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Towards a Theology of the Development of Dogma

Vatican II has undoubtedly stated much more emphatically than any other council before it that doctrine does develop and that one of the essential tasks of such a council is to develop doctrine.¹ However, it says only that doctrine does develop, not how or why.

An overly mechanistic theory has plagued traditional theology with its explanation of the development of doctrine in terms of the 'explicitation of the implicit.' Is not the development of doctrine, however, ultimately rooted in God's historical dialogue as a sacred happening with man? Is not this sacred happening intrinsically and dynamically linked with, and the cause of, Scripture, dogma, and theology? We shall first of all examine divine revelation as a communication and dialogue between persons. Secondly, we shall see that revelation is intrinsically connected to the *human* word which gives rise to Scripture and dogma. Thirdly, we shall see that part of the intrinsic dynamism of Scripture is a theology which has taken place in an ecclesial setting.

God has done far more than bequeath man a fixed number of objective propositions which contain the truth about him. He has given himself to us in Christ, 'for all the promises of God find their Yes in him.'² Throughout history men have experienced the divine inbreak in their lives and have been caught up in an historical dialogue with a God who was not only progressively revealing himself, but also giving himself. God's inbreak into human life is event, happening³ – a sacred happening accomplished by God for man, who experiences it as a saving event, adheres to it in faith, and orders his life according to it.⁴ Since revelation is primarily inbreak, happening, event, dialogue, a communication of truth is necessarily linked to it.

It is most important to focus sharply upon what God has done and communicated to us. 'The indissoluble, irrevocable presence of God in the world as salvation, love and forgiveness, as communication to the world of the most

1. Cf. 'Declaration on Religious Freedom,' in Walter M. Abbott (ed.), *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: Association Press-Herder and Herder, 1966), p. 677: '... this sacred Synod intends to develop the doctrine of recent Popes on the inviolable rights of the human person ...'

2. 2 Cor. 1:20.

3. Cf. Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 1 (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1963), p. 46.

4. Cf. G. Dejaive, 'Diversité dogmatique et unité de la révélation,' *Nouvelle revue théologique*, 89 (1967), 22: '... une vérité de salut, c.-à-d., une vérité manifestant une réalité divine à laquelle l'homme adhère par une foi qui l'engage tout entier et selon laquelle il ordonne et règle toute sa vie.'

intimate depths of the divine reality itself and of its Trinitarian life: Christ⁵ has been given to us. What more could be done or given? Nothing. Hence revelation is closed, 'because open to the concealed presence of divine plenitude in Christ.'⁶ It is closed, because the Christ-event took place in and for a community which now possesses Christ and his Spirit, yet open because this community must historically *live* his presence and develop its understanding of what it means to live as a people in full possession of the Christ-event.

Of course, the first community to experience the fullness of God's self-donation to men was the apostolic community. The apostles lived with Christ, spoke with him, shared in recreation with him, ate and drank with him, were taught by him, travelled with him. Although all of this seems obvious, the consequences of the apostles' intimacy with Christ for a theology of revelation and the development of doctrine have scarcely been touched. Precisely because the apostles lived in intimate contact with Christ, they knew Christ with a knowledge that far exceeded propositions and the conceptual. The life of Christ, his words, his gestures, his actions, and his moods penetrated not only the rational consciousness of the apostles, but also their subconscious, their preconscious, and their unconscious. Their experience of the Christ-event was rational, intuitional, emotional, and visceral. They became, in a sense, connatural with Christ. Their very beings were attuned to Christ's 'wavelength,' for they had tasted and savoured his presence.

