Robert Sungenis responds

Mario: Dear Bob,

Re: An Important Message for all Catholics about the Pope

Let me just bring up a few things here. You indicate that the current bishops and JPII himself have embraced errors that contradict the very heart of the Gospel. This is called apostasy. If they have embraced such errors and these errors are public and notorious (that's the canonical criterion), then they have, by divine law, lost their office (Canon 188.4, 1917 Code; Paul IV, Cum Ex Apostolatus).

R. Sungenis: Cum Ex Apostolatus is only enforceable by a canonical court of law, not you or me. That was the whole point of my essay.

Mario: You write that "unless our next pope is strong and orthodox...." Bob, if the Pope is not orthodox, he is not a Pope.

R. Sungenis: If that were true, then the pope could make no mistakes outside of ex cathedra statements, which is certainly not the case.

Mario: Someone who is not orthodox is heterodox, and that means not a Catholic.

R. Sungenis: A person can be unorthodox on one point, but be orthodox on all required dogma. Unless he deliberately and persistenly rejects a dogma, he is Catholic, and neither you nor I have the authority to judge it differently. The magisterium is his judge, not you.

Mario: You are saying that "Unless our next Pope is a Catholic....." It is a matter of divine law, as shown by Pope Paul IV, that a non-Catholic cannot be Pope.

R. Sungenis: No, I'm not saying that. You are reading into my words and creating a straw man.

Mario: Now you speak of losing office, but I say go back further and look at Wojtyla before his "election," and you will see he was already not a Catholic and therefore unable to obtain the pontificate to begin with.

R. Sungenis: Unless Cardinal Woytyla was proved in a canonical court of law to be a manifest heretic, then his ascension to the papal throne is legitimate. Your opinion carries no weight in this argument. It is only what the magisterium determines that counts.

Mario: Again, Pope Paul IV is clear on a non-Catholic being unable to be elected Pope (as is the Catholic Encyclopedia).

R. Sungenis: Certainly, if it can be proved in a canonical court of law that he was not a Catholic prior to his election. The Catholic Encyclopedia does not endorse lay people as vigilante judges.

Mario: I agree no one has the authority to *legally declare* JPII a non-Pope, but no one is doing that. We're talking about DISCERNING his status, not about making a legally binding declaration that by itself binds other Catholics. Whether JPII is Pope or not is first of all a matter of fact, and only secondarily a matter of law. Remember how St. Robert speaks of the fall of NEstorius. Before any official condemnation, the people *discerned* that he had lost his office of bishop because he was no longer a Catholic.

R. Sungenis: Then you're on my side, since what we "discern" is not necessarily what the magisterium discerns. Until if and when the magisterium validates the consensus of "discernment," then it remains just that -- a popular opinion of discernment. Your "discernment," as I said in my essay, can be used to protect yourself, but you have no right to turn your "discernment" into a indisputable legal indictment against the pope, as for example, you do on your website, stating as fact that John Paul II is an anti-pope.

Mario: Didn't Pope Leo II clarify the anathema about Pope Honorius? In any case, I don't think Pope Honorius could be compared in any way to John Paul II. JPII's denial of the Faith is all over the map.

R. Sungenis: I'm not comparing Honorius to John Paul II. I used the example of Honorius only to show that a pope can err in matters of the faith, but not lose his office because of it.

Mario: The authority of St. Robert Bellarmine -- Bob, I can't believe you wrote he has no authority because he is not the Magisterium. Neither was St. Thomas Aquinas the Magisterium and yet his authority is great. St. Robert Bellarmine was declared a Doctor of the Church by Pope Pius XI -- just in time, I would say. :) I know of no other Doctor who has written about the papacy in such detail as St. Robert. I think he is very much an authority on the subject, for he is a Teacher of the Church. I don't see why a Catholic could not listen to him on the issue of heretical "Popes."

R. Sungenis: St. Robert is my patron saint. If anyone would like to give him the benefit of the doubt, it would be me. But the fact is, whether it is St. Robert or St. Thomas, neither of them were the magisterium, and they would both admit to that fact, and did on several occasions. In fact, St. Robert was censored by the reigning pope for a disagreement they had over a point of doctrine.

