

# Sì sì no no

THE ANGELUS ENGLISH-LANGUAGE ARTICLE REPRINT

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 Catechetical Teachings of Pope St. Pius X

PART 2

St. Pius X is justly known for many things: his fight against Modernism, the lowering of the age of First Communion, and the formulation of the Code of Canon Law among them. What is perhaps less known today is his intense catechetical work. This article, written in 1953 by Don Silvio Riva, provides some insight into this aspect of his life and pontificate.

### The Pope of Catechists

The collaboration of laymen in the catechetical ministry of priests is not recent. St. Charles Borromeo organized his catechetical edifice—the Schools of Christian Doctrine—on numerous lay personnel: “fishermen,” correctors, assistant teachers, priors and vice-priors, *etc.*, directly subordinate to the hierarchical authority: the bishop and parish priest. In confiding to the laity a form of collaboration, the saint did not go beyond the disciplinary aspect, the seeking of new pupils for the “schools,” and, at most, allowing experienced laymen to go over the usual notions of the catechism, of which only the priest is the *master* in the full sense of the word, for he alone can explain, comment, and illustrate, however briefly, Christian doctrine as provided for in the rules of St. Charles Borromeo.

Pope Pius X was intuitive and brave: he understood that the number of priests was inferior

to the quantity of work, and that the organization he desired and prescribed in his encyclical on catechism—a purely academic organization with classes, professors, courses, curricula, textbooks—required a well-prepared body of teachers specially trained to collaborate with pastors of souls.

In the Encyclical *Acerbo Nimis* of 1905, for the first time in the Church and from the mouth of the Sovereign Pontiff, from the See of Peter, an appeal was made to the Catholic laity for lay helpers in the catechetical ministry:

In each and every parish the society known as the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine is to be canonically established. Through this Confraternity, the pastors, especially in places where there is a scarcity of priests, will have lay helpers in the teaching of the Catechism, who will take up the work of imparting knowledge both from a zeal for the glory of God and in order to gain the numerous Indulgences granted by the Sovereign Pontiffs.

In the letter to Cardinal Respighi promulgating “his” catechism, Pius X wrote:

We pray God that just as today the increasing numbers and power of the enemies of the Faith propagate error by every means, so also will arise great numbers of souls desirous of zealously assisting the pastors, teachers, and Christian parents in the teaching of the catechism, a work as noble and fruitful as it is necessary.

Pius X summons the laity to teach Christian Doctrine. He had the courage to believe in laymen and in their potential as collaborators subordinate to the hierarchy. He was the Pontiff who opened a magnificent horizon and a fruitful apostolate to laymen, procuring at the same time good collaborators for priests responsible for souls. But Pius X reminds us of the two foundations of their preparation and formation: religious piety and catechetical culture, adding to these the recommendation to understand the child’s soul. He is the one to officially mark the debut and development of a new militia in the Church: lay catechists. For them, he will give a form and a new soul to an outworn catechetical institution which, from the time of St. Charles Borromeo, experienced years of vigorous fervor and influential activity: the Congregation for Christian Doctrine, which was to become in some way the Parish Catechetical Office in which lay catechists and other persons devoted to the cause of catechism would have their place, specific functions, and activities.

Pius X, in all truth, ought to be remembered as the Pope of Catechists because he had faith in laymen, in the teaching mission flowing from their collaboration in the hierarchical apostolate.

At Venice, when he was Patriarch, he contributed to the formation of many catechists. In his letters to the clergy, he insistently reaffirmed the need to train lay catechists. In the third appendix of his catechism, he included wise “counsels to parents and Christian educators” which still today are a fine summary of catechetical formation worthy of study, meditation, and application by all teachers of Christian Doctrine, priests and laymen, parents and catechists.

I consider it a duty in conscience to offer these rules here, limiting myself to following them with a few remarks to enable the pontifical instructions to be placed in the context of today’s catechetical and scholastic environment.

To teach catechism is to instruct in the faith and morals of Jesus Christ; it is to give the children of God consciousness of their origin, their dignity, and their destiny, and also their duties; it is to place and develop in their minds the principles and reasons for religion, virtue, and holiness on earth, and thus of happiness in heaven.

