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Positive theology

1 Christianity is an historical religion: its origins were at a given time and place, in a given historical milieu; its basic self-expression is contained in sacred texts; its basic outlook is traditional, handing on the good news of the risen Christ; its tradition has grown in consciousness, explicitness, down the ages.

2 Four main factors have influenced and shaped the positive theology of the post – medieval period.

(a) Invention of Printing (*Gutenberg Galaxy*, Marshal McLuhan), whence texts, translations, critical editions of scriptures, Fathers, councils, theologians; also secondary, tertiary literature: articles, monographs, surveys, reviews.

(b) Decadence of Scholasticism (beginning 14th century; end often announced, less clear).

Positive as an alternative to Scholasticism (which is attacked, ignored, disregarded, soft-pedaled, deprecated): antiquarian erudition for its own sake; Jansenism, Gallicanism; ‘dogmatic’ theology in sense of omitting all QQ DD, attending to essentials.

Positive as a corrective, complement, to Scholasticism: Melchior Cano.

(c) As the weapon of controversy, apologetic; varying with contemporary need; Church and state (Boniface VIII, Marsilius of Padua, Bodin, etc.). Reformation, Jansenism, Classicism (pagan, Christian humanism, Enlightenment), Romanticism, Idealism, Historicism, Phenomenology, Existentialism.

(d) As a specific scientific method and technique: theology in *oratio obliqua*; what did Isaias, Paul, John, Justin, Irenaeus, Athanasius, Augustine, Aquinas think about God and all things in relation to God; how did they thematize knowledge of God mediated by corpus Christi.

It narrates the theology of particular writers; its main divisions are biblical, pontifical, conciliar, patristic, medieval, modern, contemporary; its concern is the availability of ‘experiential objectivity’ (is my hand white? Vatican I wished to defend traditional view on world created for glory of God, but unaware that Aquinas had said ‘Deus quaerit gloriam suam non propter se sed propter nos’ II-II 132 1 lm).

It is not the whole of theology but a functional part: it does not assign foundations of theology; it does not settle what all Catholics must believe; it does

[not] inquire how Catholics may understand systematically their beliefs; while it will fit in with (or demand adaptations of) foundational, dogmatic, systematic statements, it has its own distinctive function and relative autonomy. The existence of this autonomy and function is the existence of positive theology.

3 Distinctive function, relative autonomy, and so existence of Positive theology.

Just as there is a resistance of commonsense matters of fact to opposed philosophy, just as the empirical laws of natural science (falling bodies) possess an independence of scientific systems (Newton, Einstein, Heisenberg; experiments do not have to be repeated), so there is in texts a meaning and, often enough, an organic or genetic interlocking of meanings that is notably independent of one's own and one's adversaries *Fragestellung*, presuppositions, preconceptions, prepossessions, prejudices.

I do not mean that discovering meaning of text (interlocking meanings) is independent of RH and Th: inadequate RH means that one does not understand, mistaken Th means that one will keep on raising false problems – I mean that persevering study of text will demand development of RH, that dialectical criticism will reveal subterfuges of mistaken TH.

Gratia operans – NT on Christ, Son of Man, Lord, Preexistent Son (schemata).

I have compared this function and autonomy to that of empirical laws; but must add the differences (Insight: things related to us, commonsense; things related to one another, scientific explanation; Dilthey: Verstehen, Erklären).

NS hypothesis (sharply defined rigorous deductions), verification (devising experiments, testing implications)

Interpretation: not definition but you surely know what is meant; little deduction because no sharp definition; habitual nucleus of insights plus ad hoc insights.

Has been confused with 'dogmatic' theology: but not restricted to common (ubique, semper, omnibus), clear, certain; concerned with peculiar, obscure, doubtful; not limited to certain conclusions, science advances from doubt through less to greater probability; cumulative process.

Confusion with dogmatic leads to wrong questions: positive concerned only with questions raised by text itself (not Aquinas on Boy Scouts, St John on Christ as man, as God); reaches no answers that do not emerge from text itself (dogma introduces new categories); advances not by deductions, proofs, but by fuller scrutiny of known texts and discovery of further texts.

4 Determining text and setting: quis, quid, ubi, quibus auxiliis, cur, quomodo, quando. Interpreting text: cf. hermeneutics.

