Concordia Theological Monthly

Volume 37 Article 6

2-1-1966

The Theologian's Craft

John Warwick Montgomery
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield

CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY

Vol. XXXVII February 1966 No. 2

CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY

Volume XXXVII February 1966 Number 2

The Theological Journal of
THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD

Edited by
THE FACULTY OF CONCORDIA SEMINARY
SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI

CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY is published monthly, except July-August when bimonthly, by Concordia Publishing House, 3558 S. Jefferson Ave., St. Louis, Mo. 63118, to which all business correspondence is to be addressed. $3.50 per annum, anywhere in the world, payable in advance. Second-class postage paid at St. Louis, Mo. Printed in U. S. A.

CONCORDIA PUBLISHING HOUSE
SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI

Contents

Address all communications to the Editorial Committee in care of Herbert T. Mayer, 801 De Mun Ave., St. Louis, Mo. 63105

The Theologian's Craft

A Discussion of Theory Formation and Theory Testing in Theology[1]

JOHN WARWICK MONTGOMERY

Scientists are generally at a loss to know precisely what theologians *do*. Mailmen deliver letters; bartenders serve numerous varieties of firewater; otorhinolaryngologists concern themselves with throats, ears, and noses: but what exactly do theologians endeavor to accomplish? The aura of mystery surrounding theological activity troubles not merely the scientist, who generally has a clear-eyed view of his own professional function, but also the so-called "average man," who, though his awareness of his own role in life may be exceedingly vague, is even more troubled by the peculiarities of "religious" vocations. The wry comment of the parishioner, "We take care of pastor in this life and he takes care of us in the next," well illustrates the gulf that, in general, seems to separate theological activity from the meaningful work of the world.

A theologian of course theologizes, i.e., he does theology. But the tautological character of this statement requires us to press on: What is it to "do theology"? Etymologically, as everyone knows, "theology" involves a "speaking-of-God," and this expression should be regarded very carefully, for its double meaning suggests the source of difficulty in understanding the theologian's craft: theology speaks *about* God (the objective genitive of the grammarians), but only because of "God's speaking" to man (the subjective genitive); it is the active presence of the numinous in the work of theology that renders its task so strange to those who look upon it from the outside. But leaving aside (for the moment only!) the active numinosity in theological endeavor, and concentrating on the object of theological research, we can say very simply that the theologian[2] is one who engages in forming and testing theories concerning the divine.

Our task in this paper is thus the clarification of what it properly means to form and to test theological theories; and it is hoped that the result will aid both the non-theologian (particularly the scientist) to understand and to appreciate better the nature of theological endeavor and the theologian himself to keep his methodological sights correctly focused. The center of attention will be neither the historical circumstances attending theological theorizing[3] nor the psychological factors

[1] An invitational paper presented Aug. 24, 1965, at the 20th annual convention of the American Scientific Affiliation, convened at King's College, Briarcliff Manor, New York.

John Warwick Montgomery is professor of church history and chairman of the department at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Ill.

[2] It will be observed that in this essay the term "theologian" is being used in the strict sense of "systematic theologian" or "dogmatician," not in the more general and perfectly legitimate sense of "professor on a theological faculty" (a category including exegetes ["Biblical theologians"], church historians, homileticians, etc., etc.).

[3] Fascinating studies of this nature are suggested by Etienne Gilson's *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (New York: Random House, 1955). Much needs to be done

relating to theological discovery[4] — interesting as these subjects are. We shall hold ourselves quite closely to the fundamental realm of theological prolegomena, and seek to discover the nature of the operations that make theology theology. As the reader enters the rarefied air of this domain, he is warned to prepare himself for innovation and groundbreaking; it is the writer's conviction that precisely here lie the basic sources of error in much contemporary theological thinking, as well as the relatively untapped resources for theological recovery in our time.

Through a Welter of Confusion

Any attempt to get at the nature of theological theorizing runs the immediate danger of being bogged down in a morass of conflicting interpretations of theological activity. On the one hand, the student of the subject is faced with dogmatically simplistic and pejorative definitions, such as that by Princeton philosopher Walter Kaufmann:

> First, theology is of necessity denominational. Second, theology is essentially a defensive maneuver. Third, it is almost always time-bound and dated quickly. Theology is the systematic attempt to pour the newest wine into the old skins of a denomination.[5]

To which it may be replied: First, even if all theologians were members of denominations (which is not the case), this would not make theology "denominational" — any more than the (fallacious) assumption that all physicians are members of state medical societies would make medicine political. Secondly, the defense of the faith (technically: apologetics) is but one of the tasks of systematic theology, not the whole or even the center of it. Thirdly, one needs a firm criterion of obsolescence in order to assert that theology is "time-bound" — but the secularist is, *ex hypothesi*, in the worst possible position to establish such a criterion. Finally, to define theological theorizing à la Kaufmann, one must gratuitously assume that its content ("wine") is forever new and changing, that its interpretative categories ("skins") are old and denominational, and that the theorizing process ("the pouring") requires no special examination. None of these assumptions, however, is credible enough to warrant pursuing.

Alongside of simplistically objective definitions of theological activity, one encounters existentially subjective descriptions of the theologian's work. In his Cambridge University Stanton Lectures on "Theological Explanation," G. F. Woods asserts, in partial dependence on Tillich:

> The first sense of theological explanation is the ultimate personal being which is the real ground of the world. The second sense is the act of seeking an explanation of what is ultimate, both through our own efforts to make it plain and through its own endeavours to make itself plain to us. The third sense is the act of using ultimate personal being as an explanation of the world in which we live. These manifold acts of explanation take place on par-

---

in the historical study of classical Protestant theological methodologies — e.g., the "analytic" and "synthetic" methods employed by dogmaticians of the 16th and 17th centuries.

[4] A work along the lines of Rosamond E. M. Harding's *An Anatomy of Inspiration and an Essay on the Creative Mood*, 3d ed. (Cambridge: W. Heffer, 1948), would be an exceedingly valuable addition to the literature of theology.

[5] Walter Kaufmann, *Critique of Religion and Philosophy* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1961), p. 221, par. 57.

> ticular occasions and are markedly influenced by the circumstances of the day, particularly by the methods of explanation which happened to be dominant at the time. But, throughout the confused series of particular acts of explanation, there is the perpetual trend towards the use of explanatory terms derived from our own being. What we are is the source of all our methods of seeking to explain the actual world.[6]

Here one must unkindly lay stress on the author's phrase "the confused series of particular acts of explanation," for confusion does indeed reign in any theological enterprise where "our own (existential-ontological) being" constitutes the center of the stage. As Carnap showed the analytical nonsensicality of Heidegger's "non-being," so A. C. Garnett has pointed up the unverifiable nonsense involved in "being"-assertions as theological starting points.[7]

A third major variety of metatheological explanation is illustrated in William Hordern's recently published book, *Speaking of God,* which endeavors to create a bridge between current "ordinary-language philosophy" and theology. Here Hordern, by an unfortunate substitution of the later Wittgenstein for the earlier Wittgenstein, leaves the fundamental problem of theological verification aside and attempts to describe theology as a unique, sui-generis "language game":

> Instead of thinking of theology as the queen of the sciences, can we think of it as the Olympic Games? . . . The Olympic Committee does not legislate the rules of ice hockey, and much less does it train a hockey player how to play hockey. But ice hockey takes its place within the total pattern of the Olympics, and its players must meet the Olympic standards. . . .
>
> By analogy, natural science and other language games are separate and independent, with their own questions, rules, methods of verification, and ways of giving answers. . . . [The] Christian faith cannot answer scientific questions any more than the Olympic Committee can tell a hockey player how to shoot the puck. . . .
>
> Theology, as the Olympics of life . . . does not pretend to be a suprascientific system with answers to all questions left unanswered by science. It is concerned with another kind of question than is science. It does not offer a systematic explanation of the universe; it is a means whereby man is enabled to live his life with a sense of purpose, direction, and integrity.[8]

Such an approach places theology in a mystical cloud of unknowing, and lifts the Mt. Olympus of theology off the earth entirely.[9] Since theology, in Hordern's view, "cannot answer scientific questions," its axiological ship passes in the night the cognitive vessel of the scientific disciplines,

---

[6] G. F. Woods, *Theological Explanation: A Study of the Meaning and Means of Explaining in Science, History, and Theology, Based upon the Stanton Lectures Delivered in the University of Cambridge, 1953—1956* (Welwyn: James Nisbet, 1958), p. 151.

[7] See John Macquarrie, *Twentieth-Century Religious Thought: the Frontiers of Philosophy and Theology, 1900—1960* (London: SCM Press, 1963), pp. 274—75. Unhappily, Macquarrie does not personally take Garnett's critique to heart—or he would modify his own existentially-orientated theology!

[8] William Hordern, *Speaking of God: the Nature and Purpose of Theological Language* (New York: Macmillan, 1964), pp. 86—89.

[9] The Christian "Mt. Olympus," as Ludwig Wittgenstein's student O. K. Bouwsma has well shown in his unpublished essay, "Adventure in Verification," is firmly embedded in the earth, and is indeed subject to verifiability tests.

and neither can communicate with the other. Moreover, and most important, the theological "language game" is without external verification, so its theories do not have to be accepted as "Olympic rules" by anyone who is not theologically inclined. It is too bad that Hordern did not see the point behind Wittgenstein's concern that his *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* be published along with his *Philosophical Investigations*. The latter without the former provides no answer whatever to the fundamental question: how do you know if a "language game" (e. g., theological theorizing) represents reality at all? [10]

In light of fallaciously objectivistic, existentially subjectivistic, and etherially olympian descriptions of theological activity, is it any wonder that tongue-in-cheek humor not infrequently captures the special-pleading character of contemporary theological theorizing? The January 15, 1965, issue of *Christianity Today* carries Lawing's cartoon of Moses' return from Mt. Sinai with the commandments; a sly Israelite meets him with the suggestion, "Aaron said perhaps you'd let us condense them to 'act responsibly in love.'" Here Bishop Robinson's theological theory as to the "real" meaning of the commandments is lampooned: the sick humor lies in the fact that the Israelite (probably) and Robinson (certainly) lacks awareness of the degree to which cultural conformity and personal preference dictate the content of their theological constructions.

How can we gain clarity in this vital area? Let us, for the moment, step outside of the theological realm and examine the essential nature of theories by way of the discipline in which they have been most thoroughly discussed: the field of science. Here we can gain our bearings and find an immediate and meaningful entrée to the larger question of theological theory formation and testing.

Theory Construction in Science

Though there have been many theories as to the exact nature of scientific theories, a general convergence and agreement among them is not hard to find. Popper uses Wittgenstein's analogy of the Net: "Theories are nets cast to catch what we call 'the world': to rationalize, to explain, and to master it. We endeavor to make the mesh ever finer and finer." [11] Comments Leonard Nash of Harvard: "He who realizes the existence of such a conceptual fabric, and is capable of lifting it, carries

[10] See C. B. Daly, "New Light on Wittgenstein," *Philosophical Studies* [St. Patrick's college, Maynooth, Ireland], X (1960), 46—49.

[11] Karl R. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, 2d ed. (London: Hutchinson, 1959), p. 59. For Ludwig Wittgenstein's presentation of the "net" analogy, see his *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, 6.341—6.35. My former professor Max Black, in his exceedingly valuable work, *A Companion to Wittgenstein's 'Tractatus'* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1964), pp. 347—61, finds difficulties in the network analogy but includes: "According to the view I have been presenting the principles of mechanics are neither empirical generalizations, nor *a priori* truths. Taken together, they constitute an abstract scheme of explanation, within whose framework specific laws of *predetermined* form can be formulated and tested. If I am correct, Wittgenstein's central idea in his discussion of the philosophy of science has thus been vindicated." On Popper's approach to scientific theorizing, see Thomas H. Leith's unpublished Boston University Ph.D. dissertation, "Popper's Views of Theory Formation Compared with the Development of Post-Relativistic Cosmological Models," and Leith's article, "Some Presuppositions in the Philosophy of Science," *American Scientific Affiliation Journal*, XVII (March 1965), 8—15.

with it all its cords, all the colligative relations it accommodates."[12] The use of an image (the net) to illustrate the nature of scientific theory construction points to an especially vital element in such theories: the employment of "models" — representations that carry "epistemological vividness."[13] So, in speaking of the discovery that "light travels in straight lines," Stephen Toulmin notes that "a vital part of the discovery is the very possibility of drawing 'pictures' of the optical state-of-affairs to be expected in given circumstances — or rather, the possibility of drawing them in a way that *fits the facts*."[14]

To concretize these abstract remarks on scientific theorizing, let us consider a dramatic and very recent case of successful theory-building: the 1962 Nobel Prize discovery, by James Watson and Francis Crick, of the molecular structure of DNA (the nucleic acid bearing the blueprint of heredity).

