

# STUDY MATERIALS: Norms of Catholic Doctrine: Scripture, Tradition, Magisterium

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## Introduction

This course is designed to introduce the student to principles, sources, resources, matter, and scope of theology within the Catholic tradition. The primary concern in this course is to establish the "foundation" for doing theology by providing the student with an understanding of the norms of Catholic doctrine and theology: sacred scripture, Tradition, and Magisterium.

## Readings

### Required Texts

1. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Libreria Editrice Vaticana.- Liguori, 1999. Isbn 0-89243-565-8.
2. Neuner, Josef, SJ and Dupuis, Jacques, SJ, eds. *The Christian Faith: Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*. 7th ed. New York: Alba, 2000. (Note: in previous editions of this work, the page numbers may be quite different; paragraph nos. will be the same or slightly different). 0-8189-0758-4.
3. Flannery, Austin, gen. ed. *Vatican Council II: Conciliar & Post-Conciliar Documents*. 2nd ed, vol 1. Costello, 1992. 0-918344-39-5.

### Recommended Reading

See course bibliography, especially Joseph Ratzinger's *Introduction to Christianity* (Ignatius Press, 1990, isbn 0-89870-316-6) which covers the same ground as this course. See also Frank Sheed, *Theology and Sanity*, revised ed (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1993 0-89870-470-7).

1) Fundamental Theology: Flannery, Vatican Council II documents, Dei Verbum 1-8

2) Revelation: Dei Verbum 9-24

3) Revelation & the Word of God: Catechism (CCC) #26-141 (pp. 13-38)

4) Scripture: Inspiration & Inerrancy: CCC #142-184 (pp. 39-50),

5) Senses of Scripture & Hermeneutics: "Henri de Lubac and the critique of scientific exegesis" *Communio* 19 (1992):365-388

6) Tradition: The Christian Faith (CF) Chap. 1 (Revelation & Faith) #101-148; Avery Dulles, "Tradition and Creativity in Theology."

7) Scripture and Tradition: CF Chap. 2: Scripture and Tradition #201-245; "Henri de Lubac and the critique of scientific exegesis" *Communio* 19 (1992):365-388

8) Magisterium: JP II, *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*

9) Magisterium: Papal & Episcopal CF Chap 2 #246-276

10) Infallibility: CF Chap. 1, #154-188, w 10-11

11) Hermeneutics of Doctrinal Statements: CF intro to the 1st ed.

12) Conclusion: "Ressourcement theology, aggiornamento, and the hermeneutics of tradition" *Communio* 18 (1991): 530-554

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## Written Assignments by Lesson

Answers should be approximately 1-2 pages in length. You should include primary source quotes in your answers from assigned reading wherever possible--Scripture, Church Fathers and Doctors, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and documents from *The Catholic Faith*.

1. Explain the role and importance of Fundamental Theology in the entire program of Catholic theological study.
2. Briefly describe the doctrine of analogy of being (*analogia entis*).
3. Briefly explain the traditional doctrine of the "inerrancy of Scripture" and how the Catholic Church since Vatican II understands this doctrine.
4. Explain the term "analogy of faith" and how it serves as an hermeneutical principle in the interpretation of Scripture.
5. Discuss the four senses of Scripture and their implications for the understanding and interpretation of the Bible.
6. Write a two-page synopsis and review of the article "Henri de Lubac and the critique of scientific exegesis."
7. Discuss how the Vincentian canon can be used as a tool to discern **Tradition** from **traditions**.

8. Show how *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* illustrates that the Magisterium is under and not over the Word of God.
9. Please reproduce Jaroslav Pelikan's definition of doctrine and explain what each of the terms in the definition mean.
10. Discuss the biblical grounds for the infallibility of the Church and of the successor of Peter and why this charism is important for the Church.
11. Discuss the four kinds of magisterial statements and the various responses that Catholics owe to each.
12. Write a two-page synopsis and review of the article "*Ressourcement* theology, *aggiornamento*, and the hermeneutics of tradition"

**Final Exam:** 2 hrs closed book exam to be taken after the course readings and lectures have been studied thoroughly.

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## Abbreviation Key

(Numbers after these abbreviations usually refer to paragraph or article not page)

AGD - Decree on Missionary Activity (*Ad Gentes Divinitum*) of Vatican II

AH - *Adversus Haereses* (Against Heresies) by Irenaeus

CCC - *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (numbers refer to paragraph unless noted otherwise)

CDF - Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (Roman Curia)

CF - *The Christian Faith*, edited by Neuner and Dupuis (numbers refer to paragraph, not page)

CIC - 1983 Code of Canon Law (*Corpus Iuris Canonici*) for the Latin Church (canon, not page nos)

DASp - Pius XII, 1943 Encyclical Letter *Divino Afflante Spiritu*

DF - Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Filius* of the First Vatican Council (1870)

DH - Declaration on Religious Freedom (*Dignitatis Humanae*) of the Second Vatican Council

DonV - CDF *Donum Veritatis* (Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian)

DV - Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Dei Verbum*) of Vatican II

e.g. - for example (from the Latin phrase "*exempli gratia*")

FC - John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation on the Christian Family in the Modern World (*Familiaris Consortio*)

GS - Vatican II's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*)

HS - Holy Spirit

LXX - Septuagint (Greek) translation of the Old Testament

ME - CDF Declaration *Mysterium Ecclesiae* (11 May 1973) or "Declaration in Defense of the Catholic Doctrine on the Church Against Certain Errors of the Present Day"

NAB - New American Bible Translation

NT - New Testament

OT - Old Testament

PD - Leo XIII, 1893 Encyclical Letter *Providentissimus Deus*

RH - John Paul II, Encyclical on the Redeemer of Man (*Redemptor Hominis*)

RSV - Revised Standard Bible Translation

SC - Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*) of Vatican II

SP - Pope Benedict's Encyclical Letter *Spiritus Paraclitus*

SS - Sacred Scripture

STh - *Summa Theologiae* of St. Thomas Aquinas

Tdn - Tradition

UR - Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*) of Vatican II

WOG - Word of God

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## References

### Selected Supplementary Bibliography

This very limited bibliography is intended to direct students to several reference works useful for the completion of the class project as well as to suggest further, more in-depth investigation into the various areas of theology surveyed in this course. Inclusion in this bibliography does not imply my endorsement. Call numbers are those of the Univ. of Dallas's Blakley Library. Many of the following books are in print and are available by mail-order from the Univ. of Dallas bookstore (call toll-free 888-226-8632). For out-of-print titles (abbreviated opt.) try Loomer's Theological Booksellers (612-430-1092), Preserving Christian Publications (315-942-6338), or American Book Exchange <http://www.abebooks.com>. Many patristic writings and church documents can be viewed or downloaded free from a variety of world-wide-web sites including <http://www.ewtn.com>; <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/sbook2.asp>.

### Reference and General

Beeck, Frans Jozef van, S.J. *God Encountered: A Contemporary Catholic Systematic Theology*. Vol. 1, *Understanding the Christian Faith*. Collegeville: Liturgical, 1989. BQT 508.4 B43 G63 v.1. Intro to systematic theology and a look at the Christian faith as a coherent system of worship, conduct, and teaching.

Broderick, Robert C., ed. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Revised & updated. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1987. 613 pp. Its unsigned articles, over 4,000 in number, are short, some being no more than a paragraph. More a dictionary or glossary than an encyclopedia. Doctrinally orthodox. This is not the New Catholic Encyclopedia that is required for the glossary assignment! Blakley Ref. BX 841 .C355 1987. ISBN 0840755449.

Brown, Raymond E. et al., eds. *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990. Commentaries on every book of the Bible plus various topical articles from a Catholic perspective (e.g. on inspiration) complete with bibliographies. Not the best tool to facilitate direct application of Scripture to one's life,

but nevertheless helpful for study of the historical background and the literal sense of Scripture. Braniff Ref BS 491.2 .N485 1990.

Carlen, Claudia, ed. *The Papal Encyclicals*. 4 vols. McGrath Publishing Co., 1981. Papal encyclicals in English from 1740 to 1981. Contains encyclicals by Pius IX, Leo XIII, and Pius XII that are important background and sources for conciliar texts. UD Ref. BQV 3 C3C3. Download some from <http://listserv.american.edu/catholic/>

Cross, F. J. and E. A. Livingstone, eds. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 2d ed. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1974. Buy the new 3rd ed if you can! Ecumenical & particularly good on historical matters. The abridged paperback version, entitled *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, is more affordable, but the unabridged version is better. Braniff Ref. BR95 .O8 1983.

Denzinger, H. and A. Schonmetzer, eds. *Enchiridion Symbolorum*. Barcelona, 1973. Often abbreviated. as Denz. or DS, this is a classic collection, albeit partial, of Church documents in Latin arranged historically. BQT 145 .D3 1965. For an English translation of Denzinger, (imperfect, I'm told) see *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, trans. Roy Deferrari (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1955), BQT 145 .D3D.

Di Berardino, Angelo, ed. *Encyclopedia of the Early Church*. Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum. Trans. by Adrian Walford. 2 vols. New York: Oxford, 1992. Entries listed alphabetically under heresies, persons, places, etc. maps & photos. Blakley ref. BQ 31 D58E5 1991.

Ferguson, Everett, ed. *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*. Garland Reference Library of the Humanities, vol 846. NY: Garland Publishing, 1990. Liturgy, doctrine, personalities, liturgies of the churches up till about 600 AD are described by an international all-star team of patristic scholars. Braniff Ref. BQX 232 E53F3 1990.

Foy, Felican A., OFM, ed. *Catholic Almanac*. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Press, 2002. Published yearly. Has a helpful glossary which offers brief definitions of theological terms. Also contains a chronology of church history. AY 81 .R6 N2.

Glazier, Michael & Monica Hellwig, eds. *The Modern Catholic Encyclopedia*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1994. 933 p., oversized with 1,300+ cross-referenced, signed entries, many by professors or alumni of the Catholic University of America. Not all articles fully support magisterial teaching (e.g. contraception). Illustrations but no bibliographies. Emphasizes current personalities and issues over historical ones. Braniff Ref. BX 841 .M63 1994.

Komonchak, Joseph A and Mary Collins, eds. *The New Dictionary of Theology*. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1987. Braniff Ref. BR 95 .N38 1987.

Lewis, C. S. *Mere Christianity*. NY: Macmillan, 1960. Brief and non-academic exposition of central doctrines of Christianity. A masterful book that you can recommend to almost anyone. BQT 241 .L48.

McBrien, Richard P. *Catholicism*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1994. BQT 508. M111 1986. Read McBrien with caution; he is not famous for his conformity to the teaching of the Magisterium.

McBrien, Richard P, ed. *The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1995. BX 841 .H37 1995.

McGrath, Alister E. *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Modern Christian Thought*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1995. BR 95 .B58 1993. A prominent Anglican theologian.

McGrath, Alister E. *Christian Theology: An Introduction*. 2d ed. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1997.

McGrath, Alister E., ed. *Christian Theology Reader*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1995. Anthology of brief readings from the history of Christian Theology arranged topically. Particularly interesting section on soteriology. Chapters 5-11 deal with the material covered in Fundamental Theology. BT 77 .C47 1995.

Neuner, Josef, SJ and Dupuis, Jacques, SJ, eds. *The Christian Faith: Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*. 6th ed. New York: Alba, 1996. Most complete English collection of Catholic doctrinal pronouncements arranged topically. Blakley Ref. BQT 217.4 .N42 1975.

\* *New Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York: McGraw Hill, 1967 (supplementary volumes by different publishers, various dates). Best starting point on just about everything ecclesiastical: Church history, biography, philosophy, theology, Catholic trivia, etc.! You can find it in the reference sections of many public libraries and state college libraries as well as Catholic ones. Braniff Ref. BQT 6 .C385.

O'Carroll, Michael. *Verbum Caro: A Theological Encyclopedia of Jesus the Christ*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1992. 201pp. Blakley Ref. BT 199 .O23 1992. .

O'Carroll, Michael. *Trinitas: A Theological Encyclopedia of the Holy Trinity*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1987. 220 pp. Especially helpful for the glossary assignment. Blakley Ref. .

O'Carroll, Michael. *Veni Creator Spiritus: A Theological Encyclopedia of the Holy Spirit*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1990. 232 pp. Helpful for glossary. Blakley Ref. BT 121.2 .O335 1990.

O'Collins, Gerald & Edward Farrugia, eds. *A Concise Dictionary of Theology*. New York: Paulist, 1991. UD Ref. BQT 7 O34C6 1991.

Rahner, Karl, ed. *Encyclopedia of Theology: The Concise Sacramentum Mundi*. New York: Crossroad, 1986. One volume of the more important articles from the multivolume Sacramentum Mundi arranged alphabetically. Beware: Not very clear style. Blakley Ref. BQT6 .S2 C.



Rahner, Karl and Herbert Vorgrimler, eds. *Dictionary of Theology*. 2nd ed. New York: Crossroad, 1988. Alphabetical arrangement. UD Ref. BQ 7469 A5L52 1981.

Richardson, Alan and John Bowden, eds. *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1983. By an ecumenical team of theologians such as Raymond Brown, Walter Kasper, and Gerald O'Collins on the Catholic side and James Barr, John Macquarrie and J. Moltmann on the Protestant side. 614 p. IRPS library and Blakley Ref. BR 95 .W94 1983.

Schreck, Alan. *Catholic and Christian: An Explanation of Commonly Misunderstood Catholic Beliefs*. Ann Arbor: Servant, 1984. Excellent at demonstrating basis for Catholic doctrine in scripture and ancient tradition in a way that everyone can clearly understand. Great to give to parishioners. BX 1752 .S4 1984.

