

## THE THEOLOGICAL PROOF FOR THE NECESSITY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

### PART I

It is a commonplace among teachers of scholastic theology that the thesis on the necessity of the Catholic Church for salvation is one of the most difficult to impart accurately and effectively. Part of this difficulty is inherent in the subject itself, since the necessity of the Church is one of the basic aspects of its character as God's supernatural kingdom on earth. Thus this truth properly belongs to the central mystery of God's dispensation to His adopted children. In some measure, however, this difficulty stems from the fact that students are affected by certain fairly widespread but utterly untheological presentations of the doctrine on the Catholic Church's necessity for salvation. Unfortunately, some presentations of this dogma are obviously attempts to explain it away, rather than objectively to explain its meaning.

The intolerably bad effects of this untheological teaching can best be obviated by the use of the genuine theological demonstration of the Church's necessity for salvation. The true theology of the "*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*" must not and cannot detract from the mystery of the Church itself. Yet it is certainly capable of showing up as unfounded a kind of tepid and unrealistic attitude towards Christian life which neglect or misinterpretation of the dogma about the Church's necessity is wont to generate. And, because the complete theological demonstration of this thesis is very seldom set forth in the modern literature of scholastic theology, the present article will attempt to outline what is manifestly one of the most urgently needed sections of the sacred doctrine.

Any theological demonstration is the certain and complete proof that a given statement or thesis actually forms a part of the deposit of divine public revelation which Our Lord committed to the Church in which He dwells and which the Church guards and teaches infallibly until the end of time by the power of the Holy Ghost. It begins with an accurate statement of the thesis or conclusion, drawn from the pertinent datum of positive theology. It then analyzes this statement, and situates the component

concepts against their proper background in the field of revealed truth. Thus, in one and the same process, the pertinence of the thesis to the original deposit of divine revelation is manifested and the full meaning of this thesis as an expression of Christian truth is set forth. Such actually is and must be the proper theological treatment of the proposition that the Catholic Church is really necessary for eternal salvation.

The first and in some ways the most important step in the fashioning of this theological proof must be the accurate statement of the proposition with which we are concerned. The immediate norm of divine faith is the teaching of the Catholic Church itself. Hence, any theological demonstration should begin with an examination of the various authentic declarations of the Church on the subject under discussion. Only thus can we arrive at an accurate presentation of the truth which the theological demonstration is meant to prove and to elucidate.

As a prelude to the work of consulting and listing the authentic ecclesiastical pronouncements on the necessity of the Church for salvation, however, we should notice the various forms which modern theologians and writers on theological subjects have given to their theses on this subject. Basically modern teaching on this point can be reduced to six formulae. The correctness and the adequacy of each one of these six formulae can, of course, only be determined by a process of comparison with the official statements of the Church itself.

(A) The visible Catholic Church is sometimes said to be necessary for salvation with the necessity of precept alone.

(B) Occasionally the visible Catholic Church is described as necessary for salvation with the necessity of means, but only as the *ordinary* means of salvation.

(C) One method of explaining the Church's necessity for salvation is to hold that all this teaching involves is an affirmation of the fact that the various divine gifts which prepare for and constitute salvation actually belong to the visible Catholic Church.

(D) Another and a hitherto rather popular method of explaining this teaching has been to hold that no man can enter heaven without having been at least a member of the soul of the Church on earth at the time of death.

(E) Some writers have held that, in order to be saved, a man must actually be a member of the visible Church.

(F) The traditional scholastic expression of the thesis on the Church's necessity for salvation is the statement that, in order to be saved, a man must, at the moment of his death, either be a member of the visible Catholic Church or sincerely desire to become a member.

These six basic formulae frequently appear in combination with one another. Thus Edouard Hugon's explanation of the Church's necessity for salvation employs the first, the fourth, and the sixth among them. The great Dominican professor of the Angelico distinguished between the *necessity* of belonging to the soul of the Church and the *obligation* of belonging to its body. He taught that the axiom "*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*" signifies that there is a "necessity of means to belong to the soul of the Church, not merely by desire but actually, and to belong at least by desire to the body of the Church, and to belong to the body of the Church in reality in the measure in which one knows it and is able to perform this duty."<sup>1</sup> Rejecting as inadequate any explanations based on "good faith," on a soul of the Church, on an invisible Church, or on a mere necessity of precept, the illustrious French Jesuit Jean Vincent Bainvel combines the second, the fifth, and the sixth of our formulae in his teaching. He holds that the Church is the ordinary means of salvation, and that all of those who are saved are members of the Church, even though they enter it only by desire.<sup>2</sup>

The German writer, Dr. Karl Adam, employs the second, the third, and the fourth of our formulae in the following passage from his *The Spirit of Catholicism*.

True there is only one Church of Christ. She alone is the Body of Christ and without her there is no salvation. Objectively and practically considered she is the ordinary way of salvation, the single and exclusive channel by which the truth and grace of Christ enter our world of space and time. But those also who know her not receive these gifts from her; yes, even those who misjudge and fight against her, provided they are in good faith, and are simply and loyally seeking the truth without self-righteous obstinacy. Though it be not the Catholic Church

<sup>1</sup> *Hors de l'église point de salut* (Paris: Pierre Tequi, 1927), p. 364.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Is There Salvation Outside the Catholic Church?* translated by Fr. Weidenhan (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1920), pp. 25 ff.

itself which hands them the bread of truth and grace, yet it is Catholic bread that they eat. And, while they eat of it, they are, without knowing it or willing it, incorporated in the supernatural substance of the Church. Though they be outwardly separated from the Church, they belong to its soul.<sup>3</sup>

There are numerous doctrinal pronouncements on the Church's necessity for salvation, as we can readily see from an examination of the text of Cavallera's *Thesaurus doctrinae catholicae* or the index of Denzinger's *Enchiridion symbolorum*. If we examine a selected five of these texts, however, we shall find in them all of the basic truths which the Church has proclaimed about its own necessity. The first of these five passages is to be found in the first chapter of the Fourth Council of the Lateran. The second occurs in the Bull, *Unam sanctam*, written by Pope Boniface VIII. The third is in the Decree for the Jacobites, issued by the Oecumenical Council of Florence. The fourth is in the allocution *Singulari quadam*, given by Pope Pius IX, while the fifth and last is to be found in that same Pontiff's encyclical *Quanto conficiamur moerore*.

The Fourth Lateran Council teaches that "there is one universal Church of the faithful, outside of which no one at all is saved."<sup>4</sup> It is important to note that the expression "*fidelium universalis Ecclesia*," employed by this Oecumenical Council, is exactly the equivalent of the formula "*catholicorum collectio*," which Gratian's *Decretum* attributed to Pope Nicholas.<sup>5</sup> In the language of the Church the *fidelis* is and has always been the Catholic, the full-fledged member of the true Church of Jesus Christ. An ecclesiastical document like the so-called seventh canon of the second Oecumenical Council could qualify the catechumen as a Christian.<sup>6</sup> The title of *fidelis*, however, was always reserved for the baptized person fully joined to Our Lord's society by its external bonds of unity.

It is thus the visible Catholic Church, the society formed by the

<sup>3</sup> *The Spirit of Catholicism*, translated by Dom Justin McCann, O.S.B.; (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1931), p. 175.

<sup>4</sup> Cap. 1, cf. Denzinger-Bannwart, *Enchiridion symbolorum* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1937), n. 430.

<sup>5</sup> C. 8, D. I, "de cons."

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Hefele-Leclercq, *Histoire des conciles* (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1908), II, 38 ff.

Catholics or the *fideles* throughout the world, which the Council describes as so requisite for salvation that outside of it no one at all is saved (*extra quam nullus omnino salvatur*). In consequence, the teaching which holds the Church to be the "ordinary" means of salvation can never be accepted as an explanation of the truth proposed in this statement. If the Church were actually and merely the "ordinary" means of salvation, the Council would have been decidedly in error in stating that outside of that Church "no one at all (*nullus omnino*)" would be saved. Moreover the teaching that the visible Church is requisite for salvation only with the necessity of precept must also be rejected in the light of the Lateran Council's pronouncement. A thing which is necessary *only* by the necessity of precept is incumbent only upon those to whom the promulgation of the precept has come. The fact that the Fourth Lateran declared the visible Catholic and Roman Church to be necessary in such a way that outside of it no one at all would be saved is clear indication that this assembly did not consider the Church as requisite merely with the necessity of precept.

In his Bull, the *Unam sanctam*, issued Nov. 18, 1302, Pope Boniface VIII taught that "at the bidding of faith, we are compelled to believe and to hold the one holy, Catholic, and apostolic Church. We firmly believe and unfeignedly proclaim this [Church], outside of which there is neither salvation nor the remission of sins." This document ends with the statement: "Therefore we declare, say, define, and pronounce that for every human creature, to be subject to the Roman Pontiff is absolutely necessary for salvation (*omnino de necessitate salutis*)."<sup>7</sup>

The *Unam sanctam* speaks in such a way as to reject the notion that the Catholic Church is requisite for salvation merely with the necessity of precept or merely as an ordinary means. Its main importance in this section of sacred theology, however, is to be found in the fact that it also excludes any serious attempt to explain the Church's necessity by saying that the axiom "*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*" means only that the graces leading to salvation belong to the Church or that a kind of pertinence to "the soul of the Church" in this world is sufficient for eternal salvation. According to this pronouncement of Pope Boniface

<sup>7</sup> DB, 468.

<sup>8</sup> DB, 469.

VIII, a man must be subject in some way to the Roman Pontiff, the Vicar of Christ on earth and the visible head of the Catholic Church, in order to enjoy everlasting life. Unequivocally, then, the *Unam sanctam* holds that a man must be in some manner attached to the visible Catholic Church in this world if he is to be in the number of the blessed in heaven. Thus not only is it true that the *salus* belongs to the Church Catholic, but that the man who will attain it must also be counted among those who have in some way joined its company.

It is, of course, impossible to make any rational or accurate use of the term "soul of the Church" in explaining the necessity of the Catholic Church for eternal salvation. Current theological literature tells us of three ways of explaining the meaning of this expression. First of all there is the perfectly acceptable doctrine which expresses the function of the indwelling Holy Ghost in the Catholic Church by speaking of Him as the Soul of this society. If, utilizing this terminology, we state that, in order to be saved, a man has to belong to the Soul of the Church or be a member of the Soul of the Church we either fail to attempt an explanation of the very thesis under discussion or we indulge in mere gibberish. If the formula means that a man must have the Holy Ghost dwelling within him in the life of sanctifying grace in order that he may attain to the beatific vision, then this teaching is perfectly correct, but it fails to explain the function of the visible Catholic Church with reference to salvation. If, on the other hand, it means that in some way we are to become "members" of the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity in order to be saved, then it is reduced to mere unintelligibility.

Secondly there is the teaching which identifies the soul of the Church with sanctifying grace and with the various infused graces, both theological and moral, that belong with it. When this doctrine is employed in teaching that pertinence to the soul of the Church is requisite for salvation, there is not even an attempt to account for the teaching contained in the *Unam sanctam*. There is no question whatsoever about the fact that grace and the various infused virtues and gifts of the Holy Ghost are requisite for salvation. The thing that theology is bound to explain is the function of the Church with reference to salvation and to the acquisition of these other supernatural gifts, since, according to Pope Boniface, there is neither salvation nor the remission of sins

(to be found only in justification, or the infusion of sanctifying grace together with its attendant supernatural habits) outside of the Church.

