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Thursday, August 5, 1971 part 1

We have considered four of our preliminary topics: method, the human good, meaning, and religion. And we come to the fifth, functional specialties.

There was a time when there was no distinction between the Christian religion and Christian theology; they were one and the same thing. Theology developed very gradually. It became theology in the full sense, that is, a consideration of the whole Christian religion, only in the Middle Ages. The problem in theology at the present time is mainly the integration of what theology has been in the past, what is good in that, along with the new methods of exegesis and history that developed in the nineteenth century. The development of those new methods makes theology something very highly specialized at the present time. People are working in all little corners all over the place, and the fundamental problem is, How do you put all these pieces together or how do you see them as parts of one thing? That is our topic this morning, and it lays the foundation, the groundwork, for all the talks that are to follow.

[Three Types of Specialization]

We begin by distinguishing three types of specialization. Specialization is not always the same sort of thing. Perhaps best known is field specialization; the data are too extensive to be investigated by a single man. So one man takes one part, and another man takes another part, and a third man takes a third part, and so on. You can divide theology up that way. The data of

theology: the scriptural data, the Patristic data, the medieval data, the Renaissance and Reformation data, the data from the time of the Enlightenment, and the contemporary data. You are dividing up the field. And then *they* are divided: the Old Testament and the New, and the Old Testament into the Law and the Prophets and the Writings, and you can start subdividing that. And one man will specialize in one of the lesser prophets, perhaps. And in the New Testament, similarly, the Synoptics and John and Paul, and the Catholic epistles and the Apocalypse. Field specialization is a matter of dividing up data.

There is also subject specialization. Everyone has followed courses on subjects in departments; it is a matter of dividing up the teaching load; it is too much for one professor to handle; it is a conceptual division. You can study Semitic languages, Hebrew history, the religions of the Ancient Near East, Christian biblical theology, and so on. You can divide up scriptural studies in terms of certain concepts; it is a conceptual division; it is not a division of the data.

Finally, there is functional specialization, and it distinguishes stages in the process from the data to the results. At each stage there is a different pattern of related and recurrent operations applied to the results of the proceeding stage. Textual criticism, well, what was originally written? Exegesis, interpretation, what did it mean? You have to have an accurate text before you are going to get sound interpretation. But the textual criticism is an enormous task. The interpreter has to do a certain amount of it but he doesn't do it the way the textual critic does; he uses the results of the textual critic even in his textual criticism. Thirdly, after you have the textual criticism establishing the sources, and the interpretation (what do they mean?) there is the historical question, What was going forward? what was

happening? The three could be the same man but they can't be the same operations because you are doing quite different things.

To take an example from outside theology, the experimental physicist can handle the cyclotron, and the theoretical physicist might but usually can't handle the cyclotron. However, the experimental physicist has to consult the theoretical to find out what experiments would be worth while trying. And he has to give the results of the experiments to the theoretical physicists to find out what they signify. It is operating on the same data, but at different levels, and in different ways.

Now functional specialties are intrinsically related to one another. The first prepares for the second, and the second prepares for the third, and so on. Inversely, the second completes the first, and the third completes the second, and so on. Now this interrelation of functional specialties is a principle of unification. Generally, specialization tends to split things up, to separate, to let several people each go their own way and not worry what the other fellow is doing. But insofar as one attends to functional specialization, one is not merely distinguishing different tasks and having them performed in different ways, but one is also emphasizing their interdependence.

So to attend to functional specialization means that one is conceiving method not simply as we did in our first lecture as a normative pattern of related and recurrent operations with cumulative and progressive results, but it is a normative pattern of interdependent normative patterns of recurrent and related operations with progressive and cumulative result. It is a structure of methods. We are going to have in fact eight types of method, each one depending on the other seven. And it is that structure that we will be investigating for the rest of this institute.

[An Eightfold Division]

We are going to introduce an eightfold division. We are going to distinguish research, interpretation, history, dialectic, foundations, doctrines, systematics, and communications. And we will say something briefly on each of the eight, descriptively. Then we will go on to the grounds of the division and the necessity of the division. And finally, we will talk about the unity: the unity of the specialties, the unity of theology and religion, the unity of religion and man's life on earth.

(1) First, then, research. Research makes available the data relevant to theological investigation. It is either general or special. Special research is concerned with assembling the data relevant to some particular question or problem, such as the doctrine of Mr. *X* on the question *Y* (the standard title for a good doctoral dissertation). Such special research operates all the more rapidly and effectively the more familiar it is with the tools made available by general research.

General research locates, excavates, and maps ancient cities. It fills museums and reproduces or copies inscriptions, symbols, pictures, statues. It deciphers unknown scripts and languages. It collects and catalogues manuscripts, and prepares critical editions of texts. It composes indices, tables, repertories, bibliographies, abstracts, bulletins, handbooks, dictionaries, encyclopedias. Someday, perhaps, it will give us a complete information-retrieval system.

