

Hesburgh's Relationships: The Success Story of the Tantur Ecumenical Institute**Alice Reid****Publication Date**

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Hesburgh's Relationships: The Success Story of the Tantur Ecumenical Institute



(Photograph taken at the Ecumenical Institute for Advanced Theological Studies in Tantur
Jerusalem, 1972)

Alice Reid
University of Notre Dame
Writing and Rhetoric
Mr. Arnaud Zimmern

Long black robes with seemingly infinite buttons contrast starkly with the emotions on the faces of those pictured- hope and peace of mind, maybe even joy. Pure white clerical collars and ornate gold chains signal the intricate hierarchy of the Church. The photo is seemingly posed, but at the same time sincere, as the religious clergy turn to each other mid-conversation. Greek Orthodox clergy stand side by side with Catholic clergy and Protestant clergy. Alongside these religious men are I.A. O'Shaughnessy, philanthropist and major donor, as well as his daughter, both the rector and the vice rector of the Institute, and of course Theodore Hesburgh himself. This photo captures the inauguration of the groundbreaking Tantur Institute of Ecumenism, and a few of the people responsible for its success. In 1972, Tantur opened its doors to members of Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Anglican faiths in a first-ever effort to unite and learn from those of differing religious beliefs.

Hesburgh stands in the shadows of the photo, watching over the group with a knowing look of satisfaction. Responsible for establishing the Institute, Hesburgh takes a step back to observe the connections that he initiated between vastly different people in the process of creating the Tantur Institute. This one photo captures a narrow snapshot of the incredible relationships Hesburgh formed throughout his life, often with momentous outcomes. Historians and friends of Hesburgh alike have given him credit for his abilities to fundraise, network, and compromise, but at the heart of Hesburgh's success is his exceptional ability to relate to other human beings with varying levels of relationships, ranging from steadfast friendships to tense connections.

This paper looks closely at the specific relationships that Hesburgh had with those involved in the creation of the Tantur Institute, and how these connections benefitted the advancement of the institute. The major relationships crucial to the founding of Tantur are those

Hesburgh held with Pope Paul VI, donors like I.A. O'Shaughnessy, the Tantur Academic Council, and the Catholic Church hierarchy. These next paragraphs will provide a historical background on the origins of the Tantur Institute before turning to explore in depth how Hesburgh formed and navigated different kinds of relationships, both with individuals and groups, in order to benefit the Institute.

It is important to note first the context behind the ecumenical movement and how the idea for Tantur originated, which eventually led to Pope Paul VI choosing Hesburgh to head the Institute's creation. In 1959 Pope John 23rd called the Second Vatican Council, which would serve as an important stepping stone to the eventual formation of the Tantur Institute. Vatican II holds major significance in the ecumenical movement as a whole because Rome had not shown interest in ecumenism and in fact in some ways had been opposing church unity by refusing to give the Anglican Holy Orders recognition. While the ecumenical movement had first originated in 1910 in Edinburgh, Scotland, the Catholic Church had done a fine job of not only keeping its distance but outright rejecting it. A harsh interpretation of the Canon from 1917, for instance, states that no Catholics were permitted to attend non-Catholic services. With this in mind, it becomes much clearer why the Second Vatican Council was momentous for the Church and the ecumenical movement. (Lowe 15)

At Vatican II, Pope John Paul II made a big effort to welcome the observers that were from all different faiths. The observers actually were seated closer to the presider's table than the Cardinals (Lowe 24). This was important in continuing to develop a relationship with other faiths, and especially came in handy when many of the non-Catholic figures were supportive of the Tantur Institute. Soon after he was elected Pope in 1963, Pope Paul VI met with Patriarch Athenagoras, patriarch of the Orthodox Church. It was the first meeting between the Pope and

the Orthodox Patriarch since their two Churches had separated, over a thousand years ago. This marks an exciting new development for the Churches of the world. All of these events led up to Pope Paul VI's inspiration to create an ecumenical institute to pioneer Christian unity, which came to greater fruition when Hesburgh was elected president of the International Federation of Catholic Universities. (Lowe 13-25).

