

ANGELS AND DEMONS: THE TEACHING OF IV LATERAN

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UNTIL THE RISE of liberal Protestantism, Christians of all kinds acknowledged the existence of both angels and demons as part of their faith.¹ More recently, however, even some Catholics have begun to have doubts. Those theologians, of course, who wish to be Catholic and yet deny or see as dubious the existence of angels or demons must argue that beliefs concerning them are, in any event, not matters of faith. At this point a difficulty arises for a Catholic which is not usually perceived by a liberal Protestant. Any discussion by Catholics concerning the existence and nature of angels must deal with the statement of the Fourth Lateran Council in its constitution *Firmiter*:

We firmly believe and straightforwardly confess that one alone is true God . . . one [single] principle of all that is: creator of all things visible and invisible, spiritual and corporeal: who by His omnipotent power, together with the beginning of time, formed from nothing both kinds of creature, the spiritual and the corporeal, the angelic, that is, and the sensible;² and then the human, constituted of spirit and body as if common to both. For the devil and other demons have indeed been created by God as good by nature; but they, of themselves, became evil. Man, however, sinned at the suggestion of the devil.³

¹ Anabaptists were the chief exception; cf. G. H. Tavad (A. Caquot, J. Michl), *Die Engel* (Handbuch der Dogmengeschichte 2/2b; Freiburg: Herder, 1968) 91-93 (French translation: *Les anges* [Paris: Cerf, 1971]). This concise but far from superficial compendium serves as an excellent introduction to the history of Christian thought concerning angels.

² "Sensible world" here translates *mundanam*. What is intended is what we often call the "material world." Though our current English use of "material" (which I shall use nontechnically throughout this article) is in most contexts closer to *corporalem* than to *materialem* in the theological senses this had in the thirteenth century, yet "material world" here could too easily suggest a position concerning the angels that the Council in fact carefully avoided. Since the Council was concerned not to offend the Greeks (cf. n. 38 below) it could not here use *materialem* in contradistinction to *angelicam*; for the Eastern tradition had long spoken of the angels both as "spirits" and as "material," i.e., limited and spatially circumscribed. On this see, e.g., John Damascene, *De fide orthodoxa* 2, 3 (PG 94, 866); Tavad, *Die Engel* 59. The debate some fifty years later between St. Bonaventure and St. Thomas concerning "spiritual matter" in angels shows that the Eastern tradition was not without its resonances in the West.

³ DS 800. Throughout this paper I shall mean by "angel" what is specified here: incorporeal, spiritual (and thus personal) beings, not parts of our visible cosmos, created by God and named for their office as God's messengers to men; cf., e.g., Gregory the Great, *Hom.* 34, 8 (PL 76, 1250).

Till recently, Catholics generally have taken this statement as solemnly defining the existence and spiritual nature of angels, a definition which declares these points to be matters of faith, knowingly to refuse which would be to cut oneself off from the faith of the Church by heresy. A number of contemporary theologians, however, have argued, not implausibly, that this statement merely takes for granted angels' existence without ever directly raising this as a question. Since IV Lateran was convened to deal with then current doctrinal and disciplinary difficulties, in *Firmiter* it was concerned directly only with those matters of faith which the heretics of that day, the Cathars, denied. But Cathar and Catholic alike took for granted that angels and demons exist; the dispute dealt with whether they are uncreated, basically independent of God, and whether the demons are evil by essence, principles of evil in the world. *Firmiter*, then, does define that God created all that is, including whatever angels and demons there may be, and that evil has entered the world by the choice of created wills alone. But since no one doubted that angels or demons exist, on what grounds could the Council have intended to define this?

This line of argument seems to have first been opened up in a small article by Darlapp,⁴ which stands as the fountainhead of recent discussions. The majority of those who agree with Darlapp on this⁵ concur also that the existence of angels and demons is a matter of Catholic faith, though not formally defined.⁶ A few, however, go much further and argue that the existence of angels and demons, understood as personal, purely

⁴ A. Darlapp, "Dämon," *LThK* 3 (1959) 142-43; "Demons," *Sacramentum mundi* 2 (ed. A. Darlapp, K. Rahner, et al.; New York: Herder and Herder, 1968) 70-73, is essentially the same article.

⁵ Theologians as competent in this domain as J. Michl ("Angels: Theology of," *NCE* 1, 506-16, at 513) and R. Haubst ("Engel," *LThK* 3, 867-72, at 870, III) do not agree. It is not clear exactly where K. Rahner stands. Some of his remarks ("Angel," *Sacramentum mundi* 1, 27-35, at 32-34 passim) seem to indicate a solemn definition by IV Lateran of the existence of angels, good and bad; yet his continued collaboration with Darlapp in this area and lack of any clear dissociation from his position make it seem more likely that Rahner's own position is closer to Darlapp's than the one presented here.

⁶ E.g., W. Kasper, "Die Lehre der Kirche vom Bösen," 68-84 in *Die Macht des Bösen und der Glaube der Kirche* (ed. R. Schnackenburg, Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1979) 76-77; "Das theologische Problem des Bösen," 41-70 in *Teufel-Dämonen-Besessenheit: Zur Wirklichkeit des Bösen* (2d. ed.; ed. W. Kasper and K. Lehmann; Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald, 1978) 53, n. 1; K. Lehmann, "Der Teufel—Ein personales Wesen?," 71-98 in *Teufel-Dämonen* 81-82; M. Schmaus, *God and Creation* (tr. from *Der Glaube der Kirche*; New York: Sheed and Ward, 1979) 221-222; M. Seeman, "Die Engel," *Mysterium salutis* 2 (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1967) 977; *Christlicher Glaube und Dämonologie (Nachkonziliare Dokumentation* 55; Aschaffenburg: Pattloch, 1975); this "Vatican expert" is cited in Lehmann's "Der Teufel" 81-82, but the precise import of his remarks remains unclear from that brief quotation.

spiritual beings, is not a matter of faith at all.⁷

The whole approach, however, is never more than sketched. No careful examination of the text of *Firmiter* has been attempted nor investigation of its thrust and exact intent.⁸ Still less, obviously, have these arguments been tested against the results of such investigations. This present article, therefore, seeks to examine the above and related arguments concerning the teaching of IV Lateran and to confront them with what the Council actually said and, so far as we can ascertain, intended. This will enable us to discover whether, on this one basis at least, we are held as Catholics to believe that angels and demons exist.⁹ We presume that the authors mentioned accept that whatever the Council in fact intended to define as of faith is indeed an essential element or part of the content of Catholic faith.¹⁰

⁷ E.g., P. Schoonenberg, S.J., *God's World in the Making* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University, 1964) 8-9 n. 16; the authors of the so-called "Dutch Catechism," as presented by R. van der Hart, O.P., *The Theology of Angels and Devils* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Fides, 1972) 10-12; H. Haag (with K. Elliger, B. Lang, M. Limbeck), *Teufels Glaube* (Tübingen: Katzmann, 1974) 130-31; E. Lussier, S.S.S., "Satan," *Chicago Studies* 13 (1974) 3-19, at 10; C. R. Mayer, "Speak of the Devil," *ibid.* 14 (1975) 7-18, at 9-13; G. Gonzalez, "Dios y el diablo: Superación cristiana del dualismo," *Ciencia tomista* 104 (1977) 279-301, at 293-95, largely derivative from Mayer and Haag. O. Semmelroth, S.J., "Abschied vom Teufel? Mächte und Gewalten im Glauben der Kirche," in *Theologische Akademie* 8 (ed. K. Rahner, S.J., and O. Semmelroth, S.J.; Frankfurt: J. Knecht, 1971) 48-69, must be added to this group. Though delicate in his wording, he not only follows Darlapp in denying that *Firmiter* defines the existence of demons (64-66) but goes on to treat their existence as doubtful and not a certain object of faith (66-68). What is most puzzling is his quiet assumption that whatever is not the direct object of solemn definition is open to doubt.

⁸ Darlapp does offer references which go outside this circle of discussion, but none of them turns out even to have looked seriously at the text of *Firmiter*.

