

Chapter 1 : Experience Shapes Theology | To Be Continued

Theology always has been (and is for Moltmann) not an abstract or otherworldly endeavor but one nourished by, and responsive to, experiences in and with life itself. In this volume, the final in his series of systematic contributions to theology, Moltmann looks ahead from the landmarks of his own theological journey.

Terminology[edit] Aldous Huxley used the term neurotheology for the first time in the utopian novel *Island*. The discipline studies the cognitive neuroscience of religious experience and spirituality. The term is also sometimes used in a less scientific context or a philosophical context. Some of these uses, according to the mainstream scientific community, qualify as pseudoscience. Huxley used it mainly in a philosophical context. The use of the term neurotheology in published scientific work is currently uncommon. A search on the citation indexing service provided by Institute for Scientific Information returns five articles. Three of these are published in the journal *Zygon: Work on the neural basis of spirituality* has, however, occurred sporadically throughout the 20th century. Theoretical work[edit] In an attempt to focus and clarify what was a growing interest in this field, in educator and businessman Laurence O. McKinney published the first book on the subject, titled "Neurotheology: Virtual Religion in the 21st Century", written for a popular audience but also promoted in the theological journal *Zygon*. The inability of the adult brain to retrieve earlier images experienced by an infantile brain creates questions such as "where did I come from" and "where does it all go", which McKinney suggests led to the creation of various religious explanations. The experience of death as a peaceful regression into timelessness as the brain dies won praise from readers as varied as author Arthur C. Clarke , eminent theologian Harvey Cox , and the Dalai Lama and sparked a new interest in the field. Newberg and others "discovered is that intensely focused spiritual contemplation triggers an alteration in the activity of the brain that leads one to perceive transcendent religious experiences as solid, tangible reality. In other words, the sensation that Buddhists call oneness with the universe. With no information from the senses arriving, the left orientation area cannot find any boundary between the self and the world. As a result, the brain seems to have no choice but "to perceive the self as endless and intimately interwoven with everyone and everything. The meditators feel that they have touched infinity. He was awarded the Templeton Prize before his death in *A life of Alister Hardy* that the RERC later dispersed as investigators turned to newer techniques of scientific investigation. Magnetic stimulation studies[edit] Main article: God helmet During the s Michael Persinger stimulated the temporal lobes of human subjects with a weak magnetic field using an apparatus that popularly became known as the " God helmet " [15] and reported that many of his subjects claimed to experience a "sensed presence" during stimulation. The participants were frequently given an idea of the purpose of the study by being asked to fill in questionnaires designed to test their suggestibility to paranormal experiences before the trials were conducted. Following the publication of this study, Persinger et al. As in the study by Granqvist et al. Ramachandran explored the neural basis of the hyperreligiosity seen in TLE using the galvanic skin response GSR , which correlates with emotional arousal, to determine whether the hyperreligiosity seen in TLE was due to an overall heightened emotional state or was specific to religious stimuli. Ramachandran presented two subjects with neutral, sexually arousing and religious words while measuring GSR. Ramachandran was able to show that patients with TLE showed enhanced emotional responses to the religious words, diminished responses to the sexually charged words, and normal responses to the neutral words. As Beauregard has said, "There is no God spot in the brain. Spiritual experiences are complex, like intense experiences with other human beings. Nucleus accumbens activation preceded peak spiritual feelings by 1â€”3 s and was replicated in four separate tasks. The association of abstract ideas and brain reward circuitry may interact with frontal attentional and emotive salience processing, suggesting a mechanism whereby doctrinal concepts may come to be intrinsically rewarding and motivate behavior in religious individuals. Speculative suggestions have been made that an increase of N,N-dimethyltryptamine levels in the pineal gland contribute to spiritual experiences.