Pope Paul VI saw Hesburgh's election as president of the International Federation of Catholic Universities, IFCU, as the perfect opportunity to ask Hesburgh a major favor. IFCU hoped to unify Catholic Universities, which the Pope knew could correlate with his hope to unify different faiths, considering education regarding other religions is a pivotal element of ecumenism. In a private audience with Father Hesburgh and the donor I.A. O'Shaughnessy, Pope Paul VI officially asked Hesburgh to take over forming the Tantur Institute through his role as president of IFCU. Unfortunately, IFCU hadn't really been established beyond paper, so Hesburgh was initially on his own with this major undertaking. Of course, with the help of Hesburgh's vast network of friends, colleagues, and even superiors, Hesburgh was able to bring it to fruition. This project was especially challenging since the Tantur Institute was nothing like any other institute in existence up until this point, which meant Hesburgh was starting from scratch. The creation of the Tantur Institute had its fair share of challenges that Hesburgh had to face including funding, land disputes over the property located in Jerusalem, political tension in Jerusalem, and even choosing the details for the academic aspect of the Institute. With all of these challenges, Hesburgh was aided by friends, colleagues, and other religious with whom he had formed connections along the way.

It is particularly surprising that, out of all the people he could have chosen, Pope Paul VI chose Hesburgh. The university president had no formal experience with ecumenism. What was

it then about their relationship that caused the Pope to choose Hesburgh for the founding of Tantor? The Pope had many diplomatic relationships, but his friendships were rarer especially because of the prestige of his position. In his autobiography *God, Country, Notre Dame*, Hesburgh details his relationship with Pope Paul VI. When the Pope traveled to Notre Dame to celebrate the baccalaureate Mass, Hesburgh spent much of his time keeping the Pope company since not many people could speak Italian (Hesburgh 250). This was only the start of a friendship that developed to include gift-giving, continued visits with each other, and a shared interest for space travel (Hesburgh 256). The friendship that Hesburgh held with the Pope set him apart from the many other diplomatic priests and skilled Catholic businessmen that were qualified to create the Tantor Institute. In his autobiography, Hesburgh admits that his friendships with the Pope made more professional communication easier since he “felt more comfortable in conveying to the Pope what was on my mind” (Hesburgh 252). Hesburgh continued to impress Pope Paul VI with his ability and remained a friend despite some gossip regarding their falling out. The Pope chose Hesburgh for more important roles as the years went on such as head of the Vatican representatives for the human rights declaration and member of the Vatican’s United Nations, demonstrating the steady nature of their closeness.

While Hesburgh’s relationship with the Pope was responsible for landing him the role of forming the Tantor Institute, he also formed countless more connections that helped him build a successful establishment. Another important friendship Hesburgh held was with one of the major donors that made the institute possible: I. A. O’Shaughnessy. As he did with Pope Paul VI, Hesburgh spent time with O’Shaughnessy as a friend while maintaining professional relations regarding specific matters. Not many people can uphold both types of relationships, and this was a major factor that set Hesburgh apart from the rest. Father Hesburgh and I. A. O’Shaughnessy

spent many an afternoon smoking a cigar together, and Hesburgh even took O'Shaughnessy on a vacation to Jerusalem and Rome to see the finished product in Tantur as well as to explore Europe. In fact, Father Hesburgh was sitting on O'Shaughnessy's boat casually drinking a scotch with him when he broke the difficult news that the price of the building for the Tantur Institute had doubled from 1 million to 2 million as a result of the June War of 1967 in Jerusalem that meant higher wages for workers. O'Shaughnessy responded, "Father Ted, it is only money, I will double my contribution" (Lowe 10). Hesburgh was able to have this casual conversation and easily resolved outcome with O'Shaughnessy because of their friendship.

