

NOTES

TOWARDS AN INTEGRAL THEOLOGY

Contemporary theology is in a state of crisis. Of this no one who is engaged in it can fail to be aware—from leading authorities, as Karl Rahner, who propose the guiding principles of a new orientation,¹ to the young student, barely initiated to the science, with his callow criticism of scholasticism. In the period of reorientation through which we are passing, one of the greatest dangers for the welfare of theological science is that of parochialism. Theological specialists can become so engrossed in the values of some particular phase of theological investigation that they may neglect to take into account, in their concept of theology, the other phases of that investigation which are indispensable to an integral theology. Myopia is the besetting sin of specialists.

The principal tension of the present crisis is that which exists between biblical theology and systematic theology. The value and influence of all that has been achieved by biblical scholarship since the War is immense. More and more, the interest and energies of theologians have been attracted to this branch of their science. They are attracted most of all by the realism characterizing a study which bears upon the contingencies of the history of salvation. Often enough, this enthusiasm for biblical theology is associated with an impatience with systematic, or Scholastic, theology, which is held responsible for the dry-as-dust formularies in which we have been for so long expressing Christian truths. Without a doubt, the greatest challenge which faces theology today is that of integrating these complementary phases of scientific investigation. Failure to meet this challenge on the part of theologians would mean an immense loss to the Church, whose life is dependent in a very real manner upon the state of theological science in any particular age.

In approaching this particular problem of the integrating of biblical theology and a genuine systematic theology, the present paper proposes to place it within a more comprehensive framework. We mean to distinguish three distinct, but essential, phases of theological enquiry. The first, which may go by the generic name of positive theology, by reason of the methodological instruments it employs, will embrace as one of its members, indeed as its primary member, biblical theology. The second phase is systematic theology. The third is pastoral theology. We propose the view that only the theology which embraces these three phases, in such a manner as to maintain their vital continuity one with another, can claim to be an integral

¹ Cf. Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations* 1 (London, 1961) 1 ff.

theology, adequate to the role which theology must play in the life of the Church.

It is clear that such a tripartite distinction within the corpus of theology will be unacceptable unless it is shown to arise from the nature of theology, considered in itself. Theology is the science of faith. Not to be identified with faith itself, any more than an intellectual habit, such as the science of mathematics, is identified with the intellective power, it is the inevitable extension or outcome, in the inquiring human mind, of the habit of divine faith: the discipline whereby faith seeks to perfect its grasp of its proper object, which is perfectly expressed in the Anselmian definition, *fides quaerens intellectum* (*Proslogion*, Proemium). It is according to the nature of things that the human understanding will call upon every available resource in order to perfect the precious knowledge of divine faith. The most perfect of these available resources are the instruments connatural to the understanding, the scientific disciplines by which it is perfected. In theology, the understanding enriched by faith employs the disciplines of human science, that faith may perfect and order its grasp of its proper object. The work of theology is that of an investigation of the knowledge which comes through faith, an investigation which demands for its integrity three distinct phases, in which faith employs three orders of scientific instrument. The word "phase" is used advisedly, in so far as it indicates the various parts of the theological enquiry as flowing one from another in an integral investigation which constitutes theology as a whole. In the first phase, positive theology, faith employs the principles of historical and literary criticism, in order to arrive at a scientific delineation of the content of divine revelation. In the second phase, systematic theology, faith employs the instruments of a realistic philosophy, in order to disclose the ultimate intelligibility of the sacred mysteries, as they are grasped by faith. In the third phase, pastoral theology, faith employs as its instrument an understanding of the nature and evolution of cultural institutions, as it strives to understand its object, the mystery of salvation, as its realization is conditioned by the concrete propensities of human culture in any particular moment of history. Before considering each of these phases in turn, let us close this introduction with further general remarks.

