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# The American Ecclesiastical Review

Vol. CXXX, No. 4

APRIL, 1954

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Published monthly by The Catholic University of America Press, Washington 17, D. C. Subscription price in U. S. currency or equivalent: United States, Canada, \$5.00; Foreign, \$5.00; 50 cents per copy.

Entered as second class matter, November 30, 1944, at the Post Office at Washington, D. C., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Accepted for mailing at the special rate of postage provided for under Act of March 5, 1930, under Act of February 28, 1925.

Business communications, including subscriptions and changes of address, should be addressed to The American Ecclesiastical Review, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington 17, D. C. Please address all manuscripts and editorial correspondence to The Editor, The American Ecclesi-

is rather a good thing."<sup>71</sup> We trust in this petition to the presence and grace of God to protect us.

*Seventh petition: Sed libera nos a malo*

Suarez offers four traditional interpretations of evil in this petition: first, the devil, which is the meaning followed by Tertullian, Chrysostom, and Maldonatus; second, sin, an opinion favored by Augustine; third, eternal damnation, which is the interpretation of Bonaventure; and fourth, present misfortunes which impede a normal life, which is the interpretation of St. Thomas, and the one which Suarez favors.<sup>72</sup> Suarez urges the convenience of this interpretation. "It is not out of place, in fact it is very fitting, that as in the first part of this prayer we asked of God spiritual goods, and then freedom from spiritual evils, so now after we have asked for the goods necessary to this life, we then ask to be freed from the contrary evils."<sup>73</sup> Suarez says that by present misfortunes we mean all temporal "disadvantages, infectious diseases, hunger, war and the like." Thomas states:

Above the Lord taught us to ask pardon for our sins and taught us how we can avoid temptations; here He teaches us to ask for protection from evils, and this request is a general one against all evils, namely, sins, adversities, infirmities and afflictions, as Augustine said. But since we have already prayed about sin and temptation, here we ought to pray about all the other evils, namely, the adversities and all the afflictions of this world, from which God may free us.<sup>74</sup>

*Amen*

"This was added, not to be said by another, but so that the one praying might arouse himself, and by this reflection as it were join his heart and his desires to all the petitions which he has made."<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Suarez, *loc. cit.*, c. 8, n. 37.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 38.

<sup>74</sup> St. Thomas, *Sermones* . . ., 151-52.

<sup>75</sup> Suarez, *loc. cit.*, c. 8, n. 41.

## TWO RECENT EXPLANATIONS OF THE CHURCH'S NECESSITY FOR SALVATION

The index to Denzinger's *Enchiridion symbolorum* refers to twenty statements or explanations in various documents of the ecclesiastical *magisterium* of the dogma that there is no salvation outside the Catholic Church. Since the autumn of 1952 we have also had available the complete text of the Holy Office letter *Suprema haec sacra*, which contains the most complete and detailed exposition of that dogma ever given in a doctrinally authoritative ecclesiastical document. The letter, incidentally, was dated Aug. 8, 1949, but its full text was not published until three years later.

What the *Suprema haec sacra* and the various documents of the teaching Church collected in the *Enchiridion symbolorum* have to say about the Church's necessity for salvation is definitely not something of practical interest to professional theologians alone. This teaching of the *ecclesia docens* is meant for the entire Church, for all the people of God. The dogma that there is no salvation outside the true Church of Jesus Christ is a part, and an important part, of that supernatural message which we call divine public revelation. The people have a right to receive the divinely revealed truth which Our Lord directed to all His disciples.

Yet it is axiomatic that by far the greater number of the people do not, and, practically speaking cannot, obtain their explanations of Catholic dogma directly from the authoritative documents of the ecclesiastical *magisterium*. In their younger days they gain that knowledge in an orderly, yet necessarily in an elementary, way through their catechism lessons. Then, throughout their lives, they receive their instruction in matters of faith from the sermons they hear and from the Catholic books and periodicals they read. In our own time the printed word seems to play an ever increasing part in that process of instruction.

