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Thursday, August 5, 1971, part 2

[A Dynamic Unity]

We have set up a division of eight functional specialties, and now the question arises of unity. In general, we must say the unity is not static but dynamic. When you have terms precisely defined and immutable for all time and necessary principles and necessary conclusions you have something that is static; it doesn't change. But when you have an ongoing process of researching, interpreting, writing history – and history, of course, is written differently at different times: Karl Heussi in a book entitled *Die Krisis des Historismus*, Tübingen, 1932, remarked that even the excellent historical works done at the end of the 19th century are almost unreadable, even though your political and religious and social views are exactly the same as those of the author. There is a shift in the sort of thing that people find significant, find interesting. So history is an ongoing process, and so on. Then your unity has to be something dynamic. It is a unity of a process; the development is from the undifferentiated or the less differentiated, through differentiation and specialization to an integration of the specialties.

Initially, there was just the Christian religion. First of all, then, we have to say something about why a distinction between theology and religion arose and, secondly, what is the validity of that distinction. And then we will go on to the dynamic unity within theology itself.

The ground of that distinction between theology and religion remotely is that the principal part of human living is meaning. You haven't really got a man in the full sense of the word if you have someone who spends his time

in dreamless sleep or in a coma. And what makes the difference between that state of dreamless sleep and coma is meaning. The world is mediated by meaning and the meaning mediates one's world, and one is awake, intending, speaking, doing.

Now, as the principal part of human living is in meaning, so the principal part of any human movement is common meaning. Hence, the more the movement spreads, the longer it lasts, the more it is forced to reflect on its common meaning to distinguish it from other meanings, to guard it against aberrations. 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. Whether a movement be political or social or artistic or literary or scientific or philosophic or religious, that question, What is our common meaning? What do we have to do to prevent ourselves from being captured by some other movement? What are the aberrations appearing in our movement? and so on, those questions become more explicit and more complicated. Any history of Christian doctrine will reveal that to you. The New Testament is a collection of quite different theologies. They are all bearing upon the same revelation but they do it in quite different styles. The Apostolic Fathers, the Apologists, the teachers at Alexandria and Antioch, the councils at Nicea and Chalcedon, Byzantine Scholasticism, Medieval Scholasticism, it is an ongoing movement concerned with the same nucleus but in quite different circumstances.

Often, it is said today that an academic theology is just a cultural superstructure, something alien to religion. Now there can be good theology and bad theology. And certainly bad is both distinct from religion and alien

to it. Good, on the other hand, is quite distinct from religion but still related to it; it is in symbiosis of mutual influence between theology and religion, religious living grounding theology and theology illuminating religious living. However, the good of one time is not the good of another, and the good for one person is not good for another. For a person of undifferentiated consciousness an academic theology is an intolerable intrusion; it doesn't help him at all. To apprehend contemporary theology demands differentiated consciousness, and it meets the need of a differentiated consciousness at the present time. If a person is developed culturally and has differentiated consciousness, well, it is no longer possible for him to live with his childhood apprehension of religion or his earlier apprehension of religion. His apprehension of religion has to be developed according to his change in consciousness. The vast majority of the people will not be of differentiated consciousness, but it does not follow that theology, because it would be an intrusion for them, is an intrusion for everyone. There are people with differentiated consciousness, and they need theology. There are people with undifferentiated consciousness, and for them theology is incomprehensible, unless they acquire differentiation of consciousness.

However, this differentiation of theology and religion is only for the return. Toynbee has a long section in his *Study of History* on 'Withdrawal and Return.' Theology is a matter of a withdrawal from religion for a return. And it ends up with the return of communications, communications to all cultures and all classes in each culture. So much, then, for the relationship between theology and religion. Theology is reflection on religion; and method is reflection on theology. And theology is a need for religion insofar as the religion based upon a common meaning, and that common meaning

has to be understood, protected, clarified, expressed in quite different circumstances to different cultures, and so on.

Secondly, the differentiation within theology itself. We distinguished two phases: *lectio and quaestio*, sentences and commentary, Scholastic and positive, and so on. And eight functional specializations as a result. The continuity: the Aristotelian ideal of science was something static, and that was something that theology could contain as long as the exegesis and historical knowledge were rather limited. But it is within the past hundred and fifty years that the development of historical studies and exegetical methods has gone forward leaps and bounds, and for theology to contain that movement you need this more elaborate setup, I believe.

