

## FR HUNWICKE ON VATICAN II & *DIGNITATIS HUMANAЕ*

This paper is dedicated to the memory of the seventy bishops who refused to approve *Dignitatis Humanae*.

In October, English commentator, Fr John Hunwicke, in his blogsite *Fr Hunwicke's Mutual Enrichment* [<http://liturgicalnotes.blogspot.com.au/>] commented on the book of Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre entitled "They have uncrowned Him" (translation of *Ils L'ont découronné*, Fideliter, 1987), in five tranches. In nn. 3 to 5, he dealt with the authority of the Second Vatican Council and of the Declaration on Religious Freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae*, 7<sup>th</sup> December, 1965, in a manner which did little to assist a correct understanding of either, or of the part played by Pope Paul VI.

Before offering our criticisms, let us insist on some principles which no theologian should think himself free to ignore.

1. The first principle of reason, on which all others rely, is the principle of non-contradiction, that it is not licit to affirm and to deny the same about the same element of reality.
2. Truth is determined by reality not by assertion no matter how eminent those doing the asserting. The poison of the age which maintains the contrary is subjectivism.
3. When the Church formally determines an issue of faith or morals in line with *Pastor Aeternus* that definition is not open to rejection or alteration by a later pope, council or bishop.
4. A contradiction of the Church's teaching is not a development of that teaching.
5. Conduct which contradicts assertion renders the assertion meaningless.
6. 'Religious liberty' is a concept which signifies different realities in different contexts ; to use it without distinction leads to error.
7. While the Church has laid down the conditions that must be fulfilled for teaching of a pope to be infallible she has not yet set forth the conditions that guarantee that a council of the Church's bishops is a general or ecumenical council.

### *History*

We begin with some background. On 8<sup>th</sup> December 1864, in the *Syllabus of Errors* attached to his encyclical *Quanta Cura*, Pius IX formally condemned this proposition—

"Every man is free to embrace and profess that religion which, led by the light of reason, he thinks to be the true religion." [n. 15]

The authority with which he pronounced this (and other) condemnations do not admit of cavil or contradiction. He said:

"We, truly mindful of Our Apostolic duty, and especially solicitous about our most holy religion, about sound doctrine and the salvation of souls divinely entrusted to Us, and about the good of human society itself, have decided to lift our voice again. And so all and each evil opinion and doctrine individually mentioned in this letter, by Our Apostolic authority We reject, proscribe and condemn; and We wish and command that they be considered as absolutely rejected, proscribed and condemned by all the sons of the Catholic Church."

Just six years later in *Pastor Aeternus*, the bishops of the Vatican Council defined as dogma, that is, as revealed by God, that the Pope speaks infallibly when, 1) speaking *ex cathedra*, that is, carrying out his

duty as pastor and teacher of all Christians; 2) in accordance with his supreme apostolic authority; 3) he explains a doctrine of faith or morals; 4) to be held by the universal Church. Each of these four conditions was fulfilled in *Quanta Cura*, as analysis of the above statement shows.

In various papers on this website (to be found under the title in the index *Religious Freedom*) we have elaborated on the rejection of Pius IX's infallible condemnation by Paul VI publicly in an address to the General Assembly of the United Nations on 5<sup>th</sup> October 1965 and by the assembled bishops of the Second Vatican Council, and on the folly of the view that either of these actions has served to change the teaching of the Catholic Church.

Let us now address various of the expressions used by Fr Hunwicke in his commentary.

**Pope John Paul's assertion that "religious liberty has been very useful for us in Poland"**

The expression 'religious liberty' means different things in different contexts. The use of the expression by Pope John Paul refers to its only licit meaning, the freedom of Catholics to practise and proclaim the faith established by God on earth, the Catholic faith, and the freedom to embrace it. This is the meaning used also by each of the popes who had preceded him, each of the popes cited by Bishop Emile de Smedt in his *relatio* to the assembled fathers of Vatican II. In our paper '*Religious Liberty*' & the Development of Doctrine (18<sup>th</sup> July 2010) we addressed the sophistry and special pleading de Smedt used in his endeavour to call the popes in aid of the subversive view that 'religious liberty' names a right which extends to all religions.

