PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

Psalm 51.3, 4, 8-15, 17, 19

O Lord, open my lips, and I will teach transgressors your ways.

Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness;
in the greatness of your compassion wipe out my offense.
Thoroughly wash me from my guilt
and of my sin cleanse me.
Behold, you are pleased with sincerity of heart,
and in my inmost being you teach me wisdom.

O Lord, open my lips, and I will teach transgressors your ways.

Cleanse me of sin with hyssop, that I may be purified;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow,
Let me hear the sounds of joy and gladness;
the bones you have crushed shall rejoice.
Turn your face from my sins,
and blot out all my guilt.

O Lord, open my lips, and I will teach transgressors your ways.

A clean heart create for me, O God,
and a steadfast spirit renew within me.
Cast me not out from your presence,
and your holy spirit take not from me.
Give me back the joy of your salvation,
and a willing spirit sustain in me

O Lord, open my lips, and I will teach transgressors your ways.

I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners shall return to you.
O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.
My sacrifice, O God, is a contrite spirit;
a heart contrite and humbled, O God, you will not spurn.

O Lord, open my lips, and I will teach transgressors your ways.

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WAYWARD THOUGHTS ON PSALM 51: A MEDITATION

Do I really think I so much need God's mercy?
And if I do, should I set sinners straight?
Who, Lord, am I to cast a stone in judgment,
If I myself am so degenerate?

Do you not see you live by God's sheer mercy?
If so, how, then, dare you to deprecate
What He has done despite your wayward bent
To heal with boundless love your petty hate?

Do you not see the ways of God as mercy,
As truth He gives that you might escalate?
Or do you think He masters you to prevent
His own loss? You fool! He suffers no ill fate.

Lord Jesus, You who are in flesh God's mercy,
Who died my stony heart to infiltrate,
Who rose to heaven and Teacher Spirit sent:
The ways Your heart knows, teach mine to imitate!

14 August 1979

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CHAPTER 1: KNOWLEDGE, REVELATION, AND INTERPRETATION

A. Prologue

We fleshly persons are created by the eternal Father, redeemed by the Word made flesh, and offered the gift of Their Holy Spirit. We are not only souls; we are human, living bodies. We are not intellects. We have intellects for knowing, but we also have wills for loving the goods we understand, we have senses for experiencing, emotions for feeling, and hands for making things useful and beautiful for human enjoyment and for the praise of the Trinity.

The divine Persons are related to us human persons as creator to creatures, of course, but always also as Persons to persons. Therefore, everything in us except sin and other evils--which are not so much realities as gaps within our reality--is created by the eternal Father; everything in us is redeemed by Jesus, our Lord and Savior; and everything in us is to be sanctified if we do not reject the gift of Their Spirit.

We are called to share in the intimate life of the divine Family, to meet and see Them in a wedding feast which will last forever (cf. Mt 22.2; Rv 19.7-9), to know Them in fulfilling union even as They know us (1 Cor 13.12; 1 Jn 3.2). In heaven our communion will include the goods of divine life (Rv 21.6-7); the present gift of the Holy Spirit is only the first payment on the inheritance promised God's children (cf. Eph 1.14).

But we also will enjoy perfect fulfillment as human persons. We will contribute the good fruits of our nature and our work done in the Spirit to the fullness of the Lord Jesus, our brother, and in and through Him return to the Father all of the gifts we have received (cf. Eph 1.10; 1 Cor 15.24). Vatican II teaches:

> . . .after we have obeyed the Lord, and in His Spirit nurtured on earth the values of human dignity, brotherhood and freedom, and indeed all the good fruits of our nature and enterprise, we will find them again, but freed of stain, burnished and transfigured. This will be so when Christ hands over to the Father a kingdom eternal and universal: "a kingdom of truth and life, of holiness and grace, of justice, love and peace" [Preface of the Feast of Christ the King]. On this earth that kingdom is already present in mystery. When the Lord returns, it will be brought into full flower (GS 39).

The goods of the kingdom--truth, life, holiness, grace, justice, love, and peace--are both divine blessings and fulfillments of various aspects of what men and women can be. Insofar as they are good fruits of our nature and effort, these goods are created and redeemed. They will be sanctified if we share both in them and in divine life.

The kingdom will be brought into full flower only when the Lord comes, and without Him we can do nothing (cf. Jn 15.5). Nevertheless, with Him and the grace of the Holy Spirit we can and we ought here and now to contribute to the building up of Christ whose fullness we shall share in the kingdom. We can contribute by respecting and defending the human goods of the kingdom insofar as they are goods of our nature, and by pursuing and promoting them insofar as they can be good fruits of our work. God wishes our daily contribution to the building up of Christ, made in obedience to Him and in the power of His Spirit, to have eternal worth. Therefore, every morally good act of a Christian living through the grace of the Spirit is cooperation in the work of the Trinity.

A central and profound principle of Catholic moral theology is this: The creative, salvific, and sanctifying love of the divine Persons bears directly upon the goods proper to us human persons; our love for the divine Persons, which is a gift of the Spirit (cf. Rom 5.5), also bears directly upon our own fulfillment and that of all humankind. The Lord Jesus, as man, has but one human heart to love His heavenly Father and His human fellows. Since we are called to share in the divine life of Jesus, we ought for this very reason to strive for fullness of human life.

The remainder of this book will be devoted to explicating this fundamental principle of a human life centered upon the Lord Jesus and embracing all things: "All things are yours . . . and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 Cor 3.21-22).

B. Human cognition

One can say both of human persons and of other primates that they see and hear, perceive things as units, remember and dream, learn by experience, tell the helpful from the threatening, love and hate, fear and become enraged, strive after things and enjoy satisfactions. Such experience is common to the higher animals, including rational animals. This form of consciousness is preconceptual and lacks reflective discrimination between subject and object, between self and other.

This level of awareness is called "sentient" to distinguish it from the properly human functions of thinking and willing. These properly human functions and their level of awareness are called "rational," using the word in a wide sense. Even sentient awareness in human persons is shaped and permeated by reason and will, for while the two levels are distinct, they are not separate. They make up the single system of human conscious life.

Human persons are created in God's image (cf. Gn 1.26-27). For this reason, men and women are not only valuable; they are beings of dignity, of inherent worth (cf. Ps 8.5-7). The capacities of intelligence and free choice raise human persons above the rest of material creation and make them like God. These same capacities are the ground of human moral responsibility and of the openness of human existence to share in divine life (cf. GS 12-17).

