

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF THEOLOGY

"One can be a scientist, a philosopher, or an artist without having studied theology, but without theology one cannot be a Christian philosopher, scientist, or artist. Without it, one could well be a Christian on the one hand, and on the other a scientist, philosopher, or artist; but without it our Christianity will never descend into our science, our philosophy, and our art, interiorly to reform and vivify them."

- Etienne Gilson ("L'Intelligence au service du Christ Roi", in Christianisme et philosophie Vrin, Paris: 1936).

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Preface

It has been observed, with more than a little plausibility, that behind every social problem is a moral problem, and in every moral problem a dogmatic truth is involved. In a very real sense, the status of a society may be correlated positively with the status of its theology; dogma and deeds go together in a fully integrated social order. Our times, with social changes and disorders of world-wide magnitude convulsing the whole structure of society, might well re-examine its theology. What is the ultimate goal of man - wealth, power, fame, health and longevity, intelligence? Or the universal good Who is God? Only when the goal is definitely established can order be introduced into the myriad activities of everyday living.

The ever-growing interest in the study of theology as the science of God and all things in relation to God is a heartening indication of the intellectual seriousness of our times. In a recent study on "The Religion of the Post-War College Student" by Allport, Gillespie and Young (The Journal of Psychology, 1948, 25, 3-33), the authors sought to present an objective and fairly comprehensive account of the religious attitudes and practices of college students as determined fifteen months after the end of World War II. The material was obtained from 414 undergraduates at Harvard College and 85 undergraduates at Redcliffe College in November, 1946. The basic finding is "that roughly seven out of every ten students (82 per cent of the women, 68 per cent of the men) feel that they need religion in their own lives." (p. 10). While the "religion" needed may vary from orthodoxy to a diluted humanitarianism, the percentage of interest is at least significant. While we might want it to be more, it is good it is not less. In their summary of findings and of interpretations, the authors have these provocative observations:

It is a clear finding that in the majority of our cases there exist religious needs, practices, and inclinations; it is equally clear that in the majority of cases heterodoxy and dissatisfactions with available systems of faith prevail. In some instances this conflict may indicate that students are in the process of losing their childhood faith. In other cases, it indicates that they have not yet found a maturely rational system to support the religious inclinations that they feel.

A satisfying theological system, dealing as it must with the most perplexing and elusive of life's riddles, is difficult for the individual to achieve. It is, therefore, more likely to be attained in the period of middle age than in youth.

Modern college instruction (the average Church School, too) offers the student little instruction in

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the philosophical aspects of religious doctrine. If students achieve a mature system of rational theology it will not ordinarily be with the aid of college instruction. In most centers of learning theology is no longer regarded as "queen of the sciences." Yet in most lives the need for a satisfying religious orientation is felt. (p.32)

To provide a satisfactory religious orientation, to restore theology as "queen of the sciences" in the college curriculum, to accelerate the learning of religious and philosophical truths ere middle age is reached, to provide reasons for the faith that is within - these are the aims behind this little Introduction to the Study of Theology. Experience in teaching theology formally in college and adult study groups, and informally on and around a State university campus, have convinced the author that intellectually alive people want to study theology, and once started, love to deepen the science in themselves. Time and mental effort are gladly sacrificed at the throne of this queen. Through theology men come to wisdom, which "reacheth from end to end mightily and ordereth all things sweetly." (Wisdom 8:1).
✓ "Her light cannot be put out." (Wisdom 7:10).

The precise position taken in these pages is that the fullness of theology can best be attained through the study of the Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas Aquinas, whose classic synthesis, the Summa Theologica, provides a basis and adequate frame of reference for beginners in the science of theology. His acceptance by the Church as the Common or Universal Doctor is but the testimony of highest authority to the catholicity of his genius. As Pope Pius XI so graphically wrote in the Encyclical Studiorum Ducem (June 29, 1923): "It was said of old to the Egyptians who were in need of grain, 'Go to Joseph!'; so to all who hunger for truth we would say, 'Go to Thomas!' for the food of sound doctrine that will sustain the soul unto everlasting life."

This devotion to Thomas should not be construed as a blind allegiance of one of his younger Dominican brothers boosting a family product. Thomas would be the last man in this world (and in the next!) to encourage such an attitude. As he so insistently taught, man seeks universal truth. If we urge the study of works of Aquinas, it is simply because, in the opinion of friend and foe, he possessed such a profound, orderly grasp of the truth; and with his principles, method and order we can the more profitably explore and synthesize the wealth of positive theology, the progress of human sciences, natural, social and philosophical.

It is sincerely to be hoped that this somewhat casual Introduction may be the occasion of beginning an eternity-long friendship with theology and wisdom, a spiritual romance with all the drama, interest, and suspense of a serial story - begun in this world, to be continued in the next.

