

## ROME, OXFORD AND EDINBURGH

EVER since Christendom was divided, the longing for unity has filled many earnest souls. Constant efforts have been made by the Catholic Church to re-unite her separated brethren; but it is only during the last three-quarters of a century that, apart from a few ecclesiastics and university professors, there has been any noteworthy and extensive reunion-movement among the various Christian bodies separated from the See of Rome. To-day, under the name of "ecumenical movement" this movement is widespread, and may be regarded as one of the most important features of Twentieth Century Christendom. Already well developed in 1914, interrupted—or rather slowed down—by the war, it soon became a powerful force in the years that followed. The intense longing for solidarity and fraternity issued in two "ecumenical conferences" in 1925 and 1927 respectively.

This "ecumenicist" tendency in non-Catholic Christendom pursues two distinct but parallel lines, corresponding to two distinct viewpoints of the way in which unity is to be achieved. The older of the two movements, that called *Faith and Order*, which held its first world congress at Lausanne in 1927, had its origins towards the end of the last century among American Episcopalians. The younger movement, *Life and Work*, whose first world-congress was at Stockholm in 1925, is also of American origin.

Both of these two movements have held their second "ecumenical conferences" during this summer in Great Britain. The Stockholm (*Life and Work*) Movement met at Oxford from July 12th to 26th; the Lausanne (*Faith and Order*) Movement at Edinburgh from August 3rd to 18th. This means that hundreds of our separated brethren—Protestants, Anglicans, Orthodox, Christians of all sorts of denominations—have gathered together in England and Scotland to labour for the realization of the most sublime hope to which a man could devote his life. One may wonder

how many Catholics have thrown themselves on their knees to beg God with intense supplication that all sincere souls may discover the true way to unity.<sup>1</sup>

Yet the Catholic Church alone among the great bodies of Christendom, has refused to take part in the deliberations at Oxford and at Edinburgh, just as she refused to take part at Stockholm and Lausanne. This fact has been the source of great disappointment, and even of disgust, to many.

Why this refusal? Here we will attempt a brief explanation. In order to do this we must first of all outline the respective positions of the Stockholm and Lausanne Movements.

### I. LIFE AND WORK

There is no need for us to tell the history of the Stockholm Movement; it has already been fully related elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> We will recall only that the *Life and Work* group was already flourishing in U.S.A. before the war, that it was much occupied with the promotion of pacifism and still more with missionary enterprises; but that it was in the peculiar circumstances of the post-war period that its heyday began. Though its most prominent figure was the Lutheran Archbishop of Upsala with his very broad, somewhat confused mentality, (he was the inheritor of a kind of modernism coupled with the relativism of Schleiermacher, A. Sabatier

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<sup>1</sup> We may here recall the words of Benedict XV to a delegation from *Life and Work*. After stating why Catholics could not participate he added: "Nevertheless His Holiness wishes it to be known that he does not in any way disapprove of the congress for those who are not in Communion with the See of Peter. On the contrary he prays with all his heart that those who take part in it will be enlightened to join the visible head of the Church who will receive them with open arms."

<sup>2</sup> A short bibliography may be useful. The Acts (incomplete) of the Stockholm Conference will be found in *La Conférence Universelle du Christianisme pratique*, (288 pp., 1926). Other works: H. Monnier, *Vers l'union des Eglises* (Fischbacher, 1926); Ad. Deissmann, *Una Sancta* (Bertelsmann, Gutersloh, 1936). For the history of both movements see: A. Paul, *L'unité chrétienne; Schismes et rapprochements* (Rieder, Paris, 1930); M. Pribilla, S.J., *Um kirchliche Einheit; Stockholm—Lausanne—Rome* (Herder, Freiburg i B. 1929). This work of Fr. Pribilla is very remarkable and exceedingly well documented; it has been praised highly by the leaders of the Stockholm movement themselves. For a Catholic critique of the Stockholm movement see, C. Journet, *L'union des Eglises et le Christianisme pratique*. (Grasset, Paris, 1926.)

and Troeltsch), the membership was predominantly Anglo-Saxon. This fact perhaps explains the conspicuousness of the "practical" element in the Stockholm outlook, and the evident influence of the idealism of the Woodrow Wilson type. Re-reading the documents of that time, one realizes how much they are coloured by the outlook of the early days of the League of Nations; their evangelical dress is scarcely more noticeable than are the utterances of President Wilson himself. At Geneva and at Stockholm there was much the same atmosphere of a complacent optimism which favoured high-sounding speeches, the same evidence of economic prosperity and the childlike faith in the beginnings of a new era of international co-operation, the same atmosphere of a rather "bourgeois" enthusiasm for social betterment. From this point of view, *Life and Work* at Oxford in 1937 will be found to have differed considerably from *Life and Work* at Stockholm in 1925. Much has changed since then: not only the social, economic and international atmosphere, but even the theological.

