

THE TASK OF THEOLOGY

I. INTRODUCTION

The theological question most likely to promote widespread disunity among theologians is the question that asks about the unity that is proper to theologians. From my perspective, the situation seems to be such today that the best way to dissolve a gathering of theologians is to raise the basic question: what is theology? A few biographical observations might help to express my point. I belong to a regional, ecumenical, theological society. Our interests range far and wide. Our success in staying together as a society lies in our uncanny ability to avoid direct discussion on the nature of the discipline that brought us together in the first place. I have had some small involvement in field education. Experts in this area assure us that theological reflection is at the heart of the enterprise. It has been my experience that the reflection that is done is oftentimes Christian, at all times impassioned, and rarely theological. Every so often the newspapers report outrageous remarks made at gatherings of theologians, such as a recent meeting in New York City that raised the question, is God a woman? Someone must have inquired what should be done with passages in Scripture which seem offensive to women. Surely that person never bothered to raise the question—what is theology?—who responded that there is absolutely no reason why all those stories, which never really happened anyway, could not be dropped from the Scriptures. I have tried to receive with a listening heart much liberation-theology of the various kinds. I have been frequently enlightened as to what it is that makes liberation-theology *liberational*. I have not been as frequently enlightened as to what it is that makes liberation-theology *theological*. So much for theology as biography! These random observations are not made with the intent to quash adventurous theology. I would not relish being numbered among those whom Rosemary Haughton aptly describes as busybodies whose insensitivity to real theology is only equalled by their zeal for the preservation of sacred cliches.¹ My purpose in these re-

¹Rosemary Haughton, *The Theology of Experience* (New York: Newman Press, 1972), p. 15.

marks has been to describe a mood. I would like now to comment on the title of my paper.

The omni-competent theologian lives today, if at all, only in the history books. Accordingly, wisdom dictates that I assure my readers that this particular paper, notwithstanding its omni-competent sounding title, is not an effort on the part of one who teaches systematic theology to lecture his biblical, historical, and practical theological colleagues on the specifics of their diverse duties. Rather, the paper that follows, intended as a key-note presentation and the first of four reflections on the convention's question "Is there a Catholic theology?" has been designed as a modest consideration of theology's essential unity.

My paper develops in the following way. This introduction sets the scene. The second section isolates the problem and asks some questions. The third section, in response to these questions, discusses the one theology and reflects upon its basic task. In terms of logic, a fourth section should follow. Its purpose would be to discuss the many theologies and reflect upon their specialized tasks. But that would be to revive the omni-competent theologian of the previous paragraph. This fourth section is the work of the specialists themselves. The final section considers some practical consequences which, I trust, are pertinent to my paper, to this convention, and to the work of the CTSA. The issue at hand is foundational. It concerns the very right of theology to claim scientific existence. Such an issue is not the glamor-type concern that will push Harvey Cox and Andrew Greeley from the theological headlines. On the contrary, if the issue is dealt with successfully, it will help to keep them there. My topic in more familiar terms deals with the relationship between faith and theology.²

It is not without significance that the 1974 meeting of the CTSA coincides with the seven hundredth anniversary of the death of Thomas Aquinas.³ I emphasize that there is no little insignificance in this coin-

²See Schubert Ogden, "What is Theology?" in *The Journal of Religion* 52 (1972), 22-40. The author answers his question in a series of theses. Theses eleven and twelve stimulated my interest in the faith-theology relationship.

³There is considerable scholarly interest in the Thomist centennial. See, for example, James A. Weisheipl, O.P., *Friar Thomas D'Aquino* (New York: Doubleday, 1974); Armand A. Maurer, Editor in chief, *St. Thomas Aquinas. Commemorative Studies*, 2 vols. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies,

vidence because Catholic theology over these past seven hundred years can be broadly described in terms of the rise and fall of Scholasticism—of which St. Thomas is the outstanding exemplar.⁴ This issue of Scholasticism, its magnificent achievements and its subsequent demise, sets the challenge that faces the work of Catholic theology in our time. As Lonergan has described the situation, "Scholastic theology was a monumental achievement. Its influence in the Catholic Church has been profound and enduring. Up to Vatican II . . . it has provided much of the background of pontifical documents and conciliar decrees. Yet today, by and large, it is abandoned, partly because of the inadequacy of medieval aims and partly because of the short-comings of the Aristotelian *corpus*."⁵ This abandonment, leading to the present crisis, provides Catholic theology with its present, urgent challenge. This theology is the product of the faith it seeks to understand and express. It is also the product of the culture in which it labors to understand its faith and bring it to speech. And so Lonergan reminds us, "It is cultural change that has made Scholasticism no longer relevant and demands the development of a new theological method and style, continuous with the old yet meeting all the genuine exigencies of the Christian religion and of up to date philosophy, science and scholarship."⁶

These words—up to date philosophy, science and scholarship—seem innocent enough. They express the new resources which our times offer to the work of the theologian. From one point of view, this work, reflection on faith intent upon reaching the status of a science,⁷ is the

1974); *The Review of Metaphysics* 27, No. 3 (March, 1974), and *The Thomist* 38, No. 1 (January, 1974), have published centennial studies.

⁴As Chenu indicates, "Scholasticism is always the word used, whether with eulogizing or disparaging intent, to qualify medieval thought in theology as well as in philosophy, and even in law and other fields of instruction." See M.-D. Chenu, O.P., *Toward Understanding Saint Thomas*, trans. by A. M. Landry, O.P., and D. Hughes, O.P. (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1964), p. 59.

⁵Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J., *Method in Theology* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1972), p. 279.

⁶Bernard Lonergan, S.J., *Doctrinal Pluralism* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1971), pp. 32-3.

⁷This is Congar's expression. See Yves M. J. Congar, O.P., "Theology's Tasks after Vatican II," in *Renewal of Religious Thought*, ed. by L. K. Shook,

sort of work the theologian has always had to do. From another point of view, because the theologian must use the valid resources of his culture at an exacting and technical level,⁸ this work always seems to be changing. This did not prove to be a problem for Aquinas as he pursued his study of the Scriptures and of Aristotle. It did prove to be an insuperable difficulty for Stephen Tempier.⁹ This is not a problem today for the membership of the CTSA. It is a real problem in the American Church today. This is evidenced in the unfortunate rift that seems to exist between the doctrinal-pastoral teaching authority and the Catholic theological community. This community recognizes the need to confront the questions of today and to do so by utilizing the resources of today. This obviously involves the various turns of philosophical reflection, the developments in biblical criticism, the results of the anthropological sciences. As the Catholic theological community strives to come to grips with new and complex problems, for example, the task of dealing with the problems of demythologization, and the task of defending the possibility of objective religious statements, it recognizes the need to recast its notion of theological method in a most thorough-going and profound fashion.¹⁰ Misunderstanding is inevitable in such matters. Therefore, it would seem to be the responsibility of the Catholic theological community to make clear to all concerned that this work of recasting does not endanger theology's essential unity.

The word that describes the present theological scene is pluralism.¹¹ Theology has always known some form of pluralism. The

C.C.S.B., vol. 1 (Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1968), p. 47. For an expansion of this essay, see the same author's *Situation et Tâches Présentes de la Théologie* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1967).

⁸See Congar, "Theology's Tasks after Vatican II," pp. 53-4.

⁹Stephen Tempier was appointed bishop of Paris in 1268. For his role in the theological problems of the day, see Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas D'Aquino*, pp. 242, 274, 277, 285, 333-4.

¹⁰See Bernard J. Lonergan, S.J., "The Absence of God in Modern Culture," in *The Presence and Absence of God*, ed. by Christopher F. Mooney, S.J. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1969), p. 173.

¹¹See Heinrich Fries, "Theological Reflections on the Problem of Pluralism," *Theological Studies* 28 (1967), 3-26; Edward Schillebeeckx, ed., *Dogma and Pluralism* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970); Bernard Lonergan, *Doctrinal*

history books remind us of the various schools of theology "upholding contradictory opinions, starting from different assumptions, and developing different patterns of thought."¹² The pluralism that prevails in theology today, however, is vastly different. Rahner offers the following description:

Formerly there were controversies between the schools and to some extent different patterns of thought. . . . But fundamentally they knew each other, spoke more or less the same language, and could try to clarify their differences and eliminate them in a higher synthesis. The materials and methods of theology, linguistic, historical, speculative, were accessible to all—or completely outside of their range of interests. But today the intellectual and social environment of theology is different. Methods are different. There are so many different starting points and languages in philosophy that no single individual can master them adequately. The mass of material in exegesis and history of dogma is such that no single individual can take in and master theology even as it is at present.¹³

The topic of pluralism could occupy the attention of several conventions. Rahner's description suffices to suggest the nature of the actual situation confronting the contemporary theologian who for weal or woe seems well on the way to becoming more and more the impossible person.¹⁴ My purpose in mentioning pluralism at this time is to introduce the theme that will be of central concern in this paper. Pluralism in theology quite obviously introduces a proliferation of all sorts of specializations. These specializations are essential to the effective division of labor that will enable theology to do its many tasks in the light of up to date philosophy, science and scholarship. However, specialization can lead to fragmentation and fragmentation can lead to isola-

Pluralism; William M. Thompson, "Rahner's Theology of Pluralism," *The Ecumenist* 11 (1973), 17-22.

¹²K. Rahner, "Theology," *Sacramentum Mundi* 6 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), p. 239.

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴This is Congar's quotation from Lacordaire. See Congar, "Theology's Tasks after Vatican II," p. 65.

tion and the loss of communication.¹⁵ This loss of communication can threaten theology's understanding of its own essential unity. This unity provides the basis for our understanding the nature of the many theologies that must work together in service to the Church.¹⁶ As I shall be suggesting, given the actual situation today, the fundamental tasks of theology, of common concern to all the specializations, is to recover and then to foster, in the context of diversity, *the sense of its own unity*.

I will conclude these introductory remarks by delineating several assumptions. First of all, I am presuming, within the Catholic theological confraternity, the existence of a good measure of agreement over the nature of *aggiornamento*, the sign under which Catholic theology is at work at this time.¹⁷ Furthermore, I am assuming that, before we talk properly about the theology of renewal, we had better attend first to the renewal of theology. As we inquire into what the renewed theology is doing, we ought to ask who is doing the renewed theology, that is, what sort of persons we ought to be if we are to do properly the work of theology under the sign of *aggiornamento*, if we are to advance that work into the future, "if we are to do so without doing more harm than good, without projecting into the Catholic community and the world any inauthenticity that we have imbibed from others or created on our own."¹⁸ This observation presumes quite peacefully that there is a Catholic community in a theological sense and not just in a socio-

¹⁵These particular expressions are used by Ogden, "What is Theology?" pp. 34-5.

¹⁶In a later section, I shall maintain that theology is basically ecclesial in nature. For the notion of theology as ecclesial deaconry, see Congar, "Theology's Tasks after Vatican II," p. 47.

¹⁷"For *aggiornamento* is not some simple-minded rejection of all that is old and some breezy acceptance of everything new. Rather it is a disengagement from a culture that no longer exists and an involvement in a distinct culture that has replaced it . . . *Aggiornamento* is not desertion of the past but only a discerning and discriminating disengagement from its limitations. *Aggiornamento* is not just acceptance of the present; it is acknowledgement of its evils as well as of its good." See Lonergan, "The Absence of God from Modern Culture," p. 175.

¹⁸Bernard Lonergan, S.J., "Existenz and *Aggiornamento*," in *Collection*, ed. by F. E. Crowe, S.J. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), p. 248.

logical sense, that there are theologians of proper self-identification who are in service to that community, that it is quite possible for such theologians, if careless in their self-identity or if resistant to the processes of the requisite conversions, to do more harm than good and thus project into their community an inauthenticity that is an ill-conceived creation unwarranted by the tradition or an ill-advised and uncritical borrowing from elsewhere.

These remarks can suffice as introductory. I shall proceed now to isolate the problem at hand.

II. THE PROBLEM AND SOME QUESTIONS

The precise point at issue is theology's right to scientific existence. No one raises the question "Why biological science?" It is taken for granted that life exists. This is a *datum* open to all. The biologist is the one who proceeds to study this "given" in a technically competent manner. In theology, however, the 'why' question is crucial. In dialogue with the belief and the unbelief of the believer, and in dialogue with the unbelief and the belief of the unbeliever, the theologian must raise the question "Why theology?" in order to explore the conditions for the possibility of theology's existence. In other words, that God and man *can* be in communication is the prime concern of that sort of theology which I like to call philosophical theology. That God and man *are as a matter of fact* in communication—I shall refer to this as the Christian fact¹⁹—is the good news of the Christian gospel received through the inner grace of faith. This Christian fact is a matter of faith.²⁰ In sec-

¹⁹I had settled on this expression, the Christian fact, before reading the valuable essay of D. Tracy, "The Task of Fundamental Theology," *The Journal of Religion* 54, No. 1 (January, 1974), 13-34. Tracy makes use of this same expression. For me the Christian fact embraces both the inner word of the grace of faith and the outer word of Christian witness.

²⁰In the modern period some Catholic theologians began to out-rationalize the rationalists. The more authentic tradition would regard the fact of revelation as an object of faith, not of ordinary knowledge. See John L. Murphy, *With the Eyes of Faith* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1966), pp. 57-79; Charles Davis, "With or Without Faith," in *Theology for Today* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1962), pp. 25-43. The classic study of this problem is Roger Aubert's *Le Problème de l'Acte de Foi* (Louvain: E. Warny, 1958).

tions two and three of this paper I will be reflecting on theology's right to scientific existence not as possible but as actual.

