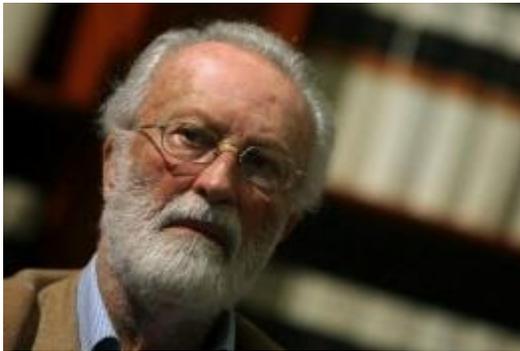


THE END DAYS

Francis on the primacy of conscience

In an article by Sandro Magister entitled “**The Francis Transformation**” in <http://chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/articolo/1350615?eng=y>, Magister believes that Pope Francis “has unveiled the true program of his pontificate in two interviews and a letter to an atheist intellectual” who is Eugenio Scalfari (in the photo), the founder of the leading secular Italian newspaper, “la Repubblica,”



Here is the excerpt of Magister’s article on our topic of interest: the role of conscience in Pope Francis’s thought. The *italic in blue* indicates the quotes from *Magister’s article*. The double *quotes in red* represent the words by *Scalfari* in his article in “la Repubblica” quoted by Magister.

One passage of the article of August 7 in which Scalfari posed questions to him was already indicative of the positive idea that the founder of “la Repubblica” had formed of the current pope:

“His mission contains two scandalous innovations: the poor Church of Francis, the horizontal Church of Martini. And a third: a God who does not judge, but forgives. There is no damnation, there is no hell.”

Having received and published the letter of reply from Pope Francis, in commenting on it Scalfari added this other satisfied consideration:

“An openness to modern and secular culture of this breadth, such a profound vision between conscience and its autonomy, has never before been heard from the chair of St. Peter.”

In affirming this, Scalfari was referring in particular to what Pope Francis had written to him about the primacy of conscience:

"The question lies in obeying one's conscience. Sin, even for one who does not have the faith, is present when one goes against conscience. Listening to and obeying it means, in fact, deciding in the face of that which is perceived as good or evil. And on this decision hinges the goodness or wickedness of our actions."

Francis had not added anything else. And some observant readers wondered how such a subjective definition of conscience, in which the individual appears as the sole criterion of the decision, could be reconciled with the idea of conscience as the journey of man toward the truth, an idea developed by centuries of theological reflection, from Augustine to Newman, and forcefully reiterated by Benedict XVI.

But in the subsequent conversation with Scalfari, Pope Francis was even more drastic in reducing conscience to a subjective act:

"Each one of us has his own vision of good and evil and must choose to follow the good and to fight the evil as he understands them. This would be enough to change the world."

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Enlightenment-style atheist Scalfari should have written that he "perfectly shares" these words of Bergoglio (Pope Francis, note by me) on conscience.

Reading the above, it is clear that, for Francis, each of us can decide what is good or evil based on our conscience. In other words, each one of us is his/her own god who can determine what is good or evil. Conscience of a pervert may decide that homosexuality is good. Conscience of a murderer may decide that abortion is good. That is why in responding to question on homosexual priests, Francis replied that who is he that can judge. Nobody can judge others as everyone is his/her own god. Even Francis himself thinks that God is so merciful that he does not judge, only forgives; hence there is no damnation, no hell (see above).

Let's us go deeper in analyzing the process of judgment in our conscience.

Conscience is the judgment of the mind about the truth of moral matters. There are three stages of a conscience's judgment. The first stage is an act of the mind to look, to see, and to know. The mind looks at what the senses show for us to see what it is, say a terrorist act that kills many innocent people. It looks and simply knows. This is the first insight. It is simple knowledge. That's how God "writes" upon our minds the truth of His Law. Hebrews 8:10. ***"For this is the testament which I will make to the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord: I will give my laws into their mind: and in their heart will I write them. And I will be their God: and they shall be my people."***

Hebrews 10:16. ***"And this is the testament which I will make unto them after those days, saith the Lord. I will give my laws in their hearts and on their minds will I write them."***

What God writes on our mind is a "voice" within us that cannot be lied to: God made our minds to function the way they do so that we would know the truth immediately without external assistance (education, tradition, customs, etc.) In our example, the voice would say that it is an act involving killing innocent people contrary to natural law.

The second stage of the conscience process of judgment is our evaluation of the object, in our example the terrorist act, through analysis, justification, ideas, and opinions. Through formal education (teaching, books, example from others, etc.), we have in our minds preformed moral principles that are pre-accepted by us as true. Our minds use the preformed moral principle to evaluate the act and judge this evaluation. If we have been taught that killing an infidel is a good act, then we would evaluate the terrorist act as not evil, but in fact good.

