

a good refutation of the Catholic claim that it has no new doctrines but only has what Jesus' doctrine implied

In Anthony Kenny's *Religion and Reason* we read a good rational assessment of the Catholic Church's new doctrine that she developed over the centuries after Jesus died. The notion is that doctrines have implications and so the development is about that. It is not about reversing previous doctrines.

This is a summary.

He noted that from the start the Church taught that instead of developing and improving the faith of the Church is unchangeable and complete.

He quoted Paul who condemned anybody who taught anything different from what he taught as implying that people who added to the gospel were doing wrong and changing the gospel even if they never contradicted it (Galatians 1:8).

Some centuries later, Pope Simplicius said that the apostolic doctrine has not changed from the time of the apostles to his time. The syllabus of Pius IX in 1864 censured the view that doctrines can develop. Kenny said that this position was completely contradicted by history. To me that shows what an untrustworthy and shifty religion Roman Catholicism is.

He observed that the Church defining doctrines as belonging to the faith of the apostles does not constitute development of doctrine because the idea was that the Church had always held these doctrines and used her infallibility to show that they were binding when they were being challenged. The Church has never defined infallibly that Jesus was a male but if a heresy comes along claiming that Jesus was a woman it will do it then. To me this suggests that the Church is to be believed by Catholics to be always right even when it does not employ its alleged infallibility.

Kenny finds that it is impossible to find any doctrine that was believed until a heresy came along to attack it thus requiring an infallible statement that the doctrine was true. Yet the Church says that it needs infallibility just to safeguard God's truth when it is questioned to prove that it really is revealed by God. It says it usually uses it then.

Kenny wrote that many theologians agree with St Vincent of Lerins that that truth is whatever the whole Church has believed before heresy appeared. This would mean that the only truth we can find is in the Apostles' Creed. The Church cannot admit that. We have to ask: how are we to know what Christians believe? Do a census? Vincent's theory implies that Church infallible declarations are invalid unless there has been worldwide census taken first.

Kenny criticises Vincent's view because the Church officially accepted many doctrines that were not unanimously accepted before and today's orthodoxy is tomorrow's unorthodoxy. I would add that since the Church and Christ said that only a tiny number would be true brethren that it makes no sense to talk about the unanimous faith of true Christians being right for nobody knows who they are.

Kenny observed that there has been no unanimous agreement on the Trinity, three persons in one God, until after the Ecumenical Councils which made the doctrine binding and official. Even Newman admitted this for he observed that even when the early writers called Christ God or said that the three persons were equal nobody knew if the writers believed that the believers in the divine Christ believed that the Father Son and Spirit were really one person and not three or if the person who declared them to be three persons but equal believed they were three Gods who were somehow entitled to be called one God in some way like a man and woman can be called one flesh. Newman confessed that St Hippolytus probably did not believe that Jesus was always God the Son. St Methodius erred on the incarnation.

Pope John XXII denied that the saved go to Heaven immediately after death which was the majority belief in the Church some time before. St Bernard of Clairvaux had taught the same thing. The Church rejected this doctrine under Pope Benedict XII.

The Church strongly taught that usury was forbidden, for centuries. It was sanctioned against far more strongly than birth-control is in our day. Even as late as 1745 it was still teaching it. Nowadays that doctrine is gone.

Kenny observes that the doctrine of the Assumption of Mary was not known before the fourth century and since 1950 Catholics are bound to believe it. This doctrine is one of the worst threats to the idea of an unchangeable faith.

Kenny admits that the idea that the apostolic doctrine might imply new doctrines that the apostles never thought of but he sees that Rome has used this as an excuse to make doctrines that were never really implied at all. They cannot be deduced

from what has gone before. Catholics might say that you can deduce from the fact that Mary gave birth to the Son of God that God would raise her body and soul to Heaven to give her special treatment. But what about those people who did as much good for God and did not give birth to him? The deduction idea implies that God ignored the fact that he has to let bad things, like letting Mary rot, happen for his greater purpose to do that for her though it may thwart it. Thus it is blasphemous. This is my observation.

