

TWO ADDRESSES TO SECULAR INSTITUTES

THE UNQUESTIONABLE importance of the international Congress of Secular Institutes is due in some measure to the doctrinal value of each and all of the papers delivered in the course of it (the report on poverty may be cited as a particularly notable contribution). However, the allocution of Pope Paul VI¹ and the opening address by Cardinal Antoniutti² have a special significance in that they sketch out the lines of authentic development for secular Institutes.

THE ALLOCUTION OF PAUL VI

A feature of the pope's allocution, which caused surprise and indeed disappointment to the many priests present at the audience, was his silence on the subject of secular Institutes for priests.³ But the omission is understandable in view of the specific object of the allocution, which was to establish the authentically secular meaning of the consecrated lives of lay members of secular Institutes and the importance of their personal consecration for the 'consecration of the world'.⁴ In short, the pope's concern was to make clear to lay secular Institutes that they are genuinely 'lay'. Indeed, one of the points at which the Holy Father departed from his written text was when he spoke of the difference between consecrated secular life and religious life. By contrast with religious, whose life is in a sense more secure and therefore less difficult, members of secular Institutes, immersed as they are in the world and using its methods, can take nothing for granted; they are involved in continual and personal renewal.

This distinction between secular and religious consecration leads to the problem of pluralism among secular Institutes. On this, too, the pope had more to say than was contained in his written text.

The pope referred to a 'just' pluralism, and this expression is worth considering in a little detail. A number of German participants at the Congress had pressed for the recognition of a kind of pluralism which would have left its

¹ *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 62 (1970) (AAS) pp 619-624; *Documentation Catholique* 67 (1970), (DC) pp 913-915.

² *Vita consecrata* (VC) 7 (1971), pp 35-46; (DC) pp 915-20.

³ Certain Institutes for priests, like that of the Prado, directed by Mgr Ancel, are very doubtful about their present canonical status and are seeking approbation as 'Associations of priests'. The new pontifical commission is to give this question first priority. Cf *supra*, p. 10. In all probability, the pope was unwilling to take any stand on the subject before knowing the conclusions of the commission. Cardinal Antoniutti, on the other hand, discussed the subject of secular Institutes of priests at some length, stressing their importance and significance in the light of the Council. Cf *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 8; VC pp 43-46; DC p 918.

⁴ Cf *Etudes sur les Instituts séculiers*, vol III (Paris, 1966), pp 17-31.

practical implications somewhat undefined. Their aim in fact was to obtain recognition as secular Institutes for associations lacking that secular quality which constitutes, as Cardinal Antoniutti was to recall, their 'characteristic trait and *raison d'être*'. The principle of pluralism needs, then, to be specified with some care. It was apparent that what certain Institutes wanted to maintain, on the principle of pluralism, was a style of life marked by community houses, specific works and a public apostolate which, taken in their entirety, would involve a separation from the laity and a way of life which would bring them remarkably close to the life-style of religious.⁵

To determine the limits of a just pluralism is not easy, but the general line of the solution is indicated in the wish of the post-conciliar commission that certain Institutes, in revising their constitutions, should be invited either to adopt a more clearly defined secular stance or to reconsider their canonical status. In the latter case, several options would be open to them. There are the missionary societies (also known as ecclesiastical societies) which have strongly emphasized the 'secular character' of their institutions.⁶ But the majority of erstwhile secular Institutes would probably wish to transfer to the category of 'societies of common life' (recently re-named apostolic societies):⁷ a canonical status which, according to the new legislation on the Institutes of Perfection, will require profession or some other form of consecration by the evangelical counsels.⁸ As for those who would prefer to remain more

⁵ The problem of secularity focuses mainly on two points of conflict with traditional values: withdrawal from the secular milieu and an approximation to the life style of religious. The transition from the older attitudes to the discovery of the properly secular christian vocation was accelerated by the Council. Present problems concerning secular Institutes afford a striking instance of life itself driving the Church back to the fundamental questions. The need to re-examine the norms for consecrated secularity, to avoid confusion and sterile polemic, is becoming increasingly urgent.

