

CURRENT THEOLOGY  
GLEANINGS FROM THE COMMENTARIES ON  
*HUMANI GENERIS*

I

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## II

Some eighteen months have gone by since Pope Pius XII's encyclical, *Humani generis*, was directed to the Catholic world.<sup>1</sup> A vast flood of commentary has followed on the event; nor was this surprising, because theologians are the first to study encyclicals and this one was an encyclical with a direct and special message for the theologians themselves. Yet, after reading the comments at hand, it seems safe to say that the definitive commentary has not yet been written. It also seems safe to say that, from this point onward, there will only be a trickle of commentary following after the initial flood of ink. However, this trickle will probably be more important, because there will be concentration of attention on nuclear questions raised by the Roman document, for the task of popular divulgation will have been transcended. Already a very broad area of agreement has been achieved by the commentators, and where there are divergences, significant though they are, only aspects and prolongations of the letter are affected.

Without exception, the Catholic theologians who commented on the pronouncement considered it most important, most timely, and most satisfactory. A non-Catholic might smilingly say that nothing else could be expected from Catholic theologians in the presence of a papal directive. However, even a non-Catholic would have to admit that there is a palpable sincerity in the affirmations of all when they manifest satisfaction and contentment with the encyclical, and no one can dismiss the common consent on this point by insinuating that some were speaking with their tongues in their cheeks.<sup>2</sup>

There were some voices of opposition. However, either they were non-

<sup>1</sup> 1/1/15, XLII (1950), 561-78.

<sup>2</sup> Erich Brock raised his voice in protest so that the Catholics who could not speak might be heard (cf. Rahner, p. 161). Brock's intentions were, no doubt, kindly, but he misunderstood the whole situation. *Humani generis* dealt with domestic issues; it was a purely family affair. There was no gagging of an opposition, because there could be none. The greenest tinn in Cathnlir ihrnlngy understands that pontifical directives are of the essence of his discipline. There is no legitimate resentment when they are given, any more than a football team legitimately resents the presence and activity of referees, without whom there could be no game, no order, and no progress. Cf. Dclfgauw, col. 1310.

Catholic critics such as Barrois and the Protestants of the German-speaking lands, or they were Catholic non-theologians like Séjournas. Because of initial theological commitments or because of a non-theological partisan spirit, such commentators were hardly competent to do justice to the papal doctrine.

As an introduction to this study, the reader has found a long catalogue of articles and works directly and immediately bearing on the encyclical? There was a serious attempt made to get representative voices from the total stretch of the Catholic world, but this attempt was not as successful as one might wish. Undoubtedly commentaries of importance have been omitted, but it was only because of the compiler's ignorance of their existence. It will be sadly noted that only one reaction from the Slav lands is recorded, but the reason is obvious; the Iron Curtain efficaciously separates us from our brethren in the East, and in all probability they could not tell us much about the Roman message, for they have more urgent problems to occupy their attention.

With the exception of Cotter's monograph, all other works mentioned are articles appearing in reviews and journals. Two reviews dedicated whole numbers to the encyclical.<sup>4</sup> The Thomistic Congress of September, 1950, has promised a thorough analysis of the document.<sup>6</sup> Many reviews, including this one, published comment in different numbers by different writers.<sup>6</sup> The result has been a quantity of literature not much smaller than that which followed on the bull defining the Assumption, which was promulgated about the same time. This abundance of studies proves more efficaciously than the affirmations of the writers themselves that the Roman letter was important.

Many commentators found fault with the quasi-official translations of the encyclical circulating in their language zones. This is really inevitable and only underlines the old principle that documents must be studied in

<sup>1</sup> References to commentators will be given in this article in terms of the catalogue. Articles in Netherlandish and Polish are named, but except for the two Netherlandish articles translated into French in *Documentation catholique*, they were not used because I cannot read those languages. I have been told that the Polish article deals with the problem of evolution as it is discussed in the encyclical.

<sup>4</sup> *Rivista di filosofia neoscholastica*. XI.III (Jan-Feb., 1951); *Euntes docete*, IA (nn<sup>o</sup> 1-2, 1951). The latter collection of articles touches and develops most of the points made in the encyclical and there are fifteen articles in all.

<sup>6</sup> Monsegù, p. 82.

•Two such series should be thrown into high relief: that of the *Civiltà cattolica*, and that of the *Nouvelle revue théologique*. The articles of the latter series have been collected and published as a brochure: *L'Encyclique "Humani generis"* (Collection des Cahiers de la Nouvelle revue théologique, VIII; Tournai: Casterman, 1951).

the original. The problem of translation is always vexing, not least to the translator himself who sweats and grunts in an ungrateful task. For the English language I know of three translations: (1) the quasi-official rendition of the N.C.W.C., published by the Council in booklet form along with an outline made by Dr. J. C. Fenton,<sup>7</sup> and also published without the outline by the *Catholic Mind* in its November, 1950, number;<sup>8</sup> (2) the Ronald Knox version published in the London *Tablet* for September 2, 1950;<sup>9</sup> (3) Father Cotter's translation published in his monograph.<sup>10</sup> For literary excellence and close adherence to the explicit text of the original, Msgr. Knox's work seems to be the best.

The commentaries were made from many different viewpoints and in the light of preoccupations varying in different regions. Some were mere paraphrastic repetitions of the leading passages of the encyclical. Others attempted to deepen and clarify particular points made in the Roman letter. In consequence the commentaries deal with theological method, determined theological doctrines, patristics, exegesis, philosophy, science, and the historical background of the document. Cardinal Gerlier and Father Cotter stated that the encyclical spoke adequately for itself and no commentary was needed—but both made comments, the Cardinal with laconic brevity and Father Cotter at length after giving solid reasons of justification."

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The overall significance of the letter was expressed in contradicting rhetorics, but only the rhetorics were in conflict, not the inner conceptions. Flick, for example, says:

Some enemies of the Church have called the encyclical "Humani generis" the encyclical of intransigence, and in a certain sense it deserves this name. The Pope has in fact shown himself intransigent to everything that could compromise the purity of faith; and woe to us if it were not so, if the immovable rock on which

<sup>7</sup> *Humani generis: Encyclical Letter of Pope Pius XII*. (Washington, D.C.: National Catholic Welfare Conference, (1950)).

• *Catholic Mind*, XLVHI (1950), 688-700.

\* *Tablet*, pp. 187-90.

<sup>10</sup> Cotter, pp. 3-49.

"Colter, pp. ix-x. Fenton, on the other hand, felt that the encyclical needed annotations to be understood: "... its schematic form, the very thing which must be grasped if the message itself is to be completely understood, is somewhat obscured under the literary perfection of the *stylus curiae* so characteristic of all papal documents. For those who study the document in an unannotated translation, the work of analysis will probably be somewhat difficult" ("Lesson," p. 361). Columbo thought it divided obviously into four parts (cf. p. 418).

the Church is founded had begun to vacillate, if Peter had ceased to confirm his brethren.<sup>12</sup>

Yet the distinctions that Flick made in his article indicate that he would not object to the summary of Galvin, where the rhetoric is quite different.

