



FAITH AND REASON

HARMONY BETWEEN FAITH AND REASON

- “Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth - in a word to know Himself - so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves”. Fides et Ratio (FR) Introduction.
- While Philosophy leads us to the highest truths we can know with reason, Theology, with the light of faith, can reach further. They do not contradict one another - faith is above reason but not irrational. There are truths, which come under the scope of both. “Faith doesn’t destroy reason, though it does surpass & complete it” De Veritate q 14 a 10 ad 9.



Harmony between Faith and Reason

- “Faith is a supernatural virtue by which, we, inspired and helped by God’s grace, believe as true what God has revealed, not because of the intrinsic truth of things perceived by the natural light of reason, but because of the authority of God himself revealing them, who can neither deceive nor be deceived” (VCI D 1789).
- Faith is built upon reason (reason needs to be present, for faith to be infused).
- Faith heals reason - reason was darkened by sin, faith makes it easier to reach the highest natural truths.
- Faith raises up reason - can reach further.

Philosophy for the believer...

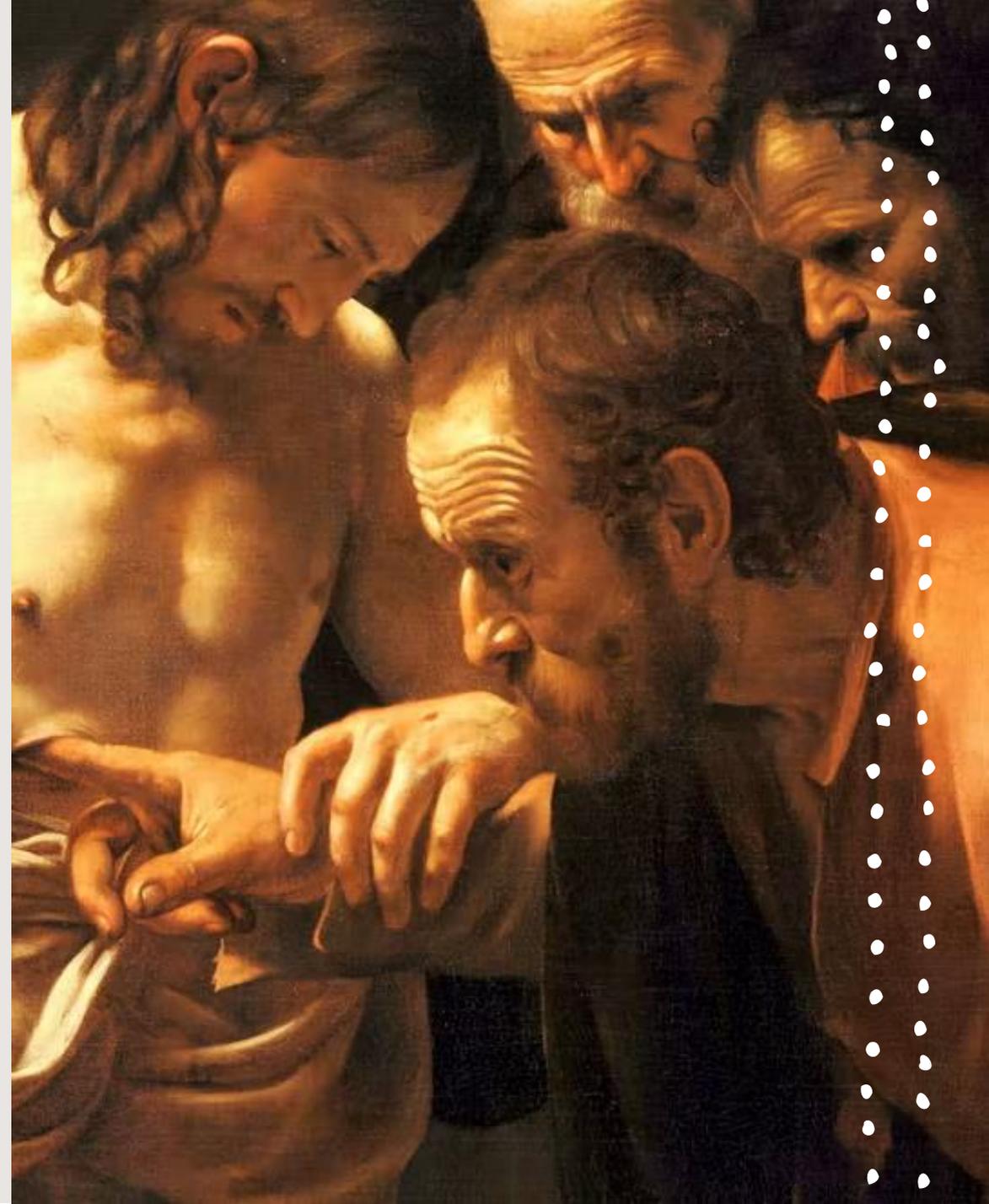
- FR 5 - The Church (& thus the believer) sees in philosophy the way to know fundamental truths about human life and at the same time an indispensable help for deeper understanding of the faith and for communicating the Gospel to those who do not yet know it.
- A Christian does not leave his/her belief to one side when studying philosophy (as he/she does not when studying biology, maths, French, etc)- one person, unity of life, don't leave faith at door when going into lecture theatre as if it were a hat or an umbrella cf. The Way 353.