⁹ It is important to note that there is no place for a Catholic to talk about "believing in angels" or "belief in the devil," as is all too often done with unfortunate consequences (Gonzalez, "Dios y el diablo" 285). Attention to theological language in this domain is essential; cf. H. de Lubac, S.J., *La foi chrétienne* (2nd ed.; Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1970) chap. 8, "Les solécismes chrétiens."

¹⁰ Haag is a clear exception. He writes: "It is indisputable that, during the whole history of the Catholic Church, the existence and activity of Satan and of the demons have been an object of her proclamation of the faith and that the other Christian churches considered themselves as very largely at one with her in this belief" (*Teufels Glaube* 138). His whole tome, of course, repudiates that "object of her proclamation of the faith." This he sees himself free to do apparently because "It [II Vatican] has . . . in fact contradicted earlier, even defined teaching and thereby sanctioned the relativity of dogmatic assertions," and because, with no less misconstrual, he attributes to II Vatican a mandate to do all theology on the grounds of *sola Scriptura* (*Teufels Glaube* 139), with the tacit understanding that Scripture be interpreted by Haag or in accordance with his canons of critical method. With this attitude, one wonders why he bothered giving even the few lines he did to IV Lateran's definition concerning the demons. He seems not to have noticed, either, that II Vatican itself claimed to define nothing not already defined. If its teaching, then, on any point were truly in contradiction with earlier definitions, it is the teaching of II Vatican that would, on its own terms, have to be rejected.

The position under discussion is, then, that IV Lateran did not formally propose as revealed truth, to be believed by all, the existence of angels and demons (or at least cannot be shown so to have proposed it). In support of this position, two distinct even if related arguments are offered which often, however, are slurred together: (1) The conciliar constitution *Firmiter* presumes or presupposes the existence of angels and demons but nowhere addresses this precise point directly; hence it cannot be said to define it. (2) The heretics of the period believed in the existence of angels and demons as much as did the Church. Their existence, then, could not have been a point dividing heretics from orthodox believers. Hence angelic or demonic existence was not a possible subject for a definition. We consider these two arguments in turn.

I

1) The psychological core of the first argument is the persistent assumption that the Council's statements concerning the angels and demons intended no other goal than to assert that God created all things without exception, and that evil was introduced by the creature, both of which assertions can be true even though no angels or demons should ever have existed. The argument loses its plausibility, then, as soon as one begins to note how much further dogmatic content there is in this same passage.

It is indeed certain that the Council was deeply concerned to defend God's being the unique and sole creator of all things without exception. Hence *Firmiter* takes over the phrase "creator of all things, visible and invisible," already utilized for just this purpose in Eastern professions of faith prior to 325 and consecrated by I Nicaea and I Constantinople.¹¹ This would seem to take care of the universality of His creative activity as well as can be done, since it provides what logicians refer to as an adequate distinction (in the thirteenth century, *disjunctio exclusiva*), one such that all possible beings can be assigned properly to one or the other of the two categories. However, for the heresies of the day (as we shall see in more detail in Part II), the inadequate distinction between the spiritual and the corporeal was far more strongly operative than the adequate one between the visible and the invisible. The Cathars argued that material things are themselves evil and were created by the devil, the principle of evil, whereas all good things are spiritual and were created by God. In such a context it is easy to see why *Firmiter* goes on to add "spiritual things and corporeal ones," making explicit that God is the source and principle of these latter no less than of the former.

Having taken full care of this question of universality, then, the decree

¹¹ A. Vacant, "Anges," *DTC* 1/1, 1264-65.

devotes the lengthy final clause of this sentence to other aspects of creation. The Council defines creation "in time" and creation *de nihilo*. Both these points are directly related to the then controverted questions as to whether God created all things immediately Himself or created at least some of them through the mediation of angels and whether, moreover, at least these latter might have existed eternally, even though created.¹² As indicated by the arguments of St. Thomas two generations later,¹³ these possibilities are all ruled out by this section of *Firmiter*. If the Council then goes on to state explicitly that God established the angelic, the cosmic, and the human orders of creation, and says this directly and not in the somewhat oblique manner with which it settles the questions of nonmediate creation and the temporality of all these orders of creation, how can this clause be supposed to have no other intent than to state that God created all things—an intent already more than adequately provided for by what precedes?

The Cathars and their like all argued that sin reaches man precisely from the side of his materiality, because material things as such are evil, that is, not only originating in some sin but compelling man into moral evil or even making him intrinsically sinful. The great majority of the heretics, moreover, held that man's corporeal state is the result of his own sin (as well as the devil's) and the cause of further sin. Hence it was of prime importance that the Council speak first of a spiritual world, then of a material one, and then of man as a natural composite, before *any* question of sin is raised, his own or others'. The Council's precise concern was to show that man, already fully "constituted of spirit and body in common," had *no* principle of evil already within him—in particular, that his materiality or corporeality was neither a cause nor a result of sin.

Following upon the assertion of the self-originated evil of the devil and other demons, *Homo vero . . .* is a much more important statement than simply, "Man sinned"—something no one doubted. Quite evidently, "at the suggestion of the devil" does nothing to further that hypothetical intent of the Council, whose sole content here is supposed to be that all

¹² We may note in passing that if angels serve only as a more reverent way to represent God's actions with regard to the world, as some non-Catholics argue (e.g., Alliance Mondiale des Religions, *Anges, démons et êtres intermédiaires*, 3^e colloque, Paris, Jan. 1968 [ed. M. Choisy and B. Grillot; Editions Labergerie, 1969] 208–10; C. Westermann, *God's Angels Need No Wings* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979; from 2nd ed. of *Gottes Engel brauchen keine Flügel* [Stuttgart: Kreuz, 1978]), it is hard to see what possible objection there could be to having creation mediated by angels. Rather it would seem obligatory to ascribe material creation to them, since it is man's disgust or horror before the seeming foulnesses, cruelties, and wastefulness of the material world that on this supposition led to the notion of angels in the first place.

¹³ *Expositio primae decretalis*, nos. 1161, 1163, in *Opuscula theologica* 1 (ed. R. A. Verardo; Turin: Marietti, 1954) 415–26. Cf. also *Summa theologiae* 1, 45, 5c; 46, 1–3; 61, 2c; 65, 3c.

evil originates with the creature. Instead, this phrase serves to underline both the difference in status of men and demons with respect to the possibility of redemption and also the purely spiritual origins of moral evil.¹⁴ Finally, all the points to be adduced in Part II likewise belong to the dogmatic intentions of the Council embodied in these few lines.

2) Though they share a common core, there are significant differences among the positions of those who deny that *Firmiter* defined the existence of angels and demons. These positions differ principally in the ways they consider "angels" and "demons" to refer to the real world. A first group of theologians concede them a metaphorical existence, that is, they see them as imaginative constructs then universally utilized to explain wide ranges of phenomena, both naturally occurring and supposedly given in Scripture. Just as, for example, the medieval theory of nine heavens offered a similarly obsolete way to speak some truth about the real astronomical universe that we know, so angels and demons were used to speak truly, say, of those real, natural powers and forces that provoke awe and sacred fear in human consciousness.

Propositions about angels and demons have, on this view, an objective reference; they can assert truth or falsehood about the world as seen from within the psychocultural framework of IV Lateran that in our own psychocultural framework we can more persuasively and effectively explain without any mention of angels or demons. What the Council was referring to, albeit without reflex awareness, in its conceptual framework must, then, be transcribed into our frame of reference if the same truths are to be asserted by our propositions though differently expressed at the imaginative level. We could make the same point as *Firmiter* were we to assert, e.g., "One alone is true God . . . creator of all things of whatever sort: who by His omnipotent power from the beginning of time formed from nothing every kind of creature, however described in our human categories . . ." For our present purposes, "every kind of creature" would refer, as needed, to the reality in the world of each of the things that have been claimed as the realities behind the term "angels." Thus "angel" may refer to God Himself as He speaks to or acts within our world or to the created manifestations of His activity or to those powers of nature or of our psyche which provoke dread in us.

a) Learned and devout as many of these theories appear, they seem incompatible with IV Lateran. If angels are simply God-as-acting, say, healing or punishing, how can they be His creatures? And who, then, are the demons who appear in the next sentence? If angels are, rather, to be created manifestations of His will to us (the stirrings of His grace within us; His chastisements; those people or circumstances through which, unexpectedly and mysteriously, He visits us), how then does *Firmiter*

¹⁴ We shall see this in Section I, 2, b.

present angels as pure spirits, an order of being other than the corporeal, carefully distinguished from the human world? And again, how could His created interventions freely make themselves evil to become demons? Or yet again, how would His self-manifestations to man be created *simul ab initio temporis*, whatever the precise meaning of that somewhat enigmatic phrase?

