

II. THE MAGISTERIUM:

THESIS:

(1) *Il Magistero ecclesiale nel suo rapporto col sacro deposito della Tradizione e della Scrittura (DV 7, 10).* (2) *L'indeffettibilità del popolo di Dio nella vera fede (LG 12).* (3) *Le origini, l'esercizio *definitivo, *universale-ordinario e *non-definitivo del magistero e la risposta ad esso dovuta (LG 25).* (4) *Il rapporto tra magistero e teologia.*

I. Magisterium: Its origin and its relationship with the sacred deposit of Tradition and Scripture (DV 7, 10)

A Text of Dei Verbum 7: Origin of Magisterium

In His gracious goodness, God has seen to it that what he has revealed for the salvation of all nations would abide perpetually in its full integrity and be handed on to all generations. Therefore Christ the Lord, in whom the full revelation of the supreme God is brought to completion, commissioned the apostles to preach to all men that gospel which is the **source of all saving truth and moral teaching**, and thus to impart to them divine gifts. This gospel had been promised in former times through the prophets, and Christ Himself fulfilled it and promulgated it with his own lips. **This commission was faithfully fulfilled by the apostles who, *by their oral preaching, *by example and *by ordinances, handed on what they had received *from the lips of Christ, *from living with Him, and from what He did, or *what they had learned through the promptings of the Holy Spirit.** The commission was fulfilled too by those apostles and apostolic men who under **the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit** committed the message of salvation to writing.

But in order to keep the gospel forever whole and alive within the Church, the apostles left bishops as their successors, handing over their own teaching role to them."

B. Various Commentaries on DV 7:

1. Wick's Exegesis of DV 7: (p. 10-13)

A. **"Original Christian discourse"**: Christianity was a discourse at its start with three forms:

a. Preaching:

Many forms of preaching of kerygma existed at the start of the church. After persecution, testimony was given to all (1 Thes. 4.10).

Content of preaching: 1 Cor. 15: 3-8: most ancient formula and central synthesis of the original content of the apostolic preaching. Others included: for Peter: (Acts 2. 14-36; Acts 3. 12-27; Acts 4. 8-12; 5. 29-32; 10. 34-43) and for Paul (Acts: 13. 16-41). NB: Christ is hermeneutical key from start. Themes included:

- a. God has saved us thru death/resurrection of Jesus
- b. Messianic titles/divine dignity of Jesus

- c. H.S. is given to the Church by Risen Christ
- d. All Scripture is fulfilled in Jesus.
- e. We are witnesses and are called to conversion

b. Instruction:

Catechesis of the significance of the Gospel and faith, in rapport with modern life. Acts 2.24: life of the primitive church suggest image of a communion in faith, sacraments and structured life.

- a. Beautitudes, Abba prayer, etc. were all remembered from Jesus' ministry and taught to the people.
- b. Next, instruction led to the creation of "summaries" - ex. "Q" to help in the instruction.

c. Exhortation and Encouragement: (Act. 14.22; 2 Thes. 2).

B. Tradition: all the three elements above became what is now called "Tradition". (NB: Wicks, p. 99-100).

1. Tradition, from 100-300 AD, had many forms, all part of a complete reality, including spiritual life.
 2. Tradition as a communal institution gave testimony to Jesus, esp. in the liturgy.
 3. The NT is the written formulation of the oral tradition of the apostolic age. The correct understanding of the NT demands the OT context.
 4. Certain apostolic Church institutions were developed under the guidance of the HS to be instruments of grace's communication and truth that was given in JC.
 5. "Pastors": were part of that institution of the church
 6. Profound rapport: Tradition and God (est. by Jesus)
- HEART of Tradition: Rapport of Father, in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit with us!

C. Apostolic Succession and the Magisterium:

1. Magisterium: universal salvific will of God (DV 7) includes all but there remains the need for authenticity and guarantee from Christ to apostles. Result: Inspiration of the HS and writers of the SS and Magisterium

2. Apostolic Succession:

- a. It is **not** able to be proved or demonstrated, i.e. that the bishops are the successors of the apostles in a clear historical link of "laying on of hands". (Who are the episcopoi and the presbyteroi of the NT?)
- b. Real point: not to be wed to just the historical method but also to employ the theological method. As a result, in faith, we can say that Christ wants to maintain his Church, **essential elements now must reflect the will of God.** Evolution was established and maintained within this context.

c. Sullivan: we see a parallel Christian understanding between the **New Testament and apostolic succession**: Time revealed **both** as normative.

1. NT: discernment of the early Church is now norm for faith

2. Apostolic succession: same idea- By 2nd century, every church had a bishop as the normative head.

Result: If we deny the bishops as successors of the apostles, we can, also, in the end, easily deny the NT as the Word of God!

2. Vorgrimler's Exegesis of Dei Verbum 7:

A. Dei Verbum 7.1:

1. Nature of apostolic preaching: What is passed on is not a Law or a series of propositions, but clearly the communication of the gift of God's plenitude. "Therefore Christ the Lord, in whom the full revelation of the supreme God is brought to completion, commissioned the apostles to preach to all men that gospel which is the source of all saving truth and moral teaching, and thus to impart to them divine gifts."

2. Three sources of the oral tradition: the experience of Jesus Christ

a. from the lips of Christ (traditional understanding of "oral Tradition")

b. from living with Him, and from what He did (source of a kind of Tradition described as apostolic example)

c. or what they had learned through the promptings of the Holy spirit (promptings of the Holy Spirit - different from Tridentine "docentes" - less propositional)

3. Three Methods of transmission: The whole of Christian life

a. oral preaching (Tridentine) to which is added:

b. example

c. ordinances (institutiones)

B. Dei Verbum 7.2: The origin of the Magisterium:

a. Preliminary remarks: Our belief is that the Church will remain faithful to Christ and his gospel until the end of time; in short, a belief in the indefectibility of the Church, and indefectibility in the truth of the gospel and indefectibly true to its apostolic origin. To say that the Church is indefectibly apostolic in faith means that the faith of the Church rests upon the witness of the apostles: such witness is normative for all future generations.

b. "But in order to keep the gospel forever whole and alive within the Church, the apostles left bishops as their successors handing over their own teaching role to them." (DV 7) Perhaps DV 7 is not as strong concerning the origin of the magisterial office of bishops as is LG 20: "This sacred Synod teaches that by divine institution, bishops have succeeded to the place of the apostles as shepherds of the Church, and that he who hears them hears Christ, while he who rejects them rejects Christ and Him who sent Christ." (note: To say that there are

complex historical factors that accounted for the evolution of the episcopacy in the early Church is not to rule out divine institution. “It is true that Vatican II in *Christus Dominus* n. 20, does say: ‘The apostolic office of bishops was instituted by Christ the Lord’, but I do not think that even this statement, while open to misunderstanding, has to be understood as committing the Council to the idea that Christ explicitly instituted the episcopate.” [Sullivan, *Magisterium*, p. 41.] We can speak of “divine institution” in the sense that the development, which we see already taking place in the New Testament Church was guided by the Holy Spirit and was part of God’s design for his Church. The New Testament Church saw this development as founded on the will of Christ).

