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THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS.

Yale University, Ph. D., 1965
Religion

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PREVIEW

FREEDOM and METHOD

An Essay in Comparative Theological Analysis

by

Walter Holden Capps, II

1965

A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Yale University in Candidacy for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Precis

Freedom and Method is an analytical approach to the problem of theological "unity and diversity". Noting that this problem cannot be clarified by a simple comparison and contrast of selected doctrinal statements, but that systematisation is its locus and source, this study seeks a methodological basis for discerning the formal and contentual elements implicit in theological argumentation. Its direction is twofold: 1) it develops a method of reflexive analysis by which the regulative characteristics of given patterns of formal coherence might be disclosed; 2) it employs that method in undertaking an exercise in comparative analysis of three representative essays on human freedom, i.e. Irenaeus' Adversus Haereses, Thomas' "De Voluntario et Involuntario", and Luther's Tractatus de Libertate Christiani.

Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason is utilized as the precedent for this application of critical reflexivity to dogmatic history. Its fittingness derives from a cultivation of a distinction between its author's analysis of a priori-synthetic knowledge and its implicit Weltanschauung. This methodological use of the Critique refers theological reflection to Kant's discussion of the function of "logical principles" and "interests of reason" in formal systematisation. By means also of other formal studies, Freedom and Method develops this use for comparative purposes, and nurtures a sensitivity to the structural peculiarities of variant theological patterns.

Because its articulation disposes reflection toward one or another formal pattern, and by virtue of its perennial theological interest, the concept of human freedom qualifies as the focal point of this comparative analysis of respective systematic "principles" and "interests". Irenaeus uses a comprehensive principle to associate freedom with the fulness-directed motion of the normative process by which God determines the course of the world. Thomas, seeking the distinctiveness of the human creature, understands freedom as the spontaneity of that organism which is characterized by the facultas voluntatis et rationis within a network of interaction. Luther, distinguishing two loci of power and authority, and assessing their proper and illegitimate claims upon and services toward each other, refers freedom to the unrestrained rule of "the one thing needful".

The three chartable systematic formulations of freedom possess distinctive influences upon the selection and the topics which are brought within range of concern. Exhibiting variant "principles" and "interests", the three patterns nevertheless reflect a fundamental structural unity. Each system is bipolar, and each identifies its principle of orientation with the locus of divine determination of the world. Each fashions that fundamental bipolarity, though from divergent starting points, according to the asymmetrical relation which is conceived between God and the world.

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Neither theologians nor speculative philosophers can afford to overlook the religious questions which sometimes arise in the course of speculative inquiry and the speculative questions which sometimes arise in the course of religious inquiry, or to mistake one for the other.¹

By parallel consent, Christian theological reflection and the problem of "unity and diversity" belong together. Their long affiliation has been fostered by their mutual dependence upon the relation of the One to the Many. Theological reflection utilizes that relation for its conception of God and the world. "Unity and diversity" is implicit in the alternative systems of coherence which a Christian understanding of that relation requires. This is a study which seeks a basis for assessing the appearance, integrity, and shape of a selected three of those differentiable systems within the concordance upon which each depends. This is an essay on freedom.

Christian theological reflection, in both historic and contemporary assemblage, is characterized by its variety of vistas, alternative points of departure, and an apparent perennial procession of rival systems. Such systematic diversity does not appear to be a mere temporary accretion,

¹ William A. Christian, "Some Uses of Reason," in The Relevance of Whitehead, ed. Ivor Leclerc (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1961), p. 89.

but must be regarded as an evident and perhaps fundamental and permanent feature of theology. But, theological variety is recognizable only by virtue of the presence of some form of unity. To paraphrase the Platonic argument that sheer change is unknowable: were there nothing but diversity, there would be nothing at all, and "diversity" would be non-existent; and, were there nothing but uniformity, then there would be nothing at all, and uniformity would be unintelligible. The question is not diversity as such, nor unity as such, but rather the possibility and basis of a rapport between the two.¹

Despite the great moment being attached to the question in the current era, the interest in the location of "unity and diversity" within the theological tradition is not a new one. In the New Testament itself this interest can be discerned in the series of warnings against "dissensions" and "dangerous innovations".² In somewhat later guise it was expressed as a claim concerning the authenticity of a particular tradition as opposed to those which possessed not the same degree of 'successio' with

¹ Bernard Lambert, Le Probleme Oecumenique (Paris: Editions du Centuries, 1962), Vol. I, p. 69.

