

THE SCIENCE OF SACRED THEOLOGY FOR TEACHERS

Contents

Revelation

By Emmanuel Doronzo

Book Two

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Revelation

By Emmanuel Delmas

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Contents

Bibliography	iv
Introduction	vi
Part I. General notions on revelation (Theoretical Apologetics)	ix
Chapter One. Nature of Revelation	1
Chapter Two. Possibility of Revelation	5
Chapter Three. Fittingness and Necessity of Revelation	11
Chapter Four. The Nature or Rational Credibility of Revelation	15
Chapter Five. Necessity of a Rational Credibility of Revelation	17
Chapter Six. The Natural Genesis of the Credibility of Revelation	22
Chapter Seven. Criteria of the Credibility of Revelation	24
Part II. The Fact of Revelation (Practical Apologetics)	26
Chapter Eight. Christ's Testimony About His Mission as Herald of God's Revelation	28
Chapter Nine. Subjective Criteria of the Fact of Revelation	32
Chapter Ten. Objective Intrinsic Criteria of the Fact of Revelation	42
Chapter Eleven. Objective Extrinsic Criteria of the Fact of Revelation. Physical Miracles	63
Chapter Twelve. Objective Extrinsic Criteria of the Fact of Revelation. Prophecies	88
Chapter Thirteen. Conclusion	106
Glossary	108
Analytical Index	114

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Introduction

THE SUBJECT MATTER of this treatise is revelation generically considered, without particular reference to the individual revealed truths. As shown in the preceding treatise on *Introduction to Theology* (p. 8 f.) revelation is both the formal reason of theology as a whole, that is, the light under which God and the other objects are considered, and its proper principle, inasmuch as it is revelation which proposes those truths from which, as from true principles, theology draws its conclusions. Under both aspects, revelation is the foundation of theology. Hence this treatise is rightly called *Fundamental Theology*.

Revelation, precisely because it is the principle of theology, cannot be directly proved by this science, for no science proves its own principles. Each science supposes its principles as certain and evident from other sources, either through reason or through faith. Theology holds its principles through faith. However, theological science, being also wisdom, indeed the supreme wisdom on earth, can and must direct its attention in a scientific manner to its own revealed principles. It must not only explain and present them by way of persuasion, but also defend them, by proving with certainty their extrinsic credibility, namely that it is fitting to believe them through supernatural faith, because Christ's testimony of the fact of revelation is absolutely truthful, being warranted and endorsed by God himself through his miraculous intervention. Hence this treatise is also essentially apologetic and can be rightly called with the combined name of *Apologetic Fundamental Theology*.¹

¹ *Apologetics* (from the Greek "apologhia," a speech in defense, from "apó," after, and "légo," I speak) means generically a defense. The word is often used in Scripture in the sense of self-defense

This leads us to its proper *definition*, expressing its nature and object: it is *the scientific demonstration of the extrinsic credibility of revelation, through evident criteria, under the light of natural reason*. It is a true scientific demonstration, not as a science standing by itself, but as a mere *integrating part of the single science of theology*, considered as wisdom, as we just noted. Hence, it does not matter that it proceeds under the light of natural reason while theology must proceed under the light of revelation, precisely because it is merely an extension of theological science, taking over the light of reason to its own service for the purpose of explaining and defending its supernatural principles.

Its *material object* is revelation, theoretically considered in its general notions; its *formal object* is the fact of revelation, shown as credible through evident criteria; its *formal reason*, or the light under which it proceeds, is the light of reason, because its purpose is to prove the credibility or knowability of revelation in a rational manner, that is, from philosophical and historical principles. For it is impossible to prove revelation by revelation itself without making a vicious circle; however, since it is a question of a mere extensive function of theology itself, the light of reason here must proceed under the direction of the light of revelation.

Hence the whole scientific process of Apologetics consists in attributing the concept of credibility to revelation (more precisely to the fact of revelation) by means of evident criteria, so that such criteria are like principles from which the following conclusion is drawn: Revelation (the fact of revelation) is credible. Such a process can be briefly reduced to the following general syllogism: That which is endorsed by evi-

(Act.22.1; 25.16; 1 Cor.9.3; 2 Cor.7.11; 2 Tim.4.16; 1 Pet.3.15) and at least once in the sense of defense of a thing, namely of the Gospel itself (Phil.1,7,16: "In the defense and confirmation of the gospel . . . I am appointed for the defense of the gospel." Theologians usually distinguish between *apology* and *apologetics*, meaning by the first the defense of a particular truth (as Trinity, Incarnation, etc.), and by the second, the defense of revelation as a whole. Hence this treatise is commonly called Apologetics.

dent extrinsic criteria, is evidently credible. But revelation (namely that God has really talked to men, according to Christ's testimony) is endorsed by evident criteria, that is by the miraculous intervention of God. Therefore revelation is credible.²

From the aforesaid object we logically draw the *division of this treatise* into two parts. In the *first part* we shall consider *revelation in its general notions* (material object), that is, its nature and properties, among which is found credibility; and this amounts to the question of the essence of revelation (Theoretical Apologetics). In the *second part* we shall deal with *the fact of revelation*, shown through evident criteria or motives of credibility (formal object); and this amounts to the question of the existence of revelation (Practical Apologetics).

² Do not, however think that in this manner the act of faith itself about revelation is resolved into such a syllogism, or that the evidence of faith itself is resolved into this rational evidence of credibility, for this is only an extrinsic credibility of the fact of revelation, which cannot generate faith but only dispose to it. In fact, in the genesis of the act of supernatural faith we find the following three steps. First, there must be *the intrinsic evidence of the given testimony and of the authority or competence (knowledge and veracity) of the witness* (namely, that Christ, a man of wisdom and veracity, testified that God has spoken). Second, there follows *the extrinsic evidence of credibility about the fact of revelation*, that is, about the objective truth of Christ's testimony (namely, that it is true and credible that God has spoken, as Christ testified, and that this is shown by evident criteria). Finally, there comes *supernatural faith itself, with its own intrinsic evidence and certitude*, founded only on the testimony of God revealing, and elicited under the movement of grace; however, this faith, which is a purely infused gift of God, does not follow if the will of man refuses to comply with the aforesaid extrinsic evidence of credibility and resists the movement of the grace of God, tending to the infusion of faith (see below, footnote 25 and p. 107).

Part I

General Notions on Revelation (Theoretical Apologetics)

In the following seven chapters we consider revelation as to its nature (chap. 1), its possibility (chap. 2), its fittingness and necessity (chap. 3), and especially its credibility or knowability. This latter is more important for our apologetical purpose and hence requires a careful explanation of its nature (chap. 4), possibility (chap. 5), genesis (chap. 6), and criteria (chap. 7).

I

Nature of Revelation

THE CATHOLIC NOTION OF REVELATION, as proposed by the Magisterium itself with its foundation in Scripture, can be described as *a direct action of God, which through words and deeds, manifests to men things and truths known only to him.*

In the *New Testament* this manifestation of God is expressed by three words: revelation, manifestation, and speech.

Revelation (in Greek "apokálupsis," the English apocalypsis, from "apó," back, and "kaléo," I call) indicates a manifestation of supernatural truth (Rom. 16.25; Eph. 1.17; Luke 2.32), or an extraordinary manifestation through visions (Apoc. 1.1; Gal. 1.12; Eph. 3.3; 1 Cor. 14.6,26; 2 Cor. 12.1,7), or the second advent of Christ (1 Cor. 1.7; 2 Thess. 1.7; 1 Pet. 1.13).

Manifestation (in Greek "fanérosis," from "fanéroo," I manifest, I make visible; remotely from "fáino," I bring to light, I make to appear, hence "epifánia," the English epiphany) indicates the first advent of Christ (1 John 1.2; 3.5,8; Tit. 3.16; Heb. 9.26; 1 Pet. 1.20), as well as his second advent (Col. 3.4; 1 Pet. 5.4; 1 John 2.28; 3.2).

Speech (in Greek "lálema," talk) indicates a speech of God to man, both by spoken words (Heb. 1.1 f.³; 2.2) and by writ-

³ Particular value has to be given to Heb. 1.1 f., which refers to all prophetic revelations of the O. T. as to a speech of God: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all in these days has spoken to us by his Son." In the O. T. itself the various manifestations of God

ten words (Heb. 2.5; 6.9; 2 Pet. 3.16); the same meaning is brought out by the kindred word *oracle* (in Greek "lóghion," from "légo," I tell, I speak), which is used to indicate the prophecies of the Old Testament (Acts 7.38; Rom. 3.2).

The *Magisterium* gives us the Catholic notion of revelation in both Vatican Councils, which deal directly with this subject. *Vatican I*, speaking of "the supernatural way [in which God chose] to reveal himself and the eternal decrees of his will to mankind," sees it expressed in the words of St. Paul, Heb. 1.1 f. about God speaking to men through the prophets and through Christ⁴ (sess. 3, chap. 2, Denz. 3044). Here revelation is presented *only as speech*. *Vatican II* extends the concept of revelation so as to include both *speech* and *deeds*: "[God's] plan of revelation is realized by *deeds* and *words*, intrinsically connected, so that the deeds, wrought by God in the history of salvation, declare and strengthen the doctrine and the things signified by the words, while the words proclaim the deeds and clarify the mystery contained in them" (Constitution on Divine Revelation, no.2).

In this extension there is no essential addition, but only a further explanation of the concept of speech, which can be expressed formally and primarily by words and equivalently also by deeds, having, however, their value of sign and expression of the mind by the words themselves. Also a man can be said to talk, or to manifest his mind, both by words and by deeds (that is, by signs other than words), provided the meaning of his deeds has been previously declared by his words, otherwise the mere deeds would not carry a clear and certain sense and would not sufficiently manifest the object and the intention of the mind. As St. Augustine puts it, "Among men words have obtained the leading role in the realm of signification" (*On Christian Doctrine* 2.2.3); applying this principle to the sacraments, particularly to baptism, the holy Doctor says: "If the word is missing, the water is nothing but water. If on the contrary the word is joined to the material

to the prophets are called "speech" or "word:" (Ps.84.9; Isa.50.4; Osee.1.1; Joel 1.1; Jonas 1.1; Mich.1.1; Soph. 1.1; Agg.1.1; Zach.1.1; Mal.1.1, etc.).

⁴ See preceding footnote.

element, there will be a sacrament, which becomes in itself a visible word" (*On John*, tract .80, no.3). We may say, likewise, in God's revelation or manifestation of his mind, if we remove the words, the deeds are mute deeds; but if we add the words to the deeds, then we have revelation in the deeds themselves, which take up the value of living and practical words.⁵

Hence supernatural revelation consists *essentially and formally in a speech of God* to man, secondarily also in deeds inasmuch as these manifest and confirm in a practical way the words themselves. Such a concept of speech attributed to God is not improper or merely metaphorical, but proper, although analogical.⁶ For speech consists essentially in manifesting one's own thought to another, as from person to person; nor does it matter in which way it is done, whether through a merely sensible sign or through a purely intellectual means, that is, by the infusion of the intelligible species in the mind of another. This can be done also by God, and in both ways. Moreover, in the act of revelation of a supernatural object, *besides the mere presentation of the object* (either through sensible or intellectual means), God must and can infuse *some*

⁵ Hence some authors (as Latourelle, Léonard, Quinn, mentioned above, p. iv, v) exaggerate when they say that the Council, by mentioning the deeds as means of revelation, has changed the traditional concept of revelation, given by the first Vatican Council itself. Some go so far as to define revelation generically as God's communication to man or as God's manifestation; in the first case the infusion of sanctifying grace would be a revelation, in the second case any supernatural instinct, or inspiration (as in the writers of the Holy Scripture), or assistance of the Holy Spirit (as that given to the *Magisterium*), would be revelation. Is not all this an effect and a cause of theological confusions?

⁶ Not every *analogical* concept is metaphorical. It can be purely *metaphorical* or improper, as when we say: This food is healthy, or Peter is a lion (both concepts of good and lion are purely metaphorical). It can be also *proper*, that is, expressing something which is formally and properly in the subject; thus, when we say: God is being, intelligent and volitional, and likewise, man is being, intelligent and volitional, these three perfections (being, intelligence and will) are predicated properly of both God and man, because they are found in both formally, although not in the same way, but proportionally, and hence analogically.

supernatural light in the intellect itself, to make it able to understand such an object. Hence God's revelation is a more proper and more perfect speech than that of man, since it communicates to man the thoughts of God in two ways, that is, both objectively and subjectively.

These two elements of revelation or speech of God can be separated, so that God would offer to a man only the presentation of the object without the supernatural light to understand it, or vice versa. However, in such cases there would be no revelation properly so called, that is real speech of God, but only an inferior kind of manifestation of God; in the first case there would be only a *prophetic instinct* (cf. *Summa Theol.*, p.2-2, q.173, a.2), like in the vision given to Pharaoh and interpreted later by Joseph (Gen. 41.14-32) or in the words uttered by Caiphas about the death of Christ and interpreted by St. John (John 11.51). In the second case there would be either a higher *prophetic instinct*, as was given to the aforementioned Joseph and John, or an *inspiration* (that is a supernatural movement to write what God wants a man to write, so that the writing is properly attributed to God, as principal author), as happened to the various writers of Holy Scripture, or a mere supernatural *assistance* (by which a writer or a speaker is merely preserved from error), as happens to the Church Magisterium when defining infallibly truths of faith. This, then, is the difference between the various supernatural lights or helps, bestowed by God to man, namely revelation, prophetic instinct, inspiration, and assistance of the Holy Spirit.

II

Possibility of Revelation

AS SHOWN ABOVE, revelation implies two elements, one objective, the presentation of a supernatural object to human intellect, and the other subjective, the infusion of a supernatural light in the intellect by which it is made proportioned to the understanding of such an object. Both of these elements presuppose the existence of a supernatural order in God which manifests itself in them. Hence the possibility of revelation is not shown unless we show first the existence of a supernatural order, and then the possibility of proposing it as an object understandable by a human intellect, and of infusing in the same intellect a light above reason, making it able to understand such an object. Since these two things are supernatural, that is, above all created nature and its powers, we can bring forth no direct and positive proof, but only indirect or probable arguments, such as are sufficient to the apologetical purpose of refuting the negation of Rationalists on those two points.⁷

⁷ *Rationalism*, from its general and common principle of the complete autonomy of natural reason, draws the conclusion that there is no supernatural order, that is, an order of things and truths above reason. This is the teaching of pure *Positive Rationalism*, either materialistic (as that of E. Haeckel), or idealistic (as that of Hegel), both of which deny the very existence of God, identifying him with the world. A form of apparently mitigated Rationalism teaches that, even if there were a supernatural order, the human intellect would not in any way be able to know it, and therefore its revelation would be impossible. This is the *Agnostic Rationalism*, which denies directly not the existence of God, but the possibility of knowing him and the objective value of the principles of reason leading to know-

The existence of a supernatural order or order of mysteries⁸ (which is *de fide* from Vatican Council I, sess. 3, can. 1 on faith and reason) cannot be directly proved, since the object is essentially supernatural. It can be derived indirectly, however, from the very existence of God, as a personal being, distinct from the world. For, what is proper to God (his nature and inner attributes) is higher than the proper object of our intellect and is in no way manifested by this lower object; hence it cannot be naturally reached by our intellect and constitutes an order above reason, that is a supernatural order. Indeed, the proper and formal object of our intellect is not God himself but a created being, that is being as limited and determined by sensible nature. Otherwise our intellect would

ledge of him. The reason for this agnosticism would be either the pure phenomenal nature of our ideas (Agnostic Empirical Rationalism of H. Spencer, A. Comte, and W. James), or their purely subjective value (Agnostic Idealistic Rationalism, founded by E. Kant). This agnostic rationalism, under both forms, was adopted within the Church by *Modernism*. Modernism denies that human reason can reach beyond phenomena and know with certainty even the existence of God.

⁸ *Supernatural*, in a proper and absolute sense, is that which is above all created nature, as to the essence of the created nature or at least as to its powers and exigencies. It is divided into *essentially or intrinsically supernatural* (or as to its intrinsic causes), which surpasses both the essence of all created nature and its powers and exigencies (such are Deity, Trinity, Incarnation, glory, grace); and *modally or extrinsically supernatural* (or as to its extrinsic causes) which surpasses only the powers and exigencies, not the essence, of created nature, and therefore consists in something which is essentially natural, but cannot be produced by any natural cause (such are most of those things that are called miracles, as glorification of the body, resurrection, the knowledge of the secrets of hearts, the gift of languages). At present we are dealing only with the essentially or intrinsically supernatural.

Mystery (in Greek "mustérion," from "muo," I close) etymologically means something closed, and, by evolution of speech, something closed to knowledge, that is secret; the word was used especially to designate religious truths and rites, as being most secret and unknown. It is divided into *natural mystery*, which can be known without God's revelation, and *supernatural mystery*, which cannot be known without supernatural revelation. This is subdivid-

be equal to the intellect of God, as being specified by the same object, and even would be identified with it which is idealistic pantheism. Now, in this kind of created being God is indeed manifested and known in some way, as a cause in its effect, and therefore according to the attributes that are common to him and the creatures (as being, one, good, intelligence, will, power). But God cannot be manifested and known as to what is proper to him and is not found in the creatures, for no effect contains adequately the nature and power of its proper cause. Hence, this intimate reality of God in himself, which cannot be known by our intellect through its proper and formal object of created being, constitutes an order above reason, that is a supernatural order.

The possibility of revelation to man of this supernatural order (which is *de fide* from Vatican I, sess.3, can.2-3 on revelation) cannot be reasonably denied. On the contrary, it can be sufficiently shown, not indeed through certain and evident proofs, but at least by the aid of persuasive and probable arguments.

The possibility of proposing a truth of this supernatural order, as an object understandable by the human intellect, lies in the objective and ontological value of our analogical concepts. Indeed, most of the concepts by which we express higher natural truths themselves and with which we deal in our natural sciences, including metaphysics and its higher part theodicy (as the concepts of being, cause, end, relation, substance, accident, and God himself as the supreme Being—true,

ed into mystery in a *broad sense*, that which, after its revelation by God, is perfectly understood both as to its existence and its nature (such are divine decrees about natural facts, for instance about future happenings which we cannot foresee) and mystery in the *strict sense*, which, even after revelation (at least the revelation we have in this life, through the obscure light of faith), is not perfectly known, for we know by faith only its existence and have only an obscure analogical concept of its essence, so that it still remains a mystery as to its intimate nature (such are Deity, Trinity, Incarnation, glory, grace). At present we are dealing especially with mysteries in the strict sense, which are at the same time essentially supernatural, so that the supernatural order is perfectly equivalent to the order of mysteries.

good, and omnipotent) are analogical concepts. No one can deny objective and ontological value to them, without rejecting the objective value of our entire knowledge. Therefore there is no reason why a higher truth of the supernatural order could not likewise be expressed with similar analogical concepts, having their objective and ontological value, and hence carrying to the human intellect a proper, although analogical, understanding of a supernatural reality. For example, when divine paternity or filiation is revealed, it is not repugnant that the concept of paternity or filiation, drawn from creatures, signifies properly, although analogically, something pertaining to the intimate essence of God.⁹

The possibility of infusing in the human intellect a light above the light of reason, to make it able to understand this supernatural object analogically expressed, cannot be rejected through any *a priori* reason, as from the impossibility of conceiving such a light or of putting it in the light of the intellect itself, and hence doubling up the intellectual light or mingling the two lights in a hybrid and contradictory being, at once natural and supernatural. For, if a supernatural order is granted, there is no reason to deny that God can communicate it to a creature in the manner of light or intelligibility, just as by creation he communicates his natural infinite science to a finite human intellect. Such supernatural light (as that of faith or of beatific vision) is not received in the light of reason as a distinct intellectual power, but as a sort of habit or disposition which elevates the natural intellectual power so that it can elicit a higher intellectual act. Hence the two lights do not make up a contradictory being, because natural and supernatural are not opposed as being and non-being, but as imperfect being and perfect being, constituting two lines specifically distinct. On this account they can be in the same subject, as one perfecting the other.

Besides, such possibility can be shown positively by a three-fold persuasive and probable reason. *The first reason* is the

⁹ As shown in footnote 6 an analogical concept can be also proper and formal.

existence of the so-called *obediential potency*¹⁰ in every created being in relation to God, that is, of an inner transcendental reference to God and dependence upon him, as the universal cause of being as such. On account of this potency, it does not seem impossible for God to work in any creature whatever is being, provided it is not in contradiction with the nature of an individual creature (cf. *Summa Theol.*, p.3, q.11, a.1).¹¹ Therefore it is not impossible for God to infuse in the human intellect a supernatural light, since, as has been shown, this is not in contradiction with the natural light of the human intellect. *The second reason* is the radical *capacity of our intellect for knowing any being*. For, although the proper and specific object of the human intellect, formally as human, is only a determined kind of being, that is being as found in the sensible nature, nevertheless the extensive object, generically as intellect, is being as such, in all its breadth. Hence it does not seem impossible that the human intellect be so changed and elevated by a supernatural light as to be able to extend its act to a higher object beyond its specific object (cf. *Summa Theol.*, p.1, q.13, a.4, ad 3). *The third reason* is a kind of *natural desire of knowing God in himself*, according to his inner essence, which spontaneously arises in anyone who through the light of reason knows the existence of God and his natural attributes.¹² This desire, being natural and spontaneous, although inefficacious and conditional ("I would wish, if it were possible, to know the inner essence of God") and as such ab-

¹⁰ About the origin and the nature of the concept of obediential potency, see L. B. Gillon, in *Revue thomiste* 47 (1947) 304-310, and G. Cala Ulloa, in *Sapienza* 5 (1952) 242-256.

¹¹ Thus by no power whatsoever can it happen that a rock, remaining a rock, would have feeling and sensation; or a brute, remaining a brute, would reason; or a corporeal eye, remaining such, would have an intellectual vision or knowledge; or a man, as finite being, would understand as God understands, in an infinite manner.

¹² Cf. *Summa Theol.* p.1, q.1, a.1; p.1-2, q.3, a.8; *Summa Contra Gentiles* 3.50. On this desire much has been written in recent years, especially on the occasion of the controversy about the absolute supernaturality of the elevation of man. See P.A. Ciappa, *Partecipazione e desiderio naturale di vedere Dio in S. Tommaso d' Aquino*, Verona 1969; L. B. Gillon, in *Angelicum* 26 (1949) 3-30, 115-142; L.

solutely capable of frustration, cannot be simply vain and void, that is tending to an impossible object, for nature does not tend to emptiness and impossibility (cf. *Summa Theol.*, p.1, q. 12, a.1).

Malevez in *Nouvelle revue théologique* 69 (1947) 1-31; 75 (1953) 561-586, 673-689; W. R. O'Connor, *The Eternal Quest. The Teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas on the Natural Desire for God*, New York 1947; L. Roy, in *Sciences ecclésiastiques* 1 (1948) 110-142; B. Stoeckle, in *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift* 72 (1963) 1-22.

III

Fittingness and Necessity of Revelation

THE MERE POSSIBILITY OF REVELATION does not necessarily prove its fittingness and much less its necessity. It even seems that supernatural revelation is highly unsuitable and harmful to human reason, depriving it of its autonomy by a submission to an exterior rule and extrinsic authority. It seems to propose to it an object different from its proper object, which cannot be assimilated, like a stone in the stomach. It seems to provide it with a light not proportioned to its natural powers and tendencies, just as if the eyes of a night owl or a bat were placed before the bright sunlight. Moreover, granting the fittingness of revelation, there is no sufficient basis for its necessity, because man with his reason is naturally complete in his own order and needs no exterior help or complement whatsoever. Such are the objections of Rationalism.

The *fittingness* of revelation (defined by Vatican Council I, sess.3, can.2 on revelation) is shown by the fact that through it human reason is perfected with an additional light and object, and its knowledge carried to a higher level. However, by this supplement of knowledge and perfection, natural reason is in no way disturbed or displaced in the normal functions of its proper inferior sphere; for, as we have shown above (p. 8), no mixture of the two natural and supernatural lights is made, nor does the supernatural light usurp or hinder the rights and the activities of natural reason, but it exercises its proper intellectual activity in a distinct and higher sphere, seeking nothing else from the human intellect but the necessary support or the natural base for its own operation, and a

"reasonable submission" to its higher truths.¹³ Besides, notwithstanding the distinction and mutual respect of the two lights, their community and partnership in the same intellect is profitable to both, as it fosters mutual help, so that for the aforesaid support and submission which the light of revelation receives from the light of reason, it abundantly repays this same light by freeing and protecting it from error and by providing it with manifold knowledge, even in its own rational sphere, as we shall see below.

The necessity of revelation for the knowledge of *supernatural truths* is self-evident, since such truths are above the proper object of human reason. Hence, in the hypothesis that God elevates man to a supernatural end, as *de facto* happened, it follows necessarily, by a strict and physical necessity,¹⁴ that

¹³ Such is the sense usually given by theologians to Rom.12.1: "*Rationabile obsequium vestrum*" (Vulgate version). However, the immediate exegetical sense is "reasonable worship or service," consisting in a holy life, befitting rational beings, as is shown by the Greek original "loghikén latréian;" and such is the sense usually given in the vernacular translations. In other passages St. Paul speaks of "obedience to faith" (Rom.1.5; 16.26; cf. 2 Cor. 10.5 f.), to which can be reduced also the reasonable worship of Rom.12.1.

Vatican Council I (sess.3, chap.3 on faith) uses Rom.12.1 speaking of the "obedience of faith, fitting reason," but it is not clear whether the sense is "reasonable obedience to faith" or "reasonable obedience by faith" (that is, in which faith itself consists); this second sense seems more probable, if we have to explain that expression by another occurring in the same context (at the beginning of the same chapter), which reads: "Man is obliged to give to God revealing a full obedience of the intellect and the will by his faith." However, the reasonable character of the obedience of the act of faith is explained by the Council through the criteria knowable by reason and thus we revert to the sense given by the theologians to the Pauline "rational obedience," used by the Council.

