THE APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTION *DEUS SCIENTIARUM DOMINUS* ITS ORIGIN AND SPIRIT

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THE twenty-fourth of May, 1931, will always remain a memorable date in the internal history of the Church. On that day, the feast of Pentecost, Pius XI, of blessed and enduring memory, promulgated the Apostolic Constitution, *Deus Scientiarum Dominus*, regulating the universities and ecclesiastical faculties of the whole world. The new ordinance was not an improvisation; for more than two years it had been prepared by a Commission appointed for the purpose, which included representatives of the secular and regular clergy, men of different nations and diverse types of schools, specialists in the various ecclesiastical sciences, noted for their scholarly works or for their lectures. The late Cardinal Bisleti, then Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Seminaries and Universities, contributed to the happy outcome of the important work by his long and varied experience and by his characteristic prudence and sound judgment. The President of the Commission, Msgr. Ruffini, Secretary of the same Congregation, brought to his task untiring energy, the experience gained in many years of teaching, and a zeal that overcame all difficulties. As the result of unwearying and constant work, there gradually came into being the document that was to acquire the value of law by the signature of the Vicar of Christ. From the outset he had followed the work of the Commission, which he had himself appointed, with the lively interest of a scholar and the attentive eye of an expert organizer. To not a few difficult problems he had himself given the definitive solution, with a clarity of insight that won the admiration of all who understood the complicated nature and the extreme delicacy of the issues.

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THE ORIGINS OF THE APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTION

It was the first time that the Church had promulgated a plan of studies that would be common to all ecclesiastical faculties throughout the whole world. Although in the *Studia Generalia* which later became the universities, the academic degrees in sacred theology were from earliest times conferred in the name of the Church, the arrangement of ecclesiastical studies in the universities and faculties of different nations was rather of a local and national character. We know that in the Middle Ages the universities enjoyed a broad autonomy, and were governed rather by ancient university traditions than by regulations from a higher authority.[1] Only in more recent times did the civil authority in various countries begin to impose itself on the universities, prescribing for them programs of study and procedure in the granting of degrees, not excepting those of sacred theology.[2] Such a change was not merely in the juridical order; it also opened the door to influences alien to the Church and often inimical to her, and ended by profoundly altering aims and methods of study.

With the rise since the sixteenth century of historical studies and the natural sciences, university teaching in general, which till then had been governed by medieval traditions, underwent significant changes. New chairs and new methods arose in the various faculties. The Scholastic method, with its disputations and repetitions, its traditional use of Latin, its accordance of the primacy to the speculative sciences, was gradually abandoned, to be supplanted by a more encyclopedic education, wherein the positive sciences predominated, and a greater emphasis was put on erudition than on sound intellectual formation. We can easily see how in certain countries even ecclesiastical studies did not remain unaffected by this new orientation, particularly in view of the fact that governments—either by agreement with the Holy See, or not infrequently by a unilateral authoritative act—legislated even for the theological faculties, bringing them into line with the other faculties, as well in organization as in the arrangement of studies and the granting of degrees. In this way there arose in certain places theological faculties of a new type (let us call it the

[1] Cf. F. Ehrle, *I più antichi Statuti della Facoltà teologica dell' Università di Bologna* (Bologna, 1932).

[2] Cf. F. Paulsen, *Geschichte des gelehrten Unterrichts* (Leipzig, 1919), I, 356 ff.

"modern type"), wherein the study of dogma was appreciably reduced, the number and importance of other sciences greatly increased, and a method more positive than speculative introduced. The formation of future doctors had specialization predominantly in view; the method of positive work in history, patrology, textual criticism, etc., was developed in the so-called seminars, which were introduced into all the faculties; and the solemn disputation, the high point of academic studies, was replaced by the dissertation.

In countries where the theological faculties did not form part of the state universities, and particularly in those religious orders which for centuries had enjoyed the right of conferring academic degrees in theology and philosophy, another path was followed. The medieval type of theological faculty was substantially preserved, but not without a notable debilitation.

