

Catholic Candle

☪ March 2026 ☪ catholiccandle.org ☪ catholiccandle@gmail.com

Words to Live By – From Catholic Tradition

Let us beware of bad companions!

St. Gregory Nazianzen, Doctor of the Church, warns us:

It is an illusion to seek the company of sinners on pretense to reform or convert them; it is far more to be feared they will communicate their poison to us.”

Quoted in Butler’s *Lives of the Saints*, vol. 2, June 14th, in the Live of St. Basil the Great.

Catholic Candle note: This allusion (to which St. Gregory Nazianzen refers) is called “*a temptation under the appearance of good*”, about which St. Ignatius of Loyola also warns us.

For a thorough explanation of this tactic of Satan, read this article:

<https://catholiccandle.org/2022/03/27/lesson-8-explanation-of-the-second-week-rules-for-the-discernment-of-spirits/>

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Catholic Candle note: The article below shows the invalidity of an excommunication against a good man when it is imposed because he *is* a good man. One such excommunication was against Archbishop Lefebvre because he was good and upheld the truth.

But a reader would be wrong in supposing that this article supports the current “new” SSPX, which is trending liberal and no longer follows the course set out for the SSPX by their founder, Archbishop Lefebvre.

Here are a few of the many proofs that the “new” SSPX is liberal and should not be supported in any way:

➤ <https://catholiccandle.org/2025/03/10/21-examples-of-liberalism-in-the-new-ssp/>

➤ <https://catholiccandle.org/category/resources-for-priests/society-of-st-pius-x/>

Further, sedevacantism is wrong and is (material or formal) schism. *Catholic Candle* is not sedevacantist.

Below is the eighteenth article in a series which covers specific aspects of the error of sedevacantism. As context for this eighteenth article, let us recall what we saw in the earlier seventeen articles:

In the first article, we saw that we cannot know whether the pope (or anyone else) is a formal heretic (rather than a material heretic only) – and thus whether he is outside the true Catholic Church ***based simply on his persistent, public teaching of a heretical opinion.***¹

Then, in the second article, we saw that we must not judge a man to be a formal heretic if he professes to be Catholic and says he believes what a Catholic must believe now, in order to be Catholic now. When a person professes a heretical opinion, we must judge him in the most favorable light (if we judge him at all). So, we must avoid the sin of rash judgment and we must not judge negatively the interior culpability of the pope and the 1.4 billion² people who profess to be Catholic. We must not judge they are not “real” Catholics if they tell us that they are Catholics. Instead, we should count them as Catholics who are very confused or are uninformed.³

Thus, we must judge the conciliar popes to have been material heretics, not formal heretics (if we judge them at all), and that each was pope in his turn until his death (or abdication). Regarding any of the world’s 1.4 billion self-described Catholics who hold heresy, we must judge them to be material heretics only (if we judge them at all), unless they themselves tell us that they know they don’t qualify to be Catholics.⁴

In the third article, we examined briefly the important difference between persons in authority who fulfill their duty to judge those under their charge in the ***external forum***,

¹ Read this article here: <https://catholiccandle.org/2024/09/26/cc-in-brief-sedevacantist-questions>

² The Vatican estimates that the number of Catholics worldwide is about 1.375 billion. <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2023-10/fides-catholic-church-statistics-world-mission-sunday.html>

³ Read this article here: <https://catholiccandle.org/2024/10/24/are-we-allowed-to-decide-that-pope-francis-knows-he-is-not-catholic/>

⁴ Read this article here: <https://catholiccandle.org/2024/10/24/are-we-allowed-to-decide-that-pope-francis-knows-he-is-not-catholic/>

as contrasted to a sedevacantist or *anyone else except God* who judges the *interior* culpability of other persons and (rashly) judges them to be formal heretics.⁵

In the fourth article, we saw that it does not help us to protect ourselves better from a conciliar pope's heresy, to declare that we know he is not the pope and is not a Catholic.⁶

In the fifth article, we saw that it is possible for a pope to teach (or believe) heresy and in fact, popes have taught and believed heresy at various times during Church history.⁷ We looked especially at the cases of Pope John XXII and Pope Nicholas I, who both taught explicit heresy while pope and nonetheless continued to be the pope. Pope John XXII also taught the same explicit heresy before he became the pope.

In the sixth article, we saw that the Church infallibly assures us that we will have a pope at all times until the end of the world, except during very short interregnums between papal reigns, *during which the Church is in the process of electing a new pope and during which the Church's unified government continues to function*.⁸ In this sixth article, we saw that we are not presently in an interregnum (even though the sedevacantists absurdly claim we are in a many-decades-long interregnum).

In the seventh article of this series, we saw that the Catholic Church is a visible Body and remains visible to all. The Catholic Church has a visible monarchical government and the pope is visible to all. Thus, we know we have a pope and that the one who is pope is visible (known) to all as the pope.⁹

⁵ Read this article here: <https://catholiccandle.org/2024/11/26/bishops-have-excommunicated-heretics-cant-we-judge-the-pope/>

⁶ Read this article here: <https://catholiccandle.org/2024/12/30/protecting-ourselves-from-a-bad-pope-or-bad-superior/>

⁷ Read this article here: *Is it Possible for a Pope to Teach Heresy and Remain the Pope?*: <https://catholiccandle.org/2025/01/27/it-is-possible-for-a-pope-to-teach-heresy-and-remain-the-pope/>

⁸ Read this article here that the Catholic Church's unified government always continues, even during an interregnum: *The Catholic Church Will Always Have a Pope*: <https://catholiccandle.org/2025/02/21/the-catholic-church-will-always-have-a-pope/>

⁹ Read this article showing that *The Catholic Church Will Always be Visible, and Will Always Have a Pope Who is Visible to All*, which can be found here: <https://catholiccandle.org/2025/03/27/the-catholic-church-will-always-be-visible-with-a-pope/>

In the eighth article, we saw that the necessary visibility of the Catholic Church and the pope requires as a corollary that the one who virtually all Catholics see (*i.e.*, believe) is the pope must *be* the pope, since the pope must be visible to all.¹⁰

In the ninth article, we addressed the superficial claim of sedevacantists (addressed to Catholics) saying that “if you think we have a pope, then you have to obey him in whatever he tells you to do”. We examined the true Catholic virtue of obedience and saw that we must not obey the commands of even a real superior like our pope, if/when he commands us to do something evil.¹¹

In the tenth article, we saw more deeply what schism is and how sedevacantism is inherently schism.¹²

In the eleventh article of this series, we saw more deeply how we should respond to a pope (or other superior) who does harm – *viz.*, we should recognize his authority but resist the evil of his words or deeds.¹³

In the twelfth article of this series, we saw how we ordinary Catholic laymen can recognize what the Catholic Truth is and how we can know when the pope (or anyone) is promoting heresy or other error.¹⁴

¹⁰ Read this article: *The Man Whom the Whole Church Accepts as Pope, IS the Pope*: <https://catholiccandle.org/2025/04/23/the-man-whom-the-whole-church-accepts-as-pope-is-the-pope/>

