

KEY TO SSPX OB DURACY ON TAINTED VACCINES

When Archbishop Lefebvre embarked on preserving the Church's tradition in the face of the ravaging effects of the determinations of the Second Vatican Council he knew he was facing a war. In setting up a society dedicated to the task it seemed to him fitting to adopt the protocols of an order whose founder, St Ignatius Loyola, had borrowed from his military background. One can understand how attractive he found the Jesuit approach. Yet adoption of the thinking of St Ignatius brought with it problems which had become endemic to his order. For the moral system the Jesuits had adopted to deal with cases of doubt about lawfulness, and their understanding of the virtue of obedience were both irregular.

The Moral Systems

The human intellect is among the weakest God created. Our knowledges are neither infused in us by God nor acquired by a simple act of intellection, as St Thomas tells us occurs with the angels. We come to the truth slowly via the senses and a long process of ratiocination, and most of the time we never comprehend it fully. Frequently we find ourselves in a position where we cannot be sure whether, and to what extent, a law (part of the moral law) obliges us. In such cases it is necessary to rely on something less than absolute certitude, called 'moral' certitude, and the Church's theologians have adopted a variety of approaches to discern what is acceptable. The three major approaches are called *probabilism*, *probabiliorism* and *aequiprobabilism*.

Probabilism holds that, provided both of two options for a course of action are 'probable'—i.e., each can be justified by right reason, good argument, and sound authority—and one alternative is more probable than the other, one is permitted to follow the less probable alternative. *Probabiliorism* (from the Latin *probabilior*, 'more likely') in contrast, holds that one may follow an authoritative opinion about whether an act is morally justified only when it is more probably right than the safer opinion. *Aequiprobabilism* stands in the mean: it holds that one may follow an authoritative opinion about whether an act is morally justified when it is equally, or almost equally, probable with the safer opinion.¹

Because each system involves opinion there is scope for error especially in an age, such as our own, afflicted by the lack of a grasp of sound philosophy. This leaves open the possibility that an erroneous opinion may be held by a sufficient number of incompetent theologians to be called 'authoritative', with the result that great numbers of the innocent will be misled.

Probabilism was promoted by the Dominican Bartolomé de Medina (1527 - 1581), professor of theology at the University of Salamanca and defended by Jesuits such as Luis Molina (1528 – 1581). It was criticised for its tendency to moral laxity by the French thinker, Blaise Pascal (1623 – 1662). The Dominicans, in the General Chapter of 1656, urged their members to adopt

¹ None of the options is available i) when what is in issue is the validity of an action; ii) when it is question of attaining an obligatory end—for instance, one may not attend a doubtful sacrament, (Innocent XI, Decree of the Holy Office, March 4th, 1679; Dz. 1151); or, iii) when the established rights of another are concerned.

probabiliorism. The Order of St Dominic was renowned for its intellectual eminence and other orders and congregations soon followed its direction.

Pope Innocent XI (1676 - 1689) endorsed a work by the Jesuit Thysus Gonzalez S.J., professor of Salamanca, *Fundamentum Theologiae Moralis*, in favour of *probabiliorism* but the Jesuit Superior General, Giovanni Oliva, refused to allow its publication. In 1680 the Pope ordered him to allow Jesuits to write in favour of *probabiliorism* and against *probabilism*, but another 14 years passed (and two other Superiors General had succeeded Oliva) before it was published. Later confessions of *probabilism*, those of Cistercian, Juan Lobkowitz (1606–1682) and Theatine, Antonino Diana (1586–1663), were held reprehensible for endowing immoral acts with an appearance of morality.

St Alphonsus Liguori (1696 - 1787), founder of the Redemptorists, Doctor of the Church, began as a *probabilist* but abandoned that position in favour of the safer *probabiliorism*. He published nine editions of his *Theologia Moralis* between 1748 and 1779 but by 1762 he had embraced *aequiprobabilism* demonstrated in two propositions, namely, that—

- it is lawful to act on the less safe opinion, when it is equally probable with the safe opinion; and,
- it is not lawful to follow the less safe opinion when the safe opinion is notably and certainly more probable.

These appeared in the sixth edition (1767).

The Jesuits' adherence to *probabilist* theory, with its tendency to favour the freer course in difficult moral situations, continued and was maintained down to the beginning of the Second Vatican Council. It has much to do with the order's reputation for casuistry, exemplified in the epithet 'Jesuitical'. The *Society of St Pius X* places great store on St Alphonsus and, following the Jesuit line, it confines its considerations to his *probabilist* phase.