At the heart of our issue is a theology of revelation. As far as the understanding of the meaning of revelation is concerned, the problem is one of mediation. On the one hand there is immanentism; on the other there is a purely extrinsic view of revelation from which frankly positivist explanations of theology's task follow as a matter of course.²¹ The immanentist position sees revelation as the inevitable, infra-historical development of mankind's religious needs. The extrinsicist position sees revelation as divine intervention coming exclusively from outside man's history and speaking to man in the form of propositions.²² That we are touching here on a key issue is supported by a recent review of Moran's volume, *The Present Revelation*.²³ The review states in part:

Gabriel Moran has his finger on the rawest nerve in contemporary theology. Many, if not most, of its practitioners operate without reference to their own scientific foundations. Otherwise intelligent and erudite scholars, whether working in the area of biblical exegesis, patristics, medieval thought, modern dogmatic problems, or even theological method, continue to be satisfied with frankly positivist definitions of the enterprise. For some, theology is the study of God's revelation in the Bible; for others, it is the study of God's revelation in the teachings of the Church. In both cases, revelation is identified with a given source: Scripture or doctrine. The question is simply not raised: By what *process* have Scripture and doctrine come into being? Indeed, it is that process which must be isolated and defined if we are to understand the meaning and the task of theology.²⁴

The sweeping charge, that many if not most of theology's practitioners operate without reference to their own scientific foundations,

²¹K. Rahner, "Revelation," *Sacramentum Mundi* 5 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), pp. 342-53.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 349.

²³Gabriel Moran, *The Present Revelation* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972).

²⁴Richard P. McBrien in *Commonweal*, June 29, 1973, pp. 363-5. It is from this review that the present paper has taken its concern. Theology's task at this time is to account for its own scientific foundations.

has a breadth to it which I am not concerned to investigate in any detail. I accept the statement as a satisfying description of the theological state of things. Positivist definitions of the theological enterprise are everywhere to be found. However, it does not follow that a particular writer actually thinks of theology in a positivist manner just because he carelessly defines it in such a manner. In this connection I am reminded of a distinguished German theologian who made reference to St. Thomas as a "conclusions-theologian" precisely on the basis of certain, inadequately expressed definitions.²⁵ (Helpful in this context is Lonergan's frequent reference in class lectures to Einstein's remark that if one wants to know what is going on in the science of physics, one does not ask a physicist for a definition; rather, one watches carefully what a good physicist does.) The question, then, stands: how does theology make reference to its own scientific foundations? The task of theology is to answer this question in a manner that will express theology's essential unity. It is a question of the relationship between faith and theology. Concern with the proper response to this question belongs to all the theological specializations. Only when this question is properly confronted and answered can theology proceed to make the more obvious inquiries about its many tasks. As I shall describe the matter, it is a question of the one and the many, the one noun and the many adjectives, the one, basic task common to all the theological specialties and the many special tasks which conspire to accomplish the one basic task. Theology as such does not have some sort of separate existence. There exist the many theologies, philosophical, historical (including biblical), systematic (including theological ethics), and practical. The one theology exists only in the various forms of the many theologies. Two fundamental questions arise. There exist philosophical, historical, systematic, and practical theologies. What is it that constitutes them as *theological*? When this is answered, the second question comes to the fore. What constitutes these theologies as *philosophical, historical, systematic* and *practical*? The concern of this paper is with the first of these two questions.

My procedure in this section is as follows: I will investigate two

²⁵The reference is to Johannes Beumer, author of *Theologie als Glaubensverständnis* (Würzburg: Echter-Verlag, 1953). See Bernard Lonergan, "Theology and Understanding," in *Collection*, pp. 121-41.

recent theological pieces which direct our attention to the matter at hand. Then I shall describe the situation in Catholic theology as I see it at the present time and from the viewpoint of this paper's special concern. In the light of my findings I shall formulate three specific questions which will be examined in section three. My overall purpose is relatively uncomplex. I intend to examine theology's integral self-understanding. If theology is not only the product of the faith that it seeks to understand but also of the culture in which it seeks such understanding, then it follows that human experience and the Christian fact constitute the bipolar origin of Christian theology. Immanentism is a form of reductionism that tends to neglect the pole of Christian fact. Positivism, biblical or doctrinal, is a form of reductionism that tends to neglect the pole of human experience. As a matter of fact, each form of reductionism is a positivism. Immanentism is positivism of a secularist sort. I shall be maintaining that positivism in any form distorts theology's integral self-understanding because it describes theology's unity by eliminating something essential to that unity. Positivism in theology has all sorts of harmful influences, especially on the progress of ecumenism. It is Rahner who reminds us of these ecumenical implications. He writes, "Tendencies to positivist self-assertion in theology are hostile to the work of ecumenism."²⁶

The first of the two writers I would like to discuss is Professor Schubert Ogden whose particular theses I had intended to consider before I became aware that he had graciously agreed to be the distinguished critic of my observations. Although it will be clear when I refer to a particular view of Professor Ogden as being reductionist that I have some problems with several of his theses, I want to affirm first of all how valuable his article has been in helping me to recognize the importance of stressing theology's essential unity. Writing in the *Journal of Religion*²⁷ Ogden raises the question "What is theology?" and proceeds to give his answer in a series of twelve theses. It is the twelfth thesis that concerns me at the moment. It reads as follows: "For this reason, and also because theology is subject to no other criterion of meaning and truth than apply to its cognate fields general-

²⁶K. Rahner, "Revelation," *Sacramentum Mundi* 5, p. 346.

²⁷Ogden, "What is Theology?" pp. 22-40.

ly, there can be no question of its right in principle to exist beside such other forms of reflective understanding as philosophy, the special sciences, and the various arts."²⁸ The phrase, "for this reason," refers to the last sentence offered in explanation of the eleventh thesis. In this particular sentence, Ogden affirms, "Thus, even though faith without theology is not really faith at all, theology without faith is still theology and quite possibly good theology at that."²⁹ In defending this twelfth thesis, Ogden refers to typical, modern doubts about theology's right to scientific existence. These doubts arise in opposition to two theological suppositions which are scientifically unacceptable to certain non-theological persons reflecting on theology's claims from the perspective of other disciplines, and to some theological practitioners as well. The first of these unacceptable suppositions concerns criteria, and affirms that theology by its very nature involves an appeal to special criteria of meaning and truth in order to establish some or all of its statements. The second supposition concerns faith in the theologian, and holds that the actual theological practitioner must be a believer already committed to the Christian understanding of reality, and thus committed to the truths of the statements that theological reflection ostensibly seeks to establish. These two suppositions, the author stresses, are not the invention of hostile critics unfriendly to the theological enterprise. On the contrary, these suppositions have been operative and still are operative in vast numbers of theologians. Now the problem that Professor Ogden sees is this: on the one hand, no one can deny that these suppositions are rooted in theology's own self-understanding, a self-understanding described as traditional; on the other hand, it is also undeniable, at least by anyone sharing the basic outlook of modern secularity, that these suppositions furnish more than sufficient reason to question theology's claim to be a legitimate form of human understanding. From this Ogden concludes, "If theology is the kind of undertaking it is widely supposed to be, by theologians themselves as well as by their modern critics, its right to exist, even in principle, is far from clear."³⁰ Now it is more than obvious to this particular audience that Professor

²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 38.

²⁹*Ibid.*

³⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 38-9.

Ogden does not question theology's right to scientific existence. Consequently, his reflections on the matter would suggest that if his arguments for rejecting the two suppositions are sound, it would follow for him that "the usual doubts about theology's right to exist pertain not to theology itself but only to the traditional understanding of it which can and should be overcome."³¹

My purpose at this stage is not to quarrel. It is merely the effort to isolate a particular theological problem. What I conclude from Professor Ogden's clear presentation is this: if theology is to defend its right to scientific existence, it must eliminate the supposition that the theological practitioner must be a believer already "committed to the Christian understanding of reality, and thus to the truths of the statements that theological reflection ostensibly seeks to establish." From my perspective, however, if, for a Christian, theology's origin is bipolar, involving human experience and the Christian fact, then the elimination of this supposition seems to involve a reductionism that emphasizes human experience but does not take seriously the Christian fact. This strikes me as being a form of positivism, of a secularist variety.

The second writer who can assist us in locating our problem is Gabriel Moran. The point that concerns Moran in the opening chapter of his recent volume, *The Present Revelation*,³² is theology's starting point. He seems to be searching not for a new starting point but for a new kind of starting point. It is in connection with this quest that he quotes approvingly the following excerpt from Herbert Muller's reflections on church and theology in the light of contemporary culture's emphasis on relativity. Muller stated: "Most Churchmen failed to meet the challenge of relativity. They simply reaffirmed the absolute truths of Christianity, involving the authority of the Bible: a sacred knowledge that had been revealed to a minority of mankind and on the proper interpretation of which Christians themselves have never been able to agree."³³ Moran seeks his new sort of starting point in the realm of the relative. He argues, therefore, for the deabsolutization of theology. His

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 39.

³²See Moran, *The Present Revelation*.

³³*Ibid.*, p. 8. The citation is from Herbert Muller, *Religion and Freedom in the Modern World* (Chicago, 1963).

anti-positivist thrust is evident. To him, "Christian writings presume that there are some divinely bestowed truths, however few or obscure they may be."³⁴ Moran feels that the attempt to make the relative the starting point for theology will never be attempted as long as the presumption prevails that something must always function as an absolute. The key for Moran's search and for his efforts to renew theology from outside theology—he despairs of theology's ability to overcome positivism from within—is found in the rejection of the traditional thinking that theology presupposes revelation.³⁵ By virtue of this presupposition the implication will always remain in the mind of the theologian that somewhere there is to be found some identifiable Something called revelation which operates as the special source of certain *a priori* truths. These truths constitute, in the traditional thinking, the absolute departure point. This means, so Moran insists, that in practice Christianity's concept of revelation is not developed from human experience but is dictated by positive, Christian sources. If the word revelation cannot be established on its own as a non-Christian word and even a non-religious word, it is always going to pose an insoluble problem in Christian theology. It will always be that inexplicable little blip that one has to accept to get the whole thing moving.³⁶

My suspicion is that Moran has undertaken an impossible quest. He not only sets out to redesign Christian theology but any sort of theology. His effort to make revelation a non-religious word seems doomed. Revelation has seemingly always functioned as part and parcel of the self-understanding of any religion claiming its origin from divine gift and not from human construct. However, my purpose at this time is not to quarrel. I am trying to define and isolate a particular theological problem. (I might add by way of this parenthesis that if I were to quarrel, the source from which I would draw, in my effort to overcome positivism and yet deal effectively with the Christian notion of revelation and the accompanying "scandal of particularity," would be *The Theology of Revelation* by Gabriel Moran.³⁷) If my reading of Moran's

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 9.

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 32.

³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 34.

³⁷G. Moran, *Theology of Revelation* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966).

thesis is correct, what I conclude is simply this: if theology is to defend its right to scientific existence, then the theologian cannot suppose that theology itself supposes revelation.³⁸ This means that Christian theology "has to face the possibility that there is no Christian revelation."³⁹ However, if for a Christian, theology's origin is bipolar, involving human experience and the Christian fact, I would consider the elimination of revelation as a Christian word and as a religious word to involve a form of reductionism that emphasizes human experience in such a way that it does not take seriously the Christian fact. This strikes me as a form of positivism, of a secularist variety.

Thus far I have described some efforts of two contemporary writers who are concerned to safeguard theology's right to scientific existence. In their laudable intentions they feel constrained to jettison elements of theology's traditional self-understanding which to my mind are essential to the theological enterprise. I have described their positions as reductionist. It is precisely this issue of reductionism, from a somewhat different perspective, that is very much a problem on the present Catholic theological scene. I would like to turn my attention to the Catholic theological world and to describe, admittedly in large strokes, what I see to be taking place. The word theological in this context has a broad connotation. I intend it to embrace pastoral preaching and the doctrinal-pastoral teaching of the magisterium as well as the work of scientific theology. It strikes me that a reductionism is being carried out on two fronts. One form of this reductionism seems to do injustice to the role of human experience, scholarship and culture in the work of theology; the other seems to endanger the Christian fact

³⁸As will be evident in section three of this paper, I am not pleased with the use of the word "suppose" in Moran's phrasing as well as in Ogden's phrasing. The word as used by these authors already suggests a positivist position. In connection with Moran's volume, *The Present Revelation*, it would be interesting to raise the convention's question "Is there a Catholic theology?" On page 38 Moran writes, "If revelation, that is, the only revelation there is, is everywhere, then those who are in charge of the church will see themselves in trouble." Moran adds the following comments as well: "I suspect that the reason the term supernatural has survived is because it was necessary for justifying the existence of a church." "There are other distinctions which I suspect are traceable to the instinct of church leaders to prop up the church's need to exist."

³⁹*The Present Revelation*, p. 31.

received through the inner grace of faith and the outer word of Christian witness. The precise point at issue is the relationship between faith and theology. There are some who so separate faith and theology that they fail to see that when they are discussing matters of faith, they are always confronting the question of theology, at least in a pre-scientific form. It is in this way that they do injustice to the roles of human experience, scholarship and culture. The temptation in this situation is to define as faith what is really yesterday's theologized expression of faith. On the other hand, there are some who so separate faith and theology that they tend to bring under the umbrella of theology what is not really theology at all. Their enthusiasm for the role of human experience, scholarship and culture can obscure their vision on the place of the Christian fact. I will describe these reductions more concretely without promising any sort of satisfying survey.

