What is Theology? Pt. 1

Theological Thinking:

Welcome to the Garden of the Real,

Or Really Thinking About Thinking

It is not good to have zeal without knowledge, nor to be hasty and miss the way. [Prov. 19:2]

Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults. [1 Cor 14:20]

Lecture Aim

This lecture intends to

- encourage us to reflect on the necessity of thinking in general, and thinking theologically in particular
- facilitate appreciation of the theo-logic of well-ordered theological thinking.

Introduction

The 'Introduction to the Course' was largely an exercise in initial throat clearing. We are going to begin not with the theological songs that we will be trained for through the course, but with some watching and listening, a moment of relative passivity as we watch some video clips. I say 'relative passivity' because I want you to do some work while, and after, you watch them:

- What kind of thinking is permitted within these environments on display?
- How does critical thinking begin and operate here?
- What need is there for critical thinking?

CLIPS

- *V for Vendetta*
- *THX 1138*
- *Mississippi Burning*
- *Star Wars, Episode IV: A New Hope*
- *We Were Soldiers*

There are several things that these clips have in common:

- Integration of belief and life

  Belief and life are fully integrated and co-determinative. This observation has several facets and implications:

    – beliefs shape life

    The things we believe can create various possibilities for action.

    – constructed reality

    Because the possibilities for action, or shape of agency, is formed by the types of beliefs we have our *reality is constructed*.[1]

    – Process of 'normalisation'

    The sets of beliefs we inhabit, especially if the beliefs are commonly held, come to look 'normal', and therefore 'natural', 'true', 'obvious', and so on. This is, for instance, how racism is not 'seen through' by those who learn to understand the world through the racist cognitive framework.

    – Theology as absolutising of this 'normal'

    Theology has to do with God-talk, and in this instance with that which is 'absolute'. It is simply hard not to assume that God sees things the way we do. Consequently, our perspective is not only 'normalised' but absolutised and therefore immunised from interrogative critique.

    – Communities of believers

    The common tendency of the modern period following the C18th Enlightenment is to emphasise the place of the individual in the process of cognition, including the activity of the individual. However, given that we are inculcated into stories that others tell about themselves and the world, learning our place within these tellings, we can see that we are not *individuals* in the processes of believing.

---

[1] As numerous linguistic philosophers argue, language itself is a highly organised and encoded system, and represents what is commonly circulated as 'truth', but truth as encoded and represented.

Instead we are considerably shaped and determined, guided in the process of learning to use language and conceive of our identity.

- Created 'other'

Given that we 'inhabit' frameworks or webs of beliefs that are significantly generative of our outlook on life we perceive and understand others (all others) in the light of our own understanding of ourselves. This entails that the 'other' is understood in a very particular way by the racist, for instance, other nations understood on certain terms by the xenophobe, and so on.[2] And it is not merely true of these more extreme perspectives. In this process, some frequently suffer while others prosper under the system of belief, even when that suffering is called 'sacrifice' for the greater good or in the sufferers' interests, and so on.[3] (The so-called 'underclass' who suffer under the capitalist system are frequently understood within capitalism to be necessary labourers, or those who, because of indolence, merit no financial aid.) There is an ethics of winners and losers.

- 'Mirror of the other'

Given that we 'inhabit' frameworks or webs of beliefs that are significantly generative of our outlook on life, and those frameworks come to look 'normal' or 'natural' then we are not in a good position to see them for what they are, or critically think them through. Only when a challenge is put to us from a different set of beliefs do we stand

---

[2] According to Edward W. Said, speaking of Orientalism (the process of understanding the 'Orient' through the eyes of Western imperialism) that "Orientalism is – and does not simply represent – a considerable dimension of modern political-intellectual culture, and as such has less to do with the Orient than it does with 'our' world." [Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin Books, 1978), 12] Thus "Orientalism responded more to the culture that produced it than to its putative object, which was also produced by the West." [Said, 1978, 22] In other words, while this ideology in some senses have a certain broad coherence with features of the world it purports to describe, it says significantly more about the world-views of its advocates. The world of the 'Orient' itself is largely rendered mute and thereby unable to resist or surprise the projects, images or mere descriptions devised for it. Abdel Malek announces that "On the level of the *thematic*, [the Orientalists] adopt an essentialist conception of the countries, nations and peoples of the Orient under study, a conception which expresses itself through a characterized ethnist typology … and will soon proceed with it towards racism. … One sees how much, from the eighteenth to the twentieth century, the hegemonism of possessing minorities, unveiled by Marx and Engels, and the anthropcentrism dismantled by Freud are accompanied by eurocentrism in the area of human and social sciences, and more particularly in those in direct relationship with non-European peoples." [Anwar Abdel Malek, 'Orientalism in Crisis', *Diogenes* 44 (Winter 1963), 107f.]

[3] Said, for example, claims that "the imaginative examination of things Oriental was based more or less exclusively upon a sovereign Western consciousness out of whose unchallenged centrality an Oriental world emerged, first according to general ideas about who or what was an Oriental, then according to general detailed logic governed not simply by empirical reality but by a battery of desires, repressions, investments, and projections." [Said, *Orientalism* (1978), 8] Out of this arose the notion of the imperial powers' civilizing the 'Orient': the "modern empire requires, as Conrad said, an idea of service, an idea of sacrifice, an idea of redemption. Out of this you get these great, massively reinforced notions of, for example, in the case of France, the '*mission civilisatrice.*' That we're not there to benefit ourselves, we're there for the sake of the natives … that these territories and peoples who beseech domination from us and that … without the English India [for instance] would fall into ruin." [Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (1994), 66]

any chance of perceiving who and what we are, and being repositioned to engage critically on our position.

- Personal disposition

Learning to critically reflect on, and especially to challenge, the 'norm' is not only a complex and difficult practice but it is personally disruptive. Only if we risk being honest can we begin to truly see ourselves and hold our and our societies' beliefs in some kind of critical abeyance for critical testing (psychology of belief and unbelief).

In what follows we will unpack some of these main points in order to see the connection between theory and practice, belief and act, theology and praxis. Unfortunately, it is too often the case that, as Nicholas Lash observes,

> The saint's heart is in the right place. But we cannot afford to ignore the fact that
> rightness of heart is quite compatible with a high degree of confusion of head.[4]

---

[4] Lash, *Voices of Authority*, 96.

