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GIVING DIRECTION TO THEOLOGY: THE SCHOLASTIC DIMENSION

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Theology in our time has been plagued by a disastrous severance of traditional correctness in formulation from successful contemporary expression. This problem was Reinhold Niebuhr's ground for complaint against both poles of the theological establishment. Niebuhr wrote that "orthodox Christianity, with insights and perspectives in many ways superior to those of liberalism," had failed to address modern society because of "outmoded" scientific perspectives and because of the "dogmatic and authoritarian" language of its pronouncements. On the other hand Niebuhr saw that liberal theology almost invariably "capitulates to the prejudices of a contemporary age."[1] If Niebuhr came to this problem primarily from the point of view of ethics, it is nevertheless a general problem in modern theology—a problem that, I believe, can best be resolved from the side of orthodoxy, with the methods and tools of orthodoxy. I speak specifically of the scholastic mode of theological thinking.

Protestants commonly assume that scholasticism represents a profoundly medieval and Roman Catholic phenomenon. Scholasticism is dry. It is a useless jumble of metaphysical issues totally unrelated to piety. It was set aside by the Reformation. It cannot be evangelical and, for Protestantism, is therefore rightly dead.

There can be only one complaint with this view of scholasticism. It is false. Luther did break with much of the substance and many of the metaphysical speculations of medieval scholasticism, but within a half century of his death his successors had reintroduced into Protestantism the forms of the scholastic system adapted to the substance of Protestant theology and piety.

A slightly more sophisticated antagonism toward scholasticism manifest recently among Protestants would view the phenomenon of Protestant scholasticism or orthodoxy as an unproductive and unnecessary recrudescence of the dry philosophizing of the middle ages and as the moment in Protestant theology in which reason triumphed over faith. If it were so, it were a grievous fault. The truth of the matter is, however, that the Protestant scholastics—even the more rationalistic of their number, like Francis Turretin—respected the Scriptural norm and limit of theology as determined by the Reformers of the sixteenth

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[1]R. Niebuhr, *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics* (New York: Harper, 1935; Meridian reprint, 1956) 14, 19 (at greater length chaps. 6-8).

century.[2] Indeed it is Turretin who refused to accept the Thomist view of theology as science. "Theology meditates upon the principles of the revealed Word of God," wrote Turretin in his examination of the "genus" of theology: "It is not a science, since it does not rest upon the evidence of reason."[3]

In the seventeenth century Protestant theology proved itself capable of combatting Roman, Socinian and other opponents because of its critical mastery of the technical language and logic of the scholastic tradition. Some modern authors have denounced this alteration of Protestant theology, but several points stand against such negative judgment. First, theology cannot be static. It must adapt to new historical and intellectual circumstances. This generalization applies to the Reformation itself, and it also explains the subsequent development of Protestant theology. Second, an embattled theology cannot simply stand upon its first formulation. Both Luther and Calvin altered, adapted and refined their positions, as did their less-brilliant successors, in answer to issues raised by their opponents. Third, no theology or piety can succeed in the intellectual struggle to survive unless it can deal with sophisticated logical and philosophical questions. This last point will encounter some objections. But we must remember that Luther's radical revitalization of theology was not accomplished in a vacuum: Luther had lectured on Lombard's *Sentences,* had learned well the late medieval scholastic system, and had attacked the errors of that system only after having grasped its inner workings.

The Protestant scholastics of succeeding epochs attempted, with varying degrees of success, to preserve the Reformation's *sola gratia* and *sola Scriptura* by incorporating these insights into a theological structure just as sophisticated as the structure utilized against them by their Roman opponents. In our own times we need to ask again the question raised by the Protestant orthodox: What technical tools do we need to utilize in the intellectually respectable defense of our faith? By way of answer I propose to examine several historical types of scholastic theology in the Reformed tradition and then to present some tentative uses of scholastic distinctions in present-day theological debate.

