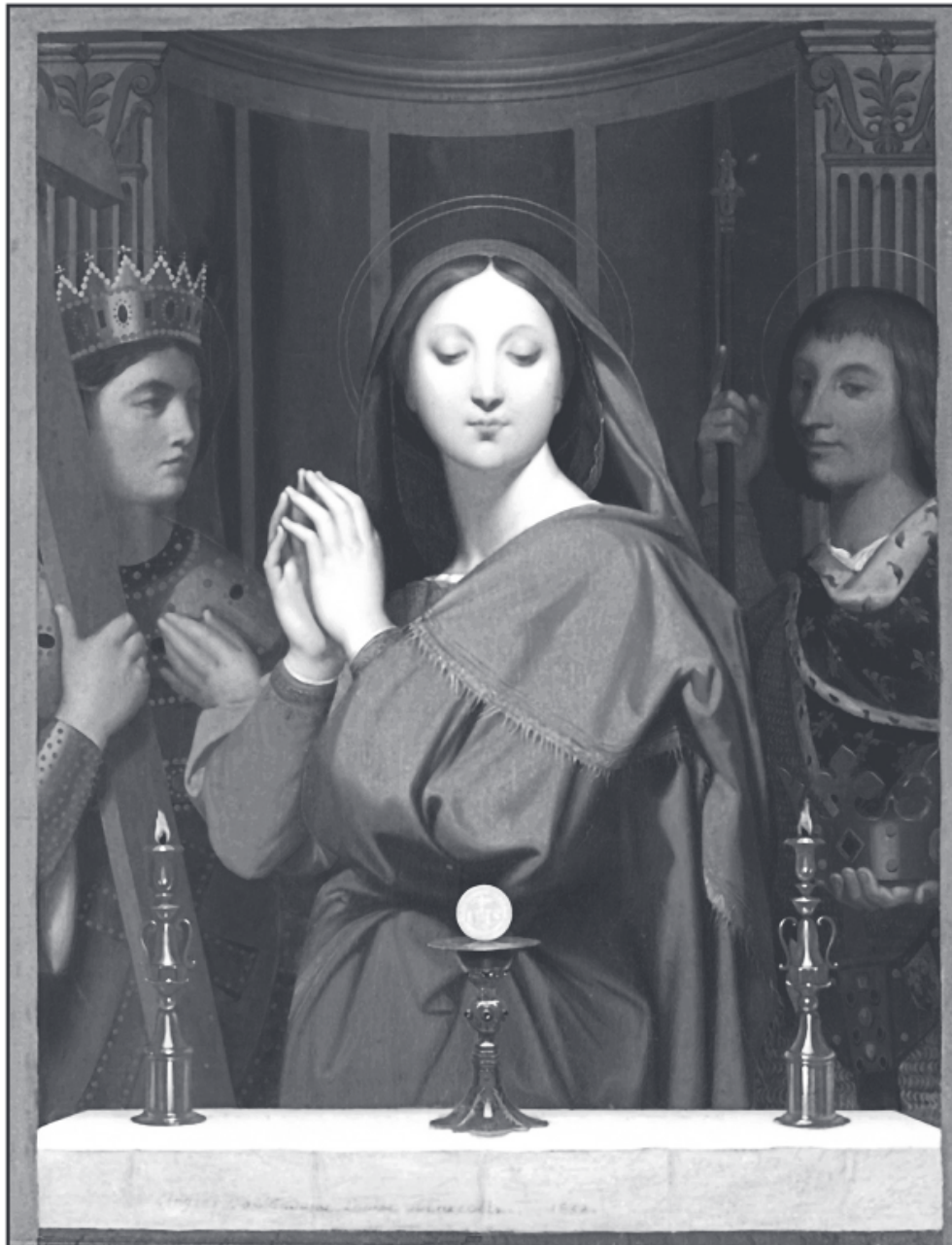


Bread of Life



The Virgin Adoring the Host
by Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres

Bread of Life

Father Leonard Feeney, M.I.C.M.