² See I Corinthians 1.10; I Timothy 6.20; Philippians 2.2 ff; Romans 12.18; and Jude 3. D. B. Reynders, in his "Paradosis. Le progres de l'idee de tradition jusqu'a saint Irenee," in Recherches de Theologie Ancienne et Medievale, Vol. V (1933), pp. 155-191, also discusses the way in which "tradition" is understood in Acts 16.4; I Corinthians 11.2; II Thessalonians 2.15, and 3.16; and II Peter 2.21. Galatians 1.9-12; I Thessalonians 4.1; and Colossians 2.6-8 are also relevant.

the beginning,¹ or as an attempt to establish as normative what had been believed in all places, at all times, and by everyone. In each of these early instances, the problem of "unity and diversity" is closely associated with the problem of authority: the ability to demonstrate continuity is almost without exception (but with refinement) identical to an argument for validity and justification.²

But the problem of "unity and diversity" is being approached in a new way in the contemporary era. Indeed, it is being recognized that while the problem will always retain a close association with the problem of authority it is nevertheless an issue whose persistence does not depend upon other auspices. Though

¹ On the question of the interest in doctrinal unity and diversity in the apostolic fathers see: Oscar Cullmann, Die Tradition (Zurich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1954); P. D. Van den Kynde, Les Normes de la Doctrine Chretienne selon la Litterature Patristique des Trois Premiers Siecles (Paris, 1933); J. Rauft, Der Ursprung des Kathelischen Traditionsprinzips (Warzburg: K. Triltsch, 1931); R. C. P. Hanson, Tradition in the Early Church (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962); J. N. Bakhuizen van den Brink, "Tradition in Theologischen Sinne," in Vigiliae Christianae. Vol. XIII, No. 2 (1959), pp. 65-86; Einar Melland, "Le development de l'idee de succession apostolique," in Revue D'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses. Vol. XXXIV (1954), pp. 1-29; W. den Boer, "Hermeneutic Problems in Early Christian Literature," in Vigiliae Christianae. Vol. I, No. 3 (1947), pp. 150-167. Of special significance in this regard is the article by D. B. Reynders ("Paradisis," Ibid.) wherein an analysis is made of the statements on "tradition" in Justin, I Clement, Irenaeus, Tatian, and Hippolytus, as well as the absence of statements in Pseudo Barnabas, Ignatius, Hermas, The Didache, and II Clement. See also discussion on this point in our following chapter on Irenaeus, Part II, chapter I.

² This point will be illustrated in a subsequent chapter on Irenaeus wherein the use to which he puts the argument for continuity against his Gnostic-oriented rivals is discussed.

concern for the problem is often prompted by other interests, the problem itself is not derivative. Theological conflict is showing itself as an issue in its own right. Differences of opinion are being recognized and even given status by growing numbers of the religious and theological communities. And the impetus is being fostered by a growing acknowledgment that the doctrinal differences which divide schools, communions, and individuals cannot always be dealt with, or uncovered, by a simple comparison and contrast of representative alternative affirmations.¹ The discovery of 'successio', for example, can neither be understood nor achieved apart from an awareness of the procedures by which continuity is meaningful. The recognition of "unity and diversity" presupposes an examination which is itself unifying or discriminating. And gradually the eagerness to re-evaluate this issue is being linked with explorations for definite programs of specifiable procedures of comparative analysis.²

¹ In philosophical inquiry this recognition is being explored in the analyses undertaken since 1937 by the International Institute of Philosophy (now in cooperation with U.N.E.S.C.O.). The purpose of the analyses, in large, is to assess the fundamental concepts of actual ideological conflict. Reports of work completed are contained in the journal Revue Internationale de Philosophie.

