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Selections from the Condemnation of 1277

Condemnation of 219 Propositions

Stephen, by divine permission unworthy servant of the church of Paris, sends greetings in the Son of the glorious Virgin to all those who will read this letter.

We have received frequent reports, inspired by zeal for the faith, on the part of important and serious persons to the effect that some students of the arts in Paris are exceeding the boundaries of their own faculty and are presuming to treat and discuss, as if they were debatable in the schools, certain obvious and loathsome errors, or rather *vanities and lying follies* [Ps. 39:5], which are contained in the roll joined to this letter. These students are not hearkening to the admonition of Gregory, "Let him who would speak wisely exercise great care, lest by his speech he disrupt the unity of his listeners," particularly when in support of the aforesaid errors they adduce pagan writings that – shame on their ignorance – they assert to be so convincing that they do not know how to answer them. So as not to appear to be asserting what they thus insinuate, however, they conceal their answers in such a way that, while wishing to avoid Scylla, they fall into Charybdis. For they say that these things are true according to philosophy but not according to the Catholic faith, as if there were two contrary truths and as if the truth of Sacred Scripture were contradicted by the truth in the sayings of the accursed pagans, of whom it is written, *I will destroy the wisdom of the wise* [I Cor. 1:19; cf. Isa. 29:14], inasmuch as true wisdom destroys false wisdom. Would that such students listen to the advice of the wise man when he says: *If you have understanding, answer your neighbor; but if not, let your hand be upon your mouth, lest you be surprised in an unskillful word and be confounded* [Ecclus. 5:14].

Lest, therefore, this unguarded speech lead simple people into error, we, having taken counsel with the doctors of Sacred Scripture and other prudent men, strictly forbid these and like things and totally condemn them. We excommunicate all those who shall have taught the said errors or any one of them, or shall have dared in any way to defend or uphold them, or even to listen to them, unless they choose to reveal themselves to us or to the chancery of Paris within seven days; in addition to which we shall proceed against them by inflicting such other penalties as the law requires according to the nature of the offense.

By this same sentence of ours we also condemn the book *De Amore*, or *De Deo Amoris*, which begins with the words, *Cogit me multum*, and so on, and ends with the words, *Cave, igitur, Galtere, amoris exercere mandata*, and so on, as well as the book of geomancy that begins with the words, *Existimaverunt Indi*, and so on, and ends with the words, *Ratiocinare ergo super eum invenies*, and so on. We likewise condemn the books, scrolls, and leaflets dealing with necromancy, or containing experiments in fortunetelling, invocations of devils or incantations endangering lives, or in which these and similar things evidently contrary to the orthodox faith and good morals are treated. We pronounce the sentence of excommunication against those who shall have taught the said scrolls, books, and leaflets, or listened to them, unless they reveal themselves to us or to the chancery of Paris within seven days in the manner described earlier in this letter; in addition to which we shall proceed to inflict such other penalties as the gravity of the offense demands.

Given in the year of the Lord 1276, on the Sunday on which *Laetare Jerusalem* is sung at the court of Paris.

1. That there is no more excellent state than to study philosophy.
2. That the only wise men in the world are the philosophers.

[. . .]

4. That one should not hold anything unless it is self-evident or can be manifested from self-evident principles.

5. That man should not be content with authority to have certitude about any question.

6. That there is no rationally disputable question that the philosopher ought not to dispute and determine, because reasons are derived from things. It belongs to philosophy under one or another of its parts to consider all things.

[. . .]

8. That our intellect by its own natural power can attain to a knowledge of the first cause.
– This does not sound well and is erroneous if what is meant is immediate knowledge.

9. That we can know God by His essence in this mortal life.

10. That nothing can be known about God except that He is, or His existence.

[. . .]

13. That God does not know things other than himself.

14. That God cannot know contingent beings immediately except through their particular and proximate causes.

15. That the first cause does not have science of future contingents. The first reason is that future contingents are not beings. The second is that future contingents are singulars, but God knows by means of an intellectual power, which cannot know singulars. Hence, if there were no senses, the intellect would perhaps not distinguish between Socrates and Plato, although it would distinguish between a man and an ass. The third reason is the relation of cause to effect; for the divine foreknowledge is a necessary cause of the things foreknown. The fourth reason is the relation of science to the known; for even though science is not the cause of the known, it is determined to one of two contradictories by that which is known; and this is true of divine science much more than of ours.

