

CHAPTER 1

PATRICK LEE

ACCEPTING GOD'S OFFER OF PERSONAL COMMUNION IN THE WORDS AND DEEDS OF CHRIST, HANDED ON IN THE BODY OF CHRIST, HIS CHURCH

The Roman Catholic Church's teaching on faith and reason insists on both the superiority of faith over reason and the basic harmony between faith and reason. Against rationalism (the idea that reason is superior to faith) the Catholic Church has insisted that faith is above reason, that by divine faith we are aware of things we could not have been aware of through natural reason (that is, reason unaided by divine faith), and that we cannot, in this life, fully understand the mysteries revealed to us by God in the words and deeds of the prophets and of Jesus Christ. Yet, against fideism (the idea that reason is unnecessary in the life of faith, and perhaps even essentially untrustworthy), the Catholic Church has insisted that human reason has not been completely corrupted by original sin, that it retains a basic capacity to apprehend truth, although seriously wounded by original sin, it has an important role to play within the act of faith, and that philosophy (a work of reason) has an important role within theology (the developed understanding of faith). In other words, while faith and reason are distinct, and faith is superior to reason, there remains a need for both (see John Paul II, 1998, chapter V, especially #49-56). This position can be understood more fully only by examining the Catholic positions on revelation, faith, and reason.

1. WHAT REVELATION IS

The Catholic faith centers on Jesus Christ. Catholics believe and confess that Jesus of Nazareth is God, that He is the second Person of the Trinity, that He

became man, died on the cross to redeem us from our sins, and rose again from the dead, that this redemptive act (His death and resurrection) is made present in the sacraments, such as Baptism, Eucharist, and Penance, that by being joined to Christ in those sacraments, Christians are brought into a personal communion with God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and that Christians are called to cooperate with God's grace in building up the kingdom of God, a community of divine and created persons.

Catholics believe that God himself has freely chosen to invite us to a friendship or personal communion with him. To have a friendship with someone (if one is an adult), one must know that person, know his offer (explicit or implicit) of friendship, and freely accept it. So, God has communicated to us who He is and His offer of personal friendship or communion, and interiorly moves us, by grace, to accept His offer (while we remain free to resist this grace).¹

This revelation includes truths which we could not have reached by our own powers operating without revelation. That is, some truths about God can be known by the use of our natural intellects reasoning from the visible things in this world (see, e.g., Rom. 1:20; Vatican I, DS 3004/1785-3010/1791). That God exists, for example, can be known by our reasoning powers unaided by revelation from God (ibid.). And perhaps other truths about God can be inferred in this way, such as, that God is immutable, that He is not in time, that He is perfect, and so on: the Church has not defined that these truths can be known by natural reason unaided by faith, but many Catholic theologians and philosophers have claimed this. Other truths about God—for example, that God is three persons in one substance, that the second Person of the Trinity became man, that God does offer to us personal communion with him, that Christ is really present in the Eucharist—cannot be known by inference from the visible things in the universe, but can be known only through a supernatural revelation, that is, only through God's freely communicating them to us by special acts in addition to or beyond the act of creation. Because God has called us to a supernatural end or purpose—personal communion with God—God gives us a supernatural revelation (DS 3005/1786).

God could have chosen to communicate with us in various ways. He could, perhaps, have communicated directly with each of us in a purely spiritual way, by a direct mystical infusion of what He wanted us to know or believe. Instead, God chose to communicate with us through tangible words and deeds, first of the prophets in the Old Testament, and then of His son, Jesus Christ become man (Vatican Council II, *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine revelation (Dei Verbum)*, #2).

Revelation, then, is not God Himself, but an understandable

communication from God, manifesting something about who He is and His will. Thus, revelation is not ineffable, nor is it grasped in a non-conceptual intuition or experience. During the twentieth century the Magisterium (the teaching authority of the Church) has several times distinguished the Catholic position on revelation from the Modernist view.² According to the Modernist view, revelation is an ineffable experience or intuition, while dogmas, or propositions, are viewed as secondary, merely functioning as reflecting back on the primordial ineffable experience.³ A consequence of the Modernist view is that contradictory dogmas may be equally acceptable, since their only function is to point back to a more primordial experience. The Church teaches, however, that revelation includes a set of created entities—the words and deeds of prophets and of Jesus. The sum total of revelation is Jesus himself, but Jesus manifests Himself and His decrees in His words and deeds. Revelation is a communication; its purpose is to make known God Himself and His will. If God has not done that, then revelation has not occurred. So, to think of revelation—as distinct from God's inner life—as totally ineffable, is implicitly to deny that revelation has occurred.

It is true that revelation includes more than propositions, to which intellectual assent is given. Revelation also includes deeds, especially the deeds of Jesus. Moreover, in accepting revelation one is accepting God himself, since to accept a personal communication and an invitation of communion is to accept the person or persons communicating.⁴ Still, just as it would be nonsense for a woman to claim she believed her husband, but did not believe him when he said he loved her, so it is seriously mistaken to say that one can believe God, but deliberately reject any of the dogmas or propositions proposed for our belief, such as that God loves us, has died on the cross for our sins, has formed a Church, and so on.⁵ Revelation includes more than propositions—not less.

But what about mystical experience? How is revelation related to this? Do not some saints have a direct vision of God's essence, for example, St. John of the Cross or St. Teresa of Avila, not to mention Moses or St. Paul? Which is prior and normative: mystical experience or what is communicated about God in the form of public revelation (the words and deeds of the prophets and of Christ)?⁶ The Church has not directly pronounced on this question. However, if we look at what the Church teaches, especially in dealing with the Modernist crisis, I believe we must say that public revelation is prior and normative for mystical experience, not vice versa.

Suppose one has an experience which he thinks may be an experience of the divine.⁷ First of all, what one thinks about this experience presupposes that one has some concept of the divine. If one says that it is an experience of the one God, then that presupposes that one has some type of concept of

what is meant by “God.” Secondly, although it might be logically possible for God to grant an immediate vision of Himself to someone who does not freely accept an offer of communion with him, still, God seems usually to have granted an immediate vision of himself, that is, a genuine mystical experience of him, only to those who have opened themselves (with God’s grace) to such an intimate communion. That is, having such an intimate communion seems to presuppose, in an adult at least, a conscious acceptance of that personal communion. But a conscious acceptance of a personal communion is possible only on the basis of faith. And so the openness presupposed by mystical experience presupposes faith, and faith presupposes revelation. So, genuine mystical experience (at least usually) presupposes the acceptance of the public revelation given to us especially in Jesus Christ and handed on to us by the Apostles and their successors.

However, even if that point were doubtful, it would still be true that what is handed on in the Church to be accepted by faith, in other words, public revelation, is not the content of a mystical experience, but rather words and deeds which can be readily understood by all, even if they can always be returned to and understood more deeply. Moses and Paul at the call to their missions, Peter, James, and John at the transfiguration, had mystical experiences. However, what they handed on to us for our acceptance in faith and for the guidance of our lives, is the publicly intelligible words and deeds intended by God as a communication from him, not the inner content of those mystical experiences.

While revelation is intelligible, still, it remains mysterious, that is, it is not fully understood. We have some understanding about what is revealed—God himself, his Incarnation, Redemptive death and Resurrection—but we do not completely understand, or comprehend, these mysteries. We can always return to them to understand them more fully. “In short, the knowledge proper to faith does not destroy the mystery; it only reveals it the more, showing how necessary it is for people’s lives” (*Fides et Ratio*, #13). The same Holy Spirit who moves the Christian interiorly to accept revelation, “constantly perfects faith by his gifts, so that revelation may be more and more profoundly understood” (*Dei Verbum*, #6).

