

TOWARDS A THEOLOGY FOR THE LAYMAN

THE PROBLEM OF ITS FINALITY

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THE question of theology for the laity has been receiving an increasing amount of attention of late. Several public discussions have concerned themselves with it; it has been much mooted in private; some writing has been done;¹ and a number of programs have been launched, either in schools or among groups of adults. One can perhaps discern the beginnings of a sort of "theological movement."²

Most of the discussion of the subject has risen in connection with the Catholic theory of education, and has centered about the position of primacy that theology should claim in the objective pattern of higher studies, by reason of its character as a science, as the queen of sciences, and as the architectonic science that should govern and guide and give unity to the whole pattern.³ Among Catholics there can hardly be any serious divergence of opinion with regard to this rather theoretical issue. In Protestant circles, too, the principle of the indispensable value of theological science, and the necessity of its introduction into a sound educational system, have been recognized.⁴

It seems to me, however, that too little attention has been paid to the properly theological issue raised by the title, "Theology for Lay-

¹ During the last decade, there were tentatives made in German towards manuals of higher religious instruction that would be at once more theological and more "lay" in character (cf. *Où en est l'enseignement religieux*, Paris, Casterman, 1937, pp. 238-45). One of the more widely read, *Kleine Laiendogmatik*, by L. von Rudloff, has been translated into English as *Everyman's Theology* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1942).

² The Holy See itself has given something more than encouragement to the idea that the theological instruction of the laity should keep pace with their advance in secular learning; cf. *Deus Scientiarum Dominus*: "It is very necessary that those of the faithful who show themselves more apt for advanced study in the sciences, and, particularly, chosen students for the sacred ministry . . . should be seriously devoted to the sacred disciplines . . ." (*AAS*, XXIII, 1931, 245-46).

³ Most recently, C. Vollert, S.J., "Theology and University Education," *Modern Schoolman*, XXI (1943), 12-25.

⁴ Cf. the thoughtful article by D. Elton Trueblood, "The Place of Theology in a University," *Religion and Life*, XI (1942), 510-20. The author makes the excellent point that in a university theology should be taught "chiefly to the faculty."

men."⁵ One may well ask: What, concretely, would such a theology be, that it may be at once a proper theology, and a theology for laymen? Ordinarily, the suggestions along this line have been extremely general. Dr. Phelan, for instance, confines himself to saying that in the curriculum of the Catholic college theology should receive a "scientific treatment proportioned to the capacities of the college student, and analogous to the scientific treatment commonly given to other subjects in the curriculum." It should be "less detailed than the theological courses in a seminary, where priests are given the technical training required for the discharge of the sacred ministry," and "less profound than the advanced courses offered by the faculty of theology of a university."⁶

Father Connell has defined the desired theology for laymen as "that harmonious blending of revelation and reason which will provide the college student with that attitude toward his religion which St. Paul calls a reasonable service." Theology in this sense, he maintains, is a necessary aid to the lay apostolate, which he conceives (rather narrowly, one must say) as the fulfillment of the laity's "right and duty to proclaim and defend the truths of faith." In his view, "emphasis must be placed primarily on that department of theology known as apologetics"; and even dogmatic subjects "must be viewed primarily from the apologetic standpoint." For advanced students he recommends an elective course, "far more technical, far more comprehensive" than the ordinary college course. Such a course would be valuable in view of the "tremendous possibilities within the power of the trained lay theologian toward spreading Christ's Kingdom on earth," through the medium of literature, law, social work, etc.⁷

In a brilliant chapter Gilson has illuminated, more profoundly than the previous two writers, the necessity of theology for laymen. "We stand," he says, "before a new problem, which demands a new solu-

⁵Moreover, the pedagogical problem has been so far quite overlooked. Yet it will be far more serious in a lay course than it is in the seminary course, by reason of their differing finalities. This subject will come up again.

⁶G. B. Phelan, "Theology in the Curriculum of Catholic Colleges and Universities," in *Man and Modern Secularism* (New York: National Catholic Alumni Federation, 1940), pp. 130, 134.

⁷F. J. Connell, C.S.S.R., "Theology in Catholic Colleges as an Aid to the Lay Apostolate," in *Man and Modern Secularism*, pp. 144-45, 147, 149.

tion. In the Middle Ages the sciences were the privilege of clerics, those who by their state were also the possessors of the science of theology. There was no problem for them. Today, in consequence of an evolution whose steps we cannot here trace, those who know theology are no longer those who profess the sciences, and those who profess the sciences, even when they do not despise theology, see nothing unbecoming in ignorance of it." For the Catholic, however, the situation is abnormal: "One can be a scientist, a philosopher, or an artist without having studied theology, but without theology one cannot be a Christian philosopher, scientist, or artist. Without it, one could well be a Christian on the one hand, and, on the other, a scientist, philosopher, or artist; but without it our Christianity will never descend into our science, our philosophy, and our art, interiorly to reform and vivify them." In the cultured mind, theology is an inner demand, as well for the benefit of one's culture as of one's Christianity. On the degree and kind of theology required Gilson is very brief; to him, it is less a question of an extensive knowledge than of profound assimilation of a few principles. He adds: "It is the work of the teaching Church, not of the Church taught, to choose these principles, to organize a course, and to give it to those whom she judges worthy of it. But if the Church taught may not by any means pretend to teach, it can at least submit its demands and make known its needs."⁸ This last remark is, I think, excellently well taken.

Most recently, M. Maritain has adverted to the necessity of theology in the curriculum of higher studies. In outlining the latter, he has recommended that "a theological course should be given during the last two or three years of the humanities—a course which by its sharply intellectual and speculative nature is quite different from the religious training received by youth in another connection." In the university, moreover, theology should be an elective, and its teaching "should remain thoroughly distinct from the one given in religious seminaries, and be adapted to the intellectual needs of laymen; its aim should not be to form a priest, a minister, or a rabbi, but to enlighten students of secular matters about the great doctrines and perspectives of theological wisdom. The history of religions should form an important

⁸ E. Gilson, "L'Intelligence au service du Christ-Roi," in *Christianisme et philosophie* (Paris: Vrin, 1936), pp. 163-65.

part of the curriculum." M. Maritain's case for the necessity of such courses derives implicitly from his concept of the aim of education. As the highest wisdom, theology should be a supremely determinant factor in the shaping of the human personality; in particular, its teaching must be part of the process of "conveying to [the student] the spiritual heritage of the nation and civilization in which he is involved, and preserving in this way the century-old achievements of generations." His point is that "theological problems and controversies have permeated the whole development of Western culture and civilization, and are still at work in its depths, in such a way that the one who would ignore them would be fundamentally unable to grasp his own time and the meaning of its internal conflicts."⁹

It will be admitted that all of these suggestions are rather lacking in precision and detail. With at least one of them—the desirability of a predominantly apologetic emphasis in the theological instruction of the layman—I must disagree, for reasons that will appear. At all events, it might be useful to attempt to sketch a theory that should preside over the construction and communication of such instruction.

In general, two ways of considering the problem suggest themselves. First, there is the view of those who regard it simply as a rhetorical problem. This view maintains that a theology for the laity is simply the product of a process of abbreviating and simplifying the scientific course of the seminary, and then "writing it down" to the level of the layman, the college or university student. For my part, I regard this view as quite superficial. Such popularization (say, of the *Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas, or of some theological manual) has its own proper, doubtless very considerable, merits. But I do not think it is the answer to the problem of an academic course in theology for the layman. This problem seems to me to be intimately theological, for the general reason touched on by M. Maritain, that the theological instruction given to layman "should remain thoroughly distinct from the one given in religious seminaries."¹⁰ This distinction will hardly be maintained in its full validity if the two courses differ merely in their rhetorical mode of presentation (the lay course being given in

⁹J. Maritain, *Education at the Crossroads* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943), pp. 73-74; 82-83; cf. p. 10.

¹⁰*Op. cit.*, p. 83.

simpler language, illumined by more homely metaphors, or perhaps accompanied by figures and diagrams), or if the difference is simply in the fact that the seminary course is "more detailed," etc.

