

# PART ONE

## THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

### SECTION ONE

#### I BELIEVE—WE BELIEVE

26 We begin our profession of faith by saying: I believe or We believe. Before expounding the Church's faith, as confessed in the Creed, celebrated in the liturgy, and lived in observance of God's commandments and in prayer, we must first ask what "to believe" means. Faith is man's response to God, who reveals himself and gives himself to man, at the same time bringing man a superabundant light as he searches for the ultimate meaning of his life. Thus we shall consider first that search (*Chapter One*), then the divine Revelation by which God comes to meet man (*Chapter Two*), and finally the response of faith (*Chapter Three*).

### CHAPTER ONE

#### MAN'S CAPACITY FOR GOD

#### I. THE DESIRE FOR GOD

27 The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw 355, 170 man to himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness 1718 he never stops searching for:

The dignity of man rests above all on the fact that he is called to communion with God. This invitation to converse with God is addressed to man as soon as he comes into being. For if man exists, it is because God has created him through love, and through love continues to hold him in existence. He cannot live fully according to truth unless he freely acknowledges that love and entrusts himself to his creator.<sup>1</sup>

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1 Vatican Council II, GS 19 § 1.

28 In many ways, throughout history down to the present  
 843, 2566 day, men have given expression to their quest for God in their  
 2095-2109 religious beliefs and behavior: in their prayers, sacrifices, rituals,  
 meditations, and so forth. These forms of religious expression,  
 despite the ambiguities they often bring with them, are so  
 universal that one may well call man a *religious being*:

From one ancestor [God] made all nations to inhabit the  
 whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and  
 the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that  
 they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and  
 find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us.  
 For “in him we live and move and have our being.”<sup>2</sup>

29 But this “intimate and vital bond of man to God” (GS 19,1)  
 2123-2128 can be forgotten, overlooked, or even explicitly rejected by man.<sup>3</sup>  
 Such attitudes can have different causes: revolt against evil in the  
 world; religious ignorance or indifference; the cares and riches of  
 this world; the scandal of bad example on the part of believers;  
 398 currents of thought hostile to religion; finally, that attitude of  
 sinful man which makes him hide from God out of fear and flee  
 his call.<sup>4</sup>

30 “Let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.”<sup>5</sup>  
 2567, 845 Although man can forget God or reject him, He never ceases to call  
 every man to seek him, so as to find life and happiness. But this  
 368 search for God demands of man every effort of intellect, a sound  
 will, “an upright heart,” as well as the witness of others who teach  
 him to seek God.

You are great, O Lord, and greatly to be praised: great is your  
 power and your wisdom is without measure. And man, so  
 small a part of your creation, wants to praise you: this man,  
 though clothed with mortality and bearing the evidence of  
 sin and the proof that you withstand the proud. Despite  
 everything, man, though but a small part of your creation,  
 wants to praise you. You yourself encourage him to delight  
 in your praise, for you have made us for yourself, and our  
 heart is restless until it rests in you.<sup>6</sup>

## II. WAYS OF COMING TO KNOW GOD

31 Created in God’s image and called to know and love him,  
 the person who seeks God discovers certain ways of coming to

2 Acts 17:26-28.

3 GS 19 § 1.

4 Cf. GS 19-21; Mt 13:22; Gen 3:8-10; Jon 1:3.

5 Ps 105:3.

6 St. Augustine, *Conf.* 1, 1, 1: PL 32, 659-661.

know him. These are also called proofs for the existence of God, not in the sense of proofs in the natural sciences, but rather in the sense of "converging and convincing arguments," which allow us to attain certainty about the truth.

These "ways" of approaching God from creation have a twofold point of departure: the physical world and the human person.

32 The *world*: starting from movement, becoming, contingency, and the world's order and beauty, one can come to a knowledge of God as the origin and the end of the universe. 54, 337

As St. Paul says of the Gentiles: For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made.<sup>7</sup>

And St. Augustine issues this challenge: Question the beauty of the earth, question the beauty of the sea, question the beauty of the air distending and diffusing itself, question the beauty of the sky . . . question all these realities. All respond: "See, we are beautiful." Their beauty is a profession [*confessio*]. These beauties are subject to change. Who made them if not the Beautiful One [*Pulcher*] who is not subject to change?<sup>8</sup>

