

## THE CALL FOR THE BISHOPS TO ACT

It is notorious that in his public and private utterances and in his praxis, Pope Francis has taught theological and moral doctrines which contradict those of the Catholic Church.

A pope is open to filial correction for demonstrated error particularly where the evil effect of his words or actions is compounded by the example of bishops and clergy who side with him. Such correction was given publicly to Pope Francis in July 2017.<sup>1</sup> Now, after Easter 2019 on the feast of St Catherine of Siena (*in forma extraordinaria*), members of the faithful—clerical, religious and lay—have sought to stir the Church's bishops to action with their *Open Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church*.<sup>2</sup> The *Open Letter* accuses Pope Francis of various heresies and sets out the reasons for doing so. But nowhere does it accuse him of the most grievous heresy the Church has identified.

The Pope's *modus operandi* towards those who have called upon him to resile from the errors in which he has engaged, to exercise his office as Father of all the faithful, to issue public corrections and to adhere to the Church's teaching, has been silence, a refusal to respond. The arrogance implicit in such an attitude is typical of adherents of the heresy of Modernism. Pius X spoke of it in his encyclical *Pascendi Dominici gregis* (September 8, 1907):

“[P]ride sits in Modernism as in its own house, finding sustenance everywhere in its doctrines and lurking in its every aspect... [It is] pride which fills Modernists with the self-assurance by which they measure themselves and which they pose as the rule for all. It is pride which puffs them up with vainglory and allows them to regard themselves as the sole possessors of knowledge and makes them say, “We are not as the rest of men”. It leads them to embrace and to devise novelties even of the most absurd kind. It is pride which rouses in them the spirit of disobedience and causes them to demand a compromise between authority and liberty.” (n. 40)

Because of its reduction of the transcendent in the Catholic faith to the level of the mundane Pius X characterised Modernism as ‘the synthesis of all heresies’.

In *Pascendi* (n. 26) Pius X condemned Modernists for their theory of the development of doctrine:

“[T]hey lay down the general principle that in a living religion everything is subject to change, and must in fact be changed. And so they pass to what is practically their principal doctrine, namely, *evolution*. To the laws of evolution everything is subject... dogma, Church, worship, the Books we revere as sacred, even faith itself... [E]volution in the Church... is fed by the need of adapting itself to historical conditions and of harmonizing itself with existing forms of society...”

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<sup>1</sup> *Correctio filialis de Haeresibus propagatis*, July 16, 2017

<sup>2</sup> The letter may be viewed at <http://www.ncregister.com/images/uploads/open-letter.pdf>

This is what Pope Francis had to say in his discourse to the *International Union of Superiors General of Women Religious* in Rome on May 10, 2019:

“[T]he Church develops on her journey in fidelity to Revelation. We cannot change Revelation. It’s true Revelation develops... it develops with time. And we with time understand the faith better and better. The way to understand the faith today after Vatican II is different from the way of understanding the faith before Vatican II. Why? Because there is development of knowledge... because the very nature of Revelation is in continual development to clarify itself...”

He went on to misquote St Vincent of Lerins in support of his novel doctrine.

A further event had confirmed his Modernism, his execution with a Muslim Imam of a joint declaration on “Human Fraternity for World Peace and Cohabitation” on February 4, 2019. Robert de Mattei has remarked<sup>3</sup> how this declaration offers worship neither to the God of the Christians nor to the Muslims’ ‘Allah’ but to a secular divinity, *human fraternity*, “which embraces all men, unites them and renders them equal”. It professes the religious indifference condemned by Pope Leo XIII in the encyclical *Libertas praestantissimum* (June 20, 1888) as “a doctrinal system teaching that each is free to profess the religion he likes and even not to profess any religion at all”. (Let it be noted in passing how the errors proclaimed by the bishops of Vatican II in *Dignitatis Humanae* have come to fruition here.)