For the apostles everything that Christ said to them, taught them, performed, or did was interpreted in terms of that larger life-experience given by living with him. The apostles would later preach a Christ whom they had deeply experienced and were continuing to experience through the presence of his Spirit. What they formally stated concerning Christ flowed from this experience and remained intrinsically linked to it. Rahner explains the psychological mechanism for this rather well:

The lover knows of his love: this knowledge of himself forms an essential element in the very love itself. The knowledge is infinitely richer, simpler and denser than any body of propositions about the love could be. Yet this knowledge never lacks a certain measure of reflective articulateness: the lover confesses his love at least to himself, 'states' at least to himself something about his love. And so it is not a matter of indifference to the love itself whether or not the lover continues to reflect upon it; this self-reflexion is not the subsequent description of a reality which remains in no way altered by the description. In this progressive self-achievement, in which the love comprehends itself more and more, in which it goes on to state something 'about' itself and comprehends its own nature more clearly, the love itself becomes ordered ... The progress of love is a living growth out of the original (the originally conscious) love *and* out of just what that love has itself become through a reflexive experience of itself. It lives at every moment from its original source *and* from that reflexive experience which has immediately preceded any given moment. Original, non-

5. Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, I, p. 49.

6. *Ibid.*

propositional, unreflective yet conscious possession of a reality on the one hand, and reflexive (propositional), articulated consciousness of this original consciousness on the other ...⁷

The apostles, therefore, possessed a simple basic consciousness of the Christ-event stemming from living with Christ, from experiencing his resurrected presence, and finally from the Holy Spirit. But, as the apostles began to form the early church, the needs of preaching, apologetics, missionary activity, catechetics, etc., forced them to reflect upon and thematize what the Christ-event was and is, and what that meant. The teachings of Christ in word and work sprang to their consciousness as apostolic needs arose. This forced them to strive to understand more clearly what Jesus had meant by his words and works.

The apostolic challenges prevented their love and experience from remaining blind. The richness of the Christ-event, however, would ever remain the source of their explicitations, so that what was being communicated was more than a set of true propositions about Christ. The apostles experienced the ambivalence rooted in every thematized expression: a reflexive, articulated, thematized version of the Christ-event enhanced the event itself, and became intrinsically bound up with the event, since no experience is human unless it is partly a conceptual experience.⁸ On the other hand, the conceptualization of their conscious experience was never adequate to express what the apostles actually lived and possessed, so that formal statements about their experience obscured the experience in the attempt to communicate it. In the apostle's effort to proclaim and communicate what they possessed, their 'theology' was born, and inherent in the Scriptures we find 'the authentic exemplary instance for the development of dogma in general.'⁹

Even a cursory reading of the Old and New Testaments reveals that much of the scriptural dogma has a history and a development. What for us is inerrant and normative, when looked at in itself is a tributary theology which flowed from a more primordial revelation happening.¹⁰ A chronological study of the Pauline epistles, for example, clearly indicates a development of Pauline doctrine with respect to church, parousia, the relation of the Christian to Christ's resurrection, justification, law, freedom, etc. At the root of Paul's doctrine is his experience of the risen Lord on the way to Damascus, which forms a sort of a priori matrix through which Paul will view most coming events. The a posteriori factors in his development of doctrine are his apostolic experiences (especially those wherein he faced death), the Judaizers, the Gentiles, etc.

As Rahner says: 'Even in the midst of the simplest kerygmatic statements

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 64f.

8. Cf. Leslie Dewart, *The Future of Belief* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966), pp. 101f.

9. Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, IV (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1966), p. 7.

10. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

there is already the beginning of theology: and this theology, understood as reflection and as derived from the most direct experience of revelation, is undoubtedly already given an extensive place in Scripture.¹¹ Revelation, therefore, is always caught up in the human word. In fact, the human word binds itself intrinsically with God's revelation, so that a 'pure' word of God is a myth. God does not give himself or disclose himself to a void. He gives himself to man who will receive him according to all that he is. God's revelation to man presupposes those unreflected elements, common to listener and speaker, without which there would be no possibility of mutual understanding at all. If God's revelation is to be revelation, it must be *heard* and *believed* by men who hear and believe as social, historical creatures and who accept and understand this revelation at least in some measure from their own conditioned point of view and within their own categories.