¹¹ Read this article examining false obedience, entitled, *The False “Obedience” of Cowardly and Weak Catholics*, which can be found here: <https://catholiccandle.org/2025/05/20/the-false-obedience-of-cowardly-and-weak-catholics/>

¹² Read this article showing that *Sedevacantism is Inherently Schism*, which can be found here: <https://catholiccandle.org/2025/06/28/sedevacantism-is-inherently-schism/>

¹³ *Our Catholic Duty: Resist the Harm Done by a Bad Pope But (Of Course) Recognize His Authority*: <https://catholiccandle.org/2025/07/24/our-catholic-duty-resist-the-harm-done-by-a-bad-pope-but-of-course-recognize-his-authority/>

¹⁴ *Judging the Pope’s Words & Deeds According to Catholic Tradition*: <https://catholiccandle.org/2025/08/29/judging-the-popes-words-deeds-according-to-catholic-tradition/>

In the thirteenth article of this series, we saw the falsehood of a related sedevacantist error (or “half-truth”), claiming that we have no pope because the conciliar popes had doubtful consecrations and/or ordinations.¹⁵

In the fourteenth article of this series, we considered another way to see that sedevacantism is wrong and sinful, *viz.*, because it is the sin of revolution.¹⁶

In the fifteenth article of this series, we saw that even though Pope Leo XIV is objectively a very bad pope, all Catholics are in communion with him, since this is an essential condition of being Catholic and not schismatic.¹⁷

In the sixteenth article of this series, we considered the position (and saw the error) that those who pray for the pope in the Canon of the Mass are declaring that they adopt his errors.¹⁸

In the seventeenth article of this series, we saw that we must have a pope because the Fatima apparitions show that a pope will consecrate Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.¹⁹

Now in the eighteenth article of this series, we consider whether excommunication is invalid if a person is excommunicated for being good or for defending the Catholic truth.

Since Pope John Paul II was a real pope, does that mean that Archbishop Lefebvre was really excluded

¹⁵ *A Man Need Not Be Consecrated a Bishop or Ordained a Priest to Be a Valid Pope – An Explanation How the Catholic Church Continues to Possess A Full Hierarchy even in these Times of Great Apostasy:* <https://catholiccandle.org/2025/09/24/a-man-need-not-be-consecrated-a-bishop-or-ordained-a-priest-to-be-a-valid-pope/>

¹⁶ *Sedevacantism is Un-Catholic Because it is Revolutionary:* <https://catholiccandle.org/2025/10/26/sedevacantism-is-un-catholic-because-it-is-revolutionary/>

¹⁷ *Answering a Sedevacantist’s Rhetorical Question: All Catholics are in Communion with the Pope:* <https://catholiccandle.org/2025/12/29/all-catholics-are-in-communion-with-the-pope/>

¹⁸ *We Must Pray for the Pope, Especially at Mass!:* <https://catholiccandle.org/2026/01/26/we-must-pray-for-the-pope-especially-at-mass/>

¹⁹ <https://catholiccandle.org/2026/02/26/the-revelations-to-sister-lucy-of-fatima-show-that-the-catholic-church-has-a-pope-now/>

from the Catholic Church by the pope excommunicating him?

Some sedevacantists seek to trap uninformed Catholics into believing that, if they support the position of good men, such as Archbishop Lefebvre, then they must declare that the post-Vatican II popes are not real popes.

One example of that trap is when the sedevacantists present a false alternative:²⁰ either:

➤ Declare that Archbishop Lefebvre died outside the Catholic Church;

or

➤ Agree that John Paul II was not a valid pope.

But even if the sedevacantist who lays that trap is himself simply ignorant, we show (below) the error of this false alternative trap.

Short answer to the Sedevacantist Question

The pope has the power to decide whom to excommunicate. However, those excommunications have no effect if they are imposed unjustly.

Discussion and explanation

This question directly pertains to the pope's power to excommunicate a wayward subordinate. But let us examine this power in its proper context of the more general

²⁰ Many sedevacantists are “experts” at using “false alternative” traps. For example, they assert to unwary Catholics: “You are required to accept any liturgical changes that a valid pope promulgates, therefore you must either:

❖ Accept the new mass;

or

❖ Agree that Paul VI (who promulgated the new mass) was not a real pope.

For purposes of this article, we do not need to determine whether the sedevacantists are culpable for such false arguments. Maybe they are merely ignorant. God will judge that, not us. We only need to be aware of their objectively false arguments so that we can help guard ourselves and others against them.

powers that a superior (including the pope) possesses, to govern the community over which he is superior.

A pope must use his authority to keep order in the Church that he governs, and therefore he must punish wayward subordinates.

This duty is analogous to that of the father of a family, who must govern for the good of his family. This duty is also analogous to the duty of a civil ruler, who must govern for the good of civil society.

Civil and ecclesiastical superiors cannot read the interior souls of their subordinates any more than parents can read the souls of their children. Thus, the superior cannot infallibly determine his subordinates' subjective interior culpability for their words and deeds.

But because superiors must care for the communities they govern (as a father governs his family), they must punish their subordinates who do evil things.²¹ They must do their

²¹ Here is how St. Thomas explains this principle that we are obliged to obey (and can be justly judged) only by those superiors who are *our* superiors at the time we are acting:

Judgment ought to be congruous as far as concerns the person of the one judging. ... It is not prohibited to superiors but to subjects; hence they [*viz.*, the superiors] ought to judge only their subjects.

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Lectures on St. Matthew's Gospel*, ch.7, §1.

St. Thomas elaborates on this truth:

[J]ust as a law cannot be made save by public authority, so neither can a judgment be pronounced except by public authority, which extends over those who are subject to the community [*i.e.*, subject to that particular public authority]. Wherefore, even as it would be unjust for one man to force another to observe a law that was not approved by public authority, so too, it is unjust, if a man compels another to submit to a judgment that is pronounced by anyone other than the public authority.

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.60, a.6, *respondeo* (bracketed words added for clarity).

best to administer justice, although they might judge mistakenly.²² God will judge how diligently those superiors sought justice.

St. Thomas Aquinas, greatest Doctor of the Catholic Church, warns those whose duty is to judge to do it carefully and justly. Here are his words:

Through an unjust sentence a judge destroys a man, nonetheless he renders an unjust sentence in vain. The power of binding and loosing is given only for building, not for destroying.”²³

A civil judge can possibly misjudge an accused person of having inner guilt, but must judge based on the best available outward evidence and punish criminals as justly as possible. Likewise, because Church officials protect the Church community that they govern (*e.g.*, the whole Church, in the case of the pope, or a diocese, in the case of a bishop, *etc.*), they must punish wrongdoers as justly as possible despite the possibility of misjudgment.

When a heretic (or other evildoer) refuses to repent despite his ecclesiastical superior’s efforts to convince him, that superior must punish him. Among other punishments, that superior can excommunicate him, *i.e.*, exile him from the community.²⁴

From all the above, we see that excommunication is a necessary ecclesiastical power and part of good governing. But in a given case, fallible Church superiors might

²² Here is how Pope St. Pius X explains the duty of ecclesiastical superiors to judge in the external forum and punish their subordinates’ evil deeds, even though the subordinate might not be *interiorly culpable* for any sin:

Although they [the Modernists] express their astonishment that We should number them amongst the enemies of the Church, no one will be reasonably surprised that We should do so, if, ***leaving out of account the internal disposition of the soul, of which God alone is the Judge***, he considers their doctrines, their manner of speech, and their action [which are the outward, objective criteria upon which a man judges in the external forum].

