

ANTHOLOGY OF TEXTS CHOSEN FROM THE MAGISTERIUM OF THE CHURCH AND FROM THEOLOGY

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE TREATISE OF FUNDAMENTAL THEOLOGY

1. *On the Nature of Fundamental Theology*

All theological subjects assume fundamental theology as the basis of their rational procedure, which has for its object of study the fact of Christian revelation and its transmission in the Church: themes that lie at the heart of every problematic on the relations between reason and faith. Fundamental theology will be studied as an introductory discipline to dogmatics and indeed as a preparation, reflection and development of the act of faith (the "Creed" of the Symbol), in the context of the demands of reason and the relations between faith, cultures and major religions. However, it is also an ongoing dimension of the whole of theology, which must respond to current problems presented by pupils and the environment in which they live and in which they will minister tomorrow.

Essential reason for fundamental theology is the rational reflection that the theologian, together with the Church, starting from faith, makes on the reality of Christianity as the work of God who revealed himself and made himself present in Christ, and of the Church itself as an institution willed by Christ to prolong his work in the world.

It should therefore be conceived as a theology of dialogue and frontier, in which - in addition to the confrontation between faith and reason in abstract terms - one comes into contact with historical religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Islamism, etc.); with the reflected forms of modern atheism (especially Marx's, Freud's and Nietzsche's); with the lived forms of religious indifference in a secularized world, characterized by the dominance of technological and industrial processes and economic values; and, finally, with the needs of believers themselves who, in the present world, bring in new doubts and difficulties and pose new questions to theology and catechesis. In order to respond to the needs and experiences emerging from these various categories of men, fundamental theology seeks to fix the meaning that, in such a situation, Christ, his message, and his Church have in order to arouse and obtain the adherence of faith, as the way to reach God.

Such an approach of fundamental theology involves the study and exposition of Christianity's relationship to history, language, other religious experiences, mysticisms, philosophies, sciences, and human conditions. But its specific task remains that of manifesting rationally, with a discourse valid for believers and non-believers alike, how the mystery of Christ, present in the Church, not only illuminates but also enacts and completes human existence, surpassing it in its perfective and saving relationship with God.

CEC, *The theological formation of future priests*, 2/22/1976, nos. 107-110.

2. *Fundamental Theology as Pedagogy of Faith*

More than other theological disciplines, yours [fundamental theology] is in the privileged condition of touching on the referential and normative points of belief. This is why I urge you, dear ones, to give special space to the *pedagogy of faith*, deepening the expressions it has taken on over the centuries.

It is up to you to find the reasons for revelation, especially today, to be perceived in its evident *credibility* when it presents the love of the crucified and risen God, the true and only source of all authentic love. The search for the conditions in which man asks for himself the first fundamental questions about the meaning of life, about the purpose he wants to give to it and about what awaits him after death, constitutes for fundamental theology the necessary *preamble* so that, even today, faith has to show in its fullness the path to a reason in sincere search for truth. In this way faith, a gift of God, while not being founded on reason, certainly cannot do without it; at the same time, the need appears for reason to make itself strong with faith, in order to discover the horizons to which it could not reach by itself [...].

Finally, know how to be authentic apologists for the mystery of Redemption. Insert yourselves generously into the long line of those who have founded their journey as believers on the words of the apostle Peter, who exhorts you to be "always ready to answer anyone who asks you for the reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15). I hope that you can enrich the ranks of apologists, witnessing even in our own time to the same greatness as Justin, Tertullian, Origen, Augustine, Anselm, Thomas, and, in centuries closer to us, St. Robert Bellarmine and Cardinal John Henry Newman. Make your own their passion for the truth of the faith, to be witnessed, if necessary even to the point of martyrdom.

John Paul II, *Address to a Congress of Fundamental Theology*, Pontifical Gregorian University, 9/30/95.

3. *Role and Aims of Fundamental Theology according to Fides et Ratio*

With its specific character as a discipline charged with giving an account of faith (cf. *1Pet* 3:15), the concern of *fundamental theology* will be to justify and expound the relationship between faith and philosophical thought. Recalling the teaching of Saint Paul (cf. *Rom* 1:19-20), the First Vatican Council pointed to the existence of truths which are naturally, and thus philosophically, knowable; and an acceptance of God's Revelation necessarily presupposes knowledge of these truths. In studying Revelation and its credibility, as well as the corresponding act of faith, fundamental theology should show how, in the light of the knowledge conferred by faith, there emerge certain truths which reason, from its own independent enquiry, already perceives. Revelation endows these truths with their fullest meaning, directing them towards the richness of the revealed mystery in which they find their ultimate purpose. Consider, for example, the natural knowledge of God, the possibility of distinguishing divine Revelation from other phenomena or the recognition of its credibility, the capacity of human language to speak in a true and meaningful way even of things which transcend all human experience. From all these truths, the mind is led to acknowledge the existence of a truly propaedeutic path to faith, one which can lead to the acceptance of Revelation without in any way compromising the principles and autonomy of the mind itself.

Similarly, fundamental theology should demonstrate the profound compatibility that exists between faith and its need to find expression by way of human reason fully free to give its assent. Faith will thus be able "to show fully the path to reason in a sincere search for the truth. Although faith, a gift of God, is not based on reason, it can certainly not dispense with it. At the same time, it becomes apparent that reason needs to be reinforced by faith, in order to discover horizons it cannot reach on its own".

Fides et ratio, n. 67.

4. *The Christians do not merit the accusations addressed to them from pagan society: a moral apology by Theophilus of Antioch (c. 120-185)*

Now we also confess that God exists, but that He is one, the creator, and maker, and fashioner of this universe; and we know that all things are arranged by His providence, but by Him alone. And we have learned a holy law; but we have as lawgiver Him who is really God, who teaches us to act righteously, and to be pious, and to do good [...].

Moreover, concerning subjection to authorities and powers, and prayer for them, the divine word gives us instructions, in order that “we may lead a quiet and peaceable life.” And it teaches us to render all things to all, “honour to whom honour, fear to whom fear, tribute to whom tribute; to owe no man anything, but to love all.”

Consider, therefore, whether those who teach such things can possibly live indifferently, and be commingled in unlawful intercourse, or, most impious of all, eat human flesh, especially when we are forbidden so much as to witness shows of gladiators, lest we become partakers and abettors of murders. But neither may we see the other spectacles, lest our eyes and ears be defiled, participating in the utterances there sung. For if one should speak of cannibalism, in these spectacles the children of Thyestes and Tereus are eaten; and as for adultery, both in the case of men and of gods, whom they celebrate in elegant language for honours and prizes, this is made the subject of their dramas. But far be it from Christians to conceive any such deeds; for with them temperance dwells, self-restraint is practiced, monogamy is observed, chastity is guarded, iniquity exterminated, sin extirpated, righteousness exercised, law administered, worship performed, God acknowledged: truth governs, grace guards, peace screens them; the holy word guides, wisdom teaches, life directs, God reigns. Therefore, though we have much to say regarding our manner of life, and the ordinances of God, the maker of all creation, we yet consider that we have for the present reminded you of enough to induce you to study these things, especially since you can now read [our writings] for yourself.

Ad Autolicum, III, 9 and 14-15

5. *The Christians are in the world as the soul in the body (from the Letter to Diognetus)*

For the Christians are distinguished from other men neither by country, nor language, nor the customs which they observe. For they neither inhabit cities of their own, nor employ a peculiar form of speech, nor lead a life which is marked out by any singularity. The course of conduct which they follow has not been devised by any speculation or deliberation of inquisitive men; nor do they, like some, proclaim themselves the advocates of any merely human doctrines. But, inhabiting Greek as well as barbarian cities, according as the lot of each of them has determined, and following the customs of the natives in respect to clothing, food, and the rest of their ordinary conduct, they display to us their wonderful and confessedly striking method of life. They dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners. Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers. They marry, as do all [others]; they beget children; but they do not destroy their offspring. They have a common table, but not a common bed. They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives. They love all men, and are persecuted by all. They are unknown and condemned; they are put to death, and restored to life. They are poor, yet make many rich; they are in lack of all things, and yet abound in all; they are dishonoured, and yet in their very dishonour are glorified. They are evil spoken of, and yet are justified; they are reviled, and bless; they are insulted, and repay the insult with honour; they do

good, yet are punished as evil-doers. When punished, they rejoice as if quickened into life; they are assailed by the Jews as foreigners, and are persecuted by the Greeks; yet those who hate them are unable to assign any reason for their hatred.

To sum up all in one word—what the soul is in the body, that are Christians in the world. The soul is dispersed through all the members of the body, and Christians are scattered through all the cities of the world. The soul dwells in the body, yet is not of the body; and Christians dwell in the world, yet are not of the world. The invisible soul is guarded by the visible body, and Christians are known indeed to be in the world, but their godliness remains invisible. The flesh hates the soul, and wars against it, though itself suffering no injury, because it is prevented from enjoying pleasures; the world also hates the Christians, though in nowise injured, because they abjure pleasures. The soul loves the flesh that hates it, and [loves also] the members; Christians likewise love those that hate them. The soul is imprisoned in the body, yet preserves that very body; and Christians are confined in the world as in a prison, and yet they are the preservers of the world. The immortal soul dwells in a mortal tabernacle; and Christians dwell as sojourners in corruptible [bodies], looking for an incorruptible dwelling in the heavens. The soul, when but ill-provided with food and drink, becomes better; in like manner, the Christians, though subjected day by day to punishment, increase the more in number. God has assigned them this illustrious position, which it were unlawful for them to forsake.

Letter to Diognetus, V, 1-17 and VI, 1-10

ON THE NATURE OF REVELATION

6. *The Gospel and its transmissions according to the Council of Trent (1546)*

The sacred and holy ecumenical and general Synod of Trent, lawfully assembled in the Holy Spirit, with the same three Legates of the Apostolic See presiding over it, keeping this constantly in view, that with the abolishing of errors, the purity itself of the Gospel is preserved in the Church, which promised before through the Prophets in the Holy Scriptures our Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God first promulgated with His own mouth, and then commanded "to be preached" by His apostles "to every creature" as the source of every saving truth and of instruction in morals (Mt 28,19 ff. , Mark Mc 16,15), and [the Synod] clearly perceiving that this truth and instruction are contained in the written books and in the unwritten traditions, which have been received by the apostles from the mouth of Christ Himself, or from the apostles themselves, at the dictation of the Holy Spirit, have come down even to us, transmitted as it were from hand to hand, [the Synod] following the examples of the orthodox Fathers, receives and holds in veneration with an equal affection of piety and reverence all the books both of the Old and of the New Testament, since one God is the author or both, and also the traditions themselves, those that appertain both to faith and to morals, as having been dictated either by Christ's own word of mouth, or by the Holy Spirit, and preserved in the Catholic Church by a continuous succession. And so that no doubt may arise in anyone's mind as to which are the books that are accepted by this Synod, it has decreed that a list of the Sacred books be added to this decree.

Council of Trent, Session IV, April 8, 1546

Decretum de libris sacris et traditionibus recipiendis, DH 1501

7. *Natural knowledge of God and historical revelation according to Vatican Council I (1870)*

The same Holy Mother Church holds and teaches that God, the beginning and end of all things, can be known with certitude by the natural light of human reason from created things; "for the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made" (Rm 1,20); nevertheless, it has pleased His wisdom and goodness to reveal Himself and the eternal decrees of His will to the human race in another and supernatural way, as the Apostle says: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners, spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all, in these days hath spoken to us by His Son."

Dei Filius, ch. 2: "Revelation", DH 3004

8. *A twofold order of knowledge, according to Vatican Council I*

By enduring agreement the Catholic Church has held and holds that there is a twofold order of knowledge, distinct not only in principle but also in object: in principle, indeed, because we know in one way by natural reason, in another by divine faith; in object, however, because, in addition to things to which natural reason can attain, mysteries hidden in God are proposed to us for belief which, had they not been divinely revealed, could not become known.

Ibidem, ch. 4: "Faith and Reason", DH 3015

9. *The notion of Revelation according to Dei Verbum and Vatican Council II (1965)*

In His goodness and wisdom God chose to reveal Himself and to make known to us the hidden purpose of His will by which through Christ, the Word made flesh, man might in the Holy Spirit have access to the Father and come to share in the divine nature. Through this revelation, therefore, the invisible God out of the abundance of His love speaks to men as friends and lives among them, so that He may invite and take them into fellowship with Himself (*ut eos ad societatem Secum invitaret in eamque suscipiat*).

This plan of revelation is realized by deeds and words having an inner unity (*fit gestis verbisque intrinsece inter se connexis*), the deeds wrought by God in the history of salvation manifest and confirm the teaching and realities signified by the words (*doctrinam et res verbis significatas*), while the words proclaim the deeds and clarify the mystery contained in them.

By this revelation then, the deepest truth about God and the salvation of man shines out for our sake in Christ, who is both the mediator and the fullness of all revelation.

Dei Verbum, 2

10. *Old Testament Revelation according to Dei Verbum, 3*

God, who through the Word creates all things and keeps them in existence, gives men an enduring witness to Himself (*perenne sui testimonium*) in created realities. Planning to make known the way of heavenly salvation (*viam salutis supernae*), He went further and from the start manifested Himself to our first parents.

Then after their fall His promise of redemption aroused in them the hope of being saved and from that time on He ceaselessly kept the human race in His care (*et sine intermissione generis humani curam egit*), to give eternal life to those who perseveringly do good in search of salvation.

Then, at the time He had appointed He called Abraham in order to make of him a great nation. Through the patriarchs, and after them through Moses and the prophets, He taught this people to acknowledge Himself the one living and true God, provident father and just judge, and to wait for the Savior promised by Him, and in this manner prepared the way for the Gospel down through the centuries.

Dei Verbum, 3

11. *Christ, fullness of Revelation according to Dei Verbum, 4*

Then, after speaking in many and varied ways through the prophets, "now at last in these days God has spoken to us in His Son" (Heb. 1:1-2).

For He sent His Son, the eternal Word, who enlightens all men, so that He might dwell among men and tell them of the innermost being of God (*ut intima Dei enarraret*).

Jesus Christ, therefore, the Word made flesh, was sent as "a man to men." He "speaks the words of God" (John 3:34) and completes the work of salvation which His Father gave Him to do.

To see Jesus is to see His Father (John 14:9). For this reason Jesus perfected revelation by fulfilling it (*revelationem complendo perficit*) through his whole work of making Himself present and manifesting Himself (*tota Sui ipsius praesentia ac manifestatione*): through His words and deeds, His signs and wonders, but especially through His death and glorious resurrection from the dead and final sending of the Spirit of truth. Moreover, He confirmed with divine testimony what revelation proclaimed, that God is with us to free us from the darkness of sin and death, and to raise us up to life eternal.

The Christian dispensation, therefore, as the new and definitive covenant, will never pass away and we now await no further new public revelation before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Dei Verbum, 4

12. *To reveal Himself is not a weakness for God. The one invisible God reveals Himself in His Word* (Irenaeus of Lyons, c. 130-200)

Wherefore also the light which is from God does not illumine them, because they have dishonoured and despised God, holding Him of small account, because, through His love and infinite benignity, He has come within reach of human knowledge (knowledge, however, not with regard to His greatness, or with regard to His essence—for that has no man measured or handled—but after this sort: that we should know that He who made, and formed, and breathed in them the breath of life, and nourishes us by means of the creation, establishing all things by His Word, and binding them together by His Wisdom—this is He who is the only true God); but they dream of a non-existent being above Him, that they may be regarded as having found out the great God, whom nobody, [they hold,] can recognise holding communication with the human race, or as directing mundane matters: that is to say, they find out the god of Epicurus, who does nothing either for himself or others; that is, he exercises no providence at all.

Adversus Haereses, III, 24, 2.