I wish to suggest that the distinction is much more profound, and that it derives from a set of properly theological considerations. My central contention could perhaps be sketched in these general terms. It rests on two cardinal principles. The first is that theology is an essentially ecclesiastical science; it is social in its origin, in the collective faith of the Church; and it is social in its function—it exists for the benefit of the life of the Church, for the building up of her Body. "Theology," as Bilz says, "does not exist for its own sake; rather, it stands in the service of religion and the Church. As a rule, one studies theology in order to employ in the service of the Church the knowledge one gains."¹¹

The second principle is that the service to be rendered to the Church by priest and layman is quite different; there is an essential difference between the two ranks, and each has its own proper duties and responsibilities, its own function in the Church, its own life. These two principles must be taken into account in discussing the question of a theology for laymen. Together, they suggest the conclusion that a theology for laymen will have its own proper finality, quite different from the finality of the course given to the cleric. It must be related to the function of the layman in the Church, and (be it noted) to this function as it has been defined with new clarity and completeness in our present age. And the further conclusion follows, that in consequence of its own particular finality, the lay course will have to be organized as a very specially constructed *corpus doctrinae*, whose structural lines will differ considerably from those commonly employed in the seminary course. Moreover, its content, its proportions, its emphases, and its method will all have to be controlled according to quite distinctive norms. "Finis est ratio et mensura omnium quae sunt ad finem."

This, I say, is my general contention. In the present article I wish to take the first steps towards a demonstration of it, first, by considering the function of theology in the Church, as it has traditionally been conceived (this consideration will serve at the same time to set

¹¹*Einführung in die Theologie* (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 1935), p. 118; cf. pp. 27-30.

in relief the specific finality of the clerical course); and secondly, by describing the special function of the layman in the Church (this description will suggest the conclusion that a course in theology designed for laymen must have its own specific finality). A later article will undertake, first, to detail the special characteristics that a lay course must exhibit in virtue of its special finality, and, secondly, to outline such a course, with particular reference to the college level.

It will not be antecedently necessary to go into the recent controversies over the nature of theology, its title to the name of science, etc.¹² For our purposes, we may be content with the commonly accepted definition of it as "the science of faith," whose formal object is "that which is knowable in what is believed" (*scibile in credito*), understanding, of course, that this knowability accrues to the object as seen under the light of faith.¹³ Moreover, I shall have in view only dogmatic theology, not moral or canon law. Finally, to forestall an objection, let me say that the exposition that follows is frankly idealistic; however, I think that its idealism is that of the Church herself, as she has let it transpire in her official utterances on the study of theology.

THEOLOGY IN THE SERVICE OF THE MAGISTERIUM

Authors who discuss the question of the necessity of theology are accustomed to state, as a commonplace, that this necessity falls primarily on the Church, and only contingently on any of her members, inasmuch, namely, as they come to partake of her magisterial and pastoral function. Sylvius, for example, says: "Inasmuch as theology involves, beyond the possession of the principles [the articles of faith], also a knowledge whereby the principles may be in some fashion explained and conclusions drawn from them, it is not necessary to the individual, either by necessity of means or of precept [for, he says, no such precept exists, and many have been saved who were not theologians]; it is, however, necessary for the Church, the Christian republic, by both types of necessity."¹⁴ The necessity of precept is in-

¹²Cf. C. Boyer, S.J., "Qu'est-ce que la théologie," *Gregorianum*, XXI (1940), 255-66; also the interesting book by L. Charlier, O.P., *Essai sur le problème théologique* (Remgal, Thuillies, 1938).

¹³Cf. Bilz, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

¹⁴*Commentarius in Primam Partem S. Thomae*, q. 1, a. 1 (ed. 2a, Duaci, 1641, p. 4).

volved in the will of Christ that there be in His Church pastors and doctors; theological science is necessary to their office. The necessity of means derives from the very character of divine revelation; its meaning must, indeed, be grasped by the Church that it may be presented adequately; but its meaning is often obscure, and must be elaborated by intelligence operating under the light of faith.¹⁵

Even from this limited point of view, theology presents itself as an essentially ecclesiastical science, whose function must be regarded primarily in social perspectives. Theology must exist in the Church; it must also exist for the Church, to serve her needs—fundamentally her need to teach the word of God. For this reason, as Petavius pointed out, “it must properly reside in those who are the overseers and directors of the Church and of ecclesiastical teaching, and whose office it is to pass sentence in matters of Christian and Catholic faith in solemn councils, lawfully convoked, and to set for others the norms of belief. These are the bishops and hierarchs.”¹⁶ The conclusion would be that the simple priest is under the necessity of being trained as a theologian because of his association in the magisterial office of the bishop.

That theology has traditionally been conceived in relation to the *magisterium* of the Church, and in function of the needs of the *magisterium*, is further evidenced by the fact that the authorities of the Church have always exercised control over the teaching of theology.¹⁷ The Church knows her own needs, and must insist that theology stay in contact with them. Therefore she imposes concern for them on those who are to be accredited as her official teachers. Their course of studies is not to be determined in accordance with the academic tastes or preferences of the individual professor or student, but in accordance with the objective needs of the teaching Church. The whole program of studies is designed to equip a member of the *Ecclesia docens* for the right understanding and discharge of his public office. It is essentially a professional course.

My immediate point is that this social and professional finality of theology, deriving from its relation to the *magisterium* of the Church,

¹⁵Cf. Hugon, *Tractatus Dogmatici*, I, *De Deo* (ed. 11a, Paris, 1933), p. 7: “Si nomine doctrinae sacrae intelligitur theologia, licet necessaria non sit singulis ad salutem, necessaria tamen est ipsi Ecclesiae ad fidei conservationem.”

¹⁶*Dogmata Theologica*, I, *De Deo*, Proleg., IX (Paris: Vivès, 1865, p. 54).

¹⁷Cf. *Deus Scientiarum Dominus*, AAS, XXIII (1931), p. 245.

profoundly determines the character of the course given to clerics. This is true in one dominant respect. The needs of the teaching Church have, indeed, varied from time to time, but she has always had one supreme need, which manifested itself early in her history, and has continued to grow more exigent since. I mean her need for speculative theology, the creation of what may be called, with Grabmann, the Scholastic method in a general historical sense: "Scholastic method, by the use of reason and philosophy in the field of revealed truth, proposes to gain the clearest possible insight into the content of faith, in order to bring supernatural truth into relation with the reflective intelligence of man, to make possible a total and synthetic presentation of the saving truth, and to be able to defend the content of revelation against the difficulties brought from the standpoint of reason."¹⁸

It is true that the Modernist crisis taught the Church the necessity of a new emphasis on positive theology—the methodical determination of what truths are contained in divine revelation, how they are therein contained, what were the stages and laws of their development, how they have been in the possession of the Church throughout her history. And this need was inculcated by Pius X.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the distinctive note of theology, as it is prescribed by the Church for those who are to be the official carriers of her thought, must still be its Scholasticism, its speculative character, its strong intellectualism, shown in the effort at the intelligence and organization of the content of faith by the use of reason and philosophy.²⁰ For example, the twenty-fifth General Congregation of the Society of Jesus, held in 1906, prescribed that: "After the dogmas have been sensibly but solidly established from the sources of revelation, let Scholastic method and doctrine be followed; for this is to be assisted, and not overwhelmed, by the sciences which are called positive, and by arguments drawn from positive sources."²¹ After the Apostolic Constitution *Deus Scientiarum Dominus*, the late General of the Society declared that this prescription can now be urged "by ecclesiastical law"; for "it is clearly the mind of the Church, newly

¹⁸*Geschichte der scholastischen Methode* (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 1907), I, 36–37.

¹⁹Cf. *Pascendi*: "Maior profecto quam antehac positivae theologiae ratio est habenda; id tamen sic fiat ut nihil scholastica detrimenti capiat" (*AAS*, XL, 1907, 641).

²⁰Cf. Pius XI, *Officiorum Omnium*, *AAS*, XIV (1922), 454–56; *Unigenitus Dei Filius*, *ibid.*, XVI (1924), 144–45.

²¹*Collect. Decret.*, d. 94; ex *Congreg. Gen. XXV* (1906), d. 14, n. 3.

insisted on, that clerics at all costs must be solidly instructed in Scholastic philosophy and theology in accordance with the mind of St. Thomas,²² and that this instruction should not be hindered by the new emphasis on positive theology.

