

A DEFINITION OF SCIENTIFIC APOLOGETICS

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IN HIS excellent work, *La crédibilité et l'apologétique*, A. Gardeil, O.P., notes that in 1907 he wrote: "If there is one subject badly defined and whose object and method is a problem for the theologians, it is certainly apologetics."¹ Many an article has been printed on the subject since that time, and yet H. Straubinger writes in 1940: "Apologetics—its purpose, method, and place in theology—is still the object of lively discussion."²

Although apologetics was thought to be reaching a state of clarification at the turn of the century, and although in its broad outlines it is taught quite uniformly in our seminaries, we find by a casual glance through the index of our periodicals that both of these observations are quite accurate. And if we look for the object of these discussions, we find that it is reducible to the three things mentioned by Fr. Gardeil, i.e., the object, the method, and the definition of the treatise.

The reason for this is threefold. First, there are the perfectly normal endeavors of the theologians to give a more perfect unity and clarity to a treatise which admittedly is not perfect. Such discussions are to be expected in any field of theology. The second reason must be attributed to the word "apologetics" itself. It is such a wide term, and has taken on such a variety of meanings, that there has resulted a certain amount of confusion in some circles as to what precisely should be accomplished in apologetics. Thirdly, as a consequence, there have been rather sharp controversies on the question of method.

PAST CONTRIBUTIONS

Looking back over the history of apologetics, we find that it was only around the middle of the last century that the theologians awoke to the realization that their treatise, originally intended to combat Protestantism, deism, and rationalism, had actually evolved into a positive

¹ 2d ed.; Paris, 1928, p. 203.

² H. Straubinger, "Die Apologetik als theologische Disciplin," *Theologische Quartalschrift*, CXXI (1940), 14.

science. We might almost say that its evolution to that state was by accident. Historically, the *De Ecclesia* came first, and was composed primarily because of Protestant attacks. Hence fundamentally it was defensive and negative. Then, when the Protestant rejection of the Church deteriorated into the deistic denial of revelation, Catholic theologians were compelled to approach the whole question of Scripture, tradition, and the Church from purely rational grounds. When this doctrine was prefixed to the already existing treatise on the Church, the happy result, apparently neither intended nor foreseen, was a treatise which made a fine logical transition from philosophy to dogma, and which gave a solid, rational justification for the whole body of Catholic truth. Once established, such a treatise obviously had a right to be called a definite discipline in the field of theology.

Such was the condition of the treatise in the latter part of the last century. In those days there was certainly a good deal of room for clarification, and not least of all in the logical process from reason to revelation. Perrone points this out quite clearly in 1865. After paying high tribute to Melchior Cano, "*Dominicae familiae decus illud ac lumen*," for his great contribution in the *Loci Theologici*, he does not hesitate to change the order of presentation given by the earlier writer. He says:

Verum quis unquam non viderit nequaquam posse quemquam de scripturis sacris prout *divinae* spectantur apte disserere, de ipsarum, ut aiunt, inspiratione, et canone, ut reliqua missa faciam, quin prius auctoritas illa constituta sit ex qua solum eae notae tuto nobis constare poterunt? Idem dic de divinis traditionibus et earum auctoritate, ac de reliquis quae ab Ecclesiae auctoritate ac testimonio, uti postea ostendemus, unice pendent.³

This need for proving first the authority of Scripture and tradition, and for resting it on the authority of the *magisterium*, which Perrone felt in the nineteenth century, was not actually recognized by Melchior Cano and his associates three centuries before.⁴ It was only with the

³ J. Perrone, S.J., *Praelectiones Theologicae* (ed. 31a; Taurini, 1865), II, 7.

⁴ St. Robert Bellarmine also felt that there was no point in proving the fact of revelation, or of approaching the whole question from reason as a starting point. So far as he was concerned, the fact of revelation did not need proof. It is admitted by his adversaries as "the spiritual sword which cannot be refused." "Convenit autem inter nos et omnino

advent of the deists that the theologians were forced to develop that argument. Once it was developed, it was for the best interests of apologetics, as a logical discipline, that it be kept and perfected.

Another point that had to be clarified was the precise subject matter of the treatise. During the nineteenth century, apologetics had not been content merely with refuting the deists, rationalists, and Protestants. It was perpetually taking on new burdens and facing new adversaries. As a result it had run wild through the field of philosophy as well as dogma. We have only to read the article in the *Dictionnaire de théologie* to recognize the resultant difficulties and confusion.⁵

It was obvious that some sort of limitation of the subject matter had to be made by someone. Although there were some theologians, such as Perrone⁶ and Bishop Kenrick,⁷ who resisted the temptation to refute all current errors in their apologetic works, the first, to my knowledge, who insisted that all extraneous philosophical questions should be excluded from the treatise of apologetics, was Ignatius Ottiger, S.J. He writes: "Doctrinas porro, quas ab initio huius disciplinae tamquam utriusque (disputantis) admissas statuere necesse est, iure dicimus esse omnes sanae et integrae philosophiae tum theoreticae tum practicae. . . . Alioquin . . . nullius . . . disciplinae campus certus et definitus esset."⁸

The same idea is taken up in Gardeil's *La crédibilité et l'apologétique*. With the credibility of dogma as the object of his apologetics, he quotes the verse from St. Paul, "omnia mihi licent sed non omnia expediunt; omnia mihi licent sed ego sub nullius redigar potestate," and pitilessly eliminates from the field of apologetics all that is not closely allied to the rational proof of the credibility of dogma.

Fortunately for apologetics, that insistence on a restricted acceptance of the subject matter for the treatise had its effect. Today, prac-

omnes haereticos, verbum Dei esse regulam fidei; ex quo de dogmatibus iudicandum sit: esse commune principium ab omnibus concessum unde argumenta ducantur: denique esse gladium spiritualem qui in hoc certamine recusari non possit" (*Disputationes de Controversiis Christianae Fidei contra Huius Temporis Haereticos*, I, "Praefatio").

⁵ L. Maisonneuve, "Apologétique," *DTC*, I, 1515.

⁶ *Op. cit.*

⁷ *Theologia Dogmatica* (ed. 2a; Mechliniae, 1858), I.