There is, therefore, a spirit of largeness in *Humani generis* which is in striking contrast to the letter of Pope Pius X, *Pascendi*, condemning Modernism. The moderation is seen (1) in the tone of the warnings, (2) in the care with which directives are presented, (3) in the balance between the rejection of modern errors and the acceptance of those elements of truth which are useful in developing greater precision and exactness in theological and philosophical studies, and (4) in the encouragement given to research by those interested and competent.<sup>13</sup>

Amid so wide a variety of commentators the rhetorics must necessarily vary, for the group will contain representatives of both the Right and the left. However, let it be remembered that the Left in this case is not an opposition party. By the Right we mean those who stress the restrictive and negative aspects of the encyclical, and by the Left we understand those who stress the permissive and positive elements. The Right is inclined to reject almost all the points of view found in the work of more recent theologians, championing instead stands comfortably in possession before the appearance of the fresh challenge; the Left, anxious to discard all that was fallacious and dangerous in the new, yet wishes to retain some of the values brought to light. There is here no question either of reaction or of minimizing. Left and Right are labels for different temperaments, not for different theologies. Nor must we think that all the contributors to the general discussion were either of the Right or of the Left. Most of the commentators, including the two cited, have no intention of belonging either to the Right or to the Left, and soberly and moderately they make their reflections with no partisan allegiances.

The possibility of partisan spirit is present because the Roman document deals with what the Pope called in 1946 a “new theology.” As long as this term is written in minuscules rather than with capital initials, there can be no hard feelings anywhere, and the meaning of the “new theology” will be gathered from the encyclical itself. The “new theology” as presented and defined in the letter was condemned and all the commentators heartily agreed that the condemnation was just and necessary. Yet prior to the publication of the document there was a heated debate in Europe concerning

<sup>12</sup> Flick, p. 590.

<sup>13</sup> Galvin, p. 501.

<sup>14</sup> In the allornlinn io ih,>                      nf ihç Twenty-ninth Cnngregatinn nf the SnrmLy\_of Jesus, September 17, 1946 (.4.15, XXXVIII [1946], 385).

the validity of the work of a group of theologians most of whom lived in France. This was a well-defined group with definite works which they had published, and their doctrines could be concretely studied in the concrete contributions which they produced. They resented the name of "new theology," in capitals or minuscules, as an unjust and improper label for their movement, but in due time the name stuck to them, and it was written as the "New Theology." No commentator ignored the fact that there was an intimate bond between the Pope's "new theology" and the French "New Theology." The Pope's message was about a theological trend that existed and not about some theology in a void, and the commentators spontaneously turned their eyes to France, and many French commentators admitted quite candidly that the encyclical had special reference to a concrete movement in France.<sup>15</sup> Two Italians, Parente and Percgo, underlined this truth, and the Spanish commentators in general pointed to it, courteously but unmistakably.

There was, therefore, a universal recognition that in the French "New Theology" there were elements of the "new theology" condemned by Rome. However, the pontifical epistle gives no one the right to identify the two theologies, in whole or in part, because it carefully refrains from naming names or indicating concrete works as expressing the condemned doctrines. Any attempt to make such an identification must be done by the private theologian at his own risk. There were, in consequence, no gleeful cries of crowing at the sight of an adversary brought low, but in their stead we find from many sides a demand of respect and charity for such theologians who to some degree or other may be objectively involved in the doctrines condemned by Rome but whose good names and orthodoxy were gently protected by pontifical silence. Rahner warned the theologians who wished to use the encyclical against individual French colleagues with these words: "It would be wholly against the mind of the encyclical itself to use it as a quiver supplying arrows for anyone feeling an eagerness to shoot."<sup>16</sup> Such warnings derive from the spirit of the document itself; it is so moderate, so painstaking in making distinctions, and so careful to name no one, that it antecedently prevented the witch-hunting that brought forth the Integrism which followed on *Pascendi*. In fact, Percgo, a stern critic of the "New

<sup>15</sup> CL, e.g., Barrat and Rouquette.

<sup>16</sup> Rahner, p. 169.

<sup>17</sup> Integrism or Integralism was a phenomenon consequent on the condemnation of Modernism. It manifested itself in the grouping of theologians and churchmen with the intention of combating any tendency or manifestation of Modernism, which was understood exaggeratedly as including anything that in the slightest way smacked of novelty. The movement had its organization and its organs: the organization was the *Sodalitium pianuni*, which was international and widespread; the principal organs were: *Correspon-*

Theology, felt obliged to protest against those who branded all opposition to the Nuova Teologia as a revival of the Integrist terror.<sup>18</sup>

The net result for the commentators was that they tried in large part to follow the example of Michel who said that the opinions under papal consideration had to be considered objectively in a pure state of abstraction from persons and places.<sup>19</sup> Michel followed his own program successfully and so did many others, but some could not resist the temptation to illustrate points made by the encyclical with examples drawn from the “New Theologians.” Nor was this altogether avoidable, for the debates that preceded the Roman letter were very much in the minds of the theologians who took part in them, and the encyclical dealt with the debated issues.

Naturally among the French commentators there were those who were more than ready to make no reference to names, works, and places. Boyer even saw a tendency in certain sections of the French press to denaturalize and minimize the papal doctrine.<sup>20</sup> However, the responsible spokesmen for French theology made it quite clear that they welcomed the directive and would obey it sincerely and wholeheartedly. Rouquette was insistent on this point.<sup>21</sup> It is true that Séjournas tried to dismiss the document by attributing its authorship to obscurantist Vatican bureaucrats but he was unique in more ways than one.<sup>22</sup> In fact, it is interesting to point out that,

*dence de Rome*, directed by Begnigni; the *Foi catholique* of the ex-Jesuit Gaudcau aryl p Fontaine; the *Critique du libéralisme*, conducted by the ex-Icsuit Barbier, who went so far as to brand Leo XIII with liberalism; the *Petrus-Blalla* of Trier. They were opposed lōanylthing lhc“considered “minimizing,” and stood for “integral Catholicism.” They attacked other theologians, raised suspicions, made accusations in Rome, and terrorized Catholic intellectuals everywhere. They were supported by the *Action française*, but Benedict XV, in his first encyclical, *Id beatissimi*, Nov. 1, 1914 (.4.45, \ I 11914], 576–77), condemned them forthrightly. Cf. J. De Jong, *Handboek der Kerkgeschiednis* (2nd ed.^ Utrecht-Nijmegen: Dekker and Van De Vcgt, 1932), III, 359-60.

» Pcrego, p. 450. The word “Integrism” also appeared in other articles: Flick, p. 570, note 3; Monscgii, p. 83. Parente uses the word *integrista* but with no reference to the Integrist movement (cf. p. 23).

” Michel, p. 662.

M Boyer, “Leçons,” p. 526.