A person who has read only the negative comments of modern historians about the orthodox will be amazed at the refinement of their hermeneutic, the intensity of their rejection of human autonomy both in soteriological and epistemological questions, and the living relationship established in their systems between theory and practice. Peter van Mastricht's *Theoretico-practical Theology* ranks as one of the great scholastic systems of Reformed orthodoxy and exemplifies these several emphases. Mastricht (1630-1706) began each division of his system with an exegetical study of a key Scriptural text relating to the doctrine about to be presented. Mastricht analyzes the original language of the passage, comparing difficult terms with other places in Scripture. Only after having established the meaning of the text does he move on to his formulation of positive doctrine. Next, Mastricht enters critical debate with the historical adversaries of

[2]Cf. R. A. Muller, "*Duplex cognito dei* in the Theology of Early Reformed Orthodoxy," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 10/2 (Summer 1979) 51-61.

[3]F. Turretinus, *Institutio theological elencticae* (Edinburgh, 1847-48) I.vi.5.

orthodox and Reformed teaching, and finally he deals at length with the practical application of each doctrine. This pattern is followed throughout the system.[4] (A similar sense of the intimate relationship of doctrine and piety is presented in many of the Puritan presentations of theological system.)

Mastricht's denial of human autonomy—in which he stood in complete agreement with his orthodox contemporaries—set strict limits on the value of philosophy and natural theology in his system. Both these areas of knowledge contain some truth, but both are bound by the finitude and corruption of the human mind. Neither can convey saving knowledge. Mastricht's consequent stress on the necessity of revelation for Christian theology (theology being defined as "living before God in and through Christ" or as the wisdom leading to that end) led to an adamant resistance to Cartesian thought with its method of radical doubt and its insistence on the primacy and autonomy of the mind in all matters of judgment. Today, in view of contemporary recognition of the deficiency of Cartesian thinking (e.g. Helmut Thielicke's *The Evangelical Faith* and Carl Henry's *God, Revelation, and Authority*), we would do well to acquaint ourselves with our scholastic tradition and its epistemology.

If the orthodox resisted some of the developments of modern science and clung to Aristotelian philosophy in a time of changing patterns of thought, they did not do so blindly. The English dogmatician Edward Leigh attempted to give a balanced view of both the Ptolemaic and Copernican theories of the solar system and ultimately chose the Ptolemaic not primarily on Scriptural grounds but because of his (understandable) pre-Newtonian inability to conceive of objects remaining fixed to the surface of a whirling globe of earth. For the orthodox, theological system did not stand or fall with cosmology.[5] As for their Aristotelianism, it was conceived of as a tool of theology, was modified and, occasionally, was rejected because of disagreement with revelation. In the era of early orthodoxy, moreover, Aristotelianism was tempered by the logical theories of Peter Ramus and by a generally eclectic approach to philosophical system. Even the understanding of Exod 3:14, where God identifies himself with the words "I will be what I will be," in scholastic and Aristotelian terms, as the revelation of God as self-existent Being, defies classification as nonexegetical prooftexting. Mastricht recognized the exegetical difficulties, realized the several implications of the Hebrew verb, and was willing to accept the ontological interpretation only in the light of similar predications of being to God in the Greek of the NT, specifi-

[4]The full title of Mastricht's system describes his method: "Theoretical-practical theology, in which an uninterrupted series [of doctrines] has been related, according to the separate theological topics, each in part exegetical, dogmatical, controversial and practical." The system appeared in Leiden in 1714. The original is in Latin.

[5]E. Leigh, *A Treatise of Divinity* (London, 1647), Book III, chap. iv. J. Dillenberger, *Protestant Thought and Natural Science* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1960), emphasizes the opposition of orthodoxy to Copernican theory but recognizes the fact that the new cosmology was not established scientifically beyond doubt until the mid-seventeenth century. R. Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, Vol. 2 (St. Louis: Concordia, 1972), argues the cautious, balanced approach of the majority of Lutheran scholastics to the new cosmology.

cally in the book of Revelation.[6] We must also consider that the only alternative to Aristotelian philosophy available during the age of orthodoxy was the Cartesian system, and that was unacceptable.

