

Chapter 19 — The Church in the Modern World

For a New Presentation of Morals

An intervention of the Patriarch on October 27, 1964.

The Church, whose role in the world is to lead all peoples to Christ, must at the very first be interested in the vital problems of its children, its witnesses in the world, to instruct them in the full knowledge of Christ. And if it wishes to engage in dialogue with the modern world through its faithful, they must be formed and treated according the fundamental principle of conduct enunciated by Christ: “No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you” (John 15:15). If the Church also wishes to contribute to the construction of the heavenly city in a manner fit for propagating the faith, it must necessarily form its faithful according to Christ’s law, which is a law of grace and of love, so that all arrive at a profound responsibility in the liberty of the children of God.

This education to maturity and responsibility is also a need of the times in which we live. These times are no longer those of the Middle Ages. The age of infancy has been passed. Today the world asks, with tenacity and force, for the recognition of human dignity in all its fullness, social equality of all classes. This world enjoys an intense intellectual culture; it witnesses scientific discoveries that yesterday were inconceivable; it is in love with freedom, and has—at least among its elites—awareness of its responsibilities. Well! We can no longer impose laws on this world, without demonstrating to it their positive significance and wisdom. Does not this state of mind of today’s society call out for a revision of the presentation of the teaching of morality? In fact, this teaching, especially since the sixteenth century, has been adapted too much to the legalism and the immaturity of a closed and absolutist society. Present teaching is marked too much by the legalism of a former era and completely impregnated with the Roman law.

Now, our Christian morality must have a Christocentric character with an expression of love and of freedom. It must bring forth in everyone a sense of personal and communitarian responsibility. Consequently, a profound revision of many of our disciplines—changing also their nature—is obligatory. It goes without saying that this is not a matter of immutable dogmas, which, however, need to be explained well. This revision is necessary for the sake of the sanctification of our people by the encouragement, the respect, and the purification of this desire for a responsibility that is deeper and more courageous. Many things of the good old times, accepted by our simple and pious ancestors, are no longer accepted today. We need only to cite, for example, the presentation in our catechisms of the commandments of the Church. According to our catechisms, to miss Sunday Mass without good cause, or to eat meat on Friday, constitutes a mortal sin, deserving eternal damnation as a consequence. Is this reasonable? How many Catholics believe this? The Church is a mother; would a

stepmother impose such an obligation, under the penalty of eternal damnation? And isn't the person, with a right conscience and a sincere mind, who does not believe, correct in taking pity on us? We could also say many things concerning the sacrament of penance. Revision is indispensable. There can be no doubt about that. Besides, the commandments should be the way to blessedness rather than to condemnation, "Keep the commandments and you will live," says the Book of Proverbs (7:2). Would it not be more evangelical, more efficacious, and even more practical to present the commandments not as orders under the pain of sin, but as counsels that attract, like a light that produces love? A mother wins over her children, not by blows of a rod, but by the warmth of her love. In addition, twentieth-century man is rebellious against any and all coercion. As for ourselves, how much has our conduct in regard to our children undergone change? Why would it be otherwise for the Church in regard to the faithful?

The legalistic spirit obstructs the energy of priests and faithful, who should be courageously employed for the salvation of the world and for the building of a better earthly city that is freer and more brotherly. Moreover, isn't this spirit of a wide opening that of our Lord, according to whom "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath"? Isn't it that of Saint Paul, who freed the Gentiles? Isn't it also that of the Fathers of the Church? And if many of us Eastern Catholics are not unharmed by this excessively legalistic spirit that we point out, it is a result of the influence of the books on canon law and morals that we studied in our youth.

The Church, in revising its position in regard to its positive laws, is not submitting to a bending of Catholic doctrine on behalf of modern and capricious ideas, but adapting its Christian pedagogy to the needs of the present epoch. Didn't Pope John XXIII, of blessed memory, talk of adapting the Church to the needs of the social and religious life of our times, and didn't he state before his death, "We have not yet discovered the requirements of charity"?

This presentation of morals should be not at the level of man bent back on himself, but that of plainspoken man, responsible artisan of the universe. Today's world awaits this presentation by the Church.

