retirement, and thanks him for his vision of a fully participatory and engaged laity.

ELENA PROCARIO-FOLEY
10.1017/hor.2023.45

I. Fundamental Theology

Paul Lakeland finished his doctorate at Vanderbilt University in 1981, the same year he joined the Theology Department at Fairfield. He has consistently contributed to the discipline of theology for more than forty years. This panel has the pleasant task to review Paul's work and pose questions that might stimulate his own reflection on his work.

Given the size of this panel, we decided to divide Paul's work into three distinct themes that developed chronologically but are more interrelated than serial sequence. The three topics encompass, first, his basic framework for pursuing theology; second, his study of the church; and, third, his attention to the laity in the church.

The first theme of the framework of theology was set in works published before the year 2000 and treated issues that underlie systematic or constructive theology. They deal with worldview and philosophy in relation to theology, questions of the context of theology, and the relation of faith to society. The second theme, church, defines a domain of theology where Paul has made a distinctive mark. Massimo Faggioli will focus on this aspect of Paul's work. The third theme concerns the members of the church, the laity in contrast to ordained ministers and office-holders. Elizabeth Johnson will highlight Paul's major contribution to a theology of the laity. I turn now to what I call "fundamental" issues that define the framework of Paul Lakeland's theology.

Looking back at the corpus of an author one can find common themes that run all through it; these themes may even function as consistent basic principles for the whole body of writing. But, in fact, writing most often emerges piecemeal; each work flows from current events, or an invitation to address an issue, or just a bright idea. This sets up a creative tension between Paul's opinions at any given time and the deeper convictions that color all his theology. I find in the four books he published between 1984 and 1997 four basic principles that characterize his theology and remain crucial for theology today. Together they provide a skeleton for a coherent treatise on the fundamentals of the discipline of theology.

I draw a first principle from Paul's thesis at Vanderbilt, which he published as *The Politics of Salvation: The Hegelian Idea of the State*.[1] I don't think of

[1] Paul Lakeland, *The Politics of Salvation: The Hegelian Idea of the State*, Hegelian Studies Series (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1984).

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2023.46 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Paul as a Hegelian as I might a Thomist, or Whiteheadian, or Heideggerian, or Lonerganian. But doctoral theses often inculcate basic principles with lasting effect. His work gave him the opportunity to study Hegel's view of religion and Christianity and their role in human history, the relation between Christianity and the state, and theology's relation to the discipline of philosophy. More particularly, Paul drew out Hegel's view of knowledge and conceptions of God, and he analyzed how Hegel thought about God's operation in a secular world, how being a Christian positioned persons relative to society and government, and, more publicly, the relation of church and state.

Paul's thesis thus established a historicist framework of thinking in the sense that the premise of the discussion is movement through time in history. Hegel gave him a historical perspective rather than a specific language or idiom, one that is quite distinct from a Thomistic retrieval of Aristotle. The first principle of his work, then, is as follows: the framework for theological reflection lies in situating human beings as a community developing across time.

In 1984, Paul published a short book entitled *Free in Christ: The Challenge of Political Theology*.[2] The book sets forth, in a personally invested and carefully constructed systematic way, the fundamental premises for doing theology in the light of the developments after Vatican II. It represents Paul's basic stance as a systematic theologian in the mid-1980s.

Political theology does not refer to a theology of politics in our sense of party politics. In theology it has the broad abstract meaning of negotiating social life, managing our society with a concern for the common good. Political theology, therefore, looks at human existence from the perspective of the community rather than the individual. More concretely, political theology as Paul understands it had two distinct sources during the 1960s: in Germany where it was called "political theology" and in Latin America where it was called "liberation theology." These two "brands" of theology provided analogous principles that feed into the basic suppositions for Christian theology in our time.

This book, then, expresses Paul's own personal synthesis of topics that govern a true and relevant theology in American society. Theology must be "found, understood, put into practice, and validated within human secular experience."[3] All theology should be relevant to life in society, have an ethical component, and be written as an appeal to action. "Belief without action is

[2] Paul Lakeland, *Free in Christ: The Challenge of Political Theology* (Leigh-on-Sea, England: Kevin Mayhew Publications, 1984), and the American edition, revised and expanded, *Freedom in Christ: An Introduction to Political Theology* (Bronx, NY: Fordham University Press, 1986).

[3] Lakeland, *Freedom in Christ*, 5.