¹⁴ Necessity of finality (arising from a final cause or end, that is the necessity of means in relation to an end) is called *physical* or *strict necessity*, if without certain means an end can in no way be reached, and corresponds to physical inability (thus food is strictly necessary for corporal life). It is called *moral necessity*, if without certain means an end cannot be suitably reached, that is, without great difficulty, and corresponds to moral inability (thus a horse or

he has to reveal this end to man and all the essential truths connected with it, so that man may direct to it his intention and his actions. For nothing is willed unless it is known and he who proposes an end will also provide the means without which such end cannot be reached (cf. *Summa Theol.*, p.1, q.1, a.1).

Furthermore, the fittingness and necessity of revelation extends beyond its proper object and reaches also natural truths themselves (as Vatican Council I teaches, sess.3, can.2 and chap.2 on revelation), although in a different manner and at a lower level, since such truths are the proper object of natural reason.

Its fittingness for the knowledge of natural truths is shown by the limited perfection of our intellect, subject to the deception of the senses and to the influence of the will and its passions, which are often sources of error. This is especially true in the area of religion and morality. Therefore, to be taught by God, infallible Truth, concerning the very things which human reason can know with its own limited and fallible light, is highly perfective of reason itself, because on the one hand it receives an infallible confirmation of its own right doctrines and on the other hand it is preserved from easy deception and error.¹⁵ Moreover, as regards specifically moral and religious natural truths, the fittingness of revelation is so great that it grows into a true *moral necessity*,¹⁶ in the sense that without revelation such truths cannot be suitably known by men, that is *quickly, readily, certainly, and universally*, as they should be known, since on them the end of man's salvation is totally dependent.¹⁷ This is strikingly confirmed by the history of

a car, and in modern life an automobile or train or plane, is morally necessary for a journey). Cf. *Summa Theol.* p.1, q.82, a.1.

¹⁵ In the preceding treatise on *Introduction to Theology* (p. 24) we have shown how theological science, which is the daughter of revelation, elevates and perfects the natural sciences.

¹⁶ See footnote 14 about the notion of moral necessity.

¹⁷ See the admirable passage of St. Thomas (*Summa Theol.* p.1, q.1, a.1; cf. 2-2, q.2, a.4; *C. Gent.* 1.4; *De veritate*, q.14, a.10), repeated and adapted by both Vatican I (sess.3, chap.2 on revelation) and Vatican II (Constit. on Divine Revelation, no. 8).

pagan peoples, on whom the light of revelation did not shine and who professed many grave errors in religious and moral matters, as is shown in the very best of Greek and Roman civilization, as well as in the great philosophers, Plato and Aristotle themselves.¹⁸

IV

The Nature of Rational Credibility of Revelation¹⁹

SO FAR WE HAVE CONSIDERED revelation in itself. In this and the following chapters we shall deal with the apologetical problem of the rational knowability or credibility of revelation. The problem amounts to this: if actually there is a revelation from God, can we know with certainty, through our natural reason and before we give supernatural assent of faith to the revealed truths, that such revelation has really been made, and how can we know it? What are the proofs, the means, the criteria by which we can be certain of that fact?

Such rational knowability of revelation is also called its extrinsic or rational credibility, if we consider it, as we do in this apologetical treatise, in its connection with the subsequent supernatural act of faith; for, if revelation is naturally knowable or able to be ascertained, it is also credible, that is suitable to be believed supernaturally. In this credibility lies the rational extrinsic foundation of the supernatural faith.²⁰ In the present chapter we shall consider only the nature of this credibility, leaving for the following three chapters the explanation of its possibility, genesis, and criteria.

¹⁹ Cf. A. Gardeil, "Crédibilité," *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* 3-2 (Paris 1907) 2201-2215; *La crédibilité et l'Apologétique*. Paris 1908; E. Huguency, in *Revue thomiste* 17 (1909) 275-298; C. M. Lagae, *ibid.* 18 (1910) 478-489, 612-641.

²⁰ See footnote 2 and pp. 19 f., 106 f.

¹⁸ See below, footnote 40.

The rational credibility of revelation is the aptitude of revealed truths to be believed with supernatural faith (that is, on the authority of God revealing), resulting from its extrinsic evidence, namely, from the rational evidence of the very fact of God's testimony.

The aptness of this definition is shown by the analysis of the concept of credibility in general, as applicable also to things which we know from faith on human testimony. For, there are two ways of certainly and evidently knowing something, that is, either through the immediate and intrinsic evidence of the object itself, directly manifesting to the intellect its own intelligibility (called evidence of truth), or through a mediate and extrinsic evidence, resulting in the object from the evidence of an authoritative testimony, that is, from the evidence of the fact of a given testimony and of the authority (knowledge and truthfulness) of the witness. This is called evidence of credibility, by which an object becomes apt to be believed, that is, held with certitude through an act of faith. Now this concept of credibility also fits revelation. For, if we can rationally show through evident signs that God spoke to man (the fact of testimony or revelation), that same God whose knowledge and truthfulness need not to be proved, it follows that the truths testified or revealed by God are rationally credible, that is, extrinsically evident and suitable for being believed with a supernatural faith, based on the authority of God revealing.

V

Necessity of a Rational Credibility of Revelation

A QUESTION SOMEWHAT DEBATED among theologians is whether credibility of revelation is absolutely necessary to faith; that is, whether, in order to be able to elicit the act of supernatural faith (and hence to receive the infused habit of faith by God), a man must first acquire a rational evidence and a true objective certitude²¹ of the fact of revelation, namely that God

²¹ Certitude is divided into merely *subjective* (that is, not founded in the evidence of the object, but in purely subjective motives) and *objective or formal* (founded in the evidence of the object, immediate or mediate through faith). This is subdivided into *absolute or metaphysical certitude*, which is founded in the very nature of things and hence admits no exception whatsoever, and *conditional certitude*, which is founded in physical or moral laws and hence admits no exception only on the supposition that some conditions are kept, which could however be lacking and hence allow exceptions. If this certitude is founded in physical laws, it is called *physical certitude* (thus it is certain that a stone will fall, provided the law of gravity is not counter-balanced by an extrinsic agent); and if it is founded in moral laws, it is called *moral certitude* (thus it is certain that a mother will not kill her child, unless by an unusual perversion she withdraws from those laws that rule the moral actions and inclinations of men). Below certitude is found *probability*, which can be so great as to amount to a practical certitude (without ever reaching the strength and the nature of a proper certitude) and in moral matters is called *imperfect or practical moral certitude*, as being a sufficient rule for moral and prudent actions, since a strict certitude cannot be obtained in the ordinary circumstances of life.

has really spoken. This necessity has been denied or doubted by some recent theologians, on the ground of an alleged moral impossibility for some people (as the uneducated and the children), to acquire, prior to faith itself, such rational evidence and objective certitude of the fact of revelation. Hence they hold, as sufficient, some kind of imperfect certitude, which is not a true objective certitude, but only a high probability, that is, according to different expressions, an imperfect moral certitude, a practical certitude (sufficient to act prudently in the ordinary circumstances of life), a respective certitude (that is, relative to some classes of people, as the uneducated and the children), a subjective certitude.²²

By far the more common opinion of theologians, however, closely following in the steps of the Magisterium itself,²³ teaches that *true and objective rational certitude of the fact of revelation is always and in all subjects required* for eliciting the act of supernatural faith, although a physical certitude is not required, but a moral (even vulgar or common) certitude is sufficient. This teaching excludes, however, any inferior degree of persuasion (as the so-called imperfect, or practical, or respective certitude), which does not reach the minimum requisite for a true moral certitude.

²² Thus particularly J. H. Newman, *A Grammar of Assent* (new edition by Fr. Harrold, London 1947) 312, who speaks of "an accumulation of various probabilities"; S. Harent (in *Dict. Théol. cath.* 6-1, col. 219-231); *Lercher-Schlagenhaufen* and *Nicolau* (in their theological manuals, where they discuss revelation), who speak of respective certitude; *P. Rousselot* (followed by several of his disciples), "Les yeux de la foi," *Recherches de science religieuse* 1 (1910) 241-259, 444-475, who even denies that reason prior to faith and independently from faith can elicit any certain and sufficient judgment about the fact of revelation, which would be elicited afterwards with the help of grace, that is, under the light of faith itself ("les yeux de la foi").

²³ Cf. Gregory XVI, condemning the Fideism of Bautin (Denz. 2753-56); Pius IX, Encycl. "Qui pluribus" (Denz. 2778-80), and in his condemnation of the Fideism of Bonnetty (Denz. 2813); Vatican Council I (sess.3, cans.3-4 and chap.3 on faith); Pius X (Decree "Lamentabili," prop.25, Denz. 3425).

The necessity of a true and objective rational certitude of the fact of revelation is shown by the general concept of faith, whether human or divine. Any faith is a state of firm assent, in which the intellect rests without positive fear of erring; but such a state of firmness cannot exist without a rational and objective certitude, founded in the evidence of the object, obtained mediately and extrinsically through the testimony of a witness.²⁴ If this objective evidence of the existence of the authoritative testimony is necessary for the genesis of any faith, even of the human faith which can be discontinued and revoked by reason of a subsequently detected incompetence of the witness, a fortiori it is necessary for the genesis of divine faith, which is absolutely infallible and irrevocable, being founded on the infallible testimony of God who can neither deceive nor be deceived. Hence no other kind of intellectual persuasion, below true certitude about the fact of revelation, is sufficient for the genesis of divine faith, enabling one to elicit the act of divine faith.

By *genesis of divine faith* we do not mean the direct production of this faith in the intellect by the preceding judgment of evident credibility, as happens *de facto* in human faith, otherwise we would resolve supernatural faith into natural reason, as to its proper and immediate cause. We only mean that the natural judgment of credibility is the necessary, although extrinsic, prerequisite to the act of divine faith, without which faith cannot be generated in the human mind by its proper cause which is essentially above reason, that is, the supernatural authority of God revealing.²⁵

Hence the act of faith has a twofold resolution. One is intrinsic and objective, wholly related to the object, resting on the sole authority of God revealing, belonging exclusively to the supernatural sphere, without any foundation or connection

²⁴ To St. Augustine it is evident that "no one believes something, unless he first thinks that he has to believe" (*On the Predestination of Saints* 2.5, ML 44.962).

²⁵ We noted above (footnote 2, see also p. 107) that, even after this necessary foundation is laid, faith is not necessarily born, unless the will of man corresponds to the movement of the grace of God, tending to the infusion of faith.

with the judgment of natural reason (hence: "I believe this particular truth simply because God has revealed it"). The other resolution is extrinsic and subjective, wholly related to the subject and resting on the rational judgment of evident credibility, as a necessary prerequisite to the supernatural act of faith and to its intrinsic and objective resolution. In this judgment of credibility, the authority of God revealing, or the action of revelation, is reached not in its essentially supernatural essence, but only in its exterior aspect, as something supernatural *in its mode*, that is, as a miraculous divine intervention. In this subjective sense we can rightly say that the act of divine faith is extrinsically resolved into an act of rational evidence, that is, in the evident credibility of the fact of revelation, inasmuch as this is only extrinsically and modally supernatural, that is miraculous.

The *sufficiency of moral certitude* about the fact of revelation is based on two reasons.

First, this kind of certitude is the only one available to everyone. The physical certitude was available only to those first Christians who physically heard the preaching of Christ and of the apostles and saw their miracles. All other Christians, to whom the knowledge of their preaching and miracles came through the testimony of others, have only a moral certitude of the fact of revelation, based on the testimony of others and on that moral law according to which a worthy witness does not lie. Only a few can now acquire a physical certitude from a careful and scientific examination of those miracles of a higher moral order which permanently remain in the revealed religion and are in some way visible to all, as is the Church itself by reason of its universality, sanctity, fruitfulness, unity and stability. (See below, pp. 50-54).

Secondly, the supernatural act of faith does not demand from the natural reason more than a rational and prudential foundation, that is a firm and prudent judgment on the credibility of the fact of revelation. But, in order to act rationally and prudently, even in very serious matters, with firm and prudent trust in someone's testimony, a moral certitude is sufficient. Thus in civil courts moral certitude, based on the testimony of upright men, is judged sufficient to infer even capital punishment.

For the same reasons, it is not necessary for everyone to have a moral scientific certitude of the fact of revelation; a *vulgar or common certitude is sufficient*. For, on the one hand this is the only one available to many people who are unable to inquire scientifically into the criteria or proofs of that fact, and on the other hand such certitude, based on common knowledge and evidence, is amply sufficient for acting firmly and prudently in natural affairs and decisions, even of serious character. However, it must be a true and objective moral certitude and not a mere probability, no matter how great and how practical (as is the so-called practical, or respective, or subjective certitude, mentioned above, p. 18), which is not really sufficient even for natural faith nor for acting firmly and prudently in natural affairs and decisions. Such common certitude is generally found also in illiterate people and in children. However, the simple and sufficient judgment of evident credibility, which these prudently make on the immediate testimony of learned people or parents, does not lean exclusively on such testimony, but through that it joins the true motives of credibility, confusedly grasped, that is, either the many historical miracles which are told to them or that great and ever-living miracle of the Church itself, to which they belong and in which they know so many wonderful things are contained and manifested.

VI

The Natural Genesis of the Credibility of Revelation

NATURAL REASON ITSELF is physically and morally able to elicit the judgment of evident credibility of the fact of revelation, without the help of supernatural grace, although such help is usually granted.²⁶

Indeed, the fact of revelation, although essentially supernatural in itself, is only modally supernatural in its exterior signs, such as miracles. Hence under this aspect it is essentially natural and falls under the proper object of natural reason, namely, being as found in sensible nature. Thus a miracle is perfectly knowable by natural reason, both as to its historical truth, that is, as a fact subject to our senses, and as to its philosophical truth, that is, as a fact truly miraculous or above natural powers and hence a direct work of God.²⁷ This is the

²⁶ This statement is questioned, without sufficient reason, by a few theologians. Thus the aforementioned *Rousselot* (p. 18) denies the very physical ability of human reason for eliciting such a judgment, even with the aid of grace and after the infusion of faith. F. Taymans (in *Nouvelle revue théologique* [1951] 14-16) and J. B. Alfaro (*Adnotationes in tractatum de virtutibus theologicis* [Rome 1956] 169-176, 197-202, 234-268) grant the physical power, but deny the moral ability for eliciting such a judgment without the aid of grace.

²⁷ *Vatican Council I*, speaking of the preparation to faith, distinguishes between "internal helps of the Holy Spirit" (grace) and "external arguments of revelation, that is, divine deeds, primarily miracles and prophecies, which, because they clearly show the

reason why even devils, obviously without any help of grace but compelled by the evidence of exterior signs, elicit a judgment of evident credibility, cause of a kind of natural faith. St. James points this out in his epistle, saying: "You believe in the one God, that is creditable enough, but the demons have the same belief, and they tremble with fear" (2.19; on the manifestation of this kind of faith in the devils, see Matt. 8.24; Mark 1.2; Acts 16.17; 19.15).

However, since this judgment of credibility is directed to dispose a man to the genesis of supernatural faith, it is becoming to divine providence to help with supernatural grace to make such a judgment easier, by inclining the mind and will of man to the consideration and ready acceptance of the motives of credibility, and even in some exceptional cases by directly, and hence miraculously, supplying the motives of credibility themselves, which perhaps were not sufficiently proposed to some individuals through the ordinary natural ways. As regards children and illiterate men, who have already received the infused habit of faith in their baptism, this faith is already present in the subject, and connaturally inclines them to form the judgment of credibility of the fact of revelation, the foundation of their faith. For, as St. Thomas keenly puts it, "the light of faith makes one see the things that are believed" (*Summa Theol.*, p. 2-2, q. 1, a. 4, ad 3; cf. a. 5, ad 1; q. 2, a. 9, ad 3).

omnipotence and infinite science of God, are evident signs of divine revelation, suitable to every man's intelligence." (Sess. 3, chap. 3). Such an opposition between internal helps and exterior evident signs suitable to the intelligence of everyone, suggests quite clearly that interior grace (or grace properly so called) is not necessary to the actual intelligence of the signs of revelation.

The same meaning must be given to the following parallel text of *Vatican Council II*: "In order to elicit the act of faith, the grace of God and the internal helps of the Holy Spirit must precede and assist, moving and converting the heart to God, opening the eyes of the mind, and giving to everyone sweetness in assenting to and believing the truth." (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, no. 5). In this text "the grace of God," as distinguished from the internal helps of God, means grace in a broader sense, that is, exterior help, such as miracles and prophecies.

VII

Criteria of the Credibility of Revelation

THE AFOREMENTIONED JUDGMENT of evident credibility is based on objective signs or motives or criteria, through which the fact of revelation becomes manifest and hence credible or apt to be believed with a supernatural faith.²⁸ In this criterion three things are required; first, that it be something historically certain (its *historical truth*); second, that it involve a direct and miraculous intervention of God (its *philosophical truth*); third, that it be clearly connected with revelation, that is, made and directed to the purpose of showing the fact of revelation, namely that God has spoken (its *relative truth*).

Since the historical truth and the relative truth can be easily ascertained, *the whole strength and importance of these criteria lie in their philosophical truth*, that is, in the fact that they involve a miraculous effect, which alone is a certain sign of the intervention of God. In this sense there is only one criterion, miracle itself, which is found in all other criteria, classified below, inasmuch as they show more or less clearly their miraculous character. However, since Christian revelation is a mediate and public revelation, to be transmitted to others, its criteria must be not only miraculous, but *exterior and sensible* as well, otherwise its divine origin would not be manifest to others. Hence, the miraculous revelation, given im-

²⁸ They are called either *signs* (marks), because they lead to the knowledge of the fact of revelation; or *motives* of credibility, because they move to faith; or, more aptly under our apologetical viewpoint, *criteria* of revelation (from the Greek "krinein," to discern), because, as distinctive signs, they lead us properly to discern or distinguish revelation from other facts.

mediately and interiorly to prophets and apostles by God and certified personally to them through a miraculous and interior sign, does not become a criterion for Christian public revelation, unless it is also shown through a sensible sign, that is through a new miraculous intervention of God perceptible by the senses, which would certify for us that such men are speaking as God's legates.

These criteria can be *divided* as follows:

Subjective, which are found within man (such as a satisfying experience of spiritual peace and joy; the fulfillment of the higher tendencies and aspirations of human nature).

Objective, which are found outside man.

Intrinsic to revealed truth itself (such as sublimity of doctrine and its wonderful fruits in the life of Christians).

Extrinsic to revealed truth (physical miracles and prophecies).

This division follows both a logical order, as is self-evident, and an order of value and importance, which gradually grows in descending direction, down to the physical miracles and prophecies, which are "The Criteria" by antonomasia, as will be shown below (pp. 63 ff.).

Part II

The Fact of Revelation (Practical Apologetics)

IN THE PRECEDING PART, which we called "Theoretical Apologetics," we have discussed the general notions of revelation and credibility, showing that a true and supernatural revelation of God, if any has come to pass, can be known with certainty and made evidently credible to man. In this second part, which can be called "Practical Apologetics," we deal with the fact of revelation itself, endeavoring to show, with suitable criteria or proofs, that revelation has in fact been made, namely, that God really has spoken to mankind.

Since what we claim to be God's revelation is contained principally in Christ's testimony,²⁹ first entrusted to the apostles and then faithfully kept and constantly transmitted by the Church, before expounding the various criteria or the miraculous interventions of God which prove such testimony to be true, it is fitting to give, in a first introductory chapter (chap. 8), a brief and general summary of this revelation, which in its breadth is sufficiently known from the Bible itself and particularly from the Gospel.

²⁹ From time to time, even the question of the historical Jesus is brought up. Cf. F. M. Braun, *Où en est le problème de Jésus*, Bruxelles 1932; J. G. H. Hoffmann, *Les vies de Jésus et le Jésus de l'histoire*, Paris 1947; M. Goguel, *Jésus* (2nd ed., Paris 1950) 39-80, 132-140; I. De la Potterie, "Come impostare oggi il problema del Gesù storico?", *Civiltà cattolica* 120 (1969) 2, pp. 447-463; Ch. C. Anderson, *Critical Quests of Jesus*, Grand Rapids 1969; Ch. Anderson, *The Historical Jesus: A Continuing Quest*, Grand Rapids 1972.

The subsequent four chapters will show the character and value of the various criteria, following the division just given above, that is, of the subjective criteria (chap. 9), of the objective intrinsic criteria (chap. 10), and of the objective extrinsic criteria, divided into physical miracles (chap. 11) and prophecies (chap. 12). We will end our apologetical treatise with a Conclusion about the obligation of believing the revelation made by God and the genesis of the supernatural act of faith (chap. 13).

VIII

Christ's Testimony About His Mission As Herald of God's Revelation³⁰

THIS MISSION IS IMPLICIT in the very dignity of Messiah,³¹ which Christ claims for himself. Christ calls himself and is called by others Messiah, the Messiah whom the prophets had announced and the Jews were expecting. To John the Baptist's disciples inquiring of him: "Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another," he answers in the affirmative to the first part of the inquiry, referring them to the miracles he is working. He implicitly approves Andrew's statement

³⁰ Christ's testimony about his Divinity is not directly considered here, as being rather one of the objects of the revelation of God. For our apologetical purpose it is sufficient to show that Christ testified to the fact of revelation, saying that God has spoken to man, and that he himself is the speaker for God, the herald of God's revelation. Once granted the Divinity of Christ, which is dogmatically more important, it follows that Christ is not only the speaker for God and the herald of revelation, but is God himself speaking and revealing.

³¹ The title *Messiah* (from the Aramaic "Mesiah" and the Hebrew "Máshiah," anointed, translated into Greek as "Kristós," anointed) in the Greek version of the Old Testament, is rendered constantly by the name "Kristós" (Christ); in the New Testament it occurs only twice, with the Greek word "Kristós" as an explanation: John 1.41: "We have found the Messiah (which interpreted is Christ)"; 4.25: "I know that Messiah is coming (who is called Christ)." The corresponding title "Kristós," as a proper name, occurs very frequently, often coupled with the name Jesus, "Jesus Christ" (Matt. 1.1; John 17.3; Acts 5.42; 9.34; Rom.1.1, 4,6,8).

to Peter his brother: "We have found the Messiah" (John 1.41). To the Samaritan woman who was talking of the expected Messiah, Christ says directly: "I who speak with you am he" (John 4.26); he emphatically approves Peter's confession: "You are the Christ [that is, the Messiah]" (Matt. 16.15-17); to the Jews murmuring against him, he says: "If you believed Moses you would believe me also, for he wrote of me [Deut. 18.15,18]" (John 5.46). To Caiphas asking him with the solemnity of a religious judge: "I adjure you by the living God that you tell us whether you are the Christ, the son of God," Jesus simply answered: "You have said it" (Matt. 26.63ff.); he allows others (as Peter and Caiphas, above) to call him Christ, which is the same as Messiah; he calls himself Christ (Matt. 23.10: "One only is your master, the Christ"; John 17.3: "That they may know you, the only true God, and him whom you have sent, Jesus Christ"; cf. Matt. 22.42). The very title "Christ," simply the translation of the title "Messiah," occurring very often in Scripture as the proper name of Jesus,³² testifies to his messianic mission.

The biblical concept of Messiah, as was expressed by the prophets themselves and kept in the Jewish tradition, implied the threefold function of king, priest, and *prophet or teacher from God, herald of God's revelation*. Moses prophesied: "A prophet like me will the Lord, your God, raise up for you from among your own kinsmen; to him you shall listen . . . And the Lord said to me: . . . I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their kinsmen, and will put my words into his mouth; he shall tell them all that I command him" (Deut. 18.15,18; cf. John 5.46; Acts 3.22). Isaias described this magisterial function of the future Messiah in the following prophecy: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me. He has sent me to preach to the meek, to heal the contrite of heart, and to preach a release to the captives and deliverance to them that are shut up, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God" (Is.61.1 f.). Christ applied this prophecy to himself, saying to the Jews in the synagogue at Nazareth: "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4.18-21).

³² See preceding footnote.

The persuasion of the common people is simply expressed in the words of the Samaritan woman to Christ: "I know that Messiah is coming (who is called Christ), and when he comes he will tell us all things," Christ applied the full meaning of this to himself, saying: "I who speak with you am he" (John 4.25 ff.).

Christ exercised de facto the proper magisterial function of Messiah by communicating to men, as legate of God, divine revelation about truths to be believed and precepts to be observed. St. John in the prologue of his gospel calls Christ "the true light that enlightens every man who comes into the world" (1.9). At the age of twelve, as a future teacher, he is "in the temple, sitting in the midst of teachers, listening to them and asking them questions; and all who were listening to him were amazed at his understanding and his answers" (Luke 2.46 f.). At the start of his public life he applied to himself the prophecy of Isaias, quoted above, and "from that time . . . [he] began to preach, and to say: 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand'" (Matt. 4.17), and "they were astonished at his teaching, for his word was with authority" (Luke 4.32; cf. Matt. 7.29).

Christ declared that he was preaching *not on his own initiative, but as sent by God* to spread the "gospel," to inaugurate "the kingdom of God." For example: Luke 4.43: "I must proclaim the kingdom of God, for this is why I have been sent"; John 18.37: "This is why I was born and why I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth"; Luke 4.18-21: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me . . . to bring good news to the poor he has sent me . . . to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of recompense . . . Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing"; John 12.49 ff.: "I have not spoken in my own authority, but he who sent me, the Father, has commanded me what I should say, and what I should declare. And I know that his commandment is everlasting life. The things, therefore, that I speak, I speak as the Father has bidden me."

The object of Christ's testimony, which we call God's revelation, is described as the "gospel" (in Greek "euanghélion," "good news," from "éu", well, and "anghelia," news); and the

"kingdom of God." It consists generically in the "knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 13.11), of those things that are known only by the Father and the Son and are revealed by them to whom they choose (Matt. 11.25-27), things pertaining to "everlasting life" (John 12.50). It consists particularly in a well-defined and specific body of supernatural truths and precepts, which are individually indicated and explained in the Gospel through the mouth of Christ himself, expounded in the epistles of the apostles, and divulged through the ages by the Church founded by Christ for this purpose. To this Church Christ gave the command to perpetuate his preaching and hand over his testimony of God's revelation through the ages; Matt. 24.14: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world, for a witness to all nations: and then will come the end"; 28.18: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations . . . , teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and behold I am with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world."

