

# DEFENSE OF THE CHURCH'S TEACHING CONCERNING BAPTISM OF BLOOD AND BAPTISM OF DESIRE

OR

## THE ANTI-FEENEYITE CATECHISM

BY BISHOP DONALD SANBORN

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### PREFACE

In the late 1940's, a certain Fr. Leonard Feeney, S.J., a priest functioning in the Archdiocese of Boston, published articles and books declaring that the Catholic Church never taught the doctrine of baptism of blood and baptism of desire. Reacting to the nascent ecumenism and liberalism of Cardinal Cushing, he held that unless someone were baptized with the baptism of water, he could not be saved. He and his followers also said that the Church's doctrine, that outside the Church there is no salvation, means that those who do not externally belong to the Catholic Church are necessarily going to hell.

The Catholic Church never said or taught the doctrines of Fr. Feeney. The Catholic Church has universally taught and teaches that there is a baptism of blood and a baptism of desire, and that those who are invincibly ignorant of the truth of the Catholic Faith are not guilty of the personal sin of infidelity in their failure to embrace the Catholic Faith.

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Fr. Feeney did not recant, but was excommunicated. He founded a community where his followers gathered around him, and his error was confined mostly to the eastern section of the State of Massachusetts. They are commonly referred to as "Feeneyites."

In the past few years, however, many traditional Catholics have espoused this condemned error as if it were a Catholic doctrine. They falsely perceive the doctrine of baptism of desire and baptism of blood as a dilution of the Church's true doctrine in preparation for the era of ecumenism.

It should be noted that there are hardly any traditional priests who adhere to the doctrine of Fr. Feeney. It is a layman's error, and it arises out of an ignorance of the Church's true doctrine.

In this *Anti-Feeneyite Catechism*, therefore, I intend to point out to the faithful the traditional doctrine of the Church, against the condemned innovation of Fr. Feeney. I will draw mostly from texts of popes, saints, doctors of the Church, renowned theologians, and common catechisms in order to prove the point.

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## INSTALLMENT NO. 1

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS TAKEN FROM *EXPOSITION OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE*, WITH AN IMPRIMATUR OF THE ARCHBISHOP OF PHILADELPHIA IN 1898, ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN FRENCH IN 1895, WHICH EDITION RECEIVED A LETTER OF APPROVAL FROM HIS HOLINESS POPE LEO XIII.

### 1. Is Baptism necessary?

From the time of the first preaching of the Gospel, no one can be saved without receiving baptism. "*Amen, amen, I say to thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*" (John III: 5) "*As by the first man, death entered among all men, we cannot, as Truth itself has said, enter the kingdom of heaven, except by water and the Holy Ghost.* (Council of Florence) "*If anyone say that baptism is free, that is to say, that it is not necessary for salvation: let him be anathema.*" (Council of Trent)

### 2. How necessary is baptism?

Baptism is necessary for infants as a means of salvation; for adults, it is necessary both as a means of salvation and as being of divine precept.

### 3. What is meant by saying that baptism is necessary for infants as a means of salvation?

It means that infants who die without receiving it are not saved. Yet they do not sin, because they are ignorant of its necessity.

**4. What is meant by saying that for adults baptism is necessary both as a means and as being of precept?**

By this is meant not only that adults are not saved if they die without baptism, but that they are damned if they refuse to receive this sacrament when they know its necessity. For since Jesus Christ commanded His Apostles and their successors to baptize all nations, it follows that on every adult who has not been baptized, either because he was born of unbelievers, or because of the perverse will of his parents, there rests the grave obligation of receiving baptism as soon as he is sufficiently instructed.

**5. Is baptism absolutely necessary?**

Baptism is not absolutely necessary, since it may be supplied by two means: perfect love of God and martyrdom. Hence there are said to be three kinds of baptism: baptism of *water*, and only this kind is a sacrament; baptism of *fire* or of *desire*; and baptism of *blood*.

**6. How may it be proved that baptism of fire, or of desire, that is to say, perfect charity, supplies for the baptism of water?**

This may be proved

(1) from Holy Scripture. *“I love them that love Me.”* (Proverbs VIII: 17); *“He that loveth Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him.”* (John XIV: 21)

(2) from the teaching of the Church. *“After the promulgation of the Gospel,”* say the Fathers of the Council of Trent, *“no one can pass from the state of the Old Adam to the state of grace, without the bath of regeneration, or without a desire for this bath.”* (Session VI, canon 4) Now, according to the same Council, this desire of baptism is *“an act of perfect charity or of perfect contrition.”* (Session XIV, canon 4)

(3) from the testimony of Tradition. *“If circumstances do not allow one to receive baptism of water, it may be supplied not only by sufferings borne in the name of Jesus Christ, but by faith and conversion of heart.”* (St. Augustine) — St. Ambrose, in speaking of Valentinian, who died a catechumen, said: *“I have lost him whom I was to regenerate; but he has not lost the grace which he had asked.”*

(4) from reason. “Baptism of water draws its efficacy from the passion of Christ, a likeness of which is imprinted by this sacrament, and ulteriorly, from the Holy Ghost, as from its first cause. Therefore the effect of baptism can be obtained directly by the power of the Holy Ghost, when He inclines the heart of man to faith, to the love of God, and to repentance for sin.” (St. Thomas)

**7. Is the *sacrament* of baptism inconsistent with the justification thus obtained by perfect charity?**

No; for at least an implicit desire of baptism is necessary, when a person cannot actually receive it; and this is true also of the baptism of blood.

**8. Does the baptism of desire produce all the effects of the baptism of water?**

No; it does not imprint a character, it does not confer sacramental grace, it does not remit all the temporal punishment due to sin, unless the charity is so intense as to merit its remission.

**9. How does the baptism of desire act?**

It acts *ex opere operantis*, that is, by virtue of the dispositions of the subject; and not *ex opere operato*, that is, by virtue of the work done: whence it follows that it can justify none but adults.