Slaves of the Immaculate Heart of Mary



Loreto Publications
Fitzwilliam, NH 03447
2018 A.D.

In obedience to the decrees of Pope Urban VIII and other pontiffs, we declare that we submit the entire contents of this book without reserve to the judgment of the Apostolic See of the Holy Roman Catholic Church.

First Published: 1952

by Saint Benedict Center, Cambridge, Massachusetts

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ISBN: 978-1-622-92133-1

Loreto Publications

P. O. Box 603

Fitzwilliam, NH 03447

603-239-6671

www.LoretoPubs.org

Layout and cover design by Michael Hamilton

Cover Images:

Front: *The Virgin Adoring the Host* by Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres

Back: *Communion cup encircled with a Garland of Fruit* by Jan Davidsz. de Heem

Printed and Bound in the United States of America

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Preface

by Brother André Marie, M.I.C.M.

To say that the book you are now reading is controversial would be an understatement. Now, controversy is not a measure of truth or falsity, of goodness or evil; it is only a measure of the reception of a thing. But in an ecclesiastical milieu infected with Modernism, Indifferentism, Liberalism, Americanism, and other toxic *-isms*, such a reception is inevitable in the case of a book like this, for it applies an astringent *contradicitur!* to all those diseases of modernity. And that is indeed good.

As I write, it is now over sixty-five years since the first publication of *Bread of Life*. It has, like its author, been a focal point of discussion and heavy criticism since then. As it is my privilege to preface this new edition, I ask the reader to permit me to explain my purposes in so doing.

As Prior of Saint Benedict Center in Richmond, New Hampshire, I am the superior of that community that was founded by Brother Francis Maluf, M.I.C.M., in 1989. Brother Francis was my beloved mentor, superior, and spiritual father. *Bread of Life* was, for him, a real treasure, his favorite chapter being "The Eucharist in Four Simple Mysteries." As *Bread of Life* is considered the moral and legal inheritance of all of Father Feeney's children, Saint Benedict Center, New Hampshire, retains the right to reprint the book. For the present edition, we have contracted with Loreto Publications to publish this part of our spiritual patrimony. I am grateful to my friend, Mr. Douglas Bersaw, Founder and President of Loreto Publications,

for agreeing to publish the book in the way I requested, which is to say, with the present front matter and appendix.

The foregoing outlines my “credentials” for writing this preface, modest as they are; I would now like to state my purpose in doing so. It has been urged that Father Feeney went too far in his defense of *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, and that in different ways, most of all, by denying the salvific efficacy of baptism of desire and baptism of blood. To those who deny the necessity of the Catholic faith for salvation, I have nothing to say, except to refer them to the appendix of this work. The same is true for those who deny the necessity of subjection to the Roman Pontiff. Here, in this introduction, it is my intention to address those who take issue with Father Feeney’s vigorous defense of the necessity of sacramental Baptism for salvation. I also wish to address some of those who have exaggerated Father Feeney’s own position, and who assert—contrary to the Council of Trent and all tradition—that justification is impossible without the actual reception of the sacrament. For it cannot be denied that there are, among those who seek to defend the necessity of the Church for salvation, some very “loose cannons,” who arrive at erroneous conclusions, and who do not represent Saint Benedict Center. In both of these matters, my intention is to explain to those interested—especially priests and theologians—how we ourselves view the matter.

To do so, I will expand upon the following summary paragraph:

Father Feeney was of the theological opinion that the sacrament of Baptism is provided by God’s providence for all the elect since promulgation of the New Covenant in Christ’s Blood. We Slaves of the Immaculate Heart of Mary do not conflate this theological opinion of our founder with Church dogma. We are aware of the common opinion of Catholic theologians on the subject of “baptism of desire,” summarized well by Saint Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa Theologiae* (III, Q. 68, A. 2), and do not rule this out as a theological possibility. We reject, however, the substantial broadening of the concept of baptism

of desire to include those who (A) do not have divine and Catholic faith (which is necessary for salvation—and even for baptism of desire to justify a person in the first place), or who (B) lack the will to be subject to the divine hierarchy established by Christ (the pope and bishops in communion with him). None of us—and I speak for the community at Saint Benedict Center in Richmond, New Hampshire, over which I preside as Prior—are going to say that a justified catechumen goes to hell because he did not get the sacrament. That would be an abomination, a monstrosity. We also consider it a waste of time to argue about what God would or would not do in difficult circumstances since no circumstance is difficult for Omnipotence.