Thirdly there was the notion that the soul of the Church was some kind of an invisible society of the just, a company of those in the state of grace even outside the confines of the visible Catholic Church. Prior to the appearance of the encyclical *Mystici corporis* there were a good many Catholic writers and lecturers who attempted to explain the necessity of the Church in terms of this fictitious assembly, asserting that, in order to be saved, a man had at least to be a member of this invisible society. The appearance of the *Mystici corporis*, officially denying the existence of such an invisible society or Church, has been an unquestionable blessing for the Church of God in our times.

The central truth or mystery of Christ's dealings with the children of men consists in the fact that His company is actually the visible Catholic Church, an organization within which good members and bad members will be mingled together until the end of time. The divine teaching on the necessity of the *ecclesia* for man's salvation has reference to the fact that, in order to obtain the Beatific Vision, a man must be connected in some way or other with this definite and visible organization. The *Unam sanctam* shows that it is impossible to explain the divine doctrine about the Church's necessity by teaching merely that the gifts of God which prepare for and constitute salvation belong to the visible Church. It insists that, in order to be saved, each man must in some manner be subject to the Roman Pontiff, the vicar of Christ on earth and the visible head of His Church.

Furthermore, in his *Unam sanctam*, Pope Boniface VIII taught that the Church is requisite not only for salvation but for the remission of sins. Now the remission of sins takes place only in and through the process of justification. As a matter of fact, it is what might be called the negative aspect of this process. The state of sin is a condition of aversion from God. It is the voluntary privation of the life of sanctifying grace in an intellectual creature meant by God to possess that supernatural life.

Hence the removal or remission of sin (original or actual) consists in the conversion of the man to God. In this process the sin is remitted in and through the supernatural conversion of the man to God in the life of sanctifying grace. For every man who

comes into the world as a member of the family of Adam, the infusion of *gratia prima* involves the remission of sin. Furthermore sin can be remitted only in the process of conversion to God. Since the only conversion towards God possible for man is the supernatural life of sanctifying grace, there is no remission of original or mortal sin without the infusion of this supernatural life. According to the Catholic dogma, brought out in the *Unam sanctam*, the Church is requisite for eternal salvation in exactly the same measure that it is necessary for this infusion of the *gratia prima* or for the remission of sin.

The *Decree for the Jacobites*, issued by the Oecumenical Council of Florence, enlarges upon this concept. Insisting that the visible Church is necessary for all men, in so far as those who are not attached to it at the end of their lives will never attain to the Beatific Vision, the *Decree* teaches also that those works which would be highly meritorious if performed under the direction of Christian charity will be of no value when performed by a person who is outside the Church in such a way as to be turned away from his salvation. The man who is not "within the Church" as he must be in order to be eligible for the Beatific Vision will not find the works of Christian piety or even the reception of the Christian sacraments profitable for him unto salvation. The Council's teaching on the necessity of the Catholic Church is found in the following paragraph.

It [the sacrosanct Roman Church, established by the voice of Our Lord and Saviour] firmly believes, professes, and teaches that none of those who do not exist within the Catholic Church, not only pagans, but Jews, heretics, and schismatics, can become partakers of eternal life; but that they are going to the everlasting fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels, unless they become attached to it (*nisi . . . eidem fuerint aggregati*) before they die. And [it firmly believes, professes and teaches] that the unity of the ecclesiastical body is of such value that the ecclesiastical sacraments are profitable unto salvation, and that fastings, almsgivings, and the other duties of piety and exercises of the Christian combat bring forth eternal rewards only for those who remain within it: and that, however great his almsgiving, and even though he might shed his blood for the name of Christ, no one can be saved unless he remains in the embrace and in the unity of the Catholic Church.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> DB, 714. The teaching on the necessity of the Church for the remission of sins is that of St. Augustine, in his *Enchiridion*, cap. 65, and in *Sermone*

During the earlier history of Christianity there was never anything like a concerted effort to explain away the necessity of the Church for salvation. Hence the Pontifical and Conciliar documents to which we have referred thus far dealt with what was, for the men of the times during which these documents were written, a truth that entered into the very center of the Catholic dogmatic message and which they had never seen seriously contradicted. So unquestionable did this truth appear to the men of Christian civilization that the very heretics who broke away from and launched themselves against the Catholic communion never dreamed of denying the dogma of the Church's necessity for salvation. The teaching occurs in the heresiarch Calvin's *Institutio christianae religionis*<sup>10</sup> and in several Protestant statements of belief. Among these latter are the Belgic Confession of 1561,<sup>11</sup> the Scotch Confession of 1560,<sup>12</sup> the Irish Articles of Religion of 1615,<sup>13</sup> and the Westminster Confession of 1647.<sup>14</sup> The last-named document, incidentally, speaks of the *visible* Church as something outside of which there is ordinarily no salvation. This manner of speaking was and remains quite in harmony with the peculiar ecclesiology manifest in the Westminster Confession, although it is quite inadequate as an expression of the divinely revealed truth about the true Church of Jesus Christ.

During the nineteenth century, however, the traditional Catholic teaching on the necessity of the Church had become obscured or confused in some Catholic circles. Hence Pope Pius IX found it necessary to insist upon this dogma and to take measures to overcome the misunderstanding generated by a somewhat naive "Catholic liberalism." His most extensive treatment of the dogma on the Church's necessity is to be found

LXXI. The second sentence in the citation from the Council expresses one of the central truths in the ecclesiology of St. Augustine. Cf. *De Baptismo contra Donatistas*, Lib. 4, cap. 24; *Sermo ad Caesareensis Ecclesiae plebem* n. 6; *Epist. CXXI*, n. 5.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Book IV, chapter 1, n. 4. In Tholuck's edition (Edinburgh, 1874), II, 230.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1882), III, 418.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, III, 458.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, III, 538.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, III, 657.

in his Allocution, the *Singulari quadam*, pronounced on Dec. 9, 1854.

In this Allocution the Holy Father dealt with two distinct errors then troubling the minds of European Catholics. Having completed his teaching on rationalism, the first of these errors, he proceeded to deal with the other.

Not without sorrow have we seen that another error, and one not less ruinous, has taken possession of certain portions of the Catholic world, and has entered into the souls of the many Catholics who think that they can well hope for the eternal salvation of all those who have in no way entered into the true Church of Christ. For that reason they are wont to inquire time and time again as to what is going to be the fate and the condition after death of those who have never yielded themselves to the Catholic faith and, convinced by completely inadequate arguments, they expect a response that will favor this evil teaching. Far be it from Us, Venerable Brethren, to presume to establish limits to the divine mercy, which is infinite. Far be it from us to wish to scrutinize the hidden counsels and judgments of God, which are "a great deep," and which human thought can never penetrate. In accordance with our apostolic duty, we desire to stir up your episcopal solicitude and vigilance to drive out of the mind of men, to the extent to which you are able to use all of your energies, that equally impious and deadly opinion that the way of eternal salvation can certainly be found in any religion. With all the skill and learning at your command, you should prove to the people committed to your care that this dogma of Catholic faith is in no way opposed to the divine mercy and justice.<sup>15</sup>

The basic approach of Pope Pius IX to the dogma of the Church's necessity was such as to show very clearly that the great Pontiff regarded this particular truth as one about which the faithful should be particularly well informed. The contradiction, or even the weakening of this dogma must be regarded as an evil which the Bishops of the Catholic Church are bound to oppose with all the intellectual forces at their disposal. And, we must remember that the Holy Father was not dealing with any crass denial of the axiom "*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*." He was faced with a situation in which it was taken for granted that non-Catholics would be saved through the use of those spiritual resources available to them as non-members of the Church of Christ, apart from any real acceptance of the Catholic faith or of

<sup>15</sup> DB, 1646.

the Catholic Church. It was precisely this attitude or opinion which Pius IX characterized as impious and deadly.

The *Singulari quadam* then goes on to give the fundamental explanation of that teaching which the Holy Father had commanded the Catholic Bishops to expound to their own flocks. They had been told to show those over whom they were placed that the Catholic dogma on the necessity of the Church for salvation was in no way opposed to the truths about the divine justice and mercy. They were to proceed in this fashion.

Certainly we must hold it as of faith that no one can be saved outside of the apostolic Roman Church, that this is the only Ark of Salvation, that the one who does not enter this is going to perish in the deluge. But nevertheless we must likewise hold it as certain that those who labor in ignorance of the true religion, if that [ignorance] be invincible, will never be charged with any guilt on this account before the eyes of the Lord. Now who is there who would arrogate to himself the power to point out the extent of such ignorance according to the nature and the variety of peoples, regions, talents and so many other things? For really when, loosed from these bodily bonds, we see God as He is, we shall certainly understand with what intimate and beautiful a bond the divine mercy and justice are joined together. But, while we live on earth, weighed down by this mortal body that darkens the mind, let us hold most firmly out of Catholic doctrine that there is one God, one faith, one baptism. It is wicked to go on inquiring beyond this.<sup>16</sup>

In this allocution the statement that no one can be saved outside of the Catholic Church is presented definitely as a matter of divine faith, as one of those truths which God has revealed to the world through Jesus Christ and which Our Lord teaches infallibly within the company of His disciples. Hence any attempt at explanation of this teaching which involves exceptions to or a denial of this absolute truth must be rejected as contrary to the divine teaching itself. Thus the statements which follow upon this basic pronouncement in the *Singulari quadam* definitely must not be interpreted as involving anything like a weakening of the dogma itself.

The second statement in the foregoing paragraph, the one to the effect that invincible ignorance of the true religion will not be accounted as an offense by God, was requisite for a proper explanation of the dogma in the time of Pope Pius IX, and it

<sup>16</sup> DB, 1647.

remains no less necessary in our own day. Acting upon a distinctively Protestant notion of God's kingdom on earth, some of the enemies of the Catholic Church had misinterpreted the dogma of the Church's necessity to mean that men would be considered blameworthy for invincible ignorance of the true Church. Such, of course, is not the true and traditional meaning of this dogma. Unfortunately, however, a certain number of Catholics had been uncritical enough to imagine that a straightforward explanation of this dogma would involve the blasphemous doctrine that men are blameworthy precisely by reason of their invincible ignorance. Pope Pius IX demanded that the Bishops of the Catholic Church exert themselves to drive this deadly misconception from the minds of their subjects. He attacked it, consequently, in his own Allocution.

The fact of the matter is, of course, that the possibility and existence of a genuine invincible ignorance about the true Church of God has nothing whatsoever to do with the Church's real necessity of means for eternal salvation. If the Church were requisite merely in terms of the necessity of precept, then the existence of a really inculpable ignorance with reference to it would automatically excuse all of those held in the ties of that ignorance. But it so happens that the Church is necessary for salvation with the necessity of means. Hence, those who have hitherto remained in ignorance of the true Church through no fault of their own still need this society in order to attain to the Beatific Vision.

