With this document, modeled on Pope Pius IX’s Syllabus, the Supreme Pontiff condemned the major errors of the Modernists. Each of the sixty-five statements is a condemned proposition. No faithful Catholic may hold these beliefs; yet today they are rampant within the Church. Here is just a brief overview and sampling:

#1 - #19: On the interpretation of the Sacred Scriptures
#20 - #26: On Revelation, Dogma, and Faith
#27 - #38: On the Person of Jesus Christ - divinity, knowledge, resurrection, mission
#39 - #51: On the Seven Sacraments
#52 - #57: On the Church - origins and authority
#58 - #62: On Doctrine
#63 - #65: On modernization

9. They display excessive simplicity or ignorance who believe that God is really the author of the Sacred Scriptures.

11. Divine inspiration does not extend to all of Sacred Scripture so that it renders its parts, each and every one, free from every error.

35. Christ did not always possess the consciousness of His Messianic dignity.

37. In the beginning, faith in the Resurrection of Christ was not so much in the fact itself of the Resurrection as in the immortal life of Christ with God.

41. The Sacraments are intended merely to recall to man’s mind the ever-beneficent presence of the Creator.

49. When the Christian supper gradually assumed the nature of a liturgical action, those who customarily presided over the supper acquired the sacerdotal character.

53. The organic constitution of the Church is not immutable. Like human society, Christian society is subject to perpetual evolution.

57. The Church has shown that she is hostile to the progress of the natural and theological sciences.

58. Truth is no more immutable than man himself, since it evolved with him, in him, and through him.

64. Scientific progress demands that the concepts of Christian doctrine ... be re-adjusted.

65. Modern Catholicism can be reconciled with true science only if it is transformed into a non-dogmatic Christianity, that is to say, into a broad and liberal Protestantism.
This document is Pope St. Pius X’s *magnum opus* against the greatest heresy that has ever infected the Catholic Church. In it he explains the heresy of modernism more exactly than the heretics themselves. In fact, modernist teachers have encouraged their pupils to read this document in order to grasp the principles of modernism. It can be a challenging document, precisely because the modernists thrive by concealing themselves in ambiguity and then claiming they are misunderstood. Hence, it was necessary for Pope Pius X to fully expose their false doctrine, condemn it, and enact strong measures to prevent it from infiltrating and overtaking the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

1. Duty of the Apostolic See

- A primary duty of the Pope, entrusted directly by Christ, is to “Feed the Flock” (cf. Jn 21:15-17); i.e. to guard the Deposit of Faith with the greatest vigilance.
- The enemies of Christ - of His Cross - are increasing and using novelties and deceit to subvert and destroy the Church (the Kingdom of Christ).
- Given the pope’s most solemn duty, he may not keep silence; else, he would be negligent in the duties of his most sacred office.

Comments:

Clearly, at the turn of the century (19th-20th), Satan is hard at work to destroy the Church and take Christ down from His Cross. He uses pride, false knowledge, deceit, presents evil as good, and perverts true doctrine. Thus the flock is fed poison and dies the eternal death. It is important to note that the three scriptural quotations listed by the Pope all refer to the spreading of false doctrine and carry apocalyptic overtones. Most importantly, notice the tremendous emphasis the Pope places on guarding and preserving the Deposit of Faith as a most solemn and sacred duty entrusted directly to the Pope by Christ (the pope is not called to be an *innovator*). Jesus entrusted St. Peter, and his successors, precisely in the context of (1) repentance as a remedy for Peter’s betrayal and (2) as proof of Peter’s love for Jesus (and the flock). In other words, the Pope must defend true doctrine in order to love Jesus (love of God and man) and for redemption (doing reparation for sin).

2. Necessity of Immediate Action

- The ‘Partisans of Error’ are not only the open enemies of the Church, but are within the very bosom of the Church (priests, laity). It is imperative to act without delay.

They have a false zeal and lack solid philosophy and theology. They are imbued with the poisonous teachings of the Church’s enemies and full of pride. They fancy themselves ‘reformers’ of the Church, yet audaciously attack our Lord, stripping Him of his divinity.
Note their parallels to the Protestant Revolutionaries (I will never use the word ‘reformers’). The Pope uses such strong language because he knows that eternal salvation hangs in the balance.