So it is that the book or the article dealing with matters of Catholic doctrine must be judged by inexorably high standards. No man writes a doctrinal work except to convince. It is a necessary consequence of his activity that the people who read his publication will tend to believe that his explanation of a Catholic dogma is true, or, at least, quite acceptable. If he should be

unfortunate enough to present that teaching inaccurately, the final result would be that someone for whose salvation Our Lord died on the Cross would accept as God's teaching something which is not in His revealed message, or would reject some truth which God actually has revealed. Objectively, there could hardly be a more fundamental frustration of the activity of one who sets out to work as an ambassador of Christ than the production of such an effect.

Just as there is no function greater than that of an ambassador of Christ, one who is privileged to bring His divine truths to the people for whom He died, so there is objectively no greater misfortune than to cause people to form a misapprehension of the divine teaching. There are practical and concrete evil consequences of inaccurate doctrinal instruction in the field of morality. Thus it is quite possible that an incorrect notion of the Church, gained through some imperfect presentation of Catholic doctrine, may be the source of lamentable conduct towards the Church itself. Yet the evil of inexact doctrinal teaching is not, in the last analysis, to be estimated in terms of the untoward effects which may or may not follow from it in the practical order. The misrepresentation of Our Lord's divine message is calamitous in itself, when we consider it objectively.

It is clear that a doctrinal book or article does its work properly when, and only when, its content is strictly in line with the pertinent authoritative statements of the ecclesiastical *magisterium*. Naturally, this does not mean that the book or article in question must limit itself to a bare and literal translation of the official ecclesiastical documents which have to do with the subject discussed in the book or the article. But, on the other hand, no literary explanation of a dogma will be in line with the teaching of the *magisterium* if it presents as acceptable or as true some statement manifestly contradicted by or incompatible with a declaration of the *ecclesia docens* on this subject. And, if the teaching contained in some book or article is not completely in accord with the teachings of the Church's *magisterium*, then definitely it is not proper intellectual nourishment for the children of the Church.

Recently two very well written books have been published in our own country. Neither of them is primarily concerned with the dogma of the Church's necessity for the attainment of eternal

salvation, but both of them offer explanations of this teaching. One of these books, *The Living Christ*,<sup>1</sup> by Fr. John L. Murphy, has already gained the widespread recognition to which it is entitled. The other, *Wisdom Shall Enter*,<sup>2</sup> by Fr. Leo J. Trese, will undoubtedly prove to be equally popular. Fathers Murphy and Trese are certainly to be numbered among the ablest exponents of Catholic teaching in our country at the present time.

It is precisely because of the extraordinary ability of these two writers, and by reason of the extensive circulation their most recent literary productions have achieved and will undoubtedly continue to gain, that it is important to examine what their books have to say about the Church's necessity for salvation. Inevitably there will be a great many of our people who will accept as true and as genuine Catholic doctrine the explanations of this dogma contained in these two books. Objectively the people will suffer harm if the teachings contained in these books should be in any way opposed to or incompatible with what the authoritative documents of the ecclesiastical *magisterium* tell us about the meaning of the dogma that there is no salvation outside the Catholic Church.

There are a few imperfections in Father Murphy's chapter on "The Church and Salvation" which prevent that chapter from reaching the level of the rest of his book. These should be corrected in the subsequent printings which this volume seems bound to attain.

1) He seeks to give the impression that there has been no important and genuine variance among Catholic theologians in their explanation of the dogma. We are told that "Theologians have regarded the axiom ['Outside the Church there is no salvation'] in different ways in their attempts to explain it, but basically they all say the same thing; it is more a question of words than of ideas. . . . Despite the varying nuances, however, all of them tell us the same thing."<sup>3</sup>

In the *Humani generis*, however, Pope Pius XII mentions,

<sup>1</sup> John L. Murphy, *The Living Christ* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1952), pp. xii+228.