A comparison of this comprehensive view of theological enquiry with a similar view of philosophical enquiry is not without profit. In a recent work, M. Maritain gives us the fruit of his own reflections on the order which unites the various disciplines of the philosophy of moderate realism:

. . . we might say that some kind of return to the singular takes place at each degree of knowledge—not always in the same way, of course, but analogically, according to the various levels of knowledge. And I would now suggest that a similar return

to the singular must take place also with respect to philosophical knowledge as a whole. . . . We start from the level of experience, i.e., the level of the singular. Now the human mind ascends above this level toward various degrees of knowledge and abstraction. We have first the sciences, which look for rational regularity in the very world of experience but are not yet philosophy. At a higher level we have the philosophy of nature. And at the supreme level of natural wisdom, of philosophical wisdom, we have metaphysics. But I would stress that the curve is not finished—after ascending it descends, it has to come down. And here we have first moral philosophy, which depends on metaphysics but is much more concerned with the concrete and existential—the existential conduct of man. Then . . . we have history. . . . And finally, I propose, we have the philosophy of history as the final application of philosophical knowledge to the singular development of human events.²

By analogy, theological enquiry has for starting point the concrete historical reality of divine revelation in salvation-history. The scientific enquiry of theology demands, first and foremost, the definition through historical and literary criticism of the content of divine revelation. From this first phase, the mind is compelled to pass to an enquiry into the ultimate intelligibility of the divine mysteries thus revealed. This second phase, systematic theology, is abstract in just the same sense as a genuine metaphysics—that is to say, in a sense which in no way implies a departure from reality, but a pre-scinding from all but what is most formal to reality.³ Now it would be wrong to think that theological enquiry has been completed with systematic theology. Just as the truths achieved in metaphysics call, of their nature, for a return to concrete reality, in moral science's practical understanding of man's concrete existence, so too a true understanding of the mysteries of God is compelled to move back from the realm of abstraction towards a practical

² Jacques Maritain, *On the Philosophy of History* (New York, 1957) pp. 12–14.

³ There should be no need to underline the falsity of the misconception, from which Catholic thinkers are not always completely free, of abstraction as a departure from reality into a realm of thought-forms which enjoy at best doubtful correspondence with reality. Post-Cartesian philosophy has shown clearly enough that in the last analysis there can be no satisfactory halfway house between realism and idealism; and realism admits no degrees, though it may admit degrees of perfection in interpreting itself—as one finds in the realistic philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. This is of great importance in what is to follow, because the views proposed in this paper concerning the order among theological disciplines presuppose a basic realism, as we shall point out. Those who accuse systematic theology of a departure from reality, because of its abstract notions, should recognize that it is one thing to accuse systematic theology of unreality—an accusation which we shall show, theologically, to be false—and it is quite another thing to say that it is not realistic in the manner in which salvation-history is realistic. Systematic theology is realistic in the manner in which a genuine metaphysic is realistic, not in the manner in which history is realistic.

understanding of the realization of these mysteries which is the continuation of salvation-history in every age, the life of the Church, Christ's Mystical Body.

It is well to point out the specific oneness of these three phases, which contrasts with the generic oneness of the philosophical disciplines we have just considered. In each of the three phases, the specifying light under which the enquiry proceeds, and understanding is arrived at, is that of divine faith. It is important for the theologian to recognize—and one senses that this very obvious truth is often overlooked, particularly with regard to pastoral theology—the essential diversity of those disciplines which he employs as instruments, in their independent state (e.g., historical criticism, metaphysics, the philosophy of culture), from the theology in which they are made use of as instruments; for the understandings arrived at belong to specifically distinct orders. That proper to theology, in each of its three phases, is essentially the understanding of faith: the *crede ut intelligas* of St. Augustine (*Serm.* 43, 7, 9). The implications concerning the part played by the personal faith and prayer-life of the theologian in his theology are obvious enough.

