

Looking for Traces of the Ecumenical Question in the *relationes ad limina* of the German Bishops (1948-58)

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Abstract A historiographical hypothesis ascribed the Holy See's first post-war pronouncement on ecumenism (5 June 1948) to information gathered during *ad limina* visits of German bishops that year. This article aims to verify it. 'Case studies' have therefore been chosen from among the dioceses most involved in the 'Una-Sancta-Arbeit'. What emerges, in particular, is the urgency of the refugee problem and the practice of the *simultaneum*, i.e., the sharing of churches between denominations. This analysis will also help to verify whether and how the 'literary genre' of *relationes* can be used as a source in the field of the history of Catholic ecumenism.

Keywords Ecumenism. Holy Office. Una Sancta Arbeit. German refugees. Vertriebene. Simultaneum.

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1 Introduction

This contribution will study the *relationes ad limina* from the particular perspective of the history of Catholic ecumenism, trying to identify traces of ecumenical issues in the periodical reports sent to Rome by local bishops. The aim is to verify how this ‘literary genre’ can be used as a source for this historiographical field and therefore if and how the *relationes* constituted a channel of information for the Roman dicasteries on the ecumenical reality in the dioceses.

To this end, some ‘case studies’ have been chosen according to the criterion of their ‘activity’ in the ecumenical field. In this contribution, all the case studies were drawn from Germany, i.e., from the German dioceses most involved in the ‘Una-Sancta-Arbeit’. A special focus will be given to the diocese of Paderborn, which constitutes a notable example and also a paradigmatic reality of the situation of ecumenical confrontation in Germany. A brief background premise is useful to explain the reasons for this choice.

2 The Roots of the 1948 Holy Office Monitum in the German Ecumenical Situation

On 5 June 1948, the Supreme Congregation of the Holy Office issued a document, the “Monitum de motione oecumenica” entitled *Cum Compertum*, which constituted the first pronouncement of the Holy See, and indeed of the pontificate of Pius XII, on the ecumenical theme since Pius XI’s encyclical *Mortalium animos* twenty years earlier.¹ The *monitum* preceded by three months the constitutive assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) that, held in Amsterdam in August 1948, would consecrate the official beginning of the international ecumenical movement, gathering delegates from more than a hundred Churches around the world.² The press at the time had no doubts in attributing the origins of the Holy Office’s *monitum* to the Amsterdam convocation, especially when the Holy See made known its refusal to send Catholic delegates or observers to the as-

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¹ Studies based on the archival fonds of Pius XI (Barbolla, “La genesi della *Mortalium animos*”) have shown the causal connection between the German ecumenical situation – in particular the activities of the *Hochkirchlich-Ökumenischer Bund* of Freidrich Heiler – and the encyclical, which for a long time was believed to have been caused by the experiment of Anglo-Catholic conversations in Malines sponsored by cardinal Dé-siré Mercier. See also Levant, “The Positioning of the Roman Catholic Church”.

² Cf. Visser ‘t Hooft, “The Genesis of the World Council”.

sembly. Indeed, the Geneva leaders of the WCC had long sought Roman Catholic representation, encouraging well-known Catholic ecumenists, such as Yves Congar, to obtain specific permission from the Holy See.³ In reality, *Cum Compertum* was nothing more than a sharp and brief warning, emphasising the prohibitions of interdenominational talks already present in Canon law, without expressing value judgements on the ecumenical instance. In particular, it recalled canon 1325, which forbade Catholics, both lay people and priests, from participating in and even more so from organising public disputes or interdenominational theological discussions without special authorisation from Rome, and canons 731 and 1278, which excluded participation in common liturgical celebrations or any form of *communicatio in sacris*.⁴ The *monitum* thus seemed to be conceived as a document not only intended for those who aspired to attend the Amsterdam meeting (to whom a written prohibition came anyway), but also aimed, as the preparatory drafts preserved in the archives of the Holy Office show, at curbing the local activities of Catholic ecumenism, which had flourished especially in the 1930s and 1940s and had experienced exponential growth after the war.

The historian Étienne Fouilloux, a pioneer of French ecumenical studies, launched a convincing hypothesis exactly forty years ago, assuming as the immediate cause of the Holy Office's *monitum* the *ad limina* visit made in April 1948 by eight German bishops to Rome.⁵ He hypothesised this also in the light of several interviews given by these prelates and a commentary aired by Radio Vaticana in the aftermath of the *monitum* that seemed to clearly link the Holy Office's measure to the ecumenical situation in Germany.⁶ Indeed, after 1945, the involvement of German Catholics in the cause of Christian unity had reached such a level of expansion and spread that it was unheard of in other national contexts. Thanks to a martyr of the Nazi regime, the Catholic priest Max Josef Metzger, a dense network of hundreds of local ecumenical circles scattered throughout Germany and gathering several thousand affiliates, both men and women, had consoli-

³ Congar, "La question des observateurs"; Congar, *Journal*, 143-53; Fouilloux, *Les catholiques et l'unité*, 781-98. See also WCC, *Memorandum on Memorandum concerning Roman Catholic observers and WCC, Report on the Roman Church*.

⁴ SO, "Cum Compertum", 5 June 1948.

⁵ Fouilloux, *Les catholiques et l'unité*, 906. Among these bishops were the five archbishops who led the former five German ecclesiastical provinces: Michael Faulhaber, archbishop of Munich; Josef Frings, archbishop of Cologne; Lorenz Jaeger, archbishop of Paderborn; Josef Otto Kolb, archbishop of Bamberg; Wendelin Rauch, archbishop of Freiburg im Breisgau. That visit was also attended by the bishop of Berlin, Cardinal Konrad von Preysing.

⁶ Commentary also published as Ambord, "Ein Kommentar".

dated under the name ‘Una Sancta Bewegung’.⁷ Many circles far exceeded one hundred participants.⁸ The vast proportions of the Una Sancta Movement had prompted the Fulda Bishops’ Conference in 1943, at the suggestion of the Archbishop of Paderborn Lorenz Jaeger, to set up a specific commission for its supervision and coordination.⁹ And Jaeger himself, who was entrusted with the chairmanship of this commission, in an interview with Radio Vaticana during his stay in Rome in April 1948, seemed to imply that one of the purposes of his *ad limina* visit was to inform Rome about the German ecumenical situation, stating that the Pope was “following the Una Sancta movement very closely”.¹⁰

The analysis of the Paderborn *relatio* of 1948, a report compiled in March of that year and which Jaeger probably delivered by hand, in this contribution is therefore the starting point for verifying Fouilloux’s thesis, although I will not refrain from referring to data from other dioceses for comparison where possible.¹¹

3 Paderbornensis Ecclesia: Paradigmatic of Post-War Germany

The archdiocese of Paderborn is a particular exemplification but also a paradigmatic reality of ecumenical challenges in Germany. Firstly, it constitutes a peculiar case because of its archbishop, who was not only the chairman and even the inspirer of the Commission in charge of ecumenism within the Fulda Conference but a true pioneer of ecumenical dialogue in Germany.¹² In 1946, in fact, with the coop-

⁷ On Metzger see Rendle, *Max Josef Metzger*, and Ernesti, *Ökumene im Dritten Reich*, 182–208, which uses and publishes several unseen documents from the Metzger archive in Meitingen and the archives of the secret police.

