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Let your speech be “Yes, yes: no, no”; whatever is beyond these comes from the evil one. (Mt. 5:37)

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THE STATE OF NECESSITY PART II

Bishop Rifan’s Incoherent Reading

Confusion between Two Errors

For Bishop Rifan, “there is no real contradiction between what Blessed Pius IX taught and what *Dignitatis Humanae*, the Declaration on Religious Freedom, teaches.”¹ According to him, Pius IX condemned religious liberty understood as the absence of a moral obligation for the individual conscience to embrace the true religion (the error of personal or individual religious indifferentism),

while *Dignitatis Humanae* teaches religious liberty understood as the individual’s right to be free from constraint by civil authorities in the public exercise of religion. But the teaching of Vatican II corresponds to the error of the religious indifferentism of civil authorities, equally condemned by Pius IX. It suffices to compare the texts to realize that Bishop Rifan’s interpretation is completely unfounded. Pius IX condemned not only the error of the indifferentism of individuals, but also and more precisely the error of the indifferentism of the State based upon the principle that the civil authorities must not prevent the

The Negative Right: A Previously Refuted Thesis

exercise of false religions in the external forum, which is tantamount to denying the social kingship of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The two equally condemned errors (indifferentism of the individual and of the State) are quite distinct. In theory, the second error can be professed without professing the first, even though there is a link of cause and effect between the two. This, moreover, is an attribute of both liberal Catholicism and of modernism, which (indirectly) instill the indifferentism of the individual conscience by at first restricting moral duty to the limits of the individual conscience. Even if apparently §1 of *Dignitatis Humanae* rejects the error of the indifferentism of individuals, even if apparently §2 of this document does not teach it, even if the expressed and various authorized declarations have stated at the time of the Council² and afterwards³ that the documents of Vatican II did not teach the first error, it nonetheless remains that §2 of *Dignitatis Humanae* confirms the error of the indifferentism of the State. That is why all the passages cited by Bishop Rifan are beside the point.

A Too Rapid Inference

Bishop Rifan is mistaken about the real thrust of *Dignitatis Humanae* because in his reading of it he makes no distinction between the internal forum of acts of conscience and the external forum of acts done in public. He says:

The Council teaches from the natural point of view a right not to be forced or prevented from acting within due limits in matters religious by the State. That is to say that the Council affirms that in matters of conscience the civil power lacks jurisdiction; it is relatively incompetent.⁴

But keeping to the exact meaning of *Dignitatis Humanae*, it must be said that the inference Bishop Rifan makes by linking these two phrases by means of “that is to say” is incorrect. It is true that, as he says in his second statement, the State does not have power to act directly on internal acts of conscience. But the text of *Dignitatis Humanae* says much more than that. In his first statement, Bishop Rifan says that the State does not have the power to compel external actions accomplished in the framework of life in society. The first assertion logically implies the second, for if one lacks the power to compel external actions, all the more so does one lack the power to compel internal acts. But the second statement does not necessarily imply the first, for it is possible to lack power to act on internal acts while possessing the power to act on external ones. That is why the two statements are not strictly equivalent, the first saying more than then second.

Finally, Bishop Rifan adopts the argument used by Fr. Basil of Le Barroux,⁵ which was refuted by Fr. Jehan de Belleville,⁶ also of Le Barroux. According to this argument,

the Council merely affirms a negative right, without conceding any affirmative rights to persons in their acts not in conformity with the truth or the good in matters religious.⁷