But of all the evils attributed to Pope Francis perhaps the pre-eminent one occurred back in June 2013 when he ordered the interruption of Mass which the Prefect of the *Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith*, Gerhard Cardinal Müller, was offering in the Church of Santa Monica in Rome so he could speak to him urgently. The Pope knew the Cardinal was offering Mass but insisted he be interrupted. This singular action reveals a fundamental flaw in the Pope’s theology, a failure to understand that when a priest offers Mass *it is Christ Himself Who is offering it*—offering Himself anew for the salvation of the world—and that no earthly considerations may be permitted to disturb Him. The Pope is Christ’s Vicar; he is there to serve. By this action Pope Francis reversed the order and made Christ serve him. His reduction of the Eternal Sacrifice to the level of a merely worldly action displayed his Modernism vividly.

One can apply to Modernists *mutatis mutandis* the teaching of Leo XIII in his encyclical *Humanum Genus* (April 20, 1884) concerning the works of Freemasons:

“[N]o matter how great may be men’s cleverness in concealment and their experience in lying, it is impossible to prevent the effects of any cause from showing, in some way, the intrinsic nature of the cause whence they come. *A good tree cannot produce bad fruit nor a bad tree produce good fruit.* [Matt. 7: 18] ...”<sup>4</sup>

And it can be said of Modernism as he says of Freemasonry that it “produces fruits that are pernicious and of the bitterest savour”.

Those who have had dealings with Modernists understand how appropriate it is to apply to them words uttered by St John Vianney of the Jansenists: “They cannot be

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<sup>3</sup> *The Most Terrible Schism the World has ever seen*, Corrispondenza Romana, May 1, 2019; cf. <https://rorate-caeli.blogspot.com/2019/05/de-mattei-most-terrible-schism-world.html#more>

<sup>4</sup> *Humanum Genus* (20.4.1884), n. 10.

converted”.<sup>5</sup> Modernists fulfil the *Gnostic* definition perfectly: they know better than Christ and His Church. A case study of a Modernist and of his bloody-minded attitude to charitable correction may be found in the interchanges between Herbert Cardinal Vaughan and Fr George Tyrell S.J. in the early twentieth century.<sup>6</sup>

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The *Open Letter* has provoked a variety of responses among theologians and Catholic commentators, some in favour, some with qualified endorsement, and some opposed. These have been summarized by Dr Peter Kwasniewski, one of the *Open Letter's* signatories, in an article: *When Creeping Normalcy Bias protects a Chaotic Pope*.<sup>7</sup>

The question for our consideration is this: Is the *Open Letter* an appropriate exercise in the circumstances?

A good place to start is with a paper published by Bishop Athanasius Schneider, Auxiliary Bishop of Kazakhstan, in March 2019.<sup>8</sup> The good Bishop's thesis is that one must leave intervention “in the rare and delicate case” of an heretical pope to Divine Providence. He says, and rightly, that the Pope has his appointment from God and not from the bishops of the Church. It belongs to God then, he argues, to see to his correction or removal. His paper is addressed primarily at those tempted to seek to remove the Pope by adopting the error of Conciliarism. But its warning extends to those, such as the signatories of the *Correctio Filialis*, who assert that a gathering of the Church's bishops has the power to convict a pope of heresy and, having done so, to call on the cardinals to elect a replacement. His paper argues against any attempt on the part of the bishops or of the faithful to intervene.

One does not know how Almighty God deals with the consequences of errors propounded by his Vicar on earth but considered objectively the Pope's errors are leading souls to hell. If one follows Bishop Schneider's argument to its conclusion there is nothing apart from prayer that the faithful are entitled to do in an endeavour to heal the rift in the Church the Pope has precipitated.

His approach is founded on two premises one of which, it is respectively suggested, is erroneous and the other of doubtful validity. The erroneous one is that we are justified in leaving resolution of the crisis (for such it is) to Almighty God. God gave man intellect and will to use in His service and He expects us to use them. In confronting evil we should pray as if everything depended on God and act—within the law—as if everything depended on ourselves. The premise of doubtful validity is that the case of an heretical pope occurs only rarely. This may have been the case in the past: it is unlikely to be the case for the foreseeable future.

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<sup>5</sup> The Curé of Ars was not stating here an absolute principle—for it is Catholic teaching that no matter how far a man may be immersed in evil, he is yet redeemable—but a practical one.

<sup>6</sup> See, for instance, Valentine Moran, ‘Father Tyrell and the Censorship of His Writings’, 1989 *Chesterton Review*, Vol. XV, nn.1-2, p.95 et seq.