33 The *human person*: With his openness to truth and beauty, his sense of moral goodness, his freedom and the voice of his conscience, with his longings for the infinite and for happiness, man questions himself about God's existence. In all this he discerns signs of his spiritual soul. The soul, the "seed of eternity we bear in ourselves, irreducible to the merely material,"<sup>9</sup> can have its origin only in God. 2500, 1730 1776 1703 366

34 The world, and man, attest that they contain within themselves neither their first principle nor their final end, but rather that they participate in Being itself, which alone is without origin or end. Thus, in different ways, man can come to know that there exists a reality which is the first cause and final end of all things, a reality "that everyone calls 'God.'"<sup>10</sup> 199

7 Rom 1:19-20; cf. Acts 14:15, 17; 17:27-28; Wis 13:1-9.

8 St. Augustine, *Sermo* 241, 2: PL 38, 1134.

9 GS 18 § 1; cf. 14 § 2.

10 St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* I, 2, 3.

35 Man's faculties make him capable of coming to a knowl-  
 50 edge of the existence of a personal God. But for man to be able to  
 enter into real intimacy with him, God willed both to reveal himself  
 to man and to give him the grace of being able to welcome this  
 revelation in faith. The proofs of God's existence, however, can  
 159 predispose one to faith and help one to see that faith is not opposed  
 to reason.

### III. THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD ACCORDING TO THE CHURCH

36 "Our holy mother, the Church, holds and teaches that  
 God, the first principle and last end of all things, can be known  
 with certainty from the created world by the natural light of human  
 reason."<sup>11</sup> Without this capacity, man would not be able to wel-  
 355 come God's revelation. Man has this capacity because he is created  
 "in the image of God."<sup>12</sup>

37 In the historical conditions in which he finds himself,  
 however, man experiences many difficulties in coming to know  
 1960 God by the light of reason alone:

Though human reason is, strictly speaking, truly capable by  
 its own natural power and light of attaining to a true and  
 certain knowledge of the one personal God, who watches  
 over and controls the world by his providence, and of the  
 natural law written in our hearts by the Creator; yet there are  
 many obstacles which prevent reason from the effective and  
 fruitful use of this inborn faculty. For the truths that concern  
 the relations between God and man wholly transcend the  
 visible order of things, and, if they are translated into human  
 action and influence it, they call for self-surrender and abne-  
 gation. The human mind, in its turn, is hampered in the  
 attaining of such truths, not only by the impact of the senses  
 and the imagination, but also by disordered appetites which  
 are the consequences of original sin. So it happens that men  
 in such matters easily persuade themselves that what they  
 would not like to be true is false or at least doubtful.<sup>13</sup>

38 This is why man stands in need of being enlightened by  
 God's revelation, not only about those things that exceed his  
 2036 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

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11 Vatican Council I, *Dei Filius* 2: DS 3004; cf. 3026; Vatican Council II, *Dei Verbum* 6.

12 Cf. *Gen* 1:27.

13 Pius XII, *Humani Generis*, 561: DS 3875.

known by all men with ease, with firm certainty and with no admixture of error."<sup>14</sup>

#### IV. HOW CAN WE SPEAK ABOUT GOD?

39 In defending the ability of human reason to know God, the Church is expressing her confidence in the possibility of speaking 851 about him to all men and with all men, and therefore of dialogue with other religions, with philosophy and science, as well as with unbelievers and atheists.

40 Since our knowledge of God is limited, our language about him is equally so. We can name God only by taking creatures as our starting point, and in accordance with our limited human ways of knowing and thinking.

41 All creatures bear a certain resemblance to God, most especially man, created in the image and likeness of God. The manifold perfections of creatures—their truth, their goodness, their beauty—all reflect the infinite perfection of God. Consequently we 213, 299 can name God by taking his creatures' perfections as our starting point, "for from the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator."<sup>15</sup>

42 God transcends all creatures. We must therefore continually purify our language of everything in it that is limited, image- 212, 300 bound or imperfect, if we are not to confuse our image of God— 370 "the inexpressible, the incomprehensible, the invisible, the ungraspable"—with our human representations.<sup>16</sup> Our human words always fall short of the mystery of God.

43 Admittedly, in speaking about God like this, our language is using human modes of expression; nevertheless it really does attain to God himself, though unable to express him in his infinite simplicity. Likewise, we must recall that "between Creator and creature no similitude can be expressed without implying an even greater dissimilitude";<sup>17</sup> and that "concerning God, we cannot grasp what he is, but only what he is not, and how other beings 206 stand in relation to him."<sup>18</sup>

14 Pius XII, *Humani Generis*, 561: DS 3876; cf. *Dei Filius* 2: DS 3005; DV 6; St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* I, 1, 1.

