



si si no no

"That let your speech be, 'Yes, yes,' 'No, no', and whatever is beyond these comes from the evil one. (Mt. 5:37)"

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This article is an answer to a letter to the Editor written to *Courrier de Rome*, the French translation of *Si Si No No*. The letter, written by a bewildered priest, precedes the article.

To Apostasy by way of“Obedience”

To the Editor:

Please clarify me on the following. In the editorial of Fr. Giancarlo Politi in the bulletin *Mondo e Missione* (Feb., 1995), I read on the subject of our four Catholic missionaries slain in Algeria. I quote verbatim:

They were not in that part of Africa to conduct crusades or to proselytize, an objective that the Church nowhere pursues.

I have read the same thing in the newsletter of Fr. Van Straaten whom I have always admired and even supported in a modest way. I would like to know if the injunction of Jesus to his apostles "Go and teach all nations...." no longer implies proselytizing, and, if it doesn't, since when. I have always believed that that was indeed the task of the apostles. Has the mission of the priesthood been changed?

Sincerely,
(Signed by Fr. X)

[The editor answers.]...To help you to understand, let's recall two pontifical texts. The first is taken from the encyclical *Pascendi* of Pope St. Pius X against Modernism:

That we should act without delay in this matter [to condemn Modernism] is made imperative especially by the fact that the partisans of error are to be sought not only among the Church's open enemies; but what is to be most dreaded and deplored, in her very bosom.... We allude...to many who belong...to the priesthood itself, who, animated by a false zeal for the Church, lacking the solid safeguards of philosophy and theology, nay more, thoroughly imbued with the poisonous doctrines taught by the enemies of the Church, and lost to all sense of modesty, put themselves forward as reformers of the Church; and, forming more boldly into line of attack, assail all that is most sacred in the work of Christ, not sparing even the Person of the Divine Redeemer. Whom, with sacrilegious audacity, they degrade to the condition of a simple and ordinary man.... Enemies of the Church they certainly are, nor indeed would he be wrong in regarding them as the most pernicious of all the adversaries of the Church. For, as We have said, they put into operation their designs for her undoing, not from without but from within. Hence, the danger is present almost in the very veins and heart of the Church, whose injury is the more certain from the very fact that their knowledge of her is more intimate. Moreover, they lay the axe not to the branches and shoots, but to the very root, that is, to the faith and its deepest fibers. And once having struck at this root of immortality, they proceed to diffuse poison through the whole tree, so that there is no part of Catholic truth which they leave untouched, none that they do not strive to corrupt [from Daughters of St. Paul edition. - *Ed.*].

That was in 1907. Forty years later, Pius XII in his encyclical *Humani Generis* against neo-Modernism or the "New Theology" wrote:

[i]t is apparent, however, that some today, as in apostolic times, desirous of novelty, and fearing to be considered ignorant of recent scientific findings, try to withdraw themselves from the sacred Teaching Authority and are accordingly in danger of gradually departing from revealed truth and of drawing others along with them into error.

There is another danger all the more serious because it is concealed beneath the mask of virtue. There are many who, deploring disagreement among men and intellectual confusion, through an imprudent zeal for souls, are urged by a great and ardent desire to do away with the barrier that divides good and honest men. These advocate an *eirensim* by which they set aside questions dividing men and aim not only at joining forces to repel the attacks of atheism, but also at reconciling things opposed to one another in the field of dogma.... Through their enthusiasm for an imprudenteism they consider as an obstacle to fraternal union things founded on the laws and principles given by Christ and on institutions founded by Him, or which are the defense and support of the integrity of the Faith, the removal of which would bring about the union of all but only to their destruction. [from the Daughters of St. Paul edition - *Ed.*]

Pius XII tells us these ruinous opinions were then being disseminated "among the secular and regular clergy, in seminaries and religious institutions."

