

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

“It is not enough to be Christians because of the Baptism received or because of the historico-social conditions in which you are born and live. As you grow in years and culture, new problems and new requirements of clarity and certainty come into consciousness. It is then necessary to set out in a responsible way in search of the motivations of your own Christian faith. If you do not become personally aware and do not have an adequate understanding of what must be believed and of the reasons for this faith, at a certain moment everything may inevitably collapse and be swept away.”¹ In March of 1979, a few months after his election, John Paul II thus addressed a group of university students in Naples. Although such words would mainly correspond to a pastoral concern and were not intended to propose an analysis of the theoretical order, they offer a truthful perception that foretold what in the following decades would impose itself with increasing evidence.

Both the pastor and the theologian today are witnesses of the growing secularization of the western world, which is manifested especially in practical materialism and in religious indifference, often a consequence of the difficulty with which the catechesis and religious formation reach the people of God and of their limited impact on the lives of believers. This has led to the profound modification of the perception of what most people today, in traditionally Christian lands, understand by a “good and happy life.” The abandonment of the main content of the apostolic faith and of the spirit that had led the first announcement have taken over most of the baptized, especially through the media propagation of judgments and behaviors that hinder the recognition of truth as the aim desired by reason and of the good as the fruit of a virtuous life—the virtuous life that is already the heritage of a classical ethics whose ultimate (and thus originary) meaning has been revealed by the Gospel. Although we admit that at the origin of these transformations there have been movements of thought and causes of a philosophical order, the changes to be considered more decisive are those of the anthropological sphere and of customs. The latter are intertwined with the complex economic mechanisms of the industrial, and now technological, society in which most of the material goods produced through the market and offered for consumption often lead and reverse-nourish, in turn, those same practices that hinder, even among the people of God, the recognition of what is true and what is good. Nevertheless, if we return to the quotation presented at the beginning, the call to not neglect an “adequate understanding of what must be believed and of the reasons for this faith,” risking the surprise of seeing the edifice of it “inevitably collapse and be swept away,” seems to refer, at least in the first place, to a system of knowledge and convictions of an intellectual, and therefore also theoretical, scope. It is in fact that set of knowledge, historically structured around the Christian *Symbolum*, that constructs the essential contents of a specific identity, and thus normatively establishes a corresponding practice. The exhortation to “set out in a responsible way in search of the motivations of your own Christian faith,” seems to be, in substance, the call to increase one’s intellectual formation in a way that is appropriate to the times, as an absolutely necessary condition so that the response of the faith retains its momentum

¹ JOHN PAUL II, “Speech to Students,” Naples, 3.24.1979, in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, 1 (1979) 708-709, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1979/march/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19790324_studenti-napoli.html.

unchanged, both in the progress of history and in the course of the personal existence of every believer.

Beyond the different weight that the motivations aroused by suffering and feelings, by empathy toward credible witnesses, by specific rational beliefs, or finally, in the most radical sense, by the encounter with Jesus Christ present in the Church, have in the self-giving/option of the faith, *all the reasons for believing* should be found dwelling within an authentic *unity of intellectual life*, which is the manifestation of a more general unity of spiritual life. A question inevitably derived from this is also a question for Fundamental Theology, which in its “search for the motivations of the faith” has traditionally recognized its privileged task.² A question that we now formulate in these terms: Are materialism and secularization problems that concern only the search for new pastoral practices and more effective communicative strategies, or do they require that Fundamental Theology—a believing consciousness that reflects on the foundational event of Christianity—knows to offer its necessary ministry (*diakonia*) in favor of a new and deeper unity of intellectual life?