There are some who so separate faith and theology that they fail to do justice to the task of interpretation and thus fall into a fundamentalism of the word of dogma.⁴⁰ Walter Principe directs our attention to an odd quirk in theological history. By and large, he suggests, Roman Catholic theologians down the centuries have managed to escape the difficulties of biblical fundamentalism. They have not always been successful in escaping a sort of magisterial fundamentalism that suggests that dogmatic formulae can somehow escape the vicissitudes of time and history. Dogmatic positivism on the Catholic scene is not a present problem for the scientific theological community which is moving effectively "towards a Catholic use of hermeneutics" and which has come to understand "that we are not addressed by . . . a word of God without alloy, coming down to us, as it were, vertically, in a purely divine statement."⁴¹ The membership of the CTSA needs no instruction that believing always comes about in the here and now as interpretative understanding. As Schillebeeckx expresses it: "Without faith there is no understanding of faith, but without understanding there is no faith."⁴²

⁴⁰This expression is from Walter Principe in his helpful essay, "The Hermeneutic of Roman Catholic Dogmatic Statements," in *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 2, No. 2 (1972), 157-75.

⁴¹See Edward Schillebeeckx, O.P., "Towards a Catholic Use of Hermeneutics," in *God the Future of Man* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968), p. 5.

⁴²*Ibid.*, p. 16.

What can be said of the scientific theological community cannot be affirmed as readily of the rest of the Catholic community, not excepting the doctrinal-pastoral magisterium. I have already made reference to the gap that exists between the scientific theological community and the rest of the Church. The crux of the matter is the hermeneutic question. In simpler terms that are pertinent to this particular paper, the issue is the relationship between faith and theology, faith and culture. The task of harmonizing culture and Christian teaching, the task of remaining fully Christian yet open to the good things that can be drawn from the prevailing culture, a task never fully accomplished at any given time in history, must never be abandoned in favor of some form of reductionism. This seems to be the message that comes from *Gaudium et spes*:

These difficulties [resulting from apparent conflict between Christian teaching and culture] do not necessarily harm the life of faith, rather they can stimulate the mind to deeper and more accurate understanding of the faith. The studies and recent findings of science, history and philosophy raise new questions which influence life and demand new theological investigations. Furthermore, while adhering to the methods and requirements proper to theology, theologians are invited to seek continually for more suitable ways of communicating doctrine to the men of their times.⁴³

As an example of Christian positivism at work,⁴⁴ I would like to cite an instance of pastoral teaching which seems to separate faith and theology in such a manner that fundamentalism of dogma results. I have in mind the "Faith and Theology" lecture given by John Cardinal Wright to various audiences in the United States and printed in a collec-

⁴³See *Gaudium et spes, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, no. 62. Cf. *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. by Walter Abbott, S.J. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966).

⁴⁴What Karl Rahner refers to as *Denzingertheologie*, the late Pierre Charles of Louvain names Christian positivism. It conceived the function of the theologian to be that of a propagandist for Church doctrines. He did his duty when he repeated, explained, defended just what had been said in Church documents. He had no contribution of his own to make and so there could be no question of his possessing any autonomy in making it. Now it is true, of course, that theology is neither a source of divine revelation nor an addition to the inspired scriptures nor

tion of lectures under the title, *The Church: Hope of the World*.⁴⁵ The lecturer stated that the present crisis in the Church is not one of faith but of theology, and he warns his hearers that "theology is not faith and all the 'theologians' combined do not add up to the faith."⁴⁶ He then states his thesis: "It is this last theme that I wish to emphasize, for 'theologies' are influenced by human conditionings (cultural, political, subjective) but the faith is from God and its content is from His revelation through Christ Jesus."⁴⁷ The impression I receive from this essay is that somewhere faith exists uninfluenced by historical conditionings. This seems to say that one can think about the faith, or articulate it, apart from some historical and therefore theological form. This impression is strengthened by the following citation: "God's revelations are the object of the faith. His Church authoritatively sets forth God's revelation. The Church is not a forum nor a school of theologians and theologies. . . . Only what the Church teaches authoritatively as the mind and will of Christ the Lord is the object of faith; all the theologies, even those which most she welcomes as helpful in understanding the faith or blesses as most consistent with the contents of the faith, are secondary and marginal, related to the faith, perhaps, but not to be confused with it."⁴⁸ It goes without saying that I too affirm that the Church is the authoritative teacher of God's word. I agree too that "much of the present crisis is perhaps due to confusion arising from failure to keep clear those distinctions between 'the theologies' and the faith." However, a distinction is not a separation, and to speak of a distinction and to mean in reality a separation is a disastrous step in the direction of a dogmatic positivism which critics, friendly or otherwise,

an authority that promulgates Church doctrines. It is also true that a Christian theologian should be an authentic human being and an authentic Christian and so will be second to none in his acceptance of revelation, Scripture and his Church doctrine. But these premises do not lead to the conclusion that the theologian is just a parrot with nothing to do but repeat what has already been said." Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, pp. 330-1.

⁴⁵ John Cardinal Wright, *The Church: Hope of the World*, ed. by Rev. Donald W. Wuerl (Kenosha, Wisconsin: PROW Books, 1972).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

will consider to be theology's traditional starting point.⁴⁹

Any satisfying survey on the matter at hand—which I have not promised—would have to consider the views on the nature of theology which underlie the interpretations of dogmatic statements in the areas of original sin, the Eucharist, Trinitarian and Christological questions, the issue of infallibility.⁵⁰ The question of dogmas in their historical contexts has a prominent place in the recent document *Mysterium ecclesiae*.⁵¹ Theologians who were profoundly disappointed with the way *Mysterium fidei*⁵² dealt with the relationship between faith and theology will doubtless find the new document more sensitive to this relationship. *Mysterium ecclesiae* presupposes no absolute distinction between articles of faith and theological statements. It even mentions the “considerable assistance” which theologians render to the magisterium. However, as Rahner notes in his helpful commentary, the document could have said that this considerable assistance is “historically and theologically an indispensable aid which by no means detracts from the dignity and specific function of the magisterium.”⁵³

This issue of Christian positivism, almost omnipresent as a problem for the Church at large in our country, is really not very much of a problem for the membership of the CTSA. Could it be, however, that our specific problem runs in the opposite direction? Are there some who so separate faith and theology that they tend to bring under the umbrella of theology what is not really theology at all? If this is so, would this not constitute an unacceptable reductionism that would do

⁴⁹See Charles Davis' opening paragraph of his essay, “Theology and Praxis,” *Cross Currents* 23, No. 2 (Summer, 1973), 154. Davis characterizes, or caricatures, theology as positivist.

⁵⁰For copious references to the contemporary literature on these specific issues, see Principe, “The Hermeneutic of Roman Catholic Dogmatic Statements.”

⁵¹See the *Declaration in Defense of the Catholic Doctrine on the Church against Certain Errors of the Present Day* (Rome: The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, June 24, 1973). Latin text in *AAS* 65, n. 7 (July 31, 1973), 396-408.

⁵²Pope Paul VI, *Mysterium fidei*, September 3, 1965. Latin text in *AAS* 57, n. 11 (October 30, 1965), 753-74.

⁵³K. Rahner, “Mysterium Ecclesiae,” *Cross Currents* 23, No. 2 (Summer, 1973), 183-98. The passage cited is on p. 187.

injustice to the question of the Christian fact? Eric Mascall writes that the task of the theologian is "to help the Church acquire a deeper understanding of the Christian faith and to mediate, interpret and commend that faith to the contemporary world."⁵⁴ He feels the need to distinguish theology in the strict sense from the vast number of studies commonly listed under "theology" in modern university catalogues. These studies have acquired the perfectly legitimate status of secular disciplines in their own right. At the same time, the theologian sees them as being most helpful to his own work. Their inter-disciplinary value, however, does not constitute them as theological. Mascall expresses it this way:

In the wider sense theology includes a vast range of disciplines in which scholars apply to the documents, monuments, events and behavioral patterns of Judaism and Christianity the same techniques and criteria that other scholars apply to the documents, monuments, events and behavioral patterns of other movements of human thought and culture: Old Testament history, the literary criticism of the Bible, Biblical Archeology, Ecclesiastical History, Liturgiology . . . and so on. . . . They provide material of the utmost value for the consideration of the Biblical and dogmatic theologian Where these disciplines differ from theology in the strict sense is the fact that, while they are concerned with the Christian religion as a phenomenon for study, they do not appeal to the Christian revelation for either their techniques or their criteria. The Old Testament historian, the Biblical critic, the ecclesiastical historian, the liturgical scholar scrutinize and evaluate the events of Jewish history, the authorship and composition of the Bible, the . . . episodes of the Church's past, and the behavior of Christians at worship with the same ruthless and impartial objectivity with which other scholars investigate the history of ancient China, the provenance of the Rig Veda and the Upanishads, the development and ramifications of Buddhism and the ritual performances of the Aztecs.⁵⁵

Once again I want to stress that these scholarly activities, which owe nothing whatsoever to theology for their legitimacy, are as a matter of fact immensely valuable for the work of theology. However, just be-

⁵⁴E. L. Mascall, *Theology and the Future* (New York: Morehouse-Barlow, 1968), p. 16.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 17-8.

cause they are related to theology and just because they are the work of Christian believers is no warrant for calling them theological.

So much then for the state of our question! I have been saying that there are many theologies. These many theologies constitute "one single movement of reflection, having an integral task."⁵⁶ To talk about this task, to ask what it is that makes these many theologies theological, to inquire about theology's essential unity, to come to grips with theology's starting point, to talk about the relation between faith and theology—these are all one and the same. If my reflections thus far bear some resemblance to the actual state of things, I see three specific questions emerging that could be of some interest to this convention with its chosen theme. The questions are as follows: (1) Can theology come to grips with its own self-understanding and defend its right to scientific existence without falling victim to reductionism, whether of the secularist variety or of the positivist variety, biblical or doctrinal? (2) What is the relationship between the *scientia* of the theological practitioner and the inner grace of faith? Is faith necessary for the work of theology? In other words, if it is true that there cannot be faith without theology, is it likewise true that there can be no theology without faith? (3) The third question is the question of the convention. Is there a Catholic theology?

SOME ANSWERS

1) Faith and Theology

The charge is made that many theological practitioners go about their business without reference to their scientific foundations. They accept, in uncritical fashion, positivist explanations of their discipline which, as their critics are quick to point out, are no explanations at all. Doubts therefore arise with reference to theology's right to claim scientific existence. Some of these doubts, I presume, come from fields other than theology, perhaps from the area of religious studies. The problem in this instance, it is alleged, is theology itself. In question is the possibility of reconciling the commitment of faith with the freedom of intellectual inquiry. At the moment, doubts of this sort do not concern me. As a matter of fact, I am not particularly sanguine about

⁵⁶Ogden, "What is Theology?" pp. 27-8.

the possibility of banishing them by way of dialogue. Theology and religious studies, it seems to me, are quite different realities and ought never to be lumped together in any careless and clumsy manner. Religious studies can survive the death of God and even thrive. On the contrary, if God is dead, so is theology.

Other doubts arise from within the camp of theology itself. The problem here is not theology itself, but what is called theology's traditional self-understanding which is equated, in the minds of the doubters, with Christian positivism. Various questions are raised. Does theology find its starting point from within the circle of faith or from outside? Does theology make use of the notion of revelation in such a way that the viewpoint of the theologian can be considered uncommitted?⁵⁷ I would like now to suggest that theology cannot be theology unless it finds its starting point from within the circle of faith; and that theology cannot be theology if the theologian speaks of revelation from some uncommitted viewpoint. This does not mean, however, that one succumbs to a positivist definition of the theological enterprise.

This, then, is the first of my three questions: Can theology defend its right to scientific existence without falling victim to reductionism, whether of the secularist variety or of the positivist variety—biblical or doctrinal? My intent is not a search for some new definition. Workable definitions abound in the literature⁵⁸ and I will make use of some for my own purpose. That purpose is to delineate theology's starting point. In the traditional expression *fides quaerens intellectum* I hope to locate theology's awareness of its own scientific foundations and the basic ground of its unity.

Three observations precede my specific response. First of all, I would point once again to the distinction between the question of theology's possibility and the question of the nature of theology as seen in its actual performance. The special task called philosophical theology has the function of investigating the conditions for the possibility of

⁵⁷See Gerald O'Collins, S.J., *Foundations of Theology* (Chicago: Loyola University Press), p. 2.

⁵⁸See Richard P. McBrien, *Church: The Continuing Quest* (Paramus, N.J.: Newman Press, 1970), pp. 5-21; René Latourelle, S.J., *Theology: Science of Salvation*, trans. by Sister Mary Dominic (New York: Alba House, 1969); O'Collins, *Foundations of Theology*, pp. 1-20.

theology. Theology, I presume, is possible if faith is possible, and faith is possible if God and man *can* be in some sort of saving communication. Our present concern, however, is theology's actual performance. Believers affirm the reality of God and his grace. "No one has ever seen God" (Jn 1:18). What then is the source of the believing affirmation? Christian believers affirm the reality of God and his grace in and through Jesus of Nazareth who is the Christ of their faith. "It is God the only Son, ever at the Father's side who has revealed him" (Jn 1:18). Our discussion, then, must focus on revelation. This should not surprise us. At the very least, the history of religions would seem to suggest "that revelation is part of the self-understanding of all religions which claim to be divine creations and not human constructions."⁵⁹

A second preliminary remark concerns what I would like to call the scientific myth of the *a priori*. The question is this: in locating theology's starting point in a way that overcomes biblical and doctrinal positivism, is there anything that can function legitimately as an *a priori*, or is one doomed in advance to commit himself to a secularist reduction? Congar makes an observation which can be a help in this regard. He reminds us that modern thought cherishes an ambition which the Christian believer will always call impossible, that is, the ambition to construct the totality of life outside the faith, the ambition to grasp the whole of reality and reality as a whole independently of the light of faith.⁶⁰ It is in response to this spirit of irreligious rationalism that I suggest the need to avoid the myth of the *a priori* in any analysis of theology's starting point. In other words, in asking about theology's starting point, one must avoid the myth of thinking that the only escape from Christian positivism is by way of a secularist reduction. As I trust my paper will make clear, there is that reality which will always remain beyond human control, the inner word, *instinctus fidei*, which theology has always called the grace of faith.

