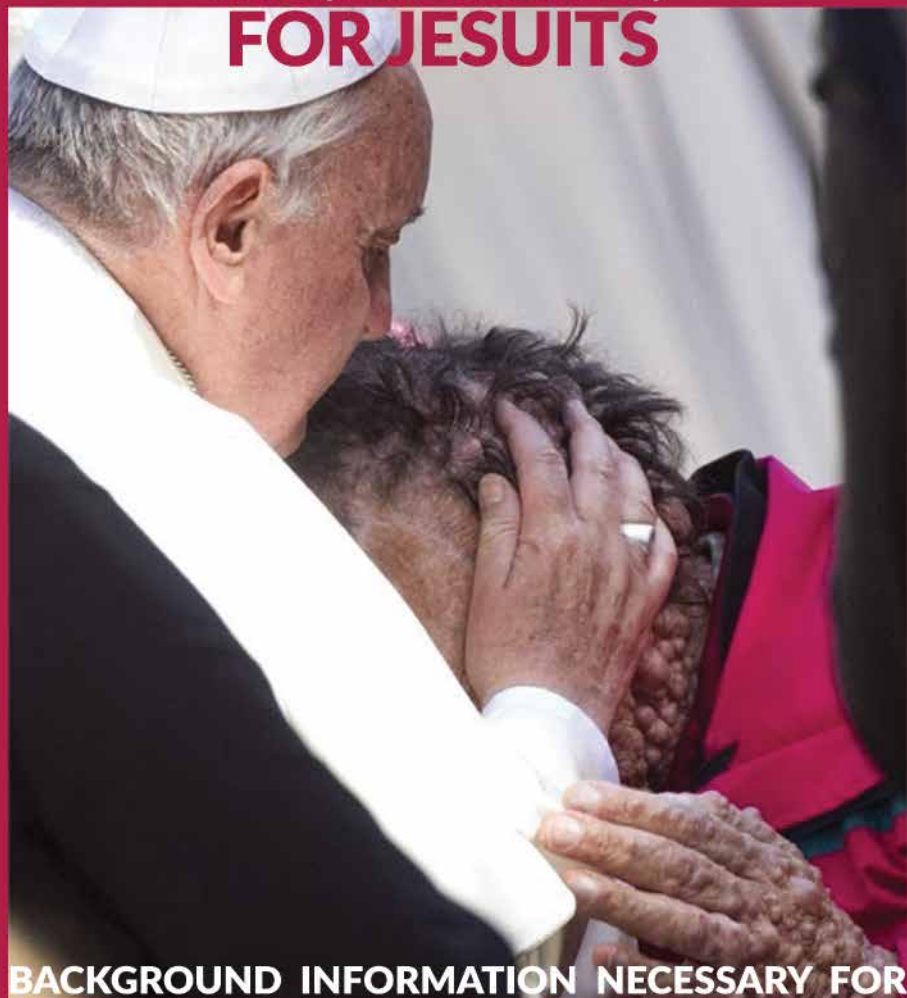


A MESSAGE MEANT mainly, not exclusively **FOR JESUITS**



BACKGROUND INFORMATION NECESSARY FOR

HELPING FRANCIS RENEW THE CHURCH

Aloysius Pieris, s.j.

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PRESENTATION

During his visit to the Baltic States, **Pope Francis mentioned that he expects the Jesuits to help him implement the renewal launched by Vatican II.** This booklet is a Jesuit's response to that request and addressed mainly, not exclusively, to his own Jesuit confreres .

A message of this kind is both necessary and urgent. For the anti-Conciliar lobby – with its Head Quarters in Italy and USA – is not happy with Vatican II coming back to prominence under Bergoglio's pontificate after 35 years of hibernation, or according to some, after virtual disappearance. Hence a well-planned conspiracy to declare this Pope heretical and depose him and then convoke a conclave to elect a Pope of their own kind (and perhaps caution the people of God against Vatican II) has now been exposed in the media. Hence this Pope's fervent appeal to the Jesuits to lend their support for his struggle to revive the renewal process triggered off by the Second Vatican Council should be taken in earnest and extended to all: the Laity, the Religious and the Presbyters of the Church. Hence this booklet.

The Jesuit Aloysius Pieris, who offers here a background knowledge required to appreciate what Francis is doing, is himself a product of Vatican II, having pursued his theological studies in Italy contemporaneously with the Council's four sessions. He had been a member of a group of Council-enthusiasts who worked indefatigably to promote the Conciliar renewal not only in Sri Lanka but – as the professor of Asian Religions at the EAPI, Manila teaching 70 to 90 Asians per year for 23 years – he has also conveyed the Conciliar message and transmitted the Conciliar spirit to a pan-Asian audience. Besides, he has served the FABC (Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences) as a Resource Person during the early phase of the post-Conciliar renewal.

His profound understanding of the uniqueness as well as the absolute necessity of a Council of this nature has been persuasively spelt out in his widely perused classic *Give Vatican II a Chance*, (Kelaniya, Sri Lanka, 2010; Second Print, Claretian Publications, Bangalore, 2012).

The Euro-American Christians, who may be irritated by Pieris' reservations about the theology churned out in the West, would do well to peruse the works of the British Theologian and New Testament scholar, Bishop Tom Knight of the Church of England who laments that in Western Christianity the Greek philosophical influence has distorted the vision of salvation revealed in the Scriptures.

This booklet demonstrates that Francis is steering the church into a more spiritual and pastoral direction inspired by the Gospels and away from that traditional Christianity now drowned in what the same Bishop Knight identifies as a society seeped in Epicureanism. Pieris would like Asian Catholics to join Francis in bringing about a renewed church that tastes the "Joy of the Gospel" (*Evangeli gaudium*) while being engaged with those outside the church in the mission of creating an eco-friendly, non-consumerist and non-pyramidal society of authentic humans.[]

Robert Cruz

*Tulana Media Unit,
Epiphany, 2019.*

Chapter One

How Francis Implements Vatican II:

PASTORAL AND SPIRITUAL RENEWAL? *YES, NON STOP!*
DOCTRINAL DEFINITIONS? *NO, FULL STOP!*

Historico-Ecclesiological Backdrop

Vatican II was radically different from every Council that preceded it; that is why even today the vast majority of Catholics do not seem to have grasped its newness. Just as “one cannot do new mathematics with an old mathematics mentality”, one cannot appreciate the uniqueness of this Council with a mindset formed by the character of *almost all other previous Councils*. Almost all other councils? Yes, *almost*; for there was perhaps one exception!

Our suggestion is that if Vatican II had any precedent at all in the history of the church, it could only be the so-called “**Council of Jerusalem**” mentioned in Chapter 15 of *The Acts*, for this great ecclesial event, too, brought about a *renewal* rather than a mere *reform*; and being a ‘council of **renewal**’ it necessarily created a *crisis* whose resolution in course of time brought a *paradigmatic change* in the infant church and prepared the ground for its acceptance among the gentiles. Had it not been for that Council, Christianity would have been just a sect of Judaism, like the Essenes.

A **Reformist Council** brings changes from the top to the bottom or from the centre to the periphery of an institution so that the structures of the Institution remain unchanged. A **Renewalist Council** results from a movement storming from the periphery into the centre or from the base into the top. In the Council of Jerusalem, the movement came

from Antioch to Jerusalem! Paul and Barnabas who worked among the gentiles *in the periphery* started a new praxis in response to the demands of the Gospel after reading the signs of the times; they both came to the Centre and convinced its head (James) of the providential validity of their new praxis, and thus introduced *a new understanding* of the Mission entrusted to the nascent church; it did create a crisis at the beginning, causing a bitter conflict between the advocates of the Spirit-inspired movement for abolishing circumcision for gentiles, on the one hand, and the Judaizers who blindly insisted on the tradition, on the other. *Such a crisis is inevitable in a renewalist process and the resolution of this crisis took some time*; but eventually the church was released from obstacles to its universal calling. For Christianity spread among the gentiles....and we gentiles are Christians today because of the bold decisions...taken by Jerusalem's *Renewalist Council* and the eventual *resolution of the crisis* it created.

Vatican II is similarly a council of *renewal* and not of reform.¹ Unfortunately, however, –unlike in the case of the Council of Jerusalem– the *healthy crisis* that Vatican II generated as a renewalist Council had not been resolved fully due to the fact that the *renewal process was aborted within a decade of its conclusion*, as explained below. Hence the resistance to Vatican II has continued to this day.

One form of this resistance consists of both covert and overt opposition to *all the four popes* who have been struggling to implement the Council's program of radical renewal! **John XXIII** (*Roncalli*) who convoked this Council was ridiculed by members of the Curia (including some cardinals) as a fat old bumpkin ailing from a deficiency in theological acumen and pastoral prudence. **Paul VI** (*Montini*) – who braved the fierce lobbying of the powerful anti-Conciliar faction

1 Amply discussed and further developed in my book *Give Vatican II a Chance*, Kelaniya, Sri Lanka, 2010; reprint, Claretian Publications, Bangalore, India, 2012.

of the church and courageously brought the Council to a relatively successful finale after the death of John XXIII— suffered from being isolated within a defiant Curia and from overt opposition on the part of an intransigent circle of regressive theology teachers. His successor, **John Paul I** (*Luciani*) had plans for a good shake-up in the rank and file of the church but mysteriously disappeared from life itself within 33 days of his election.... leaving many unanswered questions about his sudden demise.

