

## THE SSPX AND COVID-19 VACCINATIONS

We reproduce in the Appendix the opinion of moral theologian Fr Arnaud Sélégny published on the United States website of the *Society of St Pius X* addressing the moral licitness of receiving vaccines against effects of the Corona virus where such vaccines are tainted with elements (in their content or their testing) derived from the bodies of aborted infants.<sup>1</sup> The opinion was published on November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020 and re-published with revisions on December 4<sup>th</sup> following.

Fr Sélégny's opinion is flawed. He confuses the categories of the philosophy of materialism with those of metaphysics, the order of time with the order of reality and the evil of the use of elements stolen from the body of an aborted infant with the child's abortion.

### *Metaphysical Principles*

The Church's moral theology reflects her adoption, since before the Council of Trent, of Aristotle's metaphysics through the hands of her Common Doctor, St Thomas Aquinas. The constitution of the world, of the universe, cannot be rightly understood through explanations that are limited to the merely physical. The mind must plumb their depths. Aristotle demonstrates that there are four causes of every thing and of every action a man performs: *final* cause (end intended), *efficient* cause (the agent acting), *formal* cause (the character that conforms the act to the end) and *material* cause (what is done). We see a man in a field acting strangely, waving his arm around, and we ask 'What is he doing?' We know what he is doing *materially*. What we want to know is what he is doing *formally*, which reduces to this: *why he is doing what he is doing*. The material cause is *what is done*, what is available. The formal cause exemplifies *why it is done* and determines the nature of the act.

It will be plain to the reader that the terms 'form' and 'matter', and 'formal cause' and 'material cause', are not to be understood as they are used in modern speech. They are technical terms; metaphysical terms. It is an inevitable consequence of the immersion of teachers and students of St Thomas's philosophy in a world accustomed to the facile categories of materialism that a true understanding of Aristotle's doctrine will be compromised. This is particularly the case with what metaphysics means when it speaks of the material cause.

The reason is that of all the causes the material cause is the hardest to understand. This arises from the fact that prime matter, the 'stuff' that underlies all material things, is *per se* unknowable. St Thomas says that we know God in this life by what He is like, by what He is not, and by what He is more than. (*Summa Theologiae* I, q. 12) In contrast, we know prime matter only by what it is like, by what it is not, and by what it is less than. Prime matter is *like* the material things in which it is found, is *not any of* the material things in which it is found, and is *less than any of* the material things in which it is found. God is pure act: prime matter, in contrast, is pure potency, pure 'can-be-ness'. It can be anything.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://sspx.org/en/news-events/news/it-morally-permissible-use-covid-19-vaccine-62290>

When we come to speak of the material cause of an action, we are using the term ‘material’ analogously, but our usage reflects the metaphysical sense of *matter* as something essentially amorphous—in the sense of formless—as, in the realm of physical being, prime matter is utterly formless. The concern of the moral theologian is the extent to which the act of one man (the co-operator) may prove to be *matter* for the form of another man’s act. Take the instance of the man out in the field. Let’s say an agent decides to use this man’s conduct as instrumental in his own malicious intent to harm an enemy. He phones him and asks him to ring the enemy’s number on a pretext. The agent knows (since he has contrived it) that the ringing of the phone will set off an explosion. The act of the co-operator is *matter* for the agent’s act; he is involved materially, though unwittingly, in the agent’s evil.

Consider the taxi driver carrying two women in his cab to a hospital. One of them is intending to undergo an abortion. The taxi driver is assisting her though he does not know it. In the course of the journey, however, he overhears conversation between the two which reveals the reason for the journey. He now knows that his own act is contributing materially to a most grievous evil. Does he continue with his driving, or does he bring the cab to a halt? All he wants is to earn a living by carrying customers. He is not interested in other people’s actions, whether they be good or evil, but he is caught up in this evil action willy-nilly. He finds he is cooperating materially. Is his material cooperation *proximate* to the evil end, or is it *remote* from it, so that it need not trouble his conscience? The term ‘proximate’ has nothing to do with time: it has nothing to do with place. It refers to moral involvement in the evil intended by the agent. (Cf. the treatment of the principles by Don Pietro Leone, *Chains of Evil* at reference below.<sup>2</sup>) The taxi driver’s material contribution is clearly proximate to the agent’s end because he is delivering the victim for the abortion. He cannot continue.