2. ANALOGICAL LANGUAGE ABOUT GOD

But since revelation is about who God is, how can it be intelligible, since who God is clearly transcends the capacity of the human intellect to understand? Perhaps, one might argue, the Catholic Church is too optimistic about the abilities of the human intellect, given that God is infinite and incomprehensible.

The Church does not take a position on a philosophical issue except insofar as it impinges on revelation. Revelation is a personal communication from God, a revelation of who God is and an invitation to us to set up with him a personal communion. It is a free offer of personal communion, which can be freely accepted or freely rejected. So, any philosophical doctrine which implies that a free acceptance of revelation is impossible is incompatible with Catholic Faith.⁸ Any philosophical position which implies that God cannot communicate some understanding about who He is to us, or that He cannot communicate an invitation of personal communion to us, or that we cannot freely accept or reject that offer, is incompatible with Catholic faith. For this reason the Church teaches that the language used about God must be intelligible. We must understand, to some degree, what we are choosing; we must understand something about the person with whom we are freely accepting an offer of personal communion. If not, the act of faith, indeed the whole Christian life, would be devoid of sense. Our faith, our obedience, our prayers—these are meaningful, reasonable, morally responsible acts, only if we can understand that we are having faith in the right god, obeying the right god, and praying to the right god (see Geach, 1969, pp. 100-116; Grisez, 1975, pp. 84-91). And our faith, obedience, and prayers, can be addressed to the right god, only if our language is somehow in contact with God, and our concepts in some way constitute a real cognitive union with God. And for such concepts to be possible, we must be able to form concepts which really apply to the invisible and transcendent God, even though they do not adequately represent His nature or essence. And finally, for this to be possible, there must be in some way a real likeness of creatures to God, since our concepts are first drawn from creatures. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches:

All creatures have a certain resemblance to God, most especially man, created in the image and likeness of God. The manifold perfections of creatures—their truth, their goodness, their beauty—all reflect the infinite perfection of God (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #41).

The Church also insists, however, that our understanding and language fall far short of adequately representing God. Thus, the Catechism of the Catholic Church reiterates the teaching of the Fourth Lateran Council that, “between Creator and creature no similitude can be expressed without implying an even greater dissimilitude” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #43).⁹ The Catechism quotes St. John Chrysostem, referring to God as, “the inexpressible, the incomprehensible, the invisible, the ungraspable” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #43).¹⁰ And, significantly, the Catechism also quotes St. Thomas, to say that, concerning God, we cannot grasp what he is, but only what he is not, and how other beings stand in relation to him”

(*ibid.*).¹¹

These points can be interpreted and defended in various ways. Again, the Church addresses philosophical issues only to the extent that what is contained in revelation bears on them. Traditionally, theologians of different schools, for example, Augustinians, Thomists of various types, Scotists,¹² Suarezians,¹³ analytic philosophers, and so on, have proposed different approaches to understanding how our knowledge and language can really apply to God, and yet falls short of being adequate of him. What follows is one way of understanding and defending these points.

In the first line of the Creed we profess our belief in “God the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.” This doctrine is foundational, for by it we fix the reference of our religious language, that is, we establish to what entity we are referring by our creeds and prayers. Some words have a referring or “pointing to” function, while others have a describing function. To assert anything as true, that is, to depict any description as being really the case, we must point to or single out in some way the thing or things we are describing. We must know to which entity or entities we are applying our descriptions. For example, to assert anything of pulsars or quasars, we must have some way of referring to them, even if we have not directly seen them. The creed establishes the reference of our language and prayer, then, by first of all declaring that we believe in God, the Father almighty, who created all things, visible and invisible. The dependence of finite beings on God enables us to refer to the being to which our religious language applies. When we say that God is almighty, holy, perfect, and so on, the word “God” refers to that entity who causes the existence of heaven and earth (all things visible and invisible).

Still, while we can speak about God, know something about Him (since we truly say He is almighty, is three persons in one being, and so on), we cannot apprehend His essence. In fact, we cannot apprehend any intrinsic characteristics of His essence. In other words, while we do know many things about God, nevertheless, He transcends our understanding and language. We do not know what God is, but that He is, and how other things are related to Him.

This point can be clarified by the following analogy. In the late 1960’s astronomers began to detect the reception of regular radio waves from outside our galaxy. The waves came with such an amazing regularity that some astronomers suspected that perhaps their source was some extra-galactic intelligent life. Years later it was discovered what the source of these waves was, namely, neutron stars, whose rapid spinning caused the radio waves. Before this, however, astronomers coined the term “pulsar” to refer to the source of these radio waves. For years, then, astronomers

referred to pulsars, could speak about them, and theorize about them, but did not know what they were in themselves, referring to them only through the relations which other things have to them.

This case is similar to our knowledge and language about God. We do not grasp what God is in himself; we do not know what God is. Still, we can refer to him through the relationships that creatures have to Him. He is that being Who is the ultimate source of the existence, perfection, and order in the universe. He is the creator of heaven and earth—this dependency relation of creatures to Him is the vehicle through which our language points to Him, even if this relation does not enable us to grasp His inner essence. Nothing other is understood or grasped about God than what can be understood by analogy through the relationships we have to Him.¹⁴

Is the language we use of God univocal, equivocal, or analogical with language used of creatures? For example, when we say that God is good, does the word “good” have the same meaning as it does when we say that George is good? To say that some words have the same meaning when said of creatures and God would be to say that some words are predicated univocally of creatures and God. To say that the words predicated of God have completely different meanings from what they have when predicated of creatures would be to say that the words are predicated equivocally of creatures and God. And to say that the meanings of the words predicated of creatures and God are partly similar and partly dissimilar is to say that the words are predicated analogically.

The Church does not actually define which of these positions is correct. Followers of John Duns Scotus (Scotists) say that some words are predicated univocally of God and creatures. Followers of St. Thomas Aquinas (Thomists) have argued that none of the words predicated of God are predicated univocally of God and creatures. The Church has not explicitly ruled out a position (Tillich's, for example) which would hold that all of our language about God is merely metaphorical—neither univocal nor analogical with the matching language about creatures. However, given especially what the Church has said about the resemblance of creatures to God, it would seem difficult to reconcile such a position with what the Church has taught.

A Thomistic approach could be explained as follows. With creatures we often understand something intrinsic to a thing's nature even if we have not directly seen one ourselves. For example, never having directly seen a polar bear, we still do understand something of what the polar bear is intrinsically. The polar bear shares the same nature (to a certain extent) with horses and dogs: each is a mammal, each is of the genus mammal. So, understanding what a mammal is directly from horses or dogs, we come to understand something of the intrinsic nature of the unobserved polar bear. However,

God does not have the same nature or feature as any creature, since the nature of any creature is only contingently existing¹⁵ while God's nature exists necessarily. We do not know what God's essence is; but whatever God's essence is, it is such as to exist necessarily. But no other essence is of that sort. So, God and creature do not share the same essence. Moreover, as St. Thomas expresses it: God cannot be in any genus (and so cannot share the same nature as anything else) since two beings can share the same nature only if while having the same nature or essence, they differ in existence (*Summa Theologiae*, Pt. I, q. 3, a. 4). But in God essence and existence do not differ (since if God's essence and existence differed, He would depend on others).