The fourth “Vatican II Pope” is **Francis I** (*Bergoglio*), who took 35 years to arrive on the scene because of the conservative Curial backlash that lasted from 1978 to 2013. This period coincided with the reigns of Pope Ratzinger (busy writing theology) and Pope Wojtyla (busy globetrotting to present the universality of papacy). The Vatican Curia, consequently, was left dangerously free for three and a half decades to undo the incipient renewal that Vatican II generated, and thus turn the clock back to the *status quo ante*. These 35 years of regression that preceded the arrival of Francis has been quite wittily described by England’s Cardinal Murphy-O’Conner in his autobiography:- Benedict and John Paul II pressed the *pause button* on Vatican II renewal but Francis came and pushed the *play button*!

No wonder that the burden of resuming the humanly impossible mission of renewing the Church as well as reforming the Curia – almost from point zero— along the pastoral and spiritual guide-lines of Vatican II fell upon **Francis I** (*Bergoglio*), the **fourth renewalist pope**. He is a Jesuit seasoned by his experience of leading his Order and (later, as the Cardinal Archbishop of Buenos Aires) steering also the local church through Argentina’s socio-cultural challenges and political storms; he is also gifted with a boldness to do what he knows to be the right thing and a capacity to face opposition and opponents with serenity; and he is equally endowed with a magnetism and a charm

that can enthuse the faithful and specially the youth to cooperate with his noble efforts to *bring about the Church that the Second Vatican Council envisaged*.

And what was the Church that Vatican II envisaged? To have a glimpse of it, one must watch what Francis is doing, hear what he is saying and observe the character and the background of those who oppose him. Let us start the inquiry by focusing on just *three* (among several) *thrusts* of the **Conciliar renewal** – three which are inseparably inter-connected:-

Popular Parlance; Pastoral Renewal; Empowerment of the Poor

Pope John XXIII made it clear that Vatican II was to be a pastoral Council. And it was. For it would not (as did many previous councils) end up with *definition of dogmas* and *issuance of anathemas* which would invariably lead to *heresy hunting* and even *excommunications*. Remember what happened to Nestorius and his followers. They were excommunicated as heretics and driven out but now some historians have suggested that Nestorius –if his vocabulary is correctly interpreted– was not that far away from orthodoxy. Pope John XXIII was a seminary professor of Church History and knew the bitter consequences of abusing such doctrinal definitions to brand others as heretics to be excommunicated; but the Pope himself upheld the validity and veracity of every dogma defined by the church in the past and would have us do the same. We insist that no dogma has ever been compromised in Vatican II or by any of the four “Conciliar Popes” mentioned here. But they focused on pastoral renewal and spiritual animation of the church and not the issuance of dogmatic definitions.

Secondly, if one ponders carefully over the teaching methods found in the Bible as a whole and those employed by Jesus in particular,

one comes to the conclusion that the **evocative language** of *similes, parables, symbolic gestures and allegories* are the *only* effective means of communicating the Divine Mystery. Is it not hubris on our part to even pretend to contain the ineffable Word of God within the restricted conceptual framework of human language? Such formulae known as “dogmas” were at best *improvable approximations*, which, unfortunately were never treated as improvable approximations until the 19th century when Cardinal Newman educated the church to accept the notion of what he called the “development of dogmas”, by which he meant that dogmas are not rigid once-and-for-all truth formulae but are flexible enough to let themselves be stretched to accommodate new insights.

Thirdly, it is significant that the Holy Scriptures (OT and NT) employ the term “dogmas” solely and merely to signify ordinances, decrees or practical decisions dictated by pastoral needs, e.g., the exemption of Gentiles from the rite of circumcision² and that is a far cry from what came to be known as ‘dogma’ in the post-Scriptural centuries, namely, a humanly conceived verbal formula claiming to capture a divinely revealed truth, the adherence to which is imposed under pain of excommunication – something the *Church was obliged to resort to* in response to a particular need of the time.³

Providentially Pope John XXIII possessed a Church Historian’s hindsight! No wonder he expected the Council to *express its teachings in the day-to-day language of the “modern man”* (sic!). The obvious aim was to facilitate the catechizing of Christians and the evangelizing of others with greater effectiveness and at a deeper level. This is the connotative as well as the programmatic sense conveyed by the word

2 Discussed at length in my *Christhood of Jesus and the Discipleship of Mary: An Asian Perspective*, (Logos, Vol.39, No3), CSR, Colombo, 2000, pp.3-4

3 *Ibid.*, pp.5-10

“aggiornamento” (updating) which Good Pope John employed to emphasize that the way of being the Church as well as its mode of communication should be easily intelligible to the modern generation.

The first negative reactions were heard already when this ‘Good Pope John’ practiced what he recommended to the church. He began to speak off the cuff, resorting to the simple language of the average believer and breaking the long tradition of popes reading out texts carefully crafted by curial experts. His mode of communication was so unprecedented that what seemed so natural and most welcome to the masses sounded untraditionally dangerous to the pastorally distant theologians and clerically biased curialists! Their concern was that “doctrinal accuracy” of the dogmatic tradition would be compromised at the risk of damaging the faith of the people in the pews.

There soon appeared cartoons depicting this Saintly Pope (John XXIII) wearing the Devil’s horns. Paul and Francis were subjected to the same insult! But Pope Albino Luciani, who continued to indulge in impromptu interventions drawing avid audiences to his pastorally effective catechesis, did not live long enough to be a victim of such scorn as were his two predecessors.

Paul VI who wrote some of the finest of encyclicals⁴ brought out another vital dimension of Good Pope John’s instructions to the Council, namely, that *“the church should be the church of all, specially of the poor”*. Pope Montini dealt with the theme of poverty-alleviation mainly, not exclusively, in PP, ET and *Octogesima Adveniens*. In ET he drew the attention of the Religious Congregations to the nexus between their vow of evangelical poverty and the elimination of economic poverty. In PP he appealed to global justice.

4 *Ecclesiam suam* (ES), *Humane vitae* (HV) (its main thrust is still unassailable), *Evangelium nunciandi* (EN), *Populorum progressio* (PP), *Evangelica testificatio* (ET), *Marialis cultus* (MC) plus many other interventions.

Furthermore, this same Pope Montini addressed also another concern of his predecessor by issuing a *motu proprio* which **transformed the inquisitorial nature of the Holy Office** – which had been, till then, obsessed with verbal precision and heresy hunting – into what is now known as the “Congregation for Doctrine of Faith” (CDF) making its main focus *the promotion of the doctrine of faith*.

Then came the 35 dark years; sadly the CDF was re-structured by his successor’s *motu proprio* which allowed the Holy Inquisition to enter by the back door. It was a reversal of Paul VI’s reform. The Oblate Tissa Balasuriya and the Jesuit Jacques Dupuis, as we all know, were among the victims of this regressive step.

The Twofold Agenda of Francis

The Pope who has captured the Conciliar spirit and communicates it most effectively is **Francis** the fourth in the list of popes who took Vatican II as their personal agenda. He adopted a clear policy of :-

- i abandoning doctrinal definitions and heresy hunting while resorting to the day-to-language of the people as the medium of catechesis and evangelization; and
- ii stirring the conscience of nations to stop manufacturing poverty and exploiting the *Poor* and their co-victim which is the *Earth*.

As for the first concern, Francis has discontinued Cardinal Gerhard Mueller from heading the CDF and appointed in his place Cardinal Ladaria, who is reputed to be a promoter of doctrine rather than an inquisitor of heretics. Thus Paul VI’s positive conciliar approach to doctrinal issues expressed in his *motu proprio* on the CDF has been restored by Francis, who also continues the habit of indulging in

conversational exchanges with the People of God, as did Pope Roncalli and Pope Luciani.

No wonder that this Francis, who resumed the Vatican II policy of ending the ancient habit of heresy hunting, has now become the victim of naïve heresy hunters, such as the 60 odd signatories who contested *Amoris laetitia* –most of whom are mere ThD holders (teaching in numerically dwindling Western seminaries) rather than universally recognized theologians!

By contrast Francis is well equipped with a rich thesaurus of evocative idioms which he had acquired thanks to his flair for literature. He communicates the Gospel with soul-stirring neologisms and heart-warming imagery which are capable of *evoking* in the masses a *spiritual* renewal in response to God' mercy. This is what John XXIII and Vatican II demanded from the Pastors and what Francis teaches by example: to be so close to the flock as to be able to speak *their language* rather than indulge in high-flown philosophical jargon borrowed from Greek thinkers of the past. In this he closely follows Jesus, our Primordial Magisterium.

Finally, no Pope has so far taken the plight of the poor with such evangelical courage and political daring as Francis has. His crying, in season and out of season, for the acceptance of refugees into rich Nations –some of which (nations) had become rich by creating poverty in countries they colonized– reverberates in the cosmos, causing annoyance in some and conversion in others. He is a Pope who constantly reminds us of the *link between creation of poverty and exploitation of the earth*. Hence his zeal for the simultaneous liberation of the poor and the earth is both persuasive and pervasive. Deafened ears and hardened hearts of many a modern *Dives* have not deterred

him from fearlessly proclaiming the Evangelical imperative of caring for many a *Lazarus* pitifully neglected at the doorstep of opulence.

What is most edifying is that he has set an unprecedented example of abandoning the luxurious papal quarters to live in a community of visitors and workers. The message is clear: to *live poor* and to *live for the poor* should go hand in hand; and pastors should be models of this evangelical praxis.