**The qualification recited in n.1 of *Dignitatis Humanae* "[that the burden of the document] leaves untouched traditional Catholic doctrine on the moral duty of men and of societies toward the true religion and toward the one Church of Christ" is effectual**

The qualification—

- breaches the principle of non-contradiction (for the body of the document *does contradict* the Church's insistence on the moral duty of men and societies toward the true religion and the one Church of Christ) ;
- demonstrates the force of the subjectivist principle in its insistence that the truth is determined by assertion (that *Dignitatis Humanae* leaves untouched traditional Catholic doctrine) rather than by the reality of the novel teaching to the contrary contained in that document ;
- effectively denies that this novel teaching is not contrary to Pius IX's condemnation *ipsissimis verbis* of the very concept it supports ;
- implies that this contradiction is somehow a development of the Church's teaching ;
- demonstrates the naivety of Pope Paul VI and the bishops who allowed themselves to be persuaded by his foolish device.

It is pleasing to see Fr Hunwicke appreciating the logical problem of treating a contradiction as 'a development' of doctrine, regrettable that he is unable to nail the error so as to reject the teaching as contradicting the Church's position. It is regrettable, too, to observe he is quite unable to see the shallowness of the Paul VI's attempt to allow the bishops to have their cake and eat it.

The sentence he cites was not "enormous(ly) importan(t)... for the process of achieving Conciliar consensus", nor was it "the most important statement within this whole Declaration", let alone the

*clavis aperiendi cetera.* Rather, it was an exercise in silliness, a poor logician's attempt to justify a contradiction. Deferring to the *spiritus mundi*, the Pope had himself compromised the Church's clear teaching on the topic publicly just two months prior.

**In practical terms, the difference between the new teaching of *Dignitatis humanae*, and the previous doctrine, is not great...**

This statement is great nonsense. The *practical* effect of the bishops' determinations in *Dignitatis Humanae* is to deny that there is one, and only one, true religion, the religion established by Jesus Christ. The assertion of adherence to the Church's claim to uniqueness was gainsaid by the whole thrust of *Dignitatis Humanae*, as it was compromised by the bishops' conduct during the Council.

The *practical* effect of the bishops' determinations is the abandonment of the claim of the rightful submission of states to the one true religion, an evil connived at by the Vatican and its functionaries thereafter. The *practical* effect of their determinations was the removal of the chief impediment to the atheistic mentality which served to facilitate the flood which now engulfs the world. In all the history of mankind there has been no age to compare with the present in its abandonment of belief in God. Responsibility for that abandonment lies with Paul VI and the bishops of Vatican II with their neglect of adherence to Catholic principle.

The *practical* effect of the bishops' determinations has been the silence ever since of popes, bishops, priests and religious in the face of rampant irreligion, with never a word to demonstrate the utter folly of atheism, of evolutionary theory and the materialism which underlies it ; never a word uttered in defence of God or His rights before an atheistic world.

**[I]t is so technical that those who can live without fine distinctions can certainly live without considering *this* fine distinction!**

This statement is as facile as the one that precedes it. Once one understands the Church's position on 'religious freedom', it follows that the declarations of the Council's bishops that "the human person has a right to religious freedom", that such a right "has its foundation in the very dignity of the human person", are nonsense, indeed Masonic nonsense. The Church's position was, and remains, that summarised by American theologian, Mgr John A Ryan in the following passage :

"The fact that an individual may in good faith think that his false religion is true gives no more right to propagate it than the sincerity of the alien anarchist entitles him to advocate his abominable political theories in the United States, or the perverted ethical notions of the dealer in obscene literature confers upon him the right to corrupt the morals of a community." (*Catholic Principles of Politics*, New York, 1940, pp. 317-8)

Once one understands *the Church's position*—as opposed to *the Council's bishops' position*—on the subject of 'religious liberty' he begins to realise that the assertion that Vatican II was an ecumenical or general council of the Church will not survive the demands of truth mandated by reality.