> Watson was convinced by reasons based upon genetics that [the] structure could only be built around two spirals arranged "in a certain way." The answer lay in this "certain way."
>
> The only way of representing the three-dimensional structure of an invisible molecule is to replace atoms or groups of atoms by spheres and then build a model of the molecule.
>
> This is exactly what Crick and Watson did, tirelessly attempting to arrange the two spirals. To quote the expression used by one of them, all of their models were "frightful", and quite inadequate to cope with DNA's known qualities ("You couldn't hang anything on these spirals"). . . .
>
> Then came the famous "spiral night." Crick was working late in a laboratory upstairs. On the ground floor, Watson also was going over a list of possible solutions. That night Crick had a revelation, a solution whispered to him by his intuition: there were only two spirals, they were symmetrical, and they coiled in opposite directions, one from "top to bottom" and the other from "bottom to top" (this hypothesis also reflected certain laws of crystallography).
>
> Crick raced downstairs — it was a spiral staircase — and enthusiastically explained his theory to Watson. Watson received it calmly: it sounded simple to him, much too simple. Then, mentally, he built a spiral form based on this idea, and all the various chemical, biological and physical requirements he put forward were met by it. Now he too was excited; he paced up and down the laboratory, repeating: "It must be true, it must be true."[15]

---

[12] Leonard K. Nash, *The Nature of the Natural Sciences* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1963), p. 61. See Commissioner Tarquin's philosophy of scientific crime detection: "The trick is to surround it [the total crime situation], and then pull it all together" (Sebastien Japrisot, *Compartiment Tueurs* [Paris: Editions Denoel, 1962], chap. i).

[13] The expression is Frederick Ferré's; see his article, "Mapping the Logic of Models in Science and Theology," *The Christian Scholar*, XLVI (Spring 1963), 12—15. I am not happy with certain interpretations in this article (e.g., the author's distinction between theories and models; his belief that scientific theories, unlike theological theories, can exist without models), but in general the article deserves the highest commendation for its incisive wrestling with an exceedingly important methodological issue.

[14] Stephen Toulmin, *The Philosophy of Science* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1953), p. 28 (Toulmin's italics). Cf. also Toulmin's more recent work, *Foresight and Understanding: An Enquiry into the Aims of Science* ([Bloomington:] Indiana University Press, 1961), passim; and Max Black's *Models and Metaphors: Studies in Language and Philosophy* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1962), passim.

[15] Roger Louis, "A Team of Experimenters: The Men Who Discovered DNA," *Réalités*, No. 154 (September 1963), 45—46.

This lively description of the key point[16] in the discovery of DNA's molecular structure drives home several basic truths about scientific theorizing — truths expressed formally in the definitions previously cited. First, theories do not create facts; rather, they attempt to relate existent facts properly. The DNA molecular model is a "net" thrown to catch the "world" of "chemical, biological, and physical requirements" demanded by empirical facticity. The theory maker must never suppose that he is building reality; his task is the fascinating but more humble one of shaping a "conceptual fabric" that, with "epistemological vividness," will correctly mirror the world of substantive reality.[17]

The DNA discovery illustrates, moreover, that theories in science are not formed "either by deductive argument from the experimental data alone or by the type of logic-book 'induction' on which philosophers have so often concentrated or indeed by any method for which formal rules could be given."[18] Writers such as Braithwaite have effectively argued the case for the indispensable role of deductive reasoning in scientific explanation; but Braithwaite's concluding paragraphs stress the inductivist side of the coin: "Man proposes a system of hypotheses: Nature disposes of its truth or falsity. Man invents a scientific system and then discovers whether or not it accords with observed fact."[19] G. H. von Wright has logically demonstrated that "if we wish to call reasoned policies *better* than not-reasoned ones, it follows . . . that induction is of necessity the *best* way";[20] yet the appealing ghost of Francis Bacon's pure inductivism in science has been laid by such philosophers of science as Joseph Agassi,[21] and, as the history of scientific discovery shows beyond question, the great advances in theory have not arisen through static, formalistic induction.[22] Rather than

[16] The process of discovery in the case of DNA can be traced directly to Max Perutz's labors as early as 1936, and the Watson-Crick theory took several years to be collaterally confirmed by Maurice Wilkins, Perutz, and John Kendrew. All five were joint recipients of Nobel prizes (chemistry and medicine) in 1962. For a recent technical overview of the state of research in the DNA area, see Duane T. Gish, "DNA, RNA and Protein Biosynthesis and Implications for Evolutionary Theory," *American Scientific Affiliation Journal,* XVII (March 1965), 2—7.

[17] See the basic distinction made by Wittgenstein between "objects," or "things" ("Der Gegenstand ist einfach" — Wittgenstein, 2.02), and "facts" ("Was der Fall ist, die Tatsache, ist das Bestehen von Sachverhalten. Der Sachverhalt ist eine Verbindung von Gegenständen [Sachen, Dingen]" — 2.0, 2.01). Of course, theories can themselves become the substantive grist for the mill of higher level theory, but this in no way lessens the need to distinguish sharply between that which is to be explained *(explicandum)* and that which does the explaining *(explicans)*.

[18] Toulmin, *The Philosophy of Science,* p. 43.

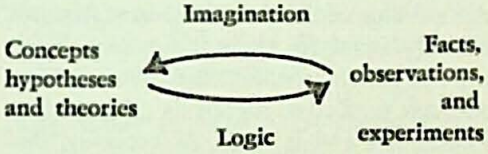
[19] R. B. Braithwaite, *Scientific Explanation: A Study of the Function of Theory, Probability and Law in Science* (Cambridge: University Press, 1955), p. 368. Braithwaite, it should be noted, is a much more helpful guide in the realm of scientific explanation than he is in the field of theological analysis; in his book *An Empiricist View of the Nature of Religious Belief* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955) he argues the position, grossly inapplicable to the Christian faith, that religious affirmations are meaningful only ethically, not cognitively.

[20] Georg Henrik von Wright, *The Logical Problem of Induction,* 2d ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957), p. 174.

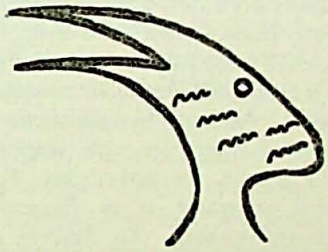
[21] Joseph Agassi, "Towards an Historiography of Science," *History and Theory Beihefte,* 2 (The Hague: Mouton, 1963).

[22] Kepler's discovery of Mars' orbit is a particularly good illustration. On the influence of

making invidious comparisons between deduction and induction in scientific theory formation, we should see these operations as complementary.[23] Instead of seeking monolithic explanations of scientific method, let us, with Max Black, "think of science as a concrescence, a growing together of variable, interacting, mutually reinforcing factors contributing to a development organic in character."[24] Nash provides the following helpful diagram, illustrating how scientific knowledge is generated by endless cyclical renewal:[25]



The essential place of "imagination" in scientific theorizing has been greatly stressed by Einstein; and its role can perhaps best be seen by introducing alongside induction and deduction — as, in fact, the connecting link between them — Peirce's concept of "retroduction" or "abduction," based on Aristotle's ἀπαγωγή-type inference.[26] "Abduction," writes Peirce, "consists in studying facts and devising a theory to explain them. . . . Deduction proves that something *must* be; Induction shows that something *actually is* operative; Abduction merely suggests that something *may be*."[27] N. R. Hanson has well illustrated the centrality of such "retroductive" reasoning to scientific theorizing; consider Hanson's ambiguous "bird-antelope":



Were this flashed on a screen, I might say, "It has four feathers." I may be wrong: that the number of wiggly lines on the figure is other than four is a conceptual possibility. "It has four feathers" is thus falsifiable, empirical. It is an observation statement. To determine its truth we need only put the figure on the screen again and count the lines.

The statement that the figure is of

Kepler's Reformation theology on his scientific labors, see my essay "Cross, Constellation, and Crucible: Lutheran Astrology and Alchemy in the Age of the Reformation," *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, 4th ser., I (1963), 251—70 (also published in the British periodical *Ambix, the Journal of the Society for the Study of Alchemy and Early Chemistry*, XI [June 1963], 65—86, and shortly to appear in French in *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses*). See W. Pauli, "The Influence of Archetypal Ideas on the Scientific Theories of Kepler," in C. G. Jung and W. Pauli, *The Interpretation of Nature and the Psyche*, trans. Hull and Silz (New York: Pantheon Books, 1955), pp. 147ff.

[23] See Arthur Pap's chapter on "Deductive & Inductive Inference" in his posthumously published work, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Science*, with an Epilogue by Brand Blanshard (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1962), pp. 139—50.

[24] Max Black, "The Definition of Scientific Method," in his *Problems of Analysis: Philosophical Essays* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954), p. 23.

[25] Nash, p. 324.

[26] Aristotle, *Prior Analytics*, ii, 25; see *Posterior Analytics*, ii, 19.

[27] C. S. Peirce, *Collected Papers*, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931—1958), V. pars. 146, 171. It should go without saying that acceptance of the Peirce-Aristotle retroduction concept in no way commits one to Peirce's pragmatic philosophy; I myself have argued strongly against pragmatic epistemologies in my book, *The Shape of the Past: An Introduction to Philosophical Historiography* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Edwards Brothers, 1963), pp. 320—29.

a bird, however, is not falsifiable in the same sense. Its negation does not represent the same conceptual possibility, for it concerns not an observational detail but the very pattern which makes those details intelligible. One could not even say "It has four feathers" and be wrong about it, if it was not a feathered object. I can show you your error if you say "four feathers." But I cannot thus disclose your "error" in saying of the bird-antelope that it is a bird (instead of an antelope).

Pattern statements are different from detail statements. They are not inductive summaries of detail statements. Still the statement "It's a bird" is truly empirical. Had birds been different, or had the bird-antelope been drawn differently, "It's a bird" might not have been true. In some sense it is true. If the detail statements are empirical, the pattern statements which give them sense are also empirical — though not in the same way. To deny a detail statement is to do something within the pattern. To deny a pattern statement is to attack the conceptual framework itself, and this denial cannot function in the same way. . . .

Physical theories provide patterns within which data appear intelligible. They constitute a "conceptual gestalt." A theory is not pieced together from observed phenomena; it is rather what makes it possible to observe phenomena as being of a certain sort and as related to other phenomena. Theories put phenomena into systems. They are built up "in reverse" — retroductively. A theory is a cluster of conclusions in search of a premise. From the observed properties of phenomena the physicist reasons his way toward a keystone idea from which the properties are explicable as a matter of course.[28]

Watson and Crick's discovery of the molecular structure of DNA clearly displays the centrality of retroductive inference in scientific theory formation: they sought a "conceptual gestalt" which would render intelligible the genetic and crystallographic data; and their resultant theory of two symmetrical spirals was successful precisely because it constituted a "keystone idea" from which the various physical, chemical, and biological characteristics of the molecule were "explicable as a matter of course."

It is particularly important to note that the validity of a scientific theory depends squarely upon its applicability as a "conceptual gestalt"; experimental confirmation through predictive success is of secondary importance and is often, of necessity, dispensed with entirely. In paleobiology, for example, experimental prediction is ruled out by the very nature of the subject matter, and in astrophysics and cosmological theory predictive experiments can seldom be formulated. Watson could say of the DNA spiral theory, "It must be true," though several years would elapse before X-ray diffraction patterns of the molecule would become available, for his theory provided a full-scale ordering of the relevant data.