As a matter of fact, in the great universities of the Middle Ages, such as Paris, Bologna, and Oxford, the attainment of academic degrees required a long period of preparation and examination. The statutes of the different faculties, though they differed in many particulars, agreed in ruling that the baccalaureate should not be granted till after the completion of the regular course of theological studies, which at Bologna lasted five years. The graduate was then obliged to attend again the courses of the masters, and to acquire teaching experience as a *cursor*, *baccalaureus biblicus*, or *baccalaureus sententiarum;* generally this experiment lasted no less than four years. Only then could he be admitted to the final tests for the attainment of the licentiate, which was conferred at a solemn gathering of the entire academic body, with the ritual formula: "Ego, auctoritate Sedis Apostolicae, instituo ac facio te in sacra theologia magistrum, auctoritate praefata dans tibi liberam facultatem legendi, docendi, determinandi, et plene in eadem theologica facultate regendi et dogmaticandi hic et ubique locorum: in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti. Amen."[3] This formula itself shows that in those days the licentiate was really equivalent to our doctorate. Originally, in the Middle Ages, the title "doctor" was purely honorary, used to designate the more celebrated masters. Later, however, it was formally granted to indicate a distinct academic degree higher than the licentiate or the *magisterium*, and in

[3] Ehrle, *op. cit.*, pp. 17–23; 34–36.

time it became the highest reward of academic studies.

The *facultas legendi*, or licentiate, therefore, supposed a period of theological formation and practical examinations lasting at least eight years. However, in succeeding centuries these requirements were gradually reduced, and in the sixteenth century, when the Roman College had the power to grant academic degrees, the baccalaureate was conferred at the beginning of the fifth year of the theological course, the licentiate at the end of the sixth year, and after two or three "public acts," the doctorate.[4] In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries university studies continued to decline, and finally even the doctorate was conferred at the end of the four-year course in theology; the baccalaureate and the licentiate, conferred during the course, became nothing more than simple titles.

In this fashion, the manner of granting academic degrees in the Church had taken two widely different paths, both of which departed from the ideal—even from the very idea—of a theological degree. In the "modern type" there was the danger of a disastrous neglect of the central part of theology, dogma, in favor of the positive sciences; in the "ancient type" too little attention was paid to the positive sciences, and the doctorate eventually became no more than a testimony to the successful completion of a study of dogmatic theology. It is clear that in both types serious damage to the science of theology was to be feared. And there was, moreover, the disadvantage that the requirements for the doctorate, and consequently the value and standing of the degree, varied widely in different countries—a fact that not seldom occasioned difficulties in the practical and administrative order.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the great Pontiff who had so much at heart the progress and prestige of Catholic learning decided to face this unsatisfactory situation, and to give to the Church a program of academic ecclesiastical studies that would unite the best of both types and avoid the defects inherent in each of them. The Church certainly cannot get along without a solid and thorough dogmatic formation for all her priests, and particularly for those who are one day to be the masters of aspirants to the priesthood and her professional theologians. On the other hand, neither can she permit her doctors of theology, even

[4] Cf. *Monumenta Paedagogica S.J.* (Matriti, 1901), pp. 460–70; 522–37.

though thoroughly schooled in dogma, to be without those positive sciences which today are necessary for every theologian; in their ignorance of the methods of study and scientific work current today in all the sciences, they would be unable effectively to repel the attacks that today are launched from the field of the positive sciences. For a long time the Holy See has been aware of this danger, which was alarmingly revealed in the aberrations of Modernism; and it has sought to oppose a check to mischief already too evident. Testimony to her efforts are the renewal of the philosophy of St. Thomas by the *Aeterni Patris* of Leo XIII, which was confirmed by the *Code of Canon Law* (canon 1366) and by the *Studiorum Ducem* of Pius XI; the prescription of a two-year course in philosophy for all aspirants to academic degrees, contained in the encyclical of Pius X, *Pascendi*; the impulse given to positive studies by the foundation of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, by the institution of academic degrees in Sacred Scripture, and by the foundation of the Pontifical Institutes—Biblical, Oriental, Archaeological; the rehabilitation in biblical studies of the licentiate, as a necessary and sufficient qualification for teaching. After all these particular ordinances, the time had come to gather up all individual constructive elements into an organic synthesis.

THE SPIRIT OF THE APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTION

This synthesis was made in the Apostolic Constitution, *Deus Scientiarum Dominus*, of May 24, 1931, with the added *Ordinationes S. Congregationis de Seminariis et Studiorum Universitatibus ad Constitutionem Apostolicam . . . rite exsequendam*, of June 12, 1931. It is a synthesis, because it covers all the existent ecclesiastical faculties: besides the theological and philosophical faculties, also that of canon law, the biblical faculty in the Pontifical Biblical Institute, that of the sciences of the Christian Orient in the Oriental Institute, that of Christian archaeology in the Archaeological Institute, and that of sacred music in the Institute of the same name. Thus the same laws and norms govern the whole of the academic life that is under the supervision of the Holy See. It is, moreover, a synthesis in a more profound sense, because the new legislation creates out of hitherto divergent types an organic and coherent unity. The word "coherent" is borrowed from the Constitution itself, wherein it stands in a significant

place— precisely in that section which defines the general method and purpose of academic teaching: "Auditorum mentes ad finem Universitatibus et Facultatibus propositum cohaerenter excolere."[5]