13. *On the unity of the two Testaments in the one God's Revelation to the human beings*
(Irenaeus of Lyons, c. 130-200)

After this fashion also did a presbyter, a disciple of the apostles, reason with respect to the two testaments, proving that both were truly from one and the same God. For [he maintained] that there was no other God besides Him who made and fashioned us, and that the discourse of those men has no foundation who affirm that this world of ours was made either by angels, or by any other power whatsoever, or by another God. For if a man be once moved away from the Creator of all things, and if he grant that this creation to which we belong was formed by any other or through any other [than the one God], he must of necessity fall into much inconsistency, and many contradictions of this sort; to which he will [be able to] furnish no explanations which can be regarded as either probable or true. And, for this reason, those who introduce other doctrines conceal from us the opinion which they themselves hold respecting God, because they are aware of the untenable and absurd nature of their doctrine, and are afraid lest, should they be vanquished, they should have some difficulty in making good their escape. But if any one believes in [only] one God, who also made all things by the Word, as Moses likewise says, "God said, Let there be light: and there was light;" and as we read in the Gospel, "All things were made by Him; and without Him was nothing made;" and the Apostle Paul [says] in like manner, "There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father, who is above all, and through all, and in us all"—this man will first of all "hold the head, from which the whole body is compacted and bound together, and, through means of every joint according to the measure of the ministration of each several part, makes increase of the body to the edification of itself in love." And then shall every word also seem consistent to him, if he for his part diligently read the Scriptures in company with those who are presbyters in the Church, among whom is the apostolic doctrine, as I have pointed out.

For all the apostles taught that there were indeed two testaments among the two peoples; but that it was one and the same God who appointed both for the advantage of those men (for whose sakes the testaments were given) who were to believe in God, I have proved in the third book from the very teaching of the apostles; and that the first testament was not given without reason, or to no purpose, or in an accidental sort of manner; but that it subdued those to whom it was given to the service of God, for their benefit (for God needs no service from men), and exhibited a type of heavenly things, inasmuch as man was not yet able to see the things of God through means of immediate vision; and foreshadowed the images of those things which [now actually] exist in the Church, in order that our faith might be firmly established; and contained a prophecy of things to come, in order that man might learn that God has foreknowledge of all things.

Ibidem, IV, 32.

14. *On the nature of Revelation: God reveals himself by words and works and by his personal manifestation* (Johann Sebastian von Drey, 1777-1853)

The oldest revelations by their content were revelations of God *in word and deed*, through Moses and the prophets; so is the new revelation. Christianity is a revelation *in the word*, and it had to be so, for if God makes himself known to man, he must first make known his eternal thoughts and express them. Christianity is also revelation of God *in deeds*, and its founder explicitly refers to them as testimonies of his words. But Christianity is also more than revelation in word and deed, it is revelation of God *in person and personal manifestation*; for this is the fundamental doctrine in relation to its specific concept of revelation: God became man in Christ, and as man dwelt among us.

[...] Christianity therefore teaches us a manifestation of God in Christ as a *specific* element of His revelation; therefore the word of this revelation also has a higher character than that of the old, for it

is not the Word of God through a man, but the Word of God *speaking personally*; for the same reason the actions of the new revelation are also on a higher level than those of the old, and have a much stronger and more universal effect, namely, *the great divine work of redemption*, and the salvation of the world, the aim of the whole manifestation of God in man and of all His action.

Die Apologetik als wissenschaftliche Nachweisung der Göttlichkeit des Christentums in seiner Erscheinung, Mainz 1838-1847, I.: *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, 117-118.

15. *God acts in history and reveals himself in history* (Henry De Lubac, 1866-1991)

God acts in history and reveals himself through history. Or rather, God inserts himself in history and so bestows on it a “religious consecration” which compels us to treat it with due respect. As a consequence, historical realities possess a profound sense and are to be understood in a spiritual manner; conversely, spiritual realities appear in a constant state of flux and are to be understood historically. The Bible, which contains the revelation of salvation, contains too, in its own way, the history of the world. In order to understand it, it is not enough to take note of the factual details it recounts, but there must also be an awareness of its concern for universality, in spite of its partial, schematic and sometimes paradoxical mode of expression. It was in this way that the Bible was read by the Fathers of the Church. From Irenaeus to Augustine, by way of Clement of Alexandria and Eusebius, they all found in it a treatise on the history of the world. Had they known all the facts now in our possession doubtless the treatise would have been of far greater complexity, but the essential form would have been the same. For they would have been faithful, as we ought to be, to that fundamental principle they learnt from Scripture: that if salvation is social in its essence, it follows that history is the necessary interpreter between God and man.

Catholicism. A Study of Dogma in Relation to the Corporate Destiny of Mankind
(New York: Sheed and Ward, 1958) 83.

16. *Revelation, manifestation of freedom and divine love* (Hugo Rahner, 1900-1968)

But what, or better, who God is in himself, what he intends in the depths of his uncreated freedom precisely as a free person, as we know him to be by our natural knowledge, what he wishes or desires, none of this can I know from “natural” revelation. I can know this only when this free God speaks to me, when he deigns to break through the silence of his creation with his Word, when he pulls back the veil which necessarily lies over the mystery of his interior personality (as over every person, even the created), when he *re-velat*, when he permits an apocalypse, an absolutely spontaneous handing over of himself to the knowledge of the creature. But when such a divine communication occurs, this Word of God necessarily demands from the creature an absolute consent. Hence revelation is never merely a divine narrative involving no obligation on our part. Rather, this loving spontaneity of the divine self-surrender corresponds necessarily to the inevitable obligation in the creature to hear and to act. Revelation, then, is “the word of God as a witness.” God speaks, giving testimony to himself, and therefore he demands consent. We must attend to the fullness of the dry-sounding definition, savor it to the full, fill ourselves with it. This speaking of God is a perfectly free act which proceeds only from love. For love is ever a revelation of the most secret, a surrender of one person to another, a creative giving, that is, one without a reason, due to the initiative of the giver alone. Therefore, the Church emphasizes in the First Vatican Council the powerful word “*placuit*” with regard to revelation: “to have pleased in wisdom and goodness.”

A Theology of Proclamation (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 18-19.

17. *It belongs to the essence of Revelation to be a gift not deducible from the world or from nature* (Romano Guardini, 1885-1968)

The first proposition of any doctrine on Revelation is this: what it is, it alone can say. It does not represent a step in the succession of natural openings of the meaning of existence but comes purely from divine initiative. Nor is it a necessary self-communication of the Supreme Being, but an action of the free, personal God. Thus, an event to understand such must go to the school of Scripture, and must more willingly face the risk of understanding God "humanly" than philosophically. "God reveals" means above all "God acts." This acting encounters existence as it is in itself; it places it under judgment, with its evil and its good; it demands that it convert; when it obeys, however, it raises it into a new beginning- indeed, its obeying is already the beginning; for it is God himself, who calls it, who gives it the gift of being able to obey. Thus it belongs to the essence of Revelation that it cannot be derived from the world, but must necessarily be received from itself.

The God who speaks in it, however, is the identical God who also created the world. What it addresses is its creation. Thus the question arises as to whether there are anticipatory sketches of Revelation in it, whether it can help, in order to understand it, to understand such sketches. Not to deduce its essence, but to prepare the eye and educate the thought so that they may better grasp the authentic reality. Such events and relations, which refer back to the actual event of revelation, do in fact exist.

Fede, Religione, Esperienza. Saggi teologici, Morcelliana, Brescia 1995, 169-170 (translation is ours)

18. *Revelation comes to us as an event that surpasses our experience* (Joseph Ratzinger, 1927-2022)

The exodus of Israel out of Egypt, the event that really brought the people of Israel into existence, is anticipated in the exodus of Abraham, which as such was likewise a cultural break. We can say of the Christian faith, in line with the faith of Abraham, that no one simply finds it there as his possession. It never comes out of what we have ourselves. It breaks in from outside. That is still always the way. Nobody is born a Christian, not even in a Christian world and of Christian parents. Being Christian can only ever happen as a new birth. Being a Christian begins with baptism, which is death and resurrection (Rom 6), not with biological birth.

It was Romano Guardini, above all, who indicated an important aspect of this basic pattern of Christian indeed, biblical faith, which does not well up from within us but comes to us from outside: Christianity, the Christian faith, he tells us, is not the product of our own experiences; rather, it is an event that comes to us from without. Faith is based on our meeting something (or someone) for which our capacity for experiencing things is inadequate. It is not our experience that is widened or deepened that is the case in the strictly "mystical" models; but something happens. The categories of "encounter", "otherness" (*altérité*: Levinas), "event", describe the inner origins of the Christian faith and indicate the limitations of the concept of "experience". Certainly, what touches us there effects an experience in us, but experience as the result of an event, not of reaching deeper into ourselves. This is exactly what is meant by the concept of revelation: something not ours, not to be found in what we have, comes to me and takes me out of myself, above myself, creates something new. That also determines the historical nature of Christianity, which is based on events and not on becoming aware of the depths of one's own inner self, what is called "illumination". The Trinity is not the object of our experience but is something that has to be uttered from outside, that comes to me from

outside as “revelation”. The same is true of the Incarnation of the Word, which is indeed an event and cannot be discovered in one’s inner experience.

Truth and tolerance: Christian belief and world religions. tr. Henry Taylor
(San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 87-89.

19. *The role of Sapiential Revelation between faith and reason according to Fides et ratio* (1998)

Sacred Scripture indicates with remarkably clear cues how deeply related are the knowledge conferred by faith and the knowledge conferred by reason; and it is in *the Wisdom literature* that this relationship is addressed most explicitly. What is striking about these biblical texts, if they are read without prejudice, is that they embody not only the faith of Israel, but also the treasury of cultures and civilizations which have long vanished.

[...]

With the Revelation of God Israel could plumb the depths of all that she sought in vain to reach by way of reason. On the basis of this deeper form of knowledge, the Chosen People understood that, if reason were to be fully true to itself, then it must respect certain basic rules. The first of these is that reason must realize that human knowledge is a journey which allows no rest; the second stems from the awareness that such a path is not for the proud who think that everything is the fruit of personal conquest; a third rule is grounded in the “fear of God” whose transcendent sovereignty and provident love in the governance of the world reason must recognize.

Fides et ratio, nn. 16 and 18

20. *Theology and science on the origins of man*

It is not the use of weapons or fire, not new methods of cruelty or of useful activity that constitute man, but, rather, his ability to be immediately in relation to God. This holds fast to the doctrine of the special creation of man; herein lies the center of belief in creation in the first place. Herein also lies the reason why the moment of anthropogenesis cannot possibly be determined by paleontology: anthropogenesis is the rise of the spirit, which cannot be excavated with a shovel.

J. Ratzinger, *Belief in creation and the theory of evolution* (1969), in *Dogma and Preaching* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 142

THE THEOLOGY OF REVELATION AND ITS UNDERSTANDING

21. *How the Christian Word differs from the Logos of the Platonists* (Augustine of Hippo, 354-430)

And therein I read, not indeed in the same words, but to the selfsame effect, enforced by many and diverse reasons, that, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made.” That which was made by Him is “life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in darkness; and the darkness comprehends it not.” And that the soul of man, though it “bears witness of the light,” yet itself “is not that light; but the Word of God, being God, is that true light that lights every man that cometh into the world.” And that “He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not.” But that “He came unto

His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” This I did not read there.

In like manner, I read the Word was born not of flesh, nor of blood, nor of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God. But that “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,” I read not there. For I discovered in those books that it was in many and diverse ways said, that the Son was in the form of the Father, and “thought it not robbery to be equal with God,” for that naturally He was the same substance. But that He emptied Himself, “and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him” from the dead, “and given Him a name above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father;” those books have not.

Confessions, VII, 9.

22. *Divine wisdom is a book written within, the immanent life of the Word, and without, first in creation, then in the Incarnation* (Hugo of St. Victor, c. 1096 - 1141)

Wisdom was like a book written within, while the work of Wisdom was like a book written outside. Afterwards Wisdom wished to be written outside in another manner, that it might be seen more manifestly and known more perfectly, so that the eye of man might be enlightened to be able to read the second writing, having been dimmed with regard to the first. Thus, after the first work, He made a second work more manifest than the first, for He not only set it before the eyes but likewise illuminated it.

Without leaving divinity he took on flesh presenting himself as a book written inside and out: outside as man, inside as God; outside to be read and imitated, inside to be contemplated; outside for our salvation, inside for our joy. Inside: *In the beginning was the Word*; outside: *And the Word became flesh, and pitched his tent among us*.

It was thus a single book, written once inside and a second time outside. First written outside with the creation of the visible world, and then with the incarnation. First to delight us, then to save us; first to create nature, then to free us from sin; first so that man would grow, then so that he would be redeemed and reach bliss.

De sacramentis christianae fidei, I, 6, 5: PL 176,256-257.

23. *In his Son, God has already spoken all* (John of the Cross, 1542-1591)

Multifarum multisque modis olim Deus loquens patribus in prophetis: novissime autem diebus istis locutus est nobis in Filio (That which God formerly spoke to our fathers through the prophets in many ways and manners, now, finally, in these days He has spoken to us all at once in His Son), [Heb 1:1-2]. The Apostle indicates that God was as it were mute, with no more to say, because what He spoke before to the prophets in parts, He has now spoken all at once by giving us the All Who is His Son.

Any person questioning God or desiring some vision or revelation would not only be guilty of foolish behavior but also of offending Him, by not fixing his eyes entirely upon Christ and by living with the desire for some other novelty.

God could respond as follows: If I have already told you all things in My Word, My Son, and if I have no other word, what answer or revelation can I now make that would surpass this? Fasten your eyes on Him alone, because in Him I have spoken and revealed all, and in Him you shall discover even more than you ask for and desire. You are making an appeal for locutions and revelations that are incomplete, but if you turn your eyes to Him, you will find them complete. For He is My entire locution and response, vision and revelation, which I have already spoken, answered, manifested, and revealed to you, by giving Him to you as a brother, companion, master, ransom, and reward. Since that day when I descended upon Him with My Spirit on Mount Tabor proclaiming: *Hic est filius meus dilectus in quo mihi bene complacui, ipsum audite* (This is my Beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased, hear Him) [Mt. 17:5], I have relinquished these methods of answering and teaching, and presented them to Him. Hear Him because I have no more faith to reveal nor truths to manifest. If I spoke before, it was to promise Christ; if they questioned Me, their inquiries were related to their petitions and longings for Christ in Whom they were to obtain every good (as is evidenced in all the doctrine of the Evangelists and Apostles). But now anyone asking Me in that way and desiring that I speak and reveal something to him would somehow be requesting Christ again, and more faith, yet he would be failing in faith, because Christ has already been given. Accordingly, he would offend My Beloved Son deeply, because he would not merely be lacking faith in Him but obliging Him to become incarnate and undergo His life and death again. You shall not find anything to ask or desire through revelations and visions; behold Him well, for in Him you will uncover all these revelations already made, and many more.

Ascent of Mount Carmel, 1579, Book II, ch. 22, nn. 4-5. Tr. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez, Carmel International Publishing House, India, 2006, 180.

24. *Jesus Christ, prefigured in the salvific events of Israel* (Melito of Sardis, +190).

He is the Pascha of our salvation.

It is he who in many endured many things:

it is he that was in Abel murdered,

and in Isaac bound,

and in Jacob exiled,

and in Joseph sold,

and in Moses exposed,

and in the lamb slain,

and in David persecuted,

and in the prophets dishonored.

It is he that was enfleshed in a virgin,

that was hanged on a tree, that was buried in the earth,

that was raised from the dead,

that was taken up to the heights of the heavens.

On Pascha, nn. 69-70, tr. Stuart George Hall, Oxford, 1979, 37-38.

25. *The liberation of the Hebrews out of Egypt, a figure of the liberation merited by Jesus Christ*
(John Chrysostom 350 - c. 407)

The Jews saw miracles. Now you shall see greater and much more brilliant ones than those seen when the Jews went forth from Egypt. You did not see the Pharaoh and his armies drowned, but you did see the drowning of the devil and his armies. The Jews passed through the sea; you have passed through the sea of death. They were delivered from the Egyptians; you are set free from the demon. They put aside their servitude to barbarians; you have set aside the far more hazardous servitude to sin.

Do you wish to know of another way in which you were judged worthy of greater marvels? In their day the Jews were unable to see the face of Moses transfigured, although he was their fellow slave and kinsman (cf. Ex 34:29). But you have seen the face of Christ in His glory. St. Paul cried aloud, saying: *But we all, with faces unveiled, reflect the glory of the Lord (2Cor 3:18)*. At that time the Jews had Christ following them, but all the more does He follow us now. Then Christ followed along with them thanks to Moses; He goes along with us not only thanks to the new Moses but thanks to your own ready obedience. For the Jews, after Egypt came the desert; for you, after your exodus will come heaven. They had Moses as their leader and excellent general; we have another Moses, God, to lead and command us.