POSITIVE THEOLOGY: SEEKING THE TERMS OF REVELATION

Faith is concerned with a revelation distinct from itself, in a manner analogous to the intellect's concern with a reality distinct from itself.⁴ Just as the intellect, cut off from access to this reality, would be no more than a power (*in potentia*), so too faith can only become operative about revelation which has come from God as a fact, when it is put into contact with the factual order of God's revelation.⁵ As factual, God's revelation is historical. Indeed, not only is revelation historical as a fact, but it is historical—God moving all things according to their nature—as to the manner of the fact; it is not imparted en bloc, but through the factual evolution of the culture of a certain people. God's revelation is, therefore, historical in the fullest sense of the word; for, as a recent study of historical method declares, giving expression to a view which is more and more establishing itself, "the historian's proper concern must be with the rise and fall of culture, and with the forces, whatever they may be, that have been most influential in this regard."⁶

⁴ By "faith" here is meant, of course, "fides qua creditur," not "fides quae creditur."

⁵ Thus, in the present order, the teaching of the Church is a *conditio sine qua non* of divine faith in the world.

⁶ H. D. Lewis, "Can History be Objective?" *International Philosophical Quarterly* 2 (1962) 243.

It is clear, therefore, that faith's scientific reflection upon itself, in order to define the very terms of divine revelation, will only be perfect when it employs genuinely scientific instruments of historical and literary criticism, which make possible, within an understanding of the cultural framework attendant on the progressive moments of revelation, a scientific appraisal of the significance of that revelation, from its obscure and rudimentary beginnings to its definitive fulfilment in the "fulness of time," and its enduring permanence in the world "all through the days that are coming, until the consummation of the world."

It is evident, too, that this phase is not homogeneous; within it a certain order must be recognized. Most fundamental to this order is the distinction between the study of the progressive revelation itself in the inspired text (biblical theology) and the study of the manner in which revelation, once definitively terminated, lives on in the consciousness of the Church, despite the vicissitudes inseparable from human history. This latter study, which is evidently subordinated to the former, could be designated accurately enough by the generic name of history of dogmas. Nor is it homogeneous in itself, but embraces such specialized studies as that of the exercise of the infallible magisterium, that of the liturgy as a *lex credendi* and the *sensus fidelium*, and that of the thought of the Fathers of the Church.

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY: SEEKING THE ULTIMATE INTELLIGIBILITY OF THE TERMS

In the introduction to the present essay, it was said that the most pressing challenge which faces contemporary theology is that of integrating positive theology (especially biblical theology) and that field of theological enquiry which we are now to consider. Theologians must not permit the advances being made by positive theology to throw them off balance, so that they fail to preserve all that is of genuine value in the systematic theology of the past. They must recognize that, according to the nature of things, without a systematic theology positive theology remains truncated and incomplete, even though it should possess the most refined biblical theology.

There is a tendency on the part of some to speak of "biblical categories" as if they were opposed to "Aristotelian categories," as if theology must ultimately settle upon the choice of one or the other; it is implied that the "Scholastic categories," even if they must be accorded a certain value as useful thought-forms which have relevance for a certain age and culture, may in time yield their place in theology to the biblical categories. Though we may not see it in our day, the sooner the better, it is said, for then the

presentation of Christian truth will recapture the realism of the patristic era, and so forth.

This point of view is all the more dangerous because it is a half-truth. It must be pointed out that it is one thing to question the desirability of presenting the good news of the mystery of salvation in terms of unabashed Scholastic abstraction, and quite another thing to question the right of such a scientific enquiry to take its place within the corpus of theological disciplines. It is the conclusion of this paper that the presentation of the mystery of salvation to the world should be in terms of the sacred history of the inspired word of God, but that this presentation will only be safeguarded and balanced when an understanding of the terms of the mysteries proclaimed has been provided by the labors of a genuine systematic theology.

The manner in which the logic of history has shown that the reflections of systematic theology must complement the work of biblical theology has been well summarized recently by John Courtney Murray. It was inevitable, he pointed out, that enquiry should pass from the level of biblical notions or categories to that of what he aptly calls metaphysical "is-ness,"⁷ that is to say, to an enquiry into the ultimate terms of intelligibility or understanding; for being, or that which is formally constituted by "is-ness," is the specifying object of understanding or intellection.⁸ The teaching of the First Vatican Council must spring to mind in this context.⁹

The only satisfactory solution to the problem of the relationship between the various theological disciplines which we are discussing will be one which is based upon the realism which is inseparable from divine faith. Revelation, the truths of salvation-history, these concern reality. The intellectual commitment which divine faith requires is of immense epistemological implications; and the only genuine explanation of those truths, by way of a systematic theology such as we are describing, will be one which does not tamper with the reality: the truth cannot be changed and still remain truth. Only that systematic theology or interpretation of the intelligibility of the terms of the sacred mysteries is acceptable, therefore, which is carried out according to the principles expressing the ultimate constitution of reality itself.