Philosophy for the believer

- Examples of effects:
 - a) God has revealed some natural truths (e.g. spirituality of human soul), so I know these truths by faith. Therefore, one does not fall into errors regarding these truths. This puts me at an advantage - to know more and with more certainty. Faith perfects reason without making it renounce what is proper to it (without perverting it, without taking away the effort needed required to reach the truth rationally)
 - b) Faith is a stimulus that demands more from reason, since it presents higher goals to reason.
 - c) Faith introduces the Christian to spiritual realities. As metaphysics studies spiritual realities, the Christian is at an advantage because he/she is familiar with them.
 - d) Having faith is helpful because it is a disposition of openness to truth outside man, which is also needed in philosophy.

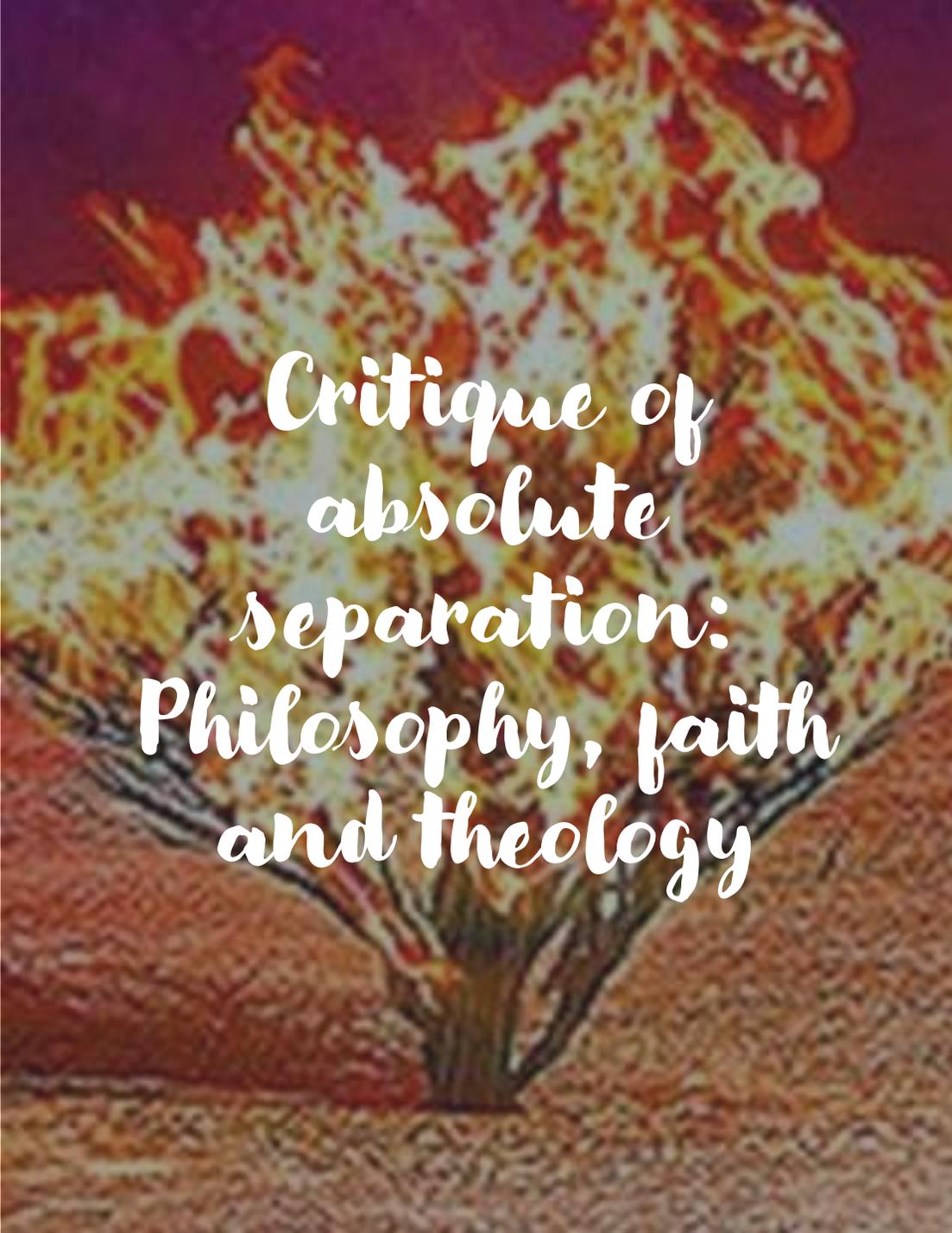
Faith guides Philosophy in the believer...

