Catholic Candle

❧ November 2026 ❧ catholiccandle.org ❧ catholiccandle@gmail.com

Words to Live By – From Catholic Tradition

Let us boldly fight for Christ the King!

> To recoil before an enemy, or to keep silence when from all sides such clamors are raised against truth, is the part of a man either devoid of character or who entertains doubt as to the truth of what he professes to believe. In both cases such mode of behaving is base and is insulting to God, and both are incompatible with the salvation of mankind. This kind of conduct is profitable only to the enemies of the faith, for nothing emboldens the wicked so greatly as the lack of courage on the part of the good.

Pope Leo XIII, *Sapientiae Christianae,* January 10, 1890, #14.

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***Catholic Candle* note:** The article below is Part XXVIII of the study of the temperaments, starting with the Choleric Temperament. Here are links to the first twenty-seven 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-cholerics-spiritual-combat-part-vi/

7. Part VII: Explaining when anger is sinful: https://catholiccandle.org/2025/02/21/lesson-42-temperaments-choleric-temperament-a-cholerics-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-cholerics-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-cholerics-spiritual-combat-part-ix/

10. Part X: Recommendations to help cholerics to overcome pride: https://catholiccandle.org/2025/05/20/lesson-45-temperaments-choleric-temperament-a-cholerics-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-cholerics-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-cholerics-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-cholerics-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-cholerics-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/

20. Part XX: Explaining the causes of fear – applying to all temperaments: https://catholiccandle.org/2026/03/31/marys-school-of-sanctity-3/

21. Part XXI: Explaining the effects of fear in all temperaments: https://catholiccandle.org/2026/04/26/about-the-temperaments-part-xxi-explaining-the-effects-of-fear-in-all-temperaments/

22. Part XXII: Explaining how to order our loves so we can use the passion of fear properly, and how the devil attempts to prevent this ordering: https://catholiccandle.org/2026/05/28/about-the-temperaments-part-xxii-how-to-order-our-loves-so-we-can-use-the-passion-of-fear-properly/

23. Part XXIII: Explanation of sloth in order to analyze this snare of Satan and to combat him: https://catholiccandle.org/2026/06/26/about-the-temperaments-part-xxiii-explanation-of-sloth-in-order-to-analyze-this-snare-of-satan/

24. Part XXIV: Explaining more about how the devil tries to draw us away from reasoning and from the things of God: https://catholiccandle.org/2026/07/29/about-the-temperaments-part-xiv-how-the-devil-draws-us-away-from-reasoning-and-the-things-of-god/

25. Part XXV – Explaining how the Devil Attempts to Destroy Our Prayer-Life and How We Should Counterattack: https://catholiccandle.org/2026/08/31/lesson-60-about-the-temperaments-part-xxv-the-devil-attempts-to-destroy-our-prayer-life/

26. Part XXVI – Explaining how the Devil uses worldliness to harm or destroy a person's deep prayer life: https://catholiccandle.org/2026/09/28/lesson-61-about-the-temperaments-part-xxv-the-fight-against-worldliness-which-is-a-huge-

detriment-to-a-deep-prayer-life/

27. Part XXVII – Explaining how the Devil Uses Gluttony to Prevent Us from Having a Life of Deep Prayer and Deep Thinking: https://catholiccandle.org/2026/10/28/lesson-61-about-the-temperaments-part-xxvii-the-devil-uses-gluttony-to-prevent-us-from-having-a-life-of-deep-prayer-and-deep-thinking/

Mary's School of Sanctity

Lesson #63 – About the Temperaments, Part XXVIII – The Devil Uses the Allurements of the World to Prevent Us from Having a Life of Deep Prayer and Deep Thinking

We have been discussing in our more recent lessons that the Devil doesn't want humans to think, especially to think ***deeply*** and ***carefully***. He knows that we humans were created to perfect our highest faculty, that is, our intellect.[1] Likewise, he knows that if we have an intellectual life (using our intellects well and thinking carefully), we will find great satisfaction for our souls.[2] Ultimately the Devil knows, too, that the intellectual life is a means of forming a deep friendship with God.

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[1] Thinking is our greatest perfection because thinking makes us most like God. Here is one way that St. Thomas explained this truth:

> The perfection of each creature is nothing other than its participation in the Divine likeness.

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Lectures on St. John's Gospel*, Ch.17, Lecture 3, #2214.

[2] Here is one way in which St. Thomas explains the reasons why a person delights in using his intellect:

> If, therefore, we compare intellectual pleasures with sensible pleasures, according as we delight in the very actions, for instance in sensitive and in intellectual knowledge; without doubt intellectual pleasures are much greater than sensible pleasures. For man takes much more delight in knowing something, by understanding it, than in knowing something by perceiving it with his sense. Because intellectual knowledge is more perfect; and because it is better known,

[Footnote continued on the next page.]

We considered how the Devil tries in any way he can to draw a man from a holy spiritual life which begins with his prayer life. In our last lesson we saw how low physical pleasures regarding food are an effective tool that the Devil uses to undermine our intellectual life and our prayer life.

In this present lesson we will see how the Devil doesn't stop there but uses other physical pleasures – which are on a higher level than food – to also distract us from a beneficial prayer life. Just as we saw in our last few lessons that we must fight against our carnal desires by striving to be temperate, we also saw the need to battle all other sources of

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[Footnote continued from the previous page.]

since the intellect reflects on its own act more than sense does. Moreover, intellectual knowledge is more beloved: for there is no one who would not forfeit his bodily sight rather than his intellectual vision, as beasts or fools are deprived thereof, as Augustine says in De Civ. Dei (De Trin. xiv, 14).

If, however, intellectual spiritual pleasures be compared with sensible bodily pleasures, then, in themselves and absolutely speaking, spiritual pleasures are greater. And this appears from the consideration of the three things needed for pleasure, *viz*. the good which is brought into conjunction, that to which it is conjoined, and the conjunction itself. For spiritual good is both greater and more beloved than bodily good: a sign whereof is that men abstain from even the greatest bodily pleasures, rather than suffer loss of honor which is an intellectual good. Likewise the intellectual faculty is much more noble and more knowing than the sensitive faculty. Also the conjunction is more intimate, more perfect and more firm. More intimate, because the senses stop at the outward accidents of a thing, whereas the intellect penetrates to the essence; for the object of the intellect is "what a thing is." More perfect, because the conjunction of the sensible to the sense implies movement, which is an imperfect act: wherefore sensible pleasures are not perceived all at once, but some part of them is passing away, while some other part is looked forward to as yet to be realized, as is manifest in pleasures of the table and in sexual pleasures: whereas intelligible things are without movement: hence pleasures of this kind are realized all at once. More firm; because the objects of bodily pleasure are corruptible, and soon pass away; whereas spiritual goods are incorruptible.