Mario: But you write that if a Pope can err in statements not ex cathedra, then of course he won't lose his office if he errs. But Bob, Vatican I also teaches the Infallibility of the Ordinary and Universal Magisterium. John Paul II teaches, and the bishops in union with him do as well, that religious liberty is a human right. This falls under the infallibility of the Universal Ordinary Magisterium and therefore proves JPII and his hierarchy to be bogus.

R. Sungenis: Vatian II teaches that religious liberty is a CIVIL human right, not a MORAL human right. I haven't seen John Paul II contradict that teaching, at least not in any official statement. And even if he did, such an error would not mean that he loses his office, since Honorius and many other popes have already shown us that papal error does not mean the pope loses his office.

Mario: Fr. Cekada has done an excellent job putting together the Church's laws and principles about papal elections and loss of office:

http://www.stjosephschurch.net/pope.htm

R. Sungenis: I have read Fr. Cekada's material. I believe he is in error. He simply has not thought out all the issues.

Mario: But let me ask you something:

--DO Catholics and Muslims worship the same God, as JPII and VII teach? (it says they ADORE Him; not just they PROFESS to do so)

R. Sungenis: I've already answered this question at length. You will find it in my dialogues with John Pacheco.

Mario: --Does man as man indeed retain the image and likeness of God, as JPII perfidiously teaches in Redemptor Hominis? This is what JPII teaches in his ordinary Magisterium.

R. Sungenis: I don't know anywhere this has been defined by the Church. If you know of something, I'd be interested to see it. As far as I understand, man retains the image of God but it is a marred image. James 3:9 understands the "likeness of God" as applying to mankind in general, but there is also the perfected image we attain as Christians (Romans 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18)

Concluding with St. Robert: "Then two years later came the lapse of Liberius, of which we have spoken above. Then indeed the Roman clergy, stripping Liberius of his pontifical dignity, went over to Felix, whom they knew [then] to be a Catholic. From that time, Felix began to be the true Pontiff. For although Liberius was not a heretic, nevertheless he was considered one, on account of the peace he made with the Arians, and by that presumption the pontificate could rightly [merito] be taken from him: for men are not bound, or able to read hearts; but when they see that someone is a heretic by his external works, they judge him to be a heretic pure and simple [simpliciter], and condemn him as a heretic." (http://www.sedevacantist.com/bellarm.htm)

R. Sungenis: Unfortunately, one piece is missing, and that is verification of the magisterium. As it stands, anyone who "judged" Pope Liberius as an illegitimate pope would have been wrong, since it is clear from history that he was indeed a legitimate pope.

The Dimond brothers are precisely the epitome of the vigilante judges I condemned in my essay. They are quite deceived. Stay far away from them, Mario. They will corrupt your soul.

R. Sungenis: Unless Cardinal Woytyla was proved in a canonical court of law to be a manifest heretic, then his ascension to the papal throne is legitimate.

Mario: No, because of Canon 188.4, undoubtedly in force in 1978, and because of Cum Ex Apostolatus, which already legally declares that a non-Catholic cannot become Pope. It doesn't say a non-Catholic cannot become Pope when the Church declares him to be a non-Catholic. IPSO FACTO!

R. Sungenis: Mario, this is your whole problem. You think you are the judge. You are not. This is why we are Catholics -- because we have a magisterium, under canon law, that decides these things for us. You are playing with fire, Mario. Objections are one thing; taking the law into your own hands is quite another.

Mario: Wojtyla to publicly defect from the Catholic Faith before 1978 in order to be "non-popeable." And this is he certainly did as is evident, for instance, in his book "Sign of Contradiction." Sorry, Bob, but the facts are not on your side this time.

R. Sungenis: Mario, I'm going to say it one more time: The only way Karol Wojtyla would have been considered a "defector from the faith," as you put it, is by a canonical court of law. If and when they did so, Fr. Woytyla would not have been a candidate for the papacy. But they didn't do so, so there is no "ipso facto" issue here. It is not YOU who decides who is a "defector," whatever you mean by that term in your present state of mind.

Mario: Bob, I know this is inconvenient for you but please face the facts here:

RS: Mario, I'm going to say it one more time: The only way Karol Wojtyla would have been considered a "defector from the faith," as you put it, is by a canonical court of law. <<

Mario: Then Canon 188.4 is meaningless.

R. Sungenis: No, your interpretation of it is meaningless, because you have neither confirmation from the magisterium that your interpretation is right, nor do you have the right to enforce it or impose it on others who don't agree with you.

