

**WHAT I HAVE LEARNED—XIV**

## Paths to Ecumenism

**A revered cardinal who was instrumental in organizing the Vatican Councils recalls lessons of patience, courage, and understanding from a long, fruitful journey.**

By AUGUSTINE CARDINAL BEA

**W**HEN my nomination as cardinal was announced in November 1959, one of the first telegrams of congratulation came from Günther Dehn, emeritus professor of evangelical theology at Berlin University. In 1897 he had been my classmate in the high school at Constance (on the lake of the same name); indeed, I may be forgiven for saying that he was my partner at the head of the class. There were various Christian confessions and religious faiths represented in the class. All the same, we got on very well and worked harmoniously together. From that time I began to learn to have not merely a chilly respect but a genuine esteem for those of other confessions, and even to love them sincerely, while remaining loyal to my own faith. That was for me, who came from an entirely Catholic village, my first school of practical ecumenism.

In succeeding decades I continued in the same kind of "school." Besides studies done at schools within the order to which I belong, I had plenty of experience in training in distinctly pluralistic environments, in the universities of Freiburg in Breisgau, Innsbruck, Austria, and Berlin. Everywhere there was a mixture of students and professors of various confessions. I remember with deep veneration several of my teachers in oriental sciences at Berlin University, all non-Catholics, each a real celebrity in his field: Eduard Meyer, the historian of the Ancient East; Hermann Strack, the Hebrew specialist; Jakob Barth, in Semitic languages; Joseph Marquart, in other oriental languages.

Such contacts continued during my

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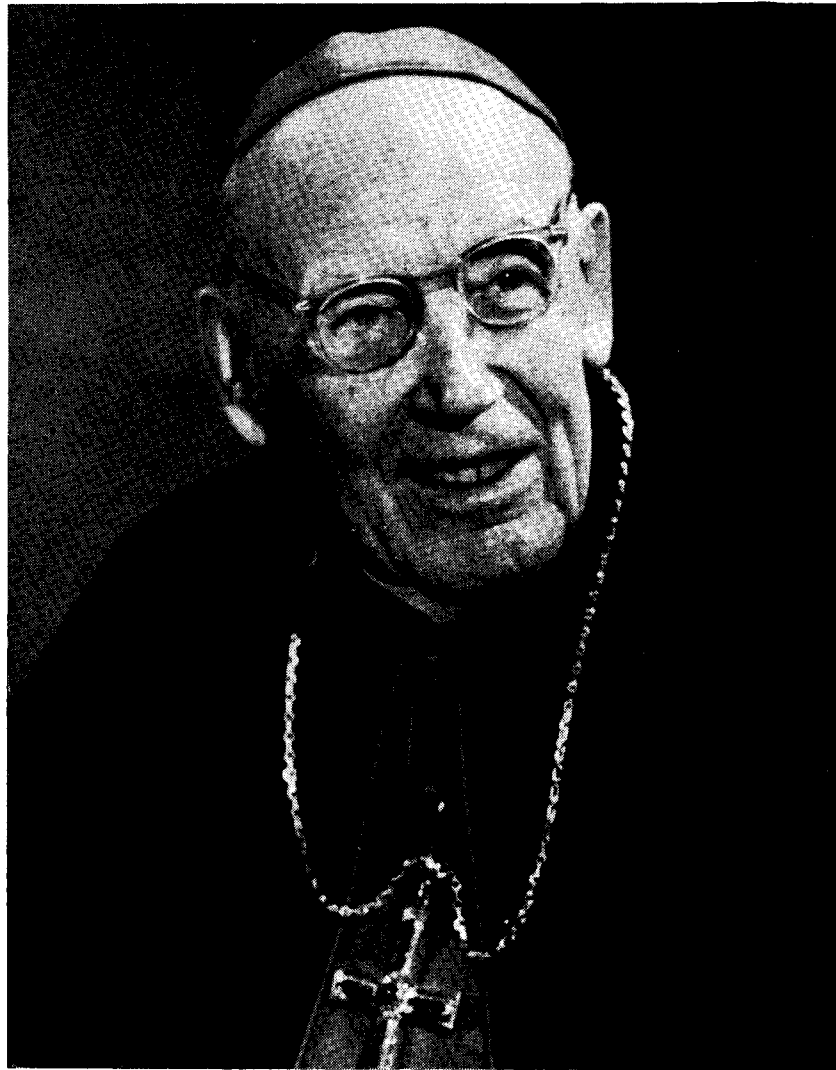
teaching life, both at the Jesuit college of Valkenburg [Holland], and at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome (1924-1959). The latter's great library was known as the best library in Rome for Protestant scientific biblical literature. From the time of Pius X, when the index of prohibited books was still in force and strictly enjoined, this Pope had, very farsightedly, authorized the rector of the Institute to give his students permission to read non-Catholic books to the full extent required for their studies and research.