Finally, what is meant in the question by the word "scientific"? It conveys here the notion of any discipline "which has the advantages of its own object and method and leads to a communicable synthesis."⁶¹

⁵⁹K. Rahner, "Revelation," *Sacramentum Mundi* 5, p. 342.

⁶⁰Congar, "Theology's Tasks after Vatican II," p. 48.

⁶¹See Latourelle, *Theology: Science of Salvation*, p. 42; see also Macquar-

Theology is far more than a science. It is a wisdom constructed on the ground of a *datum*.⁶² As a science, however, theology is more akin to the "spirit-sciences" than to the "nature-sciences." As Rahner reminds us, "To restrict science . . . to experimentally verifiable facts would not deprive theology of its claim to be a science. It would only deprive theology of a claim to be a science in a way foreign to itself."⁶³ The fact that the subject matter of theology is the Christian faith does not mean that theological procedures are unscientific in character. The commitment of faith is not incompatible with a commitment to the critical procedures of scientific investigation. Theology excludes nothing *a priori* from its range of questioning. This quite obviously includes the question of its own starting point.⁶⁴

Two definitions from the available literature will start us off on our answer. John Macquarrie defines theology as "the study which, through participation in and reflection upon a religious faith, seeks to express the contents of this faith in the clearest and most coherent language possible."⁶⁵ Theology, then, while in continuity with faith, remains distinct from faith. It operates as an intellectual discipline. It is an ecclesial reality because it deals not with faith in general but with the faith of a community. The theological practitioner speaks out of some historic faith-community and does not work as an individual investigator after the fashion of a philosopher of religion. In a certain sense, the theologian is a spokesman of the community because he is charged with a special responsibility within it.⁶⁶

While Macquarrie speaks of the connection between theology and faith in his definition, Latourelle stresses the connection between theology and revelation. "Theology is the science of God which sets out from revelation. . . . Theology's point of departure is the living God in

rie, *Principles of Christian Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), pp. 2-3; Schmaus, *Dogma I. God in Revelation* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968), pp. 272-81.

⁶²Congar, "Theology's Tasks after Vatican II," p. 54.

⁶³K. Rahner, "Theology," *Sacramentum Mundi* 6, p. 234.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*

⁶⁵Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology*, p. 2.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*

the free witness which he gives of himself."⁶⁷ The objection might be raised that these definitions of Macquarrie and Latourelle could be read in a positivist fashion. I think not, but that is irrelevant at the moment. I have used them precisely to stress the connections existing between revelation, faith and theology. The issue that must be faced is this: can the theologian recognize these connections and proceed to justify his discipline's right to scientific existence without being forced to go secular or to settle uncritically for a form of positivism? Rahner poses the question in this fashion: how can the inaccessible God communicate himself to us in such a way that we can have experience of him? Now there is of course a positivism with regard to revelation that simply responds to this question by saying, "in the obedience of faith within the Church."⁶⁸ This positivist response is incomplete and superficial. It does not adequately describe theology's foundations.

My response to our first question is necessarily a schematic response and owes its ingredients to the two complex areas of the theology of revelation and the theology of faith. In summary my argument runs as follows: for the Christian believer, God enters into human history and human language through the law of grace. This law includes two elements which form a unity: the inner word which is the grace of faith and the outer word of communication which is called the Christian fact or the Christian witness of faith.⁶⁹ Because the inner word contains a non-conceptual intellectual element and because the outer word already contains conceptual elements which are part and parcel of faith, faith can be called incipient theology. Theology is faith seeking some sort of scientific expression. Thus, I agree with Congar who writes, "Theology puts a rational method to work in order to construct intellectually a datum received in the Church on the basis of faith."⁷⁰ This argument needs some expounding.

What is meant by *datum*? Every science has its given. What is theology's given? The given is the reality of God in his self-

⁶⁷Latourelle, *Theology: Science of Salvation*, p. 7.

⁶⁸K. Rahner, "Revelation," *Sacramentum Mundi* 5, p. 346.

⁶⁹E. Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology*, vol. 2, trans. by N. D. Smith (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968), p. 43.

⁷⁰Congar, "Theology's Tasks after Vatican II," p. 47.

communication. The first reality for faith and thus for theology is God himself in his initiating self-giving. Rahner writes, "If theology takes seriously its own standard doctrine of divinizing grace, of God's universal, salvific will, of the necessity of interior, elevating grace for faith . . . and applies these doctrines to revelation, then it is quite possible, without falling into modernism, to recognize that the history of revelation . . . is the historical self-unfolding in predicamental terms . . . of the transcendental relation between man and God which is constituted by God's self-communication."⁷¹ Students of Rahner's theology of history are familiar with his somewhat clumsy terms—"general salvation and redemption history" and "special, official salvation and redemption history." (It is important to note the order of discovery. We know about the former in terms of and by the light of the latter.) These expressions are translated to mean God's transcendental revelation and God's predicamental or historical revelation. To emphasize the unity involved, one should speak of the mediating factors, transcendental and predicamental, of the one revelation and its history.⁷² For my purposes, I will use the expressions inner word and outer word. Inner word is constitutive of faith. Inner word conjoined with the outer word of Christian witness is constitutive of Christian faith. Aquinas brought inner and outer word together, especially after his more developed understanding of the *initium fidei* debate at the time of the semi-Pelagian difficulties of the early Church.⁷³ He writes in his commentary on Romans: "Man's vocation is two-fold: one is exterior, through the mouth of the preacher; the other is interior, which is nothing other than a certain instinct of the mind whereby a man's heart is moved by

⁷¹K. Rahner, "Revelation," *Sacramentum Mundi* 5, p. 349.

⁷²*Ibid.*, pp. 342-55; see also Rahner, "History of the World and Salvation-History," in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 5, pp. 97-114; "Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions," *ibid.*, pp. 115-34; "Christianity and the New Man," *ibid.*, pp. 135-53.

⁷³See Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology*, vol. 2, pp. 30-75. This essay deals with the non-conceptual, intellectual element in the act of faith. In particular, it studies the contribution of Max Seckler, *Instinkt und Glaubenswille nach Thomas von Aquin* (Mainz, 1962). See H. Rondet, *The Grace of Christ*, ed. and trans. by Tad W. Guzie, S.J. (Westminster: Newman Press, 1967), cc. 9 and 12.

God to assent to those things which are of faith"⁷⁴ Lonergan specifies this vocation in his discussion of religious conversion. "First, then, the root and ground of unity is being in love with God, the fact that God's love has flooded our hearts through the Holy Spirit he has given us (Rom 5:5). The acceptance of that gift constitutes religious conversion and leads to moral and intellectual conversion. Secondly, religious conversion, if it is Christian, is not just a state of mind and heart. Essential to it is an inter-subjective, inter-personal component. Besides the gift of the Holy Spirit within, there is the outer encounter with the Christian witness. That witness recalls the fact that of old in many ways God has spoken to us through the prophets but in this latest age through his Son" (Heb 1:1-2).⁷⁵

First I will speak of this inter-subjective, inter-personal component of the religious vocation which I am calling the outer word. Then I will speak of the inner word, *instinctus fidei*, which is the grace of faith. I am using these expressions to indicate the transcendental and historical factors of the one revelation and its history, that is, the reality of God's self-communication. My intention is to ground the scientific nature of the theology that seeks to bring to speech the Christian fact. It is precisely here that we encounter the danger of positivism. My recourse is once again to Rahner. "Without a principle," he writes, "the understanding of revelation would lead to various positivisms According to the various approaches (this means the various, positivist approaches to revelation), the Old Testament and the New Testament, and hence Judaism and Christianity, would be irreparably sundered. Or within Christianity, schools would be formed oriented to the word, to works, or to existential anthropology. And this, as experience shows, hardens into opposing confessions. Schools of positivism with regard to revelation bring about and maintain the ecumenical problem."⁷⁶ Thus the fragmentation of the Church comes about when positivist approaches to the outer word dissolve the one revelation which is the reality of God's self-communication into revelations. How is this to be avoided?

⁷⁴See Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology*, vol. 2, p. 55, footnote 33. The reference to Aquinas is in *Ep. ad Rom.* 8,30, lect. 6.

⁷⁵Lonergan, *Doctrinal Pluralism*, pp. 27-8.

⁷⁶Rahner, "Revelation," *Sacramentum Mundi* 5, p. 346.

Theology must "focus its gaze on Jesus Christ, in whom the fullness of revelation as the self-communication of God has appeared."⁷⁷ This I suspect is what theology has always tried to do. However, theology has not always thematized its procedures with the utmost of precision nor has it always experienced the need even to attend to the thematizing task at all. As a result, positivist conceptions have prevailed with regard to the *revelata* without subsuming these under the one *revelatio* and its fullness in Christ.⁷⁸ It is Christ who makes salvation manifest as inter-personal communication. It is theology's task to render an account of this salvation-dialogue so as to ground itself as a legitimate scientific activity, *scientia fidei*, without turning the divine gift into a human creation and without effecting a fragmentation of the divine gift through positivist explanations. To perform its task, theology must have recourse to the basic phenomena of human experience and human language. These are the horizons in which God's self-giving in Christ can be understood and in which theology can justify its procedures as scientific. Moran's volume, *Theology of Revelation*, has always been so very helpful to me precisely for this task.⁷⁹ Behind the datum-discourse of doctrine is the datum-discourse of Scripture. Behind the datum-discourse of Scripture is the datum-discourse of the apostolic preaching. Behind the apostolic preaching is the apostolic experience of Christ and the language that brought this experience to speech. Behind the apostolic experience and language is the human history and human language of Christ. The theologian thus points to Christ, God's very Word spoken in a human way, and says: there is God's self-communication grounded in human experience and in human language; there the inaccessible God communicates himself to us in such a way that we can experience him and develop a discourse on his self-communication that inevitably seeks the status of a science. The stress here is on the outer word. Rahner can say of it, "Methodological reflection . . . is possible and necessary be-

⁷⁷*Ibid.*

⁷⁸The reference here is to the difference in approach between *Dei Filius* of Vatican I (see DS 3008-3010) and *Dei verbum* of Vatican II (see art. 5). Cf. Ratzinger, *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol. 3, general editor H. Vorgrimler, trans. by William Glen-Doepel et al. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), pp. 170-80.

⁷⁹Moran, *Theology of Revelation*.

cause the official word of God already contains a conceptual and propositional element which, as an element of faith and its responsible communication to others, demands further explanations, reflections, confrontations, with other truths. Revelation is intrinsically amenable to reflection."⁸⁰

The primacy, however, must always belong to the inner word. God himself, the personal reality which is God, is at work within the believer, drawing the believer to faith. As Schillebeeckx notes, "Humanity itself can . . . never be the *initium fidei* and can never of its own accord be a *de facto* offer of grace."⁸¹ The believer ultimately must always affirm that God has brought him to the assent of faith. Faith is not some *blind* leap into another world, but it is a leap. This language is the necessarily inadequate expression of the transcendent nature of faith. The power to make the leap of faith is from God moving the believer inwardly by grace. Thus, it is the inner word as the light of faith which effects in the believer an experience which is non-reflective, non-thematic, confused ("in the sense of being impossible to point out directly").⁸² Schillebeeckx explains this more precisely: "The inward divine invitation to believe is itself a (non-reflective) experience on man's side, an experience which, on reflection and in the light of the revelation in Word, can and must . . . be understood as coming from grace."⁸³ The inner grace, the inner word, acts as a principle of knowledge in faith. "It makes the truth of revelation that comes from the evangelical message an authentic knowledge in faith . . ."⁸⁴ The inner word and the outer word, kept separate for purposes of discussion, must always be seen in their primordial unity in the Christian vision of things. Transcendence, that is, God himself in his self-communication through the grace of faith, must find mediation in that human history

⁸⁰Rahner, "Revelation," *Sacramentum Mundi* 5.

⁸¹Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology*, vol. 2, p. 71.

⁸²*Ibid.*, p. 72.

⁸³*Ibid.*

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, p. 45. For an excellent study of some key texts from Aquinas, see Jean Mouroux, *I Believe*, trans. by Michael Turner (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1959), pp. 13-37. For a full-scale treatment of the theology of faith, see Juan Alfaro, *Fides, Spes, Caritas* (Rome: Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 1968).

(Israel and the Christ-event) which is the outer word. Thus the inner word is God communicating himself as absolute mystery. The outer word is this same absolute mystery as historical mediation.⁸⁵

I can now summarize my answer to our first question. Theology, it seems to me, must carefully avoid a secularist reduction that would separate revelation from theology and turn revelation into some sort of human construct from an exclusively human origin. Yet theology need not settle for the half-way explanations of a biblical or a dogmatic positivism. Theology begins where faith begins because faith itself is incipient theology. In Rahner's analogy, just as the human existent grasps his own self-understanding in the act of existence and proceeds to bring this understanding to speech in a thematic manner—yet this reflective knowledge is not some leisurely afterthought but rather a constitutive element of existence—so the Christian believer who becomes the theologian grasps the meaning of faith in the very act of faith and proceeds to thematize the meaning in a technically responsible manner.⁸⁶ This work of the theologian likewise is no leisurely afterthought. Faith itself contains this element of reflection which becomes articulate in theology. Thus the science of faith is a moment of critical responsibility within faith. This inner moment or element constitutes theology's starting point. Theology is faith in scientific form.

⁸⁵See the following essays of K. Rahner: "The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology," in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 4, trans. by Kevin Smyth (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1966), pp. 36-73; "The Theology of Symbol," *ibid.*, pp. 221-52. In his essay, "Revelation," in *Sacramentum Mundi* 5, p. 349, Rahner stresses the unity of the inner and the outer word: "Active revelation always presents two aspects. On the one hand, it constitutes man's supernaturally elevated transcendence as his permanent though grace-given existential, always and everywhere operative, present even when refused. It is the transcendental experience of the absolute and merciful closeness of God, even if this cannot be conceptually expressed at will by everyone. On the other hand, the active revelation-event is also a historical mediation and conceptual objectivation of the supernaturally transcendental experience. The latter takes place in history. . . . It is what is called the history of revelation in the usual sense when it really is the history of the true self-interpretation of the supernaturally transcendental experience and not the misinterpretation, and when, therefore, it is really the result of God's self-communication in grace . . ."