Thinking About Faith Shaping Our Living

Pressures on thinking

There are various pressures on critical thinking in modern societies ranging from

- sinister forms (such as government propaganda in totalitarian regimes [e.g., *V for Vendetta*])

- to those of simple distraction (such as the entertainment culture and desire for consumer experience in consumerist societies [e.g., *THX 1138*]). According to Os Guiness,

> Modern attitudes about health and happiness are only one factor shaping contemporary anti-intellectualism. Other factors … are such diverse influences as advertising, television, talk-shows, and virtual reality.[5]

- Within the intellectual life of Western societies there appears to be something of a move towards a pluralism that refuses to imagine ways in which discriminating judgment (even if that be acknowledge to be at best partial and provisional) between belief systems can be made.

Thinking About *Faith* Shaping Our Living

Guiness notes that

> for Western evangelicals anti-intellectualism is much older than any of these recent forces. Its importance too, is far deeper.[6]

Pressures on thinking about faith

- Propositionalist Fundamentalism

    Modern epistemology regarded knowledge as a knowing subject's knowledge of 'objects', and this object-subject scheme affected theology:[7]

---

[5] Os Guiness, *Fit Bodies Fat Minds*, 10.
[6] Guiness, 10.

- o God's revelation becomes impartation of saving truths, statements of simple fact
- o God as object – object of theological knowing – the term 'God' becomes understood more as a proper name of this 'object'
- o Scriptures become containers of these saving facts.

This is a conception of doctrine as propositional, and if these propositions are given (i.e., God-given) then they can be facts possessable and protectable, to be handed on to others. But if all is *given* then there is little if any room left for anything *remaining to be given*, and therefore the place for critical theological reflection is squeezed.

- • Experiential Expressivist approach[8]

A second theological form is quite different in some ways. This is the feature of theological knowing that involves a certain kind of appeal to religious or spiritual experience. The model claims that God is known to the knower through the experience (Rudolf Otto appealed to the sense of the numinous, and Friedrich Schleiermacher appealed to the feeling of absolute dependence).

- o René Descartes – turn to the self[9]

Largely the Cartesian move to the self grounded the characteristically modern form of theological knowing in and through an appeal to experience.

- o Immanuel Kant – separation of faith from 'pure knowledge' –

Kant claimed to have made room for faith by denying that religious knowledge is grounded in pure reason. Instead, religion was located in the sphere of practical reason, i.e., ethics (Kant's God is the guarantor of the moral law).

Yet, according to Nicholas Lash, it is precisely this continued bifurcation of faith and reason that

> not infrequently encourages christians to be intellectually slothful, and then to justify their sloth, their incuriosity, as religious virtue.[10]

---

[7] Nicholas Lash, *The Beginning and the End of 'Religion'* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), 12: there develops in modernity "No time nor patience now for narrative, or poetry, or paradox. Theologians, philosophers and scientists alike developed a single-minded passion for pure prose. All knowledge is of objects, and objects are to be measured and described, as objectively and simply and straightforwardly as possible."

[8] At this point a clip of a scene from the film *Contact* might be useful.

[9] The 'turn to the self' laegely beings with René Descartes' claim "I think therefore I am". The only thing we can know for sure is that we are conscious thinking subjects, and on that basis we can build/found/support our knowing – in other words, Descartes is a turn to the self, to the *individual subject* as the source of immediate knowledge.

o Friedrich Schleiermacher – religion as *piety*, *feeling of absolute dependence*

Schleiermacher in the main worked with Kant's categories of reason and practice, but felt that religion was grounded somewhere other than practical reason.

Moreover, this basic approach which separates faith from knowledge either reduces, or finds it difficult to resist the reduction of, religion to the private sphere,[11] which is why the modern world developed dualisms or antagonisms:[12]

- faith as spirituality, and not politics[13]

- faith as evangelistic, not social work

- faith as personal, not social

- faith as personal therapy (or private fantasy), not knowledge of God[14]

- thinking as technical or pragmatic, not generative[15]

---

[10] Lash, *Voices of Authority*, 79.

[11] Lash: "the emergence of Cartesian dualism marked an important step along the road which lead to the exclusion of religion from the realm of public truth" [*The Beginning and End of Religion*, 106]

[12] Os Guiness: "The false antagonisms of that sort of either/or thinking have become a standard feature of evangelicalism, sometimes with the question posed falsely and the answer chosen wrongly. Most often we evangelicals choose a good thing but in a bad way because we choose it at the expense of another good thing. In terms of a Christian mind, we opt for heart as the more spiritual choice." [*Fit Bodies Fat Minds: Why Evanglicals Don't Think and What to do About It* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995), 32] Thus according to the C19th social reformer William Wilberforce, "Virtue excels over knowledge." [*A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians in the Higher and Middle Classes of this Country Contrasted with Real Christianity* (1797), cited in Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, Vol. I (Garden City, NY: Vintage, 1975), 198]

[13] Nicholas Lash observes "the rather glib way in which christians sometimes talk as if they had two distinct commandments to fulfil, the love of God and the love of the brethren, and that the fulfilling of each commandment occupied distinct areas of their time and energy. At our best, we talk as if these two loves could conflict (which, if it were true, would prove the atheist's point that the existence of God restricted human fulfilment). At our worst, we talk as if formal prayer was 'loving God', and sticking elastoplast on the knees of a screaming child was 'loving our brother'. Then we spend a good deal of time discussing how each of these two mutually contradictory commandments can be fulfilled without detriment to the other (we call this the 'prayer and good works controversy'). So far as I know, nobody has ever actually said: 'Excuse me brother, I can't love you at the moment; I'm too busy loving God'; but, in the framework of the discussion, the seeds are sown of even this interesting possibility." [*His Presence in the World*, 4] The difficulty of saying that we are to love God and our neighbour is not primarily a difficulty in saying 'God' or 'neighbour' but in knowing what to do with the 'and'. "There does not seem to be room for both of us. Either God exists, in which case man's space for living and developing freely is limited; or man is free, and God must go. … Christianity is unique precisely in its affirmation that, in Christ, the religious and the moral are identified; that in Christ, God comes to be in humanity in the measure that humanity is opened to his limitless grace. … If in the past we have often understood the *et* of *verus Deus et verus homo* as additive, if we have made God ino 'a' being, who can be set alongside other beings, who can compete with them for our attention, and so on, then this concept of God must go." [Lash, 5f.]

