

6. The New Theology

A new context implies a new theology. If in later chapters we hope to state positively what the new theology is by describing how it is to function, in the present section we can attempt no more

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If a new context implies a new theology, that implication does little to define what the new theology is to be. It cannot settle questions that are properly theological. But it does throw not a little light on the robes theology is to wear and the postures it is to adopt. Theology, I am sure, will feel more at ease with them than with the ill-fitting garments and awkward stance imposed in the past.

First, then, theology contains inferences, but its overall structure is not deductivist, though not exclusively, Basically it is an empirical, interpretative, historical science. Its sources are scripture and tradition. Their exact content has to be ascertained; it has to be interpreted in contemporary language; it has to be viewed in historical perspective. That, of course, is not the whole of theology, but it is an essential part.

^{one} In a sense the fact has always been recognized; in another, it is of recent date, for the need of historical perspective was not always understood.

The methodical achievement of the Middle Ages was the summa which aimed at answering coherently some totality of ^a questiones. Each questio opened with a series of authoritative texts or reasons under the rubric, videtur quod non, to be followed by a second series under the opposite rubric, sed contra est. There followed the solutio which set forth and applied the principles that reconciled the apparently opposed texts and arguments. Manifestly Now manifestly the summa was engaged in assimilating in coherent and coherent fashion a historical tradition that proceeded from the scriptures and was ~~passed~~ enriched by the decrees, the councils,

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By the new theology is understood theology within the new context. It is not a species but a genus, just as the old theology was not a species but a genus. Moreover, just as in the old so also in the new, out of all the species in the genus at most one can be true.

There are those, of course, that are opposed to any and every new theology. Just as positivists do not argue against particular species of metaphysics but reject all representatives of the genus, so too there are the spiritual heirs of Jacques Bénigne Bossuet for whom the new, because it is new, is mistaken if not heretical.

This is not altogether surprising. For the Aristotelian context, if interpreted strictly, leaves no room for any new theology. Conclusions follow from premisses not only necessarily but also instantaneously. Premisses are either self-evident truths of reason or revealed truths of faith. Human nature is always the same. The metaphysical identity and the per se performance of the soul relieves us of the per accidens variety and complexity of the historical and existential subject.

~~Still a strict interpretation of the Aristotelian context is ~~not~~ just what Aristotle himself would not tolerate. Nor is it the work of any serious theologian. Its origin would seem to lie with teachers ~~actually~~ simplifying matters for their more backward pupils, and its ~~in~~ diffusion to ~~the backward pupils~~ ^{their} ~~assuming the role of teachers!~~ ^{of learners?} ~~of learners?~~ pupils accepting the role of administrators, censors, or even teachers.~~

Such a strict interpretation, however, never fitted theology very well and, at the present time, it merely serves to define the old bottle that the new wine has burst.

It would be an invidious and tedious matter to determine to what extent and in what circles such a strict interpretation of the Aristotelian context has existed in the past and survives into the present. Suffice to say that it is the work, not of great theologians, but of simplifiers, that it has been driven underground by Catholic acknowledgement of the development of dogma, that ever increasingly in the present century has it been ignored, when not ridiculed, by Catholic scholars engaged in biblical, patristic, mediaeval, and more recent studies.

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the past, at present it is a disaster

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But if so gross a simplification served in the past
for churchmen
the doubtful purpose of packaging a smattering of theology,
today its utility is at an end

But if so gross a simplification had its uses in the grand siècle, today it is theology's greatest liability. It is useless as a container for the fruits of biblical, patristic, mediaeval, and subsequent scholarship. It cannot take seriously the acknowledged fact of the development of dogma. It cannot be reconciled with the actual procedures of Aristotle, Augustine, or Aquinas. It cannot serve to relate theology to other ^{contemporary} departments of modern culture or to bring it to bear upon current social problems. But it does provide the ignorant with their image of what theology has been and is, ^{as} and it is is and, as it is constantly ridiculed now as a Hellenism that must be deserted by a return to the bible, now as a classicism quite of touch with modern science, modern scholarship, and modern needs, now as the theology of wizened inquisitors that neither live nor let live, one hardly need look further for the cause of the poor repute in which theology is held by seminarians and by the laity

this demanded that theologians adopt, adapt, supplement some system of basic terms and relations, and that they make explicit, clarify, correlate their fundamental assumptions. A summa, ~~then~~ then, was a mighty achievement of theological coherence but, for all its greatness, it is no longer acceptable as theology. Today the apparent contradictions between authoritative doctrines are to be resolved, not exclusively by system building, but ~~primarily~~ primarily by historical investigation.

