

TOWARDS A THEOLOGY FOR THE LAYMAN

THE PEDAGOGICAL PROBLEM

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IN A previous article I suggested that the teaching of theology to the laity should be informed by its own special, well defined purpose, quite different from the purpose that directs the theological instruction of those who are to exercise the ministerial priesthood of the Church.¹ The central argument was that the laity, as members of the Church, have indeed a share in her whole redemptive mission and are divinely called to participate in her hierarchical apostolate; but they participate in her apostolate as they participate in her priesthood—analogously, and in a manner proper to themselves. The conclusion was that when theology, which is the science of faith in the service of the Church, is taught to the laity, it should be conceived in function of the specific needs of the laity, and it should instruct and form them for their special service to the Church. From this principle it follows, I think, that a theology for the laity should have its own distinctive structure, and a distinctive distribution of emphases throughout its content.

However, antecedent to the development of this conclusion, there is another problem that needs discussion. As a matter of fact, the structure and content of a theology for the laity will be determined, not only by its peculiar finality but also by a pedagogical problem, related to its finality, that will be met in this type of theological instruction. This pedagogical problem is extremely complex, and hence I think it merits a prior, and a very patient, discussion. Moreover, since theology may be taught to the laity on different educational levels—the college or university level, the various levels in adult life, determined by degrees of culture, by profession, etc.—this pedagogical problem will assume different accidental forms. In what follows, I shall try to discuss it in its general lines, with particular (if implicit) reference to the college level. This is, I think, the initial level on which the problem of a lay theology arises.

¹ "Towards a Theology for the Layman: The Problem of Its Finality," *THEOLOGICAL STUDIES*, V (1944), 43-75.

A STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

To make the genesis of the problem clear, let me briefly recall the function of the layman in the Church. Concretely, he is the Church's grip on the temporal order. The responsibility which the Church has for the sanctification of the secular and social life of humanity falls directly and immediately upon him; for he is present in, and a part of, that life in a way that the priest is not, and consequently he can be the creator of its spirit and the artisan of its forms in a way that the priest cannot. In these our times, the Church is enforcing this responsibility on the layman in a most emphatic way.² And the premise of her insistence is today's spiritual crisis in the temporal order—the fact that today's great combat for the souls of men is being fought out on a field that is properly the layman's field, namely, that borderland between the spiritual and the temporal where the divine life of the Church makes contact with the human and secular life of man. This human and secular life in all its forms—individual, domestic, civil, professional, political, economic, national and international—is the special field for the sanctifying action of the laity.

Moreover, this "lay" life has two general aspects—a religious and moral aspect, and a material and institutional aspect. Consequently, the sanctifying action of the laity must be twofold. First, there is a strictly spiritual action, inspired by Christian faith and charity, which directly and immediately aims at the religious and moral renewal, the re-Christianization of the total life of man. Secondly, there is a strictly social action (it might more exactly be called "temporal" action), likewise inspired by Christian faith and charity, which directly and immediately aims at the reform of the institutional structure of society, in order that it may favor and foster man's spiritual renewal, his re-Christianization. These two types of action are complementary, and each in its own way pursues one single goal—the irradiation of the Christian spirit into the secular order, the penetration of the ideals of the Gospel into all the relations between men and nations,

² Cf. the recent statements by Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, nn. 44, 67, 96 (N.C.W.C. edition, pp. 27–28, 43, 61); Address to the College of Cardinals, June 2, 1944: "We nourish the hope that all Our sons and daughters scattered over the earth may have a lively consciousness of their collective and individual responsibility for the setting up and organization of a public order conformable to the fundamental exigencies of the human and Christian conscience. . . ." (*Catholic Mind*, XLII, July 1944, 303).

the vitalization and stabilization of the institutional forms of human society by the truths which are their "natural" (and hence Christian) inspiration, or, in Cardyn's phrase, "the social flowering of Catholicism." In these things lie the layman's special service to the glory of Christ, and to the Church which is in the concrete the glory of Christ.

A fact of cardinal importance must now be emphasized. The Holy See has vehemently insisted that the success of this twofold lay action towards its one goal depends entirely upon the interior spiritual formation of the laity, and their consequent high level of Christian sanctity. Since the texts abound, let me cite just two. On one occasion, after speaking of the "magnificent vocation" of the laity to participate in the apostolate, Pius XI said:

It is, therefore, evident that Catholic Action [for our purposes we shall continue to take the term in a generalized sense] must consist especially of two things; it must have two phases, not necessarily successive phases, but moral and ideal phases. In order to participate in an apostolate such as this, which has been divinely instituted, and has come in all truth from the hands and heart of Jesus Christ, Redeemer and King, it is imperative before all else to form apostles, co-apostles, as Christ Himself formed His co-apostles, the sharers in his divine mission. Before all else there is a work of formation to be done—a formation of intelligence, will, manner of thinking, active initiative, virtue, and holiness. Before all else it is important that tireless Catholic activity should have as its first fruits the personal sanctification of each. What is needed is an abundance and a superabundance of the supernatural life. . . ."³

Elsewhere, too, he speaks of the need of ". . . a high type of religious and civic formation, a solid piety, a profound knowledge of religious truth, a life of perfect integrity, a plenitude of virtue, without which there is no fruitful exercise of the hierarchical apostolate."⁴ The theme of this last clause is reiterated in numberless other utterances. The renewal of the Christian spirit in society by the laity supposes the renewal of the Christian spirit in the laity. Moreover, even apart from the question of directly spiritual influence, the determination of the layman to devote his technical knowledge and skill to the problems

³ Discourse to the Catholic Associations of Rome, April 19, 1931, in *L'Action Catholique, Traduction française des documents pontificaux, 1922-33* (Paris: La Bonne Presse, 1934), p. 309.

⁴ Letter, *Quae Nobis*, to Cardinal Bertram, *ibid.*, p. 48.

of social reconstruction, at the cost of personal sacrifice, can only be awakened and sustained by the strong, interior supernatural life that is the result of a profound religious and moral foundation.

Academic Instruction and Religious Formation

It is the need of this religious and moral formation which creates our pedagogical problem. It must be a specialized formation that will issue in a layman of a particular stamp—no pious individualist, or simple ecclesiastical enthusiast of the narrow, belligerent type (a breed often infected with that “moral, juridical, and social modernism” condemned by Pius XI⁵), but the “genuine and finished Christian man,” whose interior life and social spirit have been described often enough in the great encyclicals. Obviously, this specialized formation, as Pius XI once pointed out, calls for a “specialized pedagogy” of an extremely complex kind; “. . . for it involves, not only the whole difficulty inherent in any manner of pedagogical art but also another difficulty, the most serious of all, which derives from its special aim—the formation of young people with a view to making them collaborators in an enterprise as lofty as that of the apostolate.”⁶ In order to master this specialized pedagogy, the Pope continued, intense study, as well as experience, is required. Perhaps his immediate reference was to the difficulty of imparting the techniques of the organized apostolate which is Catholic Action in the strict sense; but the reference may well be generalized.

Certainly, the problem of a specialized pedagogy comes to the fore when it is a question of teaching theology to the layman. The reason—and the essence of the problem—lies in the fact that the theological instruction of the layman has also to be made the instrument of a religious formation at once rounded and specialized, which will issue in a complete Christian, and a complete Christian layman.

Here again one must be on guard against the tendency to assume the univocity of clerical and lay theology. As a matter of fact, the professor of dogmatic and Scholastic theology is normally concerned

⁵ *Ubi Arcano*, in Husslein, *Social Wellsprings*, II (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1942), n. 56, p. 24 (where, however, “juridical” is mistranslated as “judicial”).

⁶ Discourse to the Ecclesiastical Assistants of the Association of Catholic Youth of Latium, *L'Action Catholique*, p. 104.

with only one pedagogic norm, clarity and orderliness in exposition. At his best, he labors intensely for clarity in the measure permitted by his subject and with respect for its complexity, and he makes clarity of conceptualization a preliminary means towards real intelligence of religious mystery—an intelligence that is, by definition, not clear. Moreover, the order of his exposition, following the structure of his science, is determined by relatively simple norms. On the one hand, there are the demands of the philosophically trained intelligence, and, on the other hand, there are the demands of strictly objective scientific method.

For all their height, the exigences of these norms are relatively simple, in the sense that they are unilinear; they are solely the exigences of intellect. The teaching methods of the professional theologian are not conditioned, for instance, by the need of attending to complicated problems of religious psychology on the part of his hearers, or, more in general, by the need of making his theological instruction the vehicle of a full religious formation. As a matter of fact, his course places preponderant emphasis on sheerly intellectual formation, and finds its high religious value precisely in this intellectual formation. Necessary from the very nature of Scholastic theology, this emphasis is the more permissible in that the seminarian is simultaneously receiving from other sources his complementary religious formation. The whole atmosphere of a seminary is impregnated with the ideal of a priestly sanctity, and a variety of influences form the student unto this ideal. Hence the theological courses may safely devote themselves to growth in Christian intelligence, and allow their contribution to the Christian life to be quite implicit.

