

and will to God who reveals,"⁴ and freely assenting to the truth revealed by Him. The grace of God and the interior help of the Holy Spirit must precede and assist this act of faith, moving the heart and turning it to God, opening the eyes of the mind and giving "joy and ease to everyone in assenting to the truth and believing it."⁵ In order to bring about an ever deeper understanding of revelation the same Holy Spirit constantly brings faith to completion by His gifts.

6. Through divine revelation, God chose to reveal and communicate Himself and the eternal decisions of His will regarding the salvation of men. That is to say, "He chose to share with them those divine treasures which totally transcend the understanding of the human mind."⁶

A sacred synod has affirmed that "God, the beginning and end of all things, can be known with certainty from created reality by the natural light of human reason" (cf. *Rom.* 1, 20); but it teaches that it is through His revelation "that those religious truths which are by their nature accessible to human reason can be known by all men with ease, with solid certitude and with no trace of error, even in the present state of the human race."⁷

CHAPTER II

THE TRANSMISSION OF DIVINE REVELATION

7. In His gracious goodness, God has seen to it that what He had revealed for the salvation of all nations would abide perpetually in its full integrity and be handed on to all generations. Therefore Christ the Lord, in whom the full revelation of the supreme God is

⁴ First Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith*, Chap. 3, "On Faith": Denzinger 1789 (3008).

⁵ Second Council of Orange, Canon 7: Denzinger 180 (377); First Vatican Council, loc. cit.: Denzinger 1791 (3010).

⁶ First Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith*, Chap. 2, "On Revelation": Denzinger 1786 (3005).

⁷ Ibid: Denzinger 1785 and 1786 (3004 and 3005).

brought to completion (cf. 2 Cor. 1, 30; 3, 16-4, 6), commissioned the Apostles to preach to all men that Gospel which is the source of all saving truth and moral teaching,⁸ and to impart to them heavenly gifts. This Gospel had been promised earlier through the prophets, and Christ Himself had fulfilled it and promulgated it with His own lips. The Apostles faithfully fulfilled this commission. By their oral preaching, by example, and by observances they handed on what they had received from the lips of Christ, from living with Him, and from His actions, or what they had learned through the prompting of the Holy Spirit. The commission was also fulfilled by those Apostles and apostolic men who committed the message of salvation to writing,⁹ under the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit.

Teaching Authority of the Bishops

But in order to keep the Gospel forever whole and alive within the Church, the Apostles left bishops as their successors, "handing over" to them "the authority to teach in their own place."¹⁰ Therefore this Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture of both Old and New Testaments are like a mirror in which the pilgrim Church on earth looks at God, from whom it has received everything, until it is brought finally to see Him as He is, face to face (cf. 1 Jn. 3, 2).

Sacred Tradition

8. The apostolic preaching, expressed in a special way in the inspired books, was to be preserved by an unending succession of preachers until the end of time. Therefore the Apostles, transmitting what they themselves had received, warn the faithful to hold fast to the traditions which they have learned either by word of mouth or by letter (cf. 2 Thes. 2, 15), and to fight in defense of the faith handed on once and

⁸ Cf. Mt. 28, 19-20, and Mk. 16, 15; Council of Trent, session IV, *Decree on the Canonical Scriptures*: Denzinger 783 (1501).

⁹ Cf. Council of Trent, loc. cit.; First Vatican Council, session III, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith*, Chap. 2, "On Revelation": Denzinger 1787 (3006).

¹⁰ St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* III, 3, 1: PG 7, 848; Harvey, 2, p. 9.

for all (cf. *Jude* 3).¹¹ Now what was handed on by the Apostles includes everything contributing to the holiness of life and the increase in faith of the people of God; and so the Church, in its teaching, life, and worship, perpetuates and passes on to all generations all that it is, all that it believes.

This Tradition which comes from the Apostles develops in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit.¹² There is a growth in the understanding of the realities and words which have been handed down. This comes about through the contemplation and study made by believers, who treasure these things in their hearts (cf. *Lk.* 2, 19, 51); through a penetrating understanding of the spiritual realities which they experience; and through the preaching of those who have received the charism of truth through episcopal succession. As the centuries succeed one another, the Church constantly moves forward toward the fullness of divine truth until the time when the words of God reach their complete fulfillment in the Church.

