HILDEGARD OF BINGEN: A RELIABLE AUTHORITY?

Recently the commentator Peter Kwasniewski arranged for a theological piece by Raniero da Fiore which had appeared on the website *El Wanderer,* to be published on *Rorate Caeli*.[1] It purported to be a reasonable study of the circumstances surrounding the recent consecration of bishops by the *Society of St Pius X*.

The paper is the sort of *faux profonde* exercise one can find in any 'theological' journal. Its terminology calls to mind the work of the late Avery Dulles who vaunted his subjective 'Models of Church' as vehicles for theological criticism. No realities corresponded to these 'models'; they existed only in the Dulles mind. Yet his initiative spawned a host of imitators. Perhaps da Fiore was one of them.

Let's take the first paragraph of his paper and analyse it. He writes:

> "The episcopal consecrations of the FSSPX and all the arguments for or against them have once again brought to the fore an old ecclesiological conviction held by Lefebvre's followers: **the opposition between a supposed "Eternal Rome"—traditional and orthodox—and a "Conciliar Rome"—modernist and heretical.** This expression is hardly compatible with Catholic doctrine on the unity and indefectibility of the Church. No matter how great and profound the present crisis may be, it requires some serious theological juggling to justify it. However, it is not entirely without foundation. Its strength stems from a true intuition that, unfortunately, is often trapped within an inadequate doctrinal framework." [emphasis in original]

The "old ecclesiological conviction" he attributes to the members of the SSPX is what, in Australia, we call a *furphy*, a misrepresentation of reality which verges on the absurd. The author finds in it a paper tiger against which he can fire his darts. The opposition on which the *SSPX* insists is that between the *sacred tradition* of the Catholic Church, set forth in *Trent* and confirmed in the *Vatican Council* of 1870, and its spurious version set forth by the Vatican synod (1962-65) in its 'Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation', *Dei Verbum* n. 8. The opposition between these two is not mere mental being, something existing only in the minds of the *SSPX's* members. It is real. The version of tradition to which each holds is the guerdon, as it were, of its champion: the one of Christ and His Church; the other of the devil and the counterfeit 'Church' whose invention he inspired among the bishops of that vapid synod.

Da Fiore's next claim - "This expression is hardly compatible with Catholic doctrine on the unity and indefectibility of the Church" – reveals his modernism. What he implies is that, no matter that it contradicts the Church's teaching, *what the Vatican synod taught* must be incorporated within it. Why? Because it partakes of "the unity and indefectibility of the Church". He assumes the 'Council's' integrity, assumes it a work of the Catholic Church. This is impossible. Her indefectibility demands the rigorous exclusion of *everything* that harms her integrity, as St Paul and every one of the Church Fathers and Doctors has insisted. If the reader wants to see an instance of the Church rejecting the nostrums of a synod, let him study Pius VI's bull *Auctorem Fidei* condemning, root and branch, the errors of the pseudo-synod of Pistoia. The '62-'65 Vatican synod's lucubrations were riddled with modernist errors.

He goes on. The crisis, great and profound as it is, "requires some serious theological juggling to justify it". Really! Only if the reader is infected with the modernist virus; only if he has to try and

[1] https://rorate-caeli.blogspot.com/2026/07/the-church-will-give-birth-to.html#more

reconcile the synod's vacuous utterances with the Church's constant teaching. The task is impossible. Once the speculative Catholic accepts this, he begins to grasp the truth.

There then follow two obscure sentences:

> "[I]t (i.e., 'the crisis', it seems) is not entirely without foundation. Its strength stems from a true intuition that, unfortunately, is often trapped within an inadequate doctrinal framework."

