

Mt. St. Michael
CATHOLIC DOCTRINE CLASS

“A Study of *Tumultuous Times* – Part II”
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September 5, 2017

Introductory Class

- A. To understand the problem of Vatican Council II, we need to understand the historical roots of it.
- B. Today’s class is on the history of Modernism, called “the Synthesis of All Heresies” by Pope St. Pius X.
1. Roots of it go back to ancient skepticism “I’m not sure about anything,” i.e. denial of objective reality outside oneself
 2. The mind can discern reality outside itself, but it cannot change it by merely thinking about it.
 - a. Example of a pen or a book. Can I make it an apple by thinking about it? Obviously, not!
 3. Philosophers of 17th – 19th centuries began teaching subjectivism, i.e. the reality outside the mind is not as important as what the mind wants to *believe* about that external reality.
 - a. Rene Descartes – “I think, therefore I am” (and systematically doubt that anything else exists)
 - b. George Berkeley – “Nothing exists unless it is thought of” (What about the tree in the forest that nobody has ever considered?)
 - c. Immanuel Kant – “We can never know what something really is, only what it appears to be.” He also taught that contradicting positions can both be possibly true!
 4. These false ideas made their way into theology, and formed at least some of the basis of Modernism, so thoroughly condemned by Pope St. Pius X in his great encyclical *Pascendi*, published September 8, 1907. The Oath against Modernism was imposed September 1, 1910, on all clergy, pastors, confessors, preachers, religious superiors, and professors in philosophical-theological seminaries.
 5. Even prior to St. Pius X, Vatican Council I had already inflicted a major blow on Modernist thought, forever condemning that “the truth changes with the times.” On April 24, 1870, in Session 3, Chapter 4, “on Faith and Reason,” the following was promulgated (emphasis supplied):
 - a. Solemn teaching:

For the doctrine of the faith which God has revealed is put forward not as some philosophical discovery capable of being perfected by human intelligence, but as a divine deposit committed to the spouse of Christ to be faithfully protected and infallibly promulgated.

Hence, too, that meaning of the sacred dogmas is ever to be maintained which has once been declared by holy Mother Church, and there must never be any abandonment of this sense under the pretext or in the name of a more profound understanding.

May understanding, knowledge and wisdom increase as ages and centuries roll along, and greatly and vigorously flourish, in each and all, in the individual and the whole church: but this only in its own proper kind, that is to say, in the same doctrine, the same sense, and the same understanding.

- b. Solemn condemnation: "If anyone says that it is possible that at some time, given the advancement of knowledge, a sense may be assigned to the dogmas propounded by the Church which is different from that which the church has understood and understands: *let him be anathema.*"
6. As we can see, Modernism has been around *a very long time*. St. Pius X drove it underground, so to speak, with his firm, unyielding opposition, but it began making a comeback. Why?
- a. As a pastor of souls throughout his life, he understood how carefully the flock needs to be protected. Besides, he is a canonized saint!
 - b. The popes that followed him were not *pastors* throughout their ecclesiastical careers. Indeed, they had little direct pastoral experience (this is said with the utmost respect to the true popes Benedict XV, Pius XI, and Pius XII. Remember, too, that they had to live during the horrors of World Wars I & II).
 - c. Without continued firm, unyielding opposition to them, the Modernists cautiously began popping their heads out.
7. THE OATH AGAINST MODERNISM (this required oath was dropped in 1967 – no surprise)

I . . . firmly embrace and accept each and every definition that has been set forth and declared by the unerring teaching authority of the Church, especially those principal truths which are directly opposed to the errors of this day. And first of all, I profess that God, the origin and end of all things, can be known with certainty by the natural light of reason from the created world (see Rom. 1:19), that is, from the visible works of creation, as a cause from its effects, and that, therefore, his existence can also be demonstrated: Secondly, I accept and acknowledge the external proofs of revelation, that is, divine acts and especially miracles and prophecies as the surest signs of the divine origin of the Christian religion and I hold that these same proofs are well adapted to the understanding of all eras and all men, even of this time. Thirdly, I believe with equally firm faith that the Church, the guardian and teacher of the revealed word, was personally instituted by the real and historical Christ when he lived among us, and that the Church was built upon Peter, the prince of the apostolic hierarchy, and his successors for the duration of time. Fourthly, I sincerely hold that the doctrine of faith was handed down to us from the apostles through the orthodox Fathers in exactly the same meaning and always in the same purport. Therefore, I entirely reject the heretical' misrepresentation that dogmas evolve and change from one meaning to another different from the one which the Church held previously. I also condemn every error according to which, in place of the divine deposit which has been given to the spouse of Christ to be carefully guarded by her, there is put a philosophical figment or product of a human conscience that has gradually been developed by human effort and will continue to develop indefinitely. Fifthly, I hold with certainty and sincerely confess that faith is not a blind sentiment of religion welling up from the depths of the subconscious under the impulse of the heart and the motion of a will trained to morality; but faith is a genuine assent of the intellect to truth received by hearing from an external source. By this assent, because of the authority of the supremely truthful God, we believe to be true that which has been revealed and attested to by a personal God, our creator and lord.

Furthermore, with due reverence, I submit and adhere with my whole heart to the condemnations, declarations, and all the prescripts contained in the encyclical *Pascendi*

and in the decree *Lamentabili*, especially those concerning what is known as the history of dogmas. I also reject the error of those who say that the faith held by the Church can contradict history, and that Catholic dogmas, in the sense in which they are now understood, are irreconcilable with a more realistic view of the origins of the Christian religion. I also condemn and reject the opinion of those who say that a well-educated Christian assumes a dual personality – that of a believer and at the same time of a historian, as if it were permissible for a historian to hold things that contradict the faith of the believer, or to establish premises which, provided there be no direct denial of dogmas, would lead to the conclusion that dogmas are either false or doubtful. Likewise, I reject that method of judging and interpreting Sacred Scripture which, departing from the tradition of the Church, the analogy of faith, and the norms of the Apostolic See, embraces the misrepresentations of the rationalists and with no prudence or restraint adopts textual criticism as the one and supreme norm. Furthermore, I reject the opinion of those who hold that a professor lecturing or writing on a historico-theological subject should first put aside any preconceived opinion about the supernatural origin of Catholic tradition or about the divine promise of help to preserve all revealed truth forever; and that they should then interpret the writings of each of the Fathers solely by scientific principles, excluding all sacred authority, and with the same liberty of judgment that is common in the investigation of all ordinary historical documents.

Finally, I declare that I am completely opposed to the error of the modernists who hold that there is nothing divine in sacred tradition; or what is far worse, say that there is, but in a pantheistic sense, with the result that there would remain nothing but this plain simple fact—one to be put on a par with the ordinary facts of history—the fact, namely, that a group of men by their own labor, skill, and talent have continued through subsequent ages a school begun by Christ and his apostles. I firmly hold, then, and shall hold to my dying breath the belief of the Fathers in the charism of truth, which certainly is, was, and always will be in the succession of the episcopacy from the apostles. *The purpose of this is, then, not that dogma may be tailored according to what seems better and more suited to the culture of each age; rather, that the absolute and immutable truth preached by the apostles from the beginning may never be believed to be different, may never be understood in any other way.*

I promise that I shall keep all these articles faithfully, entirely, and sincerely, and guard them inviolate, in no way deviating from them in teaching or in any way in word or in writing. Thus I promise, this I swear, so help me God...