In like manner the type of theology codified by Melchior Cano by no means neglected the empirical side of theology. Rather he endeavoured to found a ¹positive theology concerned with proving current Catholic doctrine by arguing from the scriptures, from the councils, from pontifical documents, from the common consent of the Fathers, and from the common consent of the theologians. But within a modern context such a project appears quite wrong-headed. Were it true that Catholic doctrine did not develop, then one could accept with simple-minded literalness Vincent of Lerins' quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus. On that ground one could suppose that a contemporary theologian would need no more than an understanding of contemporary doctrine to be able interpret accurately the meaning of all theologically relevant documents from the Old Testament to the decrees of Vatican II. On the same ground one could suppose that the transition from the earlier to the later statements was merely a matter of argument and proof. But such suppositions are mistaken. Not only is the development of doctrines a fact, but it also is a fact that a development is a historical process, that most developments are different processes, and that their

But if so gross a simplification had its uses in the grand siècle and in derivative cultural enclaves, ~~in~~ today it is just a liability. It cannot take seriously the acknowledged fact of the development of dogma. It cannot be reconciled with the actual procedures of Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas. It cannot serve as a container for the fruits of biblical, patristic, mediaeval, and subsequent scholarship. It is too remote and artificial to be related relate theology to other areas of

Again, the process from the scriptures to later, developed doctrines is not adequately conceived as a matter of proof or argument. A logical conclusion follows instantaneously from its premisses. Doctrines develop only over long periods of time. Most developments occur in different manners. They are to be understood ^{in the main} ~~only~~ through a historical ~~investigation~~ investigation of the problems that were being met, the circumstances that made the problems urgent, the means employed to meet them. Finally, it is ^{in the main} through such understanding of the concrete process that there comes to light the legitimacy of the development for, just as development ~~is~~ varies from instance to instance, so too does the legitimacy proper to each development.

Finally, we may recall that here we are not announcing a programme for the future but simply recognizing an accomplished ^{Catholic} fact. The whole field of theological investigation has already been taken over by modern scholarship, modern methods of history, modern notions of science. But this transformation has been effected ~~none~~ by a quiet if massive infiltration and not by working out and applying a new method of theology. On point after point the superiority of the historical approach has been established

legitimacy is to be grasped, not so much by appeals to logic or ~~xx~~ rhetoric, as by historical investigation that reveals the problems to be met and the means employed to meet them.

Theology is not about the necessary. The whole economy of salvation is not necessary but contingent, free, gratuitous. The Blessed Trinity in itself is necessary but to say that we apprehend that necessity is the semi-rationalism condemned in Vatican I

Just as physics, chemistry, biology, and the human sciences, so too theology is concerned to know, not abstractions, but the concrete universe.

Of course, if these sciences were about the necessary, then the mediaeval argument would hold and one have to ~~may~~ confine their object to abstractions. It is only by abstracting essences from the ~~common~~ created and so contingent universe that one can arrive at objects that ~~may~~ lack mobility and may be described as necessary. But this description

Just as physics, chemistry, biology, and the human sciences, so too theology is concerned to know, not abstractions, but the concrete universe.

It is, of course, true that these sciences do not know the universe or any part of it in its concreteness. That would be to know all there is to be known about it. But while human knowledge is limited in its achievement, it is not limited in ~~its aim.~~ ~~its aim.~~ It is a potentiality in process of development, and the effort to fr further development is not cut off prior to answering all questions.

