

RGT5572HS

Class 3: Larkin-Stuart Lectures

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### A New Pastoral Theology

- 1 Is there a revolution occurring in Catholic theology, analogous to the revolutions that Thomas Kuhn studied in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*? Scientific revolutions are marked by 'major achievements that change the whole face of things and initiate a new period of normal science in which the new viewpoint is assimilated, its implications worked out, and their significance applied to problems that had long existed but now could be seen in a far clearer and more revealing light' (222). More precisely, has such a revolution occurred in the eight years between the end of Vatican II and the date of these lectures (1973)? The first three lectures present indications of change in the notion of pastoral theology, in the field of fundamental theology, and in the relation of the church to the world. The fourth lecture inquires how deep this change really is and whether it modified theology deeply without breaking faith with the past. The disappearance of Scholasticism is not the real issue, since that change had begun long before the council, with the rise of hermeneutical and historical techniques, of modern philosophies, and of modern science. The three specific areas chosen do illustrate that disappearance, but more to the point they are consequences of Vatican II.
  
- 2 As Lonergan will emphasize again in 'Pope John's Intention,' Vatican II was a pastoral council, one that adverted to 'the distinction between the unchanging deposit of faith and the changing modes of its presentation to meet the needs of different times' (225), one that would take 'a leap forward (*un balzo innanzi*) that would set forth the faith in the mental forms and literary style of modern thought while satisfying the requirements of the teaching office,' an office that is predominantly pastoral. That intent was embodied particularly in *Gaudium et spes*, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. The council did not hurl anathemas; it was not remedial. Its thrust was positive, not negative. For the council 'pastoral' was not reduced to the application of doctrine through 'the devices and dodges, the simplifications and elaborations, of classical oratory' (227). Rather, 'what comes first is the word of God. The task of the church is the kerygma, announcing the good news, preaching the gospel. That preaching is pastoral. It is the concrete reality. From it one may abstract doctrines, and theologians may work the doctrines into conceptual systems. But the doctrines and systems, however valuable and true, are but the skeleton of the original message. A word is the word of a person, but doctrine objectifies and depersonalizes. The word of God comes to us through the God-man. The church has to mediate to the world not just a doctrine but the living Christ' (227). And it was especially in the theme of the word of God preached to the poor that the bishops together discovered and collectively responded to the momentous meaning of the phrase 'a pastoral council' (see 227-28). Moreover, the word of God is historic, establishing a covenant in history.

- 3 Still, the traditional position on pastoral theology is that one must learn one's fundamental, doctrinal, systematic, and moral theology, and then perhaps devote some time to the arts of human communication. Preaching can become, not just application of doctrine but doctrine pure and simple. Pastoral or practical theology can focus simply on the pastor in his parish and on canon law. This is a far cry from what the council intended in issuing a pastoral constitution on the church in the modern world, where 'pastoral' has a far broader and far more comprehensive sense. This new sense is captured in Rahner's plan for pastoral theology, a plan executed in some five volume between 1965 and 1972, and also in the periodical *Concilium*. The periodical 'stood for the view that a new theology was coming into being' (230) and attempted to explore what that might mean. The assumption is 'that the redemptive work of Christ is carried on not exclusively by individual pastors of souls but by all members of Christ's mystical body. It follows that this work is to be performed by all, at times as individuals, at times as members of this or that larger or smaller group, at times as members or as officials of the whole body. Further, this work is to be performed not in a vacuum but in the concrete situations that condition the lives of individuals, of groups, of the whole of humanity. And since there is no divine revelation of what each of these successive situations are, what is possible in them, what would be the probable outcome of this or that initiative, there is required an ongoing practical or pastoral theology concerned with apprehending and understanding situations, settling policies, working out plans, seeing to their implementation, and examining the feedback that may lead to an adjustment of policies or a revision of plans' (231).
- 4 The theologian Heinz Schuster referred to such a practical or pastoral theology as an existential ecclesiology. And this gives Lonergan the chance to add his own contribution to the discussion, for 'One arrives at the existential, first of all, when one arrives at oneself — at oneself not asleep but awake, not heavy-eyed but attentive, not obtuse but trying to understand and in some measure succeeding, not irrational but both yielding to what evidence there is and not going a millimeter beyond it, not amoral but responsibly evaluating and freely deciding. Such one is when authentically human, when one's existing is the existing proper to a human being' (231-232). Furthermore, that existing can be existing 'the existing of one whose heart is flooded by God's love through the Holy Spirit given him or her' (232). And 'it is authentic Christian experience that is alive. It is that experience as shared by two or more than is intersubjective; that, as shared by many, is community; that, as transmitted down the ages, is historic; that, as intended for all Christians, is ecumenical and, as intended for all [people], is universalist; it is the same experience, as headed for an ultimate goal, that is eschatological' (232). So the phrase 'existential ecclesiology' would be a theology of the church informed by some such horizon or vision, a genuine pastoral theology of the church.
- 5 But, says, Lonergan, why stop with pastoral theology? Should not the same be true of doctrinal and systematic theology, of fundamental theology, of historical theology? Should not this genuine existential character permeate all theology? This is the challenge to theology that emanates from Vatican II. '... the whole of theology is a