What was the characteristic of Moses of old? *Moses was the meekest of all men on earth (Num 12:3)*. One would not be wrong in describing this other Moses in these same terms, for certainly the meekest of spirits is with Him, being related to Him by consubstantiality. In those days Moses stretched forth his hands to heaven and brought down the bread of angels, manna. This other Moses stretches forth His hands to heaven and brings down the food of eternal life. Moses struck the rock and made streams of water flow; this other Moses touches the table, strikes the spiritual board, and makes the fountains of the Spirit gush forth. Consequently, the table, like the fountain, lies in the middle, in order that the flocks may surround the fountain on every side and enjoy the benefit of the saving waters.

Since, then, we have here such a fountain and our life here is such, since our table groans under the weight of countless blessings and spiritual gifts abound on every side, let us come forward with a sincere heart and with a clean conscience, that we may receive His grace and mercy to help us in our need, by the grace and kindness of the only-begotten Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, through whom and with whom be to the Father and the life-giving Spirit glory, honor, power, now and forever, world without end. Amen.

Catecheses baptismales, III, 24-27

26. *The Holy Spirit and Revelation, according to Verbum Domini (2010)*

In fact there can be no authentic understanding of Christian revelation apart from the activity of the Paraclete. This is due to the fact that God's self-communication always involves the relationship of the Son and the Holy Spirit, whom Irenaeus of Lyons refers to as "the two hands of the Father". Sacred Scripture itself speaks of the presence of the Holy Spirit in salvation history and particularly in the life of Jesus: he was conceived of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. Mt 1:18; Lk 1:35); at the beginning of his public mission, on the banks of the Jordan, he sees the Holy Spirit descend on him in the form of a dove (cf. Mt 3:16); in this same Spirit Jesus acts, speaks and rejoices (cf. Lk 10:21); and in the Spirit he offers himself up (cf. Heb 9:14). As his mission draws to an end, according to the account of Saint John, Jesus himself clearly relates the giving of his life to the sending of the Spirit upon those who belong to him (cf. Jn 16:7). The Risen Jesus,

bearing in his flesh the signs of the passion, then pours out the Spirit (cf. Jn 20:22), making his disciples sharers in his own mission (cf. Jn 20:21). The Holy Spirit was to teach the disciples all things and bring to their remembrance all that Christ had said (cf. Jn 14:26), since he, the Spirit of Truth (cf. Jn 15:26) will guide the disciples into all the truth (cf. Jn 16:13). Finally, in the Acts of the Apostles, we read that the Spirit descended on the Twelve gathered in prayer with Mary on the day of Pentecost (cf. At 2:1-4), and impelled them to take up the mission of proclaiming to all peoples the Good News.

The word of God is thus expressed in human words thanks to the working of the Holy Spirit. The missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit are inseparable and constitute a single economy of salvation. The same Spirit who acts in the incarnation of the Word in the womb of the Virgin Mary is the Spirit who guides Jesus throughout his mission and is promised to the disciples. The same Spirit who spoke through the prophets sustains and inspires the Church in her task of proclaiming the word of God and in the preaching of the Apostles; finally, it is this Spirit who inspires the authors of sacred Scripture.

Verbum Domini, n. 15.

27. *The action of the Holy Spirit in understanding Revelation*

For if the Spirit does not enlighten the heart of the hearer, the word of the one who teaches remains fruitless. Let no one therefore attribute to him who teaches what he comes to know, for if the power that enlightens is lacking in the innermost, the teacher's tongue labors outwardly in vain. Behold, you all hear in the same way the one voice of the speaker, yet you do not grasp in the same measure the meaning of the words addressed to you. If, then, the voice is always the same, why does it reach your hearts with different effectiveness? Is it not necessary to think of a Master acting within, instructing some with special care on the meaning of the words that are addressed equally to all?

Gregory the Great, *Homilia*, 76, PL 76,1222.

FAITH, THE GIFT OF GOD AND RESPONSE OF MAN TO REVELATION

28. *Human trust and confidence as conditions of living and knowing, according to Fides et ratio* (1998)

Human beings are not made to live alone. They are born into a family and in a family they grow, eventually entering society through their activity. From birth, therefore, they are immersed in traditions which give them not only a language and a cultural formation but also a range of truths in which they believe almost instinctively. Yet personal growth and maturity imply that these same truths can be cast into doubt and evaluated through a process of critical enquiry. It may be that, after this time of transition, these truths are “recovered” as a result of the experience of life or by dint of further reasoning. Nonetheless, there are in the life of a human being many more truths which are simply believed than truths which are acquired by way of personal verification. Who, for instance, could assess critically the countless scientific findings upon which modern life is based? Who could personally examine the flow of information which comes day after day from all parts of the world and which is generally accepted as true? Who in the end could forge anew the paths of experience and thought which have yielded the treasures of human wisdom and religion? This means that the human being—the one who seeks the truth—is also *the one who lives by belief*.

Fides et ratio, 31.

29. *It is the nature of the human being to seek the truth*

It is the nature of the human being to seek the truth. This search looks not only to the attainment of truths which are partial, empirical or scientific; nor is it only in individual acts of decision-making that people seek the true good. Their search looks towards an ulterior truth which would explain the meaning of life. And it is therefore a search which can reach its end only in reaching the absolute. Thanks to the inherent capacities of thought, man is able to encounter and recognize a truth of this kind. Such a truth—vital and necessary as it is for life—is attained not only by way of reason but also through trusting acquiescence to other persons who can guarantee the authenticity and certainty of the truth itself. There is no doubt that the capacity to entrust oneself and one's life to another person and the decision to do so are among the most significant and expressive human acts.

It must not be forgotten that reason too needs to be sustained in all its searching by trusting dialogue and sincere friendship. A climate of suspicion and distrust, which can beset speculative research, ignores the teaching of the ancient philosophers who proposed friendship as one of the most appropriate contexts for sound philosophical enquiry.

Fides et ratio, 33

30. *Faith according to Dei Filius of Vatican Council I (1870)*

Since man is wholly dependent on God as his Creator and Lord, and since created reason is completely subject to uncreated truth, we are bound by faith to give full obedience of intellect and will to God who reveals [can. 1]. But the Catholic Church professes that this faith, which "is the beginning of human salvation" [cf. n. 801], is a supernatural virtue by which we, with the aid and inspiration of the grace of God, believe that the things revealed by Him are true, not because the intrinsic truth of the revealed things has been perceived by the natural light of reason (*non propter intrinsicam rerum veritatem naturalis ratione lumine perspectam*), but because of the authority of God Himself who reveals them, who can neither deceive nor be deceived (*sed propter auctoritatem ipsius Dei revelantis*) [can. 2].

DH 3008.

31.

Can. 2. If anyone shall have said that divine faith is not distinguished from a natural knowledge of God and moral things, and that therefore it is not necessary to divine faith that revealed truth be believed because of the authority of God Who reveals it: let him be anathema.

DH 3032

32. *Faith according to Dei Verbum of Vatican Council II (1965)*

"The obedience of faith" (Rom. 16:26; see 1:5; 2 Cor 10:5-6) "is to be given to God who reveals, an obedience by which man commits his whole self freely to God, offering the full submission of intellect and will to God who reveals," and freely assenting to the truth revealed by Him. To make this act of faith, the grace of God and the interior help of the Holy Spirit must precede and assist, moving the heart and turning it to God, opening the eyes of the mind and giving "joy and ease to everyone in assenting to the truth and believing it." To bring about an ever deeper understanding of revelation the same Holy Spirit constantly brings faith to completion by His gifts.

DH 4205

33. *An explanation of the faith in Fides et ratio* (1998)

The Council teaches that “the obedience of faith must be given to God who reveals himself”. This brief but dense statement points to a fundamental truth of Christianity. Faith is said first to be an obedient response to God. This implies that God be acknowledged in his divinity, transcendence and supreme freedom. By the authority of his absolute transcendence, God who makes himself known is also the source of the credibility of what he reveals. By faith, men and women give their assent to this divine testimony. This means that they acknowledge fully and integrally the truth of what is revealed because it is God himself who is the guarantor of that truth. They can make no claim upon this truth which comes to them as gift and which, set within the context of interpersonal communication, urges reason to be open to it and to embrace its profound meaning. This is why the Church has always considered the act of entrusting oneself to God to be a moment of fundamental decision which engages the whole person. In that act, the intellect and the will display their spiritual nature, enabling the subject to act in a way which realizes personal freedom to the full. It is not just that freedom is part of the act of faith: it is absolutely required. Indeed, it is faith that allows individuals to give consummate expression to their own freedom. Put differently, freedom is not realized in decisions made against God. For how could it be an exercise of true freedom to refuse to be open to the very reality which enables our self-realization? Men and women can accomplish no more important act in their lives than the act of faith; it is here that freedom reaches the certainty of truth and chooses to live in that truth.

Fides et ratio, n. 13

34. *The notion of ‘belief’ according to Fides et ratio* (1998)

Human beings are not made to live alone. They are born into a family and in a family they grow, eventually entering society through their activity. From birth, therefore, they are immersed in traditions which give them not only a language and a cultural formation but also a range of truths in which they believe almost instinctively. [...] that the human being—the one who seeks the truth—is also the one who lives by belief.

Fides et ratio, n. 31

35. *We entrust ourselves to the knowledge acquired by other people*

In believing, we entrust ourselves to the knowledge acquired by other people. This suggests an important tension. On the one hand, the knowledge acquired through belief can seem an imperfect form of knowledge, to be perfected gradually through personal accumulation of evidence; on the other hand, belief is often humanly richer than mere evidence, because it involves an interpersonal relationship and brings into play not only a person's capacity to know but also the deeper capacity to entrust oneself to others, to enter into a relationship with them which is intimate and enduring. [...] knowledge through belief, grounded as it is on trust between persons, is linked to truth: in the act of believing, men and women entrust themselves to the truth which the other declares to them.

Fides et ratio, n. 32

36. *Christian faith immerses human beings in the order of grace*

Men and women are on a journey of discovery which is humanly unstoppable—a search for the truth and a search for a person to whom they might entrust themselves. Christian faith comes to meet

them, offering the concrete possibility of reaching the goal which they seek. Moving beyond the stage of simple believing, Christian faith immerses human beings in the order of grace, which enables them to share in the mystery of Christ, which in turn offers them a true and coherent knowledge of the Triune God. In Jesus Christ, who is the Truth, faith recognizes the ultimate appeal to humanity, an appeal made in order that what we experience as desire and nostalgia may come to its fulfilment.

Fides et ratio, n. 33

37. *It was the task of the fathers of philosophy to bring to light the link between reason and religion*

It was the task of the fathers of philosophy to bring to light the link between reason and religion. As they broadened their view to include universal principles, they no longer rested content with the ancient myths, but wanted to provide a rational foundation for their belief in the divinity. This opened a path which took its rise from ancient traditions but allowed a development satisfying the demands of universal reason.

Fides et ratio, n. 36

39. *The distinction between belief and theological faith according to Dominus Iesus (2000)*

For this reason, the distinction between theological faith and belief in the other religions, must be firmly held. If faith is the acceptance in grace of revealed truth, which “makes it possible to penetrate the mystery in a way that allows us to understand it coherently”, then belief, in the other religions, is that sum of experience and thought that constitutes the human treasury of wisdom and religious aspiration, which man in his search for truth has conceived and acted upon in his relationship to God and the Absolute.

This distinction is not always borne in mind in current theological reflection. Thus, theological faith (the acceptance of the truth revealed by the One and Triune God) is often identified with belief in other religions, which is religious experience still in search of the absolute truth and still lacking assent to God who reveals himself. This is one of the reasons why the differences between Christianity and the other religions tend to be reduced at times to the point of disappearance.

Dominus Iesus, n. 7

40. *The faith, reality in Christ (Jean Mouroux, 1901-1973)*

Our faith is Christological and, because of this, it is also Trinitarian. These two affirmations are not opposed, they are implied in each other. In Christ we attain the whole Trinity; and it is only in Christ that we attain it. [...] The word of God is the word of Christ; God's works are Christ's works; God's grace is Christ's grace; the testimony of God is the testimony of Christ; they are all one because Christ and the Father are one. The grace of testimony is also Christological, and consequently Trinitarian: *Fides Christi, id est, fides gratiae christianae* [St. Augustine, *De fide et operibus*, XVI, 27]. Christian Faith is specified in its entirety by Christ; it is participation in the life of a person, in the mystery of his death and resurrection; thanks to this meditation it is a trinitarian faith, and a sharing in the life of the Three Persons. It could not be otherwise, since its object is Christ in whom we find the Three Persons; its source is the grace of Christ, in whom the 'Author of Beatitude,' the Triune God, gives and reveals himself. We can now affirm in a much deeper sense that the grace of faith is a personal grace. God is indeed the object, end and witness of faith; this formula is correct.

But we now see it to mean that the object, the end and the witness of faith is God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, revealed in Christ. Faith, then, objectively considered, is the call of the One God in Three Persons, through Christ, to a human person.

I believe: The personal structure of faith, tr. Geoffrey Chapman (London: Butler & Tanner, Ltd., 1959), 34, 36-37.

41. *Jesus Christ, form of the faith* (Romano Guardini, 1885-1968)

Christianity affirms that because of the Incarnation of the Son of God, because of his death and resurrection, because of the mystery of faith and grace, all creation is required to give up its (apparent) autonomy and place itself under the lordship of a concrete person, namely Jesus Christ, and to make this its decisive norm. From the point of view of logic, this is a paradox, because it seems to endanger the very reality of the person. But personal feeling also rebels against this. Since accepting a general law that has been proven right- whether a law of nature or thought or morality- is not difficult for the person. It warns that in such a law it continues without fail in personal action. But to the demand to recognize *another* person as the supreme law of all religious life and with that of one's own existence, the person counters with elemental vividness, and one understands what the demand to *give up one's own soul* may mean.

L'essenza del cristianesimo (1938), Morcelliana, Brescia 1993, 12-13 (the translation is ours)

42. *I believe-We believe: The ecclesial significance of the faith, according to the Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1997)

166. Faith is a personal act - the free response of the human person to the initiative of God who reveals himself. But faith is not an isolated act. No one can believe alone, just as no one can live alone.

You have not given yourself faith as you have not given yourself life. the believer has received faith from others and should hand it on to others. Our love for Jesus and for our neighbour impels us to speak to others about our faith. Each believer is thus a link in the great chain of believers. I cannot believe without being carried by the faith of others, and by my faith I help support others in the faith.

167. "I believe" (Apostles' Creed) is the faith of the Church professed personally by each believer, principally during Baptism. "We believe" (Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed) is the faith of the Church confessed by the bishops assembled in council or more generally by the liturgical assembly of believers. "I believe" is also the Church, our mother, responding to God by faith as she teaches us to say both "I believe" and "We believe".

168. It is the Church that believes first, and so bears, nourishes and sustains my faith. Everywhere, it is the Church that first confesses the Lord: "Throughout the world the holy Church acclaims you", as we sing in the hymn *Te Deum*; with her and in her, we are won over and brought to confess: "I believe", "We believe". It is through the Church that we receive faith and new life in Christ by Baptism. In the *Rituale Romanum*, the minister of Baptism asks the catechumen: "What do you ask of God's Church?" and the answer is: "Faith." "What does faith offer you?" "Eternal life."