What da Fiore seems to imply here is that the Church's doctrinal framework is defective, that the Holy Spirit, the Soul of the Church, has been deficient in His managing of the Church up until the Vatican synod. An analogous error was committed by the bishops at Pistoia when they charged the Church with disciplinary failures. Pius VI condemned that presumption as follows:

> "[A]s if the Church which is ruled by the Spirit of God could have established discipline which is not only useless and burdensome for Christian liberty to endure, but which is even dangerous and harmful...—[the charge is] false, rash, scandalous, dangerous, offensive to pious ears, injurious to the Church and to the Spirit of God by Whom it is guided..." [*Auctorem Fidei, n*. 78*;* Dz. 1578]

We will now look at the burden of da Fiore's paper, what he seeks to prove, namely, that Catholics must weigh seriously the 'prophecy' of Hildegard of Bingen that the final crisis of the Church will emanate (somehow) from *within* the Church. However, we must cover some preliminary matters, for da Fiore's paper, and those who support his views, turn on them.

First, the history of the Vatican since 1965 reveals the presence there of an *objective* reality additional to the Catholic Church whose doctrine contrasts dramatically with *her* doctrine. This entity is endorsed today by almost every bishop in the world, each of whom assumes it to be *identical with* the Catholic Church. Its version of the Catholic faith is sullied with the modernist virus. This entity was identified by Paul VI as 'the Conciliar Church' and by John Paul II as 'the Church of the New Advent'. It is known today, almost universally, as 'the Church of Vatican II'. Though it inhabits the Vatican along with the Catholic Church, it is not the Catholic Church

Secondly, every pope since Pius XII has been a modernist, and that includes Benedict XVI.[2] The emasculation by the fourth of them, John Paul II, on January 25th, 1983, of the Church's processes of canonisation laid down in the 18th century with great care by Prospero Cardinal Lambertini (afterwards Benedict XIV), has served to render suspect the validity of every canonisation since that date. The 'saints' so declared, may be 'saints' of *the Church of Vatican II*. One cannot be certain they are saints of the Catholic Church until, freed at last from the modernist incubus, the Church rules on the question under a Catholic Pope (in the no-doubt far distant future). Benedict XVI's declaration of Hildegard of Bingen as a saint cannot be accepted as valid pending that enquiry. The same must be said of his declaration of her as a 'Doctor of the Church'.

The content of Hildegard's 'revelation', reported in da Fiore's paper, is disturbing to say the least. Her 'prophecy' as to the final crisis of the Church, on which he relies, is derogatory of the Church's integrity as the spotless Bride of Christ.[3] Moreover, the way it is advanced is offensive in the extreme. The image offered as accompanying it is so distasteful as to be offensive, if not obscene. If nothing more, the 'revelation' is *mala sonans* and *offensiva piarum aurium* (offensive to pious ears). If this is indicative of the type of 'visions' she was wont to proclaim, it is no wonder previous

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[2] Pius X identifies two species of modernist in *Pascendi* n. 27, the 'progressive modernist' and the 'conservative modernist'. Six of the seven popes fulfil the description 'progressive modernist', especially the present incumbent. Benedict alone could be described as 'conservative modernist'.

[3] No wonder there is no record of the Holy Office taking the woman, or her 'prophecies', seriously!

attempts to elevate the local respect in which she is held to the level of canonisation by the universal Church had failed.

The Church's position on visions and private revelations is laid down by her Mystical Doctor, St John of the Cross. A short summary of his teaching appears in the problematic, 1993, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. For a more thorough consideration of this frequently troubling issue, the reader should study St John's *Ascent of Mt Carmel*.[4] The holy Doctor warns of the dangers of the devil producing 'visions' to persuade the receiver that they come from God. Because of the dangers they pose to faith, he directs that the only safe attitude to take to a private revelation is to shun it, and that this attitude will not offend God. On the contrary, it will please Him.

Given these preliminaries, what orthodox Catholic would be surprised to learn that during the Protestant Revolt the Lutherans had used the figure of Hildegard to attack the papacy? That Benedict should endorse the utterances of a 'saint' embraced by Protestant heretics is consistent with his defective vision. Pius X teaches in *Pascendi* (n. 39) that modernism is "the synthesis of all heresies", and that includes Protestantism.

The categories on which da Fiore proceeds to place reliance, advanced by Fr Julio Meinvielle - *Church of the Promises and Church of Propaganda* - reprise Dulles' imaginary categories. They reveal only their inventor's preconceptions and offer nothing objective about the Church.

