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New Trends in Fundamental Theology in the Postconciliar Period

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The apparently unchallenging title given me by the editors of this volume conceals, in fact, a rather difficult task. For this reason I must begin by carefully defining the limits of my essay so that readers will know what they may and may not expect.

First of all, it will be helpful to point out that the expression "new trends" is more applicable to this entire collection of studies than it is to my contribution in particular. Only a reading of the whole book will show what fundamental theology has been doing in the postconciliar period and in what direction it is moving. This opening essay can do no more than highlight certain characteristics, generally regarded as more important, of the work done in this area during the time under consideration. In addition, readers will see that the novelty of the trends indicated is at times a quite relative matter, since it is a fact that in fundamental theology as in other areas of theology there are certain unchanging constants. The only thing that has really changed is the way in which we rediscover them and approach them, for this is indeed conditioned by a new context. It would perhaps be more accurate, therefore, to speak of "present" trend rather than properly "new" trends.

On the other hand, given the diversity of subject matter covered by the label "fundamental theology" (I shall return to this point, but the table of contents of this volume is enough to show what I mean), it is clear that the selection of themes judged important by one author will not be identical with the selection made by another. From the very beginning, then, I am quite ready to admit that my selection is determined by my own view of fundamental theology. While seeking, therefore, to omit nothing of importance (I am not sure, of course, that I have succeeded, apart from taking into account what I have already said in essays similar to this one), I have not hesitated to offer a critical evaluation, in the light of my conception of fundamental theology, of the positions I am reviewing here. I ask the reader's indulgence if I refer rather frequently to those other reports of mine.¹

In order to mitigate the one-sidedness (and perhaps partisan character)

of this report, I have thought it useful to begin by calling attention to some other surveys similar to mine. These too are stamped with the individuality of their authors, but at times they touch on points which complement those treated here, and can therefore help offset the fragmentary character of my selection of themes.

In addition to the special issue of *Concilium* which is already somewhat dated and to which I shall be returning,² I may call particular attention to the state of the question as defined by Heinrich Fries in 1975.³ He describes there the considerable demands being made of fundamental theology nowadays, while at the same time he bemoans the fact that no one seems capable of giving a convincing response. He also refers to the difficulty of speaking today about certain subjects, such as miracles or the absolute character of Christianity, whereas other themes, such as the anthropological approach, have become congenial to us. He also regards it as important that the range of collaborators with fundamental theology has been extended or restored, for this discipline must now be concerned not solely with philosophy but also with the science of religions, modern ideologies, Marxism, psychoanalysis, hermeneutics, linguistics, theories of science, and so on.

This last point is also made, along with many others, in the more recent and much more extensive essay of Heinrich Stirnimann.⁴ Reviewing new trends in fundamental theology, Stirnimann sketches a historical conspectus in which he distinguishes five successive but somewhat overlapping stages. (1) To begin with, there was a revitalization of the traditional approach; this was begun by A. Gardeil and R. Garrigou-Lagrange, and a good example of it can be seen in the manuals of Adolf Kolping. (2) Next came the anthropological trend, whose initiator and most notable representative is Karl Rahner. (3) This was followed by a period in which primacy was given to the history of salvation (Oscar Cullmann was the prime mover here); this period saw biblical categories taking control of fundamental theology. (4) A period of hermeneutical restructuring came next and brought a complete reversal. (5) This hermeneutics seems to have yielded place in turn to a new trend which is difficult to describe in precise terms but which is recognizable by the use made of such key words as "analysis," "linguistics," "logic," and "history of science."⁵

Fries and Stirnimann both provide their readers with valuable aid in getting their bearings in the recent history of fundamental theology. If I now offer another view, it is not so much that I want to challenge theirs (which I regard as shedding a good deal of light) but that I wish rather to avoid repeating it and perhaps to complete it by drawing attention to other aspects. There are many points which I ought to raise in this survey, but I shall limit myself to only four which seem to be the most important:

- I. A persisting uncertainty about the nature of fundamental theology.
- II. The presence on the scene of Protestant theology.
- III. The revival of apologetics.
- IV. Theology and experience.

I. Uncertainty Regarding Fundamental Theology

Anyone who casts an eye over recent work in fundamental theology must be struck by the persistent recurrence of questions about its identity, object and method. Without going back beyond the Council, we find Johann Baptist Metz saying in 1965, in an editorial launching the section on fundamental theology in *Concilium*, that this discipline, more perhaps than any other, is in need today of "a new understanding of itself."⁶ At almost the same time, Karl Rahner was throwing out his idea of a basic course of theology which would have for its purpose to survey everything which "at the existential and prescientific level can justify the faith of an educated modern person." This indication of purpose was accompanied by a statement of the subjects to be treated or omitted; his procedure entailed a major reversal of received ideas, the chief of which, perhaps, had to do with the method to be followed.⁷

Three years after the appearance of Rahner's essay, and almost simultaneously, two periodicals, *Concilium* and *Gregorianum*, published contributions which gave insight into the prevailing state of mind. *Concilium* devoted an entire issue to fundamental theology, its recent history, its problems, and the way in which it was being taught throughout the Christian world. The editors of the issue justified the undertaking by pointing out that "its [fundamental theology's] specific tasks make this branch of theology more deeply involved in constant change than others."⁸ *Gregorianum*, for its part, published the papers of a meeting of several professors at the Gregorian University who were in search of this discipline's lost identity.⁹ The relative agreement among the participants in the meeting meant that some points of agreement emerged, but in the papers of this meeting as in those published by *Concilium*, we can discern a real uncertainty with regard to the concept behind the term "fundamental theology."