So special research is research for dealing with particular questions such as a doctoral dissertation. General research builds up the tools that people doing special research will use. The index to Clement of Alexandria in the Berlin edition, a magnificient tool.

(2) While research makes available what was written, interpretation understands what was meant. It grasps that meaning in its proper historical context, in accord with its proper mode and level of thought and expression, in the light of the circumstances and intention of the writer. So interpretation is not to be anachronistic, supposing that Paul is writing to New York at the present time, instead of Rome in the 1st century; that point has been emphasized in the past. And it is a point we have to study. Tomorrow we will be on interpretation and we will be studying just what a sound interpretation is, what the interpreter has to do.

The product of interpretation is the commentary or monograph. It is an enterprise replete with pitfalls, and today it is further complicated by the importation of the problems of cognitional theory, epistemology, and metaphysics.

And so that is a second specialty. Research, interpretation.

(3) History is basic, special, or general. This is just a rough description. We will be going into history; we have two chapters on history. Basic history tells where (places, territories) and when (dates, periods) who (persons, peoples) did what (public life, external acts) to enjoy what success, suffer what reverses, exert what influence. It makes as specific and precise as possible the more easily recognized and acknowledged features of human activities in their geographical distribution and temporal succession.

Special histories tell of movements, whether cultural (language, art, literature, religion), institutional (family, mores, society, education, state, law, church, sect, economy, technology), or doctrinal (mathematics, natural science, human science, philosophy, history, theology).

General history is, perhaps, just an ideal. It would be basic history illuminated and completed by the special histories. It would offer the total

view or some approximation to it. It would express the historian's information, understanding, judgment, and evaluation with regard to the sum of cultural, institutional, and doctrinal movements in their concrete setting.

History, as a functional specialty within theology, is concerned in different degrees and manners with basic, special, and general history. In the main it has to presuppose basic history. Its substantial concern is with the doctrinal history of Christian theology, with its antecedents and consequents in the cultural and institutional histories of the Christian religion and the Christian churches and sects.

(4) Our fourth functional specialty is dialectic. Historians disagree; they tell different stories. Interpreters disagree; they give you different interpretations. And people doing special research usually have in mind the results they are going to get or are influenced by them. And so you get different pieces of research.

Dialectic tries to analyze these differences. First of all, the differences in the different Christian churches or the differences between religions generally. What is the source of those differences? Again, what are the sources of the differences in history, in interpretation, in research. It is concerned principally with the differences that arise from the presence or absence of intellectual, moral, religious conversion. It is that presence or absence of conversion that causes the real sharp divisions. There are differences that can be remedied by further research, by turning up new data; and dialectic isn't concerned with that sort of difference. There are perspectival differences. History that is written is never more than some approximation to an infinitely, almost infinitely complex business. As Karl Heussi remarked, the battle of Leipzig lasted three days, and no one ever is going to tell us everything that happened in those three days. And, similarly,

history is never a total reproduction of the past; it is always some approximation to what is considered significant in the past. And what is considered significant can vary, and you get different perspectives in history; and you are not going to eliminate that. But you can become aware of the differences that arise from the presence or absence of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion. And that is the root to which dialectic is wanting to reduce these differences.

The materials of dialectic, then, are primarily the conflicts centering in Christian movements. But to those must be added the secondary conflicts in historical accounts of theological interpretations of the movements. Besides the materials of dialectic there is its aim. This is high and distant. As empirical science aims at a complete explanation of all phenomena, so dialectic aims at a comprehensive viewpoint; it seeks some single base or some single set of related bases from which it can proceed to an understanding of the conflicting Christian movements, their conflicting histories, and their conflicting interpretations.

(5) The fifth specialty, Foundations. As conversion is basic to Christian living, so an objectification of conversion provides theology with its foundations. Conversion is something in the personal and religious. It occurs in one's personal life; it isn't part of theology but it is relevant to theology. And in theology what you do is objectify conversion in a horizon. What horizon means is a term that we will have to go into later. But, very briefly, something is beyond one's horizon when one doesn't know it and cares less.

By conversion is meant a transformation of a subject and his world. Normally, it is a prolonged process, though its explicit acknowledgment may be concentrated in a few momentous judgments and decisions. Still, it is not

just a development or a series of developments. Rather, it is a resultant change of course and direction; it is as if one's eyes were opened and one's former world faded and fell away. There emerges something new that fructifies in interlocking cumulative sequences of developments on all the levels and in all departments of human living.

While conversion is existential, intensely personal, utterly intimate, still, it is not so private as to be solitary. It can happen to many, and they can form a community to sustain one another in their self-transformation and to help one another in working out the implications and fulfilling the promise of their new life. Finally, what can become communal can become historical. It can pass from generation to generation. It can spread from one cultural milieu to another. It can adapt to changing circumstance, confront new situations, survive into a different age, flourish in another period or epoch.