**10. How may it be shown that baptism of blood, or martyrdom, supplies for baptism of water?**

This may be shown from the belief of the Church, based on Holy Scripture.

Since baptism of water draws its efficacy from the passion of Jesus Christ and from the Holy Ghost, a person can, according to St. Thomas, even without receiving baptism, obtain the effect of the sacrament by virtue of the passion of Jesus Christ by conforming himself thereto, that is, by suffering for Christ.

“Whosoever dies to give testimony to Jesus Christ, thereby receives the remission of his sins just as if he had been cleansed in the sacred waters of baptism. For He who said: *‘Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,’* makes an exception when He says not less absolutely: *‘Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God,’* and again: *‘He that shall lose his life for My sake, shall find it.’*” (St. Augustine)

*Who are these that are clothed in white robes? and whence are they come?...These are they who are come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb.* (Apoc. XIII: 14)

**11. Do children who are put to death out of hatred of Jesus Christ have any share in this privilege?**

Holy Scripture makes no distinction between children and adults. Both reap the fruits of Christ’s passion when they suffer for His sake. Moreover the Holy Innocents are honored as martyrs by the Church.

**12. What are the effects of the baptism of blood?**

It cleanses from all sin, and remits the temporal and eternal punishment due to sin; but, since it is not a sacrament, it imprints no character.

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him, and his error was confined mostly to the eastern section of the State of Massachusetts. They are commonly referred to as "Feeneyites."

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## INSTALLMENT NO. 2

TEACHINGS OF POPE PIUS IX AND OF THE HOLY OFFICE UNDER POPE PIUS XII

### I.

TEACHING OF HIS HOLINESS POPE PIUS IX, IN THE  
ALLOCUTION *SINGULARI QUADAM*  
OF DECEMBER 9<sup>TH</sup>, 1854

For it must be held by faith that outside the Apostolic Roman Church, no one can be saved; that this is the only ark of salvation; that he who shall not have entered therein will perish in the flood; but, on the other hand, it is necessary to hold for certain that they who labor in ignorance of the true religion, if this ignorance is invincible, are not stained by any guilt in this matter in the eyes of God. Now, in truth, who would arrogate so much to himself as to mark the limits of such an ignorance,

because of the nature and variety of peoples, regions, innate dispositions, and of so many other things?

### II.

TEACHING OF THE HOLY OFFICE UNDER  
POPE PIUS XII

*The following is a letter from the Holy Office to Archbishop  
Cushing of Boston in 1949,  
concerning the errors of Fr. Leonard Feeney*

THE SUPREME SACRED CONGREGATION OF  
THE HOLY OFFICE

From the Headquarters of the Holy Office

August 8, 1949

Protocol Number 122/49.

Your Excellency:

This Supreme Sacred Congregation has followed very attentively the rise and the course of the grave controversy stirred up by certain associates of "St. Benedict Center" and "Boston College" in regard to the interpretation of that axiom: "Outside Church there is no salvation."

After having examined all the documents that are necessary or useful in this matter, among them information from your Chancery, as well as appeals and reports in which the associates of "St. Benedict Center" explain their Opinions and complaints and also many other documents pertinent to the controversy, officially collected, same Sacred Congregation is convinced that the unfortunate controversy arose from, the fact that the axiom: "outside the Church there is no salvation," was not correctly understood and weighed, and that the same controversy was rendered more bitter by serious disturbance of discipline arising from the fact that some of the associates of the institutions mentioned above refused reverence and obedience to legitimate authorities.

Accordingly, the Most Eminent and Most Reverend Cardinals of this Supreme Congregation, in a plenary session, held on Wednesday, July 27, 1949, decreed, and the August Pontiff in an audience on the following Thursday, July 28, 1949, deigned to give his approval, that the following explanations pertinent to the doctrine, and also that invitations and exhortations relevant to discipline be given:

We are bound by divine and Catholic faith to believe all those things which are contained in the word of God, whether it be Scripture or Tradition, and are propose by the Church to be believed as divinely revealed, not only through solemn judgment but also through the ordinary and universal teaching office (Denzinger, n. 1792). Now, among those things which the Church has always preached and will never cease to preach is contained also that infallible statement by which we are taught that there is no salvation outside the Church.

However, this dogma must be understood in that sense in which the Church herself understands it. For, it was not to private judgments that Our Savior gave for explanation those things that are contained in the deposit of faith, but to the teaching authority' of the Church.

Now, in the first place, the Church teaches that in this matter there is question of a most strict command of Jesus Christ. For He explicitly enjoined on His apostles to teach all nations to observe all things whatsoever He Himself had commanded (Matt., 28:19-20).

Now, among the commandments of Christ, that one holds not the least place, by we are commanded to be incorporated by Baptism into the Mystical Body of Christ, which is the Church, and to remain united to Christ and to His Vicar, through whom He Himself in a

visible manner governs the Church on earth.

Therefore, no one will be saved who, knowing the Church to have been divinely established by Christ, nevertheless refuses to submit to the Church or withholds obedience from the Roman Pontiff, the Vicar of Christ on earth. Not only did the Savior command that all nations should enter the Church, but also decreed the Church to be a means of salvation, without which no one can enter the kingdom of eternal glory.

In His infinite mercy God has willed that the effects, necessary for one to be saved, of those helps to salvation which are directed toward man's final end, not by intrinsic necessity, but only by divine institution, can also be obtained in certain circumstances when those helps are used only in desire and longing. This we see clearly stated in the Sacred Council of Trent, both in reference to the Sacrament of Regeneration and in reference to the Sacrament of Penance.

The same in its own degree must be asserted of the Church, in as far as she is the general help to salvation. Therefore, that one may obtain eternal salvation, it is not always required that he be incorporated into the Church actually as a member, but it necessary that at least he be united to her by desire and longing.