Having said this, we propose the creation of a fairly large commission of informed theologians to study, in the light of the Gospel and of the Tradition of the Fathers, in openness of heart and sincerity of faith, the teaching of morals in general and of the commandments of the Church in particular, to put them in tune with our real life of the present time, so that the Church may no longer be accused, as it often is, of being a suppressor, but that it may rather be a beacon of truth and of light to enlighten everyone coming into this world.

The Profound Causes of Atheism

An intervention of the patriarch on September 27, 1965.

The schema on “The Church in the Modern World” is fundamentally good, both in the intention that instigated it and in the spirit that animates it.

Numerous voices in the council have asked for a text that is properly centered on Christ and displays a spirit of love to the world. That is essential, and in that the present schema has given them satisfaction, in our opinion. It seems to us, nevertheless, that this spirit is somewhat lacking on two points: on the subject of atheism and on the subject of war.

Today I shall speak only on the first point.

Number 19 on atheism is, in our opinion, too negative. It decries Marxism without naming it, but clearly enough and in a rather summary fashion. It condemns, it goes without saying, that atheistic doctrine, those who defend it, and the civil authorities that support it. But it is clear that one does not save humanity from atheism by condemning Marxism.

To save humanity from atheism, it is also necessary—and this is the new and constructive element—to denounce the causes that instigate atheism, by proposing above all a dynamic theology and a vigorous social morality, demonstrating Christ as the source of workers’ efforts towards their true liberation.

This number could be advantageously replaced by the passage, so strong and so positive, of our dear and venerated Pope Paul VI in his encyclical “*Ecclesiam Suam*”:

“We see atheists also moved sometimes by good sentiments, disgusted with mediocrity and with the selfishness of so many contemporary social groups, and borrowing from our Gospel forms and language of solidarity and of human compassion. Will we not some day be capable of leading these expressions of moral values back to their true sources, which are Christian?”

And Paul VI in “*Pacem in Terris*” returns to the words of John XXIII, saying: “The doctrines of these atheistic movements, once they have been worked out and defined, remain always the same, but the movements themselves cannot avoid evolving and undergoing even profound changes. We should not lose hope of seeing them one day opening another dialogue with the Church, one that is positive and different from the present dialogue, which is necessarily limited to deploring and complaining.

These texts of Paul VI and John XXIII seem to us to be preferable to the present text of the schema, which is “limited to deploring and complaining.”

We all know from experience that many of those who call themselves atheists are not really opposed to the Church. There are among them those who are very close. In reality, as Paul VI says, they seek a truer presentation of God, a religion harmonizing with the historical evolution of humanity, and above all a Church supporting not only the poor but also the effort for solidarity with the poor. They are often scandalized by a mediocre and self-centered Christianity, entangled with money and false riches, defending, even with arms, not its faith, which can never be defended by force, but its interests and its short-term security.

Certain persons have claimed that the schema denounces the sins of the world. But here is the great, the enormous sin of the world, which Jesus denounced ceaselessly in his Gospel, namely selfishness and the exploitation of man by man.

Certain persons would wish that this text speak to a greater extent of the necessity of carrying one's cross, of enduring one's lot with resignation. But, who do in fact carry the cross more than the laboring and miserable masses who try to emerge from their misery by work, solidarity, indeed even by socialism?

It is only regrettable that they do so in atheistic systems. But, isn't it the selfishness of certain Christians that has provoked and still provokes, to a large extent, the atheism of the masses?

Jesus puts us on guard against scandalizing the little ones, that is to say the humble ones: "Woe to the man through whom scandal comes!" Jesus said that at the conclusion of the parable of the rich man and poor Lazarus. Many of these atheists are simply like Lazarus, scandalized by the rich who call themselves Christians.

Let us then have the courage to "lead back" to their true sources, which are Christian, these moral values of solidarity, fraternity, and social unity. Let us show that true socialism is Christianity integrally lived in the just sharing of goods and the fundamental equality of all. These modern forms of the economy and sociology need, not condemnation, but the leaven of the Gospel to extricate themselves from atheism and to fashion themselves in a harmonious manner. Instead of condemning them ceaselessly, let us restore them to their true meaning, which is Christian. Above all, let us apply ourselves to the Gospel of sharing and of fraternity, and help others to do so. If we had lived it, if we had preached it fully, the world would have been spared atheistic Communism.

