



The Theology of Jean Daniélou: Epochs, Correspondences, and the Orders of the Real

Aidan Nichols OP

Abstract

After a survey of the life and work of Jean Daniélou considered as the classic theologian of twentieth century 'ressourcement', his theological method is explored under three headings: 'epochs' indicates his reliance on the theology of history as developed by 'biblical theology'; 'correspondences' his cosmic aesthetics, indebted to French Symbolism, and invoked theologically by way of typology; 'orders' his Pascalian emphasis on a distinction between levels of reality and the variety of epistemological approaches they require. The article concludes by applying Daniélou's method, so understood, to the heart of his theological doctrine, his account of God in Jesus Christ.

Keywords

ressourcement, theology of history, typology, Pascal

Introduction

Jean Daniélou was the epitome of *ressourcement* theology, the purest example of its type. That is plain from the range of his patristic research, the acuteness of his feeling for trends in contemporary environment, and the synthesis of these two with orthodoxy of faith in the doctrinal (and pastoral) writings he produced. *Ressourcement* theology was responsible for a number of the more salutary influences on the documents of the Second Vatican Council. It also played a part – a large one, if unwitting – in the re-awakening of the Thomist tradition to its own biblical and patristic sources, a fruitful development at the present time from Fribourg to Florida. Against this background, the figure of Daniélou seems worth re-visiting.

Life and work

Jean Guenolé Marie Daniélou was born on 14 May 1905 into a cultured family closely linked to the elites of early twentieth century

France. His father, Charles, a politician of the Centre Left, several times achieved ministerial office in the administrations of Aristide Briand. The elder Daniélou's Republicanism and disapproval of clerical interventions in politics made him, for the period, an unlikely believer. Daniélou's mother, Madeleine, a more traditional Catholic, was a professional educationalist, much involved in projects to secure the entry of women into higher learning. Daniélou deemed her religious faith, which was both intelligent and deeply spiritual, the chief formative influence on his own.¹ The attraction to her of Ignatian spirituality heralded her eldest son's eventual entry into the Society of Jesus.²

His childhood was divided between homes in Paris and Brittany. To the latter, with its wild Atlantic coastline, he ascribed his love of nature, and sense of the disclosure of God through the cosmos. Also owed to the Breton contribution to his upbringing was his respect for popular Catholicism. A 'militant' Gospel – the reference might be to 'Catholic Action', or, later, 'political theology' – was not, he thought, the only way of embodying the evangelical impulse. Christianity 'expressed in the sacralisation of the chief moments of existence' – the traditional way of life of Breton fisherfolk and farmers – was equally valid.³

In his University years, spent in Paris, Daniélou was caught up in the literary renaissance, both general and more specifically Catholic, of the 1920s, an 'epoch of *détente* and cultural enchantment' after the sufferings of the First World War.⁴ In this period he acquired his extremely rich literary culture, as well as his principal orientations in the intellectual life at large. At the Sorbonne, his love affair with the Hellenic world began. This would bear fruit in his studies of not only the Hellenistic Jewish philosopher Philo⁵ but also – and more importantly for theology – the Greek Fathers and ecclesiastical writers, notably Gregory of Nyssa⁶ and Origen of

¹ Though in later years some considered the attention he paid to the media and the young *mondain*, the notebooks published twenty years after his death testify to his spiritual life: M. J. Rondeau (ed.), *Jean Daniélou. Carnets spirituels* (Paris 1993).

² J. Daniélou, *Et qui est mon Prochain? Mémoires* (Paris 1974), p. 48. All works cited are by Daniélou unless otherwise stated.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁵ *Philon d'Alexandrie* (Paris 1958).

⁶ *Platonisme et théologie mystique: doctrine spirituelle de Saint Grégoire de Nysse* (Paris 1944); *Être et le temps chez Grégoire de Nysse* (Leiden 1970). See also his choice of texts from Gregory's homilies on the Song of Solomon (with introduction and notes), *La Colombe et la ténèbre. Textes extraits des 'Homélie sur le Cantique des Cantiques' de Grégoire de Nysse* (Paris 1967), and his presentation of one of Gregory's major treatises in mystical theology: *Vie de Moïse, ou, Traité de la perfection en matière de vertu. Introduction, texte critique et traduction* (Paris 1968, 3rd edition).

Alexandria,⁷ much of whose approach to mystical theology and biblical exegesis he retained. He was deeply influenced by the writings of the poet and critic Charles Péguy, who confirmed him in his primarily *symbolic rather than conceptual* approach to the expression of faith.⁸ He ascribed to Péguy his continuing confidence in the value of the historic Western culture,⁹ as well as a distrust of appeals to ‘progress’, and, more positively, the notion of hope as ‘surmounted despair’.¹⁰ A still closer spiritual affinity linked him, he considered, to the novelist François Mauriac, whose principal theological emphasis lay not, as with Péguy, on the virtues (whether natural or supernatural), but on the dialectic of sin and grace.

In this formative period of his life, Daniélou also admired the Neo-Thomist layman Jacques Maritain for his refined spiritual-intellectual personality, which found expression in such programmatic statements for Catholic life as *Art et Scolastique*, an essay on the revival of, especially, the visual arts, and *La Primauté du spirituel*, a counterblast to the rallying cry, ‘Politics first!’, of the nationalist-monarchist movement *Action française*. (In the ultra-activist years immediately following the Second Vatican Council Daniélou looked back on this work as a plea for putting contemplation prior to action.¹¹) But he could not stomach the systematic quality of Maritain’s Thomism – or indeed any *thorough-going* Thomism for that matter. All systematisations, he considered, distorted the real. Unfortunately, he failed to notice that the role of Aristoteleanism in Aquinas is to concentrate attention on the native intelligibility *precisely of the real*, rather than to stimulate construction of conceptual systems.

