

## PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS THEOLOGY FOR A FUTURE CHURCH: SCIENCE, WISDOM, MINISTRY

We are already more than a decade away from the year in which Stringfellow Barr published his startling analogy between the experience of Roman citizens in the pre-Christian era of a dissolute Empire and twentieth-century life in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Although the nature and purpose of Barr's essay were not primarily religious, the theological implications of his arguments are not covert. Indeed, those who acknowledge the validity of Barr's challenge and are not impelled to consequential action will, at least, have to consider seriously his suggestion that the characteristics of our culture are signs of a world in need of "redemption"<sup>2</sup> or, as Rahner would have it, so many "conditions of possibility" to be tapped and exploited, that is, "turned to practical account," for the development of a theology oriented to the Church of the future.

Scholars and thinkers other than Barr have insisted that theologians address the phenomenon which can be envisaged as "future Church." For example, theologians and theological educators have undertaken the writing of ecclesiastical scenarios, in an effort to answer questions regarding the shape of the Church in, let us say, the year 2000; the type of ministry that will best serve the needs of that Church; the programs of theological education and the modalities of the theological reflection necessary to assure such service; the realistic steps to be taken now toward development of theological resources for the era toward which we are moving.<sup>3</sup> An even more recent mood has led futurologists to probe the evolving factors, to seek the underlying dynamics that already presage the new age. Indeed, ours seems to be one of those unique historical moments which announce a "critical threshold," to borrow Teilhard's phrase, prelude to a leap into another sphere.

Within the CTSA itself, concern for the future has been expressed variously in the last decade. Who among us can—or would—forget the presidential "*en garde!*" of Walter Burghardt in 1968?<sup>4</sup> Who did not hear the tocsin sounded by Luke Salm, above the laughter which accompanied his remembering of the first thirty years of CTSA existence?<sup>5</sup>

The founding fathers of the CTSA intended a future for the Society. Our earliest documents record the decision to confer "annual awards for

<sup>1</sup> S. Barr, "Consulting the Romans" (Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, 1967).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> The Commission on Educational Strategy and Planning of the Association of Theological Schools of the United States and Canada did engage in such a project, each member writing a scenario, after analysis and reflection of documents composed by futurologists.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Proceedings*, Vol. 23, pp. 20-27.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Proceedings*, Vol. 30, pp. 239-50.

theological writings of special excellence."<sup>6</sup> The first Constitution of the Society not only prescribed "annual dues," (!) but also projected the structure and activities of the new organization in terms of days, months and years.<sup>7</sup>

A sense of hope and continuity as theologians is rightfully ours, over and above the facts of history and prior to any projections of futurologists. Because our God is the God of history, our present is necessarily rooted in a past which calls for and promises future. The entire universe is in bondage, until the day of the Lord's deliverance (cf. Romans 8:22). All of human experience, all of human existence is caught up in the movement of that mysterious plan which Irenaeus, following Paul (cf. Ephesians 1:10), perceived as the ultimate recapitulation (*anakephalaiósis*): "to bring all things in the heavens and on earth into one under Christ's headship."<sup>8</sup>

My convictions about the future of the CTSA are the result of a longer experience than that of the past year, as president. This is because, like many of you, my membership in the Society has been almost co-terminous with my life as a professional theologian. Almost from the beginning, too, I have been involved in some aspect of leadership in the Society. During the past year, despite some suggestions to the contrary, I have not asked myself whether or not the Society would continue to exist. (I must confess that Luke Salm convinced me, in 1975,<sup>9</sup> that the survival of Louisville was the test of all survival!) This year, rather, I have asked questions that approximate those articulated by Walter Burghardt in Washington ten years ago. In what manner do we justify our existence as a community of professional theologians? To what extent do we welcome the interdisciplinary adventure, the collaborative effort with other learned, professional groups? Will we be able, increasingly, to celebrate and commemorate John Courtney Murray with more than the conferral of an award which bears his name? In other words, will we be able, as time goes on, to take for inspiration every "critical American experience, face it with the totality of Catholic tradition, and come up with that paradox of all living theology: something at once genuinely Christian and radically new"<sup>10</sup>?

The significance of these questions today rests on the fact that, in a very real sense, the future has already begun. The necessary theology for a future Church is even now with us. I submit that this theology is, and must be, at one and the same time: *science, wisdom and ministry*.

