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Ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι, μιᾷ ψυχῇ  
συναβλοῦντες τῇ πίστει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου  
Phil. 1:27

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out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." 13

The sling which David later took as his sole weapon against Goliath would be familiar equipment for the modern Palestinian shepherd. It is a home-made affair, braided by the shepherd himself of goat's hair. Shepherds pride themselves on their deadly accuracy with the sling. Against wolves and jackals it is their chief weapon of defense. During the long hours with the sheep, it is both a recreation and serves for a mechanical sheep-dog. Should a ram or lambkin wander off a bit from the flock, a rock is dropped just ahead of him to drive him back with the rest. Strangely the Jew and Bedouin shepherds have no use whatever for sheep-dogs except for use at night around the sheepfold to warn against marauders, whether of the two or four-footed variety.

Christ brings into focus all the warmth and allusion of the shepherd heritage of His audience. Note how he first points out the tender attachment between shepherd and flock; then, he weaves into this context a strong allusion to His Divinity; and finally he predicts His coming Passion and death: "I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me, even as the Father knows me and I know the Father: and I lay down my life for my sheep."<sup>14</sup>

At this point a typical Joannine touch creeps into the parable. St. John was writing with the Gentiles of Ephesus and Patmos in mind. He never passes up an opportunity to bring in something Christ said or did that would be especially encouraging to Gentiles: "And other sheep I have, that are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd."<sup>15</sup>

To the Jews this same passage would recall Ezechiel's prophecy: "I will set up one shepherd over thee."<sup>16</sup> And to us, it is a prophecy of the return, some day, of Israel to the one true fold.

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<sup>13</sup> I Kings 17:35-37.  
<sup>14</sup> John 10:14-15.

<sup>15</sup> John 10:16.  
<sup>16</sup> Ezech. 34:23.

## THE RELIGIOUS ASSENT DUE TO THE TEACHINGS OF PAPAL ENCYCLICALS

It is perfectly certain theological teaching that the faithful are bound in conscience to give a sincere and truly inward assent to those doctrines which the Holy Father presents to the Church through the medium of his encyclical letters, even when these doctrines are not set forth as infallibly certain statements. In other words, when some truth which has not been authoritatively presented to the kingdom of God on earth except in a papal encyclical, even when that truth is contained in a non-infallible manner in the Holy Father's letter, Catholics are distinctly obliged, under penalty of offending God Himself, not only to refrain from opposition to this doctrine, but also to accept it as their own firm judgment. There is no question about this basic fact.<sup>1</sup>

Indubitably the Roman Pontiff has the right to issue authoritative doctrinal statements which are presented neither as dogmas of divine faith nor as truths of what has been, since the seventeenth century, generally called *fides ecclesiastica*. This divinely given power, which Franzelin ascribes to his "authority of doctrinal providence,"<sup>2</sup> obviously involves the right to demand from the faithful an acceptance of these statements by an assent which is firm and sincere, yet inferior to the assent of divine faith and the assent of the so-called ecclesiastical faith. Dominic Palmieri and Thomas Pègues speak of a morally certain assent which must be accorded to these authentic, yet non-infallible pontifical teachings.<sup>3</sup> Ludwig Lercher describes this internal religious assent as *interpretative conditionatus*.<sup>4</sup> All agree that the faithful are obligated in conscience to give at least this type of assent to any teaching which has

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the article "The Doctrinal Authority of Papal Encyclicals," in *AER*, CXXI, 2, 3 (Aug. and Sept., 1949), 136-50, 210-20.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Franzelin, *De divina traditione et scriptura*, 3rd edition (Rome: Congregatio de Propaganda Fide, 1882), p. 131.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Palmieri, *Tractatus de Romano Pontifice cum progromeno de ecclesia*, 2nd edition (Prato, Giachetti, 1891), pp. 718 ff.; Pègues, "L'autorité des encycliques pontificales d'après Saint Thomas," in the *Revue Thomiste*, XII (1904), 512-32.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Lercher, *Institutiones theologice dogmaticae in usum scholarum*, 2nd edition (Innsbruck: Rauch, 1934), I, 519.

been authoritatively presented to the Church solely through the medium of a papal encyclical.