Let us return to the point about a right understanding of Aristotle’s doctrine of causality. There are two perils (at least) for modern teachers of metaphysics. The first is that they will think that the material cause of an action is, in a measure, determinative of the effect. *It is not*. The material cause, whether in a thing or in an action, *never* determines. It is only ever *what is determined*, as is shown in the illustrations given above. The second peril has already been mentioned; that they may allow the categories of the philosophy of materialism reflected in modern speech to compromise a right understanding of the metaphysical realities. Both of these shortcomings appear in Fr Sélégný’s treatment of the issues under discussion.

Thus, cooperation is not distinguished adequately into *formal*, *immediate* and *mediate*, as he asserts, but into *formal* and *material*. The categories *mediate* and *immediate* have to do with means, and means have to do with the end, or *final* cause, of an act. The final cause establishes the formal cause, exemplified in the maxims *every man acts on account of an end*, and *formality follows finality*: in homely language this can be expressed as ‘why something is determines what that thing is’, and ‘why someone does something determines what he is doing’. Hence,

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<sup>2</sup> See Don Pietro Leone, *Chains of Evil*, <https://rorate-caeli.blogspot.com/2021/04/don-pietro-leone-chains-of-evil.html#more>

any consideration of mediacy or immediacy in the context of cooperation relates not to *material* cooperation but to *formal* cooperation which is irrelevant in the present debate for we are only concerned with *material* cooperation.

As an aside, however, let it be noted that mediacy or immediacy relative to some evil end does not affect the culpability of the principal. David used Joab as a means to contrive the death of Uriah the Hittite that he might have his wife. Pope Francis used Cardinal Müller's secretary (in 2013) as a means to interrupt the Cardinal's celebration of Mass to meet his (the Pope's) convenience. Both principals were culpable. However, mediacy or immediacy does affect *the degree of culpability* of one cooperating. The nurse assisting the abortionist cooperates immediately, the attendant who prepares the surgery mediately. Both are culpable but in differing degrees. If, for the sake of argument, we allow that each of Joab and Cardinal Müller's secretary intended the same end as his principal, each cooperated formally and immediately in the evil act and shared in its culpability, but not to the extent of the principal.

The modern world, dominated by materialism's simplistic explanations, uses materialism's terminology. We are all of us infected with the habit and find ourselves using the term 'material' as if it signified 'relevant', 'essential' or 'indispensable', its synonyms in modern speech, when in philosophical terms the material is the least component of any physical reality. Fr Sélégný replaces the metaphysical terms *proximate* and *remote* with terms 'close' and 'distant' which reflect a material or physical view. The metaphysical terms have to do with moral involvement. Time and place are involved only accidentally.

The writer has taken the liberty of adding annotations in sans serif bold type to the opinion of Fr Sélégný reproduced in the Appendix so as to point up the differences between his approach and one that accords with the Church's constant teaching. The following extract, however, deserves particular attention. He writes:

"The doctor who vaccinates a patient, or the patient who is vaccinated, has only distant cooperation, for these acts only encourage and promote the sin of abortion in a very remote and very slight way..."

In this sentence he confuses the chronological order with the ontological, the evil of use of cells stolen from the body of an aborted infant with his abortion, and the sin of proximate material cooperation in present evil with the sin of scandal occasioned in doing so.

The cooperation in evil of doctor and patient in vaccination is not 'distant', as if it related to another time and place: it is present. The evil on which they are engaged is not the abortion of the infant but the use of elements stolen from his body thereafter.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, their engagement in this evil has a scandalous consequence: it teaches the innocent that despite the fact that abortion is an intrinsic evil ravaging society, one may make some allowance for it. This complacency undermines the trenchant resistance to it which ought to characterise the attitude of every Catholic and every man of good will. Contrary to Fr Sélégný's assertion this

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<sup>3</sup> It relates to the abortion only *per accidens*. The abortion is a *conditio sine qua non* of their action.

offers support to the scourge of abortion in modern society, a present evil, in a manner which is neither remote nor slight.

#### *Application of the Principle of the Double Effect*

It is remarkable that Fr Sélégny's opinion is silent on the application of the *principle of the double effect*. This principle, implicit in the teaching of St Thomas and apparently settled by the Dominican John of St Thomas (1589-1644),<sup>4</sup> establishes four conditions precedent to the morality of certain acts. According to authors Fr John C Ford SJ and Fr Gerald Kelly SJ Pius XII invoked the principle in addresses he gave to haematologists and urologists in the 1950s to answer various moral problems.<sup>5</sup> The principle states:

It is not lawful to do an act wherefrom flow two effects, the one good, the other evil, unless four conditions are fulfilled. First, the act is a good act, or at least morally neutral; second, the good lost by the evil effect is not greater than the good of the good effect; third, good and evil effects flow, at worst, with equal immediacy, but never the evil effect prior to the good; and fourth, the good effect alone is intended.