L. A. Ryan, O.F.

An Introduction to the Study of Theology

I. What is Theology?

A. Definition.

1. Etymologically, "theology" is made up from two Greek words - "theos" meaning "God", and "logos" meaning "word" or "knowledge". Hence the word "theology" means the knowledge or science about God.
2. Real Definition. Theology is the science of God and of divine things. Its subject matter is God as God; all other things from ants and anger to angels, are considered by theology in the light of God.
Theology is the "divine wisdom" as contrasted with the "human wisdom" which is philosophy. St. Thomas Aquinas refers to theology as "sacred doctrine", truly a science established on principles revealed by God.
3. Theology differs from religion, which according to St. Thomas Aquinas, is an infused moral virtue subjected in the will, the object of which is that honor and respect of God expressed in worship. Theology, on the other hand, is an acquired intellectual habit, a science and not a virtue properly so-called. Knowledge of the TRUTHS of the FAITH is necessary for the full exercise of the virtue of religion; with God as with man, nothing can be loved unless it is first known. Theology orders and applies the truths of Faith with the aid of reason.

↓ B. Division and Kinds of Theology

1. General division of theology according to the Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas -

Part I. God.

Concerning those things which pertain to the Divine Essence - the one God.

Concerning those things which pertain to the distinction of Persons - the holy Trinity.

Concerning those things which pertain to the production of creatures by God - creation, distinction, preservation and government of creatures from earth to angels.

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Part II. The Advance of Man Toward God

The Goal of Life

The Means to Attain the Goal - Human Actions

In general

The acts themselves - human acts, passions

The principles of action, intrinsic and extrinsic

In particular

Those acts pertaining to all conditions of life (the virtues and vices affecting all men)

Theological virtues and opposed vices

Cardinal virtues and opposed vices

Those acts which pertain to particular conditions of life.

Part III. Christ, Who as Man, is the Way by Which Man Tends to God

The Savior Himself - Incarnation, Redemption, Resurrection, etc.

The Sacraments, continuing Christ's life in men.

External Life - Resurrection and the four last things.

B. 2 - Particular Divisions or Kinds of Theology

Theology is really one science because it considers all things under one aspect, namely, in their relation to God. However, because of the differences in the subjects treated or the various methods of treatment, various kinds of theology are distinguished.

- √ a. By reason of the matter treated: Dogmatic and Moral Theology.
Dogmatic theology concerns itself with God in Himself and the Trinity, the handiwork of God which is creation, the Incarnation, grace, the Sacraments, and glory.

Moral theology treats of man's actions in their relation to God, the goal of all living. It considers human knowledge and freedom, the passions, habits, virtues and vices, and law as the norm of human acts.

- √ b) By reason of the method or purpose: Positive and Scholastic.
Positive theology draws upon the Sacred Scriptures, divine tradition, the decrees of the Councils and the writings of the Fathers of the Church to show that the articles of faith were truly revealed; that dogmas truly exist; and that the conclusions of theology are based on true, positive, revealed principles.

Scholastic theology inquires into the nature and causes, the interrelation and consequences of revealed truths, putting reason at the service of faith in a synthesis of supernatural and natural truths.

- c) By reason of the sources:
Exegetical (Scriptural), Patristic, Synodic, and Symbolic.
Exegetical theology concentrates on the study of the Scriptures.
Patristic theology proceeds from the works of the Fathers of the Church.
Synodic and Symbolic theology concentrates on the Councils of Church and the Creeds.

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✓ C. Sources of Theology

1. Sources properly theological, which contain or attest to divine revelation.
 - a) Sacred Scriptures) Constitutive sources
 - b) Divine tradition)
 - c) Infallible decrees of the Roman Pontiffs
 - d) Decisions of the Roman Congregations
 - e) Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils
 - f) Mind and practice of the Church, as exemplified either in the exercise of the ordinary teaching of the Pontiffs and Bishops in universal preaching or catechetical instruction; or in the liturgy, piety, customs, and life of the Church.
 - g) Universal agreement of the Fathers of the Church
 - h) Universal agreement of the theologians

2. Subsidiary sources
 - a) Human reason
 - b) All human sciences, philosophical, social, natural.
 - c) History of the Church, of theology, canon law, etc.

D. Method of Scientific Scholastic Theology

"Formal scientific theology proceeds from the certain principles of faith to conclusions. Its method is inductive and deductive establishment of conclusions from divinely accepted principles; in this sense, theology, of its very nature 'argues', i.e., reasons." (W. Farrell, O.F.)

II. Why Theology?

A. Why Theology at All?

1. Why Not?

- a) "Since there is no God, we can have no science about God".
(Argument of the atheist)
- b) "Even if there is a God, He cannot be known by human beings because of their finite minds."
- c) "Modern scientific methods attain only that which is observable or measurable. God is neither observable or measurable. Therefore there cannot be a true science about God, i.e., theology."
- d) "All men do not accept revelation. Therefore there can be no science of revelation, or theology, since science is universal, applicable to all men - Catholic, Protestant, Jew, Mohammedan, Buddhist, pagan, etc."
- e) "Sacred Scripture contains God's revelation. Therefore it is sufficient to study the Bible and not to concern oneself with the arguments of theology."