⁷ John C. Murray, "On the Structure of the Problem of God," *THEOLOGICAL STUDIES* 23 (1962) 9-10: "How, in a word, are the scriptural affirmations to be understood? What is the full 'sense' of the Scripture? . . . The problem of Jesus moved into a new universe of discourse, which was not that of intersubjectivity but of metaphysic. The issue was still, in a sense, 'is-ness,' but in a new sense."

⁸ Cf. St. Thomas, *Sum. theol.*, 1, q. 55, a. 1; q. 79, a. 7; etc.

⁹ Cf. *DB* 1796.

Now it is a fact, which none can gainsay, that the Church has been presenting Christian truth to the world since the fourth century, as Fr. Murray's article recalls, and even earlier, in terms which express the Hellenistic mode of conceptualization. We must conclude—surely a cardinal principle in any theology of theology—that such a manner of conceptualization does not distort Christian truth.¹⁰

No one who is in the least sensible to the great achievements of biblical theology in our time will fail to recognize that the transition from the vigorously concrete Semitic mode of conceptualization to the more abstract Hellenistic mode has often involved a profound change of emphasis, that it has involved, too, a risk (not always recognized) of an unfortunate loss of vital contact with the sources of revelation as a historical reality, that some systematic theologians have tended to move their center of attention from the supernatural realities with which they were concerned to the metaphysical principles which were their instruments of theological investigation,¹¹ but, all of this notwithstanding, one must recognize that systematic theology is in vital continuity with a work of interpretation in which the magisterium of the Church itself has not been idle, a work which is indispensable to the Church in her mission.

It must be said that the limitations which this change of emphasis—scarcely recognized, it is true, in ages deprived of the benefits of Semitic studies such as we enjoy—imposed upon the Scholastic theologian are sometimes exaggerated, as the achievement of St. Thomas, who made contact with the revelation of the mystery of salvation through the Vulgate text, makes plain. But it must be recognized by the systematic theologian that he has much to gain from a genuine biblical theology, the study of revelation which traces the progressive definition of the biblical categories and sets out the integral economy of revelation. Karl Rahner has pointed out, for instance, some of the lacunae which are to be found in contemporary theological manuals through a lack of living contact with the findings of sound positive theology.¹²

¹⁰ Cf. J. Daniélou, *God and Us* (London, 1957) pp. 164–65.

¹¹ Concerning the taut liaison between the systematic theology of St. Thomas (exponent par excellence in this field) and salvation-history, cf. M.-D. Chenu, *Introduction à l'étude de saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris, 1950) pp. 59–60, 269–71, etc. Chenu notes (pp. 264–65) the dangers which we have mentioned. This work cannot be recommended too highly to those desirous of understanding the achievement of St. Thomas in its cultural continuity with his age—an understanding indispensable to one who wishes to distinguish that in St. Thomas' writings which reflects a passing vogue (e.g., the use of *auctoritates*) from that which is timeless. It is difficult to understand why such an invaluable work has not yet been made available to our students in an English version.

¹² Cf. *Theological Investigations* 1, 3.

To speak, therefore, of "Scholastic categories" as thought-forms which have a passing convenience, to treat them as an alternative to the biblical categories, is to open the door to a devastating relativism, to a "many-truth" outlook which is quite incompatible with the realism inseparable from the intellectual commitment required by divine faith.

