

QUO VADIS, PETRE?

SPECIAL EDITION TO
THE COLLECTION
ELI, ELI, LAMMA SABACTHANI!



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2. A Common Martyrology

In the Encyclical *Ut unum sint*, You speak about establishing a common martyrology.¹³ According to this, it would be desirable for Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestants to share common "saints." Your Holiness affirms the following:

"I have mentioned the will of the Father and the spiritual space in which each community hears the call to overcome the obstacles to unity. All Christian Communities know that, thanks to the power given by the Spirit, obeying that will and overcoming those obstacles are not beyond their reach. All of them in fact have martyrs for the Christian faith. Despite the tragedy of our divisions, these brothers and sisters have preserved an attachment to Christ and to the Father so radical and absolute as to lead even to the shedding of blood. But is not this same attachment at the heart of what I have called a 'dialogue of conversion'? Is it not precisely this dialogue which clearly shows the need for an ever more profound experience of the truth if full communion is to be attained?"

"In a theocentric vision, we Christians already have a common *martyrology*. This also includes the martyrs of our own century, more numerous than one might think, and it shows how, at a profound level, God preserves communion among the baptized in the supreme demand of faith, manifested in the sacrifice of life itself. The fact that one can die for the faith shows that other demands of the faith can also be met. I have already remarked, and with deep joy, how an imperfect but real communion is preserved and is growing at many levels of ecclesial life. I now add that this communion is already perfect in what

¹³ The Catholic Martyrology includes not only those who died as martyrs, as the name suggests, but also other saints who have died without shedding blood in testimony of the Faith. This ecumenical martyrology would use a similar criteria for "martyrs" and "saints" of the various religions. Here we will deal first with the "martyrs" common to diverse religions, and then with the "saints."

we all consider the highest point of the life of grace, *martyria* unto death, the truest communion possible with Christ who shed his blood, and by that sacrifice brings near those who once were far off (cf. Eph. 2:13)."¹⁴

Therefore, Your Holiness sets forth without hesitation that there can normally be salvation outside the bosom of the Holy Catholic Church. Further, You defend the thesis that those who die giving their blood in defense of their own religions are all true martyrs.

At this point, You touch upon the question of those who die by shedding their blood, the so-called "martyrs" of the other religions. Various press reports have given estimates about the number of persons who would be considered "martyrs" according to this new criterion.

One reliable Italian newspaper comments: "According to studies, there would be an average of 300,000 persons [sic] per year killed for the faith in the '90s. These are the ones who the Pope in the Sunday *Angelus* qualified as 'true martyrs of the twentieth century': the Catholics and the Orthodox who in the Eastern European countries or in other parts of the world were persecuted 'by an implacable atheist power.' The Pontiff has already spoken of this in *Tertio millennio adveniente*¹⁵ and in all

¹⁴ John Paul II, Encyclical *Ut unum sint*, of May 25, 1995 in *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*, Ed. J. Michael Miller, CSB, Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 1996, nos. 83f.

¹⁵ * "At the end of the second millennium, the Church has once again become a Church of martyrs. The persecution of believers – priests, religious, and laity – has caused a great sowing of martyrdom in different parts of the world. The witness to Christ borne even to the shedding of the blood has become a common inheritance of Catholics, Orthodox, Anglicans, and Protestants In our own century the martyrs have returned, many of them nameless, *unknown soldiers* as it were of God's great cause" (Apostolic Letter *Tertio millennio adveniente*, of November 10, 1994, no. 37).

* "Is not the twentieth century a time of great witness, which extends even to the shedding of blood? And does not this witness also involve

the ecumenical documents of the last years. What is the number of the martyrs of communism, victims of the 'red way'? Last year John Paul II appointed a 'commission for the new martyrs' as a preparatory committee for Jubilee 2000. The criteria for compiling a list of those who died for the faith in this century will be chosen by representatives of the churches of the whole world. There would be 200,000 ministers of worship assassinated in the ex-USSR alone."¹⁶

Archbishop Crescenzo Sepe, secretary general of the Great Jubilee Committee for the Year 2000, has also released statements about the meaning of the "new martyrs" who will be declared on the occasion of the Millennium: "One will no longer speak only of the Catholic martyrs of the 20th century. We will make an ecumenical ceremony to commemorate the Orthodox and so many others – Christian or not – who gave their lives for others, above all in the decades of the terrors of Communism, Nazism, and other dictatorships. On a day specifically dedicated to the modern martyrs, various names and special cases will be remembered."¹⁷

The statement of Msgr. Sepe that "we will make an ecumenical ceremony to commemorate the Orthodox and so many others – Christian or not – who gave their lives for others" clearly indicates that there will be Jewish and Muslim "martyrs"

the various Churches and Ecclesial Communities which take their name from Christ, crucified and risen? (*Ut unum sint*, no. 48, Robert Moynihan and Antonio Gaspari, "Can Changing The Papacy Bring Unity?" in *Inside the Vatican*, June-July, 1995).

* "In a theocentric vision, we Christians already have a common martyrology. This also includes martyrs of our own century, more numerous than one might think" (*Ibid.*, no. 84).

¹⁶ "I nuovi martiri? Le vittime di un ateismo totalitario," in *Corriere della Sera*, 8/28/96.

¹⁷ Crescenzo Sepe, Press statement, apud Federico Mandillo, "A igreja faz preparativos para o Grande Jubileu," in *Estado de S. Paulo*, 11/2/98.

as well. This calls to mind the words of Your Holiness upon receiving Yitszak Rabin's widow Leah when You told her that he "died a martyr of peace."¹⁸

Thus, the perspective of a common martyrology that, strictly speaking, should include Jews, would probably contain victims of the concentration camps as well as Muslims. In the latter case, would Catholics have to venerate as "martyrs" the innumerable Mohammedans killed during the Crusades? Would it be possible for the two antagonist religions, for which the followers of each side died in armed combat, to be equally true to the point that their members would receive analogous homage? One could say that this would be the negation of the principle of contradiction.