> Galileo knew he had succeeded when the constant acceleration hypothesis patterned the diverse phenomena he had encountered for thirty years. His reasoned advance from insight to insight culminated in an

[28] N. R. Hanson, *Patterns of Discovery: An Inquiry into the Conceptual Foundations of Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), pp. 87—90. Hanson, following Peirce, illustrates retroductive inference by the classic case of Kepler's theorizing to an elliptical orbit for Mars. With the "bird-antelope," see Wittgenstein's detailed philosophical analysis of the psychologist Jastrow's ambiguous "duck-rabbit" (*Philosophical Investigations*, ed. Anscombe and Rhees [New York: Macmillan, 1953], II xi 194ff.).

ultimate physical *explicans*. Further deductions were merely confirmatory; he could have left them to any of his students — Viviani or Toricelli. Even had verification of these further predictions eluded seventeenth-century science, this would not have prevented Galileo from embracing the constant acceleration hypothesis, any more than Copernicus and Kepler were prevented from embracing heliocentrism by the lack of a telescope with which to observe Venus' phases. Kepler needed no new observations to realize that the ellipse covered all observed positions. Newton required no new predictions from his gravitation hypothesis to be confident that this really did explain Kepler's three laws and a variety of other given data.[29]

The Scientific Level in Theological Theorizing

We have found that scientific theories are conceptual gestalts, built up retroductively through imaginative attempts to render phenomena intelligible. What relevance does this have for understanding the theologian's labors? Can any application be made to the field of theology? Is not theology a unique realm of the "spirit," unscientific by its very nature? To bring Tertullian's famous question up to date, "What has the Institute of Advanced Study to do with Jerusalem, the laboratory with the church?"

The answer to the last question is not "Nothing" but "Everything." Though theology is evidently something *more* than science (precisely what the "more" consists of we shall see later), it is certainly not anything *less*. I say this, let it be noted, not simply in reference to the fact that any theology can be an object of descriptive, scientific study by specialists in the history, philosophy, or psychology of religion.[30] This is of course true in the case of all the world religions; but Christianity is unique in claiming intrinsic, not merely extrinsic, connection with the empirical reality which is the subject of scientific investigation. Christianity is a *historical* religion — historical in the very special sense that its entire revelational content is wedded to historical manifestations of divine power. The pivot of Christian theology is the Biblical affirmation ὁ Λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο (John 1:14): God Himself came to earth — entered man's empirical sphere — in Jesus Christ, the revelation of God in the history of Israel served as a pointer to Messiah's coming, and His revelation in the apostolic community displayed the power of Christ's Spirit.[31] From the first verse of the Bible to the last God's *contact* with man's world is affirmed. And throughout Scripture human testimony to objective, empirical encounter with God is presented

[29] Hanson, pp. 89—90. Readers of the present essay who wish to delve further into the nature of scientific theorizing are encouraged to consult J. O. Wisdom's bibliographical article, "The Methodology of Natural Science: Publications in English," *La Philosophie au milieu du vingtième siècle*, ed. Raymond Klibansky, 2d ed. (Firenze: La Nuova Italia Editrice, 1961—62), I, 164—83.

[30] It is John A. Hutchison's great mistake that he stops here in analyzing the scientific aspect of Christian theology, thereby leaving his reader with the impression that the Christian religion is no more capable of objective validation than are any of the other competing world faiths (*Language and Faith; Studies in Sign, Symbol, and Meaning* [Philadephia: Westminster Press, 1963], especially pp. 244—47, 293).

[31] I made this point *in extenso* in the apologetic lectures I delivered at the University of British Columbia Jan. 29 and 30, 1963. These have been published in a slightly abridged version as a series of four articles under the general title "History and Christianity" in *His*, 25 (December 1964 — March 1965).

in the strongest terms.[32] Christian theology thus has no fear of scientific, empirical investigation;[33] quite the contrary, the historical nature of the Christian faith — as distinguished from the subjective, existential character of the other world religions[34] — demands objective, scientific theologizing.

Hence we should expect, Barth notwithstanding,[35] that theological theories, whatever suprascientific characteristics they may have, will most definitely display the full range of properties of scientific theories. The theological theorist, like his scientific counterpart, will endeavor to formulate conceptual gestalts — "networks" of ideas capable of rendering his data intelligible. He will employ "models" to achieve epistemological vividness. He will utilize all three types of inference (inductive, deductive, retroductive) in his theory making, but, again like the scientist, he will find himself most usually dependent on the imaginative operation of retroduction. Little more than superficial naïveté lies at the basis of the popular opinion that science and theology are in methodological conflict because the former "employs inductive reasoning" while the latter "operates deductively"! In point of fact, both generally proceed retroductively, and neither is less concerned than the other about the concrete verification of its inferences.

And how does verification take place? In science we have seen that the success of a theory depends upon its ability, as Toulmin says, to "fit the facts." The same is true in theology. Ian Ramsey — though he

[32] See, for example, the accounts of Gideon and the fleece (Judges 6), Elijah on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18), and the primary-source testimonies to empirical contact with the risen Christ (Luke 24:36-43; John 20:25-28; see 1 John 1:1-4).

[33] To King Agrippa Paul thus defended the empirical facticity of Christ's fulfillment of prophecy and resurrection: "I am speaking the sober truth. For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak freely; for I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this was not done in a corner" (Acts 26:25-26). Peter's Pentecost sermon contains the significant lines: "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves know . . ." (Acts 2:22; see F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents; Are They Reliable?* 5th ed. [London: Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1960], pp. 45—46).

[34] It might seem that such a general statement would not apply to Islam; however, see my article, "The Apologetic Approach of Muhammad Ali and Its Implications for Christian Apologetics," *Muslim World,* LI (April 1961), 111—22, and also my "Corrigendum" in *Muslim World,* LI (July 1961). No world religion other than Christianity stakes its life on the objective historical facticity of its claims; only the Christian faith dares to make such an assertion as Paul's: "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain" (1 Cor. 15:14).

[35] At the outset of his *Kirchliche Dogmatik* Karl Barth argues: "If theology allows itself to be called, or calls itself, a science, it cannot at the same time take over the obligation to submit to measurement by the canons valid for other sciences" ([Zurich: A. G. Zollikon, 1944] I/1, par. 1, sec. 1). This unwarranted opposition between theology and science directly relates to Barth's Scripturally illegitimate distinction between "salvation history" *(Heilsgeschichte)* and ordinary history *(Historie),* to his unqualified rejection of natural revelation, and to the church-directed, antiapologetic thrust of his entire theology. I have maintained elsewhere that Barth's fundamental difficulties here stem from his overreaction to Protestant modernism and to his fear of subjecting the Christian faith to the secular examination for which John 1:14 constitutes a specific mandate ("Karl Barth and Contemporary Theology of History," *Evangelical Theological Society Bulletin,* VI [May 1963], 39—49). Gordon H. Clark, in his excellent work, *Karl Barth's Theological Method* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1963), Chap. iii, points

does not see that theology exactly parallels science here — introduces a valuable analogy when he writes that "the theological model works . . . like the fitting of a boot or a shoe."

> In other words, we have a particular doctrine which, like a preferred and selected shoe, starts by appearing to meet our empirical needs. But on closer fitting to the phenomena the shoe may pinch. When tested against future slush and rain it may be proven to be not altogether watertight or it may be comfortable — yet it must not be too comfortable. In this way, the test of a shoe is measured by its ability to match a wide range of phenomena, by its overall success in meeting a variety of needs. Here is what I might call the method of empirical fit which is displayed by theological theorizing.[36]

This is precisely the verifying test that we have encountered in our discussion of scientific theories; the Watson-Crick spiral theory was just such a "shoe" whose adequacy depended squarely upon its ability to "fit" the relevant physical, chemical, and biological characteristics of the DNA molecule. Neither Watson and Crick nor the great scientific theorists of past ages (we have already referred to Galileo, Copernicus, Kepler, and Newton) achieved their primary success in theory construction through the predictive character of their formulations; both in science and theology it is "fit," not "future," that lies at the heart of successful theorizing.[37]

But clearly scientific and theological theories are not identical! Where do the differences lie? One important difference (we leave others until later) is pointed up by Ramsey's "shoe" analogy. This analogy immediately raises two basic questions about theorizing: first and most obvious, How do you make the shoe (the theory or model)? but second, and even more fundamental, What foot (data) do you try to fit? In science, the "foot" — the irreducible stuff which theorizing attempts to grasp in its net — is the natural world, and this includes every phenomenal manifestation in the universe. Science knows no investigative boundaries; its limits are imposed not by the stuff with which it is permitted to deal but by the manner in which it can treat its data. *Ex hypothesi,* science is methodologically capable of studying the world in an *objective* manner only: it can examine anything that touches human experience, but it can never, qua science, "get inside" its subject matter; it always stands outside and describes. This is, of course, both the glory and the pathos of science: it can analyze everything, but it is prevented from experiencing the heart of anything.

On the objective, scientific level, however, theology has no greater advantage; it likewise stands outside its data and analyzes. But what precisely does it analyze? What are the *Gegenstände* of theological theorizing — the "simples" the theologian attempts to render intelligible through his

---

up Barth's irrationalistic tendencies and correctly notes that in citing and arguing against Heinrich Scholz's six scientific norms (Barth, I/1, par. 1, sec. 1) Barth is in actuality opposing the straw man of 19th-century Scientism (Scientific Positivism), not genuine scientific method. Unfortunately Barth has never cared for science (Henri Bouillard, in his *Genèse et Evolution,* reports that even as a boy Barth disliked physics and mathematics); and his *Church Dogmatics* (New York: Scribner, 1955—) suffers for it on almost every page.

[36] Ian T. Ramsey *Models and Mystery* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 17.

[37] Ramsey (ibid.) perpetuates a common fallacy when he asserts that theological models differ from scientific models in that the latter must generate experimentally verifiable deductions.

conceptual gestalts? In general, for Christian theology, the "foot to be shod" is revelational experience. Theological theories endeavor to "fit the facts" of such experience; theology on this level is thus one segment of scientific activity as a whole — that segment concerned with revelational, as opposed to nonrevelational, phenomena. Jean Racette, in dependence on the great contemporary Jesuit philosopher-theologian Bernard Lonergan, puts it succinctly and well:

> La théologie n'est pas une science ou une sagesse quelconque. Elle est la science du sacré et du révélé. Elle est une démarche de l'intelligence éclairée par la foi. Elle est une réflexion systématique sur un donnée reconnu et accepté comme révélé, et donc comme vrai.[38]

However, the expression "revelational experience" is manifestly ambiguous. What does it signify? This question, without a doubt, is of paramount importance for the entire theological task, since a false step here will tragically weaken the entire process of theological theorizing — either by emasculation (if one excludes from purview genuine revelational data) or by adulteration (if one mixes nonrevelational considerations with the truly revelational subject matter). And, ironically, it is exactly at this point that Christian theology has all too often trumpeted forth an uncertain sound — or worse, a positive discord! To change the metaphor, the theologian has not infrequently played the role of a blind cobbler, trying to make shoes without knowing what kind of foot he is shoeing; at other times he appears as a bungling apprentice, busily preparing what should be dainty slippers for Queen Revelation when in fact he is putting together clodhoppers to fit the Lumberjack U. (for Unregenerate) Religiosity!

Through Christian history, the "revelational experience" which yields the proper data for theological theorizing has been understood as having either a *single* source or *multiple* sources. Traditional multiple source positions include Roman Catholicism, Greek Orthodoxy, Anglo-Catholicism (all holding that the Bible and church tradition constitute valid revelational sources), and various sects having sacred books which they use alongside of the Bible as sources of data for theologizing (e.g., Mormonism, with its *Book of Mormon;* Christian Science, with Mrs. Eddy's *Science and Health*). Multiple source approaches also constitute the epistemological core of most avant-garde mainline Protestant theological positions today: a combination of Biblical insight, church teaching, and personal religious experience is supposed to provide the fund from which systematic theology should draw its data for doctrinal theorizing. For Paul Tillich the "survey of the sources of systematic theology has shown their almost unlimited richness: Bible, church history, history of religion and culture."[39] For advocates of the post-Bultmannian "New Hermeneutic" (such as Ernst Fuchs and Gerhard Ebeling), systematic theology has as its subject matter "the word event itself, in which the reality of man comes true," and by "word event" is meant "the event of interpretation";[40] thus theology has its source in a

[38] Jean Racette, "La Méthode en théologie: Le cours du P. Lonergan au 'Theology Institute' de Toronto," *Sciences Ecclésiastiques,* XV (Mai-Septembre 1963), 293.