Human persons know themselves as selves; they know everything else as a world of other persons and of things. The rational capacity to distinguish oneself as a knowing subject from the other persons and objects one knows is exercised in reflective intelligence, by which one knows oneself knowing. In this reflection, one can distinguish <u>what</u> one knows from one's <u>knowing</u> of it and the conditions of this knowing; in making this distinction one knows the truth of one's knowing and posits the content known as other: So it is, not merely in my knowing, but in <u>what</u> I know, in reality.

The truths which are known in reflection are propositions, "pro-positions" because we put forth and posit as real what we know to be true. We call a truth a "proposition" precisely insofar as it is known and present in our knowing; the reality attained in propositional knowing is some state of affairs.

Something of the reality which will be known in this objective way must first be understood. Understood aspects of a reality are concepts. We call these aspects "concepts" precisely insofar as reality is grasped in our understanding of it. We often construct tentative propositions and then seek to determine whether any state of affairs corresponds to them; to do this is to ask a question. A proposition which picks out a state of affairs which is not real is a false proposition.

Human rational awareness is based upon sentient awareness. Our first understandings are of aspects of things given in experience; the first truths we know are about the reality of states of affairs in the world of experience. Already in knowing truth we know ourselves with an awareness which is other than sentient awareness, and so from the start our knowledge of the world of experience points beyond this limited domain. By reasoning we come to know order among things. In investigating the order of things we discover loose ends in things experienced, and seek after causes--factors not yet experienced--to complete the pattern which is grasped rationally as incomplete.[1]

Sometimes it is said that human persons have some direct and preconceptual cognition of the world and even of God--a sort of direct look at or undifferentiated contact with reality. It is true that sentient awareness is preconceptual and undifferentiated. Also, very basic truths are known in propositions which are so obvious and familiar that it is hard to express them in language; it is easier to talk about aspects of reality which vary and are differentiated.

However, there is neither evidence nor any teaching of the Church that human persons have any rational awareness of anything without concepts. The self-awareness which is incidental to knowing truths about the world of experience is not aconceptual, for it arises from the understanding of experienced things and takes form in the concept of the self who knows, the self one calls "I." Aconceptual awareness would be without understanding of any aspect of reality and would be awareness of no state of affairs as real. It is unnecessary to posit such awareness; to do so leads to avoidable mystifications.

C. Rational knowledge about God

Still, as already indicated, human rational knowledge is not limited to the world of experience and the knowing self, since reasoning follows the pointing of these beyond themselves: "Since the creation of the world, invisible realities, God's eternal power and divinity, have become visible, recognized through the things he has made" (Rom 1.20). Vatican I defines: "If anyone says that the one and true God, our creator and lord, cannot be known with certainty with the natural light of human reason by means of the things that have been made: let him be anathema" (DS 3026/1806).

The general form of the reasoning by which one comes to know God from experience is simple enough. In many ways humankind experiences the world as incomplete, as in need, as somehow unsatisfying to the human mind and heart. Part of this unsatisfactoriness no doubt is based upon our awareness that we will die; this fact seems absurd to persons, who have an inherent sense of their own dignity. Another factor is our awareness of solidarity and community with ancestors and descendents; this suggests another dimension of reality, outside worldly time and space, in which we remain with others. Yet another factor is our poignant sense of evil, especially of our own guilt, which cries out for salvation and forgiveness. Shaping all this experience is the realization that the world of things which come to be and pass away needs a principle of its reality in something independent in being.

Nothing within the world of experience nor even the human self grasped in knowing this world is able to remove the absurdity of death, unite the community of humankind, overcome evil, and account for the reality of things not real of themselves. And so an Other, apart from the world of experience but required by it, is posited as an invisible and higher reality. This Other almost inevitably is thought of as a person or as something like a person. Virtually every human group seeks ways to live without strain and in harmony with this quasi-personal Other. The ways diverse peoples find and use constitute their religions. Thus, religion of some sort is almost a universal phenomenon.

The formulation of Vatican I and the common aspects of efforts by Catholic philosophers to articulate reasoning toward the existence of God point to a precise argument which follows the general form of reasoning already described but leads to a very careful way of thinking and talking about God. Elsewhere I have attempted to lay out this precise argument in detail.[2]

The reasoning begins from the distinction between understanding propositions and knowing them to be true. Wherever this distinction holds, it implies that the states of affairs picked out by propositions are not real of themselves, but require conditions beyond themselves to be real. An infinite regress (in the series of conditions of conditions of . . .) must be excluded; some explanation is rationally required for the reality of everything which has borrowed reality. Thus, there must be a principle of reality which is other than any state of affairs having borrowed reality; this principle must have its own reality of itself.

In this reasoning one reaches a principle which really is <u>wholly</u> other than <u>anything</u> we understand. For our understanding proceeds by concepts which grasp aspects of entities which <u>cannot</u> be real of themselves. It follows that whatever we understand about anything else will <u>not</u> be an understanding of the Other whose reality is of itself. The attributes we predicate of everything else thus must be denied of this principle of reality. It is neither one nor many, neither changing nor unchanging, neither animate nor inanimate, neither bodily nor mental--using all these predicates in the same senses in which they are used to describe entities having borrowed reality. We do not know what the Other is; we know what it is not.[3]

Can we even say of this principle that it is "real," that it is "other?" Not if these words are used in speaking of it in the same sense in which they are used when we

talk of familiar entities. As St. John Damascene teaches:

> Concerning God, it is impossible for us to say what He is in His essence; it is more fitting, rather, to discuss how He is different from everything else. For He belongs not among things that exist, not because He does not exist, but because He is beyond all existing things, and beyond even existence itself. For if all modes of knowledge are concerned with what exists, that which is beyond knowledge must be beyond existence and likewise, what is beyond existence must be beyond knowledge (FEF 2340).

We can say "God exists," only because in the context of the reasoning by which one reasons beyond existing things, the word "exists" takes on a special meaning, which does apply to that Other on which they defend for their reality.

