Variations in Fundamental Theology

I have already had occasion to mention Concilium. It is a series of volumes on current theological issues in which the theological consultants at the second Vatican council continued the type of work they did during the council. So far over eighty volumes have appeared. Up to 1970 they averaged about one hundred and eighty pages each. Since then the average has dropped to about one hundred and fifty.

My topic this evening comes from volume forty-six published in 1969. Its title is Fundamental Theology, and its contributors come from around the world. They are Claude Geffré at Paris, René Latourelle at Rome, Raymond Panikkar in India, Heinrich Fries at Munich, Juan Segundo at Montivideo, Jan Walgrave at Louvain, Joseph Cahill then at Notre Dame and now at Edmonton, Karl Rahner then at Münster, Langdon Gilkey in Chicago, and John Macquarrie then in New York and now at Oxford.

The Traditional Conception

Interest in my topic lies, not in fundamental theology itself, but in the fact that the traditional conception of it was rejected by many representatives both of the thinking that went into the second Vatican Council and of the spirit that

the council fostered or at least released. This rejection marks a notable reversal of opinion. Prior to the council and during it, it was customary in most Catholic theological schools to devote to fundamental theology the whole first year of the four-year basic course. Vatican II called for an over-hauling of the teaching of theology. Four years after the council closed, René Latourelle, a brilliant French Canadian, Dean of the faculty of theology in the Gregorian University, Rome, reported: 'Key experiments, in Europe or America, demonstrate that fundamental theology at the present time is confronted with the alternatives either of dismemberment and disappearance or of beginning a new and different life.'

These alternatives are startling. What had been the staple of the first year of theological studies, now is offered the grim choice. On the one hand, it may be dismembered and disappear. On the other hand, it may be transformed into something else.

So abrupt a change may be accounted for in two ways. First, there is the general cause that accounts for so many of the seeming novelties that emerged during or after Vatican II: change was long overdue. What might have been an extended series of almost imperceptible modifications running over centuries, turned into an enormous cumulation of differences that eventually emerged as a single massive sweep.

In the second place, fundamental theology was a highly technical conception. It was concerned with presenting the

reasonableness of faith. But that reasonableness may be presented in at least three different manners, and fundamental theology denoted, not all three manners, but only one. That one was the most technical of the three, and the one most involved in the peculiarities of the thought and temper of an age that had passed away.

The reasonableness of the faith, then, may be shown on the basis of the faith itself. Such showing, of course, is not a logical proof. To a logician it is merely arguing in a circle, concluding to the faith by presupposing the faith. Still, logic never took anyone beyond what he already knew implicitly, for there is nothing in any strictly logical conclusion that is not already contained in the premisses. What advances matters is developing understanding, coming to understand what previously one did not understand. Such is the secret of all teaching. Such too is the most effective way of coming to understand the faith. To appeal to such faith as people already have, is the most rapid and convincing way to make them begin to feel at home in what they hitherto have not grasped.

Besides those that already believe, there are those still outside the faith. To them too the reasonableness of the faith may be shown. But now the argument will presuppose, not the tenets of faith, but the convictions of reasonable men and women. Its purpose will be, not to demonstrate, but to persuade. It will start from people as they happen to be. It will take into account their strengths and their weaknesses.

It will proceed in some approximation to the artistry developed in Greece by an Isocrates and codified by an Aristotle, then developed in a new key in Rome by a Cicero and codified by a Quintilian. Its success will vary with the time and place, with the skill of the advocate and the good will of his hearers or readers.

Besides these two ways there is a third, and it is the way of a fundamental theology. It is not content with the first way, even for believers, for they can feel that the beliefs they happen to entertain are the fruit of some accident. They are believers because their parents were, or because their more inspiring and persuasive teachers were, or because their country, like Kierkegaard's Denmark, is a Christian country. But what alone has an intrinsic claim upon them is the fact they are and/or wish to be reasonable men. Why should one, they ask, simply because he wishes to be a reasonable man, accept the tenets of the Christian religion as presented in this or that communion.