15 Wis 13:5.

16 *Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, Anaphora.

17 Lateran Council IV: DS 806.

18 St. Thomas Aquinas, *SCG* I, 30.

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### IN BRIEF

- 44 Man is by nature and vocation a religious being. Coming from God, going toward God, man lives a fully human life only if he freely lives by his bond with God.
- 45 Man is made to live in communion with God in whom he finds happiness: "When I am completely united to you, there will be no more sorrow or trials; entirely full of you, my life will be complete" (St. Augustine, *Conf.* 10, 28, 39: PL 32, 795).
- 46 When he listens to the message of creation and to the voice of conscience, man can arrive at certainty about the existence of God, the cause and the end of everything.
- 47 The Church teaches that the one true God, our Creator and Lord, can be known with certainty from his works, by the natural light of human reason (cf. Vatican Council I, can. 2, § 1: DS 3026).
- 48 We really can name God, starting from the manifold perfections of his creatures, which are likenesses of the infinitely perfect God, even if our limited language cannot exhaust the mystery.
- 49 "Without the Creator, the creature vanishes" (GS 36). This is the reason why believers know that the love of Christ urges them to bring the light of the living God to those who do not know him or who reject him.
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- 277 God shows forth his almighty power by converting us from our sins and restoring us to his friendship by grace. "O God, who manifest your almighty power above all by pardoning and showing mercy . . ." (*Roman Missal*, 26th Sunday, Collect).
- 278 If we do not believe that God's love is almighty, how can we believe that the Father could create us, the Son redeem us, and the Holy Spirit sanctify us?

#### Paragraph 4. The Creator

279 "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."<sup>116</sup> Holy Scripture begins with these solemn words. The profession of faith takes them up when it confesses that God the Father almighty is "Creator of heaven and earth" (*Apostles' Creed*), "of all things visible and invisible" (*Nicene Creed*). We shall speak first of the Creator, then of creation, and finally of the fall into sin from which Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to raise us up again.

280 Creation is the foundation of "all God's saving plans," the "beginning of the history of salvation"<sup>117</sup> that culminates in Christ. 288 Conversely, the mystery of Christ casts conclusive light on the mystery of creation and reveals the end for which "in the beginning 1043 God created the heavens and the earth": from the beginning, God envisaged the glory of the new creation in Christ.<sup>118</sup>

281 And so the readings of the Easter Vigil, the celebration of the new creation in Christ, begin with the creation account; likewise in the Byzantine liturgy, the account of creation always constitutes the first reading at the vigils of the great feasts of the Lord. According to ancient witnesses the instruction of catechumens for Baptism followed the same itinerary.<sup>119</sup> 1095

#### I. CATECHESIS ON CREATION

282 Catechesis on creation is of major importance. It concerns the very foundations of human and Christian life: for it makes explicit the response of the Christian faith to the basic question

116 Gen 1:1.

117 GCD 51.

118 Gen 1:1; cf. Rom 8:18-23.

119 Cf. Egeria, *Peregrinatio ad loca sancta*, 46: PLS I, 1047; St. Augustine, *De catechizandis rudibus* 3, 5: PL 40, 256.

that men of all times have asked themselves:<sup>120</sup> "Where do we come from?" "Where are we going?" "What is our origin?" "What is our end?" "Where does everything that exists come from and where is it going?" The two questions, the first about the origin and the second about the end, are inseparable. They are decisive for the  
 1730 meaning and orientation of our life and actions.

283 The question about the origins of the world and of man has been the object of many scientific studies which have splendidly enriched our  
 159 knowledge of the age and dimensions of the cosmos, the development of life-forms and the appearance of man. These discoveries invite us to even greater admiration for the greatness of the Creator, prompting us to give  
 341 him thanks for all his works and for the understanding and wisdom he gives to scholars and researchers. With Solomon they can say: "It is he who gave me unerring knowledge of what exists, to know the structure of the world and the activity of the elements . . . for wisdom, the fashioner of all things, taught me."<sup>121</sup>

284 The great interest accorded to these studies is strongly stimulated by a question of another order, which goes beyond the proper domain of the natural sciences. It is not only a question of knowing when and how the universe arose physically, or when man appeared, but rather of discovering the meaning of such an origin: is the universe governed by chance, blind fate, anonymous necessity, or by a transcendent, intelligent and good Being called "God"? And if the world does come from God's wisdom and goodness, why is there evil? Where does it come from? Who is responsible for it? Is there any liberation from it?

