



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)"

May 2002 No. 46

The Self-Destruction of the "Ecumenical" Papacy



On April 3, 2001, *Il Giornale's* interview with Cardinal Ratzinger treated some of the subject matter on the agenda of the Extraordinary Consistory scheduled by the Pope for the end of May that year. In the interview, Cardinal Ratzinger spoke favorably of a more "communitarian" guideline for the Church, saying, "It is necessary to find more effective ways to exercise collegiality in the Church." As always, necessity springs from ecumenical reasons. Cardinal Ratzinger was also quoted as saying:

The Orthodox think that the Catholic Church has rather falsified communion by becoming an absolute monarchy, but this is not true. [The Catholic Church] is a community of local churches, with the pope as the reference point. It is important that this great communitarian reality be brought to light; the pope is not the bishops' monarch but the community's servant, who confirms his brothers in the faith.

At this point, the interviewer, noting that Pope John Paul II in his letter, *Ut Unum Sint*, said he was inclined to open a discussion on forms for exercising his primacy, inquired, "Seven years later, what has come of this proposal?" Cardinal Ratzinger replied:

In Protestant and Anglican circles, there are some indications as to what these forms might be. But it is difficult to say if any might be incepted. Every pope has his charisma, and to plan the future is never easy. What is important to understand is the Petrine primacy's permanent nucleus. The forms this primacy assumes can change, leaving the same nucleus in place.

The "Nucleus"

But is it about the "forms" in which the primacy is exercised being the "same nucleus" or not? Or is it rather the very nature and scope of the primacy that is contested by the so-called separated brethren? On the nature and scope of the papacy, we have Vatican I's infallible definitions, which are the Faith's "unchangeable norms." Thus, Pope Pius IX, in *Inter Gravissimas Afflictiones*, issued on October 28, 1870, wrote:

We teach and declare that the Roman Church, through Our Lord's direction, possesses ordinary power over all of the other Churches, and that this jurisdictional power of the Roman Pontiff, which is truly Episcopal, is immediate. To this power the pastors (*i.e.*, the bishops), and the faithful of every rite and of every station, both individually and collectively, are bound by a necessity of hierarchical subordination and true obedience, not only in what concerns the Faith and customs, but also in what relates to the discipline and governing of the Church all over the world... This is the Catholic doctrine from which no one can distance himself without prejudicing his faith and his salvation.

And from this, the anathema:

Therefore, whoever would affirm that the Roman Pontiff has only the duty of overseeing or of directing, but not full and supreme jurisdictional power over the entire Church, not only in matters regarding the faith and customs, but also in matters regarding the discipline and governance of the Church throughout the world, and who otherwise affirms that the Roman Pontiff has only a very important share, but not the entire fullness of this supreme power; or who would say that his power is not ordinary and immediate, both over each and every church, and over each and every pastor and faithful, is excommunicated.

In Chapter IV, the First Vatican Council recalled the previous Councils of Constantinople, Lyons, and Florence, which say essentially the same thing, because, as Pope Leo XIII wrote in *Satis Cognitum*:

Wherefore, in the decree of the Vatican Council as to the nature and authority of the primacy of the Roman Pontiff, no newly conceived opinion is set forth, but the venerable and constant belief of every age.

This then is the Petrine primacy's nucleus. It is an already defined nucleus that can no longer be redefined because it is treated by dogmatic definitions; and every pope, whatever might be his "personal charisma," is authorized to watch over and defend, and not to touch "the ancient and constant faith of all of the centuries of Christendom" infallibly defined by various ecumenical and dogmatic Councils.

A Connection?



A pope without primacy: an altar without a tabernacle?

The Forms

It is clear that whoever admits to this nucleus has nothing more to say on the forms in which, up to the present, the Roman pontificate has been exercised, because whether broad or narrow, these forms have all supported that nucleus and are logically derived from it.

It is also clear that, since the so-called separated brethren reject this nucleus, every modification of the papacy's form is either useless or merely a pretext for destroying the nucleus, but without letting this be apparent.

