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CONTENTS OF "REPLY TO A LIBERAL"

INTRODUCTION

FATHER DONNELLY'S ARTICLE

PART I. ANSWER TO FIVE MINOR POINTS

PART II. OUTSIDE THE CHURCH THERE IS NO SALVATION.

1. Explicit Faith in the Catholic Church and in Her Teachings Is Necessary for Salvation.
2. Are there Two Kinds of Membership in the Church?
3. Can a Person Who Remains Separated from the Church Be Saved?
4. Are Protestants Formal Heretics?
5. Pope Pius IX's Real Teaching With Regard To the Salvation of Non-Catholics.
6. Concerning the Question of Ignorance.

PART III. BAPTISM

1. Baptism Is Absolutely Necessary for Salvation.
2. Is Baptism by Itself Sufficient for Salvation ?
3. Baptism of Blood and Baptism of the Holy Spirit.
 - a. Introduction.
 - b. Meaning of Baptism of Blood and Baptism of the Spirit.
 - c. Baptism of Blood.
 - d. Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

CONCLUSION

INDEX OF NOTES

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REPLY TO A LIBERAL

RAYMOND KARAM

INTRODUCTION

WE have been asked many times to explain what we mean by the term "liberal Catholic." Articles in each issue of FROM THE HOUSE-TOPS have referred to these "liberals," accusing them of religious indifferentism, of lack of concern for the Faith, of absence of loyalty to the Church, to the Pope, to the officially appointed teachers of Catholic doctrine, and, at times, of open heresy. We have been warning Catholics against the dangers of liberalism, letting them infer, from our statement of the erroneous doctrines, who these liberals are. This policy does not, however, serve to make the issue clear and definite enough, and so it becomes necessary at this point to name our opponents, or at least some of them, and to refute their heretical teachings openly.

This task has been made easier for us than we could have anticipated. In answer to one of the articles which appeared in the December 1948 issue of FROM THE HOUSE-TOPS, Father Philip J. Donnelly, S.J., Professor of Dogmatic Theology at the Jesuit Seminary at Weston, has, for the benefit of Boston College, issued a paper under the heading: *Some Observations on the Question of Salvation Outside the Church*. A weaker defense of a theological opinion could not be found, nor a more perfect expression of liberalism.

Those who read my article in the last issue must have noticed the long line of authorities quoted in support of the often-defined dogma that no person can attain eternal salvation unless before he dies he becomes a member of the Roman Catholic Church. The priest who attempts to refute my article never refers to the authorities I quoted. He ignores them. Although he is himself a professor of Dogmatic Theology, and therefore one who should know better, all he offers in support of his own liberalism is the theory of a French liberal called Caperan and the statement of an Italian Jesuit called Lombardi, both

of whom have no more authority in dogmatic questions than Father Donnelly himself.

He also gives us three allocutions composed by Pope Pius XI, one in 1927, one in 1930, and one delivered in 1938 to a group of scientists, all of which are quoted from the *OSSERVATORE ROMANO*. And, to give a final touch to this comedy, there is appended to Father Donnelly's notes an additional note by his editor, who quotes one sentence from a speech delivered by Pope Pius XII, as it was reported in the *New York Times!*

Is this the way a Catholic is expected to know the revealed and defined truths of his Faith? Since when does a teacher of Dogmatic Theology have to depend on the good pleasure and honesty of newspapers in order to know what is the Catholic Faith and what he is supposed to teach? And what about the generations of Catholics who lived before the September 6th, 1948 issue of the *New York Times*? Was it impossible for them to have known the unadulterated Catholic truth? Does Father Donnelly prepare his course in Dogmatic Theology dependently on how a newspaper quotes or misquotes some radio address of the Pope? Or is it that the techniques of our advanced and progressive century require the introduction of a course on Journalism as an indispensable part even of the theological training of our priests? We writers in the *HOUSETOPS* who are full of a "spirit of smug Protestant righteousness," according to Father Donnelly, may be greatly misinformed, but no news from Rome has reached us as yet announcing a papal definition of the infallibility of newspapers!

Apart from these "authorities," Father Donnelly makes use of the two main documents used by liberals: an allocution by Pope Pius IX in 1854, and an encyclical by the same Pope in 1863. And, as liberals always do, he at times misquotes the Holy Father, misrepresents his intention, and invariably makes the Pope's statements serve his own preconceptions. All this I have shown in my article on *Liberal Theology and Salvation*, which appeared in the December 1948 issue of *FROM THE HOUSETOPS*.

The one and only infallible pronouncement used by Father Donnelly in his paper is taken from the decree on Justification, Chapter 4, of the Council of Trent. However, this decree is erroneously ex-

plained, and, as I shall show later on in this article, is made to mean the very opposite of what was intended.

Perhaps before taking up in detail every point of Father Donnelly's paper, it would be well to quote it in full, so that no reader will be misled, and so that no point will be left confused in his mind, from not having read the original document. The article runs as follows:

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«SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE QUESTION OF
«SALVATION OUTSIDE THE CHURCH

«At present there is no work in English that covers adequately the question of «salvation outside the Church. Perhaps the best thing to do in the present «circumstances is to indicate the contents of two books on this subject:

- a) The classic work by Caperan, *Le probleme du salut des infidelés: essai théologique* (1934);
- b) The more recent work by Fr. Riccardo Lombardi, S.J., the famous apostle of Italy, *La salvezza di chi non ha fede* (Rome, 1945, "Edizioni: La civiltà cattolica").

«The first point to be made is that the formula "extra ecclesiam nulla salus" must «not be understood in the sense that salvation is impossible for any one who does «not believe explicitly in the Catholic Church, and does not accept all the revealed «truths proposed by her for belief. The same infallible authority which proposes «this formula also teaches that sanctifying grace and, consequently, a title to the «Beatific Vision are conferred by baptism of desire. Therefore, the insinuation of «a writer in the latest issue of a magazine called "From The Housetops" that «baptism of desire is a device of "liberal" Catholics to christianize heretics, is in «direct contradiction to the doctrine of the Council of Trent, which teaches that «justification of the unbaptized may be described "as the transfer from that «state, in which a man is born as the son of the first Adam, to the state of grace «and adoptive sonship of God, through the second Adam, our Savior Jesus Christ; «and after the promulgation of the Gospel this transfer cannot be accomplished «without the water of regeneration or the desire of it . . ." (Denz. 796.)

«Secondly, baptism of desire confers membership in the Church "in voto." For «Pius IX, who taught so unmistakably that "extra ecclesiam nulla salus," also «taught just as unmistakably that those who through no fault of their own do not «recognize the Catholic Church as the only true Church . . ." and who yet keep «the precepts of the law of nature graven by God in all men's hearts, who are «prepared to obey God, and who lead an honorable and upright life, are able, by «the powerful workings of God's light and grace, to attain eternal life. For God, «who sees distinctly, who searches into and knows the mind, spirit, habits and