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DISSENTIRE CUM ECCLESIA

Healthy and Unhealthy Dissent in the Context of Catholic Education

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In his article "The Juridic Protection of the Church Teaching against Contraception,"[1] Jaime Blanco Achacoso, a canon lawyer, responded to an email from a certain reader concerning a column by Atty. Jose C. Sison in the *Philippine Star*. In the said column, a certain Jose Teodoro Sagalo alerted the columnist to a "grave error that the Loyola School of Theology has posted in the Ateneo website endorsed earlier by Bienvenido Nebres, S.J., Ateneo President, for reaction, and now endorsed by Roberto Rivera, S.J., of the John Carroll Institute."[2] The matter in question here is the "Talking Points for Dialogue on the Reproductive Health Bill"[3] document prepared by moral theologian

[1]Jaime Blanco Achacoso, "The Juridic Protection of the Church Teaching against Contraception (Part III)," *CBCP Monitor* 15:2 (January 17–30, 2011), B2. The article appears at the end of a three-part series: Part I in *CBCP Monitor* 14:24 (November 22–December 5, 2010), B3; Part II in *CBCP Monitor* 15:1 (January 3-16, 2011), B2.

[2]Jose C. Sison, "Nagging Questions," *Philippine Star* (November 8, 2010): 5. Available at http://www.philstar.com/opinion/627751/nagging-questions.

[3]Eric O. Genilo, John J. Carroll, & Joaquin Bernas, "Talking Points for Dialogue on the Reproductive Health Bill," http://www.jjcicsi.org.ph/?page_id=339 (accessed June 24, 2014).

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Eric O. Genilo, S.J., sociologist John J. Caroll, S.J., and constitutional lawyer Joaquin G. Bernas, S.J. Reacting to what he or she found to be "the presence of offensive proposals" in the said document, the unnamed reader posed the following questions:

> Can these theologians, teaching in a Catholic university, where young minds are supposedly being formed in the Catholic faith, maintain such doctrinally questionable positions with impunity? Can't the Law of the Church even protect the youngest of its own faithful against doctrinal error? Or put another way, if the bishops are so concerned about the environmental degradation brought about by irresponsible mining, shouldn't they be more concerned about the doctrinal confusion brought about by irresponsible theologizing in Catholic universities? After all, environmental degradation is not as serious as the erosion of the Catholic faith, which is at bottom the reason for the increasing acceptance of the RH Bill among the Catholic faithful—including government policy-makers.[4]

Responding to this query, Achacoso discusses the "juridic regulation of the relationship between Magisterium and theologian," applying it to the relationship between the CBCP and the local bishops with theology professors in Catholic educational institutions in the Philippines. By insinuating that dissent is "the beginning of the road to perdition," Fr. Achacoso propounds that the local bishops enforce the juridical provisions in canon law to regulate academic activity, especially of dissenting clerics and theologians, to make professors "toe the line." In this case, when canon law seems to be wielded to constrict theological activity, it behooves us as theologians and teachers to seek an enlightened understanding of the issue.

This article attempts to offer a response to the concerns raised by Achacoso particularly with regard to the issue of dissent. Although the article itself may be dated, the issue of dissent is not. In fact, with the recent election of Pope Francis, it has taken on a markedly different "color" and, with the advent of social media, a much wider arena. Whereas previously dissent from pronouncements of the Pope and the

[4]Achacoso, "The Juridic Protection of the Church Teaching against Contraception (Part III)," B7.

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bishops was commonly associated with the more "liberal" theologians in the academic setting, it is now from the "conservative" side that differing opinions are also heard, particularly in the new forum of social networking sites. This only shows that dissent continues to be a very important concern for theologians today, calling for our understanding not only on the juridic but also on the theological level, and not only for ourselves but for the rest of the faithful. For this, the case of the Jesuits who authored the "Talking Points on the Reproductive Health Bill" may still provide a concrete and specific example that can aid our analysis.

The Church and Academic Freedom

Achacoso began by discussing the ecclesiastical "mandate" required of professors of theological disciplines in Catholic universities and other institutions of higher learning. He goes on to elaborate that this formal ecclesiastical mandate, in the form of a *canonical mission* or at least a *nihil obstat* for teaching theology,

> … is neither an authorization to teach nor a canonical mission, but is only a certification that the professor is not teaching anything objectionable in matters concerning faith or morals and is doing so in communion with the Church. Thus, the mandate cannot be used to teach apart from the Church and much less against the Church; there is no room for active dissent in Catholic theology. In fact, it can be withdrawn—and I dare say should be withdrawn—when there is an absence of communion between the theologian and the Church (c.253 §3).[5]

While Achacoso's definition of the mandate and description of what it means seem acceptable enough, his sweeping assertion that "there is no room for active dissent[6] in Catholic theology" raises a

[5]Achacoso, "The Juridic Protection of the Church Teaching against Contraception (Part III)."

[6]In the absence of an explicit definition from Achacoso of what he means by "active dissent," we assume that here he distinguishes it from a situation

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serious concern in connection with the protection of academic freedom which is provided for in article XIV, section 5, paragraph 2 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution as well as in article 2, section 8 of the Code of Ethics for Professional Teachers and which guarantees freedom to teach according to one's scholarship in all universities and institutions of higher learning in the land. At the same time, the problem with his statement goes well beyond a conflict between his interpretation of ecclesiastical discipline and the laws of the State.

A more important and fundamental concern for theologians, beyond the legal aspects of dissent, is whether the nature of faith does itself preclude, and absolutely so, the expression of dissent against the official teaching of the Catholic Church. Is dissent truly the "road to perdition" not only for theologians but even for their students? Are all expressions of dissent, therefore, even in a setting such as the academe, the same as teaching something "objectionable"? Does public dissent always and necessarily sever a theologian from communion with the Church, as Achacoso states?

To gain perspective, we begin by recalling that in many ways the Catholic Church itself is the historical forerunner if not the original champion of "academic freedom." Avery Cardinal Dulles noted that the "Catholic Church has always had a deep respect for learning and intelligence. It has conferred on outstanding theologians the titles of father or doctor of the Church."[7] The role of these fathers and doctors who were pioneering in their vision, often way ahead of their contemporaries and attracting opposition from them, forms the foundation of the great intellectual tradition which has continued in the Catholic Church. At least in the Western Hemisphere, it was the

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where one who holds an opinion different from what is proposed by Church authority does not speak, write, or act upon this opinion. In this case, the very *act* of writing and publishing the "Talking Points" effectively qualifies it under his category of "active dissent" and also even under the more broadly used term of "public dissent."

[7]Avery Cardinal Dulles, *The Reshaping of Catholicism* (San Francisco: Harper and Row Publishers, 1988), 98.

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Catholic Church that continued to sustain the pursuit of knowledge, especially through the so-called Dark Ages, and in many places paved the way for the establishment of our modern universities. Many important advances not only in theology but also in the various sciences owe greatly to the Church's fostering of academic activity.

The official magisterium also owes much to the academic activity of theologians. The Angelic Doctor, who in his time was considered a dissenter himself, distinguishes between two *magisteria* in the Church: the *magisterium cathedrae pastoralis* or the teaching authority of the bishops as pastors and the *magisterium cathedrae magistralis* or the teaching authority of the theologians.[8] Before the formal organization as such of the Roman Curia, it was the practice of the popes and bishops to have recourse to distinguished theological faculties or "schools" as well as individual theological consultants in the exercise of their own teaching office rather than resolving theological or moral issues by themselves. This was especially so in the period when they were usually chosen from the nobility and did not necessarily have formal academic training. In this way, the bishops acknowledged that erudition and expertise in theology was not always their personal, and certainly not their exclusive, charism. Together, these two *magisteria* collaborated and contributed to the development of Church teaching.

As such, the relationship between the official Magisterium and the magisterium of the theologians has not always been an antagonistic one. It was not until the time of the Inquisition that the relationship between these two complementary *magisteria* would become really tense and, at times, even tragic and violent.

> Since the 19th century, an entirely new type of theological model was developed alongside the older working model of the theologians as critical partners of the bishops. Malevolently, one could describe this model as follows: the theologians are servile, party ideologues, or, more correctly formulated, they are the perfect parrots of the magisterium.

[8]Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones Quodlibetales* III, 9 ad 3. Cf. also his *Commentary on the Sentences* Book IV, D. 19, q. 2, a. 2, q[a] 2, ad 4.

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> Under Popes Pius IX, X, XI, and XII a sort of totalitarian claim to the magisterium obtained.[9]

The concept of *magisterium* itself would then become more and more identified with, and for some, eventually limited to, only the teaching authority of the bishops and the Pope.

Hence, theological faculties and theologians would sometimes find themselves pitted against the bishops in cases of public dissent with official teaching. With the consultation process preceding the publication of official teaching now significantly reduced, more room was created for dissent after instead of before the publication of official teaching. The hierarchy, on the other hand, would go on to set canonical provisions to limit the academic activity of dissenting theologians, including the withdrawal of the teaching mandate which Achacoso proposes should be used by the CBCP to censure the three Jesuits.

Achacoso appears to believe that the expression of dissent manifests a failure on the part of theologians to take their mandate seriously, as well as the accompanying Profession of Faith and Oath of Fidelity required of them when they receive it. He wrote:

> … I wonder how I keep on getting reports of heterodox teachings being foisted on the young and innocent by professors teaching either theology or matters related to faith and morals in Catholic institutions. Could it be that such professors are not making either the *professio fidei* or the *iusiurandum fidelitatis*?[10]

Extending these to similar juridical measures in canon law such as the requiring of the *nihil obstat* and *imprimatur* for doctrinal and moral publications, he calls for a more aggressive enforcement of these canonical measures "to make these persons and institutions toe the line."