*The act is a good act or at least morally neutral.* The act of suffering injection is not like eating or drinking which, since they are natural acts, are inherently good. *Prima facie* being injected with a drug falls within the category of the *violent* and is evil because what is violent is against the inclination of nature. Suffering an injection is only redeemed to the level of the *artificial*, and the good, when it can be established that it is done for a reason which is objectively good because, as St Thomas reminds us, moral acts take their species according to what is intended. (*Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 64, a. 7)<sup>6</sup> There are at least two reasons why the assertion is false that suffering an injection with a tainted vaccine is an act which is morally good or morally neutral.

First, the quality of the act is specified by the chemical to be injected. Thus, if the chemical is heroin, its objectively harmful nature would disallow any assertion that the injection was a good act because the drug is harmful to both body and soul. Here, what is proposed is injection of a vaccine whose provenance involves objective cooperation by the subject in moral evil. I say 'objective' because what the one being injected may think about his involvement is irrelevant.

The second reason goes to the end of the injection. If it be said that it is reasonable because the act is done to protect one's health and/or the (collective) health of the community, the objection must be faced that health is not an absolute value. A greater good, the common good of society, may deny the entitlement to its preservation because, as St Thomas teaches, unless a man be well proportionate to the common good he cannot be good (I-II, q. 92, a. 1, ad

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<sup>4</sup> *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 64, a. 7, where St Thomas addresses the lawfulness of killing another in self defence. I am relying on secondary authorities for the assertion that it was formulated by John of St Thomas.

<sup>5</sup> *Contemporary Moral Theology, Vol. II, Marriage Questions*, Westminster Maryland, 1964, p 325.

<sup>6</sup> On the definitions of the natural, the violent and the artificial and their inter-relationship, see A. M. Woodbury S.M., Ph.D, S.T.D. *Ethics*, (Centre for Thomistic Studies, Sydney) n. 79. Access to the text may be obtained via the website [austinwoodbury.com](http://austinwoodbury.com)

3), and St Alphonsus says a man may be obliged to put his life in danger for the sake of the common good. (*Moral Theology*, Bk. I, Treat. 2, ch. iv, dub. ii, n. 3) A vaccine that depends on elements of the body of a murdered child is *eo ipso* in breach of the common good, for implicit in its contrivance as in its use is the thesis that a person, an end in himself, body and immortal soul, may be reduced to the level of a means for the welfare of others. It offends logic and moral principle to claim that one may serve the common good by an act that entails its breach.

Accordingly, injection with a tainted vaccine cannot survive the demands of this threshold condition. For greater caution, however, let us look at the other three conditions.

*The good lost by the evil effect is not greater than the good of the good effect.* The good effect is the preservation of the health of the subject—a relative value, not an absolute one. The good lost is the harm to the soul of the subject through engagement in proximate material cooperation in an immoral act—an absolute value since it bears upon his eternal destiny. The good gained (allegedly) is temporal. The good lost is eternal. This condition is not met.

*Good and evil effects must flow at worst with equal immediacy, but not the evil effect prior to the good.* If one assumes that the vaccine will be effective in preserving the health of the subject, the good effect may be taken to flow from the moment of injection—‘immediacy’ here does not refer to time, for the good effect will not occur straight away; it refers to the order of reality, for the good effect is ensured from the event which precipitates it. The evil effect, the usage of the tainted vaccine, occurs at the same moment. Accordingly, one may assume that this condition is met. There will be doubt as to whether it can be met, however, if the effectiveness of the vaccine is no more than speculative, or if it will give rise to concomitant harm, of which there is plenty of objective evidence. *The good effect alone is intended.* This condition may be regarded as met. It follows that injection with a tainted vaccine cannot be morally justified.

#### *A Moral Example*

There is an historical example of resistance to cooperation in an intrinsic evil similar to the one under consideration. In 1972 there occurred in the South American Andes the crash of a Uruguayan Airforce Fairchild FH-227 that left the survivors of 45 passengers and crew stranded at 11,000 ft. Many died in the crash and more from injuries or as a result of an avalanche that buried the plane in the days that followed. The survivors resorted to cannibalism, eating parts of the bodies of the passengers who had died in order to survive, all except one, Numa Turcatti, a 24 year old law student, graduate of the Jesuit School of the Sacred Heart in Montevideo, who chose rather to die of starvation.<sup>7</sup>

The evil involved in the use of elements of the body of an aborted child is greater than the evil in which Numa Turcatti refused to engage in 1972. The deceased passengers of the crashed aircraft of whose bodies he was invited to eat had not been murdered heartlessly; they had died of natural causes. The reality that confronted him if he refused to join his fellows was not a possibility of sickness with statistically reasonable prospects of survival but certain death. His example was heroic. It ought to inspire us.