The sacrament of Baptism has been declared to be necessary by the authority of the Councils of Vienne and Trent. The Council of Vienne: “Besides, one baptism which regenerates all who are baptized in Christ must be faithfully confessed by all just as ‘one God and one faith’ [Eph. 4:5], which celebrated in water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit we believe to be commonly the perfect remedy for salvation for adults as for children.”¹ The Council of Trent: “If anyone says that baptism is optional, that is, not necessary for salvation: let him be anathema.”²

Father Feeney held, as a matter of theological opinion, that those whose names are written in the Book of Life will die with the sacrament. That is to say, all of the elect who die in the Christian dispensation (since Pentecost) will depart this life having first received the sacrament of Baptism. In the words of Saint Augustine: “Perish the thought that a person predestined to eternal life could be allowed to end this life without the sacrament of the mediator.”³

¹ Denzinger-Hünemann (D.H.) 903 (the translation here is that of Roy Deferrari, Denz. 482).

² Session VII, Canon 5, D.H. 1618

³ *Contra Julianum* 5, 4, 14; cf. “Baptism of Desire: Its Origin and

Father Feeney, it ought to be mentioned, came to this position definitively only after the most draconian measures had already been taken against him by Archbishop Cushing and the Society of Jesus. From this we must conclude that these disciplinary actions against him were based on Father Feeney's firm stance on *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* simply considered. It is factually incorrect to say that Father was disciplined for his position on Baptism.⁴ Earlier publications of Saint Benedict Center professed the salvific efficacy of the analogous baptisms for those possessed of divine and Catholic faith. These include the articles, "Sentimental Theology," by Dr. Fakhri Maluf,⁵ which appeared in the September, 1947 issue of *From the Housetops*; and "Reply to a Liberal," by Raymond Karam, which appeared in the Spring, 1949 issue of that same journal. Both of these articles raised the ire of ecclesiastics against Father Feeney and Saint Benedict Center.

Among the reasons for holding the more "rigorous" position on the necessity of the sacrament are the following:

This position most closely conforms to Our Lord's words to Nicodemus in John 3:5, regardless of whether the term "the Kingdom of God" in that verse refers to the Church Militant or the Church Triumphant.

This position also conforms most closely to the teaching of

Abandonment in the Thought of Saint Augustine," by Brian Kelly online at Catholicism.org.

⁴ This also applies to the decree of excommunication issued on February 13, 1953. While that decree came out soon after *Bread of Life* was published, it did not mention the book, and in fact listed no doctrinal reasons at all, but instead the crime of "grave disobedience." The matter of this "excommunication" and the events leading to it are considered for twenty-one pages in *They Fought the Good Fight* by Brother Thomas Mary Sennott, M.I.C.M. In 1972, Pope Paul VI lifted the excommunication without asking for any repudiation of errors from Father Feeney.

⁵ Later known as Brother Francis, M.I.C.M.

the Councils of Vienne and Trent on the necessity of the sacrament as cited above.

Only those are part of the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, who have received the sacrament of Baptism—in addition, of course, to their possessing the supernaturally infused habit of divine and Catholic faith.⁶ Since the Church has manifestly, clearly, and repeatedly defined that there is no salvation outside herself, that is, outside Christ's Mystical Body, the reception of the sacrament is necessary for salvation.

Nobody may receive any other sacraments who has not been baptized. If a catechumen, for instance, were to attempt matrimony prior to his baptism, he would not contract it. Now, it seems a manifest incongruity that the Eucharist may not be received by any of the unbaptized if those persons can enter the Heavenly Banquet without it.