That was in 1950. Today those Churchmen, deformed by neo-Modernism in the seminaries and religious institutions and having stage-managed the last Council, are in power in the Church and occupy the key positions in the Catholic hierarchy, putting to work their "counsels of destruction" to unify the human race "in a common ruin." "Blind and leaders of the blind....," says St. Pius X:

...puffed up with the proud name of science, they have reached that pitch of folly at which they pervert the eternal concept of truth and the true meaning of religion; in introducing a new system in which "they are seen to be under the sway of a blind and unchecked passion for novelty, thinking not at all of finding some solid foundation of truth, but despising the holy and apostolic traditions, they embrace other and vain, futile, uncertain doctrines, unapproved by the Church, on which, in the height of their vanity, they think they can base and maintain truth itself" (*Pascendi*).

Amidst this Modernism, resistance by a Catholic, and most particularly by a priest, is a duty. It's a matter of choosing between aberrant and erroneous human judgments and the infallible judgment of the Church, which for 2000 years has taught that....

...nothing which pertains to the perennial and certain doctrine of the Church and which, in any way whatsoever, direct or indirect, relates to the truths of faith or morals, nothing of the constitution of the Church, nothing of that which has been fixed by Christ and, through His mandate, by the holy Apostles is subject to change (G. Siri, *La Giovinezza della Chiesa*, ed. Giardini, Pisa, 1983).

We repeat to these destructive clerics the words of St. Edmund Campion, martyr of the Anglican schism:

In condemning us, you condemn the Church of all times. For what is there that She believed and taught that we also do not believe?"

The current ordeal is one of extreme severity because "the masterstroke of Satan," as Archbishop Lefebvre has called it, has placed the authority of popes at the service of neo-Modernism, and therefore the deception is much more grave and widespread. Nevertheless, the problem is not insurmountable. It is sufficient to recall that in the conflict between Faith and authority the Faith will prevail because authority is at the service of the Faith and not the contrary.

For we can do nothing against the truth, but only for the truth (II Cor. 13:8).

Let us take the case of Fr. Werenfried van Straaten in the article "A Fruit of the Heretical Post-Conciliar Ecclesiology: the *New Charity* of Fr. Van Straaten" (*Courrier de Rome*, March, 1995). To justify his total reversal of direction, he echoes Pope John Paul II:

Rightly the Pope has forbidden all forms of proselytism. In that case we must help in the formation of Orthodox priests in order that they would be capable of instructing those that they are going to baptize (*L'echo de l'amour*, Oct. 1994).

This premise must be proven and to prove it one must prove that the Vicar is superior to the Invisible Head of the Church, who has commanded that which John Paul II forbids! Now, in the conflict between an inferior authority (a pope) and a superior authority (Our Lord Jesus Christ), obedience is owed to the superior authority. It is Catholic moral theology which teaches this. In such a case the subject does not disobey the Superior, but he obeys an authority higher than the Superior: "I owe you my love," St. Bruno writes to Pope Pascal II, "but I owe a greater love to the One who has created both you and me" (P.L. 163 col.463). But Leo XIII writes in two encyclicals:

[w]hen...an order of authority is contrary to reason, to the eternal law, to the authority of God, then we wish to make it known, it is legitimate to disobey in order to obey God (*Libertas Praestantissimum*, 1888).

And it would not be just to accuse those who act in this manner of disregarding the duty of submission to authority; for the princes whose wills are in opposition to the will and the laws of God, thereby over-step the limits of their power. (*Diuturnum Illud*).

Obedience to the pope, the prince of the Church, does not evade the moral law: the duty to obey him always supposes that his order would be both licit and lawful, that is to say that it would not be in opposition to reason, to the eternal law and to the divine order. On the other hand, the principle according to which one must "obey God rather than men" applies to the pope just as to any other authority on earth. On this point Catholic theologians, although differing widely on the question of an "heretical pope," are in perfect agreement.

Unlike yesteryear, it is necessary today to have these principles clearly in mind so one does not risk justifying what is contrary to the Gospel (as Fr. Van Straaten does) solely because the pope said it, even though it means abandoning the Faith of the Universal Church to follow the private thought of a man simply because he sits on the chair of Peter while Peter is not speaking by his mouth. St. Thomas teaches (*Summa Theologica* II, II, Q.2a) that the subjects also sin against the Faith when they follow the "authorities in the Faith" [bishops and popes], even if at the same time they warn these authorities that they are falling away from the Faith of the Universal Church. In this case, subjects are released from their normal ties of subjection and obedience and they have the duty and the right to defend their own Faith.

