

HISTORICAL SUMMARY

Similarity and Contrast

It is certainly no accident of history, but rather the Providence of God, that these two great men, Orestes Brownson and Fr. Leonard Feeney, should preach the identical doctrine, *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, in the same city, Boston, just 100 years apart. The separate fates of these two men are a powerful historical demonstration of the horrendous condition of the faith in our own day.

Let us compare both of these men in style and substance. Here is Brownson in "The Great Question," which appeared in his *Quarterly Review* in 1846:

"Here are the great mass of our countrymen aliens from the Church of God. Why do they not come and ask to be received as children and heirs? Is it lack of opportunity? It is false. There is no lack of opportunity. God does not deny them, not one of them, the needed grace. The Church is here; through her noble and faithful pastors, her voice sounds out from Maine to Florida, from the Atlantic to the Pacific. How can they hear without a preacher? But they have heard. Verily the voice of the preacher is gone out into all the earth. They have no need to say, Who shall ascend into heaven to bring Christ down? or, who shall descend into hell to bring Christ up from the dead? The word is nigh them. It sounds in every ear; it speaks in every heart. We all know they might come, if they would. From all sections, and from all ranks and conditions, some have come, and by coming proved that it is possible for all to come; and in so proving rendered invalid the plea of ignorance or inability. Those who have not come can as well come as those who have come; and their guilt in not coming is aggravated by their knowledge of the fact that some of their own number have come; for they are no longer in ignorance. (St. Augustine, Lib. 1, *De Bapt. contr. Donat.* cap. 5 - St. Joan. Chrysos. *In Epist. ad Rom.* 26). The fault is their own. They stay away because they do not will to come. "Ye will not come to me that ye may have life, because your deeds are evil." They disregard divine grace, they disdain the Church, they condemn her pastors, they scorn her sacraments. For what Catholic can doubt, if they were to seek the truth, *caute solitudine* [with careful solicitude], as St. Augustine says they must, even to excuse them from formal heresy or infidelity, that they would find, and, finding and knocking, that they would be admitted?

No; let us love our countrymen too much to be ingenious in inventing snap. excuses for them, to strain the faith in their behalf till it is nearly ready to Let us

from a deep and tender charity, which, when need is, has the nerve to be terribly severe, thunder, or if we are no Boanerges, breathe in soft but thrilling accents, in their ears, in their souls, in their consciences, those awful truths which they will know too late at the day of judgment. We must labor to convict them of sin, to show them their folly and madness, to convince them that they are dead in trespasses and sins, and condemned already, and that they can be restored to life, and freed from condemnation, only by the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, whom we, and we only, preach, which is dispensed through the Church, and the Church only.”¹

And here is Father Feeney in a lecture entitled "The Fewness of the Saved," which appeared in the collection *Bread of Life* in 1950:

“There is not a single person in the United States, who has the use of reason, who does not know Jesus Christ is the crux of the whole world's salvation or damnation. There is not a person who does not somehow sense, in the depths of his mind, that the Catholic Church is the Church founded by Jesus Christ, and that it is therefore, the true Church.

“The call to salvation should not be an invitation. It should be a challenge! It should be a clarion call. ‘Listen! Do you want to be damned forever and abandoned by God, except for being kept in mere existence? Do you want to be put down with God's enemies? If you don't, listen to what I have to say!’

“Damnation and salvation in the same utterance are what make a man realize what both these values mean. ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire!’ (Matt. 24:41) These words of Our Lord's wake a man up! They make a man think in terms of his flesh and blood. Every man knows what fire is.

“From Jesus we get both the call to salvation and the awareness of what it is. Jesus came to bring us the message of eternal life. To have a sure place as co-heirs to all the majesty and power of God for all eternity, as the adopted brothers of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, is what Christ promised us. In comparison with the life prepared for us, everything in this world is mere triviality. ‘Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him.’ (1 Cor. 2:9)

“To obtain salvation is the purpose of our life. This whole world was made by God from the very beginning to be a world in which Christian salvation is the Our Lord told His Apostles: ‘Go forth and teach all nations.’”²

Brownson did not hesitate to deal with the distinctions, concerning aspects of the doctrine, posed by scholastic theologians, though he preferred the full force of the doctrine simply stated; there is no salvation outside the Church. Concerning

the problem of Baptism of Desire, he followed St. Thomas Aquinas:

Catechumens are persons who have not yet received the visible sacrament of baptism *in re* [in fact], and are not *actu et proprie* [actually and properly] in the church, since it is only by baptism that we are made members of Christ and incorporated into his body. With regard to these 'there is a difficulty,' says Bellarmine, 'because they are of the faithful, and if they die in that state may be saved; and yet no one can be saved out of the ark, according to the decision of the Fourth Council of Lateran, C. 1: - *Una est fidelium universalis ecclessia, extra quam nullus omnino salvatur* [There is but one universal Church of the faithful outside of which no one at all is saved]. Still it is no less certain that catechumens are in the church, not actually and properly, but only potentially...