A tremendous and increasingly important amount of religious teaching has been presented to the Church in papal encyclicals, and authoritatively only in these documents, especially during the past half-century. Hence it seems clear that theologians should do everything within their power to describe and explain the assent due to these doctrines as accurately and as adequately as possible. Such a description and explanation manifestly involve answers to two basic questions. First, what one among the existent theological censures would apply to the denial of a teaching which is proposed authoritatively only in a papal encyclical, and which is presented in a non-infallible manner in that document? Second, against which one of the infused virtues does the denial of such a teaching offend? Completely satisfactory responses to these two questions would be of immense benefit to students of sacred theology. Together they would certainly constitute a definite and important advance in theological science.

The present paper intends merely to open the way to what can be a definitely fruitful discussion of these questions by pointing out some of the salient difficulties inherent in the subject-matter and by indicating probable answers. Ultimately acceptable solutions to these problems can manifestly come only through the corporate work of many theologians and only after certain prior questions have been taken into account.

In setting out to answer the question about the theological censure that would apply to the denial of a doctrine which has been presented authoritatively only in an encyclical and which is proposed in a non-infallible manner in this encyclical, we encounter a rather serious difficulty at the very beginning. The early theological explanations of the various doctrinal censures or notes took no direct cognizance of non-infallible teaching emanating from the *ecclesia docens*. They were, as a class, more interested in explaining the various qualifications in terms of the logical nexus between the teachings to which these censures were applied and statements of Catholic dogma. They made no consistent effort to tie these qualifications up with the various ways in which the *ecclesia docens* actually presents its teachings in Our Lord's kingdom on earth. Since by far the majority of theologians who have dealt with this subject

down through the years have chosen to follow that same tendency, the teaching on the theological censures, even as it stands today, is not directly and perfectly geared to the treatise on the Church's Magisterium.

The practice of reproving certain teachings authoritatively but with a qualification less severe than that of heresy has been common in the Catholic Church since the fourteenth century. Thus Pope Clement V, speaking in the name of the fifteenth oecumenical council, that of Vienne, reproved every doctrine or position rashly asserting or insinuating "that the substance of the rational or intellectual soul is not truly and of itself the form of the human body" as something "erroneous and hostile to the truth of the Catholic faith."<sup>5</sup> In the same paragraph, however, it is asserted that a person who holds or defends this position pertinaciously must be considered as a heretic. Thus, as far as the terminology of this document is concerned, the condemned proposition ceases to be merely erroneous and becomes heretical by reason of the pertinacity or obstinacy of the man who puts it forward.

Pope John XXII, in his constitution *Gloriosam ecclesiam*, condemned five statements contained in the teachings of the Fratricelli. Four of these he qualified as errors. A fifth he listed as a blasphemy.<sup>6</sup> The same Pontiff in his constitution *Cum inter nonnullos* qualified another proposition as something which from that time forward would rightly be qualified as erroneous and as heretical.<sup>7</sup> He characterized certain statements of Marsilius of Padua and of John of Jandun as "contrary to the Scripture, hostile to Catholic faith, *haereticos seu haereticales*, and erroneous."<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, in condemning certain theses which had been proposed by Eckhart, Pope John XXII characterized some of them as heretical and others as "ill sounding, temerarious, and suspect of heresy."<sup>9</sup> Pope Urban V stigmatized each of three propositions taken from the teachings of Denis Fouillechat as "false, erroneous, and heretical."<sup>10</sup>

Astonishingly enough, the theologians who dealt with the question of doctrinal censures paid comparatively little attention to these fourteenth-century qualifications. They referred rather to the ac-

<sup>5</sup> In Denzinger, *Enchiridion symbolorum* (DB), 16th edition (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1928), n. 481.

<sup>6</sup> DB, 485-89.