The third way, then, at once resembles and differs from both the first and the second. It resembles the first inasmuch as it speaks to believers. It resembles the second and differs from the first inasmuch as it speaks to non-believers. And it differs from the second inasmuch as it proposes to proceed, not by rhetoric, but by logic. It is by this concern to proceed rigorously and, in that sense, to be scientific that the way of fundamental theology differs from the other two.

It is this third way, it would seem, that Karl Rahner

refers to as traditional fundamental theology. It is the way that by many today is repudiated, despite the oblique reaffirmation of its essential validity by Pius XII in his encyclical Humani generis (DS 3876). Its origins lie in the controversies of the Reformation period, in the triumph of rationalism in the Enlightenment, and in the cultural phenomenon of atheism. It has a threefold structure that goes back to Les trois vérités of Pierre Charron (1593) and to the De veritate religionis christianae (1627) of Hugo Grotius. This threefold structure involved demonstrations, first, of the existence of God and of religion, secondly, of the Christian religion, thirdly, of the true Church. A natural theology established the existence of God. A natural ethics established the obligation of worshipping God. The prophecies of the Old Testament and the miracles of the new established the divine origin of the Christian religion, and the Christian message settled the identity of the true Church.

Now there is an obvious difficulty to this procedure. It starts from data of common experience. It advances by human reason and historical testimony. It concludes to a religion and a church that not only may acknowledge the mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation but also may claim that these mysteries are not within the reach of human reason. Somewhere it would seem there must be a fallacy, for a valid argument has nothing in its conclusions that is not contained in its premisses. But here the premisses are presented as within the reach of human reason, while the conclusion contains what may lie beyond

the reach of human reason.

To this objection there are answers, and some I think are invalid while others are valid. One may distinguish between the fact and the content of revelation, hold that the argument proves the fact, deny that it concludes or at least should conclude to the truth of the mysteries. Against such a view I would be inclined to accept Fr. Geffré's contention that the distinction is unsatisfactory.[1] The fact of revelation becomes an abstraction. It sets aside a very notable element in the content of revelation, namely, the revelation that a revelation has occurred. Again, the distinction between the fact and content of revelation leads to a further distinction. It is one thing to establish by natural reason the possibility of believing an indeterminate revelation; it is another to establish the possibility of believing mysteries that transcend human reason. The former does not include the latter, for by strict logic human reason cannot transcend itself. And so the objection stands.

However, it is possible to give substantially the same argument a quite different interpretation. It concludes not to the truth of the Christian message but to its divine origin. It concludes that man is to harken to the message, that the message creates a situation, that the situation is one of encounter, that man is to bow and adore and in his adoration, which is unrestricted submission he is to believe. On this interpretation, I think, the objection fails. But it fails precisely because it introduces a hiatus between the alleged

objective science and the act of the believer. It is the existence of this hiatus that Jan Walgrave reported when he acknowledged a broad consensus that "...it is in no sense the function of fundamental theology to prove the truth of the Christian message. All that is to be expected of it is that it should deal with the reasons which can justify the acceptance of faith as a moral option for a serious conscience."[2]

But there remains a more radical objection. Prof. Josephy Cahill, now at Edmonton, traced current fundamental theology back to the works of John Perrone written between 1835 and 1842. He claimed that its failure sprang from its attempt to do too much. He pointed to the '..naive and uncritical treatment of Scripture...' in the textbooks. He noted, beyond an overtly polemic tone and intent, the further weakness of parochialism quite out of place in contemporary ecumenism, a pluralistic world, and a crisis of faith. As a final seal of its obsolescence he observed that traditional fundamental theology does not provide any room for the universes of discourse set up by such sciences as history, archeology, psychology, biology, psychiatry, sociology, and philosophy.[3]