reflection on religion; the individual, the personal, the communitarian, the historical are essential to the Christian religion; and so, it would seem, the individual, the personal, the communitarian, the historical are relevant not just to a part of theology but to the whole of it' (233). And this is different from the view of theology that Aquinas expressed at the beginning of the *Summa*, where the commitment was still primarily to the universal over particularity. But the shift to the existential human subject is more extensive, as is outlined in section 5, and it was joined to a shift to historical-critical interpretation of the texts, first of Aquinas and the Fathers, and then of scripture itself. This signaled a movement away from a concern with necessary and self-evident truths to a field of contingent developments and probable conclusions. The challenge to Catholic theology is to find another way besides Scholasticism to sustain what is of permanent validity in the tradition. The scientific type of revolution studied by Kuhn does not involve a total repudiation of the past; it goes beyond the past but preserves it in a new synthesis. That is part of what Catholic theology is challenged to do. '... it will remain for younger theologians of today ... to effect the needed clarifications and developments that will make the alternative of a scientific revolution [alternative to a political revolution] not just a possibility but an actuality' (237). Such an alternative way of proceeding calls for a doctrinal pluralism 'for as many manners of teaching the same basic message as there are distinct classes dividing each of the many cultures of [humankind]. It is this pluralism that must be had both to preach the gospel to all nations and to reconcile the fact of doctrinal and theological development with the pastoral concern of Pope John XXIII and his Second Vatican Council' (239). Until these transpositions are made, the church will be faced with the kind of alienation that is provoked by the opening remarks in Klaus Reinhardt's article quoted on p. 236 and again in note 25 on p. 239.

#### Variations in Fundamental Theology

- 6 The traditional conception of fundamental theology was rejected by many representatives both of the thinking that went into Vatican II and of the spirit that the council fostered or at least released. That traditional conception viewed fundamental theology as concerned with presenting the reasonableness of faith. But that can be done in three ways, and it is only the third of these that represents traditional fundamental theology. The first way is just by good teaching: appeal to such faith as people already have, advance their understanding of it, and they will begin to feel at home. A second way appeals to those outside the faith: start from people as they are, and stay in communication, not attempting to demonstrate but to persuade. A third way speaks to believers and to nonbelievers alike, but it proposes to proceed not by rhetoric but by logic, and in that sense to be scientific. A threefold structure of this third way involves demonstrations, first of the existence of God and of religion, secondly of the Christian religion, and thirdly of the true church. There was one obvious difficulty to this procedure, namely, that it began from data of common experience and reason and historical testimony, but concluded to something that it acknowledged was not within the reach of human reason – a most unusual course for a strictly logical investigation to take. The objection could be answered satisfactorily only if one were ready to admit that it is not the function of fundamental theology to

prove the truth of the Christian message but simply to present reasons that can justify the acceptance of the faith as a moral option for a serious conscience.