,l Rouquette, pp. 108-9.

n It was strange to find a weak and modified echo of Séjournas’ thought in an article which almost certainly had no dependence on the bitter French essay. I refer to the highly laudatory article on Pope Pius XII by the prominent Catholic convert, Graham Greene. In “The Pope Who Remains a Priest,” Greene has the following paragraph: “Pius XII gives no automatic benediction, though there are still dim depths, one feels, in the Vatican in spite of the Roman sunshine glinting on the orders and the swords as one is sieved from one audience chamber to another by the scarlet flunkies. The huge civil service has to go on functioning, and sometimes in our irritation at its slowness, its caution or its pedantry,

though uncontrollable rumors gave names to those who collaborated in the preparation of the document, yet no writer made any mention or even insinuation of collaborators, notwithstanding the known Roman procedure of calling in consultants for the composition of encyclicals.<sup>23</sup>

Officially, then, there were no flesh-and-blood enemies at whom the Roman pronouncement aimed. Yet it was quite clear that the condemned doctrines, at least in seed-form, had local incarnations. Colombo felt that it was impossible *for* Italian theologians to make identifications, because communications with France were too meager to allow Italians to form an adequate picture of what was going on over the Alps.<sup>24</sup> Labourdette from France said that the task of identification could not be essayed now, though future historians of theology, after painstaking investigations, might be able to give an answer.<sup>25</sup> The most delightful remark about identifying the "enemy" was made by Rahner, who, conceding that the encyclical looked primarily to France, yet pointed out that it gave general norms which all theologians need, and which no true theologian had not violated in some way or another, and so each theologian was the "enemy" and should say his *confiteor*.<sup>TM</sup> However, not all commentators shared Rahner's sentiments, for two were not stimulated to remorse because of the Roman document but derived

we may feel that it is obscuring the white-clothed figure at the center. The banning of Sartre's books, the recent withdrawal of certain well known French Jesuits from teaching—these acts, of course, are not the immediate work of the Pope but of the civil service. Three theologians 'advise' the Pope, and one would have liked to take these three aging men—one French, one Dutch and one German—out into the streets of Rome during the Holy Year, milling with pilgrims from China, India, Africa and ask them: Is the Church really so insecure that opinion needs to be suppressed quite so promptly? How many of the great definitions of the Church would have been lost if even the hint of heresy had always been quickly suppressed? But an irritation like this comes and goes: it is not the impression that remains" (*Life*, XXXI [Sept. 24, 1951], 162).

<sup>23</sup> *u Osservatore Romano* (Dec. 9-10, 1950) gave the names of the preparatory commission for the definition of the Assumption: Msgr. Ottaviani, president; Msgr. Crovini, secretary; Msgr. Parente, Fathers Balic, O.F.M., Bea, S.J., Caronti, O.S.B., De Moos, S.J., Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., Hentrich, S.J., Henry of St. Theresa, O.C.D., Hürth, S.J., Jugie, A.A., Lennerz, S.J., Tromp, S.J. (cited by Cavallera, p. 4, note 1).

<sup>24</sup> Colombo, p. 397, note 3; p. 416, note 34. Yet Colombo docs give a conspectus of French theology in the years prior to the encyclical. Parente docs likewise. Percebo jeals exclusively and extensively with the "New Theology," and supplies a splendid bibliography for the whole movement. A notable bibliography was prepared by A. Avclinn F. stehan, "Nota bibliográfica sobre la Hamada 'Teologia nueva,'" *Revista española de teología*, IX (1949), 303-18; 527-46. In addition to his article in the catalogue, Monscgu has written a lengthy study of the "New Theology": "La actualidad teológica: Hechos e ideas," *Revista española de teología*, X (1950), 179-204; 335-60. All the articles here mentioned are critical of the movement.

<sup>25</sup> Labourdette, p. 32.

<sup>26</sup> Rahner, p. 169.

therefrom deep, though humble, satisfaction because their reviews and universities had ever been pure and above all taint of heterodox or dangerous opinions.<sup>27</sup>

## iv

Concerning the nuclear thesis of the encyclical there was superficial disagreement. Some saw in the letter one great central core: the necessity for theologians and Catholic intellectuals to be guided by the magisterium in every step of their work.<sup>28</sup> For others the central lesson was the reaction of relativism in theology and philosophy. Morandini expressed this notion with a lapidary phrase: the rejection of mobilism—ontological, gnoseological, and terminological.<sup>30</sup> Others felt that the great lesson was the defense of reason as a faculty of achieving objective, abiding truth. A few considered the focal emphasis to be an insistence that metaphysics has as much relevancy to theology as history.<sup>31</sup> One commentator saw the purpose of the encyclical to be a clarification of method and orientation against modern confusions.<sup>32</sup> Another commentator seemed to combine all these views by making of the encyclical a confrontation of total Catholic doctrine with what is somewhat vaguely termed the total pattern of existentialist thought.<sup>33</sup>

The above simplifications of the encyclical need not be antagonistic positions, for they are judgments made from different points of view. There would be opposition if the commentator were to insist that there is a monolithic structure to the document where a single idea moves with continuous growth to achieve the final whole. No one seems to have said that. Garrigou-Lagrangé has envisioned a tight unity but according to a different metaphor? He would find a single motif played in different variations? Fenton says that the document is “magnificently ordered and arranged,”<sup>35</sup> while Cavallera says that it does not follow “the usual rigorous logic of encyclicals, nor does it clearly make use of the resources of ordered reasoning, but rather,

<sup>17</sup> Gemelli, “Presentazione,” p. 1; Connell, p. 327. According to Monsegù, the Rectors of the Gregorian Seminary, and of the other Roman institutes on the occasion of the reopening of classes in the fall of 1950 spoke in the same way (n. ST).

<sup>28</sup> Connell, p. 323; Michel, p. 671; Cotter, p. 55; Cavallera, p. 9. Haven puts it thus: “... confidence in reason and submission to the magisterium” (p. 114),

Garrigou-Lagrangé, “Structure,” p. 3; Morandini, p. 165.

<sup>30</sup> Morandini, p. 165.

<sup>31</sup> Olgiatti, p. 59; Taymans, p. 4. Cf. Dondeyne’s excellent study, pp. 17-56.

<sup>32</sup> Levic, p. 788. Iturrioz would agree with Levic, but for him the confusion of thought is the very heart of the “Thomistic philosophy” (cf. p. 4R6)

<sup>33</sup> Weigel, pp. 229-30.

“Garrigou-Lagrangé, “Structure,” p. 1.

“Fenton, “Lesson,” p. 361.

I might say, of the vital logic of a process of overlapping, one idea calling forth another because of their inner connection rather than because of anxiety for an orderly arrangement."<sup>36</sup> Rahner says: "This [encyclical] cannot be compared with the classical planning of other great documents of the Pope, but rather gives the impression of an exorcising warning, in which anxiety is not so concerned with an instructive, carefully considered continuity of thought."<sup>37</sup> Whatever be the truth in these diverging opinions, at least this much is clear: an order of uninterrupted logical continuity has not been widely recognized, for those who made skeleton outlines were at variance with each other, not merely in details but also in the substantial divisions of the work.

## V

To glean the values given by the commentaries in an orderly fashion, it might be wise to follow the sequence of the encyclical and note what the commentaries had to offer in the way of light. There will be no need to annotate every paragraph, for much of the comment was mere repetition of the encyclical's words through paraphrase, so that in many instances nothing was illuminated or deepened because of the observations of the writers.<sup>38</sup> We shall, therefore, only indicate those marginal contributions and interesting glosses which will be of major interest to the generality of theologians.