A similar point is made with no less vigor and greater amplitude by Karl Rahner in a paper entitled "Reflections on the Contemporary Intellectual Formation of Future Priests." Traditional fundamental theology, he would say, presupposes a view of scientific knowledge that belongs only to an earlier age. Then it was possible for a single mind on the basis of personal investigation to arrive at assured mastery in this

or that field and so to be capable of a personal judgement on the issues that arose in that field. But the modern sciences are not individual but community enterprises. They are not fixed achievements but ongoing developments. They are not isolated from one another but interdependent usually in highly complex manners. The range of data to which they appeal and on which they rest is mastered not by the individual but by the group, and not by the group of this or that moment but by the ongoing group that critically receives and independently tests each new contribution. Finally, while the natural sciences admit secure generalizations and seriations, the fields of human studies confront the student with such vast diversity that each situation calls for a special investigation even though the results of the investigation may turn out to be matched by other instances.

It is within such a perspective that Rahner asks how a young student of theology--or for that matter an elderly professor of dogmatics such as himself--can form a personal judgement on relevant elements in the New Testament without being an expert in the Jewish theology of the time of Jesus, a Qumran specialist, a form critic, a historian of ancient religions, and many other things besides. He goes on to add that the student, if he becomes at least honestly conversant with the contemporary problems in these matters, cannot but feel that, so far from being capable of forming a personal judgement on which to base his own life and his future ministry, he is on the contrary bound to remain in all such matters a

pitiful amateur.[4]

Rahner has further pregnant remarks on the plight of candidates for the priesthood, but they are far less relevant to our present concern. We have been considering a traditional fundamental theology that characterized itself as scientific and so distinguished itself as scientific and so distinguished itself from the rhetoric of apologetics. But we have come upon serious objections to such a claim. There was a time when the procedures of traditional fundamental theology might pass for science, but the science of Newton and the scholarship of von Ranke have radically transformed what is and what is thought to be scientific. Traditional fundamental theology differs from apologetics, not by being scientific, but by being a more jejune and abstruse piece of rhetoric. Further, even if traditional fundamental theology were scientific, it would not reach its goal. At most it can set forth prolegomena. But the prolegomena are only remotely relevant to an encounter, an act of adoration, and in the adoration an act of faith.

The New Outlook

However, my own purpose in these reflections on fundamental theology is to intimate to you some comprehension of the post-conciliar breakdown and disappearance of Neoscholasticism and some brief introduction to its successor, die anthropologische Wende, the turn to the human subject. This turn is conceived differently by different Catholic theologians, and an account

of these differences would call for a bulky volume. I can do no more than present my own view of the matter in the hope that it may be found helpful by those among you that wish to investigate the issues more fully.

First, then, the turn to the human subject is an acceptance of a cognitional fact, unknown to Aristotle, namely, modern science. This means that the ideal of science is to be conceived not in terms of deductive logic but in terms of method. The foundations on which science relies are not some set of self-evident premisses or of necessary and eternal truths. What the scientist relies on ultimately is his method; and when his present method fails, then his reliance shifts to the improved method that that very failure, understood as failure, will bring forth. Similarly, the conclusions which science reaches are not the necessary consequents of necessary truths. As hypotheses, they are verifiable possibilities; as verified, they become the best available scientific opinion. Hence, science is no longer conceived as a permanent achievement but as an ongoing process; and it no longer is constituted by an acquired habit in the mind of an individual; rather it consists in the current stage in the cumulative development of a scientific community.

Already in these contrasts there may be envisaged the turn to the human subject. It is a turn from idealized objects, objects of infallible intuitions, of self-evident truths, of necessary conclusions. It is a turn to the actual reality of human subjects, to a community of men and women in a common

attentiveness, in a common development of human understanding, in a common reflection on the validity of current achievement, in a common deliberation on the potentialities brought to light by that achievement.