However that may be, *Life and Work* succeeded in gathering together at Stockholm in August 1925 more than 600 delegates representing thirty-one "churches" and thirty-seven nations. (The Catholic Church, of course, was not represented.) What was the idea?

Stockholm invited the Christians of the World to unite on the basis of common "Life and Work," that is to say on a basis of *action*, and that with particular regard to activities for social and international betterment. The official *Message* of the Conference announced it as "an effort to orientate the disciples of the Saviour towards a programme of practical activity in the sphere of life, leaving on one side all doctrinal, liturgical and ecclesiastical questions."<sup>3</sup>

As W. Monod said: "The drawing up of a common programme implied and presupposed the tacit adoption of a definite attitude towards doctrine and discipline." The project of finding a common unity in "life and work" indeed implied, at least in the minds of those who framed it, a

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<sup>3</sup> Message §2 [The translator regrets that he has no authorised English version of these documents to hand.]

definite conception of what Christianity is. Monod continues:

"The *Life and Work* Assembly of 1925 does not pretend to solve the problems raised by the *Faith and Order* Assembly. But it transfers them from the 'ecclesiastical' to the 'evangelical' level; i.e., from terms of 'Credo' and 'hierarchy' to terms of 'life' and 'action.' Mathematicians are wont to say 'Let us suppose this problem solved.' This is the method applied at Stockholm. We adopt the rule familiar both in psychology and in the cure of souls: 'Act as if . . . ' In the same way we say, Let us act *as if* the Church of Jesus Christ on earth were really united.

"Our Assembly includes a delegation from the Unitarians who are opposed to the Nicene Creed ('Faith'!) and a delegation from the Quakers who disregard all sacraments ('Order'!). What can we do? We must press forward in the name of 'Life' towards 'Action.' Our Message lays down quite definitely that the Conference seeks to orientate all Christians towards practical activity, 'leaving on one side' doctrinal questions. Is this indifferentism? On the contrary, it is a mark of respect for these matters of capital importance. We have no wish to shake anyone's metaphysical convictions; each Christian communion remains free to adhere to its own dogmatic formularies . . .

"In *La Revue Hebdomadaire* (19/9/27) the Stockholm Assembly is criticized as follows: 'Can we believe that unity of moral action can spring from anything but unity of faith?' The *Life and Work* Assembly has never contested this elementary truism; but it declines to subscribe to the Papal confusion of Faith with belief. If Faith, in the sense in which the word is used in the Gospels, is an attitude of soul, a religious experience, then the same 'Faith' may be expressed by many 'beliefs'."<sup>4</sup>

This quotation is very revealing. It is true that it is an unofficial statement by a private individual, and we have no right to ascribe his views indiscriminately to all the participants of the Stockholm Conference. But, recalling that no condition of belief was imposed on those who wished to participate in the conference, that it is possible to collect a number of similar statements by other leading participants, and finally that the whole programme and mentality of the

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<sup>4</sup> W. Monod. *Que signifie le Message à la chrétienté?* dans *La Conférence Universelle*, pp. 47-48. Bishop Söderblom makes a similar distinction between *fides qua creditur* and *fides quae creditur* (cf. Pri-billa op. cit. pp. 118 and 199). The first is a subjective feeling and is common to all Christians, the second—the doctrine believed—can be many and diverse.

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conference fits admirably to such a view, we may take it as an authentic expression of the ideology of the movement. That ideology may be summed up as follows:

The central idea is that there is in Christianity an *essential* reality which is common to us all and in which we can all find ourselves to be fundamentally at one. There is also an order of *secondary, accessory* realities, in which, and owing to which, we are divided. The essential reality is the Christian *life*: devotion of the soul to Christ and to the service of our neighbour that results from it. Dogmas, forms of worship and ecclesiastical organizations are only accessories. It is hopeless to find agreement and unity on the basis of these.<sup>5</sup> Unity must be reached not on the basis of dogma and ecclesiastical order, but "*in spite of all the differences of theological and ecclesiastical conceptions.*" For all these are no more than external forms of human origin, necessary and valuable in their proper place, perhaps divinely sanctioned. But the gift of God who unites every sincere soul to every other, and apart from which it is vain to seek for unity, is the inward experience of God's grace and brotherly devotion inspired by Christ. Hence the unity to be sought is a unity "*in spirit*" which retains respect for any kind of belief or ecclesiastical organization provided that it is tolerant towards others.<sup>6</sup> Only such organizations are excluded as exclude themselves by refusing to converse "*Brüder neben Brüder*" and which put themselves in a state of universal schism by pretending to possess *the Truth*.<sup>7</sup>