⁸⁶Rahner, "Theology," *Sacramentum Mundi* 6, p. 233.

2) Theology and Faith

If my answer to the first question constitutes an adequate response, it follows that there can be no faith without theology. Theology is faith in so far as faith seeks to bring its self-understanding to scientific expression. As M. Schmaus states succinctly: "Faith is impossible without some measure of understanding and experience, and so understanding is a necessary part of its existential structure. Understanding is not something incidental added to faith from outside. It belongs to the heart of faith."⁸⁷ We must now consider this same issue of faith and theology in reverse perspective. Can there be theology without faith? What is the relationship between the *scientia* of the theological practitioner and the grace of faith? Is faith requisite for the work of the theologian? In so far as our first response has indicated that theology is an inner moment of critical responsibility within faith, and that therefore faith is incipient theology, our second question seems to be already answered in the affirmative. The issue, however, is significant enough to justify some modest elaboration. It is important for the sake of the discussion to note that our second question does not speak of faith being presupposed. The word presupposition is connotative of a positivist thrust which already distorts the sense of the question. It is not an issue of theology's presupposing faith in order to do its work. Such terminology already betrays an understanding of the faith-theology relationship that is altogether too extrinsic.

If theology's questions were soluble by a process of head-counting, the present issue would disappear. The vast majority of theologians, past and present, has answered our question in the affirmative: yes, faith is necessary for the work of the theologian. Sheer numbers, however, have not prevented Professor Ogden from espousing a position that seems to contradict theology's traditional response. In this section, I would like to defend theology's traditional answer but with a note of nuance. The nuance results from a study of Lonergan's functional specialties.

The traditional position has always recognized something basically autobiographical about the work of the theologian. Personal appropriation of the community's faith has been considered a constitutive element in the theological venture. Faith does not operate solely as some

⁸⁷Schmaus, *Dogma I. God in Revelation*, p. 258.

point of departure for theological reflection. Faith so constitutes theology's center and goal that when the theologian is engaged in his endeavors, he is engaged in an activity that is salvific. Theology is always an exercise of faith.⁸⁸ What has been said traditionally of the theologian has not usually been affirmed of the philosopher of religion. Meaningful God-talk for the theologian is specifically different from meaningful God-talk for the religious philosopher. According to Macquarrie's definition, theology means participation in, and reflection on, a religious faith. I take this to mean reflection upon precisely because of participation in a religious faith. God-talk for the theologian can flow only from the personal appropriation (under grace) of the religious community's faith-affirmation that God is for real as the transcendent reality at the very heart of human experience and human history. God-talk for the Christian theologian can flow only from the personal appropriation (under grace) of the Christian community's faith-affirmation that the transcendent reality of God becomes definitively revealed in Jesus of Nazareth proclaimed as Lord in the datum-discourse of Sacred Scripture and proclaimed as true God and true man in the datum-discourse of church doctrine. Theology is faith seeking understanding, according to the answer to our first question. If we ask whose faith is seeking understanding, it would seem that the answer would point to the faith of the religious community as more or less appropriated by the theologian who acts somewhat as a spokesman for his community. To say otherwise would seem to imply that theology is concerned with the content of faith but not with the act of faith. It would seem to imply that the *fides quae* is not posterior to *fides qua*—as though act and content were not inseparable.

In his volume, *The Old Testament and Theology*, G. Ernest Wright makes the remark, "Theology is the effort of a man to explicate his own or someone else's tradition meaningfully in his conceptual world, so that he can understand it. To restrict theology to the proclamation of Israel's or the Church's kerygma is too confining."⁸⁹ I have two problems with this observation. Because this description seems to con-

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, p. 266. The entire chapter, pp. 257-85, is helpful.

⁸⁹G. Ernest Wright, *The Old Testament and Theology* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. 62.

sider only the content of faith, it seems to leave undifferentiated the theologian and the scholar of religious phenomena. Furthermore, I would be looking for a more restrictive description of theology. For example, theology for the Christian believer can not at all be limited to Israel's proclamation of the kerygma except in so far as such proclamation is related to the Christ-event. Otherwise, it would be, I presume, non-Christian Old Testament theology. As I understand the matter, there are various interpretations of the Old Testament. The New Testament happens to be one of them which the Christian believer accepts as *the* interpretation. One has to distinguish, then, an Old Testament theology which is non-Christian, an Old Testament history of Israelite religion which is non-theological, and an Old Testament theology that is Christian.

I have been suggesting the main lines of what I take to be Christian theology's traditional judgment that the theological practitioner must be a believer. After all, the theologian is not engaged in a nominalism. Rather, he is involved in the scholarly endeavor to understand reality, the reality of God's self-communication proclaimed by Christian witness and accepted and affirmed in faith under the initiating grace of faith. St. Thomas insists that the believer's act of faith terminates at what is real.⁹⁰ It is precisely the function of faith to put the believer, and thus the theologian, in contact with the reality he must endeavor to understand, that is, the reality of God. Faith, after all, is one of those virtues the tradition has called theological, or divine, because they are directed to God himself. "In and through the theological virtues, God in his self-communication effects both the capacity for, and actual participation in, the life of God himself . . ."⁹¹

G. O'Collins in his helpful volume, *Foundations of Theology*, maintains the traditional answer to the question at hand. He offers what he calls two "riders" to his understanding of theologian as believer. In so far as belief and unbelief are not mutually exclusive, that is, entirely complete entities which one either experiences totally or not at all, it

⁹⁰ "Actus autem credentis non terminatur ad enuntiabile, sed ad rem; non enim formamus enuntiabilia nisi per ea de eis rebus cognitionem habeamus, sicut in scientia, ita et in fide." II-II, 1, 2 ad 2.

⁹¹ K. Rahner, "Virtue," *Sacramentum Mundi* 6, p. 337.

follows that no one is the complete believer or the complete unbeliever. Theology has always recognized in principle the many gradations that are possible in this matter. (With reference to these gradations, I would add here the fundamental distinction between uninformed faith and faith informed by charity, a distinction of no little significance for the question that asks about the faith of the theological practitioner.) Furthermore, O'Collins suggests, "Theology may obviously be studied after a fashion by one who professes unbelief. The theologian can engage in serious academic discussion with him, just as the preacher can put some account of what the Christian message is to the ordinary non-believer."⁹²

Thus far I have been but repeating the tradition. Yet Professor Ogden would proceed quite differently. He finds unacceptable what he calls the common insistence "that one of the conditions of the possibility of theological understanding is that the theologian himself must have already accepted the Christian witness by an existential decision of faith."⁹³ He adds immediately, "One might suppose that the obvious impossibility of insisting on such a condition in the case of historical theology would have long since proved the insistence mistaken."⁹⁴ This paper is arguing that such insistence, even in the case of historical theology, is not mistaken at all. What is true of the basic task of theology is true of the special tasks of theology. In the case of historical theology, this is to affirm that faith cannot exist without historical theology and that historical theology cannot exist without faith.

The questions that Professor Ogden's position raises could lead us on several theological journeys, each constituting a complex theological issue. One such journey would demand extended treatment of the theology of faith. Another journey would take us into the theology of justification in order to investigate the relationship between faith and good works, for Ogden places theology squarely in the domain of good works.⁹⁵ As a matter of fact, these two journeys seem to have come together at Vatican II in the discussions that preceded the final develop-

⁹²O'Collins, *Foundations of Theology*, p. 36.

⁹³Ogden, "What is Theology?" p. 36.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*

⁹⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 36-40, esp. p. 39.

ment of the text of *Dei verbum*. The pertinent section in the document is paragraph five. Vatican I had already described faith both as *donum Dei* and *opus ad salutem pertinens*.⁹⁶ *Dei verbum* touches on this same distinction in the sentence that concludes the fifth paragraph: "to bring about an ever deeper understanding of revelation, the same Holy Spirit constantly brings faith to completion by his gifts." Ratzinger comments on this sentence. To him, it "shows surprisingly clearly how automatically, despite all the stimulus that they received from Protestant theologians the authors moved within the tradition of Catholic thought. For it would have been very difficult for Protestant theologians to use an expression such as the 'perfecting' of faith. For them faith is a decision between 'yes' and 'no,' which is made either entirely or not at all, but which cannot be conceived of in terms of different degrees. The fundamental point here is the extent to which one regards faith as a 'possession' of man himself or merely as God's paradoxical action in relation to man which cannot then be regarded as a 'virtue' that gradually takes over wider areas of man's existence, but is rather the total nature of his existence and cannot be thought of as being on the same level with human practices and virtues."⁹⁷ The dialectic here is between *donum* and *opus*. The document on divine revelation sees the Holy Spirit as the "effective subject of the *perfectio* that is related to the *opus*. Thus God remains here the one who is really acting, but his activity penetrates man steadily and increasingly."⁹⁸ At the heart of this matter is the question of tradition. Ratzinger suggests, as he describes the Catholic emphasis on tradition as the perfecting of the faith which the Spirit brings about in the Church, "This is the crux of the difference between Catholic and Protestant theology in the question of tradition."⁹⁹ He means of course the divergent ways of understanding the relation between God's acts and the acts of man. These observations are not intended as any full-scale or even satisfying response to Ogden's position on the question of theology and faith. In defense of theology's so-called traditional posture in this matter, I merely want to say that it

⁹⁶DS 3010.

⁹⁷Ratzinger, *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, p. 178.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 179.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*

does not suffice to indicate that theology has a close connection with the witness of faith. This would once again separate the act and content of faith. As I have already mentioned, scholars of religious phenomena, whether psychologists, sociologists, or philosophers, affirm that their disciplines are closely connected with the witness of faith, but this does not make their disciplines theological. Then too, it does not suffice to locate theology squarely within the domain of good works in any theology of justification that unduly separates faith and the works of faith. Theology is indeed a good work, often a good work done badly, but it always has to be a work of faith. Theology is not devoid of salvific significance. Theology is an exercise of faith.

Our second question has asked about the relationship between the *scientia* of the theological practitioner and the grace of faith. Is faith necessary for the work of the theologian? I have answered this question in the affirmative in defense of theology's traditional response. I have promised, however, a note of nuance which I borrow from a reflection on Lonergan's functional specialties. Lonergan conceives of theology as dividing into a mediating phase that encounters the past and a mediated phase that encounters the future.¹⁰⁰ The shift from the one phase to the other is the subject studied under the fifth of the eight specialties, i.e., foundations. As regards this specialty Lonergan writes, "We are seeking the foundations, not of the whole of theology but of the three last specialties, doctrines, systematics, and communications. We are seeking not the whole foundation of these specialties—for they obviously will depend on research, interpretation, history, and dialectic—but just the added foundation needed to move from the indirect discourse that sets forth the convictions and opinions of others to the direct discourse that states what is so."¹⁰¹ What is being discussed here is the matter of conversion. This leads to the nuance in my answer to the second question. One does not have to be in love with God, one does not have to be a believer, to do the work of research, interpretation, history or dialectic. The reason for this seems obvious enough. "Neither the converted nor the unconverted are to be excluded from research, interpretation, history or dialectic. Neither the converted nor

¹⁰⁰Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 144.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, p. 267.

the unconverted are to follow different methods in these functional specialties. But one's interpretation of others is affected by one's understanding of oneself and the converted have a self to understand that is quite different from the self the unconverted have to understand."¹⁰² The distinction is between the specialist and the specialty. As Lonergan himself says in connection with the specialist who is converted, "The three-fold conversion is, not a set of propositions that a theologian utters, but a fundamental and momentous change, in the human reality that a theologian is."¹⁰³ This momentous change, the faith-vision that seeks scientific expression, is what transforms the disciplines of research, interpretation, history and dialectic, which are related to theology, into theological disciplines. The historical theologian, for example, will see his work as part of a greater reality, the present faith of the Church seeking understanding. To follow Ogden's description of theology as a single movement of thought with distinct moments within the single movement, it is the systematic question that will precede the question for the historical theologian. It is the answer of the historical theologian that will precede the systematic answer. It is indeed true that the unconverted is not to be excluded from the functional specialty which is history. However, it belongs to the converted to do the task called historical theology.

3) *A Significant Adjective*

The answers to our first two questions support the claims that faith does not exist without theology and that theology does not exist without faith. Yet faith and theology are not the same. As the traditional manual would teach, they differ in motive, certitude and object.¹⁰⁴ The identification of faith and theology, which paradoxically results when one rejects our first claim, is as unacceptable as the separation of faith and theology which happens when one rejects our second claim. The art at work in this matter is the vanishing art of the distinction.

We come now to our third and final question which is the question of the convention. Is there a Catholic theology? It is neither my task

¹⁰²*Ibid.*, p. 271.

¹⁰³*Ibid.*, p. 270.

¹⁰⁴Latourelle, *Theology: Science of Salvation*, pp. 45-6.

nor my competence to try my hand at any exhaustive response. This paper with its faith-theology concern is but one of four presentations which are directed to the convention's question. However, because this paper also functions after the fashion of a key-note address, its scope is necessarily broader than the faith-theology issues which have been discussed thus far. Accordingly, I shall make a few observations which may be of some assistance in approaching the question. Then I shall suggest several elements or basic principles which I consider to be peculiar to that endeavor called Catholic theology which, in a properly ecumenical context, it is the express business of the membership of the CTSA to cherish and to foster. In my approach I shall stress more the formal aspects of the question. Were I to stress doctrinal content, I would begin by indicating as peculiarly Catholic the faith-theology reflections already discussed.

