

DECREE

OF THE

Holy Roman and Universal Inquisition.

Wednesday, July 3, 1907.

With result truly deplorable our age, impatient of a curb, in investigating the ultimate causes of things, often so follows novelty that, casting aside, as it were, the inheritance of the human race, it falls into the most serious errors. These errors will be far more baneful if sacred studies, the interpretation of Sacred Scripture and the principal mysteries of the Faith, are in question. It is too greatly to be regretted that even amongst Catholics are to be found writers not so few who, passing beyond the limits laid down by the Fathers and by Holy Church herself, with a pretence of higher intelligence and in the name of historical examination, seek for that progress of dogmas which is in reality their corruption.

Lest errors of this kind, which are daily spread amongst the Faithful should take root in their souls and corrupt the purity of the Faith, it has pleased our most holy lord, Pius X, by Divine Providence Pope, that the chief amongst them should be pointed out and condemned through this office of the Holy Roman and Universal Inquisition.

Wherefore, a diligent examination having been made and the opinion of the Rev. Consultors having been taken, the Most Eminent and Rev. Cardinals, General Inquisitors on questions of faith and morals, have decided that the following propositions should be denounced and prescribed by this general Decree:

1 The ecclesiastical law which prescribes that books concerning the Divine Scriptures are to be submitted to previous censorship does not apply to those engaged in criticism or scientific exegesis of the Old and New Testament.

2 The Church's interpretation of the Sacred Books is not to be despised, but it is subject to the more accurate judgment and correction of exegetes.

3 From the ecclesiastical decisions and censures directed against free and more cultured exegesis it may be inferred that the Faith set forth by the Church contradicts history, and that the Catholic dogmas cannot, in fact, be reconciled with the truer organs of the Christian religion.

4 The Magisterium of the Church cannot determine the proper sense of the Sacred Scriptures by dogmatic definitions.

5 As only revealed truths are contained in the deposit of the Faith, it is by no means within the province of the Church to pass judgment on the statements of human sciences.

6 In defining truths the learning and the teaching Church so co-operate that nothing remains for the teaching Church except to sanction the common opinions of the learning Church.

7 When the Church prescribes errors it cannot exact from the Faithful any internal assent embracing the decisions published by it.

8 They are to be considered quite free from fault who attach no importance to the condemnation pronounced by the Sacred Congregation of the Index or other Sacred Roman Congregations.

9 They are obviously too simple or too ignorant who believe that God is the Author of the Sacred Scripture.

10 The inspiration of the books of the Old Testament consists in this, that the Jewish writers handed down religious doctrines under a certain peculiar form little known, or unknown to the Gentiles.

11 Divine inspiration does not so extend to the whole of the Sacred Scripture as to secure all and each of the parts from every error.

12 The exegete, if he wishes to apply himself usefully to Biblical

studies, should put aside every preconceived opinion on the supernatural origin of the Sacred Scripture, and should interpret it not otherwise than he would other merely human documents.

13 The Evangelists themselves and the Christians of the second and third generation took the Gospel parables in an artificial sense, and thus gave occasion for the slight fruit of the preaching of Christ amongst the Jews.

14 In many narratives the Evangelists related not so much what is true as what they thought would, although false, prove rather serviceable to the readers.

15 Until the Canon was defined and established the Gospels were increased by constant additions and corrections; therefore only a slight and uncertain trace of the doctrine of Christ remained in them.

16 John's narratives are not properly history, but a mystic contemplation of the Gospel; the sermons continued in his Gospel are theological meditations about the mystery of salvation devoid of historic truth.

17 The fourth Gospel exaggerated the miracle not only that they should appear more extraordinary, but also that they might be better suited for attesting the work and the glory of the Word Incarnate.

18 John, no doubt, shows that he bears the character of a witness to Christ; but in reality he is only an excellent witness to the Christian life or the life of Christ in the Church at the end of the first century.

19 The heterodox exegetes have given the true sense of the Scriptures more faithfully than the Catholic exegetes.

20 Revelation can be nothing else but the consciousness acquired by man of his relationship to God.

21 The Revelation which is the object of Catholic faith was not completed with the Apostles.

22 The dogmas which the Church puts forward as revealed are not truths that have come down from Heaven, but a certain interpretation of religious facts which the human mind has secured by laborious effort.

23 There can and does actually exist opposition between the facts which are related in the Holy Scripture and the dogmas of the Church that depend on them; so that a critic may reject as false facts which the Church believes to be most certain.