Although God did not have to do it this way, He chose to redeem man in an incarnational economy, having taken flesh of the most pure Virgin in order to save our fallen race by His atoning death on the Cross. This economy of salvation is admirably suited to the hylomorphic nature of man, who is by nature a composite of body and soul. Conforming to this composite nature of man are so many aspects of our Holy Religion—whether it be faith which comes by hearing, or good works carried out by the body at the command of the spiritual faculty of the will, or those highest acts that the Church on Earth performs, namely, her sacred liturgical rites, especially the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The sacraments are a major part of this hylomorphic economy. Baptism, while not the greatest of the sacraments, marks our entrance into the concorporeality that Christians have with Jesus Christ, a concorporeality more fully achieved in Eucharistic Communion and ultimately consummated in the permanent glorification of man's body and soul in the Beatific Vision after the resurrection of the body.

⁶ As per *Mystici Corporis*, No. 22.

Whereas those orthodox advocates of salvation via the non-sacramental baptisms of desire and blood maintain that a mishap (Saint Thomas' "ill chance") may prevent one from receiving the sacrament, it may be asserted that God's providence cannot be stopped by unforeseen circumstances, and that it is more perfect of Him to impart the sacrament of regeneration,—with its full panoply of supernatural concomitants, including incorporation into the Mystical Body and access to the Eucharistic Banquet—than not to do so. To borrow a phrase from the Saxon monk and disciple of Saint Anselm, Eadmer of Canterbury, we can put it this way: *Potuit, decuit, ergo fecit*.⁷

In the Church's traditional Good Friday Solemn Prayers (oration five) we pray especially that the catechumens will make it to sacramental Baptism, at which point they will "be found in Christ Jesus our Lord" and "be associated with the children of Your adoption":

Let us pray also for our Catechumens, that our Lord and God would open the ears of their hearts and the gate of mercy; that, having received, by the font of regeneration the remission of all their sins, they may be found in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Let us pray.

℣. Let us kneel. ℞. Arise.

Almighty and Eternal God, Who dost ever make Thy Church fruitful with new offspring: increase the faith and understanding of our Catechumens; that being born again in the font of Baptism, they may

⁷ "He could [do it], it was fitting [that He do it], therefore, He did [it]." This argument, first used by Eadmer (d. c. 1124) in his *De Conceptione sanctae Mariae*, was later employed by the Franciscan theologian, Blessed Duns Scotus (d. 1308). Both men used the four-word formula to argue in favor of the Immaculate Conception.

be associated with the children of Thine adoption.
Through our Lord, etc. Amen.⁸

The solicitude of the Church for her catechumens as expressed in her *lex orandi*, suggests that she would not have us presume that the unbaptized are in no particular danger if they remain so.

To the above may be added the arguments adduced by Brother Thomas Mary, M.I.C.M., in his “Doctrinal Summary” which is included as the appendix of this edition of *Bread of Life* (cf. the heading, “The Necessity of Baptism”).

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says that “The Church *does not know of any means* other than Baptism that assures entry into eternal beatitude; this is why she takes care not to neglect the mission she has received from the Lord to see that all who can be baptized are ‘reborn of water and the Spirit.’”⁹ It is clear in the context that the word “Baptism” is used univocally in reference to the sacrament. Now, in that same *Catechism*, in the following numbers,¹⁰ the sufficiency of baptisms of blood and desire are also taught, along with the assertion that “God has bound salvation to the sacrament of Baptism, but he himself is not bound by his sacraments.” Having pondered this passage for some years, I am left wondering if the authors of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* intended to draw a distinction based upon degrees of epistemological certitude, viz.: the Church may be aware of possible substitutes for the sacrament for those with faith and explicit desire for it, but she “*does not know of any means* other than [sacramental] Baptism that *assures* entry into eternal beatitude,” so she still insists on the necessity of the sacrament.

The Church has never condemned the position that all the elect of the New Testament will die having received the

⁸ Translation from *The Small Roman Missal*, The Regina Press, New York, 1938.

⁹ CCC 1257, emphasis mine.