Michael Baker

15<sup>th</sup> November, 2016—*St Albert the Great*

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## APPENDIX

### Fr Hunwicke's Texts

#### They have uncrowned Him (3)

28 October 2016

When we turn from C S Lewis and Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre to the texts of Vatican II, I do not think we find a contradiction. In *Nostra aetate* the Council declared: "The Catholic Church rejects nothing which is true and holy in these religions". So far, it is in agreement with Lewis and Lefebvre; as it is when it goes on to say that the ethics and teachings of these religions "often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men. Indeed, [the Church] proclaims and must ever proclaim Christ, 'the way, the truth, and the life, in whom men find the fulness of religious life, and in whom God has reconciled all things to Himself'".

I propose now to speak frankly about the Second Holy Ecumenical Council of the Vatican.

(1) With regard *even to infallible* definitions of dogma by Ecumenical Councils and Roman Pontiffs, it is a commonplace that, while we are bound to accept them as of Divine Faith, we are not necessarily obliged to accept, on the same authority, the arguments which are offered to us in support of a dogma; or the prudential considerations which led to its definition. *A fortiori*, the same limitations apply to the documents of Vatican II. Because ...

(2) Vatican II, in any case, was *not* a Council which proposed infallibly any dogmas (except those which were already *de fide* by virtue of the previous Magisterium, such as the Immaculate Conception and Bodily Assumption of the Mother of God, the immorality of procured abortions, etc., etc., etc.). And ...

(3) Vatican II professed to be a *pastoral* Council. It is a statement of the obvious that pastoral needs (and implied audiences) can vary *toto caelo* between one generation and another, so that the pastoral observations of the Council will not be expected to speak as directly to successive generations as they might have done to the first half of the 1960s. Conciliar documents of Vatican II, very helpfully, themselves made this clear by referring to *mundus hodierni temporis* or the like; and the very document we are now considering makes the same point by its programmatic opening words *Nostra aetate*.

In the context of these observations, I can only say that, as far as I can see, this Decree of the Council deals with a subject of some complexity with an almost scandalously cheerful brevity. And it is woefully over-optimistic. For example, it addresses an implied audience of non-Christians who are keenly and with goodwill open to a positive evaluation by us of their own religions. It does not - for example - address a world (such as *our* world) in which very many who profess thus to understand their own faith see themselves as engaged in a Holy War to exterminate, by death or by conversion, those who hold our One True Catholic Faith. Accordingly, I regard as distinctively time-conditioned... well past their sell-by dates... passages such as "She [the Church] looks with sincere respect upon those ways of conduct and of life, those rules and teachings which, though differing in many particulars from what she holds and sets forth ...". And it is not so much the actual words of the Council which embarrass me as, firstly, its failure to give us some well-chosen observations about the errors of false religions ; secondly, its failure to give any guidance as to how we are to reconcile its new teaching with its own statement that the earlier Magisterium remains fully in force ; and, thirdly, what I might venture to call its body-language - what it seems *at first sight* to be saying ... until one looks more carefully.

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#### They have uncrowned Him (4)

I return now to what I mentioned in the first of my series: Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre's views about Christian and non-Christian Societies ... and, in particular, to the question raised in *Dignitatis humanae* about the 'rights of Error'. It is with regard to this Decree that a very distinguished Catholic theologian wrote, not very long ago,

that it "occasions a genuine difficulty for orthodox Catholics". And I begin with an anecdote of the Archbishop's which, I believe, goes to the heart of the problem. "Pope John Paul II made [this point] to me on the occasion of the audience that he granted to me on November 18, 1978 : 'You know', he said to me, 'religious liberty has been very useful for us in Poland, against communism'".

It is easy to put simply what the ambiguities are. If one is coming from a culture which has been oppressed for a quarter of a century by atheistic Stalinist Communism (and before that, by National Socialism), an obvious truth will prescribe: Religious Liberty must be upheld, therefore the state must cease to prevent Catholic Truth from being upheld. But, against the background of a Christendom State, as we saw it in my first piece, in which the constitution has upheld either explicitly or implicitly the just privileges of the One True Faith taught by the the One True Church, the same truth will receive the expression : Catholic Truth must be upheld, therefore the state must discourage the growth and even the existence of errors against the Truth upheld by the Catholic Church. It is not surprising that S John Paul II, the doughty and effective warrior against a dominant Marxism, and the battle-hardened French Missionary bishop from a background of cultural opposition to the inheritance of the the French Revolution, failed to see eye to eye. Yet those two outworkings of the same principle, for two different contexts, have the same message : Catholic Truth must be upheld. And I could understand that some people might go further and say that, since there are few, if any, Christendom states left, and an increasing number of states in which Catholic Truth is opposed or even persecuted by a new illiberal Secularism or by Islam, we must forget about the second outworking and, out of prudence, make a great deal of the first.