Finally, before passing to a more recent form of Protestant scholasticism we need to note the practical side of the orthodox system. The orthodox defined theology as a "theoretical-practical" discipline, insisting that no doctrine no matter how theoretical in character or how allied to metaphysical issues could be divorced from piety. All Christian doctrine must relate to the salvation of humankind. Even the divine attributes provide insight into Christian life and hope. Orthodox thinkers like Mastricht, Turretin and Pictet have been criticized in modern times for teaching a doctrine of divine immutability, but their explicit purpose in maintaining this doctrine was to underscore the constancy of God's purpose, the changelessness of his saving will, and his faithfulness in all things toward his creation.[7]

The great American system of theology that developed at Princeton Seminary during the mid-nineteenth century around the thought of Charles Hodge was, in its form and method, a revival and modernization of the Reformed orthodox scholasticism of the seventeenth century. In Charles Hodge's monumental *Systematic Theology* and in Archibald Hodge's *Outlines of Theology* and *The Atonement* the confessional stance of the Reformed churches provides the basic point of departure for theology while the more complex points of doctrine are referred to the arguments of Calvin, Ursinus, Turretin and De Moor. A similar method obtains in the *Lectures in Systematic Theology* developed by the Hodges' southern contemporary, Robert L. Dabney of Union Theological Seminary in Richmond.

Both the Hodges and Dabney refused either to abandon their theology in the face of scientific discovery or to ignore science and reason for the sake of retaining a time-worn system. An excellent example of this stance is the Hodges' reaction to discoveries in the realms of geology and paleontology, specifically to the theory of evolution. At no point do they oppose the findings of empirical, objective analysis of data. They marvel at the conformity of the theory of successive stages of creation to the patterns of the Genesis narrative, commenting on the accommodation of divine truth to human ways of knowing. Dabney takes a far less positive approach to science than the Hodges—but all three agree on the rule to be followed in the doctrinal approach to scientific theory: The primary ground of Christian doctrine, the Scriptures, stands firm. Science, on the other hand, remains incomplete. Its theories change to fit new evidence, and its methods do not permit metaphysical or theological extrapolation beyond its evidence. Dabney in particular points to the methodological difference between theology and science, arguing for example the impossibility of a valid scientific denial of crea-

[6]P. van Mastricht, *Theoretical-practical Theology*, Book III, chap. ii. There is some irony in the fact that modern theology and exegesis stand in such discontinuity with orthodoxy that the orthodox perception of the richness of meaning of the verb *hāyâ* has passed unnoticed. Mastricht notes that Exod 3:14 can be rendered "I am who I am," "I will be who I will be," "I will be who I am," and "I am who I will be."

[7]Cf. R. A. Muller, "Incarnation, Immutability, and the Case for Classical Theism," *WTJ* 45/1 (Spring 1983) 22-40.

tion *ex nihilo*. The creation of the entire world of nature is and must be a nonanalogous event and must therefore fall outside of the bounds of natural science, beyond the domain of all empirical arguments that assume that like causes have like effects. Thus the theory of evolution oversteps the limits of scientific argument in its claim to speak of origins.[8]

More important than individual arguments, however, is the appropriation of scholastic method and form by these teachers of the last century. The sixteenth- and seventeenth-century determinations of doctrine both positive and polemical remain the basis of Reformed doctrine, and the technical language of orthodoxy lends precision to formulation. But now, via encounter with subsequent developments in theology, philosophy and science, the orthodox system moves toward contemporary impact. Dabney develops his Christian epistemology in dialogue with Berkeley, Hume, Kant and Mill. Charles Hodge formulates his Christology in debate with Schleiermacher, Gess, Baur and Strauss. In both instances the formal and technical mastery achieved by the orthodox writers of the seventeenth century provides the tools of argument and the basis for reformulation. Unfortunately neither the Hodges nor Dabney follow a pattern of exposition as perspicuous in its structure as Mastricht's exegetical/dogmatic/historico-polemical/practical schema.

Before addressing the contemporary need for a consciously scholastic dimension in theology, we need to define more closely the phenomenon of ongoing "Protestant scholasticism." Examination of the scholastic systems of seventeenth-century Protestantism manifests a form and a substance of theology in many ways like the scholasticism of the middle ages but nevertheless guided by the insights of the Reformation. If we define "scholasticism" in terms of Thomism or Scotism, the word no longer applies precisely to the orthodox Protestant theology. But if we define the word etymologically and according to its initial intention as the technical, methodologically self-conscious teaching of the schools, it not only fits its seventeenth-century subject but can also be conceived of as an ongoing tradition of school-theology, which in one form or another is always with us.[9] Young ministers fresh out of seminary become aware of their own scholastic tendencies when they utilize such terms as "kerygmatic," "eschatological," or "hermeneutical" in their sermons and receive in return blank stares from a mystified congregation. Scholastic theology will always be with us. The issue is whether our scholasticism belongs to a tradition in which the crucial problems of Christian faith and life have been confronted in a wide variety of historical forms or to a modern, ahistorical attempt to encounter these same problems *de novo*. The latter option is characteristic of the shallow liberalism

[8]Cf. R. L. Dabney, *Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972 [1878]) 251 (see also pp. 26-38, 247-263), with C. Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975 [1871-73]), 1. 550-570; A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972 [1879]) 237-248.