[39] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology,* I (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 40.

[40] Gerhard Ebeling, *Theologie und Verkündigung; Ein Gespräch mit Rudolf Bultmann* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1962), pp. 14—15.

polar dialectic of Biblical text and situational interpretation. Heinrich Ott, for all his differences with Fuchs, expresses essentially the same dual-source, dialectic approach when he finds the subject matter of theology in "the Christ event, the reality of revelation and of believing,"[41] and proposes that "dogmatics is simply to unfold thoughtfully without presupposing any philosophical schema the meaning-content experienced in believing from within the experience itself";[42] systematic theology thus serves as a "hermeneutical arch that reaches from the text to the contemporary sermon."[43]

All multiple-source views of the subject matter of theology are, however, unstable. They tend to give preference to one source rather than to another, or to seek some single, more fundamental source lying behind the multiple sources already accepted. Among the sects the Bible has been virtually swallowed up by whatever special "sacred book" has been put alongside of it;[44] tradition has been more determinative than Biblical teaching in the theological development of Greek Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism; and the "New Hermeneutic" seems incapable of withstanding the old Bultmannian gravitational pull away from the Biblical text toward the other dialectic pole of contemporary existential interpretation. In the "New Shape" Roman Catholicism of Karl Rahner, Hans Küng, *et al.*, a conscious attempt is being made to get behind the dualism of Scripture and tradition through affirming a unity of "Holy Writ *and* Holy Church";[45] yet such a dialectic, like that of the Protestant "New Hermeneutic," does not escape the charge of question-begging. This is the essential, insurmountable difficulty in all multiple-source approaches to theological theorizing: They leave unanswered the question of *final* authority. What do we do as Roman Catholics when Holy Writ and Holy Church *disagree?* What do we do as Tillichians when church history, the Bible, and the history of culture are not in accord? Obviously, one must either frankly admit that one source is final or establish a criterion of judgment over all previously accepted sources — which criterion becomes, *ex hypothesi*, the final source! Multiple-source approaches to the subject matter of theology thus logically — whether one likes it or not — reduce to single-source interpretations.[46]

See James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb, Jr., eds., *The New Hermeneutic* (New York: Harper, 1964), passim.

[41] Heinrich Ott, "Was ist systematische Theologie?," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, September 1961, 25—29. Ott simultaneously regards "the Gospel of Christ" as the subject matter of theology, and here also the dialectic operates: "the Christ event encounters us through the Gospel of Christ, but the Gospel is encountered through the Gospels and witnesses that are not yet and never will be the Gospel itself. What is actually spoken is only the Gospel *according to* . . ., the Gospel according to Matthew, according to Mark, according to Luke, according to John, but also according to Paul, and why not also, dependent on those and secondarily, the Gospel according to Martin Luther, Calvin, Rudolf Bultmann, or Karl Barth?"

[42] Ibid., pp. 42—46.

[43] Ibid., pp. 25—29. See James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb, Jr., eds. *The Later Heidegger and Theology* (New York: Harper, 1963), passim.

[44] A point brought out with particular force in J. K. Van Baalen's fine work, *The Chaos of the Cults* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1955), which has gone through a number of editions.

[45] On this trend, see especially George H. Tavard, who argues that "the authority of the Church's tradition and that of Scripture are not two, but one" (*Holy Writ or Holy Church* [New York: Harper, 1959], p. 244).

[46] See W. N. Clarke's critique of philosopher Paul Weiss' *Modes of Being* (Carbondale,

If theology must ultimately admit that there is but a single "foot" which its doctrinal theories are to fit, the question becomes one of identifying that foot. The numerous identifications through Christian history contract, upon examination, to four: reason, the church, Christian experience, and Scriptural revelation. During the 18th-century "Enlightenment" it was contended that the "natural light of reason," not any alleged sacred writing or "special revelation," constitutes the final source of valid theological data.[47] Unhappily, however, pure reason (i.e., formal logic) is tautologous and cannot impart any factual data about existent things, whether theological or otherwise;[48] and "reason" understood as "nature" can yield atheistic ideologies almost as easily as deistic theologies.[49] In Romanism, the church becomes the court of last resort for determining what are or what are not genuine data for theologizing. But the argument that this is necessary because even an infallible Bible requires an infallible interpreter suffers from the fallacy of infinite regress; one can always ask, Then how can the church itself function without a higher-level interpreter? Moreover, no divine mandate can be produced to justify the authority of the church as interpreter of Scripture.[50]

Christian experience is the most widely accepted Protestant answer to the question of the source of data for theological theorizing. For the unreconstructed Modernism to the Schleiermacher-Ritschl-Fosdick era, "constructive (i.e., subjective) religious empiricism" was expected to yield doctrinal reconstructions in accord with the needs of contemporary man. As a matter of fact, however, such a methodology yielded only the results permitted by the experiential aprioris of the particular theological investigator.[51] Bultmannian existentialism and the post-Bultmannian theologies stemming from his paramount concern with "existential self-understanding"[52] are actually "experience" theologies also: for them the current situation of the theologian, not an objectively unchanging Biblical message, is the determinative factor in theological activity. In the same general class fall many of the recent attempts to interrelate theology and "ordinary language

---

Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1958), which conceives the universe as having four ultimate dimensions of being: the Weissian system "leaves untouched the . . . fundamental and, for a metaphysician, unavoidable problem of the ultimate origin or source of existence and the ultimate principle of unity of this whole with its four irreducible modes" (*Yale Review*, 48 [September 1958], 130). See my review of Weiss' *History: Written and Lived* (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1962) in *Christianity Today*, VII (July 19, 1963), 43—44.

[47] See, for the most influential American example of this approach, Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason*, especially Part 2.

[48] Alfred North Whitehead and Bertrand Russell, in their great *Principia Mathematica*, 2d ed. (Cambridge: The University Press, 1927 to —), showed that this is the case for formal logic and for mathematics — and that the latter is a special case of the former.

[49] Joseph Lewis' *The Tyranny of God* (New York: The Freethought Press Association, 1921) is a popular example of atheism built on the natural evils in the world; here the "Nature" which pointed Paine unmistakably (he thought) to a beneficent Creator points Lewis to a universe having no God at all.

[50] See my essay "The Petrine Theory Evaluated by Philology and Logic" in my *Shape of the Past*, pp. 351—57.

[51] I have demonstrated this in detail in "Constructive Religious Empiricism: An Analysis and Criticism," ibid., pp. 257—311.

[52] See especially Bultmann's "The Task and the History of New Testament Theology," an Epilogue to his *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel, II (London: SCM Press, 1955), 241.

philosophy": Ramsey's concern with theological theories in relation to "our empirical needs";[53] Hick's interpretation of theological dogmas as "the basic convictions which directly transcribe Christian experience";[54] etc.

The absolutizing of religious experience commits the "naturalistic fallacy" (sometimes unkindly called the "sociologist's fallacy"): it assumes that the "isness" of the believer's "existential encounter" constitutes an "oughtness." No answer whatever is given to the vital question: How is one to know that the divine and not the demonic is operating in the given experience? Paul Tillich argues with irrefutable cogency that "insight into the human situation destroys every theology which makes experience an independent source instead of a dependent medium of systematic theology."[55] Surely the psychoanalytic discoveries of the 20th century should give us pause before we commit ourselves to the transparent purity of man's existential life!

> The analogy from human "encounters" suggests that at least some of the experiences which are held to be "encounter with God" really are subjectively produced; can the mere claim that the experiences are "self-verifying" rule out the uncomfortable suspicion that, when dissociated from any empirical personality, they all may be only illusion?[56]

What is clearly needed is an objective check on existential experience — in other words, a source of theological data outside of it, by which to judge it.[57]

Thus we arrive at the Bible[58] — the

[53] See above, the quotation corresponding to n. 36. I suspect that Ramsey's overstress on religious experience, combined with relatively little emphasis on Biblical authority, is an underlying factor in his defense of F. D. Maurice's uncertainty about the doctrine of eternal punishment (see Ramsey's *On Being Sure in Religion* [London: University of London-Athlone Press, 1963], especially Chap. i).

[54] John Hick, *Faith and Knowledge* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1957), p. 198. For Hick, the "catalyst of faith" — the means of theologically structuring the "apperceiving mass" of experience — is "the person of Jesus Christ" (p. 196), but this Christ is not seen in the context of a fully reliable Biblical revelation. Thus in his article "Theology and Verification," Hick can make the amazing statement: "I will only express my personal opinion that the logic of the New Testament as a whole, though admittedly not always its explicit content, leads to a belief in ultimate universal salvation" (*Theology Today*, XVII [April 1960], 31). In regard to the existence of God, Hick holds the experimental view that "the important question is not whether the existence of God can be demonstrated but whether . . . faith-awareness of God is a mode of cognition which can properly be trusted and in terms of which it is rational to live" (*The Existence of God*, ed. John Hick [New York: Macmillan, 1964], p. 19).

[55] For his full-scale treatment of this issue, see Tillich, I, pp. 40—46.

[56] Frederick Ferré, *Language, Logic and God* (New York: Harper, 1961), p. 104. Ferré's entire chapter on "The Logic of Encounter" (pp. 94—104) is a masterly critique of much of the wooly "I-Thou," existential-encounter theology popular today.

[57] The foregoing criticisms, it is well to point out, also apply to those theologies which attempt to make a "living Christ" (as distinct from the Christ of Scripture) the source of theological theorizing. Such a "living Christ," if He is not known through Scripture, is necessarily known through extra-Biblical experience. But in the latter case, how can one be sure that his "Christ of experience" is the *real* Christ and not a projection of personal or corporate religious needs and desires? The dangers of idolatry here are overwhelming.

[58] Limitations of space prevent us from dealing with the question of extra-Biblical scriptures which claim to provide the ultimate interpretation of the Bible or revelational data superior to it (e.g., the *Book of Mormon*). Interested readers are referred to Van Baalen, where the

source by which reason, church, and religious experience can and must be evaluated theologically. We reach this point not simply by process of elimination, but more especially because only Scripture can be validated as a genuine source of theological truth.[59] It is the Biblical message alone that provides the irreducible *Gegenstände* for theological theorizing — the "foot" which all theological theories must "fit." In the words of the Reformation axiom, "Quod non est biblicum, non est theologicum." The Christian theologian, like the scientist, faces a "given"; he endeavors, not to create his data, but to provide conceptual gestalts for rendering them intelligible and interrelating them properly. What nature is to the scientific theorizer, the Bible is to the theologian. Franz Pieper astutely argued this parallel as follows:

> If we would escape the deceptions which are involved in the attempts to construct a human system of theology, we must ever bear in mind that in theology we deal with given and unalterable facts, which human reasoning and the alleged needs of the "system" cannot change in the least. There is, as has been pointed out, an analogy here between natural history and theology. Natural history studies the observable data in the realm of nature; its business is to observe the facts. All human knowledge of natural phenomena extends only so far as man's observation and experience of the given facts extends. The true scientist does not determine the nature and characteristics of plants and animals according to a preconceived and hypothetical system. . . .
>
> This matter has been aptly illustrated by contrasting railroad systems and mountain systems. A railroad system is conceived in the mind of the builders before it exists; its construction follows the blueprint drawn up by the engineers. The mountain system, on the other hand, does not follow our blueprints. We can only report our findings regarding its characteristics, the relation of the different mountain ranges to each other, etc., as we find them. The theologian is dealing with a fixed and unchangeable fact, the Word of God which Christ gave His Church through His Apostles and Prophets.[60]

To be sure, the affirmation that Holy Scripture is the sole source of data for theological theorizing poses questions requiring serious attention. Specifically: (1) Is the Bible an inerrantly reliable source of revelational data? (2) Is the Bible self-interpreting? (3) Does the Bible provide the norms as well as the subject matter for theological theory construction? We cannot hope to discuss any one of these questions fully here, but we can indicate

---

unverifiable nature of these claims is made patent, and where specific refutation of many of them is given.