"...It is evident, both from Bellarmine and Billuart, that no one can be saved unless he belongs to the visible communion of the church, either actually or virtually, and also that the salvation of catechumens can be asserted only because they do so belong; that is, because they are in the vestibule, for the purpose of entering, - have already entered in their will and proximate disposition. St. Thomas teaches with regard to these in case they have faith working by love, that all they lack is the reception of the visible sacrament *in re*; but if they are prevented by death from receiving it *in re* before the church is ready to administer it, that God supplies the defect, accepts the will for the deed, and reposes them to be baptized. If the defect is supplied, and God reposes them to be baptized, they are so in effect, have in effect received the visible sacrament, are truly members of the church, and therefore are saved in it, not out of it." ³

"Reply to a Liberal" by Raymond Karam which appeared in *From the Housetops* in 1949, was supervised and approved by Father Feeney, though he later came to have second thoughts on it. This article also followed the teaching of St. Thomas:

"What is the teaching of the Fathers and the Doctors? Some Fathers deny that there is any case in which a man could be saved without the actual reception of the waters of baptism (the waters of baptism martyrs alone). But most of them agree in saying that there is one case, and only one case, when a man could be saved without having been actually baptized with water. It is the case of a catechumen who confesses the Catholic Faith, who is sorry for his past sins, who is burning with desire to be baptized and to join the Catholic Church, under the authority of the Roman Pontiff, but who having been kept without baptism by the Church until he has been fully instructed, is overtaken by death suddenly and is incapable of receiving baptism. Such a catechumen, it is believed, can be saved, if he makes an act of perfect charity. *

"...St. Thomas says, "It is necessary, in order that a man might enter into

the kingdom of God, that he approach the baptism of water actually (*in re*), as it is in all those who are baptized; or *in voto*, as it is in the martyrs and the catechumens who were hindered by death before they could fulfill their intent (*votum*).”⁴

This statement in *From the Housetops* was explicitly condemned in 1949 in "The Letter of the Holy Office to the Archbishop of Boston":

“12. That one may obtain eternal salvation, it is not always required that he be incorporated into the Church as a member, but it is necessary that at least he be united to her by desire and longing.

“13. However, this desire need not always be explicit, as it is in catechumens; but when a person is involved in invincible ignorance, God accepts also an implicit desire, so called because it is included in that good disposition of soul whereby a person wishes his will to be conformed to the will of God.

“...19. From what has been said it is evident that those things which are proposed in the periodical *From the Housetops*, fascicle 3, as the genuine teaching of the Catholic Church are far from being such and are very harmful both to those within the Church and those without.”⁵

So this "Letter" would also have condemned Brownson whose doctrine is identical to that of the *Housetops*, and of course St. Thomas Aquinas phrase the source of both articles. Brownson had already rejected in advance the in the "Letter" which was so objectionable to Father Feeney, namely "implicit desire." Speaking of baptized non-Catholics of good will who are actually on their way into the Church, he writes:

“The approach to the Church is explicit, not constructive to be inferred only from a certain vague and indefinite longing for the truth and unity in general, predicable in fact, we should suppose of nearly all men; for no man ever clings to falsehood and division, believing them to be such. Their desire for truth and unity is explicit. Their faith is the Catholic faith; the unity they will is Catholic unity; the sacraments they solicit they solicit from the hands of her legitimate priest. They are in effect Catholics, and though not *re et proprie* [properly and in fact] in the Church nobody ever dreams of so understanding the article: out of the Church no one can be saved, as to exclude them from salvation.”⁶

In Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium* 2,16, the only place in the Council where the "Letter" is given as a reference, the phrase "implicit desire, "so objectionable to Father Feeney, has been dropped:

“Those also can attain to everlasting salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the gospel of Christ or His Church, yet sincerely seek

God and moved by grace strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience.⁵⁹

“...Nor does divine Providence deny the help necessary for salvation to those who without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God, but who strive to live a good life, thanks to His grace. Whatever goodness or truth is found among them is looked upon by the Church as **a preparation for the Gospel** [my emphasis TMS]. She regards such qualities as given by Him who enlightens all men so that they may finally have life.”⁷

The Church then, considers invincible ignorance when joined to a striving to follow the natural law, as a preparation for the Gospel, and it is to such souls that the Church, *Lumen Gentium* continues, "to promote the glory of God *and procure the salvation of all such men* [emphasis mine], and mindful of the command of the Lord, "Preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk. 16:16),... painstakingly fosters her missionary work.

Or as Brownson puts it::

“That those in societies alien to the Church, invincibly ignorant of the Church, if they correspond to the graces they receive, and persevere, will be saved, we do not doubt, but **not where they are**, or without being brought to the Church. They are sheep in the prescience of God, Catholics, but sheep not yet gathered into the fold. ‘Other sheep I have, ‘says Our Blessed Lord, ‘that are not of the fold; **THEM ALSO I MUST BRING; THEY SHALL HEAR MY VOICE**; and there shall be made one fold and one shepherd.’ This is conclusive; and that these must be brought and enter the fold which is the Church in this life, St. Augustine expressly teaches.”⁸

Father Feeney later had doubts about the opinion expressed in "Reply to a Liberal," concerning the salvation of a catechumen who had made an act of perfect charity, but was overtaken by death before the actual reception of the waters of Baptism, the opinion of St. Thomas. But he was in good company here, because St. Augustine, St. John Chrysostom, and the Cappadocian Fathers, all felt the same way. These new opinions were expressed in his *Bread of Life*. However these thoughts did not become part of the "Case." "Reply to a Liberal" was condemned in 1949; *Bread of Life* which appeared in 1952 was never condemned. This is from a lecture entitled "The Waters of Salvation," in which Father Feeney argues not so much from authority, as from reason and common sense:

“Here is a brief catechism line-up, in case you would like to brush up on what I have been saying:

Q. Can anyone now be saved without Baptism of Water?

A. No one can be saved without Baptism of Water.

Q. Are the souls of those who die in the state of justification saved, if

they have not received Baptism of Water?