⁸ Here some of the most numerous circles: Nordhausen, Bielefeld, Mainz, Frankfurt, Hannover, Hamm, Leipzig, Hamburg, Stuttgart, Jena, Krefeld, Naumburg, Erfurt, Bornstedt, Sangershausen, Eisleben, Passau, Bamberg, Düsseldorf, Niederaltaich, Metten, Beuron, and Weingarten. Cf. Heiler, “Utopie oder Wirklichkeit”, 10. See also Swidler, *The Ecumenical Vanguard*, 137–8.

⁹ Volk, *Akten deutscher Bischöfe*, 133–46, here 144 (minutes of the plenary meeting of 17–19 August 1943). See also Klein, “Es begann mit der Una-Sancta”.

¹⁰ An account of the interview was given in French by *Vers l’unité chrétienne*, circulaire no. 3, May 1948, 6 (a copy is kept in WCC Archives, 4201.1.1, ff. 162–167).

¹¹ Together with the *relatio*, the archive (Paderborn 1948) contains the parchments attesting to Jaeger’s fulfilment of the visit to the apostolic basilicas of St Paul and St Peter, which was obligatory in the program of an *ad limina* visit. These visits to the basilicas took place, one on 12 and the other on 13 April 1948, while the same archival folder shows the date of Jaeger’s audience in person at the Consistorial Congregation on 15 April.

¹² Cf. Priesching, Otto, *Lorenz Jaeger als Ökumeniker*.

eration of his Protestant counterpart in the diocese, the Oldenburg *Landesbischof* Wilhelm Stählin, he inaugurated a circle for theological dialogue between specialists drawn from both confessions. The so-called Jaeger-Stählin Kreis, which would meet regularly at least twice a year from then on until today, due to such an institutionalised form under interdenominational episcopal patronage, was thus a *unicum* in Europe.¹³ This was followed in 1956 by the establishment of the Johann-Adam-Möhler-Institut für Ökumenik, which is also still active today.¹⁴ However, of all these activities, which formed the core of Jaeger's pastoral commitment, there is hardly a trace in his diocesan *relationes*. The impression, for this diocese as for the others examined, is that, framed in the constraining grid of 100 questions of the 1918 questionnaire, the peculiar reality of each diocese, beyond the different statistics on the number of priests, parishes and population ratios according to the *Land* they belonged to, was flattened on a canvas that exalted homogeneities rather than differences. The question, then, is to determine whether this choice of homogeneity was due to the 'literary genre' upstream or rather downstream to a precise will of 'concealment' on the part of the compiler.

Certainly, the diocese of Paderborn, due to the peculiarities of its territory, was hardly comparable to any other, wounded in its borders by fractures that well represented on a diocesan scale the whole drama of the German situation in the aftermath of the conflict. That's the reason why it was such a paradigmatic diocese. In fact, in 1948 its territory was divided into five administrative districts, falling in different occupation zones: one, Waldeck, in the American zone, two, Arnsberg and Minden-Detmold, in the British zone and two others, the districts of Magdeburg and Merseburg, in the Russian zone.¹⁵ Whereas this was the situation attested by Jaeger's 1948 report, five years later, after the establishment of the Deutsche Demokratische Republik (DDR) and the Bundesrepublik Deutschland (BRD), the diocese presented a different picture. With a territory definitively fractured into two sections respectively east and west of the Iron Curtain, even communication within the diocese was difficult in this new situation. For instance, since seminarians could no longer travel freely to the west,¹⁶ it was necessary to establish, as reported by

¹³ Schwahn, *Der Ökumenische Arbeitskreis*; Burkard, "Chefsache Ökumene".

¹⁴ Hardt, "Die Anfänge der Ökumene"; Thönissen, "Von der Konfessionskunde".

¹⁵ Paderborn 1948, 1-2. Cf. Gruß, *Erzbischof Lorenz Jaeger*, 259-77.

¹⁶ Even if travel for his clergy was not so easy, Jaeger was always authorised to enter and leave the eastern territory, e.g., to administer confirmations: "Jurisdictio et dignitas episcopalis servari poterat illaesa et honorata. [...] Semper usque adhuc in partem orientalem intrare potui ibique muneribus episcopalibus fungi. Perdifficile saepius episcopo nec auxiliari Magdeburgi residenti munus evadit ecclesiae jura defendendi et magna ibi adhibenda est animi fortitudo et prudentia" (Paderborn 1953, 19).

Jaeger in his 1953 *relatio*, three special seminaries for the eastern part: one minor, one major and one for those who were not admitted to public schools by the communist government because of their vocation to the priesthood.¹⁷

Moreover, Paderborn was a diocese where the Catholic confession was in a strong minority, with less than 2,500,000 believers out of a total population of almost ten million, and where only the small city of Paderborn (about 40,000 inhabitants) held the record for being the majority Catholic city (about 85%) and was thus the seat of the episcopal chair. On this very particular reality, as on all other German dioceses, the phenomenon of the influx of 12,000,000 displaced Germans from Eastern Europe fell with overwhelming force at the end of the Second World War. In 1953, Jaeger's diocese counted 810,000 immigrants from the Eastern territories, of which about 110,000 were Catholics.¹⁸ According to statistics compiled by the Fulda Bishops' Conference in July/August 1948, Paderborn was the second-largest diocese in Germany in terms of the number of refugees, preceded by Osnabrück with approximately 100,000 more displaced persons.¹⁹ As a term of comparison, in the small and not very distant diocese of Mainz (thirteenth in that ranking), approximately 160,000 refugees had flowed in out of a pre-war population of around 1,900,000: even though the population increase was only 8.5 %, this abrupt shift had greater proportions as far as the Catholic component was concerned, since about 145,000 of those refugees were Catholics, increasing the number of the Catholic Church's faithful in the diocese from 460,000 before the war to 605,000 in 1948. Albert Stohr, the bishop of Mainz, in his 1948 report offered an eloquent example: before 1947 there were 9,000 Catholics living in the Gießen deanery, the following year there were 74,000.²⁰ This situation, coupled with the human losses of the war conflict, also caused a shortage of priests, although along with the refugees, many Ori-

¹⁷ "Seminarium Norbertinum Magdeburgi erectum omnes illos alumnus colligit, qui a gubernio communistarum zonae orientalis ad studia humaniora in publicis scholis non sunt admissi attamen clericali vocatione ad sacerdotium tendunt. Hi post peractas scholas inferiores in hoc Collegio humanioribus instruuntur usque ad maturitatis examen. [...] Huius seminarii cursus difficillimis conditionibus propter huius zonae orientalis circumstantias perducitur" (Paderborn 1953, 22-3).

¹⁸ Paderborn 1953, 2.

¹⁹ Mertens, *Akten deutscher Bischöfe*, 237-8.

²⁰ Another example he cited: in the parish of Nidda before the war there were only 408 believers out of 32,200 inhabitants. After 1947 there were 9,700 Catholics out of 46,250 inhabitants (cf. Mainz 1948, 1-2). Thanks to the economic recovery, the population continued to grow in the following years, reaching 1,880,000 in 1953 (of which 647,000 were Catholics) and 2,000,000 in 1958 (of which 704,000 were Catholics) (cf. Mainz 1958, 1).

ental Presbyters also arrived.²¹ But along with the Catholic priests, Protestant pastors had also emigrated, often accompanied by their communities, creating potentially explosive problems of inter-confessional coexistence, especially in the *Länder* where the subversion of the situation inherited from the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio* was most evident. Obviously, not all dioceses were equally affected by these demographic upheavals, nonetheless, on the impact of such a situation, the 1948 *relationes* of almost all German bishops agree, particularly in the context of their answers to questions numbers 84 to 99, i.e., the section on the status and morality of the *populo fidei*.

