

## THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

It is a commonplace among modern theologians who deal with the *tractatus de ecclesia* that this particular subject is treated quite inadequately in most of the current manuals. Canon Jacques Leclercq has voiced this complaint quite forcefully in his highly interesting book, *La vie du Christ dans son église*. He begins his study with the contention that

As we usually find it [the treatise on the Church] in the manuals, it is a treatise mainly apologetical in character, but partly canonical also. Its principal aim is to prove that Christ founded a visible society, that this society is the Catholic Church, and that the Catholic Church centers around the Pope. Then there follow studies about the powers in the Church, and particularly about the powers of the Sovereign Pontiff, and about the principles governing the relations between the Church and the State. But there are many other things in the Church.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the fact that he over-simplifies his description of the current treatise *de ecclesia*, Canon Leclercq is indubitably correct in his contention that sacred theology has a great deal to say about the Catholic Church which is not contained in the contemporary manuals. Among other things, the contemporary text-books of theology most frequently omit or understress the divine teaching about the relations between the Church and the world. Strangely enough, that doctrine formed an integral and highly important part of early scholastic ecclesiology. From the thirteenth century until the eighteenth, there was never any question of removing it from the treatise on the Church of Christ. During the eighteenth century, however, this section gradually disappeared from the manuals. From the beginning of the nineteenth century down to our own time, the theological manuals have contained only the barest minimum of this teaching.

The omission or the understressing of this teaching has had a definitely ascertainable cause in the history of sacred theology. It has likewise had serious and highly unfortunate results. It will be the purpose of this paper to sketch the basic teaching on the interrelations of the Church and the world, the manner in which this teaching is to be found in the most important early monu-

<sup>1</sup> *La vie du Christ dans son église* (Paris : Les Éditions du Cerf, 1947), p. 5.

ments of our scholastic ecclesiology, the causes of its decline in scholastic literature, and the unfortunate results which have followed upon that decline.

It is a truth of basic importance about the Catholic Church that, since the days of our first parents, there have existed upon this earth two distinct and mutually hostile organizations, the supernatural kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan, the group under the direction and the influence of "the prince of this world." This separation began only after the fall, when the family of Adam began to exist and to act as a social unit averted from God, its only ultimate and supernatural end. Original sin, it must be remembered, not only turned the individual child of Adam away from God, but also affected the family of Adam, as a social entity.

God, in His infinite mercy, made it possible for men, from the earliest days after the fall, to go out from this company which lay under the dominion of His chief spiritual enemy, and to enter into His own supernatural kingdom, the society which was to be headed by His divine Son. Entrance or incorporation into this new group was to be effected by a profession of faith in God, by the acceptance of divine public revelation. The divinely revealed message was chiefly concerned with the Messiah, who was to be the head of the new household of God for all eternity. Hence the supernatural kingdom of God was, from the very outset, the company of Jesus Christ Our Lord.

Within this society there existed and operated the sanctity of Christ Himself. The Saints of the Old Testament acted with the help of that divine grace which was given to them by reason of the pre-applied merits of Christ. Thus entrance into this group was basically a step, and an essential step, in the salvation of man. The people who were favored with membership in this company were those who had been saved from the great company which lay under the dominion of Satan.

Ultimately, of course, salvation consists in the achievement of the beatific vision by one who had previously been in a position of aversion from God. It involves a final and irremovable integration into the company of Christ, membership in the Church triumphant, and consequently an absolute and eternal removal from the evil of aversion from God.

This ultimate salvation begins from a proximate and real process

of salvation on this earth, a process whereby a person who has hitherto belonged merely to the family of Adam, and who has thus been turned away from God and placed under the domination of Satan, enters into the household of God which is the supernatural kingdom of Jesus Christ. The person who perseveres in this supernatural kingdom of God until the end of this earthly life is the only one who will achieve the ultimate and eternal salvation of the beatific vision. Thus the supernatural kingdom of God on this earth is and has been from the very outset the company of the saved.

Now it is an integral part of Catholic teaching, despite the fact that it has not been adequately stressed in many of the recent theological manuals in their treatise *de ecclesia*, that this supernatural kingdom of God, the congregation of the faithful in Christ, has been in existence on this earth since the days of our first parents themselves. Catholic doctrine teaches that the divinely revealed message given to this supernatural kingdom was added to from time to time during the ages that transpired between the days of our first parents and the advent of Jesus Christ Our Lord. It also holds that this message was completed in the divine doctrine which was preached by Our Lord and by His apostles.