A. No. They are not saved.

Q. Where do these souls go if they die in the state of justification but have not received Baptism of Water?

A. I do not know.

Q. Do they go to hell?

A. No.

Q. Are there any such souls?

A. I do not know! Neither do you!

Q. What are we to say to those who believe there are such souls.

A. We must say to them that they are making reason prevail over Faith, and the laws of probability over the Providence of God.”⁹

In "The Great Question" Brownson argued from authority, mostly from St. Thomas, as we saw, but in "Civil and Religious Toleration" which appeared three years later in 1849, he argued more from reason and common sense, and his thought is in remarkable agreement with the passage from Father Feeney which we have just cited.

Finally, we are told that there are persons out of the church who in reason or sound theology, authorize us are not only free from the sin of infidelity, but from actual sin. But this is a gratuitous assumption; for, without a special revelation from God, we cannot know that there are such persons, and nothing, so far as we are aware, either in reason or sound theology, authorizes us to assume that there are or can be. But suppose there can be, and there are, such persons, nothing obliges us to assert, or permits you to assume that we assert, their condemnation to the tortures of hell. The Catholic dogma objected to simply teaches, that no one can ever be saved out of the Catholic Church, that is, enter into eternal life, see God in the beatific vision by the light of glory. What the dogma obliges us to assert is, that salvation, in this sense, which is supernatural both in principle and its terminus, is unattainable out of the church. But this salvation does not necessarily stand opposed simply to the torments of hell. Hell is twofold, and consists in the punishment of loss and the punishment of sense. None are saved who do not escape both; but not therefore does it necessarily follow, that all who are not saved are doomed to suffer both. All are guilty of original sin, and original sin itself forfeits heaven, and incurs the punishment of loss; but the church does not teach that it incurs also the punishment of sense. Hence unbaptized infants, who die before committing actual sin, - though they lose heaven, can never see God by the light of glory, - do not, as our theologians teach, suffer the punishment of sense, do not we are permitted to hope, suffer positive pain, but will be gainers by having existed. Not of them, but of actual sinners who die in their sins, is it to be said, ‘Good for them if they had never been born.’

“Suppose now, - and if the supposition is inadmissible the objection vanishes, - that among the gentiles there are persons who die out of the

church, free from all actual sin: they, certainly, will never see God, will never enter heaven, will not be saved; yet nothing obliges us to believe that they will be doomed to the punishment of sense, or to the positive sufferings of hell. What will be their fate, beyond the fact that they will not be saved, we do not know, and do not attempt to determine. We remit them, if such there are, to the bounty of God, who, for aught we know, may place them in the category of unbaptized infants who die in their infancy. But no injustice is done them in not admitting them to the beatific vision; for to see God by the light of glory is a gratuitous reward, promised only to supernatural faith and sanctity, never due and never promised to mere natural innocence or to mere natural virtue. The defect of natural innocence or of natural virtue excludes from it, but the possession of either or both does not and cannot entitle to it; and natural innocence and virtue are all that it can be pretended that these have. Hence, supposing such persons, supposing them to die free from all but original sin, no injustice is done them in excluding them from salvation, and therefore the dogma which denies the possibility of salvation out of the church asserts nothing contrary to justice or even to the fidelity of God.”¹⁰

So much for the striking similarity in thought between Orestes Brownson and Father Feeney. Let us go on now and compare the relationships of both men with their respective bishops. When Brownson became convinced in 1854 that he had to become a Catholic, he sought an interview with Bishop Benedict Joseph Fenwick, the second bishop of Boston:

“What most impressed us in this second interview with Bishop Fenwick was the firm and uncompromising character of his Catholicity. He used not a single unkind word, in speaking of Protestants; but with all our art, - and we did our best, - we could not extract from him the least conceivable concession. He saw clearly what held us back, and that we believed we were prepared to join the Church, if we could only have some assurance that individuals dying out of the pale of her communion need not necessarily be despaired of; but neither by word nor tone did he indicate that he had any assurance to give. He was a Catholic, heart and soul; but he had learned the Church as the way of salvation, but he had learned no other. What he had received, that he could give; but nothing else. He was not the author of the conditions of salvation, and he would not take the responsibility of enlarging or contracting them. It was well for us that he was thus stern and uncompromising in his Catholicity. A man brought up a Protestant is apt to distrust the sincerity of another's faith, and, in general, looks upon a well educated and intelligent Catholic priest or bishop as acting a part, or merely speaking from his brief, without any firm conviction of what he professes. He also understands, in advance, that Catholicity is exclusive and boldly asserts that salvation out of the pale of the Church is not possible. If, then, we had found him less uncompromising; if we perceived in him the least disposition to soften what seemed to us the severity of the Catholic doctrine, or to conceal or explain

it away, we should have distrusted the sincerity of his faith, have failed to give him our confidence, and lost what we had in his Church.”¹¹

When Brownson asked to be received into the Church, Bishop Fenwick assigned his Coadjutor, who would later succeed him, Bishop John Bernard Fitzpatrick, to instruct him. Bishop Fitzpatrick, realizing what a prize he had in Brownson, not only taught him his catechism, but gave him the full seminary course received by priests. Later in his career when Brownson's theology was again under attack by a writer in the *Boston Pilot*, who said among other things, that because he was ignorant of Latin, he didn't understand the technicalities of scholastic philosophy, Brownson replied:

So much for our Boston theologian, who was not, we apprehend, trained, as we were, in the school of the late illustrious bishop of Boston, a theologian whose exactness and soundness we, every day as we advance in life, find confirmed, and whose teachings we but feebly reproduce. May he who was our spiritual father on earth, still remember and watch over his spiritual son with whom he had so much affectionate patience, and whom he took so much pains to instruct in the principles, doctrines, and precepts of our holy religion! Never can we repay his memory, for ever blessed, his labors and pains, his uniform sweetness, his unfailing kindness, and above all, his tender and unaffected piety, and profound and courageous love of truth, God has, we trust rewarded him.”¹²

In 1849 at the Seventh Provincial Council of Baltimore, Brownson's good friend, Archbishop Kenrick of Philadelphia, urged all the attending bishops to sign a letter of encouragement and approbation for his labors in defense of the Faith. Brownson proudly carried these signatures on the cover of his *Review*.