However, Hesburgh was not always so successful in his efforts to fundraise, and in many cases it was because of his failure to form a friendship with the donor like he did with O'Shaughnessy. In some cases, it may not have truly been possible. For instance, in Hesburgh's three hour meeting with Mr. Simon Doukas the current president of AHEPA in 1967 and John Thevos a past president of AHEPA, friendship was simply not an option. AHEPA is the American Hellenistic Educational Progressive Association; its purpose is to donate money to scholarships to encourage education of Greek immigrants. During the meeting, Hesburgh hoped to diplomatically convince one or more of these men to donate money to the Tantur Institute either for the endowment or to fund the library. Doukas was not interested in the causes that Hesburgh suggested, and instead wanted to raise money to build a monument. Doukas also wasn't really truly going about this in the ecumenical manner since he was only really taking into consideration the Catholic and Orthodox Catholics while excluding the Protestants. Hesburgh noted that Mr. Thevos, on the other hand, was supportive of the ecumenical cause, but didn't want to give financial aid to the institution. In his letter to an apostolic delegate, Egidio Vagnozzi, Hesburgh admits that this is a great disappointment for the institute since he was

really hoping for financial assistance from the Orthodox Catholics (1967 letter to Most Reverend Egidio Vagnozzi 1). Most of the documents regarding Hesburgh and his fundraising savvy only refer to his successes, so this is a rare example of a more challenging case in his major fundraising effort. Despite this setback, Hesburgh worked tirelessly, constantly meeting and sending letters with diplomats and colleagues alike in order to raise enough money to support Tantur. Most of the money that Hesburgh raised for the Tantur Institute was from private sources, so these types of meetings with influential figures were crucial to Hesburgh's fundraising cause. Even with obstacles like this one, Hesburgh was able to raise enough money as of November 1972 to fund the Institute for the next six years. (Student Newspaper Article- Up to the House of the Lord Nov 1972).

After the Provisional Committee met eight times in 1964 for organizational purposes, Hesburgh chose an Academic Council to be entirely responsible for planning the academics of the Institute. The Academic Council was strategically representative of many religions, made up of nine Roman Catholics and twenty-nine other non-Catholic scholars. Their first meeting was in Nov 1965 in Bellagio. The rhetoric Hesburgh uses to address the Academic Council is intriguing, mainly because of how it transforms over a period of five years. Hesburgh's rhetoric in letters to the Academic Council brings about an important question: what relationship does Hesburgh want to foster with the Academic Council? These two letters together give an important insight into Hesburgh and the relationships he held with others. It demonstrates his ability to form relationships over time, instead of diving right in and overstepping his boundaries treating a colleague like a close friend.

Hesburgh closes his letter to Academic Council from 1967 saying: "I send my best personal regards and gratitude for your dedication to our project" (1967 Letter to Academic

Council 3). At first, this closing seems to be a perfectly typical way to address colleagues. But, if this closing is compared to Hesburgh's closing to the same exact group of people five years later, there is a glaring juxtaposition. Five years later, he begins a letter to the council with the greeting "My dear friends" (1972 Letter Members of the Academic Council 1). This is contradictory to the more diplomatic tone that Hesburgh uses in the first letter from 1967. He speaks to them in an almost conversational tone, admitting that he has had a difficult time raising the funds needed for the institute. His willingness to share his struggles suggests a certain trust that he feels comfortable sharing something in confidence that could make him seem weak or less able. Hesburgh also refers to a "we" including him and the Academic Council, which is another symbol of his camaraderie with the group. Whether this is his true emotion or not, he clearly used his rhetoric to communicate a certain level of equality between himself and the council. At the very end, Hesburgh's closing remark is "With devoted best wishes and prayers for each of you, and looking forward to seeing you in Jerusalem in September" (1972 Letter from Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh to the Members of the Academic Council 2). Once again, Hesburgh manages to phrase his closing remark in a way that will make the reader feel special. Over a period of only five years, Hesburgh managed to befriend a group of individuals from vastly different backgrounds and religions. This brings about a distinction that is not as apparent in some of the other documents. Hesburgh wasn't best friends with prestigious figures like the Pope since day 1. Instead, it took time and effort to build up to a friendship or certain relationship that he would eventually have with them. The growingly intimate and harmonious friendship Hesburgh fostered with the Academic Council, manifested in the tone of the letters, very likely nurtured an administrative environment in which the academic and ecumenical work of the Tantur Institute could prosper.