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2. Positive Reasons for Theology

- a) The mind of man seeks unlimited truth or divine wisdom, the knowledge of all things in relation to their beginning and goal. Theology is the science of divine wisdom, considering all things in relation to God, the creator and conserver and goal of all things. That God exists is known not only by supernatural faith, but reason can demonstrate the existence of God. "Theology is the supreme object of the reasoning mind's search for science. By it, a man opens his eyes to see truth." (Farrell)
- b) Every action that a man performs has a purpose, if he is really acting as a man. All man's purposes or goals lead eventually to an ultimate goal, whether it be good or bad, true or false. Theology provides man with a better knowledge of his true goal, God, and the ways to direct all his actions toward God.
- c) The heart of man seeks unlimited love, just as the mind seeks unlimited truth. God is Love Itself, infinitely perfect; and all creatures are as radiations of this infinite love. But man cannot love God and the things of God unless he knows Him and them in relation to Him. One cannot love what he does not know. Through theology man comes to know God better, so he can love Him - and Him more.

3. Answers to Objections (cf. Why Not? above)

- a) That God exists is demonstrable by reason. (Cf. Summa Theologica, First Part, Q. 2, for explanation)
- b) Finite minds can know the infinite being, though imperfectly, through the gift of faith (through which God reveals Himself), or through the light of reason by which man knows God through the things He has made.
- c) Science is certain and evident knowledge acquired through demonstration. Scientific methods which concern themselves only with quantitative measurement provide knowledge of material phenomena. But material phenomena are not all reality. The things that mean most are the things that man cannot see or touch or measure - self, ideas, love. Philosophy penetrates to the substances of things, from the phenomena to the noumena through the full light of reason. The method of theology reaches even beyond philosophy, beyond the natural to the supernatural. Therefore, though God is not observable, He is knowable; and if something is knowable, there can be science about it.
- d) It is true that all men do not accept revelation, either because they have not received the gift of faith or they have rejected the faith. It is not necessary for true science that all men actually know it; the fact that a barbarian does not know

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mathematics does not argue that mathematics is not a science. God will not deny the knowledge of Himself to those who earnestly and perseveringly seek it, or those who having the faith live according to it.

- e) As Sacred Scripture, along with Divine tradition, contains God's revelation, it should always be studied by seekers of the knowledge of God. Without the Bible, and tradition, there would be no Christian theology. But the truths of the Scriptures can be widely misinterpreted, as is evident from the bewildering variety of religious denominations today, all pretending to follow the Bible. Therefore it is necessary to have a scientific procedure and the definition by the Church of the truths contained in the Scriptures, i.e., theology.

II. B. Why Theology for the Laity?

1. Why Not?

- a) "Theology is only for priests, the official teachers of the Church."
- b) There is not time enough to give laypeople an adequate course in theology. A little knowledge is a dangerous thing."
- c) "Even if the laity had time for theology, there are not sufficient teachers of theology to instruct them."
- d) "As yet there are not published suitable textbooks in theology for lay students."
- e) "Theology is above the comprehension of the majority of the laity. It is for an intellectual elite, and therefore should not be generally taught, or be a required course in educational institutions."
- f) "Lay students are not prepared philosophically for theology. Seminarians are required to take several years of philosophy before entering upon their theological studies."
- g) "Theology is too speculative and coldly intellectualistic. What laypeople need is a practical instruction which warms the heart as well as enlightens the mind."
- h) "Laypeople generally know their religion well enough. It should not be necessary to overburden them with courses in theology."

2. Positive Reasons for Theology for the Laity

The reasons given above in answer to the question "Why Theology at All?" apply to all men, whether clergy or laity. Every man desires the perfection of science within himself; and through theology he achieves that perfection. The more a man studies other sciences, the more he should study theology, so as to integrate his learning and thus be truly educated. Higher education in the arts and sciences for the laity without theology is a body of knowledge without a head.

Man's life becomes more purposeful, more happy, when his goal is sharply seen, as well as the means that lead to it; and theology provides the blueprint of human progress toward God.

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While the clergy are the official teachers of the faith, they are not the only teachers. Every Christian should want to communicate to others as best he can the knowledge of the true faith. Christianity became known to the ancient world through the Apostles and disciples of the Lord, and through soldiers, nobles, peasants, virgins, wives, and widows, slaves and the free.

3. Reply to Objections

- ✓ a) This is answered by what has been said above. It is not enough that priests be the only teachers of religious doctrine. Laypeople can do much good for souls, some of whom the priests never reach, by acquiring a scientific knowledge of sacred doctrine for their own perfection and for communication to their associates in field, factory, or forum - (the apostolate of "like by like").
- ✓ b) If there is enough time to devote sixteen or more class hours a week to the secular sciences, there surely should be enough time to devote two to five hours in the same period to the study of sacred science. If existing academic schedules do not provide time, time should be made by elimination of less important sciences. Order demands that the lesser should give way to the greater. For those not in educational institutions, much time spent on the study of worldly affairs could profitably be turned to the study of God. A little knowledge of God begets the desire for more and more, and a true perspective on life is restored.
- c) The shortage of trained teachers of theology represents a difficulty which could be overcome more quickly once the imperative need of theology for the laity be wholeheartedly accepted.
- d) A textbook is often an aid in the acquisition of science. However, the habit of a science can be acquired with the aid of a living text, - the teacher, and recourse to solid sources. The Summa Theologica, one of the greatest books of all time, can, with a skillful teacher, be the best text of all.
- ✓ e) To the objection that theology is above the comprehension of the majority of the laity, we reply with a distinction: for those whose intellectual ability permits the pursuit of formal higher education, surely theology is not above their comprehension; for those whose intellectual ability is less, and for those who do not have opportunity for advanced studies, as long as they have faith, which provides the principles of theology, and insofar as they have the facility of reason and time for study, a limited, yet highly beneficial grasp of theology is possible.
- ✓ f) The intellectual habit of theology proceeds from the revealed principles of faith to theological conclusions through logical reasoning. While formal philosophy would certainly facilitate the learning of theology, a lively faith and sound logical processes are sufficient for the beginner. If on the college level the student has not learned logic, then let him be taught at once.