In order to understand this portion of the *Singulari quadam* it is absolutely essential to keep in mind the truth which forms the essential background to all of the Catholic teaching about the necessity of the Church for salvation, the divinely revealed doctrine that the salvation of mankind is something intrinsically supernatural and something of which the family of Adam is rightly deprived because of original sin. For this twofold reason, then, eternal salvation must not be considered as something naturally *due* to man. Salvation, as the term itself indicates, implies a transfer from an undesirable status to a condition of blessedness. Concretely, the salvation of any human being involves a transfer from the fallen family of Adam to that company which is known as the Body of Jesus Christ.

The man who is not thus brought or transferred into the Body

of Jesus Christ, but who remains merely a member of the fallen family of Adam, will not attain to the Beatific Vision. Even though such a man has had no means of knowing the existence of the true Church of Jesus Christ, and consequently is in no way to blame for not entering this society or not even desiring to enter it, he will still remain deprived of the Beatific Vision if he departs from this life in such a condition. The mortal sins which he may have committed in this life, together with original sin itself, would suffice to constitute him as unworthy of heaven. The fact that he had not been incorporated into the one supernatural society within which the divine fellowship is to be found in this world would render him ineligible for the essentially supernatural beatitude of the Church triumphant.

As the *Singulari quadam* reminds us quite forcibly, it remains true that no one can judge accurately about the extent and the location of truly invincible ignorance with reference to the true Church of Christ in this world. Thus, to state the matter concretely, it is quite impossible for us to say whether or not some individual Protestant, living in a region where the Catholic Church flourishes, is invincibly ignorant of that Church by reason of his upbringing and his prejudices. As a matter of fact, such a judgement does not fall within our competence as preachers of Catholic truth. Actually we are and we remain the ambassadors of Christ, charged with the entirety of that message, but only with that message, which Jesus Christ teaches within our communion. The truth that the Catholic Church is actually requisite for eternal salvation forms an integral part of that message. The truth about the culpability or the lack of it in any outsider's ignorance of the true Church is definitely not a part of the teaching with which we are entrusted. Consequently, as Pope Pius IX warns us, we are only abusing our commission when we attempt to form a judgment on such matters.

Actually the truth which God has in fact revealed on the subject of the Church's necessity for salvation clearly implies the tremendous need for genuine apostolic activity on the part of all Catholics and especially on the part of priests. It is the will of God that no man should be lost or deprived of eternal salvation. Yet, in the providence of God, no man will be saved outside of the Body of Christ which is the Catholic Church. It is within our power to bring the Church and its divine message to the peoples

of the earth. Hence, if we should be lax in our apostolic endeavors, we must be considered as recreant in our love for and gratitude to Christ.

As a matter of fact the lax or "liberal" interpretation of the dogma concerning the Church's necessity for salvation is essentially a screen for a tepid or non-existent missionary spirit. If the way of salvation were really open to men in all religions or in all religious societies, then there would certainly be no valid reason for pouring out the best blood of the Catholic Church in the never-ending effort to plant the company of Christ among the peoples of the world. The missionary labors of the Catholic Church are expended, not to bring about a mere improvement in the condition of people who would have been in a position to be saved in any event, but actually to carry the message and the means of salvation to those who sit in darkness. The work of converting men to the Church of Christ aims not at bringing an easier way of salvation but at bringing the very hope of salvation to the beneficiaries of Catholic preaching.

Those in whom God has implanted a sincere desire and prayer for the means of salvation will receive them: but they will receive them from the Church itself. Hence it is the duty of all those who have been favored by God with membership in the Church to do whatever is in their power to forward the apostolic work of Christ. Such is the teaching of the *Singulari quadam*.

For the rest, as the cause of charity demands, let us pour out continual prayers to God that all nations everywhere may be converted to Christ. And let us do all in our power to bring about the common salvation of men, for the hand of the Lord is not shortened and the gifts of heavenly grace will never be lacking to those who sincerely wish and pray to be comforted in this light. Truths of this kind must be most deeply implanted in the minds of the faithful so that they may not be corrupted by the false doctrines which tend to encourage the indifference of religion which we see slowly being spread abroad and strengthened to the ruin of souls.<sup>17</sup>

Any doctrine which, even under the pretense of explaining the axiom "*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*," actually presents the Catholic Church as an agency not really requisite for salvation is rightly designated by the *Singulari quadam* as fostering or inculcating

<sup>17</sup> DB, 1648.

religious indifferentism. For it is by no means characteristic of this indifferentism to say that one religion is as good as another. What is essential to it is the mistaken notion that man can achieve his ultimate end outside of and apart from the true Church of Jesus Christ.

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FIFTY YEARS AGO

In the March, 1898, issue of *The American Ecclesiastical Review*, the leading article, entitled "Gethsemane," is by Dr. Alfred Loisy. It is a commentary on the biblical account of our Lord's agony in the Garden. [There seems to be nothing in the article indicative of a lack of orthodoxy, though biblical experts might perceive a tendency toward the views which later rendered the unfortunate author one of the leaders of Modernism]. . . . Writing under the heading "What shall be his Name?" Fr. William Stang explains the law of the Church requiring a Christian name to be conferred in baptism. He points out, however, that sometimes a name is presented which at first sight may not appear to be that of a saint, though in reality it is a modified form of some saint's name, and adds a list of approved names with varied forms in which they may appear. Thus, Elsie is a form of Adelaide, Brian of Bernard, Pierce of Peter. . . . Against three communications to the contrary, H.J.H. defends his view that children who die without baptism may subsequently, in virtue of prayers offered for them, be given the grace to elicit the requisite acts for admission to eternal happiness. . . . The *Analecta* section contains the apostolic letter of Pope Leo XIII approving the constitutions of the Sisters of St. Joseph in the United States. . . . In the answer to one of the theological questions the view is expressed that baptism can be conferred if one person pours the water while another says the words, as long as the former is acting at the command of the latter. In this event, the writer asserts, the action of the one pouring the water is a mechanical act, directed, not by his own, but by the other's intention. [I doubt if this view would find favor with many theologians]. . . . Professor Prinzivalli writes from Rome of the discovery, in the old palace of Tiberius on the Palatine Hill, of a mural engraving of our Lord on the cross, with the name "Chrestus" written over his head. The Professor believes that the engraving was the work of a pagan soldier who had served in Jerusalem and who may have been present at the Crucifixion.

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## Answers to Questions

### INTERRUPTION OF THE DIVINE OFFICE

*Question:* One evening lately I had anticipated two Nocturns of the following day's Office, but circumstances rendered it impossible for me to say any more that night. In view of the teaching of moralists that only a three hours' interval is permitted between Nocturns, was I obliged to recite these two Nocturns again the following day?

*Answer:* The three hours' interval which moralists say is permissible between Nocturns refers to the merely *lawful*, not the *valid* fulfilment of the obligation of the Office. Furthermore, this ruling does not bind *sub gravi*—in other words, if a priest, without any reasonable cause separated the Nocturns by more than three hours, he would commit a venial, not a mortal sin. And, even in this event, he would not be bound to recite again the Nocturn or Nocturns already recited. For, once a portion of the Office has been duly recited within the time permitted for the fulfillment of this obligation, there is no obligation to repeat it, however long a period may elapse before the breviary is again taken up.

Furthermore, if the priest has a sufficient reason for stopping after the second Nocturn and leaving the third until the following day, he is guilty of no sin whatsoever. The sufficient reason need not be a grave reason—it may be any utility to oneself or to some one else. Thus, a sufficient reason to interrupt the Office after the second Nocturn until the next day would be present if the priest were summoned to some task of the sacred ministry, and felt somewhat fatigued on his return, if a brother priest dropped in and he wished to show him due hospitality, if he were unexpectedly asked to prepare a special sermon for the following day, etc. From this it will be evident that the questioner not only was not bound to recite the first two Nocturns again, but that he was guilty of no fault at all in deferring the recitation of the third Nocturn until the following day, since it was impossible for him to say any more that night. (Cf. Damen, *Theologia moralis* [Rome, 1944], I, n. 1123.)



## THE THEOLOGICAL PROOF FOR THE NECESSITY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

### PART II

In his encyclical *Quanto conficiamur moerore*, dated Aug. 10, 1863, Pope Pius IX brought out one aspect of the Church's necessity which had not been stressed in the other pontifical documents to which we have referred. The other pronouncements were formulated in such a way as to show that the theological axiom "*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*" could not be explained by saying that the Church was merely the ordinary means of salvation, or that it was necessary only with the necessity of precept, or that some nebulous membership in or appurtenance to the "soul of the Church" was sufficient for salvation, or that it meant simply that the divine gifts in line with salvation belonged to and with the visible Church itself. The *Quanto conficiamur moerore* made it clear that the axiom could not be interpreted to mean that salvation is restricted to actual members of the Catholic Church. Furthermore it set forth authoritatively the truth that the desire to enter the Church, apart from which salvation is not achieved, need not be the explicit desire of the actual catechumen.

In taking up the teaching on the necessity of the Church, the *Quanto conficiamur moerore* begins with a perfectly clear and uncompromising condemnation of indifferentism, reminiscent of that which Pope Gregory XVI had written into his *Mirari vos arbitramur* more than thirty years before.<sup>1</sup> Like his predecessor, Pope Pius IX spoke out strongly against the error of indifferentism, the error which held that those who live by false teachings and are strangers to the true faith and to Catholic unity can attain to eternal life. The salvation which is not to be found outside the Catholic Church is presented here in the *Quanto conficiamur moerore* as the obtaining of this *vita aeterna*.

And here I must mention and reprove a most serious error into which some Catholics have fallen, imagining that men living in errors and

<sup>1</sup> The *Mirari vos arbitramur* condemned the teachings of Lamennais and others in the periodical *L'Avenir*. This encyclical's condemnation of indifferentism is found in Denzinger-Bannwart's *Enchiridion symbolorum* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1937), n. 1613. This work will be cited in the article as *DB*.

apart (*alienos*) from the true faith and from the Catholic unity can attain to eternal life. This, of course, is completely opposed to Catholic doctrine.<sup>2</sup>

The sentence which follows upon this passage in the encyclical is long and extremely complicated. It cannot be understood except in terms of the traditional theology of the Church.

It is known to us and to you that those who labor in invincible ignorance of our most holy religion, and who, carefully observing the natural law and its precepts which God has inscribed in the hearts of all, and being ready to obey God, live an honest and upright life can, through the working of the divine light and grace, attain eternal life, since God, who clearly sees, inspects, and knows the minds, the intentions, the thoughts and the habits of all, will, by reason of His supreme goodness and kindness, never allow anyone who has not the guilt of wilful sin to be punished by eternal sufferings.<sup>3</sup>

Now we would tragically misconstrue the meaning of this sentence if we were to interpret it as a kind of weakening of or an exception to the Catholic dogma that the Church itself is necessary for salvation. As a matter of fact, all that Pope Pius IX did in this sentence was to bring forward certain pertinent theological truths which had always been taught in the Catholic schools and which must be considered if we are to understand the teaching about the necessity of the Church. In so doing the great Pontiff brought out the fact that the Catholic teaching on this point had never meant and had never even appeared to mean that actual membership in the Church was requisite, with the necessity of means, for eternal salvation.