- As the light provided by faith is superior to that provided by reason - theology, which is the science of faith directs or guides philosophy (the highest human science). This directive (guiding) role of faith in philosophy is analogous to the guiding role of philosophy vis a vis the particular sciences.
- Faith (or theology) exercises a role of guidance when it rejects as false a philosophical affirmation, which contradicts the faith (a theological truth) e.g. everything that exists is composed solely of matter. We see in this example how theology can exercise jurisdiction over philosophical conclusions, guiding a believer to reject an erroneous philosophical proposition.



Critique of absolute separation: Philosophy, faith and theology

- There is one truth - not one philosophical truth and another theological truth. Mutual influence of both is beneficial - theology prevents some philosophical errors, Revelation enables philosophy to reach truths it would have difficulty doing so without faith, philosophy is used to delve into the faith using reason and producing theology.
- In Descartes philosophy - immanentism - starting from human doubt did in effect separate philosophy from theology. Separation *res cogitans* (philosophy) from *res extensa* (God, sense perceived beings, theology).



*Critique of
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- From Cartesian philosophy, Rationalism developed - philosophy is the absolutely sovereign science with no superior. This brings with it:
 - a) A refusal to recognise theology's superiority and its function as "negative regulator" of philosophy or its guiding function;
 - b) The denying of God the right to make known by revelation truths which exceed the capacity of reason alone;
 - c) The denial of theology's right to be a science - closely related to b). Science is certain knowledge through causes. To be categorised as such, theology needs to be based on truths that are certain, upon which reason can work to form a structured body of knowledge.

Use of Philosophy in Theology

- Apart from its function in enabling us to know the fundamental truths about human life (praeambula fidei), Philosophy, at the service of theology, is an indispensable help for a deeper understanding of the faith and for communicating the Gospel to those who do not yet know it cf. FR 5.
- The faith in itself is maximally knowable - it is the science of God who is Truth Itself. However, for us human beings to understand the faith more we need to use philosophy, because of the weakness of the human intellect (ratio), e.g. knowing about God by analogy with creatures.
- It is important to choose a philosophy which is open to truth in order to carry out this function - “It is not too much to claim that a good part of modern philosophy has seen it move further and further away from Christian Revelation, to the point of setting itself quite explicitly in opposition” (FR 46).

Use of Philosophy in Theology

- Philosophy serves theology in 3 principal ways:
 - 1) Proving truths which support the foundations of the faith (preambula fidei, motives of credibility) e.g. existence of God, how miracles prove the divine mission of the Church
 - 2) Imparting some notion of the mysteries of faith by using analogies from creatures e.g. Hypostatic Union like substantial union body and soul
 - 3) Refuting adversaries of the Faith e.g. Theology shows by means of the philosophical notion of person that the mystery of the Trinity is not opposed to reason.