⁶ Missionary societies depend on the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. Their desire is to obtain a status of their own; they insist firmly on their *non-religious* character, and strongly object to being coupled with religious Institutes.

⁷ The term 'Societies of common life' is unfortunate, since the common life of these societies is by no means so strict as that of many other Institutes or associations. 'They imitate religious life', says the Code, 'but they are not religious'. Their present concern to emphasize their *non-religious* or secular character should be recognized. This, however, is not to say that the canonical concept of 'secular' should be employed officially to define their type of life, and more particularly their own form of secularity. A process of adaptation in keeping with their origins has brought many of them to embrace a genuinely secular style; but this is not true of them all. Several secular Institutes, which observe community life and follow a more 'religious' pattern, are becoming urgently aware of the need to review their canonical status. They will probably increase the numbers of the Apostolic Societies (a title adopted by the *Mission Saint Pierre et Saint Paul*). On the present situation of these societies see our study, 'Les Sociétés de vie commune', in *Gregorianum* 48 (1967), pp 747-765.

⁸ The term 'Institutes of Perfection' was adopted by the Commission of the Code of Canon Law to supersede the term 'religious', which the theological commission of the Council applied to all Institutes of consecrated life. The conciliar documents had already made use of it as a substitute for the term 'states of perfection', introduced by Pius XII to provide a generic name for the various religious and secular Institutes.

free, the more extended and flexible terms in which the new code will treat of the right of association will enable them to find an approbation suited to their own ideal.⁹

Nevertheless, serious discussion on the question of pluralism will no doubt go on. On the one hand, there are those for whom the continuation and full development of this vocation depends on a candid acceptance on all sides of a clearly defined secular ideal. Others take a view of 'just' pluralism which would be tantamount to a guaranteed freedom from any constraint or standardization. A rather controversial text included among the conclusions of the Congress seemed to favour this latter approach. It was proposed to the assembly by one of the most fervent upholders of the principle of 'consecrated secularity'.¹⁰ The first reaction of his friends was one of astonishment: some of them feared that the basic principle of secularity was being betrayed. Others saw a victory for their own views. He has subsequently clarified his ambiguous statement both to avoid misinterpretation and to dispel the misgivings of those who look to him as the spokesman of Institutes of full secularity.¹¹

Paul VI was well aware of this debate. For some months, certain members of secular Institutes had been at work in the Roman Curia to secure the recognition of the 'pluralist' position. It is in the light of this debate that two words employed by the pope to qualify the pluralism of secular Institutes take on their full significance. The first occurs in his prepared text: 'We remain secular, that is, we retain the form of temporal life common to all. Then, by subsequent choice, each adopts his own determination according to his own preferences, within the range of that pluralism to which the secular Institutes consent'.¹² Secondly, in his spoken commentary, he employed the expression *just* pluralism: that is, one which, if it were to depart from the pluralism recognized by the Church's law and contained within the proper scope of the charism of consecrated secularity, would become *unjust*. It would be unjust because prejudicial to other Institutes, both religious and secular, and above all to the most vigorous of the secular Institutes. The language employed by the pope exhibits a discernment and a sense of nuance that would be hard to improve on, and he has placed the secular Institutes very much in his debt by his concern – based of course on consultation – that the distinctive character of their vocation should not be undermined.

On reading the pope's allocution, one is struck by the general perspective he adopts. His approach is neither canonical – which, in any case, could only

⁹ Cf *Communications*, 2 (1970), p 174, for the scheme for this section of the new Code.

¹⁰ We used this phrase, consecrated secularity, in our article 'Vie religieuse ou Institut séculier', in *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 92 (1970), pp 505–35. Fr Martelet has adopted it and discusses it at length in this Supplement. Cf *supra*, p 53 and note 12. In my own view, 'consecrated secularity' is not to be preferred to 'secular consecration'. Both terms have their importance. It is important to emphasize, for instance, that the consecration itself is secular.