4 The Interconfessional Consequences of the Refugee Emergency: Mixed Marriages and Shared Churches

In fact, in Paderborn as elsewhere, accommodating refugees entailed heavy consequences, exacerbating the shortage of houses (already in short supply following the bombing) and consequently the material but also moral misery, given the amplified opportunities for promiscuity:

With many homes already destroyed during the war, the immigration of expellees now completely overtakes all residence facilities, so that very often couples with five or six children have to live in one room day and night at the same time. As a result, the integrity of life is endangered and the abuse of marriage and the collapse of family life are caused. This shows a certain intimate connection between the evils by which Christian life is endangered and the political, economic and social calamities that are completely beyond our capacity.²²

²¹ In Paderborn in 1953, for example, they were 250 out of a total of 1,778 secular priests in the diocese (Paderborn 1953, 3).

²² "Multis habitaculis bello iam destructis nunc immigratio expulsorum omnia habitationis loca omnino excedit, ita ut persaepe coniugibus cum quinque vel sex liberis in una camera die noctuque insimul versandum sit. Quo fit, ut honestas vitae periclitetur et inducatur matrimonii abusus et vitae familiaris ruina. Quo patet quidam intimus nexus inter mala, quibus vita christiana periclitatur, et calamitates politicas, oeconomicas et sociales, quae nostrum facultatem omnino excedunt" (Paderborn 1948, 39). Just before, in the same question no. 100 he wrote: "Undecim vel duodecim milliones hominum Germanicae linguae ex Provinciis orientalibus Germaniae, ex Bohemia Sudetorum, ex Hungaria et Jugoslavia sunt expulsi, e dominibus et praediis suis ejecti, bonis suis privatis omnibus spoliati, iuribus naturalibus destituti, ex patria sua eradicate. Qui homines egentes ac omni spe frustrate ex desperatione a seductoribus radicalibus vel nihilistis alliciuntur, praesertim si - ut multi expulsi ex Bohemia Sudetorum - ignorantia fidei catholicae laborant nec ad sacramentorum frequentiam sunt assuefacti" (Paderborn 1948, 38-9). Cf. Hirschfeld, "Ihr habt ein Recht".

Population composition upheaval was also driving the exponential growth in the number of mixed marriages. In the Russian-occupied Magdeburg area, for instance, Jaeger reported that the rate of mixed marriages out of the total was about 70-80%,²³ although he justified this statistic with a certain compassion: “Catholic girls have lost hope of marrying a Catholic”, he wrote in 1953:

However, due to the raging war, Catholics mixed with non-Catholics: many Protestants were expelled from Silesia or Bohemia in Catholic regions and, conversely, many Catholics were expelled from Silesia or Bohemia in Protestant regions. As a result, so many men were killed in the war that Catholic girls gave up hope of marrying a Catholic. For all these reasons, mixed denominational marriages prevailed not only in the so-called ‘diaspora’, but also in the formerly completely Catholic countries.²⁴

Nevertheless, for other bishops, such a state of affairs was simply intolerable, especially in the *Lände* with a Catholic majority. Konrad Landersdorfer, the bishop of Passau in Bavaria, complained about the increase in the proportion of Protestants in his diocese from 1% pre-war to 10% post-war and how mixed marriages had quintupled from 91 registered in 1940 to 456 in 1946.²⁵ Even though ten years later this situation had become less serious, thanks to the decrease in both figures, the bishop nonetheless lamented that this had happened “not because of a greater loyalty of Catholics, but because of the emigration of many Protestants”, i.e., the relocation of many refugees to other German *Länder*.²⁶ The Ordinary at the head of the same ecclesiastical province, Michael von Faulhaber, archbishop of Munich, also deplored this phenomenon, which in 1948 he did not hesitate to describe as a “maxima crux”:

²³ Paderborn 1948, 34; Paderborn 1953, 35. The Vatican archives do not keep a copy of the 1958 *relatio*.

²⁴ “Attamen bello saeviente catholicis cum acatholicis permixtis multisque protestantibus in regiones catholicas expulsis et e converso multis catholicis ex Silesia vel Bohemia in regiones protestantium expulsis, deinde tam multis viris bello interfectis, puellis catholicis spe derelicta nubendi catholico: ex his omnibus causis matrimonia mixtae confessionis invaluerunt non solum in sic-dicta ‘Diaspora’, sed etiam in regionibus antea omnino catholicis” (Paderborn 1953, 18).

²⁵ Passau 1953, 1, 8.

²⁶ “Ceterum numerus ultimis annis aliqualiter diminutus est, non tam propter maiorem fidelitatem catholicorum quam propter emigrationem multorum protestantium, qui olim fugiti vel expulsi in dioecesim venerant” (Passau 1958, 4). In fact, in 1948 the diocese of Passau numbered 550,000 residents of which 482,300 were Catholics (Passau 1948, 1). Whereas this composition remained almost unchanged in the 1953 census, in 1958 the number of residents fell slightly (515,000): the number of Catholics remained unchanged, but the Protestant percentage decreased to 7%.

Mixed marriages are today the greatest cross for pastors of souls. The events of the war and the turbulent times that followed raised the risk of marriage, especially for poor girls. Since the bride is generally Catholic, a dispensation must be granted so that the Catholic education of the children can at least be saved.²⁷

Bishop Joseph Freundorfer of Augsburg, in his first report in 1953, testified that he did everything in his power to frequently admonish his faithful "to abstain from such marriages", in order to curb a scourge that his predecessor, Joseph Kumpfmüller, five years earlier ("I am sure that in this matter my priests do what they can")²⁸ seemed to show more tolerance or resignation in the face of:

Marriages between Catholics and non-Catholics are a great evil, which increased dramatically in the post-war years due to co-habitation, when, in regions hitherto inhabited only by Catholics, many fugitives arrived from Protestant countries. I know that everything is being done by me and my priests, acting both with sermons and catechesis as well as private conversations and the distribution of books and pamphlets on this imminent danger to the true faith, so that people - parents and adolescents - learn to judge clearly and distinctly on this subject and to act in a truly Catholic manner. Every year in special provisions, which are added to the pastoral letters and then affixed throughout the year to the church gates, I urge everyone to abstain from such marriages.²⁹

²⁷ "Matrimonia mixta pro animarum pastoribus hodie maxima crux. Eventibus belli et turbulentis temporibus subsequentibus maius periculum matrimoniorum excitatum est, praeprimis pro pueris pauperibus. Sponsa cum generatim catholica sit, praestat dispensationem concedere, ut saltem educationem catholicam liberorum salvemus" (Munich 1948, 7).

²⁸ With these very concise words, Kumpfmüller answered the question no. 32 in 1948: "Pro certo habeo hac in re sacerdotes meos concionibus, catechesis privatoque colloquio facere id quod possunt, sed saepe sinc fructu. Matrimonia mixta imprimis per bellum et post bellum creverunt etiam cum fugitive acatholici in medio catholicae regionis vivant. Exinde etiam multiplicantur divortia matrimoniorum, sicut queritur tribunal pro matrimonii" (Augsburg 1948, 5).

