

THEOLOGY AND THE MAGISTERIUM

To state it at once, the theme of what our program dignifies by the title, "Presidential Address," is this: Sacred Theology and the Sacred Magisterium.

Whereas my distinguished predecessors at this rostrum have advanced our understanding and deepened our appreciation of the science and wisdom of theology, I have chosen, for various reasons which should emerge in the course of these remarks, to go back to fundamentals. With your kind indulgence, I propose to dwell on the vital, intrinsic dependence of the Catholic theologian and of his science on the *Ecclesia docens*. In other words, we are to focus our attention on the primordial truth that sacred theology lives and moves and has its being in the sacred magisterium.

Primordial though that truth be, how easily and how often it is forgotten, like the primordial truth that in God "we live and move and have our being"!

One case in point would be the renowned European theologian who complained, ten years ago, that with the growth of papal authority, "the authority of the universities and of the theologians has declined in the Church."

Indeed, it was the widespread forgetfulness, not to say ignorance, of theology's essential dependence on the *Ecclesia docens* which evoked the momentous Encyclical *Humani generis*. What is more, throughout the nearly seven years which have elapsed since August 12, 1950, Pope Pius XII has repeatedly found it necessary to re-emphasize and amplify the basic lesson of that Encyclical, the lesson that God entrusted the deposit of faith and its authentic interpretation not to theologians but to the divinely constituted and divinely assisted *magisterium vivum*; that theologians, no less than non-theologians, owe to that magisterium full reverence, and due submission to all its authentic, its authoritatively imposed teachings, whether these be proposed infallibly or not; that throughout their scientific labors theologians must take that magisterium as their norm and guide.¹

¹ Cf. Pius XII, Litterae Encyclicae, *Humani generis*, AAS, XXXXII (1950), 567-568, 569, 578.

Only the complete list of these post-*Humani generis* pronouncements could fully convey to us how deep and abiding is the Holy Father's concern that theologians know their proper station and office. But since such a catalogue would be too long to offer here, I shall recall only the most noteworthy of directly relevant documents.²

First, in order of time, is the Holy Father's radio message of March 23, 1952, *La famiglia*, on the education of the Christian conscience.³ Likewise pertinent is the allocution of October 17, 1953, *Animus Noster*, delivered by His Holiness on the occasion of the Gregorian University's fourth centenary.⁴

Of paramount importance is the papal allocution *Si diligis*, on the teaching authority of the Church, pronounced on May 31, 1954, to the Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops gathered in Rome for the canonization of St. Pius X.⁵ To an equally distinguished company, present in Rome for ceremonies in honor of Our Lady, the Supreme Pontiff on November 2, 1954, addressed the allocution *Magnificate Dominum*, his promised completion of the *Si diligis*.⁶

Nor may we overlook the Holy Father's radio message of October 24, 1954, *Inter complures*, on the standards governing the study of Mariology.⁷ Highly significant, too, is the Apostolic Constitution

² Hence I omit, e.g., the Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus*, despite the indirect contributions it can make to our theme. Nor can this brief address consider the many relevant documents prior to the *Humani generis* (the Holy Father's concern that theologians know their proper station and office dates almost from the very beginning of his pontificate); e.g., the sermon to ecclesiastical students in Rome, *Sollemnis conventus*, June 24, 1939, in *AAS*, XXXI (1939), 245-251; the allocution *Quamvis inquieti*, Sept. 17, 1946, to the newly elected General of the Society of Jesus, and his electors, in *AAS*, XXXVIII (1946), 381-385; the allocution *Par est laeto*, Sept. 22, 1946, to the Master General and Capitular Fathers of the Dominican Order, in *AAS*, XXXVIII (1946), 385-389.

³ *AAS*, XXXIV (1952), 270-278.

⁴ *AAS*, XXXV (1953), 682-690.

⁵ *AAS*, XXXVI (1954), 313-317. For commentaries, cf. *L'Osservatore Romano*, Sept. 15 and 16, 1954 (English translation—poor—in *The Catholic Mind*, Oct., 1955, 577-584); F. Huerth, S.J., "Episcoporum Triplex Munus," *Periodica*, XLIII (1954), 231-251; J. Fenton, in *AER*, Sept., 1954, 186-198; Cardinal Pla y Daniel, in *Ecclesia* (Madrid), July 3, 1954, 9-12.