Stravinskis, Peter M. J., ed. *Our Sunday Visitor's Catholic Encyclopedia*. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1991. 1007 pp, isbn 0879734574. Braniff Ref. BX 841 .O97 1991. Written by various contributors, this work is orthodox and affordable. Written on a popular level, the entries are two to three paragraphs long and fail to provide any bibliography. Not a substitute for Oxford Dictionary or the New Catholic Encyclopedia. Available on CD-ROM.

Stravinskis, Peter M. J., ed. *Our Sunday Visitor's Catholic Dictionary*. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1993. 496pp. Braniff Ref. BX 841 .O87 1993. isbn 0879735074. Available on CD-ROM. Covers the same territory of the longer OSV Catholic Encyclopedia with shorter entries, usually about one paragraph.

Tanner, Norman P., ed. *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*. 2 vols. London and Washington DC: Sheed and Ward and Georgetown Univ Press, 1990. Complete acts of all 21 ecumenical councils in the original language and in English translation with brief introductions. BQX 175 .D4 T3 1990.

Urmson, J. O. and Jonathan Rée, eds. *The Concise Encyclopedia of Western philosophy and Philosophers*. London & NY: Routledge, 1991. 0-415-07883-0.

Walsh, Michael J. *Commentary on the Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1994. 440 pp. BX 1959.5 .C657 1994.

### **Fundamental Theology: Faith, Revelation, Apologetics**

Alonso Schokel, Luis, S.J. *The Inspired Word: Scripture in the Light of Language and Literature*. Trans. by Francis Martin. NY: Herder and Herder, 1965. BS 540 .A58E 1966.

Beeck, Frans Jozef van, S.J. *God Encountered: A Contemporary Catholic Systematic Theology*. Vol. 2/1, The Revelation of the Glory--Introduction and Part 1: Fundamental Theology. Collegeville: Liturgical, 1993. BX 1751.2 B36 1993 v.2 pt.1.

Berger, Peter L. *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. NY: Anchor/Doubleday, 1967. Useful for apologetics. Drawing illustrations from primitive, ancient, and contemporary societies, this Christian sociologist argues that religion is a "sacred canopy" that every society builds to give its world meaning. BQT 3483 .B47s.

Bouillard, Henri. *The Knowledge of God*. Trans. Samuel Femiano. NY: Herder and Herder, 1968. Natural theology/apologetics. Proofs for God's existence, analogy. BQT 516 .B6. . 127p.

Brogie, Guy de, SJ. *Revelation and Reason*. Trans. Mark Pontifex. Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism, 9. NY: Hawthorn, 1965. 188p. . BT 50 .B6813.

Congar, Yves, OP. *The Meaning of Tradition*. Trans. A.N. Woodrow. Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism, 3. NY: Hawthorn, 1964. 157p. . BT 90 .C593.

Congar, Yves, OP. *Tradition and Traditions*. NY: Macmillan, 1966 *French 1963*. Greatest existing work on the theology of tradition; had a decisive influence on *Dei Verbum's* treatment of the topic. BQT 253 .C74 tE 1967.

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian (Donum Veritatis)*. Washington, DC: USCC, 1973. On the various degrees of authority of different kinds of magisterial teaching and the proper response due. The limits of loyal dissent.

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Mysterium Ecclesiae (Declaration in Defense of the Catholic Doctrine on the Church Against Certain Errors of the Present Day)*. Washington, DC: USCC, 1973. Deals principally with the infallibility of the Church and its Magisterium. Occasioned by the case of Fr. Hans Kung and his denial of the doctrine of infallibility. Opt.

DiNoia, J. A., OP. "Communion and Magisterium: Teaching Authority and the Culture of Grace." *Modern Theology* 9 (1993): 403-418.

Dulles, Avery, SJ. *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*. NY: Oxford 1994. History of Christian thought about faith with Dulles own systematic examination in later chapters. Very complete. BT 771.2 .D76 1994. . Dulles is a particularly clear, understandable, and reliable author.

Dulles, Avery, SJ. "Criteria of Catholic Theology." *Communio* 22/2 (1995): 303-315. BQT 3.C63

Dulles, Avery, SJ. *A History of Apologetics*. Theological Resources Series. Washington, DC: Corpus, 1970. Contains good bibliography & index. BQT 4.2 .T47 D86.

Dulles, Avery, SJ. *The Survival of Dogma*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971. Contains important articles on faith, Magisterium, and the 'irreformability' of dogma. BQT 248 .D8.

Dulles, Avery, SJ. "The Symbolic Structure of Revelation." *Theological Studies* (March, 1980): 51-73. Periodicals BQT 3 .T458.

Dulles, Avery, SJ. "Vatican II and the Recovery of Tradition." In *The Reshaping of Catholicism*, 75-92. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988. . BQT 129.2 .D9R4

Empie, Paul C and T. Austin Murphy, eds. *Teaching Authority and Infallibility in the Church*. Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VI. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1980. US Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue Consensus Statement with background papers by Avery Dulles, Joseph Fitzmyer, et al. BQT 249 T38.

Eno, Robert, ed. *Teaching Authority in the Early Church*. Message of the Fathers of the Church, 14. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier. Anthology of patristics texts on the subject. BQT 324 E5.

Farmer, William R. and Denis Farkasfalvy, O.Cist. *The Formation of the New Testament Canon: An Ecumenical Approach*. NY: Paulist, 1983. By two University of Dallas scholars. BS 2320 F3.

Fitzmyer, Joseph A. *Scripture, the Soul of Theology*. NY: Paulist, 1994. 4 essays on the interpretation and use of Scripture. BS 476 F58 1994.

International Theological Commission. "On the Interpretation of Dogmas." *Origins* vol. 20, no. 1 (May 17, 1990). Periodicals BQT 3 .U57

International Theological Commission. "Theological Pluralism" (89-92) and "Catholic Teaching on Apostolic Succession" (93-104). In *International Theological Commission: Texts and Documents 1969-1985*. San Francisco: Ignatius, 1989. BX 1751 .2 .A1 T44 1989

Jolivet, Régis. *The God of Reason*. Trans. M. Pontifex. 20th Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism, 15. NY: Hawthorn, 1958. 126p. Proofs for God's existence & the divine attributes. , BT 101 .J613.

Journet, Charles. *What is Dogma?* Trans. Mark Pontifex. Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism, 4. NY: Hawthorn, 1964. 111p. BT 90 .C593.

Keating, Karl. *Catholicism and Fundamentalism*. San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988. Has a great chapter refuting Protestant sola scriptura and defending Tradition as authoritative witness to revelation. BQT 217.4 K25.

Keegan, Terence J., OP. *Interpreting the Bible: A Popular Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*. NY: Paulist, 1985. Opt.

Kreeft, Peter and Ronald K. Tacelli, SJ. *Handbook of Christian Apologetics*. InterVarsity, 1994. Presents all the major arguments for all the major Christian doctrines that are attacked today. 380p. . ISBN: 0830817743. Braniff: BT 1102.K724 1994.

Latourelle, René, SJ. *Theology of Revelation*. NY: Alba House, 1966. Comprehensive: proceeds historically first, then systematically. Includes commentary on Dei Verbum. 518pp. BQT 264 .L313

Latourelle, René, SJ and Rino Fisichella, eds. *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*. New York: Crossroads, 1994. 1222 pp. isbn 0824513959. Braniff Ref. BT 1102 .D5813 1994.

Levie, Jean. *The Bible: Word of God in Words of Men*. New York: P.J. Kenedy & sons, 1961 *French* 1958. Surveys the development of historical-critical exegesis from 1850 to 1958 as well as the teaching of the Magisterium on the bible. Examines relationship between the human & divine character of Scripture. BS 482.L3

Lienhard, Joseph T., SJ. *The Bible, the Church, and Authority: The Canon of the Christian Bible in History and Theology*. Collegeville: Liturgical, 1995. BS 465 .L54 1995. 120 p.

Lubac, Henri de. *Sources of Revelation*. NY: Herder and Herder, 1968. Best thing around on the spiritual senses of Scripture. BS 476 .L8

Martinetti, John. *Reasons to Believe Today*. Marquette Studies in Theology no. 11. NY: Fordham Univ. Press, 1997. Apologetics. 216pp. BT 1102.M34613 1996.

McKenzie, John L. *Dictionary of the Bible*. NY: Macmillan *Collier*, 1965. Helpful articles on inspiration, canon and many other topics. Blakley Ref. BS 440 .M36.

Metzger, Bruce M. *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance*. NY: Oxford, 1987. BS 2320 .M47 1987. 336p.

Meyendorff, John. *Living Tradition: Orthodox Witness in the Contemporary World*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's, 1978. A collection of essays in fundamental theology from an Orthodox perspective. 202p.

Meynell, Hugo A. *Is Christianity True?* Washington: Catholic University Press, 1994. Chapters on other religions, the Incarnation and Atonement, the problem of historical criticism, etc. BT 60 .M45 1994.

Morrisey, Francis G. *Papal and Curial Pronouncements: Their Canonical Significance in Light of the 1983 Code of Canon Law*. Ottawa: Saint Paul University Canon Law Faculty, 1992. Opt.

Nichols, Aidan. *From Newman to Congar: The Idea of Doctrinal Development from the Victorians to the Second Vatican Council*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1990. BQT 128 N52 F7 1990.

Nichols, Aidan, OP. *The Shape of Catholic Theology: An Introduction to its Sources, Principles and History*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991. BQT 508.4 N48 S4

Nichols, Aidan, OP. *The Splendour of Doctrine: The Catechism of the Catholic Church on Christian Believing*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995. 166 pp. BX 1959.5 .N53 1995.

O'Connor, James T., ed. *The Gift of Infallibility: Official Relatio on Infallibility of Bishop Vincent Gasser at Vatican Council I*. Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1986. . Opt.

O'Collins, Gerald, SJ. *Fundamental Theology*. NY: Paulist, 1981. 283pp. BQT 508.4 O29.

O'Collins, Gerald, SJ. *Retrieving Fundamental Theology: The Three Styles of Contemporary Theology*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1993. 225pp. BX 1751.2 O29 1993.

O'Collins, Gerald, SJ and Daniel Kendall, SJ. *The Bible for Theology: Ten Principles for the Theological Use of Scripture*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1997. 224p. BS 476.038 1997. ISBN: 0809137437

Orsy, Ladislav. *The Profession of Faith and Oath of Fidelity: A Theological and Canonical Analysis*. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1990. Discusses degrees of authority of Church Authority and the appropriate response demanded from the faithful. BX 1968 .O77 1990.

Paul VI, Pope. *Faith: Response to the Dialogue of God*. Boston: St. Paul's Editions, 1967. Insights into the nature of faith taken from the talks and audiences of Pope Paul VI. Opt. .

Ratzinger, Joseph Cardinal. *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology*. San Francisco: Ignatius, 1987. Essays on the fundamental structure of Christianity & proper relationship between theologians & Magisterium. 298pp. BQT 508.4 .R35 1987.

Rahner, Karl. "The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology." In *Theological Investigations*, vol. 4, 36-76. Baltimore: Helicon, 1966. BQT 508 R2.

Rahner, Karl. "Considerations on the Development of Dogma." In *Theological Investigations*, vol. 4, 3-35. Baltimore: Helicon, 1966. BQT 508 R2.

Rahner, Karl. "The Development of Dogma." In *Theological Investigations*, vol. 4: 39-78. Baltimore: Helicon, 1961. BQT 508 R2.

Rahner, Karl. "On Heresy." *Questiones Disputae Series*. NY: Herder and Herder, 1964. BQT 330 R3

Rahner, Karl. "Scripture and Theology" and "Scripture and Tradition." In *Theological Investigations*, vol. 6, 89-112. Baltimore: Helicon, 1969. BQT 508 R2.

Rahner, Karl. "Theology of the Symbol." In *Theological Investigations*, vol. 4, 221-252. Baltimore: Helicon, 1966. BQT 508 R2.

Rahner, Karl and Joseph Ratzinger. *Revelation and Tradition*. London: Burns & Oates, 1966. A brief collection of essays. Ratzinger's piece on what Trent taught about tradition is important. BQT 264.5 .R3E

Rousselot, Pierre, SJ. *The Eyes of Faith and Answers to Two Attacks*. Translated by J. Doncel and Avery Dulles. NY: Fordham Univ. Press, 1990. Contains "The Eyes of Faith" I & II plus "Answer to Two Attacks". Intros by Avery Dulles et al. BT 771. R6813 1990. ISBN: 0823212882.

Rondet, Henri, S.J. *Do Dogmas Change?* Trans. Mark Pontifex. Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism, 5. NY: Hawthorn, 1961. A very reputable author. BX 1747 .R643. 125p.

Schmaus, Michael. *God in Revelation*. Dogma Series, no. 1. Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1968. BQT 264.5 .R3E

Schroeder, Gerald L. *Genesis and the Big Bang: The Discovery of Harmony Between Modern Science and the Bible*. NY: Bantam, 1992. BS 651 S36 1990; 224pp.

Sokolowski, Robert. *The God of Faith and Reason: Foundations of Christian Theology*. Washington: Catholic University Press, 1995. On the relationship between faith & reason. 172 pp. BQT 234 S57.

Sullivan, Francis A. *Creative Fidelity: Weighing and Interpreting Documents of the Magisterium*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1996. 209 pp. BX 1746 .S798 1996.

Sullivan, Francis A. *Magisterium: Teaching Authority in the Catholic Church*. NY: Paulist, 1983. 234pp. isbn 0809125773. BQT 302 S83.

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## Reading #1: Henri de Lubac and the Critique of Scientific Exegesis

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For an integral interpretation to occur, both Christian tradition and Christian practice must be brought into the interpretation process.