The Issue that Confronts Us

It is common ground that the vaccines on offer to address the Corona virus in its differing manifestations are compromised, whether in their manufacture or in their testing, with cells taken from one or more aborted infants. A person, an end in himself, destined by Almighty God to live with Him for all eternity, has been reduced to the level of a means to assist, or so it is hoped, the health of other human beings.

Should one take such a vaccine? There are two opinions. The first is that use of it involves cooperation in evil and is morally repugnant—the safer opinion; the second, that involvement by the user entails no more than remote material cooperation in evil and is therefore excusable. Accordingly—so the argument may be presented—there are two moral courses, each of them probable, i.e., able to be justified by right reason, good argument, and sound authority, so that the morality of the action is open to be determined by the different theories as follows.

- *Aequiprobabilism* - one may follow the less safe opinion only when it is equally probable with the safer opinion.

- *Probabiliorism* - one may follow the less safe opinion only when it is more probably right than the safer opinion.
- *Probabilism* – even though the other is more probably right, one may follow the less safe opinion.

If we accept the premises—that the facts are as stated, and each position is objectively justifiable and supported by sound authority—it is clear that the theory of *probabilism* would allow use of the vaccines but those of *aequiprobabilism* and *probabiliorism* would not.

But are the premises true? Is each position objectively justifiable? We have addressed the issues elsewhere but will repeat the arguments here shortly. First, the moral evil in question is *not* the murder of the infant. It is the use of cells stolen from the infant's body. No one can cooperate with an evil that is in the past: it is impossible. One can, however, cooperate in an evil that is present. Hence, the argument that the evil in which one is invited to cooperate by undergoing vaccination with a tainted vaccine is 'remote' because the evil happened in the past is false. It is the evil that gave rise to the present evil that is past.

A vaccine's reliance on cells of an aborted infant—whether in manufacture or in testing—goes to the vaccine's quiddity, or essence. It is an intrinsic component of the vaccine and taints it morally. One who uses such a vaccine cooperates in its moral evil *in the present*—but to what extent? The vaccine user does not intend the abuse of the stolen cells: he desires only the hoped-for benefit. So his involvement is not *formal* (he does not intend the end of abuse of the cells), it is *material* only. He is caught up in the other's immoral activity.

Is his *material* cooperation proximate or remote? And what do these terms mean anyway? The issue is important for it is common ground among moral theologians that no one may cooperate *proximately* in another's evil act.

'Proximate' and 'remote' have nothing to do with time or place. The thinking that they do distorts much of the current commentary. The terms do not derive from materialist philosophy nor are they in common use. They derive from the Church's philosophy, the metaphysics of St Thomas Aquinas, and relate to *the end* of the evil act. They bear on the question: how close is one's involvement to the abuse of the cells so stolen? This cannot be said to be remote because the vaccine depends upon them for its very vigour. Accordingly, one who undergoes vaccination is *proximately* involved in the evil.

There is another moral issue. The use of the stolen cells involves the user in an act of scandal because his conduct suggests to the innocent that notwithstanding that abortion is an intrinsic evil and opposed utterly to the common good of mankind, one may profit from it. The only way to avoid giving this scandal is to avoid using the vaccines.

The Society's Position

The position of the *Society of St Pius X* on the subject follows generally the advice proffered by the *Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith*, that one should resist vaccination but that serious

circumstances may excuse their use, the user meanwhile making known his opposition. The advice is grounded in the thesis of proportionalism which was condemned explicitly by Pope John Paul II in *Veritatis Splendor* nn. 79, 80, and implicitly by Pope Paul VI in *Humanae Vitae*. It flies in the face of the Church's constant teaching against doing evil that good may come of it. (cf. *Romans* 3: 8)

Submissions made to priests of the Society by commentators in Australia and in America (if nowhere else!) pointing out the error in the Society's position have proved ineffectual. The submissions are accepted with courtesy but the arguments are unanswered. The Society is unmoved. Its theologians reiterate the flawed advice.

Which raises the crucial question—why does the Society, why do its priests, demonstrate such intransigence?

The Virtue of Obedience

In the Appendix the reader will find an extract from an article published in October 2018 by Canadian philosopher and theologian John R T Lamont, reproduced with permission, which analyses the Jesuit position on obedience before Vatican II and contrasts it with the Church's position expressed by St Thomas. We invite the reader to study it before proceeding.