If angels are but personifications of the overawing and "sacral" aspects of nature, society, or our own psychic experiences, *Firmiter's* remarks about the demons gain special importance. If we seek to bring these two sentences into line with the interpretation two paragraphs back, they might be recast, e.g., "For the powers of the physical universe *et al.* were indeed created by God and are by nature good, but some of them have by themselves become evil (if judged by their effects upon man). And man's own sin took place under their influence."¹⁵

Some take "evil" in such a transcription as physical or ontic evil, implausible as this is, given the Cathars' teachings. The sense of this part of *Firmiter* would then be that such things as tornados, viruses, insect pests, and floods, though good in themselves as part of the natural world-order, can yet be regarded also as evil, since they can bring pain, emotional torment, and death to man. And from the fear of such material powers, wrongly regarded as malevolent spirits at work, man would fall into sin, striving to placate them rather than trust in God while utilizing his own powers to make the world safer for his kind.

A first difficulty, for those holding this position, is that such an interpretation brings about self-contradiction, undercutting argument II mentioned above that the Council's teaching be a response only to current heresies. For if "the devil and other demons" are but obsolete cultural representations for aspects of the universe that man perceives as ontic evils, then this definition does not touch at all the major heresies of that day. These held either that there exists a spiritual principle of moral (as well as physical) evil, not created by God at all but source of lesser evil spirits and of all the material creation, or else that there is a sort of spiritual protocreature, fallen himself, drawing away other angels into his rebellion and forming from the elements, which God had created, the

¹⁵ The parenthetical phrase, or something similar, seems necessary if the discussion is to continue at all, since no natural forces or psychic powers are free to make themselves other than they are. It is this fact, presumably, that lies behind Mayer's extraordinary wordings, "if any creature was *perceived by man to be evil*, this was due to the wayward activity of that creature itself" ("Speak" 9), and "only two statements of the decree *Firmiter* should be regarded as dogmas of the faith: . . . ; and 2) whatever of that creation *has become evil in the eyes of man* has done so because of its own initiative" ("Speak" 10) [my emphasis]. For the sake of the argument, however, we may suppose the cultural transcription could allow some interpretation such as we offer here (cf., e.g., van der Hart, *The Theology* 19-25).

material world, man's body included. But, however convinced they may have been that forces of the material universe can be physically hurtful to man, the heretics were not heretics because of that all too evident fact. If the Council is not using the phrase "the devil and other demons" to mean some sort of morally evil spirits, then the Cathars' errors are untouched by the supposed condemnation.

Secondly, the context makes clear that the sin being discussed is that of the first man. Now, it was common teaching then, as for centuries before, that man was created with preternatural gifts, including actual or possible immortality and freedom from disease and suffering. To argue that the natural creation was already death-dealing to man before he fell and that the Fall came as a result of his fear of death from such forces would go directly counter to that teaching. Whatever one's stand concerning the dependency of human death upon human sin and in whatever way one wishes to explain that dependency, surely the matter was of much too great an importance at that time to have been set aside by IV Lateran in so obscure and hidden a manner as this interpretation would require, even could one conceive some reason to think that the Council would have wished to do so.

Neither can the Council, since it is speaking of man as first created, be referring to our subconscious psychic and cultural powers. These may act, as described, *in us* and provoke us to turn from God. But the common teaching, then and even till now, has taken as certain unfallen Adam's preternatural integrity or freedom from concupiscence and his possession of an unwounded nature, free of moral obtuseness or weakness. Some today would reject such notions of the first man, but we may safely leave aside their opinions if what we are seeking is the mind of IV Lateran.

Finally, all such explanations ultimately make ontic evil an essential element in God's creation, with moral evil its consequence. But how would a *good* creature tempt or "suggest" sin to sinless and not-yet-concupiscent man? If we interpret *Homo vero* . . . as "Man sinned, stirred by his awe before cosmic or psychic forces and by his fascination with them, in seeking to appease them by living in accord with their world-order rather than the will of God," then if these forces were in themselves good before man's sin, as they proceeded from God's hand, why should living in accord with them, in a totally good creation, be wrong? But this implication that God is a source of ontic evil clashes head on with the universally acknowledged intent of IV Lateran.

If, on the other hand, we try to follow more closely the seeming sense of *Firmiter* and take "evil" as referring (though perhaps not exclusively) to moral evil, i.e., to sin and the attitudes necessarily resulting from sin, then the suggested transcriptions into our cultural framework simply fail to make sense.

First, none of the entities taken as putative referents of the demons are free agents capable of sin. Second, it is evident that to regard any such powers of nature or of man as intrinsically generative of sin in man would be to make God the author of sin, a doctrine rejected as vigorously by the Cathars as by the Catholics, or to place oneself squarely with the heretics being condemned by appealing to an uncreated but creative First Principle of evil.

If we take, instead, "the devil and other demons" to refer not to natural powers inducing sin but to some innate disposition or inclination to sin, whether arising through man's physical interactions with the sensible world or through some morally defective aspects of his own being, this too is contrary to the directly intended point of the definition. For it is essential to the conciliar purposes that there is only one principle, one source of created being, from whom nothing proceeds save what is entirely, though not unlimitedly, good. Hence to consider the devil and demons as aspects of unfallen-man-in-his-world would make his Creator directly responsible for tempting him, something IV Lateran was consciously striving to avoid.

Well then, could not one just interpret *Homo vero* ... as "Man, however, sinned through his exercise of his own (spiritual) power of freedom," i.e., that he did, at his own level, just as the demons are said to have done, where no form of antecedent suggestion or evil was present? For man surely can sin without having the devil to tempt him, even as St. Thomas repeatedly asserts later on.¹⁶ This position was old and well known long before IV Lateran. Thus St. Thomas cites Origen on his side, as also Gennadius, both well enough known to the Pope and the Council fathers.

One could so interpret, but there is no evidence that such could be the meaning of the text in question. After all, the Council had just made the point that the demons did fall into sin on their own; so the language and conceptual framework were at hand to say this of man also if the Council had desired to say it.

Further, the Council had positive reason to avoid any mention of the devil in connection with man's fall. For there would be risk of seeming to approve doctrine which, if not heretical, was at least suspect since distorted and intertwined by the heretics with their own wild speculations about the Fall. Many or most of the Cathars held that man (as pre-existing angel) had been seduced into sinning by Satan and so punished by God (by being thrust into a material body, much in the manner of the earlier Origenist theories), while others held that Satan captured unwilling angels and thrust them into human bodies.¹⁷ Since *diaboli suggestionem*

¹⁶ *De malo* 3, 5; *Summa theologiae* 1, 114, 3c and ad 3; 1-2, 80, 4c.

¹⁷ F. Vernet, "Albigensis," *DTC* 1/1, 678, 685; Y. Dossat, "Cathari," *NCE* 3, 247; J. E. Bresnahan, "Albigenses," *NCE* 1, 262.

could easily enough be used to evoke at least the former of these myths, had the Council wished to say that the Fall originated solely and simply from man himself, it could hardly have found worse language in which to say it.

The only possibility left is to take this little sentence as an insistence that man's first sin had at least some root outside of either man or God, an evil root and therefore a created one which had become evil on its own, therefore free and personal. It was man who sinned—the Council does not soften that fact. But he did so in response to spiritual influence from outside himself.

b) But why should the Council care whether man sinned by his own malice or at the devil's suggestion, if it does not wish to deny that man *can* sin on his own?

A partial answer is simply that possibility does not make fact. What man could have done in principle, he did not do in fact. Like every Catholic profession of faith, *Firmiter* offers us history (and promise), what God and man have done (or certainly will do), and not mere philosophical principles, however correct.