[14] Lash, *The Beginning and End of Religion*, 16: "it is the role of religion as a medium of truth that has been privatised. … What is excluded, by the dominant ideologies, is any suggestion that the business of religion is, no less than that of science, with public truth."

7

[T]he modern invention of the 'secular' carried with it concomitant *re*definitions of 'religion'.[16]

Why think about faith?

What we have discovered so far is that there are numerous, and in many places quite different, assumptions that have generated possibilities for inability to think theologically. These, combined with the points that follow, suggest that we should be very wary of sentimental appeals to simplicity (See Rowan Williams in *Living Tradition*, cited later) and making a virtue out of a kind of 'know nothing' faith.[17]

What reasons, then, might we have for offering theology as an endeavour for Christian thinking and a necessary task to be performed?

- We are commanded to (Guiness)

  Evangelical writer Os Guinness goes a little further than proof-texting by connecting the biblical themes of Evangelical anti-intellectualism and sin:

  > Evangelicals have been deeply sinful in being anti-intellectual ever since the 1820s and 830s. For the longest time we didn't pay the cultural price for that because we had the numbers, the social zeal, and the spiritual passion for the gospel. But today we are beginning to pay the cultural price. And you can see that most evangelicals simply don't think. For example, there has been no serious evangelical public philosophy in this century. … It has always been a sin not to love the Lord our God with our minds as well as our hearts and souls. … We have

---

[15] Guiness, 84: "Its extreme exponents believe that everything in worship as well as evangelism can now be engineered and enhanced. … Theology has given way to technique. Know-whom has faded before know-how."

[16] Lash, *The Beginning and End of Religion*, 200. Nancey Murphy's study argues that "the *philosophy* of the modern period is largely responsible for the bifurcation of Protestant Christian thought. … [P]hilosophical assumptions provided limited options for theologians if they were to do their work in a way that made sense in the modern world. … [F]oundationalism has contributed to the split between liberal and conservative theologies by forcing theologians to choose Scripture or experience as the source of this special, foundational class of beliefs." [*Beyond Liberalism and Fundamentalism: How Modern and Postmodern Philosophy Set the Theological Agenda* (Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 1996), 1f.] As Lash recognises, much of the responsibility for this lies with the churches themselves: "I do think that some of the deeper reasons are to be sought in a systematic failure of the Christian churches to understand themselves as *schools* of Christian wisdom: as richly endowed projects of lifelong wisdom." "Much of the irrelevance and ineffectiveness of christianity in the modern world can be traced to a failure on the part of christians, to ask the right questions about the relationship of their christian belief to this world in which they live." [*His Presence in the World*, 2]

[17] The C19th revivalist preacher Dwight L. Moody once claimed in an interview, when asked about his theology, "My theology! I didn't know I had any." [cited in Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Vintage, 1962), 108] Billy Sunday boasted he did not "know any more about theology than a jack-rabbit knew about ping-pong." [cited in William G. McLoughlin, *Bill Sunday Was His Real Name* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), 123] As Richard Hofstadter admits, "The evangelical movement has been the most powerful carrier of this kind of religious anti-intellectualism …" [47]

excused this with a degree of pietism and pretend[ing] that this is something other than what it is – that is, sin. … Evangelicals need to repent of their refusal to think Christianly and to develop the mind of Christ.[18]

However, this is a superficial response – it does not indicate why the life of the mind is important beyond the mere observation that God has, apparently, commanded and declared that it be so. This does not absolve the claim of arbitrariness and meaninglessness without further delving beyond the surface appeal of a divine command. This call for intellectual engagement, while commendable, may also not be sufficient in that the minds that many Evangelical Christians have developed have distorted their reading of the scriptures. Thus, Charles Malik's claim that "The danger besetting American [and British] Evangelical Christianity is the danger of anti-intellectualism" is a simplistic one.[19]

- The faith of all thinkers

  One of the problems generated by the dualistic separation of reason and faith is that it becomes less obvious that those who reason well bring assumptions to bear on the means, shape and content of their reasoning. In other words, the dualism masks the fact that in practice all 'have faith', so to speak. In reality thinking always involves an act of faith.[20] John Henry Newman:

  > When faith is said to be a religious principle, it is … the things believed, not the act of believing them, which is peculiar to religion.[21]

  Thinking is always shaped by assumptions and presuppositions (although these may well be modified in the act of thinking), and we need to learn how to identify and test those assumptions. Thinking practically cannot be allowed to

---

[18] Os Guinness, 'Persuasion for the New World: An Interview with Dr. Os Guinness', *Crucible* 4.2 (Summer 1992), 15.

[19] Charles Malik, *The Two Tasks* (Westchester, Il.: Cornerstone, 1980), cited in Noll, 26.

[20] Take science for example: "Philosophers of science such as Thomas Kuhn and Stephen Toulmin have argued that faith commitments play a positive role even in the sciences." [C.S. Evans, *The Philosophy of Religion: Thinking About Faith* (Downers Grove and Leicester: Inter Varsity Press, 1985), 166] "Science continually works within undemonstrable postulates; without them the scientific enterprise would collapse. At point after point, the scientist *believes* in order to *know*. He believes in the continuity of personal identity; in the evidence of his senses; in the reliability of the laws of thought; in the value of honesty in research; in the dependability of the laws he charts. These beliefs make demonstration possible, yet they are not demonstrable beliefs." [Carl F.H. Henry, 'Science and Religion', in *Contemporary Evangelical Thought*, ed. Carl F.H. Henry (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962), 262] Therefore, Evans argues, "In a sense, every person has 'faith'; everyone has deep-rooted assumptions, convictions and attitudes which color what counts as evidence for him and how that evidence is interpreted. This is the kind of faith which *brings to* the evidence." [Evans, 178]

[21] John Henry Newman, *Prochial and Plain Sermons* I (London, 1868), 191.

obscure the fact that our thoughts, plans, and enacted intentions make sense only in the light of convictions that tell us who we are.

From this observation we could make two types of claims, one related to so-called secular society and the other to Christians.

