



si si no no

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

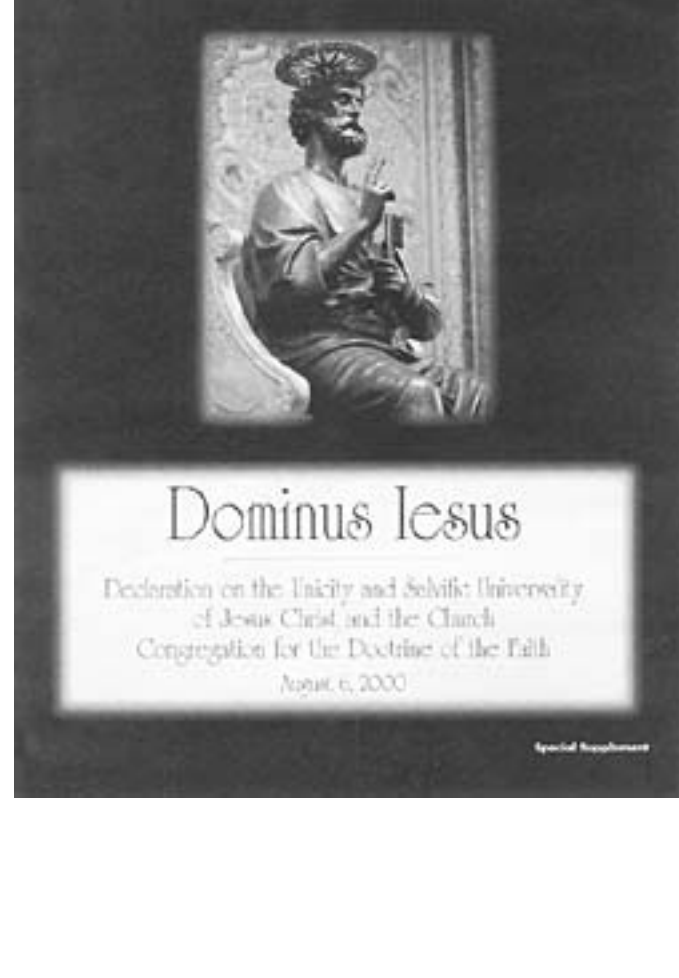
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Dominus Jesus

In his response to its publication, Superior General of the Society of Saint Pius X, Bishop Bernard Fellay, conceded that Pope John Paul II's declaration, *Dominus Jesus* (Aug. 6, 2000), was a forceful reminder of traditional Catholic doctrine on the unicity and salvific universality of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church.

At the same time, he said that these truths of Faith are "strongly moderated" by principles that have Vatican II as their only source (*SiSiNoNo*, Reprint #40, in *The Angelus*, March 2001). These principles concern the relations of the Catholic Church with other religions, both Christian and non-Christian, which introduce another theological tradition that is clearly divergent from the one known in the Catholic Church up until Vatican II.

This issue of *SiSiNoNo* gives expanded treatment on how *Dominus Jesus* breaks with Tradition by its fundamental thesis and incoherences while also explaining its effect on the Protestant sects.



DOMINUS JESUS: A DECLARATION THAT IS "PERFECTLY IN LINE WITH VATICAN II"

On August 6, 2000, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith made public the declaration *Dominus Jesus* on the unicity and salvific universality of Jesus Christ and His Church. This Declaration provoked opposition from "ecumenical" Catholics and was enthusiastically welcomed by certain Catholics who desire to be, and to remain, simply Catholic. It seems to us, however, that both those who oppose the Declaration and those who welcomed it either have not read it in its totality, or have not read it with due attention. In fact, this document is "perfectly in line with Vatican II" (Bishop d'Ornellas, auxiliary bishop of Paris) and accords with the aims of the "moderate" modernists who want neither a return to Tradition nor the headlong flight of the avant-garde (cf. Cardinal Ratzinger in *The Ratzinger Report*). To that extent, contrary to the superficial and hasty observations in the press, with the publication of this document "nothing has changed" (Bishop Ennio Antonelli, Secretary of the Italian Episcopal Conference). In fact, as we shall see, there are certain "innovations" in this document which make it ecumenically even more pointed than Vatican II.