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<sup>7</sup> At his death on December 11<sup>th</sup> he allegedly weighed only 25 kg.

### *Schism*

The division among the Catholic faithful on this issue is remarkable and follows no obvious line of demarcation. It divides conservatives quite as much as progressives. Something deeply schismatic is at work. Underlying it is the reality that there is no authoritative voice presently available within the household of the Church to resolve the issue definitively. It is as though the Church, our Mother, has chosen to remain silent when she ought to have spoken. But she is not silent. Her voice may be heard still among those few bishops and moral theologians who insist on adherence to her constant teaching in matters of morals.

This schism has had a long period of gestation. The process of preparation for it began in the 1970s when popes and heads of Vatican Dicasteries declined to issue instructions when it became clear that scientists were experimenting with cells stolen from aborted infants binding the faithful under pain of sin against any involvement active or passive. Such action must have had a salutary effect on the scientific and medical world. Popes and the heads of Dicasteries were inhibited, however, by the spirit of rapprochement with the secular promoted by Vatican II. This failure at the top was reflected throughout the episcopacy by silence or prevarication.

Another force was at work, the *nouvelle théologie* that had influenced renegade *periti*, bishops and clergy at the Council, condemned by Pius XII in *Humani Generis* (August 12, 1950). This Modernist religious theory relied for its vigour on wholesale rejection of the philosophy to which the Church had adhered for more than 600 years, that of St Thomas Aquinas, in favour of materialism and subjectivism. Thus the loss of episcopal will was pre-empted by a loss in understanding in how to explain and expound Catholic principle as teachers of metaphysics disappeared. This debility came to infect even the best of the clergy who appeared thereafter.

These two influences, in the view of this commentator, are the source of the shortcomings of the opinion of Fr Fr Sélégnny and of the contradictory position in which members of the *Society of St Pius X* find themselves on this critical moral question.

Michael Baker

September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021 — *St Michael the Archangel*

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## APPENDIX

### IS IT MORALLY PERMISSIBLE TO USE THE COVID-19 VACCINE?

Fr Arnaud Sélégnny

#### *The Vaccine Idea*

The idea of preparing the body against the harmful effects of poisons or infectious agents is not new. It could date back to king Mithridates (132 - 63 BC), who was said to have taken small amounts of different poisons in order to get used to them. This idea can be found today

in *desensitization*, which aims to reduce inappropriate reactions in allergic subjects. The subject is brought into contact with increasing amounts of the elements to which he is sensitive, in order to ultimately suppress the allergic reaction to these elements.

In vaccination, the mechanism is different. It involves administering all or part of an infectious agent, sometimes only its products, to cause the body to react and allow it to acquire immunity against this agent.

A first important conclusion must be drawn. Vaccination is only using a property of the human or animal body: the so-called “immune capacity” of the body to actively oppose foreign agents that attack it. Thus, if a subject is infected with Koch's bacillus, the agent of tuberculosis, and recovers, he will be immune to a new infection: this is *natural immunity*. If another subject is vaccinated with BCG (Bacillus Calmette-Guérin), which comes from a Koch bacillus rendered harmless, he also develops immunity, produced by vaccination: it is an *induced immunity*, effective against the Koch bacillus.

But it is obvious that this induced immunity is also *natural*: the only difference is in the way in which it is produced. This induced immunity is often less lasting because the required reaction is less significant than during an illness.

#### *The Various Types of Vaccines*

Until now, vaccines could be classified into two categories: live attenuated vaccines and inactivated vaccines.

In the first case, before being administered, the infectious agent is modified in order to render it harmless, but while retaining its antigenic power, that is to say its ability to provoke an immune reaction. The case of BCG is characteristic of this method. [Bacille Calmette-Guérin vaccine against TB] The immune system attacks the vaccine agent and will remember its response: it will then be able to defend itself against a future attack from the infectious agent.

However, this type of vaccination is contraindicated for immune-compromised subjects – those whose immune system is deficient – because then there is risk of a true infection. It happened with the smallpox vaccination, causing many tragedies.

In the case of inactivated vaccines, the infectious agent is dead; it can be administered whole or in part. Among this sort of vaccines, the tetanus vaccine is a particular case: it does not use the infectious agent, but the toxin it produces, which is dangerous and even fatal. This toxin is detoxified before it is administered so that it is no longer dangerous, but retains its antigenic power.