It is worth exploring St Thomas's remarks in *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 104, a. 5. He says:

“There are two reasons for which a subject may not be bound to obey his superior in all things. First on account of the command of a higher power... Second... if the latter (should) command him to do something wherein he is not subject to him.”

In reply to the second objection—“that the commands of a superior must be esteemed as the commands of God... [and] as a man is bound to obey God in all things, so is he bound to obey his superiors”—he says this:

“Man is subject to God simply, in all things internal and external... But inferiors are not subject to their superiors in all things, only in certain things and in a particular way in respect of which the superior stands between God and his subjects, whereas in other matters the subject is immediately under God by whom he is taught by the natural or posited law.”

And in answer to the third objection he says:

“[R]eligious are bound to obey in those things which belong to the regular mode of life... and this obedience suffices for salvation. If they be willing to obey in other matters as well, this belongs to the superabundance of perfection: provided, however, that such things be not contrary to God... for obedience in this case would be unlawful.”

As will be seen, Lamont argues that it was the Jesuits' infection with the distorted understanding of the nature of God held by the Franciscan heretic William of Ockham (1285 - 1347) that led them into error.² The misconception lent support to the development of a tyrannical understanding of authority, one based on the arbitrary will of the superior rather

² It was Ockham's thinking which inspired Martin Luther's revolt. For an analysis of the consequences of attributing to the Divine Will what pertains to the Divine Intellect and the Divine Essence see https://www.superflumina.org/PDF_files/are-good-and-evil-dictates-of-divine-whimsy.pdf

than on law—or as we would say, on the natural authority given the superior by God—exemplified in the ‘degrees of obedience’ postulated by Fr Rodriguez which departed from the Church’s understanding of what is meant by the virtue.

In early New Year 2021 more than one hundred of the SSPX faithful attended a presentation in Post Falls, Idaho, given by one of their priests in which he set out the Society’s position on these tainted vaccines. The burden of his presentation was this: issues of moral theology are complex and the SSPX faithful should trust their priests to give them the right moral advice.³ No matter that reason may have brought them to a realisation that taking these vaccines involved cooperation in evil, they must submit their wills to the Society’s decision. More than this, they must believe the Society’s decision on the subject to be the right decision.

In the February that followed, one of the faithful who attended, Mr Tony Ambrosetti, wrote to the SSPX Superior General, Fr David Pagliarani, providing objective reasons why the *Society* should abandon its position. The reply came not from Fr Pagliarani but the Secretary General, Fr Arnaud Sélégnny, who had written the papers on its US website. Fr Sélégnny (and by implication Fr Pagliarani and the Society in general) was obdurate. There would be no alteration. He revisited the arguments already presented and objected in particular to Mr Ambrosetti’s claim that his arguments of proportionate cause and grave reason could be disproved by any first-year moral theology student. The present writer agrees with that verdict on Fr Sélégnny’s reasoning, demonstrated in a number of articles on this website.⁴

How is the obduracy of the Society of St Pius X in respect of the issue in the face of criticism based on objective principle to be explained? There seems to be only one logical, if irrational, explanation. It is because the Society has adopted the Jesuit misunderstanding of the nature of obedience. Consistent with this error each of the Society’s clergy feels himself constrained to submit his intellect to the position at which the Society has arrived. The result is that *it is impossible to persuade* a priest of the SSPX to listen to reason on the topic.

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³ See A. Ambrosetti, *The SSPX doubles down on the Vaccine* at [The SSPX Doubles Down on the Vaccine | Tradidi Quod et Accepi \(wordpress.com\)](https://www.superflumina.org/PDF_files/commentary-on-fr-selegnys-sspx-paper.pdf)

⁴ See *The SSPX and Covid-19 Vaccinations* at https://www.superflumina.org/PDF_files/commentary-on-fr-selegnys-sspx-paper.pdf and *The Moral Issue on Vaccination: Another Attempt at Justification by the SSPX* at https://www.superflumina.org/PDF_files/commentary-on-fr-selegnys-sspx-paper.pdf

APPENDIX

Extract from a Paper by John R. T. Lamont,

Tyranny and Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church: A Jesuit Tragedy

[<https://rorate-caeli.blogspot.com/2018/10/tyranny-and-sexual-abuse-in-catholic.html>]

... There is one factor... that has not been widely discussed or understood, but that has had an effect that is second to none in giving rise to the scandalous situation that now engrosses our attention. This is the influence within the Church of a conception of authority as a form of tyranny, rather than as being based on and constituted by law. This essay will present the nature of this conception, describe how it came to be influential, and explore some of its more significant results.