⁶ *AAS*, XXXVI (1954), 666-677. Cf. F. Huerth, *art. cit.*

⁷ *AAS*, XXXVI (1954), 677-680.

Sedes sapientiae, May 31, 1956, regulating the education of religious clergy.⁸ No less important is the Pope's allocution of September 14, 1956, *Di gran cuore*, to those attending a convention for the Revision of Pastoral Practice.⁹ Finally, one must note the Holy Father's allocution of September 22, 1956, *Vous Nous avez*, directed to Cardinals, Archbishops, Bishops and others who had participated in the Assisi Congress on Pastoral Liturgy.¹⁰

Doubtless, the reminders and admonitions contained in these papal utterances are needed by no one who is a member of the Catholic Theological Society of America. Even so, it seems eminently proper that this Society, ever profoundly loyal to Christ's Vicar, should take official, humble and grateful cognizance of his paternal teachings and correctives concerning theologians and their science. It is to that end and in that spirit that I now touch upon some major points made by His Holiness in the above-mentioned documents and the *Humani generis*.

For brevity's sake I must omit consideration of what the Supreme Pontiff has to say about the sacred magisterium as authentic interpreter of the non-revealed moral law.¹¹ Confining ourselves, then, to supernatural revelation, if one had to sum up in a single word the fundamental principle from which everything else to be said on this subject flows, that word would be "deposit," a trust, something handed over for safekeeping to a trustee or depository, who becomes not the owner but only the custodian, the only authorized custodian, fully and exclusively responsible to the depositor, the owner.

Divine revelation is a deposit, "the deposit of faith." Our Divine Redeemer and Teacher is the depositor. The depository to whom He entrusted His heavenly truth, and who with the aid of the Holy Spirit must keep it intact and inviolate is Christ's Bride, His

⁸ AAS, XXXXVIII (1956), 354-365.

⁹ AAS, XXXXVIII (1956), 699-711. Cf. commentary in *L'Osservatore Romano*, Oct. 13, 1956.

¹⁰ AAS, XXXXVIII (1956), 711-725. Cf. the commentary by M. Donnelly, S.J., in *AER*, Jan., 1957, 1-10.

¹¹ Cf., e.g., *La famiglia*, AAS, XXXIV (1952), 272-273; *Magnificate Dominum*, AAS, XXXVI (1954), 671-672, and Father Huerth's important commentary on the latter, *art. cit.*, 240-247.

Church; more precisely, the teaching Church, the Apostles and their lawful successors. Such was the doctrine of St. Paul when he wrote to Timothy, "Guard the trust" (1 Tim. 6, 20), and again, "Guard the good trust through the Holy Spirit, who dwells in us" (2 Tim. 1, 14).¹² Such was the doctrine of St. Irenaeus, of Vincent of Lerins, of all Christian antiquity.¹³ Such was the doctrine of the Vatican Council.¹⁴

And such, of course, is the doctrine of Pope Pius XII, who, because it is fundamental to all else that he says on our subject, states it repeatedly. For example, in the *La famiglia* he declares: "Our Divine Redeemer entrusted His revelation . . . not to individual men, but to His Church, to which He gave the mission to bring men to accept faithfully this sacred deposit."¹⁵

More emphatic still is the *Si diligis* on this point: "Christ Our Lord entrusted the truth which He had brought down from heaven to the Apostles, and through them to their successors. He sent His Apostles, as He had been sent by the Father (John 20, 21), to teach all nations everything they had heard from Him (Matt. 29, 19-20). The Apostles are, therefore, by divine right the true doctors or teachers in the Church. Besides the lawful successors of the Apostles, namely the Roman Pontiff for the universal Church and Bishops for the faithful committed to their care (*CJC*, can. 1326), there are no other teachers divinely constituted in the Church of Christ."¹⁶ In a word, as the Holy Father puts it on another occasion, "the Hierarchy has the *depositum fidei*."¹⁷

So, then, the divine right of teaching Christ's truth, and, indeed,

¹² Cf. P. Medebielle, "Dépot de la foi," *Supplement au Dictionnaire de la Bible*, t. II (Paris, 1934), pp. 374-395; C. Spicq, O.P., *Saint Paul: Les Épîtres Pastorales*, ed. 2 (Paris, 1947), pp. 214, 216-217, 318, 320, 327-335; *idem*, "St. Paul et la loi des dépôts," *Revue Biblique*, XXXX (1931), 481-502.

