



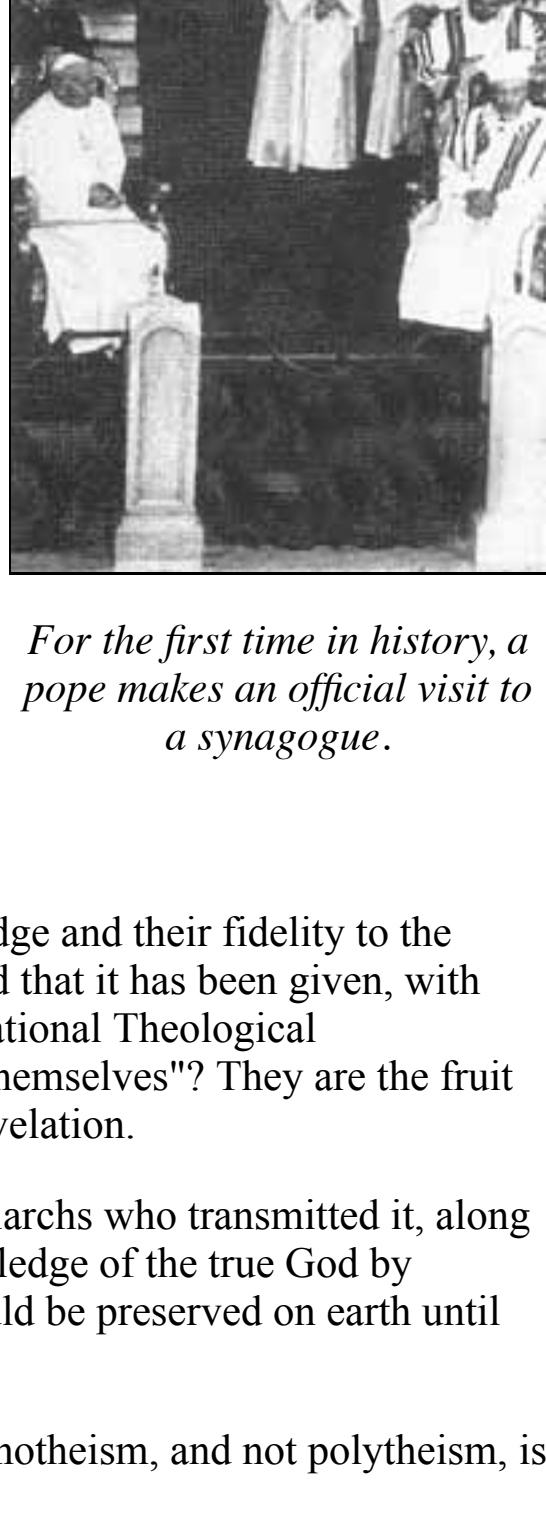
The Non-Christian Religions Are a Preparation for the Gospel!

Analyzing "Christianity and the World Religions,"
the Incredible Document From The International Theological Commission

In its issue of April 6, 1997, *Documentation Catholique* published the document, "Christianity and the World Religions," [hereafter abbreviated *CRW*] prepared by the International Theological Commission (ITC) with the approbation of its president Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

According to the Pontifical Year-book, the International Theological Commission "...is composed of theologians from diverse schools and nations, renowned for their knowledge and their fidelity to the magisterium of the Church,...." up to a maximum number of 30, named by the Holy Father on the proposal of the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for the Faith, after consultation with the Bishops' Conferences. The Yearbook says that:

the task of the Commission is to aid the Holy See, and specifically the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, in examining the most important doctrinal questions.



For the first time in history, a pope makes an official visit to a synagogue.

In order that the "dialogue among religions may bear fruit," the ITC proposes in its document, "Christianity and the World Religions," to establish "some theological principles" which may help "to clarify how religions are to be evaluated theologically" (*CRW*, §3¹). The document explains that it is not a matter of establishing "if men can attain salvation even if they do not belong to the visible Catholic Church" or, more exactly, if each man can belong to the Church in all invisible way and thereby attain salvation. This possibility is in fact already "considered as religious certain" (*CRW*, §64). On the contrary, in "Christianity and the World Religions," it is a matter of establishing if the religions *as such* [i.e., in themselves - Ed.] can have a value in the order of salvation (*CRW*, §§81,82). [The emphasis on "as such" is by the author of the article - Ed.] This is to say that the evaluation concerns itself not with the subjective level of the good faith or of the invincible ignorance of the individual, but with the objective level of religions considered in themselves, precisely "as religions."