¹¹ Cf Professor Lazzati's article, *supra* pp 73–80; also his *Pluralismo negli Istituti secolari*, in VC pp 47–55.

¹² AAS p 662; DC p 914.

be a secondary aspect – nor strictly theological: for this would involve a consideration not only of secularity but of secularization and secularism. His object is to bring out, as he puts it, ‘the psychological and spiritual aspects of your particular dedication to the following of Christ’.¹³

This insistence on the spiritual dimension appears from the outset in the pope’s description of secular consecration and vocation:

You come before us showing us what you are, *persons consecrated to Christ in secular life*; interpreting, in an attitude of faithful and generous offering to the Church, her own primary ends: to celebrate the mysterious and supernatural union of men with God the Father, a union established by Christ our master and saviour, through the outpouring of the holy Spirit; and to promote union among men by serving them in every way, on the level both of their natural well-being and of their higher end, eternal salvation.¹⁴

No clearer statement could be given of the meaning and significance of the consecration to God and men proper to the secular Institutes, that personal consecration which, through an unobtrusive style of action and the service of men in temporal things with a view to their eternal good, is also a consecration of the world.

The pope also spoke of the appearance of the secular vocation in the Church as a ‘characteristic and very encouraging sign’¹⁵ which enables us to glimpse the hidden riches of the kingdom of heaven, and shows forth the resources of virtue and holiness which the Church possesses, even today, in the midst of a world proud of its temporal achievements and in flight from the encounter with Christ that it so much needs. When the pope discusses the place of the secular vocation in relation to the life of the Church, he is envisaging it in these terms. The reality underlying this phenomenon or sign in the Church is ultimately the interior, personal response of individuals to a call. This personal response can be traced from its first conscious stirrings in the individual to the definitive choice in which the uniqueness of a particular vocation is embodied. To reflect on this gradual unfolding clarifies, therefore, both the relationship of the secular vocation to others, and also the nature of what makes that vocation specifically different. ‘If this vocation has much in common with other vocations, it is nevertheless distinguished from them by certain proper characteristics which deserve to be considered in themselves’.¹⁶

The genesis of the secular vocation, as of any vocation, begins with what is basic to human conscious life: the sense of responsibility and personality, the awareness of existential principles. For the christian, this is at the same time the awareness of being a son of God and a member of Christ’s body, of being incorporated into the Church, endowed with that common priesthood of the faithful from which stems the right and duty every christian has to

¹³ AAS p 620; DC p 913.

¹⁵ AAS p 620; DC p 913.

¹⁴ AAS p 619; DC p 913.

¹⁶ AAS p 620; DC p 913.

aspire to holiness, to the fulness of the free christian life and to the perfection of charity. It is on this level that vocation first emerges. For many, this vocation is to the true and complete profession of the evangelical counsels; for others it is a vocation to the priesthood (and this, for whoever accepts it, is also a vocation to perfection). In any event, it is to a consecration, whereby man makes the gift of himself to God in an act of self-determination, which is also one of surrender. This leads to dialogue with the Lord, the turning to him to ask his will. At this point, baptismal consecration becomes personal, and finds expression in a *moral consecration* (notice the term), which extends to the evangelical counsels and aspires to perfection. This is the primary and supreme decision which determines a whole life.