<sup>7</sup> May 8, 2019 : cf. <https://onepeterfive.com/normalcy-bias-chaotic-pope/>

<sup>8</sup> *On the Question of an Heretical Pope*, March 29, 2019, *Rorate Coeli*

Papa Bergoglio was elected by a cadre of cardinals appointed by Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI. The nescience of, or refusal to acknowledge, Catholic principle by a majority of these appointees is demonstrated by the incompetent they chose for the office of Supreme Pastor. Since his election Pope Francis has appointed seventy five cardinals. Given his Modernist proclivities, one can reasonably expect that the college is now nicely stacked to ensure that the 'Franciscan' policies will be pursued by his successors. In the absence of a revolt by the Church's bishops against Pope Francis's abuses nothing is likely to prevent the cardinals electing, as his successor, another and worse Modernist. Anyone who doubts the possibility should peruse the recent attack by a number of Italian bishops, including Pietro Cardinal Parolin, Vatican Secretary of State, on Italian Interior Minister Matteo Salvini for invoking God and the Blessed Virgin and appealing to Italy's Christian roots at a recent rally as 'an exploitation of religion'. These prelates are not Catholics.

The first consideration and duty of the bishops of the Church is the salvation of souls—*salus animarum suprema lex*—a duty which extends to the removal of scandals which may lead to their eternal loss. The bishops are bound at least, then, to point out publicly the Church's doctrine on each of the issues on which the Pope has caused such scandals. More, they are bound to correct the Pope by disagreeing publicly with his views even at the peril of removal from office. Bishops wear red because their predecessors were martyrs for the faith. They must be prepared to do the same. What is removal from office when compared with martyrdom?

The practical problem for the faithful is that for fifty years, the years since Vatican II introduced its novelties, the bishops of the Catholic Church throughout the world have been ineffectual. The principal instrumental cause of this debility is the increased authority given by Rome to regional Episcopal conferences. A bishop may be willing to stand up publicly for Catholic principle but peer group pressure renders him effete. American commentator George Weigel put the issue succinctly, if inadequately, when he remarked: "When shepherds become flocks, shepherds become sheep and something in the nature of a shepherd is lost"<sup>9</sup>.

The faithful in Australia are witnessing a fair instance of this Episcopal paralysis at the moment. An Australian professional Rugby player, Israel Folau, a Tongan and a member of the Protestant Assemblies of God Pentecostal Church, said publicly that he did not support 'gay marriage'<sup>10</sup>. He did not hide his religious views and, when pressed on social media to say what God's plan for homosexuals was he responded, "Hell... unless they repent of their sins and turn to God". He was berated publicly for his views. He was denounced by *Rugby Australia* which brought proceedings against him for breaching that organisation's 'Code of Conduct' whose 'inclusiveness' policy prevented comment by any contracted player which was critical of the sexually perverted. Folau's views are the views of Christ and of His

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<sup>9</sup> *The Courage to be Catholic*, New York, 2002, p. 214.

<sup>10</sup> The expression is a neologism invented by the homosexual lobby in an attempt to legitimize their perversion.

Church; yet no Australian bishop has uttered one word in support of him. Our bishops are terrified of standing up publicly for Catholic theological and moral principle out of deference for worldly opinion.

When the bishops of Vatican II embraced the secular they effectively neutered themselves and neutered their successors. In abandoning insistence on adherence to Catholic principle as necessary for the salvation of all men they encouraged the flourishing of atheism and its deadly mentality on a scale unprecedented in world history. *Circumspicite!*

In conclusion, then, we may say that not only was the *Open Letter* an appropriate exercise, it was a necessary one. Signatories of the *Open Letter* have expressed doubts as to whether their efforts will have much effect. Let us give them our support by having Masses offered and by praying and fasting for the intention that it may bear fruit in the stirring of just one bishop to action.

All that is needed is for *one bishop* to break ranks against the Pope's heretical stands, for one bishop, moved by the Holy Spirit to understand why it is that he wears red, to speak.

Michael Baker

May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019—*Our Lady Help of Christians, Patroness of Australia*