Father Feeney's relationship with Archbishop Cushing is quite a contrast. In 1949 when four professors who taught at Boston College, and were also members of St. Benedict Center, were fired for accusing the College of teaching heresy, namely that there was salvation outside the Church, Father Feeney came to their support. Archbishop Cushing immediately silenced him, and placed St. Benedict Center under interdict. He said: "No salvation outside the Church? Nonsense! When I die and go to heaven, if I don't see you there, I'll know it's because you're not dead yet."

But Brownson would also have his own version of Archbishop Cushing, and his honeymoon period with the American bishops soon came to an end. In 1855 he had stopped submitting the articles in his *Review* to Bishop Fitzpatrick, a big mistake, and on the urging of his friend Fr. Isaac Hecker and others, he moved to New York City, the biggest mistake of his life.

Here he came under the jurisdiction of the Irish-born Archbishop John Hughes. Brownson tried to get off to a good start with Hughes, offering to submit to him all the articles in his *Review* for censorship, but the Archbishop refused. Brownson once said that Hughes was as strong on *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* as he was, but he was a Gallican, and obviously felt intimidated by Brownson's intellectual superiority.

This was the beginning of Brownson's so-called "liberal period," when at the suggestion of Father Hecker, he adopted a more moderate tone in his apologetics for the sake of the convert movement. He wrote that it would help greatly in the conversion of the country if the Irish immigrants would Americanize, rather than conducting themselves like a foreign colony, an opinion which he later repudiated. This enraged Archbishop Hughes who equated Americanizing with Protestantizing, and he denounced Brownson publicly.

Brownson wrote:

“The Archbishop once said to us, ‘I will suffer no man in my diocese that I cannot control. I will either put him down or he shall put me down.’ We do not object to the principle; no bishop should suffer, if able to prevent it, the rise within his jurisdiction of any power, in opposition to his authority, too strong for him to control. We suppose he regarded us not unlikely to become dangerous, and therefore felt it his duty, ‘to put us down,’ though we do not think we were ever powerful enough, however ill-disposed, to be dangerous, and we know that we were never capable of resisting authority. At no time had the authority to do more than speak in its own name to be obeyed, and obeyed cheerfully.”¹³

But Hughes was not mollified, and kept up a continual harassment of Brownson, even denouncing him several times to Rome. Brownson was finally forced in exasperation to move across the Hudson River to New Jersey, to get out of his jurisdiction.

We mentioned that Brownson proudly carried the signatures of all the American bishops, who had warmly endorsed his writings, on the cover of his *Review*. Brownson's whole apologetic work was carried on in the face of the Native American and Know Nothing persecutions of the Church, who claimed that Roman Catholics could not be good Americans, because they owed allegiance to a foreign potentate, the Pope. Catholic politicians, clerical and lay, J.F.Kennedy being the more recent in a long line, were defending the Church on Gallican principles, claiming that the Holy Father had no temporal authority in this country. Brownson replied that the Pope had spiritual authority in this country, and indirect temporal authority. Indirect, meaning, that when a moral issue like abortion intrudes on the temporal, becoming the law of the land, the Holy Father has the authority to denounce it, and he must be obeyed by Catholics. This made many

American bishops furious, particularly those who had been born in Ireland, like Bishop O'Connor of Pittsburg, because they considered it a slur on the clergy of their native land, who for the sake of Catholic Emancipation, had taken an oath of loyalty to the English crown, denying that the Holy Father had any temporal authority in Ireland and England. The Gallican articles on which the oath was based, were not condemned until the First Vatican Council in 1870. But Brownson had the authority of all the Fathers and Doctors, particularly that of St. Robert Bellarmine, on his side, and he obliterated their arguments, which only made them more furious. Brownson said privately, but not publicly, that he could not in conscience have taken that oath. But such was the outcry on the part of the bishops, that Brownson was forced to drop their names from the cover of his *Review*.

Let us also examine the relationships of both men with the Society of Jesus. When four professors who taught at Boston College, and who were also members of St. Benedict Center, complained to the Rector, Fr. William Keleher, S.J. that heresy was being taught at the college, namely, that there was salvation outside the Catholic Church, he ignored them. They then appealed to the General of the Jesuits, Fr. Jean Baptiste Janssens, who without investigating their appeal, ordered Father Keleher to obtain an immediate retraction of their complaints, or fire them on the spot. Father Keleher fired them for teaching "ideas leading to bigotry and intolerance."

To get Father Feeney away from Saint Benedict Center, the Jesuits ordered him to Holy Cross College in Worcester. When Father Feeney asked the reason for the transfer, he was told "because of your doctrine." Father Feeney demanded a doctrinal hearing, and refused to go to Holy Cross until he obtained it. But the Jesuits merely repeated the order to go to Holy Cross. Father Feeney was dismissed from the Society in 1949 for disobedience, his failure to go to Holy Cross. He was never given the doctrinal hearing he desired.¹⁴

Brownson sent three of his sons to Holy Cross and two to Fordham, so you would think that he would have fared a little better at the hands of the Jesuits, but such was not the case.