The Christ-event, the full self-disclosure of God to man, happened to the first apostles. Revelation, then, reflects the characteristics proper not only to the Speaker but also to the hearers who receive it and transmit it. Of course, the mystery of Christ ever remains the central and unique object of revelation, but it nevertheless must be said that Peter's, Paul's, and John's experience of the Christ-event was *somehow the same and yet somehow different*. In fact, the Christ-event comes to us partially according to Peter, Paul, John, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. These authors give us, not merely different facts about the Christ-event, but also different *perspectives* on, and *interpretations* of, it.¹² The Christ-event actually forced the bearers of revelation, not only to preserve and pass on the 'facts' of this event, but also to reflect upon this event – to theologize about it. We agree with Rahner when he says: '... the original statement of faith already includes that moment of genuine human reflection which makes it legitimate and necessary and which continues to be effective and to unfold itself in later theology.'¹³

Scripture, then, is not only the pure word of God, but also the word of man. It not only recounts and records brute facts, but also gives us an interpretation of these saving events. It is apostolic theology. The apostles reflected upon the person of Christ, his deeds, his actions, and his words. Much of what they have handed down to us is their true theological reflection, made in contact with the living Christ. Scripture, therefore, contains theologies and a development of doctrine.

Although Scripture does contain kerygma, theologies, and the beginnings of a development of doctrine, it 'belong[s] to that unique historical event of salvation itself to which all later proclamation and theology are referred.'¹⁴ Scripture remains the starting point and the norm for any future theology and dogma, precisely because statements concerning the Christ-event constitute an intrinsic part of the event itself. This Christ-event and the statements about it

11. Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, v (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1966), p. 61.

12. Cf. Dejaifve, 'Diversité dogmatique,' 17–20.

13. Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, v, p. 61.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 62.

belong together. 'They are what is handed down and not the unfolding tradition of what has been handed down.'¹⁵

The revealed utterance, as a dialogue between God and man, exhibits two aspects: it is at once both 'statement' and 'communication.' The apostles have not only handed down to us propositions concerning their experience of the Christ-event. They have also handed down the Christ-event itself, which lives in Christ's church through his power and spirit.¹⁶ Since the Spirit of Christ lives in vital contact with the church, and since the church is the sacrament of Christ's presence, the church lives in intimate contact with Christ in much the same way as the apostles did. The church, through its possession of the Spirit of Christ, its liturgy, its preaching, its teaching, its Scripture, is in a position, not only to state something about the Christ-event, but also to communicate the very experience which it lives itself. And precisely because the church itself lives in vital contact with Christ, it is continually able to explicate and thematize the experience which it lives. It is able to develop its doctrine; it must develop its doctrine. Just as the Christ-event as interior dynamism, plus apostolic problems and obstacles as exterior dynamism, gave rise to a development of the doctrine of Peter, Paul, and John, so likewise the church's life with the Christ-event and its apostolic obstacles force it to thematize and explicate the reality it lives. The development of doctrine is intrinsic to the church's nature.

The church and the Scriptures cannot be separated from each other, for part of the church's reality is the Scriptures, while the hermeneutical key to the Scriptures is the church. The church, under the guidance of Christ's Spirit, must continually refer to the Scriptures to understand the Christ-event, for the word is part of the Christ-event. The Spirit does not enlighten apart from the word. On the other hand, the Scriptures are the exteriorized interiority of the Christ-event. Since the Christ-event took place within an ecclesial setting, this exteriorized interiority cannot be understood apart from the living consciousness of the church. The exteriority cannot be understood except in relation to the interiority which it expresses. Scripture apart from the church loses its identity, its interiority, and is almost reduced to grammar.

More precisely, Scripture must be examined with respect to its minimum and maximum content.¹⁷ For example, if I, a faithful reader of *Peanuts*, read the statement, 'Charlie Brown lost another kite today,' ten years' experience of 'living' with Charlie Brown is evoked within me. That simple statement says so much to me. I receive almost the maximum content from that simple proposition. For a person who has not read the comic strip but simply knows that Charlie Brown is a comic-strip character, the same statement means nothing more than that a little boy has lost his kite. A minimum content has been conveyed.