Inactivated vaccines can be associated with so-called “protein” vaccines: the vaccine agent is composed only of proteins from the envelope of the virus, or of its entire envelope emptied of its contents. Another variant consists in using a virus that is harmless to humans, in order to introduce the vaccine agent into its cell target (viral vector).

#### *Synthetic Vaccines*

A new type of vaccine has been studied for the last ten years. It was first considered for diseases such as Ebola or Zika. The idea was picked up for the Covid-19 vaccine.

Like all living things, the Covid-19 virus contains genetic material formed from ribonucleic acid (RNA). In living things, RNA can exist in various forms: mRNA (messenger) which transmits information from the DNA of the cell nucleus to the systems that will use them; tRNA

(transfer), which provides the elements to be assembled according to the mRNA code; RRNA (ribosomal) which constitutes the ribosomes, which synthesize proteins.

The idea of the synthetic vaccine is to copy a small part of the virus, in the form of mRNA. The part chosen in the case of Covid-19 is the part that encodes the spicule, an element that allows the virus to enter into the cells.

This mRNA is administered by vaccine to the subject and enters a cell, resulting in the mRNA multiplication. When it leaves the cell, it is identified as a foreign element and destroyed by the immune system. As a result, the subject acquires an induced immunity which will allow him to fight against a real infection by Covid-19.

The advantage of this method is the speed of its development. In fact, the two laboratories which have already announced very satisfactory results use this method. The Russian laboratory *Gamaleya* produces a vaccine in a similar fashion, but uses a "vector", that is, a virus harmless to humans, to introduce the RNA fragment. This could pose a moral problem which will be examined later.

#### *Preparing Vaccines*

There are three stages to preparing a vaccine: design, production, and laboratory testing. During these three stages of development, a moral difficulty may arise due to the environment in which the vaccine is prepared.

It should be noted immediately that vaccines against diseases transmitted by bacteria are not included in this discussion. Indeed, in this case, the culture medium is only a set of nutrients that the bacteria use for food: glucose, water, calcium, etc.

In the case of viral vaccines, the difficulty is that each of the three stages of their preparation may require a virus culture, requiring an environment composed of living cells. In the particular case of synthetic vaccines, this is only for the testing phase.

However, virologists use three types of cells: (1) cells derived from human or animal organs, (2) continuous lines [1], which are often of a cancerous origin and can multiply almost indefinitely, and (3) human embryonic cells, which also multiply for a very long time.

#### *Human Embryonic Lines*

Among the latter, there are currently at least three lines that originated from an abortion: the HEK-293 line, from a fetus aborted in 1972 in the Netherlands; the MRC-5 line, from a fetus aborted in 1966 in England, and the line Per.C6, from an aborted fetus in the Netherlands in 1985.

The use of cells from aborted fetuses to produce vaccines has therefore been going on since the 1960s, and has already led to the development of various vaccines, such as those that prevent rubella, chickenpox, hepatitis A and shingles. In the development of vaccines against Covid-19, these cells are used to produce either viral vectors (adenovirus), which will transport the vaccine agent, or the protein of the coronavirus spicule, which will elicit an immune response.

Unfortunately, pharmaceutical laboratories prefer to use cells obtained from fetuses rather than adult cells, which age faster and stop dividing. Fetal cells are also less likely to be infected with viruses or bacteria, or to have undergone genetic mutations.



## MORAL PROBLEMS POSED BY THE USE OF LINES FROM ABORTED FETUSES

The question is whether one can – or, in some cases, must – use a vaccine that has been grown on cells obtained from abortion.

The crime of abortion is so abominable and so prevalent today that at first glance this question may seem unnecessary; spontaneously, the Catholic answers: no.

In reality, the problem may turn out to be extremely delicate, for it happens that in certain very particular circumstances one can be confronted with duties so serious that it could lead to a real moral dilemma. In such daunting cases of conscience, the support of moral theology is essential to examine the situation in depth, in order to discern the good to be accomplished.

### *Preliminary Remarks*

It is necessary to note that there are no fetal cells injected when the vaccine is received, as some believe: they are used only for the culture of the viruses, and are moreover destroyed by the viruses, as are the infected cells in a patient. But this does not change the moral problem.

It should also be noted that it is not the use of the fetal cells themselves that is to blame, because they could have been obtained lawfully: in the event of spontaneous abortion or miscarriage. It is the fact that they were obtained by an evil act, an abortion.