Significant Omissions

In order to set forth "the fundamental contents of the profession of the Christian Faith," the introduction to the Declaration *Dominus Jesus* uses the Creed of Constantinople (Dz. 150), which lacks the *Filioque*. The *Filioque* was legitimately added to the Creed "because of those heretics who are going about saying that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father alone" (Synod of Friuli 796; on the *Filioque*, cf. *Courrier de Rome*, March 1998: "*Stupidité oecuménique: Le 'Filioque': Une question de dogme et non une simple formule*")

Why does *Dominus Jesus* quote from the Creed lacking the *Filioque*? Clearly, it does so for ecumenical reasons, in order to gain the goodwill of the Orthodox, who made this addition a pretext for schism. By doing this, however, the document obscures the Catholic Faith, offers a grave offense to the Catholic Church, and confirms the Orthodox in their conviction that the *Filioque* was "a diabolical invention" and "a perverse dogma," as said Photius about the Roman Church.

A further omission is the absence of any reference to the dogma "*Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*" ("Outside the Church there is no salvation") in a Declaration which deals primarily with inter-religious dialogue, i.e., dialogue with religions which are not even "Christian" in name, a dialogue which today, the document says, "does not replace, but rather accompanies" the Church's missionary activity (§2).

These are important omissions. In reality, as we shall see, despite the apparent firmness of certain affirmations which are intended to put a brake on avant-garde, *Dominus Jesus*, vitiated as it is by the "ecumenical" goal, alternates truths of faith with things that are in irreconcilable contradiction with Catholic dogma. This too is in perfect accord with the "spirit" and the texts of Vatican II, and with the documents which followed it.



The Fundamental Thesis

The declared intention of the Declaration *Dominus Jesus* is to "set forth again the doctrine of the Catholic faith" with regard to "the unicity and salvific universality of the mystery of Jesus Christ and the Church" (§3) against "specific positions that are erroneous or ambiguous" (*ibid.*).

The fundamental thesis of the whole Declaration is given in §5, where it is said:

In fact, it must be *firmly believed* that, in the mystery of Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, who is "the way, the truth, and the life" (Jn. 14:6), the full revelation of divine truth is given: "No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him" (Mt. 11:27); "No one has ever seen God; God the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, has revealed him" (Jn. 1:18); "For in Christ the whole fullness of divinity dwells in bodily form" (Col. 2:9-10)...

Thus, the Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* [much cited in the document-*Ed.*] calls the Church once again to the task of announcing the Gospel as the fullness of truth: "In this definitive Word of his revelation, God has made himself known in the fullest possible way. He has revealed to mankind who he is. This definitive self-revelation of God is the fundamental reason why the Church is missionary by her very nature. She cannot do other than proclaim the Gospel, that is, the fullness of the truth which God has enabled us to know about himself [*Redemptor Missio*, §5]. Only the revelation of Jesus Christ therefore, "introduces into our history a universal and ultimate truth which stirs the human mind to ceaseless effort" [*Fides et Ratio*, §14].

The fundamental thesis, therefore, is that in Christ we have a fullness of revelation not only *vis-à-vis* the Old Testament (which is true), but also *vis-à-vis* the false religions (which is false)—for this implies that the divine revelation is simply given *less* fully in the latter.

In other words, the whole universe of religions (pagan religions, but also the sects) could be in some way related "to the mystery of Christ"; the difference is that in the Catholic Church the revelation is found in its fullness, whereas, in the other religious "belief," it is not full, but more or less incomplete. In pagan religions, therefore, this whole universe of religions

"...serves as a preparation for the Gospel and can only be understood in reference to Christ, the Word who took flesh by the power of the Spirit, 'so that as perfectly human he would save all human beings and sum up all things'" [*Redemptor missio*, §29] (§12).

