

# The Light of Christ: An Introduction to Catholicism

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THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

AN INTRODUCTION TO CATHOLICISM

THOMAS JOSEPH WHITE, OP

The Catholic University of America Press

Washington, D.C.

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This book is dedicated to R. R. Reno, in friendship

The Church, though dispersed throughout the whole world, even to the ends of the earth, has received from the apostles and their disciples this faith: She believes in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them; and in one Christ, Jesus the Son of God, who became incarnate for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit who proclaimed through the prophets the dispensations of God: [announcing in prophecy] the birth from a virgin, and the passion, and the resurrection from the dead, and the ascension into heaven in the flesh of the beloved Christ, Jesus our Lord, and His future manifestation from heaven in the glory of the Father to gather all things in one, and to raise up anew all flesh of the whole human race. . . . As I have already observed, the Church, having received this preaching and this faith, although scattered throughout the whole world, yet as if occupying but one house, carefully preserves it. She also believes these points of doctrine just as if she had but one soul, and one and the same heart, and she proclaims them, and teaches them, and hands them down, with perfect harmony, as if she possessed only one mouth. For, although the languages of the world are dissimilar, yet the content of the [apostolic] tradition is one and the same. For the churches which have been planted in Germany do not believe or hand down anything different, nor do those in Spain, nor those in Gaul, nor those in the East, nor those in Egypt, nor those in Libya, nor those which have been established in the central regions of the world. But as the sun, that creature of God, is one and the same throughout the whole world, so also the preaching of the truth shines everywhere, and enlightens all men that are willing to come to a knowledge of the truth.

Irenaeus (ca. 180 A.D.)

Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* I, 10, 1–2, trans. A. Roberts and W. Rambaut, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, ed. A. Roberts, J. Donaldson, and A. C. Coxe (Buffalo, N.Y.: Christian Literature Publishing, 1885); translation slightly modified.

Modern Catholicism is nothing else but simply the legitimate growth and complement, that is, the natural and necessary development, of the doctrine of the early Church.

John Henry Newman (1845 A.D.)

John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 169.

## INTRODUCTION

### THE CATHOLIC INTELLECTUAL LIFE

*Intellectus* means to “read from within.” To be intellectual—to be an intellectual—means to seek to see into the depths of reality. This is something we should all want to do and be. In fact, to a great degree we do not have much of a choice. Human beings are made with the capacity to “read from within.” We tend inevitably to seek the truth about what makes things the way they are. Why is the natural world so beautiful? Why is it marked by an intelligible order that the sciences discover

progressively? Are the forces that gave rise to the universe entirely impersonal, and ultimately indifferent to human life? Why is there a world at all? If everything around us has a cause, does that mean there is a cause of all causes?

Not everyone ponders metaphysical questions. In fact, they are very likely of pressing concern for only a few people. Far more wonder about moral goodness. Nearly everyone is concerned to discern how he should live. This is not so much a concern about moral rules, though they are important. It is an attempt to penetrate the depths of our own existence. Is this the right person to marry? Should I marry? Is this the subject to major in or right job to take? Have I devoted myself to what really matters? We want to see ourselves “from within,” as it were, taking hold of the final meaning or purpose of our lives.

This concern to know life’s purpose is closely related to our fascination with beauty. This is not something we typically seek to know, at least not in the usual sense of knowing. But “knowing” translates the ancient Greek word *episteme*, which means being around or intimate with. It is this sense of the word that allowed early modern translators of the Bible to use “knowing” as a euphemism for sexual intercourse: “Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived.”<sup>1</sup> We seek to know beauty in this way, wishing to draw close to that which is beautiful, seeking to make beauty part of our lives. The prehistoric tools made by our distant ancestors were formed not just to function, but also to please. From earliest times humans decorated their bodies.

The spiritual quest of the human person for truth, goodness, and beauty can be deferred and even denied for a time. It can be stunted and stymied by lack of education, corrupt social influences, and subservience to the idols of money, status, and other forms of worldly success. But it cannot be eradicated. Our souls will not be satisfied with mere information, as if our hunger for knowledge could be quelled by uploading data. Google provides endless facts, available in an instant. But we want understanding, insight, and wisdom. We want to know why and what for. We wish to perceive all in the unending light of what is and cannot not be. Our hearts are restless with the desire to know the truth.

We see this all around us, not least in the paradoxes of our anti-metaphysical age. A number of scientists and philosophers have concluded that what we imagine to be a noble quest for truth is in fact an odd offshoot of various mental functions associated with the development of our brains in the evolutionary process. If we look into the depths of reality we find . . . neurons, electrons, protons, and other bits of matter. Yet, these very same intellectuals seem oddly driven to evangelize us and debunk our (to them) illusions about truth, goodness, and beauty. The same goes for literary professors convinced that “truth” is an army of metaphors commanded by the powerful. It’s a nihilistic conviction nearly always pressed forward as a liberating truth. The zeal of the skeptics, materialists, and reductionists of our time bears witness to our lasting desire for and devotion to truth, even as their words deny it.

Although perennial and unavoidable—or perhaps because perennial and unavoidable—we often feel our deepest longings for knowledge to be perilous. They can give rise to frustration, disgust, and despair. When we try to see into the depths of the Gulag or the gas chamber, we enter into a dark chasm of brutality. The human condition is opaque. Every earthly city is marred by injustices, perhaps less grotesque and demonic, but pervasive and dehumanizing nevertheless. Yes, history testifies to heroism, nobility of soul, and the human capacity for self-sacrifice. But like everything human, it is stained by original sin. Human beings are often most inhuman—most not themselves—in the way they treat their fellow human beings.

Moreover, we are always haunted by the knowledge that we can be deceived, perhaps by our own doing, or by the wiles of others, or simply by society’s conventional view of things. This is not a modern awareness. Again and again the Old Testament warns of idolatry’s many seductions. We

are tempted by what is convenient. We are intimidated by what is powerful and popular. In his dialogues Plato warns of sophistry. Logical arguments may seem a reliable guide, but they can be manipulated by the unscrupulous. Bad arguments can be made to seem good by those skilled at rhetoric. St. Paul warns against those who would be wise according to the world. By this he does not mean knowledge of nature, the created world, but instead an outlook on life defined by “worldly” assumptions: that God is remote and inaccessible, that death is final, that power and wealth provide the only reliable means to achieve happiness in this life, and so forth. All this may seem true, but the ways of God are not the ways of men. In Christ the wisdom of the wise is destroyed, and the cleverness of the clever thwarted.<sup>2</sup>

Our acute sense of vulnerability is heightened all the more when we venture into religious questions. For God, however near he may draw, is not accessible like other realities around us. Even when we feel him near, he eludes our grasp. And at the same time, in his hiddenness God is at the core of our being, more interior to us than we are to ourselves. Moreover, the question of God has implications for our lives. To believe something—anything—about the ultimate source of reality and summit of truth affects our convictions about how we should live and what we should live for. It is for this reason that we approach the question of God with such a perplexing combination of urgent desire and profound hesitation. It could be the most important question of all, but it could lead us down the path into serious error and delusion. But in that case, it is the most dangerous question to ignore, and the most dangerous question to answer wrongly!