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[9]Edward Schillebeeckx, "The Magisterium and Ideology," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 19 (Spring 1982): 16.

[10]Achacoso, "The Juridic Protection of the Church Teaching against Contraception (Part III)."

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Does the expression of dissent, however, necessarily violate this *Professio Fidei* and *Iusiurandum Fidelitatis*?[11] Does dissenting always signify transgressing the boundaries of orthodoxy? Here we shall continue our discussion with an examination of the *Professio Fidei* and *Iusiurandum Fidelitatis* in order to understand what is expected of theology professors and what room there is, if there is at all, for dissent.

The Profession of Faith and Oath of Fidelity for Teachers of Theology

Canon 833 prescribes that specified persons on specified situations personally make a Profession of Faith according to the formula determined by the Apostolic See. Among the categories of people obliged to make this public act at the beginning of their term of office are "professors of theology and philosophy in seminaries" (§ 6) as well as "those who in any universities teach subjects which deal with faith and morals" (§ 7). Excluded from this obligation, however, are non-Catholics (c. 11) because they do not hold the same faith, even though they may also teach these subjects in universities.[12] Those who are bound are to make it "in the presence of the rector if he is a priest, or of the local Ordinary, or the delegates of either" (§ 7). As a statement of legal obligation, the Canon has to be fulfilled by those called upon unless it is genuinely impossible to do so.

[11]The "Oath of Fidelity" of which he speaks here is the present version of what was formerly known as the "Oath Against Modernism" prescribed by Pope Saint Pius X in 1910, to be made together with the Profession of Faith. The Oath of Fidelity itself is not required in the 1917 Code or in the New Code, except for priests promoted to the episcopate (c. 380), because of its temporary and transitory nature affirmed by the Holy Office in 1918 (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 10 [1918]: 136). However, it was made obligatory for all persons listed under Canon 833 by a recent instruction from the CDF (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 81 [1989]: 104–106).

[12]James A. Coriden et al., eds., *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 586.

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The present formula consists of an audible proclamation, using the first person singular, of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan symbol followed by these propositions:

> With firm faith, I also believe everything contained in the Word of God, whether written or handed down in Tradition, which the Church, either by a solemn judgment or by the ordinary and universal Magisterium, sets forth to be believed as divinely revealed.
>
> I also firmly accept and hold each and everything definitively proposed by the Church regarding teaching on faith and morals.
>
> Moreover, I adhere with religious submission of will and intellect to the teachings which either the Roman pontiff or the College of Bishops enunciate when they exercise their authentic Magisterium, even if they do not intend to proclaim these teachings by a definitive act.

According to the 1989 Instruction by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), this is immediately followed by the Oath of Fidelity which has been appended in full to this article to facilitate reference.

Coriden comments on the meaning and significance of this Profession of Faith:

> The public manifestations of personal belief, of which this canon speaks, are acts of prayerful worship arising from the gift and virtue of faith, but they are here made juridical requirements on the occasion of the assumption of certain offices or functions related to the Church's teaching mission. The outward expression of faith in the form of a recital of a creed gives witness to the community of the authentic belief of a person who is to perform the teaching role.[13]

Regarding the Oath of Fidelity, Quade explains: "In its very title, as well as twice within its text, it is clearly established that the oath is intended for those who claim to speak *in the church's name,* and under the *church's mandate*."[14]

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[13]Coriden et al., *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary*, 585.

[14]Quentin L. Quade, "A University Perspective on the 'Oath of Fidelity'," *America* (April 15, 1989): 348 (italics in original).

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The Profession of Faith and Oath of Fidelity therefore possess not only a liturgical character but also a juridic valor, publicly vesting the persons who make it with an official role as teachers in the Church. This role gives them the right to teach Catholic doctrine and binds them with a duty to observe what they declare. We may even go on to say that because this category of persons specified by the law are expected to make the Profession and Oath, they are also expected to adhere to what they stipulate, regardless of whether they actually and formally make it or not.

Canon 2403 of the Old Code threatened the loss of income and office for those who neglect to make the Profession of Faith. Although the New Code no longer specifies any sanction for failure to comply with this obligation, the responsibility to make it and keep it, according to Jose A. Fuentes, is essentially a moral one in that "it is necessary to remember that the faithful must profess the faith if, by failure to do so, an implicit denial or abandonment of the faith, an insult to God or scandal could be assumed."[15] According to him,

> [the] fundamental juridical effect of the obligation to profess the faith in certain circumstances is that the *munus docendi* of the Church attains particular public importance so that only those among the faithful who declare that they are currently living, and will continue to live, under the bonds of communion and submission to authority will attain certain positions and duties.[16]

This provision safeguards the mutual duties and rights of both the faithful and the magisterium in relation to the faith, including the right of the magisterium "to teach authoritatively and demand responsibilities and public commitments from the faithful at certain times" and the right of the faithful "to receive the word, the right to the apostolate [of the word], the right to research the word, etc."[17] It

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[15]Jose A. Fuentes, "Tit. V. The Profession of Faith," in Angel Marzoa et al., eds., *Exegetical Commentary on the Code of Canon Law* Vol. 3/1 (Montreal: Wilson & Lafleur, 2004), 334.

[16]Fuentes, "Tit. V. The Profession of Faith," 335.

[17]Fuentes, "Profession of Faith," 334–336.

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originates from the Roman custom of requiring soldiers and public officials to profess loyalty to the Emperor before assuming public office. After the Council of Trent, it was used "as an instrument of the counter-Reformation in an effort to safeguard and build up the Catholic faith."[18]

Quade comments that it seems to be "an entirely appropriate and understandable discipline when one understands the Roman Catholic Church as it presents itself: an authoritative teaching body, protecting and promulgating truths entrusted to the church by God."[19] Hence, the *ratio legis* of this particular Canon, in relation to its original *finis*, is not simply to establish orthodoxy and enforce submission to religious authorities but, more precisely, to celebrate ecclesial communion, to highlight the importance of the responsibility that the person assumes to exercise a teaching function in the Church, and to define what is expected of the person in the exercise of that teaching role.

Scriptural and Conciliar Foundations

In the New Testament, communion with the Church was considered of utmost importance for those who teach the faith. Jesus himself speaks of false prophets who will come as wolves in sheep's clothing and gives a criterion for distinguishing them "by their fruits" (Mt. 7:15–20). In the Lukan parallel of this text, the "fruits" are identified precisely as the words that come from their hearts through their mouths (Lk. 6:39–45). Hence, there is a real need to profess one's allegiance to the true faith in words.

However, a single act of Profession of Faith is not enough but must translate to consistent orthodoxy. In his instructions to Timothy, Paul tells the bishop to "charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine which promote speculations rather than the divine training that is in faith" (1 Tim. 1:3–6). Nevertheless, this does not preclude

[18]Coriden et al., *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary*, 585.

[19]Quade, "A University Perspective on the 'Oath of Fidelity'," 348.

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theological inquiry, for the Apostle himself acknowledges that "our knowledge is imperfect and so our prophecy is imperfect. For now we see as in a mirror dimly … now I know in part; then I shall understand fully …" (1 Cor. 13:9–12). Faith then, at least in this life, necessarily remains *fides quaerens intellectum* in its conscious effort to adhere to what has been revealed in Jesus Christ and handed on in the Church, not however as ferment but as a dynamic reality, not as absolute certainty but as mystery.

Meanwhile, the Second Vatican Council describes the work of holding to, practicing, and professing the deposit of faith as "a remarkable common effort" (DV 10) of the bishops and the faithful. It also states that the development of Tradition happens with the help of the Holy Spirit, both "through the contemplation and study of believers who ponder these things in their hearts through the intimate understanding of spiritual things they experience *and* through the preaching of those who have received through episcopal succession the sure charism of truth" (DV 8).[20] In the mind of the Council, the relationship between the Magisterium and the rest of the faithful, which of course includes theologians, should not be one of suspicion but of cooperation, not one of opposition but of complementarity.

In line with this, the Profession of Faith must be understood not simply as an assimilation of a static body of doctrine and blind submission to the magisterium of the bishops as the official teachers but as a statement of belonging to a living community that struggles together, aided by the grace of the Holy Spirit, to understand what it believes and to grow and deepen in this belief as it continues to confront and wrestle with the questions and challenges of changing times. Thus, the Church has rightly removed all sanctions in the New Code connected to the Profession of Faith and Oath of Fidelity and has thus relegated it to the sphere of conscience of those who are called upon to make and observe it, as Fuentes suggests. Failure to make the Profession of Faith and Oath of Fidelity does not necessarily entail a violation of it, at least in principle. It is even rightly pointed

[20]Italics added.

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out that in efforts to comply with this Canon, it must be taken as an "ecclesiological imperative,"[21] consonant with our vision of what it means to be a believing Church and the role that those who are called to teach have in this community, and not merely as a juridical obligation that needs to be satisfied.

Categories of Church Teaching and the Corresponding Assent of Faith

Canon 749 § 3 unequivocally states that "no doctrine is understood to be infallibly defined unless this is manifestly demonstrated." "Manifestly demonstrated" here means that a particular doctrine constitutive of the deposit of faith must be explicitly proposed or clearly shown as infallible before demanding unquestioning assent. The context of this Canon is the reality that there are gradations in Church teaching and corresponding levels in the kind of assent expected of all the faithful, including teachers of theology. The Profession of Faith itself and the accompanying Doctrinal Commentary from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith reflect and express these clarifying and helpful distinctions in the nature of particular teachings as well as the corresponding response that is expected of the faithful.