Science, wisdom and ministry are not entirely new ways of understanding theology. In the foundation meeting of the CTSA, theology was identified as "both a science and a wisdom."<sup>11</sup> This understanding had prevailed long before 1946. In his homily for the convention liturgy of 1975, Avery Dulles, Vice-President of the year, stated: "As a *Catholic*

<sup>6</sup>Cf. *Proceedings of the Foundation Meeting*, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 13ff.

<sup>8</sup>*Adversus haereses* I, iii, 4; I, x, 1; III, xvi, 6; V, xxi, 1. (PG 7).

<sup>9</sup>*Proceedings*, Vol. 30, p. 241.

<sup>10</sup>*Proceedings*, Vol. 23, p. 23.

<sup>11</sup>*Proceedings*, Vol. 1, p. 27.

organization, it [the CTSA] must practice theology not as an art for art's sake but as ministry, a service in the Church."<sup>12</sup> Other theologians have suggested that theology is service in the Church. However, this dimension has not, generally speaking, received sufficient attention in the professional theological community. Furthermore, we tend to speak of theology in terms that do not simultaneously include these three dimensions.

In the light of this threefold understanding of theology, then, I would like to share with you my reflections on the achievements of the CTSA and then to suggest specific areas which might be explored, in order to foster continued endeavor and development. These reflections are my own. They represent my convictions and concerns regarding our weaknesses and strengths, our limitations and our potential for more creative, faithful ecclesial service.

#### THEOLOGY AS SCIENCE

We owe to St. Thomas Aquinas the development of a theory of theology as a science, that is, a science of revealed truth, a "sacred science."<sup>13</sup> It is unnecessary to review here the history of the long struggle to dispel the pejorative overtones of this qualification in the scholarly community at large and to win recognition for theology as a discipline marked by integrity and credibility, in its own right. The acknowledgement of theology as a science is no longer a matter of debate, either in the Christian community or in other professional circles. What have been the signs in the CTSA of this recognition? What implications can be derived for the future of the Society, from our understanding of theology as science?

The understanding of theology as a science has led to a number of consequences in the life and growth of the CTSA itself. The history of our past, from one point of view, has been a history of efforts to affirm theology as a science: thus, the determination to free the Society from a clerical identity, from identification as a Society of Roman Catholic seminary professors, from a too restricted, provincial, confessional image.<sup>14</sup> These efforts have not been without their rewards. The diversity which characterizes our membership is reported by the Committee on Admissions at every annual business meeting and is ratified by the vote of the Society represented in the membership at the convention.

We are proud to count among our members leading scholars who have established theology in a position of status and prestige in university settings. We find this university-based theology, not only in Catholic institutions of higher learning, but also on private and state campuses. Roman Catholic theologians are welcome participants in interdisciplinary and ecumenical endeavors. This participation is not reserved exclusively to the pursuit of religious questions; it reaches

<sup>12</sup> *Proceedings*, Vol. 30, p. 268.

<sup>13</sup> *ST*, I, 1.

<sup>14</sup> *Proceedings*, Vol. 30, pp. 244-45.

beyond the Bilaterals, although it is certainly to be noted there. One of our recent past presidents is currently President of the prestigious American Theological Society, a group so exclusive that its total active membership does not equal the number of our women members, still a minority in the CTSA!<sup>15</sup>

There have been consequences from the increased appreciation of theology as a science for theologians in seminary-based schools of theology, also. These consequences have resulted in new challenges for these members of our Society as curriculum development is suggested by the search for an authentic American Catholic theology, required by third-party accrediting agencies and made possible by the Roman guidelines for ecclesiastical faculties.<sup>16</sup>

Theologians in seminary-based schools of theology today find themselves called to pursue research within parameters of ecclesial accountability that are uniquely different from those which apply to other Roman Catholic theologians. Furthermore, given the demands for theological programs oriented to preparation for effective ministry and competent spiritual leadership, these theologians are discovering unique opportunities to contribute to theological research and development under the rubric of integration.

Now, as in the past, the Society is graced with members who give evidence of affirming theology as a science in fidelity to the purpose enunciated in the CTSA Constitution. There are, however, two areas in which our understanding of theology as a science still has to be explored and developed. I see these as areas of critical significance for the future of the theological enterprise in the CTSA.