Moreover, the internal structure of the kingdom itself underwent many modifications during the course of its history. From wholly unorganized beginnings, the kingdom eventually passed to the status in which one particular ethnic group was constituted as the chosen people. This politico-religious organization of the Jews was established as the social unit out of which the Redeemer of the world was to come. It was also the custodian of the divinely commanded worship of the old dispensation. This people, over and above all others, stood forth as the people of the ancient covenant, despite the fact that it was perfectly possible for a man, prior to the time of Christ's advent, to belong to God's supernatural kingdom on earth without having any connection whatsoever with the Jewish commonwealth.

The most important element in the meaning of the term "the true Church of Jesus Christ" is to be found in the truth that the existent and visible Catholic Church is, as it stands, the supernatural kingdom of God on this earth today. Or, to put the same truth in another way, the supernatural kingdom of Christ in its final status on this earth is absolutely identified with the Catholic

Church, Thus the visible Catholic Church is inherently and primarily the company of the saved, the society with which men must be associated if they are to enjoy the beatific vision. It is essentially the household of God, the company of Christ, within which alone men may find association with Our Lord on this earth.

And, by reason of the very fact that the Church is the kingdom of God on earth, it is and it will ever be a society definitely out of favor with the kingdom of "the prince of this world." The basic cause of opposition and persecution against the Church on the part of the world is and has always been the clear and unequivocal statement by the Church of the divinely revealed truth about itself and about its divine Founder. Ordinarily at least, if Catholics are willing to represent themselves as belonging to the world rather than to the unique kingdom of God on earth, the world will be perfectly willing to accept them as its own. It is only when the world encounters the accurate statement of the divinely revealed message about the Church, the teaching that this visible society is, by God's ordinance, actually necessary for salvation as the only divinely instituted and authorized religious society on earth, that unpopularity and opposition are encountered. It is the situation which Our Lord prophetically described on the night of the Last Supper.

If the world hate you, know ye that it hath hated me before you.

If you had been of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.<sup>2</sup>

It is perfectly certain, then, that the social organism which leads and will always lead the opposition against the Catholic Church is the "world" itself. The supreme direction of the corporate efforts made to counter the works of the Church belongs to "the prince of this world." Furthermore, it is of supreme importance to note that the battle for God and His truth in the religious sphere is and always will be waged by the Catholic Church itself, not by some alliance of the Church with other agencies of "good will" in this world.

The early 'scholastic ecclesiologists were quite explicit in their teaching about the existence of an *ecclesia Dei*. and an *ecclesia*

<sup>2</sup>*John*, 15:18-19.

*Satanae*, which have co-existed and which have been in a status of mutual conflict since the first days of the human race. They were equally strong in their insistence that the visible Catholic Church is actually the *ecclesia Dei*, the one and only company of the saved, in the era of the New Testament. Moneta of Cremona, a Dominican theologian of the thirteenth century, thus teaches the doctrine of the two *ecclesiae*.

Two *ecclesiae* are found in this world, according to the testimony of the Scriptures. One is the *ecclesia sanctorum*, about which we read in the first verse of Psalm 149: "Sing ye to the Lord a new canticle: let his praise be in the church of the saints." The other is the *ecclesia malignantium*, with reference to which we read that the Holy Ghost has said, through David, in the fifth verse of Psalm 25: "I have hated the assembly of the malignant"<sup>34</sup>

Moneta also brings out in all of its perfection the Catholic teaching that the Church of the New Testament is actually the continuation of the *ecclesia sanctorum* which had been in existence since the days of our first parents.

It is the teaching of Catholic men that the Church can be considered in two ways. In one way the Church is called the *congregatio fidelium* in such a manner that the *fidelis* is so designated in terms of the faith without any qualification whatsoever (*simpliciter*). But this faith is identical in the saints of long ago, who lived before the advent of Christ into the world and in those who have believed in Christ since His coming. . . . The times have changed, but the faith has not changed. They believed that Christ was going to come. We believe that He has come. When we consider the Church from this point of view, we are compelled to say that the Church began with the first just man, that is, with Abel. . . .\*

Considered in its other aspect, the Church is called the *congregatio fidelium* in such a manner that the *fidelis* is thus designated, not in terms of the faith without qualification, but from the faith of Christ who has already been born of the Virgin, who has already suffered, etc. Considered in this way, the Church began from the coming of Christ, even before the passion and the resurrection, because He gave the Holy Ghost to the disciples even before the passion, as we show in the chapter about the Holy Ghost in the second section of this work. This is the Church which is now called Roman, the Church which began