<sup>2</sup> Leo J. Trese, *Wisdom Shall Enter* (Chicago: Fides Publishers, 1954), pp. 144.

<sup>3</sup> *The Living Christ*, p. 105.

among the "poisonous fruits" of the doctrinal novelties with which he is primarily concerned in this encyclical letter, the fact that "Some reduce to an empty formula the necessity of belonging to the true Church in order that eternal salvation may be attained."<sup>4</sup> According to the Sovereign Pontiff, then, there were theologians who explained this dogma inadequately and inaccurately. The teaching that all the theologians tell us the same thing, or even approximately the same thing, about the dogma of the Church's necessity for salvation is quite out of line with the actual declaration of the ecclesiastical *magisterium* on this subject.

2) Father Murphy makes a problem out of the juxtaposition of "two seemingly opposed truths," set forth by Pope Pius IX in the *Singulari quadam*. The author of *The Living Christ* writes that Pope Pius IX "tells us first that 'We must, indeed, hold on faith that no one can be saved outside the Apostolic Roman Church, that she is the only ark of salvation, that whoever shall not have entered her will perish in the flood'; yet, on the other hand, he adds that 'We must equally hold for certain that those who labor under ignorance of the true religion, if such ignorance be invincible, are not held guilty before the eyes of the Lord.'"<sup>5</sup>

In the actual text of the *Singulari quadam*, however, there is not a trace of any even apparent opposition between the two principles enunciated by Pope Pius IX. According to the second of these principles, "qui verae religionis ignorantia laborent, si ea sit invincibilis, nulla ipsos obstringi huiusce rei culpa ante oculos Domini."<sup>6</sup> The translation given in *The Living Christ* takes no account of the two words I have italicized in citing the passage from the original. When these two words are excluded from the passage, we have an absolute and bald assertion to the effect that persons who are invincibly ignorant of the true religion are guiltless in the sight of God, a statement which would make invincible ignorance of the true religion look something like a sacrament. When, on the other hand, we look at this passage exactly as Pope Pius IX presented it, we find it to mean that invincible ignorance of the true religion is not a sin, that people will not be blamed and punished by God for being invincibly ignorant of the true religion. Seen in the context of the *Singulari quadam*, this second

<sup>4</sup> DB, 3019.

<sup>5</sup> *The Living Christ*, pp. 105 f.

<sup>6</sup> DB, 1647.

of the two principles set forth by Pope Pius IX manifests itself as a development of the great Sovereign Pontiff's assertion that "the dogmas of the Catholic faith are in no way opposed to the divine mercy and justice."<sup>7</sup>

3) Father Murphy seriously weakens and confuses his explanation by speaking sometimes of "the necessity of belonging to the Church" and sometimes of "the necessity of membership in the Church." He makes the assertion that "While the axiom, 'Outside the Church there is no salvation,' undoubtedly refers to actual membership in the visible Church, there is still a deeper meaning involved in that statement."<sup>8</sup>

There would seem to be very little excuse for imagining or for leading the Catholic reading public to imagine that the axiom of no salvation outside the Church *undoubtedly* refers to actual membership in the visible Church. There is no statement of the ecclesiastical *magisterium* to the effect that actual membership in the Church is requisite for the attainment of eternal salvation. The Fourth Lateran Council designates the Church as that "outside of which no one at all (*nullus omnino*) is saved."<sup>9</sup> The *Unam sanctam* of Pope Boniface VIII speaks of it as that "outside of which there is neither salvation nor the remission of sins."<sup>10</sup> The most forceful and arresting of all the older authoritative statements of this dogma, that made by the Council of Florence in its Decree for the Jacobites, asserts that those "intra catholicam Ecclesiam non existentes" will go into everlasting fire "nisi ante finem vitae eidem [Ecclesiae] fuerint aggregati."<sup>11</sup> The *Humani generis* mentions the "necessitatem pertinendi ad veram Ecclesiam, ut sempiterna attingatur salus."<sup>12</sup> In no case is there any reference to a necessity of actual membership in the true Church.

