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5 Functional Specialties

The point to this chapter on functional specialties is – perhaps a little bit of its history will be useful. For twenty-five years I taught what was called dogmatic theology. And the assumption was that one man could know the Old Testament and the New, the Greek and Latin Fathers, the Medieval Scholastics, the Renaissance theologians and contemporary thinkers. It was an impossible assumption and became more and more absurd the longer it lasted. So one reason for wanting to divide theology up into different specialties is the impossibility of that job, merely from the viewpoint of having the knowledge. But, in the second case, there was a further difficulty, namely, these functional specialties represent different types of jobs, and the criteria for one type of job are not the same as the criteria for another. If you are meeting the criteria of one job and people only know about the other they will say, well, you are not meeting the criteria of this other job.

A first text I wrote was in speculative theology, and I constantly had the feeling: Well, people will be saying, this is not certain, it is not a matter of faith, therefore it is of no importance whatever. And other people will be saying, this is not in scripture, therefore it is not revealed, it is no concern of the theologian. And the second volume I did in that text (it was on the Trinity) dealt with the dogmatic side, the doctrinal side. And there was constantly the objection: Well, this is a whole lot of language that doesn't occur in scripture, on the one hand. You have the interpretation but it is not positive study, so there is a need to differentiate the doctrinal from the positive studies on which the doctrines were based. And, in that way, I had three functional specialties divided up:

¹ 18 June 1970, part 1; audio can be found at 59900A0E070.

doctrinal, systematic, and positive study. And, finally, in February of 1965 I got the present eight functional specialties, eight different jobs.

1 Three Types of Specialization

Specialization is of three kinds. There is field specialization; you divide up the data. The data are too vast for a single man so you divide it up. In the Old Testament, one man takes the prophets and another the Law and a third takes the Writings; you divide up the data. And in the New Testament some people take the synoptics and other people take St Paul, the great epistles of St Paul or the Pauline epistles and someone else takes John, and so on; it is divided up, field specialization. And similarly for the Fathers: the Apostolic Fathers and the Apologists and the ante-Nicene Fathers, and so on.

Subject specialization divides up the results of investigations. Everyone has followed courses on a subject in a department. The courses divide up the subject, and the subjects divide up the department, and what the professors are doing is propounding the results of investigations, and these results are classified under titles, conceptual titles. In the first case it is dividing up data; in the second case it is dividing up results according to some classification of courses and subjects and departments.

The third type of specialization is concerned with and divides up the process from the data to the results. The experimental physicist can handle the cyclotron but he doesn't know what experiments are worthwhile doing or what the results mean; he consults a theoretical physicist on that score. And the theoretical physicist knows just what would be interesting to have results on but he can't run the cyclotron. The process from the data to the results is chopped up into successive parts; there aren't two sets of data; there are just the data that come out of the cyclotron, provided by the experimental physicist; and there is only one interpretation but that is done by the theoretical physicist.

Similarly, the textual critic ascertains from a study of the families of the manuscripts and so on what the original text most probably was. His work is quite distinct from the work of the exegete, who tells you what the text meant. In the third place, you have the historian who gathers the monographs of exegetes interpreting the texts and tells you what was going forward, what the movement was, the history. As the historians and the interpreters and the researchers come up with different results, you have a fourth level on which you set up these differences and compare them, you have a dialectic of opposed positions. Again, you are dividing up the process from data to results; and in each case you are doing a different type of job. A person who is an expert in textual criticism won't necessarily be a first-class exegete, and so on. There are different types of expertise to be acquired in the different cases.

Now this functional specialization is of great methodological interest because each successive stage presupposes the previous stages and goes beyond them. It presupposes and complements the previous stages, and it prepares the way for the subsequent stages. So it is all linked together functionally. There is a functional interdependence of the different specialties. Consequently, while field specialization chops things up and you have more and more specialists knowing more and more about less and less, and they forget about one another as this man, Heyerdall, who went on the raft to *Kontiki*. He went around in his study and he said that there were all sorts of specialists and each of them was very busily digging out a hole and carefully docketing everything he took out of it, but none of them were looking at what the other fellows took out. These functional specialties are interrelated, and you have to know what the other fellow's results are, what you are presupposing and what you are leading into. So it makes for unity.