Thus, rather than a commonplace condemnation, which is already well known, let us send to the working world a much larger number of priests and laity, ready to share the life of labor and the social endeavors of men of our times, making themselves all things for all people, to reveal to them this God whom they reject, but whom they seek gropingly, drawn by Jesus of Nazareth, the carpenter, Savior of the world and "Lover of Mankind."

The Servant Church

An intervention by Archbishop Elias Zoghby, Patriarchal Vicar in Egypt and in the Sudan, on October 27, 1964.

I would like to make five observations on Chapter II, which lacks warmth and love:

1. Chapter II of this schema begins by presenting the Church's mission of service: it is, in fact, at the service of mankind to assure their salvation and to convey to them the evangelical message. I suggest that this second chapter begin by presenting the Church's mission of love. It is more touching and truer. In fact, Christ began his ministry with works of mercy, healing the sick, consoling the afflicted, and distributing bread to the hungry. He began by relieving the corporal miseries that presented some resemblance to death and led to death, announcing by this victory His victory over the death of sin and over the death of the body. Christ accordingly opened His ministry with works of mercy and thus prepared the crowds to accept His message of salvation. The Church was instituted to continue Jesus Christ's mission of love. I propose that that be mentioned at the beginning of Chapter II of this schema.
2. In presenting the Church in this fashion, let us remind the world right at the start that the Church, like a mother, has been solicitous, following Christ's example, for the temporal and material well-being of mankind, not to lead them cunningly to the faith, but because it loves them and wishes to comfort them. Therefore, before saying that the Church has for its mission assuring the eternal salvation of mankind, let us present it to the world as being demonstrated as the author of so many works of mercy spread out through the world: hospitals, asylums, schools, etc., which relieve so many miseries and do so much good. This is most efficacious for opening the hearts of men to what is good. How many religious men and women have, through their apostolate of charity, opened to God minds that the apostolate of the word has never been able to open.
3. In doing this, let us use a language that is less didactic, less solemn, more spontaneous: the language of the Mother-Church that presents itself to its children and to those who are called to become its children. Let us address ourselves to the heart as much as to the mind.
4. In Chapter II, paragraph 2, after having spoken of the mission of the Apostles and their successors, let us insist more on our authority of service, for the world accuses us of wishing rather to exercise an authority of domination. Let us say clearly that we are men, chosen among men, with our limitations and our weaknesses. Salvation is not an ecclesiastical undertaking that we impose on the world, nor is paradise a feudal estate that belongs to us and for which we want to conquer mankind. We ourselves must struggle to achieve our salvation. This schema must call to mind that we do not seek to impose our domination on the world, nor to offer our salvation to mankind, but rather to set forth

humbly the salvation that comes from Christ and the means that He himself has placed at our disposal.

5. Our testimony can reach the modern world only if it is carried out in simplicity and poverty, and in a direct contact with the poor. The world, believing or unbelieving, today gathers together around the poor and the undernourished. It is there above all that we must be present. It is necessary that this presence of the Church among the poor be asserted in Chapter II of the schema and in the concrete life of the men of the Church.

Let us then be present among the poor, frequently visiting the houses of charity in our dioceses. But let us also arrange our episcopal residence so that it may, if possible, shelter a work of charity and appear to be truly the house of the poor. It is urgent to achieve in some manner the presence of the Church among the poor, if we wish it to be present in the modern world.

And since the world no longer recognizes any authority other than that of service, let us avoid the titles and the insignia that too frequently call to mind the honors and the spirit of domination. Let us also spare the pope, the first vicar of Jesus crucified, the pain of hearing us style him as “gloriously reigning.” The popes call themselves the servants of servants and seek to be such in fact. When one says “Holy Father,” is there a need to add anything?

To conclude, to speak only of the deceased, let us remember that the one whom the world calls “Good Pope John” demonstrated by his simplicity, his humility, and above all by his love, the presence of the Church in the world. He laid out the dominant path of this schema, when he said these memorable words: “I have loved all men whom I have encountered in my life.”