The variations of the forms, or the pope's means of exercising them, observable in the history of the Church, originate in the fact that our Lord Jesus Christ has given the Church both a solid and supple constitution; has subjected the Apostles to Peter, and so, the bishops to the pope, *vi primatus*. But the episcopal power did not have limits directly placed upon it, so that the pope, *vi primatus*, per force of the primacy, might be able to widen or restrict these limits in a way that in all times, places, and in all circumstances would provide for this "in ways sufficient to the salvation of the faithful."¹ But whatever a pope's personal charisma might be, **1)** it will never widen the bishops' power to the point of loosening them from that bond of submission and obedience, which, by divine right, binds them to Peter; and **2)** this power (and necessity) must be exercised by widening or restricting the limits of episcopal power according to the *intrinsic* necessities of the Church (the good of the faithful) and not for reasons extrinsic to it, such as unfounded actions against the primacy brought by heretics and schismatics. But those who are "more open" to revisions are not inclined to recognize the pope as having more than an honorary primacy, which falls under Vatican I's anathema (sess. IV and I):

[W]hoever would assert that Blessed Peter the Apostle was not made Prince of all the Apostles and head of the entire Church militant by Christ, our Lord, and that Peter also received from our same Lord, Jesus Christ, directly and immediately, an only honorary primacy but not a real and specific jurisdiction, is excommunicated.

Therefore, what about those who put the forms up for discussion when it is the nucleus that is being contested?

The "Nucleus" in Danger

While there is no change among the Orthodox, we see, however, that in the post-Conciliar Catholic world's consensus, the Protestants and Anglicans have increasingly put this nucleus in danger.

The same Cardinal Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, seems to have an entirely different idea for shedding light on the primacy. He speaks of "collegiality": "It is necessary to find more effective ways of exercising collegiality." Which collegiality?

Whoever discusses the universal Church's government-as Cardinal Ratzinger knows and ought to know-doesn't talk about collegiality because, as Pope Pius XI wrote in *Ecclesiam Dei*, in His Church, our Lord Jesus Christ established "the rule of one of the Apostles over all the others." And as Pope Leo XIII wrote in *Satis Cognitum*:

Christ constituted [Peter] not only pastor, but pastor of pastors; Peter therefore feeds the lambs and feeds the sheep, feeds the children and feeds the mothers, governs the subjects and rules the prelates, because the lambs and the sheep form the whole of the Church (quoting St. Bruno, *Episcopi Signiensis Comment, on john*, partiii., ch.21, n.55).

"[That all bishops are called by God to govern the [universal] Church, not only the pope" is a proposition already condemned by the Church (see Pius VI, *Super Soliditate Petrae*).

As witnessed by Cardinal Siri, who was an authoritative witness of Vatican II:

Some came to the Council proposing that the Church live Protestantly, without Tradition and without the Pope's primacy....The first aim created a lot of confusion; and through the second aim they tried to toy with the argument of collegiality,² but it is also true that their intention was thwarted by *Lumen Gentium's* Explanatory Note, which disallowed the bishops from claiming governing powers other than those that were always allowed, without discussion.³

Even less permitted is discussion relating to releasing bishops "from the need for hierarchical subordination and true obedience," which, through divine right, "both individually and collectively" binds and subjects them to the pope (Vatican I, *Denzinger-Schönmetzer*, 1827), thus assuring the Church's unity, because this subordination belongs to that nucleus of the primacy which the same Cardinal Ratzinger admits ought to remain "in place."

Cardinal Siri also wrote: "Any attempt at diminishing the Roman pontificate's primacy is an attempt against the Church's survival";⁴ and today, given the times, he also said that there is "no need to find more effective ways of exercising collegiality." On the contrary, there is a need to find more effective ways of exercising the primacy and exercising it for the ends for which our Lord Jesus Christ instituted it.

