in the magazines

The Christian Century was one of many religious and secular journals to evaluate the effect of Vatican Council II at the close of its first session on December 8. In an editorial of January 2, The Christian Century stated its conviction that "the council may prove to be the most important religious event of our time." It cited the "openness of spirit" in which deliberations were conducted, a factor so necessary for the success of the movement toward Christian unity. This spirit was seen to have been already reflected "in a diminution of churchly emphases on social measures which will reduce the likelihood of communist advances."

A commentator in World Outlook (January 1963), publication of the Board of Missions of The Methodist Church, summed up her appraisal of the Council session as it affects the non-Catholic world, with the statement that "the Council is not calling for all its separated brethren to join the Catholic Church. The Council, under John XXIII, is working on a bigger plan. Its plan is to save the world, in any way it can, for the love of men and the glory of God."

In bestowing upon Pope John XXIII the title "Man of the Year," (the first ecclesiastic to be so named since the annual selection was inaugurated in 1927), Time magazine (January 4) characterized Vatican Council II as "a revolution whose sweep and loftiness have caused it to outrank the secular concerns of the year...." This achievement loses none of its significance when "measured even against such portentous events of 1962" as U.S. and Soviet accomplishments in space, Cuba, Telestar, and war in the Himalayas, the magazine feels. "The turning point that Christianity reached in 1962 is already assured of a firm place in history."

Stuart P. Carver, editor of Christian Heritage, has found points of similarity between Prime Minister Macmillan's plans for his nation as part of a United Europe and the Vatican's definition of ecumenism (January 1963). Though seemingly unrelated, Carver states, the two are part of the "modern rush toward unity goals," and both movements, as currently conceived, lack the "ultimate vision" proclaimed by "all the prophets from Moses to Christ."

The statesman and the prelate by their public pronouncements have succeeded in pinpointing and publicizing the two main sources of contrary forces blocking unity efforts in every generation: "A devil's lust for sovereign power—'ye shall be as gods': 'and the question of survival—'ye shall not surely die.' Yet their own responses to these forces reflect too heavily their respective concerns for the physical survival of British subjects, and the survival and sovereignty of Roman Catholicism. Thus, Carver concludes, it still remains for us in 1963 to "work toward a unity in which there is a proper balancing of sovereignty and survival (peace) with honor and justice for all," as the Word of God demands.

"The radical change in the public image of the Catholic church," resulting from the first Council session, is one of the factors which in 1962 have caused Italian Catholics and Socialists to move closer together and have widened the gulf between Communists and Socialists in Italy, Mauro Calamandrei has written in The New Leader for January 7. New and liberal trends in Catholicism, noted by Italian political observers, helped to bring about the "accelerated progress toward a total political realignment," he states. "The majority of cardinals and bishops have revealed a deep-rooted desire for change and reform," and "Pope John himself has intervened on at least two critical occasions to overcome anti-democratic procedural rules and implement the majority's will." In addition, while the disagreements in the Council meetings concerned such matters as liturgy and the sources of revelation, important to Italian state politics is the fact that the "defeated faction usually included several Italian cardinals who in the past worked earnestly and effectively to block any Leftward movement by the Christian Democrats and interfered directly both in elections and in Government affairs."

Gunnar D. Kamljen, The Commonweal's regular correspondent in Rome, noted too the political effect of the proceedings in that city upon Italian domestic affairs (November 23). The "internal debates among the different groups at the council" caused some surprise to many Italians, he states. But those caught most unawares were the Italian communists. "Their first reactions to the Council were ironical and critical, following the traditional line that the Vatican is nothing but an instrument of capitalist imperialism, reactionary and unable to renew itself... By now the old slogan that the Vatican is reactionary has an almost silly ring about it, particularly after the arrival of the observers of the Russian Church in Rome."