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THE ANGELUS ENGLISH-LANGUAGE ARTICLE REPRINT

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

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TWO KEY POINTS FOR THE CHURCH'S RECOVERY

It seems to us useful to spell out two points necessary for the Church's welfare, the unavoidable paths to follow not only for a recovery, but for a spiritual renaissance that will be solid and fruitful. It must not be forgotten that, however dark the situation, the Church possesses within herself not only the antibodies to resist attacks internal and external, but also all the resources for becoming more resplendent than ever. For the Church is not a human work; she does not have as Founder and Spouse a man, however rich and powerful he might be. The Church was born from the pierced Heart of Jesus: it is there that she dwells, that she is nourished, and whence she receives her whole being. It is this origin and this vital bond with the divine Spouse which found the firm hope of all her true children, and which prevent pain and sorrow from becoming discouragement and pessimism.

Necessity of Returning to the Traditional Definition of Truth

“Necessity of Returning to the Traditional Definition of Truth”: this is the title of a surprisingly timely article by Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange.¹ Indeed, it must be realized that the current confusion has not only affected the faith and the supernatural, but it has also blighted the natural domain of reason. Since the act of faith belongs to the faculty of the intellect,² it is clear that any substantial disorder affecting the intellect must affect faith.

The proper and essential end of the intellect is truth, which has been magisterially defined by St. Thomas Aquinas as “*adaequatio rei ad intellectum*,”³ the conformity of thing and intellect. From this adhesion (or even adherence) of the intellect to the real flow the immutable laws (principles of non-contradiction, causality, and finality) which govern reasoning. The dynamic of consciousness, clearly analyzed by St. Thomas Aquinas, originates in this opening of the mind to external reality, to being:

Illud quod primo intellectus concipit quasi notissimum et in quo omnes conceptiones resolvit est ens—that which the intellect first conceives as, in a way, the most evident, and to which it reduces all its concepts, is being.⁴

On this passage as well as on others treating of this subject, countless considerations of a philosophical nature might be made; but what interests us here is simply to reaffirm, in face of the confusion of modern thought, that it is in the (Aristotelian) wonder at the verification of the existence of a thing that knowledge or understanding arises, and not in Cartesian doubt.⁵ Knowledge is an opening to being and its laws, which the intellect finds “outside itself” and not by producing or positing it. The intellect is by nature open and in relation to being as sight to colors.

To anyone unfamiliar with philosophy, this discussion can seem to be about matters of little importance and without any connection to the current crisis. But in reality, modern thought has gone astray over this very question: the understanding of the relation between being and thought. Does the former determine the latter, or, as the idealists teach, does the latter found the former? Is it thought which conforms or, so to speak, obeys reality, or the inverse? This is the question St. Pius X profoundly elucidated in his writings against modernism, as Marcel De Corte insightfully affirmed:

The evil which afflicts the individual man...is subjectivism. The intellect renounces its power to know things as they are in themselves, independently of the knowing mind. It deprives itself of the trampoline of reality: why be surprised, then, that it owns itself incapable of rising to the Origin of reality? But by exiling itself from reality, the intellect automatically turns inward upon itself.

Nothing will exist for it any longer but what is manifest within it: no longer the things in themselves, but the ideas which it makes of things. Thus, it is no longer subject to reality, nor to the Originator of reality. The intellect no longer depends upon anything but itself, its power to produce ideas, infinitely malleable entities which are henceforth subject to its creative power. The world is what I think of the world.⁶

If the first action of the intellect is not acknowledged to be its opening to reality; if the intellect does not accept having reality for the rule and norm of its action, then everything is called, at least potentially, in question:

The truth is the matching of mind and reality. If modernism divorces reality from the principle of the real, how could there still be a single eternal and necessary truth in the domain of faith and of social life?...Forms and categories are works which the mind has produced and which it dominates, of which it can, in short, free itself.⁷

It is more urgent than ever to have clear ideas about what Hegel called the “beginning” of thought; without this lucidity, nothing stable can be built. The supreme authority of the Church, the Sovereign Pontiff, will sooner or later have to forcefully and repeatedly reaffirm this essential point against those who undermine dogma and truth in their foundation, establishing the bases for the accomplishment of the Satanic project: “*eritis sicut Deus*—you will be as God”:

Coming from subjectivism, the modernist heresy returns to subjectivism, dethroning God and placing man in His place....Since the human consciousness is not linked to anything beyond itself, it can only reach God within itself.⁸

In the domain of theology, accepting the revolution of modern thought means radically undermining the possibility of understanding Catholic doctrine *eodem sensu eademque*, a specific obligation of every Catholic. At the end of the article cited above, Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, launched a vigorous, specific appeal:

What is sure is that it is necessary to return to the traditional definition of truth: *adaequatio rei et intellectus*, the conformity of judgment with exterior being and its immutable laws. Dogmas suppose this definition....It is not by an arbitrary option, but by its very nature that our intellect adheres to ontological value and to the absolute necessity of first principles as laws of reality. It is only thus that the traditional definition of truth which the dogmas suppose can be maintained.⁹

This reason, once strong and humble, with all the consequences which flow from it, is the *conditio sine qua non* for building on rock and not on sand, and there are no worse enemies than those who attempt to deny or conceal it: this is the first necessary point of departure for a true reform of the Church.

2 Necessity of Returning to the Foundation of the Faith

The essence of the act of faith is the adhesion of the intellect to truths revealed by God in virtue of the

authority of the One who reveals. One does not believe because the content of the faith is evident, nor because it is in agreement with personal or contemporary aspirations and exigencies; the formal reason of faith is God who has revealed, and the respect of the intellect is owed to Him, because He can neither deceive nor be deceived.

Divine Revelation is transmitted to us and clearly interpreted by the Church's Magisterium, to which is owed humble, filial assent, whether that teaching authority is expressed in its extraordinary form or its ordinary form. It is not possible that the Church could be mistaken when it teaches a truth or condemns an error for centuries. By its divine origin, the faith has a certitude which the most evident human knowledge cannot have (a certitude, we repeat, due to the One who reveals, and not to the intrinsic evidence of what is revealed). And, because of this divine origin, whoever denies a single article of faith saps the faith at its base, as St. Thomas clearly explains:

...whoever does not adhere, as to an infallible and divine rule, to the teaching of the Church, which proceeds from the First Truth manifested in Holy Writ, has not the habit of faith, but holds that which is of faith otherwise than by faith....Now it is manifest that he who adheres to the teaching of the Church, as to an infallible rule, assents to whatever the Church teaches; otherwise, if, of the things taught by the Church, he holds what he chooses to hold, and rejects what he chooses to reject, he no longer adheres to the teaching of the Church as to an infallible rule, but to his own will.¹⁰

Now, it is clear that, by reason of the stable nature of truth and of the One who reveals, no one, be he within the Church or without, can arrogate to himself the power to teach something different or even opposed to what the Church received from the Lord and has transmitted over the centuries. To those who feared that such an affirmation would prevent any progress in the Church, St. Vincent of Lerins replied:

But someone will say perhaps: Shall there, then, be no progress in Christ's Church? Certainly; all possible progress....Yet on condition that it be real progress, not alteration of the faith. For progress requires that the subject be expanded on. Alteration demands that it be transformed into something else.¹¹

The second thing necessary for resolving the current crisis and relaunching the Church on its apostolic mission is to disencumber it of all the positions which claim to introduce a change in relation to all the teachings of the constant ordinary and extraordinary Magisterium. Dogma in the Church has undergone great development; but that is due to its intrinsic potentialities (the external circumstances, like the danger of heresy, were but incidental factors). In other words, it was question of a deeper penetration of the truth revealed and received, a penetration which, with the aid of reason, allowed all the logical consequences to be



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FR. GARRIGOU-LAGRANGE



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ST. VINCENT OF LERINS



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ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

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drawn out. What is happening today, on the contrary—take for example the question of religious liberty—constitutes an alteration caused by the acceptance within the bosom of the Church of the principles of modern thought (in this example, the principle of the absolute liberty of conscience), principles condemned many times by the sovereign Pontiffs. Faced with this, it is necessary to meditate, word by word, on what St. Vincent of Lerins expressed with surprising relevance to the current situation:

On the other hand, if what is new begins to be mingled with what is old, foreign with domestic, profane with sacred, the custom will of necessity creep on universally, till at last the Church will have nothing left untampered with, nothing unadulterated, nothing sound, nothing pure; but where formerly there was a sanctuary of chaste and undefiled truth, thenceforward there will be a brothel of impious and base errors....

