

THE MAGISTERIUM AND THEOLOGIAN IN THE WRITINGS OF AVERY ROBERT DULLES

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This study explores Avery Robert Dulles's views regarding the nature of doctrinal authority in the Roman Catholic Church, and particularly the relationship between the hierarchical magisterium and theologians, with special focus on the apparent disparity between his early post-Vatican II views and his recent views.

To attain this goal, Dulles's convictions were considered in the context of his theological system, without neglecting the presuppositions undergirding his ideas and the methodologies used to support them. To highlight contrasting positions, three periods are studied consecutively: the earliest writings, i.e., those published before the end of the Second Vatican Council; the post-Vatican II publications, with particular emphasis on the seventies; and finally, his most recent writings, with specific emphasis on the nineties.

A brief introduction, delineating the objectives, method, and limitations of the study, is followed by a historical survey of developments in regard to doctrinal authority in the Church, with special emphasis upon the respective roles of the episcopate and theologians. The survey demonstrated that the Christian Church has struggled with the issue of doctrinal authority from its inception. This struggle intensified following the Second Vatican Council.

Chapters 3 and 4 contrast Dulles's early and recent thinking concerning the relationship between the magisterium and theologians. The early Dulles refuted the official view that revelation was mediated by a specially commissioned class of individuals, who alone were to be regarded as authoritative in the Church, and that the role of theologians was to reflect upon and defend authoritative statements. The recent Dulles believes that the remedy to the widespread damage wrought by post-Vatican II Catholic theology includes acceptance of the authority of the magisterium in its current form by Roman Catholic theologians and the admission of their dependence on authoritative Catholic sources.

The final chapter summarizes Dulles's views and suggests the reasons for his shift.