

Systematic Theology

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Systematic Theology: Task and Methods

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This chapter seeks to present a historical, descriptive, and systematic introduction to Roman Catholic conceptions of theology and theological method. After some introductory observations on the historical use of the term *theology* and on the Christian Scriptures as theological writings, the first major section will profile three classic conceptions of theology, namely, those of Augustine, Aquinas, and Neo-Scholasticism. The following section will analyze five contemporary approaches to theology, indicating the strengths and weaknesses of each. A third major section will assess the diverse challenges that Roman Catholic theology faces today. It will propose as an adequate method of theology one that seeks to integrate diverse elements and criteria. Since discussions of method are usually more abstract than treatments of particular beliefs, a reader less familiar with or less interested in theological method might prefer to read the other chapters first and to return later to this analysis of theological method.

Fragility of Theology

Theology is a fragile discipline in that it is both academic and related to faith. As an academic discipline, theology shares all the scholarly goals of other academic disciplines: it strives for historical exactitude, conceptual rigor, systematic consistency, and interpretive clarity. In its relation to faith, theology shares the fragility of faith itself. It is much more a hope than a science. It is much more like a raft bobbing on the waves

of the sea than a pyramid built on solid ground.

Throughout its history, Christian theology has endured this ambiguity. The relation of theology to faith has always reminded Christian theologians of its fragility, yet they have constantly argued for its disciplinary character and its scientific rigor. For example, Origen and Augustine sought to relate Christian theology to the philosophical knowledge and disciplines of late antiquity. In the medieval university setting, Thomas Aquinas began his *Summa theologiae* by asking whether sacred doctrine as a discipline makes a distinctive contribution to knowledge beyond the philosophical discipline about God. In the nineteenth century, Friedrich Schleiermacher and Johann von Drey argued for theology's rightful status within the modern university against challenges to that status. In the twenty-first century, Christian theologians face the challenge to theology's rightful academic place both by the dominance of the natural sciences and by the emergence of religious studies, which sometimes relegates theology to a confessional discipline not based in the university.

The term *theology* is ambiguous etymologically, historically, and systematically. Etymologically, *theology* means the "word," "discourse," "account," or "language" (*logos*) of God (*theos*). The question, however, remains: Does it mean the word of God as a subjective genitive, namely, God's own discourse? Or is it an objective genitive, meaning discourse about God? The former refers to the divine discourse itself, whereas the second refers to the human effort to understand the divine.¹ Within the early Christian tradition,

1. Ferdinand Kattenbusch, "Die Entstehung einer christlichen Theologie: Zur Geschichte der Ausdrücke *theologia*, *theologein*, *theologos*," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 11 (1930): 161–205; repr. *Die Entstehung einer christlichen Theologie* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1962). See also Gerhard Ebeling, "Theologie I. Begriffsgeschichtlich," *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, cols. 754–70; J. Stiglmayr, "Mannigfache Bedeutungen von 'Theologie' und 'Theologie,'" *Theologie und Glaube* 11 (1919): 296–309.

4 both usages are present. Saint Augustine uses the term *theologia* in the *City of God* in its objective sense to refer to discourse about the divine (*de divinitate ratio sive sermo*).² Among the Greek writers, Dionysius the Areopagite (c. sixth century), for example, uses *theologia* to designate not a human science, but the divine discourse itself, particularly the divine discourse of the Holy Scriptures. The Holy Scriptures do not just speak of God but are God's speech. Today this usage no longer prevails, and theology refers primarily to the human study of God.³

Historically, the term *theology* emerged as a common and comprehensive term for Christian theology only after the thirteenth century. Among the early Christian writers, the term primarily referred to the pagan philosophical speculation about God rather than to Christian discourse about God, for the latter focused on the divine plan or economy of salvation. Christian discourse, called Christian doctrine, was not simply theology; it was not just another philosophical doctrine about God alone. Instead, Christian discourse explicated God's "economy." It spoke of God's saving plan and action in Jesus Christ and in the Christian community. In the early medieval period, *sacra doctrina*, *sacra scriptura*, and *sacra or divina pagina* were the customary terms for the discipline. They expressed the primacy of the Christian Scriptures in Christian doctrine. As the medieval teaching evolved

from a commentary on the Scriptures or from an exposition of questions appended to scriptural texts to a full-fledged systematic discussion of controversial issues, the term *theology* emerged as the umbrella expression for Christian doctrine. It was in the thirteenth century that the term *theology* came to have the comprehensive meaning that it has for us today.⁴

Considered systematically, the present usage of the term also is ambiguous. *Theology* is often used as an umbrella term to cover all the theological disciplines. Yet the term also denotes a specific discipline known as systematic theology. The division of the theological disciplines is the result of a long process within modern times.⁵ *Theology* is also often used in contradistinction from religious studies, the former referring to a confessional approach, the latter prescinding from such commitments.⁶ Yet "religious studies" and "theological studies" are sometimes used interchangeably.

The nature and method of theology are issues about which much diversity exists in the history of Christian thought—a diversity of schools, methods, and approaches.⁷ Nevertheless, amid all this diversity, there are several constants. In examining the tasks and methods of theology, we must recognize both the diversity and the constancy.

One constant is the Scriptures, a primary element of Christian communities' tradition

2. Augustine, *City of God* 8.1.

3. See Joseph Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1987), 320–22.

4. J. Rivière, "Theologia," *Revue des sciences religieuses* 16 (1936): 47–57.

5. Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).

6. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, "Theological and Religious Studies: The Contest of the Faculties," in *Shifting Boundaries: Contextual Approaches to the Structure of Theological Education*, ed. Barbara Wheeler and Edward Farley (Atlanta: Westminster, 1991).

7. Yves Congar, *A History of Theology* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968).

and identity.⁸ Yet the meaning of the Scriptures depends on their interpretation. Augustine's interpretation of the Scriptures relied heavily on his background theory of Neo-Platonic hermeneutics. In the nineteenth century, the historical-critical method came into use as an interpretive tool. Today a multiplicity of hermeneutical theories affect our practices of interpretation. The constant of Scripture remains, yet the means of interpretation vary. The same is true of a community's tradition and creedal statements.

The experience of the community is another constant within theology. Yet that constant has also functioned diversely. Not only do different communities have different experiences, but different theologies have weighted communities' experience differently and have employed quite diverse categories to interpret that experience. The appeal to a community's experience is a constant, but its function differs considerably throughout the history of Christian theology.

Another constant is the reliance on some basic approach, procedure, or method to interpret the Scriptures, tradition, and experience. Such a procedure may be a general, implicit approach or an explicit, specific method. Such procedures constitute what could be called background theories, for they affect how the community interprets its discourse, its tradition, and its experience. Therefore, analyses of the nature of Christian theology, its task and method, should attend to the interplay between the constants of tradition, experience, and background theories that interpret tradition and experience.⁹

Christian Scriptures: Testimony and Theological Reflection

Modern theology has become acutely aware that theological reflection is at the center of the Scriptures. The Scriptures are not simply sources for theological reflection but themselves are examples of theological reflection. The Christian Scriptures do not simply witness to Jesus as the Christ, nor do they merely testify to the faith of the early Christian communities. Their witness takes place in the midst of an attempt to interpret Jesus theologically and is the testimony of a reflective faith. The Christian Scriptures, therefore, are constituted not only by the symbols and testimonies of faith, but also by that theological reflection emerging within those symbols and testimonies.

Such a view of the Christian Scriptures contrasts with previous views. Formerly, the Scriptures were seen primarily as a source providing principles for theology or as the object of theological reflection. In the nineteenth century, some scholars acknowledged only certain writings of the Scriptures as embodiments of theological reflection. They viewed Paul and John as great theologians, for example, but the authors of the Synoptics only as collectors or editors of source materials. Today it is commonly agreed that all the writings are theological. There is no part of the Christian Scriptures that is not at the same time an expression of a reflective witness and a believing theology.

8. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, "The Crisis of Scriptural Authority: Interpretation and Reception," *Interpretation* 44 (1990): 353–68.

9. The systematic nature of the task of attending to tradition, experience, background theory, and community is developed in the final section of this essay.

This conviction was strongly affirmed in the Second Vatican Council. The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei verbum*) accentuated the extent to which theological reflection permeates the New Testament writings. Section 19 in chapter 5 affirms, “The sacred authors wrote the four Gospels, selecting some things from the many which had been handed on by word of mouth or in writing, reducing some of them to a synthesis, explicating [*explicates*] some things in view of the situation of their churches, and preserving the form of proclamation but always in such a fashion that they told us the honest truth about Jesus.”¹⁰ This text refers to the selection of materials, the interpretation of traditions, explanations related to specific situations, theological synthesis, and pastoral applications. All of these elements make up the writing of the Gospels. The four Gospels give witness to Jesus in reflecting theologially on his meaning and significance for their particular pastoral situations.

This recognition of the relation between theological reflection and the New Testament writings has entered into the contemporary conceptions of the nature of the Scriptures and their origin.¹¹ Recent theories of inspiration have related inspiration to the very formation of the Scriptures.¹² The complex elements that led to the formation of the Scriptures—originating events and their interpretation, new situations,

and new reflection—are integrated within the theory of inspiration. Inspiration belongs to the whole process of the community’s reflection and interpretation of its originating events. This whole process of the formation of the Scriptures provides, some argue, paradigms for our theological reflection.¹³

Today we are aware that the Scriptures are theological. They not only contain the subject matter of theology but also embody specific and differing theological visions. This awareness corresponds to a consensus among Christian theologians and church documents.¹⁴ Moreover, our awareness of the historicity of Christian theology and the Christian Scriptures is one of the specific characteristics of modern theology. Yet before we survey modern and contemporary conceptions of theology, we will examine three classic and influential conceptions of theology.

Three Classic Paradigms of Theology

The Augustinian, Thomistic, and Neo-Scholastic approaches to theology represent the three most influential traditions within Western Roman Catholic theology as an academic discipline. In addition to these approaches, the Roman Catholic tradition contains many other schools of theology. A rich diversity of ascetic,

10. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei verbum*), in *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott (Chicago: Follet, 1966). See also the commentary by Joseph Fitzmyer in *Theological Studies* 25 (1964): 386–408. See the extended commentary on the constitution in vol. 3 of Herbert Vorgrimler, ed., *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II* (New York: Herder, 1969).

11. Karl Rahner, “Theology of the New Testament” and “Exegesis and Dogmatic Theology,” in *Theological Investigations* (New York: Crossroad, 1966), 5:23–41. See also Rahner’s *Inspiration in the Bible*, 2nd ed. (New York: Herder, 1964).

12. See Paul Achtmeier, *The Inspiration of Scripture: Problems and Proposals* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980).

13. See James P. Sanders, *Canon and Community: A Guide to Canonical Criticism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984).

14. See the collection of essays illustrating this point in Roland Murphy, ed., *Theology, Exegesis, and Proclamation* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1971). See also Bruce Vawter, *Biblical Inspiration* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971).

spiritual, and liturgical theologies exists in the West. Monastic as well as academic traditions exist. Eastern Christianity contains other rich traditions. My focus on just the Augustinian, Thomistic, and Neo-Scholastic approaches is not meant to slight these other traditions; it is meant to provide a somewhat more detailed examination of the traditions most influential in Western academic theology. Such a focus, moreover, enables one to grasp much more clearly the major changes and transitions that have occurred in the academic study and teaching of Roman Catholic theology.¹⁵

Augustine: Christian Doctrine as Wisdom

During the early church period, the plurality and diversity of theological conceptions are unmistakable. In the second century, the apostolic fathers (Clement of Rome, Hermas, Ignatius, Polycarp) continually wrestled with the relation between Christianity and Judaism. The Apologists (Justin, Aristides, Athenagoras) sought to relate Christianity to the educated and philosophical culture of the Greco-Roman Empire. Of the anti-Gnostic writers, Irenaeus especially contributed to theological method not only through his understanding of tradition and of the rule of faith, but also through his exposition

“hypothesis” or system of truth.¹⁶ In the third century, the schools of Antioch and Alexandria developed distinctive exegetical approaches, and the beginnings of systematic theology sprouted their roots in the work of Origen.