The Organic Structure of the Academic Course

In the program of studies for the individual faculties there is, therefore, a logical, psychological, and didactic coherence, and not merely a material conglomeration of more or less important subjects. This coherence shows itself in a real hierarchy of subjects. At the summit stands the "disciplina praecipua:"[6] in the theological faculty, "sacra theologia," that is, dogma, with fundamental theology and the speculative part of moral theology; in the philosophical faculty, "philosophia scholastica universa," that is, in all its divisions—logic, ontology, cosmology, etc. The Apostolic Constitution leaves no doubt that the "disciplina praecipua" is the true center and substance of theological and philosophical education. With definite solemnity it insists that in the theological faculty "principem locum teneat sacra theologia"; and in the philosophical faculty, "philosophia scholastica" is so clearly put in the first place that its importance could hardly be more strongly emphasized.[7]

The special examination for the licentiate, then, having as its sole subject matter the entire main field of study, guarantees in the student a solid and thorough dogmatic or philosophical education, which extends, not only to certain particular questions, however important, but to a wide and comprehensive synthesis of the whole matter, and thereby assures the future professor and scholar of a surety of doctrine that will protect him in his specialized studies from ideas and tendencies not compatible with Catholic doctrine or with sound philosophy. This education does not stop with the communication to the student of a certain amount of information; it impels him to thoughtful originality and to personal activity by prescribing for him the efficacious experiment of the Scholastic disputation, which gave to the Church the great masters and doctors of the thirteenth and sixteenth

[5] *Const. Apost.*, a. 29.

[6] [This phrase (and its Italian equivalent, "disciplina precipua") is hereafter translated as "the main field of study."—Trans.]

[7] *Const. Apost.*, a. 29, *a*, *c*.

centuries. The Church was not discouraged by the fact that the disputation in the course of centuries had degenerated into a sterile formalism, covered with ridicule and scorn by the humanists. She is convinced that these exercises, when well prepared and performed, are, as a noted modern author—a non-Catholic—has said, "of the greatest usefulness, resulting in a surety of doctrine, a presence of mind, and a readiness in argument, which are rarely found today."[8]

All the other subjects form the retinue of the main subject. They are not all of the same importance, but are clearly divided off into "disciplinae principales," "auxiliares," and "speciales." The first are almost autonomous, the second are their necessary or useful complement, the last are designed to perfect, and by rigorously scientific method to make more thorough, the mastery of the principal and auxiliary subjects. In this fashion the vast material to be taught is given an organic form, and assembled into a well ordered hierarchy. In the four years of theology and the three years of philosophy, all these speculative and practical studies will form the true theologian or the true philosopher, solidly grounded in dogma or scholastic philosophy, and also furnished with the positive sciences that we cannot ignore today on pain of injuring the Church herself and the integrity of ecclesiastical scholarship. The graduate, therefore, will be protected against the force of hostile attacks, and likewise against the corrosive inward doubts that arise from a lack of clearness on fundamentals.

This hierarchy of subjects creates a classroom task as important as it is delicate, namely, to give each subject that emphasis and that amplitude of development which are due to it within the hierarchic system. The task is important because on its discharge will depend the outcome of the student's formation. And the task is delicate because it supposes a correct idea of the purpose of each study, a complete intelligence of the system on the part of those who govern the faculty, and a generous conformity to the system on the part of the professor—even to the point of personal sacrifice and self-abnegation.

The task presents itself immediately apropos of the concept of the main field of study, and of the relations of the other major subjects to it.[9] In the course of recent centuries dogmatic theology and phil-

[8] F. Paulsen, *op. cit.*, pp. 273 ff.