The distinction between a negative right and an affirmative right in this context is equivalent to a distinction between the right not to be impeded from acting and the right to act. However, it is a sophistical distinction, for, as St. Thomas says,⁸ every negation is based on an affirmation: if one has the right not to be prevented from acting (negation) it is because one has the right to act (affirmation). To be fair, we should make it clear that Fr. Basil’s argumentation is in reality more nuanced than the short summary given by Bishop Rifan would lead one to believe. According to the Benedictine, *Dignitatis Humanae* proclaims not the right to act but the right not to be prevented from acting in the sense that even if an objectively bad action as such has no objective right, the person who does it has the subjective (or personal) right not to be prevented if he is in good faith. But it suffices to refer to the notion of right defined by Aristotle and St. Thomas to comprehend right away the sophism underlying this position. For in fact a right is inherently objective and not subjective; the right to act and the right not to be prevented from acting are identical, and both are ascribed not to the person who acts but to the action with its object. For it is essentially the object of an action which is at the root of a right, that is to say of the justice and hence the moral goodness of an action.⁹ The dispositions of the person accomplishing it (invincible ignorance, good faith, good intention) cannot remedy the intrinsic malice of an action. That is why the State ought to prevent intrinsically evil actions in the external forum of life in society even if those who accomplish them are in good faith. In practice, of course, the heads of state are unable to prevent evil always and everywhere. Human government imitates that of God, who allows evil in order not to place an obstacle to a greater good or to avoid a worse evil. But this exercise of tolerance is a matter of prudence and not of justice: it implies no strict right, either positive or negative, in favor of evil.

It is this negative right “not to be restrained from acting” which is explicitly condemned as such by Pope Pius IX in *Quanta Cura*. The Pope condemns the proposition that

liberty of conscience and worship is each man’s personal right, which ought to be legally proclaimed and

asserted in every rightly constituted society; and that a right resides in the citizens to an absolute liberty, which should be restrained by no authority whether ecclesiastical or civil.

This is the condemnation of the religious indifferentism of the civil authorities in the sense that they should not “restrain [anyone] from acting,” the error taught by §2 of *Dignitatis Humanae* in contradiction with Tradition before Vatican II and the social kingship of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Coherence of the Conciliar Texts

Thus far we have shown that the teaching of religious freedom in *Dignitatis Humanae* regarding the indifferentism of the State incurs Pius IX’s condemnation. We must now see whether the condemnation is limited to this error alone and examine whether §1 of *Dignitatis Humanae* really rejects the indifferentism of individuals or merely seems to.

a. A traditional appearance

It is true that this text begins by making an assertion in apparent opposition to the error of private indifferentism condemned by Gregory XVI and Pius IX:

First, this sacred Synod professes its belief that *God himself has made known to mankind the way in which men are to serve Him, and thus be saved in Christ and come to blessedness.* We believe that this one true religion *subsists* in the Catholic and apostolic Church, to which the Lord Jesus committed the duty of spreading it abroad among all men. Thus He spoke to the apostles: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Mt. 28:19-2). On their part, all men are bound to seek the truth, especially in what concerns God and His Church, and to embrace the truth they come to know, and to hold fast to it.

This sacred Synod likewise professes its belief that it is upon the human conscience that these obligations fall and exert their binding force. The truth cannot impose itself except by virtue of its own truth, as it makes its entrance into the mind at once quietly and with power. Religious freedom in turn, which men demand as necessary to fulfill their duty to worship God, has to do with immunity from coercion in civil society. *Therefore, it leaves untouched traditional Catholic doctrine on the moral duty of men and societies toward the true religion and toward the one Church of Christ.*

b. But an appearance only

Apparently, then, or at least directly, the text of *Dignitatis Humanae* does not seem to oppose the statements of Popes Gregory XVI and Pius IX concerning the condemnation of the indifferentism of individuals. But in reality, things are not quite so simple, for §1 of *Dignitatis Humanae* contains the ambiguous expression “*subsists in,*” which

recurs here, taking it from *Lumen Gentium*, §8. This expression opens the way to a new, much subtler form of private individualism and inexorably leads, albeit indirectly, to the conclusion condemned by Gregory XVI in *Mirari Vos* and by Pius IX in *Quanta Cura* and the Syllabus of Errors: one may indeed hope for salvation outside the one true religion, since religious communities other than the Catholic Church

have by no means been deprived of significance and importance in the mystery of salvation. For the Spirit of Christ has not refrained from using them as means of salvation which derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to *the Catholic Church.*” (*Unitatis Redintegratio* §3)