This indecision is explained to some extent by the historical background as detailed in certain essays, such as that of Claude Geffré, who recalls the recent history of fundamental theology,¹⁰ and especially that of Henri Bouillard, which sheds more light because it goes further back and reminds us of the anti-deistic context which conditioned the appearance on the scene of the rationalist apologetics that was the not-too-distant ancestor of our present-day fundamental theology.¹¹

At the beginning of the seventies Father Bouillard is able to distinguish three trends among the practitioners of fundamental theology. 1. First of all, there were those whose outlook in fundamental theology was primarily dogmatic and who made divine revelation the central point in their thinking. "They show how [revelation] took place in the history of salvation which reaches its climax in Jesus Christ, then how this revelation has been transmitted by means of ecclesial tradition, scripture and the Magisterium, and finally how it is accepted by faith and rendered explicit by theology." Among the representatives of this position the author singles out René Latourelle in his *Theology of Revelation* and, with the nuances proper to each,

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Karl Rahner in the work mentioned above, Hans Urs von Balthasar in his Herrlichkeit [Glory], and Henri de Lubac in parts of his many writings. This is the position toward which I myself incline.¹²

2. Next come those who preach a fundamental theology "which is apologetic in purpose," that is, "which endeavors to explain, in terms intelligible to nonbelievers, what believers consider to be the rational foundations of their faith." Bouillard locates himself among the representatives of this second position, which "does not rely on the authority of scripture and the Church but advances by way of philosophical reflection and an examination of historical facts."

3. Thirdly, there are the theologians in whose view fundamental theology should be conceived "as an investigation of the foundations of theological science, analogous to that which is carried on by the exact sciences and yielding an axiomatic, formal theory of the fundamental categories of theology; such a study would be based on modern logic, semantics and linguistic analysis."¹³ This is the kind of project G. Söhngen presents in his article "Fundamentaltheologie" in the *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*. It is also the kind of project which H. Stirnimann's essay (later than Bouillard's) makes the reader think of at more than one point.¹⁴

This picture resembles a French garden in that it points out avenues through a reality which would otherwise be pretty much an expanse of matted underbrush. As a matter of fact, the picture only partially represents the reality which, taken in its full dimensions, is much less orderly. The reader need only page through the issues of *Concilium* on fundamental theology to verify this for himself.

If we place ourselves at the vantage point of strictly external criticism, it is already possible to distinguish two periods within the position taken by *Concilium* itself. The two are clearly indicated by the general title given to the issues dealing with fundamental theology: "Borderline Questions" was the general heading for the issues from 1965 to 1972, while "Fundamental Theology" was the general rubric adopted beginning with issue no. 85 in 1973.

The aim of the first series had been explained by J. B. Metz in the editorial with which he launched it.¹⁵ As he describes them there, borderline questions include but go beyond the questions proper to fundamental theology. By and large, they correspond to the subject matter of the conciliar Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* on the Church in the Modern World (the Constitution was at that very time being composed under the working title *Schema XIII*). Given this perspective, we are not surprised to find a wide variety of themes being selected for subsequent issues. One or other article (sometimes even a whole issue, such as no. 46) may treat subjects belonging by full right to fundamental theology, but we also come upon others that belong purely and simply to dogmatic theology or moral theology.

From the beginning, therefore, we can see, on the one hand, a certain practical confusion about the precise boundaries of the area covered by fundamental theology, and, on the other hand, some theoretical difficulty in de-

fining the proper object of this discipline.¹⁶ These initial fluctuations did not disappear when the title of the second series of issues was changed. Although the series now bears the overall title of "Fundamental Theology" and does include from time to time articles on problems specific to this discipline, it continues nonetheless to deal with borderline questions (Church-world). It can be said without being paradoxical that this second series, which in theory should have been devoted to problems characteristic of fundamental theology, is the series that has least to say about these problems.

In the preceding remarks I am certainly not questioning the interest of the subjects treated in these issues of *Concilium* nor denying the need of treating them. I am simply calling attention to the fact that fundamental theology cannot deal with anything and everything without losing its identity. We need to look elsewhere to find the reason for the uncertainty and indecision which I mentioned at the beginning of this section. Lacking a sufficiently clear and exclusive choice at the very outset, the theologian will be constantly tempted to include in fundamental theology a number of subjects which seem to have in common only the fact that they have no specific place elsewhere in theology. Such an approach cannot ensure the unity of a discipline, but rather destroys it. We are faced once again with the defect which Ambroise Gardeil criticized long ago when he spoke of a "sacred pantology."¹⁷ Henri Bouillard has more recently reminded us, and with good reason, of the dangers of such a procedure.¹⁸ We must be forthright and say that from the viewpoint of methodology such an approach is a step backwards.¹⁹

Among more recent studies in this area we find the name of J. B. Metz occurring once again, with his book *Faith in History and Society*. The book's subtitle: "Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology," shows clearly that it comes within our purview here.²⁰ Metz here tries to refine his conception of political theology in the light of the criticisms it has met; he also proposes to consider this political theology as being a practical fundamental theology that is conceived as an invitation to Christianity. Despite the inherent interest of its contents, however, this book (which includes, among other things, some articles that have already appeared in *Concilium*) does not advance the definition of our discipline. The author is still persuaded that the subject matter of fundamental theology is provided by questions raised by the encounter of Church and world; the main preoccupation is still with borderline questions.²¹

Much more interesting, in my opinion, is H. Stirnimann's essay, which, like the German original of Metz's book, was published in 1977.²² It is by far the most important study that has appeared in the postconciliar period, not only by reason of its bulk but even more because of its considerable historical information, its rigorous thinking, and the significant proposals the author makes with regard both to scholarly research and practical teaching. Very briefly, the study is intended as a solidly grounded proposal in the service of an ecumenical fundamental theology; in fact, in his essay the author carries on a dialogue with non-Catholic theologians. More specifically, the

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Apologetic in purpose
phil. reflection & hist facts
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theoretical foundations of theology
based on logic, semantics, linguistic analysis

author defines fundamental theology as the reflective, critical study of the foundation of theology. This involves him immediately with three major groups of problems: those of revelation, those of tradition, and those of theological method (and connected questions).

These have always been the themes of fundamental theology, but Stirnimann approaches them in the light of four main concerns which reflect the whole new climate of contemporary theology: 1. Faith and reason; 2. Faith and understanding; 3. Faith and praxis; 4. Faith and experience. The fourfold repetition of the word "faith" in this listing is a way of calling attention to a basic point Stirnimann makes: the impossibility of a neutral, purely academic approach to theology (and therefore to fundamental theology). Theology can be done only on the basis of a lived faith and must lead to practice and commitment in accord with this faith.²³ Located as it is between a general dogmatics and a metatheology which represent two extremes to be avoided, this ecumenical fundamental theology is likely to prove a difficult balancing act.