### I. Allegorical versus critical exegesis?

In Pius XII's encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (1943), a rigorously scientific and critical approach to the study of the Bible finally received the Catholic Church's official endorsement. This landmark statement was initially provoked by an inflammatory pamphlet sent to the Italian bishops by a certain Dolindo Ruotolo which alleged that so-called scientific exegesis was in reality driven by an "accursed spirit of pride, presumption, and superficiality, disguised under minute investigations and hypocritical literal exactness."<sup>{1}</sup> As an alternative to this new rationalistic method so reminiscent of modernism, Ruotolo proposed a revival of the "spiritual" exegesis of the Fathers such as he himself had attempted in a thirteen volume commentary published some years earlier.<sup>{2}</sup>

Though Henri de Lubac is best known for his writings on grace and ecclesiology, the issue to which he devoted the most pages over the course of his career was this very issue of spiritual exegesis. Beginning the year following Pius's encyclical with an essay which essentially rehabilitated the exegesis of Origen,<sup>{3}</sup> de Lubac dedicated numerous articles and five major volumes<sup>{4}</sup> to the topic over the course of more than twenty years. His basic conclusion was that the fundamental principles of this oft-misunderstood "spiritual" or "allegorical" method are in fact essential elements of the Christian patrimony which therefore must be retained and employed even today.

Several supporters of the new scientific method could not help but wonder whether de Lubac's interest in patristic exegesis was fueled by the same hostility to historical criticism demonstrated by Ruotolo. John L. McKenzie, S.J., for example, thought that de Lubac essentially wanted to abandon exegetical science in favor of the analogy of faith.<sup>{5}</sup> While it will be impossible in the course of this essay to evaluate de Lubac's proposals for the contemporary viability of the spiritual interpretation of Scripture,<sup>{6}</sup> I do wish here to examine de Lubac's attitude towards the constellation of modern exegetical methods which we most commonly refer to today as 'the historical-critical method' and which de Lubac customarily calls 'historical criticism' or 'scientific exegesis.'<sup>{7}</sup> Though he never offers a precise definition of what he means by these terms, he seems to have

in mind essentially that method, endorsed by the Pontifical Biblical Commission, "which carefully investigates sources and defines their nature and value, and makes use of such helps as textual criticism, literary criticism, and the study of languages."<sup>8</sup> By whatever name it is called, such an approach to interpretation is historical in that it seeks to understand past persons, events, ideas, and texts in their proper historical contexts. It is also critical in that it proceeds by means of a disciplined, discriminating interrogation of the sources and seeks thereby to secure a maximum amount of verified information.<sup>9</sup>

I hope to demonstrate that, unlike other advocates of spiritual exegesis, de Lubac not only recognized the legitimacy and fruitfulness of historical-critical exegesis, but actively encouraged its acceptance by the Church. Yet, in contrast to other proponents of this new exegesis in the forties and fifties, he also recognized the inherent limitations of exegetical science as well as the questionable presuppositions with which it had been bound up since its inception. In this positive yet critical stance, de Lubac, leaning heavily on the work of Maurice Blondel, anticipates several of the post-critical hermeneutical insights that have gained widespread acceptance over the past twenty years.

## II. De Lubac's Defense of Scientific Exegesis

In a 1945 letter to his colleagues at the Catholic Faculty of Lyons, Henri de Lubac attempted to clarify his opinion regarding the use of a historical-critical method in biblical exegesis. His words demonstrate that he is neither resistant nor grimly resigned to the new method's inevitable ascendancy, but rather positive and enthusiastic about the invaluable contribution which it makes to the interpretation of Scripture:

Recently there has been attributed to me some kind of opposition to scientific exegesis being accorded citizenship [*droit de cité*] in the Church, and similarly, to the work of my colleagues and to the spirit of our Faculty. This rumor, though absurd, has become so insistent, and has spread so far and wide that I find myself obliged to combat it. I am aware of finding myself thus in the most ridiculous position, namely that of the man who must defend himself from the charge of denigrating that very thing of which he has always been known to have been the warmest partisan.

He goes on to express warm praise for all the members of the Lyons faculty who are engaged in scientific exegesis and to make the point that his zeal for scientific biblical studies is

the fruit of a definite conviction which has never wavered. Whenever I had to treat questions in my apologetics courses which touched in the least bit upon the Bible, I was always anxious to seek out the opinion of one of our colleagues who was a specialist in the field, and sometimes to submit to him the detail of my text. From the beginning of my studies in theology, I have never ceased to form myself on the basis of collections such as *Revue Biblique* or *Études Bibliques*. Quite often I have been heard to say that the Pope ought to make Fr. Lagrange a



cardinal, that this gesture would have a highly symbolic force and would produce a marvelously stimulating effect.{10}

Anticipating that his subsequent writings on spiritual exegesis might be construed as an attack on that historical-critical exegesis which was encouraged by *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, de Lubac, in the prefaces to those works and elsewhere, explicitly denied that this was any part of his intent and strongly affirmed his "deep sympathy with the immense work of research going on today." {11} In his preface to *Exégèse Médiévale*, for example, de Lubac applauds the participants of the International Congress of Biblical Science which took place at Louvain, September 1958. He agrees with them that there is a "pressing need for a method of research which is increasingly impelled by the most modern techniques" and adds "we admire the immense effort of exegesis expended in the Church today, and we are full of hope that it will further expand." {12} Believing that scientific exegesis had already made "enormous progress" in the development of new and profitable exegetical techniques, de Lubac encouraged exegetes to press on intrepidly, developing and applying them even more thoroughly: "There must be no timid . . . half-criticism!" {13}

De Lubac's appreciation of the importance of rigorous historiography springs from his ardent conviction that God has chosen history as the vehicle of his self-communication: "At the very center of our history the gospel of Christ was inserted; that gospel which is Jesus Himself. And it remains inserted in our history as an ever-living source." {14} Thus, as he sees it, the *ressourcement* of which the Church is always in need must necessarily take the form of a "plunge into history." {15} If the Church is to renew herself by drinking once again at the wellsprings of Christian truth, a tremendous amount of meticulous historical criticism must first be done in both biblical studies and historical theology. Far from denigrating such detailed labor as "grubbing in the dry dust of erudition" as McKenzie seems to think he does, de Lubac regards it as valuable, indeed, essential:

How many explorations into distant history such a research supposes! How many painful reconstructions, themselves preceded by long preliminary work! In a word, how much "archeology"! The task is not for everyone, obviously, but it is indispensable that it be done and forever done again. Let us not think that it is possible to reach the goal cheaply: to try that would be a kind of fraud, and when it comes to essential goods, the crook is never successful.

It took forty years in the desert to enter into the Promised Land. It sometimes takes a lot of arid archeology to make the fountains of living water well forth anew. {16}

It is significant that de Lubac's *ressourcement* zeal to forge a new unity between exegesis, dogmatic theology, and spirituality does not prevent him from recognizing scientific exegesis as a distinct discipline in the Church whose relative autonomy ought to be preserved. Rather than wistfully looking back to the undifferentiated unity of exegesis, dogma, moral theology, and spirituality that prevailed before the twelfth century, he affirms that the establishment of historical exegesis as an independent,

specialized discipline by Andrew of St. Victor was fundamentally a good and necessary thing.<sup>{17}</sup> De Lubac believes that the role of exegetical specialists is more important than ever today and agrees with Oscar Cullmann that their "great and unique responsibility" is "to be faithful to the text in radical fashion, even if the exegetical result thereby obtained is a modest one and possibly seems, at first glance, useless for dogmatics or for the practical life of the Church."<sup>{18}</sup> Thus, de Lubac, parting ways with certain proponents of renewed spiritual exegesis, deems it excessive and unnecessary to oblige scientific exegetes to add spiritual exegesis to their already long list of exacting duties.<sup>{19}</sup>

De Lubac's own actions are commensurate with his statements in support of historical criticism and its application to biblical studies. Jacques Guillet declares that de Lubac has indicated that he would have actually chosen to specialize in biblical studies if his chronic "physical suffering, confining him to his arm-chair, had not left him the volumes of Migne's patrology as the only reading possible."<sup>{20}</sup> Of course, as we have already seen, de Lubac's own work in historical theology is itself characterized by a vigorous application of historical criticism.<sup>{21}</sup> In essence, it is the same critical method which he endorses for biblical exegesis that de Lubac himself uses to exorcise common misunderstandings of such authors as Origen and Thomas and to examine their ideas in their proper historical contexts. Moreover, whenever in the course of his writings the literal meaning of a biblical passage or the theology of a biblical author becomes a relevant issue, de Lubac refers to the work of biblical specialists. A perusal of the footnotes of his writings on the history of exegesis demonstrates that de Lubac is widely acquainted with the exegesis and biblical theology of French and Belgian scholars of his day, especially M.-J. Lagrange, André Robert, Louis Bouyer, Jean Leve, Oscar Cullmann, and Lucien Cerfaux. While references to German scholars are noticeably few, de Lubac does give evidence of having read a fair amount of English scholarship, particularly the writings of J. B. and R. H. Lightfoot, C. H. Dodd, and Edwyn C. Hoskyns.<sup>{22}</sup>

In light of all this, the contrast between de Lubac and a Dolindo Ruotolo becomes all too apparent. Perhaps de Lubac even had Ruotolo's diatribe in the back of his mind when he assures his readers that *Histoire et Esprit* is not part of the "anti-scientific reaction" which some believe "currently 'pre dominates in the milieu of the spiritualists.'"<sup>{23}</sup> And, lest any doubt remain concerning his support for modern scientific exegesis, he goes on to add "we would consider as disastrous to the highest degree all those who would tend in the least to dispute its domain or to scorn its results."<sup>{24}</sup>

De Lubac believes that twentieth-century polemics against scientific exegesis is reminiscent of the spirited opposition of certain twelfth-century theologians to the new dialectical theology which they thought displayed insufficient respect for God's transcendence. As de Lubac sees it, the traditionalist protest of that era resulted from a mix of spiritual clearheadedness and a sensitivity to tradition on the one hand, and from laziness and a lack of spiritual imagination on the other. Though the warning of these traditionalists was a valid one, they were also guilty of injustice. In particular, de Lubac regards Paul Claudel's strident denunciations of scientific exegesis in this light.

{25} Though he possesses a lively sense of the spiritual exegesis of the ancient Church--a sense which de Lubac in fact seeks to emulate at every turn--Claudel is nonetheless unfair towards biblical criticism, in de Lubac's judgment.{26} In other words, de Lubac is ready to affirm what Claudel affirms with regard to the perpetual value of spiritual exegesis, but is not willing to deny what Claudel denies regarding the validity of critical biblical scholarship and its value for the life of the Church.

### III. De Lubac's Critique of Biblical Criticism

De Lubac's defense of scientific exegesis against its unjust detractors does not, however, prevent him from undertaking a critique of his own. "It is no good wanting to go back to a pre-critical stage," he observes. "But we must get at the root of criticism, and, moreover, establish a critique of criticism." {27} The goal of de Lubac's critique is twofold. One of his objectives is to identify those hidden and arbitrary presuppositions which have been bound up with historical criticism from its inception and which have often interfered with its proper implementation and prejudiced its results. Another related goal is to clarify the proper limits of exegesis's competence as a specialized discipline and then to expose biblical criticism which oversteps these limits.

#### A. The Influence of Blondel

At this juncture it is important to note that Maurice Blondel, one of de Lubac's mentors, {28} had undertaken just such a two-pronged critique of scientific exegesis at the turn of the twentieth century. In *L'Action*, his doctoral dissertation, Blondel laid the groundwork of this critique by reflecting upon the nature and limitation of scientific knowledge. In this work he points out that, since each of the various sciences views reality from a different angle, none can provide a comprehensive and total view of reality in isolation from the others.{29} Making a case for the "radical insufficiency" of either the empirical, inductive sciences or the exact, deductive sciences to provide a complete picture of human reality, Blondel goes on to reprimand "positivism" for thinking it can completely unlock the unique secrets of reality solely by means of a scientific examination of phenomena. Against such positivist pretensions, Blondel asserts that phenomena, in other words, scientific and historical facts, are only outer images of the real, inner reality of human life.{30}

In "History and Dogma," Blondel applies *L'Action's* general critique of positive science to the more specific issue of biblical exegesis. His comments hinge on an important distinction he makes between "technical and critical history" on the one hand and "real history" on the other. Technical and critical history deals not with the inner reality of life itself but rather with phenomena, i.e., the outer manifestations of life's inner, spiritual reality. Real history, on the other hand, is "the substitute for the life of humanity, the totality of historical truths." It includes the vital spiritual reality of human life which is never wholly represented or exhausted by the historical phenomena. "Between these two histories, of which one is a science and the other a life, one resulting from a phenomenological method and the other tending to represent genuine reality, there is an abyss." {31}

For Blondel, "tradition" plays an indispensable hermeneutical role in the interpretation of historical persons, events, and texts because it has as its content precisely what technical/critical history fails to reach, viz, that "real history" which includes the inner, spiritual character of the persons and events under study. Tradition, then, "preserves not so much the intellectual aspect of the past as its living reality."<sup>{32}</sup> If interpretation is to yield life and not just abstractions, in Blondel's view, tradition must not be excluded from the hermeneutical process.

