

HERMENEUTIC OF THE REFORM, RENEWAL IN CONTINUITY.

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As Pope Benedict XVI¹ mentioned due to the pastoral intention of the Second Vatican Council two levels of the reality have to be distinguished. The first level concerns the Faith, the infallible Truth of the '*Depositum Fidei*'. A '*Depositum Fidei*' at which however the Truth can be distinguished through several levels of certainty. The second level consists the underlying changing reality with changes in social, economical and political life, as well as changing based on technical and scientific knowledge, which has to be understood as continuously changing in "*today's world*", the "*modern world*" or "*new era*". The vision of such a changing of the "*today's world*", the "*modern world*" or "*new era*" cannot be considered as having a dogmatic or infallible character. Thinking about this changing is based on subjective experiences and analysis, which both are principally fallible. Certainly this cannot affect Faith and Moral laws.

Here we find the pastoral intention of the Second Vatican Council, just for pastoral need to regulate the human activities in the modern world of today by the '*Depositum fidei*' which as general moral law has to be projected on an underlying changed social, economical and political life. The *continuity* can be found in unity of the Tradition of the Faith of all faithful in all times up to the Apostles and is continuous and organical growing and is called the '*Depositum Fidei*'. While the *reform and renewal* concerns the way the '*Depositum Fidei*' has been projected on the underlying changing reality.

In fact *Rerum Novarum* by Pope Leo XIII in the 19th century can be considered as such.

About the two distinguishing levels we can make a suitable comparison to the daily professional work by Engineers, Medical doctors and all kind of professions at which diagnostic analysis and designs are seen as core business. As Civil Engineer involved with extremely complex problems like the high water protection in The Netherlands, with high water from the North Sea, high water from the rivers -the Rhine, mainly transporting melting snow and ice, but also high water peaks due to heavy raining periods and the Meuse transporting mainly rain water with peaks due to heavy rainfall periods-, the influence by erosion due to cutting woods in the upstream areas which causes higher peaks in the water-transport to the sea and low lands below the sea level even up to 5 to 6 m where more than 10 million people are living. Furthermore, with regards to the rising sea water level and settling land surface due to the natural compression the soft soil layers below the lowlands, protecting the drinking water against the inflow of salt water from the sea as well as due to environmental wastes and therefore making the problem more and more complex. A complexity, which is not only technically but is also affecting for example the social life of so many people as well as the economical situation, you have also to take all these effects into account.

These complex problems cannot be solved without serious analysis of the existing problems as well as analysis of the problems you can expect due to the effects of the possible solutions, which means the need of dynamically problem analysis. The better the problem analysis, the better the problems can be solved and the better it will lead to the optimal best measures that need to be taken.

Here we see the same distinctions defined by the two levels. On one hand the problems at the level of the continuous changing of the "*today's world*", which is the so called underlying changing reality. On the other hand we find here the higher level, which is the level of the continuity of our natural knowledge of the truth, distinguished by the level of certainty into scientific and experimental truth as well as opinions and presumptions. At this level we can distinguish the physical, psychological, economical, sociological and all kinds of aspects of the natural knowledge of the truth, which due to research and scientific discussions is

¹ [Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to the Roman Curia offering them his Christmass greetings \(Thursday, 22 December 2005\);](#)

developing only by organic growth.

Based on this level of the natural knowledge the problem analysis takes place using the necessary knowledge of the truth to find the best solution(s) as well as defining the measures to regulate the developments at the underlying level of the changeable all days world to solve the problem in it. All together for each decision based on the conscience of the responsible engineer(s)

However here we are also meeting the soft spot of this hermeneutic system, namely, the vision regarding the underlying changed reality or the quality of the problem analysis; such problem analysis leading to the vision, which – lying outside the domain of the ‘*Depositum Fidei*’ – can as human activity undoubtedly be altered and be fallible. Both, but especially this fallibility carries the risk of an incorrect characterization of that underlying changed reality, and thereby also a risk of incorrect decisions as to the implementation of the ‘*Depositum Fidei*’ and all consequences thereof.

Therefore, distinguished from the discussion on the ambiguity of the texts of the documents of Vaticanum II, the following points outside the ‘*Depositum Fidei*’ should be considered as legal discussions:

Firstly about the vision and analysis of the underlying changed reality and therefore also the characterization of that underlying changed reality that was used by the Council.