BEGINNING OF SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY IN THE GREEK CHURCH

Origen’s *On First Principles* (*Peri archon*) makes a threefold contribution to a systematic presentation of the Christian faith. First, Origen attempted to give a foundation for the scientific exegesis of the Scriptures.¹⁷ Second, he developed a systematic theory of religious knowledge. Third, he gave a systematic presentation of theology that indeed has earned him the label of the first systematic theologian.¹⁸ Origen’s *On First Principles* (published in 220) has been traditionally seen as a first attempt to bring the truths of the Christian faith into a theological synthesis. The traditional edition of this work, however, distorts its actual genre, which has been brought to light by a recent critical edition.¹⁹ The book is neither a *summa* nor a systematic theology, but rather a systematic exposition of God’s relation to the world.

In his preface, Origen explains that the church’s tradition contains the canon of faith, and the theologian has the responsibility to

15. For a complete survey of the history of Christian theology and doctrine, see the five-volume work by Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971–88). Earlier and somewhat dated presentations are Reinhold Seeberg, *The History of Doctrines* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977; German ed., 1895); Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 7 vols. (New York: Dover, 1961; German ed., 1900).

16. See Philip Hefner, “Theological Methodology and St. Irenaeus,” *Journal of Religion* 44 (1964): 294–309.

17. See Joseph Wilson Trigg, *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-Century Church* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1983).

18. Marguerite Harl, *Origène et la fonction révélatrice du Verbe Incarné* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1958), 346–59.

19. See Marguerite Harl’s essays “Recherches sur le *Peri archon* d’Origène vue d’une nouvelle édition: La division en chapitres,” in *Studia Patristica* III, *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur* 78, ed. F. L. Cross (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1961), 57–67; and “Structure et cohérence du *Peri archon*,” in *Origeniana*, ed. Henri Crouzel (Bari, Italy: Istituto di letteratura Cristiana antica, 1975), 11–32. The critical edition is in Henri Crouzel and Manlio Simonetti, eds. and trans., *Sources chrétiennes* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1978 and 1980).

8 explicate its inner rationale and implications. In seeking to accomplish this task, Origen adopted a specific genre of philosophical literature—one that dealt with questions of physics as the foundation of philosophy. This genre sought a first principle or the first principles of the universe. As a Christian, Origen considered God to be the beginning or first principle of the world. Therefore, he sought to synthesize the issues of physics, philosophy, and theology. The first part of *On First Principles* is a general treatise. It deals with God the Father, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Trinity, then with the four types of rational creatures, and finally with the created world and its return to God. The second part, following the same order, deals with special topics under each of these headings. Finally, there is a recapitulation of the topics. The overall effect is to show that all comes from the divine unity and returns to the divine unity. Through such an arrangement, Origen explicated his Christian faith in relation to the philosophical categories and literature of his time.

Augustine's Scientific Conception: Knowledge and Wisdom

Although Origen's originality has led many to consider him the first systematic theologian, it is Saint Augustine who has had the major impact on the development of Christian systematic theology in the West. Augustine's contribution to the development of Western theological methodology lies in his conception of theology as wisdom, his hermeneutical rules for the interpretation of Scripture, and his influence on the structure of the medieval *summa*.

Significant for Augustine's understanding of theology, or more properly, Christian doctrine, is his distinction between wisdom (*sapientia*) and knowledge (*scientia*). Whereas wisdom has as its object the eternal and unchangeable reality, knowledge is the rational insight into visible, perceptible, changeable, and temporal things.²⁰ Augustine does not equate knowledge with an empirical rationality, as our modern view does. Instead, Augustine views wisdom and human happiness as the goal of knowledge—a knowledge stemming from three sources: experience, authority, and signs.²¹

Knowledge from *experience* is not, as in modern experimental science, gained from experimentation characterized by confirmation and verification of hypotheses. Instead, this knowledge starts with the world of appearances in order to arrive at the intelligible and the first cause of things. Knowledge proceeds from the visible to the invisible, from appearances to reality. Knowledge from experience is, therefore, knowledge of the intelligible.

Knowledge from *authority* is knowledge based not on what one experiences oneself, but rather on testimony. Although Augustine maintains that knowledge from direct experience is preferable to knowledge based on human authority, he argues that the situation is different in regard to the authority of divine wisdom. The invisible has become visible in Christ. Through his miracles, life, and teaching, Christ is the mediator and revealer of truth; he is the divine authority.²² Moreover, the Scriptures contain the testimony to his authority as the revealer of the divine truth. This testimony calls for a faith in

20. Augustine, *On the Trinity* 12.15.25. See also 12.14.22–23.

21. For an analysis of Augustine's method, see Rudolf Lorenz, "Die Wissenschaftslehre Augustinus," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 67 (1955/56): 29–60 and 213–51.

22. See Augustine, *On the Trinity* 13.19.24, PL 42, col. 1034.

Christ and provides for a knowledge based on his authority.²³

In addition, there is knowledge from *signs*, which also enables one to go beyond the knowledge of immediate experience.²⁴ The external form of a perceptible sign refers to something else, hidden from the senses; smoke, for example, refers to a fire. Signs are of two kinds: either natural or “given” (*signa data*). Natural signs make us aware of something without the intention of signifying, as smoke makes us aware of fire. “Given” signs are signs that occur when someone wills they occur.²⁵ They are given by humans or by God. The most important of them is the Word. As a sign, the Word is a source of knowledge and learning. The words of Scripture are signs that refer to the transcendent. The key task of the interpreter of the Scriptures, therefore, is to interpret their transcendent reference. A genuine interpretation of the Scriptures yields knowledge of the verbal signs of the invisible God. Consequently, a correspondence exists between Augustine’s interpretation of the Scriptures and his theory of knowledge.

AUGUSTINE’S HERMENEUTICAL RULES

In *On Christian Doctrine*, Augustine developed principles and rules for the interpretation of

the Scriptures.²⁶ In so doing, Augustine provided important and influential contributions to rhetoric, education, theology, and hermeneutics. Augustine’s hermeneutical theory should be understood in relation to his Neo-Platonic background and his attempt to come to grips with the incarnation of the divine wisdom. The Platonic *chorismos* schema—namely, the distinction between the changeable and unchangeable, the temporal and eternal—provides the background theory to his rules of interpretation.²⁷ The changeable should be interpreted in relation to the unchangeable, the temporal to the eternal, the world to the transcendent, historical events to the divine plan of salvation, and the human Christ to the divine Word. Augustine’s hermeneutical theory bases signification on the ontological priority of the unchangeable eternal to the changeable and material.

This conviction (concerning the ontological priority of the transcendental reality over the material sign) leads Augustine to his basic principle of hermeneutics: what is of primary importance is not so much our knowledge of the material sign that enables us to interpret the eternal reality, but rather it is our knowledge of the eternal reality that enables us to interpret the material sign. This hermeneutical principle

23. See Augustine’s Letter 120 to Consentius 120.2.9.1–3, *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum*, 63, 182, 16–19. See Karl-Heinrich Lütcke, “Auctoritas” bei Augustinus (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1968).

24. For Augustine’s conception of sign, see R. A. Markus, “St. Augustine on Signs,” and B. Darrell Jackson, “The Theory of Signs in St. Augustine’s *De doctrina christiana*,” in *Augustine: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. R. A. Markus (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972), respectively, 61–91 and 92–137.

25. J. Engels, “La doctrine de signe chez saint Augustin,” in *Studia Patristica VI, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur* 81, ed. F. L. Cross (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1962), 366–73, argues that *signa data* should not be translated as “conventional signs” because of their intentional character.

26. See Peter Brunner, “Charismatische und methodische Schriftauslegung nach Augustins Prolog zu *De doctrina Christiana*,” *Kerygma und Dogma* 1 (1955): 59–69, 85–103; C. P. Mayer, “‘Res per signa’: Der Grundgedanke des Prologs in Augustins Schrift *De doctrina Christiana* und das Problem der Datierung,” *Revue des études Augustiniennes* 20 (1974): 100–112; Hermann-Josef Sieben, “Die ‘res’ der Bibel: Eine Analyse von Augustinus, *De doctr. chris.* I–III,” *Revue des études augustiniennes* 21 (1975): 72–90.

27. See Cornelius Petrus Mayer, *Die Zeichen in der gesitigen Entwicklung und in her Theologie des jungen Augustinus* (Würzburg: Augustinus Verlag, 1974), vols. 1–2.

10 applies not only to allegorical and typological but also to literal interpretation. To understand the words of the Bible properly as signs of eternal reality, one must acknowledge that reality.

Knowing the eternal reality requires a spiritual ascent and purification. Such a spiritual purification is, therefore, a presupposition for interpreting Scripture. "A real understanding of Scripture—one that does not stop at the external words—demands a moral purification, and Augustine proposes a scheme of seven stages leading to it."²⁸ The seven stages are the *fear* of God that leads toward a recognition of God's will; *piety*, so in meekness we attend to the Scriptures; knowledge that grasps that *charity*, the love of God and of neighbor, is the sum of the Scriptures; the gift of *fortitude* in hungering and thirsting for justice; the counsel of *mercy* by which one exercises the love of neighbor and perfects oneself in it; the *purification* of the heart from its attachments to the world; and finally, *wisdom* of divine contemplation.²⁹

The interrelation between spiritual purification and the interpretation of the Scriptures points to what in Augustine's view is the major problem of hermeneutics. This problem is not the distance between the horizon of past times and the horizon of present times. Nor is it the problem of grasping the literal meaning in its literalness, as in modern biblical fundamentalism. Though Augustine is aware of historical differences and of linguistic problems in ascertaining the correct literal meaning, for him the central problem of hermeneutics is much more basic. It is the problem of understanding the transcen-

dent referent. The person who interprets the words only in their literal or historical sense and not in their reference to the transcendent has failed to grasp the meaning of the Scriptures.

In cases of doubt, Augustine proposes some basic principles. One principle asks whether the interpretation in question leads to a greater love of God and neighbor. Indeed, he writes that if someone "is deceived in an interpretation which builds up charity, which is the end of the commandments, he is deceived in the same way as a man who leaves a road by mistake but passes through a field to the same place toward which the road itself leads."³⁰ The knowledge of Scripture entails for Augustine not new information but the discovery of God's will leading to the contemplation of eternal truths, the object of wisdom, and of the blessed life. Another principle underscores the communal context of interpretation, namely, the faith of the church as an interpreting community. This faith is most clearly manifest in the church's rule of faith as expressed in the creed.³¹

Today we face two contrasting tendencies. On the one hand, exegetical practice stresses a scientific objectivity and neutrality that aim to be free from subjective presuppositions. On the other hand, contemporary hermeneutical theory underscores the significance that one's pre-understanding and application have for interpretation. It is contemporary hermeneutical theory that seeks to retrieve and reappropriate (though with a contrasting horizon and different categories) the classic relation between life-practice and interpretation that Augustine

28. See Ragnar Holte, *Béatitude et sagesse: Saint Augustin et le problème de la fin de l'homme dans la philosophie ancienne* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1962), 342.