Brownson was invited to give the commencement address at Fordham in 1861, the first year of the Civil War, and he urged the graduating students to rise to the support of their country in its hour of crisis. When Brownson finished, Archbishop Hughes rose to speak. He denounced Brownson and the "Americanizing Club" which he insisted Brownson headed, but which was largely a figment of his imagination. Brownson rose to speak in his own defense, but the Archbishop commanded him to sit down. Brownson obeyed. The Jesuits then conducted Archbishop Hughes to the hall where a banquet was prepared,

ignoring Brownson, and leaving him sitting alone on the stage. The Archbishop had given the Jesuits the grounds for Fordham, but had held back a key plot. But after this incident he turned this property over to them in appreciation of their performance. This was just one of several such incidents at Fordham. What especially hurt Brownson about these incidents, is that many of these Jesuits were his personal friends. In 1850 the Rector of Fordham, his good friend, Fr. Augustine Thebaud had sent him by letter an honorary Doctor's degree.¹⁵

During the Civil War Brownson campaigned strenuously in his Review and on the lecture circuit, for the Emancipation of the slaves, even having several interviews with the hesitant President Lincoln in this cause. In 1861 Brownson was lecturing on Emancipation in Boston, and he dropped by Boston College to see his confessor, Father Gresslin, but was turned away at the door by the Rector, his friend, Father Bapst, who had been tarred and feathered by the Know Nothings. Father Bapst explained to him, though with tears in his eyes, added Brownson, that since the Society held property in the South, they were afraid that the Confederates would confiscate it, if they learned that they had entertained such a champion of Emancipation.

In 1941 a memorial bust of Brownson by the famous sculptor, Samuel Kitson, which stood in a park on Riverside Drive, New York City, was toppled off its pedestal by some juvenile vandals, and ended up in the municipal storage yard. Hearing of the incident, the president of Fordham, Fr. Robert I. Gannon, S.J., asked Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia if Fordham could have the image. "You may have Orestes," LaGuardia replied.¹⁶ The bust stands today on the Fordham campus, ironically, near another bust, that of Archbishop Hughes. Father Gannon was obviously trying to make an *amende honorable* to Brownson on behalf of Fordham. I doubt if Boston College will ever do anything similar.

Let us now compare the dealings of both men with Rome. In Brownson's day the United States was still considered a mission country, and as such was under the jurisdiction of the Congregation of the Propaganda Fidei. Archbishop Hughes denounced Brownson several times to the Prefect of the Propaganda, Cardinal Alessandro Barnabo. In 1861 he wrote:

“...I have already pointed out to your Emminence that apart from the personal spiritual good of Dr. Brownson, the Catholic Church has never drawn much profit from his conversion. From the first minute of his submission to the church, the Boston clergy has admitted him to too great familiarity. He was almost always at the Bishop's table, where he laid down the law and taught philosophy as if he were an oracle.

“When he came to live in New York, he wanted to submit to me

manuscripts of all articles that were going to appear in his *Review*, so that I might change, correct, or disapprove them as I saw fit. I excused myself for several very good and excellent reasons. I treated him with a lot of consideration, not allowing him either too much intimacy or too much familiarity, but leaving him a little bit off to one side in his aloofness. However he made the acquaintance of several of my priests, particularly of a class of young priests who had the advantage of studying theology in Europe and who had literary and philosophical pretensions. They kept up the practice of meeting just to make conversation - and everything that pertained to the Church all the way from the general administration of affairs by the Supreme Pontiff down to the way of acting of one of our insignificant sacristans, all this was then discussed, criticized, approved or disapproved according to the wise and discreet views of Dr. Brownson and his associates. [This is sheer fantasy. TMS] They were impatient for the light and communicate to it the spirit of the century in moment when they could illuminate the Church of this country with a new light and communicate and communicate to it the spirit of the century in which we live. I was the first and principal obstacle to the execution of their plans. They know very well that if they did or said anything that was contrary to religion or that displeased the archbishop of New York, they would draw down upon themselves the contempt of the faithful.”¹⁷

But Cardinal was not taken in. When Brownson's son Henry was writing his excellent biography of his father, he asked Bishop William McCloskey of Louisville, if he had any recollections of Cardinal Barnabo and his father, from the days when he was Rector of the North American College in Rome. Bishop McCloskey replied:

“ ...During one of these visits, - perhaps in '63, - His Eminence alluded incidently to rude criticisms that had been levelled at certain principles broached by your father, presumably in his *Review*. I have not now, well nigh forty years afterwards, any very clear definite recollection; especially as it was rather of the rough manner in which these critics had dealt with what they regarded as Dr. Brownson's short-comings, than of the merits of the case itself that His Eminence spoke...Be that as it may, I do distinctly remember how strongly the straightforward Cardinal deprecated the fierceness of the attack which had been made on a man whose lofty spirit and fearless character was not unlike his own. Plainly it annoyed him. What serves to fix the visit in my memory, was the dramatic manner in which His Eminence showed how an old Dreadnaught like Dr. Brownson would act, if threatened with the fire of a whole fleet of popular pamphleteers. But that Cardinal Barnabo was a very small man, and your father a man of Daniel Webster's build, but taller by some inches, I could have fancied the Doctor stood before me. Rising from his chair and dropping his scarlet biretum on the floor, His Eminence put himself in an attitude of defence, as if to say: Come one; come all! intimating, for that I remember well, that if critics had dealt gently with him, and pointed out his

error, if error there was, no man was more ready to acknowledge it, than that great champion of the faith.”¹⁸

Alarmed by reports that he had been denounced to Rome by Archbishop Hughes and others, Brownson also wrote to Cardinal Barnabo [H.E. stands for His Eminence]

“...Having been so long and so well known for my devotion to the Holy See and for my uncompromising defense of the rights and prerogatives of the Chair of Peter, having so earnestly and so repeatedly battled against Gallicanism and for what is here called Ultramontaniam, I thought I was free from all danger of being misapprehended or misconstrued, and H.E. will permit me to say that I do not think I should have been seriously complained of had it not been for political and national susceptibilities which my course as a Reviewer had offended and armed against me.