Further, it overcomes, counterbalances, to some extent, the endless diversity and disconnectedness of field specialization.

2 An Eightfold Division

We distinguish eight functional specializations: (1) research, (2) interpretation, (3) history, (4) dialectic, (5) foundations, (6) doctrines, (7) systematics, and (8) communications. The question is, Where does this list of eight come from? Why eight? Why not seven or nine? Or fifteen or two?

Well, first of all, there is a certain similarity between these eight and the sort of thing that has been going on in theology for some time. I speak of foundations; well, there is the well-known category, fundamental theology; of doctrines, there is dogmatic theology; systematics, there is systematic theology; communications, well there is pastoral theology. Again, research, well textual criticism is well known, the editing of Patristic texts, the editing of, for example, Clement of Alexandria with that magnificent index you have in Stählin's edition. Interpretation, exegesis, is well known; exegesis of scripture, interpretation of the Fathers, monographs of the Fathers, monographs on the Scholastics, just what did they mean. History: histories of theology, histories of dogma, salvation history, Redaktionsgeschichte, history of the redaction of a gospel. Dialectic: well, we have always had controversies; dialectic is connected with controversies, conflicts, differences. So there is at first sight some plausibility in having these eight because something like those eight already exist.

However, what is important is the interrelationship between these eight. The eight that we already have are not systematically interconnected, and when we speak of functional specialties dividing up a process, so that each section is dependent on others, we need to have principles on which these eight are distinguished and principles according to which we will be able to further refine what we mean by each one of the eight.

3 Grounds of the Division

In general, theology moves in two phases. One listens to the word, and one bears witness to it; listening and bearing witness are distinct. There is the *Wort* and the *Antwort*, the Word of God and our response to it, *lectio divina* and *quaestio*. One assimilates the tradition and one hands it on, one encounters the past and one takes one's stand towards the future. One studies theology *in oratione obliqua*, in indirect discourse; one isn't asking what I hold, but what did Isaiah mean or Jeremiah or Paul or John or Augustine or Aquinas, and so on. One wants to know what they really meant, what precisely their ideas were. But one can also do theology *in oratione recta*: this is what is so, this is the way to understand it. So there are those two phases in theology. We call the first phase the mediating phase, in which one is coming to an encounter with the mystical body, head and members, and the other mediated theology, in which one is studying God and all things in their relation to God. In that way we straddle the long-disputed question which one theology is. It is both.

Secondly, in each of these two phases one can distinguish four different tasks. There are four levels of intentional consciousness: experiencing, understanding, judging, deciding. And as long as one is operating in common sense one does all four without drawing any distinction between them. Still, insofar as tasks become more closely defined, more carefully differentiated, one discovers that there are four different things to be done.

One's aim can be to discover what the data were, the end of this first level. The textual critic is out to decide what was the most original text, what it probably was. He wants to find out what the data were; his end is the end of the first level. He just doesn't experience, stare at a manuscript; he uses all four, he decides what his method is going to be. He has to understand how the different texts arose and how the differences arose in the different manuscripts that he has at his disposal. He has to decide which is the best family, or judge which is the best family, and in that manner he arrives at what the original text most probably was. And so you have a first functional specialty, research.

Textual criticism is a sort of general research; it is making available something that is going to be used in all sorts of ways by interpreters and historians and so on. Similarly, an edition of a Patristic text, an edition of St Thomas, of a theologian, and so on, is general research. There is also special research: you are doing a dissertation, you have to discover your bibliography, what are the materials that are relevant to this work; it is special research for a special goal, a special end. You are writing your dissertation on the mind of *X* on the subject *Y*. And you have to find out about *X* to get the data, a simple rough text relevant to the points you are going to make and fill out your cards, index them, and so on: that is your special research. It is the first functional specialty.