Fr Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange OP, about whom Fr Aidan Nichols has written a fine book, made this point in a passage which Mgr Lefebvre quotes with approva l: "We can... make of liberty of worship an argument *ad hominem* against those who, while proclaiming the liberty of worship, persecute the Church (secular and socialising states) or impede its worship (communist states, Islamic ones, etc.). This argument *ad hominem* is fair, and the Church does not disdain it, using it to defend effectively the right of its own liberty". So far, fair enough. [Those who do not know the real meaning of the phrase *Argumentum ad hominem* can read my articles *via* the search engine attached to this Blog; it does *not* mean "personal attack".]

But Garrigou-Lagrange goes on "But it does not follow that the freedom of cults, considered in itself, is maintainable for Christians *in principle*, because it is in itself absurd and impious : indeed, truth and error cannot have the same rights". Bang on, surely. Error cannot have rights. But it is not pedantic to observe that the writer is not so much concerned to deny *personal* liberties to *those who belong* to such cults as to deny it '*in principle*' to the errors asserted by the *cults*.

Here is the problem : Archbishop Lefebvre, and writers who agree with him, have no difficulty whatsoever in piling up quotations from Popes who wrote before the Council, to the effect that Error has no rights. And the Conciliar Declaration *Dignitatis humanae* begins with a section including the statement that "it leaves untouched traditional Catholic doctrine on the moral duty of men and of societies toward the true religion and toward the one Church of Christ" \*. But ... as the Council goes on to "develop" its teaching, it does get quite difficult to see how the so-called 'development' is not in fact a change. This development/change is said to be rooted in a natural right not to be coerced, which is inferred to exist because of the principle that "Man's response to God in Faith must be free."

*To be concluded*

\* The Conciliar *Acta* make clear the enormous importance of this sentence for the process of achieving Conciliar consensus. On November 19 1965 as many as 249 Fathers had voted *non placet* on the draft before them. At the final vote, on December 6, the number sank to 70 as the result of pressure put on many of the Fathers. Those who reluctantly changed their vote felt enabled to do so in good conscience because of the addition of this sentence as the result of a personal intervention by Pope Paul VI. It will be remembered that Conciliar decrees are expected to have the authority of a 'moral unanimity'. *Dignitatis humanae*, considered *without* the sentence added by the Pope, would be a document that lacked that necessary consensus. There is therefore a sense in which it is *the* most important statement within this whole Declaration, its *clavis aperiendi*

*cetera*. It is therefore reasonable to insist that whatever else the document may go on to say, must be understood fully in accordance with both the letter and the spirit of that earlier teaching of the Magisterium.

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## **They have uncrowned Him (5)**

31 October 2016

In *practical* terms, the difference between the new teaching of *Dignitatis humanae*, and the previous doctrine, is not great; it is so technical that those who can live without fine distinctions can certainly live without considering *this* fine distinction! Because, *in practice*, the settled principle of the Church was that states *may* legislate for religious liberty for everybody and are *not* obliged always to maintain laws oppressive to non-Catholic minorities. (I was interested to discover, at Avignon in the Papal States, a very fine synagogue built there when the French Kingdom, just across the Rhone, discouraged Jewish worship but the Papacy allowed it; and B Pius IX boasted to Mgr Dupanloup that Rome itself contained a Synagogue and a 'Protestant Temple'). The only disagreement concerns the theological *principle* upon which this freedom to pass laws guaranteeing religious liberty is based. We are *not* discussing whether a rigorously Catholic Parliament at Westminster would pass a law to prevent Methodists from expanding their over-packed chapels or whether a devoutly Catholic James XIV would feel obliged to Revoke whatever may be the British equivalent of the Edict of Nantes! S Bartholomew's Day need hold no terrors for our few surviving Presbyterians!