Even words such as "principle" and "cause" do not express what this Other is in itself, for they cannot be used of it in the sense in which they are said of anything else without eliminating the uniqueness which must belong to the Other if it is to fulfill the requirement for which it is posited--the requirement to account for the reality of everything else. Rather, in saying that the Other is "principle" or "cause" we are saying that whatever it is like in itself, it is in some way, a way we do not understand, what it must be to do the job--to supply reality to everything having borrowed reality. Thus, while we do not know what the Other is, but only what it is not, we do know that things of our experience and we ourselves are related to it, and that--in some way beyond our comprehension--it has in itself what it must have to sustain this relationship.[4]

Do we have reason, even apart from faith, to think of this Other as quasi-personal? I think we do (cf. DS 3892/2320). While we must deny that it either is a mere object or a personal subject like ourselves, entities having borrowed reality depend upon the Other in a way somewhat similar to that in which free choices depend upon the person whose choices they are. For no one can choose freely if there is a sufficient reason apart from the choice for making it, and the Other cannot be the principle of all else if there is a sufficient reason apart from its causing for things to have the borrowed reality they enjoy. On the basis of this similarity, we are entitled to think of the Other as if it were a free agent, and if as free, then as intelligent, for choice presupposes understanding of options.[5]

At this point it becomes clear that the "Other" about which we have been talking can only be the God in whom we believe: He who freely creates heaven and earth, things visible and things invisible.

D. Divine revelation -- its possibility

Part four of this work will deal at length with revelation and faith, and with the covenant relationship God has formed with humankind.[6] It is important to note at once, however, that, as Vatican I teaches, God not only makes Himself known to humankind by creating the universe and humankind itself, but also has chosen

> . . .to reveal himself and the eternal decrees of his will to the human race in another and supernatural way, as the Apostle says: "In times past, God spoke in fragmentary and varied ways to our fathers through the prophets; in this, the final age, he has spoken to us through his Son" (Heb 1.1-2) (DS 3004/1785).

By this revelation, even certain truths naturally accessible to reason are known with certainty and without error. But supernatural revelation is not absolutely necessary on this account.

> It is necessary only because God, out of his infinite goodness, destined man to a supernatural end, that is, to a participation in the good things of God, which altogether exceed the human mental grasp; for "eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has it so much as dawned on man what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Cor 2.9) (DS 3005/1786).

Thus by supernatural revelation, especially the revelation of God in the incarnation of His Son, we come to know God, not simply as creator, but also as three Persons who invite us into Their fellowship.

While the words "natural" and "supernatural" are not found in Scripture, the distinction which these words mark is in the New Testament. It is the distinction between human begetting and divine begetting (cf. Jn 1.12-13), for no one can enter the kingdom unless he or she is begotten, not merely of flesh and blood, but of water and the Spirit (cf. Jn 3.3-8). Persons human by nature are children of God by adoption and therefore are called to a heavenly life (cf. Rom 8.14-17; Gal 4.3-7; Eph 1.4-10; 1 Jn 3.1-2).

Revelation occurs in a world in which humankind already has some awareness of God--incomplete and partly mistaken but nevertheless real. If this were not so, missionaries would not be able to make clear that the Gospel message they bring is not merely a human message but a message <u>from God</u>, for "God" would have no meaning to those to be evangelized. This prior awareness of God is based on the fact that everything created depends upon God for its borrowed reality. Thus there is a problem: If every created reality is an expression of God, how can any <u>particular</u> created reality serve as a medium for His supernatural revelation?

The answer is that God can select from among creatures some which he uses as signs or signals. He brings about these particular states of affairs without certain conditions which would dispose those to whom He wishes to communicate to see them as part of the usual course of events--the normal order of the world. The account of the revelation of God to Moses (cf. Ex 3.1-14, 4.1-9) can be studied as an example. A combination of sounds and performances is brought about without the conditions which one might expect to surround them; Moses cannot reasonably refuse to accept what he experiences as words and deeds of God.[7]

Miracles and the fulfillment of prophecies are proofs presented to experience by which certain states of affairs can be discriminated from the normal order of things and reasonably accepted as signals--as personal communications--from God (cf. Vatican I, DS 3009/1790). Vatican I definitively teaches that external signs can render revelation

credible, that one is not moved to faith exclusively by inner experience, that miracles are possible, that accounts of miracles in Scripture must not be dismissed wholesale as fables and myths, that miracles can be recognized with certainty, and that the divine origin of the Christian religion can be established by them (cf. DS 3033-3034/1812-1813).

Events which can be called "miraculous" in a strict sense are signs of an especially striking type. But God's revelation is not a sequence of isolated, spectacular occurrences. Once He gains the attention of those with whom He wishes to communicate, God sets up a continuing process of conversation, many of the elements in which taken by themselves might seem perfectly natural. But the whole process hangs together in a systematic unity. Vatican II explains:

> This plan of revelation is realized by deeds and words having an inner unity: the deeds wrought by God in the history of salvation manifest and confirm the teaching and realities signified by the words, while the words proclaim the deeds and clarify the mystery contained in them (DV 2).

In this way, God, who is naturally known by the relationship of all created things to Him, becomes personally known by the relationship which those who believe in Him have with Him in the order of salvation.

Even as God reveals Himself, His inner reality still remains hidden and mysterious to us (cf. Vatican I, DS 3016/1796). In this life "we see indistinctly, as in a mirror" (1 Cor 13.12). The mirror is the relationship God has established with us. We still know Him not in Himself, but as one who is, in a way we cannot comprehend, all that He must be to sustain with us the relationship into which He has drawn us. And even though Jesus Christ is God incarnate, the truth He reveals remains matter of faith (cf. Jn 1.12-14). God for us is He whom we have met in Jesus, He to whose inner self we hope to come through Jesus (cf. Jn. 14.6-7).

E. Modern thought ignores divine mysteriousness

It follows that even the characterization of God which is provided by Christian faith is not a description of Him in Himself but an understanding of Him only insofar as He draws us into personal relationship with Himself in the order of salvation. Once this point is understood, one realizes that it is a mistake to take expressions which Christians use in talking about God to have precisely the same meaning they would have in uses outside the context of faith.

Nonbelievers constantly make this mistake. For example, they ask how Christians can reconcile their belief that God is a good and loving Father with all the evil and misery in the world. Again, they ask how human persons can be free if God causes everything and directs all things according to the plan of his providence. Similarly, they suggest that human life cannot be held to have inherent meaning and value if human persons are called to share in another, divine life.