It would indeed be difficult to find an ideology more diametrically opposed to the teaching of the Catholic Church. *Religion* for us is that which is founded on one Faith in one body of beliefs. The *religions* are the multitudes of sects. For *Life and Work*, on the contrary, religion "*in spirit and truth*" is the moral attitude common to all the

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<sup>5</sup> cf. Monnier. *op. cit.* p. 59.

<sup>6</sup> cf. e.g. *La Conf.* Univ. p. iii; Pribilla, *op. cit.* pp. 51 ("Lehre trennt, Dienst eint"), 52, 103. *Actes du Congrès de Lausanne*, pp. 40-47 (W. Monod), and Söderblom's speech at Lausanne (p. 369) in which he likens the soul of the Church to the inspiration of the Spirit, its body to doctrines, rites, etc.

<sup>7</sup> Thus Söderblom referring to the Catholic Church; vide Pribilla, *op. cit.* p. 47.

sects and which underlies their variety and contrariety of beliefs. So to Stockholm came the Salvationists with their rejection of all the sacraments, the Unitarians with their rejection of belief in the Trinity, as well as representatives of the ancient traditional Churches of the East—even the (dissident) Patriarch of Alexandria, the see of St. Athanasius and St. Cyril.

Hence the one compelling reason for our absence from the *Life and Work* conferences is this: the position on which is based the "Ecumenicism" of Stockholm, as it was shown at the meetings of 1925, springs not from supernatural faith, which must be the basis of the Church's unity, but from merely human considerations. For a more detailed critique of the ideology of *Life and Work*, perhaps I may be allowed to refer to Chapter IV of my recent book *Chrétiens désunis: Principes d'un "Œcumenisme" Catholique?*<sup>8</sup>

## 2. FAITH AND ORDER

It would be quite unfair to liken, without qualification, *Faith and Order* of Lausanne to *Life and Work* of Stockholm. While Stockholm is the product of Anglo-Saxon "practicality" and was assembled under the aegis of a modernist Protestant, Lausanne is a characteristic product of the distinctively Anglican ethos. Hence there is no Liberalist pre-supposition of a radical opposition between the invisible and the visible, between the "churches" and "Christianity," between "beliefs" and "faith." On the contrary the fundamental idea is that Christian unity is to be attained only by unity in "faith" and in ecclesiastical "order." This assembly was Anglican in inspiration rather than Protestant.<sup>9</sup> It proposed no more than to take the first steps towards Christian reunion.

The present assembly . . . does not pretend to lay down the conditions for the future reunion of the Church. The purpose of

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<sup>8</sup> Published by Editions du Cerf, 29 Boulevard La-Tour Maubourg, Paris 7me. [This important study by Père Congar will be reviewed in a forthcoming number of BLACKFRIARS.—Ed.]

<sup>9</sup> cf. Pribilla, op. cit., p. 180. For information see *Foi et Constitution: Actes officielles de la Conférence mondiale de Lausanne 3-21 août 1927* (Attinger, Paris, 1928), and *La conférence œcumenique de Lausanne* (Fischbacher, Paris, 1928).

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the Conference is, on the one hand, to record the degree of our fundamental agreement, and, on the other, the serious differences which remain.<sup>10</sup>

Nevertheless, to the astonishment of many, the Catholic Church not only refused to take part in the Lausanne conference, but thought it necessary to take steps in its regard which it had not taken with regard to that at Stockholm. Before the conference a decree of the Holy Office was issued which expressly forbade Catholics to take part in it,<sup>11</sup> and afterwards the Pope addressed a special Encyclical explaining the reasons for this disapproval.<sup>12</sup>