Pascendi, St. Pope Pius X, §3 (emphasis and bracketed words added).

Thus, as Pope St. Pius X explains, a superior might be mistaken about “*the internal disposition of the soul, of which God alone is the Judge*” but nonetheless, the superior must protect the community over which he has authority, by judging the outward conduct of wrong-doers under him (and punishing, where necessary).

²³ St. Thomas’ *Lectures on St. Matthew’s Gospel*, ch.23, #1858.

²⁴ The *Summa* explains that “excommunication is the most severe punishment”. *Summa Supp.*, Q.21, a.3, *respondeo*.

excommunicate unjustly²⁵ (without adequate cause or judicial process), and therefore invalidly.²⁶ In other words, it would be a great error to suppose that papal excommunications are always valid and can never be void. ***An excommunication must just in order to be valid.***

St. Thomas, quoting St. Augustine, both cautions ecclesiastical judges to judge carefully and also declares that unjust censures have no force. Here are their words:

When Our Lord grants to the hierarchy the power to “bind [a person] on earth”, St. Augustine warns Church leaders: “Make sure that you bind justly, for justice shatters bonds which are unjustly imposed.”²⁷

Applying this principle to Pope John Paul II’s purported excommunication of Archbishop Lefebvre, that penalty was plainly invalid and of no effect because that penalty was imposed because Archbishop Lefebvre defended Catholic Tradition. This is similar to Pope Liberius invalidly excommunicating St. Athanasius for his orthodoxy.²⁸

²⁵ The *Summa* explains this truth as follows:

An excommunication may be unjust ... on the part of the excommunication, through there being no proper cause, or through the sentence being passed without the forms of law being observed. In this case, if the error, on the part of the sentence, be such as to render the sentence void, this has no effect, for there is no excommunication.

Summa Supp., Q.21, a.4, *respondeo* (emphasis added).

²⁶ Emphasizing the ineffectiveness of a void excommunication on a man’s charity (and therefore his possession of sanctifying grace and salvation), the *Summa* adds:

No man can be justly excommunicated except for a mortal sin, whereby a man is already separated from charity, even without being excommunicated. An unjust excommunication cannot deprive a man of charity, since this is one of the greatest of all goods, of which a man cannot be deprived against his will [showing the truth that committing a mortal sin is voluntary].

Summa Supp., Q.21, a.1, ad 2.

²⁷ St. Thomas’ *Catena Aurea on St. Matthew’s Gospel*, Ch. 18, section 5.

²⁸ See, *The Voice of Tradition*, By Michael Davies, *The Remnant*, April 30, 1978, page 13-14, citing various authorities confirming the excommunication of St. Athanasius.

Summary of this Article

The pope must use his authority to govern the Church wisely and render judgment justly. By his own authority, the pope can and must excommunicate seriously wayward, incorrigible subordinates.

The pope has the power to decide who to excommunicate. However, those excommunications have no effect if they are imposed unjustly – as would be the case when a person is excommunicated for defending the Catholic Faith. In other words, excommunications are not automatically valid.

The fact that it is possible for a pope to invalidly and unjustly proclaim an “excommunication” does not in any way serve as evidence that he is not a valid pope.

This truth “gives the lie” to the sedevacantist trick argument:

- Archbishop Lefebvre was good.
- John Paul II excommunicated Archbishop Lefebvre.
- Therefore John Paul II cannot have been a real pope.

The truth is that Pope John Paul II was a valid pope but was simply abusing his authority and acting unjustly toward Archbishop Lefebvre.



Catholic Candle note: The article below is part eighteen of the study of the Choleric temperament. Here are links to the first nineteen parts:

1. Part I: Beginning our Study of the Choleric Temperament:
<https://catholiccandle.org/2024/08/27/lesson-35-about-the-temperaments-the-choleric-temperament/>
2. Part II: A general overview of the weaknesses of the Choleric Temperament:
<https://catholiccandle.org/2024/09/26/lesson-37-about-the-temperaments-continuation-of-the-choleric-temperament/>
3. Part III: A consideration of the pride of the Choleric Temperament:
<https://catholiccandle.org/2024/10/24/lesson-38-temperaments-choleric-temperament-their-spiritual-combat/>
4. Part IV: A general discussion of anger as a passion – in order to establish a foundation for studying anger in the Choleric Temperament:

<https://catholiccandle.org/2024/11/26/lesson-39-temperaments-choleric-temperament-their-spiritual-combat-part-iv/>

5. Part V: Concerning the motivations for anger:
<https://catholiccandle.org/2024/12/30/lesson-40-temperaments-choleric-temperament-their-spiritual-combat-part-v/>
6. Part VI: Concerning what anger does to the body:
<https://catholiccandle.org/2025/01/27/lesson-41-temperaments-choleric-temperament-a-choleric-spiritual-combat-part-vi/>
7. Part VII: Explaining when anger is sinful:
<https://catholiccandle.org/2025/02/21/lesson-42-temperaments-choleric-temperament-a-choleric-spiritual-combat-part-vii/>
8. Part VIII: Explaining how being slighted provokes anger:
<https://catholiccandle.org/2025/03/27/lesson-42-temperaments-choleric-temperament-a-choleric-spiritual-combat-part-viii/>
9. Part IX: Explaining how anger turns into the sin of holding a grudge:
<https://catholiccandle.org/2025/04/23/lesson-44-temperaments-choleric-temperament-a-choleric-spiritual-combat-part-ix/>
10. Part X: Recommendations to help choleric to overcome pride:
<https://catholiccandle.org/2025/05/20/lesson-45-temperaments-choleric-temperament-a-choleric-spiritual-combat-part-x/>
11. Part XI: Explaining how a person sins by not using his reason:
<https://catholiccandle.org/2025/06/28/lesson-46-temperaments-choleric-temperament-a-choleric-spiritual-combat-part-xi/>
12. Part XII: Explaining some reasons why a choleric does not use his reason properly:
<https://catholiccandle.org/2025/07/24/lesson-47-temperaments-choleric-temperament-a-choleric-spiritual-combat-part-xii/>
13. Part XIII: Explaining why the choleric fears to use his reason well:
<https://catholiccandle.org/2025/08/29/lesson-48-temperaments-choleric-temperament-a-choleric-spiritual-combat-part-xiii/>
14. Part XIV: Explaining generally how Satan targets our fallen and weakened intellects:
<https://catholiccandle.org/2025/09/24/lesson-49-temperaments-choleric-temperament-the-choleric-spiritual-combat-part-xiv/>