Dogmatic theology

1 Quomodo ab ecclesia definita doctrina contineatur in fontibus eo sensu quo 2314 3886.

2 What are the fontes?

(a) not anachronistically interpreted fontibus: Mt, Mk, Lk, Jo, Paul knew all about Nicea, Chalcedon Const III, Aug, Aq – they may have (*scientia infusa*) – but the dogmatic theologian cannot base his conclusions on his conclusions – he has to start from what is given – NT does not speak of homoousion, person, nature, substance, supernatural.

Exclusion of simple-minded deductivism, of proof texts in that sense
the link between NT and dogmas is, in general, that what is truly stated in any context can be truly stated in any other sufficiently developed and sufficiently known context

(b) not the fontes as interpreted by romantic hermeneutics – imaginative empathetic insight

the goal of hermeneutics is not feeling the way Paul felt, not sharing Paul's insights, not talking Paul's language, but truly stating what Paul explicitly proclaimed to be true

truth is transcendental: it can be transposed to any other context; it possesses in its essence what is independent of the subject and his mode of thought

a hermeneutics that is not concerned with such truth is a useful heuristic device (provided imaginative insight stops well short of delirium) but it is not immediately relevant to the purposes of dogmatic theology, which is concerned with truth and its transposition.

(c) not the fontes as interpreted by naive historical realism – wie es eigentlich gewesen

dogma proceeds not from the Fifth Gospel (the historical Jesus as concluded by *die kritisch-historischen Methode*) but from the Four Gospels, from the text of the NT

dogmas are not what can eventually be established after the higher criticism has arrived at a satisfactory Life of Christ, a complete explanation of the hermeneutic and historical puzzles of NT – dogmas rest on the canonical texts, and the speculations of the critics have no other basis in fact

(d) not the fontes as the object of positive study, as a basis of a theology of the NT

positive study is concerned with the peculiar, obscure, doubtful (complete explanation) and it is concerned with the immanent intelligibility of texts (not their illumination by hindsight with later developments)

dogmatic interpretation takes its stand on what is common or developing, what is clear, what is certain, on broad lines rather than precise details, on many different and roughly equivalent statements in different contexts rather than specialized examination of a single writer considered in and for himself – its selection is based on hindsight

while positive and dogmatic study of NT are not identical, neither may they conflict; source of conflict is anachronistic dogmatist, romantic hermeneutics, naive historical realism

3 What are the defined doctrines

(a) primarily the actually defined doctrines, because we know exactly what they are – but secondarily and in principle the potentially defined doctrines – which ones? the ones that are seen to be definable by the same type of process that resulted in the definitions

(b) not the actually derived dogmas taken at random and in isolation but connected sets

which connections? subject (Trinity, Christology, Redemption, Grace, Church, Sacraments, Mariology, De novissimis, Revelation, Inspiration), logical, systematic (Sum theol), evolution of dogma (DDT II, opposed order in dogmatic and systematic; DVI, dogmatic is initial stage of systematic on hypostatic union; knowledge, grace, impeccability, liberty of Christ (anthropology), redemption leads into Church, sacraments, action of Holy Spirit, history)

from viewpoint of dogmatic theology: there are dogmas that presuppose other dogmas; their justification is just a complement of justification of more basic; hence, take full advantage of sequences (a) chronological, (b) logical presupposition, (c) systematic unity

Homoousion, divinity SpS, Cappadocian settlement, procession SpS, mystery (Nicea, Const I, Quicumque, Lat IV, Lyons II, Flor, Vat I); mystery depends on theorem of spnt, but also serves to introduce systematic part on Trinity

Ephesus, Chalcedon, Const II, Const III (prefix Adoptionist, Arian, and Apollinarist)

(c) the *quoad fieri possit* unity of set of dogmas provides hindsight for dogmatic study of sources; conducted in terms of sources but with view to subsequent definition; eg christology (NT not one person two natures, but the 'same' expected (Messias) present in gospel (Son of Man) present to *Urgemeinde* (Kurios) not deified man but preexistent Son; conceived by titles and transposed names (Son Lord name above every name God other titles glory; and by concepts of Hellenistic kerygma (per quem omnia, aequalis, unum)