C. Text of Dei Verbum 10: The relationship of Magisterium to Scripture and Tradition

“Sacred tradition and sacred Scripture form **one sacred deposit** of the word of God **which is committed to the Church**. Holding fast to this deposit, the **entire holy people**, united with their shepherds remain always steadfast in the teaching of the apostles, in the common life, in the breaking of the bread, and in prayers (cf. Acts 2:42), so that in holding to, practicing, and professing the heritage of the faith, there results on the part of the bishops and the faithful a remarkable common effort.

The task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on, has been entrusted exclusively to the living, teaching office of the Church, whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ. This teaching office is *not above the word of God, but serves it, *teaching only what has been handed on, *listening to it devoutly, *guarding it scrupulously, and explaining it faithfully *by divine commission and *with the help of the Holy Spirit; *it draws from this one deposit of faith everything which it presents for belief as divinely revealed.

It is clear, therefore, that sacred tradition, sacred Scripture, and the teaching authority of the Church in accord with God’s most wise design, are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others, and that all together and each in its own way under the action of the one Holy Spirit contribute effectively to the salvation of souls.”

D. Various Exegesis of Dei Verbum 10:

1. Henn’s Exegesis of Dei Verbum 10:

a. Deposit is given to the whole church.

b. There is a single unity of spirit between the bishops and the people. There is only one Magisterium which interprets authentically the tradition, in place of Jesus Christ (“in His name”). Authentic interpretation is done in the name of Jesus.

c. It is never above the Word of God. It is God’s will to have a living tradition and a living Magisterium. The point is that the Magisterium must listen to the Word of God. Therefore, we obey the Magisterium because the Magisterium, with the help of the Holy Spirit, also helps to reveal the Word of God.

d. There is an interdependence between the Magisterium, tradition and the Scriptures

2. Vorgrimler's Commentary

a. DV 10.1: The preservation and realization of the deposit of faith is the **work of the entire people of God**, not merely the hierarchy. Of course, as we shall see, the authoritative interpretation of the Word of God is entrusted to the hierarchy; however, this does not mean that they are the only ones who teach and preserve this deposit of faith. The service performed by the magisterial office does not embrace the whole of the way in which the Deposit is present in the Church.

b. DV 10.2: The magisterium is not above the Word but serves it - This is almost contrary to what is affirmed earlier in *Humani Generis*, namely that Scripture can only be clarified by the teaching office and not vice versa. Thus, theology becomes the science that proves what the teaching office has established is contained in the sources "precisely in the sense in which it is defined." Here, the attitude of the magisterium (and hence the theology which serves it) is to listen - an attitude of openness to the sources.

c. DV 10.3: The interrelationship of scripture, tradition and magisterium: "one cannot stand without the other." Unfortunately, the Council did not make explicit how and to what degree Scripture bears upon Tradition; yet, "each (scripture, tradition, the magisterium) in its own way under the action of the one Holy Spirit contribute effectively to the salvation of souls." Perhaps we might say that the teaching office which serves this Word can, through the power of the Spirit, allow the two ways in which that Word is present in the Church to compenetrates one another. We will say more on this later.

3. Sullivan's exegesis of DV 10.2:

a. "Not above the Word of God but serves it,"

Magisterium is obviously a service to the Word for others. The service to the word is a service to the community which is formed by that word. For this reason, we can call the magisterial teaching office to be the one who authoritatively interprets that word for the Church and for the sake of the unity which the word aspires to create."

b. teaching only what has been handed on,"

"what has been handed on" has the same inclusive meaning as in *Dei Verbum*, 8: "everything which contributes to the holiness of life and the increase of faith of the People of God." Elsewhere in DV 10, we read about this "one deposit" as being "**committed to the Church**." It is extremely significant that Vatican II says that it is to the Church (and not just to the magisterium) that the whole deposit of the Word of God has been entrusted. It is handed on by "the Church in her teaching, life and worship." (D.V. 8) -- thus, the deposit is not just exclusively entrusted to the magisterium and exclusively handed on by the magisterium in its official teaching.

c. “listening to it devoutly” :

Before they can be teachers of the word, they must first be hearers of the word. Since the sacred deposit of that Word has been entrusted to the entire Church, the bishops must listen to that word as it is handed on in the “teaching, life and worship” of the Church. Consultation of the faithful, with those who live the life of faith; consultation with theologians and exegetes, etc.

d. “guarding it conscientiously and explain it faithfully,”

It is not within the function of the magisterium to be the theological innovators; there is a **conservative** principle (which ought not to be harshly criticized) which is otherwise termed “fidelity” to the deposit as received. It is not their duty to explore the depths of the mysteries in the same way as is done by theologians. The magisterium proposes nothing which is not contained in the one deposit of faith.

e. “by divine commission,”

By virtue of episcopal ordination and hierarchical communion with the head and other members of the episcopal college, this college participates in the mandate given to the college of apostles to teach in the name of Christ. It is by virtue of this office that they are **authentic** (that is, authoritative) teachers of the faith. (cf. LG 20)

f. “and with the help of the Holy Spirit,”

The office of teacher is an office that is filled with a grace- gift of the Spirit conferred through sacramental ordination.

g. “it draws from this one deposit of faith everything which it presents for belief as divinely revealed.”

This one deposit is nothing less than the Word, that which has been divinely revealed for the sake of our salvation; that Word seeks to be further explicitated and witnessed to through this teaching office.

4. Older Understanding : Humani Generis (Nov. 1950, Pius XII)

1. Role of theologian: “Catholic theologians and philosophers, whose grave duty it is to defend natural and supernatural truth and instill it in the hearts of men, cannot afford to ignore or neglect these more or less erroneous opinions. . . . It is also true that theologians must always return to the source of divine revelation; for it belongs to them to point out how the doctrine of the living teaching authority is to be found either explicitly or implicitly in the Scriptures and in tradition. . . . that the most noble office of theology is to show how a doctrine defined by the Church is contained in the sources of revelation, . . . “in the sense in which it has been defined by the Church.”

2. Role of Magisterium: “by divine institution, has a mission not only to guard and interpret the deposit of divinely revealed truth but also to keep watch over the philosophical sciences themselves in order that Catholic dogmas may suffer no harm because of erroneous opinions.”

II. Indefectability of the People of God in the true faith (LG 12):

A. Context in LG :

It appears in LG 12, in the chapter on the People of God, following paragraph 11's affirmation that there is a difference in essence and not just degree between the priesthood of the baptized and ordained priesthood. What follows LG 12 is a discussion of the specific charisms given to some for the sake of all.

B. Text of Lumen Gentium 12:

“The holy people of God shares also in Christ’s **prophetic office**: it spreads abroad a living witness to him, especially by a life of faith and love and by offering to God a sacrifice of praise, the fruit of lips praising his name. **The whole body of the faithful who have an anointing that comes from the holy one cannot err in matters of belief.** This characteristic is shown in the supernatural appreciation of the faith (sensus fidei) of the whole people, when, **“from the bishops to the last of the faithful” they manifest a universal consent in matters of faith** and morals. By this appreciation of the faith, aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth, the People of God, guided by the sacred teaching authority (magisterium), and obeying it, receives not the mere word of men but truly the word of God, the faith once for all delivered to the saints. The People unfailingly adheres to this faith, penetrates it more deeply with right judgment and applies it more fully in daily life.”