However, if theology is taught to laymen, this ideal situation does not obtain. Consequently, the professor must not only undertake the task of imparting a full religious formation but also lay preponderant emphasis on the achievement of this task. His course must have a characteristic and conscious orientation towards the development in the student of a completely Christian personality, imbued with the total ideal of a Christian lay life, and dedicated to the full vocation of the contemporary Christian man. At the risk of sharpening a contrast to the point of exaggeration, I might say that the ultimate religious finality of the lay course lies more in the realm of charity than

of intelligence. Or, to recur to formulas already used,⁷ and modify them somewhat, I might put it this way: whereas the clerical course aims at conveying an intelligence of Christian faith, as a pattern of objective truth, especially in its relation to the perennial philosophy of the human mind, the lay course aims at conveying an intelligence of the Christian life, as a power for personal and social regeneration, especially in its relation to the contemporary culture of human society. The contrast in emphasis lies principally in the fact that "Christian life" is a broader concept than "Christian faith," and the problems of "culture" are more extensive than those of "philosophy." Or, in another formula, the *desiderium ex fide sciendi*, which is the normal supposition and result of Scholastic theology, is a dynamic of a different order than the *desiderium ex fide agendi*, which must be somehow generated by the lay theological course.

The assumption by the lay course of the function of effecting a full religious formation, of cultivating charity as well as intelligence, creates a major difficulty. The root of the difficulty is in the seeming disproportion between the instrument and its intended effect. Emphatically, the course itself must remain academic and *suo modo* scientific. Inasmuch as it is taught and learned, it is directed to the intelligence, and its proximate aim is to leave the student in possession of a sum of knowledge. Inasmuch as it is theological, its aim is to leave him with a knowledge that is complete, verified by reflection on its sources, and organized into a coherent body. Obviously, an academic course, methodically taught, can communicate ideas and form an intelligence. But can it communicate charity and form an apostle, who is a man not only of ideas but of dynamic love? At all events, there is the problem—how to make an academic course the instrument of a religious formation.

PRINCIPLES OF SOLUTION

In a sense, the problem is insoluble. Of themselves, courses in theology will not make dynamic laymen any more than they make saintly priests. But there are two principles of at least partial solution.

⁷ Cf. THEOLOGICAL STUDIES, V (1944), 75.

The Primacy of the Teacher

The first principle is the primacy of the teacher over the sheer course as such; for in the matter of religious formation personal influence is decisive. Yet even the influence of the teacher can only be indirect. His material is the word of God, and his effort can only be to illuminate it, to let it be seen. His problem is so to present it that it will be seen, not only as true but as demanding an answer in terms of life. Cardyn once said: "Il n'y aura rien de fait qu'on ne leur aura pas montré un catholicisme pour lequel on s'emballe."⁸ But to do this requires pedagogical gifts of a high order—psychological insight, imagination, rhetorical power, a warmth of personality—joined to an interior spirit that is discreetly and unconsciously radiant.⁹ It also requires a wide knowledge of the contemporary situation of the Church and of the world she is to save, a sympathy with the mood of present thought and sentiment, a sense of the aspirations that men have today, a profound grasp of the problems in the field of religion and culture that are vexing them.

But most particularly there is required theological scholarship of a higher order than is normally achieved in an undergraduate seminary course. My own observation has been that it is an extremely rare seminarian who accomplishes in his own mind a work of genuine dogmatic synthesis, and who acquires that sure possession of theological science which will give him freedom and flexibility in its use and adaptation. Most of them are mentally "tied" to theses, to a thesis pattern of thought, to the structure of a particular scheme of treatises, to a Scholastic manner of expression. This is not necessarily a criticism of their seminary course. It does what it is designed to do. But it is not, as it is not supposed to be, an adequate preparation for teaching theology to laymen. This specialized task requires a specialized training, superimposed upon a Scholastic formation.

It is not possible here to describe the content of this specialized training. But let me at least remark that it should start with intensive research in the papal theory of Catholic Action, against its

⁸ Quoted by Bayart, *L'Action Catholique spécialisée* (Paris: Desclée, 1935), p. 75, note 103.

⁹ Cf. E. Mersch, S.J., "Le professeur de religion: Sa vie intérieure et son enseignement," *Compte-rendu du IIIe Congrès international de l'enseignement secondaire catholique*, pp. 130-44.

proper background, the cultural history of our times. In no other way can one learn exactly what a layman is and what the Church today wants to make of him. Then, from the standpoints thus acquired (which are not those of Scholasticism), there should be a review of, and specialized work in, the fields of dogma, Scripture, history, liturgy, and ascetical and moral theology, conducted along lines other than those of the ordinary classroom manuals, and with consistently synthetic preoccupations. Finally, there should be an extensive study of the whole social doctrine and program of the Church. With this scholarly equipment of a specialized kind, perfecting better than average intellectual and spiritual gifts, a young man could go on to acquire the pedagogical experience that would put him in the way of becoming a satisfactory professor of theology to the laity.

The Law of Congruity

The second principle of solution for our pedagogical problem concerns the structure and framework of the course itself. The course, remaining academic, will tend more or less effectively to its proper religious finality, not so much according to individual details of its content (though here selection is imperative) as according to the manner in which its whole content is organized. Here two principles may be laid down.

The first is that doctrinal instruction will be religiously formative only if the manner of its organization and exposition is adapted to the psychology of the student and to his existent state of mental and spiritual development.¹⁰ This principle may seem extremely obvious. To see it overlooked is therefore all the more astonishing. There are those, for instance, who would begin a college religion course by a formal study of scientific apologetics. Such a study is of inestimable religious value for a man of developed philosophical intelligence, good historical sense, an adequate positive knowledge of Scripture, and

¹⁰ Cf. G. Delcuve, S.J., "Où l'enseignement de la religion rencontrera-t-il la jeunesse moderne?", *Nouvelle revue théologique*, LXV (1938), 1177-1210; *idem*, "Comment présenter les valeurs religieuses aux enfants et aux adolescents d'aujourd'hui?", *ibid.*, LXVI (1939), 34-66. A good deal of work has been done on the problem of religious pedagogy on the primary and secondary levels; brilliant work has also been done on the pedagogical techniques proper to Jocisme; practically nothing has been done with regard to the college and university levels, and the level of adult education.

sound religious training. Generally speaking, it is of small religious value, and may do positive harm in the direction of rationalism and scepticism, to the mentally and religiously amorphous college freshman. Similarly, a good course in the relations between Church and State is of high religious value to an adult with a firm grasp of ecclesiology, politics, and contemporary fact; but it will be unappreciated by one who lacks these presuppositions. In general, courses in religion and theology are only a form of co-operation with divine grace, which is itself the ultimately decisive factor in religious formation. Their success is consequently dependent on their obedience to the great law of efficacious grace, which is called *congruitas in actu primo*. They must reach their subject as grace reaches him, where he is, just as he is. They must insert themselves into the psychological context which is given, in order effectively to do their work of illumination and inspiration. The clerical course, structured simply in accordance with the law of logic (apologetics, the divine unity, the divine Trinity, the Incarnation, etc.), is congruous enough for its subject; generally speaking, it would be incongruous for a layman. In designing a course for the latter, it is important carefully to observe the law of psychological effectiveness, rather than the law of abstract logic. The two laws may, but do not necessarily, coincide. How this principle influences the framework of the lay course will be seen more fully when we come to outline a course.

The Primacy of Pacific and Total Exposition

Secondly, doctrinal instruction will be religiously formative in proportion as it puts the student in the way of gaining an insight into Christian truth as a harmonious, ordered, organic whole, whose parts are all illuminated by reference to a single interior principle of intelligibility, and all vitalized by reference to a common focus—the sanctification of the total life of man. The congruity of this principle derives from the whole character of our contemporary religious situation. The point needs a brief development.

It is an obvious fact that we are no longer living in the Middle Ages. We do not, of course, look back to them as to a time in which the ideal of a perfectly Christian society was achieved; they had the imperfections proper to a stage in world development. But, so far as a

simplification can be true, it is true to say that then the ordinary Christian lived in the world as a child in his Father's house; for the world he knew was pervaded by the spirit of the faith he professed. His own faith was supported by his environment; he could simply take over the ideas, attitudes, customs, and modes of conduct that surrounded him; for the life of the Church was all embracing, and it shaped the life of his times—its art and literature, its business and politics, its education and amusements. Moreover, the ordinary Christian was not greatly called on to direct the thinking or influence the social institutions of his time. The forms of the temporal order were fashioned from the top down, by the *sacerdotium* and the *imperium*, allied in pursuit of the common Christian good. Living in Christendom, a man lived in the Church, and was a Christian (if at times a bad one) as a matter of course.

But to the modern Christian the world is not his Father's house. In fact, it resembles more closely "the strong man's house" (Mark 3:27), with the strong man not yet bound. For decades, as Pius XII recently pointed out, "the progress of mankind has been without God, indeed against God, without Christ, indeed against Christ."¹¹ The world to-day is alienated from the Church. It stands over against the Church, as a closed system of life. And the faith of the ordinary Christian gets hardly any support from his environment. On the contrary, his greatest temptation is to live in the world, over against the Church. Almost unconsciously he can come to regard her respectfully, indeed, but in a certain spirit of indifference or even challenge; to feel his membership in her as a burden, not a joy; to feel his faith as a constraint and a disadvantage, not an enrichment and a liberation; to value it as at best a form of defense against some of the uglier aspects of the world, not as "the victory which overcometh the world" (I John 5:4). The insidious tendency is for him to have his ideas and sentiments formed by influences that do not emanate from the Church, and to make, as Pius XII said so many Christians have made, "... concessions to those false ideas and directions of life so often condemned by the teaching authority of the Church."¹²

¹¹ Christmas Allocution, 1943, in Gonella-Bouscaren, *A World to Reconstruct* (Bruce, 1944), Appendix II, p. 330.