There is an additional hermeneutical principle that Blondel identifies which goes beyond the bounds of critical history. In a chapter of *L'Action* entitled "The Value of Literal Practice and the Conditions of Religious Action,"<sup>{33}</sup> Blondel insists that active performance of religious practices is essential for real entrance into the conceptual knowledge of a religious idea in all its fullness and profundity. Thus, a believer cannot attain the "spirit" of religion, i.e., its sublime and inner meaning, without first observing the "letter," i.e., the very ordinary and mundane practices it counsels, since, according to Blondel, "the letter is the spirit in action."<sup>{34}</sup> "The thought that follows upon the act," declares Blondel, "is infinitely richer than the thought that precedes it."<sup>{35}</sup> This is so because action, more than mere thoughts or sentiments, penetrates into the very depths of a person, causing the truth of which it is a vehicle to become immanent in him or her. Hence, the truth that is practiced is known from within and is therefore grasped more completely and accurately than one which is known and held "exteriorly" through intellectual assent alone. The thinker who fails to *do* the truth will never really be able to understand it.

This methodological principle surely carries over to "History and Dogma." In order to know and adequately explain the reality to which the data of Scripture points, the exegete must not only be operating from within the tradition, but also must be engaged in the concrete practices which it counsels. Christian asceticism and obedience, then, constitute for Blondel a sort of hermeneutical principle: "Nothing is more reliable than the light shed by the orderly and repeated performance of Christian practices."<sup>{36}</sup>

Blondel's view of the proper role of scientific exegesis, then, can be summarized as follows: while technical-critical history possesses a "relative autonomy"<sup>{37}</sup> as a distinct scientific discipline, it is nonetheless only one element in a much more comprehensive hermeneutical process involving both Christian tradition and Christian life. While the view of the past it provides is valuable, it is nonetheless incomplete. Its specific and limited role is to reconstruct as intelligible a representation of the past as possible from the facts uncovered in research. In addition, it must do its best to explain the determinism of causality linking the past's successive moments. While critical historians ought to make this determinist explanation as complete as possible, they are also bound "to leave the issue open or even to open it as widely as possible to the realist explanation which lies always beneath."<sup>{38}</sup>

'Historicism,' for Blondel, is that positivist exercise of critical history which refuses to leave the issue open in this way. Forgetting that scientific history is a mere abstraction, it identifies the whole subject matter of history with what it can uncover of the naturalist

evolution produced under the pressure of external events and forces.<sup>{39}</sup> By narrowly equating history's meaning with the determinism of observable events in this absolute way, historicism would reduce the Bible's inexhaustibly rich subject matter to a series of hollow abstractions. Critical history which forgets its own limitations in this egregious fashion oversteps the boundaries of its competence and thus violates an important canon of truly scientific method.

Moreover, in its naive confidence that it can successfully prescind from all traditional presuppositions in order to cling to the facts alone, historicism also violates another important canon of scientific method, namely, objectivity. Ironically, it is those historians who believe they are engaged in presuppositionless interpretation who, notes Blondel, compromise their objectivity most severely since they are

influenced by prejudices on the pretext of attaining to an impossible neutrality-- prejudices such as everyone inevitably has so long as he has not attained a conscious view of his own attitude of mind and subjected the postulates on which his researches are based to a methodical criticism. In default of an explicit philosophy, a man ordinarily has an unconscious one. And what one takes for simple observations of fact are often simply constructions. The observer, the narrator, is always more or less of a poet; for behind what he sees the witness puts an action and a soul so as to give the fact a meaning; behind the witness and his testimony, if they are really to enter history, the critic puts an interpretation, a relation, a synthesis; behind these critical data the historian inserts a general view and wider human preoccupations; which is to say that man with his beliefs, his metaphysical ideas, and his religious solutions conditions all the subordinate researches of science as much as he is conditioned by them.<sup>{40}</sup>

## B. An Impoverishing and Impossible Objectivity

In the course of surveying the birth and subsequent history of scientific exegesis, de Lubac observes that the precious ore of historical interpretation has not infrequently been shot through with a great deal of dross. It is necessary, in his view, to distinguish the positive contributions of the historical method from the "narrowness and contradictory myopia which were the inevitable ransom of an exegesis that wanted to become more 'critical.'"<sup>{41}</sup> As we turn now to examine de Lubac's critique of exegetical science, we shall notice many echoes of Blondel's insights and terminology as well as some explicit references to the philosopher's works discussed above.

One impurity from which scientific exegesis must be cleansed, in de Lubac's view, is that excessive fascination with facts which is characteristic of historical positivism. Such a tendency inevitably leads to a distracting preoccupation with isolated texts and events that blinds the interpreter to a deeper and more synthetic apprehension of the truth which is the true subject matter of the various texts and the unified history they record. Repeatedly criticizing that historicism "which reconstructs the past without paying any attention to what the past was pregnant with,"<sup>{42}</sup> de Lubac here attacks the deforming superficiality of certain unnamed exegetes of the past century who were

so accustomed to reading all texts at the level of the letter that they completely overlooked the elementary conditions of all human language, so careful never to "exceed" the sense of the words that they regarded the most lofty thoughts as mere platitudes or reduced the Sermon on the Mount to the manifesto of an illuminated adventurer.{43}

For de Lubac, then, historical criticism, as a positive science, is completely unable to render an exhaustive account of the dramatic personalism and deep interior life we find throughout the Bible: "all the criticism in the world, even if allied with the greatest power of historical evocation, will not explain Abraham's faith, or the struggles of Elijah the Prophet, or the range of prophecy of a Jeremiah. . . . It will not let us into the intelligence [sic, understanding] of the Sermon on the Mount, or the trembling of Jesus in the Spirit."{44}

If Scripture and the history of Christianity are to be deeply penetrated, if they are to be truly understood and not just *explained*,{45} then the critical historian needs to abandon the kind of false objectivism and cool detachment which characterizes the attitude of so many historians tainted by historicism. Borrowing words from Barth, de Lubac laments the fact that too many modern commentators consider the Bible "as a book which interests them, but which does not concern them." There is, for de Lubac, something "defiling" in this sort of historical curiosity which is fascinated with all the color and specificity of religious history and psychology and yet completely glosses over the truth-claims made by the religious texts and personalities of the past. Again, making use of a Barthian image, de Lubac condemns such an approach which so sharply contrasts with that of the traditional Christian commentators and asserts that if one hopes to understand, one must stop "playing the spectator" before the Bible{46}

Yet the pure objectivity sought by historicism is not only impoverishing, in de Lubac's view, but also impossible. Like Blondel, de Lubac believes that the use of some sort of conscious interpretive schema or pre-understanding is as inescapable for the historian as it is essential:

Everybody has his filter, which he takes about with him, through which, from the indefinite mass of facts, he gathers in those suited to confirm his prejudices. And the same fact again, passing through different filters, is revealed in different aspects, so as to confirm the most diverse opinions. It has always been so, it always will be so in this world.

Rare, very rare are those who check their filter.{47}

Thus, aware that "human knowledge is never without a priori,"{48} de Lubac knows that we can give meaning to things only by choosing our perspective. While our particular standpoint at any one moment should never be canonized, we should never imagine that we can simply transcend it. The most insidious threat to true historical objectivity, then, is not so much having a presupposition as it is not being aware of having one, since when one's fundamental assumptions are unconscious, they are necessarily untested and more likely to make themselves into rigid absolutes:

Theology has been greatly reproached for reducing all thought to slavery.

To which it may be replied in the first place that, at least, the situation it established was clear. The believer, indeed, unequivocally declares that he submits his intelligence to Faith. How much so-called free thought is hypocritically enslaved!{49}

De Lubac sees this general problem of unexamined presuppositions as having caused a good bit of arbitrary biblical exegesis. In *Histoire et Esprit*, he relates how a certain tacit rationalism caused severe blind spots in many of the pioneers of critical exegesis: "it would not be difficult to show the impoverishments or even the errors caused in excellent exegetes by their excessive skepticism or their total incomprehension of all symbolism." {50} As if to assure us that this is no isolated phenomenon, de Lubac recalls how Karl Barth showed that so many works by "independent and critical" Protestant exegetes of the nineteenth century merely reflect the philosophy of their time. {51} He cites Barth in yet another circumstance to show how modern critical "biblicists," who reject the Christian dogmatic tradition so as to be rooted only in the Bible, free themselves from the dogma of the Church only to enslave themselves to their own dogma and the dogma of their times. {52} Unfortunately, de Lubac points out, such tendencies are not restricted to Protestant exegetes of bygone centuries. "In more than one case," he notes, "Catholic exegesis, which on the one hand was hindered in its development by traditionalist suspicions, on the other sometimes accepted too uncritically presuppositions coming from other sources." This explains for him why some supposedly "scientific" Catholic exegesis "often led, thanks to some clever interpretive acrobatics, to quite arbitrary modern-day 'applications.'" {53}

Frequently, in de Lubac's view, this sort of hidden dogmatism is what drives the hyper-critical exegesis practiced by some modern scholars which does violence to the biblical text and to the person of Jesus. In this kind of exegesis, oppositions and contradictions are exaggerated and multiplied. The Old Testament is frequently made to oppose the New. The human Jesus of the Synoptics is separated from and pitted against the divinized Jesus of the Johannine and Pauline writings. The historicity of virtually everything is not only questioned, but positively doubted. "Disdaining all real critical spirit, the spirit of criticism prevails." {54} Such a skeptical approach to interpretation, dubbed "reductionist exegesis" by de Lubac, confuses critical reflection with the rank prejudice of criticizing, and, in so doing, renders itself blind. {55} In its exclusive exploitation of the analytical or critical function of the human mind, it proves to be incapable of constructing anything positive or synthetic. Rather, it can only progressively dissect its object, thereby destroying it. True understanding, then, is completely beyond its ken:

Actually, when the critical function alone is active, it succeeds rather quickly in pulverizing everything. It makes it impossible to see what is invariable in the mind of man and in doctrinal tradition. It clouds over the continuity and the unity of revealed truth as seen in diverse cultural expressions which coincide with and follow one from another. As a result, divine revelation, inasmuch as it does not

reach man except through signs, finds itself reduced to a series of thoughts and interpretations which are entirely human. Christian faith, in its first authenticity, becomes no more than a fact of culture, important surely, but, as such outdated. {56}

De Lubac is convinced that, if we look closely enough, we will see that the negations and divisions to which this kind of dissolving exegesis leads us "are obtained only thanks to a veritable 'philological massacre' destined to satisfy some a priori which is only too evident." {57} For de Lubac, the work of Bultmann illustrates this dynamic perfectly. De Lubac seeks to unravel the "enigma" of Bultmannian exegesis by exposing its "doctrinal, let us say more precisely its doctrinaire roots" such as the systematic application of Heideggerian existentialism, "the old heritage of the myth of the creative communities," and the various equivocations involved in his 'demythologization' enterprise. Probably more decisive for his exegetical results than any of these, however, is "the transposition of the Lutheran *sola fide* into the idea that in order to obtain an authentically Christian faith it is necessary that we not know anything about Jesus that could possibly induce us to believe in him." {58} For Bultmann, then, it is theologically necessary that faith not base itself upon any 'work,' that is, upon any result of historical research. Hence, since historical research *may not* find anything in biblical history which might have some importance for faith, it in fact *does not*. {59} There simply cannot, in de Lubac's view, be anything more arbitrary and unscientific. {60}

In his enthusiastic acceptance of historical criticism on the one hand and his acute awareness of its historical pollution with the sediment of various and sundry dogmatisms on the other, de Lubac sounds very much like the Pontifical Biblical Commission. In its 1964 "Instruction Concerning the Historical Truth of the Gospels," the Commission urges Catholic exegetes to avail themselves of the legitimate insights which form criticism can provide into the understanding of the gospels while at the same time warning them to be wary

because quite inadmissible philosophical and theological principles have often come to be mixed with this method, which not uncommonly have vitiated the method itself as well as the conclusions in the literary area. For some proponents of this method have been led astray by the prejudiced views of rationalism. They refuse to admit the existence of a supernatural order and the intervention of a personal God in the world through strict revelation, and the possibility and existence of miracles and prophecies. . . . All such views are not only opposed to Catholic doctrine, but are also devoid of scientific basis and alien to the correct principles of historical method. {61}

### C. The Limitations of Exegetical Science

Regardless of the attention which de Lubac gives to the many distortions in modern exegesis which arise from the blending of *a priori* presuppositions with legitimate scientific methodology, this, for him is not the most critical issue. On the contrary, these abuses only raise the more fundamental question which de Lubac calls the "problem of criticism" the proper role of scientific thinking, its particular place within thought as a



whole, and the limits of its competence. Historically, de Lubac sees the issue of the competence and limits of critical biblical exegesis being raised for the first time simultaneously with the birth of biblical exegesis as a "separated science" in the work of Andrew of St. Victor (d. 1175). While de Lubac applauds the technical specialization initiated by Andrew as being necessary for the progress of knowledge, he nonetheless finds something very disquieting about the way Andrew pushes methodological abstraction to such an extreme that the scholar and the believer are split in two. Such a dichotomy, de Lubac believes, opens the way to fideist isolation on the one hand or to the negation of a superior order of truth on the other.{62}

For de Lubac, the fundamental problem raised by Andrew's 'separated science' is, *mutatis mutandis*, the same issue which Blondel had tried to address in his "Histoire et dogme." It is significant that de Lubac here confesses that this methodological issue of criticism is really the node of the problem of history and allegory with which he has been preoccupied in all his works on ancient exegesis.{63} As de Lubac attempts to articulate the problem at hand, he does so, interestingly enough, by making use of the very terminology employed by Blondel in his attempt to grapple with "*les lacunes philosophiques d'exégèse moderne*":

It is the problem of the relation of history as science to history as reality, and it is at the same time the problem of history and dogma or, as one would have said of old (in certain cases the signification would be about the same) the problem of history and allegory. This problem cannot be reduced to the question of knowing what literal sense ought to be recognized in this or that text, as it could sometimes seem to be. It is of a much more general and fundamental order. And one recognizes it as much regarding the gospel as regarding prophecy, as regards all spiritual history. How should we understand the reticence [the reserve in making faith affirmations] of criticism? Does it really deny, and in this case has it the right to deny, all that which the scientific examination of texts does not permit it to affirm? Do other methods exist which will permit, under certain conditions, anything more to be affirmed? Does the rank prejudice which is thought to be and is called the objectivity of science make it possible to understand the object under study? Does not such an exegesis, dogmatic in a wrong sort of way, suffer from grave "philosophical lacunae?" These and other similar questions, do not only raise a critical problem; they raise a prior problem, *the problem of criticism* [de Lubac's emphasis], of its role, of the place assigned to it within thought as a whole, and the limits of its competence.{64}

De Lubac stands with Blondel in his insistence that positive historical science is incapable of providing a complete interpretation of those spiritual realities which are the ultimate subject matter of biblical texts. For an integral exegesis to occur, both Christian tradition and Christian practice must be brought into the interpretation process. Indeed, the fundamental goal of de Lubac's lengthy study of the history of exegesis is essentially to prove that, underlying all the different commentators of the centuries with their disparate terminologies, a single "traditional hermeneutic"{65} can be identified which, in its basic outlines, can and must guide Christian interpretation of the Bible even today.