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- g) Theology, it is said, is too speculative and coldly intellectualistic. Speculative truth must precede practical application, and can easily be related to action by the apt teacher or the thinking student. True intellectual effort is never cold; the intellect takes keen pleasure in its own exercise, coordinating all reality that it discovers. This objection proceeds from a concept of eclectic theology which lacks inner coherence and harmony; the theology of St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas, for example, is fascinatingly speculative and practical, warmly intellectual.
- h) The words of Pope Pius XII suffice to answer this objection. "The growing weakness, the devitalizing process that has been going on - we speak with sorrow in our heart - going on in not a few parts of the Church, is due chiefly to an ignorance or at best a very superficial knowledge of the religious truths taught by the loving Redeemer of all . . . Instruction then is necessary, it is indispensable, not only for children in religious instruction, and should hold the place of honor in college and university curricula." (Radio address to National Catechetical Congress, Boston, Mass., Oct. 26, 1946)

II. C.

Why Theology according to the Arguments, Doctrine, and Principles of St. Thomas Aquinas?

1. Why Not?

- a) "Because St. Thomas does not employ scientific method."
 "It is argued that science and its method must be subordinated; that we must return to the logic of Aristotle and St. Thomas, in order that the young may have sure anchorage in their intellectual and moral life, and may not be at the mercy of every passing breeze that blows.
 ". . . I see at bottom but two alternatives between which education must choose if it is not to drift aimlessly. One of them is expressed by the attempt to induce educators to return to the intellectual methods and ideals that arose centuries before the scientific method was developed. The appeal may be temporarily successful in a period when great insecurity, emotional and intellectual as well as economic, is rife. For under these conditions the desire to lean on fixed authority is active. Nevertheless, it is so out of touch with all the conditions of modern life that I believe it is folly to seek salvation in this direction"

- John Dewey, Experience and Education - (1938)

- b) "Because St. Thomas is not of a truly philosophic mind."
 "There is little of the true philosophic spirit in Aquinas. He does not, like the Platonic Socrates, set out to follow wherever the arguments may lead. He is not engaged in an enquiry, the result of which it is impossible to know in advance. Before he begins to philosophize, he already knows the truth; it is declared in the Catholic faith"

- Bertrand Russell, A History of Western Philosophy -
 (1945)

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- c) "Because Aquinas did not know the limits of philosophy."
 " . . . Like most other philosophers, Aquinas understood everything except the limits of philosophy: deeply though he accepted Christian faith, he did not realize that knowledge is not enough. What can be reasoned about, what can be ordered or fabricated, was here: what must be dumbly felt, passively experienced, intuitively revealed . . . all that is left outside the Summas "

- Lewis Mumford - The Condition of Man (1944)

- d) "Even if we concede that St. Thomas had a great philosophical and theological mind, there is no reason why he should be studied any more than his illustrious predecessors, such as St. Augustine, St. John Chrysostom, and other Church Fathers and Patristic writers."
 e) "Times have changed considerably since the thirteenth century. What is needed is a twentieth century synthesis of theology rather than devotion to a Summa nearly seven centuries old."

II. C. (Cont'd)

✓ 2. Positive Reasons for Studying Theology according to the Arguments, Doctrine, and Principles of St. Thomas Aquinas ✓

- a) From the Canon Law of the Church:

In reference to seminaries, which are expected to provide model instruction, the Code of Canon Law says:

The study of philosophy and theology and the teaching of these sciences to their students must be accurately carried out by professors according to the arguments, doctrine, and principles of the Angelic Doctor, and they should hold these inviolately.

(Canon 1366, sec. 2)

- b) Statements of contemporary Pontiffs:

Pius XI - Let everyone therefore inviolably observe the prescription contained in the Code of Canon Law . . . and may they conform to this rule so faithfully as to be able to describe him (St. Thomas Aquinas) in very truth as their master. Let none require from another more than the Church, the mistress and mother of all, requires from each: and in questions, which in Catholic schools are matter of controversy between the most reputable authorities, let none be prevented from adhering to whatever opinion seems to him the more probable.