- 7 A more radical objection to the traditional viewpoint is that it tried to do too much. In Rahner's formulation it 'presupposes a view of scientific knowledge that belongs only to an earlier age. Then it was possible for a single mind on the basis of personal investigation to arrive at assured mastery in this or that field and so to be capable of a personal judgment on the issues that arose in that field' (245). But this is no longer the case, not simply in the sciences but also in theology. It is impossible to form a personal judgment on all the relevant material. We see today that traditional fundamental theology 'differs from apologetics, not by being scientific, but by being a more jejune and abstruse piece of rhetoric. Further, even if traditional fundamental theology were scientific, it would not reach its goal. At most it can set forth prolegomena. But the prolegomena are only remotely relevant to an encounter, an act of adoration, and, in the adoration, an act of faith' (246).
- 8 The successor to neo-Scholasticism in the wake of the council was the turn to the subject. Lonergan presents only his own view of the matter. The first and basic moment in the turn to the subject lies in modern science, with its massive change in the ideal of science and its shift to method as foundation, with its replacement of necessity by verified possibility, with its ambition not of permanent achievement but of ongoing process, and with its locus not in any individual mind but in the cumulative development of the scientific community. A first turn to the subject takes place here, whether acknowledged as such or not. 246-47: 'It is a turn from idealized objects, objects of infallible intuitions, of self-evident truths, of necessary conclusions. It is a turn to the actual reality of human subjects, to a community of men and women in a common attentiveness, in a common development of human understanding, in a common reflection on the validity of current achievement, in a common deliberation on the potentialities brought to light by that achievement.' So conceived, the turn to the subject is not at all a turn from the objective to the merely subjective. 247: 'Human subjects, their attention, their developing understanding, their reflective scrutiny, their responsible deliberations are the objective realities. Infallible intuitions, self-evident premises, necessary conclusions are the merely subjective constructions that may have served their purpose in their day but have been definitively swept aside by the science and scholarship of recent centuries.'
- 9 This shift involves also a shift in the ideal of philosophic inquiry, from logic as ideal entailing metaphysics as 'first philosophy' supplying the basic premises of all other disciplines to method as ideal and cognitional theory as presenting the operations that method orders; some of these operations are prepropositional, preverbal, prejudgmental, preconceptual, and to these prior operations all propositions, including metaphysical propositions, reduce.
- 10 But the priority of the cognitional yields to the moral, and the moral to the interpersonal. 247: 'To make a sound moral judgment one has to know the relevant facts, possibilities, probabilities; but with those conditions fulfilled, the moral

judgment proceeds on its own criteria and towards its own ends. Again, moral judgments and commitments underpin personal relations; but with the underpinning presupposed or even merely hoped for, interpersonal commitment takes its own initiative and runs its own course.' The relations are described in the familiar terms of successive sublations. What is of interest is the addition of the last: '... so, finally, interpersonal commitments stand to cognitional and moral operations' (248). Again, '... beyond the subject as experiencing, as intelligent, as reasonable in his judgments, as free and responsible in his decisions, there is the subject in love. On that ultimate level we can learn to say with Augustine, *amor meus pondus meum*, my being in love is the gravitational field in which I am carried along' (248). The familiar three dimensions in which we may be in love are reviewed: domestic love, the love that loyalty to one's fellow men and women, and the love of God, which now is spoken of as twofold: God's love for us, and the love that God bestows upon us. (This is an important new formulation.) Apologetics and fundamental theology through the years have had two components, outer and inner. But today, while the inner aspect of God's gift of grace is as frequent, as powerful, but also as silent and secret as ever, the outer is by no means as clear as it may have been for earlier generations. In the early church, the outer was '... repent and be baptized ... in the name of Jesus the Messiah' (Acts 2.38). For Vatican I, the outer consisted in the signs of divine revelation, especially the prophecies and miracles that show forth the omniscience and the omnipotence of God. 349: 'Today, the signs of divine revelation, the prophecies of the Old Testament and the miracles of the New, have been engulfed in the mountainous extent and intricate subtlety of biblical studies and critical history. God's gift of his grace is as frequent, as powerful, but also as silent and secret as ever, while we are perturbed by the probing of depth psychology and bewildered by the claims of linguistic analysts. By the obscurities of phenomenology, by the oddities of existentialism, by the programs of economic, social, and ecological reformers, by the beckoning of ecumenists and universalists.' The Spirit always confirmed the 'outer.' What is the Spirit confirming today?