¹² *Loc. cit.*; cf. J. Baude, "Et ceux qui ne pratiquent plus," *Nouvelle revue théologique*, LXVI (1939), 973-82; he mentions, as causes of defection from the faith: the irreligious milieu, ignorance, and loss of confidence in the Church as a social force.

It is impossible to overestimate the immense power of suggestion that is exerted today against the Christian faith by all the agencies that spread ideas. Mr. E. I. Watkin, in a brilliant chapter, has recalled this fact, and drawn the conclusion:

A sufficient Catholic education, which imparts a living, organic and interior knowledge of the Catholic religion is now literally a matter of life and death. The Catholic today as he grows out of his childish acceptance must either go in to an interior vision of Catholic truth or go out of the Church. However many individual exceptions there may still be, due to the interference of other factors, this alternative faces us inexorably. Come in or go out. You cannot stay on the surface. There is no foothold left there.¹³

Jungmann, after developing a not dissimilar line of thought, comes to the same conclusion:

Religious teaching today cannot content itself with the mere handing on of hereditary formulas; it cannot rely on the fact that the traditional sum of customs, devotions, pious ideas and practices, even intensively used, will avail, as once they did, to hold the faithful firmly in the Church, and assure security and nourishment for their religious life. Rather, it must bring to the faithful an intelligence of the content of faith itself, that they may interiorly grasp it, and thus grow to spiritual maturity and proper independence in religious life.¹⁴

Our problem is to form Christian men strong enough to be plunged into the modern secularized milieu and confidently left to the inner resources of a mature faith that is able to stand by itself, supported by the strength of its own deeply experienced reality. More than that, our problem is to develop Christian men who will be intelligent and strong enough to reform the milieu itself. And for this task there is needed a rare type of spirituality—the spirituality of the man who is able to say, out of an insight and with a conviction approaching that of St. Paul, “I am not ashamed of the Gospel [Christ, and the whole economy of life of which He is the center]; for it is the power of God unto salvation for all who believe. . . (Romans 1:16).

The Truth of the Faith, or Faith in the Truth?

The consequent problem is, how may this type of spirituality be created, at least insofar as doctrinal instruction can create it. For

¹³ *The Catholic Centre* (Sheed and Ward, 1939), p. 54.

¹⁴ *Die Frohbotschaft und unsere Glaubensverkündigung* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1936), p. 16.

my part, I do not think it will be created by an emphasis on apologetics and apologetic argument. These have their value and their place, but a very subordinate place. The reason is well put by Jungmann when he states that emphasis on apologetic argument can "strengthen the sense of the burden of faith, against which so many objections stand, rather than effect a rooting in the supernatural." Moreover, it tends to create a defensive mentality; one is always answering, and one frequently has the defeated feeling that one is not reaching the source of the difficulty, which is often not in reason and cannot be reached by reason. There is always a gap between apologetic argument and faith; it leads up to faith, not into it, still less does it engender an experience of faith as the power of God unto salvation.

Moreover, whatever may be the value of fortifying the student against particular difficulties that may be put to him from without—what about the Inquisition, the deluge, Pope Joan, General Franco, infallibility, indulgences, the *Unam Sanctam*, what not—nevertheless, we have a more fundamental problem. It is to prepare students to issue, singly and in solidarity with one another, a victorious counter-challenge to the basic challenge of the day, which is not Protestantism, but secularism and religious indifferentism. In this connection, it is important to realize, first of all, that secularism and indifferentism are not just religious errors, but religious diseases, which have to be healed at a level in the soul deeper than that of reason. Though they have their "philosophies," they are not intellectualist aberrations; their origins are not so much in reason, as in myth—the myth of the self-sufficient man in the naturalist closed universe—which then seeks to rationalize itself.

Hence the appeal to reason and apologetic argument against them is of very limited efficacy; it may demolish the rationalization, but it leaves the myth untouched. Their appeal is that of a spirit, a total and generalized way of life, an all-pervasive mode of thought, affection, sentiment, action. And this appeal can only be met successfully by the creation of a counter-spirit, generated by a vision of the whole Christian truth about God, man, and the world, which in turn generates a victorious sense of the uniquely salvific value of faith. Only this vision and this inner experience can fortify the spirit against infection from our secularist environment. What it needs is solid nourishment,

and exercise in the full-orbed sun of Christ, the Light of the World; medicine, minor surgery, isolation, and the careful application of little apologetic "band-aids" here and there will not suffice.

Moreover, one cannot emphasize too much the fact that the challenge flung to Catholicism today is radical and total. It comes from rationalism and sentimentalism in the intellectual order, from naturalism in the moral order, from statism in the political order, and, in the social order, from laicism, communism, and national socialism. Furthermore, over against us there stand not merely coherent and articulated systems of thought, but ardent, militant ways of life—what the French call *mystiques*—each animated by a powerful interior dynamism, and each making total claims upon, and promising total salvation to, the human person and human society. Even our particular American brand of laicism or secularism is such a *mystique*, the more dangerous because of the quietness, brotherliness, and even good humor with which it murmurs incessantly into millions of ears in hundreds of places—office and shop, school, press, stage, dining room. . . .

In this situation, our tactics should be clear. To a radical and total challenge, one must fling a radical and total answer. To a complete system of thought one must oppose another system of thought, even more unitary, coherent, articulated. Against an all-devouring *mystique* one must turn the full force of another *mystique*, whose inner dynamism is still more triumphant and whose engagement of the whole man is still more imperious.¹⁵

This, I think, is the uniquely important contemporary form of apologetic. It goes far beyond the characteristic aims of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Teachers then spoke, not so much of the truths of faith as of the truth of these truths; and in their effort to prove that these truths are provable, they not seldom left the truths themselves in shadow. We have not yet transcended the mental and spiritual effects of this type of apologetic, which, for all its necessity, was not an unmixed good. Even today it is possible, for instance, to see the differences between Catholicism and Protestantism reduced to a difference of practical attitude with regard to the papacy. At all events, a change has taken place, and a new

¹⁵ Cf. Delcuve, "Enseignement moderne de la religion et vie surnaturelle," *Nouvelle revue théologique*, LXVI (1939), 281-308.

intellectual and religious climate has brought new needs and new desires. These latter have been brilliantly described by P. Charles in a page that deserves transcription; there is, indeed, overstatement in it, but the central contention is very true:

It is interesting to note that the Christian people (and even the general public), wearied with all the proving and answering, bored by the noise of apologetic conflict, is demanding something more than proofs and something better than answers. It is demanding a total and pacific exposition of divine truth. And the people are right; their desire marks an indisputable progress. The 'proof' and the 'answers to objections' are never more than a preliminary stage in the acquisition of knowledge; and in the matter of good Catholic doctrine, when one has proved everything and refuted everybody, one is still 'outside the faith,' marking time in the preambles. . . The people are wearied with proofs, not because they find them superfluous, but because they wisely judge them insufficient, even when they are perfect. It is not that the proof is defective, but that the whole order of proofs is inferior. A proof is but a constraint; and there is no joy in constraints. One could never explain the joy of the faithful soul by the satisfaction, always somewhat dull, of having the truth. After all, a misfortune can be very true, and a banality can be proved irrefutably. An exact proof is like an algebraic operation carried to its term; it says its last word, it is silent, and that is all.

But Christian truth is much more than a thing 'proved'; it is the gift of God; it is the beginning of an immense and mysterious transformation, *quod nesciat finem pati*; it is a new life, and a grain of mustard seed; it is a triumphant power which conquers the world. Whereas a proof is a term, the truth is a point of departure; and the message of joy which it brings can never be transmitted by the most scientific of proofs, any more than the passport of a friend can replace his presence. . . . In spite of the paradox, it must be said that apologetics is deceived when it hopes to accomplish the great task, and imagines that after the *Ergo credendum est* everything will unroll by the sheer power and interplay of the proofs. It is not because it is true that the believer adheres to the truth of faith, but because it is of faith, that is, because it is a gift of God and a testimony of infinite love. It is not because Catholicism is proved that the faithful submit to the yoke of Christ, but because the yoke is the yoke of Christ. When we have proved everything, we have not yet opened up anything; and the truth, wrapped in its proof, is like a jewel in a casket. A proof can only prove, and proving can only show that one is right—a pretty thin joy for a child of God, and one that hardly surpasses the sad satisfaction of a Marcus Aurelius.¹⁶

¹⁶ "La théologie dogmatique hier et aujourd'hui," *Nouvelle revue théologique*, Numéro jubilaire, Soixante années de théologie, 1869-1929, pp. 35, 36, 37-38. On the "eclipse of proof by exposition," cf. Ward-Sheed, *Catholic Evidence Training Outlines* (Sheed and Ward, 1938), pp. 13-18.

All this is obviously not an anti-intellectualist argument; on the contrary, it is a plea for intelligence—that profound and personal intelligence of faith, gained through a “pacific and total exposition of divine truth,” which will reveal the Christian faith to be no mere set of propositions satisfactorily proved, but the “good news” which the angels announced with a song as “joy to all the people,” for in its splendid organic wholeness it is the “power of God unto salvation,” personal and social, temporal and eternal.