In point of fact, Daniélou would maintain, despite himself, some clear emphases from the Thomist tradition. In epistemology, he treated – as did the Thomists – the conformity of mind with being as a *sine qua non* for the validity of thought.¹² In theology, he

⁷ *Origène* (Paris 1948). According to the Scottish Dominican Fergus Kerr, this book marks the beginning of the ‘retrieval’ of Origen’s writing for modern Catholic thought, where it figures as the classic reference-point of what Kerr terms the ‘epithalamic tradition’ of nuptial theology. With pardonable exaggeration, Kerr suggests that, in documents from John Paul II and Benedict XVI, such wedding mysticism for the relation between the believer and God in Christ, mediated by other *ressourcement* theologians (Henri de Lubac, Hans Urs von Balthasar) has become virtually the central motif of the papal magisterium: see F. Kerr, *Twentieth Century Catholic Theologians. From Neoscholasticism to Nuptial Mysticism* (Oxford 2007), pp. 80–83, 135–137, 176–179, 199–201.

⁸ He expressed his continuing attachment to poetry as a tool of meaning in a work co-authored as *Actualité de la Poésie: études, témoignages, poèmes, extraits et documents* (Paris 1956).

⁹ He excoriated its neophilic despisers in *La Culture trahie par les siens* (Paris 1972).

¹⁰ *Et qui est mon Prochain?*, op. cit., p. 62.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 64. See his *Contemplation: croissance de l’Eglise* (Paris 1977).

¹² Manifest in, for example, his *Scandaleuse Vérité* (Paris 1961), where he deplors the ‘reversal of perspectives’ which substitutes ‘the subjective viewpoint of sincerity for the

accepted Thomas's account of the inter-relation of the *via affirmativa* and the *via negativa* in the knowledge of God – and indeed much else besides.¹³ His argument for divine being as infinite personality was sheer Maritain.¹⁴ But his opposition to any notion of Thomism as *the* Catholic philosophy and theology to the effective exclusion of all others would play a major part in the Church conflict over 'la nouvelle théologie' in the 1930s, 40s and 50s.¹⁵ Daniélou considered his personal philosophical sympathies to lie as much or more with the vitalist philosopher Henri Bergson and the phenomenologist Max Scheler. He certainly profited from Bergson's reflections on memory and time, and Scheler's notions of love and sympathy. More broadly, he appealed to these figures to license the intuitive element in his thinking.

Among other luminaries of the French Catholic revival who played a part in Daniélou's life and education as a layman, he met at the Maritains' the Egyptian-born Dominican Orientalist Jean de Menasce.¹⁶ Contact with this learned contemplative opened his mind to 'the Jewish world and that of the East'.¹⁷ Daniélou became deeply interested in the ancient religions of the Near and Middle East; his most original scholarly contributions, which place early Jewish Christianity in a wider setting, bear witness to this lasting passion.¹⁸

It was, then, an unusually well-formed young Catholic with an exceptional religious culture who in 1929 entered the novitiate of the Society of Jesus at Laval (north-west France). His basic orientation to the Church Fathers was already in place, as was his concept of his mission as an intellectual-spiritual apostolate. Not that the lengthy

objective view point of truth', *ibid.*, p. 13. In the Church context this appears by way of theological transposition as a 'primacy of action over doctrine, whereas action must be the fecundity of truth, the faith which works through love', *ibid.*, p. 15. That remark prepares the student of Daniélou's mind for his post-Conciliar critiques of political and liberation theology.

¹³ For the philosophical knowledge of God: *Dieu et nous* (Paris 1957); English translation, *God and Us* (London 1957), pp. 43–54; and on the act of theological faith, *ibid.*, p. 170.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, with a reference to J. Maritain, *Les Degrés du savoir* (Paris 1932), p. 464.

¹⁵ A. Nichols, O. P., 'Thomism and the *nouvelle théologie*', *The Thomist* 64 (2000), pp. 1–19.

¹⁶ A. Hastings, 'The Legacy of Pierre Jean de Menasce', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 21 (1997), pp. 168–171.

¹⁷ *Et qui est mon Prochain?*, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

¹⁸ Notably *Théologie du judéo-christianisme* (Paris 1958), the posthumous *Le Judéo-christianisme: les textes, les doctrines et la vie spirituelle*, published by the Institut Catholique in 1982, and, on one specific aspect, the *Testimonia* genre, *Études d'exégèse judéo-chrétienne: les Testimonia* (Paris 1966). One might group with these his work on the Dead Sea scrolls *Les Manuscrits de la Mer morte et les origines du Christianisme* (Paris 1957). The ground-breaking character of his work in putting 'Jewish Christianity' on the map was acknowledged in one of the two *Festschriften* he received: *Judéo-christianisme. Recherches historiques et théologiques offerts en hommage au cardinal Jean Daniélou* (Paris 1972). (The other *Festschrift*, cited in note 25 below, was more strictly patristic in subject-matter.)

Jesuit training left no mark. To his years as a Jesuit ordinand on Jersey (in the Channel Islands) he ascribed the acquisition of a discipline of prayer and, through the reading of Emmanuel Mounier's journal *Esprit*, a higher estimate of the importance of economic, social and political issues than of speculatively philosophical ones.¹⁹ The period 1936 to 1939, which included his priesting in 1938, were spent at Fourvières, the house erected in Lyons to give young French Jesuits closer contact with contemporary currents of thought. He was in full sympathy with this project. An earlier generation of Francophone Jesuit stars – Pierre Rousselot, Joseph Maréchal – by dancing pirouettes, however brilliant, on the Neo-Scholastic stage had left their secular contemporaries unmoved. Daniélou had a tendency to be over-impressed at first by the positive elements in innovatory thinking, and only subsequently discover the negative accompaniments (examples from the history of his mind are Jean-Paul Sartre and Karl Marx). So he was delighted to be in close proximity to such fellow-Jesuits as Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who was seeking a natural scientific version of the Christian narrative, from the origins to the Eschaton, and Gaston Fessard, who was investigating the usefulness to theology of a Hegelian analysis of history.