For this reason, any sincere effort to seek religious truth must address simultaneously our rightful fear of arbitrary religious manipulation and our genuine thirst for transcendent knowledge of the true, good, and beautiful.<sup>3</sup> Our quest for God must be both judicious and risk-taking, meditative and ready to abandon all for the opportunity to see God himself “from within,” if only through a glass darkly. Questions of faith require critical reflection. It is a foolish, convenient, and ill-informed conceit of the modern secular world that religious faith is based on a childish, credulous mentality. The critical apparatus of Western intellectual life was first developed in order to guide faith’s affirmation with care, guarding against idolatry, against an anthropomorphic projection onto God of human values, against simple-minded literalisms, and against a zealous mentality quick to turn to the sword to defend the truths of faith. But it is equally foolish to imagine that deep truths can be known if one stands forever at the edge, never willing to commit. There must be a moment of abandonment, however carefully guided. We cannot be romanced by a truth we lack the courage to embrace.

Every person has to accept risk in truth’s call to us. Even religious indifference is a kind of risk, perhaps the greatest of all, for if nothing is ventured, nothing is gained. The mind is reason’s instrument, but the heart is its seat. Faith shares a commonality here with romance. In opening our hearts to the search for God, we set out in hope and trust, acknowledging all the while the serious possibility of failure. Here we naturally try to avoid the two extremes of excessive skepticism and facile credulity. Excessive skepticism can lead to despair, which is a hidden form of self-aggrandizement. Facile credulity can lead to ideology, which is a not so hidden form of idolatry. And no person, whether the most ardent atheist or the most convicted believer, should refuse to take seriously the arguments of opposing viewpoints. How indeed can we enter more deeply into the truth if we do not consider why and how our convictions may be false?

Finally, the wisest recognize their need for companions on the journey to truth, especially religious truth. We need reliable guides. No one person can cover all the fronts of argument, analysis, and investigation. Physics, chemistry, and the other modern sciences are necessarily team efforts. The same goes for philosophy and theology. Indeed, all the more so in these domains, for in our search for knowledge of the highest truths we need wisdom’s guidance and not just the voice of expertise.

John Henry Newman once observed that reason's powers of proof and argument diminish as the subject matter becomes greater and more consequential.<sup>4</sup> Geometry runs on proofs. Especially gifted young people can teach themselves mathematics and learn foreign languages on their own. These are worthy enterprises, and the remarkable ability of some to make such rapid progress on the basis of pure aptitude testifies to the extraordinary propulsive power of our desire for truth. However, education of the young typically requires structure and discipline, which are meant to liberate people for the service of the truth. Like training spirited horses that already seek to gallop, one of the great joys of teaching comes from the fact that one is releasing and guiding the innate hunger for learning that energizes young minds.

Questions of God, right worship, and righteous living cannot be answered with syllogisms alone. The modern myth of the noble savage conjured up the illusion that knowledge of the good is innate, spoiled by education rather than developed by it. But to be unformed by a moral tradition is to be feral, not "natural." Moreover, there is no "natural" religious outlook that a talented autodidact can work out on his own in the same way as he can teach himself algebra. A deep knowledge of the truth, the good, and the beautiful involves the use of reason. But a great deal turns on the first principles, initial assumptions, and deep intuitions that ground reflection. As a result, we need teachers we can trust to help us discern which to affirm, which to cultivate. And in our moral and religious teachers we often (and quite rightly) prefer sound character to shining brilliance, wisdom to erudition, depth of piety to breadth of learning. In this there is peril yet again, for often we must choose our teachers before we know enough to make an expert decision. Or as is more often the case, they are chosen for us by our parents or community. And once again we must accept the risk, not failing to use our critical faculties as best we can, but not dithering on the sidelines of truth's quest for so long that we fail to make the journey.

This is a book that offers itself as a companion. I do not presume to argue the reader into the truths of the Catholic faith, though I will make arguments. Logical arguments sometimes fail to move a person to God, but they do often help us take the next step to discover God eventually. I do not offer these chapters as homilies, though they do seek to bear witness to a supernatural faith. At times we need to see before us the truth we do not yet believe, or only half believe. My goal is to make explicit in a few broad strokes the shape of Catholicism. I hope to outline its inherent intelligibility or form as a mystery that is at once visible and invisible, ancient and contemporary, mystical and reasonable. Throughout I do not seek primarily to present my own individual ideas, but to represent the wisdom of the Catholic Church. For she has been for us what Christ himself promised she would be: the trustworthy teacher of truths both human and divine.

[1.](#) Gn 4:1.

[2.](#) 1 Cor 1:19.

[3.](#) Joseph Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One: An Approach to a Spiritual Christology*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 28–29: "There has always been a kind of basic evidence for the reality of God . . . [but] the basic certainty of the existence of God was and is always accompanied by a sense of its being an immense riddle. Once we attempt to name and describe this God in more detail, once we try to relate human life to him and respond to him, the image of God falls apart in contradictory aspects . . . . A consideration of the history of religion yields a further result: the theme of revelation crops up regularly. Negatively, this shows that man is not in a position to produce a relationship to God on his own account . . . . Positively it means that the existing means of relating to God go back to an initiative on the latter's part, the tradition of which is passed on within a community as the wisdom of the ancients. To that extent, even the awareness that religion must rest on a higher authority than that of one's own reason, and that it needs a community as a 'carrier,' is part of mankind's basic knowledge, though found in manifold forms and even distortions."

4. John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 300–303.

## 1 REVELATION AND REASON

### Human Search for an Unknown God

At the starting point there is no ambiguity: apostolic Christianity is based on an appeal to divine revelation. “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.”<sup>1</sup> This founding statement is not the conclusion of philosophical argument, nor is it a first principle of natural reason. It is a statement of the truth about God, an uncovering or unveiling. (Revelation is a Latin-derived word for the Greek term *apocalypsis*, which means uncovering or unveiling.) And the reality revealed is God himself, and what God in his freedom has done for us in Christ. As something “from the beginning,” this is as fundamental for our human destiny as the creation of reality itself.