### *Theological Criticism*

The first area pertains to the art of theological criticism. Theological criticism as an art, as refined skill in judging (*kritikos*), as a theological project with appropriate methodology, deserves serious attention in the theological community. We have yet to develop a methodology for the interpretation of texts comparable to that which prevails in the literary world or commensurate with that of biblical scholarship. Too frequently, theological criticism betrays presuppositions which fall on the side of suspicion and negative expectation. Too often, theological criticism seems to be, primarily, an exercise in highly subjectivized censure. A reliable methodology of theological criticism, it would seem, ought to display *ability* to approach a text in a manner appropriate to the nature and purpose of the document; *respect* for the intentionality and contextualization from which the document derives; *credible criteria* for scholarly evaluation of the text and the means of demonstrating such credibility.

<sup>15</sup> As of June, 1978, the CTSA numbers over 1,200 members, of whom 74 are women.

<sup>16</sup> In 1976, the CTSA Board of Directors established a committee to study the proposals for new ecclesiastical legislation for canonically erected faculties. The statement, subsequently sent to all interested parties, is in *Proceedings*, Vol. 32, Appendix A.

I challenge the members of the CTSA to demonstrate their understanding of theology as a science through the development of theological criticism as an art which is also a theological reality.

### *Philosophical Pluralism*

The second area in which it would seem that we, as theologians, have not clearly demonstrated our understanding of theology as a science is in the realm of philosophical pluralism. Here again, Aquinas is our mentor, in the task of distinguishing theology from philosophy.<sup>17</sup> In an age which Rahner has rightly described as one of philosophical as well as theological pluralism,<sup>18</sup> the ability to discern and identify the philosophical presuppositions of a given theological project, position or premise is of primary importance.

Theological debate and discussion frequently end in frustration and impasse, not so much from a difference of theological perspectives, as from a failure to know and to recognize philosophical presuppositions: the implicit rejection of certain categories; the "canonization" of a given school or methodology; the confused combination of several philosophical positions or the inability to establish equivalencies of vocabulary and symbol between one philosophical presupposition and an apparently incompatible other. As heirs of a past in which philosophical and theological pluralism were not the issue they are today, we are all too aware of the pressing need to address the reality of an age which does not cease to ask for expressions of the Gospel in modalities accessible to believers who know neither Thomas Aquinas nor Leo XIII. We are asked to preserve a heritage and to transmit it in ways that manifest it as a living treasure.

I challenge the members of the CTSA to demonstrate their understanding of theology as a science through systematic investigation and analysis of the means by which the plurality of philosophical presuppositions which so frequently impede and confuse theological discussion can be discerned and clarified.

To the extent that these two challenges can be met, to that extent will theology as a science continue to be fostered and promoted. To that extent, it might be hoped, the *logos Theou* will be less restricted by the limitations of a discourse which bind that word today. To arrive at such a goal, however, theology must be more than science. It must also be wisdom.

### THEOLOGY AS WISDOM

St. Augustine understood that theology, taken in the proper sense of the word, that is, as supernatural theology, is wisdom.<sup>19</sup> This wisdom, which is also to be perceived as "supernatural" or "contemplative,"

<sup>17</sup> *Proceedings*, Vol. 1, p. 33.

<sup>18</sup> *Foundations of Christian Faith* (New York: Seabury Press, 1978), pp. 7ff.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *De Trinitate* XIII, 1, 25; XIV, c. 1, n. 3, 1-4; XII, 21-25.

does not destroy faith but perfects it with a "superior light," renewing us "in the knowledge of God, that is to say, in the justice and holiness of truth."<sup>20</sup>

How has the CTSA understood theology as wisdom? What ought this understanding be for the future? Here, we might be tempted to conclude that fidelity to the Catholic tradition in its classic formulations constitutes wisdom. Such a conclusion would be, at best, a mistaken perception; at worst, a betrayal: a betrayal of the tradition itself which, as David Tracy demonstrated in his presidential address,<sup>21</sup> can be confused with *tradita*, rather than affirmed as *traditio*; a betrayal of wisdom, which, as Augustine taught, embraces *caritas* as much as *intellectus*; is concerned with action, as well as with contemplation.

In the CTSA, theology has not been directly addressed as wisdom. This fact is most clearly evident at that level where wisdom is related to identity and image. On reflection, we must admit that we have struggled with this question from several perspectives in recent years. There were the efforts exerted to fulfill the multidimensional purpose written into the first article of our Constitution. Again, the revision of conditions for membership in 1970 represented the intention to reaffirm our identity as a learned, scholarly, professional society. Convention themes in the recent past reflect still another effort to confirm our corporate image as Catholic<sup>22</sup> and American.<sup>23</sup>

In this matter of identity and image, however, there are some hard questions to be asked. As a Society, do we too easily appropriate the identity of individual theologians as our own? Are we too individually and too readily eager to be perceived solely as teachers or writers? as lecturers or consultants? To what extent do we think of ourselves as prophets or seekers of wisdom? Obviously, the categories are not mutually exclusive. But does our lack of imagination or creativity lead to functional imprisonment because of rigid expectations and imposed divisions that result in a confused corporate image?