The third stage involves our judgment about our evaluation of the act. Since in our example we evaluate that a terrorist act is good according to our preformed moral principle, our judgment then is: we are right about our evaluation that it is not an evil act. However, this judgment will go against the “voice”. Thus our conscience will bother us until we acknowledge the truth that it is an evil act. If we keep insisting that a terrorist act is good, then we have what St Paul calls an evil conscience. Hebrews 10:22. ***“Let us draw near with a true heart, in fullness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with clean water.”***

In order to obtain an objectively accurate conscience (i.e. a conscience in conformity with objective truth – what we call God’s Law or Natural Law) we have to learn correct moral principle from the Catholic Church. Otherwise, due to incorrect formation of conscience, a person may have an incorrect or erroneous conscience. For example, a person might think that he is in the right religion to please God, when in fact he is not.

Besides education or desire to know the objective truth, our own behavior influences our conscience. You have to be good in order to know the truth. Our Lord said in John 8:31: ***“Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed him: If you continue in my word, you shall be my disciples indeed. 8:32. “And you shall know the truth: and the truth shall make you free.”*** To continue in Jesus’s words is to keep His words, to obey His commandments. If one keeps Christ’s commandments, one would know the truth and the truth would make us free from slavery to sins. Thus our conscience would be clear.

Romans 1:28. ***“And as they liked not to have God in their knowledge, God delivered them up to a reprobate sense, to do those things which are not convenient.”***

The sin of the sinner creates darkness in his understanding of the truth, giving him a twisted moral view of his actions that does not properly reveal the depravity of his actions. The sin placates the prick of conscience, making the conscience hard or callous. His repeated sinning will not bother him anymore. Thus a hardened (reprobate) sinner loses the ability to know whether an action is (1) a sin, and (2) how serious that sin is. In a recent message to Maria Divine Mercy, Our Lord said that darkness of sin would prevent the sinner from seeing the truth.

In light of the above analysis, Francis’s words: ***“Each one of us has his own vision of good and evil and must choose to follow the good and to fight the evil as he understands them”*** appear to allow the incorrect conscience or evil conscience based on one’s vision of good and evil to override any moral objections. What if a person understands an act wrongly and consider it good although by God’s Law it is evil? It means a person can call good evil and evil, good. Coupled with his idea that God does not judge, man becomes god and man’s conscience becomes absolute primacy that is not subject to anyone’s judgment. But this is an error. Conscience will be subject to God’s judgment as shown by St Paul below.

1 Corinthian 4: 4. ***“For I am not conscious to myself of anything. Yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.”*** St. Paul says that he has clear conscience but doesn't mean that he is state of grace because God is the ultimate Judge.

Thus God is the Judge who judges us based on God's Law. Christ is the supreme Law of Justice for those who believe. Romans 10:4. ***“For the end of the law is Christ: unto justice to everyone that believeth.”*** By accepting the primacy of conscience, Francis seeks to establish his own system of justice.

However, regardless of what Francis thinks or believes about conscience, those who commit evil without repentance will be damned and banished to Hell. Here is the **Catholic Church's de fide dogma on Hell:**

“The souls of those who die in the condition of grievous sin enter Hell.” (Dr. Ludwig Ott, Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma, Tan Books, 1960, page 479).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states:

1033. ***“We cannot be united with God unless we freely choose to love him. But we cannot love God if we sin gravely against him, against our neighbor or against ourselves: “He who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.” Our Lord warns us that we shall be separated from him if we fail to meet the serious needs of the poor and the little ones who are his brethren. To die in mortal sin without repenting and accepting merciful love means remaining separated from him for ever by our own free choice. This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed is called ‘hell’”.***

We should make a note here that Hell is not simply a state of life or of the mind but a real place in the center of the earth as confirmed by the Holy Scripture below. When Dathan and Abiron rebelled and blasphemed against God, they and their families were swallowed by the earth and went down alive into **Hell**:

Numbers 16:28. ***“And Moses said: By this you shall know that the Lord hath sent me to do all things that you see, and that I have not forged them of my own head:***

16:29. ***If these men die the common death of men, and if they be visited with a plague, wherewith others also are wont to be visited, the Lord did not send me.***

16:30. ***But if the Lord do a new thing, and the earth opening her mouth swallow them down, and all things that belong to them, and they go down alive into hell, you shall know that they have blasphemed the Lord.***

16:31. ***And immediately as he had made an end of speaking, the earth broke asunder under their feet:***

16:32. ***And opening her mouth, devoured them with their tents and all their substance.***

16:33. ***And they went down alive into hell, the ground closing upon them, and they perished from among the people.”***