Christian Philosophy

- It is not the official philosophy of the Church, the faith as such is not a philosophy (FR 76); nor is it exclusively adhered to by Christians, just as Greek philosophy is not only for the Greeks. It is philosophical speculation conceived in dynamic union with the faith. The term does not refer solely to taking care that philosophy does not contradict the faith, but also to the help given by the faith directly or indirectly to developing some areas of philosophy.
- We can distinguish two aspects or elements of Christian philosophy:
- 1) A subjective aspect - faith purifies reason - freeing it from presumption, imbuing it with humility.
- 2) Objective aspect: Without the clarity brought by Revelation, some truths, which are not inaccessible to reason, might never have been discovered by reason alone. E.g.: notions of a free and personal God who is the Creator of the world - a truth crucial for philosophy, particularly Metaphysics... notion of the person as a spiritual being: the Christian proclamation of human dignity, equality and freedom has influenced modern philosophical thought. In speculating on these questions philosophers have not become theologians; they continue working in their terrain with their own purely rational method (cf. FR 76).

Christian Philosophy

- One encounters the harmony of faith and reason from the very earliest days of the Church. In Acts 17:18 we find St Paul in discussion with certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers - he needed to approach them not from Moses and the prophets but from the natural knowledge of God, he saw in classical philosophy the need to purify human notions of God from mythological elements. The Fathers of the Church brought to light the link between reason and religion - not a straightforward linear task - not a wholesale nor immediate adoption of classical philosophy. It was a very cautious approach, being aware of elements which were not compatible with Christianity e.g. Gnosticism Col 2:8 “See to it that no-one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe and not according to Christ”.
- Philosophy was for some of the first Christians more of a disturbance than an opportunity. The urgent task was to proclaim the risen Christ, and the encounter with the Gospel offered such a satisfying answer to the question of life’s meaning that going into philosophers seemed a waste of time and outmoded.
- St Justin and Clement of Alexandria did hold Greek philosophy in high esteem, they saw its task as preparing the way for the Gospel and defending the faith.