<sup>3</sup>*Adversus Catharos et Valdenses* (Rome, 1743), Lib. V, cap. 1, p. 389.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, Lib. V, cap. 2, p. 408.

from Christ, whom Peter succeeded [as the visible head of the society] and which will remain thus until the end of the world.<sup>5</sup>

The doctrine thus presented by Moneta is what modern manuals teach all too succinctly in their allusions to two definitions of the Church militant, the one applying to the kingdom of God, the congregation of the faithful in Christ which has been in existence since the time of our first parents, and the other applying to the visible society of Our Lord's disciples, organized during the course of His public life on earth. Thus it has always been the teaching of Catholic theology that the society of Our Lord's disciples was not formed as an entirely new thing. This organization was fashioned to be what the kingdom of God on earth had always been, the one company of the believers, the association or brotherhood into which a man had to enter in order to be saved from the kingdom of Satan. The organization which Our Lord built around Himself is not merely the continuation of the old Israel, the assembly of the covenant, but it is the continuation and the final status on earth of God's militant kingdom.

For the older scholastic ecclesiologists, the immediate source of the teaching about the distinction between the Church and the world as between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan was the doctrine of St Augustine, particularly that set forth in his *De civitate Dei*. The Augustinian Bishop of Benevento, James of Viterbo, in the beginning of the fourteenth century, brought this doctrine out in his treatise *De regimine Christiano*. He begins by observing that the Church on earth and the Church triumphant in heaven do not constitute two societies, but actually form one and the same kingdom of God.

These are not two kingdoms, but one kingdom, because there is one King over both, namely Christ who rules both, although in a different manner. For he reigns in the *ecclesia viatorum* through faith, and in the *ecclesia beatorum* through open vision. This kingdom is one by reason of the unity of its purpose and of its principle, although it is divided by reason of a diversity of condition. . .

The kingdom of the world, which is called earthly, is opposed to the kingdom of God, because it has chosen earthly goods for itself as its own purpose. This is also called the kingdom of the devil, because the

devil rules over it, for, as it is said in the book of Job, "He is king over all the children of pride," because through malice he rules over them, as Christ rules over the just through grace. . . . But these two kingdoms, as far as men are concerned, are mingled together, in this life, because the good are mingled together with the evil and the evil with the good. Both in like manner use temporal things and both together are afflicted equally with misfortunes until they shall be separated by the last judgment when each will receive his final end, as Augustine says in the eighteenth book of the *De civitate Dei*.

James of Viterbo is quite explicit in his teaching that the two kingdoms have been in existence since the time of our first parents. He also insists that every person in the world belongs to one or the other of these two companies.

These two kingdoms originated from and were typified by Abel and Cain, and also the two sons of Abraham. There always have been men belonging to both kingdoms since the very beginning of the human race. Moreover the entire human race is contained within these two kingdoms, in such a way that each person must belong to one or the other of them.<sup>7</sup>

The fifteenth-century Carmelite theologian, Thomas Netter of Walden, is neither as clear nor as completely accurate as Moneta of Cremona and James of Viterbo in his explanation of the existence of God's kingdom on earth prior to the Incarnation. Netter wrote to refute the heretical teachings of John Wycliffe, an English priest who defined the Church as the company (*universitas*) of the predestined. Like many another controversialist, Netter weakened his own position somewhat by his anxiety to use the terminology and even the concepts of his adversary in his own presentation of the Christian message.

Netter admitted that there is "a certain kind of Church of all the elect."<sup>8</sup> He believed that this was the society which St. Augustine described frequently in the course of his works. The passage which he cites, however, is the one from the *De civitate Dei* in

<sup>8</sup> Pars I, cap. 1, in *Le plus ancien traité de l'église, Jacques de Viterbe, De regimine Christiano. Étude des sources et édition critique*, par H. X. Arquillère (Paris: Beauchesne, 1926), pp. 96 ff.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 98 f.