“Though the staunch advocate of all legitimate authority however constituted, I am an American citizen and, for my own country, a Republican accustomed from my youth up to free thought and free speech; but the prelates of the Church in the United States have only to signify to me under their own name the questions which they wish me not to discuss, or to give me frankly the directions they wish me to follow, to find me avoiding everything that could be offensive or disagreeable to them or inconsistent with their views of Catholic interests. I am and will be docile to authority, but I do not and cannot recognize the voice of authority in anonymous newspaper articles.

“...My wish is in all things to conform strictly to the teachings and wishes of the Church, and I am and always will be ready and even anxious to correct and avoid any and every error which the Holy See may point out to me. Err I may, but a heretic I am not and never will be. I wish to save my soul, and I believe that, for me at least there is no salvation out of the Catholic Church.”¹⁹

The Cardinal's reply was transmitted to him through his good friend Fr. Jeremiah Cummings, who had translated Brownson's letter into French, and sent it to Rome. Father Cummings wrote:

“Dear Doctor:

“Your letter of explanations...was received and read with pleasure at the Propaganda...Rome is satisfied with your explanations and with your disposition to submit all you write to the judgment of the Church. By the mail of August 12th, the Propaganda wrote to the Archbishop of New York to inform him of Mr. Brownson's *clairissements* and to tranquilize his mind in reference to that writer's ‘disposition.’

“...They notice the closing expression of your letter, ‘There is no salvation at least

for me, outside the Catholic Church,' and do not suppose that you believe that there is salvation under the circumstances indicated for anybody else. I am, in fine, exhorted to comfort the Reviewer especially under the various afflictions which God has permitted to befall him at the present time..."²⁰

Let us go on to Father Feeney's relations with Rome. In 1952 Father Feeney received a letter from Cardinal Pizzardo, the Secretary of the Holy Office, summoning him to appear in Rome for trial:

"The Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office has been obliged repeatedly to make your conduct the object of its special care and attention, and recently, after having again carefully examined and calmly weighed all the evidence collected in your cause, it has found it necessary to bring this question to a conclusion.

"However, His Holiness, Pope Pius XII, in His tender regard and paternal solicitude for the eternal welfare of souls committed to His supreme charge, has decreed that, before any other measure be carried into effect, you be summoned to Rome for a hearing. Therefore, in accordance with the express bidding and by the special authority of the Supreme Pontiff, you are hereby ordered to proceed to Rome forthwith and there to appear before the Authorities of the Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office as soon as possible."²¹

Surprised, Father Feeney wrote to Cardinal Pizzardo asking what he was to be tried for, so he could prepare his defense:

"I have just received a letter from the Holy Office, written in English and signed with Your Eminence's name. It is dated October 25, 1952. This is the first official notification I have received of the existence of a cause, judicially cognizable, in which I am an interested party. Your letter not only informs me that such a cause exists but also that there is to be a hearing for its disposition. A hearing or trial presupposes some formal complaint or accusation which serves as a legal basis for the proceedings and which also informs the accused of the charge against him so that he can prepare to defend himself. Before I can participate in a trial I would like to know with more adequate particularity what I am to be tried for."²²

The Cardinal answered:

"Your letter of the 30th October shows clearly that you are evading the issue, instead of obeying promptly the order which was given you in the name of His Holiness, as was clearly expressed in my letter of the 25th October.

"You are to come to Rome immediately where you will be informed of the charges lodged against you.

“I wish to inform you that if you do not present yourself at the Congregation of the Holy Office before the 31st December this act of disobedience will be made public together with canonical penalties.”²³

Not only was Father Feeney never given a statement of charges so he could prepare his defence, which he was entitled to by Canon Law, but the supposedly "secret" proceedings of the Holy Office were leaked to the public press for purposes of intimidation. Father Feeney did want to go to Rome but was prevented by some of his more over-protective disciples. But it seems clear from Cardinal Pizzardo's attitude, that no doctrinal hearing was contemplated. This was to be a situation similar to the four professors and the General of the Jesuits, Father Janssens. Either retract immediately or be excommunicated on the spot. Father Feeney was "excommunicated" in 1953 for his failure to appear in Rome. This "excommunication" does not carry the signature of Cardinal Pizzardo nor of the Holy Father. The only signature it bears is that of a notary public!²⁴

The reason that neither the Jesuits nor the Holy Office were willing to face Father Feeney on doctrine, but insisted on making it discipline, was because they had no doctrinal case. Father Feeney would have obliterated any Jesuit or Holy Office theologian on *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, had they dared to face him, and they knew it.

It is interesting to note that all Cardinal Pizzardo's letters to Father Feeney, were also signed by Cardinal Ottaviani (Assessor), who would later become the leader of the conservative wing of Vatican Council II. Fr. Karl Rahner, S.J., the most influential peritus at the Council, is astonished how little influence the conservatives had in preventing the Council, as he falsely claims, from teaching that there is salvation outside the Church.