C. Rahner’s Interpretation of LG 12:

(in Sacramentum Mundi, Sec. II of article):

a. Key distinction:

Vatican I defined infallible doctrinal magisterium of Pope and Vatican II defined infallible doctrinal authority of episcopacy as a whole with and under the Pope. It left the relationship between the two undefined. Rahner, therefore, speaks of the Pope’s authority always in relationship with college as its head.

b. Basis of Indefectability: Church as eschatological community

Starting point: We affirm eschatological triumph of Christ-event. He is Word that bears testimony to self. It can only remain eschatological triumphant word and still present in the world if it does not falter and fail in the word of its own self-attestation. This word is testimony received and spoken by the Church who is the historically structured society with a confession of faith and doctrinal authority. Thus, the church is indefectable in terms of its eschatological nature. It is not an argument that can simply appeal to authority. Thus, to say that the Pope is infallible is to say that “Christ is the Lord.”

NB: infallibility of the bishops: makes sense only in light of the Church as the **eschatological community of Christ and salvation.**

c. Magisterium seen in terms of Creative Word of God

“Thus, the Magisterium is not strictly speaking the authority to teach abstract doctrines for their own sake. It is the guarantee that the salvific word of Christ will be really addressed to the concrete situation of a given age, in view of Christian life.”

d. Magisterium seen in terms of truth as Intercommunicative

“Truth of its very nature has to do with fellowship, society and institution, even though the precise relationship of an individual and his truth to the truth of fellowship and society differs essentially according to the nature of the society in question.”

III. Three Forms of the Exercise of the Magisterium: (LG 25)

A. Origin: Teaching of the Scripture:

Apostolic succession (cf. “Magisterium” in Dict. of Theological Interp., 1976, Vol. II.)

1. 1 Tim. 3.15: Church as **“pillar and ground of truth”**
2. Doctrine that is “whole and good” is **handed on** : Tt. 1.9; 2.1; 1 Tim. 4.6; 2 Tim. 4.3.
3. The Christian faith: “Conoscenza della verita”
4. Jesus is the Word (Jn. 1.1); come to proclaim the truth (Jn. 8.40; 45; 18.37).
5. The Spirit is of the Truth (Jn. 16.13)
6. Paul: The Word of truth (Col. 1.5; Eph. 1.13)
The Truth of the Gospel (Gal. 2.5; 19).
7. Doctrine “of the apostles” (Acts 2.42)
8. received and transmitted **as mandate** (1 Cor. 11.23; 15.3)
9. anathema (Gal 1.9; Rom. 16.17; 2 Jn. 10)
10. **mission of apostolic succession** (Lk. 10.16; Mt. 28.20)
11. dottori: (1 Cor. 12.28; Acts 13.1)

SUM: All together, the Church is seen as teaching which is important and must continue.

B. Rahner on the Scriptural Doctrine:

“The real nature of the magisterium derives from the Christ-event which is eschatological triumph and possesses in the Church and its confession of faith its permanent presence. If the Church is the pillar and ground of truth (1 Tim, 3:15), and if it has a social constitution and hence sacred offices, among which, primary and fundamental, must be the authority to preach salvation in Christ and demand belief, then this office is to be explained by the very nature of the Church.”

C. Lumen Gentium 25: Three Forms of Exercise of the Magisterium:

1. Infallible Definitive Mode: (c. 749)

a. Key Distinctions:

1. Sullivan suggests that infallibility best be understood as an act or event of teaching authority and not a property of a particular type of propositions. Infallibility is best seen as modifying a verb and not a noun.

2. Propositions (meaning of truth) are irreformable and subjects of infallible pronouncements and not statements or formulae (expressions of truth). Kung misses the point.

a. Kung: human words are never infallible

b. Congar: judgment of Magisterium, expressed in words and propositions are true. KEY: Other words may be used to express the same significance and judgment. The result is the same meaning with different words.

3. While general principles of the natural law are divinely revealed and can be infallibly defined, particular norms of the moral law by nature cannot be, because they are reformable by nature and do not pertain to revelation or are a truth that must be defined to protect the revealed deposit of faith.

4. Bishops as “Authentic” teachers means: not just genuine or with authority but “with hierarchical authority/authoritative”.

b. Conditions:

1. Subject:

a. Ecumenical council;

b. ex cathedra definition by Pope (in which the Church’s charism of infallibility is present in a singular way- LG 25)

c. Ordinary Universal Magisterium: college of bishops scattered throughout the world but “united in bond of communion among themselves and with the successor of Peter together with the Pontiff in their capacity as authentic teachers of faith and morals agree on an opinion to be held as definitive.

2. Object:

a. Primary: Word of God: **No** new revelation but the point is to indicate what was revealed and explain it. (ex. 1854, Immaculate Conception; 1950, Assumption). These are revealed by God.

b. Secondary: Truth not revealed but must be defined out of necessary to defend revelation. Two forms: Negative and positive. An example of negative is an anathema: errors are not part of revelation but there is definitive teaching when an anathema is given.

3. Act itself:

Intention must be to define something as part of the normative faith of the Church. It must be evident and clear.

4. Response: “divine and Catholic faith” (c. 750); “theological faith (*Donum Veritatis*, 23; CDF,1990); “all are bound to adhere to and to which they are obliged to submit” (LG 25).

NB: Only that which pertains to revelation can demand an assent of divine faith, on authority of God who reveals it. For “secondary” truths above, “they are still closely and intimately connected to Revelation, these are to be firmly accepted and retained” (*Donum Veritatis*, 23).

2. Ordinary and Universal Form : (Definitive & Non-definitive Forms) (c. 750)

a. When? universal, taught by all

Ordinary: as opposed to extraordinary above

Universal: bishops act **collegially** [NB: collegial means more than the sum total of individual opinions]

b. Conditions:

1. **Subject:** Pope with all the bishops throughout the world.

2. **Object:** same as above

3. **Act:** either infallible or non-definitive in form. It enjoys infallibility when Pope and all the bishops teach something we must believe.

4. **Criteria of Infallibility as per LG 25:**

a. “they can nevertheless proclaim Christ’s doctrine infallibly

b. even when dispersed throughout the world”

c. provided that they maintain a bond of unity among themselves and the successor of Peter

d. and while teaching authentically”

e. as a matter of faith and morals

f. they concur in a single viewpoint

g. as definitively to be held.

(key: this implies irrevocable assent on part of the faithful vs. serious assent) An example of such teaching would be definition of Biblical elements. It is difficult to delineate what forms part of the ordinary and universal Magisterium.

5. Two Different responses to Ordinary Universal Magisterium:

a. **when infallibly taught:** “is theological faith to teachings of ordinary magisterium when proposing something as divinely revealed.” (*Donum Veritatis*, 23; CDF, 1990);

b. **non-definitive teaching:** “a religious respect of intellect and will (c. 752); “loyal submission of the will and intellect (LG 25).

c. **meaning of “Religious submission of intellect and will”:**

1. key distinction: act of legislation demands act of will alone while an act of the Magisterium demands “**obedience of judgment**”. ie. will and assent of mind.

2. Practical Meaning: overcome obstinacy and adopt docility.

3. Question of personal dissent / lack of reception arises only here.

3. Non-Definitive Form

a. Conditions:

1. **Subject:** individual bishops; synod of bishops; episcopal conferences, papal encyclicals, etc.

2. Object: faith and morals, teachings related to faith and morals that must be defined in support of definitive teaching, and even the natural law discussions here as the CDF document speaks of it.