²⁹ "Nuptiae inter catholicos et acatholicos magnum malum sunt, quod in annis post bellum elapsis valde crevit propter cohabitationem, cum in regions adhuc a catholice solis habitatas multi fugitive ex regionibus protestanticis venissent. A me et a sacerdotibus meis omnia fieri scio, et concione et catechesis et colloquio private et distribution librorum et libellorum de hoc fidei verae imminentि periculo agentium, ut homines - et parentes et adolescentes - clare et distincte de hac re iudicare et vere catholice agere discant. Omni anno in specialibus praescriptis, quae litteris pastoralibus adduntur et postea in ecclesiae portis per totum annum affiguntur, omnes moneo, ut se a talibus nuptiis abstineant" (Augsburg 1953, 16).

The examples of Augsburg, Passau and Munich are not given by chance. Although Bavarian and therefore predominantly Catholic dioceses, the presence of the Una Sancta Movement was stronger in these territories than elsewhere. In Augsburg, for example, in the small town of Meitingen, the congregation of Christ the King (Christus-König-Gesellschaft), founded by Metzger and consecrated to Christian unity, had its headquarters since 1928, as did the publishing house Kyrios Verlag linked to the congregation. The journal *Una Sancta Zeitschrift* was also printed there, which reached all German cities in tens of thousands of copies and was subject to the direct *imprimatur* of the local bishop. Just after arriving at the Augsburg see in February 1949, Freundorfer, among other things, had to intervene to remove its editor, Matthias Laros, at the direct request of the Roman Holy Office.³⁰ Yet, of all this activity and the existence of Metzger's congregation in the diocese, still active there to this day, there is no mention at all in the *relationes* of 1948, 1953 and 1958, with the exception of the purely statistical list in response to question no. 80.³¹ However, the answers to question no. 32 about mixed marriages would seem to reveal a subtle discrepancy between the two Augsburg bishops Kumpfmüller and Freundorfer concerning the presence of Protestants in their diocese, which could explain why the Una Sancta Movement was able to establish its foundations in Meitingen and work there undisturbed until 1949. It is certainly a hypothesis that should be investigated further, beyond the mere data that emerges from the comparison of the *relationes*.

In the same *Land*, Passau was home to the Benedictine abbey of Niederaltaich, which, modelled on the 'union monastery' in Chevetogne, Belgium, had since 1934, under the leadership of Abbot Emmanuel Heufelder, devoted itself to the cause of unity, hosting monks of both Latin and Byzantine rites and celebrating 'union days' that were renowned throughout the Country and that periodically hosted hundreds of participants, including non-Catholics. From 1953, it also became the nerve centre of the Una Sancta Movement, since, after Laros' removal, the leadership of the movement, as well as the direction of the journal, passed to the monk Thomas Sartory.³² Even this important presence, located only a few kilometres from the Czechoslovak border and for this reason not infrequently a refuge for priests and monks who fled from the east, is never mentioned in

³⁰ Marotta, *Gli anni della pazienza*, 167-70. The request for removal came from the Holy Office to the German Bishops' Conference in February 1949. Cf. Minutes of Feria II, 10 January 1949.

³¹ "Sorores Christi Regis in Meitingen, quae caritati, imprimis operibus spiritualis misericordiae necnon literaturae religiosae catholicae, etiam inter eos, qui a vera Ecclesia catholica separati sunt, propagandae se dedunt. Numerus sodalium: 91" (Augsburg 1953, 36). The same in Augsburg 1958, 24.

³² Marotta, "Ökumene von Unten", 558-62.

Landersdorfer's *relationes*, except for the canonical question no. 3, as mere statistics.

Finally, Munich hosted one of the largest circles of the German Una Sancta Movement, founded between 1935 and 1936 by the Lutheran Friedrich Heiler and the Jesuit Max Pribilla,³³ and which had reached a membership of 500 Catholics and Protestants already in its early years.³⁴ Once again, nothing emerges about the activities of this circle in the *relationes* of the Munich diocese preserved in the Vatican. Nothing surfaces even in Faulhaber's 1948 *relatio*, who nevertheless had an intense correspondence with the leader of the circle on the evangelical side, Wilhelm Freiherr von Pechmann, to whom in April 1940 he had written, recognising him as "a herald and foreman of the *Una Sancta*" (*ein Herold und ein Vorarbeiter der Una Sancta*):

I cannot but agree one more time with your principles: in hope and love we must now put aside what separates us and not forget that the world situation is no longer the same as it was in the 16th century and that even mistakes made by one side or the other do not invalidate the commandment of the Lord in John 17 [*ut unum sint*].³⁵

This was not an isolated occurrence. The same year, just a month earlier, in his Palm Sunday homily, the cardinal had publicly praised the *Una Sancta* circle, to which he had given official approval:

These men know the historical facts and respect the beliefs of their brothers and sisters. They do not want to create proselytes – in the negative sense of the word – and therefore do not do so, because in their debates there are no teachers and pupils facing each other, rather both confess themselves as pupils of the One who is called teacher in the Gospel (Mt. 23:10).³⁶

³³ Heiler, the leader of the Hochkirchlich-Ökumenischer Bund, had written to Provost Paul Simon of Paderborn on 4 July 1935 explaining that he wanted "to travel to Munich and then attempt to initiate similar circles for dogmatic discussions between Catholic and Protestant theologians" (Ernesti, *Ökumene im Dritten Reich*, 71). Heiler and Simon in April 1934 had been the chairmen of the conference in Hermsdorf, near Berlin, which Max Pribilla had also attended and which constituted the first ecumenical conference on German soil in the twentieth century.

³⁴ Cf. Metzlaff, "Der Una-Sancta-Kreis München"; Stahl, *Eins in Ihm*; Linhart, "Der Una-Sancta-Kreis München".

³⁵ Sommer, *Wilhelm Freiherr von Pechmann*, 227, who published a letter from Faulhaber to Pechmann dated 6 April 1940 that was extraordinarily laudatory, even though it referred specifically to his fight against National Socialism. The correspondence between Faulhaber and Pechmann is kept in the diocesan archives in Munich.

³⁶ Homily of 3 March 1940, in Ernesti, *Ökumene im Dritten Reich*, 218.

In the 1920s Faulhaber had intervened several times with the church authorities to prevent *Una Sancta Zeitschrift* from being placed on the Index, and in 1941 he had courageously defended the circle also to Nuncio Cesare Orsenigo: "I respectfully ask you not to prohibit these discussions".³⁷ Furthermore, for the study meetings and common prayers of the circle, which considered itself above all a prayer community, meeting in private homes and parish halls,³⁸ Faulhaber often makes the sacristy of his cathedral available.³⁹ This too is obviously not mentioned in his *relatio*, although in response to question no. 19 on liturgical uses, the archbishop admitted in passing that he had opened up the possibility of *simultaneum*, i.e., the use of the same place of worship by Catholics and another denomination.⁴⁰ The diocese of Munich, like all Bavarian dioceses, was in fact experiencing the reverse of the problem that plagued the rest of Germany, namely the serious spiritual emergency generated by the problem of displaced persons:

Immigration from the East has brought Catholics to villages where there are neither churches nor chapels; and therefore divine worship must be celebrated in private homes or Protestant churches.⁴¹

This is how, in his 1948 *relatio*, briefly justified himself Bishop Albert Stohr of Mainz, who in the following years would also have to face the problem of the continuous influx of immigrants due to the growth of industrialisation in his area.⁴² The bishop of Limburg, Ferdinand Dirsch, echoed Stohr with much more explanation:

The greatest shortage of churches has arisen in those regions of the diocese, which are commonly known as the 'Diaspora'. In fact, in these regions, where only a very few Catholics had previously

³⁷ Faulhaber, Letter to Orsenigo, 05-08-1941, in Volk, *Akten Kardinal Michael von Faulhabers*, 775-80 (Doc. No. 822)

³⁸ Especially in the 1940s, in order to escape the control of the gestapo, which arrested several members, meetings were held secretly in the apartments of Paula Linhart and Emmy von Miller. Cf. Linhart, "Der Una-Sancta-Kreis München".