[9] ["Major subject" is consistently used to translate "disciplina principale."—Trans].

osophy have developed extensively, and have branched off into special fields, more or less closely connected with the main field. For example, to dogmatic and fundamental theology have been attached biblical theology, the history of early Christianity, patristic studies, the history of dogma, the history of the Councils, the history of religions; and philosophy has ramified into a group of philosophical subjects, for the most part historical and scientific. Philosophical and theological faculties of the "modern type" have in many instances left these curricular elements unintegrated, without regard to their synthesis and organic relationships, obviously with no small detriment to an organic, coherent, and thorough philosophical and theological education. This was the system of *multa, non multum.*

The other major subjects have seen a no less vigorous expansion. One thinks, for instance, of Church history and its subdivisions—hagiography, the history of the Popes, the history of missions, the history of Christian art.[10] Similarly, the biblical sciences, the natural sciences, ethics and moral theology have had their own offshoots.

It is undeniable that philosophy and theology have derived very great benefits from the flowering of special subjects. These latter have not arisen through caprice or mere academic curiosity; they have almost always been called into being by urgent needs of the Church, as she became involved in conflicts which demanded special research of a more meticulous and extensive kind. It is sufficient to recall the development undergone by ecclesiastical history, thanks to the exhaustive labors of Baronius, St. Robert Bellarmine, the Maurists, and the Bollandists, in times which called for a vigorous defense of the Church in the historical field. There can be no doubt that Scholastic philosophy and theology have reaped plentiful and precious benefits from these special studies, conducted with scientific conscientiousness by competent masters.

But it is another question how these special studies are to be introduced into the didactic system of philosophical and theological faculties. In her obligatory—and primary—solicitude for the doctrinal solidity and surety of those who one day are to have a decisive influence

[10] Cf., e.g., A. Ehrhard, "Die historische Theologie und ihre Methode", in *Merkle-Festschrift* (Düsseldorf, 1922), pp. 117–36.

on ecclesiastical learning, either by teaching or by scientific publications, the Church has settled this question with great prudence and wisdom. It was impossible even to think of splitting up the two main fields of study into a collection of special subjects; for dogma and Scholastic philosophy, in their imposing organic structure and their victorious unity, must remain the substance of education, as they were in the brightest periods of Catholic philosophical and theological scholarship. However, they must also profit by the special studies made in their various branches, and cultivate as well their speculative as their positive parts. With an exactness that leaves no doubt, the method of dogma is described as a mixed method, positivo-speculative.

The first thing, after a clear exposition of the meaning of the dogma, is the demonstration from Scripture and tradition—that is the positive part; there follows the speculative part—the investigation and illustration of the "natura et intima ratio" of each truth, not along the lines of some personal idea or preference of the professor, but "ad principia et doctrinam S. Thomae Aquinatis," and therefore according to the method, the principles, and the doctrines which are the boast and glory of the golden period of dogmatic speculation, as represented by its greatest genius, the Angelic Doctor. Similarly in the philosophical faculty, no mere fragments—however valuable in themselves—are to be given, but a coherent, logical system, a Scholastic and speculative whole, founded on the sure methods and principles of St. Thomas. Only after having acquired in this way a solid body of doctrine, is the step to be made to judgments on other philosophical systems.[11] And it is not sufficient to set forth philosophical doctrines in eloquent and enthusiastic discourse; with what might well be termed an intransigent forcefulness, the Constitution prescribes the Scholastic method, and for the presentation of arguments and the discussion of difficulties, syllogistic form.[12] The motive for this severity is clear: rich in the experience of centuries, the Church knows that only by this iron discipline are strong intelligences and great controversialists formed. Thinking of the future, she wants learned men who will be, as the *Ordinationes* significantly say: "apti paratique . . . non solum ad falsa

[11] *Const. Apost.*, a. 29, *c.*
[12] *Ordinationes*, a. 18, § 3.

systemata erroresque antehac exortos diiudicandos et refutandos, sed etiam ad discernendas et ex veritate aestimandas sententias novas quae forte in disciplinis theologicis vel philosophicis oriantur."[13]