These are but a few lines, but they contain a rational treatise of the motivation for the catechetical apostolate, which specifies first of all the notion of religious instruction and relates it to its final end, which is to impart a Christian conscience to men by means of education and to remind them of their destiny here below in terms of the hereafter. From these fundamental notions, the trainers of catechists can develop a cycle of religious considerations founded on solid doctrine apt to convey the true meaning of apostolic collaboration in catechesis.

The teaching of catechism is therefore the most beneficial and necessary thing for individuals, the Church, and civil society; it is the fundamental instruction at the basis of Christian life, and if it is lacking or has been badly imparted, Christian life is weak, vacillating, and even likely to expire.

Pius X had a global vision of catechesis, not only in the domain of evangelization, but also in its social and civic, humane and individual, communitarian and cultural, functions. In his apostolic conception, the Catechism is something essential and great. He does not hesitate to subordinate to it social and Christian order, which flourishes where the knowledge of revealed truths is elevated and enjoys a necessary prestige. This is a warning and a reminder to today’s educators, priests and laity, who, overburdened by their concern for pressing new works, underestimate the function of catechesis, postponing or even suppressing it in order to leave room for other initiatives of a contingent and limited nature. Corporeal charity is certainly a paramount work in the Church’s strategy for evangelization, but if it is not immediately and concurrently accompanied by the intellectual charity of truth, it becomes sterile. The social apostolate must have the Catechism as its foundation and code if it is to be able to lay claim to the name and spirit of Christian.

Just as Christian parents are the first and principal educators of their children, so also ought they to be their first and principal catechists: the first, because they should instill the doctrine received from the Church in their children in early childhood; the principal, because theirs is the duty to make the children learn by heart at home the rudiments of the Faith, beginning with their first prayers, and to have them repeat them every day so that gradually they will permeate their children’s souls. Should it happen, as is often the case, that they are obliged to be assisted by others in this education, they should remember their holy duty to choose the institutions and persons who can and will conscientiously fulfill for them so grave a duty. Indifference in this matter has caused the irreparable loss of very many children. What an accounting one will have to render to God!

In the hierarchy of lay catechists, parents, their children’s teachers by nature and grace, hold the first place. Nature has given them specific gifts for penetrating their children’s minds and reaching into their little hearts and touching their weak wills.

If one thinks, for example, of the wealth of feeling enclosed within a mother’s heart; of the ease and

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suppleness of a mother's language, capable of being effortlessly understood even by the youngest as if by a continuation of the identification of the child with its mother, one can have a fair idea of the efficacy of this initial catechesis. It is an irreplaceable catechesis because other persons, even consecrated to the formation of young children, lack the efficacy of a mother. Nature and grace make teachers of parents: the sacrament of marriage gives them the right to special graces for fulfilling the educative mission with which God has invested them. Pius X then descends into the details of this gentle maternal magisterium, and his rules should be continually repeated to contemporary parents. This is an important aspect of pastors of souls' ministry of forming the new couple and young parents who feel the responsibility for their family and the protection of the new lives entrusted to their care.

To teach fruitfully, it is necessary to know Christian doctrine; it is necessary to expound it and explain it in a way adapted to the capacity of the pupils, and, since it concerns practical doctrine, it is especially necessary to live it.

Doctrine must be known well, for how can one instruct without being instructed? Hence the parents' and educators' duty to review the Catechism and to fully sound its truths with the aid of broader explanations by priests destined for adults, by asking competent persons, and by reading, if they can, appropriate books.

It is an act of honesty and justice for whoever teaches catechism, even in humble rural schools, to possess the science one teaches. It should even be known twice: once for oneself and once for the others, for it is one thing to know, and another to teach. Teaching requires culture, in particular in the domain of Christian doctrine, for which incertitude of knowledge would bring discredit and contempt upon the most elevated science, since it comes from God, was revealed by Jesus Christ, and has been safeguarded and transmitted by the Catholic Church. Catechetical culture is not something static which allows one to stop learning, but is dynamic and consequently demands being revitalized, increased, and deepened by means of classes, books, and journals.

