HERESY

In a general sense of the term, **heresy** is the rejection of one or more of the truths of faith by one who professes to believe in the Christian revelation. Total rejection of the Christian revelation by one who once held it is called **apostasy.**

The **formal motive of faith** is belief in a God who reveals Himself to man; belief in Jesus Christ. Heresy cannot coexist with faith because the heretic subjects the formal motive of faith to human judgement.

A clear distinction must be made between heresy and **error.** One does not reject divine revelation when one makes an error about what is revealed. So, non-Catholic Christians, born and instructed in their beliefs, may have the faith, while denying many revealed truths, or professing as revealed that which has not been revealed.

It could happen that a baptised Catholic is poorly instructed in the teachings of the faith, through circumstances which are no fault of his own. Such a person could have good will towards God and still reject truths taught by the Church as revealed by God, through **ignorance**. Nor is it heresy to reject that which is not clearly taught by the Church as revealed.

No one, except the person to whom it has been clearly revealed, is bound to accept private revelation, even widely accepted private revelation such as those at Fatima and Lourdes.

Heresies of the Early Church

Arianism was the principal heresy that denied the divinity of Christ.

Donatism taught that Baptism and other sacraments administered by an unworthy minister were invalid.

Gnosticism held that special knowledge, secretly revealed, was necessary for salvation.

Iconoclasm (image-breaking) was a movement which taught that the veneration of images, pictures and relics was idolatrous.

Manichaeism ascribed a twofold origin to life, holding that matter is evil and spirit is good, and that these two supreme principles are in constant conflict.

Monarchianism taught that God is the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Spirit, according to what He is doing at the time.

Monophysitism taught that Christ had one single nature, not two distinct natures, human and divine.

Montanism imposed a rigorous moral code and proclaimed the immediate end of the world and the Second Coming of Christ.

Nestorianism held that there were two persons in Christ, one human and the other divine.

Pelagianism denied the doctrine of original sin, the necessity of Baptism and of grace for salvation.

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