[59] In my *Shape of the Past* I have summarized what I believe to be the crux validation: "1. On the basis of accepted principles of textual and historical analysis, the Gospel records are found to be trustworthy historical documents — primary source evidence for the life of Christ. 2. In these records, Jesus exercises divine prerogatives and claims to be God in human flesh; and He rests His claims on His forthcoming resurrection. 3. In all four Gospels, Christ's bodily resurrection is described in minute detail; Christ's resurrection evidences His deity. 4. The fact of the resurrection cannot be discounted on *a priori*, philosophical grounds; miracles are impossible only if one so defines them — but such definition rules out proper historical investigation. 5. If Christ is God, then He speaks the truth concerning the absolute divine authority of the Old Testament and of the soon-to-be-written New Testament."

[60] Franz Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, trans. and ed. T. Engelder, J. T. Mueller, and W. W. F. Albrecht (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950—1957), I, 142—43.

the central considerations which demand affirmative answers in each case.

In a recently published paper,[61] I have attempted to show that any view of Biblical inspiration that rejects the inerrancy of Scripture is not merely incorrect, but in fact *meaningless* from the standpoint both of philosophical and of theological analysis. Anti-inerrancy inspiration positions are based upon dualistic and existentialistic presuppositions that are incapable of being confirmed or disconfirmed (thus their analytically meaningless character), and they fly directly in the face of the Scriptural epistemology itself, which firmly joins "spiritual" truth to historical, empirical facticity and regards *all* words spoken by inspiration of God as carrying their Author's guarantee of veracity. Moreover, if in some sense Scripture were not unqualifiedly a reliable source of theological truth, what criteria could possibly distinguish the wheat from the chaff? Not the Scripture itself (by definition), and not anything outside of it (for the "outside" factors would then become revelation, and we have already seen that extra-Biblical revelation-claims are incapable of validation)!

This latter point also applies to the question of the self-interpreting nature of the Bible: Were the Scripture not self-interpreting, then a "higher" revelation would be needed to provide interpretative canons for it; but such a Bible-to-the-second-power cannot be shown to exist. And, indeed, there is no reason to feel that one should exist. If God inspired the Scripture, then its self-interpreting perspicuity is established. The reformers soundly argued that "the clarity of Scripture is demanded by its inspiration. God is able to speak clearly, for He is the master of language and words."[62] True, "there are many impenetrable mysteries in Scripture which are unclear in that they cannot be grasped by human intellect, but these mysteries have not been recorded in Scripture in obscure or ambiguous language."[63] Present-day specialists in Biblical hermeneutics who have been trained in general literary interpretation make every effort to impress upon their students and readers that the Bible must be approached objectively and allowed to interpret itself. Thus Robert Traina writes in the Introduction to his superlative manual, *Methodical Bible Study: A New Approach to Hermeneutics:*

> Now the Scriptures are distinct from the interpreter and are not an integral part of him. If the truths of the Bible already resided in man, there would be no need for the Bible, and this manual would be superfluous. But the fact is that *the Bible is an objective body of literature* which exists because man needs to know certain truths which he himself cannot know and which must come to him from without. Consequently, if he is to discover the truths which reside in this objective body of literature, he must utilize an approach which corresponds in nature with it, that is, an *objective* approach.[64]

[61] John Warwick Montgomery, "Inspiration and Inerrancy: A New Departure," *Evangelical Theological Society Bulletin,* VIII (Spring 1965).

[62] Robert Preus, *The Inspiration of Scripture: A Study of the Theology of Seventeenth Century Lutheran Dogmaticians* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1957), p. 159.

[63] Ibid., p. 157.

[64] Robert Traina, *Methodical Bible Study: A New Approach to Hermeneutics* (New York: Ganis and Harris, 1952), p. 7; Traina's italics. This book was first published in 1952 and is

Such a hermeneutic approach has been explicitly adopted by the great systematic theologians, past [65] and present,[66] and *must* be presupposed in theological theorizing if one is to avoid interpreting and systematizing one's own subjective opinions and desires instead of God's Word. The "circularity principle" of Bultmann and his former disciples [67] gives carte blanche to this latter error and invariably destroys the possibility of sound theological theorizing; as I have written elsewhere:

> When Bultmann argues that not only historical method but also existential "life-relation" must be presupposed in exegesis, he blurs the aim of objectivity which is essential to all proper literary and historical study. Following Dilthey as well as the general stream of philosophical existentialism, Bultmann attempts to "cut under the subject-object distinction"; he claims that "for historical understanding, the schema of subject and object that has validity for natural science is invalid." But in fact the subject-object distinction is of crucial importance in history as well as in natural science, and only by aiming to discover the objective concern of the text (rather than blending it with the subjective concern of the exegete) can successful exegesis take place.[68]

But does the Bible *per se* yield the norms, or only the subject matter, for theological theorizing? Not only from existentially orientated Bultmannians and post-Bultmannian advocates of the "New Hermeneutic," but also from Paul Tillich, who has valiantly endeavored to stiffen theological existentialism by means of ontology, we receive the negative reply that Scripture cannot in itself supply absolute norms for theological construction. After noting the variety of norms employed through church history for imparting significance levels to Biblical data, Tillich asserts: "The Bible as such has never been the norm of systematic theology. The norm has been a principle derived from the Bible in an encounter between Bible and church." [69] Now we readily grant that church history presents a number of different normative approaches to Holy Writ: the early Greek church's stress on the Logos as the light shining in the darkness of

available from the Biblical Seminary in New York. Serious application of its principles offers perhaps the best counteractive to such absurdly superficial judgments as Kaufmann's remark on "the overt ambiguity of the Scriptures" (Kaufmann, p. 227): "In no case can a theology really do justice to the Scriptures because it refuses to take into account their heterogeneity and their deep differences."

[65] E.g., the classical Lutheran dogmatician Johann Gerhard (1582—1637), in his *Loci theologici*, Preuss-Frank ed., I, 237—40.

[66] E.g., my esteemed colleague, J. Oliver Buswell, Jr., in his epochal work, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1962—1963), I, 24—25. Edward John Carnell has rightly praised Buswell for his "repeated insistence that a univocal meaning unites the mind of God with the mind of a Christian. The defense of univocal meaning implies a forthright rejection of all species of theology, ancient or modern, that either openly assert or tacitly consent to the hypothesis that truth signifies one thing for God (because He is almighty) and another for a Christian (because he is merely human)" (*Christianity Today*, IX [Feb. 26, 1965], 40).

[67] Heinrich Ott defends the "hermeneutical circle" as strongly as does Bultmann; see Ott, pp. 23—25. The "hermeneutical circle" approach is of course an outgrowth and corollary of Heideggerian existentialism.

[68] John Warwick Montgomery, "The Fourth Gospel Yesterday and Today," CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY, XXXIV (April 1963), 204.

[69] Tillich, pp. 50—51.

man's mortality,[70] the sacramental Christology of the Western church in the Middle Ages, the Reformation emphasis on God's gracious forgiveness of sin, Protestant Modernism's concern with social amelioration, Tillich's own concentration on Christ as the New Being, etc. But are we, à la Tillich, to commit the naturalistic fallacy and assume that because varied judgments on the norm of Biblical theology *have* existed they *should* have existed, or that the various historical judgments on the norm have been equally valid, simply because they have met the needs of the time, or that Scripture does not in fact provide its own absolute norms for unifying its content? Tillich's dialectic "encounter between Bible and church" as the source of norms inevitably degenerates to historical relativism, leaving his own norm without justification along with the others.

In point of fact, one can readily detect unsound theological norms (e.g., Modernism's "social gospel") by virtue of their inability to give Biblical force to central Scriptural teachings and by their unwarranted elevation of secondary (or even unbiblical) emphases to primary position. In other words, Scripture *does* very definitely supply "weighting factors" for its own teachings. Moreover, the majority of norms displayed in the history of orthodox theology have not really been as divergent as Tillich's discussion implies: most often they have displayed complementary facets of the overarching Biblical message that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." Scripture itself makes this Christocentric teaching primary and ranges its other teachings in objective relation to this teaching; and a sinful church learns this not through its historical "encounters" (which are always tainted) but from the perspicuous text of Holy Writ. Only Scripture is capable of truly interpreting Scripture; and only Scripture is able to provide the norm-structure for its interpretation and for the construction of theological doctrine based upon its inerrantly inspired content.

Terminating, then, our discussion of the scientific level of theological theorizing, we must reaffirm the fundamental thesis for which proof has been marshalled *in extenso:* science and theology form and test their respective theories in the same way; the scientific theorizer attempts objectively to formulate conceptual gestalts (hypotheses, theories, laws) capable of rendering nature intelligible, and the theologian endeavors to provide conceptual gestalts (doctrines, dogmas)[71] which will "fit the

[70] See Jaroslav Pelikan's *The Light of the World: A Basic Image in Early Christian Thought* (New York: Harper, 1962), and *The Shape of Death: Life, Death, and Immortality in the Early Fathers.* (New York: Abingdon, 1961).

[71] Hick *(Faith and Knowledge,* pp. 198ff.) distinguishes between "dogmas" and "doctrines": the former "define the religion in question by pointing to the area of primary religious experiences from which it has arisen" (example: The Apostles' Creed); the latter are "the propositions officially accepted as interpreting [the religion's] dogmas and as relating them together in a coherent system of thought." This is a useful distinction in practice, but Hick errs at several points in developing it. (1) Not "religious experiences" but the Holy Scriptures are the proper source of data from which Christian dogmas are developed (see above, our text at n. 54). (2) Doctrinal systems are not to be built upon "dogmatic foundation"; doctrines, no less then dogmas, are gestalts that conceptualize *Biblical* data. (3) The difference between dogmas and doctrines does not lie in the "fixed and unchangeable" character of the former as contrasted with the variable nature of the latter *(both* are theoretically alterable, for only

	SCIENCE	THEOLOGY
THE DATA (Epistemological certainty presupposed)	Nature	The Bible
CONCEPTUAL GESTALTS (In order of decreasing certainty) [72]	Laws	Ecumenical Creeds (e.g., the Apostles' Creed) and historic Confessions (e.g., the Augsburg Confession)
	Theories	Theological systems (e.g., Calvin's *Institutes*)
	Hypotheses	Theological proposals (e.g., Gustaf Aulén's *Christus Victor*) [73]

facts" and properly reflect the norms of Holy Scripture. The above tabular summary perhaps offers the best conclusion to the rather involved discussion preceding it as well as the best background for what is to follow.

Scripture is inerrant) nor in the fact that dogmas are formulated by "a descriptive and empirical process" while the construction of doctrines is "speculative in method," involving "philosophical thinking" (*both* are Wittgensteinian "nets" to catch Scripture — not descriptive assertions *or* philosophical speculations). In actuality, the distinction between dogmas and doctrines is *quantitative:* the former are more stable because they are based on a greater wealth of Biblical evidence, whereas the latter express theological convictions for which less Scriptural support can be adduced. It follows that no strict or absolute line can be drawn between dogmas and doctrines, or between heresy (the rejection of orthodox dogma) and heterodoxy (the rejection of orthodox doctrine). Christian churches, in formulating tests of fellowship, should proceed with great care so as to avoid the twin errors of laxity (stemming from an insufficiently defined or enforced dogmatic-doctrinal position) and bigotry (the bruising of consciences through required subscription to Biblically doubtful doctrines). Thomas Campbell's rule remains the best guide: "Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent."