Finally, we come to the second, the *concrete* decision. It is at this stage that what is unique in the vocation of the secular Institutes becomes clear. For this concrete choice bears on the particular life-style in which this consecration is to be actually lived, and the question which immediately arises is whether or not to abandon life in the world. The Church's answer to that question is that the individual is completely free to choose for himself. We may, if we wish, remain secular, that is, retain the form of life common to all men in the world. The language used by Paul VI in this connection is entirely in the tradition of Fr Gemelli's principle *in mundo et veluti ex mundo*, adopted by Pius XII in the *motu proprio Primo Feliciter*: both are concerned to formulate the fundamental norm of a true consecrated secularity. Their ultimate choice, says Paul VI, has led the secular Institutes to a self-determination in accord with their own preferences, within the bounds of an approved pluralism sanctioned by law. Their choice cannot be described as easy, for their members are not thereby separated from a profane world where the paramount values are the temporal, and where, often enough, the moral law is exposed to continual and formidable temptations. The difficulty of this vocation leads the pope to emphasize what must always be its outstanding characteristic: a constantly attentive spiritual discernment, a discernment implying profound inner resources beneath the unfolding of what is visible and outward.

It should be noted that in setting out the way in which vocation develops and noting the interior landmarks – personal responsibility, baptismal grace, the call to consecrated life and the choice of the particular form of consecration, the pope is confining himself to the area of man's conscious receptivity, reflection and response. It is important to emphasize this to safeguard against misunderstanding. For while an analysis of the generic elements of a vocation certainly shows how deeply God's gift involves us, it might also suggest to some minds that vocation as *call* is prior to vocation as *charism*. God's gift is always specific and personal. It would be a misunderstanding of the approach adopted by the holy Father, if we were to conclude that particular forms of consecrated life are the result of a basically undifferentiated consecration, which takes on a concrete form simply through particular circumstances or by adaptation to an environment or situation. Every form of con-

secrated life is founded on a charism, and the characteristic features of any form of consecration by the counsels belong to that charism. What the holy Father is concerned to do is to present the development of vocation under a certain aspect: that of man's conscious self-determination. He is speaking of conscience and consciousness: that inner sanctuary where, as a thinking spiritual being, man is alone before God and where responsibility is made the altar of his self-offering.¹⁷

It would be a grave mistake to see in the papal allocution nothing more than an exhortation. It contains a reflection on the very nature of the secular vocation, and sets out to establish the main criteria for secularity. Certainly, such a vocation is difficult. In another addition to his text, the pope observes that, in contrast to the religious life, where the way is clearer, reasonably well-trodden and level, for secular Institutes the road is an uneven one, on which man is drawn downwards by the lure of the easy and yet is urged on to the effort that leads upwards. Theirs is the arduous ascent of the mountaineer.¹⁸ These words have brought great comfort to the secular Institutes, and especially the more secular among them. For it is these who experience the difficulty of their own vocation most profoundly, and who may even have doubted whether it is not too difficult and too fraught with risks. Such misgivings could easily lead them to exchange their own way for that of the religious congregations, by living in groups or following the observances of a common rule in a more secure milieu.

With regard to religious and their problems, history shows that the world has often breached the cloister-wall – a very real danger for the monastic life; whilst for apostolic Institutes they would not be true to *their* vocation unless they were ever more active in the world, using all the means which can serve the contemporary apostolate, without in any way damaging the public witness of their consecrated life. Difficulties surround every vocation; but by the grace of Christ each is adapted to our human weakness, though it remains a call to the perfection and following of Christ.

The pope concluded his allocution by reminding the secular Institutes of three distinctive marks of their vocation: their consecration, their apostolate, their life in the Church.

Consecration

At a time when the very idea of consecration through the evangelical counsels is being called in question, the pope's insistence that there is no secular Institute without such consecration is most timely. For Paul VI, consecration through the counsels is a sort of compass, an inner directive principle

¹⁷ On the level of experience, of course, things work out in various ways. God's dealings with us are diverse and unexpected. Some are called directly to consecration in a definite Institute. For others the desire to give themselves to God finds its realization in a definite form of consecrated life only at the end of a process of search, which takes place amid the circumstances of life and the often various promptings of temperament.

