

Pascendi, Vatican II and after

These pages provide examples of the Modernist characteristics of Vatican II and post-Vatican II thinking. The correlation between this thought and the explanations of Modernism given in *Pascendi* is not always completely direct because the statements included below more specifically reflect the intellectual developments of Neo-Modernism. Nevertheless, in most cases, the connection is striking.

1. Agnosticism

“The Modernists place the foundation of their religious philosophy in that doctrine which is commonly called agnosticism. Perforce, then, human reason is entirely restricted to phenomena, namely, things that appear, and that appearance by which they appear; it has neither the right nor the power to transgress the limits of the same. Therefore, it cannot raise itself to God nor recognize His existence, even through things that are seen.”

⇒ “We do not know whether God exists. We do not know it with scientific certitude, but we know it by faith.”¹ (Reverend Dufour, Bishop of Limoges, Confirmation sermon)

⇒ Scalfari: “Your Holiness, is there is a single vision of the Good? And who decides what it is?”

Pope Francis: “Each of us has a vision of good and of evil. We have to encourage people to move towards what they think is Good.”

Scalfari: “Your Holiness, you wrote that in your letter to me. The conscience is autonomous, you said, and everyone must obey his conscience. I think that's one of the most courageous steps taken by a Pope.”

Pope Francis: “And I repeat it here. Everyone has his own idea of good and evil and must choose to follow the good and fight evil as he conceives them. That would be enough to make the world a better place.”²

These statements of the Pope at least imply the unknowability of even objective standards of good and evil. They suggest *agnosticism* about any objective external standard, beyond phenomena.

¹ Most Reverend Dufour, Bishop of Limoges, Confirmation sermon, published in *Courrier Francais*, July 25, 2003.

² http://www.repubblica.it/cultura/2013/10/01/news/pope_s_conversation_with_scalfari_english-67643118/

2. Religious Sense and Religious Experience

“Therefore, as God is the object of religion, we must conclude that faith, which is the basis and foundation of all religion, must consist in a certain interior sense, originating in a need of the divine.” (Pascendi n.7)

“The question as to whether in itself it exists outside that feeling and affirmation is one which the philosopher passes over and neglects. For the Modernist believer, on the contrary, it is an established and certain fact that the reality of the divine does really exist in itself and quite independently of the person who believes in it. If you ask on what foundation this assertion of the believer rests, he answers: In the personal experience of the individual.” (Pascendi n.14)

- ⇒ “This God is professed in his silence by the Trappist and the Camaldolite. It is to Him that the desert Bedouin turns at his hour of prayer. And perhaps the Buddhist too, wrapt in contemplation as he purifies his thought, preparing the way for Nirvana. God in His absolute transcendence, God who transcends absolutely the whole of creation, all that is visible and comprehensible.”³ (John Paul II, *Sign of Contradiction*)
- ⇒ “19. In the Amazon, life is inserted into, linked with and integrated in territory. This vital and nourishing physical space provides the possibility, sustenance and limit of life. Furthermore, we can say that **the Amazon** – or another indigenous or communal territory – is not only an *ubi* or a *where* (a geographical space), but also a *quid* or a *what*, a place of meaning for faith or the experience of God in history. Thus territory is a **theological place where faith is lived, and also a particular source of God’s revelation**: epiphanic places where the reserve of life and wisdom for the planet is manifest, a life and wisdom that speaks of God. In the Amazon, the ‘caresses of God’ become manifest and become incarnate in history (cf. LS 84, ‘Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God’)⁴.” (Working Document for the Pan-Amazonian Synod)

3. Religious Sense *transfigures* and *disfigures* history

“Hence should it be further asked whether Christ has wrought real miracles, and made real prophecies, whether He rose truly from the dead and ascended into heaven, the answer of agnostic science will be in the negative and the answer of faith in the affirmative - yet there will not be, on that account, any conflict between them.” (Pascendi n.16)