So, one cannot know what God is through understanding some other thing of the same essence, specifically or generically. One cannot understand what God is the way in which one might understand what a polar bear is—by first understanding what creatures are, and then inferring that God shares the nature to certain extent with those creatures. Since creatures are effects of God they are like God in some respect. But their likeness to God as creatures cannot consist in possessing the same nature or in being of the same genus.

Still, we derive our understanding, our concepts, in the normal course of things (that is, short of an extraordinary miracle), from intellectually apprehending what is intelligible in sense experience.¹⁶ It follows that what we can understand about God must be based on: a) knowing what God is not, and b) the likenesses that creatures have to God. But these likenesses can only be indirect—they cannot consist in sharing the same nature, even to a small extent. St. Thomas Aquinas expresses this point clearly. After pointing out that in this life our knowledge is derived from sense experience, he says the following:

Hence from the knowledge of sensible things the whole power of God cannot be known; nor therefore can His essence be seen. But because they are His effects and depend on their cause, we can be led from them so far as to know of God “whether He exists,” and to know of Him what must necessarily belong to Him, as the first cause of all things, exceeding all things caused by Him (*Summa Theologiae*, Pt. I, q. 12, a. 12).

What applies to our natural knowledge of God applies as well to our knowledge of God after revelation. With grace and revelation more things are known about God than what can be inferred through natural reason. Still, except for extraordinary instances (such as mystical experiences), our manner of understanding what is said of God remains indirect and analogical, proportioned to our finite manner, indeed, our body-soul manner, of existing. As St. Thomas explains: “God cannot be seen in His essence by a mere human being, unless he is separated from this mortal life. The reason

is because, as was said above, the mode of knowledge follows the mode of the nature of the knower" (*Summa Theologiae*, Pt. I, q. 12, a. 11). Two extraordinary exceptions to this point mentioned by Aquinas, but not confined to them, are Moses and St. Paul (*Summa Theologiae*, Pt. I, q. 12, a. 11, reply to objection 2).

The limitations of our knowledge about God are summed up well by Aquinas in the following passage:

Now it was shown above that in this life we cannot see the essence of God; but we know God from creatures as their principle, and also by way of excellence and remotion. In this way He can be named by us from creatures, yet not so that the name which signifies Him expresses the divine essence itself (*Summa Theologiae*, Pt. I, q. 13, a. 1).

In other words, the words we apply to God do signify Him, do cognitively connect us to God. But these words do not express the essence itself of God. They signify God, point to God, as it were, but they do not convey to our minds a presentation of what God is in Himself. For example, when we say that God is good and perfect the intrinsic goodness and perfection of God is not presented to our mind, but what we mean (and understand) is that whatever perfection there is in the created universe is but an imperfect reflection of what exists in the Creator in a manner far above what we can understand. When we say that God understands, or loves, we mean (and understand) that there exists in the Creator, in a manner we cannot understand, a perfection which is similar (in a manner we cannot specify with precision) to the perfections we call "understanding" and "love" in creatures.¹⁷

Even our understanding of other spiritual beings, though they are not infinite and supernatural, is similarly limited. For example, we understand intellectual knowledge by analogy with the more easily understood sense knowledge.¹⁸ Thus we say that an explanation threw light upon an issue or question. The word "light" primarily signifies what enables one to see material objects with one's eyes, and is applied to the sun, fire, and light bulbs. But then we notice that the sun and light bulbs are related to material objects as an explanation is related to an issue or situation; there is an indirect similarity, a similarity of relationships. The relation between the sun and material objects is similar to the relation between an explanation and an issue. Noticing this makes us understand something about explanations, and we extend the term "light" to signify explanations, because of this similarity of relations of other things to them.¹⁹ A similar process occurs in our understanding and speaking of God. We do not grasp what God is in Himself. Rather, we understand that contingent beings are related to Him as effects are related to causes.

Revelation now teaches us that God is our Father. This is a very significant new truth, even if it is still indirect. It tells us that we should relate to God as to a father, and that God is in Himself whatever is necessary for this relationship to be an appropriate one. Thus on the basis of different relationships (creation in one case, personal communion in the other case) the terms “Creator” and “Father” are rightly predicated of God.

In this way, we can understand how it is possible to understand something about God and speak about God, without understanding what God is, that is, without apprehending any perfection intrinsic to God’s essence. All of our understanding and language about God remains indirect and analogical.

3. TRANSMISSION OF REVELATION

Revelation is intended for all people, not just for those who lived in Palestine during the days Jesus lived in a visible manner there. Hence the communication received from Christ must somehow be transmitted to later generations. So, Jesus formed a visible community and commissioned it to hand on His teaching: “He said to them [the Apostles], ‘Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned.’” (Mk 16: 15-16). Christ promised to remain with His Church to the end of the world (Mt 28: 20), to lead her into all truth (Jn. 16:13; 14:26), and to guard her from the forces of evil (Mt 16: 16-18). The community Christ formed, the Church, is the body of Christ, for it is the extension of Christ into the whole world (1 Cor. 12). Christ remains present in the world through the Church, for the Church hands on His words and His deeds.

In the sacraments the redemptive act of Christ, His obedience unto death, is made present. It is Christ Himself Who baptizes, Who forgives sins, Who joins spouses (in the sacrament of Matrimony), through the human ministers of the Church. When Jesus appeared to the Apostles after His Resurrection, He said: “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” John reports further, “And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.” (Jn. 20:19-23) Earlier in the Gospel of John Jesus had made it clear that the Father sends Him in a special way, that although the Father sends Him out, the Father remains in Him, or is present in Him (Jn. 8: 29; 14:1-14; 17:16-26). So, Jesus sends the Apostles, but He remains in them. Thus, Jesus remains present in the world in a special manner in the Apostles and their successors, the bishops and priests of the Church. Note also that Jesus does not tell them to announce that their sins have been forgiven, but to forgive them. This they do only in

virtue of Jesus being active in them (Council of Trent, DS 1601/844-1630/870).

The words and deeds of Christ handed on to us in the Church are the communication from God, God's revelation, to which we give an obedience of faith, a commitment of ourselves (Vatican II, *Dei Verbum*, #5). Thus, revelation is handed on not just by the Bible, nor just by the bishops and the pope, but by the whole community, the Church, founded by Jesus. For example, when a mother teaches her children their prayers, or their catechism she is handing on divine revelation.

But this process of transmitting revelation is not a mere human process. Jesus promised that he would remain with the Church, that he would guide it into all truth, that is, that he would ensure that revelation, the gospel, would remain available in the world in its integrity (see Mt 28:18-20; Jn 14:15-21; 16:12-15) Thus, Jesus promised a divine gift that would ensure that the Gospel would remain available in the world in its entirety. That divine gift ensuring the Gospel's integrity must exist in the world today. Individuals participate in handing on revelation, but they may also lose parts of it, and confuse revelation with cultural accretions and mistakes. The same is true of parts of the Church just as such (that is, insofar as their actions are not the actions of the whole Church). Therefore, the divine gift ensuring that the Gospel remain in its integrity belongs neither to individuals nor to parts of the Church, but to the Church as a social whole (Grisez, 1983, volume 2, p. 17).