An Aristotelian might object that the created universe is cont¹ingent, that science is of the necessary, and so it~~x~~ is only by abstracting essences from the concrete universe that one can have any science of it. This argument is valid, but one of its premisses is false: science is not about the necessary

It is true of course that man does not know anything in its concreteness, for that is to know all there is to be known about a thing. But this does not imply that scientia est de universalibus et necessariis

withdraws one from service to the Body of Christ and closets one in some irrelevant ivory tower.

Fourthly, the transitions from soul to subject and from first premisses to transcendental method imply a corresponding transition in the theologian.

When the theologian's task was thought to be no more than acknowledging the truths of faith, bowing to the self-evident principles of reason, and drawing the inevitable conclusions, there was no personal contribution to be made by the theologian. To be impersonal made one objective. To be indifferent to values freed one from bias. To be unrelated to other persons liberated one from party ties. Nor was there any need for self-criticism either to acknowledge the truths of faith acknowledged by all ^{or} except heretics, [^] to bow to self-evident principles which only a perverse blindness could fail to see, or to draw the necessary conclusions obvious to everyone even when not reinforced by an explicit application of the laws of logic.

This incredible simplification, however, now belongs to the past

withdraws one from service to the Body of Christ to closet one in some ivory tower. ~~of indeterminate and indeterminate~~

Fourthly, reflection on theology does not prescind from the theologian. No doubt, it was offensive to reflect on the theologian himself when his task was thought to be no more than acknowledging the truths of faith, bowing to the self-evident principles of reason, and drawing the inevitable conclusions. But that elegant simplification fails to account for the mass of unresolved, disputed questions that have been accumulating since the Middle Ages. Nor are these disputes purely theological. There is to them a philosophic component that on issue after issue lines up theologians in their various schools. To remove this perennial interference with theology will be the task of the critical and dialectical functions of transcendental method.

~~Some readers may feel, however, that these disputed questions are becoming a thing of the past, now that theology has become predominantly empirical, interpretative, historical.~~

Some readers may feel, however, that there is no longer any need for a transcendental method to clear away disputed questions, for such questions ~~are vanishing from~~ vanish from theology in the measure that it acknowledges its basic character as empirical, interpretative, historical.

Now I cannot, of course, expect our Christian positivists to lay down their arms without a battle. But perhaps I may point to the facts. There is a current series of books entitled Quaestiones disputatae. Contemporary widespread interest in theology is concerned not with biblical research, not with patristic studies, not with mediaeval scholarship, but with disputed questions. Moreover, just as the critical problem

spreads from philosophy into theology because theologians have minds, so too does it spread into empirical science, into hermeneutics, and into history because empirical scientists, interpreters, and historians also have minds. At the present time ~~Fifthly~~ the interpreters and the historians are acknowledging the fact.

Fifthly

formulation of theological reality has been lacking. There has
been widely accepted ~~the~~ ^{a vague} view that theology was a science on
the analogy of Aristotelian science, and a law of intellectual
~~inertia allowed those that took the analogy for granted~~
inertia obliged those that doubted the analogy to work out an
alternative position and prove it, while those that took the
analogy for granted were not required to even to make their
assumptions plausible.

formulation of theological reality has been lacking. Concern with method is concern to work out that formulation.

Now method directs operations towards ends. So far from being indifferent to values (wertfrei), it is concerned with values, namely, with the value proper to the science in question. Again, in directing operations towards ends, method does not prescind from the operator. On the contrary method wants the operator trained and skilled in the operations required of him, and it wants him committed to the ends towards which he operation operates. Indeed, in ~~the~~ its principal form of transcendental method with its normative, critical, and dialectical functions, method aims at an intellectual conversion of the operator. To this topic in due course we shall return. But at once we may note that, just as the Aristotelian ideal of science left theology with little to say on conversion, so the existential subject as converted through method is congruous with the existential subject as converted through faith at once we may note that the recognition of values and conversion on the level of method is congruous with the recognition of theology as a science that presupposes the values and conversion of faith.

formulation of theological reality has been lacking, and our concern with method is a concern to work out such a formulation.