The first proposition of the Profession of Faith corresponds to dogma. These are revealed truths which are inviolable and not open to dissent. Dogmas are defined either through the extraordinary magisterium by way of a solemn definition by an ecumenical Council or by the Pope acting as the head of the episcopal college when he explicitly teaches a certain doctrine *ex cathedra*, or through the universal ordinary magisterium where bishops across time and space consistently hold and teach the same doctrine. We apply the category of formal heresy to deviations from this limited body of doctrines to which the first proposition corresponds such that "whoever obstinately places

[21]Canon Law Society of Great Britain and Ireland, *The Canon Law: Letter and Spirit* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1995), 454.

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them in doubt or denies them falls under the censure of heresy, as indicated by the respective canons of the Codes [sic] of Canon Law."[22]

However, because the first category consists of doctrines regarding which there is universal consensus or which have been definitively determined by the Church in an explicit manner, these matters are not only not open to dissent. Dissent does not normally revolve around these matters. There is practically no disagreement nowadays within the Catholic Church about such matters as the divinity of Christ or even the Immaculate Conception of Mary. The danger and potential conflict lies in regarding as dogma matters which do not qualify under this category and consequently applying the category of formal heresy, which is a very strong and serious accusation.

While the Church, from the time of the Christological Councils all the way to the Second Vatican Council, has deemed it fit and necessary to make solemn and dogmatic pronouncements, the non-adherence to which led to excommunication (*anathema sit*) because of heresy, not all Church pronouncements are dogmatic in nature. In matters that remain controversial at present, such as the teaching on contraception in particular, no solemn and dogmatic pronouncement has yet been made. Also, what is held about these matters by the universal ordinary magisterium as expressed in the consensus, synchronic and diachronic, of the entire episcopal college has yet to be determined.

Meanwhile, the second proposition pertains to "all those teachings belonging to the dogmatic or moral area, which are necessary for faithfully keeping and expounding the deposit of faith, even if they have not been proposed by the Magisterium of the Church as formally revealed." These are "definitive" doctrines so intimately connected with dogma and morals that they are "necessary" to uphold the core of our belief even if they do not belong to the core itself. A clear example would be the belief in the inspired nature of the Scriptures

[22]Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Concluding Formula of the Profession of Faith* (June 29 1998), 5, http:// www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_1998_professio-fidei_en.html (accessed June 24, 2014).

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without which all our belief based on them falls apart. As such, they are also considered infallible and demand a full assent of faith. Those who dissent from these teachings "would be in a position of rejecting a truth of Catholic doctrine and would therefore no longer be in full communion with the Catholic Church."[23]

This second category of doctrine, however, is even less defined than the first and more porous because it is not always clear whether a particular doctrine is "required for the keeping and expounding of the deposit of faith." Francis Sullivan, S.J., notes that

> while it is official Catholic doctrine (though not a dogma of faith) that the Church's charism of infallibility extends to such a "secondary object" there is no official statement specifying in detail what is included in it nor is there unanimity among Catholic theologians about the exact contents or limits of the object.[24]

Also, the way in which the expected response to this body of doctrines is stated—"to embrace and hold firmly" (*firmiter amplector ac retineo*)—is as vague as it is poetic. Orsy notes that

> [t]here are new elements here not found in this form in earlier professions of faith or in any of the documents of the Second Vatican Council or in the canons of the new Code. The text speaks of doctrines *definitively proposed* by the Church, doctrines that ought to be *embraced and held*. This leads to some weighty theological questions.[25]

For instance, he asks, "what is the theological significance of *embracing and holding* a doctrine? Is it the same as the making of an act of faith?

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[23]Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Concluding Formula of the Profession of Faith*, 6.

[24]Francis A. Sullivan, "Some Observations on the New Formula for the Profession of Faith," *Gregorianum* 70:3 (1989): 552. Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University.

[25]Ladislas Orsy, "Profession of Faith and the Oath of Fidelity," *America* (April 15, 1989): 345–346.

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If so, we should say credo, 'I believe,' and should not use any other ambivalent term."[26]

Although the CDF identifies two criteria by which to establish if a doctrine belongs to this category, namely, "historical relationship" and "logical connection," theologians still vary in determining whether a particular doctrine such as the teaching on contraception belongs to it. Some adapt a liberal application that more readily admits doctrines within its scope. Conversely, others adopt a stricter one, following the spirit of Canon 749 § 3 and do not admit a doctrine within it unless it can be clearly established otherwise. Once again, the danger lies in readily classifying certain teachings under this category, effectively qualifying them as infallible, and once again adopting a polemical if not inimical stance against those who hold contrary beliefs.

Finally, the third proposition, according to the CDF, refers to "all those teachings—on faith and morals—presented as true or at least as sure, even if they have not been defined with a solemn judgment or proposed as definitive by the ordinary and universal Magisterium." The CDF goes on to declare that "a proposition contrary to these doctrines can be qualified as erroneous or, in the case of teachings of the prudential order, as rash or dangerous and therefore, '*tuto doceri non potest*.'"[27]

Thus, if such an explicit and absolute prohibition—*tuto docere non potest*, "absolutely cannot teach"—applies to the lowest category, any obedient Catholic theologian "absolutely cannot teach" anything that contradicts a doctrine falling within any of all these three categories. Still, it remains to be asked whether such ideas may still be expressed in the classroom or university podium without making the subject schismatic or adamant in error. After all, there is a fine line that divides

[26]Orsy, "Profession of Faith and the Oath of Fidelity," 345–346 (italics in original).

[27]Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Concluding Formula of the Profession of Faith*, 10.

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teaching something as true and sure and merely proposing questions and alternative positions within the context of academic discourse.

Moreover, the important operative phrase "religioso voluntatis et intellectus obsequio adhaerere" in the third proposition is rather open to varying interpretation. Sullivan observes that this crucial Latin term "obsequium" has been variably translated in English and equivalently in other languages as either "submission" or "respect." Both words have in fact been used in authorized English translations of the Code as Orsy observed: "respect" for the one published for the United States and "submission" for the other authorized English translation. Sullivan therefore suggests that "one should at least not give too strong a meaning to 'submission' or too weak a meaning to 'respect'," [28] that is, not to undermine or overemphasize the authority of the official teaching.

Therefore, while we are called to respect or submit to whatever the Church proposes to us "as true or at least sure," including judgments of a prudential nature, we need not be absolute and unquestioning about all teachings, as if they all bear the same theological weight. For instance, while it is clear that openness to procreation is intrinsic to the marital act based on the doctrine on the two ends of marriage, the question of using certain birth control methods in particular situations can be much more complex. What do we say for instance to a wife with seven malnourished children and an unemployed husband who adamantly refuses to cooperate in natural family planning because of a prevailing macho culture? It needs to be asked anew, even demands to be asked anew because of the uniqueness and increasing complexity of human realities, if we are to be truly faithful to the upholding of the dignity of human life. In the same way, we cannot be minimalist or relativist in regarding the official magisterium of the Church as only a voice among and equal to other voices that we must consider. To this effect, Orsy insightfully points out the deeper meaning of *obsequium*:

[28]Sullivan, "Some Observations on the New Formula for the Profession of Faith," 557.

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> The root meaning of the word does not refer to any specific action but to an attitude, as any good Latin dictionary attests. It points to an attitude of readiness to follow some promptings of another, to a disposition of loyalty. Such an attitude can, of course, at some proper times lead to the specific act of the full acceptance of a point of doctrine proclaimed by the magisterium, but it can also imply a respectful listening, coupled if necessary with critical reflections.[29]

In another place, he explains:

> The external manifestation of a disposition can take many forms, depending on the person to whom *obsequium* must be rendered, or on the point of doctrine that is proposed as entitled to *obsequium*. Accordingly, the duty to offer *obsequium* may bind to respect, or to submission—or to any other attitude between the two.[30]

In any case, both submission and respect can manifest *obsequium*.

Even the Oath of Fidelity, it can be argued, does not employ absolute language and appears to allow some room for dissent, but only after establishing a fundamental loyalty to the Church: "In fulfilling the charge entrusted to me in the name of the Church, I shall hold fast to the deposit of faith in its entirety; I shall faithfully hand it on and explain it, and I shall *avoid* any teachings contrary to it."[31] Avoiding is not necessarily equivalent to evading but can also point more to a disposition of caution rather than complete non-engagement. After all, the very process of handing down the faith today and explaining it may itself necessitate such an engagement.

A very recent example of the fruitfulness of such critical engagement is the International Theological Commission's document entitled "The Hope of Salvation for Infants Who Die Without Being Baptized," approved by Pope Benedict XVI for publication on January 19, 2007. The said document concerns the teaching on the Limbo of

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[29]Orsy, "Profession of Faith and the Oath of Fidelity," 346.

[30]Ladislas Orsy, *The Church: Learning and Teaching* (Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1987), 89.

[31]Italics added.

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the Unbaptized, which, originating from Saint Augustine, was held by the Church in connection with the teaching on the necessity of baptism and incorporation in the Church in order to be saved. In this document, the CDF applied the word "theory" to the doctrine of Limbo, implying that the said concept, as in other disciplines, may have been operational at a certain point as a solution to a certain question but is at the same time provisional and open to the possibility of emendation or even rejection in the future.