Nothing very significant was said about the first four paragraphs which was not said by the paragraphs themselves. In paragraph 4, where it is stated that the credibility of the Catholic faith is attainable with certitude by mere reason, most commentators saw an implicit condemnation of the theories of Rousselot concerning the approach to faith. Yet F. Malmberg, S.J., saw in it only a renewed condemnation of the fideists and traditionalists as fulminated originally by the Vatican Council.<sup>39</sup> One commentator brought out that, though a physical incapacity of reason for the recognition of the warranted credibility of Catholic faith is rejected, yet moral incapacity can be admitted (cf. paragraphs 2, 3, and 4).<sup>40</sup> It was not stated whether or not this would be a saving correction for Rousselot's theory, but another commentator objected to this interpretation by indicating that the encyclical

<sup>14</sup> Cavallera, pp. 7-8.

<sup>37</sup> Rahner, p. 164.

<sup>M</sup> In following the sequence of the encyclical, we shall use the enumeration of the N.C.W.C. translation. Father Cotter's enumeration is slightly different. The Latin original and the Knox version have no enumeration.

<sup>39</sup> Felix Malmberg, S.J., "Solo rationis lumine," *Bijdragen der Nederlandsche Javueln*, IX (1950), 202-11 (cited by Colombo, p. 418, note 39 and by Roets, p. 269, note 2).

<sup>40</sup> Taymans, pp. 15-16.

admitted the possibility of grace playing a role in such a recognition, but it did not teach that such grace was *always* necessary.<sup>41</sup>

Cotter underlined the implicit doctrine of the paragraph, namely, that the apologetic proposed by the encyclical is the one in use in the schools, the apologetic of miracles in favor of the Church.<sup>42</sup> It might also be profitably added that the words used by the encyclical are taken verbatim from the locus in the Vatican Council where the so-called analytic argument for apologetics is outlined, although no other apologetic is given this privilege.<sup>43</sup> Perhaps our schools do not use as intensively or as extensively this approach recommended so notably by the Council and now indirectly by the encyclical.

Rahner succinctly summarizes paragraphs 5-8 as "from Hegel to Sartre."<sup>44</sup> Garrigou-Lagrangé reduces the four facets of the current mentality of the world—evolutionary progress, existentialism, historicism, and anti-intellectual dialectical theology—to one idea: a flux philosophy which refuses to admit any metaphysical stability and identifies being with becoming.<sup>45</sup> Weigel saw in the four errors outlined by Rome one mood of thought which can be described as "existentialist."<sup>46</sup>

Very few dealt at length with the meaning of historicism, but Olgiatti made a long study of the phenomenon and of its entry into Catholic theology. His own mind is nicely put in the following lines:

Some have held that the encyclical of Pius XII consists of a bundle of condemnations and advertences, consequently of a merely negative significance. I permit myself to think that the recent pontifical document has also a positive import, is constructive, because it is not restricted to the discarding of certain solutions offered to the problem of the relations between metaphysics, theology, and history, but also suggests others and invites us to develop them. That is the basic idea which inspires these pages which propose, against historicism and against the tactic of relativizing philosophy and theology in the name of history, to indicate the necessity of evolving the notion of history and to intensify in our camp a sense of history in such a way as not to lose gains made long ago in philosophy and theology.<sup>47</sup>

His own suggestion is that the notion of the Mystical Body can lead us to a valid and fruitful theology of history.<sup>48</sup> The article is also valuable for the vast amount of bibliographical material furnished by the notes.

Flick recognized in paragraph 8 a "discreet" allusion to the dialectical theology of men like Barth and Brunner,<sup>49</sup> but it is surprising that relatively

<sup>41</sup> Parente, p. 42.

<sup>42</sup> Cotter, pp. 57-58.

<sup>43</sup> *DB*, 1794.

<sup>44</sup> Rahner, p. 164.

<sup>45</sup> Garrigou-Lagrangé, "Structure," pp. 7-8

<sup>46</sup> Weigel, pp. 221-23.

<sup>47</sup> Olgiatti, p. 59.

<sup>48</sup> Olgiatti, p. 83.

<sup>49</sup> Flick, p. 580. The recognition of the crisis-theologians was also made by Colter, Bea, Saggiés, and others.

few of the commentators voiced such a recognition. It might almost be suspected that in many places not too much is known about this phenomenon, which would be contrary to the teaching of paragraph 9 urging theologians to study all such movements.

In paragraph 11 the encyclical makes its first mention of "irenicism," a spirit of appeasing non-Catholics, as Knox so well translates. The little note of Boyer in *Unitas* briefly indicates ironical tactics discountenanced by the encyclical. Dom Gros brought out that any condemnation of a false "irenicism" did not mean that the Pope wished to put a halt to the evangelization of the world, but merely wished to prevent excesses.<sup>60</sup> Morandini would agree with this notion but he made a distinction: the intellectual has an inner and outer apostolate, but his first apostolate is the inner one, whereby he contemplates the truth and builds up a vision whose only concern is loyalty to the truth itself. In performing this task the theologian rightly merits the name of apostle.<sup>61</sup>

The teaching of paragraphs 10-13 was often repeated by the commentators but nothing really new was brought forth. Bea did a neat task of summary: he showed that the psychological roots of the activity of some recent theologians were three: an itch for the new, an anxiety to be modern, and an inclination to minimize objective differences that separate Catholics and non-Catholics.<sup>62</sup>

French commentaries made much of paragraph 13. They stressed the need of caution and prudence on the part of theologians because their guarded and properly distinguished propositions are not understood with all their distinctions by laymen, and can produce much havoc, as the encyclical states.

So many commentators hailed paragraphs 14-17 as the true exposition of the fatal defects of the "new theology." It was unacceptably relativistic in its method. The discontent with the traditional treatment of dogma, the insistence that canonized formulas should be shelved in favor of expressions more congenial to current views, the refusal to see in concepts an adequate expression of revealed truth, all these things put theology in danger of cutting off its ties with the continuous Christian tradition. It is strange that the "new theology," so eager to further development of doctrine, made the

<sup>60</sup> Gros, p. 65. Dondcync, who sees the problem of "irenicism" as central to the encyclical, agrees with Gros (Dondcync, pp. 5-6).

<sup>61</sup> Morandini, pp. 169-72. Gervais in his article dealt with a point touched by Morandini. Gervais protested against the notion that the prime task of the theologian is research. In this protest he insists that the contemplation of truth in prolonged meditation rather than the feverish search for new facts is the proper work of theology.

<sup>62</sup> Bea, in *Scholastic*, pp. 39-41.

task impossible. One of its fundamental principles, orthodox enough, was that revelation at all times is identical with itself. But there was another principle which was killing, namely, that change was only the indifferent modification of terminology and philosophic matrix. In consequence the synthesis of any moment did not grow out of the continuous past but abruptly arose from the contingent exigencies of a new historical context. In this theory there can be no growth but only change. The encyclical insists that all growth must be organic, that there must be continuity in growth. Burke quoted a beautiful passage from Newman inculcating this same idea which teaches that no moment in the nearly two thousand years of Catholicism is excluded from the present time.<sup>53</sup> What is more, the present moment not only includes all the past, but the past cannot be understood except in the light of the present; it is not that, as some were saying, an understanding of the present demanded a return to the past.