To sum up: this Pope is doing nothing new. His vision-cum-mission is the implementation of Vatican II's mandate to trigger off a *non-stop process of spiritual and pastoral renewal of the church as dictated by the spirit of the Gospel of Jesus*. Consequently he is determined to remove the *theological barrier* that has distanced the **Magisterium from the Masses**, the *class barrier* that separated **Shepherds from the Sheep**, the *language barrier* that stood between the **Church and the World** and the *barrier of bias* that obstructs both **ecumenism and inter-religious collaboration**.

Hence our hope is that the pastoral and spiritual renewal of the church envisaged by Vatican II and re-launched by Francis will also have its salutary effect on the *future of theology* thanks to a discovery of its authentic starting point and its pastoral foundation – which is the focus of our final consideration.

The Future of Theology and the Theologies of the Future

If Francis lives long enough to complete his mission of *ecclesia semper reformanda* (non-stop pastoral and spiritual renewal of the church envisaged by Vatican II), one of the fruits of his labour would be the emergence of **gospel-based theologies** – theologies that are not tied down to a rational system or a philosophy as has happened so far in the West, where, ironically, the near demise of authentic Christianity

has not opened the eyes of its anti-Francis pastors to the failure of their own methodology – whereas, also ironically, the Argentinian Pope coming from the Third World is gathering the youth back to the fold in de-churched Europe with his evangelical approach! It is, therefore, ludicrously arrogant on the part of the fanatic advocates of pastorally unproductive and spiritually sterile theologies to campaign against Francis who is challenging them to re-plant the churches that they themselves had allowed to die! Hence they should join this Pope in the field-hospital and work with him if they want to salvage Christianity from extinction in their own home-ground. For the theology they defend has failed the Church.

What then should theology be? Allow me to define “Christian theology” as a *contextual interpretation of the Scripturally Revealed Word of God* (as epitomized in Christ and constitutes the Good news of Salvation) in response to the socio-cultural challenges of each place and time. History had demonstrated that many a religion had died a natural death because its written and oral message was *not interpreted according to changing social contexts in order to make it accessible to each new generation*. Hence contextual interpretation of Revelation (that is what theologizing really means) is indispensable for the continuance of Christianity.

Take the example of Thomas of Aquinas. By utilizing the philosophy of Aristotle to *interpret* the Data of Revelation in a way that made sense to the educated elite of his time, he saved European Christianity from being dismissed as a religion of the illiterate masses in the face of Islam which was attracting the European intellectuals by appealing to the same Greek philosopher!

But there was a problem nobody foresaw: this same Aristotelianism which the medieval church revered as *ancilla theologiae* (the “Maid-servant of Theology”) was not a *philosophia perennis* (an all-time valid philosophy) as they claimed it to be then. For by the second half of the 19th century and early part of the 20th there emerged a succession of new phases in the scientific revolution (with the new theories such as the hypothesis of biological evolution etc.) which made the post-Thomistic scholastic philosophy sound obsolete and incapable of responding to the challenges of the times. What did many theologians do to avert the crisis? Certainly not an example to be followed today! Instead of *returning to the Sources (scripture and tradition) as well as to The Source (Jesus Christ) and interpreting the Source(s) anew in terms of the emerging new context*, they gave a fresh interpretation to the post-Thomistic scholasticism itself; which is being taught in some seminaries in Asia, ignoring the theological insights of the FABC. It is merely a twentieth century *interpretation of a medieval interpretation* – rather than a true theology, which is *a fresh interpretation of the Revelatory Source(s)* in response to the challenges of contemporary societies.

By contrast, Vatican II was heralded by a clamour for *reditus ad fontes*: a return to the Sources (scriptures and tradition) and even more radically, to *Return to “The Source”* who is Christ, God’s Eternal Word – not certainly a mere change of philosophy, say, from Aristotle to Heidegger or Levinas or to another philosopher! Some Asians followed this same counter-productive methodology by trying to interpret Christianity within the speculative thought of medieval Vedantic philosophers such as Sankharachariya rather than along the life-and-death struggles of the Dalits and destitute masses! Let us rather follow the lead given by Francis:-

The Conciliar renewal, which Francis has resumed, demands a **spiritual praxis springing from a love for the earth and justice to the poor** as demanded by the plan of salvation contained in the Revealed Word of God. It is a shift from the traditional *fides quaerens intellectum* (faith seeking understanding) to a *fides promovens justitiam* (faith fostering justice). Spirituality is not derived from a speculative theology, as has been the practice in the dominant theological tradition; it is the other way around: an authentic theology is implicit in and derived from a spiritual praxis rooted in a pastoral engagement with God's redemptive plan for both the Cosmos and Humankind. Obedience to God's Word and preaching it in the Asian context of many religions and teeming poor leads to an Asian theology.

In other words this Pope's pastorate aims at bringing about a *Church re-evangelized by a return to our Source who is Jesus the Christ*, in and with whom we are called to **TRANSFORM all creation into His Reign** rather than *philosophically EXPLAIN things to ourselves for own intellectual satisfaction*. That is why in his *Evangelii gaudium* (no.165), Francis expressed dissatisfaction about "doctrines that are philosophical rather than evangelical". In fact all his encyclicals and Apostolic Exhortations, homilies and Sunday catechesis bear witness to this concern of his. This is exactly what John XXIII meant when he warned the Council not to get bogged down with an obsessive search for conceptual precision in verbal formulations; rather he persuaded the Council Fathers to work towards a radically renewal of the the Church in the Spirit of the Gospels so as to make it fulfill its mission as Christ's own Extension (or Body) actively present in the 'modern world' as a readable sign of God's salvific love.

Hence our conclusion: learning a lesson from the theological bankruptcy of anti-Francis heresy-hunters specially in the West, we

in Asia should abstain from concocting a theological language out of a bookish study of various Eastern “systems of thought” or philosophies; rather our method must be one of indulging in a humble attempt to experience the *liberative* core of non-Christian soteriologies and to join their adherents in a common struggle to **transform this universe into and eco-friendly home where the current socio-economic system – in which the wants of the few create needs in the many– is challenged by a proliferation of Basic Human Communities.**

Experimentate in libertá (“be free to experiment”) was Francis’ challenge to the Italian episcopate –whose response to the Pontiff, however, was an enigmatic silence. We, Asian Christians, must make use of the *freedom of the children of God* that we enjoy under this papacy to be creative in taking daringly evangelical plunges into Asian soteriologies and emerging with theologies, which not only palpitate with the Heart of Christ that has been ever active amongst our people but also reflect the religious and cultural pluralism of our continent. *Francis is preparing the soil; are we ready to sow the seed?[]*

Chapter Two

The First-World Church to Depose our Third-World Pope?

POLITICS OF COWARDICE

(an updated version of an article that first appeared in the
Daily Mirror, 06 October 2018, p.6.)

Current Context

Many members of the American Hierarchy have been accused of large-scale child-abuse crimes. But quite unlike the Chilean bishops who had the courage and the humility to resign from their episcopal office as an act of repentance and reparation, a few US bishop had initially shown cowardice and arrogance in the face of their scandalous failure; and they have demonstrated this in two ways:

One Cardinal (a decent one, I admit) has begged the Pope to cancel the synodal meeting on Youth because the credibility of the bishops among the teenagers had sunk to an all-time low. The Pope is trying to salvage the youth (i.e., the next generation of Christians) from a crisis of faith caused by the culpable negligence of their pastors; now these very pastors, in their pusillanimity, wanted to avoid being embarrassed before the youth who are now fully informed about how their young colleagues have been preyed upon by some unscrupulous “shepherds”. The bishops wished to evade the unpleasant truth chicken-heartedly rather than face it with repentant hearts; cowardice, not courage.

The other solution was crass treacherous. The revelations of clerical pedophilia in Pennsylvania – *even conceding that the Grand Jury report*

was “misleading, irresponsible and unjust” [cf. Peter Steinfelds, *LaCroix*, 12-01-19 *via Commonweal*] **and is spread over a seventy year period**— have shocked the American laity so much that many bishops feared a lay uprising. And their strategy seemingly was to put the blame on the Pope (who assumed office only five years ago) and wash their hands of a crime they have been perpetrating decades before this pontiff was elected! So it is the innocent Pope who has to resign, not the degenerate hierarchs! See what living in the lap of economic comfort has done to these pastors! They could not even think straight.

The Culprit Caught and Exposed

The culprit behind the proposed “coup” against the Pope is Mgr. Carlo Maria Viganò, the Vatican Nuncio to USA. He has mendaciously accused Francis of covering up the sex-scandals of the ex-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, despite **the well recorded fact that it was Francis, and Francis alone, who severely censured this predator-prelate and even deprived him of his Cardinal status --- a first time event in the whole history of the Church!**

But the stakes have now turned against Viganò in a way he had never expected. According to the revelations made by eminent theologians like Massimo Faggioli (Villanuova University) and highly respected investigative journalists such as Andrea Tornielli (*La Stampa*), it is Viganò who had tried shamelessly to cover up the ignominious sex-scandals perpetrated by John Niensteadt, the Archbishop of Minneapolis!!! Viganò’s duplicity is now a public secret!

The next bombshell came from someone whom the conservative US bishops always admired and even favoured as the alleged opponent of Francis, namely Benedict XVI. This retired Pope has dismissed Viganò’s accusation as “fake news” and a “lie”! Hence let me stress that

this nuncio is a liar according to the very Pope whom the conservative “Viganò-fans” hold as the authentic leader of the church!!!