In fact, the phrase "development of doctrine" appears many times in the document which traces the historical development of the said theory. In the end, it makes its conclusion, effectively cancelling a doctrine which has been taken for granted by many and sometimes even regarded as part of Tradition: "We believe that, in the development of doctrine, the solution in terms of Limbo can be surpassed in view of a greater theological hope …."[32] Such a humbling but enlightening clarification on the part of the Church could not have been reached without adopting a spirit of openness to questioning certain doctrines which the Church teaches and viewing them with a healthy attitude of self-criticism which does not deny the possibility of refining or even correcting our long-held belief in the light of new data or with the progress of reflection.

If one is to be overstated in assessing the importance of particular doctrines, sometimes regarding everything as dogma without being conscious of these gradations of Church teaching and being overly rigid in giving assent to them, the tendency is to exclude all possibility of dissent, especially the public expression of such dissent, and even more so the expression of dissent in a context of teaching. If one is more sober, however, in the treatment of Church doctrine, without underemphasizing or overemphasizing its authority and valor, and certainly not undermining it especially in the case of dogma, one can become more open to the development of doctrine.

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[32]International Theological Commission, *The Hope of Salvation for Infants Who Die Without Being Baptized* (January 19, 2007), 95, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_ doc_20070419_unbaptised-infants_en.html (accessed August 21, 2014).

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The Role of Dissent in the Life of the Church

Edward Schillebeeckx regards dissent as normal in the organic life of the Church.

> A certain tension between the magisterium and the rest of the Catholic community, and especially between the magisterium and Catholic theologians, belongs to the normal life of the Church. Throughout the history of Catholic experience, the theologians' function has been one of scientific and confessional criticism in dealing with the specific forms in which the Magisterium articulates the Christian faith.[33]

The International Theological Commission categorically affirms this reality and even suggests that such tension may even be a permanent feature of the life of the pilgrim Church:

> The exercise of their tasks by the magisterium and theologians often gives rise to a certain tension. But this is not surprising, nor should one expect that such tension will ever be fully resolved here on earth. On the contrary, wherever there is genuine life, tension also exists. Such tension need not be interpreted as hostility or real opposition, but can be seen as a vital force and an incentive to a common carrying out of the respective tasks by way of dialogue.[34]

Even sociologists have observed several stages which are common to the life of human organizations, namely, forming, storming, norming, and performing. As seen in the history of the Church, storming in the early stages was crucial in the formation of its identity and the articulation of its core values and beliefs. However, as this model is really a cycle or a spiral rather than a merely linear representation, even after reaching the stages of norming and performing, storming can still occur when new questions arise or new problems surface that need to be addressed. Such later storming is also essential if stagnation and even paralysis is to be avoided in the life of an organization.

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[33]Schillebeeckx, "The Magisterium and Ideology," 5.

[34]International Theological Commission, *Theses on the Relationship between the Ecclesiastical Magisterium and Theology* (June 6) (Washington: United States Catholic Conference, 1976), 9.

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Schillebeeckx observes that the present situation of the Church is complicated by some emerging factors, including a growing mistrust of the teachings of the magisterium on the part of many believers today "and in particular between the magisterium and critically minded Catholics."[35] Thus, there is an undeniable storming that has already been going on in the Church today. Gone are the times when the laity blindly acquiesced to the teaching of the clergy or, to use the rather curt secular slogan, simply "prayed, paid, and obeyed." Thus pressured, the hierarchy has at times adopted a defensive stance towards dissent to which theologians have also reacted defensively, with antagonism from both sides hindering genuine and sober dialogue. In such cases, reason is forsaken and the relationship turns into rivalry based on power or persuasion.

> This goal of the dialogue, the service of the truth is often endangered. … the dialogue between the magisterium and theologians is especially violated if the level of argument and discussion is prematurely abandoned and means of coercion, threat and sanction are immediately brought to bear; the same thing holds when the discussion between the theologians and the magisterium is carried out by means of publicity, whether within or outside the Church, which is not sufficiently expert in the matter.[36]

However, while dissent may at times represent a real threat that can lead to heresy or schism, it can also be a moment of opportunity for the Church, a gift from God who leads us to deeper knowledge of the truth and to renewal as many difficult but shining moments in the history of the Church attests. Healthy storming eventually leads to better norming and performing. Indeed, we can acknowledge the place of dissent not only on practical but also on theological grounds. Apparent dissent can actually be an authentic movement of the Holy Spirit.

> The doctrine that the Holy Spirit inspires ever-renewed interpretations of the faith logically implies that at any specific point in the ongoing

[35]Schillebeeckx, "The Magisterium and Ideology," 5–6.

[36]International Theological Commission, *Theses on the Relationship between the Ecclesiastical Magisterium and Theology,* 11.

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> developmental process, conscientious dissenters may be ahead of the current teaching authority because of their deeper interpretation on some disputed matter. An individual's dissenting conscience currently unsynchronized with Rome may be erroneous, or it may be correctly responding to what the Holy Spirit intends for the future of the Church.[37]

Indeed, the history of the Church bears witness to such a long line of loyal and faithful dissenters, including those of recent memory such as Yves Congar, O.P. and John Courtney Murray, S.J. Both were held in suspicion initially but proved instrumental in the teachings of the Second Vatican Council. "Cutting off internal dissent severs the church's self-correcting source of reform and renewal. We also appear absurdly hypocritical in preaching freedom of conscience to the world when we do not live by those same standards within our own community."[38]

Because of liberalism and the free and rapid diffusion of ideas today especially through social media, dissent is already present everywhere even if professors inhibit themselves from participating in it. Gone are the times when books and ideas perceived to be inimical or at least dangerous can be censured and forbidden and the young people can be prevented from being exposed to them. In fact, the refusal to engage dissenting opinions expressed even in informal venues and tackle them in our formal academic theological discussions only seems to contribute to the growing climate of mistrust already pointed out by Schillebeeckx. It is not so much a question of going with the popular flow as engaging the people today and the questions that they are already discussing, with or without our involvement. The very openness to this dialogue can only contribute positively to the threatened credibility as well as to the questioned relevance not only of the magisterium but even also of theology professors.

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[37]Sidney Callahan, "Conscience Reconsidered," *America* (November 1, 1986): 251.

[38]Callahan, "Conscience Reconsidered," 252.

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Healthy and Unhealthy Dissent

As Novak has stated, dissent is normal, helpful, and even necessary not only in the academic setting but for the very life of the Church. "Bold and original investigations, even when admixed with error, uncover new ways of thinking and new angles for casting light upon the revelation of God entrusted to the Church."[39] However, care must be taken that dissent be not perverted and used to attack the Church and the faith.

Avery Dulles imparts a number of helpful criteria for discerning movements of true reform from false reform—in effect, constructive dissent from destructive dissent.

> False reforms, I conclude, are those that fail to respect the imperatives of the gospel and the divinely given traditions and structures of the Church, or which impair ecclesial communion and tend rather towards schism. Would-be reformers often proclaim themselves to be prophets but show their true colors by their lack of humility, their impatience, and their disregard for Sacred Scriptures and tradition.[40]

In contrast to this, we may consider the heroic attitude and example of once perceived dissenters from Origen and Aquinas to Congar and Courtney Murray who were unfailing in their love and loyalty for the Church and hierarchy, even in the face of trial. These saintly theologians proved themselves mature and keenly aware that the development of doctrine is a process that takes time and is better helped by patience rather than force. However, because not all dissenters have always been mature or patient, the term "dissent" itself has become burdened with negative connotations, as Orsy laments. Thus, he proposes a new way of looking at and naming differences in theological views.

> In this process, the voice of a theologian who remains in communion but proposes an answer different from the one given by those in

[39]Michael Novak, "Dissent in the Church," in William May, ed., *Vatican Authority and American Catholic Dissent* (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 74.

[40]Avery Cardinal Dulles, "True and False Reform," *First Things* (August–September 2003): 17.

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> authority may not be an act of dissent at all; rather, it may be a needed contribution to the development of doctrine, coming from someone who is assenting to every part of the revealed truth but is in the process of searching for the whole truth.[41]

While the use of the word dissent, loaded as it is, may have become unavoidable, there is, this writer proposes, a clarifying difference between dissenting from the official teaching of the Church and discrediting the Church, which sometimes but not always go together. The verb "dissent" comes from the Latin "sentire" which means "to think," and which is often translated more closely today as "to sense." No one in his right mind today would forbid thinking and sensing. The Church itself has consistently rejected fideism or irrational and unthinking faith, just as it has condemned rationalism or unbelieving and Pelagianist reason. Thus, and rightly so, every theologian and indeed every believer is entitled and must even be encouraged to think and to sense for himself, even if his or her thinking and sensing may sometimes be different from the mainstream thinking and sensing of the Church.

Cardinal Dulles reminds us that "in some cases, no doubt, the vast majority of Christians will recognize where the truth lies, but in other cases, the authentic teaching may be held only by a faithful minority."[42] Once again, one need only look at the long history of the Church, beginning with Christ himself all the way to the present time, to find suspected dissenters who were suspected by their contemporaries but discovered at the end of the day to be the true bearers of the truth.

There is a genuine value that we need to recognize in dissent as an inextricable and perhaps even essential part of the process of doctrinal reception. Thus, the word dissent must not be given an absolutely negative meaning, or at least a more descriptive and relatively neutral term such as disagreement or difference must be preferred instead. "Catholic doctrine is enriched by the process of

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[41]Orsy, *The Church: Learning and Teaching*, 98.

[42]Avery Cardinal Dulles, "Sensus Fidelium," *America* (November 1, 1986): 242.