Jesus of Nazareth is a person, not the conclusion to a syllogism. Christ’s crucifixion is not something we can deduce from first principles of philosophy or mathematics. We can only know the truth about Christ because we are told about it, and not just by anyone, but by trustworthy sources who testify to us about him. The author of the Gospel of John follows up the announcement of the Incarnation in precisely this way: “John bore witness to him, and cried, ‘This was he of whom I said, ‘he who comes after me ranks before me, for he was before me.’”<sup>2</sup> There are many internal reasons why we come to faith. Some are spurred on by philosophical questions, or a personal search for meaning. Others identify with the mystery of Christ suffering on the Cross. Still others are inspired by the example of friends whose faith seems to make them generous or peaceful. There are as many paths to Christ as there are types of people and moments in history. But he is only available to us because he is proposed to us, because he is put forward by others as the Christ—because others bear witness to him.

The idea of organizing our lives around a truth received on the testimony of others received on trust is often thought to be at odds with universal human reason. How can we base our beliefs about a transcendent God on the words of someone like an itinerant desert ascetic and preacher, John the Baptist, which after all depend on the trustworthiness of the testimony of John’s Gospel where they are recorded, which in turn depends on the trustworthiness of the small Christian community that decided to take the Gospel as an authoritative truth? Our beliefs about the ruler of the universe should flow from universal human reason, should they not? Put somewhat differently, given the supreme importance of God—this is a truth we desire most deeply—don’t we want to be especially careful to get things right, which means trusting not this prophet or seer or even religious tradition, but relying on the testimony of the reason all human beings share?

Well, no. Universal human reason *is* capable of coming to considered conclusions about God. We have been deliberating about God for as long as human beings have sought to discipline their wonder with the considered use of reason. But we are not capable of determining the free decisions of God. Reason cannot determine whether the transcendent God chooses to remain hidden from us—or concerns himself with human destiny and reveals himself personally, and not just in the distant past, but here and now, in your life and mine. This is why, if we are thinking clearly, we can conclude that it is *rational* to be open to the religious search for God. For reason is in no position to know conclusively whether or not God may come in search of us! In fact, it is reasonable to be open to the suggestion of divine revelation, and arbitrary and unreasonable simply to exclude this possibility.

We nevertheless feel a tension between our normal ways of thinking and the claims of revelation, even when it is authentic. This is because revelation clashes with human convention. Christian revelation is not opposed to reason. It surpasses reason. But it contradicts conventional ideologies.

## Religious Pluralism and “The True Philosophy”

From the very outset Christianity was at odds with what at the time seemed to be a very successful way of approaching the question of God. Ancient Greco-Roman culture was religiously pluralistic, composed of diverse tribes and nations, and admitted a fairly broad range of incompatible viewpoints, both philosophically and religiously. The political unity of the Roman Empire was maintained not by forging a universal consensus about truth, but by adopting a multiplicity of religions into an ever-increasing pantheon of gods. Conventions of various conquered cultures were not abolished but assimilated. This civilization differed in many ways from today’s multiculturalism, but it shared with contemporary sensibilities a flexible attitude toward theological truth-claims, and pragmatic commitment to the basic good of social unity.

Ancient Romans considered this a strength, not a weakness. The great pagan orator Symmachus, writing after Christianity had become politically powerful, deplored the abolition of the pagan cults. He argued on practical grounds: every society needs to maintain continuity with its ancestors. The Greco-Roman system that assimilated diverse religious cultures had provided centuries of stability and peace. Moreover the resulting pluralism encouraged a more humble approach: “What does it matter with what philosophy each individual seeks the truth? It is not possible to reach so great a secret by a single route.”<sup>3</sup> Better, then, to cultivate many different paths to God.

The audacity of ancient Judaism and early Christianity was to claim that this system of political assimilation of “every truth” was a betrayal of our most fundamental vocation as seekers of truth. We should be concerned to protect social unity and promote peace, and that may require compromise and a humility that comes from recognizing that our own views might be mistaken. But we were made primarily for conviction in the truth, not doubt, for knowledge, and not only for questioning. At some point the authority of truth itself must govern, not the pragmatic needs of the moment. At times we are arrested by insights and persuaded by arguments so strong and so fundamental that to set them aside compromises our integrity and violates our conscience. Only shared truths can unite human beings in an enduring way.

Ancient Rome endured for so long because it subordinated our search for God to the Roman quest for glory. *That* ideology was the shared truth behind the supposed humility of their religious pluralism. A refusal to accept this subordination of religious and intellectual conscience was the reason why the earliest Christians made common cause with another group that criticized popular pagan religion organized around civic life: the philosophers.

Already in sixth-century B.C., Xenophanes of Colophon attacked the religious myths of the poets. He claimed that they attributed immorality to the deity, and depicted God in an irrational, anthropomorphic fashion. “Homer and Hesiod have attributed to the gods everything that is a shame and reproach among men, stealing and committing adultery and deceiving each other.”<sup>4</sup> Heraclitus attacked the notion that blood sacrifice could alleviate guilt.<sup>5</sup> Sophocles criticized state obligations of Greek religion in *Antigone*, suggesting that his heroine’s decision to bury her brother was an act of true justice and piety. Most famously, Socrates was accused in his trial, among other things, of denying the gods of the city, and of therefore being an atheist.<sup>6</sup> Plato responds by reversing the charges. In the *Republic* he says that if a dramatic poet, the muse of the city’s gods, comes to visit the ideal state, he should be “crowned with wreaths and sent away to another city.”<sup>7</sup> Aristotle in the *Metaphysics*, in the midst of his own discussion of divine attributes, says that the poets have portrayed the gods mythologically for reasons of political expediency and rhetorical persuasion.<sup>8</sup> They and other spokesmen for the city’s pantheon are silver-tongued propagandists.

The earliest Christian apologists took up this tradition of vigorous critique of Greco-Roman paganism to promote Christianity as “the true philosophy.” This appeal to reason’s power and dignity appears already in the New Testament. In Romans 1:19–25, St. Paul tells his readers that all human beings can come to recognize that God exists. Human reason can know something of the creator from the consideration of his creatures, which are his effects. However, human beings typically have “exchanged the truth about God for a lie . . . and served the creature rather than the Creator,” by treating physical objects in the creation as absolute causes, or by worshiping God with images of reptiles, birds, animals, and mortal men.

Here Paul echoes the literature of Hellenistic Judaism. In the book of Wisdom (from around 100 B.C.) the rationality of belief in God is contrasted to those who believe the universe to be itself divine, or upheld in being by the mere power of the stars. “They supposed that either fire or wind or swift air, or the circle of the stars, or turbulent water, or the luminaries of heaven were the gods that rule the world.” Against this seduction of errant reason, the book of Wisdom proposes a view of God as the transcendent creator of everything rather than a particularly powerful or sublime force within the world. “If through delight in the beauty of these things men assumed them to be gods, let them know how much better than these is their Lord, for the author of beauty created them. . . . For from the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator.”<sup>9</sup> God is not the greatest or most powerful force within the cosmos. He is not even “beyond” the cosmos in the sense of being outside or above. He is the source of the very fabric of existence, the transcendent cause of the intelligibility that we discover in all that exists.

