

John Salza v. *Novus Ordo* Apologist on Vatican II's Religious Liberty

Following is from an actual email debate I had with a non-traditional Catholic apologist on Vatican II's teaching on religious liberty set forth in its document *Dignitatis Humane* (DH). Let's call my opponent "NO" for *Novus Ordo* as he wished to remain anonymous; I will be referred to as "JS." Like many others, this apologist could not answer the substantive objections against the teaching of DH, and failed to make the necessary distinction between the positive (and negative) right to religious liberty and immunity from coercion. Instead, he appealed to the "infallibility" of the document as his *a priori* defense of religious liberty and Vatican II as a whole.

NO: John, in your writings on religious liberty, you are misconstruing the word "right," and you do so consistently.

JS: It is necessary to make that argument to defend *Dignitatis Humane* (DH) against assertions of discontinuity, but the problem is this: I am using the word "right" the same way Popes Leo XIII, Pius XI, Pius XII and the entire pre-conciliar Magisterium has used it; I am using "right" in its every day common meaning (a just claim versus a freedom) and the way it is used in manuals of theology; and you provide no evidence from pre-Vatican II teaching that "right" is used in any other manner. So, at a minimum, we are faced with a problem of discontinuity between DH's use of "right" and the pre-conciliar use of "right." Rather than admit that DH uses "right" in a novel way, or even argue that DH is developing doctrine concerning rights, you instead fall back on the closing statements of Paul VI and declare DH to be infallible. You do not even use pre-conciliar teaching to defend DH's use of "rights." So we are not going to be able to move this debate forward.

The key problems that I see in your defense of DH are as follows:

1. You don't acknowledge the critical difference between rights and mere freedoms, which is a fundamental difference in moral theology. I can't believe we are even debating it.
2. You don't acknowledge that the Magisterium has never taught before Vatican II that man has the "right" to public worship and the "right" not to be hindered in public teaching and witness to his false religion (if you could prove otherwise with citations to authority, you would).
3. You confuse the right to immunity from coercion with the right to public worship and the right not to be hindered from public teaching and witness to one's faith.
4. You claim DH is infallible doctrine, even though DH did not dogmatize or definitively set forth religious liberty as revealed truth (there is no dogmatic definition of religious liberty). Rather, you appeal to the closing statements of

Pope Paul VI, even though Vatican I requires a teaching to be proposed as revealed truth and part of Tradition to be infallible.

5. You don't seem to acknowledge that the worship of false religions is an evil that must be suppressed, not a good that should be elevated to a "right."

DH says the civil right recognizes the natural right based on his dignity and nature (the civil right exists *because* the natural right exists), so your attempted division of the civil from the natural is not what the council teaches.

NO: The "natural right" is simply man's free will to do good or evil, and he has the God-given "dignity" to choose for himself between those two. That is what DH is teaching.

JS: First, the Church has always defined "natural right" as the objective moral faculty of choosing good, in contradistinction to man's subjective, psychological freedom to choose good or evil.

NO: Where? If you claim it is "defined," they you'll need to show us a dogmatic statement in which the Church's magisterium defined it as such. This would exclude quotes from Thomas, since he is not the magisterium.

JS: Good, so if the Magisterium teaches that a "right" is a moral faculty, then you admit DH is at odds with that Magisterium. Pope Leo XIII says, "For right is a moral power - as we have before said and must again and again repeat - it is absurd to suppose that nature has accorded differently to truth and falsehood, to justice and injustice" (Libertas, No. 23, 1888). That is why Pope Leo declared that there are "no rights to anything save but what is true" (ibid., no. 33). Pope Pius XI also says, "man as a person possesses rights he holds from God" (Mit Brennender Sorge, No. 30, 1937). Because "rights" concern only the God-given faculty to choose good, Pope Pius XII, like his predecessors, declared that "what does not correspond to truth or to the norm of morality objective has no right to exist (JS: a positive right) or to be spread (JS: a negative right) or to be activated" (Ci riesce, 1953). I can provide more, but this should suffice: Man does not have a right to worship the way he sees fit, or the right not to be prevented from so worshiping; he has only the freedom to do so. Are you willing to at least admit that DH's use of "right" and not mere "freedom" is problematic in light of the pre-conciliar teaching? I hope you would at least make that concession.

NO: Depends on how one looks at it. If right is a moral power, then according to DH, man has the moral power of having the freedom to choose his religion and not to be coerced into another religion. That is why, for example, DH says: "The demand is likewise made that constitutional limits should be set to the powers of government, in order that there may be no encroachment on the rightful freedom of the person and of associations."

JS: You conspicuously do not address the teachings of Popes Leo XIII, Pius XI and Pius XII which teach that "rights" must correspond to only to truth, and not error, even though DH says man has a "right" to public worship whether his religion is true or false.

Man does not have the “moral power” or faculty to choose a false religion. He only has the free will to do so. All the pre-conciliar popes (not to mention manuals on moral theology) make this critical distinction between rights and freedoms. In fact, to say that man has the moral faculty to choose evil is heretical. I hope you are not saying that. Also, your quote from DH is not relevant to the issue I am raising, that is, the difference between rights and freedoms. This leads to some simple questions:

Where does the pre-conciliar Magisterium teach that man has a "right" to "public worship" and the "right not to be hindered in his public teaching and witness to his faith"? Can you provide me with any support for this teaching?

How can you criticize Pope John Paul II's Assisi gatherings if the pagans have the "right" to worship their gods? If the pagans have the "right" (civil, natural, moral, or otherwise) to worship their gods, you have no "right" to criticize them.

NO: Further, in light of what Leo and Pius state, DH says: “Over and above all this, the council intends to develop the doctrine of recent popes on the inviolable rights of the human person and the constitutional order of society.” So, as much as the popes of the past have said no one has a right to do evil, they have also spoken of certain rights that the human person possesses. DH explicates those rights.

JS: Yes, the pre-conciliar popes have said man does not have a right to do evil, and that is precisely the problem, because DH says man has a "right" to public worship, and a "right" not to be prevented from worshiping as he sees fit, *without regard to the religion itself*. You have thus just highlighted the key issue, thereby establishing the discontinuity between pre-conciliar teaching and DH. Does man have a “right” to worship Buddha (civil, moral, natural, or otherwise)? No. He only has the freedom to do so. In fact, the Buddhist’s false worship must be suppressed unless suppression would harm the greater good. Evil is only tolerated, but never given the status of a right. Never.

NO: I also think a clarification is in order. DH says that the only “right” it is proposing is to “religious freedom,” not the right to choose evil: “2. This Vatican Council declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom. This freedom means that all men are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power, in such wise that no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs, whether privately or publicly, whether alone or in association with others, within due limits.”

JS: You are addressing only one aspect of the teaching on religious freedom, which is the immunity from coercion component (to which I have no objection because it restates the Tradition of the Church), but not the other parts, namely, the right to public worship and the right not to be prevented from worshiping as one sees fit (which comes later in chapter 1, part 4). I have repeatedly pointed out that this is the focus of my objection, but you are not addressing it.

NO: When this right to religious freedom or freedom from coercion is put in the context of a constitutionalized society, then it is further specified as a “civil right”: “This right of

the human person to religious freedom is to be recognized in the constitutional law whereby society is governed and thus it is to become a civil right.”

JS: As I said, there is no objection to this part of the teaching. There is a natural right to immunity from coercion, and the State must recognize that natural right as a civil right. But man has no right to worship outside the Church.

NO: The main purpose of all this talk of religious freedom is to protect the Catholic from being coerced by the government into a religion other than Catholicism, for now it is declared by the Church that a constitutionalized society (be it Capitalism, communism, Marxism, Facism, Socialism, etc.) does not have the right to coerce its citizenry into a preferred religion. Thus the Catholic is free, civilly, to worship God as a Catholic, and cannot be coerced into any of the above political, ideological or religions views. By the same token, of course, it means that non-Catholics have the religious freedom in civil society to not be Catholic. It doesn't mean they made the right moral choice, but only that they have the freedom to make the choice.

JS: I agree. That is not the issue. Non-Catholics may have the freedom to choose not to be Catholic, but DH also says that they have the right to their public worship and the right not to be hindered in their teaching and practice. Tell me where the Church has ever said that non-Catholics have a right to their false worship? You never do. This is the sole issue of the debate. You must admit that this is a "new" teaching, and then attempt to reconcile it with what the Church has always taught. But you won't. Rather, you will claim infallibility for DH. This is not an honest approach to vetting the contentious points of DH, and only highlights the inability to find pre-conciliar support for DH's teaching on rights.

NO: This is why DH says in para 13: “At the same time, the Christian faithful, in common with all other men, possess the civil right not to be hindered in leading their lives in accordance with their consciences. Therefore, a harmony exists between the freedom of the Church and the religious freedom which is to be recognized as the right of all men and communities and sanctioned by constitutional law.”

JS: The Church has never taught such a thing, and that is why it cannot be reconciled with Tradition (it simply is not in the Tradition; it is something "new" that the council “brought forth”). Man does not have a right not to be hindered in propagating religious errors, because those errors threaten the souls of Catholics and lead them to damnation. In fact, the State must *prevent* man from propagating those errors, unless intervention would threaten the common good. That is the traditional teaching of the Catholic Church, and not the teaching of DH.

NO: This is why later in 6 DH says of the government: “The protection and promotion of the inviolable rights of man ranks among the essential duties of government. Therefore government is to assume the safeguard of the religious freedom of all its citizens, in an effective manner, by just laws and by other appropriate means.”

Theologically, DH says that the whole idea of the right to religious freedom is based on man's free will: “10. It is one of the major tenets of Catholic doctrine that man's

response to God in faith must be free: no one therefore is to be forced to embrace the Christian faith against his own will. This doctrine is contained in the word of God and it was constantly proclaimed by the Fathers of the Church. The act of faith is of its very nature a free act.”