A further reason why the Council should have been so concerned with what would otherwise seem a minor matter can be had, I think, from St. Thomas. In the *Summa theologiae* 1-2, 80, 4, arg. 3, Thomas refers to a position taken by Pope Gregory the Great:

He [God] made two creatures for knowledge of Himself, the angelic, that is, and the human The angel being spirit only, but man both spirit and flesh [The devil fell irreparably because pure spirit; man, however, reparably, since affected by the weakness of the flesh.] There is another reason why man, when lost, ought to have been restored and the ever-proud spirit could not be restored, because the angel fell by his own malice, but another's [malice] prostrated man Because he [the angel] himself brought on the darkness, he should bear without end what he did; nor should he ever receive the light of his first state, because he lost that even though persuaded by no one.¹⁸

There are several points of interest here. First, though neither *suggestio* nor its cognates appear in the entire chapter of the *Moralia*, Thomas uses them five times in his brief little argument, which at least suggests an influence of *Firmiter* on his own thought here.¹⁹

Second, Thomas argues, in objection to his own position, that since none of man's sins is irreparable, it must be that he never sins without the suggestion of the devil. In responding to this objection, he accepts Gregory's point but denies the conclusion drawn from it, arguing that an

¹⁸ *Moralia* 4, 3 (PL 75, 642).

¹⁹ While speaking of language, one might also note the beginning phrase of Gregory's text and the strong resemblance, both as to words and structure, to *Firmiter's* passage on the twofold creation—the difference being largely in terms of perspective, that Gregory is in this place concerned only with intellectual creatures.

adequate statement of the roots of human sin needs completion by another element: "... the sin of the devil was irremediable because neither at someone's suggestion did he sin nor had he any proneness to sinning caused by a *preceding suggestion*. Which cannot be said concerning any sin of man"²⁰ [my emphasis]. Given the prominence of the *Moralia* among reform-minded ecclesiastics throughout the Middle Ages, and if we note that the very next sentence of *Firmiter* goes on to show the Trinity initiating the teaching of salvific truth through the saints of the Old Testament, it seems likely that what Innocent III here proposed to the Council was a wording which pointed at once, even in the first mention of original sin, to the possibility of a remedy.

But not only or even principally that. *Diaboli suggestione* is a brilliant retort against the Cathars, which turns against them not only Catholic doctrine but even their own fables of the Fall. For, following the lead given by Gregory's other remarks, which link the possibility of repentance to existence in the flesh, this phrase finishes the demonstration that it is the spiritual, not the corporeal, that lies at the source of moral evil. The difference between the sin of the demons and the sin of man, already intimated by *vero*, is made explicit by saying of the demons that "they became evil," but of man only that "he sinned." Then the Council takes the matter one final step. Since the evil-doing of the demons was "on their own," whereas man's was "at the suggestion of the devil," pure spirits were the only untempted sinners. Spiritual powers alone, not man's corporeality nor that of his universe, tempted him. Not only is the material order not evil; from at least this one, most fundamental aspect, it is further from evil than is spirit.

There is another reason also, I think, for the Council's inserting the phrase *diaboli suggestione*, one strongly stressed by Karl Rahner.²¹ God's revelation to us is concerned with angels and demons not for their own sake but insofar as they enter into human salvation-history. This means, ultimately, that angels and demons must be seen primarily in their relation to the mystery of Christ. Now, from the Council's perspective, the Fall represents the principal intervention of angelic substances into the human world. If any connection is to be made between such powers and the work of Christ, here is the obvious and essential one; for it is from the devil's success in this intervention that the concrete need for human salvation arose and that its mode and manner were congruously determined. All else in human history is stamped by that event, and it is Christ who brought about its reversal and ultimate failure.

With this in mind, one can more easily understand a further mention

²⁰ Ibid., ad 3.

²¹ "Angelologie," *LThK* 1, 537-38; "Dämonologie," *LThK* 3, 146-47; "Angel," *Sacramentum mundi* 1, 29.

of the devil, strangely overlooked in present-day discussion about *Firmiter's* position concerning angels and demons. When speaking of the resurrection of all, both good and bad, it says that "those [the reprobate] receive with the devil unremitting punishment; and these [the elect], with Christ eternal glory."²²

The parallelism established here between Christ and the devil is obvious and is evidently intentional. From the context of the entire paragraph it is clear that Christ is being considered here in his human nature, that nature he took up into himself precisely so that he might overcome the devil (Heb 2:14). There is no Christian dualism: the devil is as nothing in God's eyes and can in no way prevail against Him. But he is, as St. Ignatius Loyola habitually described him, "the enemy of our human nature." So it was that God chose that he should be conquered by a man, like ourselves in all save sin. Heaven, then, is our triumph with him who saved us through our own nature and his; hell is our total subjugation to that evil spirit and alien nature whom we chose, without any necessity, to retain as our master.

3) A second group of theologians concedes at most a hypothetical existence to angels and demons. Elements of long-gone world-views, they once served as vehicles for revealed truth. But we now know or at least suppose that there was never anything in the real world to which they referred, even with all allowance made for cultural transpositions. It is this lack of any objective referent that makes the essential difference between this position and that of I.2) above. Rather than force a metaphoric identification of angels and demons with God's self-manifestations or the powers of the psyche, etc., things which assuredly the Council was not talking about, those urging this position consider the conciliar statement to be analogous to some such assertion as "God created all material things without exception, including the gryphons and chimaeras." There is no referent for the last phrase which we would now admit to exist. Yet the phrase still has a use and a purpose which we can accept, these then-believed-in creatures serving merely to exemplify the all-inclusiveness of the assertion. So here; *invisibilia*, *angelica*, and the rest are really only an awkward way of saying "whatever else there might be other than God and man and the material universe." They constitute an antiquated way to designate a category of beings which might or might not exist (the Council thought, in fact, that they did; "modern man," generally, thinks they do not) but whose existence was not directly of concern—only that, if they exist, they also are creatures. So also, with regard to the next sentence, *Diabolus enim* . . . , we are told that even if "the devil and other demons" do not exist, at least the Council's intent (that whatever evil

²² DS 801, at end.

beings do exist could have become such only by their own doing) is still preserved.

Like the metaphorical approach, this argument has difficulty in being self-consistent. For example, *Diabolus enim* ... could be transcribed into "The devil and other demons, if there be any such, were created ..." without harm to the dogma that evil originated with the creature. But would it not be strange to "firmly believe and straightforwardly confess that ... [m]an sinned at the suggestion of the devil, *if there be one*." And if not? Too much of that with which we have seen the Council to be directly concerned is at stake here to permit us to accept such witless ambiguity as a truth of faith solemnly professed. The metaphorical approach might seem plausible here, but the hypothetical one collapses.

The worst aspect, however, to this nonreferential approach to dogma is that it can be maintained only at the cost of admitting the possible falsity of dogmatic propositions. Thus, although the last clause of the first sentence of *Firmiter* is subordinate, it is so only through its having as its subject a relative pronoun referring back to the Trinity as one single principle of creation. The clause forms an integral statement and, if the Persons did not in fact as one principle create all three orders of creation as there asserted, is false.

Diabolus enim ... is a separate and independent statement which asserts directly that the devil and other demons were created by God, etc. If, then, nothing at all in the real order exists to which the "devil and other demons" refers, this sentence also is rendered not meaningless but false, for what is signified by these terms was in that case not created by God. The analogy involving gryphons, if extended here, does nothing to help: "Gryphons were created by God as good (for man's benefit?) but in fact, by their own doing, became evil (hurtful to man?)" could never have been part of any profession of faith (unless one slides unconsciously back into a metaphorical interpretation and takes all this as having some obscure referent). Such a statement would, in the context of the nine heavens, not be equivalent to "God created all nine of the heavens" but to "God created nine solid, crystalline spheres." So also, if man sinned other than by the suggestion of the devil, the next sentence too is falsified. The position we are arguing against, then, requires the simultaneous falsity of three directly asserted, solemnly professed propositions. Can such a position be an acceptable interpretation of a profession of faith of the Universal Church?