On the other hand, in relation to us, bodily pleasures are more vehement, for three reasons. First, because sensible things are more known to us, than intelligible things. Secondly, because sensible pleasures, through being passions of the sensitive appetite, are accompanied by some alteration in the body: whereas this does not occur in spiritual pleasures, save by reason of a certain reaction of the superior appetite on the lower. Thirdly, because bodily pleasures are sought as remedies for bodily defects or troubles, whence various griefs arise. Wherefore bodily pleasures, by reason of their succeeding griefs of this kind, are felt the more, and consequently are welcomed more than spiritual pleasures, which have no contrary griefs, as we shall state farther on (Ia IIae, Q.35, a.5).

Quoted from *Summa*, Ia IIae, Q.31, a.5, *respondeo* (emphasis added).

dissipation. We examined the technological gadgets that distract us, but now let us look at some other typical physical pleasures which are major sources of distraction.

There are many things that can distract a soul from its final end, *viz.,* salvation. Below, we will focus on some additional common ones that the Devil uses to draw souls away from an intellectual life of deep and careful thinking ***and*** by this means to draw those souls away also from a spiritual life of prayer.

In this lesson we will not attempt to make an exhaustive list of all possible distractions but will take some very common ones and will give some important considerations about each of them. However, we must keep in mind that although all the temperaments may be drawn to these typical distractions, some temperaments are more strongly inclined to particular ones. In addressing each of the temperaments (in future lessons), we will bring back some of this material to aid in the proper understanding of the particular temperament we are studying. This, in turn, will help a person with that temperament to gain self-knowledge and be able to improve his intellectual habits and his prayer habits.

A Life of Luxury Leads to Worldliness and Dissipation

The items discussed below may come as a surprise to us because we are so accustomed to them that we usually do not classify them as luxuries. However, when we read the *Lives of the Saints*, or Sacred Scripture, it is easier to see how they could be considered superfluous and dangerous to the soul.

Travel

In his book *The Four Last Things,* Fr. Cochem says the following:

> We esteem it a pleasure to visit a fine city, renowned for its architectural and other attractions and many are the travelers who journey all over the world to see foreign towns, and feast their eyes on their beauty. What are these cities of earth in comparison with the celestial cities?[3]

In addition to this quote let us also ponder the following sober words from the *Imitation of Christ:*

[3] *The Four Last Things* by Fr. Martin Cochem, ©1899, p.186, *On Heaven.*

> The desires of sensuality draw thee abroad, but when the hour is past, what dost thou bring home but a weight upon thy conscience and a dissipation of heart?[4] …
>
> Few are improved by sickness; so too they that travel abroad seldom become holy.[5]

These sobering words certainly capture an important aspect of our fallen human nature. Because the Devil does not want us to seek the higher things and wants to distract us from our true goal, heaven, he will try to grab our attention with things of this earth.

But if we belong to Christ, we should seek the things of Christ, not the things of the world. Here is one way in which St. Paul teaches this truth:

> If you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth. For you are dead; and your life is hid with Christ in God.[6]

With our fallen human nature, how often is it that we enjoy talking about where we have been, even if it was many years previously. There is a little feeling of "how special I am because I have been to such and such a place." Included in this self-satisfaction are the memories we dwell on of having been to a certain place and the re-living of our experiences often distracts us from our intellectual work and our prayer life. These feelings are subtle and not in the forefront of our minds but linger in the background.

It is often the case with those who have the extroverted temperaments and have travelled much that they encourage those who don't travel to make sure they get an opportunity to do some traveling. These extroverts tell the homebodies how they would really enjoy traveling. There is an almost palpable relief in the extrovert when the introverted person says that he will indeed make a trip. What explains this relief?

Also, those who have an introverted temperament, who do not seek to travel (or avoid travelling), can often find they have some kind of feeling of guilt for not having travelled. They can feel like they are viewed as a "stick in the mud" or "not a fun person" just because they have not travelled. They can feel awkward admitting that they like to simply stay home. Why these feelings of "guilt" or "awkwardness"?

Could we not say fairly that the Devil wants people to lose track of the heavenly harbor and the reality that life on earth is only an exile? Isn't this what the *Imitation of Christ*

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[4] *My Imitation of Christ,* by Thomas à Kempis, ©1982, Confraternity of the Precious Blood, 5300 Fort Hamilton Parkway, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11219, Bk.1 ch.20.

[5] *My Imitation of Christ,* by Thomas à Kempis, ©1982, Confraternity of the Precious Blood, 5300 Fort Hamilton Parkway, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11219, Bk.1 ch.23.

[6] *Colossians*, 3:1-3.

is telling us (in the quotes above)? Would not Satan be the one to encourage people to give a detailed account of where they have been and show countless pictures? Are not the social media filled with people showing all their friends or acquaintances what a wonderful time they had travelling to such and such a place?

We clearly recognize that Satan would use this means to distract persons from pursuing a truly intellectual life and also as a temptation to pride in many forms. Another consequence of travel is that it often makes a person catch the "travel bug" and he cannot wait for his next escapade. He becomes discontented in simply staying home and focusing on his duty. Likewise, he is agitated and easily distracted in his prayers because of all of the excitement of having gone abroad. Therefore, it is understandable that the Devil would try to lure humans into this type of dissipation.

Entertainment

Of course, there are many forms of entertainment. Two lessons ago[7] we discussed the dangers of television, movies, and social media, so in this lesson we will turn to other dangerous form of entertainment.

Attending Sport Events

We should be aware of the moral dangers to our souls when we attend professional Sports events. Obviously, there is immodesty of the athletes themselves and the crowd itself. There is the immodesty of any marching bands or cheerleaders, *etc.*

There is an additional moral danger against prudence in spending our time and money on such an empty pursuit. Again, this hobby can become an obsession which would make it clearly against the love of God.