Believers sometimes make these same mistakes. Some believers also wonder whether the reality of humankind's personal relationship with God in the order of salvation does not entail that God mutually depends upon His creatures.

While a great deal can be said about all of these questions, the fundamental principle for replying to them is that they all assume that one knows God in Himself, that one's thought and talk about Him is not after all very different from one's thought and talk about everything and everyone else.[8]

We Christians do not know how to reconcile our belief in God's goodness with our experience of evil. We do know that we do not understand God and cannot expect to justify His ways (cf. Jb 42.2-6). We also believe that in the death and resurrection of Jesus God gives us a sign of His love which does not lessen the reality of evil but promises to overcome it (cf. Rom 8.18-38; Jn 11.17-44).

Similarly, we do not know how God can cause the very reality of our free choices, without determining what we choose, nor do we know how His providential design can include our lives without reducing us to the status of puppets playing our roles in a drama in no way our own. But the difficulties dissolve if we keep in mind that we do not understand God's causality and providential direction. God "causes" in a unique sense; His plan is not the merely superhuman design of a grand puppet master (cf. Rom 11.33-36). The life of good deeds in Christ is a gift of God's grace (cf. Eph 2.10), yet we can choose either life or death (cf. Sir 15.11-20).

Likewise, we do not understand in itself the divine life in which we are called to share. Were it simply a kind of life other than the human as human life is a kind of life other than that of a lower animal, we could no more share in divine life without losing our humanity than a dog could become human without losing its own identity. But divinity and humanity are not exclusive of one another; this is one of the lessons of the Word's becoming flesh (cf. GS 22 and 34).

The answer will be similar to those who think that the relationship we enjoy in the Lord Jesus with God implies that He mutually depends upon us. We know that God is neither changing nor unchanging, neither dependent nor independent, in the sense in which these predicates can be understood when they are said of anything which we understand in itself. We believe that God is faithful (cf. 2 Tim 2.13) and that His good will toward us is unalterable (cf. Jas 1.17-18); we also believe that everything we receive supernaturally from God is a completely free gift, a grace, in the granting of which He in no way depends upon us (DS 373-378/176-181). Yet we also know that our relationship with God is a genuine, interpersonal one; for example, He does hear and answer our prayers (cf. Jn 16.23-24; Mt 7.7). These beliefs will not seem incompatible unless we import into them meanings from outside the context of faith. If we make this mistake and assume that we understand God in Himself apart from the relationship He establishes with us by revelation, then the mystery of faith will degenerate into an incoherent human theory. Such a theory inevitably will find God's transcendence as creator and His presence as personal friend incompatible with one another.

When modern philosophers treat of religious matters, they almost always regard such an incoherent human theory as if it represented Christian faith. Hobbes, Hume, Spinoza, Kant, Hegel, Feuerbach, Marx, Nietzche, Dewey, Sartre, and many others deny

divine revelation.[9] Yet they retain a residue of what Christians believe, especially in their exalted idea of the human person or, at least, in the ideal by which they criticize human life. Since it is the business of philosophers to articulate their beliefs, to show the reasonableness of holding them, and to answer objections from all sides against them, modern philosophers such as those named have articulated more or less tightly integrated atheistic systems (cf. GS 19-21).

Modern philosophic systems are plausible, complex, and seemingly powerful. Yet they are ultimately inconsistent. Hume, for example, holds that reality necessarily excludes anything which is not contingent--that is, which is necessary; in this way he tries to exclude God. Kant holds that knowledge cannot extend to God because it is limited to the world of experience; he thinks he shows this by developing a knowledge of the sources of knowledge--which he locates outside experience. Hegel maintains that one cannot know anything in a fully true way short of knowing the totality of reality; he believes that at this point knowing and what is known coincide; at the same time, Hegel thinks his own thought is fully true and that it excludes rival philosophies as false. The post-hegelian philosophers mentioned above and many others maintain that the complex of human thought and action is the ultimate source of all meaning and value; at the same time, they try to exclude as illegitimate the belief and way of life of Christians, since we do not agree with their view that God is to be replaced by the human mind--and replaced in that peculiar way each atheistic humanist personally prefers.

The preceding paragraph is not intended as a summary refutation of the leading approaches in modern philosophy. I have treated these matters at length in a previous work.[10] Rather, my intention is to make clear that Catholic theology must be very careful in borrowing from modern philosophies and from theologies which have been shaped by modern philosophies. Vatican II continues to commend St. Thomas as a guide for Catholic theological speculation (OT 16). The Holy See continues to point out that modern philosophies are not the apt instruments for Christian reflection which ancient philosophy was for the work of St. Thomas (CCE 52).

F. Divine revelation as living communication

Catholic theology has one major way by which it avoids taking in inappropriate senses which they would have outside faith the expressions which Christians use in talking about God and the order of salvation. This way is to keep to the understanding of these expressions which they have within the Catholic Church. The Church herself belongs to the order of salvation; she is a sign always and everywhere present in the world. Her own reality and qualities provide an adequate motive for believing the revelation of God in Christ, and at the same time prove her divine mission of guarding and handing on this revelation (cf. Vatican I, DS 3013-3014/1794).

For this reason, Catholics need not reach back through history to meet God in Christ in the first century; we need not make use of a critical study of Scripture to seek out the Lord Jesus and then try to understand Him by modern philosophy.

Instead, in the words and deeds of the Church teaching and working in the world today we Catholics find the living Christ (cf. DV 7-10). For the Church is the body of Christ, and His Spirit continually vivifies and builds up this communal body of His (cf. LG 7-8). The Lord Jesus is present when the Church teaches (cf. Mt 28.20), and so heaven validates the Church's earthly decisions (cf. Mt 16.19; 18.18). The Lord Jesus is present in the Eucharist (cf. 1 Cor 11.23-29), and by His Spirit empowers the Church to forgive sins (cf. Jn 20.21-23). The Lord Jesus is present in those who require works of love (cf. Mt 25.31-46), and by the faith and prayer of the Church does greater works now than He did during His earthly life (cf. Jn 14.12-14).

Hence Catholics hear Christ speaking in living language through the successors of the apostles united with the successor of Peter, experience Christ's saving work in the sacraments, and meet Him also in those for whom they do works of love. Only then do Catholics engage in critical historical studies and undertake a further effort at understanding revelation, which already has a definite expression in contemporary words and present human deeds (cf. LG 7-8 and 20-21).