Since then a third explosive revelation has denuded this ignoble “Accuser” of the Pope in the eyes of his own countrymen. According to the verdict passed in an Italian court of justice in Milan, Carlo Maria Viganò has been proved to have embezzled 1.8 million Euros from his own ailing blood brother, also a priest, out of their family inheritance! His own sister Rosanna has appealed to Swiss authorities to retrieve money that she had given this same prelate-brother to deposit in her name. If *greed for money* could make him behave so inhumanly towards his own siblings, what is surprising about his *greed for clerical power* making him slanderously attack the Pope with whom he seemingly entertains a personal grudge?

The fourth shocking news that has now disquieted the Francis-opponents is that *all* the American prelates accused of pedophilia recently had been appointed by Pope John Paul II whose pontificate was considered by these same men as the ideal period of church-life allegedly reversed by the Argentinian Bishop of Rome!

God’s mill grinds slowly but steadily. We have now heard of the fifth bombshell in the series. The Italian Press has made a thorough investigation into the diabolical scheming that lurks in the Viganò-dossier and the work is aptly titled *Il Giorno del Giudizio* (The Day of Judgment) – indeed the long awaited divine verdict on the true character of this unscrupulous liar and on the much awaited vindication of Pope Bergoglio’s innocence.

The Pope’s Strategy

No wonder that Pope Francis refused to respond to Viganò’s accusation and asked the journalists to do their job properly and find out the truth

for themselves, promising that he would add a few words after they had done their homework. He has nothing to fear. We admire his silence, which of course some crafty bishops of USA have interpreted as an admission of guilt! But there is time to be silent and there is a time to speak out as the scriptures advise (Eccl 3:1, 17; 8:6). Hence they never expected Bergoglio to break the silence at the appropriate time and cancel the US Bishops' meeting on abuse as he thought they were not spiritually prepared to resolve the crisis they themselves have created. Furthermore, they received from him a strongly worded admonition as they began a retreat on January 2, 2019 in compliance with his request and under the guidance of the Preacher he had sent; he did not mince his words. As Pope he merely wanted to strengthen the faith of his brethren as Jesus expected Peter to do.

It is true that the scrupulous adherence to justice and mercy had made the Cardinal Archbishop Bergoglio of Buenos Aires reluctant to condemn even pedophiles until they were proved guilty beyond doubt; for the vilification of innocent people, who were later found innocent, has taught a bitter lesson to many ecclesiastical superiors. That policy of prudence is a far cry from covering up abuse, which is precisely what the Pope's 'Accuser' has been caught doing! In fact recently at his mass at Santa Martha Francis explained (based on the day's scriptural reading and the praxis of Jesus) that prayerful silence is the answer to those showing hatred. Silence was also the Pope's response to the despicable poster-campaign organized against him in the city of Rome by a notorious Curial cardinal from USA, a covert supporter of Viganò! Hence our suspicion: *is there also a **political motive** for many first-world Catholic leaders to bring disrepute on this Third World Pope?*

Third World Pope

The first Pope who annoyed the First World's right-wing Catholic Churchmen by criticizing the First World's economic exploitation of

the Third World, was certainly not Pope Francis. It was **St. Paul VI**. This Italian pontiff's *Populorum progressio* was dismissed by the First World Press as a Philo-Marxist critique of their allegedly successful economic system. Paul VI reiterated this uncompromising critique on several other occasions. Church historians have observed that Francis is only continuing the Conciliar Renewal which ceased with Pope Paul's demise. Paul has come alive in Francis.

Francis, of course, has been even more blunt and insistent than Paul when hurling this same criticism against economic exploitation by rich countries. For he comes from the Third World and had experienced the effect of such exploitation on his people. Hence we are amused to hear him being accused of Marxism — a label tagged on to anyone who struggles for economic justice! But Francis seemed even more amused; for his humorous repartee was that whatever good Marx had taught [e.g., about exploitation of workers] was copied from the Bible! It is solely *the Word of God in the Bible* that guides this Pope whenever he sees, judges and acts. Hence the following observation.

Back to the Bible

“Back to the origins” (*reditus ad fontes*) was the slogan with which Vatican II was launched. For the church felt it had deviated from its sources. The West's right-wing Catholic lobby including bishops had forgotten that the biblical narrative does not begin with *the Creation Story* (which was an important after-thought) but with a **Workers' Revolt** in Egypt and the revelation of a *merciful God* who took the Workers' side in their struggle for justice. According to the New Testament, it was this God's divine Son who, at the appointed time, was born into a *worker's family* and inaugurated the reign of *mercy and justice* with a small group of disciples many of whom also came from a *worker-background*. It is about this God that Pope Francis speaks to

the dismay of those Catholic leaders whose Mammon-worship had led them not only to abandon the God of the Oppressed but also oppress God's little ones.

Furthermore, history has demonstrated that wherever the Church has failed to witness to the **revolutionary origin of Judeo-Christianity**, it has sinned against God's poor and has violated the dignity of the most vulnerable humans, i.e., children. We, Asian Christians, must learn a lesson from this crisis of the first world, and renew ourselves, our families, our parishes, our religious congregations and our dioceses as demanded by Vatican II lest we too succumb to the same temptation. For, there are signs that we and our churches are not far away from that pitfall. Infact some long hidden scandals are emerging in the media.

Conclusion

There is also another area in which our Third World Pope has antagonized the church leaders and theologians of the de-churched West, namely by severely reprimanding them for failing to feed their flock with God's Word. "From the fruits, you shall know" said the Lord Jesus. The crisis of faith in those countries is the visible fruit of the self-seeking clericalism of their pastors as well as their bookish theology which is evangelically ineffective and spiritually sterile. Ironically, it is this Argentinian Pope from the Third World who is re-gathering Europe's de-Christianized youth while the self-styled 'theologians' of the West, who look for heresies in this Pope, have lost their credibility among the believers entrusted to them. The Third World Pope is, therefore, a thorn in the flesh of failed pastors, who should now examine their own personal histories instead of harassing our lion-hearted pontiff for restoring the original charisma of Christianity in accordance with the renewal programme of Vatican II.[]

Chapter Three

The Origin and Genesis of Pope Francis' Theology :

PRAYERFUL LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD BOTH IN THE SCRIPTURES AND IN THE POOR

(Slightly revised version of an article first published in
Vāgdevī, 23, January 2018, p. 55)

A few Western (and Western-educated) ecclesiastics — such as the 60 odd signatories to the letter condemning *Amoris laetitia* — presume that their method of theologizing is universally valid and therefore cannot appreciate that we have, for the first time, a *Third World Theologian* at the helm of the church and that he has something quite fresh to offer them thanks to the very different politico-cultural and socio-economic context of his provenance, and consequently, thanks also to the way he has apprehended, absorbed, practiced and communicated the Good News of Jesus to *poor practicing masses of Christians* — while by contrast his Western and Western-educated critics impart a rational and explanatory theology to elite groups who would later rant it to an *aging generation of believers in half-empty churches*. This obvious contrast springs from the vast difference in their respective **methodologies** in theologizing.

As a Jesuit, this Pope has gone through a rigorous theology course, which is not very different from what is taught regularly in the West. Hence it is presumptuous on the part of these theologians to think that he is ignorant of their theology, which is what is taught in seminaries almost everywhere. Hence Francis is acquainted enough with that particular theology to criticize both the location and the

process of its production. True, these occidental “theologians” and bishops might have been irritated by the Pope’s gentle rebuke that their once Christian continent has been pastorally neglected and that their purely “doctrinal” approach to the Good News proclaimed by Jesus has ceased to produce a vibrant Christianity. It is themselves that they need to criticize, not the Pope, for it is they who have lost their credibility to “teach” and must now start learning from this exemplary Shepherd who has been catechized in a Continent where the faith in the God of Jesus is kept alive by the masses of the poor.

The Location and the Process of Theologizing

Ever since Augustine, Thomas, and other intellectuals of the Western Church began to make use of a given “rational system” such as that of Plato or Aristotle, to “construct” theologies, the West’s Catholic educators have continued to hold (even after Lutheran reforms) that theology is the “Mistress” (*domina*) who employs a philosophy as its “handmaid” (*ancilla*). Hence the message of Scriptural revelation had to be cooked and dressed up by the handmaid in the kitchen before the Mistress could present it for public consumption! Even today a few traditional theologians resort to some philosopher such as Heidegger, Levinas etc. to create a theology. The *context* of some (not all) theologies seems to be a rational framework of well known thinkers rather than a socio-spiritual praxis. Hence their “spirituality” is something deduced from their thought-system which they call theology.

The opposite takes place in many genuinely Third World Theologies, which are derived from a *socio-spiritually* liberative praxis accompanied and inspired by a *lectio divina* (a spiritual reading of the Scriptures) made in the concrete politico-economic context of the oppressed masses. For praxis is the first formulation of a theory.

Francis, both as Presbyter and later as Cardinal Archbishop was practicing the beatitudinal spirituality of *evangelical poverty* as required by the gospels (unlike his armchair critics) and had simultaneously thrown himself into what he calls the “field hospital” to accompany those drowned in *economic poverty* in their struggle for full humanity. The theologians living in Christian nations that became rich by colonizing poor countries must humbly listen to him not only as the Pope but as a man whose *theology vibrates with God’s Cry for justice* – a cry which is heard loud and clear more than ever from the world’s needy majority who are mass-produced by a greedy minority. His theology, therefore, speaks to all – *hurting the powerful and heartening the powerless; enraging the mighty and empowering the meek* – unlike that of his clerical critics who live in ivory towers.