⁸ *Theologia Fundamentalis* (Friburgi Brisgoviae, 1897), I, 15.

tically all the theologians have given back to the philosophers the question of the existence of God, of cultus, of the immortality of the soul, etc., and confine themselves more or less strictly to the construction of a *demonstratio christiana et catholica*. And in this they are perfectly justified; for, after all, their textbooks are intended for theological students, and they can rightly suppose from canon law that those who begin the study of theology have settled those questions in the two or three years of sound Scholastic philosophy.⁹

Concomitant with this rejection of extraneous philosophical problems is the positive assertion on the part of all modern theologians that apologetics is not the same as apology. Both words, it is true, derive from the same Greek verb; both of them mean the defense of something, and in a restricted sense both of them can be and have been used for the defense of the Catholic Church and religion. Yet, despite the common etymology and the use of the terms in the past, the theologians today insist that apology and apologetics have distinct functions.

According to present-day usage of the terms, apology is a defense which rises almost spontaneously to meet individual attacks of the adversaries of the Church. It is in this sense that some of the theological works of the eighteenth century are to be understood. At that time Catholic theologians were face to face with the new attacks of deism and materialism. They accepted the challenge and answered the attacks step by step. Deism and materialism were refuted; the theologians were satisfied; their work was done.¹⁰ The same thing was true of the early apologists of Christianity, who took it upon themselves to refute individually the attacks of the pagans and Jews.

Apologetics, on the other hand, plays a more general role. Its purpose is not to refute this or that adversary, nor to prove the absolute truth of this or that element of the Catholic teaching. Its function is rather to give a solid rational foundation to the whole ensemble of Catholic truth. Hence it is no more under the sway of apology than the treatise *De Verbo Incarnato*, *De Sacramentis*, or any other tract in theology. Granted that the *De Ecclesia* was first written to defend the Church against the attacks of the Protestants; granted that the doc-

⁹ Can. 1356.

¹⁰ G. Rabeau, *Apologétique* (Paris, 1930), p. 2.

trine *De Revelatione* did not make its appearance until the advent of deism and rationalism; the fact remains that apologetics has outgrown those defensive days. As Dieckmann writes, "alii sunt gradus praeparatorii, alia est ipsa scientia."¹¹

Even among those who speak of apologetics as the defense of the Catholic faith, we find the protestation that the element of defense is quite secondary in the definition. As one writes, "to demonstrate the foundation of the Christian religion is the main and positive task; to defend those foundations against attack is a supplementary task of a rather negative kind."¹² Such a defensive aspect is common to all the treatises in philosophy and théology.

PRESENT POSITION

We might characterize the present position of apologetics by saying that it has accepted gracefully the contributions and clarifications we have mentioned above. As a result, it can boast of a logical process from reason to revelation; it possesses, for the most part, subject matter which is agreed upon; it is distinguished from apology; and it is recognized as a positive science with a definite place in the framework of theology. One tendency, however, that has been quite pronounced during the last thirty years, is the attempt to introduce, as occasion permits, an element not for the immediate benefit of the seminarian taking the course, but rather for the prospective convert he may meet when he is in the priesthood. By that I mean the introduction of what is called today practical apologetics.

Practical apologetics may be defined as the art of converting non-Catholics to the Catholic Church.¹³ With that as its purpose, it looks for the most effective means of making the Catholic faith and its obligations as appealing as possible to definite individuals who are beginning to show interest in the Church. For that reason, its appeal is not only to the intellect but also to the will. It wants to create the proper dispositions, to eradicate prejudice in the prospective convert,

¹¹ *De Revelatione Christiana* (Friburgi Brisgoviae, 1930), p. 28.

¹² J. Brunsmann, S.V.D., *Fundamental Theology*, adapted and edited by A. Preuss (London, 1928), I, 4.

¹³ A. Cotter, S. J., *Theologia Fundamentalis* (Weston, 1940), p. 488.

and make him eager to listen to the objectively sound arguments of Catholicism.

Obviously, such an apologetics is an excellent thing. But we must be careful to draw a very sharp distinction between that type of apologetics and the scientific apologetics which is the main and fundamental treatise in first-year theology. Without that distinction, there is bound to be a certain amount of confusion. And that confusion can be manifested by claiming that the science of apologetics is out of date because it fails to create the proper dispositions in non-Catholics.¹⁴ The obvious answer is that the objection has missed the point. Scientific apologetics would fulfill its purpose if there were no souls to convert, for the simple reason that its prime function is not to make converts. We shall return to this distinction later in this paper.

MODERN DEFINITIONS

In examining the current definitions of the treatise, we might do well to begin with the article of L. Maisonneuve in the *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*. His definition is particularly interesting inasmuch as it is part of an extensive treatment and criticism of the subject written shortly after the turn of the century. He reviews the contributions and confusions of many of the earlier apologists, and offers this rather general definition: "Apologétique est cette partie de la théologie qui traite scientifiquement de la justification et de la défense de la foi chrétienne."¹⁵ Such a definition, at first sight, would seem to indicate that there is no difference between Catholic apologetics and the apologetics of any other Christian sect which believed in "foi chrétienne." Actually, however, he develops the article in such a way that it includes the *demonstratio catholica* as well as the *demonstratio christiana*. But that is just an affirmation of the weakness of the initial definition.

Perhaps it was this article which motivated Gardeil to attempt to

¹⁴ There have been rather numerous articles relative to apologetics in the *Revue apologétique*, *Ecclesiastical Review*, and other periodicals during the past twenty years, some of which would have profited greatly if the distinction had been kept between scientific and practical apologetics.

¹⁵ *DTC*, I, 1515.

give greater clarity to the concept of apologetics. He recounts all the extraneous matter that had found its way into some of the apologetic works, shows the need for some unifying principle, and strikes on the notion of credibility. He sees the distinctive note of apologetics in the universality with which it envisages the proof of Catholic truth. But the general aspect under which the dogmas of the faith are accessible to reason is precisely and uniquely their credibility. Hence apologetics is "la Somme de la crédibilité du dogme catholique."¹⁶ This was originally written in a volume appearing in 1908, some seven years after the article by Maisonneuve.

In a pertinent review, Pinard notes that it is hardly adequate to define apologetics as the science which treats of the credibility of dogma.¹⁷ Of its very nature, dogma is not only credible; it *must* be believed. Hence the idea of credendity,¹⁸ as well as credibility, should be included in the definition. The observation is a good one. But Pinard, unhappily, in his insistence on the "devoir de croire," speaks only of the generic obligation of faith, which is the common property of Catholic, Protestant, and Jew, all of whom profess the obligation to believe. Such a definition obviously does not square with what is proved in the *demonstratio christiana et catholica*, and, in a sense, brings us back to the definition of L. Maisonneuve.