² Approaches to, or discussions of, such programs as applied primarily to theological materials include the following: Peter Fransen, "Three Ways of Dogmatic Thought," in The Heythrop Journal. Vol. IV, No. 1 (1963), pp. 3-24; Jean Danielou, "Unité et pluralité de la pensée chrétienne," in Etudes. Vol. 312 (January, 1962), pp. 3-16; Edmund Schlink, "Die Struktur der dogmatischen Aussage als ökumenisches Problem," in Kerygma und Dogma. Vol. III (1957), pp. 251-306; Paul Ricoeur, "The Hermeneutics of Symbols and Philosophical Reflection," in International Philosophical Quarterly. Vol. II (May, 1962), pp. 191-218; Gerhard Ebeling,

A significant methodological step toward qualifying the theological problem of "unity and diversity" for this kind of analytical approach was taken by Adolph Harnack and the members of his school. Harnack suggested that the original Christian story is different in kind from its subsequent adaptation to conceptual and systematic form. By means of this distinction an opportunity was created to endeavor to abstract the primitive sacred story from any product of that story's systematic translation.¹ Harnack further argued---and it is a further

"The Significance of Doctrinal Differences for the Division of the Church," in Word and Faith (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), pp. 162-190; C. Moeller and G. Philips, Grace et Oecumenisme (Paris: Chevetogne, 1957); G. Philips, "Deux tendances dans la theologie contemporaine," in Nouvelle Revue Theologique. Vol. LXXXV, No. 3 (1963), pp. 225-238; A. Malet, "Hermeneutique et philosophie," in Eglise et Theologie. No. 73 (September, 1961), pp. 2-22; Harald Eklund, "Die Denkformen der Theologie," in Studia Theologica. Vol. X (1955-57), pp. 67-76; Robert S. Paul, "Teaching Church History in an Ecumenical Perspective," in The Ecumenical Review. Vol. XIV, No. 1 (1961), pp. 35-42; H. E. W. Turner, The Pattern of Christian Truth (London: A. R. Mowbray, 1954); Gustaf Wingren, Theology in Conflict (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1958); N. A. Nissiotis, "Principles of an Ecumenically-Oriented Theology," in Criterion. Vol. II, No. 2 (1963), pp. 3-8; Maurice Blondel, "The Unity of the Christian Spirit," in Cross Currents. Vol. I, No. 3 (1951), pp. 1-12; Catholicity: A Study in the Conflict of Christian Traditions in the West, ed. E. S. Abbott, et al (London: Dacre Press, 1957).

¹ This basic distinction allows Harnack to attribute the disappearance of that which was essential to the primitive message of the Messiah and his Kingdom to the theological effort to adapt the kerygma to the forms of Greek language and thought. For Harnack, the Kingdom which Jesus and the apostles proclaimed is nothing but the treasure which the soul possesses in the eternal and merciful God, a spiritual gift not translatable into normative literature and only inadequately grasped by dogmatic construction. Such construction was fostered by the Christians' struggle with the Gnostics, and has as its purpose the establishment of criteria by which the Church might exclude

argument¹---that not only is the story abstractable from its conceptual translation, but that the translation as translation is illegitimate. The conceptualisation of the story is its dehabilitation, when dehabilitation is equivalent with change.

those who refused obedience. See Adolph Harnack, History of Dogma, trans. Neil Buchanan (New York: Dover, 1961); and What is Christianity? trans. Thomas Bailey Saunders (New York: Harper, 1957).