However, this desire need not always be explicit, as it is in catechumens; but when person is involved in invincible ignorance, God accepts also an implicit desire, so called because it is included in that good disposition of soul whereby a person wishes will to be conformed to the will of God.

These things are clearly taught in that dogmatic letter which was issued by the Sovereign Pontiff, Pope Pius XII, on June 29, 1943, "On the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ" (AAS, Vol. 35, an. 1943, p. 193ff.). For in this letter the Sovereign Pontiff clearly distinguishes between those who are actually incorporated into the Church as members, and those who are united to the Church only by desire.

Discussing the members of which the Mystical Body is composed here on earth, same August Pontiff says: "Actually only those are to be included as members e Church who have been baptized and profess the true faith, and who have not been so unfortunate as to separate themselves from the unity of the Body, or been excluded by legitimate authority for grave faults committed."

Toward the end of this same Encyclical Letter, when most affectionately inviting unity those who do not belong to the body of the Catholic Church, he mentions who "are related to the Mystical Body of the Redeemer by a certain unconscious yearning and desire," and these he by no means excludes from eternal salvation, but the other hand states that they are in a condition "in which they cannot be sure their salvation" since "they still remain deprived of those many heavenly gifts and helps which can only be enjoyed in the Catholic Church" AAS,

loc. cit., 243).

With these wise words he reproves both those who exclude from eternal salvation united to the Church only by implicit desire, and those who falsely assert that men be saved equally well in every religion (cf. Pope Pius IX, Allocution *Singulari quadam*, in Denzinger, nn. 1641, ff. also Pope Pius IX in the Encyclical Letter *Quanto conficiamur moerore* in Denzinger, n. 1677).

But it must not be thought that any kind of desire of entering the Church suffices that one may be saved. It is necessary that the desire by which one is related to the Church be animated by perfect charity. Nor can an implicit desire produce its effect, unless a person has supernatural faith: "For he who comes to God must believe that God exists and is a rewarder of those who seek Him" (Hebrew 11:6). The Council of Trent declares (Session VI, chap 8): Faith is the beginning of a man's salvation, the foundation and root of all justification, without which it is impossible to please God and attain to the fellowship of His children" (Denzinger, n. 801).

From what has been said it is evident that those things which are proposed in the periodical "From the Housetops," fascicle 3, as the genuine teaching of the Catholic Church are far from being such and are very harmful both to those within the Church and those without.

From these declarations which pertain to doctrine certain conclusions follow which regard discipline and conduct, and which cannot be unknown to those who vigorously defend the necessity by which all are bound of belonging to the true Church and of submitting to the authority of the Roman Pontiff and of the Bishops "whom the Holy Ghost has placed . . . to rule the Church" (Acts, 20:28).

Hence, one cannot understand how the St. Benedict Center can consistently claim to be a Catholic school and wish to be accounted such, and yet not conform to the prescriptions of Canons 1381 and 1382 of the Code of Canon Law, and continue to exist as a source of discord and rebellion against ecclesiastical authority and as a source of the disturbance of many consciences.

Furthermore, it is beyond understanding how a member of a religious institute, namely Father Feeney, presents himself as a "Defender of the faith," and at the same time does not hesitate to attack the catechetical instruction proposed by lawful authorities, and has not even feared to incur grave sanctions threatened by the sacred canons because of his serious violations of his duties as a religious, a priest and an ordinary member of the Church.

Finally, it is in no wise to be tolerated that certain Catholics shall claim for themselves the right to publish a periodical, for the purpose of spreading theological doctrines, without the permission of competent Church Authority; called the "imprimatur," which is prescribed by the sacred canons.

Therefore, let them who in grave peril are ranged against the Church seriously bear in mind that after "Rome has spoken" they cannot be excused even by reasons of good faith. Certainly, their bond and duty of obedience toward the Church is much graver than that of those who as yet are related to the Church "only by an unconscious desire." Let them realize that they are children of the Church, lovingly nourished by her with the milk of doctrine and the sacraments, and hence, having heard the clear voice of their Mother, they cannot be excused from culpable ignorance, and therefore to them applies without any restriction that principle: submission to the Catholic Church and to the Sovereign Pontiff is required as necessary for salvation.

In sending this letter, I declare my profound esteem, and remain Your Excellency's most devoted

Cardinal Marchetti-Selvaggiani

A. Ottaviani Assessor

To His Excellency  
Most Reverend Richard James Cushing  
Archbishop of Boston

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## INSTALLMENT NO. 3

CATHOLIC THEOLOGY

BENEDICT HENRY MERKELBACH O.P.<sup>1</sup>

[*Summa Theologiae Moralis*, Vol. III, nos. 133, 134 & 135, published in 1954]

**133. Principle I. After the promulgation of the gospel, the Sacrament of Baptism, by the positive**

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<sup>1</sup> Fr. Benedict Henry Merkelbach, a Dominican, who wrote the first edition of this work in the 1930's, is the most renowned moral theologian of the twentieth century. His massive three-volume work was the standard textbook for many, many seminaries throughout the whole world before Vatican II. It is the one which is used at Most Holy Trinity Seminary in Warren, Michigan.

**order of God, is in itself and ordinarily necessary for all men, and is necessary by necessity of means for salvation.** For adults, however, it is necessary also by necessity of natural and divine law, since this means must be accepted by them voluntarily.

**134. Principle II. The Sacrament of Baptism extraordinarily or by accident can be supplied for by means of the baptism of blood, which is martyrdom, or by the baptism of flame, i.e., the act of perfect charity or contrition with at least the implicit desire for the very same sacrament.** This principle is *certain* from the tradition of the Church.

*Proof.* A. *The baptism of blood* is martyrdom, that is, a death inflicted and tolerated for Christ, for the true Faith or some other Christian virtue.