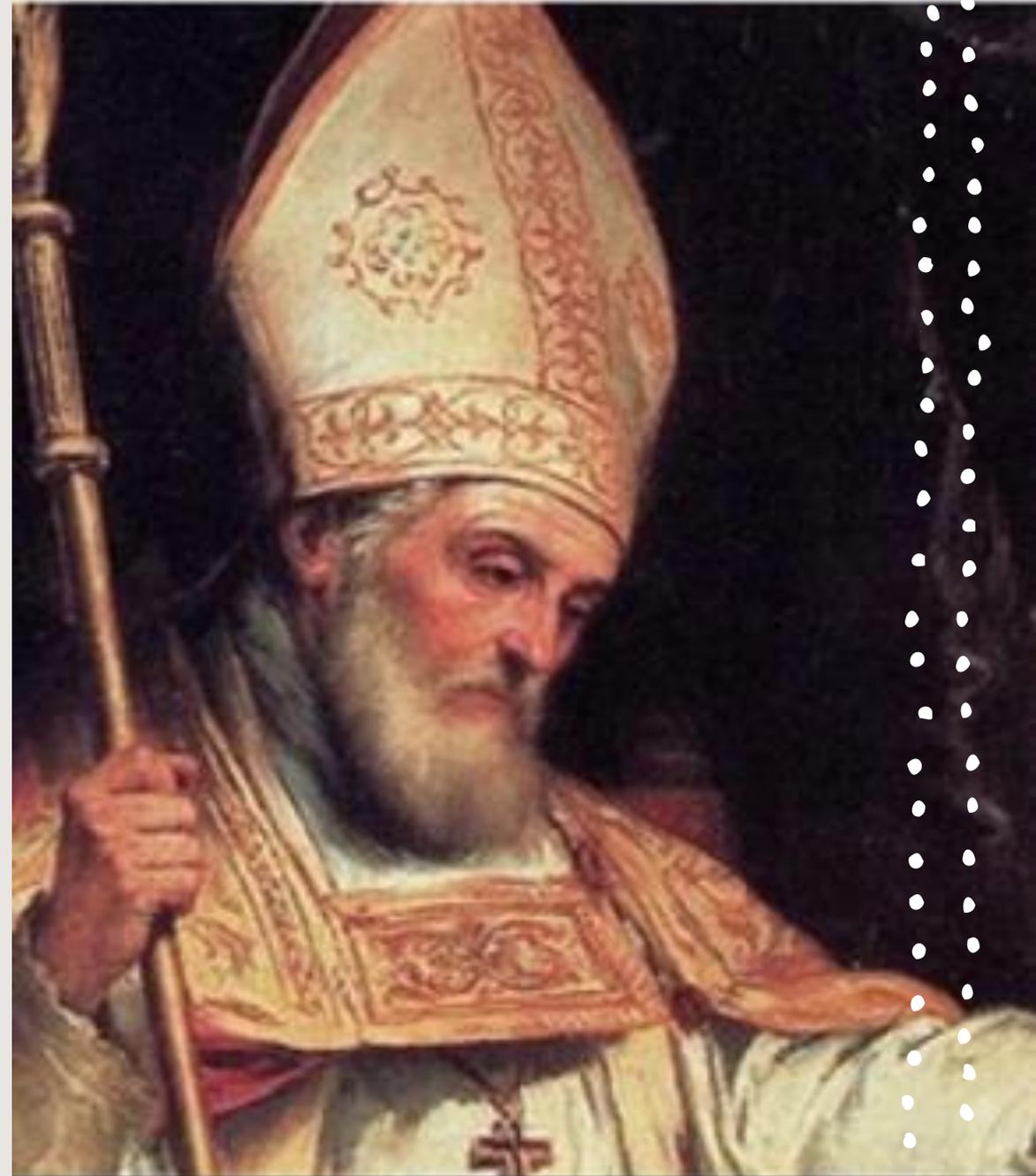
Christian Philosophy

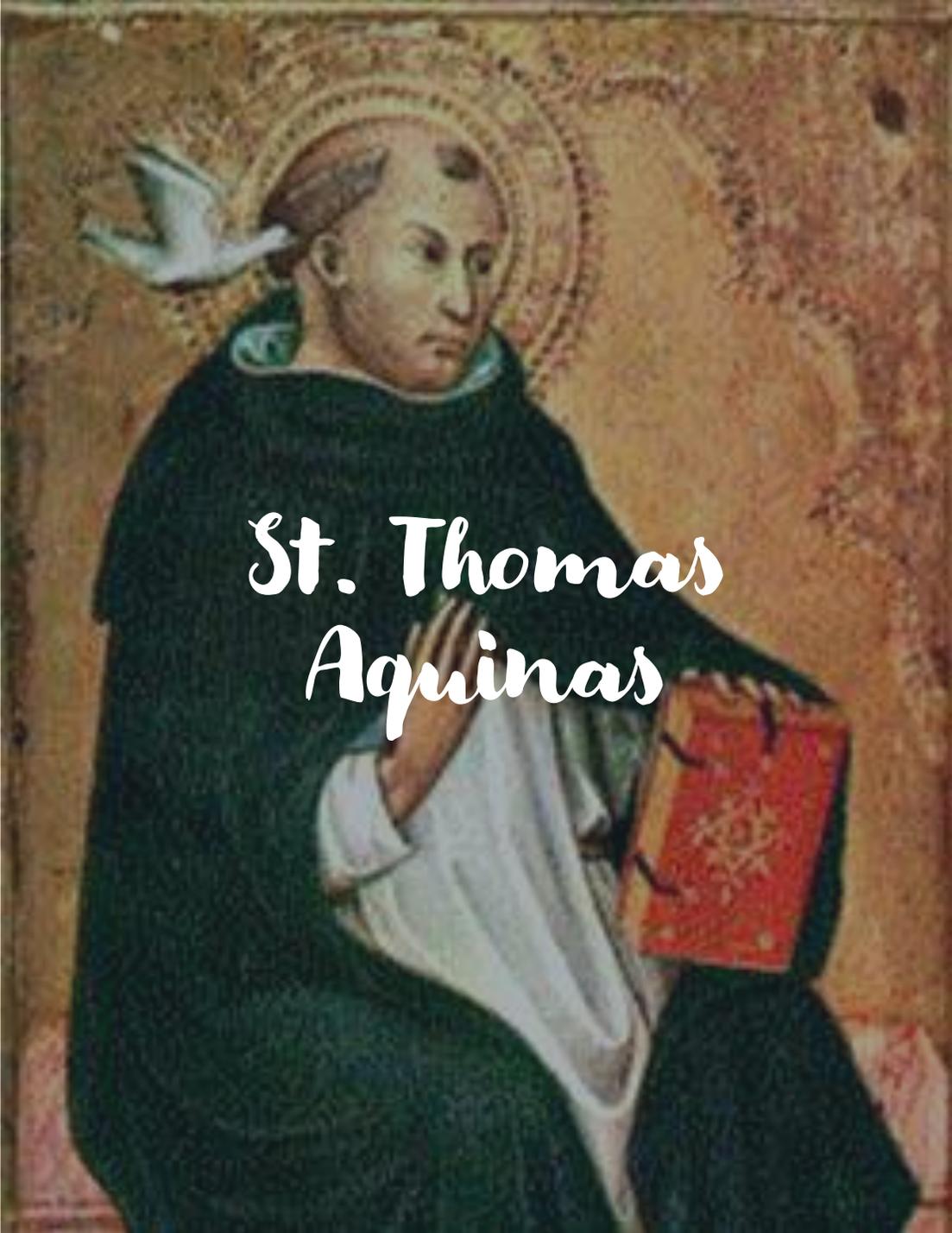
- Origen (185-254) used many elements of platonic philosophy to construct an early form of Christian theology. St Augustine continued this work of Christianising platonic and neo-platonic thought. He had come into contact with many philosophical schools all of which left him disappointed, it was only when he met Christianity that he had the strength to change his life. He produced the first great synthesis of philosophy and theology, embracing Latin and Greek currents of thought.
- “They fully welcomed reason which was open to the absolute, and they infused it with the richness drawn from Revelation. This was more than a meeting of cultures, with one culture perhaps succumbing to the fascination of the other. It happened rather in the depths of human souls, and it was a meeting of creature and Creator. Surpassing the goal towards which it unwittingly tended by dint of its nature, reason attained the supreme good and ultimate truth in the person of the Word made flesh” FR 41.