¹⁸ AAS p 623; DC p 914.

by which life is guided along the right path. Certainly, their consecration imposes on members of secular Institutes the duty of attentive discernment, but it is not a weight or a burden. On the contrary, it must provide aid and support, a love, joy and fulness which compensate for renunciations, an openness to others in order to possess Christ.

Apostolate

The apostolate of the secular Institutes is a mission of salvation; but this mission can only be explained in terms which, once again, bring to the fore the secular quality of this vocation. It is a vocation to be *in* the world, in such a way as not to be *of* the world, but *for* it. The world has need of this consecrated presence of a life led in the heart of the world in order to open to the world the way of salvation. Indeed, there could be no better way than this of describing consecrated secularity.

Life in the Church

It is significant that the pope does not speak of their activity as a work of the Church, nor does he ask of them any other dependence on the hierarchy than that which devolves on all laypeople.¹⁹ The relationship of the secular Institutes to the Church arises from their quite distinct situation within the wide spectrum of consecrated life.²⁰ To lead a life truly within the Church, yet in a way proper to consecrated seculars, the first need is for a profound sense of belonging to the Church. So she becomes for them the constant argument of their thoughts. They will find in her a help and support. They will also discover her concern for them, and confidence in them, as chosen children and consciously active and devoted members.

The action of secular Institutes in the Church – a lay action – is also defined by the pope in terms of silent witness, service and even sacrifice. Members of secular Institutes are lay people ‘who make of their christian profession a constructive force for the support of the Church’s mission and structures’. The point to be noticed here is the indirect, or better, the *inspirational* character of their presence. It is true that the experience of secular Institutes and their members is an immediate experience of the Church’s needs: ‘You are people who, by your direct experience, are in a favoured position to know the needs of the Church’. But the apostolate itself is indirect, an apostolate of presence, inspiration and insertion into the world.

¹⁹ Cf *Commentarium pro religiosis* 51 (1970), pp 364–5. The author of this note is slightly puzzled to learn that secular consecration requires no greater degree of dependence or availability in regard to the hierarchy than that of lay people. In view of the *secular* quality of their consecration, nothing could be more obvious. Consecrated lay people are not clerics in disguise.

²⁰ There is a tendency among clergy to declare that such lay people are at the disposition of the Church, in virtue of their consecration: hence the often tactless demands they make of them. Members of secular Institutes are not professional sacristans or church staff, and demands that threaten to divert them from their true vocation should be resisted.

Finally, the pope declares that knowledge of the Church's needs in the world makes possible a keener awareness of the Church's failings. This awareness is desirable not as giving rise to attitudes of criticism but as a spur to a more faithful service and a greater love. Once again, what might appear a difficulty becomes an appeal and a stimulus.

To delineate the secular vocation and consecration within the secular lay condition calls for considerable nuance. As the attentive reader of the allocation will discover, it is precisely this that gives the document its directive force.

THE ADDRESS OF THE CARDINAL PREFECT

Cardinal Antoniutti adopts a more canonical approach. He sets out a number of principles and elucidates the already traditional terminology of pontifical documents with regard to secular Institutes. He is at pains to emphasize that the secular Institutes make possible a true consecration to God and to men, one which may be defined as total, genuine and at the same time secular. But the members of these Institutes remain either diocesan clerics or lay people involved in the world; in no sense are they religious.

Clerics and lay people who become members of secular Institutes remain what they were previously. The layman remains a lay person in the world: and the cleric, already subject to his diocesan Ordinary, is now doubly subject, being bound by a new tie of obedience. In no case may either one or the other be given the name of religious or be regarded as such.²¹

On the subject of Institutes for priests, the cardinal affirms that these correspond to the requirements of the Council and to the spiritual needs of diocesan clergy in search of a deeper interior life in harmony with their apostolic ministry.