Another serious concern is that the year 2000 could see the possible beatification of heretics who were condemned to death for their doctrines. For example, Girolamo Savonarola, Giordano Bruno, and Jan Hus could also come to be considered "martyrs."¹⁹

¹⁸ John Paul II, Statements, in *Jornal do Brasil*, 12/15/95.

¹⁹ **Girolamo Savonarola** (1452-1498), a Dominican monk who under the pretext of combating the moral excesses of the Renaissance and the Clergy, preached a "miserabilist" Church, without earthly goods (see Note 46). With the help of King Charles VIII of France, he established a theocratic republic of a socialist bent in Florence. He disobeyed the orders of his ecclesiastical superiors and was excommunicated. He continued to preach, calling for a council against the Pope. The people apprehended him, he was handed over to justice, and was burned at the stake. He is considered the precursor of the Reforma-tion, and his statue stands in front of a monument dedicated to Luther in Worms.

Giordano Bruno (1548-1600), a Dominican monk, was ordained in Naples in 1572. Accused of heresy, he left the Order and travelled through Europe. He attacked the Church on various occasions. His principal errors consisted of defending that Jesus Christ is not God but a magician, that the Holy Spirit is the soul of the earth, and that the devil will be saved. Denounced to the Inquisition in Venice, he was condemned and burned in Rome.

Such is the general outline regarding the new "martyrs" who could be pronounced on the occasion of the Millennium.

Yet in the Encyclical *Ut unum sint*, Your Holiness does not restrict yourself to the declaration of "martyrs," that is, those who died by shedding their blood. There would be still other "saints" from the other confessions who ought to be acknowledged. In fact, You affirm: "While for all Christian communities the martyrs are the proof of the power of grace, they are not the only ones to bear witness to that power. Albeit in an invisible way, the communion between our Communities, even if still incomplete, is truly and solidly grounded in the full communion of the saints – those who, at the end of a life faithful to grace, are in communion with Christ in glory. These saints come from all the Churches and Ecclesial Communities that gave them entrance into the communion of salvation.

"In the radiance of the 'heritage of the saints' belonging to all Communities, the 'dialogue of conversion' toward full and visible unity thus appears as a source of hope. This universal presence of the saints is in fact a proof of the transcendent power of the Spirit. It is the sign and proof of God's victory over the forces of evil which divide humanity. As the liturgy

Jan Hus (1369-1415) was ordained a priest in Prague (1400). Influenced by the writings of John Wyclif (1324-1384), even though they had been condemned by the Church, Hus translated them into the Czeck language and spread them, feeding the spirit of reform. He attacked Bishops and the Pope. He was excommunicated by the Archbishop of Prague, and the Pope placed his residence under interdict. He went to the Council of Constance to defend his doctrine and there he was judged, condemned, and burned.

See Gilles Lapouge, "Papa pretende beatificar Girolamo Savonarola," in *O Estado de S. Paulo*, 5/25/97; L. Accattoli, "Savonarola beato al Giubileo," in *Corriere della Sera*, 2/17/96; *Corriere della Sera*, "Il Cardinale Piovanelli: fate santo Savonarola," 12/6/95; "Il supplizio di Giordano Bruno: la Chiesa fa mea colpa," 11/15/96; "Savonarola verso la beatificazione a 500 anni dal rogo," 1/26/97; Cesare Medali, "Savonarola, martire o contestatore?" in *Corriere della Sera*, 2/3/97.

sings: 'You are glorified in your saints, for their glory is the crowning of your gifts.'²⁰

Once again, Your Holiness categorically affirms that the other religious confessions, different from the Catholic Church, are a normal and legitimate means to salvation – even to the point that they can have members who can be called “saints.”

Thus it could happen that the saints of tomorrow would be those very persons who until today were considered by Catholics as abettors of schism and heresy. This would be proclaimed by the Successor of Peter, in union with leaders of the other religions, at the passing of the Millennium.

Based on this, it seems licit to raise some hypotheses. Would such authorities begin by declaring the leaders of the Eastern Schism to be “saints”? In this case, would Photius and Michael Cerularius²¹ be included in this number? So it seems, since a solemn joint declaration was read simultaneously at the Basilica of St. Peter by Paul VI and in Constantinople by Athenagoras I (12/7/65). While it claimed to revoke “the sentence of excommunication leveled against the patriarch Michael Cerularius” in 1054, the act had no practical effect. The passing of the years has shown that, despite the intentions of Paul VI and Athenagoras, the act was *de facto* considered ineffectual because it did not change the situation. The act pompously enti-

²⁰ John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, no. 84.

²¹ **Photius**, patriarch of Constantinople in the ninth century, broke officially with Rome, refusing to submit to her discipline on two occasions between 868 and 886. This was considered the origin of the dispute that two centuries later caused the Eastern Schism.

Michael Cerularius, patriarch of Constantinople from 1043 to 1058, had problems with Rome from the beginning of his rule and clashed several times with Sovereign Pontiff St. Leo IX. The last of these disputes resulted in the sentence of excommunication that the papal delegate, Cardinal Humbert Moyenmoutier, Bishop of Silva Candida, left on the altar of the Basilica of Saint Sophia in the year 1054. Since this time, the followers of Cerularius have been schismatics.

tled "the lifting of the excommunications" *de jure* meant nothing, since an excommunication only has validity in the Church Militant while the accused is living. The *post-mortem* consequences are handed over to the judgment of God. Thus, the lifting of the excommunication of Michael Cerularius was only a diplomatic measure, without juridical effect or practical purpose.

Does not the new martyrology suggest something along the lines of a rehabilitation of the abettors of the Schism? Will the eventual aim be the rehabilitation of the two principal perpetrators of the Schism? In this case, would Catholics have to render honor to those who were the first to break the unity of the Holy Church?