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Married CA-Conservatives Actually the problem with third and fourth generation Pentecostals is that they lack a real Pentecostal experience. The Pentecostal experience is a biblical experience to have. The problem is that the new generation has another experience which is not the Pentecostal experience. They try to make it fit and redefine the biblical terminology. For example , they say that they have been baptized in the Holy Spirit when all they have had is an experience where they were around something supernatural for a brief encounter. Here is the testimony of William Durham , the first general superintendent of the Assembly of God church. I desire to give my testimony for the glory of God, and in the hope that it will prove a blessing to many that read it. Nine years ago I was deeply convicted of sin, through the Bible and the Spirit moving upon me, which He continued to do till I truly repented of my sins, and earnestly sought the Lord, finally yielding all to Him, and pleading His mercy. Later I saw and grasped by faith the truth of sanctification, and the Spirit witnessed to my heart that the work was done, and the Holy Ghost wonderfully wrought in my life. Five years ago I was called into the ministry, and all these years the Spirit has been with me in a wonderful way. Sometimes I would be overcome by His power. In brief, I honestly believed I was baptized with the Holy Ghost, and testified to it. God had done so much for me, that it was hard for me to believe that there was more for me, except of course, development as I went on with God. And still there was a longing in my heart for something. I traveled as an evangelist from coast to coast, and preached the gospel in almost every large city in the United States, speaking to as high as 1, people at a time, often seeing from twenty-five to one hundred in the altar in a single service. And many were saved, sanctified and many healed. But some way all this did not satisfy me, and for a year the heart hunger has increased. Like all Holiness people I have met, I kept praying for love, power, etc. But I saw those who were speaking in tongues had something that I did not have, and I finally became a seeker. And the Lord impressed me to go to Los Angeles, and attend the meetings, and seek the baptism in the Holy Ghost. The first man I met on entering the building was Bro. Blake of Ruthton, Minnesota, who still believed he had received the baptism with the Holy Ghost in sanctification, and the anointings and fillings that followed; but I told him, I was convinced that what I had was not the baptism. The first thing that impressed me was the love and unity that prevailed in the meeting, and the heavenly sweetness that filled the very air that I breathed. It seemed and still seems to me, I could not sing in that chorus. I know it came direct from heaven. I at once became an earnest seeker, and day after day, I went down before the Lord and He was true to me. He showed me myself as He saw me. I can never forget the state of utter helplessness to which He reduced me. He even took away the spirit of prayer, my testimony was removed from me, I saw myself apart from Christ as it were, and it made me desperate. I can never forget the faithfulness of Sister Good, and others, in dealing with me. Next to God, I am indebted to them, dear faithful souls, laying down their lives for others; and all the reward they receive so far as I can see, was the plain clothing they wear and food they eat. After I had been there a little over two weeks, devoting the entire time to seeking my Pentecost, on a Tuesday afternoon, when very much disheartened, suddenly the power of God descended upon me, and I went down under it. I have no language to describe what took place, but it was wonderful. It seemed to me that my body had suddenly become porous, and that a current of electricity was being turned on me from all sides; and for two hours I lay under His mighty power, and yet I knew I was not baptized yet, though I literally felt transparent, and a wonderful glory had come into my soul. Again on Thursday evening following, His power came over me, and I was prostrate on the floor for two hours, and still I knew I was not baptized, though I received a great spiritual uplift. But on Friday evening, March 1, His mighty power came over me, until I jerked and quaked under it for about three hours. It was strange and wonderful and yet glorious. He worked my whole body, one section at a time, first my arms, then my limbs, then my body, then my head, then my face, then my chin, and finally at 1 A. First I was conscious that a living Person had come into me, and that He possessed even my physical being, in a literal sense, in so much that He could at His will take hold of my vocal organs, and speak

any language He chose through me. Then I had such power on me and in me as I never had before. And last but not least, I had a depth of love and sweetness in my soul that I had never even dreamed of before, and a holy calm possessed me, and a holy joy and peace, that is deep and sweet beyond any thing I ever experienced before, even in the sanctified life. And Oh, such victory as He gives me all the time. According to the testimony of early Pentecostals, what modern Pentecostals refer to as their Pentecostal experience would have been rejected and they would have been told to continue seeking. The main problem with modern Pentecostals is that the vast majority have not been baptized in the Holy Spirit. It skews their theology when they try to argue that they have and yet lack the fruit that should be there. This results in a bad witness and non Pentecostals rightly ask the question, if they have had this life changing experience of the baptism of The Holy Spirit, that we lack, then where is the fruit of that? The sad truth is for the most part one cannot find much of a difference between Pentecostals and non Pentecostals. What the first generation of Pentecostals had was strong biblical roots and a real experience. They also had the fruit to show for it. There is a good reason why people still talk about Azusa Street a hundred years later. A small group of people turned the world upside down. Just like Acts 2. What we see today when compared with the Azusa Street generation is like a bee gun compared to a nuclear bomb. Some have had real touches from God but not the Baptism in the Holy Spirit that the bible speaks about.

Chapter 3 : The experience of God: an invitation to do theology - calendrierdelascience.com

Theology always has been (and is for Moltmann) not an abstract or otherworldly endeavor, but one nourished by, and responsive to, experiences in, and with, life itself. In this volume, the final in his series of Beitrage (systematic "contributions" to theology), Moltmann revisits the landmarks of his own theological journey.