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reception and by what communication experts designate as 'feedback'. Even the difficulties experienced in the process of reception may be instructive; they sometimes help the teachers speak more accurately and convincingly."[43] In the same way that negative feedback can be constructive, responsible dissent can lead to the development and fine-tuning of doctrine that ultimately serves to benefit rather than harm the authority of the Church. Even for dissent itself, the same feedback mechanism operative in the academe in the form of peer review and criticism can serve as an important refining, correcting, and filtering mechanism for arriving at the truth.

There is at the same time a certain kind of dissent that is not helpful because in principle and in effect it discredits the Church. The verb discredit is a negation of the Latin word "credere" which means "to give assent to" or "to have faith in." Taking this into account with the more fundamental understanding of revelation and faith which informs us that what we are called to give our assent to and to have faith in does not only consist of propositions and doctrines but is ultimately a person: God in Christ who continues to be present and active in the Church by the power of the Holy Spirit, the most dangerous form of discrediting would be to discredit not doctrines but God himself and the Church itself. On one hand, it may be possible not to assent to certain propositions and doctrines without failing to assent to and maintain faith in the Church and in Christ. On the other hand, attacking all forms of dissent and free theological activity, especially under the guise of defending and protecting the Church, may signify a deep mistrust, a real discrediting of the competence and vigilance of the Holy Spirit himself who is at work in the Church guiding her towards the fullness of truth.

Discrediting the Church can sever us from her communion with Christ the Head. If we are to dissent, then, we must be careful and honest to discern whether that dissent is in the context of a sincerely searching faith, a faith that is always humbly trusting while at the same time intelligently asking, a really honest *fides quarens intellectum*. A

[43]Dulles, "Sensus Fidelium," 263.

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completely different matter would be the explicit and final rejection of Church teaching in favor of one's own views contrary to it. May rightly asserts that

> nothing in the documents of Vatican II supports the kind of dissent … that is, the right of theologians to declare the authoritative, yet non-infallibly proposed teachings of the Church erroneous and to instruct the faithful that they are at liberty to set these magisterial teachings aside and substitute for them the opinions of theologians.[44]

Thus, while theologians have the right "to raise questions and to raise alternatives that may be in contradiction to them," one may only offer these humbly as "hypotheses," subject to the validation and criticism of peers in the field, the reception of the rest of the Church, and the judgment of the official magisterium. "One's own opinions are surely not infallible, and Catholics ought never to prefer the opinions of theologians, however learned, to the authoritative teachings of those who have been invested with the authority to teach in Christ's name."[45] Thus, dissent rightly occurs in a humble and docile attitude of questioning, seeking for answers from the Church itself rather than attacking it. Nonetheless, such seeking can only thrive in a climate of mutual trust, which unfortunately is not always present.

A case of such lack of trust appears to be embodied in the CDF Instruction *Donum Veritatis* "On the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian."[46] The said document expresses a very negative view of "the problem of dissent" which it practically equates to "attitudes of general opposition to Church teaching which even come to expression in organized groups" (32). It follows Paul VI's "diagnosis" of what it apparently presents as a malady, attributing dissent to certain

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[44]William E. May, "Catholic Moral Teaching and the Limits of Dissent," in William May, ed., *Vatican Authority and American Catholic Dissent* (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 99.

[45]May, "Catholic Moral Teaching and the Limits of Dissent," 99.

[46]Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Donum Veritatis* (May 24, 1990), http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19900524_theologian-vocation_en.html (accessed June 24, 2014).

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causes to which it applies loaded terminologies like the "ideology of philosophical liberalism" and appeal to public opinion as well as "theological positivism" and "theological pluralism" which have been negativized in other official documents. In effect, it sets up dissent as a "parallel magisterium" in opposition to the "Magisterium" of the hierarchy and goes on with a blanket assertion that "the freedom of the act of faith cannot justify a right to dissent" (36).

While it is true that such cases of rebellious and ultimately destructive dissent have existed and continue to exist, what the document appears to forget is the role that healthy dissent has played in the life of the Church coming from individuals motivated by a sincere love and concern for the Church rather than mere ideology. Not all dissent is unjustified, ill motivated, and destructive. The entire achievement of Catholic intellectual clashes, beginning with the so-called Christological controversies all the way to the Catholic Reformation and the Second Vatican Council, attests to this. The Church undoubtedly owes to the work of such "dissenters" whose penetrating vision and groundbreaking insight, coupled with humility and true fidelity, paved the way for the development of doctrine. To give such a blanket condemnation of dissent can alienate many believers of good will and contradict the image of the Church as a "mystery of communion" (39) which the document itself was trying to present.

Dissent in the Context of Catholic Education

After looking at what dissent is, its positive role in the life of the Church, and its necessary limitations, we focus once again on its application in the specific context of Catholic education for professors of theology, once again using the Canon on the *Professio Fidei* and *Iusiurandum Fidelitatis* as our point of reference. Although we have earlier declared that healthy dissent can be a positive element in the life of the Church, its practice in the context of Catholic education raises another concern.

While theologians, as academics, can always express dissent in papers or in debates, for instance, it is a different matter when they do

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so as teachers, especially in Catholic institutions. The authority inherent in their office can create confusion in the minds of their students if what they say does not agree with official teaching because of the unstated expectation on the part of the students to receive Catholic doctrine. This is especially so since not all students are always able to make distinctions and nuances in what their professors say. Here, the commentary offered by some canonists regarding the Canon in question may prove very helpful.

Both Orsy and Quentin argue for a stricter, more limited application only to those who officially speak in the Church's name and with the Church's mandate: "There is solid evidence that the obligation exists for those, *and those only*, who either are appointed to hold an ecclesiastical office, or are at least mandated to function 'in the name of the Church.'"[47] There is a very important point that these canonists are raising. First, it clarifies the fact that not all theology professors, strictly speaking, are teaching "in the name of the Church," even when they do so in a "Catholic" school.[48]

This is not a legal loophole that gives license to those who are not covered by the Canon to act and speak as they please. Rather, the wider implication of their comment is that it is possible to consider theology professors in non-pontifical institutions as well as those in pontifical institutions as professionals and practitioners of an academic discipline of theology, and to take their teaching and research publication as the proper exercise of such and not as official Church teaching. With their activity thus understood, direct conflict can be avoided, for as long

[47]Orsy, "Profession of Faith and the Oath of Fidelity," 346. Italics added.

[48]In the Philippine setting, not all theology professors possess a canonical mandate. Also, with the exception of the Royal and Pontifical University of Santo Tomas which is "Catholic" *de iure*, having been established as such through a title conferred on it by the Roman Pontiff, and of the Loyola School of Theology which is a Pontifical Faculty with authority to confer ecclesiastical degrees, all other "Catholic" universities and educational institutions in the country are only so *de facto* and are not, strictly speaking, officially and legally connected to the Catholic Church in an academic capacity.

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as there is no attempt on the part of these professors to present their views or the views of other theologians as the official teaching.

It is important to establish this kind of distinction for all stakeholders, above all for the students themselves. Without making such an explicit clarification, we run the risk of students confusing what a professor says as the official Catholic teaching. On the part of the Church hierarchy themselves, this distinction may also prove helpful, if not liberating. Schillebeeckx for instance sees the conflict beginning with "the idea that theologians teach 'in the name of the Holy See'"[49] prevalent among Vatican officials who thus feel pressed to enforce uniformity and consistency in their teaching.

Conversely, if this distinction between personal conviction and official teaching is clearly established from the outset, many present difficulties can be avoided, even for those who possess the mandate and teach in institutions which are juridically Catholic. Theology professors may now be able to propose answers to theological or moral questions without presenting these as the official Catholic teaching, just like their colleagues in other academic fields who propose new problems or even theories or hypotheses in their own fields. As Quade envisions, "the environment of free inquiry, obviously, can result in a scholar questioning one or other church teaching. Precisely, because these people do not speak for the church, or in its name, or under its mandate, there is no essential incongruity if this happens."[50]

If dissent is normal in the organic life of the Church, it is even more so in the academic setting. Thus, we may even go on to say that even professors with the ecclesiastical mandate may tackle dissenting opinions in class as long as they make an explicit distinction to avoid conflating these with their handing on of the official teaching as mandated, and so long as they do it in clear service and loyalty to, and not in contempt of, the Church. Nonetheless, this distinction of what is official teaching and what is not is simply prudential or cautionary,

[49]Schillebeeckx, "The Magisterium and Ideology," 16.

[50]Quade, "A University Perspective on the 'Oath of Fidelity'," 348.

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a pastoral convention to avoid the scandal of misleading the weak. Healthy and responsible dissent, as we have seen, is part and parcel of the organic ministry of doing and teaching theology.

To tackle and engage dissent remains a daunting and demanding task, calling for constant updating with regard to the issues and questions being raised, and requiring a basic if not high level of mastery of the matters in question in order to participate meaningfully in the debate. At the same time, to bury our heads in the sand, to effectively turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to this discussion would be a terrible failure in the discharge not only of our academic but more so our prophetic role.