Christian doctrine should be taught in a way adapted to the pupils, that is to say, with intelligence and love, so that the children will no longer be disgusted and bored by the teacher and by the doctrine. That is why it is fitting to put it within their reach, to use common and simple terms, to awaken their minds by comparisons and appropriate examples, and to touch the feelings of their hearts; to exercise the utmost discretion and measure so as not to tire them; to progress gradually, without wearying of repetition, and, with patience and gentleness, to be indulgent for the agitations, distractions, impertinences, and other defects of this age. One should especially avoid rote learning, which constrains and leaves the mind stunted, bringing into play the memory only without appeal to the mind or heart.

This addresses, in summary, the didactic problem and the pedagogical problem expressed in

a simple way that even the humblest catechists can understand. About this problem illustrious names and top authorities in the domain of education have written books and treatises, and continue to do so. St. Pius X expressed the essence of the immense problem, and with grace and simplicity exposes it to Catholic catechists so that they can understand it and resolve it by means of the brief but very wise rules he suggests. The didactics of catechism, apart from the scientific definitions that have been given and which could be given, amounts to this: to make oneself understood by children when speaking to them and to understand children when they speak to us. Today, after discussing pedagogy at length, it is necessary to render to didactics—which is not something apart or distinct from pedagogy, but is rather a constitutive element of pedagogy and linked to it—its role in catechism class, but without slipping into “didacticism,” which diminishes the dignity of school, depriving it of its soul to reduce it to a batch of formulas and techniques. The success of catechetical schools today is partly due to a healthy didactic, serene and active, linked to the value of *children's language* as the instrument of communication for the science. The rules of pedagogy dictated in these *counsels* call to mind St. John Bosco and his ardent yet gentle spirit.

Finally, live the faith and morals one teaches, or else how will one have the courage to teach the children the religion one does not practice, the commandments and precepts one neglects before their very eyes? In such a case, what fruit can be hoped for? On the contrary, the parents will discredit themselves and will accustom their children to indifference toward contempt of the most necessary principles and the holiest duties of life.

To teach well, more than knowledge is required; it demands coherence between knowledge and life, between school and the teacher's personal conduct. The first lesson of the catechism is not “spoken,” but lived. The first textbook is not between the children's hands, but is the person of the catechist who, by his presence, deportment, life and works, teaches even before speaking. It scarcely needs to be said that the catechetical teaching given to children and grown-ups is not limited to imparting theoretical knowledge of religious notions, but is only complete when it helps the catechumens to *believe* the truths they have learned and to *live* them in their daily life. The catechism is not only culture but knowledge for life, a moral code, an itinerary of faith, and a directory of graces.

And since today there is a generalized atmosphere of incredulity fatal to the spiritual life and that militates against every idea of a superior authority, of God, of revelation, of a future life, of mortification, parents and educators must inculcate the fundamental truths of the first notions of the catechism with

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utmost care. They must inspire the children with the Christian notion of life, the sense of their responsibility for all of their actions before the supreme Judge, who is everywhere, who knows all and sees all, and they must infuse in them the holy fear of God, the love of Christ and the Church, a taste for charity and solid piety, and esteem for the virtues and Christian practices. Only then will the education of children be founded, not on the sand of shifting ideas and human respect, but on the rock of supernatural convictions that will not be shaken for their whole life despite the tempests.

The Catechism is a summary of Christian doctrine; however, Pius X takes pains to specify which “chapters” must be held to be essential for the formation of the Christian of our days, and he sets out a short doctrinal itinerary: **1)** the Christian notion of life; **2)** the sense of our responsibility for every one of our acts before Almighty God, who knows all and sees all; **3)** the fear of God; **4)** love of Christ and the Church; **5)** a taste for charity, piety, and esteem for the virtues and Christian practices.

At nearly a century’s remove from the articulation of these *rules*, we are in a position to evaluate their importance and essential character: generations of Christians have been formed by the Catechism of St. Pius X. These are the generations that gave the impetus to the works of Catholic Action and the secular religious institutes that miraculously flourished in the Church, and which provided and still provide the men and ideas for the social and caritative

apostolates of our time. St. Pius X thought and saw with the eyes of saints, which are the eyes of Christ.