I cannot insist too much that this turn to the subject is totally misconceived when it is thought to be a turn from the truly objective to the merely subjective. Human subjects, their attention, their developing understanding, their reflective scrutiny, their responsible deliberations are the objective realities. Infallible intuitions, self-evident premisses, necessary conclusions are the merely subjective constructions that may have served their purpose in their day but have been definitively swept aside by the science and scholarship of recent centuries.

I have been indicating the turn to the human subject--as I have to conceive it--in its first and basic moment. But that first moment is only the thin edge of the wedge. For the shift from an ideal in terms of logic to an ideal in terms of method involves a shift not only in the ideal of scientific endeavor but also in the ideal of philosophic inquiry. As long as one's ideal is in terms of logic, then one's first philosophy will be, like Aristotle's, a metaphysic. For logic operates on propositions, and it is metaphysical propositions that are presupposed by all other propositions. But method orders cognitional operations, and there are cognitional operations that are prepropositional, preverbal, prejudgemental, preconceptual; to these prior operations all propositions,

including metaphysical propositions, reduce; and so from the viewpoint of method, as opposed to the viewpoint of logic, priority passes from metaphysics to cognitional theory.

It turns out, however, that the priority of cognitional theory is only relative and the priority of cognitional operations qualified. The cognitional yields to the moral, and the moral to the interpersonal. To make a sound moral judgement one has to know the relevant facts, possibilities, probabilities; but with those conditions fulfilled, the moral judgement proceeds on its own criteria and towards its own ends. Again, moral judgements and commitments underpin personal relations; but with the underpinning presupposed or even merely hoped for, interpersonal commitment takes its own initiative and runs its own course.

I am touching here upon a key point. I have already mentioned a hiatus between the arguments of a fundamental theology and, on the other hand, the act of faith. That hiatus frequently is referred to as a leap of faith. That affirmation of a leap I would not deny or diminish. But while acknowledging its unique aspects, I would urge that it is not unparalleled. For a distinction may be drawn between sublating and sublated operations, where the sublating operations go beyond the sublated, add a quite new principle, give the sublated a higher organization, enormously extend their range and bestow upon them a new and higher relevance. So inquiry and understanding stand to the data of sense, so reflection, checking, verifying stand to the formulations of understanding, so deliberating

on what is truly good, really worth while, stands to experience, understanding and factual judgement, so finally interpersonal commitments stand to cognitional and moral operations.

The successive sublations of which I speak are, not at all the mysterious surmounting of contradictions in a Hegelian dialectic, but the inner dynamic structure of our conscious living. In its natural mode, as perhaps Edmund Husserl would say, such living is just lived. It is not adverted to explicitly; its elements are not distinguished, identified, named; the patterns of their interconnections have not been studied, scrutinized, delineated. But if we hold back from the world of objects, if our whole attention is not absorbed by them, then along with the spectacle we can advert to the spectator, along with the sounds we can find ourselves aware of our hearing. So too problems let us find ourselves inquiring, solutions let us find the insights of the solver, judgements bring us to the subject critically surveying the evidence and rationally yielding to it, decisions point not only outwardly to our practical concerns but also inwardly to the existential subject aware of good and evil and concerned whether his own decisions are making him a good or evil man. But beyond all these, beyond the subject as experiencing, as intelligent, as reasonable in his judgements, as free and responsible in his decisions, there is the subject in love. On that ultimate level we can learn to say with Augustine, <u>amor meus pondus meum</u>, my being in love is the gravitational field in which I am carried along.

Our loves are many and many-sided and manifold. They are the ever fascinating theme of novelists, the pulse of poetry, the throb of music, the strength, the grace, the passion, the tumult of dance. They are the fever of youth, the steadfastness of maturity, the serenity of age. But on an endless topic, let us be brief and indicate three dimensions in which we may be in love. There is domestic love, the love that makes a home, in which parents and children, each in his or her own ever nuanced and adaptive way, sustains and is sustained by each of the others. There is the love that is loyalty to one's fellows: it reaches out through kinsmen, friends, acquaintances, through all the bonds--cultural, social, civil, economic, technological--of human cooperation, to unite ever more members of the human race in the acceptance of a common lot, in sharing a burden to be borne by all, in building a common future for themselves and future generations. But above all, at once most secret and most comprehensive, there is the love of God. It is twofold. On the one hand, it is God's love for us: "God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, that everyone who has faith in him may not die but have eternal life" (Jn 3, 16). On the other hand, it is the love that God bestows upon us: "..God's love has flooded our inmost heart through the Holy Spirit he has given us" (Rom. 5, 5).