Though it necessarily begins with an attempt to apprehend the literal or historical meaning of the Bible with the help of the best scientific tools available in a given epoch, this comprehensive hermeneutic invariably proceeds to search out the deeper "spiritual sense" of the biblical texts by means of a corresponding "spiritual understanding." This movement of spiritual understanding, often termed allegory, aims not merely at the interpretation of texts, but, more fundamentally, the reinterpretation of the heritage of Israel, indeed of all history and reality, in the light of the Mystery of Christ which the Christian tradition unanimously identifies as the subject matter of both Old and New Testaments. De Lubac repeatedly points out that, since the interpreter is part of this reality which is to be transformed and reinterpreted, application or appropriation is an integral part of the traditional process of exegesis rather than some subsequent operation tacked on only after interpretation has been successfully completed. This is necessarily so, as Origen and many other traditional commentators realize, both because the transformation of the reader is the inherent objective of the text and also because the text can only be fully understood by someone who has put it into practice. {66}

For de Lubac, the very specialization of scientific exegetes, who are primarily concerned with the historical reconstruction of what the text meant to its original audience, thus imposes limits on them. Their science, in the modern sense, cannot be the whole of scriptural 'science,' in that wider sense given to the term by the tradition. "This realization," observes de Lubac, "is something they have occasionally lacked." {67} This is not a fault specific to exegetical science, however. De Lubac detects an overweening, self-aggrandizing attitude on the part of many practitioners of modern science:

Without in any way minimizing what the human sciences have to contribute, we are forced to admit that in the absolute statements and totalitarian pretensions of a certain number of the representatives of these sciences they go far beyond the limits of their competence and give an additional proof of a dogmatism which is both foreign and contrary to the scientific spirit. {68}

In de Lubac's mind, the tendency towards this kind of 'totalitarianism,' is endemic to the scientific enterprise. "We must recognize the fact," he observes, "that it is in any case difficult in practice for the same man to give these sciences the place due to them without yielding to that illusion which gives them all the place there is." {69} Nevertheless, this perpetual temptation towards reductionism must be steadfastly resisted by the exegete who deals with the interpretation of literature which witnesses not only to the spiritual life of men and women, but to the very revelation of God.

Thus, de Lubac's criticism of historical criticism needs to be seen in the larger context of his general, life-long protest against every sort of scientific reductionism, every attempt of logical intelligence, whether deductive or analytical, to reckon itself the whole of knowledge and to reduce the mysteries of God and the human person to objects that it can dissect and examine. {70} De Lubac objects to sciences insofar as "they are applied to what lies beyond them, to what can in no case be their object, because it is not in fact

an object."{71} This critique of science, then, is not unrelated to de Lubac's resistance in the thirties and forties to those neo-scholastic theologians who seemed to think that they could contain the mystery within their rational constructs. The kind of theological and exegetical science to which he objects exhibits the same dangerous impulse as that '*curiosa cupiditas*' denounced by Hugh of St. Victor in the twelfth century: "it wants to explain in order thereby to possess and dominate. It wants to make the infinite Truth its thing."{72}

#### IV. Conclusion

During the last three decades, a broad movement has emerged in the sciences and humanities which has been characterized by the desire to move beyond the predominantly detached, critical, and analytical approach to reality that emerged in the Enlightenment to a more personal, synthetic, and holistic stance in the face of the world and its mysteries. With particular regard to hermeneutics, this trend, often described as 'post-critical,' translates into a growing awareness that the historical-critical method, though an indispensable tool in the interpretation of historical texts, is of itself incapable of generating the kind of fruitfulness for human life that must be the final result of the interpretation of any great text, especially one that purports to be the Word of God. Its serious limitations thus recognized, historical criticism is dethroned by post-critical hermeneutics and made to serve a much broader interpretive process in which tradition and personal application each occupy an important place. Hence, in the words of one author, a post-critical exegesis is an exegesis which no longer admits the "critical question as its central concern."{73}

At a time when the Roman Catholic community of biblical scholars was still preoccupied with acquiring the tools of the historical-critical method, Henri de Lubac, who unhesitatingly accepted that method's validity, had already anticipated several of the important, post-critical questions of hermeneutics that would dominate scholarly circles decades later. It was this foresight, and not some pre-critical hostility to the emerging exegetical science, which inspired his lifetime study of ancient Christian exegesis.

In both his critique of exegetical science and appreciation of the hermeneutical productivity of tradition, de Lubac was decisively influenced by the seminal French philosopher Maurice Blondel who, fifty years before Bultmann's famous essay on the subject and twenty years before Heidegger made the point in *Being and Time*, had already exposed the illusory character of presuppositionless exegesis and warned of the havoc it could wreak in historical interpretation.{74} My goal in this essay, then, is not to prove Henri de Lubac to have been an original hermeneutical thinker, but simply to point out that his hermeneutical insight was much more sophisticated and forward-looking than is commonly recognized. Prepared by his appropriation of Blondel's philosophy, his immersion in the Christian tradition, and his own prayerful practice of the Christian life, he was able to recognize, long before many others in the Catholic theological community, both the limitations of critical exegesis and the profound hermeneutical richness of that traditional exegesis that is so often thoughtlessly dismissed as "pre-critical."

Notes:

{1} Dain Cohenel *Dolino Ruotolo*, "Un gravissimo pericolo per la Chiesa e per le anime: Il sistema critico-scientifico nello studio e nell'interpretazione della Sacra Scrittura, le sue deviazioni funeste e le sue aberrazioni" (Naples: np., 1941), 40. Unfortunately this tract is not available in the U.S. Thus, for quotes from and a summary of the pamphlet we are forced to rely on the Pontifical Biblical Commission's (hereafter PBC) "Letter to the Italian Hierarchy" (20 August 1941), *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 33 (1941): 465-472. [For an English translation, see *Biblical Interpretation*, ed. by James J. Megivern (Wilmington, N.C.: Consortium, 1978). 304-313.

{2} Ruotolo's ten thousand page commentary series, entitled *La Sacra Scrittura: Psicologia, commento, meditazioni* (Naples: n.p., 1929- 39), is also unavailable in the U.S. This collection was evidently so outlandish that it was placed on the Index by a decree of the Holy Office dated 20 November 1940.

{3} See "Introduction" to *Homélies sur la Genèse* by Origen, trans. and notes by L. Doutreleau, Sources Chrétiennes, no. 7 (Paris: Cerf, 1944).

{4} See *Histoire et Esprit* (Paris: Aubier, 1950) and *Exégèse Médiévale*, 2 pts. in 4 vols. (Paris: Aubier, 1959-64).

{5} John L. McKenzie, "A Chapter in the History of Spiritual Exegesis: De Lubac's *Histoire et Esprit*," *Theological Studies* 11 (1950): 379.

{6} For this, see Marcellino D'Ambrosio, "Henri de Lubac and the Recovery of the Traditional Hermeneutic" (Ph.D. diss., Catholic University of America, 1991).

{7} For an example of de Lubac's use of the former term, which refers to the general method of critical historiography utilized by scientific exegetes as well as other contemporary historians, see his *Paradoxes of Faith* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1987), 203. For examples of his use of the term 'scientific exegesis,' which could be defined as the specific application of historical criticism to biblical texts, see his *Sources of Revelation*, trans. by Luke O'Neill (New York, Herder and Herder, 1968), 58 n.9, and "De Lubac: A Theologian Speaks," trans. by Stephen Maddux (Los Angeles: Twin Circle, 1985), 31. Though the only instance which I have found wherein de Lubac employs the term 'historico-critical method' is in context of stinging criticism see his *The Church: Paradox and Mystery* (New York: Alba House, 1969), 110, this is probably purely accidental. I cannot conceive of any objections on his part to the use of such terminology. Thus, from this point on, I will use these various terms interchangeably.

{8} PBC, "Instructio de historica Evangeliorum veritate," *Osservatore Romano*, May 14, 1964, par. 1 (Megivern, *Biblical Interpretation*, 392).

{9} This is generally how Edgar Krentz describes 'critical' method in the Historical-Critical Method (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 6. The clearest and most concise description I have found of historical-critical method of biblical study is that of Joseph Fitzmyer, "Historical Criticism: Its Role in Biblical Interpretation and Church Life," *Theological Studies* 50 (1989): 249-252.

{10} *Mémoire sur l'occasion de mes écrits* (Namur: Culture et Vérité, 1989), 312-13.

{11} *Paradoxes of Faith*, 7. The original context of this affirmation was the preface to *Nouveaux Paradoxes*, published in 1954. See also *Mémoire*, 86 and "A Theologian Speaks," 32.

{12} *Exégèse Médiévale* 1/1: 17-18, citing Béda Rigaux, "Le congrès international des sciences bibliques de Louvain," *La Croix*, 5 Sept. 1958 (de Lubac provides no page reference); *Exégèse Médiévale* 1/1:19.

{13} *Paradoxes of Faith*, 203.

{14} "The Church in Crisis," *Theology Digest* 17 (1969): 321 *augmented French vers. published as L'Eglise dans la crise actuelle* (Paris: Cerf, 1969). See also *Paradoxes of Faith*, 145: "Christianity is not one of the great things of history: it is history which is one of the great things of Christianity."

{15} *Paradoxes of Faith*, 154.

{16} *Ibid.*, 57-58. See also McKenzie, "Chapter," 379.

{17} The "disadvantages resulting from a fragmentation *in the Middle Ages between exegesis, theology, and spirituality* which had become necessary can very well invite us to new efforts of synthesis; they ought not provoke in us a romantic nostalgia for indistinctions of the past." *Exégèse Médiévale* 2/1:424. Of course, de Lubac is nevertheless careful to point out and criticize several unhappy results of what he calls "this ambivalent evolution" of a unified theology into three distinct specializations. See *Exégèse Médiévale* 2/1:418-36. Cf. *Corpus Mysticum* (Paris: Aubier, 1944), 297, where de Lubac in similar fashion affirms that the passage from the symbolic theology of the Fathers to the scientific theology of the Scholastics constituted a step forward, though it too was not without negative consequences.

{18} Oscar Cullmann, "La nécessité et la fonction de l'exégèse philologique et historique de la Bible," *Verbum Caro* 3 (1949), 13, cited in *Sources of Revelation*, 58 n. 9 (*Histoire et Esprit*, 424).

{19} *Sources of Revelation*, 58 n. 9 (*Histoire et Esprit*, 424).

{20} Jacques Guillet, "Le Cardinal Henri de Lubac," *Etudes* 358 (1983): 281. Guillet does not provide his source for this statement.

{21} This was a common feature of the French *ressourcement* theology of the period, as Austin J. Lindsay, "De Lubac's Images of the Church" (Ph.D. diss., Catholic University of America, 1974), 81, points out.

{22} The paucity of direct references to German biblical scholarship is not surprising given de Lubac's ignorance of the German language.

{23} *Histoire et Esprit*, 12, citing an unacknowledged source.

{24} *Ibid.* Cf. *Sources of Revelation*, 2 (*Histoire et Esprit*, 376).

{25} See *Exégèse Médiévale* 1/1:101-6, esp. 104 on Claudel.

{26} De Lubac often cites Claudel approvingly in *Catholicisme*, *Histoire et Esprit*, and *Exégèse Médiévale*, and numerous other works. Claudel visited de Lubac at Fourvière in January of 1943 ostensibly to discuss his approach to spiritual exegesis. He subsequently wrote to de Lubac that "it is a great comfort to me to know that my way of understanding Scripture is approved by men

such as you and Fr. Fontoynt." *Mémoire*, 232. Nevertheless, see *Exégèse Médiévale* 2/2: 84 where de Lubac takes Claudel to task, and *Sources of Revelation*, 71-2 (*Histoire et Esprit*, 435) where he attributes unfairness to both Claudel and Léon Bloy.

{27} *Paradoxes of Faith*, 107.

{28} I discuss the general influence of Blondel on de Lubac's thought in "The Recovery of the Traditional Hermeneutic," 41-4. Here I will focus on Blondel's influence on de Lubac's critique of exegetical science.

{29} M. Blondel, *L'Action* (Paris: Alcan, 1893), 453. Cf. Blondel's "History and Dogma," in *The Letter on Apologetics and History and Dogma*, trans. by A. Dru and I. Trethowan (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1965), 238. Originally this essay appeared in three parts: "Histoire et dogme: Les lacunes philosophiques de l'exégèse moderne," *La Quinzaine* 56 (1904): 145-167; 349-373; 433-458.

{30} Blondel, *L'Action*, 78; 483; and 438-9.