I would challenge the CTSA to the exercise of theology as wisdom in a renewed affirmation of our corporate identity as Catholic and as American.

#### *Wisdom and Theology as Catholic*

The identity of the CTSA as a Catholic Theological Society is clear, but it is incomplete. As Catholics, we have been concerned almost exclusively with Western, Latin thought; with Western, Latin problems.<sup>24</sup> The rich and ancient tradition of Eastern Christianity, the multiple expressions of Christianity in cultural languages of which most of us are shy: these remain unexplored, unsuspected *loci theologici* in the

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, XVII, n. 23.

<sup>21</sup> *Proceedings*, Vol. 32, pp. 240ff.

<sup>22</sup> *Proceedings*, Vol. 27, Vol. 29.

<sup>23</sup> *Proceedings*, Vol. 26, Vol. 28.

<sup>24</sup> The word, "Latin," as it is used here refers to the language, not the culture of Hispanic peoples and nations.

great majority of our undertakings. We need to be reminded that Athanasius and Chrysostom, Ambrose and Augustine, Thomas and Mary are all represented on the Society's seal. In research and study, in programs and projects for the future, our endeavors can stand only to be enriched, if we seek to be fully Catholic through an integration of the rich and diversified heritage that accompanies the understanding of theology as wisdom.

### *Wisdom and Theology as American*

The identity of the CTSA as an American Theological Society has already been addressed directly and frequently throughout our history. Once again, our efforts have been selective and incomplete. We have been overly enthusiastic about some aspects of our national characteristics and treasures. There are other significant aspects of American life and culture that remain to be explored theologically.

One such is the world of technology, with its mysterious probings of physical reality, its daring inroads into dimensions most of us cannot even name; its lightning-swift reductions of complexifications and its mind-expanding explosions of uncharted discoveries. This world may well present a more impelling challenge to theologians than any other with which we have sought to dialogue thus far. The attempt to explore technology would lead us almost immediately to address the theological implications of the manner in which wealth and power—the by-products of technology—are wielded and exploited at the expense of human and evangelical values.

As American theologians, we have neglected to respond to the challenge that comes to us from the world of business and commerce. A more wholistic view of moral theology could lead us into theological investigations more attuned to the demands and pressures under which too many Christians live; could begin to bridge the distances which have yet to be measured between our concerns and those of the society in which we live.

In a sense, we have resisted identification of the CTSA as American, to the extent that we have not known how to invoke American techniques for the facilitation of structural revision in the Society. Despite positive steps undertaken to promote the activities of the CTSA in the past decade, we have still to evaluate our operation in terms of organization, planning, long-range goals, personnel resources and the real needs or interests of our members. We tend to evade the sophistication of professional assists in some areas of responsibility. The progress realized since Walter Burghardt's appeal in 1968 for new structures to increase the vitality of the Society can only be furthered by a clear manifestation of intent in this direction.

Theology as science; theology as wisdom: renewed understanding of these two dimensions could be a giant step toward the preparation of a future Church. The Church of the future, however, is increasingly perceived as a Church which will be constituted of and concerned about ministries. Such a Church calls for a theology which itself is ministry.

## THEOLOGY AS MINISTRY

In the last several years, scholars have pointed out repeatedly that our understanding of ministry can be clarified by three key texts: Romans 12, I Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4. We can learn a great deal about ministry in general from a study of these texts. We can also learn a great deal about an understanding of theology as ministry.

Ministry is service. We can speak of this service as the exercise of a charism which is the free and generous gift bestowed on individuals by the Holy Spirit, ever present in the Church, ever mindful of the changing needs of that Church. The purpose for which a charism is intended is, ultimately, the building up of that assembly which is the Body of Christ, as a eucharistic community of faith, love and worship. The community is thus enabled to minister, in turn, to others. A charism, in this sense, is given to an individual to be exercised in the service of others.<sup>25</sup>

To what extent has theology already been perceived in the CTSA as a ministry? What can be done to intensify this perception and foster the development of theology as ministry?