This reason is that the *Faith and Order* conferences rested on the assumption that the One Church of Christ is not an actual and accomplished fact; that the various Christian bodies which preserve a minimum of ecclesiastical faith and order are each, in some measure, though imperfectly, the Church of Christ; that hence among the existing "Churches" there is no one that is purely and simply the Church of Christ whose dogma is true as such; that some articles of faith are necessary and some variable and optional. This position, says the Encyclical, is untenable to the Catholic Church: she is the One Church, the one and only faithful bride of Christ; she maintains the efficaciousness of Her Master's Will and prayer that she should be one; she has His assurance that His Church has existed, does exist and will exist indefectibly by His grace. The Catholic Church must therefore lay an emphatic *No* to any "Ecumenicism" to the extent that it implies that the One Church of Christ is not an existing fact in the world, or which implies any kind of corruption of the Church or any break of the living continuity which, by graces of the Spirit, link her to the Incarnate Saviour and His historic Redemption. As Berdyaev has finely said:

"If the Church has not always existed since its foundation by Jesus Christ, then she never will exist. Congresses, conferences,

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<sup>10</sup> Actes, p. 519, from the preamble accepted by the conference for transmission to the "Churches." This Preamble was the only document unanimously accepted by the delegates.

<sup>11</sup> Decree of 8. 7. 1927 (Acta Ap. Sedis 19 (1927), p. 278).

<sup>12</sup> *Mortalium Animos*. 6. 1. 1928. (Acta Apostolicae Sedis, 20. 1928.)

interdenominational meetings may be the sign of a new ecumenical spirit in Christendom, but they cannot pretend to create a Church which, for the first time in history, is authentically ecumenical."<sup>13</sup>

The Catholic Church rejects authoritatively and emphatically any kind of "ecumenicism" in which the promises and the gifts of Christ to His Church run the risk of being considered to have been, in point of fact, unfulfilled and ineffective—though even only partially so. She maintains, at whatever cost, that her Master, by the gift of His Spirit (Lk. xxiv, 49; Jn. xiv, 16-26; xv, 26; xvi, 31), by His mission (Mt. xxviii, 19; Mk. xvi, 15; Jn. xvii, 18; xx, 21) and by His power (Mt. xxviii, 18, 19; Lk. xxii, 19, etc.), abides in her till the end of the world (Mt. xxviii, 20) and that she is indeed the "pillar and foundation of the truth" (I Tim. iii, 15). The reason for the Church's abstention from Lausanne (and Edinburgh) is not that she is opposed in principle to discussions between her own theologians and delegates of the denominations, but that she considers that they have no place in discussions on such a basis as those of *Faith and Order*.

What, indeed, could Catholics have done had they gone to Lausanne? Even the delegates of the Eastern Orthodox Church were compelled to declare that "they had regretfully come to the conclusion that the bases for the preparation of the declarations adopted for submission to the conference are incompatible with the principles of the Orthodox Church."<sup>14</sup> Catholic delegates would have been compelled to make a similar declaration at the very outset of the discussions. They would have been deeply distressed at the inadequate and impoverished statements of Christian doctrine submitted to the conference. From the proclamation of the Message onwards they would have been compelled to say, "Yes, that is all true; but the truth is far more than that . . ."

The drama of the Catholic Church in the presence of

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<sup>13</sup> N. Berdyaev, *L'oecuménisme et le confessionnalisme in Foi et Vie*, Nov. 1931, p. 769.

<sup>14</sup> Actes, p. 439. Apart from its references to the Pope, the speech of Mgr. Chrysostom, Orthodox Archbishop of Athens, expresses excellently the Catholic view. (Actes. pp. 122-132.)



Stockholm and Lausanne is that she knows that she holds the fullness of the truth which their participants held but partially—and because partially, distortedly. She knows that even the contradictory truths debated in those conferences contain elements of the truth which are resolved in her own unity and faith.<sup>15</sup> Precisely because she possesses this fullness of truth, precisely because she *is* this fullness of truth, she has no part to play at Stockholm or Lausanne, at Oxford or at Edinburgh. She has no place in any such “ecumenical conference” because they are conferences of *parts* and she is the *whole*.

Hence her own way of serving the cause of unity is to be herself and to maintain unflinchingly her own prerogative. We think that, in refusing to take any part in the “ecumenical movement” as it is represented by Stockholm and Lausanne, the Catholic Church has contributed far more to the real cause of “ecumenicism” than those who did take part. Moreover, we believe that the more recent developments of the movement owe much to the uncompromising attitude taken by the Catholic Church.

### 3. THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT TO-DAY

Precisely what lines this development will take will not become altogether clear until we possess and have had time to appraise the acts of the Oxford and Edinburgh Conferences. But it is possible to indicate the general lines of recent tendencies.