- 11 Some of the authors in various *Concilium* issues are reviewed, with an eye to answering some such question as this, only to conclude that the answer will come out of what is revealed by the turn to the subject, which will integrate faith statements with human experience (thus the upshot of the discussion of Bouillard, Fries, Geffré, and Walgrave, 250-52), and provide a way to negotiate theological pluralism (Rahner) and religious pluralism (Panikkar) in 'a pluritheological dialogue' (255) that 'breaks the bounds of some single universe of discourse' and manifests 'the working of the one Spirit of God in diverse cultures and traditions' (256). Relevant to all this will be the 'earlier and more celebrates Scholasticism' whose 'aim was not to demonstrate but to understand' (256). But added to the resurrection of that earlier ideal must be historical consciousness that can grasp and live with the successive strata of an ongoing process. For Lonergan all this can be done without any repudiation of what is valid in the Catholic past. And for that perhaps *Method in Theology* may be helpful. 258: 'The preverbal and, indeed, preconceptual foundation of theology proposed by Panikkar intends to be a common starting point for all religions. Insofar as one starts from it and moves towards Christ, the Word of God, it corresponds to the foundational

reality set forth in chapter 11 of *Method*, a reality conceived by Christians in terms of St Paul's statement: 'God's love has flooded our inmost hearts through the Holy Spirit he has given us' (Romans 5.5).

'For Rahner's puzzlement over the swarm of disparate theologies that resist precise classification and so escape theological judgment, we may offer a set of larger containers, namely, the ordered multiplicity of differentiations of consciousness and their diversification by the presence or absence of religious, moral, or intellectual conversion. Such broad genetic differences can serve to mark off frontiers that contain conceptually disparate views.

'Finally, the views of Bouillard, Fries, Geffré, and Walgrave form a separate class. They do not single out some preverbal and preconceptual foundation with Panikkar, and they do not stress with Rahner the disparateness of the views they discuss. Nonetheless, their existential concern both relates them implicitly to Panikkar's emphasis and, at the same time, enables their argument to be relevant to the disparate positions to which Rahner draws attention.'

### Sacralization and Secularization

- 12 Here my summary is taken from the paper I wrote for the Lonergan Workshop last summer and used as well for my presentation at the Colloquium on Violence and Religion in Koblenz, Germany. The entire paper was on Sacralization and Desacralization in Lonergan and Girard, and can be found on the website of COV&R. Here I'm just summarizing what I said about Lonergan's paper 'Sacralization and Secularization.'
- 13 The most important contribution of the paper lies in a set of heuristic notions: '(1) a sacralization to be dropped and (2) a sacralization to be fostered; (3) a secularization to be welcomed and (4) a secularization to be resisted' (264). The words 'secular,' 'secularize,' 'secularization,' 'secularist,' and the words 'sacral,' 'sacralize,' 'sacralization,' 'desacralize,' 'desacralization' are neutral terms describing attitudes of persons and communities. Roles, places, times, and objects are sacral when the activity involved is regarded as religious by the participants, and secular when the activity involved is not so regarded. Similarly, 'desacralize' and 'desacralization' denote a withdrawal of sacrality from what previously had been regarded as religious: '... one may say that meat sacralized by pagans was desacralized by Christians' (271).
- 14 The real issue, then, has to do with the transition from 'sacral' to 'really sacred,' from 'secular' to 'really profane,' and in the case of desacralization, from 'sacral' first to 'secular' and then to 'profane' – that is, from what participants regard as such and such to a true judgment about what really is so. It is by meeting the issue thus defined that we can determine which sacralizations are to be dropped and which to be fostered, and which secularizations are to be welcomed and which are to be resisted.
- 15 For Lonergan there are three criteria for these transitions. One criterion is personal, one is communal, and one is historical. The personal criterion is the authenticity of the subject, the communal criterion is the authenticity of the subject's tradition, and

the historical criterion arises inasmuch as religion and culture develop, so that sacral domains can be desacralized over the course of time, while what seems to be secular activity can be given a genuine religious significance.