A variant on the Harnackian interpretation is presented by Martin Werner in his The Formation of Christian Doctrine (London: A. and C. Black, 1957). Werner traces the "process of hellenization" to an early collapse of the eschatological perspective which had previously characterized the Christian community. What followed was a transformation to the more apparent course of human history. Through this process of secularisation, primitive Christianity became merged Catholicism by procedures which Werner believes to be strictly indefensible. By the same process, the historical Jesus became a mere product of doctrinal fantasy.

For a history of "the hellenization movement" see Jaroslav Pelikan's "The Eschatology of Tertullian," in Church History. Vol. XXII (1952), pp. 108-122. See also S. G. F. Brandon, "The De-eschatologizing of Christian Doctrine," in The Hibbert Journal. Vol. LIV (1955-56), pp. 392-396; Johannes Hessen, Griechische oder Biblische Theologie? Das Problem der Hellenisierung des Christentums in neuer Beleuchtung (Leipzig: Koehler und Amelang, 1956); Jean Danielou, Message Evangelique et Culture Hellenistique aux I^{er} et III^e Siecles (Paris: Desclée, 1961); G. M. G. Reardon discusses Werner in "Martin Werner and the Problem of Historical Christianity," in The Hibbert Journal. Vol. LVIII (1959-60), pp. 42-52.

¹ Obviously one can regard the story and its systematisation as the unity-diversity variables without sharing Harnack's interpretation or scheme. One might contend that the translation of the initial body of revelation implies neither loss nor discontinuity with the beginning. In sharp contrast to the positions of Harnack and Werner, John Henry Newman, for example, holds there to be a fundamental continuity between the primitive Christian witness and its subsequent systematic expression, seeing both as comprising a unitary norm. Against any attempt to have "religion without dogma" Newman advances what he calls a "theory of doctrinal development" which finds the passage of time to be a necessary ingredient in the full comprehension and perfection of great ideas. (See discussion on this point by Owen Chadwick,

Clearly, Harnack's first intent was not to apply the technique of abstraction to the relevant materials for purposes of clarifying the problem of theological "unity and diversity". In a strict sense, even his quest for Christianity's core element is not identical with the search for the basis of theological unity. And, yet, the ingredients were present by which the project could be extended for that use. The original sacred story could readily be regarded as the locus of "unity", and "diversity" could become coincidental with the transposition

From Bossuet to Newman. London: Cambridge University Press, 1957, p. 152.) The nature of Christian truth is such that it cannot be comprehended all at once by its recipients, but requires time and deep thought for its full elucidation.

For Newman the translation and the original are virtually identifiable. But they are such since they are united by a comprehensive normative process. The original treasure (or sacred story) becomes the process' point of orientation; history and doctrine appear as its forms of development. Diversity then is coincidental with any form of extension from the beginning which lacks conformity or congruity with the normative process. In addition to securing a place for the regulative guidance of the Catholic Church, this scheme of continuity also demands an articulation of canons, or "notes", as the characteristic marks by which genuine doctrinal development can be discerned. (See Newman's Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine. New York: Doubleday, 1960, part II, chapter 5, pp. 175-208.)

Karl Rahner (in Theological Investigations, Vol. I, trans. Cornelius Ernst. Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1961) refers the necessity of doctrinal development to the incompleteness of human language. Even though a revealed truth remains true and always binding, a truth concerning divine reality is nevertheless necessarily expressed in partial finite statements. In doctrinal development "no change takes place in the divine reality, nor do the true propositions concerning the reality become false, but there is a certain change in the perspective in which...the reality through the proposition is seen." (p. 75)

See also Jean Guitton, La Philosophie de Newman (Paris: Boivin, 1933); Alfred Loisy, The Gospel and the Church, trans. Christopher Home (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1909); F. Marin-Sola, La Evolution Homogenie du Dogme Catholique (Fribourg: Imprimerie et Librairie de l'Oeuvre de Saint-Paul, 1924).