285 Since the beginning the Christian faith has been challenged by responses to the question of origins that differ from its own. Ancient religions and cultures produced many myths concerning origins. Some philosophers have said that everything is God, that the world is God, or that the development of the world is the development of God (Pantheism).  
 295 Others have said that the world is a necessary emanation arising from God and returning to him. Still others have affirmed the existence of two eternal principles, Good and Evil, Light and Darkness, locked in permanent conflict (Dualism, Manichaeism). According to some of these conceptions, the world (at least the physical world) is evil, the product of a fall, and is thus to be rejected or left behind (Gnosticism). Some admit that the world was made by God, but as by a watchmaker who, once he has made a watch, abandons it to itself (Deism). Finally, others reject any transcendent origin for the world, but see it as merely the interplay of matter that has always existed (Materialism). All these attempts bear witness to the permanence  
 28 and universality of the question of origins. This inquiry is distinctively human.

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120 Cf. NA 2.

121 Wis 7:17-22.

286 Human intelligence is surely already capable of finding a 32  
 response to the question of origins. The existence of God the  
 Creator can be known with certainty through his works, by the  
 light of human reason,<sup>122</sup> even if this knowledge is often obscured  
 and disfigured by error. This is why faith comes to confirm and  
 enlighten reason in the correct understanding of this truth: "By 37  
 faith we understand that the world was created by the word of  
 God, so that what is seen was made out of things which do not  
 appear."<sup>123</sup>

287 The truth about creation is so important for all of human  
 life that God in his tenderness wanted to reveal to his People  
 everything that is salutary to know on the subject. Beyond the 107  
 natural knowledge that every man can have of the Creator,<sup>124</sup> God  
 progressively revealed to Israel the mystery of creation. He who  
 chose the patriarchs, who brought Israel out of Egypt, and who by  
 choosing Israel created and formed it, this same God reveals himself  
 as the One to whom belong all the peoples of the earth, and the whole  
 earth itself; he is the One who alone "made heaven and earth."<sup>125</sup>

288 Thus the revelation of creation is inseparable from the  
 revelation and forging of the covenant of the one God with his  
 People. Creation is revealed as the first step toward this covenant, 280, 2569  
 the first and universal witness to God's all-powerful love.<sup>126</sup> And  
 so, the truth of creation is also expressed with growing vigor in  
 the message of the prophets, the prayer of the psalms and the liturgy,  
 and in the wisdom sayings of the Chosen People.<sup>127</sup>

289 Among all the Scriptural texts about creation, the first  
 three chapters of Genesis occupy a unique place. From a literary 390  
 standpoint these texts may have had diverse sources. The inspired  
 authors have placed them at the beginning of Scripture to express  
 in their solemn language the truths of creation—its origin and its  
 end in God, its order and goodness, the vocation of man, and finally  
 the drama of sin and the hope of salvation. Read in the light of  
 Christ, within the unity of Sacred Scripture and in the living 111  
 Tradition of the Church, these texts remain the principal source for  
 catechesis on the mysteries of the "beginning": creation, fall, and  
 promise of salvation.

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122 Cf. Vatican Council I, can. 2 § 1: DS 3026.

123 *Heb* 11:3.

124 Cf. *Acts* 17:24-29; *Rom* 1:19-20.

125 Cf. *Isa* 43:1; *Pss* 115:15; 124:8; 134:3.

126 Cf. *Gen* 15:5; *Jer* 33:19-26.

127 Cf. *Isa* 44:24; *Pss* 104; *Prov* 8:22-31.

## II. CREATION—WORK OF THE HOLY TRINITY

290 "In the beginning God created the heavens and the  
earth":<sup>128</sup> three things are affirmed in these first words of Scripture:  
the eternal God gave a beginning to all that exists outside of  
himself; he alone is Creator (the verb "create"—Hebrew *bara*—  
326 always has God for its subject). The totality of what exists (ex-  
pressed by the formula "the heavens and the earth") depends on  
the One who gives it being.