*It takes the place of the sacrament*, as is clear from the words of Christ in Matthew X: 32, 39<sup>2</sup>; Luke IX: 24<sup>3</sup>; it is true *even in children*, which is evident from the fact that the innocents killed by Herod have always been venerated by the Church as martyrs, “who confessed [the Faith] not by speaking but by dying.” This is most fitting, for since the sacraments have their efficacy from the passion of Christ and His merits, it is necessary that the real imitation of the passion of Christ, by which man is most configured to Christ, obtain the application of the merits of the passion and the effect of the sacrament.

B. *The baptism of flame* or desire, which is not called so because there is a desire for Baptism, which is present in the other baptisms of adults, but because there is nothing but a desire for Baptism. It is an act of *perfect* charity or contrition, which includes at least implicitly a desire for Baptism, by desiring to do all things which God commands under pain of mortal sin, and to use all the means which are necessary for salvation, first among which is Baptism, “inasmuch as,” says St. Thomas in q. 66, art. 11, “the heart of someone is moved by the Holy Ghost to believe God and love God, and to do penance for his sins.”

*It takes the place of Baptism in adults*, because, since the sacraments have their power from the Holy Ghost as their first cause, someone can, through the power of the Holy Ghost, obtain the effect, not only without the Baptism of water but also without the baptism of blood. This is evident from all of the general assertions concerning the love of God (John XIV: 23)<sup>4</sup> and penance (Ezekiel XVIII: 21)<sup>5</sup>. These proofs are confirmed by the case of Cornelius in whom, before he was baptized, the Holy Ghost visibly descended (Acts X: 33, 44)<sup>6</sup>. Likewise it is proved by the Council of Trent<sup>7</sup> in Session 6, chapter

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<sup>2</sup> “Every one therefore that shall confess me before men, I will also confess him before my Father who is in heaven.” “He that findeth his life, shall lose it: and he that shall lose his life for me shall find it.”

<sup>3</sup> “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; for he that shall lose his life for my sake, shall save it.”

<sup>4</sup> “If anyone love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him.”

<sup>5</sup> “But if the wicked do penance for all his sins which he hath committed, and keep all my commandments, and do judgement, and justice, living he shall live and shall not die.”

<sup>6</sup> The reader would do well to read the whole tenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, where the pagan Roman centurion Cornelius, as St. Peter was explaining the gospel to him, received the Holy Ghost before his baptism.

<sup>7</sup> In these words a description of the justification of a sinner is given as being a translation from that state in which man is born a child of the first Adam to the state of grace and of the “adoption of sons” [Romans VIII:15] of God through the second Adam, Jesus Christ, our Savior; and this translation after the promulgation of the Gospel cannot be effected except through the laver of regeneration, **or a desire for it**, as it is written: “Unless a man be born again of water and

4, and by the doctrine of justification *ex opere operantis*, i.e., by the act of perfect contrition and charity, which is demonstrated in the tract on grace, and is drawn from the thirtieth condemned proposition of Baius.

Since, however, the *desire* for Baptism is required, it follows that those who have been justified by the baptism of flame or of blood remain obliged to receive the Sacrament of Baptism, when the opportunity presents itself. Therefore someone should be baptized who has already received a mortal wound, if he continues to live for a few moments.

**135. Corollary.** *There is a threefold Baptism: water, flame, and blood.*

1. *The Baptism of water*, that is, the Sacrament of Baptism is an external ceremonial sign. It is a sacred rite instituted by Christ and administered in His name, that it be His instrument in the remission of sins and of admission into the Church. It justifies *ex opere operato* with only imperfect contrition. It imprints the character and remits all punishment due to sin, as we have explained above in no. 130.

2. *The Baptism of flame or desire* is an act of perfect charity or contrition. It is not a sacrament, because it is not an external sign, and therefore does not imprint the character. Therefore, after such a baptism there remains the obligation of receiving the Sacrament of Baptism. It justifies *ex opere operantis*, and ordinarily does not remit all punishment for sin.

3. *The Baptism of blood* or martyrdom. It is not a sacrament, because it is not a ceremonial sign or a rite instituted by Christ, which is administered in His name in order that it be an instrument of sanctification. Therefore it does not imprint the character. It justifies in a manner like *ex opere operato*, not actively but passively, with only imperfect contrition, and in it all the punishment for sin is remitted. It is more eminent than the other two types of baptism since it gives a more perfect conformity with Christ, and therefore God grants a greater grace in it.

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the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” [John III: 5]. [emphasis added]

# Baptism of Desire and Theological Principles (2000)

*by Rev. Anthony Cekada*

## **What principles must Catholics follow to arrive at the truth?**

OVER THE YEARS I have occasionally encountered traditionalists, both lay and clerical, who followed the teachings of the late Rev. Leonard Feeney and the St. Benedict Center concerning the axiom “Outside the Church there is no salvation.” Those who fully embrace the Feeneyite position reject the common Catholic teaching about baptism of desire and baptism of blood.

Catholics, however, are not free to reject this teaching, because it comes from the Church’s **universal ordinary magisterium**. Pius IX stated that Catholics are required to believe those teachings that theologians hold “belong to the faith,” and to subject themselves to those forms of doctrine commonly held as “theological truths and conclusions.”

In 1998, I photocopied material on baptism of desire and baptism of blood from the works of twenty-five pre-Vatican II theologians (including two Doctors of the Church), and assembled it into a dossier. All, of course, teach the same doctrine.

Behind the Feeneyite rejection of this doctrine lies a rejection of the **principles** that Pius IX laid down, principles that form the basis for the whole science of theology. He who rejects these criteria rejects the foundations of Catholic theology and constructs a peculiar theology of his own — one where his own interpretation of papal pronouncements is every bit as arbitrary and idiosyncratic as a free-thinking Baptist’s interpretation of the Bible. It is utterly pointless to argue with such a person over baptism of blood and baptism of desire, because he does not accept the only criteria on which a theological issue must be judged.