It is notable that both of these examples concern giving a greater place than had Scholasticism to the dimension of *temporality* – for this would be the key to Daniélou's own most distinctive theologising. As he wrote, 'For me, the theology of history is the most important aspect of contemporary theology'²⁰. However, neither Teilhard nor Fessard but Henri de Lubac was his real master. De Lubac consolidated Daniélou's conviction that patristic *ressourcement* should be Catholic theology's most important *form*. De Lubac also gave him the idea that the theology of history should be its most important *content*. In an encomium of de Lubac in his posthumously published *Mémoires* Daniélou declared:

[A] theology of history allows us to gather together, while ordering in a hierarchy, the various currents that criss-cross religious history, to make a synthesis of them, a vision of the whole, by integrating into theology the dimension of temporality which all the great modern systems have included in one way or another.²¹

That is what made de Lubac's thought for Catholics the most 'important' of the twentieth century, the most potent for the formation of a truly 'actual' theological synthesis.²²

¹⁹ The two were interestingly connected in his *L'Oraison, problème politique* (Paris 1965), a critique of a self-secularising society where prayer retreats into the private sphere.

²⁰ *Et qui est mon Prochain?*, op. cit., p. 91. See above all his *Essai sur le mystère de l'histoire* (Paris 1953).

²¹ *Et qui est mon Prochain?*, op. cit., p. 91.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 91–92.

The pupil praised the master for the revival of the fourfold sense of Scripture in de Lubac's *Exégèse médiévale*,²³ a crucial confirmation of Daniélou's own intuition of the importance of typology. He shared de Lubac's emphasis on the need to understand modern thought, as represented (for de Lubac) by the trio of Nietzsche, Marx and Kierkegaard. Of those three, the frequent recurrence of the term 'existence', or 'mystery of existence', in Daniélou's theological work strongly suggests that the influence of Kierkegaard had touched him, in part no doubt indirectly through the Catholic Existentialist Gabriel Marcel.²⁴ He admired de Lubac's studies of Eastern religion – chiefly Buddhism, whereas Daniélou was more interested in Hinduism. He was not in the least troubled by de Lubac's (as Daniélou judged) total lack of any systematic impulse. Quite rightly, de Lubac preferred to disengage, rather, the most genial insights of past and present.²⁵ Far in the future, in the conflictual situation of the post-Conciliar Church, another ground for rejoicing came to be de Lubac's alignment with Hans Urs von Balthasar's journal *Communio* – which possessed, so Daniélou would comment, 'all that is solid in present-day theology in a common line' joining de Lubac, Louis Bouyer, and Daniélou himself.²⁶

The influences of childhood, precocious young manhood, and de Lubac's powerful example furnished Daniélou with the principal convictions he took to the Parisian Institut Catholique when at the young age of 37 he was presented to the chair of the History of Christianity, thus following in the footsteps of the great historian of the early Church, Louis Duchesne, his predecessor but one. Daniélou's patristic monographs, and the massive 'History of Christian Doctrine before the Council of Nicaea', as well as his panoramic study of the early Church co-authored with the historian of ancient philosophy and culture Henri Marrou,²⁷ would fully justify his selection to this

²³ H. de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale. Les quatre sens de l'Écriture* (Paris 1959–1964). Daniélou had already written a far more compressed study of the same topic in the early patristic era: *Les divers sens de l'Écriture dans la tradition chrétienne primitive* (Louvain 1948).

²⁴ For approving remarks on Kierkegaard see, for instance, over against Sartre (and Merleau-Ponty), *Scandaleuse Vérité*, op. cit., p. 34, over against Marx (and Hegel), *ibid.*, p. 36. Daniélou might well be treated, with de Lubac, as marrying the neo-patristic orientation of 'la nouvelle théologie' with 'existential theology': thus D. Hoffmann-Axthelm, *Anschauung und Begriff: zur historischen Einordnung von 'Nouvelle Théologie' und 'Existentialer Theologie'* (Munich 1973).

²⁵ One wonders if this is entirely fair to the author of *La Foi chrétienne. Essai sur la structure du Symbole des apôtres* (Paris 1970, 2nd edition).

²⁶ *Et qui est mon Prochain?*, p. 95.

²⁷ *Des origines à saint Grégoire le Grand* (Paris 1963, = *Nouvelle histoire de l'Église*, 1).

prestigious post. The fine Festschrift entitled *Epektasis* bore witness to the esteem in which other patristic scholars held him.²⁸

Outside of his professional remit he also gave a great deal of time to dialogue with representatives of other religions (and none), through such means as the ecumenical review *Dieu Vivant* and the missiologically oriented ‘Cercle Saint Jean-Baptiste’ (both in Paris),²⁹ as well as, internationally, the high-powered ‘Rencontres de Florence’,³⁰ and the Eranos colloquia organised by an admirer of C. G. Jung’s in Canton Ticino (Switzerland).³¹ These in no way diminished his sense of the uniqueness of Christianity, and the claims of Catholic orthodoxy. But they served to expand his sense of the variety of idioms in which Gospel and doctrine can be expressed, as well as the possibility of acquiring nuggets of real gold from cultures beyond the Church’s limits.

He would remain at the Institut Catholique for twenty-five years – with intervals of enforced absence through his dangerous work for the French Resistance during World War Two, as well as, on a very different note, Roman sojourns for the sessions of the Second Vatican Council, 1962–5 where he acted as a *peritus* or theological expert. His influence on the Conciliar texts may be found in the doctrine of revelation in *Dei Verbum*, the Dogmatic Constitution on Revelation, in the overall caste of *Nostra Aetate*, the Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, and in the eschatological emphases which sit in somewhat uneasy tension with the ‘theology of earthly realities’ in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes*.

Only his appointment as a cardinal by Pope Paul VI in 1969 brought his University-level teaching to an end – whereupon his encounters with others became more irregular but not necessarily less frequent. He developed a surprising talent – and popularity – in television interviews and debates, at a time when the foundations of

²⁸ J. Fontaine – C. Kanengiesser (ed.), *Epektasis. Mélanges patristiques offerts au cardinal Jean Daniélou* (Paris 1972).

²⁹ See the collection of texts from this Centre he edited as *Les laïcs et la mission de l’Église: études et documents du Cercle Saint Jean-Baptiste* (Paris 1962). His continuing fascination with the figure of St John is explained in *Jean-Baptiste, témoin de l’Agneau* (Paris 1964). See also *Le Mystère de l’Avent* (Paris 1948).