I have been indicating two distinct components in the task of apologetics or, if you will, of fundamental theology. The precise character of these components varies with the

historical unfolding of the Christian religion and with the personal development of individual inquirers. In the early church the two came together in the reply: "..repent and be baptized, everyone of you, in the name of Jesus the Messiah; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2, 38). For inasmuch as one was baptized in the name of Jesus the Messiah, one entered into the objective history of salvation; and inasmuch as one's repentance became efficacious through the gift of the Spirit, one entered upon a new life. But as the centuries slipped by, both the early simplicity remained for many, and a more complex account was needed whether for the more erudite or for the more perverse. So in the first Vatican council the two components appear: the first as the signs of divine revelation and, particularly, as the prophecies and miracles that show forth the omniscience and the omnipotence of God; the second as the help of the Holy Spirit given us within (DS 3009).

Today, the signs of divine revelation, the prophecies of the Old Testament and the miracles of the New, have been engulfed in the mountainous extent and intricate subtlety of biblical studies and critical history. God's gift of his grace is as frequent, as powerful, but also as silent and secret as ever, while we are perturbed by the probing of depth psychology and bewildered by the claims of linguistic analysts, but the obscurities of phenomenology, by the oddities of existentialism, by the programs of economic, social, and ecological reformers, by the beckoning of ecumenists and universalists.

New Positions

If I have attempted an overview of the issues, I must now report, even if with more brevity than justice, on positions that have been adopted and solutions that have been proposed. Certain basic attitudes are common to Henri Bouillard, Heinrich Fries, Claude Geffré, and Jan Walgrave, and from them I shall begin. In contrast, the views of Karl Rahner and Raymond Panikkar introduce new distinct issues that call for separate treatment.

In general, all agree that traditional fundamental theology has had its day. Juan Segundo of Montivideo succeeds in being quite amusing on the topic of a year of lectures establishing the fact of revelation without getting around to studying what was revealed.[5] Heinrich Fries depicts the controversialists that dilated on the apostasy of opponents but failed to grasp what they prized and defended, and he contrasts such an approach with the contemporary effort not to rebut error but to open doors, to listen and ask questions, to seek seriously an answer to questions.[6] Jan Walgrave speaks of a reversal of former positions: The old demonstrations from miracles and prophecy are often relegated to some intellectual limbo or are allowed to appear as incidental matter on the fringe of the real issues.[7] For Henri Bouillard the real issues have their root in human experience of human life. He considers the word, unbelief, a negative name for a positive reality. The positive reality he finds stated by Paul Vi in

his encyclical, Ecclesiam suam, where it is asserted that there exist authentic human and spiritual values at the heart of non-Christian religions and at the basis of the arguments used by atheists to explain the nature of man.[8]

This appeal to common human experience evokes the memory of Maurice Blondel, once the victim of old guard attacks, but now mentioned explicitly by Geffré[9] and Walgrave.[10] However, the language employed seems to fit most easily into an adaptation of Heidegger. For Heidegger verstehen, understanding, was the condition of the possibility of the project and so of Dasein, of being a man. For these writers faith is the condition of the possibility at once of being fully a man and of being a Christian. Bouillard develops the point at some length but the gist of his thought would seem contained in the sentences: ".. God's revelation would have no meaning for us if it were not at the same time the revelation of the meaning of our own existence. For the signs of revelation to be understood for what they are, the subject must grasp that there is an intrinsic relationship between the mystery which they are said to manifest and our own existence. The subject must at least glimpse what the Christian faith contributes to the fulfilment of his destiny No apologetic will touch him if it does not in some way achieve this."[11]