Dining Out

An excursion of this type seems safe enough but we need to exercise caution here. We live in an era of extreme shallowness. Restaurants and "eating out" could always have been considered a luxury, but in our times it is a very dangerous occasion indeed. The majority of restaurants have a wait staff which is extremely immodestly dressed. In addition to this, there is usually offensive "music" and a television screen blaring at the clientele. These dangers are obvious moral perils. Prudence must be used here, especially for a family. It is far better to eat at home and foster the family life where the mother and daughters do the cooking and the family sits down together for the meal and

[7] https://catholiccandle.org/2026/09/28/lesson-61-about-the-temperaments-part-xxv-the-fight-against-worldliness-which-is-a-huge-detriment-to-a-deep-prayer-life/

a visit together. The family meal time is a crucial time to teach the children the proper social skills they need for life and the many wholesome things that the family cannot get outside the home environment.

Bodily Concerns

This includes all that pertains to our bodies and our apparent "needs."

We humans are very good at worrying about our bodies – often (unfortunately) to the detriment of our souls. We tell ourselves that we have many needs. Here are some examples:

Joining Fitness Clubs

Since we need to keep fit and healthy, many people feel they need to join fitness clubs. They spend hours at a gym "working out." There is not only the danger of becoming obsessed with one's body, but there is usually an unwholesome atmosphere in places like this. For example, there are the obvious problems with immodesty and worldliness. There is the further danger of forming bad relationships with the other people who spend lots of time in these places.

So the Devil tempts under the appearance of good— that since one must stay fit in order to be healthy, one finds himself using a most spiritually unfit place to accomplish this goal.

Joining Sports Teams

Others join sports teams. The concept of playing a sport is not bad in itself, but there are dangers one must keep in mind. There is much to weigh in the decision to join a sports team. One must examine the appropriateness of joining such a team. One must weigh modesty issues. One must be concerned about the amount of time employed, and that this time may interfere with other duties. Likewise, one must be concerned about placing himself among bad companions.

Bodily comforts

The Devil doesn't want us to do any sort of penance because penance strengthens the soul against him. So the Devil tells humans that they must have all the amenities of life – having the perfect temperature and climate for every season of the year. These include air conditioning, keeping the furnace at a high temperature for the winter, always taking

a comfortable shower, doing anything to avoid any discomfort, *etc.*

But Do We *Really* Need to "Worry About" the Dangers Of Traveling, Dining Out, Sporting Events, and Similar Activities?

A person might suppose that he can enjoy the many "fun" activities of life without sin. Perhaps he can.

But as quoted above, the *Imitation of Christ* did not declare that a traveler always commits a particular sin by traveling. Rather, the *Imitation of Christ* warns that "They that travel abroad seldom become holy."[8] In other words, travel and such things ***tend to be an impediment*** to the spiritual life.

St. Ignatius of Loyola reminds us of our purpose on earth. He reminds us that we should participate in various life activities ***only to the extent that those activities help*** us to save our soul. Here are St. Ignatius' words:

> Man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God Our Lord, and by this means to save his soul. All other things on the face of the earth are created for man to ***help*** him fulfill the end for which he is created. From this it follows that ***man is to use these things to the extent that they will help him to attain his end***. Likewise, he must rid himself of them insofar as they prevent him from attaining it.[9]

St. Ignatius reminds us that we should be ***indifferent*** to travel, dining out, and other life activities and only use them if they ***help*** us to save our soul. Here are St. Ignatius' words:

> Therefore, ***we must make ourselves indifferent to all created things***, insofar as it is left to the choice of our free will and is not forbidden. Acting accordingly, for our part, ***we should not prefer*** health to sickness, riches to poverty, honor to dishonor, a long life to a short one, and so ***in all things we should desire and***

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[8] *My Imitation of Christ,* by Thomas à Kempis, ©1982, Confraternity of the Precious Blood, 5300 Fort Hamilton Parkway, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11219, Bk.1 ch.23.

[9] Quoted from *Principle and Foundation*, *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola*.

For a thorough analysis of St. Ignatius' *Principle and Foundation*, read these articles:

† https://catholiccandle.org/2022/05/24/lesson-9-the-principle-and-foundation-part-i/

† https://catholiccandle.org/2022/06/27/lesson-11-the-principle-and-foundation-part-ii/

> ***choose only those things which will best help us attain the end for which we are created***.[10]

So, if we are indifferent to travel, to dining out, and to other such activities, then we will not prefer them to their alternative (*viz*., refraining from them). If we will choose those activities only if they are "***things which will best help us to attain the end for which we are created***", then that is fine.

But how often is that ***really*** true?[11] How often do travel, dining out, and such activities ***really help*** us to save our soul? We should ask Our Lord about this in our prayers. He will tell us and that is what we should do.

Conclusion

We have studied how God intends for us to be virtuous and use our intellects well in order to obtain intellectual/spiritual pleasures. He wants us to have the intellectual life and a deep spiritual life of friendship with Him. This means that we have to take the appropriate means to guard ourselves against the allurements of the world. In the previous two lessons we have looked at our use of creatures and how this usage influences our enthusiasm for using our God-given intellect. In this present lesson we considered some additional worldly allurements which the Devil likes to use to draw us away from the spiritual satisfaction we get when we think well and deeply.

If we are to strive for the habit of thinking well and carefully, we must take the means to avoid worldly dissipations. We must take the ***best*** means, not the easiest ones. As Our Lord tells us: "Heaven suffereth violence and the violent bear it away."[12] By doing this, we will strengthen our will-power to help us do the things that please God. He gave us our intelligence and wants us to use it to become more like Him, especially to grow in our love for Him.

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[10] *Principle and Foundation*, *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola*. For a thorough analysis of St. Ignatius' *Principle and Foundation*, read these articles:

† https://catholiccandle.org/2022/05/24/lesson-9-the-principle-and-foundation-part-i/

† https://catholiccandle.org/2022/06/27/lesson-11-the-principle-and-foundation-part-ii/

[11] Here is an article which can help us to use creatures in the way that God wills us to use them: https://catholiccandle.org/2026/09/15/lesson-61-about-the-temperaments-part-xxv-the-fight-against-worldliness-which-is-a-huge-detriment-to-a-deep-prayer-life/

[12] *St. Matthew's Gospel*, 11:12.