### *Distinctions to be Made*

The principle that guides our reflection in this situation is that of *cooperation in evil*. The general question is: is it permissible to cooperate in the evil or the sin of others? Moral theology has given the necessary explanations.

Helping a sinner to commit his sin is called "cooperation in evil", regardless of the kind of help given. For such cooperation to exist, the action of the co-operator must have a real influence on the evil act, through the help given to produce it.

**No. The action of the co-operator must aid the achievement of the agent's evil end.**

To be able to judge, the cooperation must be properly analyzed. This is crucial. Those who neglect these details may not judge properly the morality of cooperation.

Cooperation is said to be *immediate* when the co-operator performs the sinful act together with the sinner, for example if he helps the thief to take away the booty and hide it. This is also the case of the surgical assistant that performs parts of an abortion together with the abortionist.

Cooperation is said to be *mediate* when the co-operator provides what will help the sinner—material, necessary action, means—to commit the sin, or which will allow him to do it more easily. Such is he who holds the ladder for the thief, or the nurse who assists the abortionist. This mediate cooperation, finally, can be more or less "close" or "remote", according to whether the help given has more or less influence on the sin committed, or has a more or less close connection with it. So, to sell an idol to a pagan so that he can worship it is *close* cooperation. But selling the wood from which an idol will be made is a matter of *remote* cooperation.

Moreover, depending on the intention, we distinguish a *formal* cooperation, when the co-operator voluntarily consents to the sin in which he is involved. Thus, whoever helps a burglar by keeping watch, for example, while approving of this sin, formally cooperates in the theft. Civil law will also call him an "accomplice".

Cooperation is *material* when the co-operator does not want to sin, but acts while foreseeing that the sinner will abuse the help offered in order to commit the sin. Thus, the bar owner who, only for the money, agrees to provide a few drinks to an already tipsy customer, participates in the sin of drunkenness but does not formally cooperate with the intentions of the drunkard.

### *Principles*

*Formal* cooperation is always illicit and forbidden, because the agent takes upon himself the sin with which he cooperates. The co-operator himself intends the sin.

*Immediate* cooperation, even only material, is illicit, because it is an evil deed, and most of the time a sin identical to that of the principal sinner. For example, a surgeon's assistant who participates in sterilization – tubal ligation or vasectomy – commits the same sin as the surgeon. **This is not material, but formal, cooperation.** For his action directly influences the sinful act which could not be committed without him, or at least with much more difficulty.

*Mediate* cooperation may be licit or illicit. Most of the time, and usually, it is illicit because one should always seek to avoid evil actions or to avoid cooperating with them.

However, for a real utility or a serious necessity, one can sometimes be required to perform an act which, although good in itself, will be a mediate cooperation with a bad action.

**This assertion neglects to distinguish the evil involved in the 'bad action' into those which are intrinsically evil and those which are not. Moreover, it assumes that the cooperation involved is material when, as explained in the text, mediate or immediate involvement only relates to *formal* cooperation.**

The usefulness or necessity in question can be so compelling that one is then excused from the obligation to avoid cooperation in evil.

**Not if the cooperation is formal; nor, though the cooperation be only material, if what is involved is an intrinsic evil such as homosexual behaviour or abortion.**

In this case, it is said that there is a “proportionately grave reason” for cooperating licitly. [2]

Let's take a general example, by considering the various possible agents around an abortion:

- Immediate co-operator: the surgeon's assistant who performs part of the abortion.
- Close mediate co-operator: the assistant who helps the doctor by passing him the instruments.
- Less close mediate co-operator: the nurse who prepares the woman for the operation.
- Even less close mediate co-operator: he who maintains the operating room.
- Moving further away: he who sterilizes the necessary instruments.
- Remote co-operator: the laboratory that supplies the anaesthetic products and dilators, or the manufacturer of the surgical instruments. In both cases, the material provided could be used for operations other than an abortion.
- Very remote co-operator: the company delivering these products.

For every stage of the material cooperation, the “proximity” in relation to the sin committed is very variable.

**Not all of these are stages of *material* cooperation. The first four, at least, are stages of *formal* cooperation; possibly also the fifth. Six and seven are *material* co-operators. Their involvement may be 'remote' in the materialist sense of that term (i.e., reflecting the philosophy of materialism) but in metaphysical terms their involvement is *proximate* to the evil end.**

Are we to say that each and every one of these material co-operators is absolutely required to abstain from cooperating? No matter the cost?

**Yes! The end his actions is aiding is an intrinsic evil and his immortal soul is at stake.**

Moral theology answers: No. The influence of the cooperation on the evil deed is so weak—for example, for the orderly who cleans the operating room—that a reason such as keeping one's job is enough to continue doing it.