For the one who denies such, they are simply out of touch with reality. We have all gone through experiences based upon our culture, family upbringing, education, economic status and even church background. Such is unavoidable in life. Paul even had these interesting words to say: And he [God] made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us. Such criticism is usually coupled with the fact that, historically, these groups have not had a solid Biblical foundation for some of their practises. Of course, there is no doubt it would be unhealthy to found everything on experience and little, or nothing, on the truth of Scripture. Such can lead us down a path, or will lead us down a path that causes much confusion and damage. Yet, what one might also observe is that experience may not only be a fault for Pentecostals and charismatics, but even for cessationists. We should not look to be cruel and label this as hypocrisy, but there at least needs to be a reassessment here. If someone is quick to label Pentecostals and charismatics as those who base too much of their theology on experience and not enough on the Bible, and then the person goes on to state that one of the reasons they do not believe miracles and healings still take place is because they have never experienced or seen it happen, this gives rise to concern. What seems to have been created is a double standard. Pentecostals and charismatics are chided for basing their theology on experience, but it might be that a cessationist does not consider certain gifts of the Spirit to still exist because they have neither experienced or know any one who has experienced such at least experienced such to their personal satisfaction. Of course, not all cessationists would make such a claim, and I only bring up such a point for consideration for both sides. But with cessationists, from the theologically trained to those who have no such training, there are quite a few who boast of founding their theology solely upon the Bible rather than experience, all the while heaping criticism upon the more charismatic groups for even considering experience as something on which they can build theology. Yet, when the cessationist understanding of certain Scripture passages is challenged and found wanting, and of course this is where I lean, many cessationists can regularly remind us that they know of no one who has truly seen such miracles or healings, nor of anyone who has ever been truly used in prophecy or tongues. So, what are we to do? Well, let us first recognise that our experience does shape our theology. Whether we are full cessationist or full continuationist or anywhere in between, our personal life experiences will shape our theology. We cannot deny it. Such is not inherently wrong. But this is not our sole, nor major, foundation for our understanding of God and His work. God has given us a plethora of tools to guard against such: Scripture, the current local body of Christ that we are a part of, the whole cloud of witnesses that have fought the good fight for 2, years, and specific leadership within the local church. And that is just for starters, but good starters they are. Of course, humanity can still go wrong. But, as a whole, if we keep our experiences in life humbly submitted to God, His revelation in the Scripture, leadership and the body with whom we relate, I think we can pretty much bank on being guarded against heresy, wrong practises, or just odd-ball stuff though God might just call us to do something a little out of the ordinary. In all, neither cessationists nor continuationists are free from the charge that our experience shapes our theology. And, please remember that this is ok. Such is not an anathema. It never has been from the Garden to today. And as we humbly seek God, let us continue to grow in being faithful to Him and His revelation in Scripture.

Chapter 4 : Thoughts about the Role of Experience in Theology: Part One | Roger E. Olson

Provides a methodological afterword (rather than a foreword) to his systematic contributions to theology. Presents theology as an adventure of ideas, shaped by his personal career and the political context through which he has lived.