A double reason, external and internal, has created this need of the Church for speculative theology. There was, first, an external, polemical reason. In its farthest origins, the Scholastic method, as Grabmann has pointed out,²³ was the necessary consequence of the encounter of divine truth and human intelligence, which is natively philosophical, and likewise natively proud, desirous of being itself the supreme arbiter of human thought and life. The encounter early took the form of a clash. / Already in the second century, an heretical gnosis, with pretensions at being the supreme wisdom, sought to absorb and supplant the new Christian wisdom. Later, the Neo-Platonism of Alexandria and the Aristotelianism of Antioch each wrought its own deformations of the word of God. And in the defense of the faith against rationalist incursions reason and philosophy necessarily had to play a role. The first tentatives were, indeed, unsure, and at times mistaken; for the philosophic instruments of the time were defective. But as early as the Apologetes the immense task of theology had been begun, and with Irenaeus Christian theology can be said to have been founded. It undertook, first, a task of philosophically exact conceptualization (e.g., of the relation between the Father and His Word, and of the unity of Christ). Secondly, it had to organize the truths and precepts of Christianity into "a majestic, Christocentric system. . . a unity and order full of living interrelations and of the sublimest teleology,"²⁴ to oppose itself as an organic system to rival pagan and heretical systems. Finally, there was the most difficult task of all, not to be achieved for centuries, and, in a sense, not ever to be definitively achieved. I mean the organization of the two orders of truth—the human truth of philosophy and science, and the divine truth of revelation—into a unity in which the distinction of orders and their hierarchy would be preserved.

Speculative theology was also the result of a second, inner need of the Church. Historically, of course, the origins of theology were bound up

²²*Acta Romana*, VII (1934), 782.

²³*Op. cit.*, I, pp. 61-76.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 63.

with the conversion of philosophers, men trained in conceptualization and in the organization of thought. In their own minds they experienced the need of mental unity. Their faith could not simply subsist alongside of their philosophy, much less in contradiction with it; vital relations had to be established between the two. But their personal experience was simply the manifestation of a necessity for theology that is inherent in the very nature of faith and intelligence. Divine truth was not given to the Church as a system of abstract concepts static in their clarity, dead by their remoteness from the drama of human life and destiny. Rather, *semen est verbum Dei*, and growth is the law of its life. Furthermore, this living truth was inserted in human intelligence, the collective intelligence of the Church; and consequently its growth was engaged in the workings of the intellect's native dynamism towards the assimilation of all that is real. A double process, therefore, necessarily ensued. There was, first, the process of faith itself striving to grow, to come into ever more perfect possession of its object, the living God, dwelling in His Church; and striving, consequently, to express itself in concepts and propositions ever more explicit and precise, ever more consciously opposed to erroneous or defective formulations. The result has been the growth of what we call dogmatic formulae—a growth realized at the interior of the Church's faith.

But, together with this growth in faith itself—in its adhesion to its object and in its expression of its object—there also was set afoot a second and distinct process, the effort of reason and intelligence *suo modo* to assimilate the content of the word of God. Faith is, indeed, *sacrificium intellectus*; by it the intellect is captured, made obedient to the authority of God. Nevertheless, faith is not to extinguish intellect. The precept of Augustine to Consentius, "Intellectum valde ama!" is, as he implies, a divine command.²⁵ God spoke to man in man's own language, and He wills that, once His message has been accepted by faith, its sense should be understood and its every virtuality explored as fully as possible. This will of His, which is conformed to the very nature of intelligence, gives man the right, and indeed¹ the duty, to devote his human mind, with all its techniques and tools of

²⁵*Epist. CXX, ad Consentium, III, 13 (PL, XXXIII, 459).*

thought, to the service of faith, and, within the limits of the obedience of faith, to give rein to his mind's native exigence for understanding.

Moreover, this task of constructing a science of faith is not just facultative; it must be done in the Church and by the Church, as the price of survival of her faith. There is a real tension between *au-toritas* and *ratio*, and unless it is maintained within the framework of a vigorous, ever living and growing theological science, the result is disaster for both faith and reason alike. Historically, this has been so. The Church has needed theological science in order to resist two opposed, but equally disintegrating tendencies—rationalism and irrationalism, the tendency to over-intellectualize faith or to de-intellectualize it. In Arius and the Macedonians the former early threatened to deliver mankind over to a Son and a Spirit, who, as Athanasius and the Cappadocians well saw, could not save us. The latter, in Pelagius, threatened to dissolve the complex mystery of the Christian life into a very simple and understandable, but religiously barren naturalism and moralism.

This latter tendency is quite as dangerous as the former. In modern times we have evidence enough to know that every attempt to return to the *simplex piscatorum fides*, stripped of all Scholastic intellectualism, has always resulted in the decay of faith itself. The Church, therefore, has recognized in the sane and controlled intellectualism of Scholastic theology, as best typified in the Angelic Doctor, the indispensable bulwark of her faith, and the faithful ally of her *magisterium*.²⁶ Ultimately, the reason is that the supreme thing about revealed truth which the Church must protect is the sheer fact of its revelation; and, with seeming paradox, she cannot do this without an intense preoccupation with human reason, and the utilization, towards a fuller intelligence of faith, of all the resources of philosophy. Finally, from another angle, too, we see the intimate relation between theology and the *magisterium* of the Church; the foes of one are, as Pius X said, normally the foes of the other: “. . . it is certain that eagerness for [doctrinal] revolution has always been joined with a hatred of the Scholastic method.”²⁷

²⁶Cf. Leo XIII, *Aeterni Patris*: “. . . magna est philosophiae laus, quod fidei propugnaculum ac veluti firmum religionis munimentum habeatur” (*Leonis Papae XIII . . . Acta Praecipua*, ed. Desclée, 1887, I, 97).

²⁷*Pascendi*, *ASS*, XL (1907), 636.

And, on her part, the Church has always believed in the proportion: what dogma is to the life of the individual, Scholastic theology is to the life of the Church. The point of the proportion is that each supplies that inner, intellectual "core of hardness" that keeps the religious life of one and the other ever capable of renewal, constantly resistant to decay.

The conclusion from all this may be put in the axiom, *anima Ecclesiae naturaliter scholastica*. With it in mind, we may go on to a more complete statement of the distinctive finality of the clerical course in theology. I have said that it is essentially a professional course, not primarily designed to meet the particular and personal needs that might arise from some particular exigencies of the student's own religious or mental life, or from the prevision of some concrete work that he may expect to do. Rather, it is primarily designed in view of the teaching Church's need for an intelligence of her own faith, in order that she may properly discharge her magisterial office. I may add now that it is a cause predominantly intellectual in its finality; in its distinctive and culminating feature, it is designed to meet the Church's need for a philosophic intelligence of her own faith, in order that in the discharge of her magisterial office she may preserve the stability and vitality that only a strongly philosophical intelligence of faith can assure her.

At this point, lest there be misunderstanding, two precisions must be introduced. By its very definition, theology must contain a double value—an intellectual value as a science, and a religious value as the science of faith, an intelligence of the Gospel that is "the power of salvation unto them that believe."²⁸ Moreover, though it exists for the Church, it exists also in and for the individual. Hence, in emphasizing the impersonal (or better, social) and intellectual finality of the clerical course, I do not mean to overlook its personal and religious finality. No more than, if I should insist on the social and official character of the sacrificial act of the Mass, I should therefore minimize the fact that the whole personality of the priest is engaged in it and prof-

²⁸The intimate relation between *theologia* and *pietas* has been a commonplace for development, traditional since St. Augustine, and most frequently carried out in dependence on his famous dictum, which runs all through Scholastic expositions of the notion of theology: "Huic scientiae . . . illud solum tribuitur quo fides saluberrima, quae ad veram beatitudinem ducit, gignitur, nutritur, defenditur, roboratur" (*De Trinitate*, XIV, 1, 3); cf. Pius XI, *Studiorum Ducem*, AAS, XV (1923), 309-10; 315.

its from it. My point is to maintain right perspectives, through the lack of which theological science is sometimes misunderstood.