Paragraphs 18-21 of the encyclical teach the total dependence of theology on the living magisterium. The theologian, no less than any other member of the Church, receives his doctrine from the authoritative teaching organs of the Mystical Body, which can quote Christ's words: "He who hears you, hears me." This part of the message was taken up by all commentators, who did little else but assent to it fervently. There can be no doubt that there was unanimous consent on this point, and this consent is illuminating for the understanding of Catholic theology. Perhaps the total range of commitments is not yet recognized by all. The theologian works with revelation, but he receives it exclusively from the magisterium. The theological proofs in favor of revealed dogma are not the moving force for their acceptance; what makes belief in the dogma imperative is the sole fact that it is taught by the magisterium of Christ's Church.

The encyclical, as the commentators saw, draws the inevitable conclusions from the above principle. Any theologians' deductions from supposed implicits in theological sources are invalid if rejected by the actual living magisterium. This authority, even in its ordinary activity (which is its normal activity, for solemn pronouncements are rare), is the theologian's proximate guide and norm. The encyclical indicates the two kinds of authoritative direction: in one case a question is closed by answering the question officially; in the other the debate is closed, even though the question itself be left open, either to die of inanition or to be reopened by the magisterium itself according to its norms at some possible future date. In either case the theologian, by the rationale of his discipline and by his place among the *discipulis* of the Church, accepts wholeheartedly and without resistance.

<sup>53</sup>Burke, p. 275.

Cavallera developed this doctrine to make it luminous for our moment. He was evidently thinking of theologians who were in search of fuller truth, and perhaps felt that they were achieving something but now saw themselves stopped. He insists with full reason that the magisterium has only one function: to teach efficaciously the full revelation of Christ in any age to all people. The function of the magisterium is not to develop dogma but to preserve it intact without blur. In fulfilling this office it may be necessary to interfere with the theologians, who, unlike the magisterium, are primarily interested in the development of revealed truth. Such interference is not intrusion. Lines of theological research and discussion, well-intentioned and innocent enough within the enclosure of the theological brotherhood, may be dangerous and misleading when they reach the non-theological public, and such discussion does jump over the wall. The magisterium with frightening duties to the total *ecclesia discens* will have to step in, in order to fulfill its urgent and divine mission, and the theologian will have to be silent and correct his speech. Development may be delayed, but the first obligation of the magisterium must be satisfied. The faithful at large, theological and non-theological, must not be led astray from the God-given truth.<sup>M</sup>

Concerning the Roman doctrine of the relations of theology to the magisterium, this reporter found no more limpid summary than the short but incisive paragraphs of Dr. Patrick Hammell of Maynooth:

Revelation is a message from God to man, and to reach individual men it must be formulated in human language. It is the divine fact or truth which is revealed, not the proposition which expresses it. The divine truth is immutable, inexhaustible. The instrument which we use to state it, human language, is finite, imperfect, changing. No formula fashioned by man can exhaust or perfectly convey divine truth. Christ appointed the Teaching Authority of the Church to be the guardian and interpreter of revealed truth, and this Teaching Authority, in the infallible exercise of its commission, interprets and formulates the truths entrusted to it. Those revealed truths which the Church proposes to us as such for our belief are dogmas. The choice of terms and concepts and the construction of the logical proposition to convey the revealed truth are conditioned by a number of factors including the language, culture, and philosophical development of the time.

Theology is a science whose directing and underlying principles are the truths revealed by God, but its proper object is the conclusions, theological conclusions, deduced by reason from divinely revealed truths. By means of these deductions we are able to gain more knowledge of the faith than the simple expression of the revealed truth itself gives, and it is the function of theology to penetrate more and more deeply into the mysteries of revelation and so endeavor to gain a more profound understanding of them.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Cavallera, pp. 8-10.

<sup>44</sup> Hammell, p. 290.

As various commentators saw, it was this conception of theology, whereby this discipline is bound irrevocably and proximately to the magisterium, which made the doctrine of paragraph 21 unescapably logical. Even positive theology is *theology* and not mere natural historical method, and consequently even positive theology must take its proximate guidance from the living magisterium of the moment.

Paragraphs 22-23 deal with the misuse of the symbolical sense of the Scriptures and the tendency to minimize the literal sense as misleading. The commentators confirmed this doctrine and simultaneously brought out that Rome was not denying that there is a symbolic sense in Scripture. Dom Ralph Russell's words express the consensus:

It [the encyclical *Divino afflante* quoted by *Humani generis*] showed that what is technically called the 'sensus literalis' (which is not the 'literal sense' of English idiom, but the sense intended by the author, be it historic, poetic, metaphorical, or that of sonic ancient literary 'genre'), must be sought first. It is this sense which possesses inerrancy, and upon it any other sense must rest. To elucidate it must be the primary duty of Biblical scholarship and Biblical initiation.

But by maintaining the primacy of the literal sense we do not reject a 'spiritual' sense. The timely warnings of *Humani generis* are intended to safeguard genuine theological thought, foster it by showing up aberrations, and preserve it from the lazyminded or the innovators who seek to avoid the duties imposed by Papal pronouncements and to pass over all the solid work of centuries. But there is another kind of lazymindedness which tries to justify by official pronouncements its own failure to study new problems or investigate sources. We should be careful, then, lest we suppose that, because the literal and historic sense is fundamental to the Bible, no other sense is contained in it.<sup>66</sup>

Lambert and Levie brought out the negative aspect of the encyclical by indicating clearly the doctrines proposed by the "new theology" and condemned by Rome: (1) scriptural inerrancy is limited to moral and religious truths; (2) there are two senses in Scripture, the divine and spiritual which is hidden, and the human and literal which is apparent; only the first is infallible; (3) scriptural interpretation need not be concerned with the analogy of faith nor with the tradition of the Church; (4) a spiritual interpretation must be substituted for the literal?<sup>7</sup> As these commentators added, these errors are old and have been condemned before.

Paragraphs 25-28, passing from the errors of theological method to the errors of content, offer us what Rahner calls "a kind of syllabus of errors," and Rahner adds: "Candidly I do not know in which school that is still Catholic such errors are tolerated."<sup>58</sup>

Russell, pp. 2-3.

M Lambert, pp. 225-28; Levie, pp. 790-91.

<sup>7</sup>Rahner, p. 165.

One of the theological errors included in this little catalogue was the denial of the gratuity of the supernatural. In general the commentaries noted the condemnation and referred to previous condemnations of the same proposition in earlier Roman pronouncements. The encyclical leaves no doubt that theologians must admit the possibility of a non-elevated human being. Sagüés in his commentary discusses this possibility according to the preoccupations and orientations of the text-books.<sup>69</sup> Here more than elsewhere the commentators thought of France and with politeness and proper courtesy they nodded, some shyly and some not so shyly, in the direction of P. Henri deLubac, because of whose book and the discussions that followed it, the whole question was timely.