29. Augustine *On Christian Doctrine*, 2.7.9–11.

30. *Ibid.*, 1.36.41.

31. See Howard J. Loewen, "The Use of Scripture in Augustine's Theology," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 34 (1981): 201–24.

expressed with his combination of Christian beliefs and Neo-Platonic categories. Hermeneutical theory today affirms that a life-relation to the subject matter to be interpreted is essential to understanding. This hermeneutical affirmation raises the question of the proper life-relation to the subject matter of the Christian Scriptures.

This question (implied in the hermeneutical theories of Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer) has been raised within theological hermeneutics. Yet it has been raised quite diversely by existential hermeneutics and by liberation theology.³² The existential approach (represented by Rudolf Bultmann's classic essay on hermeneutics) asks: Since the Scriptures are about God's revelation, how then do humans have a pre-understanding of God's revelation?³³ Bultmann's answer refers to Augustine, for it asserts that the issue guiding our approach to the Scriptures is the quest for God that is implied in the question of the meaning of human life. Liberation theology, in contrast, understands this life-relation and pre-understanding as the self-transcendence of solidarity with the poor and oppressed. The existential question of Bultmann's hermeneutics and the solidarity affirmed by liberation theology both stand in a continuity—yet with considerable modifications—with Augustine's stress on self-transcendence and spiritual purification as a condition

for the proper understanding of Scriptures. As such, they contrast sharply with the objectivism of much modern historicism.

AUGUSTINE'S INFLUENCE ON THE WEST

Augustine strongly and directly influenced the method, content, and arrangement of medieval theology. His specification of the relation between faith and understanding was decisive for medieval theology and theological method. Augustine quoted an early Latin translation of Isa. 7:9 ("Unless you believe, you will not understand") in order to suggest not only that faith seeks and understanding finds, but also that one seeks understanding on the basis of faith.³⁴ This verse and idea find their classic formulation in Anselm's prologue to his *Proslogion*: "I do not seek to understand in order to believe, but I believe in order to understand. For I believe even this: that I shall not understand unless I believe."³⁵ For Anselm, the attempt to gain understanding and rational insight into the truths was an obligatory task and the key to his theological method. Anselm's explication of this Augustinian starting point provided the basis for the Scholastic theological method.

Augustine's view of faith's relation to understanding relates to his understanding of the role of authority in knowledge and the role of the church within theology. Augustine declared

32. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), secs. 31–32; Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd ed. (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 265–307.

33. See Rudolf Bultmann, "The Problem of Hermeneutics" and "Is Exegesis without Presuppositions Possible?" in *New Testament Mythology and Other Basic Writings*, ed. Schubert M. Ogden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984). Bultmann relates his notion of pre-understanding and question to Augustine: "Unless our existence were moved (consciously or unconsciously) by the question about God in the sense of Augustine's 'Thou hast made us for thyself, and our heart is restless until it rests in thee,' we would not be able to recognize God in any revelation" (p. 87).

34. Augustine, *On the Trinity* 15.2.2. The translation of the Latin Vulgate differed; it had "not abide" instead of "not understand."

35. See chapter 1 of *Proslogion*. For the context and role of Anselm in medieval theology, see Gillian Rosemary Evans, *Anselm and a New Generation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980); Richard Campbell, "Anselm's Theological Method," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 32 (1979): 541–62.

12 that the authority of the apostolic sees is what determines which Gospels are canonical; that is, the decisions of the apostolic sees are decisive for determining which texts are acknowledged as Scripture. In addition, the creeds as explications of the rule of faith provide a standard for the interpretation of Scripture. Moreover, Augustine's treatment of the articles of faith in the creed as the reality of faith, and especially the order of his exposition in the *Enchiridion* and *On Christian Doctrine*, influenced the structure and arrangement of topics in the medieval *summas*.³⁶ *On Christian Doctrine* divides the content of Christian doctrine into reality (*res*) and signs (*signa*). The signs are the words of Scripture, and the reality is the triune God. In *On Christian Doctrine*, Augustine discusses the Apostles' Creed (see book 1, chapters 5–21), and in so doing, he sketches the following outline of Christian doctrine: First is the reality, the triune God, the goal of all human striving. Second is the divine wisdom that has become human and who heals the sick. His teachings and gifts are given to the church, his bride, for the forgiveness of sins. This outline influenced two authors, Gennadius of Marseilles and Fulgentius of Ruspe, who in turn influenced the arrangement of the medieval *Summa sententiarum*.³⁷ Their treatment of the material is Augustinian and Western, especially insofar as they do not follow the Eastern stress on the economy of salvation, a stress that underscored the soteriological significance of the Christ event and the unity between

creation and salvation history. Instead, they follow Augustine's order and discuss first faith and then the objects of faith: God and Christ. They thereby pave the way for Peter Lombard.

After 1215, Peter Lombard's *Four Books of Sentences* was for all practical purposes the medieval textbook. Lombard follows the Augustinian outline, and he distinguishes between reality and signs. Books 1 to 3 treat the *res* (reality): book 1 treats the triune God, book 2 discusses creation, and book 3 discusses Christ (including the virtues). Book 4 is about the signs, the sacraments. Lombard's outline was taken over by many medieval theologians and strongly influenced the order of the presentation of their material.³⁸

Besides influencing the systematic arrangement of medieval *summas*, Augustine had an inestimable influence on concrete doctrines. It is impossible for Christian theologians to discuss the doctrine of the Trinity, the nature of sin, the theory of original sin, the role of grace, the efficacy of the sacraments, the nature of ministry, or the relation between church and state without reference to the contributions of Augustine. His influence extends not just to medieval theology, but also to the Reformation and to key theological movements within modern theology. Many of the views of Luther and Calvin were attempts to retrieve Augustine's understanding of grace and human nature. Within the twentieth century, this constructive influence remains: Reinhold Niebuhr's *The Nature and Destiny of*

36. See Alois Grillmeier, "Vom Symbolum zur Summa," in *Mit ihm und in ihm: Christologische Forschungen und Perspektiven* (Freiburg: Herder, 1975), 585–636.

37. The outlines of Gennadius of Marseilles's *Liber sive definition ecclesiasticorum dogmatum* and Fulgentius of Ruspe's *Liber de fide ad Petrum* show their indebtedness to Augustine and their contrast with Eastern theological treatises. See Alois Grillmeier, "Patristische Vorbilder fröhshcholastischer Systematik: Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Augustinismus," in Cross, *Studia Patristica* VI.

38. The outline influenced Thomas in the *Summa theologiae*, with some modifications. Thomas locates the virtues not in his treatment of Christ, but in his anthropology.

Man provided a brilliant reformulation of Augustine's understanding of human nature and sin and then applied that reformulation to political life.³⁹ Henri de Lubac sought to recover Augustine's understanding of nature and grace over against Neo-Scholasticism.⁴⁰ Karl Rahner sought to counter popular misconceptions of the Trinity by retrieving and developing some aspects of Augustine's theology of the Trinity.⁴¹

*Aquinas:
Scholastic Method
and Thomas's Sacra Doctrina*

In 1879 Leo XIII's encyclical *Aeterni patris* declared Thomas to be the leading Scholastic theologian, the Angelic Doctor, "omnium princeps et magister" ("prince and teacher of all").⁴² Thomas's influence upon Roman Catholic systematic theology is indeed unsurpassed. One cannot conceive of Roman Catholic theology without his influence. Yet much of theology that claims to be Thomist represents in reality theological presuppositions, views, and conclusions that are distinct from his. This difference is of such importance that within German theological literature, the terms *Thomanism* and *Thomism* are commonly employed to differentiate Thomas from Thomists.⁴³ Moreover,

within the course of twentieth century research on Thomas, clear-cut differences have emerged between how the Neo-Thomists understood Thomas that emphasized his Aristotelianism and his philosophical theology, and the current understanding of Thomas that underscores the theological character and purpose of his work and realizes its Augustinian as well as Neo-Platonic background.⁴⁴ The Neo-Thomists had interpreted with a specific polemic. They sought to use Thomas's philosophy as both a natural theology and a natural-law ethic to counter what they envisioned to be the influence of Kant on nineteenth-century philosophy and theology. As this polemic waned, so did that specific interpretation of Thomas.

I shall examine Thomas's understanding of theology in three steps. First, I shall consider the development of the Scholastic theological method as the context for his theological method. Second, I shall analyze Thomas's definition of theology and the specific meaning of the title *Sacra doctrina*. Finally, I shall address the criteria of theology. What constitutes for Thomas good theology, or what counts as a considered theological judgment? The answers to these questions display some of the considerable differences between medieval theology and contemporary theology.

39. Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man* (New York: Scribner, 1941).

40. Henri de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural* (New York: Herder, 1967); idem, *Augustinianism and Modern Theology* (New York: Herder, 1968).

41. Karl Rahner, *The Trinity* (New York: Crossroad, 1970).

42. On the authority of Thomas, see Heinrich Stirnimann, "Non-'tutum'-toto tutius? Zur Lehrautorität des hl. Thomas," *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 1 (1954): 420–33.

43. Gottlieb Söhngen, *Der Weg der abendländischen Theologie* (Munich: Pustet, 1959).

44. My brief survey in "The New Theology and Transcendental Thomism," in *Modern Christian Thought*, vol. 2, *The Twentieth Century*, 2nd ed., ed. James Livingston and Francis Schüssler Fiorenza (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 197–232; Wayne J. Hankey, "Thomas' Neoplatonic Histories: His Following of Simplicius," *Dionysius* 20 (2002): 153–78; idem, "Reading Augustine through Dionysius: Aquinas' Correction of One Platonism by Another," *Aquinas the Augustinian*, edited by Michael Dauphinais et al. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2007): 243–57.

**BACKGROUND TO
SCHOLASTIC METHOD
AND THEOLOGY**

The maturation of theology as an academic discipline coincided with the gradual development of the twelfth-century schools into universities. The growth of the universities and the advancement of the liberal arts had a decisive impact on the development of theology, particularly systematic theology.⁴⁵ At the beginning of the twelfth century, several kinds of schools existed in Europe: the monastic school, the cathedral school, schools attached to individual scholars, and in Italy, the urban schools that taught liberal arts.

Instruction at the medieval university developed from the reading (*lectio*) to the practice of the disputation (*disputatio*) of questions. This development provided the context for the emergence of the theological *summas* with their diverse “articles.”⁴⁶ Medieval university lectures first focused on the reading and learning of texts. Since the primary text was sacred Scripture, the discipline was called *sacra doctrina*.⁴⁷ The lectures on the text at first amounted to verbal glosses. The lecturer explained the words of the texts, the sense of the passages, and finally the *sentential* or diverse opinions about the more profound meaning and significance of the texts. The questions and opinions that arose in

relation to the meaning of the scriptural text increased in number and length. These questions, however, gradually detached themselves from the text in which they had originated. In becoming separated from the text, they were then collected, giving rise to florilegia, compilations, and *summas* in which diverse opinions regarding various questions were collected.⁴⁸

The development from the *lectio* to the *disputatio* entailed an important shift not only in teaching, but also in method. The *lectio* was primarily interpretive, for it consisted of a reading, exposition, and gloss of the text of some recognized authority. The *disputatio* consisted in a lively academic debate. It assumed divergence of opinion and differences among authorities. The method of disputation started out not from an authoritative text, but from a set of questions that pointed to a set of propositions that could be doubted. “From this starting point, the pro and con are brought into play, not with the intention of finding an immediate answer, but in order that under the action of *dubitatio* [doubt], research be pushed to its limit. A satisfactory explanation will be given only on the condition that one continue the search to the discovery of what caused the doubt.”⁴⁹ The “on the contrary” of the *quaestio* is not the author’s thesis, but rather the alternate position. The response of the master follows both posi-

45. Gillian Rosemary Evans, *Old Arts and New Theology: The Beginnings of Theology as an Academic Discipline* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980). For an outstanding survey of recent literature that locates the rhetorical function of his writings, see Mark D. Jordan, *Rewritten Theology: Aquinas after His Readers* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006).