The 'fine distinction' is this. The Council declared that "the human person has a right to religious freedom". It went on to declare that "the right to religious freedom has its foundation in the very dignity of the human person". But the earlier Magisterium taught that the State - if it were a Catholic State - should "protect the citizens against the seductions of error, in order to keep the City in the unity of faith, which is the supreme good", and may regulate and moderate the public manifestations of other cults and defend its citizens against the spreading of false doctrines which, in the judgement of the Church, put their eternal salvation at risk". *This teaching* (I am quoting, incidentally, from the curial draft which was put before Vatican II but discarded) *went on, however, to say* that, because of Christian charity and prudence, a desire to draw dissidents to the Church by kindness, to avoid scandals or civil wars, to obtain civil cooperation and peaceful coexistence, "a just tolerance, even sanctioned by laws, can, according to the circumstances, be imposed".

In other words, non-Catholics in a Catholic state may and perhaps should for good reasons be *granted* an immunity from coercion. It is not, as the Council asserts, a natural right founded in the dignity of the human person.

There are clever ways round this problem. A Professor Thomas Pink argued that the earlier Magisterium did not in fact assign to the State the right to limit liberty; it took the view that the Church has her rights over those who through baptism are her subjects, so that, if the State *did* coerce, it was acting on behalf of the Church. In other words, within the assumptions of the Christendom State, which we considered in my first piece, the boundaries between Church and State are coterminous (except, habitually, for the Jews) and the problem of Religious Liberty arises only as this unity dissolves, gradually in the early modern period and catastrophically in the Age of Revolutions.

Another factor which should not be forgotten is that the Council admitted that Scripture provides no basis for novel teaching. *Indeed* it does not: the entire Old Testament is a consistent assertion of the corporate Judaism State, with nation and cult coterminous. This admission perhaps offers a way ahead. Here we have one of the many respects in which the life of the people of Israel before the Christian era, and belief in the Christendom State, are in close agreement. We have much to learn from our Hebrew inheritance. The integration of Scripture into this dialogue constitutes another piece of unfinished Conciliar business.

Furthermore, the curial draft (which Mgr Lefebvre helpfully provides at the end of his book) itself asserted that "the civil Authority is not permitted in any way to compel consciences to accept the faith revealed by God.

Indeed the faith is essentially free and cannot be the object of any constraint." This is not quite the same as to say that the right to religious freedom has its foundations in the dignity of the human person, but are not the two positions within reach of each other ?

What *must* be accepted is the Right of Christ to rule and the unlawfulness of secular legislation which contradicts his Law. Legislation against the will of God is legislation which the Christian is not simply not bound to obey; it is something which he is obliged to disobey. Christ is King and, as S Paul told the Philippians, our *politeuma* is from above. It will become all the more important to teach this and to preach it, as the social and legal framework of secular society becomes ever more, year by year, a grotesque and Diabolical inversion and parody of the *Civitas Dei*. Daily, they uncrown him. Thank God for every archbishop or bishop who has bravely made this point, for every priestly or lay society which has preached Christ as King.

## CONCLUSIONS

*(1) There can be no doubt that the newer elements in Dignitatis humanae are embodied in a Conciliar document ratified by the Roman Pontiff (and, according to his biographer, signed by Archbishop Lefebvre together with an overwhelming majority of the Fathers). But those who promote this teaching will be performing a suppressio veri deserving of grave censure if they fail to state, as the Council did, the abiding authority of the previously established teaching. Because:*

*(2) The same Council with the same authority reasserted the teaching of the previous Magisterium, without any qualification. Thus any suggestion that people, such as Mgr Lefebvre's followers, who continue to lay great emphasis upon the teaching of the previous Magisterium, are opposing the Magisterium of the Council and of the post-Conciliar Church, would itself be a clear denial of the Council's authority and would seem to me to merit a formal Magisterial correction.*

This is the context within which I commend Mgr Lefebvre's book\* (although, to be honest, not quite all its rhetorical hyperbole) as *essential* reading in pursuing tasks which the Council left incomplete.

\* Angelus Press and Carmel Books

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