CCC nn. 166-168

43. *Sentire cum Ecclesia is to have the same feelings (sentiments) of Christ*

One can...demand of Christ's member's that their minds should be determined by a *sentire cum Ecclesia*, but, by definition, this must be identical with *hoc sentire quod et in Christo Jesu*. The feeling of the Church has its measure in the feeling of Christ and, therefore, feeling with the Church also has its measure there. To the extent that the Church is the objective reality that transcends the individual subject, even, that is, the believer who has received grace, we are justified in postulating the self-transcendence and self-denial of the individual as he is taken up into the Church's manner of feeling. The Church is the canon not only in external things and regulations, but equally in internal operations. We must here note, however, that the identity of the objective and the subjective elements in the Church must be sought where it really exists: namely, not in the average views of the mass of sinners that populates the Church, but rather where, according to the Church's prayer, the *forma Christi* best comes to prevail and best becomes impressed on the form of the Church—in Mary, in the saints, in all those who have consciously made their own form to wane so as to yield the primacy in themselves to the form of the Church: *ut per haec sacrosancta mysteria in Illius inveniamur forma, in quo tecum est nostra substantia* (Secret of the First Christmas Mass). The being-in-God of our substance occurs in the form of Christ, and the realisation of this reciprocal indwelling is the holiness of a Church that has become a reality and the transformation of the individual soul into an *anima ecclesiastica*.

H.U. von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord. I. Seeing the form*, tr. Erasmo Veiva-Merikakis (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), 255-256

THE CHURCH, KEEPER OF REVELATION AND SUBJECT OF ITS TRANSMISSION

44. *On the relation between Revelation and history according to Fides et ratio* (1998)

God's Revelation is therefore immersed in time and history. Jesus Christ took flesh in the "fullness of time" (Gal 4:4); and two thousand years later, I feel bound to restate forcefully that "in Christianity time has a fundamental importance". It is within time that the whole work of creation and salvation comes to light; and it emerges clearly above all that, with the Incarnation of the Son of God, our life is even now a foretaste of the fulfilment of time which is to come (cf. Heb 1:2).

The truth about himself and his life which God has entrusted to humanity is immersed therefore in time and history; and it was declared once and for all in the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth. The Constitution Dei Verbum puts it eloquently: "After speaking in many places and varied ways through the prophets, God 'last of all in these days has spoken to us by his Son' (Heb 1:1-2). For he sent his Son, the eternal Word who enlightens all people, so that he might dwell among them and tell them the innermost realities about God (cf. Jn 1:1-18). Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, sent as 'a human being to human beings', 'speaks the words of God' (Jn 3:34), and completes the work of salvation which his Father gave him to do (cf. Jn 5:36; 17:4). To see Jesus is to see his Father (Jn 14:9). For this reason, Jesus perfected Revelation by fulfilling it through his whole work of making himself present and manifesting himself: through his words and deeds, his signs and wonders, but especially through his death and glorious Resurrection from the dead and finally his sending of the Spirit of truth".

For the People of God, therefore, history becomes a path to be followed to the end, so that by the unceasing action of the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn 16:13) the contents of revealed truth may find their full

expression. This is the teaching of the Constitution Dei Verbum when it states that “as the centuries succeed one another, the Church constantly progresses towards the fullness of divine truth, until the words of God reach their complete fulfilment in her”.

History therefore becomes the arena where we see what God does for humanity. God comes to us in the things we know best and can verify most easily, the things of our everyday life, apart from which we cannot understand ourselves.

In the Incarnation of the Son of God we see forged the enduring and definitive synthesis which the human mind of itself could not even have imagined: the Eternal enters time, the Whole lies hidden in the part, God takes on a human face. The truth communicated in Christ's Revelation is therefore no longer confined to a particular place or culture, but is offered to every man and woman who would welcome it as the word which is the absolutely valid source of meaning for human life.

Fides et ratio, nn. 11-12.

45. *On the error of historicism*

To understand a doctrine from the past correctly, it is necessary to set it within its proper historical and cultural context. The fundamental claim of historicism, however, is that the truth of a philosophy is determined on the basis of its appropriateness to a certain period and a certain historical purpose. At least implicitly, therefore, the enduring validity of truth is denied. What was true in one period, historicists claim, may not be true in another. Thus for them the history of thought becomes little more than an archeological resource useful for illustrating positions once held, but for the most part outmoded and meaningless now. On the contrary, it should not be forgotten that, even if a formulation is bound in some way by time and culture, the truth or the error which it expresses can invariably be identified and evaluated as such despite the distance of space and time.

In theological enquiry, historicism tends to appear for the most part under the guise of “modernism”. Rightly concerned to make theological discourse relevant and understandable to our time, some theologians use only the most recent opinions and philosophical language, ignoring the critical evaluation which ought to be made of them in the light of the tradition. By exchanging relevance for truth, this form of modernism shows itself incapable of satisfying the demands of truth to which theology is called to respond.

Fides et ratio, n. 87

46. *The transmission of Revelation entrusted to the Church*

In His gracious goodness, God has seen to it that what He had revealed for the salvation of all nations would abide perpetually in its full integrity and be handed on to all generations. Therefore Christ the Lord in whom the full revelation of the supreme God is brought to completion, commissioned the Apostles to preach to all men that Gospel which is the source of all saving truth and moral teaching, and to impart to them heavenly gifts. This Gospel had been promised in former times through the prophets, and Christ Himself had fulfilled it and promulgated it with His lips. This commission was faithfully fulfilled by the Apostles who, by their oral preaching, by example, and by observances handed on what they had received from the lips of Christ, from living with Him, and from what He did, or what they had learned through the prompting of the Holy Spirit. The commission was fulfilled, too, by those Apostles and apostolic men who under the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit committed the message of salvation to writing.

But in order to keep the Gospel forever whole and alive within the Church, the Apostles left bishops as their successors, "handing over" to them "the authority to teach in their own place. This sacred tradition, therefore, and Sacred Scripture of both the Old and New Testaments are like a mirror in which the pilgrim Church on earth looks at God, from whom she has received everything, until she is brought finally to see Him as He is, face to face.

Dei Verbum, n. 7

47. *The notion of Tradition according to Dei Verbum*

Now what was handed on by the Apostles includes everything which contributes toward the holiness of life and increase in faith of the peoples of God; and so the Church, in her teaching, life and worship, perpetuates and hands on to all generations all that she herself is, all that she believes.

This tradition which comes from the Apostles develops in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit. For there is a growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down. This happens through the contemplation and study made by believers, who treasure these things in their hearts through a penetrating understanding of the spiritual realities which they experience, and through the preaching of those who have received through Episcopal succession the sure gift of truth.

For as the centuries succeed one another, the Church constantly moves forward toward the fullness of divine truth until the words of God reach their complete fulfillment in her.

Dei Verbum, n. 8

48. *What is Tradition*

This permanent actualization of the active presence of the Lord Jesus in his People, brought about by the Holy Spirit and expressed in the Church through the apostolic ministry and fraternal communion is what, in a theological sense, is meant by the term "Tradition": it is not merely the material transmission of what was given at the beginning to the Apostles, but the effective presence of the Crucified and Risen Lord Jesus who accompanies and guides in the Spirit the community he has gathered together.

Tradition is the communion of the faithful around their legitimate Pastors down through history, a communion that the Holy Spirit nurtures, assuring the connection between the experience of the apostolic faith, lived in the original community of the disciples, and the actual experience of Christ in his Church.

In other words, Tradition is the practical continuity of the Church, the holy Temple of God the Father, built on the foundation of the Apostles and held together by the cornerstone, Christ, through the life-giving action of the Spirit. [...]

Tradition is not the transmission of things or words, a collection of dead things. Tradition is the living river that links us to the origins, the living river in which the origins are ever present.

Benedict XVI, *Wednesday Catechesis*, April 26, 2006

49. *The “great” Apostolic Tradition and traditions, according to the Catechism of the Catholic Church*

81. "Sacred Scripture is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit."

"And [Holy] Tradition transmits in its entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. It transmits it to the successors of the apostles so that, enlightened by the Spirit of truth, they may faithfully preserve, expound and spread it abroad by their preaching."

83. The Tradition here in question comes from the apostles and hands on what they received from Jesus' teaching and example and what they learned from the Holy Spirit. The first generation of Christians did not yet have a written New Testament, and the New Testament itself demonstrates the process of living Tradition.

Tradition is to be distinguished from the various theological, disciplinary, liturgical or devotional traditions, born in the local churches over time. These are the particular forms, adapted to different places and times, in which the great Tradition is expressed. In the light of Tradition, these traditions can be retained, modified or even abandoned under the guidance of the Church's Magisterium.

CCC nn. 81, 83

50. *The teaching of the Apostles, learned and passed by their disciples*
(from a letter by Irenaeus of Lyons to Florinus)

When I was still a boy I saw you [Florinus] in Lower Asia in Polycarp's company, when you were cutting a fine figure at the imperial court and wanted to be in favour with him. I have a clearer recollection of events at that time than of recent happenings—what we learn in childhood develops along with the mind and becomes a part of it—so that I can describe the place where blessed Polycarp sat and talked, his goings out and comings in, the character of his life, his personal appearance, his addresses to crowded congregations. I remember how he spoke of his intercourse with John and with the others who had seen the Lord; how he repeated their words from memory; and how the things that he had heard them say about the Lord, His miracles and His teaching, things that he had heard directly from the eyewitnesses of the Word of Life, were proclaimed by Polycarp in complete harmony with Scripture. To these things I listened eagerly at that time, by the mercy of God shown to me, not committing them to writing but learning them by heart. By God's grace, I constantly and conscientiously ruminate on them.

Cited by Eusebius Of Caesarea, *History of the Church*, V, 20, 5-7.

51. *Where the true Tradition is* (Irenaeus of Lyons, c. 130-200)

It is within the power of all, therefore, in every Church, who may wish to see the truth, to contemplate clearly the tradition of the apostles manifested throughout the whole world; and we are in a position to reckon up those who were by the apostles instituted bishops in the Churches, and [to demonstrate] the succession of these men to our own times; those who neither taught nor knew of anything like what these [heretics] rave about. For if the apostles had known hidden mysteries, which they were in the habit of imparting to “the perfect” apart and privily from the rest, they would have delivered them especially to those to whom they were also committing the Churches themselves. For they were desirous that these men should be very perfect and blameless in all things, whom also they were leaving behind as their successors, delivering up their own place of government to these men;

which men, if they discharged their functions honestly, would be a great boon [to the Church], but if they should fall away, the direst calamity.

Since, however, it would be very tedious, in such a volume as this, to reckon up the successions of all the Churches, we do put to confusion all those who, in whatever manner, whether by an evil self-pleasing, by vainglory, or by blindness and perverse opinion, assemble in unauthorized meetings; [we do this, I say,] by indicating that tradition derived from the apostles, of the very great, the very ancient, and universally known Church founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul; as also [by pointing out] the faith preached to men, which comes down to our time by means of the successions of the bishops. For it is a matter of necessity that every Church should agree with this Church, on account of its pre-eminent authority, that is, the faithful everywhere, inasmuch as the apostolical tradition has been preserved continuously by those [faithful men] who exist everywhere.

The blessed apostles, then, having founded and built up the Church, committed into the hands of Linus the office of the episcopate. Of this Linus, Paul makes mention in the Epistles to Timothy. To him succeeded Anacletus; and after him, in the third place from the apostles, Clement was allotted the bishopric. This man, as he had seen the blessed apostles, and had been conversant with them, might be said to have the preaching of the apostles still echoing [in his ears], and their traditions before his eyes. Nor was he alone [in this], for there were many still remaining who had received instructions from the apostles. In the time of this Clement, no small dissension having occurred among the brethren at Corinth, the Church in Rome despatched a most powerful letter to the Corinthians, exhorting them to peace, renewing their faith, and declaring the tradition which it had lately received from the apostles, proclaiming the one God, omnipotent, the Maker of heaven and earth, the Creator of man, who brought on the deluge, and called Abraham, who led the people from the land of Egypt, spake with Moses, set forth the law, sent the prophets [...]

To this Clement there succeeded Evaristus. Alexander followed Evaristus; then, sixth from the apostles, Sixtus was appointed; after him, Telesphorus, who was gloriously martyred; then Hyginus; after him, Pius; then after him, Anicetus. Soter having succeeded Anicetus, Eleutherius does now, in the twelfth place from the apostles, hold the inheritance of the episcopate. In this order, and by this succession, the ecclesiastical tradition from the apostles, and the preaching of the truth, have come down to us. And this is most abundant proof that there is one and the same vivifying faith, which has been preserved in the Church from the apostles until now, and handed down in truth.

Then, again, the Church in Ephesus, founded by Paul, and having John remaining among them permanently until the times of Trajan, is a true witness of the tradition of the apostles. Since therefore we have such proofs, it is not necessary to seek the truth among others which it is easy to obtain from the Church; since the apostles, like a rich man [depositing his money] in a bank, lodged in her hands most copiously all things pertaining to the truth: so that every man, whosoever will, can draw from her the water of life. For she is the entrance to life; all others are thieves and robbers. On this account are we bound to avoid them, but to make choice of the thing pertaining to the Church with the utmost diligence, and to lay hold of the tradition of the truth. For how stands the case? Suppose there arise a dispute relative to some important question among us, should we not have recourse to the most ancient Churches with which the apostles held constant intercourse, and learn from them what is certain and clear in regard to the present question? For how should it be if the apostles themselves had not left us writings? Would it not be necessary, [in that case,] to follow the course of the tradition which they handed down to those to whom they did commit the Churches?

Adversus Haereses, III, 3, 1-3, and 4,1

52. *Scripture, Tradition, and the Church have the Holy Spirit as their soul* (J.A. Möhler, 1796-1838)

Tradition is the expression of the Holy Spirit giving life to the totality of believers. [...] The question if tradition is coordinate with or subordinate to Scripture is to be rejected as based on false principles. There is not antithesis between the two. Moreover, this question has at its base the assumption that Scripture and tradition are transmitted together in two parallel lines. As history indicates, this is not so. They proceed in one another and live in one another. [...] The Christian Church is not based on the Holy Scriptures. If Christianity first lives in the mind of our Lord and in the minds of his apostles who were filled by the Holy Spirit before it was a concept, speech, or letter, we must assert: the Spirit was before the letter. Anyone who possesses the life-giving Spirit will understand the Spirit's expression, the letter. [...] Outside the Church the Holy Scriptures are therefore not understood, for if the Church is found where the Spirit is and the Spirit is where the Church is, the Spirit must be outside of itself if one understands the Holy Scriptures, the Spirit's work, outside of the Church.

Unity in the Church (1825), Tr. Peter C. Erb (Washington, D.C.: CUA Press, 1996), 97, 117-118.

REVELATION AND MAGISTERIUM: INDEFECTIBILITY OF THE CHURCH AND INFALLIBILITY OF THE MAGISTERIUM

53. *Relation between Revelation and Magisterium, Vatican Council II*

That divine mission, entrusted by Christ to the apostles, will last until the end of the world, since the Gospel they are to teach is for all time the source of all life for the Church. And for this reason the apostles, appointed as rulers in this society, took care to appoint successors. [...] In order that the mission assigned to them might continue after their death, they passed on to their immediate cooperators, as it were, in the form of a testament, the duty of confirming and finishing the work begun by themselves.

Lumen gentium n. 20

54. The task of authentically interpreting the word of God has been entrusted to the Church

But the task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on, has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the Church, whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ. This teaching office is not above the word of God, but serves it, teaching only what has been handed on, listening to it devoutly, guarding it scrupulously and explaining it faithfully in accord with a divine commission and with the help of the Holy Spirit, it draws from this one deposit of faith everything which it presents for belief as divinely revealed.

Dei Verbum, n. 10

55. *Relation between Scripture, Tradition and Magisterium according to Dei Verbum*

There exists a close connection and communication between sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture. For both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring, in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same end. For Sacred Scripture is the word of God inasmuch as it is consigned to writing under the inspiration of the divine Spirit, while sacred tradition takes the word of God

entrusted by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, and hands it on to their successors in its full purity, so that led by the light of the Spirit of truth, they may in proclaiming it preserve this word of God faithfully, explain it, and make it more widely known. Consequently it is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed.

Dei Verbum, n. 9

56. Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and the teaching authority of the Church cannot be divided

It is clear, therefore, that Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and the teaching authority of the Church, in accord with God's most wise design, are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others, and that all together and each in its own way under the action of the one Holy Spirit contribute effectively to the salvation of souls.

Dei Verbum, n. 10

57. *Profession of faith and adherence of the people of God to the various modes of teaching of the Magisterium of the Church*

This new formula of the *Profession of Faith* restates the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed and concludes with the addition of three propositions or paragraphs intended to better distinguish the order of the truths to which the believer adheres. The correct explanation of these paragraphs deserves a clear presentation, so that their authentic meaning, as given by the Church's Magisterium, will be well understood, received and integrally preserved. [...]