A course so organized as to convey such an intelligence of faith will be a religiously formative influence of the first order, congruous to the needs of our times. The body of Christian truth has a form; therefore, the vision of it in its form will be of itself formative. One who has seen the form has taken the first step towards conforming his life to its exigences. Moreover, there is a power of conviction latent in the vision of the faith as an organic whole that is the best means for waking the *desiderium ex fide agendi* (together, indeed, with a *desiderium ulterius ex fide sciendi*), and for rendering Christian action of the two types mentioned both dynamic and intelligent. Such a vision puts a man in possession of that highly integrated system of motives which, as Lindworsky has explained, is the necessary support of consistent action. Finally, only this vision of Catholicism as an organic whole will reveal it in its uniqueness and transcendence as the supreme and universal *mystique* whose inner dynamism is of the Holy Spirit of God. And only when Catholicism is thus set utterly apart from other religious or quasi-religious systems will the ground be cut completely from under the secularist and indifferentist temptation.

Obviously, for all its necessity, this intelligence of faith will not be the sole sufficient means of effecting the formation of the genuine and finished Christian man; for into his complete formation other factors must enter—the molding influence of personal prayer, sacrificial charity, works of zeal, the experience of social worship and the corporate fellowship of the Church, sustained obedience to the moral law. However, this intelligence of faith is all that an academic course can hope to contribute, or at least put the student in the way of acquiring, towards this end. In aiming at its conveyance in a manner respectful of the hearers’ psychology, the course will be a congruous form of co-operation with divine grace. And this is its only legitimate ideal.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A LAY COURSE

Our problem, therefore, how an academic course can be made the vehicle of the rounded, yet specialized religious formation needed by the contemporary layman, will find its basic solution through the construction of a course that will be a living, organic whole, and through a mood of teaching that will be pacific and positive. The approach to each truth must be from the standpoint of its inner idea as a vital member of the Christian *corpus doctrinae*, not from the standpoint of the attacks made upon it. The emphasis at every step must be on that intelligence of faith "e mysteriorum nexu inter se," of which the Vatican Council spoke; for only through its organic relations with every other Christian truth will the full and vital meaning of any single truth appear. At every step, too, the conscious tendency must be to illuminate for the intelligence the vital relations between the *corpus doctrinae* which is Christian faith and the *corpus Ecclesiae* which, in the concrete, is Christian life. In other words, it must tend towards that further and decisive intelligence of faith, of which the Vatican Council also spoke, "e mysteriorum nexu cum fine hominis ultimo" (remembering always that "the end of man" is not to be conceived individualistically, but as that *consortium beatitudinis* which is achieved in the Church and through the Church, inchoatively in the earthly visible community, perfectly in the glorious Church in heaven).

This, I say, is the decisive intelligence of faith, particularly for the purposes of a lay theology. These demand that faith be presented as more than an *assensus in verum*, but as more fundamentally a *consensus in vitam*. Within its framework, we must be explicitly mindful that the God of our faith is not simply the remote and abstract *Deus verax* of whom the theological manuals speak, but the *Deus Pater* to whose nearness and love every page of the New Testament bears witness. Nor is faith itself a carefully calculated admission of a set of propositions that cannot reasonably be denied by some disembodied critical intelligence; it is a joyfully obedient acceptance, by mind and will, of a Father's promise, made to His uncomprehending child, of a deliverance, a dignity, and a destiny. Faith is *initium salutis*, *primus motus mentis in Deum*,¹⁷ *via in beatitudinem*,¹⁸ it is the beginning of a

¹⁷ S. Thomas, *In lib. Boeth. de Trin.*, q. 3, a. 2; *In Rom.* c. 3, lect. 3, 4; *In Joann.* c. 6, lect. 4, n. 5.

¹⁸ *Sum. Theol.*, II-II, q. 1, a. 7.

quest for God,¹⁹ at whose term one will also marvelously find oneself and everything and everybody else. About it there is the immense joy of a rescue, the new wonder of a resurrection. By it one's whole soul is stirred in its depths, set on a way, "moved" towards the God who beatifies and towards the fullness of a blessed life in Him. This affective and dynamic concept of faith, not only as a knowledge of God but as a "movement" towards a heavenly Father, is prominent in St. Thomas.²⁰ It is important, therefore, to remember that theology, which pretends to be the science of faith, must be dynamic as faith itself is dynamic; it must serve to release the affective dynamism inherent in faith. And it does this by conveying an intelligence of the relations between faith and "the end of man," his total life as a person and as a member of the human race. It must not only notify men of the truth, but move them towards the salvation which is in the truth; it must set them on the way to life in God. If this dynamic tendency should not be absent from any theology, its presence is particularly necessary in a theology for laymen, which is the science of faith that must wake the *desiderium agendi ex fide*.

Correlative with this idea is another—that a theology for the layman must be emphatically an organic doctrine of salvation. To illustrate the point briefly, we may recall the ancient distinction between the two parts of sacred doctrine, the "theology" and the "economy." The former comprised the truths about God Himself, His inner life, the trinitarian processions; the latter, the truths about His works, especially the "dispensation" of the divine life in the world of men. Obviously, the two parts are intimately united, as is clear from the text that launched the distinction: "This is eternal life, that they may know thee, the only true God, and him whom thou hast sent, Jesus Christ" (John 17:3). But there is the possibility of variant perspective, or better, of a contrariety of movement of thought in their study. In its characteristic emphases and movement, Scholastic theology is an effort of man to understand God as He is in Himself, and His works as somehow the manifestation *ad extra* of His being. Its movement is ascending; it is a homage of intellect addressed by men to

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, q. 5, a. 1 ad 1m.

²⁰ Cf. II-II, q. 1, a. 1 c; a. 6 ad 1m; a. 8 c; *In Lib. Boeth. de Trin.*, q. 3, a. 1 c; *De Ver.*, q. 14, a. 8 ad 9m; cf. E. Hocedez, S.J., "Valeur religieuse de l'acte de foi," *Gregorianum*, XV (1934), 377-408.

God. On the other hand, the Scriptures exhibit rather a descending movement; they are a message of love, a promise of salvation, addressed by God to men. Everything in them (less pronouncedly, of course, in the Psalter and in St. John) regards man and his life in God, rather than God and His life in Himself.

Accepting this distinction, the layman's theology should be modelled on the Scriptures rather than on Scholasticism. Its perspectives and movement should be manwards, towards an intelligence of the "economy." In particular, it should preserve the soteriological emphasis so strongly marked in St. Paul, in whose letters the "theology" is left implicit, simply as the background of the "economy." The three divine persons are not formally studied in themselves, in their inner life and their relations with one another; they appear as engaged in the salvation of man, and their life is studied inasmuch as it is communicated to men by grace. In fact, only from what they are to us do we catch a glimpse of what they are to each other eternally.²¹ We see the same adjustment of emphasis in the Apostle's Creed itself, whose framework is indeed trinitarian, but whose focus is on man, loved by the Father, redeemed by Christ, sanctified by the Spirit in the Church. The central theme of the Creed is the mystery of the "economy";²² the mystery of the "theology" simply furnishes the setting. Patristic thought, too, reveals a similar adjustment of emphasis and a similar movement (save, of course, when polemic preoccupations dictated otherwise). And this emphasis and movement must be characteristic of a layman's theology. Where Scholasticism, for instance, moves upwards towards an intelligence of the inner order in the decrees of the divine will as they are in God, the layman's theology will move downward towards an intelligence of these decrees in their created term, which is within the life of man. More briefly, whereas Scholasticism studies the world in God, a lay theology will study God in the world.

Moreover, having in view the layman's specific function in the

²¹ Cf. J. Lebreton, S.J., *Histoire du dogme de la Trinité*, I, *Les origines* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1927), p. 439: "If St. Paul has left in partial shadow the inner life of God, at least he has shed a glowing light upon the mysteries of the divine life in man and in the Church; and it is there that we can best grasp the trinitarian doctrine of St. Paul in its entirety."

²² Cf. J. A. Jungmann, "Die Gnadenehre im apostolischen Glaubensbekenntnis und im Katechismus," *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie*, L (1926), 196-219.

Church, his theology must be particularly concerned to illuminate for him the relations between divine truth and a special aspect of the life of man—his temporal and social life. Nor is this concern foreign to the doctrine of the Vatican Council. Man's last end is indeed definitively reached only in eternity, and only in eternity, too, will his social unity be fully achieved. Nevertheless, he really enters upon his end, and enters, too, into a real community in this life. "Faith," in St. Thomas' favorite definition, "is a habit of mind whereby eternal life is begun in us."²³ The word of God, on which we believe, is a "word of salvation" (Acts 13:26) for man even in this world; the Spirit of Christ is about the work of "gathering into one the scattered children of God" (John 11:52), even while earthly history is running its course; and the Church would find it "impossible to contribute more to prosperous and happy living even if it had been born for the sole purpose of conferring or making more abundant the useful things and the conveniences of this mortal life."²⁴ A theology for the layman, therefore, must be in a particular sense a theology of this *inchoatio vitae aeternae*, this rescue of man from temporal damnation, this perfecting of humanity as humanity by the power of the grace of Christ. In a word, it must be soberly but strongly a supernatural humanism. Only thus will it be a proper instrument for the formation of those who are to be in a privileged sense the agents of the renewal and reconstruction of man's temporal and social life.

THE CENTRAL THEME OF A LAY COURSE

If the layman's theology is to be an organic whole with these particular cachets, the question arises, what will be its central unifying theme? And what will be the mode of its development—the starting point and the organic sequence of ideas? These questions are best answered in detail when outlining an actual course. Here we may insist simply on principles.