15. Part XV: Explaining the passions in general, to lay the foundation for our consideration of the passion of fear: <https://catholiccandle.org/2025/10/26/3050/>
16. Part XVI: Explaining fear as a passion: <https://catholiccandle.org/2025/11/25/lesson-51-temperaments-choleric-temperament-the-cholerics-spiritual-combat-part-xvi/>
17. Part XVII: Explaining how fear works in the soul and influences all of the temperaments: <https://catholiccandle.org/2025/12/29/lesson-52-temperaments-choleric-temperament-the-cholerics-spiritual-combat-part-xvii/>
18. Part XVIII: Explaining how pain and death are objects of fear for persons of any temperament: <https://catholiccandle.org/2026/01/26/lesson-53-temperaments-choleric-temperament-pain-and-death-are-objects-of-fearf-any-temperament/>
19. Part XIX: Explaining in what way sin is an object of fear for all temperaments: <https://catholiccandle.org/2026/02/26/lesson-54-temperaments-choleric-temperament-whether-sin-is-an-object-of-fear-for-all-temperaments/>

Mary's School of Sanctity

Lesson #55 About the Temperaments Part XX – Considering the Causes of Fear for All Temperaments

A review of what we've covered about fear so far

In the more recent lessons we have been considering the passion of fear. We saw that the passions are movements of the sensitive (non-rational) part of the soul arising when we imagine good or evil. This movement is the action of our sensitive appetite (desire) and is naturally influenced by our sensitive apprehension (*i.e.*, perceiving through our senses). Furthermore, this movement produces a corporeal transmutation (*viz.*, physical change) in us.

We saw that there are two groups of passions – the concupiscible and the irascible. The **concupiscible** passions are concerned with sensible good or evil (simply apprehended as such) which cause pleasure or pain. Thus, sensible good or evil, in itself, is the object of the concupiscible passions. The passions in the concupiscible group are joy, sorrow, love, hatred, and such like.

The **irascible** passions are concerned with good or bad ***in so far as this good or bad is arduous***, that is, a good which is difficult to acquire or an evil that is difficult to avoid.

Hence, the arduous good or evil is the object of the irascible passions. The passions in the irascible group are daring, fear, hope, and such like.

Then we considered in more detail what fear is. We saw that the passion of fear is the soul's anticipation of suffering an evil which is difficult to avoid. ***The object of fear is something reckoned as an evil to come, near at hand, and difficult to avoid.***

What is the *Cause* of Fear?

Let us look at what St. Thomas says regarding this question. St. Thomas, quoting St. Augustine, says, "*There can be no doubt that there is no cause for fear except the loss of what we love, when we possess it, or the failure to obtain what we hope for.*"²⁹

For this reason, St. Thomas explains that "all fear is caused by our loving something: and consequently love is the cause of fear."³⁰

But exactly how is it that love can cause fear? First, let us recall what love is.

What is Love?

In a previous lesson³¹, we saw that a good (or something perceived as good) causes the soul to incline toward it and this inclination is the passion of ***love***. ***Love is the soul's inclination toward a (desired) good thing.*** The good thing which is desired is the object of that love.

However, regarding the soul's inclination toward the good thing, we could also "look at it from the other direction". We could say that the desired good thing acts upon the soul drawing (*i.e.*, inclining) the soul towards it. In this way the good thing that is desired is an ***agent*** that causes – *i.e.*, "does the work" (as it were) – of attracting the soul to it. St. Thomas calls an agent or force that does a work or brings about a result – an "***efficient cause***" (also known as an "***agent cause***"). So the object of love can be regarded as the

²⁹ *Summa*, Ia, IIae, Q.43, a.1, *Sed Contra*, (Quoting St. Augustine's work, *Eighty-Three Questions*, at Q.33).

³⁰ *Summa*, Ia, IIae, Q.43, a.1, *Sed Contra*.

³¹ Read this article: *Lesson #50: Temperaments – Choleric Temperament – The Choleric's Spiritual Combat – Part XV*: <https://catholiccandle.org/2025/10/10/3050/>

agent (*i.e.*, the force) which attracts the soul to it and hence is the efficient cause of love in the soul.

Now Let Us Consider Fear

Man naturally seeks the good that he loves and he desires to obtain that good. But, what happens when an obstacle prevents him from obtaining the good he desires?

Since the obstacle is a force that brings about the result (namely, the man is prevented from possessing what he loves), he will view the obstacle as an evil (*i.e.*, undesirable and bad). Thus, the obstacle will become an object of fear to the man when all of these conditions are true concerning how the man reckons the obstacle:

- 1) As an evil to come (separating him from the good that he loves);
- 2) That this obstacle is near at hand (and not in the distant future); and
- 3) That the obstacle is difficult to avoid,

(Remember, as we saw above and previously,³² fear is one of the irascible passions and is concerned with a future evil, near at hand, and arduous.)

Again, since the obstacle is a force (*i.e.*, agent) that prevents the man from obtaining what he loves (and seeks), this obstacle causes the man to fear that he will not obtain what he loves and so this obstacle is an efficient cause of the man fearing that he will be deprived of what he loves.

Therefore St. Thomas says, “And thus it is that love causes fear: since it is through his loving a certain good, that whatever deprives a man of that good is an evil to him, and that consequently he fears it [*viz.*, the obstacle] as an evil.”³³

So St. Thomas teaches that something which can inflict an evil on us is the efficient cause of fear and the object of fear (what we fear) for us. In addition to this, St. Thomas explains that the ***material disposition*** of a man can also be a cause of fear in him. By

³² Read this article: *Lesson #50: Temperaments – Choleric Temperament – The Choleric’s Spiritual Combat – Part XV*: <https://catholiccandle.org/2025/10/10/3050/>

³³ *Summa*, Ia, IIae, Q.43, a.1, *Respondeo* (bracketed words added for context).

material disposition, St. Thomas means that the love a man bears towards the good thing makes him apt to be afraid of not obtaining what he loves.³⁴

Likewise if a man already possesses the good thing he loves, he can fear losing that good through some evil which is an obstacle to his *continued* possession of it.

A Concrete Example of What We Have Just Explained

Suppose a man is a farmer and has planted a field of corn. He purchased very good seed; the field was well-prepared with the proper tilling and nutrients; and he then sowed his corn. He tended his crop by watering it diligently and preventing weeds and insects from infesting the crop. Therefore he anticipated a very good crop. The corn was growing extremely well and showed much promise of a great harvest. Then one hot summer day golf-ball size hail destroyed his entire crop.

In this example, the hail was the efficient cause (*i.e.*, the doer or agent) that brought the farmer the great evil of a ruined crop.

We could say that farmers have many fears regarding their crops. They fear insufficient rainfall. They fear animals and insects eating the plants. They fear a cold snap that would damage the crops. They fear hailstorms. And more. All of these *agents of destruction* are efficient causes of fear for the farmer. Even if they do not actually happen, the farmer still fears that they might happen.³⁵

We understand that the farmer would naturally love his crop as his property and his work. He also loves the success of his endeavors, and in addition to this, loves his livelihood and the good of his family which he loves and supports. Through these circumstances, he is materially disposed to love his crop and fear its loss.

Because a person naturally loves what he perceives as good, when he thinks that he will be deprived of the good which he loves, then he perceives the deprivation as an evil and

³⁴ St. Thomas characterizes as “*material dispositions*” those circumstances in which there is a good which a man loves but that good is vulnerable to loss through an evil which he apprehends. *Summa*, Ia, IIae, Q.43, a.1, *Respondeo*.