291 "In the beginning was the Word . . . and the Word was God  
. . . all things were made through him, and without him was not  
241 anything made that was made."<sup>129</sup> The New Testament reveals  
that God created everything by the eternal Word, his beloved Son.  
In him "all things were created, in heaven and on earth . . . all things  
331 were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and  
in him all things hold together."<sup>130</sup> The Church's faith likewise  
703 confesses the creative action of the Holy Spirit, the "giver of life,"  
"the Creator Spirit" (*Veni, Creator Spiritus*), the "source of every  
good."<sup>131</sup>

292 The Old Testament suggests and the New Covenant re-  
veals the creative action of the Son and the Spirit,<sup>132</sup> inseparably  
one with that of the Father. This creative cooperation is clearly  
affirmed in the Church's rule of faith: "There exists but one God . . .  
he is the Father, God, the Creator, the author, the giver of order. He  
made all things *by himself*, that is, by his Word and by his Wisdom,"  
699 "by the Son and the Spirit" who, so to speak, are "his hands."<sup>133</sup>  
257 Creation is the common work of the Holy Trinity.

## III. "THE WORLD WAS CREATED FOR THE GLORY OF GOD"

293 Scripture and Tradition never cease to teach and celebrate  
337, 344 this fundamental truth: "The world was made for the glory of  
1361 God."<sup>134</sup> St. Bonaventure explains that God created all things "not  
to increase his glory, but to show it forth and to communicate it,"<sup>135</sup>

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128 Gen 1:1.

129 Jn 1:1-3.

130 Col 1:16-17.

131 Cf. Nicene Creed; DS 150; Hymn "*Veni, Creator Spiritus*"; Byzantine Troparion of Pentecost vespers, "*O heavenly King, Consoler.*"

132 Cf. Ps 33:6; 104:30; Gen 1:2-3.

133 St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres* 2, 30, 9; 4, 20, 1: PG 7/1, 822, 1032.

134 *Dei Filius*, can. § 5: DS 3025.

135 St. Bonaventure, *In II Sent.* I, 2, 2, 1.

for God has no other reason for creating than his love and goodness: "Creatures came into existence when the key of love opened his hand."<sup>136</sup> The First Vatican Council explains:

This one, true God, of his own goodness and "almighty power," not for increasing his own beatitude, nor for attaining his perfection, but in order to manifest this perfection through the benefits which he bestows on creatures, with absolute freedom of counsel "and from the beginning of time, made out of nothing both orders of creatures, the spiritual and the corporeal. . . ." <sup>137</sup> 759

294 The glory of God consists in the realization of this manifestation and communication of his goodness, for which the world was created. God made us "to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, *to the praise of his glorious grace*,"<sup>138</sup> for "the glory of God is man fully alive; moreover man's life is the vision of God: if God's revelation through creation has already obtained life for all the beings that dwell on earth, how much more will the Word's manifestation of the Father obtain life for those who see God."<sup>139</sup> The ultimate purpose of creation is that God "who is the creator of all things may at last become 'all in all,' thus simultaneously assuring his own glory and our beatitude."<sup>140</sup> 2809 1722 1992

#### IV. THE MYSTERY OF CREATION

##### God creates by wisdom and love

295 We believe that God created the world according to his wisdom.<sup>141</sup> It is not the product of any necessity whatever, nor of blind fate or chance. We believe that it proceeds from God's free will; he wanted to make his creatures share in his being, wisdom, and goodness: "For you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."<sup>142</sup> Therefore the Psalmist exclaims: "O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all"; and "The LORD is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made."<sup>143</sup> 216, 1951

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136 St. Thomas Aquinas, *Sent.* 2, Prol.

137 *Dei Filius*, 1: DS 3002; cf. Lateran Council IV (1215): DS 800.

138 *Eph* 1:5-6.

139 St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres* 4, 20, 7: PG 7/1, 1037.

140 AG 2; cf. *1 Cor* 15:28.

141 Cf. *Wis* 9:9.

142 *Rev* 4:11.

143 *Ps* 104:24; 145:9.

### God creates "out of nothing"

296 We believe that God needs no pre-existent thing or any  
 help in order to create, nor is creation any sort of necessary ema-  
 285 nation from the divine substance.<sup>144</sup> God creates freely "out of  
 nothing":<sup>145</sup>

If God had drawn the world from pre-existent matter, what  
 would be so extraordinary in that? A human artisan makes  
 from a given material whatever he wants, while God shows  
 his power by starting from nothing to make all he wants.<sup>146</sup>

297 Scripture bears witness to faith in creation "out of nothing"  
 as a truth full of promise and hope. Thus the mother of seven sons  
 338 encourages them for martyrdom:

I do not know how you came into being in my womb. It was  
 not I who gave you life and breath, nor I who set in order the  
 elements within each of you. Therefore the Creator of the  
 world, who shaped the beginning of man and devised the  
 origin of all things, will in his mercy give life and breath back  
 to you again, since you now forget yourselves for the sake of  
 his laws. . . . Look at the heaven and the earth and see  
 everything that is in them, and recognize that God did not  
 make them out of things that existed. Thus also mankind  
 comes into being.<sup>147</sup>

298 Since God could create everything out of nothing, he can  
 also, through the Holy Spirit, give spiritual life to sinners by  
 1375 creating a pure heart in them<sup>148</sup> and bodily life to the dead through  
 the Resurrection. God "gives life to the dead and calls into existence  
 992 the things that do not exist."<sup>149</sup> And since God was able to make  
 light shine in darkness by his Word, he can also give the light of  
 faith to those who do not yet know him.<sup>150</sup>

### God creates an ordered and good world

339 299 Because God creates through wisdom, his creation is or-  
 dered: "You have arranged all things by measure and number and  
 weight."<sup>151</sup> The universe, created in and by the eternal Word, the

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144 Cf. *Dei Filius*, can. 2-4: DS 3022-3024.

145 Lateran Council IV (1215): DS 800; cf. DS 3025.

146 St. Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolycum* II, 4: PG 6, 1052.

147 2 Macc 7:22-23, 28.

148 Cf. *Ps* 51:12.

149 *Rom* 4:17.

150 Cf. *Gen* 1:3; 2 *Cor* 4:6.

151 *Wis* 11:20.

“image of the invisible God,” is destined for and addressed to man, himself created in the “image of God” and called to a personal relationship with God.<sup>152</sup> Our human understanding, which shares in the light of the divine intellect, can understand what God tells us by means of his creation, though not without great effort and only in a spirit of humility and respect before the Creator and his work.<sup>153</sup> Because creation comes forth from God’s goodness, it shares in that goodness—“And God saw that it was good . . . very good”<sup>154</sup>—for God willed creation as a gift addressed to man, an inheritance destined for and entrusted to him. On many occasions the Church has had to defend the goodness of creation, including that of the physical world.<sup>155</sup>

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### God transcends creation and is present to it

300 God is infinitely greater than all his works: “You have set your glory above the heavens.”<sup>156</sup> Indeed, God’s “greatness is unsearchable.”<sup>157</sup> But because he is the free and sovereign Creator, the first cause of all that exists, God is present to his creatures’ inmost being: “In him we live and move and have our being.”<sup>158</sup> In the words of St. Augustine, God is “higher than my highest and more inward than my innermost self.”<sup>159</sup>

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### God upholds and sustains creation

301 With creation, God does not abandon his creatures to themselves. He not only gives them being and existence, but also, and at every moment, upholds and sustains them in being, enables them to act and brings them to their final end. Recognizing this utter dependence with respect to the Creator is a source of wisdom and freedom, of joy and confidence:

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For you love all things that exist, and detest none of the things that you have made; for you would not have made anything if you had hated it. How would anything have endured, if you had not willed it? Or how would anything not called forth by you have been preserved? You spare all

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152 Col 1:15; Gen 1:26.

153 Cf. Ps 19:2-5; Job 42:3.

154 Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 31.

155 Cf. DS 286; 455-463; 800; 1333; 3002.

156 Ps 8:2; cf. Sir 43:28.

157 Ps 145:3.

158 Acts 17:28.

159 St. Augustine, *Conf.* 3, 6, 11: PL 32, 688.

things, for they are yours, O Lord, you who love the living.<sup>160</sup>

## V. GOD CARRIES OUT HIS PLAN: DIVINE PROVIDENCE

302 Creation has its own goodness and proper perfection, but it did not spring forth complete from the hands of the Creator. The universe was created “in a state of journeying” (*in statu viae*) toward an ultimate perfection yet to be attained, to which God has destined it. We call “divine providence” the dispositions by which God guides his creation toward this perfection:

By his providence God protects and governs all things which he has made, “reaching mightily from one end of the earth to the other, and ordering all things well.” For “all are open and laid bare to his eyes,” even those things which are yet to come into existence through the free action of creatures.<sup>161</sup>

303 The witness of Scripture is unanimous that the solicitude of divine providence is *concrete* and *immediate*; God cares for all, from the least things to the great events of the world and its history. The sacred books powerfully affirm God’s absolute sovereignty over the course of events: “Our God is in the heavens; he does  
269 whatever he pleases.”<sup>162</sup> And so it is with Christ, “who opens and no one shall shut, who shuts and no one opens.”<sup>163</sup> As the book of Proverbs states: “Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will be established.”<sup>164</sup>