The major principle, of course, is the maintenance of the integrity of the lay course in its distinction from the clerical course. The latter is organized substantially in accordance with the classic theory of the nature, unity, and pattern of theology which was evolved in the

²³ *De Ver.*, q. 14, a. 2.

²⁴ Leo XIII, *Arcanum Divinum*, ASS, XII (1879-80), 386; cf. J. Bluett, S.J., "The Church's Duty to Man's Earthly Happiness," THEOLOGICAL STUDIES, IV (1943), 183-222.

Middle Ages. Therefore, in order to clarify our own theory in its distinction from the medieval theory, it will be necessary briefly to look at the problematic background of the latter and at the circumstances of its evolution.

The Unity of Scholastic Theology

The initial phases of medieval thought were strongly influenced by the accepted equivalence of the *sacra doctrina* to the *sacra scriptura*—an equivalence which was sustained, if only so far as terminology is concerned, by St. Thomas himself.²⁵ Theology was considered essentially as the *scientia de divina pagina*, obviously not to the exclusion of tradition, but in a privileged sense. The method of theology was the *expositio*, and the early treatises on methodology were primarily concerned with what we would call manners of exegesis.²⁶ Initially, therefore, the problem of the one subject of theology was that of the one *materia* of Scripture. And the answer was generally framed in the light of St. Augustine's dictum: "Christum igitur sonant haec omnia; caput illud quod iam ascendit in coelum, et hoc corpus eius quod usque in finem laborat in terra, scribentium Litteras vere sacras omnis parturivit intentio."²⁷ Hence came the theory, mentioned by St. Thomas, of the *totus Christus* as the subject of theology.²⁸ The theory later went out of sight, but it was never actually denied.²⁹ What happened was that the problem of theology went into a new phase, chiefly under the impact of Aristotelian currents of thought. The *sacra doctrina* was gradually disentangled from its practical identification with the *sacra scriptura*; the *quaestio* assumed the primacy over the *expositio*;^{29bis} but, above all, the problem, "Utrum sacra doctrina sit scientia," received a new position in terms of Aristotle's definition of science.

²⁵ Cf. *Sum. Theol.*, q. 1, aa. 3, 8; cf. M.-D. Chenu, O. P., "La théologie comme science au XIII^e siècle," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* (Paris: Vrin, 1927), pp. 33, 43, 67-69.

²⁶ There is a relic of this tradition in the inclusion of aa. 9 and 10 in the *Summa*, I, q. 1.

²⁷ *Contra Faustum Manich.*, c. XXII, n. 94 (PL XLII, 463); cf. *In Epist. ad Parth.*, c. II, n. 1 (PL XXXV, 1989): "Quidquid illarum scripturarum est, Christum sonant, sed si aures invenient."

²⁸ *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 1, a. 7 c *ad fin.*

²⁹ Cf. E. Mersch, S.J., "L'Objet de la théologie et le Christus totus," *Recherches de science religieuse*, XXVI (1936), 129-57, esp. 147.

^{29bis} Cf. the brief résumé in Chenu, *op. cit.* (*supra*, note 25).

For our purposes, only one aspect of this problem is important, namely, how theology can be a genuine science when its principles, the articles of faith, are not evident. A strictly scientific solution was reached (and elaborated chiefly by St. Thomas) in terms of a principle taken from within the domain of science itself—the distinction between subalternant and subalternate sciences. Theology, in spite of the fact that its principles are not evident, is still a true science because it is subalternate to the *scientia Dei et beatorum*,³⁰ in which its principles are evident, and from which they are assumed as true, without further need of proof. For us, the importance of this aspect of the problem and of its solution lies in the viewpoint whose adoption they compelled. Theology was conceived in relation to its subalternant science, existent in the mind of God. Consequently, theorizing on theology proceeded from the standpoint of what is the case *quoad se*, not *quoad nos*. *Quoad se*, the genesis of theology is from the knowledge of God: “Huius scientiae principium est fides, sed primum est intellectus divinus cui credimus.”³¹ In itself, theology is “velut quaedam impressio divinae scientiae”;³² in its process, it is a progressive assimilation to the divine knowledge,³³ set afoot by the initial “impression” received, and carried on by increasing intelligence (not proof) of the principles impressed: “fides est in nobis ut perveniamus ad intelligendum quae credimus.”³⁴ The science of faith approached, as a limit, the *scientia Dei et beatorum*.

Furthermore, as an impression of the divine knowledge, theology necessarily has as its one subject God as God, and all things else in their relation to Him; for this is the one subject of the divine knowledge. It is, consequently, the central theme, the unifying object which theology pursues in all its work of science, as the eye seeks always color (“illud de quo principaliter fit sermo in scientia,” and “id sub cuius ratione omnia referuntur ad scientiam”).³⁵ The unity of theology, therefore, is in its own way an imitation of the unity of the divine knowledge, “quae est una simplex omnium.” The whole order of reality which it knows has one single source, God as God; and all particular objects within this order find their unity in their common

³⁰ *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 1, a. 2.

³² *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 1, a. 3 ad 2m.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, a. 7 c.

³¹ *In lib. Boeth. de Trin.*, q. 2, a. 2 ad 7m.

³³ *In lib. Boeth. de Trin.*, q. 2, a. 2 c.

³⁵ *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 1, a. 7.

reference to God as God; and all these objects are viewed in their unity because they are viewed from the standpoint of God as God, which viewpoint is "impressed" on man by faith.

Understanding the matter analogically, what *ens sub ratione entis* is to philosophy, *Deus sub ratione deitatis* is to theology—the principle of unity, in virtue of which a multitude of objects are capable of being organized into one science, and consequently the principle of intelligibility, by reduction to which each object is ultimately intelligible. There is only an analogy here, because theology, unlike philosophy, is a subalternate science. It has not within itself its own principle of unity and intelligibility; for *Deus sub ratione deitatis* is only intelligible in the subalternant *scientia Dei et beatorum*. In theology, therefore, it remains indeed the principle of intelligibility *quoad se*, since theology is an impression of the divine knowledge; but it is not such a principle *quoad nos*, since theology is also a science human in its mode.

Finally, the logic of this theory demands that the structure of theology should follow the structure of its subalternant science; the order in which its truths are organized is the order in which they exist in the mind of God, as the human theologian is obliged to conceive the mind of God. This order is substantially that of St. Thomas in the *Summa Theologica*. The starting point of the science is God as He is in Himself, one in nature, three in personality; the sequence of ideas is the procession of creatures from God, as images of Himself, and their return to Him in Christ.³⁶ In fidelity to the whole medieval theory of theology as a science subalternate to the knowledge of God and of the blessed, probably no more logical order could be conceived. The circular pattern of the *Summa* remains the best possible commentary on the Aristotelico-Thomist concept of theology. The nobility and essential soundness of the concept are unchallengeable. Whether the underlying assumption of the adequacy of Aristotle's concept of science

³⁶ "Considerationem circa creaturas habet doctrina fidei christianae, in quantum in eis resultat quaedam Dei similitudo . . . ; et sic alia ratione subjiciuntur praedictae doctrinae et philosophiae. [There follow the differences, as we would say, *secundum rationem formalem quae*, and also *sub qua*.] Exinde etiam est quod non eodem ordine utraque doctrina procedit. Nam in doctrina philosophiae quae creaturas secundum se considerat et ex eis in Dei cognitionem perducit, prima est consideratio de creaturis et ultima de Deo; in doctrina vero fidei, quae creaturas nonnisi in ordine ad Deum considerat, primo est consideratio de Deo, et postmodum creaturarum; et sic est perfectior, utpote Dei cognitioni similior, qui seipsum cognoscens alia intuetur" (*Contra Gentes*, II, 4).

is equally valid, is a question that need not detain us here. Our purpose is simply to understand in a general way whence came the classic concept of theology, and its "theocentrism." It resulted from operating within the terms of a problem posited in a particular way, whose solution dictated a definite point of view, which then had to be consistently maintained.

The Unity of a Lay Course

But it is immediately evident that the medieval problem is not our problem. As a matter of fact, in seeking the unifying theme, starting point, and pattern of theology, we are not at all moving in the medieval universe of discourse, which was created by the position of a typically Scholastic problem. Consequently, we can grant, as of obligation for Scholastic (clerical) theology, the substantial validity and the implications of the medieval theory, especially in its conclusions about the structure of theology, and still leave our own thought free. Our own problem is not Scholastic. We are concerned with the teaching of theology to the laity for the purposes of the laity, and therefore with the construction of sacred doctrine in such an organized form that it will reveal itself to the (not necessarily philosophically trained) laity in its inner unity as the power of God unto salvation, especially in the temporal order of human society. This problem has its own peculiarities.

First, it is indeed scientific, but it is not posited in terms of the medieval concept of science. We want to construct a science, but our non-Scholastic purposes allow us to take the term in a broader sense, simply as implying these four elements: (1) a unity of theme or subject matter (material object), (2) a singleness of interest and viewpoint (formal object *quod*), (3) a methodical procedure in development, and (4) an organizing activity directed toward the constitution of a true body of knowledge.³⁷

Again, we want to construct a science that, in the process of its learning, will be religiously formative of the intelligent and dynamic layman. This, as has been said, weights our problem heavily on the pedagogical side. It directs our attention primarily to the aspect of

³⁷ Cf. J. Bilz, *Einführung in die Theologie* (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 1935), p. 38.

things *quoad nos*, rather than *quoad se*, to psychological effectiveness of presentation rather than to abstract logic, to the whole truth in its wholeness and its inner relationships rather than to single truths in their singleness and detailed proof, to the whole truth in its relation to personal and social life rather than to single truths in their relation to rational philosophy, to the integral Gospel as the power for salvation rather than to the synthesis of revealed and rational truth as a pattern for thought.