Here, evidently, we have the basis of a theology of the Church's attitude to philosophies through the ages. Philosophy is but an ultimate interpretation, or appraisal, of our conceptualizations. In all ages the Church has embraced the philosophy of realism (be it imperfect, as in the case of Plato's philosophy, or more elaborated, as in that of Aristotle's), not as providing convenient thought-forms, but because (from the realistic viewpoint which is proper to her through her knowledge of faith) she has recognized their harmony with the truths of faith, particularly in their success in faithfully presenting the terms of the sacred mysteries according to their ultimate intelligibility. On the other hand, though per se she possesses no mandate to judge philosophies in themselves, the realism of her outlook leads her confidently to reject all philosophies which are incompatible with, or corrosive of, realism.

Many of those who display an impatience with "the Scholastic method" undermine one's confidence in their point of view by showing little discernment of the wide qualitative range of works which commonly go by that general name. In particular, many make no distinction between the genuine Scholastic method—of which St. Thomas is the great example—and the method employed by contemporary theological manuals. A theologian who goes beyond the scissors-and-paste snippets of the manuals to study St. Thomas in the original text will find that the study carried out by St. Thomas is as far removed from that of the contemporary manual as it is from the "baroque" Scholasticism which becomes absorbed in a metaphysical formalism and loses sight of the divine mysteries.¹³ St. Thomas, reverently presupposing the terms of the sacred mysteries (from his own biblical theology¹⁴), and taking as his instruments the principles of Aristotelian realism (i.e., presupposing, according to moderate realism, that the intelligible consistency of any object of understanding is the very consistency of reality itself), recognizing that the intelligible structure which the mind can recognize in reality as such must be realized (albeit analogically) in the supernatural reality of the mysteries themselves, sets out to probe the ultimate intelligibility of these mysteries for an understanding enriched by divine faith.¹⁵

¹³ Cf. Chenu, *Introduction*, p. 58.

¹⁴ Cf. Chenu, *ibid.*, pp. 23, 59, 133–34, etc.

¹⁵ Cf. Chenu, *ibid.*, p. 221, etc.

It must be made clear, moreover—notwithstanding a stereotype misconception—that the principal work of systematic theology is not the drawing of conclusions from revealed truths. Refer to the example of *sacrae doctrinae argumentatio* given by St. Thomas (*Sum. theol.* 1, q. 1, a. 8), and one will find that this example concerns the recognition of an intelligible nexus between two strictly supernatural mysteries (Christ's resurrection and our own). Charles Journet is faithful to the mind of St. Thomas in pointing out that the basic work of systematic theology is not the deduction of theological conclusions by medium of a natural premise, but the explanation of the truths of faith and their logical subordination.¹⁶

It seems just to conclude that those who express impatience with Scholasticism will do an injustice to the Church by discrediting an instrument which is indispensable to her mission, if they fail to make it clear that their criticism is leveled, not at Scholasticism as such, but at the defects of certain Scholastics. In general, it is characteristic of this defective Scholasticism that it fails to make the truth of the Christian mysteries of practical relevance in the life of the Mystical Body. Thus we are brought to the discussion of the third indispensable phase of theological enquiry.

PASTORAL THEOLOGY: UNDERSTANDING THE CHRISTIAN MYSTERIES
IN THEIR PRACTICAL REALIZATION

Let us recall what has been said already concerning the work of this member of theology. Faith's understanding of its object would be incomplete were it not to include a study of the manner in which the Christian mysteries come to realization in a concrete historical situation: the faith of the twentieth-century Church has not understood the Mystical Body of Christ as it ought, until it has grasped the manner in which that Mystical Body can, under God's grace, become a living twentieth-century reality. The practice, during the modern period of the Church's history, now drawing to a close, of presenting Catholic truth (even that taught in elementary catechisms) in the abstract terms of Scholastic theology, reveals a failure to bring to its logical completeness the movement of theological investigation. It is according to the nature of things—recall the comparison which was made with the disciplines of an integral philosophy—that once the understanding of the sacred mysteries according to the ultimate intelligibility of their terms has been acquired, the understanding should contemplate the mystery of salvation, not in the abstract notions of the conclusions of systematic theology, but in the richness of the kerygma of God's inspired word, as it bears upon the continuation of salvation-history in our own day.