*s. Antiquitatum fidei catholicae ecclesiae doctrinale de sacramentis* (Venice, 1758), Lib. II, cap. 10, p. 286.

which St. Augustine states that "The Church goes on in pilgrimage, amidst the world's persecutions and God's consolations, not merely from the time of the bodily presence of Christ and of the apostles, but from Abel, the first just man, whom his impious brother killed, and [it goes on] thence to the very end of the world."<sup>9</sup> Later in this same work, Netter presented his theory that this "Church of the predestined" is contained within the visible Church "as a wheel within a wheel."<sup>10</sup> The visible Church is the society of the baptized, the congregation which includes both good and evil members in this world. It is the reality which Our Lord described in the parable of the great net.<sup>11</sup>

Thomas Netter of Walden, writing against the Wycliffites, centered his attention on the Church militant of the New Testament. The teaching he tried to explain in terms of a twofold Church was exactly the same doctrine which the other scholastic ecclesiologists brought out with their twofold definition of the same society.

Another great fifteenth-century theologian, the Dominican Cardinal John de Turrecremata, wrote what is still by all means the best doctrinal explanation of the origin and the nature of Our Lord's Church. In his *Summa de ecclesia*, a masterpiece which has never been utilized in the history of scholastic theology to the extent it deserves to be, Turrecremata gives a magnificently complete and accurate teaching about the twofold origin of the Christian Church. He explains its beginnings as the society of the disciples, organized around Himself by Jesus Christ Our Lord, and then he shows how this society is actually the final status in this world of a company of believers in Christ which started from Abel. In turning back the objections of those who held that the *ecclesia sanctorum* began from Adam rather than from Abel, Turrecremata insisted that opposition to the kingdom of Satan was of the very nature of Christ's company in this world, and that such opposition was first manifest in the persecution and murder of Abel by Cain.<sup>12</sup>

This same concept of the Church of Christ as opposed throughout its entire history by the world, considered as the kingdom of Satan, is manifest in the works of the great counter-Reformation

<sup>9</sup>The citation is from Book XVIII, cap. 51.

<sup>10</sup>Netter, *op. cit.*, Lib. II, cap. 12, p. 299.

*KIbid.*

<sup>12</sup>*Summa de ecclesia* (Venice, 1561), Lib. I, cap. 27, p. 30r.



theologians. Invariably it carried with it an account of the origin of God's supernatural kingdom on earth in the days of our first parents. It was still current in scholastic theology in the early days of the eighteenth century, and it forms an integral part of Tournely's ecclesiology.

That teaching, however, has no longer been stressed since the middle of the last century. Its disappearance from Catholic theology can be explained, in part at least, by an unfortunate tendency to divide the treatise *de ecclesia* into two sections, the one "apologetical" and the other "theological." The nineteenth-century ecclesiol-ogists considered it their duty to refute the main contention, of liberal Protestantism, the erroneous teaching that Our Lord had never organized any religious society of His own. Unfortunately, however, they seem to have imagined that this preoccupation en- titled them to leave out of their teaching on the foundation of the Church all that was not immediately requisite for this refutation. Hence the pre-existence of the Christian Church as God's super- natural kingdom on earth prior to the Incarnation, and the nature of the Catholic Church as this kingdom in its final and definitive state on this earth have been somewhat neglected in the popular ecclesiology of recent times.

The manoeuvre itself was quite unscientific. There is no reason whatsoever why any one section of ecclesiology should be desig- nated as "apologetical" and cut off from what is called the "theo- logical" portion of the treatise. It is perfectly true, of course, that there is ample historical as distinguished from specifically revealed evidence for the establishment of the Catholic Church by Jesus Christ Our Lord. This evidence with the conclusion to which it leads does not, however, in any way constitute the entire theo- logical teaching about the origin and the basic nature of the Church.

The brotherhood of Catholics with the Saints of the Old Testa- ment forms an integral part of the divinely revealed message about the Church. That fellowship can only be explained in terms of common membership in one company of believers, within which the faith itself remained one since the days of our first parents. The opposition of the world to the Church is a fact attested by Our Lord Himself. That opposition can only be understood ade- quately when it is known that the visible Church militant of the New Testament is actually God's supernatural kingdom on earth,

a company which has been in existence, and which has been opposed by the kingdom of Satan, since the earliest days of the human race.

When the complete theology of the Church's origin is rightly explained, the necessity of the Church for salvation is more perfectly understandable. The kingdom of God, opposed by the kingdom of this world, has always been and is of its very essence, the society of salvation. Men are saved from the company of Satan primarily by entrance into this supernatural kingdom. It is interesting to note that the confusion which has characterized some of the teaching on this thesis has appeared in theological literature only since the theology of the Church's origin has been presented in inadequate form.