Conversion as lived affects all of a man's conscious and intentional operations. It directs his gaze, pervades his imagination, releases the symbols that penetrate to the depths of his psyche. It enriches his understanding, guides his judgments, reinforces his decisions. But as communal and historical, as a movement with its own cultural, institutional, and doctrinal dimensions, conversion calls forth a reflection that makes the movement thematic, that explicitly explores its origins, developments, purposes, achievements, and failures.

Inasmuch as conversion itself is made thematic and explicitly objectified, there emerges the fifth functional specialty, foundations. Such foundations differ from the old fundamental theology in two respects. First, fundamental theology was a theological first; it did not follow on four other specialties named research, interpretation, history, and dialectic. Secondly,

fundamental theology was a set of doctrines: on the true religion, the divine legate, the church, the inspiration of scripture, and theological topics. In contrast, foundations present, not doctrines, but the horizon within which doctrines can be apprehended. A horizon is what the analysts call a 'blik.' It's the outlook within which statements of a certain kind will have a meaning. So it's something prior to doctrines, in a sense. Just as in religious living 'a man who is unspiritual refuses what belongs to the Spirit of God; it is folly to him; he cannot grasp it' (1 Cor 2.14), so in theological reflection on religious living there have to be distinguished the horizons within which religious doctrines can or cannot be apprehended; and this distinction is foundational.

(6) Sixthly, doctrines. Once you have foundations, once you have a determinate horizon, then you are able to decide which of the positions exhibited in dialectic are positions and which are counterpositions; which are the positions compatible with intellectual, moral and religious conversion and which are the counterpositions, incompatible with either intellectual or moral or religious conversion. And then you arrive at doctrines. So doctrines occur at the sixth phase, at the sixth specialty. We are not dealing with doctrines up till then. Such doctrines are not merely dogmatic theology; they are also moral theology, ascetical, mystical, pastoral, and anything else. They are judgments, true judgments of fact and of value.

(7) The seventh specialty is systematics. The facts and values affirmed in doctrines give rise to further questions. For doctrinal expression may be figurative or symbolic. It may be descriptive and based ultimately on the meaning of words rather than on an understanding of realities. It may, if

pressed, quickly become vague and indefinite. It may seem, when examined, to be involved in inconsistency or fallacy.

The functional specialty, systematics, attempts to meet these issues. It is concerned to work out appropriate systems of conceptualization, to remove apparent inconsistencies, to move towards some grasp of spiritual matters both from their own inner coherence and from the analogies offered by more familiar human experience.

(8) Finally, there are communications. Communications are concerned with theology in its external relations. These are of three kinds. There are interdisciplinary relations with art, language, literature, and other religions, with the natural and the human sciences, with philosophy and history. Further, there are the transpositions that theological thought has to develop if religion is to retain its identity and yet at the same time find access into the minds and hearts of men of all cultures and classes. Finally, there are the adaptations needed to make full and proper use of the diverse media of communication that are available at any place and time.

[Grounds of the Division]

So much for a preliminary description of those eight specialties. Now, you will ask where do these eight come from? why eight? why not nine or seven or twenty-three? Further, if we know why there are eight and why precisely those eight, we will also have the principles to be involved in working things out more exactly and eliminating further and clarifying functions and relations.

Now the eight have a certain justification in theology as it has existed in the past. The last four (foundations, doctrines, systematics, and

communications) are not totally different from the old fundamental theology, dogmatic theology, systematic theology, and pastoral theology. And the first four are not altogether novelties. We've had textual criticism all along, research. We've had interpretation, exegesis. We've had church history and history of dogma, history of theology, salvation history, and so history is not a new category. And finally, if dialectic seems to be new, at least we've had apologetics in the past, a way of handling those differences. So the eight are not pure novelties.

However, we can put a little more theory to account for our eight. And the first observation is that theology moves in two phases. One listens to the word but one also bears witness to the word. There is the *lectio divina* in the Middle Ages but also the *quaestio*. There is the assimilation of tradition but also handing it on. One encounters the past but one also takes one's stand towards the future. There is theology in indirect discourse: what did Isaiah and Jeremiah, and so on, say, hold, teach? What did John and Paul, what did Augustine and Aquinas, with did Luther and Calvin, and so on. We are ,just repeating what we consider to have been the doctrine of these people. It is theology in indirect discourse. I'm not saying so; I say Thomas said so. On the other hand, there is theology in direct discourse. One affirms the Trinity, the Incarnation, and so on. Now there are those two fundamental phases of theology; each will subdivide into four specialties if one pursues, uses, all four levels of consciousness: experiencing, understanding, judging, deciding, to settle the object of one level. [To the blackboard]