None of the official ecclesiastical documents which we have cited for their teaching on the necessity of the Church for salvation have mentioned actual *membership* in the Church. It is true of course that the text of these documents to which we have appealed does not in any case directly state or even imply by itself that membership is not necessary. If they were the only sources of information about the Church's teaching on this subject, then there might be some excuse for imagining that the authors of these documents were of the opinion that a man could not be saved without actually being a member of the true and visible Church of Jesus Christ. We really have at our disposition, however, highly important dogmatic sources which show

<sup>2</sup> *DB*, 1677.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

us very clearly that the Pontiffs and the Fathers who issued the documents with which we are concerned were fully aware of the fact that a man can be saved even though he is not a member of the Church although, in truth, no one is saved outside of that Church.

From the very beginnings of Christian history, the Church of God has been wont to reverence and honor as its own and as the glorious recipients of eternal salvation those martyrs who suffered death for the faith, even when these martyrs were not baptized. The Pontiffs and the conciliar Fathers who have given us our official teachings on the necessity of the Church for salvation were all fully aware of the truth St. Augustine set down in his *De civitate Dei*, that the eternal glory of a man who died for Christ before he could receive the baptismal initiation into the Church of God was far greater than that of the person who departs this life immediately after receiving the sacrament of baptism. St. Augustine had written that:

Those who have been baptized when they no longer could escape death, and have departed this life with all their sins forgiven, have not so great merit as those who did not defer death, even though they were able to defer it, because they chose rather to end their life by professing Christ than to come to His baptism by denying Him.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, the men who formulated and expressed those statements about the necessity of the Church for salvation were cognizant of the fact that a person who died while intending to receive baptism, but before he had the opportunity actually to be baptized, could be saved by reason of that very desire. The constant teaching of the Church on this point is summed up by St. Ambrose in his *De obitu Valentiniani*.

But I hear that you are sad because he [Valentinian II] did not receive the sacraments of baptism. Tell me, what else is there in us, apart from will, apart from petition? But for a long time, and even before he came into Italy, it was his desire that he should be initiated [into the Church by baptism]. Recently he made it known that he wished to be baptised by me and it was for this reason, rather than for any other causes, that he decided to summon me. Does he not have, therefore, the grace he has desired? Does he not have what he prayed for? Certainly he has received it because he prayed.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *De civitate Dei*, Lib. XIII, cap. 7. CSEL, XL, ii, 622; MPL, XLI, 381.

<sup>5</sup> *De obitu Valentiniani*, n. 51. MPL, XVI, 1374.

Thus, when the *ecclesia docens* has taught that the true and visible Church of Jesus Christ is so constituted that outside of it "no one at all can be saved," it has obviously understood that men like the martyrs of whom St. Augustine spoke, and like the catechumen about whom St. Ambrose spoke, were, like the actual *fideles* or members of the Church, not "outside" it. When the Popes and the Bishops who pronounced the various dogmatic formulae dealing with the Church's necessity used the expression "outside the Church," they obviously meant to imply that the unbaptized martyr and the catechumen dying in the state of grace were, with reference to this point at least, "inside the Church," together with all the Catholics or *fideles* who are joined to Our Lord by the outward bonds of ecclesiastical unity.

The doctrine that a man can be "inside the Church," in the sense of being in a position to receive eternal salvation, while he is not actually a member of that Church, which is a visible and highly organized society, is obviously something quite difficult to teach accurately and adequately. Yet this doctrine is nothing more or less than the truth manifestly revealed by God to His Church. Many a scholastic theologian has tried his hand at what seemed at the time to be a workable and pedagogically apt formula for explaining the catechumen's status "inside the Church." Alphonsus a Castro and Francis Suarez simply cut the Gordian knot and taught that the catechumen should be considered as a member of the Church.<sup>6</sup> Both appealed to well known papal decisions. In one of these rescripts Pope Innocent II taught that a local Church could and ought to offer its prayers and Masses for a man who had lived and died as a holy presbyter of that Church but who, it developed after his death, had never been validly baptized.<sup>7</sup> In the other, Pope Innocent III dealt with the case of a Jew who wished to enter the Church but who could find no one to baptize him when he was at the point of death. This man had immersed himself in water and had pronounced the baptismal formula for himself. The Holy Father informed the Bishop of Metz that if the man were still living, he

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Alphonsus a Castro, in the *De iusta haereticorum punitione*, Lib. I, cap. 8, in the *Opera Alphonsi a Castro* (Paris, 1571), col. 1096 f. and Suarez, in the *Tractatus de fide*, Disp. IX, sectio 1, in the *Opus de triplici virtute theologica* (Lyons, 1621), p. 160.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. DB, 388.

ought to be properly baptized, since the act he had performed was invalid. If, on the other hand, the man were already dead, the Bishop and his flock could be certain that he had gone to heaven "*propter sacramenti fidem, etsi non propter fidei sacramentum.*"<sup>8</sup>

Despite the manifest brilliance of these theologians, the theory of Alphonsus a Castro and of Francis Suarez never achieved any real success in the field of Catholic theology. The evidence that catechumens were not actually members or parts of the visible Church militant was far too strong. Today, of course, their position is entirely untenable. John Lens and Francis Sylvius, however, essayed another and a less radical simplification.<sup>9</sup> Both of these distinguished writers taught that the baptism of water is only the ordinary means for entrance into the Church militant (quite a different position, it must be remarked, from that which pretends that the Church itself is only the ordinary means of salvation), and held that a catechumen in the state of grace is invisibly integrated into the visible Church prior to his death, if he should die without having the opportunity to receive the sacrament of baptism. There was something fantastic about this explanation, and it never attracted any important number of adherents in the theological world.

What seems to have been the best explanation of all was offered by John Wiggers, like Lens a member of the faculty of sacred theology in the University of Louvain. According to Wiggers:

No one can be saved outside of the Church, that is, without being in it either actually and in reality or by desire and intent (*desiderio et affectu*). For when any person, in the light of the true faith, is converted to God with all his heart and wishes to be incorporated into the Church, in such way that it is not his fault that he is not externally and really incorporated into it, then he can be saved by reason of that desire (*mediante illo voto*). In the same way, under similar circumstances, he can be saved by the intention of baptism. In like manner a

<sup>8</sup> Cf. DB, 413.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Sylvius, in the work entitled *Libri sex de praecipuis fidei nostrae controversiis cum nostris haereticis*, Lib. III, qu. 1, art. 3, in the *Opera Francisci Sylvi* (Antwerp, 1698), V, 238. John Lens, a Louvain theologian, who died in 1593, is the only authority cited by Sylvius in support of his theory. I have not been able to find a copy of Lens' *De una Christi in terris Ecclesia libri sex* (Louvain, 1588).

man could be saved from shipwreck even if he did not actually go aboard another and an undamaged craft so as to be within it. But if he holds on to it with his hands, he will be brought with it to the shore and safety. These desires and wishes are like hands, which people of this sort use to grasp and to hold on to the ship which is the Church, although they never enter it absolutely, really, and in a bodily manner.<sup>10</sup>

Now it is important to note that the encyclical *Quanto conficiamur moerore* not only takes it for granted that a person who is not a member of the Church can be saved, but also teaches that salvation is possible even for one who is (and who presumably remains) in invincible ignorance of this Church. According to this document, the people who observe the precepts of the natural law, and who are prepared to obey God, and who lead an honest and upright life can attain eternal life through the working of the divine light and of the divine grace, even while they remain in invincible ignorance of the true Church of Jesus Christ. Yet this teaching is by no means a novelty in the Catholic doctrine and in the Catholic Church. It is manifestly implied in the teaching of the Council of Trent on justification and the preparation for justification in adults.

After explaining, in the fifth chapter of its *Decretum de justificatione* that the reception of sanctifying grace by an adult who has hitherto been in a state of sin or aversion from God involves the work of grace and our own real co-operation, the Council, in the subsequent chapter, goes on to explain the acts by which adults are disposed to receive the supernatural life from God.

Now they are disposed to justice itself when, aroused and aided by divine grace, receiving faith from hearing, they are freely moved towards God, believing those things to be true which have been divinely revealed and promised, and especially that the sinner has been justified by God through His grace and through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; and when, understanding themselves to be sinners, they, by turning themselves from the fear of divine justice, by which they are beneficially terrified, to consider God's mercy, they are raised up to hope, trusting that God will be kind to them for the sake of Christ. And then they begin to love Him as the font of all justice, and therefore they are moved against sin by a certain hatred and detestation, that is, by the sort of penance which should be performed before

<sup>10</sup> John Wiggers, in his *Commentaria de virtutibus theologis* (Louvain, 1689), p. 109.

baptism. And finally [they are disposed to justice] when they propose to receive baptism, to begin a new life, and to keep the divine commandments.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, according to the Council of Trent, there are six distinct steps which enter into the preparation for the reception of the life of sanctifying grace, or, in other words, for the forgiveness of sin. According to Pope Boniface VIII, in his *Unam sanctam*, the Church is requisite for the forgiveness of sin, or for *justificatio*, in the same way that it is necessary for eternal salvation.<sup>12</sup> Hence, from the consideration of these six factors of the disposition for justification, we can see the kind of knowledge of the Church which is requisite for the reception of grace and for salvation itself.

The six factors are, (1) faith, (2) salutary fear of God's justice, (3) hope, (4) *amor initialis*, (5) penance, and (6) the proposal to receive baptism, to begin a new life, and to keep God's commandments. Obviously the key to the understanding of our problem is faith itself. From the Catholic teaching about what explicit belief a man must have in order to be saved, we can see the perennial Catholic truth that a man may be in a certain measure inside the Church and may be saved without having any explicit knowledge of the Church as such.

Now the faith by which men are saved, the faith which necessarily enters into the preparation for justification on the part of an adult, is proposed by the Council of Trent as *fides ex auditu*. It involves the acceptance of the message actually revealed by God Himself. Thus a mere expression of willingness to believe what God has revealed if He has really given any message to the human race would not constitute the requisite faith. This faith is the actual and unquestioning acceptance of the doctrine which we know as the divine public revelation.

There has always been, however, some question as to the amount of this divine public revelation which a man must believe explicitly in order to be saved, or in order to receive the life of sanctifying grace. It is absolutely certain that there is no possibility of salvation for an adult unless he believes explicitly at least the two truths that God exists and that He rewards those who seek Him. Furthermore it is also certain that this salutary belief must consider God as the Author of the super-

<sup>11</sup> Sessio VI, cap. 6. *DB*, 798.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *DB*, 468.

natural order, that is, as giving His creatures a reward or remuneration far greater than their status as creatures would demand. What has divided the theologians over the centuries has been the question about the need of explicit belief in other propositions of faith for eternal salvation.

As far as the actual documentation of the Church is concerned, it would seem that explicit belief in the redemptive work of Christ is required. In the chapter of the *Decretum de justificatione* from which we have just cited, the Council of Trent speaks of the adult preparing himself for justification as "believing those things to be true which have been divinely revealed and promised, and especially that the sinner has been justified by God through His grace and through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus."<sup>13</sup> It is certainly difficult to interpret this statement as other than an indication that the Council was convinced that there would be no justification apart from explicit belief in these truths.