But if so much importance is attached to the main field of study, what about the other major subjects, which are also of moment? The Apostolic Constitution makes no explicit pronouncement in this regard, but from the ensemble of its norms and counsels it is easy to ascertain the mind of the Church. Each one of these major subjects *per se* opens up vast prospects and offers the possibility of extensive treatment, as is evidenced by the existence of the faculties of Sacred Scripture, ecclesiastical history, and canon law in the theological field, and of the institutes of physics, chemistry, anthropology, the faculty of political economy, etc. in the field of philosophy. But it would be absurd to cram all this material into a theological and philosophical course. The receptive capacity of even the most brilliant student always remains limited; and an excessive importance given to positive studies will necessarily detract from the main field of study. The indisputable desire of the Church to form theologians of solid and deep dogmatic learning, and philosophers of sound Scholastico-Thomistic principles, furnishes the criterion for the treatment of the other major subjects: it cannot be other than the consideration of them in function of the main field of study, and the determination, on this basis, of the amplitude of development they are to receive. A certain minimum will always be necessary for every priest; it pertains to the general theological education which is imparted even in those seminaries which are not faculties. What is taught over and above this minimum will be, in the first place, that which is useful for a better understanding of, and a deeper penetration into, the main field of study. As a matter of fact, a course in exegesis or ecclesiastical history, having this orientation, can be of great benefit to dogmatic theology, as a course in the history of philosophy can likewise be to philosophy. Conceived in this fashion, the major subjects make an organic unity with the main field of study; the faculty becomes a real "organism," whose soul is the main field of study, which informs and vitalizes the other major subjects; and the student is able to devote himself to these latter with the more profit in that he is not overburdened with heterogeneous and disorganized material.

[13] *Loc. cit.*

Anyone can see that this vital equilibrium is one of the most important points of the new legislation; but it is also the sphere of danger. The equilibrium can easily be disturbed, either by stressing too much the main field of study, and neglecting the positive side, or—and this will be the more frequent occurrence in the actual state of affairs—by exaggerating the importance of the other major subjects, with the result that the student is loaded with an immoderate amount of positive, factual matter, and his solid dogmatic and philosophic formation thereby impeded. Such a contingency would certainly not be due to the Apostolic Constitution, whose meaning is clear, but to an erroneous interpretation of it—either theoretical, by mistaking the relationship that exists between the major subjects and the main field of study—or practical, by admitting the ascendancy of the major field of study, but insisting too much in the classroom on knowledge of particular positive details.

What has been said of the major subjects is equally valid, or more so, with regard to the auxiliary subjects. One who examines the Apostolic Constitution on this point will easily perceive that it has held to great moderation in their number and choice; therein it differs from programs in force here and there in other faculties. Evidently the dominant idea here, too, is the preponderance of the main field of study, which ought to contain in itself all that is useful for the full grasp and penetration of theological or philosophical truth.

In the theological faculty, the auxiliary subjects prescribed by the Apostolic Constitution are rather of a peripheral nature. The two biblical languages, Hebrew and Greek, are necessary for the scientific study of Sacred Scripture in the original texts, and hence of great importance for dogma, in which the scriptural argument has a prominent place. The other prescribed subjects—the "institutiones systematico-historicae liturgiae," ascetics, and the "quaestiones theologicae ad Orientales maxime spectantes"—cover fields that are of particular contemporary interest in large sections of the Church; the implication, therefore, is that when the present interest in them has waned, they may readily be displaced by other subjects, more important in some future context.

On the other hand, the auxiliary subjects in the philosophical faculty —experimental psychology, scientific questions connected with philosophy, the text of Aristotle and St. Thomas—are more intimately

related to the main field of study, Scholastic philosophy, and particularly to psychology and cosmology. Consequently, their pedagogic purpose is clear: to help towards a more profound penetration of the aforesaid branches of philosophy. Likewise, their breadth of treatment and its orientation are defined: how much is required by the main field of study? Thus the very character of the auxiliary subjects determines their method and scope. To desire to teach them with the thoroughness that they might deserve, if considered in themselves and as independent subjects, would surely be to misconceive completely the idea and intentions of the Apostolic Constitution. Pius XII himself, in his remarkable allocution to the students of the Roman colleges, authoritatively sketched the program for the teaching of these auxiliary subjects: "Hae sic tradendae sunt atque exercendae, ut disciplinas principales vindicent, nec umquam ita, ut studium accuratum et vere summum praecipuarum doctrinarum detrimentum vel minimum patiatur."[14] A skilful professor, who has in mind the total orientation of all study towards a solid and thorough knowledge of Scholastic philosophy and dogmatic theology, will know how to select the questions to be treated; he will orientate them towards the main field of study; he will propose his material simply and clearly; he will endeavor to impress it on the memory of his pupils right in the classroom, by an orderly method of instruction; he will be careful not to burden them with useless details, matters of erudition rather than of doctrinal and systematic value. Furthermore, the more thorough his own formation and the more profound his knowledge of his subject, the more effective will be his efforts—aided by scrupulous preparation—to set in relief the points of cardinal importance, and to give his pupils the major lines and the fundamental ideas of his science, rather than an agglomeration of unimportant and unrelated details. Such a professor—a specialist, by all means—will be of powerful assistance in the true formation of the student, and at the same time he will sustain that interest in his subject which could easily be killed by an overtechnical and overspecialized treatment, given the fact that the great majority of his students are not destined for specialization in his particular field.