A Preview…

Having looked at the entrapments arrayed against all the temperaments to bring about sloth, in our next lesson we will look at the results which occur in the choleric who does not think deeply and how the Devil links this weakness with pride.

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***Catholic Candle* note:** Below is part 12 of our exploration of the best type of education – which is a true *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 twelfth part of this article, let us recall what we saw in the earlier eleven parts:

Previously, ***in part 1 of this article***,[13] we examined the problems which are rampant 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 trained to sound like someone in their field but they do more memorizing and little thinking.
- Grade "inflation" and degree "inflation" are rampant. Grades and academic degrees do not mean much anymore.

In part 2 of this article,[14] we examined, in general, what education is. We considered the human soul and the perfection of its highest faculty (*i.e.*, its highest power) – which is

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

[14] 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/

the intellect – and which is immaterial (*i.e.*, incorporeal). We saw that our intellects are perfected through knowing eternal, unchangeable truths and the causes of things.

In part 3 of this article,[15] after having seen what true education is, we examined the question ***who*** *should perfect his intellect.*

In part 4 of this article,[16] having seen that modern universities do not provide a true education, we consider whether there is ***ever*** a good reason for men or women to attend them.

In part 5 of this article,[17] 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 foster in us the vice of pride.[18]

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/training which is appropriate for a slave.[19]

In part 8 of this article, we considered further how the truth perfects our minds. This shows us that we must really ***know*** the truth, not merely believe true opinions.[20]

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[15] 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/

[16] 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/

[17] 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/

[18] Part 6 of this article can be found here: https://catholiccandle.org/2026/01/26/3129/

[19] 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/

[20] Part 8 of this article can be found here: https://catholiccandle.org/2026/03/10/the-blessing-of-a-true-catholic-liberal-education-part-viii/

In part 9 of this article, we considered more-specifically what studies (sciences) belong in a *Catholic Liberal Education*.[21]

In part 10 of this article,[22] we explored the motive and the goal of a true *Catholic Liberal Education*. A *Catholic Liberal Education* begins in Wonder and aims at Wisdom.

In part 11 of this article,[23] we considered what authors and books we should use in our *Catholic Liberal Education.*

Below, in part twelve, we consider so-called "academic freedom" and its role in education, including a *Catholic Liberal Education*.

What Is Academic Freedom? Is It Good?

Part 12

In the earlier eleven parts of our article concerning a true education, we considered many aspects of education. But we hear all around us that what is called "academic freedom" is essential to successful learning and education. But what ***is*** academic freedom? And is it ***good***?

Below, we consider what is called "academic freedom". But first let us briefly recall truths which will help us to understand "academic freedom" and assess whether it is good. The truths are answers to the following questions:

1. What is truth?;

2. What is the purpose of our intellect?;

3. What is the purpose of speech (*i.e.*, communication)?; and

4. What is education?

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[21] Part 9 of this article can be found here: https://catholiccandle.org/2026/06/26/the-blessing-of-a-true-catholic-liberal-education-part-viii-2/

[22] https://catholiccandle.org/2026/08/31/the-blessing-of-a-true-catholic-liberal-education-part-x/

[23] The Blessing of a True, Catholic Liberal Education – Part XI – The Books to Read in the Best Education: https://catholiccandle.org/2026/09/28/the-blessing-of-a-true-catholic-liberal-education-part-xi/

Then after briefly recalling these truths, we will consider "academic freedom" itself.

1. What is truth?

Truth is the mind's conformity with reality.

Here is one way that St. Thomas Aquinas, the greatest Doctor of the Catholic Church and the greatest of all thinkers, explains what truth is:

> Truth is the correspondence of a thing with the intellect, and this results when the intellect understands the thing as it is.[24]

This definition pertains to truth which is present in a person's mind. We see that this definition corresponds to the common understanding and common usage of the word "truth". For example, if a person thinks he is Napoleon Bonaparte, we would hold that his belief is not true, because his belief does not conform with reality.

Besides residing in the mind, truth can also be communicated orally and in writing. In that case, truth is the conformity to reality of what is ***said***. Here is how St. Thomas explains this:

> Something which is spoken can be commendable for two reasons. First, because ***what is said is in harmony with the thing about which it is said***; and this happens if what is said is true, for if it is false, it does not harmonize with the thing.[25]

Thus, the ***truth in communication is the conformity of what is said with reality***. That is, truth is the harmony between what is communicated and a thing as it really is. By contrast, what is false conflicts with reality.

We see that this definition corresponds to the common understanding and common usage of the word "truth". Continuing with the same example (above), suppose that a man states that he is Napoleon Bonaparte, we would hold that his statement is not true, because his statement does not conform with the reality that he is not that French

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[24] *Lectures on St. John's Gospel*, ch.14, lecture #2, section #1869.

[25] Quoted from St. Thomas' *Lectures on St. John's Gospel*, ch.13, lecture #3, section #1776 (emphasis added).

General from history.[26]

2. What is the Purpose of the Intellect?

God created us to perfect the talents (*i.e.*, abilities) that He gave to us. But the highest ability He gave us is to think – because thinking makes us most like Him[27] – whereas our bodily activities resemble the activities of brute beasts. Thus, God especially created us to be thinkers and to know the truth.

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[26] Leftists frequently talk as if the truth is simply a person's opinion (whatever that opinion might be) and is subjective. For example, the leftist Katherine Maher, CEO of National Public Radio and former head of Wikipedia, claimed that the truth is subjective in these words:

> "Our reverence for the truth might be a distraction that is getting in the way of finding common ground and getting things done," she said. "That is not to say that the truth doesn't exist or to say that the truth isn't important. Clearly the search for the truth has led us to do great things ... [but] one reason we have such glorious chronicles to the human experience and all forms of culture is because we acknowledge ***there are many different truths***." …
>
> "***I'm certain that the truth exists for you. And probably for the person sitting next to you. But this may not be the same truth***," she said.

