

DRAFT OF A DOGMATIC CONSTITUTION DEFENDING INTACT THE DEPOSIT OF FAITH

PREFACE

1. The Serious Duty to Defend the Deposit

Before God and the Redeemer of the human race, the second Holy Vatican Synod is fully aware that unless the deposit of faith is preserved pure and inviolate, the Church cannot at all fulfill its heavenly mandate to teach, sanctify, and rule so that it may be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (see Mt 5:13-14). The defense of this sacred deposit is not only entrusted to individual pastors as a duty for which they will render an account to the Lord (see Hb 13:17); it especially belongs to all the bishops gathered into one apostolic group by the Spirit of Christ and under the Roman Pontiff.

For the sacred ecclesiastical hierarchy with its pastors and teachers was established so that we may "all attain to the unity of faith" and may no longer be children, tossed by waves and swept along by every wind of teaching arising from human wickedness, from cunning, in the wiles of deceitfulness (see Eph 4:11-14). Upon this hierarchy appropriately falls the duty of which the Apostle warned Timothy: "Guard the deposit, avoiding godless novelties and the contradictions of falsely so-called knowledge, by professing which some have fallen from the faith" (1 Tm 6:20-21).

2. The Mind of the Holy Synod

It has not escaped the Holy Synod that the minds of people today are being disturbed by various pernicious teachings, especially concerning the primary truths about human existence, that is, about the origin, nature, and purpose of man's life on earth and about the way by which one can come to God and to full inner happiness. The same Holy Synod also knows that many other seeds of error are being strewn with the result that the faithful are sometimes being burdened by anxiety and that many are no longer maintaining sound doctrine but are turning away from listening to the truth and turning instead to fables (see 2 Tm 4:4). For this reason, the conciliar Fathers, that they might religiously fulfill the task entrusted to them and might show people today the way by which they can safely seek and find God and his only-begotten Son, consider it their duty to bring forward certain truths from the deposit God entrusted to Holy Church, especially those that concern the foundations of religion itself, and in the chapters that follow to present those truths concisely and to defend them from errors, for the benefit of all the faithful and of all those who seek God with a sincere heart.

CHAPTER I
THE KNOWLEDGE OF TRUTH

3. *Theological Foundation*

Since faith illumines reason and protects it from error,¹ the Holy Synod, relying upon what divine revelation says about the dignity of man created in the image of God (see Gn 1:26-27; Wis 2:23; Sir 17:1); about the mission of Christ who freed us by the truth (see Jn 8:32); about the Holy Spirit sent by the Lord to teach us all truth (see Jn 16:13); and about the Church, the pillar and bulwark of the truth (see 1 Tm 3:15), teaches that by his nature man enjoys the sublime ability to attain the truth, since, if this ability is denied, human reason itself falls and indeed both revelation and faith perish. But, taught by the Spirit of truth, the Church not only firmly acknowledges that man enjoys the ability to understand things as they are in themselves,² but also believes that the human intellect can be and in fact is so elevated by God that, illumined by faith, it can know truths that surpass the grasp of any created mind, until in heaven it gazes face to face upon the First Truth, God One and Three, in the light and splendor of the beatific vision.³

4. *The Truth of the First Principles*

Continually relying on the divine word, the Church has always held that truth is not something merely subjective,⁴ but must rather be considered the singular perfection of the human mind by which that mind can be conformed to the totality of things, as Augustine said: "Reasoning does not make things so; it finds them so."⁵ With equal firmness it has also always held that man's intellect is endowed with the ability to attain necessary and immutable truths⁶ and to make statements about them that are not subject to change.⁷ But because these universal principles, which scholars usually call the principles of identity, contradiction, sufficient reason, and efficient and final causality,⁸ and which are so obvious that they are known almost spontaneously to everyone, are the basis on which the whole edifice of human knowledge rests and upon which indeed the very order of the doctrine of the faith is in some way constructed,⁹ the Sacred Council teaches that no one may in any way call these principles into doubt.

5. *Remedies for the Obscuring of Truth*

From the time when, because of the first Fall, man fell into the slavery of ignorance and the passions, the light of natural reason has been clouded¹⁰ and knowledge of the truth is therefore now rendered more difficult, especially in matters that pertain to religion and morality (see Wis 9:13-19; Rm 1:18-32). For this reason, despite the wondrous progress of all the sciences today, it is only "to divine revelation that must be attributed the fact that matters concerning divine realities, which of themselves are not beyond human reason even in the present condition of the human race, can be known by all easily, with firm certainty, and without the admixture of error."¹¹ Quite rightly, however, has the Church never denied the usefulness and effectiveness of proper dispositions of the whole soul if religious and moral truths are to be known and embraced; indeed, it has always taught that the lack of such dispositions can be the reason why an intellect, held back by the passions and by bad will, does not see correctly and wanders from the truth.¹²

NOTES

¹ See the Vatican Council, Sess. III, Dogmatic Constitution *On the Catholic Faith*, ch. 4 (D 1799).

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² See St. Thomas, *In Ioh.*, ch. 18, n. 11. Also Pius XII, Address to Participants in the First Symposium on Medical Genetics, Sept. 7, 1953 (*AAS* 45 [1953] 601): "Thinkers at every time, based upon sound reason, and Christian thinkers in particular are aware that they must maintain the essential principle: truth is the agreement of the judgement with the being of things determined in itself." See John XXIII, Radio Message, Dec. 22, 1960 (*AAS* 53 [1961] 7-8); and St. Thomas, *Summa theol.*, I, q. 16, a. 1.

³ Vatican I, Sess. III, Dogmatic Constitution *On the Catholic Faith*, ch. 4 (D 1795-96); Pius IX, Letter *Gravissimas inter*, against J. Frohschammer; D 1673.

⁴ Holy Office, Decree *Lamentabili*, prop. 58, condemning the view that "truth is no more immutable than man himself; rather it evolves with him, in him, and through him" (D 2058).

⁵ St. Augustine, *De vera religione*, ch. 39, n. 73 (PL 34, 155).

⁶ Pius XII, Encyclical *Humani generis* (D 2320): "the attainment of certain and immutable truth."

⁷ Holy Office, Decree *Lamentabili*, prop. 58 (D 2058).

⁸ Pius XII, Encyclical *Humani generis*: "The philosophy acknowledged and received in the Church defends the truth and genuine value of human knowledge, the unshaken metaphysical principles--sufficient reason, causality and finality--and lastly the attainment of certain and immutable truth" (D 2320). See Address to Physicians, Sept. 7, 1953 (*AAS* 45 [1953] 601); Address to the Gregorian University, Oct. 17, 1953 (*AAS* 45 [1953] 685); St. Thomas, *Summa contra Gentes*, II, c. 83: "Our intellect knows *being* and the things that in themselves belong to being as being; on this knowledge is based the knowledge of the first principles, such as, '*One cannot affirm and deny at the same time*,' and others like it. Our intellect naturally knows only these principles, but conclusions it knows through them."

⁹ Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *On the Catholic Faith*, ch. 4 (D 1799): "Not only can faith and reason not disagree with one another, but they provide help to one another, since *right reason demonstrates the foundations of faith*;" see Pius XII, Encyclical *Humani generis* (D 2321-2322)

¹⁰ Council of Trent, Sess. V, *De peccato orig.*: "By that sinful offence, the whole Adam, body and soul, fell into a worse state" (D 788). See St. Thomas, I, q. 95, a. 1.

¹¹ Vatican I, Sess. III, Dogmatic Constitution *On the Catholic Faith*, ch. 2 (D 1786). See St. Thomas, I, q. 1, a. 1.

¹² See Pius XII, Encyclical *Humani generis* (D 2324).

CHAPTER II GOD

6. Knowledge of God, the Final Goal of Man

Relying upon the testimonies of divine revelation, the Church has always held that it is in the natural knowledge of the existence of God the Creator that the foundation of all religious life is to be placed insofar as in that knowledge is had a sort of preamble to the knowledge of God himself that comes through faith. It further professes that God, who is love (1 Jn 4:8) and the light of truth (see 1 Jn 1:5), and thus the source of all good things, by whom we were created and from whom we await our eternal happiness, in order to make knowledge of such great importance accessible, has manifested himself to men both by supernatural works of his Providence and by the common works of creation which he so wisely disposed that they bear open witness to him. For he is not far from any of us (see Act 14:17), and "he did not leave himself without testimony, doing good from heaven, giving rain from and fruitful seasons, and filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:16).

7. That God can be Known is Affirmed

Furthermore, the same holy Mother Church believes and teaches that the existence of the invisible God can be known with certainty and therefore can also be demonstrated even by the mere light of natural reason, from the visible works of creation, as a cause is known from its effects.¹ For, "ever since the creation of the world, his invisible attributes of eternal power and divinity are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made" (Rom 1:20).

8. An Argument from the Perfections of the World

Indeed, the holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church² by various and very strong arguments have demonstrated that God is "the cause of the organized universe, the light by which truth is known, and the spring from which happiness may be drunk."³ For truly the incomparable magnificence and beauty that are observed in the world and the wonderful order with which all things powerfully and constantly pursue their ends most certainly proclaim a most wise and powerful Author and Governor, that is, a personal God;⁴ so that they must be considered foolish who look at the works but do not acknowledge who their workman was, and who are delighted by their beauty but do not consider how much more beautiful is their ruler (see Wis 13:1-5).⁵

9. An Argument from the Imperfections of Creatures

The imperfections that are present in all the things of this world, for example, mutability, inconstancy, causal dependence, contingency, limitation, and others of this sort, plainly show that such realities were not engendered by themselves or by other worldly principles that labor under the same imperfections, but drew their origin from a Creator transcending the world who possesses all perfections. But, while the Church considers these arguments stronger, she does not neglect nor disparage other arguments, for example, those which argue from man's innate desire for happiness or from the absolute obligation of the moral law; for these too have their effectiveness and are very suitable for at least some people.

10. Rejection of Errors

Since, therefore, the existence of the one true God is so splendidly manifest, the blindness of

those who wretchedly reject God is all the more deplorable.⁶ For this reason, the Holy Synod condemns first the error of those who, regarding matter to be the one universal principle, utterly deny God⁷ and indeed are impiously striving, even by the use of force, to eradicate the name of God from the minds of men. It also rejects the error of those who, abusing a falsely so-called philosophy or science, substitute for the personal God impersonal or merely ideal and therefore useless fictions, or who, rejecting a demonstration based upon objective truth, profess that the existence of God rests only on a subjective and merely voluntary adherence of the mind to God.⁸

11. A Commendation of the Doctrine about God

Finally, the Holy Synod warmly encourages the faithful to value above all other goods the correct doctrine about God which they have received, to guard it carefully, to defend it from attacks, to take it as a norm for their whole life, and not to devote their energies to beclouding the arguments by which the human mind is raised to God, but instead to work at explaining them.⁹ Lastly, all should always remember that they were baptized in the name of the living God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, so that they might believe and serve the God who in his great love revealed himself to us in the Lord Jesus (see 1 Jn 1:1-3; Eph 2:4).

NOTES

¹ Pius IX, Letter *Gravissimas inter* (against Frohschammer), December 11, 1862 (D 1670); Vatican Council, Sess. III, Dogmatic Constitution *On the Catholic Faith*, ch. 2 (D 1785) collated with canon 1 (D 1806); *Antimodernist Oath*, September 1, 1910 (D 2145); Pius XII, *Humani generis*, August 12, 1950 (D 2317).