Rather than continue our examination of various definitions that have been formulated during the last forty years, I think that, for all practical purposes, we can group a representative number of them into three classes. Perhaps the grouping may seem slightly forced because of the individual characteristics of some of the definitions, but it is the only alternative to considering each apologist on his own particular merits—a rather lengthy piece of work.

¹⁶ A. Gardeil, O.P., *La crédibilité et l'apologétique* (2d ed.; Paris, 1928), p. 212.

¹⁷ H. Pinard, S.J., "Bulletin apologétique," *Recherches de science religieuse*, IV (1913); cf. also the Gardeil-Bainvel controversy in the *Revue apologétique*, VI-VII.

¹⁸ The term "credendity" owes its origin to a theologian named Caramuel; I quote from Fr. Harent: "Il ne s'est pas contenté du terme de crédibilité, mais il a ajouté la crédendité ou nécessité de croire . . . et pour s'excuser de la nouveauté du terme, il ajoute que, 'bien que les auteurs classiques n'aient pas tiré du participe en *div* des noms abstraits, c'est maintenant nécessaire'" ("Foi," *DTC*, VI, 173).

1) Apologetics is the science which treats of the credibility of dogma: Gardeil,¹⁹ Le Bachelet,²⁰ Garrigou-Lagrange,²¹ Falcon,²² Baierl.²³

2) Apologetics is the science which treats of the demonstration and defense of the Catholic Church and religion: Ottiger,²⁴ Goebel,²⁵ Brunsmann-Preuss,²⁶ Maisonneuve.²⁷

3) Apologetics is the science of those things prereduced for the study of theology: Muncunill,²⁸ Pesch,²⁹ Felder,³⁰ Tromp,³¹ Van Noort-Verhaar,³² Dieckmann.³³

Grouping them in this manner, I do not intend even to hint that these definitions are either false or the least bit contradictory. Their differences are reducible merely to a question of emphasis. On the other hand, it does not seem that they have as yet given perfect expression to the purpose of apologetics. For example, in regard to the definitions in the first class, we must agree with Pinard that it is not sufficient to speak merely of the credibility of dogma. Because of the very nature of dogma and public revelation, those for whom this revelation is intended *must* believe. Hence the notion of credendity should be expressed.

Regarding the definitions of the second class, it is clear that the "demonstration and defense of the Catholic Church and religion" is also perfectly correct, so far as it goes. But the difficulty is that it tells us practically nothing of what one proves in such a demonstration and defense. Apparently, something indicating the precise direction and function of the individual theses and proofs would be a desidera-

¹⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 212.

²⁰ X. Le Bachelet, S.J., "Apologétique," *DAFC*, I, 225.

²¹ R. Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., *De Revelatione* (ed. 3a.; Paris, 1926), pp. 14-17.

²² J. Falcon, S.M., *La crédibilité du dogme catholique* (Lyons, 1933), p. 16.

²³ J. Baierl, *The Theory of Revelation* (Rochester, 1927), I, vi.

²⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 14.

²⁵ P. Goebel, O.M.Cap., *Katholische Apologetik* (Freiburg, 1930), p. 1.

²⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 1.

²⁷ *Op. cit.*, col. 1515.

²⁸ J. Muncunill, S.J., *De Vera Religione* (Barcelona, 1909), n. 8.

²⁹ C. Pesch, S.J., *Praelectiones Dogmaticae* (ed. 7a.; Freiburg, 1924), I, 3.

³⁰ H. Felder, O.M.Cap., *Apologetica* (ed. 2a.; Paderborn, 1923), I, 13.

³¹ S. Tromp, S.J., *De Revelatione Christiana* (Rome, 1931), p. 7.

³² G. Van Noort—J. Verhaar, *De Vera Religione* (ed. 4a.; Hilversum, 1923), p. xxiv.

³³ *Op. cit.*, p. 24.

tum. The same thing is true of the rather vague "things which are prerequired for the study of theology." It would be far better if the apologist could point to a more definitely clear, unifying principle which would permeate the whole of the treatise, and give it the cohesion, clarity, and solidity which it demands as a theological discipline.

In that type of definition, Tanquerey, to my mind comes much closer to the ideal than the theologians whom we have just mentioned. He writes: "Apologetica est scientia motivorum credibilitatis et credenditatis divinae Revelationis a Jesu Christo allatae, et per Ecclesiam catholicam propositae."³⁴

A NEW DEFINITION

In 1940 we find an entirely new definition proposed by A. C. Cotter, S.J., in his *Theologia Fundamentalis*. Unlike the preceding theologians, who point to generic things to be proved in the treatise, he proposes as the *finis* of his book the rational proof of a particular dogma:

Finis Theologiae fundamentalis est demonstrare *dogma catholicum* quod sic enuntiatur a Concilio Vaticano: 'Fide divina et catholica ea omnia credenda sunt quae in verbo Dei scripto vel tradito continentur, et ab Ecclesia, sive solemnii iudicio sive ordinario et universali magisterio, tamquam divinitus revelata credenda proponuntur' (*DB*, 1792).

And, since the questions of Scripture and tradition belong to the *loci theologici*, and not to apologetics,³⁵ he eliminates the clause, "quae in verbo Dei scripto vel tradito continentur" from the first part of his book, and writes of apologetics proper: "Finis Apologeticae est probare, ex lumine naturali, credenda esse ea omnia quae a magisterio Ecclesiae proponuntur tamquam divinitus revelata et credenda, i.e., magisterium Ecclesiae Catholicae esse nobis *regulam fidei*."³⁶

³⁴ A. Tanquerey, *Synopsis Theologiae Dogmaticae Fundamentalis* (ed. 21a.; Paris, 1925), p. 21.

³⁵ This distinction between apologetics and fundamental theology is not, of course, universal among the theologians. Pesch, Felder, and others identify the two terms; Langan, on the other hand, restricts apologetics to the *demonstratio christiana*; Dieckmann prefers not to use the term "apologetics," etc. I do not intend to enter that question here.

³⁶ A. Cotter, S.J., *Theologia Fundamentalis* (Weston, 1940), p. 3; the previous citation is from p. 2 of this work.

Such a *finis* for apologetics is undoubtedly new. Since it is new, I would like to indicate the contribution it brings to scientific apologetics, and show how it is a definite step forward in the clarification of the treatise.