Quoted from:
https://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2024/04/17/npr_ceo_katherine_maher_a_reverence_for_the_truth_might_be_getting_in_the_way_of_getting_things_done.html

In her statement above, we see that leftists such as NPR's Maher are very confused and completely misunderstand what truth is. ***She speaks as if the reality to which one person must conform his mind (and words) is not the same reality to which other persons must also conform their minds and words***.

Returning to our example of a man who claims to be Napoleon: his claim is simply false. His claim is not "his truth" because it is not ***the*** truth. In other words, his statement does not conform to reality.

[27] Because thinking makes us most like God, then thinking is our greatest perfection. Here is one way that St. Thomas explained this truth:

> The perfection of each creature is nothing other than its participation in the Divine similitude.

St. Thomas Aquinas, Lectures on St. John's Gospel, Ch.17, Lecture 3, #2214.

We perfect our intellect by knowing universal, unchangeable truth.[28] Here is how St. Thomas teaches this fact, quoting the great Philosopher Aristotle:

> "The true is the good of the intellect, and the false is its evil", as stated in [Aristotle's] *Ethics*, bk.6, ch.2.[29]

In other words, the truth is what rectifies our intellect and makes it good. Thus, St. Thomas teaches that "knowing the highest truth keeps the intellect rectified."[30] That is why St. Thomas Aquinas teaches (as quoted in the footnote above) that "***everyone should strive to make his judgment accord with things as they are***".

3. What is the Purpose of speech?

As we consider the purpose of speech, let us first recall what the *Natural Law* is:

> ***The Natural Law is what we understand that we must do (or refrain from doing) through the light of the natural reason God gave to us.***[31]

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[28] Knowing singular, contingent facts does not perfect a person's mind. For example, our intellects are not perfected by knowing the name of each street in Atlanta, Georgia (or anywhere else). Read a fuller explanation of this principle here: https://catholiccandle.org/2025/07/09/the-blessing-of-a-true-catholic-liberal-education-part-ii/

[29] *Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.60, a.4, ad 2. Here is the longer quote:
> [W]hen we judge of *things* … there is 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 (bracketed words added for clarity; emphasis added).

[30] Quoted from St. Thomas' sermon given to the faculty and students of the University of Paris, on the evening of September 8, for the Feast of Our Lady's Nativity.

[31] Here is how St. Thomas explains what the Natural Law is:

> [L]aw, being a rule and measure, can be in a person in two ways: in one way, as in him that rules and measures; in another way, as in that which is ruled and measured, since a thing is ruled and measured, in so far as it partakes of the rule or measure. Wherefore, since all things subject to Divine Providence are ruled and measured by the Eternal Law, as was stated above [in *Summa*, Ia IIae, Q.91, a.1], it is evident that all things partake somewhat of the Eternal Law, in so far as, namely, from its being imprinted on them, they derive their respective inclinations to their proper acts and ends. Now among all others, ***the rational creature is subject to Divine Providence in the most excellent way, in***

One example of the Natural Law is that we must never tell a lie. We naturally know this because we know that ***the purpose of speech is to convey the truth.*** For (as St. Thomas explains above), conforming to reality in our speech is good (*i.e.*, commendable) and falsifying reality is bad.

Our experience shows us that everyone naturally knows that telling a lie is abusing the purpose of speech. For we observe that liars attempt to ***hide*** the fact that they are lying. That is, liars strive to appear that their words convey the truth and conform to reality.[32]

4. What is Education?

The word "education" comes from the Latin word "educere" – to lead out. Education is leading a person from ignorance to knowledge.

Education is the pursuit of the truth about the objective order established by God. Thus, education (whether formal or informal) is the pursuit of the truth which perfects our intellect.

> ***so far as it partakes of a share of providence, by being provident both for itself and for others. Wherefore it has a share of the Eternal Reason, whereby it has a natural inclination to its proper act and end: and this participation of the Eternal Law in the rational creature is called the Natural Law***.
>
> Hence the Psalmist after saying (in *Psalm*, 4:6): "Offer up the sacrifice of justice," as though someone asked what the works of justice are, adds: "Many say, Who showeth us good things?" in answer to which question he says: "The light of Thy countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us": thus implying that ***the light of natural reason, whereby we discern what is good and what is evil, which is the function of the Natural Law, is nothing else than an imprint on us of the Divine light***. It is therefore evident that ***the Natural Law is nothing else than the rational creature's participation in the eternal law***.

Summa, Ia IIae, Q.91, a.2, *respondeo*.

[32] A man offends God and deserves punishment for knowingly breaking the Natural Law even if God has not given him any grace and the Catholic Faith. This is because man has reason and free will. Therefore, when he does what he knows is bad and contrary to the Natural Law (*e.g.*, telling a lie), he deserves punishment for doing this evil and acting against the nature God gave to him.

By contrast, because grace and the Catholic Faith are free undeserved gifts of God, God does not punish a man for lacking those gifts when God chooses not to give them to him.

What is Academic Freedom?

So-called "academic freedom" is ***the supposed "right" to study in whatever way that a person wishes and/or to disseminate his opinions even if other persons want such opinions silenced.*** Such "academic freedom" does not depend on the truth or falsity of the opinion given.

Here is how *Encyclopedia Britannica* defines "academic freedom":

> Academic freedom, the freedom of teachers and students to teach, study, and pursue knowledge and research without unreasonable interference or restriction from law, institutional regulations, or public pressure. Its basic elements include the freedom of teachers to inquire into any subject that evokes their intellectual concern; to present their findings to their students, colleagues, and others; to publish their data and conclusions without control or censorship; and to teach in the manner they consider professionally appropriate. For students, the basic elements include the freedom to study subjects that concern them and to form conclusions for themselves and express their opinions.[33]

Note that proponents of "academic freedom" say (as quoted immediately above) that it protects a person from "unreasonable interference". This suggests that "academic freedom" still allows some "reasonable" interference. But such "reasonable interference" refers to interference to prevent a person from using "academic freedom" as a cloak to engage in obscenity, libel, harassment, blackmail, bribery, insider trading (which is a violation of federal securities law), perjury, plagiarism or other such (usually illegal) activities.[34] But, generally, opinions which are not illegal are permitted regardless of their falsity. In other words, this so-called "academic freedom" ***is the institutionalized permission to spread falsehoods***.

