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## **250 Years of Pastoral Theology. The Contributions of Franz Stephan von Rautenstrauch and German Theologians to the Development of a Theological Discipline as a Science<sup>1</sup>**

**250 años de teología pastoral. Las contribuciones de Franz Stephan von Rautenstrauch y algunos teólogos alemanes al desarrollo de una disciplina teológica como ciencia**

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### **Abstract**

Pastoral Theology established itself as an independent theological discipline 250 years ago with the creation of the first academic chair. This article shows that pastoral reflections can be found even earlier in New Testament traditions, the writings of the Church Fathers, and medieval traditions. With its establishment as an academic discipline, a debate began as to whether Pastoral Theology should be understood as a normative or practice-oriented science. This discourse on the history of Pastoral Theology is illustrated by the theologians Johann Michael Sailer, Anton Graf, Michael Benger, Constantin Noppel, and Franz Xaver Arnold. Looking to the future, the article concludes by presenting perspectives on the pastoral care of creation.

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## Key words

Pastoral Theology – Practical Theology – Eco-Theology – Pastoral Care of Creation

## Resumen

La Teología Pastoral se consolidó como disciplina teológica independiente hace 250 años con la creación de la primera cátedra académica. Este artículo demuestra que las reflexiones pastorales se encuentran incluso antes, en las tradiciones del Nuevo Testamento, los escritos de los Padres de la Iglesia y las tradiciones medievales. Con su establecimiento como disciplina académica, se inició un debate sobre si la Teología Pastoral debía entenderse como una ciencia normativa o práctica. Este discurso sobre la historia de la Teología Pastoral se ilustra con las obras de los teólogos Johann Michael Sailer, Anton Graf, Michael Benger, Constantin Noppel y Franz Xaver Arnold. De cara al futuro, el artículo concluye presentando perspectivas sobre la pastoral de la creación.

## Palabras clave

Teología pastoral – teología práctica – eco-teología – pastoral de la creación

“I have seen yesterday – I know tomorrow” is a well-known aphorism attributed to various figures from antiquity (and perhaps even put into their mouths). Even if the authorship of the sentence is unclear, it nevertheless expresses an essential insight. Engaging with the past, and especially with one’s own history, is necessary in order to understand the present and (in the truest sense of the word) to sketch out reflective scenarios for the future. And so, here we will take a look at the roots of pastoral reflection and Pastoral Theology as an academic discipline.

Even before the introduction of Pastoral Theology as an academic discipline towards the end of the 18th century, Christians had already been reflecting on and discussing questions of pastoral action, the Christian shaping of community life, and the appropriate practice of Church action<sup>3</sup>. The writings of the New Testament, in addition to proclaiming the message of the Kingdom of God,

3 August Laumer, *Pastoraltheologie. Eine Einführung in ihre Grundlagen* (Regensburg: Pustet, 2015), 17-22.

already represent an examination of the pastoral challenges in the early decades of Christianity. “The writings arose from the intention to ensure the direction of the communities’ actions in the coming decades. In this respect, they were ‘action-oriented’ writings”<sup>4</sup>. For example, the Synoptic Gospels describe Jesus sending out his disciples in such a way that it legitimized the practice of charismatic itinerant missionaries, who traveled from place to place to preach the Gospel, which was central to early Christianity. The Gospel of Mark records in the relevant passage: “And he commanded them to take nothing for their journey except a staff – no bread, no bag, no money in their belts, no extra tunic – and to wear sandals. And he said to them, ‘Stay in the house where you enter until you leave that town. But if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, leave that place and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them’” (Mk 6:7-13; cf. Mt 10:7-16; Lk 10:1-9).

Another example illustrating the thesis that the traditions of the New Testament reflect and document the debate surrounding early Christian practice can be found in the early Christian community rule handed down in the Gospel of Matthew regarding inappropriate or undesirable behavior in the Christian community. The Gospel of Matthew puts the following instruction for fraternal correction into Jesus’ mouth:

If your brother [sister] sins against you, go and rebuke him [her] in private. If he [she] listens to you, you have won back your brother [sister]. But if he [she] does not listen to you, take one or two others with you, so that the whole matter may be decided by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he [she] does not listen to them either, tell it to the Church! But if he [she] does not listen to the Church either, let him [her] be to you as a Gentile [a pagan] or a tax collector (Mt 18:15-17).

This tradition reflects the early Christian debate on how to deal with Church members whose behavior was considered problematic, and not only caused “inner annoyance” but also damaged the reputation of the Christian communities.

The Pauline epistles are also influenced by pastoral practice during the missionary activity of the Apostle to the Gentiles. He encourages, advises, admonishes, requests, instructs, and sometimes formulates specific instructions

4 Stefan Knobloch, „Was ist Praktische Theologie?“, en *Praktische Theologie im Dialogue* 11 (Fribourg: Academic Press, 1995), 48; translated by Pascal Collinet.

for practice in the early Church – for example, when he calls for a collection for the early Church in Jerusalem in his letter to the congregation in Corinth<sup>5</sup>. In the same letter, Paul admonishes the Christians in Corinth not to begin the Lord's Supper, which is associated with a meal of satiety, until all members of the congregation have arrived. This was in response to the problem that wealthier members of the congregation would gather earlier and share food and drink before the poorer members could join them after work (1 Cor 11:17-34). He also opposed elitist thinking in the Church in Corinth, where those who had the gift of glossolalia claimed a special role for themselves (1 Cor 12:12-27).

The Deuteropauline or Tritopauline letters also provide very specific instructions for Church practice. These will be discussed here, if only because they show that in the early days of the Church, pastoral and practical aspects were essential to the question of access to Church office. For example, the author of the Epistle to Titus goes into astonishing detail about the requirements that must be met when electing a bishop (or elder). From today's perspective, these requirements are surprisingly pragmatic and oriented toward concrete life, as noted there:

I left you in Crete for this reason, that you should finish what remains to be done and appoint elders in each town, as I directed you. The candidate must be blameless and the husband of one wife, with children who are believers and not accused of debauchery or insubordination. For a bishop must be blameless as a steward of God, not arrogant or quick-tempered, not a drunkard, not violent, not greedy, but hospitable, loving what is good; temperate, just, holy, and self-controlled, one who holds to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it (Tit 1:6-9).