IX

Subjective Criteria of the
Fact of Revelation

BY SUBJECTIVE CRITERIA we mean the proofs that are derived directly from the subject, namely, found within man himself. These criteria can be expressed and determined in several ways and considered under different aspects, but they all amount generically to a fulfillment of the various human aspirations, both intellectual and moral, which arise in the individual man and in the collectivity, such as individual longing for interior peace and joy, universal aspiration for truth, religion, morality, virtue, justice, stability of family and society. We shall consider first the existence of such a fulfillment of human aspirations through revelation or Christian religion, and then its apologetical value, that is, whether it is an evident sign or criterion of the fact of revelation, the supernatural origin of this religion.

1. *Christian revelation greatly satisfies and fulfills all human aspirations, in both the intellectual and the moral order.*³³

³³ This fact is denied by *Rationalism*, which rejects the fittingness (even the possibility itself) of revelation, as being harmful to human reason (see above, pp. 5, 11). Against it *Pius IX* declares that "faith is the teacher of life, the guide of salvation, the expeller of all vices, the fecund parent and nurse of virtues . . . , the one who 'preached peace, announced good things' (Isa. 52.7) to all." (Encycl. "Qui pluribus," 1846, Denz. 2779). *Vatican Council I* attributes to the Church "inexhaustible fruitfulness in all good things" (sess. 3, chap. 3, on faith), adding that the Church "far from opposing the culture of human arts and sciences, aids and promotes it in many

The individual aspirations or deepest longings of every man for peace and joy of mind, for human dignity, for personal liberty, for freedom of conscience or religious freedom, are safeguarded and fulfilled by Christian doctrine. *Vatican Council II* declares: "The Church truly knows that only God . . . meets the deepest desires of the human heart, which is never fully satiated by earthly nourishment" (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, no.41). "The Church is able to shelter the dignity of human nature against all wavering opinions, for example, those which either undervalue or excessively glorify the human body. By no human law can human personal dignity and liberty be so safely guarded, as by Christ's gospel, entrusted to the Church" (*ibid.*). "Only in freedom can man direct himself to righteousness, that same freedom which is so highly priced and eagerly sought by our contemporaries . . . Man's dignity itself requires that he act according to conscious and free choice . . . But man obtains such dignity when, freeing himself from all slavery to passion, he seeks his goal in the free choice of righteousness and searches, with effective and sagacious diligence, for the suitable means to that end. Since man's freedom has been wounded by sin, he is unable to achieve effectively and fully such relationship with God without the help of his grace" (*ibid.*, no.17). "The human person has a right to religious freedom. Such freedom consists in this, that all men must be

ways." (Chap. 4, Denz. 3013, 3019).

More recent documents of the Magisterium, particularly those of social character, show how aptly the Christian revelation meets the weighty problems of the present age, both individual and social. Thus *Leo XIII*, Encycl. "Immortale Dei," 1885, and "Libertas," 1888; *Pius XI*, Encycl. "Divini illius Magistri," 1929, "Casti connubii," 1930, and "Quadragesimo anno," 1931; *Pius XII*, Encycl. "Summi pontificatus," 1939; *John XXIII*, Encycl. "Mater et Magistra," 1961, and "Pacem in terris," 1963; particularly *Vatican Council II*, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World "Gaudium et spes," Dec. 7, 1965, which extensively shows the fittingness of the Christian doctrine in the present conditions of the world, regarding the individual (no. 41), society generically (no. 42), marriage and family (nos. 47-52), culture (nos. 52-62), socio-economic life (nos. 63-72), political life (nos. 73-76), and international relations (nos. 77-90).

immune from coercion on the part of individuals, of social groups, and of any human power . . . The right to religious freedom is rooted in the very dignity of the human person, as is made manifest by the revealed word of God and by reason itself" (Declaration on Religious Freedom, no.2).

The universal aspirations in the intellectual and speculative order, that is, the quest for truth, which is innate to man (for, as St. Augustine puts it, there is nothing that man desires more than knowing the truth), are fulfilled by Christian revelation. Indeed, this religion offers to man definite and secure doctrines about God, the unknown Supreme Being, who is necessarily found at the end of every man's search for truth, even at the very bottom of Atheism itself, for man is naturally religious and his "soul is naturally Christian" (Tertullian, *Against Marcion* 1.10). It gives to man a suitable explanation of the origin, the course and finality of the world, by appealing to the concept of creation and to the truth of divine providence and government. It gives a suitable solution to the problem of man's own origin and destiny, which touches and troubles him intimately, particularly in some major events of life, as in suffering and failures, in catastrophe and death; such human riddle cannot be solved but through the same doctrines about God's creation and providence, and through belief in eternal life and in an ultimate settlement of things.³⁴

As to the universal aspirations in the intellectual practical order, that is, in the order of human practical culture and civilization, which are keenly felt and promoted in the modern

³⁴ *Vatican Council II*: "Man's dignity has its foundations and its full achievement in God himself . . . Hence, when a divine foundation and the hope of an eternal life are lacking, man's dignity is most grievously injured, as is often shown by current events, and the riddles of life and death, of guilt and sorrow, remain unsolved, so that men are easily driven to despair. Meanwhile every man becomes an unsolved puzzle to himself, however obscurely he may be aware of it. For, on certain occurrences, particularly when major events of life take place, no one can simply avoid considering such a puzzle; to which God alone can supply a full and satisfactory solution, by inviting man to the knowledge of higher things and to humble search for truth." (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, no. 21).

age, the Church has always fostered and satisfied them within the limits and exigencies of its spiritual and primary mission.³⁵

In the first centuries the Church adopted the best of Graeco-Roman civilization, saved it from the general collapse of the Roman Empire, extended it to barbarian peoples together with Christian revelation, prevented it from fading away in the succeeding dark ages, and helped it to mingle with and to impregnate the rising new civilization of the Middle Ages. In the following centuries up to the present time, never did the Church cease keeping pace with the progress of culture and civilization, inasmuch as it was fitting to its primary mission which is to evangelize, not to civilize, the world. Recently Vatican Council II has directed its attention in a particular way to the values of temporal things and the ways of fostering the modern culture, also in its practical and corporal aspect.³⁶

³⁵ Note the following words of Pius XI to M. D. Roland-Gosselin: "It is necessary never to lose sight of the fact that the objective of the Church is to evangelize, not to civilize. If it civilizes, it is for the sake of evangelization." (*Semaines sociales de France*, Versailles 1936, pp. 461-462).

³⁶ The Council teaches that the *human body* has its own proper value and hence no one is allowed to despise his bodily life (Pastoral Constitution on the Church, nos. 14, 41). *Temporal things in general* have their value, not only extrinsically, because they help man in the attainment of his ultimate goal, but also intrinsically, because they were made by God, who, after creating the material world "saw . . . it was very good" (Gen. 1.31), and because of their relationship both to the human person, for which they were made, and to Christ, to whom God ordained all things, even material (Col. 1.18) (Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, no. 7).

Hence there should be a general concern in the Church as a whole for cultivating and promoting the construction and development of the temporal order in the right way, and directing it to God through Christ (*Ibid.*, and Pastoral Constitution on the Church, no. 39). In particular, this concern regards both the bishops, who should know that earthly things and temporal institutions are related to man's salvation and contribute to the welfare of the Church (Decree on the Bishops' pastoral office, no. 12), and to the laity, who, as in their own proper field, should cooperate in the development of human labor, technical skill, and civic culture, considering the renewal of the temporal order as their special obligation (Dogmatic Constitu-

However, since material culture is only indirectly linked with the primary mission of the Church and with supernatural revelation itself, no one can reasonably expect to find necessarily in the Catholic nations a higher standard of civilization than in pagan or non-Catholic countries. On this subject of human culture or civilization, there is a general misunderstanding, due to the ambiguity of the two words themselves. Man is composed of body, intellectual faculties and moral faculties. The human culture or advancement and the human civil behavior is likewise threefold, that is, in ascending gradation of perfection, corporal, intellectual and moral. The moral culture and that part of the intellectual culture which is concerned with religious truth (Ethics and Theodicy) are expected to be, and are in fact, much higher in Christian nations, while the other part of intellectual culture and the physical or corporal culture can be lower or higher or equal according to contingent causes and circumstances. It can even happen that some of the principles of revealed ethics, as the importance of caring more about the salvation of the soul and about eternity, than about the body and temporal things, or the necessity of suffering and expiation, may lead some persons or peoples, either by false interpretation or by undue exaggeration or by the very desire for Christian perfection, to draw back or proceed at a much lower step on the path of culture and civilization. On the contrary, for opposite reasons of pagan or materialistic or atheistic trend, it may happen that other peoples or classes of people, discarding every idea of spiritual values and every hope of future life, trusting simply in their own moral liberty and devoting themselves entirely to the acquisition and development of bodily and material things, progress at a much speedier pace on the way of material progress and culture, while they draw back from moral culture.³⁷ Thus the Graeco-

tion on the Church, no. 36; Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, no. 7).

³⁷ *Vatican Council II*: "The modern world shows itself at once strong and weak, capable of the best and of the worst deeds, while it finds wide open before itself the road to liberty or slavery, to progress or regress, to brotherhood or hatred. Moreover, man becomes aware that it is up to him to lead in the right direction the forces which he has untied and which may oppress him or obey

Roman culture was physically and intellectually higher than the Hebrew, but morally much lower; several of the modern Communistic nations, as the Soviet, seem to proceed faster in the physical and scientific culture than some of the Christian nations, but they descend lower and lower in the realm of moral and religious culture.

The universal aspirations of men in the moral order, regarding both the end of man (his final and total happiness) and the means to that end (which are the various virtues, whose seeds were planted by the Creator in the human conscience), are particularly fulfilled by Christian doctrine and practice. Revelation recalls and confirms the natural truth that *man's true and final happiness* is found only in the knowledge and love of God, who is man's beginning and end, according to St. Augustine's maxim: "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you" (*Confessions* 1.1). Moreover, it supernaturally manifests to man the possibility and the existence of an immediate union with God through the beatific vision, which surpasses the power and the efficacious desire of human nature. Revelation fulfills the aspirations of man to *virtue*, strengthening the natural motives of the different virtues and completing them by the addition of supernatural motives. Thus the highest virtue of *religion*, whose seeds are naturally planted in every human conscience (for man is naturally religious and in this sense his "soul is naturally Christian," as emphatically stated by Tertullian, *Against Marcion* 1.10), is perfected through revelation by the removal of all kinds of false mysticism and superstition, into which those same people often incline who deny a personal God and check in their conscience the true natural religious instinct. Besides, revelation adds to natural religion a pure interior worship of the Divinity, joined to a definitely determined and suitable exterior worship, consisting mainly in Christ's eucharistic sacrifice and the reception of the sanctify-

him." (*Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, no. 9). "In the present time, not a few people, excessively trusting in the progress of the natural sciences and technical arts, have fallen into an idolatry of temporal things, thus becoming their slaves rather than their masters." (Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, no. 7).

ing sacraments. The virtue of *prudence* is freed from the admixture or adulteration of a sort of utilitarianism. The virtue of *fortitude* rises even to the palm of martyrdom. The virtue of *temperance* (which fosters the institution of temperance societies, particularly against alcoholism) is enriched and elevated by the motives of mortification and expiation. The virtue of *justice* is tempered by supernatural mercy and love, which alone are able to remove disagreement and strife in families and society, and to diffuse among men a true peace that no natural motives can promise.

The entire proof of our statement is confirmed by three signs. First, by the generally outstanding character of the life of Christian individuals, families and societies. Second, by the spontaneous testimony of individuals, converted to our faith, who acknowledged that they found in it all the benefits they had sought in vain elsewhere. Third, by the adaptability of revealed religion to all men and nations of whatever character or culture, a thing which has not happened in the case of other religions. Paganism, Buddhism, Islamism and late Judaism, continuously flourished only within the narrow limits of a single people or place.

2. Apologetical value of the subjective criteria.

Notwithstanding its marvelous character and its subjective force of attraction, such a fulfillment of human aspirations by revealed religion is *not objectively a sufficient criterion of the fact of revelation*, that is, one which would be the basis for an evident and certain judgment that our religion has a revealed and supernatural origin, and hence is suitable for being believed and indeed one which must be believed with supernatural faith.³⁸ The reason is, because such a marvelous ful-

³⁸ A rather recent opinion among Catholic writers holds, on the contrary, that these subjective criteria are fully sufficient, and even equal in strength to the objective criteria, or stronger than these, or simply the only sufficient criteria. Hence it advocates a radical change in Catholic Apologetics, to be built only, or primarily, or at least equally, on subjective criteria.

The reason for removing the traditional Apologetics (based on objective criteria, principally miracles and prophecies) and introducing a new Apologetics or a "method of immanence" (called

fillment, even taken in its entirety, does not clearly and exteriorly bear the character of a true miracle, that is, of a direct and extraordinary intervention of God, marking it with the seal of his testimony. Hence, absolutely speaking, it could be attributed to a natural cause or to the confluence of several natural causes, which would prove only the outstanding character of our religion, as the best among natural religions, or even as the only true natural religion; but not, however, prove it to be a supernatural religion.

"Apologetics of Immanence," or "Apologetics of Adaptation," or "Apologetics of Integration") is the merely intellectual character of the old Apologetics, which is either insufficient in itself or at least inadequate to the mind of modern man.

According to Maurice Blondel (+1949), the founder of this new Apologetics, and his principal disciple L. Laberthonnière (+1932), objective criteria, particularly physical miracles, are altogether insufficient because the philosophical nature of a miracle, as a derogation of natural laws by God, cannot be known with certainty, as there are no fixed laws in nature, and therefore no ontological changes or exceptions of laws, but only apparent changes. Hence the only possible Apologetics is that of immanence.

According to others, the objective method, although valuable in itself, is practically insufficient for modern man, imbued as he is with rationalistic principles. Hence it must be either simply replaced by the subjective method (thus L. Ollé-Laprune, Blondel's teacher, and G. Fonsegrive, advocating simply an Apologetics of adaptation), or joined and strengthened with the subjective method, without which it would be insufficient (thus, among others, A. Liégé, J. Levie, A. de Bovis, N. Dunas, pleading for an Apologetics of integration).

Cf. Blondel, *L'action*, Paris 1893; second edition in 2 volumes, Paris 1936-37; *La philosophie et l'esprit chrétien*, 2 vols., Paris 1944-46; Laberthonnière, *Essais de philosophie religieuse*, Paris 1903; *Réalisme chrétien et idéalisme grec*, Paris 1904 (both volumes placed on the Index); Dunas, "Les problèmes et le statut de l'apologétique," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 43 (1959) 643-680.

For ampler knowledge of Blondel's theory and its development, see R. Aubert, *Le problème de l'acte de la foi* (éd. 2, Louvain 1950) 277-337. For a right appraisal and refutation of this doctrine, see C. Boyer, in *Gregorianum* (1935) 485-503.

Of course, some of the elements shown above, as the beatific vision of God, the eucharistic sacrifice and the sacraments, the higher motives of Christian virtues, are in themselves intrinsically supernatural, and several of the other things included in the marvelous fulfillment of human aspirations may be modally supernatural, that is produced miraculously, but the supernatural or miraculous character of both is not visible and cannot be proved with certainty, since they have only a subjective value, that is, the fulfillment of subjective aspirations. For, this subjective value of doctrines and practices is of itself indefinite and variable, according to the different psychology and customs of peoples, so that a thing which completely satisfies one, may satisfy another less or not at all. Hence we see men easily satisfied in their own religion, as a Jew, trusting only in Mosaic law and the old revelation, a Mohammedan, trusting only the Koran, a Buddhist, resting peacefully in Brahmanic contemplation and expectation. We even see people easily shifting from one religion to another in order to find a satisfaction of some individual aspirations not found in their former religion.

Although objectively insufficient, such a criterion has nevertheless the force of a solid *probability* of the divine miraculous intervention to fulfill in the described manner all the human aspirations. By reason of its probability and especially of the force of attraction which it exercises on many people, particularly in modern times, this criterion is in practice *very useful*, at least for a start on the road to faith and as a stepping stone for the search and consideration of the objective and certain criteria, which alone are sufficient and required to elicit the judgment of evident credibility, the necessary prerequisite for the act of supernatural faith. Just as in other matters probability often leads to certitude, so such a probable criterion, with the aid of subjective inclinations and of the apologetical art of the preacher, who would fittingly and opportunely present it to the various categories of men, may lead to the willing and right consideration of the objective criteria, and through these to the certain judgment of credibility.

Moreover, it is probable that the various subjective criteria, taken all together, could be made sufficient through their

change into an objective criterion, that is by considering them as a *true miracle of the moral order*, inasmuch as, in view of the natural weakness of the will and the moral inability of the intellect for a suitable acquisition of the natural truths of religion (see above, p. 13 f.) it would seem impossible that the Christian religion could fully satisfy all the moral and intellectual aspirations of man without being a miraculous effect of God. But in this way we have no longer a subjective, but an objective internal criterion, to be reduced to the criterion of the sublimity and fruits of Christian doctrine. Moreover its sufficiency is not certain, as will be shown below (pp. 54-57).

X

Objective Intrinsic Criteria of the
Fact of Revelation

ACCORDING TO THE SKETCH given above (p. 25), these criteria are found in and derived from the revealed truth itself, as its properties. They can be reduced to three: 1) *the sublimity of the revealed doctrine* and its marvelous fruits, shown both in 2) *the sanctity of its believers*, and in 3) *the marvelous propagation, Catholic unity, and unaltered stability of the Church*.

Like in the preceding question, we shall consider first the existence of these three properties and then their apologetical value, that is whether they are evident criteria or signs of the fact of divine revelation.

1. *The Christian doctrine is truly sublime in its articles, and marvelous in its fruits, that is in the sanctity of its believers and in the propagation, unity and stability of the Church.*

A. *Sublimity of the revealed doctrine.*

The very historical *origin* of Christian doctrine bears the signs of a wondrous happening. In fact Christ did not learn it from rabbinic schools, which he did not attend, nor directly from the books of the Old Testament, for on the one hand he did not have the means and social conditions for a particular study of Scripture, as is evident from the Gospel itself, and on the other hand in his own teaching he surpassed by far the doctrines and the laws of the books of the Old Testament. Hence the wonder, that the twelve year old boy already aroused in the doctors of the temple "amazed at his understanding

and his answers (Luke 2.47). And later on there was the continued admiration of the people from the beginning of his public ministry: "And all bore him witness, and marvelled at the words of grace that came from his mouth. And they said: Is not this Joseph's son?" (Luke 4.22); "And when he had come to his own country, he began to teach them in their synagogues, so that they were astonished, and said: 'How did this man come by this wisdom and these miracles? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary?'" (Matt. 13.54 f.). Again: "Jesus went into the temple and began to teach. And the Jews marvelled, saying: 'How does this man come by learning, since he has not studied?'" (John 7.15); "The attendants answered: 'Never has man spoken as this man'" (John 7.47). Christ himself gave an answer to all such wondering, saying to the same Jews in the temple: "My teaching is not my own, but his who sent me" (John 7.16).

Likewise, the *manner of his teaching* bears an extraordinary character, as appears from the simplicity and beauty of its form (especially in the parables), from the clarity of pronouncements (cf. Matt. 5 to 7, the Sermon on the Mount), from its controversial effectiveness (Matt. 12.33 ff.; Luke 11.14 ff.), from the gravity and clarity of the accusations against the doctors of the law (Matt. 23.1 ff.), and mainly from the teaching authority shown to the people: "The crowds were astonished at his teaching; for he was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their Scribes and Pharisees" (Matt. 7.28 f.).³⁹

The doctrine in itself shows perfection and harmony, the two constituent parts of the concept of sublimity. This is evident as regards the *natural truths*, taught by Christ, which agree with and afford the necessary complement to whatever natural reason can find about the essence and attributes of God, and about the nature and the properties of man (spirituality and immortality of the soul), as well as man's moral conditions (purpose of life, moral law, reward, destiny, briefly: human ethics). This perfection of doctrine is the cause of the admirable fulfillment of the intellectual and moral aspira-

³⁹ Cf. P. Quinsat, "La manière dont Jésus parlait," *Maison-Dieu* (1954) 59-82.

tions, of which we have spoken above (pp. 32 ff.).

The same perfection and harmony appears also in the *supernatural truths* revealed by Christ. For, notwithstanding their lofty and mysterious nature, no opposition can be found either between themselves or with natural reason, but to a careful analysis they rather manifest a general fittingness and harmony.

Thus the mystery of the *Trinity* of persons in God is not opposed to the natural truth of the oneness of God, but completes it by the distinction of nature and person, and the twofold trinitarian processions of the Son from the Father and of the Holy Spirit from both finds an imperfect but significant illustration in the natural acts of the human intellect and will (the interior word proceeding from the intellect, and love proceeding from both). The mystery of the *Incarnation* is not opposed to divine perfection, which remains unchanged and untouched by it, and completes the notion of divine providence, particularly through the twin mystery of *redemption*, which brings this providence to its apex. The mystery of *grace*, or man's elevation to the supernatural order, completes the rational perfection of human nature. The mystery of *original sin* agrees with the inner weakness of human nature and gives a suitable explanation of its evil inclinations and of the general evil and misery in the world. The mystery of *eternal life and beatific vision* matches with the natural truth of the immortality of the soul and with a certain natural desire of seeing God in himself (cf. above, p. 9 f.), and at the same time completes the mystery of grace, which is the seed of eternal life and the root of the beatific vision. The mystery of *hell* is fitting to the truths of law, justice and divine providence. *Supernatural law and ethics* are in perfect agreement with and complete the natural law and ethics (see what has been said above, on p. 37 f., about the completion of natural virtues by the supernatural).

There are of course several difficult and opposed concepts, inherent to the supernatural nature of these mysteries; but, far from proving in them a real contradiction or unfittingness, they show rather their great perfection or sublimity, which consists precisely in unifying into a higher synthesis things

that are opposed in a lower sphere. Thus in the mystery of Trinity, unity and plurality are joined in the same simple Being; in the Incarnation, infinite divine nature and finite human nature; in redemption, justice and mercy; in the elevation of man, nature and supernature; in the mystery of hell, and of Christ, at once redeemer and judge, the greatest mercy and the strictest justice; in Christian ethics, life with death, perfection with renunciation, contemplation with action, simplicity with prudence.

The proper perfection and originality of Christian doctrine is further shown *through its comparison with the doctrines of other religions*. For in no other religion or philosophy can we find such perfect fittingness with and completion of the truths of natural religion and ethics. In no one, *a fortiori*, are found the supernatural mysteries mentioned above nor the higher ethics based on supernatural motives. The few similarities that are found between the Christian religion and the others are only apparent or superficial, since they mingle with greater and fundamental differences regarding the proper and formal object of the various truths. Moreover they are due to some fundamental human ideas and exigencies, to which Christ himself necessarily had to adapt his religion, although it is essentially different from the others. Such are the messianic mission (as in Christ and Mohammed), the doctrinal authority (as in Christ and other religious leaders), the various cultural practices, inspired by natural religion, as prayer, sacrifice, communication with the Divinity, the rite of ablution or purification, and the sacrificial meal. Every one of these truths or practices is specifically different in the Christian religion, as is evident, for instance, in Christ, the Messiah, who is at once man and God, as well as the revealer of supernatural truths; in the Church, at once perfect visible society and Mystical Body; in Baptism, cause of interior regeneration; in the Eucharist, sacrifice of the body of Christ, really present, and immediate participation of it.

In view of such fundamental and essential differences it is also evident that the truths of Christian religion *were not derived or borrowed from any of the pagan religions or philosophies*, infected with doctrinal polytheism and fatalism, ambiguous and often shameful rites, ethical utilitarianism and

personalism. All of this St. Paul includes in the following reprobation: "Do not bear the yoke with unbelievers. For what has justice in common with iniquity? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial?" (2 Cor. 6.14 f.). Nor is Christian religion properly derived from Judaism itself, but it has only preserved, fulfilled and surpassed that indeed true and supernatural religion, thus showing its own perfection and originality.

B. *The fruits of sanctity, produced by the revealed doctrine.*

These fruits are shown both in Christ himself, at once founder of the new religion and exemplar to his followers, and in the Church, taken as a whole and considered particularly in some of its outstanding members, namely the martyrs.

The entire life of Christ, as historically related in the Gospel, is a witness to his holiness and lofty virtues. In vain did his adversaries, Scribes and Pharisees, seek anything in his actions that could be an object of calumny or accusation; hence, without fear of contradiction in the midst of one of the hottest controversies, he challenged them, saying: "Which of you can convict me of sin?" (John 8.46). And during the final showdown in the court of justice before Caiphaz "the chief priests and all the Sanhedrin were seeking false witness against Jesus, that they might put him to death, but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward" (Matt. 26.59 f.), so that the judge himself had to provoke Christ to saying that he was the Son of God, to build up against him a charge of blasphemy and justify the death sentence (Matt. 26.63-66).

Christ shows a high degree of perfection in the field of every virtue. His *religion and charity toward God*, his Father, is summarized in the following declaration: "My food is to do the will of him who sent me, to accomplish his work" (John 4.34). His *charity toward his neighbor* is shown in his entire salvific mission throughout his public life, in the unceasing ministry of preaching, in the healing of sick, in the forgiveness of offenses, which made him address his traitor with the name of "friend" (Matt. 26.50) and pray for his persecutors on the cross (Luke 23.34), and finally in dying, as a criminal, in behalf of all mankind, for "greater love than this no one has,

that one lay down his life for his friends" (John 15.13).

His *prudence* is manifested in the way he gradually inculcates his messianic and divine dignity, in order to avoid the false political interpretation of his mission by the common people and a reaction on the part of the Scribes and Pharisees, as well as in the indirect and efficacious manner he answers the insidious questions of the same doctors (as on the condemnation of the adulterous woman, John 8.3-9; on the tribute due to Caesar, Matt. 22.15-22; on his divine Sonship, Matt. 22.46; on his teaching authority, Matt. 21.23-27). His *justice* is shown particularly in driving out the sellers and the buyers from the temple (Matt. 21.12 f.) and in publicly exposing the vices of the Pharisees (Matt. 23.1-36); his *temperance*, in the simplicity and poverty of his life, such as to be able to say: "The Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (Matt. 8.20); his *fortitude* (combined with patience and perseverance), in bearing the continued persecution of the doctors of the law, in standing for truth against all false accusation in their court of justice. And finally in giving, through a painful and patient martyrdom, the supreme testimony of his sanctity and his divine mission.