[9]W. Walker rather nicely speaks of "the application of the methods of logic, or of dialectics to the discussion of theological problems which [in the eleventh and twelfth centuries] resulted in fresh and fertile intellectual development"; *History of the Christian Church* (rev. ed.; New York: Scribner's, 1959) 238. A similar emphasis on method and technique appears in H. E. Jacobs, "Scholasticism in the Lutheran Church," in *The Lutheran Cyclopedia* (ed. Jacobs and Haas; New York: Scribner's 1899), where the phenomenon of "Protestant scholasticism" is defined.

noted at the beginning of this essay. The former is a living option all-too-infrequently adopted in our century.

Bereft of the tradition of Protestant school-theology, we face a long uphill climb in the face of modern (and rather scholastic themselves) arguments against the existence of God. Anthony Flew put forth the claim that the concept of a sovereign creator so contradicted any concept of free will and responsibility that the Christian attempt to combine these two concepts in its view of God pointed to the impossibility of attaining any coherent God-language. To call God creator means that "absolutely nothing happens save by his ultimate undetermined determination with his consenting ontological support." A creator cannot leave creatures "to their own devices"; a God in whose world there is disobedience cannot be a sovereign creator.[10] In response to such argumentation Niebuhr's liberal thinker becomes a death-of-God theologian. Our scholastic tradition, however, has confronted and answered these objections in the distinction between God's providential concurrence in sustaining the world order, God's revealed positive will, and God's permission. God's "consenting ontological support" indicates the sphere of his providential will toward creation. But the term "will" cannot (as Flew's argument supposes) be employed univocally. There is a clear difference between the all-encompassing, sustaining will of God, the forensic expression of God's will found in the decalogue, and that aspect of God's willing that allows the creature freedom to respond. Disobedience contradicts the forensic will but does not fall outside of the all-encompassing, sustaining will of God. None of these concepts is inconsistent with the idea of a sovereign God: Providential concurrence negates neither ethical mandate nor the permission granted to finite moral agents. At very least, the scholastic dimension of Protestant theology would force Flew to raise the level of his argument.

Another and similar example: Paul Ziff has noted that the traditional conception of an omnipotent God is unintelligible and that, therefore, "nothing answering to the plain man's conception of God exists." He comes to this conclusion via the claim that insofar as modern physics determines the inability of any object to exceed the speed of light, we cannot conceive of a being who could "transport a stone from the earth to the sun in one second." Yet the idea of an omnipotent God requires just such a capability on God's part. Until the theory is set aside, Ziff concludes, theism is unintelligible.[11] A scholastic like Mastricht would probably present two responses, the first an expression of amusement. Whoever this "plain man" may be, it seems that he has, at once, a rather sophisticated view of his world and a rather comic view of God. Under the terms of this argument, for God to exist he would need to be an egregiously pompous magician who proves his ability through useless demonstrations. In the second place, the "plain man" ought to allow Christian theology at least some of the terminological sophistication of modern physics. Scholastic orthodoxy was well aware that God's omnipotence is an effective power determined by God's nature and operative within the realm of possibility. (We might also add, in defense of physics, that the point is

[10]A. Flew, *God and Philosophy* (London: Hutchinson, 1966) 44, 47.

[11]P. Ziff, "About 'God'," in *Philosophy of Religion* (ed. S. M. Cahn; New York: Harper, 1970) 208.

not so much that nothing can exceed the speed of light but that hypothetical speeds in excess of the speed of light cannot be measured and that discussion of such speeds raises all manner of logical problems—such as an object arriving at its destination before leaving its point of departure.) The idea of an omnipotent God is unintelligible only when it is improperly defined.