Now method directs operations \downarrow towards ends. So far from being indifferent to values (wertfrei), it is concerned with values, namely, the values proper to the science in question. Moreover, in directing operations to ends, method does not prescind from the operators. On the contrary, it wants them trained and skilled in the operations required of them. It wants ^{them} committed to the ends ~~two~~ towards which they \downarrow operate. Indeed, in the principal case of transcendental method with its normative, critical, and dialectical functions, method aims at an intellectual conversion of the operator.

On conversion and its ~~two~~ three forms, \downarrow intellectual, moral, and religious, more will be said in due course. But it may not be out of place to point out at once that the recognition^{of} of values and conversion on the level of method ~~should~~ prepares the way for conceiving theology as a science even though it is committed to values and is to be reached only through a conversion. On the other hand, to revert from method to logic, from the concrete, existential subject to a per se or de iure subject contemplating abstract necessities, ~~is to encourage the notion of conversions and to encourage an idea of science as indifferent to values.~~ ^{make} ~~irrelevant~~ ^{irrelevant} encourages an idea of science as indifferent to values.
 encourages an idea of science as a work of pure intellect independent of will and
 A indifferent to values, and so makes the notion of conversion as at best irrelevant.

Next, while the normative, critical, and dialectical functions of transcendental method \downarrow can be expected to contribute greatly to clearing away the thick underbrush

of perennially disputed questions that have afflicted theology for centuries, they also have a highly important relevance for the more recently developed aspects of theology. I have said that theology is an empirical, interpretative, historical science. I must add that the issues that are raised in ~~the~~ their general form by reflecting on transcendental method, also are raised in a concrete and far more complex form when one asks what is empirical science, what is hermeneutics, what is history.

~~Moreover, it is only by answering these questions in a fundamental and adequate manner that the exigences of the newer part of theology can be ascertained and a satisfactory account of the whole of theology be worked out.~~

What is one doing when one knows, why is doing that knowing, what does one know when one does it, are questions that occur not only in ~~the~~ this general form but also in the particular and more elaborate forms that ask about doing empirical science, doing hermeneutics, doing history. Moreover, it is only by answering these questions in a fundamental and adequate ~~way~~ manner that one can hope to heal thr the breach between the older and the more recent achievements of theology. For one cannot have a clear and satisfactory connection and interdependence of the many parts of theology without taking the trouble to work out the precise working of each of the parts.

If I have been stressing the point that the theologian is an existential subject, I must add that this concrete and self-critical view of himself is required of the theologian by his historical role.

hope to heal the breach between the older and the more recent achievements of theology. For one cannot have a clear and satisfaction connection and interdependence of the many parts of theology without taking the trouble to work out the precise functions of each of the parts.

Seventhly, ^{it} It is already apparent to everyone that contemporary theology has the bulk of a modern science. It is not ^{be} to enclosed in some great book or to be stored in an acquired habit of a single mind. ^{Merely to} To sample its extent there is needed a large and costly library. To represent its departments there ^b would be needed a large number of specialists.

Seventhly, while I have been adverting mainly to the aspects of theology both as a science and in its relations to other sciences, it must be born in mind that a modern science in virtue of its concreteness has many dimensions that are in virtue of its concreteness is to be illuminated by its proper sociology of knowledge and science, ^b its cultural origins, functions, influence, by its historical role. Let me say a something on each of these that, however brief and skimpy, will serve at least to draw attention to the matter.

Already it is apparent to everyone that contemporary theology has the bulk of a modern science. science. It is not to be enclosed in some great book; indeed, it is only sampled by a large and costly library. It is not to be stored in the acquired habit of a single mind; a large number of specialists are needed to represent its many parts and sections. Theology, accordingly, resides in the group of theologians. By the group it is produced, developed, transmitted. There is, then,

a sociology concerned with the relations between theologians
as individuals and as members of various classes, between theologians
and other members of their church

a field of social relations betw among theologians, between
theologians and other groups within their church and without it