The reality of the duopoly in the Vatican - Catholic Church and *Church of Vatican II* - is anathema to da Fiore. The reason lies in his modernism. He *cannot* allow that the two are distinct: the former *must be* reduced to the latter. Hence his recourse to the device of 'corruption' within Christ's Church which Hildegard purports to prophesy. He writes:

> "The Antichrist does not appear as a reality entirely external to the Church. This observation is decisive because it allows us to simultaneously understand both the merit and the error of certain contemporary traditionalist analyses. Their merit lies in recognizing that the crisis can incubate within the very heart of the visible Church. **Their error becomes apparent when they attempt to resolve that intuition through an overly simplistic division between two distinct Churches:** Eternal Rome versus Conciliar Rome." [emphasis in original]

The seer's observation is 'decisive' only if you accept her delusions and the vapid commentary of the author.[5]

Da Fiore's appeal to the disobedient priest, and former Jesuit, Fr Leonardo Castellani, is equally disturbing. There is no objective authority for Castellani's contention "that Protestantism appropriated a truth the Catholic Church must set free". Nor is there for da Fiore's assertion that the Church of the end times is "at once decayed and prostituted, yet at the same time innocent and holy". Clearly, neither saw difficulty in embracing contradictions, a characteristic logical fault of modern philosophy which was adopted by Tyrell and Loisy, the first exponents of the modernist heresy and embraced by their successors. The fault was a frequent feature of the utterances of the '62-'65 synod.

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[4] Cf. *CCC*, nn. 65-67; *Ascent of Mt Carmel* Bk. II, Chs. 22, 23 & 24.

[5] Further concern as to Hildegard's reliability is to be found in the enthusiasm for her and her works, especially in music, in a secular world complaisant over the apparent moderation of the Church's teachings since the Vatican synod. She fits the modern feminist theme rooted in the errors of Karl Marx, of a 'class struggle' between women and men, whose claim it is that women must cast off 'the oppression' men have always exercised over them.

In what follows we see again da Fiore's appeal to the heretical:

> "If the faithful Church could simply separate itself from the corrupt Church, the problem would be relatively straightforward. It would suffice to abandon the decadent structure and gather around the small remnant of the elect. That was, in essence, Luther's solution. And it also constitutes the constant temptation of every form of traditionalism that ends up imagining itself as a substitute for the Church".

What he contends has nothing to do with Catholicism, but everything to do with a relativistic view of the current crisis afflicting Christ's Church with which he hopes to justify the conservative modernist position.

It may be, as da Fiore avers, that "[n]either Hildegard, nor Castellani, nor Meinvielle ever [taught] that the gates of hell [would] prevail against the Church", but if the doctrines they espoused conflict with the constant teaching of Christ's Church, they must be rejected out of hand.

It is a matter of concern that Dr Kwasniewski should consider this vacuous paper worthy of rational consideration by Catholic readers. While he has done a great deal to defend the Catholic, as opposed to the modernist, position on matters of liturgy and doctrine, he has revealed a reluctance to commit himself unequivocally to the Catholic position. One cannot sit on the fence. When Christ said "he who is not with me is against me", He meant what he said.

We would recommend that instead of dabbling in proto-modernism, he, and his peers at *Rorate Caeli* and *OnePeterFive*, give us commentary on topics which are unashamedly *Catholic*, such as the following:

- What, if anything, is wrong with the 154 point *Profession of Faith of the Society of St Pius X* published June 24th, 2026?
- How can it be possible for Pope Leo to be at once holder of the Power of the Keys and a modernist heretic?
- If a man is both Pope and modernist, how ought one view his exercises of authority?
- Why is the sedevacantist position to be rejected?
- What is to be said of the 'doctrinal note' Mater Populi fidelis?
- How should a Catholic view n. 27 of *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*?
- Was Robert Prevost's election as Pope licit as well as valid?

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July 16th, 2026—*Our Lady of Mt Carmel*