“Their three first laws are contained in those three principles of their philosophy already dealt with: the principle of agnosticism, the principle of the transfiguration of things by faith, and the principle which We have called of disfiguration... Hence we have that distinction, so current among the Modernists, between the Christ of history and the Christ of faith, between the sacraments of history and the sacraments of faith, and so on. Next we find that the human element itself, which the historian has to work on, as it appears in the documents, has been by faith transfigured, that is to say raised above its historical conditions. It becomes necessary, therefore, to eliminate also the accretions which faith has added, to assign them to faith itself and to the history of faith: thus, when treating of Christ, the historian must set aside all that surpasses man in his natural condition, either according to the psychological conception of him, or according to the place and period of his existence. Finally, by virtue of the third principle, even those things which are not outside the sphere of history they pass through the crucible, excluding from history and relegating to faith everything

³ Karol Wojtyla (= John Paul II), *Sign of Contradiction*, 1979, pp.15-16

⁴ <http://www.sinodoamazonico.va/content/sinodoamazonico/en/documents/pan-amazon-synod--the-working-document-for-the-synod-of-bishops.html>

which, in their judgment, is not in harmony with what they call the logic of facts and in character with the persons of whom they are predicated. Thus, they will not allow that Christ ever uttered those things which do not seem to be within the capacity of the multitudes that listened to Him. Hence they delete from His real history and transfer to faith all the allegories found in His discourses.” (Pascendi n.30)

- ⇒ “We must count as legendary many of the stories of the miracles contained in the Gospels. In these legends one must seek not so much their historical content as their theological aim.”⁵ (W. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*. **Kasper was created Cardinal by John Paul II on February 21, 2001, *Gesù il Cristo* was published first in 1975).**
- ⇒ “A number of miracle stories turn out in the light of form criticism to be projections of the experiences of Easter back into the earthly life of Jesus, or anticipatory representations of the exalted Christ. Among these epiphany stories we should probably include the stilling of the storm, the transfiguration, Jesus’ walking on the lake, the feeding of the four (or five) thousand and the miraculous draught of fishes. The clear purpose of the stories of the raising from the dead of Jairus’s daughter, the widow’s son at Naim and Lazarus is to present Jesus as Lord over life and death. It is the nature miracles which turn out to be secondary accretions to the original tradition... The result of all this is that we must describe many of the gospel miracle stories as legendary. Legends of this sort should be examined less for their historical than for their theological content. They say something, not about individual facts of saving history, but about the single saving event which is Jesus Christ. To show that certain miracles cannot be ascribed to the earthly Jesus does not mean that they have no theological or kerygmatic significance... The probability is that we need not take the so-called ‘nature miracles’ as historical.”⁶ (W. Kasper, *Gesù il Cristo*)
- ⇒ “A running camera would not have been able to make an audio-visual recording of either the Easter manifestations of Jesus in front of his disciples, nor of the Resurrection event, which, at its core, is the consummation of the personal relation of the Father to the incarnate Son in the Holy Ghost. In contrast to human reason, animals and technical devices are not capable of a transcendental experience and thus also lack the ability to be addressed by the Word of God through perceptible phenomena and signs. Only human reason in its inner unity of categoricity and transcendentality is determinable by the Spirit of God to enable it to perceive in the sensory cognitive image (triggered by the manifestation event) the person-reality of Jesus as the cause of this sensory-mental cognitive image.”⁷ (Gerhard L. Müller, *Katholische Dogmatik*. **Müller, raised to the rank of cardinal by Pope Francis, had previously been Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith for five years**).

⁵ Most Reverend Dufour, Bishop of Limoges, Confirmation sermon, published in *Courrier Francais*, July 25, 2003.

⁶ W. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, November 1, 1976, p. 90-91

⁷ Gerhard L. Müller, *Katholische Dogmatik*, 8th ed. [Freiburg: Herder, 2010], p. 300

4. Ecumenism

“On what grounds can Modernists deny the truth of an experience affirmed by a follower of Islam? Will they claim a monopoly of true experiences for Catholics alone? Indeed, Modernists do not deny, but actually maintain, some confusedly, others frankly, that all religions are true. That they cannot feel otherwise is clear. For on what ground, according to their theories, could falsity be predicated of any religion whatsoever? ... For they heap such praise and bestow such public honor on the teachers of these errors [false religions] as to give rise to the belief that their admiration is not meant merely for the persons, who are perhaps not devoid of a certain merit, but rather for the errors which these persons openly profess and which they do all in their power to propagate.” (Pascendi n.14)