³⁵ Even in these modern times with crop insurance, farmers still fear deductibles, increased premium rates, payment delays, extra paperwork, *etc.*

consequently fears the deprivation.³⁶

Are there any other causes of fear?

St. Thomas inquires, “Whether Defect Is the Cause of Fear?”

To answer this question he examines the teaching of the great philosopher Aristotle, who explains that “*wealth, strength, a multitude of friends, and power drive fear away*”³⁷

St. Thomas starts with this truth as a principle and shows us that a defect can cause fear in two ways:

1. Fear can be caused by the disposition of the man who fears; and

³⁶ *Summa*, Ia, IIae, Q.43, a.1, *Respondeo*. Here is how St. Thomas explains this truth:

That which can inflict such an evil, is the efficient cause of the *object* of fear, and, consequently, of fear itself. While that which renders a man so disposed that thing is such an evil to him, is a cause of fear and of its object, **by way of material disposition**. And thus it is that **love causes fear**: since it is through his loving a certain good, that whatever deprives a man of that good is an evil to him, and that consequently he fears it as an evil.

Emphasis added.

St. Thomas adds two further interesting points which add to his explanation of how love is ultimately the cause of fear.

1) As stated above (Q.42, a.1), fear, of itself and in the first place, regards the evil from which it recoils as being contrary to some loved good: and thus fear, of itself, arises from love. But, in the second place, it regards the cause from which that evil ensues: so that sometimes, accidentally, fear gives rise to love; in so far as, for instance, through fear of God's punishments, man keeps His commandments, and thus begins to hope, while hope leads to love, as stated above (Q.40, a.7).

2) He, from whom evil is expected, is indeed hated at first; but afterwards, when [and if] once we begin to hope for good from him, we begin to love him. But the good, the contrary evil of which is feared, was loved from the beginning.

Summa, Ia, IIae, Q.43, a.1, ad 1 & ad 2 (bracketed word added for clarity).

³⁷ In the *Summa*, Ia, IIae, Q.43, a.2, St. Thomas quotes these words of Aristotle from Aristotle's treatise on Rhetoric, *Bk. 2; Ch. 5 #1383b1*. These words carefully reflect human nature and what happens when we feel ourselves superior to our rivals and also that we only fear when we feel they are superior to us, *e.g., in wealth or strength*.

2. Fear can be caused by the person feared.

In the first of these ways, fear can be caused by a condition in the man who fears. In this case, some defect, in itself, is the cause of fear because it is owing to some lack of power that one is unable easily to repulse a threatening evil. And yet, in order to cause fear, this defect must be able to be measured in some way. For example, the defect which causes fear of a future evil, is less than the defect caused by evil present, which is really the object of *sorrow*. And an even worse defect would exist if a man was entirely missing the perception of the evil or the love of the good which is involved.³⁸

In the second way, the fear can be caused by the person who is feared because his power and strength are in themselves causes of fear. This is because power and strength are apprehended as something harmful to a person against whom they are used when they cannot be repulsed.

Some Spiritual Applications of These Principles

These truths about fear are applicable in many ways. But the reason we are presently studying fear is part of our careful study of the temperaments. We are treating fear and its consequences so that we can specifically apply what we know about fear to each of the temperaments as we study them.

Presently, we will make only a few basic connections but, after we study the effects of fear on our souls and bodies, we will go into more depth about the spiritual ramifications of fear.

We Must Be on Guard about What We Love

Because of the fact that love is the cause of fear, and that fear (as is true of the other passions) must be used in conformity with reason, we must be careful *what* we love so that we love only what is reasonable to love and only in the degree it is reasonable to love it.

The devil is always “lurking nearby” to tempt us to love creatures inordinately. Here is a short list of things that the devil frequently tempts us to love unreasonably and, consequently to unreasonably fear losing:

- *We love bodily comfort. Hence we want to pamper ourselves and indulge our bodies with luxuries.*

³⁸ We will return to this unfortunate situation in a future lesson.

- *We love a conscience that does not rebuke us because these rebukes are uncomfortable. Hence, we avoid self-reflection and examining our conscience because of what we might find.*
- *We love ease of body and so we are prone to laziness and avoiding physical work.*
- *We love to relax our minds and escape from difficult mental activity.*
- *We love to avoid commitments and responsibility because they are often difficult and uncomfortable.*
- *We love pleasures, entertainments, and travel.*
- *We love acceptance, social approval, and being like everyone else. Therefore, we desire to conform to fashions, act just like everyone else, use the same electronic gadgets as everyone else; and*
- *We love being honored, praised, respected, sought after.*

The loves listed here can be found in different people in varying degrees. The list is not exhaustive and is only meant as a starting point for us to examine our loves to see if they are disordered, and hence displeasing to God.

In future lessons we will strategize how to fight the allurements of the devil and his pomps in order that we can avoid having disordered loves and hence unreasonable fear of losing those things loved excessively.

A Preview...

In our next lesson we will explore what St. Thomas explains about the effects of fear on the soul and consequently on the body. In this way we will be able to better address how we must use the passion of fear properly.



Catholic Candle note: Below is part 8 of the article concerning the best type of education – which is a *Catholic Liberal Education*. Do not confuse this education with many university programs called “liberal arts” but which are full of fluff, falsehood, and aimless so-called “cultural enrichment” courses and “humanities”.

A liberal education also does not refer to liberalism, nor is a true liberal education an indoctrination into that error of liberalism or *political correctness*. In fact, a true *Catholic Liberal Education* is the best antidote to the errors of liberalism.

As context for this eighth article, let us recall what we saw in the earlier seven articles:

Previously, *in part 1 of this article*,³⁹ we examined the problems we see in modern education:

- Modern colleges do not improve the quality of their students' minds (and their thinking ability) much or at all.
- Most "education" is merely job training, fluff courses, and/or leftist indoctrination.
- The students are taught to sound like someone in their field but they do more memorizing and little thinking.
- Grade "inflation" and degree "inflation" is rampant. Grades and academic degrees do not mean much anymore.

In part 2 of this article,⁴⁰ we examined, in general, what education is. We considered the human soul and the perfection of its highest faculty (*i.e.*, power) – which is the intellect – and which is immaterial (*i.e.*, incorporeal). We saw that our intellects are perfected through knowing eternal, unchangeable truths and their causes.

In part 3 of this article,⁴¹ after having seen what true education is, we examined the question *who should perfect his intellect*.

In part 4 of this article,⁴² having seen that modern universities do not provide a true education, we consider whether there is *ever* any reason for men or women to attend them.

³⁹ Part 1 of this article can be found here: <https://catholiccandle.org/2025/06/28/the-blessings-of-a-true-catholic-liberal-education/>

⁴⁰ Part 2 of this article can be found here: <https://catholiccandle.org/2025/07/24/the-blessing-of-a-true-catholic-liberal-education-part-ii/>

⁴¹ Part 3 of this article can be found here: <https://catholiccandle.org/2025/08/28/the-blessing-of-a-true-catholic-liberal-education-part-iii/>

⁴² Part 4 of this article can be found here: <https://catholiccandle.org/2025/09/24/the-blessing-of-a-true-catholic-liberal-education-part-iv/>

In part 5 of this article,⁴³ having seen that women and girls should pursue a True *Catholic Liberal Education* – just as men and boys should, too – we then considered what the best environment is in which women and girls should do this.