46. M. D. Chenu, *Toward Understanding Saint Thomas* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1964). See also his *Théologie comme science* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1943).

47. See Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1952); Gillian Rosemary Evans, *The Language and Logic of the Bible* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

48. For the background to the development of the medieval *summas*, see Johannes Beumer, “Zwischen Patristik und Scholastik: Gedanken zum Wesen der Theologie an Hand des Liber de fide ad Petrum des hl. Fulgentius von Ruspe,” *Gregorianum* 23 (1942): 326–47.

49. Chenu, *Toward Understanding*, 94.

tions and resolves the doubts that the question raises.⁵⁰

For this method of instruction, the contribution of Peter Abelard and his student Peter Lombard was decisive. Peter Abelard compiled a set of passages from the patristic writings on issues of Christian doctrine and practice. He called this compilation *Yes and No* (*Sic et Non*).⁵¹ As its title suggests, the compilation uncovered the disagreements, contradictions, and differences of opinion in theology. Abelard's approach was innovative insofar as he applied a method common in canon law to issues of doctrine. Medieval canon lawyers, familiar with diverse interpretations of law and practice, sought to educate and to resolve disputes through such collections of conflicting opinions.

Abelard's introduction to *Yes and No* offered several rules for overcoming conflicts of opinion: (1) examine the authenticity of the text or passages; (2) look for later emendations, retractions, or corrections; (3) attend to diversity of intention—for example, the difference between a precept and a counsel; (4) note the distinction of historical times and circumstances; (5) attend to differences in the meaning of terms and their references; and (6) if unable to reconcile the diversity, give greater weight to the stronger witness or greater authority. In this endeavor, the Scriptures retained prime authority. Abelard sought to demonstrate the difference of opinion among Christian authors.⁵² It was they,

rather than the Scriptures, that disagreed, and it was their differences of opinion that needed resolution. Abelard's attention to the problem of the disagreements within the tradition came to characterize medieval theological instruction. His student Peter Lombard compiled a collection of diverse opinion that served as a text of medieval education.

THOMAS'S UNDERSTANDING OF SACRA DOCTRINA

In the twelfth century, the issue was not yet whether theology is a science, but rather whether faith is knowledge. A common answer was that faith is more than opinion but less than knowledge. Faith has more certitude than opinion but less than knowledge. Faith is neither a *scientia opinativa* (operative knowledge) nor a *scientia necessaria* (necessary knowledge), but a *scientia probabilis* (probable knowledge). Faith is, therefore, a form of knowledge that is a grounded opinion with probable certitude.⁵³ In the twelfth century, *sacra doctrina* was not yet distinct from the interpretation of Scripture. "Yet the idea of a scientific theology, which apodictically derived its conclusions from evident principles, led to a notion of theology as an independent question and consequently led to the question of its relation to the other disciplines."⁵⁴

This question of the relation between *sacra doctrina* and the other disciplines was discussed within the Franciscan schools. Edward

50. See F. A. Blanche, "Le vocabulaire de l'argumentation et la structure de l'article dans les ouvrages de Saint Thomas," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 14 (1925): 167–87.

51. D. E. Luscombe, *The Influence of Abelard's Thought in the Early Scholastic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

52. See the careful analysis of Abelard's intention and the correction of von Harnack's widespread view in Martin Grabmann, *Geschichte der scholastischen Methode* (Freiburg: Herder, 1911), 2:168–229.

53. See Richard Heinzmann, "Die Theologie auf dem Weg zur Wissenschaft: Zur Entwicklung der theologischen Systematik in der Scholastik," *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift* 25 (1974): 1–17.

54. Charles H. Lohr, "Theologie und/als Wissenschaft im frühen 13. Jahrhundert," *Internationale katholische Zeitschrift* 10 (1981): 327 (my translation). For a comparison of Augustinian and modern conceptions of science, see

16 Kilwardby had asked what the relation is among theology, metaphysics, and other sciences. The *Summa halensis* answers that both theology and metaphysics are wisdom, because they relate to the first causes. When medieval theologians first called theology a “science” (*scientia*), they often used the notion of *scientia* in a general sense.⁵⁵ William of Auxerre and Alexander of Hales sought to specify theology as a science by employing Aristotle’s notion of science. Thomas, however, went a step further in that he took over Aristotle’s division of the sciences and applied the notion of “subalternate science” to describe sacred doctrine as a science.⁵⁶

Thomas’s understanding of the nature of *sacra doctrina*, the subject matter of the first article of his *Summa theologiae*, has been and remains an object of considerable controversy. The first commentator on Thomas’s *Summa*, Thomas Cardinal de Vio Cajetan (1469–1534), argues that in the first article, *sacra doctrina* refers neither to faith nor to theology, but rather to the knowledge revealed by God. In the second article, it refers to knowledge as an intellectual habit concerning the conclusions drawn from that knowledge.⁵⁷ The Louvain theologian Francis Sylvius (1581–1649) argues that *sacra doctrina* is the habit of Scholastic theology derived from

the principles of faith.⁵⁸ In recent times, Yves Congar interprets *sacra doctrina* as the process of Christian instruction. It is, however, not just the academic theological discipline or simply a collection of theological truths, but rather the whole process of teaching and instruction. Congar interprets the notion of Christian instruction in a broad sense to include both Scripture and theology.⁵⁹ Gerald van Ackeran, following Congar, argues that sacred Scripture, sacred doctrine, and theology proper are distinct realities in a causal context. Scripture relates to *sacra doctrina* as an external instrument, as its efficient cause. God, however, is the principal cause.⁶⁰ Criticizing these approaches, James Weisheipl, a recent biographer of Thomas, argues that *sacra doctrina* primarily refers to faith,⁶¹ whereas Thomas O’Brien argues that it refers to a distinct academic discipline.⁶²

If one locates Thomas within the medieval discussions about academic disciplines, then it becomes clear that by *sacra doctrina*, Thomas meant an academic discipline alongside philosophy. Thomas uses the Aristotelian distinction of sciences to illumine his conception of “sacred doctrine” as distinct from the philosophical understanding of “theology” as the philosophical doctrine of God. Aristotle had distinguished

Charles H. Lohr, “Mittelalterlicher Augustinismus und neuzeitliche Wissenschaftslehre,” in *Scientia Augustinianai*, ed. Cornelius Petrus Mayer (Würzburg: Augustinius Verlag, 1975), 157–69.

55. See Peter Lombard *Sententiae* lib. 3, dist. 35, cap. 1.

56. For a survey of the diverse medieval positions, see Ulrich Körpf, *Die Anfänge der theologischen Wissenschaftstheorie im 13. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1974).

57. Cajetan, *In I Summa* q. 1, a. 1 and 2.

58. Sylvius, *Opera omnia* I, q. 1, a. 1.

59. Yves Congar, “Traditio und *Sacra doctrina* bei Thomas von Aquin,” in *Kirche und Überlieferung: Festschrift J. R. Geiselmann* (Freiburg: Herder, 1960), 170–210. French text in *Église et tradition* (Le Puy–Lyon: Mappus, 1963), 157–94.

60. Gerald van Ackeran, *Sacra Doctrina: The Subject of the First Question of the Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Rome: Catholic Book Agency, 1952).

61. See James Weisheipl, “The Meaning of *Sacra Doctrina* in *Summa theologiae* I, q. 1,” *Thomist* 38 (1974): 49–80. See his important biography of Thomas, *Friar Thomas d’Aquino* (New York: Doubleday, 1974); and his essay “The Evolution of Scientific Method,” in *The Logic of Science*, ed. V. E. Smith (New York: St. John’s University, 1964), 58–86.

62. Thomas O’Brien, “‘*Sacra Doctrina*’ Revisited: The Context of Medieval Education,” *Thomist* 41 (1977): 475–509.

two kinds of sciences: One proceeds from principles of natural reason, such as arithmetic and geometry. Another proceeds from principles that are from a superior knowledge. For example, optics proceeds from principles of geometry, and music from principles of arithmetic. Thomas suggests that *sacra doctrina* is a science of the second type (a subalternate science) because it proceeds from principles known in a superior science, namely, the knowledge that God possesses. By appealing to Aristotle's doctrine of subalternate science, Thomas not only affirms that *sacra doctrina* is a science, but he also establishes its distinctive source and authority. It is based on the knowledge that God has revealed. The knowledge proper to *sacra doctrina* comes to us only through God's revelation. Its principles are based on the revelation of divine knowledge and divine wisdom.

Thomas's understanding of *sacra doctrina* as a science involves the reduction or resolution (*resolutio*) of theological statements to the articles of faith. Yet such a procedure should not be understood as a purely axiomatic and deductive procedure, as if *sacra doctrina* were just another type of classical geometry. The personal faith in the articles of faith is important to his theological method in the sense that theology is anchored in the prescientific faith, in regard to both its content and its certainty. Through the virtue of faith, the Christian theologian participates in the divine knowledge.⁶³ Therefore, it could be stated that in addition to its axiomatic character, *sacra doctrina* has a hermeneutical character. Its task is to interpret the prescientific faith.⁶⁴

BASIS AND SUBJECT MATTER OF SACRA DOCTRINA

Having argued that *sacra doctrina* is a distinct discipline, Thomas then raises the issue of the mode of argument or authority within the discipline. How does *sacra doctrina* make judgments, and how does it argue? Thomas distinguishes carefully between making judgments according to inclination and making judgments according to knowledge (*per modum cognitionis*). The second way of judging characterizes *sacra doctrina* as an academic discipline. For as Thomas notes, this second way of making judgments is "in keeping with the fact that it [*sacra doctrina*] is acquired through study."⁶⁵

Basis of Sacra Doctrina ☉ The discipline of *sacra doctrina* is based on the Scriptures in two ways. First, since *sacra doctrina* has its origin in divine revelation, its authority is founded on the Scriptures of this revelation. Second, *sacra doctrina* is a distinctive discipline because it has its specific authoritative text, the sacred Scriptures. As a distinctive discipline, *sacra doctrina* has its own authorities. Its arguments proceed from the authority of divine revelation in the Scriptures. In Scholastic theology, the term *authority* has diverse meanings, most associated with a practice of teaching and arguing.⁶⁶ Instruction, even in nontheological subjects, was based on the texts of writers who constituted the authority in question. Authority referred to the status of a person who was qualified and whose writings were thereby trustworthy. The text itself, as a quotation from a writer, became a *dictum auctoritatis* (authoritative statement). Author-

63. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I–II, q. 110, a. 4: "Homo participat cognitionem divinam per virtutem fidei."

64. See Ludger Oeing-Hanhof, "Thomas von Aquin und die Gegenwärtige Katholische Theologie," in *Thomas von Aquino: Interpretation und Rezeption*, ed. Willehad Paul Eckert (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald, 1974), 243–306, esp. 260–70.

65. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 1, a. 6, ad 3.

66. M. D. Chenu, "'Authentica' et 'Magistralia,'" *Divus Thomas (Piacenza)* 28 (1925): 3–31.

18 ity and quotation thus became interchanged. In the disciplines, this respect for authority meant that academic work was often commentary or interpretation of an authoritative text.⁶⁷ Since *sacra doctrina* consisted primarily of a commentary on the Scriptures, it was also called *sacra pagina*, and its authoritative text was the Scriptures. As the disputation of individual questions increased and became independent of the interpretation of the text, the term *theology* came to replace these terms.