We shall shortly say more about the difference between professions of faith and other solemn definitions. I do not think, however, that any examples of such vacuous language and false assertion as are called for by the above interpretation of *Firmiter* can be found elsewhere in either type of clarification of the content of the faith. Even a convinced poly-

genist, for example, will not reject Trent's "first man Adam" (DS 1511) as having *no* referent whatever, even though he may choose to "translate" it into many human yet not kindred individuals. And though some conciliar statements may seem to us conceptually awkward and but poorly expressive of the truth they seek to set forth, e.g., some of Trent's canons on the sacrament of penance, none can be found that are simply false, even where they might still serve some other function in their context. Since the burden of proof lies on those who espouse this position, we may wait for them to bring forward any such falsely true assertions from a profession of faith of the Universal Church or from her other solemn definitions.²³

We shall discuss later whether it is theoretically possible for an ecumenical council solemnly to define propositions that are false when translated into any and every cultural framework but that are absorbed by the Council's intent into some general truth contained by their definitory context; more, whether a profession of faith can contain such false assertions. Here we note only that a mere assumption of this possibility is of no theological value. The point requires proof; to my knowledge, none has been offered.

Further, let us look more closely at the sort of analogy already mentioned: that angels are used, only as gryphons might be, from a scruple for completeness, that a Council might make a definition in terms of gryphons and all other material beings that would not be the less true for being false, and that this is just what has occurred here concerning the angels and any other pure spirits. Perhaps. But what does the Council actually say? "[God] ... formed ... the spiritual world ... that is, the angelic world..." The suggested analog would run, "God formed ... the animal world... that is, the world of gryphons." May we be excused for finding this unconvincing? Would it help, to shift the example slightly, to say that God created trolls to guard the precious metals in the mountains and that He created them good but they became bad on their own and have led men to covet their treasures and so to sin?

This last example brings forward another aspect of the decree. Were angels and demons merely prototypical examples of an unreal spirit world, they would still have been only two varieties among many. Angels and demons were not, for most Christians of that day, the only invisible, incorporeal, or spiritual beings. Sprites of many kinds were widely thought to be active in human affairs. It is scarcely plausible that the Council, were it concerned in scrupulous fashion with only the universality of God's creation and the creaturely origins of evil, would have failed to give any hint that its teaching extended as well to trolls, fairies,

²³ For details of the distinction between a profession of faith and other solemn definitions, cf. II, 1 below.

korrigans, elves, duendes, imps, gnomes, poultergeists, goblins, ghosts, banshees, and their kin. Yet current ideas about the activities of all these were seriously corruptive of practical trust and faith in God. Were the Council as scrupulous as supposed, would it not at least have spoken of "spiritual beings, such as angels" or "including angels" or "especially the angels"? Would it not have indicated that all evil creatures, "especially the devil ..." or "before all others, the devil ...," became evil by their own choice? The fact that it did nothing of the sort shows, from still another vantage point, that instead of limiting itself to asserting a merely hypothetical, abstract principle concerning the genesis of moral evil, the Council was, at least implicitly, separating the existential status of the devil and other demons from that of all kinds of sprites.²⁴

4) The majority of theologians today who have seriously considered the matter acknowledge angelic and demonic existence to be a matter of faith. But they see in *Firmiter* not a definition of this but, rather, one more particularly strong attestation to the *de fide* ordinary teaching of the Church of all centuries. They raise no question, then, about the referents of the terms, which are acknowledged to be real, but only about the precise range of the defining intent of the Council. Their concern is with theological methodology rather than the content of the faith.

Only a point of doctrine, they argue, which is explicitly stated and expressly set down by the Council, following due reflection on that precise point, can be regarded as part of what it intended to define. But *Firmiter* does not state, "Angels and demons exist." If it does not expressly affirm their existence, what right would we have to stretch the definition to include this point or bind a Catholic's conscience to acceptance under pain of "shipwreck as to faith"?

But the question is poorly conceived; we are not concerned with stretching what the Council said but understanding it. When I Nicaea declares, "We believe in one God, Father, almighty," is it defining the *existence* of God? No Council has stated, "Jesus Christ exists." Need we

²⁴ Though the matter would require a deeper investigation into the thought of Innocent III and the background of *Firmiter*, it seems not unreasonable to see this section as implying that all the spirits directly created by God (as distinguished from the human soul at death) are angels. The whole world of sprites would thereby be excluded from Christian faith and relegated to superstition. This interpretation is not required by the text, since, as we shall see, the heresies of the time offered sufficient grounds for these phrases. Yet an interpretation seeing *Firmiter* as an implicit rejection of the superstitions prevalent in the Middle Ages (and often since) should not be put aside, I think, without a good deal more careful work on the genesis of the decree than has been done. Finally, suppose that we find no trace or hint of such an intent. These phrases would then bear witness to a genuine presupposition of the sort being suggested by Darlapp *et al.*: the Christian conviction that beliefs in sprites are but superstitions, in no way worthy to be mentioned alongside Catholic faith concerning angels and demons.

believe that He does or, from another perspective, have we the Church's guarantee that He does? Most Catholics would, I think, instinctively answer a firm yes to these questions and would regard it as the worst sort of legalism or quibbling to say that these things have not been directly defined (i.e., proposed by the Church as divinely revealed, hence to be believed) even though the formal and express statements of existence have never been made.

The most basic reason for such an answer is clear. The primary concern of a creed or profession of faith is to make the faith publicly recognizable—hence its name *symbolon*.²⁵ The common faith, not one's philosophy, not one's theology, is what is professed. Assertions of existence might be called for by a philosopher, even a theologian; faith has no need of them, since it speaks of nothing but what is real.

To put the matter more systematically, the presuppositions made by a profession of faith as to the existence of the things about which it intends to make true assertions differ, precisely as existential, from all other presuppositions—for example, those relating to language, to conceptual framework, to cultural patterns, and to theological systems. Existential presuppositions, unlike these latter, cannot be accorded any different authority than expressly formulated points, since the reality spoken of by these is identically that which is presupposed. If any existential presupposition is not true, then, whatever be the case concerning the language employed or conceptual background, the expressly declared assertion is by that very fact not true. Did God not exist, we could not believe in Him in any Christian sense. Since, however, the converse is not true (since assertions might be false without implying the nonexistence of their subject), existential presuppositions are, if one may so speak, more certain and more essential elements of the faith intended by a profession than were they expressly defined. It is mere juridicism or legalism to see the express wording of a profession of faith as more significant than the substance of the faith itself.

For the same reason, we have used the existential reference, assumed or implied, of the terms "angel," "devil," and "demons" as our primary criterion in categorizing the types of argument; for the reality spoken about is as it is, independently of language, conceptual frameworks, cultural patterns, and all the rest save in cases of self-reference, which are not in question here. Faith transcends all of these, though not ordinarily able to exist without them, precisely by giving us direct access to the reality itself. It is in the light of this contact with the divine reality that the Church can judge all propositions made about it.

Linguistically, there is a problem in that we have in English no correlative to "expressly" and its cognates. To speak of what is "impressly

²⁵ Cf. de Lubac, *La foi* 392–98.

defined" would introduce an obscure and awkward neologism. As a result, much has been written concerning "implicit definition." But this can easily distort the matter; for the relation to existence of which we are speaking is not one discovered by theological argument, by rational implication, or even by the strictest logical entailment. Rather, the existential aspect, something like a Kantian *a priori*, is that without which the act of faith that is expressly indicated not only cannot be conceived but cannot take place at all in the human person. Though not expressed directly by the words used, it is already present, and is manifested, if need be, by a sort of unfolding; hence not "implicit definition" but "explicit though not express."

Thus, at the beginning of *Firmiter*, IV Lateran both explicitly and expressly defines the unicity of God, but defines His existence only explicitly.²⁶ The decree defines expressly and explicitly the relations of the divine Persons, only explicitly that there are such Persons; expressly and explicitly the two natures and activities of Christ among us, only explicitly His earthly existence; expressly and explicitly the spiritual nature and creaturely status of angels (and demons), only explicitly their existence.