The end of this passage is also remarkable: it states that religious freedom, the subject of the following discussion, “leaves untouched traditional Catholic doctrine on the moral duty of men and societies toward the true religion and toward *the one Church of Christ.*” Here it is not a question of “the Catholic Church” in which, it is said a few lines above, the one true Church subsists; rather, it is a question of “the one Church of Christ.” This is another snare from *Lumen Gentium* §8. The true religion is the one exercised only in the one Church of Christ. But the Catholic Church is only the community in which this one true religion and this one Church of Christ subsist. Now, we know (thanks to a document of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith of June 29, 2007,¹⁰ what the expression “*subsistit in*” means: to subsist means to exist fully, as opposed to existing partially. The text of §1 thus states that the religion binding on all men is the one exercised not only fully in the Catholic Church, but also more or less in the other religions, which are so many partial elements of the one Church of Christ.

***Dignitatis Humanae:* A Text Contradicting Tradition from A to Z and from No. 2 to No. 1**

Consequently, to state that “it leaves untouched traditional Catholic doctrine on the moral duty of men and societies toward the true religion and toward the one Church of Christ” is to deny the truth. Indeed, either the text of *Dignitatis Humanae* understands the expressions “true religion” and “one Church of Christ” in the sense suggested by the context in parallel places of *Lumen Gentium* and *Unitatis Redintegratio*, in which case the

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doctrine that religious liberty leaves untouched is not the traditional Catholic doctrine; or else the text understands these same expressions in the traditional Catholic sense, in which case religious freedom does not leave untouched the doctrine they express.

Contrary to the appearances, §1 of *Dignitatis Humanae* is perfectly coherent with §2: the moral obligation imposed on individuals does not concern the one true religion as it is preached by the one true Catholic Church; it concerns religion not only as it is preached in the Catholic Church, but also in the false religions considered as such. The indifferentism of the State which is the subject in §2 is rooted in a new, subtler form of the indifferentism of individuals discussed in §1.

Benedict XVI and the Authentic Interpretation of Vatican II

We can also see that the different declarations of Pope Benedict XVI do not corroborate Bishop Rifan's rereading of the text.¹¹ Until now, the successor of John Paul II has not yet done anything to correct the most seriously defective teachings of the Council; on the contrary.

a. Benedict XVI and Religious Liberty

In his Christmas Address to the Roman Curia of December 22, 2005, Pope Benedict XVI makes a distinction between the two meanings possible for "freedom of religion." In the sense that it would be the equivalent of an independence of the conscience in relation to the divine authority fixing the objective rule of morality (thus, in the sense of the indifferentism of the individual) the expression is to be reprovved,¹² according to the Holy Father. But in the sense that it would be the equivalent of the absence of any and all constraint in the external forum on the part of the civil authorities, the expression is, according to him, just.¹³ Further on, the Pope adds:

The martyrs of the early Church died for their faith in that God who was revealed in Jesus Christ, and for this very reason they also died for freedom of conscience and the freedom to profess one's own faith: a profession that no State can impose but which, instead, can only be claimed with God's grace in freedom of conscience.

This passage could at the most have an equivocal sense, for it is true that the profession of faith cannot be imposed by the State in the internal forum of the conscience, whereas it is false that the profession of faith cannot be imposed by the State in the external forum of society. Moreover, the Pope is not speaking here of the profession of the one true faith; he is simply speaking of martyrs who claimed

the freedom to profess their own faith, which can be understood in the subjective sense.

But subsequently, other addresses of the Pope have dispelled this ambiguity and proven that Benedict XVI speaks of freedom understood in the sense condemned by Gregory XVI in *Mirari Vos* and by Pius IX in *Quanta Cura*. Indeed, the Pope claims the right for all believers to profess their religion publicly in society without the State being able to intervene in any way whatsoever. Moreover, in his Address of 2005, Benedict XVI already said that the Vatican II had wished to ratify "an essential principle of the modern State." This remark should prick our ears, for it strikes us as an echo of the former reflections of Cardinal Ratzinger, who presented the teachings of Vatican II on religious freedom as a "countersyllabus."¹⁴

