

THEOLOGY IN THE NEW CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA

I hardly need say that I am deeply grateful to the Right Reverend president and officers of the Society for this opportunity to speak to you about the work of *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*. As you know, the present *Catholic Encyclopedia* is now almost half a century old. A magnificent work of its time—indeed of any time—and still the standard general source in English about the Church and its teaching, it is in many respects badly dated. Advances in the physical sciences, theories of human behaviour, political and economic institutions in their infancy or barely dreamed of fifty years ago, are now commonplaces and pose new moral problems. The old *Encyclopedia* appeared before the Code of Canon Law; before the great impetus given to Catholic Action by Pope Pius XI; before the extensive teachings on a multitude of subjects by Pope Pius XII. And we need only mention the tremendous multiplication of significant works on theology and Sacred Scripture that have appeared in our time.

Their Eminences the Cardinals and their Excellencies the Archbishops and Bishops of The Catholic University Board of Trustees have given their enthusiastic approval to the project and have named the Right Reverend William J. McDonald, Rector of the University, as Editor-in-Chief of the new *Encyclopedia*. An Editorial Committee made up of members from different sections of the country has been meeting in Washington for some months, engaged in the work of preliminary planning. Central offices have been established just off The Catholic University campus.

The particular reason why I welcome the opportunity to speak to the Society about the project is obviously the vast importance of theology in the *Encyclopedia*. Sacred theology has been assigned one-fifth of the total space in the work—over two and a half million words, over twenty-five hundred articles. While it is planned to invite scholars from a number of countries to contribute articles, it is quite reasonable to assume that most of the contributors in theol-

ogy will be members of this Society. And it is ultimately, of course, on the quality of the articles and on the scholarship of their authors that the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* will stand or fall. As American theologians we are deeply concerned about the presentation of our science in this *Encyclopedia*. I know you will agree that it is a work calling upon our cooperation and our good will.

While the invitations to individual contributors have not yet been extended, and probably will not be, in any considerable numbers, before next fall, the work of planning the theological section is well advanced. The general field of theology has been divided into nine areas and a tentative word allotment assigned to each. The nine areas are: (1) Dogmatic Theology, (2) Moral and Pastoral Theology, (3) Fundamental Theology, (4) Patrology and Christian Archaeology, (5) Liturgy, (6) Religious Education, Homiletics and Catechetics, (7) Oriental Theology, (8) Ascetical and Mystical Theology, and (9) Non-Christian Religions. (I might mention, lest there seem to be certain subjects of much theological interest, not provided for under the listed areas, that "The Bible and its Milieu" is a general field by itself, as is Canon Law, Church History, Sociology, etc.)

Area editors in the field of theology, and some consultants, have already been invited and have consented to participate in the work. They have begun the demanding task of outlining their areas and drawing up the lists of articles to be included. As I mentioned a moment ago, it is hoped that most of the invitations to the all-important element in the *Encyclopedia* organization—the contributors—will be ready for issuance in the fall. And the full, printed consummation of the work is devoutly wished for 1964.

The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* would not be possible without sacrifices in time and effort on the part of the theologians of America. It is with confidence in them that the work has been begun. May we humbly pray that God will bless and prosper this great new effort in our day for Him and for His Church.

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