## 1. Pastoral reflection in the Church Fathers

It is not surprising that the practices of the early Churches are also reflected in the writings of the Church Fathers. For example, a total of 24 catecheses by Cyril of Jerusalem (313-387)<sup>6</sup> have been preserved, which can be classified as

5 Klaus Vellguth, *Kirche und Fundraising. Wege einer zukunftsfähigen Kirchenfinanzierung* (Freiburg: Herder, 2007), 79-102.

6 Cyrill von Jerusalem, *Mystagigicae catecheses – Mystagogische Katechesen*. Eingel. und übersetzt von Georg Röwekamp (FC 7) (Freiburg: Herder, 1992).

“concrete forms of practical theology”<sup>7</sup> and remain relevant for sacramental pastoral reflections today.

Individual works by Augustine of Hippo (354-430), the greatest theologian of the Latin Patristic era, also bear pastoral traits.

Gregory the Great (540-604) also devoted himself to pastoral issues and, shortly after his election as pope, wrote the *Liber regulae pastoralis*, in which he discusses in four chapters the necessary integrity and the task of teaching and admonishing, and warns against arrogance in office. What is significant about these pastoral reflections is that the focus has shifted away from the congregation to Church officials, which would shape pastoral reflection well into the 19th century. In the case of Gregory the Great, the image of the bishop was already strongly influenced by the role of the monastic abbot<sup>8</sup>. Gregory’s work *Apologeticus pro fuga sua* was referred to as “the pastoral trilogy” of the early Church in the 19th century, together with Chrysostom’s *De sacerdotio* and Gregory the Great’s *Regula pastoralis*<sup>9</sup>.

## 2. Development in the Middle Ages and the early modern days

The publication of the *Decretum Gratiani* (c.1140) reflects the desire to formulate intersubjectively binding rules for the actions of the Church. This endeavour led to the development of canon law as a separate theological discipline, which was assigned responsibility for reflections on the practice of Church action, while at the same time a speculative theology largely detached from Church practice became established<sup>10</sup>.

The Council of Trent (1545-1563) can be described as a pastoral council, as it was based on the “primacy of pastoral care”<sup>11</sup> and focused in particular on the abuses of the accumulation of benefices, the lack of training of the clergy, clandestine (secret) marriages, etc. In order to end disputes over competence in pastoral care, the introduction of the territorial principle resulted in the clear

7 Knobloch, „Was ist Praktische Theologie?“, 53.

8 Silke Floryszczak, *Die Regula Pastoralis Gregors des Großen. Studien zu Text, kirchenpolitischer Bedeutung und Rezeption in der Karolingerzeit (Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum 26)* (Tübingen: Mohr, 2005).

9 Georg Friedrich Böhringer, *Die Kirche Christi und ihre Zeugen*, vol. IX (Stuttgart: Meyer & Zeller, 1876), 29.

10 Laumer, *Pastoraltheologie...*, 28.

11 Hubert Jedin, „Trient“, en *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, vol. X (Freiburg: Herder, 1965), 341-352, 249.

assignment of the faithful to a responsible pastor. This established the parish as the central pastoral reference point<sup>12</sup>. At the same time, this principle implied a subject-object relationship between the priest on the one hand and the faithful on the other<sup>13</sup>. The territorial principle, like the subject-object relationship, became the central pastoral structure and guiding principle for Church action until the present day at the beginning of the 21st century.

### 3. The emergence of Pastoral Theology

While the examination and reflection on pastoral issues has accompanied the history of Christianity from the beginning, a *theologia pastoralis* was first explicitly mentioned by Petrus Canisius in 1556 – incidentally, only a few decades before the publication of the *Enchiridion theologiae pastoralis* by the Auxiliary Bishop of Trier and reform theologian Peter Binsfeld (1545-1598) in 1591. The term *theologia pastoralis* is a neologism in line with the terms *theologia moralis*, *theologia dogmatica*, *theologia spiritualis*, etc., in which the noun *theologia* is each time followed by an explanatory adjective to denote the *differentia specifica*. However, numerous other works from the early modern period also document an intensive examination of pastoral issues, raising the question of why the implementation of theologically reflected options for Church action was not established as a separate scientific-theological discipline. The pastoral care concepts that were advocated until the 18th century understood pastoral care predominantly in the tradition of the Council of Trent (1545-1563) as the communication of Church doctrinal decisions, and thus a “doctrinal theology” developed, not least with a view to strengthening identity in contrast to the Reformers.

The establishment of Pastoral Theology as an academic discipline can essentially be traced back to the Austrian Empress Maria Theresa. Former Trier pastoral theologian Heinz Feilzer looks back on the era in which Pastoral Theology emerged and writes with regard to its origins: “During the post-Tridentine era, theology was taught at universities almost exclusively by members of the Jesuit order and, cloaked in yellowed scholastic garb, became increasingly entangled in

12 Franz Xaver Arnold, „Pastoraltheologische Ansätze in der Pastoral bis zum 18. Jahrhundert“, en *Handbuch der Praktischen Theologie I* (Freiburg: Herder, 1964), 15-39, 31.

13 Knobloch, „Was ist Praktische Theologie?“, 60.

technical jargon that was alien to real life”<sup>14</sup>. In the age of enlightened absolutism, the Austrian monarch used the dissolution of the Jesuit Order in 1773, which ended the Jesuits’ educational monopoly, to implement a fundamental reform of higher education. Previously, in 1752, a study reform promoted by the Austrian state had failed. It sought to differentiate between *theologi morales* and *theologi speculativi* as lower and higher theology, respectively, and thus to narrow the training of pastors to *theologi morales* in a practice-oriented manner. The Empress commissioned Franz Stephan Rautenstrauch (1734-1785), who had been elected abbot of the two monasteries in Břevnov and Broumov on March 13, 1773, and appointed director of the Theological Faculty in Prague in the same year and director of the Theological Faculty in Vienna the following year, to draft a theological curriculum. He then presented “a draft for the improvement of theological schools”, which was approved by Empress Maria Theresa in 1774 and immediately introduced as the “Constitution of the Faculty of Theology”. As part of this curriculum, Rautenstrauch introduced Pastoral Theology as a theological subject and thus also as a university discipline for the first time<sup>15</sup>. In 1778, Rautenstrauch published his work *Tabellarischer Grundriß der in deutscher Sprache vorzutragenden Pastoraltheologie* (Tabular outline of Pastoral Theology to be taught in German)<sup>16</sup>, thereby stipulating in the title of his seminal work on the new theological discipline that, unlike other theological subjects, was to be taught in German rather than Latin. The plan was for Pastoral Theology to be the main focus of the fifth year of study and to be taught by a university lecturer for two hours a day<sup>17</sup>.

