

D0270

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in its relation to our lives in modern culture. As such it must begin from the experience of faith in modern times.

Thesis 4: An empirical theology does not lose its concern for the fact, but shifts that concern into a new context. If the Christian faith is to be mediated with modern culture, that faith must be known in its origins, its history, the development of its doctrines, the evolution of its self-understanding. The methods developed ~~now~~ by modern historical study are what are employed in investigating this fact. The first phase of a modern theology consists in this study of the fact. But Scripture and Tradition now provide, not premises from which the theologian deduces conclusions, but data that the theologian interprets in the light of modern historical methods. TNC<sup>59</sup>: "Where before the step from premisses to conclusions was brief, simple, and certain, today the steps from data to interpretation are long, arduous, and, at best, probable. An empirical science does not demonstrate. It accumulates information, develops understanding, masters ever more of its materials, but it does not preclude the uncovering of further relevant data, the emergence of new insights, the attainment of a more comprehensive view."

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Thesis 5<sup>3</sup>: Nonetheless, what the interpreter finds in the data will be a function in part of the person the interpreter is. In the first part of our course, we studied the problems raised for theology today by the modern methods of studying history. We spoke of the historical-critical method of inquiry, which consists of a sustained attempt to recover the fact by patient analysis of all available data, of all evidence. This method insists on

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impartiality on the part of the historian, who cannot allow his or her own personal beliefs to influence the histories they write. We saw that the only assumptions that were allowed by this method were the assumptions of a modern scientific world view. We saw that, as a result, historians came to regard much of what previously had been accepted as fact, now as fiction, myth, legend, a matter merely of literary genre.

This thesis deals with the problems that emerged for theology from the use of the historical-critical method. It states that the history one writes and the interpretation of the past will be inevitably a function, not only of the techniques of one's method, but of the horizon established by the personal stance one takes to the questions: what can I know? what is real? what is of value? what is my stance toward God? One does not transpire from data ~~concerning~~ the past to a history written today without filtering one's interpretation through the sieve of one's own person. Polemics against miracles, <sup>of</sup> the Resurrection of Jesus, as well as reductionistic explanations of the religious experience of others in the past, are no more based solely on an investigation of the data than are the acceptance of miracles, the Resurrection, and respectful accounts of the faith of others. In either case, an assumption about reality that is a function of the kind of person one is, is crucial in the interpretation and history one writes today. Are miracles possible, for example? A religiously unconverted subject will say, No. Even a religiously converted subject may say,

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No, if intellectually he holds the scientific world view of mechanist determinism, of the great clockwork. But a religiously and intellectually converted subject would say, Yes, for such a person knows not only of the power of God but also of the inadequacy of a mechanist determinism as a worldview. But in either case, there is a personal equation that determines the outcome of one's interpretation of the fact and of one's history. We must focus more on this personal equation.

~~Thesis 6: This personal equation becomes much more apparent in the second phase of theology, where theology turns its attention to the present and the future and attempts, not to interpret and report the views of others, but to say what is so to the men and women of today.~~

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In the last two classes I presented you with six theses, introducing the last part of our course. These six theses should be included in your notes under the heading: I. Theology and Education. The six theses read:

1. Despite the distinction between the everyday level and the super-structural level of culture, there is a reciprocal relationship between them.
2. The contemporary American University is fundamentally an Enlightenment institution.
3. The Catholic University in America resisted the myth of value-free education until the mid-1950's, but it did so in a classicist manner.
4. With the collapse of classicism, Catholic University education became increasingly cast in an Enlightenment mode.
5. Catholic theology is being restructured today, however, and the basis of this restructuring is Lonergan's claim that reflection on conversion is foundational for theology.
6. A theology that makes reflection on conversion its <sup>foundational</sup> ~~fundamental~~ moment has a contribution to make to other scientific and scholarly disciplines, and to professional training in higher education.

## Questions. Connections.

We now move to a second set of theses, dealing with conversion and the structure of modern theology.

### II. Conversion

~~Thesis: Reflection on conversion discloses the fact there are at least three forms of conversion: religious, moral, and intellectual.~~

~~Comments: We have spoken frequently in this course of authenticity and, in agreement with Lonergan, we have identified authenticity with self-transcendence. But self-transcendence is not some~~

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## II. Conversion and the Structure of Modern Theology

### A. General Statements.

Thesis 1: A modern theology that is at the same time thoroughly Christian will differ from the theologies of the past, not by reason of the faith it attempts to understand, but because there is a new superstructural context in which the meaning of that faith must be clarified.