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2023.46 Published online by Cambridge University Press

empty; but action without belief is thrashing around in the dark."[4] Christian theology thus begins not with awe at the beautiful world, but with a certain indignation that as Christians we tolerate so much human suffering and abuse. To sum up, I express the second principle like this: theology must work within a social liberationist rather than an individualist framework, and it must stimulate action.

In 1990, Paul published *Theology and Critical Theory*.[5] Critical theory refers to analysis of society in an effort to unmask false assumptions underlying life in common and open up pathways to "human emancipation and the construction of a good and just society."[6] He first appeals to "critical theory," from a school of thought that arose in an institute for social study established in Frankfurt after World War I and was influenced by Marx's ideas on social bias and partisan social assumptions. Actually, Paul's study really finds its focus in the second generation of critical theorists and in particular Jürgen Habermas.

Two fundamental ideas of Habermas find their way into Paul's theology. First, human societies are held together principally by linguistic communication. A set of common ideas and values communicated through language hold communities together. An example for us Americans is our constitution. At the same time, modern societies are also to some degree pluralistic. What holds unity and difference together is conversation, exchange aimed at greater harmony, and particular goals for the common good. The ideal strategy for establishing the common good is civil conversation.

Secondly, though, social conversation has its own rules. It requires truth and truthfulness rather than a simple desire to gain advantage and win. It also requires in Paul's terms "a willingness to give each member of the community or all the partners in the dialogue equal voice, equal respect, and attention."[7] This principle translates the teaching of Jesus on the Christian life into social terms: not just love of friends, but also love of enemies; love that builds up the common weal.

This yields the third principle of Paul's theology: theology needs a social anthropology and a way of thinking that engender community rather than exclusively attending to personal suffering of individuals.

I now turn to Paul's fourth book in fundamental theology entitled *Postmodernity: Christian Identity in a Fragmented Age*.[8] The term "postmodern" does not have a single clear commonly accepted meaning

[4] Lakeland, *Freedom in Christ*, 45.

[5] Paul Lakeland, *Theology and Critical Theory: The Discourse of the Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990).

[6] Lakeland, *Theology and Critical Theory*, 31.

[7] Lakeland, *Theology and Critical Theory*, 49.

[8] Paul Lakeland, *Postmodernity: Christian Identity in a Fragmented Age*, Guides to Theological Inquiry (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1997).

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2023.46 Published online by Cambridge University Press

for two main reasons. It has no determinate meaning in itself other than being after modernity; and both the meaning and value of modernity are highly contentious. Some people cheer the postmodern as a return to the tradition, and others fear the postmodern as a loss of modern standards. Thus, Paul first gives a calm sensible meaning to postmodernity and then submits the challenges that it poses to traditional Christian and especially Catholic doctrinal understandings of itself.

Paul identifies the basic cause of postmodernity: Western enlightened reason was too sure of its universal relevance. Against this overconfidence, there gradually developed a sense of time and change that showed that reason itself is always conditioned by particular circumstances and interests that blunt its global authority. Everything is rational by some person's or some culture's reasoning. A sense of the particularity and contextuality of history itself causes basic convictions to unravel. Suddenly, the pillars of Christian theology begin to wobble: the very term "God" does not fit in Buddhist cultures; the place of Jesus Christ seems to be alongside rather than above other religious mediators, and the Christian community in history loses its supremacy.

In response to the new problem of God, Paul does not offer a concept that he thinks all will accept. Rather he appeals to the tradition set in the book of Job where God speaks from the whirlwind of chaos that God transcends and orders. God loves all things but does not attend to each "me" by intervention at every impasse. Paul puts it this way: "Human beings have neither reason nor right to claim to be the meaning of the universe."[9] He then looks inside the tradition toward the mystics and prophets for an answer: God is encountered within and as transcendent; God does not intervene but urges human agency in the pursuit of justice.

To formulate the fourth principle of Paul's foundations: in several respects, theology has to address a new intellectual culture beyond the modernity that Vatican II embraced.

I conclude with this: In his early writings, Paul Lakeland developed a coherent social base for theological understanding. It is as relevant and needed today as when it was composed. It proposes historically conscious thinking, sets individual concerns in a wider social context, and is critical with questions that resonate with today's problems. My final question for Paul today asks how he would formulate the most pressing theological question at this moment of history from the perspective of America.

ROGER D. HAIGHT
Union Theological Seminary, USA
rhaight@utsnyc.edu
10.1017/hor.2023.46

[9] Lakeland, *Postmodernity*, 99.

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2023.46 Published online by Cambridge University Press