Nevertheless, there have been divergent teachings on this point in Catholic theological literature. Thus Billuart teaches that since the gospel has been sufficiently promulgated, explicit belief in both the Trinity and the Incarnation must be considered as necessary for all, with the necessity of means, for eternal salvation. Billuart regards the time when the gospel of Christ could be said to have been sufficiently promulgated as something about which we have no certain information. He hazards the opinion, however, that the gospel could be said to have been sufficiently promulgated about forty years after Our Lord's ascension into heaven.<sup>14</sup>

Melchior Cano offers an interesting variation of this opinion. He holds that explicit faith in Christ is necessary for eternal and final salvation, while an implicit faith suffices for the remission of sins and thus for justification.<sup>15</sup> Suarez and the Salmanticenses, were of the opinion that, since the promulgation of the gospel, an explicit faith in Christ is *per se* a necessary means for salvation, but that, as a matter of fact, some people are saved apart from this means *per accidens*. This opinion, for all practical purposes,

<sup>13</sup> Sessio VI, cap. 6. *DB*, 798.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Billuart's *Tractatus de fide*, Dissertatio III, art. 2, in the *Cursus theologiae* (Paris: Lecoffre, 1904), V, 29 f.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Cano's *Relectio de sacramentis in genere*, Pars II, conclusio 3, in the *Melchioris Cani opera theologica* (Rome: Filiziani, 1900), III, 230 ff.

is equivalent to the teaching of Blasio Beraza in our own times. Beraza holds that explicit faith in Our Lord as a mediator is not absolutely requisite for salvation even in New Testament times.<sup>16</sup>

These are highly interesting opinions, and they serve to throw light on the problem of the Church's necessity for salvation in so far as they show that no theologian demands as absolutely requisite for eternal salvation any explicit belief in the Catholic Church itself. Hence it is obvious that the very *schola theologorum* which has insisted most strongly upon the validity of the doctrine that the Church is requisite for salvation never intended to teach and cannot legitimately be interpreted as teaching that a man had to be an actual member of the Church, or, absolutely speaking, even had to possess explicit knowledge of the Church as God's kingdom on earth in order to attain eternal salvation. The men who expounded the Church's teaching about its own necessity have always explained that teaching against the background of a theology which states that a man can be saved by a desire of the Church even when that desire was merely implicit.

Thus, even from this point of view, it would be absurd to qualify the teaching of the *Quanto conficiamur moerore*, telling of the possibility of salvation for a man who lives in invincible ignorance of the Church, as in any way an attenuation or a partial abandonment of the dogma on the Church's real and absolute necessity for salvation. The statement we have seen was nothing more or less than an official pronouncement of a doctrine which had long been taught as an integral part of the same science of sacred theology in which the teaching on the Church's necessity is expounded and developed. It forms one of the many truths which must be taken into consideration when we study and teach that no one can be saved outside of the Catholic Church.

There is, however, still another aspect to this statement in the *Quanto conficiamur moerore* to which the theologian must advert if he is to formulate the teaching on the necessity of the Church accurately and adequately. The encyclical of Pope Pius IX speaks of the possibility of salvation for those who *sedulously* (the Latin "*sedulo*" conveys the idea of continued action) obey the natural law and who live an honest life. It speaks of this possi-

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Beraza's *Tractatus de virtutibus infusis* (Bilbao: El Mensajero del Corazón de Jesús, 1929), pp. 448 ff.

bility as available to such people "through the working of the divine light and grace."

Now a person "sedulously" observing the natural law is manifestly one who is living for a long time without committing a mortal sin. It is, however, the common teaching of Catholic theology that, in the status of fallen nature, no one can remain for any considerable time without committing mortal sin apart from the aid of supernatural grace.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, it is most probable that the grace, apart from which a man will not actually observe all the natural precepts taken collectively over any considerable period of time, is sanctifying grace itself.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, far from implying that a man can merit eternal salvation by purely natural acts, performed outside of the Catholic Church, the encyclical letter of Pope Pius IX really teaches that the man who observes all the natural law can attain eternal salvation through that life of grace which he already possesses. And, if he has the life of grace, he has already gone through that process by which he was disposed to or prepared for justification, which, according to the Council of Trent is "not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renovation of the inward man through the voluntary reception of grace and the gifts, whence man is changed from an unjust person into a just person and from an enemy into a friend, in order that he may be an heir according to the hope of life eternal."<sup>19</sup>

In other words, the man who is sedulously observing the natural law in such a way as to avoid mortal sin for a considerable period of time is one who has already made an explicit act of supernatural faith, in which the belief in the Church was at least implicitly contained. With this faith, and with the real hope in God which followed upon it, he made his act of love for God, the act of the theological virtue of charity, inseparable from the life of sanctifying grace in adults. In this act of charity, the man who sedulously observes the natural law formulates the real intention to do whatever God has commanded, and to associate himself with God, even in this life. The association or fellowship with

<sup>17</sup> Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologica*, Ia-IIae, qu. 109, art. 8.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. the Salmanticenses, *Tractatus de gratia Dei*, Disputatio II, dubium, 6, in their *Cursus theologicus* (Paris and Brussels, 1878), IX, 249 ff, and Billot, *De gratia Christi* (Rome: The Gregorian University, 1928), pp. 70 ff.

<sup>19</sup> Sessio VI, cap. 7. DB, 799.

God in this world demanded by Christ as a necessary means to salvation is the reality or communion which we know as the visible Catholic Church. Hence, by and in his act of theological charity, the man who has avoided mortal sin for a long time has already desired to enter the Catholic Church, even though he is not explicitly aware of the actual existence or status of that Church.

This, then, is one aspect of the meaning of the dogma on the Church's necessity for eternal salvation. Even a person who is invincibly ignorant of the true Church can, through an act of explicit faith in God as the head of the supernatural order, and through an act of charity for God known in this supernatural way, be in the state of sanctifying grace and friendship for God which is the beginning of eternal life in this world. Such a person, through his supernatural faith and charity, implicitly but sincerely wills to be within the community of fellowship with God and Christ. This community of fellowship, in the merciful designs of God's providence, is the visible Catholic Church, the visible Church of the Roman communion.

Such is the lesson brought home in the subsequent sentence of the *Quanto conficiamur moerore*.

But it is a perfectly well known Catholic dogma that no one can be saved outside of the Catholic Church, and that those who are contumacious against the authority of that same Church, and who are pertinaciously divided from the unity of that Church and from Peter's successor, the Roman Pontiff, to whom the custody of the vineyard has been committed by the Savior, cannot obtain eternal salvation.<sup>20</sup>

In this lesson two distinct truths are enuntiated. In the first place the encyclical assures us absolutely that no one can be saved outside the Church. The second tells us that no one of those who remain separated from the Church through their own fault are in a position to attain eternal life as long as they remain in that status. It is tremendously important, however, to realize that the first statement is in no way restricted to the extent of the second. The first informs us absolutely that no one can be saved outside the Church. The second tells us that those who pertinaciously remain separated from the unity and from the leadership of the Church in this world are most certainly in the

<sup>20</sup> DB, 1677.

category of those "outside the Church," and have placed themselves in a position such that, while they remain in this status, they cannot attain eternal life. Thus it would be an obvious misinterpretation of the encyclical's teaching to imagine that it meant to say that no person could be judged "outside the Church" except those who pertinaciously and thus voluntarily refuse to enter its communion even after they are aware of the validity of its claims. Actually any human being who is not really a member of the Church and who has not at least an implicit real desire to dwell within it is "outside the Church," and is thus one of those in whose favor the missionary charity of Catholics must be exercised.

We must not lose sight of this fact. Separation from the Church always is *objectively* an evil, even in the case where the person in this status is not blameworthy in the sight of God precisely for being "outside the Church." The man who is "outside the Church," in the sense in which this expression is employed in the dogmatic formulae about the Church's necessity for salvation, is definitely turned away from God, his ultimate end, by original sin, or by mortal sin, or by both. No one, however, is guilty in the sight of God precisely by reason of his separation from the Church except those who remain outside of it pertinaciously, knowing that God wills that they should enter it.

Hence it would be quite erroneous to interpret the teaching of the *Quanto conficiamur moerore* to mean that all of those who are outside the Church and thus in need of Catholic missionary charity have sinned against God in not coming in to the Church. It is quite possible to be "outside the Church," without, to use Newman's old phrase, "having sinned against the light."

Actually, according to the divine constitution of the Church itself, the responsibility for bringing those outside the fold into the company of Christ rests, not upon the outsiders, but upon the Church itself. Broadly speaking, the Church is not simply a goal towards which the people of the world are supposed to run of their own accord. It is the living society of the disciples, commissioned and commanded to bring itself and its message to the children of men. If contact is not made with those outside the fold, the fault lies, not with these people, but with the Catholics who have been recreant to their missionary vocation.

This, after all, is the final conclusion of the *Quanto conficiamur moerore*.

God forbid that the children of the Catholic Church should ever in any way be the enemies of those who are in no way joined to us in the same bonds of faith and of charity. But let them [the Catholics] rather strive always to attend these people when they [the non-Catholics] are poor or sick or afflicted with any other ills, and help them by all the services of Christian charity. Primarily, let them strive to take them out of the darkness of error in which they unfortunately live and bring them back to Catholic truth and to the loving Mother Church which never ceases to hold out its maternal hands to them affectionately and to call them back to its embrace in order that, founded and strengthened in faith, hope, and charity, and bringing forth fruit in every good work, they may attain eternal salvation.<sup>21</sup>

In the final analysis, the teaching on the necessity of the Catholic Church thus appears as the dominant motive force in the charity of Catholic missionary endeavor. The Church itself, the society or community within which alone in this world the fellowship of God and Christ is to be found, is absolutely necessary for salvation with the necessity of means. According to the divine revelation, infallibly proposed in the dogma of the Church, both the members of this society and those who sincerely, even though only implicitly, desire to live within it, are "inside the Church" in such a way as to be able to live the life of sanctifying grace which is the beginning of eternal salvation.

All of those who are not members of the Church, however, whether they desire to enter it or not, stand in real need of this society. If they long to be in God's household on this earth, they actually will to live as members of this visible society. If they do not, and consequently they are unfortunately averted from God and deprived of the supernatural life Christ died to procure for them, they ought to have the benefit of the Church, through which they may be brought to life everlasting.

The fact of the matter is, as Pope Pius IX pointed out so effectively, that the responsibility for bringing this needed benefit to the persons for whom Christ died on the Cross devolves directly upon the members of the Catholic Church. Primarily, of course, it is the duty of the Catholic hierarchy, of the apostolic college as it now exists in the company of Christ. We should not forget, in

<sup>21</sup> DB, 1678.

this instance, the terrifying words of St. John Chrysostom with reference to the responsibility of the individual Catholic bishop.