Consequently, in this matter also it is not the law of the Church that might create difficulties or do educational harm. The danger would

[14] *AAS*, XXXI (1939), 246.

rather come from a false interpretation, a mistaken evaluation of the accessory subjects, a failure to subordinate them to the general and common interest.

What has hitherto been said illustrates clearly the importance attached by the Apostolic Constitution to Scholastic and speculative studies. But it would be an error to think that the Church's new legislation had only this aspect of academic education in view. The Church is well aware of the fact that the future professor or writer, who would be useful, and ready for every combat, and prepared for every opportunity, cannot be content merely to know the conclusions of the positive sciences; he must also know their method, and be able to find, and avail himself of, the instruments of scientific research. In fact, in order to command the respect of adversaries, he must himself be particularly competent in some field of knowledge. Consequently, a large section of the Apostolic Constitution and of the *Ordinationes* concerns itself with the training of the student in methods of study and in personal work in some field which attracts and interests him. It deals, therefore, with the training of future specialists.

Herein we observe the influence of modern tendencies and methods on the new legislation, and we perceive the solicitude of the Church to neglect nothing that the human intellect, the gift of a wise Creator, has brought to light. The Church pays grateful tribute to the deserving work done during recent centuries by great historians, exegetes, patrologists, economists, psychologists, physicists—in a word, by all those whose laborious specialized studies have promoted the welfare of the Church, the salvation of souls, and a more profound knowledge of the Creator and His marvelous universe. Finally, alongside of the unitary tendency, there is to be seen the Church's delicate respect for the scientific traditions dear to the various universities and faculties, and her maternal solicitude that scholars throughout the world be given the possibility of scientific work that will meet the needs of their own region or nation: "Disciplinae speciales seligantur pro cuiusque Universitatis vel Facultatis traditionibus et regionis necessitatibus, ad principia doctrinae catholicae in varias vitae intellectualis provincias efficacius diffundenda."[15]

All this proves that the Church, with remarkable largeness of view,

[15] *Ordinationes*, a. 28.

has reflected on all the tasks to be accomplished in all the fields of intellectual life, and has neglected none of the real needs of the Kingdom of God. But at the same time one must admire her prudence and moderation in combining speculative and positive studies, basic studies and specialized studies, in such a way as not to compromise the substance of mental formation by excessive and premature specialization. The Church knows that the four years of theology and the three years of philosophy antecedent to the licentiate do not leave the student who is seriously intent on his main field of study much time for extensive special studies. Were he to select and pursue a favorite subject in line with his scientific bent, there would be danger lest it exert too great an attraction, and call him away from that difficult and laborious philosophical and theological work which is indispensable, not only for his solid general formation, but also for fruitful specialization.

It is not surprising, therefore, that in the matter of special subjects the Apostolic Constitution prescribes only "una alterave vel aliquot cursus peculiares";[16] or that the *Ordinationes* are content to have the *exercitationes* begin only two years before the licentiate.[17] This restraint is not due to any lack of esteem for *exercitationes*; the Church values them highly, and considers them as the indispensable school of scientific work, the key to an intelligent feeling for texts and authors, the preparation for teaching and writing—in a word, as an introduction to all scientific activity.[18] The first proof of the formation they impart is the dissertation to be written for the doctorate; it is not to be just a compilation, but an essay at personal scientific research, which may contribute in some fashion to the progress of knowledge, and be a presage of future scientific efforts.[19] But in order that solid dogmatic or philosophical formation may not be impaired even by this important work on a dissertation, it is laid down that after the completion of the basic courses, and the examination *de universa disciplina praecipua*, at least another year is to be added to the curriculum, and given over in large part to the writing of the dissertation. Here again the Church has regard for the psychology of the student and the gradual development of his mind.

[16] *Const. Apost.*, a. 33, § 3.
[17] *Ordinationes*, a. 23.
[18] *Const. Apost.*, a. 30, § 1; *Ordinationes*, a. 22
[19] *Const. Apost.*, a. 46, § 1, 1°.