3. Characteristics of the Modernists

† They are the most pernicious of all the Church’s adversaries. This danger is present in the very veins of the Church, seeking to destroy her very root, i.e. the Faith.

There is no part of the Catholic truth which they leave uncorrupted. They are two-faced (Catholic and rationalist), yet tend to have a reputation of high morality. They disdain all authority and are full of pride, while claiming to love truth. They are crafty, deceitful, obstinate, and full of audacity.

† They present their doctrines without order and systematic arrangement. In reality, their teachings are interconnected and quite fixed towards evil results.

They have a strong aversion to the scholastic method (logical, clear and systematic). They thrive in ambiguity. Therefore the Pope will expose all their doctrine and thus unmask them.

† The Modernist assumes a manifold personality: (1) philosopher, (2) believer, (3) theologian, (4) historian, (5) critic, (6) apologist and (7) reformer.

4. The Modernist as a Philosopher

The modernist’s philosophizing is more aptly termed folly!

♦ Theℳ’s foundation is agnosticism.

→ Human reason is confined to the realm of phenomena (things that can be detected by the senses and just as the senses detect them).

→ Human reason may not overstep these limits. [This is inconsistent, since reason itself is not a phenomena.]

♦ History and science therefore can’t know/say anything about God. Consequences:

→ God’s existence can not be demonstrated by natural reason.

→ They destroy natural theology and external Revelation. [This violates teachings of Vatican I. It is anti-Incarnational and anti-Sacramental. More akin to Iconoclasm and Protestantism, but certainly not Catholic.]

♦ From agnosticism (can’t know about God), the ℳ makes the leap to scientific and historical atheism (God is absent from science and history).

→ Only phenomena can be the proper object of history and science. [This leap is unexplainable and irrational. While they give theoretical lip service to ignorance of God’s activity, in actual consequence, they positively deny God’s activity.]

♦ Agnosticism is the negative side of the ℳ’s philosophical system (that which we do not know) while Vital Immanence is the positive side (that which we do know).
Religion does exist, but since it is unexplainable from that which is outside man, its cause (source) must be found within man. Hence, the $M$ develops the theory of religious immanence.

- Man has a ‘need’ or impulse, which causes a movement of the heart, called a sense.
- Faith is this interior sense which originates in a need for the divine.
- This need (which is only experienced in favorable circumstances) is latent, lying hidden in the subconscious.

[Notice how their concept of Faith is purely subjective, ambiguous, individual and changeable.]

The boundaries of science and history are the external visible world (phenomena) and the conscious internal world. For the $M$, These are then the limits of human reason. Beyond these boundaries lies that which is unknowable: either beyond the visible world of nature or hidden in man’s subconscious.

The $M$’s concept of the divine reality:

- It is both the cause and object of the interior religious sense, i.e. Faith.
- Yet the divine reality is also possessed within the religious sense.
- This is the modernist explanation of how faith unites man to God and is the beginning of all religion.

[Notice how God is wholly ‘within man’ which means God’s union with man is simply man’s union with himself.]

The $M$ not only locates faith within this religious sense, but also revelation.

- Revelation is simply the result of those times when man becomes conscious of his subconscious religious sense.

[Notice, that all revelation must come from within man himself. Man is the source of revelation.]

- Thus, every religion is natural (conscious awareness) and supernatural (subconscious religious sense of the divine reality)

- For the $M$, Consciousness = Revelation.

- Thus, anything having to do with faith (or religion), must submit to the individual’s religious consciousness, even the supreme authority of the Church.

[Herein lie all sorts of errors: religious indifference, my ‘personal beliefs’ about God are my own, no one can dictate morality to me, dogma is unimportant, god is this way for me but that way for you, god is within me and I just need to find the inner balance & harmony to be at peace with myself and one with all creation.]

The $M$’s concept of the unknowable:

- It presents itself to the religious sense in conjunction with phenomena which seem to exceed the limits of science and history.

- Like a magnet, faith is attracted to the unknowable.
Faith seizes the whole (phenomena and unknowable), and permeates the whole (phenomena and unknowable) with its own life. This results in:

➢ A kind of **transfiguration**: The phenomena are elevated above their true conditions and clothed in the divine character which faith bestows upon them.