To purchase this book online, go to [www. Experience](http://www.Experience), [â€] Dermot Lane invites Christians to deepen their faith by exploring some of the fundamental issues of contemporary theology, such as the religious meaning of experience, the nature of Christian revelation and the place of grace and faith in Christian life. Experience, God and theology 2. The nature and revelation 3. Theology emerges as an exciting adventure available to all. This revised edition will be of interest to students of theology, catechists, religious, priests and adult Christians wishing to deepen their faith. This development is especially remarkable in Catholic theology in view of the fact that not so long ago there was something of a magisterial ban against the use of experience in theology. This distrust of the appeal to experience was brought about by the Modernist crisis at the beginning of the twentieth century. During that time a rather narrow, psychological and subjectivist understanding of experience was in existence. As a result the unfortunate impression was given that theology was simply an outgrowth of experience in this narrow sense. By way of reaction against Modernism Catholic theology deliberately isolated itself from historical, social, scientific and cultural developments. Barriers were erected between life and theology. Something of a divorce took place between theory and practice. Grace and nature became exclusive opposites. The argument from authority assumed absolute significance. This kind of apartheid was inconsistent with the witness of the theological tradition and Christian living. It could not be followed through rigorously and therefore could not last for long. Gradually in the early s and s theology once again moved outwards towards the other sciences. Similarities as well as differences between theology and the other sciences emerged. Soon it became clear that theology was concerned not only with the passing on of Scripture and tradition, but also with some form of critical correlation between human experience and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Today most discussions about the nature of theology among Catholic theologians include reference somewhere along the line to the role of human experience. Perhaps even more significant is the way that the language of experience over the years has come back into official Church documents. The legacies of Friedrich Schleiermacher and William James continue to be enjoyed and refined by modern Protestant theology. According to Paul Tillich: Smith argues persuasively that the disclosure of God to the world takes place in and through human experience. The appeal to experience has become so commonplace that it is now in danger of becoming vacuous. It can be made to mean just about anything one wishes it to mean. If experience is to become a genuine source of theology in the light of Scripture, tradition and the authority of the Christian community, then there is a pressing need for precision in the use we make of and the meaning we attach to experience. What do we mean by the appeal to experience in theology? Is such an appeal to experience in danger of becoming a subjective cloak or even worse a new smokescreen against critical reflection? It is hoped that a treatment of these issues will throw a little critical light on the use we make of experience in theology and perhaps advance the way forward toward some ecumenical agreement on how Christian theology is done as well as providing a point of departure for inter-religious dialogue. In this way we will be laying the critical foundations for a theology, in subsequent chapters, of the interplay that exists between revelation and faith in experience. The meaning of experience We can begin our exploration of the meaning of experience by excluding at the outset the more obviously deficient uses of the word. Here experience is reduced to the level of euphoric outbursts of transient emotions. Such phenomena may be the result of a passing psychological mood or they may be induced by artificial external stimuli. In either case we are dealing with a situation that is temporary, superficial and unrepresentative of the normal human condition. To this extent such experiences cannot be regarded as reliable channels of human understanding. Here experience is confined exclusively to a direct contact with the empirically given world. This empiricist view of experience must also be rejected because of the large areas of life that are automatically excluded. A third and not untypical view of experience is one which says that language determines the character of all human experience. Not only is language descriptive of human experience, but it is also prescriptive of human

experience. The language we use in life determines the kind of experiences we have of the world around us. These restrictive accounts of experiences alert us to some of the more obvious pitfalls that are around when trying to work out a critical theology of experience. What then are the basic ingredients of a human experience? Experience involves first and foremost a human subject and reality. By a human subject we mean an individual self that is capable of seeing, feeling, thinking and discerning. The element of feeling, as distinct from emotion, is important in the life of the human subject. Following on this there must be some form of conscious encounter between the subject and reality if there is to be any genuine experience. It implies that within experience we find something already there; we come up against reality as given, and therefore prior to us. We confront persons and events in the world and we do so in such a way that we receive whatever it is that we encounter without being responsible for producing what we receive. Encounter, however, is only the beginning of experience since within encounter we do not move beyond the surface of reality. Reality has more to it than surfaces; it also has depth and breadth. Moving from encounter we must go on to posit a process of interaction between the subject and reality. It is through this process of interaction that experience begins to actualise itself as event in the life of the subject. The interaction is composed of a chain of events. These include a response or reaction from the subject, as conscious subject, toward reality. Following on this, reality is refracted or broken back upon the subject. This in turn evokes a process of critical reflection in the subject. Experience, therefore, is the outcome of the interaction that takes place between the subject and reality. Experience should not be located as something simply within the subject who looks at life but rather as the outcome resulting from critical interaction between the subject and reality. Experience is a more complex process; it is the critical assessment of reality by the subject through the movements of response, refraction and critical reflection. Within experience there is always a reciprocal flow between the subject and reality which creates a new relationship, a new level of personal participation, a deepened form of awareness and understanding in the life of the individual. Thus experience is never merely subjective or objective. Such is a false antithesis. It is, instead, that which emerges out of a living relationship between the subject and reality. A basic characteristic of experience is that no one experience discloses the totality of reality. Repeated experiences, no matter how contrasting, are a necessary component in the process of understanding reality. A succession of similar experiences can have a cumulative effect on human understanding. A certain pattern may emerge within experience, and this, in turn, can give rise to insight and new understanding. Past experiences affect present experiences and present experiences influence future experiences. Every experience exercises a critical function in relation to other experiences. An important factor in any theory of experience is the role that the community plays. This role is two fold. On the one hand the community provides the overall horizon of understanding within which human experiences begins to make sense. Experience without understanding is an empty event. The essential element of understanding that is brought to bear on human experience is usually the inherited wisdom of the community we live in and the tradition we have been brought up in. Prior to experience this horizon of understanding, derived from the community, exists in a pre-critical and pre-reflective form. This transition from a pre-critical to a post-critical level of understanding is essential to the growth of the individual in the life of the community. In fact it is only through different experiences that the emergence of an individualised self-consciousness and personal identity takes place. We do not come into the world with a readymade self. Rather we enter life with a capacity to become which is shaped by our experiences of reality. We leave the world with a constituted self shaped by the experiences we have undergone. The self develops out of experiences with reality, especially the reality of the human community composed of other selves. On the other hand, having undergone this movement from a pre-critical to a post-critical level of understanding, the individual is still dependent on the collective wisdom of the community. Individual experiences must be tried and tested against the corporate experiences of the community. In most cases the community acts as a guide for understanding the significance of human experience. This does not mean that individuals are necessarily tied to the wisdom of anyone particular community. They are always free to move beyond or outside the community to which they originally belonged. If they do this, however, they must move into some other community which will act as norm to their experiences. Individuals as individuals cannot critically assess their own experiences without reference to