What follows are notes from a July 15, 2000 conference I gave addressing the principles to be applied in examining the issues of baptism of desire and baptism of blood. The photocopied dossier mentioned is available from our office for a nominal charge.

### *Section I*

## **What Principles Does the Church Require You to Follow?**

### **I. You must believe the teachings of both the solemn and the universal ordinary magisterium of the Church (Vatican I).**

#### **A. General Principle:**

- “Further, by divine and Catholic faith, all those things must be believed which are contained in the written word of God and in tradition, and those which are proposed by the Church, either in a solemn pronouncement **or IN HER ORDINARY AND UNIVERSAL TEACHING POWER** [*magisterium*], to be believed as divinely revealed.” Vatican Council I, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Faith* (1870), DZ 1792.

**B. The Code of Canon Law imposes the same obligation.**  
(Canon 1323.1)

**C. Therefore, you must believe by divine and Catholic faith those things:**

1. Contained in Scripture or Tradition, *AND*
2. Proposed for belief as divinely revealed by the Church's authority, either through:
  - a. **Solemn pronouncements** (by ecumenical councils, or popes *ex cathedra*) OR
  - b. **Universal ordinary magisterium** (teaching of the bishops together with the pope, either in council, or spread throughout the world.)

**D. This is not "optional," or "a matter of opinion."**

- It defines the *object of faith* — what you are obliged to believe.
- Further, it is *de fide definita* — an infallible, unchangeable, solemn pronouncement.

**II. You must believe those teachings of the universal ordinary magisterium held by theologians to belong to the faith (Pius IX).**

- "For even if it were a matter concerning that subjection which is to be manifested by an act of divine faith, nevertheless, it would not have to be limited to those matters which have been defined by express decrees of the ecumenical Councils, or of the Roman Pontiffs and of this See, but would have to be **extended also to those matters which are handed down as divinely revealed by the ordinary teaching power of the whole Church spread throughout the world, and therefore, by universal and common consent are held by Catholic theologians to belong to faith.**" *Tuas Libenter* (1863), DZ 1683.

**III. You must also subject yourself to the Holy See's doctrinal decisions and to other forms of doctrine commonly held as theological truths and conclusions. (Pius IX).**

**A. General Principle.**

- "But, since it is a matter of that subjection by which in conscience all those Catholics are bound who work in the speculative sciences, in order that they may bring new advantage to the Church by their writings, on that account, then, the men of that same convention should realize that it is **not sufficient for learned Catholics to accept and revere the aforesaid dogmas of the Church**, but that it is also necessary to subject themselves to the decisions pertaining to doctrine which are issued by the Pontifical Congregations, and also to those forms of doctrine which are held by the common and constant consent of Catholics as **theological truths and conclusions, so certain that opinions opposed to these same forms of doctrine, although they cannot be called heretical, nevertheless deserve some theological censure.**" *Tuas Libenter* (1863), DZ 1684.

**B. You must therefore adhere to the following:**

1. Doctrinal decisions of Vatican Congregations (*e.g., the Holy Office*).
2. Forms of doctrine held as:
  - a. Theological truths and conclusions.
  - b. So certain that opposition merits some theological censure short of "heresy."

#### IV. You must reject these condemned positions on this issue:

**A. Theologians have “obscured” the more important truths of our faith.** (Condemned by Pius VI.)

- “The proposition which asserts ‘that in these later times there has been spread a general obscuring of the more important truths pertaining to religion, which are the basis of faith and of the moral teachings of Jesus Christ,’ HERETICAL.” *Auctorem Fidei* (1794) DZ 1501.

**B. Catholics are obliged to believe only those matters infallibly proposed as dogmas.** (Condemned by Pius IX.)

- “And so all and each evil opinion and doctrine individually mentioned in this letter, by Our Apostolic authority We reject, proscribe, and condemn: and We wish and command that they be considered as absolutely rejected, proscribed and condemned by all the sons of the Catholic Church...”

“22. The obligation by which Catholic teachers and writers are absolutely bound is restricted to those matters only which are proposed by the infallible judgement of the Church, to be believed by all as dogmas of the faith.” CONDEMNED PROPOSITION. Encyclical *Quanta Cura* and *Syllabus of Errors* (1864), DZ 1699, 1722.

**C. Encyclicals do not demand assent, because popes are not exercising their supreme power.** (Condemned by Pius XII.)

- “It is not to be thought that what is set down in Encyclical Letters does not demand assent in itself, because in these the popes do not exercise the supreme powers of their *magisterium*. For these matters are taught by the ordinary *magisterium*, regarding which the following is pertinent ‘He who heareth you, heareth me.’; and usually what is set forth and inculcated in Encyclical Letters, already pertains to Catholic doctrine.” *Humani Generis* (1950), DZ 2313.

#### Section II

### Why the Church Requires You to Believe or Adhere to Doctrines Commonly Taught by her Theologians.

Résumé translated by Fr. Cekada from Fr. Reginald-Maria SCHULTES OP, *De Ecclesia Catholica: Praelectiones Apologeticae* [*Apologetic Lectures on the Catholic Church*], 2nd. ed., Paris: Lethielleux 1931, pp. 667ff. This book was used by students for Doctoral degrees in theology in Roman Universities in the early 1900s. Fr. Schultes held the highest theological degree in the Dominican Order (OPS ThMagister), and was a Professor at the Pontifical University of the Angelicum in Rome. Sections marked with asterisks (\*) = additional comments by Fr. Cekada.

#### I. Introductory Concepts.

**A. Definition of Theologian** = “learned men who after the time of the Church Fathers scientifically taught sacred doctrine in the Church.”

1. *in the Church* = in union with the Church, either with: (a) a Specific mission from the Church or (b) the Consent of the Church, either express or tacit.
2. *doctrine* = either dogma or moral.