Let us, therefore, see how these presuppositions and preoccupations influence our concept of the unity of a lay theology, its starting point, its method, and its pattern. Antecedently, be it noted that the resultant concept will in no sense contradict the classic theory. It will be simply another concept, not an opposed concept. In a word, we are dealing with analogates, not alternatives.

Obviously, the formal object (*quod*) of a lay theology will remain the *scibile in credito*. But, generally speaking, the lay theologian will not pursue this knowableness "ex eorum quae naturaliter cognoscit analogia" (Vatican Council), after the fashion of the Scholastic. The natural analogies which he will explore and explain are those in which revelation itself is couched (fatherhood, sonship, Body of Christ, regeneration, indwelling, etc., etc.); but he will dispense with their exhaustive conceptual analysis in terms of formally philosophical categories (e.g., the divine Fatherhood in terms of a concept of relation). In this respect, the general quality of thought in a lay theology will be biblical rather than Scholastic.

Secondly, the unity of a lay theology will not be established in terms of its "subject" in the refined Scholastic meaning of the term (*id sub cuius ratione omnia referuntur ad scientiam*). It will take its unity simply from a oneness of subject in an integral and material sense; it will study one all-comprehensive thing. In this sense, its subject, its central theme or master idea will be the *Christus totus*, Christ, head and members.³⁸ In other words, a lay theology should be built on the pre-Thomistic, Augustinian theory and its formula. The theory, as I have said, was never denied, but simply transcended in the course of a

³⁸ Cf. E. Mersch, S.J., "Le Christ mystique, centre de la théologie comme science," *Nouvelle revue théologique*, LXI (1934), 440-75.

more philosophical determination of the unity of theology. Its formula, as Mersch well says, "lacks, not truth, but niceness,"³⁹ the niceness of ultimate philosophical precision. But it has all the niceness that we need for our purposes. Moreover, as Lakner has suggested in completing Mersch,⁴⁰ it fits with a system of thought preoccupied, as ours is, with the intelligibility of things *quoad nos*, rather than *quoad se*. Certainly, *quoad se*, God as God is the primary (in the sense of ultimate) source of unity and principle of intelligibility of the whole order of revealed truth; but *quoad nos* Christ is such a principle: "Totum igitur novit, qui Christum noverit."⁴¹ True, He Himself remains to be explained by *Deus sub ratione deitatis*, as happens in the *scientia Dei et beatorum*; but He explains to us, not simply in His teaching but in His very being, the order of our salvation, which is essentially incarnational. The whole economy of salvation—the Church, the sacraments, salutary acts, etc.—is structured on the basic principle of the union of the divine and the human, of which He is the exemplar.⁴² He is the prototype of our predestination, the transcendent model of our "assumption" to a share in the divine life. Interior to us by His humanity, and interior to the Trinity by His divinity, he explains to us what God is (eternally and essentially Fatherhood), what we are to be in God (sons in the Son) and in the Church (brothers in a unity both visible and invisible), and what our lives are to be personally

³⁹ *Recherches de science religieuse*, XXVI (1936), 152; this more historical article is to be read in conjunction with the speculative treatment given to the subject in the article cited in the preceding footnote.

⁴⁰ F. Lakner, S.J., "Das Zentralobjekt der Theologie," *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie*, LXII (1938), 10.

⁴¹ Paschasius Radbertus, *De Fide, Spe, et Caritate*, 9 (PL CXX, 1412); cf. J. A. Jungmann, "Christus als Mittelpunkt religiöser Erziehung," *Stimmen der Zeit*, CXXXIV (1938), 218–33.

⁴² This intimate and dynamic union, without confusion, of the human, visible, and external elements of the Church with its divine, internal, and spiritual elements is the major theme of the encyclical *Mystici Corporis*; as a matter of fact, this splendid document reveals in several striking ways the theological emphases that the Church considers desirable today. Among them is certainly an emphasis on the union of grace and nature, the divine and the human, and a consequent emphasis on the perfection of nature by grace, rather than the emphasis on the transcendence of grace over nature that characterized the period of polemics against Baius; the results of this latter emphasis can be considered to be definitively acquired; the ground of inquiry has now shifted, and a less one-sided view of the complex notion of the supernatural is being sought.

(divinely human) and socially (spiritually one with others after the fashion of the Son's unity with the Father). Wherefore, as Mersch well says:

The reduction to Christ is with reference to all Christian doctrine what the reduction to 'being' is in metaphysics, or what the reduction to mathematical equations is to the positive sciences—that which of itself produces intelligibility. To link all revealed truths to this unique truth, to show how each dogma serves to explain some aspect, some part, some condition or consequence of our incorporation in the mystical Christ—this will be, in the field that concerns us, the work of theology. In the measure in which it is successful, this work will give an insight into the close union, in fact, the unity that there is between the doctrine of Christ and Christ Himself.⁴³

In the last sentence there is an added reason for making the *Christus totus* the unifying subject of a lay theology. Centered on this theme, it will be an intellectual study that of itself will release the affective dynamism in our faith. Growth in intelligence of the doctrine of the whole Christ will at every step animate growth in love of Christ Himself, Head and members, and in love of the latter in both body (temporal life) and soul. The doctrine of the *totus Christus* is the doctrine of God's gift of Himself in love to undeserving mankind; consequently, an intelligence of this doctrine will of itself be the "first movement of soul" in an answering gift of oneself to God and to others. In the order of religious motive, such an intelligence is unsurpassed in its power to inspire both personal sanctity and the social apostolate, and each in its organic relation to the other. Its conveyance is absolutely cardinal for the success of the lay vocation. On this the Holy See has been most explicit:

Indeed, all the institutions for the establishment of peace and the promotion of mutual help among men, however perfect these may seem, have the principal foundation of their stability in the mutual bond of minds and hearts whereby the members are united with one another. If this bond is lacking, the best of regulations come to naught, as we have learned by too frequent experience. And so, then only will true co-operation be possible for a single common good when the constituent parts of society deeply feel themselves members of one great family and children of the same heavenly Father; nay, that they are one body in Christ,

⁴³ *Nouvelle revue théologique*, LXI (1934), 469.

'but severally members one of another,' so that 'if one member suffers anything, all the members suffer with it.'⁴⁴

It must, therefore, be emphatically said that a lay course in theology will have been essentially a failure if it does not succeed in communicating to the student this "vue obsédante de l'unité humaine" which, as Lubac has well said, is at the basis of the Gospel.⁴⁵ This is the indispensable foundation of the Christian social mentality, the ultimate motivation of the whole Christian social program. Consequently, the situation of the *totus Christus* at the center of the lay course, the reduction of all other doctrines to this focal truth, and its illumination from every angle, is necessary, not only that the course may be a theology, but that it may be specifically a lay theology. This truth is primary *quoad nos* as the principle of unity and intelligibility of the economy of salvation; it is likewise primary as the truth principally formative of the social mentality, and principally generative of spiritual and social action. It assures to the course both its academic unity and its religious power; for it reveals the Christian faith in its organic oneness, and it is uniquely capable of waking the *desiderium cooperandi socialiter ex fide* (which may perhaps stand as a more expanded formula for expressing the affective finality of the lay course).

THE METHOD OF DEVELOPMENT

The next question concerns the method of a lay theology, especially insofar as method implies a starting point and an organic sequence of ideas in the development of the one theme, the *totus Christus*. In answering this question it is important to have in mind a distinction which Scheeben, for instance, puts thus:

The objective center, the proper root of the whole supernatural order is, indeed, the triune God, or the bosom of the eternal Father, from which Christ came forth and to which He returns with His Mystical Body. But so long as we have not entered with Christ into the bosom of the Father, and must still see the invisible only in the visible, Christ Himself in His earthly appearance is the Way along which we have to strive towards these heights. Our theologi-

⁴⁴ *Quadragesimo Anno*, *Two Basic Social Encyclicals* (New York: Benzinger Bros., 1943), n. 137, p. 183.

⁴⁵ H. Lubac, *Catholicisme: Les aspects sociaux du dogme catholique* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1938), p. iv.

cal wisdom must attach itself first of all to the human side of Christ, in order to be able to ascend to His divine side, His unity with the Father.⁴⁶

For this reason, he says, "The incarnate Wisdom of God is the proximate goal and object, the center about which the wisdom revealed to us in theology revolves; for the God-Man is the most real and most splendid revelation of God, and the node, if not the root, of the whole system of Christian truth."

We may understand Scheeben to be distinguishing (in his customarily involved terminology and metaphors) between the genesis of the order of theological truth *quoad se*, and the genesis of ordered theological knowledge *quoad nos*. With perhaps greater clarity, we might distinguish between the objective and logical order within the body of revealed truth as such, and the subjective and genetic order of the discovery of revealed truth by us. The former order is based on the primacy of the intrinsically (*quoad se*) more knowable, as well as on the order that prevails among the divine decrees as they are conceived to exist in God. As has been suggested, the theory of Scholastic theology requires that it should follow this order in its starting point and sequence of ideas. The latter order is based on the primacy of the relatively (*quoad nos*) more knowable, as well as on the order in which the divine decrees have been notified to us in history. A lay theology will adopt this latter order, as more conformable to its pedagogical and religious purposes.