² St. Gregory Nazianzen, *Orat.* 28, 6 & 16 (PG 36, 31 and 45); St. John Chrysostom., *Comm. on Romans*, Hom. 3, 2 (PG 60, 412-13); St. Augustine, *Confess.*, XI, 4, 6 (PL 32, 811); *Sermo.* 141 (PL 38, 776-78); *De libero arbitrio*, II, 7, 15 to 15, 39 (PL 32, 1249-62); St. Thomas, *Summa theol.*, I, q. 92, a. 3; *In Ev. Ioh.*, Prol. in prol. St. Jerome; see Pius XI, Encyclical *Studiorum duces*, June 29, 1923 (*AAS* 15 [1923] 317); Pius XII, *Address to the Pontifical Academy of Science*, Nov. 22, 1951 (*AAS* 44 [1952] 31f).

³ St. Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, VIII, 10, 2 (PL 41, 235).

⁴ Pius XII, Encyclical *Humani generis* (D 2317); see *Ibid.* (D 2325); see Pius XI, *Mit brennender Sorge*, March 14, 1937 (*AAS* 29 [1937] 149).

⁵ See also Rm 1:20-21.

⁶ Pius XI, *Mit brennender Sorge* (*AAS* 29 [1937] 148-50); Decree of the Holy Office on Communist Parties, July 1, 1949 (*AAS* 41 [1949] 334).

⁷ Vatican I, Sess. III, Dogmatic Constitution *On the Catholic Faith*, ch. 1 (D 1782-84) and the corresponding canons (D 1801-1805). See Pius XII, Encyclical *Humani generis* (D 2306 and 2323).

⁸ St. Pius X, Encyclical *Pascendi*, September 8, 1907 (D 2072-74); Pius XII, Encyclical *Humani generis* (D 2325).

⁹ Pius XII, Encyclical *Mediator Dei* (AAS 39 [1947] 525-26).

CHAPTER III
THE CREATION AND EVOLUTION
OF THE WORLD¹

12. The Creation of the World at the Beginning of Time

The divinely inspired account of the creation of the world is of supreme importance both for attaining a correct notion of God and for professing the true religion, since God's supreme dominion over men rests upon that creation. The second Holy Vatican Synod, supported by the testimony of the Word of God written and handed down, therefore again confirms the doctrine many times asserted by the Church's Magisterium and states that the whole world was so created by God out of nothing that it began the course of its existence at some point. For only "the true God, out of his goodness and omnipotent power, not to increase his happiness nor to acquire it, but to manifest his perfection through the goods which he gives to creatures, in utter freedom created simultaneously at the beginning of time and out of nothing creatures both spiritual and corporeal, that is, angelic and mundane, and then the human creature, a common creature, composed of spirit and body."²

13. Rejection of Materialistic and Pantheistic Evolutionism.

Most opposed to this doctrine is the materialistic evolutionism that maintains that the world, which incessantly changes and develops, did not take its origin from God and is not governed by him and that in its progress all that happens is that unmade matter continually changes and that out of it are brought forth new and more perfect structures that were, therefore, already in some way pre-contained in unmade matter. But the dogma of creation is also openly distorted by that pantheistic evolutionism whose proponents do indeed admit that the world comes from a single and immaterial principle, which they call divine, but mistakenly conceive things, as if the world were nothing but the totality of the changes, especially in the life of the human spirit, that are produced by the gradual self-evolution of that principle. Of these two views, the first utterly destroys the notion of God and religion, while the other clearly confuses religious matters, attributing to God what is mundane and human and to man and the world what is divine.

14. False Modern Views on the Creation and Evolution of the World.

The children of the Church should also take care not to be deceived by erroneous opinions and so to distort any of the revealed truths. They must not corrupt the concept of creation by imagining that it consists in this: that God gradually brings into unity some primordial multiplicity of realities already existing before any divine action. They must not weaken the Catholic doctrine on the subsistence of the world in itself and on the utter simplicity and perfection of God, by daring to think that God so directs the world's evolution that he is gradually gathering all things into himself, that he is somehow joining them to himself, and that he thus in some way becomes a participant in the world's construction. Neither scientific investigation nor sound philosophy can give suitable arguments for maintaining such false opinions.

15. The Doctrine of the Faith and True Scientific Study of Evolution.

The things which a science worthy of the name prudently studies about the evolution of the world and which it is able to present, not as conjecture, but as really certain, whether they concern the formation of the universe's shape, or the history of the earth and the manifold development of life

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on it, or even the origin and growth of the human race, bring no harm to the doctrine of the faith; to the contrary they provide suitable help to illumine it. For "there can never be any real disagreement between faith and reason, since the same God who reveals his mysteries and infuses faith also gave the light of reason to the human mind."³ The appearance of contradiction that sometimes arises between scholars in the sacred and the profane sciences arises chiefly from the fact that "either the dogmas of faith have not been understood and expounded according to the mind of the Church, or that uncertain theories are taken for verdicts of reason."⁴ But the conclusions of scientific investigations of this sort do not equal in dignity or in certainty the judgements of faith to which, helped by the light of grace, we cleave with the firmest possible assent, relying upon God himself, who is the supreme truth. Therefore, certain questions concerning the evolution of the world, which directly or indirectly touch upon the Catholic faith, are to be treated with supreme caution, so that the genuine statements of faith are not contradicted or endangered. Individual believers should be prepared to submit to the judgement of the Church, to which Christ entrusted the task of guarding and interpreting the deposit of faith.⁵

16. *The Creation of Man and the Evolution of Life.*

As for scientific investigation of the beginnings of life, especially with regard to the question whether the human race might have originated from some earlier living organism, Catholic doctrine about the composition of man from spirit and matter, which essentially differ from one another, must above all be preserved; and the same is true of the doctrine about the immediate divine creation of each man's soul from nothing, so that it may not in any way be admitted that the human soul arose from some vital principle already somehow existing before. Moreover, the first origin of the human body must be treated with supreme moderation and caution, for this topic does not concern only the natural sciences, but in part philosophy also; indeed it touches upon many truths contained in the sources of divine revelation, for example, the statements of faith about the special intervention of God in forming the bodies of the first parents and those about the wondrous state of original justice in which they were first created.⁶

NOTES

¹ The first three paragraphs of this Constitution deal first with the creation of the world *in general* according to *Catholic faith* and then with *philosophical* doctrines opposed to that faith on this matter. The last two paragraphs deal with the *doctrine of faith* with regard to creation, especially with regard to the *creation of man*, and with its relationship to *scientific investigations*.

² Vatican I, Sess. III, Dogmatic Constitution *On the Catholic Faith*, ch. 1 (D 1783); see Lateran IV, ch. 1 (D 428).

³ Vatican I, *On the Catholic Faith*, ch. 4 (D 1797).

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ See Pius XII, Encyclical *Humani generis* (D 2326).

⁶ See Pius XII, Encyclical *Humani generis* (D 2327).

CHAPTER IV
PUBLIC REVELATION AND CATHOLIC FAITH

17. The Catholic Notion of Revelation

The external and public revelation¹ by which the object of Catholic faith was divinely communicated to the Church is that act of speaking by which the most kind God, once through the prophets and last of all in the Son, testified to the mysteries of salvation and to related truths, prescribing for all "the obedience of faith" (Rm 16:26).² God, who also teaches inwardly, so that individuals may be able to receive "the word of salvation" (Acts 13:26) as they should, adds to the gift of external revelation the illumination and inspiration of grace to make it a joy to consent to and believe in the truth.³

18. Revelation and the History of Salvation

Among the objects of divine revelation, the clearest and most important is the long series of saving events that finally reaches its summit in the life, death and resurrection of Christ, and in it are announced to us the loftiest mysteries. For this reason, although it must be admitted that revelation was given to us in the history of human salvation, whether foretold or narrated,⁴ it is not at all to be thought that revelation was already so constituted by those mere events that it is only secondarily completed by the words of Christ, the Son of God, and of other divine legates. For those events belong to the revealed order of salvation only because of the mysteries that are hidden in them or connected to them, truths declared to us by the words of Christ or of God's legates and to be held by us in faith.⁵

19. Revelation and Doctrine

Revelation, furthermore, besides the mysteries displayed in the individual facts of the history of salvation, also contains universal truths of both the natural and supernatural orders; and it primarily regards God himself, whom the elect are to gaze upon in heaven in the ineffable mystery of the three divine Persons. That is why the Fathers of the first Vatican Synod rightly called the sum-total of revealed truths by the term "the doctrine of faith;"⁶ in this they were following our Lord, who states, "My doctrine is not mine, but his who sent me" (Jn 7:16), and the Apostle, who writes to Titus about the holy life Christians must live, so that by worthy lives "they might adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things" (Tt 2:10).⁷

20. Revelation and the Manifestation of Christ

The fullness of divine revelation is rightly said to have appeared in Christ, the Son of God,⁸ not only because he, the author and finisher of faith (see Hb 12:2), taught men the chief truths of faith, but also because by his whole life he showed us the way of salvation. It remains true, nonetheless, that it is because of the teaching of Christ that his whole life has the character of a divine testimony and that the whole mystery of Christ is to be believed because of the authority of God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. It cannot be held, therefore, that divine and Catholic faith is primarily constituted by an experience in which the whole mystery of Christ and everything revealed in it is perceived to be true, and only secondarily consists in the act by which the things that were reached first and in a higher degree in the experience are expressed in concepts and words. Rather, Catholic faith includes both an acknowledgment of the teaching authority of God and an assent, because of his authority, to the revealed truths as they are presented for belief by the Church.⁹ But this faith, perfected by charity and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, can be augmented by the mind of

Christ (see 1 Cor 2:16) to a deeper understanding of revealed truths and indeed by an obscure enjoyment of the mystery of the Son of God, who, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, dwells in the souls of the just.¹⁰

21. Errors Quite Contrary to the Catholic Notion of Revelation

The Catholic notion of revelation is completely abandoned by those who mistakenly maintain that God cannot, through legates instructed or inspired by him, communicate with man by means of express words or also in Sacred Writings. The same thing is to be said about some others who are of the view that divine revelation produced not only the religion of the Old and New Covenants but also, though more imperfectly, produced all the religions, and that revelation consists in the fact that religious men, in order to be able to gaze upon the absolute towards which the human mind is borne, choose sacred things for themselves and fashion notions for themselves, which, even if they do not correspond to reality, nonetheless help the mind somehow to search for God.¹¹

22. A Recent Form of Relativism

There is also a dangerous departure from the truth in those who think that the statements and concepts by which, even though incompletely and imperfectly, revealed truths are communicated, are incapable of quite truly expressing divine realities. They think that the statements and concepts are to be regarded as approximations, ever changeable and ever in need of whatever correction may be required by some higher sense of the mystery believed or by some change in the way men think. On the contrary, the God who reveals and the Church which with God's aid carries out the task of guarding and interpreting the whole of revealed truth often clearly indicate that they do not intend to speak only symbolically but often also properly and truly and therefore demand a full and immutable assent to the doctrine of faith, understood in that sense which their words and statements display.¹²

23. The Signs of External Revelation

The saving faith by which we believe God proceeds from a light divinely instilled in the mind, as John says, "The Son of God has come and has given us understanding that we might know the true God and be in his true Son" (1 Jn 5:20). Since that grace of faith lies hidden in the mind, however, the most wise God, wishing the submission of our faith, which comes from hearing, to be in accord with reason (see Rm 10:17 and 12:1), joined to the internal aids of the Holy Spirit manifold signs of revelation, and especially external signs, befitting the public character of revelation and the social nature of those called to faith. And these signs make it possible for right reason to prove by certain arguments the divine origin of revelation.¹³

24. A Certain Priority of Miracles and Prophecies

Because of the weight and the clarity of the argument which they offer, the most important of these signs are miracles and prophecies,¹⁴ as the first Vatican Council most wisely taught.¹⁵ It is only because of false prejudiced opinions that these signs are either absolutely denied or greatly weakened; about these signs, however, Our Lord declared: "The works which the Father has granted me to accomplish, these very works which I am doing, bear me witness that the Father has sent me" (Jn 5:36); and also, "You search the Scriptures...and they bear witness to me" (Jn 5:39).