1) First of all, it gives to apologetics a very definite thing to prove, a particular dogma. That in itself constitutes a real contribution; for it delimits the treatise, tells us exactly what has to be done and how, and shows us precisely where the treatise ends.³⁷

2) This dogma, which is more fundamental in the logical order than all the other dogmas of the Catholic faith (a super-dogma, we might call it), will indicate why all the other dogmas of the faith have credibility and credendity. Hence, having proved this one proposition, we have *eo ipso* proved what has to be proved from reason in regard to the *depositum fidei*.

3) Giving to apologetics a dogma from the Vatican Council to be proved from reason, it applies to the treatise as a whole the same general apologetic method which is employed in the individual theses in the treatise. In the individual theses, we take *id quod est probandum*, together with the definitions of the notions contained in it, from the *magisterium*. In the same way here, we are taking a proposition of the *magisterium* regarding Catholic faith, and we want to establish it solidly before the tribunal of reason.

The obvious advantage of this procedure is that it clarifies the general *status quaestionis* at the very beginning of the treatise. It makes very clear that the treatise is not formulated in order to find the true Church; we belong to it already. We are not searching for the truth; we have it. As Fr. Falcon writes:

L'apologète n'est pas un chercheur en marche vers la vérité, mais un docteur qui a conscience de la posséder et entreprend de la communiquer; un docteur qui parle le langage abstrait et universel de la science, et qui s'adresse à des intelligences déjà préparées par une volonté droite et l'adhésion à une philosophie du réel à recevoir son enseignement.³⁸

4) This dogma clarifies whatever vagueness is contained in the three classes of definitions criticized above. First of all, it is a dogma whose

³⁷ We might note here the unilinear method as described *ibid.*, p. 18.

³⁸ J. Falcon, S.M., *La crédibilité du dogme catholique*, p. 21.

proof from reason is just what is "prerequisite for the study of theology." Having proved that the *magisterium* of the Catholic Church is the rule of faith, then, with perfect logic, we can argue from the teaching of that *magisterium*, with the assurance that it is the word of God proposed for belief by the only authorized teaching body instituted by Christ. Such is the prerequisite for the study of theology proper. Secondly, it indicates the direction and function of the individual theses in "the demonstration and defense of the Catholic Church and religion." For in the dogma is included (a) the obligation of a Catholic to believe (b) whatever is the revealed word of God, and (c) whatever is proposed by the *magisterium* of the Church as revealed and binding on him as a Catholic. Thirdly, it adds the notion of credendity to the definition which includes the idea of the credibility of dogma as the *finis* of apologetics. That is clear in the very opening words of the proposition, "Porro fide divina et catholica ea omnia sunt credenda."

5) I have mentioned before that I think there is a danger today of confusing scientific apologetics and practical apologetics. I also think that this new definition can eliminate that danger. As we shall show later, the dogma which it takes from the Vatican Council is concerned solely with the obligation of *Catholics* to believe whatever is proposed by the *magisterium* of the Catholic Church as revealed doctrine. It says absolutely nothing about the obligations of non-Catholics in regard to the act of faith; it says absolutely nothing about the best way of making the Catholic faith and its obligations more appealing to those not in the Church. Hence the treatise is differentiated sharply from practical apologetics, which is concerned primarily with those not of the faith.

That this distinction is necessary becomes clear when we read of complaints that the scientific approach is not the best way of bringing non-Catholics into the fold. The obvious answer is that its prime purpose is not to bring them into the fold. It deals with the logical basis of the faith; it tells us, whether we be prospective converts or convert-makers, what a Catholic must believe and what exactly is meant by Catholic faith; it does not, however, prove that the non-Catholic must necessarily accept that faith, nor does it profess to be the best means of making the Catholic religion appealing to him. But it

does prove conclusively why the Catholic has the obligation of believing whatever is proposed by the *magisterium* as the revealed word of God and binding on him as a Catholic. In other words, it prescind from the psychological advantages or disadvantages for the prospective convert, and deals merely with logical conclusions. The professor of apologetics gives his student the arguments and tells him to study them. The convert-maker may tell his prospect to pray over them.

As Le Bachelet notes, apologetics, under the technical form which it receives in our course in theology or in our manuals, does not present itself as a practical recipe which is of immediate application for the conversion of non-Catholics. It is rather a synthesis, a systematization of proofs which justify the claims of the Catholic Church.³⁹

THE APPROACH TO APOLOGETICS

6) From the standpoint of the approach to scientific apologetics, I think we shall find a sixth important contribution in the new definition of Fr. Cotter. Put very briefly, this new definition avoids many of the intricate difficulties pertaining to the act of faith (which does not belong to apologetics), and does so by following the method employed by the Vatican Council. I shall try to show how this is a very important contribution.

The supposition in some of the manuals on apologetics today is that they are dealing with a man *in via ad fidem*. With that supposition, they begin a process that leads logically up to the act of faith. In the process, man is guided by reason up to what is called the *judicium credibilitatis*, and then there is the leap from the natural plane to the supernatural, a leap which can be accomplished only with the aid of grace.

But why must we consider man *in via ad fidem* in apologetics? In the first place, all those who make the act of faith do not go through the process mentioned above. In the second place, the *judicium credibilitatis*, as it is treated in the *processus ad fidem*, is in relation to the act of *fides divina tantum*. In apologetics we are not treating merely of divine faith; we are treating of divine and Catholic faith. Why then should we make the *fnis* of apologetics the *judicium credibilitatis*, when

³⁹ X. Le Bachelet, S.J., "Apologétique," *DAFC*, I, 235.

the treatise, as it is actually composed, contains not only the proof of the fact of revelation and the corresponding act of divine faith, but also the fact of the *magisterium* of the Catholic Church and the corresponding obligation on the part of those who are Catholics to receive that revelation as it is proposed for belief by the *magisterium* of that Church?

I realize that divine faith is not intrinsically different from divine and Catholic faith. But I also realize that extrinsically the difference is tremendous. Fr. Martindale, who apparently is not too anxious to talk of himself, but nevertheless writes beautifully and accurately of his conversion, expresses this fact very clearly:

When will men understand that between what is Catholic and what is anything else, there is a great gulf fixed? You have to have your bridge. Perhaps God drags you, squealing and squirming, across it. It isn't history, nor psychology, nor philosophy, nor the need for authority, nor the love for symbolism, nor any other thing created, that does it, but God does it, Christ does it, Grace does it.⁴⁰

To my mind, it is much more in conformity with the apologetic method, and also with the approach of the Vatican Council, to view not a man *in via ad fidem*, but rather a man with *fides iam possessa*. And the question to be asked in apologetics is not, "Along what steps did you proceed?" but rather, "Is your present state justifiable before the tribunal of reason?" That such is the viewpoint of the Vatican Council, we shall see later.