Hesburgh also formed important relations with larger groups and organizations, most prominently his relationship with the Catholic Church. Hesburgh's relationship with the Church was quite different than his relationship with Pope Paul VI. While Hesburgh was almost an old friend of Pope Paul VI, Hesburgh challenged the authority of the Vatican if necessary. In order to have the relationship with the Vatican that Hesburgh did, he needed to assert his authority in certain situations even if it meant causing some strain on the relationship. In 1967, Benelli decided he wanted to take over the Tantur Institute. Cardinal Benelli was infamous within the Catholic world, and was nicknamed "The Berlin Wall" as well as "Your Efficiency" because of his reputation for being stubborn and making enemies easily. Benelli worked very closely with Pope Paul VI, and was considered to be one of the most powerful prelates in the Roman Catholic Church at the time. Hesburgh threatened to resign from his position, using his resignation as leverage to oppose Benelli's efforts. Hesburgh also pointed out that funds would be returned to donors if Benelli took over, using his keen business skill to manipulate this tough situation and keep everything within his control. Benelli's importance within the Church puts in perspective what Hesburgh was up against when he protected the Tantur Institute from being taken over by the Holy See. Considering the prestige of Cardinal Benelli, not just any person would be willing to not only stand up to him, but be able to win the argument. While a more tense diplomatic relationship is not one that Hesburgh is often praised for, it was necessary for this situation, and demonstrates Hesburgh's capability to know how to best form relationships with different people to allow for the success of Tantur. (*Cardinal Giovanni Benelli, Powerful Vatican Official, Dies* 1)

Hesburgh applied the same reasoning he used to prevent Benelli from overtaking Tantur in the Eighth General Meeting of the International Federation of Catholic Universities. In 1969,

Father Hesburgh, as president of the International Federation of Catholic Universities, and Pere Luyten, professor at the only state university in Switzerland holding a Faculty of Catholic Theology, both argued that a Catholic University should be independent, since the source of its Catholic identity lies not in its relation to the Holy See (Doherty 123). Luyten stated that “any external control would be foreign to the Catholic spirit and to the essential freedom of research as well as of theological development itself” (qtd. Doherty 123). Although this example is about Catholic Universities, it demonstrates how Hesburgh used his knowledge from other organizations and discussions to aid his decision-making for the Tantur Institute. The sometimes-strained relationship that Hesburgh had with the Church was a necessary evil in order for him to assert his own opinions and beliefs even if it meant going against the grain.

Throughout his life, Hesburgh was able to be successful in a large part because of his incredible ability to cultivate strong relationships with important people from around the world. Studying Hesburgh’s relationships with other people reveals some insight into the inner workings of his mind. Hesburgh was a business-savvy but also loving man. He formed genuine connections but was also strategic with the types of relationships he established. Whether countering the Holy See or addressing the newly appointed Academic Council, he knew how to interact with varying individuals or groups differently in order to create the ideal connection. Think back to the photo of Hesburgh with other influential figures at the Tantur Inauguration. Hesburgh brought people together - oftentimes individuals that might usually consider each other rivals. The effect of Hesburgh’s unifying abilities, both from the ecumenical standpoint and on a global level, are evident to us in the form of the Tantur Ecumenical Institute. The beauty in the specificity of Tantur is a representative perspective of Hesburgh’s actions, motives, and most importantly his relationships for a period of ten years. This intricate paper trail of Academic

Council agendas, letters from Apostolic Delegates, and interviews with Hesburgh himself contribute to a portrait of Hesburgh which deviates from the classic glorified priest and businessman to an imperfect but constantly developing diplomat. The story of Tantur represents so much more than just the success of Hesburgh. It provides readers an inside look at the failures that were crucial moments of the later successes, and details a timeline of Hesburgh's maturing as an effective relational leader. The insights uncovered during hours paging through Hesburgh's records in the archives also open the door to even more questions. What more could the Institute have been if it had included rather than opposed Benelli, or succeeded with obtaining donations from Doukas? With these in mind, we can begin to piece together a more human image of Hesburgh. Despite his glorified reputation, Hesburgh leaves behind the archival documents that reveal the imperfect journey he took to achieve his more celebrated accomplishments, in particular the Tantur Institute.

Annotated Bibliography

Black and white photograph taken at the Ecumenical Institute for Advanced Theological Studies in Tantur Jerusalem 1972 with Reverend Hesburgh, Msgr. Charles Moeller, and others pictured. GNDL 14/24. UNDA.