For all of this one must have a lively faith, a profound esteem of the value of souls and spiritual goods, and the wise love that strives to assure above all the eternal happiness of the souls of those one holds dear. One must also have a special grace to understand the character of children and to find the path to their minds and their hearts. Christian parents, by virtue of the sacrament of marriage well received, have a right to the graces of their state and thus to those necessary for the Christian education of their children. Moreover, they can by humble prayer obtain even more abundant graces for this same end, for it is a work particularly agreeable to God that they rear adorers and obedient and pious children. Let them do so, then, whatever the sacrifices: it is question of the eternal salvation of their children’s souls and of their own. God will bless their faith and their love in this work of capital importance, and will reward them by the pre-eminently desirable gift of holy children eternally happy with them in heaven.

These rules are addressed firstly to Christian parents, but they do not exclude the category of teachers and parish catechists who conceive of their school as a community and a spiritual family. These Pius X reminds of their educative responsibility, but he also reminds them of the graces and divine assistance, concluding with the thought of heaven, which is the school’s prize and highest and most desirable reward. 

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## An Invitation to Return to the Sources: A Contribution to Interreligious Dialogue

Discussion with non-Catholic institutions is not an invention of Vatican II, as a reading of some passages of the New Testament shows. The first Pope to enter a synagogue, after all, was not John Paul II...

Those who think that before the Council, Catholicism never experienced debate or opposition

are mistaken. They are also mistaken who think that in the past the Church was no match for those who did not consider themselves to be her children.

Discussion, which is the basic instrument of intercourse with others, whether individuals or groups, has always been employed since the dawn of Christianity, beginning with the Lord Himself, who, the model of every perfection, is also the model of relations with the world of His time, with the civil and religious institutions with which He was in contact and which He confronted in Palestine two thousand years ago. What originated with the Council, on the contrary, is a new and atypical way of establishing relations with the institutions of our time, whether religious or not. This change is radical because the

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goal of dialogue and relations with contemporary interlocutors seems to be radically different.

Given that this shift, as all the conciliar shifts, is presented as a return to the primitive spirit of Christianity, quite obviously betrayed by medieval, Tridentine, and post-Tridentine clericalism, we have interrogated the sources themselves, giving preference to the most ancient. And as the Tradition of the Church is sometimes opposed to holy Scripture, of which it was not always the faithful sister, we have looked for satisfactory responses to our questions only in Sacred Scripture, and more precisely in certain passages of the Gospel according to St. Luke, the author also of the Acts of the Apostles, the interpreter and faithful companion of the Apostle to the Gentiles.

Naturally, at the time of the Apostles there were no Protestants, Orthodox, or Muslims. It was inevitable that Jesus and the Apostles should be in contact primarily with the local religion of Palestine and the communities of the Diaspora. But how was the confrontation with the Synagogue of the era envisaged? We have selected three significant passages in which our Lord, St. Peter, and St. Stephen furnish us more than satisfactory indications. We shall leave the reader to draw his own conclusions, limiting ourselves to a brief commentary.

## **Jesus' Visit to the Synagogue of Nazareth: The Gospel According to St. Luke, 4:14-30**

Let us first remark that, contrary to a widespread opinion, the first Christian religious leader to enter a synagogue was not John Paul II in 1986, but Jesus himself, whose example was followed by the Apostles and in particular St. Paul.

Let us note also that Jesus enters a synagogue to announce the Gospel, the New Covenant: He applies unequivocally to Himself one of the most famous Messianic passages of the Prophet Isaias. This way of proceeding contains a very important message: Jesus shows that the Old Testament spoke of Him, that it has a meaning in relation to Himself, and that the prophecies it contains became reality with His Incarnation. Consequently, after the Incarnation, a reading of the Old Testament that would prescind from our Lord would be not only incomplete, but wayward and injurious, somewhat like a cloak designed, woven, and made for Christ Himself but placed on the shoulders of someone else.

The reaction of Jesus' compatriots is well described by St. Luke. On the one hand they are taken aback by His knowledge and wisdom; on the other hand, they refuse to recognize Him as the Messiah. "While the wisdom shown by Jesus should have attracted them to the faith, it became for them, on the contrary, a stumbling block. Blinded by their prejudices, they did not want to

acknowledge that the Messiah could be a carpenter's son; and they argue from Jesus' obscure birth to the rejection of His doctrine, saying contemptuously: 'Is not this the son of Joseph?'" (Fr. M. Sales, O.P., *The New Testament*, I, 234).