The authority that Thomas attributed to Scripture is evident in his division of authorities, where he distinguishes proper or intrinsic authority from necessary and probable argument.⁶⁸ *Sacra doctrina* makes use of sacred Scripture *properly*, and its arguments from Scripture carry the weight of necessity. Since Christian faith rests on the revelation given to the apostles and prophets, the canonical Scriptures have, for Thomas, a primal significance and authority. *Sacra doctrina* also uses the authority of the doctors of the church properly, but only with probable effect. *Sacra doctrina* relies on philosophers only as extrinsic and probable. It makes use of them only in those questions in which one can know the truth by natural reason.

This point is significant for understanding the relations between the Roman Catholic and the Lutheran and Reformed traditions of theology. Martin Luther sharply criticized Scholastic theology for excessive reliance on Aristotle's philosophy. Contrasting his theology of the cross

with a Scholastic theology of glory, he identified the latter with the natural theology of Scholasticism.⁶⁹ In the twentieth century, Karl Barth likewise sharply criticized the defense of natural theology on Thomist philosophy and theology. Such criticisms often overlook the authority and primacy of Scripture within medieval theology and for Thomas Aquinas. A Scandinavian Lutheran theologian, Per Erik Persson, has done a great service in arguing that Thomas attributes an authority to Scripture that is overlooked in the traditional Reformation and Protestant neo-orthodox polemic against Scholasticism.⁷⁰

The primacy that Thomas attributes to Scripture limits the role of philosophy. Philosophy cannot demonstrate the truth of *sacra doctrina*, since the latter's principles are based on revelation. Philosophy can only demonstrate that the truths of revelation do not contradict reason. Furthermore, philosophy can also illuminate the meaning of these truths by the use of metaphors and examples. Through logical explanation, philosophy elaborates the implications of the articles of faith.⁷¹

Subject Matter of Sacra Doctrina ☉ *Sacra doctrina* as a discipline has not only distinct principles but also a distinct object: God as the source and goal of all things insofar as they refer to God. Within an Aristotelian conception of science, the subject matter of a discipline is determined by the object or end that provides the unity of that discipline. For Thomas, God is the end that provides the unity of *sacra doctrina*.

67. See Edward Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967), 1:223–58.

68. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 1, a. 8.

69. See Martin Luther, "Heidelberg Disputation: Theological Theses," in *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, ed. Timothy F. Lull (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 30–32.

70. Per Erik Persson, *Sacra Doctrina: Reason and Revelation in Aquinas* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970). Eugene F. Rogers, *Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth: Sacred Doctrine and the Natural Knowledge of God* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), makes a similar reference to Thomas on Romans.

71. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 1, a. 5, ad 2.

Only to the extent that created things relate to God as their origin and goal are they the proper subject matter of theology.⁷²

This principle determines the theocentric structure of the *Summa theologiae*, which uses the Aristotelian causal schema as well as the Neo-Platonic *exitus-reditus* (procession from and return to) schema to express the relation of all created reality to God. Thomas's arrangement differs from that of other Scholastic authors.⁷³ Some followed a more systematic or conceptual order. Peter Abelard's arrangement was faith, love, and the sacraments. Peter Lombard referred to *res* and their signs. Others followed the order of salvation history. Hugo of Saint Victor, Alexander of Hales, and Bonaventure referred to the Christ and his redemptive work and benefits. In the decades immediately preceding Thomas, Peter Lombard's arrangement was modified through salvation-historical considerations, not in the sense of a chronological salvation history, but rather as the explication of God's work of creation and re-creation—the invisible re-creation of grace and the visible re-creation in Christ and the sacraments. This outline, evident in Magister Hubertus's *Colligite fragmenta* (1194–1200), is the pattern that Thomas followed.⁷⁴ However, Thomas stands in the context of the rediscovery of Aristotle within the West. He uses the Aristotelian conception of science (namely, the appeal to diverse causes:

efficient, final, exemplary, and material) to refer all to God's creative activity. He thereby elaborates God's work of salvation history, namely, creation and re-creation, into the Neo-Platonic *exitus-reditus* schema.

Thomas Aquinas and Magisteria ☉ The issues of the foundation and authorities underlying theology raise for us the question of the relation between theology and magisterial authority. At the time of Aquinas, an understanding of magisterium prevailed that differs considerably from ours. Today it has become customary to refer to a magisterium in a singular sense. This contemporary use of *magisterium* is the result of a long historical development and has diverse backgrounds.⁷⁵ Thomas employed the plural term *magisteria* and distinguished between a pastoral magisterium and a teaching magisterium.

Thomas distinguished between two functions, prelacy and magisterium, and between two kinds of teaching, preaching and doctrinal teaching. The function of prelacy (*praelatio*) belongs to the bishops, and their teaching involves preaching (*doctrina praedicationis*). Theologians have the function of magisterium, and their teaching involves Scholastic doctrine (*doctrina scholastica*). Whereas Thomas ascribes the title of magisterium primarily to the theologian in the forum of teaching magisterium, he attributes to bishops a magisterium of prelacy and

72. Wayne J. Hankey, *God in Himself: Aquinas' Doctrine of God as Expounded in the Summa theologiae* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

73. For a survey of interpretations, see Otto Hermann Pesch, "Um den Plan der *Summa theologiae* des hl. Thoma von Aquin. Zu Max Seckler's neuem Deutungsversuch," *Münchener theologische Zeitschrift* 16 (1965): 128–37; and his more recent book, *Thomas von Aquin* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald, 1988), 381–400.

74. See Richard Heinzmann, "Der Plan der 'Summa theologiae' des Thomas von Aquin in der Tradition der früh-scholastischen Systembildung," in Eckert, *Thomas von Aquino*, 455–69.

75. Yves Congar, "Pour une histoire sémantique du terme 'Magisterium'" and "Bref histoire des formes du 'Magistère' et des ses relations avec les docteurs," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 60 (1976): 85–98, 99–112. For the development of the concept of ordinary magisterium, see John P. Boyle, "The 'Ordinary Magisterium': Towards a History of the Concept," *Heythrop Journal* 20 (1979): 380–98; and 21 (1980): 14–29.

20 preaching. To quote Thomas's own terminology, bishops have a "pastoral magisterium" (*magisterium cathedrae pastoralis*), whereas the theologians have a "magisterial magisterium" (*magisterium cathedrae magistralis*).⁷⁶

Concerning what today is called the papal magisterium, Thomas attributes to the pope both judicial and doctrinal competence. Defining matters of faith is a judgment made by the pope, because the more important and difficult questions are referred to him. However, as Yves Congar points out, "It is fact that St. Thomas has not spoken of the infallibility of the papal magisterium. Moreover, he was unaware of the use of magisterium in its modern sense."⁷⁷

Neo-Scholasticism: Its Distinctive Characteristics

In the medieval period of Scholastic theology, diverse schools and traditions flourished. Bonaventure, Duns Scotus, William of Ockham, and many others contributed significantly to theology. Yet in the modern period, Thomism dominates. Thomas's *Summa* replaced Peter Lombard's *Sentences* as the basic textbook of classroom instruction. Although the Neo-Scholasticism that developed in the period following the Renaissance and the Reformation swore its allegiance to Thomas, it manifests decisive differences from Thomas's own thought and categories—differences that twentieth-century historical studies have brought to light.

FROM SCHOLASTICISM TO POST-TRIDENTINE CATHOLICISM

The transformations and shifts from medieval Scholasticism to Neo-Scholasticism were in large part occasioned by the controversies surrounding the Protestant Reformation and by the influence of the Renaissance. Some of the changes in theological method, however, had already begun within late medieval Scholasticism itself. These changes can be traced back to the development of theological censures. It was the issue of theological errors and the awareness of a distinction between theological and philosophical errors that led to a new development in theological method. They led to an increasing emphasis on authority and to a growing number of theological sources.

A comparison between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries makes this transformation obvious. In the thirteenth century, following Aristotle's notion of science from the *Posterior Analytics*, Thomas considered the articles of faith as the principles of an understanding and presentation of Christian doctrine. Thomas assumed that a basic harmony exists between natural reason and supernatural revelation. Disharmonies resulted from errors in philosophy, and one could correct them through the teaching of Scripture and the doctors of the church.

Certain developments within the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries made it no longer feasible to refer to Scripture and tradition as the basic authorities in the same way that Thomas

76. For the distinction between pastoral and teaching magisterium, see Thomas Aquinas, *Questiones de quodlibet* 3.4.1, ad 3 (Parma ed., 9:490–91). See also *Contra impugnantes dei cultum et religionem*, cap. 2 (Parma ed., 15:3–8). For the theological implications, see Avery Dulles's two essays, "The Magisterium in History: Theological Considerations" and "The Two Magisteria: An Interim Report," in his collection *A Church to Believe In* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 103–33. See also the special issue of *Chicago Studies* 17, no. 2 (Summer 1978), entitled *The Magisterium, the Theologian, and the Educator*.

77. Yves Congar, "Saint Thomas Aquinas and the Infallibility of the Papal Magisterium (*Summa theol.*, II–II, q. 1, a. 10)," *Thomist* 38 (1974): 102; Ulrich Horst, "Das Wesen der 'potestas clavium' nach Thomas von Aquin," *Münchener theologische Zeitschrift* 11 (1960): 191–201.

did. The controversy about the papacy as well as the conflict among councils, the papacy, and the universities with respect to the authority to watch over doctrine necessitated a more complex theological method. Such a method, initiated by John of Torquemada and used by Johann Eck in his debate with Martin Luther during the Leipzig Disputations in 1519,⁷⁸ was further developed by Albert Pigge and Bartolomé Caranza in the polemic of the Counter-Reformation.⁷⁹ This theological method sought to determine Catholic truths (*veritates catholicae*) by appealing to Scripture, tradition, the councils, the teaching of the papacy, and so on. Such a method signaled a situation far different from that of Aquinas. In the sixteenth century, the theological method became the search for the evident principles within the diverse sources. This question of the authorities within diverse sources faced Melchior Cano, a Spanish Dominican theologian. His proposals, influencing baroque Scholasticism, initiated the beginning of the development from Baroque Scholasticism to Neo-Scholasticism.⁸⁰

BAROQUE SCHOLASTICISM

Melchior Cano wrote *De locis theologicis* (literally, “concerning theological places”), a book about

the sources of theological authority. This book, published posthumously in 1563, represented a new and distinctive theological approach. In the Renaissance, various loci were assembled for different disciplines, and Cano extended this practice to theology. He developed a list of places where theology could look for the sources of its arguments and reasoning.

In adapting the practice of collecting various loci to the discipline of theology, Cano followed not the Aristotelian but rather the humanist concept of locus. This concept, developed by Rudolph Agricola, a humanist, followed Cicero and viewed the loci as *sedes argumentum* (authoritative source of the argument).⁸¹ How Cano differs from Aristotle is important. For Cano, the term *locus* did not refer to either the premises of a syllogism or the principles of theology, as within medieval theology. Instead, the term referred to the place where theology finds its authorities.⁸² Cano thereby sought to establish the foundations of Roman Catholic theology with reference to the weight of the authorities that underlie that theology. He listed ten sources of authority from which one could argue theologically: (1) Scripture, (2) oral tradition, (3) the Catholic church, (4) the general councils, (5) the Roman church, (6) the

78. See the two works by P. Polman, *Die polemische Methode der ersten Gegner der Reformation* (Münster: Aschendorf, 1931); and *L'élément historique dans la controverse religieuse du XVIe siècle* (Gembloux: J. Duculot, 1932).