St. Paul expositis this view of God in his discourse to the Athenians at the Areopagus in Acts 17. This hill in the northwest of the city was a place for philosophical debates. “Men of Athens I perceive that you are in every way religious. For as I passed along, and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, ‘To an unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.”<sup>10</sup> Fundamentally, Paul stipulates that the unknown God of the Greeks is he in whom “we live and move and have our being,” “the God who made the world and everything in it.”<sup>11</sup> God exists beyond the realm of finite realities we can identify and categorize. For that reason he cannot be found and known in the way we can find and know a new continent or develop a new scientific theory. But he can be known as the source of all finite reality, the ground of being. The truly supreme and transcendent source of all reality is above the cacophony of local religions collected together and harmonized by Roman society for its own political purposes. Sound philosophy itself can show that many conventional religious views of God fail to speak his true name.

Greek philosophy was a powerful ally in the Christian criticism of Rome’s ideological subordination of the search for God to the needs of the earthly city. But it too promoted its own conventional wisdom. St. Paul speaks of the Cross of Christ as foolishness to the Greeks.<sup>12</sup> This is because Greek philosophy took it as axiomatic that the infinite, immaterial, and unchangeable supreme being is antithetical to the finite, material, and changeable world of human life. And what could be a more poignant and bitter sign of changeability than death? Therefore, the metaphysical imagination of the ancient world found it absurd to think of God as incarnate, and even more absurd to think that his humiliating death could be “good news” preached by Christians.

Our metaphysical imaginations have not changed much. On occasion one hears a religiously interested person recoil from the dogmatic nature of Christianity. “The mystery of God is too great to put into a box,” he says. This resembles the Greek intuition. Transcendence is unlimited. Finite existence is limited. Therefore, the finite historical life of Christ cannot reveal the infinite God. Stated differently, in this way of thinking all particular views about God, including the Christian view, become idolatrous if they are taken as final and ultimate.

In his *Confessions*, Augustine recognized that this view is erroneous, and that it springs from a

crucial weakness in ancient philosophy.<sup>13</sup> The key error is to oppose the transcendence of God with his real presence in the world. Religious awe is set in opposition to spiritual intimacy. Against this false opposition, the Church Fathers developed a deeper understanding of the mystery of creation. God's transcendent mystery is distinct from the finite world, but not antithetical to it. In fact, it is precisely because God is the cause of all that exists that he can be intimately present to all that is. By contrast, the idea of an intrinsic antithesis between God and the finite world implies a paradoxical limit on God, as if he were somehow excluded from his creation. The Church Fathers recognized that the mystery of God is present all around us. God is "He Who Is," the hidden transcendent source who gives existence to all things, and that accounts for their being, goodness, and beauty. This transcendence is not only consistent with God being immanently present in all things as creator, but even entails that it is so. It is God in whom we live, and move, and have our being, because there is nothing he does not sustain in existence. Therefore, God can become human without changing in himself. He can reveal who he truly is to us *in a singular human life* without diminishing himself in any way. God can become intimately present to humanity by grace and make himself known to us personally, while remaining incomprehensible, transcendent, and omnipotent.

St. Paul also spoke of the Cross as a scandal to the Jews.<sup>14</sup> This sense of scandal stems from a different kind of conventional thinking, one that concerns how we read the scriptures of Israel rather than how we engage in philosophical speculation. Ancient Jews were not religious syncretists. True, they were tempted by the politically convenient pluralism that characterized Greek and Roman religion. The Old Testament presents us with numerous instances when the leaders and people of Israel adapted themselves to the cults and practices of their more powerful neighbors, clearly hoping to juggle theological commitments for the sake of political goals. But the Old Testament prophets, unlike Roman apologists, denounced these strategies as base betrayals of Israel's vocation to be a people uniquely chosen by God, a monotheistic light to the nations.

Nor did the Jews at the time of Jesus object to the notion that God the creator could become intimately present to his people by his own sovereign decision. This is after all a central theme of the book of Exodus. Their objection to St. Paul's preaching stemmed instead from the form this presence took, that of a crucified messiah. It was not the presence of God in history that scandalized. It was his weakness. In the book of Exodus the *mirabilia Dei* manifest that the God of Israel is omnipotent and unique. God overawes Egypt's Pharaoh, who is representative of the paganism of the nations. God destroys the Egyptian army in the Red Sea, sustains Israel in the wilderness, and eventually delivers them into the Promised Land. God incarnate in Christ employs his omnipotence in a different way. His triumph comes about through suffering and death.

The response to this Jewish sense of scandal is found, of course, in the physical resurrection of Christ. If Jesus is the Christ, why is he crucified? The Christian claim is not that God is uninterested in overcoming the powers of the world, but that he wants to overcome them in a more profound way than Israel had ever before deemed fathomable. The fulfillment of the promises to Israel comes about in Christ, but on an infinitely greater scale than was previously imagined. The death and resurrection of the crucified messiah are the definitive victory of God over the very worst that the human race is capable of, and are the gift of the greatest thing possible. God takes upon himself the consequences of human evil, suffering, and death so as to overcome them once and for all. In return he gives all human beings—"Jew and Greek alike"—the offers of grace, the forgiveness of sins, and participation in eternal life. To the Greeks, the Cross might seem too material and mired in finite reality and thus "foolishness." It may seem a story of failure and humiliation for Jews, and thus a "scandal." But as Paul says, in the resurrection Christ's death is revealed to be the "power of God and the wisdom of God."<sup>15</sup>

Skepticism and the Usefulness of Belief

Of course many of our contemporaries simply find this implausible. Human life is finite and we surrender to death in the end. The real world is comprised of practical calculations and the struggle for material success, not the lofty but ultimately unreal reflections of ancient sages. Christian beliefs about power, money, and sex are unrealistic. Aims of immortality are illusory. We should respond to suffering through scientific research, technological development, and sound political strategies. We can find happiness in this world through aims such as human love, sexual freedom, education, and the civic arts. In short, it is best to be reasonable, and avoid the temptations of religious metaphysics which distract us from realistic goals and our more modest but ultimately meaningful human tasks.