Suppose, then, that we begin scientific apologetics, not with the person who has no faith, nor with the person who has merely divine faith, but with the full-fledged Catholic who has divine and Catholic faith. Granted its existence; granted the fact that the Catholic Church tells us that to remain a Catholic we must believe whatever the *magisterium* of the Catholic Church proposes to be believed; our purpose in the treatise will be to prove that such a dogma has a solid rational foundation. Can we do that? The Vatican Council says that we can:

Ut nihilominus fidei nostrae obsequium rationi consentaneum esset, voluit Deus cum internis Spiritus Sancti auxiliis externa jungi revelationis suae argumenta, facta scilicet divina, atque imprimis miracula et prophetias, quae . . . divinae revelationis signa sunt certissima et omnium intelligentiae accommodata.⁴¹

⁴⁰ *Conversions to the Catholic Church*, A Symposium (London, 1933), p. 91.

⁴¹ *DB*, 1790.

As we shall later see from Bishop Martin's pertinent comment on this passage,^{42bis} the Vatican Council is not primarily envisaging here the attitude of non-Catholics, or the obligations of non-Catholics, or the particular process by which a person first elicits an act of Catholic faith. It is accepting faith as an actual fact, and it tells us that we can justify that faith by the arguments from miracles and prophecies. Now if such is the approach of the Vatican Council, it seems to me that the same attitude of mind should be stressed in scientific apologetics. In other words, there is no need of bringing a man along the difficult and obscure process of establishing the act of faith, or of bringing into the treatise the question of whether the *judicium credibilitatis* must be supernatural or not, or whether the formal object of supernatural faith is any different from the formal object of natural faith, etc. Let the theologians dispute about these questions in the particular treatise *De Fide*. They do not pertain to apologetics, or to the account of faith and its rationality as described by the Vatican Council. The theologians did well to eliminate mere philosophical problems from the treatise some forty years ago. Perhaps we could do our part by eliminating the dogmatic disputes as well.

THE VATICAN COUNCIL ON FAITH

To clarify our position in regard to the dogma which is taken from the Vatican Council, and its value in the definition of apologetics, it may be well to indicate just what its position was in that Council and, at the same time, indicate the mind of the Council's theologians in regard to faith and its justification. As a prelude to that investigation, we must note the warning of Dom Butler:

It may safely be said that perhaps never in the history of the world has any legislative act been subjected to a discussion more free, or to a sifting more thorough, or a criticism more searching, or a weighing of objections more painstaking, or a transformation more complete, than found place in the dogmatic constitution of the Catholic Faith.⁴²

Our particular dogma did not escape that treatment. First of all, although it was a doctrine insisted on just a few years previously by Pius IX, we look for it in vain in the scheme that was originally pro-

⁴² *The Vatican Council* (Longmans, 1930), I, 187. ^{42bis} Cf. *infra*, p. 178, note 58.

posed for the Vatican Council by Cardinal Franzelin. In his Apostolic Letter to the Bishop of Munich, written in 1863, the Holy Father recalled explicitly that divine faith was not to be restricted merely to those doctrines defined by the express decrees of the Councils or Popes, but was to be extended to all doctrines taught as divinely revealed by the *magisterium* of the entire Church dispersed throughout the world (*DB*, 1683).

The initial omission of this doctrine was remedied when the second scheme made its appearance. The man responsible for it was Ignatius Senestrey, Bishop of Ratisbon, who kept demanding that the Council condemn the error of those who held that only those truths were to be believed by divine faith which were *defined* by the Church. This paragraph is the result of that insistence.⁴³

In the ninth session we find the actual proposal. It is to the effect that the following sentence be added to the third chapter after the third paragraph: "Porro fide divina et catholica ea omnia credenda sunt, quae ab Ecclesia sive iudiciis dogmaticis, sive ordinaria et universali doctrina et praedicatione tamquam in Verbo Dei scripto vel tradito contenta proponuntur."⁴⁴ As it was actually introduced into the scheme given to the bishops for consideration, it read as follows: "Porro fide divina et catholica ea omnia credenda sunt, quae in verbo Dei scripto vel tradito continentur et ab Ecclesia sive solemnii iudicio sive ordinario magisterio proponuntur."⁴⁵

It did not take the bishops very long to realize that this insistence on *Catholic* faith was distinctly different from the other propositions contained in the third chapter. Before this paragraph, they had been treating of *fides divina tantum*, its definition, the reasonableness of its acceptance, and its absolute gratuity (*DB*, 1789–91). After this paragraph, they again take up the question of *fides divina tantum*, its

⁴³ Acta Concilii Vaticani, *Collectio Lacensis*, VII, 1675.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, col. 1658.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, col. 73. There was a particularly interesting difficulty about the words "magisterio ordinario" in this proposition. Apparently some of the Fathers thought that these words referred to the definitions of the Holy Father, and that the words "solemni iudicio" referred to the definitions of the Councils. To eliminate any thought or suspicion that the proposition was in any sense a definition of the infallibility of the Pope, the word "universali" was prefixed to "magisterio," and explained by Bishop Martin as referring to the *magisterium* of the entire Church dispersed throughout the world (*ibid.*, col. 176).

absolute necessity for all men, the absence of conflict between faith and reason, etc. (*DB*, 1793 ff.). But in this paragraph, a new notion has been added, namely *fides divina et catholica*.

Because of this apparent incongruity, one of the bishops proposed that the paragraph be deleted:

Usque nunc de fide divina, seu a Deo revelata, actum est, non de fide catholica, aut ab Ecclesia proposita: ideoque paragraphus 4 omissenda est; et quae sequuntur in paragrapho 5 'haec illa fides est' usque ad 'vitam aeternam assequetur' inclusive, addenda sunt paragrapho 3; hic enim adhuc agitur de fide divina, etiam ante adventum Christi necessaria.⁴⁶

It is rather easy to understand the difficulty of the objector. He apparently saw no reason why the paragraph on Catholic faith should be inserted in the midst of doctrine that concerned merely divine faith. His objection, however, was not accepted. The doctrine was to remain, even though it was in striking contrast to what immediately preceded (the reasonableness of simple divine faith), and what immediately follows (the universal necessity of divine faith). The importance of the doctrine was sufficient warrant to keep it in the Council, even though it disrupted the logical order in the sequence of the paragraphs.