¹⁰ CCC 1258, 1259.

sacrament of Baptism, but she has vigorously defended the necessity of the sacrament of Baptism, as at Trent and Vienne, earlier cited. Neither has the Church ever infallibly defined that any particular person, dying since Pentecost, was saved without the sacrament of Baptism.

Nobody who dies justified, that is, in the state of grace, is lost, nor can he be. Father Feeney clearly states as much in this very book, *Bread of Life*: “We may or may not persevere in justification, but if we *do* persevere, we will attain salvation—at the hour of our death.”¹¹ Indeed, it is the teaching of the Church, infallibly defined by the Council of Trent in these words: “For Jesus Christ himself continuously infuses strength into the justified, as the head into the members [*cf. Eph 4:15*] and the vine into the branches [*cf. Jn 15:5*]; this strength always precedes, accompanies, and follows their good works, which, without it, could in no way be pleasing to God and meritorious [*can. 2*]. Therefore, we must believe that nothing further is wanting to the justified for them to be regarded as having entirely fulfilled the divine law in their present condition by the works they have done in the sight of God; they can also be regarded as having truly merited eternal life, which they will obtain in due time, provided they die in the state of grace....”¹²

¹¹ Pg. 31.

¹² Decree on Justification, XVI, D.H. 1546. Some hold that this passage definitively proves Father Feeney a heretic because he implicitly denied that “nothing further is wanting” to the justified but non-baptized person. But this is nonsense. The passage does not even address the question of an unbaptized catechumen or analogous person. Besides this, earlier in the same decree (D.H. 1529), the sacrament of Baptism is mentioned as the instrumental cause of justification, and the sacrament of penance (D.H. 1542) is mentioned as the “second plank,” after shipwreck. While this does not definitively mean that the Decree of Justification *always* refers to a baptized person when discussing the justified, neither does it rule out the justified person under discussion being baptized. In other

Neither can any true martyr for the Catholic faith possibly be damned.

The position of Saint Thomas Aquinas and many other Doctors of the Church and orthodox theologians concerning the salvation of one who dies without the sacrament of Baptism but in the state of grace (having divine and Catholic faith working by charity) is not heresy; it is orthodox.¹³ It is a position that the Church has never censured in any way, and we are well aware that Father Feeney's theological opinion in the matter—along with any arguments that may be adduced in its favor—does not authoritatively contradict it.

Other theologians, who are not orthodox, have freed the theological construct of baptism of desire from the narrow limits placed on it by the Fathers and Scholastics and have used it as a means of dissolving the necessity for salvation of divine and Catholic faith, of subjection to the divinely constituted hierarchy of the Church, or even, in the case of the infamous Karl Rahner, of *belief in the existence of God*. That highly influential theologian and Vatican II *peritus* held that atheists could be saved (*qua* atheists), as “anonymous Christians.” At the present time—and this is very important to note—there are self-professed, “orthodox,” “conservative” and even “traditionalist” Catholics whose notion of baptism of desire is *much* closer to Rahner's than to that of Saint Thomas, for they will, contrary to the Angelic Doctor's teaching, speak of unbelievers of all sorts being saved by virtue of baptism of desire.¹⁴ Rahner himself expressed surprise that his optimism

words, in the question at hand, the decree is inconclusive.

¹³ The argument that Saint Thomas wrote what he did before Trent “settled the issue” in Father Feeney's favor (which it did not) is easily countered by enumerating those post-Tridentine Doctors—Saints Robert Bellarmine, Peter Canisius, Alphonsus de Liguori—who explicitly agreed with Saint Thomas in the matter.

¹⁴ I use the term “unbeliever” here strictly as Saint Thomas employs it

for the salvation of non-Catholics met with little resistance by the more conservative fathers of Vatican II. He also claimed that his “anonymous Christian” was a further development of the older idea of baptism of desire—showing a radically dogmatic sort of progressivism that presses doctrine ever forward in the direction of greater liberalism, indifferentism, and latitudinarianism.¹⁵ In our day, we are witnessing the same false progressivism in moral theology, in which discipline the erroneous notions of the autonomy of conscience, of “gradualism,” of “accompaniment,” and other neologisms are being used to justify giving Holy Communion to impenitent serial adulterers, contrary to perennial Catholic doctrine and praxis—and indeed, of the Divine Positive Law itself.