**This is the eighth in Fr Séléigny's series and is in a different category from the first seven.**

**This is an instance of *remote* material cooperation.**

On the other hand, the stronger the influence exerted, the more serious the reason to continue must be. And when the closeness is too great, no reason can excuse. **Not on account of its 'closeness' but because the co-operator intends the same end as the agent.** One must refuse, even if it means finding another job. **One must refuse even if one cannot find another job!**

#### *Application to Vaccines Prepared With Cells Obtained From Abortion*

It is now a question of analyzing the cooperation of those involved in the preparation or use of a vaccine prepared with cells obtained from an abortion. We only speak here of material cooperation, because formal cooperation is always illicit.

Whoever *makes* or markets this vaccine is cooperating with the sin of abortion in a way that, although it cannot be called close, can be viewed as immoral. Culpability varies, however, depending on the role played.

**Maker and marketer derive the 'product' from the abortion. They must do so with knowledge of its provenance and, therefore, are at least in the position of accessories after the fact, if not principals. It matters not whether they do so directly or indirectly; it matters not whether they 'close' or 'distant'; they are culpable because they intend the same end—they are cooperating formally, not materially.**

Whoever *runs* a pharmaceutical company profiting from a past abortion bears a greater responsibility. First, because he could have chosen not to make this vaccine; second, because he should stop using the cell lines in question and choose other lines that do not pose a moral problem, even if this has its drawbacks.

The *researcher* who chooses which cell lines to work on finds himself in a similar situation: he is **profiting** from a past crime.

**More accurately, both pharmaceutical company and researcher are profiting from a present and continuing evil which consists of using elements derived from the body of a murdered child.**

But the *lab technician* who is just one executor, or the *truck driver* delivering the vaccine, have only distant cooperation, so it is acceptable, especially for the second.

The *doctor* who vaccinates a patient, or the *patient* who is vaccinated, has only distant cooperation, for these acts only encourage and promote the sin of abortion in a very remote and very slight way. For sufficient health reasons, such acts could therefore be morally permitted.

**The evil in which they are complicit is *not* the past sin of abortion: it is the use of a chemical (the vaccine), in the present, dependent for its efficacy *in the present* on elements deriving from that sin. In accepting that it is reasonable to use a vaccine tainted**

**in this way, doctor and patient manifest complacency over the enormity of the evil of the murder of the unborn. They sin against the common good of society.**

A young woman who is to get married can thus receive the rubella vaccine, although such a vaccine is almost always prepared on fetal cells obtained by abortion. The reason is the danger for the child: if a woman contracts rubella during pregnancy, especially during the first trimester, the risk of birth defects—eye, hearing or heart—are significant. These malformations are permanent.

**This assertion is reprehensible: it betrays the constant teaching of the Catholic Church. The condition of proportionality in the *Principle of the Double Effect* requires that the good lost by the evil effect should not outweigh the good of the good effect. In the situation posited, one might aver that the *life* of one child must outweigh the *health* of the other. But it is not the *life* of the aborted child that is in issue, since the child is already dead. Rather, the good lost is the harm to the common good that results from the use of elements of the body of the murdered child.**

Now, health is a temporal good not an absolute one, and the common good of society is a higher good than the temporal good of any of its members. It follows that harm to the common good involves loss of a good greater than the good of the health of any of its members.

**The proportion required by the *Principle of the Double Effect* being absent, Fr Séléigny's conclusion of licitness is defective.**

However, if there exists a vaccine derived from cells not obtained from an abortion, and it is available, it is the one that must be used.

#### APPLICATION TO THE CASE OF THE VACCINE AGAINST COVID-19

Here we are only interested in the moral aspect of the use of an anti-Covid vaccine, in reference to its preparation or manufacture.

##### *Lines Used as Part of the Vaccine against Covid-19*

The complete list of vaccines in preparation is given in the document annexed to this article. This document specifies the responsible company and the eventual use of cells from an aborted fetus in any of the phases of the preparation: design, production and testing.

[List of vaccines currently in preparation]

##### *Moral Judgment according to the Principles Laid Down*

Since some of the proposed vaccines were not prepared illicitly, they do not pose a moral problem for use from this point of view. They should therefore be preferred over others.

Those that have used a morally illicit preparation should be avoided as much as possible.