First, therefore, let me add that the young cleric's approach to theology is intensely personal. But, paradoxically, his deepest personal need is to make the needs of the Church his own personal needs. He cannot begin to theologize otherwise than by installing himself at the heart of the Church, in personal contact by his living faith with the divine reality that dwells in her. "He must," as Charlier has finely said, "incorporate into himself [the whole of revealed truth], and live it in communion with the whole Church, whose experience of faith, accumulated in her heart throughout the ages of her life, he must himself assimilate."²⁹ Positive theology puts him in the way of doing this. Jungmann states its goal thus: "The objective certainty of the Church, as the 'pillar and ground of truth' (I Tim. 3:5), must become in him [the priest] subjective-psychological certainty, gained no longer simply by gazing at Mother Church, on whose brow her children see the signs of her divine origin, but now also by having won an insight into the history and meaning of the two thousand years of spiritual combat that has raged around the Church on diverse fronts."³⁰ Possessing this certainty, the priest will speak out of the fullness of it, and the faithful will hear in his voice the echo of the Church's own certainty, the conquering accents of God's own Word. The teaching Church needs must speak in such serenely authoritative accents, for the faithful need to hear them; and by his positive theology the cleric seeks to acquire them. From its study he aims to emerge with a faith newly vitalized by contact with its sources, newly conscious of itself and of its conquering power. He becomes a "major in fide," in whose faith the "minores" may securely believe.³¹

Furthermore, he pursues another aim. *Anima Ecclesiae naturaliter scholastica*—of this truth his positive theology will already have given him a glimpse. His second effort, therefore, must be to make this Scholastic mind his own—not merely to know Scholasticism, but to be a Scholastic, to experience interiorly the exigence that exists at the

²⁹*Essai sur le problème théologique*, p. 76.

³⁰*Die Frohbotschaft und unsere Glaubensverkündigung* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1936), p. 58.

³¹Cf. II-II, q. 2, a. 7.

heart of the Church for an intelligence of faith through philosophic reflection. Actually, without this inner experience, speculative theology will risk doing him at least as much harm as good. But the years of philosophic training and learning that the Church prescribes as a preparation for theology have supposedly led him to this experience. They will have given him a great respect for human reason, a confidence in it, together with a profound humility in its exercise; a drive toward clarity in conceptualization, together with a realization that clarity can be quite deceptive; an instinct for basing his thought on the real, and the power to carry a thought through with sensitive logic; the need for thinking in wholes, for the organization of truth with truth; a sense for analogy, and particularly a sense of the utter otherness of the divine mode of being; an intimate conviction that philosophy is but a partial wisdom, open to completion; above all, a sense for the problematic, a capacity sharply to feel the antinomies between truth and truth that necessarily force themselves upon an intelligence that is abstractive in its processes; finally, a metaphysic so firmly possessed that it may be used as an instrument for the penetration and construction of revealed truth. I suppose that, in the concrete, speculative theology often fails to achieve its proper end because of defects in the philosophic preparation that is its necessary presupposition.³² But here I am speaking of the ideal, with a view to detaching the "idea" of the clerical course in theology. This "idea" is certainly to develop in the cleric a reflective and philosophical intelligence of faith, born of the experience of an inner need for such an intelligence—a need that is native to the teaching Church, and that must be transferred to the teachers in the Church.

This intelligence is, in a sense, an end in itself. The finality of the intellect is assimilation to the real. Hence I said that the clerical course in theology pursues a predominantly intellectual end. Yet it must be emphasized that this intelligence is also of its nature immensely vital and of high religious value. Precisely as intelligence, it is, as the Vatican Council said, "most fruitful." But here, I believe, one must distinguish between the vitality and religious value of the Scholastic synthesis as a synthesis, and the vitality and religious value of its particular parts. I would be prepared to defend the latter; for ex-

³²Cf. Pius XI, *Unigenitus Dei Filius*: "... ex inscio imperitoque philosopho fieri nunquam doctum theologum posse" (*AAS*, XVI, 1924, 145).

ample, there is, I believe, no more vitally religious idea than that of the subsistent relation, the cardinal notion in Trinitarian theology, and the most difficult notion in the whole field of speculative theology. Once it is penetrated, it becomes a profoundly dynamic idea, that casts a singular illumination upon the life of God in Himself, and upon our life in God, which is a "participation in the eternal Sonship." Nevertheless, the vitality of particular parts of Scholastic theology differs, and it is not exactly fair to put, in the first instance, what may be called "crucial experiments," as, for example: What is the religious value of a theory of quasi-formal causality in its application to the genesis of the created reality of sanctifying grace? The question is not fair, because the answer is not a proper subject for argument. If one has actually grasped this piece of metaphysical speculation, no argument about its vitality is necessary; one sees it, and the act of intelligence is itself a religious experience. On the other hand, if one has failed to grasp it, argument is useless.

I should prefer to insist, however, that the major religious value of Scholastic theology resides, not in its particular speculations, but in the synthesis of all revealed truth, and of revealed truth and philosophic truth, that it is designed to fashion. It is this intelligence of faith that the Vatican calls most fruitful. And (be it noted) its fruitfulness is *per prius* in the intellectual order. It is fruitful in the strength and stability that it gives to the student's philosophical and religious thought. It is fruitful, too, in a power of discernment between truth and the half-truth which is error, and in a power of analysis that can segregate the one from the other—again an intellectual fruit, of high religious value. Again, it is fruitful in a freedom, a facility, an articulateness in the presentation of divine truth, and in its application to the mental and spiritual needs of the Church. Not only has each truth been analyzed to the ultimate degree of clarity that it admits, proceeding from the metaphorical and analogical language of revelation, to the transposition of its content into metaphysical terms, then back to the metaphor itself, now made newly meaningful; but, what is more important, all individual truths have been organized into an organic whole according to definite structural principles, and their vital interrelations have been clarified to explicitness, so that the certainty and value of each truth is confirmed by that of all the others and by the solidity of

the whole edifice itself. The result is that the theologian acquires that sure intellectual mastery of the Gospel which alone enables him to make it the "power of God for salvation to all who believe." What he will teach, of course, is the Gospel, not theology; but he will teach it out of the reflective insight into its meaning that is the product of theology.³⁸ Actually, it seems to me, this background of philosophic intelligence possessed by the Church is, in the designs of God, the providential substitute that supplies by analogy for those extraordinary manifestations of the Spirit's indwelling in the ministers of the Church which accompanied the apostolic teaching. Both supply what St. Paul calls power (I Cor. 2:4-6). After the era of charisms in the infant Church, the Holy Spirit reveals Himself in the mature Church by her progressively growing intelligence of her faith; this is itself a testimony to His indwelling in her.

We should go on now to consider how the predominantly intellectual finality of the clerical course in theology determines certain aspects of the course. It transpires, first, in the rigid logic of the approach to the science. Logically, the initial position is accorded to fundamental theology, the critical reflection of the believer on the philosophical and historical foundations of his faith, and their stringent demonstration. This initial position is accorded more readily because of two suppositions that the clerical course makes. The first is that the student is already familiar with Scholastic metaphysics, and that he has acquired the philosophic mind, a capacity for reflective and critical thought. The second is that the young cleric (seminarian or religious) is not only somewhat mature in faith, but is at the same time subject to a religious discipline, a life of prayer and ascetical exercise, whereby his interior life is being methodically strengthened. His faith, therefore,

³⁸Obviously, scientific theology is not designed to be a proximate preparation for preaching; its "practicality" in this regard is only remote. Between the classroom and the pulpit there are several steps to be taken. A discussion as to the best way of negotiating them was recently loosed by a remarkable chapter, "Glaubensverkündigung und theologische Wissenschaft," in Jungmann's book, already quoted in note 30. The discussion centered on the legitimacy and the possible structure of an intermediate science which would stand between the theology of the classroom and the word of God as proclaimed to the Christian people, and which (with material and formal homiletics) would be the proximate preparation of the herald of the Gospel. Later I hope to discuss the merits of this so-called *Theologie der Verkündigung*.

is rendered proof against the impact of scientific apologetics, which, when taught with critical honesty, can be disconcerting.