This type of defensive maneuvering, though necessary and rather rewarding in a limited way, ought not to be the measure of a modern orthodox approach to the doctrine of God. As Paul Tillich pointed out in a time of overemphasis on epistemology, the system of Christian doctrine must be concerned with ontology[12]—indeed, must formulate an up-to-date ontology capable, for example, of entering debate with process thought. E. L. Mascall's critique of the Whiteheadian view of God is masterful, but it leaves us with a Thomistic or Aristotelian ontology.[13] A revitalized Protestant orthodoxy needs to advance to an appreciation of post-Kantian thought, encountering without necessarily appropriating the idealist ontology of the nineteenth century and recognizing without betraying theological principles the gap between noumenal and phenomenal.

Such an advance can in fact be made along lines laid down during the period of orthodoxy. One of the neglected resources of the orthodox ontology (and of the related principles of orthodox epistemology) is the dictum *finitum non capax infiniti* ("the finite cannot grasp the infinite"). Older Reformed theology meditated long and hard on the inability of finite man to reach, to understand, and to have communion with an infinite God—and, as a result, many of the distinctions found in the orthodox system relate to the way in which this chasm is overcome by the acts of God in history. The distinction between the decree and its execution, the historical line of the covenant, and the revelation of God in Christ all describe the saving initiative of an infinite God grasping the finite.[14] A sophisticated modern scholasticism can well afford to recognize the inability of fallen man to raise his level of perception beyond the phenomenal. This, indeed, is the problem underlying many of the philosophical arguments leveled against theology in our time. But recognizing this rift between noumenal and phenomenal, recognizing also that any claim on our part to rise beyond the world of perception would smack of Pelagianism, we can nevertheless refuse to fall into the trap of Brunner's neo-orthodox approach where not only man but also God must oblige the great epistemological rift.[15] For the infinite God who graciously grasps the finite, who comes to the finite creature with saving revelation of himself in Christ, has shattered the Kantian barrier from his side.

[12]In particular see P. Tillich, *Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality* (University of Chicago, 1955); *Systematic Theology,* Vol. 1 (University of Chicago, 1951).

[13]E. L. Mascall, *The Openness of Being: Natural Theology Today* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971) 158-174.

[14]By way of example see J. Owen, *Christologia: or, a Declaration of the Glorious Mystery of the Person of Christ in the Works of John Owen* (ed. W. H. Goold; London, 1850-1853), 1. 45-46, 54-55.

[15]Cf. E. Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of God* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1950), chap. 4, and esp. pp. 24-26, 28, 31.

If the scholastic dimension of theology holds out some promise in the encounter of Christianity with modern philosophy, it also provides a method—and a tradition—of appropriating for the use of Christian theology the results of other disciplines. The intellectual survival and the continued applicability of theology to the life of man depends upon its coming to terms with such disciplines as psychology and sociology in a systematic way. It is not enough for theologians to continue to debate the nature of a human being as consisting in body and soul as over against the trichotomous view of man as body, soul, and spirit or to deny a radical body-soul dualism and speak of a "psychosomatic unity." These concepts must be brought to bear critically and creatively upon the contemporary sciences of man.

This does not mean searching out "Christian" psychologists and sociologists. It means the detailed examination of the field from the point of view of Scripture and with the aid of our doctrinal heritage. One example will suffice. The great social psychologist, Ernest Becker, did not write from a specifically religious point of view.[16] Indeed, he considered human aspirations to transcendence primarily as "myth." Yet his analysis of the role of "myths of heroic transcendence" in overcoming the bondage of guilt and his recognition of the natural guiltiness of humanity have the potential of enriching traditional Pauline and Augustinian theology with a contemporary relevance. Here at last is a non-Christian analysis of the physical and spiritual plight of humanity, of the trauma of existence in a world that threatens to crush the life out of its children, that gives the lie to older psychological theory and that makes sense, albeit from a secular perspective, of Christian insistence on the religious hope of body-soul transcendence of this life through resurrection. A conscientious school-theology would enter into debate with and profit from the insights of writers like Becker without losing its orthodox correctness of insistence on the objective truth of the Christian promise.