79. Albert Pigge, *Hierarchiae ecclesiasticae assertio* (1538), and Bartolomé Caranza, *De necessaria residentiali personali episcoporum* (1547). See Charles H. Lohr, “Modelle für die Überlieferung theologischer Doktrin: Von Thomas von Aquin bis Melchior Cano,” in *Dogmengeschichte und katholische Theologie*, ed. Werner Löser et al. (Würzburg: Echter, 1985), 148–67, esp. 164–67.

80. For a corrective to many presentations of the significance and contribution of Scholastic schools of theology in Spain, see Melquiades Andres, *La teología española en el siglo xvi* (Madrid: Biblioteca de autores cristianos, 1976), vol. 2. For the theological method and Cano, see esp. pp. 386–424.

81. Cano differed not only from Aristotle but also from the Lutheran Scholastic Melanchthon, who used locus as a *locus communis*.

82. Whereas Ambrose Gardeil originally interpreted Cano as understanding loci in the Aristotelian sense, Albert Lang argues that Cano follows Cicero and has a different understanding of loci. See A. Lang, *Die theologische Prinzipienlehre der mittelalterlichen Scholastik* (Freiburg: Herder, 1964). The general interpretation today follows the direction

22 fathers of the church, (7) the Scholastic theologians, (8) human reason, (9) philosophers, and (10) history. The first seven were, according to Cano, properly speaking theological authorities, whereas the last three were extrinsic to theology.⁸³

A further development took place from the Baroque Scholasticism of the sixteenth century to the Neo-Scholasticism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For this development, the writings of the Parisian theologian Denis Petau (Dionysius Petavius) were decisive. Today one commonly thinks of Robert Bellarmine and Francis Suarez as the leading theological figures of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. At the beginning of the twentieth century, however, Neo-Scholastic theologians considered Denis Petau most significant, so much so that the Neo-Scholastic theologians Carlo Passaglia and Clemens Schrader labeled him “*theologorum facile princeps*” (prince of theologians).⁸⁴ Petau’s influence consisted not only in his development of the theological use of historical sources, but also in his understanding of the nature of theology.⁸⁵

Petau developed a conception of theology as a deductive science—a decisive shift from the medieval conception. Petau argued that theology achieves the status of scientific discipline to the degree that it employs a deductive method. Theology advances in knowledge by deducing conclusions from premises of faith by means of premises of reason. Philosophy is the interme-

diated link within a syllogistic process of theology. Petau’s conception presumed as an implicit background theory that a deductive syllogism constitutes the scientific nature of a discipline. Therefore, theology is a strict science, he argued, only insofar as it uses a deductive process to arrive at theological conclusions. This notion of the deductive, syllogistic theological conclusions became the distinctive Neo-Scholastic conception of theology as a scientific discipline. This understanding of the scientific character formed the structure and procedure of the Neo-Scholastic handbooks of theology.

NEO-SCHOLASTIC THEOLOGY

Characteristic of the Neo-Scholastic approach is the development of the theological manual, which became the major instrument of theological instruction. Whereas Baroque Scholasticism had produced several significant commentaries on Thomas’s *Summa theologiae*, Neo-Scholasticism’s distinctive contribution was the theological school manual. These manuals followed a set approach. They sought first to clarify the Catholic position on a particular topic, then to demonstrate its veracity with arguments drawn from the Bible and early church writers, and finally to refute the errors of Protestantism. This approach and the methodology of the manuals display the influence of Petau’s conception of theological method. Influenced by the Cartesian emphasis on clear and distinct ideas, Neo-Scholasticism sought to incorporate these scientific

established by Albert Lang. See also Elmer Klinger, *Ekklesiologie der Neuzeit* (Freiburg: Herder, 1978); and M. Jacquin, “Melchior Cano et la théologie modern,” *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 9 (1920): 121–41.

83. Lohr, “Modelle für die Überlieferung theologischer Doktrin,” 148–67.

84. See Walter Kasper, *Die Lehre von der Tradition in der Römischen Schule* (Freiburg: Herder, 1962), 379.

85. See Michael Hoffmann, *Theologie, Dogma und Dogmenentwicklung im theologischen Werk Denis Petaus* (Munich: Herbert Lang, 1976); Ignace-Marcel Tshiamalenga Ntumba-Mulemba, “La method théologique chez Denys Petau,” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 48 (1972): 427–78; and Leo Karrer, *Die historisch-positive Methode des Theologen Dionysius Petavius* (Munich: M. Hueber, 1970).

ideals into its theological approach.⁸⁶ The three elements of Neo-Scholastic theological method display a starting point and approach that differed considerably from medieval Scholastic disputation and from the Baroque Scholastic commentary.

Starting Point: Church Teaching ☉ The Neo-Scholastic manuals began their treatment of theological topics with theses explicating church teaching. The first text that adopted this practice was the 1771 *Theologie Wirceburgensis*—a widely used and distributed manual of theological instruction. The treatment began with a thesis about church teaching because Neo-Scholastic theology considered church teaching to be the immediate rule of faith (*re fidei proxima*). It was this teaching that provided a clear rule and definite standard, enabling believers to ascertain those truths contained in Scriptures and traditions. The Scriptures and traditions themselves were considered to be the remote rule of faith.⁸⁷ This distinction between immediate and remote rule of faith expressed the post-Tridentine and apologetical concern of Neo-Scholasticism to elucidate the content of the Roman Catholic faith in the most precise and shortest formulas. The exactitude and brevity facilitated the preaching, teaching, and learning of the formulas of faith.⁸⁸

Such an approach constituted two decisive changes from traditional Scholasticism: one affecting the form of presentation, and the other, the role of Scripture. The manner of presentation changed from the *quaestio* to the thesis. It was the *quaestio* in high Scholasticism and the

disputatio in late Scholasticism that provided a framework for teaching. Traditional Scholastic teaching began with disputed questions, whereas modern Scholastics began with theses about church teaching. This contrast between modern and medieval Scholasticism has been well described by Chenu, a noted historian: “For an article is a *quaestio*, not a *thesis*, the word that was to be used in the manuals. The change in terms is in itself a denunciation of the heinous reversal to which have been subjected the exalted pedagogical methods set up in the XIIth century universities: ‘active methods,’ mindful to keep open, even under the dead-weight of school work, the curiosity of both the student and the master.”⁸⁹

The second change concerned the role of Scripture. Medieval Scholasticism had given a priority to the Scriptures, and much of the instruction was basically a commentary on Scripture. Disputed questions were resolved by an appeal to authority, the most proper and intrinsic being Scripture, for as Thomas had maintained, an argument based on the authority of the Scriptures bore intrinsic and necessary probity. For Neo-Scholasticism, the situation was radically different. In reaction to the Reformation’s appeal to the Scriptures, Neo-Scholastic theologians began to argue that the Scriptures are often misinterpreted. Therefore, they argued that the church’s official teaching is the primary and proximate rule of faith.

This specification of official church teaching as the proximate rule of faith led to a distinctive characteristic of the Neo-Scholastic

86. Alexander Ganoczy, *Einführung in die Dogmatik* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983). For an analysis of the three-step method, see B. Durst, “Zur theologischen Methode,” *Theologische Revue* 26 (1927): 297–313 and 361–72.

87. See Kasper, *Die Lehre von der Tradition*, 40–47.

88. Ganoczy, *Einführung*, 130–43.

89. Chenu, *Toward Understanding*, 96.

24 approach, namely, the careful delineation of the binding or obligatory character of church teaching.⁹⁰ Theological propositions were classified regarding their centrality to faith, their degree of certitude, and their corresponding censure. Theological propositions could, for example, express truths that were formally revealed. These were classified as “of divine faith” (*de fide divina*), and their denial consisted of heresy. Propositions that were not only formally revealed but also defined as such by the magisterium were considered of “defined divine faith,” whereas what the ordinary magisterium taught as revealed truth was labeled simply *de fide*. In the next rank were statements that indirectly flowed from the teaching office of the church. They were defined as belonging to ecclesiastical faith as such, or they were simply and generally acknowledged as belonging to ecclesiastical faith. Other theological positions were classified with corresponding lesser notes, such as proximate to faith, theologically certain, of common opinion, and of probable opinion.⁹¹

The attempt at clear and distinct classifications of theological propositions corresponded in part to a philosophical attitude prevalent at the time. Neo-Scholasticism had a Cartesian scientific ideal of clear and distinct ideas. Through its distinct classifications, this approach of Neo-Scholasticism set the parameters of theological debates and discussions. Dissent and disagreements were possible but only within the framework of a graded hierarchy of propositions. Although in reaction to the Neo-

Scholastic approach many theologians have criticized such distinctions, today a balanced reassessment is taking place. Such classifications are not without value, for they had the advantage of identifying areas for disagreement and dissent. They prevent one from indiscriminately viewing all elements of the tradition as central and essential to the Roman Catholic faith.

Proof from the Sources: Scripture and Tradition ☉ The second step sought to demonstrate the truth of the thesis in its relation to the sources of faith, namely, Scripture and tradition.⁹² The demonstration from the sources followed a definite procedure. The demonstration took place not independent from the magisterial teaching, but precisely from the perspective of that teaching. It was not an attempt to provide a historical-critical analysis of the sources within their own historical context and questions. Instead, the selection and reading of the sources were determined by the proposition that one sought to demonstrate. In practice, the passages from the Scriptures and from early Christian writers were reduced to proof-texts for a particular proposition. They were often cited independently of their context and were interpreted primarily as demonstrations of the truth of a particular doctrinal thesis.

Such a procedure was explicitly justified by the distinction between the proximate and remote rule of faith. The proximate rule of faith provided the interpretive key for understanding the meaning and proof value of the remote source of faith. As one Neo-Scholastic theo-

90. For the distinctiveness of the Neo-Scholastic understanding of magisterium, see T. Howland Sanks, *Authority in the Church: A Study in Changing Paradigms* (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1974).

91. Francis A. Sullivan, *Creative Fidelity: Weighing and Interpreting Documents of the Magisterium* (New York: Paulist, 1996); and Harold E. Ernst, “The Theological Notes and the Interpretation of Doctrine,” *Theological Studies* 63 (2002): 813–25.

92. For an analysis of the Roman School’s understanding of tradition, see Kasper, *Die Lehre von der Tradition*.

gian explicitly advocated, “The demonstrative power of the Sacred Scripture, as inspired, as well as that of the documents of the tradition depend upon the church’s teaching office because those sources have value for us in the order of knowledge only as a result of the help of the teaching office.”⁹³

Speculative Exposition ● The third step sought to give a systematic explication of the thesis and thereby lead to a more profound understanding of its truth. The teaching of the church, affirmed in the thesis and demonstrated in the appeals to Scripture and tradition, was then in this final step further illumined through philosophical reflection. This reflection drew upon examples, analogies, and comparisons from natural experience. These examples illustrated the thesis and elaborated its meaning. In this step, the systematic reflection sought to relate the particular thesis to other beliefs and sought thereby to present the coherence of the thesis with the other beliefs.

At the same time, this step sought a certain “actualization” of the thesis. Insofar as it addressed questions of the day, it applied the thesis to concrete issues. In other words, it sought to demonstrate how traditional truths could be correlated with modern questions and contained answers to them. A further element present in this third part was the attempt to resolve the debates among the diverse Scholastic schools (for example, between the Thomists or Scotists or between diverse Thomistic opinions) in order to provide a greater conceptual clarification. Within the framework of Neo-Scholasticism, philosophical reflection served as an instrument or tool or theological reflection rather than as a challenge or critique. The purpose of philosophy

was to bring a deeper understanding of theological truths.