From their very nature, the eight functional specialties interact, because they are regarding the ends of four things that are interrelated: experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding are interrelated, and consequently the objects proper to each of those levels are interlocked and interdependent. The connection is not a logical connection, of universal to particular, or premise to conclusion; it is four successive partial objects, in the first phase, cumulatively built up to an ever fuller response to the total moving object which is the body of Christ. Research: the data are the data on the body of Christ; the interpretation is the meaning of those data; history is the history of the movements of the body of Christ. And finally, dialectic is confrontation, the challenge of meeting persons who differ from you.

The structure is essentially an open structure; experience 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, the clarification of real conflicts.

There is a reciprocal dependence. Interpretation depends upon research, but the research also depends upon the interpretation. You are not a good textual critic unless you know what the text means, and that is a certain amount of interpretation. The history depends upon research and interpretation, but the opposite is also true. Because it is through history that good interpretation, the interpretation is in accord with that place and time, the mentality of that place and time, the style of that place and time, the intention of the author, the nature of his audience. And, similarly, research gets its perspectives insofar as it is founded on good historical knowledge. Finally, dialectic depends upon research, interpretation, and history: quite obviously from the nature, the fact that it is picking out the conflicts in the historical and the interpretative processes. But the opposite is also true; you clarify issues in history and interpretation that cannot be clarified, eliminated, through the rules proper to interpretation and to history. History: it is the problem of value judgments. You settle issues concerning values in this fourth, dialectic. And, as we will see tomorrow and on Monday, both in interpretation and in history, the critical procedures yield univocal results only if there is the same state of the question in different writers. Different writers will arrive at the same results if they have the same state of the question, the same *Fragestellung* but not otherwise. And you eliminate that difference only on the level of dialectic, and not on the level of the earlier specialties.

Now this reciprocal dependence of all these first four, is most easily achieved when one man does all four 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 recourse has to be had to team work; there

must be understood the fact of reciprocal dependence; each specialist must be familiar with what has been achieved in the past and be able to grasp new developments, and be in easy and rapid communication with one another through the university, through periodicals, through books, through congresses.

The first phase proceeds from almost an endless multiplicity of data, through many interpretative unities, to more comprehensive narrative unities, to dialectical oppositions running through the interpretations and the histories.

In the second phase, one proceeds from the unity of a grounding horizon, through doctrines and systematic clarifications, to communications with the almost endless varied sensibilities, tastes, mentalities, interests of mankind.

As in the first phase so in the second, the process is not deductive. It is not from premises to conclusions; it is a movement through successive and more fully determinate contexts. Foundations provides a basic orientation. Apply the foundations to conflicts of dialectic, ambiguities in history and interpretation, and it becomes a principle of selection that results in doctrines. Doctrines tend to be regarded as mere verbal formulae until their ultimate meaning is worked out and their coherences assured through systematics. Systematics reveals what there is to be communicated. But there remains the problem of the creative use of the available media, the task of finding the appropriate approach and procedure to convey the message of the Gospel to peoples of every kind of culture and every class in the culture.

Dependence is not just in one direction. Questions for systematics can arise from communications; doctrinal formulations can draw on systematics; conversion formulated as horizon in foundations has not only personal but

also social, historical, doctrinal dimensions. There is then, in both phases, a reciprocal dependence: any one of the four depends on the others. However, still further there is an interdependence of the two phases; and clearly the second phase depends on the first. The first is mediating theology, which is the Body of Christ as it has existed and still exists, manifesting itself to us. And it is studied, first of all, as data; second, as meaning; third, as history; and, fourth, as confrontation. The second phase is mediated theology: theology as of God and of all things in their relations to God. The first is theology as field specialization rising up four levels of conscious intentionality. The second is theology as subject specialization descending from horizon of conversion through doctrines and systematics to communications. The second manifestly depends on the first; the second is facing the future in the light of the past.

We can ask, however, whether the first phase depends on the second. It does. But here the greatest care must be exercised to exclude undue influence. Undue influence from the second phase on the first would tend to cut it off from its sources, to paint yourself into a corner. Medieval theology, as commentaries on the Sentences of Peter Lombard, was theology in contact with its sources. But if you compare what Peter Lombard is talking about and what St Thomas is talking about in his commentary on Peter, you find that there is a good hundred years in between them. The questions have become quite different. The development of the *Summa* and the separate *Summa*, with more or less very little use of sources was a further step away. When they started writing commentaries not on Peter Lombard's Sentences, classifications of passages from scripture and the Fathers, but on St Thomas's *Summa* — Cajetan started that and it went on till the beginning of the 17th century, commentaries on St. Thomas's *Summa* — you were still

further away from your sources; you were writing commentaries on a theological work. And that separation is the thing that has been reproved in recent documents. The theologian has to remain in contact with his sources, and it is by having the eight specialties in their interdependence that you get that. If the second phase were to start trying to run the first, then, it would really be blocking its own development.