This, I say, is what the Catholic Church, roused by the novelties of heretics, has accomplished by the decrees of her Councils,—this, and nothing else,—she has thenceforward consigned to posterity in writing what she had received from those of olden times only by tradition, comprising a great amount of matter in a few words, and often, for the better understanding, designating an old article of the faith by the characteristic of a new name.¹²

Practical Conclusions

It is clear, by the very avowal of the reigning Pontiff, then Cardinal, that the Vatican Council II constitutes, in certain of its texts (*Dignitatis Humanae*, *Gaudium et Spes*, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, to name only the most controversial), a novelty that contradicts the past, an opening to the “modern world” to which the Church had been opposed until Pope Pius XII. As long as [churchmen] remain attached to these positions, which can make no claim to a place within the Church’s prior teaching, a true renaissance of the Church will not be possible. They might happen to agree on the condemnation of abuses, on the miserable condition of the Catholic world at present, on the disquieting state of the world today, *etc.*, but on the most important and most urgent point, that is to say, the remedy, they can only be at the antipodes of the true solution.

His Holiness knows well that the question of Tradition cannot be postponed much longer; but the key point consists in understanding that it does not just involve the “problem” of the Society of Saint Pius X. To officially welcome the world of Tradition means recognizing that the solution to all the problems which afflict the Church and the world resides in unconditional fidelity to all that the Church has transmitted to us without alteration to the present. It is only thus, by a humble and confident surrender to God, mistrusting all human calculations and forecasts,

that they will be able to open the way not only to a restoration, but also to a true reform of the Church which will possess all the vigor and dynamism of which she will undoubtedly stand in need.

They must not be afraid to reaffirm all that the Church has always taught; it matters little if these principles ring false in ears deformed by the modern mentality. They must be faithful to the Lord and to His Church, and not to the world and its expectations. The only true charity which we can do to the wayward world is to be faithful to the Tradition of the Church; to fearlessly teach once again all that has been handed down to us, relying exclusively upon God’s help.

Isaias prophesied:

Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help, trusting in horses, and putting their confidence in chariots, because they are many: and in horsemen, because they are very strong: and have not trusted in the Holy One of Israel, and have not sought after the Lord.

For thus saith the Lord to me: Like as the lion roareth, and the lion’s whelp upon his prey, and when a multitude of shepherds shall come against him, he will not fear at their voice, nor be afraid of their multitude: so shall the Lord of hosts come down to fight upon mount Sion, and upon the hill thereof...so will the Lord of hosts protect Jerusalem, protecting and delivering, passing over and saving.¹³

It is only by the courage of fidelity to that which the world considers foolishness, folly, and fanaticism, but which is, on the contrary, to paraphrase St. Paul, the wisdom and the power of God, that the Reign of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary will be inaugurated. Faced with such terrible dangers and the pitiful reality which we have before our eyes, there is but one road to take: “Faith, my brethren, more faith!”¹⁴

This act of courageous faith it is that we await from the sovereign Pontiff, which, alone, will enable the Church to be reborn more beautiful and resplendent than ever. ☪

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¹ Fr. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, “Nécessité de revenir à la définition traditionnelle de la vérité,” *Angelicum*, 3 (1948), 185-98.

² *Summa Theologica*, II II, Q.2, Art.2, “Cum enim credere ad intellectum pertineat.”

³ *I Sent.*, XIX, Q.5, Art.1. The definition “*adaequatio rei et intellectus*” is equivalent.

⁴ *De Veritate*, Q.1, Art.1.

⁵ [“I think, therefore I am.”—*Ed.*]

⁶ Marcel De Corte, *La grande hérésie*.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Garrigou-Lagrange, “Nécessité de revenir,” 197-98.

¹⁰ *Summa Theologica*, II, II, Q.5, Art.3.

¹¹ *Communitorium*, XXIII [English translation by the Rev. C. A. Heurtley, D.D.]

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Is. 31:1, 4-5.

¹⁴ L. Orione, *Au nom de la divine Providence* (In the name of Divine Providence) (Milan: Piemme, 1994), 30.