CRISIS OF NEO-SCHOLASTIC THEOLOGY

Today Neo-Scholastic theology is often criticized by those seeking to bring theology up-to-date. Such criticisms often overlook the achievements of Neo-Scholastic theology. It sought to deal with problems of its time, just as theologians do today. In the face of rationalist criticisms of revelation and concrete forms of religion, Neo-Scholastic theology sought to develop an apologetic for revelation and for institutional religion. In the face of the rationalist advocacy of clear and distinct ideas, it sought to define as clearly as possible what constituted Christian revelation. Its rationalistic understanding of truth in terms of definite propositions and distinct ideas was in part due to the rationalism against which it fought. In a period of ecumenical controversy, it sought to delineate carefully—though defensively—the distinctiveness of Roman Catholic identity. Neo-Scholastic theology sought to defend its faith against the challenges of its age. What today often appears as its failure can be in part traced to its indebtedness to the currents and categories of its own day.

Nevertheless, two basic problems led to a crisis within Neo-Scholastic theology.⁹⁴ These problems occasioned the shift from classical to contemporary approaches to theology. The first was the increased awareness of the historical character of human thought in general, which when applied to theology led to the recognition of the historical character of theological affirmations. The second was the development of a new relationship between theology and philosophy.

93. Durst, “Zur theologischen Methode,” 310 (my translation).

94. Walter Kasper, *The Methods of Dogmatic Theology* (Shannon, Ireland: Ecclesia, 1969).

26 The development of transcendental, phenomenological, hermeneutical, and existential philosophy affected a shift in the role of philosophy within theological method. Philosophy was no longer limited to an auxiliary or instrumental role within the theological task.

Summary

The three classic theological approaches (Augustinian, Thomist, and Neo-Scholastic) display common elements as well as significant differences. All emphasize the tradition (especially the Scriptures), the scientific character of the discipline of theology, the importance of the community of the church, and the role of experience. Yet how these four elements are interrelated and combined differs considerably. There is a shift from Augustine's emphasis on the relation between personal purification and the correct interpretation of Scripture, to Thomas's emphasis on *sacra doctrina* as an academic discipline with its authorities and rules, to the Neo-Scholastic emphasis on the church's teaching as the proximate rule to interpret Scripture and tradition as the remote rule of faith.

Yet each of these shifts cannot be understood without taking into consideration the background theories informing each approach's conception of what it means to be "scientific" and what it means to interpret the tradition. Augustine is incomprehensible without Neo-Platonism, Thomas without Aristotelianism, and Neo-Scholasticism without its rationalistic and Cartesian reception of Scholasticism. The attempt to think critically and theologically about the objects of the Christian faith is present in these three classic types of Roman Catholic theology, yet all three are intricately linked with specific philosophical and theoretical background theories.

Five Contemporary Approaches to Theology

Within contemporary Roman Catholic theology, many distinctive methods and approaches are employed. To give some idea of this diversity, this section describes several "ideal types": transcendental, hermeneutical, analytical, correlation, and liberation. These approaches represent ideal types to the extent that they are theoretically distinct. However, in practice, these approaches are not mutually exclusive and are indeed often combined. A specific theologian may predominantly follow one approach while at the same time borrowing insights, categories, and methods from other approaches. For example, a liberation theologian may, within a particular argument, employ a transcendental analysis or a recent hermeneutical theory, even though liberation theology as a theological movement is quite distinct from a transcendental or hermeneutical theology.

Transcendental Theology

Much of modern Roman Catholic theology that attends to the challenges of modern philosophy initiated by Descartes and Kant is best characterized by the description "the turn to the subject," that is, the focus on human subjectivity and its role within human knowledge and religious belief. Such a turn was particularly prevalent in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when many theological schools sought to take up the challenges of modern philosophy. These attempts, however, were rebuffed during the pontificates of Pope Pius IX and Pope Leo XIII. The latter sanctioned Thomism as the official philosophy of the Roman Catholic Church. Consequently, in the beginning of the

twentieth century, Thomism became the dominant Roman Catholic direction within philosophy and theology. However, in the 1940s and 1950s, a new beginning was made. This time, theology sought to integrate modern philosophy and Thomistic philosophy. This endeavor of engagement with modern philosophy, from its initial attempts to its rebuff and to its renewed attempts, needs to be examined in more detail.

THE TURN TO THE SUBJECT IN MODERN THEOLOGY

The efforts at incorporating modern philosophy came to fruition within the early nineteenth century. Georg Hermes, professor at the Universities of Münster and Bonn, sought to explicate a starting point for theology that incorporated the Cartesian principle of doubt. Anton Günther, though a private scholar and theological author in Vienna, was the most influential German-speaking Roman Catholic theologian of the nineteenth century. He sought to develop theology on the basis of an anthropology and categories that were strongly influenced by Descartes. Theologians of the Tübingen School (von Drey, Möhler, Staudenmeier, Kuhn, and Schell) were in dialogue with German Idealism, especially with such major figures as Hegel, Jacobi, Schleiermacher, and Schelling.⁹⁵ They sought to develop Roman Catholic theology by drawing upon these thinkers' insights and categories—though with considerable modifications—in order to relate the content and history of faith to human subjectivity. Although the influence of Schleiermacher's appeal to the human experience is

evident, Roman Catholic theology, especially the Tübingen School, took this influence in a specific direction with its influence upon history and tradition.

The Neo-Scholastic movement reacted against these attempts to reconcile modern philosophy and Roman Catholic theology. Ecclesiastical and political influences were brought to bear on Catholic educational institutions. As a result, several significant theologians lost their teaching positions. The papacy promulgated Thomism as the "official philosophy" of Roman Catholic theology. Yet this Thomism, today called Neo-Thomism, was a special brand of Thomism. It reacted against modern philosophy and the Enlightenment, yet it was as much a child of modernity as it was a foe of modernity. This Neo-Thomism sharply separated nature and grace, expanded the preamble of faith into a full-blown natural theology, and developed a fundamental theology and apologetics in distinction from systematic theology. These developments were deeply indebted to the very modernity that Neo-Thomism opposed.⁹⁶

The dialogue with modern philosophy, however, did not end with the imposition of Neo-Thomism. In time, the antimodernist polemic waned, and Neo-Thomists moved away from their polemic against modern philosophy. Instead, genuine historical studies flourished.⁹⁷ Within this context, attempts emerged among the heirs of the Thomist revival to relate Thomas's theology to modern philosophy. Those Roman Catholic theologians most influential at the Second Vatican Council and in postconciliar times were all trained in the Neo-Scholastic

95. For a comprehensive survey, see Donald J. Dietrich, *The Goethezeit and the Metamorphosis of Catholic Theology in the Age of Idealism* (Frankfurt: Peter D. Lang, 1979).

96. For the historical development of fundamental theology, see Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, *Foundational Theology: Jesus and the Church* (New York: Crossroad, 1984).

97. The works of Grabmann, Glorieux, and Chenu are just a few examples.

28 tradition and, with the exception of Hans Küng and Joseph Ratzinger, wrote their dissertations or first major works on Thomas. They sought to reinterpret Thomas Aquinas independently from the presuppositions and views of Neo-Scholasticism. They brought to the fore the theological dimensions of Thomas's thought. They recovered the Augustinian elements within Thomas's theology. They demonstrated that the abstract contrast between nature and super-nature in Neo-Scholasticism was not authentically Thomist. As a theological movement, this effort was powerful and effective because it neither jettisoned the past out of fascination with the modern nor rejected the modern out of nostalgia for the past. Rather, it opened a way to bring Thomas's theology in contact with modern philosophy.

The results of this movement are indeed impressive. Karl Rahner's study of the epistemology of Aquinas incorporates both Kantian and Heideggerian categories.⁹⁸ Bernard Lonergan's two dissertations (on operative grace and on the relation between inner word and ideas) relate Thomas to modern cognitional theory.⁹⁹ Edward Schillebeeckx's dissertation on Thomas's understanding of the sacraments relates the

sacraments to a phenomenology of encounter.¹⁰⁰ Both Henri Bouillard's study on the relation between grace and nature and Henri de Lubac's historical studies on the development of the notion of the supernatural show the importance of Augustinian elements—which Neo-Thomism had neglected—in Thomas's theology.¹⁰¹ Even the following generation of theologians (most notably, Johann Baptist Metz, Max Seckler, and Otto Hermann Pesch) continued this dialogue with Thomas Aquinas.¹⁰²

KARL RAHNER'S

TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGY

The development of the transcendental method in Roman Catholic theology is particularly significant.¹⁰³ The term *transcendental* is a technical philosophical term with diverse historical meanings. In Scholastic philosophy *transcendental* referred to what was applicable to all being. For example, "goodness" is transcendental because it applies to everything that exists (e.g., God, angels, human persons, objects of nature), whereas quantity applies only to material reality. In modern philosophy, Kant used the term *transcendental* to refer to the a priori conditions of possible experience. A transcendental analy-

98. Karl Rahner, *Spirit and the World* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1968). See the introduction by F. Fiorenza, "Karl Rahner and the Kantian Problematic," xxix–xl.

99. Bernard Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, ed. David Burrell (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1967); idem, *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. L. P. Burns (New York: Herder & Herder, 1971), 1224–30.

100. Edward Schillebeeckx, *De sacramentele heilseconomie* (Bilthoven: Nelisson, 1952).

101. Henri Bouillard, *Conversion et grâce* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1944); Henri de Lubac, *The Mystery of Salvation* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1967); idem, *Augustinian and Modern Theology* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1969).

102. Johann Baptist Metz, *Christliche Anthropozentrik* (Munich: Kösel Verlag, 1962). See also Max Seckler, *Instinkt und Glaubenswille* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald, 1961); idem, *Das Heil in der Geschichte: Geschichtstheologisches Denken bei Thomas von Aquin* (Munich: Kösel, 1964); Otto H. Pesch, *Theologie der Rechtfertigung bei Martin Luther und Thomas von Aquin* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald, 1967); and idem, *Thomas von Aquin: Grenze und Grösse mittelalterlicher Theologie* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald, 1988).

103. Otto Muck, *The Transcendental Method* (New York: Crossroad, 1968); and Harold Holz, *Transzendentalphilosophie und Metaphysik* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald, 1966).

sis, in this sense, investigates the conditions and possibility of knowledge through an analysis of human cognition.

Within contemporary transcendental Roman Catholic Thomism, the term *transcendental* carries a third meaning that combines the previous two. It includes the Kantian meaning to the extent that it refers to the subjective conditions of possible knowledge. In this sense, the term *transcendental* is given a theological twist insofar as it refers to the conditions of our knowledge of revelation. Systematic theology is transcendental when it investigates the “a priori conditions in the believer for the knowledge of important truths of faith.”¹⁰⁴ The term *transcendental* also retains an element of its Scholastic sense to the degree that it refers to the infinite horizon of human knowledge. In this sense, transcendental refers to the unlimited dynamism of the human intellect striving to grasp not just specific objects of experience but the meaning of the totality of reality.