While the Bible belongs to the Church as a whole, it cannot be the sole means by which the Gospel remains in the Church in its integrity. Revelation is personal communication, but communication is not complete until what is said is heard and rightly understood. It follows that the Bible is only a component in that larger process, and that the Bible belongs to revelation only in the sense in which it is understood or interpreted by the Church.²⁰

There are other reasons why the Bible alone could not be the sole gift ensuring the integrity of the Gospel. The Church reveres the Bible, and clearly teaches that it is inspired and inerrant (Vatican II, *Dei Verbum* #11). However, the Bible is subject to various interpretations, as history has proved. Several important passages of the Bible are not clear on their face, but are interpreted by reasonable people of good will in different ways. There are several examples: the presence of Christ in the Eucharist, infant Baptism, sacramental Confession, divorce and remarriage.²¹

Also, the Bible does not contain a table of contents, and so there is need of an extrabiblical, living authority to determine what belongs to the Bible (inspired written teaching) and what does not.

Further, new questions arise that one could not expect the Bible to have

addressed explicitly (for example, abortion, euthanasia, liturgical norms for the sacraments, controversies on how to understand the relation between Christ's humanity and His divinity). The divine gift belonging to the Church ensuring the integrity of the Gospel, then, is not the Bible alone, but the divine assistance preventing the faith or teaching of the Church from erring.

No large community can act as whole without certain members having the function or office of acting for the community. For example, a company cannot hire a person without someone's word or signature counting as the act of the company as a whole. It is the same with the Church. Jesus appointed leaders for His Church, and, since their office is indispensable, evidently intended that leadership role or office to continue. The leadership role of the Apostles is continued by their successors, the bishops, and the leadership role of St. Peter is continued by the successor of St. Peter, the pope.²² The role of the bishops in communion with the pope is to teach in the name of the Church as a whole. Their official teachings are the acts of the Church and are, for that reason, infallibly proposed. That is, if they are teaching precisely as leaders of the Church, and with their full authority, then—but only then—their teachings are the teachings of the Church, the Body of Christ, and therefore infallibly proposed.²³

In short, the Church hands on the revelation from Christ, first received by the Apostles. But this handing-on process must be discernible. That is, so that the revelation will not be lost or become indiscernible from cultural accretions and corruption, there must be some way of telling when the Church as a whole is teaching. This is possible only if there are official leaders and their judgment on what belongs to revelation counts as the judgment of the Church herself. The bishops acting individually can disagree (and often have), and so their judgments are not those of the Church as a whole. Rather, the bishops in communion with the pope constitute the teaching office of the Church: their official teachings count as teachings of the Body of Christ. Revelation can be discerned in their teaching.

4. FAITH AND REASON

An important objection to Christian faith in modern times has been the rationalist position. The rationalist rejects Christian faith because of his understanding of faith itself. He argues that one should always follow reason, but that in Christian faith the Christian goes beyond reason and therefore violates it. That is, the rationalist holds that one should always proportion one's belief to the amount of evidence available: positions with strong evidence for them should be believed strongly, positions with less evidence for them less strongly, and so on. Now, there is not sufficient

evidence for the truth of the Christian religion to merit absolute certainty, otherwise, we would not be asked to have faith.²⁴

The Church rejects rationalism; but the Church also teaches that the act of faith is reasonable, and that reason has a definite role to play within the act of faith. To understand this, we should first compare faith in God with human faith. Suppose my colleague tells me that while I was away from my office a student came to visit and that I should call him. If I believe my colleague then I accept what he says, not because of evidence (through my senses or understanding), but on the basis of my colleague's trustworthiness. Faith or belief is distinct from knowledge,²⁵ or the deliverances of reason, in that in knowledge one accepts something because of evidence. In knowledge the evidence moves one to accept the proposition as true. For example, one accepts the proposition that grass is green because of one's sense experience. One accepts that the earth is spheroid because of proof. One accepts that equals added to equals are equal because one intellectually apprehends it as self-evident.²⁶ But in belief (or faith) there is not sufficient evidence to move one to accept with certainty the proposition believed. If I accept the proposition that a student came to my office, I do so not on evidence, but on the trustworthiness of a witness. Thus, to believe is to assent to (accept as true) certain propositions, not on the basis of evidence (direct or indirect), but on the basis of trust in a witness.

Some significant points about belief in general should be noted. First, it involves in some way a choice. True, one may find oneself spontaneously believing someone (that is, without a choice), but even then, one has at least an indirect voluntary control over one's acts of belief: one could choose to try not to rely on others for information. Moreover, by developing a habit of independence, one could diminish one's readiness to believe other people.²⁷

Second, beliefs or acts of faith can be absolutely certain. In popular parlance the word "belief" often connotes a lack of certainty, as when one says, "I believe that is so, but I can't be sure." But that is not the sense of the word "belief" used here. People are often more certain of beliefs—what they accept on the word of a witness—than of things known through proof

Third, some beliefs are reasonable and others are unreasonable. Believing a trustworthy person who can know what he testifies to is reasonable. Believing an untrustworthy person or an ignorant person (or one ignorant about the area testified to) is unreasonable. Thus, human beliefs are not private matters one cannot discuss. Even though one cannot prove what one is asked to believe—otherwise belief would be unnecessary—still, one can examine the situation and the witness to try to determine whether one's belief is reasonable. Human beliefs need not be blind leaps.

Fourth, since one has some voluntary control (direct or indirect) over

one's beliefs, and since only some beliefs are reasonable, it follows that in some situations one ought to believe, and in other situations one ought not. For example, in most cases a child ought to believe his parents and in most cases a husband ought to believe his wife; whereas often (evidently) one ought not to believe politicians.²⁸

Christian faith has many of the same characteristics as human belief, or belief in general. However, instead of believing a human witness, Christians believe God Himself, Who speaks to us in revelation. God speaks through the words and deeds of the prophets of Israel, and of His Son, Jesus. These words and deeds are handed on to us in the Church. We accept these words and deeds as true, not because we can prove them, but because of God's trustworthiness. Moreover, like the human faith we just spoke of, the Christian faith of an adult is free, certain, reasonable, and a morally responsible act.

However, one must avoid having an over-intellectualized view of faith. Writing in a theological and university context, Catholic theologians have sometimes given the impression that they viewed the act of faith as a purely intellectual act, an assent to impersonal information of essentially scientific interest. Catholic theologians sometimes gave this impression when, between the times of the Council of Trent (the Council which met between 1545 and 1563, and replied to Luther) and Vatican II (1962-1965), they often emphasized the differences between Catholicism and Protestantism. Protestants sometimes emphasized the aspect of trust in the act of faith to the point that the intellectual component seemed unimportant. In reaction, Catholic theologians sometimes over-emphasized the intellectual component. Vatican II signaled the importance of a balanced approach by teaching that, "By faith man freely commits his entire self to God who reveals..." (Vatican II, *Dei Verbum*, #5). Faith is a response not just to impersonal, scientific information, but to a personal communication from God, an invitation from God to set up with him a personal communion. So, one's act of faith (in adults) is the beginning and foundation of this personal communion with God. It is, as the letter to the Hebrews says, "the substance of things to be hoped for" (Heb. 11:1).

Scripture frequently compares our relationship with God to a marriage relationship. Suppose John proposes marriage to Susan. John's proposal is an invitation to her to set up with him a common life. Thus, his communication is not mere impersonal information. Rather, by what he says, and equally importantly, by what he does, he communicates to her who he is. He reveals himself to her. He will no doubt have revealed to her his origins, his family, his basic beliefs, and, very importantly, his plans and his commitments. These things constitute (in part) who a person is. And so her

acceptance of this communication is not just a purely intellectual assent to his assertions as being true, although it will include that. Her acceptance of his proposal is also an acceptance of him, and the beginning of the type of personal communion they will form in the rest of their married life.