/Another condemned error was the proposition that the Mystical Body has a wider extension than the Catholic Church. On this point Vodopivec contributed an excellent article, rich with bibliographical data and lucid in explaining the historical setting of the question.

vr

From paragraphs 29 to 34 the encyclical speaks of the relations of philosophy to theology. This was necessary because the "new theology" was disdainful of metaphysical philosophy in general and of Scholasticism in particular. /According to the new position, theology could use any kind of philosophy for the purpose of expressing revelation, always recognizing that all were completely inadequate for the task. In consequence there was no philosophy that could be called Catholic and the theologian for purposes of inevitable communication could use any one most useful for that end. For reasons of efficiency and vitality he should use the one in vogue rather than some other form that was *démodé*.

Rome, to the satisfaction of all the commentators, rejected the new position totally. The theologian cannot work without a philosophy and he must inevitably construct over the ages a philosophy adequate for revelation. This has been done, and to ignore and despise this slowly and carefully built instrument is rash and to deny its validity unjust and erroneous. To affirm that any philosophy will do for the theologians' purpose is an erroneous denial of the validity of philosophy and reason itself, and a mistaken conception of the theological enterprise.

The pontifical defense of the natural powers of reason to achieve objective truth was applauded by the vast majority of the commentators. They also pointed out that the encyclical did more than this: it also defended the possibility of a perennially valid and objective metaphysic.

M Sagüés, pp. 163-65. Cf. also I'crego, pp. 450-54.

There was entailed in this defense a rejection of the more vociferous forms of existentialism which deny the meaningfulness of metaphysical achievement. However, some of the commentators insisted that this pontifical condemnation did not fall on all forms of existentialism, but only on the atheistic and anti-metaphysical varieties.<sup>60</sup> Alfaro understood the condemnation to include any kind of existentialism, but Martins called him to task by name.<sup>61</sup> Stakemeier stated that Christian existentialists like Peter Wust and Gabriel Marcel, *ceteris paribus*, were not being censured.<sup>62</sup> Rahner went the farthest when he claimed that one of the great merits of the encyclical was that it showed us a starting point from which a true existentialist philosophy could be developed.<sup>63</sup>

The encyclical did more than condemn atheistic and anti-metaphysical existentialism. It also praised and recommended Thomism. Bea remarked that the word "Scholasticism" does not appear in the letter.<sup>64</sup> This is true, but perhaps not to the point. Knox (as well as others) seems to be quite justified when he puts the word into his translation as a rendition of *philosophia nostris tradita scholis*. What is more, an encyclical which praises Thomism, *co ipso* is talking about Scholasticism, for the former is the most legitimate form of the latter.

It is perhaps not surprising that a number of Jesuit commentators made the reflection that the encyclical did not canonize any one form of Thomism.<sup>65</sup> For them any philosophy using the methods and principles of St. Thomas is legitimate, for in paragraph 32 the words of Canon Law are cited where the meaning of Thomism is given as "according to the method, doctrine, and principles of the Angelic Doctor." Even that outstanding Thomist, P. M. Labourdette, stated that the encyclical did not canonize any philosophy, not even the doctrine of St. Thomas, in the sense of making it the doctrine of the magisterium. However, the Church not only recommends Thomism but *demand*s it of those who receive their teaching office from her in contradistinction to those who teach without such a commission. The reason for this demand lies not in the magisterium's teaching a philosophy—for it does not do so—but her experience has taught that Thomism is a sure instrument for the understanding and development of revelation.<sup>66</sup>

The French Dominican, following the lead of the encyclical, rejects any objection that supposes that such a stand precludes progress in philosophy.

Let no one believe that by this stand the Church rejects progress in philosophical

M E.g., Ilaycn, p. 120; Dondcync, pp. 12-14. " Martins, p. 77.

α Stakemeier, p. 484. " Rahner, p. 167. w Bea, in *Scholastik*, p. 47.

\*\* Ilaycn, pp. 131-33; Cotter, p. 89; Bea, in *Scholastik*, p. 48.

" Labourdette, n. 8, pp. 43-44.

thinking. She only wishes that this progress be an authentic one. She rejects a progress by the *substitution* of new forms—which are only ‘fashions,’ as ephemeral as the flower of the fields—for what has been given and tested by tradition; but she approves and encourages, calls for with all eagerness, a progress of vital growth which is organic; she blesses the effort of those who try to present it in a fresh form less dependent on Scholastic formulas; and she blesses all that prevents a traditional philosophy, which carries the mark of a period of culture quite different from ours, from appearing less vital and less actual (unless not merely known but also understood and grasped personally) than some philosophy spawned by the present and less assured of survival.... At the root of the concept of progress which the encyclical combats, there rests the fallacious and pernicious opposition between life and structure, which supposed opposition spreads its malice into other fields, into the theological treatise of ecclesiology in particular.<sup>67</sup>

Hayen, agreeing heartily with this doctrine of Labourdette, thinks that something more must be said in the light of the encyclical. We are given not merely the rejection of a false conception of progress but also the clear outline of a true notion of development. Out of the encyclical he gathers six points of such an outline: (1) Cling to the truth already achieved. (2) Prune away defective expressions and elaborate more accurate forms of presentation. (3) Eliminate errors. (4) Reinforce the vigor of what has been explained not only by the rigor of deductions and syllogisms but also by the rigor of reflection on the data. (5) Evolve the structure of truth by making its build-up coincide with the structure of the real so as to make the real more manifest in thought. (6) Seek help from others, even from those in error; not in the sense of filtering out bits of truth floating in a bath of falsehood, but rather of finding there truths that we have not yet discerned and of deriving the stimulus to aid us to penetrate and understand the truth.<sup>68</sup> He concludes: “In sum, the encyclical demands *an intense effort of progress, hedged about by all the guarantees of prudence. It insists above all on the importance of these guarantees, searched after with a serene confidence in truth and in the unity of intelligence.*”<sup>69</sup>

Both Hayen and Labourdette agree that the encyclical teaches that Catholic philosophy is controlled by the Church.<sup>70</sup> Hayen gives the broad outline of such a control so as not to stifle its own spontaneity. He refers to Maritain’s theory that a fuller vision of faith acts as a chart for the mariner, giving him confidence in his own navigation and supplying him points of orientation for his piloting.

Labourdette, n. 8, p. 44.

<sup>67</sup> Hayen, pp. 125-27.

<sup>68</sup> Hayen, pp. 127-28.

<sup>70</sup> Labourdette, n. 7, p. 42; Hayen, pp. 129-31; 133-34.

## VII

When the commentators reached the paragraphs (35-37) on evolution, the majority had surprisingly little to say. With paraphrases they dilated on the conditions required in order to use licitly the evolutionary hypothesis as a means for the interpretation of the account of man's creation in Genesis. Then they passed on to the question of polygenism, where most did nothing but summarize the propositions of the encyclical.