The idea of a treatise of a *Theology of Credibility in the Scientific Context*—whose two volumes precede two other future volumes dedicated to a *Theology of Revelation in the Scientific Context*—arises from the conviction that we should respond affirmatively to the preceding question. Moreover, it inseparably arises from two further convictions: a) the intellectual synthesis today of believers and their contemporary interlocutors also necessarily includes scientific knowledge, and b) the questions that the scientific context poses to theological knowledge represents, for Fundamental Theology, an indispensable hinge for the exercise of that desired ministry that we referred to earlier. In accord with a tradition whose roots take us back to the exercise of a *logos* that accompanied the first proclamation of the Gospel, the fundamental-theological reflection is also called today to encourage that, in the minds of the believers, faith can rest at ease in any field of knowledge, without taking refuge in the spaces of a mistaken spiritualism or flowing toward what does not seem to belong to reason. In order for such a program to be undertaken, however, two important clarifications must be provided. The first regards the reason for paying specific attention to the scientific context, and not to other contexts, the role of specifying a perspective that Fundamental Theology can or should follow, as we will try to do precisely, to some extent, in the volumes of this Treatise. The second question is about the appropriateness of a fundamental-theological proposal being characterized precisely by a reference to the scientific context, at a time in which overcoming the traditional apologetic model would require not severing the unique theological *ratio* at the base of every believing theology; and it would simultaneously require that we do not conceptualize any separate reason, even a scientific reason, as an interlocutor that is outside of the faith, a faith on which one desires to assess again an original fiduciary, and anthropologically complete, value.

We can respond more easily to the first question. The spirit of Vatican Council II, especially the redaction of *Gaudium et Spes*, encouraged several times an exposition of the faith that took the changing intellectual conditions into account, with explicit reference to the influence exerted by scientific thought; this is done both by reflecting

² Already in an essay published at the end of the Vatican Council II, Karl Rahner linked this situation to the uncertainty regarding the method and the content of Fundamental theology, especially in reference to the formation of the clergy, cf. K. RAHNER, *Sull'odierna formazione teoretica dei futuri sacerdoti* (1965), in “Nuovi Saggi”, vol. I, (Rome: Paoline, 1968, pp. 199-235).

on the recipient of the proclamation and by thinking about the work of the theologian and pastor, so that the latter two, in their elaboration of the knowledge of the believer, would consider the certain results of science and the new perspectives brought about by them. It is sufficient, in this regard, to recall the statement near the beginning of that Constitution:

Today's spiritual agitation and the changing conditions of life are part of a broader and deeper revolution. As a result of the latter, intellectual formation is ever increasingly based on the mathematical and natural sciences and on those dealing with man himself, while in the practical order the technology which stems from these sciences takes on mounting importance. This scientific spirit has a new kind of impact on the cultural sphere and on modes of thought. Technology is now transforming the face of the earth, and is already trying to master outer space.³

The adoption of a theological development that takes the scientific context into account does not aim to superimpose itself on other proposals that emerged from Vatican II, nor does it intend naïvely to replace them. Rather, the current perspective, which aims more simply to place itself alongside the contemporary proposals that already exist, meant to cover an area that still seems to be strangely ignored.⁴

The intention is certainly not to construct a fundamental-theological system *starting* from the instances of scientific thought—a reductive and methodologically illogical operation—but rather of developing a Fundamental Theology that implicitly has in mind the men and women who live in the scientific culture of their time. There are those who are extensively educated about the theoretical results of science, employing technological applications and listening to the questions that public opinion—rightly or wrongly—addresses to the faith precisely from that context. And they themselves are wondering, not without some perplexity, about the meaning of many contents of Revelation, when read in light of the knowledge that is now peacefully held about the physical world, the nature of life, the history of the human race, and the place that it occupies in the cosmos. The reference to the scientific context certainly represents an *emphasis* here for Fundamental Theology, but an important emphasis. The reader who scans the index of this work will notice this emphasis made explicitly in only a few chapters, but will recognize it present as the rationality of a *counterpoint* in many of the arguments discussed.⁵

³ GS, no. 5; cf. also nos. 57 and 62.

⁴ Thus expressed Karl Rahner in a 1970 essay: “The duty that theology has to learn the natural sciences, in the way that is specific to them, has not yet been fulfilled; on the contrary, it can be said that it is just beginning now, because theology, which is interested in man in his entirety and unity examines only slowly man shaped by natural and rational science and non-traditional humanism. Theology [...] really does not yet sufficiently know the recipient to whom it must and will turn to in the future. And in this sense it will have to take more time to listen to devotees of the natural sciences,” K. RAHNER, “La teologia nel dialogo interdisciplinare delle scienze,” in *Nuovi Saggi* (Rome: Paoline, 1975) vol. V, 135, our translation.