24 The exegete is not to be blamed who lays down premises from which it follows that dogmas are historically false or doubtful, provided he does not directly deny the dogmas themselves.

25 The assent of faith ultimately rests on a heap of probabilities.

26 The dogmas of the Faith are to be held only according to their practical sense—that is to say, as a preceptive rule of action not as a standard of belief.

27 The Divinity of Jesus Christ is not proven from the Gospels, but is a dogma which the Christian conscience has deduced from the notion of the Messiah.

28 When He exercised His ministry Jesus did not speak with a view to teaching that He was the Messiah, nor were His miracles intended to show this.

29 It may be granted that the Christ Whom history presents is much inferior to the Christ Who is the object of faith.

30 In all the Gospel texts the name Son of God is only equivalent to the name Messiah; it by no means signifies that Christ is the true and natural Son of God.

31 The teaching concerning Christ which Paul, John and the Councils of Nicea, Ephesus, and Chalcedon hand down is not that which Jesus taught, but what the Christian conscience conceived with regard to Jesus.

32 The natural sense of the Gospel texts cannot be reconciled with what our theologians teach as to the conscience and infallible knowledge of Jesus Christ.

33 It is evident to every one who is not led by preconceived opinions either that Jesus taught error concerning the approaching advent of the Messiah or that the greater part of His doctrine contained in the Synop-

tic Gospels is devoid of authenticity.

34 The critic cannot ascribe to Christ knowledge without limit except on the hypotheses, which cannot be conceived historically and which is repugnant to the moral sense, that Christ as man had the knowledge of God and yet was not willing to make His disciples and posterity acquainted with so many things.

35 Christ had not always the consciousness of His Messianic dignity.

36 The Resurrection is not properly a fact of the historical order, but a fact of the purely supernatural order, neither proved nor provable, which the Christian conscience gradually inferred from other facts.

37 Faith in the Resurrection of Christ was concerned at the beginning not so much with the fact of the Resurrection itself as with the immortal life of Christ with God.

38 The doctrine of the expiatory death of Christ, is not Evangelical, but only Pauline.

39 The opinions on the origin of the Sacraments with which the Tridentine Fathers were imbued, and which undoubtedly had an influence on their dogmatic Canons are far different from those which now rightly prevail amongst historical investigators of Christianity.

40 The origin of the Sacraments is due to the fact that the Apostles and their successors interpreted some idea and intention of Christ under the movement and influence of circumstance and events.

41 The Sacraments have no other object than to bring to man's remembrance the ever beneficent presence of the Creator.

42 The Christian community introduced the necessity of baptism, adopting it as a necessary rite and associating with it the obligations of the Christian profession.

43 The custom of baptizing children was a disciplinary development which was one of the causes why the Sacrament was divided into two—baptism and penance.

44 There is no proof that the rite of the Sacrament of Confirmation was employed by the Apostles; the formal distinction, therefore, between the two Sacraments—Baptism and Confirmation—does not belong to the history of primitive Christianity.

45 Not all that Paul relates concerning the institution of the Eucharist (1 Cor. xi, 23-25) is to be accepted as historical.

46 The conception of the Christian as a sinner reconciled by the authority of the Church did not exist in the primitive Church; it was only very slowly the Church became accustomed to this conception. Nay, even after penance was recognized as an institution of the Church it was not called by the name of a Sacrament because it was considered an ignominious Sacrament (sacramentum probrosum).

47 The words of the Lord "Believe ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain they are retained" (John xx, 22-23), do not refer at all to the Sacrament of Penance, whatever it may have pleased the Tridentine Fathers to declare.

48 James in his Epistle (v, 14-15) does not intend to make known a Sacrament of Christ, but to recommend a pious custom and if perchance he sees in this custom a means of grace he does not take it in the rigorous sense used by the theologians who fixed the notion and number of the Sacrament.

49 The Christian Supper having gradually assumed the character of a liturgical action, those who were accustomed to preside at the Supper acquired the sacerdotal character.

50 The elders who discharge the office of overseers at the meetings of the Christians were appointed by the Apostles as priests or Bishops to provide for the necessary regulation of the growing communities, not especially to perpetuate the Apostolic mission and power.

51 Marriage could not become a Sacrament of the new law till late in the Church, since for marriage to be considered a Sacrament it was necessary that there should, first be a full theological development of the doc-

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