“...This optimism concerning salvation appears to me one of the most noteworthy results of the Second Vatican Council. For when we consider the officially received theology concerning all these questions, which were more or less traditional right down to the Second Vatican Council, we can only wonder how few controversies arose during the Council with regard to these assertions of optimism concerning salvation, and wonder too at how little opposition the conservative wing of the Council brought to bear on this point, how all this took place without any setting of the stage or any great stir even though this doctrine marked a far more decisive phase in the development of the Church's conscious awareness of her faith than, for instance, the doctrine of collegiality in the Church, the relationship between scripture and tradition, the acceptance of the new exegesis, etc.”²⁵

The reason that Cardinal Ottaviani and the other conservatives

were so ineffectual in stopping the wolves of liberalism and Modernism from ravaging the fold after Vatican Council II, is because they themselves had left the gate open, when they condemned Father Feeney for his defense of the dogma, no salvation outside the Church.

And finally let us contrast both men in their dealings with the Holy Father. When Bishop Fitzpatrick visited Rome in 1854, he presented Pope Pius IX with a letter from Brownson and several issues of the *Review*, which contained Brownson's two best expositions of his teaching on salvation, "The Great Question" and "Civil and Religious Toleration." The Holy Father replied with a warm letter of gratitude and appreciation, and with a special blessing for Brownson and his entire family.

Father Feeney twice appealed to Pope Pius XII to support him in his fight for the dogmas of the faith, but he never responded. Instead the Holy Father gave his approval in 1949 to "The Letter of the Holy Office to the Archbishop of Boston," which condemned Father Feeney by name and his teaching on salvation. According to Cardinal Wright, the Pope himself made the official English translation of this "Letter."

In 1950 Pius XII issued his encyclical *Humani Generis* in which he said: "Some reduce to a meaningless formula the necessity of belonging to the True Church in order to gain salvation." ²⁶ This was widely interpreted in the secular press as support for Father Feeney's doctrinal position. It was only after *Humani Generis* was issued that Pope Pius permitted the "Letter of the Holy Office" to be published in full, otherwise the "Letter" itself would have fallen under the condemnation of "meaningless," and then he did not allow it to be placed in the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, the register of all official Vatican documents at the time.

Pius XII approved of the "excommunication" of Father Feeney in 1953, but did not sign it, nor did he permit any of the Cardinals of the Holy Office to sign it. Father Feeney always denied the validity of this alleged "excommunication," not only because the Cardinals of the Holy Office had violated every Canon Law in the book, but more simply: "How can I be excommunicated for merely professing a defined dogma of the Faith?"

The Orestes Brownson story ends on a note of triumph. Brownson had become very discouraged at the end of the Civil War, in which he lost two of his sons, by the continuous battering he was getting from Gallican bishops, so he suspended the publication of his *Review*. But with the condemnation of the Gallican articles by Vatican Council I in 1870, and to fulfill a dying request of his dear wife, he once again revived his *Review*, and this final series contains some of his most brilliant writings in defence of the Faith.

“What he considered of the most vital importance as bearing on the

controversies of the day was the Council's utter condemnation of the first three Gallican articles, which controverted the supremacy of the vicar of Christ, both in relation to the civil power and in relation to a general council, and the assertion of the primacy of jurisdiction of the successor of Peter in relation to both. The Vatican proclamation of the papal prerogatives leveled, he said, 'a death-blow at the wretched Gallicanism and political atheism which enfeebles and kills the life of every nation.' He felt free now for the first time in his life to defend the Catholic Church unhampered by a mutilated orthodoxy. He could now bring out and insist on the very truths needed to combat the dominant heresies of the age. And with renewed energy and assurance he returned once more to a promulgation of his high-toned ultramontanist as the only medicament that could heal the wounds of a well-nigh moribund society."²⁷

Unfortunately the Father Feeney Case ends on no such triumphant note. Father Feeney would say, "if anyone says that there is salvation outside the Church, he is a heretic, because it is *de fide definita* that there is no salvation outside the Church." But if someone said, "there is no salvation outside the Church, but - persons of good will outside the Church involved in invincible ignorance can be saved by Baptism of Desire," a position not yet condemned by the Church, he too felt hampered by a "mutilated orthodoxy." Of course he had the Fathers and Doctors on his side, as did Brownson regarding Gallicanism, but nothing really on point from the Magisterium. Rome has ignored all his appeals to put a halt to the rampant liberalism of our time, and until this is finally done, the situation can only get worse.

References

- 1 "The Great Question," *Brownson's Quarterly Review*, October 1847, pp.569,570.
- 2 Fr. Leonard Feeney, M.I.C.M., "The Fewness of the Saved," *Bread of Life*, Saint Benedict Center, Cambridge, 1953, p.144.
- 3 "The Great Question," *Op. cit.*, pp.561-563; *Summa*, 3, Q.68, a.2 *Corp. ad 2 et ad 3*.
- 4 Raymond Karam, "Reply to a Liberal," *From the Housetops*, St. Benedict Center, Cambridge, Vol. III, No. 3, Spring, 1949, pp.60,62; * Abbot Jerome Theisen, O.S.B., states that neither St. John Chrysostom nor any of the Cappadocian Fathers thought that salvation was possible for a catechumen overtaken by death before the actual reception of the sacrament. *The Ultimate Church and the Promise of Salvation*, St. John's University Press,

Collegeville, MN, 1976, p.12, n.35; + St. Thomas Aquinas, *On St. John*, Ch. III, Lect. I, n.4.

5 Denz., 3870, 3873; This "Letter" was never placed in the *Acta Apostolicae sedis*, the official register of all Vatican documents at the time, but first appeared in Denzinger in 1965 when Fr. Karl Rahner was editor. He gives as his source, *The American Ecclesiastical Review*! When *Humani Generis* later appeared he left out the phrase: "Some reduce to a meaningless formula the necessity of belonging to the True Church to obtain salvation."

6 "The Great Question," pp.564,565.