The first paragraph states: "With firm faith, I also believe everything contained in the word of God, whether written or handed down in Tradition, which the Church, either by a solemn judgement or by the ordinary and universal Magisterium, sets forth to be believed as divinely revealed". The object taught in this paragraph is constituted by all those doctrines of divine and catholic faith which the Church proposes as divinely and formally revealed and, as such, as irreformable.

These doctrines are contained in the word of God, written or handed down, and defined with a solemn judgement as divinely revealed truths either by the Roman Pontiff when he speaks 'ex cathedra,' or by the College of Bishops gathered in council, or infallibly proposed for belief by the ordinary and universal Magisterium.

These doctrines require the assent of theological faith by all members of the faithful. Thus, whoever obstinately places them in doubt or denies them falls under the censure of heresy, as indicated by the respective canons of the Codes of Canon Law.

The second proposition of the *Professio fidei* states: "I also firmly accept and hold each and everything definitively proposed by the Church regarding teaching on faith and morals". The object taught by this formula includes all those teachings belonging to the dogmatic or moral area, which are necessary for faithfully keeping and expounding the deposit of faith, even if they have not been proposed by the Magisterium of the Church as formally revealed.

Such doctrines can be defined solemnly by the Roman Pontiff when he speaks 'ex cathedra' or by the College of Bishops gathered in council, or they can be taught infallibly by the ordinary and universal Magisterium of the Church as a 'sententia definitiva tenenda'. Every believer, therefore, is required to give firm and definitive assent to these truths, based on faith in the Holy Spirit's assistance to the Church's Magisterium, and on the Catholic doctrine of the infallibility of the Magisterium in these

matters. Whoever denies these truths would be in a position of rejecting a truth of Catholic doctrine and would therefore no longer be in full communion with the Catholic Church. [...]

The third proposition of the *Professio fidei* states: "Moreover, I adhere with religious submission of will and intellect to the teachings which either the Roman Pontiff or the College of Bishops enunciate when they exercise their authentic Magisterium, even if they do not intend to proclaim these teachings by a definitive act".

To this paragraph belong all those teachings – on faith and morals – presented as true or at least as sure, even if they have not been defined with a solemn judgement or proposed as definitive by the ordinary and universal Magisterium. Such teachings are, however, an authentic expression of the ordinary Magisterium of the Roman Pontiff or of the College of Bishops and therefore require religious submission of will and intellect. They are set forth in order to arrive at a deeper understanding of revelation, or to recall the conformity of a teaching with the truths of faith, or lastly to warn against ideas incompatible with those truths or against dangerous opinions that can lead to error.

A proposition contrary to these doctrines can be qualified as erroneous or, in the case of teachings of the prudential order, as rash or dangerous and therefore 'tuto doceri non potest'. [...]

As examples of doctrines belonging to the third paragraph, one can point in general to teachings set forth by the authentic ordinary Magisterium in a non-definitive way, which require degrees of adherence differentiated according to the mind and the will manifested; this is shown especially by the nature of the documents, by the frequent repetition of the same doctrine, or by the tenor of the verbal expression.

CDF, *Inde ab ipsis promordis*, 6/29/1998, nn. 4-11.

58. *The infallibility of the magisterium of the Roman Pontiff, according to Vatican I (1870)*

The Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when carrying out the duty of the pastor and teacher of all Christians by virtue of his supreme apostolic authority he defines a doctrine of faith or morals to be held by the universal Church, through the divine assistance promised him in blessed Peter, operates with that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer wished that His church be instructed in defining doctrine on faith and morals; and so such definitions of the Roman Pontiff from himself, but not from the consensus of the Church, are unalterable.

Pastor Aeternus, DH 3074.

59. *The teachings of Vatican II on the infallibility of the Church in docendo*

Although the individual bishops do not enjoy the prerogative of infallibility, they nevertheless proclaim Christ's doctrine infallibly whenever, even though dispersed through the world, but still maintaining the bond of communion among themselves and with Bishops, teaching in communion with the Roman Pontiff, are to be respected by all as witnesses to divine and Catholic truth. In matters of faith and morals, the bishops speak in the name of Christ and the faithful are to accept their teaching and adhere to it with a religious assent. This religious submission of mind and will must be shown in a special way to the authentic magisterium of the Roman Pontiff, even when he is not speaking *ex cathedra*; that is, it must be shown in such a way that his supreme magisterium is acknowledged with reverence, the judgments made by him are sincerely adhered to, according to his manifest mind and will. His mind and will in the matter may be known either from the character of

the documents, from his frequent repetition of the same doctrine, or from his manner of speaking. the successor of Peter, and authentically teaching matters of faith and morals, they are in agreement on one position as definitively to be held. This is even more clearly verified when, gathered together in an ecumenical council, they are teachers and judges of faith and morals for the universal Church, whose definitions must be adhered to with the submission of faith.

Lumen gentium, n. 25.

60.

And this is the infallibility which the Roman Pontiff, the head of the college of bishops, enjoys in virtue of his office, when, as the supreme shepherd and teacher of all the faithful, who confirms his brethren in their faith, by a definitive act he proclaims a doctrine of faith or morals. And therefore his definitions, of themselves, and not from the consent of the Church, are justly styled irreformable, since they are pronounced with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, promised to him in blessed Peter, and therefore they need no approval of others, nor do they allow an appeal to any other judgment. For then the Roman Pontiff is not pronouncing judgment as a private person, but as the supreme teacher of the universal Church, in whom the charism of infallibility of the Church itself is individually present, he is expounding or defending a doctrine of Catholic faith.

Lumen gentium, n. 25.

61.

Bishops, teaching in communion with the Roman Pontiff, are to be respected by all as witnesses to divine and Catholic truth. In matters of faith and morals, the bishops speak in the name of Christ and the faithful are to accept their teaching and adhere to it with a religious assent. This religious submission of mind and will must be shown in a special way to the authentic magisterium of the Roman Pontiff, even when he is not speaking *ex cathedra*; that is, it must be shown in such a way that his supreme magisterium is acknowledged with reverence, the judgments made by him are sincerely adhered to, according to his manifest mind and will. His mind and will in the matter may be known either from the character of the documents, from his frequent repetition of the same doctrine, or from his manner of speaking.

Lumen gentium, n. 25.

62.

The Roman Pontiff and the bishops, in view of their office and the importance of the matter, by fitting means diligently strive to inquire properly into that revelation and to give apt expression to its contents; but a new public revelation they do not accept as pertaining to the divine deposit of faith.

Lumen gentium, n. 25.

63. *The mission of the Bishop of Rome in the context of ecumenism*

The mission of the Bishop of Rome within the College of all the Pastors consists precisely in "keeping watch" (*episkopein*), like a sentinel, so that, through the efforts of the Pastors, the true voice of Christ the Shepherd may be heard in all the particular Churches. In this way, in each of the particular Churches entrusted to those Pastors, the *una, sancta, catholica et apostolica Ecclesia* is made present. All the Churches are in full and visible communion, because all the Pastors are in communion with Peter and therefore united in Christ.

With the power and the authority without which such an office would be illusory, the Bishop of Rome must ensure the communion of all the Churches. For this reason, he is the first servant of unity. This primacy is exercised on various levels, including vigilance over the handing down of the

Word, the celebration of the Liturgy and the Sacraments, the Church's mission, discipline and the Christian life. It is the responsibility of the Successor of Peter to recall the requirements of the common good of the Church, should anyone be tempted to overlook it in the pursuit of personal interests. He has the duty to admonish, to caution and to declare at times that this or that opinion being circulated is irreconcilable with the unity of faith. When circumstances require it, he speaks in the name of all the Pastors in communion with him. He can also—under very specific conditions clearly laid down by the First Vatican Council— declare *ex cathedra* that a certain doctrine belongs to the deposit of faith. By thus bearing witness to the truth, he serves unity.

All this, however, must always be done in communion. When the Catholic Church affirms that the office of the Bishop of Rome corresponds to the will of Christ, she does not separate this office from the mission entrusted to the whole body of Bishops, who are also "vicars and ambassadors of Christ". The Bishop of Rome is a member of the "College", and the Bishops are his brothers in the ministry.

John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint*, nn. 94-95

64. *The authority of the Roman Pontiff and his role in the safeguarding and the development of Christian doctrine* (J.H. Newman, 1801-1890)

When the Church, then, was thrown upon her own resources, first local disturbances gave exercise to Bishops, and next ecumenical disturbances gave exercise to Popes; and whether communion with the Pope was necessary for Catholicity would not and could not be debated till a suspension of that communion had actually occurred. It is not a greater difficulty that St. Ignatius does not write to the Asian Greeks about Popes, than that St. Paul does not write to the Corinthians about Bishops. And it is a less difficulty that the Papal supremacy was not formally acknowledged in the second century, than that there was no formal acknowledgment on the part of the Church of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity till the fourth. No doctrine is defined till it is violated. And, in like manner, it was natural for Christians to direct their course in matters of doctrine by the guidance of mere floating, and, as it were, endemic tradition, while it was fresh and strong; but in proportion as it languished, or was broken in particular places, did it become necessary to fall back upon its special homes, first the Apostolic Sees, and then the See of St. Peter. [...]

It must be so; no Church can do without its Pope. We see before our eyes the centralizing process by which the See of St. Peter became the Sovereign Head of Christendom.

The Development of Christian Doctrine (1845), I, 4, 4
(London: Longmans - Green, and Co., 1909), 151, 155.

65. *The sensus fidei of the people of God and the Magisterium*

The entire body of the faithful, anointed as they are by the Holy One, cannot err in matters of belief. They manifest this special property by means of the whole peoples' supernatural discernment in matters of faith when "from the bishops down to the last of the lay faithful" they show universal agreement in matters of faith and morals. That discernment in matters of faith is aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth. It is exercised under the guidance of the sacred teaching authority, in faithful and respectful obedience to which the people of God accepts that which is not just the word of men but truly the word of God. Through it, the people of God adhere unwaveringly to the faith given once and for all to the saints, penetrates it more deeply with right thinking, and applies it more fully in its life.

Lumen gentium, n. 12

IMMUTABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT OF DOGMA

66. *Immutability and development of dogma according to *Mysterium Ecclesiae* (1973)*

The faithful therefore must shun the opinion, first, that dogmatic formulas (or some category of them) cannot signify truth in a determinate way but can only offer changeable approximations to it... these formulas signify the truth only in an indeterminate way, this truth being like a goal that is constantly being sought by means of such approximations. Those who hold such an opinion do not avoid dogmatic relativism and they corrupt the concept of the Church's infallibility relative to the truth to be taught or held in a determinate way.

Such an opinion clearly is in disagreement with the declarations of the First Vatican Council, which, while fully aware of the progress of the Church in her knowledge of revealed truth, nevertheless taught as follows: "That meaning of sacred dogmas...must always be maintained which Holy Mother Church declared once and for all, nor should one ever depart from that meaning under the guise of or in the name of a more advanced understanding." The Council moreover condemned the opinion that "dogmas once proposed by the Church must, with the progress of science, be given a meaning other than that which was understood by the Church, or which she understands."

CDF, *Mysterium Ecclesiae*, n. 5

67. *The homogenous development of the dogmatic teaching of the Church*

But some one will say, perhaps, Shall there, then, be no progress in Christ's Church? Certainly; all possible progress. For what being is there, so envious of men, so full of hatred to God, who would seek to forbid it? Yet on condition that it be real progress, not alteration of the faith. For progress requires that the subject be enlarged in itself, alteration, that it be transformed into something else. The intelligence, then, the knowledge, the wisdom, as well of individuals as of all, as well of one man as of the whole Church, ought, in the course of ages and centuries, to increase and make much and vigorous progress; but yet only in its own kind; that is to say, in the same doctrine, in the same sense, and in the same meaning.

The growth of religion in the soul must be analogous to the growth of the body, which, though in process of years it is developed and attains its full size, yet remains still the same. There is a wide difference between the flower of youth and the maturity of age; yet they who were once young are still the same now that they have become old, insomuch that though the stature and outward form of the individual are changed, yet his nature is one and the same, his person is one and the same. An infant's limbs are small, a young man's large, yet the infant and the young man are the same. Men when full grown have the same number of joints that they had when children; and if there be any to which maturer age has given birth these were already present in embryo, so that nothing new is produced in them when old which was not already latent in them when children. This, then, is undoubtedly the true and legitimate rule of progress, this the established and most beautiful order of growth, that mature age ever develops in the man those parts and forms which the wisdom of the Creator had already framed beforehand in the infant. Whereas, if the human form were changed into some shape belonging to another kind, or at any rate, if the number of its limbs were increased or diminished, the result would be that the whole body would become either a wreck or a monster, or, at the least, would be impaired and enfeebled.

In like manner, it behoves Christian doctrine to follow the same laws of progress, so as to be consolidated by years, enlarged by time, refined by age, and yet, withal, to continue uncorrupt and

unadulterate, complete and perfect in all the measurement of its parts, and, so to speak, in all its proper members and senses, admitting no change, no waste of its distinctive property, no variation in its limits.

For example: Our forefathers in the old time sowed wheat in the Church's field. It would be most unmeet and iniquitous if we, their descendants, instead of the genuine truth of corn, should reap the counterfeit error of tares. This rather should be the result,—there should be no discrepancy between the first and the last. From doctrine which was sown as wheat, we should reap, in the increase, doctrine of the same kind—wheat also; so that when in process of time any of the original seed is developed, and now flourishes under cultivation, no change may ensue in the character of the plant.

Vincent of Lerin, *Primum Commonitorium*, ch. 23 (PL 50, 667-668).

68. *The criteria for an authentic development of dogma* (J.H. Newman, 1801-1890)

I venture to set down seven Notes of varying cogency, independence and applicability, to discriminate healthy developments of an idea from its state of corruption and decay, as follows: There is no corruption if it retains one and the same type, the same principles, the same organization; if its beginnings anticipate its subsequent phases, and its later phenomena protect and subserve its earlier; it has a power of assimilation and revival, and a vigorous action from first to last.

[...] The point to be ascertained is the unity and identity of the idea with itself through all stages of its development from first to last, and these are seven tokens that it may rightly be accounted one and the same all along. To guarantee its own substantial unity, it must be seen to be one in type, one in its system of principles, one in its unitive power towards externals, one in its logical consecutiveness, one in the witness of its early phases to its later, one in the protection which its later extend to its earlier, and one in its union of vigour with continuance, that is, in its tenacity.

The development of Christian doctrine (1845) (London: Longmans - Green, and Co., 1909), 171, 206.

69. *The connection between Christian mysteries and dogmas* (J.M. Scheeben, 1835-1888)

Again our attention has been drawn inevitably to the close and harmonious connection existing among the mysteries of Christianity, and to the remarkable organic relationship whereby any one of these profound truths recalls the others. The mystery of the Eucharist reminds us of the mystery of grace and of heavenly glory, for it is their connatural cause, prefigure, and inauguration. The mysteries of grace and glory in turn postulate the mystery of the Eucharist as their foundation and type. And, as the mysteries of grace and glory are inextricably interwoven with the mysteries of the Trinity, and the Incarnation, the same is necessarily true of the Eucharist.

As concerns the Trinity, we have already remarked that the oneness of substance and life existing between the Father and the Son is transmitted to us and reproduced in us most perfectly by the Eucharist. In particular, the Eucharist is the agency that effects the real and perfect mission of the divine persons to the outer world.

Above all it crowns the Son's mission to us on this earth. For in the Eucharist the Son unites Himself to us in the most perfect way, to give us in general the power to become sons of God, and also to make us one Son of God by incorporating us in Himself.

In the Eucharist we likewise perceive the real and intimate mission of the Holy Spirit. For, since the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Son, is really united to the Son's body, in which He reposes and dwells,

He also comes to us in this same body, to unite Himself to us therein, to communicate Himself to us, and to give Himself to us as our own.