³⁰ For some of the fruits of his activity along these lines, see his *Dialogues avec les Marxistes, les Existentialistes, les Protestants, les Juifs, l’Hindouisme* (Paris 1948). A particular concern was Christian-Jewish dialogue as in *Les Juifs: dialogue entre Jean Daniélou et André Chouraqui* (Paris 1960). How the world beyond the Church may be mysteriously linked to the gift of salvation was early explored by him in *Le Mystère du salut des nations* (Paris 1946).

³¹ Pagan mythology could carry some elements of ontological truth – and correlate with the psychological ‘archetypes’ in which Jung had specialized. He presented Christian symbolism’s debt to, yet difference from, the mythopoeic religions in *Mythes païens, Mystère chrétien* (Paris 1966).

both Church and State in France were shaking. And he continued to animate groups of students, declaring to critics of his acceptance of Episcopal orders that, indeed, despite their denials, he had ‘a church’: not a diocese (as they would have preferred) but something equally important – ‘les jeunes’: the Parisian young. Much of the last period of his writing was concerned to reinstate credal and ethical certainties, and a proper sense of the rightful authority of the Church, in a French Catholicism profoundly troubled by the post-Conciliar crisis.³² As he insisted:

Christianity dwells between two poles, the Gospel and the Church. The Church must perpetually refer to the Gospel, but the Gospel must be lived in the Church. Fidelity to the Gospel can never be infidelity to the Church.³³

Such forthright statements of allegiance did not prevent Daniélou’s election to membership of the *Académie Française* – for the ‘immortals’ of high culture in France – in November 1972.

Jean Daniélou died on 20 May 1974 – in the unlikely setting of a brothel which the septuagenarian was visiting in the course of his priestly ministrations. It was a supreme monument to the total freedom of movement Paul VI had given him as a cardinal. It was also an indication of a certain lack of prudence. He had always said and done what he thought right, regardless of reactions. The following year, a ‘Société des Amis du Cardinal Jean Daniélou’ was founded in Paris, with an annual bulletin, to ‘promote the study of his writings and the continuance of his influence’.³⁴

Daniélou’s theological method: epochs, correspondences, and the orders of the real

Daniélou assisted students of his thought by directing them for its essentials to his first book, *Le signe du Temple*, written as early as 1941.³⁵ All his other books, he opined, were no more than commentaries on this opusculum.³⁶ Given the ambitious character of

³² See for instance, on doctrine: *La Foi de toujours et l’homme d’aujourd’hui* (Paris 1969); *La Catéchèse aux premiers siècles* (Paris 1968), the publication of which was linked to the catechetical vacuum in the French church of the period; *Évangile et monde moderne: petit traité de morale à l’usage des laïcs* (Tournai 1964); on the role of the Church: *L’avenir de la religion* (Paris 1968); *Autorité et contestation dans l’Église* (Geneva 1969); *L’Église des apôtres* (Paris 1970); *Pourquoi l’Église?* (Paris 1972); *Crise de l’Église, crise de l’homme* (Paris 1972).

³³ *Scandaleuse Vérité*, op. cit., p. 123.

³⁴ [Anon.], ‘Daniélou’, Jean, in F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford 1997, 3rd edition), p. 450.

³⁵ *Le signe du Temple ou de la présence de Dieu* (Paris 1942).

³⁶ *Et qui est mon Prochain?*, op. cit., p. 109.

the dossiers that make up his history of Christian doctrine until the Council of Nicaea,³⁷ it is hard to take this judgment literally. But nonetheless, for what concerns the great lines of his own thinking – and that would include his instinctive manner of organising the content of the texts left by ancient authorities in the Church, the comment is fair enough. As he himself (again) remarked, his patristic monographs, which are, so far as bulk is concerned, his chief output, were not written merely as ‘scientific’ analysis – though they are also that – but in order to express his own concerns.³⁸ In this, as in all his theological writing, he took it for granted that Scripture and Tradition constitute what he called the ‘regulative basis to which the theologian must always refer, on pain of making arbitrary constructions’.³⁹

Le signe du Temple identifies itself as a theology of history which considers a succession of religious epochs, each of which is characterised by a distinct modality of divine presence. To some degree, these epochal modes of presence overlap yet they also constitute a narrative which runs from God the Alpha to God the Omega. The divine ‘temple’ is in turn cosmic (in nature); Jewish (in Jerusalem); ‘Christic’ (in the Word incarnate); ecclesial (in the Church, and most notably in the Holy Eucharist), and eschatological (at the End). In some versions of this list Daniélou will also include – in connexion with the ecclesial ‘temple’ – a *mystical* condition of the polyvalent divine indwelling. This is the temple of God in the hearts of redeemed human beings, justified and sanctified by the blood of the Lamb.⁴⁰

Two key presuppositions help explain Daniélou’s presentation of the God-world relationship in the various modes of its realisation. The *first* concerns what he liked to call *correspondances*, ‘correspondences’. In symbolic thinking, by a poetic grasp of the real, certain affinities declare themselves for the purpose of articulating the sacred. Granted Daniélou’s literary sensitivity, one can detect here an influence from the Symbolist aesthetic influential among late nineteenth and early twentieth century French poets. ‘The only universe where I can breathe is the sort where I can cross from one level to another. It is a universe of correspondences.’⁴¹

But how was that cosmic aesthetic set to use *theologically*? At one level, these correspondences concern the harmony which governs the inter-relations of the economy of creation with that of salvation. Some

³⁷ *Histoire des doctrines chrétiennes avant Nicée* (Paris 1958–1978). Commissioned in Britain, the last volume of this trilogy was published later in French than in English.

³⁸ *Et qui est mon Prochain?*, p. 130.

³⁹ *God and Us*, op. cit., p. 163.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 181–203.

⁴¹ *Scandaleuse Vérité*, op. cit., p. 72.

features of the cosmos, constitute natural epiphanies which provide a ‘vocabulary’ – both ontic and, through the mediation of human interpreters, linguistic – for the saving events of the divine redemptive plan. Obvious examples are the meteorological phenomena associated with the Sinai revelation in the book of Exodus where a storm expresses the concentrated intensity of God’s existence, or, in the same book, the vagaries of the flood-waters at the Red Sea which entail death by drowning for oppressors, a way of escape for victims. At another level, these ‘correspondences’ concern the inter-relations of events within the divine plan to secure creation definitively through redeeming it in Jesus Christ and by his Spirit. That can be so because the same Saviour God – gradually revealed as Trinity – is at work at all the stages of the economy, in both Old and New Testaments. As a close student of Jewish Christianity it was the latter which especially concerned Daniélou though, to be sure, the principles of biblical typology are common to writers in the non-Semitic traditions of Greek East and Latin West as well.