some other group or community. To do otherwise would be to run the risk of arbitrary subjectivism. It should be noted, at this stage, that experience usually contains more than we can fully express or clearly articulate. The interpretation of experience usually falls short of the full content of the experience in question. Often we will return to the same experience from a slightly different angle in an attempt to grasp more of its full significance. And yet the totality of an experience is always greater than the sum of its individual parts. The implications of an experience can take time to unfold, and it may happen that the real significance of an experience only emerges at a later stage in the life of an individual. These preliminary remarks about the meaning of experience apply to all human experiences whether one is talking about science or philosophy or theology. Clearly experience within this framework is a uniquely formative element. Furthermore, experience is the basic source of all human understanding, including religious understanding.

Chapter 5 : Experiences in Theology: Ways and Forms of Christian Theology by Jürgen Moltmann

Theology always has been, and is for Moltmann, not an abstract or otherworldly endeavor, but one nourished by, and responsive to, experiences in and with life itself.

Experience has become a buzz word within many churches today. This individualism leans toward a spiritualism that tends to divorce itself from the communal aspect that is strongly attested in Scripture. It opens itself up to the possibility of relativism, which asserts that Truth is really in the eye of the beholder. This type of experience is usually viewed as subversive to what Scripture asserts about Truth. Experience, in contemporary society, has been given a position of authority based on the individual. Although Wesley did not explicitly discount personal experience, it had greater implications than the individual. Moreover, individual experience can be problematic, as is the case with interpreting Scripture, interpreting the meaning of that experience. If it is simply a subjective experience, then it tends to be open to any interpretation placed upon it by that individual. This can be especially problematic where interpretation of an experience differs. Ultimately, subjective experience cannot stand alone as its own authority. Therefore, experience was an objective reality. Knowledge gained from experience mattered little if it did not apply back to experience. Anything that we understand or consider knowledge is gained through experience. As such, experience is the source from which we derive our knowledge about life. However, experience does not simply provide data. It is also the arena in which we apply our knowledge to see if it is true. Even though experience has an authority role for Wesley, he also understood that the knowledge it provides is incomplete. Using only our empirical senses it is impossible to make assertions about God or the spiritual realm. Therefore, we must either be like Locke and say that knowledge has reached its logical end and can go no further. They impact one another. Experience is also subject to incorrect interpretation. People can be delusional or unreasonable in understanding their experience. Therefore, experience must also be subject, as any good experiment, to tests which weigh the worth of a proposition. Logic and reason provided such a tool for assessing the coherence of a belief gained from experience. In other words, experience became the great testing ground. Experience was the venue in which theological perspectives could be assessed. However, experience was also subject to Scripture for correct interpretation. Experience and Scripture were two balancing authorities, dependent upon one another for mutual correction. Furthermore, reason serves as a tool which allows these two authorities, Scripture and experience, to interact on level ground. Rather, knowledge needs to be transformational, it must lead to genuine Christian living if it is to be of value. Right thinking is not the end goal. Wesley believed that it was necessary for our beliefs about reality to affect our experience. However, in saying that knowledge need be practical, Wesley also did not allow for much theory. If it was not immediately applicable, Wesley held little affinity for such thoughts. However, this thinking does not allow for theoretical knowledge that has yet to be proven. Immediate applicability does not always determine the validity of a proposition. As such, viewing experience in such a way quite possibly limits our receptivity to future knowledge and learning. It produces and encourages a type of close-minded traditionalism. In doing theology, it is necessary that we take into account experience. We must realize that the natural realm is not immediately separate from the spiritual realm. They both have ramifications for the other. Theology also must be practical in the sense that it must be conducive to authentic Christian living. That does not mean that all theoretical theology is useless. It may take time to work through all of the implications. Ultimately, knowledge must be tested in the crucible of life. Experience must also listen to the Word of Scripture as a source of authority so that it is not left to its own contrivances. The inverse of this statement is also true. Theology must also listen to experience of the collective whole. To divorce theology from experience is to render theology impractical, overly lofty, and legalistic.