- o The theology of secularism

   Not merely can we ask whether an unthinking secularism thinks in a confused way, but whether in doing so it actually thinks through untested *theological presuppositions*. Asking this type of question once again prevents anyone from claiming to be free from belief and resting wholly on knowledge (the Richard Dawkins type). Lash makes the point that

It is taken for granted, in sophisticated circles, that no one worships God these days except the reactionary and the simple-minded. This innocent self-satisfaction tells us little more, however, than that those exhibiting it do not name as 'God' the gods they worship. In fact, whatever names we give to things, we worship things (especially ourselves) as naturally and as spontaneously as we breathe and speak. We have no option but to have our hearts set somewhere, to hold something sacred. The question is not *whether* we shall worship but in what direction our hearts might be set – for destruction, or for all things' peace and freedom, friendship and fulfilment? Some god or gods will hold our hearts, serve as the centre of our sacrifice – but what?[22]

It is for this reason that Lash claims that

We are spontaneously idolatrous – where, by 'idolatry', I mean the worship of some creature, the setting of the heart on some particular thing (usually oneself). For most of us there is no single creature that is the object of our faith. Our hearts are torn, dispersed, distracted. We are (to use the seventeenth-century term) polytheists. And none of us is so self-transparent as to know quite where, in fact, our hearts are set.[23]

The point is that "untutored, we set our hearts on *things*: on forces, elements, ideas; on people, dreams and institutions; on the world or on some item of its furnishing. We are spontaneously idolatrous."[24] In this sense, then,

---

[22] Lash, *The Beginning and End of Religion*, 49.
[23] Lash, *The Beginning and End of Religion*, 21.
[24] Lash, *The Beginning and End of Religion*, 50.

The secularity of our culture is an illusion, and a dangerous one at that. … [T]he displacement of religion from the realm of truth merely unleashes the horsemen of the Apocalypse, leaves our propensity for idolatry unchecked and unconstrained, with devastating consequences.[25]

o Christians with unchristian presuppositions

In the first place, then, we can ask whether an unthinking Christian faith thinks in a confused way, but doing so through untested and *unchristian presuppositions*. An observation of Henry Blamires in the 1960s suggests that this has been a problem with the failure particularly, although not only, of British Evangelicals to construct a "vital Christian mind":

Except over a very narrow field of thinking, chiefly touching questions of strictly personal conduct, we Christians in the modern world accept, for the purpose of mental activity, a frame of reference constructed by the secular mind and a set of criteria reflecting secular observations.[26]

American Mark Noll agrees with this assessment:

If evangelicals do not take seriously the larger world of the intellect, we say, in effect, that we want our minds to be shaped by the conventions of our modern universities and the assumptions of Madison Avenue, instead of by God and the servants of God.[27]

This fact seems to have been lost on Evangelical NT scholar Don Carson when he claims that

It is crucial that we learn the gospel and proclaim it. But it is also vitally important to understand that the people to whom we speak bring with them their own particular prejudices, backgrounds and biases. … [W]e must address the cultural presuppositions of our hearers so that we do not unwittingly obscure the gospel.[28]

Carson's set of claims makes a number of problematic assertions, not least one about the place of theologising in any and every host culture. Are not

---

[25] Lash, *The Beginning and End of Religion*, 110.

[26] Henry Blamires, *The Christian Mind: How Should a Christian Think?* (London: SPCK, 1963), 4, 7, cited in Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, 5.

[27] Noll, 34. Guiness, 14: "Failing to think Christianly, evangelicals have been forced into the role of cultural imitators and adapters rather than originators. In biblical terms, it is to be worldly and conformist, not decisively Christian."

[28] Don A. Carson, 'The Worldview Clash', *Southern Cross Quarterly* (summer 1998), reprinted www.focus.org.uk/carson.htm

Christians also equally culturally embedded, and the way the Gospel is heard, received, and then proclaimed to others coloured by that embeddedness? The church is too close to, and bound up with, its host cultures for it ever to be able to declare itself (its truth and truthfulness) over against those cultures.[29] As Graham Ward argues,

> Christian utterance is constructed out of the cultural materials at hand. It is not homogenous but always hybrid, improvised and implicated in networks of association which exceed various forms of institutional, individual or sectarian policing. Furthermore, since Christians are also members of other associations, networks and institutions, what is both internal and external to Christian identity (and its continuing formation) is fixed.[30]

This is something of a general observation, and an important one. But can we put any theological flesh on these bones? Are there any good (and Guiness' reason is not particularly good) theological reasons for integrating theology, or critical reflection on the content of Christian faith, into Christian life and practice? The last response, theologically, could be reformulated in an account of sin:

- Pervasive sinfulness distorts our knowing of God

    The C16th Reformer John Calvin spoke of the human mind under the conditions of sin as being a factory of idols. Here he was drawing on a long Christian tradition, particularly from the 1st ch. of Paul's letter to the Roman Church. The logic of the position is not that everything we do or think is wrong, but rather that nothing we do or think is free from the distorting conditions of misplaced desire. From the moment we are conceived we are educated in culture or cultures with dreams, desires, outlooks on life, etc., and these shape who we become. While we may 'escape' our host culture to an extent, we will always be learning how to think in engagement with some culture or other. Consequently, there exists no purity. But do Christians not constitute God's people, a society of knowers of God?

---

[29] He does later admit, against the grain of this, that "All of us see things only in part, and never without some measure of distortion", yet the force of this is somewhat muted by its being voiced almost as an afterthought, after his book's reader has been led to dismiss the notion of cultural conditioning [Carson, *The Gagging of God*, 96].

[30] Graham Ward, 'Barth, Hegel and the Possibility for Christian Apologetics', in Mike A. Higton and John C. McDowell, *Conversing With Barth* (Aldershot, Burlington, et al.: Ashgate, forthcoming).

Whatever else that means it *does not mean that Christians are free from the distorting effects of sin.* For example,

- o despite much Christian rhetoric suggesting that there may be a pure Christian group or individual, idolatry in the biblical traditions is not something that only others do, but is something within which *all* are in some way implicated under the conditions of living in a world such as this. It is for that reason that the writer of the *First Letter of John* urges the *Christians*: "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." (1 Jn. 5:21; cf. 1 Cor. 10:14)[31]

- o Paul warns the Corinthian church that, it would seem, claim a pure divine presence in their midst to remember that they are far from being at their consummating End:

  > For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. … For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. [I Cor., 13: 9, 12]

- o Confession of sin has been a crucial moment in Christian praying – for sins done consciously and unconsciously, for things done and things left undone.