One year after his famous speech on the hermeneutic of the Council, Pope Benedict XVI unequivocally indicated what the meaning of this religious freedom is in the Address of November 28, 2006, to the diplomatic corps of the Turkish Republic:

The civil authorities of every democratic country are duty-bound to guarantee the effective freedom of all believers and to permit them to organize freely the life of their religious communities.¹⁵

Especially during his recent trip to the United States, Benedict XVI forcefully repeated the same ideas in his Speech to the United Nations Assembly on April 18, 2008:

Human rights, of course, must include the right to religious freedom....The full guarantee of religious liberty cannot be limited to the free exercise of worship, but has to give due consideration to the public dimension of religion, and hence to the possibility of believers playing their part in building the social order.

He adds that the principle of religious liberty is "directed towards attaining freedom for every believer."¹⁶

b. Benedict XVI and Ecumenism

Far from correcting the faulty teaching of *Dignitatis Humanae* on religious freedom, Pope Benedict XVI's speeches clearly and forcefully confirm it. On the other hand we can see that Pope Benedict XVI, no more than did Pope John Paul II, does not flinch the consequence of this teaching; indeed, the consequence of religious freedom is ecumenism. Without entering into details about his visit to the synagogue of Cologne in 2004 or his trip to the Middle East in 2006, we can see very well that, during the ecumenical meeting held at Naples on 21 October 2007, Benedict XVI did not hide his intentions. He explained:

Today's meeting takes us back in spirit to 1986, when my venerable Predecessor John Paul II invited important Religious Representatives to the hills of St Francis to

pray for peace, stressing on that occasion the intrinsic ties that combine an authentic religious attitude with keen sensitivity to this fundamental good of humanity.

And he added: “While respecting the differences of the various religions, we are all called to work for peace....”¹⁷ It is clear that the spirit of Benedict XVI is still the spirit of Assisi.

The conclusion that interests us is the following: the declarations of Pope Benedict XVI and his ecumenical endeavors do not bring an end to the state of necessity. The authentic interpretation of Vatican II given by the present pope still upholds in principle the same errors denounced long ago by Archbishop Lefebvre and Bishop de Castro Mayer in their Open Letter to Pope John Paul II.¹⁸ This letter alone reduces to nothing Bishop Rifan’s sophistry.

Twenty Years after the Episcopal Consecrations: Operation Survival Continues

Twenty years have passed since the episcopal consecrations of June 30, 1988. Pope Benedict XVI denounces the abuses ascribed to the spirit of the Council, but he preaches fidelity to the empoisoned letter of the Council. He declares that the traditional missal was never abrogated, but he sees in it the extraordinary expression of the liturgical law in concurrence with the protestantized *Novus Ordo*,

which in his eyes remains the ordinary expression of this same law.

This duality which divides Benedict XVI’s government between a faultless fidelity to the erroneous principles of the Council and an appearance of a return to order is perfectly explained in the logic of the modernist system. Modernism, which is religion in progress and perpetual evolution, results, said St. Pius X, “from the conflict of two forces, one of them tending towards progress, the other towards conservation.” The force tending towards conservation is authority, which represses abuses; the force tending towards progress is the imperatives of the Council. And we can see how the conciliar authorities are always looking for a balance and trying to counterbalance the two contradictory tendencies against each other, the progressives against the conservatives.

The conservative tendency will at the most go so far as to authorize a certain personal attachment of some of the faithful to pre-conciliar Tradition. But this would not justify a conclusion that the state of necessity has ended. The dilemma remains the same, between a false blind obedience and legitimate resistance for the sake of perpetuating the Catholic Faith. Even today we must still choose the latter. ❏

Authored by Fr. Jean-Michel Gleize, SSPX. Translated exclusively for Angelus Press from *Courrier de Rome*, July-August, 2008, pp.6-8.