8.

of that story into another mode of discourse. But the primary significance of that extension does not issue from the particular schematism which might be constructed, but rather from a) the association of theological "unity and diversity" with the process of systematisation, and b) a recognition that the hellenizing process is such that its formal and contentual elements can be distinguished by means of abstraction. It is through the avenue of that distinction that an analysis of the process of hellenization (i.e. the application of Greek language forms to primitive religious affirmations) can contribute to a clarification of the problem of theological "unity and diversity".

Harnack's schematism itself is of limited value when applied directly to the problem of "unity and diversity". Its stress on the freeing of the core element from conceptual adaptation prevents it from giving full status to the interdependence of formalisation and sacred story. Hence, the procedure which Harnack prefigures is overly simple when hellenization is not regarded as debilitating of "the essential core", and when unity does not insist upon being preconceptual. It would appear that the recognition of a fundamental difference between contentual and formal and between sacred story and conceptual adaptation is not sufficient basis upon which to identify these two distinctions with each other, or, indeed, with the unity-diversity variables. The problem is created by virtue of the fact that

sacred story does not stand solely in relation to systematisation as such, but rather to a variety of consistent but conflicting systems. A clarification of the problem requires not only the abstraction of the kerygmatic affirmations from subsequent systematisation, but also the technique by which the various systems (with which those affirmations have been associated) might be distinguished from each other. To be sure, the problem of "unity and diversity" and the distinction between the contentual and the formal belong together. But their association is not necessarily by the identification of their respective determinative poles.

In a certain sense, the advancement beyond Harnack must regard the process of hellenization not only as the source but also as the locus of the problem of theological unity and diversity. In that context the reciprocal influences of the formal and the contentual, as well as of affirmation and scheme, are manifestly more complex than Harnack's simple identifications would allow them to be. The systematic pattern functions, for example, as the structure by which affirmations are joined and made to cohere. In specific ways the systematic patterns contain the limits and circumscribe the possibilities for the kinds of affirmations which can be given formal status. But, beyond that, the system contributes content of its own. It also creates additional affirmations as are structurally appropriate or necessary to the achievement of systematic closure. This creative or formative function, however, is not restricted

to the system and to the exigencies of systematic order. The affirmations also retain various degrees of ability to shape the system into which they are incorporated. The candidacy of certain systems, for example, is nullified by the conceptual demands of specific affirmations. Other patterns do not readily allow the formal expression of some of the affirmations which Christian faith seeks to be made. And, under other circumstances, the presence of the affirmation might almost be coincidental with the articulation of some portion of that structural framework with which it comes associated.

When systematisation is regarded as the context to which "unity and diversity" refers (rather than simply being coincidental with diversity), then the approach to the problem must be fitted not to "de-hellenize" the kerygma, but, instead, to undertake a critical exercise in comparative theological reflexivity. It must be reflexive, for it requires an analytical technique by which the rudiments of already-expressed theological orientations might be discerned and disclosed. It is the cultivation of a peculiar consciousness, a critical sensitivity, an effort at rethinking. The exercise must also be critical and not constructive, for it seeks access to the constituents of given patterns of theological reflection. It must be comparative, for it must understand the variety of theological systems to be associated with the source from which the problem derives.

The approach which this treatise advocates and seeks to

illustrate is the treatment of the problem of "unity and diversity" through the development of a kind of morphology of theological systematisation. The intention of this structural art can be neither composition nor explanation, but analysis and critique. Its patron is not constructive theology in any of its forms---it cannot be used for such positive purposes except by carefully measured transitions---but critical philosophy. Its precedent is the entrance of critical reflexivity into dogmatic history. Thus, some of its guidelines have been established and developed through the patterns of analysis which have been applied to formalisation of thought. Its particular responsibility is the adaptation and cultivation of those patterns toward a deliberate sensitivity to systematic reflection's theological examples.