⁵ To talk about the rationality of the scientific context, we share and gladly present once again the ‘counterpoint’ metaphor, originally suggested by Josef Pieper to express the relationship between philosophy and theology, cf. J. PIEPER, *Per la filosofia* (Milan: Ares, 1966), 159; and, *Sulla fine del tempo* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1954), 18. Reason, which is a counterpoint, is not external to the melody (the faith), but belongs to the composition of a single symphony. The general symphony on which the melody is developed precedes the counterpoint, and yet the latter closely follows the melody, almost obliging it to express itself in an always new and more musically articulate way, or else suggesting to it to reproduce the musicality already expressed, without ever doing it in a way that is repetitive or

It cannot in fact be ignored that, evaluated against the backdrop of contemporary scientific rationality, the pretexts/affirmations of Christian theology today take on an enormous weight: it is God the creator of the physical universe (the same universe that is also the subject of science) who is revealed to humankind on the planet Earth; it is God the creator of this same universe who encounters man, the creature made in His image, taking human nature upon Himself in an irreversible place and time; it is this God, creator of the universe and fontal cause of life, to die on a cross for the human race and to overcome death with a resurrection that also takes on physical and biological, in addition to meta-historical, aspects. It is this creator God, center and Lord of history and of the cosmos, who invites man to enter into communion with Him for all eternity, determining each possible future scenario of the universe, even the physical universe. If all of these areas are not properly the object of Fundamental Theology—consider, for example, how they also include the treatment of creation, theological anthropology, and eschatology—it is, however, the task of Fundamental Theology to explain the scope and credibility of a Revelation that conveys truths of faith that are certainly also located in those areas and related to that knowledge.

However, the second clarification to which the perspective that has been adopted here must give a response needs further explanation: that is, we must consider the actual practicability and productivity, within a unique theological reason, of a fundamental-theological view that chooses scientific reason as its own expositional counterpoint. In the first place it should be observed that a Fundamental Theology, or a Theology of Credibility, “in the scientific context” does not aim to be a “theology in the genitive case” and thus is not assimilated with one of the forms of the so-called “hermeneutic model” which, distancing itself from an improbable universal reason, is traditionally charged to favor forms of historical-contextual rationality. In a hermeneutic model, as is known, it is affirmed that the presentation of the Christian message at a specific historical time would be conditioned in a determinate way both by the hermeneutic of the recipient and by the hermeneutic that the present history imposes on the understanding of the message itself. In reality, scientific rationality is the “least hermeneutic” of all, because it aims at simple criteria of universality, communicability, and invariance. Theology, therefore, can deal with it only if it maintains the awareness of its own corresponding instance of universality: a theology that is interested in the scientific context does not for this reason address its attention to provisional hermeneutic-contextual categories—although, when ill-equipped, it certainly runs the risk of doing so—but rather addresses the instances of the truth of knowledge as such. Differently from what in its time reproached those forms of Apologetics that arose in modern thought to counter atheism and deism, in order to pay attention to scientific thought, for a theology that knows how to remain true theology, it does not mean yielding to the error of conducting the discussion on the “opponent’s territory,” or endeavoring to forcibly make recourse to its categories. It means, more simply, remaining on the field of universal and shared knowledge, of which scientific knowledge is an integral part.

It has also been noted that contemporary theology today exalts its kerygmatic task above all, almost with the desire to reorganize the whole of theological

merely rhetorical. Without the counterpoint of reason, the faith would not reveal its whole range of tones and scales. Without the melody that sustains it and reveals its purpose, the counterpoint would remain fragmented by isolated, perhaps incisive, verses, but unable to bind with a single vision of the symphonic truth of the musical project.