In other words, we cannot claim to know fully or to have the divine presence in its consummating realisation presenced to us as purified experiencers of God. Given that this is so then the separation of critical reflection from the confession of Christian faith can be maintained only with difficulty. The critical reflection becomes a vital moment in the health of every faith that claims to be honest about itself, a moment in the call to testing that pervades the Old and New Testaments (see 1 Th. 5:21; 1 Jn. 4:1).

But within the Christian traditions there are several other themes that would force us to re-evaluate the dissolution of Christian theological reflection.

- • The richness of God

  Running deep through Christian traditions, particularly the most ancient ones, is the notion of the infinite richness of the incomprehensible God. God cannot be

---

[31] The irony, then, is not merely that Christians too often rely on a mistaken certainty (as in the Corinthians), a set of beliefs that cannot be sustained when the complexity of beliefs is tested against the 'evidence', but that they can assume a theological approach that mistakes God – in other words, their approach is sustained by a 'God' that exists in serious tension with the heart of what the Christian traditions' reflections on the scriptures have tended to confess about the God of Jesus Christ.

conceived or known fully, even in the event of God's giving knowledge of God's Self. Drawing on earlier traditions, the C16th Reformers spoke of the mystery and hiddenness of God, for example.

> Because of the nature of what we speak of, God's liberty, we do not come to an end. And when doctrinal language or the language of preaching and worship has become sterile or has come to be seen as a tight and adequate scheme, we have to learn the divine freedom all over again by what silences and disorients us, by the recovery of whatever it was that on Easter morning sent the first witnesses of the resurrection away afraid to speak because, like Paul, they had heard what they had no words for that were not empty. … When we find ourselves clinging to formulae (whether 'conservative' or 'liberal') and no longer asking whether the way we use them actually speaks about the transformation worked in Jesus Christ, we are desperately in need of something – in our culture, in our individual experience – that makes us inarticulate.[32]

Consequently, Rowan Williams exhorts:

> beware of being sentimental about simplicity. In all kinds of ways, reality *is* complex, and it is foolish to pretend otherwise. Whether that complexity comes across as intimidating or enriching depends a lot on how and in what context it's communicated.[33]

This is all highly significant. Critical reflection cannot be separated from human living, and that certainly even more crucially means Christian living. There are ancient resources from Jewish-Christian wisdom from which to ask serious questions of the modern bifurcation of theology and worship, thinking and living.

But there is something else we must consider before we move on – that critical thinking or reflection is vital to the health of good practice. In other words theory and

---

[32] Rowan Williams, 'Teaching the Truth', in Jeffrey John (ed.), *Living Tradition: Affirming Catholicism in the Anglican Church* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1992), 29-43 (35).
[33] Rowan Williams, 'Teaching the Truth', in Jeffrey John (ed.), *Living Tradition: Affirming Catholicism in the Anglican Church* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1992), 29-43 (33). Steve Chalke and Alan Mann tell of an incident in which a theological professor announced that "We need constantly to search for the real Jesus." An incensed student retorted, "If you academics in your ivory towers have lost Jesus, that's your problem. I've not lost him. I know him. I love him. I don't need to search for him." Chalke and Mann reflect, "However, as appealing as this kind of certainty might at first sound, … [t]o assume that we have got Jesus 'pinned down' or 'summed up' is not simply arrogant but stupid, and in the end inhibits our ability to communicate his unchanging message to an ever-changing world." [*The Lost Message of Jesus*, 18f.] [So it is not that I am here deliberately trying to obfuscate something that is essentially simple, but rather am encouraging a far more sensible and theologically suitable understanding and appreciation of some of what is involved in Christian believing.]

practice are integrated in a practical way too. There is a sense of this in the writings of Augustine:

> knowledge and love are held together: there is a coinherence of love and knowledge – we cannot love what we do not know, nor do we progress in knowledge if we do not love ….[34]

This all, of course, has considerable implications for the way Christians live, and worship as well as think since the intellectual imagination and life are not divorced (simply, although the recognition is highly significant, the way we think affects the way we act).[35] Thus thinking well is more than merely a matter of finding a clever vehicle for presenting the Christian message, as some Christian apologists would imply, but rather has to do with the whole determinative substructure of Christian life and faith. Kathryn Tanner consequently argues that

> One is not a Christian and then an interested social agent, or a social agent and then a Christian, but a Christian inevitably engaged in social action from a particular social location. In the concrete circumstances of life, actions and interests do not exist per se isolated from the beliefs one holds; nor do beliefs exist per se isolated from one's actions and interests with reference to others. Instead, one finds actions and interests that are already interpreted: actions and interests that are inevitably understood in terms of what one already believes, and the beliefs of persons who are already implicated in the politico-ethical responses that are part and parcel of a life lived with others.[36]

Thinking About Faith *Shaping Our Living*:

---

[34] Andrew Louth, *Discerning the Mystery: An Essay on the Nature of Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 5.

[35] According to Noll, Evangelicals have been ill equipped, and lacked theological incentive, to develop what Noll calls the Christian mind, by which is meant the ability to read the world theologically or "to think within a specifically Christian framework – across the whole spectrum of learning, including economics and political science, literary criticism and imaginative writing, historical inquiry and philosophical studies, linguistics and the history of science, social theory and the arts" [Noll, 7]: "it has been precisely these Bible-believers par excellence who have neglected sober analysis of nature, human society, and the arts." [Noll, 4] One telling example that he speaks of early in his book, through summarising the conclusions of Paul Boyer and Ronald Numbers, is that "evangelicals – bereft of self-criticism, intellectual subtlety, or an awareness of complexity – are blown about by every wind of apocalyptic speculation and enslaved to the cruder spirits of populist science. In reality, Numbers and Boyer show even more – they show millions of evangelicals thinking they are honoring the Scriptures, yet interpreting the Scriptures on questions of science and world affairs in ways that fundamentally contradict the deeper, broader, and historically well-established meanings of the Bible itself." [Noll, 14]

[36] Kathryn Tanner, *The Politics of God: Christian Theologies and Social Justice* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 9f.

Practically Significant Theology
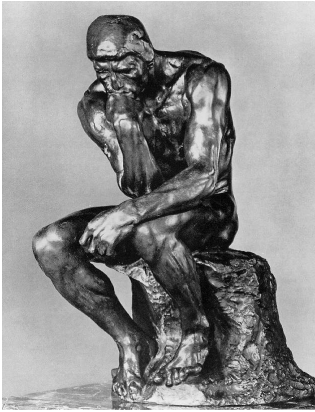
What difference does thinking make?