The following analysis, an exercise in critical theological reflexivity, seeks access to the constituents of formal order in three systematic presentations. The access which is sought is calculated to disclose a basis of comparison and contrast with respect to three types of formal order which have appeared in the Christian theological tradition. It is not the purpose of this essay to reduce the entire theological tradition to a comprehensive typological scheme which both links and demonstrates the necessity of its divergent but component parts. It is the intention of the project, however, to illustrate the fact that a variety of formal patterns have been utilized in the Christian tradition, and that this variety is implicit in the doctrinal disputes which appear in both historic and contemporary survey.

We shall approach this topic by specifying a means by which the formative characteristics of divergent treatments of one and the same theological issue can become accessible. We shall utilize that issue to illustrate the way in which chartable methodological variations are implicit in the starting points and manner according to which formal patterns function.

The exercise itself is divided into two major sections. The first of these is directed toward an examination of the characteristics of formal systematisation. The second utilizes the discovered characteristics of systematisation to locate the formal patterns of selected representative theological perspectives. The first section seeks to formulate a method by which such a comparative formal analysis might be undertaken; the second tests that method's usefulness as applied to specific essays of classic theological importance. The first part of the treatise is given to a reassessment of the theological significance of the analysis in Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason. The second portion applies that significance to three representative treatments of human freedom in Christian theological literature: 1) Irenaeus' Adversus Haereses; 2) Martin Luther's Tractatus de Libertate Christiani; and 3) Thomas Aquinas' discussion of "De Voluntario et Involuntario" in his Summa Theologica. The Critique of Pure Reason has been chosen as our starting point primarily because of the precedent it establishes with respect to investigations of the constituents of formal coherence in thought. Irenaeus,

Luther, and Thomas have been selected by virtue of their ability to represent positions to which major chronological, historical, ecclesiastical, and theological divisions in Christendom can conceivably refer.

But, if the Critique of Pure Reason is calculated for formal analysis, it does not itself establish the basis upon which an exercise in comparative formal analysis might be conducted. Nor does it assure that its basis of analysis is sensitive in every respect to the conceptual structures which are characteristic of our chosen theological examples. In order to utilize the Critique for this task without distorting its original intent, we must preface our comparative exercise with the appropriate transitions. The initial undertaking (in Part I, chapter I) is the tracing of the way in which critical philosophy is applied to religion and to religious discourse within the Critique. Chapters II and III of Part I recall some standard interpretations of the theological significance of the Critique, and also cite and sort some major criticisms which philosophical assessments of the permanent importance of Kant's work have raised. The purpose of this sampling of responses is not only to refer our study to the tradition of ongoing discussion and scholarship which the Critique has provoked, but also to clearly distinguish the strictly methodological use to which it will be put in this examination. For example, in contrast to the varieties of post-Kantian theological orientations which attempt to free religion from any required dependence upon the area of experience which the Critique seeks

to illumine, the methodological use treats this analysis primarily as a critical account of formal reasoning. It builds upon a distinction between a) the response to the question concerning the possibility of a priori-synthetic knowledge, and b) Kant's own account of the nature of reality. It argues that the legacy to be received from the critical philosopher (at least for these purposes) is not his Weltanschauung (tempered as it is by Newtonian physics, Aristotelian logic, and Euclidean geometry), but rather the reflexivity which he exhibits concerning the way in which conceptual and categorial patterns are made to cohere. And, in contrast to the line of philosophical comment which also makes and develops that same distinction, but on the basis of a more accurate reading of the nature of reality, this thesis' supportive reference is the formal character of theological reflection. Systematisation, under the methodological auspices of a comparative theological exercise, is not dependent upon empirical data in quite the same demonstrable way as systematisation must be within an account of the possibility of knowledge. Thus, chapter III of Part I reexamines Kant's discussion of "the natural dialectic of reason", and refers its question concerning the constitution of systematic theological structures to the Critique's account of the way in which connection of parts are manifested in conformity with a single principle. The intention throughout the entire first section of the dissertation is the cultivation of an access through which variations between unitary structures can be discerned and, if possible, negotiated.