[72] ***Absolute*** certainty, both in science and in theology, rests only with the data (for the former, natural phenomena; for the latter, Scriptural affirmation). All conceptualizations on the basis of these data lack ultimate certainty (in science the Einsteinian revolution helped to make this clear), but some formulations are so well attested by the data that they acquire a practically (though not a theoretically) "certain" status; in science we call such gestalts "laws," in theology, "creeds" and "confessions." Just as a denial of scientific laws removes one from the scientific community (see modern alchemists such as Tiffereau and Jollivet-Castelot), so denial of creeds and confessions results in one's separation from ecclesiastical circles. Scientific hypotheses and theological proposals, however, are never proper tests of "fellowship," for they lie, by definition, in the realm of open questions — which, hopefully, more investigation will either raise to a higher status or cause to be discarded. Scientific "theories" (in the narrow sense) and theological systems occupy an intermediate position between laws/creeds-confessions and hypotheses/theological proposals; thus although they are not generally made the basis of *formal* tests of fellowship, they often have that function on an informal (social or psychological) level (see the negative reception in scientific circles of Immanuel Velikovsky's cosmological theories).

It is of course possible to develop a more extensive classification of conceptual gestalts in science and theology (since only quantitative differences exist among the respective levels), but the above scheme appears to be the most generally useful; in Roman Catholic dogmatics, at least 10 "theological grades of certainty" are distinguished, from "immediately revealed

The Artistic and Sacral Levels in Theological Theorizing

A recent article describing the sorry Spiritualist phase at the end of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's distinguished career concludes with this thought-provoking evaluation:

> He was ill suited by personal temperament and life experience to become a religious philosopher. His natural sympathies were located in the outer rather than the inner life of man, as seen in his power to describe actions in his literature and his failure to portray character. Thus he was continually drawn towards the appearance of an event, its overt significance, but denied the ability to perceive its inner meaning.[74]

Leaving aside the disputable point (to which no addict of Sherlock Holmes could possibly agree!) that Doyle was a poor delineator of character, one finds here an exceedingly important reminder that the theological realm requires something more of investigators than scientific objectivity alone: it demands "the ability to perceive inner meaning." What is involved in this "inner meaning," and what conection does it have with theological theorizing?

A powerful hint toward an answer is provided in Luther's description of his theological method, which he characteristically drew from Scripture itself:

> Let me show you a right method for studying theology, the one that I have used. If you adopt it, you will become so learned that if it were necessary, you yourself would be qualified to produce books just as good as those of the Fathers and the church councils. Even as I dare to be so bold in God as to pride myself, without arrogance or lying, as not being greatly behind some of the Fathers in the matter of making books; as to my life, I am far from being their equal. This method is the one which the pious king David teaches in the 119th Psalm and which, no doubt, was practiced by all the Patriarchs and Prophets. In the 119th Psalm you will find three rules, which are abundantly expounded throughout the entire Psalm. They are called: *Oratio, Meditatio, Tentatio.*[75]

By *meditatio* Luther meant the reading, study, and contemplation of the Bible (i.e., very much what we have spoken of in our foregoing discussion of the objective aspect of theological methodology); by *tentatio* he meant internal and external temptation — what we today would doubtless call subjective, experiential involvement; and by *oratio* ("prayer") he meant the vertical contact with the Holy One, without which all theologizing is ultimately futile. Much the same threefold approach to theology is suggested by the treatment of the con-

---

truths" to "tolerated opinion" (see Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, trans. Patrick Lynch and ed. James Bastible, 2d ed. [St. Louis: Herder, 1958], pp. 9—10, par. 8).

[73] On the "Christus Victor" atonement motif, set forth in historical context in Gustaf Aulén's book of that title (trans. A. G. Hebert [New York: Macmillan, 1956]), see the Appendix to my *Chytraeus on Sacrifice: A Reformation Treatise in Biblical Theology* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1962), pp. 139—46, where I compare the Aulén approach with Anselm's "Latin doctrine" of the Atonement and with Abelard's "subjective view."

[74] Sherman Yellen, "Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: Sherlock Holmes in Spiritland," *International Journal of Parapsychology*, VII (Winter 1965), 54.

[75] This passage appears in the preface to the German section of the first edition of Luther's collected writings (Wittenberg, 1539). For an excellent discussion of it, see Pieper, I, 186—90, from which our translation is quoted.

cept of faith in classical Protestant orthodoxy: faith involves *notitia* ("knowledge" — the objective, scientific element), *assensus* ("assent" — the subjective element), and *fiducia* ("trust/confidence" — the vertical, regenerating relation with the living God).[76] Quenstedt grounds this analysis of faith in John 14:10-12, where v. 10 (πιστεύεις ὅτι . . .) speaks of knowledge, v. 11 (πιστεύετέ μοι) of assent, and v. 12 (πιστεύων εἰς ἐμέ) of confidence; and he notes that "heretics can have the first, the second the orthodox alone, the third the regenerate; and therefore the latter always includes the former, but this order cannot be reversed."[77] Theology, like the faith to which it gives systematic expression, has objective, subjective, and divine levels, none of which can be disregarded. Having discussed the scientific base in theological theorizing, let us now focus attention on the second, or artistic, level of theological activity.

The Theologian as Artist. In his excellent introduction to literary criticism ("How Does a Poem Mean?") John Ciardi quotes the following passage from Dickens' *Hard Times:*

> "Bitzer," said Thomas Gradgrind, "your definition of a horse."
>
> "Quadruped. Gramnivorous. Forty teeth, namely twenty-four grinders, four eye-teeth, and twelve incisive. Sheds coat in the spring; in marshy countries sheds hoofs too. Hoofs hard, but requiring to be shod with iron. Age known by marks in mouth." Thus (and much more) Bitzer.
>
> "Now, girl number twenty," said Mr. Gradgrind, "you know what a horse is."

Ciardi quite rightly points out that, after having heard this learned description, "girl number twenty" knew "what a horse is" only in a very special and limited way: she knew horses in a formal, objective, scientific manner, but not at all in a personal, experiential way — not in the way in which a poet or an artist endeavors to convey knowledge. In the same vein, Peter Winch argues for the legitimate, and indeed necessary, inclusion of subjective involvement in the work of the social scientist; over against psychological behaviorism he asks the rhetorical question: "Would it be intelligent to try to explain how Romeo's love for Juliet enters into his behaviour in the same terms as we might want to apply to the rat whose sexual excitement makes him run across an electrically charged grid to reach his mate?"[78] Theorizing in the humanities or social sciences requires more than scientific objectivity; it also demands "the language of experience"[79] — "grasp-

[76] A particularly attractive presentation of this threefold conception of faith is given by Johann Gerhard, III, 354ff. A similar treatment can be found in Martin Chemnitz' *Loci theologici,* II, 270.

[77] Johann Andreas Quenstedt (1617—1688), *Theologia didactico-polemica,* IV, 282. For Quenstedt, as for many of the other classical Protestant dogmaticians, both *notitia* and *assensus* pertain to the intellect, and *fiducia* to the will; however, *assensus* is better regarded as bridging the gap between intellect and will, for, as Chemnitz correctly asserts, it involves "not merely a general assent but that by which each one determines with firm persuasion, which Paul calls assurance (πληροφορία, Heb. 10:22), that the universal promise belongs privately, individually, and specifically to him and that he also is included in the general promise" (IV, 282).

[78] Peter Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science and Its Relation to Philosophy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958), p. 77.

[79] John Ciardi, "How Does a Poem Mean?" in *An Introduction to Literature,* ed. Gordon N. Ray (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1959), p. 666.

ing the *point* or *meaning* of what is being done or said." [80]

Is this also true of theology? We have justified the scientific character of theological theorizing by pointing to the empirical, objective nature of God's historical revelation in Holy Scripture; now we must make the equally important point that, by virtue of its historical character, the Biblical revelation lies also in the realm of the social sciences and humanities. Because God revealed Himself in history, and the Bible — the source of all true theological gestalts — is a historical document, theological theories must partake of the dual science-art character of historical methodology. The historian cannot stop with an external, objective examination of facts, and records; as Benedetto Croce and R. G. Collingwood have so well shown, he must relive the past in imagination — reenact it by entering into its very heart.[81] As Jakob Burckhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* and Johan Huizinga's *Waning of the Middle Ages* magnificently delineate their respective historical epochs by cutting to the essence of them, so theological constructions must meet Ernst Cassirer's standard for every "science of culture": they must teach us "to interpret symbols in order to decipher their latent meaning, to make visible again the life from which they originally came into being." [82]

We cannot enter into the problem of the logical status of subjective artistic assertions;[83] suffice it to say, as has been effectively shown by Ian Ramsey and others, that such judgments follow from the independent, irreducible nature of the "I," which is in fact presupposed in all statements about the world — including scientific statements.[84] What we do wish to emphasize is the necessity of incorporating the

---

[80] Winch, p. 115. Winch illustrates with Wittgenstein's hypothetical society, where the people sold their wood by piling the timber "in heaps of arbitrary, varying height and then sold it at a price proportionate to the area covered by the piles. And what if they even justified this with the words: 'Of course, if you buy more timber, you must pay more'?" (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1956], pp. 142ff.). To *understand* such behavior, notes Winch, requires much more than the formulation of statistical laws concerning it. ("Understanding" is here used, let it be noted, not in an abstract, purely cerebral way, but in Max Weber's sense of *Verstehen* — "empathic comprehension"; see Talcott Parsons, "Unity and Diversity in the Modern Intellectual Disciplines: The role of the Social Sciences," *Daedalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, XCIV [Winter 1965], 59 ff.).

[81] On the historical philosophies of Croce and Collingwood, see my *Shape of the Past*, pp. 90 ff. Crime detection, like history, is both a science and an art; thus Commissioner Tarquin (see above, n. 12) also recommends in the investigation of a woman's murder: "Put yourself inside this woman's skin, get to know her better than she knew herself, become her twin. Get to understand her from the inside out, if you see what I mean" (Japrisot, Chap. iii).

[82] Ernst Cassirer, *The Logic of the Humanities*, trans. C. S. Howe (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1961), p. 158.

[83] A good beginning can be made with Virgil C. Aldrich's *Philosophy of Art* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963).

[84] "In every situation, when 'I' and 'me' have been distinguished, 'I' cannot be given exhaustive 'objective' analysis without denying ourselves in fact, or without supposing that the subject-object relation in the construction of language is merely subject-predicate, which seems a quite unnecessary, indeed a quite disastrous, assumption. It is what Whitehead calls 'extreme objectivism' which even objectifies the subject" (Ian T. Ramsey, *Miracles: an Exercise in Logical Mapwork. An Inaugural Lecture Delivered Before the University of Oxford on 7 December 1951* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952], p. 15). See Karl Heim, *Christian Faith and Natural Science*, trans. N. Horton Smith (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1957), passim.

artistic element into all theological theories, in order to avoid a depersonalization of theology and the concomitant freezing of Biblical doctrine. Concretely, all valid theological theories must be set within the "invisible quotation marks" of belief,[85] must represent the personal, inner involvement of the theologian with Holy Scripture, and must convey a genuine reliving and reenactment of historical revelation.

The presence or absence of such artistic criteria as these is to be determined not by formulae, but by individual sensitivity on the part of theologian and Christian believer. Yet the artistic factor is no less real because of that. Just as a sensitive social scientist can recognize the greatness of William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience* as compared with pedestrian monographs on the same subject and the sensitive literary critic has no doubt as to Milton's stature among epic poets, so the Christian who is in tune with Scripture can readily distinguish between theological theorizing that cuts to the heart of Biblical revelation and theological theories that (scientifically correct as they may be) operate on a superficial level. Luther's insistence in presenting the doctrine of the fall of man that "you should read the story of the Fall as if it happened yesterday and to you" has this requisite inner quality,[86] as does such a creedal statement as the following, extracted from Johann Valentin Andreae's *Christianopolis* of 1619:

Credimus toto corde in Iesum Christum,[87] Dei & Mariae filium, coaequalem patri, consimilem nobis, Redemptorem, duabus naturis personaliter unitum & utrisque communicantem, Prophetam, Regem, & Sacerdotem nostrum, cujus lex gratia, cujus sceptrum pacis, cujus Crucis est sacr[i]ficium.	We believe with our whole heart in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Mary, coequal with the Father yet like us, our Redeemer, united as to personality in two natures and communicating in both, our Prophet, King, and Priest, whose law is grace, whose scepter is that of peace, whose sacrifice, that of the cross.[88]

The Theologian and the Holy. In common with science, theology formulates its theories with a view to the objective fitting of facts (in this case, the facts of Scripture); in common with the arts, theology seeks by its theoretical formulations to enter personally into the heart of reality

[85] Ramsey, *Models and Mystery*, p. 27: "There can — and it is a logical 'can' — be no objects without a subject which cannot itself be reducible to objects. The ideal of logical completion is never a third-person assertion; it is a first-person assertion. *He does X* necessarily carries with it a pair of invisible quotation marks, so that it is to be set in some such frame as 'I am saying . . .' and without this wider frame the third-person assertion is logically incomplete."