³⁹ Stahl, *Eins in Ihm*, 9.

⁴⁰ "Quoad sanctitatem loci leges liturgicae omnino observantur. Attamen timendum est, ne sectis acatholicis russicis abusus irrepant. Episcopi Bavariae novas cautelas statuerunt de simultaneo usu ecclesiarum nostrarum cum lutheranis fugitivis" (Munich 1948, 5).

⁴¹ "Immigratio ex oriente catholicos in vicos perduxit, ubi neque ecclesiae neque sacella habentur et ideo cultus divinus in domibus privatis vel Ecclesiis protestantibus celebrari debet" (Mainz 1948, 7).

⁴² "Numerus ecclesiarum in singulis oppidis plerumque sufficit necessitatibus fidelium, etsi augmentum catholicorum praecipue in regionibus industrialibus semper novas aedes construere cogit" (Mainz 1953, 3). The 1958 census recorded 130,000 more workers than in 1953, out of a population that had risen from 1,750,000 in 1946 to 207,000 (cf. Mainz 1958, 1; Mainz 1953, 1; Mainz 1948, 1).

been dispersed, new homes were assigned to many tens of thousands of exiled Catholics, so that in all the villages and towns that had previously been purely Protestant, quite large Catholic communities often sprang up. In all these districts, the sacrifice of the Holy Mass had to be celebrated in Protestant churches almost everywhere and here and there, but rarely, also in secular places. Meanwhile, there is no possibility to effectively remedy this catastrophic calamity.⁴³

In fact, whereas in Bavaria it was the Catholics who had to come to the aid of other Christians by providing them with places of worship for their Protestant religious services in an area that did not provide any as it was overwhelmingly Catholic, elsewhere the bombings and the influx of immigration had led to a shortage of Catholic temples, a shortage that even the generous and enormous efforts at rapid reconstruction could not compensate for in the short term. Furthermore, at the end of the 1950s, the economic recovery added to the spiritual needs of the refugees also those of the workers in the expanding industrial areas, such as in the Saar, as well as those of a different type of refugees, namely those who escaped from the Soviet control zone.

This situation, which recurred with the same script in all the German dioceses, only a few bishops tried to remedy (or only a few in the *relationes* confessed to doing so) by adopting creative solutions, including sharing churches with the German Evangelical Church or borrowing them from it, a solution that entailed inevitable interdenominational and liturgical risks. The bishop of Berlin, Cardinal Konrad von Preysing, had initially attempted to overcome this emergency by multiplying the Masses, and thus giving priests permission to 'binare' or even 'trinare', i.e., to celebrate even two or three times on the same day to meet the spiritual needs of the faithful.⁴⁴ However, even in this diocese, the devastation inherited from the massive war bombing had made the use of evangelical places of worship inevitable, a use that von Preysing sought unsuccessfully to play down by emphasising that these were already Catholic churches in ancient times:

⁴³ "Maxima ecclesiarum penuria in iis diocesis regionibus orta est, quae 'Diaspora' vulgo audiunt. In his enim regionibus, ubi antea paucissimi tantum catholici dispersi inveniebantur, multis decemmillibus catholicorum exsulum nova domicilia assignata sunt, ita ut in omnibus viciis et oppidis antea mere protestanticis communitates catholicae saepe sat magnae ortae sint. In omnibus istis districtibus S. Missae sacrificium fere ubiquie in ecclesiis protestanticis celebrari debet, hinc inde, attamen raro, etiam in locis profanis. Nulla interim conspicitur possibilitates huic calamitati catastrophali efficaciter medendi" (Limburg 1948, 10).

⁴⁴ The Vespers Mass, intended especially for workers, would not be conceded by Pius XII until 6 January 1953 with the apostolic constitution *Christus Dominus* which also softened the rules on Eucharistic fasting.

In the smaller villages of the Berlin diocese, outside the city, in several places the parish church buildings have been destroyed, so that other decent, worthy and suitable places to worship are used, with the Ordinary's permission and with the additional license for priests to trine, according to the Indult granted to the Ordinary by the Apostolic See. In rural regions, for the faithful who have fled from the eastern provinces (Silesia, Pomerania, Prussia), the sacraments are celebrated in private houses, whose places are devoutly decorated by the faithful. In some cases, Mass is celebrated in the churches of the Protestant sect, which are willingly offered for this purpose by its ministers; some of these churches are old Catholic churches (dating back to the Reformation period). All liturgical and canonical precepts are strictly observed.⁴⁵

Multiplying masses in the same building was a solution that had the disadvantage of not remedying the sometimes enormous distances that separated the faithful from places of worship and often discouraged them from observing the Sunday precept. For this reason, in many dioceses, where the largest number of evacuees had taken refuge, the use of "Protestant temples" was unavoidable, such as in Osnabrück,⁴⁶ Hildesheim⁴⁷ or in Paderborn, where even in 1953 more than 700 places of worship were still missing, as denounced by Jaeger.⁴⁸

45 "In minoribus oppidis dioecesanis Berolinensis extra urbem diversis in locis aedificia ecclesiarum parochialium deleta sunt, pro quibus alia loca decentia, digna et apta ad cultum exercendum cum licentia Ordinarii adhibentur et addita licentia trinandi pro sacerdotibus ex Indulto quod Sedes Apostolica Ordinario concessit. Regionibus ruralibus pro fidelibus fugitivis ex provinciis orientalibus (Silesiam, Pomeranae, Borussiae) sacra celebrantur in domibus privatis, quorum loca a fidelibus pie ornantur. Quibusdam casibus missa celebratur in ecclesiis sectae protestantica, quae a eius ministris ad hoc libenter offeruntur; quaedam ex istis ecclesiis sunt antiquae catholicae ecclesiae (ex tempore reformationis). Omnia pracepta liturgica et canonistica strictissime observantur" (Berlin 1948, 17-18).

46 "Numerus ecclesiarum minime sufficit in regione diasporae, ubi multis locis ecclesiae vel oratoria desiderantur, quippe cum orthodoxae fidei cultores usque ad bellum finitum et immigrationem profugorum illic non habitaverint. Missa celebrari debet his locis in domibus privatis vel etiam in templis lutheranis, si fideles in alium locum convocari nequeunt, ut legi de audiendo Sacro satisfaciant" (Osnabrück 1948, no. 20).

47 "Numerus ecclesiarum generatim sufficit in regionibus catholicis, minime vero in iis vastis regionibus, in quibus catholici inter heterodoxos dispersi habitant et, sicut supra dictum est, ultimis annis [myriades] ex Germania orientali expulsorum nunc sedem collocaverunt. Necessitatibus exinde provenientibus ex minima tantum parte satisfieri potuit, quia opes et materialia non sufficient. Nihilominus in isto quinquennio decem ecclesiae vel oratoria publica sunt instituta. In multis locis autem ita saluti animalium providetur, ut sacerdos diebus dominicis et festivis in domo private aut in ecclesia acatholica missam celebret, sacramenta administret, verbum Dei praedicet" (Hildesheim 1948, 12).

48 "Deficientibus ecclesiis catholicis, omnibus aliis domibus hominibus repletis in circa 700 locis missae in templis protestantium errant celebrandae, ut catholici tali saltem modo missae possint adstare" (Paderborn 1953, 13).