The Order of Discovery

First, this "order of discovery" is pedagogically more effective. As Scheeben indicates, our manner of knowing requires that we reach the divine and transcendental only through the visible and historical. This law of our knowing was obeyed, as it were, in the very fact of revelation: "No one hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has revealed him" (John 1:18). To a considerable extent, too, it commanded the progressive manner in which the revelation unrolled. The beginning of knowledge of "the Word of Life" was, as St. John implies, through "what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked upon and our hands have handled. . ." (I John 1:1).

⁴⁶ *Mysterien des Christenthums* (2d ed., Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 1898), p. 705.

Not only did men see the Father in the Son (John 14:9), but they saw—or at least began to see—the divinity of the Son in the perfection of His humanity, in the authority and sanctity of His human presence, word, and action. Moreover, they began to see His Sonship—His *esse ad Patrem*—in the constant, urgent orientation of the life of His human soul towards One who is Father. Again, in the steady, willing movement of His whole life towards the Cross (most palpable in St. Luke), they began to see, albeit dimly and without understanding, the mystery of His priesthood. Similarly, in the centrality in His life of the formation of the Twelve they began to see the fact of His Church. Furthermore, as the movement of St. Paul's thought reveals, men reached the reality of the Fall through the reality of the redemption, and a knowledge of the gifts that Adam lost through a knowledge of the gifts resplendent in the humanity of Christ and restored (in the measure of the divine economy) to men through Him. Finally, on another plane of ideas, development in the formulation of the Church's thought has continually had its roots in development in her mystical and organizational life: "*Legem credendi lex statuit orandi.*"

In its historical and progressive character, and in its marvelous adaptation to fundamental human psychology, the method of revelation itself is a divine masterpiece of pedagogical art. It will furnish us, therefore, with the main lines of our method of teaching theology to the layman. I say, the main lines, since it will be impossible always to adhere to the "order of discovery," given the complex system of mutual interrelationships that obtains between truth and truth, as well as the complicated process of historical development. However, generally speaking, and as a matter of principle, a lay theology will have, certainly its initial starting point, and then the point of approach to its individual developments, in what is relatively the more knowable *secundum nostrum modum cognoscendi*—in the visible and historical. I admit, of course, that this approach makes great demands on pedagogical art; in many ways, the more conceptual approach of Scholastic theology is easier handled. Moreover, this "genetic" method of presentation has to be carried through with great skill, or the results will be as unsatisfactory as those achieved by sheer conceptual "indoctrination." But the method itself is sound, and at its best is unsurpassed in pedagogical effectiveness. Illustration of it

must be left till we come to the outlining of a course. For the moment, let me point out the consequence of this pedagogical insistence on the primacy of the visible and historical as regards the place in a layman's theology to be held by the Scriptures and the liturgy.

The Use of Scripture

There was a time, we saw, when *sacra doctrina* meant in effect *sacra scriptura*. Theological growth has ended the equivalence, but it has not in any way diminished the value of scriptural knowledge for theology. "It is most desirable and necessary," said Leo XIII, "that the use of Sacred Scripture should influence the whole study of theology and be, as it were, its soul."⁴⁷ Benedict XV, after making his own a host of St. Jerome's testimonies to the value of scriptural knowledge, concludes by saying: "It is our great desire for all the children of the Church that they should be saturated and strengthened (*perfusi et roborati*) with the sweetness of the Sacred Scriptures, and thus arrive at the all-surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ."⁴⁸ And most recently Pius XII has added his authority to the constant wish of the Church that "the word of God, imparted to men through the Sacred Scriptures, might daily be more deeply and fully understood and more intensely loved. . . ."⁴⁹

This "saturation" by the Scriptures, especially the New Testament, is trebly imperative as a feature of the method of a lay theology. First, scriptural knowledge is not otherwise supplied to the layman, as it is to the seminarian in his formal scriptural courses. Secondly, the study is of immense pedagogical value as a means of introduction to dogmatic concepts, whose essential content can be grasped in the plastic images of Scriptures, or in the living context of historical fact therein narrated. Finally, the religious value of the study is unsurpassed. As the Scriptures were the Church's first "textbook" in doctrine and especially in moral, so they have historically been the normal nourishment of Christian sanctity. Protestant exaggerations with regard to the *sacramentum verbi* should not lead us to overlook the fact that the word of God has actually a quasi-sacramental efficacy

⁴⁷ *Providentissimus Deus*, ASS, XXVI (1893-94), 283.

⁴⁸ *Spiritus Paraclitus*, AAS, XII (1920), 422.

⁴⁹ *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, Catholic Mind (XLII, May, 1944), n. 58, p. 279.

in the formation of the Christian mind and soul.⁵⁰ The author of the Bible is the Spirit of God; like any author, He dwells in His Book. Intelligent contact with the Book, therefore, brings the soul with great immediacy into contact with the Spirit, who is the ultimate agent of religious formation. On this fact have been based all the exhortations of the Church, most recently summed up and reinforced in *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, that the knowledge of Sacred Scripture should be widely diffused among the faithful.

It is more particularly desirable—and this should be an outstanding feature of a lay theology's method of handling Scripture—that the books of Scripture, especially the New Testament, should be known in their entire argument, in the full sweep of their story, in the full illumination that each throws upon the mystery of the whole Christ. It is not a question of exhaustive exegesis of a few texts, classic for their "probative" value, after the frequent (perhaps too exclusive) manner of Scholastic theology. The ideal is rather a more synthetic presentation, from a theological point of view, of scriptural doctrine, either the complete content of a particular book, or the complete data on a particular topic. In the practical order, this ideal will be difficult of achievement; but, at any rate, the emphasis should be on a certain wholeness of exposition, rather than on minute details of exegesis. Skillfully achieved, this emphasis will insure a certain simplicity; the view will fall upon the forest, and individual trees will stay in perspective. Moreover, this desirable simplicity will be further protected by firmly orientating all scriptural expositions towards doctrinal constructions, in a manner yet to be exemplified.

The Place of Liturgy

In consequence of what I have called its "genetic" method, a layman's theology will also rely heavily on the use of the liturgy as an approach to dogmatic truth. There is, said Pius XI, "... an intimate relation between dogma and sacred liturgy, as also between Christian worship and the sanctification of the people."⁵¹ *Quoad se*, of course, liturgy has its genesis in dogma, of which it is the expression

⁵⁰ Cf. Leo XIII: "... haec propria et singularis Scripturarum virtus, a divino afflatu Spiritus Sancti profecta . . .", *ASS*, XXVI (1893-94), 272.

⁵¹ *Divini Cultus*, *AAS*, XXI (1929), 33.

in prayer and ritual action. But, understanding liturgy for the moment in the narrower sense of rites and ceremonies, *quoad nos* the process is usefully inverted, as a point of pedagogic method. These rites and ceremonies, according to the *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, are to be explained to the people, because they "... present an image and convey the significance of the things that are done in the sacrament [in the context, baptism] ... [they] serve to exhibit to the eyes of the beholder a lively picture of the exalted and inestimable gifts which they [the sacraments] contain, and impress on the minds of the faithful a deeper sense of the boundless beneficence of God. . . ." ⁵² It is increasingly recognized today that the liturgy is a particularly effective means of doctrinal instruction; for in the order of discovery it has a certain primacy over dogma, at least in the sense that our knowledge of the Church's doctrine and of the mysterious grace that dwells in her has a uniquely dynamic quality when grasped through a study of the visible signs in which her beliefs and sanctifying action are, as it were, dramatized.

Referring to the lessons of history, Pius XI wrote in the Apostolic Constitution, *Divini Cultus*: "In the churches, where the choir was formed by almost the whole town, the workmen, builders, painters, sculptors, and men of letters were imbued through the medium of the liturgy with that knowledge of theological reality which today is so manifest in the monuments of the Middle Ages." ⁵³ And in the encyclical *Quas Primas*, alluding more directly to a principle of religious education, he wrote the well-known text:

Early initiation of the people into the realities of faith, whereby they are lifted up to an interiorly joyous life, is more effectively achieved through the annual celebration of the sacred mysteries than through even the solemn statements of the teaching Church. These latter, for the most part, are suited to a relatively few men of superior culture; they are uttered but once, and the impression they make is chiefly on the mind. But liturgical celebrations interest and instruct all the faithful; their annual recurrence makes their effect lasting; and they exert an influence on both mind and sentiment, in fact, on the whole man. Man is made up of body and soul; he must, therefore, be stirred and stimulated by the external solemnization of feastdays, to the end that he may more fully absorb divine doctrine through the variety and beauty of sacred rites, and have doctrine

⁵² *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, trans. Donovan, p. 133.

⁵³ *AAS*, XXI (1929), 34.

become in him strength and energy that will serve his progress in the spiritual life.⁵⁴

It is obvious, therefore, that a layman's theology, which aims at presenting the truth in a living and liveable form, will make extensive use of the liturgy, as a matter of pedagogical principle.

