

Summary of Fides et Ratio

Catholic Theology of Science

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INTRODUCTION - "KNOW YOURSELF"

- According to its Greek etymology, the term philosophy means "love of wisdom."
- Different human cultures are complementary, fundamental moral norms are shared by all.
- "Without wonder, men and women would lapse into deadening routine and little by little would become incapable of a life which is genuinely personal."
- There has been a philosophical pride, a "temptation to identify one single stream with the whole of philosophy."
- "Yet the positive results achieved must not obscure the fact that reason, in its one-sided concern to investigate human subjectivity, seems to have forgotten that men and women are always called to direct their steps towards a truth which transcends them. Sundered from that truth, individuals are at the mercy of caprice, and their state as person ends up being judged by pragmatic criteria based essentially upon experimental data, in the mistaken belief that technology must dominate all."
- With so much new knowledge, human orientation towards truth has lost its search for the transcendental.
- "With a false modesty, people rest content with partial and provisional truths, no longer seeking to ask radical questions about the meaning and ultimate foundation of human, personal and social existence. In short, the hope that philosophy might be able to provide definitive answers to these questions has dwindled."
- Such rapid change leaves the younger generation without valid points of reference.

CHAPTER I - THE REVELATION OF GOD'S WISDOM

Jesus, revealer of the Father

- The Church is the bearer of a message from God himself.
- “In his goodness and wisdom, God chose to reveal himself and to make known to us the hidden purpose of his will (cf. Eph 1:9), by which, through Christ, the Word made flesh, man has access to the Father in the Holy Spirit and comes to share in the divine nature”.
- The truth attained by philosophy and the truth of Revelation are neither identical nor mutually exclusive. From Vatican I: “There exists a twofold order of knowledge, distinct not only as regards their source, but also as regards their object. With regard to the source, because we know in one by natural reason, in the other by divine faith. With regard to the object, because besides those things which natural reason can attain, there are proposed for our belief mysteries hidden in God which, unless they are divinely revealed, cannot be known”.
- Philosophy and the science are from natural reason, faith is enlightened and guided by the Holy Spirit.
- Time in Christianity, salvation history, has a fundamental importance.
- History shows us what God does for humanity.
- Mysteries: “the Eternal enters time, the Whole lies hidden in the part, God takes on a human face.”
- “Where might the human being seek the answer to dramatic questions such as pain, the suffering of the innocent and death, if not in the light streaming from the mystery of Christ's Passion, Death and Resurrection?”

Reason before the mystery

- Faith is an obedient response to God.
- Men and women assent to divine testimony.
- The act of assent of the will and intellect is how to realize personal freedom to the full.
- Freedom is not realized in decisions made against God.
- “Revelation therefore introduces into our history a universal and ultimate truth which stirs the human mind to ceaseless effort; indeed, it impels reason continually to extend the range of its knowledge until it senses that it has done all in its power, leaving no stone unturned.”
- “Do not wander far and wide but return into yourself. Deep within man there dwells the truth” –St. Augustine
- Reason would not have given us the truths of Revelation.

CHAPTER II - CREDO UT INTELLEGAM

“Wisdom knows all and understands all” (Wis 9:11)

- Faith sharpens the inner eye.
- “This is to say that with the light of reason human beings can know which path to take, but they can follow that path to its end, quickly and unhindered, only if with a rightly tuned spirit they search for it within the horizon of faith. Therefore, reason and faith cannot be separated without diminishing the capacity of men and women to know themselves, the world and God in an appropriate way.”
- Faith and reason – each contains the other, no competition between them.

- Condition of the fool: no fear of God, cannot order thinking, cannot fix gaze on things that truly matter.

“Acquire wisdom, acquire understanding” (Prov 4:5)

- Continue learning truth even if there is doubt.
- “Yet, for all the toil involved, believers do not surrender. They can continue on their way to the truth because they are certain that God has created them “explorers” (cf. Qoh 1:13), whose mission it is to leave no stone unturned, though the temptation to doubt is always there. Leaning on God, they continue to reach out, always and everywhere, for all that is beautiful, good and true.”
- Can reason that God exists, “According to the Apostle, it was part of the original plan of the creation that reason should without difficulty reach beyond the sensory data to the origin of all things: the Creator.”
- In the Garden of Eden the “tree of knowledge of good and evil” was a symbol that man cannot fully discern what is good and evil, but must appeal to a higher authority.
- Sin made the eyes of the mind unable to see clearly, reason became a prisoner to itself. Christ’s coming was the “saving event which redeemed reason from its weakness.”
- Jesus Christ’s death on the cross challenges every philosophy.
- “The preaching of Christ crucified and risen is the reef upon which the link between faith and philosophy can break up, but it is also the reef beyond which the two can set forth upon the boundless ocean of truth.”