5) With respect to any one of the forms of argument we have been considering, it might be objected *mutatis mutandis* that we have misconstrued the Council's intent by neglecting the presently popular distinction between the *content* of a profession of faith (or, indeed, of the faith itself), which is regarded as infallibly proclaimed thereby, and its *form* or mode of expression, which, as culturally conditioned and soon outdated, is not binding on the Catholic conscience.²⁷

The most obvious difficulty with such a distinction here is that IV Lateran knew nothing about it in any way useful to those insisting upon it with regard to angels. Further, such a distinction would be useless for their purpose unless they also show that what *Firmiter* says of good angels and bad is, in fact, solely a part of the form and not at all a part of

²⁶ It will not do to say that, even if God did not exist, it would still be true that the Christian concept of God implies His unicity, hence that declaration of His unicity gives no grounds of itself for asserting His existence; for, did He not exist, faith in His unicity would be erroneous. Professions of faith are solely existential and factual; conceptual elaboration is of no direct concern to them.

²⁷ Darlapp indeed brings up this question, not apropos of *Firmiter*, however, but of the Scriptures, suggesting thereby that a certain modern approach would find angels and demons there primarily as part of the literary and conceptual forms of thought of the sacred authors but not, or at least only rarely and in very limited measure, part of its content. More detailed arguments of this sort can be found throughout van der Hart, *The Theology*, Haag, *Teufels Glaube*, and Westermann, *God's Angels*. We leave this aspect of the problem to biblical theologians; there is no doubt that Innocent III and the Council fathers regarded angels and demons as part of the revealed content of the Scriptures.

its content, that only their two endlessly repeated facts, God's unique and universal creativity and the creaturely origins of evil, can be considered content. Though so often stated or implied, to my knowledge no serious effort has been made to show it to be the case. In my judgment, it cannot be shown. As the arguments in Section I have already manifested and as those in Section II will do more fully, the Council was directly and profoundly concerned with true doctrine concerning angels and demons *as such*, and not merely as being representative of the whole furniture of the world.

II

We turn now to the final type of argument used against the possibility that IV Lateran defined the existence of angels and demons. The hermeneutic principle upon which all here turns is succinctly stated by C. Mayer: "any dogmatic definition ought not to be extended beyond the scope of the error it intends to condemn."²⁸ The Cathars aimed at by *Firmiter* did not, however, deny the existence of angels and demons but, if anything, exaggerated their importance. The Council surely could not here be defining something concerning which the heretics held the same doctrine as the Church. Hence, it is argued, whatever it is intending in this passage, IV Lateran is not here defining as a point of faith the existence of angels and demons.

1) The hermeneutic principle just enunciated might be something useful for ecumenical councils to think about before drawing up their definitions. As a principle for interpreting what a Council has in fact done, it is seriously inadequate.

First, what is defined by a form of conciliar words is whatever truth the Council intended to define by their means. We are, admittedly, sometimes ignorant of what a Council intended—in which case the words they bequeath to us may give little light or serve only to point some general direction or orientation. It is, then, as an aid in descrying the Council's intent that one scrutinizes, as well as one can, the errors the Council sought to condemn in the form in which it perceived them.²⁹ Thus, to use the above principle, one must show that the Council in question had, at least implicitly, adopted it. Yet none of these authors has attempted to show that either Innocent III or IV Lateran itself was using this principle in *Firmiter*.

²⁸ Mayer, "Speak" 10; cf. also Semmelroth, "Abschied" 64–66.

²⁹ It should be clear that the actual doctrines of the heretics and the exact sense they gave them are, in this context, of secondary importance; it is what the Council took them to be that matters in its teachings. Hence a Council's perception of false doctrine often has to be inferred as much from the conciliar decrees as from the writings or teachers condemned.

Second, such a showing is needed since *prima facie* this principle has little intrinsic plausibility in our present context. It may be useful for interpreting such express condemnations of false teaching as the canons of Trent or I Vatican; but *Firmiter* condemns nothing whatever.

The theologians who urge this principle here have failed to distinguish between the different types of doctrinal decree. For our purposes, we need differentiate only between creeds and professions of faith on the one hand and solemn definitions of more general nature (the several sorts of which we need not concern ourselves with here) on the other.

The great difference between the creeds and the professions of faith is the acceptance of the former into liturgical use, making them thus a part of the worship offered by the entire Church. What is common to them both is that, usually on occasion of some heresy, they enunciate positively the fundamental faith of the Church. They do so, moreover, in such manner that all their parts bear witness to the content of the faith.³⁰

The contrast between either creed or profession of faith and other statements which contain solemn definitions is generally evident. Their structures and literary styles differ strikingly. Many things are included in these latter doctrinal decrees which are not themselves defined. Some are fairly extensive, discursive presentations of doctrine, containing many elements which clearly do not have, nor were intended by the Councils themselves to have, the same weight. Others, the canons, are very dense, tightly-worded condemnations of specific people or doctrines. The common principles of interpretation (e.g., the sense given a citation of Scripture is not defined unless expressly declared to be so; matters contained in subordinate clauses are not, as such, defined; the principle here under discussion: the exact bearing of a condemnation can only be fully determined by discovering the exact notion the Council had of the error condemned thereby) are all needed for proper interpretation of these statements. The points we developed in Section I, 4 above are pertinent here also, concerning the kinds of presuppositions present in conciliar decrees and what is or is not expressly defined.

Now, the hermeneutical principle of Mayer, Semmelroth, *et al.*, if applied to professions of faith or creeds, would radically falsify the nature of these acts of faith; for it would reduce declarations of the faith through which we live to statements of mere reaction to evil, to affirmations of only what heretics have already denied. It would forbid councils to set forth, coherently and in some fulness, the positive content of the faith. But surely no one would wish to say that reflex awareness of the faith can be had solely as a response to heresy, true though it may be that theology often flourishes in such conflicts. Moreover, if one cannot go beyond the scope of an error, often the error cannot be shown for what

³⁰ Cf., e.g., Lehmann, "Der Teufel" 81.

it is, for theological errors are largely the result of overlooking or refusing part of the data of faith; still less can the opposed truth be stated.

Finally, this principle is flatly contradicted by the opening lines of the Creed of I Nicaea: "We believe in one God, Father, almighty, maker of all things, visible and invisible," which no Arian would have dreamed of denying. Indeed, the greater part of this creed consists of dogmas which Arians also held as central to their belief.³¹ The Creed of I Constantinople and, so far as I can tell, every creed and profession of faith the councils have yet proposed for our instruction has affirmed as dogmas doctrines that the heretics of the time did not reject. Evidently, then, the fact that a point of doctrine, mentioned in a profession of faith, is held in common with heretics offers no grounds whatever for excluding it from the defining intent of a council.

2) To apply all this to our present case, let us look for a moment at the second constitution approved by IV Lateran, *Damnamus* (DS 803-8), directed against the errors of Joachim of Flora concerning the Trinity.

We see that its primary concern is with a theological issue that was in principle of great importance for the faith but had at the time no great influence on the lives of Catholics outside the theological faculties of the University of Paris and of a few others. Abbot Joachim's equally important, equally false, and equally plausible doctrine linking the three ages of the history of salvation with the three Persons of the Trinity was even then of far greater practical consequence than his verging logically on tritheism through his rejection of Peter Lombard's proposition on the Trinity. *Damnamus*, in fact, reflected Innocent III's own theological preoccupations and interests³² and was directed principally to theologians. Thus only could it afford to set aside in a manner so casual as to be almost flip the far more radical subversion of faith represented by Amaury de Bène's pantheism.

For all that, *Damnamus* contains major and solemn definitions of matters lying at the very heart of the faith. But in style it is discursive. It refers to the history of the dispute; it explains, marshals arguments, seeks to persuade, even in its most solemn portions. Evidently its synopsis of Abbot Joachim's complaints against Peter Lombard is not defined doctrine, nor are its remarks about him and his monastery. Further—and this is the point rightly made by Mayer—even the portions of the text which clearly constitute the heart of the decree can only be rightly interpreted in the light of the doctrine being condemned. Thus, "in God there is only a Trinity, not a quaternity"³³ could not legitimately be used

³¹ I. Ortiz de Urbina, S.J., *Nicée et Constantinople* (Paris: Editions de l'Orante, 1963) 72-73.