To understand this point, one must bear in mind that the revelation of God in Christ is not like a disembodied transference of thoughts nor like the transfer of information from one computer to another. It is more like the personal communication of parents with their infant children. Revelation establishes a communion of fellowship between the Trinity and us fleshly persons. It initiates the intimacy which will be perfect in heaven. As personal communication, divine revelation has three important characteristics.

First, personal communication is not completed in the utterance of words or the performance of deeds, but only by someone's hearing of the words uttered and response to the deeds performed. Thus the apostolic witness is to "what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked upon and our hands have touched--we speak of the word of life" (1 Jn 1.1). With the death of the last apostle, the appropriation of what God reveals in the Lord Jesus was completed.[11] Now we expect no further public revelation (cf. DV 4).

Second, personal communication does not essentially consist in information which also could be gained in some other way. If an infant did not trustingly accept and respond to the words and acts of its parents, the child never would know them and never would learn how to live as a member of the family. Similarly, since divine revelation is personal communication, one cannot come to the truth God reveals except by faithfully listening to His words and cooperating in His works.

Third, personal communication includes but is not limited to certain propositional truths. Parents tell their child: "We love you," and, "We are your parents; you are our child." Similarly, God tells us He is our God and we His people, that He loves us, and much more (cf. Rv 21.3; 1 Pt 2.9-10; LG 9-17). These are truths to be believed, and it would be nonsense for one to say that one believes God but does not believe all of the truths He makes known to us. But beyond truths, God reveals in Jesus His love, His power, His mercy--in a word, Himself. Reception of the fullness of this revelation is

more than assent to truths. It is a formation of our sentient consciousness, of our wills, of our lives.

From these characteristics of divine revelation as personal communication, it follows that the message of God's revelation in the Lord Jesus can remain in the world and be delivered to the whole of humankind--to every member of which it is personally addressed--only by the fellowship of those who hear God's word and adhere to it, who benefit from His saving deeds and respond to them.

> Therefore the apostles, handing on 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 Th 2.15), and to fight in defense of the faith handed on once and for all (cf. Jude 3). Now what was handed on by the apostles includes everything which contributes to the holiness of life, and the increase in faith of the People of God; and so the Church, in her teaching, life, and worship, perpetuates and hands on to all generations all that she herself is, all that she believes (DV 8).

In this way, revelation remains alive in the world not only in the teaching and belief of the Church, but also in the liturgy and the holiness generated by sharing in it, and in the guidance of the Church's pastors and cooperation of her members in living the truth in love.

The whole rich experience of God revealing Himself abides in the body of Christ, the Catholic Church. St. Irenaeus refers to this whole reality as the "true gnosis":

> The true gnosis is the doctrine of the Apostles, and the ancient organization of the Church throughout the whole world, and the manifestation of the body of Christ according to the successions of bishops, by which successions the bishops have handed down the Church which is found everywhere; and the very complete tradition of the Scriptures, which have come down to us by being guarded against falsification, and which are received without addition or deletion; and reading without falsification, and a legitimate and diligent exposition according to the Scriptures, without danger and without blasphemy; and the pre-eminent gift of love, which is more precious than knowledge, more glorious than prophecy, and more honored than all the other charismatic gifts (FEF 242).

Divine revelation is total personal communication, and the Church hands it on totally.

From the riches of this whole, the Church always can bring forth new truths and make the faith bear fruit (cf. LG 25). In doing this, the Church does not suppose that she can add anything to the revelation of God in Christ (cf. DV 4). Nor does the Church suppose that revelation occurs apart from the fleshly signs, the words and deeds, which God uses. Rather, the Church believes that the Spirit who teaches nothing on His own continues to unfold the revelation of God in the Lord Jesus, and so to lead humankind to the full truth of God Himself (cf. Jn 16.13).

The extent to which the Catholic conception of the present availability of divine revelation in the Church is not fully understood is suggested by much recent writing on the question of infallibility. Very often it is assumed that the infallibility of the Church in believing and teaching cannot be that absolute infallibility which is God's by nature. This assumption is inconsistent with the belief that divine revelation abides in the Church and that the Lord Jesus Himself teaches in the teaching of the Church: "He who hears you, hears me" (Lk 10.16; cf. LG 20). The incarnation of the Word means that God has entered definitively into our world; He remains in the world inasmuch as the Lord Jesus, by means of human ministers and the gift of the Spirit, teaches and acts in His body, the Church (cf. Mt 28.18-20; Jn 15.26-27, 17.6-8; Eph 4.3-16).

In sum, God reveals Himself by sensible signs, chiefly by the bodily existence and the words and deeds of His incarnate Son. Faith is no aconceptual intuition, nor is it the acceptance of some ancient information. Rather, faith is the hearing of God's word and adhering to it, the full human and personal experience of the personal relationship God seeks to initiate with all humankind. Catholic faith is adhering to God in the Catholic Church, by accepting the belief of the Church, worshipping according to this belief, and trying to live up to it in the whole of one's life.

Since God's revelation abides in the world in the Catholic Church, the true propositions which belong to faith are contained in the teaching of the Church. And the proper understanding of the relational language which expresses these beliefs is the Church's understanding of it.

G. Interpretation -- introductory clarifications

Catholic theology begins from faith in God, whose revelation in the Lord Jesus abides in the belief and life of the Church.[12] Only in the living Church is the fullness of revelation to be found. "Consequently," Vatican II teaches, "it is not from sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed" (DV 9). This priority of the living Church as the starting point for theology is peculiarly Catholic. As St. Augustine says: "Indeed, I would not believe in the Gospel myself if the authority of the Catholic Church did not influence me to do so" (FEF 1581). But Catholic theology proceeds from the Church's living belief and teaching to study Scripture and other expressions and evidences of God's revelation and His Church's faith.

These expressions--which I shall call "witnesses of faith"--must be carefully interpreted, so that the Church will have a rich and accurate sense of her own identity, based upon an abundant memory of her own continuous life. Moreover, Catholic theology seeks to understand revelation always more fully by asking what light it sheds upon reality, and especially what implications it has for life. These theological studies constantly demand the work of interpretation. Interpretation is at present the subject of many studies and debates; it has become a large and complex subject.[13] But a few introductory clarifications are necessary here.