The Mysteries of Christianity (1865), §75, Tr. Cyril Vollert (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1946)

70. *The importance of a philosophy capable of drawing from language and from a stable truth, according to Fides et ratio* (1998)

66. For its part, *dogmatic theology* must be able to articulate the universal meaning of the mystery of the One and Triune God and of the economy of salvation, both as a narrative and, above all, in the form of argument. It must do so, in other words, through concepts formulated in a critical and universally communicable way. Without philosophy's contribution, it would in fact be impossible to discuss theological issues such as, for example, the use of language to speak about God, the personal relations within the Trinity, God's creative activity in the world, the relationship between God and man, or Christ's identity as true God and true man. This is no less true of the different themes of moral theology, which employ concepts such as the moral law, conscience, freedom, personal responsibility and guilt, which are in part defined by philosophical ethics.

It is necessary therefore that the mind of the believer acquire a natural, consistent and true knowledge of created realities—the world and man himself—which are also the object of divine Revelation. Still more, reason must be able to articulate this knowledge in concept and argument. Speculative dogmatic theology thus presupposes and implies a philosophy of the human being, the world and, more radically, of being, which has objective truth as its foundation.

95. The word of God is not addressed to any one people or to any one period of history. Similarly, dogmatic statements, while reflecting at times the culture of the period in which they were defined, formulate an unchanging and ultimate truth. This prompts the question of how one can reconcile the absoluteness and the universality of truth with the unavoidable historical and cultural conditioning of the formulas which express that truth. The claims of historicism, I noted earlier, are untenable; but the use of a hermeneutic open to the appeal of metaphysics can show how it is possible to move from the historical and contingent circumstances in which the texts developed to the truth which they express, a truth transcending those circumstances.

Human language may be conditioned by history and constricted in other ways, but the human being can still express truths which surpass the phenomenon of language. Truth can never be confined to time and culture; in history it is known, but it also reaches beyond history.

96. To see this is to glimpse the solution of another problem: the problem of the enduring validity of the conceptual language used in Conciliar definitions. This is a question which my revered predecessor Pius XII addressed in his Encyclical Letter *Humani Generis*.

This is a complex theme to ponder, since one must reckon seriously with the meaning which words assume in different times and cultures. Nonetheless, the history of thought shows that across the range of cultures and their development certain basic concepts retain their universal epistemological value and thus retain the truth of the propositions in which they are expressed. Were this not the case, philosophy and the sciences could not communicate with each other, nor could they find a place in cultures different from those in which they were conceived and developed. The hermeneutical problem exists, to be sure; but it is not insoluble. Moreover, the objective value of many concepts does not exclude that their meaning is often imperfect. This is where philosophical speculation can be very helpful. We may hope, then, that philosophy will be especially concerned to

deepen the understanding of the relationship between conceptual language and truth, and to propose ways which will lead to a right understanding of that relationship.

97. The interpretation of sources is a vital task for theology; but another still more delicate and demanding task is the *understanding of revealed truth*, or the articulation of the *intellectus fidei*. The *intellectus fidei*, as I have noted, demands the contribution of a philosophy of being which first of all would enable *dogmatic theology* to perform its functions appropriately. The dogmatic pragmatism of the early years of this century, which viewed the truths of faith as nothing more than rules of conduct, has already been refuted and rejected; but the temptation always remains of understanding these truths in purely functional terms. This leads only to an approach which is inadequate, reductive and superficial at the level of speculation. A Christology, for example, which proceeded solely "from below", as is said nowadays, or an ecclesiology developed solely on the model of civil society, would be hard pressed to avoid the danger of such reductionism.

Fides et ratio, nn. 66, 95-97

71. *The necessity of conserving words or legal concepts for some truths of faith*

Everyone is aware that the terminology employed in the schools and even that used by the Teaching Authority of the Church itself is capable of being perfected and polished; and we know also that the Church itself has not always used the same terms in the same way. It is also manifest that the Church cannot be bound to every system of philosophy that has existed for a short space of time. Nevertheless, the things that have been composed through common effort by Catholic teachers over the course of the centuries to bring about some understandings of dogma are certainly not based on any such weak foundation. These things are based on principles and notions deduced from a true knowledge of created things

Pious XII, *Humani generis*, DH 3883

72. *The anthropological criteria cannot carry out the determinant role in the interpretation of dogmatic formulations*

In addition to the two criteria already considered, the "anthropological criterion" has also an important role today in the field of interpretation. In saying that, there is obviously no intention of suggesting that man in himself, certain of his needs or interests, or even the tendencies of fashion, can function as the measure of faith and the interpretation of dogma.

That is already out of court for the very fact that man himself is an unresolved question to which the only full response is God. Only in Jesus Christ is the mystery of man made clear: in him, the New Man, God has fully revealed man to man and opened up to him his most sublime vocation. Man then is not the measure, but the point of reference for faith and dogma. This is the road, too, the Church follows in the explanation of her dogmas

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CTI, *The interpretation of dogma*, October 1989

THE CREDIBILITY OF CHRISTIAN REVELATION

73. *Credibility according to ch. 3 of Dei Filius of Vatican Council I (1870)*

However, in order that the "obedience" of our faith should be "consonant with reason" (cf. Rm 12:1), God has willed that to the internal aids of the Holy Spirit there should be joined external proofs of His revelation, namely: divine facts, especially miracles and prophecies which, because they clearly show forth the omnipotence and infinite knowledge of God, are most certain signs of a divine revelation, and are suited to the intelligence of all [can. 3 and 4]. Wherefore, not only Moses and the prophets, but especially Christ the Lord Himself, produced many genuine miracles and prophecies; and we read concerning the apostles: "But they going forth preached everywhere: the Lord working withal and confirming the word with signs that followed" (Mc 16:20). And again it is written: "And we have the more firm prophetic word: whereunto you do well to attend, as to a light that shineth in a dark place" (2 Pt 1:19).

Moreover, although the assent of faith is by no means a blind movement of the intellect, nevertheless, no one can "assent to the preaching of the Gospel," as he must to attain salvation, "without the illumination and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who gives to all a sweetness in consenting to and believing in truth" (Council of Orange, n.178 ff.). Wherefore, "faith" itself in itself, even if it "worketh not by charity" (cf. Ga 5:6), is a gift of God, and its act is a work pertaining to salvation, by which man offers a free obedience to God Himself by agreeing to, and cooperating with His grace, which he could resist [cf. n.797 f: can. 5].

Further, by divine and Catholic faith, all those things must be believed which are contained in the written word of God and in tradition, and those which are proposed by the Church, either in a solemn pronouncement or in her ordinary and universal teaching power, to be believed as divinely revealed.

But, since "without faith it is impossible to please God" (He 11:6) and to attain to the fellowship of His sons, hence, no one is justified without it; nor will anyone attain eternal life except "he shall persevere unto the end on it" (Mt 10:22 Mt 24:13). Moreover, in order that we may satisfactorily perform the duty of embracing the true faith and of continuously persevering in it, God, through His only-begotten Son, has instituted the Church, and provided it with clear signs of His institution, so that it can be recognized by all as the guardian and teacher of the revealed word.

For, to the Catholic Church alone belong all those many and marvelous things which have been divinely arranged for the evident credibility of the Christian faith. But, even the Church itself by itself, because of its marvelous propagation, its exceptional holiness, and inexhaustible fruitfulness in all good works; because of its catholic unity and invincible stability, is a very great and perpetual motive of credibility, and an incontestable witness of its own divine mission.

By this it happens that the Church as "a standard set up unto the nations" (Is 11:12), both invites to itself those who have not yet believed, and makes its sons more certain that the faith, which they profess, rests on a very firm foundation. Indeed, an efficacious aid to this testimony has come from supernatural virtue. For, the most benign God both excites the erring by His grace and aids them so

that they can "come to a knowledge of the truth" (1Tm 2:4), and also confirms in His grace those whom "He has called out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1Pt 2:9), so that they may persevere in this same light, not deserting if He be not deserted.

DH 3009-3014

74. *Vatican I canons on credibility*

Can. 3. If anyone shall have said that divine revelation cannot be made credible by external signs, and for this reason men ought to be moved to faith by the internal experience alone of each one, or by private inspiration: let him be anathema.

Can. 4. If anyone shall have said that miracles are not possible, and hence that all accounts of them, even those contained in Sacred Scripture, are to be banished among the fables and myths; or, that miracles can never be known with certitude, and that the divine origin of the Christian religion cannot be correctly proved by them: let him be anathema.

Can. 5. If anyone shall have said that the assent of the Christian faith is not free, but is necessarily produced by proofs from human reasoning; or, that the grace of God is necessary only for that living faith "which worketh by charity" (*Ga 5:6*): let him be anathema.

Can. 6. If anyone shall have said that the condition of the faithful and of those who have not yet come to the true faith is equal, so that Catholics can have a just cause of doubting the faith which they have accepted under the teaching power of the Church, by withholding assent until they have completed the scientific demonstration of the credibility and truth of their faith: let him be anathema.

DH 3033-3036

75. *The notion of praeambula fidei in Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274)*

Thus, in sacred doctrine we are able to make a threefold use of philosophy. First, to demonstrate those truths that are preambles of faith and that have a necessary place in the science of faith. Such are the truths about God that can be proved by natural reason—that God exists, that God is one; such truths about God or about his creatures, subject to philosophical proof, faith presupposes.

Commentary on the De Trinitate of Boethius. q. 2, a. 3, resp.

76.

The existence of God and other like truths about God, which can be known by natural reason, are not articles of faith, but are preambles to the articles; for faith presupposes natural knowledge, even as grace presupposes nature, and perfection supposes something that can be perfected. Nevertheless, there is nothing to prevent a man, who cannot grasp a proof, accepting, as a matter of faith, something which in itself is capable of being scientifically known and demonstrated.

Summa Theologiae, 1, q. 2, a. 2, ad 1

77. *The role of the praeambula fidei in Fundamental Theology according to Fides et ratio*

In studying Revelation and its credibility, as well as the corresponding act of faith, fundamental theology should show how, in the light of the knowledge conferred by faith, there emerge certain truths which reason, from its own independent enquiry, already perceives. Revelation endows these

truths with their fullest meaning, directing them towards the richness of the revealed mystery in which they find their ultimate purpose.

Consider, for example, the natural knowledge of God, the possibility of distinguishing divine Revelation from other phenomena or the recognition of its credibility, the capacity of human language to speak in a true and meaningful way even of things which transcend all human experience.

From all these truths, the mind is led to acknowledge the existence of a truly propaedeutic path to faith, one which can lead to the acceptance of Revelation without in any way compromising the principles and autonomy of the mind itself.

Fides et ratio, n. 67

78. *The testimony of the Annals of Tacitus on the fire of Rome and the Christians* (c. 116)

43. Of Rome meanwhile, so much was left unoccupied by his mansion, was not built up, as it had been after its burning by the Gauls, without any regularity or in any fashion, but with rows of streets according to measurement, with broad thoroughfares, with a restriction on the height of houses, with open spaces, and the further addition of colonnades, as a protection to the frontage of the blocks of tenements. These colonnades Nero promised to erect at his own expense, and to hand over the open spaces, when cleared of the debris, to the ground landlords. He also offered rewards proportioned to each person's position and property, and prescribed a period within which they were to obtain them on the completion of so many houses or blocks of building. He fixed on the marshes of Ostia for the reception of the rubbish, and arranged that the ships which had brought up corn by the Tiber, should sail down the river with cargoes of this rubbish. The buildings themselves, to a certain height, were to be solidly constructed, without wooden beams, of stone from Gabii or Alba, that material being impervious to fire. And provided that the water which individual license had illegally appropriated might flow in greater abundance in several places for the public use, officers were appointed and everyone was to have in the open court the means of stopping a fire. Every building, too, was to be enclosed by its own proper wall, not by one common to others. These changes which were liked for their utility, also added beauty to the new city. Some, however, thought that its old arrangement had been more conducive to health, inasmuch as the narrow streets with the elevation of the roofs were not equally penetrated by the sun's heat, while now the open space, unsheltered by any shade, was scorched by a fiercer glow.

44. Such indeed were the precautions of human wisdom. The next thing was to seek means of propitiating the gods, and recourse was had to the Sibylline books, by the direction of which prayers were offered to Vulcanus, Ceres, and Proserpina. Juno, too, was entreated by the matrons, first, in the Capitol, then on the nearest part of the coast, whence water was procured to sprinkle the fane and image of the goddess. And there were sacred banquets and nightly vigils celebrated by married women. But all human efforts, all the lavish gifts of the emperor, and the propitiations of the gods, did not banish the sinister belief that the conflagration was the result of an order. Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their center and become popular. Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an

immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired.

Nero offered his gardens for the spectacle, and was exhibiting a show in the circus, while he mingled with the people in the dress of a charioteer or stood aloft on a car. Hence, even for criminals who deserved extreme and exemplary punishment, there arose a feeling of compassion; for it was not, as it seemed, for the public good, but to glut one man's cruelty, that they were being destroyed.

Tacitus, *Annales*, XV, 43-44.

79. *Correspondence between Gaius Caecilius Pliny (the younger) and Emperor Trajan on how to deal with Christians* (112-113) - From Pliny to Traian

It is my custom to refer all my difficulties to you, Sir, for no one is better able to resolve my doubts and to inform my ignorance. I have never been present at an examination of Christians. Consequently, I do not know the nature or the extent of the punishments usually meted out to them, nor the grounds for starting an investigation and how far it should be pressed. Nor am I at all sure whether any distinction should be made between them on the grounds of age, or if young people and adults should be treated alike; whether a pardon ought to be granted to anyone retracting his beliefs, or if he has once professed Christianity, he shall gain nothing by renouncing it; and whether it is the mere name of Christian which is punishable, even if innocent of crime, or rather the crimes associated with the name.

For the moment this is the line I have taken with all persons brought before me on the charge of being Christians. I have asked them in person if they are Christians, and if they admit it, I repeat the question a second and third time, with a warning of the punishment awaiting them. If they persist, I order them to be led away for execution; for, whatever the nature of their admission, I am convinced that their stubbornness and unshakeable obstinacy ought not to go unpunished. There have been others similarly fanatical who are Roman citizens. I have entered them on the list of persons to be sent to Rome for trial.

Now that I have begun to deal with this problem, as so often happens, the charges are becoming more widespread and increasing in variety. An anonymous pamphlet has been circulated which contains the names of a number of accused persons. Among these I considered that I should dismiss any who denied that they were or ever had been Christians when they had repeated after me a formula of invocation to the gods and had made offerings of wine and incense to your statue (which I had ordered to be brought into court for this purpose along with the images of the gods), and furthermore had reviled the name of Christ: none of which things, I understand, any genuine Christian can be induced to do.

Others, whose names were given to me by an informer, first admitted the charge and then denied it; they said that they had ceased to be Christians two or more years previously, and some of them even twenty years ago. They all did reverence to your statue and the images of the gods in the same way as the others, and reviled the name of Christ. They also declared that the sum total of their guilt or error amounted to no more than this: they had met regularly before dawn on a fixed day to chant verses alternately among themselves in honour of Christ as if to a god, and also to bind themselves by oath, not for any criminal purpose, but to abstain from theft, robbery and adultery, to commit no breach of trust and not to deny a deposit when called upon to restore it. After this ceremony it had

been their custom to disperse and reassemble later to take food of an ordinary, harmless kind; but they had in fact given up this practice since my edict, issued on your instructions, which banned all political societies. This made me decide it was all the more necessary to extract the truth by torture from two slave-women, whom they call deaconesses. I found nothing but a degenerate sort of cult carried to extravagant lengths. I have therefore postponed any further examination and hastened to consult you. The question seems to me to be worthy of your consideration, especially in view of the number of persons endangered; for a great many individuals of every age and class, both men and women, are being brought to trial, and this is likely to continue. It is not only the towns, but villages and rural districts too which are infected through contact with this wretched cult. I think, though, that it is still possible for it to be checked and directed to better ends.

Epistula X, 96, 1-9

80. From Traian to Pliny

My dear Pliny, in the investigation of the trials of those who were denounced to you as Christians, you followed the procedure to which you had to adhere. For no general rule can be established that has, so to speak, a rigid character. They are not to be sought out; if they are denounced and found guilty, they are to be punished, but in such a way that the one who will have denied being a Christian and proved it with facts, that is, by addressing supplications to our gods, however much he may have aroused suspicion in the past, will obtain forgiveness for his repentance. As for anonymous pamphlets put into circulation, they should not enjoy consideration in any trial; for it is a practice of very bad example, unworthy of our times.