Similarly, God's revelation is not just impersonal information about the nature or structure of the universe (although it includes truths about the nature of the universe). It is a communication about who God is, and of His invitation to us to set up with Him a personal communion as intimate as a marriage. "By divine revelation God wished to manifest and communicate both Himself and the eternal decrees of this will concerning the salvation of mankind" (Vatican II, *Dei Verbum*, #6; *Fides et Ratio*, p. 22, #13). And just as John's communication to Susan is in deeds as well as words, so God's revelation is by deeds as well as words. The words and deeds of the prophets and of Jesus, handed on to us by the Church (in the Church's teachings and sacraments), constitute the personal communication from God.

Finally, Susan's acceptance of John's marriage proposal is the beginning of their marital communion. Normally this act of acceptance also involves a commitment by her to do her part in building up that commitment (love), and a trust that John will do his part in sustaining the communion (hope). In one act she accepts the proposal as sincere (faith), trusts that John will do his part (hope), and commits to do her part (love). Similarly, the Christian's act of faith, his acceptance of God's proposal of personal communion, is the beginning of the Christian's personal communion with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (the "substance of things to be hoped for"). And in one act the Christian accepts the proposal as true (faith), trusts that God will fulfill His promises (hope), and commits to do his part in building up the Kingdom of God (an act of love or charity) (Grisez, vol. 1, chapter 19). This obedience of faith remains as part of who the Christian is, and is implemented by hundreds of choices and actions throughout the Christian's life, as, with God's grace, he seeks to integrate every aspect of himself, and his society and culture, with that living faith.

How, then, can the act of faith be reasonable? How should a Catholic answer the rationalist objection? The rationalist rejects religious faith, as we saw above, arguing that the evidence for Christianity is not sufficient to warrant absolute certainty, since one is asked to believe, not know. And yet Christians teach that one should have absolute certainty, that one should believe firmly. How, in other words, can Christian faith be: a) distinct from knowledge, b) absolutely certain, and yet c) also reasonable?

The first Vatican Council taught the following:

Nevertheless, in order that the obedience of our faith might be in harmony with reason [consentaneum rationi], God willed that to the interior graces of

the Holy Spirit there should be joined exterior evidences (argumenta) of His revelation, namely, divine facts, and especially miracles and prophecies, which, as they manifestly display the omnipotence and infinite knowledge of God, are most certain signs of his divine revelation, adapted to the intelligence of all human beings (DS 3009/1790).

Thus, two things insure the reasonableness of divine revelation: the interior graces of the Holy Spirit (illumination of the intellect and movement of the will), and exterior signs (such as miracles, prophecies, the sublimity of Christian teaching, or the holiness of the Church). That is, there is both an internal light of faith, by which one perceives that what is revealed is of divine origin, and external signs, which indicate the revelation's divine origin. How should these two factors be understood?

Regarding the external signs of credibility, consider this analogy. I receive what purports to be an important communication from my human father: how could I determine that the message was indeed from my father? Clearly, the message would need to be accompanied by signs or marks indicating that it really was my father speaking. This might be my father's signature, his characteristic way of speaking, or an indication that the author knows things that only my father could know, or a combination of all these things. The case of divine revelation is similar: God causes certain effects to accompany His revelation, effects related to His revelation just as a signature or a characteristic turn of phrase is related to my human father's message. Miracles and prophecies, but also the sublimity and luminosity of the divine revelation, and the holiness of the Church, are like a divine signature, indicating to us that here God is indeed speaking. Just as it would not be unreasonable to accept a message from my father, given external signs of his authorship, so it does not violate reason to accept God's revelation, partly because of external signs of divine authorship. The signs of credibility dispose us to believe, and insure that the act of belief does not violate reason, although the primary cause of the act of faith is God's interior illumination and movement.

The Church in the first Vatican Council mentions miracles and prophecies, but she does not limit signs of credibility to those. Thus a sign of credibility might be the sublimity of Divine revelation, the character of Christ, the holiness of the Church, the stability of the Church, or combinations of these.²⁹ One may grasp signs of credibility by reasoning, by reflecting on the characteristics of Christ or of the Church which are explained in apologetics books. Or one may apprehend signs of credibility by a simple act of perception, discerning the divine character of the Gospel, of the Liturgy, or of the Church.³⁰

Vatican I emphasizes that the act of Christian faith is done only with "the illumination and inspiration" of the Holy Spirit, "who gives to all people

sweetness in assenting to and believing in truth”(DS 3009).³¹ Thus, the Holy Spirit working within us enables us to recognize the divine origin of the Gospel proposed to us exteriorly.

Consider how one recognizes the work of a favorite artist. First, there are definite marks or signs in the painting that one might be able to indicate, which are clear signs of the master's work. Second, one might be aware of such signs without being able to articulate them the way an art historian or even a reader of books on art is able to. Third, many people are able to perceive the chief characteristics of a master artist without any reasoning at all, either explicit or implicit.

Similarly, one need not have read apologetics books in order to be aware of signs of credibility in God's revelation, signs which attest to its divine origin. Second, many people perceive the sublimity of revelation or the holiness of the Church—the holiness produced by living the Gospel—without being able to articulate or defend this point. Third, many people may go through a reasoning process that is implicit and that they cannot articulate (see, e.g., Newman, 1985; du Broglie, 1963, especially pp. 20-66). Finally, people may immediately perceive the divine origin of the revelation. In any of these cases their faith is reasonable and a responsible act.³²

Another point of comparison with appreciation of art is significant here. To recognize the artist, or say, the beauty of a painting, there is required an “artistic sense” on the part of the subject. Some people (and not only art critics) have a developed artistic sense, while others seem to lack an artistic sense altogether. While what one recognizes—the origin of a particular piece of art, or its beauty—is objective, still, there is needed a sense or openness on the part of the subject to apprehend it. Similarly, the Holy Spirit works interiorly, moving the Christian to perceive the divinity in the revelation that is exteriorly preached to him (du Broglie, 1963, especially pp. 20-66). God working interiorly in the soul of the Christian gives him a “sense of divinity,” a capacity to recognize the divine origin of the revelation handed on from the Apostles.³³ Thus, of the Good Shepherd, Our Lord says that he calls his own sheep by name and the sheep hear his voice, “and the sheep follow him because they hear his voice. But a stranger they will not follow, but will flee from him because they do not know the voice of strangers” Jn. 10:4-6).³⁴

Hence the interior light of faith, together with the external signs of credibility, show that the act of faith does not violate reason, that it is “consonant with reason.” One might distinguish between “epistemic” justification and “moral” justification. Epistemic justification involves the norms for an intellectual act, where those norms concern the relation of one's intellectual acts with the goal of attaining knowledge of truth. Moral

justification involves the norms for choices, and these norms concern the relation between these acts of will and all of the intrinsic goods of persons. Roughly, the epistemic domain concerns truth, the moral domain concerns goodness of will. Some Catholic thinkers have argued that rationalism is mistaken because, although the act of faith may lack epistemic justification or warrant (sine the evidence by itself may not warrant absolute certainty), still, it has moral justification. The light of faith and the signs of credibility render the act of faith a morally responsible act, because it is morally responsible in some cases to go beyond the evidence. Other Catholic thinkers have argued that the rationalist is mistaken because there is sufficient evidence, even for epistemic justification for the act of faith. The evidence is of a distinctive sort, not the same as in scientific matters, but the sort involved in interpersonal relationships. By the light of faith, and confirmed by external signs of credibility, one perceives that revelation is of divine origin. In either case, the act of faith is a reasonable and morally upright act.