The Church of the Poor

An intervention of Archbishop Elias Zoghby, Patriarchal Vicar of Egypt and the Sudan, on October 21, 1964.

If this council is a blessing for the Church and for the world, it is also a blessing for us bishops. It brings us back to the pure spirit of the Gospel and to the methods of the apostolate of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Certain conciliar Fathers have insisted on the obligation of the bishops to be poor. Others have insisted on his duty to advance the works that look after the poor. Permit me to add that that the Church must also love the company of the poor, and appear to the world as surrounded with the poor. Why? I shall not limit myself to the example of Our Lord, who preferred the company of the poor, nor to the spiritual advantages that a bishop can draw from fellowship with the poor. I would rather insist on the fact that the company of the poor is today for the apostle, the bishop, the priest, or the layperson, the best means of bringing his witness to the world.

In fact, the Christian and non-Christian world is on the way to mobilize all its energies to come to the help of the poor class, whose number and misery cause a scandal. Men of good will, baptized and not baptized, have set a rendezvous in the places where misery abounds. They have adopted service to the poor as a new form of religious practice, the only one for many of them. The only man of the Church whom they approach and who interests them is the one they see involved in this apostolate and who can help them in it, becoming an intermediary between them and the poor. Well, nobody is better suited to be this intermediary than the man of the Church.

The time has passed in which the Christian world saw in the bishop the “prince” of the Church who in order to preserve his prestige, had to remain distant and withdrawn in what was called the “episcopal palace.” A bishop should renounce his isolation and his comfort, to be present where modern men have established the place of their meeting. Presiding in charity, the bishop should act, not only in the manner of an able administrator of the works of charity, but in the manner of Jesus Christ, who, in multiplying the bread, distributed the loaves with his own hands: “He gave them to the disciples, who in turn gave them to the people.” It is there, in the distribution of bread, that the pastor will encounter both the poor who need to be served and the others who desire to serve.

That being so, permit me to suggest modestly what follows:

As we are sometimes obliged to participate in official receptions, to sit at the tables of the rich, and to meet the important persons of this world, we should be, as much as possible, present among the poor and those who suffer, mingling with those in our orphanages, in our asylums, and in the hospitals. Why should we not visit more frequently the houses of

charity, sharing the bread with the poor and living a few hours of their lives? By doing so, we shall often draw men to us, we shall be able to converse with them and lead them to the light of the Gospel. This witness will sometimes have more effect than our pastoral letters and the most sparkling acts of our ministry.

Why should we not share our episcopal residences with a work of charity or a small group of the unfortunate ones, even if only symbolically, thus transforming the home of the bishop into a house of charity, where one will recognize the presence of Christ and of His vicars? Did not Pope St. Gregory the Great have a dozen of the poor at his table each day? Are there not already among the bishops those who share their table with these chosen ones of Jesus Christ and live their life?

It is common in the East to see the bishopric or the patriarchate, where the clergy dwell, become the home of a community of the faithful, always opening the doors to the Christian people. It is there that charitable works originate and are organized with the cooperation of the faithful, and it is from there that they distribute their benefits over the whole region. It is there, in the residence of the pastor, that these charitable works have their secretariat, it is there that they hold their meetings and receive the poor at all hours. The bishop or priest who thus opens his house and his heart to all truly appears as being the father of the poor.

I know that time may be lacking for many of us, but I believe that all our activities put together cannot have the effectiveness of this living testimony. Let us entrust to our co-workers, priests, deacons, and laypersons, the care of filling in our stead certain of our obligations, but when it is a matter of service to the poor, let us not renounce the honor that comes to us from being in the first row.

In a rather legalistic system, it is enough for the bishop to be a good administrator in order to be a good bishop. In a pastoral system, that is not enough. Never has “good administrator” been synonymous with “good pastor.”