This photo pictures Archimandrite Daniel, Bishop Hanna Kaldany, Archbishop George Appleton, Msgr. Charles Moeller, Fr. Sheedy, Mrs. O'Shaughnessy, Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, Archbishop Stephanos of Caza, the Greek Orthodox Archimandrite Head of Ceremonies, and Rev. Pierre Duprey at the opening of the Tantur Ecumenical Institute. All of these people in some way contributed to the making and implementation of the institute. For example, I. A. O'Shaughnessy was the major donor that made the Tantur Ecumenical Institute possible. Msgr. Charles Moeller was the first rector at the institute. The photo depicts a posed picture that still seems candid in a few ways. Many of the religious clergy are turning and smiling each other. Hesburgh is in the background in the picture, which I found intriguing considering his role in the creation of the institute. I was also surprised that Hesburgh seems more distant and reserved in this photo since almost everyone else's faces seem to be filled with joy. I thought this photo encapsulates the many beneficial relationships that Hesburgh formed with people from around the world that aided in the success of the Institute.

“Cardinal Giovanni Benelli, Powerful Vatican Official, Dies.” *The Washington Post* (1974-*Current File*). October 28, 1982, sec. METRO Federal Diary Obituaries Classified.

This article is a post-mortem short biography of Cardinal Benelli. Cardinal Benelli was infamous within the Catholic world, and was nicknamed “The Berlin Wall” as well as “Your Efficiency” because of his reputation for being stubborn and making enemies easily. Benelli worked very closely with Pope Paul VI, and was considered to be one of the most powerful prelates in the Roman Catholic Church at the time. The significance of this article is that it puts in perspective what Hesburgh was up against when he protected the Tantur Institute from being taken over by the Holy See. Considering the prestige of Cardinal Benelli, not just any person would be willing to not only stand up to him but be able to win the argument. While a more tense diplomatic relationship is not one that Hesburgh is often praised for, it was necessary for this

situation, and demonstrates Hesburgh's capability to know how to best form relationships with different people to allow for the success of Tantur.

Doherty, John F. "On the Eighth General Meeting of the International Federation of Catholic Universities." *Philippine Studies* 17, no. 1 (1969): 120–32.

This document focused on the issue of Catholic Universities and addressed the topics and discussions that occurred at the International Federation of Catholic Universities Meeting in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1968 with Hesburgh as the president. One of the major topics of disagreement was the level of autonomy a Catholic University should have from the Vatican or other ecclesiastical control. On page 123, both Father Hesburgh and Pere Luyten argued that a Catholic University should be independent, since the source of its Catholic identity is not from its relation to the Holy See. On page 123, Luyten stated that "any external control would be foreign to the Catholic spirit and to the essential freedom of research as well as of theological development itself." Although this article is about Catholic Universities, it demonstrates how Hesburgh used his knowledge from other organizations and discussions to aid his decision-making for the Tantur Institute. In particular, there was a situation in 1967 in which Archbishop Giovanni Benelli tried to take over the institute but Hesburgh fended him off. Hesburgh would eventually use the same reasoning he used to prevent Benelli from overtaking Tantur in the Eighth General Meeting of the International Federation of Catholic Universities.

Hesburgh, Theodore M. *God, Country, Notre Dame*. Doubleday, New York, 1990.

Hesburgh's biography provides an important springboard for my paper. The details regarding his work in ecumenism and most specifically his relationship with different Church leaders are important to better understand him. He spends some time describing his relationship with Pope Paul VI, which is crucial since it is responsible for him being chosen for heading the creation of the Tantur Ecumenical Institute. He also gives some interesting insight into how he became interested in ecumenism, and what ecumenism meant to him. Although this source is a foundation, it can still most importantly be used to explain the friendship between Pope Paul VI and Hesburgh.

Kochems, Tim and Jim Munsch. "Up to the House of the Lord." *Editorial*, 114, no. 5, (3 Nov 1972): 10-11.