3. Response: (See above 5b) other descriptions include: “inner assent”; “sense of religious respect” (c. 753); “ready and respectful allegiance of mind” (LG 25); “religious spirit”.

NB: Two Different responses: are tied to type of teaching: (LG 25):

- 1. Faith:** is the response to definitive teaching
- 2. “Must be accepted and retained”:** response to non-revealed truths that are so closely related to Revelation that they are declared to be definitive and irreformable.
- 3. Religious submission of will and intellect:** response to non-definitive teaching.

D. Theological understanding of magisterial definitions

(Theologically speaking, what does it mean when the Church defines something as normative for the faith of the community? How does theology penetrate the meaning of such definitions?)

1. Preliminary remarks (Alfaro)

a. The meaning of “definition,” Usually we mean those solemn judgments in which the supreme teaching authority of the Church (an ecumenical council or the Pope speaking ex cathedra) exercises its teaching authority to the highest degree, definitively proposes some truth to have been divinely revealed, and henceforth to be an article of the normative faith of the Catholic community.

b. L.G. 25: “In matters of faith and morals, the bishops speak in the name of Christ and the faithful are to accept their teaching with a religious assent of soul.” For the theologian, there is a tension between human reason, as exercised in theological reflection, and the magisterium’s binding authority in which the Catholic theologian believes.

c. Fides quaerens intellectum

a. Faith: Theology starts with and presupposes faith. This faith has a cognitive aspect (assent to a particular content), a fiducial aspect (a trust in the one who reveals) as well as a practical aspect (“faith expressing itself in love” -- Gal 5:6): In short, theology is the knowing, deciding and acting Church reflecting upon its knowledge, decisions and actions.

b. Seeking: We shall examine this quaerens aspect in greater detail -- but the intellectual activity “seeking” implies a threefold aspect: critical, methodical and systematic.

c. Understanding: The “texts” which theology encounters (Scripture and the living Tradition) are already interpretations, “understandings” of what God has revealed. Theology takes that understanding that is already present and re-integrates it into

interpretations which speak to contemporary ways of understanding the world and human destiny.

2. Theological understanding of an Infallible Magisterium (Alfaro)

1. The Ground of the Magisterium: The question concerns ‘authority’ - by what authority can a human institution proclaim something to be “true”? How is the truth content verified (verifiable)? The ultimate truth itself is self-grounding - God’s self-revelation in Jesus Christ. The incarnation and resurrection are events which claim as their ground for authentication the intervention of God into history. The human expressions which proclaim this reality appeal to the veracity of God who has revealed himself in this way. As *Dei Verbum* expresses it, “In His gracious goodness, God has seen to it that what he has revealed for the salvation of all nations would abide perpetually in its full integrity and be handed on to all generations. Therefore Christ the Lord, in whom the full revelation of the supreme God is brought to completion, commissioned the apostles to preach to all men that gospel which is the source of all saving truth and moral teaching, and thus to impart to them divine gifts.” (DV 7) Therefore, the Christ event is itself what God has revealed to us for the sake of our salvation.

2. Indefectability: The absolute uniqueness of the Christ-event gives rise to the uniqueness proper to the apostolic Church as the normatively authentic witnesses of that event - - normative for Christian faith of every age. However, the Church, throughout the ages, believes herself to be indefectible in faith, that is, able to perdure in the truth of Christ, and is able therefore to attest to that apostolic faith in every age. The Church’s belief in her infallibility is an expression of its belief in Christ, in the enduring quality of his victory over darkness and ignorance, and the sure hope that the truth of the gospel will prevail for all generations to come. Thus, belief in the infallibility of the Christian community is a self-grounding belief -- it is grounded in the very idea of God’s full revelation in Christ which is for all time. The interior light of the Spirit helps us to discern the presence of God’s word in the words of men, we, the hearers, are also convinced of the reliability of the witnesses and successive interpreters. Key text here is from *Lumen Gentium*, 12. “The body of the faithful as a whole, anointed as they are by the Holy one, cannot err in matters of belief. Thanks to the supernatural sense of faith which characterizes the people as a whole, it manifests this unerring quality when ‘from the bishops down to the last member of the laity’, it shows universal agreement in matters of faith and morals. For, by the sense of faith which is aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth, God’s people accepts not the word of men but the very Word of God (cf. I Th 2:13). It clings without fail to the faith once delivered to the saints (cf. Jude 3), penetrates it more deeply by accurate insights, and applies it more thoroughly to life.”

3. Growth of Understanding: Throughout the centuries, the Church has grown in its understanding of Christian Revelation and in its articulation of that mystery. Such growth takes place through the interior guidance of the Holy Spirit. Alfaro offers a very fine synthesis of the relation of Scripture and Tradition: “Insofar as Scripture contains the Christian revelation, it is the norm for the Church and its faith; on the other hand, it is as it is understood in the living faith of the Church (Tradition) that scripture becomes the living word of God to us here and

now. Both Scripture and tradition are required in order that the revelation of God in Christ may become God's word for us at our present moment in history."

4. Magisterial definitions: What is the church doing in an act of definition?

a. The act of defining is expressed by verbs proper to a profession of faith. The definition, as an expression and understanding of the Christ event, calls for an assent of its content ("religious submission of faith -- L.G. 25). The assent of faith to dogmatic definitions implies also the same radical choice by which Christians believe in Christ and therefore in his visible and indefectible Church in the concrete institutional form this has received from the total Christ event.

b. The act of defining supposes the revealed character of the content.

c. The act of "believing-defining" is based on Scripture and Tradition and acknowledges its dependence upon them.

d. The act is authoritative (necessary for belonging to the Church) and the authority is from Christ (cf. DV 10, LG 20).

5. Ecclesial magisterium is thus not identified with Revelation but, as we have seen in DV 10, is subordinate to God's Word. Definitions of the magisterium are not divine revelations but understandings of that Revelation. The duty of the magisterium is to "protect and faithfully expound" that depositum (DV 10). Those who hold this office are subject to divine revelation as contained in Scripture and Tradition; their function is to provide a faithful and authentic (authoritative) interpretation of the content of revelation. Both the indefectibility of the Church as a community of faith and the primatial-episcopal institution as fundamental element in the being of the Church are based on the self-grounding character of the Christ-event (that is, Christ as the supreme revelation of the Father).

3. The Subject, Object and Act of Defining, theologically understood (Sullivan)

a. The subject:

The supreme and universal teaching authority of the Church. Between Vatican I and II it was customary to speak of two inadequately distinct subjects of supreme authority -- the Pope and the ecumenical council. Inadequately distinct because there is no ecumenical council apart from the Pope. Rahner says that there really is only one subject of supreme teaching authority in the Church, namely, the whole episcopal college, which can exercise this authority in two ways -- either as an episcopal college in council, or as the head of the college (thus, when the Pope defines a dogma, without summoning an ecumenical council, he is acting in his capacity as head of the episcopal college).

a. The body of bishops together with the Roman Pontiff: (an interesting tidbit: It is universal and ordinary magisterium (not defined) that an ecumenical council, in union with the Pope, can, in matters of faith and morals, solemnly define doctrines that are binding in faith for the universal Church.

The grounds for an ecumenical council:

(1) **In the East**, the criterion of ecumenicity was the consensus of the Pentarchy, the five patriarchal Churches (Rome, Antioch, Jerusalem, Alexandria and Constantinople). For the Orthodox, this criterion is still in effect, which means that in their view, there has never been an ecumenical council since Nicaea II.