<sup>7</sup> DB, 494.

<sup>8</sup> DB, 500.

<sup>9</sup> DB, 529.

<sup>10</sup> DB, 575-77.

tion of the Council of Constance, and of Pope Martin V in confirming some of the enactments of this synod. The Council, in its eighth session, had condemned forty-five propositions taken from the works of Wycleff, asserting that many of these were manifestly heretical, several others erroneous, and others again scandalous, blasphemous, temerarious, and offensive to pious ears.<sup>11</sup> Later it rejected thirty propositions ascribed to John Hus.<sup>12</sup> Pope Martin V, in his Bull, *Inter cunctas*, demanded from persons suspected of Wycleffite or Hussite tendencies the admission that the statements stigmatized by the Council "are not Catholic, but some of them notoriously heretical, some erroneous, others temerarious and seditious, and others offensive to pious ears."<sup>13</sup>

The Cardinal John de Turreremata who had himself been present at the deliberations of the Council of Constance formulated the first influential description of the censures on a theological rather than on merely a canonical level. He distinguished seven different kinds of heretical propositions, each one of which was considered as opposed to a definite class of Catholic truth.<sup>14</sup> As distinct from these, he spoke of certain statements which, though not heretical in the absolute sense, were *haeresim sapientes quia haeresi propinquae*.<sup>15</sup> Such statements were conclusions which followed from two premises, the one an heretical proposition in the strict sense of the term, and the other a perfectly certain and evident statement of the natural order.

Turreremata defined a temerarious assertion (which, incidentally, he explained just after the propositions favoring of heresy and just before those characterized as erroneous) as "a proposition stating either by reason or from authority."<sup>16</sup> As an example of a temerarious proposition he gives a declaration that the world is due to end at the end of one hundred and twenty years. He defines an er-

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Hefele-Leclercq, *Histoire des conciles* (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1916), VII, 224 f.; *DB*, 581-625.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Hefele-Leclercq, *op. cit.*, 316 ff.; *DB*, 627-56.

<sup>13</sup> *DB*, 661.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Turreremata, *Summa de ecclesia*, Lib. IV, par. 2, c. 10 (Venice, 1561), p. 383v.

<sup>15</sup> *Cf. ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, c. 11, p. 384r.

roneous proposition merely as one which states something false.<sup>17</sup> All of the other doctrinal censures have reference, according to Turreremata, to faults which the condemned teachings are likely to bring about in those who accept them or to the damage they do to others. Later writers spoke of censures which denounced certain statements as ambiguous or misleading.

The theologians who followed Turreremata were inclined to amplify his teachings about the meaning of that doctrinal censure by which a teaching is qualified as erroneous. Melchior Cano held that this censure differed from that of heresy "not as a genus differs from a species, but as one species of error differs from another."<sup>18</sup> He asserted that a proposition was classified as erroneous in the strict sense of the term when it contradicted a Catholic truth of the second order, a doctrine the denial of which involved, not the loss of faith, but damage to the faith. He believed, furthermore, that when the learned and competent Catholics are firmly convinced that a proposition is of faith, but when the Church has not obviously defined this proposition, its contradiction constitutes an error of the type stigmatized by this doctrinal censure.<sup>19</sup>

Francis Suarez developed the teaching about the censure of a proposition as erroneous to the stage at which it exists in most theological textbooks today. Suarez carefully explained Cano's stand on this question, and admitted that Cano had successfully distinguished the censure of error from that of heresy. He believed, however, that Cano's teachings could not serve to show the difference between the qualification of error and the other censures less severe than that of heresy. It was in order to clarify this last distinction that he offered his own solution to the problem. Suarez insisted that an erroneous proposition was one which was opposed to a doctrine which is theologically certain, but which has not the certitude of divine faith itself. Ultimately such a teaching was classified as a conclusion derived from a syllogism composed of one premise accepted on divine faith and one acceptable in the light of human reason.<sup>20</sup> Thus, for all intents and purposes, the proposition

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Cano, *De locis theologicis*, Lib. 12, c. 9, in the *Opera theologica* (Rome: Forzani, 1900), III, 82.