"Interpretation" sometimes is used to refer to the acts of expressing and receiving involved in every communication, even the most simple and immediate. For example, it can be said that when one wants salt and says, "Please pass the salt," one interprets

one's desire by means of the expression, and that when someone near the salt hears this request and responds to it the one responding interprets "Please pass the salt." However, such simple and immediate instances of communication--although, like everything else, they can be subjected to endless study--do not involve interpretation in the sense in which it is especially necessary and difficult in theology. Instances of simple and immediate communication must be presupposed by all complex and mediated communicating. It is worth noticing that the bulk of human communication is simple and immediate. Even in such communication misunderstandings can occur, but for the most part immediate communication is effortless and fully effective.

In a stricter sense, "interpretation" refers to an effort of mediation, an intervention into the flow of direct and simple communication to facilitate communication when it otherwise would be ineffective and to correct misunderstandings which have occurred. Someone asks in English for salt and is not understood by a table-companion who speaks no English. Perhaps the request is interpreted by a gesture. People who think that others have misunderstood their words or deeds often say "in other words" or "that was not meant to hurt you," and try again to convey the intended proposition or try to soothe the hurt feelings.

As the preceding examples show, interpretation can be helpful in all aspects of personal communication, not only in facilitating the accurate grasp of propositions expressed in language. A nonlinguistic communication such as a touch sometimes needs interpretation ("Excuse me"); actions often require many words to make their significance clear. Moreover, language itself not only expresses propositions, but also is a means for communicating requests ("Grant, we beseech You"), commitments ("I do believe"), images and feelings (much poetry), and so on. Efforts of interpretation appropriate to every possible aspect of personal communication are at times necessary in theological work, since God reveals Himself in the Lord Jesus to the whole of us fleshly persons.

In the case of language which expresses propositions, the fact that interpretation is possible and sometimes needed makes clear that the propositions which are expressed and the language by which they are expressed are not the same. For example, someone can express the truth that snow is white in many languages and even in various ways in the same language. The proposition is a particular truth one can know about snow; it picks out and corresponds to the state of affairs of snow being white. No matter how many ways the proposition is expressed, it remains in itself <u>what is meant</u> by all the linguistic expressions. Thus a proposition is not part of language; it is a nonlinguistic entity. And one proposition can have many and varying expressions in language; for example, the proposition that snow is white is as much one as the state of affairs it is about, although the same proposition is expressed in many languages.[14]

Words often have many meanings, and even long and complex linguistic expressions sometimes are ambiguous. Moreover, the same linguistic expression can have different meanings at different times and in different places. A word such as "person," which is important in theology, has more than one meaning. Words such as "love" and "law" are ambiguous no matter where and when they are used; usually the context--the whole discourse--in which they occur helps to make clear what they mean. However, a linguistic context which suffices to eliminate ambiguities in a communication between two persons speaking to one another might not be sufficient if the discourse is recorded or transcribed and later heard or read by someone remote in time and place--that is, by someone whose knowledge of the language might be imperfect and who lives in a very different extralinguistic context.

Language only expresses propositions when a certain extralinguistic context is given. "God loves us" means one thing when it is said by a believer in a theological discourse, another when said by an atheist who has experienced some tragedy and is speaking ironically. Temporal and spatial references which are included in propositions descriptive of present events--"It's raining" said by a person gazing out the window to someone in the same room--often are not expressed in language. In general, language is used to express only what cannot be assumed from the extralinguistic context. Thus this context must be taken into account.

Some who notice these characteristics of language think it follows that propositions vary as the language in which they are expressed varies, and that propositions true at one time and place will be false at other times and in other places. This conclusion does not follow. As I explained above, propositions are not linguistic entities. The limitations of language, including its variability, cause obstacles to accurate and easy communication and require careful interpretation. But the very fact that an interpreter can know that expressions used at some remote time and place had a different meaning than they would have if used now shows that <u>what</u> the expressions originally meant has not changed. The interpreter tells us what the expressions <u>meant</u>, using other expressions.

Moreover, if the propositions meant by certain expressions were true, subsequent variations in the meaning of the expressions does not affect the truth of the propositions, but only the ability of the expressions to communicate truth without interpretation.

The proposition that it is raining expressed by the person gazing out the window includes many unmentioned determinations. The proposition is that rain is falling at a certain place, at a certain time, and so forth. If this proposition is true, it will be true always and everywhere, for rain did fall at that place and time and so forth. Or, better, if any proposition is true, its truth simply is not temporal and spatial, and has no characteristics depending on space and time.

H. <u>Need for interpretation</u>

The preceding point is very important for theology, since some are misled by a confusion between propositions and their expressions to conclude that truths of faith are no more complete than their linguistic expressions, and hence are open to diverse and incompatible completions at different times and places, much as their linguistic expressions require different efforts at interpretation in diverse extralinguistic

contexts.

The fact is that truths of faith need nothing added to them to be true, but always need further truths of faith added to them to develop God's relationship to His People as He wishes it to develop. As explained previously, the Church always can bring such fresh truths from the riches of revelation. Since every such new truth is an aspect of the one Truth revealed by God in the Lord Jesus, no authentic development of doctrine ever can contradict what the Church believed and taught in earlier times and in other places.

Of course, since language is as variable as it is and since linguistic expression of truths of faith never can communicate these truths without an adequate extralinguistic context, anyone who tries to interpret old doctrinal expressions while ignoring the most important part of their extralinguistic context--the living Church handing herself on whole to all generations--is likely to misinterpret them. Within the Church, what was revealed by God in Christ and handed on by the apostles is constantly communicated by the teaching, life, and worship of the whole People of God (cf. DV 10). For the most part this communication is simple and immediate--for example, when children are brought up in a good Catholic family. No interpreter usually is required to facilitate the genuine and fruitful reception of God's message by such children.

Yet parents and others who communicate the faith in this simple and direct way must themselves be formed by preaching and assisted by other forms of teaching, ultimately under the guidance of the bishops united with the pope. At this level, at least, obstacles to communication and breakdowns in it must be dealt with in a methodical way. Interpretation becomes essential to resolve difficulties and correct mistakes which otherwise would impede the handing on of the faith or corrupt the message of God. But the necessary work of interpretation only can make its contribution if it is carried out with a clear awareness that the linguistic expressions to be interpreted are only partial expressions of the truths the Church believes, and that the truths which the Church believes are only part of the whole reality which she herself is--the whole reality of humankind's relationship to God in Christ.