(2) **In the West**, the idea of many theologians and bishops that a council was not truly ecumenical unless it manifested the **horizontal consensus** of the entire episcopate (again, we are not talking about participation at the council, since in none of the great councils in the first century did all of the bishops take part. Rather, the question is one of reception and the right of the entire episcopate to express its judgment as to whether or not a conciliar decree met the criterion of “**vertical consensus**” with Scripture and Tradition. This later consensus was the concern of the Eastern bishops in regards to papal authority.

b. The Roman Pontiff, the head of the college of bishops, as supreme shepherd and teacher of all the faithful. . . as supreme teacher of the universal Church. (LG 25)

(1) **Thomas** writes, “Just as a later council has the authority to interpret a creed established by an earlier one, and to add something and to clarify its meaning...so also the Roman Pontiff can do this by his own authority, for it is by his authority alone that a council can be convoked...Nor is it necessary, in order to provide such a clarification, that a universal council be convened, since conflicts of war can make this impossible (and then Thomas cites Nicaea II where all the bishops could not be convened due to war).

(2) **The Second Council of Lyons (1274)** -- “The same holy Roman Church holds the supreme and full primacy and sovereignty over the whole Catholic Church, which it truthfully and humbly acknowledges that it received from the Lord himself in blessed Peter, the prince and head of the apostles, whose successor is the Roman Pontiff. And just as he is obliged, above all others, to defend the truth of the faith, so it is by his judgment that questions that arise concerning the faith must be decided.”

(3) **Vatican I** defines the issue of papal infallibility and universal jurisdiction.

2. The Object:

“This infallibility with which the Divine redeemer willed his Church to be endowed in defining a doctrine of faith and morals extends as far as extends the deposit of divine revelation, which must be religiously guarded and faithfully expounded.” (L.G., 2)

a. Primary Object: faith and morals: This description of the object of magisterial teaching is used five times in paragraph 25 of Lumen Gentium. In the same paragraph, the bishops are commended to “preach to the people committed to them the faith they must believe and put into practice.” Res fidei et morum then can be interpreted to mean that certain matters are to be simply believed, others to be both believed and put into practice. In Trent we see the beginnings of this distinction -- in speaking of the Gospel is called the fontem omnis et salutaris veritatis et morum disciplinae. **Mores means more than just “morals”** -- it includes everything that the Gospel reveals about the Christian way of life -- how to live, how to worship. Perhaps Res fidei et morum would be better translated as “matters pertaining to Christian faith and practice.”

b. Secondary object of infallible magisterium: those matters which must be “religiously guarded and faithfully expounded.” In Vatican I, the idea of a secondary object was accepted -- but what might fall under this category? Some wanted it to be simply, “things connected with the deposit of revelation.” This, however, was too vague. The drafters of the constitution of the Church (Vatican I) wanted “truths which are necessarily required in order that the deposit of revelation be preserved intact”. Vatican II did not settle the issue concerning the nature of these secondary objects; however, the document *Mysterium Ecclesiae* of the SCDF states: “According to Catholic doctrine (i.e., doctrines that are commonly held to be certain by theologians), the infallibility of the magisterium of the Church extends not only to the deposit of faith but also to those things without which the deposit cannot be properly safeguarded and explained.”

Rahner says that the secondary or indirect object of Magisterial teaching “are other truths which, though not revealed per se or explicitly, touch matters of faith and morals directly or indirectly.” Such as: “virtually revealed” truths; “dogmatic facts; “ecclesiastical faith matters”(?).

3. Conditions that concern the act of defining.

For an act of magisterium to constitute a dogmatic definition, it must be evident that it is intended as such to be a definitive judgment, obliging the faithful to give their assent of faith to the doctrine so defined. Such a Magisterial definitive judgment can also be expressed negatively, by the solemn declaration of an opinion as heretical; the contradictory of the heresy is thereby defined as a doctrine of faith.

a. The difficult issue revolves about the question of the conditions for the act of defining when the subject is the pope; in Vatican I, the question was whether the consultation and consent of the episcopate was a condition upon which would depend the infallibility of a papal definition. The *Deputatio de Fide* of the Council ruled out that condition and explicitly placed into the formula of definition that the definitions are “irreformable of themselves and not from the consent of the Church.”

(1) This phrase is a reaction to the fourth article of the Gallican Articles of the Clergy was aimed to counter any opinion that there is a juridical dependence of papal definitions upon episcopal approval.

(2) “*ex sese, non autem ex consensu Ecclesiae*” does not rule out a real dependence of papal definitions on the faith of the Church, for the Pope can only define as a dogma of faith what is contained in the deposit of revelation.

(a) “the sacred deposit of the Word of God has been entrusted to the Church” (DV 10)

(b) The Church, in her “teaching, life and worship perpetuates and hands on this deposit to all generations.” (DV 8)

(c) The Pope, when he defines that which is contained in the deposit of revelation, must listen to that Word of God as it has been entrusted to the Church and as the

Church herself has handed that Word on in her teaching life and worship. In other words, before the Pope can define a dogma, he must listen to the Church.

(3) **THEREFORE:** There is a difference between saying that a papal definition of doctrine is not juridically dependent upon the consent of the episcopate and to say, on the other hand, that the papal definition arises from an understanding of the faith of the Church which ought to be consulted. Consultation, however, can be obtained in many ways as there are many ways in which the deposit of revelation has been handed on (Scripture, conciliar decrees, writings of the Fathers, theologians, etc.). It is not necessary to obtain a consensus of the bishops or all the faithful for that matter (although, the consensus fidelium was elicited through the bishops in the pronouncements of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption).

4. Theological Interpretation of Dogmas (Alfaro)

RETROSPECTIVE (Hermeneutical-Critical) aspect of theological interpretation: Every dogmatic definition is both a terminus and a new point of departure in the ongoing process whereby ecclesial faith endeavors to understand its own content. The Catholic theologian, as a believer, accepts the magisterial definitions as the “authentic” interpretation of revelation. In this retrospective phase, he tries to determine exactly the original sense of the text of the definition. What was the question about which the magisterium intended to take a position? What was the concrete teaching that the Church intended to condemn? What is the meaning of the terms that appeared in the formula? (Of course, here is presupposed that there is a distinction between the truths defined and the manner of expression of the truths -- cf. Pope John XXIII’s address at beginning of the council: “The deposit of faith is one thing: the way that it is presented is another. For the truths preserved in our sacred doctrine can retain the same substance and meaning under different forms of expression.” -- AAS 54,792.) What is the philosophical background or even other (hidden) influences that shape the definition? What aspects of the question may have been overlooked? What theological opinions were left open? Between the two camps, was there perhaps a fundamental perspective that was common to both which could not be reached due to a lack of vocabulary or adequate concepts? In interpreting the text, one must distinguish between the content of the dogma (the defining formula) and the subordinate propositions which may be used to either justify or explain the dogma (which do not have a dogmatic character -- e.g., transubstantiation) **Purpose of this phase: to delimit exactly the defined content that calls for an assent of faith. BUT NB: *Mysterium Fidei*.**

INTROSPECTIVE PHASE (integrative): A dogmatic definition presupposes that its content is part of the divine deposit of faith and is therefore revealed. However, the defining of a dogma doesn’t make that dogma more true or more important for Christian faith and salvation. The definition serves only as a formal criterion for determining whether a particular content belongs to revelation. By their own finality, dogmas are limited to concrete and partial aspects of revealed truth. A theological understanding of dogmas demands, then, that they be inserted in the total process of biblical revelation and of tradition. **In this phase, theology is called upon to interpret and show the truth of dogma by relating this definition to the whole of Scripture and Tradition.**

a. There is a gradation in the importance of dogmas based upon their connection to the centrality of the Christ event. Cf. UR #11: “In Catholic teaching there exists an order or hierarchy of truths, since they vary in their relationship to the foundation of the Christian faith.” The very act of defining does not necessarily bring it “closer” to its core.

b. revelation is saving truth, manifested by God for the salvation of the human race.