Or would the Holy See and the authorities of other religions begin by declaring less controversial persons to be "saints"? The Russian Schismatic thinker Vladimir Soloviev,²² for instance, was praised in your Apostolic Letter *Fides et ratio* as an example of a person who made "a philosophical inquiry

²² Vladimir Soloviev, philosopher and Russian poet (1853-1900), was an heir to "the French Revolution, German idealism, the Hegelian left of Feuerbach and Marx, the positivism of Comte, the evolutionism of Darwin, the doctrine of the super-man of Nietzsche, the arrogant pessimism of Schopenhauer ... In him, the confessional dialogue took on a world dimension and turned into dialogue between the East and the West, between Byzantian-Moscow and Rome" (Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Soloviev," in *La gloire et la Croix*, vol. II, Lyon: Aubier, 1972, pp. 167ff.). Soloviev defended the interior experience as the last recourse to reach the Absolute. He thought that the future of philosophy would be a synthesis between the philosophy of the West and the theological doctrine of the East. In his work, traces of pantheism have been found. He defended the idea of the union of churches as the way to prepare for the unification of humankind and, for this reason, he is considered the precursor of ecumenism. His evolutionist cosmology of man approaches systems of thought of various contemporary thinkers, notably that of Fr. Teilhard de Chardin, SJ.

that was enriched by engaging the data of faith."²³ This, added to the indisputable prestige that he enjoys in circles of the *Nouvelle Theologie*, could stimulate his name to be proposed for the general veneration of Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestants.

It does not seem that the two hypotheses would exclude each other. Either the more or the less prominent Schismatics could, without difficulty, be presented as "saints."

Various events regarding the heresiarchs of Protestantism are also cause for pressing concern. Above, we cited the "lifting of the excommunication" of Cerularius (1965). Below, we record two statements of Cardinal Willebrands indicative of the times (1970, 1983) as well as two significant documents of Your Holiness (1983, 1984). They are not the most recent, undoubtedly, but they seem to reflect the base for the present reality: the exaltation of Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin.

Cardinal Jan Willebrands, then president of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, spoke of Luther in terms that Catholics usually reserve for St. Thomas Aquinas. The Angelic Doctor justly deserves the title of "common master" or "common doctor," which signifies that he should be respected by all of the theological schools in the Church. Yet Cardinal Willebrands praised Luther in his official speech at Evian in 1970 at the fifth plenary meeting of the Lutheran World Federation Council in Evian. Speaking about the doctrine of justification, the Cardinal applied to Luther the title of "common master," properly reserved for St. Thomas Aquinas. These were his words:

"Who cannot recognize that a more just assessment of the person and work of Martin Luther is imperative? Over the last few centuries, the person of Martin Luther has not always been duly respected by Catholics, and his theology has not always been correctly expounded. This has served neither truth nor

²³ John Paul II, Encyclical *Fides et ratio*, of November 15, 1998, in *Origins*, 10/22/98, vol. 28/19, no. 74.

love, and therefore, it has not served the unity that we strive to achieve between ourselves and the Catholic Church. On the other hand, we can happily say that in the last few decades Catholic scholars have been striving for a more precise understanding of the figure of Martin Luther and his theology Today, who would dare to deny that Martin Luther was a profoundly religious personality who sought the message of the Gospel honestly and with abnegation? Who could deny that in spite of the torments he inflicted upon the Catholic Church and the Holy See – truth demands that we speak out – he preserved a considerable measure of the riches of the ancient faith? Did not Vatican Council II approve demands that had been formulated by Martin Luther? And, by these, are not many aspects of the Christian faith and life better expressed today than in the past? To say this is a reason for great joy and hope.

“In an extraordinary way for his time, Martin Luther made the Bible the starting point of theology and Christian life. In your churches, the Bible has since enjoyed a privileged place and has been studied with great zeal. For its part, with a profundity never before attained, Vatican Council II inserted the Holy Scripture – which has always been a treasure in the Catholic Church – more fully into the life of the Church and its members and made it more fruitful for the latter In Martin Luther, one word continuously repeats itself, the great word ‘faith.’ Luther profoundly recognized its value, and many men, both inside and outside your churches, have learned to live from it even to our day. If there seems to have been a certain exclusiveness on this point that might be derived from the emphasis that Luther gave it in his talks, the joint research by Catholic and Protestant scholars on this matter shows that the word ‘faith’ in the sense that Luther attributed to it certainly does not exclude works, love, and hope. One can properly say that, as a whole, Luther’s notion of faith means nothing but what the Church calls love.

“It is neither necessary nor possible to expound here the essential points of Luther’s theology. Many things would have

to be said about his theology of the cross, his Christology, his insistence on the divinity of Christ, questions that today particularly unite us to him. Yet both Catholic and Protestant scholars draw our attention to still another matter: the difficulty of presenting the thinking of Luther precisely, exhaustively, and above all, proportionately, giving full justice to many of his formulations that he did not express in a systematic way.

“For me it is a pleasure to think that in this regard we agree with your sentiments In a session whose theme is *Sent to the World*, it is good to reflect upon a man for whom the doctrine of justification²⁴ was the *articulus stantis et cadentis Ecclesiae* [the turning point of the enduring Church]. He can be our common master in this field as he states that God must

²⁴ In its *Decretum de justificatione* of January 13, 1547, the Council of Trent dealt with the topic of the Protestant doctrine of justification (generically praised by Cardinal Willebrands). It pronounced anathema the errors of Luther and his followers in 33 canons. For example, these Lutheran theses were condemned by canons 9 to 12:

- “Can. 9. If anyone shall say that by faith alone the sinner is justified, so as to understand that nothing else is required to cooperate in the attainment of the grace of justification, and that it is in no way necessary that he be prepared and disposed by the action of his own will; let him be anathema” (D 819, cf. 798, 801, 804).
- “Can. 10. If anyone shall say that men are justified without the justice of Christ by which He merited for us, or that by that justice itself they are formally just: let him be anathema” (D 820, cf. 798f.).
- “Can. 11. If anyone shall say that men are justified either by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ, or by the sole remission of sins, to the exclusion of grace and charity, which is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Spirit and remains in them, or even that the grace by which we are justified is only the favor of God: let him be anathema” (D 821, cf. 799ff., 809).
- “Can. 12. If anyone shall say that justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in the divine mercy which remits sins for Christ’s sake, or that it is this confidence alone by which we are justified; let him be anathema” (D 822, cf. 792, 802).