The concept of "freedom" is chosen as the focal point of the structural analyses which comprise Part II of the study. Freedom qualifies for this role since it is a concept which appears to lead reflection into one or another characteristic formal pattern. As such it assumes the function of a kind of "formal concept" since its articulation, dependent upon a specification of the relation of order to indeterminateness, provokes a pattern of reflective systematic coherence. At the same time, freedom is also a topic of fundamental and central religious interest throughout the history of Christian life and thought: the dominant interest in freedom may, indeed, be a religious one. Thus, freedom's formal utility can be drawn upon for comparative purposes when that concept is made the focus of representative theological essays which seek to provide summary statements concerning the Christian faith.

The analysis which develops in the following pages is necessarily precise and a very delicate one. As a formal concept, freedom must nevertheless not be formally superimposed upon the respective theological essays. Nor, on the other hand, can freedom be regarded as a motif of such exclusive religious interest that it is foreign to formal analysis. The account of freedom in Part I must, therefore, be restricted to an examination of that concept's function with respect to systematisation. The account of freedom in Part II must allow the theologians to express the significance of that concept as

in their own language. But the search for bases of correspondence and difference between the theological accounts is responsible for the application of Part I to Part II. The theological literature is unable to provide critical and comparative tools by which its variant versions can be measured. Formal analysis can, indeed, specify such available techniques, even though the literature is not the product of such analyses.

As the following project will further clarify in appropriate stages and in greater detail, formal systematisation (even the unity given religious affirmations) reflects the convergence of what Kant calls logical principles (starting points) and interests of reason (methods by which coherence is achieved). Theological variety, in chosen systematic instances, seems accessible when the analyst charts the function of characteristic starting points (be it to synthesize, specify, discriminate, etc.) and the interests under which unitary order is sought. Irenaeus, for example, attempts coherence by means of comprehension and synthesis. Luther, on the other hand, seeks the particular in order to rid the indubitable of obscurity. Thomas begins by inquiring as to the place of the peculiar and its operation within the totality. A careful reading of each approach discloses a variation in principle and method which is indicative of all-encompassing differences in orientation and perspective. In each a variant basis of systematic order is implicit not only in the articulation of the concept of freedom: it also possesses a distinctive influence upon whatever is

brought within range of concern. And, yet, with diverse starting points and methods, the alternative systematic patterns of Irenaeus, Luther, and Thomas nevertheless also manifest a fundamental unity. Each is bipolar in structure, and each fashions that bipolarity according to the asymmetrical relation which is conceived between God and the world. By virtue of their respective intentions to capture a like asymmetrical relation within systematisation, though by means of divergent starting points and methods, these three patterns manifest both unity and diversity in accessible and chartable forms. As by a kind of gracious bestowal, the requirements of freedom demand that each of the three characteristic starting points be included. And the dynamism of asymmetry, which both creates and depends upon ordered variety, provides the technique by which the three perspectives can be simultaneously retained.

PART ONE

Critical Reflexivity and Theological Systematisation

PREVIEW

I

No philosopher understands his predecessors until he has re-thought their thought in his own contemporary terms; and it is characteristic of the very greatest philosophers, like Kant and Aristotle, that they, more than any other, repay this effort of re-thinking.¹

The argument of our Critique, taken as a whole, must have sufficiently convinced the reader that although metaphysics cannot be the foundation of religion, it must always continue to be the bulwark of it...²

The foregoing introduction gives indication of the possibility of clarification of the problem of theological "unity and diversity" through an examination of the procedures by which religious affirmations are formalized. To refer this issue from the beginning to Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason and the discussion which it has provoked is to take not only a precautionary measure. Nor does it exhibit simply an unwillingness to dishonor an established precedent which views all contemporary theological problems and efforts as being in some sense dependent upon the entrance of the critical philosopher into dogmatic history.

¹ P. F. Strawson, Individuals (New York: Anchor Books, 1963), p. xv.

² Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1961), A 849, p. 664.