So Christ recapitulates all religions, i.e., the true religion and the false religions! Having made this obligatory link with Christ (and His Church), which actually usurps the dogma "*Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*" the Declaration thinks it has protected the "unicity and salvific universality of the mystery of Christ and the Church"!

The Fundamental Ambiguity

As regards pagan religions, the perspective is mistaken at the outset because of an erroneous view of their belief:

If faith is the acceptance in grace of revealed truth, which "makes it possible to penetrate the mystery in a way that allows us to understand it coherently" [*Fides et Ratio*, §§31,32], then belief, in the other religions, is that sum of experience and thought that constitutes the human treasury of wisdom and religious aspiration, which man in his search for truth has conceived and acted upon in his relationship to God and the Absolute (§7).

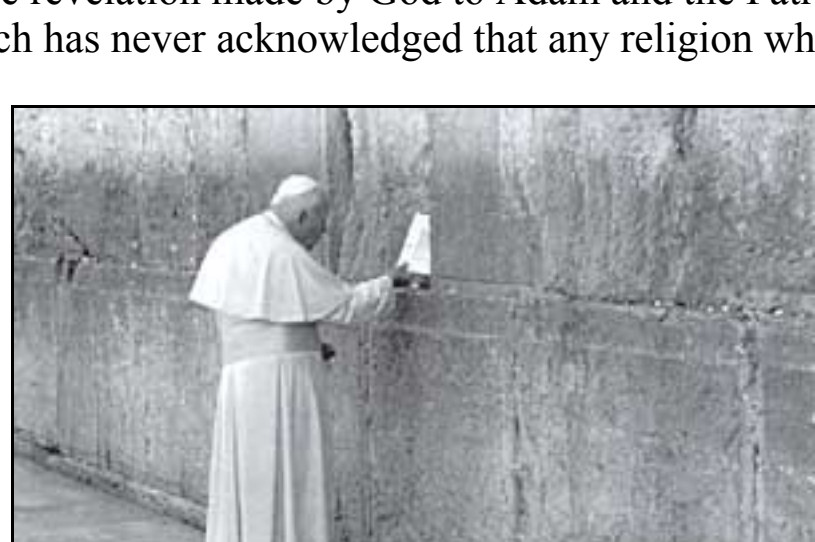
This would suggest that man, down the centuries, has done nothing other than search for the truth, given that in virtue of his natural disposition he is orientated towards the absolute and the divine; whereas, on the contrary, the history of religions shows us man's apostasy, right from the earliest revelation. We see a gradual falling-away, in all peoples, from the original monotheism.¹ Two things that are not mentioned in the document—as in the most emphatic naturalism—are the work of the devil (who is never spoken about) and the consequences of original sin.

The "human treasury of wisdom and religious aspiration" recalls a certain Wednesday catechism audience at the Vatican when we were told that,

the different religions arise from man's primordial openness to the notion of God. Not infrequently we find that their founders, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, underwent a most profound religious experience.

According to this naturalist and immanentist perspective (which we have already refuted on other occasions² and which is not directly the subject of this study), the false religions—which are a fruit, not of man's "openness," but of his primordial closed-ness towards God and of the human perversion which it entailed—must be treated "with sincere respect" by the Church.

If the Church's highest authorities were to examine these religious beliefs in the light of Holy Scripture and Tradition, they would deny them all respect, as the Church has always done. They would see "the human treasury of wisdom and religious aspiration"-or the few swamped and distorted truths which it contains—for what it really is: either a fruit of the natural light of reason, or the remains of the primitive revelation made by God to Adam and the Patriarchs, or else borrowings [*i.e.*, theft], down the centuries, from the definitive revelation of Jesus Christ.³ That is why the Church has never acknowledged that any religion whatsoever has a single truth to call its own.