In a similar, but of course much more profound, way, when St Augustine

15. *Ibid.*

16. Cf. Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, I, p. 68.

17. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 69f.

read the statement, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me,' more was conveyed to him than, say, to Carl Jung, who would also understand these words in some minimal, but valid, sense. Augustine lived in the church, wherein interiority and exteriority remain linked in the deepest sense. Just as human speech is exteriorized interiority, and the only way to understand what a person is really saying is to be attuned to his interiority, which can only come about through a certain intimacy with him, so it is with the word of God. The word of God is spoken with full force only in the church which *lives* this word. Only someone in contact with the Christ-event through the church's liturgy and preaching, his own personal prayer, etc., receives more than the minimum content. Unless one hears the speaker as well as his words, one does not really understand what he is saying, or receive what he is communicating.

One of the important factors in the church's development of doctrine hinges upon this distinction between the minimum and the maximum content in Scripture. The words of Scripture point beyond themselves to a reality who can never be totally exhausted in conceptual language. The word of God leads us to the reality itself; it exhibits a mystagogical character.¹⁸ The person's experience of the mystery and his reflection upon it are open to constant intensification and explication – which of course leads to a development of doctrine. We are not speaking about a development of doctrine which proceeds by a logical deduction from the statements of Scripture, or from the results of exegesis, although this is certainly one valid procedure. The process in question here is rather one wherein a person, by reading Scripture in a context of ecclesial life, liturgy, and prayer, becomes connatural in a certain sense with the Christ-event. Although the words are an essential means of introduction into the Christ-event, the words still remain the way through which the reality is attained. The more transparent the words become, the more will be communicated. In a sense, a paradox must be faced here.

The paradox is this. Consider a husband who has lived with his wife of many years, loves her very deeply, and 'knows' her very deeply. If he attempted to thematize what he knows, he might find this extremely difficult. His words cannot capture the richness of what he knows; indeed, they might even impoverish it. But who else is more fit than he to say who his wife is, if there were ever a need for such a statement? If he were skilled in poetry, literature, philosophy, logic, etc., he could communicate much about his wife, and in the very explication his love for his wife would change, becoming more ordered and more intense. The same can be said of the development of doctrine. When the need arises, the church must unfold the reality which it lives with and loves. It must communicate this reality. And when it does so, it becomes enriched. On the other hand, the explication in some sense also diminishes the experience and obscures it. All communication involves both elements: enrichment and impoverishment. The need for a development of doctrine which leads into that primordial grasp of the mystery where words are useless and needless

18. Cf. Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, v, p. 58.

is obvious. Any consideration of the development of doctrine must take cognizance of 'the dynamism of compression and simplification ... towards the single mystery, an intensification of the experience of faith of what is infinitely simple and in a very essential sense obvious.'¹⁹

Another aspect of development which is closely linked with the notion of the minimum and maximum content in Scripture is to be found in Rahner's distinction between what is formally stated and what is formally communicated:

It is possible for something to be stated formally (the above-mentioned necessary minimum sense of a proposition); and for something to be formally *communicated* (the total meaning of the utterance, in fact communicated and intended in the speaker's utterance, but neither by speaker nor by hearer always articulated reflexively and propositionally, or even capable of immediate articulation).²⁰

In Scripture, therefore, one must be aware that what is formally stated may be only a minimum of what is being formally communicated. Since the apostles were the original preachers of the word of God, which was eventually to be cast in a literary form, the apostles must be considered as messengers and transmitters of a message which was not their own, but was essentially God's. What they in fact passed on was far in excess of what they themselves were capable of appropriating, formally and systematically, for themselves.²¹ What they passed on was not only a message larger than they could comprehend, namely the Scriptures, but also a reality which they lived – the church.