¹³ Cf. St. Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses*, 3, 4, 1, and 3, 24, 1; *PG*, 7, 855; 7, 966. Cf. Vincent of Lerins, *Commonitorium*, I, 22; *PL*, 4, 667.

¹⁴ Cf. *DB*, nn. 1798, 1800, 1836; also n. 1793 ("*custos et magistra verbi revelati*").

¹⁵ *AAS*, XXXXIV (1952), 273.

¹⁶ *AAS*, XXXXVI (1954), 314. Cf. also *Humani generis*, *AAS*, XXXXII (1950), 569; *Sedes sapientiae*, *AAS*, XXXXVIII (1956), 362; *Di gran cuore*, *AAS*, XXXXVIII (1956), 709.

¹⁷ *Vous Nous avez*, *AAS*, XXXXVIII (1956), 713.

a right embracing the whole of that truth,¹⁸ belongs exclusively to the sacred magisterium, whence, as the *Si diligis* later asserts, in the Church there can be no legitimate magisterium withdrawn from the authority, guidance and vigilance of the sacred magisterium.¹⁹

Furthermore, to encroach for a moment on Father Cyril Vollert's theme of doctrinal development, this divine right and responsibility of the sacred magisterium bears on the deposit of faith also insofar as it is, to quote St. Irenaeus, a *depositum iuvenescens*,²⁰ a deposit ever renewing its youth, a deposit so rich that it yields ever new treasures.²¹ The mining of these treasures, the elucidation and explanation of what is contained in the deposit of faith only obscurely and, as it were implicitly, belongs, we are told in the *Humani generis* and the *Inter complures*, above all to the living magisterium of the Church.²²

In the execution of this as of its other doctrinal offices the sacred magisterium is guided from on high, enjoys the divine aid which was promised by Christ,²³ alluded to by Paul in his admonition, "Guard the good trust through the Holy Spirit" (2 Tim. 1, 14), and taught by the Vatican Council.²⁴

Of the Holy Father's frequent reminders of this all-important but often forgotten truth, the following may be mentioned.

In the *La famiglia* he declares that "the divine aid, which is meant to preserve revelation from error and deformation, was promised to the Church, and not to individuals."²⁵

¹⁸ There is no portion of public revelation which was not entrusted to the magisterium; as the *Si diligis* noted above, Our Lord sent His Apostles to teach everything they had heard from Him; the *Humani generis* emphasizes that the entire deposit of faith was committed to the care and interpretation of the sacred magisterium, *AAS*, XXXXII (1950), 567.

¹⁹ Cf. *Si diligis*, *AAS*, XXXXVI (1954), 317.

²⁰ Cf. St. Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses*, 3, 24, 1; *PG*, 7, 966. In effect, such, too, was St. Paul's notion of the "deposit"; cf. Medebielle, *art. cit.*, col. 391-394.

²¹ Cf. *Humani generis*, *AAS*, XXXXII (1950), 568.

²² Cf. *ibid.*, 569; *Inter complures*, *AAS*, XXXXVI (1954), 678.

²³ Cf. Matt. 28, 19-20; John 14, 16-17; 14, 26, etc.

²⁴ Cf. *DB*, n. 1836.

²⁵ *AAS*, XXXXIV (1952), 273. This is not to deny that the Holy Spirit also sheds supernatural light on individuals; but the refusal of submission to the divinely assisted magisterium is convincing proof that those who thus

The *Animus Noster* has this striking passage: "The Church, interpreter and guardian, by God's mandate, of the Sacred Scriptures, (and) depository of that Sacred Tradition which is always alive . . . , is the portal of salvation, and she is, under the protection and guidance of the Holy Spirit, unto herself the fountain of truth."²⁶

And this no less striking passage from the *Di gran cuore* demands to be heard, despite its length:

"The Lord was approaching the end of His earthly life; He had many things yet to say to those who were to continue His mission; but, in the state in which they were at that time, they were not able to bear His words (John 16, 12); therefore He would ask the Father to send another Advocate, Who would stay always with them, the Spirit of Truth. . . .

"This Helper, this Holy Spirit, would teach and recall to the Apostles all that Christ had said to them, i.e., the entire 'Truth of Christ' (John 14, 16). Thus they would be made capable of continuing and preaching the word of Christ in the spirit of Christ. From the power and authority of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, they would possess everything they were to teach.