- 16 Lonergan set the issue in the context of Ricoeur's work on Freud, a context of development and retardation. Where Ricoeur distinguishes religious maturity and religious retardation, Lonergan draws on Ricoeur to encourage us to avoid mistaking retardation for development and mistaking development for retardation. Ultimately the appeal will be to the inner conviction of authenticity generated by the self-transcendence that is promoted and sustained by the gift of divine love.
- 17 He then proceeds to a debate current at the time concerning the relation between the inner life of prayer and the secular, desacralized world in which we live. For Lonergan the debate as exemplified in Chenu and Daniélou reduces to a contemporary variation on the theme that was played out in the Aristotelian-Augustinian debates in the Middle Ages. As a Thomist, Chenu will gladly support the progress of natural and profane forces all through history, confident that such progress will only assist genuine transcendence. Lonergan expresses a qualified agreement, but his proviso is important: there are 'many ways in which progress is corrupted by bias and turned into decline' and we must look to 'the redemptive role of religion in overcoming bias and restoring progress' (280). But he also expresses a qualified agreement with Daniélou on the need for symbolic thinking for almost all people, for education in the genuine sacred. However, his proviso here is that there is also a false sacred, and much secularization is long overdue. For example, Daniélou speaks of providing cultural and social foundations for the faith of the poor, but without economic analysis such tactics are subject to Marx's critique of religion as the opium of the people.
- 18 It seems from section 5, 'A Genealogy of Differences,' and from section 6, 'Conclusion of the 1973 Lecture,' that Lonergan expects there to be development in these regards and that rearward reaction against legitimate secularization will result in 'the outraged and outright rejection of all religion as the futile champion of a dead and un lamented past' (274). 274-75: 'Secularization is the liberation of a secular domain from the once but no longer appropriate extension of the sacral. Still, for it to be known as secularization, there also must be known that the extension of religious feeling over the domain is no longer appropriate.' Without that knowledge, a legitimate and overdue secularization appears to be an incomprehensible desacralization. For example, 'the long and slow decay of the empire ... created a vacuum of talent and prestige that gradually transferred to local bishops an increasing share in the burden of secular offices. Again, the beginnings of Western civilization in the dark and the medieval periods found in the church traditions and structures that cradled and later reinforced feudal economics and politics. But what is justified by the decline of a civilization or by the weak initial stages of its successor is bound to experience an ever diminishing role as its successor or successors become capable of handling their own affairs' (276-77). And so, there has been a series of secularizations in the body politic reinforced by secularization in science, in philosophy, in literature, in education. All of this is legitimate. Continued sacralization can be the extension of

the mantle of religion over the quite traditional opinions of ignorant people. At the other extreme, though, secularization becomes secularism. 'The secularizer denies literal meaning to the symbol, but he does not deny it all objective significance. But for the secularist, the only meaning of the symbol is purely subjective; it expresses in some inadequate fashion the feelings of religious people but says nothing about what really is so ... for him the hermeneutics and the metaphysics that find a real meaning for the symbol are as childish as the symbols themselves' (279-80). The secularism can then be overcome by a resacralization, as Ricoeur exemplifies in his study of Freud. 280: 'Acknowledge the insight of the critic of religion, and pin it down exactly. Discover the oversight that makes him a critic of religion. Use his insight for the purification of religion, and use his oversight for a renewal of its vitality and power.' Clearly we have here a set of categories that need further reflection.