25. The Resurrection of Christ, the Messianic Prophecies, Christ Himself

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Now the Church has always considered and still considers the greatest sign to be the bodily resurrection of Christ, which, clearly predicted by him, because of the discovery of the empty tomb and the appearances of the Revivified One himself, has become a shining historical sign. Among the arguments drawn from prophecies, the Church has also considered especially wondrous the fulfilment in Christ Jesus of the prophetic expectation of the Messiah and of his reign. The Lord himself first used this argument (see Lk 24:13-32), and St. Peter also wrote about it: "We have the prophetic word made more sure. You will do well to pay attention to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns" (2 Pt 1:19). Nor should one pass over that the especially illustrious divine sign, which by its clarity is able to draw especially the humble of heart, is Jesus the Teacher himself, whose sublime wisdom and supreme holiness so solidly confirm the testimony which he bore about himself that, while distinguishing between himself and his miracles, he could say, "Even though you do not believe me, believe my works" (Jn 10:38).¹⁶

26. *The Pre-eminence of the Church as Sign*

By its presence even now on earth and by the abundance of gifts with which Christ never ceases to adorn it, the Church in itself stands out among the signs of revelation. "Because of its wondrous growth, outstanding holiness, and inexhaustible fruitfulness in all good things, because of its catholic unity and invincible stability, it is a great and perpetual motive of credibility"¹⁷ and, as it were, a sign raised up among the nations (see Is 11:12).¹⁸

27. *Internal Testimonies and Signs*

So it happens that for those who, moved by God's grace, are seeking faith or those who have already received the light of faith from God, a broad avenue is opened for acquiring and increasing a fitting knowledge of the external signs and proofs which invincibly confirm divine revelation. To these signs and arguments are added many forms of internal witness and internal calls to believe. By these God can so urge the mind on that they can even confirm and corroborate what sometimes remains obscure in the knowledge of the external signs; indeed sometimes, by God's mercy, they can even substitute for the external signs themselves.¹⁹ One should certainly not overlook such internal testimonies and signs by which God, as St. Paul says, shines in hearts (see 2 Cor 4:6); but one should also beware of making too much of them and of thereby slighting the external and more manifest signs. The First Vatican Council, speaking about the signs of Christian revelation, solemnly forbade anyone to think that "men must be moved to faith only by each individual's internal experience or private inspiration."²⁰

28. *Credere Deum, Deo et in Deum*

But if saving faith is prepared and protected by arguments proving the divine origin of revelation, it is not acquired by them; saving faith is, rather, received with humble assent as a gift of God's grace. We do not embrace divine revelation with such faith until that revelation has been presented, as something we must believe, in a judgement that proceeds from the divine light. Indeed, the very act of faith is the full submission of intellect and will by which a person, moved and drawn by the grace of God (see Jn 6:44), is related in his believing to God in three ways: he relies upon God as an infallible teacher [*credit Deo*]; he affirms God in the whole revealed doctrine [*credit Deum*]; and he is freely moved by a holy desire for God our salvation [*credit in Deum*].²¹

NOTES

¹ That revelation is the speech of God to which faith corresponds is clear first from the Sacred Scriptures; see Jn 3:11; 8:25-28; 12:50; 14:10; 17:13; Rm 10:17 on faith from hearing; and Hb 1:1, also cited at the Vatican Council. Add the fact that the deposit of faith, in which is contained the whole revelation to be believed, is called "the Word of God written and handed down." As for the Magisterium, it will not be unhelpful to adduce texts which directly or indirectly help to confirm the notion of revelation as the speech of a witnessing God [*locutio Dei attestantis*] as is stated in the Constitution. This statement seems opportune so that the traditional notion of revelation, which is also grounded in the Scriptures, may be protected against inaccurate views, to which, after Protestant authors, some Catholic theologians are also inclining. The texts of the Magisterium now follow:

Symbol of Epiphanius (D 13): "And we believe in the Holy Spirit, who *spoke* in the Law and preached through the prophets and descended at the Jordan, *spoke* to the Apostles, and dwells in the saints."

Nicene-Constantinopolitan Symbol (D 86): "And we believe...in the Holy Spirit,...who *spoke* through the holy prophets."

Second Council of Constantinople (D 212): "We profess that we hold and preach the faith which from the beginning was given to the apostles by our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, and was *proclaimed* by them to the whole world, and which the holy Fathers professed and explained...."

Fourth Council of the Lateran (D 428-29): "This Holy Trinity... *communicated the doctrine of salvation to the human race*, first through Moses, the holy prophets, and their other servants. And finally the only-begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ,...showed the way of life more clearly."

Council of Florence (D 706): "The holy Roman Church...professes that one and the same God is author of the Old and New Testaments, that is, of the Law, the Prophets, and the Gospel, because by inspiration of the same Spirit, the saints of both covenants *have spoken*."

Council of Trent, Sess. IV, Decree on the Canonical Scriptures (D 783): "...the purity of the Gospel..., which was *promised* of old through the prophets in the Sacred Scriptures and which our Lord Jesus Christ *first promulgated from his own lips*, and in turn ordered that it be *preached* through the Apostles to all creatures as the source of all saving truth and rule of conduct."

Council of Trent, Sess. VI, Decree on Justification, ch. 6 (D 798): "Adults are disposed for that justice when...they conceive faith *from hearing* and are freely led to God."

Pius IX, Encyclical *Qui pluribus*, November 9, 1846 (D 1636): "Indeed, as our holy religion is not invented by human reason but mercifully *disclosed* by God to men, everyone can easily see that this religion *receives all its strength from the authority of God who is speaking*."

Pius IX, *Ibid.* (D 1637).

Vatican I, Sess. III, Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith, ch. 2 (D 1785): "The same Holy Mother Church holds and teaches that...it pleased his wisdom and goodness to *reveal* himself and his eternal decrees..., as the Apostle says, 'In many and various ways God *spoke* of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he *has spoken* to us by the Son' (Hb 1:1f)."

Vatican I, *Ibid.*, (D 1787): "Further, this supernatural revelation...is contained in the *written books* and the unwritten traditions which have come down to us, having been received by the Apostles from *the mouth of Christ* himself or from the Apostles themselves *by the dictation of the Holy Spirit* and have been *transmitted* as it were by hand."

Vatican I, *Ibid.*, ch. 3 (D 1792): "All those things are to be believed with divine and Catholic faith which are contained *in the Word of God written or handed down*;" (D 1793): "God has instituted the Church through his only-begotten Son...so that she may be recognized by all men as the guardian and teacher of *the revealed word*."

Vatican I, *Ibid.*, ch. 4 (D 1800): "*The doctrine of faith* which God has revealed...has been handed on to the Spouse of Christ as a divine deposit." See Sess. IV, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of Christ, ch. 4 (D 1836): "*The revelation handed down* or the deposit of faith..."

Vatican I, *Ibid.*, ch. 3 (D 1791): "...Still no one can 'assent to the *Gospel preaching*' as is necessary to obtain salvation, 'without the illumination and inspiration of the Holy Spirit who gives to all joy in assenting to the truth and believing it,'" collated with the Second Council of Orange (529) (D 178f).

Leo XIII, Epistle *Testem benevolentiae*, January 22, 1899 (D 1967): "Many think that this must be understood not only of the discipline of life., but also of the *doctrines* that are contained in the deposit of faith."

Antimodernist Oath (D 2145): "I sincerely accept *the doctrine of faith* which was handed down to us in the same meaning and always with the same purport from the Apostles through the orthodox Fathers.... I hold most certainly...that faith...is the genuine assent of the intellect to a truth *which is received from outside 'by hearing'*, by which assent, given on the authority of the all-truthful God, we believe to be true what has been *said, attested to, and revealed* by the personal God, our Creator and Lord."

Holy Office, Decree *Lamentabili*, July 3, 1907 (D 2059), condemning proposition 59: "Christ did not teach a definite *body of doctrine* acceptable to all times and to all men, but rather began a religious movement which is and must be adapted to different times and places."

Code of Canon Law, c. 1322, 1: "Christ the Lord entrusted the deposit of faith to the Church so that, with the constant assistance of the Holy Spirit, she might religiously defend and faithfully present the revealed *doctrine*."

Pius XI, Encyclical *Mortalium animos*, January 6, 1928 (*AAS* 20 [1928], 8): "It is therefore clear that there can be no true religion apart from the one which rests upon the revealed *Word of God*." *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12: "Both of Christ's commands..., the one about *teaching* and the other about *believing* in order to obtain eternal salvation, cannot indeed be understood unless the Church presents the integral and clear *Gospel doctrine* and unless in presenting it she is immune from any danger of error." *Ibid.*, p. 14: "revealed doctrines."

Pius XI, Encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge*, March 14, 1937 (*AAS* 29 [1937], 156): "Revelation in the Christian sense is *the Word of God to men* [*Offenbarung in christlichen Sinn ist das Wort Gottes an die Menschen*]."

² See Vatican I, Session III, Canons *On Catholic Faith*: "If anyone should say that human reason is so independent that faith cannot be commanded of it by God, A.S." (D 1810).

³ Second Council of Orange, can. 7 (D 180); Vatican I, Dogmatic Const. on the Catholic Faith, ch. 3 (D 1791).

⁴ St. Augustine, *De vera religione*, XXV, 46 (PL 34, 142): "What was to be done for the human race God wished to make known through history and prophecy" (PL 34, 142).

⁵ On the one hand, the Constitution intends to acknowledge what is true in what many are saying about the historical character of the object of revelation; on the other hand, it intends to reject what is false in what is being said about it. Some people, affected by anti-intellectualism, wish to maintain that revelation is constituted by saving events, to which the discourses of God's legates are only added in subsidiary fashion; this means that Christian faith is assisted by such discourses, but it is not governed by them. George Tyrrell wrote: "Revelation is not a statement, but a 'showing.' God speaks by deeds not by words" (*Through Scylla and Charybdis*, London, p. 287). Many Protestants make similar statements; some Catholics dangerously stress only the historical aspect, only the events in divine revelation.

⁶ Vatican I, Sess. III, Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith, ch. 4 (D 1800).