In Pastoral Theology, Rautenstrauch differentiated “three different aspects: the duty of the teacher, the mediator, and the spiritual leader”<sup>18</sup>. In doing so, he focused exclusively on the activities of priests in Pastoral Theology and

14 Heinz Feilzer, „Pastoraltheologie – die Anfänge als Universitätsdisziplin in Trier und der Brückenschlag zum Heute“, en *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift* 93 (1984), 181-192, 181; translated by Pascal Collinet.

15 Joseph Müller, *Der Pastoraltheologisch-didaktische Ansatz in Franz Stephan Rautenstrauchs, Entwurf zur Einrichtung der theologischen Schulen*“ (Wiener Beiträge zur Theologie, vol. 24) (Wien: Herder, 1969); Ferdinand Klostermann / Joseph Müller, *Pastoraltheologie. Ein entscheidender Teil der josephinischen Studienreform (1777-1977)* (Wien: Herder, 1979).

16 Franz Stephan Rautenstrauch, *Tabellarischer Grundriß der in deutscher Sprache vorzutragenden Pastoraltheologie* (Wien: o/R, 1777).

17 Heinz Feilzer, „Pastoraltheologie...“

18 Heinz Schuster, „Die Geschichte der Pastoraltheologie“, en *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie 1* (Freiburg: Herder, 1964), 40-92, 46; translated by Pascal Collinet.

implicitly tied in with the schema of Christ's threefold office (based on Christ's titles of sovereignty in the New Testament) as teacher or prophet, priest, and king, as well as Calvin's doctrine of the three offices, and differentiated in his understanding of Pastoral Theology among a duty to teach, administer, and edify. Rautenstrauch understood catechesis and homiletics as the duty of instruction. Under the heading of the duty of dispensation, Rautenstrauch focused primarily on the administration of the sacraments. And under the heading of the duty of edification, Rautenstrauch addressed questions of priestly conduct. This laid the foundation for a priest-centered and office-related understanding of Pastoral Theology, which was to shape the new academic discipline in German-speaking countries well into the 20th century. The first chair of Pastoral Theology was now filled at the Theological Faculty of the University of Vienna. In the following years, the first Pastoral Theology textbooks were published, which were based on Rautenstrauch's pastoral theological perspectives.

First of all, the practical understanding of Pastoral Theology aimed to improve the quality of pastoral practice. At the same time, it avoided or overcame a narrow understanding of pastoral action as being limited to the ecclesiastical sphere. Pastoral action was now also regarded as a socially formative political practice, whereby "care for the poor" in particular and, in a broader sense, the diaconal work of the Church, were classified as an integral part of pastoral care. Rautenstrauch saw a close connection between pastoral care and State action, or between pastoral caregivers and the State. For him, the priest was always also a servant of the State<sup>19</sup>.

With regard to the close connection between the Church, pastoral care and the State, Paul Michael Zulehner critically comments on Rautenstrauch's concept:

The absolutist State, traditionally "Christian", saw itself as responsible for the welfare of its citizens. Religion was supposed to contribute to this. In order for this task to be fulfilled, the religious ministers employed by the Josephinian state had to be well prepared. Pastoral Theology was supposed to ensure this education. It was indeed very practical: a good practical guide, a manual for "State ministers of religion". Theology was rare in this Pastoral Theology; it was taken for granted<sup>20</sup>.

19 Franz Stephan Rautenstrauch, *Tabellarischer Grundriß...*, 33.

20 Paul Michael Zulehner, *Pastoraltheologie*, vol. I: *Fundamentalpastoral* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1989), 42; translated by Pascal Collinet.

#### 4. Johann Michael Sailer and his influences on Pastoral Theology

Johann Michael Sailer (1751-1832) grew up in Munich and joined the Jesuit order shortly before its dissolution; on ordination he was incardinated in the diocese of Augsburg. Before he was removed from academic office for allegedly being an *Illuminati*, he wrote his three-volume work *Lectures on Pastoral Theology*, which was published between 1788 and 1789. In it he records his fundamental reflections on Pastoral Theology. He defined the term “Pastoral Theology” as follows:

Pastoral Theology is therefore the science of bringing people who are separated and estranged from God and divided among themselves closer to each other and to God, and into unity among themselves and with God, in the spirit of Christ and in the spirit of his Church; in the spirit of Christ, who appeared on earth to unite humanity to himself and through himself to God; in the spirit of his Church, which is nothing other than the living union of all members among themselves and with their head<sup>21</sup>.

Sailer advocated scriptural research with the aim that “the mind transfigured by the content and spirit of Scripture itself becomes a living Bible that interprets and reaffirms the written word”<sup>22</sup>.

It is interesting to note whom Sailer saw as the addressees of his Pastoral Theology lectures. In his view, pastoral care was not the exclusive task of the clergy, contrary to the spirit of the times, which focused on official theology, but a common task of all Christians. In his lectures on Pastoral Theology, he states:

The word “pastoral care” has two meanings. On the one hand, it expresses the most personal duty of every human being, and in this sense every human being can and must be his own pastor. But it also refers (and it is in this common sense that it is used here) to the duties and rights, the abilities and powers of those who are appointed and ordained by the Church to care for the immortal spirits of their fellow Christians within a certain circle<sup>23</sup>.

21 Johann Michael, Sailer, *Vorlesungen aus der Pastoraltheologie* vol. II, 3. ed. (München: Ignaz Joseph Lentner, 1812), 9; translated by Pascal Collinet.

22 Johann Michael Sailer, „Vorlesungen aus der Pastoraltheologie“, in Anton Zottl, u.a. (Hg.), *Wege der Pastoraltheologie. Texte einer Bewusstwerdung* (Eichstätt: Sales, 1987), 117-167, 132; translated by Pascal Collinet.

23 Johann Michael Sailer, *Vorlesungen aus der Pastoraltheologie*, vol. I, 1. ed. (München: Ignaz Joseph Lentner, 1788), 9; translated by Pascal Collinet; cf. Kießling, Klaus, „Grundwissen Psychologie“, in Kießling, Klaus/ Engel, Agnes/Wagener, Herman-Josef, *Grundwissen Psychologie. Lehrbuch für Theologie und Seelsorge* (Ostfildern: Matthias Grünewald, 2021) 17-34, 20f.