Thus modern secularism. Truth be told, it is not entirely novel, but has clear roots in ancient skepticism and Epicureanism. We cannot know very much about our human plight or its ultimate meaning (if there is one). Instead we should seek to manage our lives reasonably, seeking pleasure and avoiding pain. We find this criticism of Christianity articulated already by Celsus, the third-century pagan philosopher. He argued that Christianity claims to know too much and aims for too much, or at least for what is outside the sphere of our limited rational knowledge. Only the uneducated can accept it uncritically. But its bold, unrealistic claims threaten to undermine our real possibilities for human happiness and civic reason. Religion has its uses, but it also has its place, and it needs to be modest if it is to be friendly to human well-being.

This viewpoint is unsatisfying, however, because it is based on resignation. Religious skepticism claims that it is the guardian of human happiness. But in fact it stems from the fear of making a mistake, and is based on its own form of spiritual paralysis and even despair. The human being is alive in seeking the truth and finding new and creative ways to love selflessly. Imprisoned in our own pleasures and limited sense of understanding, we grow old and self-referential. As Newman noted, reason without faith tends to obsess with objects that are inferior to man, that we dominate, but that at the same time make our intellectual pursuits complacent and less interesting.

Those who deliberately refuse to form a judgment upon the most momentous of all subjects; who are content to pass through life in ignorance, why it is given, or by whom, or to what it leads; and who bear to be without tests of truth and error in conduct, without rule and measure for the principles, persons, and events, which they encounter daily,—these men . . . [should not] be granted the name of philosophers.[16](#)

Reasonable openness to God, then, is a source of spiritual youth in any person or culture. It maintains in us a sense of investigation, wonder, cumulative wisdom, and knowledge in the service of love. Refusal of the mystery of God makes us the unique masters of ourselves, but also imprisons us within the ascetical constraints of our own banal finitude. The privilege of the educated and wealthy is to be able to control their sense of wonder before the mystery of human existence, and to retreat into their own domain of competency and control. Often their inferiors do not have this luxury and are therefore more innately disposed to accept dependence upon God. Posing questions about God opens the human being up to new vulnerabilities, and therefore also to new forms of happiness that the artificial limitations of skepticism cannot foresee.

Augustine noted that deep-seated skepticism is a luxury item that the true intellectual cannot afford. He points out that belief—faith in what others tell us for our instruction—is fundamental for the intellectual life.[17](#) When we begin learning in any rigorous discipline (mathematics, observational sciences, philosophy, law) we have to leave behind the conventions of our

presuppositions and entrust ourselves to those who instruct us. Concretely, human faith in authentic teachers is nearly always the basis for true growth in understanding, and not our own solitary intuitions or the presuppositions of the masses. Augustine then draws up a key set of distinctions. On one side, there is extreme skepticism, by which a person remains in a conventional posture, and risks nothing but also can gain nothing. On the other side, there is credulousness, a foolish form of faith by which we mistakenly entrust ourselves to a poor teacher, or even to a true teacher, but fail to understand the material for ourselves, remaining infantilized or rudimentary in our insight. Faith that “merely believes what it ought to believe” is “dead.”<sup>18</sup> Between the two extremes is the middle way of “faith seeking understanding,” one that is both human and Christian. We should accept instruction but also examine it critically and studiously, seeking to find the truth in what is said, to test it. Every body of knowledge has its own internal structure and laws, its insights, paths of reasoning, and genuine conclusions, that we must progressively make our own. There is a discipline to becoming a lawyer, learning constitutional principles and their applications from one’s teachers. Likewise there is a discipline of the mind in becoming a Christian, learning the truth as revealed by God, and developing an intellectual understanding of God’s mystery.

One can object, of course, that revelation presents us with a very different kind of subject matter than the other disciplines. Unlike law or mathematics, we cannot verify the truths of revelation independently from our own experience as we go along in our instruction, and must depend continuously upon the testimony of another. This is true. What should be kept in mind, however, is that even in ordinary experience, human beings tend to live “above” the merely empirical dimension of life. Behind the study of law we must confront the question of what true justice is, something we will never find through empirical measures. Behind mathematics, there is the question of perennial, unchanging truth, since the laws of mathematics apply always and everywhere that quantitative beings exist. Behind all such subjects is the question of God, who is the cause of all that exists. We cannot know what another human person wills or thinks except on the basis of voluntary trust in that person. So too with the transcendent God, we can learn from him personally only through faith.<sup>19</sup>

What revelation gives, then, is the opportunity to be instructed not uniquely by our fellow human beings, but by God, who remains inaccessible in some way to all strivings of human philosophy and religion, yet who also reveals to us what we could never discover by our own powers. To receive this instruction requires supernatural faith, which is itself a grace. This grace, as Aquinas notes, is received into the intellect, allowing us to judge that a given teaching comes from God and is about God.<sup>20</sup> We can compare this to “ordinary” trust in a teacher by analogy. It is like the difference between knowing that a physics professor exists and studying his theories in books he has written, versus meeting him personally and learning from him directly as a living source of truth. As a disposition, supernatural faith is like natural trust in a teacher, but it provides something more: direct access to the mystery of God who reveals himself to us and teaches us.

To seek to know God entails risk, undoubtedly, but it also entails an irreplaceable possibility: that we could truly come to know God personally, find friendship with God, and live with him by grace. If this possibility is real, and not a mere myth or human conjecture, then it is the greatest of possibilities, and one that we should not dismiss through fear, resignation or complicity with the conventions of our age. As Anselm writes:

Indeed, for a rational nature to be rational is nothing other than for it to be able to discriminate what is just from what is not just, what is true from what is not true, what is good from what is not good. . . . The rational creature was made for this end: viz., to love above all other goods the Supreme Being, inasmuch as it is the Supreme Good. . . . Clearly, then, the rational creature ought

to devote his entire ability and his entire will to . . . understanding and loving the Supreme Good—to which he knows that he owes his existence.[21](#)

The real opposition, then, is not between faith and reason, but between a skeptical reason that is reductive, and a magnanimous, studious reason that engages in faith. Expansive desire for the truth breaks away from conventions, and awakens human beings to our true nobility, against temptations to self-diminishment. The Christian vocation of “faith seeking understanding” is both dynamic and restful. It gives us something greater than ourselves to ponder, and takes us out of ourselves toward God as our teacher. But it also allows us to know ourselves as rational beings, able truly to ask and even answer the deeper religious questions. Faith therefore creates a learning community. The Church is a place where human beings have the conviction to patiently seek the truth together, in a shared life of charity, one that is both cosmopolitan and personal, both reasonable and religious, both philosophical and theological. This communion in the truth is made possible, however, only because people have first accepted to be apprenticed to revelation through a common effort of learning the truth from another (i.e., God), who is the author of truth, and from one another.