When you get your data there is another end that comes to you, namely, understanding, interpretation. Now, for example, an interpreter of the New Testament, an exegete, won't go through all the work of the man who set up the texts, the textual critic, study all the families of texts, and so on. But in each text that he is working on, in each passage that he is working on, in the New Testament, he'll be going over all the variants, and so on, and decide for himself just how much he likes the texts that have been supplied and how plausible they are, and so on. He won't do the whole job of editing the New Testament or a given book, but he will work out all the variants for himself and take that into account, but his interpretation, in the main, will be a matter of understanding meaning, grasping what was meant. In my *verbum* articles the question was, Is this just metaphysics that Thomas is talking about, *intelligere* and *verbum*, and so on, or is he talking about psychological events, events that you can find in your own experience? Is *emanatio intelligibilis* just causality, the same sort of thing you have when you throw the chalk in the air, or is it something with a psychological meaning? These are the types of questions you can have when you are asking what an author meant, the problem of interpretation; and it is an entirely different sort of thing from doing the research.

Your aim may be to arrive at what was so, a judgment. You use your experience, understanding, judgment, and deciding to arrive at the judgment. Von Ranke's aim in

history, *wie es eigentlich gewesen*, how it really happened, history in that sense as opposed to Acton's type of history, passing moral judgments, summoning these people before the bar of history to pronounce judgment on them and the rightness or wrongness of their actions; it is a different ideal in history. But with what was going forward you use a much larger array of interpretation than does the exegete. The interpreter is content to interpret one author but the historian will use monographs on a whole series of authors. And so we have the third level, history.

Finally, besides merely understanding what was meant, there is also the appreciation of what was meant. Besides history, what happened, what was going forward, there is the question, Is what was going forward a good thing or not? This is evaluative history. That type of question belongs to this fourth level where you make judgments of value. Besides, you have to evaluate your historians, your interpreters, and your researchers, and so you have this fourth level of deciding, which is dialectic. This gives us mediating theology.

In this part, your theology is not taking sides, the side you are on is not a criterion. You have to work out, simply on the basis of the data and in terms of the data, what your interpretation, what your history is. You don't go about it a priori; the Catholics hold this, therefore we will say this; you don't do a good job that way, you don't notice everything that is there.

Stephen Neill² praises Lightfoot, a last-century man, for doing a first-class piece of work insofar as for all time he put an end to Baur's late dating of the New Testament. You settle an issue permanently by doing a first-class piece of research. In the main what Lightfoot did was to determine which ones of the epistles of Ignatius of Antioch were authentic and to date them and to argue from the quotations of the New Testament, the

² *The Interpretation of the New Testament, 1861-1961*, London: Oxford University Press, 1964, pp. 36-59, on J. B. Lightfoot's refutation of F.C. Baur's dating of the New Testament writings.

New Testament that existed at the time when Ignatius wrote; and that is the sort of work that has to be done on this level here, it is making the data settle the issue. And if you keep at it long enough and work hard enough you can do it. A lot of the history of Catholic scholarship has been a matter of coming along after someone has set up some theory, taking dominance of the field, and showing that he is wrong. If you want to have the initiative you don't do that; you do the research and get the results and take the lead. That is the point to this mediating theology.

Now there is mediated theology. Mediating theology heads towards an encounter with the Mystical Body, head and members. Mediated theology: first of all there is foundations. You will find that dialectic will reveal people with different horizons. Historians will disagree because they have different horizons within which they are making the past intelligible to themselves, and that is not something that a person can escape. You get different interpretations because you have people with different horizons understanding the text. We will go into this more next week when we are doing these functional specialties in detail. But that difference of horizon exists, and the function of dialectic is to reveal these differences of horizon.

Now foundations is a matter of determining a horizon; it is not like fundamental theology, which is a set of doctrines, *de vera religione, de legato divino, de inspiratione sacrae scripturae, de ecclesia, de locis theologicis*. First-year theology in the old school. This is foundations; it is the determination of a horizon, the selection of one of the horizons out of those presented by the dialectic. What selects is conversion: religious conversion, moral conversion, intellectual conversion. Conversion is a movement into a new horizon.