➢ A kind of **disfiguration**: The phenomena are given characteristics they do not possess. In particular this takes place when they are in antiquity, removed in time and place from the present.

♦ The **ℳ’s method of historical criticism**:  
   ➢ It is founded upon their three laws of  
      (1) agnosticism, (2) transfiguration and (3) disfiguration.

   ➢ Pius X demonstrates how the **ℳ** applies these principles to Jesus (Paragraph 9).

   [Notice all the ambiguity. How are the phenomena united to the unknowable? How do the phenomena seem to exceed the limits of history and science? How does faith permeate these with its own ‘life’?]

♦ The **ℳ’s concept of the religious sense**:  
   ➢ It is the germ (seed) that explains all religion.

   ➢ At first, it is rudimentary and formless, but under the mysterious process of vital immanence, it gradually matures with the progress of human life, and takes on a more definite form. The same spontaneous process and the circumstances of life always continue to refine it

   ➢ All religions develop this way, including the Catholic religion.

      ➢ For Catholicism, the process of vital immanence simply originated in the consciousness of Jesus. He was a man like all others with a special sensitivity and insight to his religious sense.

      ➢ The Catholic religion therefore emanated spontaneously from Christ and his subsequent followers.

   [Note how their false doctrines are intimately linked to the erroneous theory of evolution. They go so far as to fall into the sacrilege of saying that Jesus Christ is just a man. Previous heresies saw man thinking he deserved the supernatural; now, in this heresy, the supernatural is considered to be a product of man and thus beneath him.]

   And by these mad ravings they boast they can reform the Church!  
   Nothing could be more destructive to the whole supernatural order!

♦ The **ℳ’s view of the role of the human intellect**:  
   ➢ The religious sense is very confused and indistinct, hardly perceived by the believer.

   ➢ The **intellect** casts light on it, reflecting and analyzing.

   ➢ It generates (1) mental pictures, then expresses them in (2) words (like a painter restoring a blurred picture). The first concepts are (3) simple statements (spontaneous &
Further reflection & elaboration leads to (4) secondary propositions which are more precise & distinct. With approval from the group authority, they become (5) dogma. [It is the human intellect that determines all concepts about religion. There is no need for obedience to God. No acceptance of God or of reality! Bottom line is that dogma is a product of the human intellect, not God’s revelation, and therefore man is its master. Dogma can change and can not be terribly important.]

♦ The ℳ’s understanding of dogma:
- Religious formulas (dogmas) are simply a means (instrument) for a believer to give an account of his faith.
- They are inadequate expressions (symbols) of the interior religious sense. They are adapted in order to express man’s religious sense.
- It is impossible for them to contain absolute truth.
- The religious sense has an infinite with of aspects and depending on varying conditions, man may feel the inner need to (imperfectly) express one aspect over another.
- Dogma is subject to all these vicissitudes and thus liable to change.

[Despite all their fancy sounding words, the common man sees through all this talk and states the obvious: the modernist tells me that dogma is at the same level as opinion. As Pius X writes: This immense structure of sophisms will ruin and wreck all religion.]

♦ Evolution of Dogma
- A basic principle of ℳ is that dogma can and ought to evolve. It can and must change.
- The religious formulas are not really religious but intellectual speculations.
- They have to be ‘living’ and live the life of the religious sense.
- In other words, the primitive formula must be approved by the heart (the religious sense) and so too the secondary formula. Once they lose their meaning, they must be changed and re-adapted to suit man’s religious sense.

[The modernists love to speak of ‘symbols’ of faith. Dialogue is important in order to explore the many and varied aspects of the religious sense. Dogmas are ever changing chameleons and God is ever elusive. If this is not building on shifting sand, what is? cf. Mt 7:26-27]
- ℳ criticizes the Church, claiming she has failed to distinguish between the surface meaning of dogma and its ‘real’ moral and religious meaning.
- ℳ claims the Church has ruined religion by tenaciously clinging to meaningless formulas no longer ‘living’. These formula no longer express man’s faith and religious sense. The formula are seen as oppressive; ℳ thinks they will be the death of religion.