{31} Blondel, "History and Dogma," 237 and 239.

{32} *Ibid.*, 267.

{33} Blondel, *L'Action*, 405-423.

{34} *Ibid.* 404.

{35} *Ibid.*, 403.

{36} Blondel, "History and Dogma," 277.

{37} *Ibid.*, 232.

{38} *Ibid.*, 237. See also 236.

{39} *Ibid.*, 239-41. While in this series of articles Blondel avoids linking this position with any names, he makes clear in his personal correspondence that he thought Alfred Loisy was, at least at points, guilty of historicism. See M. Blondel to F. von Hügel, 19 February 1903 in René Maréchal ed., *Au coeur de la crise moderniste: Le dossier inédit d'une controverse* (Paris: Aubier, 1960), 130. For an interesting review of von Hügel's critique of Blondel's interpretation of Loisy, see James J. Kelly, "The Modernist Controversy: Von Hügel and Blondel," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 55 (1979): 297-330.

{40} Blondel, "History and Dogma," 237-8.

{41} *Histoire et Esprit*, 205.

{42} *Sources of Revelation*, 39 (*Histoire et Esprit*, 407).

{43} *Histoire et Esprit*, 205.

{44} *Paradoxes of Faith*, 107-8. Cf. *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*, trans. by Edith Riley (New York: Meridian, 1963), 44: "We know . . . that the most penetrating criticism cannot produce one atom of being.

{45} For de Lubac, explaining is an analytical process of breaking a thing down into its constituent parts while understanding is a synthetic grasping of the whole. See *Sources of Revelation*, 148-9 (*Exégèse Médiévale* 1/1: 355).

{46} *Exégèse Médiévale* 1/2: 486; 485; 486, citing Karl Barth, *Dogmatique*, vol. 1, t. 2,1, pp. 75 and 118.

{47} *Paradoxes of Faith*, 102. This recalls the last line of an article written by de Lubac and other Fourvière Jesuits in 1946: "The first rigor to exercise in dogmatic matters is a rigor against oneself." See "La théologie et ses sources: Réponse aux Etudes critiques de la *Revue Thomiste* (May-Aug., 1946)," *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 33 (1946): 398.

{48} De Lubac, Preface to *La Mystique et les mystiques*, ed. by A. Ravier (Paris: Desclée, 1965), 11; a slightly expanded English version of this essay appears as "Mysticism and Mystery," in *Theological Fragments*, trans. by R. H. Balinski (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1989), 35-69.

{49} *Paradoxes of Faith*, 97.

{50} *Histoire et Esprit*, 205. De Lubac declines to give specific examples. *Exégèse Médiévale* 2/1:10 also mentions how the positivistic historiography of previous generations tempted even Christian historians of exegesis to relegate symbolism "en masse to the domain of the irrational," a theme which de Lubac also picks up in *Athéisme et sens de l'homme* (Paris: Cerf, 1968), 34.

{51} De Lubac neglects to mention the specific Barthian work he has in mind, but I assume it is *La théologie protestante au XIXe siècle*, trans. by Lore Jeanneret (Geneva: Labor et fides, 1969) to which de Lubac refers elsewhere, notably in *L'Eglise dans la crise actuelle*, 18.

{52} "The Church in Crisis," 318, citing Barth, *Credo*, trans. by P. and J. Jundt (Paris: Je Sers, 1936), 226. For an English translation, see *Credo*, trans. by Strathearn McNab (New York: Scribner, 1936).

{53} "A Theologian Speaks," 31.

{54} "The Church in Crisis," 317. See also *ibid.*, 318 and 322-3 where de Lubac cites Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, trans. by E. Leiva-Merikakis (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1982), 471.

{55} *Athéisme*, 33-4. This type of exegesis is contrasted with the "deepening exegesis" [*l'exégèse approfondissante*] which proceeds from faith and leads to its understanding. De Lubac here goes on to designate what Ricoeur has named the hermeneutic of suspicion as one species of "reductionist exegesis" and "demythologizing fever" (*ibid.*, 39) as another.

{56} "The Church in Crisis," 317. Cf. *Mémoire*, 157, where de Lubac refers to the "pulverizing," "pan-critical mentality," which reigns in the Western world in these closing decades of the twentieth century.

{57} *L'Eglise dans la crise actuelle*, 73, citing Balthasar, *Glory*, 1: 471.

{58} *L'Eglise dans la crise actuelle*, 37 n. 22. Interestingly enough, a very similar analysis of the *a-priori* presuppositions that govern Bultmann's exegesis can be found in Fitzmyer, "Historical Criticism," 253. For an analysis of the Enlightenment presuppositions latent in

Bultmann's demythologization program, see Roger A. Johnson, *The Origins of Demythologizing: Philosophy and Historiography in the Theology of Rudolf Bultmann* (Leiden: Brill, 1974).

{59} *L'Eglise dans la crise actuelle*, 73-4, citing Heinz Zahrnt, *The Question of God: Protestant Theology in the Twentieth Century*, trans. by R. A. Wilson (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1969), 333.

{60} Despite his sharp criticism of Bultmann, de Lubac is convinced that the problems which gave rise to Bultmann's demythologization program are extremely important and worthy of further attention. See *The Eternal Feminine*, trans. by R. Hague (London: Collins, 1971), 178. De Lubac is considerably more positive about several of Bultmann's pupils such as Ernst Kasemann, Gunter Bornkamm, and Ernst Fuchs who he deems to be less encumbered than their master with doctrinaire prejudices and who also benefit from a more mature science (see *L'Eglise dans la crise actuelle*, 74). I find it disappointing, however, that here, as in his criticism of Bultmann, de Lubac is relying too heavily on Zahrnt, *The Question of God*.

{61} PBC, "Historical Truth," 1 (BI, 393).

{62} *Exégèse Médiévale* 2/1, 364-5. Depending upon *Objectiones magistri Andreae* in Richard, De Emman. prol. (PL, 196, 603-4), de Lubac notes that Andrew, as a believer, admitted the christological interpretation of certain Old Testament prophecies, but made no allusion to it in his exegesis, thus prompting his brethren to accuse him of "judaizing." Though apparently not confident that Christian thinkers had ever adequately responded to Jewish objections to Christian exegesis of the Old Testament, Andrew nevertheless excused himself from entering the debate on the grounds that his inept attempts to defend the Christian cause would most likely do more harm than good.

{63} Clearly the title of his book on Origen, *Histoire et Esprit*, also alludes to the centrality of this issue for de Lubac. It also echoes the title of Blondel's essay "Histoire et Dogme."

{64} *Exégèse Médiévale* 2/1: 366, referring to the subtitle of Blondel's "Histoire et Dogme."

{65} See "Les humanistes chrétiens du XVe-XVIe siècle et l'herméneutique traditionnelle," in *Ermeneutica e Tradizione*, ed. by E. Castelli (Rome: The Institute of Philosophical Studies, 1963), 173-177 as well as *Exégèse Médiévale* 2/2: 409 where this phrase is employed. For a detailed exposition of the "traditional hermeneutic" as de Lubac understands it, see D'Ambrosio, "Recovery," 144-219.

{66} For more on this traditional hermeneutic circle of understanding and application, see *Exégèse Médiévale* 1/2: 558-71, *Sources of Revelation*, 19-23 (*Histoire et Esprit*, 389-393), and *Histoire et Esprit*, 303-4.

{67} *Sources of Revelation*, 58 n. 9 (*Histoire et Esprit*, 424 n. 171).

{68} "The Church in Crisis," 322-3. Cf. *The Church: Paradox and Mystery*, 110, where he lauds Balthasar for resisting "the totalitarian claims" of the human sciences, especially exegetical science.

{69} *Paradoxes of Faith*, 202-203.

{70} For de Lubac's critique of "the new scientific reductionism" exhibited by some schools of psychology and sociology, see his *A Brief Catechesis on Nature and Grace*, trans. by R. Arnandez (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1984), 66-7 and 143-7. See also his *Paradoxes of Faith*,



119-122, and *Mistica e Mistero Cristiano*, trans. by A. Sicari, Henri de Lubac Opera Omnia, vol. 6 (Milan: Jaca Book, 1978), 157-62.

{71} Paradoxes of Faith, 122.

{72} *Exégèse Médiévale* 2/1: 311; see also 309-10.

{73} Denis Farkasfalvy, "In Search of a 'Post-Critical' Method of Biblical Interpretation for Catholic Theology," *Communio* 13 (1986): 295. De la Potterie calls it "an undeniable fact" that criticism of the historical-critical method has been multiplying for the last twenty years or so. See "Reading Holy Scripture 'in the Spirit': Is the Patristic Way of Reading the Bible Still Possible Today?" *Communio* 13 (1986): 308.

{74} R. Bultmann, "Is Exegesis without Presuppositions Possible?" in *Existence and Faith*, ed. by Schubert M. Ogden (London: Fontana, 1964), 289-296. M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (1st ed., Halle: Niemeyer, 1927; 7th ed., Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1963), 150. Barth also made the point in the preface to his 2d 1921 ed. of *Epistle to the Romans*, 10-12.

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## Reading #2: Ressourcement Theology, Aggiornamento, and the Hermeneutics of Tradition

by Marcellino D'Ambrosio

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The Christian tradition is a vital and dynamic force that is not retrograde, but progressive.

### I. A Singular Epoch in French Theology

The years 1930-1950 marked a time of crisis and change affecting every aspect of European society.{1} During this tumultuous period of transition, a broad intellectual and spiritual movement arose within the European Catholic community in response to the challenge presented by a newly secularized society, a challenge that the reigning neo-Scholasticism seemed sorely ill-equipped to meet. Though this movement drew some of its inspiration from earlier theologians and philosophers such as Möhler, Newman, Gardeil, Rousselot, and Blondel, it also owed a great deal to the French Catholic poets Charles Péguy and Paul Claudel.{2}

Academic theologians involved in this movement included such Belgian and German thinkers as Emile Mersch, Dom Odo Casel, Romano Guardini, Karl Adam, and Dom Anselm Stolz, to name a few. Yet it was France that was the undisputed center of theological activity during this fertile epoch<sup>{3}</sup> and so it will be to French theology during this period that we will limit our attention here. Led principally by the Jesuits of the Lyons province and the Dominicans of Le Saulchoir, the French theological revival of these years boasted some of the greatest names in twentieth-century Catholic scholarship such as Henri de Lubac, Jean Daniélou, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Yves Congar, Marie-Dominique Chenu, and Louis Bouyer.<sup>{4}</sup>

The participants in this movement, derisively labeled "*la nouvelle théologie*" by its opponents,<sup>{5}</sup> were far from the tightly organized cadre they were often thought to be.<sup>{6}</sup> On the contrary, they were men from various universities and religious congregations who, though friends and colleagues,<sup>{7}</sup> nevertheless differed in many respects.<sup>{8}</sup> What united this diverse group were the convictions that 1) theology had to speak to the Church's present situation and that 2) the key to theology's relevance to the present lay in the creative recovery of its past. In other words, they all saw clearly that the first step to what later came to be known as *aggiornamento* had to be *ressourcement* rediscovery of the riches of the Church's two-thousand-year treasury, a return to the very headwaters of the Christian tradition.<sup>{9}</sup>

For these thinkers, doing theology meant doing history. Yet the distinctive approach to historical theology which they shared was neither mere detached, scholarly reconstruction nor a futile attempt at what Congar calls "restitution."<sup>{10}</sup> It was rather a creative hermeneutical exercise in which the "sources" of Christian faith were "reinterrogated"<sup>{11}</sup> with new questions, the burning questions of a century in travail. With such twentieth-century questions serving as hermeneutical keys, these theologians of *ressourcement* were able to unlock new rooms in the treasure house of tradition and discover there, surprisingly enough, many of the twentieth-century ideas which neo-Scholasticism neglected or even resisted.<sup>{12}</sup>

In this essay, I will take a close look at the French theological revival of 1930-1950 with an eye towards 1) capturing the theological ethos of this pivotal epoch which had such enormous impact on the Second Vatican Council and 2) inquiring into what relevance it may have for theology today. I hope to establish that the twin impulses of *ressourcement* and *aggiornamento*, which are sometimes erroneously set over and against one another, are, at least in the authors under discussion, inextricably intertwined.