First, then, is our convention's question frivolous? Some might suggest that it is. After all, in the small world of the history of theology, the existence of what many have called Catholic theology would seem to be a massive fact. But our concern is not with some sociological existent. Our theme is theological. It inquires about those elements which are peculiar to and necessary for the existence of Catholic theology. Our convention's question raises the precise issue considered by the Catholic bishops of Germany in their statement made in connection with the publication of Hans Kung's volume on the question of infallibility. At that time, the German bishops observed, "It is not the task of bishops to take a position on the points of technical theological controversy which the book has revived for discussion. The German Bishops' Conference does see it as its duty, however, to call to mind a few non-negotiable items which a theology cannot deny if it is to continue to be called Catholic."¹⁰⁵ The word "non-negotiable" in our present society is part of the language of confrontation. Such is not the intention of the convention's question. Our purpose is a serious but irenic effort to come to grips with what the Scholastics would probably have called the *esse theologicum* of Catholic theology. It hardly seems necessary for me to add that we are dealing with a complex issue. Cornelius

¹⁰⁵I have used the translation given in *Theology Digest* 19, No. 2 (Summer, 1971), 124-5. The translation is made from the original text appearing in *Publik* 4:7 (February 12, 1971), 15.

Ernst writes, "Reception of the Church's continuing tradition of theology is a matter of faith. This is not of course to say that every proposition in every theological system is an object of faith; but faith is a presupposition of insight into the meaning of these diverse theologies, of understanding that they are unified in the object or realm of their concern—very simply, are trying to talk about the same things."¹⁰⁶ This observation is of some concern in view of the situation of pluralism.

It is no longer seriously possible to offer an anonymous handbook, however large, and call it simply "Catholic theology"; it was not long ago that even Karl Barth, with some justification, seemed to suppose that this was so. Communion, ordinary or extraordinary, in the Church in faith, offers access to a universe of meaning, not open to those who reject this communion. So the Church as a continuing historical institution, and active spiritual communion of faith in the Church, together form the double *a priori* of theological meaning.¹⁰⁷

This suggests a second preliminary remark, the question of faith's "ecclesiality." The response to our second question rejected the possibility of theology without faith. I would affirm in the present context that there can be no theology without ecclesial faith. Faith is social in structure because it is intimately tied to a community. As Schmaus reminds us, it is the Church which must be called the transindividual subject of faith. The individual becomes the believing subject in so far as he or she enters into the Church's subjectivity and shares in the faith of the Church.¹⁰⁸ Theology as such and Christian theology as such are abstractions. Theology always exists as something ecclesial. "It grows but of the Church, and it reacts upon the Church. Theology is not a private enterprise of the theologian but a life utterance of the community of the Church."¹⁰⁹ Rahner expresses it this way: "Since human inter-subjectivity is at its peak in faith . . . while faith, the hearing of

¹⁰⁶Cornelius Ernst, "Theological Methodology," *Sacramentum Mundi* 6, p. 219.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸Schmaus, *Dogma I. God in Revelation*, p. 260.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, p. 269.

the revelation directed to the people of God, is the faith of the Church and faith within the Church, theology is necessarily ecclesial. Otherwise, it ceases to be itself and becomes the prey of the wayward subjective spirituality of the individual which is today less fitted than ever to be the cohesive force of a community."¹¹⁰ Does the fact that theology is ecclesial deprive it of its critical function with regard to the Church and its life of faith? The answer is in the negative. In fact it is precisely because it is an ecclesial science, and hence an element of the Church itself, that theology can and must exercise its function as the Church's self-criticism. This means "the constantly renewed effort to purge the faith from all that is merely human and questionable or historically transient."¹¹¹

How does one move from ecclesial theology to Catholic theology? The question "What is theology?" is fundamentally the God-question. The question "What is Christian theology?" is fundamentally Christology, the reality of God in Christ giving meaning and purpose, hope and direction, to human history both personal and corporate. Christian theology is the task of theology for those believers who strive to bring to expression in language their belief in God at work in Christ in their experience and in their history. But Christians as such do not exist. Christians are ecclesial. Hence there is the task of theology for ecclesial Christians. Thus the question "What is Catholic theology?" is a matter of ecclesiology. For my purposes, ecclesiology means from one perspective *Lumen gentium*; from another perspective *Gaudium et spes*; and from a third perspective *Unitatis redintegratio* and the spirit that supports serious Catholic participation in the various bilateral consultations which are on-going at this time, nationally and internationally. Catholic theology is what happens when Catholic faith becomes reflective. Catholic faith becomes reflective when it sees itself as the scandal of particularity, that is, when it wrestles with the mystery of how God in Christ wills to give himself in redeeming love, a self-giving which is made to all, but a self-giving which is made known specifically through the predicamental aspects of divine revelation. But Catholic theology in itself is also an abstraction. What exist are the many theologies—philosophical,

¹¹⁰Rahner, "Theology," *Sacramentum Mundi* 6, p. 235.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*

historical, systematic and practical; and these many theologies are all ecclesial. A reminder is in order. There is a negative and a positive element operative in this ecclesiality. As Ernst sees it, "... the continuing validity of the expression 'Catholic theology' is due to the self-defining activity of the Church from time to time in excluding theological articulations of faith declared not to be Catholic: the *positive* unity of Catholic theology is not itself capable of exhaustive theological articulation but is the one reality of God, Christ, the Church."¹¹²

By way of a parenthesis, I would like to set the question at hand in a popular context which bears some relevance for the theological scene. It would seem that many, not excluding teachers of Catholic theology, view the adjective "Catholic" as a sociological indicator, not infrequently of an embarrassing nature. In March of this year, *Commonweal* published an exchange of views on "the future of the Catholic Peace Movement."¹¹³ One partner to the dialogue argued for a broadening of the meaning of the adjective. He suggested, "For young people particularly the traditional definitions of what is 'good' Catholic practice have simply disappeared; they do not marry in the Catholic Church; they, and an increasing number of their elders . . . do not attend Mass on Sundays; yet they have no qualms about calling themselves Catholic, as one might call himself American, or a Minneapolitan or an Atlantan, and still regard their values, their resistance to war and oppression as peculiarly Catholic." Commenting on this remark several weeks later,¹¹⁴ Michael Novak observed that John Cogley had raised a similar point but to the opposite effect; Cogley did not regard being a Catholic as a form of ethnic, regional or tribal identity but as adherence in conscience to certain intellectual doctrines. Novak adds, "To be a Catholic is to belong to a people, and to belong to a people places one under authority and discipline—under the intellectual and spiritual power of several historical traditions. That is a far deeper reality than being an Atlantan, or even being an American. (It is not, I think, as 'doctrinal' as Cogley has described it.)" In my present response to the question "Is there a Catholic theology?" although I too would have difficulty in saying that

¹¹²Ernst, "*Theological Methodology*," p. 219. (The italics are the author's.)

¹¹³*Commonweal*, March 8, 1974, pp. 14-15.

¹¹⁴*Commonweal*, March 22, 1974, p. 55.

it is merely a matter of adherence in conscience to certain intellectual doctrines, I would argue that the matter is far more doctrinal than Novak would seem to allow. It is in support of this contention that I will now offer the following observations as belonging to the non-negotiable aspects of Catholic theology. These observations are necessarily schematic. Each principle I shall discuss would demand a paper, even a convention, all its own.

How does the inaccessible God communicate himself to us in such a way that we can have experience of him? The Christian responds that the inaccessible God, whom no man has ever seen, communicates himself to us in and through his incarnate Son, the sole mediator in whom God's revelation reaches its full and climactic moment. We confront here the scandal of history, the scandal of particularity. Many who would be open to the idea of divine revelation are scandalized by the Christian affirmation of particularism. In agreement with Rahner, we must not minimize the difficulty in acknowledging that revelation, divine in origin yet constitutive of the very core of human history, can and must be present everywhere and at all times for the salvation of all men without ceasing to be the Word of God's freedom upon which we can place no demand and conditions.¹¹⁵ In all its particularity, then, we have to raise the question of God's predicamental self-revealing. The peculiar way we answer this question constitutes theology as Catholic. In asking this question, one is forced to raise a host of other questions. In summary fashion I will ask these questions and then proceed to discuss some of the elements, peculiarly Catholic, which their answers contain. The first I shall call the sacramental principle; the second, the dogmatic principle; the third, the philosophical principle.

What is the source of our faith in God? We have already answered this in our earlier sections. Our faith in God arises from the inner word of the grace of faith and the outer word of Christian witness. But the experience that results from the inner and outer word presses for articulation, and so a second question arises: how does the believer move from experience to speech? In the New Testament period this becomes the question of the preached tradition leading to the Scriptures. But the

¹¹⁵This observation reflects Rahner's constant theme in elaborating a theology of history, and also in working out the nature-grace relationship. For a summary view, see the article on revelation in *Sacramentum Mundi* 5.

preaching had to continue because the Scriptures had to be traditioned. Thus we see the development of post-scriptural reflection and interpretation. In this development the permanent meaning of the initial experience, first brought to speech in written form in the New Testament witness, finds expression in a pluralism of communication characteristic of post-scriptural interpretation. This is the issue of Scripture leading to tradition. Then inevitably comes the Yes-No question that is always the contemporary question: how does the community of faith which is the Church keep alive and intact, as intelligible, the meaning of the original experience and the language that expressed and interpreted that experience? This is the hermeneutical task of interpretation that leads to church doctrine. Preliminary to, and consequent upon, church doctrine is the indispensable role of theological doctrine: how do members of the Church achieve an ever deeper and more satisfying understanding of their faith in God? The answer is a complex of several ingredients. It includes prayer, the orthopraxis of Christian living and the orthodoxy of theological doctrine.¹¹⁶ These questions should suffice for our present purposes. Involved in their answers are some of the elements I am calling peculiarly Catholic. This does not mean that only Catholic theologians (in the sociological sense) hold to these elements, or that all Catholic theologians (again in the sociological sense) are as a matter of fact holding to these elements. I merely intend to indicate a reality called Catholic theology that transcends the sociological confines of what Catholic theologians are actually doing.

The first principle is the sacramental principle. God as Father of the Lord Jesus comes to us in his Son and in their common Spirit. Bernard Cooke notes, "The consciousness Jesus had of the Father is the supreme manifestation of God in human history, the most direct insight possessed by man into the reality of God and source of all our understanding of God."¹¹⁷ The question about the inaccessible God, there-

¹¹⁶There are other questions, not immediately pertinent to this paper, which would have to be raised in order to keep this series of questions integral. For example, how does theology try to show God as present in the experience of the human person's thinking and doing, as grounding the possibility of belief? How does theology commend the faith as reasonable and acceptable to those outside the visible community of faith?

¹¹⁷See Bernard Cooke, *Beyond Trinity* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1969), p. 37.

fore, is the question that asks how we today are in saving contact with the consciousness of Jesus. I submit that there is a specifically Catholic response to this question which is found in the sacramental nature of the Church. Between the historical presence of the Lord Jesus as described in the gospels and his coming in glory at the end of time, our present encounter with the Lord takes place in a sacramental manner. We encounter the risen Lord in the mystery of the Church.¹¹⁸ Two quotations from Rahner can help to say in summary fashion what is meant by seeing Christ as the human symbol of the divine. First, Christ is sacrament of God. "Christ is the historic presence in the world of the eschatologically victorious mercy of God. It is possible to point to a visible, historically manifest fact, located in space in time, and say—because that is there, God is reconciled with the world."¹¹⁹ Analogous to the way Christ is sacrament of God, the Church is sacrament of Christ: "The Church is the continuance, the contemporary presence of that real, eschatologically triumphant and irrevocably established presence in the world, in Christ, of God's salvific will. The Church is the official presence of the grace of Christ in the public history of the one human race."¹²⁰ The believer, and therefore the theologian, does not make his initial contact with the Lord by becoming exegete and returning to the pages of the New Testament, important though this return is. The theologian, like any other believer, encounters Christ here and now in the sacrament of the Church. I mention this, not to discuss in depth an issue that is far more complex than I have expressed. I mention it to denote what I take to be a peculiarly Catholic approach to theology's starting point.

The issue is significant because of the ecclesial nature of theology. If the Church were just some handy way of gathering together, and giving some organization to the followers of the Lord, that would say one thing about theology's starting point. But such is

¹¹⁸In speaking of the Church as a sacrament, I am not intending to confine ecclesiology to this one model. See Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (New York: Doubleday, 1974). Dulles suggests, with regard to the model of the Church as sacrament, "During the past generation, it has proved highly attractive to professional theologians, at least in the Roman Catholic communion" (p. 68).

¹¹⁹K. Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963), p. 15.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 18-9.

not the Church. The Church is God's people socially organized as the Body of the Lord. What does this mean? It means that the faith and love of the Christian people give expression to the present consciousness of the risen Lord. Hence the starting point for theology is the living faith of the Church.¹²¹ Then, from this perspective, the theologian can turn to the Scriptures to learn all he can about the historical reality of Jesus. One's educated understanding of the Church's present faith and the careful exegesis of New Testament texts put the theologian in some contact with the mystery of Christ.¹²² The basic starting point of theology is the present faith of the Church as expressed in the authentic celebration of the Eucharist. Here God's people are one with their risen Lord in the worship of the Father through the Spirit. Theology begins where faith begins. The theologian is the believer who, in his technically competent manner, reflects upon the Church's faith. By virtue of the sacramental principle, this faith is always a present reality in response to God's ever-present revelation. What Cooke says of the believer is obviously true of that particular believer who is the theologian: "The experience of hearing the Scriptural expression of the word of God, the sacramental experience of enacting the very mystery of which the Scripture speaks, the experience of confronting the realities of daily life with the vision of Christian faith and hope and love, all inter-act to interpret one another and help fashion that matrix of personal understanding into which God's self-revealing presence is received. God's revelation takes place within the consciousness of the believers to whom he reveals himself."¹²³ With this as starting point, the Catholic theologian proceeds to his functional specialties.