The "Sacred" Books of Pagan Religions Are Also Inspired—Or, Almost

In §7 the Declaration rediscovers the distinction (which had been obliterated for decades) between theological faith, "by which men freely entrusts his entire self to God, offering the full submission of

intellect and will to God who reveals and freely assenting to the revelation given by him," and "belief (human and erroneous) in the other religions. We have already seen that this "belief" is presented in an absolutely positive light in the Declaration. In the following section (§8) there is an attempt to bridge this "gulf between human and divine revelation, between fallen nature and what is supernatural.

By going directly to speak of the hypothesis of the "inspired value of the sacred writings of other religions," the Declaration neglects the opportunity to repeat clearly that it is only the sacred books of Christianity which are inspired. It is merely said that "The Church's tradition...reserves [*sic*] the designation of inspired texts" to the Old and New Testaments, adding that:

Nevertheless, God, who desires to call all peoples to himself in Christ and to communicate to them the fullness of his revelation and love, "does not fail to make himself present in many ways, not only to individuals, but also to entire peoples through their spiritual riches, of which their religions are the main and essential expression even when they contain "gaps, insufficiencies and errors" [*Redemptoris Missio*, §55]. Therefore, the sacred books of other religions, which in actual fact direct and nourish the existence of their followers, receive from the mystery of Christ the elements of goodness and grace which they contain (§8).

Behind the diplomatic circumlocutions there is clearly an attempt to recognize the "sacred books" of the false religions as enjoying some kind of inspiration, like that of Sacred Scripture, even if "less intense" or inferior in degree. This is because God is supposed to make himself "present" in some unspecified way by means of these religions, and their "sacred" books "receive from the mystery of Christ the elements of goodness and grace" [*sic*] which "direct and nourish the existence of their followers." A little earlier we read that, by means of these "elements...countless people throughout the centuries have been and still are able today to nourish and maintain [*sic*] their life-relationship with God." In short, pagan beliefs constitute *quasi-Christian* religions (as we shall see), and their "sacred" texts, contrary to what was always said and should always be said, are quasi-inspired.

This optimistic and unrealistic view of pagan religions *contradicts* what the Church, on the basis of Holy Scripture and Tradition, has always taught, and what the *Catechism of Saint Pius X* explains and summarizes, quite simply, in its *Short History of Religion*: since man's end is supernatural,

one can understand...that from the beginning, religion had to be revealed, that is to say, taught by God to man.

In fact, God revealed religion to Adam and to the first Patriarchs that followed him...until the day when God formed to Himself a people who conserved this primitive religion until the coming of the Savior Jesus Christ, the Word of God incarnate. Jesus did not destroy it, but rather He completed it, perfected it, and confided its keeping to the Church for all time.

The history of religion, as it blends, so to speak, with the history of mankind, proves [man's need of a religion revealed directly by God]. It is clear, consequently, that all that bears the name of religion besides the one true religion revealed by God, are inventions of men and deviations from the Truth, of which some contain certain fragments, but united to many lies and absurdities.

Incoherences

If the Declaration (§8) presents us with a Christ who bestows "elements of goodness and grace" even upon the "sacred" books of the pagans (Moslems, Hindus and others), it is hard to see how (§9) it is possible to condemn those theological reflections (which are merely "more advanced," but also, in their error, are more logical) which present Christ as a historical figure "who reveals the divine not in an exclusive way, but in a way complementary with other revelatory and salvific figures."

It seems to us, in fact, that the necessary consequence of the view taken by §8 is precisely to include Christ among the "other revelatory and salvific figures," even if they are inferior to Him and dependent on Him (but not excluded from Him, as § 14 clearly says—which we shall examine shortly). This subordination can safeguard Christ's primacy (Christ has no need of secondary roles) and the exhaustive character of His work (Christ has no need of "complementary" ways; but it cannot safeguard His "exclusivity" and hence His "unicity"-if these words are to mean anything.

The conclusion of §10 also seems to involve contradiction: here it is urged that,

...the theory which would attribute, after the incarnation as well, a salvific activity to the *Logos* as such in his divinity, exercised "in addition to" or "beyond" the humanity of Christ, is not compatible with the Catholic faith.