The intellectual origins of this conception of authority and obedience are largely to be found in nominalist theology and philosophy. William of Ockham notoriously came down on one side of the Euthyphro dilemma by asserting that good actions are good simply because they are commanded by God, and that God could make idolatry, murder, and sodomy good, and abstention from these actions evil, if he commanded that they be performed. This conception of divine authority lends support to a tyrannical understanding of authority in general as based on the arbitrary will of the possessor of power, rather than on law.

A law-based understanding of authority, in contrast, holds that law derived from the nature of the good provides the source of the authority of a ruler, and delimits the sphere in which a ruler can give commands. Scholars have long known that the dominance of nominalist thought in the fourteenth century left its mark on Catholic thought for centuries, with key nominalist theses remaining entrenched even in scholars who believed themselves to be upholding anti-nominalist traditions. The nature of authority was one of these theses. Catholic theologians and philosophers during the Counter-Reformation all held that law and moral obligation are to be understood as resulting from the command of a superior; Suarez gave a characteristic description of law as ‘the act whereby a superior wills to bind an inferior to the performance of a particular deed.’

Restoration of discipline among clergy and religious was one of the main goals of the Counter-Reformation. The theories of law and authority that guided this restoration differed from a pure nominalist position, but these differences were lost when the practical principles for training in obedience were devised. These principles embodied a tyrannical understanding of authority, and a servile understanding of rightful obedience as consisting in total submission to the will of the superior. The most influential formulation of these principles was given in the writings of St. Ignatius Loyola on obedience. The key elements of the Ignatian notion of authority are the following:

- The mere execution of the order of a superior is the lowest degree of obedience, and does not merit the name of obedience or constitute an exercise of the virtue of obedience.
- In order to merit the name of virtue, an exercise of obedience should attain the second level of obedience, which consists in not only doing what the superior orders, but conforming one's will to that of the superior, so that one not only will to obey an order, but wills that that particular order should have been given – simply because the superior willed it.
- The third and highest degree of obedience consists in conforming not only one's will but one's intellect to the order of the superior, so that one not only wills that an order should have

been given, but actually believes that the order was the right order to give, simply because the superior gave it. 'He who aims at making an entire and perfect oblation of himself, in addition to his will, must offer his understanding, which is a further and the highest degree of obedience. He must not only will, but he must think the same as the superior, submitting his own judgment to that of the superior, so far as a devout will can bend the understanding.'

— In the highest and most meritorious degree of obedience, the follower has no more will of his own in obeying than an inanimate object. 'Everyone of those who live under obedience ought to allow himself to be carried and directed by Divine Providence through the agency of the superior as if he were a lifeless body which allows itself to be carried to any place and to be treated in any manner desired, or as if he were an old man's staff which serves in any place and in any manner whatsoever in which the holder wishes to use it.'

— The sacrifice of will and intellect involved in this form of obedience is the highest form of sacrifice possible, because it offers to God the highest human faculties, viz. the intellect and the will.

It should be said that St. Ignatius's practical exercise of authority did not agree with his own writings. He was accustomed to send Jesuits on independent missions where they had to use their initiative. Literally construed, his writings on obedience could have no application in these situations, because the superior was not there to give the commands to which this kind of obedience is due.

We can explain the contradiction between his theory and his practice by the influence of the accepted philosophical and theological ideas of his time, and by the goals that his teachings on obedience were aimed at. His doctrine on obedience was intended to provide for an initial training in discipline, of the kind practised in the military profession that he had once followed. Once this training was completed, it was also intended to ensure that Jesuits on independent missions internalized the objective that their superiors had sent them to accomplish, so that they would correctly and wholeheartedly carry out the missions they had been given. But St. Ignatius did not intend to give religious superiors a totalitarian control over all the thoughts and actions of their subordinates.

Unfortunately, the interpreters of his works read his writings literally, and credited him with upholding a totalitarian control of this kind as the model of religious authority. Some expositions of his teaching described obedience to an order that one suspects but is not certain to be immoral as an especially high and praiseworthy form of obedience. This statement about the exceptional merit of obeying orders that are morally dubious is made in St. Ignatius's letter 150. The letter was in fact written for him by Fr. Polanco, his secretary; but since it went out under St. Ignatius's signature, it benefited from his authority.