Soon there was a real exchange of contacts between the Institute and non-Catholic biblical scholars and orientalists. Pius XI personally made a decisive contribution in this direction. In 1935 the illustrious German scholars J. Hempel and P. Volz organized at Göttingen the first International Congress of Old Testament Studies. For the first time in its history the Pontifical Biblical Institute of Rome was invited to a gathering of the kind. This was so novel that I felt I ought to put it directly to Pius XI himself. Now, he had been for most of

his life a librarian by profession, first at the Ambrosiana in Milan and then at the Vatican, and had considerable experience with scholars of all kinds. Hence he answered, with his habitual assurance and energy: "Why shouldn't you accept? Go by all means, and take with you some well-equipped men who know their subject."

**I**T was a brave decision for those days, and turned out to be fruitful beyond expectation. In fact, the Institute delegation was so well received at the Congress that its leader, the rector, was invited to preside at the final session. In this way began frequent contacts with the non-Catholic scholars of the world. These were further intensified when the Institute acted as host in Rome to the International Congress of Studies on the Ancient East.

The total effect of these encounters was a steadily increasing collaboration of exegetes of various confessions in both Old and New Testament studies, expressed steadily in a large number of learned international congresses and re-



—Pix.

Augustine Cardinal Bea—"A desire for continual intellectual renewal is needed."

views dealing with biblical studies, ranging over the whole scriptural field. The latest initiative of this kind is the collaboration between Catholics and the non-Catholic Bible Societies in the translation and distribution of the scriptures. In recent months this has taken still more definite shape and is richer than in mere promise, not only for Christians' getting to know the Bible better and drawing closer together, but also for their fulfilling their common duty and pledge of carrying the torch of the Word of God to all the peoples of the world.

**W**HAT is the *interior attitude* which inspires a common life and activity of this sort among men belonging to various confessions and religious faiths? It is, obviously, somewhat complex and needs to be analyzed step by step. Clearly, I do not propose to tackle, much less exhaust, so exacting a theme, but only to illustrate some of its aspects in the light of my own experience. This example will illustrate a primary element:

One of my first studies in the field of biblical science was two articles about

German studies on the Pentateuch—i.e., the first five books of Holy Scripture. I concerned myself in particular with the theories of the illustrious German non-Catholic scholar Julius Wellhausen. The theme was an extensive one and, although I was only writing for the educated lay reader, it called for two articles. When the first appeared, the higher authorities of the Order in Rome let me know that I should not have eulogized a non-Catholic scholar, as I had done with Wellhausen, especially when he had done so much damage in the field of Sacred Scripture. I answered laconically that they should wait for the second article. In fact, in the first article I had endeavored to explain Wellhausen's ingenious scientific construction, while in the next I showed its undeniable weaknesses and limits.

I did the same thing subsequently in my writings, in particular in the book I published fifteen years later on the same theme of the Pentateuch. This procedure started from the principle that there is not and cannot be an opinion, even if it be an erroneous one, which

does not contain a kernel of truth. It was necessary first to grasp and frankly recognize this good element, this kernel of truth, when one found it. Only then, on this objective foundation, could one voice a constructive critical judgment.

**T**HE attitude I have described evidently presupposes a sincere and firm *will always to understand*, according to the motto of that well-known orientalist, Cardinal G. Mercati (1866-1957), prefect of the Vatican Library: "*paratus semper doceri*" (always ready to learn). The desire for a continual intellectual renewal is needed. In this sense I have more than once told my students: "What I teach you, I have learned in my activity as professor." I have told them, too, that I had always learned much from them. They, indeed, with their questions and difficulties, press—even force—the teacher to clarify and give greater precision to his thinking. A principle I always tried to follow in examinations was perhaps part of the same outlook and the same live relationship with my students. Alluding to the kind of examiner who tries

to "trick" the candidate in order to discover what he has not studied, I used to tell my students, "I am not interested in what a candidate does *not* know but in what he does know."