knowledge around its *catechetical mission* and around the search for an *apologetic dialogue* to involve themselves primarily with today's culture, with the various forms of philosophical thought, and with the sciences. Pier Angelo Sequeri observes without reservations: "In themselves, apart from the unbearable uncertainty of their current interpretation, relevant reference points are treated. But in fact, the reduction of theology to these tasks emphasizes its character as instrumental thought: the passage that precedes a new ideological configuration of the faith."⁶ There is undoubtedly the temptation of constructing around such contextual, and always most recent, reference points, a program and methodology for the whole of theological work, and this should certainly be avoided. Nevertheless, that "mission" and "dialogue" can also be understood as a manifestation of an *auditus temporis* that does not disconnect from the unique theological reason generated by the *auditus fidei*. And it is only in this sense that we believe that it is rightly possible to ask Fundamental Theology to remain attentive to the pastoral-kerygmatic and dialogical-apologetic dimensions within its elaboration. The reference to other forms of knowledge does not affect theology in an instrumental way if among such knowledge there is identified in a critical and coherent way the access to the only Truth that theology itself is recognized as possessing. Paying attention to what philosophical or scientific rationality may suggest, or at times openly demonstrate, does not mean obliging oneself to take on the other's *form of reasoning*, but to intelligently listen to *its reasons*.

More generally, we agree with the analysis of those who argue that Fundamental Theology often copes with a tragic dilemma: on one hand, that of developing its specific nature, identifying it in its apologetic function, with the (anything but remote) risk of thematizing a contraposition, or even only a conceptual comparison, between faith and reason, reinforcing the (more or less) unconscious re-proposal of reason in Cartesian terms; on the other hand, giving up this specific nature precisely with the aim of overcoming a similar contraposition, thus translating the denial of any possible apologetic function into a demobilization of Fundamental Theology in its entirety.⁷ The point in question is how to maintain a mission and a dialogical-apologetic function—that will not affect the sources and method of its theology—complying with the relevant requirements but avoiding both horns of the dilemma. The road that we intend to travel in this treatise (or at least the road we indicate to be covered in the future) is to highlight the openness of all knowledge to the same reason that the Revelation reveals as *theological*, because it is linked to a principle of creation that precedes everything, and from which no philosophy or analysis of reality, even of physical reality, will ever leave aside. Developing an apologetic dimension of Fundamental Theology does not mean instituting a separate reason, but seeing to it that the unique reason is recognized as revealed.

A similar path must necessarily be encountered with the theme of *interdisciplinarity*, and therefore with the critical observation that a Fundamental Theology eager for a dialogue with the cutting-edge disciplines, using their respective knowledge, may end up becoming a kind of "sacred pantology." This is a warning that a treatise that is proposed for developing a Fundamental Theology in the scientific context can certainly not ignore. Quite a few wonder how collecting

⁶ P.A. SEQUERI, *Il Dio affidabile: Saggio di teologia fondamentale* (Brescia: Queriniana, 1996), 152, our translation.

⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 13.

information from other disciplines serves theology, especially if it is developed by non-theologian authors. Theology, it is said, has a different object: interdisciplinarity offers information that may be useful, but it would not grow theology *as theology*. In fact, the basic problem is, in our view, another. It is not asking history, religion, or science to provide the product of a theological elaboration, but asking the theologian to make theology well-aware of the implications and links that it has with history, religion, science, or with other knowledge. Interdisciplinarity does not mean extrinsicism. If it could possibly do so in the past, today's theology can no longer speak of a man created in the image of God, the recipient of His revelation and listener of His word while treating him as a rational abstract being and ignoring the fact that the first symbolic and cultural activities to which the predecessors of the *Homo Sapiens* are linked have left traces dating back to over one million years ago. Nor can we speak of Jesus as the fullness of revelation, center of the cosmos and of history while ignoring what this history and this cosmos are, and what they mean for the twenty-first century scientist. The fundamental theologian should certainly not enter into terrain on which he does not belong to offer his own elaboration, favorable or otherwise, to what the other disciplines assert starting from their sources and their method: however, he cannot ignore the fact that those same terrains become stressed with severe, far-reaching problems. But sometimes there are also fruitful speculations that should be compiled and evaluated.