Heinrich Fries writes: '.. faith is one of man's basic possibilities and actions--in so far as it essentially means "I believe in you" and not "I believe that."'[12] What is said

of faith in general as a basic human possibility, is applied to Christian faith: 'The tenets of faith must strike man in such a way that he is real in them and finds himself in an authentic encounter. In this encounter, man should really come to understand himself; he should find his "self" and the answers to his questions. Otherwise, faith is simply ideology.'[13]

Jan Walgrave, who like Heinrich Fries is a student of John Henry Newman, feels that other approaches run into difficulties because they do not go to the heart of the matter. So we are to confront the Christian message ".. with the deepened self-understanding of man and with the philosophy which analyzes the motives that live in that self-understanding." This, of course, repeats in more general terms the point made by Bouillard and Fries, to which Walgrave adds that what is to be reached in that self-understanding is existential, pre-reflective, already a reality before it is clarified, vécu before it can be thématique.[14]

Claude Geffré presents, not so much a view of his own, as a critical survey of the current situation. He finds the ultimate refinements of traditional fundamental theology in the writings of Ambrose Gardeil and Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange.[15] He observes that contemporary thought has been reacting not merely against an obsolete fundamental theology but more basically against the once pervasive intellectualist and objectivist assumptions of Neo-Thomism. Accordingly, the

background of more recent efforts lies in post-Kantian developments of man's understanding.[16] To the whole of theology he ascribes an anthropocentric dimension, to which fundamental theology pays special attention. For him the human subject is no longer a passive receptacle, into which supernatural truths are to be deposited; on the contrary, the meaningful activity of God's people is accounted a constitutive element in revelation itself. So modern theology draws out the implications of Bultmann's intuition on the pre-understanding requisite for reading the Christian message. The gift of God's revelation is also a revelation of man to himself, so that, as Ricoeur has it, revelation as such is an opening up of existence,[17] a possibility of existing, or as Schillebeeckx put it, understanding the faith and self-interpretation cannot be separated.[18]

With Rahner Geffré feels that the distinction between fundamental and dogmatic theology will tend to vanish, the more that dogmatic theology tends to be hermeneutical, i.e., to find its basic terms in immediate human experience.

He feels, as Rahner suggests, there should be a far greater interpenetration of fundamental and dogmatic theology than at present exists, and thinks this will come about the more dogmatic theology becomes hermeneutical,[19] i.e., derives its basic terms from immediate human experience. With others, however, he finds, if not dangers, yet an excessive abstractness in Rahner's emphasis on an anthropocentric theology,[20] and devotes considerable space to the views of Johannes Metz

and Jürgen Moltmann on eschatology as the key to the integration of theology in human historical process.[21]

Rahner and Panikkar

While Rahner's anthropocentrism (which goes back to the nineteen forties) comes up for criticism in volume forty-six of Concilium, Rahner himself is off on quite a different tack. His topic is theological pluralism. For two theologies to be contradictory, they have to share to some extent a common universe of discourse. Otherwise, the putative contradiction would be merely a misunderstanding. For propositions to be contradictory they must employ the same terms and attribute to them the same meaning. But it is just these identities that tend to be lacking in the modern world. As Rahner puts it: "We are encountering basic positions, held by alien theologians, which do not spring from a shared horizon of fundamental understanding and which do not directly contradict our own theology. The disparity is not clear-cut, so that we cannot tackle it directly. In such cases we cannot adopt a clear yes or no toward the other side."[22]

He does not hesitate to illustrate his point from his own Germanic world. He asks: "Who among us can say for sure whether the basic conception of Barth's doctrine of justification is Catholic or not? If someone feels that he can, I would like to shake his hand. But where do we go, when we cannot even do that?