But this is evil! Falsehood is the poison of the mind. Here is how Pope Gregory the XVI explained this truth:

> Some are so carried away that they contentiously assert that the flock of errors arising from [bad books] is sufficiently compensated by the publication of some book which defends religion and truth. Every law condemns deliberately doing evil simply because there is some hope that good may result. ***Is there any sane man who would say poison ought to be distributed, sold publicly, stored, and***

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[33] https://www.britannica.com/topic/academic-freedom

[34] https://www.harvardmagazine.com/2024/09/harvard-academic-freedom-free-speech

> ***even drunk because some antidote is available and those who use it may be snatched from death again and again?***[35]

God created our mind and our power of speech to be ordered to the ***truth***! For, as Our Lord taught us: it is the ***truth*** which makes us free. *St. John's Gospel*, 8:32.

The modern, evil fad called "academic freedom" is not *real* freedom but is an abuse of real freedom. Rather, it is "academic licentiousness".[36] This "freedom" ***for*** error is a violation of the Natural Law and an abuse of our mind because (as we saw above) the purpose of the mind is to know the truth. This so-called "academic freedom" is also an abuse of speech because (as we saw above) the purpose of speech is to convey the truth.

If a modern academic institution were to attempt to prevent its teacher from teaching whatever he wants, such a teacher would invoke "academic freedom" and say (in effect) "who are you to tell me that I shouldn't teach [the particular opinion]?" Implicit in this retort is that "you have your opinion and I have mine" and that both opinions are permissible.

In this way, we can see that so-called "academic freedom" implies one (or more) of the following three positions:

1. The truth is unimportant – and so it does not matter if a person teaches errors; or

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[35] August 15, 1832 Encyclical *Mirari Vos*, ¶15 (emphasis added).

[36] Pope Leo XIII condemned so-called "academic freedom" in the following words:

> A like judgment must be passed upon what is called ***liberty of teaching*** [*i.e.*, "academic freedom"]. There can be no doubt that truth alone should imbue the minds of men, for in it are found the well-being, the end, and the perfection of every intelligent nature; and therefore ***nothing but truth should be taught both to the ignorant and to the educated***, so as to bring knowledge to those who have it not, and to preserve it in those who possess it. For this reason ***it is plainly the duty of all who teach to banish error from the mind***, and by sure safeguards to close the entry to all false convictions. From this it follows, as is evident, that ***the liberty [viz., "academic freedom"] of which We have been speaking is greatly opposed to reason***, and tends absolutely to pervert men's minds, in as much as it claims for itself the right of teaching whatever it pleases - a liberty which the State cannot grant without failing in its duty. And the more so because the authority of teachers has great weight with their hearers, who can rarely decide for themselves as to the truth or falsehood of the instruction given to them.

Pope Leo XIII, Encyclical *Libertas praestantissimum*, June 20, 1888, ¶24.

2. There is no such thing as objective truth and so we "might as well" allow everyone to communicate his own opinion because, since there is no real objective truth, every opinion is "as good as any other"; (we see this attitude in the common expression "you have your truth and I have mine"); or

3. Truth might exist but cannot be known – so no opinion can be proven false by appealing to the objective truth since we cannot know the truth.

In other words, ***"academic freedom" takes as an official tenet in the field of education that teaching and learning do not need to be guided by the truth.***

Let's Get to the *Root* of "Academic Freedom": It Is a Satanic Refusal to be Bound by the Truth

Academic freedom is an invention of the devil, who is the *Father of Lies* and of falsehoods. At the beginning of creation, the devil rejected reality – *viz.*, the reality that he is a creature who owes his existence to God, to Whom he owes gratitude and service. In the devil's rejection of the truth, he declared "*non serviam*" to God. In other words, the devil declared himself "emancipated" from reality and to be "free" from the truth.

In the same manner, educators who are not devoted to the truth and who follow Satan's example, likewise declare their own "*non serviam*". They declare their "emancipation" from reality and from the obligation of being directed by the objective truth, especially as revealed in the wisdom of the Catholic Church.[37] Such educators show themselves unfit to teach because they lack the clarity of understanding and the strength of conviction to uphold that human reason can discover and understand the objective reality around us –

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[37] At Vatican II, the churchmen wanted to promote the spirit of the world. They largely came out into the open with their intent to follow the world and to refuse to be guided by the infallible teaching of the One, True, Holy, Catholic Faith. Another way to say this is that at Vatican II the churchmen declared "*non serviam*" and declared their "emancipation" from the obligation of being directed by the truth of the Catholic Faith.

To read many more examples of the unfaithful teachings of the council fathers at Vatican II, read *Lumen Gentium Annotated,* by *Quanta Cura Press*, © 2013, pp.277-301. This book is available:

- From *Catholic Candle* as a free e-book here: https://catholiccandle.org/2023/06/23/lumen-gentium-annotated/ and
- From Amazon, at cost, here: https://www.amazon.com/Lumen-Gentium-Annotated-examination-revolution/dp/1492107476 .

and that they must be guided by this reality.

With "Academic Freedom" in Schools, There Can Be No Pursuit of the Truth *as Such*

Because teachers consider themselves "emancipated" from the truth, they have the problem that they cannot justify their work as conveying to students the (objective) truth about reality as God created it. So, to "justify" the idea that there ***is any*** academic life even worth pursuing, educators teach "survey courses" – comparing what various authors said without reference to the fact that some authors taught the truth and others spread error. This attitude tends to emphasize creativity and originality (*i.e.*, ideas which are new) instead of conformance with reality. These survey courses merely sample different "approaches" and ideas from the past.

The fact that contemporary "liberal arts" are so thoroughly historical and humanistic is caused by the modern view that the value of man's intellectual achievements is not grounded in the truth of his accumulated objective wisdom.[38] Instead, the modern view is that wisdom is a human creation and is a "glorious product in which to rejoice". This pseudo "Liberal education", then, is not seen as something which perfects and is good *for* man, but as something worth studying and preserving for the simple reason that it is *from* man.

Such studies are fittingly called "humanism" because they focus on the works of man. Man's scientific and literary accomplishments are thought worthy of being included within this collection of things to be studied because they are "brilliant human achievements". For this reason, so many modern academic works are studied because they are "testimonies to human ingenuity" or are human "self-expressions". This evil theory, *viz.*, humanism, arose in the Renaissance as a substitute for the (prior) pursuit of the objective truth.