Though his movements are physically restricted to the Vatican today, he assiduously employs all the resources available to him

- to **wake up** the traditional theologians from their *dogmatic slumber*;
- to **shake up** the present day Herods and the Caesars with loud summons to socio-economic justice;
- to **make up** for past lapses in clerical abuse of minors;
- to **break up** the canonical chains that prevent the Consecrated Ones from moving to the frontiers;
- to **take** today’s High Priests and Scribes to task for living *on* rather than living *for* their flocks;
- to **slake** the universally felt thirst to see decency and efficiency restored in the Vatican Curia.

Thus in contrast with those who teach bookish theories in seminaries, Francis teaches the whole wide world in his daily homilies which are

broadcast through the Vatican Radio and other media. These homilies are nurtured by a *lectio divina*, a prayerful listening to God's Word in the readings prescribed for the day but always affectively united with *the Divine Word*, namely, Jesus who is the Personal Revelation of the Father and who remains the prime hermeneutical key to any authentic interpretation of the Holy Writ.

Note, however, that we have two concepts of the "Word of God" :- *dabar* in Hebrew and *logos* in Greek, which are semantically poles apart. The Hebrew word (*dabar*) stands for a "speech-request" so that *hearing* the speech implies *acting* according to that request, which is obedience. That is why the Bible uses the verb to "hear" to convey the meaning of "obedience". Just as God says "Hear Oh Israel" (Obey Me), so also in the Psalms we are invited to pray "Hear us Oh Lord (Obey us Oh Lord)!" Being a love-covenant, the relationship between God and us is one of *reciprocal compliance with Word-Requests exchanged between the two of us*.

And what is God's request to us? That we join the Risen Christ in *transforming* this world into the paradise God had originally destined it to be. The transformed reality to be expected is what Jesus referred to as the Rule of God, i.e., a new creation where God, whose name and nature is 'self-giving love', reigns supreme; *something already in operation since his death*. A theology that is neither inspired by nor leading to such a transformative engagement is sterile and futile. Thus authentic spirituality as well as the theology that should emerge from it, cannot be divorced from our participation in God's transforming activity anticipated in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

This is where the Pope stands today! It is his standpoint (*theopraxis*) that has determined his viewpoint (*theology*). What one sees depends

on where one stands. Many theology teachers in the First World have completely missed seeing reality because they have taken their stand in their academic enclaves; and that explains their inability to even comprehend the Pope's theological method based on prayerful practice of Justice and Love in obedience to God's *dabar*, always standing with the Poor and the Marginalized in whom God is met and recognized. Let us see where, why and how his critics deviate from his methodology.

Whence the Difference

Unlike the Greek Fathers who appropriated whatever seemed good in the *spirituality* of their (Greek) ancestors, the Occidental Churches toyed with Greco-Roman [philo]*sophia* in their theological reflection despite St Paul's warning against being allured by such "wisdom" or *sophia* which is not derived from the crucified Christ. One of the casualties of this rational methodology was the overly literal translation of *dabar* (Word) into Greek as *logos* without inseminating this Greek term with the semantic content of Hebrew *dabar*. For *dabar*, is a "speech" and a "request", as explained above –speech to be heard and request to be obeyed. But *logos* is a combination of "idea" and "reason" –an "idea" for *contemplation* (in spirituality) and "reason" for *explanation* (in theology)!

There lurked here the danger of spirituality being over-identified with *mystical contemplation* rather than (obedient) *action*, while on the other hand, theology is reduced to *reason explaining the faith*, as expressed in the West's definition of theology as "faith seeking understanding" (*fides quaerens intellectum*). This is a departure from the biblical spirituality which is *obedient action* giving rise to a theology of "faith fostering justice" (*fides promovens justitiam*) –in view of transforming this world into the Reign of Love envisaged and inaugurated by Jesus. This is where the Pope's theology which springs from his socio-spiritual

praxis, is to be located. May his critics, who are logos-theorists, be humble enough to follow his *dabar-praxis* as the theological method of transformation rather than of doctrinization.

Does this mean that the Pope neglects contemplation to indulge in action? Here we must clarify that contemplation takes three formats in Western Tradition and one notices a confusion of the three in many discourses on Spirituality. The term is first used to indicate a “formal prayer” that leads to mystical union with God, a grace given to a few. By “Formal Prayer” I mean a prayer that is characterized by the need to devote a specific time and place, duration and method. Teresa of Avila, the great example of the formal prayer known as (mystical) contemplation insists, nevertheless, that what constitutes salvation (“union with God’s will” as she calls it) happens through love of and service to one’s neighbor, for such love is required by the will of God. Ignatius too insisted that mystical contemplation is a gratuitous grace to be welcomed with humility if given, but that it is actually *our loving service to our neighbours* that constitutes our Christian vocation and mission. In short, contemplation of this kind is not absolutely essential for salvation.

But there is another formal prayer which this Pope indulges in daily and which Ignatius called “contemplation”. As a formal prayer it involves a fixed time, place, method and duration. Every Jesuit is encouraged to engage in this prayer daily. Ignatius did not invent it but discovered it in the church’s venerable tradition. It was already advocated by Ludolph of Saxony a century and half before Ignatius and was also recommended by the great Dutch theologian Erasmus, a contemporary of Ignatius. It is none other than *a very special form of lectio divina*, a way of reading the scriptures with the full participation of all the human faculties including one’s imagination which helps

one to re-live affectively the events described in the sacred texts in the course of prayer.

Hence this second species of contemplation which coincides with *lectio divina* which the Pope practices (as every good Jesuit should) is not biblical exegesis, which of course is an intellectual exercise quite helpful for *lectio divina*! Biblical exegesis is comparable, e.g., to a laboratory study of a chemical compound and *lectio divina* is comparable to the employment of the knowledge so gained to satisfy human needs. To quote the words of Ignatius, “It is not the abundance of knowledge that satisfies the soul but *tasting things interiorly*” (*non abundantia scientiae satiat animam sed res interne gustare*). The Ignatian contemplation, which Francis is fully given to every morning exhibits its fruit in his daily homily, for it truly feeds his flock with God’s Word together with its divine taste. That is why so many listen to and enjoy his sermons and learn authentic theology. For this daily prayerful “hearing” of the Word (*dabar*) which, being a divine request, prompts obedient “action”, is only *one* source of his theological reflection – ever profound as it is practical. The *other source* of the Word is the *cry of the poor* in whom God dwells and demands our service.

There is also a third meaning that has been forced into the word ‘contemplation’, in the oft-repeated expression “contemplation in action”, a misnomer for *continuous God-awareness*, which corresponds to Ignatian understanding of “informal prayer” as *finding God in all things and all things in God*. It is not a formal prayer since it does not have a fixed place time duration or method to experience it. Hieronimo Nadal, an early interpreter of Ignatian spirituality, was the first to call this informal prayer by the misleading name “*contemplation even in action*”. The historical context in which this name was coined happened to be the criticism which contemplative monks specially

of the Dominican Order had hurled at Jesuits for being mere activists rather than contemplatives. “We are contemplatives all right”, Nadal argued back, “but contemplatives while being in action”. Here being contemplative does not mean indulging in either of the two *formal prayers* which we mentioned above as “contemplation”, and which are impossible to be engaged in while being involved in action. Here Nadal had used the word contemplation as a misnomer for *continuous informal prayer* or more precisely *being always prayerful*. Speaking in biblical terms, we can say it is a *permanent attitude of listening to God’s Word (dabar)* in a mood of prompt obedience – the Word that is heard always from our Divine Covenant Partner while we are engaged in the mission of transforming the creation into the Her Reign. The Pope’s recent exhortation to a group of youth has touched on this *spirituality of being engaged continuous conversation with God*.

Conclusion:

It is when one is in *constant touch with God* – while being nourished daily both through *lectio divina* and through uninterrupted prayerfulness, but always moved by the Lord encountered in the poor and the rejected – that one becomes qualified to indulge in *God-Talk* or theology. All else is ideology, not theology, says Francis! Those who do not remain on their knees in prayer before God and in service before the Oppressed (Christ’s vicars) are not theologians but doctrinalists belonging to the category of scribes and chief priests – prototypes of *some* of today’s theologians and bishops – who invoked their traditions to object to and obstruct the mission of Jesus, *God’s Dabar*.

The last synod on youth and the papal document that will follow focus on this specific methodology, which will have to be practiced in all seminaries and houses of formation. The emphasis will be on the acquisition of the habit of *discernment*, i.e., the ability to decipher God’s

Speech-Requests [*debarim*] not only in the contemplative reading of the Sacred Scriptures but throughout the day amidst the cacophony of other noises that drown Her divine voice. That ardent and affective form of *lectio divina* which Ignatius called ‘contemplation’ (2nd type in our list) is an absolutely essential aid to this form of “incessant God-awareness” which Nadal misnamed ‘contemplation in action’ (3rd type in our list). The Pope laments that slavish dependence on human-made regulations had deadened the hearts of the clergy to divine demands that can be picked up only by those *trained in the art of discernment*. He is preparing to offer this formation to the youth, specially those in seminaries. The Synod of 2018 was devoted to achieve this end.