In part 6 of this article, we addressed the objection that, having seen the great value of a True *Catholic Liberal Education*, we should be afraid that the great blessing of this education would be a danger to our souls because it might make us proud.⁴⁴

In part 7 of this article, we considered more fully the difference between the education which is appropriate for a free man as contrasted to the education which is appropriate for a slave.⁴⁵

Below, in part eight, we consider further how the truth perfects our minds. This shows us that we must really *know* the truth, not merely hold true opinions.

The Blessing of a True, *Catholic Liberal Education*

Part 8

Making the Truth “Our Own”

Let us consider another aspect of a Catholic Liberal Education, *viz.*, how we must make the truth really “our own” in order for it to perfect our intellects. We must *know* a truth and not merely hold human opinion, even if that opinion were true. This is because the good of the intellect is *knowing* the truth, not merely memorizing true opinions.⁴⁶

⁴³ Part 5 of this article can be found here: <https://catholiccandle.org/2025/10/26/the-blessing-of-a-true-catholic-liberal-education-part-v/>

⁴⁴ Part 6 of this article can be found here: <https://catholiccandle.org/2026/01/26/3129/>

⁴⁵ Part 7 of this article can be found here: <https://catholiccandle.org/2026/02/26/the-blessing-of-a-true-catholic-liberal-education-part-vii/>

⁴⁶ Here is how St. Thomas explains this principle:

[W]hen we judge of *things* ... there is the question of the good of the person who judges [*viz.*, the good of his intellect], if he judges truly, and of his evil [*viz.*, of his intellect] if he judges falsely, because “***the true is the good of the intellect, and the false is its evil***”, as stated in [Aristotle’s] *Ethics*, bk.6, ch.2. Wherefore, everyone should strive to make his judgment accord with things as they are.

Summa, IIa IIae, Q.60, a.4, ad 2 (emphasis and bracketed words added).

Let us consider an example from the science of geometry. In order for us to have **knowledge** of the Pythagorean Theorem⁴⁷ we must **know** this truth and see that it arises from careful reasoning grounded in first principles and that we also **know** these first principles to be true. In other words, we must **see** this truth (with our minds) and see that it arises out of those first undeniable principles of geometry.

When we mention “first principles”, we refer to principles such as the common notion that **when equals are added to equals, the sums are equal**. We must begin a science by examining the first principles and see that they are certain and must be true. To have real **knowledge**, e.g., of a geometrical theorem, we must **see** how that theorem arises from the principles of the science through a chain of careful syllogistic⁴⁸ reasoning.

When we are proving a theorem, if this proof is not built on the solid foundation of first principles, then we would only hold the **opinion** that this theorem is true. So, for example, when two of the *Catholic Candle* Team members took high school geometry classes, they acquired only **human faith** that the Pythagorean Theorem was universally true, because those classes did not give **proof** from the first principles of geometry but only provided some examples of this theorem and then raced on to apply this theorem to a long set of problems (which were graded by the teachers to confirm that the student got the correct answer and that he knew how to apply the formula to the numbers set out in the problems assigned to the class).

When we memorize a correct opinion (without really **proving** the statement) then we memorize that statement without having real **knowledge**. We would merely **believe** this

Note: God created us with many powers (faculties) which can be perfected. He intends that we perfect them. He made it **enjoyable** for us to perfect those faculties, especially our highest faculties – our intellects and wills. This perfection of our will is called **moral virtue**. This perfection of our intellect is called **intellectual virtue**.

This perfection of our intellect with high truths is thrilling and is “worth more than kingdoms”. This reality is set forth in the *Book of Wisdom*:

I preferred her [*viz.*, wisdom] before kingdoms and thrones, and esteemed riches nothing in comparison of her. Neither did I compare unto her any precious stone: for all gold in comparison of her, is as a little sand, and silver in respect to her shall be counted as clay.

Book of Wisdom, 7:8-9.

⁴⁷ The Pythagorean Theorem is the proof that the area of the square erected on the hypotenuse of a right triangle (which is opposite the right angle) is equal in area to the sum of the areas of the squares erected on the two legs (the other two sides) of that triangle.

⁴⁸ A syllogism is a “formal argument consisting of the major premise, the minor premise, and the conclusion. The conclusion necessarily follows from the premises so that, if these are true, the conclusion must be true.” *Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary*, sixth edition, ©1949.

statement (e.g., a theorem) as an opinion. Again, we must remember that it is **knowledge, not opinion**, which is the perfection of (and the good of), the intellect.

When we hold mere human opinion about a truth of geometry, this would be similar to our holding the true opinion that there is a city called “Athens” in a country called “Greece”. In other words, we are believing this on human authority and do not have **knowledge** of this fact.

The focus of this analogy is not whether Athens exists (or, in contrast, whether we are deceived when we are told that it exists). The focus is that we do not **know** that Athens exists but only **believe** it as an opinion we have been told. Such opinions do not perfect our intellects, which are perfected by **knowing universal truth**, not by memorizing opinions or statements made on human authority. (What is revealed infallibly by God and the Catholic Church, does not have this same weakness as mere **human** opinion – but we will discuss this later.)

Going back to the geometric example above: when we start with the firm principles of Euclidean geometry, we build an edifice of one thing proved from the geometric principles (that we previously came to know) and after we prove that first theorem, we use it along with the principles of geometry to prove a second theorem, then a third, and so on, to prove more and more theorems, all of which have this same firm foundation of the principles that we know (with certitude) to be true. From there, we continue building the geometrical edifice of our knowledge, all grounded firmly on the sureness of the first principles that we know with certainty because we examined them carefully at the beginning of our study and understood that they **must** be true.

Above, we saw the importance of knowing truth and making the truth “our own” by grounding this truth in the first principles that we already know. In other words, we **know** a conclusion when we see that it must be true because we see that the conclusion comes through an undeniable chain of syllogistic reasoning, from principles that we know are certain.

Let us take an example. We could learn the conclusion of the Pythagorean Theorem, *viz.*, that the area of the square erected on the hypotenuse of a right triangle (which is opposite the right angle) is equal to the sum of the areas of the two squares erected on the two legs (the other two sides) of that triangle.

If we memorize that true conclusion, then we have a correct opinion but it cannot really be said that we **know** that truth because our intellect does not **see** that truth as necessary⁴⁹ and **see** that it arises from the undeniable first principles that are the basis of the science of geometry. Instead, if we merely memorized or merely trusted someone

⁴⁹ When something is *necessary*, it must be true and cannot fail to be true.

(including a book) we would only hold the Pythagorean Theorem based on the **human authority** of that book or person.