On a different level, the question is also posed of the interdisciplinarity of Fundamental Theology with respect to other areas of theology. The preceding accusation of pantology had also been advanced, in this case, suggesting leaving most of its subjects to other disciplines such as the exegesis and Christology, when they are not asked to disappear altogether, in order to thus allow the other disciplines to develop a proper foundational treatment. Referring to the orderly development of this treatise for the response to this last question, we observe that a precise distinction between Fundamental Theology and the other disciplines of theological work is undoubtedly necessary, and protects it from engulfing areas that do not belong to it. However, we at the same time note that if the fundamental theologian is sometimes compelled to confront essential hinges on the frontier of its journey, it does so for the simple reason that they now seem to be disregarded by those who should investigate and resolve them. It is enough to think of all the references to the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth, the historical and real aspects of his resurrection or to issues related to the credibility of the Old Testament image of an apparently violent and bloody God, themes that are surprisingly expunged from university biblical theology, or examined only in critical-exegetical keys but not theological-foundational keys, thus forcing the fundamental theologian to propose a necessary, though not scientifically equipped, recovery.

Finally, we observe that developing a contextuality that looks toward philosophical and scientific thought, recognizing the relevance of a dialogical-apologetic function to Fundamental theology, also seems to be in agreement with the recommendations of Vatican II, to which we referred before, although they never mentioned (as is known) our subject area. Explicit, rather, is the mention of the apologetic-contextual function of Fundamental Theology in the thematic analysis offered by the instruction *The Theological Formation of Future Priests* (1976), in the directions of John Paul II in *Sapientia Christiana* (1979) and in the programmatic requests marked by the same Pontiff in *Fides et Ratio* (1998). There we find expressions that make reference to Fundamental Theology as a theology of dialogue and of the frontier, clearly distinct from dogmatic theology; formulations that speak

of it like an area that must consider the issues of atheism and religious indifference, whose critical development will necessarily interact with authors like Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche. To this is also entrusted the study of the relationships of Christianity with non-Christian religions. In those documents, Fundamental Theology is presented as an indispensable theology not only as an introduction to dogmatic theology, but also as service to pastoral theology; a theology subject to reflections aimed at resolving the doubts present in the intellectual life of believers and equally able to present itself as a path to faith for those who still do not believe. It speaks of an area of study called to justify and expound the relation between faith and philosophical reflection, able to show how, in light of knowledge through faith, there emerge certain truths that reason already perceives in its own independent inquiry; Fundamental Theology is also explicitly asked to help in discerning the *divine* Revelation from other phenomena that do not possess this qualifier, thus contributing to the recognition of its credibility. It will perhaps be objected that these tasks are too broad and general, or observed that they blend new trends with old objectives from which some today would like to leave aside; however, it certainly cannot be ignored that all of these tasks are now necessary and inescapable, although for the most part disregarded by the textbooks or by the study aids that are still in circulation for educational purposes. Surprising is the clear evidence with which these documents speak of Fundamental Theology as *a true and proper field*, like dogmatic, moral, biblical, or spiritual theology, in open disagreement with the small space given to it in the basic cycle of priestly formation, where the role corresponding to an area of study that is comparable to preceding ones is uncertain, despite the at least eight or nine different fields of which it is comprised and that they are reflected in the systematic proposals of the most influential multi-volume treatises typical of the French and German world.⁸ If we exclude the small window offered by higher programs of study, where this can be laid out in a specialized license or institutional formation programs, the teaching structure has reserved a little more of the space associated with a *single subject*. This is data that should give pause and that is probably not unrelated to the lack of training to which we referred at the beginning, by representing one of the underlying causes of the lack of formation of the clergy and the people of God.

Like any theological work this treatise also has certain fundamental inspirations, and aims to propose programmatic elements in a natural (and inevitable) connection with the biography and intellectual journey of its author. With all the limitations that every list has, we will try here to summarize the main ones.

– An understanding of the centrality of the Incarnation of the Word in Revelation, capable of making sure that the normative dimension of Christocentrism is never separated from the existential dimension required by every *sequela Christi*.

– A presentation of Revelation that reevaluates the category of the promise, understood as the internal foundation of the covenant, places it as the first expression of a con-descending Word that promises because He loves, and because He loves, we engage in a story of consolation and covenant.

⁸ Among these should be included: Introduction to the Christian Mystery - Introduction to Theology – Theological Treatise on Religion – The Theology of the Revelation – The Fundamental and Dogmatic Theology of the Faith – The Communication of the Revelation and Fundamental Ecclesiology – The Theology of Credibility – Theological Gnoseology – Christianity and Religions.