The full development of a tyrannical conception of religious authority and a servile conception of obedience can be found in Alphonsus Rodriguez S.J.'s *Practice of Perfection and Christian Virtues*. This work, the most widely read manual of ascetic theology of the Counter-Reformation, was published in 1609. It was required reading for Jesuit novices up to the Second Vatican Council. Its contents were accepted as the correct interpretation of St. Ignatius's teaching on obedience. In his proposed examination of conscience, Fr. Rodriguez (who is not to be confused with St. Alphonsus Rodriguez) requires the penitent

II. To obey in will and heart, having one and the same wish and will as the Superior.

III. To obey also with the understanding and judgment, adopting the same view and sentiment as the Superior, not giving place to any judgments or reasonings to the contrary.

IV. To take the voice of the Superior... as the voice of God, and obey the Superior, whoever he may be, as Christ our Lord, and the same for subordinate officials.

V. To follow blind obedience, that is obedience without enquiry or examination, or any seeking of reasons for the why and wherefore, it being reason enough for me that it is obedience and the command of the Superior.

Rodriguez praises obedience – as he understands it – in illuminating terms.

One of the greatest comforts and consolations that we have in Religion is this, that we are safe in doing what obedience commands. The Superior it is that may be wrong in commanding this or that, but you are certain that you are not wrong in doing what is commanded, for the only account that God will ask of you is if you have done what they commanded you, and with that your account will be sufficiently discharged before God. It is not for you to render account whether the thing commanded was a good thing, or whether something else would not have been better; that does not belong to you, but to the account of the Superior. When you act under obedience, God takes it off your books, and puts it on the books of the Superior.

Like other writers, Rodriguez makes the usual exception for obedience to commands that are manifestly contrary to the divine law. It has however been noted that the Jesuit doctrine of *probabilism* tends to nullify this exception. According to this doctrine, there is no sin in doing any action that a reputable authority maintains to be permissible; and one's religious superior normally counts as a reputable authority. There is also a psychological fact that tends to make this exception nugatory. Internalising and practising this notion of obedience is difficult, and requires time, motivation, and effort. When it has been done successfully, it has a lasting effect. Once one has destroyed one's capacity to criticise the actions of one's superiors, one cannot revive this capacity and its exercise at will. Following the directive to refuse obedience to one's superiors when their commands are manifestly sinful then becomes psychologically difficult or even impossible – except perhaps in the most extreme cases, such as commands to murder someone, which are not the sort of sinful commands that religious superiors often have an interest in giving in any case.

This conception of obedience did not remain a peculiarity of the Society of Jesus, but came to be adopted by the Counter-Reformation Church as a whole. It became prevalent in the new institution of the Counter-Reformation seminary; the *Treatise on Obedience* of the Sulpician Louis Tronson gave St. Ignatius's teaching and writings as the summit of Catholic teaching on obedience. The Sulpician adoption of this conception was particularly important because of their central role in the training of priests in seminaries from the seventeenth century onwards. The servile conception of obedience remained the standard one into the twentieth century. Adolphe Tanquerey, in his widely read and translated (and in many ways excellent) work *Précis de théologie ascétique et mystique*, could write that perfect souls who have reached the highest degree of obedience submit their judgment to that of their superior, without even examining the reasons for which he commands them.

The Jesuit approach to the manifestation of conscience contributed to inculcating a totalitarian understanding of authority. St. Ignatius not only encouraged but required the manifestation of conscience, and he required that the manifestation be made to the religious superior. The manifestation of conscience included 'the dispositions and desires for the performance of good, the obstacles and difficulties encountered, the passions and temptation which move or harass the

soul, the faults, that are more frequently committed... the usual pattern of conduct, affections, inclinations, propensities, temptations, and weaknesses.' He required that such a manifestation be made every six months, and he directed that all superiors and even their delegates were qualified to receive these manifestations. Instead of restricting the purpose of the manifestation of conscience to the spiritual well-being of the manifestee, he not only permitted but required the superior to use the knowledge of his subordinates gained through the manifestation of conscience for the purposes of government.