**B. General Types of Theology.**

1. *Positive* = investigates and expounds the contents of Scripture and the Fathers.
2. *Scholastic* = seeks understanding of the faith through use of Scripture, the Fathers, reason (syllogisms), philosophic

principles (in explaining revelation, drawing conclusions and formulating definitions).

**C. \*The Education and Career of a Theologian.\***

- *Minor Seminary:* 6 years. Latin, liberal arts.
- *Philosophy:* 2–3 years. Logic, Metaphysics, Cosmology, Psychology, Criteriology, etc.
- *Theology,* studied at a Pontifical University: Dogmatic, Moral, Pastoral courses studied by ordinary clergy, 4-5 years. (In 1st year, the *criteria* for settling theological issues.) S.T.L. degree. Ordination at about age 25. Doctoral studies, 2-4 years. Research, dissertation, public defense of dissertation before examiners of a Pontifical University. S.T.D. degree.
- *Early Career:* Teaching undergraduate university courses. Assisting senior professors with research. Writing and researching own articles. Publication of articles in journals. (All are scrutinized by professors, and must be reviewed by ecclesiastical superiors, and given an Imprimatur.) Review by senior faculty.
- *Middle Career:* (If successful.) Assistant Professorship in Pontifical University. Selection as associate author of a major work by a recognized theologian. Continued research, and publication of articles in journals. (All with peer review and ecclesiastical approval.)
- *Later Career:* (If successful.) Full Professorship at a Pontifical University. Authorship of a work considered a significant contribution in a particular field. Continued research, and publication of articles in journals. (All with peer review and ecclesiastical approval.)
- *The Top of the Heap:* (Only the very best.) Head of a department at a Pontifical University. Authorship of a multi-volume manual in dogmatic or moral theology that is considered an outstanding contribution in its field, and used in seminaries and universities throughout the world. Appointment by pope as a Consultor to one of the departments of the Roman Curia. Invitation to draft an Encyclical or papal legislation. The Cardinal's hat. Canonization as a saint. The title "Doctor of the Church."
- *Conclusion to Be Drawn:* The theologians who were acknowledged as the best in their fields before Vatican II possessed a knowledge and expertise in Catholic doctrine that was overwhelmingly superior to that of a layman or the average parish priest.

**II. Opponents to Authority of Theologians.**

- A. Humanists.** (Rejected supernatural principles. Put man at center of universe.)
- B. Protestants.** (Rejected doctrines theologians defended.)
  1. *Luther.* Scholastic theology is "ignorance of the truth and inane falsehood."
  2. *Melancthon.* Scholastic theology is "the Gospel obscured, the faith extinguished."
- C. Jansenists.** (Claimed that theologians "obscured revealed doctrine.")
- D. Modernists, liberals rationalists.** (Reject the immutable nature of truth.)

**III. Church Doctrine on the Issue.**

- A. Papal Pronouncements.**
  1. **Pius VI.** *Condemns the following propositions of the Synod of Pistoia (1794):*

a. That the scholastic method “opened the way for inventing new systems discordant with one another with respect to truths of a greater value, and which finally led to probabilism and laxism.” DZ 1576.

b. “The assertion which attacks with slanderous charges the opinions discussed in Catholic schools about which the Apostolic See has thought that nothing yet needs to be defined or pronounced.” DZ 1578.

c. “The proposition which asserts ‘**that in these later times there has been spread a general obscuring of the more important truths pertaining to religion**, which are the basis of faith and of the moral teachings of Jesus Christ’, **heretical**.” DZ 1501.

2. **Pius IX.** *Reproof to those who reject the teachings of scholastic theology*:

- “Nor are we ignorant that in Germany there also prevailed a false opinion against the old school, and against the teaching of those supreme Doctors, whom the universal Church venerates because of their admirable wisdom and sanctity of life. **But by this false opinion the authority of the Church itself is called into danger**, especially since the Church, not only through so many continuous centuries has permitted that theological science be cultivated according to the method and the principles of these same Doctors, sanctioned by the common consent of all Catholic schools, but it [the Church] also very often extolled their theological doctrine with the highest praises, and strongly recommended it as a very strong buttress of faith and a formidable armory against its enemies.” *Tuas libenter*, 1863, DZ 1680.

3. **Leo XIII.** *Prescribes use of St. Thomas and his methods*.

#### **B. Practice of Church.**

1. Condemning doctrines contrary to the teaching of theologians.
2. Applying scholastic doctrine and methods in her pronouncements.
3. Declaring theologians Doctors of the Church. (*Ss. Thomas, Bonaventure, etc.*)

#### **C. The Code of Canon Law.**

- “Instructors in conducting the study of the subjects of rational philosophy and of theology and in the training of the seminarians in these subjects shall follow the Angelic Doctor’s method, doctrine and principles, and steadfastly adhere to them.” (Canon 1366.2)

### **IV. Thesis: The unanimous teaching of theologians in matters of faith and morals establishes certitude for the proof of a dogma.**

#### **A. First Proof: The connection of theologians with the Church.**

1. As *men* who study theological science, theologians have only a scientific and historical authority. But as *servants, organs, and witness of the Church*, they possess an authority that is both dogmatic and certain.

2. Church doctrine on matters of faith and morals possesses an authority that is dogmatic and certain. (a) The unanimous teaching of theologians *testifies and expresses* the doctrine of the Church, because the Church accepts the common teaching of theologians as true and as her own when she either tacitly or expressly approves it. (b) Theologians as *ministers and organs of the Church* instruct the

faithful in the doctrines of the faith. So, in fact those things preached, taught, held and believed are those same things the theologians propose and teach.

3. And so, because of the theologians' connection with the Church, their agreement on a doctrine has an authority that is both dogmatic and certain, because otherwise the authority of the Church herself would be endangered, because she admitted, fostered or approved the [false] doctrine of theologians.

