

1. *Those who openly condemn or minimize the philosophical and theological doctrine of Thomas, and attempt to impugn it and to hold it up to derision.* As Pius XII says:

How deplorable it is that this philosophy accepted and honored by the Church is scorned by some and shamefully rejected as being outdated in form and rationalistic in its method of thought. They say that this philosophy of ours upholds the perverse notion that there is an absolutely true metaphysic. And, on the contrary, they hold that reality, especially transcendent reality, cannot better be expressed than by disparate teachings which mutually complete each other, although in a way mutually opposed. So they concede that our traditional philosophy with its clear exposition and solution of questions, its accurate definition of terms, and its clear-cut distinctions, can indeed be useful as a preparation for scholastic theology, though it is more suited to the mentality of the Middle Ages. Yet it does not offer a method of philosophy suited to the needs of modern culture.

Then, they allege that our perennial philosophy is only a philosophy of immutable essences, whereas the modern mind must look to the 'existence' of things, and to life, which is ever in flux. While scorning our philosophy they praise others, ancient and modern, oriental and occidental, by which they seem to imply that any philosophy or theory, graced with a few corrections or additions if need be, can be reconciled with Catholic dogma. No Catholic can doubt that this is entirely false, especially where there is question of those fictitious theories they call immanentism, idealism, historic or dialectical materialism, and even existentialism, whether atheistic or simply the type that denies the validity of reason in metaphysics.

Finally, they reproach the philosophy taught in our schools for regarding only the intellect in the process of cognition and neglecting the function of the will and the emotions. This is simply not true. Christian philosophy has never denied the usefulness and efficacy of good dispositions of soul for perceiving and embracing fully moral and religious truths. In fact, it has always taught the lack of such dispositions can be the reason why the intellect, influenced by the passions and evil inclinations, is so darkened that it cannot see clearly. Indeed, St. Thomas holds that the intellect can in some way perceive higher goods of the moral order, whether natural or supernatural in that it experiences in the soul a certain 'connaturality' with these goods whether this be natural

or the result of grace;²⁷⁷ and it is clear how much even this somewhat obscure knowledge can help reason in its investigations.

But it is one thing to recognize the power of the dispositions of the will in helping reason to reach a more certain and solid knowledge of moral truths; it is quite another to contend, as these innovators do, that the appetitive and affective faculties have a certain power of understanding, and that man, since he cannot decide with certainty based on reason itself what is true and therefore to be embraced, turns to his will, by which he freely chooses among opposite opinions.

It is not at all surprising that these new opinions constitute a dangerous influence for the two philosophical sciences which are by nature closely connected with the doctrine of the faith, namely theodicy and ethics. They maintain that the function of these sciences is not to prove with certitude anything about God or any other transcendental being, but rather to show that what faith teaches about a personal God and His precepts is perfectly consistent with the necessities of life and therefore are to be embraced by all to avoid despair and to attain eternal salvation. All of these opinions are openly contrary to documents of Our predecessors Leo XIII and Pius X, and cannot be reconciled with the decrees of the Vatican Council.

It would be unnecessary to deplore these aberrations from the truth, if all, even in philosophy, directed their attention with proper reverence to the Teaching Authority of the Church. It is the mission of the Church, by divine institution, not only to safeguard and interpret the deposit of divinely revealed truth but also to watch over the philosophical sciences in order to prevent Catholic dogma from being harmed because of erroneous opinions.²⁷⁸

2. *They err by defect and disobey the commands of the Church, who, under any pretext whatever, withdraw from the doctrine of Thomas, or do not study him with proper sincerity, but rather spend their time in looking for his defects, if there are any, and not in attempting to discover his genuine doctrine and to explain it.* As Leo XIII said: "to depart unadvisedly and rashly from the wisdom of the Angelic Doctor is not only against Our will, but is *fraught with danger* as well."²⁷⁹ Pius X

²⁷⁷ *Summa Theol.*, II-II, q. 1, a. 4, ad 3; q. 45, a. 2.

²⁷⁸ *Humani Generis*, *loc. cit.*, 573-575.