It is not so much a question of a change of personnel. The differences between Stockholm and Oxford lie rather in a change of spirit and atmosphere. Stockholm was still impregnated by the complacent optimism of the era of Liberalism with the Liberal myth of “Progress.” Much has happened since the Stockholm Conference to destroy that blissful atmosphere: economic crisis, loss of confidence in the League of Nations, the failure of so many secular conferences which were relied upon to establish international peace and good will. But, over and above this, though not

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<sup>15</sup> e.g. the contradictory views of the Kingdom of God debated at Stockholm, as Friedrich Heiler and Fr. Pribilla have already remarked.

unconnected with the changes in the socio-political sphere, there have been profound changes within the non-Catholic communions themselves. While regretting, and even finding fault with, the attitude of the Catholic Church towards the ecumenical movement, this attitude has undoubtedly profoundly impressed its adherents. It has witnessed to a known realization of what "the Church" really is and what its unity really means. The "confessional" revival of recent years within the Protestant communions themselves, as yet scarcely perceptible in 1925 and 1927, has now become a factor of dominant importance. The "dialectical theology" of Karl Barth is diametrically opposed to any kind of Liberalism: it has given back to Protestantism a sense of the importance of dogma and hence a new realization of the meaning and function of "the Church." The religious crisis in the Third Reich has restored in many a living, interior faith; Barth and his friends exercise an immense influence in the sphere of ecclesiastical policy no less than in that of theology. From all this has resulted a feeling that "ecumenical conferences" can do no more than give opportunity for discussion. It has been discovered that the Church is not just a group for moral uplift and improvement—a sort of moral and spiritual "double" of the state—but that she belongs to a totally different world, and is, as it were, the vessel suspended from heaven for the reception of the Word of God through Faith. It has been discovered, too, that the task of the Church is not merely to make man morally "better," but to make him what God wills him to be, and that through faith in Him. Hence a widespread return to the dogmatic teaching of the first Reformers, an anxiety to discover exactly how man stands in relation to God, the distinctive place of the Christian in the world and in history, the distinctive place of the Church in relation to God and in relation to the State. Hence the subject matter for the *Life and Work* discussions at Oxford was "Community, Church and State."

Furthermore—and this is one of the results of this revival—it is understood better to-day than it was ten years ago, that the unity of the Church can neither be arranged nor

accomplished by the will of men. It can only be the work of *God*. Conferences and assemblies are useful only in that they give opportunity for their participants to meet and understand one another better, and to enable themselves to be more open to receive the full and undiluted truth of God.

Inevitably, *Faith and Order* has not developed to the same extent as has *Life and Work*; its constitution remains the Anglican inspiration. But perhaps in this movement, too, there has been some evolution, in the form of a keener realization of the incompatibility between Catholicism and Protestantism, and the deepening conviction that the problem of unity is a problem of unity of *doctrine* even more than a problem of unity of organization.

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It is undeniable that these changes which the ecumenical movement has undergone during the past ten years are all in the right direction, and tend to render it less unacceptable to Catholics. It is not impossible that it will develop further in the same direction. Some may already be inclined to ask whether the doctrinal reasons which had hitherto induced the Catholic Church to abstain from taking part still hold good, and are still applicable to a movement which has to a large extent become disillusioned of the errors of its early days.

It must be pointed out that, quite apart from such reasons of doctrine, the Catholic Church has strong reasons of maternal prudence and spiritual experience for fighting shy of interdenominational conferences and "ecumenical assemblies." These reasons, though not in every case absolutely insurmountable, are of very great weight. It will be sufficient to recall the following points:

(1) A body so vast and complex as the Catholic Church cannot be involved in a movement in which risks, uncertainties and dangers of different sorts abound. Still less so when the movement is in its early stages, when it is impossible to foresee how it may evolve or what results may follow from it. The new developments of the ecumenical movement have as yet scarcely touched some of the participating Christian groups; many of them are not in a position which

would render discussion of any use, even if no positive harm were to result.