## II. Theological Discontent

In 1943, a book appeared which broke like a bombshell upon the French Church. Written by Henri Godin, a priest who had been intimately involved with the Young Christian Workers movement (J.O.C.) in France for many years, *France, pays de mission?*<sup>{13}</sup> exposed the tremendous religious indifference that existed in France and

the Church's loss of large segments of the working class. Yves Congar saw the publication of this book as nothing short of a historical event: "The man and the book were truly providential and prophetic. . . . Very quickly, this work led to a new awareness of the situation of the world and of the relation of the Church to this world."{14}

Suddenly, it seemed, the whole French Church became aware of the magnitude of France's dechristianization and scrambled to do something about it. *Incarnation, présence, engagement, and adaptation* became the new pastoral buzzwords. A call to missionary activity resounded throughout the Church and gave rise to bold new pastoral initiatives such as the worker-priests. The exciting revival of Catholic life and pastoral practice sparked by Godin's book seemed to peak in the years immediately following the war. Yves Congar remarks that "anyone who did not live through the years 1946 and 1947 in the history of French Catholicism has missed one of the finest moments in the life of the Church."{15}

In a provocative article written in 1946, Jean Daniélou, a Lyons Jesuit who taught at l'Institut Catholique of Paris, set out to describe the kind of theology necessary to meet the challenges of the post-war situation.{16} In the course of the article, regarded by some as a sort of "manifesto" of "*la nouvelle théologie*," Daniélou indicts theology for being absent from, not present to, the thought world of his day. Indeed, he asserts, Scholasticism is "a stranger to these [contemporary] categories . . . mired" as it is "in the immobile world of Greek thought." Though history is a central category for every philosophy from Hegel to Bergson, notes Daniélou, neo-Scholasticism has virtually no historical sense. In an existentialist world, it remains resolutely essentialist and objectivist, oblivious to human subjectivity. In fact this theology, he charges, is cut off not only from the contemporary thought world, but from the daily life of the people of God. Hardened in its Scholastic categories, neo-Thomism remains basically incomprehensible to most people and is thus incapable of offering them spiritual and doctrinal nourishment.{17}

Such a "rupture between theology and life," maintains Daniélou, flies in the face of one of the chief insights of the century, i.e., that thought is not meant merely to contemplate the world, but to transform it. "Theoretical speculation, separated from action and uninvolved in life, has seen its day." In contrast, what the Church of postwar France needs is a theology "entirely engaged in the building up of the body of Christ."{18}

The Dominican theologians of Le Saulchoir had a similar commitment to what Yves Congar called "the primacy of the pastoral."{19} In the words of Marie-Dominique Chenu, regent of studies at Le Saulchoir from 1932 to 1942, "before all else, to be a theologian really means not to be cut off from the daily, concrete life of the Church."{20} In an article published in 1935, Chenu denounced the fragmentation of theology into various compartments and "account books."{21} For example, he notes that the speculative theology of the day was not only cut off from pastoral practice, but also from spirituality. Other theologians of this period join him in stressing the intimate bond between theology and spirituality{22} In the words of Daniélou,

It is no longer possible to disassociate, as was done too much in times past, theology and spirituality. The first was placed upon a speculative and timeless plane; the second too often consisted only of practical counsels separated from the vision of man which justified it.{23}

Dogmatic theology was also cut off, as Chenu saw it, from the sources of positive theology. Echoing his confrere Louis Charlier and the latter's teacher R. Draguet, Chenu asserts that revealed data must be given primacy over rational constructs and that theology once again must be centered in the history of salvation. In Chenu's view, theologians since the seventeenth century had been overly fascinated with closed, clear systems. This excessive preoccupation with clarity and systematization had impoverished Western theology and had seriously diminished its sense of mystery.{24}

The loss of a sense of God's transcendent mystery by a rationalistic theology was the very thing, noted Daniélou, that Kierkegaard had reacted against. Theology in his day had made God an object, so he affirmed the mystery of a personal God, accessible only through love. In so doing, he recalled the theologian to the attitude of reverence with which the mystery ought to be approached. "We find here one of the characteristic traits of theological renewal, this sense of the mystery of God which gives negative theology its place."{25} This zeal for the transcendence and unfathomable mystery of God will prove to be one of the hallmarks of the theology of *ressourcement*. For Daniélou, de Lubac, and others, the existential ethos of the mid-twentieth century helps spark a rediscovery of the Church's traditional teaching that God is the Supreme Subject, the Person *par excellence*, whose self-revelation in Scripture is intelligible but never fully comprehensible.{26}

### III. Ad Fontes!

#### A. Ressourcement as Revitalization

The main question for the theologians under discussion was how to break out of the neo-Scholastic quagmire and begin developing a theology that would truly meet the challenges of the age. Their common instinct was a paradox: in order to go forward in theology, one first has to go backward. Étienne Gilson says it succinctly: "if theological progress is sometimes necessary, it is never possible unless you go back to the beginning and start over."{27} What was necessary, then, was a "return to the sources"{28} of tradition. The theological revolution which the Church so desperately needed had to begin with, in the words of Péguy, "a new and deeper sounding of ancient, inexhaustible, and common resources."{29} Hence the term "*ressourcement*." In *Vraie et fausse réforme dans l'église*, Congar notes that it is not certain who coined this noun.{30} However, it seems to him that the essential concept derives from the following passage from Péguy:

a [true] revolution is a call from a less perfect tradition to a more perfect tradition, a call from a shallower tradition to a deeper tradition, a backing up of tradition, an

overtaking of depth, an investigation into deeper sources; in the literal sense of the word, a "re-source."<sup>{31}</sup>

It is important to note that the *ressourcement* advocated by these thinkers was not ultimately a work of scholarship but rather a work of religious revitalization. Indeed, in their writings the word "source" only secondarily refers to a historical document; the primary meaning they assign to the term is a fountain-head of dynamic spiritual life which never runs dry.<sup>{32}</sup> The events and words of Scripture, the rites of the liturgy, the creeds and decrees of the councils, the teaching of the Fathers, Doctors, and great spiritual masters—all of these organs of tradition are, for them, sources inasmuch as they are channels of the one, incomparable Source that is the Mystery of Christ. The ultimate goal of the renewal is not, then, a more accurate historical understanding of Christian origins, but rather, in Congar's words, "a recentering in the person of Christ and in his paschal mystery."<sup>{33}</sup>

By immersing themselves in the forms and categories of ancient Christianity in all their diversity and concrete specificity, these theologians hoped to discover and imbibe that Spirit which was their common inspiration and source. Hans Urs von Balthasar, referring to the Greek Fathers, says: "We would rather hope to penetrate to the vital source of their spirit, to the fundamental and secret intuition which directs the entire expression of their thought."<sup>{34}</sup> What the *ressourcement* theologians sought, then, was a spiritual and intellectual communion with Christianity in its most vital moments as transmitted to us in its classic texts, a communion which would nourish, invigorate, and rejuvenate twentieth-century Catholicism.<sup>{35}</sup>

## B. The Patristic Revival

In a movement whose goal was a recentering in Christ and his paschal mystery, it stands to reason that liturgical revival should come first both historically<sup>{36}</sup> and in order of priority. Following upon its heels came the Catholic biblical movement, inaugurated by the establishment of Jerusalem's *École biblique* by M.-J. Lagrange, O.P. (1890) and Leo XIII's encyclical *Providentissimus Deus* (1893).<sup>{37}</sup> Surveying the progress of these movements from the vantage point of 1946, Daniélou saw them both as having developed along the lines of a two-phase process. At first the accent was upon archaeology, i.e., critical historical scholarship aiming at situating ancient rites and texts in their original context. Then came more of a focus upon the spirit of the biblical and liturgical sources, with an eye towards identifying their meaning for us today.<sup>{38}</sup> Furthering this second and more hermeneutical process is clearly what Daniélou believed to be the task at hand in 1946.

One of the great contributions of the Lyons Jesuits<sup>{39}</sup> on this score was to point out the hermeneutical character and ongoing value of patristic thought. First of all, they underscored the extent to which the entire patristic legacy can be interpreted as one vast commentary upon Scripture, the sacramental mysteries, and the correspondences between them.<sup>{40}</sup> Secondly, they established the contemporary relevance of the Fathers by demonstrating the remarkable correspondence between patristic theology and several distinctively modern issues. "From certain perspectives," they write, "the

Fathers of the Church seem sometimes closer to us than some later theologians."<sup>{41}</sup> Indeed they showed how such pivotal modern categories as history, human solidarity, and personal subjectivity form the warp and woof of patristic thought.<sup>{42}</sup> Even the patristic proclivity for expressing truth by means of images and symbols, they note, corresponds to a modern preference for the concrete over the abstract and the intuitive over the conceptual.

In their "*Réponse*" to the criticisms of Labourdette, the Fourvière theologians assert that the importance of the Fathers cannot be reduced to their historical role of preparing the way for the truly scientific theology of the thirteenth century. The fact that St. Thomas assimilated the major patristic insights into his higher scientific synthesis does not mean we can now dispense with the Fathers, relegating them to the archives of historical theology:

The Fathers clearly do not have the same authority [as Scripture]; they are sources which are secondary, derived, never sufficient of themselves; yet this does not prevent them from playing a capital role. And they play this role not only in the past, but they continue to play it in the present. They are sources, not in the restricted sense in which literary history understands the term, but in the sense of wellsprings which are always springing up to overflowing.<sup>{43}</sup>

As the Fourvière Jesuits see it, the Fathers' writings provide "intellectual nourishment which is directly assimilable"<sup>{44}</sup> by the ordinary believer of the twentieth century. The task at hand, then, is to reconnect the individual Christian directly with the patristic tradition, to mediate the past to the present in a nourishing, life-giving way.

This is the significance of the great series *Sources Chrétiennes*.<sup>{45}</sup> In explaining the reason for undertaking this project, Daniélou contrasts its goals with those of a patristic collection compiled earlier in the century by Hemmer and Leahy. For these, "it was a question above all of publishing historical documents, witness of the faith of the ancients." *Sources Chrétiennes* is different because:

it thinks that there is more to ask the Fathers. They are not only the truthful witnesses of a bygone era; they are also the most contemporary nourishment of men and women today, because we find there a certain number of categories which are those of contemporary thought and which Scholastic theology had lost.<sup>{46}</sup>

Each volume of *Sources Chrétiennes* contained a classic patristic text which was carefully translated into French. The Greek Fathers, who had suffered from centuries of neglect in the Western Church, were given special attention. An able use of the critical historical method enabled the editors to situate each work in its historical context by means of introductions that were sometimes quite provocative.<sup>{47}</sup> Yet, from first to last, the meticulous historical scholarship for which the series became known was motivated by and subordinated to the editors' self-admitted goal: "to provide a number of readers a direct access to these 'sources,' always overflowing with spiritual life and theological doctrine, which are the Fathers of the Church."<sup>{48}</sup>

### C. The Critical Reinterpretation of St. Thomas

The Fourvière theologians' love of the Fathers did not, however, induce them to despise or even neglect the medievals, especially St. Thomas.{49} On the contrary, several of them were in fact themselves dedicated Thomists who had a sense that the Thomism of the manuals was not the Thomism of St. Thomas{50} To quote the epigraph of de Lubac's controversial *Surnaturel*: "Buried under five centuries of deposits, ignorance of itself is the most serious ill from which Scholasticism is suffering. To cure it, let us listen to the counsel of history."{51}

Committed to a critical re-investigation of the Scholastic tradition, several of the Lyons Jesuits joined a movement that had been anticipated by Péguy{52} pioneered by Rousselot,{53} and brought to the forefront of theological debate in the 1930s by men such as J. F. Bonnefoy, R. Draguet, and L. Charlier. What gradually became clear was that St. Thomas had not introduced a new method of 'conclusion theology' radically different from that of the Fathers. The new methodology had been introduced later by the commentators, especially John of St. Thomas, who can be regarded as the true father of modern Scholastic theology.{54} This is the stream of thought, modified around the beginning of the twentieth century by "heavy doses of Suarezianism and Bañezianism (not to mention [Christian] Wolff and Descartes),"{55} which was known as "neo-Thomism."

Hence the rigidly non-historical and rationalistic way of thinking characteristic of certain neo-Scholastics was not to be identified with St. Thomas at all! Aquinas, instead, emerges as a much more traditional figure in substantial continuity with the positive theology of the Fathers. As such, he has much more relevance for today than had been commonly thought. In relationship to the thought of St. Thomas, then, the cry "*Ad fontes!*" took on a bit more militant and critical character. Here the Angelic Doctor's tradition history was scrutinized in the light of his original texts and found wanting. Gilson expressed well the sentiment of many *ressourcement* theologians:

Our only salvation lies in a return to Saint Thomas himself, before the Thomism of John of Saint Thomas, before that of Cajetan as well Cajetan, whose famous commentary is in every respect the consummate example of a *corruptorium Thomae*. . . . Salvation lies in returning to the real Saint Thomas, rightly called the Universal Doctor of the Church; accept no substitutes!{56}

It is in this light that we should view several of the works of the *Théologie* series, {57} notably Bouillard's *Conversion et grace chez S. Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: Aubier, 1941) and de Lubac's *Surnaturel* (Paris: Aubier, 1946).{58} To quote de Lubac: "Returning to the real Saint Thomas': this was also, as Gilson accurately perceived, my clearly expressed (and I believe always well-founded) intention, whether in *Sur les chemins de Dieu* or in *Surnaturel*."{59}

#### IV. Ressourcement and 'Aggiornamento'{60}

##### A. Renaissance vs. Repristination

However passionately the Fourvière and Le Saulchoir theologians pursued the historical recovery of the Fathers and "the real St. Thomas," it must be clearly understood that they do not advocate any slavish restoration of either one or the other as the solution to the Church's present problems. In fact, virtually all *ressourcement* theologians emphatically repudiate all manner of "archaeologism" and "repristination" after the manner of Jansenism or the Protestant Reformation.{61} In this passage, Balthasar makes it clear that, for him, returning to the sources was not all the same thing as returning to the past:

We turn towards a more distant past, but without believing that exhuming the "Greek Fathers" and adapting them, for better or for worse, to the needs of the modern soul will be enough to bring a languishing thought back to life. We are not so naive as to prefer "neo-patristic" theology to a "neo-Scholastic" one! No historical situation is ever absolutely similar to any other preceding period; none can therefore furnish its own solutions as so many master keys capable of resolving our contemporary problems.{62}

As respectful as they are of the great theological syntheses of the past, the *ressourcement* theologians have no trouble admitting that many aspects of these great achievements are now hopelessly outdated. In fact they contend that we have not only the freedom but the duty to dispense with outmoded conceptual frameworks when translating the Christian message to our own generation. For example, we should not hesitate to jettison much of the Aristotelianism of the medieval doctors which, as Henri Bouillard points out, contains

many an obsolete explanation, aged schema, dead notion. They have served in their time to transmit the mystery and, for this reason, are venerable. But, like an obsolete vestment or aged tool, they now obstruct the progress of theological reflection. They prevent those who no longer understand them from grasping the exact meaning of the Christian message. . . . For theology to continue to offer meaning to our mind, to enrich it and to progress with it, it too must renounce these Aristotelian notions{63}