Again, the intellectual dynamic of the course reveals itself in the severity of its method—in positive theology, the method of the thesis and its formal “proof,” with the reply to adversaries; and in speculative theology, the critical examination of variant opinions, and the exact demonstration of the one to be preferred. Furthermore, the auxiliary disciplines are designed to assist towards an intellectually more satisfying grasp of revelation in its sources and development. Finally, the orientation of the clerical course towards a scientific insight into the truth reveals itself in the plan and pattern of the course—the ordering of the various treatises—and in the proportion of development given to certain truths. To use Mr. Adler’s distinction, the principle of construction is the objective order of subject matters, not the subjective order of discovery or learning.³⁴ For instance, the treatise on the Trinity precedes that on the Incarnation, though it was by the Incarnation that we “discovered” the Trinity; similarly, the treatise on the elevation and fall of man is given a logical precedence over that on the redemption, though it is only through a knowledge of what Christ restored that we “discovered” what Adam had and lost; again, a treatise on the sacraments in general precedes discussion of the individual sacraments, though it is simply an induction from the latter; then, too, all the sacraments are grouped together in one treatise, though they do not appear all together in revelation or in the life of the Church. All these details of disposition, and many others, are quite logical, which is exactly what they are supposed to be. Whether they are equally satisfactory from the standpoint of the psychology of the student and certain norms of religious pedagogy, is another question, but one with which theological science as such does not concern itself. Its aim is to reveal the inner logic of the scientific structure of faith; its pattern derives from the ontological order of the truths of faith; its standpoint, so far as possible, is that of the eternal decrees of God, not the historical order of their revelation; in its structure, as well as in its matter and its certitude, it is a science subalternate to God’s own vision of Himself and all things else.

³⁴M. J. Adler, “The Order of Learning,” *Catholic School Journal*, XLI (1941), 334–36.

Further, within the individual treatises those points of doctrine receive major development which create particular difficulty for the philosophic intelligence: the processions in the inner life of God, the analogy in the concept of personality as applied to the Trinity, the hypostatic union in Christ, the process of justification and the genesis of sanctifying grace, the causality of the sacraments, the relation between efficacious grace and human freedom, the light of glory, etc., etc. These emphases are required by reason of the finality of the course, and they contribute to give it its particular stamp.

Moreover, they contrive also to create what I may call the mood of teaching. Of course, the teacher will not fail to signalize for his students the religious value of the truths with whose *ostensio* and *defensio* (to use an ancient phrase) he is concerned. For the most part, however, he is involved, and seeks to involve his students, in that powerful dialectic of *auctoritas* and *ratio* which was set afoot when God spoke to men of an order of mysteries. His appeal is to their intelligences; he must trust the truth itself to reach their hearts. Although his subject, of its nature, is orientated towards their religious formation, since it deals with the truth "quae secundum pietatem est in spem vitae aeternae" (Tit. 1:1), nevertheless his actual teaching of it necessarily has a narrower scope, and is focused on the truth as truth. To use the famous phrase of the pseudo-Dionysius, he must be content if the student is *discens divina*, and, for the rest, he can only hope that he is also *patiens divina*. The professor's proper triumph is only in the order of intelligence, and it is twofold: first, by the intuitiveness that traverses his manner of teaching somehow to convey an intuition of the organic unity of revealed truth, and secondly, by a combination of insight, erudition, and logic in his handling of speculative problems somehow to make the meaning of theological science dawn upon his students, and allure them into an experience of the inner problematic of theology, the maintenance of the vital tension between truth and truth and between the two orders of truth. The former will be his contribution to their religious lives, the latter his contribution to their intellectual lives. Both together will set them on the way to growth, which, in the last analysis, is about all he can do.

One final characteristic of the clerical course in theology has to be set down, namely, its polemical character. The fact is evident; the

course practically moves from adversary to adversary, and at every turn comes to grips with error. This fact also derives from the social finality of the course (as standing in the service of the ecclesiastical *magisterium*) and from its intellectual finality (as serving the demands of intelligence). Obviously, the teaching Church needs to know her adversaries and all the involutions of their doctrine. She must know the adversaries of the past, first, because they are never entirely dead, but chiefly because of the precious clarification and development of the truth that they unwittingly occasioned. And she must know the adversaries of the present, not only that the faith may be defended against them, but also that it may be developed in such a way as to bring a more perfect solution to the religious, social, or historical problems out of which error develops. Moreover, the angle of view taken in this polemic is always intellectual; it is the erroneous doctrine that matters, not the man who fashioned it nor the historical context that perhaps helped to make it welcome to a particular age. This strong intellectual polemic is extremely necessary, given the relation of theology to the *magisterium*. The ideal supposition is that the *magister* in the Church should meet in his own mind every one of her adversaries, grasp his problem in its roots and in its terms, see what determined its erroneous solution, and feel the full seduction of the resultant error—a seduction that derives from the element of truth in it. Then he should see how this element of truth finds its organic place in the Catholic synthesis, and is freed from its devitalizing element of error. Finally, by reference to the sources of revelation, he should see why the error is error, and why, if admitted, it would shatter not only a particular truth but the whole Catholic *corpus doctrinae*. All this preoccupation with gaining a profound insight into error is again the necessary equipment of the “major in fide.”

In another respect, too, the clerical course has a strong polemic note: it is not a little concerned with the clash of opinion between various schools of theological thought within the Church. This preoccupation is necessary, for this clash (within limits, which, one must admit, have at times been exceeded) is a fruitful source of further intelligence of revealed doctrine, and a means of insuring true catholicity to theological science. A school or a system is, by definition, a limited thing, and its existence makes necessary other schools and systems.

Moreover, since these schools or systems usually divide off on intellectual grounds (not seldom on initially divergent metaphysical intuitions), a course which makes much account of them will necessarily have its intellectual tone heightened to new predominance.

We may now attempt a summary statement of the specific finality of the clerical course in theology, and of the characteristics it assumes in virtue of 'this finality.

First of all, the course stands wholly in the service of the teaching Church—this is the cardinal principle. It aims, therefore, at meeting the specific needs of the teaching Church. In general, her need is for an intelligence of faith—the exploration down to the last detail of what is knowable in what she believes. In regard to faith itself, this search for the knowable involves four things. First, that thoroughly scientific and stringently critical knowledge of the foundations of faith which is the object of fundamental theology. Secondly, a knowledge of the particular truths of faith (*a*) as they are contained in the official norms of faith (the teaching of the *magisterium*), (*b*) as they are contained in the sources of revelation, and (*c*) as they have been developed through different phases, all of which contrive to make intelligible their present state, and suggest future orientations and enrichments. Thirdly, the need is for the organization of all revealed truth into an organic whole of harmonious proportions. These needs are met by theology inasmuch as its method is positive; and in meeting them the stress is always on the intellectual element—the truth as truth, its precise dogmatic “note,” its exact doctrinal content, its ultimate measure of demonstrability. Fourthly, the need is for a triumphantly argumentative defense of the faith against error, accomplished by scientific analysis and argument; this is the polemic scope of theology, in which again its preoccupation with the demonstrable shows itself.

Beyond these needs, which have to do with a knowledge of what has been revealed, there is the further need for a specifically philosophic intelligence of the content of faith and of the relations between faith and reason; this is the proper object of Scholastic theology. The search for this mode of intelligence is imposed by the relation of theology to the *magisterium* of the Church, and is supported by the inner exigence created in the cleric by the study of Scholastic philosophy. And the ultimate orientation of the clerical course toward this reflectively philosophical

intelligence of faith accentuates still further its particular cachet—its severe intellectualism. Finally, it is precisely this intellectualism that makes this theology vital, first to the life of the teaching Church, and by transference to the life of the individual teacher in the Church. The supreme religious value of the course is to be sought in the realm of insight. The Gospel is vindicated as the “power of God unto salvation” simply because of its unshakable truth.

In a brief formula, the specific finality of the clerical course may be thus summed up: “That intelligence of faith, especially in its relation to human reason and philosophy, which is required in order that the *magisterium* of the Church may be able effectively to preserve, explain, and defend the whole of revealed truth.” Later we shall compare this formula with another that we must construct to express the specific finality of a lay course in theology.

THEOLOGY IN THE SERVICE OF THE LAY PRIESTHOOD

The foregoing exposition will perhaps have sufficed to set in relief certain principles, of which account must be taken in constructing a course for laymen. There are three such principles: (1) theology is the science of faith, and as such involves both an intellectual and a religious virtue: it is the pursuit of what is knowable in what the Church believes, and it is a seizure of the Gospel as the power of God unto salvation (two virtues which are distinct, but solidary); (2) theology stands essentially in the service of the Church, for the furtherance of her mission among men; (3) the particular form that theology assumes is determined by the special service it seeks to render to the Church (for the clerical course, a service to the *magisterium*).