RS: If and when they did so, Fr. Woytyla would not have been a candidate for the papacy.

Mario: Exactly. In which case Cum Ex Apostolatus would have been meaningless / useless.

RS: It is not YOU who decides who is a "defector," whatever you mean by that term in your present state of mind.

Mario: We are Catholics, not gnostics. Someone who is in public and notorious heresy cannot hold Catholic office. Bob, I didn't make these laws. God did. I do not mean to be rude, bothesome, or harsh, but this is too serious business to pass over. You are simply wrong in what you're writing out there on this matter.

R. Sungenis: That's right. It is "too serious." That's why I've told you what I have told you. Vigilante Catholicism never works, Mario. Stop circumventing the canonical process. The "God" you mentioned above put it there for a reason -- to stop precisely what you are trying to do.

Mario: Please tell me then what Canon 188.4 means. It reads: "188: Any office becomes vacant UPON THE FACT and WITHOUT ANY DECLARATION by TACIT RESIGNATION recognized BY THE LAW ITSELF if a cleric: (4) publicly defects from the Catholic faith."

For the record, YOUR argument was that "there is no ipso facto issue here" and that "The only way Karol Wojtyla would have been considered a defector from the faith, as you put it, is by a canonical court of law." The text of Canon 188.4 *plainly* disproves you on both counts. It specifically says WITHOUT DECLARATION and UPON THE FACT (ipso facto).

R. Sungenis: Mario, you're just proving my point.

First of all, Canon 188.4 of the 1917 Code is no longer in force, since that code has been

superceded by the 1983 code. (And you can't argue that the 1983 code has no force, since you can't use as proof what you haven't proven, that is, that John Paul II has no power to enforce the 1983 canon because he is not the pope).

Second, even if canon 188.4 were in force, the clause "publicly defects from the Catholic faith" is not defined, so your attempt to confine it to when YOU think the pope has defected is simply begging the question. Unfortunately, you seem to think that if the pope says something wrong doctrinally in public, then he loses his office, but you simply have no proof for that assertion. If that were the case, then Honorius, John XXII, and many other popes would have lost their office, but the Church gives not the slightest hint that such was the case. Again, since the Church knew that a pope could speak a doctrinal error in public, this was precisely the reason Vatican I limited the times a pope would speak without error, and that is only in an ex cathedra statement. This was done precisely to stop vigilantes like you from declaring the pope a non-pope based on your personal judgment of whether or not he made an error.

So, not only do you operate with an outdated canon, the very canon to which you appeal doesn't prove your argument.

RS: First of all, Canon 188.4 of the 1917 Code is no longer in force, since that code has been superceded by the 1983 code.

Mario: Bob, we're speaking about 1978 when Wojtyla was supposedly elected to the Papacy. The 1917 Code was very much in force then. Besides, I would think that as Cum Ex Apostolatus indicates, the loss of office of a Catholic cleric who is publicly and notoriously guilty of defection from the Faith is a matter of divine law. But no need to argue this point. We're talking about 1978, not 2005.

R. Sungenis2: Yes, but we are talking about your attempt to depose a pope based on what you think is heresy in 2005. If we were only talking about John Paul's election, then, of course, we would also have to consider Paul VI's "The Election of the Roman Pontiff" in 1975 which modified some of the strictures of both the 1917 code and Cum Ex Apostolatos Officio.

RS: Second, even if canon 188.4 were in force, the clause "publicly defects from the Catholic faith" is not defined

Mario: You're being silly! The word "Catholic" isn't defined either, not throughout the whole Code probably! The words "the" and "tacit" and "resignation" and "is" etc. all aren't defined! Bob, you are really grasping for straws now. Canon 188.4 flatly and completely refutes your position, and you're not willing to concede it.

R. Sungenis2: Mario, in a court of law, only technical and operative words that have more than one meaning and application need to be defined. You are the one grasping for straws.

Mario: Obviously, heresy and apostasy qualify for "defection from the Faith," wouldn't you think? We don't have to be any stricter than that, but obviously heresy and apostasy qualify.

R. Sungenis2: You're begging the question. If heresy, without qualification, is a "defection from the Faith," then I would say YOU have defected from the faith, because you hold a heretical view of the papacy. Two can play that game, Mario. In fact, there are several times I could have accused you of "defecting from the faith" by your saying erroneous things about the faith. But I don't do that. Why? Because the so-called defection would have to be persistent and unrepentant with full cognizance of what you are saying, and all those qualifications would have to be judged by a competent authority for me to even consider that they had any validity for judgment against you. This protocol protects us from all the kooks and vigilantees.