JS: Again, you are citing DH's teaching on immunity from coercion. That is not the subject of the debate. The subject of the debate is whether man has a right to choose a false religion, and a right not to be prevented from doing so. You, like many others, confuse the positive/negative right to religious liberty question with the immunity from coercion question. These are two different things. Also, man's free will does not give man the right to worship outside the Church. If it did, man wouldn't be culpable for rejecting the Faith. This is more confusion on your part between rights and freedoms.

Second, taking it a step further, DH says that the right it is referring to is based *not* on the subjective disposition of man (ch 1, no. 2), but on his objective dignity and nature. So, unlike what you claim, DH is referring to an objective natural right to religious freedom, not the mere free will to choose a religion, and this is what has caused all the confusion. No where has the Church ever taught that man has a "right" to religious liberty. If you disagree, then cite the authority.

NO: In para. 10 DH has footnotes that show the sources. It cites many Fathers and several popes to substantiate the concept of the right to religious freedom. Among them are Ambrose, Augustine, Gregory the Great, Clement III, Innocent III. One instance I have found in Innocent III regards the Jews:

“The Christian must not exterminate or oppress them...We must not molest them in the exercise of the privileges accorded them...As they seek our help, we accept and take them under our protection; and following our predecessors Callixtus, Eugenius, Alexander, Clement and Celestine, we forbid the forcing of baptism on a Jew, also harming them in any way or taking their goods, etc., or violating their cemeteries and digging up corpses to find money. The punishment for disobedience to these dispositions is excommunication.” (The Apostolic Constitution, *Licet Perfidia Judaeorum*, of Pope Innocent III in 1199 AD).

JS: Again, this deals with the Church's traditional teaching on immunity from coercion. That is not the debate. The issue is whether man has the right to worship outside the Church and the right not to be hindered from doing so. Where has the Church ever taught such a thing? You can search the patristics high and low and you won't find it anywhere. Nowhere. It is something "new" that the Vatican II council said it was bringing forth, which you claim is infallible, even though you cannot cite it in any pre-conciliar teaching. The right to immunity from coercion (of being forced to accept the Catholic faith) is not the same as the right to embrace a false religion. Do you believe man has a right to embrace a false religion? If yes, then man is not culpable for that error. If no, then man does not have a right to religious liberty.

NO: Paras. 11 & 12 go on to give the Scriptural backing. “For He bore witness to the truth, but He refused to impose the truth by force on those who spoke against it. Not by

force of blows does His rule assert its claims. It is established by witnessing to the truth and by hearing the truth, and it extends its dominion by the love whereby Christ, lifted up on the cross, draws all men to Himself. Taught by the word and example of Christ, the Apostles followed the same way. From the very origins of the Church the disciples of Christ strove to convert men to faith in Christ as the Lord; not, however, by the use of coercion or of devices unworthy of the Gospel, but by the power, above all, of the word of God.”

JS: Again, same reply as above. You are not understanding the key objection to DH. There is nothing in Scripture or Tradition which says man has a right, based on his dignity and nature, to choose a false religion or a right not to be hindered from propagating his errors. I have already provided a number of quotes from the popes which declare that man has no rights to adhere to or spread error, and DH puts itself at odds with these Popes by saying man has such "rights." Again, you will not be able to point to a single teaching from the pre-conciliar Magisterium which teaches that man has a "right" to "public worship" or a "right not to be hindered" from engaging from such worship. If you could, you would be citing it over and over again. This means DH has “developed” a new teaching, and it can be reconciled with the Tradition only by demonstrating that the Popes have taught the same doctrine before Vatican II (which they have not). But you don’t even attempt to do that; you simply claim infallibility for DH and divert the debate to the immunity of coercion question which is not the issue.

NO: Man’s free will is not a “subjective disposition,” and I didn’t use that term. Man’s free will is, indeed, a part of his dignity and nature, for he was made in the image of God with a free will.

JS: Yes, but there is a distinction between a "right" and a "freedom," and you fail to make this critical distinction throughout your presentation. Man has the freedom to worship outside the Catholic Church, but not the right to worship outside the Catholic Church. This is the sole issue of the debate. DH says that man has a "right" to religious liberty, and not a mere "freedom" to choose a false religion. Where has the pre-conciliar Magisterium ever taught that man has a right to religious liberty?

NO: You keep crossing the line between moral right and civil right, as well as putting different meanings on what DH is trying to say. DH makes it clear that man does not have a moral right to choose a false religion, but a civil right or religious freedom to not to be coerced into a religion not of his choice.

JS: First of all, I have not even addressed the issue of civil versus moral rights, but will be happy to do so, and to show DH’s discontinuity with that distinction. Second, you fail to acknowledge that DH first recognizes the natural right based on man's dignity and nature, and then only after that recognition declares that the civil right must recognize the natural right. That is why DH says it is to "become a civil right." If you disagree, then you get yourself into even more trouble, since you would have to argue that DH is advocating a civil right that has no underlying natural right, in other words, DH would be sanctioning an immoral civil right. That is absurd. DH is saying that the State is

recognizing what is God-given. That is what DH says. You want to distinguish between a moral and a civil right (to save DH from advocating a God-given right to false worship), but won't admit that DH says the civil recognizes the underlying human right which is innate in man, based on his dignity and nature. Tell me, where has the Church ever taught that religious liberty is based on a man's dignity? I will tell you: Nowhere. Liberty is based on truth, not dignity, so says the pre-conciliar Magisterium and Jesus Christ Himself: "the truth will set you free" (not "dignity" will set you free). DH is proposing a new teaching, and it is not found in the pre-conciliar Magisterium.

NO: In worship of God, he has the right not to be coerced into accepting a religion not of his choice. The Church dealt with this issue centuries ago when it stated that it would not practice forced conversions of Jews and Muslims. The Church tolerated their choices due to their free will, and DH accepts them "within due limits," but the Church, including DH, has always said that choosing the wrong religion is not morally allowable, and thus they are culpable for their choice.

JS: A right to immunity from coercion is not the same thing as a right to worship and not to be hindered from worshipping the way one desires (a distinction you habitually fail to make). The Church has always affirmed that man cannot be coerced into worshipping against his conscience. DH affirms this traditional teaching. The problem is that DH goes beyond the traditional teaching by saying that man also has a positive right to "public worship" and the negative right "not to be hindered in their public teaching and witness to their faith." You are not addressing the real issue. You do not understand what you are debating.

NO: DH says it makes no difference whether it's public or private, the same principle holds. Moreover, it's obvious that if one cannot be coerced to worship in one particular religion, the corollary truth is that he has the freedom to worship in a religion of his choice. Whether his choice is morally correct is another story all together, and this is where DH draws the line, since the only true moral choice is the Catholic Church.

JS: You are not engaging the problematic texts of DH that I have continually cited. You are substituting the word "freedom" where DH uses "rights." Why? Perhaps deep down you know you cannot say man has a right to worship as he sees fit, only the freedom to do so. But DH says man has a "right" to public worship and a "right" not to be hindered from public teaching and witness to his faith, Catholic or not, based on his God-given dignity and nature. No where has the Church ever taught such a thing. Also, a right to immunity from coercion does not give man a corollary right to choose a false religion. They are two different things. Man has a right not to be coerced into believing the Catholic faith, but that does not give him a right to worship outside the Church. If he had the right to worship outside the Church, he would not be culpable for rejecting the Faith. It is only an attempt to save DH from teaching error.

NO: I would think that the "attempt to save DH from teaching error" would be an expected and welcomed endeavor, since, after all, it is the 21st ecumenical council of the Catholic Church, and either the Holy Spirit was there protecting the Church from

error or he wasn't, and if he wasn't, then neither DH nor any other of the 15 documents is worth our time and attention, since I cannot base my Catholic faith on the possibility of error.

JS: The Holy Ghost protects the Church from error only when the teaching is either from the solemn Magisterium or the ordinary and universal Magisterium, so says the First Vatican Council. He doesn't protect the Church from every teaching that comes from the Magisterium. Since both John XXIII and Paul VI said Vatican II was an exercise of the ordinary authentic (but not solemn or universal) Magisterium, such protection is not guaranteed.

NO: I don't know where either John 23 or Paul 6 said Vatican II was merely "an exercise of the ordinary authentic Magisterium" as opposed to being the "ordinary universal Magisterium." Do you have a citation on that?

JS: Yes I do.

Paul VI, Jan. 12, 1966, General Audience – "the Council intended to give to its teachings, knowing that it avoided issuing solemn dogmatic definitions backed by the Church's infallible teaching authority. The council was pastoral in character and this ordinary and truly authentic Magisterium must be accepted with docility and sincerity by all faithful."

The Pope specifically avoided calling Vatican II "universal." Thus, because the council was an exercise of the authentic (but not universal) Magisterium, the Pope did not require an assent of faith, only a submission of intellect and will. That is because the authentic Magisterium is not necessarily protected from error.

NO: I think you are reading this wrong. Paul 6 is not saying that Vatican II could have taught error. He only said that it did not speak with solemn dogmatic definitions. Solemn dogmatic definitions are always backed by the Church's infallible teaching authority, but that doesn't mean that another venue – a venue that does not use solemn dogmatic definitions – is necessarily fallible.

JS: Of course a Pope is not going to come out and say the council could have taught error. But the fact that he did not bind us to the council by an assent of faith, that he called the council authentic but not universal, that the council did not dogmatize religious liberty, and that the pre-conciliar Magisterium has never taught what DH did concerning "rights" to religious liberty means the council is not necessarily protected from error. To the contrary, the pre-conciliar Magisterium has *condemned* religious liberty which means that DH *teaches error*. We have an obligation to hold that position as good Catholics, in light of the many pre-conciliar teachings which condemn the principles of DH.

NO: This ties into another misunderstanding, that is, when you make the distinction between "ordinary and truly authentic" as opposed to "ordinary and universal." You are

making them different, but they are one in the same. Paul 6 is merely saying that Vatican II was an authentic display of the ordinary and universal magisterium, and therefore its teachings are to be accepted as without error. How could Vatican II not be universal? It gathered all the bishops of the world who voted on its teachings, and these bishops went to their respective diocese and propagated there very teachings, just like every other ecumenical council.