16. That the first cause is the most remote cause of all things. – This is erroneous if so understood as to mean that it is not the most proximate.

17. That what is impossible absolutely speaking cannot be brought about by God or by another agent. – This is erroneous if we mean when is impossible according to nature.

18. That what is self-determined, like God, either always acts or never acts; and that many things are eternal.

[. . .]

20. That God of necessity makes whatever comes immediately from Him. – This is erroneous whether we are speaking of the necessity of coercion, which destroys liberty, or of the necessity of immutability, which implies the inability to do otherwise.

[. . .]

22. That God cannot be the cause of a newly-made thing and cannot produce anything new.

23. That God cannot move anything irregularly, that is, in a manner other than that in which He does, because there is no diversity of will in Him.

24. That God is eternal in acting and moving, just as He is eternal in existing; otherwise He would be determined by some other thing that would be prior to Him.

25. That God has infinite power, not because He makes something out of nothing, but because He maintains infinite motion.

26. That God has infinite power in duration, not in action, since there is no such infinity except in an infinite body, if there were such a thing.

27A. That the first cause cannot make more than one world.

28. That from one first agent there cannot proceed a multiplicity of effects.

[. . .]

30. That the first cause cannot produce something other than itself, because every difference between maker and made is through matter.

[. . .]

33. That the immediate effect of the first being has to be one only and most like unto the first being.

34. That God is the necessary cause of the first intelligence, which cause being posited, the effect is also posited; and both are equal in duration.

[. . .]

38. That the intelligences, or separated substances, which they say are eternal, do not have an efficient cause properly speaking, but only metaphorically, in so far as they have a cause conserving them in existence; but they were not newlymade, because then they would be mutable.

39. That all the separated substances are coeternal with the first principle.

40. That everything that does not have matter is eternal, because that which was not made through a change in matter did not exist previously; therefore it is eternal.

[. . .]

42A.¹ That God cannot multiply individuals of the same species without matter.

43A. That God could not make several intelligences of the same species because intelligences do not have matter.

[. . .]

50A. That if there were any separated substance that did not move some body in this sensible world, it would not be included in the universe.

[. . .]

52A. That the separated substances, in so far as they have a single appetite, do not change in their operation.

53A. That an intelligence or an angel or a separated soul is nowhere.

54A. That the separated substances are nowhere according to their substance. – This is erroneous if so understood as to mean that substance is not in a place. If, however, it is so understood as to mean that substance is the reason for being in a place, it is true that they are nowhere according to their substance.

55A. That the separated substances are somewhere by their operation, and that they cannot move from one extreme to another or to the middle except in so far as they can will to operate either in the middle or in the extremes. – This is erroneous if so understood as to mean that without operation a substance is not in a place and that it does not pass from one place to another.

[. . .]

61. That since an intelligence is full of forms, it impresses these forms on matter by using the heavenly bodies as instruments.

[. . .]

63. That the higher intelligences impress things on the lower, just as one soul impresses things on another and even on a sensitive soul; and that through such an impression a spellbinder is able to cast a camel into a pitfall just by looking at it.

64. That God is the necessary cause of the motion of the higher bodies and of the union and separation occurring in the stars.

[. . .]

¹ Items numbered 'A' refer to the theses of Aquinas.

66. That God could not move the heaven in a straight line, the reason being that He would then leave a vacuum.

67. That the first principle cannot produce generable things immediately because they are new effects and a new effect requires an immediate cause that is capable of being otherwise.

68. That the first principle cannot be the cause of diverse products here below without the mediation of other causes, inasmuch as nothing that transforms, transforms in diverse ways without being itself transformed.

69. That God cannot produce the effect of a secondary cause without the secondary cause itself.

[. . .]

73. That the heavenly bodies are moved by an intrinsic principle which is the soul, and that they are moved by a soul and an appetitive power, like an animal. For just as an animal is moved by desiring, so also is the heaven.