Chapter 6 : Neuroscience of religion - Wikipedia

I have long thought that experience does and should play a role in Christian theology, but I have also long known that's controversial, especially among conservative Christian theologians, and.

Theology March 3, by tlhorton80 To go from one extreme to the next in the time-span of only 2 or 3 years is truly a work of God. I think there is much to be learned from circumstances in life before and after the completed Canon of scripture. A question many ask is-How do we balance our circumstances in life through dreams, experiences, and unexplainable events against the written revelation of God, the Bible? Can the two walk together? Experience- particular instance of personally encountering or undergoing something. I learned a lot of great things from many excellent preachers and teachers. Throughout all of scripture starting from Genesis and ending in Revelation we see God interacting with humanity continuously through visions, dreams, personal experiences, and even on some occasions audibly. Then all of a sudden with the culmination of the scriptures God now becomes mute and we somehow we no longer can hear from God. This may be a bit of a extreme some would say. My life from inception has been also accompanied by experiences that cannot necessarily be confirmed or discredited by the Bible. For one example I think of when I was born, I had neuroplastoma and my mother visited a church near the hospital since I was basically in and out of the hospital with my condition for about 2 years. While my mother was at the church I assume it was charismatic someone started to speak in tongues and apparently there was also a translator who translated the message or language to be Biblical. Excuse me for lacking the details but is this coincidence or God? I personally believe God would have healed my cancer apart from this churches prayers but He allowed for men and women to intercede for my health. While in the charismatic church I read many books with a untrained eye regarding things that contradicted scripture. Many things I read talking about the nature of Hell from a perspective or experience that cannot be found in scripture and in the same token contradicted Luk If it does contradict most likely it is not God. This has been proved through time through all the famous cult leaders like Charles Taze Russell, Bringam Young, Joseph Smith, and many others. In conclusion our experiences should absolutely never alter our theology study of God-the Bible. Led by the Spirit by Jim Elliff Advertisements.

Chapter 7 : Experiences in Theology: Ways and Forms of Christian Theology | Fortress Press

Experience with Theology When I hear the word theology I think of doctrines and religious studies. I think of the educational part of faith. However, after completing module 1 reading assignments I have learned that it is much more than that.

Mystical theology is the science which treats of acts and experiences or states of the soul which cannot be produced by human effort or industry even with the ordinary aid of Divine grace. It comprises among its subjects all extraordinary forms of prayer, the higher forms of contemplation in all their varieties or gradations, private revelations, visions, and the union growing out of these between God and the soul, known as the mystical union. As the science of all that is extraordinary in the relations between the Divinity and the human spirit, mystical theology is the complement of ascetical, which treats of Christian perfection and of its acquisition by the practice of virtue, particularly by the observance of the counsels. The contents of mystical theology are doctrinal as well as experimental, as it not only records the experiences of souls mystically favoured, but also lays down rules for their guidance, which are based on the authority of the Scriptures, on the teachings of the Fathers of the Church, and on the explanations of theologians, many of them eminent as mystics. Its rules and precepts are usually framed for the special use of those who have occasion to direct souls in the ways of mysticism, so as to preserve them from error while facilitating their advancement. It must therefore take note of the erroneous systems of prayer, like Quietism or Semiquietism, and of the self-illusion or deception of souls that mistake the powers of darkness for those of light or the promptings of their own self-seeking for Divine communications. It is this part of the science that necessitates inquiry into various phases of occultism, diabolism, etc. Mystical theology has a nomenclature all its own, seeking to express acts or states that are for the most part purely spiritual in terms denoting analogous experiences in the material order. Usually it does not form part of the ordinary class-room studies, but is imparted by spiritual masters in their personal direction of souls, or inculcated, as in seminaries and novitiates, by special conferences and courses of spiritual reading. Preliminary to the study of mystical theology is a knowledge of the four ordinary forms of prayer: The last two, notably the prayer of simplicity, border on the mystical. Prayer is often called active or acquired contemplation to distinguish it from passive or higher contemplation, in which mystical union really consists. Mystical theology begins by reviewing the various descriptions of extraordinary contemplation, contained in the works of mystics and of writers on mystical subjects, and the divisions which help to describe its various phases, indicating chiefly whether it consists of an enlargement or elevation of knowledge, or of absorption in the Divine vision, or, again, whether the cherubic, i. The objects of contemplation are set forth: God, His Attributes, the Incarnation, and all the Sacred Mysteries of the Life of Christ; His presence in the Eucharist; the supernatural order; every creature of God in the natural order, animate or inanimate, particularly the Blessed Virgin, the angels, the saints, Providence, the Church. In analyzing the causes of contemplation, what may be called its psychology next comes up for consideration, in so far as it necessitates the ordinary or exceptional use of any human faculty, of the senses of the body, or of the powers of the soul. The closing chapter in this part of the science dwells on the fruits of contemplation, especially the elevation of spirit, joy, charity, zeal; on the influences that may contribute to its duration, interruption, or cessation. Here some theologians treat in detail of the preliminary or preparatory dispositions for contemplation, of natural or moral aptitude, solitude, prayer, mortification or self-denial, corporal and spiritual, as a means of soul-purification; these topics, however, belong more properly to the domain of ascetical theology. What strictly comes within the province of mystical theology is the study of the processes of active and passive purification through which a soul must pass to reach the mystical union. Although the active processes are also treated to some extent in ascetical theology, they require special study inasmuch as they lead to contemplation. It is to these processes that the well-known term "night" is applied by St. John of the Cross, since they imply three things which are as night to the soul in so far as they are beyond or contrary to its own lights, viz. Passive purifications are the trials encountered by souls in preparation for contemplation, known as desolation, or dryness, and weariness. As they proceed sometimes from God and sometimes may be