- Encyclical Letter, Studiorum Ducem (1923)

Pius XII - These injunctions already given by Our Predecessors, We deem it appropriate to recall now, and if they failed

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anywhere to be heard, to promulgate anew. At the same time we make our own the warnings of those same Predecessors, whereby they sought to protect genuine progress in science and lawful liberty of research. We thoroughly approve and recommend that the ancient wisdom be brought into accord, if need be, with the new discoveries of scholarship; that there be free discussion of points on which reputable students of the Angelic Doctor commonly argue; that fresh resources be drawn from history for the better understanding of the text of St. Thomas

If these points are observed, as we confidently hope, abundant progress in scholarship may be expected. For a proper rivalry in discovering and spreading the truth is not suppressed, but rather stimulated and directed, by regard for the doctrine of St. Thomas.

- Speech to Clerical Students in Rome, June 24, 1939.

c) Statements of earlier Pontiffs:

John XXII - He (St. Thomas) alone enlightened the Church more than all other doctors; a man can derive more profit in a year from his books than from pondering all his life the teaching of others.

Innocent VI - His (St. Thomas) doctrine exceeds all others, with the exception of canon law, in propriety of expression, precision of definition and truth of statement, so that those who have once grasped it are never found to have deviated far from the path of truth; and anyone impugning it has always been held suspect of error.

Leo XIII - Now above all the Doctors of the Schools towers the figure of Thomas Aquinas, the leader and master of them all, who, as Cajetan observes, "because he had the utmost reverence for the Doctors of antiquity, seems to have inherited in a way the intellect of all."
. . . . There is no branch of philosophy which he did not treat with as much acumen as thoroughness; his discussions of the laws of reasoning, God and incorporeal substances, man and the rest of the sensible creation, human conduct and the principles governing it, are so exhaustive that there is nothing lacking in his teaching. It embraces a fruitful crop of topics, an appropriate disposition of parts, perfection of method, firmness of principle, cogency of argument, clarity of exposition, propriety of expression, and facility in the explanation of every abstruse point

Be careful, however, that the wisdom of Thomas be drawn from the spring itself or at any rate from streams which, flowing from that spring, still, in the certain and unanimous opinion of learned men, run pure and undefiled

- Aeterni Patris (1879)

to know!

II. C. 3. Reply to Objections

- a) "That St. Thomas does not employ the scientific method."

If by the scientific method one understands the ordered investigation of observable phenomena, certainly St. Thomas used that. He did not use only this limited scientific method; in addition he used philosophic induction and deduction. If by scientific method one understands merely the quantitative analysis of data experimentally observed and statistically recorded, St. Thomas did not use that because it was not pertinent to his philosophical and theological investigations. "He strikes a middle course between a one-sided emphasis on the factual at the expense of ideal truth, and a one-sided emphasis of the ideal at the expense of the factual - between a positivistic empiricism and an exaggerated realism." (Grabmann) Mr. Dewey places an antithesis where there should be only a subordination; his "two alternatives" do not exhaust either the logical or the real possibilities of relationships between the scientific, philosophical, and theological methods.

- b) "That St. Thomas is not of a truly philosophic mind".

Dr. Russell typifies philosophic enquiry as that in which the result cannot possibly be known in advance. That it cannot be known in advance by the philosophical method is to be conceded; that it cannot be known in advance by a higher, i.e., theological, method, is to be denied. The objector fails to distinguish when St. Thomas is arguing philosophically and when theologically. The very fact that some of St. Thomas' philosophical theses came under temporary ecclesiastical condemnation at Paris and Oxford, yet were maintained and vindicated, should testify to the independence of his philosophic enquiry.

- c) "That Aquinas did not know the limits of philosophy".

Mr. Mumford's difficulty likewise proceeds from a failure to distinguish the provinces of philosophy and theology. It is difficult to understand how what is "dumbly felt, passively experienced, intuitively revealed" can be made the objects of science, be it philosophy or theology.

- d) "That there is no more reason to study St. Thomas than other Fathers and Doctors of the Church."

For those who recognize the authority of the Roman Pontiffs and the Code of Canon Law, the answer is clear. For others, the sweeping synthesis, the accurate analysis, and the marvellous internal order of Thomistic doctrine should be sufficient persuasion.

- e) "That we need a modern theology rather than a Summa nearly seven centuries old."

Again, the directives of the Church should guard against an unhealthy modernism. While in the matter of the natural and social sciences, where new techniques and changed social conditions provide different objects for scientific study, considerable change could be expected, the subject matter of theology - God, man, the God-man Christ - places it above the matter of mere time and considers the wisdom rather than the century of the thinker. Admitting this to be true regarding the basic principles, method, and order, the twentieth century student of St. Thomas need not be any the less open to consideration of contemporary data. In the words of Pope Pius XII: "For a proper rivalry in discovering and spreading the truth is not suppressed, but rather stimulated and directed, by regard for the doctrine of Saint Thomas."

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III. How Study Theology?

Since this Introduction is concerned with the study of theology outside the seminary course for clerics, the observations on methods of study pertain to college students, adult laity, and non-clerical religious. ~~Not that~~ ^{No} we are to think in terms of a specific theology for the laity, any more than we would think of lay mathematics as separate from mathematics for clerics. Theology as a science is one, the same for Pope, priest, nun, and the man in the street, or the woman in college. Whatever variance in presentation is necessary should be dictated by the mental level of the student and the amount of time available for study; the content, order, and method of the science itself, however, must remain substantially the same. Knowledge, and especially the knowledge of God should always be sought primarily for the perfection of the individual; the particular use to which one may put it, be it as official teacher of the Church, Catholic Actionist, or individual lay apostle, though important, is a secondary consideration and certainly not sufficient to justify destroying the essential order of the science.

