

PART IV

THE TEACHING OFFICE OF THE CHURCH

Canons 1322-1408

Dangers to the Faith of Catholic Youth: The Y.M.C.A.:

Indifferentism: Duty of Bishops (Holy Office) AAS 12-595.[1]

The Holy Office calls the attention of Ordinaries of places to the fact that certain associations of non-Catholics are doing great harm especially to Catholic youth by drawing them away from the faith under the pretext of affording them opportunities for physical culture and education. The inexperienced can easily be deceived by the fact that these associations have the financial and moral support of very respectable citizens, and do very effective work in various fields of beneficence. Their real nature, however, is no longer doubtful, as it has been openly declared in the magazines which are their organs. Their aim is, they say, to cultivate the characters and improve the morals of youth. This culture, which is their religion, they define as "perfect freedom of thought, dissociated from the control of any religious creed."

It is especially young students of both sexes who are endangered. These are first shaken in their traditional faith, then led to hesitate between various opinions, next brought to universal doubt, and finally induced to acquiesce in a vague sort of general religion which is certainly far other than that taught by Our Lord Jesus Christ. The greatest injury occurs in the case of those whose home training in religion has been wanting through negligence or ignorance.

Among these associations it will suffice to name one which is, as it were, the parent of many others, one which is very far-reaching . . . and backed by immense resources; namely, the Young Men's Christian Association, or Y.M.C.A.; an association which, on the one hand, enjoys the support of many non-Catholics in good faith, who believe that it is helpful to all and certainly harmful to none, and on the other hand, is favored by certain easy-going Catholics who are ignorant of its true nature. It boasts indeed a sincere love for youth, as though it had nothing more at heart than their bodily and mental welfare; but at the same time it attacks their faith under the pretense of purifying it and of giving them a better knowledge of the true way of life "above all churches and apart from any religious creed... ."

[1] The first two paragraphs of this report are a summary; the rest follows the original document quite closely.

608

CANON 1324

[AAS 12-
595]

Hence, this Sacred Congregation asks all Ordinaries of places, who have received from God in a special way the charge of governing His flock, to guard young people carefully from the contagion of these societies, through whose so-called beneficence administered in the name of Christ, the most precious treasure they have, Christ's grace, is imperiled. Therefore warn the unwary and confirm those who are faltering in the faith; build up strongly in the spirit of Christ such societies of young people of both sexes as you have among you; cultivate others of the same kind; call upon the wealthy of our faith to help, so that they may have the means with which to combat the enemy. At the same time exhort pastors and those who have charge of organizations of youth to do their duty vigorously, and especially by the publication of books and pamphlets to check the errors that are being broadcast, to expose the wiles and deceits of the enemy, and to come to the assistance of those who are looking for the truth.

[AAS 17-633]

STATE ABSOLUTISM 609

It will, accordingly, be your duty in the regional meetings of Bishops (cf. c. 292) to discuss this matter with the care that its importance merits, and to agree together upon such measures as may meet the situation. Among such measures the Sacred Congregation recommends that in every diocese there should be a public declaration by the Bishop to the effect that the papers, magazines, and other writings of these societies, which are certainly pernicious, and which are being scattered broadcast in order to instill into the minds of Catholics the errors of rationalism and religious indifferentism, are forbidden by the law of the Church itself.[1]

Metropolitans shall, within six months, report to the Holy See what deliberations have been had and what measures have been taken in this matter in their respective dioceses.

AAS 12-595; Holy Office, Letter to the Ordinaries of places, 5 Nov., 1920. *Periodica*, 10-183 (Vermeersch).

The Church the Defender of Human Rights Against State Absolutism (Allocution, Pius XI) AAS 17-633.

In his Allocution of 14 Dec., 1925, His Holiness, Pius XI, declared:

There are certain rights of liberty which the Church is in duty bound to protect and vindicate. For she is by her doctrine and teaching utterly opposed, not only to the license and disorder into which the false and condemned theories of Liberalism and Socialism plunge human society, but also to every other concept of government which holds that the State is sufficient unto itself as a last end; from which error there follows naturally, nay necessarily, the violation and destruction by the State of individual rights.

AAS 17-633; Pius XI, Consistorial Allocution, 14 Dec., 1925. *Periodica*, 14-155.

[1] A note appended to the published text calls attention to this connection of the matter with canons 1384, Section 2, and 1399, Section 4, and names certain publications in Italy as examples of the sort of writings which are forbidden by these canons.