It must be remembered that in their study of Christian origins, it was the "spirit" or "principle" of the tradition that the *ressourcement* theologians were ultimately after. They were confident that, once fortified with the nourishment provided by this vital "sap," twentieth-century Christians would be energized and enlightened to solve their problems in a fully contemporary yet entirely traditional way. It was as if the spirit of the tradition, made present again by the Church's fruitful communion with its origins via *ressourcement*, was expected to serve as a catalyst that would stimulate new ideas and fresh pastoral initiatives. As Congar aptly put it, "to go back to the beginnings, to 're-source,' as is said today, is to think through the situation in which we are presently



engaged in the light and in the spirit of all that an integral tradition can impart to us of the sense of the Church."{64}

The concept which sheds perhaps the most light on *ressourcement's* impact upon the present is supplied by Péguy. In a 1912 letter to his friend Joseph Lotte, the poet speaks of his perception that a Catholic "renaissance" was beginning to break forth in France{65} For Péguy, each new historical period finds the Church once more at the beginning. In every age the Church needs to let the principle of the tradition flower anew and bear fruit in new intellectual and pastoral forms.{66} Tradition, for him, is an exceedingly fertile principle. Whenever it is allowed the proper room to grow and develop, renaissance inevitably results. By restrictively equating tradition with one particular theological synthesis, neo-Scholasticism had actually petrified it. In so doing, it cut itself off from the spiritual vitality upon which true renaissance and adaptation depend. The goal of the *ressourcement* theologians was to prune away the dead canes and bring the Church back to tradition's living root so that the vitality inherent in it might give rise to a fresh pastoral and theological renaissance.{67}

## B. Paradigms for Contemporary Theology

In their study of St. Thomas and the Fathers, the *ressourcement* theologians were struck by the contrast between the traditional theological methodology on the one hand and that of neo-Scholasticism on the other. Whereas the latter had isolated itself from positive theology, spirituality, and the secular intellectual milieu, Aquinas and the Fathers had held theology, spirituality, and pastoral practice in a dynamic and vital unity while at the same time maintaining a fruitful contact with the great cultural forces of their respective periods. These doctors of the Church had, in fact, each allowed the spirit of the tradition to flower anew in their day. The many theological renaissances which resulted from their efforts thus employed different philosophical categories but nevertheless possessed the same spirit.

What Thomas and the Fathers had done was to distill the essence of the tradition for their respective generations. In their organic conception of the unity of theology and life as well as in their hermeneutical effort to re-articulate traditional doctrine in the language of their contemporaries, these classical theologians offer today's Church a paradigm of authentic theological method. It would, then, be entirely unfaithful to the character of their thought merely to parrot their material categories. Instead, it is necessary to emulate their great achievements in the hermeneutics of tradition. In the words of Balthasar:

In order to remain faithful to herself and to her mission, the latter [the Church] must continually make the effort of creative invention. Before the Gentiles who came to enter a Church which was an heir to the Synagogue, Paul was obliged to invent. The Greek Fathers had to do the same in the face of Hellenistic culture and Saint Thomas in the face of arabic science and philosophy. We must do nothing less before the problems of our own day.{68}

## C. Ressourcement as Prerequisite of Aggiornamento

In his pastoral letter of 1947, Cardinal Suhard exhorted the Catholic intellectuals of France in words similar to Balthasar's: "Your task therefore, Christian thinkers, is not to follow, but to lead. It is not enough to be disciples, you must become masters; it is not enough to imitate, you must invent."<sup>{69}</sup> Yet it was an axiom of *ressourcement* theology that before becoming creative masters, theologians had first to become attentive disciples. In other words, theology can only hope to be "original" if it has first drunk deeply at the "origins" of Christian life and thought. Congar, citing Werner Förster, asserts that "only a profound understanding of the tradition can guide one to discern the useful elements in modernity, to select them with certainty, to adapt them with tact."<sup>{70}</sup> He underlines the fact that it is not just a superficial familiarity with historical theology but rather a thorough-going *ressourcement*, having as its goal the appropriation of the very spirit of the tradition, that is the necessary prelude to a hermeneutically successful *aggiornamento*. "It is the Catholic principle thus having become the master of the conscience and the mind that makes possible the double task of discernment and assimilation."<sup>{71}</sup>

Here again. St. Thomas, in his "adaptation" of Aristotelian categories, serves as a model. Congar notes that if Aquinas was able to introduce Aristotle into theology "without doing violence either to Catholic dogma or to the most delicate evangelical spirit, it was without any doubt due to the profound understanding which he had of the tradition, fruit of a docility and an equally intense meditation."<sup>{72}</sup> Yet this paradigm of authentic *aggiornamento*, certain *ressourcement* thinkers point out, has not always been successfully emulated. Congar, for instance, notes that Church history is unfortunately replete with examples of an "adaptation" that is mechanical and innovating in character.<sup>{73}</sup> Indeed, both before and after the Council, Bouyer, de Lubac, and others warned that certain programs of "adaptation" or *aggiornamento* were afoot which, having cut all moorings to tradition, were rapidly drifting towards "servile adaptation to the world and to its changing idols."<sup>{74}</sup>

It is true that one of the initial impulses of *ressourcement* theology was the re-establishment of contact between Catholic theology and contemporary thought. Yet representatives of the movement are careful to clarify their motivation for this. They tell us that they felt no compulsion to search far and wide for remedies to the Church's problems as if they had lost confidence in the resources of the Christian tradition. Neither were they driven by any desire to "adapt" theology to contemporary thought and values. Rather their goal was to break the "fortress mentality" and compel Catholic theology to engage in a critical dialogue<sup>{75}</sup> with twentieth-century thinkers, a dialogue that would send theologians back to the sources with new questions, provoking the rediscovery of forgotten or neglected dimensions of the tradition.<sup>{76}</sup>

Indeed, what the Church needs to update herself and to meet the challenge of the brave, new world is not, according to these theologians, to go *farther* but to go *deeper*. The task at hand is not to change Christianity and make it something more, but to make it more itself. In the words of de Lubac:

In the last analysis, what is needed is not a Christianity that is more virile, or more efficacious, or more heroic, or stronger; it is that we should live our Christianity with more virility, more efficacy, more strength, and if necessary, more heroism; but we must live it as it is. There is nothing that should be changed in it, nothing that should be corrected, nothing that should be added (which does not mean, however, that there is not a continual need to keep its channels from silting up); it is not a case of adapting it to the fashion of the day. It must come into its own again in our souls. We must give our souls back to it.

The question, be it repeated, is a spiritual one and the solution is always the same: in so far as we have allowed it to be lost, we must rediscover the *spirit* of Christianity. In order to do so we must be plunged once more into its well-springs, and above all in the Gospel. The Gospel which the Church unvaryingly offers us is enough for us. Only, always new, it always needs to be rediscovered.{77}

Hence, for the *ressourcement* theologians, the abiding norm governing the adaptation of Catholic theology to a new historical and cultural context is neither modern thought on the one hand, nor the letter of past theological syntheses on the other. It is rather the spirit of the tradition, the Catholic principle, which is intellectually and spiritually appropriated under the pastoral care of the Magisterium through a continual immersion in the classic sources of Christian faith.

#### D. "New" Theology

It is in the light of their teaching on adaptation that we can see the fundamental ambiguity of the label "*la nouvelle théologie*"{78} which was attached to many *ressourcement* theologians by their opponents{79} By and large, the theologians of Le Saulchoir and Fourvière had a horror of any theology that was "new" in the sense of rejecting the legacy of the past in favor of the intellectual fads of the present. Even as Congar criticized "adaptation/innovation" as noted above, so de Lubac years later will criticize those who, not satisfied with the *ressourcement* and *aggiornamento* stipulated by the Second Vatican Council, want a "whole 'new theology,' the foundation of a 'new Church.'" {80} Thus, when Labourdette accused these men of an "open disparagement of Scholastic theology" {81} and Garrigou-Lagrange charged them with rejecting Thomism, these critics demonstrated an inability to distinguish between St. Thomas and the subsequent Scholastic tradition. {82}

Yet there is a sense in which the theology of the *ressourcement* theologians was truly a "new theology." Inasmuch as revolution is new precisely to the extent that it is traditional, as Péguy here so astutely observes, *ressourcement* was not only new, but even revolutionary:

a revolution is not a full revolution unless it is a full tradition, a fuller conservation, an anterior tradition, deeper, truer, more ancient and thus more eternal. . . It is necessary that, by the depth of its new and deeper "re-source," it prove that the preceding revolutions were insufficiently revolutionary, and that their corresponding traditions were insufficiently traditional and full; it is necessary

that, by a more profound mental, moral and emotional intuition, it conquer the tradition itself by being traditional, by tradition, that it pass under it; far from being a supraaugmentation, as is believed much too generally, a revolution is an excavation, a deepening, an overtaking of depth.{83}

Ressourcement theology, then, is actually more authentically traditional than the neo-Scholasticism of many twentieth-century thinkers. In contrast to the latter's timid staleness, the freshness and newness of ressourcement theology flow from its "more victorious confidence in the eternal youth of the Church." {84}

## V. Ressourcement and the Hermeneutics of Tradition

Several definite conclusions can be drawn from this brief examination of the French theological revival of the thirties and forties. First of all, we have seen that during this period an unorganized yet clearly identifiable movement arose in order to meet the challenges of the times by means of a recovery of the Church's tradition. Significantly, no particular time period in the Church's history was idealized as the "golden age." Instead, the entire tradition was combed for spiritual and theological "classics" {85} that might serve as "sources" of life for Christians in the twentieth century. "Ressourcement theology" thus seems the most adequate way to refer to this program of renewal because it describes the distinctive theological method and spiritual goal which united its diverse participants into a recognizable movement. The polemical epithet "*la nouvelle théologie*," on the other hand, however well established it may be in the theological literature, is an equivocal label which should be abandoned. Not only was this phrase never used by the writers in question, but it was passionately disavowed by several of them as misleading and contrary to the spirit and aim of their work. {86}

Secondly, the *ressourcement* in which these scholars engaged went considerably beyond detached historical reconstruction. Though the *ressourcement* thinkers succeeded in making considerable strides forward in understanding the Church's past, {87} their interest in the past was inseparable from their concern for the present. Dissatisfied with the overly-cerebral aloofness of a neo-Scholastic theology cut off from history, pastoral practice, and prayer, the *ressourcement* scholars aimed to restore the dynamic links between dogmatics, historical theology, spirituality, and everyday life. Viewing theology's role as one of service to the Church's spiritual and pastoral mission, the ultimate goal of their historical research was to nourish and inspire the faithful as well as to enlighten fellow scholars.

Thirdly, the *ressourcement* impulse was fundamentally a critical one. In order to break through the crust of misinterpretation and get at, for example, "the real" St. Thomas, i.e., St. Thomas' subtle thought understood in its own historical context, thinkers of this tendency employed a method of historical investigation that was rigorously critical. And once understood critically, the rich thought of the past was then reappropriated critically as well. The kind of appropriation of the past in the present practiced by *ressourcement* thinkers was very similar to what Gadamer and others describe as a "fusion of horizons." Such a hermeneutical process of application is, in the words of Richard

Palmer, "not a literal bringing of the past into externalities of the present; it is bringing *what is essential* in the past into our personal present."<sup>{88}</sup> This essential element of the past is what Gadamer and others call the "classical," i.e., "something enduring, of significance that cannot be lost and is independent of all the circumstances of time . . . a kind of timeless present that is contemporaneous with every other age."<sup>{89}</sup> In other words, *ressourcement* thought was in no way congenial to a naïve and anachronistic restoration of outmoded categories or practices, as Wolfhart Pannenberg seems to allege in a recent interview.<sup>{90}</sup> Confident that the essential or classical dimensions of the ancient tradition, once assimilated, would stimulate the growth of new expressions of Christian life suitable to the present age, the *ressourcement* championed by these thinkers contains within itself the very notion of *aggiornamento* and is inseparable from it.

Perhaps the greatest lesson we can draw from the *ressourcement* theologians is that there is no contradiction between fidelity to tradition and creative freedom. Quite to the contrary, they show us that the latter is actually a product of the former. This is because, as they learned from Péguy and Blondel, the Christian tradition is a vital and dynamic force that is not retrograde, but progressive. In recent years Jaroslav Pelikan has confirmed the most basic insight of *ressourcement* theology: throughout two thousand years of Christian history, the most creative thinkers have been at the same time the most traditional.<sup>{91}</sup>

In the wake of such seminal hermeneutical thinkers as Gadamer and Ricoeur, we are in a better position today than we were thirty years ago to appreciate the uncommon hermeneutical acumen of the *ressourcement* theologians. Their work perfectly illustrates the dialectic between past and present described by Gadamer: contemporary problems and questions enabled them better to understand the past, and this deeper understanding of the past in turn equipped them better to understand and respond to the present. What resulted from their work, then, was a true mediation between past and present.

*Ressourcement* theology was, in essence, a deft exercise in the hermeneutics of tradition that successfully navigated between the Scylla of archaism and the Charybdis of modernism. Thanks to its acute sense of the inexhaustible fullness of the Christian Mystery, it steadfastly refused to identify that Mystery with any of its past expressions or embodiments. Yet similarly, its confidence in the utter uniqueness and perpetual relevance of Christianity caused it to resist the temptation to accommodate the gospel to modernity in such a way as to deform it. We do well to ask ourselves whether theology today, be it conservative or avant-garde, is as spiritually fruitful, hermeneutically sophisticated, and free from the spirit of conformity as was the theology of *ressourcement*.