Thus, our minds are not perfected by this human opinion because the good of the intellect is **knowing** the truth, not merely memorizing true opinions. God wills men to **know** the unchanging truth because He wills men to perfect the talents that He has given them, especially their highest faculty, *i.e.*, their intellect. By unchanging truth, we mean truth which is always true, *e.g.*,

❖ The whole is greater than its own part; and

❖ $4 + 4 = 8$.

The truths of our Holy Catholic Faith are unchangeable truths and are especially perfecting for our intellects. Two quick examples of this are:

† God has no body; and

† The Blessed Virgin Mary was assumed into heaven body and soul.

(As we said above, what is revealed infallibly by God and the Catholic Church, does not suffer the weakness of being based on mere human opinion – but we will discuss this later.)

Unchangeable truths, most of all the Holy Catholic Faith, perfect our intellects. In other words, such truths make our intellects good. Here is how St. Thomas explains this principle:

[W]hen we judge of *things* ... there is the question of the good of the person who judges [*viz.*, the good of his intellect], if he judges truly, and of his evil [*viz.*, of his intellect] if he judges falsely, because “***the true is the good of the intellect, and the false is its evil***”, as stated in [Aristotle’s] *Ethics*, bk.6, ch.2. Wherefore, everyone should strive to make his judgment accord with things as they are.

Summa, IIa IIae, Q.60, a.4, ad 2 (emphasis and bracketed words added).

In this quote above, when St. Thomas says “everyone should strive to make his judgment accord with things as they are”, this means everyone should seek the truth, since ***truth is the mind’s conformity with reality***.⁵⁰

But the truth that is the good of the intellect is ***unchangeable truth***, such as the Pythagorean Theorem or knowing that God has no body. It does ***not*** perfect a man's intellect to know things that could be different and are changeable, such as the names of the streets of our town and other contingent facts.

It might be useful to know the streets of one's own town so that he knows how to get to the grocery store (or otherwise has a practical need for this information). But such knowledge of particular, contingent facts, even though true, do not perfect a man's intellect. Here is one way St. Thomas teaches this:

Neither does it pertain to the intellect's perfection to know the truth of contingent, singular facts in themselves.

Summa, IIa IIae, Q.60, a.4, ad 1-2 (emphasis added).

So, one crucial error of thought is to confuse those things which are eternal truths, with those things that are changeable, particular truths. The Modernists make this error and it is one way for us to see that, even as a matter of reason, the heresy of Modernism is plainly false and impossible. Here is how Pope St. Pius X explained that modernists profess that all truth changes:

[T]hey have reached that pitch of folly at which they pervert the eternal concept of truth [They say] dogma [*i.e.*, high truths of our Faith] is not only able, but ought to evolve and to be changed. ... Thus far, Venerable Brethren, We have considered the ***Modernist as a philosopher***.⁵¹

Thus, we see that it is important to perfect our intellect by knowing the unchangeable truth as coming from a careful chain of reasoning from first principles that are certain and known. These truths – which perfect our intellect – are universal and unchanging, ***not*** particular truths which could be otherwise or could change.

⁵⁰ Here is one way that St. Thomas Aquinas, greatest Doctor of the Catholic Church, teaches this truth:

Uno modo si id quod dicitur conveniat rei de qua dicitur; quod fit per veritatem, quia si sit falsum, non convenit ei.

Quoted from St. Thomas' *Lectures on St. John's Gospel*, ch.13, lecture #3, section #1776.

St. Thomas teaches this same thing in other words at *Lectures on St. John's Gospel*, ch.14, lecture #2, section #1869.

⁵¹ *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, Pope St. Pius X, September 8, 1907, §§ 13-14 (emphasis and bracketed words added).

There are No “Shortcuts”

Truth acquired in this way is the perfection of our intellects. There are no “shortcuts”, even for those who are sons of a learned man. The son cannot perfect his intellect by simply memorizing the truth that his learned father previously proved for himself through careful syllogistic reasoning “down to” the solid foundation of first principles. This is because, however wise and learned his father is, the perfection of that son’s own intellect involves the *son himself* doing that same intellectual work that his father did.⁵²

Similarly, there are no “shortcuts” for those who live in a society blessed with many generations of learned men. Each man (and woman) must perfect his (her) own intellect and not simply take on human authority (human faith) the truths which others before him had proved. Persons in each new generation must repeat the labor of their ancestors because each person has his *own* intellect to perfect.

This is like the fact that our parents (or many generations of our forebearers) might have been virtuous, *e.g.*, patient, just, and temperate, but we cannot simply “take up where they left off”. Instead, we must make the same sort of efforts that they did, to acquire virtue like they did. For example, we must acquire the virtue of patience by repeated acts of fighting impatience ourselves and making our own repeated acts of patience.

So, in this way we see that the rectification and perfection of the moral character of each man requires the same work as it required of his forebearers. Similarly, the rectification and perfection of a person’s intellect requires the same work that it did for the wise and learned men who came before him. Again, there are no “shortcuts” to achieve this perfection of mind which is the knowledge of eternal truth.

As a Means of Pursuing the Truth, Lectures are Inferior to Well-Prepared, Well-Organized Discussions

In this enterprise of making the truth “one’s own”, we see that lectures of wise professors are of less value than we might at first believe. This is because the truth becomes “one’s own” through an internal or external debate, struggle, and/or discussion. There must be a “back and forth” through which the student sees the solution to the “objections” that he made to the (true) statement that he is considering.

Different students will have different objections. Let us take an example: Regarding a particular statement under discussion, one student will ask himself how can the

⁵² In fact, when one has very wise parents yet at the same time does not do the same hard work to become wise by learning important universal truths himself, he might be more susceptible to self-deception than children of other families, since he might be more prone to think himself wise, whereas children of less-wise parents may have less reason to fool themselves.

statement be true because of an apparently-contrary verse of Sacred Scripture. Another student will think he sees indisputable observations in nature which contradict the truth of the statement under discussion. In fact, a particular objection on which a student focuses can seem so central that this objection impedes all progress on solving other objections and completing his analysis of the matter.

A lecture from any professor – however wise he is – cannot anticipate all objections and solve them all without the student’s input. The truth cannot be made the student’s “own” without the student’s “own” input. The student must have a role in the mental discussion.

It is a tremendous help in a student’s education for him to articulate what he believes that he sees as the truth in the matter. This not only helps others analyze whether he is correct or not, but also helps the student himself come to know whether or not he truly knows, *and whether he could reason the matter all the way back to indisputably true first principles.*

Although the student can have the help of others, he himself must play a central role in analyzing a statement and see how it is based on (or, alternatively, how it contradicts) foundational principles of which he is certain. By contrast, a professorial lecture telling the students what conclusions to memorize, does not make “one’s own” the truths at issue.

By Contrast, Shortcuts are Possible (and Common) in Mechanical and Technical Matters

In contrast with a Liberal Education or with the acquisition of moral virtue, there are other, different sorts of matters where “shortcuts” are possible and even common. For example, in transportation, a person does not need to go back to learn to use the first inventions of that sort. He can simply learn how to drive the current model of automobile. He does not need to start with the ox cart (or whatever other early conveyance).

Similarly, we do not need to learn how to use an abacus or a slide rule before we are able to use a calculator. So, we see that there can be shortcuts in technical skills, machinery, *etc.* but not in wisdom, virtue, and real knowledge.