Epistula X, 97.

81. *On how to understand the historicity of the gospels.*

When the Lord set forth His teaching orally, He used the forms of thought and expression prevailing at that time. Thus He adapted Himself to the mentality of His audience so that His teaching would be firmly impressed on their minds and easily remembered by His disciples. The latter realized that the miracles and other events of Christ's life, took place so that men might believe in Christ and embrace His message of salvation by faith.

The Apostles rendered testimony to Jesus, announcing first and foremost the Lord's death and resurrection. They faithfully set forth His life and His words, adapting the format of their preaching to the condition of their audience. When Jesus rose from the dead and His divinity became manifest, faith by no means obliterated the memory of the events which had taken place. On the contrary it reinforced these memories, because it rested on the things which Jesus had taught and done. Nor did their worship of Jesus as Lord and Son of God transform Him into a "mythological" figure, or distort His teaching. However there is no reason to deny the fact that the apostles, in telling their listeners about our Lord's deeds and words, utilized the fuller understanding which they had acquired from the glorious events of Christ's life and the guidance of the Spirit of truth. After His resurrection Jesus Himself "interpreted to them" His own words and those of the Old Testament. In a similar manner they explained His deeds and words according to the needs of their audience. Devoting themselves, "to the ministry of the word," they set about preaching, and utilized the type of presentation appropriate to their purpose and the mentality of their listeners. They were debtors "to Greeks and to foreigners, to learned and unlearned." Indeed we can single out the following categories in the preaching of Christ's heralds: catechetical formulas, narrative reports, eyewitness accounts, hymns,

doxologies, prayers, and similar literary genres commonly found in Sacred Scripture and the speech of that period.

This primitive instruction was passed on orally at first, and later written down. Indeed it was not long before many attempted "to draw up a narrative" of the events connected with the Lord Jesus. The sacred authors, each using all approaches suited to his specific purpose, recorded this primitive teaching in the four Gospels for the benefit of the churches. Of the many elements at hand they reported some, summarized others, and developed still others in accordance with the needs of the various churches. They used every possible means to ensure that their readers would come to know the validity of the things they had been taught. From the material available to them the Evangelists selected those items most suited to their specific purpose and to the condition of a particular audience. And they narrated these events in the manner most suited to satisfy their purpose and their audience's condition. Since the meaning of a statement depends, among other things, upon the context in which it is found, the Evangelists reported Christ's deeds and words in varying contexts, choosing whichever one would be of greatest help to the reader in trying to understand a particular utterance. Hence the exegete must try to ascertain what the Evangelist intended by reporting a certain saying or event in a particular manner or a particular context. The truth of the Gospel account is not compromised because the Evangelists report the Lord's words and deeds in different order. Nor is it hurt because they report His words, not literally but in a variety of ways, while retaining the same meaning. As St. Augustine says: "It is quite probable that each Evangelist felt duty-bound to narrate his particular account in the order which God suggested to his memory. At least this would seem to hold true for those items in which order of treatment would not affect the authority or truth of the Gospel. After all, the Holy Spirit distributes His gifts to each as He chooses. Since these books were to be so authoritative, He undoubtedly guided and directed the sacred writers as they thought about the things which they were going to write down; but He probably allowed each writer to arrange his narrative as he saw fit. Hence anyone who uses enough diligence, will be able to discover this order with the help of God."

The exegete will not fulfill his task - finding out what the sacred writers really said and really intended - unless he considers all the factors involved in the origin and composition of the Gospels, and makes proper use of the sound findings of recent investigations. Recent studies indicate that the life and teaching of Jesus were not simply related so as to be remembered; they were "preached" to provide the basis of faith and morals for the Church. Thus the exegete, by scrutinizing the testimony of the Evangelists over and over again, will be able to illustrate more clearly the perennial theological value of the Gospels as well as the importance and necessity of the Church's interpretation.

Pontifical Biblical Commission, *Instruction on the Historical Truth of the Gospels*, 4/21/1964.

82. *A brief analysis of the psychology of Jesus of Nazareth*

By the concordant testimony of the Gospels, He must have been a man accustomed to toil, hardy, healthy, robust. And already in this He was distinguished from other famous founders of religions. Muhammad was a sick man suffering from hereditary defects, shaken in his nervous system, when he raised the prophet's banner. Buddha was inwardly undone, enervated, weary of life, when he retired from the world. There is no indication, on the other hand, that Jesus was touched by any disease. All the sufferings that befell him were caused by his office: they were privations and sacrifices imposed on him by his messianic mission.

His body must have been extraordinarily hardened and resistant to fatigue. This is already proven by his habit of going out very early to his work. "In the morning he arose very early and went into a deserted place to pray" (*Mark* 1:35). "At dawn he called his disciples around him and chose twelve of them" (*Lk* 6:13). The same sense of freshness and healthy vigor emanates from his love of nature. In a special way he loved the mountains and the lake. After a day of strenuous work he gladly climbed some isolated high ground.

[...] Moreover, this life of wandering was filled with no small amount of work and toil. Mark frequently points out, "They did not even have time to eat" (cf. *Mk* 3:20; 6:31). Late into the night they came and went with the sick (cf. *Mk* 3:8). And with the sick came and went evil adversaries, Pharisees and Sadducees. Then it was blows and answers, word against word, spirit against spirit. Nervous arguments arose, fights and dangerous pitfalls. Added were the exhausting explanations to the disciples, made burdensome by their incomprehension and pride. Any ill temperament, or barely delicate one, would have had to give in or succumb. Never and nowhere did Jesus retreat, even in the most unnerving, most dangerous situations. He slept peacefully lying on his pillow in the midst of the storm rocking the Lake of Genezareth; when the disciples woke him up, as soon as he was awakened from deep sleep he immediately found himself and mastered the situation. All this shows how far He was from having an excitable, nervous temperament; instead He was always master of His senses: in short, He was perfectly healthy.

Karl Adam, *Gesù il Cristo* (1938), Morcelliana, Brescia 1995, 83-85 (the translation is ours).

83. *The sobriety of the account of the Passion testifies to its historicity*

The account rings with sacred truth. Never rhetorical, it is rendered simply and objectively. Not a word about Jesus' possible emotions; no hint of the author's reaction. We have only to imagine what a modern reporter would have made of the 'story' to feel the straightforwardness with which this event, upon which the eternal salvation of the world depended, is recorded. That is why it is so convincing, but also why it appears almost insignificant. Every sentence is packed with immeasurable content; but only so much is revealed as the individual reader's love and earnestness is capable of bringing to light. No wonder the pious masses have composed as accompanying commentary to these few terse pages, the prayerful, meditative, symbolic exercise of the Way of the Cross.

R. Guardini, *The Lord* (1937) (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publish, Inc., 1982), 461.

84. *Why the figure of Jesus of Nazareth could not have been invented*

Neither the Jews nor the Hellenists could ever by their own means have arrived at that Christ figure, which shines and shines in the Gospels. The theory that wants to seek its origins in the creative power of the faith of the community turns out, from the historical point of view, to be false and deceptive. Let us add: if the moving reality, the singularity of this unspeakably sublime event of the life of Jesus Christ had not manifested itself with evidence on the soil of Galilee, no human brain could ever have thought such a life, no ingenuity could ever have composed it. "Innumerable and terrible," Lavater wrote, "are the doubts of a reflecting Christian: but all of them are overcome by the certainty that Christ *could not have been invented*."

And really could not be invented this Son of God, who on the cross cries "My God, My God, why have *You* forsaken *Me*?" Impossible is to invent this All-Saint, this *solus sanctus* who is the companion of the publican and the sinner, who allows himself to be covered with perfume by an

infamous girl. Who would have been able to invent this risen One, this Lord of glory, who kisses the traitor, who is silent when spit in his face?... Neither a Jew, nor a Roman, nor a Greek, nor a German would have known and been able to dream up such an image of the Savior.

K. Adam, *Gesù il Cristo* (1938), Morcelliana, Brescia 1995, 79-80 (the translation is ours).

85. *The empty tomb, the basis of the logic of the apparitions*

The Judaism of Christ's time had a markedly different concept from that proper to the Western Greek mentality about soul and body relations: it interpreted them not in a dualistic sense but in a monastic sense. The Jew always saw soul and body as united in one whole. "Living spirit" is for him always also "living body." For the Jew, a spirit can only effectively manifest itself in and through a body. The idea that the spirit of a deceased person, on its own, separate from his body could still be living and operating would have succeeded inconceivably to the Jewish mindset. This held that spirits in the *sheol* were like shadows devoid of substance and action. Even Jesus' disciples would never have had the impression that He was truly resurrected and alive if they had not together directly ascertained that the very body had appeared, and that it was still exercising its bodily functions.

The spirit of Jesus without the body of Jesus would have been—to the Jewish mentality of the apostles—something quite abnormal, would have been a "ghost," as they had suspected at Jesus' first appearance: they thought they were seeing a ghost, even when he ate and drank with them (cf. Lk. 24:37). It follows that the apostles, as true children of the Jewish people, could not believe and adhere firmly to the reality of the appearances of the Risen One *except on the condition that* his body no longer lay in the tomb, that in short, the Jerusalem tomb was indeed empty.

If the disciples, as the theory of visions claims, had perceived apparitions of Jesus in Galilee without being able at the same time to realize the empty tomb in Jerusalem, such apparitions would not have produced lasting effects in them; at most they would have thought of a singular ghost, a specter, as they had already another time, amid the raging gale they had believed they saw on the shocked waves of the Lake of Genezareth.

What the disciples ascertained about the resurrection thus contains, in each case, an *objective*, externally visible, observable, perfectly demonstrable and controllable element: the fact of the empty tomb. Without this fact, the apostles' firm and living faith in the resurrection, given their mindset, would have no sufficient motivation. Any theory that believes it can disregard this fact, speaking of purely subjective experiences rehearsed in Galilee, without naming the empty *tomb* together, betrays itself, for that very reason, as a sterile product of a philosophy that claims to be enlightened, but which in reality misconstrues history, indeed opposes history.

K. Adam, *Gesù il Cristo* (1938), Morcelliana, Brescia 1995, 188 (the translation is ours).

86. *Jesus' resurrection is not mythology: Origen responds to Celsus*

But seeing that Jesus was crucified before all the Jews, and His body slain in the presence of His nation, how can they bring themselves to say that He practised a similar deception with those heroes who are related to have gone down to Hades, and to have returned thence? [...] if we were to suppose Jesus to have died an obscure death, so that the fact of His decease was not patent to the whole nation of the Jews, and afterwards to have actually risen from the dead, there would, in such a case, have been ground for the same suspicion entertained regarding the heroes being also entertained regarding Himself.

Probably, then, in addition to other causes for the crucifixion of Jesus, this also may have contributed to His dying a conspicuous death upon the cross, that no one might have it in his power to say that He voluntarily withdrew from the sight of men, and seemed only to die, without really doing so; but, appearing again, made a juggler's trick of the resurrection from the dead. But a clear and unmistakable proof of the fact I hold to be the undertaking of His disciples, who devoted themselves to the teaching of a doctrine which was attended with danger to human life — a doctrine which they would not have taught with such courage had they invented the resurrection of Jesus from the dead; and who also, at the same time, not only prepared others to despise death, but were themselves the first to manifest their disregard for its terrors.

Origen, *Contra Celsum*, II, 56.

87. *A detailed and fabulous description of the Resurrection, according to the apocryphal Gospel of Peter*

Early in the morning, when the Sabbath was beginning to dawn, a crowd from Jerusalem and the surrounding area went to see the sealed tomb. But in the night when the Lord's Day was beginning to dawn, as the soldiers stood guard two by two, a loud cry sounded in the sky. Those saw the heavens opened and two men descending from there with great splendor and approaching the tomb. The stone, which had been thrown at the entrance, rolled by itself and stood aside. The tomb thus opened and the two young men entered. At this sight the soldiers awakened the centurion and the elders. These were also there for safekeeping. As they were explaining what they had seen, behold they again saw three men coming out of the tomb: two were supporting the third, while a cross followed them. The head of the first two reached the heavens, while that of the one who was led by the hand by them exceeded the heavens. Then they heard a voice from above saying, "Did you preach to the sleeping ones?" Then they heard the answer coming from the cross, "Yes."

Gospel of Peter, 9:34 - 10:42, tr. it. M. Erbetta (ed.), *Gli apocrifi del Nuovo Testamento*, Marietti, Casale Monferrato 1975, vol. I/1, 143-144.

88. *Why did the Risen One appear only to a select few disciples*

This is the question, "Why did not our Saviour show Himself after His resurrection to all the people? why only to witnesses chosen before of God?" and this is my answer: "Because this was the most effectual means of propagating His religion through the world."

After His resurrection, He said to His disciples, "Go, convert all nations:" [Mt 28,19] this was His especial charge. If, then, there are grounds for thinking that, by showing Himself to a few rather than to many, He was more surely advancing this great object, the propagation of the Gospel, this is a sufficient reason for our Lord's having so ordained; and let us thankfully receive His dispensation, as He has given it.

Now consider what would have been the probable effect of a public exhibition of His resurrection. Let us suppose that our Saviour had shown Himself as openly as before He suffered; preaching in the Temple and in the streets of the city; traversing the land with His Apostles, and with multitudes following to see the miracles which He did. What would have been the effect of this? Of course, what it had already been. His former miracles had not effectually moved the body of the people; and, doubtless, this miracle too would have left them as it found them, or worse than before. They might have been more startled at the time; but why should this amazement last? [...]

In truth, this is the way of the mass of mankind in all ages, to be influenced by sudden fears, sudden contrition, sudden earnestness, sudden resolves, which disappear as suddenly. Nothing is done effectually through untrained human nature; and such is ever the condition of the multitude. Unstable as water, it cannot excel. One day it cried Hosanna; the next, Crucify Him. And, had our Lord appeared to them after they had crucified Him, of course they would have shouted Hosanna once more; and when He had ascended out of sight, then again, they would have persecuted His followers.

J.H. Newman, *Witnesses of the Resurrection*, in *Parochial and Plain Sermons* (London: Longmans and Co., 1891), vol. 1, Sermon XXII. 283-284

89. *The Church, reason for faith in Jesus Christ, in Arnobius of Sicca*

What say you, O ignorant ones, for whom we might well weep and be sad? Are you so void of fear that these things may be true which are despised by you and turned to ridicule? And do you not consider with yourselves at least, in your secret thoughts, lest that which today with perverse obstinacy you refuse to believe, time may too late show to be true, and ceaseless remorse punish you? Do not even these proofs at least give you faith to believe, viz., that already, in so short and brief a time, the oaths of this vast army have spread abroad over all the earth? That already there is no nation so rude and fierce that it has not, changed by His love, subdued its fierceness, and with tranquillity hitherto unknown, become mild in disposition? that men endowed with so great abilities, orators, critics, rhetoricians, lawyers, and physicians, those, too, who pry into the mysteries of philosophy, seek to learn these things, despising those in which but now they trusted? [...] Do you indeed believe that these things happen idly and at random? That these feelings are adopted on being met with by chance? Is not this, then, sacred and divine? Or do you believe that, without God's grace, their minds are so changed, that although murderous hooks and other tortures without number threaten, as we said, those who shall believe, they receive the grounds of faith with which they have become acquainted, as if carried away by some charm, and by an eager longing for all the virtues, and prefer the friendship of Christ to all that is in the world?

Adversus nationes, II, 5

90. *The customs of all nations changed after the preaching of the Gospel*

The customs of all nations are now set aright, even those customs which before were savage and barbarous; so that Persians who have become His disciples no longer marry their mothers, nor Scythians feed on human flesh, because of Christ's word which has come even unto them, nor other races of Barbarians have incestuous union with daughters and sisters, nor do men madly lust after men and pursue unnatural pleasures, nor do those, whose practice it formerly was, now expose their dead kindred to dogs and birds, nor, strangle the aged, as they did formerly...