Then Jesus openly reproaches them for their lack of faith (for the demand for new miracles is caused by incredulity) and the Nazarenes even decide to kill Him. But He miraculously slips away. A certain initial enthusiasm is succeeded by a tragic end.

The visits of John Paul II and Benedict XVI to the Synagogue of Rome certainly have an historical dimension, but the tenor of the dialogue, the content of the speeches, and the specific finality of the events were radically different and, in a certain sense, diametrically opposed: He who had been the object of the first evangelization is practically missing from the official speeches, and the episode resulted in a general climate of eirenism. The recent visits did not constitute a new fact, but the spirit and goal that characterized them were new: the Gospel is no longer announced, and the validity and irrevocability of the Old Covenant, the one Jesus replaced in word and in deed as surely as Jacob supplanted Esau his elder brother, were reconfirmed.

Unfortunately, we did not hear in the Synagogue of Rome the gentle, irresistible words with which Jesus introduced Himself to the Synagogue of Nazareth: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me. Wherefore he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor: he hath sent me to heal the contrite of heart, to preach deliverance to the captives and sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of reward.... This day is fulfilled this scripture in your ears."

From a theological standpoint, the exclusion of Jews today from the preaching of the New Covenant paradoxically stands out as a new form of discrimination and anti-Semitism. Faced with this danger, Jesus explicitly imposes on us the duty not to exclude anyone from the preaching of His Kingdom and to invite every man, however recalcitrant, to convert: "Going therefore, teach ye all nations: baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Mt. 28: 19-20). "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned" (Mk. 16:16).

Jesus Himself teaches us in the gospel passage of St. Luke to carry out this necessary evangelization even at the risk of our life for our neighbor's sake.

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## Peter Before the Sanhedrin: The Acts of the Apostles, 4:5-21

This passage of the Acts has considerable testimonial value. Not only is it a very ancient text contained in Sacred Scripture, but it contains one of the first speeches of the first Pope pronounced after Pentecost. It is a matter of the Petrine magisterium in the most literal and authentic sense of the term.

The speech is clear, concise, simple, and unambiguous. It contains an unequivocal invitation to convert based on the absolute necessity of adhering to our Lord for salvation. Let us note that St. Peter is speaking to Jewish doctors; the principle holds for all and above all for them as the first interlocutors of the Apostles: the Old Covenant is hence replaced by the New. Let us note lastly that St. Peter is in a position of inferiority: he is convoked by the Sanhedrin, which might not let him go. Confronted by the Sanhedrin's threats, he does not back down: It is impossible for him to keep quiet about what he has seen and heard without disobeying God. In effect, the proclamation of the Lord and of the New and Eternal Covenant to the Jewish people is not an option, but a necessity because it flows from the need to adhere to it in order to be saved.

## The Judgment and Martyrdom of St. Stephen: The Acts of the Apostles, 6:8-10, 7:54-60

We invite the reader to read the debate between St. Stephen and the Synagogue. In particular, we point out a very important detail. There is a statement made by St. Stephen after which the dialogue is brusquely broken off. It is the crucial affirmation of the New Testament, the ultimate content of every Christian affirmation, the first source of all truth: the assertion of the divinity of Jesus Christ.

Any discussion, dialogue, or debate with any interlocutor only has meaning if it leads to this crucial assertion. Without this supreme end, nothing we say or witness to has any meaning. The Synagogue of the era grasped very well the centrality and in particular the implications of this affirmation. Hearing it, the Jews stopped up their ears; the dialogue was over, and there were only two options left: conversion or crime. Unfortunately, they chose the second, but later, one of theirs, Saul, chose the first, for the calls of our Lord to conversion and the possibility of regeneration by His grace never cease.

This is what we would also like to remind every man on earth, whatever religion he may have, and—if needs be—churchmen, too.

