarily share those approaches with other people who were of different persuasions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Church has come from quite a narrow orthodoxy and it is challenging Stalinist type views which are very singular in the sense of there is only one orthodoxy and if you don't conform to that, then you are outside. The Church has actually done something very similar in terms of when people don't have the same perspective as it has, it has shut argument down and allowed nothing. • There has to be clarification and truth and it can't be just whatever anybody wants, but perhaps the Church could apply some of what it has suggested could be taken from a broader perspective to the way it has actually offered religious freedom: religious freedom is not only to be as the Catholic Church wants us to be, but must also be to help us grow in our faith. It is only through exploration and growth that we do find the truth (as opposed to doing something somebody told us).

Question	Group response
<p>2. The Council Fathers recognise that there are forms of government still existing that do not allow religious freedom. In what other ways are people's religious freedom diminished – e.g. poverty, hunger, oppression, violence?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More and more we are finding that people are exiled or locked into a country – e.g. by removing visas. This is a new way of exploiting and oppressing people.• There is oppression based on gender or sexuality.

Part 3: The Decree on Eastern Catholic Churches (*Orientalium Ecclesiarum*)

Group 6 Feedback:

Concerning the Eastern Churches That Are Catholic - paragraphs 1-23

By way of introduction to the ways in which the Western, Roman Catholic and Eastern Churches that are Catholic are alike and differ, the group noted that they were impressed by the fact that in the Eastern Church they have twenty-one different rites. And we in the Western, Roman Catholic, Church only have one! This was perhaps indicative of some sort of commitment to diversity in the East while the West has more desire for uniformity. The group felt that such a desire for uniformity in the West might be problematic in that there is a danger that we don't grow if we are all the same and run the risk that, ultimately, we don't survive.

Ways we are alike	Ways we differ
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Basic belief in God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit• Global rules.• Preaching the Gospel.• Pope gives equal dignity and respect to Eastern Churches. However, this does not seem to happen in the minds of the people.• There is an underlying sense of exclusiveness that can be picked up from the passages – we are the ones who are right and the other people must be at least slightly wrong sometimes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The East focuses on the Trinity more than on the person of Christ as a basis for belief.• Greater freedom to adapt to the culture around them in the Eastern Churches.

Group 7 Feedback:

Concerning the Eastern Churches That Are Not Catholic - paragraphs 24-30

Question	Group answer
1. Summarise how the Council at Vatican I dealt with the Eastern Churches who are not Catholic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Church shows great respect for their customs and traditions.• We need to resolve our hostilities, not end our differences.• The East focused on the Trinity, while the West focused on the Eucharist and the real presence of Christ.• The Eastern Churches have a right and duty to govern themselves.• <i>An interesting aside: From the East arose the monastic tradition and the development of Divine contemplation, both of which have had a profound effect on the whole church.</i>
2. What is new from the Council Fathers in the relationship between the Eastern Churches not in union with Rome and the Western, Latin Rite, Church?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Common worship to be promoted and highly encouraged.• Mutually recognised that the other possesses true sacraments, Eucharist and priesthood.