The second principle is the dogmatic principle. Our question remains the same: how does the inaccessible God reveal himself? as we turn to Vatican II and its document on revelation, *Dei verbum*. The relevant section is the second section, paragraphs seven to ten: "In his gracious goodness God has seen to it that what he has revealed for the salvation of all nations would abide perpetually in its full integrity and be handed on to all generations. Therefore, Christ the Lord, in whom

¹²¹Cooke, *Beyond Trinity*, pp. 49-51.

¹²²*Ibid.*, p. 51.

¹²³*Ibid.*, p. 50.

the full revelation of the supreme God is brought to completion, commissioned the Apostles to preach to all men the Gospel which is the source of all saving truth and moral teaching But in order to keep the Gospel forever whole and alive within the Church, the Apostles left bishops as their successors, 'handing over' to them 'the authority to teach in their own place.'"¹²⁴

But is Christ's teaching authority transferable? Some would argue that "divine authority is absolutely intransmissible, incommunicable, in any conceivable fashion to any kind of human authority whatever."¹²⁵ Others would argue that such a transfer is legitimate in the case of the apostles. However, apostolic authority is intransmissible because it is so intimately tied with the apostolic function which is intransmissible.¹²⁶ The Catholic claim is quite different as *Dei verbum* makes clear.¹²⁷ The issue involved in the dogmatic principle is quite precise. Bouyer wrote over a decade ago, "The question outstanding between Protestantism and Catholicism is by no means whether the authority of God's Word in Scripture can or cannot be limited by some other authority. It is one of determining in what actual conditions, established by God Himself as the author of Scripture, their sovereign authority can effectively be upheld in practice. It is not a question here of adding on another authority to that of God's Word—thus diminishing God's Word. Rather, it is a question of knowing the specific conditions according to which God who inspired the Scriptures entrusted them to the Church."¹²⁸ *Dei verbum* emphasizes that the teaching office is not above the word of God but serves it, "teaching only what has been handed on, listening to it devoutly, guarding it scrupulously and explaining it faithfully in accord with a divine commission, and with the

¹²⁴Paragraph seven. The quotation is from Irenaeus. See art. 7, footnote 3.

¹²⁵Louis Bouyer, Cong. Orat., *The Word, Church and Sacraments*, trans. by A. V. Littledale (New York: Desclee, 1961), p. 45. The reference in Bouyer's text is to Paul Tillich.

¹²⁶*Ibid.* The reference in Bouyer's text is to O. Cullmann.

¹²⁷*Dei verbum*, nn. 7-10. "The task of authentically interpreting the Word of God . . . has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the Church whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ" (n. 10).

¹²⁸Bouyer, *The Word, Church and Sacraments*, pp. 28-9.

help of the Holy Spirit, it draws from this one deposit of faith everything which it presents for belief as divinely revealed" (#10).

My task at the moment is not extended commentary on *Dei verbum*. This particular citation, however, contains the dogmatic principle: the authority in the Church from a divine commission to present certain beliefs as divinely revealed. Rahner has made an extended study of the nature of the dogmatic statement.¹²⁹ He makes a passing reference to the matter in his volume on the Trinity: "He who does biblical theology wishes to say exactly what the Scripture says; yet he cannot simply repeat the words of Scripture. In this respect, it seems to me, the only but essential difference between Protestant and Catholic theology is this: that for Catholic theology the logical explanation of the words of the Scripture by the Church can definitely become a statement of faith; whereas for the Protestant theologian it remains basically theology, and it may always be revised and reversed."¹³⁰ For our summary purposes, five points stressed by the German bishops can help to put some flesh on the dogmatic principle.

First of all, belief in God's word, in the scriptural witness and in the Church's profession of faith, supposes that, in spite of the changes in history and in language, it is at least theoretically possible that there are statements which are true and which keep the same meaning and remain irrevocably valid amidst the fluctuations of historical modes of thought and expression. Secondly, although the faith of the Church must be examined anew by critical intelligence in changing cultural

¹²⁹K. Rahner, "What is a Dogmatic Statement?" in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 5, trans. by Karl H. Kruger (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1966), pp. 42-66. W. Pannenberg has written an article with the same title as Rahner's article. See *Basic Questions in Theology*, vol. 1, trans. by George H. Kehm (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), pp. 182-210.

¹³⁰K. Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans. by Joseph Donceel (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), p. 56. By a logical explanation of a scriptural passage, Rahner means an explanation that makes the statement in question clear, that is, more precise, less liable to be misunderstood. "A logical explanation clarifies the statement independently of anything else. To put it roughly: the logical explanation explains by making more precise, it does not use one state of affairs to explain another one." This is said by way of contrast with an ontic explanation which explicates one state of affairs by taking into account another state of affairs in such a way that the second state of affairs hopes to clarify what is to be explained. See *The Trinity*, pp. 52-3.

situations, still it includes an unmistakable Yes and an unmistakable No which are not interchangeable. This is the obligatory character of God's word. If this were not so, the Church could not remain the truth of Jesus Christ. Thirdly, when new questions arise in different historical situations, the Church must allow a thorough examination of the faith. However, the Church has the right and duty when necessary to express anew and in binding form the faith's unmistakable Yes and No. Fourthly, such expression, or dogma, acquires its binding force not from theological discussion and not from majority assent, but from the charism given the Church which enables the Church to hold fast to the word once uttered and to expound it without deception. Responsibility for remaining in the truth of the gospel is entrusted in a special way to church office. Fifthly, the power to make binding statements belongs first of all to ecumenical councils which represent the entire episcopate. The Catholic Church confesses in addition that this power can be exercised by the bishop of Rome as successor of St. Peter and head of the episcopal college. The conditions under which he is empowered to speak with such authority proceed from the tradition and are delineated by both Vatican councils.¹³¹

The third principle is the philosophical principle. Once again our question is the same: how does the inaccessible God communicate himself? Once again my lament remains the same; my present purposes allow for what is but a cursory summation of an issue that needs more detailed treatment. By the philosophical principle I have in mind what Congar discussed many years ago when he studied the formula of Chalcedon in an ecumenical context. His concern was with the realism of the Incarnation and the proper role the human must play in the work of redemption.¹³² By the philosophical principle I have in mind what Lonergan discusses in his essay, "The Origins of Christian Realism," in which he writes: "Insofar as Christianity is a reality, it is involved in the problem of realism. But this involvement is twofold. There is a remote involvement in which the problems of realism have

¹³¹Cf. footnote 105. For an excellent elaboration of the dogmatic principle, see Richard P. McBrien, *Who is a Catholic?* (Denville, N.J.: Dimension Books, 1971), pp. 25-39.

¹³²Yves M. J. Congar, O.P., *Christ, Our Lady and the Church*, trans. by Henry St. John, O.P. (London: Longmans, Green, 1957).

not yet appeared. There is a proximate involvement in which the problems of realism gradually manifest themselves and meet with an implicit solution. Finally, there is the explicit involvement which arises when people discuss whether or not there is a Christian philosophy."¹³³ I have in mind, then, what took place in the early Church during the Christological difficulties when theology, with conciliar ratification, made the passage from Scripture to dogma, prescinding here from the infra-scriptural issue of the development of dogma.¹³⁴ I have in mind what took place in the medieval Church when theology, without specific conciliar ratification at the time,¹³⁵ developed the doctrine of the supernatural. I have in mind what took place in the Tridentine Church when theology, with subsequent conciliar ratification, developed the definition of sacramental efficacy. I am thinking of what took place at the first Vatican Council in the reason-revelation teaching of *Dei Filius*. I am thinking of what took place among the medieval schoolmen when the master interpreter of Holy Scripture, *Magister in Sacra Pagina*, became *Magister in Theologia*, that process, as Chenu suggests, in which reason achieved a decisive success within the

¹³³Bernard Lonergan, S.J., "The Origins of Christian Realism," in *Theology Digest* 20, No. 4 (Winter, 1972), 295. It might seem that the expression "Christian philosophy" militates against my argument that the philosophical principle is something distinctively Catholic. Then, too, it might seem that, whereas the sacramental and the dogmatic principles are ecclesiological, the present principle concerns what is Christian and hence Christological and not ecclesiological. I would argue to the contrary on both scores. First of all, with Congar, I would suggest that a monophysite Christology, for example, mis-shapes one's view on the Church, and thus on the theological enterprise which is an ecclesial reality. The argument runs as follows: basic to ecclesiology, because it is basic to Christology, is the principle that safeguards the legitimate place of the human in the work of redemption. This has important ramifications for the nature of the theological enterprise. To paraphrase Chenu, already quoted in this regard, reason must achieve within the realm of faith a decisive success. This is what is meant by the philosophical principle, a principle of philosophical realism. It should be noted that the expression "Christian philosophy" is a technical term and did not originate in any Catholic vs. non-Catholic context.

¹³⁴See Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol. 4, pp. 3-35, *re* doctrinal development.

¹³⁵See Robert Richard, S.J., "Rahner's Theory of Doctrinal Development," *CTSA Proceedings* 18 (1963), 179-83.

realm of faith.¹³⁶ Finally, I am thinking of contemporary theological scholarship, in doctrine as well as in ethics, trying to work out intellectually and bring to speech the nature-grace relationship in which nature, as an inner moment within the order of grace, is the very condition for the possibility of grace; in which reason as an inner moment within the order of faith, is the very condition for the possibility of faith; in which philosophy as an inner moment within the theological order is the very condition for the possibility of theology; in which a natural law ethics, as an inner moment within the order of evangelical moral doctrine, is the very condition for the possibility of evangelical ethics. To be somewhat more detailed, I will comment on Nicaea, on Aquinas as exemplar of the medieval Scholastic, and on the *Dei Filius* of Vatican I. By the philosophical principle, I am not merely asserting the obvious that philosophy has a role to play in theology; and I am not merely asserting that the Catholic theological tradition historically has been by and large a philosophical tradition. I am asserting that the origins of Christian realism mean the origins of Catholic realism. The philosophical principle is a theological necessity by virtue of the nature of Catholic faith.

The Nicaean experience taught the Church that there is a style of epistemology and ontology resident in the scriptural word of God. The *homo-ousion*, as a development of faith and not some Hellenistic deformation, is proof that the Church came to grips with what we are calling the philosophical principle. As Robert Richard said to the CTSA in 1963, "Nicaea activated a tendency that is in itself radically human and bound to assert itself whenever mature human intelligence, individual and communal, and especially when illumined by faith, is allowed its proper scope and freedom. This is the tendency of authentic Christian consciousness to transpose the revealed communication through systematic understanding from an experiential priority to the objective priority."¹³⁷ Many theologians have inquired: does theology need philosophy, and if so, why does theology need philosophy? The responses of Rahner and Lonergan to such questions would reject the phrasing of these questions as an unacceptable extrinsicist.¹³⁸ Lonergan would say

¹³⁶Chenu, *Toward Understanding Saint Thomas*, p. 302.

¹³⁷Richard, "Rahner's Theory of Doctrinal Development," pp. 180-1.

¹³⁸See Rahner, "Philosophy and Theology," *Theological Investigations*,

that the theologian needs philosophy if the theological works of the masters are to be read in their diverse cultural contexts. More importantly, the theologian needs philosophy to know what is going on when one is doing theology. To do theology is to know in a theological manner, and to know in a theological manner is to come to grips with the style of epistemology and ontology resident in God's scriptural word. This is applicable to the many tasks of theology. It applies to the task of interpreting a text and of reconstructing a mentality just as much as it applies to the systematic task of developing understanding of the mysteries of faith.¹³⁹

The Church at Nicaea seemed neither to ignore nor to succumb to the culture of the Greco-Roman world. The *homo-ousion* represents the transformation of the culture in the preaching of the truth of the faith. The same can be said analogously of Aquinas. He was a man of his culture. His times were times of change and renewal brought about in great measure by the importation of Greek and Arabic ideas. The *Summa theologiae* represents the philosophical principle at work in St. Thomas, as he transformed a *sacra historia* into an *ordo doctrinae* for the purposes of faith-understanding. Lonergan says of Thomas: "The brilliance and magnitude of Aquinas' achievement permit us to single him out as the example of what was going forward in his day, namely, discovering, working out, thinking through a new mould for the Catholic mind, a mould in which it could remain fully Catholic and yet at home with all the good things that might be drawn from the cultural heritage of the Greeks and Arabs."¹⁴⁰ Thomas studied his Scriptures and his Aristotle. He tried to do justice to the Christian fact and to human experience, science and scholarship. His logic, his science, his metaphysics of the soul now need transposition in view of modern concerns with method, contemporary science, and the philosophy of

vol. 6, trans. by Karl and Boniface Kruger (Baltimore: Helicon, 1969), pp. 71-81; "Philosophy and Philosophising in Theology," *Theological Investigations*, vol. 9, trans. by Graham Harrison (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), pp. 46-63; Lonergan, "Theology and Man's Future," *Cross Currents* 19, No. 4 (Fall, 1969), 453-4; *Method in Theology*, cf. index under "philosopher," "philosophies," "philosophy."

¹³⁹ Lonergan, "Theology and Man's Future," p. 454.

¹⁴⁰ Lonergan, "The Future of Thomism," an unpublished lecture.

the self-transcending subject. Still Aquinas stands in a special way for what I am suggesting as a peculiarly Catholic element in theology, namely the philosophical principle.