Nonetheless, even though we must ask a few critical questions of the author, it must be acknowledged that his essay treats the various aspects of the subject in a masterful way.²⁴

II. Presence of Protestant Theology

The most important event in the recent history of fundamental theology is undoubtedly the entry of Protestant theologians into an area that used to be regarded as the private preserve of Catholic theologians.²⁵ The first of our contemporaries to travel this new path is Gerhard Ebeling who in 1970 published his "Reflections on an Evangelical Fundamental Theology"²⁶ and shortly afterward in 1975, various essays on fundamental theology in the third volume of his *Wort und Glaube* [Word and Faith].²⁷ The 1970 article was very influential and is readily acknowledged as a point of departure both by Catholic theologians (such as Stirnimann and Metz) and by Protestant theologians. In fact, Wilfrid Joest refers explicitly to Ebeling in his own *Fundamentaltheologie* of 1974.²⁸ Max Seckler seems quite justified, therefore, in hailing Ebeling as "the first Protestant fundamental theologian" while describing Joest's work as "the first Protestant fundamental theology."²⁹

Flattering though these evaluations are (and even justified, as far as recent theology is concerned), they are not completely accurate. According to Ebeling himself, the terms "foundations," "fundamental doctrine" and even "fundamental theology," as well as the realities corresponding to such terms can be found in the works of Protestant authors from as early as the second half of the eighteenth century. More than that, Ebeling claims that the introduction of the very name "fundamental theology" for a special discipline within Catholic theology was effected under the influence of a usage already widespread in the Protestant world.³⁰ This point, which Ebeling says is in

need of further verification, receives broad confirmation from the extensively documented historical sketch which Stirnimann gives of the beginnings of fundamental theology. At the decisive point in this history, when the theologians of Tübingen were constructing their great works, they found not only suggestions but in many cases a model in parallel Protestant writing. Similarly, the prehistory of fundamental theology, in the form of an apologetics meant as a weapon against a spreading rationalism, was not begun (contrary to a widespread view) by Catholic authors but by Anglican and Protestant authors.³¹

Consequently, when nowadays such authors as Ferdinand Hahn,³² Johannes Flury,³³ Horst Beintker,³⁴ or in French, the theologians writing in *Etudes théologiques et religieuses*³⁵ turn to fundamental theology and apologetics, their action represents less a novelty than a spectacular return to a venerable heritage of the Reformed tradition. In this renewed sharing of interests by Protestant and Catholic theologians Stirnimann sees a sign of promise for the future of the ecumenical fundamental theology for which he himself is calling.

If we turn now to the themes and tasks which the authors just mentioned see as proper to fundamental theology we find them listing a whole series of questions which is identical at a number of points with the questions put forward by Catholic authors. Hahn, for example, whose article is entitled "Exegesis and Fundamental Theology," speaks of the indissoluble bond linking these two disciplines and takes the question of the historical Jesus as a concrete example.³⁶ Flury, who cannot help feeling a certain admiration for the compact structure of Catholic fundamental theology (as expressed, for example, in the documents of Vatican II), gives preference to the themes characteristic of dialogue with unbelievers and with philosophy. Beintker mentions chiefly questions having to do with relations between faith and reason. Joest, for his part, uses the name "fundamental theology" to refer to a doctrine about the foundation and methods of theology. By this he means a foundation, a critical reflection on theology's understanding of itself, on the methods used in theology as a whole, on its object and function, on the foundations and norms of its statements, and on its relation to science generally.

Ebeling too is much concerned about the epistemological and methodological task of fundamental theology. In regard to what he calls the main business (*Hauptgeschäft*) of fundamental theology, namely "as radical as possible a statement of the problem of truth," he formulates three requirements that must be met: a methodical determination of the conditions for a historical and systematic verification of theological statements; a determination of what is specific to Christianity; and a working out of the major guiding distinctions, such as God-world, nature-grace, sin-forgiveness, law-gospel.³⁷

We may be allowed to doubt the necessity of including all the last-named themes in fundamental theology, but on the other hand we can only

applaud the increasingly pronounced tendency to give serious thought to the problems of theological criteriology. Protestant writers will render an important service to their Catholic colleagues by reminding them of this area which they have too often neglected.

III. Revival of Apologetics

The reader may be surprised to see apologetics put down as a *new* trend. Is this not in fact a very old trend, but definitively discredited now by reason both of its weaknesses and of its excesses? This is indeed a rumor that has been abroad among Catholic theologians for some thirty years now. But it is not a very well-founded rumor, and serious theologians have never questioned the need for the apologetic task. In fact, some of them—Henri Bouillard, for example—have gone on successfully defending the view that fundamental theology is apologetic in nature, its ambition being to discourse in ways acceptable even to unbelievers.³⁸ And yet it must be admitted that this type of thing has been in disfavor among Catholic theologians for some time now; if it should manage to win favor again, we would indeed have to speak of a revival or return.

Here again, Protestant theologians have played an important role. In addition to the Protestant theologians, chiefly German-speaking, whom I mentioned in the previous section, we may name here a whole series of English-speaking authors, Protestant and Anglican, for whom this type of undertaking has continued to be, or has become once again, a living reality.³⁹ Paul Tillich, whose *Systematic Theology* is presented unambiguously as an apologetic theology, is doubtless the best known of these writers. But there are others, such as Schubert Ogden,⁴⁰ Gustaf Aulén,⁴¹ and John Macquarrie,⁴² who with more or less direct reference to Tillich pursue a similar course: to show that there is a correspondence (Tillich speaks of a “correlation”) between human existence and the gospel message.⁴³ Each author’s work is marked by emphases peculiar to him, but none of them doubts the importance of the task.⁴⁴

On the Catholic side, apologetics is once again being looked upon with greater favor, at least when it comes to declarations of principle. In the article of which I spoke earlier, Henrich Stirnimann vigorously defends the cause of this discipline. Far from referring to something negative (as current usage of the term would suggest), apologetics is on the contrary an eminently positive procedure based on faith. It is in no sense a dishonest technique using any and every argument in order to prevail at any price. As an undertaking that has for its purpose to defend the faith and show its reasonableness, apologetics is an integral and indispensable part of the discourse of faith. The manner in which the great apologetes of the past carried out this task is enough to show its beauty and fruitfulness. We need think only of Pascal or Kierkegaard, both of whom did more for the Christian faith than armies of professors of theology.⁴⁵ Stirnimann, indeed, does not think that

apologetics should be confused with fundamental theology or that it is even a part of it, but his concern in maintaining this position is to distinguish the specific task proper to each, and not to deny the specific task of apologetics.⁴⁶