In developing the theme of secularity, he points out that the spiritual lives of members of secular Institutes develop in and with the world. Since their duties and activities lie in the world, their lives are no different outwardly from those of other unmarried secular Christians. Their role is to sanctify the profane and the temporal, to sanctify themselves in their very involvement with profane realities, and to be bearers of Christ in the world. Their aim, in short, is 'to become holy in the world through the perpetual profession of the evangelical counsels'.²²

With regard to the mode of their insertion into the world, the cardinal desires that 'according to their wishes and in keeping with their statutes, they can live either in their families – as the majority do – or in common'.²³

²¹ VC p 37; DC p 916. In the case of priests, secular consecration does not entail the renewal of the canonical obedience that they owe to their Ordinary. Nevertheless, their consecrated obedience, motivating as it does the whole of their lives, extends to their priestly ministry and their dependence on the bishop.

²² VC p 38; DC p 916.

²³ VC *ibid*; DC *ibid*.

It may be noted here that the allusion to common life is made almost in passing. Though the communitarian life-style finds favour, as we have seen, with the partisans of a more extreme conception of pluralism, the majority of the Institutes takes less and less account of this possible mode of secular consecrated life. Nevertheless, the pace of this development varies from one country to another, according to prevailing doctrinal influences.

The range covered by the apostolate of presence may be illustrated by a citation which amounts to a paraphrase of the formula *in mundo et veluti ex mundo*:

They are God's co-workers in the world of science, art, thought and progress, of social, technological, economic and cultural structures, in civic commitment of every sort, in the life of the family, in schools, factories, fields, hospitals, barracks, public administration, welfare; in every sector of the immense and active panorama of the world.²⁴

To a large extent, this picture also corresponds to the activities of apostolic religious in the fields of secular action. Hence the text must not be interpreted in too restrictive a sense: one that would exclude religious from a genuine sharing in the life of modern man. Nevertheless, even in those realms of commitment shared with the laity, the witness of religious, if it is to accord with their proper vocation, will need to be distinctive both in form and in spirit. To try to elucidate this difference is one of the main tasks facing the theology of religious life.

After affirming that members of secular Institutes may in no case be called religious or regarded as such, the cardinal goes on to clarify the point at issue:

If, after reaffirming the intrinsic value of secular consecration, I have stressed especially its secular quality, that is because, particularly in certain quarters, it is necessary to be absolutely specific about the value of this characteristic of the secular Institutes; otherwise confusion and sterile polemic will result. Some would maintain (they are not, of course, members of secular Institutes) that the secular quality is in effect no more than an appearance, a purely phenomenal aspect behind which the reality is very different. This opinion is absolutely false.²⁵

Not only are there many who insist on calling the secular Institutes 'religious'; there are also religious who make themselves out to be 'secular'. In their view, the renewal of apostolic religious life can only consist in a far reaching adaptation to the secularized world; the alternative is for religious to be rejected by the world. Certainly, as the Council itself has insisted, out-

²⁴ VC *ibid*; DC *ibid*.

²⁵ Cf Manzoli, E.: *Gli Istituti secolari nella Chiesa* (Milan, 1969), p 271. It is to this work that the cardinal refers. It is extremely one-sided and merely re-opens a useless debate. There are several current criticisms of the book, including that of Fr Jean de la Croix Bonadio, *supra*, pp 17-18.

moded forms of life and action must be revised or discarded. But it is of first importance that the renewal of religious life should not destroy what is essential to a clearly defined vocation in the Church. The cardinal takes to task those who would carry the secularization of religious life to extremes:

The difference between religious and secular Institutes is so clear and precise, so intrinsic to the two vocations, that it is hard to understand how the renewal of religious Institutes could ever be seen in terms of transformation into secular Institutes. Indeed, the renewal of religious Institutes, according to the decree *Perfectae Caritatis*, consists in a return to the spirit of their founders, a return embodied in the planned balance of a way of life which, certainly, must be modified and improved, but never overturned.²⁶

Such 'secularization' of religious renewal would also be detrimental to the secular Institutes:

for the effect would be a blurring of the ecclesial features proper to secular Institutes. When a religious Institute secularizes itself, it loses its nature, its own physiognomy, to produce a new organism of dubious consistency.²⁷