PROSPECTIVE PHASE: The charism of truth that belongs to the magisterium does not guarantee that the formulation was the best or the only one possible at the historical moment in which it was issued, or that it will be understood without difficulty in the future. Our understanding of the content of dogmas must be constantly renewed, so they may be assimilated in a living way in Christian faith and praxis. Simple repetition of the defined formulas in changed cultural and linguistic settings would produce an illusory orthodoxy. **The theologian’s task is to render the content of the dogmas accessible, believable, understandable to people of today and tomorrow.** No dogmatic formulation exhausts the mystery or gives fully adequate knowledge of the defined reality. Unfortunately, there can be a “communications breakdown” between the dogmatic formulation and the present situation of believers -- thus relegating dogmatic content to a marginal place in the Christian life. What are the challenges that face us today?

a. World consciousness: the question of revelation beyond the Judaeo-Christian context?

b. Historical consciousness: static notions of “quod semper creditum est” are no longer possible.

c. New philosophical modes of thought: logical positivism, non-foundationalism, personalism, existentialism, etc. which raise the ultimate questions of meaning and destiny: Christ still is the answer, but we will not present him as the answer if we misunderstand the question or fail to make the answer intelligible to the questioner.

IV. The Relationship between Magisterium and Theology

A. Theses on the Relationship Between The Ecclesiastical Magisterium and Theology (International Theological Commission in 1975).

1. Introduction

The purpose of the document, as stated in the introduction, is to clarify the relationship between the “mandate laid upon the ecclesiastical Magisterium to safeguard divine revelation, and the task entrusted to theology to understand and explain the doctrine of the faith.”

Thesis One: clarification of terms

a. **Ecclesiastical Magisterium** : is clearly meant the office of teaching that is proper to bishops.

b. Theologians: are those “who because of their studies and their life in the community of the Church’s faith are qualified to serve the Word of God by seeking a deeper understanding of it.” A qualification of a theologian is that he be part of the life of the Church’s faith community. **Theology is faith seeking understanding**, not just the fides quae of propositional faith, but the fides qua by which we make that unreserved surrender to God in what he has revealed.

c. Finally, the first thesis alludes to the fact that the history of the Church has shown a rather varied way in which theology and magisterium have interacted.

(1) First millennium: many theologians were bishops - union of the two roles.

(2) High middle ages and the growth of universities; not only did the doctores have an influential position in the Church, in the height of conciliarism, they imposed their viewpoint upon the magisterium.

(3) Reformation: the theologians were resources of the popes; it was they who first sat in judgment on the theses of Luther.

(4) Trent saw a fruitful collaboration of bishops and theologians who acted as periti to the bishops in council.

(5) The nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century saw theologians as the ones called upon to show how the doctrine, defined by the Church, was contained in the sources of revelation in the very sense in which it had been defined.

2. Elements Common to Magisterium and Theology in exercise of tasks

Thesis 2: Common element in task: safeguard deposit of revelation

The common purpose of magisterium and theologians, though realized in analogous and distinct ways, is to “safeguard the deposit of revelation, to seek ever deeper insight into it, to explain, teach and defend it for the service of the people of God.”

Thesis 3: Four Common Obligations

In the common service to the truth, the magisterium and the theologians are both bound by:

a. The word of God.” The document quotes the sections of Dei Verbum which speak of the service to the Word of God rendered by both magisterium and theologian.

b. The sense of the faith of the Church (of his and previous times). Both the magisterium and theologians must pay close attention to what the sensus fidelium is and both have a role in determining whether any belief has the consistency and universality of consensus that would justify the conclusion that it could not be erroneous. (Sensus Fidei: “supernatural appreciation of the faith”).

c. The documents of Tradition. Documenta has a broader meaning than documents -- indeed it refers to the “teaching life and worship” by which the deposit of faith is handed down in the successive generations of the Church.

d. The pastoral and missionary care they must have towards the world. The theologian has to have a concern for the effect that his ideas could have on the wider public.

For theologian, it has two senses:

- a. negative: not to destroy faith of people
- b. positive: explain the faith better

Thesis 4: Manner in which Task is carried out: Communion with Church

“The charism of infallibility, promised to the whole people of God and, in a special way, to the episcopal college in communion with the Successor of Peter, as well as the Supreme Pontiff himself, head of the college, must be made effective by the co- responsible and collegial association of the members of the magisterium and of individual theologians.”

3. Four differences between the Magisterium and Theologians

Thesis 5: Differences of functions:

a. The function of the magisterium (Conservative):

It is to authoritatively maintain the Catholic integrity and unity of the Church’s faith and practice. The function of the magisterium, therefore, will always be conservative in its approach. Positively, it means that it is called upon to “authoritatively interpreting the Word of God, both in Scripture and in Tradition.” This certainly doesn’t mean that the bishop functions as exegete, but rather to discern the consistent patterns which Scripture and Tradition give in matters that concern Christian faith and practice.

b. The theologian’s function : two-fold mediation

It can be described as mediating -- in both directions -- between the magisterium and the people of God. In its relation towards the magisterium, the theologian offers the teaching office the insights of the people of God, insights that are based upon new understandings of culture and human nature -- thus mediating the scholarship of the sciences for the Teaching office. In the other direction, theology mediates the teachings of the magisterium to the people of God, helping to make those teachings more intelligible to people of varying cultures and levels of education.

Thesis 6: The kind of authority with which they carry out their respective tasks:

a. “The magisterium derives its authority from sacramental ordination... This authority, which is called ‘formal’ is at once **(1) charismatic** and **(2) juridical**. “ The “charismatic” element refers to the grace-gift conferred through sacramental ordination. The “juridical” aspect of the authority refers to the fact that the teaching office is not carried out only in virtue of ordination, but also in virtue of the bishop ‘ s hierarchical communion with the entire episcopal college with the Pope as its head.

b. **“Theologians derive their specifically theological authority from their qualifications as scholars...** from the distinctive character of their discipline which, being ‘ the science of the faith ‘ cannot be pursued without a living experience of the faith. “ Interestingly, there is no mention of a charismatic basis for the teaching authority of theologians.

Thesis 7: A difference in the ways that the magisterium and the theologian are related to the Church .