## Scripture

True teaching authority is based on the knowledge of the teacher, not the arbitrary use of power. The word *auctoritas* in Latin can mean “principle,” “guide,” or “one having warranted agency.” So a legitimate teaching authority is an agent of the truth, one who enlightens others. Christ, however, is unique among teachers, because he does not only instruct externally through words (leading us progressively to see what he sees), but also enlightens us interiorly by grace. Christ, the eternal Wisdom of God, moves the mind and heart from within so that we can perceive intellectually the truths that he reveals. This, Thomas Aquinas argues, is one of the reasons it is fitting that Jesus did not write a book during his lifetime, but entrusted his teaching to others: so that we would not confuse the real presence of Christ among us with a text he wrote, but would instead learn of his presence through the teaching of the apostolic Church, a process that he assists and works through, by the presence of his grace acting in those who teach and in those who are instructed.[22](#)

Scripture is at the center of this process: the Old and New Testaments. The modern reader often feels daunted by the Bible. How does one begin to understand this collection of texts with its complex history? Who wrote the books? Are all of them supposed to be historical? If so, does that mean that a person who takes the Bible seriously must reject truths of modern science and archeological studies? Is the decision about “what is true” a matter of convention, adjusted continually by theologians to appease modern critics of Christianity? Perhaps most important: do we really know anything about the historical Jesus or are the texts all reconstructions of the early Christian community that fail to correspond to what Jesus really said or who he was? Why should we treat this ancient book as something essential today and why should we trust it? Is it possible for a text this ancient to be relevant to all times and places?

These are all reasonable questions. Answering them is an important and helpful part of the work of theologians and scripture scholars. However, they are also second-tier questions. The more fundamental one is: what is the essence of scripture? How is it intended to be used? And for this we should go back to what Aquinas says: scripture is primarily about discovering the presence of a person. Scripture reveals to us who Christ is, who God is personally. As an inspired book, it places us in living contact with the presence of God, enlightening us and strengthening the desires of our heart by grace. Scripture, then, is first and foremost a mystery that we live, and only secondarily a book that we subject to historical scrutiny. The latter is entirely warranted but if we begin only

from that perspective, we lose sight of the essence.

Hans Urs von Balthasar speaks here of scripture safeguarding the “form of Christ,” by which he means that it was written to reveal to us the determinate identity of the Son of God as a singular person who lived among us in Israel two thousand years ago. Jesus Christ is himself God, who took on our human form, who suffered, died, and was buried, who is resurrected from the dead physically, is glorified, and is now present to the Church.<sup>23</sup> Scripture brings human beings into living contact with this same Christ who speaks to the Church, with God who speaks to Israel. The Bible acts as a norm, then, by which we are confronted with revelation continually: divine teaching, not human convention, the challenging moral teachings of Christ, not our own half-enlightened moral intuitions—the real identity of God, not our own projections. If scripture is at the heart of our intellectual life, we are constantly challenged to question conventions and transcend our ordinary human expectations and presuppositions. Christ is the measure and guide of human experience, and not the inverse.

Believing this entails belief in historical truths of the Bible: there was an ancient people of Israel who was called into a covenant by God through Abraham and Moses. There were inspired prophets who followed in their wake. Christ, who was God made man, was crucified under Pontius Pilate and rose from the dead. He did appoint apostles, making Peter their head, and instituted sacraments of the New Law. In doing so he founded the Catholic Church.<sup>24</sup>

But here we should make two qualifying remarks: *first*, modern biblical scholarship, when done well, achieves modest results. Biblical scholarship can neither disprove nor prove the core tenets of Christian belief. One can demonstrate beyond reasonable doubt, for example, that there was an ancient nation of Israelites, that certain members of this group were believed to be prophets, that this people believed itself called into a covenant with God, that Jesus of Nazareth existed, that he made some fairly exalted claims about himself, that he was killed by Roman crucifixion, that some of his followers truly believed that they encountered him physically alive after he had been put to death, that the early Christian movement worshiped Jesus as God. None of this is trivial, but none of it proves that Christianity is true either. For that, supernatural faith is necessary because the subject matter of Christianity is a mystery that transcends natural human reason. Even people in Jesus’ own day who saw or heard him needed grace to believe in him. As St. Paul says of himself before his conversion: “we once regarded Christ from a human point of view.”<sup>25</sup>

Still, biblical scholarship is far from useless. On the contrary, it teaches us to understand the books of the Bible—their composition and the events that lie behind them—in a nuanced, historically sophisticated way. It does not tell us per se whether divine revelation is real, but if we accept the revelation, it can teach us how to believe in the Bible in a realistic, historically reasonable way.

This protects us against irrational notions of inspiration. These usually originate from some version of dictation theory, wherein a book is said to be composed immediately by God or an angel, without a human author. In this case, the language and concepts of the book inevitably are said to have no human historical origin or sociological context. Therefore, the text cannot be analyzed historically, if this means examining the human authorship and cultural context. Such dictation theories are prevalent in both Islam and Mormonism, as well as certain forms of Christianity: they present us with a kind of fundamentalism that forbids rational study of the text on theological grounds, forbidding us to consider the human authors, the historical setting, or the literary genera. This kind of ahistoricism is unrealistic and leads quickly into ideological dead-ends. It sows confusion within a given religious tradition, and frequently gives rise to a counter-reaction: the intellectual rejection of religion. Fundamentalism taken as a form of religious purism ironically is often the cause of atheism.

The Bible is a divinely inspired book which has God as its origin, but is also a human book, and its

humanity needs to be taken seriously. The Word has become flesh, in history and time, and this incarnational realism is reflected in the composition of the scriptures as well. The Holy Spirit is the principal author of scripture, but he works in and through genuinely human, historical authors.

*Second*, the Bible contains historical affirmations that are essential, but it contains many other forms of thought as well: metaphysical truths, ethical teachings and moral examples, symbolic discourse, love poetry, practical wisdom, theological doctrines. The first three chapters of Genesis, for example, teach us that God created the physical world, that the order of the world reflects the divine wisdom, that God is in no way the author of moral evil, that the human being is made in the image of God and has a spiritual soul, and that the human race was created in a state of grace but forfeited the privileges of this state through some kind of primeval act of disobedience.<sup>26</sup> These teachings are primarily metaphysical in kind. They have historical implications, and implicitly commit the Catholic Church to historical teachings of a kind (such as the reality of a historical fall from grace), but it is an error to call this kind of narrative a “history” in the modern sense of the term. As Augustine pointed out in his disputes with Faustus the Manichaeon, many people reject the Old Testament because they interpret it wrongly, failing to grasp its symbolic and spiritual senses. But when it is read according to the classical rules of the Church (which focus attention on the typological and metaphysical teachings of the Bible), then it is understood to be a deeply insightful, intellectually realistic book that can enrich human reflection over centuries.

