

C 46 The Development of Fundamental Theology 1969

Raymond Pannikar, "Metatheology or Diacritical Theology as
Fundamental Theology" pp 43 - 55

p 43 Fundamental theology: two notions, functions

p 44 "The former proposes to be a rational or at least reasonable justification of the elements elaborated by theology; the latter claims to be a disclosure of the very basis of theological self-understanding. It is to the second aspect that I shall restrict myself."

"Central to this manner of thinking (Vat9can I) is a dualistic conception of reality: God and the world, increate and created, the ground and the erection above it. In this two-storey building of nature and supernature, grace is based on nature, faith on reason, theology on philosophy, and the like. To be sure, the foundations are called praeambula and not fundamenta -- in order to maintain the freedom and 'gratuity' of the upper storey -- but they amount to the same thing. If for instance you do not admit that there is a God or a soul, how can Christian teaching make sense to you?"

p 45 "An assumption is something which I assume for many possible reasons -- traditional, axiomatic, pragmatic, hypothetical, &c. It is a principle which I set at the basis of my thinking process in a more or less explicit way. A presupposition, on the other hand, which I uncritically and unreflectively take for granted. It belongs to the myth from which I proceed and the material out of which I draw the material to feed my thought. The moment a presupposition is known to be the basis of thought or the starting point of a process, it ceases to be a pre-supposition. Only another person -- or I myself in a second moment -- can make me aware of my presuppositions; when that happens, I cannot hold them as I had done previously, but am led either to reject them, or to keep them as "suppositions" or as assumptions. This is also why, at the moment theology becomes more aware of its presuppositions either through criticism from the outside or through acquiring a critical perspective, theologians begin to question the until then unquestioned basis of their science. The crisis thus produced is of the sort that any living reality must experience in its growth."

p 45 f The presuppositions of theology and fundamental theology have been being laid bare; they have been even challenged as assumptions. p 46: "INdeed the ground on which theology rests today has become more problematic than the Christian content itself."

p 46 "The real challenge to Christian faith today comes from within -- i. e., from its own exigency of universality.... The Christian faith will either accept this challenge or declare ~~xxxxif~~ its particular allegiance to a single culture and thus renounce its claim of being the carrier of a universally acceptable message, which does not destroy any positive value.

"The problem of fundamental theology today cannot be solved merely by extrapolating, without a previous justification, a set of propositions which may be meaningful within a certain cultural ~~xxxxxxx~~ or religious context, but which are irrelevant, meaningless, or even unacceptable outside it. If fundamental theolgyogy is to have any relevance at all in our time of world communication, it has to make sense to those outside the cultural area of the Western world and, incidentally, also to those within it who no longer think, imagine, and act according to the paradigms of traditional fundamental theology."

p 47 "The encounter of peoples cultures and religions is a major problem for ~~x~~ fundamental theology, a problem which indeed challenges its very anthropological and philosophical foundations. It 9s in this connection that I would like to put forward some general considerations."

"The problem... cannot be ignored or explained away, assuming that others will sooner or later understand or be converted to our point of view. Those times are over... .

"The only possible method for find~~xxxx~~ing the foundations of theology has to be a posteriori. In other words, fundamental theology is not at the beginning of theological reflection, but at its end. It is not that the Christain faith is based on those foundations, but rather that the ~~f~~ effort at understand9ng a Christian fact leads us to discover some of the conditions of its intelligibility under some given circumstances.

p 47 "The thesis I am proposing tries to reestablish the unity -- and by this the harmony -- between theology and ~~x~~ fundamental theology. It considers the latter neither a necessary epistemological

p 48 condition for the former, nor its ontological basis. If theology would depend on the acceptance of an extra-theological basis, it would then lose not only all its wisdom character but also all its intellectual cogency; it would become utterly at the mercy of that philosophy which would offer a better backing to the theological thesis.

"What I am proposing is the recovery of fundamental theology as a fundamentally theological endeavor -- i. e., as fundamentally theology. The very fact of reincorporating fundamental theology into theology will explode the far too narrow cage in which theology has sometimes been confined; it will liberate theology from the tutelage of philosophy, making it no longer dependent on one particular philosophy or world view outside itself.

"Accordingly, fundamental theology is considered to be the theological activity (for which so often there is no room in certain theologies) which critically examines its assumptions and is always ready to question its own presuppositions. However, it does so not as a separated platform on which in a second moment faith builds up another construction of its own, but rather as that effort at intelligibility of the actual theological situation in any given context. There is a difference, indeed, between the ~~RM~~ content of the Christian faith and the conditions of its intelligibility, but it is not a real distinction, for the content of my faith is nothing but an intelligible crystallization of faith itself. Content means intelligible content. And a content is not such if it rests on explicitly non-understood premises

"I am saying that the anthropological conditions necessary to the understanding and acceptance of the Christian message cannot and are not to be severed from the interpretation of its content."

p 49 "The Buddhist would like to believe in the whole message of Christ, and he sincerely thinks that he could accept it and even understand it better if it could be purified from what he considers to be its theistic superstructure. The Hindu will wonder why he has to join a physical and cultural community simply because of his belief in the divinity of Christ and in his resurrection. The 'death of God' theologian, or whatever name we may choose for him, will say that it is precisely because Christ is the Savior that he can dispense with any conception of a transcendent God or a physical miracle."