– A view of created nature that is capable of revealing its Creator, keeper of an added value that is expressed in the (relative, but true) autonomy of terrestrial realities, based on a theology of nature and of a history that is articulated with the task, entrusted to each Christian, of participating in the recapitulation and reconciliation of all things in Christ.

– Attention to the philosophical journeys, spontaneous or reflexive, that make the divine Revelation intelligible and meaningful to its recipient, journeys proper to a *ratio capax fidei*; it is therefore a created reason precisely because of an anthropology that is preceded and founded by a natural revelation that also becomes a condition of opening to a historical revelation, and which is required for fruitful listening to the latter; finally, this is a reason that, like the anthropology of which it is an expression, now requires an indispensable and urgent restoration.

– A re-evaluation of the sapiential Word as a mode of the divine revelation that cannot be absorbed by the religious experience of the Exodus, because it is the custodian of the original instances of universality, religiosity, philosophical speculation, and the moral life proper to the God of Israel as the one God accessible to any authentic religious experience and any sincere search for truth.

– The conviction that the fundamental logic of Christian credibility consists in a *dynamic that runs from the Promise to its Fulfillment*, capable of spanning not only all of the great historic-salvific categories, not excluding the creation itself, but even the singular moments of the history of salvation, the history of Jesus, and the history of every human being; this is a dynamic whose conditions of possibility are given by the historicity of the human being and by the necessary finitude of a creation *in statu viae*.

– A renewed attention, of great importance for theology and the life of the Church, to the role occupied by the Holy Spirit in Revelation, a role that is capable of being expressed in a multifaceted operation: from the inspiration of the Word to its fruitful reception in the believing heart, from the revelation of God in charity to His role as protagonist in the Tradition, from His intimate presence in every authentic religious experience to the credibility of the Church of saints and martyrs.

– The persuasion of the value of the testimony of life and of the apostolate as an irreplaceable mode for the spread of the Gospel, in favor of which all baptized believers are called to be living subjects.

– The desire to be able to offer elements so that the believers know to speak of God in the contemporary cultural situation, with particular attention to the situations of secularization and religious indifference, to the challenge posed by new forms of (pseudo) religiosity and to the demands of scientific rationality.

– The importance of reaching a *unity of knowledge*, which intellectually reflects the *unity of life* to which every Christian is called. This implies a deeper study of the relationship between theology and the other sources of knowledge, in order to develop a theology capable both of integrating the certain results of other disciplines, and of speaking of God in a convincing and rigorous way to those who have a specific competence.

– The intention of developing such a theology that is also accessible by the laity and is therefore adequate to serve the apostolic mission and its role in the Church as well. Without being resolved mainly to this pastoral objective—which remains our theological-systematic proposal—coming to be highlighted in a particular way will be those elements that are able to generate a “Theology of Credibility” within which

it is easier to recognize what represents even today a preparation for faith and what the motivations are that qualify the option for faith as human and reasonable.

– The intention of facilitating the understanding of the reasons that underpin the due consent of the faithful to the Magisterium of the Church, in its specific task of authentic interpretation of the Revelation and guarantor of its faithful communication.

Finally, with this treatise we intend to encourage, in each of its readers, the achievement of a personal intellectual synthesis. It is our desire to convey a *way* of understanding and looking at Revelation and its credibility; we want to suggest a *gaze* (we prefer this term to that of *vision*) capable of keeping together the various sources of the knowledge of reality, without the fear of also accepting the eventual *chiaroscuro* derived from faith. Reproducing the conditions of this gaze made possible by the light of Revelation, Christians can offer a direction to their interlocutors, perhaps not always sufficient for completely instructing them on individual steps to take, but certainly adequate for identifying what would be required from time to time for those who want to act with intellectual honesty and reasonability. Even the believer's faith does not spare his labor, but it is precisely this struggle that pushes (whoever of faith has shared its acceptance) to evaluate in the *chiaroscuro* of his own personal road those luminous points that, while in reference to himself, can also be so for others.