During the Age of Enlightenment, Sailer was committed to mediating between the Catholic Church and modernity. He endeavored to derive Pastoral Theology consistently from a fundamental idea of Christianity, which he described as the “central view of the essence of Christianity”: “It is the view that looks back from every single teaching of Christianity to its fundamental teaching, and from the fundamental teaching of Christianity to every single teaching of Christianity. It is the view that sees the center of Christianity in every single doctrine, and all the individual doctrines in every center”<sup>24</sup>. In this process, even if the wording sounds antiquated and cumbersome from today’s perspective, one can see the effort to formulate a Pastoral Theology committed to specific theological options. In terms of content, he wrote about this theological or soteriological option, which he called the “central view”:

The central idea of Christianity can only be one and must be the same, which lived in Christ and passed from Christ to John, Paul, Peter, to all the apostles, to all enlightened preachers of Christianity. This central idea of Christianity can be obscured to a greater or lesser extent, illuminated to a greater or lesser extent, hinted at in one way or another, expressed in one way or another; but it is unmistakable even in the expression that I have chosen not without reason, and which I have refreshed and continue to refresh on all occasions: “God in Christ – the salvation of the sinful world”<sup>25</sup>.

Sailer incorporates this soteriological option into his pastoral theological reflections on various areas of pastoral care.

Looking back, Sailer’s contributions to Pastoral Theology can be summarized as follows:

Johann Michael Sailer presents a new approach to Pastoral Theology based on biblical foundations, which was novel at the time of the Enlightenment. His background is the comprehensive panorama of the unification of people with God and with each other as the task first of Christ and the Holy Spirit, then of all people, more specifically of the Church and ecclesiastical bodies<sup>26</sup>.

24 Johann Michael, Sailer, *Vorlesungen aus der Pastoraltheologie*, vol. II..., 9.

25 Johann Hofmeier, *Seelsorge und Seelsorger. Eine Untersuchung zur Pastoraltheologie Johann Michael Sailers* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1967), 19f; translated by Pascal Collinet.

26 Laumer, *Pastoraltheologie...*, 55; translated by Pascal Collinet.

## 5. Anton Graf as advocate for a practical theology

This initially socially oriented approach to Pastoral Theology changed in the mid-19th century, when a Church-oriented understanding of Pastoral Theology prevailed and, during the Restoration and Neoscholasticism, Pastoral Theology became aligned with the magisterial documents understood as normative for Church practice. The pastoral theologian Anton Graf (1811-1867), who emerged from the Tübingen School, played an essential role in this reorientation.

Graf published his ideas on Pastoral Theology in his 1941 work *Kritische Darstellung des gegenwärtigen Zustandes der praktischen Theologie* (Critical presentation of the current state of Practical Theology). Graf blamed the previous understanding and profiling of Pastoral Theology, which, as an academic discipline, “even now lacks the important definition of its concept, its scope, its structure, the establishment of its true principles, the relationship of its individual branches to one another, the determination of the scientific and theological necessity and practical value of its entire organism and its individual disciplines”<sup>27</sup>. Graf described society as a secular counterpart to the Church<sup>28</sup>. In doing so, he took up ideas from the theologians Johannes Hirschers and Johann Adam Möhler, and argued in his work for an understanding of pastoral care that recognizes “a Church that builds itself into the future” as the subject of Pastoral Theology: “Practical theology does not exist because there is a predominantly practical interest in theology, but rather because the Church is one that builds itself”<sup>29</sup>. This concept of a Church building itself up for the future, which was essential to his pastoral-theological approach, was embedded in an overall view of the theological disciplines. Graf classified biblical studies and Church history as dealing with the past of the Church, while dogmatic and moral theology focus on the “unchangeable nature” of the Church in the present, and Pastoral Theology is future-oriented and focused on the self-building of the Church in the future.

Graf was concerned with a broad understanding of Pastoral Theology and preferred the term “Practical Theology” to “Pastoral Theology,” since the term

27 Anton Graf, *Kritische Darstellung des gegenwärtigen Zustandes der praktischen Theologie* (Tübingen: H. Laupp, 1841), 8; translated by Pascal Collinet.

28 Markus Lehner, „Pastoraltheologie. II Geschichte“, en *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, vol. VII (Freiburg: Herder, 1998), 1446-1447, 1447.

29 Graf, *Kritische Darstellung...*, 143.

“Pastoral Theology” suggests a “pastor” as the agent of Church action. Graf denounced this narrow view and complained that

we always remain with the clergy and do not progress beyond them to the ultimate source of everything, to God and Christ, to the Church and the congregation. According to conventional theory, it is not these that are active through the clergy, but the clergy that are active. The sermon appears to be his sermon, the worship service his worship service, the discipline his discipline. Conventional works undoubtedly had the truth in mind, but it always remained in the pen, or only emerged incidentally<sup>30</sup>.

By using the term “Practical Theology,” he wanted to overcome this narrow focus and take into account the actions of all Christians. In doing so, pastoral theological reflection should not be limited to pastoral action, but should reflect, in a broader sense, on the entire action of the Church and its actors. In particular, this also involved a critical examination of the relationship between State and Church, which led to the rejection of Anton Graf’s approach by the state authorities and ultimately, in 1844 – three years after his ordination in 1841 – contributed significantly to Graf’s removal from his teaching position at the University of Tübingen.

## 6. Michael Bengel and his understanding of Pastoral Theology as a manual

Twenty years after the publication of Graf’s *Critical presentation of the current state of Practical Theology*, the three-volume *Pastoral Theology* by Cologne pastoral theologian Michael Bengel (1822-1870) appeared, in which the Redemptorist priest critically rejected the ecclesiological approach developed by Anton Graf and conceived of Pastoral Theology as a “non-scientific instructional doctrine”<sup>31</sup>. Bengel became known as an important reformer of missionary preaching.

Bengel’s pastoral theological work can be seen as exemplary for a generation of pastoral theologians who believed that Pastoral Theology should primarily be a non-scientific instructional doctrine. Bengel disparagingly addressed Graf’s approach, dismissively referring to Graf’s *Critical presentation of the current*

30 Graf, *Kritische Darstellung...*, 107 s.

31 Erich Garhammer, „Bengel, Michael“, in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* vol. II (Freiburg: Herder, 1994), 229; translated by Pascal Collinet.