The life of the Church shows likewise an extraordinary sanctity, and an unflinching moral fruitfulness, both in the world at large and especially in its own members.

The Church, through its doctrines and laws, has restored or improved the morals of *the world*. First in the *individuals*, for many crimes and corrupted customs, which were common and tolerated among pagans (as pederasty, sodomy, unstable concubinate, sacred prostitution), gradually fell into disuse in Christian times or were at least commonly considered as grave depravities. Secondly, in *family life*, as is clear from the restored dignity of women, the rights of children protected against the tyranny of fathers, the expulsion of polygamy and easy divorce, the prohibition of abortion and of the various practices preventing human fecundation. Finally, in *civil society*, as is evident from the abolition of slavery, the care of the poor, the sick, and the weak, the abolition of political tyranny, the condemnation of racial discrimination, the protection of private property, the promotion of peace among

peoples and the fostering of the so-called international law.⁴⁰

The Church fosters and in many of its members obtains the so-called *common sanctity*, as is clear from the common observance of several difficult precepts, particularly about mortification, chastity (both in individual and in family life), sacramental confession, and of the peculiar evangelical counsels (poverty, chastity, obedience) which have given rise to many religious communities. It obtains also in several of its members a *heroic sanctity*, as is evident from the lives of Saints and particularly from the causes of canonization.

Among these, the *martyrs*⁴¹ deserve a particular mention, for they represent of themselves a particular and outstanding witness to the supernatural character of Christian religion, or a particular criterion of revelation.

As regards the *history* of martyrs,⁴² in the first three cen-

⁴⁰ Among the greatest philosophers, *Plato* pleads for the introduction of a general form of communism, both social and domestic, by which everything should be common, including women, and *Aristotle* tries to justify absolute slavery through the principles of natural law. Both of them defend also suppression of deformed children or previous abortion (cf. *Aristotle, Polit.*, book 7, no. 1335; however see the mild interpretation of St. Thomas, *ibid.*, lesson 12). The primitive *Roman law*, called "Law of the Ten Tables," bore such an article: "The father shall quickly kill a child conspicuously deformed" (table 4), and later *Seneca*, a philosopher and Nero's tutor, justified such a law and practice, by saying: "No wrath, but reason, sets apart the useless from the healthy." (*On Wrath* 1.15).

⁴¹ Martyr (from the Greek "mártus," witness) is generically understood to be one who by dying or suffering a deadly pain for the faith of Christ (hence death or pain inflicted by an enemy of the faith, as such) gives witness to Christ. For a more precise concept of martyrdom, see St. Thomas, *Summa Theol.* p.2-2, q.124; E. Hocedez, "Le concept de martyre," *Nouvelle revue théologique* 45 (1928) 81-99, 198-208; R. Hedde, "Martyre," *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* 10-1 (Paris 1928) 220-233.

⁴² Cf. P. Allard, "Martyre," *Dictionnaire apologétique de la foi catholique* (ed. 4, Paris 1926) 331-492; H. Grégoire, *Les persécutions dans l'empire romain*, Bruxelles 1951; E. De Moreau, *La persécution du Christianisme dans l'empire romain*, Paris 1951; *Nouvelle revue théologique* 73 (1951) 812-832.

turies there were no less than twelve successive and general persecutions by decrees of the Roman emperors (the first under Nero in 64 and the last under Julian the Apostate in 363; the most violent and more general persecution was that of Diocletian from 303 to 311). In the following centuries up to the present time, persecutions have been only sporadic and local (as during the French, Russian, Mexican, and Spanish revolutions, and under the Soviet regime). It cannot be doubted that the *number of martyrs* in the Roman persecutions (which particularly come under our consideration) was very large, although it cannot be either exactly or approximately determined; this is testified by some pagan witnesses (*Tacitus, Annal.* 15.44; *Pliny the Younger, Epist.*, book 10, no. 96) and by many Christian sources (*St. John, Apoc.* 6.9-11; 17.6; *Clement of Rome, Epist. to the Corinthians* 6; *Irenaeus, Against Heresies* 4.33.9; *Lactantius, On the Death of Persecutors* 16; *Eusebius of Caesarea, Ecclesiastical History* 8.6, etc.).⁴³

The *condition* of martyrs, under a physical, moral, and social aspect, is manifold. Among them are found very young people (*Tarcisius, Agnes*), old men (*Polycarp*), women (*Agnes, Perpetua, Cecilia, Agatha*), soldiers (*Sebastian*), plebeians (*Theodotus, Serenus*), noblemen (*Clemens, Apollonius*), apostles (*Peter and Paul*), learned men (*Justin, Irenaeus, Cyprian*). The aforementioned pagan witness *Pliny the Younger* speaks of "many of all ages, of all ranks, of both sexes."

The *motive* for suffering was only one, that is, *religious faith*, which was also, directly or indirectly, the motive of persecution. For, whatever may have been the immediate aim of the persecutors, it is certain that the Christian religion came to be considered as in radical opposition to the minimum

⁴³ The number of martyrs, up to the year 311, once greatly exaggerated by some historians (11 million according to *Florès*, 2 million according to *Gaume*), has been exceedingly reduced by some modern writers (*H. Grégoire* proposes much less than 10,000 in his work *Les persécutions dans l'empire romain* [Bruxelles 1951] 162, while *L. Hertling*, in *Gregorianum* [1944] 103-129, gives about 100,000). The Roman Martyrology counts 13,825 martyrs, which seems to be closer to the truth.

of religious conformity, requested by the tolerant Roman law, so that Christians were considered as public enemies, under their religious standard; hence the public axiom: "Christians are not allowed." The pagan writer Suetonius, speaking of the first persecution by Nero, says that "Christians, a class of men characterized by a new and malicious superstition, were sent to torture" (*Life of Nero* 16.2). Tertullian at the end of the second century testifies that Christians were considered as "public enemies of the gods, of the emperors, of laws, of moral customs, enemies of the whole nature" (*Apol.* 4), and because they did not sacrifice to the emperor they were "charged with sacrilege and high treason; and this was the supreme charge, nay the whole charge" (*ibid.* 10).

The manner of suffering, amid frightful physical and moral torments (crucifixion, burning, exposures to beasts, mockery, tears of relatives, exposure of women to houses of prostitution), shows only virtue and heroism, namely fortitude of soul, tranquillity of mind, hope in God's help, meekness, charity and prayer in behalf of the persecutors themselves.

C. *The marvelous propagation, Catholic unity and unaltered stability of the Church, as a fruit of the Christian doctrine.*

*The propagation of the Church*⁴⁴ shows all the signs of an extraordinary event, considering its huge size (that is, its local, numerical and social expansion), its great speed, its scanty means, and the serious obstacles opposed to it.

The size of this propagation, as a local or geographical expansion, in the apostolic time itself (hence in the lapse of some seventy years, from Christ's death in the year 30 to St. John's death about the end of the first century) has no other limits than those of the Roman and civilized world. This is clear from the Acts and Epistles of the apostles and the Apocalypse. St. Paul emphatically testifies that "the gospel truth . . . is in the whole world, . . . has been preached to every creature under heaven" (Col. 1.6,23; cf. Rom. 1.8). In the middle of the

⁴⁴ Cf. J. Rivière, *La propagation du Christianisme dans les trois premiers siècles*, Paris 1907; L. Hertling, "Die Zahl der Christen zu Beginn des vierten Jahrhunderts," *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 58 (1934) 243-253.

second century Justin, and at the end of the same Irenaeus and Tertullian, testify that the Christian religion had already reached beyond the very limits of the Roman Empire.⁴⁵

The great numerical expansion is easily conjectured from the geographical expansion itself. The Church started with 12 apostles and 70 disciples of Christ; immediately after the Ascension 120 disciples are referred to (Acts 1.15); on the day of the first Pentecost 3000 were baptized; a little later the number of Christians grew to 5000 (Acts 4.4) and was further increased (Acts 5.14) until mention is made of many thousands (Acts 21.20). According to Tacitus, in the first persecution by Nero in the year 64 a "huge multitude" of Christians died in Rome (*Annal.* 15.44); from Pliny's epistle to Trajan toward the beginning of the second century it appears that a great part of the population in Bythia was Christian and a century later Tertullian testifies that in Africa "almost the larger part of every city" was Christian (*To Scapula* 210). Around the beginning of the fourth century, when Constantine, the first Christian emperor, took the power, at least a fifth (some say a fourth, others a half) of the Roman Empire was Christian.

The social expansion is evident in the apostolic age itself. Among the apostles, besides the ten fishermen, we find a businessman (Matthew) and a learned man of the Pharisees' school (Paul). Among the other followers there is a Pharisee, doctor of the law (Nicodemus), and a nobleman (Joseph of Arimathea). Shortly after the Ascension there came to the new faith a large group of Jewish priests (Acts 6.7); Cornelius, a centurion (Acts 10.1 ff.); proconsul Sergius Paulus (Acts 13.12); Dionysius the Areopagite, an influential man (Acts 17.34); a number of noble women (Acts 17.4; cf. 17.34);

⁴⁵ Justin, *Dial. cum Thryphone* 110 and 117, says generically that "there are absolutely no people of any kind" who do not adore Christ crucified. Irenaeus, *Against heresies* 1.10, points out even Egypt and Lybia. Tertullian, *Against the Jews* 7.4, mentions, among several other barbarian peoples, "the places of the Bretons, not reached by the Romans, . . . and many other hidden peoples and provinces and islands, which are unknown to us and impossible to number."

Crispus, the president of a synagogue (Acts 18.8); Apollo, a learned and eloquent man (Acts 8.24 f.); Flavius Clement, a nobleman (Phil. 4.3); several "of the Caesar's household" (Phil. 4.22); other noble people named by St. Paul in Rom. 16.1-25. Suetonius names the aforementioned Flavius Clement and his wife Domitilla, a relative of emperor Domitian, both killed under the same emperor (*Life of Domitian* 10.2; 15.1). Tacitus mentions "Pomponia Graecina, a noble woman . . . guilty of extreme superstition" (*Annals* 13.32). Eusebius of Caesarea mentions "the mother of emperor Alexander [Alexander Severus 222-235], Mammaea by name, a particularly pious and religious woman" (*Ecclesiastical History* 6.21), in whose "household there were many Christians" (*ibid.* 6.28), and emperor "Philip [the Arab 244-249] . . . a Christian," as well as his wife (*ibid.* 6.34,36). Among soldiers other documents mention "the lightning legion" (cf. Tertullian, *Apol.* 5.8-12), Nereus and Achilleus, the forty martyrs of Sebaste, Sebastian and others.

In the second century the new religion finds its great Apologists among learned and outstanding men, such as Aristides, Athenagoras, Justin, Irenaeus, and Tertullian; toward the end of the same century a famous center of religious learning is founded, namely the Alexandrian school (in which was soon to flourish Origen, the greatest mind of oriental Christianity). In the year 197 Tertullian, addressing the pagans in his apologetical work, does not hesitate to assert: "We are outsiders [according to you], but we have already filled the world and everything that is yours, cities, islands, forts, city halls, assemblies, military camps themselves, regiments and companies, imperial palace, senate, law courts. We have only left the temples to you" (*Apol.* 37.4; cf. 1.7).

The *great speed* of this propagation is obvious, considering the extension of the lands reached (the whole known or civilized world) and the shortness of time, for as we have shown above, this was sufficiently done in the apostolic age itself (in 50 or 70 years), and at any rate less than three centuries after Christ's death (around 300) it was largely accomplished, when at least a fifth (probably a half) of the population of the Roman Empire was Christian.

The *means* of propagation were scanty. In human ways, the means of rapid success are principally three, namely, *pleasure*, *wealth* (which is also the basic factory of arms) and *honor*, which correspond to the three concupiscences of man, spoken of by St. John (1 Epist. 2.16). The Church did not have and did not promise such things; she was preaching mortification up to the sacrifice of one's own life, she was poor in her Founder, her apostles, most of her members, she was despised and condemned by law and science, being considered as a superstition, of Jewish origin and of sectarian character, opposed to the socially accepted standards of religion, culture and customs.

The *obstacles* to this propagation were serious. The *internal* obstacle was precisely that the new religion had nothing to offer of the naturally desirable, no pleasures, no wealth, no honors. The general *external* obstacle was that the things she had to offer were in open contradiction with the religious, cultural and moral conditions of that time, and hence met from the beginning with a stern opposition. This opposition came from the Jewish and pagan sacerdotal cast, whose temples were deserted and profits diminishing, from the people, whose customs were censured, from the philosophers, whose superior hellenic culture was despised, and finally from the public authorities, whose supreme and quasi-divine autonomy was challenged. All these obstacles came together in the one great and radical obstacle of the public and general persecutions, to which any one of the aforesaid motives could furnish the occasion and under which any ordinary religious or political movement would have been doomed to fail.

The *Catholic or universal unity of the Church* in its three constituent elements, government, faith and cult, is also historically evident. In the very process of this swift and universal propagation, in which other societies or institutions by reason of human passions and conditions would have met with dissensions and divisions, and would have allowed them within its limits in order to subsist, the Church constantly retained this threefold unity and carefully dropped from her membership any dissenting man or group, considering them no longer as Christ's followers.

The unaltered stability of the Church is likewise warranted by history. For, through twenty centuries the Church has constantly retained the same essential features, that is, the same essential identity of government, faith and cult, as the primitive apostolic community established by Christ, notwithstanding grave natural obstacles and reasons that seemed to call for a change. These were in sequence of time, the persecutions in the first three centuries, the great heresies of Arianism, Nestorianism and Monophysitism, the rise and expansion of Islamism, the Eastern Schism, medieval Caesaro-papism, the Great Western Schism, the Protestant Reformation, the French Revolution, and at last the combined assault of rationalism, liberalism, communism, atheism and laxism in our age.

2. Apologetical value of these objective intrinsic criteria.

Notwithstanding their marvelous and extraordinary character and their preeminence over the subjective criteria, these intrinsic objective criteria (that is, generically the extraordinary quality of the Christian doctrine in itself and in its fruits), taken individually and separately as proposed above are not evident and sufficient criteria of revelation (that is, of the fact that God has revealed), but only very probable criteria. On the contrary taken all together as one single fact having multiple facets, that is, as the Church itself, they are not only an evident and sufficient criterion, but also the primary criterion of all, or as Vatican Council I puts it, "an incontestable testimony" of revelation.

The reason why these criteria, taken each separately,⁴⁶ are not evident nor sufficient, is because each one does not clearly and visibly bear the character of a true miracle, or of the direct and extraordinary intervention of God, and hence, absolutely speaking, each could be attributed to a natural cause

⁴⁶ Under the three general headings mentioned above (p. 42), that is, sublime doctrine, marvelous fruits of sanctity, and extraordinary qualities of the Church, we pointed out eight more particular criteria, namely, the origin of Christ's doctrine, this doctrine in itself, Christ's sanctity, sanctity of the members of the Church, particular sanctity of martyrs, propagation of the Church, unity of the Church, stability of the Church. Each one of these is an outstanding probable criterion.

or to the confluence of several natural causes. This appears from a close examination of the three individual criteria, mentioned above, that is, the sublimity of the doctrine, the marvelous fruits of sanctity produced by this doctrine (in the Founder of the Church and in the members of the Church, particularly in the martyrs) and the extraordinary qualities of the Church, that is, its expansion, unity and stability.

No doubt the doctrine in itself bears an extraordinary character, both as to its origin in Christ and as to its articles, and hence it strongly suggests and makes highly probable a supernatural and miraculous intervention of God in it; for no human or natural cause can suitably explain it.

Nevertheless such a miraculous intervention of God and the exclusion of natural causes is not absolutely certain and evident. First, because the object itself, that is, the doctrine to be judged as a miracle, is something indefinite. For, if we consider the natural truths of religion (which indeed cannot be suitably known through natural reason alone, without supernatural miraculous revelation, as we have shown above, pp. 11, 43), we cannot, a priori and exactly, determine what combination of such truths and in what degree of perfection and certitude they should be known by man in order to be able to reach the end of his salvation. If we consider moreover the supernatural truths, they are not clearly suitable, much less perfect and harmonious to human reason, precisely on account of their supernatural character, and need to be explained and defended as to their own suitability, particularly against the attacks and mockery of infidels. The second reason is because the appreciation or proper estimate of the value of a doctrine is variable according to the different intellectual and moral dispositions of men. Therefore it is open to the danger of subjectivism and relativism, since what pleases one may displease another, and every single religion rests peaceably in its own philosophy judging it perfect and superior to others (see above, p. 40).

Thus one could, without falling into impossibility, explain the origin of the doctrine of Christ through the natural cause of an extraordinary intellectual capacity, and its authoritative efficacy through an extraordinary power of the will, as hap-

pened, although in much lower degree, in some of the other founders of religions, as Mohammed or Buddha; and likewise one might judge, without falling into impossibility, that the religious truths taught by those two leaders are strictly sufficient, though not perfect as Christ's doctrine, to make man able to attain the end of salvation.⁴⁷

The extraordinary fruits of sanctity of the revealed doctrine, shown in the Founder himself and in his followers, particularly in the martyrs, suggest likewise and make *highly probable* the supernatural character of this Christian doctrine; for no natural cause can suitably explain them.

But again *they are not of themselves an evident and sufficient* criterion of revelation, for the same reason of our inability to prove with certainty the miraculous intervention of God and the exclusion of natural causes, on account of the indefinite and variable character of such criterion.

⁴⁷ *Vatican Council II* discusses quite at length the various elements of religious truths found in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, and their connection with the Christian religion itself. (Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, no. 2 f.; cf. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, no. 16).

Recently J. H. Walgrave in his work *Un salut aux dimensions du monde* (trans. from the Dutch by E. Brutsaert, Paris 1970), affirmed with a generous dose of exaggeration that divine revelation works and God speaks also through what we call pagan religions, both of the East and West, as Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam.

On this same tendency to exaggerate the supernatural elements of non-Christian religions is partially based the claim, now spreading in Christian circles, for a *renewal of Missiology or theology of the missions*, in the sense of a work of civilization rather than evangelization, since the uncultivated peoples would have in their non-Christian religions enough means of salvation. (See a description and criticism of this opinion in *Civiltà Cattolica* 121-4 [1970] 105-110). Such a claim has certainly no foundation in the documents of Vatican II mentioned above, in which it is only stated that "the precepts and laws [of non-Christian religions] . . . often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men" and that "whatever goodness and truth is found in them is considered by the Church as a preparation for the Gospel."

Absolutely speaking, *Christ's sanctity* could be explained (as far as it is knowable by men) in a natural way, which would establish only his natural superiority above all men and founders of other religions. The fruits of morality brought by *the Church* to the world at large concern only natural ethics; the sanctity of its members, both common and heroic, may meet with subjective and different appreciation according to the variety of people and philosophy (thus monogamy, fostered by the Church, is rejected by Mohammedans as a source of divorce and immorality). The great sanctity and heroism of *martyrs* is of course the strongest part of this criterion, for no natural cause can invincibly explain it (as pride, or passion, or fanaticism, or hope of praise, or physical coercion) considering the great number, the variety of the physical, moral and social conditions of martyrs, among them women and children, and especially their motive and manner of suffering as explained above (pp. 48-50). But again this fact could, absolutely speaking, be an effect of natural causes, as of a deep conviction and enthusiasm about the Christian ideals, higher indeed than the one found in martyrs of other religions or human organizations. Moreover, finally, it is also subject to a variable appreciation of its real value.⁴⁸

The three properties of propagation, unity and stability of the Church bear likewise a very extraordinary character, especially if taken together, and consequently they make up a very *notable criterion* of revelation or of the miraculous intervention of God. For, considering all the elements involved in them, no natural cause can be advanced to suitably explain them.

⁴⁸ It should be noted that, in the course of martyrdom, real and certain *physical miracles* may occur, if for instance the sense of pain is removed or suspended (as happened in the martyrdom of Polycarp, Lawrence and Perpetua); in such cases martyrdom is an evident and sufficient criterion, not by itself, but by reason of such a certain physical miracle. Besides, martyrdom itself is for us a sure *historical testimony* of the preceding miracles and prophecies, which were the reason why the martyrs had joined and defended their faith; but in this sense martyrdom is not a criterion of revelation, but only one of the means through which we come to the knowledge of the true criteria, that is, the miracles and the prophecies.

Indeed the usual and principal causes of successful *propagation* in the natural order are the three objects of human concupiscence, namely, pleasure, wealth and honor, which the Church did not and could not offer, as shown above, and its necessary condition is the absence of major obstacles, especially from public authority, such as met by the Church (see p. 53).

Nor can we consider as a sufficient cause and condition of the propagation of the Church the attraction exercised by some of its doctrines, as monotheism, syncretism, and universalism, or several fortunate historical circumstances, as the diffusion of the Jewish communities in the Roman Empire, to which connational Christians could easily emigrate, or the organization of the Roman Empire, its political and cultural unity, and the religious tolerance of its laws, which paved an open and easy way to a speedy propagation. For the indubitable usefulness of these facts is not sufficient to explain such an extraordinary expansion, in view of the aforesaid scanty means and great obstacles. Moreover, those same facts could be reverted and were actually reverted into major obstacles to propagation; for the novelty and purity of the Christian doctrine and morality proved to be repugnant to the majority of the people, both ignorant and learned, and to the sacerdotal and political classes who considered the Christians as public enemies; the new religion found opposition rather than help in the Jewish communities; the unity of the Roman Empire was also the greatest obstacle to propagation, favoring the general persecutions which on account of this unity were easily planned, effectively carried out and often renewed.

The *Catholic or universal unity* of the Church as to its government, faith, and cult, cannot be suitably attributed to a natural cause in view of human passions and natural circumstances which draw every human institution into factions and parties within itself.

Likewise the unaltered *stability* of the Church, amid so many historical conditions calling for change, cannot be suitably explained through natural causes which would be no other than the three aforementioned objects of human concupiscence, namely, pleasure, wealth, and honor, not offered nor possessed by the Church. To the various exterior and interior

obstacles, urging for change or dissolution, the Church opposed no other means than the affirmation of its inflexible doctrine, the defense of the divine laws, and the exhibition of its proper virtues of confidence in divine help, patience in trials, charity, and love for its own enemies.

Nor can we say that the cause of such great stability has been the wise constitution and organization of the Church, particularly the principle of supreme and unappealable authority. For the question still remains how such wise organization and supreme authority, which was also the glory and the force of the Roman Empire, was constantly kept unchanged amid so many obstacles and historical circumstances, and why the Church organization or the Church itself did not fall or decay as the Roman Empire did. The same strengthening comparison can be applied to many other important cultures and religions, some of which are entirely obsolete, as the great pagan religions of the East and of the West; others have become so aged and weakened that they survive in a state of lifeless stability or they retain only a general outline of their original features and vigor, although they have generally met no sizeable obstacles and have sprung, been protected, and kept alive by favorable causes and circumstances, as Buddhism, Islamism, and Judaism.

Notwithstanding its great force of persuasion and probability, *such a criterion is not evident nor sufficient* in itself. The reason is because these wonderful properties of the Church, absolutely speaking, could be attributed to natural causes producing an unusual and extraordinary effect, namely, the most active, unifying and stable of all natural religious societies. The marvelous expansion of the Church could perhaps be explained by a crafty and tenacious perseverance of its founders in meeting or avoiding obstacles and even converting them, as well as other favorable circumstances, into means of propagation and expansion - a policy in which the genius of St. Paul excelled. And persecution itself usually arouses among people a reaction in favor of the persecuted. The unity of the Church could perhaps be explained by an unusual and traditional ability of the hierarchy in checking human passions and the other causes of fraction and division, largely favored both by the principles of a unitarian faith and by the totalitar-

ian organization under one supreme and unappealable authority. The same causes could also explain the stability of the Church. Moreover such an expansion, unity and stability is also found to some extent in other religious cultures or societies, as Buddhism, Islamism, and Judaism. The higher degree or excellence in which these properties are found in Christian religion does not necessarily prove its divine origin, but only its natural superiority, for as philosophers say, "a higher or lower degree of perfection does not change the nature of things."

However, as stated above (p. 54), these three intrinsic criteria, only probable in their individual force, if they are taken together and combined into one single extraordinary fact having multiple facets, make up an evident and sufficient criterion, nay the primary criterion of revelation, because they amount to a true and great miracle of the moral order, easily discernible with moral certitude and suitable to the intelligence of all people, namely, the Church itself, with all that it implies.⁴⁹ This is explicitly stated by Vatican Council I as follows: "To the Catholic Church alone belong all those many and marvelous things which have been divinely adapted

⁴⁹ As we noted above, speaking of the fulfillment of human aspirations by the Christian doctrine (p. 40), such criteria, though only probable if taken individually, are very useful and at time also necessary to dispose the mind to the further examination of the extrinsic criteria (miracles and prophecies), which will give the certitude of the fact of revelation.

Besides, some of these intrinsic criteria, even taken individually, can indirectly acquire the strength of evident criteria, not indeed by themselves, but by being joined with the extrinsic criteria of miracles and prophecies, as an evident sign of these. For some of them are such that, unless true and extrinsic miracles had preceded to convince men of the divine origin of Christian religion, they could not be explained and would have no sufficient cause. Such are especially martyrdom as death voluntarily met for that religion (see above, p. 57) and the extraordinary propagation of the same; for, as St. Augustine argues "ad hominem" against those who deny miracles: if there were no miracles "there would be this great and sufficient miracle, that the whole world would have believed without miracles" (*City of God* 22.5).

Thus the Church itself, taken as a whole with all it implies and

for the evident credibility of the Christian faith. Furthermore, even the Church itself, because of its marvelous propagation, its exceptional holiness, and inexhaustible fruitfulness in all good things, and because of its Catholic unity and unaltered stability, is one great and perpetual motive of credibility, and an incontestable testimony of its own divine mission" (sess.3, chap.3, Denz.3013; cf. Pius IX, Encycl. "Qui pluribus," Denz. 2279).