This was strange, for many of our theological schools in recent times have hedged on the question if it were licit to entertain the transformist theory to explain the divine formation of man, and in the first two decades of this century a goodly number of theologians branded the evolutionary hypothesis, if not heretical, at least as erroneous and intolerable. Now the encyclical for the first time officially gives permission to use the transformist hypothesis, indicating the restrictions necessary for such a use. Aubert was, as far as this reporter knows, the only one who brought this important fact into relief.<sup>71</sup>

Three articles were written on this whole question that merit reading.<sup>72\*</sup> In one of them, Vandebroek and Renwart try to clarify some points.<sup>71</sup> They explain what hypothesis means in scientific terminology and agree with the pontifical designation of transformism as an hypothesis. However, they also state that in the life-sciences this hypothesis is firmly rooted. Bea had given the impression that there is today a trend among scientists to question or reject the basic evolutionary theory.<sup>74</sup> Vandebroek and Renwart, on the contrary, say:

To note the considerable divergences of opinion existing among scientists defending evolution, to weigh hypotheses already abandoned! and those under attack, to bring to light the weak points of explanations actually in vogue, is an

<sup>71</sup> Aubert, cited by d'Quincc, pp. 367-68.

<sup>72</sup> (1) Vandebroek-Renwart: one of the two, Vandebroek, is professor of embryology, comparative anatomy, and anthropology at the University of Louvain; the other, Renwart, is professor of dogmatic theology at the Jesuit theologate at Eegcnhovcn. Following the advice of the encyclical (n. 36), representatives of theology and science try to expose and conciliate the findings of the two fields. (2) Picard in a long article gives the scientific view of polygenism and analyzes it from the position of the encyclical. Cf. also Dondcync, pp. 14-16. (3) Alessandri gives a rapid and schematic outline of the classical arguments for evolution, arriving at the conclusion that evolution is possible but not proved. Cf. also the article of Mariani in which an exegesis of Rom. 5:12-14 is given.

<sup>71</sup> Vandebroek-Renwart, p. 340.

<sup>74</sup> Bea, in *Scholastik*, pp. 52-53.

easy thing, but to conclude therefrom that we are passing through a crisis of the evolutionary theory would be a clumsy mistake.<sup>75</sup>

The question of polygenism raised some difference of opinion among the commentators. Not one denied that Rome had categorically and unequivocally forbidden the teaching of polygenism. In none of the literature examined was there any attempt to twist the clear prohibition so that it would still be permissible to hold polygenism even as a theory. As to the meaning of the word "polygenism" in the encyclical there was unanimous agreement: the origin of the human race that we know on this our earth, not from a single couple but from an indefinite number of original pairs, unrelated among themselves and directly produced by evolution. Not a few commentators brought out that the papal condemnation of such polygenism did not include the theory of pre-Adamites, some race or races of human beings already extinct at the moment of Adam's creation, but, as Vandebroek and Renwart observed, that theory of the 17th century is "antiquated and of no great interest."<sup>76</sup>

If there was no doubt that polygenism was condemned, there was nevertheless some confusion as to *how* it was condemned. There were those who saw the question of polygenism closed forever, so that any and all polygenism was definitely excluded from Catholic theology. Others could not find this position in the encyclical, though they recognized that the papal directive forthrightly and unmistakably forbade the teaching of polygenism here and now. For these men, Rome definitely closed the debate, but made no definitive reply to the question. The reason for this difference of opinion was a complicated verbal formula in the papal prohibition. Knox did an excellent translation of the passage (37), leaving the tantalizing phrase just as it was in the Latin:

There are other conjectures, about polygenism (as it is called), which leave the faithful no such freedom of choice. Christians cannot lend their support to a theory which involves the existence, after Adam's time, of some earthly race of men, truly so called, who were not descended ultimately from him, or else supposes that Adam was the name given to some group of our primordial ancestors. It does not appear how such a view can be reconciled with the doctrine of original sin, as this is guaranteed to us by Scripture and tradition, and proposed to us by the Church.<sup>77</sup><sup>71</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Vandebroek-Renwart, p. 340.

<sup>72</sup> Vandebroek-Renwart, p. 349. In the same sense Lcvic, p. 789.

<sup>77</sup> Knox, London *Tablet*, Sept. 2, 1950, p. 190.

The difficult phrase is the Latin formula: “cum nequaquam appareat quomodo huiusmodi sententia componi queat cum iis quae fontes revelatae veritatis et acta Magisterii Ecclesiae proponunt de peccato originali.”<sup>78</sup>

Cotter’s translation is quite different from that of Knox. He renders it this way: “For it is unintelligible how such an opinion can be squared with what the sources of revealed truth and the documents of the Magisterium of the Church teach on original sin.”<sup>79</sup> In his commentary he explains: “Some die-hards might wish to see a loophole in the words ‘for it is unintelligible’ (*cum nequaquam apparcaC*) as if they left the door open for a different decision in the future. This would be an illusion. Polygenism is definitely banned; it should not even be put forward as a hypothesis (20, 36).”<sup>80</sup>

Now there are two distinct questions involved: what the encyclical said and what the encyclical meant. The translator gives us what the document said and the interpreter gives us what it meant. Even if Cotter as interpreter be right, as translator he unfortunately leaves himself open to the charge of rewriting the phrase rather than translating it.

Connell does not give us a translation but a paraphrastic popularization, and when dealing with the contents of paragraph 37 he speaks in the following words: “Such an opinion [i.e. the existence of human post-Adamites not descendants of Adam], he [the Pope] adds, cannot be reconciled with the teachings of revelation and of the Church regarding the transmission of original sin. . . .”<sup>81</sup> Here there is simply no account made of the full phrase, “cum nequaquam appareat quomodo queat,” and it is simplified to read, “cum nequaquam queat.” If this is to be an essay at reproducing what the Pope *said*, it is hardly a happy endeavor.

Boyer, recognizing a translator’s problem in the words of the relevant passage, would yet say that Cotter and Connell gave the true *meaning* of the locus. He speaks as follows:

There is, therefore [by reason of the transmission of original sin as explained by the Scriptures and the councils], no way of coming to terms with polygenism. A Christian is not free to defend it, even as an hypothesis. It would certainly be stretching the thought of the Holy Father to see in the formula, “cum nequaquam appareat,” a door left open for a different directive in the future. Polygenism, as defined in the encyclical, is definitely rejected.<sup>82</sup>

There were voices that struck a different note. Some merely objected to the Cotter-Connell way of translating, without giving any personal opinion

71.4/15, LII (1950), 576.

<sup>79</sup> Cotter, nn. 38 and 43.

<sup>80</sup> Cotter, pp. 96-07.

<sup>81</sup> Connell, p. 326.

