



God is the light of the world (1856-1857)

According to Church doctrine, in the supernatural order, Original Sin completely deprived us of grace. In the natural order, reason has fallen from its primordial state, but it has not lost all its power to reach the truth. The will is damaged and weak, but it has not lost all its power to be freely self-actualising. In addition, what especially distinguishes the Church from Jansenism is the feeling it gives rise to in us about our weaknesses and our wretchedness. It does not rejoice in them; it does not exult in them, it does not imitate Pascal in his testimony: 'I cannot fail to see without a secret joy the power of reason so invincibly perturbed by its own weapons and this bloodthirsty revolt of man against man, which, in communion with God, into which he drew himself by the dictates of his feeble reason, propels him into the condition of mindlessness.' I am saddened to observe this joy in such a great man! Why should we rejoice in our wretchedness? What is there so consoling to see ourselves propelled into the condition of mindlessness? It means that in Jansenism, faith is founded only on and triumphs only in the total ruination of nature. Do you want to believe? 'Kneel! Bless yourself with holy water! Deaden your mind!' This is what Pascal is telling you. However, I am telling you with no less conviction and energy: no, do not rejoice when you feel the weakness of reason or the rebellion of evil. On the contrary, plunge into mourning to see God's creation brought so low and dishonoured!

No doubt humility is the first and most essential of our virtues; no doubt we cannot of ourselves acquire any right to heavenly gifts, but we can nevertheless work with the unfailing help of God to make ourselves less unworthy of it. If therefore there are those among you who do not believe at all and do not feel the desire for a faith that is lacking, then far from seeking to deaden your mind, seek, on the contrary, to lift your soul to a higher and more serene level. God is light and he should not at all be sought

in the darkness. The great men of the early period of the Church showed us another way by their example. They taught us that, in order to prepare ourselves to receive an undeserved aid set aside for us by God, that we need to seek, without loss of humility and the proper use of our freedom and reason, to remove the obstacles that prevent God's grace from acting in us.

I ask you, is that the true idea of redemption that springs from Holy Scripture and the teaching of the Church? Not in the slightest! No doubt there is in God's choice an unfathomable mystery for our feeble reasoning, but what we must never forget is that humanity's loss comes from within, from the wrong use of its freedom. God opens his fatherly arms to all; Christ offers to all, without exception, the merits of his labours, his sweat, and his blood. No one on earth is excluded. All peoples have sufficient help to progress at least towards this outflow of mercy. From the summit of Calvary, it spreads throughout the universe. Imagine those deprived of everything. There is one thing they cannot lack. I insist that God's grace, from the Father and Saviour of all peoples, gives them enough to ultimately reach him, those at least who wish to make use of it.