I. Interpretation of sacred Scripture

This awareness of the context of expressions to be interpreted is likely to be overlooked in the study of sacred Scripture, and so is not least urgent in this study. The Bible contains accounts of the signs by which God reveals Himself. It also describes the hearing and reaction with which these revealing signs were received. Because of the total personal character of divine revelation, much more than the expression and grasping of propositional truths is involved, as I already explained. The Bible richly reflects this whole communication in all its aspects. For this reason, Scripture contains prose and poetry of many kinds which permanently enshrine many aspects of God's shaping of His People by His living word.

There are helpful articles concerning the interpretation of Scripture included in standard commentaries on it (NCC 61-67; JBC 71.1-31). Recent work on hermeneutics--the theory of interpretation--makes clear that if one applies historical-critical methods to the study of the Bible on the assumption that it is no different from any other ancient set of writings, one is hardly likely to assist effectively in the work of handing on God's revelation to which the sacred texts bear witness. One must take into account the ecclesial community to whose culture the Bible belongs. Since much of the text is for use in celebration and for shaping action, a sincere attempt to live out the biblical message and regular liturgical use of the text is as essential to understanding it as appropriate responses of infants to their parents are to their growing understanding of an adult world.[15]

These remarks are not intended to suggest that careful literary and historical study is unnecessary for the interpretation of Scripture. One must distinguish literary forms, learn about the extralinguistic context, and understand the language originally used and its limits. Since few but experts can do this, most of us must rely for guidance on the best available commentaries. In other words, we must trust experts for a correct understanding of God's word, which is essential to our Christian life.

Catholics will trust fully only those experts who conform in their work to the guidance offered by the magisterium--the living teaching office of the Church made up of the pope and the bishops in communion with him. For, as Vatican II teaches:

> The task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on, has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the Church, whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ. This teaching office is not above the word of God, but serves it, teaching only what has been handed on, listening to it devoutly, guarding it scrupulously, and explaining it faithfully by 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 (DV 10).

As the pope and bishops are servants and not masters of God's words, so Catholic Scripture scholars must be servants and not masters of this same word as it is received "whole and alive in the Church" through the service of the successors of the apostles (cf. DV 7).

If one attempts to disengage propositions asserted in Scripture, one must be on guard because of the many other aspects of the whole reality which is communicated. Moreover, to tell whether a proposition is asserted or not, historical and psychological information often is necessary, and sometimes it simply is not available.

In any effort to disengage from sacred Scripture the truths of faith which are asserted there, one must bear in mind the Church's solemn teaching:

> . . .in matters of faith and morals affecting the structure of Christian doctrine, that sense of sacred Scripture is to be considered as true which holy Mother Church has held and now holds; for it is her office to judge about the true sense and interpretation of sacred Scripture; and, therefore, no one is allowed to interpret sacred Scripture contrary to this sense nor contrary to the unanimous

agreement of the Fathers (Vatican I, DS 3007/1788; cf. 1507/786). It is important to understand what this basic rule does not mean and what it does mean.

Sometimes in the liturgy and even in the teaching of the Church, phrases and longer passages are used from Scripture with a sense which no one supposes is that of the text in its actual context. This practice is called "accomodation." Even nonbelievers quote Scripture in this fashion; for instance, they often use "the truth will make you free" (Jn 8.32) to proclaim a secular humanist faith in merely human science and technology. The Church's accomodated use of Scripture should not be considered her holding of its true sense.

Again, because Catholic theology begins from the present teaching of the Church and examines Scripture and other witnesses to revelation in the light of living faith, one is easily led to find in Scripture propositions which are not there--for example, to find in the Gospels the truth that Jesus Christ is a divine Person existing according to both divine and human natures. But this truth of faith is articulated fully only in the fifth century by the Council of Chalcedon (DS 301-302/148). It is compatible with the truths about the Lord Jesus asserted in the Gospels, but the teaching of Chalcedon adds to earlier formulations of faith and makes Christian knowledge of our Lord more complete and more precise. Thus, the Church's developed doctrine, formulated in concepts not available to the biblical writers, is not to be taken as the true sense of Scripture.

At the same time, it is a mistake to think that the Church only holds a certain interpretation of Scripture to be a true meaning of it if a proposition asserting the interpretation is defined. The Church teaches much more than it proposes in solemn definitions, as I will show in part four.

The Church holds an interpretation to be correct when this interpretation is presented in the constant and universal teaching of the Church as one which the faithful should accept. For example, the use the Church makes of Romans 1.20 in her teaching on the possibility of knowing God by the natural light of reason--a matter discussed above in section C--makes clear what the Church holds to be the true meaning of this statement of Paul's.

Often scholars say that the literal meaning of the text is what the original author intended to communicate or what the initial audience would have understood. But the Church does not consistently use this principle in her own interpretation of Scripture. There are several reasons for not doing so.

In the first place, in some cases virtually nothing is known about the original author and audience; in these cases, the ideal is impractical. Moreover, even under these conditions, a text does carry some meaning.[16] This, of course, is not to say that available information should be ignored, since it can supply relevant aspects of the extralinguistic context.

What is even more important, speakers and writers often communicate more than they intend. One "lets the cat out of the bag." An author writes a sentence, rereads it, and comes to understand "what I meant to say"--a proposition not previously articulated. Thus the connotations and implications of any limited linguistic expression carry a true, fuller meaning (sensus plenior) which can be discovered only by considering the expression in the widest linguistic and extralinguistic context in which it is being used. Since the Church reads Scripture as a witness of divine revelation, which lives and works through the long course of the history of salvation, each passage is understood in the context of the whole of Scripture and tradition, the whole history and life of the Church. Correct interpretation of Scripture finds its true sense in harmony with all of the truths of faith which the Church believes and teaches (DV 12).

J. Interpretation of other documents

Not only Scripture but all the other witnesses to the faith of the Church require careful interpretation. In general, the difficulties and principles of sound interpretation are similar, whether one is dealing with Scripture, the writings of the Fathers of the Church, conciliar or papal documents, or other expressions of revelation living among God's People.

For instance, accurate interpretation of the documents of a Council such as Trent requires that one take into account what concepts were available to the Church at that time, what challenges it confronted and dealt with, what range of views existing among Catholics it wished to respect, and what meanings the technical expressions of theology had for Catholic thinkers who had been formed in the various schools faithful to the Church.