This effort to understand that we have been talking about naturally calls for much attention and psychological insight regarding differences of mentality, language, ways of expression, etc. I remember in this connection that during my stay in Japan in 1929 an old European who had lived there many years told me: "For a Japanese a syllogism is a cruelty," because with it one man tries to force another to recognize what he is perhaps unwilling to recognize. Now I believe that also in this field of sensitivity to different mentalities recent progress in biblical studies has made a notable contribution. The kind of interpretation, Catholic or not, of the Bible which tended in one way or another to project the psychological and literary categories of Western biblical scholars on it, doing violence to the sense, has been heavily challenged by the discovery of the riches of the various literatures of the Ancient East, still far from being thoroughly explored today. This was a shock which brought us up against the great differences of outlook, language, and ways of expression between the modern Western mind and those literatures, the Bible not excepted.

It is interesting that from the Catholic side it was Pius XII (a canonist who as a young man had been secretary of the commission for the reform of the Code of Canon Law) who strongly drew the attention of Catholic exegetes to this problem. The fact that he was not only a canonist but also a diplomat of keen psychological insight enabled him to understand a field that was not his own. I can also add, from my personal experience, that from the time he was a young nuncio, Eugene Pacelli was deeply interested in Scripture. I knew him in Munich when, from 1921 to 1924, he was apostolic nuncio and I was superior of the southern province of my Order. Even then he often sought my advice on the interpretation of this or that text of Sacred Scripture. The same thing went on after he had returned to Rome in 1929 and became Secretary of State; in fact, it lasted until his death.

It was not without previous preparation that Pius XII could remind Catholic scholars in his well-known encyclical on the Bible: "What those ancient writers meant by their words is not determined only by the laws of grammar and philology, or argued from the context: the interpreter must also as it were go back in mind to those remote centuries in the East, and with the help of history, archeology, ethnology, and other sciences determine exactly what literary genres the writer of that distant time intended to

make use of." A little further on he added: "The exegete cannot decide *a priori* what they [the literary genres] are, but only after a careful study of the ancient literature of the East."

This spirit of respect for and openness toward the thinking of others is of fundamental importance for team work in any form. A well-known modern statesman is said to have declared that committees always work badly. Men of a similar outlook often refuse teamwork, thinking it leads inevitably to compromises which are signs of weak and servile giving way on principles. For my part I have often, especially during my forty years' work in Rome, had occasion to serve on a variety of committees. Naturally, I don't say that such work is easy or even that it is always agreeable. Obviously, the result will depend on the choice of chairman and his collaborators, and on the harmony or lack of it between them. Nevertheless, even when I have very carefully studied and prepared the agenda, I have always realized afresh that the other members put their finger on things that escaped me, and in this way made their indispensable contribution which it was my business to recognize and accept candidly.

ONE of the chief problems posed by teamwork is *how to deal with divergences of view*. These are not merely inevitable, they are just what makes the work of a committee fruitful, bringing out the various points of view which must be taken into account. The problem lies in the way these divergent opinions are expounded on the one side and received on the other. Here is an example:

A well-known Catholic ecumenist years ago gave a public lecture on the theme "The Council and the Union of Christians." After the lecture a non-Catholic speaker said, "The lecturer has said some rather hard things about us non-Catholics. All the same, he could have said more. Given the way in which he has said them, we are bound to accept them." One who had had a good deal of experience in committee work remarked that personally he always stuck to the principle, "If I have to express a difference of opinion with somebody I try to do it as courteously and amiably as I can. It seems to me that in this way I have managed for the most part to avoid unpleasantness."

Recently, in an address to the Secretariat for the Promoting of Christian Unity, Paul VI remarked very acutely how often difficulties of a psychological order tend to be represented as difficulties of principle. "Old positions hardened by bitter memories, mixed up with questions of prestige and subtle polemics, arouse reactions which tend to be represented as assertions of principle on which

it would seem impossible to yield." Anyone who has worked in the difficult ecumenical field—and not only in this field—knows how often this is true, and how necessary it is to have uncommon clear-sightedness to understand and evaluate such situations.

So far, I have spoken of my experiences that bear on the way of traveling together toward a common goal. What are the *prospects* of arriving? In September 1961, while I was staying in Strasbourg, the mayor, M. Pfimlin, surprised me by asking, "Your Eminence, are you an optimist or a pessimist about the prospects for ecumenism?" "Mr. Mayor, I am neither an optimist nor a pessimist, but a realist," I answered promptly—and perhaps the promptness showed how much the answer reflected my deepest conviction and attitude.