The words of the holy Fathers witness to the life-giving presence of this Tradition, whose wealth is poured into the practice and life of the believing and praying Church. Through the same Tradition the Church's full canon of the sacred books is known, and the sacred writings themselves are more profoundly understood and unceasingly activated in the Church. Thus God, who spoke in ages past, continually converses with the Spouse of His beloved Son; and the Holy Spirit — through whom the living voice of the Gospel resounds in the Church and, through the Church, in the world — leads believers to all truth and causes the word of Christ to dwell abundantly in them (cf. *Col.* 3, 16).

Tradition and Scripture

9. Hence there exists a close connection and communication between Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture. Both of them, flowing from

¹¹ Cf. Second Council of Nicaea: Denzinger 303 (602). Fourth Council of Constance, session X, canon 1: Denzinger 336 (650-652).

¹² Cf. First Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith*, Chap. 4, "On Faith and Reason": Denzinger 1800 (3020).

the same divine wellspring, unite in a certain manner and tend toward the same end. Sacred Scripture is the word of God inasmuch as it was written under the inspiration of the divine Spirit, while Sacred Tradition takes the word of God entrusted by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, and transmits it to their successors in its full purity. Thus, led by the light of the Spirit of truth, they may in proclaiming this word of God preserve it faithfully, explain it, and make it more widely known. Consequently it is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws its certainty about everything which has been revealed. Both Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of devotion and reverence.¹³

10. Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture form one sacred deposit of the word of God, committed to the Church. Holding fast to this deposit, all the holy people united with their bishops remain always steadfast in the teaching of the Apostles, in the common life, in the breaking of the bread and in prayers (cf. *Acts* 8, 42, Greek text). Thus there is a single common effort by the bishops and the faithful to hold onto the heritage of faith and to practice and profess it.¹⁴

Their Relation to the Magisterium

The task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed down,¹⁵ has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the Church,¹⁶ whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ. This teaching office is not above the word of God; but, teaching only what has been handed on, it serves the word of God by listening to it devoutly, guarding it scrupulously, and explain-

¹³ Cf. Council of Trent, session IV, loc. cit.: Denzinger 783 (1501).

¹⁴ Cf. Pius XII, Apost. constitution *Munificentissimus Deus*, Nov. 1, 1950: *AAS* 42 (1950), p. 756; together with the words of St. Cyprian, *Ep.* 66, 8: Hartel, III, B, p. 733: "The Church is the people united with their Priest and the flock clinging to their Shepherd."

¹⁵ Cf. First Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith*, Chap. 3, "On Faith": Denzinger 1792 (3011).

¹⁶ Cf. Pius XII, Encyc. letter *Humani Generis*, Aug. 12, 1950: *AAS* 42 (1950), pp. 568-69: Denzinger 2314 (3886).

ing it faithfully in accord with a divine commission and with the help of the Holy Spirit. It draws from this one deposit of faith everything which it presents for belief as divinely revealed.

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

CHAPTER III

THE DIVINE INSPIRATION AND THE INTERPRETATION OF SACRED SCRIPTURE

11. The divinely revealed realities contained and presented in Sacred Scripture were written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Holy Mother Church, relying on the belief of the Apostles, holds that the books of both the Old and New Testaments in their entirety, with all their parts, are sacred and canonical because, having been written under the Holy Spirit's inspiration (cf. *Jn.* 20, 31; *2 Tm.* 3, 16; *2 Pt.* 1, 19-21; 3, 15-16), they have God as their author, and they have been handed on as such to the Church itself.¹⁷ God chose men to compose the sacred books, and while employed by Him¹⁸ they used their powers and abilities in such a manner that, with Him acting in

¹⁷ Cf. First Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith*, Chap. 2, "On Revelation": Denzinger 1787 (3006). Biblical Commission, Decree of June 18, 1915: Denzinger 2180 (3629); *EB* 420; Holy Office, Epistle of Dec. 22, 1923; *EB* 499.

¹⁸ Cf. Pius XII, Encyc. letter *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, Sept. 30, 1943: *AAS* 35 (1943), p. 314; *EB* 556.