Therefore, in approaching the problem of theology for the layman, the first step must be a description of the precise function of the layman in the Church, his proper role in the discharge of her mission. This description is not easy to achieve. It is clear, of course, that the laity occupy a distinct canonical rank in the Church. It is clear, too, that baptism gives them what may be called (rather misleadingly) a passive function in her life: the laity is to be taught, governed, sanctified, and thus to participate increasingly in her mystical and sacramental life, unto the goal of Christian perfection. Furthermore, it is clear—at least so far as the sheer fact is concerned—that confirmation imposes

on the laity the duty of collaborating actively, under the obedience of the bishops, toward the final end of the Church, the glory of God and of Christ, through the establishment of His reign among men.

At this point, the difficulty commences; for the doctrine of the active function of the laity in the Church has undergone an immense development in our own times. Building on the foundations laid by Leo XIII and Pius X, the late Pius XI elaborated the role of the laity under the extremely rich, complicated, traditional yet in many respects new concept of Catholic Action.³⁵ Consequently, our description of the layman's role must appeal to his numerous utterances on Catholic Action, as they are cast against the larger background of the great social encyclicals written by himself and his immediate predecessors.

A second difficulty now arises. In the mind of Pius XI, Catholic Action habitually assumed a highly qualified sense; it meant the laity, not simply as called in a general way to a participation in the apostolate of the Church, but as organized and governed according to peculiar norms, and as related in a definite way to the hierarchy by way of mandate. It is, moreover, undeniable that Pius XI desired, as an ideal, that Catholic Action in this strict sense should become *the* form of the lay apostolate; in his view, it was precisely its mode of organization and government that rendered it particularly adapted to the special needs of our times. However, for obvious reasons of fact, we cannot identify the active function of the laity in the Church with Catholic Action in this intimately papal sense. Nor shall I attempt to describe the latter in all its specifying notes. For our purposes, we must avail ourselves of the distinction that, as Dabin points out,³⁶ the papal documents invite and permit us to make between a strict and wider use of the term. In the wider sense, Catholic action (I shall use the small letter to preserve the distinction) designates simply the laity as called to support and prolong the apostolate of the hierarchy; it omits the question of their mode of organization. And we shall take Catholic action in this sense as covering the active function of the laity in the Church.

³⁵There is an immense literature on the subject; for well selected references see Archambault, *Les Sources de l'Action catholique*, Bibliographie générale (Montréal: École Sociale Populaire, 1943).

³⁶*L'Action catholique* (Paris: Bloud et Gay, 1929), p. 28.

In this wider sense, said Pius XI:

[Catholic action] is not new in itself, nor was it unknown to former ages of the Church, although it has been chiefly in our own times that its nature and meaning (*ratio*) have been more clearly and satisfactorily explained and set in their proper light. Its origins and beginnings were twofold: on the one hand, there was the necessity of safeguarding and furthering the Catholic cause—a motive that at all times has made the ministers of the Church vehemently desire to enlist active allies from the ranks of the laity; on the other hand, there was the attitude of Catholics themselves, who, as they grew in zeal and love for the Church, have always the more intensely desired to lend their aid to the clergy for the spreading of Christ's kingdom everywhere.³⁷

Therefore, behind the development of the doctrine of Catholic action, there has been a double pressure—one from without upon the Church, and, answering it, another from within, a vital upsurge of the Church's own conquering life. Obviously, we cannot pause to analyze in detail these two pressures, and trace their origins. The single point is that the function of the laity in the Church has been officially clarified in the light of the Church's situation in our particular historical context. Pius XI put the matter bluntly in *Quadragesimo Anno*:

The present state of affairs, Venerable Brethren, clearly indicates the way in which we ought to proceed. For we are now confronted, as more than once before in the history of the Church, with a world that in large part has almost fallen back into paganism. That these whole classes of men may be brought back to Christ whom they have denied, we must recruit and train from among them auxiliary soldiers of the Church who know them well and their minds and wishes, and can reach their hearts with tender brotherly love. [The rest of the text is the familiar one that defines the apostolate of like unto like.]³⁸

The same concrete starting point of Pius XI's thought on the mission of the laity appears in dozens of texts. One more may be cited:

You see upon what times we have fallen, and what they clamorously demand of us. On the one hand, we have the sorrow of seeing how human society has been despoiled of the Christian spirit, and how the life of men is governed by a pagan ethic; in the minds of many the light of Catholic faith is being dimmed, so much

³⁷*Lætus Sane Nuntius*, AAS, XXI (1929), 664. This letter to Cardinal Segura is one of the two most fundamental pontifical documents on the subject; the other is the *Quæ Nobis* to Cardinal Bertram.

³⁸Translation from *Two Basic Social Encyclicals* (New York: Benziger, 1943), p. 187.

so that the religious sense is being almost extinguished, and moral integrity and rectitude are being day by day more miserably undermined.³⁹

On the other hand, he adds, the clergy are incapable of meeting the needs of the time, by reason of their fewness and their exclusion from secular life. And the conclusion is the famous text:

It is, therefore, absolutely necessary that in this our age all should be apostles; it is absolutely necessary that the laity should not sit idly by, but that they should stand ready to the call of the hierarchy, and give them vigorous assistance, in such wise that by their prayers, their self-devotion, and their active collaboration they may powerfully contribute to the growth of Catholic faith and the Christian reform of morals.⁴⁰

The present developed concept of the role of the laity in the Church has its origins, therefore, in the great "social transformations" of our times.⁴¹ These latter also contribute toward a definition of the concept itself. In brief, they have effected what we ordinarily call the secularization of modern life, the gradual development of a complete separation, and, in fact, an active opposition between the spiritual and the temporal, between the Church and human society. We cannot here go into the causes of this development; the point is to indicate its effects. On the one hand, the expulsion of the Church from secular affairs has, indeed, favored an immense growth and a new vitality in her inner life. But, on the other hand, it has tragically resulted in the progressive destruction of that temporal milieu favorable to Christian faith and virtue which centuries of labor had patiently created. There has been immense and valuable material and scientific progress; but the order of earthly civilization has organized itself over against the Church, without her and opposed to her, and the result has been an enormously complex social mechanism that, in its spirit and in its institutions, is in active contradiction to the Gospel. Those who have been most helplessly exposed to its influence, the masses, have been slowly dechristianised and demoralized; and the great scandal of the nineteenth century was the apostasy of the working class.

Of course, in this paganized milieu there still remain individuals and families of more or less vigorous Christian faith and life; but they

³⁹ *Laetus Sane Nuntius*, AAS, XXI (1929), 668.

⁴⁰ *Loc. cit.*

⁴¹ *Ubi Arcano*, AAS, XIV (1922), 695.

live enveloped by the milieu, subject to the full pressure of its alien mentality, its institutions, its social sanctions, its whole apparently impregnable social reality. Apart from what Newman called particular providences, or heroic charity, this pressure has a seriously disintegrating effect. Vigilance tends to diminish, the reactions of conscience become confused, and the tendency is towards a subtle asphyxiation of the Catholic sense, and then a gradual drifting into that lack of religious sense which is characteristic of the whole order in which they live. In the meantime, the order itself continues to exist, strengthened by every Christian defection, and largely untouched by even the most heroic individual charity.

In such a situation, wherein the secular whole which is the temporal order is erected over against the spiritual whole which is the Church, two solutions are possible. The Church might choose to live wholly *ad intra se*; to gather its own faithful within newly strengthened ramparts of defense, and, interposing her priests between them and the world, attempt somehow to shelter them from its disintegrating influence, with the hope of saving their individual souls. A certain school of thought would seem, at least in tendency, to favor some such isolationist solution. Pius XI certainly did not.⁴² His solution was the opposite—an immense penetration of the life of the Church *ad extra*, with the purpose of transforming the total milieu of modern life. Not the isolation of the faithful, nor simply the imposition on them of the duty somehow to live in two separate worlds, but their formation and their organization, according to the very techniques of the milieu they must combat, for the work of recapturing the moral direction of the

⁴² Nor does Pius XII; cf. his words to youth engaged in Catholic Action: "Andate in mezzo al mondo!" (AAS, XXXII, 1940, 370). In the same address he stated the place of Catholic Action in his program: "In this critical hour. . . We fix our gaze on Catholic Action and strengthen our soul with the confident hope of finding in it. . . devoted and ardent collaborators [he habitually speaks of lay "collaboration," where Pius XI said "participation" in the apostolate] in the great enterprise which above all others fills our heart, for the supreme interests of souls and of the nations: the return of Christ to the consciences [of men], to the domestic hearth, to public morals, to the relations between social classes, to civil society, to international relations" (*ibid.*, p. 366). Moreover, as I have elsewhere suggested, Pius XII invited the collaboration of all men of good will, to reinforce the (supposedly already organized) collaboration of the Catholic laity with bishops and priests, toward the moral renewal and social reconstruction of the world (cf. THEOLOGICAL STUDIES, IV, 1943, 26-61).

temporal order, reconstituting a Christian social order, rechristianising "whole classes" of men, and reanimating with a new spirit the whole complex order of temporal institutions. The scope of the task is breathtaking, but the man of conquering zeal who conceived it also fashioned with cold intelligence a plan for its practical realization.