When a person speaks to another person, he formally states something and he formally communicates something. The more the conversation pertains to the speaker's personal core, the less can his words be taken in their exteriority. The listener must allow himself to be caught up with the words in such a way that he grasps them as exteriorized *interiority*. Since Scripture is the saving word of God, uttered now by the church which lives the Christ-event and is the Christ-event, the non-believer who reads the Scriptures will be led, ideally speaking, to the interiority of the church, so that he can receive and live what the church wishes to communicate to him. It will be a sort of love at first sight, wherein the person knows his beloved in a preconceptual, yet full, sense. As the love affair matures, however, the interaction between living, intensifying, the experience, and conceptualizing it becomes more apparent.²²

If we examine the different literary forms found in Scripture, we shall see why Scripture leads to the interiority of the Christ-event, and cannot be appreciated outside the context of a living church. The language and linguistic symbolism found in Scripture is rich in imagery, poetry, and concrete terms, which are good vehicles for transmitting experience to a person, and also for evoking experience. Scripture abounds in connotative and evocative language.

19. Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, IV, p. 26.

20. Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, I, p. 71, n. 2.

21. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 62.

22. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 64f.

Scripture depends on literary devices which focus on experience *as experience*, in which a person is made connatural with what Scripture is attempting to communicate. This type of language depends heavily upon a prior lived experience, which can now be awakened through this language. A poem can communicate to us only what in a sense we already possess. In like manner, Scripture awakens us to our finitude and the infinite longings we have. If we have been living a Christian existence, it further evokes and connotes it. Through scriptural language, a person is more easily made connatural with the Christ-event. Viscerally, intuitionally, and rationally – although the first two predominate – the person resonates with this event. Through Scripture, a person is introduced to the Christ-event in functional and phenomenological terms. Although the ontological, ‘in-itself’ aspect is certainly present in the Scriptures, the phenomenological, functional ‘for-me’ aspect does predominate.

We have already seen that Scripture itself contains a development of dogma. Not only do the Scriptures record bare facts, but they also interpret the saving events which are still normative for our age, since the interpretation is wrapped up with the event itself. Since the Church’s doctrine has continued to develop beyond the scriptural development, we must show the objective connection which exists between the ancient deposit and a newly defined dogma.²³ By keeping in mind the functional, phenomenological language found in Scripture and the ‘experiential first’ of a culture, this objective connection will become somewhat more evident.

A clue to this objective connection resides in what Lonergan refers to as an ‘experiential first.’ Since the first apostles lived with Christ and in a very real sense possessed and lived the Christ-event, their faith sought *understanding*. Their effort to understand the reality they possessed, however, was determined ‘by the constants of a particular cultural mentality.’²⁴ They assimilated the Christ-event and sought to explain it according to their experiential priority – that is, that something which is first in the order of experience for everyone.²⁵ This gave rise to a ‘biblical first,’ that is, what we described above as primarily a phenomenological, connotative, functional, ‘for-me,’ poetic understanding of the reality which the apostles possessed.

As the church became ever more universal, it experienced its transcultural aspect. Different cultures began to live the Christ-event, and to assimilate it according to *their* own experiential priority. Nicaea exemplifies the transposition from the biblical first to the ‘patristic first.’²⁶

But what does this mean? First of all, it does not mean that the church, as the Christ-event under the ‘patristic first,’ totally altered its identity. It was a change *in*, but not *of*, identity. Essentially the church lived the same mystery, the mystery of Christ, but lived it in a different way. Peter, Paul, and John now lived the Christ-event *with* Alcibiades, Socrates, and Plato. Of course,

23. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 56.

24. Robert L. Richard, ‘Contributions to a Theory of Doctrinal Development,’ *Continuum*, 2 (1964–5), 512.

25. Cf. *ibid.*

26. Cf. *ibid.*

the Christ-event as now being lived was somewhat different from the Christ-event as lived under the first apostles, but what primarily changed was the way of understanding what was lived.

A young man, for example, is a certain person, and has a certain understanding of himself. While he is maturing, through meeting new people, loving more, and studying literature, philosophy, theology, science, etc., he changes and hence understands himself somewhat differently. He lives a continually maturing life. The experiential priorities in his life change, so that he views himself differently as he himself is maturing. Through all of this, however, while there is a change in, there is no change of, identity. The man changes, but remains the same person.