<sup>19</sup> *Cf. ibid.*, 83.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Suarez, *Tractatus de fide*, disp. 19, sect. 2, in the *Opus de triplici virtute theologica, fide, spe, et caritate* (Lyons, 1621), p. 302.

which Suarez would censure as erroneous was equivalent to the one which Turrecremata would qualify as savoring of heresy or as nearly heretical.<sup>21</sup>

Cano developed Turrecremata's teaching about temerarious propositions by asserting that such statements were opposed, not directly to the faith, but rather to the rule of ecclesiastical *modestia*. He classed a denial of Our Lady's assumption as a temerarious statement.<sup>22</sup> Suarez, on the other hand, distinguished two different sorts of temerarious pronouncements. The first were those of the type already described by Turrecremata, teachings presented as certain, but lacking any adequate evidence of certitude or of credibility. The second were those statements opposed to the received and common authority of the Fathers and the scholastics.<sup>23</sup> Suarez' treatment of this question was destined to remain classical in the literature of scholastic theology. There have been some developments, but substantially the position of the theologians today is that of the great Spanish Jesuit writer.

In line with these explanations, it is clear that the contradiction of a doctrinal statement contained in a papal encyclical in a non-infallible manner, but asserted authoritatively only in an encyclical, is something which could be qualified with at least the censure of error. Obviously this applies to doctrinal statements alone. There are many encyclicals, primarily commemorative rather than doctrinal in content, in which some of the statements, particularly of merely historical import, are obviously not being imposed authoritatively upon the members of Christ's flock.

Where there are doctrinal statements, as in the case of the social encyclicals, those which dealt with questions of Church and State, and others of an obviously dogmatic character, it is perfectly clear that these statements deal at least with matters connected with the faith, and that the authority by which they are proposed is at least on a par with that of the common consent of the Fathers or of the scholastics. By reason of these very characteristics, all doctrinal statements contained in the encyclicals must be accepted

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Turrecremata, *op. cit.*, c. 10, p. 383v.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Cano, *op. cit.*, p. 90. It is interesting to note that Suarez (*loc. cit.*) lists the denial of Our Lady's assumption as an error according to the principles of Cano himself.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Suarez, *op. cit.*, p. 304.

with a firm and sincere inward assent. For this same reason a denial of such doctrinal propositions may be qualified or censured as at least temerarious.

Objectively the man who teaches or who accepts such a temerarious proposition is morally at fault. It is important to know against what particular virtue or virtues this man offends by this type of activity.

Cano, as we have seen, believed that such conduct was contrary to the rule of ecclesiastical modesty. The *modestia* to which Cano referred seems to be the virtue which St. Thomas classified in his *Summa theologica* as one of the potential parts of the virtue of temperance. This *modestia* disposes a man towards the proper moderation in those matters in which moderation is not encompassed with any special difficulty.<sup>24</sup>

The Carmelites of Salamanca, in their famed *Cursus theologicus*, listed the teaching and the holding of propositions censured or censurable as temerarious as acts of *curiositas*, as offenses against the virtue of *studiositas*, one of the "parts" of *modestia*.<sup>25</sup> The *curiositas* of which the Salmanticenses speak consists in a failure to moderate, or properly to direct, man's natural tendency to seek knowledge. St. Thomas teaches that a man who seeks to know truth which lies beyond the range of his own competence can be considered guilty of this infraction.<sup>26</sup> Those who, on their own initiative, presume to question or to contradict a doctrinal statement proposed authoritatively in a papal encyclical, even in cases where the Holy Father does not make a definitive decision, may well be said to be striving for something manifestly beyond their competence. No individual and, for that matter, no group of individuals within the *ecclesia discens* can be said to have the competence to dispute with the visible head of the Church militant on a matter connected with the Church's deposit of divine revelation.