The document concludes (*CRW*, §§118,119) that inter-religious dialogue [that is, the dialogue with the false religions - Ed.] raises anew the question of "evangelical preparation." According to "Christianity and the World Religions," the function of inter-religious dialogue is not to be compared to that of the Old Testament, which, in fact, "was the preparation for the very coming of Christ," but that the non-Catholic religions "as such" can act as a preparation for "the salvific event already accomplished." That is to say, the false religions in themselves can be quite as much "teachers as the Christ" (St. Paul). Like the Old Testament! This is enough to leave one dumbfounded.

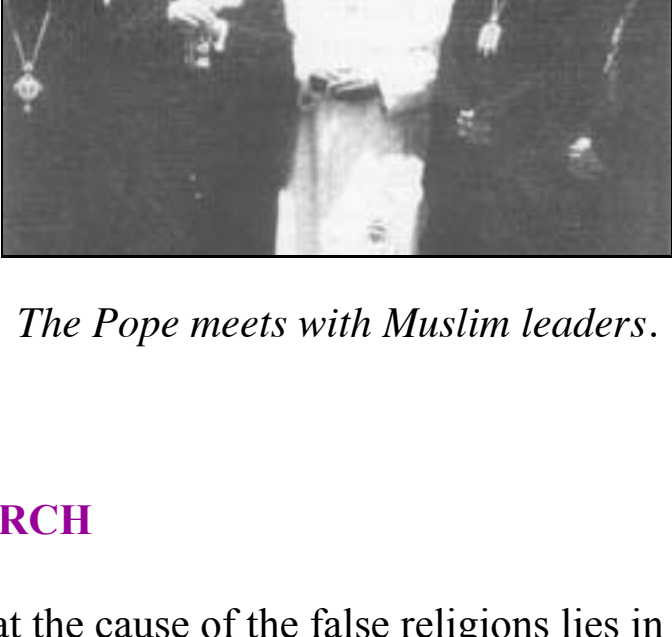
NOT RELIGIONS, BUT APOSTASIES FROM THE ONE TRUE RELIGION

If the members of the International Theological Commission were really what they ought to be, that is, theologians "renowned for their knowledge and their fidelity to the magisterium of the Church," they would know that the evaluation of false religions "as such" was given by God Himself in Sacred Scripture and that it has been given, with perfect fidelity to the Word of God, for 2000 years by the Holy Catholic Church. The Church's evaluation is absolutely negative, and the International Theological Commission's favorable evaluation in "Christianity and the World Religions" is in manifest contradiction to it. What are the false religions "in themselves"? They are the fruit of apostasy [in the literal sense of the word, i.e., defection - Ed.] from the one true religion, either in its original revelation or in its definitive revelation.

Divine Revelation tells us (see the Book of Genesis) that, from the very beginning, God revealed the one true religion to Adam, then to the patriarchs who transmitted it, along with the promise of the Redeemer, to their posterity. In the general corruption of society which followed, since mankind had lost even the knowledge of the true God by creating for itself false gods to adore, God chose a people that He would govern with a special providence in order that the one true religion could be preserved on earth until the coming of the Savior, who would perfect it and entrust it to His Church until the end of time.

That which is attested by Sacred Scripture concerning the original revelation is amply confirmed by studies of religion in the earliest times. Monotheism, and not polytheism, is the highest stage of religion. Polytheism appears afterwards as a degeneration of the original monotheism.²

If the false religions of the pagans, polytheists and idol-worshippers (Buddhism, Hinduism, etc...) are the fruit of the estrangement from the early divine revelation, the other false religions (Judaism, Islam, heretical and/or schismatic sects, etc) are the fruit of the total or partial rejection of the divinely defined revelation, that is, of the Christian revelation.



The Pope meets with Muslim leaders.