JS: Because “universal” refers not just to the gathering of the world’s bishops in space, but also that their teaching is found throughout time (to reiterate, it’s not just about “space” but also about “time”). Further note that Vatican I says that a teaching is part of the universal Magisterium only if it can be found in Tradition and proposed as revealed truth. You would have to show me where the Church has taught before Vatican II that man has a right to public worship and a right not to be hindered from so worshipping where the worship is not Catholic. But this you cannot do (again, if you could, you would have already cited the authority). A single act of the non-solemn Magisterium does not guarantee that a teaching is in accord with Tradition. The proof is in the pudding: No where has the pre-conciliar Magisterium taught that man has a right to religious liberty. Rather, it has condemned that principle.

NO: Furthermore, Paul 6 did not say, as you claim, that Vatican II “does not require an assent of faith, only a submission of intellect and will.” He said Vatican II must be accepted with docility and sincerity by all the faithful.

JS: Yes, and this is different than an assent of faith. As canon 752 and JP II's *Ad Tuendam Fidem* teach us, if the teaching is not proposed as revealed truth or definitive, then only a religious submission of intellect and will is required (and which, frankly, is a novel category created by the conciliar church to get Catholics to submit to its novelties). DH's teaching on man's "rights" to worship how he sees fit in public and the "right" not to be hindered in such worship was not (nor could it have been) proposed as revealed truth or definitive. If it were, then you should have never criticized JP II's prayer meetings at Assisi, since those pagans had the same "right" to pray to their deities as Catholics had to the Blessed Trinity. Nor should you have ever criticized any of John Paul II's encyclicals, since his Magisterium was just as authoritative as Vatican II.

NO: As for the so-called “pastoral character” of Vatican II, this is also misunderstood. The original words came from John 23 in his opening speech on Oct. 11, 1962:

“The substance of the ancient deposit of faith is one thing, and the way in which it is presented is another. And it is the latter that must be taken into great consideration with patience if necessary, everything being measured in the forms and proportions of a magisterium which is predominately pastoral in character.”

Hence, John 23 didn't say Vatican II was a “pastoral council” and thus imply that it wasn't infallible. He merely said that the magisterium was pastoral in character, and it certainly is, since the Church doesn't preach merely raw theological data, but seeks to minister that data in a pastoral fashion so that the sheep can understand and apply it.

But none of this states or implies that the magisterium is fallible when it acts in a pastoral character.

JS: So the Magisterium is infallible on everything it sets forth? What Catholic apologist or theologian holds this view? Be clear about this. That position is simply not true. This is why Vatican I established very precise and narrow parameters for infallibility. These parameters reveal the “error of excess” of those who think everything that comes from the Magisterium is infallible. Some have even demonstrated errors (however rare) in the pre-Vatican II Magisterium, for example, the council of Florence’s teaching concerning the form and matter for the sacrament of Holy Orders, which Pope Pius XII later corrected (I don’t hold this view, but many do).

NO: You’ll have to elaborate on that. I know of no such “correction” or of any “error” that Pius XII said that the Council of Florence taught on Holy Orders.

JS: The council of Florence's *Decretum pro Armenis* taught that the matter of Holy Orders was the presentation of the chalice and the host and the form was "Receive the power to offer sacrifice." However, Pope Pius XII stated in his constitution *Sacramentum Ordinis* by declaring that the form was the prayer of the Preface of Ordination and the matter was the imposition of hands. Again, I personally don’t believe this example proves pre-conciliar error, but it has been debated as an example of such.

Also, contrary to your assertion, Paul VI *did* call Vatican II a pastoral council (Sept 29, 1963) and so did Cardinal Ratzinger. If you want to argue that there is a difference between a pastoral council and a council that is pastoral in character (is there a difference between an intelligent person and one who is intelligent in character? No!) as if to mean that Vatican II simply reiterated pre-conciliar teaching in a pastoral manner, then the burden is on you to show where the pre-conciliar Magisterium ever taught (much less dogmatized) that man has a right to public worship and a right not to be hindered from worshipping as he sees fit. But you cannot. Since that burden cannot be met means that such teaching is not part of the Tradition and hence not error-free.

You yourself have criticized several of Pope John Paul II's encyclicals (on common prayer, Assisi), and you rightly did this because those teachings are not part of the ordinary and universal Magisterium, nor are they solemn judgments. When we are not required to give an assent of faith, but only a submission of the intellect, we can use our intellect (as you have done in the past with JP II's encyclicals) to discern whether the teaching is part of the Tradition or not. If it’s part of Tradition, we accept it. If it’s not, we reject it.

NO: Canon Law says that when the pope speaks singly, we are not to assume that what he says is infallible unless he states its infallible character clearly. In order to be infallible, it would have to be an exercise of the extraordinary magisterium, which only the pope can administer. Not so with an ordinary and universal ecumenical council confirmed by the reigning pope who uses the solemn language that Paul 6 did when he closed all 16 documents of Vatican II.

JS: Canon law says no such thing about the ordinary and universal Magisterium. The First Vatican Council says the teaching must be from the ordinary and universal Magisterium, based on St Vincent's teaching in his *Commonitorium* that a teaching must be taught "by all, always, and everywhere." That means the Vatican Council recognized the Magisterium does not always teach in its ordinary and universal manner. Universal means both in time and space (an ecumenical council may teach universally in space, but not necessarily in time when its teaching cannot be found in prior Magisterial teaching). But you seem to think that the Magisterium *always* exercises this manner when it is not solemn, and hence always binds and is always infallible. This is simply not true and is what is called the "error of excess." You are holding Vatican II to a standard that it never imposed upon us, and I am not aware of anyone in our business who holds such a position.

Here are some other quotes revealing that Vatican II was not an exercise of the ordinary and universal Magisterium:

- *John XXIII, Opening Address, Oct. 11, 1962* – the Council is “predominantly pastoral in character.”
- *Paul VI, Sept. 29, 1963, Discourse at the Opening of the Second Session* – “the Council...is a pastoral one”
- *Paul VI, Sept. 9, 1963 Letter to Cardinal Tisserant* – refers to “the pastoral character of this Council.”
- *Paul VI, December 8, 1965, Closing Speech of the Council* – teaching “is to be religiously observed by all the faithful” (not “assent of faith”)
- *Paul VI, Aug. 6, 1975, General Audience* - “Differing from other Councils, this one was not directly dogmatic, but disciplinary and pastoral.”
- *Cardinal Ratzinger, July 1988, Address to the Chilean Episcopal Conference* – “The truth is that this particular Council defined no dogma at all, and deliberately chose to remain on a modest level, as a merely pastoral council.”

NO: I’ve already commented on the first three, and we’ve already talked about the fourth, that is, even if it were the case that we posited a distinction between “religiously observed” and “assent of faith,” how could the church tell us to practice something with religious fervor that it also says we don’t have to believe is true? You already agreed to recognizing that absurdity.

JS: If the teaching doesn't meet the parameters of Vatican I, then it is not immune from error, according to an infallible teaching of the Church (Vatican I), no matter what pastoral direction or instruction a Pope may give us. You are imposing upon these Popes a level of authority that they did not claim (infallibility), which is also what the sedevacantists do. Since Vatican II's teachings on religious liberty, ecumenism, dialogue and collegiality cannot be found in the pre-conciliar Magisterium, the

sedevacantists conclude we don't have a real Pope. But they err because they misunderstand the level of authority that is involved, as you do (same premise, but with different conclusions).

NO: Moreover, Paul 6 did not oppose his use of “religiously observed” to “assent of faith,” so as to put the former on a lesser authoritative level. You opposed the former to the latter, not Paul 6. Paul 6 used “religiously observed” without a distinction to “assent of faith,” and he did so in a context that shows us that he put it on the highest level of required obedience.

JS: But your problem is that the Church (in canon law and JP II's ATF) teaches an assent of faith is required for teachings proposed as revealed truth or taught definitively. Yet, DH's teaching that man has a right to religious liberty was not so proposed by the council (you have even admitted that the teaching was communicated in a pastoral manner, not in a dogmatic or definitive statement). So the teaching itself does not necessarily require the assent of faith, according to canon law and Pope John Paul II.

NO: Here is the paragraph. Note the sentences I have underlined:

“We decide moreover that all that has been established synodally is to be religiously observed by all the faithful, for the glory of God and the dignity of the Church.... We have approved and established these things, decreeing that the present letters are and remain stable and valid, and are to have legal effectiveness, so that they be disseminated and obtain full and complete effect, and so that they may be fully convalidated by those whom they concern or may concern now and in the future; and so that, as it be judged and described, all efforts contrary to these things by whoever or whatever authority, knowingly or in ignorance, be invalid and worthless from now on. Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, under the [seal of the] ring of the fisherman, December 8... the year 1965, the third year of our Pontificate.”

Now, when you add the above closing statement to how Paul 6 closed each document of Vatican II with these words:

“Each and every one of the things set forth in this decree has won the consent of the Fathers. We, too, by the Apostolic authority conferred on us by Christ, join with the venerable Fathers in approving, decreeing and establishing these things in the Holy Spirit, and we direct that what has been enacted in synod be published to God's glory I, Paul, Bishop of the Catholic Church.”

What more solemn language do we need to see that the full weight of the pope and the council Fathers was put on Vatican II as they called upon their “Apostolic authority” to “approve, decree and establish,” “in Christ” and “in the Holy Spirit” all the teachings of Vatican II? If this isn't language of infallibility, what is?

Moreover, Paul 6 warned that anyone (including you and me) who would contest the teachings of Vatican II, are to be considered invalid and worthless, from the get-go; end of discussion; don't even bother talking about it. That's very similar to an anathema.

JS: That is precisely why God gave us the narrow parameters of infallibility through the First Vatican Council. If the teachings are not of the solemn or ordinary and universal Magisterium, they are not necessarily immune from error, no matter how a Pope dresses them up. How could DH's teaching that man has a right not to be hindered in teaching or spreading a false religion be immune from error? Rather than relying solely upon Paul VI's closing statements to make the case, we need to look at what the pre-conciliar Magisterium has actually taught about religious liberty, if we are going to follow the directives of the First Vatican Council. Otherwise, we might as well throw out Vatican I and profess that the closing statements of a Pope alone, and which don't even claim infallibility (and about teachings that the same Pope said are not infallible), definitively determine the level of authority of a teaching (and bearing in mind Vatican I taught its parameters dogmatically, and DH's teaching on "rights" is no where to be found in Tradition). Also, anathemas apply to those who oppose articles of faith, as taught either dogmatically or definitively, not to pastoral teachings about undefined terms like religious liberty and ecumenism which were not imposed as matters of salvation.

