

Recently I was in receipt of an anonymous email and blogs of an individual claiming to be an offspring of the Creator, and of others disavowing the validity of the election of Pope Francis. I wish to reply to those who cast aspersions against the Church, her teachings and her instructors. First, it appears evident to me that such individuals exhibit the textbook definition of “cognitive dissonance” – a psychological stress triggered by the individual’s preconceived ideas clashing with new information perceived, or in this case, spammers who infiltrate religion to oppose Church teaching in order to cling to their preconceived ideas, largely on account of human pride and vincible ignorance. Such individuals have in common 1) the absence of higher learning and ecclesial credentials, which obviously prohibits them from teaching theology in any capacity; 2) the attitude of refusing to comply with Church teaching (e.g., they refuse to give “the religious assent of the will and intellect... in a special way to the authentic teaching authority of the Pontiff even when he is not speaking ex cathedra;¹ they act “reprehensibly” by publicly opposing works that bear the Church’s official seals of the approval;² they adamantly refuse to seek to collaborate with the Magisterium, but unscrupulously attack it,³ and this list goes on); 3) a disdain toward and the spreading of public disinformation against the Church and her instructors.

The adamant approach against the Church and her instructors was sharply condemned by Our Blessed Lord when confronted with the cognitively dissonant Pharisees of his day who saw religion as the observance of every detail of the law, and the New Testament message as too novel. What did these individuals do? They attacked Christ, his teachings and his disciples. In response Jesus issued seven woes to them in order to challenge their preconceived ideas of religion in order to win them over to the virtue of docility. Sadly, He did not always succeed on

¹ Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, Vatican Council I, vol. II, op. cit., pp. cap. II-IV, Ibid., p. 869.

² Jordan Aumann, *Spiritual Theology*, Christian Classics, 1980, p. 492; Mariology, A Guide for Priests, Deacons, Seminarians and Consecrated Persons, bearing the Imprimatur of the Most Rev. Raymond L. Burke, and the Nihil Obstat of Fr. Peter Felner, F.I., 2007, Queenship Pub. CA, p. 830.

Those who criticize and belittle the official Magisterial seals of approval, the *Imprimatur* and the *Nihil Obstat* do not seek to collaborate with the Magisterium, but attack it and thus act contrary to the Magisterial teaching expressed in *Donum Veritatis*, arts. 20, 30, that relates,

“The theologian, to be faithful to his role of service to the truth, must take into account the proper mission of the Magisterium and collaborate with it. How should this collaboration be understood? How is it put into practice and what are the obstacles it may face? These questions should now be examined more closely...

If, despite a loyal effort on the theologian's part, the difficulties persist, the theologian has the duty to make known to the Magisterial authorities the problems raised by the teaching in itself, in the arguments proposed to justify it, or even in the manner in which it is presented. He should do this in an evangelical spirit and with a profound desire to resolve the difficulties. His objections could then contribute to real progress and provide a stimulus to the Magisterium to propose the teaching of the Church in greater depth and with a clearer presentation of the arguments.

In cases like these, the theologian should avoid turning to the "mass media", but have recourse to the responsible authority, for it is not by seeking to exert the pressure of public opinion that one contributes to the clarification of doctrinal issues and renders servite to the truth."

³ Ibid., *Donum Veritatis*, arts. 20, 30.

account of the hard-heartedness to which they cleaved. As in the days of Christ, so today there are critics who lose sight of the inner meaning of religion in which they prefer their own ideas of religion to God's idea of religion. In the struggle to set themselves free from the psychological stress and discomfort that accompany cognitive dissonance, which may be achieved with a simple "Fiat" of the mind and will, they fail to advance from pure adolescent potential to mature and responsible action and, in remaining deprived of the comfort they seek, set out to attack those that enjoy such comfort.

Such individuals bereft of theological credentials unfortunately set themselves up as interpreters post-biblical prophetic revelations, and in so doing, fail to observe the Pontiff's encyclical on Sacred Scripture in which he exhorts them to 'better understand what the inspired author wishes to express'⁴ (intention) and consider their 'setting in life' (context) before pronouncing judgment on them. Such individuals limit the interpretation of the prophetic text to the pure letter, thereby divesting it of intentionality and context. This type of approach constitutes a form of *rationalism* or *theological pragmatism*, which espouses the following errors: a) the interpretation of the literal prophetic word; b) the dismissal of the 'analogy of faith' (i.e., every individual statement of the text is interpreted in the light of the whole objective body of the text); c) the non-acceptance of human error in the transmission of God's revealed word (a refusal to acknowledge the influences that St. Hannibal di Francia addresses,⁵ which are responsible for the prophet's unintentional human error); d) inattentiveness to the disparity between the profound theological doctrine contained within prophetic text and the lack of doctrinal education of the prophet; e) a de-emphasis of the prophet's habitual exercise of the virtues, rectitude of moral life, mental balance, honesty, habitual sincerity, frequent reception of

⁴ Pope Pius XII, Encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, op. cit., 33-34.

⁵ St. Hannibal founded the Rogationist Fathers and the Sisters of Divine Zeal, and he was the spiritual director of many mystics, including the seer of La Salette, Melanie Calvat, and the Servant of God Luisa Piccarreta. In the following passage, he emphasizes the importance of the Church's "learned writers" or theologians who are to remove such errors before the prophetic revelation is published and read by the faithful. In a letter to Fr. Peter Bergamaschi who had published all the unedited writings of a renowned Benedictine mystic, Sr. M. Cecilia of Montefiascone (1694-1766), Hannibal criticizes his decision to publish them:

"Conforming to prudence and sacred accuracy, people cannot deal with private revelations as if they were canonical books or decrees of the Holy See. Even the most enlightened persons, especially women, may be greatly mistaken in the visions, revelations, locutions, and inspiration. More than once has the divine operation been restrained by human nature. For example, who could ratify in full all the visions of Catherine Emmerich and St. Brigitte, which show evident discrepancies? I love the private revelations of holy persons, but I never accept everything.

Were I to publish revelations, I would eliminate or revise what is inconsistent with a sound criterion, or reliable tradition, or opinions of sacred, learned writers. I think of behaving prudently... My dear father, to consider any expression of the private revelations as dogma or propositions near of faith is always imprudent!... This is proved by experience, by the mystical theologians, such as St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa, Castrotevere, Poulain, etc... We cannot consider their revelations and the locutions as words of Scripture. Some of them must be omitted, and others explained in a right, prudent meaning."

the Sacraments, etc.⁶ The dismissal of these important criteria in the examination of post-biblical prophetic texts gives rise to false criticisms against the writings of the Servant of God Luisa Piccarreta, several of which enjoy the Magisterial seals, the *Imprimatur* and *Nihil Obstat*. Pay no heed to these critics, but pray that their hearts be opened to God's divinely revealed truths.

"You should know how to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of truth" (1 Tim. 3:15).

In Christ,
Rev. JL Iannuzzi, STL, S.Th.D.

⁶ Cf. Norms Regarding the Manner of Proceeding in the Discernment of Presumed Apparitions or Revelations, issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Jerome Hamer, O.P., Cardinal Francis Seper, 1978.