If anyone, reading what I have said so far about respect for other opinions, the need for effort to understand, and so on, has thought that I am an optimist at any price, that I wrap myself in illusions that man is "by nature good" and disguise difficulties and obstacles, he is mistaken. In speeches and in my books I have always tried to guard against every illusion that ecumenical work is easy. When we are concerned with understanding and unity on the merely human level, difficulties increase immeasurably and the limits of human possibility are more restricted.

For the rest, I believe that much of my experience has educated me in this realistic view of life. I have been able during my life to feel the profound truth of the passage in the Book of Wisdom IX. 14: "For the reasoning of mortals is worthless, and our designs are likely to fail."

WHEN I was eleven, a doctor gave me only three months to live because of a pulmonary infection. In 1913 another doctor said, on the basis of an X-ray (that technique was then only beginning), that I should never be able to stand the climate of Rome—where I have since lived for forty-three years. And my religious superiors—how many contrasting destinies they planned for me! In 1904 I was consigned to the study of ethnology; in 1910, to Greek and Latin philology at Innsbruck, which I was then to teach at the college of our Order in Feldkirch, Austria.

Shortly afterward, at the end of my theology course, I was intended for a lectureship in theology; but in 1913 the superiors sent me to study oriental languages at Berlin University as a preparation for teaching Holy Scripture. This I actually began to do in 1917. But four years later the higher authorities in Rome sent me to govern the South German province of my Order; and in 1924 I was called to Rome, and here, too, the vari-



ous tasks and offices and the teaching of various subjects followed one after another.

Why have I referred to these facts? Certainly not to deny the authority which, in my Order as in the Church at large, guided me as I obeyed it. Nor do I intend to criticize my superiors who ruled me in this way. Superiors, of course, are not always free to do what they would like, and are dependent on many changeable circumstances. I have described these ups and downs rather to illustrate how experience has taught me a healthy realism—taught me to see clearly men's limits and the inadequacy of their work.

And there are worse things. Besides limits and powerlessness there are in this world the painful realities of evil and sin, with everything disorderly, unhealthy, and sometimes devilish that is involved. And, as if this were not enough, there are the invisible powers of evil—just as it was written that Christ came “to undo the work of the devil” (1 John III, 8). For the same reason the Apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians: “For we are not contending against flesh and blood [against poor, weak creatures like men] but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness” (Eph. VI, 12).

These, then, are the reasons on which a sober and authentic Christian realism is based. It is this that makes me profoundly convinced of what the Council solemnly declared at the end of the decree on Ecumenism: “This Holy objective—the reconciliation of all Christians in the unity of the one and only Church of Christ—transcends human powers and gifts” (Decree on Ecumenism, 24). But all this does not imply defeatism and discouragement.

It was no accident that good Pope John, nearly every time I met him, repeated with an affectionate smile this single word: “*Coraggio*.” I don't believe that the thought in the Pope's mind was that I lacked courage; rather, he wanted to underline how much courage was needed to face the obstacles which reared up, and are still rearing up, in the path of the Secretariat for the Promoting of Christian Unity—as, for that matter, they reared up in the path of Pope John himself, as I tried to make clear in a chapter of my book *Unity in Freedom*. Which is why I believe the Pope often had to repeat the word to himself.

What is the *foundation* of this courage? Here, too, I may be allowed, as when talking earlier about education for healthy realism, to point first and foremost to my own experience, especially that of recent years. Before the end of the Council I already was able to say publicly that what has happened in these

last few years in the ecumenical field has surpassed the rosiest expectations we could have had a few years earlier. This judgment is even more valid today after the conclusion of the Council and after the latest developments in the field. The same could be said of the way the Council went, considered as a whole; of the most important documents it gave us; of the moral unanimity with which all, even the most difficult of them, were approved, and that in secret ballots.