"In such wise, beloved sons, you have the key to the understanding and the appreciation of the Church's preaching: preaching of the doctrine of Christ through the teachers of the Church, the Pope, and the Bishops in communion with the Pope. It is the one and triune God Who, through the Church's Magisterium, communicates truth, light and life. . . . Within herself the Church has weapons Christ gave her: His truth and the Holy Spirit."²⁷

Finally, it is to be noted that, according to the *Humani generis* the Holy Spirit's light and guidance extends also to the magisterium's vigilance over the terminology and concepts used by scholastic theology to express the truths of the faith more accurately, to win deeper insight into them,²⁸ and to deduce theological conclusions.²⁹

speak and act are not guided by the Spirit of God and of Christ; cf. the *Si diligis*, AAS, XXXXVI (1954), 317.

²⁶ AAS, XXXXV (1953), 685.

²⁷ AAS, XXXXVIII (1956), 705, 707-708.

²⁸ Cf. *DB*, n. 1796.

²⁹ Cf. *Humani generis*, AAS, XXXXII (1950), 566-567; E. Burke, C.S.P.,

In the light of what has been said thus far, one readily understands why Pius XII says in the *Humani generis* and the *Inter complures* that the sacred magisterium is the proximate and universal norm of truth in matters of faith and morals;³⁰ why, again in the *Humani generis*, he insists that all authentic teachings of this magisterium, even those not proposed infallibly, require due, proportionate, assent;³¹ why, in the *Si diligis*, he inculcates the duty of conjunction with the living magisterium, of conformity with its common doctrine clearly proposed in various ways, of union with its mind.³²

After this general survey of the Holy Father's declarations on the magisterium, it remains for us to see what specific applications they have to the theologian. The latter will be considered under two aspects; first, in his capacity as teacher; thereafter, precisely in his role of theologian.

The applications to the teacher of theology are obvious. Teachers of theology exercise their office by delegation of the Church, by canonical mission, not by divine right, and hence remain subject to the authority and vigilance of the lawful magisterium.

But let us hear the Holy Father himself on this subject. After stating in the *Si diligis* that besides the Roman Pontiff and the Bishops "there are no other teachers divinely constituted in the Church of Christ," Pope Pius XII continues: "But the Bishops, and especially the Supreme Magister in the Church and Christ's Vicar on earth, may associate others with themselves in their work of teacher, or use their advice. They delegate to them the faculty to teach, either by special grant, or by conferring an office to which the faculty is attached (*CJC*, can. 1328). Those who are thus called teach in the Church not in their own name, nor by reason of their theological knowledge, but in virtue of the mission which they have received from the lawful Magisterium, and to that

"Thesis Form as Instrument of Theological Instruction," *Proceedings of Eleventh Annual Convention of the CTSA* (1956), pp. 232-233; A. Cotter, S.J., *The Encyclical "Humani generis,"* ed. 2, Weston, Mass., 1952, pp. 72-74; G. Eldarov, O.F.M.Conv., *Presenza della Teologia*, Padua, 1954, pp. 138-140.

³⁰ Cf. *Humani generis*, *AAS*, XXXXII (1950), 567; *Inter complures*, *AAS*, XXXXVI (1954), 678.

³¹ *AAS*, XXXXII (1950), 567-568.

³² *AAS*, XXXXVI (1954), 315-316.

Magisterium their faculty remains always subject, and never becomes *sui iuris*, subject to no authority. Bishops, for their part, by conferring this faculty are not deprived of the right to teach."³³

The same doctrine is repeated in the *Sedes sapientiae*,³⁴ and again in the *Di gran cuore*, where the Holy Father pointedly adds: "It might be asked whether the word of theologians or that of the Church's Magisterium offers greater weight and guarantee of truth. . . . Decisive for the knowledge of the truth is not the '*opinio theologorum*,' but the '*sensus Ecclesiae*.' Otherwise one would be making theologians '*magistri Magisterii*,' which is an evident error."³⁵

These declarations of Christ's Vicar speak for themselves. May they come to the attention of our European theologian whose complaint we heard at the outset of these remarks. And may they be well weighed by anyone who is tempted to pit his own mind against the divinely constituted and divinely assisted magisterium of the Church.