Secondly about the implementation of the ‘*Depositum Fidei*’ regarding the analysis of the underlying changed reality. **NB!** Not the ‘*Depositum Fidei*’ itself, but the consequences due to the used characterization of the underlying changed reality and implementation of the ‘*Depositum Fidei*’.

Thirdly about the analysis of the effects due to the proposed and applied implementation of the ‘*Depositum Fidei*’, especially -because of the fallibility of the problem analysis of the “*today's world*”- about the time-boundedness of the pastoral view of Vaticanum II.

Here at one hand we have to mention the ambiguity of the texts of the documents there are some remarkable points in the history concerning the Council, which would be of great importance:

Firstly the publication of the *Nota Preavia*, which has been attached to the document *Lumen Gentium* by His Holiness Pope Paul VI. This *Nota Preavia*, which explains how to read certain chapters of *Lumen Gentium*, would not be published if that part of the text of *Lumen Gentium* should be clear and not be ambiguous in itself.

Herewith His Holiness Pope Paul VI recognize the potentiality of an ambiguity of the text of Vaticanum II, which can raise to a false interpretation at least on one place.

Secondly, June 23th 1972, Pope Paul VI announced in a speech to the Cardinals his concern with the following words: “... ***an emergency which We cannot and must not keep hidden: in the first place a false and erroneous interpretation of the Council, who would want to break with the tradition, even as regards the doctrine, an interpretation which goes so far as the Church is preconiliar rejected and allowed one considers a 'new' church, as it were reinvented from the inside, as regards the establishment of the Church, the dogma, the usa and the law.***”². And within one week there after, at the Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul

2 [Acta Apostolicae Sedis \(AAS\) jaargang 64 \(1972\), p. 498](#) [Die 23 mensis iunii a. 1972: Eminentissimis Sacri Collegii Cardinalium Patribus, Summo Pontifici die Eius nominali felicia ac fausta ominantibus]. “*Per alcuni, questo sentimento sorge dal fatto che l'edificio ecclesiale, il quale rappresentava ai loro occhi un tutto fortemente coerente e organizzato, oggi sembra a loro minacciato nella sua unità. Essi sono certamente scossi dal criticismo venuto alla luce in questi anni, dal carattere arrischiato di certe iniziative che ignorano la Tradizione, dall'abbandono di manifestazioni esteriori o di forme di pietà alle quali erano attaccati : però tendono a ripiegarsi su se stessi, e a rifiutare di prendere la parte loro spettante nella vita e nei compiti della Chiesa. Per altri, invece, la mancanza di fiducia nella Chiesa è originata dal convincimento che essa, secondo loro, rimarrebbe impigliata in istituzioni che hanno fatto il loro tempo : in una società secolarizzata, essi pensano che la Chiesa dovrebbe abbandonare la maggior parte delle forme che la distinguono e rinunciare perfino alle certezze acquisite, per mettersi unicamente all'ascolto dei bisogni del mondo; e provano, di fronte alla Chiesa visibile e istituzionale, una freddezza che porta alcuni ad allontanarsi da essa, sensibili, come pensano di essere,*

(June 29th, 1972), Pope Paul VI spoke publicly the famous words: "... *that from somewhere or other, the smoke of Satan has entered the temple of God.*"

Herewith His Holiness Pope Paul VI recognized that the risk on false interpretations of the Councils documents has already become a wide spread fact, which even has entered the Vatican Curia as part of the Holy See being the temple of God.

Thirdly, at Christmas 2005 about 33 years after the words of Pope Paul VI, the words of Pope Paul VI were found still actual by Pope Benedict XVI as he has repeated these words in his speech to the Curia: "*On the one hand there is an explanation, which I want to mention 'hermeneutics of rupture'. This often has the cooperation of the mass media, and also a part of modern theology has made use of here.*"

Here His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI recognizes that the false interpretation of the Council's documents was still a wide spread fact and also inside the Curia.