But rather than accept the error that anyone—whatever nation he may belong to—can be saved without entering into the New and Eternal Covenant established by Jesus, sealed by His blood and marked by His cross, we prefer martyrdom: “*Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus.*”

## The Validity of the Old Covenant in Light of Contemporary Official Documents

On this vexed question (which in reality did not become vexed until the Council), we decided to interrogate a very recent source: the [new] Catechism of the Catholic Church, which provides us some indications in paragraphs 839-840. Since it concerns a current topic about which some interest is expressed by Catholics as well as by Jews, it seemed necessary to us to make an effort to understand what the official line today is on this crucial point. To begin with, the matter is neither simple nor clear. For, on the one hand it is reaffirmed that the Old Covenant is an irrevocable gift and thus still valid; and on the other, it is often reiterated today—for example, in official speeches—that Jesus Christ is the only Savior for all men; reminders of this in the Encyclical *Dominus Iesus* occur frequently. We find ourselves before one of these paradoxes from which, in an authentically Hegelian vision, is supposed to surge the dynamism of truth—a “living” truth for which contradictions are not an obstacle and which is constantly measured against them so as to outstrip them and confront new ones in a dialectical process that will terminate only at the end of History.

Let us examine this fundamental text:

### The Church and non-Christians

**839.** “Those who have not yet received the Gospel are related to the People of God in various ways” [*Lumen Gentium* 16].

*The relationship of the Church with the Jewish People.* When she delves into her own mystery, the Church, the People of God in the New Covenant, discovers her link with the Jewish People [cf. *Nostra Aetate* 4], “the first to hear the Word of God” [Roman Missal, Good Friday, General Intercessions, VI]. The Jewish faith, unlike other non-Christian religions, is already a response to God’s revelation in the Old Covenant. To the Jews “belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ” [Rom. 9:4-5], “for the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable” [Rom. 11:29].

**840.** And when one considers the future, God’s People of the Old Covenant and the new People of God tend towards similar goals: expectation of the coming (or the return) of the Messiah. But one awaits the return of the Messiah who died and rose from the dead and is recognized as Lord and Son of God; the other awaits the coming of a Messiah, whose features remain hidden till the end of time; and the latter waiting is accompanied by the drama of not knowing or of misunderstanding Christ Jesus.

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In this official text we find satisfactory responses to our questions, especially in light of the second paragraph. Let us begin with the irrevocability of the gifts made by God to Israel.

The Old Covenant would still be valid at present in its salvific function, for it is considered as an irrevocable gift by the Jewish people independently of the kind of response historically given it by the latter. Consequently, the fact that it had been established by God with Israel to prepare the coming of the Savior Jesus, who was not recognized, would not annul its salvific worth today. It would seem to be the only pact in history that remains valid even though one of the parties does not respect the terms of the pact.

The traditional interpretation, with particular reference to Romans 11:29, is completely different: God will not abandon His people, for one day He will also convert it to Christ and thus save it, but this will not happen by virtue of a still-valid Old Covenant, but thanks to the tardy integration of the Jewish people into the New and Eternal Covenant.

Here is how a learned exegete explained it:

God will not abandon his people, enriched by so many gifts and privileges, but one day He will show them mercy and He will convert them en masse to the faith....The Apostle particularly calls it a vocation not only because it is the first privilege, but also because in it are contained all the others. These gifts are without repentance because God has sworn it to the Patriarchs, so that, though by its infidelity Israel is now rejected so that in the mean time the Gentiles may enter the Church, God will not fail in His promise, and one day He will convert it and show that He has not abandoned His people. (Fr. M. Sales, O.P., *New Testament*, II, 79)

The two perspectives are opposite and irreducible, and their divergence is not the result of a homogeneous development of dogma but of a break with Tradition: Here the hermeneutic of continuity compels us to refuse the new doctrine.

As regards the contradiction between the necessity of adhering to Christ for salvation and the current validity of the Old Covenant, paragraph 840 is masterly: while the Christians await the second coming of the Messiah whom they have already recognized in the person of Jesus, the Jewish people await him for the first time because currently “his features remain hidden,” he is still not known to them and they are in a state of ignorance. Thus Christians and Jews “tend toward similar goals”; even though they believe in different things, they converge toward the same goal. In other words, the Jews are also currently waiting for Christ without knowing it; consequently, they are also saved, but—unlike the rest of common mortals—by doing without the Church, the society of those who have already recognized Him. The ingeniousness is only apparent.