In the case of the three Jesuits who authored the "Talking Points on the RH Bill," for example, we do not find a case of actual classroom teaching. What we have are academic professionals presenting springboards for rational dialogue primarily addressed to legislators and other stakeholders in the issue rather than to students. The confusion on the part of Achacoso and his reader appears to spring from the fact that the said document was hosted by the University website, but this was done only as a practical means of dissemination. As such, they equated it immediately to dissent, calling for sanctions to be imposed. Nevertheless, it is neither an accurate barometer of how the doctrines on the sanctity of life and the use of contraceptive methods are taught to the students in the University nor was it proffered as the official stand of the Ateneo on the issue of the RH Bill. What it does instead is to raise salient pointers around which conversations on the issue could intelligently revolve. When inspected closely enough, one finds that the document nowhere disagrees with official Catholic teaching, whether categorically or implicitly, but actually ushers in important insights of the Catholic tradition to bear on the dialogue on this important issue.

As theology professors, we cannot simply disengage from these issues and concerns that our students encounter and raise, or brush them aside during instruction, in the insistence on sticking to official teaching and avoiding all semblance of dissent. Our social obligation as academics, especially in the university setting, likewise calls for active

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engagement and involvement in issues and questions affecting society at large, such as the issue on the RH Bill. The engagement of dissent in this case would then be not a disloyalty but a responsibility.

Dissent and the Responsibility to Raise Young People in the Faith

Now we take a closer look at the concern we raised which has not often been treated or adequately emphasized in the discussions of the issue of dissent in the academic setting. This is the implicit expectation of the parents and other stakeholders in sending the students to "Catholic" educational institutions for them to receive a Catholic education. Such is implicit in the concern raised by the reader of Achacoso about these centers of education "where young minds are supposedly being formed in the Catholic faith." Although a university or school may not be Catholic *de iure* or a professor may not have an ecclesiastical mandate and thus in the strict juridical sense do not teach "in the name of the Church," the fact that they are teaching in institutions perceived and even presenting themselves as Catholic gives rise to this expectation. This kind of expectation is legitimate, at least theologically if not juridically.

By virtue of their baptism, all Catholic teachers have the *munus*, the duty to discharge, according to their state in life, the prophetic mission of Christ in which they share and participate, regardless of whether they have the official mandate or not, and regardless of whether they teach in *de iure* Catholic institutions. Schillebeeckx aptly states that: "'Theologians are not theologians on the basis of a *missio canonica*, but on the basis of their baptism; they are theologians as members of a believing and thinking 'people of God.'"[51] This baptismal *munus* and *missio* is more fundamental than the canonical mandate and mission.

> Even when it is not exercised in virtue of an explicit "canonical mission", theology can only be done in a living communion with the faith of the Church. For this reason, all the baptized, insofar as they both really

[51]Schillebeeckx, "The Magisterium and Ideology," 16.

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> live the life of the Church and enjoy scientific competence, can carry out the task of the theologian, a task which derives its own force from the life of the Holy Spirit in the Church ….[52]

As such, the fundamental posture of the theologian then has to be one of faith and loyalty to the Church and never one of dissent. If healthy dissent is done, it is always done as a faithful son or daughter of the Church, and not as its antagonist.

Also, as educators and not just as scholars, theologians have the moral duty to first provide what is basic and essential to form the students in the faith. Here it clearly becomes important, pedagogically speaking, to give priority to a solid catechesis in the official teaching of the Church before introducing other perspectives and to consider the level of preparedness of the students to be introduced to questions and concepts that may lead to more confusion than clarity. Nowadays, it is undeniable that, because of their dwindling participation in the life of the Church and lack of adequate exposure to catechesis, especially for those who do not come from Catholic basic education institutions, many students in our Catholic universities are still at the level of what is called "evangelization", and at the entry level lack the catechetical preparation necessary for them to engage in complex theological discussions.

This coincides with what Orsy points out in his important discussion of "dissent in the existential order." Expressing dissent is not only an intellectual matter involving questions and ideas on the part of scholars but can truly affect the community, even the very souls of believers for whom we are accountable. In many cases, he says, "more is at stake than a propositional dissent; prudence requires a judgment that takes into account the existential situation of the community."[53]

Nevertheless, this high risk should not be an excuse for the ready refusal to tackle different opinions to which the same students are

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[52]International Theological Commission, *Theses on the Relationship between the Ecclesiastical Magisterium and Theology*, 7.

[53]Orsy, *The Church: Learning and Teaching,* 105.

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already exposed and for insisting on being limited only to official Church teaching in the curriculum. Rather, the existing situation should serve as a challenge for us to take our duty to impart a solid formation in the faith even more seriously, which then prepares the students to engage intelligently in the ongoing debates inside and outside our classrooms. In our actual experience, the ill-equipped students are often the ones bringing up the issues and questions in class. To simply dismiss them or even discourage them from doing so would be a failure on our part to discharge our pastoral responsibility towards these least, if not lost, of our flock.

Towards a Praxis of Tackling Dissent in the Academic Setting

A good way now to begin addressing the "how" of dissent in the classroom setting is by taking into account what Avery Cardinal Dulles says regarding the different levels of doctrine which we have pointed out in an earlier section of this article, and how they are to be presented depending on the kind of audience in question:

> It is often said, with good reason, that the faithful are entitled to have official Catholic doctrine presented to them in a fair and favorable light. But such presentations can be made at various levels. In catechetical instruction the teacher is expected to present the doctrine of the church rather than the opinion of private theologians. But the case is not so simple in higher education. University students, especially at the graduate level, have the right to know the difference between reformable and irreformable teaching.[54]

Teaching these distinctions between levels of Christian doctrine has become very important today especially with the rapid diffusion through mass and social media of various forms of Church teaching. Many today, especially the young, react eagerly to formal and informal broadcasts of papal encyclicals, exhortations, and homilies as well as interviews and statements, even tweets and status updates from

[54]Dulles, *The Reshaping of Catholicism*, 108.

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the official Twitter and Facebook accounts of the Holy See and even other bishops. These reactions, whether positive or negative, are to be welcomed, at the very least, as signs of interest on the part of young people in the view of the Church and her authorities regarding important and relevant issues. All this is a heartening sign that we are still able to reach out to our flock to engage them in meaningful discussion. As such, they must be addressed especially by those endowed with both the competence and opportunity to directly and personally provide guidance to them, such as theology professors.

At the same time, we need to be alert to the very dangerous tendency today among "a segment of the Catholic population that tends to flatten out important distinctions regarding the authoritative character of these ecclesial pronouncements …. Every Catholic has the right to know what doctrinal weight the Church is proposing in a particular teaching."[55] In view of this, the ruling out of all forms of dissent to every form of pronouncement coming from the hierarchy, especially in the academic setting where freedom of inquiry is presumed, implicitly fosters and contributes to a harmful tendency of absolutism and fundamentalism. Conversely, a sound education in healthy and intelligent dissent and dialogue, and even more importantly, a living witness on the part of professors in this regard, would be helpful.

Nonetheless, the classroom is not the exclusive venue and may not always be the best place for dissenting opinions, especially the more complex and technical ones which may be more suited and appropriate for journals, debates, or other academic fora. The professor's chair must not be used irresponsibly to air novel and groundbreaking ideas without considering the good of one's audience. Even in other disciplines, a good amount of caution and prudence is employed before publishing untested theories or including them in the curriculum. A useful rule of thumb here is for educators to address the issues that the students themselves raise, rather than to address the issues that only professors and scholars are concerned about.

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[55]Richard R. Gaillardetz, *Teaching with Authority: A Theology of the Magisterium in the Church* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press/Michael Glazier, 1997), 124.

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In the field of research and publication, however, a wider horizon of freedom could be envisioned. It is here where theologians can bring forth questions and ideas for discussion and debate not only for their peers in the academe but for the Church and the hierarchy as well, without jeopardizing the students and their faith. However, it is also here that the possibility of conflict and even of error emerges, but even these are not realities that are undesirable or impossible to surmount. This dialogue necessarily entails not only a good measure of time but also a high level of risk.

Michael Novak describes the important role of dissent in the life of a community which for him may necessarily include a more than slight margin of error committed in good faith. However, instead of being discouraged, he presses on further by calling not only for "elbow room" for dissent but also for error itself on the part of theologians as necessary for academic pursuit:

> Theologians need room to err. That is why we do not base our lives upon the teachings of theologians. Their errors, despite themselves, can nonetheless be fruitful for the body of the Christian people. The chances they take, the specific neuroses to which intellectuals are prey, and the odd angles of vision they assume, often serve the Lord's ironic purposes. We theologians do our best in the hope that even our errors will serve to shed reflected light upon the truths to which we struggle to be faithful. In this sense, a pluralism of theologies and of philosophies is vitally necessary to the Church. (…) On the other hand, not everything … is to be mistaken for a full report on authentic Catholic faith. Discernment is indispensable.[56]

This "room for error" requires not only an adequate amount of liberty to be conceded by the ecclesiastical authority, but also the humble acknowledgment of natural limitation and even the admission of actual error when committed and recognized by the theologians.

> The Catholic community, like every other living community, most urgently needs dissenters. It especially needs dissenters whose dissents are only provisional. It needs dissenters who try to be as honest, as clear, and as broad of view as a person can, recognizing the while that it is

[56]Novak, "Dissent in the Church," 75.

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> the *unequal* office of the college of bishops, and the still more *unequal* office of the bishop of Rome, to render practical judgment upon any dissenter's efforts. We also serve who only err.[57]

In cases of apparent deadlock, dialogue emerges once again as the means of preserving ecclesial communion without sacrificing the freedom of intellectual pursuit. As Joseph Komonchak proposes,

> there appears to be no way through this difficulty but dialogue and dialectic, a conversation in which people take one another, and one another's arguments, seriously, begin with what they hold in common, work back from there to what divides them, attempt to identify the basis for their differences, and seek to resolve them by reference to the common faith and by the exercise of an intelligence and reason both subject to the gospel.[58]

Such a model seems to be very much in keeping with the apostolic witness as exemplified in the First Council of Jerusalem, where consensus on disputed matters was eventually reached not by the easy way of authority imposing itself or dissenting elements usurping the pressure of politics, economy, or popular opinion but through open and discerning dialogue.