Doctrine develops, then, at least partially because the church undergoes a change in, but not of, identity. Nicaea points to the fact that a different way of thinking had come about. The question, 'what does it mean,' was being asked more sharply under the 'patristic first' than under the 'biblical first.' It would seem that Nicaea activated a tendency which is radically human: to take the connotative, the phenomenological, the functional, the relative, the 'for-me,' the experience-as-experience aspect or view of reality, and to view it in terms of the denotative, the ontological, the metaphysical, the absolute, the 'in-itself,' the experience-as-intelligible aspect. The thinking believer must sooner or later inquire about the intelligibility and meaning of what he is, lives, and believes.

When one looks at the concrete history of the development of doctrine, one can agree with Robert L. Richard that: 'This historical movement is at once from the relative toward the still relative; but also, and as involved in the movement toward the still relative, from the relative to the absolute.'²⁷ It does seem that much, if not all, of the development of doctrine has resulted from man's desire to understand his faith, first from one experiential priority, and then from another, but always with a movement in the direction of a priority which is not experiential, but rather is metaphysical and absolute. We are not saying that the metaphysical is not found in the 'biblical first,' but we are saying that the metaphysical aspect is minimal in the 'biblical first.' The human mind, however, cannot rest with only fact, data, imagery, poetry, the phenomenological. The mind must understand what it knows, and thus it will always disclose a tendency towards the metaphysical.

It might be objected here that metaphysical theology is only one of many ways to theologize, and that in many respects it is far from the best way. Two things must be said about this: namely, that *historically* the movement of theology has been toward the metaphysical, and that *in itself* theology must contain this metaphysical urge. The human mind is never satisfied unless it attains intelligibility, meaning, understanding – that is, metaphysical knowledge. The horizon of *all* thinking is metaphysical, 'innate' and acquired – though most frequently that horizon operates as a preconscious, prejudiced world-view. As Bernard Lonergan says:

27. *Ibid.*, 511.

... there is a need of kerygma, charisms, the gnosis of Alexandria, patristic thought, liturgy, prayer, etc. Yet a human apprehension of the particular and concrete is never an apprehension of the whole. To know God and all things in their relations to God the human mind moves from the familiar categories of intersubjective living to the objective categories in which the notion of being is potentially both completely universal and completely concrete.²⁸

Inherent in human understanding, then, is the tendency of the one who understands to give up his own view for the view, so to speak, of the thing as related to itself and to its causes of being. Every man has a world-view, an over-all picture of reality. Metaphysical theology purifies this world-view, by rejecting falsehood and establishing a new-world view upon a scientific foundation through critical methodology.

Consider a person who is both a poet and a metaphysician. On the occasion of a certain experience he writes a poem which more or less captures the experience. He is certain that this poem represents his experience, because he himself 'lives' the poem in a primordial way, and his actual poem lives and is sustained by this 'living.' As a metaphysician, however, he considers the poem under its intelligible aspect. He may explicate the intelligibility contained within the poem. As a poet, he presents his readers with his vision as a *vision*, his experience as *experience*, his musical words as *rhythm*. As a metaphysician, however, he presents his readers with his vision, his experience, his musical words, as *intelligible*. If another person were to read both the poem and the metaphysical explanation offered for it, he would detect an objective connection between the two. In both cases the same vision and experience have been presented, yet under quite different formalities. The objective link between the two viewpoints or formalities is ultimately sustained by a primordial, pre-reflexive certainty, by which the person knows the connection between the poem and its metaphysics *because he lives both of them*.²⁹

Consider also a patient and his doctor.³⁰ It is the patient who actually has the disease, lives it, and experiences it. He relates this experience as best he can to a doctor who does not have the disease. And yet the doctor is able by means of his science to question the patient, examine him, etc., in such a way that the patient's experience can somehow be transferred to the doctor's experimental, thematized point of reference. The patient's disease has been assumed under a new point of view, in such a way that in one sense the doctor knows more about the person's disease than does the sick person himself.