- ⇒ “The Fathers of the Church rightly saw in the various religions as it were so many reflections of the one truth.”⁸ (John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*)
- ⇒ “Communion is made fruitful by the exchange of gifts between the Churches insofar as they complement each other.”⁹ (John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint*)
- ⇒ “It follows that these separated Churches and Communities, though we believe they suffer from defects already mentioned, have by no means been deprived of significance and importance in the mystery of salvation...for the Spirit of Christ has not refrained from using them as means of salvation”¹⁰ (*Unitatis Redintegratio*)
- ⇒ “The event of Assisi can thus be considered as a visible illustration, an object lesson, a catechesis understandable by all, of the presuppositions and signification of our commitment to the ecumenism and interreligious dialogue recommended and promoted by the Second Vatican Council... All authentic prayer is inspired by the Holy Ghost, who is mysteriously present in the heart of every man.”¹¹ (John Paul II, “*The State of the World and the Spirit of Assisi*”)

“In the conflict between different religions, the most that Modernists can maintain is that **the Catholic** has more truth because it is more living and that it **deserves with more reason the name of Christian** because it **corresponds more fully** with the origins of Christianity. That these consequences flow from the premises will not seem unnatural to anybody.” (Pascendi n.14)

- ⇒ “Never fight! Let the theologians study the abstract realities of theology. But what should I do with a friend, neighbour, an Orthodox person? Be open, be a friend. ‘But should I make efforts to convert him or her?’ There is a very grave sin against ecumenism: proselytism. We should never proselytize the Orthodox!”¹² (Pope Francis)

⁸ John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*, n.11

⁹ John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint*, n.57

¹⁰ Vatican II, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, n.3

¹¹ John Paul II, “*The State of the World and the Spirit of Assisi*,” Discourse to the Cardinals and the Curia, December 22, 1986; DC, No. 1933 (February 1, 1987), p. 134.

¹² *Address Of The Holy Father, Apostolic Journey Of His Holiness Pope Francis to Georgia And Azerbaijan* (30 September - 2 October 2016) Meeting With Priests, Religious, Seminarians And Pastoral Workers

⇒ “You must be consistent with your faith,” he said. “It never occurred to me (and nor should it) to say to a boy or a girl: ‘You are Jewish, you are Muslim: come, be converted!’ You be consistent with your faith and that consistency is what will make you mature. We are not living in the times of the crusades... The last thing I should do is to try to convince an unbeliever. Never.”¹³ (Pope Francis)

5. Evolution of Dogma

“These formulas have no other purpose than to furnish the believer with a means of giving to himself an account of his faith. These formulas therefore stand midway between the believer and his faith,” (Pascendi n.12)

“Dogma is not only able, but ought to evolve and to be changed. This is strongly affirmed by the Modernists, and clearly flows from their principles... religious formulas if they are to be really religious and not merely intellectual speculations, ought to be living and to live the life of the religious sense.” (Pascendi n.13)

⇒ “The root of this schismatic act can be discerned in an incomplete and *contradictory* notion of Tradition. Incomplete, because it does not take sufficiently into account the *living character of Tradition*, which, as the Second Vatican Council clearly taught, “comes from the apostles and progresses in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit. There is a growth in insight into the realities and words that are being passed on. This comes about in various ways. It comes through the *contemplation and study of believers who ponder these things in their hearts*. It comes from the *intimate sense of spiritual realities which they experience*. And it comes from the preaching of those who have received, along with their right of succession in the episcopate, the sure charism of truth.”¹⁴ (John Paul II – in excommunicating Archbishop Lefebvre)

⇒ “The way to understand the faith today, after Vatican II, is different than the way of understanding the faith before Vatican II. Why? Because there is a development of knowledge. Also the very nature of the moral conscience. For example, today I said clearly that the death penalty is not acceptable — it’s immoral. But, fifty years ago, no. Did the Church change? No. Moral conscience has developed. A development.” (Pope Francis, May 10 2019, speaking to the International Union of Superiors General of Women Religious:)

¹³ http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2019/december/documents/papa-francesco_20191220_visita-liceo-albertelli.html cited in <https://www.breitbart.com/faith/2020/02/02/pope-francis-every-baptized-christian-is-called-to-be-a-missionary/#>

¹⁴ Apostolic Letter “*Ecclesia Dei*,” John Paul II – excommunicating Archbishop Lefebvre and the SSPX Bishops