THE JUDGMENT OF SACRED SCRIPTURE AND THE CHURCH

Sacred Scripture (see the Book of Wisdom, chaps. 13,14) teaches that the cause of the false religions lies in the darkening of reason and the disorder of the passions. It renders a very severe judgment of what the false religions are "in themselves." They are the worship of non-existent divinities "introduced into the world by the vain thoughts of men" (Wis. 14:13-14); "sources of impiety" and of "corruption of life" (Wis. 14:12), because all false religions are a way of "thinking false of God" (Wis. 14:30). St. Paul will go on to say that the pagans are "unjustifiable because they have exchanged the truth of God for a lie" (Rom 1:25) and erroneous knowledge of God leads to moral perversion just as the true knowledge of God leads to a recovery of morality (Wisdom, chaps. 14,15; Romans, chap. 1).

In evaluations of the false religions "as such," the Fathers and the Doctors of the Church do not, as we shall see, deviate in the least from those of Sacred Scripture. The Church has always taught that false religions "in themselves" are effectively sins against the first commandment,³ that they are not "religions," but rather are vices opposed to the virtue of religion, which requires that the divine worship be rendered only to the One to whom it is due and in the manner in which it is due.⁴ In reality, the false religions are institutionalized superstitions and organized manifestations of infidelity (or incredulity) by means of an improper external worship. After the hatred of God, they are objectively the most grave sins because they do grievous injury to the rights of God over man.⁵

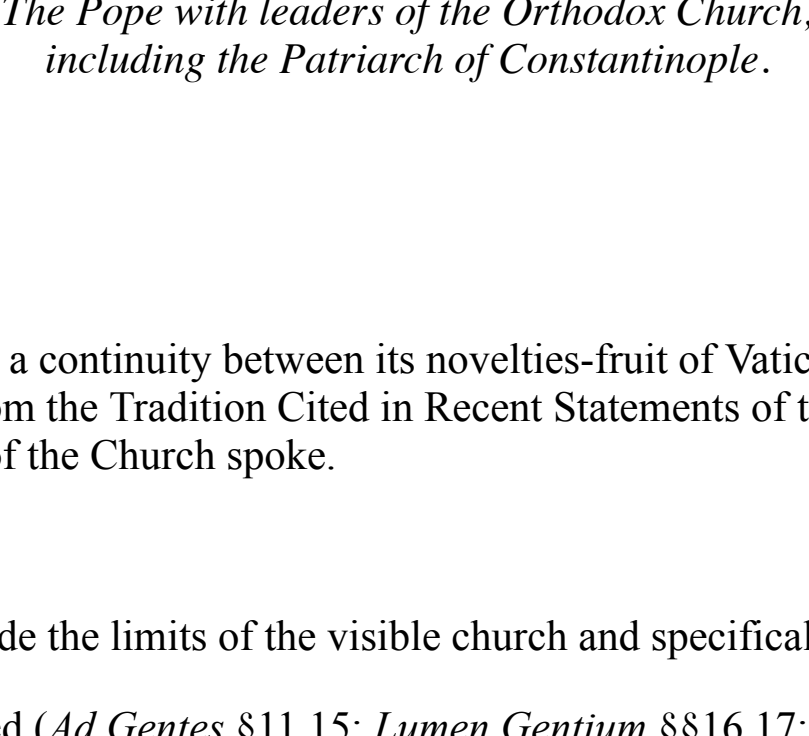
ERROR IS THE CHARACTERISTIC PROPERTY OF FALSE RELIGIONS

If, among so many errors, one finds bits of the true and of the good in the false religions, it is a matter either of reflections of sound reason (which is the light of the Word in the *natural* order) or of residue from the original revelation or from the Christian revelation (which is the light of the Word in the *supernatural* order). This residue, however, clearly does not belong to the false religions "as such," but rather it belongs legitimately and in its own right to the Catholic Church, to whom it had been given as a deposit in trust. About the great Greek philosophers, St. Justin wrote, "All the good thing, they have taught belong to us, to us Christians!" (*Apol.* II, §10). One must say the same thing, *a fortiori*, of the residue of revealed truths, of Sacred Scripture, and of the sacraments still traceable in the heretical and/or schismatic sects and of the residue of the true and the good that one finds in the Qur'an. Thus, even though God may use this residue of truth to impel certain individual souls toward salvation, it can never be said that He utilizes the false religions "in themselves." Rather one must say that He uses the elements of the true religion which had survived in the false religions.⁶ That being said, it must be noted that the Church has always relied little on this residue of truth in converting false religionists, and that she has always deployed her missionary zeal, without sparing the blood of her most generous sons.⁷

Thus, only the errors by which they distinguish themselves and oppose themselves to the true religion belong by right to the false religions "in themselves." The false religions "as such" are an obstacle, not a preparation for the Gospel, as the International Theological Commission would have it. The following, which one can read in the same document (*CRW*, §§78,79), is alien and injurious to the Catholic Church:

To the extent that the Church recognizes, discerns, and makes her own the true and the good that the Holy Spirit has accomplished in the words and actions of non-Christians, she becomes more and more the true Catholic Church.