"Who can say for sure that the ultimate root positions of Rudolf Bultmann are really un-Catholic? Who can say that the ultimate conclusions to be drawn from the postulates of the Bultmann school actually undercut his real intention and are unacceptable to Catholics, whether the Bultmann school realizes it or not? What do we do if we are not in a position to form some clear and responsible stance toward the other positions that confront us?"[23]

Rahner gives further examples from within Catholic thought, but what he is up to is plain enough. Any science, any academic enterprise is the work of a group, of a scientific or academic community. For the work to prosper the conditions for its possibility must be fulfilled. What Rahner is observing is that their medieval heritage had given Roman Catholic theologians a common and to some extent unambiguous language. There did exist different schools of thought, but the schools were of ancient lineage, and each had a fair notion of the ambiguities endemic in other positions. But Scholasticism and Neoscholasticism had long been inadequate to modern needs, and their influence simply evaporated with Vatican II. Thereby, the Roman Catholic theologian and, no less, the teaching office of the church, the magisterium, are confronted with basic, foundational problems that hitherto they were able to neglect. A solution will have to be ongoing, dynamic and not static, for human knowledge is a process of development. It will have to be securely anchored in history; otherwise it will be irrelevant to a historical religion. It will have to

have criteria for distinguishing between genuine development and mere aberration.

Raymond Panikkar is, if anything, more radical than Rahner. He argues that if ".. fundamental theology 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."[24] Again, he urges: "The real challenge to Christian faith today comes from within--i.e., from its own exigence of universality... The Christian faith will either accept this challenge or declare 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 particular value."[25] He finds that acceptance of the Christian message is blocked, not by its religious or theological content, but by its philosophic or cultural accretions. "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 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 choose for him, will say that it is precisely because Christ is the Savior that he can dispense with any conception of a trans-

cendent God or a physical miracle."[26]

The solution envisaged by Father Panikkar is notably clear though not notably precise. It is not any set of epistemological or ontological presuppositions that once more would tie theology to some philosophic kite. Fundamental theology is to be fundamentally theology.[27] Its immense difficulty is that it is to be an Exodus theology, a theological justification of a theological as well as a religious pluralism.[28] It would show ".. that the Christian message may become meaningful in any authentic human attitude and genuine 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 under the hypothesis of there being no God, if this is existentially given, the Christian proclamation could look for a justification and a meaning."[29]

The source of the solution is a plurithеological dialogue. It is not to be assumed that there must be a kind of objectifiable common ground or certain universally formulable common statements. The plea is for a really open dialogue, one in which its meeting ground may first have to be created, one in which the very intermingling of religious currents, ideas, and beliefs may release a more powerful stream of light, service, understanding.[30] There are to be no rules of the game laid out in advance. Fundamental theology becomes lived religion. It becomes mystical faith because it is

previous to and beyond any formulation. It is the religious quest for a ground of understanding, for a common concern, which has to be lived, delimited, verbalized.[31]

Summary

By way of a concluding summary one may place generically and specifically the fundamental theology that once was traditional and now is widely rejected. Generically it was a logically ordered set of propositions. Specifically it was worked out in the context of a distinction and a separation: the distinction was the medieval distinction between nature and grace; the separation was the Cartesian reinforcement of the medieval distinction between philosophy and theology.

The logical operations were in a cumulative series. A first topic was the existence and attributes of God: it was considered philosophic and named a natural theology. A second topic was ethical: it established man's duty of worshipping God. A third topic was the true religion, and there it was argued that Jesus Christ was God's plenipotentiary in this matter. A fourth topic was the true church: it examined the divisions within Christianity and determined which was the true church and what were its legitimate claims. With this concluded, the rest of theology had its foundation: for the true church demanded acceptance of all it believed and taught; and it was equipped to settle any further issues of moment that might arise.