4. This proof is confirmed because the dogmatic authority of theologians is denied by all those and only those who: (a) Deny or refuse to admit the dogmatic authority of the Church; or (b) At least refuse to consider the connection of theologians with the Church. It is no wonder that all enemies of the Church or Catholic truth are likewise enemies of Catholic theology.

**B. Second Proof: False principles behind opposing arguments.**

- Opponents deny the dogmatic authority of theologians by: (1) Breaking the link between the Church and theologians, or by at least denying or diminishing the dogmatic authority of the Church herself. (2) Directly opposing Catholic doctrine which theologians propose and defend. (3) Attempting to introduce erroneous philosophy or other false concepts incompatible with the teaching of the faith.

**C. Third Proof: The Effects**

- The teaching of the theologians, especially the scholastics, best explains and defends the doctrine of the faith, nourishes and begets faith, and helps and perfects the Christian life. On the contrary, whenever and insofar as the doctrine of the theologians is abandoned, especially that of the scholastic theologians, theological errors, indeed heresies, rise up, and the Christian life falls. All ecclesiastical history bears witness to this, from the Middle Ages to our own time. On one hand, the magnificent explanation and elucidation of Christian doctrine by the scholastic theologians, approved and acclaimed by the Church — whose job it is to judge the truth of theological doctrine — and faith and exemplary Christian life. On the other hand, heresies, theological errors, declining Christian life — all is proved by the history of the Protestants, Baianists, Jansenists, Modernists, and other opponents of recent theological schools.

**V. Objections and Responses.** (A-C: Fr. Schultes; D-E: Fr. Cekada)

**A. Theologians, then, “create” doctrines.** *“It is not the job of theologians to determine whether some doctrine is ‘de fide’ or ‘certain’ or ‘Catholic.’”*

- *Response:* Theologians do not ‘determine’ whether some doctrine is ‘de fide’ or ‘certain’ or ‘Catholic.’ They merely demonstrate, or manifest or give witness that a particular doctrine is ‘de fide’ or ‘certain’ or ‘Catholic.’

**B. But theologians erred in the past...** *“Throughout history, theologians held various errors, and then disputed about grave issues amongst themselves.”*

- *Response:* I let pass the accusation that scholastic theologians erred in certain questions of the faith. They did not, however, unanimously defend an error as a doctrine of the faith.

**C. They cannot reliably explain the meaning of defined doctrine.** *“Theologians are reliable witnesses to a doctrine as defined by the Church. But they are not reliable witnesses to the meaning of a doctrine they propose. In this they must be considered only private teachers, interpreting dogma and applying it according to their own philosophy.”*

- *Response:* Theologians are witnesses not only to whether a doctrine is defined, but also to its *meaning*. (a) In explaining and determining the meaning of dogmas, theologians are considered private teachers with regard to the *methods* they use (arguments, etc.), but *not* when they propose a doctrine as a doctrine of the faith or the Church, even though they express its meaning to other persons using other concepts and formulas. (b) The opposite opinion obviously sins against the teaching of the Church regarding the authority of theologians. (c) Furthermore, it is absurd to claim that the Fathers of the Church and her theologians erred in setting forth and explaining the meaning of the doctrine of the faith. This opinion involves the Jansenist error that the faith has been “obscured” in the Church.

D. **\*Theologians and Vatican II.\*** *“The teachings of theologians were responsible for the doctrinal errors of Vatican II. Because these theologians erred and we reject their teachings, we are also therefore free to reject the teaching of earlier theologians if a teaching ‘does not make sense’ to us.”*

- *Response:* The group of European modernist theologians primarily responsible for the Vatican II errors were enemies of traditional scholastic theology and had been censured or silenced by Church authority: Murray, Schillebeeckx, Congar, de Lubac, Teilhard, etc. When the strictures were removed under John XXIII, they were able to spread their errors freely. If anything, **the fact that they had been previously silenced demonstrates the Church’s vigilance against error in the writings of her theologians.**

E. **\*Private Interpretation of Magisterial Pronouncements.\*** *“I think the infallible pronouncements of the Church are all pretty clear. I don’t need ‘interpretations’ or explanations from theologians. I just take everything literally.”*

- *Response:* Do-it-yourself interpretations and explanation of texts are for Protestants, not Catholics. Theology is a science which operates under the watchful eye of the Church, not a free-for-all for every Catholic with an English translation of Denziger. Like any other science, theology operates according to recognized and objective criteria which experts use to arrive at the truth about various propositions. So, if you are not trained in the science, you have no business coming up with your own interpretations for the pronouncements of the magisterium. At best, you’ll end up looking ignorant; at worst, you’ll end up a heretic.

### *Additional Explanation from Another Theologian*

Résumé translated by Fr. Cekada from material in  
I. Salaverri SJ. *Tractatus de Ecclesia*, 3rd ed., Madrid, BAC 1955, 846ff.

#### **Thesis 21. The consensus of theologians in matters of faith and morals is a certain criteria of divine Tradition.**

##### **A. Dogmatic Value of this Thesis.** It is:

1. *Catholic Doctrine.* (From the teaching of Pius IX quoted above.)
2. *Theologically Certain.* (From the practice of Trent & Vatican I.)

## B. Proof of the Thesis.

1. *Major Premise.* The consent of theologians in matters of faith and morals is so intimately connected with the teaching Church that an error in the consensus of theologians would necessarily lead the whole Church into error.
2. *Minor Premise.* But the whole Church cannot err in faith and morals. (The Church is infallible.)
3. *Conclusion.* The consensus of theologians in matters of faith and morals is a certain criteria of divine Tradition.