At least in an indirect manner, however, every rejection of an authoritative doctrinal pronouncement contained in a papal encyclical is opposed to the theological virtue of faith itself. That virtue empowers a man to accept with complete certitude and on God's

<sup>24</sup> Cf. II-II, q. 160, a. 1.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. their *Tractatus de fide*, disp. 9, dub. 4, n. 3, in the *Cursus theologicus* (Paris and Brussels, 1879), XI, 436.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. II-II, q. 167, a. 1.

own authority the body of truth which the Church proposes as having been revealed by God as His public communication to mankind. It must be remembered that the Church definitely does not teach this divine message in the capacity of an entity in any way separated from or independent of God Himself. The *ecclesia docens* acts as God's instrument. What the Church teaches is not the Church's message but God's message.

It must be understood, furthermore, that the commission given to and the responsibility incumbent upon the successor of St. Peter must not be considered as limited to the bare presentation of the truths revealed by God and entrusted to His kingdom on earth. The Prince of the Apostles was empowered and commanded to act as a shepherd to Christ's sheep, and to feed His lambs and His sheep. He and his successors are thus obligated to nourish and to protect the faith of their brethren within the Church. The task which God has entrusted to them makes it imperative that they authoritatively discountenance tenets or propositions injurious to faith or morals even on points upon which they have not as yet issued definitive and absolutely irrevocable decisions.

Thus we lay ourselves open to very serious misunderstandings when we fail to appreciate the fact that the teaching of the Church must be taken as a unit. While it remains perfectly true that not every individual authoritative statement issued by the *ecclesia docens* is to be accepted with the assent of divine faith, we must remember that all of the doctrinal activity of the Catholic Church is essentially nothing more or less than the highly complex process of teaching the content of divine public revelation. All of the subsidiary or preparatory authoritative pronouncements of the Holy Father or of the entire *ecclesia docens*; all of the decisions given by the Church's *magisterium* on matters connected with the deposit of revelation rather than with the formal content of that revealed message, must be considered as a contribution to and as a part of the process of teaching and guarding the divine teaching delivered to the Church by the apostles.

When an individual or a group of individuals presume on their own initiative to deny or to ignore the authoritative doctrinal statements of papal encyclicals, they are at least placed in the position of rejecting divinely authorized guidance in the direction of the purity and the well-being of the faith. The fact that some authori-

tative statements of the Church's *magisterium* are frequently said to demand an adherence of "ecclesiastical faith," while others, again, call for merely "a firm, sincere, and inward religious assent," should not blind men to the paramount truth that all such pronouncements enter into the effective carrying out of the Petrine commission to confirm the faith of the brethren.

Thus, to return to our original questions, it would seem that a rejection of a doctrinal statement proposed authoritatively in a pontifical encyclical could be considered censurable as *ad minus temeraria*. Such an unauthorized rejection on the part of individuals or groups of individuals within the Church would violate what Cano termed "the rule of ecclesiastical *modestia*," and would be opposed, indirectly though none the less truly, to the virtue of divine faith, not in such a way as to destroy that virtue, but objectively to constitute an offense against it and to harm it.

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#### PRAISE AND THE PREACHER

If the preacher permits himself to be carried away by a desire of praise, his labour and his talent will profit him nothing. For the mind that cannot bear the foolish criticism of the people becomes discouraged and loses zeal for preaching. Hence it is very important to be convinced that praise should be despised. For if a man is not convinced of this, whatever be his talent for oratory, he will not succeed. And if you consider carefully the case of the man who is without that talent, you will find that he needs contempt of praise no less than the other. For if he permits himself to be overcome by the desire of praise, he will be driven to commit many faults. For as he is unable to equal orators of repute, he will not shrink from plotting against them and envying them, and finding fault with them, and doing many other unseemly things. But he will risk everything, were it even the loss of his own soul, to lower the reputation of others to the level of his own.

—Saint John Chrysostom, *On the Priesthood* (Westminster, Md.: The Newman Bookshop, 1943. Pp. 114-15).