⁰ The Modernists were already opposing revelation as an experience and impression of events (which they admitted) to revelation as a doctrine divinely presented for belief (which they rejected). So, again, Tyrrell: "Revelation belongs rather to the category of impressions than to that of expression" (*Op. cit.*, p. 280); "Faith is now an intellectual assent to this revealed theology as deriving directly from the divine intellect; it is no longer the adhesion of the whole man, heart, mind and soul, to the divine spirit within--primarily a spirit of life and love and only thereby a guide or beacon leading the mind gradually to a fuller instinctive apprehension of the religious truth implicit in the inspirations of grace" (p. 213). Some Catholics do not sufficiently guard themselves from such views, since they say that God did not reveal doctrine and that the object of faith is history and not doctrine.

⁸ Pius XI, *Mit brennender Sorge*, l.c., p. 150: "The fullness of divine revelation has appeared in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God."

⁹ Vatican I, Sess. III, Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith, ch. 3 (D 1789, 1792).

¹⁰ The tendencies corrected in paragraph 20 are an application to the coming of Christ of the tendencies addressed by the Constitution in the two preceding paragraphs. The views here corrected unduly stress the mystical aspect of faith and unduly play down its doctrinal aspect. Many such views are found among Protestant authors, and some Catholics are somewhat affected by their view.

¹¹ This view, which is not so different from others already condemned in the Decree of the Holy Office, *Lamentabili* (D 2020) and in the Encyclical *Pascendi* (D 2075), is taken from Henri Duméry, who, among other things, says the following: "The subject, penetrated deep within by the presence of the Absolute, can only recognize it by reflecting it; he projects it upon external objects (the sacred) or upon internal objects (the sanctification of his intentions, of his psychological acts, of his conduct)" (*Philosophie de la religion*, vol. II, p. 189, n. 4). "Every religion reveals and is revealed: the process of revelation is identical with the series of measures which consciousness must take in order to strive for the Absolute *through* and *in* the representations which it succeeds in making of it" (*Ibid.*, p. 254, n. 4). "Christianity follows a general rule: it establishes an aspiration for God upon a selection of facts or of objects 'revelatory of God,' according to a process found in all the hierophanies known to history. Its superiority, however, shines in the excellence of its choice: it does not insinuate the sacred into things, nor does it lodge it in beings deprived of reason; it lodges the sacred in men--the biblical writers--especially in one man in whom the 'revelation' culminates because he professes the universal of charity and because one cannot imagine what could be added to the commandment of love" ("Foi, dogmes et sacrements," *Encyclopédie française*, vol. XIX, 19, 38, 10).

¹² This is the form of dogmatic and theological relativism rejected by Pius XII in the Encyclical *Humani generis*, August 12, 1950 (*AAS* 42 [1950] 565-67).

¹³ See Vatican I, Sess. III, Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith, ch. 4 and can. 4 (D 1795, 1813). This paragraph of the present Constitution does not add much that is new (except about the fittingness of external signs to the nature of man); but it is almost necessary to prepare for what follows on the different signs.

¹⁴ That the word "works" means miracles is clear from Jn 9:4-7; 10:12; 15:24, etc.

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¹⁵ Vatican I, Sess. III, Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith, ch. 3 (D 1790).

¹⁶ The teaching of Vatican I is recalled because it is being forgotten by many (D 1795, 1813). The pre-eminence of miracles and prophecies is also explained. A note is added, because it is quite opportune today, on the resurrection of Jesus as a historical sign and on the messianic prophecies. Something is also added on the sign which by his wisdom and sanctity Jesus himself is, lest the Council seem to have neglected this sign which is so important to many of the faithful, drawn towards Christ by divine grace.

¹⁷ Vatican I, Sess. III, Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith, ch. 3 (D 1794).

¹⁸ The pre-eminence of the Church as sign is explained. Nothing is added to the description of the Church as sign given at Vatican I, because any addition would have to take the matter further while not preferring one private opinion to another--and this would, it seems, be difficult.

¹⁹ St. Thomas: "A believer has sufficient motives for believing; for he is motivated by the authority of a divine teaching confirmed by miracles and, what is more, by the inner instinct of God's invitation, so that he does not lightly believe. But because he does not have sufficient motivation for knowledge, his act remains meritorious (*Summa theol.*, II-II, q. 2, a. 9, ad 3). "The inner instinct by which Christ could manifest himself without external miracles belongs to the power of the First Truth which internally illumines and teaches men" (*Quodlib. II*, q. 4, a. 6, ad 3m). In notes to the pre-conciliar drafts of Vatican I, this is said: "It must be held that the inner grace of God supplies what is lacking, for men of this sort [the unlettered], in the external presentation of the faith. But this is no reason for denying a presentation of the faith through motives adapted to their ability and using the necessary diligence, or for reducing the whole matter to inner experience and inner instinct" (*Coll. Lac.*, vol. VIII, col. 1623).

²⁰ Vatican I, Sess. III, Canons on the Catholic Faith, (D 1812).

²¹ See the Council of Trent, Sess. VI, Decree on Justification, ch. 6 (D 798).

CHAPTER V
THE DEVELOPMENT OF DOCTRINE

29. Receiving the Treasure of Truth from Christ

The second Holy Vatican Synod firmly professes that the treasure of truth, by which the Christian life is to be nourished until the end of the world, was received from Christ Jesus, author and finisher of faith (see Hb 12:2), in such fashion that, after it was completed by the Apostles,¹ it could no longer in itself be increased.² For the Apostles, illumined by the Paraclete who taught them all things and reminded them of all that the Teacher had said to them (see Jn 14:26), preached everywhere what he had heard from the Father (see Jun 15:15) and handed it on to their successors as a precious deposit (see 1 Tm 6:20) to be faithfully defended by the Church, supported by the help of the Holy Spirit dwelling within her.³

30. How the Treasure is to be Defended

This treasure is not effectively and fruitfully defended merely by preserving books or by repeating words but by a living magisterium by which the Church truly directs faith and morals,⁴ as this may be required for a genuine understanding of the things revealed,⁵ by the efforts of Christian piety to explore the riches of Christ more deeply,⁶ by the attacks of mistaken men,⁷ and finally by the needs of the times and new questions that need answers.⁸ For these reasons, the Sacred Synod teaches that the very nature of the sacred magisterium entails both the study of the sources of revelation and careful, reverent, and serious reflection on the mysteries themselves.

In no way does such inquiry tear minds away from divine revelation; for in no way does it attempt to exchange what was divinely handed on for human inventions or to substitute them for it.⁹ Its purpose instead is to examine and to explain the riches hidden in revelation itself,¹⁰ making use of means that are strictly connected with the things revealed.¹¹

31. An Affirmation of Doctrinal Development

The Sacred Council, therefore, acknowledges and professes that true development in understanding and presenting the doctrine of faith does take place in Christ's Church, in such a way that new definitions of revealed truth can even be made.¹² But it declares legitimate only a development which consists simply in an increase in human knowledge about revelation, and not in the growth of the deposit itself. For the deposit remains in itself immutable, since any truth that may be proposed newly by the Church is contained therein at least implicitly and therefore is supported by divine authority.

NOTES

¹ Council of Trent, Sess. IV, Decree on the Canonical Scriptures (D 783); Holy Office, Decree *Lamentabili*, July 3, 1907, prop. 21 (D 2021).

² Brief *Eximiam tuam* to the Archbishop of Cologne (against Günther, D 1656); Pius IX, *Syllabus*, prop. 5 (D 1705); Vatican I, Sess. III, Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith, ch. 4 (D 1800).

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³ Vatican I, *Ibid.*, (D 1800); Pius XII, Encyclical *Humani generis* (D 2307, 2313, 2314).

⁴ Leo X, Bull *Exsurge Domine*, June 15, 1520 (D 767); Pius XII, Encyclical *Humani generis* (D 2313).

⁵ Vatican I, Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith, ch. 4 (D 1796); Pius XII, Encyclical *Humani generis* (D 2314).

⁶ Pius XII, Encyclical *Mystici corporis*, June 29, 1943 (*AAS* 35 [1943], 196).

⁷ St. Simplicius, Epistle *Quantum presbyterorum*, January 9, 476 (D159): "...I urge you, my beloved brother, to use whatever means in the synod to resist the efforts of the perverse. A council is never called except when some new and evil view has arisen or some uncertainty appeared in the statements of faith, so that by dealing with it in common, the authority of the priests' deliberation can cast light on what is obscure." St. Gelasius I, Epistle *Licet inter varias*, July 28, 493(?) (D 161); Pius IX, Epistle *Gravissimas inter* to the Bishop of Munich and Frising (against Frohschammer), December 11, 1862 (D 1675); Pius XII, Encyclical *Humani generis* (D 2308); Encyclical *Mystici Corporis*, l.c., pp. 197-98 (*AAS* 35 [1943] 197-98).

⁸ As culture develops, new problems arise, especially in moral matters; but in more speculative orders developments also occur because of recently raised religious needs; see *Mystici Corporis*, l.c., pp. 196-97.

⁹ Pius IX, *Eximiam tuam* (D 1656); *Syllabus*, prop. 5 (D 1705); Vatican I, Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith, ch 4 (D 1800); Sess. IV, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of Christ, ch. 4: "Nor was the Holy Spirit promised to Peter's successors so that by his revelation he might manifest new doctrine, but so that by his assistance they might carefully defend and faithfully explain the revelation given by the Apostles, that is, the deposit of faith" (D 1836).

¹⁰ St. Simplicius, *Quantum presbyterorum* (D 159); St. Gelasius I, *Licet inter varias* (D 1616).

¹¹ Vatican I, Sess. III, Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith, ch. 4 (D 1800), with can. 3 (D 1818); Holy Office, Decree *Lamentabili*, prop. 59-65 (D 2059-65); St. Pius X, Encyclical *Pascendi*, September 8, 1907 (D 2080).

¹² Pius IX, Bull *Ineffabilis Deus*, December 8, 1854 (D 1641); Vatican I, Sess. IV, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of Christ, ch. 3 (D 1831), ch. 4 (D 1838); Pius XII, Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus*, November 1, 1950 (D 2332).

CHAPTER VI PRIVATE REVELATIONS

32. The Value of Private Revelations¹

Since the Lord himself indicated that there would always be charisms and miracles in the Church and the Apostle warned, "Do not extinguish the Spirit" (1 Th 5:19), the Church reverently receives private revelations and other charismatic gifts as long as they show fitting signs of their divine origin; in this it is following the words of the Doctor of the Gentiles, "Test all things, and keep what is good" (1 Th 5:21).

But with regard to private revelations which are claimed to have occurred after the death of the Apostles, the Holy Synod declares that they are to be subjected completely to the judgment of the Church's Pastors, lest the faithful be deceived, since Christ warned, "False prophets will arise and will deceive many" (Mt 24:11). It also declares that they are worthy of consideration only when they are in total agreement with the truths contained in the public treasury of faith and when they promote the living of the Christian life under the leadership of the Pastors. They cannot offer an opportunity to bring forth any ecclesiastical institutions unless they have a dogmatic foundation elsewhere. And, finally, it is never permitted because of them to introduce new doctrines or to begin new undertakings if the Church is unwilling.