Note that my objections to DH are not based on the "authority" of DH, but on what DH teaches. Nevertheless, since you asked, these quotes are relevant to the question of whether Vatican II was protected from error. Pastoral teachings requiring religious observance are not immune from error (I can't imagine you would disagree with this statement). Only those teachings solemnly defined or part of the OUM (and hence requiring an assent of faith) have the guarantee of infallibility according to Vatican I. Sure, there is a rebuttable presumption that the teachings of a pastoral ecumenical council are true, but we can and must use our God-given intellects to discern whether they are truly a part of Tradition. If, based upon the objective standards of the solemn or OUM, they are not part of Tradition, we are obliged to reject them.

NO: I've already answered these questions above.

JS: Again, the real issue is what DH teaches. Proponents of DH invariably wish to hide behind some kind of cloak of infallibility without addressing what the text actually says. We need to engage the text or we won't get very far. You are not engaging the text of DH.

NO: The text of DH needs to be read in context. DH is not saying that man has a right to error. It is saying that, when the issue is religion, man has the right to freedom, and DH backs this up with numerous citations from the Fathers and Popes of Tradition, as well as Scripture.

JS: Quote from the document. Chapter 1, no 4 says man has a "right not to be hindered in their public teaching and witness to their faith." It does not say "freedom," it says

"right." If according to you Vatican II is simply restating the Church's Tradition in a pastoral manner, then please show me where the Magisterium has ever taught that man has a "right not to be hindered in their public teaching and witness to their faith." This is the crux of the issue. Can you do that please? If you can, that will end this debate quickly.

NO: Vatican I (Denz 1792) spoke of two categories: "those which are proposed by the Church, either in a solemn pronouncement or in her ordinary and universal teaching power, to be believed as divinely revealed"

Vatican II was certainly the Church's "ordinary and universal teaching power" according to how both John 23 and Paul 6 described Vatican II:

JS: Only when it reiterated the Church's solemn or ordinary and universal Magisterium (e.g., the divinity of Christ, the sacrifice of the Mass). Otherwise, as Pope Paul VI said, it was an exercise of the ordinary authentic Magisterium, pastoral in character, and not immune from error according to Vatican I.

NO: Already answered above.

JS: Rebutted above.

NO: At the close of every one of the 16 documents, Paul 6 wrote:

"Each and every one of the things set forth in this Decree has won the consent of the fathers. We, too, by the Apostolic Authority conferred on us by Christ, join with the venerable fathers in approving, decreeing, and establishing these things in the Holy Spirit, and we direct that what has thus been enacted in synod [council] be published to God's glory.... I, Paul, Bishop of the Catholic Church."

At the close of Vatican II, on December 8, 1965, Paul 6 wrote:

"At last all which regards the holy Ecumenical Council has, with the help of God, been accomplished and all the constitutions, decrees, declarations and votes have been approved by the deliberation of the synod and promulgated by us. Therefore, we decided to close for all intents and purposes, with our Apostolic authority, this same Ecumenical Council called by our predecessor, Pope John XXIII, which opened October 11, 1962, and which was continued by us after his death. We decide moreover that all that has been established synodally is to be religiously observed by all the faithful, for the glory of God and the dignity of the Church We have approved and established these things, decree that the present letters are and remain stable and valid, and are to have legal effectiveness, so that they be disseminated and obtain full and complete effect, and so that they may be fully convalidated by those whom they concern or may concern now and in the future; and so that, as it be judged and described, all efforts contrary to these things by whoever or whatever authority, knowingly or in ignorance, be

invalid and worthless from now on. Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, under the ring of the fisherman, December 8... the year 1965, the third year of our Pontificate.”

JS: The foregoing fails to meet Vatican I's requirements for infallibility. If it is not a solemn definition or is not from the OUM, it is not guaranteed to be protected from error, no matter what solemn closings a Pope may decide to put at the end of the document. So says Vatican I. To contend that Vatican II is immune from error is precisely what leads many people into sedevacantism. They presuppose that Vatican II intended to bind the faithful and claimed immunity from error (as you do), but since they cannot reconcile DH with pre-conciliar teaching, they conclude that it was an invalid council confirmed by an invalid pope. They are incorrect, because their presupposition - that Vatican II claims to be error-free - is erroneous.

NO: Another issue entirely.

After the council, Paul 6's General Audience said much the same in Jan. 12, 1966:

“...it [the Council] still provided its teaching with the authority of the supreme ordinary magisterium. This ordinary magisterium, which is so obviously official, has to be accepted with docility, and sincerity by all the faithful, in accordance with the mind of the Council on the nature and aims of the individual documents.”

JS: Again, this continues to affirm what I have been saying, namely, that Vatican II fails to meet Vatican I's requirements for infallibility. Rather, it affirms that the council was not an exercise of the universal Magisterium which does not require an assent of faith. Notice how Paul VI craftily avoids calling the council “universal” and instead uses non-traditional descriptions like “supreme,” “official” and “authentic.” He knew what he was doing. No OUM, no assent of faith required. No assent of faith required, not error-free.

NO: I flatly disagree. As I said above:

What more solemn language do we need to see that the full weight of the pope and the council Fathers was put on Vatican II as they called upon their “Apostolic authority” to “approve, decree and establish,” “in Christ” and “in the Holy Spirit” all the teachings of Vatican II? If this isn't language of infallibility, what is? Moreover, Paul 6 warned that anyone (including you and me) who would contest the teachings of Vatican II, are to be considered invalid and worthless, from the get-go; end of discussion; don't even bother talking about it. That's very similar to an anathema. Moreover, since the Church has never used the words “infallible” or “irreformable” in the very documents it considers infallible and irreformable, we are left with the solemn language above. In that light, I can think of few more solemn words than “apostolic authority,” “approve, decree and establish” or “in Christ” and “in the Holy Spirit” to confirm that Vatican II is without error.

JS: I have already answered your argument by referring to the infallible parameters set forth by the First Vatican Council. Vatican II doesn't meet them. And that's why Paul VI created a new category of “religious submission” and “docility” for the “official” and

“authentic” council of Vatican II that we must “recognize” and “honor.” All these novel and never-before-heard-of terms and conditions only reveal the utterly novel and non-binding character of the Second Vatican Council.

NO: Isn't this why we came to the Catholic Church, John, to get away from all the confusion and doubt of every Tom, Dick and Harry telling us something different about what Christ taught? What else but our own feeble minds do we have to depend on if we reject such solemn language as being subject to fallibility? Should I instead now go to John Salza, Esq. and his like-minded colleagues for the final word on what Christ taught?

NO: No, you should go to Popes Pius VI, Gregory XVI, Bl Pius IX, Leo XIII, St Pius X, Pius XI and Pius XII, because they all taught the same thing about religious liberty, and they all definitively taught that man does not have a "right not to be hindered" from propagating his religious errors, because those errors lead souls to damnation. Or were these Popes ignorant of Christ's teaching? Your position assumes there can be no conflict between Vatican II and the pre-conciliar Magisterium, but you will never be able to find DH's teaching from any of the pre-conciliar popes (if you could, you would demonstrate the same). It's easy to play the infallibility card. It takes courage to admit that there is something wrong with DH.

Perhaps because DH comes from a council, you will not criticize it. I don't know (why is Pope John Paul II's Magisterium game for your criticism but not Vatican II, especially when John Paul's Magisterium was devoted to interpreting Vatican II?!). What I do know is that the teaching of DH regarding man's "rights" cannot be found in the teachings of the pre-conciliar Popes, and, in fact, is contradicted by them. So I have to remain faithful to what these Popes have repeatedly taught, as part of the perennial Tradition, even though I recognize that Vatican II was a valid council, confirmed by a valid Pope, but certainly not immune from error, and especially because DH *prima facie* contradicts 200 years of clear Magisterial teaching on religious liberty.

NO: “The Council is a great act of the magisterium of the Church, and anyone who adheres to the Council is, by that very fact, recognizing and honoring the magisterium of the Church...”

JS: Already answered above.

NO: In *Ecclesiam Suam* (# 30) of Aug. 6, 1964, Paul 6 said:

“It is precisely because the Second Vatican Council has the task of dealing once more with the doctrine de Ecclesia (of the Church) and of defining it, that it has been called the continuation and complement of the First Vatican Council.”

JS: How can a pastoral council "continue and complement" a dogmatic council, especially when that dogmatic council (Vatican I) didn't say a word about religious liberty (or ecumenism, or dialogue, or collegiality, or non-Christian religions)? This was

a self-serving statement that bears no relation to reality. In this statement, Paul VI even says that the council dealt with "doctrine...and of defining it," even though elsewhere he said (correctly) that the council did not define any doctrine!

NO: The first problem, as I stated earlier, is your misconception of what the phrase "pastoral council" means. It does not imply non-infallibility. It only means that the magisterium of the Church seeks to be pastoral in its teaching. Vatican II accomplished this pastoral dimension better than any other council because it put its teachings in common contexts as opposed to merely theological contexts.

JS: You didn't answer the question. How does Vatican II "continue and complement" the First Vatican Council when the First Vatican Council did not teach about religious liberty, ecumenism, dialogue or collegiality?

NO: The second problem is that, now that you've been confronted with a statement from Paul 6 that doesn't agree with your thesis, you denigrate it as "self-serving," and imply that Paul 6 was deluded in saying it. Looks to me that your arguments are becoming self-serving, John.

