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There remain a few sections of the chapter on doctrines, our sixth functional specialty. First of all, the permanence of dogmas, secondly, the historicity of dogmas, thirdly, pluralism and the unity of faith, and, fourthly, the autonomy of theology.

### **[The permanence of Dogma]**

The permanence of dogmas is a question that arose in the first Vatican Council. Its occasion was the doctrines of Anton Günther and Frohschammer. Gunther attempted to subsume Catholic doctrine under the Hegelian system, and Frohschammer's position was that the historical development of human intelligence moved the mysteries within the compass of human understanding.

First, there were two apostolic constitutions in Vatican I and the first was *Dei Filius*, and the second was with regard to the Roman pontiff. And it is with regard to *Dei Filius*, the first of these constitutions, that dealt with this doctrine, this rationalism, on the one hand, and traditionalism on the other.

The chapter against rationalism and traditionalism, the *Dei Filius*, distinguished first of all the natural light of reason, the range of its objects – God and some revealed truths are included; faith: we believe what God has revealed because of the authority of God, and among the principle objects of faith are the mysteries hidden in God, although some of the truths that are revealed are also accessible to human reason. Thirdly, reason illuminated by faith can reach some fruitful understanding of the mysteries. And fourthly, reason operating beyond its competence, which is the criticism of Vatican I against the opposed doctrines.

Now a critical account of all this document would require more or less a week spent on a discussion of the doctrine itself, but the criticism is, fundamentally, What do you mean by a dogma? Do you mean a truth revealed by God, whether it is accessible to human reason or not, or a truth revealed by God that human reason cannot discover? Now the examination of the documents is to the effect that the dogmas that the Vatican I is talking about are truths revealed by God which human reason could not discover if they were not revealed.

The ground for affirming the permanence of dogmas is, on the one hand, that a meaning that a truth possesses in its own context (and contexts are continuously changing, although Vatican I did not insist on that point); but the meaning that a truth possesses in its own context can never be truthfully denied, and the meaning of a dogma is not a datum but a truth. In a revealed truth there is something that man can have no evidence ever to affirm or to deny, and consequently it is beyond the human historicity.

### **[The Historicity of Dogmas]**

The constitution *Dei Filius*, the first constitution of Vatican I, was occasioned on the one hand by traditionalists, who denied any efficacy to human reason and, on the other hand, semi-rationalists, Günther and Frohschammer, who were very much concerned with the historicity of church doctrines; but Vatican I selected one aspect of their position that was unacceptable, without attempting to deal with the underlying issue of the historicity of dogmas. And the question is at the present time, Can the doctrine of Vatican I, on the permanence of the meanings of dogmas, be reconciled with the historicity of man's thought and action?

The historicity of man's thought and action follows from the fact that human concepts, theories, affirmations, actions are expressions of human understanding.

And human understanding develops over time cumulatively and differently in different places and times.

Now fuller understanding can be fuller understanding of the same data or of a truth. Fuller understanding of data leads to the rejection of previous theories. But in fuller understanding of a truth, the same truth is more and more fully understood. The Babylonians understood that two and two are four, the Greeks understood that two and two are four, modern mathematicians understand that two and two are four. The understanding is not the same in each case. The Greeks understood by 'two and two are four' an eternal truth; the modern mathematician understands 'two and two are four' as a conclusion from postulates; you set up a set of definitions, and you will arrive at 'two and two are four' as a necessary consequence of your set of postulates. It is an entirely different understanding of the truth that two and two are four. But it is the same truth all along the line.

Now dogmas are permanent in their meaning because a better understanding is of the same truths; *in eodem dogmate, eodem sensu eademque sententia*, is Vatican I on the developing understanding of the dogmas of the church. What is opposed to the historicity of dogma is not the permanence of their meaning but the classicist assumption of one universal, permanent culture. Historicity is opposed not to the permanence of the meanings of dogmas as affirmed in Vatican I, it is opposed to the classicist assumption that culture is ever one and the same, something permanent and eternal.