The reaction of another bishop was that the insertion made it appear that Catholic faith was necessary for salvation. Because of this very real difficulty, Bishop Martin, in charge of the deputation, deleted the words "haec illa fides," with which the next paragraph (*DB*, 1793) began, and substituted the more general words "quoniam vero sine fide." He gives the following reason for the change:

Sublato sic nexu inter hanc quartam et sequentem paragraphum evanescit difficultas inde orta, quod quasi videretur omnibus necessarius ad salutem actus catholicae fidei. Haec difficultas iam remota est quia nexus ille intimus inter paragraphum quartam et quintam iam sublatus est.⁴⁷

The same assertion is repeated in the next session:

Rationem huius mutationis iam hesternae die vobis, reverendissimi Patres, exposui, nempe ratio, ut paucis repetam, haec est, ut intimus ille nexus inter praecedentem et hanc paragraphum tollatur, ne videretur omnibus ad salutem necessarium esse actum fidei catholicae: nam hoc falsum esset.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ *Coll. Lac.*, VII, 159.

⁴⁷ *Mansi, op. cit.*, LI, 323.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, col. 324.

This repeated insistence on the fact that Catholic faith is not necessary for all, is a point that must be kept in mind in our approach to scientific apologetics. For it is one thing for us to say, "extra Ecclesiam nulla salus," realizing at the same time that membership in the Church can be had *in re* or *in voto*, but it is quite another thing to say that the act of Catholic faith is necessary for all. That proposition cannot be defended in itself, and has absolutely no justification from this paragraph in the Vatican Council.

Actually, the precise reason why this paragraph was inserted in the Constitution on Faith is given in several places in the Acts of the Council:

Qua doctrina excluditur error eorum, qui articulos fidei formaliter definitos tantummodo fide divina credendos esse volunt, itaque summam credendorum quasi ad minimum reducere student.⁴⁹

And again:

Voluit explicare quodnam sit objectum materiale fidei. . . . Igitur ea tantummodo voluit explicare quae credenda essent respectu objecti materialis fidei; et voluit dirigere hanc paragraphum contra eos theologos qui dicerent tantummodo ea fide divina credenda esse quae ab oecumenicis conciliis aperte definita essent.⁵⁰

And again, in the explanation of why the words, "tamquam divinitus revelata," not originally in the document, were inserted before the word "proponuntur":

Ne scilicet scholarum opiniones, quae per scholas catholicas traduntur, etiamsi certae, inserantur doctrinae fidei; nam si dicitur Ecclesiam aliquid docere tamquam divinitus revelatum, non est possibile esse solummodo opiniones scholae. Secundo hac modificatione totum objectum materiale fidei pressius determinatur, atque erroribus temporis obviam itur.⁵¹

In other words, it is a proposition directed against those within the Church who wanted to restrict the material object of Catholic faith. That is a far cry from saying that the act of Catholic faith is necessary for all. Such a proposition, Bishop Martin affirms, would be false. And it is also incorrect to appeal to this paragraph, as does Schultes, to

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, col. 314.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, col. 224.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, col. 322.

prove, "fidem catholicam esse de necessitate salutis."⁵² Nor does Vacant seem to be correct when he writes concerning this paragraph: "Ce sont donc les vérités particulières qui doivent être crues par tous les chrétiens que notre constitution détermine. Or les vérités particulières qui doivent être crues par tous les chrétiens, ce ne sont pas celles qui sont simplement de foi divine, mais celles qui sont de foi divine et catholique."⁵³

Perhaps a justification of such statements might be attempted by saying that they do not refer necessarily to *fides catholica in re*, but rather to *fides catholica in re vel in voto*. And just as we say that membership in the Catholic Church *in re vel in voto* is necessary for salvation, so also *fides catholica in re vel in voto* is necessary for salvation. The reason why I say "perhaps" such a justification "might" be attempted is because, actually, I have never seen the term *fides catholica in voto* in any book or article. If the justification were attempted, then certainly it could not be based on the Vatican Council, which makes only one distinction, scil., between Catholic faith (*DB*, 1792) as it is binding on all those who wish to remain in the Catholic Church, and divine faith (*DB*, 1793) which is necessary for all men. To add a third term, "fides catholica in voto," is to invent terminology without reason.

Regarding the universal necessity of divine faith, as it is defined by the Vatican Council (*DB*, 1793), it may be well to note that the question at issue is not the act, but rather the virtue, of faith. This is clear from the explanation given by Bishop Martin. In answer to an objection that had been raised by one of the bishops regarding the act of faith, he says:

Hic agitur de fide ut virtus, non ut actus spectata; et sicut omnes nos scimus, haec fides tamquam virtus spectata est etiam in pueris baptizatis, quia fides infunditur per sacramentum baptismi.⁵⁴

And again:

Venimus ad emendationem 60am [in reference to *DB*, 1793] quae quidem emendatio proponit ut. . . post verba 'sine illa' addatur: fide seu explicite seu implicite

⁵² *De Ecclesia Catholica* (Paris, 1925), p. 270.

⁵³ *Constitutions du Concile du Vatican* (Paris, 1895), II, 84.

⁵⁴ *Mansi*, LI, 324.

professa. Reverendissimi Patres, etiam haec emendatio non satis fundata videtur, cum sicut modo dixi, hoc loco de virtute fidei, non de actu fidei agatur.⁵⁵

It is clear, then, that the Council is speaking here of the universal necessity of the virtue of faith, not of the act of faith. Obviously, the act of faith is universally necessary for all who have reached the age of reason; but that is not the precise doctrine defined here by the Council.

This last point on the necessity of faith brings up a very good observation which is made by Harent. He claims that there are two extremes which we ought to avoid in our considerations of those outside the Catholic Church. The first extreme is to suppose gratuitously, and contrary to very good evidence, that there are very few non-Catholics who are in good faith, and that those who are can never elicit an act of divine and salutary faith on the articles of Christian revelation which are preserved in their particular sect. The other extreme is to deny that there is any difference between the subjective state of certitude and doubt, of good faith and bad, of Catholics as a group and non-Catholics as a group.⁵⁶

I think there is little danger that our textbooks on apologetics will fall into the second extreme. All of them object strenuously to what is called indifference in religion; they insist on the necessity of the Church; and they point to the doctrine of the Vatican Council ("ad solam enim catholicam Ecclesiam ea pertinent omnia quae ad evidentem fidei christianae credibilitatem tam multa et tam mira divinitus sunt disposita," *DB*, 1794) to show that the Catholic Church alone manifests the marks of God's recognition and confirmation of that Church as His own. Clearly, then, there is no danger of our textbooks' giving even the slightest hint or indication from which one could possibly argue that one religion might conceivably be as good as another.