## C. Proofs of the Major Premise.

1. **Citation of Theological Works.** Popes, bishops, etc., from the 8th century onwards taught material which they drew from the teaching of theologians.
2. **Supervision.** From the 12-16th centuries, the Church founded, directed, and watched over all theological schools.
3. **Legislation.** From the time of Trent, theological works were used in seminaries which were supervised by bishops and popes.
4. **Consultation.** Church used theologians as her consultants for doctrinal matters.
5. **Implicit Approval.** The Church implicitly approves the contents of theologians' works by not censuring them, which she is obliged to do in case of theological errors.
6. **Recommendation.** The writings of various theological schools are praised by popes and held out as examples to imitate.

### Section III

## Pre-Vatican II Theologians Who Teach Baptism of Desire, Baptism of Blood.

*From dossier with 122 pages of photocopied material.*

The accompanying table contains a list of pre-Vatican II theologians who teach baptism of desire (=desiderii, flaminis, in voto, etc.) and baptism of blood (=sanguinis, martyrii, etc.), together with a page reference to the photocopied dossier I prepared. Two, St. Alphonsus de Ligouri and St. Robert Bellarmine, are **Doctors of the Church**. Many more such theologians can easily be found. These were merely the works in my private library.

Also given is the **theological category** (if any) each theologian has assigned to the teaching on baptism of blood and baptism of desire. This "category" in theology (also called a theological "note," "qualification," etc.) indicates how close a teaching is to the truths God has revealed and obliges us to believe — whether it is "theologically certain," "Catholic doctrine," *de fide* (of the faith), etc. (Some theologians simply teach the doctrines, and do not assign categories.)

### Table of Theological Categories

Theologian or Canonist	Page in Dossier	Theol. Category Bapt. of Desire	Theol. Category Bapt. of Blood
1. Abarzuza	2	<i>de fide</i> , theol. cert	theol. cert.
2. Aertnys	7	<i>de fide</i>	teaches
3. Billot	10-20	teaches	teaches
4. Cappello	23	teaches	certain
5. Coronata	28	<i>de fide</i>	teaches
6. Davis	32	teaches	teaches
7. Herrmann	35	<i>de fide</i>	pertains to faith
8. Hervé	38	theol. cert.	theol. cert. at least
9. Hurter	44	teaches	teaches
10. Iorio	47	teaches	teaches
11. Lennerz	49-59	teaches	teaches
12. Ligouri	61-62	<i>de fide</i>	teaches
13. McAuliffe	67	cath. doctrine	comm. cert. teaching
14. Merkelbach	71	certain	certain
15. Noldin	74	teaches	teaches
16. Ott	77	<i>fidei proxima</i>	<i>fidei proxima</i>
17. Pohle	81	cath. doctrine	cert. doctrine
18. Prümmer	89	<i>de fide</i>	constant doctrine
19. Regatillo.	91, 96	<i>de fide</i>	teaches
20. Sabetti	98	teaches	teaches
21. Sola	102	<i>fidei proxima</i>	theol. certain
22. Tanquerey	107,111	certain	certain
23. Zalba	114	teaches	teaches
24. Zubizarreta	118	teaches	teaches
25. Bellarmine	120	teaches	teaches

Résumé of Theological Categories	Bapt. of Desire	Bapt. of Blood
Common teaching of the doctrines	25 (all)	25 (all)
Theologically certain, certain	3	8
Catholic doctrine, constant	2	1
<i>fidei proxima</i> , pertains to faith	2	2
<i>de fide</i> (of the faith)	7	0

*Section IV*

**Conclusions from the Foregoing  
about Baptism of Desire and Baptism of Blood**

1. All twenty-five theologians teach baptism of blood and baptism of desire, and none reject the teaching, so **both doctrines are held by common consent**.
2. Some theologians categorize the doctrines as **theologically certain**.
3. Some theologians categorize the doctrines as **Catholic doctrine**.
4. Some theologians categorize the doctrines as *de fide* (of the faith).

*Section V*

**Application of Pope Pius IX's Principle  
to the Teaching of these Theologians**

1. **General Principle** (from Pius IX, sect. I: II-III above):  
All Catholics are obliged to adhere to a teaching if Catholic theologians hold it by common consent, or hold it as *de fide*, or Catholic doctrine, or theologically certain.
2. **Particular Fact** (from sects. III, IV above, as documented in dossier):  
But, Catholic theologians do hold the teaching on baptism of desire and baptism of blood by common consent, or hold it as *de fide*, or Catholic doctrine, or theologically certain.
3. **Conclusion** (1 + 2):  
**Therefore, all Catholics are obliged to adhere to the teaching on baptism of desire and baptism of blood.**

Section VI

### Degree of Error and the Gravity of the Sin if You Reject Baptism of Desire, Baptism of Blood

Each theological “category” has a corresponding **theological censure** attached to it which expresses the degree of error into which someone has fallen by denying a particular teaching.

Below are the various categories theologians attributed to baptism of desire and baptism of blood, along with the corresponding censures and a note on the **gravity of the sin** committed.

<i>Theologians categorize the teachings on the baptisms of desire and blood as one of the following:</i>	<b>YOUR DEGREE OF ERROR</b> <i>(the censure) if you deny the teaching:</i>	<b>GRAVITY OF SIN</b> <i>against the Faith if you deny the teaching:</i>
<b>Theologically certain</b>	<b>Theological error</b>	<b>Mortal sin</b> Indirectly against the faith.
<b>Catholic doctrine</b>	<b>Error in Catholic doctrine</b>	<b>Mortal</b> Indirectly against the faith
<b>De fide</b>	<b>Heresy</b>	<b>Mortal</b> Directly against the faith.

Section VII

### General Conclusion

All Catholics are obliged to adhere to the common teaching on baptism of blood and baptism of desire.

According to the norms outlined above, the Feeneyite position represents either theological error, error in Catholic doctrine or heresy.

Those Catholics who adhere to the Feeneyite position on baptism of desire and baptism of blood commit a mortal sin against the faith.