The *Suprema haec sacra* is quite explicit on this point. "Quandocumque ut quis aeternam obtineat salutem, non semper exigitur ut *reapse* Ecclesiae tamquam membrum incorporetur, sed id saltem requiritur, ut eidem *voto et desiderio* adhaereat."<sup>13</sup> In other words, according to this authoritative instruction issued by the Holy Office at the command of the Holy Father himself, the dogma

<sup>7</sup> DB, 1646.

<sup>8</sup> *The Living Christ*, p. 116.

<sup>9</sup> DB, 430.

<sup>13</sup> *AER*, CXXVII, 4 (Oct., 1952), 308.

<sup>10</sup> DB, 468.

<sup>11</sup> DB, 714.

<sup>12</sup> DB, 3019.

that there is no salvation outside the Church definitely do not mean that a man has to be an actual member of the Church in order to be saved.

Father Murphy's book was written some months before the publication of the entire text of the *Suprema haec sacra*. It is unfortunate, however, that the ablest of the recent books dealing with the Church's necessity for salvation should contain any teaching not in accord with the doctrine set forth in that instruction from the Holy Office. The ecclesiastical *magisterium*, which recognized and venerated as Saints men who had suffered martyrdom without having had an opportunity to be baptized and thus to achieve actual membership in the Church, definitely should not be represented to our people as teaching that actual membership in the Church is necessary for salvation.

4) In *The Living Christ*, two diverse and mutually incompatible explanations of the dogma are represented as differing only in a relatively unimportant matter of terminology. We are told that "Whether one wishes to interpret the axiom ['Outside the Church there is no salvation'] as referring only to actual membership and consider others outside the Church as divinely intended 'exceptions'; or whether one wishes to interpret it as meaning 'outside either actual membership in the Church, or an implicit or explicit desire for membership there is no salvation,' it tells us the same thing. The terms are really a subtle question for theologians to debate."<sup>14</sup>

The author of *The Living Christ* makes it quite clear that he prefers to interpret the statement that there is no salvation outside the Church in terms of membership in the Church rather than in terms of either membership or a desire for membership. He states that some have "explained the axiom as saying that unless one were a member of the Church either actually or in desire, there is no salvation."<sup>15</sup> But, according to him, "This interpretation does seem to force the meaning of the axiom itself, which seem always to have indicated the ideal plan of God's economy; and also, the very term 'member in desire' is liable to the criticism of being bad English and clumsy theology."<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> *The Living Christ*, p. 117.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

Father Murphy's strictures against the use of the expression "member in desire" are quite justified in the case of those men who would speak in such a way as to give the impression that a member in desire was one kind of member of the Church, with a membership in some way distinct from that of a member *in re*. Such a procedure is definitely bad English and clumsy theology. When, on the other hand, we say that a man can attain eternal salvation as a member of the true Church or as one who desires to belong to it, we are simply repeating the teaching of the *Suprema haec sacra* itself. This teaching does not "force" the meaning of the axiom "Outside the Church there is no salvation" in any way. It is, on the contrary, a part of the Church's own interpretation of the dogma of which the axiom itself is the expression.

If, however, we choose to interpret this axiom as referring only to actual membership in the Church, considering others outside the Church as divinely intended "exceptions," we are offering an explanation of the dogma and of the axiom quite incompatible with the explicit statements of the ecclesiastical *magisterium*. The axiom, in the last analysis, is nothing more or less than the common and popular statement of a dogma which the *ecclesia docens* has set forth and has explained many times. The statements of the *magisterium* with regard to the Church's necessity for salvation are always unrestricted and universal. Thus the *magisterium* tells us that *no one at all* (*nullus omnino*) is saved outside the Church and that *none of those who are not within the Catholic Church* (*nullo intra catholicam Ecclesiam non existentes*) can become partakers of eternal life. Statements like these do not admit of exceptions. If there are individuals who attain eternal salvation outside the Catholic Church, according to the way in which the *magisterium* itself interprets the meaning of the word "outside" in this context, then these declarations of the *ecclesia docens* are simply not true.