Should the Magisterium of the Catholic Church ever infallibly define that the analogous baptisms of desire and blood are—along with divine and Catholic faith working by charity, and sanctifying grace—sufficient for salvation, the true disciples of Father Feeney would accept this authoritative teaching placidly and unhesitatingly. This is something I was taught by Brother Francis himself, who showed great patience whenever I importuned him with my numerous questions on the issue.

But the Church’s Magisterium has not issued such a definition.

Some who have taken up the cause of *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* have attempted to prove that justification is impossible to the non-baptized. This position is nothing Father Feeney ever taught, nor is it anything that we at Saint Benedict Center hold; far from it. It is a manifest absurdity to hold that Old Testament saints (e.g., Abraham) could be justified without sacramental Baptism while those living in the grace of the New Testament

in *ST* II-IIae, to include heretics as well as Jews and pagans, which latter term would include Muslims in the medieval theological lexicon.

¹⁵ Liberals perpetuate a lie when they call this a legitimate “development of doctrine.”

(e.g., Cornelius¹⁶) cannot be justified prior to receiving the sacrament. People whose zeal far outpaces their knowledge have muddied the waters of this discussion by interpreting the Latin of the Council of Trent to mean the very opposite of what it clearly teaches, namely, that one with faith that works by charity can be justified in anticipation of receiving the sacrament.

Is it possible that Father Feeney “went too far” on the issue of Baptism, having “exaggerated” it in his zeal to defend the necessity of the Catholic Church for salvation? The 1974 edition of *Bread of Life* that I am using as a reference has these words atop the copyright page amid the book’s front matter: “In obedience to the decrees of Pope Urban VIII and other pontiffs, we declare that we submit the entire contents of this book without reserve to the judgment of the Apostolic See of the Holy Roman Catholic Church.” On the back cover of the same volume are these words: “Leonard Feeney, M.I.C.M. (1897-1978). His one concern: *the salvation of souls*. His one desire: *a Catholic America*. His one crusade: *the defense of the Faith against the heresies and sophistries of our time*. And in all his teachings, he submitted, without reserve, to the ultimate judgment of the Infallible Magisterium of the Living Church.”¹⁷ Given these express dispositions of Father Feeney himself, we must answer the question in the affirmative. If the great Fathers and Doctors of the Church could be wrong about their theological opinions—and could admit the possibility—so could Father Feeney.

Credit ought to be given to Father Feeney for fighting to defend the incarnational, ecclesiastical, and sacramental economy of salvation.¹⁸ Saint Thomas and all other orthodox Catholic

¹⁶ Cf. Acts 10.

¹⁷ Bold and italics as in original.

¹⁸ It bears mention that the Archbishop who condemned Father Feeney so strongly, Richard (later, Cardinal) Cushing, is on record for publicly and unqualifiedly denying the necessity of the Catholic Church and the Catholic faith for salvation.

divines firmly rooted the baptisms of desire and blood not only in the supernatural *habitus* of faith, but also in the sacrament of Baptism, whereas the progressivist ideas of later theologians have rendered the sacraments truly and utterly superfluous. But the sacraments are *not* superfluous, as per the teachings of Trent: “If anyone says that the sacraments of the New Law are not necessary for salvation, but that they are superfluous; and that without the sacraments or the desire for them men obtain from God the grace of justification through faith alone (although it is true that not all the sacraments are necessary for each person), let him be anathema.”¹⁹

Moreover, the very *concept* of a catechumen, whom the orthodox adherents of the baptisms of desire and blood hold to be a candidate for these means of salvation, connotes a person *on the way to Baptism*—both by his own explicit intention and that of the Church—for that was the very purpose of the catechuminate, preparing a person for Baptism. Even here, salvation is rooted firmly in the sacramental system, if not to the actual reception of a sacrament.