Daniélou was convinced that the typological exegesis of Scripture was no mere patristic (and mediaeval) curiosity, which subsequently, with the advent of the historical-critical method, the Church, heaving a sigh of relief, could lay aside. On the contrary: whatever gains the historical-critical method might bring, the Church’s fundamental way of reading the Scriptures must remain that of the Fathers. Only the typological method allows the unity of the Testaments to be concretely affirmed: this Daniélou would seek to show in his study of that subject, *Sacramentum futuri*.⁴² Only that same method can validate the use of Scripture in the traditional Liturgies: this was the burden of his *Bible et Liturgie*,⁴³ a work so appreciated by the Eastern Orthodox as to be translated into modern Greek.⁴⁴ Only an openness to typology, again, enables twentieth scholars, and a wider public, to rediscover the earliest ‘reception’ of the Gospel which took place in the world of early Jewish Christianity, long lost to consciousness in the Great Church but thanks to the energy of researchers and sometimes their good luck, now available again through the meticulous re-composition of a jigsaw. Thus the theology of highly condensed symbols – the palm and the crown, living water, Elijah’s chariot, the star of Jacob and the like – he explored in *Les Symboles chrétiens primitifs*.⁴⁵ Only typology – this was his conviction – allows Scripture to interpret Scripture through the hermeneutical complementarity

⁴² *Sacramentum futuri. Études sur les origines de la typologie biblique* (Paris 1950).

⁴³ *Bible et Liturgie. La théologie biblique des sacrements et des fêtes d’après les Pères de l’Église* (Paris 1951).

⁴⁴ *Hagia Graphê kai Leitourgia. Hê bibliê theologia tôn Mysteriôn kai tôn heortôn kata tous Pateres tês Ekklêsias* (Athens 1981).

⁴⁵ *Les Symboles chrétiens primitifs* (Paris 1961).

of distinct but ‘corresponding’ events and texts.⁴⁶ Where typology is suppressed, the art of the Church ceases to be legible, and the capacity to write theology in the spirit of the Fathers withers away. From his standpoint, Daniélou can pay the Fathers no greater compliment than when he writes, ‘They had an extraordinary perception of the sacred symphony’.⁴⁷

The *second* key presupposition which throws light on Daniélou’s rich account of divine modes of presence in the world does not concern this organic inter-relating of distinguishable economies (creation and salvation) or differing phases of saving time (whether the time of ‘holy pagans’,⁴⁸ or the times of the Old Covenant and the New) by the invocation of such instructive ‘correspondences’. The second key presupposition entails a contrasting insistence on maintaining due distinctions where levels of reality and manners of investigation are concerned. This is vital for his theological method: ‘the principle of method is the distinction of orders.’⁴⁹ The irreducibility of orders one to another is as important as the correspondences to be found between them – and is, moreover, what makes those correspondences so interesting and potentially fruitful for both intelligence and life.

Daniélou was very taken by the seventeenth century philosopher and mathematician Blaise Pascal’s plural ‘orders’ of the real and of appropriate enquiry therein. In the *Pensées*, Pascal had applied to physical, rational and cordial understanding – senses, reason, heart – a notion he had earlier worked out in his mathematical writings. In mathematics, lines, squares and cubes cannot be added together, since – so Pascal explained – they belong to different orders.⁵⁰ Pascal himself made different applications of the orders doctrine.⁵¹ Similarly, Daniélou’s concern with multi-dimensionality is constant in emphasis but flexible in application. The scheme Daniélou most characteristically offers is a triple one which takes the form: cosmos, interiority, revelation – each irreducible and with approaches suited to itself.⁵²

⁴⁶ I have attempted a retrieval of this typological method for the general reader, using both Daniélou and the (under-appreciated) Anglo-Catholic biblical theologian Gabriel Hebert, in *Lovely, like Jerusalem. The Fulfillment of the Old Testament in Christ and the Church* (San Francisco 2007).

⁴⁷ *Et qui est mon Prochain?*, op. cit., p. 135.

⁴⁸ Compare *Les saints ‘païens’ de l’Ancien Testament* (Paris 1956).

⁴⁹ *Scandaleuse Vérité*, op. cit., p. 71.

⁵⁰ A. J. Krailsheimer, ‘Introduction’, in Pascal, *Pensées* (Harmondsworth 1979 [1966]), p. 22. Cf *Pensée* No. 110 in the Lafuma enumeration.

⁵¹ In *Pensée* 298 in the same numbering, the orders are not threefold but twofold: the order of the mind, and the order of charity.

⁵² *Et qui est mon Prochain?*, op. cit., p. 124.

My universe is. . . multidimensional. I respect the immense richness of the real. Only the distinction of orders allows one to explore the real in its totality, an inexhaustible reality, moreover, in whose discovery we can always advance.⁵³

The scientific exploration of the cosmos discloses the real – stupendously so – in the organisation of matter. Art, literature and philosophy, by contrast, show us the ‘inner man’ – another world of inexhaustible richness, though sadly impoverished by those who measure the human through quantitative analysis. And finally there is revelation: the order of ‘charity and prophecy, the universe of the divine dimension of man and history as that is in its essence revealed in Christ’.⁵⁴ Here too there are riches beyond words. In his philosophical essay collection *Scandaleuse Vérité* Daniélou compares these three orders to Teilhard’s biosphere, noosphere and Christosphere, while insisting – presumably against Teilhard – that there is ‘no passing from one to another of these’, since each is an ‘irreducible universe’.⁵⁵ No process of evolution joins them, but rather passages to different planes. On the level of the noosphere, personalist humanism can be as much a prison as is materialism on the level of the biosphere. Here too man must go beyond himself to discover the divine Spirit who not only energises one’s existence in creation but raises it above itself in salvation and theosis.

