

a negative answer. ~~to the question~~

Now if we join the contributions of the three initiators to the practice of the monastic schools, we are at the origins of scholastic method. For that practice consisted in reading and reflecting and, under the new impulse, not only could it be viewed as the combination of lectio and quaestio, but the lectio could be clarified by glosses, it could be extended by commentaries, it could be organized by collections of passages bearing on distinct topics, collections that were known as Libri sententiarum. There were several such collections current in the twelfth century, but the most famous was Peter Lombard's, on which commentaries were written up to the time of Estius at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

Now the commentaries were not modern in their style. They did not aim at the historical reconstruction of the original meaning of texts. They simply applied to the materials the technique of the quaestio. With regard to any particular topic several questions might arise. They were enunciated. In turn their existence was established by listing authorities or reasons first for a negative answer (Videtur quod non) and then for a positive answer (Sed contra est). There followed the principles for a solution (Respondeo dicendum) and the application of the principles to the contrary arguments and, at times, to the positive arguments as well.

There resulted a method. For it attracted a group of specialists following a common procedure in a special field of investigation. Its results were ongoing and cumulative: for previous solutions often were only partial to give rise to further questions to be tackled by later writers; and the later writers could complement their predecessors yet, by that very fact, give rise to new questions. So we find in Aquinas' Scriptum super Sententias that the questions he considers stand at a notable distance from the text of Peter Lombard, indeed, at a distance measured by a century-long process of development and refinement and transposition of issues.

above the good opinion of men. Finally, in the writings of Thomas of Aquin may be discerned the completion of the process. His writings extend over a period of twenty years. On some topics his opinion at the end was much the same as at the beginning. On others there can be traced a series of stages as the thought of his predecessors was adjusted on a set of interlocking issues and eventually there emerged a new paradigm for communicating Christian wisdom to inquiring minds.

Now the introduction of a new paradigm into a field of investigation easily results in conflict. For its relevance can be visible only to inquiring minds. It calls for a reorganization of a field, and such a call can be greeted only by those that know the field, understand the limitations of current achievement, and grasp in the new paradigm the solution to outstanding issues. What Newton did for mechanics, Maxwell for electromagnetism, Einstein for both, Max Planck and Werner Heisenberg for quantum theory, Mendeleev for chemistry, Darwin for biology, and von Ranke's seminars for history, in its own way had also been done by Aquinas.

While most of these paradigms initially were greeted by an incomprehension that endured for shorter or longer periods, like Galileo and Darwin Aquinas was viewed as a heretic. For it was supposed that his use of Aristotle was parallel to contemporary use of Augustine, that while Augustine was an auctoritas for both Augustinians and Thomists, the pagan Aristotle was for Thomists a superior auctoritas. In fact, Aquinas not only adopted Aristotle but also adapted him; and as the adoption was not to set up a new source for information on Christian wisdom, so the adaptation was to secure the inner coherence not of Aristotelian thought but of thirteenth-century Christian theology.

## Horizons and Transpositions

### Introductory

Gerald McCool Catholic Theology in the Nineteenth Century  
1977 New York: Seabury Press  
"Twentieth Century Scholasticism" in  
Celebrating the Mediaeval Heritage, ed. David Tracy,  
Supplement to Journal of Religion 58(1978), S198-S221.

### The Rise and Fall of Scholasticism

Prof. McCool rightly locates his problematic in the 19th century situation. But to reach the issues involved in the present paper on "Horizons and Transpositions" I feel it is necessary to go back to the rise and fall of medieval Scholasticism. Accordingly I shall speak briefly on five basic features of that process, namely,

- (1) The initiators
- (2) The emergence of method
- (3) The problem of coherence
- (4) The use of Aristotelian categories
- (5) The ensuing conflict.

It will perhaps suffice to name three initiators: Anselm of Canterbury, Abailard, and Gilbert de la Porrée.

Anselm was the thinker. His interest lay in all the profoundest problems of theology: the Trinity, the end of the Incarnation, the fall of the angels, original sin, divine foreknowledge and predestination, grace and liberty. But his solutions tended to be "bricks without straw," brilliant constructions without a solid underpinning in revealed or theoretical sources.

Abailard was the explorer. His Sic et Non was a series of one hundred and fifty-eight propositions which he undertook both to prove and to disprove by appealing to the scriptures, the Fathers, and to reason. He emphasized precisely what was lacking in Anselm.

Gilbert de la Porrée established a cardinal point in what was to be Scholastic method. He set forth the conditions for the existence of a question, namely, a question exists when there exist solid reasons for both an affirmative and

It remains that this method stood in need of a complement. It led to the solution of single questions. It offered no guarantee that the totality of solutions to the totality of questions would coalesce into a single coherent whole. There still was needed some comprehensive view into which the solutions to single questions could fit and, as well, some technical model that at least would offer a basis for a formulation by analogy of the comprehensive view.

Two Arabic thinkers, Avicenna (Ibn Sina, 980-1037) and Averroes (Ibn Rushd, 1126-98), gave Latin theologians both the impulse and the clue to the solution of their basic problem in method. The impulse was apologetic: Christian thinkers had to find answers to non-Christian accounts of the thought of Aristotle and Plotinus. The clue was the suggestion that, as Greek thought could be used to good purpose by Arabic writers, so too it could be turned to better purpose with Christian aims in view.

~~The gradual implementation of that suggestion may be illustrated by the tentative use of the distinction between habit and act at the beginning of the thirteenth century (DS 780) only to be followed early in the fourteenth century with an explicit approbation (DS 904).~~

The gradual implementation of that suggestion may be illustrated from views on the effect of infant baptism, from the systematic conjunction-without-confusion of Aristotelian thought and specifically Christian teaching, and from the writings of Aquinas in which the suggestion has been implemented all along the line. Thus at the beginning of the thirteenth century the common view was that baptized infants were freed from guilt but did not receive justifying grace, though there also was mentioned a further opinion that they received the habit but not the use of justifying faith (DS 780). But early in the fourteenth century the second of these views was pronounced more in accord with the merits of Christ (DS 904). Again, about 1230, Philip the Chancellor of the University of Paris brought a final clarification to the relations between culture and gospel by pointing out that grace was above nature, faith above reason, charity above friendliness, and merit before God

The Emergence of Articulated Christology

Earlier I suggested that Christians at different places and times held uniformly to an intermediate position between the polytheism of pagans and the solitary monotheism of the Hebrews. I have now to characterize this intermediate position more closely and to relate it to the articulated christology that emerged in the councils of the fourth and fifth centuries.

First, I would note that the intermediate position is comparative, negative, and extrinsic. It is comparative for its points of reference are positions of pagans and of Hebrews. It is negative for it denies identity of doctrine. It is extrinsic: mention is made of the positive doctrine ~~of~~ of pagans and Hebrews, but the positive doctrine<sup>c</sup> of christianity is not presented.

Secondly, the intermediate position is not an explicit and recurrent formula. Rather it is an underlying assumption. More frequently it appears not in its entirety but in either of its two parts. And when it appears as a whole or in its parts, it is something to be taken for granted not only by Christians but also by Jews and even by pagans.

Thirdly, it may be helpful to say that it functions as an element of tacit knowledge, not indeed as though Michael Polanyi's analysis can be applied to early Christian thinkers as Robert Innis applies it to contemporary theories of art (Innis 1977), but in the general sense that tacit christological assumptions can be advanced to an articulate christology by appealing to unarticulated convictions by means of comparative, negative, extrinsic expressions of Christian thought and feeling.