In this section, reference will be made to the procedures, found useful in teaching theology A) on the undergraduate level in college; B) adult laity study groups and groups of non-clerical religious.

A. Theology on the College Level

In approaching the theology course on the college level, consideration should be given to the following factors: 1) objectives of the course; 2) the student, his or her previous training and current studies other than theology; (3) the teacher and his methodology, which includes the factors of time allotted to and place given to the course in the college curriculum.

1. Objectives. It is most important that the objectives of the theology course be understood precisely at least by the college administration and the faculty. If the main objective of the course be merely more information about Catholic doctrine, then the notion of science is subordinated to that of indoctrination; if the immediate social utility or apologetic value of the matter be stressed, then the perfection of the individual mind is prejudiced; if personal piety is sought directly, then moralistic preaching may take the place of scientific teaching.

✓ a) The primary purpose of the theology course in college should be to develop in the student the habit of thinking theologically, i.e., by the use of the principles of faith and reason to arrive at conclusions regarding God and all things in relation to God. This intellectual habit involves: i) order, that is, awareness of the proper interrelations between the objects studied; ii) certainty, acquired through demonstration of conclusions logically following from the principles of faith and reason. This is the purpose of teaching theology qua science.

✓ b) Secondary Purposes of the theology course may be many, and by no means unimportant: for instance, to integrate the whole curriculum, to develop greater personal sanctity through orderly appreciation of the truths taught by Christ and the Church, to equip modern apostles and apologists by providing reasons for the faith that is in them. Granted an apt disposition

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and good will on the part of the students, thorough teaching on the part of the instructor, and most importantly the grace of God, these secondary purposes can be realized with the attainment of the primary end.

2. The Student.

a) It is argued that the student should not undertake the scientific study of theology until he or she has completed the courses in philosophy. While a complete formal course in philosophy is desirable as preparation, it is not absolutely essential; certainly it is not possible under the present set-up in the collegiate education. It is essential that the student have a grasp of revealed truths as contained in the Sacred Scriptures and tradition, which is had through the infused habit of faith. It is essential that the student know the first principles of reason; and that he either have, or concurrently be trained in, methods of right thinking. With these, the habit of thinking theologically can be initiated and increased, with due provision for explanation of specific philosophical principles when particular problems are approached. Though the student does not have a complete formal course in philosophy before beginning theology, it is necessary that the curricula in theology and philosophy be coordinated from the first year on, to provide the maximum correlation.

b) It is desirable, and should be expected, that the student have an adequate grasp of the formulation of dogmatic and moral truths as contained in the catechism for adults. If, because of lack of previous Catholic education, this requisite is wanting, remedial classes over and above the scheduled theology course should be instituted to correct this deficiency. Admittedly, the student thus deficient is progressing under a handicap; but he or she is progressing, and the handicap can, with due application, be removed in the first year of college.

c) Since theology proceeds from the supernatural principles of faith, a lively faith is necessary for progress in this science. The means of grace - prayer, the Sacraments, and good works - increase the habit of faith and thus dispose the student to understand better the science of theology.

d) The other general requisites for a good student of collegiate calibre - an open, inquiring mind, average I.Q. for college work, good study habits, and sufficient health - are, of course, expected. The open, inquiring mind is especially important; too often students enter college courses in religion or theology with the prejudice that they know all about their faith already.

Note. It would be well if students could have a formal course in logic before coming to college. Senior high schools could provide this, thus saving much college time and energy.

3. The Teacher.

a) The teacher should, first of all, know his subject matter, i.e., theology according to the "arguments, doctrine, and principles of the Angelic Doctor" (Canon 1366). This is best acquired through the study of St. Thomas Aquinas' writings themselves, especially his masterful synthesis, the Summa Theologica. Studying about Thomas will not do; one must study Thomas

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in the original or faithful translation, then the accepted commentators and traditions of the Thomistic school. The caution of Pope Leo XIII bears repetition:

Be careful, however, that the wisdom of Thomas be drawn from the spring itself or at any rate from streams which, flowing from that spring, still, in the certain and unanimous opinion of learned men, run pure and undefiled (Sacrae Patris)

b) It is very important that the teacher know also the mental level and interests of the college student. A careful study of tests and examinations, a sympathetic understanding of collegiate problems (curricular and extra-curricular), and especially the ability to relate theology to the other sciences and activities in the collegian's day - these should, through experience, bring about an effective and fruitful teacher-student relationship.

c) The method of teaching will, of course, vary according to the different types of teachers and students. In general, because of the directives of the Code of Canon Law and the Supreme Pontiffs, the presentation should follow as closely as possible the order and method of the Summa Theologiae, which was written for beginners. The divine science, theology, "cannot be distorted as to order or substantial content. It is not to be had through piecemeal, or selective, presentation of this or that mystery; it is a body of interrelated, tightly interwoven conclusions." (Terrell)

Since the aim of the course is to develop the habit of thinking theologically, the teaching techniques should be such as to provide active participation and intensified thinking, in and out of class; whether by stimulating lectures, lively class discussions, thought problems for individual or group research, quizzing aimed at thinking rather than memorized information.