With the modern rejection of the pursuit of objective Truth and Wisdom, the only thing remaining is to pursue what might appeal to the fancy of each particular student. Therefore, students are offered a curriculum full of "electives" (as we will discuss more in the next section) and are encouraged to choose whatever ones they want.

Because educators reject the ***truth*** as the criterion by which to determine which books should be studied, they seek to attract students' interest by offering "fun" classes,

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[38] To understand what *genuine* wisdom is and how it is objective and is not contingent on the opinions of man, read this article: https://catholiccandle.org/2026/08/31/the-blessing-of-a-true-catholic-liberal-education-part-x/

innovative connections, and idle curiosity. Students are supposed to derive from these classes whatever ***they*** like or deem valuable in some personal way.

In this we see the fulfillment of St. Paul's prophesy regarding society's abandonment of the truth and the pursuit of fables:

> For there shall be a time, when they will not endure sound doctrine; but, according to their own desires, they will heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears: And will indeed turn away their hearing from the truth, but will be turned unto fables.[39]

This counterfeit "liberal education" is a caricature of a genuine Liberal Education in the same way that Satan is a counterfeit "god"!

"Academic Freedom" Results in the Absurdity that Students Choose their Own Courses of Studies (Academic "Majors")

Because the educational establishment has abandoned the pursuit of truth and has "replaced" it with surveying the "glory" of human works, there arose (unsurprisingly) another evil fad – *i.e.*, filling the curriculum with "electives" – that is, allowing the student to decide for himself what he wants to study.

Previously, when the goal of learning was to form one's mind in the highest truths and wisdom, then a single curriculum (for all students) was obviously the best approach. This single plan of studies was handed down through the centuries, having been chosen by the wisest teachers based on the fruits of their entire lifetime of study. These wise teachers were in the best position to judge the common path on which all students should travel to perfect their minds.

The students' own input was neither sought nor helpful because they were at the beginning of learning and would be poor judges of the correct way to pursue the work ahead of them. This is like the fact that a kindergartener is a poor judge of whether he should spend all of his school time coloring and playing with blocks or whether he should also be required to begin to learn to read and write.

Further, the goal of genuine education is to obtain the highest truths and wisdom, and so this best plan for study did not (and should not) be changed merely because some students might enjoy or fancy some subjects of study more than other subjects. That preference would not be relevant when determining which program would best perfect their minds.

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[39] 2 *Timothy*, Ch.4: 3-4.

In other words, it would be foolish to allow students to choose their own program of studies ("electives") based on their appetites and ignorance instead of forming their minds in the program that was objectively best – which is set out for them by wise thinkers aiming at forming the students' minds with a genuine education.

The Best Type of Education Must Be Catholic – *i.e.*, It Must Be Guided by Christ and His Church

Now let us look at the good which is opposed to "academic freedom". A good education must be undertaken in subordination to the teaching of the Church. In other words, education must be guided by Christ and His Church. This is one of the many great blessings of being Catholic – *viz.*, the best perfection of our intellects is possible for Catholics and is attainable only by faithful Catholics.[40]

Such an education demands that each part of the curriculum should be conducted with a view to understanding the highest truths revealed by the Catholic Faith, and that the Faith itself should be the light by which the curriculum is studied. This subordination to the True Faith also fits with the reason why God put us on earth – *viz.*, to save our souls.

It makes perfect sense that we should be guided by the true Catholic Church and Faith. (We are ***not*** referring to the current, heretical,[41] conciliar teachings of the unfaithful, human element of the Church.) This is because Our Lord ***is*** the Truth – as He taught us: "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life."[42]

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[40] Because God cannot err, the pursuit of truth and the fidelity to God require that we never suppose that Sacred Scripture or infallible Catholic dogma might be false, although it could happen that we consider whether we correctly understand a point of the traditional Catholic Faith.

[41] A reader would be wrong to suppose that the heresy taught by the conciliar popes and the rest of the hierarchy shows that they do not hold their offices. A pope (or other member of the hierarchy) can teach (or believe) heresy and in fact, popes have taught and believed heresy at various times during Church history. To take two examples: Pope John XXII and Pope Nicholas I both taught explicit heresy while pope and nonetheless each of them in his turn, continued to be the pope. 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/

For an analysis of other aspects of the grave error of sedevacantism, read the articles which *Catholic Candle* published on this topic: https://catholiccandle.org/2026/03/10/since-pope-john-paul-ii-was-a-real-pope-was-archbishop-lefebvre-was-excommunicated/

[42] *St. John's Gospel*, 14:6.

Not only is Our Lord the Truth, but this is the reason He became Man, as He said:

> For this was I born, and for this came I into the world; that I should give testimony to the truth. ***Every one that is of the truth, heareth My Voice***.[43]

Therefore, in order for us to be truly educated and thus to be "***of the truth***", we must ***hear His Voice***. This means that we must be docile sons of the Truth by being ***guided by His Voice*** as transmitted to us through the traditional teachings of the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church is Christ's Mystical Body. When we hear the true, infallible, traditional teachings of His Mystical Body, we hear Him.[44]

So we know infallibly that we should be guided by the Divine Wisdom Who became Man, because this is why He came to teach us. And, when we are taught by Him, He tells us that "you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."[45]

Since the Faith liberates a person from error by his submission to Catholic teachings, it both guides and strengthens his intelligence in the performance of those activities which constitute his very life as a thinker. Since man is distinguished most of all by rationality, he lives most of all through the living activity of thinking.

When we are pursuing the truth, it helps us tremendously to already know through our infallible Catholic Faith the conclusion we will reach through the chain of natural reasoning that we undertake. Here is how St. Thomas Aquinas explains how the true Faith aids us when we seek the truth using our reason:

> As regards those truths about God which human reason could have discovered, it was necessary that man should be taught by a divine revelation; because the truth about God such as reason could discover, would only be known by a few [*i.e.*, wiser persons], and that after a long time [*i.e.*, after much study], and with the admixture of many errors.[46]

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43 *St. John's Gospel*, 18:37.