Mario: But you still haven't told me what the REAL interpretation of Canon 188.4 is. I will not let this slip! You have told me my interpretation is wrong; now you tell me what the real interpretation is. The whole POINT of Canon 188.4 is TACIT resignation WITHOUT ANY DECLARATION. That is there to protect the Church. Imagine if somewhere in the jungle a bishop started preaching Voodooism....I suppose the poor faithful would have to wait till Rome finds out about it and declares him a non-Catholic? This is silly!

R. Sungenis2: If John Paul II had said something like: "I reject the Catholic faith," that, of course, would make it a lot easier for us to accuse him, but even then, this statement would have to be adjudicated by the proper authorities to see if it was not merely an inadvertent sin as opposed to being a persistent, deliberate and unrepentant belief of his. If the latter was determined, then, yes, ipso facto, he would lose his office, and the college would go about electing another pope. They would need no "declaration" to do so, since the loss of office is automatic, legally speaking.

But the crucial distinction you are missing is that they would not need a "declaration" only if they have legally determined beforehand that the "defection from the faith" was a real defection (e.g., persistent, deliberate, unrepentant, etc). That is done in a canonical court of law, not in the public thoroughfare as you are doing.

Moreover, slips of the tongue, mistaken judgments, incomplete ideas, ambiguities, judgments made on false information, judgments made under duress, faulty interpretations, etc, do not qualify as "defections from the faith." That is precisely why Honorius, even though he made an error, was not the example of a "defector," and that is why no one spoke of deposing him from office.

RS: Unfortunately, you seem to think that if the pope says something wrong doctrinally in public, then he loses his office, but you simply have no proof for that assertion.

Mario: No, I said "publicly defects from the Catholic Faith." John XXII wasn't in heresy, he was not denying dogma. And, well, Pope Honorius is another can of worms, quite a difficult matter in which we seem to have contradictory positions (e.g. the condemnation by the council but then Pope Leo II "moderating" that condemnation). Besides, it is very questionable whether the letter to Sergius qualifies as "public."

R. Sungenis2: Sounds like there are a lot of "questions" still remaining to be answered for you in order to determine whether John Paul II has "defected" from the faith. Don't you think you should leave this in more competent hands?

Mario: But I'm not arguing JPII *lost* his office. I'm saying he never obtained it.

R. Sungenis2: Same difference. Both are based on the fact that you think he "defected from the faith." You have what you think is evidence to support this belief, but in a canonical court of law your "evidence" is just as good as the evidence of the defense attorney who opposes you, at least until the judge and jury decides which evidence is valid.

RS: Again, since the Church knew that a pope could speak a doctrinal error in public, this was precisely the reason Vatican I limited the times a pope would speak without error, and that is only in an ex cathedra statement.

Mario: Remember, the Ordinary and Universal Magisterium is just as infallible as an ex cathedra statement. And that's where the VII hierarchy fails the test: they ordinarily and universally teach religious liberty (among other heresies). And you have yet to answer that point, Bob. You said that VII teaches it's a civil right, not a moral right, when it specifically says that it is to BECOME a civil right BECAUSE it is a HUMAN right.

R. Sungenis: Mario, I don't know from what planet you get your paradigms, but civil rights don't come out of a vacuum. They exist because we are humans, not monkeys. As humans, we have the divine and human right not to be coerced into a religions belief, since God gave us all free will to decide whom we would follow. THAT, and that only, is the message of Dignitatis Humanae, and your attempt to make it say otherwise, or to denigrate and dismiss that teaching, simply has no resonance with me. If THAT is what you call a "defection from the faith," then it is you who has either defected or are simply misconstruing what is being taught in DH. Don't risk your Catholicism on something so tenuous.

RS2: If we were only talking about John Paul's election, then, of course, we would also have to consider Paul VI's "The Election of the Roman Pontiff" in 1975 which modified some of the strictures of both the 1917 code and Cum Ex Apostolatos Officio.

Mario: In that case let's go straight to Roncalli and his modernism prior to 1958.