Foundations: once you have foundations then you are able to select between the different interpreters and historians and so arrive at doctrines. Foundations is on the level of deciding; doctrines is on the level of judging what is so, what is to be done, judgments of fact and judgments of value. On the level of understanding, systematics; the doctrines

can be metaphorical, they can appear incoherent, they can seem to be conflicting with the results of science, and so on and so forth. How do you make them intelligible? How do you put it all together? How do you get away from metaphors and say what really is meant and not meant? These are questions for systematics; it is on the level of understanding, but it is understanding the thing, not understanding the text. Finally, if the gospel is to be preached to all nations you have to have communications. How do you transpose what you have grasped systematically so that you have a message that is intelligible in every class and in every culture? How do you use the media available? How do you communicate with other disciplines: linguistics, literatures, sciences, philosophies, other fields of history? Such are the eight functional specializations in a general idea.

Next week, on Monday, we will do interpretation; Tuesday, history; Wednesday, more history from the viewpoint of historians, not theorists of history but practicing historians, struggling with the inroads made by positivists in the writing of history; Thursday, dialectic; and Friday, Foundations. The other three have not yet been attempted, although you can get a good deal about them from the introductions in my *De Deo trino*; on systematics in the second volume and doctrines in the first, the introductions. So much for the division.

4 The Need for the Division

First of all, there already exist these differences. People do research, do exegesis, do histories of religions, dogmas, theologies, histories of the church. Dialectic is something like apologetics; foundations is something like fundamental theology; doctrines is something like dogmatic theology; systematics is like systematic theology; and communications like pastoral theology.

However, what we are doing is relating these eight to one another as successive stages in a single process. Piaget's notion of structuralism, which is much more complex than Levi-Strauss's, is in a very small thin book, and it is in some collection, it is about 1300 in this collection but he presents it there. What we have here is interdependent processes; the relations between the several functional specialties are the relations between successive elements in a compound object. The object is one compound object of experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding; and the relations between the first four and the relations between the second four are the relations between the successive elements in a compound object. It is not a logical relationship but a structural relationship.

The eight differences are differences of eight different tasks. It is not just a matter of convenience, too much for one man to do; even if one man does it, he does eight different things, or he gets mixed up. He is using the criteria of one task when he is performing another. Textual criticism is quite different from the operations of an exegete, and similarly all along the line. There are different jobs to be done, different ends to be pursued, different precepts guiding operations to that end, and you have to keep them apart. Otherwise, when you are doing systematics, people will be asking: well, does the church teach that? And if you are doing doctrines: Well, how do you explain it? it doesn't make sense. You can be putting up some other specialty and its criteria and its end and saying, well, if you are doing this you are not doing that. If you haven't got the distinction between them, you will be at a loss, you will be just confused.

The tasks exist as different; up to a certain point you don't get those distinctions. But after a certain point the jobs become or are being done with far greater refinement, far greater thoroughness, and you have to get things separated. For example, even in the early Scholastic period you had the difference between the two phases. The first phase is *lectio* and then collections of sentences, collections of opinions of the Fathers, texts from

scripture and the Fathers on different topics; and, on the other hand, the *quaestio*: how do you reconcile the different statements of the different writers?

Further, besides the existence of the different tasks at the present time, there is the need to curb totalitarian ambitions. Anyone can pick his one of the eight and say, This is the real thing in theology. And the others are insufficient by themselves, so we will deride them, keep them down so that theology becomes only dogmatic theology or only systematic theology or only historical theology or only biblical theology and the rest doesn't count: the totalitarian ambition of the specialist.

On the other hand, there is a need to curb excessive demands. If one does one of these on a particular point well, one is doing a good job. One needs a defense to prevent people saying, Well, you are not doing the other seven, and finding fault with you on that account. So you have to curb excessive demands, and you have to curb totalitarian ambitions.

5 A Dynamic Unity

Now with regard to the unity. First of all, with regard to the unity of theology and religion; and, secondly, with regard to the unity of these eight functional specialties.