But what if, in a particular case, a person finds it necessary to be vaccinated and is unable to obtain a "licit" vaccine, having only an "illicit" vaccine available? This may occur for health reasons (vulnerable elderly person), or because of the professional situation (exposed medical personnel) or for professional reasons, such as traveling by plane. There is already at least one airline—Qantas in this case—which has warned that, as soon as vaccines are available, it will require vaccination to accept a passenger. It is very likely that this requirement will be quickly taken up by many airlines.

**In which event, principle may dictate that our movements by air will be limited.**

As cooperation is only distant, and the reason given is serious enough, it is possible in these cases to use such a vaccine. Moreover, it remains for each individual to judge, with the help of appropriate advice, this real need.

**This misunderstands what is meant by 'distant', or 'remote'. It is not a temporal, or physical, measure, but an *ontological* one. 'Remoteness', or 'proximity', refer to the extent of involvement in the end of the evil act. Moreover, the evil from which Fr Séléigny avers cooperation is 'distant' is the original abortion, but this is past and one cannot cooperate, even 'distantly', with an act that is past. One can, however, cooperate in an act that profits *in the present* from the effects of the past sin.**

It must be clearly stated that we are here in the domain of a prudent judgment, which cannot be uniform for all and in all cases. Moral theology says what is lawful or unlawful. It gives the principles. But it is for personal prudence to judge their application on a case-by-case basis.

**No prudent judgement can allow involvement in an evil which derives from, or promotes, an intrinsic evil.**

As for the considerations outside this question of the licitude according to the source and preparation of the vaccine, they are on (sic) the order of personal opinions. Like any opinions which cannot be absolutely proven, it is vain and impossible to want to impose them on everyone.

Everyone is free to have [his] opinion on the origin of Covid-19, on the way in which it has been managed in various places, on the vaccination policy of a particular country, on vaccination in general; but all these elements do not change the moral conclusion given here.

*One last remark*—It should be noted that, in addition to the case of these vaccinations that we have studied, cooperation with evil occurs in many analogous situations: the latter can be treated and resolved according to the same moral principles. Thus:

Should we stop paying taxes because part of the money is used to reimburse abortion or assisted reproduction?

Should we agree to get supplies from a pharmacist who sells illicit products: abortifacients, condoms, contraceptives? Wouldn't that be a form of encouragement?

Should we accept treatment from a doctor who approves of abortion and prescribes the pill?

Should we agree to go to a department store or a bookstore that sells bad magazines?

Should a cashier refuse to collect payment from a customer who is buying a bad DVD?

It is clear that the list could go on and on.

**None of these instances, save perhaps the last, amounts to material cooperation in the evils involved. The hypothetical cashier should look for alternative employment!**

A final example will be taken from the New Testament: Is it licit to eat the idolothytes, that is, meat sacrificed to idols (1 Cor 8: 1)? To properly situate this question, it is important to know that all the meat consumed in Antiquity necessarily passed through the temples. Moreover, there is only one word in Greek, *mageiros* (used exclusively in the masculine), to designate the priest, the butcher and the cook: for those who wanted to abstain from immolated meat, there was no other meat to eat.

Let us add that the sin of idolatry is one of the most serious, since it attacks God himself.

St. Paul answers that it is permissible to eat these meats, unless it scandalizes the neighbor. This means that whoever consumes this meat is not participating in the sin of idolatry. Otherwise, St. Paul could not have answered thus.

**The example is misconceived, and naïve. It was not a question of participating in the pagans' sin. As St Thomas says (*Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 94, a. 1, ad. 3), "we must understand the saying that *that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is not anything*, because by being thus sacrificed the sacrificial flesh acquired neither sanctification, as the Gentiles thought, nor uncleanness, as the Jews held". What the pagans who did the 'sacrificing' thought they were doing was of no effect, but the eating of such meats might scandalise those who could not understand the distinction.**

Likewise, anyone who is in a situation of sufficiently distant material cooperation in the use of a vaccine against Covid-19, the manufacture of which would have benefited from one of the above-mentioned cell lines, does not participate in the sin of abortion committed 35, 48 or 54 years ago.

**Of course he doesn't. But he does participate in the continuing sin of using elements of the bodies of the children so aborted in vaccines. It is *this sin* in which participants are engaged.**

However, as has been said, one should, as far as possible, avoid cooperation in evil, even material, and if there is a choice, take the vaccine which poses no moral problem.

However, we must not be content with this deplorable state of affairs and do nothing. Influential Catholics must use all their power to influence the pharmaceutical industry to develop their new vaccines on cellular carriers that do not pose any moral difficulty.

Father Arnaud Sélégný +  
SSPX USA website

<https://ssp.org/en/news-events/news/it-morally-permissible-use-covid-19-vaccine-62290>