Indeed, the Second Vatican Council itself encouraged theologians to have an attitude of search: "to seek continually for more suitable ways of communicating doctrine to the men of their times" (GS 62). Part of this seeking is asking good questions and even trying to find the answers without the pretense of self-confirmation that we have arrived at the truth ahead of everyone else. Rather, the quest is always done within the community of the Church and under the guidance of her pastors.

Likewise essential if not indispensable to this search is a reasonable measure of audacity and confidence, coupled with prudence and humility. This sound disposition comes from a deep faith and trust in

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[57]Novak, "Dissent in the Church," 86. Italics in original.

[58]Joseph Komonchak, "Authority and Magisterium," in William May, ed., *Vatican Authority and American Catholic Dissent* (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 112.

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the gracious assistance of the Holy Spirit in our quest for the truth as well as in the believing-searching community itself which accompanies us in our quest and never leaves us alone when we err. It also comes from a realistically relativizing view of our human competence and efforts, for all of us are always poor in the face of the truth and so need to learn always from one another.

Elizabeth Johnson views the healthy expression of dissent even as an integral part of the responsibility of theologians and their service to the Church, describing it in terms that are analogous to a movement of conscience: "If a declared teaching or practice continuously jars our mind as missing the mark … it is our responsibility to explore and express the reasons why. This resistance is not to be equated with disloyalty or rebellion, let alone lack of faith, but with a form of loyalty and service."[59] Thus it appears that freedom to dissent is not exclusively a matter of academic freedom but also of religious freedom and even freedom of conscience.

The Case of the Three Jesuits

Coming back now to the case of the three Jesuits after a lengthy discussion of the issue of dissent, we now hope to apply to this specific example the different perspectives we have gathered so far. We begin by affirming the validity and seriousness of the concern raised by Achacoso and his reader about the correct transmission of the Catholic faith, especially to our young people. As we have seen, this fundamental baptismal duty of theologians with the office of teaching is attested to by both Scripture and Church teaching.

However, although it may arise from a valid and serious concern, the insinuation that the three Jesuits in question are not making, and even more seriously not observing, the *Profession of Faith* and *Oath of Fidelity* is imprecise, to say the least. Thus, even more irresponsible is the very serious suggestion that these professors, and even Loyola School of Theology itself, be then deprived of teaching mandate.

[59]Elizabeth Johnson, "Responses to Rome," *Commonweal* (January 26, 1996): 11.

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First, among the Jesuits in question, only Genilo teaches a subject dealing with faith and morals in Loyola School of Theology, a pontifical institution. As such, the other two, who are connected elsewhere in Ateneo de Manila University, are not actually bound by this Canon requiring the *Profession of Faith* and *Oath of Fidelity* which is "taxative, and should not be expanded or extended to others by analogy."[60]

Furthermore, the title itself which they chose to give to their document, "Talking Points," is a very precise if not astute indication of what they were actually trying to perform. "Talking Points," in legal jargon, is a set of pointers for discussing the merits and demerits of a case. This choice of word is wise and appropriate since the primary audience identified for the said document is the legislators in order to help them make an informed decision on the issue of the RH Bill. Thus, although a theologian was involved and the influence of Church teaching was evidently brought to bear on the discussion, there is no pretense in proposing a theological opinion, and even less of presenting the contents of the document as official Church teaching, even if all three were priests.

Here we do not have a case of classroom teaching with "heterodox teachings being foisted on the young and innocent by professors teaching either theology or matters related to faith and morals in Catholic institutions." We have instead an example of theology becoming involved together with other disciplines in an effort from one "Catholic" university to help address a current and relevant social concern, namely, the RH Bill, discussion of which has been ongoing at that time, with or without intervention from these academics. It is thus also a fine example of making a clear and clarifying distinction between what is official Church teaching and what is not.

Second, as we have demonstrated, the *ratio legis* of this Canon is not to enforce blind submission to the magisterium but to celebrate through a liturgical and juridical act the participation of the person who is making it in the teaching office of the Church. Precisely the ones bound by law to make the *Profession of Faith* and *Oath of Fidelity*

[60]Coriden et al., *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary,* 585.

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are the "*docendi*" or teachers. As such, they are not mere parrots but true conveyors and interpreters of Church teachings to various audiences and contexts. The fact that they are given to participate in the teaching office of the Church already attests to their competence and suitability to which the act of making the *Profession of Faith* gives formal affirmation.

Part of the effective discharge of the teaching mandate is to address concerns and issues our students are facing, which necessitates that we tackle dissenting views to which they are already exposed and immersed even outside of the academic setting. Part of the duty of professors is their social obligation to contribute their learning in matters concerning the wider community. Genilo, the lone theologian here, is to be praised rather than excoriated for participating in the said discussion and making use of his competence and training as a moral theologian, affirmed by the Church in allowing him to teach in an Ecclesiastical Faculty of Theology, to help shed light on the issue.

Moreover, even if the "Talking Points" were used in actual classroom discussion, for instance in courses on moral theology and bioethics in Loyola School of Theology, no direct violation of the teaching mandate is committed, especially if the distinction, already clear in its very title, from official Church teaching is explicitly and clearly made. Genilo in that case would have been presenting the fruit of his study and reflection together with other professors on an issue, not in conflict but in line with his fulfillment of his responsibility.

Thirdly and most importantly, Achacoso's understanding of dissent as equivalent to heterodoxy or even heresy and thus not only a violation of the *Profession of Faith* and *Oath of Fidelity* but an offense against the Faith and the Church itself is also untenable. One should not be quick to state that the *Professio Fidei* or *Iusiurandum Fidelitatis* has been violated or heresy has been committed except in clear cases of departure from divinely revealed dogmatic doctrine, which is not true in all cases of dissent. While it is true that dissent from dogmatic and moral teachings essentially related to the deposit of faith may imply that a person has fallen from the communion of faith, the difficulty

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in determining which teachings may be indisputably qualified as such allows ample room for charitable prudence before negative judgment. Again, as the law of the Church itself wisely directs us, we need to observe the basic principle of adopting a strict rather than a liberal interpretation in the case of canons such as this (c. 36).

Achacoso seems to put two important values in apparent conflict here: loyalty to the Church and to her magisterium on the one hand and the academic freedom of theologians on the other. The contradiction can only be apparent because in the majority of cases where dissent is done in good faith and with a spirit of unquestionable love and fidelity to the Church, the faith being defended and being served is the same Catholic faith, which has consistently understood itself to be *fides quarens intellectum*.

Achacoso's blanket assertion that "there is no room for active dissent in Catholic theology" cannot be seriously held without injury to the rich theological tradition that has itself produced the inestimable body of doctrine we cherish today. Holding on to such an assertation would be especially ironic within a Church which traces its very origins to the historical person of Jesus Christ, whose death was due in large part to the ire he incurred from the religious authorities of his time because of his teachings which dissented from and threatened the establishment. Within the spectrum that spans the untenable extremes of uncritical submission and indifferent respect, there may be a legitimate space for differing without disregarding Church authority, dissenting from some church doctrines without discrediting the Church itself, as something that purifies and enriches rather than corrupts or diminishes our faith. Moreover, not only a policy of tolerance but also a principle of mutual cooperation is to be truly desired, trusting in the Holy Spirit who guides not only the hierarchy but the entire Church.

As the International Theological Commission points out, "If the charism of infallibility is promised to 'the whole body of the faithful,' … then it should be put into practice in a co-responsible, co-operative, and collegial association of the members of the magisterium and of

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individual theologians."[61] The "deep fear of allowing conscientious dissent seems rooted in an excessive distrust of human reason, as well as lack of faith in the power of the Holy Spirit to bring consensus among prayerful Christians of good will."[62] Trust in the Spirit leads us to trust His work in one another.

Conclusion: *Dissentire cum Ecclesia*

Viewed from a wider perspective, all this has to go beyond the mere point of exonerating the three Jesuits or even establishing the productivity and importance of healthy dissent for theology. It has to do with the new vision of being Church concretized in a more trusting and therefore more collaborative approach to the Faith.[63] In this, the present Roman Pontiff himself seems to set the direction.

From the onset, Pope Francis has visibly departed from many customs in terms of ceremonial and protocol, and has also expressed some openness in the discussion of highly controversial issues such as the status of divorced persons in the Church, sometimes arousing agreement but also provoking disagreement both from within and outside the Church. At the same time, he has also been observed to be firm on certain points of doctrine such as the ordination of women. When asked to comment on Saint Ignatius of Loyola's famous phrase, "sentire cum ecclesia," the Jesuit Pope said:

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[61]International Theological Commission, *Theses on the Relationship between the Ecclesiastical Magisterium and Theology*, 4.

[62]Callahan, "Conscience Reconsidered," 253.

[63]Nowadays, more and more bishops open their ears to experts, both clerical and lay, and not only from other fields but also within theology itself, to guide their teaching. This is especially so since, after Vatican II, a good number of theological faculties have opened their doors not only to priests and seminarians but also to religious sisters and even some lay faithful who have also become well-educated and competent in this field, which had at one point become the exclusive domain of the hierarchy.