Utilization of theories such as Becker's in bringing theology into discursive contact with the modern world and its problems points from the theoretical development of Christian anthropology toward contemporary moral and ethical critique of our technological society and its irresponsible aggrandizement of power and wealth at the expense of the human spirit. Here the Beckerian demand for a holistic spiritually-oriented science of man, aware of the impossibility of all utopian dreams but nevertheless insistent in its critique of oppression and dehumanization, could be brought to bear by a consistent orthodoxy as an alternative to the plethora of revolutionary Marxist-Christian theologies currently in vogue.

The orthodoxy described in the preceding paragraphs cannot afford to be lethargic. It dare not rest satisfied with ground gained and doctrine defined, no more than the Hodges and Dabney were satisfied with the formulae of Ursinus, Turretin or De Moor. It can, however, provide a strong but flexible foundation for the current theological enterprise beyond the faddism and constantly shifting

[16]See E. Becker, *The Structure of Evil; An Essay on the Unification of the Science of Man* (New York: Free Press, 1968); *The Lost Science of Man* (New York: George Braziller, 1971); *The Denial of Death* (New York: Free Press, 1973); *Escape from Evil* (New York: Free Press, 1975). A useful introduction to Becker's thought is his early *The Birth and Death of Meaning* (New York: Free Press, 1962; 2d ed., 1971).

perspectives of much twentieth-century religious thought. Armed with its own technical expertise, readied for debate by its methodology, and aware that it must deal with advances in the humanities and the social sciences, an orthodox school-theology can have a compelling word to speak to our age.

Where, then, do we begin? The proper beginning, I would suggest, is with the proper model—as, for example, the perfect balance of Mastricht's scholasticism: exegetical, dogmatic, historico-polemical and practical. By searching into our past as far as Mastricht's system we arrive not only at a fully orthodox model for a school-theology but we gain an historical and a formal perspective on present-day works, even the most compendious. Standard manuals like Berkhof's *Systematic Theology* give us a clear idea of the positive structure of orthodoxy and of the old polemic, but they fall short on the side of encounter with the present.[17] Works in the eristic and polemical vein[18] address issues posed by contemporary theology, philosophy and exegesis, but frequently they either fall short of complete positive and practical formulation or leave the task of dogmatic theology to others. From the very onset of our efforts we need to recognize, as Mastricht recognized, that the theological task is not complete unless we have distinguished four basic elements in Christian theology: exegesis, positive doctrine, historical analysis and defense, and practice. Theology must move from the interpretation of Scripture to doctrinal statement, resting doctrine on the one infallible norm of faith. From there objections can be countered and the various philosophies of the day appraised. Finally, doctrine needs to be applied practically to Christian life, for the Word is directed toward believers. And this must be done as one theological effort rather than as a series of separate options.

This model, drawn from Mastricht and the Protestant scholastics, many will recognize as the traditional "fourfold encyclopedia" of the so-called "classical" seminary curriculum. It was developed in the seventeenth century and, during the nineteenth century, elaborated into encyclopedic studies of the four basic theological disciplines and their subdivisions by writers associated with the confessional and "restoration" theologies. Alongside the systematic work of the Hodges in America and the gathering of older dogmatics into modern compendia by Heppe (*Reformed Dogmatics Set Out and Illustrated from the Sources*) and Schmid (*Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*), several outstanding teachers of theology—Philip Schaff, Karl Hagenback, R. F. Weidner—produced analyses of the entire theological curriculum as consisting in Biblical, historical, systematic and practical studies and provided, under each of the divisions, compendious bibliography.[19]

[17]L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1939). This volume has recently been augmented by the reissuing of Berkhof's excellent prolegomenon on the nature of dogmatics and theology and on the Scriptural ground of theology: *Introduction to Systematic Theology* (1932; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979).

[18]See e.g. C. F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority,* 5 vols. (Waco: Texas: Word, 1976-).