(2) There is also a fear in the Church that by taking part in a movement of this type, her own unity and uniqueness would be obscured; and that in this way she would appear unfaithful to herself and so to the cause of unity. It is necessary that we understand fully the great difference between Catholicity and "Ecumenicity." Catholicity means the integration of multiplicity within unity; or, more exactly, (since her unity is something already existing and not something to be attained), it is unity as assimilating multiplicity. Unity comes first; and it is in relation to this unity that multiplicity must be understood and appraised. St. Augustine likens Catholicity to the branches of a great tree, all of them receiving their life and their beauty from the trunk. It is not a bundle of severed branches, for the life of all is derived from the same trunk.<sup>16</sup> The Catholic Church is afraid that "Ecumenicism" would, instead of uniting the Many into the One, tend to dissolve and dissipate the One in the Many. "That is why," as Lacordaire said, "the Catholic Church, which is at once Truth and Charity is so 'exclusive' in her methods, while heresies and schisms follow the method of 'reunion.' The Church excludes what contradicts her without at all ceasing to be universal. Heresy seeks to come to terms with what contradicts it, without at all ceasing to be merely local." The Church is afraid little or nothing will be learned about her real unity from such movements, and that multiplicity itself will, in consequence, be the loser. For, apart from the one trunk, the branches themselves lose their life and their significance. Moreover she knows that it is precisely her God-given task to proclaim her own unity and plenitude, and that it is not for nothing that she bears the name of Catholic, and has the responsibility of preserving intact and proclaiming the real meaning of Unity and Catholicity.

(3) The Church has a feeling that there is a great danger in discussing publicly the theology of the Church at such

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<sup>16</sup> e.g. in Sermon xlvi, c.8, n.18. (P.L. 38, 280-281.)

gatherings, and in trying to discover by means of meetings and conferences a "formula" for unity. For she knows that she possesses a plenitude of truth which is incapable of presentation or formulation. She is afraid of being unable to present herself adequately, and thus of being made to appear as a mere party in the discussion and not as the totality which she really is. For Catholic truth is the *plenitude* of truth which includes and embraces all partial truths; but it is a dynamic and living plenitude which transcends all possibility of adequate formulation. She does, indeed, constantly bear witness *to* herself by the very fact of her life and her existence; but she avoids as far as possible bearing witness *about* herself, knowing that her reality surpasses anything that the most learned and eloquent of her children can say about her. She is afraid, too, of the very *enthusiasm* of the "ecumenical movement." She would rather see this enthusiasm schooled by the theology of the Church than that the doctrine of the Church be schooled by the enthusiasm of the "ecumenicists." She fears that her own reality would be distorted by our own limited explanations and experiences of it.

(4) The Church is well aware that, above all earthly ecclesiastical government, is the personal guidance and government of the Holy Spirit. She believes that these are mutually complementary and in mutual accord. To the Holy Ghost alone, the Church looks for the reunion of all Christians in the unity of the One Church. She knows, therefore, that it is impossible to predict how this reunion may be brought about, and that, in the last analysis, the manner of its accomplishment cannot be laid down by an ecclesiastical hierarchy. She does not exclude the possibility that the Holy Ghost may intervene to bring about this union through the instrumentality of some "ecumenical" movement. Nevertheless, she finds the "ecumenical" movement, as we have so far known it, to be clearly associated with erroneous ideas, and she feels very strongly the danger of preoccupying ourselves with a hypothetical manifestation of God's will in the future.

Here, we think, we touch on the fundamental reason for

the hesitation and for the suspicion with which the Catholic Church views the movement—even if it is not also the reason for her refusal to take part in it. This reason lies in the fact that there seems to be among the “ecumenicists,” in greater or lesser degree, an assumption that the Will of God for His Church has not been made completely manifest in the past (if so we may express it), but is yet to be made manifest in the future, and that it is the Church’s business to lay herself open to this new manifestation of God’s will. In its more moderate forms this idea implies M. Berdyaev’s distinction between the Church as “ecumenical plenitude” and the Church as “confession.” In its more extreme form it implies the Liberal idea that the Church is something yet to be created, and that the events of time constitute the Word of God, and true Divine Revelation. Without denying that God intervenes in, and speaks to us through, the events of history, the Catholic Church is afraid that a movement which is preoccupied with what lies *before* us tends to forget what lies *behind*; or rather (since “Christ is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever,” and “is with us till the end of the world”) to forget what is already given to us by God as something already accomplished, definite and indefeasible. She is afraid that the anxiety to hear and obey the voice of God in 1937 may lead the movement to forget the promises and the creative words which were and are the foundation of the Church, and that her living continuity with Christ guarantees her against the possibility of her destruction and against the need for her to be metamorphosized into anything other than herself. Such, we believe, is the decisive reason for an attitude which it would be quite wrong to regard as one of contemptuous aloofness or of imperialistic and pretentious pride and ambition.

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