This is the salutary revolution that Pope Francis has set off and it is our collective responsibility as God’s People to join him in this venture, hoping thereby to transform the Church into what Vatican II called “a universal sacrament of salvation”, i.e., a visible and active agency inviting and inciting all people of good will, by exhortation and example, to collaborate in the liberative task of reconciling humans with one another and with Nature in the course of witnessing to and mediating God’s love and justice in the world through obedient action. Francis is presenting us with a *prayed and lived theology* which originates from and leads back to this incessantly active response to God’s Dabar, made flesh as Jesus the Christ. []

Chapter Four

Anti-Francis Fake-News Mafia

A CALL TO BE VIGILANT ABOUT SLANDERS AND SLANDERERS

(Revised version of an appendix attached to the editorial of
Vāgdevī, 24. July 2018, pp.6-9)

The ultra-conservative Catholic lobby – a considerable part of the Roman Communion including two thirds of the episcopate (according to a Roman Source) – a lobby that had been conspiring to stall the renewal initiated by Pope John XXIII and Vatican II has now begun to spread *fake news about Pope Francis* in order to halt his program of church-renewal and curia reform. We know that a galaxy of recognized theologians (including G. Mueller whom Francis discontinued as CDF’s Prefect and became the Pope’s severest critic) have nevertheless come in defense of the Pope’s orthodoxy in *Amoris laetitia*. Despite this unassailable evidence, the enemies of reform are maliciously indulging in anti-Francis propaganda.

We are not holding the other extreme position that a Pope (including the present one) is beyond criticism. In fact in his address to the Italian Episcopate Francis himself declared quite mischievously that “it is not a sin to criticize the Pope”! What we condemn is slander. We are, therefore, happy to record here that Pope Ratzinger (in his latest book, carrying Pope Francis’ preface) distances himself from his influential friend, Marcello Pera (a philosopher and not a theologian), who rejects the Conciliar renewal and its effects as detrimental to Christianity, castigating Francis for his part of the renewal process. Ratzinger’s endorsement of the Bergoglio phenomenon should now be more than

clear to those who spread the fake news that Benedict and Francis were in opposite camps, the one orthodox and the other heretical.

Another canard has it that the Pope allegedly thinks the Bible is all wrong; that he is an abortionist; that he advocates divorce and remarriage. His Jesus-like sympathy towards the LGBT has been maliciously interpreted as a recognition of gay-marriages as sacraments whereas the Pope has exclusively defined Christian marriage as that between man and woman. Some of these calumniators pose as theologians whereas they are at most mere degree-holders in theology (as were most of the 60 odd signatories of the letter criticizing *Amoris laetitia* as heretical). Though contested by the most recognized *theologians* and *prelates* of the Church, these calumnies are diffused with premeditated constancy.

The latest [at the time writing these notes] is Eugenio Scalfari's report in *La Repubblica* that Francis denies the existence of hell – a canard rejected outright by the Vatican. This Journalist according to the Vatican Correspondent of *The Table* (07-04-18) had neither made a voice-recording nor taken down notes when interviewing the Pope. As Cardinal Nichols explains (in the same issue of *The Tablet*), there is no evidence in the Scriptures of any single human person burning eternally in Hell, but that Hell is what wilful rejection of the all merciful and loving God consists of, whereas the images we have of it are mere creations of artists. On the other hand the Pope is all the while speaking of the devil and his machinations – which, according to our opinion, are most manifest in his slanderous critics.

Recently Francis (in a heart-stirring scene) assured an emotionally agitated child that his *atheist dad* who was reported to have been a very good man in his life and a loving father to his children (having

also baptized all of them) will not be chased out of heaven because God is a merciful Father. Some called the Pope a heretic for saying that a non-believer can be saved. By making this unfounded accusation, these self-styled Christians have in that same breath *condemned the Evangelists Mathew and Luke as heretics !* For in Mathew's Last Judgment scene, the *nations* ("non theists" as opposed to People who are Yahweh believers) enter the eternal kingdom of the Father for being generous with the neediest ones despite their denial of having known Christ; Luke shows that the Samaritan (the apostate who had abandoned his faith in Yahweh) attained eternal life by being a neighbour to a stranger-in-distress in contrast with the two Yahweh-believers (Levite and the Priest). Not those who say "Lord, Lord" (who acknowledge YHWH in words) but "those who do the will of my Father" (i.e., those who love their neighbor) that go to heaven says Jesus himself. Is Jesus also a heretic? Hence the heretics are precisely those who anathematize Francis' scripture based assurance offered to that anxious little boy.

Then there are influential prelates of all ranks who feel personally threatened by the Pope's simple lifestyle and his people-oriented pastoral outreach; for this has led to the flock making odious comparisons between the Chief Shepherd and his fellow shepherds. Expensive cars and luxury episcopal palaces which used to be considered essential for maintaining the dignity of the 'princes' of the church have begun to appear in the eyes of the faithful as sinful possessions forbidden for sheep-tending and sheep smelling pastors. There is therefore a sudden surge of criticism and a veiled protest against Francis and it comes from those who are threatened by his life-style. One red-capped prelate (who would unabashedly advertise through the TV his vulgarly exuberant liturgical celebrations) has disgraced himself by indulging in a nasty poster campaign against the Pope right in the heart of Rome but failed miserably to hide his identity!

In his *Gaudete et exultate*, no 115, Francis condemns slander that even Catholic Media indulge in :

It is striking that at times in claiming to uphold other commandments, they completely ignore the eighth which forbids bearing false witness or lying and ruthlessly vilifying others. Here we see the unguarded tongue, set on fire by hell, sets all things ablaze (cf. James, 3:6)

We are happy to note that editorial boards of many Catholic journals have committed themselves to expose these cowardly clerics and debunk their slanders in order to present Francis for what he is, and *support the reforms which he was commissioned to introduce by the Conclave that elected him*. For these reforms are overdue. The group of nine cardinals have already come very close to a formula for complete restructuring of the Curia, where the most-powerful anti-reformers were said to have resided.

On the other hand Francis knows to put his foot down when a prelate oversteps his limits of authority. We, therefore, congratulate him on having put Robert Sarah in his place and, as the last resort, having taken upon his own papal self the pastoral task of instructing the flock on the Liturgy during weekly general audience. These ways of exercising the Petrine Ministry, which is his Christ-given task (“feed my sheep feed my lambs”) have to be delegated to the curia which, therefore, will have to be completely re-structured to ensure that *shepherding the flock and evangelizing the nations* remain the only two-fold focus of all the Vatican dicasteries, which consequently are to be staffed by competent persons rather than by clerical careerists.

Let us all do our little bit to support this humanly impossible and perilously vital mission of the Pope against the sinister schemes of his vilifiers. []

Chapter Five

Bergoglio's Papacy and Church Governance:

FROM *MONARCHY* THROUGH *COLLEGIALITY* TO *SYNODALITY*

Vicar of Christ or Vicar of Peter and Paul?

During the first four centuries we never hear of any Pope calling himself the “Vicar of Christ.” The meaning of “vicar” (*vicarius* in Latin) is “the one who is and acts in place of another”. According to Mathew 25: 31-46 (the judgment of nations), it is those who are deprived of their basic rights to *food, drink, clothing, housing and freedom* that Jesus identifies as his own divine self – “whatever you do to them, you do it to Me”. Those deprived of the basic needs of life are, therefore, the true Vicars of Christ. We grant that the Apostles too were sent by Jesus as his vicars when (in Mathew 10:40) he said that whoever receives them receives him; but before sending them as his vicars, he spelt out the conditions and qualifications for claiming that status, such as renunciation of money and other comforts, embracing the cross and so on. Thus only those practitioners of evangelical poverty and victims of economical poverty represent Christ. Finally, the vulnerability of little children qualify them also to be his vicars (Lk 9:47-48).

The obvious conclusion is that a Minister of any rank, not merely a Pope, has to be totally God-dependent like the *little ones* and the *belittled ones* of human society before he or she could claim to be a Vicar of Christ. It is no secret that some popes did not pass the test; nor do many among us, the presbyters and bishops.

Church historians tell us that the Byzantine Emperor(s) usurped this title at the peak of “Caesaropapism” (i.e., the merging of secular power and ecclesiastical authority in one person) in the 6th century, whereas already in the previous century (the 5th) that same designation had been ascribed to Pope Gelasius. The implicit argument behind this change was that since Christ, the Crucified and Risen Lord claimed “all power is given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Mt 28:18), those who claimed to be His Vicars were thought to have a God-given right to exercise that same power both on ‘earth’ (misinterpreted as the secular realm) as well as in heaven (misinterpreted as the spiritual realm). Finally the Popes alone continued to retain the title and tried to exercise jurisdiction both over the church and the state.

There were many crimes that have been cited as indirect effects of this false identification –sometimes called ‘papal absolutism’ – e.g., the Inquisition leading to coopting the Secular State in the torture and burning of heretics and schismatics; the inhumane treatment of women accused of being witches; and, of course, the Crusades.... to name the major ones. There were also many unorthodox teachings that grew out of this false claim, as for instance Boniface VIII’s notorious papal “definition” (*sic!*) that no human can be saved unless he or she is subject to papal jurisdiction! Such doctrinal concessions to Papal Absolutism officially crept into two General [*not Ecumenical*] Councils that preceded Vatican II. For instance the **Council of Trent** (16th century) makes this declaration:

The pope is ... not responsible to any earthly tribunal or power. He is the judge of all, can be judged by no one, kings, priests, or people. He is free from all laws, and cannot incur any sentence or penalty for any crime ... He is all in all, and above all, so that **God and the pope, the Vicar of God, are but one** ... He hath all power on earth, purgatory,

heaven, and hell, to bind, loose, command, permit, dispense, do, and undo. Therefore it is declared to stand upon necessity of salvation for every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff. All temporal power is his; the dominion, jurisdiction, and government of the whole earth is his by divine right.[bold added]

Vatican I which defined the dogma of Papal Infallibility (19th century) was not less emphatic; it reiterates an already promulgated teaching that “all the faithful must believe that the holy Apostolic See and the Roman Pontiff possess the primacy over the whole world.” This habit of claiming for the Pope the secular powers of a monarchy had already ended up with the Pope owning vast territories of land as did the secular kings and emperors of medieval Europe. Hence among the “kingdoms” of this world there came to be recognized what history knows as the *Papal States*.