It further teaches that we neither must nor can give private revelations, even approved ones, the assent of Catholic faith but only the assent of human faith, according to the rules of prudence if these indicate that such revelations are probable and piously credible.²

The Christian faithful should thus carefully restrain immoderate curiosity about wonders that are not sufficiently approved by the Church's Pastors. For there are people who pursue such things as if the very Deposit of faith were insufficient to nourish the Christian life or as if richer pastures lie before the sheep of Christ outside the Deposit.

33. The Pernicious Practice of Spiritism

Such curiosity becomes truly pernicious when it moves believers to give themselves over to superstitious divination of any form, but especially to that spiritualism that attempts by human effort to evoke sensible communication with spirits or with separated souls in order to attain various information or various helps. "There shall not be found among you anyone who practices divination, a soothsayer, or an augur, or a sorcerer, or a charmer, or a medium, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For the Lord abominates all these things" (Dt 18:10-12).³ The Apostolic See has not neglected in various of its documents to oppose evil spiritualism with appropriate remedies.⁴

34. A Rejection of Practices

In many regions superstition is creeping widely and is being spread more every day, sometimes also deceitfully under the false title of parapsychology, the discipline whose task it is to explain facts that appear to contradict the ordinary laws of psychology. The Sacred Council declares that the divine law prohibits as a very serious sin against religion both to want to call out the souls of the dead and to wish to establish perceptible communications with them or with any other spirits, however it may be done, publicly or privately, even if the intention is to address only good spirits

and the whole exhibition has the appearance of propriety, piety and religion. It forbids all Christians even out of mere curiosity to attend or to promote in any way spiritualist sessions or other meetings of this sort.

35. *The Cult of the Faithful Departed and of Guardian Angels*

The Holy Synod does, however, exhort all the faithful to imitate the example of holy Mother Church by praying for the faithful departed that they may attain the vision of God and intercede with him for us; it also exhorts them to commend themselves to the holy Angels who in God's fatherly providence guard the human race and are ready by direction, assistance, and enlightenment to help individuals not to succumb to their malicious enemies.⁵

NOTES

1. Benedict XIV, *De servorum Dei beatif. et canoniz.* (Prati, 1840), Bk. III, c. 52-53; thus (ch. 53, n. 15): "To [private] revelations, even those approved, we must not and cannot give the assent of Catholic faith, but only that of a human faith, according to the rules of prudence, as these indicate that such revelations are probable and piously credible." See also *Ibid.*, II, 32. Benedict XV, Decretal Letter *Ecclesiae consuetudo*, May 13, 1920; *AAS* 12 (1920) 486.

St. Pius X, Encyclical *Pascendi*, September 8, 1907 (*ASS* 40 [1907], 649): "When a judgement is to be made about pious traditions, one needs to remember that the Church uses such great prudence in this matter that it does not permit such traditions even to be put in writing without great caution and only if the statement of Urban VIII is placed as a preface. Even if this is done correctly, the Church does not assert the truth of the fact but, unless human arguments for believing it are lacking, simply does not forbid its being believed. So, thirty years ago, the Sacred Council for protecting legitimate rites declared (Decree of May 2, 1877): 'Such apparitions or revelations were neither approved nor condemned by the Apostolic See, but only permitted as things to be believed with a merely human faith, according to the tradition they bear, confirmed by suitable testimonies and monuments.' Anyone who holds this will be free of any fear. For devotion towards any Apparition, insofar as it regards the fact itself and is called relative, always has as its implicit condition the truth of the fact; insofar as it is absolute, however, it always rests on the truth, for it is directed towards the very persons of the Saints who are honored."

Pius XI, Encyclical *Miserentissimus Redemptor*, May 8, 1928 (*AAS* 20 (1928) 177-78); Pius XII, Encyclical *Haurietis aquas*, May 14, 1956 (*AAS* 48 [1956] 328, 346-48); see *Ibid.*, p. 340: "not properly having the nature of some private revelation divinely granted."

2. Benedict XIV, l.c.

3. See also Lv 19:31 and 20:6; Is 8:19-20; Jer 27:9; Acts 8:9-23; 16:16-19 and 19:13-20; Gal 5:20; Rev 21:8.

4. Besides the more ancient documents of Alexander IV, *Quod super nonnullis*, Sept. 27, 1258; John XXI (said to be XXII), *Super illius*, 1326; Innocent VIII, *Summis desiderantes*, Dec. 5, 1484; Leo X, *Supernae dispositionis*, May 5, 1514; *Honestis petentium*, Feb. 13, 1521; Sixtus V, *Coeli et terrae*, Jan. 5, 1585; Gregory XV, *Omnipotentis Dei*, March 20, 1623; Urban VIII, *Inscrutabilis*, April 11, 1631, see especially the Encyclical of the Holy Office *on the abuse of magnetism*, Aug. 4, 1856 (*ASS* 1 [1865], 177-78; D 1653-54); the response of the Holy Office, Apr. 24, 1917 (*AAS* 9 [1917]. 168; D 2182); *Code of Canon Law*, c. 1399,7. On spiritualism and related matters at Vatican I, see Mansi 53, 773; CL VII, 784.

5. See Roman Catechism, IV, 9, 4; the hymn *Custodes hominum*; the prayer *Angel of God*.

CHAPTER VII
THE NATURAL AND SUPERNATURAL ORDER

36. God the Author of Nature and Giver of Grace

Since, according to the doctrine of the Scriptures and of the holy Fathers, "what fell in the first Adam is raised in the second,"¹ the Sacred Council believes and professes that almighty God, whose essence is goodness, from the beginning created man in his own image and likeness and destined him to the blessed vision of himself to be gained through the gift of grace.

34. The Great Dignity of Man who by his Nature is Ordained for the Service of God.

Head and crown of all visible beings (see Ps8:6-9)² because endowed with a rational soul in which the image of God shines forth (see Gn 1:27),³ man is by his very nature ordered towards serving God and rendering him the worship of adoration, love and praise.

But in the utterly free decision of his will, God willed to raise man to a share in the divine nature, so that he who by nature is but a slave might by the grace of adoption become a son, one who, enriched with the virtues of faith, hope and love, would worship his Creator not only as Lord, but also as Father, and, when the time of testing is over, would attain eternal life in the perfect possession and enjoyment of God One and Three.⁴

35. The Mystery of our Elevation to the Supernatural Order

Acknowledging the mystery of divine love and returning the most heartfelt thanks to the generous God, the Holy Synod teaches the faithful that so great a gift is at once gratuitous and wondrously suitable to human nature.⁵

For man's exaltation to a share in the divine nature through the grace of adoption, which here on earth is a certain beginning of eternal glory, exceeds all the powers and exigencies of human nature; for that reason it must be said to be a gratuitous blessing of God, or, as the Doctors of the Church, following the teaching of the Fathers, say, a supernatural gift.⁶ "Eye has not seen," said the Apostle, "nor ear heard, nor has it entered the heart of man, what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Cor 2:9).

Following the teaching of the same Fathers and Doctors, however, one must acknowledge in human nature not only a capacity to receive this supernatural gift,⁷ but also its wonderful fittingness. For, created in the image of God, man bears a natural desire that cannot be fully quieted by any finite good⁸, and attains in the vision of God his ultimate and perfect happiness, and when that is reached, there is nothing more to desire.⁹

36. The Supernatural End is the Only End to Which, even after Sin, Man Remains Ordained

From the supreme kindness by which God called us to the supernatural order, it follows that man has only one ultimate end, to which, in God's plan, even after sin, he remains ordered; and, should he not attain that goal, even if he were to have enjoyed the goods of nature in abundance, it means nothing, for he would not have attained even his natural end (see Mt. 16:26).

37. Grace Perfects Nature.

In that supernatural end, however, man's natural end, which he might have been able to attain by the powers of his own nature, is contained as the perfectible in the perfect; and the goods of nature

itself that conform to the heavenly state are preserved and perfected. For the supernatural order neither destroys nor weakens the natural order, but instead raises and perfects it,¹⁰ for it renders it stronger assistance and fulfills its native capacities.

38. Errors are Rejected

The Sacred Council rejects, therefore, the errors both of those who do not properly distinguish between the natural and supernatural orders and assert that man's call to the state of grace and glory is owed to human nature or that it must be granted him by God, and of those who, blinded by naturalism or a false humanism, are so ungrateful for the grace of God that they either spurn those gifts or deny that they are to be desired above all others.

NOTES

1. St. Leo the Great, *Sermon* 12, 1 (PL 54, 168). To this refer all the texts of Scripture which speak of the *reconciliation, restoration, renewal*, etc. effected by Christ; they all seem fittingly drawn together in the words of St. Leo.
2. See also Wis 9:2-3; 10:1-2; Gn 1:28-30; Eccl 17:1-2.
3. See also Eccl 17:1; 1 Cor 11:7; Col 3:10.
4. Pius XII, Encyclical *Mystici Corporis*, June 29, 1943 (AAS 35 [1943] 232).
5. It seems necessary to insist upon the two boundaries of Catholic truth about the mystery of our elevation to the supernatural order, its gratuity and its supreme fittingness; beyond those limits remains only the freedom to err.
6. See the condemned errors of Baius, prop. 21 (D 1021); of Paschasius Quesnel, prop. 35 (D 1385); and of the Synod of Pistoia, prop. 16 (D 1516). See St. Pius X, Encyclical *Pascendi*, September 8, 1907 (D 2103), and Pius XII, Encyclical *Humani generis*, August 12, 1950 (D 2318).
7. St. Pius X, Encyclical *Pascendi* (D 2103): "Here again we must strongly complain that there are Catholics who, seem to admit in human nature not merely a capacity and fittingness for the supernatural order--which Catholic apologists, with proper qualifications, have always demonstrated--but also a full and proper exigency." St. Augustine, *De Trin.*, XIV, 8, 11 (PL 42, 1045): "By the very fact that he is God's image, man is capable of him and can share in him;" see *Ibid.*, XIV, 4, 6 (PL 42, 1040): "because he is capable of the supreme nature and can participate in it, great is man's nature;" St. Thomas, *Summa theol.*, I-II, q. 113, a. 10: "...and in this respect, the justification of the wicked man is not miraculous, because the soul is naturally capable of grace; for by the very fact that it is made in the image of God it is capable of God through grace, as Augustine said;" *Ibid.*, III, q. 9, a. 2, ad 3: "The blessed vision or knowledge is in some ways above the nature of the rational soul, that is, insofar as it cannot reach it by its own power; but in another way it is in accord with his nature, that is, insofar as he is capable of it, that is, insofar as he was made in the image of God, as was said above [in the body of the article]."
8. St. Augustine, *Confess.*, I, 1,1 (PL 32, 661): "You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they rest in you;" St. Thomas, *Summa contra Gent.*, III, ch. 50: "Nothing finite can quiet the desire of the mind."

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9. St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, XII, 1,3 (PL 41, 349): "...[rational nature] was created in such excellence that...it will [not] fulfill its need unless it is happy, and cannot be completely fulfilled except by God." St. Thomas, *Summa theol.*, I-II, q. 3, a. 8: "The ultimate and perfect happiness cannot be anything but the vision of the divine essence." *Ibid.*, I-II, q. 2, a. 8: "It is impossible for man's happiness to consist in any created good." The same view is expressed by authors writing about man's last end, which totally quiets his appetite, who adopt the same argument of St. Thomas.