Curricular requirements that are inspired by these ideas will surely guarantee to the student a solid formation, and protect him from unconscionable burdens, harmful alike to his intellectual development and his personal activity, and from a formation that rests on no solid bases. Given this prudent combination of the speculative and the positive, the doctoral dissertation itself will be no mere proof of erudition, nor the result simply of a more or less mechanical application of methodological rules. On the contrary, it will bear a personal stamp, and reveal insight into ideas. This will be the more likely, if (as is desirable) the candidate is not obliged to make all haste in passing the final examination for the doctorate, but is given time for leisurely and thorough preparation, and for the consolidation of his acquired learning by teaching, study, and writing. This mode of procedure was common in the golden age of Scholasticism, when the doctorate was not the result of a final examination undergone at the completon of studies, but the reward of a fruitful professorial or literary activity, and an invitation to new and still more important endeavors.

The Preparation for Academic Studies

Academic studies, as conceived by the Apostolic Constitution, are a serious work, whose successful outcome demands the full application of the student and the constant, earnest labor of the professor. At that, success is not assured unless the student is properly prepared at the outset. The Apostolic Constitution, therefore, would have been incomplete and defective, had it not also concerned itself with the very important question of the preparation of the student for his academic work.

Before all else, as a necessary preparation for admission to any ecclesiastical faculty, a humanistic formation is prescribed: "curriculum medium studiorum classicorum rite absolvisse."[20] This is certainly not to be taken in the narrower sense of a course comprising simply the study of Latin and Greek, such as the humanistic course was from the Middle Ages up to the end of the seventeenth century. It is rather to be taken in the modern sense of the gymnasium-lyceum of the classic type, in which are taught, besides the two classical ancient languages, secular history, geography, and the sciences (mathematics,

[20] *Ibid.*, a. 25, 1°.

physics, chemistry), to an extent that will vary according to the diverse scholastic programs of the different nations, but that in every case is to reach the minimum required for admission to academic studies.[21] This is not the place to undertake a general demonstration of the formative and educative value of intermediate studies based on the humanities. Today even devotees of the sciences admit that classical studies, especially the study of Latin, have an extraordinary formative power; and the fact that recent decades have witnessed a return in not a few countries to a more intensive study of Latin, shows what have been the results of the experiments *in materia viva* carried on for nearly a century.

That the student of Scholastic philosophy, theology, and canon law ought to have a firm grasp of Latin and Greek, is self-evident; otherwise, how shall he handle the sources, Sacred Scripture, the Fathers, St. Thomas and the Scholastics, the Code? The *Ordinationes* further prescribe that the classes in Sacred Scripture, dogmatic and moral theology, and Scholastic philosophy be conducted in Latin—a necessary prescription, if academic studies are not to be shut off from the treasures accumulated in Latin during the past centuries.[22] Consequently, the student must have something more than that acquaintance with Latin which might be sufficient to translate a text with the aid of a dictionary; practical skill in this language, and a facility in its use, are required, on peril of failure precisely in the most fundamental and important subjects. It is certainly right that in the minor seminaries the sciences and the other modern subjects should likewise be taught; as a matter of fact, the dignity of the priesthood requires that in the matter of general culture the priest should be in no wise inferior to other intellectuals. But the exigencies of the study of philosophy and theology will always give a very particular importance to the classical languages, especially to Latin, and accord them the primacy in the formation that precedes academic studies.

In past centuries the cultural curriculum embraced, besides the five-year course in humanities, a three-year course in philosophy, during which the young student formed his thought on God, on man, on the physical and moral world. In a word, he studied Scholastic

[21] *Ordinationes*, a. 13. [22] *Ibid.*, a. 21.

philosophy, in intimate connection with the study of the sciences. This study of the "arts" was a necessary condition for all who were to go on to university studies in the proper sense—theology, law, or the other fields. But in time the character of the original triennium of philosophy, which was the crown of medieval studies, underwent profound alteration, in consequence of many factors, notably the increasing development of the natural sciences, and the abandonment of the integrated medieval system, which did not admit the simultaneous study of languages and sciences, but aimed at a gradual formation: "nonnisi unum uno tempore." Generally speaking, there remained but little of philosophy—perhaps a bit of "introduction to philosophy," or of the history of philosophy; and these subjects were not seldom taught by professors whose bias was anything but Scholastic. Instead, the study of philosophy in the proper sense, of whatever particular tendency, was little by little transferred to the university; and there the faculty of philosophy took its place beside the other faculties, and had its own vast programs and its own proper academic degrees.[23] Of the so-called philosophy taken in the lyceum, no account at all was made.