The most important effect of this inadequacy in teaching about the origin of the Church and about the Church and the world has been the emergence of a kind of mitigated indifferentism. Those who forget that the Church is essentially God's kingdom on earth, ever striving for its supernatural objective against the hostile efforts of the world itself, have been prone to imagine that the visible Catholic society to some extent shares its functions with other organizations. They have formulated the concept of a vast struggle for God's service on earth, a struggle in which the army working for God consists of the Church and other organizations of "men of good will." They do not grasp the central mystery of God's teaching about the Church, the truth that this visible society, with its good and evil members mingled together during all the days of its earthly sojourn, is actually the kingdom which alone does God's will in the religious order. This, and this alone, is the company of Christ.

Canon Ledercq's somewhat summary description of the treatise *de ecclesia*, as this treatise stands in a good many modern manuals of sacred theology, takes no cognizance whatsoever of the divine teaching about the identity of the Church as God's kingdom on earth and about the relations of that supernatural kingdom with "the prince of this world" and the group subject to his influence. It is unfortunately all too probable that the impression many other theologians have formed of this treatise corresponds more or less exactly to that of the distinguished Belgian writer. If this be so, it is essential that the treatise should be enriched, so as to en-

compass within it an adequate teaching of the divinely revealed truth about the Church.

This enrichment of scholastic ecclesiology demands, first of all, an inclusion of certain teachings about the life of the Church which, although existent in theological literature, have not as yet been brought into the ordinary treatise *de ecclesia*. As **examples of** such teachings we may mention the theology of the local Church or diocese, and the theology of the place of religious congregations in the Church.

It is fully as important, however, that there should also be a reconsideration of that part of ecclesiology which is now termed merely or principally apologetical in nature. It is highly important that theologians should remember that, on the origin of the Church and on its discernibility, there is not merely a body of strictly historical evidence, but also a tremendous amount of specifically supernatural teaching. A man definitely does not understand all that God wills he should know about the origin of the Catholic Church if he is simply aware of the historical evidence "that Christ founded a visible society," and "that this society is the Catholic Church." He does not grasp all that God wills that he should know about the unity of the Church if he considers this unity merely as a visible note.

The historical evidence now set forth in the "apologetical" section of the treatise *de ecclesia* rightly belongs in this treatise. But, if the treatise is to be treated adequately, the evidence of divine revelation itself, the strictly theological evidence about the origin, the unity, and the character of the Catholic Church must be included also. That section of the treatise now commonly designated as apologetical is no more repertory of facile responses to non-Catholic arguments and jibes against the Church of Christ. Properly speaking, it is and it ought to be the fundamental part of the scholastic explanation of God's teaching about His supernatural kingdom on earth.

It is well to remember that, although scholastic theology itself has somewhat understressed the teaching about the Church and the world, that doctrine has been stated with the utmost clarity in a highly important pontifical document. On April 20, 1884, Pope Leo XIII issued his famous encyclical letter, *Humanum genus*. This encyclical condemned the powerful organization of the Freemasons precisely because, in the opinion of Pope Leo, this

group had come to act as the central and directive force in the campaign of the kingdom of Satan against Our Lord and against the supernatural kingdom of God on earth.

At this period, however, the partisans of evil seem to be combining together, and to be struggling with united vehemence, led on or assisted by that strongly organized and widespread association called the Freemasons. No longer making any secret of their purposes, they are now boldly rising up against God Himself. They are planning the destruction of the holy Church publicly and openly, and this with the set purpose of despoiling the nations of Christendom, if it were possible, of the blessings obtained for us through Jesus Christ Our Saviour.<sup>13</sup>

Pope Leo's accusations against Freemasonry are understandable only in the light of the Catholic teaching on the Church and the world, seen together with the doctrine on the origin of God's kingdom on earth during the lifetime of our first parents. Hence the encyclical itself opens with a vigorous statement of this truth.

The race of man, after its miserable fall from God, the Creator and the Giver of heavenly gifts, "through the envy of the devil," separated into two diverse and opposite parts, of which the one steadfastly contends for truth and virtue, the other for those things which are contrary to virtue and to truth. The one is the kingdom of God on earth, the true Church of Jesus Christ; and those who desire from their heart to be united with it so as to gain salvation must of necessity serve God and His only-begotten Son with their whole mind and with an entire will. The other is the kingdom of Satan, in whose possession and control are all whosoever follow the fatal example of their leader and of our first parents, those who refuse to obey the divine and eternal law, and who have many aims of their own in contempt of God, and many aims also against God.