continuously remain the Lord and our most essential human response must be an absolute confidence in and worship of God.²⁵

Cardinal Willebrands' acclaim of Luther could lead one to think that his name might soon be proposed as a "saint" of the new martyrology. But the Cardinal goes even further in his praises. In a speech at the Ecumenical Institute of Bari, he judged that for the Church to be cured of the "wounds of her past," she needed to make a "more just and honest portrait of Luther." Cardinal Willebrands spoke these words at a meeting commemorating the fifth centenary of the birth of the heresiarch (1983): "It cannot be denied that Luther is present in Western Christendom. His name is a sign of division within it. Hence the question, 'But why?' We can draft a quick answer, but the essential question remains: What is the deepest meaning of what happened? Is it sufficient for us to take refuge in the inscrutable mystery of Divine Providence? Or should we instead ask ourselves: What can we do today to heal the wounds of the past? And how should we do it? Making a more just and honest portrait of Martin Luther will also serve to heal the sufferings of the Body of Christ."²⁶

In his speech at Bari, Cardinal Willebrands revealed the Catholic post-conciliar stance of adaptation to Protestantism: "In addition to recovering the central role of Scripture in the Church and the lives of the faithful, since Vatican II Catholics have been increasingly willing to reassess the common priesthood of the faithful and the co-responsibility of laymen in the whole life of the Church; to recognize the character of the

²⁵ Jan Willebrands, "Lecture delivered at the 5th Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation," 6/15/70, in *La Documentation Catholique*, 1569, 9/6/70, pp. 765f.

²⁶ J. Willebrands, Speech about Luther at the St. Nicolas Institute, apud Salvatore Manna, published under the title: "Il Card. Willebrands inaugura il corso dell'Istituto S. Nicola," in *L'Osservatore Romano*, 2/5/84, p. 6.

Pilgrim Church on earth; to reevaluate local churches, to accept liturgical reform with the introduction of national languages; to concede to having Communion under two species and the declaration of religious liberty."²⁷

Would these conclusions be those only of Cardinal Willebrands? They seem to suppose the at least implicit assent of Your Holiness. This could be assumed even by the position of the Cardinal as president of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity. If You disagreed with the stands of this Prelate, You would certainly have given him some warning. This pontifical silence alone would suffice it to be said that the Pope agreed with these policies and eulogies. Such silence would be an indirect but cogent proof.

There is, however, a direct and indisputable proof. It is your personal letter to Cardinal Willebrands encouraging and directing him to participate in the commemorations held on that occasion. You began the letter paying homage to the heresiarch by calling him "Doctor," which brings to mind the title of "common doctor" that Cardinal Willebrands employed for Luther. These were your words: "November 10th is the 500th anniversary of the birth of Doctor Martin Luther of Eisleben. On this occasion, numerous Christians remember that theologian who contributed substantially to the radical change of ecclesiastical and secular reality in the West. Until today our world feels his great impact on History."²⁸

Your Holiness gave a certain imperative tone to the norms at the end of the letter to Cardinal Willebrands: "I trust, therefore, Honored Cardinal, that under your direction and on this foundation and in this spirit, the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity will carry forward this dialogue that began with

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ John Paul II, Letter to Cardinal Willebrands of October 83, published under the title, "La verità storica su Lutero alimenta il dialogo per l'unità," in *L'Osservatore Romano*, 11/6/83, p. 4.

such great seriousness in Germany even before Vatican Council II; and that you will do this with fidelity to the faith freely given, which implies penitence and a readiness to learn from listening."²⁹

This "foundation" and "spirit" that You propose the Cardinal to adopt includes acknowledging a "fraternity" with Protestants and affirming Luther's "profound religiosity" and "ardent passion" for eternal salvation. This is quite evident from the following paragraphs of your letter: "Well-known personalities and institutions of Lutheran Christendom have expressed the desire that the year dedicated to Luther be marked by a genuine ecumenical spirit and that reflections about Luther may contribute to the unity of Christians. I welcome this intention with satisfaction, seeing it as a fraternal invitation to achieve a more profound and complete vision of historical events and a critical analysis of Luther's multifarious heritage by means of this common effort. Indeed, the scientific research of evangelical and Catholic scholars, which has already led to many points of convergence, have made a more complete and nuanced picture of Luther's personality as well as a more complex interlacing of the historical, political, and ecclesiastical reality in the first half of the sixteenth century. These results have given visible proof of the profound religiosity of Luther, who was moved by an ardent passion for the question of eternal salvation."³⁰

One cannot but be perplexed at finding Your Holiness extending "with satisfaction" a "fraternal invitation" to Protestants and overestimating historical and political circumstances in order to find many "points of convergence" between the Catholic Church and the Protestant heresy.³¹

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Although further on Your Holiness gives some importance to doctrinal controversy in the "dialogue" with Protestants, in this excerpt You

Regarding the errors of Luther, all of which involve matters of Faith, the sketch of "a more complete and nuanced picture of his personality as well as of the complex interlacing of historical reality" does nothing to change the solemn condemnation of the heresiarch's theses pronounced by Pope Leo X in the Bull *Exsurge Domine* of June 15, 1520. He summarizes this teaching with these strong words: "We condemn, reprove, and entirely reject each one and all of the aforementioned articles or errors [of Luther] as heretical, scandalous, false, offensive to pious ears, seductive of simple minds, and opposed to Catholic truth."³²

Thus it is surprising to see You describe Luther as a man gifted with a "profound religiosity" and an "ardent passion" for

appear to subordinate the understanding of truth to historical conditions. In contrast with this tendency, consider the clear teaching of Saint Pius X condemning the Modernist errors in apologetics: "Hence that common axiom of the Modernist school that in the new apologetics controversies in religion must be determined by psychological and historical research" (Encyclical *Pascendi Dominici gregis*, of September 8, 1907, no. 35).