Theology is regarded by many as perhaps abstruse and abstract, far removed from the affairs of ordinary life. The theological thinker here could well be conceived after the manner of Rodin's statue of the thinker, as one who sits pondering abstract and speculative questions.

There are various reasons why this is an inadequate perception, and we have already considered several:

- Secular society has untested and unacknowledged theological presuppositions;
  - Moreover, theological questions are *actually* asked by many. *Almost everyone* has been puzzled from time to time by essentially theological questions as "What does life mean?", "Why do I exist" and "Is there life after death?"
  - Most people also have some kind of theology in the sense of a personal outlook on life, whether they are aware of it or not. A rejection of all theology is in itself arguably theological since it makes a judgment on what is important, worthwhile, or valuable.[37]
- Christians too are not free from unchristian presuppositions and desires;
- God is not an 'object' that can be fully possessed in human knowing, but a Subject who is infinitely rich and endlessly deep.

Theory and practice are not separable since belief and theory affect the way we understand reality and own identity and thereby affect the way we reason about what and how to act. As Alasdair MacIntyre observes,

---

[37] William Placher puzzles over the negative attitude to theology of many Christians – "What is puzzling about this attitude is that all Christians do theology all the time, for *theology* just means thinking about our faith." [William C. Placher, 'Why Bother With Theology?', in William C. Placher (ed.), *Essentials of Christian Theology* (Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 1-10 (1)]

> Every action is the bearer and expression of more or less theory-laden beliefs and concepts; every piece of theorising and every expression of belief is a political and moral action.[38]

Consequently, for a Christian to talk of Christian practice in a way that separates it from critical reflection on Christian belief is to allow Christian practice to be shaped and directed by values and desires that are un- or pre-Christian. Lash makes this point:

> If his detailed, day-to-day response to his situation is not consciously sustained and influenced by the word he has received, the word made flesh which he shares in the eucharist, then one half of is life permanently denies and renders unintelligible (and therefore 'scandalous') the other.[39]

We can unpack this point with a series of further observations:

- **Intellectuals' ideas have enormous influence on our everyday lives**. The very structure of our economy, our politics, our own living in the world are largely the fruits of directions taken by philosophers of the Enlightenment, and their ideas need to be theologically tested.[40]

- **Every institution can be changed through ideas**. Changes in thinking have led to the overthrow of governments, drastic changes in laws, and the transformation of entire economic systems.

- **Systems of education follow a society's beliefs** about what children ought to be taught and for what purposes. The values and skills taught by the educational system of a society thus reflect the society's philosophy of what is important.

In the light of all this theology can offer several crucial things:

- In relation to the church (1) – **Theology tests proclamation because of society's influence**. The question is whether Christian identity and

---

[38] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 58.
[39] Lash, *His Presence in the World*, 38.
[40] Huston Smith: "The dominant assumptions of an age color the thoughts, beliefs, expectations, and images of the men and women who live within it. Being always with us, these assumptions usually pass unnoticed – like the pair of glasses which, because they are so often on the wearer's nose, simply stop being observed. But this doesn't mean that they have no effect. Ultimately, assumptions which underlie our outlooks on life refraxct the world in ways that condition our art and our institutions: the kinds of homes we live in, our sense of right and wrong, our criteria of success, what we conceive our duty to be, what we think it means to be a man or woman, how we worship our God or whether, indeed, we have a God to worship." [*Beyond the Post-Modern Mind*, 2nd edn. (Wheaton, Ill.: The Theological Publishing House, 1989), 3f.)]

proclamation has been modified appropriately through cultural influence. According to Andrew Louth, since the Enlightenment,

> the mainstream of theology has been swept along by the currents of the day, and has, in a fairly direct way, reflected contemporary cultural preoccupations.[41]

- In relation to the church (2) – **Theology tests proclamation because of infinite richness of** God. As Vincent Bacote argues,

> The purpose of articulating intellectually coherent truth claims is not ultimately to achieve speculative flights of fancy, but to enable better appropriation of the faith.[42]

- In relation to the wider society – **Theology can clarify what is worth valuing, why, and what to do about it**. Socrates, at his trial in 399 B.C., maintained that "the unexamined life was not worth living". He found that nearly all of his contemporaries spent their lives pursuing various goals, such as fame, riches, pleasure, without ever asking whether these are important (or even useful). Unless they raised such a question, and seriously sought the answer, they could never know whether or not their entire lives might be wasted in pursuing useless or even dangerous goals.

Karl Marx once famously declared that the point of the philosopher was "not to interpret the world but to change it". When read badly this seems to be a call for activism shorn of theoretical reflection and guidance, and that was certainly not Marx's point (his articulated vision of the communist society shaped the manner of his political exhortations). No less for the theologian is theory separable from practice but is always thought with a view to (even if the connection is not always clear) living well, and practice is the practice of those who are learning what it means to be identified as Christians. Douglas John Hall makes the point well:

> It may appear defensive and self-serving when a theologian asserts, in effect, that theology matters. But if by *theology* one means the continuous process of disciplined and prayerful *thought* through which a community of faith seeks to understand what it believes and thus to be guided in its living out of that belief

---

[41] Louth, 6.

[42] Vincent Bacote, 'Liberation from the Intellectual Ghetto: Setting Doctrine Free to Embrace and Invigorate Life', *Christian Theological Fellowship Papers* (1998), 3, www.luthersem.edu/ctrf/Papers/1998_bacote.pdf, accessed 02-01-07.