In regard to the first extreme, however, I think there may be some danger; or at least some statements in the textbooks might be wrongly construed. As a matter of fact, the question regarding the obligations of those not of the faith is a very intricate one; and, to my mind, so far as apologetics is concerned, it would be much better if the theologians confined themselves to the attitude of the Vatican Council. To put it very simply, the Council has nothing to say either in regard to the

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, col. 325.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, col. 325.

attitude of those not of the faith, or in regard to their obligation to accept the faith. Even when it speaks of the Catholic Church as "signum levatum in nationes et ad se invitet, qui nondum crediderunt, et filios suos certiores faciat, firmissimo niti fundamento fidem quam profitentur" (*DB*, 1794), it does not intend to affirm anything about non-Catholics. As Bishop Martin notes very carefully, "hoc loco minime sermo est de officio acatholicorum, sed tantummodo de officio catholicorum, nempe quod catholici et fideles numquam debeant fidem suam vocare in dubium."⁵⁷

Add to that the pertinent explanation formulated by Bishop Martin relative to *DB*, 1790, that "hoc loco non agitur de personis variis actum fidei elicentibus, sed agitur de fide in se spectata; et de hac fide in se spectata omnino iure dici potest, quod textus de ea dicit, nempe quod sit rationi consentanea,"⁵⁸ and we have a clearer concept of just how the Council was considering the question of faith, scil., not in regard to the attitude of non-Catholics, not in regard to the obligation of non-Catholics, and not in regard to the particular process by which a man first elicits an act of faith.

So much, then, for the outlook of the Vatican Council on the question of faith. Now if we begin our scientific apologetics, not with a man with *fides catholica iam possessa*, as the Council does, but with the idea of a man *in via ad fidem*, it seems to me that we involve ourselves in a good many problems that should not come up in the treatise. After all, looking at the question from the point of view of the many millions who are not Catholics, how much do we actually know of the will of Christ in regard to them? We have, it is true, our thesis about the universality of the Kingdom established by Christ; but when we have finished our study of it we are left with a thousand perplexities. Let us quote from one author and examine our conclusions.

Secundum voluntatem Christi Regnum Dei est universale, i.e., destinatum pro omnibus hominibus omnium temporum, ita quidem, ut omnes homines non solum invitentur, qui intrare atque participes bonorum Regni Dei fieri possint, sed eo sensu, ut omnes obligati sint ad ingrediendum Regnum Dei ex positiva voluntate Christi.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ S. Harent, S.J., "Foi," *DTC*, VI, 306-7.

⁵⁷ *Mansi*, LI, 328.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, col. 320.

⁵⁹ H. Dieckmann, S.J., *De Ecclesia* (Freiburg, 1925), II, 250.

So much for the general statement. But when the terms are explained and defined, we come to the conclusion that it means the following: (1) the Kingdom of God is destined for all in this sense, that all men must either actually belong to it, or belong to it *in voto*; (2) to those who are in invincible ignorance of the Kingdom, there is the obligation to belong to it *in voto*; (3) to those who know of it as the true Kingdom of God, there exists the very definite obligation to belong to it by assuming the bonds of faith and obedience with men of that Church.

The difficulty, of course, is that very few theologians would care to define precisely what one means by the words, "those who know of it as the true Kingdom of God." Obviously, it means more than natural conviction, because mere natural conviction of itself cannot give one the supernatural gift of faith. And so we are forced to bring in the question of grace. And, even though we bring in that question, which certainly is foreign to the treatise of scientific apologetics, can we say that the supernatural grace necessary for the act of Catholic faith will always be offered to an individual as soon as he is convinced of the truth of the Church?

Let us approach the same question from the standpoint of Scripture. We have the text, "euntes ergo docete omnes gentes. . . ." Yet, what do we know of the working out of that commission, in the concrete? Did Christ intend, when He gave that commission, that all men of all times should actually hear the preaching of the apostles and their successors? Obviously not, because He knew then, as we know now, that it was physically impossible to reach millions of men, not only in the first, but also in the twentieth century. The apostles were to do the best in their power to preach the Kingdom of God, but *humano modo*.

Now this is not the question of the catholicity of the Church, in which we can make the distinction, *catholicitas iuris et catholicitas facti*. It is a question rather of the mind of Christ in regard to each individual in his relation to the preaching of the Gospel. And, under that aspect, we certainly cannot conclude from the words, "docete omnes gentes," that Christ intended that all men should hear that preaching.

A fortiori, the phrase, "qui non crediderit, condemnabitur," does not apply to all men. It can only mean that those, and only those, who

receive the grace of Catholic faith will be condemned if they do not believe.⁶⁰ But how many men, can we say, receive the grace of Catholic faith and reject it? Or, to put the question in another form, for whom is the Catholic faith necessary? To make the question more practical, and to bring it closer home, let us forget for the moment the pagans in the middle of Africa, and think of the non-Catholic just down the street from the Catholic Church, who to all appearances is perfectly sincere in a false sect. Would we dare to say that the phrase, "qui non crediderit, condemnabitur," applies to him? And what of the non-Catholic husband who has heard all about the doctrine of the Catholic Church from a very devout wife? Does it apply to him? To say that, we must have some assurance that he has received the grace necessary to become a Catholic. And, regarding that grace, not for divine but for divine and Catholic faith, can we prove from any Council or text, that those who know of the Church *eo ipso* receive the grace to enter it?⁶¹

Perhaps it would be pertinent here to quote the opening lines of Fr. Lester's account of his conversion:

When William Cobbett was travelling in Yorkshire he used to call upon a certain old Father for a chat and refreshment. They were kindred spirits—bluff old Englishmen.

One night when the old Father was bidding him farewell he said: 'Mr. Cobbett, I have just been reading your *History of the Reformation* and I can't understand how it is that a man who could write that book doesn't become a Catholic.'

'Indeed', said Cobbett, 'and now, my friend, there's one thing that I can't understand.'

'What's that?' said the old priest.