Further, the Decree *Lamentabili* of the Roman and Universal Holy Inquisition of July 3, 1907 presents a *Syllabus* of condemned Modernist propositions, some of which can be indirectly likened to your position. They include the following:

"3. From the ecclesiastical judgments and censures passed against free and more scientific exegesis, one can conclude that the Faith the Church proposes contradicts History and that Catholic teaching cannot really be reconciled with the true origins of the Christian religion

"22. The dogmas the Church holds out as revealed are not truths that have fallen from heaven. They are an interpretation of religious facts which the human mind has acquired by laborious effort

"54. Dogmas, Sacraments, and Hierarchy, both their notion and reality, are only interpretations and evolutions of the Christian intelligence which have increased and been perfected by an external series of additions to the little germ latent in the Gospel."

³² Leo X, Bull *Exsurge Domine*, of June 15, 1520, in DS 1492.

eternal salvation, which would contradict the perennial teaching of the Church.

One sees that Cardinal Willebrands, whose statements and participation in the ceremonies commemorating the birth of the heresiarch cause astonishment, was in fact only following the orientation of the Pope, clearly laid out in the letter we have just cited.

When Your Holiness was in Germany in 1996, the possibility of absolving Luther was the subject of frequent conversation. For example, a typical news report stated: "Pope John Paul II is arriving in Germany today for a three-day visit. Bishop Karl Lehmann revealed yesterday that the Catholic Church and the Lutheran Church had reached an agreement to invalidate the mutual condemnations dating from the 16th century: 'The Pope will speak important words about this agreement, and I believe that we can expect surprises.' Vatican sources affirm that the Pope could revoke the condemnation of the father of the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther."³³

Another newspaper report explained why this absolution would not take place: "During his visit to Germany, Pope John Paul II intended to revoke the excommunication of Luther ... but he was dissuaded by advisers in face of the negative reaction of the German Episcopate, according to the weekly *Focus*. This historical initiative, which would have been made in the name of ecumenism, would have coincided with the 450th anniversary of the birth of Luther and been announced at the castle of Wartburg, where he took refuge during the religious wars between the Reform and the Counter-reformation."³⁴

Such eulogies of Luther have continued into our days. For example, these were your words during your 1996 visit at the beginning of an ecumenical celebration in the city of

³³ "Papa tenta aproximação com protestantes alemães," in *O Estado de S. Paulo*, 6/21/96.

³⁴ "Papa pretendia reabilitar Lutero," in *Jornal do Brasil*, 6/16/96.

Paderborn: "After centuries of alienation and opposition, his [Luther's] memory permits us today to recognize more clearly the great importance of his request for a theology close to Sacred Scripture and a spiritual renewal of the Church."³⁵

To judge by such texts and reports, who could be surprised if the heresiarch were to be absolved on the occasion of the Millennium? Or even eventually pronounced a "saint"?

During a trip to Switzerland, Most Holy Father, You also visited the Federation of Protestant Churches in Kehrsatz. There, You admiringly referred to the supposed "zeal" of Zwingli and Calvin: "This year we recall the zeal that animated two outstanding religious personalities in Swiss history: one, Huldric Zwingli, whose fifth centennial you are commemorating with celebrations honoring his person and work; the other, John Calvin, who was born 475 years ago."³⁶

Here as well, attributing zeal to Zwingli and Calvin can only be understood as a eulogy. Would this mean that the two heresiarchs could also be included in the new martyrology? It is a possibility that we sincerely hope will not take place.

Similar questions could be made about the rest of your speech, in which You reaffirmed your ecumenical commitment to "repair the damage" caused by the Catholic struggle against Protestants. Its leaders – in this case, Zwingli and Calvin – were supposedly moved by the noble intention of "making the Church more faithful" to Our Lord Jesus Christ: "Above all, the memory of events of the past should not limit our present efforts to repair the damage caused by those events. Cleansing the memory is an element of capital importance in ecumenical

³⁵ John Paul II, Speech given at a meeting with representatives of the evangelical church in Paderborn on June 22, 1996, in L. Accattoli, *When a Pope Asks Forgiveness*, New York: Alba House, 1998, p. 195.

³⁶ John Paul II, Speech to the Federation of Protestant Churches in Kerhsatz, on June 14, 1984, published under the title "La franca discussione degli avvenimenti storici, elemento fondamentale nel progresso ecumenico," in *L'Osservatore Romano*, 6/15/84, p. 8.

progress. It includes the frank recognition of reciprocal faults and errors committed in the reactions of one to the other, when each one had the intention of making the Church more faithful to the will of the Lord."³⁷

If Calvin and Zwingli "had the intention of making the Church more faithful" to the will of Christ, would this indicate that they should be raised to the altar for the veneration of Catholics? It is a hypothesis that cannot be disregarded.

Therefore, Most Holy Father, the possibility exists that in the inauguration of the common martyrology, Catholics could be asked to renounce something that has been one of the characteristic marks of the Church for four centuries: its doctrinal opposition to Protestantism. And this Protestantism was personified by those very heresiarchs who founded some of its most important fragmentations.

Should this be true, one could say that for all practical purposes the common martyrology and the ecumenical festivities of the Millennium would have as a corollary the death of militancy in the Catholic Church.

CHAPTER II

CATHOLIC DOCTRINE AND ECUMENISM

Most Holy Father, an important topic will be presented here for your consideration: the conformance between the ecumenical⁵⁵ and inter-religious initiatives of the conciliar Church,

⁵⁵ The Greek word *oikoumenikos* from which ecumenism derives signifies that which extends throughout the whole world, what is universal. In a certain way it is synonymous with the Greek word *katholikos*, which also means universal. This is the legitimate meaning of ecumenism. It is what strives for the true Faith to spread throughout the world, which was the missionary ideal as the Church understood it up to Vatican Council II.