CHAPTER III - INTELLEGO UT CREDAM

Journeying in search of truth

- Paul spoke to the Athenians in their own philosophy. “Athenians,” he said, “I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, 'To an unknown god'. What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.”
- In all human hearts there is a “seed of desire and nostalgia for God.”
- The urgency of this desire is seen in literature, music, painting, sculpture, architecture, etc.
- “All human beings desire to know the truth.”
- Determining truth and falsehood is a mark of maturity, we grow towards that, it drives enquiry and progress.
- “It is essential, therefore, that the values chosen and pursued in one's life be true, because only true values can lead people to realize themselves fully, allowing them to be true to their nature.”
- “The truth comes initially to the human being as a question: Does life have a meaning?”
- The experience of suffering proves the question of meaning cannot be dismissed.
- Death is a certainty that we all realize, philosophers have always concerned themselves with this question (Socrates).
- “No-one can avoid this questioning, neither the philosopher nor the ordinary person. The answer we give will determine whether or not we think it possible to attain universal and absolute truth; and this is a decisive moment of the search.”

- “Hypotheses may fascinate, but they do not satisfy.”

The different faces of human truth

- The search can be distorted by other concerns.
- “People can even run from the truth as soon as they glimpse it because they are afraid of its demands.”
- The human being is one who seeks truth, and life can never be grounded on doubt and deceit lest it be constantly threatened by fear and anxiety.
- Scientists are confident that they search for truth even if they have setbacks or do not know everything.
- Modes of truth: 1) immediate evidence or confirmed by experimentation and 2) philosophical truth attained by speculative powers and 3) religious truths.
- Human beings are not made to live alone, but to be in families and societies.
- Many truths are believed.
- “Who, for instance, could assess critically the countless scientific findings upon which modern life is based? Who could personally examine the flow of information which comes day after day from all parts of the world and which is generally accepted as true? Who in the end could forge anew the paths of experience and thought which have yielded the treasures of human wisdom and religion? This means that the human being—the one who seeks the truth—is also the one who lives by belief.”
- By believing others we entrust ourselves to others, enter into relationship.
- Knowledge through belief is grounded on trust and linked to truth.
- The martyrs knew they found truth and that no one could take it from them.

- Friendship: “A climate of suspicion and distrust, which can beset speculative research, ignores the teaching of the ancient philosophers who proposed friendship as one of the most appropriate contexts for sound philosophical enquiry.”
- Truth is unified, principle of non-contradiction.

CHAPTER IV - THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FAITH AND REASON

Important moments in the encounter of faith and reason

- This chapter gives a history of theology.
- Epicurean and Stoic philosophers
- The Apostles meeting the paganism and Gnosticism
- Origen adopts Platonic philosophy.
- Patristic era, Fathers of the Church
- The Cappadocian Fathers and St. Augustine Christianized Platonic and Neo-Platonic thought.
- The Bishop of Hippo synthesized philosophy and theology, embracing currents of thought both Greek and Latin.
- Tertullian, “What does Athens have in common with Jerusalem? The Academy with the Church?”
- “Faced with the various philosophies, the Fathers were not afraid to acknowledge those elements in them that were consonant with Revelation and those that were not. Recognition of the points of convergence did not blind them to the points of divergence.”
- Philosophical schools, Scholastic era

- St. Anselm, “To see you was I conceived; and I have yet to conceive that for which I was conceived.”
- “In dismantling barriers of race, social status and gender, Christianity proclaimed from the first the equality of all men and women before God.”
- Clement of Alexandria called the Gospel “the true philosophy.”

The enduring originality of the thought of Saint Thomas Aquinas

- Dialogue with Arab and Jewish thought of his time.
- Light of reason and light of faith come from God, no contradictions.
- “Faith therefore has no fear of reason, but seeks it out and has trust in it.”
- Truth is always from the Holy Spirit.

The drama of the separation of faith and reason

- Saint Albert the Great and Saint Thomas were the first to recognize the autonomy which philosophy and the sciences needed if they were to perform well in their respective fields of research.
- From late Medieval period on, they began to separate. Exaggerated rationalism.
- Idealism vs. atheistic humanism.
- Positivistic mentality, rejected metaphysical or moral vision.
- The crisis of rationalism resulted in nihilism.
- Philosophy reduced to one of many fields of human knowing, but it originally means universal wisdom and knowing.

- “Man therefore lives increasingly in fear. He is afraid of what he produces—not all of it, of course, or even most of it, but part of it and precisely that part that contains a special share of his genius and initiative—can radically turn against himself.”
- Some have abandoned the search for truth altogether.
- The theme of death can urge man to reconsider the true meaning of their own life.