Thus the two explanations of the axiom which Father Murphy offers as at least practically equivalent are, in point of fact, disparate and mutually incompatible. One turns out to be a statement of the Church's own teaching. The other involves an opposition to authoritative declarations of the Church's *magisterium*. The fact that the great Cardinal Newman himself taught that

the dogma of the Church's necessity for salvation admitted of exceptions in no way justifies the employment of this device.<sup>17</sup>

5) Father Murphy has weakened his explanation of the dogma by use of the term "ideal." We are told that "Here we have the statement of the *ideal*: that every single man in the New Testament era should become an actual member of this visible Church established by Christ, and through her receive the graces of Redemption. Yet God knew from all eternity that there would actually be men who would not become members of this Church through no fault of their own."<sup>18</sup> Again, we are told that "Looked at in this way, the axiom may be understood as referring to the *ideal* plan of providence; it is the rule and not the exception. Those who are saved outside the Church are the exceptions . . ."<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, he states that "It is the order primarily desired by God, the rule that He lays down, that all should be saved within the Church. In establishing this general rule, however, God did not fail to provide for those whom we may call the exceptions."<sup>20</sup>

Thus we see the practical equivalence, for Father Murphy's explanation of the dogma, of being actually a member of the Church, and being "within" the Church. This is not in accord with the teaching of the *magisterium*. Likewise, there is a tendency to see in the axiom merely a statement of an antecedent decree of the divine will. The body of authoritative teaching of which this axiom is the commonly employed expression, however, bears no such interpretation. All of these claim to be statements of actual fact. They are intended as expressions of the consequent will of God. They mean, according to the *Suprema haec sacra*, that the Church is necessary for salvation with the necessity of means as well as with the necessity of precept. The Church is not merely an entity which was necessary for all according to an antecedent decree of the divine will. It is a society, the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, outside of which actually no one at all can be saved.

Father Trese's approach to this teaching is somewhat different from that of Father Murphy. He seeks, in the best sense of the

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Certain Difficulties Felt by Anglicans in Catholic Teaching* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1896), II, 336.

<sup>18</sup> *The Living Christ*, p. 106.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

term, to popularize Catholic teaching. He writes simply and incisively, to explain the fundamentals of our doctrine.

Yet it is by reason of this very tendency towards simplicity that *Wisdom Shall Enter* presents a somewhat undesirable explanation of the Church's necessity for salvation. "These then," Father Trese tells us, "are the ones of whom it is true to say that, 'Outside the Church there is no salvation': the Catholic who already has the faith and cannot lose it except through his own fault; and the non-Catholic who knows, or at least suspects, that the Catholic Church is Christ's own."<sup>21</sup>

*Wisdom Shall Enter* was published long after the publication of the full text of the *Suprema haec sacra*. In this authoritative letter of the Holy Office, sent at the command of the Holy Father himself, we read: "Neque enim in praecepto tantummodo dedit Salvator ut omnes homines intrarent Ecclesiam, sed statuit quoque Ecclesiam medium esse salutis, sine quo nemo intrare valeat regnum gloriae caelestis."<sup>22</sup> This is part of the Church's own explanation of the dogma that there is no salvation outside the Church. Hence people are seriously misled if they are persuaded to believe that this dogma applies only to Catholics and to those non-Catholics who know or suspect that the Catholic Church is the true Church of Jesus Christ. Yet this is precisely the impression that is gained from a declaration that these are *the ones* to whom the dogma applies.

Father Trese, it is true, teaches that the state of mind of a Protestant (or a Jew or a Mohammedan) who is sincerely convinced that his religion is the true religion, and who lives up to his religion to the very best of his ability is this: "I want to do everything that God asks of me, no matter what."<sup>23</sup> He does not, however, connect this teaching with the dogma that there is no salvation outside the Catholic Church.