It would be relatively simple to state with reasonable conviction that theology has always been ministry. Actually, the concept calls for much further exploration and articulation than has taken place. For one thing, the widespread repudiation of theologians as a source of embarrassment or confusion in the Christian community would seem to belie any claim on our part to the exercise of a ministry which is theology.

One of the signs of the failure of theology to be ministry is the development, in recent years, of pastoral theology. Pastoral theology or, as it has been called elsewhere, "the enculturation of faith,"<sup>26</sup> is that happy melding of theological knowledge and the professional, human skills which are expressed in words and gestures of support, instruction and healing through spiritual leadership and spiritual direction, in the multiple experiences of daily life. We might say that pastoral theology is the articulation of the manner in which "the men and women in the trenches" minister to the women and men "in the streets."

If pastoral theology is rapidly developing independently of and at a sometimes disturbing distance from what we might call "professional" theology, it is, perhaps, because as professional theologians, we have not always understood theology as ministry. If pastoral theology is considered a hybrid and a stepchild in the theological community, perhaps it is because, as professional theologians, we have not always known how or where to exercise theology as ministry.

As theologians, our theology must be ministry to one another, to specific members of intermediate groups and to the magisterium. I challenge the members of the CTSA to undertake this threefold exercise of ministry precisely as theologians.

<sup>25</sup>This summary of an understanding of ministry is based on previous study and analysis of the texts referred to in the text and published elsewhere by this author. Cf., for example, *The Role of Women in Ecclesial Ministry: Biblical and Patristic Foundations* (USCC Publications, 1976).

<sup>26</sup>I am indebted to Reverend Charles R. Meyer, Dean of Theology at St. Mary of the Lake Seminary, Mundelein, Illinois, for this definition.



*The Ministry of Mutuality*

How are we to minister to one another through our theological projects and undertakings? I suggest three simple ways which correspond to three concerns which I have for the Society.

My first concern is for what I shall call our *integrity*. Integrity, as I intend it here, is that quality which is violated by our inability to acknowledge or accept one another's competency, to celebrate one another's success. Integrity is violated by pejorative "labels" ascribed to those whose positions differ from ours, for any one of a variety of reasons. Integrity is violated when we readily exploit the disadvantage of another for our own personal or political aggrandizement. Integrity is violated by every effort to prevent theological research through totalitarian tactics or through disregard of the fine line that lies between the "safe-guarding" of the faith and control of individual consciences. The violation of integrity constitutes failure to exercise theology as ministry.

My second concern is for our *mutual support in faith*. Roman Catholic theologians, it seems, are notorious for their failure to pray together. When we do pray, it is often with a sense of embarrassment, of discomfort, of inability to execute together the symphony that fills our lives, the rhythm that measures our days. We have yet much to learn about that "new song," which the Word of God, as Clement of Alexandria tells us, sings to God through the instrument that each of us is meant to be:

A harp by the unity of parts in one whole  
 A flute by thy living breath  
 A temple by thy reason:  
 A harp that rings in harmony  
 A flute that breathes melody,  
 A temple that is the Lord's house.<sup>27</sup>

It is no secret that the great theologians of Christianity have all been, in a broad, inclusive sense, liturgists. Their theology is in their prayer, in their homilies, in their sacramental instructions and *sermones*. This is as true of Newman, Tillich and Barth, as it is of Chrysostom, Ambrose and Augustine. This is a ministry of which we have been deprived, frequently, in the Society. It is one we need for spiritual nourishment. The Society of theologians who know how to pray together may well be the one that stays together!

My third concern for our mutual ministry refers to those of our CTSA members who, for whatever reason, *experience a sense of isolation or alienation* in their CTSA membership. In some instances, this isolation is due to geographical location or philosophical orientation. At times, the sense of alienation is due to the fact that one represents a minority status in the Society. At other times, the distance seems to be experienced by newer, younger members who feel they somehow have to "prove" themselves before they receive recognition in the Society. Some members experience alienation in relation to the more experi-

<sup>27</sup> *Protrepitkos* I, O. Stahlin, GCS 12.

enced, older members, whose competence and expertise seem not to be readily accessible beyond a select "circle." The structures to address this third concern already exist in the CTSA. It is a matter of utilizing them in a new manner, that is, for fostering theology as ministry. The task should not be monumental.