This implies the Catholic Church is not yet fully the true Catholic Church and the Holy Spirit has accomplished something among the non-Christians that He has not accomplished within the Catholic Church!



The Pope with leaders of the Orthodox Church, including the Patriarch of Constantinople.

AN INEXCUSABLE EQUIVOCATION

The ITC, to avoid the foreseeable objections, strains to establish a continuity between its novelties-fruit of Vatican II - and the tradition of the Church. In fact, one of the subtitles in "Christianity and the World Religions" is "Motifs from the Tradition Cited in Recent Statements of the Church's Magisterium." It pretends to discover in the false pagan religions those "seeds of the word" of which the Fathers of the Church spoke.

Under this subtitle, the document says:

The *semina verbi*, "seeds of the word," can be found outside the limits of the visible church and specifically in the different religions:...

In support of this, three documents of Vatican Council II are cited (*Ad Gentes* §11,15; *Lumen Gentium* §§16,17; *Nostra Aetate* §2) and the encyclical letter *Redemptoris Missio* of John Paul II (§56). Concerning these citations, nothing more is said. Immediately afterwards, however, it is affirmed that "[T]he theology of the seeds of the word stems from St. Justin Martyr." The document also cites Clement of Alexandria and St. Irenaeus. We vigorously dispute that St. Justin, St. Clement of Alexandria, and St. Irenaeus can be invoked in support of the affirmation that "the seeds of the word" can be found in a concrete manner in the false religions! In fact, those Fathers of the Church, when they spoke of "the seeds of the word," were not speaking of the false religions, but of sound philosophy, and precisely of "that small number of the elect...who have a sound and upright philosophy" (St. Clement, *Strom.* I. c. XIX), and, far from identifying it "in a concrete manner" with the false religions, they opposed this sane and upright philosophy to the false religions and used it to combat them.⁸

THE CONTRADICTIONS OF THE DOCUMENT

Contradictions appear throughout "Christianity and the World Religions" of the ITC, which, however, does not seem to perceive them.

Faced with the polytheism of the Greek world, Justin sees in philosophy an ally of Christianity since it has followed reason;...(*CRW*, §§42,43).

Thus St. Justin places sound philosophy, which has followed right reason, in opposition to the false religions, which are a deviation from that right reason which is always capable of ascending from the knowledge of created things to the one true God, their creator (Romans, chap. 1; Wis. 13:1-5).

The document quotes St. Clement of Alexandria:

But God has been sowing since the beginning of time, so that different parts of the truth are to be found among the Greeks and among the barbarians, especially in philosophy considered in its totality, even though alongside the truth there has been darnel as well (*CRW*, §43).

Even St. Clement, accordingly, speaks of the natural light of reason, which among the pagan ancients (Aristotle, Socrates, Plato, *et al.*) especially manifested itself in their sound philosophy:

We do not accept without distinction all the philosophers,...but only that small number of the elect...of whom Socrates speaks in Plato...those of whom Socrates said had a sound and upright philosophy (*Strom.*, *op. cit.*).

St. Clement said elsewhere, "Philosophy in the sense which we intend it is that which attains the truth in philosophizing" (*Strom.* VI. c. XVIII). What he is referring to is the matter of the religious truths accessible to natural reason [i.e., the existence of God, His oneness, the immortality of the soul, etc. -Ed.] which constitute the *preambula fidei*, otherwise understood to be the bedrock upon which the truth can be built, and which then can serve as a preparation for the Gospel. Clearly, the saints are not supporting false religions in themselves, against which these same Fathers justly oppose the right usage of reason.

St. Justin says that Socrates, in order to remain faithful to right reason, was not concerned about being considered an "atheist" in the idolatrous *milieu* in which he lived (*Apol.* I, §46):

He drove out of his republic the malevolent demons and the deities who were committing the offences described by the poets, and he turned men away from them and exhorted men to seek, through the use of reason, to recognize that God which they did not know [*Apol.* II, §10].