10. Pius XI, Encyclical *Divini illius Magistri*, December 31, 1929 (D 2206).

CHAPTER VIII
ORIGINAL SIN IN THE CHILDREN OF ADAM¹

42. Introduction

Since also in our time opinions are being spread around about original sin and its transmission to all men that corrupt the authentic notion of faith and damage the very foundations of the Christian life with profane novelties of words (see 1 Tm 6:20), the second holy Vatican Synod considers it necessary again to confirm the doctrine defined by earlier Councils and to state it more strongly.

43. The Dogma of Original Sin is Shrouded in Mystery

In the first place, in order to cut the root of many aberrant opinions, it strongly warns the Christian faithful to remember that original sin is a dogma of faith for the exploration of which human reason does not suffice.

For although the life of man itself, filled as it is with hardships and trials, affords some testimony to the existence of the sin by which the human race was infected from its origins, the inner nature of that sin, as it is presented for belief by revelation, is shrouded in mystery; and this mystery is in some way illuminated by the solidarity of the human race with Jesus Christ the Redeemer (see Rm 5:17-21).

Those, therefore, who are troubled by the difficulty of the question, must be ruled by the rudder of authority, which is the rule of faith; for, even if the nature of original sin is not easy to examine or to explain in words, "nevertheless, that is true which was of old preached by the trustworthy Catholic faith and is believed by the whole Church."²

44. The Original Sin with which Men are Born Infected has the True Character of Sin

As the custom of baptizing even infants also shows, the whole Church always believes and preaches that the sin which is passed on from the one man to the whole human race by propagation or generation is not, as some modern people state, a defect flowing out of the limitations of human nature, or the privation of union with a society of people who are serving God, or the very variety and division under which the whole human race has labored from the beginning, or only a tendency towards evil which all men experience from their birth; rather, although in a different way than is personal sin, it is sin in a true and proper sense, which holds men guilty and drags them towards perdition unless what was contracted by generation is blotted out by a regeneration.

We know from what faith teaches that men are born without the life of God (see Eph 4:18), unjust, dead in their souls, by nature children of wrath (see Eph 2:3); and that, unless they are reconciled to God through the merit of Christ and are reborn in Christ, they cannot attain the eternal life for which they are destined. "For through the misdeed of one," says the Apostle, "condemnation has befallen all men" (Rm 5:18).

45. In what Sense Original Sin is Sin

The Church further believes and professes that original sin, which is in each person as his own, does not draw its sinful character from the fact that by birth a man becomes a member of a corrupt society of men, but from the fact that man is generated in a nature infected by the sin of Adam since he was the beginning, the head and the source of the human nature.³ "In the first Adam we offended [God]," says Irenaeus, witness of the venerable tradition, "by not obeying his command."⁴ And,

similarly, St. Ambrose, Doctor of the Church, says: "We have all sinned in the first man, and through the succession of nature a succession also in guilt has been transmitted from one to all."⁵

46. Through Original Sin the Human Race was Changed for the Worse

The Church also believes and professes that through that transgression of the first parent the whole human race not only lost its innocence with the result that all men since are necessarily born without the justice they should have, but also that the human race itself was changed for the worse both in body and soul.

For by the loss of original justice which Adam lost both for himself and for all his posterity when he transgressed God's command, men have been made subject to the reign of death also of the body and have received the wounds of concupiscence and ignorance. Although their free will has not indeed been utterly extinguished by these wounds, it has been so weakened and has contracted such a bent towards evil, that not only can it do nothing that makes for salvation without the help of prevenient grace, as the Lord said, "Without me you can do nothing" (Jn 15:5), but it is also unable to keep the whole natural law or to avoid sin for long unless it is divinely freed and assisted. But men must never despair after the transgression of Adam. For Adam was the type of the one who was to come (see Rm 5:14), that is, of Christ the Lord who has redeemed us from the power of sin and given us a much more abundant grace. For "the gift is not like the transgression. For if by that one man's transgression the many died, how much more did the grace of God and the gracious gift of the one man Jesus Christ overflow for the many," (Rm 5:15) that is, for all, who are reborn through him from water and the Holy Spirit (see Jn 3:5).

47. The Revelation of Original Sin is Contained in the Epistle to the Romans

Confirming and stating the doctrine of the Council of Trent and of earlier Councils,⁶ this holy Synod holds and maintains that the truth about the original sin which has passed into all men is taught by the Apostle in the Epistle to the Romans, 5:12-19, as the Catholic Church throughout the world has always understood those words.

48. The Doctrine of the Common Origin of the Human Race

There are some today, even among the children of the Church, who either deny or call into doubt the unity of origin of the human race. In order, therefore, to safeguard the integrity of the doctrine presented above, by which we believe that sin was transmitted from one man⁷ to all men by generation,⁸ and in order to foster the bonds of relationship and love among all peoples who, as they all derive from one source, are also called to the one grace of Christ, the second holy Vatican Synod professes and teaches that the whole Church, relying on divine revelation, has always held and taught that here on earth men (living after Adam), whatever their form or color, have both a common natural origin and a common author of salvation.⁹ For the Apostle says, "As through the sin of the one man condemnation has befallen all men, so through the justice of the one man justification unto life has come upon all" (Rm 5:18); and again, "As in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will come to life" (1 Cor 15:22).

The same Apostle, preacher of this truth, also said that God "made from one the whole human race to dwell upon the broad face of the earth" (Acts 17:26), for he shaped "the first man,"¹⁰ Adam, and his wife, who is called the mother of all the living (Gn 3:20), so that those two spouses would be the natural principle of the whole human race; from them human beings would descend wherever they might be born.

49. *A Rejection of Views Opposing Monogenism*

The sacred Synod, therefore, rejects the views of those who assert either that after Adam there have been here on earth true men who did not derive by natural generation from that one first parent or that Adam represents some multitude of first parents; such views contradict Catholic doctrine. For it is not at all apparent how such views are compatible with what the sources of revealed truth and the acts of the Church's Magisterium present about original sin, which proceeds from the sin truly committed by the one Adam and which is transmitted to all by generation, and which is in each person as his own.¹¹

NOTES

1. Notes for the individual paragraphs:

For #43: If one considers all the elements that revelation presents about original sin: that it is true sin and not only a penalty for sin, that it is voluntary by the will of the first parent, that it is transmitted by generation even by parents in whom it has already been remitted, that it consists in the privation of original justice--it seems impossible to deny that original sin is in the nature of a mystery.

But while stating that original sin is a mystery, we must avoid settling the disputed question whether the existence of original sin can be proven by reason alone from the evils of this life. We know that St. Augustine used this argument (see, for example, *Contra Iulianum*, IV, 16,82. St. Thomas writes that "a defect of this sort [death and concupiscence] can probably enough be proven to be penal; and so it can be concluded that the human race was originally infected by some sin" (*Contra Gentes*, IV, 52). St. Bonaventure was of the view "that for Catholic doctors it appeared certain not only on faith but also by the evidence of reason" that human nature was cast down into its present condition because of an initial transgression (*In II Sent.*, d. 30, a. 1, q. 1).

It was necessary, therefore, to distinguish between the existence of original sin, to which the life of man, filled with trials and hardships, bears witness, no one we know disagreeing, and the precise or accurate notion of original sin, which is shrouded in mystery.

Thus it seems good to use the words with which St. Augustine wrote against the rationalism of Julian of Eclanum when they were disputing about original sin.

For #44: That original sin has the true character of sin was defined at the Second Council of Orange, c. 2 (D 175) and at the Council of Trent, Sess. V, Decree on Original Sin, c. 2 (D. 789). The Council of Trent expressed this notion of sin in many ways: it speaks about the *guilt* or original death that is remitted in baptism (D 792), of original sin as the soul's death (D 789) which makes men unjust from conception (D 793), ungodly (D 796), enemies of God (D 799), children of wrath (D 793), in need of reconciliation with God through Christ the Lord (D 790). Moreover, the Second Council of Lyon (D 464) and the Council of Florence (D 693) defined that the souls of those who die in actual mortal sin, even if *only original* sin, immediately descend into hell, to be punished with unequal penalties.

All these things need to be stressed because of those who are trying either to deny or to weaken the guilt of original sin, thinking that original sin is nothing but a defect of human nature that derives from its finitude (radical evil), or the lack of a religious community to which by God's disposition man ought to belong, or a powerful tendency which inclines men towards evil, or (this view is obscure) the multiplicity of things that existed before it was reduced to unity by the help of evolution.

For #45: This needs to be stressed both because of those who say that men contract original sin because at birth they are inserted into a society of people who are not serving God but sin, and because of those who have tried to defend polygenism or at least to prove that polygenism is not certainly excluded by Catholic faith.

For #46: In writing paragraph 46, in accord with a proposal by some members of the Subcommission, a distinction was made between the loss of sanctifying grace and the necessity of dying and the wounds of ignorance and concupiscence.

That by original sin man was changed for the worse, see the Second Council of Orange, c. 1 (D 174) and the Council of Trent, Sess. V, Decree on Original Sin (D 788). On the wounds of original sin,

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see St. Thomas' clear statement, *Summa theol.*, I-II, q. 85, a. 3. On free will's not being extinguished but weakened and distorted, see the Council of Trent, Sess. VI, Decree on Justification (D 793).

Finally, these very words of the Council of Trent are explained by the doctrine that grace is necessary both to be able to perform the works of salvation and in order to avoid for a long time sins against God's natural law; these doctrines need to be stressed because of those who, by praising the Pelagian doctrine on the powers of free will, reject the necessity of grace.

For #47: It is well known how many interpretations are given of Rom 5:12. From a dogmatic point of view, however, it seems that the Church's Magisterium has given an authoritative interpretation of the Apostle's words, so that it is not possible to twist them to mean something else. For:

(a) The Council of Carthage, approved by Pope Zosimus, after speaking about the original sin which infants contract at birth, added this: "For there is no other way to interpret what the Apostle said: 'Through one man sin entered the world, and through sin death, and so it passed to all men in the one in whom all sinned,' than in the way in which the universal Catholic Church has always understood it" (D 102). These very words are repeated by the Council of Trent (D 791).

(b) The Second Council of Orange asserts that those who deny that original sin, the death of the soul, passed into all men contradict the Apostle who said, "Through the one man, etc." (D 175). The Council of Trent also repeats these words (D 789).

It should be added that at the Council of Trent, the third of the errors against which the Decree on Original Sin was written is this: "Third, the error of the Pelagians, which Erasmus has also followed, that Paul in Rom 5 makes no mention at all of this original sin."

2. St. Augustine, *Contra Iulianum*, VI, 5, 11 (PL 44, 829).

3. See St. Thomas, *Ad Romanos* 5:12, lect. 3; *Quaestio Disp. de Malo*, IV 1, ad 1.

4. St. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, V, 16, 3 (PG 7, 1177).

5. St. Ambrose, *Apologia prophetae David*, II, 12, 71 (PL 14, 915; CSEL 32, 2, 276).

6. See Council of Trent, Sess. V, Decree on Original Sin (D 789 and 791); Council of Carthage (418), approved by Pope Zosimus (D 102); and Second Council of Orange, c. 2 (D 175).