R. Sungenis3: You are begging the question again, Mario. No authoritative body of the Church ever applied Cum Ex Apostolatos Officio or 188.4 to Roncalli prior to his papacy, and therefore you have no basis to say he was not qualified to be pope. All you have are suspicions, innuendos and circumstantial evidence, but no pope will be deposed on such hearsay.

RS2: Mario, in a court of law, only technical and operative words that have more than one meaning and application need to be defined. You are the one grasping for straws.

Mario: So then Canon 188.4 is defective and unusable because it doesn't define what it says? Absurd. You are gagging Canon 188.4!

R. Sungenis3: No, canon 188.4 works the way it was intended. It is your interpretation of it that is defective.

Mario: As I said, we don't need to be strict here about what constitutes defection from the Catholic Faith, but surely heresy and schism would qualify? If not, what DOES constitute defection from the Faith? You can tell me it's not what I think, but what do YOU think it means? If "public defection" is meaningless because it isn't defined (and if it IS meaningful, then we need no extra definition), then you cannot say we need a canonical court either because "public defection" has no meaning, and if it has no meaning, it has no meaning for us OR for a canonical court.

R. Sungenis3: No, you DO need to be strict here about definitions. It’s all about making the proper distinctions, and he that doesn’t will fall into error. Even the terms “heresy” and “schism” have varying degrees of meaning and application (e.g., material heresy versus formal heresy).

RS2: You're begging the question. If heresy, without qualification, is a "defection from the Faith," then I would say YOU have defected from the faith, because you hold a heretical view of the papacy.

Mario: But I don't critique that view of yours on principle. If I hold to a heresy, then yes, I have defected from the Catholic faith. No argument there.

RS: Two can play that game, Mario. In fact, there are several times I could have accused you of "defecting from the faith" by your saying erroneous things about the faith. But I don't do that. Why? Because the so-called defection would have to be persistent and unrepentant with full cognizance of what you are saying, and all those qualifications would have to be judged by a competent authority for me to even consider that they had any validity for judgment against you.

Mario: No, Bob, you are mistaken. The will to violate the law is presumed in the external forum,

as Canon 2200.2 says. So that means if I were a public figure and violated a law of the Church, the presumption would be against me. That's why I can say that if Wojtyla (before 1978) preaches heresy in the external forum, we must assume he knows better until the contrary is proved, as the canon says. Now note I say HERESY, not merely doctrinal error.

R. Sungenis3: We can “presume” all we want, but whether our presumption is, indeed, fact is another story altogether. Just the fact that Canon 2200.2 adds “until the contrary is proven,” means that the Canon anticipates that a juridical authority will prove or not prove whether the “presumption” is valid and warrants further action. In fact, Canonist Michels says: “Here the law rightly presumes that a violation of a law takes place deliberately and freely, and thus with criminal intent, until from concrete external circumstances the violation of the law is proven to have been undertaken without any fault (or at least grave moral fault) or out of juridical fault alone” (De Delictis, 1:134), showing that it is possible to have a presumed violation of law be “without any fault.”

This is precisely what we do in ordinary life. Someone is presumed to be guilty of a crime because of external evidence. The district attorney must then bring the case to court and formally prosecute the defendant. The judge and/or jury will determine whether the DA’s evidence is valid for a conviction or not. The defendant may, indeed, be found not guilty or released by: plea of insanity, a mistrial, a technicality, because he was framed, or because he actually did not do the crime, but it only looked like he did. Only a court of law has the right to make those decision, not you or I. We can only bring our “presumptions” to the court for adjudication.

RS2: If John Paul II had said something like: "I reject the Catholic faith," that, of course, would make it a lot easier for us to accuse him, but even then, this statement would have to be adjudicated by the proper authorities to see if it was not merely an inadvertent sin as opposed to being a persistent, deliberate and unrepentant belief of his.

Mario: Bob, we don't need to continue. This is so ridiculous and absurd. According to you, I cannot know that my neighbor who goes to synagogue every Saturday, celebrates Passover and Hanukkah, isn't actually a Catholic.

R. Sungenis3: No, Mario, the problem is that you don’t understand the legal side of life. And until you do, you’re going to be caught in the same quicksand you’re in now.