St. Clement of Alexandria also said that even "for those who were righteous men according to philosophy [that is to say who followed the rule of reason and the natural law - Ed.] it was still necessary not only to have faith in the Lord, but also to renounce idolatry" (*Strom.* VI. c. VI.,P.G.,t.IX,col.265).

A NOT VERY HONORABLE PRECEDENT

One does not see how the ITC can call upon those Fathers to support its unorthodox thesis, according to which

[T]he universal significance of Christ has been expressed in different ways in the church's tradition from the earliest times...The *semina verbi*, "seeds of the word," can be found outside the limits of the visible church and specifically in the different religions;... ["Christianity and the World Religions," (*CRW*, §40)].

No! This thesis has foundation neither in Sacred Scripture nor in Tradition, but contradicts both of them. Its only foundation rests on the texts of Vatican Council II and of Pope John Paul II cited in the document. It has a precedent which certainly does not do honor to the members of the ITC, that is, the program of the modernists in which they initially take things out of context (specifically from St. Justin and St. Clement), play on "ambiguities," and seek to justify their heterodox thesis that all religions are true in themselves.

THE HERESY OF UNIVERSALISM

"Christianity and the World Religions" promotes another falsehood:

The Son of God was united himself to *every man* (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, §22; *Redemptoris Missio*, §6, among many other places). The idea is repeated frequently in the fathers, who take their inspiration from some passages in the New Testament...."The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn. 1:14), has also been interpreted on not a few occasions in the sense of dwelling "within us," that is to say, within each person, from the idea of his being in us one can go easily to that of being in him. Containing us all in himself, he can reconcile us all with God the Father. In his glorified humanity we can all find resurrection (*CRW*, §46) [emphasis added].

The ITC goes on to cite a text of St. Gregory of Nyssa in which the lost sheep (cf. Mt. 18: 12-24; Lk. 15: 1-7) "is identified with the *erring human race*, which Jesus has come to seek out (*CRW*, §46) [emphasis added]. Is it possible that it has escaped the theologians of the ITC that it is one thing to speak of "every man," and quite another to speak of the "erring human race"? Certainly, by the Incarnation, our Lord Jesus Christ joined together (in action) His own individual humanity and (in authority) the entire human race as His Mystical Body, but the latter only in authority. That is to say that each man can save himself (objective universal redemption), but to truly save himself he must make this union actual by his personal and free adhesion to the Savior (subjective individual redemption). It is not possible to confuse two plans so totally different without falling into the heresy of "universalism" or "the restoration of all things." [This is also known as the heresy of *Apocatastasis*, which was initially the heresy of Origenism, then of certain Protestants, and is now that of the "New Theology." These promote universal unconditional redemption of all men whether they will it or not, and whether they are aware of it or not.⁹ - Ed.]

A DOGMA DOWNGRADED AND A CHRIST SEPARATED FROM HIS CHURCH

The worst thing about the document is the fact that it downgrades the dogma that there is no salvation outside the Church to a simple exhortation or preaching applicable solely for Catholics. Therefore, one reads in "Christianity and the World Religions":

In this way [Second Vatican Council] aligned itself in continuity with the teaching of Pius XII, but emphasized more clearly the original parenthetical character of this expression (*CRW*, §67).

Here is the conclusion of the International Theological Commission following upon the conception of Vatican Council II:

Thus the original meaning is restored to the expression *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* [outside the Church there is no salvation - Ed.], namely, that of exhorting the members of the church to be faithful (*CRW*, §70).

This is to deviate from the original sense of the Church since she has always declared that it is *of faith* that belonging to the Church is necessary for all, from a necessity of means [not of precept - Ed.], in order to attain salvation. The true sense of *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* is taught in two Church councils (Lateran IV and Florence III, see Denzinger [hereafter abbreviated D:] 430, 714; *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*) and in repeated acts of the Magisterium (Innocent III, D:423; Boniface VIII, D:468; Clement VI, D:470b; Benedict XIV, D:1473; Pius IX, D:1647; Leo XIII, D:1955; Pius XII, D:2286,2288).

Evidently, the members of the ITC do not believe in the infallibility of the Church.