Johann Baptist Metz is no less clear. He too recalls the bad press which apologetes have had until recently as professional defenders of the Church who are inspired by a shortsighted ideology and a real mania for always having the last word, and always suspected of insincerity and of looking solely for tactical advantage. Yet Metz does not hesitate to make this uncompromising assertion: “The apologetical approach forms the basis of all genuine Christian theology. As an attempt to justify or defend Christian hope, it is as old as Christianity itself and the controversies in which the Christian religion has always been engaged.”⁴⁷ The example of St. Justin, apologete and martyr, is enough to confer a patent of nobility on this task. At the same time, it shows that the duty of giving an account of the faith is not a purely intellectual or theoretical matter, but extends to the testimony of one’s life and even to dying for the cause. “Apology” or defense is here very close to “following of Christ” and therefore includes a praxis.

On the basis of New Testament language, which emphasizes the public and quasi-judicial character of such a defense,⁴⁸ as well as of the example of Justin as he followed in the footsteps of Christ and his apostles, Metz stresses the point that this praxis implies taking a position with regard to political power and its embodiments. He even thinks he can see here something like a scriptural basis for his own practical fundamental theology. One may feel free not to follow him as far as this, and yet continue to regard his rehabilitation of apologetics as a very positive contribution.

Other examples of this new interest in apologetics might be cited.⁴⁹ Neither may we overlook the undeniable apologetic dimension in the work of certain great contemporaries of ours: Teilhard de Chardin and Karl Rahner, for example. Far from lessening the excellence of their work, the presence of the apologetic aspect shows clearly the extent to which every original reflection on the faith inevitably leads to the question of faith’s justification, not only in the eyes of unbelievers or non-Christians but even in the eyes of the faithful themselves. Well before Justin and the Apologists appeared on the scene St. Paul had expended greater energy than anyone in defending what is specifically Christian.⁵⁰

“Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you” (1 Pet 3:15). These attractive words of scripture have always been regarded as the very charter of all theological work,⁵¹ but they apply in a special way to the task of showing the legitimacy of faith. It is not surprising, then, that this verse from Peter should be a privileged point of reference for apologetes⁵² and that we should find it being quoted on every side in our time. It states a task that came into existence with the Christian faith itself and is destined to last as long as that faith does.

IV. Theology and Experience

This is a trend that affects theology generally and not just fundamental theology. But since one function of fundamental theology is reflection on problems of epistemology and criteriology, it is clear that the renewed place given to experience in theology must be of concern first and foremost to fundamental theology.

The attention given to experience in theology is not as recent a phenomenon as we might be tempted to think. Without stopping to speak of the books of Ambrose Gardeil on mystical experience, which were addressed to a problem quite different from our present one,⁵³ we must at least mention the magisterial book of Jean Mouroux, in which experience was expressly presented as an introduction to a theology.⁵⁴ Shortly thereafter, in 1965, Henri Bouillard gave expression to an idea that has always been dear to him, when he described human experience as the starting point of fundamental theology.⁵⁵

However, it is chiefly since 1970 that the appeal to experience has become a real commonplace. Beginning in 1970 we find a number of titles by English-speaking authors from North America and elsewhere; for example, Gregory Baum, Gabriel Moran, and Avery Dulles.⁵⁶ In Europe the same interest began to show itself at about the same time; I may mention especially an essay of Piet Schoonenberg⁵⁷ and an important conference which Gerhard Ebeling gave at Göttingen in 1974 and published a year later in the third volume of his *Wort und Glaube*, along with several other studies in fundamental theology.⁵⁸

At this point I must allot a special place to a little book that appeared in France in 1972 and that by its brilliant writing contrasted favorably with the usual literary mediocrity of contemporary theological publications. But *Une foi exposée*, by Patrick Jacquemont, Jean-Pierre Jossua and Bernard Quelquejeu, was distinguished by more than its style. Its originality was also, and more profoundly, in its method: reflection by the authors on their experience as Christians, and its purpose: to render an account of a lived faith.⁵⁹ Jean-Pierre Jossua became the theoretician of this undertaking and isolated its characteristics in a study that appeared a little later on.⁶⁰

Along the same lines I may mention J. B. Metz's defense of this type of essay in an article in which he put forward the thesis that a theologian's own life can be regarded as a kind of theological locus.⁶¹ Finally, the term and the theme have also found their way into the work of specialists, for example, in that of Heinrich Stirnimann (who has written a number of things not mentioned here⁶²) or in the "Chronicles" in which I have drawn attention to this phenomenon and suggested some criteria for discernment.⁶³ Then too there is the special issue of *Concilium* on "Revelation and Experience" (no. 133; New York, 1979).

To speak of a revival of interest in experience or a new attention being given to it is clearly to suggest the reappearance of a theme already known to theology. And in fact G. Ebeling reminds us in a timely way that *exper-*

ientia was one of Martin Luther's key words: *experientia sola facit theologum* (experience alone makes a theologian).⁶⁴ But neither does Ebeling forget to point out that neither the word nor the reality was unknown to the medieval theologians. He mentions Bonaventure and Gerson;⁶⁵ he could also have cited Thomas Aquinas, some of whose themes closely resemble those of Luther⁶⁶ and who also uses the expression *cognitio experimentalis* (experiential knowledge or knowledge springing from experience).⁶⁷ Schleiermacher, closer to us in time, is evidently still the important name in Protestant theology; he repeats Luther's formula almost verbatim.⁶⁸ Georg Hermes (first half of the nineteenth century) may be rather forgotten now,⁶⁹ but the Modernist appeal to experience is still present in the minds of all.