7. That original sin is transmitted to his descendants from *one man* and cannot be understood as a sin committed by some *multitude* of men, see Council of Trent *Ibid.* (D 788): "If anyone does not confess that the first man, Adam, when he transgressed the command of God in paradise..."; Sess. VI Decree on Justification, ch. 4 (D 796): "In these words the justification of the wicked is taught, so that there is a transferral from that state in which a man is born a son of the first Adam into the state of grace...through the second Adam, Jesus Christ," Sess. V, Decree on Original Sin, 2 (D 789): "If anyone should say that Adam's transgression injured only himself and not his whole posterity, or that he lost only for himself and not for us too the sanctity he had received from God,...let him be anathema;" Pius XII, Encyclical *Humani generis* (see below n. 11).

8. That original sin is transmitted to posterity *by generation* is in Sacred Tradition before the Pelagian controversy. See Tertullian *De testimonio animae*, 3 (PL 1, 613); Cyprian, *Epist.* 64, 5 (PL 3, 1018-191); Novation, *De Trinit.*, 29 (PL 3, 944); Origen, *In Levit. hom.* 8,3 (PG 12, 496); Athanasius, *In Psalm.* 50, 7 (PG 27, 240); Didymus of Alexandria, *Contra Manich.*, 8 (PG 39, 1096); Aphraates, *Demonstr.*, 6, 14; 23, 3 (PS 1, 291; 2, 6); Ephraem, *Hymn. de instaur. Eccl.*, 4, 1 (Lamy 3, 974); Hilary, *In Psalm.* 118, in Augustine, *Contra Iulianum*, I, 3,9 (PL 44, 645); Ambrose, *Apolog. proph. David*, I, 11,56 (PL 17, 92); *Exp. in Lucam*, 2, 56 (PL 15, 1573); Ambrosiaster, *In Rom.* 5, 12 (PL 17, 92); Gregory Nazianzenus, *Orat.* 38, 16 and 40,8 (PG 36, 330 and 367); *Idem* in Augustine, *Contra Iulianum*, I, 5,15 (PL 44, 649); Chrysostom, *In Ep. ad Rom.*, hom. 10,2 (PG 60, 476-77).

The Pelagian controversy itself hinged on the question whether Adam's sin passed to his posterity *by imitation* or *by propagation*. See Augustine, *De pecc. merit. et remiss.*, I, 9,9 (PL 44, 114); *ibid.*, I,

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9,10 (PL 44, 115); *Opus imperf. contra Iulian.*, I, 48 (PL 45, 1071). St. Thomas clearly teaches that transmission through generation is *de fide* to be believed; see *Summa theol.*, I-II, q. 81, aa. 1 and 3, along with art. 4.

As for the magisterium of the Church, besides Leo the Great, *Serm.* 22,3 (PL 54, 196), see Second Council of Orange, confirmed by Boniface II, c. 2 (D 175): "If anyone asserts that Adam's transgression injured only himself and not his *posterity*..."; Council of Trent, *Decree on Original Sin*, c. 2 (D 789), which repeats the just cited canon of Second Orange. What Trent meant by propagation appears clearly in the *Decree on Justification*, ch. 3 (D 795): "For just as men would not be born unjust were they not propagated and born from the seed of Adam, for by that propagation, when they are conceived, they contract their own injustice; so also they will never be justified unless they are reborn in Christ." In the *Decree on Original Justice*, 4 (D 791), of infants to be baptized it is said "that in them might be cleansed by regeneration what they contracted by generation."

9. On the unity of the human race, see Gen 1:27; 2:5-25; Acts 17:26; Rm 5:13-21; I Cor 15:45-47. As for the Fathers, see the clear statements of Irenaeus, *Adv Haer.*, III, 23,2 (PG 7, 961); Ephraem, *Interpr. in S. Script.: In Genes.* 2 (Lamy, 1, 129); Ambrose, *De Paradiso*, 10, 48 (PL 14, 298); Theodoret, *Graec. affect. curatio*, sermon 5 (PG 83, 944). St. Augustine openly teaches that the truth of the unity of the human race is *de fide*: see *De Gen ad litt.*, IX, 11,19 (PL 34, 400) and *De pecc. orig.*, 24,28 (PL 44, 398). See also *De Civ. Dei*, XVI, 8 and 9 (PL 41, 486-87), passages on the distinction of races and on the antipodes. The Sacred Magisterium agrees: see Pelagius I, *Ep. ad Childebert* (D 228a); Leo XIII, Encyclical *Arcanum divinae* (ASS 12 [1879-80] 386); Pius XII, *Summi Pontificatus* (AAS 31 [1939] 426-27).

10. Sixteenth Council of Carthage, c. 1 (D 101), along with I Cor 15:45).

11. Pius XII, *Humani generis* (D 2328): "For the Christian faithful may not embrace the view of those who assert that after Adam true men have existed on this earth who did not derive by natural generation from the same one, as the first parent of all, or that Adam represents some multitude of first parents; since it is not clear at all how this view is compatible with what the sources of revealed truth and the acts of the Church's Magisterium propose about original sin, which proceeds from the sin truly committed by the one Adam and which is passed on to all by generation and is in each person as his own."

The theologians of Vatican I prepared a canon: "If anyone denies that the whole human race arose from one first parent, let him be anathema" (CL VII, 1637). In notes they stress "the most serious importance of this dogma of the unity and common origins of the whole human race, which in our age, as everyone knows, has been called into doubt by some men for very slight geological and ethnographic reasons" (*Ibid.*, cc. 544-45; see also CL VII, 515a-b, 555-56, 1633a-b).

CHAPTER IX THE LAST THINGS

50. Preface

The second holy Vatican Synod, gathered in the Holy Spirit, wishes to confirm the Church's children in the faith which they have received and to repel the errors which in our time too, to the destruction of souls, are being spread with regard to the teaching about the last things. It has decided again to urge and more fully to state that same doctrine which Christ the Lord and the holy Apostles preached most urgently and which the Church has proposed for faith in both its ordinary and solemn magisterium, so that, with the errors repelled, "we might live soberly and justly in this world, awaiting the blessed hope and glorious coming of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ" (Tit 2:12-13).

51. The Time for Merit and Demerit Ends with Death

In the first place, everyone should remember that the Church holds and teaches as a dogma of faith divinely revealed that the time for merit or demerit, or, as it is called, the state of journey by which we move towards an eternal end, ends with death, and that there is not, after the life we live on earth, another life in which man might look to his own salvation. "It was established for men," says the Apostle, "that they die once, and then comes the judgement" (Hb 9:27).¹

Immediately after death, as the sacred Councils have taught more than once, the souls of those who die in the grace of God without any satisfaction to make for what they have done or failed to do or, if they had something to satisfy for, after they have been cleansed, are received into heaven. Those, however, who died in the state of actual mortal sin or in the state of original sin alone go down into the depths to suffer their unequal punishments.²

The faithful, therefore, should know that the doctrine of reincarnation or metempsychosis is false and execrable,³ and they must utterly avoid it and with all their hearts attempt to follow the Apostle's warning: "While we have time, let us do good" (Gal 6:10). "For the night is coming," says the Lord, "when no one can work" (Jn 9:4).

52. The Punishment of the Damned will be without End

It is not only the divine mercy towards those who will be saved that ought to be kept in mind; one must also acknowledge and adore the mystery of divine justice that comes upon those who perish, that is, all those who die in mortal sin.

For with Catholic faith it must be believed that the punishments to be suffered by the damned in hell, punishments earned by them because of their violations of the eternal law, will be perpetual. "And these will go," says the Lord, "into eternal punishment, the just, however, into eternal life" (Mt 25:46). "Both are eternal," says St. Augustine; "so that if the eternal life of the saints will be endless, the eternal punishment also, for those condemned to it, will assuredly have no end."⁴ The holy Synod, therefore, rejects as alien to the Catholic faith the opinions of those who deny that the punishment of the damned, both of men and of angels, will be without end or perpetual.⁵

It must also be believed with faith that the punishment of the damned who have died guilty of personal sin will consist not only in the deprivation of the vision of God but also, in proportion to the seriousness of their sins, in the torments of Gehenna, that is, that fire which, according to the words of the Lord, "has been prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mt 25:41). And after the resurrection and the general judgement, in which all will have to stand "before the tribunal of Christ

to give an account of the deeds they have done in their bodies, both good and evil" (2 Cor 5:10),⁶ these torments will be extended to the bodies of the damned.

53. The Eternal Happiness of Heaven

As for the happiness which the souls of the just will attain in heaven, where there will be no evil and where no good will lie hidden, when "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, nor grief nor moaning nor sorrow" (Apoc 21:4) and he will give them to drink from a torrent of delights (see Ps 35:9): this is what holy Mother Church teaches: that it is the eternal life which the Lord Jesus promised us and merited for us, and it consists in the vision of the One and Three God (see I Cor 13:12), in supreme love (see I Cor 13:8) and in unspeakable joy (see Mt 25:51; Jn 16:22). God will be "the goal of all our longings; we shall see him for ever; we shall love him without satiety, and praise him without wearying."⁷

With the attainment of this happiness, the souls of the just will attain that inestimable freedom (see Jn 8:36) which excludes the ability to sin,⁸ and so, they will always be with the Lord, most certain of the eternity of the happiness they enjoy.

It was of this endless enjoyment that St. Peter was speaking when he said that we are regenerated "into an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that cannot fade, ...kept for us in heaven...and ready to be revealed at the end of time" (I Pet 1:4).

54. The Resurrection of the Flesh

This most blessed enjoyment of God is not hindered nor diminished by the fact that the souls of the blessed await the resurrection of their bodies (see Rom 8:24) which will occur in that "rebirth" (Mt 19:28) in which "death, the last enemy, will be destroyed" (I Cor 15:26). With the destruction of death through the resurrection of the flesh at the coming of Christ at the end of the world,⁹ not only will the soul be blessed, but the body also will be graced with full immortality. "For this corruptible body," says the Apostle, "must put on incorruption, and this mortal body immortality" (I Cor 15:51), so that the whole man, who was lost, will be saved. "For just as through a man came death," says the same Apostle, "so through a man comes the resurrection of the dead; and as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will come to life" (I Cor 15:21).

55. A Commendation of Reflection on the Last Things and of Trust in the Mercy of God

The holy Synod strongly urges the faithful to keep the last things always in mind so that they can avoid sin. But if salvifically struck by the rigor of divine justice, they become aware that they have sinned, they should with all their hearts take refuge in God's mercy and place their most firm hope in it, knowing that there is no sin, however serious it may be, whose forgiveness they cannot obtain through the merits of Christ, if, moved and aided by divine grace, they turn with sincere hearts back to God and implore him who wishes no one to perish, but desires all to come to repentance (see 2 Pet 3:9).

NOTES

1. The text of the Apostle is added, not to refer to the particular judgement since it is not clear that he is speaking of it here, but to confirm the doctrine that after death man is brought into an ultimate and definitive state, since he dies only once--as Christ died once--and after death awaits the judgement.