(and that is what I mean), then to deny that theology matters, and matters very concretely, is tantamount to opening up the ever-ready floodgates of irrationality and mindless, boundless spiritualism. Worse still, it is to make a gift of that spiritual energy to powers and principalities that have vested interests in trying to deploy it.[43]

Thinking badly, in other words, has serious ethical and political consequences, and learning how to think well belongs to a healthy life.[44]

> [I]t is worth remembering that doctrine can be pressed into the service of inhuman and unchristian oppression – that it can be a tool of corruption and violence. The less people are enabled to take responsibility for grasping the shape of the world they stand in, the shape moulded by a self-sharing God, the more readily the distortion and manipulation of Christian rhetoric can have its way, whether in the anti-semitism of a French or Polish Catholic reactionary or in the bland pieties of Reagan's America; or nearer home.[45]

Within this scheme of understanding the *self-involving nature of theological performance*, doctrine has to do with *doxa* (praise), honestly testing for the truthfulness of the witness to God's economy with the world in wonder.[46] The pastoral function of Christian doctrine, Ellen Charry argues, is intended to shape character, to cultivate a taste, to generate and direct a way of life. "When encountering doctrinal texts, then, one does not merely encounter a series of propositions and interpretations of the faith, but texts which

---

[43] Douglas John Hall, *The Cross in Our Context: Jesus and the Suffering World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 3.

[44] It is crucial to notice that what churches preach as 'good news' is often understood by many outside churches to be 'bad news' – the problem is (1) not merely the need for better proclamatory PA so as to encourage people to realise the goodness of the news (like telling the oppressed that their suffering is good for them); but also (2) that churches need to carefully listen to the voices that would faqcilitate the testing of their assumptions and practices. The Gospel can too readily become something to *die* by in these distorted forms, and not so much something to *live* by.

[45] Rowan Williams, 'Teaching the Truth', in Jeffrey John (ed.), *Living Tradition: Affirming Catholicism in the Anglican Church* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1992), 29-43 (33).

[46] Karl Barth declares, "If anyone should *not* find himself astonished and filled with wonder when he becomes involved in one way or another with theology, he would be well advised to consider once more, from a certain remoteness and without prejudice, what is involved in this undertaking ... When he reconsiders the subject, however, such a man might find that astonishment wells up within him anew, or perhaps even for the first time. ... A quite specific *astonishment* stands at the beginning of every theological perception, inquiry, and thought, in fact at the root of every theological word. This astonishment is indispensable if theology is to exist and be perpetually renewed as a modest, free, critical, and happy science." [*Evangelical Theology: An Introduction*, trans. Grover Foley (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1964), 53f.]

have the intent of doing something to, for, or with the reader."[47] So Rowan Williams claims that "doctrine is a set of instructions for performance."[48] In other words,

Telling the truth about both God and humanity is thus, predictably, inseparable from becoming holy: enacting our doctrine, realizing that doctrine itself is simply the deposit of a transforming of relationship to God and God's world.[49]

The responsibility for being a theologian (theo-logy having to do with God-talk, *theos logia*) rests not with some professional academic elite but with the body of those calling themselves God's people (i.e., those who use God-talk), as Lash argues:

Although not every Christian is called upon to be a 'professional' theologian, it is nevertheless true that if his general thinking and activity is to be 'theological' in the wider sense, then in the measure in which his circumstances and education allow, he must be engaged in the work of formal theology, in at least the same way that he is engaged (be it only through reading the *Guardian*) in contemporary scientific, political, or economic thinking.[50]

Provisionally Concluding Comments

---

[47] Bacote, 3f.

[48] Rowan Williams, 'Teaching the Truth', in Jeffrey John (ed.), *Living Tradition: Affirming Catholicism in the Anglican Church* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1992), 29-43 (36).

[49] Rowan Williams, 'Teaching the Truth', in Jeffrey John (ed.), *Living Tradition: Affirming Catholicism in the Anglican Church* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1992), 29-43 (42). "This divorce of theoretical from practical concerns in doctrinal exegesis has been maintained at a high price: Intellectual concerns have obscured the moral shaping function of Christian beliefs. Yet, a careful examination of many dogmatic treatises reveals concern for the moral effects of doctrine alongside coherence and intelligibility. Where the two are found together, ignoring the moral and pastoral questions in favor of those of coherence and intelligibility distorts the [earlier Christian] author's intention and robs the church of one of its central tasks: the formation of character. … [T]hey viewed dogmatic explication of the faith as an instrument of individual and societal formation and transformation, as an instrument of moral pedagogy." [Ellen T. Charry, 'The Moral Function of Doctrine', 33]

[50] Lash, *His Presence in the World*, 37. "It is, of course, perfectly true that erudition, or even literacy, are not necessarily conditions of that aspect of holiness which is Christian wisdom. Nevertheless, it is never virtuous, nor is the refusal to engage all the resources of the mind and heart at the service of faith's quest for understanding. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that devout and educated Christians who refuse to acquire a theological competence cognate to the general level of their education simply do not care sufficiently to seek some understanding of that Word through whom all things were made, into whose light we have been called, and which will set us free." [Lash, *Holiness, Speech and Silence: Reflections on the Question of God*, 5]

I have already questioned the modern separation of faith and knowledge, something that occurs in the Enlightenment and would have been largely incomprehensible to those inhabiting the Christian traditions prior the modern period.

Take Anselm of Canterbury's (1033-1109) classic claim:

– faith is "faith seeking understanding" (*fides quarens intellectum*).[51]

Now that means that theology operates within the so-called 'circle of faith', trying to understand what faith is all about – in other words, what is it faith in?, why is it worthy of having faith in?, and so on. Among other things, this entails that faith is a rational enterprise, one involving the interpenetration of what we might call reason, desire and ethics.[52]

However, the very fact that we have to address these matters at the beginning of a theology course and defend theologically the attempt to reflect critically on the Christian faith suggests that something has gone wrong with theology, with reason, and with faith in the recent imagination. As we have seen, there are several pressures on thinking in contemporary society, thinking theologically, and relating theological thinking and everyday practice. In that environment Christian theology, life and practice become disordered by problematic disjunctions. Yet William Placher rightly puzzles over the negative attitude to theology of many Christians –

> What is puzzling about this attitude is that all Christians do theology all the time,
>
> for *theology* just means thinking about our faith.[53]

Through this course we will have that in the background as we explore what it means for Christian traditions to confess faith in the Triune God.

Theology, then, will involve a

- o Transforming outlook – learn to *see/think* things differently
- o Transforming desire – learn to *feel* differently

---

[51] The original title of Anselm's *Proslogion* (address) was *fides quaerens intellectum* ('faith seeking understanding').

[52] After all, faith is a faith, belief or trust *in* something or someone, and that means that faith has an 'object' that can be reflected on (philosophers note that faith or belief in includes a faith or belief *that* such and such is the case). Consequently, we cannot get away from questions of doctrine – even if one was to claim that there is nothing to be said of God then that is itself a claim about God and therefore a doctrinal claim that requires justification and critical testing.