[Because dogma is ever changing, it is very hard for the modernist to speak definitively. He destroys all sure foundations and finds solace in the unknowable. His only refuge is the ‘inner self’. Since faith is to be ‘lived,’ it must all boil down to social action (phenomena), morality (be a ‘good’ person), and/or new age mysticism (interior).]
5. The Modernist as a Believer

→ As a philosopher, the ℳ considers the divine reality to be in the heart of the believer (subjective existence). He ignores the question: “Does divine reality exist objectively?”

→ But as a believer, the ℳ is certain of God’s objective reality, How does he know this?

♦ His personal experience of God.

→ Those who do not believe, like a rationalist, are unwilling to experience or acknowledge the experience.

→ This personal experience is what truly makes one a Believer.

→ In this they are similar to the Protestants and pseudo-mystics.

→ Thus the ℳ ‘believer’ destroys the One True Religion.

→ All religions, even paganism or Islam must be considered as true because they are based on experiences and they do in fact exist.

→ They cannot assign falsity to any religion.

→ At best they can say: (1) In comparison to world religions, Catholicism has more truth because it is more vivid. (2) In comparison to Protestants, Catholicism or more fully deserves the name Christian because it corresponds better to the origins of Christianity.

→ For ℳ, to live (exist) is proof of truth. So any religion that exists and survives must be true. It not, it would not be ‘living’ and would have died out.

♦ The ℳ’s understanding of Tradition:

→ It the communication of an original experience by means of intellectual formulas.

→ They believe the intellectual formulas:

→ Stimulate the religious sense and renew the experience in believers

→ Awaken the religious sense and produce the initial experience in non-believers.

♦ The ℳ’s view of the relationship between Faith and Science (Reason):

→ Faith only deals with the unknowable. Science deals with the knowable phenomena. So faith and science are completely separate and exist in isolated spheres of each other.

→ Faith and science should not disagree because they share no common ground.

→ Problems arise when faith attempts to encroach into the realm of science.

→ Now faith necessarily involves phenomena at some level. The ℳ applies the triple laws of agnosticism, transfiguration, & disfiguration, knowing the phenomena are truly governed by the ℳ understanding of science.
Therefore, faith is really made subject to science and science remains above and independent of faith.

So, did Christ really perform miracles, resurrect, ascend into heaven?

As a philosopher, the modernist answers “no” because he only considers the historical reality.

As a believer, the modernist answers “yes” because he considers the life of Christ as *lived again* by and in ‘faith’.

♦ **The Modernists’ Method:**
  - The modernist sees no contradiction in these two answers.
  - He talks like a rationalist and then like a Catholic.
  - Any time he goes against Catholic teaching, he claims he does so on the basis of science and history.
  - If he is reprimanded, he claims his liberty is violated.
  - They purposefully disdain Catholic theology and introduce a *new theology* that supports the aberrations of philosophers.

6. The Modernist as a Theologian

- The ‑ theologian applies the ‑ philosophical principles to the ‑ believer:
  - *Philosopher:* The principle of faith is immanent in man.
  - *Believer:* The principle of faith is God.
  - *Theologian:* *Therefore God is immanent in man.***
  - *Philosopher:* The representations of the object of faith are merely symbolical.
  - *Believer:* The object of faith is God in himself.
  - *Theologian:* *The representations of the divine reality are merely symbolical.***

- The ‑ claims dogmas are not absolute; they conceal and reveal the divine reality. Since their only purpose is to unite the believer to the divine reality, the individual believer should rely on them only to the extent they are helpful to the believer.
  - [This is the justification for Cafeteria Catholicism.]
- A certain social respect ought to be given to the dogmas proposed by the Magisterium. Yet the current need not be subject to the previous Magisterium.
  - [This describes the neo-orthodox Catholic movement which is so prevalent in the Church today.]

♦ **The ‑’s concept of **Divine Permanence:**
  - The founder has a ‘permanence’ in the religion. Since religion lives (& evolves) through the religious sense and the process of vital immanence, it can be said to be ‘divine.’
  - Because the consciousness of each Christian is virtually included in the consciousness of Christ (like a plant in a seed), and each Christian lives the life of Christ (in faith), then when Christians established the Church and the sacraments (*in a purely human way*), it can still be said that their origin is ‘from’ Christ and ‘divine’.