In this regard, Johannes Hofinger has proposed a distinction, based upon

¹⁶ Cf. Charles Journet, *Introduction à la théologie* (Paris, 1947) pp. 100 ff.

"formal objects," of "Scholastic" and "kerygmatic" theologies.¹⁷ But it must be said, in reply, that the specifying formal object of sacred theology—i.e., *ipsum proprium quod est deitas*, the formal object in order to which all theological understanding is specified—admits of no such formal distinction.¹⁸ The distinction which Fr. Hofinger is seeking is to be found, as we have already pointed out, not in the object of study, but in the methodological instruments necessary to a complete science of that object. Karl Rahner, who has done much to redirect attention to the kerygmatic character of Christian truth, makes the more profound observation that the Christian mysteries do not stand in need of practical orientation; such an orientation is of their very nature. Where they fail to awaken a practical inspiration, one can only conclude that they have not been approached as realities.¹⁹

The neglect to return to the scriptural record of salvation-history, in which to contemplate the sacred mysteries, is often blamed upon the Scholasticism of the Middle Ages. This is historically inaccurate. In the time of St. Thomas, the bulk of theological instruction took the form of a commentary upon the inspired text.²⁰ The *Summa theologica*, key to the theological mind of St. Thomas, must be recognized as presupposing a biblical theology and maintaining a vital contact with scriptural revelation. This loss of contact with the Scriptures is characteristic, rather, of theological writings of the modern period. How is it explained? If the manuals and catechisms of this period are as dry as a treatise of geometry (I think the comparison is Frank Sheed's), the Christian truth they tell of, and in which their readers believed, is still the "good news"; if it takes on the air of an abstract intellectual problem (concerned with the *enuntiabile* rather than the *res*), this may well be accounted for by what Toynbee has described in another context as a "schism in the soul"²¹ of the authors of these works.

¹⁷ Cf. Johannes Hofinger, *The Art of Teaching Christian Doctrine* (Notre Dame, Ind., 1957) p. 243.

¹⁸ Cf. *Sum. theol.* 1, q. 1, aa. 3 and 7: "Quidam vero, attendentes ad ea quae in ista scientia tractantur, et non ad rationem secundum quam considerantur, assignaverunt aliter subjectum huius scientiae: vel res et signa; vel opera reparationis; vel totum Christum, idest caput et membra. De omnibus enim istis tractatur in ista scientia sed secundum ordinem ad Deum."

¹⁹ *Theological Investigations* 1, 7: "the strictest theology, that most passionately devoted to reality alone and ever on the alert for new questions, the most scientific theology, is itself in the long run the most kerygmatic." Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, in many ways so different from Fr. Rahner, inspired his students with an awareness of the reality of the theological object, recalling the words of St. Thomas: "actus credentis non terminatur ad enuntiabile, sed ad rem" (*Sum. theol.* 2-2, q. 1, a. 2, ad 2m).

²⁰ Cf. Chenu, *Introduction*, "Magister in sacra pagina," pp. 207-8.

²¹ Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History* 5 (Oxford, 1955) 376.

Caught up in the vigorous currents of a secularizing culture, the modern Catholic has often been the victim of a split spiritual allegiance, so that the secular values of the reigning culture—while not formally embraced—tend to confine the religious values to a narrow compartment of life and interest. The intellectual life of a Catholic in these circumstances can easily become the maintenance of a minimum which will save him from compromising himself; and it is not difficult to see how the science of faith, the *fides quaerens intellectum*, is bound to suffer in such cramping circumstances and to take on the air of dealing in intellectual problems, rather than the greatest issues of human existence. Nor is it difficult to see how the exigencies of apologetics have tended to invade all the theological treatises.

It was remarked above that this period is now drawing to a close. We base this assertion upon the fact that, though the ideas which have dominated the culture of the modern age—enlightenment, progress, secularism, sensism, etc.—languish on, “however long these tendencies may remain to stultify and imperil us they are already finished in the sense that their implications have now been fully developed, their real nature and consequences are no longer hidden, their inherent possibilities have been tried and their pretensions refuted by the events.”²² In a world which these ideas may stultify but which they no longer tyrannize, the Church enters into what Piux XII has described as a springtime of history.