[. . .]

76. That the intelligence moving the heaven influences the rational soul, just as the body of the heaven influences the human body.

[. . .]

79. That if the heaven stood still, fire would not burn flax because God would not exist.

80. That the reasoning of the Philosopher proving that the motion of the heaven is eternal is not sophistic, and that it is surprising that profound men do not perceive this.

[. . .]

82. That if in some humor by the power of the stars such a proportion could be achieved as is found in the seed of the parents, a man could be generated from that humor; and thus a man could be adequately generated from putrefaction.

83. That the world, although it was made from nothing, was not newly-made, and, although it passed from nonbeing to being, the nonbeing did not precede being in duration but only in nature.

84. That the world is eternal because that which has a nature by which it is able to exist for the whole future has a nature by which it was able to exist in the whole past.

85. That the world is eternal as regards all the species contained in it, and that time, motion, matter, agent, and receiver are eternal, because the world comes from the infinite power of God and it is impossible that there be something new in the effect without there being something new in the cause.

86. That eternity and time have no existence in reality but only in the mind.

87. That nothing is eternal from the standpoint of its end that is not eternal from the standpoint of its beginning.

[. . .]

89. That it is impossible to refute the arguments of the Philosopher concerning the eternity of the world unless we say that the will of the first being embraces incompatibles.

[. . .]

91. That there has already been an infinite number of revolutions of the heaven, which it is impossible for the created intellect but not for the first cause to comprehend.

92. That with all the heavenly bodies coming back to the same point after a period of thirty-six thousand years, the same effects as now exist will reappear.

[. . .]

96. That beings depart from the order of the first cause considered in itself, although not in relation to the other causes operating in the universe. – This is erroneous because the order of beings to the first cause is more essential and more inseparable than their order to the lower causes.

[. . .]

99. That there is more than one prime mover.

100. That, among the efficient causes, if the first cause were to cease to act, the secondary cause would not, as long as the secondary cause operates according to its own nature.

101. That no agent is in potency to one or the other of two things; on the contrary, it is determined.

102. That nothing happens by chance, but everything comes about by necessity, and that all the things that will exist in the future will exist by necessity, and those that will not exist are impossible, and that nothing occurs contingently if all causes are considered. – This is erroneous because the concurrence of causes is included in the definition of chance, as Boethius says in his book *On Consolation*.

[. . .]

110A. That forms are not divided except through matter. – This is erroneous unless one is speaking of forms educed from the potency of matter.

[. . .]

112. That the elements are eternal. They were nevertheless newly produced in the disposition that they now possess.

[. . .]

115A. That God could not make several numerically different souls.

116A. That individuals of the same species differ solely by the position of matter, like Socrates and Plato, and that since the human form existing in each is numerically the same, it is not surprising that the same being numerically is in different places.

117. That the intellect is numerically one for all, for although it may be separated from this or that body, it is not separated from every body.

118. That the agent intellect is a certain separated substance superior to the possible intellect, and that it is separated from the body according to its substance, power, and operation and is not the form of the human body.

[. . .]

122. That from the sensitive and intellectual parts of man there does not result a unity in essence, unless it be a unity such as that of an intelligence and a sphere, that is, a unity in operation.

123. That the intellect is not the form of the body, except in the manner in which a helmsman is the form of a ship, and that it is not an essential perfection of man.

[. . .]

126. That the intellect, which is man's ultimate perfection, is completely separated.

[. . .]

129. That the substance of the soul is eternal, and that the agent intellect and the possible intellect are eternal.

[. . .]

131. That the speculative intellect is simply eternal and incorruptible; with respect to this or that man, however, it is corrupted when the phantasms in him are corrupted.

[. . .]

133. That the soul is inseparable from the body, and that the soul is corrupted when the harmony of the body is corrupted.

[. . .]

135. That the separated soul is not alterable, according to philosophy, although according to the faith it is altered.

136. That the intellect can pass from body to body, in such a way that it is successively the mover of different bodies.

[. . .]

138. That there was no first man, nor will there be a last; indeed, the generation of man from man always was and always will be.

[. . .]