RS.: If the latter was determined, then, yes, ipso facto, he would lose his office, and the college would go about electing another pope. They would need no "declaration" to do so, since the loss of office is automatic, legally speaking. But the crucial distinction you are missing is that they would not need a "declaration" only if they have legally determined beforehand that the "defection from the faith" was a real defection (e.g., persistent, deliberate, unrepentant, etc). That is done in a canonical court of law, not in the public thoroughfare as you are doing.

Mario: Wait a minute now. You're saying that a canonical court is needed to determine whether someone has publicly defected from the Catholic Faith, and when they have determined that this is so, then they don't need to issue a declaration that this is so? Bob, you can't possibly believe that yourself. In fact, I wonder if you would repeat what you have just said in public.

R. Sungenis3: This is all going out to the public, Mario, because I'm determined to stop you in your tracks with this sedevacantism. It is not "declared" because it is referring to people outside the canonical court who presume a crime has been committed. They don't "declare" anything because they have no recourse or need to declare it. They can only "presume," and then pass it to the proper authorities.

Mario: Look, my position is very brief and simple: when a cleric publicly defects from the Catholic Faith, then he loses his office and membership in the Catholic Church IPSO FACTO without any declaration. You say no, a declaration is needed. I quote Canon 188.4, you dismiss it as unintelligible, since it doesn't define what "public defection" means, even though we have canonists and theologians speak of when a heresy becomes public and notorious.

R. Sungenis3: Don't confuse what I said. I didn't say Canon 188.4 was "unintelligible." I said your definition is faulty. You've even proved my point about the ambiguity in the term, since you now add "notorious" to the connotation of "public defection."

RS: Moreover, slips of the tongue, mistaken judgments, incomplete ideas, ambiguities, judgments made on false information, judgments made under duress, faulty interpretations, etc, do not qualify as "defections from the faith."

Mario: I agree with you (barring the "fault interpretations" perhaps), but this does no damage to my position.

R. Sungenis3: Sure it does, since, by your own definitions, you need to prove that the “defection” was “public AND notorious” in order for you to conclude that John Paul II cannot be the pope.

RS2: Sounds like there are a lot of "questions" still remaining to be answered for you in order to determine whether John Paul II has "defected" from the faith. Don't you think you should leave this in more competent hands?

Mario: No, I don't think there's much that remains to be answered, esp. since JPII is more than happy to demonstrate his false theology in practice. To believe that this man is sincere in his errors, you'd have to believe he is a complete idiot, and we both agree he isn't stupid. But anyway, all I go by here is canon 2200.2, which was in effect in 1978, which says that the presumption is against the accused.

R. Sungenis3: But your interpretation of Canon 2200.2 is private, and, I might add, faulty.

Mario: But I'm not arguing JPII *lost* his office. I'm saying he never obtained it.

RS2: Same difference.

Mario: Oh no! For when someone is already Pope, then it gets more difficult because he is above church law (thought not divine law).

R. Sungenis3: I know that. I’m talking about the “same difference” in regard to determining whether he has erred in his teaching, not how hard it would be to convict him of it.

R. Sungenis3: Mario, I don't know from what planet you get your paradigms, but civil rights don't come out of a vacuum. They exist because we are humans, not monkeys. As humans, we have the divine and human right not to be coerced into a religions belief, since God gave us all free will to decide whom we would follow. THAT, and that only, is the message of Dignitatis Humanae,

Mario: Here's what DH says: "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."

This is VERY different from what you said. DH says no one is to be forced to act contrary to his own beliefs, privately or even publicly, the reason being that "it is in accordance with their dignity as persons." In other words, a Jehovah's Witness is not to be forced to stop distributing the Watchtower because his human dignity gives him the right to distribute that heretical magazine. That's entirely different from saying that a JW is not to be forced to become a Catholic. Sorry, but your interpretation of DH is at odds with what it actually says.

R. Sungenis3: The JW has a free will to exercise his beliefs in the civil realm, but, as DH says, he is “bound by a moral obligation to seek the truth, especially religious truth.” Thus, the JW has the moral obligation to stop distributing his tracts, and we have the moral obligation to tell him why it is wrong to do so. But he is not to be coerced by any civil or religious power in order to force him to stop his own religious beliefs (“within due limits”). That’s the same reason that God gave Adam and Eve a choice in the Garden of Eden, and it is the same reason that St. Paul never spoke about turning apostates over to the civil magistrate to force them to believe in Christ. The Gospel of Christianity is given so that men make a free will choice. Coercion is not part of the plan of God.