Thus, our attention is directed to the broader problem of the manner in which the realization of the kingdom of God in every individual and in every age is conditioned by the rhythms and patterns of cultural change. Properly understood, it is the work of pastoral theology to concern itself with this problem.²³ In this phase, the final one, of investigation, faith uses as its instrument a disciplined understanding of human culture, whether it be that of the individual person (ascetical and mystical theology is concerned with the supernatural culture of the person, and remains incomplete if it neglects to take into account all that conditions that culture, particularly what is being established by recent advances in empirical psychology) or the human community (pastoral theology—in a specific sense, as opposed to the generic sense this name has when referring to this third phase of theology in its entirety—is concerned with the culture of a Christian community, in so far as it conditions the apostolate; missiology is concerned with

²² James McAuley, *The End of Modernity: Essays on Literature, Art and Culture* (Sydney, 1959) p. viii.

²³ It must be stressed that a practical, truly theological study of the liturgy is undoubtedly the principal task of pastoral theology. The valuable work being carried out in this field must become, as soon as possible, not a fringe interest of the theologian, but an integral part of his theological science. The same may be said of recent developments in catechetics.

the culture of a non-Christian community, in so far as this culture conditions the access of Christian truth to the people of this culture and its possible fruits²⁴).

The prospects which are opening for a pastoral theology which employs, as its instrument, the nascent discipline which has been called metahistory, the philosophy of sociocultural change, have as yet scarcely been recognized. For the first time in human experience, it has become possible for man, looking out over the complete span of human existence, to recognize and interpret the regularities of the development of human culture. We have seen only the beginning of writings which essay an interpretation of this new vision; but it is of great significance, in our present context, that the scholars who have given us these writings have invariably recognized the paramount role of religion in the molding of cultural achievements. The conclusions of such writers as Christopher Dawson, Arnold Toynbee, Eric Voegelin, and Mircea Eliade may be summed up in Dawson's words: "Religion is the key of history. We cannot understand the inner form of a society unless we understand its religion. We cannot understand its cultural achievements unless we understand the religious beliefs that lie behind them."²⁵

In the face of such a challenge, can the *fides quaerens intellectum* neglect the relevance of an understanding of human culture for the Mystical Body,

²⁴ The vision, in this field, of Ricci and de Nobili, the Jesuit missionaries who were men born before their time, is only now beginning to be appreciated. The writings of Fr. Thomas Berry provide a welcome contemporary lead; cf. "Our Need for Orientalists," *World-mission* 7 (1956) 301-14; "Oriental Philosophy and World Humanism," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 1 (1961) 5-33.

²⁵ Christopher Dawson, *Religion and Culture* (London, 1948) p. 50. Cf. Toynbee, *op. cit.* 7 (Oxford, 1955) 393: "The writer of this study had to confess that he . . . had been satisfied for many years with this rather patronizing view of the churches' role and nature (as useful and perhaps necessary, but secondary and transitional phenomena—'chrysalises'); . . . but he had come to believe that this was so small and unrepresentative a facet of the whole truth about universal churches as to be utterly misleading if it was mistaken for the whole of which it was in reality a minor part." Cf. Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics* (Chicago, 1952) p. 67: "The meaning of the anthropological principle must, therefore, be qualified by the understanding that not an arbitrary idea of man as a world-immanent being becomes the instrument of social critique but the idea of a man who has found his true nature through finding his true relation to God." Cf. Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (London, 1958) p. xi: "Because religion is human it must for that very reason be something social, something linguistic, something economic—you cannot think of man apart from language and society. But it would be hopeless to try to explain religion in terms of any one of those basic functions." In a recent review (*Review for Religious* 21 [1962] 391) of Eliade's more recent *Images and Symbols* (New York, 1961) we read: "Studies such as this . . . are of great value to every Christian and especially to missionaries, because they indicate what the natural elements are in the religious practices of different peoples. . . . These are expressions of the deepest aspirations of man, and as such will be respected by Christianity and brought to their fulfilment in Christ."

as a historical reality? If the "new science" has such a relevance, can the Church's pastoral theology fail to mature, finally, into a theology of history?