Eusebius of Caesarea, *Praeparatio evangelica*, I, 4, 6, tr. En. E.H. Gifford, 1903

91. *Without Jesus Christ, the Church ceases to be a sign*

If Jesus Christ is not its wealth, the Church is miserable; the Church is barren if the Spirit of Jesus does not fertilize it. Its building collapses if Jesus Christ is not its Architect, and if his Spirit is not the cement that holds together the living stones with which it is built. It is without beauty if it does not reflect the unique beauty of the Face of Jesus Christ, and if it is not the Tree whose root is the passion of Jesus Christ The science of which it boasts is false; it is false the wisdom that adorns it, if the one

and the other do not converge in Jesus Christ; and if its light is not an "enlightened light" that all comes from Jesus Christ, it forces us into the darkness of death. It is a lie all its doctrine, if it does not proclaim the truth that is Jesus Christ. It is vain all its glory if it does not make it consist in the unity of Jesus Christ. Its very name is indifferent to us if it does not immediately evoke the only name given to men for our salvation. It represents nothing to us if it is not for us the sacrament, the efficacious sign of Jesus Christ. [...]

By speaking too exclusively of the Church, we no longer in fact show it in its true reality, which is sacramental in nature. Unwittingly, we arrest our gaze on it. It then becomes, for those who listen to us and who do not yet experience its mystery, a kind of opaque object. It no longer shines in its mystical transparency. Hence the widespread impression that churchmen preach themselves.

H. de Lubac, *Meditazione sulla Chiesa* (1953), Jaca Book, Milano 1979, 147-148 and 151
(the translation is ours)

92. *Witness, criterion of the transmission of Revelation*

Above all the Gospel must be proclaimed by witness. Take a Christian or a handful of Christians who, in the midst of their own community, show their capacity for understanding and acceptance, their sharing of life and destiny with other people, their solidarity with the efforts of all for whatever is noble and good. Let us suppose that, in addition, they radiate in an altogether simple and unaffected way their faith in values that go beyond current values, and their hope in something that is not seen and that one would not dare to imagine. Through this wordless witness these Christians stir up irresistible questions in the hearts of those who see how they live: Why are they like this? Why do they live in this way? What or who is it that inspires them? Why are they in our midst?

Such a witness is already a silent proclamation of the Good News and a very powerful and effective one. Here we have an initial act of evangelization. The above questions will ask, whether they are people to whom Christ has never been proclaimed, or baptized people who do not practice, or people who live as nominal Christians but according to principles that are in no way Christian, or people who are seeking, and not without suffering, something or someone whom they sense but cannot name.

Evangelii nuntiandi, n. 21

CHRISTIAN REVELATION IN RELATION WITH RELIGIONS

93. *Christianity and Religions: Uniqueness and singularity of the mediation of Jesus Christ*

In the final analysis, he [Buddha] only says what basically anyone could say. He shows a way that, even without him, subsists with the value of a cosmic law. The person of the Buddha himself is not an essential part of that which is properly religious; it is extinguished [...]

In truth there is no persistent identity. The appearance of persistent reality, if man wishes to arrive at liberation, must be removed layer by layer, as he, tense in aspiration, says to each one, "This is not it"--and not to grasp at the end a final essential core, but to recognize that in principle nothing is there, and thus dissolve.

R. Guardini, *L'essenza del cristianesimo* (1938), Morcelliana, Brescia 1987, 20-21
(the translation is ours)

94. *Jesus Christ's original mediation*

Since Christ is both the revealing mystery and the revealed mystery, both the mediator and the fullness of revelation (*DV* 2 and 4), it follows that he plays an utterly unique role in the Christian faith, a role that distinguishes Christianity from all other religions, including Judaism. Christianity is the only religion whose revelation is embodied in a person who claims to be living and absolute Truth. Other religions had their founders, but none of these (the Buddha, Confucius, Zoroaster, Muhammad) set himself up as the object of his disciples' faith. [...]

Jesus performs actions, proclaims a message, brings into the world a quality of life and love never before seen or imagined or experienced, and thus causes others to ask what his real identity is.

R. Latourelle, *Revelation*, in *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 933-934

95. *Christianity and religions: salvation and visible boundaries of the Church*

Those who have not yet received the Gospel are related in various ways to the people of God. In the first place we must recall the people to whom the testament and the promises were given and from whom Christ was born according to the flesh. On account of their fathers this people remain most dear to God, for God does not repent of the gifts He makes nor of the calls He issues. But the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator. In the first place amongst these there are the Muslims, who, professing to hold the faith of Abraham, along with us adore the one and merciful God, who on the last day will judge mankind. Nor is God far distant from those who in shadows and images seek the unknown God, for it is He who gives to all men life and breath and all things, and as Saviour wills that all men be saved. Those also can attain to salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ or His Church, yet sincerely seek God and moved by grace strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience. Nor does Divine Providence deny the helps necessary for salvation to those who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God and with His grace strive to live a good life.

Lumen gentium, n. 16

96. *Christianity and religions: the attitude of believers in Christ*

Let them [evangelizers] be familiar with their national and religious traditions; let them gladly and reverently lay bare the seeds of the Word which lie hidden among their fellows. [...] Should know the people among whom they live [...] so that they may learn what treasures a generous God has distributed among the nations of the earth. But at the same time, let them try to furbish these treasures, set them free, and bring them under the dominion of God their Savior.

Ad Gentes, n. 11

97. *Christianity and Religions according to Vatican Council II*

The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men. Indeed, she proclaims, and ever must proclaim Christ "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), in whom men may find the fullness of religious life, in whom God has reconciled all things to Himself. (Cf 2 *Cor.* 5:18-19)

98. *Christianity and religions: on the need for dialogue with other religions to mature into evangelization*

Thus one too frequently hears it said, in various terms, that to impose a truth, be it that of the Gospel, or to impose a way, be it that of salvation, cannot but be a violation of religious liberty. Besides, it is added, why proclaim the Gospel when the whole world is saved by uprightness of heart? We know likewise that the world and history are filled with "seeds of the Word"; is it not therefore an illusion to claim to bring the Gospel where it already exists in the seeds that the Lord Himself has sown?

Anyone who takes the trouble to study in the Council's documents the questions upon which these excuses draw too superficially will find quite a different view.

It would certainly be an error to impose something on the consciences of our brethren. But to propose to their consciences the truth of the Gospel and salvation in Jesus Christ, with complete clarity and with a total respect for the free options which it presents- "without coercion, or dishonorable or unworthy pressure"- far from being an attack on religious liberty is fully to respect that liberty, which is offered the choice of a way that even non-believers consider noble and uplifting. Is it then a crime against others' freedom to proclaim with joy a Good News which one has come to know through the Lord's mercy? And why should only falsehood and error, debasement and pornography have the right to be put before people and often unfortunately imposed on them by the destructive propaganda of the mass media, by the tolerance of legislation, the timidity of the good and the impudence of the wicked? The respectful presentation of Christ and His kingdom is more than the evangelizer's right; it is his duty. It is likewise the right of his fellow men to receive from him the proclamation of the Good News of salvation. God can accomplish this salvation in whomsoever He wishes by ways which He alone knows. And yet, if His Son came, it was precisely in order to reveal to us, by His word and by His life, the ordinary paths of salvation. And He has commanded us to transmit this revelation to others with His own authority. It would be useful if every Christian and every evangelizer were to pray about the following thought: men can gain salvation also in other ways, by God's mercy, even though we do not preach the Gospel to them; but as for us, can we gain salvation if through negligence or fear or shame- what St. Paul called "blushing for the Gospel" - or as a result of false ideas we fail to preach it? For that would be to betray the call of God, who wishes the seed to bear fruit through the voice of the ministers of the Gospel; and it will depend on us whether this grows into trees and produces its full fruit.

[...] And may the world of our time, which is searching, sometimes with anguish, sometimes with hope, be enabled to receive the Good News not from evangelizers who are dejected, discouraged, impatient or anxious, but from ministers of the Gospel whose lives glow with fervor, who have first received the joy of Christ, and who are willing to risk their lives so that the kingdom may be proclaimed and the Church established in the midst of the world.

Paul VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, n. 80

99. *Preaching the Gospel to the lands of mission*

Nor are *difficulties* lacking *within* the People of God; indeed these difficulties are the most painful of all. As the first of these difficulties Pope Paul VI pointed to "the lack of fervor [which] is all the more serious because it comes from within. It is manifested in fatigue, disenchantment, compromise, lack of interest and above all lack of joy and hope." Other great obstacles to the Church's missionary work include past and present divisions among Christians, dechristianization within Christian countries, the decrease of vocations to the apostolate, and the counterwitness of believers and

Christian communities failing to follow the model of Christ in their lives. But one of the most serious reasons for the lack of interest in the missionary task is a widespread indifferentism, which, sad to say, is found also among Christians. It is based on incorrect theological perspectives and is characterized by a religious relativism which leads to the belief that "one religion is as good as another." We can add, using the words of Pope Paul VI, that there are also certain "excuses which would impede evangelization. The most insidious of these excuses are certainly the ones which people claim to find support for in such and such a teaching of the Council."

In this regard, I earnestly ask theologians and professional Christian journalists to intensify the service they render to the Church's mission in order to discover the deep meaning of their work, along the sure path of "thinking with the Church" (*sentire cum Ecclesia*).

Internal and external difficulties must not make us pessimistic or inactive. What counts, here as in every area of Christian life, is the confidence that comes from faith, from the certainty that it is not we who are the principal agents of the Church's mission, but Jesus Christ and his Spirit. We are only co-workers, and when we have done all that we can, we must say: "We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty" (Lk 17:10).

John Paul II, *Redemptoris missio*, n. 36

100. *The work of the missionaries*

In proclaiming Christ to non-Christians, the missionary is convinced that, through the working of the Spirit, there already exists in individuals and peoples an expectation, even if an unconscious one, of knowing the truth about God, about man, and about how we are to be set free from sin and death. The missionary's enthusiasm in proclaiming Christ comes from the conviction that he is responding to that expectation, and so he does not become discouraged or cease his witness even when he is called to manifest his faith in an environment that is hostile or indifferent. He knows that the Spirit of the Father is speaking through him (cf. Mt 10:17-20; Lk 12:11-12) and he can say with the apostles: "We are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit" (Acts 5:32). He knows that he is not proclaiming a human truth, but the "word of God," which has an intrinsic and mysterious power of its own (cf. Rom 1:16).

The supreme test is the giving of one's life, to the point of accepting death in order to bear witness to one's faith in Jesus Christ. Throughout Christian history, martyrs, that is, "witnesses," have always been numerous and indispensable to the spread of the Gospel. In our own age, there are many: bishops, priests, men and women religious, lay people—often unknown heroes who give their lives to bear witness to the faith. They are *par excellence* the heralds and witnesses of the faith.

Ibidem, n. 45

101. *The uniqueness and salvific universality of Jesus Christ and the Church*

5. As a remedy for this relativistic mentality, which is becoming ever more common, it is necessary above all to reassert the definitive and complete character of the revelation of Jesus Christ. In fact, it must be *firmly believed* that, in the mystery of Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, who is "the way, the truth, and the life" (Jn 14:6), the full revelation of divine truth is given.

6. Therefore, the theory of the limited, incomplete, or imperfect character of the revelation of Jesus Christ, which would be complementary to that found in other religions, is contrary to the Church's faith. Such a position would claim to be based on the notion that the truth about God cannot be

grasped and manifested in its globality and completeness by any historical religion, neither by Christianity nor by Jesus Christ. [...] faith requires us to profess that the Word made flesh, in his entire mystery, who moves from incarnation to glorification, is the source, participated but real, as well as the fulfilment of every salvific revelation of God to humanity,¹⁴ and that the Holy Spirit, who is Christ's Spirit, will teach this "entire truth" (*Jn* 16:13) to the Apostles and, through them, to the whole Church.

8. The hypothesis of the inspired value of the sacred writings of other religions is also put forward. Certainly, it must be recognized that there are some elements in these texts which may be *de facto* instruments by which countless people throughout the centuries have been and still are able today to nourish and maintain their life-relationship with God. [...] The Church's tradition, however, reserves the designation of *inspired texts* to the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments, since these are inspired by the Holy Spirit (Cf. Council of Trent, *DS* 1501; First Vatican Council, *DS* 3006). [...] Nevertheless, God, who desires to call all peoples to himself in Christ and to communicate to them the fullness of his revelation and love, "does not fail to make himself present in many ways, not only to individuals, but also to entire peoples through their spiritual riches, of which their religions are the main and essential expression even when they contain 'gaps, insufficiencies and errors'". Therefore, the sacred books of other religions, which in actual fact direct and nourish the existence of their followers, receive from the mystery of Christ the elements of goodness and grace which they contain.

10. It is likewise contrary to the Catholic faith to introduce a separation between the salvific action of the Word as such and that of the Word made man. With the incarnation, all the salvific actions of the Word of God are always done in unity with the human nature that he has assumed for the salvation of all people. The one subject which operates in the two natures, human and divine, is the single person of the Word.

Therefore, the theory which would attribute, after the incarnation as well, a salvific activity to the Logos as such in his divinity, exercised "in addition to" or "beyond" the humanity of Christ, is not compatible with the Catholic faith.

12. [...] In the New Testament, the mystery of Jesus, the Incarnate Word, constitutes the place of the Holy Spirit's presence as well as the principle of the Spirit's effusion on humanity, not only in messianic times (cf. Acts 2:32-36; *Jn* 7:39, 20:22; 1 Cor 15:45), but also prior to his coming in history (cf. 1 Cor 10:4; 1 Pet 1:10-12). [...] Furthermore, the salvific action of Jesus Christ, with and through his Spirit, extends beyond the visible boundaries of the Church to all humanity. Speaking of the paschal mystery, in which Christ even now associates the believer to himself in a living manner in the Spirit and gives him the hope of resurrection, the Council states: "All this holds true not only for Christians but also for all men of good will in whose hearts grace is active invisibly. For since Christ died for all, and since all men are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery" (*Gaudium et spes*, 22).

22. [...] Salvation is found in the truth. Those who obey the promptings of the Spirit of truth are already on the way of salvation. But the Church, to whom this truth has been entrusted, must go out to meet their desire, so as to bring them the truth. Because she believes in God's universal plan of salvation, the Church must be missionary Inter-religious dialogue, therefore, as part of her evangelizing mission, is just one of the actions of the Church in her mission *ad gentes*. Equality, which is a presupposition of inter-religious dialogue, refers to the equal personal dignity of the parties in dialogue, not to doctrinal content, nor even less to the position of Jesus Christ - who is God

himself made man - in relation to the founders of the other religions. Indeed, the Church, guided by charity and respect for freedom, must be primarily committed to proclaiming to all people the truth definitively revealed by the Lord, and to announcing the necessity of conversion to Jesus Christ and of adherence to the Church through Baptism and the other sacraments, in order to participate fully in communion with God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Thus, the certainty of the universal salvific will of God does not diminish, but rather increases the duty and urgency of the proclamation of salvation and of conversion to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, *Dominus Iesus*, nn. 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, 22

102. *The incarnation as a model of inculturation of faith*

In Sacred Scripture, therefore, while the truth and holiness of God always remains intact, the marvelous "condescension" of eternal wisdom is clearly shown, "that we may learn the gentle kindness of God, which words cannot express, and how far He has gone in adapting His language with thoughtful concern for our weak human nature." For the words of God, expressed in human language, have been made like human discourse, just as the word of the eternal Father, when He took to Himself the flesh of human weakness, was in every way made like men.

Dei Verbum, n. 13

103. *Religion and Culture*

Transcending all the differences which distinguish individuals and peoples, there is a *fundamental commonality*. For different cultures are but different ways of facing the question of the meaning of personal existence. And it is precisely here that we find one source of the respect which is due to every culture and every nation: *every culture is an effort to ponder the mystery of the world and in particular of the human person: it is a way of giving expression to the transcendent dimension of human life*. The heart of every culture is its approach to the greatest of all mysteries: the mystery of God.

John Paul II, *Address to the United Nations*, New York, 05/10/1995, 9

104. *The essential point by which Christianity differs from all the other religions*

Here we touch upon *the essential point by which Christianity differs from all the other religions*, by which *man's search for God* has been expressed from earliest times. Christianity has its starting-point in the Incarnation of the Word. Here, it is not simply a case of man seeking God, but of God who comes in Person to speak to man of himself and to show him the path by which he may be reached.

John Paul II, *Tertio millennio adveniente*, n. 6.