When the shepherd changes into a wolf, the first duty of the flock is to defend itself. Normally, without doubt, doctrine descends from the bishops to the faithful, and those who are subjects, in the order of the faith, are not to judge their superiors. But in the treasure of revelation there are some essential points which every Christian, by the very fact of his title as Christian, is bound to know and defend (*The Liturgical Year*, Vol. IV, Dom Guéranger, Feast of St. Cyril of Alexandria).

"BUT THE POPE IS INFALLIBLE"

Some will object, "But the pope is infallible." Be careful! First of all, infallibility has not been promised in order to add "novelties" to the "deposit of the faith," but solely to preserve, explain and defend the truths already revealed:

The Holy Spirit has been promised to the successors of Peter not that they may make known, under His revelation, a new doctrine, but in order that, with His assistance, they may piously preserve and faithfully set forth the revelation transmitted by the Apostles, that is to say the deposit of the faith. (Vatican I, *Constitution De Ecclesia Christi*, D.1836).

Besides, the pope can express himself at four very distinct levels:

- at the level of the **extraordinary infallible Magisterium** (ex cathedra).
- at the level of the **ordinary infallible Magisterium**.
- at the level of the **ordinary non-infallible Magisterium**.
- at the level of the **theologian** or of **the private person**. (This is the case in *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, Pope John Paul II's recent book-interview.)

We immediately exclude from infallibility this last level, because it is evident that infallibility has not been promised to the pope as a private person.

The extraordinary infallible magisterium (*ex cathedra*) applies when the pope "fulfilling his charge as pastor and teacher of all Christians;...defines, in virtue of his supreme apostolic authority, that a doctrine on faith or morals must be held by the entire Church" (*Pastor Aeternus*, see also Vatican I, D.1839, etc.).

The ordinary infallible magisterium applies when the truth being taught is proposed by the pope....

...as having been previously defined, or as having always been believed or acknowledged in the Church, or as being attested to by the unanimous and continuing consent of theologians as Catholic truth (*Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, t. VIII col. 1705).

Thus, for example, Leo XIII is infallible when, in the encyclical *Providentissimus*, he teaches as always believed by the Church the absolute absence of errors in the faithfully preserved texts of Sacred Scripture.

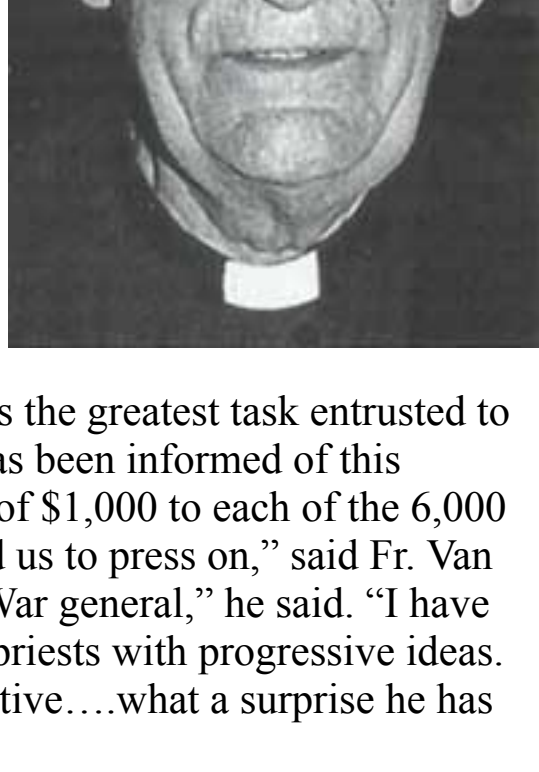
It is **only** at these two primary levels that the teaching the pope exposes is guaranteed to expose faithfully that which is truly contained in divine Revelation. There is, on the other hand, the ordinary magisterium non-infallible, simply authenticated, wherein...:

...a teaching is praised, recommended, or simply affirmed [by the pope] without any indication of its belonging to revelation or to the constant and universal Catholic tradition and without any indication of strict obligation imposed by the faith or by the submission due to the sovereign authority of the Roman Pontiff (*Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, to VII col. 1713).