However, during the process of the unification of Italy in the 19th century, the vast Papal States were merged into one Italian nation so that the papal jurisdiction was restricted to the hundred-acre property of the Vatican. The Pope of the time, Pius IX, called himself a prisoner in the Vatican in protest against the alienation of Papal States. His immediate successors, Pius X, Benedict XV, Pius XI and Pius XII too remained confined to the Vatican but used the media (first the press, then the radio and later the television) to address the whole world while remaining within the Vatican.

Recovery of the Twofold Mission of Papacy

The Lateran Treaty made between Pope Pius XI and Benito Mussolini in 1929 resulted in elevating the hundred-acre property of the Vatican to the level of a political State, thus recognizing the Pope as its legitimate sovereign. In course of time many nations began to

recognize the political sovereignty of what in reality was merely the diocesan property and official residence of the Bishop of Rome.

But Popes preferred to remain “prisoners” of Vatican until Pope John XXIII one fine day got out of the papal city and took the train to Assisi! Pope Montini who became Paul VI did one better. He seems to have recognized the *providential nature of the Vatican City being accorded the political status*. True to the name ‘Paul’ which he assumed on becoming the Pope, he made use of his position as a Head of a State to travel to other countries and even the UN, thus exercising the *Pauline mission to the nations* in an unprecedented manner. He initiated the contemporary habit of combining the office of Peter with that of Paul. All his successors followed suit. This was a healthy beginning in the process of re-acquiring the more authentic as well as the original title of the Bishop of Rome, namely, “**Vicar of Peter and Paul**”.

Peter was appointed as an apostle by *Jesus of History* (“Jesus in the days of his flesh”) and **Paul** was anointed as an apostle by *Christ of Faith* (“Jesus risen from the dead”). They were *certainly not the “founders” of the church in Rome* but were recognized as its *apostolic “foundation”* because they had witnessed to the faith through their martyrdom in that city. Hence the title “*Vicarius Petri et Pauli* (Vicar of Peter and Paul)” is historically the earliest designation and ecclesiologically the most appropriate description of the role of papacy. The epithet “Vicar of Christ” has come to stay but one should conclude that by now the notion of papal absolutism has been squeezed out of its semantic content. The obvious implication of the original epithet “Vicar of Peter and Paul” is that the Pope is endowed not only with the **Petrine Office** of *confirming the other church leaders in faith* but also with the **Pauline Mission** to *evangelize the nations*.

Thus, the declaration of the Vatican City as a mini-state (about hundred acres in extent) was a providential development because it has enhanced the exercise of the two-fold mission of the Bishop of Rome in the contemporary world. Obviously abuses, which its curia had been accused of for centuries does not exclude the good use to which it should be put. *Abusus non tollit usum* (abuse of thing does not exclude the good use of it). Actually it is Pope Francis who makes the best use of this historical development to exercise his twofold mission.

Pope Bergoglio's Pauline Legacy

Pope Francis exercises his *Pauline mission* to the nations in an entirely new key. The first novelty comes from his ability to *read the signs of the times*, a phrase going back to Jesus and frequent in the lips of John XXII. Francis replaces this phrase with the word *discernment* – also a scriptural word which Ignatius had developed into an incessant prayerful manner of hearing God's Word, which is always an expression of God's Will; it is, therefore, a perpetual mood of obedience to God's summons. Francis has discerned that other religions are included within the providential economy of salvation and therefore he has spelt out a form of evangelization which does not amount to proselytism – thus confirming what the Asian Theologians have been proposing to the universal magisterium at least during the past century.

His personal friendship with Jewish and Muslim believers in Argentina has convinced him that religionists must come together to confront institutionalized sin of our times, such as the unjust economic system that not only manufactures poverty but desecrates God's Creation into a lethally poisonous hell for both human and inhuman beings. Evangelization, so defined, is a project that the church cannot do alone according to his reading of the signs of the time. Other religionists and even non-theists have responded to his appeal with enthusiasm. He is

not afraid to take calculated risks in the exercise of the Pauline ministry to the nations as can be evidenced in his daring attempt to dialogue with China and to entice North Korea to allow a papal visit. His stand on nuclear disarmament is part of his evangelical concern for world-peace. He is not afraid to make enemies if the Gospel demands it. This is the essence of St Paul's mission which he has inherited.

Pope Bergoglio's Petrine Legacy

As for the *Petrine ministry*, which focusses on the Church-Governance we must recall that it was Vatican II convened by John XXIII that brought a revolutionary change in the concept of the church and consequently, also in the church administration not only by advocating *collegiality* (Pope governing the church with Bishops as his equals) but also by sowing the seed of *synodality* in defining the "Church" primarily as the "(Priestly, Prophetic and Royal) *People of God*", the implication being that papal and episcopal authority is founded on the *sensus fidelium*, which is a technical term referring to the indefectible faith of all believers – a collective faith that cannot and does not fall into heresy: in *credendo falli nequit* as Vatican II has taught.

Regrettably, neither **collegiality** nor, *a fortiori*, **synodality** has been practiced by the successors of John XXII; some critics include the otherwise radical Pope Paul VI in this list. It is true that Montini was over-cautious about the papal primacy being diluted within collegiality and reserved some controversial issues to the papal magisterium, removing them from the Council's agenda, such as women's ordination and marital ethics revolving round the issue of birth-control. But it must be said to his credit that he did order an opinion survey from the laity about the admittance of married priests into ministry.

All the post-Vatican II Popes continued to govern the church as before..... until Bergoglio from Argentina took over the reins of papal office. **The inauguration as well as the continuance of Vatican II – the first ever “World Council”** in that the natives of all nations constituted its membership for the first time – **was accompanied by a wide consultation of the bishops as well as the laity, thus giving a precedent to follow.** Francis is the first Pope to re-introduce these two dimensions of Conciliar ecclesiology – collegiality and synodality – as his governmental policy, not without virulent opposition from pastors who have not been formed by the “communion” model of ecclesial life advocated by the Council. Vatican observers have forecast that his courageous reform of the Vatican Curia with the advice and help of a college of Cardinals from various churches is another **collegial achievement** and its revolutionary result will soon take centre stage in the ecclesiastical forum. Note also that all the Post-Conciliar popes before Francis treated the synods as mere consultative bodies. *This Bergoglio is the first Bishop of Rome to practice both the collegial and the synodal mode of Church-governance.*

The Synod on the family that led to the Apostolic exhortation *Amoris laetitia* and the second Synod on and with the youth [to be] followed by another papal missive reflects his fidelity to Vatican II. Collaboration from the base to the top is the model of church governance and church renewal proposed by Vatican II; adoption of this model presupposes that Vatican II is not only the last council but is also a lasting council in the sense that hence forward the renewal process as dictated by the “signs of the times” will continue unabated in and through *collegial* as well as *synodal* mode of consultation and deliberation. Pope Francis has given a kick start to what would have otherwise remained in the Conciliar documents as a mere recommendation.

Conclusion

Now that this Pope has invited us to *help him implement the renewal project of Vatican II*, the People of God with their *sensus fidelium* joined by the ordained ministers as well as consecrated members of various religious congregations have to do more than just “think *with* the church” (*sentire cum ecclesia*) but begin to “think *as* the church” (*sentire ut ecclesia*) in a climate of mutual confidence and Spirit-led collaboration. Francis is calling us to join him in this renewalist mission aimed at making our church a universal sacrament (i.e. a visible sign and effective means) of salvation, as Vatican II defined it. According to this Pope’s governmental policy, God’s people are not merely consulted as advisers but are also co-opted as collaborators in the ongoing renewal of the church. In other words Francis is inviting us to assist him in playing his Petro-Pauline role. []

VERSIFIED PROTESTS
against
COUNTER-CONCILIAR MOVEMENTS
OF THE ANTI-FRANCIS LOBBY
Aloysius Pieris, s.j.

(first published in *Vāgdevī* under the Pseudonym J.S.Sireipyola)

HAIL ROBERT SARAH !
WE FROM THE EAST SALUTE THEE!

*“Face the East, you People and you Priests
When you celebrate the Eucharist,
Both in private and at solemn feasts”,
Ordered Sarah, Rome’s Liturgist.*

Am I dreaming? Should I trust my ear?
Romans truly yearn to face the East?
They used to face the Western Hemisphere
Where the Orient’s light waned and ceased!

And now our Sarah pays the East its due:-
*“In Vatican’s name I offer a solemn pledge:
“The church will pray and worship facing you!
“Asians, move to the Centre from the edge”!*

The CDF’s **warnings**,* twelve in all (**Dominus Jesus* etc)
Against the Asian Christians and their thought
Will vanish when the Roman eyes will fall
On what our Eastern churches claimed and taught.