To pass over everything else: if one soul depart unbaptized, does not this subvert all his own prospect of salvation? The loss of one soul carries with it a penalty which no language can represent. For if the salvation of that soul was of such value that the Son of God became man and suffered so much, think how terrible a punishment the losing of it must bring.<sup>22</sup>

In this passage St. John Chrysostom speaks directly of the Bishops of the Catholic Church. The primary responsibility for the work of bringing the means of salvation to those souls for whom Our Lord died devolves upon them. They constitute the apostolic college, the band of men commissioned by Our Lord to carry His message and His Church to those for whom He offered the sacrifice of Calvary. Hence it is primarily their business and their obligation, as a group gathered under the presidency of Peter, to expend every effort and to utilize every resource at their command to bring the means of salvation to those who are not members of the true Church.

We must not forget, however, that the obligation to work effectively and sincerely to bring non-Catholics into the Church is in no way limited to the apostolic college. It is true that this obligation devolves upon them primarily. Yet it is an obligation to a work in which the Catholic people themselves are bound to co-operate. All the doctrine of Catholic Action constitutes a warning to the people of the Church that they are expected to aid their hierarchy in the apostolic work and that they are recalcitrant to their Christian vocation if they fail to enter into this activity.

Thus, in the last analysis, the teaching on the necessity of the Catholic Church for salvation does not seek to blame non-Catholics as a group for failing to enter the Church. It is inclined, on the other hand, to militate against what might be a certain complacency on the part of the Catholics themselves. It insists upon the obligation which God has laid upon the members of His Church to do all in their power to bring the necessary means of salvation to the souls for whom Our Lord died. Its practical effect must be, not to irritate and insult those who are unfortu-

<sup>22</sup> In *Actus Apostolorum homilia tertia*, n. 4. MPG, LX, 40.

nate enough to be non-members of Our Lord's Church, but to stimulate the members of that Church to expend every effort to bring the fellowship of Christ in God's kingdom on earth to people who need it so badly, and who are so unfavorably placed with reference to eternal salvation by the fact that they are not members of the Church.

This, the essential and manifestly charitable practical attitude of the Catholic Church towards those who are not its members, is brought out most effectively in the present Holy Father's encyclical, the *Mystici Corporis*.

Most affectionately we invite all of them individually that, yielding of their own accord and freely to the inner impulses of divine grace, they should take care to remove themselves from that status in which they cannot be secure about their own eternal salvation, seeing that even though they may be disposed towards the Mystical Body of the Redeemer by a certain kind of desire and longing (*desiderio ac voto*) which they do not understand, they still lack so many and such great heavenly favors and helps which they may enjoy only in the Catholic Church. May they all therefore enter the Catholic unity and, joined with us in the one structure of the Body of Jesus Christ, may they come together unto the Head in the society of the most glorious love. With never ceasing prayers to the Spirit of love and truth, with hands upraised and outstretched, we await their coming, not to the house of a stranger, but to the house which is their own and their Father's.<sup>22</sup>

It is important for us to realize that, when we speak of the theological proof for the proposition that the Catholic Church is necessary for eternal salvation with the necessity of means, the proposition must be understood as expressing all of this truth brought out in the various official pronouncements of the *ecclesia docens*. The Church as a society, as a thing, is presented to us in the divine public revelation as a necessary means for salvation. Those who are fortunate enough to have the grace of membership in this Church have satisfied this one of the conditions for salvation in an unmistakable way. Non-members of the Church may possibly be "inside the Church" as the community of fellowship with God by reason of a real, though perhaps only an implicit, desire to live within it. Their status, however, is distinctly unfavorable and unfortunate from the spiritual point of view. Thus

<sup>22</sup> *AAS*, XXXV, 7 (July, 1943), 243.

it is the business of the Church, which as a society is animated and motivated by the charity of Christ Himself, to bring this means of salvation certainly and effectively to all of those for whom Our Lord offered the sacrifice of His life.

The theological proof of this teaching must be based upon the consideration of the revealed teaching about salvation, and on the concept of the Church itself as God's kingdom on earth.

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#### THE CHURCH'S DIVINE MANDATE

The universal divine mandate with which the Church of Jesus Christ has been by Jesus Christ Himself incommunicably and absolutely commissioned concerns itself with eternity, with heaven and the supernatural—with that order of things which, on one side, it is of the strictest obligation for every rational creature to consider and to which, on the other side, it is necessary by the very nature of things to coordinate the remainder.

The Church of Jesus Christ is certainly acting within the limits of its mandate, not only when it puts into souls the first indispensable beginnings and elements of supernatural life, but also when it assists and encourages the growth of this supernatural life according to the opportunities and the capacities of persons and in the ways and by the means which, in the Church's judgment seem suitable also, with the purpose of preparing capable and efficient collaborators with the apostolic Hierarchy and clergy. It is Jesus Christ Himself who made the solemn declaration that He came precisely that souls might have not only some beginning or some element of supernatural life, but that they might have it in greater abundance. "I am come that they may have life, and have it more abundantly."

—Pope Pius XI, in his encyclical *Non abbiamo bisogno*, issued June 29, 1931.



would do. He started looking over the books on his shelves. He'd find something deep, something that would impress the people, yes, and the priests who would be there, too. He'd show them, most of them were youngsters anyway, that the old fellows had fire in them yet, and could beat these young fellows any day, when it came to getting up and giving a good sermon.

Now, what would be a good book to start from? Title after title he passed over, saying to himself that he had seen it in the library of some one of the priests of the district. He wouldn't use one that they were familiar with, for then the impression would be lost. He'd have to find one they didn't know about. Finally, his gaze rested on one which he had had ever since he had left the seminary. He had never seen it in any other rectory that he had visited. This was it, and from the title it should have some good stuff for a Forty Hours sermon. *Le Quatrième Évangile*, that was it, the Fourth Gospel, where St. John tells about the Last Supper. Of course, his French was somewhat rusty these days, but with the aid of a dictionary he should be able to get some ideas. Now, if those ideas were just deep enough, he had what he was after. Thumbing hurriedly through the book, he decided that it was deep, all right, and laid it on his desk so that he would have it close to hand when he sat down to prepare the sermon.

It had been a long time since he had tried to preach a sermon on the Scriptures. Maybe he should give his people some of that stuff. It might do them good, and it would certainly be different from what he had been giving them in the past. Maybe a change was what they were waiting for. If that was it, then that was what they would get. He'd see what kind of an impression the sermon made on the people over in Wheeler. If they were interested he'd try it at home, too. Give them some good, solid, meaty stuff, that was the idea.

With a fire and enthusiasm which he had not know in years when it came to preparing a sermon, Fr. Wall seated himself at his desk and started writing furiously as he noted sections of the book which he intended to take up.

(To be continued)

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## THE THEOLOGICAL PROOF FOR THE NECESSITY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

### PART III

The theological proof for the necessity of the Catholic Church is a strict demonstration of the fact that what the Church actually teaches on this subject in its official documents is manifestly contained in the sources of divine revelation. In its Pontifical and conciliar pronouncements, the *ecclesia docens* teaches as a part of God's own message the truth that the Church is necessary for salvation, in the very real sense that outside of it no one at all can be saved. Furthermore, from these same ecclesiastical pronouncements, we learn that a person may be said to be "outside" the Church when he has neither membership in this visible society nor any intention of entering it. Finally, the doctrinal utterances of the *ecclesia docens* inform us that even an implicit desire to enter the Church may be effective unto salvation in a person who is invincibly ignorant of the one true fold of Jesus Christ, although they also point to the highly important fact that the spiritual position of any person who is not a member of the Catholic Church is disadvantageous to himself and objectively contrary to God's will.

This complex truth, set in its proper background of the Catholic dogma about the Church of Christ, and seen as one of the basic theses in the Catholic theology of the missions, stands out in the deposit of divine public revelation. The theological proof is the process whereby we indicate the way in which this thesis is contained in Scripture and in divine apostolic tradition, the two sources of divine public revelation. Furthermore, precisely because it manifests the thesis or conclusion in its place in the deposit of faith, the theological proof offers an invaluable understanding of this truth. When the Vatican Council taught that reason, enlightened by faith, could gain a most fruitful understanding of the divinely revealed mysteries by way of analogy of these mysteries with the natural objects of human intelligence and through the connection of the mysteries among themselves and with the last end of man, it was referring to the theological demonstration.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Session III, chapter 4. Cf. Denzinger, *Enchiridion symbolorum* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1937), n. 1796.

What the Vatican Council had to say on this subject is perfectly exemplified in the theological proof of the thesis on the Church's necessity for salvation. The analogy between the mystery and the natural objects of human intelligence has been used to produce the various technical terms that enter into the thesis and its explanation. The words appearing in a modern presentation of this thesis by authors like Zapelena and Parente did not occur in the scriptural or in the earliest patristic enunciation of the same doctrine. Terms like "the necessity of means" and "visible society," to mention only two of them, were introduced into this section of theology because the theologians as a group, and ultimately the *ecclesia docens* itself, found that the meanings these expressions conveyed in the world of nature could be of service in the formation of an absolutely correct and unequivocal statement about the mystery of God's kingdom on earth.

The process of analogy with things of the natural order serves the science of sacred theology chiefly in the development of an acceptable terminology. The theological demonstration as such, however, is effected primarily through the observation of the connection and interrelation of the revealed mysteries among themselves. Such is manifestly the case in the proof of the Church's necessity for eternal salvation, as that proof is elaborated by the foremost theologians of our age. In their writings they cite the connection of the Church with Our Lord, with the true and necessary worship of God, and with the sacrament of baptism as factors in the theological evidence that the teaching on the Church's real necessity for salvation is contained in the deposit of faith delivered to the Church by the apostles as the divine message of Christ.

Taken as a group, modern theologians have presented a valid and effective proof of the Church's necessity. They have used these arguments from the necessity of union with Our Lord, of the true religion, and of Christian baptism, along with many other factors, to produce a demonstration of the fact that men really need the visible Catholic Church in order to attain the life of heaven. Unfortunately, however, they have not taken what would appear to be anything like sufficient cognizance of one "connection" which, of itself, is capable of giving that proof an apodeictic perfection and an enlightening power far beyond what that proof contains in its present state of development. They have not integrated the basic scrip-

tural theology of salvation itself into their demonstration, and thereby they have overlooked what can and should be a decisively effective factor in this proof. Scripture itself shows salvation as essentially involving a social concept. It is the divine gift by which a man is transferred, by the beneficent power of God, from one social entity to another.

The primary purpose of this series of articles is to show how the proof of the Church's necessity for salvation attains a genuinely new perfection when it includes an analysis of the New Testament teaching about that salvation which comes to men through the sacrificial death of Our Lord Jesus Christ. The greatest benefit which this hitherto somewhat neglected element in the theological proof of the Church's necessity brings to sacred doctrine is a manifestation of the fact that the Catholic Church is something essential to and inhering in the process of salvation itself. As it stands in too many of the modern manuals of sacred theology, the proof of the Church's necessity is constructed in such a way as to leave room for the suspicion that the visible society of Our Lord's disciples is not essentially and connaturally a factor in the process of salvation at all, but that it enters this process solely by reason of a positive divine ordinance. The man who is deceived into adopting this view as an opinion has lost sight of one of the most important truths in all the deposit of sacred teaching. Actually the Catholic Church, by reason of its nature as God's kingdom on earth, enters into the very concept of salvation, in such a way that the salvation described in the divine public revelation cannot be understood at all adequately except in terms of this visible society.