[86] See my article "The Cause and Cure of Sin," *Resource*, III (February 1962), 2—4.

[87] "Credimus in" followed by the accusative is the Latin equivalent of the Greek πιστεύομεν εἰς . . . , signifying the highest level of faith (*fiducia*, "confidence"). Andreae's Creed thus reaches beyond assent to trust, as must all genuine Christian doctrinal affirmations.

[88] For the full text of this Creed, with accompanying English translation and detailed analysis, see my (as yet unpublished) dissertation for the degree of Docteur de l'Université, mention Théologie Protestante: "Cross and Crucible: Johann Valentine Andreae's *Chymical Wedding*" (Strasbourg, France: University of Strasbourg, 1964) I, 272ff. As a contemporary example of a theological system manifesting Biblically sound artistic-subjective quality throughout, I particularly recommend the late Erlangen professor Werner Elert's *An Outline of Christian Doctrine*, trans. C. M. Jacobs (Philadelphia: United Lutheran Publication House, 1927).

(God's revelation in the Bible). But theology is more than science or art, for it possesses a dimension unique to itself: the realm of the holy. By this expression we do not refer merely to the "numinous" quality of religion as analyzed by Rudolf Otto in his epochal work, *The Idea of the Holy;* we refer specifically to the unfathomable nature of the God of Scripture, whose ways are not our ways and whose thoughts are not our thoughts (Is. 55:8) and who demands of the theologian as of Moses, "Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Ex. 3:5; cf. Acts 7:33). Lack of recognition of the distance between sinful man and sinless God or blindness to the absolute necessity of relying upon His Holy Spirit in theologizing will vitiate efforts in this realm, even though the scientific and artistic requirements are fully met. Without *fiducia, notitia* and *assensus* are like sounding brass and tinkling cymbal. O. K. Bouwsma makes this point well in his unpublished allegory, "Adventure in Verification," where his hero encounters difficulties in determining how Zeus makes Olympus quake:

> At a meeting of the P. L. B., the Pan-Hellenic Learning Bust, an annual affair at which the feasters eat each other's work, he confided to fellow ravishers that at the time he was considering his confrontations with the Makers of Fact or the News, on Mt. Olympus, the difficulty that bothered him most was not the matter of protocol but that of language. It wasn't that, as he anticipated, they, the interviewed divinities, would not understand him — they are adept in understanding four-hundred and twenty-six languages — but that he would not understand them. . . .
>
> He went down the mountain disappointed. . . . When he got home he wrote an account of his adventure in order that the future of verification might not lose the benefit of his effort. His own adventure he described as one of weak verification due to sand, quicksand, too quick for the hour-glass. It never occurred to him that not quicksand but vanity was the condition which led to his having his eyes fixed on his own good name in the bark of the tree when they should have been fixed on Zeus, who made Great Olympus shake, not by waving his ambrosial locks, nor by stamping his foot nor by a crowbar, nor by a cough, but in his own sweet way.[89]

How many theological theorizers have failed in their Herculean labors as a result of vanity — as a result of fixing their eyes on themselves "when they should have been fixed on Zeus, who made Great Olympus shake"!

In what way is the dimension of the "sacred" conveyed in theological theory construction? Essentially by the admission that (in Bouwsma's phrase) we do not fully understand Zeus' language. That is to say, the theological theorist must always indicate in the statement of his doctrines the limited character of them — the fact that ultimately God works "in his own sweet way" (in the double sense of the phrase!). Michael Foster, by his stress on the irreducible mystery in all sound theological judgments,[90] and William Zuurdeeg, with his emphasis on the "convictional" nature of theological assertions,[91] endeavor (albeit by overemphasizing a good thing) to drive this point home. The best analysis

---

[89] Bouwsma, pp. 8, 10.

[90] Michael B. Foster, *Mystery and Philosophy* (London: SCM Press, 1957).

[91] Willem F. Zuurdeeg, *An Analytical Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Abingdon, 1958).

of the problem, however, comes from Ian Ramsey, who observes the linguistically "odd" character of genuine theological affirmations. These consist of models taken from experience, so qualified to indicate their sacral (logically "odd") character. Such "qualified models" can be found throughout the range of Christian doctrine, e.g., in the phrases "first cause," "infinite wisdom," "eternal purpose" (where the qualifying adjective in each case points the empirically grounded noun in the direction of the sacral, so as to reduce anthropomorphism and increase awareness of God's "otherness"). Another example is "creation *ex nihilo*" where *"ex nihilo"* is the sacral qualifier:

> In all the "creation" stories we have told, there has always been *something* from which the "creation" was effected; there have always been casual predecessors. So that "creation" *ex nihilo* is on the face of it a scandal: and the point of the scandal is to insist that when the phrase has been given its appropriate empirical anchorage, any label, suited to that situation, must have a logical behaviour which, from the standpoint of down-to-earth "creation" language, is odd. When creation *ex nihilo* as a qualified model evokes a characteristically religious situation — a sense of creaturely dependence — it further claims for the word "God," which is then posited in relation to such a situation, that it caps all causal stories and presides over and "completes" all the language of all created things. It places "God" as a "key" word for the universe of "creatures".[92]

Ramsey's assertion here that the "odd" qualifier, conveying the sacral dimension, can be "any label suited to that situation" reminds us again of the single source for all sound theological theorizing: Holy Scripture. Only the Bible can serve as an adequate guide for determining what sacral qualifiers are "suitable" to given doctrinal formulations.[93] On this note the present section of the essay can properly be concluded: Sacred Scripture offers the sole criterion for testing the scientific, the artistic, and the sacral health of theological theories. Does a given theory represent objective truths? Does it incorporate the proper kind of subjective involvement? Does it adequately preserve the sacred dimension? To all three of these questions *sola Scriptura* holds the answers.

The Structure of Theological Theories

Theory formation and testing in theology have now been analyzed from the points-of-view of science, art, and the holy. One final question remains — and it is, if possible, the most consequential of all: How do the three methodological aspects of theology relate to each other? Analysis has now been completed; what about synthesis? So important is the synthetic problem that to neglect it or to embrace a false solution to it is to insure failure in theological theorizing, no matter how honorable one's motives and impeccable one's procedures in other respects.

Let us clear the air by making explicit a fundamental principle to which we have already arrived by implication. We have seen from clear Scriptural evidence that each of the three methodological aspects of theology is absolutely essential. Neither the scientific nor the artistic nor the sacral ele-

[92] Ian T. Ramsey, *Religious Language: An Empirical Placing of Theological Phrases* (London: SCM Press, 1957), p. 73.

[93] Unhappily, as we have seen (the text at nn. 36 and 53), Ramsey makes "religious experience" rather than Holy Writ his touchstone for confirming or disconfirming theological models and their qualifiers.

ment can be removed from theological theorizing without destroying the possibility of results in harmony with God's Word. Thus we can legitimately expect to find deleterious theological climates wherever, in church history or in the present, reductionism is permitted with reference to one or more of the three methodological elements. The following table will indicate the unfortunate end products of the six possible methodological reductionisms: In terms of this scheme, many of the unfortunate examples of contemporary theological theorizing already referred to in this paper (G. F. Woods' subjectivism, Hordern's Olympic Game thinking, Bultmannian and "post-Bultmannian" obliteration of the subject-object distinction, etc.) become more understandable: our age is particularly prone to reductionism No. 6, which eliminates the scientific element from theology and produces wooly-minded, unverifiable existentialisms that readily pass into the realm of analytic meaninglessness. But let us not lose perspective; this methodological sin, heinous as it is, is only one of several committed in Christian history, and we must link together the scientific, the artistic, and the sacral elements in theology so that *none* of the six methodological blunders will be permitted.

How shall the elements be related? Certainly not in dialectical fashion,[95] for (as we pointed out earlier) a polar dialectic is an open invitation to reductionism, since, as pressure is brought to bear on theology from the sinful cultural situation, the theologian can readily and almost imperceptibly slide from one pole to another, avoiding the serious demands of each. (It is this dialectic approach, so hospitable to Neo-

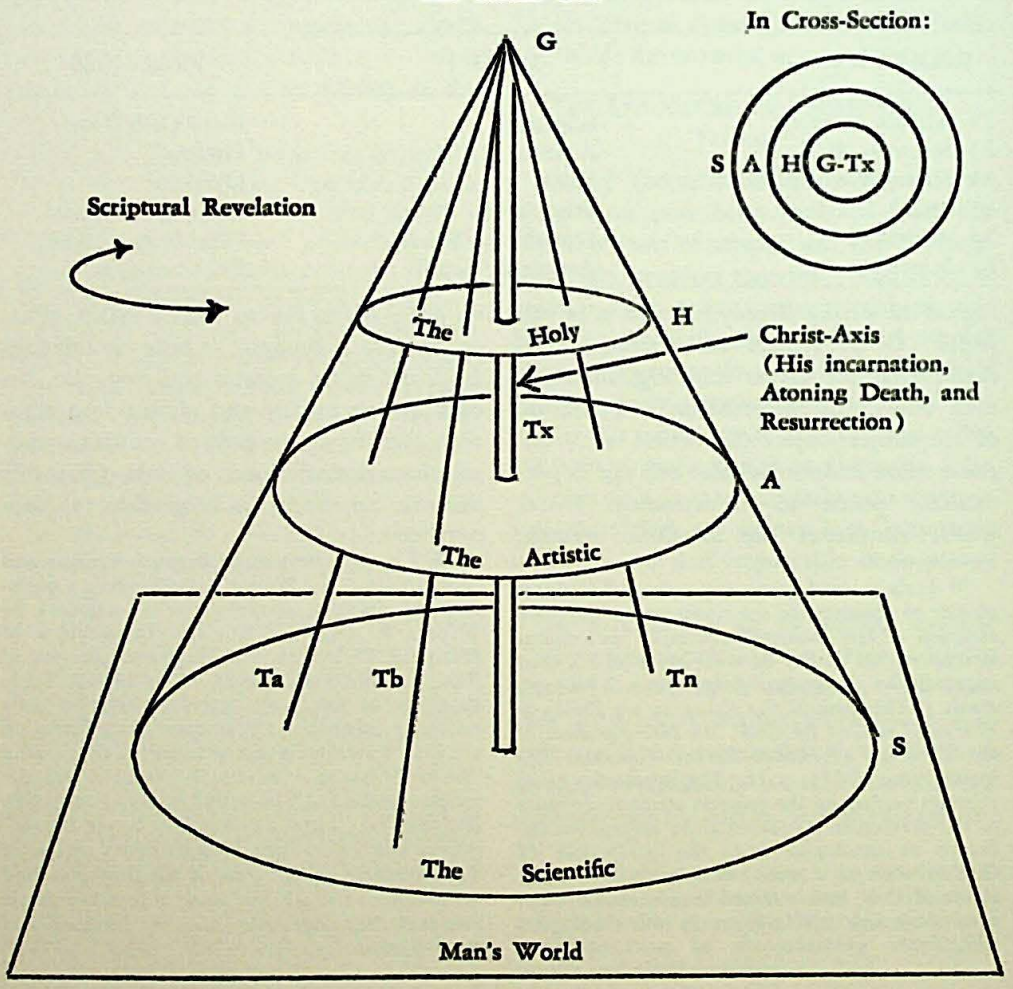
REDUCTION OF	INTO	PRODUCES
1) Artistic & Sacral	Scientific	Dead Orthodoxy
2) Scientific & Sacral	Artistic	Pietism
3) Scientific & Artistic	Sacral	Mysticism
4) Sacral	Scientific & Artistic	Anthropocentrism
5) Artistic	Scientific & Sacral	"Theology of Glory"[94]
6) Scientific	Artistic & Sacral	Existentialism

[94] Luther used the expression *Theologia gloriae* to characterize the presumptive, god-like attempts of late medieval Scholastic theologians to embrace all reality in their systems; his own approach he designated simply as a *Theologia crucis* ("Theology of the Cross"); see Philip S. Watson, *Let God Be God! An Interpretation of the Theology of Martin Luther* (London: Epworth Press, 1947), p. 78. The Scholastics erred through neglecting the tentatio element requisite to the theologian's activity; their impossible endeavor to theologize from the perspective of God's throne as it were, would not have come about if they had retained awareness of their own subjective involvement in the theological task.