My final observation will concern the first Vatican Council. The peculiarly Catholic philosophical principle is operative in the Council's reflections on God and his existence, and in the Council's observations on the nature of theology. The question of God and the question of theology are not separate questions. They represent two aspects of the same question. The Council's approach is anthropological. It is telling us something about the human potential: not so weak in the face of transcendence that a reductionist capitulation to some form of fideism is the solution; not so much in control in the face of transcendence that a reductionist capitulation to some form of rationalism is the solution. The bipolar origin of Catholic theology is maintained, human experience and the Christian fact harmonized under the rubric *ratio fide illustrata*.¹⁴¹ The history of Catholic theology in recent centuries is not a glorious account of fidelity to the philosophical principle. On the contrary, there has occurred an unfortunate separation of theology and philosophy.¹⁴² The philosophical principle may call for a distinction. It does not call for a separation. Vatican I, in its own intellectual context, is a strong affirmation of this principle in Catholic theology. Two

¹⁴¹DS 3016.

¹⁴²Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, pp. 336-7. "In contrast with medieval procedure, Catholics in recent centuries have not merely distinguished but even separated philosophy and theology. The result was two theologies; there was a natural theology in the philosophy course; there was a further systematic or speculative theology concerned with an orderly presentation of the mysteries of the faith. I think the separation unfortunate. In the first place it was misleading. Time and again students took it for granted that systematic theology was just more philosophy and so of no religious significance. At the opposite pole there were those who argued that a natural philosophy does not attain the Christian God and, further, that what is not the Christian God is an intruder and an idol. In the second place, the separation weakened both natural theology and systematic theology. It weakened natural theology for abstruse philosophic concepts lose nothing of their validity and can gain enormously in acceptability when they are associated with their religious equivalents. It weakened systematic theology for the separation prevents the presentation of systematics as the Christian prolongation of what man can begin to know by his native powers."

commentaries on this matter can serve to conclude these remarks and at the same time illustrate a position on the God-question which I wish to call peculiarly Catholic. This does not mean that these commentaries are saying everything that ought to be said, or that they are saying things the right way or the best way. What I am saying is that these commentaries, in their own cultural context, are part of the on-going tradition of the philosophical principle.¹⁴³ Bernard Lonergan spoke to the membership of the CTSA in 1968 on the natural knowledge of God. He commented on the meaning of Vatican I: "The doctrine of natural knowledge of God means that God lies within the horizon of man's knowing and doing, that religion represents a fundamental dimension in human living."¹⁴⁴ Karl Rahner comments on the decree of Vatican I in his essay, "Theos in the New Testament."

The theological sense of this decision . . . is clearly this: that in this conception of human nature alone is it possible for man to be a potentially receptive subject of theology and of Revelation. It is only if man stands before God always and of necessity . . . even, then, as sinner . . . that he is the being who has to come to terms

¹⁴³In his significant volume, *Naming the Whirlwind*, L. Gilkey raises questions which, in my opinion, Catholic faith-become-reflective-in-theology has always felt compelled to raise: how can it be established . . . that existence as a whole is coherent enough so that speculative thought about its ultimate structure is possible? How can we show that there are legitimate uses of cognitive thinking found in ordinary experience which by their character carry our cognitive thoughts beyond immediate experience? (See page 226.) In footnote 30 on page 226 Gilkey cites the sort of writers and thinkers he has in mind who are actively engaged in the task of answering these significant questions. The outstanding examples are Rahner and Lonergan. It strikes me as being no accident that all four writers cited in this footnote are considered Catholic writers of theology and/or philosophy. I would maintain that Catholic theology is committed to the position, espoused by the Scholastics, that "being" and "true" are convertible terms; that this becomes the principle of intelligibility, which affirms that the real is intelligible; that this principle is analogously applicable to the reality in which the act of faith terminates; and that in systematic theology we find the prolongation of what man can begin to know by his native powers. Thus, a Catholic theology of act of faith would affirm, *Per actum fidei affirmat homo contentum divinae revelationis tamquam reale*. See Alfaro, *Fides, Spes, Caritas*, pp. 28-66.

¹⁴⁴Lonergan, "Natural Knowledge of God," *CTSA Proceedings* 23 (1968), 66.

with Revelation Precisely in order to be able to experience God's personal self-disclosure as *grace* . . . man must be a subject who in the very nature of things has to come to terms with God's disclosure or withholding of himself. Only if it is in the nature of things that he has something to do with God can he freely and spontaneously experience God's self-disclosure as it is actually promulgated in Revelation: in other words, precisely so that Revelation might be grace, it is necessary at least in principle that man should have something to do with God from a locus which is not already grace.¹⁴⁵

Is there a Catholic theology? This is the convention's question, not just mine. It is up to the convention to make a response. I am eager to hear the presentations on revelation, ethics and the papacy. As for my contribution to the general discussion, I conclude with a resounding Yes. There is a Catholic theology. My reasoning is threefold. There is the sacramental principle; there is the dogmatic principle; there is the philosophical principle.

TWO CONSEQUENCES

In introducing the remarkable first volume of his history of the development of doctrine, Jaroslav Pelikan makes the following observation: "The Church is always more than a school; not even the Enlightenment managed to restrict or reduce it to its teaching function. But the Church cannot be less than a school. Its faith, hope and love all express themselves in teaching and confession."¹⁴⁶ We find the same sort of sentiment in a remark of Rahner: "The Catholic Church cannot and ought not be a 'Church of professors,' but it cannot be today a Church without professors."¹⁴⁷ The reason the Church cannot be anything less than a school seems obvious. Theology is for the Church's task of preaching. Preaching demands theological schooling. Such schooling means seminaries and divinity schools, parish catechetical

¹⁴⁵Rahner, "Theos in the New Testament," *Theological Investigations*, vol. 1, trans. by Cornelius Ernst, O.P. (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1961), p. 83.

¹⁴⁶Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 1.

¹⁴⁷Rahner, "Theology," *Sacramentum Mundi* 6, p. 239.

programs, college and university theology departments. A Church without theology professors is a non-preaching Church. What ought to be said about theology professors in the Church today? (From personal experience many of us can think of all sorts of things that have been said in a pejorative vein. These, however, ought to be excised from any public document—after the fashion of a Watergate transcript. They only serve to remind us in passing that no one ought to take up the ecclesial ministry of theology if the goal is to elicit gratitude from the students or widespread approbation from all the diverse elements in the Church.) By way of a practical postscript, this paper will have two things to say about theology professors. The first concerns their collectively indispensable role in the life of the Church. The second concerns an indispensable requisite for theology professors that must accompany their professional competence, namely, holiness of life. These two observations flow from the two assertions this paper has been making: that faith does not exist without theology; and that theology does not exist without faith.

First of all, faith does not exist without theology. To assert the opposite is to settle for a reduction that does not do justice to human experience and culture. Reductionism breeds polarization, and this is descriptive of the Catholic Church in the United States at this time. This paper has been suggesting that polarization finds its deepest cause in the faith-theology question. This takes many specific forms. Recently, Richard McCormick has concretized the polarization issue under the specific rubric of *Humanae vitae*. He writes, "From the response to *Humanae vitae* over the past five years, one thing is clear: the Catholic community is polarized both on the issue of contraception and, even more importantly, on the nature and function of the Church's magisterium and the appropriate Catholic response to authoritative teaching."¹⁴⁸ The McCormick article made the suggestion that the bishops establish a "blue ribbon committee" to study the underlying issues of the controversy. This could be a possible point of entry for a renewing of serious theological dialogue between the bishops and the Catholic theological community. Recently, the general secretary of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops made reference to the compel-

¹⁴⁸Richard McCormick, "The Silence since *Humanae Vitae*," *America* (July 21, 1973), p. 32.

ling necessity of this sort of dialogue. Bishop James Rausch had this to say in an address given at the Catholic University of America:

A second matter I would like to touch upon briefly this evening . . . is the relationship between bishops and scholars in the Church. If there is any single issue that requires attention in our time, *this is it!* It holds particular importance because, as all of us know, third parties exist in our country who are taking it upon themselves to exegete and theologize and engage in analysis without possessing the required tools of scholarship. In addition, these same third parties are assuming a role reserved to the official magisterium by passing judgments on the orthodoxy of scholars or granting something in the nature of a *nihil obstat* or an *imprimatur* in their editorials or their question and answer columns.¹⁴⁹

Bishop Rausch, I presume, is not attacking freedom of speech or freedom of the press. Rather, he seems concerned with judgments being made on delicate and complex matters by those without the requisite competence of either scholastic credentials or properly designated mission. The practical imperative is clear. There is urgent need for bishops and scholars to sit down and work out their relationship and discover their mutual need for one another. Efforts at collaboration must begin to close the ominous gap which, if continued as is or even widened, will prove catastrophic for the good estate of God's people in our country.

The membership of the CTSA needs no further instruction on the collectively indispensable role of good theology professors and other scholars in the life of the Church. Richard McCormick spoke to us about this matter several years ago.¹⁵⁰ Roderick MacKenzie dealt with this issue at the Toronto Theological Congress of 1967.¹⁵¹ Pope Paul VI has stressed the role of theology in his well-publicized remarks

¹⁴⁹Most Reverend James S. Rausch, "Address at Honorary Dinner," The Catholic University of America, March 5, 1974. I have received a copy of the address, courtesy of the author. The italics and exclamation mark are his.

¹⁵⁰Richard A. McCormick, S.J., "The Teaching of the Magisterium and Theologians," *CTSA Proceedings* 24 (1969), 239-54. See also John R. Quinn, "The Magisterium and Theology," *ibid.*, pp. 255-61.

¹⁵¹Roderick A. MacKenzie, S.J., "The Function of Scholars in Forming the Judgment of the Church," *Theology of Renewal*, vol. 2, pp. 118-32.

on the relation between theology and the bishops' magisterium.¹⁵² Theology, like the magisterium, originates in God's Word entrusted to the Church. Theology, like the magisterium, presses towards the same goal of expressing, defending, illuminating God's Word so that all may see it as the message of salvation (Acts 13:26). Still, theology and the bishops' magisterium enjoy different gifts because they are responsible for different functions. As Latourelle reminds us, in relating these functions, it is not a question of relating a charismatic understanding of revelation, as proper to the magisterium, and a purely rational reflection, proper to theology. Rather, the relationship is one of two activities each animated by a different charism.¹⁵³ The task of the magisterium is to preach the deposit of faith in its integrity, to guard it from error, to promote its intelligibility. At times the magisterium is called upon to pass judgment on certain theological formulations. Theology functions differently in the Church. No summary expression of its many functions could possibly be satisfying. In general, however, it can be said that theology must reflect upon God's Word in the context of the present culture and bring to the knowledge of the Christian community, and in particular to the bishops' magisterium, the results of its reflection so that through the doctrine taught by the bishops these results may give light to all God's people.¹⁵⁴ The theological charism does not dispense with the theologian's obedience to the dogmatic principle. The bishops' charism hardly grounds the claim to exclusive theological initiative. The theologian operates in obedience to his charism as a responsible servant of God's Word. He may at times be *avant-garde*. He should eschew the role of *franc-tireur*.¹⁵⁵ The theology professor knows well that his discipline is not a source of divine revelation nor an addition to the Scriptures nor the authority that promulgates Church doctrines.¹⁵⁶ He strives to develop theological doctrines

¹⁵²The Papal address can be found in *L'Osservatore Romano*, October 2, 1966.

¹⁵³See Latourelle, *Theology: Science of Salvation*, p. 47.

¹⁵⁴Pope Paul to the International Theology Congress, Rome, September, 1966. This is cited by Latourelle, *Theology: Science of Salvation*, p. 47.

¹⁵⁵*Ibid.*, p. 49. The distinction is from Hans Küng as cited by Latourelle.

¹⁵⁶Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 331.

in order to render intelligible today, for purposes of preaching and celebration, the Church doctrines formulated yesterday. As he does so, he works to develop the theological doctrines that will provide the background and some part of the content of the Church doctrines that will be promulgated tomorrow.

If there is no faith without theology, it follows that there is no effective preaching of the faith without theology. This demands serious theological dialogue between bishops and theology professors. The present gulf that presently separates them must be bridged. On the other hand, theology does not exist without faith. To assert the opposite is to settle for a reduction that does not do justice to the Christian fact. To do injustice to the Christian fact is to deny that theology is a salvific activity personal to the theological practitioner. Thus, it seems to follow, granting of course a high level of theological expertise, that he or she is the better theologian to the extent that he or she works at the faith and matures in the faith, formed by charity and strengthened by the gifts of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The theologian must be credible as a person, a Christian, a Catholic. The biologist can be a very fine biologist without necessarily being a good person. The theologian enjoys no such luxury. The theologian's God-talk is not unrelated to his being in love with God. In our theological pluralism today, it is good to recognize that there is a type of pluralism existing in our time that results from the presence or absence of intellectual, moral and religious conversion. "It is this type of pluralism that is perilous to unity in the faith especially when a lack of conversion exists in those that govern the Church or teach in the Church."¹⁵⁷ The emphasis at the moment is on religious conversion. We return, then, to a question already asked in the first section of this paper: what sort of person ought the theology professor to be if he or she is to do the work at hand without doing more harm than good, without projecting into the Catholic community any inauthenticity one has imbibed from others or created on one's own?¹⁵⁸ The suggestion is simply this: falling in love with God hardly seems irrelevant to the successful doing of the task of theology.

It has been noted that theology today is locked in an encounter

¹⁵⁷Lonergan, *Doctrinal Pluralism*, p. 65.

¹⁵⁸See footnote 18.

with its age. Will it grow and triumph as it did in the thirteenth century when it followed its age by assimilating Aristotle? Or will it wither to insignificance as it did in the seventeenth century when it resisted its age?¹⁵⁹ This depends on the clarity and the accuracy of theology's grasp of the external cultural factors that undermine its past achievements and challenge it to new endeavors.¹⁶⁰ In other words, it depends on how well the theology professor talks about faith and theology, how well he makes reference to his own scientific foundations. Such is the present task of theology.

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¹⁵⁹Lonergan, "Theology in its New Context," p. 37.

¹⁶⁰*Ibid.*