²⁷⁹ Letter to the Minister General O. F. M., *loc. cit.*

added, "it is true even today that when someone parts company with Thomas, he seems to be ultimately aiming at *parting company with the Church*."²⁸⁰

Pius XI advised Professors:

To be persuaded that then only will they satisfactorily discharge their duty and Our expectation when, after long and diligent perusal of his writings, they begin to feel an intense devotion for the Doctor Aquinas and by their exposition of him succeed in inspiring their pupils with like fervor and train them to kindle a similar zeal in others.²⁸¹

Pius XII concludes:

Wherefore, beloved sons, *fill your souls full with love and zeal for St. Thomas: strive with all your powers to perceive his clear doctrine with your minds; freely embrace whatever has a clear connection with it and is supposed by a sound reason in his doctrine*.²⁸²

St. Augustine wisely set up this law for understanding and interpreting the works of any author—first, that the authors themselves should at least not be despised and, secondly, that they should be loved. "Who ever thought that the obscure and hidden books of Aristotle ought to be interpreted by one of his enemies?"²⁸³ A man who wrote his works with such labor and care as St. Thomas is especially entitled to the same degree of diligence in one who is studying or explaining him. Otherwise we can suitably apply to him that saying of St. Augustine, "If you believe that I am in error, carefully consider again what was said, lest perhaps you fall into error."²⁸⁴

3. *They also err by defect who admit the great and powerful authority of St. Thomas for other times, though not for our times which present new problems. According to them the historian of philosophy and theology should attribute a great*

²⁸⁰ Letter to Fr. Th. Pègues, *loc. cit.*

²⁸¹ *Studiorum ducem*, *loc. cit.*, 323.

²⁸² Discourse to the clerical students at Rome, *loc. cit.*

²⁸³ *De utilitate credendi*, cap. 6, no. 18, *ML* 42, 74.

²⁸⁴ *De dono perseverantiae*, cap. 24, no. 68, *ML* 45, 1034.

position to him in noting the doctrines of the Middle Ages, but the modern philosopher and theologian should recognize only his archaeological value.

On the contrary Leo XIII asserted:

This is a great accomplishment, that his doctrine is founded upon and provided with principles enjoying the widest possible extension, *is fitted to the needs* not alone of one particular age but of *all ages*, and is especially accommodated to the destruction of errors which perpetually arise.²⁸⁵

Benedict XV wrote:

The Apostolic See's famous praises of Thomas Aquinas allow no Catholic to doubt that he was divinely raised up *that the Church might have a Teacher whose doctrine should be followed for all time*; ²⁸⁶ a Teacher indeed and a Doctor who never grows old.²⁸⁷

St. Thomas, in the words of Pius XII, "is *always* a most skilful guide and a *never-failing light*"; the structure he has erected "is living perpetually, above and beyond all time, and is even now a strong and powerful bulwark to protect the deposit of Catholic faith."²⁸⁸ Therefore, it is never lawful "to overthrow [even one of his philosophical doctrines] or contaminate it with false principles, or regard it as a great, but obsolete relic."²⁸⁹

4. *They err by defect who acknowledge and praise the supreme authority of St. Thomas by words, and state that it is valid even in our time, but deny and disparage his authority by deeds, insofar as they consider it to be merely symbolic, as if Thomas was not a singular individual person but represented all scholastic writers indifferently. And so that highest doctrinal authority would affect scholastic doctrine indistinctly, and not especially the doctrine of Thomas himself, though it would*

²⁸⁵ *Cum hoc sit, loc. cit.*, 112.

²⁸⁶ Letter to Fr. Pègues, *loc. cit.*, cf. note 119.

²⁸⁷ Letter of Pius X to Fr. Hugon O. P., July 16, 1913, AAS 5 (1913), 487.

²⁸⁸ Allocution to the Dominican General Chapter, *loc. cit.*

²⁸⁹ *Humani generis, loc. cit.*, 572.

be named after Thomas since he was the most outstanding of the scholastics; or even if they accept him really and as himself, they equate his authority with that of other ecclesiastical writers in such a way that Thomas' authority and that of these others is practically the same. So there is no special obligation to follow Aquinas as guide, but rather every kind of liberty is given in a sort of eclectic manner to embrace several kinds of doctrine at once, even including contrary doctrines.

Indeed, as they say, the doctrine of St. Thomas is held up by the Roman Pontiffs as safe and sound; yet this does not prevent the doctrine of other writers, though inconsistent with and contrary to Aquinas' teaching from being called safe and sound. Indeed, it may be safer and sounder! It is merely scholastic doctrine that is being approved and commanded by the Church when she extolls Aquinas, rather than Thomistic doctrine.

Such people have sadly deceived themselves. The documents of the Church clearly and positively exclude opinions of this kind. It is sufficient to refer to only a few among a great number.

Leo XIII said:

When We declare that one should receive with a willing and glad mind whatever has been wisely said, or whatever is profitable no matter by whom it is discovered or thought out, We exhort all of you, Venerable Brethren, with the greatest earnestness for the safety and glory of the Catholic faith, for the good of society, and for the increase of all knowledge, to restore the golden Wisdom of St. Thomas and to spread it as widely as possible.

