



Address to the Plenary Session and to the Study Week on the Subject 'Macromolecules of Biological Interest with Special Reference to Nuclear Proteins'



In a written message to the Academy, John XXIII emphasises how the presence of the scientists of the Academy bears witness to the 'complete agreement which has always existed between the Church and true science'. He observes that one mission of the Church is to be an educator and emphasises that she is the champion of the development of intellectual culture. Faith and reason are not in opposition to one another but help each other. The Church supports scientific advance because truth 'brings forth a broadening of the human person' and involves a 'glorification of the creative work of God'.

Gentlemen: we are happy to receive today for the first time the new President and members of your illustrious and learned assembly. This day, which is the anniversary of our election, happens also to be that of the episcopal consecration of Pius XI, the wise founder, or, to be more exact, the restorer of the academy which bears the title of Pontifical Academy. Our pleasure is all the greater as your ranks have recently been increased by other outstanding persons from many countries, who are recommended by their lofty merit and by the breadth of their scientific learning.

In response to our cordial invitation, you have been meeting for several days to hold a plenary session as well as a new study week on the structure of macromolecules, which are of biological interest.

Let us thank you sincerely for the eagerness with which, despite your manifold occupations, you answered this invitation, and express to you the pride felt by the Church in seeing such a select group of scientists meeting in the Vatican City to exchange information.

By the diversity of your origins and by the variety of your specialities, Gentlemen, you really constitute a reflection of the present-day world of learning and bear witness to the complete agreement which has always existed between the Church and true science.

As you know, it is not because of a desire to remain true to the humanistic traditions inherited from the Renaissance that the Church welcomes you. It is because of a consciousness that in receiving you she is fulfilling part of her constant mission as mother and educator. Wherever she has established herself, she has always created a noteworthy enthusiasm for the development of intellectual culture.

Such was, indeed, the noble purpose pursued by our predecessor, Pius XI when he founded, precisely a quarter of a century ago, the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. This purpose led him to include in the Motu Proprio of establishment the shining statement from the First Vatican Council on the relationships between faith and reason, which it pleases us to recall here: 'Not only can faith and reason never be in opposition to each other, but they render to each other reciprocal assistance'. And the same Pope concluded from that: 'It is our ardent and firm hope that by this institution which is both ours and theirs, the Pontifical Academicians may always contribute to the better progress of science. We are not asking anything else of them, for the service in favour of truth which we look for from them consists in this generous purpose and noble work'.¹

This expectation is also ours, you may be sure. You all know the importance which we attach personally to intellectual work and scientific investigation. It has always been close to our heart to use the leisure left to us by our diverse functions in pastoral and historical research. It was therefore with joy that we greeted at the time of its creation this Academy of yours.

In this perspective, we want to mention today the memory of its first President, Agostino Gemelli, who showed himself to be faithful to the admirable programme laid out by your founder. His life brought honour to the Church and to science. It is also pleasant for us to appreciate for its just value the happy choice made by your illustrious society in conferring the gold medal of Pius XI on Professor Robert Burns Woodward of Harvard University, whose scientific activity in the chemical field is full of success and of promise.

In fact, far from fearing the most daring discoveries of mankind, the Church believes, on the contrary, that any progress in the possession of truth brings forth a broadening of the human person and constitutes and advances toward the primary Truth as well as a glorification of the creative work of God.

Holy Scripture often reiterates these important thoughts, and without doubt, it often happens to you, Gentlemen, that, in the enthusiasm of research and discovery you allow the magnificent song recorded in the book of Daniel to sing within you: *Benedicite omnia opera Domini Domino* (All you works of the Lord, bless the Lord).² Following the three children of Israel, filled with admiration before the miracles of nature, how can we fail to call upon the angels, the stars and the elements, animals, plants, minerals, the most saintly men and those most heard by God, to interpret our feelings of praise to the Creator?

With the assurance that you are working with all your energy in this undertaking of knowledge and praise, we are glad to invoke upon your work and yourselves, as a token of our paternal good will, an unstinted effusion of divine blessings.

1 *In Multis Solaciis*, 28 Oct. 1936; AAS 28, p. 421.

2 *Dn* 3:57.