As a cause of this new interest in experience Ebeling mentions the pressure of an environment that for three centuries now has been heavily influenced at every point by the methods of the experimental sciences. This factor doubtless played a decisive role in changing mentalities, but, nearer to us in time, and at least in French-speaking countries, we cannot underestimate the role played during the past fifty years by Catholic Action movements. Their well-known method with its three points: see, judge, act, has influenced not only the members of the movements but also their chaplains and, indirectly, even the theologians. The latter, often called upon to provide a theological "reading" of the "facts" put forward by the members, were surprised to discover not only a Christian and even a mystical life of unsuspected richness, but an implicit theology which when explicated could be a source of great enthusiasm.⁷⁰

The call for "a theology based on life," which was first formulated in these circles, preceded and surely influenced the desire of many contemporary theologians to practice their discipline in close connection with a vital environment. The essays I mentioned above (those of Jossua and his colleagues, as well as that of Metz) seem to me to be an echo—distant indeed and indirect, as well as highly filtered and controlled—of those initial, more informal essays. Nowadays the theology of liberation can be considered to be in part an extension, on a large scale, of the method that seeks to ground theology in life. Now it is a matter no longer of a few individuals or even of a much larger group, but of the life of the Church throughout an entire continent; the goal, however, is the systematic elaboration of the faith that is implied in the Church's life and practice.

The concept of experience, however, is one of the most "problematic" ones we have,⁷¹ and it is here that fundamental theology has something special to contribute, both in clarifying the meaning assigned to the term and in formulating criteria for judging the possible normative value of experience in theology. Among the theologians who have addressed themselves to this task I must mention Ebeling who sees experience in general as structured by a fourfold relationship: (1) to life; (2) to history; (3) to reality; and (4) to perception. All this, which holds for secular experience, applies also to religious experience at its own proper level, which is that of the ultimate, the decisive, the unconditional, and of supreme interiority. In fact, it is in the

concrete unity of Christian experience that experience of God, experience of the world and experience of the self are brought together. The first of these three experiences is evidently the decisive one, and faith, says Ebeling, is the lived experience, in harmony with God, of total human experience.⁷² Normative values in this area are given us through the experience that is received by the handing on of the word of God in its original source, but this transmitted experience itself becomes perceptible only in Christian experience that is lived in union with Christ.⁷³

Stirnimann in turn, but more briefly, raises three main questions: 1. Must theology be related to experience? The answer is evidently Yes. 2. Of what kind of experience are we speaking? The answer is quite similar to Ebeling's: an experience of the world and of life, with experience in, with, and through faith being at the center. 3. What normative value do various possible experiences have? Here again the answer is clear: Individual experience cannot serve as the ultimate norm; the only possible norm is that which is the foundation of faith itself, namely, the event of God's Word becoming a reality in Jesus Christ.⁷⁴

At a time when I was as yet unacquainted with Ebeling's thinking or Stirnimann's suggestions, I had myself, in a first approach to the subject, proposed that particular Christian experience (the experience of an individual, a group or even a local Church) be tested in the light of the total Christian experience. The experience of the Church (which in turn has for its norm the foundational experience that is transmitted through scripture) is thus the vital environment for, and the framework within which to judge, the concrete experience of believers. Within this ecclesial experience, however, a place must be provided for two internally coordinated sources of critical evaluation: on the one hand, the service rendered by theology and, on the other, the hierarchical ministry in the exercise of its prophetic function. The second of these two has the final word, but neither one can carry out its work of discernment except in continual dependence on the foundational experience.⁷⁵

In all likelihood, this appeal to experience as "locus of theology" and "theological locus"⁷⁶ marks only the beginning of a movement that will spread in the coming years. It is a promise of hope for theology which may find renewed vitality in it, but it is also a task laid on fundamental theology which must further define the norms for the utilization of experience.

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The Necessity and Insufficiency of Fundamental Theology

David Tracy

Each theologian often seems dominated by a single concern. For some that concern takes the form of a particular thematic focus (salvation—reconciliation—liberation) around which cohere all uses of the broad range of the Christian symbol-system and the broad range of experience disclosed by those symbols. For others the wide-ranging character of the symbol-system and the equally wide-ranging and more elusive nature of the forms of experience and language involved in theological discourse occasion the need to reflect first on the character of theological discourse itself before proceeding to more thematic interests. Moreover, the distinct but related crises of meaning of both Judaism and Christianity in the modern period and more recently the crisis of the Enlightenment model of modernity itself intensify the need for clarification of the character of any claims to public truth. The related phenomena of historical and hermeneutical consciousness are the chief but not sole forces to occasion the question of the character of theological language moving to the center of reflective attention for many theologians in our period.

This general and familiar set of questions may take the more specific form of seeking ways to express anew the authentically *public* character of *all* good theology, whether fundamental theology, systematic theology or practical theology; whether "traditional" or "contemporary." In initially general terms, a public discourse discloses meanings and truths which in principle can transform all human beings in some recognizable personal, social, political, ethical, cultural, or religious manner. The key marks of "publicness," therefore, will prove to be disclosure and transformation.¹ For example, Christian theological discourse—here understood as a second-order, reflective discourse upon the originating Christian religious discourse—serves an authentically public function, precisely when it renders explicit the public character of the meaning and truth for our actual existence embedded in the Christian classical texts, events, images, symbols, doctrines, and persons.

When one focuses on the character of theology as an academic disci-

MTZ	<i>Münchener theologische Zeitschrift</i>
NCCHS	<i>New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture</i>
NRT	<i>Nouvelle revue théologique</i>
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
NZST	<i>Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie</i>
ParVi	<i>Parole di Vita</i>
PL	<i>Patrologia Latina</i>
RassTeol	<i>Rassegna Teologica</i>
RBibIt	<i>Rivista Biblica Italiana</i>
REG	<i>Revue des études grecques</i>
RevMétaMor	<i>Revue de métaphysique et de morale</i>
RGG	<i>Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart</i> , 3rd ed.
RSPT	<i>Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques</i>
RSR	<i>Recherches de science religieuse</i>
RT	<i>Revue thomiste</i>
RThPh	<i>Revue de théologie et de philosophie</i>
Sal	<i>Salesianum</i>
SC	<i>Sources chrétiennes</i>
ScCatt	<i>Scuola Cattolica</i>
Schol	<i>Scholastik</i>
TLZ	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
TPS	<i>The Pope Speaks</i>
TQ	<i>Theologische Quartalschrift</i>
TTZ	<i>Trierer theologische Zeitschrift</i>
TvF	<i>Tijdschrift voor Filosofie</i>
TZ	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
ZKG	<i>Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte</i>
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZTK	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

Introduction

1. We have in mind the *Chroniques de théologie fondamentale* which Jean-Pierre Torrell has been publishing regularly in RT since 1964, and the bulletins of Henri de Lavalette in RSR since 1971.