The considerations we have just been making provide a thought with which this essay may close. Karl Rahner has pointed out the basic principle which should guide all who are concerned with the problem of giving an orientation to the theology of our age. He writes: ". . . we hold that theology is an endeavour of the spirit and a science which has to be of service to its own time, just as it has or should have grown out of its own time. . . ."²⁶ Theology is faith seeking understanding, but seeking understanding in a mind formed by a determinate culture. A genuine theology must be in continuity with the culture of the age which produced it. Is there anything more characteristic of the culture of the contemporary mind than the awareness of historical time, a perception of cultural plurality? Over and above the consciousness of physical time which belongs to every rational creature, contemporary man is aware of the workings of the time process in human institutions; he sees in the development of those institutions a successive plurality of cultures; coming to appreciate the contemporaneous existence of venerable cultures, in which human persons find themselves immersed, he recognizes the inadequacy of the distinction "civilized/un-civilized." Theology cannot neglect this new-found awareness, if it is to be the genuine theology of our age; from it, on the other hand, the sacred sciences have much to expect. In fact, looking back over the three phases of theological enquiry with which this paper has been concerned, we may recognize the relevance of a maturing sense of cultural plurality in each of these phases.

Positive theology owes its recent advances to a discerning historical awareness of the cultural evolution through which God's revelation took form among men, and through which a definitive Christian truth has become incarnate in the successive eras which make up the Church's history. The culture of the Jewish people was from the same matrix as that of their Semitic neighbors. An awareness of this fact has brought out, as never before, both the genuine significance and the patently unique character of the Hebrew experience.

Systematic theology's relationship to positive theology will only be appreciated through an understanding of the transition from the realistic mode of conceptualization of one culture to that proper to another, given the lack of metaphysical analysis in the more rudimentary Hebrew conceptualization. The nature of things makes it clear that systematic theology is not conditioned by the existing cultural milieu to the extent to which the other branches are. There is, however, a real conditioning which no alert

²⁶ *Theological Investigations* 1, 2.

theologian can neglect. The genuinely realistic elements of any culture (a problem of no small magnitude, here, of discerning these) are capable of utilization in a systematic theology valuable to the people of that culture; indeed, they must be so utilized if that theology is to play its true role in the life of the community formed by that culture. This conditioning will touch, not so much the answers given, as the questions asked and the lines of interest explored.

With regard to pastoral theology, what has been said already should have made it clear that an understanding of cultural changes is the specific instrument used by faith in this phase of theology. In this regard, theologians cannot too often be reminded of the great principle enunciated by Pius XII to the Tenth International Congress of Historical Sciences:

The Catholic Church is not identified with any one culture; her essence forbids it. She is ready, however, to enter into relations with all cultures. She recognizes and leaves to subsist whatever in these cultures is not opposed to nature. To each, however, she brings in addition the truth and the grace of Jesus Christ, and thus confers upon them a profound resemblance: it is by this very means that she makes the most effective contribution to bringing peace to the world.²⁷

It is the duty and the privilege of the pastoral theologian to look to the implementing of this principle in the concrete situation of the Church.

It is easier to criticize the texts in current use in the teaching of theology than it is to provide a substitute. No one can deny, however, that the principles which must guide the preparation of future texts must be made clear as soon as possible. The present state of theological science is making it less and less feasible that one author should be capable of preparing a text suitable to serve as basis for the theological formation of our students. Such a text—a *summa* of our time—must be the work of experts in the three distinct phases we have outlined. Their collaboration must ensure the organic continuity of the three phases, each of which is indispensable to the Church. Once such an integration has been achieved, in a theology aware of its relevance to historical reality, is it not possible that the basis will have been provided for a broader integration of the many disciplines which make up the curriculum of our students—liturgy, canon law, history, etc.—providing a formation which is fundamentally theological, in the best sense of the word?

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²⁷ Allocution of Sept. 7, 1955; *The Pope Speaks* 2 (1955) 213.