Comments: Just as for all Catholics, whether they study theology or not, the issue is not a new religion or a new faith but a belated social and cultural transition, so at the superstructural level the task of theology is not to report on a new faith or to deny essential elements of the faith of the past, but to say what that faith means in the context of modern science, modern human studies, modern philosophy. There is a new cultural context, not only at the everyday level but also at the superstructural level. Just as religion at the everyday level must find an expression that relates it to the rest of life, so theology at the superstructural level must articulate that religion in its relation to the dimensions of human experience reflected on in other disciplines.

TNC, p. 58: "A theology is a product not only of the religion it investigates and expounds but also of the cultural ideals and norms that set its problems and direct its solutions." Theology mediates religion with culture in a reflective manner. A modern theology has to mediate the Christian religion with modern culture. The forms, structure, and method of such a theology will be different from that of the past. Its content can be different only if it is a development in continuity with the truth affirmed by theologians in the past, or a correction of their errors. It cannot be a denial

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of the truth either of fact faith or of fact theology. It may express the meaning of dogmas and of theological truth in a new way, but the meaning of a true statement remains permanent.

Thesis 2: Theology's mediation of religion and modern culture occurs on the superstructural level. Theology enters into dialogue with, learns from, and contributes to, the other disciplines of modern superstructural knowledge. Theology is not preaching or counselling or prayer, but a reflective discipline. It relates religious experience and the faith community to the realities studied in the other disciplines, but it does so primarily, not by talking to the man on the street, but by engaging in scholarly and scientific interchange with students of other disciplines.

Thesis 3: This does not mean that theology is isolated from the concerns of everyday living, however. It simply means that theology's role is a superstructural reflection on everyday living and its religious dimension. It is quite appropriate for theology to take as <sup>its</sup> the starting-point <sup>of its questions & problems</sup> the human problems of the modern world, <sup>and to return to them in its results.</sup> But its task is to understand, judge, and evaluate these problems in dialogue with specialists in other areas, rather than engaging directly in the immediately practical. Cultural r. th. social. Superstructural r. th. everyday.  
But necessary for the social.

Thesis 4: With regard to conversion, this means that theology's task is not directly to persuade to conversion, but to make conversion a theme that is reflected on and talked about, studied and described, in academic circles. Conversion occurs in life, not as a part of theology. Theology objectifies it, states its meaning and implications,

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studies its relation to other human experiences. ~~But~~ Theology ~~presumes~~ ~~conversion~~, needs conversion if it is to be done well, but theology's task is not conversion but reflection on conversion. This will have an effect on the everyday level, due to the reciprocal relation of the superstructural and the everyday.

Thesis 5: A modern theology must be empirical. Its task is not to deduce conclusions from premises in a logical fashion, as did the dogmatic theology that arose in opposition to modern culture, but to develop our understanding of Christian faith in its relation to life in modern culture. Conversion is a topic that enables theology to be both Christian and modern: Christian, because conversion is coming to love the God revealed in Jesus Christ; modern, because conversion is an experience, and a theology that is based on reflection on conversion is thus an empirical theology.

~~Thesis 6~~: B. The Two Phases of Theology.

Thesis 1: An empirical theology has two phases: one that studies the Christian faith in its origins, its history, its traditions, the development of its doctrines, the evolution of its self-understanding; and the other that attempts to state the meaning of Christian faith for contemporary experience. Both phases are necessary. Without the first, the second would not know what it is talking about when it talks of Christian faith. Without the second, the first would no longer be theology, but history pure and simple.

Theology is a process from data to results. The data are the events, traditions, doctrines of the past. <sup>documents witnessing to</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> phase interprets these & states what happens. The 2<sup>nd</sup> phase gives the results. <sup>to day.</sup> The results state their meaning to day.



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Thesis 2: A modern empirical theology thus does not lose its concern for the past, but shifts that concern into a new context and treats the past in a different manner, <sup>from a classical theology.</sup> Scripture and Tradition no longer provide premises or first principles from which the theologian deduces conclusions, but data that the theologian studies in the light of modern historical methods. This study is what constitutes the first phase of theology. TNC, p. 59: "Where before the step from premises to conclusions was brief, simple, and certain, today the steps from data to interpretations are long, arduous, and, at best, probable. An empirical science does not demonstrate. It accumulates information, develops understanding, masters ever more of its materials, but it does not preclude the uncovering of further relevant data, the emergence of new insights, the attainment of a more comprehensive view."

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