The Pascalian doctrine of the multiple orders of the real, and their cognitive instruments, enabled Daniélou to distinguish between various strata in the realm of being. So far as the interpretation of the Bible is concerned, the natural-scientific, historical-humane, and revelatory-salvific orders and the intellectual disciplines which appropriate these are simply not identical. Theologically synthetic thinking can respect natural scientific considerations and humane historiography as aids in its enquiry, but it need not be confined to their methods. Nor indeed should it, since the disclosure of the real represented by the cosmic and human orders can and does serve revelation as *Hilfsmittel*: auxiliaries to the unique self-disclosure of the Uncreated. Daniélou found this principle of the distinction of orders helpful more widely in the making of Catholic theology. It served above all to differentiate the *various modes of divine presence* to human understanding. And that interest in the modalities of God’s presence to humanity, as *Le signe du Temple* and all Daniélou’s subsequent writing bears witness, constitutes the heart of his theological sensibility and thought.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 122.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 123.

⁵⁵ *Scandaleuse Vérité*, op. cit., p. 74.

Applying the ‘method’: Daniélou on the mystery of God in Jesus Christ

How did Daniélou’s theological vision and method lead him to treat the central theological themes? The lode-star of Christian theology is the mystery of God in Jesus Christ as revealed in the history of salvation. Daniélou’s awareness of the wider world of human religion in its cosmic setting in creation prevented him from treating this great subject in a spirit of revelational positivism. Yet at the same time, he insisted that only a theology of history can do full justice to a revelation expressed in saving events.

Daniélou’s *de Deo*, entitled *Dieu et nous*, proposes three basic ways of knowing God: via ‘the religions’, via philosophy and via faith – though to do justice to the last of these he finds he must add a trio of supplementary essays, which take as their subject the different manners in which, for faith, God makes himself known in Christ, in the Church Christ founded, and in the mystical witnesses to Christian living. Among these various modalities Daniélou is concerned to establish *order*: to show how religions and philosophies, Old and New Testaments, theology and mysticism, have a proper relation to the knowledge of God and so to each other.⁵⁶

On *the religions*: he treats a general disclosure of God through creation and human conscience as furnishing the valid elements in the world-religions beyond Israel and the Church. Though in the post-lapsarian situation cosmic religion tends to be vitiated by three profound errors – polytheism, pantheism, and dualism – the Letter to the Romans (1: 20) expects a genuine knowledge of God to issue from what Daniélou terms, with the Rumanian anthropologist of religion Mircea Eliade, ‘hierophanies’ in the natural order.⁵⁷ Cosmic religions possess ‘theologies’ in the form of myths, most of which are cosmogonic in object: they bear on the primal origin of all the essential realities of life, and of the world as a whole. Their natural mysticism may be considered the interior manifestation of cosmic process. The symbolism in which they convey their sense of the sacred can serve the historic revelation, but the grave misconceptions about the God-world relation into which paganism falls shows the need for a new divine initiative in saving history.

Daniélou detected a similar ambivalence in *philosophy*. Rational argument about God’s existence and nature is necessary: without it, man falls prey to obscurantism and superstition. But both Gregory

⁵⁶ An unusual expression of Daniélou’s impulse to find differentiated order in the modes of divine self-manifestation in creation and salvation, and especially in the various phases of the latter, was *angelological*: see his *Les Anges et leur mission, d’après les Pères de l’Église* (Paris 1953).

⁵⁷ M. Eliade, *Traité d’histoire des religions* (Paris 1946).

of Nyssa in the East and Thomas Aquinas in the West insist on the limitations of a purely rational approach to the mystery of God: philosophy can affirm God's existence but it transgresses its own limits if it claims a complete grasp of the intelligibility of his being.⁵⁸ Appeal to analogy-thinking is in place here – but it does not suppress the character of this issue as a 'limit-problem'. Such 'problems' (other examples of this kind of *aporia* are freedom, and suffering) compel man toward conversion, since they engage his existence. Daniélou stresses the importance of a philosophical opening towards the idea of divine personality, and thus communicativity and self-giving in God. Without that, there can be no existential encounter such as biblical revelation posits.

The God of *faith* is the same God yet known now not as a transcendent principle behind the world but as actively involved in it through unique interventions in its course the sum-total of which constitutes a 'plan': the design of 'sacred history', the 'history of salvation'. Insofar as these events are, on their empirical side, humanly chronicled, they can be investigated by the historical method. But their divine character is known only through revelation to intelligence in its supernaturally elevated prophetic mode, as the mind rests on the self-evidence – Daniélou emphasises the rock-like nature of this, signalled by the Hebrew term for truth, *emeth* – of the Word of God. In a series of *covenants* – Daniélou accepts from the Protestant exegete Walter Eichrodt the importance of this concept for the Old (and indeed the New) Testament,⁵⁹ but emphasises, with the Catholic doctors and mystics, its *nuptial* quality – that Word discloses not only what is, the divine being, but also what shall be, the future realisation of the promises of God to his beloved corporate human partner. The Word received in faith invites human persons to draw near to the sovereign reality which is God's holiness, at once his beauty and his ethical demandingness.

This divine self-revelation climaxes in Jesus Christ as the disclosure of God the Holy Trinity. Daniélou takes as axiomatic a principle proposed by St Gregory Nazianzen in his fifth Theological Oration: revelation of the Persons is by stages. In the Old Testament, revelation is primarily of the Father: appropriately, since the literature of Israel deals chiefly with origination (the origin of creation, of election, of mission). That is so even if there is also in its pages a 'dark' disclosure of the Word and the Spirit who theophanise mysteriously in the events of creation and salvation. In that manner – here it is Irenaeus of Lyons who is key for Daniélou – the way is prepared by

⁵⁸ Daniélou could also appeal in this connexion to the Antiochenes: thus 'Introduction', *Jean Chrysostome. Sur l'incompréhensibilité de Dieu. Homélie I-V contre les Anoméens* (Paris 1970, 2nd edition).

⁵⁹ W. Eichrodt, *Theologie des Alten Testaments* (Leipzig 1933–1935, 2 volumes).

mutual ‘accommodation’ of God and man as they ‘get used to’ one another, for the manifestation of the Son in the New Testament and of the Spirit as that Testament gives way to the time of the Church.