In this article, the authors describe the creation of the Tantur Ecumenical and specifically how it relates to the University of Notre Dame. The main intended audience is Notre Dame students. It makes some interesting points about the fact that Notre Dame technically paid for this institute, but has no academic control over it. This is an important differentiation to make that separates University of Notre Dame from the Tantur Institute. His article from a Notre Dame student-run newspaper gives an entirely different perspective than the other documents and

articles written by scholars. This is especially important to balance the paper since University of Notre Dame is a major component of how this institute is formed. The authors of this article also interview Hesburgh, so some of their quotes will be helpful in better understanding his goals for the institute.

Lowe, Timothy S. *Hope of Unity, Living Ecumenism Today : Celebrating 40 years of the Ecumenical Institute Tantur*. Aphorism, Berlin, 2013.

This book is a compilation of the lectures given at the Tantur Conference in October of 2012 in honor of the 40th anniversary of the Tantur Ecumenical Institute. It begins with a preface by Father Hesburgh. After that, it gives a detailed and complex background story to the inspiration and formation of the Tantur Ecumenical Institute. This will be helpful to better understand how this institute came into being and the role, whether big or small, that Hesburgh played in this process. Interestingly enough, Hesburgh isn't mentioned until 20 pages into the history of the institute. After this extended passage is a lecture which explores the future and evolving direction of ecumenism for both the western and eastern Churches. The final section of the book delves into the new challenges that face the ecumenical movement. These last two sections will be more helpful in gauging the success of the institute and what effect it was able to have for the ecumenical movement so far.

Pio Laghi to Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, 31 October 1973, CPHS 137/01, UNDA.

Within the archives, this was one of the only sources that majorly involved Hesburgh and ecumenism. Pio Laghi, an apostolic delegate, writes to Hesburgh regarding the newly formed Bethlehem University and Amman State University and how it will relate to the newly implemented Tantur Ecumenical Institute. He refers to the visit that Hesburgh paid Prince Hassan and the support he showed to the new university. This is an important demonstration of Hesburgh's business savvy, which serve him well and particularly can help aid in the success of the Tantur Institute. It also represents the ecumenical work that he did beyond Tantur, which is important because it shows his dedication and passion to the ecumenical movement that grows beyond his responsibility to complete the task that Pope Paul VI gave him.

Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh to the Members of the Academic Council, August 17 1967, CPHS 157/16, UNDA.

This letter serves a very similar purpose as the next letter that is from Hesburgh to the Academic Council five years later. Hesburgh's rhetoric is the aspect of the letter that is particularly interesting. The wording and tone that Hesburgh sets forth in this letter is much different from the letter that he sends five years later. This sets up an interesting juxtaposition to

be able to take a look at how the relationship between Hesburgh and the Academic Council changed over a period of 5 years. For example

Hesburgh ends this 1967 letter to the Academic Council with the closing: “I send my best personal regards and gratitude for your dedication to our project” (1967 Letter to Academic Council 3). This seems to be an appropriate way to address colleagues, but if compared to Hesburgh’s closing to the same exact group of people five years later, it seems like two different people writing the letter.

Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh to the Members of the Academic Council, 10 April 1972, CPHS 157/03, UNDA.

The rhetoric Hesburgh uses to address the Academic Council is intriguing. He begins with the greeting “My dear friends” (1972 Letter from Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh to the Members of the Academic Council 1). This is contradictory of the more diplomatic tone that Hesburgh would be expected to speak with other important figures. He speaks to them in an almost conversational tone, admitting that he has had a difficult time raising the funds needed for the institute. This suggests a certain trust that he feels comfortable sharing something in confidence that could make him seem weak or less able. Hesburgh also refers to a “we” including him and the Academic Council, which is another symbol of his camaraderie with the group. Whether this is his true emotion or not, he most definitely used his rhetoric to communicate a certain level of equality between him and the group. At the very end, Hesburgh’s closing remark is “With devoted best wishes and prayers for each of you, and looking forward to seeing you in Jerusalem in September, I am ever devotedly in Our Lord” (1972 Letter from Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh to the Members of the Academic Council 2). Once again, Hesburgh manages to phrase his closing remark in a way that will make the reader feel special. The way in which he phrased this letter begs the question: what relationship does Hesburgh want to foster with the Academic Council? This letter sheds some light on the answer to that question.