[19]P. Schaff, *Theological Propaedeutic: A General Introduction to the Study of Theology, Exegetical, Historical, Systematic and Practical* (New York: Scribner's, 1894); K. R. Hagenbach, *Encyclopaedie und Methodologie der theologischen Wissenschaften* (9th ed.; Leipzig: 1874), translated and adapted as G. R. Crooks and J. F. Hurst, *Theological Encyclopaedia and Methodology* (New York: Hunt and Eaton, 1894);

I recognize that the fourfold model has been weakened by the extreme specialization of the academic disciplines. Scholars do not specialize in Biblical theology or in historical, systematic or practical theology but in the exegesis of the synoptic gospels, Greek patristic theology of the fourth century, the doctrine of God, marriage and family ministries, and the like. The "state of the art" makes difficult even the intellectual integration of Biblical or historical or systematic or practical theology as a whole, not to mention the integration of these four basic areas into a theological unity. A recent survey of the fields, Gerhard Ebeling's *A Study of Theology,* simply sets forth the various disciplines separately and argues the internal rationale of each without claiming to find an overarching unity of the disciplines. Another contemporary scholar has called the fourfold model into question and called for a radical revision of the curriculum.[20] There are very sound reasons, however, for maintaining the model despite these difficulties and for striving in theological study for the scholastic unity of approach noted above.

In the first place, the academic specialists who staff our seminaries must recognize that they are not for the most part engaged in training specialists but generalists. We need to make a concerted effort to bring our highly specialized knowledge to bear on general fields so that the major seminary task of the historian of fourth-century Greek patristic theology is to make historical theology as a whole alive for and useful to young people who will not become historical theologians. And the major effort of the exegete of the synoptic gospels ought to be to make NT theology accessible and functional—as a whole—to students who will not become scholars of NT exegesis. In addition, the teacher of any given discipline needs to be attentive to the relationship of his or her discipline to the other broad areas of encyclopedia. Since seminary students are being prepared to be generalists, the interconnectedness of subjects, the practical or ministerial implications of Biblical, historical and systematic study, the implications of Biblical and historical for systematic study, and so forth—in all permutations and combinations—must become the classroom agenda of the specialist and should be regarded as the final constructive enterprise dictated by a carefully constructed "school-theology."

In the second place, I am convinced that the fourfold model, as a structure for binding together the diverse disciplines of theology, is not at all arbitrary but in fact arises out of the nature of the disciplines themselves or, if more broadly conceived, out of the nature of Christian theology as such. Mastricht's model recognized that both system and practice—that is, both faith and life—arose out of the Biblical revelation and represented the two contemporary sides of the theological task dictated by that revelation. His polemical section, which served the needs of system, did not admittedly do justice to that history of the Church. When history as a discipline in its own right appears in the model it stands as the

R. F. Weidner, *Theological Encyclopaedia and Methodology,* 3 vols. (Chicago: Wartburg, 1898). The extensive nineteenth-century German "encyclopaedias" are reviewed in Schaff, *Theological* 13-16, the most eminent of which is the still-valuable *Handbuch der theologischen Wissenschaften in encyclopaedischer Darstellung,* 4 vols. (ed. O. Zoeckler; Nordlingen, 1890).

[20]E. Farley, "The Reform of Theological Education as a Theological Task," *Theological Education* 17/2 (Spring 1981) 93-117.

ongoing chronicle of the faith and life of the Church, defined in its beginning by the canonical Scriptures and at its end by the present-day world. It is the temporal link that binds the Church to its Scriptures and that must stand in the encyclopedia as long as the canonical Scriptures remain authoritative.[21] It is also the history of the faith and life of past ages that issues forth in the present as systematic and practical theology and that provides a basis for understanding the present content of those disciplines.

Lastly, and no less importantly, the cohesive and comprehensive perspective afforded by the scholastic perspective, the technically fine-tuned method, is the prerequisite for the success of the churchly generalist and the specialist theologian alike if their work is to bring theology to bear upon the world in the twentieth century. In a complex and highly sophisticated world such as ours we need more technique, more discipline and a clearer vision of the broad outlines and component parts of our work than perhaps ever before. A scholastic method with its careful division of theology into Biblical, historical, systematic and practical theology may well be the best foundation upon which we can produce an effective theological synthesis for our times.

[21]Ibid., pp. 100-101, argues that the fourfold encyclopedia developed out of "the Protestant version of the way of authority (based on *sola scriptura*)." Since he does not view "the way of authority" and the "salvation-history world scheme" with its "concept of two Testaments" as a "credible theological option," the fourfold encyclopedia must also fall. We simply note that in circles where *sola Scriptura,* salvation-history and the two Testaments remain "credible" the encyclopedia may well continue to have value.