*state of Practical Theology*, published twenty years earlier, as a “pamphlet”<sup>32</sup> and defining his understanding of Pastoral Theology as “usually understood as the scientific instruction of clergy in the proper administration of the spiritual office”<sup>33</sup>. Benger is not concerned with Pastoral Theology as a theological science, but – and here one can perhaps discern his studies in canon law – primarily as a guide for the clergy: “Pastoral Theology is, first and foremost, not merely science, or primarily science, but mainly and primarily guidance”<sup>34</sup>. Benger is representative of contemporary theologians who oppose the scientification or unjustified academization of a subject, which thereby degenerates into an end in itself. He advocates a utilitarian approach to Pastoral Theology, which must serve immediate practice.

Benger opposes both the expansion of Pastoral Theology beyond the circle of clergy and an approach to Pastoral Theology that is committed to theological self-reflection. In his view, Pastoral Theology should limit itself to its task of providing mere guidance. In doing so, he also considers the relationship between the Church’s magisterium and the scientific teaching of theologians, placing the latter under a pneumatological sign and ecclesologically domesticating the work of the Holy Spirit.

Benger’s approach represents a counterposition to Anton Graf’s conception of Practical Theology and also sees itself as distinct from it. With his understanding of Pastoral Theology as guidance and his subordination of scientific theology to the Holy Spirit-filled magisterium, he advocated a hierarchy-friendly approach that, unlike Graf’s approach, did not harbor any potential for conflict, but rather uncritically recognized the authority of the Church hierarchy.

In the second half of the 19th century, numerous pastoral theological works were published in this vein, but these were more in the nature of manuals or instructions for action, and were not based on any fundamental conceptual considerations or a convincing pastoral theological approach. While the works of Johann Michael Sailer and Anton Graf were based on independent pastoral theological options and concepts, such a viable, scientifically-oriented approach is hardly recognizable in later pastoral theological publications of the 19th

32 Michael Benger, *Pastoraltheologie*, vol. I (Regensburg: Druck und Verlag von Georg Joseph Manz, 1861).

33 Michael Benger, *Pastoraltheologie*, vol. I, 2.

34 Michael Benger, *Pastoraltheologie*, vol. I, 2.

century. Examples of this include Anton Kerschbaumer (1823-1909), Ignaz Schüch (1823-1893), Johann Evangelist Prunen (1827-1907) and Johann Baptist Renninger (1829-1892). What is striking about these works is that they derive their statements primarily from Church documents in the sense of uncritical canon law, rather than engaging with them in a theologically critical manner.

### 7. Constantin Noppel and *Aedificatio Corporis Christi*

In the first half of the 20th century, Constantin Noppel (1883-1945), a Jesuit, developed a pastoral theological approach that places the structure of the Church as the body of Christ at the center of pastoral care<sup>35</sup>. Noppel wrote books on the nature and organization of Christian charity, on priesthood and pastoral care as well as on the structure and coexistence of the Christian community. In 1937, he published *Aedificatio Corporis Christi*, in which he presented an accentuated outline of Pastoral Theology. Noppel took up Cornelius Krieg's differentiation between individual pastoral care and communal pastoral care, and assigned the various areas of pastoral action to these two categories. He began by defining Pastoral Theology, whereby an ecclesiocentric understanding can already be heard in this definition: "Pastoral Theology is, insofar as we initially only offer an explanation of the word, the doctrine of the pastoral office of the Church, i.e. of the guidance and care of the Church as a community of believers or as the people of God (1 Peter 2:10) through the bodies directly or indirectly appointed to it by Christ, its invisible head"<sup>36</sup>. It is noteworthy that Noppel formulated this Christocentric-ecclesiological perspective at a time when a totalitarian State was claiming sole leadership. Noppel emphasized the dual orientation of the Church towards the worship of God on the one hand and the salvation of the faithful on the other, and concretized this with regard to his understanding of Pastoral Theology<sup>37</sup>. At the same time, he took up the newly accentuated body of Christ ecclesiology in theological discourse and combined it with his pastoral theological approach.

35 Erich Garhammer, „Stichwort Noppel“, en *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, vol. VII (Freiburg: Herder, 1996), 903.

36 Constantin Noppel, *Aedificatio Corporis Christi, Aufbau der Pastoral* (Freiburg, Herder, 1937), 1; translated by Pascal Collinet.

37 Laumer, *Pastoraltheologie...*, 79.

Noppel was aware of the tendencies towards dissolution in Pastoral Theology, in which it was detached from a practical theological canon of subjects and reduced to hedegetics (pastoral care science). With regard to the question of whether Pastoral Theology should initially focus on community or individual pastoral care, Noppel advocated an emphasis on community pastoral care based on his ecclesiological approach. He conceded that pastoral practice is mostly characterized by individual pastoral care and that individual and community pastoral care cannot be played off against each other. At the same time, however, he formulated the option that community pastoral care already has primacy as the more comprehensive one. In Noppel's conception, individual pastoral care was particularly important where it served to build up the Church. "Individual pastoral care appears completely subordinate here as the building up of the Church and only relevant at all from a communal-Church perspective"<sup>38</sup>.

Parallel to this emphasis on overall pastoral care as opposed to individual pastoral care, Noppel argued for a return to an overall Pastoral Theology. With regard to the differentiation of practical theological subjects, Noppel emphasized the priority of Pastoral Theology over the other practical theological disciplines. This results from the overall conception of his approach, which places the building of the *corpus mysticum Christi* at the center.

An important accentuation of Noppel's approach is the emphasis on the role of the laity as acting subjects in pastoral work. However, the role of the laity is not yet – as later emphasized by the Second Vatican Council – derived from the common priesthood of all believers and the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, but as participation and involvement in the apostolate of the hierarchy.

## 8. Franz Xaver Arnold

Franz Xaver Arnold (1898-1969) made a significant contribution to the development of Pastoral Theology as a discipline that was both strictly scientific and at the same time lively and contemporary. At the same time, his pastoral theological reflections contributed to a reorganization of the practical theological disciplines. Alongside Ferdinand Klostermann, Norbert Greinacher, Karl Rahner,

38 Laumer, *Pastoraltheologie...*, 79.

Heinz Schuster, Viktor Schurr and Leonhard M. Weber, Arnold was one of the pastoral theologians who shaped the new departure in Pastoral Theology before and during the Second Vatican Council. Karl Rahner described Arnold as an “old master” of Pastoral Theology even during his lifetime.

Arnold, whose pastoral theological approach was strongly influenced by the ecclesiology of the Tübingen School, is characterized by the “principle of the God-human in pastoral care”<sup>39</sup>. Arnold differentiated between the process of salvation on the one hand and the mediation of salvation on the other. While the salvation process is a process between God and humanity in which the Church is not directly involved, the Church can point to or “mediate” the salvation process through the Word and the sacraments<sup>40</sup>. The Church or the Church’s salvific action therefore primarily has a function of service. However, this secondary function has considerable relevance insofar as it refers to or “mediates” the primary process of salvation.