Kenny then cites the teaching of theologians who say that the deduction process works not through logic as we know it but through God's logic which is different to ours and which makes little sense to us for we are not as intelligent as him. He calls this dangerous. It opens the way for the Church to change whatever it likes as long as it pretends it has not changed truth but that God sees how its contradictory doctrines can be reconciled even if we can't or the Church is left able to command whatever evil thing it likes.

Catholics say that if there is no record of a doctrine being ancient it does not matter for it was in oral tradition that was passed down from one generation to the next. Kenny writes that for the fathers and all the great Scholastics the truths necessary for salvation are all in the Bible. Tradition was declared by them not to be a new source of revelation but only a help in interpreting the Bible. The first person to come up with the oral tradition idea was William of Ockham who died in 1349. How could the idea be true when it took that long to appear? Kenny mentions Cardinal Pole attacking with the approval of the Catholic Church the doctrine of Henry VIII which claimed that both scripture and tradition were parallel sources of revelation. Kenny write that third century and later Christians never appealed to oral traditions and made a little use of liturgical traditions for liturgy was a fixed thing and apparently all believed that the Bible alone had the information about the doctrine the Church of Christ should follow. Origen could not depend on tradition to learn the identity of the true author of the book of Hebrews so he examined its writing style and contents. No good God would use a medium for the transmission of revelation that could not be proven. Anybody could invent a doctrine and say it was known in the early days and was not written down.

Kenny says that the pope can only make infallible doctrines relating to matters which are necessary for salvation. He says there is no way of knowing if a pope only thought he was using his infallibility but was mistaken for the doctrine he was defining was not necessary for salvation. I say then that the popes and Church have no right to say that doctrines like the assumption of Mary into Heaven or whatever are necessary for salvation for if any are, the most basic ones like the deity of Christ, the atonement he offered for us, the resurrection of Christ, Heaven and Hell are the only doctrines necessary. To say that God cares about whether or not we believe that Mary was taken up into Heaven bodily is foolish and blasphemous for it makes him really petty.

To say the pope is right that he can only make new dogmas that are necessary for salvation is to say that the pope must infallibly know what is necessary for salvation first. The pope can make a dogma anytime. Thus he needs to know what doctrines are needed for salvation all the time just in case. This knowledge would be a gift to him from God. So the pope is automatically infallible all the time for if he knows a doctrine is necessary for salvation he knows the doctrine is true. He knows how a doctrine is needed for salvation and why. He knows what the doctrine is.

And then he must infallibly know that he really knows this and is not mistaken. So before the pope can tell us infallibly that Mary was taken bodily up into Heaven he has to infallibly know himself and also know how the dogma is necessary. This requires a vast amount of infallibility as to his own psychological processes and the intricacies of theology. He would need to be very infallible indeed. The Church of Rome would never dare teach such a foolish doctrine but it does teach it by implication.

It is also worth remembering that the Church has always insisted that there were doctrines necessary for salvation. Nowadays it is said that you will lose your salvation if you know that a doctrine is true and refuse to believe it. But that could not possibly have been what the Church meant. The Athanasian Creed for example condemned anybody who denied any of the several articles of faith in it to hell and excommunication. If it had just meant that it would have said so. It meant that sincere or not you would not get into Heaven if you denied anything it said. The Church officially taught for most of its existence that error excluded from Heaven and it was the belief that sincerity was not good enough that led to the persecution of heretics.

The Church often said that certain doctrines were necessary for salvation. This could only mean that sincere disbelief after initial religious belief would cost one one's salvation for otherwise it would just say that any doctrines true or false that you believe to be true and then reject will exclude from salvation. The Church never went that far for it encouraged pagans and atheists to abandon their doctrines. So doctrines necessary for salvation means exactly what it says, that sincerity is not enough and is in fact often dangerous.