The initial principle commanding his whole program is, of course, the fact that the Church cannot refuse, or feel herself dispensed from, her divine mission in the temporal order, nor consent to her own exclusion from secular affairs. The very soul of man is engaged in the temporal order, and hence its affairs, in their spiritual and moral aspect, are necessarily her concern. The second principle is that the world today is not what it was in the Middle Ages or under the *ancien régime*. Pius XI showed an acute sensitivity to the fact of the vast "social transformations" that have taken place;⁴⁸ and there was fearless realism in his refusal, at times even in the face of Catholic pressure, simply to revive old forms, and trust in them. The classic form for due regulation of the temporal by the spiritual—the union of Church and State, and the influence wielded upon social structures, laws, and institutions by the Church through the intermediary of governments—is, in the modern hypothesis, not everywhere pertinent. Even where it subsists, it is inadequate to the task. Pius XI's liquidation of the temporal power of the Papacy, his injunctions to the clergy to retire from party politics, and his dissolution of Catholic political parties, are all indicative of a new phase in the eternal problem of the relations between spiritual and temporal. The Church has ceased to pursue her mission in the temporal order by direct immixture in its religious-social problems through the medium of the political process.

But if the Church has definitively retired from politics, she has not bowed to the command of the liberals to retire to the sacristy. Her task of furthering the common good of mankind remains a necessary, if secondary, part of her saving mission. And the problem was to

⁴⁸William Ferree, S.M., has illuminated this fact in striking fashion; cf. his recent book, *The Act of Social Justice*, A Study in Social Philosophy (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1943), Appendix B, pp. 218 ff.; more particularly, pp. 91-134 (Pius XI's doctrine on social justice); also pp. 177 ff. This whole book is most remarkable, and should initiate a wider Catholic understanding of the realism and profundity of Pius XI's thought. The author (p. 177) suggests the organic unity of the doctrine on Catholic Action and on social justice.

devise a new formula whereby she might prosecute it. The answer was an appeal and a command to the laity—the development of the concept of Catholic action. The penetration, shaping, and control of the temporal order would be by an essentially religious and spiritual action, whose carriers would be the Christian laity, and whose effects, therefore, would be felt throughout the whole range of the social life of humanity, in which the life of the laity is enmeshed. By this tactic, Church and State, remaining perfectly distinct as societies, would become one in the same spirit, the Christian spirit, communicated to secular society by the Christian laity, organized (to use Civardi's genial metaphor) as a vast Tarcisus, to receive Christ from the hands of the priest to communicate him to the modern world.

This is, indeed, a rather general statement of the formula, as well as of the conditions that gave it birth. But we cannot here stop to add the necessary precisions.⁴⁴ The point to note is that the success of the formula depends on two things, upon which Pius XI incessantly returned. The first is the intensification of the inner life of the Church, the lifting of the level of sanctity among both clergy and laity by a retiring, as it were, into the very heart of the Church, there to drink deeply of her fountain of living waters, to assimilate fully and intelligently the word that is her bread of life, to share to the full her liturgical and sacramental life. The second is the communication to the laity, through this more intimate participation in the life of the Church, of her single preoccupation—that Christ may reign, not only over men as individuals but over human society in all its groupings, domestic, national and international, through the reconstitution of a social order whose institutions will be conformed to the laws of God and so animated by a Christian dynamism that they will serve at once the eternal salvation of the human person and the stable prosperity of the State.

Before going farther, I may say that the function of theology for the layman must be to serve the needs of the Church by assisting, in its own way, toward the realization of these two conditions of success in the task that she regards as of primordial importance today, and whose

⁴⁴There are many nice determinations to be made, most of them centering on the relation between Catholic action and "temporal" action, e.g., Catholic action and the "social question" in its economic aspects, the balance between the spiritual renewal of the temporal order and its organizational reform, Catholic action and the problem of politics in its double sense, etc.

execution she has officially committed to the laity.⁴⁵ A lay course that does not consciously and explicitly, and in its dominant tendency, pursue this end would be, to my mind, open to the charge of dilettantism; it would be a betrayal of the vital needs of the Church, and, by that very fact, a betrayal of the nature of theology.⁴⁶

For the moment, however, I must insist further on the difficulty and delicacy of today's problem, and on the fact that only the laity, by reason of their peculiar situation, are in a position to solve it. This insistence may contribute to a further clarification of the role of the laity in the Church, and prepare the way for a statement of the finality of the theological instruction needed for its discharge.

The terms of the problem are not simple. On the one hand, the Church is obliged to spiritualize the whole of the temporal order, to Christianise all of what is human, to effect, as it were, an incarnation of the Christian spirit in a secular order. Leo XIII made this abundantly clear. On the other hand, he also made it clear that the Church must respect and safeguard two essential freedoms. The first is her own spiritual freedom, which demands that she should not be compromised in her essential mission by engagement in the inevitable uncertainties that attend every directly political and economic manoeuvre. The second is the freedom of the secular order itself and of its controlling agencies—notably the State—a freedom which is based on the distinction between the spiritual and the temporal, and on the sovereignty and autonomy in its own order that the temporal, now evolved to full self-consciousness, can legitimately claim. More concretely, in fulfilling her mission in the temporal order, the Church must avoid two extremes: on the one hand the "angelism" that would consist simply in proclaiming principles and preaching a spirit, without acting toward their incarnation in temporal institutions; and on the other hand a "clericalism" that would involve the immediate shaping of temporal institutions by the activity of those in whose persons the responsibility of the Church herself would be engaged—the sacerdotal order.

The problem is immensely real, for it uncovers what seem to be real

⁴⁵ I say, advisedly, execution; clearly, the direction of the work pertains to the hierarchy.

⁴⁶ This is all the more true inasmuch as the theology we are discussing will be for an élite; and the Church hopes for particular aid "a lectis de populo viris" (*Peculiari Quadam*, AAS, XX, 1928, 256); on the élite and the mass in Catholic action, cf. Lelotte, *Pour réaliser l'Action catholique*, Principes et méthodes (Paris: Casterman, 1937), pp. 185-99.

incompatibilities. An effectual reconstruction and control of the temporal by the spiritual would seem to imply contacts between them that would violate their mutual distinction and their respective sovereignties. If both the Church and the temporal order are to retain their necessary freedoms, how shall the Church not be obliged to accept that isolation in the spiritual which the liberals would willingly concede her? Or, if she chooses to "go down into the street," how shall she not somehow lose her own soul by seeking to effect its incarnation in temporal forms? The problem, as De Soras has pointed out, would be insoluble were it not possible "to find a mediator who is sufficiently of the Church and sufficiently of the temporal order to assure by his mediation their necessary union, and who, at the same time, is sufficiently distinct from the Church as such and from the profane as such to assure in the course of his mediation the indispensable freedom [of each]."⁴⁷ Providentially, however, there is such a mediator—the Catholic laity. That is the specific function and finality of the laity—to mediate between the spiritual and temporal. By this function it is distinguished from the ministerial priesthood, which is charged with official mediation between God and man as ordered to a participation in the life of God, and to a supratemporal destiny—a mediation that is accomplished wholly in the spiritual order, to which alone the priest as priest belongs. The layman, on the other hand, is charged with the mediation between the essentially sacerdotal body of the Church, as the means and milieu of man's total salvation in body and soul, and the essentially secular, this-worldly body of human society, wherein man is ordered to a temporal end, the achievement of his proper human perfection. It is through the layman that there must flow into the world those supernatural energies which, as faith teaches, are necessary in order that man may achieve even his proper humanity—his personal freedom, his social unity.⁴⁸

It is, then, from the standpoint of its specific function that one can see how the laity is a necessary component of the Church, without which she would have no means, especially in today's context, of operating the temporal salvation of mankind, which is an essential, if subordinate, part of her mission. One can see, too, how the laity

⁴⁷ A. de Soras, S.J., *Action catholique et action temporelle* (Paris: Spes, 1938), p. 68.