First, Jesus made Himself known universally, and He began to do so in the midst of the Jewish people to whom the Messiah had first been promised: That is why the shepherds of Bethlehem and the first Apostles

and disciples were all Jews without exception; it was in the midst of His own people that Jesus met with the first acceptances as well as the first refusals.

Secondly, it does not seem fair to the Jews to qualify them as ignorant about this point. They know very well the historical figure of Jesus of Nazareth, and it is precisely for that reason that they refuse to descry in Him the traits of the Messiah. This is because, quite simply, the historical figure of Jesus does not correspond to the messianic canons proper to the Judaism of today nor to those of official Judaism two thousand years ago.

From an historical view point, there is no people in the world that has been so closely in contact with Christ and Christianity over the last two thousand years as the Jewish people. This contact has allowed the Jews a sufficiently developed knowledge of Jesus and of Catholicism, and has given them the opportunity to elaborate and expound conscious motivations for non-adherence to Jesus Christ.

There could be an unconscious expectation of Christ where real ignorance exists (something like what occurs in Virgil’s famous Eclogue IV), *but there cannot be expectation of someone where there subsists an explicit refusal of that person*. The root of the error is logical even before being theological. For example, it can happen that a girl is waiting for the ideal man of her life whom she does not yet know and whom she hopes to meet one day; but it is unthinkable that she should both await and reject the same man (who obviously is known, in order to be rejected).

Finally, to describe the Jews as ignorant risks betraying a touch of hypocrisy for a simple reason: When someone’s ignorance is recognized, the moral duty remains to instruct that person in the thing of which he is ignorant, especially if the knowledge lacking is fairly important. If churchmen today were sincere and consistent, they would do all they could to try to evangelize and convert those who do not yet know Christ, whosoever they might be, in order to lead them to His Church. Contrariwise, on the one hand they characterize the Jews as ignorant, and on the other they declare that “there is not, in the strongest terms, any change in the attitude the Catholic Church has developed toward Jews, above all beginning with the Second Vatican Council,” and “it is not the intention of the Catholic Church to operate actively for the conversion of Jews” (Cardinal Bagnasco, September 22, 2009, Zenit.org).

All the related affirmations, and the contradictions linked to them, are instruments serving to justify the new theology and the new attitude inherent to the vexed question. We shall only cite one, which is

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quoted by the text we have examined. It is question of the famous Good Friday prayer contained in the Missal of Paul VI: for the Jews, conversion to Catholicism is not sought, but rather progress in fidelity to a covenant (the old one) which Catholic doctrine considers to have ended since the day the Church, the new Israel, was born: "That they may continue to grow in the love of his name and in faithfulness to his covenant." Clearly, the prayer makes reference to the covenant to which the Jews lay claim today.

It may seem to be a quibble, but such a view is tantamount to recognition that the Synagogue has a legitimate, complete, and efficacious mission for the salvation of souls: precisely what churchmen do not recognize the Society of St. Pius X to have. This paradox perfectly explains the unease the Jewish world experiences over the eventuality of discussing some parts of Vatican II to which it shows itself very attached; this surprising attachment of the Jewish world to the teachings of an Ecumenical Council has no precedent in the Church's history.

To return to paragraph 840, the theory of "convergent bimessianism"—if we may call it thus—is a theological alteration that links together and makes coincide a thing and its negation, being and non-being, Christ and the Negation of Christ.

Assuredly, the Jewish people will also recognize Jesus at the end of time, but this will happen thanks to a genuine conversion and not to an unconsciously convergent dynamism toward Christ already at work: this dynamism only exists in the minds of those who desire an idealist unity that no longer adheres to the Truth, the Gospel, or Reality.

The theory of "convergent bimessianism" is absurd and does not correspond to any

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authentically Catholic thought, nor authentically Jewish thought, nor authentically logical thought. It cannot function as a solid platform for a serious and dispassionate confrontation with Judaism. To present it as a Catholic doctrine does not seem to us to be fair to Catholics or Jews or, above all, our Lord Jesus Christ. ☞

***Don David Pagliarani***

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