³² M. Maccarrone, "Il IV Concilio Lateranense," *Divinitas* 5 (1961) 270-98, at 288.

³³ DS 804.

against the quaternity involved in St. Thomas' doctrine of four real relations in God (*ST* 1, 28, 4), but only against that very different quaternity spoken of by Joachim.

Yet even here it is not possible to restrict the scope of the Council's definitions by limiting its deliberate intent merely to negating what Abbot Joachim said. In its first paragraph, indeed, *Damnamus* details at some length the doctrines it is condemning. The following paragraph gives the Council's response in positive form, making Peter Lombard's phrases its own. The third paragraph, however, sets forth and deepens the Church's teaching concerning the true meaning of the consubstantiality of the Persons, without further consideration of the Abbot's errors on the matter. And the great principle of the fourth paragraph concerning God's complete transcendence of His creatures far exceeds the scope of Joachim's thought, while at the same time pointing to the deepest roots of his mistakes.

Firmiter, on the other hand, is a profession of faith. Its contrast to *Damnamus* is striking. *Firmiter* gives no arguments whatever and no explanations; it does not mention any adversaries or indicate the doctrines it is rejecting; it offers neither persuasion nor motivation. Its sole function is to profess the true faith, albeit with special emphasis and greater elaboration of what in the Church's faith, as we know from *other* sources, was misunderstood and was currently an occasion of error and heretical misinterpretation.

Its closest parallels are to be found in the Apostle's Creed and in those of I Nicaea and I Constantinople.³⁴ Indeed, Bernard of Parma, who had been in his teens at the time of the Council and who a generation later wrote the gloss upon the Gregorian Decretals which was to become the *Glossa ordinaria*, called *Firmiter* a fourth creed.³⁵ Similar language occurs in a fuller, more carefully qualified statement from the same author's *Casus longi*.³⁶ As noted by the marginal annotator of the printed text of 1612, the so-called Athanasian Creed or *Quicumque* (mentioned

³⁴ Maccarrone, "Il IV Concilio" 286. R. Foreville, *Latran I, II, III, et Latran IV* (Paris: Editions de l'Orante, 1965) 275-82; J. Alberigo *et al.*, *Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta* (3rd ed.; Bologna: Istituto per le Scienze Religiose, 1973) 228; *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church* (ed. J. Neuner, S.J., and J. Dupuis, S.J.; 1st U.S. ed. corrected, Westminster, Md.: Christian Classics, 1975) 15.

³⁵ "Istud potest appellari quartum symbolum: et ita sunt modo quatuor, sicut quatuor Evangelistae" (Bernardus Parmensis, *Glossa ordinaria* on X, 1, 1 *rubr.*, in *Decretales Gregorii IX* [Paris, 1612], to be found in col. 6, A. lines 11-13). Maccarrone, "Il IV Concilio" 287, followed by Foreville, *Latran* 275, attributed this text to Johannes Teutonicus, a canonist already active and well known at the time of IV Lateran. The correct attribution was graciously provided by Stephan G. Kuttner (private communications).

³⁶ "Istud autem concilium posset appellari quartum symbolum, in quo illud, quod de fide catholica, et de summa Trinitate in praedictis conciliis et symbolis continetur, confirmatur, et repetitur" (*Decretales*, *ibid.*, C, lines 6-19).

in both passages of Bernard as the third creed, following the Apostle's Creed and that of I Constantinople, which latter Bernard designates as the Nicene Creed) tends toward the explanatory and hence is less properly called a *symbolum* (creed) than a rule (of faith).³⁷ But he makes no such reservation about *Firmiter*. Neither is there any doubt that in structure it is much closer to the Creed of I Constantinople than to *Quicumque*.³⁸ It should be noted, however, that though Bernard's gloss is careful to mention the liturgical use of the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds, he indicates no liturgical use made of *Firmiter*.³⁹

All this is confirmed by the style of *Firmiter*: "We firmly believe and straightforwardly confess that ..." are the only words not themselves expressive of some point of faith, just as in the Nicene Creed and its Constantinopolitan amplification the only such words are the initial "We believe in." The rest is sober, clear, nuanced in a direct, slightly repetitive manner, like the earlier creeds. There are no superfluities, no looseness of expression. Further, the topics are arranged in strict parallelism with the earlier creeds.⁴⁰ In brief, there is no slightest indication that anything there is not intended by the Council to express some basic aspect or element of the Catholic faith.

Worse yet for the argument of Mayer *et al.*, it is not hard to show, not only in *Damnamus* but even elsewhere in *Firmiter*, that IV Lateran put into its profession matters of faith that, while related to disputed matters, were not themselves in dispute, even as I Nicaea and I Constantinople did before it. For example, the statements in *Firmiter* on the processions and relations in the Trinity were not in dispute (apart from the *pariter ab utroque*, which supported the *Filioque* against its rejection by the Greeks). A careful reading of *Damnamus* (DS 803) indicates that Joachim had not denied the processions or relations as such, little as he understood of their import. As to the Cathars, they held that the Son and Spirit were angels, mere creatures of the Father—against whom an assertion of their

³⁷ *Decretales*, *ibid.*, marginal note 5, opposite text of col. 6, C, line 5.

³⁸ The chief reason why *Firmiter* was not set into exact parallelism with the first two was undoubtedly Innocent III's intense interest in reunion with the Greek Church and in putting a final end to the schism (Maccarrone, "Il IV Concilio" 274-75; Foreville, *Latran* 254-57, 275, 280). He knew well that the addition of even the one word *Filioque* to the text of the Creed of I Constantinople, even though the doctrine thereby expressed was acceptable to the Greeks when they understood it, was a major bone of contention. The Greeks held firmly to the decree of Ephesus (DS 265) and conceded no right to add anything to the early creeds save by a council indisputably ecumenical—and at IV Lateran the Greek churches, although invited, were not represented. Indeed, as present Greek-Anglican relations show in connection with recent actions on the Book of Common Prayer, the matter is still active and sore.

³⁹ It would be a matter of some importance to know with certainty if at IV Lateran itself any liturgical use was made of it.

⁴⁰ Cf. Foreville, *Latran* 275-83.

divinity was required but for whom statements concerning the processions are, strictly speaking, superfluous. The Waldenses also, touched in two places by *Firmiter*,⁴¹ seem to have had no heretical doctrine as to the processions and relations (cf., e.g., DS 790-91).

3) Even if one accepts the overly restrictive conditions placed by Mayer *et al.*, however, it is not hard to show that the Council was declaring directly the existence of angels and demons. In the years preceding IV Lateran, Albigensianism and the other forms of Catharism constituted an almost continuous range of both strict and mitigated forms of dualistic heresy. What has been much less widely recognized is that almost all their false teachings were expressed as false doctrines concerning angels or demons.⁴²

Thus the strict dualists rejected monotheism, declaring Satan to be the uncreated principle of evil and the creator of matter in all its forms, though apparently inferior in power to the good God, who created only spiritual beings. All the groups seem to have rejected the Trinity, making the Word and the Holy Spirit into created pure spirits. Most held that men at their creation were themselves angels in heaven.⁴³ According to one school, they were thrust into this material and evil body, made by the devil, only as a punishment for their initial rebellion against the good God; another school made the fall of these angels into human estate the direct doing of Satan, who invaded heaven, conquered Michael, and captured one third of the angels, whom he then thrust into human or animal bodies. The God of the Old Testament was the devil; the God of the New Testament alone is the good God. The Incarnation was rejected: the human bodies of Jesus and Mary (also an angel) were mere appearances and not real matter at all. The resurrection of the body was denied: whoever is imperfect at death must be reincarnated repeatedly until made perfect; after that he rises from the dead as pure spirit, an angel once again. John the Baptist was a demon, John the Evangelist an angel.

Moreover, it is not true, as a general proposition, that Catholics and Albigenses held the same doctrine as to the existence of angels and demons. Both groups, indeed, used the words "angels" and "demons," but they gave them, in important ways, quite different meanings. Most strikingly, of course, the strict dualists meant by "the devil" a second god, rival to the good God, infinite in evil, and creator of matter and all

⁴¹ Vernet, "Albigensis," *DTC* 1/1, 684-85.