However, what is meant by undue influence? The first phase questions have to be met not by appeal to the second phase as an a priori; they have to be met out of the resources of the first phase itself. You don't settle questions in the first phase by appealing to doctrines or systematics. You solve the questions in the first phase by the means proper to that phase. And you don't solve problems in the first phase by pointing out that so and so has false philosophic presuppositions. The effective answer: you can be guided by that fact, and be helped by that fact, but what you have to do is to go back over the sources, pin down what has been overlooked by the man, and do the long, painstaking, scholarly job that ends the matter.

Now, if you want a good account of that sort of thing get hold of Stephen Neill, *The Interpretation of the New Testament, 1861-1961*. And he has a very illuminating passage on Lightfoot and his *Apostolic Fathers*. Lightfoot wanted to refute Baur's views on the date of the New Testament: Baur was placing the date of the New Testament towards the end of the second century. Lightfoot went to work. First of all he established which one of the epistles of St Ignatius of Antioch were genuine. After establishing that he used the genuine epistles to show that the New Testament was the sort of thing that Ignatius knew about, and that Ignatius lived at the end of the 1st century. And so he destroyed Baur's position; it was never heard of again. This sort of scholarly work: there is a sort of scholarly work that just closes

an issue, and that's the sort of thing to be done in the first phase. You know, it requires almost a lifetime of work, but it is the sort of thing that is effective. And you have to let the first phase remain open and the work proper to it be done there according to its own methods. Neill remarks about Lightfoot, that if he had anything to say about this sort of thing, if he was a dean of a theological college, that every first year student would be obliged to read 500 pages of Lightfoot's *Apostolic Fathers*. And that, again, shows you; it is not the latest work that is alone counts. There exists very good work that was done fifty, sixty, seventy years ago, and that is still the thing to read from certain viewpoints. I remember I did a seminar under Paul Galtier when I was a theological student. And at the start he told us: well, now, it is not reading the latest article and the latest book that you are going to be able to do a good job on – we were working on Cyprian's epistles. He said Gaston Boissier's *Cicero et ses amis* was a hundred years ago and it is still required reading. And it is not that Gaston Boissier has read all that has been written in the last hundred years; he hasn't. It is because he knew his Cicero inside out. And those are the people who are important, and they are the people to be imitated in the first phase. So much in general. There is a proper way of going about work in the first phase, and that is not to be eliminated in favor of some short-cut drawing on the second phase.

On the other hand, there is a proper influence of the second phase on the first because it is illuminating the same matter from a different angle, and that is not to be excluded. In particular, there is an interdependence between history and doctrines. We have discovered in Scholastic circles rather recently that to understand doctrines you have to understand their history. It is through understanding the history of doctrines that you understand the doctrines. But it is also true that if you want to understand the

history you have to understand the doctrines. A person who doesn't know mathematics can't write a history of mathematics. His work would be full of ambiguities. He would be exaggerating the importance of things that were quite minor and overlooking the big things that were really important and so on all along the line. Similarly, unless you know the dogmas, you can't write the history of the dogmas; and unless you are a good theologian you can't write a history of theology.

There is a mutual dependence, then, between the history and, on the other hand, the doctrines. Similarly, there is a mutual dependence between foundations and dialectic. Insofar as people are converted, the conflicts of dialectic tend to disappear. And insofar as the dialectical oppositions are clearly worked out, the foundations become clearer. Further, since the four on either side are interdependent with one another and the top two are interdependent this way, there is an indirect interdependence of the whole eight.

The dynamic unity, then, is the interaction in the two phases of the eight functions. It is the interaction of theology and religion. And, finally, it is the interaction of religion and human living.

Finally, we note that functional specialization involves a distinctive notion of theology. Field specialization gives the ideas of biblical, Patristic, Medieval, Reformation, contemporary theology. Subject specialization gives theology as science of God and of all things in their relation to God, as known under the light of revelation and faith. Field specialization tends to neglect subject specialization; subject specialization tends to neglect field specialization. Functional specialization brings these two together, allowing each its full significance and role, without thereby tending to neglect the other. Moreover, it keeps theology distinct from religion, the study of

theology from the pursuit of religious development, the teaching of theology from the teaching of religion. No doubt all of these are interconnected, but they have to be clearly distinguished before their relations and connections can be grasped. And it is in the distinctions that one eliminates the, more or less, stultifying objections such as: this book on theology doesn't seem to be very pious; and he doesn't seem to be praying when he is teaching theology and so on. *Eine Betendetheologie*, a praying theology, has been demanded in recent years.