### **[Pluralism and the Unity of Faith]**

Thirdly, pluralism and the unity of faith. There are three sources of pluralism. First, linguistic, social, and cultural differences give rise to different brands of common

sense. Secondly, consciousness may be undifferentiated, or it may be differentiated to deal expertly with some combination of such different realms as common sense, transcendence, beauty, system, method, scholarship, philosophic interiority.

Thirdly, in any individual at any given time there may exist the abstract possibility, or the beginnings, or greater or less progress, or high development, of intellectual, moral, or religious conversion.

So there are the variations of common sense, the variations of the differentiation of consciousness, and the presence or absence of conversion in various degrees on the intellectual, moral, or religious dimension.

One can conceive unity of faith in different ways. On classicist assumptions there is just one culture; it is beyond the simple faithful, the *simplices fideles* or beyond the natives, or the barbarians, or the uneducated, the lower classes. But careers are open to talent, and one moves into a career by learning Latin and Greek, studies Scholastic philosophy and theology, learns canon law and so on, and one moves into the inner circle. But such classicism was never more than the shabby shell of Catholicism. The real root and ground of unity is being in love with God. The acceptance of this gift of love constitutes religious conversion and leads to moral and even intellectual conversion.

Further, religious conversion, if it is Christian, is not just a state of mind and heart. Essential to it is the intersubjective component. Besides the gift of the Spirit within, there is the outward encounter with Christian witness.

The function of church doctrines lies within the function of Christian witness. For the witness is to the mysteries revealed by God and, for Catholics, infallibly declared by the church. The contexts, however, in which such meanings are grasped vary as do their modes of expression.

Such variation is familiar to us from the past. According to the Second Vatican Council, revelation occurred not through words alone but through words

and deeds. The apostolic preaching was addressed not only to Jews in their thought forms but also to Greeks. Scripture spoke more to the heart, and the Christological councils more to the mind. Scholastic theology in its recasting of Christian belief in an Aristotelian mold deserted neither revelation nor the councils. And if modern theologians were to transpose medieval theory into the categories of interiority, they would be doing for our age what the great Scholastics did for theirs. In the past there has existed a notable pluralism of expression. Classicist insistences on uniformity are disappearing, and a pluralism of manners is emerging. One must preach to every class in every culture in the appropriate mode. In general, such preaching will be to a consciousness that is little differentiated. The brands of common sense are enormously diverse, and you have to advert and attend to each and talk in each. The preacher will have to keep in mind that when consciousness is only slightly differentiated, coming to know does not occur apart from acting.

An exact grasp of another's mentality is possible only if one attains the same differentiation and lack of differentiation. Each differentiation of consciousness involves a certain remodeling of common sense. One's initial common sense is purged of its simplifications, its metaphors, and so on, as one moves on to other differentiations of consciousness. With the attainment of full differentiation common sense is confined entirely to its proper realm, its proper object of the immediate, the concrete. But that type of common sense that is that has been removed from all fields of specialty is a highly differentiated type of common sense.

There are many roots to the full attainment and the many varieties of common sense. But preaching the gospel to all means preaching it in the manner appropriate to each of the varieties of partial attainment and, no less, to full attainment. The initial systematic exigence required Clement of Alexandria to deny the literal quality of scriptural anthropomorphisms. Fully systematic meaning

required of medieval Scholasticism that it seek a coherent account of all the truths of faith and reason. Contemporary scholarship and its exigence required Vatican II to decree that the interpreter of scripture determine the meaning intended by biblical writers by understanding the literary conventions of each age and each writer.

The church, then, following the example of St Paul, becomes all things to all men. It communicates revelation in the appropriate manners and in accord with the almost endless brands of common sense.

Becoming all to all, even though it involves no more than a pluralism of communications, nonetheless is not without its difficulties. It requires development in those that teach and govern, it must cope with those with no taste for scholarship and its devices, and with those who oppose the systematic on the grounds that it is better to feel compunction than to define it.