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> The Church is the people of God on the journey through history, with joys and sorrows. Thinking with the church, therefore is my way of being part of this people. And all the faithful, considered as a whole, are infallible in matters of belief, and the people display this *infallibilitas in credendo*, this infallibility in believing, through a supernatural sense of the faith of all the people walking together.[64]

Pope Francis here uses the very beautiful image of the Church as people of God, so dear to the Second Vatican Council, the dynamic image of a people in pilgrimage towards God who is Truth himself, a thinking Church in which every single member is part of the thinking. "We should not even think, therefore, that 'thinking with the church,' means only thinking with the hierarchy of the church."[65] At the same time, the Pope is careful to distinguish between the infallibility of all the faithful and a false sense of infallibility based simply on majority which he calls "populism."

Corresponding to this, the Pontiff's image of theology is also dynamic and collaborative: an active and communal investigation into mystery. In his personal view of theology, Pope Francis appears to be balanced in giving emphasis on both humility and rational inquiry, freedom and fidelity to the hierarchical magisterium:

> Theology thus demands the humility to be "touched" by God, admitting its own limitations before the mystery, while striving to investigate, with the discipline proper to reason, the inexhaustible riches of this mystery. … because it draws its life from faith, theology cannot consider the magisterium of the Pope and the bishops in communion with him as something extrinsic, a limitation of its freedom, but rather as one of its internal, constitutive dimensions, for the magisterium ensures our contact with the primordial source and thus provides the certainty of attaining to the word of Christ in all its integrity.[66]

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[64]Antonio Spadaro, "A Big Heart Open to God: The Exclusive Interview with Pope Francis," *America* (September 30, 2013): 22.

[65]Spadaro, "A Big Heart Open to God: The Exclusive Interview with Pope Francis," 22.

[66]Francis, *Lumen Fidei* 36.

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Accordingly, he also stresses the richness of charisms bestowed on all the members of the Church at the service of the Word of God and ecclesial communion:

> The Holy Spirit also enriches the entire evangelizing Church with different charisms. These gifts are meant to renew and build up the Church. They are not an inheritance, safely secured and entrusted to a small group for safekeeping; rather they are gifts of the Spirit integrated into the body of the Church, drawn to the center which is Christ and then channeled into an evangelizing impulse.[67]

This trust in the intelligent people of God walking in pilgrimage to the truth is evident in the way the Pope carries out his own teaching office as the successor of Peter. With regard to the practical stance of the Pope himself when engaging in theological discussions, a woman theologian comments:

> Through never straying from the tradition, he has a way of framing discussion of these topics to demonstrate his benevolent and respectful attitude. He treads carefully and thoughtfully in raising concerns, never assuming that he knows all the answers but signaling the need for greater understanding of the *sensus fidelium*. He told members of the International Theological Commission on Dec. 6 that the Church has a "duty to pay attention to what the Spirit tells the church through authentic manifestations of the sense of the faithful." But even as he voiced this attitude, he made clear that this sense "must not be confused with the sociological reality of majority opinion."[68]

This ecclesiology of involvement, confident in the charisms of the Spirit which are not exclusive to the bishops but imparted to everyone in the Church, is seen in the way the Pope shares the intelligence of the Church not only with other bishops but also with the lay faithful. For instance, he fosters the original cooperation of the magisterium and theologians by quoting not only Scriptural and Patristic texts along with conciliar and papal statements, as has been the practice of his predecessors, but also private theologians in his most recent

[67]Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 130.

[68]Katarina Schuth, "Open to All: The Emerging Ecclesiology of Pope Francis," *America* (March 17, 2014): 14.

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apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*. At the same time, he did not shun the necessary enforcement of ecclesiastical discipline in doctrinal matters on Greg Reynolds of the Archdiocese of Melbourne who was excommunicated after a thorough process which was initiated during the term of his predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI. This leaves many guessing, afraid or hopeful, about what reforms Pope Francis may or may not achieve in the Church with this disposition. Seen from another perspective, this may show the delicate balance he is trying to find.

Such a delicate balance, which is difficult to achieve without discernment and patient dialogue, was the struggle of the last Synod, which strove to tackle complex moral issues on Marriage and Family Life, the subject of so much dissent and disagreement even within the hierarchy. Indeed, the great intensity of the discussions and debates in the Synod Hall was no secret even to those outside it so that the Holy Father, in his final Message, spoke of "fatigue" and "tensions," "desolations" and "temptations," "hostile inflexibility" but also being "do-gooders," "neglecting the *depositum fidei*" but also of "neglecting reality."

Indeed, it would have been so much easier to simply insist on existing doctrine and neglect reality or, as may be more fashionable, to go along with popular demand and neglect the deposit of faith. Nonetheless, at the heart of all this struggle, Pope Francis offered a very positive and encouraging appraisal of what may seem to be the complicated and convoluted outcome when dissent and discussion is allowed about controversial issues in the Church.

> Personally I would be very worried and saddened if it were not for these temptations and these animated discussions; this movement of the spirits, as St. Ignatius called it (*Spiritual Exercises*, 6), if all were in a state of agreement, or silent in a false and quietist peace. Instead, I have seen and I have heard—with joy and appreciation—speeches and interventions full of faith, of pastoral and doctrinal zeal, of wisdom, of frankness and of courage: and of *parresia*. And I have felt that what was set before our eyes was the good of the Church, of families, and the "supreme law," the "good of souls" (cf. Can. 1752). And this always … without ever putting into question the fundamental truths of the Sacrament of marriage: the indissolubility, the unity, the faithfulness,

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> the fruitfulness, that openness to life (cf. Can. 1055, 1056; and *Gaudium et Spes*, 48).[69]

This *parresia*—this freedom in speech coming from a deep confidence in the Father's guidance through the Holy Spirit but also from conscientious study of the Word of God and deep involvement in human realities—is the word used many times in the New Testament to characterize the teaching manner of Christ and also of the apostles, who were all persecuted for dissenting from the official teachings of their religion. Is this not also what we desire for our theology professors and also for all believers who are all called to share in the teaching office of Christ? Being intolerant of all manner of dissent rather than welcoming intelligent and humble dialogue on matters of faith and morals may liken us not to Christ but to those who were his persecutors in the Gospel. On the other hand, as Pope Francis himself said, healthy dialogue which allows freedom and welcomes legitimate differences will help the Church continue to grow as it seeks to unravel the richness of the Word of God:

> The Church is herself a missionary disciple; she needs to grow in her interpretation of the revealed word and in her understanding of truth. It is the task of exegetes and theologians to help "the judgment of the Church to mature." (…) Within the Church countless issues are being studied and reflected upon with great freedom. Differing currents of thought in philosophy, theology and pastoral practice, if open to being reconciled by the Spirit in respect and love, can enable the Church to grow, since all of them help to express more clearly the immense riches of God's word. For those who long for a monolithic body of doctrine guarded by all and leaving no room for nuance, this might appear as undesirable and leading to confusion. But in fact such variety serves to bring out and develop different facets of the inexhaustible riches of the Gospel.[70]

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[69]Francis, *Speech at the Conclusion of the Third General Assembly of the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops* (October 2014). A copy is available at https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/october/documents/papa-francesco_20141018_conclusione-sinodo-dei-vescovi.html.

[70]Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 40.

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In the end, teaching an important doctrine as definitively true is a dangerous but sometimes necessary act which must neither be shunned nor exercised light-handedly. *Tuto doceri non potest* may then apply not only to the rebellious and divisive holding and wielding of contrary opinions in contempt of the official doctrine of the Church but also to the uncharitable and alienating holding and wielding of the official doctrine of the Church against believers who may at times express contrary opinions in sincere faith and good conscience. "Erosion of the Catholic faith" may indeed be a very serious threat to the Church. But if Christ and Paul were right in what they taught, even more alarming would be the erosion of Christian charity.

Appendix:[71] OATH OF FIDELITY ON ASSUMING AN OFFICE TO BE EXERCISED IN THE NAME OF THE CHURCH

(*Formula to be used by the Christian faithful mentioned in Canon 833, nn. 5–8*)

I, N., in assuming the office of _____, promise that in my words and in my actions I shall always preserve communion with the Catholic Church.

With great care and fidelity I shall carry out the duties incumbent on me toward the Church, both universal and particular, in which, according to the provisions of the law, I have been called to exercise my service.

In fulfilling the charge entrusted to me in the name of the Church, I shall hold fast to the deposit of faith in its entirety; I shall faithfully hand it on and explain it, and I shall avoid any teachings contrary to it.

I shall follow and foster the common discipline of the entire Church and I shall maintain the observance of all ecclesiastical laws, especially those contained in the Code of Canon Law.

[71] Available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19880701_professio-fidei_en.html.

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With Christian obedience I shall follow what the Bishops, as authentic doctors and teachers of the faith, declare, or what they, as those who govern the Church, establish.

I shall also faithfully assist the diocesan Bishops, so that the apostolic activity, exercised in the name and by mandate of the Church, may be carried out in communion with the Church.

So help me God, and God's Holy Gospels on which I place my hand.

(*Variations in the fourth and fifth paragraphs of the formulary, for use by those members of the Christian faithful indicated in can. 833, n. 8*).

I shall foster the common discipline of the entire Church and I shall insist on the observance of all ecclesiastical laws, especially those contained in the Code of Canon Law.

With Christian obedience I shall follow what the Bishops, as authentic doctors and teachers of the faith, declare, or what they, as those who govern the Church, establish. I shall also — with due regard for the character and purpose of my institute — faithfully assist the diocesan Bishops, so that the apostolic activity, exercised in the name and by mandate of the Church, may be carried out in communion with the Church.

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