

1. What is the plan of God for man?

God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life. In the fullness of time, God the Father sent his Son as the Redeemer and Savior of mankind, fallen into sin, thus calling all into his Church and, through the work of the Holy Spirit, making them adopted children and heirs of his eternal happiness. 1-25

CHAPTER ONE

Man's Capacity for God

"You are great, O Lord, and greatly to be praised [. . .] You have made us for yourself and our heart is restless until it rests in you." 30
(Saint Augustine)

2. Why does man have a desire for God?

God himself, in creating man in his own image, has written upon his heart the desire to see him. Even if this desire is often ignored, God never ceases to draw man to himself because only in God will he find and live the fullness of truth and happiness for which he never stops searching. By nature and by vocation, therefore, man is a religious being, capable of entering into communion with God. This intimate and vital bond with God confers on man his fundamental dignity. 27-30 44-45

3. How is it possible to know God with only the light of human reason?

Starting from creation, that is from the world and from the human person, through reason alone one can know God with certainty as the origin and end of the universe, as the highest good and as infinite truth and beauty. 31-36 46-47

4. Is the light of reason alone sufficient to know the mystery of God?

In coming to a knowledge of God by the light of reason alone man experiences many difficulties. Indeed, on his own he is unable to 37-38

enter into the intimacy of the divine mystery. This is why he stands in need of being enlightened by God's revelation, not only about those things that exceed his understanding, but also about those religious and moral truths which of themselves are not beyond the grasp of human reason, so that even in the present condition of the human race, they can be known by all with ease, with firm certainty and with no admixture of error.

5. How can we speak about God?

- 39-43 By taking as our starting point the perfections of man and of the other
48-49 creatures which are a reflection, albeit a limited one, of the infinite perfection of God, we are able to speak about God with all people. We must, however, continually purify our language insofar as it is image-bound and imperfect, realizing that we can never fully express the infinite mystery of God.

CHAPTER TWO

God Comes to Meet Man

THE REVELATION OF GOD

6. What does God reveal to man?

- 50-53 God in his goodness and wisdom reveals himself. With deeds and
68-69 words, he reveals himself and his plan of loving goodness which he decreed from all eternity in Christ. According to this plan, all people by the grace of the Holy Spirit are to share in the divine life as adopted "sons" in the only begotten Son of God.

7. What are the first stages of God's Revelation?

- 54-58 From the very beginning, God manifested himself to our first parents,
70-71 Adam and Eve, and invited them to intimate communion with himself. After their fall, he did not cease his revelation to them but promised salvation for all their descendants. After the flood, he made a covenant with Noah, a covenant between himself and all living beings.

8. What are the next stages of God's Revelation?

God chose Abram, calling him out of his country, making him "the father of a multitude of nations" (Genesis 17:5), and promising to bless in him "all the families of the earth" (Genesis 12:3). The people descended from Abraham would be the trustee of the divine promise made to the patriarchs. God formed Israel as his chosen people, freeing them from slavery in Egypt, establishing with them the covenant of Mount Sinai, and, through Moses, giving them his law. The prophets proclaimed a radical redemption of the people and a salvation which would include all nations in a new and everlasting covenant. From the people of Israel and from the house of King David, would be born the Messiah, Jesus. 59-64 72

9. What is the full and definitive stage of God's Revelation?

The full and definitive stage of God's revelation is accomplished in his Word made flesh, Jesus Christ, the mediator and fullness of Revelation. He, being the only-begotten Son of God made man, is the perfect and definitive Word of the Father. In the sending of the Son and the gift of the Spirit, Revelation is now fully complete, although the faith of the Church must gradually grasp its full significance over the course of centuries. 65-66 73

"In giving us his Son, his only and definitive Word, God spoke everything to us at once in this sole Word, and he has no more to say." (Saint John of the Cross)

10. What is the value of private revelations?

While not belonging to the deposit of faith, private revelations may help a person to live the faith as long as they lead us to Christ. The Magisterium of the Church, which has the duty of evaluating such private revelations, cannot accept those which claim to surpass or correct that definitive Revelation which is Christ. 67

THE TRANSMISSION OF DIVINE REVELATION

11. Why and in what way is divine revelation transmitted?

- 74 God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4), that is, of Jesus Christ. For this reason, Christ must be proclaimed to all according to his own command, “Go forth and teach all nations” (Matthew 28:19). And this is brought about by Apostolic Tradition.