The absurdity of the desire of any theologian to be autonomous, independent of the sacred magisterium, is already evident from what has just been said. But that absurdity becomes all the more obvious when, turning from the theologian as teacher to the theologian *qua* theologian, we consider the essential bond between sacred theology and the sacred magisterium, the vital dependence of the former on the latter.

We may begin our consideration by asking two questions. *May* the theologian in going about his task, which is the scientific, systematic elaboration of revelation, abstract from the magisterium? Indeed, *can* he abstract from the magisterium, and yet succeed in that task? In the final analysis, the answer to both questions must be "No."

By "sacred theology" I mean, of course, supernatural theology, theology proceeding from divine revelation and faith, and, indeed, theology both contemplative or theoretical, and practical or moral. Excluded from our consideration, therefore, are natural theology, apologetics, and mere ethics. I also exclude polemical theology as

³³ *Ibid.*, 314-315.

³⁴ *AAS*, XXXXVIII (1956), 356, 362.

³⁵ *AAS*, XXXXVIII (1956), 709.

such, where, arguing *ad hominem* against non-Catholics, one must prescind from the living magisterium, at least as a positive, internal, constitutive norm. Important though it is in the world we live in, polemical theology is really only an accidental function of the theologian, in the sense that it is contingent upon the existence of adversaries of the true Faith.

This much presupposed, I can now indicate the reason why theologians may not abstract from the living magisterium of the Church. That reason should be clear from what has already been said about divine revelation as a sacred deposit handed over exclusively to the magisterium. The latter is not just one of several optional means for knowing divine revelation. On the contrary, it is the ordinary means through which, by Christ's ordinance, men should come to know revealed truth.³⁶ The Church with her magisterium was instituted to be, in the words of the Vatican Council, "(the) guardian and teacher—*custos et magistra*—of the revealed word."³⁷ Therefore the magisterium is the proximate rule or norm of faith,³⁸ for all, the theologian *qua* theologian included—it is from the hands of the Church that he must receive, for his science, the truths of revelation.³⁹ As Pius XII explicitly stated, in the *Humani generis* and again in the *Inter complures*, "the sacred Magisterium must remain for every theologian the proximate norm of truth in matters of faith and morals, since to it has been entrusted by Christ Our Lord the whole deposit of faith—Sacred Scripture and divine Tradition—to be preserved, guarded and interpreted."⁴⁰

For sacred theology, then, the magisterium must be not just a negative norm, as for philosophy; not just a positive, external, and regulative norm, as for apologetics; it must be rather a positive,

³⁶ Cf. L. Lercher, S.J., *Institutiones Theologiae Dogmaticae*, Vol. I, ed. 3 curante F. Schlagenhaufen, S.J., Oeniponte, 1939, n. 630.

³⁷ *DB*, n. 1793; cf. n. 1792.

³⁸ Cf. B. Bartmann, *Lehrbuch der Dogmatik*, I, ed. 3, Freiburg im Br., 1917, pp. 34-35; J. Pohle, *Lehrbuch der Dogmatik*, I, ed. 10, neubearbeitet von J. Gummersbach, S.J., Paderborn, 1952, pp. 70-71.

³⁹ Cf. Pohle-Gummersbach, *op. cit.*, I, p. 26; M. Premm, *Katholische Glaubenskunde*, I, Wien, 1951, pp. 27, 30.

⁴⁰ *Humani generis*, *AAS*, XXXXII (1950), 567; *Inter complures*, *AAS*, XXXXVI (1954), 678. Cf. M. Nicolau, S.J., *Introductio in Theologiam*, n. 6, in *Sacrae Theologiae Summa*, I, ed. 2, Matriti, 1952, p. 17.

internal, constitutive norm.⁴¹ The objective principles of sacred theology are not just revealed truths, they are dogmas—revealed truths proposed as such by the magisterium.⁴² The faith on which the theologian must build his science is Catholic faith.⁴³ Sacred theology is not simply the science of faith, it is the science of Catholic faith.⁴⁴

To sum up, sacred theology—the whole of it, that is, theology both contemplative or theoretical, and practical or moral—is dogmatic theology, must proceed from dogmas, dogmas now theoretical, now practical.⁴⁵ Sacred theology is ecclesiastical theology, since without the Church there would be no dogmas, and without dogmas sacred theology would be bereft of its rightful object.⁴⁶

Hence the theologian's initial concern must be with what is termed *theologia positiva Magisterii*, as distinct from *theologia positiva fontium*. He must strive to ascertain accurately the teaching of the Church, both in her solemn and in her universal ordinary magisterium, not forgetting, moreover, that under due conditions the ordinary magisterium of the Popes can be a criterion of dogma.⁴⁷

This done, the theologian's duty to and dependence upon the magisterium are by no means exhausted. The same basic reason which obliges him to receive his principles from the teaching Church also requires that he heed and be guided by the magisterium throughout his subsequent efforts to achieve a scientific, systematic elaboration.