One can experience, understand, judge, decide to settle what precisely is the object of experience, what are the data; and then you get research. You can use deciding, judging, understanding, and experiencing to understand the texts, and then you get interpretation. You can use all four to decide what

happened, what are the facts, what was going forward; and then you get history. You can use all four to decide what were the roots of the different positions taken by different people in conflict; and then you get dialectic. You can objectify your fundamental decisions, your intellectual, moral, and religious conversions; and then you get foundations. You can use foundations and the other four to determine what is so: the doctrines. You can use all four to come to an understanding of the doctrines: what do you mean by three persons in God? what do you mean by the redemption? Understand the thing. In interpretation you are understanding texts; here you are understanding religious reality: systematics. And, finally, you can start producing data for other people to experience; and that's communications.

Now ordinarily, people use all four to decide what to do; they are not specializing on some level of consciousness. But the more a discipline becomes specialized, the more these different tasks become distinct tasks – and settling what the data are in textual criticism is obviously something that is performed in a different way from the actual business of understanding the text; they are all connected because they are functional specialties, they are interrelated with one another' but you are doing different things in each one.

[The Need for Division]

Now we will ask about the need of the division.

The division itself, the eightfold division, I attribute first of all to the fact that theology occurs in two phases: indirect discourse and direct discourse, encountering the past and facing the future, *lectio* and *quaestio*. And, secondly, that in either of those phases you can distinguish four

different tasks, viz., by specializing on the object of a different level of conscious intentionality.

The need of the division: why divide? Well, it already exists in some form. We have already pointed out a similarity between Foundations and fundamental theology, Doctrines and dogmatic theology, Systematics and systematic theology, Communications and pastoral theology. And similarly for the other four. But what is new is the locking of [continues on tape 02 part 01] these eight, conceiving them as functional specialties, as interrelated specializations, sets of operations, eight normative patterns, eight interdependent normative patterns of recurrent and related operations with cumulative and progressive results.

The need for the distinction is not simply a matter of convenience. Field specialization: well, the whole field is too much for one man; we divide it up. It is more convenient to do it that way. But this is a division not of specialists who are dividing up the task and all doing the same sort of thing approximately. It is because of a difference in the task itself. You have eight different tasks to perform; you perform them in eight different ways; and you have, consequently, eight different sets of rules for going about the task. One cannot arrive at methodical rules without distinguishing the tasks. Otherwise, one is just in confusion. When you are doing systematics you are only going to arrive at something probable, a probable understanding of the mysteries of faith. And if people say, well now, that is not a matter of faith, why should we bother our head about it? he hasn't got any clear distinction between doctrines and systematics. You settle doctrines by settling what is a matter of faith, but you don't settle systematics that way; you go to the most intelligent theologian you can find and learn what you can from him. And you say, well, the theologians are constantly disputing with one another;

well, it is a way of getting at the root of that. And that you have in conversion. And converted people can recognize one another.

So the need, then, arises from eight different tasks. Because the tasks are different we have to have the distinction. It is not because it would be too much work for one man to do and there was only one method. There are eight tasks and eight methods.

The different tasks exist, not from the beginning of theology; they gradually become distinguished. It is only with the development of positive studies that we have moved on to eight from an original four. And in the Middle Ages it was *lectio* and *quaestio*. They were commentaries on the scripture, on notable people, and, on the other hand, they were solving questions.

The further element to the need. The need to curb totalitarian ambitions. Know scripture; you don't have to bother with anything else in theology; that's the whole show. Or, know dogmas; that's the whole show; or, know systematics, be a good speculative theologian; that's the whole show. All the eight are necessary. But a person can become so enamored of his own as to point out that the other seven, by themselves, are not sufficient, and become a totalitarian. And theology has suffered terribly from that in the past. And it is still suffering from it, because the sufferings in the past have produced their reactions.

Finally, the need to curb excessive demands. A person does very well if he makes a significant contribution to theology in any one of those eight specialties. But if the eight are not clearly distinguished from one another and known to be distinct, well, a man can do something in doctrinal theology and it will be pointed out that he doesn't seem to know very much about scripture or the Fathers and he doesn't seem to understand very well what he

is talking about, and so on and so forth. He isn't doing the other seven. And you can raise those objections at any one of them. This textual criticism, well, that really has nothing to do with religion, it is so far remote from it; and exegesis too, that's really a little too laborious; we must become religious, and so on; all these things. You have to curb excessive demands. And the point to distinguishing the eight is that if we get them distinguished and people working at different tasks and knowing that they are distinct, then you are curbing the excessive demands of people who suppose that if you are doing systematics you are doing doctrines and interpretation and history and so on also, and because you haven't done them you've done a poor job.

So much, then, for a general outline of those eight specialties. And in the next period we will consider the dynamic unity of the several specialties, theology and religion, and religion and human life.