This twofold kingdom St. Augustine keenly discerned and described after the manner of two cities, contrary in their laws because striving for contrary objects; and with subtle brevity he expressed the efficient cause of each in these words: "Two loves formed two cities: the love of self, reaching even to contempt of God, an earthly city; and the love of God, reaching even to contempt of self, a heavenly one." At every period of time each has been in conflict with the other, with a variety and multiplicity of weapons and of warfare, although not always with equal ardor and assault.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup>*The Great Encyclical Letters of Pope Leo XIII* (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1908), pp. 83 f.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 83.

We are, all of us, firmly convinced that the theology of our time will be gloriously enriched by the inclusion in the manuals of the doctrinal treasures resident in the great papal encyclicals. Unfortunately, however, when there is mention of the encyclicals in our time, there is a widespread tendency to think merely or at least primarily of the great social documents, like the *Rerum novarum* and the *Quadragesimo anno*. Actually that tendency has done a great deal of harm to modern Catholic instruction. It is perfectly true that the men for whom Christ died need, and need badly, the social teachings of the Catholic Church. It is also true that our people and our priests must have the treasures of dogmatic truth, contained in encyclicals like the *Humanum genus* "the singulari quadum, and the *Mystici corporis*. Only when these documents are used more fully, and only when their content is brought into the theological manuals, will we find the type of adequate theological teaching on the Church about which Canon Leclercq has written and towards which he has contributed so effectively.

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#### Adapting the Catholic Message

The principles on which the new opinions We have mentioned are based may be reduced to this: that, in order the more easily to bring over to Catholic doctrine those who dissent from it, the Church ought to adapt herself somewhat to our advanced civilization, and, relaxing her ancient rigor, show some indulgence to modern popular theories and methods. Many think that this is to be understood not only with regard to the rule of life, but also to the doctrines in which the deposit of faith is contained. For they contend that *it is* opportune, in order to work in a more attractive way upon the wills of those who are not in accord with us, to pass over certain heads of doctrines, as if of lesser moment, or so to soften them that they may not have the same meaning which the Church has invariably held. Now, Beloved Son, few words are needed to show how reprehensible is the plan that is thus conceived, if we but consider the character and origin of the doctrine which the Church hands down to us.

—Pope Leo XIII, in his encyclical *Testem benevolentiae*, issued on Jan. 22, 1891. In *The Great Encyclical Letters of Pope Leo XIII* (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1903), p. 442.

## Answers to Questions

### A RECENT DECREE OF THE HOLY OFFICE

*Question:* What decree did the Holy See recently issue in reference to "interfaith" meetings? What bearings will this decree have on conditions prevailing in our country?

*Answer:* The questioner evidently refers to a *monitum* issued by the Holy Office on June 5, 1948, the translation of which is as follows:

Since it has been found out that in various places, against the prescriptions of the Sacred Canons and without previous permission of the Holy See, mixed gatherings of non-Catholics with Catholics have been held, in which matters of faith have been discussed, all are reminded that it is forbidden by Canon 1325, §3, for both lay persons and clerics, whether secular or religious, to take part in these gatherings without the aforesaid permission. Much less is it permitted for Catholics to convoke and establish such gatherings. Hence, let the Ordinaries insist that these prescriptions be exactly observed by all.

There is still more reason for observing these rulings when there is question of what are called "ecumenical" gatherings, in which Catholics, whether lay persons or clerics, may under no circumstances take part without the previous consent of the Holy See.

Since however, both in the aforesaid gatherings and outside of them, even acts of mixed cult have not infrequently been performed, all are again admonished that any communication in sacred rites is absolutely forbidden, according to the norm of Canons 1258 and 731,52.

Given at Rome, from the Holy Office, June 5, 1948.

**Peter Vigorita, Notary**  
(*Osservatore Romano*, June 6, 1948)

This decree contains nothing that is strictly new; it merely repeats very emphatically certain prescriptions already laid down by the Code in the canons cited. However, this present decree makes explicit mention of a point which is contained only in a general way in the code—namely, that clerics as well as lay Catholics are forbidden to take part in religious discussions and conferences with non-Catholics unless they obtain due permission. Furthermore, this *monitum* speaks of the Holy See alone as the competent authority to grant this permission. It is true, Canon