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2. Council of Lyons (D 464); Council of Florence (D 693); See John XXII, Letter *Nequaquam sine dolore*, November 21, 1323 (D 493a, 530); Leo X, Bull *Exsurge Domine*, June 15, 1520 (D 778). The doctrine of the Councils is rendered almost verbatim in the text; but instead of saying "*in infernum descendunt*," we have preferred to write "*ad inferos descendunt*," because, as it is commonly understood today, the word "*infernum*" appears to suggest not only the pain of damnation, but also what is called the pain of sense.
3. Unfortunately, even today many proponents of spiritualism and theosophy adhere to the doctrine of reincarnation.
4. *De civitate Dei*, XXII, 23 (PL 41, 736).
5. The eternity of the pains in hell was once denied and is being denied now for various reasons, whether for all or for some of the damned.
6. Although 2 Cor 5:10 can be understood of either judgement, particular or universal, it is used of the last judgement in the Symbol of Faith of the Eleventh Council of Toledo (D 286) and in the Apostolic Constitution *Benedictus Dei* of Benedict XII, with reference to the beatific vision (D 531).
7. St. Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, XXII, 30, 1 (PL 41, 802).
8. The fact of the impeccability of the blessed is presented, leaving to theologians the question of the manner or the intimate nature of impeccability.
9. That the resurrection of all does not take place immediately after death but at the end of the ages when Christ will come to judge the living and the dead is so contained in the Sources of Revelation and in the Magisterium of the Church that this truth must be said to belong to the faith. See the "Athanasian" Symbol and the Apostolic Constitution of Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Dei*, November 1, 1950 (*AAS* 42 [1950], 770).

CHAPTER X
THE SATISFACTION OF CHRIST

56. Christ, the Word of God, by Suffering and Dying in the Flesh he Assumed, Rendered True and Proper Satisfaction to God for the Sins of Men

The Spouse of the Divine Redeemer, remembering the words of St. Paul, "Christ loved the Church and handed himself over for her, to sanctify her" (Eph 5:25-26), has always most gratefully acknowledged the Cross of the Lord as the source of all supernatural goods on earth and in heaven. By it and through it the Savior purchased the Church with his own Blood (Acts 20:28), offered himself to the Father for the whole world's salvation, interceded for the human race with a loud cry and tears (see Hb 5:7), gave a heroic example of all the virtues, merited for the Church the inexhaustible source of graces, and superabundantly satisfied for the sins of men. For that reason the Church, born from the side of the second Adam as he slept on the Cross,¹ cannot allow the mystery of salvation to be stained by certain corruptions of doctrine. Because of the errors that are being spread today and so as not to fail in her duty as Mother and Teacher, now in this second Vatican Synod, she in a special way confirms, as a truth rightly to be considered among the chief truths of the Christian religion, the expiatory value of the death of Christ; and she declares that the Word of God, suffering and dying in the human nature he assumed, truly and properly made satisfaction to God for our sins.² "For all have sinned," says the Apostle, "and need the glory of God, being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God made to be an propitiation, through faith in his blood" (Rom 3:23-25).³

57. Sin is a True and Proper Offense against God

At least in the present economy of salvation, no created power of men was enough fully to expiate the crimes of men unless the Son of God assumed the human nature that needed to be restored.⁴ According to the utterances of the Holy Spirit, sin is wickedness and an offense against God; for by violating the divine law the sinner sins before God and spurns him, offends the divine majesty and becomes an enemy of God.⁵ Similarly, we are taught that our iniquities separate us from God, call for punishment before God, make men debtors to God and children of wrath, in need of the mercy of God by which they are gratuitously reconciled to him.⁶ Therefore, to repair the injury to the divine majesty, the Son of God himself offered his own blood to the eternal Father through the Holy Spirit (see Hb 9:14) and thus through his death reconciled us to God (see Rm 5:10). To him alone, as the most innocent one, equal to the Father in dignity, are fitting the words of John the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" (Jn 1:29).

58. By his Vicarious Satisfaction for all Men, Christ Placated the Justice of God

Contemplating the work of the wondrous love of God and of Christ for us, by which the sin of the world is taken away, John the Evangelist, moved by the divine Spirit, confesses: "In this is love, not as if we loved God, but because he loved us first and sent his Son as a propitiation for our sins" (1 Jn 4:10). The propitiation for the sins of the whole world, which is Jesus Christ himself, the Just One (see 1 Jn 2:2), truly had a vicarious satisfactory efficacy." For not only did our Redeemer "die once for our sins, the just one for the unjust" (1 Pt 3:18), but also as our Head and the New Adam, he expiated original sin and the guilt of all men and the punishments due it, insofar as, suffering out of love and obedience, he gave far greater glory to God than recompense for all the human race's offense could have required.⁷ The prophet Isaiah sang beforehand of this role when he spoke of the Servant of Yahweh: "Truly he has born our sufferings, our torments he has suffered" (Is 53:4). Still more openly the Apostle says: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, became a curse for our

sake, as it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who hangs from a tree,' so that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the nations in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:13-14). For although God, out of his supreme goodness, could have forgiven the sins men have committed against him without satisfaction, thus following only the tendencies of a merciful love,⁸ nevertheless, in order to give a superabundant manifestation of his mercy even in his justice (see Rm 5:20) and in order better to preserve the dignity of man, he preferred to send his Son into the world, so that through him, the God-Man, he would not indeed judge the world but save it; thus he did not spare his own Son, but handed him over for us all (see Rm 8:32). And Christ, obeying the decree of his most merciful and most just Father even to death on the Cross (see Ph 2:8), "loved us and handed himself over for us as an offering and sacrifice whose fragrance is pleasing to God" (Eph 5:2). There was one will, then, in the Father who decided upon and in the Son who accepted the sacrifice of the Cross for the salvation of the human race; so that the Apostle could summarize the whole mystery of redemption in these words: "All things are from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ" (2 Cor 5:18).

59. Rejections of Views which Pervert the Notion of Sin as an Offense against God and the Notion of Satisfaction Carried out by Christ for Us

This Holy Synod, therefore, drawing the doctrine of human redemption from the most pure sources of divine revelation in the light of the perennial magisterium of the Church,⁹ rejects the views of those who, mistakenly thinking that no true offense is given to God by sin, dare to assert that the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross had no value or efficacy apart from that of example, merit and liberation, not the value of a true and proper satisfaction for human crimes, as if this were repugnant to the divine justice, when rather it most highly accords both with the mercy and the justice of the eternal Father.¹⁰

NOTES

1. Leo XIII, Encyclical *Divinum illud*, May 9, 1897 (*ASS* 29 [1897], 649).

2. First Vatican Council, *Schema secundae Constitutionis dogmaticae De Fide catholica*, can. IV, 3, On the Mystery of the Incarnate Word: "If anyone should deny that the Word of God himself, by suffering and dying in the flesh he assumed, made true and proper satisfaction to God for our sins and earned grace and glory for us, or should dare to assert that vicarious satisfaction, that of the one Mediator for all men, is repugnant to the divine justice, A.S." (Mansi 53, 294).

3. See, for example, Fr. Ceuppens, *Quaestiones selectae ex Epist. S. Pauli* (1951), pp. 32-36.--With St. Thomas and, among more recent exegetes, M.-J. Lagrange, A. Lemonnyer, J. Sickenberger, G. Ricciotti, the distinguished author thus renders the mind of the Apostle: "From all eternity God willed to exhibit Christ as an expiating and propitiating victim and that man share in this expiation through faith in the blood, that is, in the efficacy of the blood of Christ, which faith leads men to justification" (p. 34).

4. See Pius XI, Encyclical *Miserentissimus Redemptor*, May 8, 1928 (*AAS* 20 [1928] 170).

5. See 1 Jn 3:4; Ps 50:6; Lk 15:18; 1 Kgs 2:30; Dt 9:23; Ez 20:8; 20:21; Rm 5:10.

6. See Is 59:2; Gn 4:10; Jas 5:4; Rm 12:19; Mt 6:12; Eph 2:3; Rm 3:23; Col 1:21.

7. St. Thomas, *Summa theol.*, III, q. 48, a. 2: "By suffering out of love and obedience, Christ offered more to God than would be required to compensate for the offences of the whole human race."

8. St. Thomas, *Summa theol.*, III, q. 46, a. 2, ad 3m: "If God had willed to free man without any satisfaction, this would not have gone against justice.... God, however, has no superior, but is himself the supreme and common good of the whole universe. And therefore, if he forgives sin, which has the nature of guilt because it is committed against him, he does no one any injury."

9. It will help to remember:

a) Among the holy Fathers: St. Augustine, *Contra Faustum*, XIV, 4 (PL 42, 297): "Christ took our punishment upon himself without guilt so that he could thus loose our guilt and end our punishment;" *De Trinitate*, IV, 13, 17 (PL 42, 899): "By his death in the one most true sacrifice offered for us, whatever guilt there was because of which the principalities and powers rightly held us in order to punish us, he purged, abolished, and extinguished." St. Gregory the Great, *Moralia*, XVII, 30, 46 (PL 76, 33): "[The Son of God] did sacrifice for us, for sinners offered his body as a sinless victim, which could die in its humanity and cleanse in its justice."

b) Among the Doctors of the Church: St. Thomas, *Summa theol.*, Suppl., q. 13, a. 1: "Satisfaction does not respond to sin except insofar as it is an offense to God."

c) The Magisterium of the Church: Council of Ephesus (D 122): "If anyone says that...[the Word of God] made the offering of himself for his own sake and not rather for us alone..., A.S." Council of Trent, Sess. V, Decree on Original Sin (D 790), speaking of the merit "of Jesus Christ who reconciled us to God, ... having become our justice, sanctification, and redemption (1 Cor 1:30)." Leo XIII, Encyclical *Tametsi futura*, November 1, 1900 (ASS 33 [1900-1901], 275): "When God's plan had come to maturity, the only-begotten Son of God, become man, abundantly *satisfied* for men's accumulated violations of God and by so great a price redeemed and claimed the human race for himself." Pius XII, Encyclical *Orientalis Ecclesiae*, December 15, 1952 (AAS 45 [1953], 13): "To propitiate the divine majesty wounded by so many and such great injuries and offences."

10. F. Ceuppens adduces suitable texts from both Testaments to prove that distributive justice, which only in God includes remunerative and vindictive justice, *formally* befits God (*De Deo Uno*, vol. I [1938], pp. 226-27).

See also: The presynodal acts of Vatican I, cited in note 2. Pius XII, Encyclical *Humani generis*, August 12, 1950 (AAS 42 [1950], 570): "Nor is this enough: for when the definitions of Trent are set aside, the notion of original sin is perverted and, along with it, the notion of sin in general as an offense against God and the notion of the satisfaction which Christ offered for us." Pius XII, Encyclical *Haurietis aquas*, May 15, 1956 (AAS 48 [1956], 322), where he refers to the text of St. Thomas, *Summa theol.*, q. 46, a. 1, ad 3: "For man to be freed by the passion of Christ befitted both his mercy and his justice. His justice because by his passion Christ made satisfaction for the sin of the human race, and so man was freed by the justice of Christ. And his mercy because man could not by himself make satisfaction for the sin of the whole of human nature, ... God gave his own Son to be the one who satisfies."

St. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XIII, 10, 13 (PL 42, 1042), shows that to liberate the human race "another possible way was not lacking to God..., but there was and should have been no other more suitable way to heal our wretchedness." See A. Hacault, *La satisfaction du Christ-Jésus à la lumière de l'Encyclique "Humani generis"* (Montréal, Canada, 1960).

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