Although Human Opinion Does Not Perfect the Mind, the Catholic Faith *Does* Perfect It

Above, we said:

What is revealed infallibly by God and the Catholic Church, does not have this same weakness as mere human opinion.

Let us consider that statement now.

The Catholic Faith – Taken on God’s Authority – is Not Deficient as is an Opinion Based on Mere Human Authority.

The problem with taking something as true based on human faith – *i.e.*, belief in a merely human authority, is that this authority could be wrong for two reasons:

1. The human authority might be mistaken (because it is part of the human condition that people make mistakes); or
2. The human authority could intentionally deceive us as a means of attempting to achieve an apparently-good end (or even some end which is truly good in itself).⁵³

Because a man can be wrong for those two reasons, we describe as an “opinion” what a man asserts as true without having proof. Opinions, as such, can be true but they do not perfect our intellects (as genuine knowledge does) to the extent that we do not **know** (*i.e.*, see) the opinion statement as resting upon the firm foundation of most-sure first principles.

For, as we saw earlier, eternal truth (which is what *does* perfect our intellect) must be **known all of the way to the foundational principles of the science**. The term “science” here means philosophy, theology and any other body of knowledge whose object is eternal truth.

We Must Now Make the Distinction between Primary Sciences and Subordinate Sciences

⁵³ **Brief note about the second of these:** Of course, we know that to tell a lie is always evil and sinful. No end ever justifies a sinful means. Even if we were to act for the very highest of all motives – which is to promote the glory of God – that would never justify a lie.

Here is the very striking way in which St. Thomas Aquinas, greatest Doctor of the Catholic Church, teaches this truth:

A lie must be shunned to such an extent that, even if it seemed that the lie would increase the glory of God, a lie should still not be told.

Here is the Latin:

Adeo enim vitanda sunt mendacia, ut etiam si cedere videantur ad laudem Dei, non sunt dicenda.

St. Thomas Aquinas’ *Lectures on St. John’s Gospel*, ch.13, lecture #3, section #1776.

Some sciences are subordinate to other sciences and such subordinate sciences take their principles from that higher science. For example, the science of optics, which investigates the bending of light (through lenses, *etc.*), is subordinate to the science of geometry, which proves the principles which are needed for and are used in the science of optics. This is because light, as studied by the science of optics follows the truths (*i.e.*, the proofs) of geometry concerning angles, parallel lines, *etc.*

Although the subordinate science of optics takes its principles from the very firm foundation of Euclid's geometry, nonetheless, the person who studies optics has a very imperfect grasp of his own science (optics) unless he is also a master of geometry. If he were only to take the principles of his science (*viz.*, optics) back to his reliance upon geometrical conclusions which he himself has not mastered, then his grasp of optics is imperfectly grounded. Thus, a student of optics should first be a master of geometry so that his understanding of optics can be rooted in those most-certain first principles which he himself sees are the basis and foundation of geometry.

Now let us look at Divine Revelation. We know that the truth of what is revealed by God is the most certain of all knowledge. It is more certain than our own human knowledge because God is all-knowing and (in the words of the *Act of Faith*) God "can neither deceive nor be deceived".

But Divine Revelation is a sacred science (body of knowledge) which is a subordinate science in the same way that optics is a subordinate science. Whereas:

- † Optics relies for its principles on the truths shown in geometry and not proved in the science of optics itself,
- † So Divine Revelation is a sacred science which is subordinate to the Science pertaining to God (and things closely related to God) ***as these truths are known with absolute certainty by the Mind of God and the minds of the blessed in heaven.***

These truths (known in heaven) are revealed to us and are received by us as Divine Revelation (like the science of optics receives its principles from the science of geometry).

Does this Mean that the Catholic Faith (as a Subordinate Science) is Deficient?

So, the question arises: if a man knows the subordinate science of Sacred Doctrine (revealed in the Catholic Faith), but cannot (in this life) know the primary, celestial *Science known by God and the Blessed in heaven*, does the man's mind lack perfection in a way similar to the man who knows a different subordinate science (*e.g.*, optics) but does not also know the underlying primary science (*e.g.*, geometry) from which the subordinate science takes its principles?

The answer is “no”. Whereas with other subordinate sciences (such as optics), a man’s failure to know the underlying primary science causes his knowledge of the subordinate science to rest on the human faith (human authority) of those who know geometry, and in this way, his grasp of the subordinate science does not rest on a firm foundation which perfects the mind.

By contrast, the principles of the science of Sacred Doctrine are the infallible truths of the Holy Catholic Faith. Those principles are even surer than the firm first principles of any other sciences. So, we know the science of Sacred Doctrine with great certitude because its principles are so surely known through the Catholic Faith.

Of course, it is true that our minds would completely delight in seeing the truths which are seen by the blessed in heaven. But meanwhile, while in this life, our minds can know the science of Sacred Doctrine resting on the surest principles.

So on the one hand, Divine Revelation should be highly esteemed because: 1) it is most-sure; and also 2) because these truths of Divine Revelation are of the highest matters (and our minds are perfected most by knowing the highest truths).

But on the other hand, Divine Revelation (sacred doctrine) has the disadvantage of being a subordinate science to the science of God and of the blessed. Thus, just like the student of optics should know geometry in order to perfect his mind with the science of optics, likewise the student of Divine Revelation (sacred doctrine) should (ideally) know the higher science which is the knowledge of God and the blessed in heaven in the Beatific Vision. But man cannot attain this higher theological science on earth because it is only available to those in heaven.

But returning to the issue of the Catholic Faith and the authority on which it rests: we see that our Catholic Faith, which is infallibly revealed by God, does not have this same weakness as mere human opinion because God’s revelation cannot err.

So we should strive with all of our might to get to heaven and spend Eternity enjoying the Beatific Vision which is the higher science that is the Truth known by God and the blessed and on which our Faith rests!

Let us use these considerations to help us to yearn for Eternal Truth, especially the Eternal Revelation of the Highest Truths in the Beatific Vision!

Along with St. Paul, this should be our mind-set:

Forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth myself to those that are before, I press towards the mark, to the prize of the supernal vocation of God in Christ Jesus.

Philippians, 3:13-14.

Summary of Part Eight of this Article

Truth is the good of the mind and is its perfection. We must strive to perfect our minds with the highest truths, known through a series of careful syllogisms all the way “down” to the first certain principles of the science.

There are no “shortcuts” in perfecting our minds, just as there are no shortcuts in acquiring the moral virtues.

The high and infallible truths of our Catholic Faith perfect our minds, unlike matters taken on human faith.

Having in mind the importance of knowing the unchanging Truth, let us live the life of truth which is a big help to us to enable us to live the (spiritual) life of Him Who Is the Truth.

The Question Arises:, *What Studies (Sciences) More-Specifically Belong in a Catholic Liberal Education?*

It is time to consider more specifically: *What studies belong in a true Catholic Liberal Education?* This canon of study has long been set out and perennially followed in Western Civilization by those seeking to perfect their highest faculty (their mind). In the next part of this article, we will begin examining that canon of study and the reasons for it.

To Be Continued ...



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