Social Worship and Social Action

But there are more profound relations between a layman's theology and an understanding of liturgy, taking the term now in its proper sense as the social worship of the Church, especially in its central act, the Mass. The layman seeks in theology the instruction and formation necessary for his special service to the Church. As a matter of emphasis, I have situated this service in the co-operation of the laity, as a solidary body, in the hierarchical apostolate of the Church, in terms of a twofold action, spiritual and social. And, since the Church has told us that the inner support of this co-operation must be an intelligent insight into the mystery of Christ, and a consequent profound sense of the unity of all men in Christ, I have proposed the *totus Christus* as the unifying, central theme of a lay theology. The principle now to be enforced is that this *sensus Christi* cannot be brought to real experiential keenness, and therefore to a truly operative stage, save through active participation in the liturgy of the Church, especially in the Mass—which is the whole Christ, Head and members, united in the central Christian act of worship and sacrifice—and in the Eucharist, which is the *sacramentum ecclesiae unitatis*, the cause and sign of Christian solidarity. The conclusion is that a layman's theology must be immensely concerned with the conveyance of that intelligence of the sacred liturgy which is foundational to active participation in the liturgy. To this concern it is committed by the demands of its own finality.

There is, therefore, a two-way relationship between liturgy and a lay theology. The liturgy furnishes an important way to an intelligence of the theology of the *totus Christus*; and then this theology is reconverted, as it were, to produce a more profound intelligence of the liturgy. And both together, the intelligence of the doctrine and the

⁵⁴ AAS, XVII (1925), 603; cf. G. Taymans, "Prière commune et formation religieuse," *Nouvelle revue théologique*, LXIV (1937), 872-78.

experience of its reality in social worship, combine to strengthen that sense of the unity of all men in Christ which is the inspiration of all Christian social action. This set of ideas should hardly need much development. It is entirely obvious that we see today in the life of the Church three "movements" intimately interwoven, in a process of reciprocal action and reaction. There is the theological movement towards a wider intelligence of the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ, the liturgical movement towards a more active participation in the liturgy of the Mystical Body of Christ, and the social movement towards a more universal participation in the hierarchical apostolate of the Mystical Body of Christ. At the starting point of each "movement" stands the immense fact of the *totus Christus*, and all three "move" unitedly towards the one goal, the peace of Christ in the reign of Christ. It is abundantly clear that the Church wishes every layman, and especially an élite, to be responsibly engaged in all three, in order that the proper lay contribution to the achievement of the one goal may be triumphantly made. It is precisely the function of a lay theology to enlighten the layman as to his responsibility, and in its own way to engage him in these three movements.

Genetically, the ideal process is: *scientia fidei—actio sacra—sensus Christi—actio catholica*. The formation of the social order in the spirit of Christ demands that one be oneself formed in the spirit of Christ; and one is formed in the spirit of Christ by means of an intelligence of Christ, indeed, but chiefly by sharing in the sacred action of Christ, the Mass.⁵⁵ This educational rhythm seems to be exactly revealed in a letter of the present Pope, written as Secretary of State:

Once the faithful have discovered that they are to go forward along the royal road of *public prayer* and of the other manifestations of worship, they will with far more zeal than hitherto strive to put on the *mind of Christ*. Inspiring their acts, thoughts, and affections at this source, they will *co-operate* with renewed vigor to achieve that return to Him which the present lamentable state of affairs causes them to hope for with growing desire and fervent longing.⁵⁶

This statement is itself a program. Father Gerald Ellard, S.J., whose services to the cause of liturgical education in America have been out-

⁵⁵ Cf. G. Lefebvre, O.S.B., "Catholic Action and the Liturgy," in *Restoring All Things*, edited by J. Fitzsimons and P. McGuire (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1938), pp. 16-50.

⁵⁶ Letter of Eugenio Cardinal Pacelli, Secretary of State, on the 25th anniversary of the *Revista Liturgica*, quoted in *Orate Fratres*, XIII (1939), 196-97 (Italics mine).

standing, interprets the mind of the Church with perfect correctness when he says: "The restoration of corporate worship as an instrument in the formation of the social conscience . . . is part and parcel of the Church's vast program of social restoration."⁵⁷ Consequently, in a theological education designed to form the agents of social restoration, systematic use of this instrument is of cardinal importance.

As regards the manner of its use, there is room for option between education in the liturgy (i.e., a formal course in liturgy), or education by the liturgy (i.e., methodical use of the liturgy as a source of doctrine), or education for the liturgy (i.e., the pointing of doctrine towards intelligent liturgical action), or—what will perhaps be best—a combination of all three techniques. At all costs, however, the principle suggested by the triad, "sacred action—the spirit of Christ—social action," must be made operative. I have said that a theological course as such cannot of itself produce apostles, men of charity. But it will do an essential work towards their production if it forms men of theological and liturgical intelligence, and sends them from the school to ". . . the Church, where the faithful gather together in order to come in contact with this [the true Christian] spirit in its primary and indispensable source, which is active participation in the sacred mysteries and in the public and solemn prayer of the Church."⁵⁸

CONCLUSION

There is no space here to go on to a detailed sketch of the framework and content of a lay course, or to concrete illustrations of its method. Perhaps some will think that I have spent too much time on "theory." For my own part, I feel that the theory on which the time has been spent is far from being adequate, but that the time spent in theorizing is still farther from being adequate. What is most needed is a good theory, without which one can neither judge nor improve nor control practice. Moreover, even when a good theory is had, it will immediately be found that its reduction to practice will require still more theoretical work. There are a number of parts of theology—the Church, the sacraments, the redemption, the last things—which have

⁵⁷ *Men at Work at Worship* (New York: Longmans Green and Co., 1940), p. 8.

⁵⁸ Pius X, *Motu Proprio, De restauratione musicae sacrae*, ASS, XXXVI (1903-1904), 331.

not received either the extent or the type of development that is necessary to make them available in a form suited to the science of faith in the service of the lay priesthood. I believe, therefore, that an interest in this special science would be of highly stimulating value to the professional theologian.

But, curiously enough, the main value that the professional theologian would find in theorizing about the nature of a lay theology lies in the illumination he might thus receive on the nature of theology as such. It is no secret that theologians the world over are uncomfortable about the pass—perhaps even the impasse—to which scientific theology has come in certain aspects of its practice, precisely because it lacks a fully satisfactory theory about itself and its functions. Few, for instance, would disagree with Schmaus, that "... in spite of the many discussions of the subject, the question, what theology is, needs further and more profound clarification" Still fewer would disagree with his added remark, that "... the use of the Aristotelian concept of science will not by itself get us any farther" ⁵⁹

The fact is that an immense development has taken place in the faith of the Church and in the theology of the schools since the thirteenth century. Moreover, it has not taken place independently of many revolutionary changes in human life, and in the scientific mode of thought. It is also a fact that we do not yet quite understand this development, nor the immensely complicated product with which it has left us; the reason very largely is that we have not yet got an adequate theory of theological development. Confronted, therefore, with the need of further developing theology in such a way that it will be of service to the laity in their special function in the Church, we are under an initial disadvantage. Hardly knowing what theology itself is, it is difficult to know what a theology for the laity should be. In this remarkable situation, my suggestion is that we might possibly clarify the answer to the first question by attempting to answer the second.

⁵⁹ M. Schmaus, *Katholische Dogmatik*, Zweiter Band, *Schöpfung und Erlösung* (München: Max Hueber, 1938), Vorwort, p. iv; there is an interesting development of the Franciscan (Bonaventuran) concept of theology by T. Soiron, O.F.M., *Heilige Theologie* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1935); cf. the series of articles by the same author, "Die Theologie des göttlichen Wortes," *Wissenschaft und Weisheit*, VI (1939), 41-58; 95-111; 179-93; 223-44; a study of this concept would be extremely fruitful for the purposes of a lay theology.

By deciding what we want to do for the sheep, we might find out what needs to be done for the shepherds.

This suggestion derives from a study of the curious outcome of the recent European debate on "wissenschaftliche Theologie" versus "Verkündigungstheologie." The origins of the debate were ultimately in the perception of a chasm between the science of theology and the Christian life. The outcome, to put it paradoxically, was an exceedingly fruitful stalemate. One side asserted that *de facto* such a chasm between scientific theology and Christian life did exist; therefore, to bridge it there was needed a median type of theology, more living, vitalizing, saving. The other side asserted that *de iure* no such chasm should exist; therefore no new bridge was needed; for scientific theology should itself be living, vitalizing, saving. Weisweiler, for instance, thus puts the conclusion: "... the great value of the controversy over a *Verkündigungstheologie* lies in the fact that it should persuade dogmatic theology of its own saving office [the demonstration, as he has said, of the word of God, not merely as true but as good, as a saving word], to be taken with great seriousness . . ."⁶⁰

Some similar conclusion as to the full duty of scientific theology should emerge from a discussion of the nature of a lay theology. But the problem of the latter would still stand. By divine constitution, the sheep are not the shepherds. And it is hardly fitting that we should either invite the sheep to draw up a chair to the shepherd's table, or ask the shepherds to crawl about cropping grass with the sheep.

⁶⁰ "Die Grundfrage der Verkündigungstheologie," *Scholastik*, XV (1940), 232; cf. also F. Lakner, S.J., "Lebendige Theologie oder Theologie der Verkündigung?", *Theologisch-praktische Quartalschrift*, LXXXXII (1939), 591-94 (Lakner has been the chief theorist of the latter type of theology; in this note he gives an introduction to the literature).