The reason why these probable criteria taken together make up an evident or certain criterion consisting in a true moral miracle, is not because they join together their probabilities. For an accumulation of probabilities taken materially can produce only a greater probability and not a certitude, even of an inferior degree, as "no one can give what he does not have," according to philosophers, just as many flies do not make one bird, however small. But if these probable criteria are considered formally as convergent, with their individual probabilities, on the same object, then they make up or rather they are converted into a certain criterion of truth. The reason is that such a convergence of probabilities on the same object could not be explained by any other reason than the objective truth itself; otherwise it would be an effect without a sufficient cause. Hence it is by means of an extrinsic metaphysical principle, namely, the principle of sufficient reason, that these various probable criteria are changed into one single certain criterion.

Thus the Church with all the wondrous facts and characteristics that it implies (fulfillment of human aspirations, sublime doctrine and excellent sanctity, marvelous propagation, unity and stability) becomes really an "incontestable testimony" to revelation. It is the primary criterion clearly visible to all, like a miraculous light showing the way to those who search for truth with willing and open eyes, and like "a flag set up above the nations" (Isa. 11.12; 5.26; cf. Vatican Council

supposes, including the physical miracles and prophecies themselves, is like a compendium of all the criteria of revelation, and hence the primary criterion, or the criterion by antonomasia.

I, sess. 3, chap. 3).⁵⁰ The light of such a criterion is so bright that it is perceived in all its strength by the simple people, without any distinct and scientific examination of the single motives of credibility, through a sort of instinct or immediate intuition, which is the proper and principal act of our intellect.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Regarding the practical manner, in which such a great motive of credibility frequently and effectively works in contemporary conversions, see D. Grasso, "Il fenomeno della Chiesa nelle conversioni contemporanee," *Problemi scelti di teologia contemporanea* (Roma 1954) 189-198.

⁵¹ About the nature and importance of the intellectual intuition in general, see J. Maritain, *The Peasant of the Garonne* (trans. from the French by M. Cuddihy and E. Hughes, New York 1968) 14-16., 110 f., 137-139, 148 f.

XI

Objective Extrinsic Criteria of the Fact of Revelation. Physical Miracles⁵²

ACCORDING TO THE DIVISION of criteria mentioned above (p. 25), physical miracles are called extrinsic criteria because they are found outside the revealed doctrine as such. As in the two preceding chapters, we shall consider first the existence of physical miracles (or the historical truth of the deeds) and then their apologetical value, that is whether they are evident criteria or proofs of the fact of revelation.

⁵² Brinkmann, B., "Die Erkennbarkeit der Wunder Jesu," *Scholastik* 29 (1954) 345-362.

Dhanis, E., *Tractatio de miraculis*, Romae 1952; "Un chaînon de la preuve du miracle," *Problemi scelti di teologia contemporanea* (Roma 1954) 63-86; "Qu'est-ce qu'un miracle?" *Gregorianum* 40 (1959) 201-241.

Evely, L., *L'évangile sans les mythes*, Paris 1970.

Garrigou-Lagrange, R., "La grâce de la foi et le miracle. Trois théories à propos de travaux récents," *Revue thomiste* (1918) 289-320.

Grant, R. M., *Miracle and Natural Law in Graeco-Roman and Early Christian Thought*, Amsterdam 1952.

Hardon, J. A., "The Concept of Miracle from St. Augustine to Modern Apologetics," *Theological Studies* 15 (1954) 229-257.

Latourelle, R., "Miracle et révélation," *Gregorianum* 43 (1962) 492-509; "Authenticité historique des miracles de Jésus: Essai de Critériologie," *Gregorianum* 54 (1973) 225-261.

Lhermitte, J., *Le problème des miracles*, Paris 1956.

Michel, A., "Miracle," *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* 10-2 (Paris 1929) 1798-1859.

This question is of the utmost importance to our apologetical purpose, for two reasons. *First*, because the following chapter on prophecies is largely dependent upon it, for prophecies are simply one kind of miracle, although not physical but intellectual. *Secondly*, because visible miracles are the primary or certain criteria of revelation, for all the subjective and intrinsic criteria previously considered, have been found only probable, with the exception of the Church as such, which embraces all of them into a single criterion amounting to a moral miracle.

As we noticed above (p. 24), all the importance and the force of any criterion of revelation lies in its miraculous nature, that is, in the fact that it involves an extraordinary and direct intervention of God. In this sense, accordingly, there is only one criterion of revelation, miracle itself, which is found more or less probably or certainly in all the individual criteria enumerated above (p. 25). Hence the subjective and the intrinsic criteria are only probable criteria, because they are only probable miracles, and extrinsic criteria are said to be certain criteria, because they are certain miracles.

Before considering the two points just mentioned, that is, the existence and the apologetical value of the physical miracles, it is therefore fitting to give a brief explanation of miracle in general, as to its nature and possibility.

1. *Miracle in general.*

A. *Nature of miracle.*

The word *miracle* (in Latin "miraculum," from "mirari," to wonder)⁵³ etymologically means something that makes us

Monden, L., *Le miracle, signe du salut*, Bruges 1960.

Richardson, A., *The Miracle Stories of the Gospel*, London 1956.

Tonquedec, J. de, *Introduction à l'étude du merveilleux et du miracle*, 3rd. ed., Paris 1923; *Merveilleux métaphysique et miracle chrétien*, Paris 1955.

Van Hove, A., *La doctrine du miracle chez Saint Thomas et son accord avec les principes de la recherche scientifique*, Weteren-Bruges-Paris 1927.

⁵³ The word is used in the Latin Vulgate version of the Old Testament (Ex. 11.7; Num.26.10; 1 Kgs.14.15; Job 33.1; Isa.21.4; 29.14;

wonder. It is properly and scientifically defined according to St. Augustine and St. Thomas: "*That which is done above the order of powers established by God in all created nature.*"⁵⁴

What is proper and essential to miracle then, is its extraordinary character, that is, the fact that it is outside and above any law or way of acting established by God in any created nature. In this definition three elements must be carefully noticed.

First, miracle is above the order of the powers of nature, not necessarily above nature itself. Hence it is necessarily supernatural as to the mode in which it is done (modally or extrinsically supernatural), not necessarily as to the essence of the thing done (essentially or intrinsically supernatural; see footnote 9); hence the thing produced by a miracle can be either essentially natural (as the healing of the body) or essentially supernatural (as the healing of the soul, that is the infusion of grace), provided in both cases it is done in a supernatural way, that is, above the order of natural powers.

Second, miracle is something above the established order of powers. Hence things that are done by God himself but according to an established order, either natural or supernatural, are not miracles, even if they are the most important effects

Jer.23.32; 44.12), but not of the New Testament, in which miracles are called, according to the meaning of the original Greek words, works (John 5.20,36), powers (Matt.13.54,58), prodigies (Matt.24.24; John 4.48), marvelous things (Matt.21.15), wonderful (or rather, unexpected) things (Luke 5.26), signs (Matt.12.38 f.; 24.24; John 2.11,18,23). Among the Fathers St. Augustine adopted and used frequently the word miracle, and hence it became classical and technical in theology and in the documents of the Magisterium since the Middle Ages.

⁵⁴ St. Augustine defines it: "I call a miracle whatever appears to be difficult or unusual above the hope or the power of the one who wonders." (*On the Utility of Believing* 16.34). St. Thomas defines it more strictly: "Miracle is properly called . . . that which is done by God beyond the order of all created nature" (*Summa Theol.*, p.1, q.110, a.4); the context shows that by "order of nature" St. Thomas means "the acting order of nature," that is, the power of nature, the power established by God in all created nature.

of God, as creation (which is the very constitution of the natural order), his providence or government of created things, his creation and infusion of a rational soul into the body, man's elevation (which is the very constitution of the supernatural order), infusion of sanctifying grace into the soul, justification, production of grace through the sacraments, the infused light of faith, the light of the beatific vision. On the contrary the proper nature of miracle is found in the following extraordinary effects: Incarnation, transsubstantiation, beatific vision if temporarily granted to someone in this life (as it probably was to the Blessed Virgin), sudden justification granted outside the established laws and dispositions (as probably was St. Paul's justification on the road to Damascus).

Thirdly, miracle is above the order of *all created nature*. Hence it is an effect proper to God. Any extraordinary thing produced by an angel or devil through his own natural power and not as a mere instrument of God is not a miracle, because it is done within the established order of one created nature.

From this definition we can draw two *divisions* of miracles. The first and material division regards the nature of the thing which is done. Thus miracle is divided into *supernatural*, if the thing belongs to the essentially supernatural order (as sanctifying grace), and *natural*, if the thing belongs to the natural order, though it is done in a supernatural way. This is subdivided into *physical* miracle (as healing and resurrection), *intellectual* miracle (as prophecy and knowledge of the secrets of heart), and *moral* miracle (pertaining to the order of morals, or of the will, as change of morals). The second and formal division regards the manner in which a miracle is above the established order of the powers of all created nature, or in which it surpasses the established manner of acting of all created nature. Thus miracle is divided, in descending gradation of perfection, into *miracle as to substance* (first class miracle), if the very substance of the thing cannot be produced in any way or circumstance by a created cause (as making two bodies occupy the same place, glorification of a body similar to that which will take place in heaven, resurrection, transsubstantiation, or the Incarnation), *miracle as to subject only* (second class miracle), if the substance of the

thing can be produced by nature, but not in this particular subject (resurrection under another aspect,⁵⁵ restoration of sight to the blind, healing of the lame), and *miracle as to manner only* (third class miracle), if the substance of the thing can be produced by nature even in this particular subject, but not in such manner, that is, either without natural means (as cure from sickness without medicines, rain out of a clear sky), or beyond natural proportion (as the multitude of frogs produced by Moses in Egypt), or suddenly without its natural duration (as sudden cure from sickness).⁵⁶

B. Possibility of miracle.⁵⁷

This possibility follows from two combined reasons, that is from the fact that the natural laws (both physical and moral)

⁵⁵ Resurrection can be considered in two ways; specifically as a restitution of life to a *dead body*, and thus it is a first class miracle, and generically as uniting a soul to a body, and thus it would be a second class miracle, inasmuch as nature can work this union, as it does in every generation, but not in such subject, that is in a dead body.

⁵⁶ This division is given and explained by St. Thomas, *Summa Theol.* p.1, q.105, a.8; *C. Gent.* 3.101; *In 4 Sent.*, dist.17, q.1, a.5, qa.1. In another work, *De potentia*, q.6, a.2, ad 3, St. Thomas gives a somewhat different division into miracles *above nature*, *against nature*, and *beyond nature*, which is based on the difficulty of performing the work.

⁵⁷ This is denied by two mutually opposed forms of positive Rationalism, which from different principles come to the same conclusion, that is, philosophical *Determinism*, which affirms the absolute stability of the natural laws and hence denies any possible exception or miracle, and philosophical *Contingentism*, which denies any stability to such laws or even their very existence (conceiving every phenomenon as standing by itself without any connection with the others) and consequently denies any exception to the law since there is no law. For the first system there is no exception because there is a fixed law, for the second there is no exception because there is no law.

Determinism takes two forms. *Absolute Determinism* denies the very *physical possibility* of miracle; to this form belong all kinds of Pantheism, both materialistic and idealistic, which reduces all things, God and the world, to one being, evolving according to a constant and unchangeable law. *Relative Determinism* denies only

are merely contingent and changeable, and that God is omnipotent, that is able to do anything which does not involve contradiction. Indeed, all laws, either metaphysical, or physical, or moral, have their own proper and intrinsic necessity on which our certitude is based. But, unlike the metaphysical laws (which are rooted in and derived from the very essence of things and hence allow no exception whatsoever) the necessity of the physical and moral laws is only contingent or conditional, as far as the attainment of their effect is concerned, that is, it supposes that no other extrinsic cause or condition interferes to counteract and impede their effect. Thus the physical law of gravity can be opposed by a natural agent, as man

the *moral possibility* of miracle, as something disagreeing with the attributes of God, like dignity, wisdom, and goodness; to this form belong the so-called Deists, who deny the particular providence of God (Cherbury, Voltaire, and others), and the Optimists, who claim that God created the best possible world, to whose laws therefore there can be no exceptions (N. Malebranche, W. Leibniz). Absolute Determinism is also in a practical way endorsed by Positivists, who claim that the absolute fixity of natural laws is rigorously proved through scientific induction (D. Hume, J. Stuart Mill).

Contingentism is likewise expressed under two forms. *Religious Contingentism*, based on Agnosticism, considers miracle as a natural effect not yet explained by science, transformed by faith into a religious symbol and considered as a special divine intervention (Liberal Protestants, Modernists, and the Catholic defenders of the method of immanence, as Blondel and Laberthonnière, mentioned above, p. 39). *Scientific Contingentism* either denies the very existence of natural laws, considering the universe as a sort of confused aggregate and succession of phenomena without any mutual dependence or connection, so that anything can happen at any time, or, in the milder and commoner form (as that of H. Poincaré and H. Bergson), denies only the fixity of such laws, on the same basis of a lack of connection between phenomena, which makes the exception at least impossible to detect.

Against these errors *Vatican Council I* defined: "If anyone shall say that miracles are not possible, and hence that all accounts of them, even those contained in Sacred Scripture, are to be banished among fables and myths; or, that miracles can never be known with certitude, and that the divine origin of Christian religion cannot be rightly proved through them; let him be anathema" (sess.3, can.4 on faith, Denz. 3034).

preventing a stone from falling, and the moral law of parental love can be frustrated by the unusual perversion of a woman killing her child (see footnote 21).

Hence, if there be an agent who would be able to counteract the action of any natural law and prevent it from reaching its natural effect, and this in a way in which no created agent can do it, there would be something done above the order of powers of all created nature, that is, a miracle. But God is such an agent, by reason of his omnipotence which extends itself to anything not involving contradiction. Therefore miracle is possible. Miracle then would consist in a direct action of God intervening into the course of natural causes or laws, either by opposing to them such an obstacle which no natural agent can oppose (as denying in such particular case the very impulse of the first and primary cause, without which no secondary cause can operate); or on the contrary by fostering their action with such favorable conditions that their effect be produced in an extraordinary manner; or by producing their effect without them; or finally by producing a special effect which they are unable to produce (cf. *Summa Theol.*, p.1, q.105, a.6).

Furthermore, miracle is not only absolutely or physically possible, on the basis of God's omnipotence (as we have shown), but also *relatively or morally* so, inasmuch as, far from being opposed to the other divine attributes, it perfectly befits them. Indeed, an obstacle or exception to the established order of natural laws does not disagree with the *dignity and loftiness of God*, as if he should not descend to such particular things in the government of the world (as Deists claim), or he should have created the most perfect world which would need no exceptions or corrections (as Optimists teach). For, on the one hand, the very particular providence of God shows on the contrary the universality of his power, of his knowledge, and of his care for creatures, and on the other hand creation of the most perfect world is not possible, otherwise God would no longer be omnipotent, being unable to do anything better. Likewise miracle does not disagree with *God's wisdom*, as if by it God would reject what he once chose or correct what he had not foreseen; nor with *God's goodness*, as if he would arbitrarily and violently intervene in the world

to change the course of nature and check the natural exigencies of things. For, on the contrary, God had foreseen and wanted all the future changes and exceptions, which would follow, in due time and manner, for a wise complement and balance of the universe as well as for particular reasons proper to each miracle, not least of all the very purpose of confirming his supernatural revelation, thus paving the way to faith through the forces of nature. Hence miracle, as well as nature itself, is a bright mirror of the divine perfections.

2. Christ's miracles, as to their historical truth.

The supernatural origin of Christian religion can be proved by any true miracle, worked in the Church at any time, for the seal of God's testimony stamped on any miracle is a sufficient testimony. We will confine our consideration, however, to the miracles narrated in the Gospel, for they are the major testimony on whose strength and evidence the Church was first built and propagated. Moreover, among such miracles we leave out, as not necessary or less efficacious for our apologetical purpose, those performed about Christ, as the several wonders in Christ's nativity, during his public life (voice from heaven in his Baptism, during his preaching, in the Transfiguration), and in his death (the darkening of the sun, the earthquake).⁵⁸

We consider only the physical miracles performed by Christ himself, either in his own body or in other persons and things, excluding of course all the many miracles mentioned only generically (as in Matt. 4.23; 8.16; Mark 1.32-34; Luke 4.40 f.; 6.17-19; John 2,23; 6.2), which cannot be examined and given apologetical value.

Among such miracles there are three major ones worked by Christ in his own body, namely his Transfiguration, his Resurrection, and his entrance into the closed cenacle, and about thirty-five worked on other people or things, with a great variety of subjects and matters. These concern either spiritual beings or demons, in people possessed by them, the so-called demoniacs (at least six distinct miracles); or ir-

⁵⁸ Almost 100 particular miracles, performed by Christ or about Christ, before, in, and after resurrection, can be easily counted.

rational creatures (at least nine miracles, as multiplication of loaves, change of water into wine, etc.); or men, that is, three resuscitations, more than seven cures from defect or injury of an organ (eyes, hearing, speech), many cures from various and serious infirmities (as dropsy, leprosy, paralysis for 38 years, hemorrhage for 12 years, crippled condition for 18 years).

For the sake of our apologetical purpose we can point out several groups of these miracles, and divide them according to the degree of their supernatural character into the three classes mentioned above (p. 66), namely; *Miracles as to substance*: the Transfiguration (Matt.17.1-3); entrance into the closed cenacle (John 20.19); resurrection; three resuscitations, of Jairus' daughter, of the son of the widow at Naim, and of Lazarus (Matt.9.20-26; Luke 7.11-17; John 11.1-44). *Miracles as to subject*: several cures from organic defect or injury (eyes, hearing, speech), particularly of the man born blind (John 9.1-38); change of water into wine (John 2.1-11); two multiplications of loaves (Matt. 14.13-21; 15.32-39); the calming of the storm on the lake (Matt.8.23-27); the walking upon the sea (Matt.14.22-23). *Miracles as to manner*; all other miracles can be reduced to this class, especially the healing from merely functional diseases. Deliverance from diabolic possession is a more difficult type to classify, because such possession is at times coupled with a functional or organic disease, as in the epileptic demoniac, the dumb demoniac, the blind and dumb demoniac (Matt.17.14-21; 9.32-34; 12.22-24).

The historical truth of such facts⁵⁹ appears from external as well as from internal criteria.

⁵⁹ Among the aforementioned Rationalists who deny the possibility of miracles (p. 67), the older ones simply discard the historical truth of all such miracles, attributing them to a fraud of Christ's disciples (H. S. Reimarus) or to a mere political fiction of the same (H. E. G. Paulus and D. F. Strauss). The more recent ones (as Liberal Protestants and Modernists, led by A. Harnack, *Das Wesen des Christentums* [Leipzig 1902] 16 ff.), generally distinguish between different miracles. They deny the historical truth of the outstanding miracles that are more difficult to explain, as the cure of the man born blind, the three resuscitations, and especially Christ's resurrection, to which they attribute some kind of natural error or legiti-

The external criterion is the testimony both of the evangelists, whose direct knowledge of the facts and complete veracity in relating them cannot reasonably be doubted, and of the adversaries of Christ themselves (cf. John 3.2; Mark 6.14;

mate fiction, due to the aureole with which founders of religions are usually adorned, to the general tendency among the Jews to admit miracles and the fulfillment of ancient prophecies, and to the beginning of a process of idealization of Christ's deeds immediately after his death. As regards the other *easier miracles*, they admit the historical truth but deny their supernatural character, attributing them to natural causes (see below, footnote 65).

Regarding Christ's resurrection in particular, which implies the two elements of true death and subsequent true life, a few of the older Rationalists reject the truth of the death of Christ, invoking a mere apparent death due to swooning or lethargy (thus H.E.G. Paulus and F. Spitta), while the others generally concede the reality of the death but deny directly the resurrection to new life, and explain the contrary affirmation of the Gospel and of the apostles in three general ways, namely:

1) Either through fraud of the disciples or of the Jews themselves, who secretly removed from the tomb and hid the corpse (the *fraud theory* held by Reimarus, Réville, Le Roy, O. Holtzmann).

2) Or through error of the disciples, deceived by some illusion or vision (of a pathological, or mystical, or objective, or spiritistic character), which made them believe they saw again Christ alive (the *error theory* held by E. Renan, A. Meyer, R. Otto, E. von Dobschütz, R. A. Hoffmann).

3) Or through a mere but reasonable and legitimate fiction, by which a new life was attributed to Christ (the *fiction theory*). Such attribution arose in four ways. Either through the usual popular legend, adorning the life of founders (*mythical fiction*, held by F. Strauss, A. Meyer, A. Loisy). Or through the particular legend of the "savior god" rising from the dead, which was common to several hellenistic and oriental religions (*religious-syncretistic fiction*, or theory of "Religiongeschichte," held by W. Bousset and A. Loisy). Or through a popular-literary fiction, that is, a legend fashioned gradually by the addition of elements of popular literature to primitive historical elements (theory of *popular literary fiction*, "Formengeschichte" or historical forms, held by M. Albert, L. Brun, and E. Bichermann). Or through a religious symbolic process, taking originally Christ's resurrection not as a physical fact but as an ideal or symbol of spiritual resurrection and immortal life of Christ with God (theory of *symbolic fiction* held by Harnack, Loisy and

John 11.47; Matt.27.42), who lacked neither the opportunity of a strict examination of Christ's miracles, nor the motive and the will to make it, as is particularly evident in the two miracles of the man born blind and of Lazarus. This testimony is further confirmed by that of extrinsic sources close to the

the other Modernists condemned by Pius X, Denz. 3436 f.; and recently by R. Bultmann, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* [Tübingen 1958] 305; *Kerygma und Mythos* [Hamburg 1960] 1, pp. 44-48, and W. Marxsen, *Die Auferstehung Jesu als historisches und als theologisches Problem* [Gütersloh 1965] 20-35; *Die Auferstehung Jesu von Nazareth* [Gütersloh 1968]).

This last theory, as expounded by Bultmann and Marxsen, has influenced the doctrine or some recent Catholic writers who prefer to abstain from the word "resurrection" and replace it with the general word "life," simply declaring that by the so-called Christ's resurrection it is meant only that Christ is still alive and lives forever in a better state of glorification, and not that the individual body of Christ came back to life.

Particular commotion and criticism among Catholic circles was caused by the work of Xavier Léon-Dufour (a Scripture scholar), *Résurrection de Jésus et message pascal* (Paris, 1971; second printing with some corrections, 1972). The author keeps the word "resurrection" as the one in perfect harmony with the biblical narratives, but changes its meaning, teaching that Christ's resurrection, though a real happening, is not a historical fact in the sense commonly accepted, namely a revival of the individual body of Christ. The individual or historical body of a man is not the real component part of the human being, but only a place or a means of communication with other beings, while the real component part of the human being is the universal or cosmic body. At the moment of death the individual body, the corpse, is as it were absorbed by the universal cosmic body, never to revive. Hence when Christ died, his individual and historical body, forever dissolved, returned to the universal cosmic body, which by virtue of the resurrection was transformed and made glorious. Thus Christ's resurrection is a real fact, but not a historical fact in the sense of a revival of the dead body, historically ascertainable.

For a further explanation and criticism of this opinion see J. Galot, in *Civiltà Cattolica* (1972), vol. 2, pp. 527-540, C. M. Martini, *ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 125-135; Ch. Journet, in *Nova et Vetera* (1972) 304-311; E. Pousset, in *Nouvelle revue théologique* (1972) 95-107; C. Spicq, in *Esprit et Vie* (1972) 76-79; M.-M. Labourdette, in *Revue Thomiste* 72 (1972) 619-633.

facts, as the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2.22; 3.12; 10.37f.; 2 Pet.1.16), and the second century tradition, unanimously referring to Christ's miracles. The apologist Quadratus about the year 124 even testifies that some of those cured by Christ were still alive in his time (this is quoted by Eusebius of Caesarea, *Eccles. Hist.* 4.3). Also the Jewish historian Joseph Flavius, writing about the year 93, recalls the miracles and resurrection of Christ.⁶⁰

The internal criterion, that is, the close examination of the narratives, shows the same historical truth. First of all, Christ's miracles are so numerous and so intimately connected with the other facts and words of Christ that they belong to the very substance of the entire Gospel, which without them would go crippled and unexplained; for Christ's miracles were the reason for the crowding of people around him and for the opposition of the Pharisees, as well as the occasion for him to hand on and confirm his various doctrines. In particular, if miracles were removed, the following pericopes would have to be taken out or completely changed: the reproach to Chorozain and Bethsaida (Matt.11.20-24), Christ's power over demons (Matt.12.23-37), the eucharistic sermon (John, chapter 6, which is almost wholly, vv.1-70, based on the miracle of multiplication of loaves), the Pharisees' examination about Christ on the occasion of the cure of the man born blind (John, chap.9, in its entirety), the great commotion of both the people and the Pharisees on account of the resuscitation of Lazarus (John, chap. 11, in its entirety).

Secondly, the narratives of Christ's miracles are in full agreement with his character, messianic mission, and teaching.

⁶⁰ *Antiquities* 18.3.3: "At that same time Jesus lived, a wise man, if however it is right to call him a man. For he was a performer of wonderful deeds, a teacher of those who spontaneously accept the truth; he drew to himself many Jews as well as many Gentiles. He was the Christ. When Pilate had sentenced him, accused by the leaders of our people, to the torture of the cross, they did not cease to love him as they had done before. For he appeared to them alive on the third day, according to the divine prophets who had foretold these and other wondrous things about him."

Thirdly, the historical truth of such miracles is also confirmed by the style or manner in which they are narrated, a style which is simple, sober, life-like, spontaneous, detailed, clothed in color and concrete circumstances, free from exaggerations, void of any pretence, deceit or contradiction, notwithstanding the variety of the fourfold source. A particular specimen of this style is found in the accounts of the Cana wedding, of the multiplication of loaves and of the cure of the man born blind (John 2.1-11; 6.1-13 and parallel texts in the synoptics; 9.1-38).⁶¹

As to Christ's resurrection,⁶² the historical truth of the two elements implied in it, namely, a true death and a true life

⁶¹ This internal coherence of the object and the style of the evangelical narratives shows also the difference, as to their historical truth, between Christ's miracles and those that are brought forth by Rationalists, under the form of a skeptical objection, from rabbinic and pagan history, as the miracles of the Pythagorean philosopher Apollonius of Tyana, of emperors Hadrian and Vespasian, of the oriental divinities Apollo, Isis, Asclepius Epidaurus, and of the religious founders Buddha and Mohammed. Cf. S. Tromp, *De revelatione christiana*, ed. 5, pp. 239-241 (see bibliography, *ibid.*, p. 421).