⁶⁰ Cf. what St. Thomas has to say regarding the infidelity of the Jews despite the miracles performed by Christ: "Secunda quaestio est de veritate condicionali, utrum, scilicet, si Christus non fecisset in eis opera quae nemo alius fecit, immunes essent a peccato infidelitatis. Responsio. Dicendum: Si nos loquamur de quibuscumque miraculis, habent excusationem, si in eis facta non fuissent per Christum. Nullus enim potest ad Christum venire per fidem nisi tractus; supra vi, 44: Nemo potest venire ad me nisi Pater qui misit me, traxerit eum. . . . Unde si nullus esset qui eos traxisset ad fidem, excusabiles essent de infidelitate. Sed est attendendum, quod Christus attraxit verbo, signis visibilibus et invisibilibus, scilicet movendo et instigando interius corda" (*In Evangelium S. Joannis Commentaria*, cap. XV, lect. 5).

⁶¹ We must remember that today, as well as in the first centuries of the Church, there still exist the *modus ordinarius et extraordinarius ad salutem*; cf. L. Caperan, *Le problème du salut des infidèles* (Toulouse, 1934), p. 110.

'I can't understand,' said Cobbett, 'that a man who has studied his theology doesn't realise the difference between conviction and conversion.'⁶²

I realize that all this brings up the question of the axiom, "Facienti quod est in se, Deus non denegat gratiam." But I also know that when that question is introduced, we become involved in further problems that must be discussed. If the grace is given, when will it be given? Is there any difference between the grace necessary for a non-Catholic living a supernatural life outside the visible unity of Catholic Church, and one who is not living a supernatural life? Does the one living a supernatural life need merely a medicinal grace to enter the Church? etc.

I am proposing these questions, not to attempt to give my answer or the answer of anyone else to them, interesting though the questions in themselves may be. My purpose is to show that these questions, which are foreign to scientific apologetics, are bound to come up if we begin our treatise with the notion of a man *in via ad fidem*, instead of a man with *fides catholica iam possessa*. I shall add one more, taken from the *Apologétique du signe* of Fr. Masure. He cites the incident in the life of Claudel when, at the age of eighteen, having nothing better to do, he entered Notre Dame Cathedral while Vespers were being sung:

Et c'est alors que se produisit l'événement qui domine toute ma vie. En un instant, mon coeur fut touché et je crus. Je crus d'une telle force d'adhésion, d'un tel soulèvement de tout mon être, d'une conviction si puissante, d'une telle certitude ne laissant place à aucune espèce de doute, que, depuis, tous les livres, tous les raisonnements, tous les hasards d'une vie agitée, n'ont pu ébranler ma foi ni, à vrai dire, la toucher.⁶³

I quote this from Fr. Masure, not that I agree with his approach to apologetics, but rather to indicate that this *processus ad fidem*, strange as it seems, is only one of a thousand different approaches to the faith. Were we to quote from G. Schnepf's article, "Who are the Converts?"⁶⁴ or from books like *Why I Am and Why I Am Not a Catholic*, or *Conver-*

⁶² *Conversions to the Catholic Church*, A Symposium (London, 1933), p. 79.

⁶³ E. Masure, "L'Apologétique du signe," *Revue apologétique*, LVIII (1934), 650.

⁶⁴ G. Schnepf, "Who Are the Converts?" *Ecclesiastical Review*, CVIII (1943), pp. 39-46.

sions to the Catholic Church,⁶⁵ we would have to come to Belloc's conclusion that "when you have predicated of one what emotion or reasoning process brought him into the fold and you attempt to apply your predicate exactly to another you will find a misfit."⁶⁶ And yet, it seems to me, that question, intricate though it is, would have to be considered if we were treating of a man *in via ad fidem* in scientific apologetics. Any adequate solution for it presupposes, if not the complete course in theology, at least the treatise on grace.

Such difficulties, to my mind, are eliminated if we adopt the approach to faith which is found in the Vatican Council, namely of considering a man with *fides catholica iam possessa*, and proving not only that his faith is consonant with reason, but also that the obligation which he has to believe is an obligation which can be proved not only to a person who has the eyes of faith, but to anyone who exercises the use of reason; in other words, if we give a rational foundation to the dogma from the Vatican Council which reads: "Porro fide divina et catholica ea omnia credenda sunt, quae. . . magisterio tamquam divinitus revelata credenda proponuntur" (*DB*, 1792).

A DIFFICULTY

We might ask, if this paragraph from the Vatican Council is so pertinent to the treatise, why is it that the earlier theologians did not discover its value in apologetics? I cannot answer that question with any degree of assurance. Perhaps it was because of the circumstances under which it was introduced in the Council. As we have seen, Bishop Senestrey did not have the *finis* of apologetics in mind when he made his proposal. He was intent on rejecting the contention of those who wanted to restrict the material object of Catholic faith. Perhaps it was because this was the prime intention of the paragraph that the theologians did not realize its possibilities for the treatise. Or again, perhaps the reason can be found in the fact that some theologians have been so intent on considering in apologetics the rational foundation of the whole body of Catholic truth, that they did not appreciate the fact

⁶⁵ H. Belloc, and Others, *Why I Am and Why I Am Not a Convert* (New York, 1930).

⁶⁶ H. Belloc, Editor's Note in G. K. Chesterton's *The Catholic Church and Conversion* (New York, 1926), p. 7.

that this dogma was, in the logical order, more fundamental than all other propositions in that body of Catholic truth. Or lastly, perhaps it was because the distinction between practical and scientific apologetics has not been sufficiently stressed in all that has been written on the subject during the last forty years. Whatever the reason may be, the fact remains that its proposal by Fr. Cotter constitutes a definite contribution to the treatise.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, let us sum up briefly the advantages of using the rational proof of *DB*, 1792, as the *finis* for apologetics.

1) It offers to apologetics a definite dogma to be proved from reason. Once it is proved from reason, it shows why all the other dogmas of the faith have credibility and credendity. (2) Because it offers to apologetics a dogma which must be proved, it is in perfect accord with the apologetic method in general, which takes *id quod est probandum* from the magisterium. (3) It avoids any misconception of the purpose of scientific apologetics. With this dogma as the *finis* of the treatise, there can be no question of producing a practical recipe for convert work; there are no deep difficulties about the process to faith, i.e., whether the *judicium credibilitatis* should be supernatural as well as natural, or whether there is an *objectum formale supernaturale* for faith, etc. (all of which are dogmatic questions and belong to the field of dogma). There is only one question, and that is the rational justification of the obligation of a Catholic to accept whatever is proposed by the *magisterium* of the Catholic Church as revealed and binding on him as a Catholic. (4) Finally it is the approach to the question of faith which is found in the Vatican Council.