With the principle of the God-human that he formulated, Arnold now directly took up the teaching of the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon in 451 that Christ in two natures is “without confusion” and at the same time “undivided”, fully God and fully human. He made this the point of reference for pastoral theological reflection and the perspective of Church action, and emphasized that Pastoral Theology must also combine the divine and the human. Arnold taught that Pastoral Theology must be firmly grounded in the dogmatic doctrine of Christ, the God-Man, who is the sole Mediator between God and humanity. His unique mediation – rooted in His dual nature as God and brother to humankind – defines the Church’s role, which mediates only in a secondary, relative sense through Word, sacrament, and altar. Thus, all ecclesial theory and practice are rightly ordered only when derived from and measured by the unaltered image and doctrine of Christ, whose absolute mediation is both their foundation and limit.

39 Franz Xaver Arnold, „Das Prinzip des Gott-menschlichen und seine Bedeutung für die Seelsorge“, en *ThQ* 123 (1942) 145-176. Franz Xaver Arnold, „Das Gott-menschliche Prinzip der Seelsorge in pastoralgeschichtlicher Entfaltung“, en *ThQ* 124 (1943) 99-133. Franz Xaver Arnold, „Das Gott-menschliche Prinzip der Seelsorge in pastoralgeschichtlicher Entfaltung“. V.: „Die Auswirkungen der Aufklärungspastoral in Theorie und Praxis der Seelsorge des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts“, en *ThQ* 125 (1944) 57-80. Franz Xaver Arnold, „Das Gott-menschliche Prinzip der Seelsorge in pastoralgeschichtlicher Entfaltung“. Schluß: Liturgieverständnis, in *ThQ* 126 (1946) 43-85.

40 Laumer, *Pastoraltheologie...*, 87.

Understanding the work of the Church from an intermediary position – we would perhaps use the term “in-between” today – led Arnold to regard both principles derived from biblical, historical and systematic theology and the concrete life situation of people as pastoral theological reference points or epistemological sources<sup>41</sup>.

Another key emphasis in Arnold’s pastoral theological approach relates to the subjects of pastoral care. He opposed a reduction of the agents of pastoral care to the clergy or a narrowing of the concept of pastoral care to the activities or duties of the priest. Instead, he advocated that Pastoral Theology should reflect the actions of the whole Church (and thus of all baptized and confirmed Christians). Arnold argues that when speaking of the Church and her future edification, theology refers to the Church in her full dogmatic and personal reality – as the assembly of all the baptized, who, according to the Catholic tradition, partake in the mediation of salvation through faith, love, intercession, and penance.

While Arnold regarded all the baptized and confirmed as subjects of pastoral care and thus rejected a pastoral theological narrowing to the “pastors”, he also spoke out against replacing the term Pastoral Theology with the term Practical Theology. Although he accepted a synonymous use of both terms, he gave priority to the term Pastoral Theology in view of its implicit reference to Christ as the Good Shepherd.

## 9. Perspectives on a pastoral care of creation

The debates and discourses on the self-image of Pastoral Theology, which have now lasted for over a quarter of a millennium, continue to have an impact in Germany to this day. There are currently representatives of the discipline who – also inspired by the social sciences – focus very strongly on optimizing pastoral practice in their work. For example, the Chair of Pastoral Theology at the University of Bochum and the Center for Applied Pastoral Care, which is based there, have been doing highly qualified pioneering work for years. On the other hand, there are chairs that focus more on traditional parish pastoral care and reflect on this. One example of this is the Chair of Pastoral Theology

41 Franz-Xaver Arnold, *Seelsorge aus der Mitte der Heilsgeschichte* (Freiburg: Herder, 1956), 198.

at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich. While the Chair of Pastoral Theology in Augsburg works very much from a historical perspective, other chairs focus more on intercultural discourses. The Pastoral Theology chairs in Münster and Trier should be mentioned here. The cooperation and interaction of the various chairs with their different perspectives reflects a 250-year struggle for an appropriate and helpful understanding of Pastoral Theology, which ultimately aims to reflect and shape the mission of the Church.

At the Chair of Pastoral Theology at the Faculty of Theology in Trier, the intercultural perspective of pastoral care for the global Church is complemented by the perspective of pastoral care for creation<sup>42</sup>. This perspective is an integral part of an ecotheology which is “developed to motivate religious individuals and institutions to engage in ecological sustainability. Ecotheology includes systematic theology, environmental ethics, practical theology and environmental politics. The concept is normative and interdisciplinary”<sup>43</sup>. The approach of a pastoral care of creation demolishes an understanding of pastoral reflections that was originally strongly synchronous, and expands it to include a diachronic understanding of responsibility<sup>44</sup>. In view of humanity in the Anthropocene<sup>45</sup>, whose survival in the common home can only succeed working together, the

- 42 Klaus Vellguth, *Wir sind nur Gast auf Erden. Indigene Perspektiven für eine christliche Schöpfungstheologie*, en Carlo Maria Pagano / Elisabeth Steffens / Klaus Vellguth (Hg.), *Wir sind nur Gast auf Erden. Lateinamerikanische Schöpfungsspiritualität im Dialogue*, vol. I, ed. Schöpfung (Ostfildern: Matthias Grünewald, 2019), 15-30; Klaus Vellguth, „Asiatische Schöpfungstheologien im Dialogue. Unterwegs zu einer gemeinsamen Schöpfungsverantwortung“, en Isis Ibrahim / Shaji Kochutara / Klaus Vellguth (Hg.), *In der Schöpfung Heimat finden. Asiatische Schöpfungsspiritualitäten im Dialogue* (Ostfildern: Matthias Grünewald, 2020), 13-30. Klaus Vellguth, „Mit der Schöpfung Leben atmen. Afrikanische Schöpfungsspiritualitäten im Dialogue“, en Moses Awinongya / Gabriel Faimau / Klaus Vellguth (Hg.), *Mit der Schöpfung Leben atmen. Afrikanische Schöpfungsspiritualitäten im Dialogue* (Ostfildern: Matthias Grünewald, 2021), 15-27; Klaus Vellguth, „Schöpfung für das Leben. Schöpfungsspiritualitäten in Deutschland im Dialogue“, en Dennis Halft / Carolin Neuber / Klaus Vellguth (Hg.), *Schöpfung für das Leben. Schöpfungsspiritualitäten in Deutschland im Dialogue*, vol IV, ed. Schöpfung (Ostfildern: Matthias Grünewald, 2024), 15-28.
- 43 Tom Sverre Tomren et. al, ed., *Contemporary ecotheology, climate justice and environmental stewardship in world religions*, Ecothee, vol. VI, (Steinkjer: Orthodox Academy of Crete, 2021), 23-32, 32.
- 44 Klaus Vellguth, „Vom Dialogue des Lebens hin zum Dialogue des Überlebens. Interreligiöse Herausforderungen im Zeitalter des Anthropozän“, en Marco Benini / Walter Andreas Euler / Klaus Vellguth (Hg.), *Trierer Ringparabel. Den Glauben interreligiös zur Sprache bringen* (FS Theologische Fakultät Trier), (Freiburg: Herder, 2025), 283-313.
- 45 Klaus Vellguth, „Leben in Fülle. Tastversuche hin zu einer Schöpfungspastoral“, en *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift* 132 (2023) 4, 253-268. Klaus Vellguth, „Die Abenddämmerung des Anthropozäns. Vom Ende eines Erdzeitalters“, <https://www.feinschwarz.net/die-abenddaemmerung-des-anthropozaens/>.