JS: It's not that Paul VI's statement doesn't agree with my thesis. It is that it doesn't agree with the dogmatic teaching of the First Vatican Council regarding when a teaching is protected from error. You are being duplicitous. When John Paul II said he was implementing Vatican II at Assisi and in his teaching on common prayer, you criticized him (evidently, you know better than John Paul II what Vatican II really meant). But when Paul VI approves a conciliar teaching that was never taught by the Magisterium, in your view it is suddenly immune from criticism (and error). This is a blatant inconsistency in your argumentation.

You can put this issue to bed for me by finding me one teaching - just one - from the pre-conciliar Magisterium which says that man has a "right" to worship in public how he sees fit and a "right" not to be prevented from doing so. That has always been the crux of the debate, and that will end our debate quickly.

NO: Of DH, Vatican II says it has its roots in divine revelation:

"The statements made by this Vatican synod on the right to religious freedom have their basis in the dignity of the person, the demands of which have come to be more fully known to human reason from the experience of centuries. But this teaching on freedom also has its roots in divine revelation, and is for that reason to be held all the more sacred by Christians." #9

JS2: Yes, revelation teaches that man is created in God's image and likeness, and he cannot be forced to act against his conscience. But revelation does not teach that man has a positive right to worship outside Christ's Church and the negative right "not to be hindered in public teaching and witness" to man's false religious beliefs. That is why DH

never cites any authority for its novel teaching on these so-called "rights" to religious liberty. You continue to misunderstand the issue.

NO: It seems that when opportune for you, you invent terms to make distinctions, but don't allow DH to do so to clarify its position. For example, you use the phrase "positive right" and "negative right." Where do these terms originate?

JS: In philosophical truth. When DH says man has a "right" to public worship, that is a positive right to act. When DH says man has a "right" not to be hindered from worshiping, that is a negative right not to be prevented from acting. You have taken both philosophy and moral theology courses. They are correlative concepts. That is no invention. Where does the pre-conciliar Magisterium teach that man has such rights? Where? You have not responded to this question, and I suspect will continue to avoid it.

NO: Yet when DH makes the distinction between a "moral right" and "civil right," you disallow it and insist on one definition and context of "right."

JS: No, it is you who has failed to understand this distinction. As DH teaches, the civil right exists only because the God-given right exists. If that weren't true, then DH would be saying the State should recognize immoral actions in civil law. You don't acknowledge this because it is fatal to your thesis about the alleged disconnect between civil and moral rights.

NO: Vatican II says it again in DH #12:

"Hence the Church is being faithful to the truth of the Gospel and is following the way of Christ and the apostles, when it sees the principle of religious freedom as in accord with human dignity and the revelation of God, and when it promotes it. Throughout the centuries it has guarded and handed on the teaching received from the master and the apostles." #12

JS: Good. So tell me where the Church before Vatican II taught that man has a right to worship "the supreme being in public" and a right "not to be hindered" in worshiping, when that worship is not Catholic. Again, where? Where did the pre-conciliar Magisterium ever teach that man has such rights? It simply doesn't exist.

NO: I already gave examples above. One that stands out is Pope Innocent III decree for the Jews in his Apostolic Constitution. He gave them the right to choose to be Jews and not to be coerced into the Catholic faith. Obviously, this didn't mean that Innocent III was condoning their choice as morally correct. The Church made such decrees because it recognized that it wasn't going to convert the whole world (as nice as that would be) and thus there had to be a provision for the civil right to remain in one's religion of choice and not be coerced into the Catholic faith. The reason Vatican II brought the whole issue up again was that by the 20th century human society was much more pluralistic than in the time of Innocent III or Quanta Cura, and thus had to deal

with the world the way it was. Nothing has changed in Church teaching. It is just applied more acutely than it was previously.

JS: You have missed it yet again. Your quotes deal with immunity from coercion, whereas the problematic parts of DH deal with man's "rights" to worship and not to be hindered from worshipping. I trust that after this round, you will finally understand that distinction. I have also accumulated countless quotes from the pre-conciliar Magisterium (exercising its ordinary and universal power and hence more authoritative than Vatican II) which condemns religious liberty as both a positive and negative right, religious liberty as a civil right, and religious liberty in itself.

NO: I believe you've collected only what you thought condemns DH. For example, I believe it can be easily shown that *Quanta Cura* does not in any way contradict DH, that is, if you look at both in context and resist the temptation to proof text.

JS: I have already provided you with a number of quotes where the Magisterium teaches that man does not have a "right" to religious liberty or a "right" not to be hindered from propagating error. The point is that there is nothing in the pre-conciliar Magisterium which teaches that man has such "rights." If he did, he would not be culpable for rejecting the Catholic Faith. The Church has always distinguished between rights and freedoms. I am well aware of how some wish to contextualize *Quanta Cura* and engage in historical doctrinal relativism, as if Blessed Pius IX's condemnations of religious liberty were situational and issue-specific, even though condemnations concern errors against the Faith and apply no matter what the context (whether the "liberty" is limited or absolute). At a minimum, I hope you recognize that DH's use of the term "right" and not mere "freedom" is problematic in light of what the Church has always taught about the meaning of "rights" and religious liberty.

NO: Not in the least. I've learned to give the Church the benefit of the doubt, especially in an ecumenical council approved by the reigning pope with solemn language.

JS: I understand that to be the safe position, but since the council did not teach dogmatically or definitively, and there is a continuity of papal teaching against religious liberty as a "right" and not a mere freedom, we are forced to reconcile DH with pre-conciliar teaching. And since the pre-conciliar Magisterium has never taught that man has a "right" to error, DH provides *prima facie* evidence of discontinuity.

NO: But you are telling us that DH and Vatican II are telling us a heretical doctrine. I find that hard to believe in light of the above magisterial statements.

JS: I never said that Vatican II taught manifestly heretical doctrine (at least not in this debate). I said that Vatican II is not immune from error, based on the dogmatic teachings of the First Vatican Council and what the Popes have said about Vatican II. There is a difference. Only the Church can officially declare Vatican II to be heretical. But since Vatican II was not an exercise of the solemn or universal Magisterium, a Catholic, using his intellect, can certainly claim that he doesn't understand how DH can

be reconciled with Tradition. That is my position. I don't see how DH can be reconciled with Tradition (neither did Michael Davies, Archbishop Lefebvre and many others), unless DH's use of "right" means a mere, subjective, psychological freedom, and not an objective natural right (which DH seems to even expressly disclaim).

NO: Your mistake, of course, is declaring Vatican II as not being the ordinary and universal magisterium, when the Church herself has not said so. As I pointed out above, you misunderstood the reference to "authentic" and "pastoral." And I think you need to be honest with yourself. You are, indeed, saying that Vatican II is teaching heretical doctrine about "rights," and you hold that position until, if and when, someone can explain how DH can be reconciled with what you believe Tradition to be. This is at least the way you will be understood by your EWTN audience.

JS: I don't understand how to reconcile it with the plain teaching of the Popes I mentioned, and neither did those council fathers who refused to sign the document. Let's face it. The document is problematic. That is what all the angst has been about for the last 45 years. Perhaps if you could show me where the Church has ever taught that man has a right to public worship and a right not to be hindered from worshiping as he sees fit, then you could change my mind. But no one has been able to do so. Even Fr. Brian Harrison admits that this is a new teaching (true) and that it is non-doctrinal (not true), although he incorrectly believes that there can be a negative right not to be hindered in embracing a false religion but not a positive right to do so. DH's teaching on "rights" simply isn't in the perennial teaching of the Church, but is contrary to it.

NO: Second, DH won't say that the right to religious freedom is a "subjective psychological freedom" because that is not what someone like Pope Innocent III meant when he said the Jews have the right to be Jews and not be coerced into the Catholic faith. If it's merely subjective and psychological that it's not real and can be withdrawn at any time by higher subjective and psychological needs.

JS: No, the council does not say a right is based on a "subjective psychological freedom" because the objective of a right can be only truth and goodness, and not falsehood and evil. Man has the freedom to choose evil, but never the right to choose evil. This is why the council says the contrary, namely, that the right to religious liberty is *not* found in the subjective psychological disposition of the person, *but in his very God-given nature*. Also, Pope Innocent's teaching on immunity from coercion is not relevant to the issue at hand, namely, the alleged "rights" to worship as one sees fit.

NO: But above Paul 6 told us to reject anyone who tries, whether by knowledge or ignorance, to invalidate Vatican II's teachings ("...all efforts contrary to these things by whoever or whatever authority, knowingly or in ignorance, be invalid and worthless from now on.")

JS: So are you going to teach your children that they have a "right" to worship outside the Church, or only the "freedom" to do so? Whoever says man has a "right" to worship the way he sees fit and a "right" not to be prevented from doing so must be rejected, as

their teaching would be incompatible with Popes Pius VII, Gregory XVI, BI Pius IX, Leo XIII, St. Pius X, Pius XI and Pius XII. The only way to reconcile DH with Tradition is to say that "right" doesn't mean "right" (the way the Church has always used the term), but a mere freedom (but again, DH takes that possibility away by stating the right is not the mere psychological disposition). The Pope can say what he wants about a council after the fact, but what only matters is what the documents actually say. Unless the conciliar teaching itself is either solemn or part of the OUM, it is not immune from error, according to Vatican I.

NO: Look up the word "right" in an unabridged dictionary. You'll see at least two pages of definitions and usages. It has many different shades of meaning and applicability depending on the context. Your mistake is assuming the Church always uses the word "right" in exactly the same way, without any shade of difference. Words like "right" "freedom" "civil" are highly contextualized words. I would suggest you reevaluate the contexts of when the above popes use the word "right." Vatican II deserves the benefit of the doubt, if you still have one, after such an investigation. It's either that or create a scandal by implying that it was the devil leading the authors of DH and not the Holy Spirit (as I explained to you before. Rejecting DH open up Pandora's box for endless confusion and doubting – precisely what the Church does not need today. If anything, we need to gather round Vatican II and make it our own.

JS: The confusion and doubting come from imprecise and ambiguous teaching, and that is indeed the work of the devil. Many (myself included) have researched how the Magisterium has used the word "right" before the council, and it has never been used in the way DH uses the term. At a minimum, any definition of right precludes the entitlement to do evil. We cannot say that man has a right to public worship and a right not to be hindered from worshiping if the worship isn't Catholic. Otherwise, the Catholic religion means nothing. As soon as all those Concordats were broken in light of DH's teaching on religious liberty, the Catholic faith was all but destroyed in those countries (Italy, Spain, Columbia). These are the wicked fruits of DH, and Christ tells us to judge by the fruits.