44 For an explanation how we ordinary Catholics can discern the authentic traditional Catholic Faith as contrasted to conciliar falsehood, read this article: *Judging the Pope's Words & Deeds According to Catholic Tradition*, found here: https://catholiccandle.org/2025/08/09/judging-the-popes-words-deeds-according-to-catholic-tradition/

45 *St. John's Gospel*, 8:32.

46 *Summa*, Ia, Q.1, a.1 (bracketed words added for clarity).

An Example Where the Traditional Catholic Faith Guides Us on a Philosophical Question.

Here is one topic (among countless others) in which the Catholic Faith is our light by which we consider a natural truth: *When we are considering through human reason whether the human soul is immortal, it helps us to avoid wasting time and to avoid being deceived by errors, for us to know at the beginning of this philosophical study what is the final conclusion which is infallibly taught by our Catholic Faith, viz., that the human soul* ***is*** *immortal. Knowing this is a crucial help to us in avoiding many "blind alleys" of fruitless inquiries.*

Thus, when we seek the proofs of reason whether the soul is immortal, we would know that we should study the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas and Aristotle in their treatises on the soul (in which works they prove through natural reason that the soul is immortal), rather than to futilely seek the truth in the wrong "direction" – in the works of erroneous thinkers such as Karl Marx – who falsely denied that man has an immortal soul and falsely denied the existence of all spiritual (immaterial) beings – including the soul.

Leftist Often Apply "Academic Freedom" in a Way that Protects Error but Does Not Protect the Truth and Various Conservative Positions

Because so-called "academic freedom" is a tool promoted by the enemies of Christ, it often results in a teacher not really being free to teach *whatever* he wants – but only what the leftists choose to allow. These leftists who control academia punish those who invoke "*academic freedom*" to attack leftist ideology. So, for example, if a teacher explains the evil of "academic freedom" or of the leftists' doctrine of "diversity, equity, and inclusion",[47] leftists would generally not give him the protection of "academic freedom" to continue his teachings.

So-Called "Academic Freedom" is the Application in the Academic Setting of the More-General (False) Principle of Freedom for Error

This "academic freedom" is the application to schools (*i.e.*, education) of the same evil principle (*viz*., freedom for error) which in spiritual matters is the heresy called "religious

[47] For an analysis of the evils of the leftists' promotion of diversity, equity, and inclusion, read this article: https://catholiccandle.org/2022/01/05/the-false-principle-of-diversity-and-inclusion/

liberty".[48] This "freedom for error" is absurd on a natural level and also on the supernatural level.[49] The Church has condemned this "insanity"[50] throughout Her entire history and this so-called "freedom" is just as absurd in the academic setting as it is in the religious setting.

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[48] The Catholic Church and sound philosophy throughout history have condemned the heresy and "insanity" called religious liberty – *viz*., the "liberty" to espouse and spread religious errors. Here is a list of the consistent condemnations of religious liberty through the ages: https://catholiccandle.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Errors-of-Dignitatis-Humanae.pdf

[49] In the following words, Pope Leo XIII condemned the idea that people have a right to communicate errors and called this idea "absurd":

> *We must now consider briefly liberty of speech*, and liberty of the press. It is hardly necessary to say that there can be no such right as this, if it be not used in moderation, and if it pass beyond the bounds and end of all true liberty. For right is a moral power which – as We have before said and must again and again repeat - ***it is absurd to suppose that nature has accorded indifferently to truth and falsehood***, to justice and injustice.

Pope Leo XIII, Encyclical *Libertas praestantissimum*, June 20, 1888, ¶23.

[50] Here is how Pope Gregory XVI (1765-1846) condemned as "insanity" the freedom to hold erroneous opinions and communicate them to others:

> From this poisoned source of indifferentism springs that ***false and absurd maxim, better termed the insanity [deliramentum]*** that liberty of conscience must be obtained and guaranteed for everyone. This is the most contagious of errors, which prepares the way for that absolute and totally unrestrained liberty of opinions which, for the ruin of Church and State, is spreading everywhere.... Here we must include that harmful and never sufficiently denounced freedom to publish any writings whatever and disseminate them to the people, which some dare to demand and promote with so great a clamor. We are horrified to see what monstrous doctrines and prodigious errors are disseminated far and wide in countless books, pamphlets and other writings.... Some are so carried away that they contentiously assert that the flock of errors arising from them is sufficiently compensated by the publication of some book which defends religion and truth.... Is there any sane man who would say poison ought to be distributed, sold publicly, stored and even drunk, because some antidote is available and those who use it may be snatched from death again and again?

August 15, 1832 Encyclical *Mirari Vos*, ¶¶ 14-15 (emphasis added).

The Solution – There is a Privileged Status for the Truth

Above we see that so-called "academic freedom" is evil. Error has no rights. No one has the right to believe or spread errors. God made our minds only to seek and to hold the truth and He gave us speech only to communicate the truth. In academic ideas, religious ideas, and in all other aspects of life, the truth must be promoted and error must be suppressed by ***all*** authorities, civil and religious. Here is one way in which Pope Leo XIII taught this truth:

> Men have a right freely and prudently to propagate throughout the State what things soever are true and honorable, so that as many as possible may possess them; but lying opinions, than which no mental plague is greater, and vices which corrupt the heart and moral life should be diligently repressed by public authority, lest they insidiously work the ruin of the State.

Pope Leo XIII, Encyclical *Libertas praestantissimum*, June 20, 1888, ¶23.

Conclusion

God made us with the duty and the privilege to know the truth and to communicate the truth. Error has no rights and thus "academic freedom" is evil and is an impediment to learning.

All men must pursue the truth – especially in philosophy and theology – through docile submission to the traditional Catholic Faith.

Looking Ahead

In Part Eight of our treatment of the blessings of a genuine *Catholic Liberal Education*, we saw that this true education requires that we make the truth "our own". We saw that we must not simply memorize true opinions but must understand the truth as founded on first principles which we clearly know.

In Part Eight, we touched briefly upon the advantages of well-prepared, orderly classroom discussions as compared to classroom lectures. In our next part of this article, we will consider more fully the advantages and disadvantages of learning through lectures and through discussions.

To Be Continued …

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Catholic Candle's 2027 Catholic Calendar

The *Catholic Candle*'s 2027 Traditional Catholic calendar is coming soon. It will be free to download and freely distributable.

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