In its day this procedure was well adapted to the tactic of entering through another's door and coming out one's own. One entered the rationalist door of abstract right reason and one came out in the all but palpable embrace of authoritarian religion. But in the course of time it came to pass

that the rationalist door led nowhere. Authoritarian religion lived on, but it did so not as a logical conclusion but as a concrete community with a long and complicated history. There still was process but now it was, not from premisses to conclusions, but from the original mustard seed to the large and conspicuously different tree. There still were cognitional operations, but now they terminated in the responsibility and freedom of total commitment.

Such has been the shift to the human subject, die anthropologische Wende, explored by Fathers Bouillard, Fries, Geffré, Walgrave. Such also is the historical process, that breaks the bounds of some single universe of discourse, and scatters in Father Rahner's manifold of disparate yet not totally dissimilar modes of speech and thought. Such, to an undisclosed extent, may be the working of the one Spirit of God in diverse cultures and traditions to ground Father Panikkar's metatheology.

If I have been stressing differences between the Catholic present and past, I must stress equally that the past in question is a relatively recent past. There was a late Scholasticism that took over and expanded the mistakes in Aristotle's Posterior Analytics. Its tendencies, which were widely influential, were extended by the controversies of the sixteenth century and by the rationalism of the Enlightenment. Such I should say were the antecedents of traditional fundamental theology. But there also was an earlier and more celebrated Scholasticism. Its aim was not to demonstrate

but to understand. It brought together and classified the data of Scripture and tradition. It sought to reconcile discrepancies. It partly adopted and partly adapted a terminology, a single, coherent Begrifflichkeit, from the Aristotelian corpus. In this technical terminology it aimed to express a motivated clarification and orderly synthesis of the often seemingly opposed doctrines contained in its sources.

This procedure was a commonly understood and accepted if not explicitly formulated method. Its cumulative and progressive character can be seen in the succession of commentaries on Peter Lombard's Four Books of Sentences. If for example one compares the questions and articles of Aquinas with the corresponding passages in the Lombard, one can understand the manifest differences of thought and expression only through the theological development that occurred in the intervening century.

But though it was methodical, this work had a basic defect. It was not informed by historical consciousness, and so it projected, as it were, on a flat surface without the perspectives of time and change what can properly be apprehended only as the successive strata of an ongoing process.

Contemporary Catholic theology, then, is rightly new inasmuch as it makes its own all that is to be learned from modern conceptions and techniques of science, of interpretation, of history. But I believe that all this can be achieved

without any repudiation of what is valid in the Catholic past. Indeed, as my own various writings will show, it can be done in a style and with a content that has a basic isomorphism[32] with the thought of Aquinas. So in this year, in which the seventh centenary of his death is celebrated, you will, I trust, permit me to end tonight's paper with this brief tribute to his name.

Notes

1) Concilium 46 (1969), 11.

2) Ibid., p. 82.

3) Ibid., p. 94.

4) Karl Rahner, Theological Investigations, VI, 117.

5) Concilium 46 (1969), 69-79.

6) Ibid., p. 58.

7) Ibid., p. 82.

8) Ibid.

9) Ibid., p. 13.

10) Ibid., p. 82.

11) Concilium 6 (1965), 67.

12) Concilium 46 (1969), 62.

13) Ibid., p. 61 f.

14) Ibid., p. 84.

15) Ibid., p. 9.

16) Ibid., p. 15.

17) Ibid., p. 15 f.

18) Ibid., p. 19.

19) Ibid.

20) Ibid., p. 21.

21) Ibid., p. 23 ff.

22) Ibid., p. 109.

23) Ibid.

24) Ibid., p. 46.

25) Ibid.

26) Ibid., p. 49.

27) Ibid., p. 47 f.

28) Ibid., p. 51.

29) Ibid., p. 52 f.

30) Ibid., p.52

31) Ibid., p. 54

32) "Isomorphism of Thomism and Scientific Thought," in Collection, Papers by Bernard Lonergan edited by F.E. Crowe, New York: Herder & Herder, and London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1967, pp. 142 - 151.