You also seem to presume the limits of what evils God wills to permit, and that He could have never allowed the devil to influence the council fathers at Vatican II. Says who? If you studied Our Lady's warnings at Fatima, you would recognize the connection between Her prophecies of apostasy and the fall of the clergy and Vatican II, which is why She demanded Her Secret to be revealed in 1960. Regarding your fear of scandal that the devil was leading the authors of DH, Paul VI already acknowledged the scandal when he said the smoke of Satan had entered the Church (precisely what Our Lady revealed at Quito, LaSalette, Akita and Fatima). If the men in the Church can disobey Our Lady of Fatima for the last 80 years, they certainly can err in their pastoral teachings about principles that are not matters of salvation. They are the very subjects of the diabolical disorientation that Sister Lucia lamented.

NO: Did Adam have the "natural, God-given right" to eat of the forbidden fruit or not? The answer, of course, depends on what one means by "natural, God-given right." If we

are speaking of man's moral obligation, the answer is no, Adam did not have the right to eat of the fruit. But if we are speaking of man's prerogative of free choice which God gave him, then the answer is yes, Adam did have the right to eat the fruit, and he would suffer the moral punishment for doing so.

JS: Now we are finally getting somewhere. You have correctly distinguished between the objective natural right, and the subjective psychological right. This is precisely why DH creates the problems it does. It declares that man's right to religious freedom is not based on his psychological disposition (the subjective right), but on his dignity and nature (the objective right). But man does not have an objective, natural right to religious freedom because man does not have an objective, natural right to disobey God.

NO: I don't see how you interpret my above historical reference to Adam as "getting somewhere," unless you are admitting, as I have claimed, that DH makes the same distinction between the moral right and the civil right. In terms of DH, Adam had the civil right to decide whether he would obey God or the devil since God was not going to coerce Adam into accepting Him, but Adam did not have the moral right to decide for the devil.

JS: Where does DH say that there can be a civil right without an underlying moral right? It doesn't. Rather, it says the civil right merely recognizes the preexisting God-given right in man. Hence, using your analogy, if Adam had the civil right to do evil, then he had a preexisting natural right to do evil. That, of course, is absurd. This highlights the error in your attempted divorce of the civil from the moral right.

NO: I believe the problem is that you fail to use the distinctions that DH teaches you. You keep using your own categories (and you claim to get them from tradition, but I don't know where the Magisterium has taught your categories in defined doctrine).

JS: What categories am I creating? There are only two: "rights" and "freedoms." Man has the freedom to do evil, but never the right to do evil (like worshiping outside the Church). These are truths, not "my own categories."

NO: DH makes the distinction between civil right and moral right, but you refuse to accept it. The reason you refuse is that you have a myopic concept of the word "right" based on texts from previous popes that you have interpreted for yourself as being different than DH's use of right. This is a vicious circle or self-attestation.

JS: Then how do you interpret those texts from the previous Popes? How do you interpret the Popes' many declarations that man has no "rights" to choose evil? And how do you reconcile them with DH? You offer no interpretation other than to say that DH is infallible (how can it be when it doesn't teach dogmatically or definitively!?) Further, there is obviously a difference between civil and moral, but what you fail to recognize is that the civil is based on the moral. The civil depends on the moral. That is what you fail to grasp or admit. This is why DH says the right in man must "become" a

civil right. So tell us where the pre-conciliar Magisterium ever taught that man has a "right" to worship as he sees fit? I will ask this question until I am blue in the face, and you won't be able to provide an answer. You will simply defer to the alleged infallibility of the council. That happens when people can't prove the continuity, but don't want to admit the discontinuity.

NO: The categories that DH states, and which Paul 6 approved, are: (1) civil right based on the concept of non-coercion, and (2) the moral right. DH says he has the civil right but not the moral right. Those are the categories you need to work with, so says Paul 6 in his binding you to Vatican II.

JS: It seems that your preconceived conclusions drive your analysis. In the problematic sections of DH (in chapter 1, no. 4, where DH says man has a "right" to "public worship" and the "right not to be hindered in their public teaching and witness to their faith), DH does *not* say "civil right." It only says "right" (I checked the Latin; *ius*, not *ius civile*). So what kind of "right" is this? DH says that it is a "right" based on "the dignity of the human person" and his "very nature." That means when DH uses the term "right," it is referring to a natural, God-given right. Just as God gives the dignity and nature, He also gives the right. After DH establishes the natural right to religious liberty, it then says that the right "is to *become* a civil right." The council, of course, would only sanction a civil right that recognizes and underlying natural right, correct? The council would not recognize an immoral civil right. So what is the problem?

NO: The problem is, whether you want to call it a natural right or civil right the same difference applies – it is not a moral right. "Natural" and "civil" are amoral terms. They only state what exists, not whether the choices coming from them are morally correct.

JS: It makes no difference whether we call it a "natural" or a "moral" right. The issue is that it is a right based upon man's dignity and nature, which is to "become" a civil right. If it is a right based on man's dignity and nature, then it is a right given by God which gives man a just claim. Does man have a just claim to worship outside the Church? No. That is the whole issue. It is obvious. Man does not have a natural right to worship outside the Church. He also does not have a natural, God-given right not to be hindered in spreading his false religious ideas, because such is evil and would threaten the souls of Catholics. The State can tolerate the evil for a greater good, but man does not have a "right" to do evil.

NO: Correct, but this is another case where you put a blanket term on the discussion ("evil") and thereby confuse the issue. You make it sound as if DH is promoting evil; that if you take DH to its logical conclusion, we must conclude it is promoting evil. Quite the contrary. DH, and all past Church teaching, understands that when it comes to religion, the pursuit of God, there are many levels or stages that man goes through before he may arrive at the truth.

JS: Yes, but man does not have a right to propagate his errors while he is searching for God. That is the whole issue! If you are going to refer to "past Church teaching," then you will quickly learn that such has never been taught before by the Magisterium.

NO: God has instilled in man a natural inclination to pursue Him, as Paul teaches in Romans 1:18-20. Man goes about this process by using his God-given conscience, the laws written on his psyche by God himself (Romans 2:14-15). If a man is at a certain stage in his thinking, and he arrived there by using his conscience, he cannot be forced to go to another level if his conscience won't allow him. We can only preach the Gospel to him, educate him as much as he wants to learn, and pray for him. In the meantime, what category is he in? DH says he is in the natural and civil category to abide by the pursuit of God his conscience will allow, and we, as the Church, will allow him to do so without coercion.

JS: Again and again, DH says much more. It says man has a "right" to "public worship" and a "right not to be hindered from its public teaching and witness to faith." Where does Tradition say man has a "right" to promote religious errors which threaten Catholics' salvation while he is "using his conscience" to find God? Nowhere. Man does not have the right to propagate evil while he searches for truth. If there were such a teaching, you would have already cited it.

NO: The Church expects this to be the case because she learned early on that most people she seeks to evangelize either will not convert or remain in a quasi-state of morality or religiosity without total commitment. Hence, the Church will allow these quasi-states because she can do little to change them, short of coercing them to convert.

JS: Again, that is not the issue. The Church does not coerce them to the Faith because man has a natural right to immunity from coercion. But the Church never says that they have a "right" to remain in their errors or propagate their errors. The Magisterium has condemned such perceived "rights."

NO: But the Church also recognizes that in allowing man to have this freedom to remain outside the Church, there are two important stipulations she must also maintain: (1) remaining outside the Church is not morally correct, and thus the Church will continually plead with them to enter, and (2) their freedom to remain outside does not mean they can do anything they want. There are "due limits" to what freedom of religion will allow. For example, it does not allow the practice of immorality. It does not allow for insurrection. It does not allow attacks on the Catholic Church, etc.

JS: If (1) is true, then man does not have a "right" not to remain outside the Church. If (2) is true, then man does not have a "right" to "public teaching and witness" to his false religion under any circumstances, because such threatens the souls of Catholics. Man may have the freedom to do (1) and (2), but he does not have the right to do (1) or (2). This means that man does not have a right to religious liberty. You have just demonstrated that DH is at odds with the teachings of the Church.

NO: These are the crucial distinctions that DH is establishing. In regards to man's free will, DH has chosen the word "civil" to best describe that prerogative.

JS: Read the document more closely. DH first establishes that the right to religious freedom is a natural right based on man's dignity and nature. It is only because the natural right exists that the civil right exists. Hence, DH says that this right "must become a civil right." The council is correct to say that natural rights must be recognized as civil rights. But the question here is whether there is a natural right to religious freedom in the first place. You have failed to see that the civil right is based on the natural right.

NO: No, I understand the connection, as I have stated above.

JS: No, you have tried to divorce the civil from the moral, even though the civil recognizes the moral.

NO: Not really. Man has a natural right not to be coerced into a religion not of his choice. The Church decided this long ago by not coercing Muslims or Jews into the Christian faith.

JS: You are not addressing my statement. Of course man has a natural right not to be coerced into a religion not of his choice. That is called a right to immunity from coercion. That is not the same as a positive right to worship publicly, or a negative right not to be prevented from worshiping publicly. The pre-conciliar Magisterium continually makes a distinction between the right to immunity from coercion and the positive and negative rights to religious liberty. You continue to miss the key issue.

NO: I have addressed it, since non-coercion necessitates that there is a corollary freedom to worship as one's conscience dictates. You cannot have one without the other when you are dealing with religion.

JS: This is absolutely false. The right to immunity from coercion does not mean there is a corollary right to worship according to the dictates of one's conscience. This is a fundamental error in your approach, and also happens to be the teachings of Freemasonry, not the Church. This is precisely why high-ranking Freemasons like Yves Mausadon and Dr. Rudolph Steiner praised the conciliar teachings, for they recognized the novel change in Church teaching while you have not. A right to immunity does not mean a right to error. There is a clear distinction.