In fact, salvific activity of the *Logos* "in addition to or beyond the humanity of Christ, after the incarnation as well" is affirmed by the same Declaration when it tells us that "God does not fail to make himself present," not only to each individual, but also to peoples "through" their false religions—here again with the habitual, imprecise reference to the "mystery of Christ." We see, therefore, that this Declaration, from the highest Roman Congregation, is profoundly contradictory at the very point where it wanted to show greatest firmness.

An Unheard-Of Novelty

As usual, the defense of the "unicity and salvific universality of the mystery of Jesus Christ and the Church" is in fact gravely undermined by the desire to promote—even at the price of truth—the "*causa unionis*" not only with the denominations which call themselves Christian, but also with all religious beliefs.

This ecumenical intention is clearly expressed in §14:

Bearing in mind this article of faith, theology today, in its reflection on the existence of other religious experiences and on their meaning in God's salvific plan, is invited to explore if and in what way the historical figures and positive elements of these religions may fall within the divine plan of salvation. In this undertaking, theological research has a vast field of work under the guidance of the Church's magisterium. The Second Vatican Council, in fact, has stated that: "the unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude, but rather gives rise to a manifold cooperation which is but a participation in this one source" [*Lumen Gentium*, §62].

The content of this participated mediation should be explored more deeply.

As we see, Vatican II and the documents which followed in its wake have manufactured a continuity between Christ and pagan belief, obliterating the gulf which had been pointed out by the Magisterium hitherto. Instead of being viewed as adversaries and enemies, the false religions are placed, as at Assisi, alongside Christ and in *continuity* with Him.

As a result, the document does not wish to repeat, firmly and univocally, that there is only one way of salvation, i.e., that established by Christ in His Church. Instead it gives us to understand, through its *equivocations*, that we must admit that "historical figures and positive elements of these [other] religions may fall within the divine plan of salvation," and that, according to Vatican II, the false religions can be seen to exercise "a manifold cooperation" and even a "participated mediation" in the one mediatorship of Christ. There is one reservation, however: these "participated forms of mediation...cannot be understood as parallel or complementary to his." In fact, the concept of parallel [equal] complementarity is very different from that of participated [subordinate] mediation.

This concept of participated, subordinate mediation has always been intrinsic to the Catholic religion. What is new in the Declaration, and what is unheard-of in the Catholic religion, is that this participated mediation is now no longer reserved to the Most Blessed Virgin, the Saints and the members of the Mystical Body, but extended to all the false religions (the sects and the pagan religions). This is in harmony with the "new theology," which no longer understands the Mystical Body to be coextensive with the visible Church (plus the individual exceptions in the case of souls united to the Church "*in voto*," by implicit and explicit desire), but broadens and expands Christ's Mystical Body to embrace all humanity with all its false religious beliefs.

The fundamental concept of ecumenism can be reduced to this: "All religions are orientated to salvation, which is one, and is of Christ. These religions are ranked according to each one's degree of participation in the fullness of truth and salvation which is found in its highest degree in Christ and his Church." This is the basis supporting the superstructure of the Declaration *Dominus Jesus*, and we cannot see in what way it differs from the thesis of Modernism, namely, that God reveals Himself "in the life of all the religions, individually and collectively, but most of all in the life of Christianity" (George Tyrrell, *Per la sincerità in Rinnovo* [For Sincerity in the Renewal] July-Aug. 1907).

Discipulus

1. See, for example, W. Schmidt, *Manuale di Storia comparata delle religioni*: [*Manual of religions*] (Brescia, 1938), and, R. Boccassino, *La religione dei primitivi* [*Primitive religion*], in *Storia delle Religioni* [*History of Religions*] by Fr. Tacchi Ventura.

2. See *Courrier de Rome*, January 2000, pp.4-6, "*L'Esprit-Saint à l'origine des...fausses religions*."

3. See *Courrier de Rome*, September 1997, pp.1ff