quality of the necessary intercultural and interreligious dialogues is changing. It is no longer about a possible dialogue of life in a neighborly community or culture, but about an absolutely necessary dialogue of survival in a global community of destiny. This dialogue of survival does not stand alongside the other categories of dialogue that have been included up to now, but must be thought of as transversal or connecting categories: the dialogue of survival as a dialogue of life, as a dialogue of different concepts of the world and of God, as a dialogue of action and a dialogue of spiritual experience. In this dialogue, perspectives, relationships and behaviors that were previously taken for granted must be broken down and overcome. Pope Francis' paradigm shift from an anthropocentric view to a situational anthropocentrism already invites us to broaden our world view<sup>46</sup>.

The concept of "ecological *diakonia*"<sup>47</sup> is essential for classifying creation theology within Pastoral Theology. Theologically, the idea of ecological *diakonia* is rooted in the current reinterpretation of the signs of the times<sup>48</sup>. The climate crisis and species extinction become central *loci theologici*<sup>49</sup>, and the semantics of the ecological challenge, which are initially formulated in everyday language as "profane," become, from a Christian perspective, a question of what God wants to tell us humans in the face of the environmental crisis. It would be worth discussing the extent to which compassion (Lk 10:29-37) and mercy (Lk 15:11-32) as central religious categories or moments of Christian experience of God can be repositioned and, in the context of ecological *diakonia*, refer not only to interpersonal but also to intercreatural relations as a whole.

It should be noted at this point that such an expansion of the Christian understanding of compassion and mercy could certainly be linked to Hartmut Rosa's reflections on resonance theory and, in particular, on the human experience

46 Klaus Vellguth, „Ökologische Diakonie. Anmerkungen zur theologischen Verortung einer Schöpfungspastoral“, en *Anzeiger für die Seelsorge* 133 (11/2024), 38-41.

47 Klaus Vellguth, „Diakonische Perspektiven einer Schöpfungspastoral. Zu den Grundlagen einer ökologischen Diakonie“, en Maren Baumann, Frederik Simon, *Caritas, Frömmigkeit und katholische Literatur im historischen Wandel. Theologische, sozial- und literaturgeschichtliche Untersuchungen* (Aschendorff, Münster: FS Bernhard Schneider, 2025), 83-100.

48 Klaus Vellguth, „Ökologische Diakonie. Anmerkungen ...“, 38-41.

49 Luiz Carlos Susin, „Das Christentum im Anthropozän. Eine lateinamerikanische Perspektive“, en Sandra Arenas, Edoh F. Bedjra, Catherine Clifford et al., *Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil. Ereignis und Auftrag*, vol. I, Allgemeine Einführung und Hermeneutik (Freiburg: Herder, 2024), 164.

of resonance in nature. Furthermore, this question correlates directly with sentientism, as advocated by Peter Singer or Tom Regan, for example, or with pathocentrism, which is already rooted in Jeremy Bentham's utilitarianism. Bentham wrote in the 18th century: "Perhaps one day people will realize that the number of legs, the hairiness of the skin, or the shape of the sacrum are not sufficient reasons to condemn a sentient being to the same fate? [...] The question is not whether they can think, nor whether they can speak. The question is: can they suffer?"<sup>50</sup>. Following on from utilitarianism, sentientism, and pathocentrism, the experience of faith described in the Gospel of Luke as *esplagnisqn* could represent not only a reaction to the suffering of other people, but also a reaction to the suffering of every creature capable of suffering in creation, or even creation itself<sup>51</sup>. Concepts of mindfulness<sup>52</sup> and compassion<sup>53</sup> would need to be redefined and rethought in the age of *Homo postindustrialis*, in order to appreciate the theological relevance of the moments of divine experience inherent in *esplagnisqn* and to develop a new religious and theological sensitivity to moments of encounter with God.

An ecological diaconate that is at the heart of a pastoral care of creation is polymorphic, polyphonic, and polychromatic. It is polymorphic in that it is realized in liturgy (*leiturgia*), proclamation (*martyria*), and community (*koinonia*). For even in ecological *diakonia*, it is evident that the fundamental activities of the Church cannot be separated from one another, but must always be thought of as interwoven. It is polyphonic because it has very different timbres in intercultural and global Church discourse and will be performed at different volumes. And finally, ecological *diakonia* is polychromatic because it is realized locally in different colors.

In concrete terms, ecological *diakonia* unfolds, for example, in the technical sphere. This initially encompasses seemingly mundane areas, ranging from water-

50 Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation. A new edition, corrected by the author* (London: W. Pickering and E. Wilson, 1828), 236, translated by Pascal Collinet.

51 Hermann Steinkamp, „Berührbarkeit. Die „Kompetenz“ des Samariters“, en *Diakonia* 53 (2022) 2, 116-121.

52 Marcel Hunecke, *Verantwortung, Lebensstile und Umweltverhalten* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2000); Marcel Hunecke, *Psychologie der Nachhaltigkeit. Psychische Ressourcen für Postwachstumsgesellschaften* (München, Oekom, 2013).