Normally one also owes obedience, even if it is neither unconditional nor absolute, to the non-infallible and merely authentic magisterium of the pope. However, one does not owe him any obedience whatsoever when, opposed to a non-infallible judgment of the Church or even of the constant and universal faith of the Church. In this case, resistance is not only justified, it is a duty. It is born not of a spirit of error nor of rebellion, but rather of charity.

Fr. Van Straaten's project to finance the Russian Orthodox Church did not go down well with some benefactors of the association he founded, "Aid to the Suffering Church."... "They sustain that it would be wrong to finance a 'schismatic' Church, separated from Rome and a slave to the former Communist regime."... "The former Soviet Union is a mission field and the western Church is not up to evangelizing this vast territory," he said. "Only the Orthodox Church can do that and we should help it with all the means - financial and non - we have at our disposal." He is certain that the Pope will approve his initiative. "John Paul II has said that reconciliation with the Orthodox Church is the greatest task entrusted to us at the end of this second millennium. He has been informed of this initiative of ours to guarantee an annual wage of \$1,000 to each of the 6,000 priests of the Russian Church and he has urged us to press on," said Fr. Van Straaten. "They used to call me the last Cold War general," he said. "I have always had many enemies some of whom are priests with progressive ideas. Now they are saying: look at that old conservative....what a surprise he has turned out to be."

- (30 Days, No.12, 1994)



The gravity of the current crisis is precisely owing to the lack of security in the faithful that, in normal times, was offered to them by the ordinary non-infallible magisterium of the popes. It is true, however, that, **at this level**, Our Lord Jesus Christ did not promise any infallibility to Peter (Mt. 16: 18; Lk. 22:22) or to his successors "according to the constant interpretation of theologians," but only concerning his *ex cathedra* teaching (*Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, t. VII col. 1717). The assurance which in normal times is derived from the non-infallible magisterium of the pope is only linked to the care that he takes not to deviate from the doctrine transmitted by the Apostles. Today this care has disappeared because that "unchecked passion for novelty" of which St. Pius X spoke also corrupts the mentality of the one who sits on the throne of Peter and who so wonderfully affirmed it at the beginning of his pontificate:

If the Lord has called me "with such thoughts...with such sentiments, it is in order that they ...find a resonance in my new and universal ministry" (*The Angelus*, March, 1979).

This is the same as saying, "It is no longer the pope who must conform himself to Tradition, but Tradition which must conform itself to the mentality of the pope."

One risks tremendous aberrations if these sad realities are ignored and one conducts himself as if all goes well without hindrance in the current ecclesiastical situation. From his unproven and erroneous premise - "Rightly the Pope has forbidden all forms of proselytism" - Fr. Van Straaten deduces that Catholics must subsidize the proselytism of the Orthodox churches, in aiding "the formation of Orthodox priests in order that they would be capable of instructing those that they are going to baptize." It is no indifferent matter to God whether souls should be baptized in His one and only Catholic Church or in schism and heresy!

The Church has always condemned the subsidizing of non-Catholics as a grave sin against truth and charity (see *Encyclopedia Cattolica*, under the word *Cooperation*, col. 498). Fr. Van Straaten has forgotten his dogmatic and moral theology. He no longer seems to have the Faith which tells us the pope is there to keep and promote the Catholic Faith and not to demolish it (II Cor. 10:8). All this because of a false concept of obedience improperly raised to the level of a theological virtue. Yet, it is a **moral** virtue in which one can sin, yes, by default, but also by **excess**, in obeying "in matters contrary to a law or to a superior precept." This constitutes an "improper obedience" or, more accurately, "servility" (Roberti-Palazzini, *Dizionario di teologia morale*, ed. Studium).

As we have written:

In practice, no one has ever explicitly imposed upon a Catholic in the name of obedience a denial of his very Faith....But they have and do impose on him a new "course for the Church" which, in implying the negation of everything that the Church has taught and done on the basis of the doctrinal principles up until Vatican Council II, leads straight to apostasy. (*Courrier de Rome*, March, 1990, "The Duty to Resist!").

In other words, to apostasy by way of "obedience," which is by nature a denial of reason. - **Hirpinus**

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