12. What is Apostolic Tradition?

- 75-79 Apostolic Tradition is the transmission of the message of Christ,
83 brought about from the very beginnings of Christianity by means
96, 98 of preaching, bearing witness, institutions, worship, and inspired writings. The Apostles transmitted all they received from Christ and learned from the Holy Spirit to their successors, the bishops, and through them to all generations until the end of the world.

13. In what ways does Apostolic Tradition occur?

- 76 Apostolic Tradition occurs in two ways: through the living transmission of the word of God (also simply called Tradition) and through Sacred Scripture which is the same proclamation of salvation in written form.

14. What is the relationship between Tradition and Sacred Scripture?

- 80-82 Tradition and Sacred Scripture are bound closely together and communicate one with the other. Each of them makes present and fruitful
97 in the Church the mystery of Christ. They flow out of the same divine well-spring and together make up one sacred deposit of faith from which the Church derives her certainty about revelation.

15. To whom is the deposit of faith entrusted?

- 84, 91 The Apostles entrusted the deposit of faith to the whole of the Church.
94, 99 Thanks to its supernatural sense of faith the people of God as a whole, assisted by the Holy Spirit and guided by the Magisterium of the Church, never ceases to welcome, to penetrate more deeply and to live more fully from the gift of divine revelation.

16. To whom is given the task of authentically interpreting the deposit of faith?

The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the deposit of faith has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone, that is, to the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome, and to the bishops in communion with him. To this Magisterium, which in the service of the Word of God enjoys the certain charism of truth, belongs also the task of defining dogmas which are formulations of the truths contained in divine Revelation. This authority of the Magisterium also extends to those truths necessarily connected with Revelation.

85-90
100**17. What is the relationship between Scripture, Tradition and the Magisterium?**

Scripture, Tradition, and the Magisterium are so closely united with each other that one of them cannot stand without the others. Working together, each in its own way, under the action of the one Holy Spirit, they all contribute effectively to the salvation of souls.

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SACRED SCRIPTURE**18. Why does Sacred Scripture teach the truth?**

Because God himself is the author of Sacred Scripture. For this reason it is said to be inspired and to teach without error those truths which are necessary for our salvation. The Holy Spirit inspired the human authors who wrote what he wanted to teach us. The Christian faith, however, is not a "religion of the Book," but of the Word of God—"not a written and mute word, but incarnate and living" (Saint Bernard of Clairvaux).

105-108
135-136**19. How is Sacred Scripture to be read?**

Sacred Scripture must be read and interpreted with the help of the Holy Spirit and under the guidance of the Magisterium of the Church according to three criteria: (1) it must be read with attention to the content and unity of the whole of Scripture; (2) it must be read within the living Tradition of the Church; (3) it must be read with attention to the analogy of faith, that is, the inner harmony which exists among the truths of the faith themselves.

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20. What is the *Canon* of Scripture?

- 120 The *Canon* of Scripture is the complete list of the sacred writings which
138 the Church has come to recognize through Apostolic Tradition. The
Canon consists of 46 books of the Old Testament and 27 of the New.

21. What is the importance of the Old Testament for Christians?

- 121-123 Christians venerate the Old Testament as the true word of God. All
of the books of the Old Testament are divinely inspired and retain a
permanent value. They bear witness to the divine pedagogy of God's
saving love. They are written, above all, to prepare for the coming of
Christ, the Savior of the universe.

22. What importance does the New Testament have for Christians?

- 124-127 The New Testament, whose central object is Jesus Christ, conveys to
139 us the ultimate truth of divine Revelation. Within the New Testament
the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are the heart of all
the Scriptures because they are the principal witness to the life and
teaching of Jesus. As such, they hold a unique place in the Church.

23. What is the unity that exists between the Old and the New Testaments?

- 128-130 Scripture is one insofar as the Word of God is one. God's plan of sal-
140 vation is one, and the divine inspiration of both Testaments is one.
The Old Testament prepares for the New and the New Testament ful-
fills the Old; the two shed light on each other.

24. What role does Sacred Scripture play in the life of the Church?

- 131-133 Sacred Scripture gives support and vigor to the life of the Church. For
141-142 the children of the Church, it is a confirmation of the faith, food for
the soul and the fount of the spiritual life. Sacred Scripture is the soul
of theology and of pastoral preaching. The Psalmist says that it is "a
lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105). The Church,
therefore, exhorts all to read Sacred Scripture frequently because
"ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ" (Saint Jerome).