On the other hand the foreword ([German](#) and [English](#)) which Pope Benedict XVI wrote in August 2012 concerning the Second Vatican Council presenting as part of his collected works³ has to be mentioned here. From that foreword it became clear that the Council was strongly taken in by the prejudice of **not to speak negatively about the 'new era', 'modern world' or 'today's world'**. Concerning this prejudice we can find very oft the suggestion that the State is, should be or would be neutral. Such prejudiced suggestion is in fully contradiction to the *Diuturnum Illud* by Pope Leo XIII. Certainly such prejudice act as a blind spot in looking at the truth by which the analysis regarding the 'new era', 'modern world' or 'today's world' has failed. In his foreword Pope Benedict XVI has confirmed this failure in the case of *Gaudium et Spes* and was additionally carried over to *Dignitatis Humanæ* and *Nostra Ætate*. This statement, however, must be either correct or not, the same statement can never be both. Therefore, if that problem analysis has failed in some of the Council documents then the same analysis may be expected to have failed for the whole. Moreover this failed analysis is responsible for an incorrect characterization of the underlying changed reality. Accordingly, as a logical consequence of these words by the magisterium of Pope Benedict XVI, the risk signaled appears to have been confirmed.

It is this failed analysis of the 'new era', 'modern world' or 'today's world' going back to the blind spot of the prejudice which logically has caused the ambiguous texts within the Council documents. Of course such failure is effecting some documents more and less in others.

From this it may be concluded that:

Firstly, due to the blind spot by the prejudice of not to speak negatively about the 'new age' or 'modern times', the Council could not define a fully correct characterization of the changed reality.

Secondly, due to the incorrect characterization of the changed reality it may be searched not only deeply enough into 'the holy tradition and the doctrine of the Church the treasury out of which the Church continually brings forth new things that are in harmony with the things that are old' (DH-1) but also on wrong points of the 'Depositum Fidei' to find the just measures from that 'Depositum Fidei';

Thirdly, by studying and criticizing the documents of the Second Vatican Council in a real continuity, one has to made distinguishes between (1) statements concerning the characterization of the underlying changed reality which may be incorrect and (2) statements

alle profonde mutazioni che caratterizzano la nostra epoca, alle novità delle situazioni culturali e alle possibilità scientifiche e tecniche.

Da queste opposte tensioni deriva uno stato di disagio, che non possiamo e non dobbiamo nasconderci : anzitutto una falsa e abusiva interpretazione del Concilio, che vorrebbe una rottura con la tradizione, anche dottrinale, giungendo al ripudio della Chiesa pre-conciliare, e alla licenza di concepire una Chiesa « nuova »), quasi « reinventata » dall'interno, nella costituzione, nel dogma, nel costume, nel diritto."

3 'Joseph Ratzinger, *Zur Lehre des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils.*' Erster Teilband, (Joseph Ratzinger. *Gesammelte Schriften* 7/1), re-edited by Mgr. Gerard Ludwig Müller and the 'Institut Papst Benedikt XVI', Regensburg, ISBN 978-3-451-34124-3, Herder Verlag, Freiburg 2012. [Foreword, English translation](#));

regarding the *Depositum Fidei* which are infallible principally. However the concerning the last (2a) incorrect implementations of the *Depositum Fidei* as well as (2b) insufficient exploration of the *Depositum Fidei* both due to the incorrect characterizations of the underlying changed reality could be discussed

Fourth, looking at the false interpretations of the Council's documents as concluded by Pope Paul VI and Pope Benedict even wide spreaded in use caused by the ambiguity as well as the measures founded on these false interpretations it should be legally to discuss and criticize, especially the interpretations and measures that did not include the full *Depositum Fidei* and cannot being rightly founded on the Council. Hereby we have to consider the words of His Holiness Pope Paul VI "... *that from somewhere or other, the smoke of Satan has entered the temple of God.*"

Finally looking at the documents of Vaticanum II and the hermeneutics not only the problem analysis concerning the '*new era*', '*modern world*' or '*today's world*' has failed, we have also to conclude that an analysis has been missed concerning the effects on the Church life due to the measures by the Council as well as a well defined formulation of the correct hermeneutic. Evidently we had to wait for 40 years after the end of Vaticanum II before His Holiness Pope Benedict mentioned the correct hermeneutic of a Pastoral Council in 2005.