Please turn to East, my Tiber friends!
Appreciate our multi-religious wealth
Many and varied ascetico-mystical trends
Help us keep and nurse our spiritual health

Thank you Sarah, thank you million times
For turning altars, to let the East be seen!
The **warning*** bells are drowned in jubilant chimes
Where the Dawn of Light has always been.[]

POPE FRANCIS (HE),
THE LAITY (WE)
THE CLERGY (THEY)

Whenever **HE** speaks, we gladly lend our ear:
His words inspire and lift our heart !
But *they* would curb us preaching hellish fear:
Hired shepherds' governing art !

Non-believers find **HIM** all aglow
With human warmth and friendly care.
Indolent men in robes are far too slow
To breathe an atheist's secular air

From Vatican hill, **HE** walks down the streets
To meet the lonely homeless ones.
His aides only warm *their* comfy seats,
Gloating in *their* affluence.

HE tells the rich to share their extra wealth
That hungry ones may have their fill.
As for *clergy's* board, holiday, health
Well-off friends would pay *their* bill.

HE counts on us; upon our lay vocation:
The soil where the Word is sown.
The Christian home remains the sole location
Where the church is daily born.

HE has turned the pyramid upside down
We the base, from pressure freed,
Prune the tree of doctrines *they* had grown;
For "Sensus Fidelium" is its seed!

"Hired hands! Your flocks are scattered forlorn!
"Drones! You hardly earn your keep!
"Your castles smell like that of a feudal highborn
"Shouldn't the shepherds smell like sheep?"

Many a *gold-ringed hand and mitered head*
Hate this sharp rebuke to heed.
Since *they* fear this news may widely spread
HIM *they* slander; the flock mislead.

Did not the crafty *priestly ruling class*
Torture Christ to save *their* skins?
A secret cross is being prepared, alas!
Wait we idly to see who wins?

Let us all arise, we People of God
Tis time to stand with Peter-and-Paul
Who walked the perilous path that Christ had trod,
Till treachery caused their fatal fall*. [*some Christians delated them to Rome]

The **VICAR of Peter-and-Paul*** even today [*A Pope's original title]
Is called by God to seek and search
For most effective, practical, winning way
The "Gospel's Joy" can change the church!

Together we stand around our **PASTOR-GUIDE**
And join **HIM** in **HIS** church reform.
Seas are rough but Mary's on **HIS** side!
Peter's Bark will brave the storm.[]

THE MARIAN CULT: DEVIATION VS. DEVOTION

*A satire on a **deviation** in the celebration of Mary's nativity introduced in one of the dioceses of Sri Lanka (08.09.2014) against the background of authentic **devotion** in accordance with Catholic Mariology advocated by Vatican II.*

1 DEVIATION

"Cakes galore for Mary's birth-day feast!
They'll fill her soul with celestial glee!"
Sighed our fervid, ebullient Parish Priest,
An ardent Marian devotee.

His flock was wont to pray to Virgin Mary,
"Give us, please, our rice today!"
But he, their pastor, seemed disturbed and wary
About the 'selfish' way they pray.

"Think of her! Forget your hunger and thirst
"She craves for cakes, which cheer her heart.
"If blest you wish to be, and not accurst,
"Then buy for her a honeyed tart!"

With borrowed money they bought a birth-day cake
Which Mary did not taste at all!
But BAKERS loved our Pastor's dumb mistake,
And laid for Mary a pastry stall.

"The birth of Jesus marks our business-peak,
"It boosts our trade in BAKERIES!
" Mary's birth now gives us one more week
"To foster *cake-ful* revelries!"

But would this make the Son of Mary glad?
The needy bearing needless weight?
Are they sane who promote this Marian fad?
Check, we must, their mental state!

Our land is filled with 'Marys' —ill, unfed
Who wait for a meal to come their way.
'Make them purchase cakes ? Or give them bread?'
Christ will ask on Judgment Day !

2 DEVOTION

The **Spirit** breathed on her the **Word** divine !
In heart received, in womb conceived,
It took a human form by God's design !
But Satan grieved, for *she* believed !

Before our Father sent the Holy Ghost
And formed the Church on Whitsun morn,
Mary had her own Pentecost:-
A church before the Church was born.

The Church's model and its foremost member,
Pregnant by the Spirit poured !
Such is Mary, as must we e'er remember :-
The *church* that gave us Christ, the Lord.

She scaled the hills in haste to Zachary's house
By Gabriel's joyous news refreshed.
As servant maid to Zachery's pregnant spouse
She brought their home the Word Enfleshed.

Aptly have our Popes and Councils taught
That she was not a fleshless fairy !
She wrestled hard and relentlessly sought
The Will Divine – this dauntless Mary

We, the Church, must always *emulate*
That primal church's thirst for God.

**Can you name a Marian cult as great
As trudging on the path she trod ?**

*“At your death, your Son, the ‘Fruit-of- your-womb’
Preserved your flesh, decay-immune.
As ‘Risen Church’ you left an empty tomb,
The Woman clothed with Sun and Moon”* []

A CONTROVERSY BETWEEN A COMMUNICANT & A CELEBRANT

A satire on clerics who follow Robert Cardinal Sarah's *heretical* suggestion that communion-in-the-hand implies a *Satanic* tendency to desecrate the Holy Eucharist.

On your palm, my son,
To place Him is a sin.
Let me see your tongue
If you want Him in!

*Father I am truly shocked,
(And may I say, amused too?)
It's only when I want you mocked
That I would show my tongue to you!*

A prey to Satan's taunt
Your faith has changed to doubt.
If it's Christ you want,
Stick your tongue out!

*Christ has uttered no such thing!
What he said was "Take and Eat" !
Obey you must your Lord and King
What he did must you repeat!*

A pass from Urbaniana,
Amplify qualifies me!
Sarah (Curia Romana)
Sends this new decree!

A Bee Tee Etch from 'Urban' School
May make you spurn the Francis Era
Just 'O' level ! But I'm no fool
Nor a fan of Robert Sarah!

As Worship Committee's Head
Sarah now has banned
Whatever Jesus said
On communion in the hand!

*Not the Lord's but Sarah's voice
Did Abraham hear and Ishmael came!
Sarah's child and God's choice
Are now at war! What a shame!*

You aired a hellish view
With consequences scary !
Back you go to your pew;
My **Sacred Hands** are weary.

*Haven't you again insinuated
Sacred hands must Him receive?
Is my tongue, then, consecrated?
Is that the truth we must believe?*

Get behind me Satan!
You put your priest to test?
What I teach is certain!
It's far beyond your quest.

Do as Sarah tells you, Pastor!
At that time in Palestine
Saints and sinners touched our Master!
Now your fingers Him confine !!

PS.

Though he argued without malice
He wasn't given the Holy Bread
Nor a sip from the Sacred Chalice.
For Sarah rules in Jesus' stead.[]

AN AMBITIOUS ECCLESIASTIC'S MEDITATION ON JACOB, THE PATRIARCH

(i) Biblical data on Jacob meditated upon

Deceiver from his mother's womb
He loved one woman and 'used' another;
His sibling's foe from womb to tomb,
His sons would sell their own brother!

Relentless wrestler with his God,
Usurper of his clan's bequest.
How curious indeed, how doubly odd
His genes produced Creation's Best!

From his stock the Saviour came;
From it, the purest woman's birth!
He played his role, despite ill-fame,
In God's redemptive plan on earth!

(ii) The ambitious ecclesiastic's reflection

Now *who* was acting odd: he ?
Or God, whose *Chosen One* he was,
God, who let *His Elect* be
Exempt from God's moral laws?

If Jacob were my exemplar
The plot I hatch ambitiously
Would not seem at all bizarre !
What's right for him isn't wrong for me!

Didn't he win the Lord's favour
By dint of crass duplicity?
In wiles I prove to be the braver!
The church is led by guides like me !!

(iii) The ambitious ecclesiastic's prayer

Hear O Lord my ardent plea:
Consider my dubious history;
Assign an '*Eminent*' role for me
In Your Church's hierarchy !

Then Your eyes will see no more
Abuses in the Liturgy
The Latin Mass will I restore
And bring Your church to normalcy

I'll give to Caesar Caesar's due
And let him wage the war for peace
I'll steer Your Bark with a select crew
And drown the prophets in troubled seas.

(iv) God's answer to the ambitious ecclesiastic's prayer

Amen, amen, I say to you
Your ways and mine are poles apart (Is.55:8-9)
Though weak by nature, Jacob knew,
Unlike you, what pleased my heart.

You read My Word through purple glasses,
Blind to what Isaiah cites:-
Justice do to oppressed masses!
Stop your grand liturgical rites ! (Is. 1: 11-17).

Succeed you may in all your schemes
But 'Grace of State' you'll ne'er obtain!
The career castle of your dreams
Which I won't build, you build in vain (Ps. 127:1).

WHO IS HE?

AN EMBODIMENT OF CONCILIAR RENEWAL

His head never bore a bishop's mitre
No crosier seen to be held in hand.
No climbing cleric or ambitious fighter
For crimson buttons and purple band

But tall he stood in Colombo's See
Far above the *Ordinary** kind * "Ordinary" = canonical term for a bishop
The diocese had its best VG
With a heart of gold and a lucid mind

A Gentle Man in a clerical suit
A rare sight, a random factor
He tried to train, to mold, recruit
His own kind, when Seminary Rector

Like Moses who left a viceroy's throne
To serve the needy, free the slaves
He swapped his class and comfort zone
For work in Mutuwal's foul enclaves

Who is he, this man we mourn
Of whom we all have tales to tell?
No seeker of fame, yet widely known:
The Friend and Father *Joe de Mel*.[]



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