Consider finally the case of a very learned ascetical theologian, who is acting as a spiritual father for a very holy, yet uneducated nun. When this nun describes her mystical experiences to the learned theologian, from one point of view this theologian, although not a mystic himself, actually understands

28. Bernard Lonergan, 'Theology and Understanding,' *Gregorianum*, 35 (1954), 643.

29. Cf. Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, iv, p. 22.

30. Cf. Frederick E. Crowe, 'On the Method of Theology,' *Theological Studies*, 23 (1962), 639f.

the nun's experiences better than she does herself. His learning in one respect has given him a vantage point. Perhaps this is why St Teresa advised her nuns that, in selecting a spiritual director, if they had to choose between a learned priest and a holy one, they should take the learned one.

In a certain sense the theologians of the church parallel the metaphysician, the doctor, and the ascetical theologian of our previous examples. Theologians transpose the basic experience of the church as the Christ-event – the church as members living with Christ through hierarchy, charisms, sacraments, sacred writings, traditions, liturgy, etc. – and view this experience according to its intelligibility. Challenged by historical circumstances and in dialogue with the magisterium, the theologians, living, yet assuming an intellectual stance toward, the Christ-event which the church lives and is, have continually asked the magisterium: 'Is this what the church *means* and *understands* by its faith?' The entire church, then, carries within itself dogmatic development, for doctrine develops from the clarification of the believing consciousness of the whole church, living the entire reality which it attempts to understand and to clarify. The entire church lives the faith; the theologians thematize and structure what is lived; the magisterium gives its 'yes' or 'no' to the theologians; and finally, 'the Pope is the point at which the collective consciousness of the whole Church attains effective self-awareness, in a manner which is authoritative for the individual members of the Church.'³¹

It cannot be overemphasized that dogma is the exteriorized interiority of what is lived and experienced by the entire church as the Christ-event.³² To appreciate dogma, then, it is not sufficient to rest content with the exteriorized element, the formulation. It is quite true that the formulations have a relative autonomy, and that there is some merit in a certain amount of theologizing through strict logical reasoning and deductions. But if theology is to be vital, it cannot become a theology of a theology – in other words, theologians cannot become fascinated with the logical matrix which they have created.

In our previous examples we considered a metaphysician, a doctor, and an ascetical theologian. Let us examine the doctor and the ascetical theologian more carefully. A doctor considering different symptoms can ignore the interiority of a person only in so far as the symptoms do not concern his personal core. A doctor could possibly be a 'body mechanic,' and yet do great work on certain diseases. A psychiatrist, on the other hand, could not treat a symptom in comparative isolation, as a doctor might well treat a damaged artery. Perhaps a good heart surgeon could afford to be without a 'sense of man,' but a psychiatrist could not. As for our ascetical theologian, although

31. Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, IV, p. 34.

32. The reason for putting the point in this way is to stress somehow that the church as the Christ-event contains the Scriptures as part of its intrinsic constitution. Doctrine develops, however, because the church *lives* the Scriptures in its interiority. The Scriptures, as written books, can in a sense be called the church's self-expression or interiority. Doctrine, therefore, develops also because the books, as exteriority, can be further exteriorized. The emphasis, however, must be placed on the church as the living context, the voice of the living person who speaks and lives the Scriptures.

we did seem for a moment to oppose holiness and learning, he must, if he is to perform his task rightly, be a man of prayer and wisdom, and not only of understanding. The doctor and the ascetical theologian must continually re-plunge themselves into the interiority, the life flow, of their science. The more their science deals with the deeper aspects of man, the more closely they must keep their theories and learning rooted in man's experience. Without this 'sense of man,' this closeness to the roots of experience, this taste of interiority, their science becomes ripped from its moorings and assumes an objectivity and autonomy which it does not actually possess. The more a science deals with the deeper aspects of man, the greater the need for the 'scientist' to live the entire experience himself, to stay close to the experience, to plunge his objective knowledge continually into the experiential matrix which feeds it, and the more must he consider his theories as ways into interiority – ways which are constantly in need of revision.