However, apart from these bishops, all the others in their *relationes* made it clear that they did not want to remedy the shortage of churches in any other way than by rebuilding or renovating damaged ones. These may have been their real intentions, but it could also be that they rightly feared that the reference in the *relationes* to the practice of *simultaneum* and the indiscriminate use of churches of other denominations would only alarm rather than comfort the Roman authorities.⁴⁹ These in fact could well perceive what the bishops omitted to make explicit, that is, how frequent was the risk that many Catholics, who found themselves in cities often lacking churches or priests of their own confession, would often attend religious services of rival confessions. It is therefore not surprising that on the very evening that the *monitum Cum Compertum* appeared, the Holy Office's assessor, Alfredo Ottaviani, told some journalists that the warning was addressed to the condemnation of joint worship services between Catholics and non-Catholics, which the Congregation had recently become aware of.⁵⁰ However, it was above all the comment provided the next day by a German speaker of Vatican Radio, Father Beato Ambord, that related the *monitum* to the German ecumenical reality, to which he stated without hesitation that the measure was directed:

As to the reasons for the promulgation of this admonition at the present time, we would like to point to the wild growth [*Wildwuchs*] which has made its appearance on the fringes of the *Una Sancta* movement, and which by now has penetrated deep into its centre [...] Joint services or joint prayers were by no means unusual.⁵¹

This statement by Ambord, especially since it limited the prohibitions of the *monitum* only to ecumenical meetings without prior episcopal approval, most likely intending to safeguard activities such as those

49 It is no coincidence that still in 1953, the Holy Office instructed the Apostolic Nuncio Aloysius Joseph Muench to interrogate all German bishops in order to obtain precise statistics on the permanence of the *Simultankirchen*. The resulting report testified that 1,000 Catholic churches were still given to Protestants and no less than 6,500 Evangelical places of worship were used by Catholics for the celebration of mass. Cf. Enquiry Simultankirchen 1954.

50 "Monsignor Alfredo Ottaviani, one of the three main directors of the Holy Office, told newspaper men tonight that the Vatican has learned that in the United States, Germany and Switzerland Catholics have joined non-Catholics in common worship services. He said that in some cases Protestants have been given Holy Communion in Catholic churches and that in other cases Catholics have taken part in services in Protestant worship places commemorating Christ's Last Supper. Monsignor Ottaviani said that the Holy Office warning is aimed in particularly strong terms at the condemnation of these joint services" (McGurn, "Vatican Warns").

51 An English translation was provided by *The Tablet*, 12 June 1948.

of the Jaeger-Stählin Kreis,⁵² had such an international echo that the Jesuit Franz Hürth, consultor at the Holy Office, requested a rectification.⁵³ From all this, it does not seem unfounded to hypothesise, as Fouilloux did, that the *ad limina* visit of Jaeger and the other German prelates in April 1948 may have been the occasion on which the Holy See gathered information on the interdenominational situation in the German dioceses.

5 Traces of Ecumenical Activities in the *relationes*

The *relationes*, even those of the dioceses most active in that field, let the ecumenical problem emerge as a watermark, coming into play only indirectly, that is, by answering the explicit question on mixed marriages, expressly provided for in question no. 32, or that of question no. 20 on the adequacy of the number of buildings for worship in relation to the needs of the faithful. On the other hand, it is also true that the questionnaire the bishops answered, which was the one published by the consistory congregation in 1918, did not include a specific question on ecumenism. Several elements suggest that this reticence, especially from the bishops of the so-called ‘ecumenical’ dioceses, was not only due to the limitations of the scheme devised thirty years earlier. A starting point may be the analysis of open question no. 100, where the bishops finally had the opportunity to address what they held most dear, although many dismissed it in a few lines instead. We have only two cases where something of the ecumenical activities of these dioceses shines through in the answers to this question: Paderborn and Mainz.

52 “Nicht berührt sind durch das Dekret, – so erklärte man abschließend – ernste, religiöse Auseinandersetzungen im engsten oder engeren Kreis, wobei z.B. die Abweichungen in den verschiedenen Bekenntnissen klar herausgearbeitet werden und der katholische Standpunkt in seinem Verhältnis zu den übrigen Bekenntnissen dargelegt wird. Das geschicht ja auch im Konvertitenunterricht” (Ambord, “Ein Kommentar”). It is no coincidence that another consultor of the Holy Office, the Paderbornian Josef Grendel, had proposed sending this article by Ambord to various bishops, including Jaeger, as an authentic interpretation of the *monitum*: “Il Rev.mo P. Grendel, in una lettera a S.E. Mons. Assessore in data 16 giugno 1948, scriveva a questo proposito: Se mi è permesso aggiungere subito il mio umile parere, osservo che a riguardo dei chiarimenti in merito al ‘monito’ del 5 giugno, si potrebbe forse in via privata rimandare S.E. l’Arcivescovo ad un articolo che sta nel Supplemento ‘Christliche Kultur’ delle ‘Neue Zürcher Nachrichten’ dell’11 giugno che contiene una buona spiegazione del Monito del 5 giugno in merito alla sua occasione, al suo scopo e *al suo senso*. L’autore secondo le iniziali apposte è evidentemente il P. Beato Ambord, S.I., il locutore tedesco alla Radio Vaticana. (Il S.O. però non diede alcun suggerimento di questo genere all’Arcivescovo di Paderborn)” (SO, Report October 1948, 2-3).

53 “Il Rev.mo P. Hurth ha inviato al S.O. un importante Pro-memoria, in cui criticava la suddetta interpretazione; e il Santo Padre, nell’Udienza accordata a Mons. Assessore, nella Feria V, 21 ottobre 1948, ha stabilito: ‘Reassumptis praecedentibus, fiat relatio et proponatur prout de more’” (SO Report October 1948, 3).

Lorenz Jaeger from Paderborn mainly used answer no. 100 to emphasise once again the moral decay of the German population, mainly due to indigence and materialistic society.⁵⁴ Nonetheless, he also used this response to finally hint at his efforts at dialogue with non-Catholics, although in the 1948 *relatio* this mention is only *en passant*:

Even non-Catholics nourish reverence towards the Holy See; and here, perhaps, is born the best fruit of the present distress. Today almost everyone turns the eyes of their mind to the Church, which, as the pillar of faith and as the rock of hope and as the burning fire of charity in the storms and tempests of today, is precisely that heavenly city built eternally on the mountains, which cannot remain hidden from the eyes of those who seek it. As a result, many non-Catholics have gradually drawn closer to the Catholic Church, and in the religious discussions of learned men of both confessions, not disregarding canon 1325 §3,⁵⁵ not a few Protestants who excelled in science and humanity have been reconciled with Holy Mother Church. May the Holy Spirit increase their number, which is already growing day by day, and lead many back to the unity that is founded on the rock of blessed Peter.⁵⁶

Jaeger in fact cited these dialogues in the context of the undisputed esteem earned by the Catholic Church in the reconstruction of Germany, in which it had fully succeeded in presenting itself, and to a greater extent than the Evangelical Churches, as a point of reference and authoritative mediator between the population and the occupying forces that had won the war. This esteem, together with Jaeger's efforts for theological dialogues between specialists of both confessions, had brought about some conversions to the Roman Catholic

54 The archives of the Consistorial Congregation unfortunately do not contain the text of the 1958 *relatio*, which would perhaps have confirmed the trend highlighted by Francesco Tacchi of a progressive shift in the attribution of the reasons for moral decay from the material misery inherited from the war to the rampant materialism of consumer society ten years later (cf. Tacchi in this issue).