As the modern world does not recognize more than one single authority, that of service, let us avoid the expressions “prince of the Church” and “episcopal palace,” which bring to mind honors and domination. Let us cease to style the foremost vicar of Jesus crucified as “gloriously reigning”. The popes call themselves the servants of the servants of God, and today behave as such. When one has said “Holy Father,” is there need to add anything else? I conclude, venerable Fathers! I have said that this council is a blessing for us bishops. It is also a gift of God to the world. Everything demonstrates to us that divine providence has positively wished it and has entrusted it to us. Have we the right to wish absolutely to finish our business at any price? Certainly, the progress that has been realized until now is admirable, but the world moves very quickly, and it becomes hard to please, and fortunately we all are hard to please. Nearly all our schemas need amendments. Neither the religious, nor the priests, nor the missionaries, nor the Eastern Churches, nor the laity, nor the world are yet satisfied with the schemas that concern

them. Now, if all find that the schemas are backward in our time, how will they be considered in twenty years, and how will our council be judged?

Let us not object that our dioceses are waiting for us. Do we believe that our priests feel very much deprived because we are far away? Do you believe that something has changed in the life of our faithful because we are not near them?

Do our faithful see us that often when we are at home? For my part, I believe that we have never been as present to our priests, to our faithful, and to the world as at this time of the council, where at Rome we work more efficaciously than ever for our priests, our faithful, and for the world.

The Church and Human Rights

An intervention by Archbishop George Hakim of Saint John of Acre and of All-Galilee, on November 10, 1964.

Since our message to the world, the message with which we inaugurated the work of this council, the world has not ceased to wait for the conciliar response of the Church to the grave problems whose profusion and severity overwhelm it. Woe to the Church and to the world if this expectation and this hope should be disappointed!

The schema that is presented to us, and which is of a pastoral urgency of the highest level, while containing many excellent things, does not seem to us to respond to this expectation.

Far from being the charter of a council of modern times, the schema appears to us to be hesitant, paternally full of exhortations, when we would have wished to find in it clear and frank assertions, which would be the directing principles for the future of the relations of Christians with the present world. We would desire a conciliar assertion, according to the model of the first councils, which would settle the following points mentioned in paragraphs 23 to 25:

1. Of the meaning of human labor in the divine plan:

- By their labor, men perfect creation and man himself.
- In Jesus Christ, labor is dignified and finds its place in the spiritual life and in the Redemption.
- Men have a primordial right to make, through their work, their lives and those of their families consistent with their true dignity as men and as sons of God.
- The worker is infinitely superior to all money.
- It is intrinsically wrong to control work in such fashion that men are by their work, or the conditions of this work, led to be less than men.
- The pay of workers should correspond to personal and social justice, and be in harmony with the superiority of the worker over money, in harmony with the diverse parts of product of the work, and in harmony with modern progress.

2. Of the meaning of ownership and of money:

- Ownership of the goods of production should not in any fashion contribute to the domination of men, but, on the contrary, should help everyone's progress.
- This ownership is not an untouchable axiom and an absolute to which the social doctrine would be tied, but a way destined to bring about the common object of the goods.
- The Church is not tied to any economic, social, or political system. It encourages the collaboration of all men to promote the common good.

3. Of materialism and atheism:

- Materialism and atheism are theoretical and practical at the same time.
- Under these two forms, materialism and atheism are condemned, for, in many ways, they arouse the spirit of domination, luxury, and hedonism, and because their principles are spreading more and more in regions that are called Christian.
- But the various regimes called socialist, spread out in several regions, are not condemned with Marxist atheism without differentiation.

4. Of equality among men:

- All discrimination based on race, religion, or social condition is condemned, both in laws and in customs.
- Men who exploit other men, whether it be economically, socially, or politically, are condemned.

5. Of international solidarity and peace:

- All nuclear, bacteriological, or chemical war is condemned, all of which affect mankind without discrimination.
- The hunger of a multitude of mankind cries to the rich peoples, so that through action, through technology, and through fraternal charity without stinginess or avarice, they may aid the less developed peoples.
- All works of social and international peace, founded on justice, liberty, and fraternity, are praised.
- Institutions, whether social or international, in which men work together for true human progress are encouraged.
- Let the faithful be encouraged to have, with prudence and simplicity, an active part in all these institutions.

6. Various points:

- All mankind has the right to associate for the common good.
- Totalitarianism is contrary to the dignity of the human person.
- In the light of the separation between the Church and workers, existing in several nations, and already denounced by Pius XI in his encyclical "*Quadragesimo Anno*," let there be encouragement for all attempts, started by the laity or by priests, which lead to the true evangelization of the poor.