5. REASON AND ORIGINAL SIN

Someone may object to what seems an overly optimistic view of reason: “Given the reality of original sin (one might argue) how can one have such a high evaluation of reason’s natural capacities, as the Catholic Church does? After all, because of original sin, human nature has been radically corrupted, and it would therefore be a dangerous folly to trust it at all. In these circumstances, we should forsake reason and abandon ourselves to faith and God’s grace.” How, then, does the Catholic Church’s position on faith and reason relate to the reality of original sin?

The Church certainly does recognize that human reason has been seriously wounded or damaged by original sin. The Church rejects, however, the conclusion that some draw from this, that therefore reason is now fundamentally derailed or unable to arrive at any certainty. The damage done by original sin could be understood in two ways. First, one might think that original sin causes human reason now to be fundamentally untrustworthy. Perhaps reason is like a broken clock—it cannot be trusted at all, its readings being perhaps completely out of touch with real time.

Or, secondly, the damage caused by original sin might be understood as a weakening of reason, making it more liable to error—especially on matters bearing on moral questions—but not rendering it incapable of arriving at any legitimate certainties. The analogy here might be an injured leg, say a leg with an arthritic knee: although one cannot walk as well or securely with an arthritic knee, still, one can limp or hobble with it; the leg can still function

(move one to a new place), though not as efficaciously as a healthy leg. Moreover, if one adds a sturdy knee-brace—analogueous to faith and grace—one might walk and even run quite well. The Catholic Church understands the effect of original sin in this second way, not the first.

I cannot give a full defense of that position here, but perhaps it would not be out of place to present two considerations which may at least clarify it in part. The first way of understanding the damage of original sin would appear to be self-referentially inconsistent. It is one thing, as we have said, to hold that one's reason is weakened, but quite another to hold that one's reason is fundamentally unreliable. But holding that reason is fundamentally unreliable would annul every act of reason, including this very act in which one holds that it is untrustworthy. Put otherwise, the act of believing that reason is fundamentally untrustworthy is itself an act of reason (even if other powers, in ourselves or in others, God perhaps, are held to be involved). So, to hold that reason is radically untrustworthy is at the same time, implicitly, to hold that it is not (at least in this instance) radically untrustworthy.

Secondly, to hold that reason is totally corrupted by original sin, rather than wounded or weakened by it, seems to be based on thinking of evil and corruption as positive realities, rather than as privations or distortions of what still must retain some good in them. How can we conceive of the intellect, a spiritual power, being damaged? We might think of evil as a certain type of nature, to which, after original sin, we are drawn and which somehow enters us and twists our capacity to reason, rendering it fundamentally unreliable. However, such a view is mistaken. Evil is not a nature or positive something that competes with goodness. Rather, evil is a privation, a lack of what is due a thing.³⁵ While there are things and acts which are evil, what makes them evil is a lack of what ought to be in them, a lack of order or of some fullness of being due those things.

Original sin—that is, the original sin transmitted to babies when they are conceived—is the privation of the communion with God (sanctifying grace) which should have been there had Adam not sinned (Council of Trent, DS 1510/787-1516/791). Other effects of original sin are death—for if Adam had not sinned we would not have died, because of the preternatural gift³⁶ of immortality—and concupiscence (e.g., Rom. 5:12, and 5:19). Concupiscence is the lack of the preternatural gift called “integrity,” the subjection or ordering of our emotions to the judgment of reason. After original sin our emotions tend to go off on their own, as it were, preceding the direction of our reason.

Original sin itself is removed by Baptism, which is to say that the baptized person receives sanctifying grace, a share in the divine nature, the Holy Spirit poured forth in his heart (*Fides et Ratio*, #22 and 28). But the effects

of original sin remain, namely, concupiscence and a certain darkness of the intellect and weakness of the will. How should the darkness of the intellect be understood? The intellect and will are spiritual powers of the human soul. How can they be damaged by the lack of sanctifying grace?

The darkening or weakening of the intellect is not a contrary tendency in it. (Since evil is not a positive nature, evil as such cannot be the direct object of a tendency.) Moreover, since the intellect is a simple, spiritual power, it cannot be thought of as composed of various cells some of which lose their capacity or size, as muscular tissue becomes weaker, or totally incapacitated. Rather, the intellect seems to be damaged by sin insofar as its attention is modified—directed in the wrong way. We all have experienced times where because of selfishness, pride, or envy, we slighted or ignored clear evidence, and exaggerated other apparent evidence or arguments. Selfishness, pride, envy, and so on, incline us to concentrate on certain facts and ignore others. A simple example will illustrate the point. Those who smoke cigarettes sometimes find it difficult to be objective about the massive research showing that cigarette smoking is deadly to one's health. Clearly, a bias can impede the functioning of the intellect, suppressing its operation in certain cases, tempting one to rationalize in other cases, and thus darkening the intellect.³⁷

Two important conclusions can be drawn from these points. First, the human intellect is weakened by original sin, not totally corrupted. It is not paralyzed, even if it now walks with a limp.

Second, the intellect can be healed by grace and faith. If selfishness, pride, envy, lust and so on bias the operations of the intellect, then charity, humility, chastity, and, above all, faith, heal that bias. Of course, there remain aspects of ourselves not yet integrated with faith and charity, and so the bias more or less remains, more with some of us than with others. But the Catholic view is that the practical conclusion to be drawn from this is, not to abandon reason, in a blind leap of faith, but to struggle with one's selfishness, pride, and so on, and, above all, to reason within the context of faith. In that way, we can counteract the biases we have because of the effects of original sin: "Seen in this light, reason is valued without being overvalued. The results of reasoning may in fact be true, but these results acquire their meaning only if they are set within the larger horizon of faith" (*Fides et Ratio*, #20).

6. FAITH, REASON, AND RESPECT FOR GOD'S CREATION

At times some people have tended to view creatures and creator, the temporal and the eternal, human action and divine action, as in fundamental

competition, rather than in harmony. They thought that to give credit to creatures was to detract from God's glory. And so they tended to give as little credit to creatures as possible, in order to leave room for giving credit to God. Given these ideas some people tended to exalt faith, but denigrate reason, attribute almost all to grace and almost nothing to nature, and view the temporal as nothing but a mere means or testing ground in relation to the eternal. We could call this view "fideistic supernaturalism" (Grisez, 1983, vol. 1, p. 311). This view seems to have lent support to the "sola gratia" doctrine during Reformation times—the doctrine that we are saved by grace alone, that free will has no role at all in justification or salvation. It also seems to have lent support to the "sola scriptura" doctrine—the doctrine that revelation is by Scripture alone, and not by tradition at all.

Taken to its logical conclusion, fideistic supernaturalism (that is, the tendency to detract from creatures in order to exalt divine power) led certain Islamic theologians in the Middle Ages, called the "Mutakallimin," to teach that only God actually causes effects, and that creatures are nothing but occasions for God's activity. Thus, according to the Mutakallimin, the sun does not warm the river or the fields, but God does so alone, on the occasion of the river or the fields being under the sun. In the last few centuries, this same view of the divine and the human as exclusive or dichotomous has continued on, except that many thinkers have denied the significance of the divine in order to leave room for seeing significance in the human. This view, secularism, is just the flip-side of fideistic supernaturalism, but it is of the same coin. Both make the same basic mistake: the assumption of a fundamental dichotomy between the human and the divine.