Particular Methods.

Due mainly to the difficulty of making the complete English text of the Summa Theologiae available to every student, and for lack of a workbook based on the Summa, various alternatives have thus far been employed in the college theology courses in the United States. (It is sincerely to be hoped that the ever-growing interest in the Summa Theologiae will stimulate publishers to issue student editions of the text within the reach of the collegiate pocketbook.)

Several of the methods successfully employed will be explained briefly here.

i) As far as time allotted to the course is concerned, two class hours per week each semester is the minimum. Three hours per week is preferable, pedagogically, in that it gives more time to cover the matter; it is better psychologically, too, in that the students see that it is given due weight as a major course in the curriculum. Finally, it is quite possible to arrange, once the integrating value of the science be fully appreciated.

ii) As far as the order of material is concerned, it is generally conceded that a course for four full college years should be devoted to the theology of the Summa, one year being assigned to each of the major divisions

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of the text, namely, the First Part, The First Part of the Second Part, The Second Part of the Second Part, and The Third Part. While other sequences have been tried, the most logical procedure would be to arrange the curriculum thusly:

- Freshman Year - Introduction to Theology, the First Part of the Summa (God, Trinity, Creation, etc)
- Sophomore Year - First Part of the Second Part (Man's ultimate goal, human acts in general)
- Junior Year - Second Part of the Second Part (Human acts in particular - the theological and cardinal virtues)
- Senior Year - Third Part (Christ, the Sacraments, the last things)

When this sequence is followed, the student is progressively led from the better known to the less known with logical development of essential relationships. (For example, to adequately appreciate the doctrine on indulgences, one must understand the Sacrament of Penance; to understand Penance, one must know how the Sacraments are related to the Incarnation of Christ and the nature of grace; a theological understanding of the Incarnation presupposes a sound knowledge of the nature of God and the nature of man.) To start other than at the beginning is to destroy the unity of the science for the student and imperil progress through incomplete foundationing.

iii) As far as teaching materials are concerned, the following procedures have thus far been indicated:

- x) The Summa Theologica as the student text, probably in translation. The professor assigns readings, lectures on and promotes discussion of text, supplementing it with the Sacred Scriptures, accepted commentators and canon law where necessary, applying to current life of the Church and the individual.
- y) If the text of the Summa is not available to each student, the professor dictates or reproduces notes summarizing essential readings and propositions, amplifying and applying as above.
- z) A Companion to the Summa by Walter Farrell, O.P., each volume paralleling a major part of the Summa, is required text for each student. While not written as a workbook, A Companion is the best auxiliary text available in English. (The Theology for Laymen pamphlet series will, when completed, constitute another valuable text for Summa study.)

Several ways of using A Companion to the Summa have been tried with success:

Method No. 1 - Each Chapter of the Companion is divided by the teacher (usually about ten pages of text) for assignment. The student then is to develop the outline (preceding each chapter) or that part of the outline assigned from the text, the idea being to compare the author's outline from the text. This entails a number of readings of the text, in order

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to estimate what is essential. The development is made in the form of propositions. These completed outlines are collected before each class, and then class is conducted on that section. It consists in answering questions of students which have arisen in compiling the completed outline, and asking them questions to provoke discussion on particular points.

Method No. 2 - The students are assigned a certain chapter or part of a chapter to be studied outside of class, especially with a view to the underlying principles of the argumentation. The teacher, having prepared for discussion with study of the Summa Theologica as well as the Companion, proposes the principles in true or erroneous form as a basis for argument. By introducing difficulties and urging applications of the principles in varied situations, the teacher stimulates student activity and the development of the intellectual habit of reasoning from the principles of faith and reason to theological conclusions.

Method No. 3 - A four step procedure is employed, involving

- a) Statement of the basic problems of the Companion chapter and corresponding parts of the Summa in the form of questions (4 to 10 for each chapter);
- b) Determination of principles of solution, principles from faith (Sacred Scripture and tradition) and from reason, by student analysis of the Companion plus summary of related articles from the Summa (5 to 10 for each chapter);
- c) the actual argumentation or proof, attained through individual study, class discussion quizzing and some lecturing;
- d) proposition of the argumentation by the student either by speech (oral exposition in class) or writing (theology notebook or written assignments.) In preparing the list of problems, one or two problems involving application of the doctrine to the students' lives or the current scene are indicated.

Note: A Workbook for the College Course in Theology is projected which will facilitate the use of the Summa Theologica as student text, with references to contemporary literature in the field and statement of problems in the student milieu.

It should be kept in mind that any readings that are offered to the student should provoke his or her thinking, challenging the mind to seek a solution, not offering a solution ready-made. A textbook, in the common acceptance of the term, is not at all desired. Textbooks often inhibit thinking, rather than stimulate it. Any text used for reading should be somewhat above the level of the student; with the help of the teacher, a workbook to explain basic terms and procedures, and deep study, the student's mind is elevated through acquaintance with great minds. The question is not so much how to get the text down to the student as to enable the student to get up to the text.