Monarchy and "Absolute Monarchy"

In His Church our Lord Jesus Christ instituted "the rule of only one over all" (Pope Pius XI, *Ecclesiam Dei*) and this form of government, since time immemorial, is called monarchy. Therefore, as Pius VI wrote in *Super Soliditate Petrae*, "that Jesus Christ did not immediately establish the monarchical form in the Church" is a proposition already condemned many times.

But Cardinal Ratzinger negates the pope as the "Bishops' monarch" and also that the papacy is an "absolute monarchy," and he describes the Catholic Church as "a community of local churches with the pope as a reference point."

But the primacy's nucleus, infallibly defined by Vatican I, which the same Cardinal Ratzinger says should remain in place, recognizes that the pope, by divine right, has a veritable governing power that is universal, supreme, complete, ordinary, episcopal and immediate over all members of the Church, both bishops and faithful. Let's specify these powers:

- 1) Actual Power** to govern or of jurisdiction, not just a faculty for overseeing or direction. The corresponding aspect of this real power on the part of the faithful (bishops and faithful) is that they owe actual obedience and submission, and not just respect or deference, to the pope;
- 2) Universal Power**, which is personally extended over each and every bishop and each and all of the faithful ["shepherds and sheep" (Jn. 21:15-17)];
- 3) Supreme Power** because it supersedes that of each individual bishop and all of the bishops as a group, because there is no possibility of appeal against the pope;
- 4) Full Power**, that is, that the pope possesses the complete fullness of governing power, and thus is able to regulate every single thing without the approval of either the bishops or of the entire Church;
- 5) Ordinary Power**, that is, inerrancy via divine will, of the papal office, through which the pope can always exercise it and not only in exceptional cases, for example, when a bishop transgresses his own power within his own diocese, as Febronius wished;
- 6) Episcopal Power**, that is, the pope is the bishop of the entire Church, the "universal bishop" and not the "first among bishops," exactly as the Bishop of Rome is "*episcopus urbis et orbis*" and, so, he has legal, judicial and penal power over the entire Church, just as each bishop has the same over his own diocese;
- 7) Immediate Power**, that is, the Pope can directly exercise his power over the bishops and faithful without intermediaries.

Cardinal Siri wrote that all of this could be summarized as follows:

The Roman Pontiff has power over the entire Church, can exercise power over all, whether over the whole or over one; he can exercise power without being limited by anyone, neither Pastor nor faithful.⁵

However, Cardinal Ratzinger believes he can re-summarize this power by presenting the Church as "a community of local churches with the pope as the reference point." Is this what he means by "keeping the papacy's nucleus in place?"

Roman Communion, Not Headless Communion

After presenting the Church as a federation of local churches with the pope as merely a reference point, Cardinal Ratzinger says that

it is necessary to make this great communitarian reality known; the Pope is not the Bishops' King, but the community's servant who confirms his brothers in the faith.

But, then, the pope-like it or not-is, by divine right, the king of all, including "King of the Bishops," for in the Catholic Church the communion was never simply a communion of local churches with a vague point of reference in the pope, but was always the **Roman** communion, that is the communion with Peter and under Peter. In *Quartus Supra Vigessimus*, to the Armenians (Jan. 6, 1873), Pope Pius IX wrote:

For any man to be able to prove his Catholic faith and affirm that he is truly a Catholic, he must be able to convince the Apostolic See of this. For this See is predominant and with it the faithful of the whole Church should agree (St. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, chapter 3, 3). And the man who abandons the See of Peter can only be falsely confident that he is in the Church (St. Cyprian, *De Unitate Ecclesiae*, 4). As a result, that man is already a schismatic and a sinner who establishes a see in opposition to the unique See of the blessed Peter (St. Optatus of Milevis, *De Schisma Donatist*, book 2, n.21, from which the rights of sacred communion derive for all men (St. Ambrose, *Epist. XI, ad Imperatores*).