The Catholic Church formulates the doctrine of scriptural inspiration in this way:

Since everything asserted by the inspired authors or sacred writers must be held to be asserted by the Holy Spirit, it follows that the books of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching solidly, faithfully and without error that truth which God wanted put into sacred writings for the sake of salvation. Therefore “all Scripture is divinely inspired and has its use for teaching the truth and refuting error, for reformation of manners and discipline in right living, so that the man who belongs to God may be efficient and equipped for good work of every kind” (2 Tim. 3:16–17). However, since God speaks in Sacred Scripture through men in human fashion, the interpreter of Sacred Scripture, in order to see clearly what God wanted to communicate to us, should carefully investigate what meaning the sacred writers really intended, and what God wanted to manifest by means of their words.<sup>27</sup>

The teaching here is that the scriptures are inspired by God in their entirety and teach infallibly all the truth that God has willed to reveal for our salvation. At the same time, God reveals himself through the medium of human authors, so we need to take seriously the diverse literary genres of the books of the Bible, and the discernible intentions of the sacred authors. Sacred truth is frequently communicated in highly symbolic fashion in the first twelve chapters of Genesis (which contains archetypes like Noah or the tower of Babel). The legal writing of Deuteronomy in sixth-century B.C. is different from the Greco-Roman style of the Gospels in first-century A.D. The letters of Paul to local churches constitute a different form of writing from the apocalyptic narrative of John in the book of Revelation.

God speaks to the Church, however, in and through the whole of divine revelation. To understand scripture rightly, then, the Catholic Church insists on three theological criteria. The first is scriptural unity: the books of the Old Testament should be interpreted in light of the revelation of the New Testament, and each book of the Bible must be interpreted coherently in relation to the teaching of all the others. God speaks to us in a coherent, unified way through the manifold witness of all the sacred authors. The second is consonance with tradition: the Bible is received as the Word of God

down through time in and through the tradition of the Catholic Church, and is rightly understood in the light of that tradition (a point I will return to below). The third is the “analogy of faith”: the mysteries of faith need to be understood in the light of one another. The mystery of the Incarnation has to be understood in relation to God’s election of the people of Israel (and vice versa). The mystery of the Eucharist has to be understood in relation to the mystery of the Incarnation. The mystery of the Church has to be understood in relation to the mystery of the Eucharist, and so on.

The Church also speaks traditionally about diverse “senses of scripture.” The Bible has a literal sense and various spiritual senses, which are termed moral, typological, and anagogical.<sup>28</sup> The moral sense teaches us how we are to live. The typological sense refers to Christ as the fulfillment of the old covenant. The anagogical sense refers us to the end times, or to the last things, the final state of the world. Take as an example the Paschal Lamb narrative from Exodus 12. The literal sense refers to an ancient liturgical practice (the sacrifice and ritual eating of a lamb) which the Israelites offered to God each year to commemorate their historical liberation from enslavement in Egypt. The moral sense denotes the divine obligation given to the ancient Hebrews to obey the terms of the covenant with God so that they might live in friendship with him, and be assured of his mercy. The typological sense refers to Christ, who is denoted in John’s Gospel as the “Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”<sup>29</sup> It is his Passover offering to the Father in the crucifixion that actively redeems humanity. His sacrifice recapitulates the Paschal Lamb symbolism and orders it toward a universal horizon. The anagogical sense is found in the book of Revelation, which depicts Christ in glory as the “Lamb who was slain,” but who is now alive again, receiving the praise of the saints in heaven.<sup>30</sup> The final “Passover” is from our earthly state to the state of glory. These various senses of scripture teach us to read the Bible as a book concerned with our concrete salvation. The literal sense typically denotes the sacred events of salvation history. These events themselves point forward mysteriously to fulfillment in Christ and in the Church. The mystery of Christ and the Church in turn points forward to the life of the world to come. The moral sense, meanwhile, teaches us how we are to live spiritually in response to the grace of God, in the midst of our present world.

Why is the interpretation of the Bible so complicated, though? Shouldn’t the religious truth we seek be simpler, more direct? Aren’t Christians simply making excuses theologically for the all-too-human fragmentation or diversity of sources we find in this book? Not necessarily. After all, only an intellectually profound book is worthy of the sustained attention of every human culture and prolonged efforts of understanding. Simplicity is dangerous in religious matters, except when it is conditioned by a strong dose of qualification. One can affirm simply that the New Testament teaches that Jesus is God, but this simple truth needs qualification. The four Gospels teach it in manifold and often only implicit ways. As Origen pointed out in the third century, the scriptures are complex from a literary, historical, and theological point of view precisely so that we are invited to think more deeply about their internal content.<sup>31</sup> This spurs on human thought, and makes Christianity the most intellectual of religions. God inspired a book because he wanted human cooperation in thinking about divine truth, not because he wanted anti-intellectualism and human abdication. This way of redeeming man makes him use his mind, not abandon it, which is the only real way religion could make any sense.

Likewise, we can say with Aquinas that “grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it.”<sup>32</sup> The Bible is a book of human authors as well as of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, it is the product of a vast human religious culture with its internal traditions, external influences, occasional crises, and its moments of intellectual resolution. It is this richness of human experience that is inspired, not a magical world of authors removed from normal human life and its circumstances. As Austin Farrer once noted, the Bible is like a love-letter written by a soldier fighting in trenches on the battlefield. There is some blood and dirt on it and the paper is torn, but the message is beautiful and we can understand it.<sup>33</sup> The divine word speaks to us truly, but does so through the gritty reality of

human historical life.

## Teaching Authority: Tradition and the Magisterium

Already in the second century, Irenaeus of Lyons pointed out the importance of Catholic tradition and magisterial authority during the controversy with Gnosticism. The gnostic Christ, he noted, is a caricature completely incompatible with the canonical portrait of Christ in the four Gospels. The texts of scripture can be rearranged just like the tiles in a visual mosaic of Christ, so that they no longer present an image of the God-man, but an image of a dog.<sup>34</sup> What prevents this misuse of the apostolic teaching is the living authority of the successors of the apostles. Among those, the one that is most prominent is the bishop of Rome, successor of both Peter and Paul.

[We do this, I say,] by indicating that tradition derived from the apostles, of the very great, the very ancient, and universally known Church founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul; as also [by pointing out] the faith preached to men, which comes down to our time by means of the successions of the bishops. For it is a matter of necessity that every Church should agree with this Church, on account of its preeminent authority, that is, the faithful everywhere, inasmuch as the tradition has been preserved continuously by those [faithful men] who exist everywhere.<sup>35</sup>

Irenaeus goes on to list the bishops of Rome who have succeeded Peter and Paul down to his own day.<sup>36</sup> Here, then, we see already the normative teaching of the Church formulated theologically as early as 175 A.D.