At the root of most problems concerning secular Institutes lies a failure to appreciate that secularity, as the defining mark of a vocation in the Church, does not result merely from the suppression of certain traditional external features of religious life. Religious Institutes, together with other catholic associations and even a number of secular Institutes themselves, are open to criticism on this score. The objections to be made against religious Institutes which seek to become secular Institutes also holds of every other association which aims to retain or acquire the status of secular Institute by means of merely structural changes. What distinguishes the secular Institute from other forms of life in the Church is not, as the cardinal observes, simply a matter of canonical structures, but of very much more – 'a vocation given by God and confirmed by the Church'.²⁸

If all this is to become clear, it is essential that the distinction between religious and secular Institutes should be affirmed without ambiguity in the Church's law. The cardinal's declaration to this effect marks a decisive step forward:

Once it is established that secular Institutes are not to be regarded as religious Institutes, legislation concerning them must be formulated

²⁶ VC pp 42-3, DC p 918.

²⁷ VC p 41; DC p 917.

²⁸ VC *ibid.*; DC *ibid.* See also my own study: 'Vie religieuse ou Institut séculier', in *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 92 (1970), pp 505-35, which is based on two articles published in *The Way*, Supplements 8 and 9: 'Religious life or secular Institute?' and 'Institutes of Apostolic life'. Both these articles are reprinted in *Religious life or secular Institute* (Rome, 1970), pp 207 ff.

in such terms as to exclude all confusion with that of religious, and must be expressed in a terminology that leaves no room for erroneous interpretation.²⁹

What holds of the common legislation (and the above principle must be applied, of course, to the revision of canon law) holds *a fortiori* for all texts relating to particular Institutes: constitutions, rules, statutes. The basis is laid for a work of immense importance both in the revision of the relevant section of Church law and within the secular Institutes themselves, engaged as they are today either in revising their statutes or in exploring the deeper implications of their vocation. In connection with this work of revision, the cardinal's address includes a reminder of the continuing relevance of the basic pontifical documents:

If certain secular Institutes, perhaps influenced by a climate formerly imbued with the traditional ideas about religious life, have come to depart from the precise directives laid down in *Provida Mater*, *Primo Feliciter* and *Cum Sanctissimus*, they need to examine their position afresh and return to the sources contained in the legislation of these three pontifical documents.³⁰

However, it is the task of the competent roman congregation to reconsider, according to the directives laid down by the post-conciliar commission, the statutes of those Institutes which do not comply with the norms of a true consecrated secularity. Indeed, some would hold that the pontifical documents referred to above were, at the time of promulgation, themselves too heavily influenced by the climate proper to religious life.³¹

No one can read the two allocutions, whose contents I have attempted to survey, without being struck by two qualities: their incisiveness and their relevance to the questions which at present divide both religious and secular Institutes. There are still religious whose attitude towards the secular Institutes, it seems to me, is governed by the presuppositions of what Cardinal Antoniutti called an outmoded polemic. In many quarters there are still signs of the attitude dismissed by the cardinal as 'absolutely false': that secularity is no more than a purely phenomenal aspect behind which lies a very different reality.³² In several respects, the position to which many secular Institutes still subscribe stands in need of revision in the light of the norms contained in the pope's allocution, notably in the realms of obedience and community life. Finally, it is encouraging to note that the effects of the allocutions are already beginning to show; certain Institutes, which had defended a form of pluralism inconsistent with a fully secular approach, have taken to heart the pope's directives.

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²⁹ VC p 41; DC p 917.

³⁰ VC *ibid.*; DC *ibid.*

³¹ In opposing Mazzoli's thesis, the cardinal also answers the position adopted by Karl Rahner in his study on secular Institutes – in *Mission and Grace* vol II (London, 1964), pp 182–228.