304 And so we see the Holy Spirit, the principal author of Sacred Scripture, often attributing actions to God without mentioning any secondary causes. This is not a “primitive mode of speech,” but a profound way of recalling God’s primacy and absolute Lordship over history and the  
2568 world,<sup>165</sup> and so of educating his people to trust in him. The prayer of the Psalms is the great school of this trust.<sup>166</sup>

305 Jesus asks for childlike abandonment to the providence of our heavenly Father who takes care of his children’s smallest  
2115 needs: “Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ . . . Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.”<sup>167</sup>

160 Wis 11:24-26.

161 Vatican Council I, *Dei Filius* 1: DS 3003; cf. Wis 8:1; Heb 4:13.

162 Ps 115:3.

163 Rev 3:7.

164 Prov 19:21.

165 Cf. Isa 10:5-15; 45:5-7; Deut 32:39; Sir 11:14.

166 Cf. Ps 22; 32; 35; 103; 138; *et al.*

167 Mt 6:31-33; cf. 10:29-31.

### Providence and secondary causes

306 God is the sovereign master of his plan. But to carry it out he also makes use of his creatures' cooperation. This use is not a sign of weakness, but rather a token of almighty God's greatness and goodness. For God grants his creatures not only their existence, but also the dignity of acting on their own, of being causes and principles for each other, and thus of cooperating in the accomplishment of his plan. 1884 1951

307 To human beings God even gives the power of freely sharing in his providence by entrusting them with the responsibility of "subduing" the earth and having dominion over it.<sup>168</sup> God thus enables men to be intelligent and free causes in order to complete the work of creation, to perfect its harmony for their own good and that of their neighbors. Though often unconscious collaborators with God's will, they can also enter deliberately into the divine plan by their actions, their prayers, and their sufferings.<sup>169</sup> They then fully become "God's fellow workers" and co-workers for his kingdom.<sup>170</sup> 106, 373 1954 2427 2738 618, 1505

308 The truth that God is at work in all the actions of his creatures is inseparable from faith in God the Creator. God is the first cause who operates in and through secondary causes: "For God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."<sup>171</sup> Far from diminishing the creature's dignity, this truth enhances it. Drawn from nothingness by God's power, wisdom, and goodness, it can do nothing if it is cut off from its origin, for "without a Creator the creature vanishes."<sup>172</sup> Still less can a creature attain its ultimate end without the help of God's grace.<sup>173</sup> 970

### Providence and the scandal of evil

309 If God the Father almighty, the Creator of the ordered and good world, cares for all his creatures, why does evil exist? To this question, as pressing as it is unavoidable and as painful as it is mysterious, no quick answer will suffice. Only Christian faith as a whole constitutes the answer to this question: the goodness of 164, 385 2850

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168 Cf. *Gen* 1:26-28.

169 Cf. *Col* 1:24.

170 *1 Cor* 3:9; *1 Thess* 3:2; *Col* 4:11.

171 *Phil* 2:13; cf. *1 Cor* 12:6.

172 *GS* 36 § 3.

173 Cf. *Mt* 19:26; *Jn* 15:5; 14:13.

creation, the drama of sin, and the patient love of God who comes to meet man by his covenants, the redemptive Incarnation of his Son, his gift of the Spirit, his gathering of the Church, the power of the sacraments, and his call to a blessed life to which free creatures are invited to consent in advance, but from which, by a terrible mystery, they can also turn away in advance. *There is not a single aspect of the Christian message that is not in part an answer to the question of evil.*

310 But why did God not create a world so perfect that no evil could exist in it? With infinite power God could always create something better.<sup>174</sup> But with infinite wisdom and goodness God  
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1042-1050 freely willed to create a world “in a state of journeying” toward its ultimate perfection. In God’s plan this process of becoming involves the appearance of certain beings and the disappearance of  
342 others, the existence of the more perfect alongside the less perfect, both constructive and destructive forces of nature. With physical good there exists also *physical evil* as long as creation has not reached perfection.<sup>175</sup>

311 Angels and men, as intelligent and free creatures, have to journey toward their ultimate destinies by their free choice and preferential love. They can therefore go astray. Indeed, they have  
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1849 sinned. Thus has *moral evil*, incommensurably more harmful than physical evil, entered the world. God is in no way, directly or indirectly, the cause of moral evil.<sup>176</sup> He permits it, however, because he respects the freedom of his creatures and, mysteriously, knows how to derive good from it:

For almighty God . . . , because he is supremely good, would never allow any evil whatsoever to exist in his works if he were not so all-powerful and good as to cause good to emerge from evil itself.<sup>177</sup>

312 In time we can discover that God in his almighty providence can bring a good from the consequences of an evil, even a moral evil, caused by his creatures: “It was not you,” said Joseph to his brothers, “who sent me here, but God . . . . You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive.”<sup>178</sup> From the greatest moral evil ever  
598-600 committed—the rejection and murder of God’s only Son, caused

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174 Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* I, 25, 6.