NO: Man already has an innate inclination toward God (Romans 1-2), so he is going to pursue God in one form or another, whether we like it or not. As such, we then are led to the following: Question #1: does man have the natural right to pursue God according to his conscience? The answer is yes.

JS: Again, you fail to make the proper distinctions. Man does not have a right to pursue God according to his conscience if that pursuit is non-Catholic worship. That is called a freedom, but not a right. Man must respond freely to God's grace, but he does not have the right to worship outside the Church. You have conflated "rights" with "freedoms" throughout this debate and that is the key issue. Man in his search for God does not have a right to profess his erroneous ideas about God, even though he is still searching for Him. We cannot go further until you acknowledge this most fundamental distinction.

NO: Question #2: does he have the moral obligation to consider and accept the Gospel of the Catholic Church as the ultimate attainment of his pursuit of God? The answer is yes. Since both questions are answered in the affirmative, DH is correct in its assessment of man.

JS: He does not have a moral obligation to the Catholic Church if he has the right to religious liberty. Both cannot be true. If he has a right to religious liberty, he cannot be culpable for rejecting the Church, otherwise he did not have a right, only a freedom.

NO: DH also makes it very clear in its opening paragraphs that while man may have the civil (or free will) right to choose a religion other than Catholicism, he does not have the moral right to do so, and he will suffer the consequences of his choice just like Adam did.

JS: You are confusing much terminology. You are claiming an interdependence between civil rights and free will but that is incorrect. Civil rights can only recognize natural, moral rights, but not every action that flows from free will should be the object of a civil right. I have the free will to slaughter my neighbor, but not the civil right to do so.

NO: No, I am talking only about the sphere of religion, which is what DH is focusing upon.

JS: But the issue is whether man has "rights" or mere "freedoms" in the "sphere of religion." That is the issue. Man has the right only to worship in the Catholic religion. He does not have a right to "public worship" and the right "not to be hindered" from such worship where the worship is not Catholic.

NO: Already answered above.

JS: No, you did not. You claim that the immunity from coercion right gives rise to a right to worship as one sees fit, which is incorrect. One does not follow the other. Second, if, as you say, man has "the civil (or free will) right to choose a religion other than Catholicism," then, tell me, does he have a natural, objective right to do so based on his "dignity and nature"?

NO: I think you are confusing the terminology. DH does not use the term "natural, objective right." DH says that based on man's dignity and nature, he has the right not to be coerced into a religion not of his choosing.

JS: It says more than that. No one disagrees with the traditional teaching that man has a right to immunity from coercion. DH goes beyond that to affirm positive and negative rights to religious liberty, even where the religion is not Catholic. Also, DH says that the "right" "has its foundation in his very nature." That means it is a natural right that is given by God. DH even distinguishes this natural (objective) right from the "subjective disposition" of man. Again, man may have the subjective disposition (in other words, free will) to worship outside the Church, but not the natural right to do so. Does man have a natural right to do something unnatural? Does man have a God-given right to disobey God? No.

NO: Again, using blanket terminology only confuses the issue. Does the man of Romans 2:14-15 "disobey God" when he uses his conscience and the law written on his heart to do the right thing (e.g, not steal, commit adultery, murder, ect)? Is he disobeying God if he takes his private thoughts about these moral choices and makes them public in his community? Obviously, the answer to both questions is no. In his limited way he is obeying God, and he will stand or fall according to his Master's judgment, even if he never hears the Gospel directly.

JS: If the man is following "the law written on his heart to do the right thing," then he is following God's law, and he has a right to do so. You enumerated some of the divine commandments. Man has a right and a duty to follow them. That is because man has a right only to adhere to the truth. Your argument proves my point. That means man does not have a right to religious liberty where that liberty means rejecting these commandments. Did the pagans at Assisi have a right to worship their false gods? DH says man has a right to such public worship, so why did you criticize it? If Assisi was wrong, then DH is wrong, for Assisi was the implementation of the council according to John Paul II.

NO: Now, of course, another phase of the discussion comes in when this same man is actually confronted with the Gospel, as the "religious" Athenians were in Acts 17. They were commanded to accept Jesus Christ and thus prepare themselves for Judgment Day. When such men are confronted with the Gospel but refuse it, then they are morally culpable and will suffer the consequences of their refusal.

This, I believe, is the dangerous issue we are facing today, for the Church at large seems to have shifted from preaching the Gospel to make sure all men have the opportunity to be saved unto a message which implies that all religions, in one form or another, are pathways to salvation.

JS: I agree, and this is the result of teaching that man has a right to religious freedom.

NO: Neither DH nor any other document of Vatican II taught such, but it has been interpreted as such by many. This is why I believe John Paul II's Assisi meetings were superfluous.

JS: What do you mean “superfluous”?

NO: It is one thing to recognize the pursuit of God in each religion of man, but it is quite another to send these men home to their respective lands without ever telling them that only in Jesus Christ can they accomplish the true and eternal pursuit of God. That these same men are in their own lands thinking they can still pray to their personal gods for material favors, and not feel any compunction or necessity to convert to the Catholic faith, is an absolute tragedy. But this is not DH’s fault. DH merely recognized the preliminary stage of the pursuit of God in man. Lumen Gentium gave the directions for the later stage.

JS: You are really dancing around here and creating distinctions of your own making. Where does DH say that it is addressing only the "preliminary stage" of the pursuit? That is quite a spin. DH is positing a right based on man's dignity and nature, and you say it is only touching upon the “preliminary stage.” Does that mean if DH is touching upon "later stages" in the journey, the teaching would be problematic? And does that also mean man has the right to adhere to error only in the “preliminary stage” of his search?

St. Thomas teaches that a civil law that would grant a right to do evil (such as the right to religious liberty) would be a "perversion of the law."

NO: St. Thomas is not the magisterium, and neither is any other saint or doctor or theologian.

JS: So a law granting rights to do evil is not a perversion of law? St. Thomas was wrong? Saints and doctors can teach truth just like you and I can do so. The point is that any rights granted by the state that are contrary to God-given natural rights are not rights at all, but perversions of the law, or as some would say, licenses (but never rights). There is no civil "right" to abortion, since civil rights must be based on natural rights. There is only a perverted "right" or license to abortion, or the psychological liberty to kill a child.

NO: Not applicable, since we are not talking about abortion. If a religion advocated abortion, it would be infringing on the “due limits” clause of DH.

JS: So man has the right to worship outside the Catholic Church if the worship is "within due limits"? Of course not. What if the religion advocated worshiping Buddha? Would such worship violate "due limits"? If so, tell me how. The Catholic Church teaches that the State may tolerate man's false worship for the common good, but man does not have a right to worship outside the Church, nor does he have a right to state toleration. These are critical distinctions that you do not address.

NO: I have addressed them. See above.

JS: Rebutted above.

NO: The Holy Spirit did not promise to protect Thomas from error in doctrine, but he did promise to protect the Catholic Church at large when she issues doctrinal teaching, and DH is doctrine. The statements do not need to be put in doctrinal formulas in order to be protected from error. DH is written openly enough that no explicit error in doctrine can be found in it. DH is simply not written in a way that will allow it to be convicted or proven to be in error.

JS: Then I suggest you read the relevant documents of the First Vatican Council so you understand the distinction between the ordinary and universal magisterium and Vatican II. There is no guarantee that Vatican II is protected from error. Even Paul VI said the council didn't teach with a note of infallibility, except when it reiterated previously defined teaching. Further, I have already demonstrated that DH's use of "right" is contrary to the teachings of the pre-conciliar Magisterium, which condemn the right to religious liberty.

NO: In addition to what I quoted above from the mouth of Paul 6 regarding Vatican II (that it is the ordinary and universal magisterium), Paul 6 also this on January 12, 1966 about the Council:

"the Council had avoided proclaiming in an extraordinary manner dogmas affected by the mark of infallibility."

Paul 6 also said: "it was one of the programmed items of the Council not to give solemn dogmatic definitions."

But these statements simply mean that Vatican II's teachings were not taught in an extraordinary manner, not that any of Vatican II's teachings were in error or could be in error.

JS: No, your conclusion does not follow. Just because the council did not teach solemnly does not mean that it is necessarily protected from error. Those are two different things. You can have non-solemn teaching that is error free, and non-solemn teaching that is erroneous.

NO: Correction. Vatican II taught solemnly but it didn't use the traditional "dogmatic definitions." Yet when Paul 6 said that Vatican II did, indeed, define doctrine for the Church, you said his comment was "self-serving" and that he wasn't dealing with reality!

JS: You should already know this. The Magisterium teaches solemnly when it dogmatizes the truth or teaches definitively, or when the Pope teaches ex-cathedra. Vatican II did neither. But since you maintain that Vatican II "defined doctrine," tell me what the doctrine of religious liberty is? Where is it dogmatized? What is the definition? Same questions for ecumenism and dialogue.

NO: The solemnity of Vatican II's teaching were clear in its specific language: As I said above: What more solemn language do we need to see that the full weight of the pope and the council Fathers was put on Vatican II as they called upon their "Apostolic authority" to "approve, decree and establish," "in Christ" and "in the Holy Spirit" all the teachings of Vatican II? If this isn't language of infallibility, what is? Moreover, Paul 6 warned that anyone (including you and me) who would contest the teachings of Vatican II, are to be considered invalid and worthless, from the get-go; end of discussion; don't even bother talking about it. That's very similar to an anathema. Moreover, since the Church has never used the words "infallible" or "irreformable" in the very documents it considers infallible and irreformable, we are left with the solemn language above. In that light, I can think of few more solemn words than "apostolic authority," "approve, decree and establish" or "in Christ" and "in the Holy Spirit" to confirm that Vatican II is without error.

JS: Already addressed above.

NO: Vatican II taught things in the ordinary and universal manner, under the definition of Vatican I. Since Vatican II's teachings merely reiterated past dogmatic teaching and put them in a modern setting and terminology, and it promulgated its teaching to the universal church since it was not a local council but an ecumenical council, then it fulfills the definition of Vatican I of being "ordinary and universal" and therefore a council that gave us divinely revealed truth.