2. Symposium held at Gazzada, Italy, September 6–11, 1964, with papers by H. Bouillard, G. Colombo, A. M. Javierre, R. Latourelle and J.-B. Metz; the papers are published under the title of *Le Deuxième Symposium international de théologie dogmatique fondamentale* in *Biblioteca del Salesianum*, vol. 71, 1965. In 1969 a confer-

ence on fundamental theology was held at the Gregorian University in Rome, with J. Alfaro, H. Bouillard, H. Carrier, G. Dejaifve, R. Latourelle and G. Martelet participating; cf. “La théologie fondamentale á la recherche de son identité,” *Greg 50* (1969), 757–76.

3. J. Schmitz, “La théologie fondamentale,” in R. V. Gucht and H. Vorgrimler (eds.), *Bilan de la théologie au XX^e siècle* (Paris—Tournai, 1970), pp. 9–51; V. Boublik, “Orientamenti attuali della teologia fondamentale,” in A. Marranzini (ed.), *Correnti teologiche postconciliari* (Rome, 1974), pp. 139–47; F. Arduoso, “Teologia fondamentale,” in L. Pacomio (ed.), *Dizionario teologico interdisciplinare 1* (Rome, 1977), pp. 182–202; J.-B. Metz (ed.), *The Development of Fundamental Theology* (Concilium 46; New York, 1969).

4. A. Dulles, *A History of Apologetics* (Philadelphia, 1971); H. Stirnimann, “Erwägungen zum Fundamentaltheologie. Problematik, Grundfragen, Konzept,” *FZPT 24* (1977), 291–365; C. Geffré, “Recent Developments in Fundamental Theology: An Interpretation,” *Concilium 46*, pp. 5–27, now in his book *A New Age in Theology*, tr. by R. Shillenn et al. (New York, 1974).

Chapter 1

1. Cf. “Chronique de théologie fondamentale,” RT 64 (1964), 97–127; 66 (1966), 63–107, 239–76; 67 (1967), 439–65; 69 (1969), 61–92; 71 (1971), 61–98; 75 (1975), 599–624; 76 (1976), 97–125; 78 (1978), 430–63; 79 (1979), 273–314.

2. *Concilium*, no. 46: *The Development of Fundamental Theology*.

3. H. Fries, “Zum heutigen Stand der Fundamentaltheologie,” *TTZ 84* (1975), 351–63.

4. H. Stirnimann, “Erwägungen für Fundamentaltheologie. Problematik, Grundfragen, Konzept,” *FZPT 24* (1977), 291–365.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 308–17. To these studies of Fries and Stirnimann we may add the rather hasty but relatively complete survey, in Italian, of V. Boublik, “Orientamenti attuali della teologia fondamentale,” in A. Marranzini (ed.), *Correnti teologiche postconciliari* (Rome, 1974), pp. 139–47.

6. J.-B. Metz, “Editorial,” *Concilium*, 6, p. 1.

7. K. Rahner, *Est-il possible aujourd’hui de croire? Dialogue avec les hommes de ce temps* (Paris, 1966); citation from p. 198. Cf. the discussion of this book in RT 67 (1967), 439–42.

8. “Editorial,” *Concilium*, 46, p. 1.

9. J. Alfaro, H. Bouillard, H. Carrier, G. Dejaifve, R. Latourelle, and G. Martelet, “La théologie fondamentale á la recherche de son identité. Un carrefour,” *Greg 50* (1969), 757–76.

10. C. Geffré, “Recent Developments in Fundamental Theology: An Interpretation,” *Concilium*, 46, pp. 5–27; now in his book *A New Age in Theology*, tr. by R. Shillenn et al. (New York, 1974), pp. 11–30.

11. H. Bouillard, “De l’apologétique á la théologie fondamentale,” in his *Les quatre fleuves 1. Dieu connu en Jésus-Christ* (Paris, 1973), pp. 57–70. For a complementary survey of J. Schmitz, “La théologie fondamentale,” in H. Vorgrimler and R. van der Gucht (eds.), *Bilan de la théologie au XX^e siècle 2* (Tournai—Paris, 1970), pp. 9–51.

12. Cf. my “Chronique,” RT 64 (1964), 97–103.

13. H. Bouillard, “La tâche actuelle la théologie fondamentale,” in *Recherches Actuelles II* (Le point théologique 2; Paris, 1972), pp. 7–49. My citations in this and

the preceding two paragraphs are from pp. 7–9 of the essay; I have inverted the order of the first two trends as given by Fr. Bouillard.

14. Cf. above, n. 4. In an article, "Teologia fondamentale," in G. Barboglio and S. Dianich (eds.), *Nuovo Dizionario di Teologia* (Alba, 1977), pp. 1754–67, G. Ruggieri likewise sees a threefold division within fundamental theology, but he distinguishes the branches as "models": the neoscholastic model, the immanence model, the political model (cf. pp. 1756ff.).

15. Cf. *Concilium*, 6, pp. 1–2.

16. In the editorial for *Concilium*, 6, Metz remains vague about the definition of fundamental theology. He is clearer on the need of renewal in this discipline (cf. n. 6, above), but we may legitimately doubt that its specific mission is "a more effective proclamation of our faith in its confrontation with contemporary philosophical and theological problems" (p. 1).

17. Cf. A. Gardeil, *La crédibilité et l'apologétique* (2nd ed.; Paris, 1912), p. 205.

18. Cf. H. Bouillard, "La tâche actuelle . . .," pp. 25–26.

19. This is not the place for explaining my own position; I refer the reader to the pages referred to in n. 12, above.

20. J.-B. Metz, *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology*, tr. by D. Smith (New York, 1980); the German original was published at Mainz in 1977. There is a detailed review of the book in RT 79 (1979), 286–94.

21. Despite his effort to separate himself from the political theology of J. B. Metz, Antonio Osuna adopts almost the same position in his article, "La función crítica de la teología. Reflexiones para una teología fundamental," CT 103 (1976), 577–622. The reservations expressed by G. Ruggieri seem to me much more pertinent (n. 14, above, pp. 1758–60).