We said the wisdom of St. Thomas, for it is not by any reason in Our mind to set before this age, as a standard, those things which may have been inquired into by scholastic doctors with too great subtlety or taught with too little consideration, not agreeing with the investigations of a later age; or, lastly, anything that is not probable. Let these teachers carefully chosen by you do their best to instill the doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas into the minds of their hearers; and let them point out clearly its solidity and excellence above all other teaching.²⁹⁰

²⁹⁰ *Aeterni Patris, loc. cit., 72, 74.*

He wrote to the Fathers of the Society of Jesus that they should not be so engaged in the study of their own authors as to withdraw in the slightest from the cultivation of the true teaching of St. Thomas, in which they should be uniform. Such uniformity

is impossible unless the students of the Society adhere to *one* author, i. e. one already approved, concerning whom there is *one* precept [in the laws of the Society] 'they shall follow *St. Thomas* and consider him as their own proper doctor'. It follows then that if any of those authors [of the Society] whom We have praised, disagree with the doctrine of the Common Doctor [namely, St. Thomas,] there should be no doubt as to which is the right path to follow,

namely, the path of Aquinas.²⁹¹

To the Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor he wrote:

The name of Thomas should be held sacred by all the children of St. Francis and they should be fearful if they fail to take as their guide him of whom Jesus Christ said that he had written well of Him.²⁹²

Pius X complained that some misunderstood him when he said that the philosophy of Aquinas should be *chiefly followed*²⁹³ He stated that because he said *chiefly* but not *uniquely*:

Certain persons persuaded themselves that they were acting in conformity with Our will or at any rate not actively opposing it, in adopting indiscriminately and adhering to the philosophical opinions of any other Doctor of the School, *even though such principles were contrary to the principles of St. Thomas*. They are completely mistaken. For, if the doctrine of any author or saint has even been approved by Us or by Our predecessors with singular commendation joined with an invitation and order to propagate and to defend it, it may be clearly understood that it was commended only insofar as it agreed with the principles of Aquinas, or was in no way opposed to them.²⁹⁴

²⁹¹ Brief *Gravissime nos*, *loc. cit.*, 248.

²⁹² *Loc. cit.*

²⁹³ Motu proprio *Sacrorum Antistitum*, *loc. cit.*

²⁹⁴ Motu proprio *Doctoris Angelici*, *loc. cit.*, 336, 338.

Far from permitting the doctrine of St. Thomas to degenerate into some weak, amorphous scholastic relic, this injunction must be obeyed in reference to it:

In teaching the precepts of philosophy and theology, teachers should follow faithfully the scholastic method *according to the principles and doctrine of Aquinas*.²⁹⁵

St. Thomas' authority in both philosophy and theology is entirely unique: ²⁹⁶ Among all the doctors of scholastic philosophy *the palm is reserved for St. Thomas, and he holds a principal position*.²⁹⁷

Moreover, the doctrine of St. Thomas is not only approved and commended by the Church as merely safe and sound, rather it is safer and sounder than the rest, indeed, it is the safest, soundest and surest.

St. Pius V said of St. Thomas that "his theological doctrine accepted by the Catholic Church is *more safe and sound than the rest*:" ²⁹⁸ for he is "the *surest rule* of Christian doctrine."²⁹⁹

Benedict XIV recalled and adopted the words of Clement VIII who said that Thomas wrote his works *without any error at all*; and added that it can consequently be followed *without any danger of error*.³⁰⁰ Further, he commanded:

That henceforth none of the masters or lecturers of the College of St. Denis may explain, teach and read to their students any other doctrine, especially in theology, beside the sole doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas.³⁰¹

Leo XIII praised his pure doctrine. For:

Whatever truth was enunciated or reasonably discussed by pagan philosophers, by the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, by

²⁹⁵ Pius XI, Apostolic Letters, *Unigenitus Dei Filius*, *loc. cit.*, 144; *Officiorum omnium*, *loc. cit.*, 454-455; Pius XII, *Humani generis*, *loc. cit.*, 572-573.

²⁹⁶ Pius XII, Allocution to the Dominican General Chapter, *loc. cit.*

²⁹⁷ Allocution to the Third Thomistic Congress, *loc. cit.*, 734.

²⁹⁸ To the Master of the Sacred Palace. July 29, 1570, cf. Berthier, *op. cit.*, 99.

²⁹⁹ Constitution *Mirabilis Deus*, April 11, 1567, *ibid.*, 98.

³⁰⁰ Brief of Aug. 2, 1756. Berthier, *op. cit.*, 156.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*