JS: Yes, some teachings, but not all of them. I have already demonstrated that Paul VI called the council "authentic" (requiring assent of intellect) which is different from "universal" (requiring assent of faith) according to Vatican I, so this fact proves fallacious your argument for infallibility.

NO: You have misconstrued the term "authentic," and you have ignored much of what Paul 6 said subsequently.

JS: I have not ignored Paul VI's statements, but I evaluate them in light of what the Church has always taught, as any Catholic does. No where does the Church say that a Pope's closing statements to pastoral teachings render the teachings infallible. You ignore the dogmatic parameters of Vatican I, and instead base your arguments on the closing statements of Paul VI (not to mention what the texts of the documents actually say).

Moreover, the Church has never taught that man has a "right" to public worship or the "right" not to be hindered from worshiping when the worship is non-Catholic. I am quite surprised that you said the council merely "reiterated past dogmatic teaching." Where had the Church defined religious liberty, or ecumenism, or dialogue, or collegiality, for example? If these teachings come from "past dogmatic teaching," then please point me to the council or councils that defined them.

NO: Already answered. They are in the footnotes of DH. If you want further clarification, you should write to the Vatican and ask them, rather than publicize dissent from DH.

JS: Come on now. I don't need to write the Vatican when you can easily provide me the citations. Please do so. If these definitions are in the footnotes of DH as you say, then show me. Cut and paste them for me to see. If you cannot do so (you cannot), then DH is not a reiteration of "past dogmatic teaching" (and, frankly, you are embarrassing yourself for making such a claim).

NO: But Paul 6 already precluded your objection by saying that anyone who tries to invalidate the Council's teaching is to be ignored. He already said that Vatican II reiterates the Tradition, and at no time did he say that there were any exceptions to it, nor did any pope after him.

JS: First, neither DH nor Paul VI's statement about Vatican II meets the parameters of infallibility declared by Vatican I, so you are confused on who should really be ignored. Second, if DH were dogmatic, anyone attempting to "invalidate" it should not merely be "ignored" but anathematized, which also proves the non-binding nature of Vatican II's novel teachings.

NO: Where does Vatican I list the "parameters" for the reigning Pope to state that the ecumenical council he is endorsing fulfills the criterion for an infallible council? It doesn't. It merely speaks about the requirements for an extraordinary papal magisterium. The other category Vatican I lists is the ordinary and universal magisterium. Your attempt to deny this category to Vatican II by merely calling it an "authentic" and not "universal" magisterium is nowhere taught by either Vatican II or Paul 6.

JS: It does so in *Dei Filius* which provides that a teaching must be found in the Tradition (no where has the Church ever taught that man has a "right" to religious liberty), it must be proposed as revealed truth (DH does not propose a "right" to religious liberty as revealed truth; only the truth of human dignity) and it must be taught by the ordinary and universal Magisterium (meaning it must be taught "by all, always and everywhere"). If you disagree, then surely you can provide pre-conciliar teaching to prove your case.

We still have a pastoral council that does not require an assent of faith...

NO: No, we have you misconstruing what the term "pastoral" applied to, and Paul 6 gave no distinction between "religiously observed" and "assent of faith."

JS: No, you have ignored canon law and ATF which teaches that an asset of faith is required to dogmatic or definitive teaching, neither of which Vatican II gave us.

...and no pre-conciliar teaching that man has a "right" to religious liberty (in fact, several popes taught the contrary).

NO: I don't know of one, including Quanta Cura when read in context.

JS: What context? It is easy to hide behind the infallibility argument, but that won't get us anywhere. We need to focus on what the council actually taught, especially since Vatican II was pastoral and not doctrinal in character.

NO: It's easy to hide behind the word "pastoral" and say that it was "self-serving" of Paul 6 to later say that Vatican II defined Catholic doctrine. As for "hiding behind the infallibility argument," if ecumenical councils confirmed with solemn language by the reigning pope are not infallible, then you and I ought to eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die.

JS: Is that the litmus test? Just sprinkle some "solemn language" at the end of a pastoral teaching and we have infallibility? Where does the Church say this is the test of infallibility? It doesn't meet the definition of Vatican I. And if DH is infallible, surely you can provide me with the Magisterial pedigree for its teaching on "rights" to public worship. We can search the Tradition high and low to see whether the Church ever taught that man has a right based on his dignity and nature, and not his mere psychological freedom, to worship as he desires, and a right not to be prevented from so worshiping. There is no such teaching in the pre-conciliar Magisterium. All "rights" (whether moral, natural, or civil) come from God, and God does not give man the right to religious liberty.

NO: Again, you need to use the categories that Vatican II gives you, and that means you should stop framing the discussion around your own categories. When it's convenient for you, you make distinctions. When it's not convenient, you ignore the distinctions.

JS: How so? You need to be very specific when you make those kinds of accusations. You are also not engaging the text of DH or the preconciliar Magisterium as I have repeatedly demonstrated.

DH uses the category of "right," and that is precisely the "category" I am focusing on. I am simply reiterating (even quoting) what DH teaches: that man has a right to public worship and a right not to be hindered from public teaching and practice, whether or not his religion is Catholicism. You need to deal with that teaching.

NO: You fail to distinguish between the natural/civil right and the moral right, but that is the crux of the issue.

JS: I have already addressed this *ad nauseam*. The civil right exists only because the natural/moral/God-given right exists. I would also add that you have created a distinction of your own making, that is, your attempt to divorce the civil right from the natural right, even though DH says that the civil recognizes the preexisting right of the human person, based on his dignity and nature. You argue that there is some kind of

civil right without an underlying moral right, but DH says the civil is based on the moral (if not, DH would be encouraging the State to recognize immoral laws, which is absurd).

NO: DH refers to the moral in several places:

“the moral duty of men and societies toward the true religion and toward the one Church of Christ.”

“Man has a moral obligation to seek the truth, especially religious truth.”

“In the use of all freedoms the moral principle of personal and social responsibility is to be observed.”

Other than that, there is no reference to the “moral” basis. Hence, DH is not saying that the natural/civil right is based on a moral right, and this may be the key to why you misunderstand DH. The natural/civil is not based on the moral. The natural/civil are basically amoral. A natural right means it is natural; it is inherent, and does not need to be based on anything. The moral comes in when God gives man his law and says: “do this; don’t do that.”

JS: DH says just the opposite. It says the God-given right based on dignity and nature must “become” the civil right. You are not making the proper distinctions. A natural right is God-given, and God does not give man a right to worship as he sees fit. A civil right (a law) must be based on the moral right, or it is a perversion of law. These are basic tenets of Catholic teaching. In fact, it makes no difference whether you wish to argue that DH is giving a natural right to religious liberty or a respected civil right to religious liberty. In either case, the Church rejects such “rights” because they are contrary to the laws of God.

NO: Because man was created with free will, he thus has the inherent or natural ability to decide whether he will “do this and don’t do that.” Since God gave his law, man has, as DH says, “the moral duty toward the true religion and toward the one Church of Christ.” The bottom line is that God gives man the right not to be coerced into the Christian faith, and within certain limitations, he has the right to honor and thank God as his moral conscience leads him.

JS: Yes, man has the right not to be coerced into the Catholic faith (the immunity from coercion right), but no, man does not have the “right” to “honor and thank God as his moral conscience leads him.” He only has the freedom to do so. In fact, DH was careful NOT to say that religious freedom was based on conscience, because that is a false teaching. Surely, you would agree that man does not have a right to worship Buddha even if is “moral conscience leads him” to do it? Correct? That man cannot be coerced into believing in Catholicism, but he does not have the right to worship a false god, no matter what his conscience tells him.

NO: Again, the problem comes in when you fail to use “right” rightly. You insist on confining it to one category, the moral, but DH says there are two categories. As such, I can say with DH and the rest of the Church that a man has the natural/civil right to

worship Buddha because he has a free will, given by God, but he does not have the moral right to worship Buddha, especially after I bring the Gospel to him and tell him that worshipping Buddha is morally wrong.

JS: See above. The civil is recognizing the God-given according to DH, even though you want to divorce the civil from the God-given. That is where your argumentation collapses. DH says the state recognizes what is already God-given in man based on his dignity and nature. But if the civil recognizes man's right to worship Buddha, then man must have an underlying, God-given right to worship Buddha, since that is what the State is recognizing. It is that simple. Does man have a God-given right to worship Buddha? No. Does man have a God-given right to disobey God? No. He only has the freedom to do so.

NO: It is the hope of the Catholic Church that it can take that spark of God in man and lead him to the Catholic Church, which is the essence of evangelism. It is really very simple.

JS: If DH were only so simple. How will declaring to man that he has a "right" to worship as he pleases lead him to the Catholic Church?

NO: Same as above. He has the natural right of free will, but he has the moral obligation to go to the Catholic Church. Very simple.

JS: The natural right of free will? We don't talk about a "right" of free will since it is a condition (a being in potency) that already exists in man. The "right" deals with what the free will chooses to do. This is why DH says man has the objective right to religious liberty (which is in the domain of acting), and not just a subjective right (which is in the domain of being). We don't have a right to exercise free will when the object of the will is evil. Also, how is telling man that he has a "right" not to be hindered in his public teaching and witness of his false religion "the essence of evangelism"?

RS3: You frame it correctly. Tell him he has the free will to worship as he pleases because God does not treat him like robot or animal but has given him the dignity of choice, but that the one true path is Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church.

JS: But does he have the "right" to worship as he pleases? You have conspicuously avoided using the phraseology of DH, and I wonder why. You always substitute "right" with "freedom" or "free will" even though DH uses "right." Why? Man does not have the right to worship as he pleases, only the freedom to do so. Man does not have the right to sin, only the freedom to sin. If you want to continue the dialogue, then let's use the pre-conciliar Magisterium as the basis for evaluating DH going forward. Otherwise, there is no point in continuing. Unless you can show me where the pre-Vatican II Church teaches that man has a right to worship as he sees fit, you will confirm for me the discontinuity between DH and pre-conciliar teaching, and we will be at an impasse.

END