22. Cf. n. 4, above.

23. The reader will see how sound the methodology of this position is by contrasting it with that of David Tracy, according to whom the practitioner of fundamental theology need not be a believing member of the Christian community: "The Task of Fundamental Theology," JRel 54 (1974), 13–34, at p. 14, n. 2. Tracy repeats this statement in his book *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (New York, 1975); cf. p. 36, n. 16; p. 57 n. 3. There is a good critique of this position in G. O'Collins' review in Greg 57 (1976), 779. We used to think that the unbelieving theologian of decadent Scholasticism was a figment of the imagination, but here he is *redivivus!*

24. There is a lengthy presentation of Stirnimann's views, followed by some critical queries, in RT 79 (1979), 273–86.

25. A Protestant author, Karl Nitzschke, wrote in 1956: "Fundamental theology, also known as apologetics, is a basic discipline of Roman Catholic theology" (cited in Stirnimann, art. cit., p. 291, n. 1; I owe to Stirnimann many of my references in this section of my essay). An analogous judgment appeared in 1970 from the pen of Josef Schmitz: "In German-speaking countries . . . apologetics or fundamental theology is almost universally rejected as a strictly theological discipline" (cf. art. cit. in n. 11, above, p. 38).

26. G. Ebeling, "Erwägungen zu einer evangelischen Fundamentaltheologie," ZTK 67 (1970), 479–524.

27. *Wort und Glaube* 3 (Tübingen, 1975). Although this collection bears the subtitle: "Contributions to Fundamental Theology, Soteriology and Ecclesiology," it does not contain the article cited just now in n. 26. In his Preface (p. III) Ebeling explains that he intends to expand that article as part of a larger work.

28. W. Joest, *Fundamentaltheologie. Theologische Grundlagen- und Methodenproblemenlehre* (Stuttgart, 1974), p. 9. On the work of Ebeling and Joest cf. Stirnimann's review: "Evangelische Fundamentaltheologie," FZPT 22 (1975), 378–83, which fills out the briefer comments in the study I am citing here.

29. M. Seckler, "Evangelische Fundamentaltheologie. Erwägungen zu einem Novum aus katholischer Sicht," TQ 155 (1975), 281–99. H. Fries, "Zum heutigen Stand . . .," p. 363, also stresses the importance of this Protestant interest in fundamental theology.

30. Cf. Ebeling, "Erwägungen . . .," p. 505.

31. Cf. Stirnimann, "Erwägungen . . .," p. 300 and n. 42; cf. pp. 293–301.

32. F. Hahn, "Exegese und Fundamentaltheologie. Die Rückfrage nach Jesus in ihrem Verhältnis zu Kerygma und Heiliger Schrift. Ein Beitrag zu Grandfragen der Theologie aus evangelischer Sicht," TZ 155 (1975), 262–80.

33. J. Flury, "Was ist Fundamentaltheologie?" TZ 31 (1975), 351–67.

34. H. Beintker, "Verstehen und Glauben. Grundlinien einer evangelischen Fundamentaltheologie," KD 26 (1976), 22–40.

35. B. Reymond, B. Morel, P.-A. Stucki, A. Gonnelle, U. Neuenschwander and L. Gagnebin, "L'apologétique aujourd'hui," ETR 47 (1972), 161–208. In his book on A. Sabatier, B. Reymond calls attention to the apologetic dimension of Sabatier's work; cf. RT 78 (1978), 440.

36. This bond has long been acknowledged by Catholic theologians; R. Latour-elle gives a fine exemplification of it in his book, *Finding Jesus through the Gospels: History and Hermeneutics*, tr. by A. Owen (Staten Island, N.Y., 1979); cf. RT 78 (1978), 657–60.

37. For this summary cf. Stirnimann, "Erwägungen . . .," pp. 318–19.

38. See, e.g., the article of Bouillard cited above in n. 13. G. Ruggieri seems to be thinking along the same lines when he includes "the other" in the horizon of his definition of fundamental theology; but we may note that this "other" is "inside" as well as "outside" (cf. art. cit. in n. 14, above, pp. 1754–55 and 1764–65).

39. Sometimes it even shows a polemical tone that is in the direct line of classical apologetics, as in John King-Farlow and William D. Christensen, *Faith and the Life of Reason* (Dordrecht, 1972).

40. Schubert M. Ogden, *The Reality of God* (London, 1967).

41. Gustaf Aulén, *The Drama and the Symbols* (Philadelphia, 1970).

42. John Macquarrie, *God-Talk. An Examination of the Language and Logic of Theology* (London, 1967).

43. H. Bouillard, "La tâche actuelle . . .," p. 34, and H. Fries, "Zum heutigen Stand . . .," p. 355, have called attention to the relevance of this method.

44. There is an interesting survey of Protestant apologetics, chiefly in the English-speaking countries, in Langdon Gilkey, "Trends in Protestant Apologetics," *Concilium*, 46, pp. 127–57.

45. I might also mention Maurice Blondel, to whom H. Bouillard owes so much (cf. "La tâche actuelle . . .," pp. 36–37). With regard to Pascal the reader should consult the important book of Pierre Magnard, *Nature et histoire dans l'apologétique de Pascal* (Paris, 1975).

46. Cf. Stirnimann, "Erwägungen . . .," pp. 319–21.

47. J.-B. Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, p. 14. And cf. earlier, on p. 3: "Any Christian theology . . . can be defined, at least in its task and intention, as the defense of hope."

48. *Ibid.*, pp. 8–10; Metz refers here to Ebeling.

49. Cf. A. Patfoort, "Nouvel âge de la théologie ou . . . de l'apologétique?" *Ang* 50 (1973), 243–48. Speaking of Geffré's book, *A New Age in Theology* (the French original appeared in 1972), Patfoort observes that a number of traits presented as specific to a renewed theology are in fact typically apologetic attitudes (cf. pp. 244–45).

50. Cf. 1 Corinthians 15. As early as the end of the apostolic age, and even before the time of the Fathers known as the Apologists, Christians had to defend their faith by means of writings; cf. H. Paulsen's recent essay on one such undertaking: "Das Kerygma Petri und die urchristliche Apologetik," *ZKG* 88 (1977), 1–37.