Still, the disengaging of propositions asserted in conciliar teaching is far easier than is the disengaging of propositions asserted in Scripture. The canons and decrees of Trent clearly are intended to express either true propositions or suitable precepts. The Council does not attempt to convey in its decrees the extrapropositional dimensions of divine revelation as Scripture does in its varied forms of discourse.

As in reading Scripture, so in reading Trent, one must begin from the living faith of the Church. One cannot assume that the decrees of Trent never say more than the Fathers meant to say, because their expressions are part of the whole tradition of Catholic teaching. The extrapropositional dimensions of revelation always remain a source for the development of doctrine. But legitimate development will be stifled if existing expressions of the truths of faith are interpreted in a way which rigidly excludes finding in them a true, fuller meaning. Of course, this fuller meaning must be compatible with and even somehow implicit in the truth of faith articulated and expressed in the existing formulation.

Notes to chapter one

1. The theory of human knowing briefly summarized here is based on St. Thomas. The most useful published treatment of his theory is L.-M. Regis, O.P., Epistemology (New York: Macmillan, 1959). For clarifications of the notions of proposition, state of affairs, truth, and obtaining, and for the distinction between propositions and

linguistic expressions, see Germain Grisez, Beyond the New Theism: A Philosophy of Religion (Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), pp. 40-52, and the references to additional materials, p. 390, notes 12-14.

2. See St. Thomas, De ente et essentia, c. 4; Grisez, op. cit., pp. 36-91.

3. See A. D. Sertillanges, O.P., Dieu, in Thomas d'Aquin, Somme théologique (Paris, Tournai, Rome: Desclée & Cie., 1926), pp. 379-389. In particular, see St. Thomas, In I Sent., d. 13, a. 1, ad 4. In Scripture, the impossibility of saying what God is in Himself is expressed very often by saying that he is "hidden" and "mysterious." The Church likewise teaches that God is ineffable--that is, indescribable in language (cf. DS 800/428; 3001/1782).

4. See St. Thomas, Summa contra gentiles, II, cc. 11-14; Grisez, op. cit., pp. 256-268.

5. See Grisez, op. cit., pp. 268-272.

6. A useful general introduction to many of the questions treated in this section and throughout this introductory part is Michael Schmaus, Dogma, vol. 1, God in Revelation (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1968). An excellent, more specialized treatise on the theology of revelation is Rene Latourelle, S.J., Theology of Revelation (Cork: Mercier Press, 1968), especially pp. 313-424.

7. For a fuller treatment of miracles and their relationship to revelation, see Grisez, op. cit., pp. 326-342, 357-365, and the additional works cited, p. 404, note 24.

8. See ibid., pp. 273-324, for a fuller treatment of these questions.

9. A very sympathetic but critical treatment of the philosophies of Hume, Kant, and Hegel, with special reference to religion, is James Collins, Emergence of Philosophy of Religion (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967); see especially pp. 393-406, for the attitude of these philosophers toward revelation.

10. See Grisez, op. cit., pp. 93-228.

11. For the special position of the apostles and for their reception as not only normative but even as constitutive, see Latourelle, op. cit., pp. 369-372.

12. See CCE 44; Pius XII, Humani generis, AAS 42 (1950) 586 (DS 3886/2314); Yves M.-J. Congar, O.P., A History of Theology, trans. and ed. by Hunter Guthrie, S.J. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1968), pp. 226-275, especially pp. 270-271.

13. One of the most important and often cited works on interpretation is Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth and Method (New York: Seabury Press, 1975). This book contains a wealth of information and insight. But Gadamer's position is defective to the extent that it involves post-hegelian relativism. Gadamer explicitly states (pp. 406-407 and 483) the self-referential criticism which shows the untenability of this relativism. (This line of criticism is developed at length in Grisez, op. cit., pp. 217-225.) But Gadamer does not understand the logic of self reference and mistakenly thinks that the existential (performative) character of the inconsistency, which is not formal incoherence (as Gadamer rightly notes), allows the relativist to escape. On the logic of self reference, see Joseph M. Boyle, Jr., Germain Grisez, and Olaf Tollefsen, Free Choice: A Self-Referential Argument (Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976), pp. 122-138, and especially pp. 127-130, where we criticize evasions not unlike Gadamer's.

14. See Richard L. Cartwright, "Propositions," in Ronald J. Butler, ed., Analytical Philosophy, 1st series (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1962), pp. 81-103. Cartwright replies to criticisms in "Propositions Again," Noûs, 2 (1968), pp. 229-246. Anyone who tries to talk about interpretation, historicity and development of doctrine, the infallibility of teachings and the irreformability of definitions, and other such topics, but who lacks the necessary logical equipment is certain to fall into error and great perplexity.

15. See the very interesting and important article by George T. Montague, S.M., "Hermeneutics and the Teaching of Scripture," Catholic Biblical Quarterly, 41 (1979), pp. 9-12. (This article is based on the author's presidential address at the 1978 meeting of the Catholic Biblical Association.)

16. Ibid., pp. 6-7, and works cited.

Questions for study and review

1. Explain what is meant by "concept" and "proposition." Why is it implausible to suppose that there is aconceptual awareness other than sentient awareness?

2. Why can we not say what God is in Himself? Why are contradictions inevitable if one does not attend to the relational character of affirmative predications about God?

3. Why are miracles essential if there is to be a divine revelation? What is the relationship between revelation and supernatural life?

4. Some today say that since divine revelation initiates a personal relationship, it cannot be tied to a particular set of propositions. Criticize this view.

5. How is it possible for doctrine to develop, when the developments cannot be logically deduced from earlier formulations, without ongoing revelation?

6. Analyze and criticize the following statement: "It's impossible to know what God revealed. Jesus said what He had to say a long time ago. If only someone had tape-recorded everything He said, then we would be sure about what is revealed."

7. Explain the distinction between propositions and linguistic expressions. With this distinction, explain what is meant by "interpretation" in the strict sense (insofar as interpretation is concerned with propositional communication).

8. Why is the interpretation of sacred Scripture in principle much more complicated than the interpretation of a decree of the Council of Trent?

9. Analyze and criticize the following statement: "Everything in the world changes; nothing stays the same forever. So what the Church taught in other times and places has to be reinterpreted today. Otherwise, Catholic teaching is just going to become more and more irrelevant to the contemporary world."