⁴¹ Cf. J. Mors, S.J., *Theologia Dogmatica*, I, ed. 2, Buenos Aires, 1950, p. 21; *idem*, *Theologia Fundamental*, I, ed. 2, Buenos Aires, 1954, p. 17; Pohle-Gummersbach, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 23, 24.

⁴² Cf. J. Mors, *Theologia Dogmatica*, I, p. 21.

⁴³ Cf. M. Nicolau, *op. cit.*, n. 38 (p. 35).

⁴⁴ Cf. F. Dander, S.J., *Summarium Tractatus Dogmatici De Fide Divina*, Oeniponte, n.d. (1950), p. 21.

⁴⁵ Cf. Pohle-Gummersbach, *op. cit.*, I, p. 31; J. Brinktrine, *Einleitung in die Dogmatik*, Paderborn, 1951, p. 26.

⁴⁶ Cf. J. Bilz, *Einfuehrung in die Theologie*, Freiburg im Br., 1935, pp. 27-31; M. Schmaus, *Katholische Dogmatik*, I, ed. 3-4, Muenchen, 1948, pp. 22-23; Pohle-Gummersbach, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 23, 26; Bartmann, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

⁴⁷ Cf. P. Nau, O.S.B., "Le Magistere pontifical ordinaire, lieu theologique," *Revue Thomiste*, LVI (1956), 389-412; M. Scheeben, *Handbuch der katholischen Dogmatik*, ed. 2, herausgegeben von M. Grabmann, I, Freiburg im Br., 1948, n. 433: "Als Kriterien des eigentlichen Glaubensdogmas gelten . . . speziell die *notorische, konstante Glaubenstradition der roemischen Kirche.*"

tion of the dogmas. As the divinely appointed custodian, teacher, and interpreter of the deposit of faith, the magisterium has a vital stake in this elaboration, and must be allowed to accompany and direct the theologian in his study of the sources and in his exercise of the various functions of the speculative theologian. All this has been made plain in *Humani generis* and the *Inter complures*.⁴⁸ According to these documents, positive theology of the sources must be not only truly theology—reason proceeding under the light of faith, but also Catholic theology— theology guided by the divinely assisted magisterium. Similarly, speculative theology must be Catholic. In fine, the theologian's *fides quaerens intellectum* must be *fides Catholica quaerens intellectum Catholicum*.

Why the theologian *may not* ignore the magisterium should now be clear. Why he *can not* do so is our next concern.

In submitting that without the magisterium the theologian could not succeed in his proper task, I do not suppose the widely-held view that an act of divine faith is impossible unless the revealed truth has been proposed by the Church.⁴⁹ I concede, then, that a theologian can by his personal studies, e.g., of Sacred Scripture, arrive at divine faith in this or that revealed truth. But theology is not merely a matter of one or another revealed truth—it is the scientific, systematic elaboration of the whole of public revelation. To accomplish such an elaboration the theologian needs to know the *integral* body of revelation, and its genuine sense and germane interpretation. But he cannot know either the one or the other without the divinely assisted magisterium.

For, first of all, it is only from the latter that the theologian can learn which books are the inspired word of God, and which are not. Moreover, he depends on the magisterium not only in this matter of the definitive canon of the Sacred Scriptures but also in the matter of the authentic text and versions of the canonical Scriptures.

No less is his dependence on the teaching Church for certainty

⁴⁸ Cf. *Humani generis*, XXXXII (1950), 566-571; *Inter complures*, XXXXVI (1954), 677-679.