⁶² Braun, F., "La résurrection de Jésus devant la critique moderne," *Vie spirituelle* 63 (1940) 26-52.
 Daniélou, J., *La résurrection*, Paris 1969.
 De Rosa, G., "Il cristiano di oggi di fronte alla risurrezione di Cristo," *Civiltà cattolica* 121 (1970), vol. 3, pp. 365-377.
 Fuller, R. H., *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives*, New York 1971.
 Haes, P. de, *La résurrection de Jésus dans l'apologétique des cinquante dernières années*, Rome 1953.
 Kremer, J., "Ist Jesus wirklich von den Toten auferstanden?," *Stimmen der Zeit* 94 (1969) 310-320.
 Léon-Dufour, X., "Exégèse du Nouveau Testament. Autour de la résurrection du Christ," *Recherches de science religieuse* 57 (1969) 583-622; "Présence de Jésus ressuscité," *Etudes* (1970) 593-614; *Résurrection de Jésus et message pascal*, Paris 1971; second printing with a few corrections, 1972.
 Martini, C., *Il problema storico della risurrezione negli studi recenti*, Roma 1959; "La testimonianza dei primi cristiani per la risurrezione di Gesù," *Civiltà Cattolica* (1972), vol. 3, pp. 125-135.
 Pousset, E., "La résurrection," *Nouvelle revue théologique* 91 (1969)

after death, is likewise evident from both evangelical and extraevangelical testimony.

The evangelical witnesses of *Christ's death* are: the four evangelists, saying that Christ on the cross "gave up his spirit" (Matt.27.50; Mark 15.37; Luke 23.46; John 19.30); the soldiers, who did not break his legs because they were certain of his death (John 10.32-34); the centurion, who for the same reason withdrew from guarding the cross (Mark 15.39); Pilate, inquiring from the centurion "whether he [Christ] was already dead" and hence "granting the body to Joseph [of Arimathea]" (Mark 15.44 f.); Mary, his mother, and the other friends standing by the cross, whose love would have allowed no doubt about his death; the Pharisees, who not only made sure of his death, but tried to prevent even a simulated resurrection, asking Pilate to seal the tomb and have it guarded by the soldiers (Matt.27.62-66).

Even if Christ's previous torments, as crowning with thorns, scourging, painful walking to the place of crucifixion, crucifixion itself, three hours of agony, had not been sufficient to cause death, but only a sort of syncope or lethargy, which is extremely improbable, a certain death would have violently followed from the piercing of his side with a lance and the consequent flowing of blood (John 19.34) and from suffocation due to the wrapping of the body in linen cloths and spices (mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds; John 19.39 f.) and its stay in the closed sepulchre.

Confirmation is added by extraevangelical testimony, particularly by the preaching of the apostles, ocular witnesses, who threw the unchallenged accusation at the Jewish people, witnesses themselves and executors: "Him . . . you have crucified and slain by the hands of wicked men" (Acts 2.23), "The author of life you killed, whom God has raised from the dead" (Acts 3.15).

1009-1044.

Ponthot, J., "Les traditions évangéliques sur la résurrection du Christ," *Lumen vitae* 20 (1965) 649-673; 21 (1966) 99-118.

Résurrection (La) du Christ et l'exégèse moderne (collective work), Paris 1969.

Christ's true life after death (and hence his resurrection) is shown by the fact that the tomb was found empty, without the body being removed by anyone, and that the body appeared again alive to the disciples.

After Christ's body was truly buried (as shown by the Gospel's description), *the tomb was found empty*, as testified both by the four evangelists (Matt. 27.57-60; Mark 15.42-46; Luke 23.50-55; John 19.38-42) and by the Pharisees themselves, who bribed the soldiers, telling them: "Say, 'His disciples came by night and stole him while we were sleeping'" (Matt.28.13). *The body was not removed*, neither by the disciples, as is evident from this same confession of the Pharisees and from the strict vigilance of the military guard (recently enforced by an edict of Caesar Augustus or Tiberius against violators of tombs), nor by the Pharisees themselves in order to prevent any such action on the part of the disciples. This is evident from the same vigilance of the guard and from the fact that later the Pharisees would have brought forth the body in order to refute the disciples' affirmation on the resurrection.

The apparition of the living body of Christ is testified by the same four evangelists, whose veracity is warranted and fraud excluded by the general simple and spontaneous character of the Gospel, mentioned above (p. 75). Nine distinct apparitions are narrated in the Gospel: to Mary Magdalen (Mark 16.9; John 20.11-17), to the pious women (Matt.28.9), to Peter (Luke 24.34), to two disciples on their way to Emmaus (Mark 16.12; Luke 24.13-33), to the disciples in the cenacle, twice (Mark 16.14; Luke 24.36-43; John 20.19-29), to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias (John 21.1-14), to the apostles on a mountain of Galilee (Matt.28.16 f.; Mark 16.15), to the same immediately before the Ascension (Mark 16.19; Luke 24.44-52). Besides St. Paul testifies to three other apparitions, that is, to more than 500 disciples, to James, and to himself (1 Cor.15.6-8; 5.5-7). Hence there were 12 distinct apparitions in all, six of which were made to the whole group of the disciples or apostles.

The truth of the testimony is warranted by the authority of the witnesses, that is, by the veracity of the disciples, for in

their lives there is nothing that would suggest possibility of falsehood or fiction, and by their knowledge of the facts, which were external, visible and even collective apparitions.⁶³

⁶³ Hence the aforementioned *error-theory* and *fiction-theory* advanced by Rationalists and Modernists (p. 72) do not stand critical examination and the only logical course for them would be to reject or completely reshape the Gospel text itself.

Thus a *pathological error* of the disciples has no foundation, since they were not disposed to hallucination by reason of their mental balance and physical health, nor were they even thinking about the resurrection foretold by Christ, as is clear from their first movement of incredulity when they saw Christ again (Mark 16.13; Luke 24.11, 21-26, 37-41; John 20.27-29). Besides, hallucinations do not happen to many witnesses at the same time, nor to all the senses at the same time, nor to the same person many times or for a long time.

Mythical fiction (as that found in the fables about Aeneas, Romulus, and others) is something which does not endure but degenerates with time. It cannot deceive prudent men but only the popular fancy. It has some value in building up history or literature, but not interior convictions, ardent faith and a program or rule of life itself.

Likewise, *religious-syncretistic fiction* has no foundation, for it cannot be shown why and how the Christian religion would derive one of its fundamental truths from abhorred idolatrous religions, and how such adoption could have been made in so short a time.

Popular-literary fiction would also require a long time to develop and transform the original historical elements, while Christ's resurrection was commonly believed in the Church shortly after his death, as is clear from St. Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians (15.3-11), written about the year 56.

Symbolic fiction does not agree with the historical character of the Gospel narrative, nor can it be said that such historical character is a later evolution of the primitive symbolic sense given to Christ's resurrection, for there was no sufficient time for such an evolution and the primitive Pauline teaching about the resurrection bears the same historical character. The first epistle to the Corinthians was written between the year 55 and the year 57, several years before the Gospels and the Acts; hence 1 Cor 15.3 f. is the oldest Christian testimony of Christ's resurrection.

Regarding the aforementioned doubt or denial of some recent Catholic scholars about the historicity of Christ's resurrection, note the following. This resurrection, as the revival of Christ's individual body, is not directly a historical fact, historically ascertainable, in-

2. Apologetical value of Christ's miracles.

The physical miracles performed by Christ are evident and sufficient criterion of revelation, on account of their evident supernatural character.

As we noted above (p. 24), an evident and sufficient criterion of revelation is made up of three necessary elements, that is, its historical, philosophical and relative truth. Therefore, the deeds which we call physical miracles of Christ are prov-

asmuch as no one witnessed or properly could witness the actual reunion of Christ's soul to his dead body. It is, however, a fact indirectly historical, of which we can acquire a moral certitude, as a conclusion from various facts which are directly historical, namely, the death and burial, the empty sepulcher, the apparitions and the conviction of the disciples about Christ's true resurrection.

The general anthropological conception, advanced by the chief dissenter, Léon-Dufour, does not agree with either philosophical or theological safe doctrine. The human soul can inform only a determined individual body, not an indefinite cosmic matter. The Church Magisterium has clearly defined that the human nature is "composed of spirit and body" (Council of Lateran IV, repeated by Vatican I, Denz. 800, 3002); hence the physical individual body is a component part of man. The Council of Lateran IV defines also that "all men shall resurrect in those same proper bodies, which they now have" (Denz. 801).

As regards Christ directly, the same Council defines that he "resurrected in his flesh" (Denz. 801), therefore, in his historical and individual body and not in a universal cosmic matter which is not flesh. The traditional doctrine teaches that the Word of God assumed a human nature composed of soul and individual body, from which he was never separated, even after the mutual separation of soul and body through death. If Christ's soul after his death would be united to the universal cosmic matter, there would result a monstrous union of the Word with the universe, a sort of "pan-christism," and Christ's body would be the universe itself, assumed and transfigured by his Divinity. All our faith, piety, and liturgy are based on the individual humanity and body in which Christ was born, in which he spoke the words of divine revelation, suffered, died and offered his sacrifice on the Cross, and in which he remains with us in the eucharistic sacrament and sacrifice. All this would fall with the disappearance of the individual and historical body of Christ into the universal and cosmic matter.

ed to be evident and sufficient criterion of revelation, if we prove, first, their *historical truth*, or that they actually took place as they are narrated in the Gospel; second, their *philosophical truth*, or that they are true miracles, that is things done by God alone (at least as principal cause) above the order of powers and laws established by him in all created nature; third, their *relative truth*, or that they were performed by Christ with the manifested intention of proving the fact of revelation, that is, that God was speaking through him. If these three things are certain, then the fact of revelation is also certain, because Christ's testimony would be approved and endorsed by God, who cannot bear witness to falsehood.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ It is of course possible that God permit abuse of the gift of miracles by a man (as he permits abuse of the sacramental character by a priest), if for instance an apostate from the faith, in order to confirm his new false doctrine, would appeal to miracles performed by him when he was an apostle of the same faith. It is even possible that God work some miracles on a member or through a member of a false religion, as St. Thomas admits (*Summa Theol.*, p. 2-2, q.178, a.2, ad 3; *De potentia*, q.6, a.5, obj.5 and ad 5). Some believe that such was the case of the Hindu ascetic, Sundar Singh (cf. *Recherches de science religieuse* 12 [1922] 1-29).

But these and similar things can be permitted by God only if no confirmation of false doctrines or religions would result from them, considering the facts and their circumstances; otherwise God would be witness to falsehood.

Thus, in the case of an apostate appealing to his past miracles for confirmation of his new false doctrine, the fallacy of his argument is clearly shown by the difference and distance between the situation in which he once performed the miracle and his present situation in which he appeals to the old miracle as a sign of his new doctrine. Miracles that are said to happen in false religions are usually false miracles because they are performed in such a way or in such circumstances that, if they were true, false religions would be approved by God. But, out of such circumstances, God can perform a miracle on a member or through a member of a false religion for different particular purposes, for instance to reward or show an outstanding virtue of an individual (as chastity, charity toward the neighbor, religious behavior), or even to show the presence of a particular element of truth found in that false religion, providing this religion as a whole does not receive any confirmation from the miracle in view of the circumstances in which it is performed.

The *historical truth* of Christ's miracles has just been proved.

Their *relative truth* can be easily shown, for the whole life of Christ in his words and deeds tends precisely to prove his messianic and divine mission. Christ *generically and explicitly* declares to perform his miracles in order to prove his divine mission; John 5.36: "The works which the Father has given me to accomplish, these very works that I do, bear witness to me, that the Father has sent me;" John 15.24: "If I had not done among them works such as no one else has done, they would have no sin. But now they have seen, and have hated both me and my Father" (cf. 10.25,37,38; 14.12). The same declaration is vividly contained in Christ's words to John's disciples asking him whether he was the Messiah to come, to whom he simply answered that his miracles proved who he was (Matt.11.2-5), and in his reproach to the cities of Israel, such as Capharnaum, for having seen his miracles and not believed (Matt.11.20,23).

Christ makes the same explicit declaration in regard to some *particular* and outstanding miracles. Thus he heals the paralytic "that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" (Matt.9.6); he cures the blind because "the works of God were to be made manifest in him" (John 9.3; cf. 9.36); he brings Lazarus back to life "because of the people who stand around . . . that they may believe that you have sent me" (John 11.42). Referring to his *resurrection* he explicitly says: "An evil and adulterous generation demands a sign, and no sign shall be given it but the sign of Jonas the prophet. For even as Jonas was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12.39 f.); and predicting to the apostles his return to them after death, he says: "And now I have told you before it comes to pass, that when it has come to pass you may believe" (John 14.29).

The same relative truth is *implicitly* contained in the three following circumstances. *First*, the very fact that someone works miracles while preaching a doctrine turns necessarily into a confirmation of his doctrine, and hence he implicitly

intends such reference and confirmation. *Secondly*, the whole doctrine of Christ and much of his dispute with the Pharisees about his divine mission hinge upon miracles (see above, p. 74) which are, therefore, considered as the credentials of his divine mission. This is the reason why the Pharisees tried to deny the true miraculous nature of the wonders performed by Christ, attributing them to Beelzebub (Matt.12.24) and they spurned with threatening words the remark of the blind telling them: "Why, herein is the marvel, that you do not know where he is from, and yet he opened my eyes" (John 9.30). *Third*, the messianic expectation among the people was such that its fulfillment had to be shown by miracles; this is the reason why to John's disciples inquiring whether he was the Messiah Christ gave no other answer than referring them to his miracles (Matt.11.2-5). Not much later "a man among the Pharisees, Nicodemus by name, a ruler of the Jews . . . came to Jesus at night and said to him, 'Rabbi, we know that you have come a teacher from God, for no one can work these signs that you work unless God be with him'" (John 3.1 f.).

The philosophical truth of Christ's miracles,⁶⁵ namely that they are unmistakably true miracles, due only to the direct action of God, is the most important as well as the most difficult point to be proved, considering on the one hand that we do not see God operating and on the other hand we do not know how far is to be extended or limited the power of created causes, whether physical, human, or angelic.

However, although we do not know *positively and universally* what created nature can do through its proper powers and in any circumstance, we can know *negatively* what this

⁶⁵ As we noted in footnote 59, Rationalists, denying the very possibility of any miracle, logically reject the philosophical truth of all Christ's miracles, and for this reason they discard even the historical truth of those outstanding miracles for which they find no explanation and they attribute the others to natural causes, that is, either to *natural powers not yet known*, or to *mental suggestion*, or to *occultism*. Thus among others E. Renan, *Vie de Jésus* (éd. 14, Paris 1873) 268-270; A Harnack, *Das Wesen des Christentums* (Leipzig 1902) 16 ff., with other Liberal Protestants; A. Loisy, *L'Évangile et l'Église* (éd. 5, Paris 1930) 16-23, with other Modernists.

particular nature cannot do absolutely and taken in itself, with regard to a specific object or in a particular circumstance.

Indeed, if we consider the *specific object or effect* of some of Christ's miracles, we can have an absolute certitude that no created cause can produce it, a certitude derived from metaphysical principles as well as from common sense which is called "the perennial philosophy" and is the basis of metaphysics itself. For in those miracles which we mentioned above (p. 71) under the name of *miracles as to substance* and *miracles as to subject*, as they stand out and as they are judged by common sense itself, there takes place a *universal effect*, that is a change in the depths of "being" itself or in the very nature and essence of a thing, which, therefore, by the metaphysical principle of the necessary proportion between cause and effect, calls necessarily for a *universal cause*, that is, God himself. For God is the proper cause of being as such and of the nature and essence of things.

Thus, referring to the major miracles of the two classes, Christ's Transfiguration (or bodily glorification) implies some change in the *essence of quantity*, so that it may exhibit outwardly those extraordinary properties of brightness and color which it does not possess in its natural way (Matt.17.2: "And his face shone as the sun, and his garments became white as snow"). In Christ's entrance into the closed cenacle after the Resurrection there was for one moment a sort of compenetration of the body of Christ with the wall or door through which he entered, and hence the presence of two bodies in the same place, which cannot happen unless there is some change in the *essence of quantity* of either body, preventing it from occupying its natural place. Christ's Resurrection, as well as the three resuscitations he worked on others, requires necessarily a change or a direct touch in the very *essence of the body* to draw it back from corruption and dispose it again for the infusion of the rational soul.

Similar *substantial change* or touch is required in the cure of organic defects, especially in completely reshaping an organ, as in a man born blind; for organs are immediately rooted in the substance of man. The same change is required in the sudden transformation of water into wine and multiplica-

tion of the bread, for both effects naturally take place only through a slow process of various substantial changes. The two last miracles mentioned above, that is the calming of the storm on the lake and the walking upon the sea, require only a change in the essence of the quantity of the wind and of the water, by which the law of gravity is checked or regulated.

One or another modern theologian, granting that only God can produce such essential changes, denies that we can prove with certitude that such changes actually take place and they are not only apparent, due to a prodigious action of an angelic creature, who would, for instance, quickly substitute wine for water or bring loaves of bread from another place.⁶⁶

Such an explanation certainly cannot be applied to some of the above miracles, as entrance into the closed cenacle, resuscitation, and healing of the man born blind. For, the same body of Christ which was outside is said to be inside the cenacle; the same man who was dead is said to be alive; the same man who had no sight is said to have it. Besides, if we were to explain such miracles as merely apparent facts due to the action of angelic creatures, we should say, for instance, that an angel removed the wall before the body of Christ and then replaced it, or produced only an appearance of Christ's body before the apostles, and likewise that Lazarus actually did not rise, but an angel took his body away from the tomb and produced an appearance of Lazarus which apparently exercised all the functions of life and lasted as long as Lazarus was seen to live, and finally that the blind man did not have the sight, but an angel constantly produced in him an illusion of vision so that all the exterior objects would continually appear to him as if he had the sight. Such an explanation would not only uselessly multiply extraordinary things, but would seem also repugnant to common sense, since deception and illusion cannot last long.

⁶⁶ Thus Van Hove, *op. cit.* (above, p. 64) 300, stating: "If we consider miraculous facts only under their exterior appearances, we could attribute most of them to an action of spiritual substances [angels] . . . Substantial transformations themselves do not exclude an explanation of this kind."

Even the change of water into wine and the multiplication of bread, as well as other miracles, like instantaneous cures performed by Christ, have to be taken in their obvious sense. For, if all such things were not certain miracles just because they could absolutely be explained by a surreptitious intervention of an angelic creature, it would affect also the certitude we have of the daily events of our life, and I would not be certain, for instance, that I see, walk, eat, and that other men do these things in like manner, since possibly without my knowledge all such things are merely apparently done by an angelic creature. All of which is against common sense and out of the range of a sane mind.

As regards the miracles of the third class which we called *miracles as to manner* (most of the remaining miracles, as cures from some organic injuries of eyes, hearing and speech, and especially from functional diseases, as paralysis, dropsy, leprosy, fever), their supernatural character is known with certainty, not from the mere consideration of their object, for, absolutely speaking, this could be produced by a created cause, physical, human or angelic, but from the *circumstances, both physical and moral*, which accompany them and which prove that a particular deed cannot be produced in such a way by any created cause.

The *physical circumstances* can be reduced to three, that is, the great difficulty of the deed, the absence of natural and usual means in performing it, and its sudden, complete and permanent character. All three are found in Christ's miracles. The difficulty of the deed is clearly shown in the *various cures* from diseases, especially of the man sick with paralysis for 38 years (John 5.1 ff.), of the woman crippled for 18 years (Luke 13.10-17), and of the woman with a hemorrhage for 12 years (Matt. 9.20-22). The absence of natural and usual means, as medicines and other treatment, is evident; the son of the centurion and the son of the Jewish ruler are cured from a distance, the paralytic and the leper are cured by a single word, the lepers and the woman with the hemorrhage by touch alone, the deaf mute by touch and spittle. The cure in all cases was instantaneous, complete and permanent; no sign to the contrary is shown, which would have been the occasion for doubt or incrimination on the part of the Pharisees. The

same circumstances are found proportionally in miracles performed about *irrational creatures*, as the extraordinary catch of fish (Luke 5.1-11; John 21.1-11), the barren fig tree (Matt. 21.18-22), the shekel found in the mouth of the fish (Matt. 17.24-27); these were likewise difficult deeds, performed without the usual means and crowned by immediate and perfect results. The same circumstances appear in miracles regarding *spiritual creatures or demons* in the cure of demoniacs, which moreover show Christ's power over such creatures and hence a clearer sign of their supernatural character.

The *moral circumstances* are the morality of the performer, the goodness of the deed, its purpose, the way of acting, the means, place and time of the action; from such circumstances, which render a deed morally good or bad, one can judge whether or not it is from God or supernatural. Christ's miracles proceed from a holy man, seeking in them no gain, glory or revenge; they contain nothing immoral, harmful, dishonorable, useless, or ridiculous; they were performed for a religious purpose, in a fitting manner, with no vain, unworthy or violent means, in the right place and at the right time.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Hence the three natural causes proposed by *Rationalists* (see footnote 65) did not have any influence in Christ's miracles.

Unknown natural powers could not work, at least in such physical circumstances as those which accompanied Christ's deeds.

Mental suggestion (or the medical method called psychotherapeutic) cannot explain miracles about irrational creatures, about the expulsion of demons from demoniacs, about organic diseases (as blindness, deafness, dumbness, cut off ear); to which we can associate some diseases mingled with an organic injury (as paralysis, atrophy, leprosy, dropsy, flow of blood). Hence there remain only the merely functional infirmities, or rather those that are more directly connected with nervous disorder, on which suggestion may have its psychological influence. However, suggestion is effective only in a subject psychologically apt, present, prepared by the action of the one using suggestion, who moreover works slowly and patiently and obtains his effect gradually and only imperfectly. Such characteristics are alien to Christ's miracles.

Occultism (alias spiritism, hypnotism, animal magnetism, animism), both as a doctrine and a practice, is based on an occult power through which extraordinary effects are obtained. Such effects are either *physical*, as telekinesis (motion of a material thing done

at a distance by the will alone), levitation (by which a body is raised and kept in air without support), and materialization (formation of a new body from the fluid mass emitted by the body of the "medium"); or *psychical*, as telepathy (communication of thought to distant persons), and clairvoyance (knowledge of things distant in time or place or condition, as thoughts or secrets of heart).

Christ's miracles cannot be explained by such an occult power. The *object* is different as is clear especially for the above mentioned miracles of first and second classes (resuscitation, cure of organic diseases, change of water into wine, etc.). Particularly physical and moral *circumstances* are different; thus in spiritistic sessions things are done by a psychopathic or abnormal person (called "medium") working in an abnormal state of nervous prostration or excitement (called "trance"); total or partial fraud often takes place; the action is performed in an unbecoming manner, either frivolous or ambiguous or secret, often in the dark; the end is not religious but superstitious and a general shunning of religion.

XII

Objective Extrinsic Criteria of the
Fact of Revelation. Prophecies⁶⁸

IN THE ABOVE MENTIONED division of criterion (p. 25) we placed prophecy, along with physical miracles, as an objective extrinsic criterion of revelation. For, on the one hand it is a true miracle, although of the intellectual order, and on the other hand, it is also exteriorly recognizable with certainty by reason of the sensible manifestation of both the knowledge of a future event and its fulfillment. Thus it approaches physical miracle itself, making with it a double and primary criterion of revelation. Just as in the preceding chapter we will first give a brief explanation of prophecy in general, as to its nature and possibility, and then proceed to the two points of our apologetical treatment, namely, the existence of prophecies (or the historical truth of the predictions of future events and of their fulfillment) and its apologetical value, that is, whether they are evident criteria or proofs of the fact of revelation.

- ⁶⁸ Bacht, H., "Wahres und falsches Prophetentum," *Biblica* 32 (1951) 237-262.
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1. Prophecy in general.

A. Nature of prophecy.

The word prophecy (in Greek "Prophetéia," derived either from the verb "profáino," I manifest before time or for a person, or from the verb "próphemi," I speak before time or for a person) etymologically means either prediction of the future or speech for another person as a legate. Both senses are biblical; thus Isaiah and Jeremiah are called prophets because they predicted the future, while Elias and Eliseus are called prophets because they were speaking as legates of God without particularly predicting the future. Likewise both senses are patristic and theological, although the first (that is, prediction of future events) prevailed in theology, in the documents of the Magisterium and also in popular language.

In this sense prophecy is properly and strictly defined: *Certain knowledge and exterior manifestation of a contingent future event.* (Cf. *Summa Theol.*, p.2-2, q.171, a.1-3). Two elements integrate this definition, that is, knowledge of the future and manifestation of this knowledge to others. The first element which is primary and essential, as being miraculous, implies two effects in the mind of the subject, that is, the infusion of a *supernatural light*, proportioned to the object to be known (hence a light modally supernatural, as explained above, p. 6; and thus prophecy is a true miracle of the intellectual order, as noted above, p. 66), and the *presentation of such an object*, that is, of a contingent future event (or an event depending on the free will alone and therefore completely undetermined or contingent). The second element is evidently not miraculous nor essential to prophecy as such (hence if God manifests the future to a man who keeps it secret to himself, there is still a prophecy), but it is essentially required for prophecy as a sign, that is for its apologetical value, for which moreover the historical and visible fulfillment of the prediction is required. Hence two things are required in *prophecy, taken apologetically* as a criterion of revelation, namely, *prediction* (certain knowledge and exterior manifestation) of a contingent future event, and its evident *historical fulfillment*.