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III. A. (Cont'd)

Appendix 1. The trend toward the introduction of the Thomistic theology course in colleges has grown in the past few years. The College of St. Mary of the Springs (Columbus, Ohio) and Rosary College (River Forest, Illinois) were in the vanguard of the movement. Other colleges which have initiated the theology course for undergraduates include: Caldwell (Caldwell, New Jersey), Albertus Magnus (New Haven, Conn.), Barry (Miami, Fla.), Our Lady of Cincinnati (Cincinnati, Ohio), St. Xavier's (Chicago, Ills.), Trinity (Washington, D.C., Providence (Providence, R.I.).

In the summer of 1945, two courses in Theology for the Laity were inaugurated at the Catholic University of America Summer School, Washington, D.C. The students comprised sisters, teaching brothers, and lay students.

2. On the graduate level, mention should be made of the School of Sacred Theology established at St. Mary's College, Notre Dame, Holy Cross, Ind., under the inspiration of Sister M. Madeleva, C.S.C., President. This pioneer venture is motivated by the conviction that "all who are engaged as religious teachers, as Catholics in the lay apostolate, have a right to participate according to their needs and abilities in the treasury of sacred doctrine handed down by the great doctors of the Church." To achieve this instruction, a course covering two full years and three summers is provided for Sisters and laywomen teaching religion in colleges or engaged in explaining the faith in lectures and writing, at the successful completion of which the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Religion is conferred.

3. Mention should also be made of the School of Sacred Theology for Sisters, which will be inaugurated at Providence College (R.I.), the summer of 1948. Recognizing that the Sisters have need of a deeper study of religion, the Dominican Fathers of Providence College offer to the Sisters "a series of courses in theology and allied sciences, which should form the basis of religion classes and should be the touchstone of all other classroom instruction." The theological course will be completed in three summer sessions; and upon successful completion, a Certificate in Theology will be granted.

4. Various Sisters' communities have sponsored summer courses in theology for their members over the past five or six years. Among these communities are the following: St. Mary of the Springs (Columbus, O.), San Rafael (Calif.), Rosary College (River Forest, Ill.), Our Lady of the Elms (Akron, O.), St. Catherine's (Springfield, Ky.), Mercyhurst (Erie, Pa.), St. Catherine's (St. Paul, Minn.). The Ursuline Nuns of the Roman Union have sponsored courses for their members during the academic year at the College of New Rochelle (N.Y.), and the Ursuline Academy, Wilmington, (Del.). St. Xavier's College (Chicago, Ill.) has conducted summer courses in theology for Sisters beginning in 1946. This venture has recently been expanded into a formal school of theology under the direction of the Dominican Fathers of the Province of St. Albert the Great, and is known as Theological Institute for Sisters.

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III. B. Special Courses and Study Groups

The movement for instruction in formal theology has made great strides in the field of adult education. It is not possible here to describe in detail the objectives and various techniques of the ventures in this field. However, mention should be made of several groups which have done highly significant work.

1. The Catholic Thought Association. In the season 1934-35, a group of Catholic laymen in New York sponsored an introductory course on "St. Thomas and the Modern World" at the Centre Club. This was followed by a four year course in the Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas. Under the direction of the National Director who represented the Provincial of the Dominican Province of St. Joseph, the Very Rev. T.S. McDermott, O.P., Director General, groups were founded in many cities of the East and Midwest providing "a) general courses for those who have neither the time for, nor the inclination to a technical course in philosophy or theology, and b) more technical courses for groups who wish exercises in Scholastic method as well as knowledge of Thomistic principles".

2. The Thomist Association. In the Midwest, the activities of the Catholic Thought Association give rise to the Thomist Association which has, under the Very Rev. Peter O'Brien, O.P. Director General and Provincial of the Dominican Province of St. Albert the Great, conducted courses in Thomistic philosophy and theology in Chicago, (Ill.), Milwaukee, Racine, Kenosha, Oshkosh, and Appleton (Wisconsin).

3. The School of Theology for Laymen. In the Fall of 1947, a group of laymen and laywomen in Washington, D.C., sponsored a series of courses in theology, contemporary philosophy, Sacred Scripture, Church history, and Apologetics conducted by the priests of the Theological Faculty of the Dominican House of Studies. The School is "for those who are seriously 'thirsting' for a better insight, a greater knowledge of the faith". There is no requirement of collegiate training; "all that is necessary is an average intelligence and a lively interest."

4. In addition to the large organized groups mentioned above, there is an increasing number of small study and discussion groups throughout the United States, in which five to fifteen laypeople meet, from one to four times a month, to investigate the science of theology. A Companion to the Summa by Walter Farrell, O.P., is very often used as the text. Many zealous priests have given their time and labor to the assistance of these groups. Unfortunately the demand for priest-directors exceeds the supply; yet not a few groups are doing remarkable work studying by themselves till a director is available.

NOTE - The author would greatly appreciate information on any schools, courses and study groups in theology in the United States.

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