THE DOGMA OF SUBSTITUTION

And what is the new "dogma" proposed by the International Theological Commission? Read again the first sentence of §70 from the document and the sentence which concludes it:

Thus the original meaning is restored to the expression *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, namely that of exhorting the members of the church to be faithful. Once this expression is integrated into the more universal *extra Christum nulla salus* [outside of Christ there is no salvation - Ed.], it is no longer in contradiction to the universal call of all men to salvation (*CRW*, §70).

We ask: when was this? The Catholic Church has always preached the call of all men to salvation as well as the necessity for all to belong to the Church, without ever believing it was obliged to eliminate the second dogma to keep the first one in existence. It is a question solely of stating precisely the manner of belonging.

For those who know the Church in her nature and her requirements, there is need of a visible and explicit belonging. For those who, in good faith, do not know it, and are of good will, believing "*in voto*" can suffice, that is to say a belonging of desire, even implicit, by means of supernatural faith and charity.¹⁰ The distinction between these two modes of belonging having been made, it remains true that for all, and not merely just for Catholics alone, there is no salvation outside the Church. In fact, those who eventually work out their salvation in the sects or in the false religions, are saved by virtue of the one true Church, in which dwells the only Savior, and notwithstanding their visible belonging to a sect or a false religion.¹¹

Clearly this Catholic doctrine does not allow us to value the other religions "in themselves." That is why the ITC has dealt with it in such a manner. It has paved the way for a Christ heretically separated from His Church. Such is the heresy of Teilhard de Chardin:

A general convergence of the religions towards a universal Christ, which, in the main, satisfies them all: such seems to me to be...the only form imaginable for a religion of the future.

This is the heresy of De Chardin that his supporters were circulating in France in the years preceding Vatican Council II.¹² The Teilhardians of today, in power in the Church since the Council, impose it from on high.

We are in agreement with the ITC on one thing only, and that is where it declares "the truth of the Faith is not at our disposition." That is as it ought to be and the ITC ought to obey its own declaration. "For we can do nothing against the truth, but only for the truth," as St. Paul wrote (II Cor. 13:8). Unfortunately the whole of the document "Christianity and the World Religions" is there to give the lie to this solemn affirmation.

Author's Notes:

N.B.: "Interreligious dialogue" is dialogue with the "non-Christian" religions. With the "Christian" religions the dialogue is called "*ecumenical*." Today it is given as a certainty that the heretical and/or schismatic sects also are the essence of the Christian religion and therefore, of the Catholic Church, which is to be restructured, in consequence, starting with the primacy of the pope.

N.B.: With the document that we have just analyzed, the International Theological Commission has said it intends to put a check on the explosion of "ecumenical" heresies which go so far as to deny the unique and indispensable mediation of the Word Incarnate. We make the observation that one does not combat error by opposing it with other errors, even if they be lesser errors, but in opposing the *truth* to it. One does not combat merely with theoretical declarations, but uses the coercive power which Christ has given to His Church to fight against the pertinacity of the heretics.

Antonius M

(Translated from *Courrier de Rome*, Sept., 1997; edited by Rev. Fr. Kenneth Novak)

1 Sections designations are taken from the version of "Christianity and the World Religions" published in *Origins* (Aug 14, 1997, vol.27, no.10).

2 W. Schmidt, *Der Ursprung der Gottes idee*, Munster, 1926-1936, and by the same author, *Manuale di Storia comparata delle religioni*, Brescia, 1938; see also R. Bocassino, "La religione dei primitivi" in *L'Histoire des Religions* of Fr. Tacchi Venturi.

3 V. E. Ione, *Compendio di Teologia Morale*, ed. (Marietti, 1955), p.118sq.

4 St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IIa-IIae, Q.94.

5 *Ibid*, IIa-IIae, Q.94, a.3.

6 *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, under the word "Infideles", col. 1912 and col. 1914sq.

7 See E. Hugon *Hors de l'Eglise point de salut?* ed. Clovis, p.83.

8 On the "seeds of the Word" in St. Justin, St. Clement of Alexandria and St. Irenaeus, see Dictionnaire de théologie catholique, under the word "Infideles" col. 1806sq.

9 See *Si Si No No*, (Italian ed.) Apr. 15, 1993, pp.1sq.

10 See Letter from the Holy Office to the Archbishop of Boston, Apr. 8, 1949.

11 E.Hugon, *op. cit.*

12 See R. Garrigou-Lagrange O.P. *La nouvelle théologie où va-elle?* (1946).