

January 2, 1967

Very Reverend Father General, P. C.,

I have received your letter, dated December 14, 1966, and occasioned by a radio interview given by Fr van Kilsdonk.

I do not think there should be any question of changing traditional formulae consecrated by scriptural, credal, conciliar, and liturgical usage.

I do not think that any addition to traditional formulae, such as 'Jesus sine semine viri conceptus,' should be attempted prior to thorough study of the matter.

The necessity of such study is that contemporary hermeneutics are far more difficult, complex, and erudite than is commonly understood. Depth psychology, cultural anthropology, history of religions, philosophies of symbolism combine to emphasize and multiply the ~~man~~ many modes and levels of human apprehension. Catholics have no difficulty in accepting secularists' accounts of man's symbolic and mythopoetic activity in non-Christian religions. In the past they rejected the anthropomorphisms of the bible and the creeds: God the Father has no right hand. They worked out a systematic theology that balanced imaginative descriptions by theoretic explanations: the heavenly banquet hall by the beatific vision, and the 'poena sensus' by the 'poena damni.' A much more general and complicated problem seems now to be imposed upon them.

This problem begins with Adam and Eve in the garden and concerns every instance that speaks to the human imagination and the human heart right up to the return of the Son of Man on the clouds of heaven. In each case there recurs the question, 'wie es eigentlich geschehen.' To this recurrent question we have some partial answers. But we are extremely weak on basic methods and comprehensive principles, and so we tend to be knocked off balance as the same problem recurs now in this form and now in that.

To pursue the matter further would be to attempt an unwanted 'theologische Abhandlung.' If enough has been said to indicate clearly the direction of my position, I beg to extend to Your Paternity my best wishes for the coming year.

Most respectfully yours in our Lord,

*Bernard*

Bernard Lonergan, S. J.