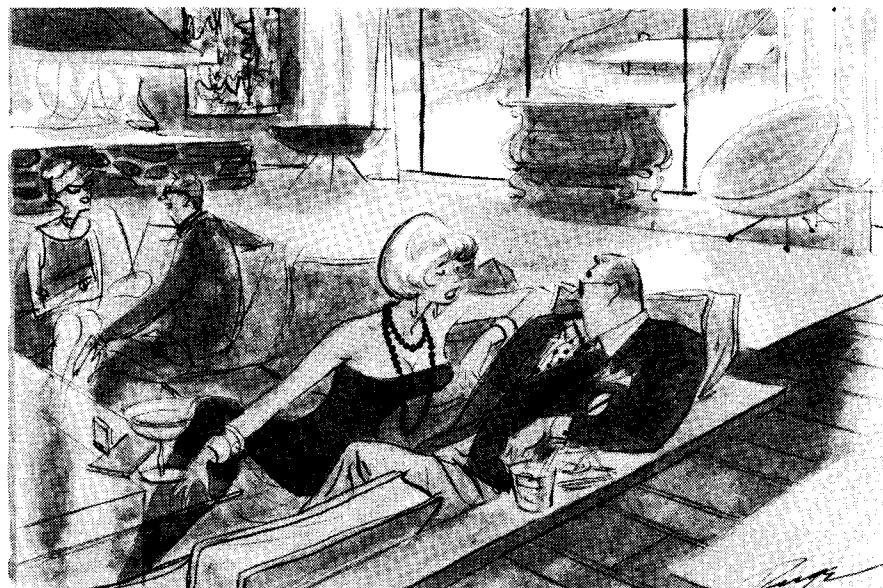
But all these well-known facts are not more than episodes—indeed, relatively small episodes—in the immense work of God which is the redemption of humanity through His Son. The Christian faith witnesses to this, and gives us security. Full of wonder at this work, St. Paul was able to write: “If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave Him up for us all, will He not give us all things with Him?” (Rom. VIII, 31-2).

**I**T is in this light that we should view the prospects of our journey together toward the great goal which is *the full unity of the human family*. If I may be permitted yet once more to refer to my own life, it seems to me that the slightly tortuous path into which obedience has directed my life, as I have hinted above, is an image of the path of mankind through history. Certainly the path of humanity, seen merely through human eyes, is as tortuous as could be, full of failures and grave misadventures. It is none the less certain that it is guided, in a manner secret and unseen yet real and effective, toward the realization of God's plan with and for mankind. I believe that today I can be sure—so far as it is possible for man here below to be

sure—that all those shuntings to and fro made up a preparation for the tasks which Divine Providence has gradually entrusted to me. Equally, I don't doubt that one day we shall be clear how the painful and wearisome groping of mankind through history was intended to educate man for his eternal destiny and guide him toward it—and has, in fact, done so.

Certainly, in marching toward the great goal set for humanity, we ought to engage ourselves very seriously, we ought to dwell on making plans, we ought to employ all our resources of mind and heart and collaborate assiduously with others, and, indeed, with the whole of creation ranged at man's disposal. But it is not said that all this will work out as we intend; it is not said that we shall be spared hard blows and even failures. Yet all this should not frighten us. “If God is with us, who is against us?” Who will succeed in overcoming us?

If Pope John solemnly declared his disagreement with the “prophets of doom” he did not thereby deny that mankind's path is strewn with evils and misfortunes—he himself repeatedly and clearly denounced many of them—but he spoke thus to invite confidence in the safe guidance of Divine Providence. In the famous discourse—defined as prophetic by his successor—with which he opened the Council, he said, “At this moment of history, Providence is leading us towards a new order of human relations which, by the work of men and for the most part beyond their expectations, are developing towards the fulfillment of higher and unforeseen designs.” It is in this light that we can safely and confidently march together toward the great goal of the unity of the human family.



*“Did it ever occur to you, Roy, that two-thirds of Westport is acting like the typical New Yorkers we used to see back in the Midwest in old Fred Astaire and Robert Montgomery movies?”*

# WHY NOT COMPULSORY HOSPITAL INSURANCE?

By ROUL TUNLEY

**W**E ALL HAVE our own stories about the high cost of illness. Mine concerns an aged relative who recently—at the end of a life devoted largely to helping others—found himself in a New York hospital. He was dying of cancer, but he didn't know it. The dying was hard enough; the pressure of bills made it worse.

He was not a pauper, but, like most of us, he didn't have the kind of cash a serious illness requires today. He had a few modest assets, but these were not immediately convertible, and his equally aged wife needed them. The Medicare benefits soon ran out, and so did the cash. Yet he was not technically a pauper and therefore not eligible for welfare aid. He was in a private room; in his condition a ward was hard on him, as well as on others.