<sup>82</sup> Boyer, “Leçons,” p. 533.

as to the meaning of the passage. Levie remarked: “. . . ‘cum nequaquam appareat quomodo . . . componi queat’ is not the same as ‘cum appareat . . . componi nequaquam posse’: the first formula, quite strong of itself, is nevertheless less exclusive and less radical than the second would be.”<sup>84</sup> Others admitted without reserve that no one could hold any current theory of polygenism nor raise the question, but the closure of the debate, definite and clear, did not mean that Rome had closed the question. Vandebroek and Renwart spoke quite unequivocally:

After a complete and mature consideration, the Holy Father, in the exercise of his ordinary magisterium, esteems that the attempts to reconcile polygenism with revelation show no possibility of falling in line with tradition. That is why he prevents investigators from following this path of research. Is there here a question of a definitive, irrefragable judgement? Certainly not; the very manner of expressing himself shows that the Holy Father does not intend to promulgate here a dogmatic definition, but, if it is permitted to paraphrase his expressions, “in truth one does not see what could lead the Church to modify this rule of conduct.” It is for the theologian, then, to scrutinize further the nature of this unique sin and the mystery of its transmission to all the descendants of Adam.<sup>84</sup>

More interesting, perhaps, is the statement of Augustin Bea, the former rector of the Biblical Institute in Rome:

The encyclical does not enter into the scientific side of the question. It is content to reject as irreconcilable with dogma two recent attempts at explaining original sin. Whether there can be forms of polygenism which can be brought into resonance with constant Church-teaching, is a question that is shelved. The Church has no grounds for making any statement on the point; she can rest satisfied with explaining solid doctrine, and leave it to the representatives of science to see if perhaps new forms of polygenistic theory can be found which do not contradict dogma. For the moment the question is not urgent, for the representatives of the natural sciences themselves do not consider polygenism as probable.<sup>85</sup>

Yet it would be erroneous to think that there is true discord among theologians in the understanding of the encyclical’s teaching concerning polygenism. As Vandebroek and Renwart pointed out, the irreconcilability of polygenism with Catholic doctrine is not derived from Genesis taken in isolation, but from the impossibility of making it square with the dogma of original sin as derived from St. Paul and the Council of Trent.<sup>86</sup> Boyer gives the key to the basic consent of all the commentators who differed

<sup>84</sup> Levie, p. 789. Stakemeier points out the same thing, p. 484.

<sup>85</sup> Vandebroek-Renwart, pp. 350-51. <sup>16</sup> Bea, in *Scholastic*, p. 54.

<sup>86</sup> Vandebroek-Renwart, p. 349.

among themselves more in emphasis than in fact. As Boyer puts it, the polygenism as *defined by the encyclical*, namely, that which cannot be reconciled with Catholic dogma, is out now and forever. That is evident from the concepts. Concerning some polygenism not being considered by the Pope, it is a banal tautology to say that he is not talking about it. As Bea said, the Church has no grounds to say anything about hypothetical possible theories not yet discernible. Nor would those who stressed the condemnation of polygenism deny that, for they would consider it too obvious.

This conclusion was brought out explicitly in the study of Sagüés.<sup>87</sup> He himself thinks that it is still possible in the light of the encyclical to brand even monogenetic evolution as false and to give to its contradictory the note of "theologically certain." Although he admits that the "nequaquam apparet quomodo componi queat," grammatically considered in isolation, does not condemn polygenism definitively, yet in the light of its total context considered according to the psychology of communication, the only meaning, as he sees it, is one that makes the contradictory of polygenism, if not implicitly *de fide*, at least "theologically certain." Nevertheless he concludes his discussion with the following paragraph:

One can still ask if this means the rejection of *coery polygenislic hypothesis*. If one is possible (and this seems to be excluded) which does not involve any of the false suppositions which have just been indicated (namely, that not all men come from Adam, or that he is not an individual person) and which can likewise be reconciled with the correct doctrine on original sin, we would say that the encyclical neither excludes nor approves it.<sup>88</sup>

#### vin

The last part of the encyclical (38-9) treats of the manner of dealing with the first eleven chapters of Genesis, and wishes to clear up any confusion that followed on the letter of the secretary of the Biblical Commission to Cardinal Suhard, Archbishop of Paris, in 1948.<sup>89</sup> The problem is how to categorize the literature under consideration. Once more Rome repeats the well-known answer: it is history, not myth, legend, or fable. There is added an additional note: this is not history as the ancient Gracco-Roman writers would write it, and much less as it would be written today according to the canon of scientific historical method. What is more, it is conceded that the author of the account in question may well have borrowed from earlier or contemporary cosmogonies. However, the borrowing was under the light of inspiration and what the human author said is God's word, all of it, and it is therefore not to be put into a class with old wives' tales.

<sup>87</sup>Sagüés, pp. 174-77.

<sup>88</sup>M Sagüés, p. 177.

<sup>89</sup>♦A.1S, XL (1948), 45-48.

All this was duly stressed and paraphrased by the commentators. The question, however, is: if it is not history as Thucydides or Tacitus wrote it, nor as Baronius or the Bollandists would write it, what kind of history is it? Lambert recognized and voiced this obvious question.<sup>90</sup> His answer was that the Roman document offered to Catholic scholars a challenge. It left to the exegetes the task of answering the question; the encyclical itself did not offer the answer. Lambert takes up the challenge and makes an essay at showing how the account is history. He supposes that the author incorporated two different traditions. This is the well-known double-source theory: a Jahvistic tradition and a sacerdotal tradition.<sup>91</sup> Catholic scholars up to the present have eyed this theory with definite coldness and it will be interesting to see their reactions to Lambert's version of it.

#### IX

Little notes of *envoi* were attached to the encyclical by many commentators. It might be profitable to see some of them. Jean le Cour Grandmaison, a layman, offered his insight thus:

One of the great benefits of the encyclical, for us laymen, is the reminder that we have no need to take part in the discussions of specialists; that there exists an unchangeable truth, defined by the magisterium, and if its expression can vary through the centuries, yet the essential formulation of dogma is not something that is still to be discovered, nor the principles of philosophy, so that what our fathers believed remains valid for us and for our most remote descendants. We must seek for the expression of our faith from the magisterium alone.<sup>92</sup>

Some theologians struck the note that the encyclical is not meant to be, nor should it be used as, a hindrance to progress. Iturrioz, himself highly critical of innovations, winds up his study of the papal document with the following serene observation:

The encyclical is not an obstructionist norm, launched to impede progress. The truth is not afraid of the truth, and the lover of truth is not afraid of investigation and progress. The encyclical itself points out at every moment where it is possible to open new paths, improve old ones, reconstruct old structures, and accept developments made by others.<sup>93</sup>

Marcotte ends in this way:

One last remark. The questions touched by the encyclical have divided Catholic thinkers into two camps, at times violently opposed. The intervention of authority

<sup>90</sup> Lambert, p. 231.

<sup>91</sup> Lambert, pp. 231-43.

<sup>92</sup> Grandmaison, col. 1304.

<sup>93</sup> M Iturrioz, p. 504. In the same vein Monsegù, pp. 99-103.

in this debate did not mean that the Holy See had the intention of crushing one side and handing a palm of victory to the other, but rather of indicating to all the sure norms within which they could achieve full validity and full fruitfulness for the ideas and initiatives dear to them. Let there not be, then, a childish question of victors and vanquished.<sup>94</sup>

As a true *envoi*, breathing a spirit of charity, unity, and encouragement to all, perhaps nothing would be better than a paragraph taken from the article of Cyril Vollert in this review:

Let future historians of theology, if they must, connect names with the currents of ideas and the writings that are taken to task in the encyclical. At the present time, in the absence of personal designations, such an attempt cannot be made without risk of grave injustice to Catholic theologians and philosophers whose loyalty and devotion to the Church are beyond question. Suspicions and insinuations are out of place. Not by eyeing each other askance, but by seeking to aid and understand one another with forbearance, will theologians be able to work in harmony to further the interests of their difficult science.<sup>95</sup>

*Woodstock College*

Gustave Weigel, SJ.

<sup>94</sup> Marcotte, p. 200\*.

<sup>95</sup> Vollert, p. 4.