Such difficulties suggest certain rules. First, appropriate modes of communicating revealed truth to every brand of common sense and to every differentiation of consciousness must be sought. Secondly, faith of itself does not demand differentiation of consciousness. Faith does not oblige one to refrain from attaining ever more differentiated consciousness. On the other hand, everyone may express his faith in the differentiation of consciousness that he has attained. Finally, no one should judge what he does not understand or try to judge a differentiation of consciousness that he does not possess.

Now this differentiation, this pluralism, will have little appeal to persons with a propensity to over-simplification. The real menace, however, lies in the absence of intellectual, of moral, or of religious conversion. It is especially perilous in three manners. First, when the absence of conversion occurs in church officials or teachers. Secondly, when there is a movement forward from classicism, as it has existed in the past, to the pluralism of

cultures as it is being recognized at the present time. Third, when someone so emphasizes system, or method, or scholarship, or interiority, or elementary prayer, as to block advance in other fields. One can insist so much on one or the other or the third or the fourth or the fifth of these differentiations of consciousness as to block advance in the other fields.

### **[The Autonomy of Theology]**

Finally, the autonomy of theology. What Rahner refers to as *Denzingertheologie*, the late Pierre Charles of Louvain named Christian positivism. For this positivism, the function of the theologian is to be that of a prophanandist for church doctrines. Such a theologian simply repeats, explains, and makes no contribution of his own to, what has been declared by the church. Now, theology is not a source of revelation nor an addition to inspired scripture nor an authority that promulgates church doctrines. Again, a Christian theologian should be an authentic human being and an authentic Christian, and if so he will be second to none in his acceptance of revelation and church doctrine. Still, this does not mean that the theologian is simply a parrot.

The history of theology makes it clear that theologians treat many matters which church doctrines do not treat and that theologians have been the first to propound theological doctrines that, particularly in the Catholic Church, provided the background of subsequent Church councils. So it is that in our chapter on Functional Specialties we drew a distinction between religion and reflection on religion, that we identified such reflection with theology, that we found theology so highly specialized that over and above field specialization and subject specialization we distinguished eight functional specialties.

The theologian has a specific contribution to make and possesses as a consequence a certain autonomy. Moreover, in our present account of method a criterion has been worked out to guide the theologian in his exercise of autonomy. Dialectic assembles, analyzes, and so on, the conflicting views of evaluators, historians, interpreters, researchers. Foundations determines which views are the positions that proceed from the presence of conversion and the counterpositions that reveal the absence of conversion. As autonomy calls for a criterion, so too it demands responsibility. Theologians should keep their own houses in order in view of their influence on the faithful and the influence theological doctrine may exert on church doctrine. It will be helpful for them to turn their thoughts to the topic of method and to adopt the best method available at any given time.

It may be felt that one endangers the authority of the church officials if one acknowledges that theologians have a contribution of their own to make, that they possess a certain autonomy, that they have at their disposal a strictly theological criterion, and that they have grave responsibilities that will all the more effectively be fulfilled by adopting some method and working gradually towards improving it.

The authority of church officials has nothing to lose and much to gain from the proposal. Historical fact indicates that theology has a contribution to make; it is beneficial to recognize its autonomy and the responsibilities it implies. For responsibility leads to method and method if effective makes police work superfluous.

There is a further aspect. Though I am a Roman Catholic with quite conservative views on religious and church doctrines, I have written a chapter on doctrines without subscribing to any but the doctrine about doctrine set forth in the First Vatican Council. My purpose has been ecumenical. I desire it to be as simple as possible for theologians of different allegiance to adapt my method to their uses.



Finally, a distinction between dogmatic theology and doctrinal theology should be made. Dogmatic theology is classicist. It is concerned with what is eternally true. In contrast, doctrinal theology is historically minded. It knows that the meaning of propositions becomes determinate through contexts, that contexts vary, that the variation depends upon the development of understanding. Consequently, it distinguishes between the religious apprehension of a doctrine and its theological apprehension. The religious apprehension is through the context of one's own common sense, one's evolving culture, the state of differentiation of consciousness, the degree of one's conversion. In contrast, the theological apprehension of doctrines is historical and dialectical. It is historical as grasping the different contexts in which the same doctrine was expressed. It is dialectical as discerning various positions and counterpositions.