Magisterium is an ecclesiastical office which is conferred by the sacrament of Holy Orders...Theology, even when it is not practiced in virtue of an explicit ‘ canonical mission ‘ can be done only in a living communion with the faith of the Church . Consequently, any baptized person who both actively lives the life of the Church and enjoys scholarly competence, can undertake the theologian’s task. “

a. The question of a **“canonical mission”** for the teaching of theology. This thesis is clear that such a mandate is not necessary for the t of theology, but it seems to assume that one would have a “canonical mandate” for the teaching of theology. [The situation described in this thesis seems to reflect the state university system in Germany where, since 1840, all professors of theology need a mandate from the Church.] In 1933, the canonical mission became a requisite for teaching in ecclesiastical faculties authorized to grant pontifical degrees. In 1983, the new code extended the requirement of the canonical mission to those teaching theology or related subjects in any institute of higher learning . The code does not explicitly say “canonical mission”, but speaks of a “mandatum” from the competent ecclesiastical authority.

b. Alessandro: while the mandatum avoids the use of the technical term “canonical mission” (making the teaching assignment akin to an ecclesiastical office), but it certainly maintains the idea of hierarchical deputation. While the 1917 code spoke of the role of the hierarchical church toward the theologian as “negative vigilance”, now the relationship is one of “positive deputation. “ In this regard, the relationship between the theologian and the magisterium is similar to that outlined by Pius XII in *Si Diligis*: Those who are thus called to teach, work as teachers in the Church, not in their own name, nor by title of their theological scholarship, but by virtue of the mission which they have received from the legitimate magisterium.”

c. The ITC seems to assert that the magisterium and the theologian teach with different kinds of authority. *Si Diligis*, on the other hand, seems to reduce all teaching authority in the Church to the teaching authority of the pastoral chair.

d. Question: can we not link the authority of the theologian to that of the recipient of any charism in the Church? While the thesis does not mention the teaching of theology as a charism, it would be in line with the theology of the council to speak of this grace-gift which could be judged as authentic or inauthentic (based on the evident signs that this person is following a vocation to do theology as an ecclesial ministry).

(1) In *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 3, the Council says “From the reception of these charisms or gifts arises the right and duty to use them in the Church and the world for the good of mankind and for the upbuilding of the Church.” A genuine ecclesial ministry need not be thought of as a sharing in a hierarchical ministry or as being derived from it. An ecclesial ministry, and the right to exercise it in the Church can be derived directly from a charismatic gift of the Spirit.

(2) This is not to compromise the fact that the ministry is exercised under the supervision of the hierarchy, working in communion with the hierarchy.

Thesis 8: “A difference as regards the freedom that is proper to each, and as regards the critical role they must exercise toward the faithful, the world, and one another.”

a. The magisterium is “manifestly free in carrying out its mission” but has a great responsibility in exercising that freedom so that it does not appear to be excessive or arbitrary.

b. The freedom of theologians “flows from their genuine responsibility as scholars. This is not an unlimited freedom, for besides being bound to the **(1) truth**, it must also recognize that in the exercise of any freedom, one must observe **(2) the moral principle of personal and social responsibility.”**

1. Truth:

a. The limits set by the truth: For the theologian, this limit is the revealed truth; of course, the truth of a doctrine is one thing and the form or formula in which it is expressed is another. To be bound by the truth is not to be bound by the formulas. The theologian can and should be called to task on how he is working within this limit -- the critical function is exercised by other theologians and by the magisterium itself (again, in a way that is neither excessive nor arbitrary)

b. What are the “limits of the truth”? Pius XII in *Humani generis* states that the “sacred magisterium ought to be the proximate and universal norm of truth in matters of faith and morals. Does this mean even ordinary non-infallible magisterium? If that were the case, in what sense could the magisterium be the “Servant of the Word of God” (LG 5, DV 10)?

c. The critical role of theologians with regard the magisterium, interpreting statements of the magisterium, putting them in a wider context, and applying to them the science of hermeneutics:

1. Re: defined dogmas: since dogmas always arise out of a previous theology, whose concepts and language may be uncritically enshrined, it can happen that the essential faith content of the dogma may now need to be explained in such a way as to become more intelligible and credible to the modern mind.

2. Re: the ordinary magisterium of the Church. What are the limits of a theologian to express publicly their dissent from such teaching if they are convinced that some statement of this magisterium is erroneous?

(a) GS, 62: “Let it be recognized that all the faithful, clerical and lay, possess a lawful freedom of inquiry and of thought, and the freedom to express their minds humbly and courageously about those matters in which they enjoy competence.” - a far cry from the ban of such free discussion in *Humani generis*.

(b) Certainly theologians in preparing the schema of Vatican II had departed from much of what had been previously taught by the Popes in past encyclicals.

(c) The focus of theological criticism seems to be the fact that the magisterium tries to “do theology” in its official pronouncements, endorsing one particular theological model, thus closing off other possible theological options and ways of articulating the faith.

2. Personal and Social responsibility:

The other limit for theologians: in choosing the manner and medium of its critical expression, the theologian has to observe the moral principle of personal and social responsibility. This limit is hard to follow in an age where the media will try to sensationalize the theologians findings. In one sense, the theologian needs the scholarly journal as an instrument of scholarly exchange. The good of such exchange must be weighed against the potential harmful results if those findings are sensationalized (even when such publicity is not intended, it can be foreseen).

Thesis 9: “The exercise of their functions by the magisterium and by theologians sometimes gives rise to certain **tension**... Tension as such is not hostility or real opposition: rather it is a lively stimulus and incentive for both sides to perform their respective tasks in communion with the other, following the method of dialogue.”

4. A Method for improving the relationship between Theologians and the Magisterium

Thesis 10: Basis for Dialogue:

“Dialogue between theologians and the magisterium has as its basis and is made feasible by the fact that both sides **share the faith of the Church** and both are engaged in **ministry for the upbuilding of the Church**... Here dialogue can be extremely profitable for both sides: the magisterium can achieve a deeper understanding of the truth of faith and morals which it preaches and safeguards, while the theological understanding of faith and morals can gain greater certainty from its corroboration by the magisterium.”

Thesis 11: Limit to Dialogue:

“The dialogue between the magisterium and theologians is **limited only by the truth of the faith to be preserved and explained**.”[the thesis only speaks of revealed truth as a matter for dialogue -- but some of the questions that have occasioned the greatest tension between theologians and magisterium in recent years are questions on the moral order] “There are some kinds of behavior which restrict the possibility of dialogue and make it less likely that it will achieve its purpose of serving the truth... measures of coercion, threat of sanctions employed

too soon...resorting to the kind of publicity that has the effect of introducing external pressures.” [Richard McCormick offers an excellent assessment of “public and organized dissent,” there are many risks in such dissent, creating polarity, undermining confidence in the charism of the hierarchy, associating theology with the mass media. It could only be warranted if other forms of less sensational dissent prove to be ineffective and in circumstances where the unopposed error would cause grave harm. But the burden of proof is on the person who seeks public and organized dissent. -- cf. Notes on Moral Theology, 1969.

NB: Dialogue method reaches its limit when the truth of faith is harmed.

Thesis 12: “Before instituting any formal process about a question of doctrine, the competent authority should exhaust all the ordinary possibilities of reaching agreement through dialogue.” [hence, not every case is immediately referred to Rome. The principle of subsidiarity ought to prevail.] This thesis does not specify the exact manner of sanctions that ought to be employed by the magisterium in exercising its critical function; however, it intends to underline that the method and spirit of dialogue should characterize the procedure at every step along the way. Fruitful dialogue is impossible when either side claims a monopoly on the role of the teacher and refuses to be taught by the other.