¹ “This Vatican Synod declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom. This freedom means that all men are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power, in such wise that [1] in matters religious no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs. [2] Nor is anyone to be restrained from acting in accordance with his own beliefs *whether privately or publicly*, whether alone or in association with others, *within due limits*” (*Dignitatis Humanae*, §2). [Emphasis added.] Bishop Rifan, *Traditions et magistère vivant* (Le Barroux: Editions St. Madeleine, 2007), p.96. See also p.92, n.130: Bishop Rifan borrows this explanation from Fr. Lucien, Fr. Basil of Le Barroux, and from Fr. Louis-Marie de Bliignières. For more details about this question, see *Le Sel de la Terre*, No. 56 (Spring 2006), pp.183-87.

² Bishop Rifan, *ibid.*, pp.94-95, quotes the official report given on the text of *Dignitatis Humanae* by Bishop Emile De Smedt on November 19, 1963.

³ *Ibid.*, pp.99-103. Bishop Rifan quotes long passages of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992) which are along the same lines as Bishop De Smedt’s report.

⁴ Bishop Rifan, *ibid.*, p.96.

⁵ The thesis of Father Basil, *La liberté religieuse et la tradition Catholique* (Le Barroux: 1998) reviewed in *Le Sel de la Terre*, No.30 in six volumes comprising 2,960 pages and 9,154 notes, has only a material advantage, for if one has the patience to read it to the end, it becomes evident that there is a lot of hot air. A new, condensed version in one volume is not any more convincing.

⁶ Jehan de Belleville, O.S.B., *Droit objectif dans Dignitatis Humanae: La liberté religieuse à la lumière de la doctrine juridique d’Aristote et de St. Thomas d’Aquin* (Rome, 2004).

⁷ Bishop Rifan, *Tradition et le magistère vivant*, p.96.

⁸ Disputed question *De Malo*, Q.2, Art.1, ad 9.

⁹ See *Sel de la Terre*, No. 56 (Spring, 2006), pp.180-82.

¹⁰ Response of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, June 29, 2007.

¹¹ Bishop Rifan (*Tradition*, p.103), claims nevertheless to rely on the Discourse of December 22, 2005.

¹² “...if religious freedom were to be considered an expression of the human inability to discover the truth and thus become a canonization of relativism, then this social and historical necessity is raised inappropriately to the metaphysical level and thus stripped of its true meaning. Consequently, it cannot be accepted by those who believe that the human person is capable of knowing the truth about God and, on the basis of the inner dignity of the truth, is bound to this knowledge” (translation available on the Vatican’s Web site).

¹³ “It is quite different, on the other hand, to perceive religious freedom as a need that derives from human coexistence, or indeed, as an intrinsic consequence of the truth that cannot be externally imposed but that the person must adopt only through the process of conviction. The Second Vatican Council, recognizing and making its own an essential principle of the modern State with the Decree on Religious Freedom, has recovered the deepest patrimony of the Church” (*ibid.*)

¹⁴ Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology* (1982; Ignatius Press, 1987), pp.381-82.

¹⁵ Meeting with the Diplomatic Corps to the Republic of Turkey, November 28, 2006 (online at vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches).

¹⁶ Address to the General Assembly of the United Nations Organization, April 18, 2008 (online at vatican.va).

¹⁷ Greeting to the Heads of Delegations taking part in the International Encounter for Peace at the Episcopal Seminary of Capodimonte, October 21, 2007 (online at www.vatican.va).

¹⁸ English version: *The Angelus*, January 1984.

Limbo Is Not a Theological Hypothesis But a Truth Taught by the Apostolic Magisterium

The Demolition of Orthodoxy

Neomodernism is demolishing orthodoxy stone by stone, by repeated blows, blows which, through an unnameable tolerance and sometimes a veritable complicity, are allowed by those in charge, who wash their hands like Pilate. Numerous “masters in Israel” vie to create a media spectacle; there is a whole cortege of improvised disciples: neo-exegetes, neo-theologians...neo-this and neo-that, disposed to joyously trample the Faith in the name of the fairy-queen of a global, ultimately adogmatic religion. An example of this continuous demolition of the most certain truths is the attack on the doctrine of *limbo*.