CHAPTER V - THE MAGISTERIUM'S INTERVENTIONS IN PHILOSOPHICAL MATTERS

The Magisterium's discernment as diakonia of the truth

- The Church has no philosophy of her own.
- The Magisterium authoritatively discerns philosophies which contradict faith.
- This is not a negative discernment, but an intervention to promote, prompt and encourage philosophical enquiry.
- Fideism and radical traditionalism were rejected “for their distrust of reason's natural capacities.” Dogmatic Constitution Dei Filius
- Rationalism and ontologism were rejected because “they attributed to natural reason a knowledge which only the light of faith could confer.” Dogmatic Constitution Dei Filius
- “Even if faith is superior to reason there can never be a true divergence between faith and reason, since the same God who reveals the mysteries and bestows the gift of faith has also placed in the human spirit the light of reason. This God could not deny himself, nor could the truth ever contradict the truth”. From First Vatican Council

The Church's interest in philosophy

- Second Vatican Council was much about the revival of Thomistic philosophy.
- The Council also dealt with the study of philosophy required of candidates for the priesthood.
- First, there is the distrust of reason found in much contemporary philosophy.
- “I wish to repeat clearly that the study of philosophy is fundamental and indispensable to the structure of theological studies and to the formation of candidates for the priesthood.”

CHAPTER VI - THE INTERACTION BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY

The knowledge of faith and the demands of philosophical reason

- “The word of God is addressed to all people, in every age and in every part of the world; and the human being is by nature a philosopher.”
- Twofold methodological principle: the *auditus fidei* (Revelation as this has been gradually expounded in Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and the Church's living Magisterium) and the *intellectus fidei* (speculative enquiry to the specific demands of disciplined thought).
- “It is necessary therefore that the mind of the believer acquire a natural, consistent and true knowledge of created realities—the world and man himself—which are also the object of divine Revelation.”
- Moral theology has a great need of philosophy's contribution.

- Gentiles were transformed when they accepted faith, “walls separating the different cultures collapsed.”
- “It is Christ who enables the two peoples to become “one”. Those who were “far off” have come “near”, thanks to the newness brought by the Paschal Mystery. Jesus destroys the walls of division and creates unity in a new and unsurpassed way through our sharing in his mystery. This unity is so deep that the Church can say with Saint Paul: “You are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are saints and members of the household of God.”
- No one culture can ever be the single criterion of judgment, or the ultimate criterion of truth.
- Relationship of theology and philosophy is best construed as a circle.

Different stances of philosophy

- Philosophy before Christ, untouched by Gospels, valid aspiration to be an autonomous enterprise, own rules, employ the power of reason alone, but open implicitly to supernatural.
- Theology respects this autonomy, grace does not destroy nature but perfects it, so the assent to faith will perfect the free will.
- This approach is rejected by modern philosophy.
- Second stance is to separate Christian philosophy, invalid because there is no official philosophy of the Church.
- Christian philosophy has two aspects. Subjective, faith purifies reason, and objective, Revelation.

- “Were theologians to refuse the help of philosophy, they would run the risk of doing philosophy unwittingly and locking themselves within thought-structures poorly adapted to the understanding of faith.”
- Magisterium has repeatedly affirmed the merits of Aquinas.
- Truth can only be one.
- “It is to be hoped therefore that theologians and philosophers will let themselves be guided by the authority of truth alone so that there will emerge a philosophy consonant with the word of God.”
- “To believe is nothing other than to think with assent... Believers are also thinkers: in believing, they think and in thinking, they believe... If faith does not think, it is nothing”. And again: “If there is no assent, there is no faith, for without assent one does not really believe”.

CHAPTER VII - CURRENT REQUIREMENTS AND TASKS

The indispensable requirements of the word of God

- From the Bible we learn that God made man in His image, freedom and immortality of spirit.
- Evil stems from disordered exercise of human freedom.
- “The fundamental conviction of the “philosophy” found in the Bible is that the world and human life do have a meaning and look towards their fulfilment, which comes in Jesus Christ.”
- Modern philosophy promotes doubt, skepticism, and indifference, turning one inward and not upward. No longer asks the question of the meaning of life, no real passion for truth.

- Philosophy needs to recover sapiential dimension, search for overarching meaning of life.
- Philosophy must verify the human capacity to know the truth, objective truth.
- Need a philosophy of genuinely metaphysical range, transcending empirical data.
- The Gospels impose some requirements on philosophy, make it harder, but point to truth.
- Promote a return to scholasticism.
- Eclecticism, historicism, pragmatism
- Scientism, which “leads to the impoverishment of human thought, which no longer addresses the ultimate problems which the human being, as the animal rationale, has pondered constantly from the beginning of time.”

Current tasks for theology

- Evangelization
- Seek truth from Revelation
- “The chief purpose of theology is to provide an understanding of Revelation and the content of faith. The very heart of theological enquiry will thus be the contemplation of the mystery of the Triune God.”
- Word of God not addressed to any one culture or time.

CONCLUSION

- Encyclical emphasizes the value of philosophy for the understanding of the faith.
- Sets limits on philosophy if it neglects or rejects Revelation.
- Appeal to philosophers, theologians and scientists – search for truth without ever abandoning the sapiential horizon of the search for the meaning of life.