The unity is not static but dynamic. It is not the unity of what modern logicians call something that has been formalized. You have your primitive statements and your primitive propositions and your rules of procedure and the deduction of all the conclusions from your primitive propositions that conform to the rules of procedure. People say that metaphysics is static; it isn't metaphysics that's static, metaphysics can be quite dynamic. What is static is something that is formalized logically; nothing there moves or varies. If something is implied it is implied eternally.

Now, initially, there was just the Christian religion; except in a peculiar sense, there did not exist theology, such as theology later came to be. They talk about biblical

theology, and there is a valid sense in which one can do so, the personal thoughts of each of the different writers. But there was not a distinct discipline, distinct from the religion, initially.

First, then, how does theology arise out of religion? What is the relation of theology to religion, and how does it emerge? Well, the principal part of human living is meaning; what counts is not what goes on when you are asleep and not dreaming, but what goes on when you are awake and you have conscious and intentional operations. Further, the principal part of any human movement, again, is meaning, and a common meaning. The more the movement spreads, the longer it lasts, the more is it forced to reflect on its form and meaning and values, to distinguish its meanings and values from other meanings and other values that may be competing with it, to guard itself against aberrations and against being captured by the other movements. As rivals come and go, as circumstances and problems change, as issues are driven back to their presuppositions and decisions to their ultimate consequences, there emerges what Georg Simmel has called *die Wendung zur Idee*, the shift towards system, towards thinking things out. This holds for every human movement, it is the nature of the case whether the movement is political, social, artistic, literary, scientific, philosophic, or religious.

For the movement to retain its identity through ever-changing circumstances and situations, and so on, it has to understand just what it is. You have these shifts in the history of the Church. Our Lord spoke to the Apostles within the Palestinian milieu, the first propagation of the faith was in the vicinity of Jerusalem. When it moved into the Hellenistic world, first of all into Hellenistic Judaism, and then into the Graeco-Roman world and also into the Syriac, of course, it was moving into a different milieu, and the differences between them come out very clearly if you read Daniélou's book on Judeo-Christianity. The thought forms are totally different from what you get even in the New Testament. You get approximations to it in the New Testament, in the Apocalypse and in the epistle of Jude. But there are a whole series of Jewish-Christian writings.

Again, you had the breakdown of the Dark Ages and the reemergence of the Middle Ages, and you have Christianity coming into contact with Greek and Arabic thought in a whole different way, in the Medieval period; and then the Modern period. For the one religion to retain its identity through all these differences, one has to figure out just what it is; and that reflection on religion is theology.

The objection commonly is raised that theology is just an academic superstructure, essentially alien to religion, something apart from real life. Now there can be bad theology as well as good theology, and I am not attempting to defend bad theology. But when this sort of question is put, one has to ask, Whose real life were you talking about? If you are talking about the real life of a primitive, a person of undifferentiated consciousness, certainly theology is an intolerable superstructure if you can't get it across, and it will be no use to him; it is just beyond his horizon. You don't try to teach theology to people with undifferentiated consciousness; you are wasting your time. But what is good for one person is not necessarily good for another. There are people with differentiated consciousness, and if their apprehension of religion is the apprehension of a child, they will begin to look on their religion as childish and drop it. People with differentiated consciousness need theology if they are not to misapprehend their religion. If a person is highly cultivated in the natural sciences or the human sciences, and knows no more about his religion than what he learnt in elementary school, he will be suffering difficulties; and the solution to his difficulties or what is important to his real life as a Christian is theology.