### The Scope of Renewal

- 19 How far-reaching and how radical has been or is to be the renewal in contemporary Roman Catholic theology? That is the question of the lecture.
- 20 A first symptom and a first measure of the change is the passing of Thomism. Three factors led up to the rejection of Scholasticism at the council: historical scholarship, modern science, and modern philosophy. (a) The Aquinas of historical scholarship can be known only by specialists, and the specialist is apprised only of the best available opinion of one's own day. (b) Empirical science is verified science, and the verification is of intelligibilities that are not necessities but possibilities. Scientific systems are just systems on the move: smaller systems move into and are transformed by larger systems, and larger systems give way to more comprehensive views. (c) Philosophy from Kant on challenged in different ways the claims on which Scholastic philosophy rested. Lonergan traces these challenges in broad strokes on 285-86, and concludes by pointing to two goals of Aquinas and their contemporary significance: truth within the province of the human mind, and truth that exceeds its capacity and asking what contemporary theology is saying and doing about these two realms.
- 21 For Congar, the great task for theology today is to appropriate an adequate anthropology, and he emphasized that the third world should begin to make its contribution to Catholic theology. Daniélou sees the radical question to be our capacity to attain knowledge of the divine because of our apprehension of ourselves and of human values. Culture is the issue, and the permeation of culture by the Gospel. Schillebeeckx asks what place is left for faith. Is it irrelevant? He urges a new kind of 'natural theology,' that is, a discipline that shows that it is possible to speak about God on the basis of secular life itself. Schoonenberg identifies the relation of orthodoxy and orthopraxis as paramount. For Rahner the very question of God has become lost, and Metz concurs that our environment is not a world against God but a world without God. Rahner, always known as progressive, saw that we would have to deal with a situation in which genuinely unchristian heresies spring up in the church, to which the church must say no. Metz emphasized that the church has yet to learn a genuine pluralism and to accept that the person for whom faith must be



justified is within the church itself, not always outside it. Lonergan has summarized all of these positions in order to emphasize that, while Thomism itself has passed, something very much like it is to be desired on the level of our own time.

- 22 What, then, is desired? For Lonergan it would be ‘first, an assimilation of what is new, secondly, in continuity with the old, and thirdly, dialectical. More concretely an assimilation of what is new will have to involve, first, an understanding of modern science, secondly, an understanding of modern scholarship, and thirdly, a philosophy that is at home in modern science and modern scholarship. Next, continuity with what is old will be a matter of analogy and, indeed, of analogy of proportion; so a theology will be continuous with Thomism, to take one example, if it stands to modern science, modern scholarship, and an associated philosophy as Thomism stood to Aristotelianism. Finally, the theology will be dialectical if it distinguishes systematically between the authentic and the unauthentic, between positions and counterpositions, and if it can settle issues by appealing to this distinction’ (293).
- 23 By understanding modern science, he means attending to scientists’ performance, figuring out what is involved in any process from inquiry through discovery to experimentation and verification, and assembling the elements of the larger movement from one discovery to another’ (293). And understanding modern scholarship ‘is not just practicing it but understanding the practice: what is going on in learning another language, what are the ups and downs in interpreting an ancient text, how does history differ from chronicle, and critical history from the previous stage of uncritical history’ (293). And the appropriate philosophy, at home in modern science and modern scholarship, is one that for Lonergan would be empirical: all its statements will be in some sense verifiable, though not always in the same manner. ‘There is the simple and direct application of the empirical principle in the empirical method of the natural sciences, where verification is in the data of sense as given. There is a simple but less direct application of the empirical principle in the empirical method of interpreters and historians, where verification is in the data of sense, not simply as given, but as given and as carriers of meaning. From simple and direct one turns to simple and indirect applications when one uses ordinary, mathematical, scientific, or scholarly language to direct attention to the data of consciousness’ and develops a generalized empirical method through which the subject appropriates his or her conscious reality as an existential subject and moves beyond the empirical to the normative.
- 24 So for Lonergan it is here that the dialectical analysis finds its foundations: through the norms of authenticity to the opposition between authentic and unauthentic and to its manifestations in an opposition and a confusion of positions and counterpositions. As for continuity with the old, all he has time and space to offer here is the lines along which a new natural theology might be worked out, from the existential subject to God through a full rejection of obscurantism. The excellence of the new approach that he is proposing is that it begins from what secularists can discover in their own reality and moves from there to the possibility of transcending secularism. But if it is to be used by church leaders it demands that they repudiate the very obscurantism that in the past led people beyond secularization to secularism. ‘At a single stroke it would recall

those that have gone astray and, as well, remove the scandal that led them to go astray' (297).