This fundamental change in the Scholastic plan of studies had a fatal effect on the theological faculty. The young student came to theology without profound and exact philosophical knowledge. Everyone knows the importance of philosophy, particularly Scholastic philosophy, for theological studies in general, and notably for academic studies. Not to speak of the formative value of philosophy for any study and in fact for every mental activity, many great men have frankly admitted their debt to sound philosophy for their effectiveness in parliamentary debate, in public discussions, and in the professor's chair. But in theology there are higher values involved: the speculative penetration of the sublime truths of faith, which have been formulated in terms taken from Scholastic philosophy; judgments to be passed on doctrines and theories intimately connected with philosophical systems; the systematisation of a world of ideas, with a view to bringing the natural and the supernatural into coherent unity in a grand philosophico-theological synthesis of Christian thought. He

[23] Cf. F. Paulsen, *op. cit.*, II, 144–46.

will be inadequate to this difficult task who lacks elementary philosophical concepts, and who is a stranger to the history of human thought. The history of theology in the nineteenth century, and of Modernism at the beginning of the twentieth, clearly shows whither those theological studies lead that are not guided by solid and profound Scholastic philosophy.

Consequently, the changes that have everywhere taken place in the field of intermediate education created for the Church a new task, as important as it was difficult. Today philosophy rarely occupies any considerable place in intermediate curricula; when it does, it is almost exclusively in intermediate schools under religious supervision (minor seminaries, religious houses of study). Even in this case there is the danger of slighting either the serious study of philosophy, or the study of other subjects, particularly history and science, which have come to occupy an important place in the so-called lyceum, and which, as a matter of fact, form a considerable part of that general culture which the priest, particularly if he be a scholar, cannot do without. Almost everywhere else, except in these ecclesiastical schools, philosophy has been banished from intermediate education. Consequently, the Church has been forced to supply it where lacking, and to put in a real, formal course in Scholastic philosophy antecedent to academic studies in theology. This course runs only two years (not three, as formerly), in view of the fact that the sciences, once taught together with philosophy, have already been studied in the intermediate school. This is the origin of the law that, in order to be admitted to the faculty of theology, it must be proved that: "studiis mediis classicis peractis, saltem per biennium universae Philosophiae scholasticae studuisse et praescripta examina superasse."[24] This law is fully explained in the *Ordinationes*, which prescribe that the course in philosophy must be made in a faculty of philosophy or in a superior school of philosophy having ecclesiastical recognition, and must embrace the whole of Scholastic philosophy—logic, critica, cosmology, psychology, natural theology, ethics, and natural law—and the history of philosophy.[25]

The law in question is obviously of the highest importance; in fact, it can be said without fear of exaggeration that its importance is

[24] *Const. Apost.*, a. 25, 2°, *a*. [25] *Ordinationes*, a. 16.

capital. But another point is no less clear. The law does not merely exist in the theoretical order of programs of study and methodological norms; it affects the real, concrete life of the student, to whose years of study it materially adds. In the practical order, therefore, the difficulties may be considerable. Nevertheless, this fact does not diminish the importance of the law in the framework of the educational reform put through by the inflexible will of Pius XI, of sainted memory. This reform had a higher and broader scope than that dictated by the transitory and particular interests of any individual, or even of any diocese. Where it is a question of obtaining for the Church a company of theologians who will be well formed and absolutely sure in their doctrine and thought, assuredly no sacrifice can be too great.

We come, therefore, to the end of our examination of the spirit of the academic reform instituted by Pius XI. No one can fail to notice how it breathes the spirit of that great Pontiff—the spirit of a competent scholar, who was respected as such even in circles outside the Church; the spirit of a zealous apostle, who wished to give back to the Church great theologians and eminent scholars, such as have always been the strong support of her magisterial office; the spirit of a great organizer, thoroughly acquainted with the history of human and ecclesiastical institutions, who drew from his knowledge pointed lessons for our own times, and united in a grand synthesis elements furnished by the glorious past and by the dynamic present. In this light the legislative work of the great Pope must be viewed. And it is beyond doubt in the distant future, when the history of Catholic theology and the ecclesiastical sciences is written, high tribute will be paid (as it has in our day already been paid, even by secular universities) to the mind and pen of Pius XI, and to all those as well, who have helped to give enduring life to the letter of the law. Ten years ago the Pope published the letter of the law; assuredly it has already taken on life in many faculties; in fact, in certain places where it was more readily and quickly put into effect, it has already borne valuable fruit. But ten years are a lapse of time too short in which to gather abundant and fully mature fruit, especially since the new legislation must be executed in times as difficult as our own. But the seed has been sown in the fertile field of the Church; it is a good and vital seed....