175 Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *SCG* III, 71.

176 Cf. St. Augustine, *De libero arbitrio* 1, 1, 2: PL 32, 1223; St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* I-II, 79, 1.

177 St. Augustine, *Enchiridion* 3, 11: PL 40, 236.

178 *Gen* 45:8; 50:20; cf. *Tob* 2:12-18 (Vulg.).

by the sins of all men—God, by his grace that “abounded all the more,”<sup>179</sup> brought the greatest of goods: the glorification of Christ and our redemption. But for all that, evil never becomes a good. 1994

313 “We know that in everything God works for good for those who love him.”<sup>180</sup> The constant witness of the saints confirms this truth: 227

St. Catherine of Siena said to “those who are scandalized and rebel against what happens to them”: “Everything comes from love, all is ordained for the salvation of man, God does nothing without this goal in mind.”<sup>181</sup>

St. Thomas More, shortly before his martyrdom, consoled his daughter: “Nothing can come but that that God wills. And I make me very sure that whatsoever that be, seem it never so bad in sight, it shall indeed be the best.”<sup>182</sup>

Dame Julian of Norwich: “Here I was taught by the grace of God that I should steadfastly keep me in the faith . . . and that at the same time I should take my stand on and earnestly believe in what our Lord shewed in this time—that ‘all manner [of] thing shall be well.’”<sup>183</sup>

314 We firmly believe that God is master of the world and of its history. But the ways of his providence are often unknown to us. Only at the end, when our partial knowledge ceases, when we see God “face to face,”<sup>184</sup> will we fully know the ways by which— 1040  
even through the dramas of evil and sin—God has guided his creation to that definitive sabbath rest<sup>185</sup> for which he created 2550  
heaven and earth.

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## IN BRIEF

315 In the creation of the world and of man, God gave the first and universal witness to his almighty love and his wisdom, the first proclamation of the “plan of his loving goodness,” which finds its goal in the new creation in Christ.

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179 Cf. *Rom* 5:20.

180 *Rom* 8:28.

181 St. Catherine of Siena, *Dialogue on Providence*, ch. IV, 138.

182 *The Correspondence of Sir Thomas More*, ed. Elizabeth F. Rogers (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), letter 206, lines 661-663.

183 Julian of Norwich, *The Revelations of Divine Love*, tr. James Walshe, SJ (London: 1961), ch. 32, 99-100.

184 *1 Cor* 13:12.

185 Cf. *Gen* 2:2.

- 316 Though the work of creation is attributed to the Father in particular, it is equally a truth of faith that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit together are the one, indivisible principle of creation.
- 317 God alone created the universe freely, directly, and without any help.
- 318 No creature has the infinite power necessary to “create” in the proper sense of the word, that is, to produce and give being to that which had in no way possessed it (to call into existence “out of nothing”) (cf. DS 3624).
- 319 God created the world to show forth and communicate his glory. That his creatures should share in his truth, goodness, and beauty—this is the glory for which God created them.
- 320 God created the universe and keeps it in existence by his Word, the Son “upholding the universe by his word of power” (*Heb* 1:3) and by his Creator Spirit, the giver of life.
- 321 Divine providence consists of the dispositions by which God guides all his creatures with wisdom and love to their ultimate end.
- 322 Christ invites us to filial trust in the providence of our heavenly Father (cf. *Mt* 6:26-34), and St. Peter the apostle repeats: “Cast all your anxieties on him, for he cares about you” (*1 Pet* 5:7; cf. *Ps* 55:23).
- 323 Divine providence works also through the actions of creatures. To human beings God grants the ability to cooperate freely with his plans.
- 324 The fact that God permits physical and even moral evil is a mystery that God illuminates by his Son Jesus Christ who died and rose to vanquish evil. Faith gives us the certainty that God would not permit an evil if he did not cause a good to come from that very evil, by ways that we shall fully know only in eternal life.
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