St Anselm of Canterbury

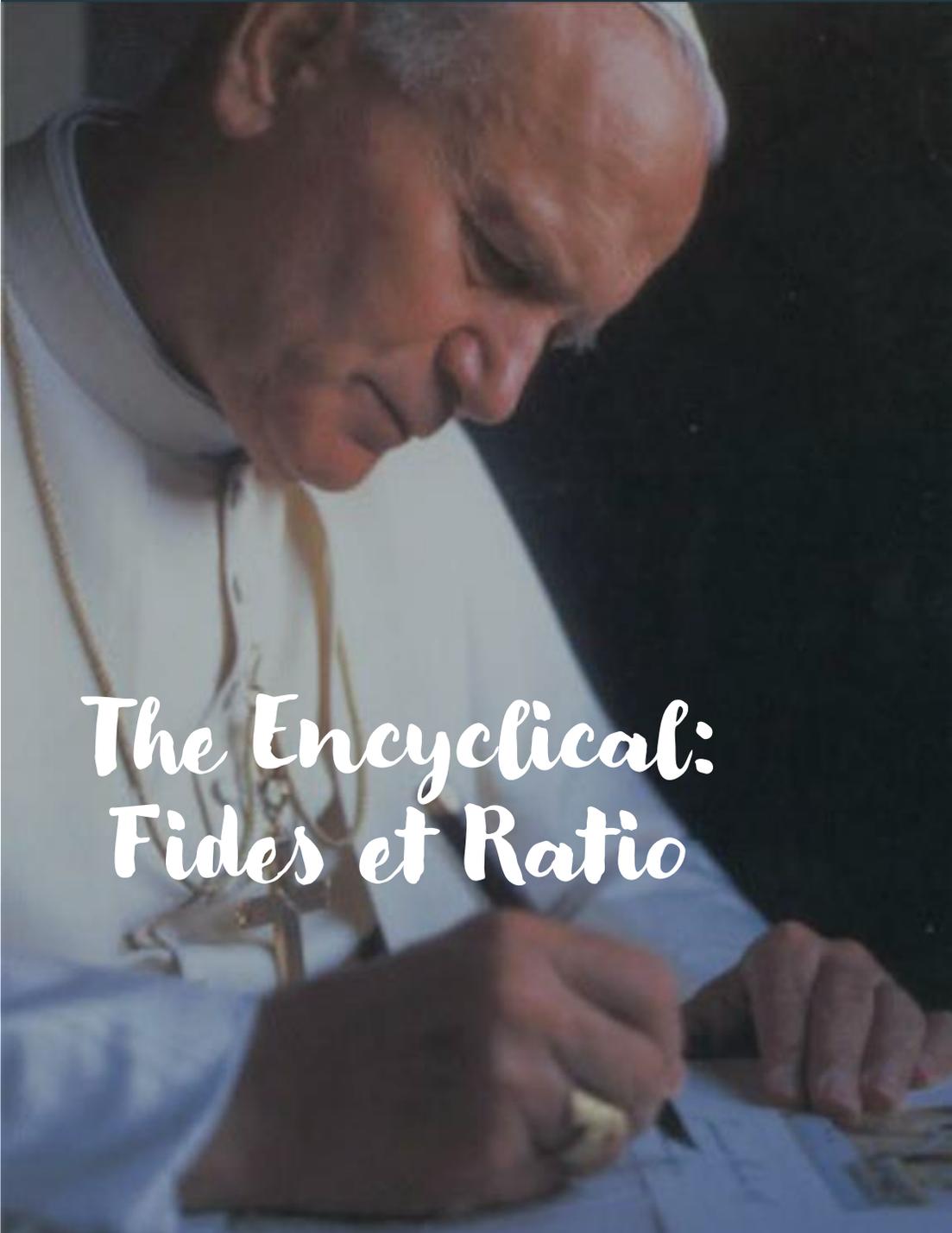
- Scholastic philosophy: St Anselm (1033-1109) used reason to delve into the faith so it is more intelligible for us - intellectus fidei. The desire for truth moves the intellect to penetrate into revealed truth so everyone can come to understand the faith better. He makes clear that we cannot completely comprehend Revelation with philosophy, but rather illustrate it, understand it better.





St. Thomas Aquinas

- The enduring originality of the thought of St Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) (FR 43-44):
- Dialogue with Arab and Jewish thought of his time. Gave pride of place to the harmony between faith and reason. There can be no contradiction between them because the light of reason and the light of faith come from God.
- He recognised that nature, which philosophy studies, could contribute to the understanding of Revelation. Faith has no fear of reason but seeks it out and trusts it. Just as grace builds on nature and brings it to fulfilment, so faith builds on and perfects reason (cf. S.Th I q 1 art 8 ad 2).
- Another great insight of St Thomas was his perception of the role of the Holy Spirit in the process by which knowledge matures into wisdom. Wisdom, as gift of the Holy Spirit, comes to know by way of connaturality.



The Encyclical: Fides et Ratio

- With the separation of faith and reason, we reach the crisis of Nihilism.
- Both faith and reason have lost out from this separation. Contemporary philosophy is concerned with matters of secondary importance e.g. analysis of language rather than truth, contemporary culture concerned with doing rather than being; religion - subjective private matter which cannot be expressed rationally.
- There is a crisis of truth: many people live without any concern for truth, concerned only about having things and technical advances.

Characteristics of Fides et Ratio

- a) Eminently positive. “Modern philosophy has the great merit of focusing attention upon man” (no. 5) “cultures show forth the human being’s characteristic openness to the universal and the transcendent” (no. 70). Faith and reason are not moments in time as the positivists tell us nor are they opposed, but two wings with which we fly towards the truth.
- b) Written from a theological perspective. Centres on Jesus Christ, the relation of faith and reason is analogous to the relation between divinity and humanity in Christ.
- c) Existential character. Each person seeks truth to give meaning to his/her life. People ask questions about their existence - Who am I? Written in the form of a dialogue.

Bishop Barron on Faith and Reason

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GcH_5lecu5s