⁴⁹ For criticisms of this view, cf. L. Lercher, *op. cit.*, I, nn. 630-631; S. Harent, "Foi," *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, t. 6, Paris, 1920, col. 163-170; T. Zapalena, S.J., "Problema theologicum. IV," *Gregorianum*, XXV (1944), 268-278.

as to the true witnesses of divine Tradition. Finally, it is the divinely assisted magisterium which must provide the theologian with the correct understanding of Scripture and Tradition, and with the sound norms for their interpretation.⁵⁰

In the last analysis, therefore, the divinely assisted magisterium is at least morally necessary for the theologian if he is to attain to a congruous knowledge of revelation. By such knowledge I mean, of course, a knowledge not merely of this or that truth, but of the whole of revelation, including the latest explicitations of the *depositum semper iuvenescens*; a knowledge, moreover, arrived at with ease, and possessed with unwavering certitude and without any admixture of error. Highly relevant here is the following passage from the Encyclical *Casti connubii*:

"For just as God in the case of natural truths of religion and morals added Revelation to the light of reason so that what is right and true, 'in the present state also of the human race may be known readily, with firm certainty, and with no admixture of error' (Vatican Council, Sess. III, cap. 2), so for the same purpose He has constituted the Church the guardian and the teacher of the whole of the truth concerning religion and moral conduct."⁵¹

Thus Pope Pius XI. If a divinely assisted magisterium is morally necessary for a congruous knowledge of the revealed truths of natural religion, *a fortiori* it is necessary for a congruous knowledge of revealed mysteries.⁵² That such necessity holds also for the theologian is amply proved by the history of Protestant theology—"in endless error hurled."^{52 (bis)}

⁵⁰ Cf. F. Diekamp, *Katholische Dogmatik*, I, ed. 10-11, Muenster Westf., 1949, pp. 40-43, 58-60. Cf. B. Durst, O.S.B., "De characteribus sacramentalibus expositio methodologica-speculativa," *Xenia Thomistica*, II (1924), 541 ff.; *idem*, "Zur Theologische Methode," *Theologische Revue*, XXVI (1927), 297-313, 361-372. On the first of these important works of Durst, cf. F. Diekamp, in *Theologische Revue*, XXV (1926), 163-165; in contrast with Diekamp's favorable reaction, cf. the captious criticisms of T. Zapalena, "Problema theologicum. III," *Gregorianum*, XXV (1944), 53-65.

⁵¹ Pius XI, *Litterae Encyclicae Casti connubii*, Dec. 31, 1930, in *AAS*, XXII (1930), 580.

⁵² Cf. Lercher, *op. cit.*, I, nn. 284, 630; Diekamp, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 12-13.

^{52 (bis)} Cf. Pius XII, *Humani generis*, *AAS*, XXXXII (1950), 563: "At simul dolendum est haud paucos istorum, quo firmiter verbo Dei adhaereant, eo magis humanam rationem adimere, et quo libentius Dei revelantis auctori-

So, then, as I declared at the outset, sacred theology lives and moves and has its being in the sacred magisterium. Cut off from the latter, sacred theology would, like the branch cut off from the vine, lose its life. To try to construct an autonomous theology, a theology independent of the *Ecclesia docens*, would be an act of suicidal folly.

In sketching (it was no more than a sketch) the indispensable, organic role played by the magisterium in sacred theology, I have told you nothing new, nor did I intend to. My purpose was rather that these remarks, together with your kind attention to them, might stand as a public renewal, so to speak, of the baptismal vow pronounced by our Society at its birth and christening eleven years ago, when the inaugural convention cabled to Christ's Vicar on earth the assurance of our undying loyalty.

My remarks had one further purpose. They were meant to pave the way for a suggestion as to how we might help curb what *Si diligis* termed a "certain spiritual contagion,"⁵³ namely, the growing lack of due reverence for and submission to the sacred magisterium. The suggestion will spring from the following brief reflections.

Perhaps many of you will have to confess, as I myself, that your realization of theology's dependence on the magisterium does not date from your first introduction to the sacred science. Quite likely that realization dawned upon you, as in my own case, only after some years of study.

The reason for this belated understanding is the fact that the average introduction to sacred theology in the dogmatic manuals, and the like, either neglects the "ecclesiastical" aspect of theology altogether, or else fails to give it sufficient prominence and emphasis.

The average introduction says much about the necessity of theology for the Church and her magisterium but little or nothing about the necessity of the magisterium for theology. The average intro-

tatem extollant, eo acrius Ecclesiae Magisterium aspernari, a Christo Domino institutum ut veritates divinitus revelatas custodiat atque interpretetur. Quod quidem non solum Sacris Litteris aperte contradicit, sed ex ipsa rerum experientia falsum manifestatur. Saepe enim ipsi a vera Ecclesia dissidentes de sua ipsorum in rebus dogmaticis discordia palam conqueruntur, ita ut Magisterii vivi necessitatem fateantur inviti." Cf. Bilz, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-33.