Thus, it is not the Catholic Church which has "rather falsified communion," but the Orthodox who have done so, and not just a little, by rejecting the papacy, which is the foundation that, as Pope Leo XIII wrote in *Satis Cognitum*, "effects and involves unity of communion, [and] is necessary *jure divino*" (see Vatican I, *dz* 1821).

Since the Orthodox say that the Catholic Church has "falsified" communion, are we also authorized to falsify it? If the Orthodox reject the "absolute monarchy" of the papacy, which their fathers believed, we Catholics reject the dispersion of their headless episcopate into "a confused and disorderly multiplicity" (Pope Leo XIII, *Satis Cognitum*), and we reject it because this is not what our Lord Jesus Christ wished, which is:

[S]o that all of the multitudes of believers be conserved in the unity of the Father and communion, the blessed Peter was put in charge of the other Apostles, establishing in him the perennial principle and the visible foundation of thorough unity (*Dz* 1821).

And this also shares in the nucleus of the papacy, infallibly defined by the dogmatic council, Vatican I.

Certainly, the Pope ought to render to the Church "the service" of maintaining Her in the unity of the faith, but this does not demote him from being the "King of the Bishops" to being a "reference point," and even worse, to being "a servant of the community," as the heretical Synod of Pistoia wished and which was condemned by Pope Pius VI in *Auctores Fidei*. In the broad sense, all authority is service, but it is a service rendered precisely while exercising authority, not by resigning it, in which case whoever possesses the authority no longer serves but damages the Church, as we note in this era of resignation of authority in every camp (except those to Modernism's benefit).

A Balance Sheet of Desolation

As the custodian and not the owner of the deposit of faith, the Pope is then the steward and not the owner of the Church's divine constitution, whatever might be the spirit of the times, and whatever might be the heretics' and schismatics' complaints. In fact, the absolute monarchy of the papacy is not arbitrary and despotic as it would be if the power of Peter were absolute from below, and not absolute from above; from above is restricted by Divine right. As II Corinthians 10:7,8 says:

If any man trust to himself, that he is Christ's let him think this again with himself, that as he is Christ's, so are we also.

For if also I should boast somewhat more of our power, which the Lord hath given us unto edification and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed.

Today, it is a case of remembering that the ecumenical self-destruction is impending upon the papacy.

In *Quartus Supra Vigessimus*, Pope Pius IX wrote:

Jesus Christ, Our Lord, who is charity (Jn. 1:4,8) has openly declared that those who do not listen to the Church should be regarded as pagans and public sinners (Mt. 18:17).

And we not only call them "separated brethren" but we look to them in matters of faith, and listen to those who do not listen to the Church. And this for a goal that is illusory and outside the Church, which is to facilitate those who intend to stay outside the Church and who do not wish to subject their intellects to the infallible Magisterium. For nearly 40 years we have been accumulating ruin inside the Church, ruin obscuring Catholic Tradition, throwing the unity of the faith into turmoil, weakening authority, humiliating the papacy, and breaking the bonds of the unity of communion. And now we have arrived at what St. Augustine called "exquisite impiety" and "insensible arrogance": to lay hands on the divine constitution of the Church. Therefore, whoever tampers with "this foundation no longer preserves the divine and Catholic Church, [but] attempts to make a human church." (Pope Leo XIII, *Satis Cognitum*, quoting St. Cyprian).

Hirpinus

(Translated by Suzanne Rini from *SiSiNoNo*, April 30, 2001, Vol.27, No.8, pp.1-4.

1. St. Thomas, *Contra Gentiles*, c 72; see G. Siri, *Lagiovinezza della Chiesa*, Giardini ed., Pisa, p. 130, and *si si no no*, January 15, 1999, p.5.
2. G. Siri, *op. tit.* p.205.
3. *Ibid*-p. 128.
4. G. Siri, *Il primato delta verita*, Giardini, Pisa, p.280.
5. G. Siri, *La giovimzza della Chiesa*, p. 125.
6. L. Ott, *Compendia di teologia dogmatica*, Marietti, p.472