This good ecumenism rests on several presuppositions: *First*, that the Catholic Faith is one and cannot be fragmented into smaller parts that would contain incomplete, but acceptable, pieces of the truth. This is expressed in the adage, "*bonum ex integra causa, malum ex quocunque defectu.*" *Second*, it presupposes that the Holy Church is the only means by which one can achieve eternal salvation. On this basis, the Catholic Church has always taught that seeking the conversion of heretics, schismatics, Jews, and pagans was one of her principal objectives. It is one of her Catholic marks, and, in that sense, ecumenical in the sound sense of the word.

However, the ecumenism that is spoken of so much today in large part does not conform to this good ecumenism. Born from Protestant initiatives at the end of the last century that sought to draw in Catholics who tended toward relativism, this movement of "bad" ecumenism gained ground in liberal Catholic milieus and then in Modernist circles. After the strong anti-Modernist campaign of the pontificate of St. Pius X, it again took hold and acquired strength and influence up to its triumph at Vatican II in documents of major importance: the Decree

principally the Millennium festivities, and the uniform, constant, and universal teaching of the Catholic Magisterium. It is difficult to reconcile the teachings of the Pontifical Magisterium prior to Vatican II with the practical cooperation, diplomatic approaches, and even joint statements on doctrine that have become increasingly frequent from the reign of John XXIII until now.

Excerpts from teachings of the perennial Pontifical Magisterium will be reproduced here and then compared with what has been done in our days.

Pius IX, together with Vatican Council I, reiterated the immutable doctrine of the Church. Pope Pius IX taught that the Faith could be found only in the body of the Catholic Church and emphasized her separation from the false creeds. Contrary to this, numerous Prelates today are preaching some degree or other of parity of the Holy Church with other religions. Many examples of this could be given, but only these few will be cited for the sake of brevity.

Unitatis redintegratio, the Declaration *Nostrae aetate*, and the Declaration *Dignitatis humanae*.

This ecumenism departs from presuppositions diametrically opposed to those of true ecumenism: *First*, the Faith would no longer be one, but fragmented. What should be accepted is a "theological pluralism," in which each one would profess only parts of the truth and not the entire truth. *Second*, the Church should no longer strive to convert heretics, schismatics, Jews, and pagans from their false creeds, but should respect and adapt herself to them to the measure possible in search of a new "unity." This is an ecumenical unity that is founded upon relativism and religious syncretism, and tends toward a panreligion. This idea has been unanimously condemned by the Pontifical Magisterium up to Vatican II, as we shall see in this chapter.

For a further explanation of true and false ecumenism, see Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira, "Unperceived Ideological Transshipment and Dialogue," in *Crusade for a Christian Civilization*, vol. 12, no. 4, pp. 28f.; A. Sinke Guimarães, *In the Murky Waters of Vatican II*, Chap. IX, §§1f.

This is what Vatican I said about the difference between the Catholic Church and the false religions: "For to the Catholic Church alone belong all those many and marvelous things which have been divinely arranged for the evident credibility of the Christian Faith. But, even the Church itself by itself, because of its marvelous propagation, its exceptional holiness, and inexhaustible fruitfulness in all good works; because of its Catholic unity and invincible stability, is a very great and perpetual motive of credibility, and an incontestable witness of its own divine mission. By this it happens that the Church ... both invites to itself those who have not yet believed, and makes its sons more certain that the faith, which they profess, rests on a very firm foundation Wherefore, not at all equal is the condition of those, who, through the heavenly gift of faith, have adhered to the Catholic truth, and of those who, led by human opinions, follow a false religion."⁵⁶

With exemplary force, Pius IX spoke about religious indifferentism, the essence of which today is called ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue. The condemnatory statement of the Pontiff is particularly cogent when he refers to those who "pretend that men can gain eternal salvation by the practice of any religion." The excerpts about the common martyrology (Chapter I, no. 2) seem to take as presupposed the exact opposite teaching. Yet Sovereign Pontiff Pius IX clearly stated: "Also perverse is the shocking theory that it makes no difference to which religion one belongs [religious indifferentism], a theory which is greatly at variance even with reason. By means of this theory, those crafty men remove all distinction between virtue and vice, truth and error, honorable and vile action. They pretend that men can gain eternal salvation by the practice of any religion, as if there could ever be any sharing between justice

⁵⁶ Pius IX in union with Vatican Council I, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith*, Session III of April 24, 1794, in D 1494.

and iniquity, any collaboration between light and darkness, or any agreement between Christ and Belial.”⁵⁷

It would thus not seem exaggerated to affirm that the first flagrant contradiction has appeared between two fundamental points of the Millennium festivities – the panreligious meeting and the common martyrology – and the traditional doctrine of the Church.

In the *Syllabus of Errors*, Pope Pius IX summarizes various teachings of his pontificate that are today generally passed over in silence. In it he condemns the 15th proposition: “Anyone is free to embrace and profess that religion which, guided by the light of reason, he judges to be true.”⁵⁸ Likewise he condemns the 16th proposition: “In the cult of any religion, men can find the road of eternal salvation and achieve the same eternal salvation.”⁵⁹

How could the conciliar texts that state there is the possibility of salvation in the practice of innumerable religions be reconciled with the doctrine of Pius IX? Would not the hypothesis of a common martyrology be based on the error declared anathema by the 15th and 16th propositions of the *Syllabus* cited above? From this arises the embarrassing but inevitable question: Which would prevail: the doctrine taught by Pius IX, which conforms to the teaching of the Magisterium that preceded it, or that of Your Holiness, which was supported by Vatican II?

⁵⁷ Pius IX, Encyclical *Qui pluribus*, of November 9, 1846, in *The Papal Encyclicals 1740-1978*, vol. 1, ed. Claudia Carlen IHM, Raleigh: McGrath Publishing Co., 1981, p. 280.

⁵⁸ The same sentence is also condemned in the Apostolic Letter *Multiplices inter*, of June 10, 1851, and in the Allocution *Maxima quidem*, of June 9, 1862.

⁵⁹ The same thesis is condemned in the Encyclical *Qui pluribus*, of November 9, 1846, in the Allocution *Ubi primum*, of December 17, 1847, and in the Allocution *Singularem quidem*, of March 17, 1856.