7 Fr. Walter M. Abbot, S.J., General Editor, *The Documents of Vatican II*, America Press, New York 1966, p.35; n.59 cf. "Letter of the Holy Office to the Archbishop of Boston," Denz. 3869-72. Abbot Theisen comments on this omission: "The suppression of *votum implicitum* [implicit desire] is probably due to disenchantment with the term, especially since it was used indiscriminately to describe the situation of both separated Christians, and the 'unevangelized' in their diverse relations to the Roman Catholic Church." *The Ultimate Church and the Promise of Salvation*, *Op. cit.*, p.57.

8 "The Great Question," pp.558,559.

9 "The Waters of Salvation," *Op. cit.*, pp.136,137.

10 *Brownson's Quarterly Review*, July 1849, pp.216,217.

11 "The Right Reverend Benedict Joseph Fenwick, Second Bishop of Boston," *Brownson's Quarterly Review*, October 1846, p.522; *Works*, Vol. XIV, pp.474,475.

12 "Answer to Objections," *Brownson's Quarterly Review*, 1874, p.451; *Works*, Vol. XX, pp.405,406. *The Pilot* was not at this time the official journal of the Boston Archdiocese, but a secular Irish-American paper. According to Brownson's daughter Sarah, the unnamed writer was the famous Irish patriot, John Boyle O'Riley, who was editor at the time. See Fr. Thomas Ryan, C.P.P.S., *Orestes A. Brownson: A Definitive Biography*, Our Sunday Visitor Inc., Huntington, IN, 1976, pp.302,303.

13 Henry Brownson, *Brownson's Latter Life*, H.F. Brownson, Detroit, 1900, p.262.

14 The Jesuits continue to attack Father Feeney's doctrinal position. In 1992 Fr. Francis Sullivan, S.J., a theologian at the Jesuit University in Rome, the Gregorian brought out a book entitled *Is There Salvation Outside the Church?* (Paulist Press, New York) which is merely a continuation of Fr. Philip Donnelly's paper "Some Observations on the Question of Salvation Outside the Church." One of the authorities Father Sullivan quotes is that of his predecessor

at the Gregorian, Fr. Giovanni Perrone, S.J., claiming that he is the real author of the encyclical of Pope Pius IX, *Quanto Conficiamur*, which according to the liberals' false claim, teaches that a person involved in invincible ignorance can be saved outside the Catholic Church. Interestingly enough, this same Father Peronne sent Brownson his *Il Protestantismo e la regola fede* for review. Brownson wrote: "He has never been a Protestant and lends them more of the qualities of his own Catholic heart than entitled to...their ignorance is crass and supine rather than invincible." *Brownson's Quarterly Review*, January 1854, p.129; cited in Ryan, *Op. cit.*, p.198, n.24.

15 Ryan, *Op. cit.*, p.423; Brownson also received an honorary doctorate from Norwich University in his home state of Vermont.

16 Cf. Ryan, p.732.

17 Ryan, p.594.

18 Henry Brownson, *Brownson's Latter Life*, pp.259,260.

19 Ryan, p.592.

20 *Latter Life*, pp.255,256. Brownson would later use the Cardinal's correction of his ambiguous conclusion of his letter in response to criticism in the *Boston Pilot* of his teaching on "no salvation outside the Church":

"I shall never leave the Church, for I am certain that there is no salvation outside her communion, at least for me." The Cardinal noticed the apparent limitation, and in the name of the Holy See rebuked it, and asked: "Does not Il Signore Brownson believe there is no salvation for no one out of the Church?"

"Answer to Objections," *Brownson's Quarterly Review*, October 1874 , p.438; *Works*, XIX, p.173.

21 *The Loyolas and the Cabots, Part II: A Documentary Summary*, St. Benedict Center Archives, 1970, p.40.

22 *Idem*, p.41.

23 *Idem*, p.42.

24 The extremely liberal John Deedy writes:

"...It seems a mistake...not to have given Feeney the doctrinal hearing he desired, or at least to have thrown open the salvation topic to the theological ... community for debate Likewise it seems a mistake to have formalized the excommunication of Leonard Feeney. (The Holy Office declared in its 1953 decree that Feeney 'automatically incurred

excommunication' by displaying 'stubborn disobedience to an order' enjoining him to appear in Rome "before the authorities of the Sacred Congregation.") However much patience, charity and the 'rules' had been abused, the pronouncement of excommunication seems superfluous, coming as it did on top of the silencing, the withdrawal of faculties, interdiction of St. Benedict Center, and other measures. This was over-kill. The church's disapproval of Feeney and his doctrine was more than apparent. A more sensitive reading of the situation, particularly after 1949, should have suggested referral to others than excommunicators. Under the circumstances, the excommunication was excessive. Deedy, *Seven American Catholics*, The Thomas More Press, 1978, pp.119,120.

25 Fr. Karl Rahner, S.J., "Problelem of the 'Anonymous Christian,'" *Theological Investigations*, Volume XVI, The Seabury Press, New York, 1976, pp.283,284.

26 Denzinger, 2319. It is interesting to note that Brownson used the identical word, "meaningless," used by Pope Pius XII:

"It is seldom we meet a Catholic man or woman, priest or layman, who will permit us to say "out of the Church no one can be saved," without requiring us to qualify the assertion, or so to explain it as to make it meaningless to plain people who are ignorant of the subtlties, the nice distinctions, and refinements of the theologians."

Cf. Ryan, p.383, n.9; *Brownson's Quarterly Review*, April 1874, p.221; *Works*, V, p.578.

27 Ryan, pp.452,453, n.58; "Gallicanism and Ultramontaniam," *Brownson's Quarterly Review*, July 1874; *Works*, XIII, p.470.