Further, while theology and religion did become differentiated mainly in the Middle Ages – in the Fathers you have theology by bits and pieces: Athanasius on the Son and the Cappadocians on the Trinity and Augustine on Pelagianism, and so on, different people, at different times, pursued different theological questions, they did not treat them in systematic fashion; they did not have this distinction between the *priora quoad se* and the *priora quoad nos*; Augustine was a rhetorician, he wasn't a systematic

thinker; he was a profound thinker, he knew a lot about interiority, like Newman or Pascal, but they were not theoretical thinkers such as you get in the Middle Ages when they took over Aristotle's fundamental categories and systematically worked through all these notions implied in the dogmas. You get into system when your fundamental terms are brand new. Mass is a fundamental term in mechanics. It is not momentum, and it is not weight. It is what you know when you put up the constant m in a series of equations like the energy is $\frac{1}{2}mv^2$ and so on, the force is mass by acceleration, that m , that is what mass is. Temperature is not feeling hot and feeling cold; this iron stand feels colder than this wooden table but they are both the same temperature. The electromagnetic field: there is no need to explain that that isn't a datum of experience. Your fundamental notions are constructs; you move into theory when you turn the corner. The old botany had descriptions of all the different plants, beautifully arranged; it didn't explain anything. But when you bring in evolution to start explaining the different species, you are on the explanatory level and you are introducing something that is quite new, for example, the emergent theory of species or something like that. There is a book on that, *Randomness, Statistics and Emergence* by Philip McShane, that is just out.

So in the Middle Ages when they started saying everything about religion in terms of potency and act, the two fundamental concepts of that time, they were moving into systematic thinking. What I think the fundamental problem in theology today is to get out of that theoretical, that differentiation of common sense and theory, to the double differentiation, common sense, theory and interiority, where the theory is derived from the interiority.

Finally, this differentiation of theology and religion exists for a return, and the final phase is communications. You do this research and interpretation and history and dialectic and foundations and doctrines and systematics for the return to concrete Christian living and preaching.

Secondly, differentiation within theology itself: ... [something skipped] it is moving onto the level of meaning, when you move on to the level of meaning, interpretation, you are dealing with something specifically human. You can send into a law court or a classroom all the physicists and chemists and biologists you please, with all the equipment they want, and they can count and measure and weigh and dissect to their heart's content and they will never discover the law court. To discover the law court you ask the porter on the way in: what's this? And you get a piece of commonsense meaning, and that commonsense meaning is something constitutive of human living. So this level of interpretation is universal in any human science; it is what phenomenology is about, it goes beyond the phenomena to the essence, to the understanding, the insight.

The structure of those four: you go from data to meaning, to what was going forward: to facts, events; and, finally, to meeting a person, meeting persons, meeting witnesses to Christ and finding them a challenge to you.

The structure of the four is essentially open: experience is open to ever further data; understanding to greater penetration; judgment to more detailed information, more nuanced pronouncements, more adequate perspectives; dialectic to the elimination of mistaken issues, to the clarification of real conflicts. So it is four processes that are open to ever further advance.

The four stand in reciprocal dependence: interpretation depends upon the research; you are wasting your time if you haven't got a critical text, trying to figure out what the author really meant. You eliminate problems in interpretation if you get a really good text to interpret. The interpreter depends upon the textual critic, and in general the interpreter upon his data. But there is also the opposite dependence: the textual critic has to interpret the significance of the texts, the manuscripts, assemble them into families. Similar texts have a common basis and other similar texts another source, and so on. There is a great deal of understanding involved in the work of textual criticism. Similarly, history obviously depends upon the research and the interpretation, but inversely, the

research and the interpretation depend upon the history. You have to know the situation in which the man lived, the people to whom he spoke and so on, and it is the historian who supplies this information; there is mutual interdependence. Finally, the dialectic obviously depends upon the previous three. But the previous three can get their fundamental orientation by attending to the oppositions in the dialectic and, perhaps, settling questions raised by the dialectic by going back to the data.

Now this reciprocal dependence is easily achieved when one man does all four functional specialties. But the more the specialties develop, the more refined their techniques, the more numerous and delicate the operations they perform, the less possible it becomes for one man to do all four well. Then you have recourse to team work or to interdependence through living in the same university, in the same faculty, through journals, quarterlies, through congresses, and so on.

So the first phase: from almost endless multiplicity of data, through many interpretative unities, to more comprehensive narrative unities, and, finally, to dialectical oppositions running through the interpretations and the histories. We will go on to the second phase after a break.