In order to understand how an exposition of the New Testament theology of salvation can perfect the demonstration of the Church's necessity, we must know something about the status of this proof in modern writings. In their treatment of this particular proof, the more recent theologians exhibit an amazing diversity of presentation. Indeed, those individuals who habitually deplore what they believe to be drab uniformity of modern theological writing would be hard pressed to explain or justify their attitude if they took the trouble to examine even a few twentieth-century presentations of this proof.

Much of this diversity can be attributed to the fact that some of the authors have tried to show that the Church itself is only neces-

sary as the ordinary means of salvation or by reason of a divine precept. Others have confused the issue by intruding into their proofs certain elements which go to show that appurtenance to or membership in the "soul of the Church" must be considered as requisite for salvation. Such tentatives have had the inevitable effect of beclouding the issue, and of obscuring the meaning of the documents which they must adduce. The ecclesiastical documents are such as to support only the basic contention, that the visible Catholic Church, the kingdom of God on earth, is actually necessary for all men.

Despite this diversity of treatment, however, the modern theologians as a group have worked very effectively to demonstrate their thesis. Most of them tend to list separately the pertinent documents of the *ecclesia docens*, the texts from Holy Scripture, passages from the Fathers, and a certain number of *rationes theologicae*. Billot and Herrmann<sup>2</sup> have been especially successful in utilizing the biblical texts in the elaboration of a genuine theological proof. They have thus integrated their demonstration much more effectively than have some of their confreres.

Most of the texts employed in the "proof from Scripture" by modern theologians deal directly with the necessity of union with Our Lord or with the Church itself. The strictly ecclesiological texts are again divided into two classes, those which deal with the commission and the power of the Church, and those which treat of the evil of voluntary separation from it.

The texts that refer to the necessity of union with Our Lord for the attainment of salvation are employed as the prerequisite for a demonstration of the fact that the Catholic Church, as the Mystical Body of Christ, is itself necessary. Three texts are used quite frequently for this purpose. The first is the passage in St. John's Gospel containing Our Lord's statement: "I am the door. By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved. . . ." <sup>3</sup> The second, also from the fourth Gospel, records Our Lord's words to St. Thomas the Apostle: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No man cometh

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Billot, *Tractatus de ecclesia Christi* (Rome: Gregorian University, 1927), I, 117 ff; Herrmann, *Institutiones theologicae dogmaticae* (Paris: Vitte, 1937), I, 373 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *John*, 10: 9.

to the Father but by me." <sup>4</sup> The third is a doctrine taught by St. Peter in his discourse to the Sanhedrin after he and St. John had been taken into custody because of the miraculous cure of the lame man in the temple. It is the statement that "Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved." <sup>5</sup>

The principal texts pertinent to the divine commission of the Church are found in the final chapters of the Gospels according to St. Matthew and St. Mark. The first of these contains the words Our Lord spoke to the eleven disciples just before His ascension.

. . . All power is given to me in heaven and in earth.

Going therefore, teach ye all nations: baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world. <sup>6</sup>

The citation from the second Gospel is even more directly and perfectly demonstrative.

And he said to them: Go ye into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature.

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be condemned. <sup>7</sup>

The theologians also point to the texts in which the evangelists speak of the instructions Our Lord gave to the twelve apostles and to the seventy-two disciples when they were being sent to preach the kingdom of God in His name. The first of these passages is found in St. Matthew's Gospel.

And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words: going forth out of that house or city shake off the dust from your feet.

Amen I say to you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment than for that city. <sup>8</sup>

The first Gospel also records that Our Lord's discourse included the statement: "He that receiveth you receiveth me: and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me." <sup>9</sup> St. Luke's account of the sending of the seventy-two contains a negative version of this

<sup>4</sup> *John*, 14: 6.

<sup>5</sup> *Acts*, 4: 12.

<sup>6</sup> *Matt.* 28: 18-20.

<sup>7</sup> *Mark*, 16: 15-16.

<sup>8</sup> *Matt.* 10: 14-15.

<sup>9</sup> *Matt.* 10: 40.

same doctrine. "He that heareth you, heareth me: and he that despiseth you, despiseth me. And he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me."<sup>10</sup> Both of these texts are widely used in the proof from scripture for the thesis that the Catholic Church is necessary for eternal salvation.

Taken simply by themselves, these last two texts serve primarily and directly to prove only that the Church is necessary with the necessity of precept. They show that a man or a community sins against God in rejecting the message which Our Lord preached and which the apostles and their fellow-workers proposed in His name. The passage from the last chapter in St. Mark's Gospel has a far greater probative force even when taken individually. It indicates that men can achieve salvation through the doctrinal mission of the Church as well as that they will be condemned if they reject its teachings. The parallel text from St. Matthew implicitly teaches the necessity of the Church when it states His promise to be with the Church while it fulfils the mission He has entrusted to it.

Another group of texts employed in the scholastic presentation of our proof deals directly with the evil of leaving the Church. Several of the theologians quote from St. Matthew's Gospel the warning "And if he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican."<sup>11</sup> Others point to the words of St. Paul's epistle to Titus:

A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition, avoid: Knowing that he that is such an one is subverted and sinneth, being condemned by his own judgment.<sup>12</sup>

The theologians also point to another text which deals with this same truth, and which has a more effective probative value for their thesis than the others. It is found in the Second Epistle of St. John.

Whosoever revolteth and continueth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God. He that continueth in the doctrine, the same hath both the Father and the Son.

If any man come to you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into the house nor say to him: God speed you.

For he that saith unto him: God speed you, communicateth with his wicked works.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Luke, 10: 16.

<sup>11</sup> Matt. 18: 17.

<sup>12</sup> Titus, 3: 10-11.

<sup>13</sup> II John, 9-11.

The immediate implication of these texts is the lesson that it is an evil thing to abandon the Church and the faith of Jesus Christ. The last citation also brings out the truth that the continuation in the doctrine as one of the faithful, as a member of the society of the disciples, carries with it fellowship with God. It does not, by itself, prove that there is no other way to gain this fellowship with God, and hence, taken individually, this final series of texts does not constitute an apodeictic proof of the necessity of the Catholic Church for salvation.

Far more important than the proof from scripture alone is the *ratio theologica* properly so-called, which most of the writers unfortunately separate from the scriptural and patristic evidence in favor of their thesis. In by far the greater number of modern theological works, the *ratio theologica* is composed of several elements, in such a way that the thesis is established, not by any one integrated proof, but by a series of arguments. In almost every case the cumulative effect of these various demonstrations is amply sufficient, although various individual elements of the argument in a few theological works are not completely satisfactory.

In modern manuals one of the most popular individual arguments in the strictly theological proof of the Church's necessity for salvation is the one based upon the necessity of baptism. The numerous modern authors who employ this argument reason that the Church is manifestly necessary for salvation because it is so intimately connected with baptism, which is itself requisite for the attainment of eternal blessedness. The sacrament which God has instituted as the means for obtaining the beginning of the life of grace and the remission of original sin is the rite of initiation into the society of Our Lord's disciples.

Another tremendously popular theological argument for the Church's necessity is that based upon the necessity of that faith which the Church alone preaches infallibly and authoritatively. It follows that because acceptance of the divine message preached by Our Lord is incumbent upon men if they are to obtain salvation, that men stand in obvious need of the society which divine revelation indicates as the one divinely commissioned and inerrant guardian and teacher of that revelation. Akin to the demonstrations based upon the necessity of baptism and that of faith are those demonstrations which manifest the Church's necessity in terms of man's need

for the means of salvation and for the ecclesiastical ministry, to be found properly only within the Catholic society. Several of the theologians make special mention of the power of the keys, which obviously belongs to the true Church alone.

Each one of these demonstrations taken individually is valid as a proof that the Catholic Church is really necessary for salvation with the necessity of means. Taken together, their force is unquestioned. Unfortunately, however, proofs of this sort have a tendency to make the Church look like something which is in itself an extrinsic factor in the economy of salvation, and as necessary for eternal life only by reason of a positive enactment by God. To a lesser extent this shortcoming is shared by the proof from the necessity for a true religion, or an authorized worship of God, which is to be found only in the Church of His Son.

Another class of proofs centers around the concept of the Church as the institution so intimately united with Our Lord that it is called His Mystical Body. The theologians reason correctly that, because union with Our Lord is necessary for the attainment of those blessings which come to us only through Him, the Church itself must be considered as manifestly necessary in terms of its identity as the fellowship of Christ. The Church is not merely a society within which a man can find association with the Saviour. Objectively it is the company of Christ, the supernatural family or household of God within which He dwells. Hence the proof based upon this characteristic manifests the Church, not as a merely acceptable society, but as a fellowship within which a man must live in order to achieve the Beatific Vision.

Most of the modern theologians who employ this argument make no effort to restrict themselves to any one of the many designations of the Church. They speak of this society, not only as the Mystical Body of Christ, but also as the kingdom of God on earth, as the New Israel, and particularly as the Church of the promises. They realize that the efficacy of their proof depends entirely upon their success in bringing out the truth that the deposit of divine revelation represents the Catholic Church precisely as the recipient of the various and ineffably glorious promises which Our Lord made to the company of His followers. They point to the fact that when Our Lord said "I am with you all days," He was promising to be present in the visible Catholic Church, and that when He declared that the

gates of hell would not prevail against His Church, He was speaking of a prerogative of this same visible society.

Several modern theologians integrate into their proof the doctrine that man stands in real need of the ecclesiastical ministry. This ministry exists only in the Catholic Church. In short, they teach that the visible Catholic Church and its divinely instituted resources are requisite for union with Our Lord, apart from whom there is no possibility of eternal salvation.

In this tremendously complicated process of proof, modern theology presents irrefutable evidence that the salvation which Our Lord merited for men by His sacrificial death is not to be obtained outside of His Church. Nevertheless, the effectiveness and the clarity of this demonstration would be greatly improved by an integration into it of the basic theology of salvation itself. The fundamental truths which God has revealed to us about the process of salvation stand out clearly in the New Testament, especially in the Epistles of St. Paul. This particular section of sacred teaching is considered in the theological treatise on grace, and particularly in the treatise on the effects of Our Lord's passion and death. The *Summa theologica* contains a magnificent exposition of this truth in the 49th question of its third part.

Salvation itself is something which God has procured for man through the passion of Christ. As its very name implies, salvation involves a transfer from one status to another, from an unfavorable and even fatal condition to a position of security and perfection. In the supernatural order, salvation consists in the process of bringing a man from a condition of aversion from God through sin into the status of one who lives the life of grace.

Now the inspired word of God clearly teaches, and the science of sacred theology rightly explains, that this process of supernatural salvation is intrinsically a social as well as an individual reality. A man is said to be saved by the meritorious power of Jesus Christ when he has been freed from the bonds of sin and constituted as an adopted child of God and as a brother of Our Lord through the life of sanctifying grace. This passage from the state of sin to the state of grace is what we may call the individual aspect of salvation. There is, however, a social or corporate aspect of this same divine gift, just as essentially pertinent to it as its individual connotation. The corporate aspect of salvation is to be found in the

transfer of a person from the kingdom of Satan into that social entity which we know as the kingdom of God or the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ.