53 Johann Baptist Metz, „Compassion. Zu einem Weltprogramm des Christentums im Zeitalter des Pluralismus der Religionen und Kulturen“, en Johann Baptist Metz / Lothar Kuld / Adolf Weisbrod, *Compassion. Weltprogramm des Christentums* (Freiburg: Herder, 2000), 9-18.

saving buttons in the parish center or photovoltaic systems on Church roofs to the use of energy-efficient household appliances. In addition, ecological social welfare is realized in daily consumption, whereby “compulsive consumerism” (LS 203)<sup>54</sup> is countered by alternative lifestyles such as the ability to enjoy life, self-acceptance, mindfulness, meaning-making, and solidarity (LS 236). Ecological *diakonia* also has an impact on education when events draw attention to ecological challenges in an information-oriented way, foster an emotional connection to nature and creation in an experience-oriented way, and invite people to adopt an attitude of preserving relationships within creation. Ultimately, ecological *diakonia* takes on a Eucharistic dimension (LS 222-223) because Christians find themselves in an attitude of gratitude in the midst of creation. This experience of gratitude is in turn celebrated in the liturgy.

Ecological *diakonia* takes concrete form in its many colors, not only within the framework of the “established Church,” but also beyond the Church steeple and outside the parish in the actions of Christians and numerous people of good will: for example, in the commitment of environmental activists who often do not initially see their own actions as pastoral, but who, with their protests in Lützerath (North Rhine-Westphalia), in Pödelwitz (Saxony) or in other places of concrete environmental destruction, explicitly point to the consequences of the climate crisis and thus implicitly advocate for the preservation of creation. Some of them, such as environmental activist Lea Bonasera, explicitly challenge the Church and urge it to become more involved in the climate debate:

The Church must raise its finger in warning and point accusingly at those responsible, even if that means that three fingers point back at itself. Only a few people are needed to bring about decisive change, but they are crucial, as our history has shown time and again. And for me, there is no clearer message than when Catholic believers dare to join us in civil resistance. Social teaching explains it best in its three steps: see – judge – act. In this sense, the Catholic Church has shirked its responsibility for far too long and will hopefully finally take more action at this crucial moment<sup>55</sup>.

At almost the same time, activist Aimée van Baalen made a similar appeal at the annual conference of the Synod of the Evangelical Church in Germany

54 Francisco, “Carta encíclica *Laudato si’* sobre el cuidado de la casa común” (24.05.2015).

55 Lea Bonasera, „Die Letzte Generation. zur Rolle der Kirche im Kampf gegen die Klimakrise“, in *Stimmen der Zeit* 147 (2022) 9, 653-662, 662; translated by Pascal Collinet.

in 2022: “We need the Protestant Church on our side”<sup>56</sup>. She appealed to the representatives of the Evangelical Church in Germany, saying that the Church must turn to politics “to finally demand the climate protection that is needed in this situation”<sup>57</sup>.

An ecological diaconate always strives for pastoral perspectives for action. In view of the environmental crisis, this raises the question of how people can be motivated to take action. The “pastoral-theological three-step process” of seeing, judging, and acting expresses a dubious optimism that helpful or appropriate action can be derived from available information or even result directly from it<sup>58</sup>. But when dealing with the climate crisis in particular, one could reverse Jesus’ words “they know not what they do” and say “they do not do what they know”. For it is obvious: “Despite all attempts to deny, conceal, gloss over or relativize the issue, the signs of climate change are here and increasingly evident. No one can ignore the fact that in recent years we have witnessed extreme weather phenomena, frequent periods of unusual heat, drought and other cries of protest on the part of the earth” (LD 5)<sup>59</sup>. However, although scientifically verified information on the climate crisis (and media reports of its harbingers) is available, it is not yet possible to implement appropriate measures. Pope Francis addressed the question of how Christians can become ecologically active in both *Laudato si’* and *Laudate Deum*. This question will also need to be addressed more intensively in academic circles in the future. Perhaps Pastoral Theology also needs to expand the three-step process of seeing, judging, and acting to include the dimension of willing, as suggested by the Vallendar pastoral theologian Jürgen Kroth. The sentence he formulates, seeing – judging – willing – acting, incorporates a step that may have been overlooked until now, in order to move from knowledge to action and from hubris to humility<sup>60</sup>.

56 Aimée van Baalen, quoted from: Benjamin Lassiwe, EKD-Synode: „Kampf gegen den Relevanzverlust“, in *Herder Korrespondenz* 76 (2022) 12, 11-12, 12; translated by Pascal Collinet.

57 Aimée van Baalen, quoted from: Benjamin Lassiwe, EKD-Synode: „Kampf gegen den Relevanzverlust...“

58 The three-step process of seeing - judging - acting goes back to Josef Cardijn, the founder of the International Christian Workers’ Youth (CAJ). In September and October 1965, Cardijn opened the discussion on the pastoral constitution of the Second Vatican Council *Gaudium et spes* in the Council hall, the structure of which is based on the three steps of seeing - judging - acting propagated by Cardijn.

59 Francisco, “Exhortación apostólica *Laudate Deum* a todas las personas de buena voluntad sobre la crisis climática” (04.10.2023).

60 Jürgen Kroth, *Dein Reich komme. Studien zu einer politischen Theologie sakramentaler Praxis. Studien zur Theologie und Praxis der Seelsorge*, vol. II, 102 (Würzburg: Echter, 2018) 33-37.

Following Karl Rahner's original dictum of a "qualitative leap" in reference to the historical development of the Church toward becoming a universal Church, one can also speak figuratively of the development of an ecological diaconate, saying that in the course of the dissolution of a one-sided anthropocentric view, "under the guise of a natural and slow development, something like a qualitative leap is taking place"<sup>61</sup> if Pastoral Theology, in its reflections on a sustainable community living together in a shared house, situates itself within essential social discourses<sup>62</sup>. The current environmental and climate crisis can be met with fear and panic, or with denial and repression. Consumerist reactions aimed at realizing an extensive hedonistic lifestyle in the time that remains can also be observed. However, ecological *diakonia* is characterized by a perspective of hope that, embedded in the belief in God's universal will for salvation (LG 25) and in trust in universal salvation, does not give up hope for tomorrow and for a future of creation worth living.

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61 Karl Rahner, „Theologische Grundinterpretation des II. Vatikanischen Konzils“, in Karl Rahner, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. II (Freiburg: G. Wassilowsky, 2013), 970-981, 978; translated by Pascal Collinet.

62 S. A. „Zulehner zu Reformprozessen: Rom will Erster sein“, <https://katholisch.de/artikel/55476-zulehner-kirchen-als-hoffnungshebammen-in-angstgetriebener-welt>.

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