But if scripture really is the word of God, why should the Church stand in need of tradition and a visible teaching authority? The reason is that scripture is an inspired book but is still “merely” a book. In the memorial words of Newman: “the Bible does not answer a purpose for which it was never intended,” that is to say, it was not adequate on its own to “make a stand against the wild living intellect of man,” and assure doctrinal continuity in the Church amidst the “anarchical world” of human history.<sup>37</sup> This is where tradition and the magisterial authority of the Catholic Church have an essential role to play.

Sacred tradition, as Yves Congar noted, is multilayered.<sup>38</sup> Certainly it entails the traditional dogmas and doctrines of the Catholic Church, which are employed to protect truth and promote true interpretations of scripture. But it also includes the teachings of great theologians, doctors of the Church, and saints which, while not necessarily infallible in all their details, act as tested resources for understanding more deeply the teachings of the faith. Tradition is not only about ideas. It also entails the sacred *practices* of the Church: her living celebration of the sacraments, the sacred liturgy, the moral virtues of the Church, her varied spiritual devotions and artistic customs, and commonsense wisdom found in her members, or embodied in ecclesiastical law. In all this complexity we find differing kinds of authority present, but also a beautiful and perennial spirit of unity across many ages and in varied cultures. This constancy and universality of the Catholic tradition are features that no historian can fail to notice. They are striking testimonies to the enduring homogeneity and continuity of Catholic teaching, life, and practice across time. Moreover, Catholic tradition in no way undermines the true interpretation of scripture. On the contrary, precisely because of its vitality and essential identity maintained down through the ages, the tradition promotes the true knowledge of scripture in a uniquely exalted way that would be impossible in its absence.

Nor can critics of Catholic tradition avoid making use of some kind of tradition of their own. On a practical level, the rejection of tradition is not a realistic option for anyone who takes scripture seriously. For as soon as we begin to articulate what we think scripture means (or any other book for that matter), we inevitably set a precedent that can be accepted, denied, or qualified by another. In this way, every text that has a seminal role in human culture also acquires traditions of interpretation down through time, and these are embodied in turn in living communities that promote them or distort them, alter them creatively or develop them homogeneously, reject them or maintain them. This "context" of the text is the wild living mind of man referred to by Newman. To remain constant in any teaching down through time, any community that wishes to maintain its own unity must not only have principles, but also develop a commonality of vital intellectual teaching that is passed on to others across time and place. \*

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*The Light of Christ* provides an accessible presentation of Catholicism that is grounded in traditional theology, but engaged with a host of contemporary questions or objections. Inspired by the theologies of Irenaeus, Thomas Aquinas and John Henry Newman, and rooted in a post-Vatican II context, Fr. Thomas Joseph White presents major doctrines of the Christian religion in a way that is comprehensible for non-specialists: knowledge of God, the mystery of the Trinity, the Incarnation and the atonement, the sacraments and the moral life, eschatology and prayer.

At the same time, *The Light of Christ* also addresses topics such as evolution, the modern historical study of Jesus and the Bible, and objections to Catholic moral teaching. Touching on the concerns of contemporary readers, Fr. White examines questions such as whether Christianity is compatible with the findings of the modern sciences, do historical Jesus studies disrupt or confirm the teaching of the faith, and does history confirm the antiquity of Catholic claims.

This book serves as an excellent introduction for young professionals with no specialized background in theology who are interested in learning more about Catholicism, or as an introduction to Catholic theology. It will also serve as a helpful text for theology courses in a university context.

As Fr. White states in the book's introduction: "This is a book that offers itself as a companion. I do not presume to argue the reader into the truths of the Catholic faith, though I will make arguments. My goal is to make explicit in a few broad strokes the shape of Catholicism. I hope to outline its inherent intelligibility or form as a mystery that is at once visible and invisible, ancient and contemporary, mystical and reasonable."

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Rock In The Bible - I've been teaching Introduction to Catholic Theology for the past eighteen years, and I The central aim of this book is to show that reason and Christian belief are.. still and cool; the light on the distant horizon is streaked with a palette of soft. The Medium is the Messiah: McLuhan's Religion and its - Introduction Catholic theology has been, right from the very beginning, taught and done "in the light of faith and under the guidance of the Church's Paradigm Shifts in Theology of

Mission, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1991, pp. Lumen gentium - La Santa Sede - Although early Christian theologians speculated in many ways on the Father, Son, and take over a concept of divine transcendence from Platonism, in light of which Christ as Michael, protecting angel over Israel mentioned in the books of Some Catholic apologists have argued that this doctrine shows the necessity of Theme: Rooted in Jesus Christ - To say that Marshall McLuhan was incidentally a Christian, or that his For McLuhan, this was not the speed of light, but was the Incarnation of Christ, a fact or Eric McLuhan, in the introduction to the posthumous collection, The McLuhan's first book, The Mechanical Bride (1951), was reviewed by his Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults - United States Conference - Reformed Products in Augustine Institute Books - Lighthouse Catholic - From Jesus To Christ - PBS Physical Light and the Light of Christ - BYU ScholarsArchive - Bible answers to your Frequently Asked Questions about God, Jesus Christ, Each year, teams of six club members study a book of the Bible (alternating Old. Bible Study Questions on the Gospel of Luke Introduction: This workbook was which is the light that rule the day created by the God in the fourth day of creation? Mary, Mother of Christ - BOOK LIST. Loving God: Through Jesus, God's Son " Parva\*. Light to the Nations, Part I (Catholic Textbook Project, Ignatius Press, 2010). Joelle Hodge, et al., The Discovery of Deduction: An Introduction to Formal Logic (Camp Hill, Pa. The Message of the Restoration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ - The Bible teaches that Christian giving should be done in light of the incarnation. is somewhat different from the number of the books in Catholic Bible which in turn differs from the Bible of.. Apr 11, 2017 Â· Introduction to the Prayer Secrets. Contemporary benediction songs - Note that my page of Intellectual Catholic Books already has a number of. John McNichol also has a fast-paced light-hearted Catholic science fiction novel.. an introduction by Walker Percy, and is set in a strong and unique Catholic milieu. 6:00 PM The Light of Christ " The Thomistic Institute - If you are preaching a funeral for someone who is not a Christian, you will have to. Introduction: What do you do, when someone you love leaves this world for the next? ONeal and Gospel Light Baptist Church of Albany, Georgia. My book Sermon Outlines for Busy Pastors: Fresh Sermon Series, comes from a time

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