One day when I drove in to visit him I found an unpaid hospital bill clutched in his hand and an anguished look on his face. He was too weak to speak aloud and he motioned me close. "Can you move me back into the ward?" he whispered. "I can't continue this financial obligation any longer."

He was not moved back. We all tightened our belts a little more and, behind his back, accepted the contributions of friends. But a few days later, I got a call from the head nurse. He had tried to get out of bed in the night, had fallen, and injured his head. A special night nurse was needed, she said. Otherwise they would have to strap him down for the night—an indignity that would make him suffer in his restless state.

I ordered the special nurse. The only trouble was that such nurses had to come from outside; their fees could not be put on the hospital bill. They had to be paid separately and immediately. I made a 75-mile trip into New York that evening to pay this nurse her \$40 fee for the first night. And I knew this new

commitment would add another \$280 weekly to the skyrocketing bills. The worry showed in his face when he talked about it. Fortunately, death came a few days later. It was not an easy death, and it was not made easier by all the agonizing he did over the bills.

The ironic thing is that the United States—the richest nation on earth—is the only industrialized country in which people are put through such a shoddy tragedy. All others have some sort of universal medical care under which basic medicine is given as a *right*, not a *privilege*.

Financial ruin from medical bills is almost exclusively an American disease. Elsewhere medicine is mostly taken care of by insurance which pays *all* the bills for as long as one is sick. One does not have to be ground down to the level of a pauper before getting help. Moreover, this system is no untried, blue-sky scheme. In Germany, for example, it's been operating successfully for 100 years, with minimum involvement of government. In Britain, insurance has been eschewed in favor of paying the bills out of taxes. But most people there now feel that it would have been better to move in the direction of insurance.

Whatever the system, none of them expects a citizen to pay medical bills he cannot afford. Although private medicine still flourishes in these countries and doctors do well, essential medicine is provided for all, not just welfare patients. And for those who want extras, they can either pay out of their own pockets or take out additional insurance.

The soaring costs of modern medicine brought about compulsory or universal systems when it became obvious that voluntary insurance wasn't adequate. As in the United States, too many people stayed outside the umbrella, either because they couldn't afford it or they preferred to take a chance and spend their money elsewhere. Our voluntary system, for example, enrolls about 75 per cent of the population but it pays less than 30 per cent of the bills. Other nations have found that only when *all* people are

covered can costs be spread sufficiently to make the system work. Winston Churchill called it "the application of averages for the relief of millions."

Each year one out of seven Americans is hospitalized. The most expensive care in the medical spectrum, the daily average just for room and board is close to \$60 today. For years the annual rise had been about 8 per cent, with Blue Cross premiums going up accordingly. Then last year costs zoomed a phenomenal 16.5 per cent—five times the general cost of living increase. Moreover, the end is nowhere in sight. Dr. John Knowles, head of the prestigious Massachusetts General Hospital, has said that \$100-a-day rooms would soon be the rule.

If hospitals were anything but what they are, they would long ago have priced themselves out of the market. But when that happens in such vital institutions, the public steps in—by way of government.

Last year, of course, the government stepped in and passed Medicare, a compulsory hospital insurance for all those over sixty-five. It's still hemmed in with a thicket of deductibles, time limits, and other obstacles, as we have seen, but it's a giant step. And one of its results has been to raise an even bigger question. What about those *under* sixty-five, especially children, whose health is vital to national survival?

It was hoped that this question would be answered by Medicare, too. For in that act was included a section called Title XIX under which states could call on the federal government for help in providing medical care for welfare patients and *all others* whose income was insufficient to pay for it.

**U**NFORTUNATELY, Title XIX—or Medicaid, as it came to be called—has not answered the question. It is out-and-out welfare medicine (one has to pass a means test to get it), and it has not worked. To begin with, almost half the states (twenty) have not acted on it at all. Others have acted only half-heartedly. Only three states (New York, California, and Massachusetts) have really embraced the idea, and they are in trouble. Money is the principal reason. The law often requires counties to match the financial formula laid down by federal and state governments, and most counties do not have the financial capability of contributing their share. Doctors, too, have been slow to cooperate in many places. In New York, less than half have enrolled in the program, and in some communities patients insist that doctors are reluctant to take a Medicaid patient.

"There is a good chance that Title XIX will go the way of Kerr-Mills—down the road to oblivion," says Harry Becker, executive secretary of the New