Mankind today is awaiting clear and frank words, without ambiguity. I have humbly tried to propose an example along this line, while knowing that it is indeed imperfect. Let the experts work for a better method of expression.

Venerable Fathers, on October 13, 1962, in our message to the world, indicated above, we said: "Having come together from all the nations that are under heaven, we carry in our hearts the corporal and spiritual distresses, the sufferings, the aspirations, the hopes of the people who are entrusted to us. We are very attentive to the vexatious problems that beset them. That is why our solicitude desires to extend first to the humblest, the poorest, the feeblest. Like Christ, we feel ourselves moved with compassion at the sight of crowds

that suffer from hunger, misery, and ignorance; and we always remember all those who, not having the desired help, have not yet attained a life worthy of human nature.”

For three years we have been in laborious sessions, and what have we proposed? Have we decided on the practical and redeeming examples by which we ourselves would begin the reforms that the modern world expects of us, in our stations, our way of life, our customs, our habits?

In the absence of concrete examples, let us at least give clear and frank responses to the problems of our times.

Condemnation of War

An intervention of the patriarch on November 10, 1964.

A menace of destruction hovers over humanity; it is nuclear armament. And this menace grows from day to day through the increasing number of these infernal devices.

Without entering into physical and scientific considerations, which are beyond us and which cannot be expanded here, we believe that we must raise our voices, for we feel that we are oppressed. From our hearts there springs forth a cry of alarm, a cry of agony, I would even say a cry of despair... And we pray you to do all that is in our power, with whatever effect it may have, to ward off such an evil.

The intervention in favor of peace of two thousand bishops, spread out through the entire world, can be capable of changing the course of history and defending the fate of mankind.

There is talk of a just war. What adequate reason can justify, in sound morality, a destruction which constitutes a true worldwide cataclysm? Can a civilization and peoples be annihilated under the pretext of defending them? And if mankind must disappear in an instant, what is the good of this pastoral on which we have been working so laboriously since the announcement of Vatican II, and for whom is it intended?

Should not the concept of just war in modern times be lived and reconsidered in the light of the present situation? Should not national sovereignty have limits? Should the human community be completely ignored?

Venerable Fathers, all humanity is gasping as it looks to us with haggard eyes, to see what we are going to do. We cannot be silent because of considerations of whatever nature they may be. As faithful guardians of the souls of our peoples, we still have duties in regard to their earthly life. We must speak, speak boldly, speak courageously, like John the Baptist before Herod, like Ambrose before Theodosius, to condemn the use of these infernal devices.

Our Holy Father John XXIII, of blessed memory, has done so in his encyclical "*Pacem in Terris*." The schema that we are studying "On the Church in the Modern World" also does it in a manner that is clear, but a little platonic. But that is not enough. We must make on behalf of the council a declaration "to the city and to the world" that is clear, frank, and precise.

This radical condemnation on the part of the Church can grow like a snowball, since all truth contains a force of penetration and of expansion in souls. Other authorities, civil or religious, will be able to follow our example. A worldwide swell of opinion could oblige rulers, shut up in their national concepts, to reflect further. Sanctions of various natures

could be foreseen. But always we cannot be silent under the peril of disappointing the world, of disappointing what is noblest in ourselves, and of rendering our ministry fruitless among the peoples.

For the love of Christ, Lover of Mankind and King of Peace, we pray and beseech you to make a solemn and energetic condemnation of all nuclear, chemical, and bacteriological warfare. Let this council address a message to the world, according to the example of the one through whom our conciliar labors began. Let this council condemn, in principle, all nuclear warfare in all its forms, and to demand that the billions saved through disarmament be employed for the relief of a poor humanity, of whom two-thirds do not eat enough to relieve their hunger, and who needs everything.

Venerable Fathers, the history of the past two thousand years has not ceased to view the bishop as “the defender of the city.” More than ever, the world today needs these disinterested and courageous defenders. Let us not disappoint the world in this regard. The Church is expected to remain always a pillar of strength and of truth.