produced by the Evil Spirit , rules for the discernment of spirits are set down to enable directors to determine their source and to apply proper means of relief, especially should it happen that the action of the Evil One tends to possession or obsession. These passive purifications affect the soul when every other object of contemplation is withdrawn from it, except its own sins , defects, frailties, which are revealed to it in all their enormity. They put the soul in the "obscure night", as St. John of the Cross calls it, or in the "great desolation", to use the phrase of Father Baker. In this state the soul experiences many trials and temptations , even to infidelity and despair, all of which are expressed in the peculiar terminology of writers on mystical theology, as well as the fruits derived from resisting them. Chief among these fruits is the purification of love , until the soul is so inflamed with love of God that it feels as if wounded and languishes with the desire to love Him still more intensely. The first difficulty mystical writers encounter in their treatises on contemplation is the proper terminology for its degrees, or the classification of the experiences of the soul as it advances in the mystical union with God effected by this extraordinary form of prayer. Ribet in "La Mystique Divine" has a chapter x on this subject, and the present writer treats it in chapter xxix of his "Grace of Interior Prayer" tr. Scaramelli follows this order: In this union the soul experiences various spiritual impressions, which mystical writers try to describe in the terminology used to describe sense impressions, as if the soul could see, hear, touch, or enjoy the savour or odour of the Divinity. Ecstatic union with God is a further degree of prayer. This and the state of rapture require careful observation to be sure that the Evil One has no share in them. Here again mystical writers treat at length the deceits, snares, and other arts practised by the Evil One to lead souls astray in the quest for the mystical union. Finally, contemplation leads to a union so intimate and so strong that it can be expressed only by the terms "spiritual marriage". The article on contemplation describes the characteristics of the mystical union effected by contemplation. No treatise of mystical theology is complete without chapters on miracles , prophecies, revelations, visions, all of which have been treated under their respective headings. As for the history or development of mysticism , it is as difficult to record as a history of the experiences of the human soul. The most that can be done is to follow its literature, mindful that the most extraordinary mystical experiences defy expression in human speech, and that God , the Author of mystical states, acts upon souls when and as He wills, so that there can be no question of what we could consider a logical or chronological development of mysticism as a science. Still, it is possible to review what mystical writers have said at certain periods, and especially what St. Teresa did to treat for the first time mystical phenomena as a science. Before her, mystics were concerned principally with ecstasies , visions, and revelations; she was the first to attempt a scientific analysis of the process of mystical union brought about by contemplation. As the contribution to the science and history of mystical theology by each of the writers in the following list has been sufficiently noted in the articles on them, it will suffice here to mention the titles of some of their characteristic works. Famous mystics prior to the nineteenth century St. Gregory I the Great b. Victor , canon regular at Paris b. Bernard , Abbot of Clairvaux b. Victor , canon regular at Paris d. Bonaventure , Minister General of the Friars Minor b. The "Seven Roads of Eternity", which has sometimes been attributed to him, is the work of a Friar Minor , Rudolph of Bibrach, of the fourteenth century. Gertrude, a Benedictine b. Blessed Angela of Foligno b. Tauler , a Dominican b. Blessed Henry Suso , a Dominican b. Bridget of Sweden b. Blessed Ruysbroeck , surnamed the Admirable b. John of the Cross , founder of the Discalced Carmelites b. Venerable Luis de Lapuente b. Francis de Sales , Bishop of Geneva b. Alvarez de Paz, S. Bossuet called her the "Teresa of the New World ". Bossuet , Bishop of Meaux b. Emmanuel de la Reguera, S. As a description, this is the best treatise of the eighteenth century despite its too complicated classification; Voss has published a compendium of it, entitled "Directorium Mysticum" Louvain, Blumenlese aus der deutschen Mystikern der