140. That the agent intellect is not united to our possible intellect, and that the possible intellect is not united to us substantially. And if it were united to us as a form, it would be inseparable.

141. That the possible intellect is nothing in act before it understands, because in the case of an intelligible nature, to be something in act is to be actually understanding.

[...]

143. That a man is said to understand to the same extent that the heaven is said to understand, or to live, or to move of itself, that is, because the agent performing these actions is united to him as mover to moved and not substantially.

[...]

146A. That the fact that we understand less perfectly or more perfectly comes from the passive intellect, which he says is a sensitive power. – This statement is erroneous because it asserts that there is a single intellect in all men or that all souls are equal.

147A. That it is improper to maintain that some intellects are more noble than others because this diversity has to come from the intelligences, since it cannot come from the bodies; and thus noble and ignoble souls would necessarily belong to different species, like the intelligences. – This is erroneous, for thus the soul of Christ would not be more noble than that of Judas.

[...]

150. That that which by its nature is not determined to being or nonbeing is not determined except by something that is necessary with respect to itself.

151. That the soul wills nothing unless it is moved by another. Hence the following proposition is false: the soul wills by itself. – This is erroneous if what is meant is that the soul is moved by another, namely, by something desirable or an object in such a way that the desirable thing or object is the whole reason for the movement of the will itself.

[...]

154. That our will is subject to the power of the heavenly bodies.

[...]

156. That the effects of the stars upon free choice are hidden.

157. That when two goods are proposed, the stronger moves more strongly. – This is erroneous unless one is speaking from the standpoint of the good that moves.

158. That in all his actions man follows his appetite and always the greater appetite. – This is erroneous if what is meant is the greater in moving power.

159. That the appetite is necessarily moved by a desirable object if all obstacles are removed. – This is erroneous in the case of the intellectual appetite.

160. That it is impossible for the will not to will when it is in the disposition in which it is natural for it to be moved and when that which by nature moves remains so disposed.

161. That in itself the will is undetermined to opposites, like matter, but it is determined by a desirable object as matter is determined by an agent.

162A. That the science of contraries alone is the cause for which the rational soul is in potency to opposites, and that a power that is simply one is not in potency to opposites except accidentally and by reason of something else.

163A. That the will necessarily pursues what is firmly held by reason, and that it cannot abstain from that which reason dictates. This necessitation, however, is not compulsion but the nature of the will.

[. . .]

165. That after a conclusion has been reached about something to be done, the will does not remain free, and that punishments are provided by law only for the correction of ignorance and in order that the correction may be a source of knowledge for others.

166. That if reason is rectified, the will is also rectified. – This is erroneous because contrary to Augustine's gloss on this verse from the Psalms: *My soul hath coveted to long*, and so on [Ps. 118:20], and because according to this, grace would not be necessary for the rectitude of the will but only science, which is the error of Pelagius.

167. That there can be no sin in the higher powers of the soul. And thus sin comes from passion and not from the will.

168. That a man acting from passion acts by compulsion.

169A. That as long as passion and particular science are present in act, the will cannot go against them.

[. . .]

172. That happiness is had in this life and not in another.

[. . .]

174. That after death man loses every good.

[. . .]

177. That raptures and visions are caused only by nature.

[. . .]

180. That the Christian law impedes learning.

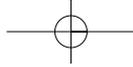
181. That there are fables and falsehoods in the Christian law just as in others.

182. That one does not know anything more by the fact that he knows theology.

183. That the teachings of the theologian are based on fables.

[. . .]

188. That it is not true that something comes from nothing or was made in a first creation.



189. That creation is not possible, even though the contrary must be held according to the faith.

[...]

191. That the natural philosopher has to deny absolutely the newness of the world because he bases himself on natural causes and natural reasons, whereas the faithful can deny the eternity of the world because he bases himself on supernatural causes.

[...]

200. That no other virtues are possible except the acquired or the innate.

[...]

216. That a philosopher must not concede the resurrection to come, because it cannot be investigated by reason. – This is erroneous because even a philosopher must *bring his mind into captivity to the obedience of Christ* [cf. II Cor. 10:5].

[...]