He terminates his own explanation of this subject with the following paragraph.

But this fact still remains: Christ's own Way of Salvation is bound to be the best, the surest, the safest way. There are good Protestants, and there are bad Catholics. But in no other church

<sup>21</sup> *Wisdom Shall Enter*, p. 142.

<sup>22</sup> *AER*, CXXVII, 4 (Oct., 1952), 308.

<sup>23</sup> *Wisdom Shall Enter*, p. 143.

can personal sanctity reach such heights as in Christ's own Church; in no other church will goodness be so widespread, nor salvation so certain. With all the helps which Christ has entrusted to His Church—the Mass, the Sacraments, the fulness of Truth—the “good Catholic” has an advantage over the “good non-Catholic” beyond all compute.<sup>24</sup>

It would be difficult to find a defense of the Catholic Church elaborated more completely in terms of distinctly Protestant ecclesiology. The Catholic Church is presented, not as the Mystical Body of Christ, actually requisite for all men, but merely as the best of the religious organizations available to men. Indeed, the paragraph seems to imply that there is some way of salvation available other than through Our Lord. It is painful to realize that some Catholic people will be led to imagine that a statement like the first sentence of the paragraph cited above is an accurate expression of genuine Catholic doctrine.

In point of fact, the Catholic Church does not present itself merely as the best or the most effective religious society on earth. It is the Mystical Body of Christ, the only religious society objectively approved by and acceptable to God Himself. It is the one kingdom of God on earth, the true *ecclesia* of Jesus Christ.

According to the original Protestant theory of ecclesiology, on the other hand, the kingdom of God, the *ecclesia* of the Scriptures, is not an organized society at all. It depicts this true *ecclesia* as an *invisible* church, as the sum-total of all the good people or the predestined people on earth. In the light of this erroneous theory, the visible churches, the organized societies into which men who wish to follow Our Lord are organized, play a distinctly subsidiary part. If the Gospel is preached sincerely and sacraments administered rightly within these organizations, they appear as more or less acceptable and useful aids for people who are supposed to be joined to Our Lord in the invisible church.

No proponent of this theory ever held that all religious denominations are equally good. Quite on the contrary, an organization was supposed to be more acceptable or more useful than others if it could offer more effective spiritual guidance and help to its members. Naturally, each denomination would claim a high degree of excellence for itself, while, at the same time, it held, according to this same general theory, that other religious societies which

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 143 f.

passed muster under the Protestant notes of the church were legitimate and really, though perhaps in a lesser degree, effective.

The theory itself is hopelessly erroneous because the Mystical Body of Christ actually is the visible Catholic Church. The religious society over which the Bishop of Rome presides as Our Lord's Vicar on earth is the one and only social unit within which men may achieve salvific contact with God in Christ.

Yet, in this final paragraph of *Wisdom Shall Enter*, we find the Catholic Church presented in the light of this theory. “Christ's own Way of Salvation” is designated as the best, the surest and the safest, but definitely not as the only way. There are other “churches” in which salvation itself will be found, even though not as certainly as in the Catholic Church.

Such teaching is not in conformity with the declarations of the Church's *magisterium*. Thus, to cite only one example, in the *Singulari quadam*, the great allocution which Pope Pius IX delivered on the day following his definition of the dogma of Our Lady's Immaculate Conception, the Holy Father said that it was his duty to admonish the Bishops who were listening to him to do all in their power “to drive out of men's minds that equally impious and deadly opinion according to which the way of eternal salvation can be found in any religion.”<sup>25</sup> That error is present even when the way of salvation is represented as available in other religions less perfectly or less certainly than in the Catholic Church.

Those who will benefit from reading *Wisdom Shall Enter* will be benefited far more if, in future printings of this work, the part on the necessity of the Church for salvation is revised in line with the pertinent statements and explanations of the ecclesiastical *magisterium*.

JOSEPH CLIFFORD FENTON

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<sup>25</sup> *DB*, 1646.