A final point, which can only be briefly treated, is the relation of linguistic expression to our deepest and most persistent intuitions. The certainty of linguistic expression can live only by reference to a more primordial certainty which we live. This linguistic certainty, which differentiates a proposition of the faith from a mere form of words, is sustained by something more primordial.³³

Although any proposition remains inadequate for the task assigned to it, we insist that a very sharp distinction must be made between inadequacy and falsity. Any proposition is inadequate, but it does not follow that it must be false. '... since each truth of faith is in this way a moment of this movement towards the unifying self-communication of God, which is absolutely unified and utterly intensive, the assertion can only function when it is open to more than it contains, to the whole, in fact.'³⁴ The merely inadequate proposition is open to the whole, whereas the false proposition remains closed to the whole. However, since an inadequate proposition remains inadequate, even though open, it remains subject to change and revision.

Since any proposition – or any theological system, for that matter – is inadequate, when it comes into conflict with an 'erroneous' proposition it must be prepared to ask whether or not this 'erroneous' proposition does not 'belong to a satisfactory explanatory system correlated to a narrow set of data to which the orthodox doctrine is not, because of its *own* narrowness, applicable.'³⁵ That is to say, dogma develops in part because orthodox doctrine confronts an apparently erroneous proposition which forces the orthodox system to take notice of its own inadequacies. In so doing, the orthodox system is forced to develop a theory sufficiently broad to account both for the 'erroneous' system and its data and for its own limited theory and its data. Therefore: 'The higher synthesis S_1 would embrace the orthodox theology S with its data D , and the alternate theology S' with its data D' . The construction of the hypothetical S_1 is, naturally, the task of future generations. $S_1 \dots S_n$ would be

33. Cf. Anselm Atkins, 'Religious Assertions and Doctrinal Development,' *Theological Studies*, 27 (1966), 531.

an ascending hierarchy of consistent theologies inclusive of all lower-grade theologies.³⁶

If orthodox theology can regard itself as true, although inadequate and hence open to growth; if it takes more into account the entire reaction of the entire person to its scheme of thought; if it becomes aware that it too is prone to 'the fallacy of misplaced concreteness'³⁷ – in other words, that its emphasis is often misplaced, that although objectively true, it may still be kerygmatically misleading and clash with the affective tone set up by another system, and finally that the 'infralapsarian' nature of human knowledge and expression within the church may make some orthodox dogmatic statements, though true, yet rash and presumptuous³⁸ – then it will be slow to condemn, more open to a certain pluralism in expressing the truths of the faith, more ecumenical, and simply more open to growth in Christ.

In summary, then, our position concerning the development of doctrine stems primarily from Christ's pre- and post-resurrection life with his disciples, and from their responses to, and interpretations of, this. The total Christ-event is the church formed by Christ, who continued to be present to his disciples even after his ascension in such a way that the church *is* Christ, living with his disciples who live with him, preach him, and interpret him to others. Some of the first disciples' interpretations were embodied in the Scriptures, which constituted an intrinsic part of the Christ-event. Interpretation increases, enhances, and forms an intrinsic part of, the Christ-event. Doctrine develops, then, because the Christ-event develops. Doctrine develops, too, because the Scriptures show within themselves a *development* of interpretations. The Scriptures also lead us into the interiority of the church, where the minimum content of any of the Scriptures' formal statements breaks forth into an ever-increasing content, showing more and more fully what has been formally *communicated*. And finally, the very language of Scripture, the shift in experiential priorities from one culture to another, and the inadequacies of theories and of formulations of doctrine are further factors in the development of doctrine.

34. Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, IV, p. 25.

35. Atkins, 'Religious Assertions,' 535.

36. *Ibid.*

37. *Ibid.*, 543.

38. Cf. Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, v, p. 45.