The concept of baptism of desire, so clearly and explicitly attached to the sacramental economy in the patristic and medieval eras and beyond, became separated from it in very modern theology. This was presented, as such mischief often is, as a “development of doctrine,” but this is hardly a homogeneous development as per the requisites of Saint Vincent of Lerins. As a result, there now exist Karl Rahner’s theory of “the Anonymous Christian” and similar theses, which are not only removed from the sacramental economy, but even from divine and Catholic faith as it is described as necessary for salvation by the Council of Vatican I.²⁰ Such errors are due largely to a novel Kantian epistemology that vitiates the traditional notion of faith as a divinely infused habit of the intellect

¹⁹ Canon IV, On the Sacraments in General, D.H. 1604.

²⁰ *Dei Filius*, Chap. 3, D.H. 3011-3012.

by which the believer assents, under the command of the will, to the objective truths of divine revelation. Another source of this error is the tendency of such authors as Rahner and also Henri de Lubac to make grace implicit in nature, which logically renders superfluous both faith and the sacraments. And it should go without saying, of course, that Hans Urs von Balthasar's revival of the *apocatastasis*—an empty Hell, universal salvation—renders the entire question meaningless.

Once each man has died, when all opportunities for conversion and merit have ceased, he will appear before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ, the *Judex Justus*, for his particular judgment. While that person may have been an object of our missionary concern during his life, now that he has departed this vale of tears, we are utterly without qualification to make a judgment on his eternal whereabouts. Our own reasonings on the matter, however informed we think them to be, must leave place for the mysterious operations of God's grace. Indeed, there will probably be many whose salvation did not seem to us to be likely, but whose glory in beatitude will be a cause for our own exultation of God's mercy and providence in eternity. Father Feeney was fond of saying that in Heaven there will be many surprises, but none of them will contradict what we know by faith in this life. Because of this nescience we have about the everlasting destiny of our fellow men—except for the canonized saints and those, like Judas, whose damnation is *ex clara scriptura*—we commend the dead to God without pontificating on the matter of where they have gone. But to omit to tell our fellow man how to be saved, with clarity and urgency as well as charity, is sinful, for the frightful prospect of everlasting damnation is real, as we are assured by the Bible, by sound theology, by the admonitions of the saints, and the emphatic testimony of approved private revelations, especially those of Fatima, where Our Lady showed innocent little children a frightful vision of Hell.²¹

²¹ In his book, *The Secret of Fatima, Fact and Legend* (p. 106), Father

Practically speaking, it is our wish as Catholic missionaries to cooperate with the Holy Ghost in helping unbelievers to desire the sacrament of Baptism by first assenting to all the truths of the Catholic faith with their intellects and then seeking with their wills to enter the true Church that Jesus Christ established for the salvation of man. In this way, we want to spread *the desire for Baptism* far and wide, but we hope this desire terminates in the actual reception of the sacrament, which we entrust to the Providence of the Holy Trinity. We invite all priests and lay faithful to join us in praying and working for the conversion of all non-Catholics to the true Church of Jesus Christ, which is alone the Catholic Church—and outside of which no one at all is saved.

Joaquin Maria Alonso, C.M.F., relates an interview that Father Riccardo Lombardi, S.J., had with Sister Lucy in 1954: "On February 7, 1954 Father Lombardi, after much insistence, but at an inopportune time for Sister Lucia, managed to speak with her in the parlor of the Carmelite convent in Coimbra. He wrote later of the impression she made on him:"

Her face was simple, her voice clear and without the slightest trace of the artificiality which can be so easily assumed in certain situations. She was not well; in fact, she was running a temperature. I questioned her:

"Tell me if the Better World Movement (which was already known to her) is the Church's response to the words of Our Lady to you."

"Father," she replied, "there is certainly need of this great renewal. Without it, and considering the present state of humanity, only a limited part of the human race will be saved."

"Do you really believe that many people go to hell? I myself hope that God will save the greater number, and I even wrote it in a book entitled *The Salvation of Those Who Have No Faith*."

"Father, many are condemned."

"It is certain that the world is an abyss of vice....Still, there is always hope of salvation."

"No, Father, many, many are lost."