⁴² J. Duvernoy, *Le catharisme: La religion des cathares* (Toulouse: Privat, 1976) 57-76; A. Borst, *Die Katharer* (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1953) 143-55, 162-73; "Katharer," *LThK* 6 (1961) 59; Foreville, *Latran* 283-85; Bresnahan, "Albigenses," *NCE* 1, 262; Dossat, "Cathari," *NCE* 3, 246-47.

⁴³ The others held what might be called "angelic traducianism," making Adam an angel, from whom all subsequent human souls were stepwise propagated (Duvernoy, *Le catharisme* 114-15).

things insofar as material. Hence the Albigenses' assertion "The devil exists" does not embody the same judgment as the Catholics' assertion "The devil exists." A similar divergence of meaning can be found between the orthodox idea of a human or even animal soul and the heretics' notion of souls: angels animating human or animal bodies.

Nor should one forget that the ever-growing disputes concerning "the problem of universals" had for a century been spawning heresies involving angels. There were the Platonists, who regarded the angels as eternally subsistent, universal ideas. At the opposite extreme, the nominalist Roscellinus saw the Trinity as but the consortium of three angels.⁴⁴ There were the doctrines of Amaury de Bène, who had angels propagating their kind⁴⁵ and thought the devil is in God and that God gives him approval.⁴⁶ And there were the nascent problems generated by the Aristotelian doctrines of the Averroists and others concerning "separated substances" and their role in human cognition, with the consequent denial of the immortality of the individual human person.⁴⁷ This by no means exhausts the heresies of the day concerning angels and demons but includes most, I think, of those known to the Council.

A direct response to such varied, ever-changing, and fluid doctrinal error was probably impossible, certainly impracticable. Hence the Council, following the lead of Innocent III, adopted the strongly positive policy of stating in balanced manner the Catholic faith as to all areas in dispute. What is said, then, of angels and demons intentionally and directly asserts articles of Catholic faith, set up against the entire rash of distortions and perversions of doctrine current at the time.

Mayer offers as a supporting argument that "No theologian has ever claimed that Lateran IV intended to define the existence of the world of material things as a dogma of the faith . . .,"⁴⁸ inferring therefrom that neither does it intend to define the existence of a world of spiritual things. There are, however, several weaknesses in this argument.

The parallelism is weak, at best. For material things are directly experienced by us through our natural powers, requiring no help of grace whatever. But to know that angels and demons, *such as Christianity conceives them*, exist is a matter of faith alone. Even for St. Thomas,

⁴⁴ Cf. Anselm, *Opera omnia* 2, 1-35 (*Ep. de inc. Verbi* 1-2); Tavard, *Die Engel* 62.

⁴⁵ G. C. Capelle, *Amaury de Bène* (Paris: Vrin, 1932) 40-41.

⁴⁶ Capelle, *Amaury* 91. At about the same level of thought was David of Dinant's recently notorious teaching that God is the *materia prima* of the entire universe—one additional though minor reason for the Council's wishing to define the existence of spiritual creatures; cf. L. Scheffczyk, *Creation and Providence* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970) 131.

⁴⁷ It seems that this was not to become prominent until about 1250, at least in Paris, according to the testimony of Roger Bacon (cf., however, Foreville, *Latran* 283, 285).

⁴⁸ Mayer, "Speak" 11. As to the point of fact, P. Schoonenberg does seem to claim this; cf. *Convenant and Creation* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1968) 76.

reason can show the existence of pure spirits other than God not by apodictic proof but by *convenientia*—suitability.⁴⁹

Then, denial by the heretics of the existence of certain material beings constituted a considerable portion of their heresy: the denial of the material reality of the human bodies of our Lord and his mother, with the consequent denial of his redeeming death; the denial of the existence of human bodies when man was first created; the denial of the resurrection of the body and of the body's sharing in glory or punishment. *All* material beings were denied existence by the followers of Amaury de Bène, as a result of their spiritualistic monism. According, then, to the principle for interpreting conciliar decrees adduced by Mayer, to define the existence of material things over against that of spiritual things was perfectly in order. In my judgment, *Firmiter* does intend to define that the existence of some material beings, as well as of spiritual ones, is given in revelation. Further, by defining God to be the creator of the sensible world, against the majority of Cathars who held that it was created by the devil, the Council, as seen above, defined explicitly, though not expressly, its existence.

4) Before we conclude, some comment ought to be made on I Vatican's often misunderstood reiteration of IV Lateran (DS 3002). I Vatican mentions angels in a direct and unmodified quotation of the last clause in the first sentence of *Firmiter*, beginning with "simul ab initio temporis." One might suppose that the fathers of I Vatican intended to charge these phrases about angels with fuller meaning than did their source; for there had been great theological development of Catholic doctrine concerning angels during the intervening 650 years, especially at the hands of St. Thomas. Moreover, though the Cathars seemed to have vanished without a trace, the existence of angels and demons was already under attack in the Catholic circles infected with rationalism about whom the Council was concerned.

Yet I have been unable to turn up from *acta*⁵⁰ any sign of thought or concern about angels in themselves. The Council fathers restrict themselves to asserting the radical difference between God and even the most spiritual of creatures. Their fight is with the pantheisms, monisms, and emanationisms of their day (cf. DS 3024-25). Darlapp's line of argument fits very well here. Angels are brought in precisely in order to be complete, not indeed in listing the creatures of the world but in eliminating all the forms of emanationism. Canons 1, 4, and 5 of this chapter speak of invisible or spiritual beings, but only as examples to illustrate the doctrinal points being made and to give them universal extension.

⁴⁹ Cf. Rahner, "Angelologie," 536-38; "Dämonologie." Also Schmaus, *God* 208-14.

⁵⁰ *Collectio Lacensis* 7, esp. 69-78, 507-18, 1628-36.

Haag,⁵¹ Gonzalez,⁵² and others suggest that I Vatican is making a significant change in Church teaching by its omission of the next two sentences of *Firmiter* concerning the devil and other demons. Such a suggestion can be seen only as wishful thinking. In the context of creation versus pantheistic emanation, emergence, and the like, explicit mention of the devil, of the Fall, even of salvation was not seen as crucial; the battle was elsewhere. In any case, due to the at least temporary victory of Thomas' angelology within the Church, "angel" stood, even more easily than at IV Lateran, for both good angels and bad.

In conclusion, then, I think I have shown that the methodological difficulty which has prevented Darlapp and those who stand with him from seeing in *Firmiter* a *de fide* declaration of the existence of angels and demons is inapplicable and out of accord with both actual text and context of the constitution itself, even though useful enough with regard both to other aspects of *Firmiter* and to the angels in I Vatican's quotation therefrom. A fortiori, doubts or denials that the existence of angels and demons is an article of Catholic faith have been shown to be without serious grounding. There is no way to restrict the defining intent of IV Lateran to merely the universality and unicity of God's creative activity and the creaturely origins of evil. The doctrines of the heretics of the time were couched primarily in terms of false teachings about angels and demons, so that *Firmiter* was indeed speaking against unacceptable doctrine in what it said of these. The arguments utilizing other senses of "presupposition" than that of Darlapp would either destroy Catholic doctrine in every area or prove inadequate to deal with the actual text of *Firmiter*.

Finally, I should like to draw attention to the fact pointed out by Foreville⁵³ and by L. Hödl,⁵⁴ that serious theological work on the teaching of *Firmiter* has hardly started. And the historical research that would be indispensable for understanding with some fulness the exact mind of the Council seems to have centered on everything save the theological background of Innocent III and the Council fathers, their perceptions of the theological situation of their times, and the immediate influences brought to bear on the drafting of *Firmiter*.

⁵¹ *Teufelsglaube* 131-32.

⁵² "Dios y el diablo" 294.

⁵³ *Latran* 418.

⁵⁴ *Die Geschichte der scholastischen Literatur und der Theologie der Schlüsselgewalt* 1 (Münster, 1959) 321, cited in Maccarrone, "II IV Concilio" 270, n. 1.