In its July-August 2007 edition, *Courrier de Rome*¹ published an article that demonstrated in great detail the doctrinal falsity of the assertion that the existence of limbo is a mere “theological hypothesis.” In fact, it is neither an hypothesis nor a fable that the “New Evangelization” could sweep away, opening wide the gates of Paradise to all unbaptized infants. In this issue we will review the teachings of the Apostolic magisterium prior to Vatican II, with the clarification that if a rightly

understood, homogeneous evolution of doctrine is certainly possible, the involution and contradiction of truths already legitimately set forth ought to be rejected out of hand. It is certainly possible that a less clear truth may acquire greater clarity, but the contrary is false, given that a clearly explained truth tranquilly taught in theology and by the constant and universal magisterium of the Truth cannot undergo an involution, and still less a cancellation. In effect, the Holy Spirit, who leads the Church, does not begin by teaching a truth only to authorize its being discarded.

The Voice of the Apostolic Magisterium

1) *The Council of Carthage* (418) energetically defends the baptism of infants (and thus the doctrine of limbo) in the following articles:

Whoever says that infants fresh from their mothers' wombs ought not to be baptized, or says that they are indeed baptized unto the remission of sins, but that they draw nothing of the original sin from Adam, which is expiated in the bath of regeneration...let him be anath-

ema. Since what the Apostle says: “Through one man sin entered into the world (and through sin death), and so passed into all men, in whom all have sinned” [cf. Rom. 5:12] must not be understood otherwise than as the Catholic Church spread everywhere has always understood it. For on account of this rule of faith even infants, who in themselves thus far have not been able to commit any sin, are therefore truly baptized unto the remission of sins, so that that which they have contracted from generation may be cleansed in them by regeneration.²

It is a truth of faith, then, that infants are born with original sin (cf. Rom. 5:12); this can only be effaced by baptism (“*nisi renatus fuerit ex aqua et Spiritu Sancto non potest introire in Regnum Dei*”—Jn. 3:5). Baptism of desire also exists, but it is not possible except for those who have attained the use of reason, which is certainly not the case of infants and young children.

If anyone says that for this reason the Lord said: “In my Father’s house there are many mansions” [Jn. 14:2]” that it might be understood that in the kingdom of heaven there will be some middle place or some place anywhere where the blessed infants live who departed from this life *without baptism, without which they cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven*, which is life eternal, let him be anathema.³

The canon is formal: children who die without baptism cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven, which is eternal life.

2) Pope Innocent III (beginning of the 13th century), in an apostolic letter to the Archbishop Imbert of Arles, affirmed this among other things:

We say that a distinction must be made, that sin is twofold: namely, original and actual: original, which is contracted without consent; and actual, which is committed with consent. Original, therefore, which is committed without consent, is remitted without consent through the power of the sacrament; but actual, which is contracted with consent, is not mitigated in the slightest without consent....*The punishment of original sin is deprivation of the vision of God*, but the punishment of actual sin is the torments of everlasting hell.⁴

3) The Council of Florence (1442), in the decree *Pro Jacobitis*, affirmed:

Regarding children, indeed, because of danger of death, which can often take place, when no help can be brought to them by another remedy than through the sacrament of baptism, through which they are snatched from the domination of the Devil and adopted among the sons of God, it advises that holy baptism ought not to be deferred for forty or eighty days, or any time according to the observance of certain people, but it should be conferred as soon as it can be done conveniently, but so that, when danger of death is imminent, they be baptized in the form of the Church, early without delay, even by a layman or woman, if a priest should be lacking.⁵

4) Pope Pius VI (1794), in his Apostolic Constitution *Auctorem Fidei*, condemned 83 propositions of the Jansenist Synod of Pistoia, including the following:

The doctrine which rejects as a Pelagian fable, that place of the lower regions (which the faithful generally designate by the name of the limbo of children) in which the souls of those departing with the sole guilt of original sin are punished with the punishment of the condemned exclusive of the punishment of fire, just as if, by this very fact, that these who remove the punishment of fire introduced that middle place and state free of guilt and of punishment between the kingdom of God and eternal damnation, such as that about which the Pelagians idly talk—false, rash, injurious to Catholic schools.⁶