In the remainder of *Dieu et nous* Daniélou asks how, in the Church, which is the fruit of the Ascension, harvested at Pentecost, the theologian and, equally or more importantly, the ordinary believer – can be aware of this, the sole veridical, interpretation of the biblical data. His answer is: through the Church’s Tradition which was responsible for the written deposit of the biblical witness in the first place. And here discerning the truth expressed in the documents is one thing; articulating it in a variety of idioms is another. Thus Daniélou justifies his writing a history of Christian doctrine in its Semitic, Hellenic and Latin phases – to which he hopes to see added at some future date of Catholicism’s story an Indian, and a Chinese. With his debt to such mystical theologians as Gregory of Nyssa, he does not hold, however, that Christian God-talk is limited to learned forms of retrieval of a past revelation. By sheer faith, beyond all concepts, the individual soul can seize the mysterious divine reality through the communication God makes of himself *hic et nunc* in the new creation of baptismal grace, which is a sharing in the triune life on the basis of the death and Resurrection of Christ. Here, at the true heart of the order of charity, Trinitarianism confirms what high points in natural experience may lead us to suspect:

The world of existence is revealed to us as a universe of persons united by love. Theological ontology is an ontology of love.⁶⁰

If Daniélou’s Christology in *Dieu et nous* turns out really to be a Triadology, that is because he planned to write a more explicit and ample *De Christo* in the form of a companion volume, which indeed appeared in 1961 as *Approches du Christ*. The titles of the English translations – *God and Us*, *Christ and Us* – neatly bring out the binary character of the overall result.

In *Approches du Christ*, Daniélou affirms the real, but limited, value of the historical-critical approach to Jesus of Nazareth. He places it at the head of his account, arguing ingeniously that, since the entry of the Word into the empirical order by birth as Jesus in a Palestinian-Jewish environment at the time of the Roman principate was *also* the beginning of his salvific manifestation, mentioning first the order of investigative historical knowing suits likewise the order – in the temporal rather than epistemological (and ultimately ontological) sense of the word ‘order’ – of the saving events. For Daniélou, as for Pascal, we cannot appropriately grasp the greatness of Jesus Christ unless we are introduced into the order of charity by the spirit

⁶⁰ *Scandaleuse Vérité*, op. cit., p. 79. For Daniélou’s existential Trinitarian mysticism, see especially *La Trinité et le mystère de l’existence* (Paris 1968).

of prophecy: namely, though an understanding of the sacred history in the light of the Holy Spirit who is its Author.

Nonetheless our account can *begin* more modestly. In the Gospels, just as the Infancy Narratives use Jewish literary techniques to pattern their materials by reference to Old Testament examples,⁶¹ so the rest of the text stylises, possibly through liturgical use,⁶² the common tradition of the primitive community going back to the apostles. ‘The Gospels are the outward expression of what for the apostles Jesus *was*’.⁶³ This is why they are necessarily testimony and not dispassionate biography. In entering his historical milieu in all its particularity, Jesus also overflowed it, surpassing the limits of his period and country in such a way as to fulfil the image of God in man. *Ecce homo!* People of every sort identify with him and his message. Modern ideologies of freedom and the person are, remarks Daniélou in a fashion that looks ahead to the late twentieth century Anglo-Saxon movement ‘Radical Orthodoxy’, merely ‘secularized “left-overs”’ of the Sermon on the Mount.⁶⁴

The question ultimately raised by Jesus’s personality and behaviour is whether his transcendence of his time and place does not also indicate, over and above such universal human appeal, a unique identification with the creative Word, the *archetypal* Image of God. Jesus’s re-working of the Torah, including the Sabbath, which for Jews, was inscribed in the very structure of creation,⁶⁵ his assumption of the divine prerogative of forgiveness, his self-identification with the Temple, the place of the *Shekinah*, his Lordship over death as shown in the raising of Lazarus, and his emphasis on a unique I – different from the modes of ‘normal’ prophetic utterance and coming to its climax in the ‘I Am’ sayings of St John’s Gospel: all these amount convergently to a claim to divinity which can only be explained by saying he was mad, bad, or God.⁶⁶

In retrospect, the Pauline literature – emphasised by Daniélou partly because he treats Johannine thought as an echo of the *ip-sissima vox* of Jesus himself and not as theological reflection – finds

⁶¹ In a work devoted exclusively to this subject, *Les Évangiles de l’enfance* (Paris 1967), Daniélou would seek to steer the same course: the Infancy Narratives lie somewhere between full historicity and imaginative theologising.

⁶² Daniélou appealed on this point to the Swedish exegete Harald Riesenfeld’s *The Gospel Tradition and its Beginnings* (London 1957).

⁶³ *Approches du Christ* (Paris 1961); English translation, *Christ and Us* (London 1961), p. 12.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁶⁵ One might refer here to Daniélou’s study of the opening chapters of Genesis: *Au commencement: Génèse I-III* (Paris 1963).

⁶⁶ J. Redford, *Bad, Mad or God? Proving the Divinity of Christ from St John’s Gospel* (London 2004) continues a classic theme of theological apologetics which is as much at home with the sophisticated *académicien* Daniélou – compare, for instance, *Scandaleuse Vérité*, op. cit., pp. 103–105 – as it is with G. K. Chesterton or C. S. Lewis.

in the mission, the sacrificial death and the Resurrection of Jesus the Word the final irrevocable fulfilment of the divine promises. As the One 'to whom the world belongs [Christ] re-takes possession of it...in such a way as to establish the world in its final condition, thus fulfilling the divine design'.⁶⁷ In a theology of the mysteries of the life of Christ indebted to the Fathers and the Liturgy, the Incarnation and Baptism of the Lord are essential to this, as are his Passion, death, and descent into Hell. Above all, it is the Resurrection, the consummation of the Incarnation, the outcome of the Cross – it means the ending of man's slavery to death and sin, and the communication to him of an endless share in divine life – that is the central moment of human history.⁶⁸ Here there can be absolutely no comparison with other religious founders or thinkers, a claim the Pascalian distinction of orders helps to articulate. Daniélou contrasts the 'order of wisdom', to which, say, Gautama and Socrates, belong, with the 'order of holiness' where Christ is situated. He 'is not primarily a great religious personality, He is primarily an act of God among men'.⁶⁹