p 49 "The answer to the question as to whether these three persons can be called Christians will depend on the interpretation of what they say -- i e., on what they really mean to say.... .. the three statements offer the same pattern and that it would be ~~artificial~~ artificial ~~and~~ and not conducive to clarification to lodge the former (ie first?) into fundamental theology, or the second into theology, /50/ or the third into philosophy. All depends on what we mean by God and how we picture Christ's resurrection, on our assumption and their context, and how the Christian faith can be maintained within such different religious, epistemological, and metaphysical patterns. For instance, is it necessary to have a theistic and substantivized conception of the divinity to be loyal to the Christian faith? Does one need to have a literal and fundamentalistic picture of the resurrection to be an orthodox believer? Is it essential to hold the Aristotelian-Thomist philosophical scheme to meaningfully accept the Christian message? Do I really have to admit some praeambula fidei as part of faith itself, or does it all depend on the interpretation I give to what faith tells me, so that the same faith may have different praeambula?

p 50 "The Catholic existential answer is very clear to the individual: your interpretation -- that is, your understanding of the Christian faith -- must be personally intelligible, but it has also to be in harmony with tradition and thus with the magisterium, because dogma is also a historical reality. However we are not dealing now with a problem of discipline or with an individual case. My question would be whether tradition and the magisterium have the right to prevent the entry into the Church of those whose lives are guided by different patterns of intelligibility -- or stating the same problem more properly, ~~whether~~ whether the present-day historical crystallization of the Christian faith is the only possible one. The Church has never theoretically said this.... The problem remains whether or not and up to what extent the several patterns can sustain ~~the~~ and convey the Christian kerygma. And here only history will have the last word. The Church herself is inscribed in the historical process.

p 51 "The role of fundamental theology... is also to work out the intelligibility of theology outside the culture and even the ~~xx~~ religion where that theology ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ until now grew and prospered."

"And here lies the immense difficulty. Fundametal theology is an Exodus theology."

"Today two thirds of the world's population live in an non-historical dimension; half of mankind does not have the theistic coneption of God as the children of Abraham have; one thid of humanity lacks a consciousness of separated individuality."

"In a wrod, the function of fundamental theology consists in providing a theological justification of a theological as well as a religious pluralism."

p 52 "Metatheology could also be described as the human religious endeavor to become aware of, to analyze and/or to understand that human primordial relatedness which occurs when dealixng with ultimate problems -- an endeavor resulting not out ~~xx~~ of a particular concept o human nature, but as a fruit of a pluri-theological investigation. I am not assuming that there must be a kind of objectifiable common ground or certain universally formulable common statements. I am only pleading for a really open dialogue -- one in which the meeting ground may have itself first to be created -- where in the very intermingling of religious currents, ideas and beliefs a more powerful stream of light, serivce, and better understanding will emerge."

"~~Ixxx~~ should say, then, that the role of a fundamental theology is not that of dinding ouxt some extra-theological principles on which its speculation is based, but of showing that the Christian message may ~~xx~~ become meaningful in any authentic 53 human attitude and genuine philosophical position, of proving that the Christian kerygma is not in principle tied down to any particular philosophical system or cultural scheme, or even to any particular religious tradition. Its role is to explain for instance, not simply that the acceptance of the existence of God is a necessary prerequisite to understand and accept the Christian faith, but also that under the hypothesis of there being no God, if this is existentially given, the Christian proclamation could look for a justifiication and a meaning. Metatheology is not

p 53 is not just another system of theology, as metaphysics is not simply a more refined physical science. A theological system may still be theistic. Metatheology does not need to be so, and may be, for instance, at the origin of a non-theistic theological reflection. It does not encroach upon the different systems or jeopardize the several theological schools of the most disparate systems and religions. And yet it belongs to the theological investigation. IN fact, it modifies both the underlying system and the Christian understanding, though not according to any preconceived pattern, but as the very result of the metatheological activity itself."

"... it (metatheology) tries to do and say in another context what Christ did and said in the place and time in which he lived. But this is not possible if you do not make yourself understood. And again this can only happen to the extent that you share in the assumptions of the people with whom and for whom you speak."

54/ "... the communitarian or ecclesial character of this enterprise. It cannot be the work of Christians alone, or of 'religious' people exclusively, but has to result from the common effort of all those interested.../in performing this major work of dialogue, communication, and communioⁿ, even in spite of and through the conflicts that may arise."

p 54 "here is where theology and religion meet, where life and speculation encounter one another, and where the scholar is the wiser the simpler he is as a man. Any one side or party cannot lay out the rules of the game or fix the conditions or the outcome of the experience. Fundamental theology becomes lived religion, mystical faith (because it is previous to or beyond any formulation), It is the religious quest for a ground of understanding, for a common concern, which ~~has~~ has to be lived, delimited, and verbalized. It is a dialogue which transcends the logos... in order to decide which logos we are going to use and if the ground of our search belongs in any way to the logos or to the Spirit."

"What I am aiming at is this: to state that the dialogue is not simply a device for the discussion or clarification of different opinions, but that it is in itself a religious category, that it becomes an act of religion, an act of faith (which comes of hearing), a mutual recognition of our human condition, and thus constitutive interrelatedness."