5) Pope St. Pius X, in his Catechism of Christian Doctrine (1912), wrote:

Children who die without baptism go to limbo, where they do not enjoy God, but neither do they suffer, for having original sin, and only this, they do not merit to enter Paradise, but neither do they merit purgatory or hell.⁷

In an apostolic letter to Cardinal Vicar Pietro Respighi, speaking of his Catechism, the holy pope wrote that the faithful

will find it a brief, very precise summary, even in format, in which they will find explained with great simplicity the principal divine truths and the most useful Christian reflections.⁸

How can anyone think that limbo is a simple “theological hypothesis” that can be tranquilly suppressed?

6) Pope Pius XII, speaking of the necessity of baptism, confirms:

If what We have said up to now concerns the protection and care of natural life, much more so must it concern the supernatural life, which the newly born receives with baptism. *In the present economy there is no other way to communicate that life to the child who has not attained the use of reason*. Above all, the state of grace is absolutely necessary at the moment of death; without it, salvation and supernatural happiness—the beatific vision of God—are impossible. An act of love is sufficient for the adult to obtain sanctifying grace and to supply the lack of baptism; to the still unborn or newly born this way is not open.

A Convenient Interpretation

The last act of the supreme magisterium, which officially blocked the interpretation of the doctrine of limbo as a whimsical hypothesis, could not go unmentioned by the International Theological

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Commission, which in fact, in its last document aimed at suppressing the Catholic doctrine of limbo, gave its own interpretation, asserting that

Pius XII rather recalled the limits within which the debate must take place and reasserted firmly the moral obligation to provide Baptism to infants in danger of death.⁹

In reality, the Commission did not correctly understand the pontifical message: Pius XII authorized no “debate” on limbo, but wished to confirm that *baptism is absolutely necessary* for salvation, for if baptism of desire exists for adults in a state of invincible ignorance, this is not the case for infants and children who have not yet reached the use of reason. And if for children without the use of reason baptism is a “*conditio sine qua non*” for obtaining supernatural life, this also holds true for obtaining the beatific vision; whence the traditional teaching on limbo as a strictly theological conclusion confirmed by repeated and precise statements of the magisterium, which no one can suppress on the pretext that this teaching is but a vain imagining fit only for the memory hole.

The International Theological Commission cannot wander outside the rails set by biblical truth, which is of divine faith: “Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”¹⁰ That is what Fr. Michel, author of several articles on the subject published in *L’Ami du Clergé*, wrote:

Undoubtedly, the Catholic doctrine implied in the dogma of the necessity of baptism for the remission of original sin is that children who die without baptism *cannot enjoy the beatific vision*. If this conclusion cannot yet be considered a dogma of faith insofar as it has not yet been proposed directly as such by the Church’s magis-

terium, *it is at least an immediate truth of faith susceptible of a dogmatic definition.*¹¹ 

Stephanus

Translated from *Courrier de Rome*, October 2008, pp.7-8.

- ¹ Name of the French edition of *SiSiNoNo*. This article appeared in the *The Angelus* (Nov. 2007).
- ² Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, tr. by Roy J. Deferrari from the 30th edition of Denzinger’s *Enchiridion Symbolorum* (1955; reprint: Loreto Publications, n.d.), 224 [hereafter abbreviated Dz.].
- ³ *Ibid.*, n. 2.
- ⁴ Dz. 410.
- ⁵ Dz. 712.
- ⁶ Dz. 1526.
- ⁷ St. Pius X, Catechism of Christian Doctrine, §100.
- ⁸ AAS, December 2, 1912, pp.690-92.
- ⁹ International Theological Commission, *The Hope of Salvation for Infants Who Die Without Being Baptized*, §39.
- ¹⁰ Jn. 3:5.
- ¹¹ A. Michel, “The Salvation of Children Who Die Without Baptism,” *L’Ami du Clergé*.

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