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Chapter 8 : Experiences in Theology: Ways and Forms of Christian Theology - Jürgen Moltmann - Google

The experience of God: an invitation to do theology 30 November, Dermot Lane invites Christians to deepen their faith by exploring some of the fundamental issues of contemporary theology, such as the religious meaning of experience, the nature of Christian revelation and the place of grace and faith in Christian life.

Therefore, it is still necessary to work out a rigorous account of the notion of Christian experience. Only then will we be able to eliminate all the impasses and to set the relationship between experience and theology on a secure enough foundation. It is not my task here to meet to this challenge. Nevertheless, I want to record a few short reflections on what is commonly understood under the rubric of Christian experience the entirety of a life lived according to the faith and, therefore, within the community of the Church , in the hope that they may suggest some fruitful clarifications regarding its relationship to theology. Theology, understood as systematic and critical investigation, is in itself incapable of producing Christian experience by its own resources. What is more, theology is born of Christian experience and must ceaselessly refer to the horizon that this experience sets for it. The foundation of the ontological priority of experience over theology lies in the concept of Christian experience itself. The truth-criterion of Christian experience is inside this experience itself, not outside or beyond it. This fact does away with an extrinsicist, thus originally dualistic, conception of the connection between experience and reason. This subject as communion, which does not absorb the person, but allows him to exist in an ontological correlation with all who have received by faith and baptism the grace of participation in the dead and risen Christ. It likewise imparts a distinctive character to the method by which Christian experience begins and unfolds in relation to theology. Any temptation to lock ourselves into a human measure reduces experience to something partial. This partialness can be overcome only by the "gift from on high," in the Spirit and in faith. Faith bestows the opening towards the totality that is the incarnate Son of God. In point of fact, the priority of experience over theology is ontological, and this priority reveals plainly that man is primarily and essentially the receiver, not the producer, of truth. We can draw three important conclusions from what he have just set forth: One final observation in keeping with everything that we have said: Conversely, we can say that the life of the saints just think of Benedict, Dominic, Francis of Assisi, Ignatius of Loyola. To subscribe write Communio, P. Box , Washington, D.

Chapter 9 : Theology & Experience â€“ Pomomusings

Theology finds a point of contact in everyday and scientific language where the experience of "limits" signals a "religious dimension." All theologies, of course, are influenced by "common human experience and language" as well as by Christian texts.

I had those formative experiences in my life that taught me about masculinity and manhood. However, I knew that what I needed to work on now, as a man beginning my seminary journey, was how to enter into authentic relationships with people. I knew enough to know that being not just a man but a "man who can love as man loves" would be a vital part of becoming a priest. He was engaging, and we had good conversations at meals and so forth. Very early on, as I was starting to grow in friendship with him and other classmates as well, this guy stopped by my room, and while I was typing a paper at my computer, he started to give me a shoulder rub. When he moved down my back, I immediately stood up and acted like I needed to do something. He left, and I sat in my room for about 10 minutes. I finally decided to go down to his room and confront him. The seminary kicked the harasser out of the seminary. I started to get uncomfortable as he was starting to come by more often. And then he got in some real trouble when he was reported for sexually harassing a male waiter at a restaurant. He was on staff. Again a very kind guy. He would check in on me and the other seminarians and ask how things were going and so forth. My point in all of this is that a spiritually mature man is hard to develop. And part of the temptation for some men to NOT grow and develop in masculine love is that they believe that intimacy, relational loving, etc. Most guys in the seminary are trying to figure out what in the hell an actual vulnerable and masculine friendship looks like. So when you are trying to establish and grow friendships in the midst of that environment, and you at some point learn that a guy is pursuing friendship with you for VERY wrong reasons, that will either 1 drive you completely away from the seminary or 2 completely confuse and damage your growth as you seek to develop masculine intimacy in your life. The Catholic Church welcomes all. This film I put together helps explain it well. All are welcome in the Catholic Church, but we do put all kinds of restrictions, hurdles, tests etc. We DO tell guys pursuing the priesthood that if they are wrestling with things they need to sort those things out before going to the seminary. For further theological delving into this topic, a favorite seminary prof of mine, Fr.