Leo XIII's exposition of the changeless Catholic position of the defense of the Faith in face of heretics conflicts with the position of many today who say that such heretics are only partially, if at all, culpable for their errors. According to conciliar criteria, what should be more strongly emphasized are the points of Faith that the heretics already accept, to give the impression that they are close to achieving unity with the Church.

Contrary to this tendency, Leo XIII taught: "The Church, founded on these principles and mindful of her office, has done nothing with greater zeal and endeavor than She has displayed in guarding the integrity of the Faith. Hence She regarded as rebels and expelled from the ranks of her children all who held beliefs on any point of doctrine different from her own. The Arians, the Montanists, the Novatians, the Quartodecimans, the Eutychians, did not certainly reject all Catholic doctrine: they abandoned only a certain portion of it. Still who does not know that they were declared heretics and banished from the bosom of the Church? In like manner were condemned all authors of heretical tenets who followed them in subsequent ages: 'There can be nothing more dangerous than those heretics who admit nearly the whole cycle of doctrine, and yet by one word, as with a drop of poison, infect the real and simple faith taught by Our Lord and handed down by Apostolic tradition.'^{60,61}

The requests for pardon, ever multiplying as the Millennium nears, seem to assume that there would have been error and sin in the Catholic Church: She would be both "holy and a sinner."⁶² As seen above, this faulty doctrine finds refuge in some of the documents of Vatican II.⁶³ And Your Holiness has

⁶⁰ *Tractatus de Fide Orthodoxa contra Arianos.*

⁶¹ Leo XIII, Encyclical *Satis cognitum*, of June 29, 1896, in *The Papal Encyclicals*, vol. 2, p. 393.

⁶² See note 46.

⁶³ See pp.32f.

also been the protagonist for many of these requests for pardon.⁶⁴

Speaking in a diametrically opposed way, His Holiness Pope Gregory XVI asserted without hesitation this teaching: "Therefore, it is obviously absurd and injurious to propose a certain 'restoration and regeneration' for her [the Church] as though necessary for safety and growth, as if She could be considered subject to defect or obscurity or other misfortune."⁶⁵

Another Pontiff, Pope Pius XI, affirmed this most beautifully: "During the lapse of centuries, the Mystical Spouse of Christ has never been contaminated, nor can She ever in the future be contaminated, as Cyprian bears witness: 'The Bride of Christ cannot be made false to her Spouse: She is incorrupt and modest. She knows but one dwelling, She guards the sanctity of the nuptial chamber chastely and modestly.'^{66,67}

Thus, Most Holy Father, we ask a word of clarification: How can the teaching that the Church could be "holy and sinning," implied in passages of Vatican II, and the requests for pardon harmonize with the teachings of the two Pontiffs presented above?

Pope Pius XI analyzed the ecumenical efforts that were already beginning in his day and said that they "certainly can nowise be approved by Catholics": "For since they [those who strive to introduce a sentiment of universal fraternity into the Church] hold it for certain that men destitute of all religious sense are very rarely to be found, they seem to have founded on that belief a hope that the nations, although they differ among themselves in certain religious matters, will without much diffi-

⁶⁴ See pp. 30-37.

⁶⁵ Gregory XVI, Encyclical *Mirari vos*, in *The Papal Encyclicals*, vol. 1, p. 237.

⁶⁶ St. Cyprian of Carthage, *De Catholicae Ecclesiae unitate*, no. 6.

⁶⁷ Pius XI, Encyclical *Mortalium animos*, of January 6, 1928 in *Papal Encyclicals 1903-1939*, vol. 3, p. 317.

culty come to agree as brethren in professing certain doctrines, which form as it were a common basis of the spiritual life. For which reason conventions, meetings, and addresses are frequently arranged by these persons Certainly such attempts can nowise be approved by Catholics, since they are founded on that false opinion which considers all religions to be more or less good and praiseworthy Not only are those who hold this opinion in error and deceived, but also in distorting the idea of true religion, they reject it, and little by little, turn aside to naturalism and atheism, as it is called.”⁶⁸

The censure of Pius XI against today’s partisans of ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue could not be more severe: “From which it clearly follows that one who supports those who hold these theories and attempt to realize them, is altogether abandoning the divinely revealed religion.”⁶⁹

Once again, we ask Your Holiness to address these critical discrepancies: How should this condemnation of Pius XI be understood with regard to the present day ecumenical initiative of the conciliar Church without causing a rupture? Did Pius XI and the Popes who preceded him err? Did the conciliar Popes err?

Further on, Pius XI refutes the sophism that ecumenism would be an expression of charity, established by the evangelical precept “*ut unum sint*” (“that they may be one”). Today, on the eve of the Millennium, this position has become widespread, and these very words have become the title of one of your encyclicals. Yet Pius XI clearly stated: “And here it seems opportune to expound [upon] and to refute a certain false opinion, as well as that complex movement by which non-Catholics seek to bring about the union of the Christian churches depends. For authors who favor this view are accustomed, times almost without number, to bring forward these words of Christ: ‘That they all may be one And there shall be one fold and one shepherd,’ with this

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 313f.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

signification however: that Christ Jesus merely expressed a desire and prayer, which still lacks its fulfillment. For they are of the opinion that the unity of faith and government, which is a note of the one true Church of Christ, has hardly up to the present time existed, and does not today exist

“They add that the Church in itself, or of its nature, is divided into sections; that is to say, that it is made up of several churches or distinct communities, which still remain separate, and although having certain articles of doctrine in common, nevertheless disagree concerning the remainder; that these all enjoy the same rights Controversies therefore, they say, and long-standing differences of opinion which keep asunder till the present day the members of the Christian family, must be entirely put aside, and from the remaining doctrines a common form of faith drawn up and proposed for belief, and in the profession of which all may not only know but feel that they are brothers This then is what is commonly said They soon, however, go on to say that that Church [the Roman Church] has also erred, and corrupted the original religion by adding and proposing for belief certain doctrines that are not only alien to the Gospel, but even repugnant to it. Among the chief of these they number that which concerns the Primacy of jurisdiction, which was granted to Peter and to his successors in the See of Rome.”⁷⁰

Your Holiness has asked Catholic and non-Catholic theologians to restudy the future role of the Papal Primacy so that it will no longer be an obstacle to panreligious union.⁷¹ Doesn't such a request directly counter this grave censure of Pius XI?