⁵³ *AAS*, XXXXVI (1954), 314.

duction underlines the duty of following St. Thomas Aquinas but forgets to emphasize the duty of following the sacred magisterium itself, first and foremost. The average introduction is content to define theology as the science of faith, of revelation, when in reality it is the science of Catholic faith, of divinely revealed truths proposed as such by the sacred magisterium. The average introduction stresses that there can be no genuine theology without the habit of faith, but fails to note that non-Catholics can have faith, and that, therefore, the decisive reason why genuine theology cannot flourish among them is their rejection of the divinely constituted and divinely assisted living magisterium. Briefly, the average introduction fails to highlight the ecclesiastical character of sacred theology.

Some of the most recent treatments of our subject, and a few older ones as well,⁵⁴ escape these criticisms, but what I have said appears to describe most. Implicit acknowledgement of this is had in what Xiberta wrote only a few years ago. By way of preface to his own few pages on the "indoles ecclesiastica" of sacred theology, he offered this explanation, almost apologetic in tone:

"Ratio Quaestionis. In hac quaestione exponendus est ordo sacrae disciplinae ad Ecclesiam, seu multiplex dependentia quam theologia habet respectu Ecclesiae. *Quaestio mira fortasse videbitur et praeter ordinem consuetum.* Nihilominus eam saltem innuere libet; nam revera indoles ecclesiastica haud ultima est inter theologiae dotes et praeterea supernaturalitatem aptissime complet." ⁵⁵

Obscuring, as they do, the organic role of the magisterium in the work of theology, and thus fostering an exaggerated notion of the theologian's station and office, the above-mentioned shortcomings of the average introduction to sacred science may well be a major cause of that "spiritual contagion" which has so distressed the Holy Father. Failing to free themselves from misconceptions engendered by a faulty initiation into their science, some theologians have been be-

⁵⁴ Besides authors already cited (Bilz, Mors, Nicolau, Pohle-Gummersbach, Dander, Bartmann, Schmaus, Brinktrine, Durst, Diekamp), cf. T. Soiron, O.F.M., *La condition du Théologien* (transl. of *Heilige Theologie*), Paris, n.d., pp. 125-164; G. Roschini, O.S.M., *Introductio in S. Theologiam*, Romae, 1947; B. Xiberta, O.Carm., *Introductio in S. Theologiam*, Matriti, 1949; Roschini and Xiberta are unduly influenced by Zapalena's criticisms of Durst.

⁵⁵ Xiberta, *op. cit.*, pp. 273-274; emphasis supplied.

trayed into insubordination toward the sacred magisterium. In these cases first impressions have indeed, and unfortunately, been lasting.

If the foregoing diagnosis is correct, then the appropriate remedy should be obvious. To curb and extirpate the lamentable "spiritual contagion," the dangerous deficiencies which mar the average introduction to sacred theology must be rectified. Faced with a new class of beginners, the professor of theology should lose no time in carrying out this admonition of Pope Pius XII in the *Sedes sapientiae*:

"In the teaching of philosophy and theology . . . all the prescriptions laid down by the sacred canons, by Our Predecessors and by Ourselves must be religiously observed, especially those concerning the constant duty of professing and instilling in the minds and hearts of the students the reverence and complete fidelity which are due to the Ecclesiastical Magisterium."⁵⁶

In accordance with this admonition, novices in the sacred science should be taught at once that, in the words of Karl Rahner, "the doctrinal pronouncements of the Church are the first and the last in theology"—theology's point of departure, and theology's abiding norm throughout.⁵⁷ They should learn without delay, from De Lubac's moving essay, "Ecclesia Mater," that the theologian must be above all "a man of the Church," that he ought to thank God for the magisterium, that the words of the Apostle to Christ may also be addressed to the magisterium: "To whom shall we go? Thou hast words of everlasting life."⁵⁸

⁵⁶ AAS, XXXXVIII (1956), 362.

⁵⁷ *Schriften zur Theologie*, II, Einsiedeln, 1955, p. 8, with note 1.

⁵⁸ Cf. H. De Lubac, S.J., *The Splendour of the Church*, Ch. VII, "Ecclesia Mater."