To inspire these guidelines in the writer, there is undoubtedly a *forma mentis* favored by the frequency of the works of Thomas Aquinas, the vision handed down by Irenaeus, Athanasius, and Augustine, the meditation of the pages of authors like Blaise Pascal, Maurice Blondel, and John Henry Newman, and the inevitable and fruitful encounter with contemporaries such as Karl Rahner, Romano Guardini, Henri de Lubac, Joseph Ratzinger, and René Latourelle. I am also indebted to many reflections that the magisterium of John Paul II has given us for over a quarter century, whose concerns, but also aspirations, I feel I have deeply shared; finally, I owe to the spiritual and pastoral commitment of Josemaría Escrivá the decisive impulse to explore, in this specific theological field, a synthesis between Christianity and instances of modern thought, as well as many of the lights that suggested in what directions this synthesis was to go.

From the foregoing, it is clear that this *Fundamental Theology in the Scientific Context*, organized in the dual articulation of a *Theology of Credibility* and of a *Theology of Revelation*, of which the first now sees the light, does not have the immediate goal of being a manual for education or teaching. The work is directed, however, mainly at those who already work in the theological disciplines, especially in the area of Fundamental Theology, with the desire of presenting themselves as new interlocutors with whom to converse in a critical way. Moreover, it is also directed at all of those who share with the author a sincere pastoral care for the formation of the clergy and the people of God, of whom is expected a better skill in being able to exhibit the reasons of their own faith. Obviously a teacher of systematic theology may suitably use some chapters of this *Theology of Credibility in the Scientific Context* to organize the theoretical basis for an educational journey. In this sense, the ideas contained sequentially in Chapters I and IV of Volume I can serve as a General Introduction to the Fundamental Theology of an institutional curriculum, possibly enriched with the ideas of an extractable History of Apologetics from Chapters VI-X of the same volume. Chapters II-VI of Volume II also offer the material for organizing a fruitful educational course on the Theology of Credibility in an institutional curriculum. From the contents of the following two volumes dedicated

to a *Theology of Revelation in the Scientific Context*, still in preparation, we will then draw out of the material for lessons of the institutional curriculum concerning Revelation, the Tradition, and the Faith. An expert teacher will also strike up, if you will, a program for the course of Introduction to Christian Mystery (or Introduction to the Mystery of Salvation), provided as a preparatory approach to theology at the end of philosophical studies. Finally, we hope that the integral content of various chapters of each of the four volumes that comprise this work will be useful for the preparation of courses of a specialized license. In particular, Chapters X-XIV of Volume II could be employed as an outline for a course about the relationships between theology and scientific thought.

It should be noted that none of the chapters presented here, or in the course of preparation, propose a systematic treatise of theological epistemology—customary, for example, in educational plans of the German school—or provide content that is explicitly directed at a program of an Introduction to Theology, strictly speaking. However, the general principles and some meaningful elements for a theological epistemology and an Introduction to Theology emerge from the chapters of this work dedicated to the relationship between philosophy and theology, from the reflection on the sources of theological knowledge, as well as those parts dedicated to the concept of Tradition, the relationship between Tradition and Scripture, and to the formulation, interpretation, and development of the dogmatic teaching of the Church.

Many of the pages that comprise this treatise are the result of a theological biography, that of its author. Along with the firm points that illuminate the journey of a shared faith we also do not omit showing the still-open themes, unresolved issues, the issues that demand a more convincing exposition. The knowledge of the revealed truth and of the pillars on which to build does not exempt one from the trouble of having to look with effort for the most suitable building material; nor does it dispense, at times, one from the explicit recognition of not yet having it. In every theological construction, the search for new and more delicate structural equilibria is compatible with the faith that the foundation is already possessed, though at times it is not seen in all its soundness and extension. Theology is not Revelation. If the latter is the guiding star, the former is, rather, the search for the route. And like any search for the route, it is never free from stops, falls, or errors in direction. Theology has the grueling, impossible, but necessary task of presenting to the human intellect the Mystery of God and its implications for the world; an arduous task, certainly, but one in which we come to realize the *gaudium de veritate in caritate*, when we become capable of together being able to specify a path along which to advance, slowly.

The Author