55 "Let Catholics beware lest they have debates or conferences, especially public ones, with non-Catholics without having come to the Holy See or, if the case is urgent, to the local Ordinary" (*Codex Iuris Canonici* 1917, can. 1325 § 3).

56 "Etiam acatholici magnam colunt reverentiam erga Sanctam Sedem; et hic forsitan optimus fructus ex praesenti angustia est exortus. Hodie omnes fere oculos suae mentis in Ecclesiam dirigunt, quae sicut columna fidei et sicut petra spei et sicut ignis ardens caritatis in procellis et tempestatibus hodiernis revera est illa civitas coelestis super montes aeterna constructa, quae non potest abscondi quaerentium oculis. Quo fit, ut multi acatholici ecclesiae catholicae sensim approximant et religiosis colloquis virorum eruditorum utriusque confessionis haud neglecto can. 1325 § 3 habitis non pauci protestantum scientia ac humanioribus praestantes sanctae matris ecclesiae reconcilientur. Quotum numerum iam de die in diem crescentem Spiritus Sanctus adaugeat multosque ad unitatem reducat, quae in beati Petri petra fundatur" (Paderborn 1948, 40).

Church. However, neither conversions nor efforts at theological dialogue are discussed in depth, and in fact no figures are provided to quantify the phenomenon of converts, a fact that certainly remains singular, given the predominantly ‘statistical literary genre’ of the *relationes ad limina*. Moreover, the phenomenon of conversions within the Jaeger-Stählin-Kreis, if any, must not have been widespread, if such conversations took place with the co-participation of the Oldenburg *Landesbischof*, which in that case would certainly not have consented to their continuation for so many years. In 1948, therefore, Jaeger spoke of the effort he had been personally undertaking for years in the field of specialised theological dialogue between the confessions, but concealed it under purposes that were certainly not directly related or in reality not so explicit. Significantly, in 1953 Jaeger devoted a few more lines to his activity as head of such theological sessions and more clearly explained that conversions were not so much a direct result of such activities:

Many non-Catholics, who are excellent in the religious and human sciences, are in favor of the Catholic Church and indeed a considerable number have returned to the unity of this Church. In religious discussions, which take place without disregarding canon 1325 §3 and according to the norms confirmed by the Apostolic See, even Protestant professors and other people of excellent learning know more the Catholic faith. And although they do not immediately embrace the faith of the Church, they nevertheless begin to appreciate it, and it can indeed be said that those certain Catholic doctrines, e.g., on the efficacy of the sacraments, on the inner sanctification of the justified man, on the tradition to be considered in addition to Scripture, are received with a devout spirit. Many Protestants also feel a kind of genuine reverence for the Holy See, which, like a rock unbroken by any storm, resists modern errors. The Catholic Church appears in the eyes of those who seek the truth as a banner raised among the nations and as that city set on a mountain, whose light cannot be hidden.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ “Acatholicorum multi scientiis religiosis et humanioribus praestantes ecclesiae catholicae favent, immo spectabilis numerus ad unitatem huius ecclesiae redit. Religiosis colloquiis, quae fiunt haud neglecto can. 1325 §3 et ad normas a Sede Apostolica comprobatas, protestantium etiam professores aliquie scientia paeclaris homines catholicam fidem melius neverunt. Et quamvis non statim fidem ecclesiae amplexerint, tamen illam aestimari incipiunt, et revera dici potest, illos quasdam catholicas doctrinas v.g. de sacramentorum efficacitate, de interna hominis iustificati sanctificatione, de traditione praeter scripturam tenenda devota mente recepisse. Multi etiam protestantes quandam veram reverentiam sentiunt erga Sanctam Sede, quae quasi petra nullis tempestatibus fracta erroribus modernis resistit. Ecclesia catholica quaerentium veritatem oculis appetet tamquam signum elevatum in nationibus et sicut illa civitas supra montem posita, cuius lux non potest abscondi” (Paderborn 1953, 42).

Jaeger probably felt protected in writing so because in 1950 the Holy Office's Instruction *Ecclesia Catholica* had appeared, which, expanding and correcting the 1948 *monitum*, constituted almost a handbook of norms for the activities of Catholic ecumenism in the dioceses.⁵⁸ *Ecclesia Catholica* delegated the responsibility of supervising local ecumenical activities to diocesan bishops, thus decentralising this control from the Holy See. Therefore, in his answer no. 100 Jaeger accompanied the mention of the theological dialogues by specifying that they were conducted in accordance with the norms issued by the Roman authority. What he did not add, however, was that it was precisely the German bishops, and Jaeger in the forefront, who had urged this instruction in 1950 at the Holy Office. In April 1949, indeed, Jaeger sent the theologian Josef Höfer as his emissary to Rome, who negotiated with the Holy Office a list of norms *ad experimentum*, i.e., provisional, which the German bishops would have to adhere to for the continuation of ecumenical activities in their dioceses. These instructions received *pro tempore* would later be confirmed in the instruction *Ecclesia Catholica* promulgated at the end of the same year but only published in March 1950.⁵⁹

In both Jaeger's *relationes*, from 1948 and 1953, these references to theological dialogue, being brief and not providing in-depth details on the subject, are once again disproportionate to the real extent of the ecumenical commitment in Paderborn. But this also applies to the *relationes* of other dioceses that were in the forefront of the ecumenical field, whose silences, in addition to the lack of explicit mention of ecumenism, must also be evaluated. It is significant, for example, that none of them, among the moral dangers threatening the population, ever listed contamination with other Christian denominations due to forced cohabitation, something that other bishops might instead have passionately denounced, one of whom was the Bishop of Freiburg im Breisgau Conrad Gröber, who died in February 1948 and who had sent a memorandum to Rome on this subject in 1943.⁶⁰ These elements would seem to support the presumption of an attitude of prudence adopted by Jaeger and other bishops in addressing the canonical *relatio ad limina* to the consistory congregation. To make a quick comparison, it is useful to look at how the Bishop of Mainz Albert Stohr answered the same question no. 100.

Stohr, on 22 December 1951, had personally obtained permission from Pius XII to ordain to the priesthood the first married priest of the Latin Church, the 71-year-old Rudolf Goethe. Three years later, he would ordain another, 43-year-old Otto Melchers, at the time of Goe-

⁵⁸ SO, "Ecclesia Catholica", 20 December 1949.

⁵⁹ On this see: Marotta, *Gli anni della pazienza*, 124-31.

⁶⁰ Ernesti, *Ökumene im Dritten Reich*, 346-68.

the's ordination already in the seminary. In both cases, they were former Lutheran pastors who had converted and were still happily married: the international echo was huge.⁶¹ These conversions, among other things, came from the activities of the 'Braunshardt conferences', a theological circle of dialogue between Catholics and Protestants that took place under Stohr's patronage, even though, in terms of modality, it was more akin to the activities of the Una Sancta Movement than Jaeger's *Kreis*.⁶² Yet, Stohr made no mention at all of the conferences nor of the ordinations of Goethe in his 1953 *relatio*, not even with regard to questions 29, 51 and 52 on priestly ordinations or particular personal situations that caused scandal among the faithful: questions in which, on the contrary, he was prodigal with details, providing the name and surname of a long list of priests who, as the curia official in charge of studying the *relationes* commented, had by then "crossed the Rubicon", especially because they had abandoned celibacy.⁶³ This silence can perhaps be explained by the extreme prudence required to avoid compromising the ordination of Melchers - who was younger than Goethe and who also had four children - which was to take place on 1 August of that year, a few months after the *ad limina* visit. Besides, also Jaeger, in his *relatio* of that year, made no mention at all of the imminent ordination in his diocese on 19 December 1953 of the former pastor Martin Giebner, who was also married.