Prophecy, a member of the division of miracle (that is an

intellectual miracle, as explained above, p. 66), cannot be divided essentially, that is, on the part of the supernatural light which is the same for the knowledge of all future events, but it is *divided accidentally*, both according to the way its object is presented to the subject, that is, whether directly in the intellect, or through the imagination, or through the exterior senses (*intellectual, imaginary, or sensible*, prophecy), and to the state of the subject, when receiving from God the knowledge of the future, that is, whether he is in *wakefulness, or in sleep, or in ecstasy*.

B. *The possibility of prophecy*⁶⁹ derives necessarily from two combined truths, namely, from the natural truth that God, by reason of the perfection of his knowledge and the universality of his providence, knows all future events, and from the

⁶⁹ The above mentioned Rationalists, who reject the possibility of miracles in general (see, p. 67), deny consequently the possibility of this particular intellectual miracle. This denial, found likewise in other systems, springs directly from three sources.

The first is *Fatalism*, which denies liberty and contingency of things and hence removes the very object of prophecy, that is, future contingent event. Such fatalism is common to Pantheists, among whom Baruch Spinoza (*Theological Political Treatises*, chaps. 1 and 6) directly attacked the possibility of miracle in general and of prophecies in particular.

The second and opposite source is a kind of theological *Contingentism*, denying to God a definite knowledge of the future as something incompatible with human freedom and leading to fatalism. Thus Marcus Tullius Cicero (refuted by St. Augustine, *City of God* 5.9) among Stoics; Celsus, enemy of Christian doctrines (refuted by Origen, *Against Celsus* 2.20); Socinians among the first Protestants; Voltaire among Deists; Kant, founder of agnostic rationalism (*Anthropology*, §39).

The third source is generically *Agnosticism*, common to Rationalists and Liberal Protestants (as Schleiermacher, Wegschneider, Kuenen, Lange, Sabatier), who, abstracting from the speculative possibility of prophecy, deny directly its practical possibility or its discernibility, hence inferring that prophecy has no objective value, but only a moral value and sense, as being an expression of the deep faith and morality of the men we call prophets.

Vatican Council I teaches the existence and the probative value of both miracles and prophecies: "In order that the 'obedience' of our

supernatural truth that God can reveal to man things pertaining to the supernatural order (as shown above, p. 5 ff.).

2. *Christ's prophecies, as to their historical truth.*

The supernatural origin of the Christian religion can be proved by any true prophecy made in the Church at any time, because the seal of God's testimony stamped on any prophecy is a sufficient testimony. However, we shall confine our consideration to the prophecies made *by Christ himself*, as being together with his physical miracles the major testimony on whose strength and evidence the Church itself was first built and propagated.⁷⁰

faith should be 'consonant with reason' [cf. Rom. 12.1] God has willed that to the internal aids of the Holy Spirit there should be joined external proofs of his revelation, namely: divine deeds, especially miracles and prophecies which, because they clearly show forth the omnipotence and infinite knowledge of God, are most certain signs of a divine revelation and are suited to the intelligence of all" (sess. 3, chap. 3, Denz. 3009).

⁷⁰ Hence we leave out of our considerations:

First the *messianic prophecies* of the Old Testament about Christ, which taken all together would likewise make up an evident and sufficient criterion of Christian revelation, but only by the aid of a more careful and scientific examination, required by their less precise character (see below, pp. 101-105).

Second, the prophecies made by Christ but *not yet fulfilled* (like the prophecy about the perpetuity of the Church, as distinct from its longevity and enduring stability which is already actual, as well as the prophecy about things regarding the end of the world), because before their fulfillment they cannot be proved as true prophecies and hence they have no apologetical value, as we noted above (p. 89).

Third, that manifold and marvelous *manifestation of past and present hidden things*, often made by Christ, especially of the secrets of hearts, as the sins of the Samaritan woman (John 4.18-19, 29, 39), the interior suspicion of a Pharisee (Luke 11.38 f.), the interior scorn of Simon the Pharisee about the sinful woman washing Christ's feet (Luke 7.39 f.), the hostile thoughts of the Pharisees on various occasions (Matt. 9.4; 12.25; Luke 6.8), Judas' interior plan of betrayal (John 13.18). This manifestation is not about the future and hence not properly prophecy; moreover, although it is an outstanding miracle of the intellectual order and can be used as a cri-

Although at first sight less noticeable than miracles, Christ's prophecies are equally scattered throughout the Gospel and are no less evident as to the definite *prediction* of future events and its exact *fulfillment*, which are the two requirements of a prophecy under its historical aspect. A great harvest of such prophecies can be gathered under a threefold heading.

First in importance are the prophecies about Christ himself, namely, about his passion and resurrection.

Christ's passion is predicted not only indefinitely as to the mere fact (Matt. 9.15; 17.12; 20.22, 28; 21.33-45; 26.29; John 2.19; 3.14; 8.28; 10.17; 12.24,32), but also with the addition of very particular circumstances, as Judas' betrayal, Peter's denial, Christ's deliverance into the hands of the Jewish leaders and his condemnation by them, his subsequent deliverance to the Gentiles themselves and his being mocked and spit upon by them, the scourging and the crucifixion. All these circumstances are gathered in Mark 10.32-34: "And again taking the Twelve, he began to tell them what would happen to him, saying, 'Behold we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the Scribes; and they will condemn him to death, and will deliver him to the Gentiles; and they will mock him, and spit upon him, and scourge him, and put him to death; and on the third day he will rise again.'" The same prophecy is found in Matthew (20.18ff.) and Luke (18.31-33) with the addition of the circumstance of crucifixion by Matthew. All four evangelists relate Judas' betrayal and Peter's denial. This prophecy in all its details was fulfilled to the letter, as is clear from the last chapters of the three Synoptics.

Christ's resurrection is likewise predicted both indefinitely (John 10.17; 11.25; 12.24; 14.19; 16.16) and with the particular circumstance of time, that is, "on the third day,"⁷¹ empha-

tion of revelation, its apologetical value is not too great, because its miraculous character is not too clear.

⁷¹ The expression "on the third day" is found in Matt. 16.21; Mark 10.34; Luke 9.22. The evangelists use also other equivalent expressions, as "until the third day," "in three days," "for three

sized by the double figure of the rebuilding in three days of the destroyed temple (John 2.19,21) and of the prophet Jonas who was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights (Matt. 12.39 f., quoted above, p. 117; cf. Luke 11.29 f.). This prophecy was brought up by the Pharisees themselves, both before the court of Caiphas, as an accusation (Matt. 26.61; cf. 27.40), and before Pilate, as a precaution, for they asked him to have the sepulcher guarded for three days, because "that deceiver said: After three days I will rise again" (Matt. 27.63 f.). Also the apparition after the resurrection was predicted (Matt. 26.32; Mark 14.28). This prophecy was likewise fulfilled to the letter, as we have shown above (pp. 75-78).

Secondly there are several general or particular prophecies about the disciples, all of them exactly fulfilled. The general prophecies concern the Church, that is, the rejection of the Jews, the conversion of the Gentiles, the expansion and stability of the Church (Matt. 8.11; 16.18 f.; 24.14; 26.13; Mark 13.10; 14.9; Luke 13.29; 24.46 f.; John 10.16; 12.32). Less general prophecies are about the apostles as a group, like their flight during the passion (Matt. 26.31), the coming of the Holy Spirit upon them (John 7.39; 14.16 f.; Luke 24.49; Acts 1.8; cf. 2.1 ff.), the power of miracles (Mark 16.17). Particular or individual prophecies regard Judas' betrayal and Peter's denial (see above), Peter's primacy (Matt. 16.18 f.) and martyrdom (John 21.18 f.), the martyrdom of Zebedee's sons, which happened to James in a bloody manner and to John unbloodily (John 21.18-23; Acts 4.13; 5.18,40; Apoc. 1.9).

Thirdly, two prophecies regard the Jewish people, namely the spiritual downfall of Israel or the transferring of the kingdom of God to the Gentiles, fulfilled in the foundation and propagation of the new Church (Matt. 8.10-12; 21.43; 24.14; Mark 13.10; Luke 21.24) and the temporal ruin of the Jewish nation with the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple (Matt. 24.1-35; Luke 19.41-44; 21.20-33), which was fulfilled in all its predicted circumstances almost within a generation. This second prophecy deserves particular attention because of its

days," "after three days" (Matt. 27.63), "three days and three nights" (Matt. 12.40). There is no opposition between these expressions, because even a part of the day used to be counted as a day.

importance as an historical event and of an exegetical difficulty involved in it.

Its importance is evident from the detailed description of the destruction of Jerusalem and its fulfillment to the letter. According to the prophecy, there would be false prophets among the Jews, famines and earthquakes, a siege of the city by a Gentile army, complete destruction of Jerusalem and its temple, and captivity of the Jewish people among the nations. This all happened in the year 70, forty years after Christ's death. The general fact is attested by Roman history, according to which Jerusalem underwent a double attack of the Roman army in 66 and in 67-70, and after a long siege was captured and destroyed by Titus, afterwards emperor, who carved the event in his triumphal arch, still standing in the Roman Forum. The details, given by the Jewish historian Joseph Flavius in his work *The Jewish War*, are, as predicted by Christ, the advent of false prophets before and during the siege (*ibid.* 6.5.2 f.), pestilence and famine (*ibid.* 6.9.3), destruction of the temple and most of the city, with the exception of a few towers and part of the wall, left as a sign of victory and for the use of the Roman garrison (7.1.1),⁷² death of the majority of the population (1,100,000 persons) and captivity of the rest (97,000), destined either to be sold into slavery, or to do hard mining work in Egypt, or to the cruelties of amphitheaters, or to enhance the Roman triumph of Titus himself (*ibid.* 6.9.2 f.).

The exegetical difficulty in this prophecy arises from the fact that some of the elements mingled with it do not fit the

⁷² A further destruction of the towers themselves followed under emperor Hadrian after the year 117 on account of the rebellion of the pseudoprophet Bar Chochba. The complete destruction of what was left took place under emperor Julian the Apostate in 363, when the Jews, encouraged by this emperor, began to dig up the very foundations of the temple with the purpose of building a new one; in which attempt they were checked by preternatural balls of fire bursting out of the grounds, as is attested by Ammianus Marcellinus, an attendant of Julian the Apostate, *Hist.* 23.1, St. Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration about Julian* 2.4, Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.20, and Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.22.

end of Jerusalem but rather the end of the world, as "the coming of the Son of Man" or the second advent of Christ, the advent of false christs who "will show great signs and wonders," the darkening of the sun and the moon, the shaking of the skies, the general resurrection (Matt. 24.23-35); all of which is said to happen within a generation: "Amen I say to you, this generation will not pass away till all these things have been accomplished." (Matt. 24.34; Mark 13.30; Luke 21.32). From this it would seem on the one hand that Christ himself, deceived by some eschatological ideas and tendencies, made a prophecy only about the end of the world within a generation, which in fact was not fulfilled, and on the other hand the first Christians, witnessing the end of Jerusalem instead of the end of the world, reshaped in an awkward manner Christ's original prophecy into a prophecy about the end of Jerusalem itself and introduced it into the Gospel. Such is the objection of Rationalists and Modernists.

However, on the one hand it is generally accepted as certain that the three Synoptic Gospels were written before the year 70, therefore before the destruction of Jerusalem,⁷³ and on the other hand the Gospel text is entirely genuine and not falsified by later interpolations, as serious exegetes show. This is confirmed, in our case, by the internal examination of the text itself; for, if it had been interpolated or reshaped after the destruction of Jerusalem, it would not be apparently so vague, confused and mixed up, that the exegetes are embarrassed and disagree among themselves as to what exactly is referred to the end of Jerusalem, to the end of the world, and to both, especially with regard to that difficult assertion closing the entire pericope: "Amen I say to you, this generation will not pass away till all these things have been accomplished."

One thing is certain, namely that the Gospel text brings together a double prophecy, one about the end of Jerusalem (as

⁷³ The approximate chronology of the Gospels and of the Acts of the Apostles is as follows: Matthew's Aramaic and lost gospel in the year 40-50; Matthew's Greek and present gospel in the year 62-70; Mark's gospel, 64-70; Luke's gospel, 65-70; John's gospel, 90-100; Acts of the Apostles, 62-63.

is clear especially in Luke's pericope) and the other about the end of the world, and that the first has been fulfilled even within a generation.⁷⁴

The historical truth⁷⁵ of such prophecies appears from external as well as from internal criteria in the same way as the historical truth of the physical miracles. Hence whatever has been said above about Christ's miracles (pp. 71-78) holds proportionally here as regards Christ's prophecies.

3. Apologetical value of Christ's prophecies.

Christ's prophecies, as implying both prediction of contingent future events and its actual fulfillment, are evident and sufficient criterion of revelation, on account of their evident miraculous character.

As we stated above, speaking of miracles (p. 79 f.), this apologetical value is based on three necessary elements, name-

⁷⁴ Our apologetical purpose allows little importance to the question disputed among exegetes, as to the sense of "present generation." Some say that the *present generation* has to be referred to the prophecy about the end of Jerusalem; in which case it retains its proper and *historical* sense and strengthens the prophecy with the circumstance of time, matching the facts. Some on the contrary hold that it refers to the other prophecy about the end of the world; in which case the present generation is taken in an *eschatological* sense, meaning that the Jewish people, or mankind itself, will not come to an end before Christ's second advent takes place. Finally, other exegetes refer the present generation to both prophecies at once; in which case it takes a *typical* or *prophetic* sense, meaning that the present historical generation will not pass until both things happen, that is the end of Jerusalem in itself and the end of the world in its figure, which is shown in the end of Jerusalem.

⁷⁵ Among the aforementioned *Rationalists and Agnostics*, who reject the possibility of prophecies (p. 90), some radically deny the historical truth of Christ's predictions, gratuitously attributing them to later *invention or fiction, interpolated into the Gospel* after the various events took place, to express faith in Christ or to extol his dignity. Thus H. E. G. Paulus, D. F. Strauss, R. Bultmann, A. A. Jülicher, followed by Modernists, who say that such prophecies have their origin from the later pauline doctrine of the atoning character of Christ's death, which, according to the desire of the faithful, ought to have been foreseen and predicted by Christ himself.

ly, the *historical, philosophical, and relative truth*. In other words, it has to be certain that the prophecies were made and fulfilled, that they are true miracles (although of the intellectual order), and that they were made by Christ with the manifested purpose of proving the fact of revelation, or that God was speaking through him. If these three things are certain, the fact of revelation is certain, otherwise God himself, by his miraculous intervention involved in the prophecies, would approve and endorse falsehood.

The historical truth has just been shown.

The relative truth is of itself implicit in the fact that Christ was making his prophecies in the actual exercise of his preaching as God's legate, for, this very fact turned naturally into a confirmation of his mission, and therefore he implicitly intended such reference or confirmation. Besides, this was also explicitly declared by him on several occasions; thus, after predicting Judas' betrayal, Christ added: "I tell you now before it comes to pass, that when it has come to pass you may believe that I am he" (John 13.19); predicting to the apostles his return to them after death, he declared: "And now I have told you before it comes to pass, that when it has come to pass you may believe" (John 14.29); predicting to them their future trials and persecutions, he repeated the same declaration: "But these things I have spoken to you, that when the time for them has come you may remember that I told you." (John 16.4). He predicted his resurrection as the greatest sign of his mission, thus equivalently making both, the fact of the resurrection and its prediction, the sign of his mission. (Matt. 12.39, quoted on p. 81).

The philosophical truth of Christ's prophecies,⁷⁶ namely, that they are unmistakably true miracles, due to the direct

⁷⁶ Moderate *Rationalists*, who grant the historical truth, deny necessarily the philosophical truth of such prophecies, attributing them to a natural power of *prevision or divination*, accidentally coupled with a lucky chance.

Such power, cause of natural prophecies, would be accompanied in some extraordinary men either by *fraud and imposture*, which impels them to usurp a divine mission, or by a mere innocent *illusion*, which creates in their imagination a fictitious divine mission,

intervention of God who alone can know contingent future events, is proved by the exclusion of *natural causes, which have to be reduced to a mere conjecture, based on a particular power of divination* (either connatural or occult, that is, hypnotic or spiritistic, or even diabolic) *coupled with a lucky chance.*

Such exclusion appears from the consideration of the *subject*, or firmity of his prediction, of the *object*, which is purely contingent and very particular, and of the nature of *chance*, which is something essentially inconsistent. Indeed, it is impossible, naturally and merely conjecturing, to predict, firmly, definitely and with detailed circumstances, an event which is dependent upon the free will of God or men, remote in time, and not favored by circumstances of time and place. Besides, on the supposition that one would arbitrarily and temerarily venture such conjecture, it is impossible that such event would happen *de facto* and merely by chance, especially when it is a question of several and various predictions, for, chance is by definition something essentially inconsistent: things that happen by chance are not determined and constant.⁷⁷ But

or by an unusual *religious exaltation*, caused by a deeper faith and producing a kind of interior persuasion of some divine mission assigned to them.

According to this last and more common theory (developed especially by A. Kuenen and A. Sabatier) prophecy is the product of a natural and universal phenomenon of providential and normal course of history, according to which some outstanding men (as Confucius, Buddha, Zoroaster, Plato, Christ, Mohammed) connaturally rise up and express their own religious experience and aspirations, also under the form of prophecy or prediction of the future, so that it represents an object of hope rather than the knowledge of an object.

⁷⁷ From such close examination of the subject and the object it is not difficult to distinguish and detect *false prophecies*, proceeding either from a human and probable *conjecture* (due to levity, temerity, imposture, illusion, religious exaltation), or from occult *natural power of divination* (as in hypnotism and spiritism), or even from *diabolic intervention*. These are all reduced essentially to a mere conjecture, proceeding from a natural perspicacity of created intellect (human or angelic), having no firm and definite character, bearing on an indefinite object which favorable circumstances of

Christ's prophecies carry the aforesaid complex and definite character in their subject and object, as a cursory examination of some of them will show; therefore, they are not due to a mere natural conjecture, coupled with a lucky chance.

Christ's *resurrection* could not be conjectured in any way, considering that the very object can happen only by the power and the free will of God, and is favored by no natural circumstances or dispositions. Hence it is even outside the reach of any chance.

Christ's *passion* bears unusual and unexpected circumstances which would defy any conjecture, namely: condemnation, notwithstanding his great popularity with the people up to the Sunday before his death; condemnation to death itself, rather than to exile, as was possible; death by crucifixion (not stoning), unusual among the Jews and proper to the

time and place make naturally probable, and at times meeting by a lucky chance with an accidental fulfillment of their object.

Such are for instance the famous *Sibylline Oracles* of the ancient Greek religion (whose collection "Sibylline Books" was lost in the burning of the Roman Capitol in 183 B.C.; cf. H. Leclercq in *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie* 12-2, col. 2209-2224), partially scattered with obscurity and ambiguity, and partially interpolated after the events had taken place.

However, it is not impossible that God would permit *true prophecies also in false religions* (as we noted above about miracles, p. 80), providing they would not turn into a direct confirmation of such religions. It may even happen that a pagan or an enemy of the true religion is impelled by God to utter (consciously or unconsciously) a prophecy about or in behalf of the true religion. Such were the predictions of the pagan soothsayer Balaam, whom God compelled to make an outstanding messianic prophecy (Num. 24.15-19; cf. 2 Pet. 2.15 f.; Apoc. 2.14), Caiphas' words who, while condemning Christ, "prophesied that Jesus was to die for the nation" (John 11.51), and, according to St. Augustine (*City of God* 10.27; 18.23) and St. Thomas (*Summa Theol.*, p. 2-2, q.172, a.6, ad 1), some of the *Sibylline Oracles*, especially the famous oracle of the Cumoean Sibyl, predicting "the great new order of times about to be born," which the poet Virgil quotes and applies to the time of emperor Augustus in his fourth eclogue. This belief in Sibylline Oracles inspired the medieval verses of our Latin liturgy: "*Dies irae, dies illa, solvet saeculum in favilla, teste David cum Sibylla.*"

Romans; condemnation and death by the Gentiles, not by the Jews themselves, as it would have been logical and as Pilate himself objected to the Jews (John 18.31); derision, spitting, scourging, which are very detailed and entirely contingent circumstances. Nor can one say that Christ knew from the Old Testament about the passion and death of the Messiah; for, on the one hand, all such particular circumstances are not contained in the messianic prophecies and hence they make up a prophecy by themselves, and on the other hand the fact that Christ said that the passion and death prophesied about the Messiah were going to be fulfilled in his own person, constitutes a new prophecy by itself. At any rate, what kind of chance would be able to bring about such passion with such particular circumstances?

Regarding *Judas' betrayal*, although Christ through his keen sense of observation could have gradually detected Judas' disloyalty and particularly his greediness (cf. John 12.4-6), he could not naturally foresee, at least for sure and so long before it happened (cf. John 6.71 f.), that he was going to betray him. For, Judas had concealed his plan so long and so well that the other apostles had no suspicion at all (cf. Matt. 26.22) and he could even to the end converse familiarly with them and with Christ (cf. John 12.4-8).

Peter's denial, rather than that of any other apostle, could not have been naturally foreseen, in view of his particular attachment to Christ, shown in several instances, as when he confessed Christ's divinity (Matt. 16.16-19: "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona"), when he indignantly discarded the possibility of Christ's passion (Matt. 16.22: "Far be it from you, O Lord; this will never happen to you"), and especially when to Christ explicitly predicting his denial he vehemently protested: "Even if I should have to die with you, I will not deny you." (Matt. 26.35). Much less the particular circumstance of the cock's triple crowing could have been naturally conjectured.

The expansion and stability of the Church could not have been naturally foreseen, in view of the scanty means at her disposal and the great obstacles she would encounter. (See above, p. 53).

The destruction of Jerusalem and its temple, center and base of so flourishing a people and religion, could in no way have been naturally foreseen, much less with so many and detailed circumstances. Notwithstanding the Roman yoke and its foreign character, political relations between the Jews and the Romans were not such as to suggest an imminent war, particularly because the war power of the Jewish people was so slight in comparison with that of the Romans that hardly could anyone think of a happy outcome of any war or rebellion. Furthermore, the wise Roman policy was to preserve the temples and particular monuments of the conquered peoples, even though they destroyed the cities and overturned their walls; but the temple of Jerusalem was completely destroyed by the fury of the soldiers against the explicit will of Titus himself, who entering the burning city was able to save only the upper towers. As the Jewish historian Joseph Flavius sadly remarks, no other city ever destroyed by the Romans met with such disaster. (*The Jewish War*, prologue).

We said above (p. 91) that we were not taking into consideration *the messianic prophecies about Christ in the Old Testament*, on account of their less precise character. However, as a complement of the present question on Christian prophecies, a word is to be added about these prophecies regarding their proper apologetical value.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ The most important and clearest messianic prophecies are found in eighteen passages, distributed as follows:

Five prophecies in the patriarchal period: Gen. 3.15 ("the seed of the woman"); Gen. 22.17 f. (all nations blessed in the seed of Abraham); Gen. 49.8-12 (the King rising from the tribe of Judah); Num. 24.17-19 (the star rising from the family of Jacob; Balaam's oracle); Deut. 18.18 (the coming of the future prophet, similar to Moses).

Three prophecies in the Davidic period: Ps. 2.6-9 (the divine King); Ps. 15.9-11 (the resurrection of God's Servant); Ps. 109.1-4 (the divine King and the Priest according to the order of Melchisedech).

Ten prophecies in the period of the prophets strictly so-called: Isa. 7.14 (the virgin birth of Emmanuel); Isa. 9.1-2, 6-7 (the royal birth of the prince of peace); Isa. 11.1-5 (the coming of the Prophet, son of David, filled with the Holy Spirit); Isa., chap. 53 entirely (the "Man of sorrows" and his passion); Jer. 23.5 f. (the King, son of

Indeed, the messianic prophecies about Christ are of themselves an *evident and sufficient criterion of revelation*, because their historical, philosophical and relative truth can be known with certainty.

The *historical truth* appears evident from a *general and complete view of them*, as converging into a symmetrical and continuous unity of books in which they are contained, of people to which they are directed, and especially of the object which they declare.⁷⁹ The prophetic books make up an organic collection, gradually built by various authors of different character and writing in different circumstances until about the third century before Christ. The persons to whom the prophecies are addressed are one and the same Jewish people in its continuous and consistent history, with which the books themselves are intimately connected. The object of such prophecies is one and the same messianic hope of a future period of glory, peace and salvation, and such hope is made dependent on a definite person, whose character and attributes, at first outlined generically under the double aspect of savior and king (prophecies of the patriarchal period), were subsequently and progressively determined (prophecies of the Davidic period and of the time of men specifically called prophets), so that this person is distinctly said to be king, prophet and priest, Son of God, to originate in the tribe of Judah, from the line of David, by a virgin mother, in the town of Bethlehem, and one who would suffer and rise. Even discordant attributes are candidly and without hesitation predicted of him, as son of a woman and Son of God, son of David and David's Lord, humble and glorious, suffering and trium-

phant; Ezech. 34.23 f. (the son of David, good shepherd); Dan. 9.24-27 (the Holy of Holies, coming to restore the cult, after 70 weeks); Mich. 5.2 (Bethlehem, birthplace of the Messiah); Zach. 9.9 f. (the King Messiah, riding a donkey); Mal. 3.1-3; appendix 5 (the King's precursor).

⁷⁹ At least three of these prophecies, namely Ps. 2.1-9; Ps. 109.1-4; and Isa. 53, considered apart in themselves, show an evident character of historical truth, because they have a *literal messianic sense* which could only arbitrarily be denied, while the others could possibly be understood only in a *typical sense*, and hence they would need to be considered in the overall prophetic picture.

phant, dying and rising.

The *fulfillment* of such prophecies in the person and life of Christ is shown with details in the Gospel and is explicitly claimed by Christ himself. *Christ's genealogy* is traced back to David, Judah, Jacob, Abraham, and Adam, thus showing the fulfillment of the first prophecies about the seed of the woman who was to come to save the race (Gen. 3.15), the seed of Abraham in which all nations would be blessed (Gen. 22.17 f.), the star rising from the family of Jacob (Num. 24.17-19), the leader coming from the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49.8-12), the son and heir of David (Isa. 11.1-5; Jer. 23.5; Ezech. 34.23 f.; 37.24 f.).