⁴⁸ Cf. W. O'Connor, *The Layman's Call* (New York: Benziger, 1942), pp. 74-81.

is a complementary organ of the hierarchy, from which it receives the word of life, the power of the Holy Spirit, and the command to act, in order that, having been thus received into a participation in the apostolate of the hierarchy, it may prolong the salvific influence of the Church into a sphere of human life from which the hierarchy as such is excluded. Again, one may see, finally, why the action of the laity is intimately sacerdotal,⁴⁹ though in an analogical sense to the action of the ordained priesthood, to which it is in an organic relation of subordination, while at the same time it preserves its own propriety and relative autonomy.⁵⁰

Finally, one special characteristic of lay action in modern times—it must be social. It was a principle with Pius XI that “the personal apostolate cannot any longer suffice, if, indeed, it ever did suffice.”⁵¹ Obviously, it remains necessary, and all its forms are still valid—prayer, the sacrificial life, good example, the chance conversation. And for them all the layman must be equipped. Moreover, the Pope has likewise insisted on the fact that “in order to spread everywhere the Christian attitude, and especially the Christian life, it is necessary before all to work on individuals. . . , on particular consciences.”⁵² This said, it remains true that Catholic action is essentially social. It is social in its principle and term, for it is “the apostolate of the whole Church upon the whole State, by the intermediary of the lay zone, the frontier between the temporal and spiritual, with a view to gaining, not this soul or that (this remains its ultimate finality), but a whole milieu, the whole profane milieu, civil society.”⁵³ The problem is to alter a social reality, our paganized order of civilization, which is a complex of institutions that will not yield to individual pressures. The essential thing, therefore, is to create a solidary laity, an adequately

⁴⁹ From the outset, Pius XI insisted on this point: cf. *Ubi Arcano*, AAS, XIV (1922), 695.

⁵⁰ It should be clear that I am regarding only one aspect of the lay priesthood, its mediation of God's gifts to men. There is another, more primary aspect, the mediation of man's love and contrition to God through participation in the Sacrifice of the Church. A special article will be given to this latter aspect in a forthcoming issue.

⁵¹ Discourse to Belgian Catholic Students in Sept., 1933; cf. *L'Action catholique*, Traduction française des documents pontificaux, 1922-1933 (Paris: Bonne Presse, 1934), p. 422.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 423.

⁵³ H. Carpay, S.J., “La Nouveauté de l'Action catholique,” *Nov. rev. théol.*, LXII (1935), 491-92.

social principle of a social effect. I leave the point without further development, but it is necessary to have it in mind, since it has important applications in the matter of disposing emphases in the theological instruction of the laity.

It is not part of my purpose to analyze in detail the manner in which the laity are to exercise their specific mediatorial function, or the double modality under which, as the laity of the Church, they are uniquely privileged to act,⁶⁴ or the particular tactics that are indicated as necessary for their success in this present age.⁶⁵ The single point was to reach a definition of the specific function of the laity, as it has been officially clarified by the Church. I realize that much more could be said, and should be said. But perhaps enough has been said for our particular purpose. We retain simply one thing: the laity has a part in the mission of the Church; it has only a part, but a part proper to itself, fitted to its lay character. It has not to operate the formal sanctification of mankind by the preaching of the word of God, the administration of the sacraments, and the formation of the human soul to the demands of Christian moral discipline. It may and must on occasion prepare for the accomplishment of this work, and contribute to it. But the mission of the laity as such "has for its domain not the life that is properly divine, but human life in its relations to the divine life, to which it must be adapted. This adaptation of human life to the exigences of the supernatural life is what we call the Christian social order."⁶⁶ The formula is broad, but, I think, exact, and it will serve to point a contrast between the ministerial and the lay priesthood. In turn, this contrast will show the way to a definition of the specific finality of the lay theological course.

The ministerial priesthood is to mediate the Holy Spirit to the soul of man; the lay priesthood is to mediate the Christian spirit to the institutions of civil society. The former exercises its mediation in the wholly spiritual order in which the very life of God mysteriously flows into the human soul, to effect its divinization; the latter exercises its mediation in that borderland of the spiritual and temporal, wherein the life of the Church makes vital contact with the terrestrial life of

⁶⁴ Cf. De Soras, *op. cit.*, pp. 69-79.

⁶⁵ Cf. P. Bayart, *L'Action catholique spécialisée* (Paris: Desclée, 1935).

⁶⁶ Carpay, *op. cit.*, p. 490.

man, to effect its humanization. The former, as the instrument of Christ, is to bridge the gap created by sin and ignorance between man and God, his Father; the latter, as the instrument of the hierarchy, is to bridge the gap created by secularism between the profane activity of man and the life of the Church, his Mother. The former is instrumentally to rescue man from sin and the peril of losing his soul in hell; the latter is instrumentally to rescue man from social injustice and the peril of losing his humanity on earth.

Perhaps these formulas sharpen the distinction. But, as a matter of fact, the Church herself in these latter days has wished to sharpen the distinction between spiritual and temporal, in order the better and the more organically to unite them without danger of confusion.⁵⁷ Correlatively, and for the same purpose, it is necessary to sharpen the distinction between the ministerial and lay priesthoods. My purpose at the moment, however, is simply to point the fact that, while one might regard the priest as a sort of diminished bishop (in the sense that their priesthood is of the same order, though possessed in its fullness only by the bishop), one may by no means regard the layman as a sort of diminished priest, a sort of clerical secular. On the contrary, the lay priesthood, remaining a participation in the unique priesthood of Christ, is of quite a different order than the ministerial priesthood, and has the perfection proper to its own order.

And the conclusion I want is this: we may not suppose that what the layman needs is a sort of diminished theology, only quantitatively or rhetorically different from that taught in seminaries—a sort of *Summa Theologica* with the hard parts left out. On the contrary, what he needs is a theology that, remaining theology, keeps to an order of its own, and has all the perfection proper to that order. He needs a professional course, as professional as the seminary course, but in its own peculiar way. In other words, on the lines of the analogy exhibited by the concept of priesthood in its application to the minister of the Church and to the layman, there must be worked out an analogy in the concept of theology as taught to one and the other. The analogy will be one of proportionality, and will go rather like this. Both “theologies” will be *secundum quid eadem*: each will verify the abstract idea of theology—the science of faith in the service of the Church. But

⁵⁷ Cf. Bayart, *op. cit.*, pp. 144–57.

they will be *totaliter diversa*: in its concrete mode of realization, each will verify this idea in quite a different way. Obviously, the total diversity will be of the qualitative order; it is not a question of teaching a different faith! Rather, it is a question of effecting, for a specified purpose, a particularly apt organization of the truths of faith, and of adjusting emphases within this order of truths, and of communicating them according to a particular pedagogical method. Therefore, the basis of the proportionality is the fact that both "theologies" serve the Church, indeed, but each serves a different rank in the Church, and therefore a different purpose of the Church.

We may recall now the formula previously fashioned to express the specific finality of the clerical course: "That intelligence of faith, especially in its relation to human reason and philosophy, which is required in order that the *magisterium* of the Church may be able effectively to preserve, explain, and defend the whole of revealed truth."

Over against this formula we may now set another, conceived in the light of our description of the special function of the layman in the Church, which will express the specific finality of the lay course: "That intelligence of faith, especially in its relation to human life and the common good of mankind, which is required in order that the laity of the Church may be able effectively to collaborate with the hierarchy in accomplishing the renewal and reconstruction of the whole of modern social life."

If this statement is valid, it delivers us immediately into the midst of a host of problems: in order that this finality may be achieved, what special characteristics will the course have, in the matter of structure and content? What will be the pedagogical principles for its teaching? What will be its allied disciplines, and how will they be integrated with it? What manner of special preparation will its teachers need? To these questions I shall attempt an answer in another article.