Responding to this idea as it was found in the Mutakallimin's position, St. Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century expressed well the basic Catholic position. Aquinas's reply to this position was that God's action and creatures' actions are not in competition at all, but in a fundamental harmony. In fact, he argued, to detract from creatures' action does not glorify God, but on the contrary, detracts from His power:

[T]he perfection of the effect demonstrates the perfection of the cause, for a greater power brings about a more perfect effect. But God is the most perfect agent. Therefore, things created by him obtain perfection from him. So, to detract from the perfection of creatures is to detract from the perfection of divine power (*Summa Contra Gentiles*, Bk. III, Ch. 69, #15).

Just as to praise an artist's work in no way detracts from the artist, but just the reverse is true. So, to see efficacy and significance in God's art, God's creation, does not detract from God. On the contrary, to detract from the perfection of an artist's work is to detract from the talents of the artist. And it is similar with God and His creatures, who are His art.

God elicits our active cooperation, not because He needs our actions; He does not depend on us in any way. Rather, He elicits our active cooperation to ennoble us, because, as St. Thomas again expressed it, He wishes us to be like Him not only in being but also in action (ibid., #16).³⁸ An analogy may clarify. A mother may give her two pre-school children a good gift by giving them some cookies. But, an even better gift would be to get them to help her bake the cookies, with her constant supervision and guidance. Then the gift is even better. Part of the gift is their active participation in making the cookies. Likewise, our active cooperation in redemption and salvation in no way competes with divine grace; rather, it is part of the divine gift. This point applies to the relationship between grace and nature, but also faith and reason, Scripture and tradition, human goods and divine life.³⁹ To see some efficacy and significance in the human in no way detracts from the divine.

The Catholic Church clearly teaches that the kingdom of God is a gift that we cannot earn. We are freely called into communion with the Lord; the Holy Spirit is poured forth into our hearts, purely out of God's generosity. The Church also insists, however, that it is possible by our free will to fall away from that communion (Eph 5:1-6), and that we are called actively to cooperate with God in preparing the materials, as it were, for the eternal banquet. Our own active cooperation is not in competition with God's grace, but is itself part of the gift God has prepared for us (First Vatican Council, DS 3008/1789-3010/1791; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #153-154). "For we are His handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for the good works that God has prepared in advance, that we should live in them." (Eph. 2:8-9) And so the Church teaches the centrality of grace and faith, but also the dignity and importance of reason and all of the goods of human nature. Indeed, the eternal kingdom will include not only supernatural communion with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but also the fulfillment of our human nature, both body and soul, and all of the fruits of our human action, purged of imperfection.

When we have spread on earth the fruits of our nature and our enterprise—human dignity, brotherly communion, and freedom—according to the command of the Lord and in His Spirit, we will find them once again, cleansed this time from the stain of sin, illuminated and transfigured, when Christ Jesus presents to His Father an eternal and universal kingdom, 'of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace.' (reference to Preface for the Feast of Christ the King) Here on earth the kingdom is mysteriously present; when the Lord comes it will enter into its perfection (Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, #39).

Thus, the Church teaches, against both secularism and fideistic supernaturalism, that grace is central, and that grace does not supplant

nature, but perfects and builds on it. Similarly, faith does not negate reason, but adds to it and provides an illumining horizon for it. "Redeemed by Christ and made a new creature by the Holy Spirit, man can, indeed he must, love the things of God's creation: it is from God that he has received them, and it is as flowing from God's hand that he looks upon them and reveres them" (Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, #37).

Department of Philosophy
Franciscan University
Steubenville, Ohio

NOTES

- ¹ Council of Trent (which met in the years 1545-1563), DS 1525/797; 1532/801. I will refer in the standard way to Church councils by citing a work edited by Henricus Denzinger and Adolfus Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum Definitionum et Declarationem de Rebus Fidei et Morum*, hereafter abbreviated as DS, with their enumeration. There will be two numbers; the lower one is found in an earlier edition of the handbook and in many publications using it. Much of Denzinger-Schönmetzer is translated in *The Church Teaches, Documents of the Church in English Translation* (1973).
- ² "Modernism" is the name of a set of views on revelation and the Christian life rejected by the Catholic Church early this century during the papacy of Pope Pius X. See Pope Pius X, "On the Doctrine of the Modernists" (*Pascendi Domenici Gregis*), #8-10, in DS 3477/2072.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ In the text the case of living, healthy faith is discussed. It also is possible to have the supernatural virtue of faith without the virtues of charity and hope. Following St. James, the Church has traditionally referred to that as "dead faith." See Jas. 2:14-17; Council of Trent, DS 1544/808.
- ⁵ Propositions are not the same as the verbal or written sentences one uses to express or signify them. Rather, propositions are the objects of thought signified by the outward expressions. Thus, two different sentences, one English and one French, say, can signify or express the same proposition.
 Nor should propositions be thought of as intermediaries somehow blocking our grasp upon reality. Propositions are the content of what we understand of a reality with which we are in cognitive union; they *constitute* that union. Even though their complexity and limitations are not properties of what is understood, but of our manner of understanding, their content is identical with some aspect of the thing understood, or, in the case of analogical predications, their content is a likeness of the thing understood.
- ⁶ On the analogical meaning of our understanding and language about God in revelation, see below.
- ⁷ Of course, not every alleged mystical experience is genuine.
- ⁸ Cf. *Fides et Ratio*, #13. The authority of the Church is not based on scholarly expertise but her mission with respect to revelation. The Church does not take positions on the philosophical issues as such. But various philosophical positions do impinge on her mission, which is to hand on, guard, and develop the deposit of Faith received from the Apostles. First, some of the truths of revelation do answer, inadvertently, philosophical

questions, for example, philosophical issues regarding the existence of God, free will, other minds. Second, some philosophical positions, while not directly contradicting any specific doctrine of revelation, would imply, if true, that the basic relationship which revelation is meant to establish is impossible.

⁹ The teaching is from the Fourth Lateran Council, DS, 806/432.

¹⁰ The quote is from *The Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, Anaphora*.

¹¹ The quote is from St. Thomas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Bk. I, Ch. 30.

¹² Followers of John Duns Scotus, a Franciscan theologian-philosopher who lived between 1265 or 1266 and 1308, who is famous for defending, against the Thomists, the position that some of our words are predicated *univocally* of God and creatures. For a brief introduction to his life and thought, see Frederick Copleston, *History of Philosophy, Volume 2: Medieval Philosophy* (1962, Chapters 45-50).

¹³ Followers of Francisco Suarez (died in 1617), a seventeenth century Jesuit theologian. See Frederick Copleston, *History of Philosophy, Volume 3: Ockham to Suarez* (1953, Chapters 22-23).

¹⁴ An important disanalogy with pulsars is that God is not distant—although He is understood only indirectly, He is intimately present, and is loved and worshipped as present. See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 8.

¹⁵ Shown by the fact that our understanding of the feature does not tell us thereby that it exists.

¹⁶ This is because we are body-soul composites, not pure spirits, and our natural manner of understanding follows our natural manner of being. For a good explanation of this point see Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Insight* (1970, pp. 3-33).

¹⁷ Things understood and chosen are related to God in ways somewhat similar to the ways things understood and chosen are related to human agents. On the basis of that similarity of relationships, we rightly extend the terms “knows” and “wills” to God, even though we do not apprehend what God’s understanding or willing is in Himself.

¹⁸ Indeed, even sense *knowledge* is probably understood by analogy, and contrast, with other types of actions, such as swallowing or grabbing—cf. the terms, “gullible,” “apprehend,” and “grasp.”

¹⁹ This type of analogy is technically called an analogy of proportionality.