Christ had his precursor in *John the Baptist*, according to the prophecy of Malachias (3.1-3; and appendix 5; both texts are referred to John by Christ himself, Matt. 11.10; 17.10-13); he was born in *Bethlehem*, the birthplace of David, according to Micheas (5.2), and of a *virgin mother* according to Isaias (7.14).

Christ explicitly claimed that he was the prophesied *Messiah* and was recognized as such by others (see above, p. 29). In his life he exercised the triple proper office of the Messiah announced by the prophets, that is, the *magisterial or prophetic office* (according to Deut. 18.18; Isa. 11.1-5); the *priestly office* (according to Ps. 109.4; Isa., chap. 53 about the "man of sorrows" dying for his people; Ezech. 34.23 f. about the good shepherd; Dan. 9.24-27 about the 70 weeks), by dying on the cross, instituting the eucharistic sacrifice, substituting a new cult for the old; the *royal office* (according to Gen. 49.8-12; Num. 24.17-19; Ps. 2.6-9; 109.1-4; Isa. 9.1 ff.; Jer. 23.5; Mich. 5.2; Zach. 9.9 f.), entering Jerusalem triumphantly (according to Zach. 9.9 f.) and declaring to Pilate that he was a king, though not of a temporal kingdom. Besides, he affirmed to be the Son of God (according to Ps. 2.6-9).

Christ ended his life through his passion as the "man of sorrows," "despised and rejected by men" (according to Isaias, chap. 53); but he did not know the corruption of the grave and arose from the dead (according to Ps. 15.9-11).

The *philosophical truth*, or miraculous character, of these prophecies is shown by the exclusion of a natural cause, that

is, of conjecture coupled with lucky chance (as above, p. 98). For, it is impossible to explain through such a cause the consistency of those prophecies, notwithstanding the course of so many centuries, nor their mutual concordance, notwithstanding the great variety of prophets as to their character, time and other circumstances, in predicting long before the time (a minimum of 260 years before Christ), a fact combining many elements (the various attributes and deeds of the Messiah) and several detailed circumstances (place of birth, precursor, virgin conception, resurrection), depending on the free will of men, or even of God alone (virginal conception, resurrection), some of which were indifferent or undesirable to the people (birth in a small town, humility, ignominious passion and death, universality of the Kingdom opposed to the Jewish nationalistic ideals). Besides, even if these prophecies were one great and arbitrary conjecture, continued by many people and for so many centuries, it would still be impossible that its fulfillment should happen by a mere lucky chance, for, things do not happen fully and determinately by chance.

The *relative truth* of the same prophecies, namely, their connection with Christ's doctrine which gives to them their proper strength as a criterion of Christian revelation, is contained immediately in their very fulfillment in Christ, and thus implicitly in the intention of the prophets themselves. For, from the fact that these prophecies were fulfilled in Christ (and hence that Christ is the legate of God announced by the prophets) it follows necessarily that his teaching is from God and contains divine revelation. Besides, through his own miracles and prophecies, Christ proved that he was the legate of truth announced by the prophets and thus the Old Testament prophecies themselves received a divine confirmation.

On account of its apologetical value, the argument drawn from messianic prophecies has been constant and customary in Christian apologetics since the beginning. Christ himself insistently appealed to these prophecies as fulfilled in his person, both for his personal defense against the Jews denying his divine mission and for the instruction of the disciples and the Church. He solemnly said to the Jews: "You search the

Scriptures, because in them you think that you have life everlasting. And it is they that bear witness to me, yet you are not willing to come to me that you may have life." (John 5.39 f.). And to his disciples after the resurrection: "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled that are written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning me . . . Thus it is written; and thus the Christ should suffer, and should rise again from the dead on the third day, and repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name to all the nations" (Luke 24.44-47).

XIII

Conclusion

On the obligation of believing the revelation made by God and the genesis of the act of supernatural faith, prepared by the judgment of credibility.

As was shown above (p. vii), the formal object or the intrinsic purpose of Apologetics is to prove the evident credibility of the fact of revelation through evident criteria, or to show how a man can arrive at a sure judgment of the credibility of revelation. But there is also an extrinsic purpose to it, namely, to lead man to the act of supernatural faith itself. For this act cannot be elicited unless he has first acquired a rational evidence of the fact of revelation and elicited a certain judgment about the credibility of this fact (see above, p. 18). However, the passage from this natural judgment of credibility to the supernatural act of faith is neither necessary nor immediate, otherwise the supernatural act of faith would resolve itself into and be originated by an act of natural reason. Hence there must come, between them, an impelling act of the free will and a subsequent practical judgment by which a man affirms the obligation to believe what the speculative judgment shows as credible.

The entire process of the conversion of a man to faith includes the following steps. Since the natural law itself obliges a man to accept whatever it pleases God to reveal, even a truth of the supernatural order, as soon as he conceives a founded doubt about his natural religious belief and a solid probability about the truth of the supernatural Christian religion, he is obliged, not of course to believe as yet (since a doubtful law does not bind), but to inquire into the matter,

in order to expel his doubt and to form a sure judgment about it. After this inquiry, consisting in a careful consideration of the various criteria of the revealed religion, which are of themselves objectively evident and subjectively adapted to the intelligence of all, he is able to elicit the *speculative judgment of credibility* about this revealed religion ("Revelation is evidently credible"), and for this he does not need the help of grace, which however is easily granted to him. (See above, p. 22).

Then, recalling the aforesaid obligation of obedience to God revealing, from this speculative judgment he proceeds under the influence of the will and the necessary help of grace to elicit the *practical judgment*, that is, the judgment about the personal obligation to believe this credible revelation ("Revelation is to be believed by me here and now"). This practical judgment is already something essentially supernatural and a proximate disposition to faith. Finally, under the influence of the will, he elicits in the intellect an *act of command to believe*, such as precedes any efficacious action of man ("Believe it"), which opens the door to faith and which, under the renewed influence of the will and of grace, is immediately followed by the *act of faith* ("I believe").

The speculative judgment of credibility does not necessarily bring in the act of faith, for the will can resist the movement of grace and interrupt the course of conversion; on the contrary the practical judgment is necessarily followed by faith, because it is the cause of the election of the will, under which the command of believing is given and the door is open to faith.

From such a process of acts and from what was said above (pp. viii, 19) it is evident that, although the natural judgment of credibility is a necessary prerequisite to the supernatural act of faith, it is in no way the *cause* of this act or the *principle* into which faith is resolved. Faith and reason live in the same intellect in a friendly symbiosis, keeping their distinct rights and objects: the judgment of credibility discharges its duties to faith, first by paving the way to it and then by remaining under that supernatural light as its rational and extrinsic foundation.

Glossary of Technical Words

Occurring In This Treatise

Agnosticism (from the Greek "á," a negative prefix, and "ghignósco," I know; hence, I do not know) is a philosophical system which denies the capacity of our mind to know objective truth. It is divided into *Positivistic Agnosticism* (as that of Comte and Spencer), which restricts our knowledge to experimental facts, and *Rationalistic Agnosticism* (founded by Kant), which limits our objective knowledge to an undetermined phenomenon, which makes an impression on our senses, so that all the definite concepts we have (as God, the soul, etc.) are merely subjective forms, and we cannot know whether they have a corresponding objective reality outside our mind. In this system, supernatural order, revelation, miracles, prophecies, are things whose reality cannot be ascertained. This mitigated form of Rationalism of the Kantian character was adopted among Catholics by *Modernism*, condemned in 1907 by Pius X.

Analogy means similarity of concepts and is opposed to univocity, which is identity of concepts. It is important to notice that an analogical concept is not necessarily metaphorical (as when we say: Peter is a fox), but it can be also proper; thus, if we say: Peter is son of Paul, and Christ is Son of God, the concept of sonship is proper to both Peter and Christ, although not univocal, but only analogical, inasmuch as sonship is truly found in Peter and Christ, but in different ways.

Apologetics, which etymologically means defense, is the technical name of the first part of theology which deals with the defense of revelation as a whole, against Rationalism,

which denies the possibility of revelation. The defense of a particular revealed truth is more properly called apology.

Deism, etymologically from the Latin "Deus" (God), has taken historically a weakened sense in comparison to Theism, etymologically from the Greek "Theós" (God). Theism is the right philosophical system about God (called theodicy), while Deism is a rationalistic conception of the Divinity, which mutilates God in his nature and attributes in various ways, among which is found the denial of his providence (Deists were the Socinians, Cherbury, Collins, Voltaire, Rousseau). In this system revelation, miracles, prophecies, have no sense.

Essence, nature, substance of a thing are practically the same and signify the proper constituent element of something. Formally, however, this same element is called essence in relation and opposition to existence; it is called nature in relation to the acts or operations flowing from it; it is called substance in relation and opposition to the accidents placed in it. Thus body and soul together are the essence of man, making him capable to exist, they are also the nature from which flow all his actions (as understanding, willing, seeing, hearing, walking, talking), and finally they are his substance, in which all his accidents are received (as intellect, will, senses, quantity, sensible qualities).

Faith subjectively is a supernatural and theological virtue dealing directly with God (as charity and hope), which makes us able to elicit the act of assenting to what God reveals (the act of faith). Objectively it is the revealed truth to which we give our supernatural assent. In this sense, which is the same as the objective revelation, we speak of truths of faith, articles of faith, symbols of faith (the Creed). In both senses Christians are called the faithful.

Fatalism is a philosophical system denying the contingency of things and consequently freedom in man. The world is conceived as a whole, enveloping and whirling in its rigid course all its parts, man included, and destiny or fate is the inescapable law of the universe. All Pantheism, whether materialistic

or idealistic, is a fatalistic system, and such also is Stoicism. In this system, revelation, miracle, prophecy, have no meaning.

Immanentism is a philosophical religious system which reduces all reality to the subject (subjectivism). It began with Descartes, received a particular form with Kant, and reached its peak in the idealistic *Pantheism* of Hegel. It took a different form in *Pragmatism* (especially with William James), which is a general tendency to consider everything from the practical viewpoint, that is, in terms of action, seeking in action itself the reason of truth and certainty. It was recently adopted in Catholic Apologetics, especially by M. Blondel (+1949) and L. Laberthonnière (+1932), under the name of "*method of immanence*" or "*Apologetics of immanence*," which gives undue importance and preference to the subjective criteria (satisfactions of human aspirations) over the objective extrinsic criteria (miracles and prophecies) in proving the divine origin of Christian religion.

Miracle, etymologically wonder, theologically is something which is above the established order of powers of every created nature and hence cannot be done but by God. Any wonder done by angels or demons or men is not a miracle, unless they work as instruments of God. Also things done by God himself according to an order established by him, are not miracles, such as creation, elevation, justification. Hence the proper and specific note of a miracle is its extraordinary character, that is, its being outside the order and laws established by God in all created things.

Modernism is a heresy which consciously or unconsciously arose among Catholics at the beginning of this century and was condemned by Pius X in 1910 in the Decree "*Lamentabili*" and in the Encyclical "*Pascendi*." It is based on three philosophical principles or systems, that is, *Kantian agnosticism*, which denies the possibility of objective knowledge, *immanentism*, which makes God and religion an effect of an inner sense or conscience, and *evolutionism*, which teaches that reality does not consist in being but in becoming. Hence religion with all its dogmas is only a fruit of a blind conscience, continually

developing and expressing itself in new formulas without an objective reality that could be ascertained. In this system, supernatural order, revelation, miracles, prophecies, have no objective but only symbolic value.

Mystery etymologically and generically means something hidden, especially to knowledge, hence a secret. In theology it is taken with regard to God's revelation, and it means something which is so secret to us that it cannot be known without God's revelation. If after God's revelation such thing is perfectly clear to us (for instance if God reveals to me that in about a year or two there will be again a general war), it is a mystery in a broader sense; if on the contrary it still remains obscure as to its intimate nature, it is a mystery in the strict sense. Such are Trinity, Incarnation, revelation, grace, justification, beatific vision, etc., which we call the mysteries of our faith precisely because even after revelation they remain secret and unknown as to their intimate nature, and before the beatific vision are not seen but only believed through the obscure light of faith. All such mysteries are intrinsically supernatural.

Object of a science, or rather of any knowing faculty, is the subject matter under consideration. Material object is the concrete subject under consideration without distinction, as the concrete body which I see with my eyes. The formal object is that particular aspect or quality which is considered in the subject, as color under which my eyes see a body. The formal light is the degree of immateriality found in the formal object, which makes this object knowable, for, knowing consists in abstracting or separating an object from its material conditions.

Optimism is a theological system, held by the Protestant W. Leibniz (+1716) and the Catholic N. Malebranche (+1715), which teaches that God was morally forced by his own goodness and dignity to create the best possible world (in the case that he chose to create, as he did). Hence the natural laws, being the best, are immutable and exceptions to them, that is, miracles, are impossible. What appears to be a miracle is only an effect of angelic creatures or of natural laws still unknown.

Rationalism is a general philosophico-theological system proclaiming the absolute autonomy of the natural reason, to whose judgment all knowable object and truth is subject, including God and his world. In such system, which embraces various extreme or mitigated forms from Deism to Atheism, supernatural order and its connections, as revelation, miracles, prophecies, have no meaning at all. Rationalism takes two general forms. One extreme, or *Positive Rationalism*, especially pantheistic, either materialistic (as that of E. Haeckel) or idealistic (as that of Hegel), which denies the existence of God and of the supernatural order, identifying God with the world. The other mitigated, or *Agnostic Rationalism*, which denies the existence of God and of the supernatural order only practically, by denying that we can know such supernatural objects, even if they exist.

In the question of miracles Positive Rationalism takes two different forms, from which the denial of miracles equally follows. One is *Determinism*, which affirms the absolute fixity of the natural laws, allowing no exceptions; the other is *Contingentism*, which affirms the absolute instability of those laws, or rather their nonexistence, and therefore the impossibility of exceptions to nonextant laws.

Revelation is taken either actively, for the action of God revealing, or passively, for its effect in man. The passive revelation is taken again in two ways, namely, objectively, for the object or truth presented to the intellect of man, and subjectively, for the supernatural light infused in the intellect to enable it to understand such truth. Hence flows the difference between revelation and the other two divine lights or helps, namely, *inspiration*, given to the hagiographers who wrote the Holy Scripture, and *assistance of the Holy Spirit*, given to the infallible Magisterium of the Church. In the three cases the subject is preserved from error. But in revelation, man receives the knowledge of a truth. In inspiration he receives no knowledge but he is only moved by God in such manner as to write without error things that he already knows and also with such influence as to become only an instrument of God, principal author of the writing. In the case of the assistance of the Holy Spirit the Magisterium receives no revelation nor

inspiration but merely an assistance (either supernatural or natural, but ever providential) by which it is preserved from error in its pronouncements.

Supernatural in the strict and absolute theological sense is that which is above all created nature and its powers. If it is above created nature itself, it is said to be essentially supernatural (as Trinity, Incarnation, revelation of strict mysteries, sanctifying grace); if it is only above the powers of nature, it is said to be modally supernatural (as physical miracles and prophecies). All things that we call supernatural (faith, mysteries, revelation, truths, graces of all kinds, lights, helps, virtues, etc.) belong to either of these two kinds of supernatural-ity.

Analytical Index

Analogy. Our analogical concepts have an objective value also when they are used to express revelation, 3, 7 f. An analogical concept can be either purely metaphorical or proper, footnote 6

Apologetics. Meaning and use of the name, footnote 1. Its definition and object, vii f. It is an extension or a fundamental part of theology, vi. Its purpose is to prove the credibility of revelation, vi-viii, 15, 106. *See Credibility, Criteria*

Augustine (St.). On the necessity of the judgment of credibility, prior to faith, footnote 24. Definition of miracle, 65, footnote 54. Words are the principal signs of the mind, 2. Man's heart is restless until it rests in God, 37

Civilization. *See Culture*

Certitude. Absolute certitude is founded on the nature of things, while conditional certitude is founded only in physical and moral laws, and hence it is divided into physical and moral certitude, footnote 21. Moral certitude of the fact of revelation is necessary for eliciting the act of supernatural faith, 17-21. This extrinsic certitude is essentially different from the intrinsic certitude of faith itself, footnote 2. Convergent probabilities may produce a true certitude, 61

Christ. The question of the historical Christ is still brought up from time to time, footnote 29. Christ's holiness and outstanding virtues as a criterion of the divine origin of his religion, 46 f. The origin of his doctrine and the manner of his teaching show a wondrous character, 42 f. His testimony about his divine mission, 28-31. The exercise of his mag-

isterial function, 30 f. As to Christ's miracles, prophecies, and resurrection, *see these three entries*. Besides prophecies, Christ made many miraculous manifestations of past and present hidden events, footnote 70

Church. The Church, in itself and as a whole, represents a great miracle of the moral order, and hence a certain and outstanding criterion of its divine origin, 21, 60-62. Probable criteria of its divine origin are its sublime doctrine, 42-46, 55 f., its sanctity, 47-50, 56 f., its expansion, unity, and stability, 50-54, 57-60. Number of the persecutions and of the martyrs of the Church, 48 f. In about seventy years after Christ's death the Church reached the limits of the civilized Roman world, 50 f. and at the beginning of the fourth century at least the fifth of the population of the Roman empire was Christian, 51 f.

Credibility. Notion, 15 f. Credibility of the fact of revelation is the proper object of Apologetics, vi-viii, 14, 106. It is the rational and necessary foundation of the supernatural faith, 17-21. The proper meaning of "Reasonable submission," stressed by St. Paul (Rom. 12.1), 12, footnote 13. *See Criteria. Faith*

Criteria. General notion and division of the criteria of revelation, 24 f. They are called signs, or motives of credibility, or criteria of revelation, footnote 28. Strictly speaking there is only one criterion of revelation, namely, miracle, 24, 39, 41, 54, 64, 79. Subjective criteria (fulfillment of human aspirations) are only probable criteria, contrary to a recent opinion exaggerating their importance, 38-41, footnote 38. Objective intrinsic criteria (doctrine, sanctity and other qualities of the Church) are likewise only probable criteria, 54-62. However, such probable criteria are very useful in practice, footnote 49. The only certain criteria are physical miracles and prophecies; *see these entries*

Culture. The Church with its revealed doctrines has always fostered culture and civilization, 34-37. There is a threefold culture and civilization, namely, corporal, intellectual, and moral; Catholic peoples are expected to be superior to others

Fundamental Theology

only in moral civilization and in that part of the intellectual civilization which regards religion, 36 f. The Church has restored and improved the morals of the world, 47 f.

Desire of God, naturally felt by man, is the sign of his capacity to be elevated to a supernatural order, 9. About this natural desire much has been written in recent years, footnote 12

Faith. The rational certitude of the fact of revelation is necessary for eliciting the act of supernatural faith, 17-21. However, faith is not directly based on or reduced to such rational credibility, 19, 107, footnotes 2 and 25. The genesis of divine faith in the intellect follows several natural and supernatural steps, footnote 2, 19, 106 f. Faith and reason stand in full agreement in the same human intellect, 8, 11 f., 20. Demons have a natural faith, based on the evident judgment of the fact of revelation, 23. *See Intellect, Reason*

Grace is not necessary for eliciting the judgment of evident credibility of revelation, 22 f.

Intellect. God's revelation involves the infusion of a supernatural light in the intellect, 4, 8-10. The human intellect has a radical capacity to reach something beyond its natural specific object, 9. The natural light and activity of the intellect is in no way disturbed by the infusion of the supernatural light of revelation, 8, 11 f., 19 f. *See Credibility, Faith, Reason, Revelation, Supernatural*

Martyr. Notion of martyrdom, footnote 41. Martyrs are an outstanding motive of credibility of the Christian religion, 48-50. Their history, motive, and manner of suffering, 48-50. Number of persecutions and of martyrs, 48 f., footnote 43

Messias. Meaning and use of this title, footnote 31, given to Christ in the gospels, 28 f. The concept of Messias in the O. T., 29 f.

Miracle. Biblical use of this word, footnote 53. Nature and division of miracle, 64-67. The specific character of miracle is

to be something extraordinary, that is, beyond the laws established by God in all created nature, 65 f. Creation, infusion of soul in the body, elevation, justification, are not miracles, 65 f. Any extraordinary thing produced by angels or demons is not a miracle, 66. Physical miracle is only modally supernatural, footnote 8. The principal division of miracles is into miracle as to substance, as to subject, and as to manner, 66 f., 71, 83. The possibility of miracle is based on the contingency of the physical laws and on the omnipotence of God, 67 f. Miracle is not opposed to God's wisdom and goodness, 69 f. The possibility of miracle is denied by Rationalists under two opposed forms of Determinism and Contingentism, footnotes 57 and 59. They attribute miracles either to fiction or to natural causes, as unknown forces of nature, mental suggestion, or occultism, footnotes 65 and 67. False or true miracles in pagan religions, footnotes 61 and 64. Christ's miracles are historically true, 71-78. The great variety of his miracles, 70 f. His greatest miracle is his own resurrection; *see this entry*. Christ's miracles are evident and certain proof of the divine origin of his religion, 79-87. In several of these miracles there takes place a universal effect, which cannot be produced but by God, the universal cause, 83-85. *See Prophecy, Supernatural*

Modernism. *See Rationalism*

Mystery, as to its notion and division, footnote 8. *See Supernatural*

Natural Laws. Physical and moral laws, unlike the metaphysical, are contingent, and hence they allow exceptions, like miracles, 67-69. Among rationalistic systems, Determinism teaches absolute fixity of the laws of nature, while Contingentism holds their complete instability; in both cases the possibility of miracle is denied, footnote 57. *See Miracle*

Necessity, either physical or moral, footnote 14

Obediential Potency, as to its notion, 9, footnote 10, and as a basis of supernatural elevation and revelation, 8 f.

Pagans. The imperfect ethics of the great pagan philosophers, such as Plato and Aristotle, footnote 40. False miracles and prophecies and possibility of true miracles and prophecies among pagans, footnotes 61 and 77. Various religious truths found in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, as expounded by Vatican II, footnote 47

Prophecy. Notion and division, 89 f. Its proper object is a contingent future event, depending on the free will of God or man, 89. As a criterion of revelation it requires not only the prediction of a future event but also its fulfillment, 89. Its possibility is based on the universal knowledge of God and of its revelation to man, 90 f. Christ's prophecies are historically true, 91-96. His principal prophecy regards his own resurrection, 92 f.; among other prophecies particular importance is to be given to the one about the destruction of Jerusalem, 93-96, 101, footnotes 72-74. Christ's prophecies are certain criteria of the divine origin of his religion, for no natural cause can account for them, 96-101. The messianic prophecies of the O. T. are also certain criteria of the same truth, 101-105; they are found especially in eighteen passages of the patriarchal, Davidic, and prophetic eras, footnote 78 f. Distinction between true and false prophecies, footnote 77. Rationalism denies the trueness of prophecies, on the basis of Fatalism, or Contingentism, or Agnosticism, footnote 69, and attributes them to natural divination, accompanied by fraud, illusion, or religious exaltation, footnote 76

Rationalism teaches the following: There is no supernatural order (Positive Rationalism) or at least it cannot be known by man (Agnostic Rationalism, like Modernism), footnote 7. Revelation is not necessary nor fitting, but rather harmful to human reason, 11, footnote 33. Miracle is not possible, because the laws of nature are either absolutely fixed (Determinism), or completely contingent (Contingentism), footnote 57. Christ's miracles are either historically not true, or they can be explained through natural causes, footnotes 59, 63, 65, 67. Christ's resurrection can be attributed to fraud, error, or fiction, footnotes 59, 63. Prophecies can be attributed to natural divination, coupled with fraud, illus-

ion, or religious exaltation, footnotes 76, 77

Reason is perfected by revelation, both in the speculative and in the practical order, 11-14, 32-37. Without revelation, natural reason cannot suitably reach natural truths concerning religion and morals, 13 f. *See Faith, Intellect, Revelation*

Religion. Christian religion compared to other religions and cultures, 36 f., 38, 40, 45 f., 55, 56, 60. It is in no way derived from other religions or philosophies, 45 f.

Resurrection can be considered as a miracle either of the first or of the second class, footnote 55. Christ's resurrection is historically true, 75-78. Its miraculous character is evident from the fact that in it a universal effect takes place, which requires a universal cause, God alone, 83. Rationalists deny its historical truth, attributing it to fraud, error, or fiction, footnotes 59 and 63. Christ's prophecy about his resurrection, 92 f., 99. *See Miracle*

Revelation. Biblical concept of revelation, 1 f., and its definition, 2-4. Vatican II did not change the traditional definition of revelation as being essentially a speech of God, 2 f., footnote 5. Distinction of revelation from inspiration and assistance of the Holy Spirit, 4. With respect to theology, revelation is its light, principle, and foundation, vi. *See Faith, Intellect, Reason, Supernatural*

Sanctity, as a fruit of Christian religion, 48-50, and a criterion of its divine origin, 56 f., 60. *See Martyrs*

Supernatural. Notion and division, footnote 8. Various supernatural lights in human intellect, 3 f. The existence of a supernatural order follows from the very existence of God as transcending the proper object of the human intellect, 6 f. Physical miracles are supernatural not essentially but modally, 75. The supernatural truths of Christian religion are in full harmony with natural truths, 43-45. *See Faith, Reason, Revelation*

Fundamental Theology

Tertulian testifies to the extraordinary expansion of the Church at his time, 52, footnote 45. His famous axiom about "the soul being naturally Christian," 34, 37

Thomas Aquinas (St.) on definition and division of miracle, 65, footnotes 54 and 56; on necessity of revelation for the suitable knowledge of natural truths, footnote 17

Vatican I. Definition of revelation, 2, its possibility, 7, fittingness and necessity, 11 f., 13, footnote 17. Existence of evident criteria of revelation, especially miracles and prophecies, footnotes 2 and 69. The Church promotes human culture, footnote 33

Vatican II. Definition of revelation, 2 f. On the necessity of divine help for preparation to faith, footnote 27. Revealed doctrine fulfills the human aspirations and is fitting to the present conditions of the world, 33-35. In pagan religions, as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, are found several elements of truth, footnote 47