The overweening power that this practice gives to the religious superior needs no underlining. The ancient religious orders resisted the introduction of an obligatory manifestation of conscience on St. Ignatius's model, but many modern religious institutes adopted it. The abuses of the practice were so severe that the papacy eventually had to forbid it. It was banned for all religious by canon 530 of the 1917 Code of Canon Law (the Jesuits, however, were permitted to preserve it by a special decree of Pope Pius XI). By this time, however, the practice had had several centuries to leave its mark on the understanding of authority, the forms of behaviour, and the psychology of superiors and subordinates within the Catholic Church.

The novelty of this understanding of obedience can be seen by contrasting it with the position of St. Thomas Aquinas. St. Thomas considers the proper object of obedience to be the precept of the superior (*Summa theologiae*, 2a2ae, q. 104, a. 2 co., a. 2 ad 3). St. Ignatius's lowest degree of obedience, which he does not consider to be virtuous, is considered by St. Thomas to be the only form of obedience. He holds that St. Ignatius's alleged higher forms of obedience do not fall under the virtue of obedience at all:

Seneca says (*De Beneficiis* iii): 'It is wrong to suppose that slavery falls upon the whole man: for the better part of him is excepted'. His body is subjected and assigned to his master but his soul is his own. Consequently in matters touching the internal movement of the will man is not bound to obey his fellow-man, but God alone. (2a2ae, q. 104, a. 5, co.)

St. Thomas does not consider obedience to involve the sacrifice of one's will as such. The virtue of obedience in his view only involves the sacrifice of one's self-will, which is defined by its adherence to objectives that are contrary to our ultimate happiness. Rodriguez however makes it clear that it is not self-will, but the entire human faculty of will itself, that is to be sacrificed. This is a sacrifice in the sense of an abandonment and a destruction, since it involves eliminating the operation of one's will and handing it over to the will of another human being. Nor does St. Thomas think of obedience as a virtuous form of personal asceticism. He does not hold that obeying a command we dislike is better as such than obeying a command we are happy to fulfil.

A good person will be glad to carry out any suitable command, since such commands further the common good. He does not consider that all good acts are motivated by obedience to God, because he considers that there are virtues the exercise of which is prior to obedience – such as faith, which religious obedience presupposes. Nor does he consider that the essence of sin consists in disobedience to God, or even that all sin involves the sin of disobedience. All sin does indeed involve a disobedience to God's commands, but this disobedience is not willed by the sinner unless the sin involves a will to disobey the command in addition to a will to do the forbidden act... Obedience is simply an act of the virtue of justice, which is motivated by love of God in the case of divine commands and love of neighbour in the case of commands of a human superior. These loves are both more fundamental and broader than obedience.

The conception of religious authority and religious obedience that became dominant in the Church from the sixteenth century onwards was thus a fundamental innovation that departed from previous Catholic positions. It came to influence the Church through the training given in

seminaries for diocesan priests, and the approach to discipline in religious congregations. The daily life of seminarians and religious was structured by a multitude of rules governing the minutiae of behaviour, and activities that fell outside this routine could generally be pursued only with the permission of the superior. Such permission was arbitrarily refused from time to time in order to encourage submissiveness in subordinates. Reasons for orders were not provided, and questions about the reasons for orders were not answered.

This approach to authority had damaging effects on clergy and religious. The exaction of servile obedience from subordinates destroyed strength of character and the capacity for independent thought. Exercise of tyrannical authority by superiors produced overweening pride and incapacity for self-criticism. The fact that superiors all started off in a subordinate position meant that advancement was facilitated for those proficient in the arts of the slave — flattery, dissimulation, and manipulation.

The laity could not hope for advancement in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, so the effect of promotion of a servile understanding of religious obedience was to infantilize them in the religious sphere. This infantilization can be observed in religious art and devotion, especially from the 19th century onwards, and in willingness to give blind obedience to the clergy. The resulting dissociation between adult maturity and religious belief undermined religious faith and commitment among the laity, and contributed to the steady secularization of Catholic societies.

The effects of this conception of obedience were mitigated by countervailing factors. Canon law, liturgical discipline, and the rules of religious orders provided detailed prescriptions that limited the tyrannical exercise of authority by superiors. Scholastic philosophy and theology, classical education, and the requirement for proficiency in Latin all imposed objective standards for the knowledge and intellectual capacity demanded of the clergy. Jesuit secondary schools, which were by far the most important and successful of their apostolates, were governed by an excellently designed *ratio studiorum* that laid down in detail what was to be studied and how. As long as the tyrannical conception of authority was restrained by these factors, it was crippling but not fatal to the Church.