²⁰ What is denied here is the *formal* sufficiency of the Bible—sufficiency not for salvation (since even one who does not know of Christ can be saved by God’s grace if he wills to do God’s will), but sufficiency for understanding what God has revealed. Perhaps all of the basic truths of public revelation are contained, implicitly or explicitly, in the Bible (the Catholic Church has not taken a position on that question). That would be *material* sufficiency. The Church’s teaching is that the Bible is not *formally* sufficient: to understand properly what is revealed, and how what is revealed in the Bible applies to issues that arise later in history, a living authoritative interpreter is needed.

²¹ The issue of divorce and remarriage is particularly instructive. On a first reading, the Gospel of Matthew appears to contradict the teaching on divorce and remarriage in Mark, Luke and Paul (Cf. Mt. 5:31-32, Mt. 19:1ff, with Lk. 16:18, Mk. 10: 1-12 and Paul’s 1 Cor. 7: 10-11). In Mark, Luke and Paul it is taught that no one can divorce and remarry, that the attempt to do so is adultery, and no exceptions are made. In Matthew there appears, on first reading, to be an exception. In both places Matthew says that Our Lord said that if a man puts away his wife, *except on account of porneia* (often translated as “fornication”), and marries another, then he commits adultery. (In Mt. 19:1ff the phrase is, “except for” [*epi me*] *porneia*) The context of Mt. 19, however, indicates fairly clearly that an exception could not actually be meant, for if a true exception were envisaged it

would be hard to see how the refrain, "You have heard it said, ... but now I say to you..." would apply. If Jesus were merely affirming the stricter of the two predominant interpretations of the time (those of Shammai and Hillel) then he would not be going beyond what was generally taught. Also, it is hard to explain how one or more evangelists (depending on which gospel is earliest) could feel justified in contradicting what other evangelists and/or Paul had taught (note also that Paul makes a point of indicating that he is reporting Our Lord's teaching, not just his own). Further, if a true exception were allowed the ground would probably be referred to as "adultery" (*moicheia*), instead of "fornication" (*porneia*). So it is clear that what appears to be an exception really is not. The most probable explanation of the apparent discrepancy is that "*porneia*" in this context means, not fornication or adultery, but an *illicit union*. Thus, the meaning seems to be this: "Whoever puts away his wife, except where the marriage is unlawful, that is, not a real marriage, and marries another, commits adultery." Two points are important for our purposes: first, the passage is not on its face perspicuous, but requires interpretation. Second, the most probable explanation for the apparent discrepancy supports the Catholic Church's authoritative teaching on the issue.

- ²² The leadership role is just one of the functions of the Apostles. The function of being the original foundation is unique to eye-witnesses, and is not passed on.
- ²³ So, day to day teachings are not infallibly proposed. On this issue, see Germain Grisez, 1983, volume 2, pp. 19-20. Notice that the pope's teachings are teachings of the Church herself, and thus infallible, only if the pope teaches to the whole Church, using his full authority, and defines that a teaching is part of revelation. The cases cited as counterexamples by critics of the Church—the Galileo case, or Honorius in the seventh century, for example—are clearly not cases of the pope teaching to the whole Church, nor defining that a doctrine belongs to revelation, nor teaching with his full authority. On these objections, see B.C. Butler, *The Church and Infallibility* (1954).
- ²⁴ Cf. Bertrand Russell's "Liberal Decalogue." His "first commandment" is: "Do not feel absolutely certain of anything." His fifth commandment is: "Have no respect for the authority of others, for there always are contrary authorities to be found." *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell*, pp. 71-72, cited on the internet at the *Bertrand Russell Society Home Page*.
- ²⁵ The word "knowledge" is sometimes used as a contrast with belief or faith, where it means, being rightly certain of something on the basis of evidence, direct or indirect. At other times "knowledge" means being rightly certain of something, whether by evidence or by faith. In this second sense, one can *know* something either by evidence or by faith. The context suffices to indicate which sense is used.
- ²⁶ Hence there are three broad types of evidence: sense evidence (including memory), proof (deductive or inductive), and intellectual self-evidence.
- ²⁷ That the will is involved in belief is clear from the fact that faith is meritorious. Abraham's faith was "credited to him as righteousness" (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:6).
- ²⁸ The *ought* in question here is a *moral* ought (as opposed, say, to a logical or technical ought).
- ²⁹ There are several good works on Catholic Apologetics. See, for example, Benedict Ashley, *Choosing a World-View and Value-System, An Ecumenical Apologetics* (2000); Michael J. Miller, *Life's Greatest Grace: Why I Belong to the Catholic Church* (1993); James Cardinal Gibbons, *The Faith of Our Fathers* (1917); Arnold Lunn, *And Yet So New* (1958). On documented miracles, the best instance, because of the meticulous documentation by physicians of various faiths or no faith at all, is Lourdes. On this see: Louis Monden, S.J., *Signs and Wonders: A Study of the Miraculous Element in Religion*

- (1966, pp. 194-250). Patrick Marnham, *Lourdes: A Modern Pilgrimage* (1981). On several incorrupt bodies of saints: Joan Carrol Cruz, *The Incorruptibles: A Study of the Incorruption of the Bodies of Various Catholic Saints and Beati* (1977).
- ³⁰ This is expressed quite well by Guy de Broglie, S.J., *Reason and Revelation* (1963, pp. 20-66).
- ³¹ Vatican I is quoting there Canon 7 of the Second Council of Orange.
- ³² For a defense of the position that the “judgment of credibility” is based on an immediate perception, rather than a reasoning process, see Germain Grisez, *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, Vol. 2, *Living a Christian Life*, Chapter 1.
- ³³ Something analogous also happens with respect to moral attributes even on the natural level. All of us know of characters (at least from movies or books) who are completely selfish, and as a consequence expect everyone else to be. Everyone, they believe, must always have an angle, a selfish motive behind his actions. It seems that there must be some generosity within a person as a prerequisite to recognizing the real generosity in others. Analogously, the divinity within the Christian’s heart enables him to recognize the divine origin of revelation.
- ³⁴ Note that the ability to accept is from within, but the intelligible content of what is accepted is from without.
- ³⁵ At the Council of Florence, the Church defined that: “there is no nature of evil, since every nature, insofar as it is a nature, is good [*nullamque mali asserit esse naturam, quia omnis natura, in quantum natura est, bona est*] (DS 1333). See, for example, Charles Journet, *The Meaning of Evil* (1963); Patrick Lee (2000, pp. 239-269).
- ³⁶ A “preternatural gift” is something which was given to Adam and Eve and would have been given to their offspring if Adam had not sinned, a gift that is beyond the capacities that are due a human nature, but is not the same as a sharing in the divine life, this last being called “*supernatural*.”
- ³⁷ “The search for truth, of course, is not always so transparent nor does it always produce such results. The limitation of reason and the inconstancy of the heart often obscure and distort a person’s search. Truth can also drown in a welter of other concerns. People can even run from the truth as soon as they glimpse it because they are afraid of its demands” (*Fides et Ratio*, #28).
- ³⁸ For example: “For it is not a result of the inadequacy of divine power, but of the immensity of His goodness, whereby He has willed to communicate His likeness to things, not only so that they might exist, but also that they might be causes for other things. Indeed, all creatures generally attain the divine likeness in these two ways, as we showed above. By this, in fact, the beauty of order in created things is evident” (*Summa Contra Gentiles*, Bk. III, Ch. 70, #7).
- ³⁹ Thus, the completed eternal kingdom, heaven, will include both divine life—the beatific vision—and human goods such as health, human friendship, play, and so on. One must not view heaven as purely spiritual and thus reduce the material order to a mere means.

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