NB: Heresy occurs only when obstinacy exists.

B. Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian: CDF (1990) *Donum Veritatis*

1. Summary:

Theology deals with the truth, reminiscent of Jn. 1.14; that the Word became carne. In Christ, the significance of all being is revealed. If Christ is our truth, then faith must deal with that truth.

Slavery is to live without the truth. True liberty comes only with truth. Thus, doctrine always was and is in the center of the Church’s life. (1 Tm. 3.15; Church is the bearer of truth).

2. Outline of Document:

A. The Truth, God’s Gift to His People:

Truth possesses in itself a unifying force. The entire body of the faithful are indefectable (LG 12). The entire people of God must contemplate the mysteries of faith and present their reasonableness to the world.

B. The Vocation of the Theologian:

1. “His role is to pursue in a particular way an ever deeper understanding of the word of God found in the inspired Scriptures and handed on by the living tradition of the Church. He does this in communion with the magisterium which has been charged with the responsibility of preserving the deposit of faith.”

2. Theology has a double origin:

- a. from interior life of God's people (love)
- b. missionary vocation (faith seeking understanding)

3. Philosophical concepts must be used in the articulation of faith but discernment is necessary. "The ultimate normative principle for such discernment is revealed doctrine, which itself must furnish the criteria for the evaluation of these elements and conceptual tools and vice versa."

4. Freedom: does not equal liberty. "In theology this freedom of inquiry is the hallmark of a rational discipline whose object is given by revelation, handed on and interpreted in the church under the authority of the magisterium and received by faith."

C. The Magisterium of the Church's Pastors

1. "The function of the Magisterium is not, then, something extrinsic to Christian truth nor is it set above the faith. It arises directly from the economy of faith itself, inasmuch as the magisterium is in its service of the word of God an institution positively willed by Christ as a constitutive element of his church."

a. In what does the Magisterium teach?

- 1. Infallibly in faith and morals
- 2. "In a definitive way" on matters related to faith and morals
- 3. matters of the natural law.

2. "The pastoral task of Magisterium is one of vigilance. It seeks to ensure that the people of God remain in the truth which sets free."

D. Magisterium and Theology:

1. Collaborative Relations:

a. Reciprocal Relationship:

Magisterium authentically teaches doctrine and benefits from theology's insights. Theology gains "by way of reflection an ever deeper understanding of the word of God found in Scripture and handed on faithfully by the church's living tradition under the guidance of the Magisterium"

b. Reality of canonical mission

c. Response to Magisterial Teaching:

- a. infallible teaching: religious faith
- b. ordinary magisterium when proposes a belief as divinely revealed: religious faith
- c. "in a definitive manner": "Firmly accepted"
- d. non-definitive: religious submission of will and intellect

For theologian: Willingness to submit loyally to Magisterial teaching.

4. Tensions: dialogue must apply

1. Two different forms:
 - a. Question of communion of faith: “unity of truth”
 - b. Question of differences alone: “unity of charity”
2. Personal Difficulties must not lead to dissent

b. The Problem of Dissent:

a. Definition: Dissent is public opposition to the Magisterium.

b. Two Arguments used to justify dissent:

- a. Order of hermeneutics: all magisterial documents are nothing more than a debatable theology
- b. Theological pluralism that leads to relativism.

c. Question of sensus fidei: Sensus fidei is not consensus or public opinion. “The sense of the faith is a property of theological faith; and as God’s gift which enables one to adhere personally to the truth, it cannot err. This personal faith is also the faith of the church, since God has given guardianship of the word to the church. Consequently, what the believer believes is what the church believes. The sensus fidei implies then by its nature a profound agreement of spirit and heart with the church, sentire cum ecclesia.”

d. Question of freedom: Freedom of the act of faith cannot justify dissent because faith cannot be expressed without the truth. Thus, the Magisterium reserves the right to judge a person’s opinions, but not the person.

e. Question of conscience: “Conscience is not an independent and infallible faculty. It is an act of moral judgement regarding a responsible choice.” It cannot be the basis for dissent.

C. Ecclesialità e libertà della teologia (M. Seckler)

1. Introduction:

Theology is unique in that it has as its object faith and its method science. The need to unify both comes from the internal dynamism of faith itself that recognizes the reasonableness of faith.

2. Ecclesiality of Theology:

Key notion: Theology is fundamentally a function of the very life of the Church. This can be understood as the personal relationship of the theologian to the Church (personal disposition) or as the intrinsic configuration of the science of faith (structure). It is the latter that is Seckler’s point, understood in two ways:

A. Epistemologically:

Theology partakes in the life of the Church. As such, the reference to the Church is an intrinsic determinative factor in its ambito and function.

1. Nature of Church: as more than just the pastoral Magisterium but the notion of the eschatological people of God (of the NT). For this reason, theology is not a tutelage of the Magisterium but refers to the globality of the Church.

2. The **Word of God is the supreme norm** while **the Church is the proximate norm** for theology. These two are not the same. Mediated Immediacy is at work here insofar as the Word of God creates a personal rapport with its Source while always mediated to an individual through the Church and its faith experience.

B. Vital-Practical Aspect:

Theology partakes in the mission of the Church; to serve, as science of faith, the Word of God in the ambito of the Church's mission. In this sense, theology is anchored also to the institutional and juridical life of the Church.

3. The Church as “Norm” for Theological Work:**A. Criteriological Principle:**

In the global life of the Church, the Magisterium has a normative and regulative role in its Confrontations with the science of faith. The question is how does one understand this? That is, is it an intrusion from without or a normative form from within?

B. Three Models:

1. **Epistemological Individualism of Theologian:** Sees absolute criteria as Word of God and proximate one as individual theologian.

2. **Autonomous Institutionalism of science:** sees absolute norm as Word of God and proximate norm as the workings/rules of science itself.

3. **Model of Normative Ecclesial Mediation:** Best one; Absolute criteria is the Word of God and the proximate norm is the faith of the Church. “La teologia deve perciò cercare il consenso della Chiesa intorno agli esiti della sua produzione, fondamentalmente e intrinsecamente, sulla base di motivi criteriologici e non solo politici o tattici.”

The problem arises when the Church is seen as supreme/absolute norm and not proximate norm. We must always recognize the historicity of the Church's faith witness and remember that the Word of God does not equal the Church's faith testimony.

C. Consequences of this Third Model:

1. The proximate norm is the faith testimony of the Church in its fullest sense. We look to all loci theologici (SS, fathers, theologians, etc) of which the Magisterium is one. Remember that the Magisterium is not the whole church!

2. In cases of conflict, the Magisterium has the right and duty to intervene, even if seen as intrusive by person.

3. The Magisterium's response must be a differentiated one, insofar as we must admit of our historical nature, that admits of growth and development.

4. The Magisterium must speak in terms of doctrinal decision while the theologian must return to the constitutive element of his science, the argument,

4. The Freedom of Theology:

The ecclesiality of theology does not preclude its true freedom.

A. Epistemologically:

Theology is not free to choose its presuppositions or fundamental orientation. No science exists without such presuppositions. In the case of theology, it is the Church that mediates its presuppositions and judges its results. However, it must be free from external constrictions and free to pursue its theological search according to its method.

B. Practical Scientific Application:

Theology is free to pursue its work according to its own mode of life. The reason why so much is spoken of recently about freedom of theology rests in confusion about this point.