[95] E.g., "in the tension between analysis and existentialism" (Walter Kaufmann's philosophical maxim, characteristically endorsed by Willem F. Zuurdeeg in "The Implications of Analytical Philosophy for Theology," *Journal of Bible and Religion*, XXIX [July 1961], 210). In point of fact, only a solid analytical *base* can keep existential affirmations from dribbling off into unverifiable nonsensicality; thus not a "tension" but a *structure* is required for the proper relating of objective analysis and subjective-sacral existentialism. No better illustration of this exists than Wittgenstein's arrival at *das Mystische* at the end of his *Tractatus* and the manner in which this work of logical analysis prepared the ground for his later *Philosophical Investigations*.

orthodox and existentialist viewpoints, that has permitted contemporary theology, under pressure from "scientific" critics of the Bible, to avoid the basic issue of the historical and scientific authority of Holy Writ.) And not by an attempt to find a pivot in man's faculties (e.g., Lonergan's striking "insight" motif[96]) by which the several methodological levels can be tied together, for such a pivot will inevitably shift the focus of theology from the God of Scripture to sinful man. Rather, we must structure the scientific, the artistic, and the sacral factors in theology so that they have a theocentric, Cross-centered focus, and so that the objective provides an epistemological check on the artistic, and the artistic serves as an entrée to the sacral. Consider, then, this structural model of theological explanation:

[96] Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (London: Longmans, 1958), passim. The Autumn 1965 number of the Saint Xavier College (Chicago) quarterly,



The cone represents God's revelation to man as expressed in Holy Scripture. This revelation, as we have seen, consists of irreducible, objective facts (the scientific level), to which subjective commitment must be made (the artistic level), and over which the divine majesty hovers in grace and judgment (the sacral level). The truths of which God's revelation is composed are legion (T_a, T_b, and T_n), but they all center on the great truth which serves as the axis and focal point of the revelation as a whole: the Word become flesh, who died for the sins of the world and rose again for its justification (T_x). The task of systematic theology is to take the truths of revelation as discovered by the exegete, work out their proper relation to the focal center and to each other (in the model, these relations are represented by the distances between T_a, T_b, and T_x), and construct doctrinal formulations that "fit" the revelational truths in their mutual relations. In terms of the model, theological theories can be conceived of as cellophane tubes constructed to fit with maximum transparency the truths of revelation; the theologian will endeavor continually to "tighten" them so that they will most accurately capture the essence of Biblical truth.

The theological theorist builds his cellophane tubes from bottom to top: he starts in the realm of objective facticity, employing the full range of scientific skill to set forth revelational truth; and he makes every effort not to vitiate his results by reading his own subjective interests into them.[97] But as he climbs, he inevitably

Continuum, is a Festschrift entirely devoted to the exceedingly important work of this Wittgenstein-like professor at Rome's Gregorian University. In matters of theological methodology Lonergan is far more worth reading than most contemporary Protestant writers on the subject since he is well aware of the debilitating effect of current existentialisms on theological method and thoroughly versed in post-Einstein scientific theory. See Lonergan's review of Johannes Beumer's *Theologie als Glaubensverständnis* (Würzburg: Echter-Verlag, 1953) in *Gregorianum,* XXXV (1954), 630—48; and see also the accounts of Lonergan's institute on theological methodology held in July 1962 at Regis College, Toronto *(Sciences Ecclésiastiques,* XV [Mai-Septembre 1963], 291—93, and F. E. Crowe, "On the Method of Theology," *Theological Studies,* XXIII [1962], 637—42).

[97] The mingling of the subjective with the objective is deadly to any scientific theorizing. Theologians who would disregard this fact in their eagerness to existentialize Christian theology might ponder the following quotation from Rupert T. Gould's *Enigmas* (New Hyde Park, N. Y.: University Books, 1965), p. 321: "A novel and interesting theory respecting the origin — wholly, or in part — of Schiaparelli's [Martian] 'canals' was communicated to me in November 1944 by Dr. G. S. Brock, F.R.S.E. He draws attention to the possibility that some or all of the appearances which the Italian astronomer believed he had discovered on the Martian disc were actually situated *in the lens of his own eye* and were symptomatic of incipient cataract.

"It is undoubtedly true that in certain conditions of lighting an image of the lens of the eye (together with any defects which this may have) can be projected on to the object which its owner is observing. Dr. Brock informs me that this fact was first announced by an Austrian scientist c. 1842 but was afterwards lost sight of in consequence of Helmholtz' invention of the ophthalmoscope some 10 years later. He considers it quite possible that some, at least, of Schiaparelli's 'canals' were caused by light from Mars, reflected from his retina, causing defects in the lens of his eye to be apparently projected on to the planet's disc — and, not improbably, blended with markings actually existing there" (italics Gould's). Whether or not this explanation of the famed "canals" of Mars is sound, it should give pause to contemporary theologians; for not a few of the theological theories of our day reflect the inner life of their proponents far more than the objective revealed truth of Holy Writ.

(because of the personal center of Biblical truth) reaches a point where he must involve himself subjectively in his material in order to get at the heart of it; here he passes into what we have called the artistic level, where the semi-transcendent, subjective "I" can not be ignored. Still he climbs, and eventually — if he is a theologian worthy of the name — he finds that his theory construction has brought him into the realm of the sacred, where both the impersonal "it" of science and the subjective "I" of the humanities stand on holy ground, in the presence of the living God.

A concrete illustration may be of value here. The doctrine of the Trinity is a theological theory, since the term is not given as a revelational fact. In formulating this theory, the theologian commences by objectively analyzing the Biblical data concerning the relations among God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit — but especially in reference to the character of Jesus Christ, the focal center of theology.[98] He finds that Jesus fully identifies Himself with the Father through His words (e.g., forgiving sin), acts (e.g., miracles), and specific claims ("I and the Father are one," "he who has seen Me has seen the Father," etc.), and that He attests His claim to deity through His resurrection.[99] The theologian discovers, moreover, that this same Jesus asserts that the Holy Spirit is "another of the same kind" (ἄλλον παράκλητον) as Himself,[100] and that in His final charge to His disciples He places Father, Son, and Holy Spirit on precisely the same level.[101] At the same time, the personal identities of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are manifestly evident in Holy Writ, though God is "One" to all the Biblical writers. Conclusion: the God of the Bible is (in the words of the Athanasian Creed) "one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity." The paradoxical character of this theological theory should not disturb us, for it is a conceptual gestalt demanded by the data; the more "rational" (better: "rationalistic") theories of Unitarianism and Modalism pervert the Biblical facts in the interests of a superimposed logical consistency. The orthodox theologian properly and humbly subordinates his theory to the data, as the physical scientist does in formulating the paradoxical "wave particle" theory to account for the ostensibly contradictory properties of subatomic phenomena:

> Quantum physicists agree that subatomic entities are a mixture of wave properties (W), particle properties (P), and quantum properties (h). High-speed electrons, when shot through a nickel crystal or a metallic film (as fast cathode-rays or even B-rays), diffract like X-rays. In principle, the B-ray is just like the sunlight used in a double-slit or bi-prism experiment. Diffraction is a criterion of wave-like behaviour in substances; all classical wave theory rests on this. Besides this behaviour, however, electrons have long been thought of as electrically charged particles. A transverse magnetic

[98] Historically, as is well known, the church arrived at its Trinitarian doctrine primarily through just such reflection on the Christological problem of Jesus' relation to the Father.

[99] See John 2:18-22 and my *Shape of the Past*, pp. 138—45. What in our structural model we have called the "Christ-axis" thus becomes the epistemological support for the entire theological endeavor.

[100] John 14:16; ἄλλος is sharply distinguished in the Greek from ἕτερος ("another of a different kind") — see Gal. 1:6.

[101] Matt. 28:19.

field will deflect an electron beam and its diffraction pattern. Only particles behave in this manner; all classical electromagnetic theory depends upon this. To explain all the evidence electrons must be both particulate and undulatory. An electron is a PWh.[102]

To be sure, the conception of the Trinity in Scripture is not fully or even principally comprehended by an abstract formula. Though on the scientific level "Trinity" is methodologically analogous to "PWh," the comparison ceases when we rise higher. "PWh" is impersonal, but the Trinity is intensely personal and touches the life of the theologian at its very center. Thus in explaining the Trinitarian articles of the Apostles' Creed, Luther reiterates the subjective, "for me" character of the doctrine: "I believe that God has made me. . . . I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord. . . . I believe that . . . the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith."[103] Moreover, as the theologian contemplates the Trinitarian character of Holy Scripture, he is caught up in wonder and amazement, finding himself transported to the very gates of glory; with the Athanasian Creed, therefore, he must express by sacral qualifiers the "otherness" of superlative truth: "The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate, and the Holy Ghost uncreate. The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible. The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal."[104]

Lost in wonder, then, does theological theorizing find its fulfillment. Commencing in the hardheaded realm of science, moving upward into the dynamic sphere of artistic involvement, it issues forth into a land where words can do little more than guard the burning bush from profanation. Here one can perhaps glimpse theology as its Divine Subject sees it: not as man's feeble attempts to grasp eternal verities but as a cone of illumination coming down from the Father of lights (James 1:17) — a cone whose sacral level brightens the artistic, and whose artistic level brightens the scientific level below it. The truly great theologian, like Aquinas, will conclude his labors with the cry: "I can do no more; such things have been revealed to me that everything I have written seems to me rubbish."[105] In the final analysis, the theo-

[102] Hanson, p. 144. See Jean E. Charon, *La Connaissance de l'Univers* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1963), passim. Lutheran theology has always cautioned against violating revelational paradox, but Roman Catholic and Calvinist theologies have emphasized the need of achieving maximum rational consistency in doctrinal construction; the above parallel between the Trinity and PWh illustrates the complementary truth in the two views: the theologian must always strive for rationality in his theorizing, but he must sacrifice this ideal to the accurate "fitting of the facts" when the latter do not permit logically consistent formulation. Reason properly has a ministerial, not magisterial, role in theology.

[103] Luther, *The Small Catechism*, Arts. 1, 2, and 3 of the Creed.

[104] See Ramsey, *Religious Language*, pp. 174—79.

[105] See Jacques Maritain, *St. Thomas Aquinas* (London: Sheed, 1931), pp. 44—46, 51. The eminent Jesuit philosopher Frederick Copleston writes: "The Christian recognizes in the human nature of Christ the perfect expression in human terms of the incomprehensible Godhead, and he learns from Christ how to think about God. But at the same time it is certainly no part of the Christian religion to say that God in Himself can be adequately comprehended by the human mind. And that He cannot be so comprehended seems to me to be

logian must say of his theologizing what the great Wittgenstein said of his philosophizing:

> My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as senseless, when he has used them — as steps — to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it.)
>
> He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright.[106]

Deerfield, Ill.

at once a truth vital to religion, in the sense that it prevents us from degrading the idea of God and turning Him into an idol, and a truth which follows necessarily from the fact that our natural knowledge begins with sense-experience. For my own part, I find the thought that the reality, the 'objective meaning,' far exceeds in richness the reach of our analogical concepts the very reverse of depressing. St. Paul tells us that we see through a glass darkly, and the effect of a little linguistic analysis is to illuminate the truth of this statement" (*Contemporary Philosophy: Studies of Logical Positivism and Existentialism* [London: Burns & Oates, 1956], pp. 101—102).

[106] Wittgenstein, 6.54. On the famous concluding assertion (7.0) that immediately follows, Foster (p. 28) perceptively comments: "When Zechariah says, 'Be silent all flesh before the Lord,' this is not wholly different from Wittgenstein's 'Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.' "