The events in which that divine act was manifested are not only world-changing. They are also world-fulfilling. Thus the Ascension, towards which the Resurrection leads, is the climax of cosmic process: 'not only does the glorified Christ become the Head of the Church which is his Body, but he becomes the Lord of all creation'.⁷⁰ There can be – here we have Daniélou's eschatological emphasis – 'nothing beyond' this. This is, after all, the new and eternal Covenant. To these events, and to this goal, the Old Testament points forward by means of its 'prophecies and types'. Within the specific order of the revelation to Israel, something, however, could not be foreseen. It was not to be predicted that the fulfilment of the expected divine act of deliverance and consummation, on the one hand, and, on the other, of the coming of a human Messiah to be its instrument, would coincide. Jesus Christ is God now turned towards man, and man now turned towards God, and these two movements are one.

In post-Resurrection time the contents and power of these events are unfolded by the development of the Conciliar dogmas, which for Daniélou have at their heart the reconciliation of two freedoms, God's and man's, in the person of the incarnate Word; by the Church's preaching; by her celebration of the sacramental mysteries, and by her mission which Daniélou portrays in studiously unfashionable terms:

⁶⁷ *Christ and Us*, op. cit., p. 64.

⁶⁸ See for a fuller theology of the *Anastasis* his study *La Résurrection* (Paris 1969), which goes far beyond any merely confirmatory role of the empty tomb for Jesus's claims. For Daniélou, the Resurrection is the heart of eschatologically transfigured being.

⁶⁹ *Christ and Us*, op. cit., p. 69.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

it is first and foremost a mandate to make known the message of salvation, in view of the Judgment to come. More gently, the work of the Word in history is also continued through the progress of individuals in spiritual life with Christ as their 'interior Master'. That is a reminiscence of the writings of St Augustine, though Daniélou draws into his account of Christ in the life of the soul Greeks – Clement of Alexandria and Gregory of Nyssa, mediaeval Latins – Bernard and Tauler, Counter-Reformation saints – Teresa of Avila and Ignatius Loyola, and to represent the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Jean-Marie Vianney, the Curé d'Ars, and Abbot Columba Marmion who a quarter of a century after Daniélou's death would be declared 'blessed' by Pope John Paul II.⁷¹

In their richness, the post-Paschal unfoldings in *Christ and Us* suggest how all time is now the 'deployment of [Christ's] spaces, *espaces*, until the Church, which is his body, has attained his plenitude'.⁷² No 'revolution' – watchword of *marxisant* Christianity in France before as well as after the Second Vatican Council – can compare with this. What shows Catholic 'progressivism' to be false is that, with Christ, the Eschaton has already begun.⁷³

Conclusion

Jean Daniélou was or became – whatever anxieties Toulouse Thomists may have felt for his role in the dispute over *la nouvelle théologie* – a classically Catholic theologian. That was so in his concern to integrate into theology as many as possible of the themes of Scripture, while seeing the two Testaments in their reciprocally interpreting unity. It was so in the amplitude of his appeal to Tradition – to the Fathers of both East and West, to the historic Liturgies, to the Councils and other major magisterial declarations of the Church. He was classically Catholic too in his robust metaphysical realism, expressed in a fundamentally Thomasian ontology of creation, and in the equally vigorous realism with which he described the events of salvation for what they are: God's self-involvement in divinely initiated acts.

If much of his theological work comes under the heading of *ressourcement* – going back to the sources, at once biblical, patristic and liturgical, he was no mere antiquarian. His Gallic concern for

⁷¹ Marmion's 1917 set of monastic conferences, *Le Christ, vie de l'âme*, have obvious affinities with the final chapter of *Approches du Christ*.

⁷² *Scandaleuse vérité*, op. cit., p. 82.

⁷³ Ibid. Daniélou does not omit to add that, by the same token, Catholic 'traditionalism', understood as fixation on one past period as an ecclesial golden age, must also count as a Christological misunderstanding.

coherence and clarity – this too was also ‘classical’, but in the sense of typical of France’s *grand siècle* – sought to exhibit the wholeness of the revelatory pattern, set against its wider creational backcloth. The twin principles of ‘correspondence’ and ‘order’ enabled him to bring this wholeness yet distinctiveness to light.

Daniélou’s existentialism, unlike that of Bultmann against which he maintained unceasing enmity, did not cancel out his theological concern for objectivity (which links him, sometimes despite himself, to the Neo-Thomists), or for totality thinking about revelation, not least in its relation to the cosmic and human End (which suggests an affinity with Bouyer and Balthasar). The rooting of that existentialism in a profound sense of corporate process (owed to de Lubac), and (via an ecumenical range of exegetes) in a Scripturally founded theology of covenant, saved him from the snares of individualism. Yet through the language of encounter, at once biblical and existentialist (here one might compare the early Schillebeeckx), he was able to combine communitarianism with personalism, and to treat his readers, as he did his pastoral clients, as unique selves, invited to an equally journey of discovery and, ultimately, growth in union with God.

This combination of theological and spiritual qualities he brought sharply to bear on the rather disoriented French Catholicism of the post-Conciliar years. The example was not perhaps lost on another, if much younger, *peritus* at Vatican Council II: Joseph Ratzinger.⁷⁴

Aidan Nichols OP

Blackfriars

Buckingham Road,

Cambridge

CB3 0DD

Email: jcan2@cam.ac.uk

Some of this has appeared in Norwegian as ‘Jean Daniélou’, in S. J. Kristiansen & S. Rise (ed.), *Moderne teologi. Tradisjon og nytenkning hos det 20. århundrets teologer* (Kristiansand 2008), pp. 255–272.

Note on further reading

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⁷⁴ See the letter of Benedict XVI, dated 20 May 2005, on the centenary of Daniélou’s birth, reproduced in J. Fontaine (ed.), *Actualité de Jean Daniélou* (Paris 2006), pp. 11–12.

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