What is the link between sources and dogmas

(a) f(understand the doctrine ::: understand history of the doctrine)

one cannot write history of mathematics, medicine, theology, unless one understands science of math, medicine, theol: unable to select all that is significant in math, med, theol; unable to discriminate between important unimportant, breakthrough from fuss and feathers

conversely, especially in theol, the doctrine does not possess its exact and full meaning apart from its history; dogmas are not a set of isolated propositions but solutions to problems, answers to questions, strategic decisions in explicitation of object of faith; to disregard their genesis, so far from simplifying the matter, creates endless difficulties; instead of open-eyed appraisal of gradual process blind leap from NT to dogma

understanding the history

not just information on the history: endless information is compatible with no understanding and misunderstanding; eg Greek councils applied Greek philosophy to truths of faith; a widely accepted bit of nonsense

not understanding the whole historical process, every aspect of each writer's mind

but discovering the key moments in the genesis of that particular dogma: what were the blocks that had to be overcome; how did their removal take place

EG: Butterfield, *Origins of Modern Science 1300-1800* – not research on particular scientists between 1300-1800; not detailed report on research done by others; but higher level performance (up to about 1700 scientists could not free their own minds from Aristotelian presuppositions; thereafter science was sufficiently advanced for scientists to do so; that freedom is the beginning of modern science)

such a discovery has to arise from the data and so will differ for each key dogma; at the same time the blocks to be removed are apt to be constants, to reappear under another guise in the minds of students and in contemporary movements of thought

Tertullian, Origen, Athanasius – Adoptionist, Apollinarist, Antiochene, Alexandrian, Chalcedon

(b) the foregoing determines what exactly the problem is essentially yet concretely; the solution of the problem is to establish an identity between source and dogma

identity (1) is transition from implicit, vécu, to explicit thématique: such is the explicitation of invariants of human cognitional activity; cf. metaphysics as making explicit what everyone knows and constantly employs (transcendentals)

identity (2) is transposition from dramatico-practical to intellectual pattern of experience; its basis is that ‘whatever can be stated truly in any context, can be stated truly in any other sufficiently developed and sufficiently known context’; ground, the transcendence of truth, its independence of patterns of experience, to change pattern of experience is not to change truth but to change one’s mode of apprehension and expression

identity (3) presupposes that (1) and (2) have been effected; it is the transition from premises to conclusions, from logically implicit to logically explicit

(c) certitude on the truth of the solution has its removens prohibens in grasping the problem and its solution; its motive is the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the church; its modality lies in the sociology of knowledge (the issue is not the individual settling things for himself (philosophy) but the Body of Christ attaining explicit consciousness)

Development of Dogma

Cf. ‘die Wendung zur Idee,’ ‘shift to system,’ ‘Class consciousness,’ ‘progress’

Unum multis commune (a) universal by abstraction (b) universal by diffusion, assimilation, definition. A process of universalization, socialization, heightened consciousness

Universale in re: proper to Christ became common by diffusion to apostles, disciples, crowds, by apostolic preaching and apostolic succession

Universale in mente: quidquid recipitur... the one source and yet the differences of Paul, Mark, Matthew, Luke, John – Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female, though one in Christ, nonetheless each had his own mode of apprehension, mentality – positive theology concentrates on these differences –

dogmatic theology emphasizes the common catholic faith; there was a common belief with a common object – that community prescinded from individual differences, constituted the *quod ubique quod semper quod ab omnibus*

Universale reflexum: supposes the common catholic belief, reflects on it, selects what is essential, decisive, strategic – process of defining – transition from commonsense to technical, from literary to literal meaning

cf. literal meaning in absolute sense: beyond problem of hermeneutics
commonsense statements about everyday objects; scientific statements about scientific objects; philosophic and theological statements about philosophic and theological objects

commonsense vocabulary can only approximate to transcendent objects

one goes beyond mind of original writer inasmuch as one transposes to a technical context he did not know; one makes statements of the same truths inasmuch as one's transposition is adequate, accurate

2 Dogmas obscure, gospels clear

3 Gospels religious, dogmas intellectualistic

development = (1) undifferentiated (2) differentiation (3) integration (mutual mediation)

as consciousness differentiates, religion must undergo a similar differentiation; otherwise it becomes the affair of children and weaker-minded women

still, this is no defense of conceptualist aberration, which pits dogma against religion

(a) conceptualism is content with concepts, sole field of meaning, hence only dogmas

(b) conceptualism omits understanding, dogmas become mere formulas to be recited and believed

Christian religion is mutual self-mediation before God within a tradition; it takes over the whole man – it does so in field of truth through dogmas – but the converse does not hold: there is a *fides informis* (1 Cor 13)

4 Development as differentiation of horizon

5 Dogmas and catechetics