[53] William C. Placher, 'Why Bother With Theology?', in William C. Placher (ed.), *Essentials of Christian Theology* (Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 1-10 (1).

o Transforming character – learn to *be* differently

o Transforming practice – learn to *act* differently

Theology is a search for understanding (critical self-description), then, and involves a form of doctrinal therapy in service to and for the health of the church (theology as such can never be at the centre of Christian life and worship but always stands, so to speak, nearer the margins – as critical reflection and pressure towards understanding and therefore appropriate worship). According to Stanley Hauerwas,

> Theology should be a form of discourse that is meant to help us to live more
>
> faithfully as Christians who are part of that community called Church.[54]

It is performed as the self-involving skill or craft[55] of an habitual disciplining of the life of the communal Christian mind (which is determinative of the forms of Christian living – i.e., Christians should live in certain ways because of what they confess to concerning the ways of God with the world), and fundamentally involves (self-conscious and self-)critical reflections on the 'raw' materials Christians interpret: the scriptural witness, the extended conversation over how the scriptural witness is to be interpreted, the relation of the interpretation of the scriptural witness to the interpretation of our experiences of grace, and the relation of the interpretation of the scriptural witness to the broader interpretation of the world and other ways of thinking that are done.

Engaging in this conversation, debate or argument that constitutes theology may well be a painful experience. It may call into question our unexamined assumptions, our most cherished beliefs, our very place in the conversation and within the 'wider world', and so on.[56] But, at least if one listens to theologians involved in thinking through the experience of idols, it is an interrogatory task that must be done if we are to examine and celebrate our faith (and that goes for those who do not claim any particular version of religious affiliation).

That means, consequently, that theology is *not an exercise in the quest for certainty*, and it is certainly not the articulation of a certainty *already achieved* or *given*. It is equally,

---

[54] Stanley Hauerwas, *Unleashing the Scripture: Freeing the Bible from Captivity to America* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 8.

[55] MacIntyre, *The Rival \\AZ`4E\\AZ`4EVersions*, 65: "To share in the rationality of a craft requires sharing in the contingencies of its history, understanding its story as one's own, and finding a place for oneself as a character in the enacted dramatic narrative which is that story so far."

[56] Lash, *His Presence in the World*, 18f.: "In other words, to put it rather crudely, any discovery of God that comes from the 'outside' (accepting someone else's God) is not a discovery of God at all. The road to belief is not a process of acquiring facility in manipulating the terms of religious discourse. It is the long, dark, painful road of exposure, my exposure, to reality, my reality and the mystery which grounds it."

less a search for theological 'facts' about God and God's world than about the business of asking questions, many questions (and learning to discern which ones are *appropriate* to its task),[57] in order to clear the appropriate space for the hearing of the critical and life-giving question in Jesus Christ that God sets to the world.[58]   Consequently, as a human enterprise of self-reflective witness to the Self-Givingness of God it is fragile, provisional, partial, and always in the process of critical self-reflection, as Karl Barth rightly admits:

> Even the most able speech of the most living faith is a human work. And this means that the community can go astray in its proclamation of the Word of God, in its interpretation of biblical testimony, and finally in its own faith. Instead of being helpful, it can be obstructive to God's cause in the world by an understanding that is partly or wholly wrong, by devious or warped thought, by silly or too subtle speech.[59]

But this entails that for the sake of clarification we need to move a little further before we launch into the business of material reflection on the themes of the witness of the Creed, by thinking about what Christians mean when they speak of 'tradition'.

---

[57] The discerning of what is appropriate and inappropriate for the listening, engaging, and reflecting that theology is and does is what underlies the provisional distinctions between orthodoxy and heterodoxy/heresy (on this see, for example, the early chapters in Karl Barth, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century* and *Evangelical Theology*).

[58] Lash: "it is sometimes true that the best way of getting at the right question is to ask the wrong one". [*His Presence in the World*, 7]

[59] Barth, *Evangelical Theology*, 41.

Bibliography

Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction*, trans. Grover Foley (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1964).

Ellen T. Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds*

Ellen T. Charry, 'The Moral Function of Doctrine', *Theology Today* 49.1 (1992), 31-45.

Trevor Hart, *Faith Thinking*

Stanley Hauerwas, 'Doctrine and Ethics', in *Sanctify Them in the Truth*, ch. 1.

Gareth Jones, *Christian Theology*, Cambridge: Polity, 1999), ch.1, 'Christian theology and Christian faith'.

Nicholas Lash, *His Presence in the World* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1968), ch. 1 'What on Earth is Theology?'.

George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Westminster Press, 1984).

Gerard Loughlin, 'The basis and authority of doctrine', in Colin Gunton (ed.), *The Cambridge companion to Christian Doctrine* (Cambridge: CUP, 1997).

James W. McClendon, *Systematic Theology 2* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), ch.1, 'What is doctrine?'.

Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), ch.1, 'The task of theology'.

David Tracy, 'Theological Method' in P. Hodgson and R. King (eds.) *Christian Theology* (London: SPCK, 1985).

Rowan Williams, *On Christian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), ch. 1 'Theological Integrity'.

Other Reading

Vincent Bacote, 'Liberation from the Intellectual Ghetto: Setting Doctrine Free to Embrace and Invigorate Life', *Christian Theological Fellowship Papers* (1998), www.luthersem.edu/ctrf/Papers/1998_bacote.pdf, accessed 02-01-07.

Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality* (New York: Anchor, 1966).

Ellen T. Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

Stanley J. Grenz and John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville, Kent.: Westminster John Knox, 2001), Part. One.

Colin E. Gunton, *Enlightenment and Alienation*

I. Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

George Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace*, ch. 13.

Nicholas Lash, *Voices of Authority* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1976), ch. 6.

A.E. McGrath, *The Genesis of Doctrine* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).

A.E. McGrath, *Understanding Doctrine* (London: H & S, 1990).

Nancey C. Murphy, *Beyond Liberalism and Fundamentalism: How Modern and Postmodern Philosophy Set the Theological Agenda* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996)

Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*

J. Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture* (Cambridge: Polity, 1990), ch.1.

David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth* (Leicester: IVP, 1993).

David F. Wells, *God in the Wasteland* (Leicester: IVP, 1994).