### *The Wider Community*

Theology as ministry to the wider community, to the people of God, cannot be realistically considered perhaps, except in relation to other learned and scholarly societies. Here, I am conscious of setting old lyrics to a new melody or of playing the same old song in a new key. Through the leadership of the Board of Directors, the CTSA has often considered the possibility, the advantages and the obstacles attached to collaborative endeavors undertaken with other professional societies. A reasonable amount of cautious collaboration has been effected in recent years. Frequent evaluation of the CTSA position on jointly-sponsored or co-sponsored projects has taken and continues to take place. CTSA liaison with the Joint Committee of Catholic Learned Societies and Scholars seems to be one hopeful way in which to insure the unique contribution that we, as theologians, can offer to serious research tasks of importance undertaken by Catholic scholars for the vitality of the Church in the United States.

As we listen to requests that come to the Society for collaboration and cooperation, the understanding of theology as ministry may help to shed welcome and new light for clearer determination of a policy that will be found to be appropriate to the nature of the Society and consonant with its purpose. Such a policy would be helpful in meeting the challenge that comes from groups carrying responsibility for religious education, the continued formation of priests or other organizations which recognize the need of sound doctrinal foundation and competent theological reflection as assists in the fulfillment of their particular objectives. In these areas, our understanding of theology as ministry ought to enable us to bring together the rich, untapped resources of our Society's members and the needs of persons who are critically placed to translate and transmit the results of theological research into a more accessible mode for a still wider community than the one we are able to serve.

### *Theology and the Magisterium*

The third area which I would present as a challenge for our understanding and exercise of theology as ministry is that of our relationship with the magisterium. It is true that the CTSA has served the American bishops in many ways, especially since the strengthening of contacts which took place during the presidency of Richard A. McCormick, S.J. (1970-1971). Specific research topics have been undertaken at the request of bishops. Task forces have been established to study documents and questions submitted by episcopal committees or by individual or-

dinaries. Members of the Society have taken part in projects directed toward the continued education of the bishops. Requests for research assistance from individual theologians continue to be channelled through the CTSA liaison representative with the Joint Committee of Catholic Learned Societies and Scholars or directed to the office of the Secretary.

Theology as ministry to bishops, as I envisage it, is needed to address the development of open and sincere dialogue between the CTSA and the bishops. Renewed contact with the Committee on Doctrine ought to be reconsidered, following on the mutual dissatisfaction with modalities of discourse as they existed until three or four years ago. New channels for such exchange need to be designed conjointly, in order to foster a dialogue which is desired and sought by both bishops and theologians. The guidelines of the International Theological Commission for relationships between theology and the magisterium could be consulted with profit by both groups.<sup>28</sup>

Theology as ministry to bishops needs to be exercised with attention to the difficulties that militate against a bishop's desires and efforts to remain theologically advised; to work through the multitudinous documents he receives for consultation; to provide leadership that is doctrinally faithful and pastorally sensitive. Theology as ministry ought to know how to serve the bishops in these needs. Theology as ministry ought to seek to assure the bishops that competent theological research is meant, in the last analysis, to contribute to the bishops' competency and credibility in the exercise of the episcopal pastoral office.<sup>29</sup> It is important that the bishops be helped to perceive this, even when the results of theological research seem to challenge rather than confirm that exercise. Theology as ministry ought to prepare for the day when bishops and theologians in mutual respect, in creative tension, in disagreement and in dialogue can witness in a shining manner to the unity of faith in the harmony of a recognized diversity, for the comfort and the sustenance of themselves, first of all, and for the whole People of God.

#### CONCLUSION

Theology as science, as wisdom, as ministry: this, I submit is theology for a future Church. This is a theology we can even now anticipate, as we reflect on the life and activities of the CTSA in its most representative moments. I say this, with the conviction that I speak, not only for myself, but, in a very real sense, for the Society as a whole.

This is so, because the reflections I have shared with you, the challenges I have placed before you, carry the resonance of your own concerns, of your own vision. You know the achievements of the CTSA as well as I—some of you, much better. My perception of the Society's strengths and weaknesses, its resources and its potential for the future is

<sup>28</sup>(USCC Publications, 1977.)

<sup>29</sup>Cf. the address delivered October 1, 1966 by Pope Paul VI at the closing session of the International Congress on the Theology of the Second Vatican Council.

a composite perception, sharpened by what I have learned from past presidents, from faithful and active members, from new members with aspirations and projects still to be realized.

If I have been able to identify aspects of life in the Society where effort and endeavor are indicated, it is because I know we are thinking together of greater effort and endeavor. If I have dared to suggest areas where growth and development are possible, it is because I am certain that we share the conviction that growth and development are realities which must continue.

We have every reason to be grateful and confident that our unique mission in the Church of the future is needed, is desired, is assured.

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