The dominion of God's chief spiritual enemy over unregenerate and sinful mankind is clearly asserted in sacred doctrine. Satan's rule over the multitude subject to him is, of course, in no way completely parallel to Our Lord's sway over the company of His associates. Nevertheless he actually exercises a certain kind of dominance, and is so placed that Our Lord Himself could speak of His principal foe as "the prince of this world."<sup>14</sup> In his *Summa theologiae*, St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that Satan actually may be said to govern those in the state of aversion from God and that thus he may be termed the head of these individuals.<sup>15</sup> It follows, then, that the people subject to Satan in this way constitute a sort of loosely organized community, united by the one evil will of their chief.

This community is the thing which the early theologians called the *ecclesia malignantium*.<sup>16</sup> Its work is directed by Satan against God and against God's supernatural kingdom in this world. Primarily the process of salvation involves a transfer from this *ecclesia malignantium* into the kingdom of God on earth, the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, the true *ecclesia sanctorum*.

These two companies are intermingled on earth. Every man on earth belongs to one or to the other of these social units. An individual who is held by the bonds of original sin, together with mortal sin or even apart from it, is definitely under the power and the direction of Satan, and thus forms part of his kingdom. The great mystery of God's economy with His followers is the fact that God's kingdom on earth in this, its final status before the end of the world, is a visible and fully organized society. The work of Satan's realm is directed against this visible community, the Catholic Church of Jesus Christ.

<sup>14</sup> *John*, 12:31; 14:30; 16:11.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Summa theologiae*, IIIa, qu. 8, art. 7.

<sup>16</sup> The expression is taken from Psalm 25:5. The new translation has "*conventum male agentium*." For a discussion of the use of this expression in the early post-Reformation Catholic writings, see the article "Scholastic Definitions of the Catholic Church," Part I, in *The American Ecclesiastical Review*, CXI, 1 (July, 1944), 59 ff.

Because God's kingdom on earth is a visible society, it is possible to be one of its members and at the same time to be subject to Satan through the aversion from God inherent in the status of mortal sin. Thus the Catholic who lives in the state of sin constitutes himself as a traitor to Our Lord. He lives, by God's mercy, as a citizen within the City of God, and at the same time, by reason of his own malignity, he places himself under the control of the enemy of God.

In any event, the salvation of an individual involves a passage from the dominion of Satan into the kingdom of God. In the case of a person who has not been baptized, this means a transfer from a community ruled over by the spiritual enemy of God to the community or family which is truly and supernaturally God's kingdom. In the case of a Catholic who has fallen into sin, it means the abandonment of the ties which have bound this hitherto unworthy and disloyal member of Christ to the enemy of Christ, and the completion within this person of the bonds of unity which attach him to his Saviour within the company of the disciples. In other words, it means that he acquires charity and grace, which belong to the internal bond of unity. In this latter case the process of salvation is essentially a return to loyalty within the kingdom of God.

St. Paul's Epistles show us very clearly this intrinsically social connotation of salvation. Thus the letter to the Colossians entreats the Christians to remain

Giving thanks to God the Father, who hath made us worthy to be partakers of the lot of the saints in light:

Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love.<sup>17</sup>

To be under the power of darkness was not to be a neutral with reference to God and His supernatural kingdom. According to St. Paul, the condition of these people was that of enemies.

And you, whereas you were sometime alienated and enemies in mind in evil works:

Yet now he hath reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unspotted and blameless before him.<sup>18</sup>

The Epistle to the Galatians insists upon the social or corporate character of salvation. It speaks of Our Lord Jesus Christ "Who

<sup>17</sup> *Col.*, 1: 12-13.

<sup>18</sup> *Col.*, 1: 21-22.

gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present wicked world, according to the will of God and our Father."<sup>19</sup> The same lesson is brought out in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Therefore because the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner hath been partaker of the same: that, through death, he might destroy him who had the empire of death, that is to say, the devil:

And might deliver them who through the fear of death were all their lifetime subject of servitude.<sup>20</sup>

St. Peter's words at the conclusion of his missionary sermon on the first Christian Pentecost stress the corporate or social aspect of salvation.

And with many other words did he testify and exhort them, saying: Save yourselves from this perverse generation.

They therefore that received his word were baptized: and there were added in that day about three thousand souls.<sup>21</sup>

He brought out the fact that the salvation with which Christian teaching is concerned involves a removal from the perverse or crooked generation, from a social unit turned away from God. The attainment of this salvation, however, was understood to involve affiliation with the company of Christ, the visible religious organization over which Peter himself presided. The people who accepted the Christian teaching of Peter acted to save themselves from the society of Satan by incorporating themselves into the company of Christ.

Throughout this inspired teaching we find the salvation which God has decreed to give to men represented as a passage from one empire to another, from the company of Satan to the kingdom of Christ. We could not understand the process of salvation at all if we were to forget the fact that sin or aversion from God necessarily carries with it a real subjection to the devil, and that grace or the sharing of the divine life necessarily involves affiliation with the company of Jesus Christ. A man is either a friend or an enemy of his God. He is either possessed of the life of grace or turned away from his ultimate and supernatural end. And he can be neither a saint nor a sinner alone. He stands either with the Church militant, the army of the living God, or with the cohorts of Satan.

<sup>19</sup> Gal. 1:4.

<sup>20</sup> Heb. 2: 14-15.

<sup>21</sup> Acts 2: 40-41.

Thus the kingdom of God on earth is presented in divine revelation as something inherently and necessarily requisite for the process of salvation. Just as opposition to God in original or mortal sin necessarily and intrinsically involves participation in the kingdom of Satan, conversion to God in the life of grace involves an entrance into the company of Christ, the *ecclesia sanctorum*. The concept of a man who would live the life of grace or salvation outside of Christ's kingdom is, according to God's own revealed teaching, something like the idea of a square circle, a mere combination of utterly incompatible elements.

Thus we see that the ultimate and all-important link in the chain of proof that the visible Catholic Church is necessary for salvation with the necessity of means is the basic Christian truth that this visible Catholic Church is absolutely identified with the kingdom of God, the Mystical Body of Christ, on this earth. It is precisely because and only because the visible religious society over which the Roman Pontiff presides as Christ's Vicar is God's kingdom and city and household in this world that this visible organization is proposed to us in the divinely revealed message as really necessary for the life of grace on earth and for the final flowering of that life in heaven. As the kingdom of God on earth, the Catholic Church is the company into which a man is brought by the process of salvation itself.

And, because it is the kingdom of God on earth, the Catholic Church is the organization against which the cohorts of Satan direct their attack. The army of the living God, the company that struggles against the enemies of Christ on earth, is not some amorphous group of persons who have what the world calls "faith," but the visible Catholic Church. When, by God's mercy, a man is changed from a sinner into a possessor of the life of grace, he is thereby transferred from the empire of Satan into the brotherhood of Christ. He comes within the Catholic Church either as a member or as one who wills to become a member. If he has not at least this latter sort of association with the company of Christ, he cannot have the life of grace which men hold only through contact with the Saviour.

Hence the force of the theological proof that the Church is truly necessary for salvation will inevitably be destroyed in any exposition which plays down or confuses the teaching that the visible Catholic Church is actually the reality designated in the

Scriptures as the kingdom or the city or the household of God. The central point of the doctrine of the English-speaking Modernist was obviously a denial of the necessity of the Church. Hence we are not at all astonished to find a typical Modernist like Von Huegel distinguishing the Church from the kingdom.<sup>22</sup> It is unfortunate, however, to see a recent publication otherwise quite accurate bring forward the assertion that "the Church is not the City of God."<sup>23</sup>

Fortunately we have a passage from one of the encyclical letters of Pope Leo which presents this basic teaching clearly and accurately.

The race of man, after its miserable fall from God, the Creator and the Giver of heavenly gifts, "through the envy of the devil," separated into two diverse and opposite parts, of which the one steadfastly contends for truth and virtue, the other for those things which are contrary to virtue and to truth. The one is the kingdom of God on earth, namely, the true Church of Jesus Christ; and those who desire from their heart to be united with it, so as to gain salvation, must of necessity serve God and His only-begotten Son with their whole mind and with an entire will. The other is the kingdom of Satan, in whose possession and control are all whosoever follow the fatal example of their leader and of our first parents, those who refuse to obey the divine and eternal law, and who have many aims of their own in contempt of God, and many aims also against God.

This twofold kingdom St. Augustine keenly discerned and described after the manner of two cities, contrary in their laws because striving for contrary objects. . . .<sup>24</sup>

A recognition of the existence of these two kingdoms, and a realization of their position with reference to the process of eternal life and salvation, together with an awareness of the fact that the visible Catholic Church is truly the kingdom and the city of God

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Von Huegel, *Essays and Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1921), I, 127.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Dom Aelred Graham, *The Christ of Catholicism* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1947), p. 306.

<sup>24</sup> The encyclical *Humanum genus*, issued April 20, 1884. The translation is that of *The Great Encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII* (New York: Benzinger Brothers, 1903), p. 83.

on this earth: these are the elements which can give complete force and meaning to the theological proof of the axiom "*extra ecclesiam nulla salus.*"

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#### FIFTY YEARS AGO

The leading article in *The American Ecclesiastical Review* for May, 1898, is an account of St. John's Seminary, Boston from the pen of Fr. John A. Butler. The first building, he tells us, was opened in 1884, and to this was added a special house of Philosophy in 1892. Fr. Butler gives a detailed description of the curriculum and of the daily spiritual exercises of the seminarians. The library, he states, contains fifteen thousand volumes. [The present library at St. John's, vastly increased over that of a half-century ago, is one of the outstanding ecclesiastical libraries in America]. . . . The first instalment of *My New Curate*, the most popular clerical novel of Canon Sheehan, appears in this issue. Evidently the author preferred to remain anonymous, for the story is described as "gathered from stray leaves of an old diary by an Irish parish priest." [It is gratifying to note that it was *The American Ecclesiastical Review*, through its first editor, Fr. H. Heuser, that introduced the gifted parish priest of Doneraile to millions of enthusiastic readers in the United States]. . . . Fr. E. Taunton, beginning a series of articles on liturgy under the general title "*Horae Liturgicae*," emphasizes the importance of the study of liturgy in the seminary, and gives a brief description of the origin of the Roman rite and missal. . . . Abbé Hogan, continuing his series of "*Clerical Studies*," writes on the devotional use of the Bible by seminarians and priests. . . . In the *Analecta* we find the solution of a case presented to the Holy See. A young priest doubted the validity of his ordination, on the ground that he may not have had the intention of receiving Holy Orders because of his hesitancy as to his worthiness to enter the sacerdotal state. The Congregation of the Inquisition replied on Jan. 26, 1898, that he should regard himself as validly ordained. . . . The answer to a question states that a marriage entered into by a man under compulsion from a civil judge, as preferable to the infliction of a jail sentence because of the man's illicit relation with the girl, is to be considered valid. [The contrary seems the more commonly accepted opinion at the present day.]

F. J. C.