How can the journey of Assisi and the panreligious commemoration being prepared for the Millennium festivities be reconciled with the prohibitions of Pius XI? This Pontiff qualified the attitude that is being assumed today by much of

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 315.

⁷¹ John Paul II, Encyclical *Ut unum sint*, nos. 90, 95.

the conciliar Church as “indeed iniquitous”: “It is clear that the Apostolic See cannot on any terms take part in their [interconfessional] assemblies, nor is it anyway lawful for Catholics to support or to work for such enterprises; for if they do so they will be giving countenance to a false Christianity, quite alien to the one Church of Christ.

“Shall We suffer, what would indeed be iniquitous, the truth, and a truth divinely revealed, to be made a subject for compromise? ... Is it possible that the object of faith should in the process of time become so obscure and uncertain, that it would be necessary today to tolerate opinions which are even incompatible one with another? If this were true, we would have to confess that the coming of the Holy Ghost on the Apostles, and the perpetual indwelling of the same Spirit in the Church, and the very preaching of Jesus Christ, have several centuries ago lost all their efficacy and use, to affirm which would be blasphemy.”⁷²

Once again, Holy Father, how can these doctrines that seem so contradictory be reconciled?

Further on, Pope Pius XI censured the word “pan-Christians.” Yet this expression is being employed today in descriptions of some of the Jubilee Year events. For example, the interreligious meeting planned for October 1999 officially has been designated the “Pan-Christian Encounter.” The questions arise: Has the meaning of the word pan-Christian altered? Or has the doctrine taught by a Pope in times past as legitimate and true now been changed?

In fact, Pius XI stated: “These pan-Christians who turn their minds to uniting the churches seem, indeed, to pursue the noblest of ideas in promoting charity among all Christians: nevertheless, how does it happen that this charity tends to injure faith? Everyone knows that John himself, the Apostle of love, ... altogether forbade any intercourse with those who professed a

⁷² Pius XI, Encyclical *Mortalium animos*, p. 316.

mutilated and corrupt version of Christ's teaching: 'If any man come to you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into the house nor say to him, God speed you.' For this reason, since charity is based on a complete and sincere faith, the disciples of Christ must be united principally by the bond of one faith. Who then can conceive a Christian federation, the members of which retain each his own opinions and private judgment, even in matters which concern the object of faith, even though they be repugnant to the opinions of the rest?"⁷³

This same Sovereign Pontiff taught a doctrine whose direct application would lead one to consider today's partisans of ecumenism as advocates of Indifferentism and Modernism. He made this decisive statement: "How so great a variety of opinions can make the way clear to effect the unity of the Church We know not; that unity can only arise from one teaching authority, one law of belief, and one faith of Christians. But We do know that from this it is an easy step to the neglect of religion, or Indifferentism, and to Modernism, as they call it. Those, who are unhappily infected with these errors, hold that dogmatic truth is not absolute but relative, that is, it agrees with the varying necessities of time and place and with the varying tendencies of the mind, since it is not contained in immutable revelation, but is capable of being accommodated to human life."⁷⁴

Pius XI closes his Encyclical prohibiting ecumenism and refuting, already in his time, the basic premises behind the interconfessional festivities that are being prepared for the near future: "So it is clear why this Apostolic See has never allowed its subjects to take part in the assemblies of non-Catholics: for the union of Christians can only be promoted by promoting the return to the one true Church of Christ of those who are separated from it, for in the past they have unhappily left it. To the one true Church of Christ, we say, which is visible to all and

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 317.

which is to remain, according to the will of its Author, exactly the same as He instituted it For since the Mystical Body of Christ, in the same manner as His physical body, is one, compacted, and fitly joined together, it were foolish and out of place to say that the mystical body is made up of members which are disunited and scattered abroad: whosoever therefore is not united with the body is no member of it, neither is he in communion with Christ its head.”⁷⁵

Therefore, Most Holy Father, after having considered the unchangeable doctrine of the Church in these excerpts from the ordinary and extraordinary Pontifical Magisterium, it becomes very difficult not to see a contradiction between what these documents have affirmed and what is being announced for the Millennium festivities. In effect, could it be possible to allow “pan-religious encounters” without incurring the severe censure made by the Roman Pontiffs cited above? How can the partisans of false Orthodox and Protestant religions, and even of the Jewish and Muslim confessions, eventually be declared “saints,” as is supposedly being planned for a common martyrology? How can one imagine a common declaration of “faith” among the monotheist religions, when Mohammedanism and Judaism deny a large part of Catholic dogma? Finally, how can one ask pardon for the “errors” that the Holy Catholic Church would have committed in the past in her combat against schismatics, heretics, and pagans without implicitly denying her militant character and the incorruptibility of her divine nature, as well as incurring the pontifical condemnations cited above?

These are some of the questions that leave so many Catholics perplexed and for which we humbly and respectfully request the paternal guidance of Your Holiness.

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⁷⁵ *Idem*, pp. 78f.

In summary, Most Holy Father, our affliction could be expressed in this way: If the prior teaching of the Church is not true, would the Church have erred in demanding adherence to this doctrine as the expression of revealed truth and as a condition of salvation? If, on the contrary, such doctrine is true, how can the contradiction with what is being taught today be explained? If it becomes clear that the road chosen by the post-conciliar teaching is contrary to the time-honored Magisterium, then where is the Institution directed by Your Holiness heading? If it is not clear where this road is leading us, as so it seems today, what direction should the faithful adopt in such confusion? In view of such tragic and crucial contradictions, we come to the Vicar of Christ, begging your response to the question that rises: *Quo vadis, Petre?*

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