It was only in 1958, and precisely in the context of question no. 100, that Stohr finally mentioned the activities of these two former pastors become Catholic priests who, among other things, had opened a *Haus der Begegnung* in 1954, known as 'Domus Pacis', dedicated to the catechesis of converts, running it together with their wives. It is a courageous mention that makes no secret of the identity of the two priests who ruled the house, nor of the co-participation of the wives (at least the oldest one, Goethe's almost 80-year-old wife, is mentioned). Still, it is curious that Stohr had already finished drafting the *relatio* once again without mentioning the activities of these two *sui generis* priests, deciding only at the last moment to add a page 19-bis to the report in which he included a final paragraph to answer no. 100:

Allow me to add a few things regarding a certain institution called the 'Domus Pacis'. This house, located near the cathedral, was intended for the benefit of those who have endeavored to convert their faith, i.e. the '*Konvertiten*', or those who waver in religious matters and sincerely seek the truth, called 'seekers' (*Suchende*).

61 Stohr, Letter to Pius XII, 28-10-1950. Cf. Marotta, *Gli anni della pazienza*, 150-8 and Goethe, "Die Offene Tür". See also Hell, "Ein Erinnerungsort", 490-3.

62 Braun, "Stohrs praktische Arbeit".

63 Anonymous comment in Mainz 1953, 25.

In this house, work those two priests, who, although they were once heretical ministers and are still married, nevertheless, having obtained permission from the Holy See a few years earlier, were promoted to the sacrament of Holy Orders. The wife of one of them, now in old age and not burdened with children, helps the two priests in the training of the newly converted. The number of these converts in the house each year reaches more or less fifty. The younger of these two priests has begun pastoral work with out-of-town converts in the scattered villages of the diocese, where he will be able to work with better fruit than any other priest equally engaged in this field.⁶⁴

6 Conclusion

At the end of this analysis of the traces of ecumenism in the German *relationes*, the fundamental question to be asked concerns the origin of the omissions and silences detected, which produced an undeniable discrepancy between the portrait and the diocesan reality portrayed. At least in the cases of Mainz and Paderborn, it can be excluded a lack of sensitivity by the ordinary to the ecumenical theme, which can instead be assumed for other cases, such as Augsburg and Passau, for example. Were these silences, therefore, the effect of the limitation inherent in the 'literary genre' of the *relationes ad limina*, i.e., the constraint to the 1918 questionnaire, written when ecumenism was not an emergency? Was it rather a measure of 'prudence'?

With regard to the *relationes* sent by Jaeger concerning the diocese of Paderborn, a datum found directly in the archives of the Holy Office provides some clarity, indicating, among other things, that Fouilloux was not mistaken in guessing that Lorenz Jaeger's *visit ad limina* was the trigger for the *monitum* of June 1948. Indeed, the archives of the Supreme Congregation show how Jaeger, during that Roman visit, was also received by the authorities of the Holy Office and delivered a second report, completely independent of the *rela-*

⁶⁴ "Adhuc pauca adipisci mihi liceat quae pertinent ad institutionem quandam quam 'Domus pacis' vocant. Haec domus prope ecclesiam cathedralem sita destinata est in favorem eorum qui fidem suam convertere nituntur v.d. 'Konvertiten' vel eorum qui in rebus religiosis vacillantes veritatem sincere querunt, 'Suchende' nuncupati. Qua in domo illi duo sacerdotes operam dant, qui etsi quondam ministri haeretici etiamnunc uxorati, tamen licentia a Sancta Sede obtenta annis nonnullis ante ad sacramentum ordinis provecti sunt. Alterius uxor aetate iam declivis nec liberis gravata duos sacerdotes in neo-convertendis instruendis adiuvat. Numerus ista in domo conversorum quotannis plus minusve quinquaginta attingit. Iunior ex his duobus sacerdotibus laborem circa conversos extra urbem in pagis dioecesis dissitis suscepit, ubi meliore fructu operam navare poterit quam quisvis alius sacerdos in hac materia haud pari modo versatus" (Mainz 1953, 19bis).

tio ad limina delivered to the consistory, specifically concerning “the mutual contact between Protestants and Catholics in Germany after 1945” (“de contact mutuo inter protestantes et catholicos Germaniae inde a 1945”).⁶⁵ Unfortunately, the text is not to be found in the Roman archives and must still be sought in those of the diocese of Paderborn. However, it can nevertheless be deduced that it was a decisive text, since it was in commentary on this text that consultor Sebastiaan Tromp drafted a *Votum* on 2 June 1948, which was presented a few days later to the cardinals who were members of the Holy Office in a session that ultimately decided on the publication of the *monitum* (“Many conferences are held in complete independence of the bishops [...] indeed they are generally dangerous”, pointed out an alarmed Tromp).⁶⁶

Jaeger had thus provided the Roman authorities with a long and detailed report on the activities of German Catholic ecumenism, which probably also included the activities carried out in his diocese. From Tromp’s *Votum*, it can be deduced that Jaeger in that report had also spoken about the case of converted pastors who were candidates for the priesthood. The archbishop, however, had not mentioned this further report in his *relatio ad limina*, not even to refer to it to complete the information provided. Comparison then between the 1948 text and the 1953 version excludes the possibility that the 1948 *relatio* deliberately omitted information in order to include it in the special report, as the text of the 1953 does not differ significantly from the 1948 one.

It therefore seems that, at least as far as Jaeger is concerned, the reasons for the ‘silences’ in the *relationes ad limina* can be traced back mainly to a problem of ‘literary genre’, that is, to the main purpose of the *relationes*, which rather than providing a complete snapshot of the state and activity of the diocese had to focus on statistical data, on figures regarding access to the sacraments, and thus justify the lower frequency of the Easter precept by referring to the spread of indifferentism and materialist ideology among the faithful. Finally, the problem of the ‘recipient’ should probably not be underestimated either. Up until 1951, in his dealings with the Roman authorities, Jaeger had taken advice from a consultor of the Holy Office, the Paderbornian Josef Grendel. The latter, as to the best way to report on ecumenical activities in the diocese, had advised Jaeger to keep a low profile, i.e., that it was “sufficient to report briefly on the participants and the outcome of the meetings. Too detailed an account would only provoke unnecessary questions from some of the people

⁶⁵ Tromp, *Votum*, 1.

⁶⁶ “Multa colloquia fieri prorsus indipenderet ab Episcopis [...] immo ea generalim esse periculosam” (Tromp, *Votum*, 1-2).

who will receive these reports".⁶⁷ One may thus wonder whether the norm of 'avoiding unnecessary questions' may have been a criterion for the drafting of the *relationes ad limina* by those bishops who wished to 'protect' experimental or particularly sensitive experiences in their dioceses.

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⁶⁷ "Es genüge, bloß die Teilnehmer und das Ergebnis der Tagung kurz zu berichten. Ein zu aus ausführlicher Bericht, so meinte er, würde nur Anlaß bieten zu unnötigen Rückfragen von Seiten einiger Herren, welche diese Berichte vorgelegt bekämen" (Jaeger to Bea 31-03-1951, in Marotta, *Gli anni della pazienza*, 600).

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