51. Cf. J. de Ghellinck, *Le mouvement théologique du XIII^e siècle* (1st ed.; Paris, 1948), pp. 279–84.

52. Peter the Venerable, for example, one of the most important apologetes of the twelfth century, often cites this verse; cf. J. P. Torrell, "La notion de prophétie et la méthode apologétique dans le *Contra Saracenos* de Pierre le Vénérable," *Studia Monastica* 18 (1975), 257–82, at p. 274.

53. A. Gardeil, *La structure de l'âme et l'expérience mystique* (Paris, 1927). I mention the title here simply as representative of a theological preoccupation that was very strong at that time and that could be the subject of a very full bibliography.

54. Jean Mouroux, *The Christian Experience. Introduction to a Theology*, tr. by G. Lamb (New York, 1954).

55. H. Bouillard, "Human Experience as the Starting Point of Fundamental Theology," *Concilium*, 46, pp. 79–91. Bouillard had developed this theme at greater length in his *The Logic of Faith* (New York, 1967); he has touched on it once again in his essay, "La tâche actuelle. . ."

56. A few titles: Gregory Baum, "Religious Experience and Religious Statement," and Seely Beggiani, "Revelation and Religious Experience," in G. Devine (ed.), *New Dimensions in Religious Experience* (New York, 1970), pp. 3–11 and 31–51. Although the word "experience" does not appear in the title of Gabriel Moran's *The Present Revelation: The Search for Religious Foundations* (New York, 1972), the book is concerned throughout with the subject of "revelation and experience." On Moran's book cf. A. Dulles, "The Problem of Revelation," *Proceedings of the Twenty-ninth Annual Convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America* (Chicago, 1974), pp. 77–106, at pp. 92–97, as well as my own review in *RT* 78 (1978), 440–49. More recently, there is Gerald O'Collins' article, "Theology and Experience," *ITQ* 44 (1977), 279–90.

57. P. Schoonenberg, "Revelation and Experience," *Lumen vitae* 25 (1970), 551–60.

58. G. Ebeling, "Die Klage über das Erfahrungsdefizit in der Theologie als Frage nach ihrer Sache," in his *Wort und Glaube* 3 (Tübingen, 1975), pp. 3–28. On experience in Ebeling cf. a few remarks in *RT* 76 (1976), 120–21. Ebeling has recently returned to this subject in order to show that the scriptural principle, which is traditional in Protestant theology, does not exclude an appeal to experience, as the example of Luther himself shows: "Schrift und Erfahrung als Quellen theologischer Aussage," *ZTK* 75 (1978), 99–106.

59. P. Jacquemont, J.-P. Jossua and B. Quelquejeu, *Une foi exposée* (Paris, 1972).

60. J.-P. Jossua, "Théologie et expérience chrétienne," in *Le service théologique dans l'Eglise: Mélanges offerts au Père Yves Congar* (Cogitatio fidei 76; Paris, 1974), pp. 113–29. Jossua has written several other articles on the same subject; cf. *ibid.*, p. 113, n. 1.

61. J. B. Metz, "Excursus: Theology as Biography," in his *Faith in History and Society*, pp. 219–28.

62. Stirnimann, "Erwägungen . . .," pp. 343–47.

63. J.-P. Torrell, "Chronique," *RT* 76 (1976), 118–20; 78 (1978), 446–49.

64. Cf. Ebeling, "Die Klage . . .," pp. 6ff.

65. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 8–9, n. 11.

66. In the margin of his Commentary on Romans 5:4 (in which he translates the Greek *dokimē* by the German *Erfahrung*), Luther wrote: "Experience is when a person has been well tested and can speak about a subject as one who has been there" (cited by Ebeling, "Die Klage . . .," p. 6, n. 3). Thomas Aquinas, for his part, speaks of things that intensify faith because they resist it or put it to the test: "For this reason the martyrs gain greater merit in their faith . . . as do the learned [that is, the theologians], who do not abandon the faith in the face of arguments offered by the philosophers . . ." (*Summa theologiae*, 2–2, q. 2, a. 10, ad 3).

67. Cf. the texts cited by Stirnimann, "Erwägungen . . .," p. 345, n. 220.

68. "A theologian reaches maturity only through doubt and temptation: that is an ancient and splendid saying" (cited by Ebeling, "Die Klage . . .," p. 11).

69. E. Hocedez, *Histoire de la théologie au XIX^e siècle* 1 (Paris, 1948), pp. 179–80, tells us that Hermes' "method was inspired chiefly by his religious experience."

70. The literature is far too extensive for me to give even an idea of it here. As but one example, cf. J.-P. Torrell, "Le projet de Dieu: Former un Peuple; comment la J. O. C. la réalise dans la jeunesse ouvrière," *Masses ouvrières*, no. 239 (April, 1967), pp. 28–45.

71. The term is Ebeling's, in "Die Klage . . .," p. 5; he also cites H.-G. Gadamer, who regards the concept of experience as one of the most obscure we have (*ibid.*, n. 2).

72. Cf. Ebeling, *ibid.*, p. 25 and, at greater length, pp. 16–24.

73. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 25.

74. Cf. Stirnimann, "Erwägungen . . .," pp. 345–47. Stirnimann returns to the theme of experience in "Language, Experience and Revelation," *Concilium*, no. 133, pp. 117–30.

75. Cf. J.-P. Torrell, "Chronique," *RT* 76 (1976), 119–20.

76. On this distinction cf. the explanations given by G. Geffré in the collective volume *Le déplacement de la théologie* (Le Point Théologique 21; Paris, 1977), pp. 6 and 175–77.

Chapter 2

1. The term "disclosure" refers to the *cognitive* side of religious truth; the term "transformation" to the ethical (both personal and social) side of that truth.

2. The term "discipline" allows for a wider range in the English-speaking world than the more familiar term "science." The latter term, which retains its expansive meaning in the Scholastic notion of *scientia* and the German notion of *Wissenschaft*, has become largely identified with the methods of natural science (and their analogues in social science) in the English-language discussion. On the notion of "discipline," see Stephen Toulmin, *Human Understanding 1: The Collective Use and Evolution of Concepts* (Princeton, 1972), espec. pp. 145–200 and 364–412.

3. The assumption here is that any theology is related in some manner to all three publics (church, academy, society) from the viewpoint of sociology of knowl-



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