The origin of transcendental Thomism lies with Joseph Maréchal, a professor of philosophy at the Belgian Jesuit Scholasticate. He related the metaphysics of Thomas Aquinas to modern philosophy, particularly that of Kant and Fichte. Through his teaching and his five-volume work, *Le point de départ de la métaphysique*,¹⁰⁵ Maréchal had an enormous influence upon continental Roman Catholic philosophers and theologians. Of the theologians influenced by Maréchal who have come to represent the

direction of the transcendental approach within theology, Karl Rahner is by far the most influential and renowned. Influenced not only by Maréchal but also by Martin Heidegger (especially his earlier work), Karl Rahner has written about the whole range of Christian theological topics. His editorial work is also extensive and influential. For years, he edited the Denzinger collection of church documents. As editor, he also published several major encyclopedias and dictionaries of theology, *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, *Sacramentum mundi*, *Dictionary of Theology*, and an important series on controversial questions, *Quaestiones disputatae*. He was also influential in establishing the international journal *Concilium*.

Rahner’s Starting Point ☉ Central to Rahner’s approach is his analysis of human experience of knowledge and freedom as an experience of an “absolute and limitless transcendentality.”¹⁰⁶ This experience both constitutes and expresses the historical nature of human persons as radically open toward the transcendent, as oriented to the absolute mystery called God. In Rahner’s view, this radical orientation toward the absolute is not only constitutive of human nature, but also results from God’s full historical self-communication and presence to humanity—a self-communication that has at the same time a history, namely, the history of God’s saving presence to the world.

Rahner’s Method ☉ Rahner outlines his method in several points.¹⁰⁷ First, through acts

104. Karl Rahner, “Transcendental Theology,” in *Sacramentum Mundi* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1970), 6:287.

105. Joseph Maréchal, *Le point de départ de la métaphysique*, 5 vols., 3rd ed. (Brussels: Museum Lessianum, 1944–49).

106. Karl Rahner, “Reflections on Methodology in Theology,” in *Theological Investigations* (New York: Crossroad, 1974), 11:94. For the argument that christological interpretation of anthropology avoids the charge of foundationalism that Rahner’s critics bring against him, see Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, “Method in Theology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner*, ed. Mary E. Hines and Declan Marmion (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 65–82.

107. Here I follow Rahner’s exposition in *Foundations of Christian Faith* (New York: Seabury, 1978), 208–12, which differs slightly from his essay on method.

30 of knowledge and freedom, human persons transcend themselves. The act of knowing an individual object or the act of willing an individual action has a dimension of unlimited openness. Knowledge and volition are not limited to one object or to one act but are unlimited. The first step is this experience of the limitlessness of our knowing and willing as an experience of the openness of our subjectivity toward the transcending infinite. The unlimitedness of the horizon of our knowing and willing comes to the fore in our questioning and searching for the meaning of the horizon of our existence. We look beyond objects of experience for meaning, and we are confronted with incomprehensible mystery.

Second, in this search for meaning, we experience ourselves as radically finite yet with unlimited questions. We experience reality as an incomprehensible mystery, but at the same time, we hope there is a fulfillment of the highest possibility of human existence. We hope that ultimately reality is meaningful. Though finite and limited, we have the hope for an absolute fullness of meaning. We hope and trust that the absolute mystery of our being is a Thou who is absolutely trustworthy.¹⁰⁸

Third, Rahner argues for unity between historical existence and subjective human existence. This unity means that God's self-communication (revelation) and the human hope for it are historically mediated. They "appear" together in concrete human history. Consequently, the historical and contingent at the same time announce and awaken hope in the presence of the infinite and absolute. In short, the human hope

for meaning is historical hope that emerges in history as a result of God's presence in human history. In Rahner's interpretation, the historical mediation of the infinite within the finite means that God is first of all present in the historical and contingent as promise and as hope in the face of human finitude and death.¹⁰⁹

Fourth, since human persons exist in history and time, they search history for God's self-promise as final and irreversible. They search history for an answer to their quest for meaning. They search for what could be considered an absolute fulfillment in itself of the meaning of history. They search for a historical event that brings an irrevocable promise to the world.

Rahner's final point is the development of the notion of "absolute savior," which he explicates with the argument that the historical mediation of God's irreversible presence to the world can be expressed only in a free subject. Only such a free subject can be the "exemplar" of God's presence. For God's presence to be freely offered and accepted, it must be made and accepted in a free human subject. Such an individual accepts human finitude and as such is accepted by God and thus has exemplary significance for the world.

COMPARISON BETWEEN AQUINAS AND RAHNER

A comparison between the *Summa theologiae* of Aquinas and Rahner's *Foundations of Christian Faith* illustrates important shifts in theological presuppositions and method. Thomas wrote the *Summa* as a handbook for students. Rahner wrote his book as a "basic course" (the origi-

108. See Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, "The Experience of Transcendence or the Transcendence of Experience: Negotiating the Difference," in *Religious Experience and Contemporary Theological Epistemology*, ed. Yves de Maeseneer and S. van den Bossche (Louvain: University Press, 2005), 183–218.

109. Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 210.

nal German title was *Grundkurs*) that aimed to introduce beginning theological students to Christian theology and faith. Although such a comparison is not entirely appropriate—for the former is a *summa* of theology, whereas the latter is a text of fundamental theology—the comparison is helpful in showing their distinct theological presuppositions.

Rahner begins with an analysis of human persons, their acts of knowing and willing, and their basic existential quest for meaning. The beginning chapters investigate the quest for meaning and experience of absolute mystery coupled with the experience of sin and grace. Rahner's starting point is anthropological not only insofar as he begins with this anthropological analysis, but also insofar as the content of the basic Christian beliefs is related to the anthropological question. God's revelation, salvation history, Christology, the church and sacraments, and eschatology are interpreted in relation to their significance for human nature.

Thomas's starting point and structure are theocentric. After the first question on the nature of *sacra doctrina*, Thomas begins part 1 of the *Summa theologiae* by addressing the issue of the existence and nature of God as one and trine; this is followed by a discussion of what God has created. Part 2 treats human nature and its virtues. Part 3 deals with Christology, the sacraments, and eschatology. This structure has been interpreted as following Aristotelian as well as Neo-Platonic patterns. Neo-Scholastic interpretations of Thomas underscored that the three parts fit Aristotelian categories of causality: part 1, God as the efficient cause; part 2, God as the final cause; and part 3, God as the exemplary

cause of all. Medieval historians pointed to the Neo-Platonic pattern that emphasizes the origin of all things from God and the return of all things to God (*exitus-reditus*).¹¹⁰ Part 1 is the *exitus*: God and the creation proceeding from God; part 2 is the *reditus*: the return to God; part 3 treats the model as well as the means of the return. These interpretations of the structure of the *Summa* convey its theocentric structure.

The difference between *Foundations* and the *Summa* is most conspicuous in regard to the locus and role of anthropology. Whereas Thomas located anthropology in part 2 of the *Summa*, Rahner locates anthropology in the beginning of *Foundations*. Anthropology constitutes for Rahner the starting point as well as constant reference point of theological reflection. The starting point is the human quest for ultimate meaning that raises the question of God and looks to history—specifically to God's revelation in Christ—for a response. The individual contexts of faith are all related to the structures of human existence and to the human quest for ultimate meaning. In this way, Rahner's theology seeks to relate anthropocentrism and theocentrism. They are not opposed, but proportionately correlated.

BEYOND TRANSCENDENTAL THEOLOGY

The turn to the subject not only represents an important movement of modern theology, it also underscores the theological task of relating the content and subject matter of theology to human subjectivity. Nevertheless, the turn to the subject is not without its criticisms. Hans Urs von Balthasar especially has argued that the anthropological turn in modern theology,

110. M. D. Chenu, "Le plan de la somme théologique de S. Thomas," *Revue thomiste* 45 (1939): 93–107. For an interpretation that suggests a salvation-historical outline, see Ulrich Horst, "Über die Frage einer heilsökonomischen Theologie bei Thomas von Aquin," *Münchener theologische Zeitschrift* 12 (1961): 97–111.

32 particularly as developed by Karl Rahner, reduces religious truth to the perspective of anthropology and thereby does less justice to other perspectives. Von Balthasar has developed his major systematic work as a triptych: The first part outlines a theological aesthetics that approaches revelation from the standpoint of the beautiful. The second part treats revelation as a dramatic interplay. The third part considers revelation as idea and word. The code words for the three parts are: theo-phany = aesthetics; theo-praxy = dramatic theory; and theo-logy = logic.¹¹¹ Von Balthasar has influenced Walter Kasper and Joseph Ratzinger in their respective criticisms of Rahner's transcendental approach. Kasper's own theological approach seeks to complement a transcendental approach with a systematic incorporation of history, the latter being indebted to the nineteenth-century tradition of the Tübingen School.¹¹²

In addition to such criticism of a transcendental method, other contemporary theological approaches attempt to go beyond a transcendental method insofar as they incorporate into the theological task other dimensions that relocate the role of human subjectivity.¹¹³ Contemporary linguistic philosophy and hermeneutical theory underscore that the human subject exists within a world of language and a tradition of cultural

meaning. Political and liberation theologies underscore that the sociopolitical arena is the broader context in which to view the human person. They emphasize the significance of the social and political for the formation and dignity of the human person. The differences from the transcendental approach will become clearer in analysis of these other approaches.

Hermeneutical Theology

Hermeneutics deals with theories of interpretation.¹¹⁴ All approaches to theology are hermeneutical insofar as they include interpretation, be it the interpretation of the Scriptures, creeds, traditions, or experience. Moreover, some theologians attempt to combine transcendental analysis and hermeneutical theory within their approaches. Nevertheless, recent hermeneutical theory underscores the transcendence of language to human subjectivity in a way that brings to the fore the differences between a transcendental and a hermeneutical approach to theology. At the same time, the emphasis within hermeneutical theory on the transcendence of language and on the universal scope of hermeneutics opens hermeneutical theory to the criticisms raised by liberation and political theologies as well as critical theory.¹¹⁵

111. For a criticism of Karl Rahner, see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Cordula oder der Ernstfall*, 3rd ed. (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1987). For an introduction to von Balthasar's own position, see Medard Kehl and Werner Löser, eds., *The von Balthasar Reader* (New York: Crossroad, 1982). His own systematic system is developed in three sets of volumes: *The Glory of the Lord*, 7 vols. (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1982–89); *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*: vols. 1–5 (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988–98); and *Theo-Logic*, vols 1–3 and *Epilogue* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2004–5).

112. Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ* (New York: Paulist, 1976); idem, *The God of Jesus Christ* (New York: Crossroad, 1984); and idem, *Theology and Church* (New York: Crossroad, 1989).

113. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, "Theology: Transcendental or Hermeneutical," *Horizons* 16 (1989): 329–41.

114. For a history of hermeneutics, see Richard Palmer, *Hermeneutics* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1969); and Kurt Mueller-Vollmer, ed., *The Hermeneutic Reader* (New York: Crossroad, 1985).

115. See Jürgen Habermas's critique of hermeneutical idealism in Justus George Lawler and Francis Fiorenza, eds., *Cultural Hermeneutics* (entire issue of *Continuum* [1970]: 7).

EXPERIENCE AND LANGUAGE

A major distinction between a hermeneutical and a transcendental approach rests on their different interpretation of the relationship between experience and language. Transcendental theology appeals to religious experience that underlies creedal and doctrinal formulations. Such a transcendental approach views language as expressive: doctrinal formulations are propositional statements that express a basic religious experience. At the turn of the twentieth century, modernist theologians viewed religious experience as much more basic than religious doctrine because they considered doctrines as mere linguistic expressions of religious experience. Therefore, they thought doctrinal formulations could be exchanged for different but equivalent formulations.

Hermeneutical theory criticizes this view on the following grounds: Such an expressive view of language and doctrine overlooks the degree to which language does not just express but also constitutes experience. Therefore, religious language is not only expressive, but also constitutive of religious experience. Thus, some hermeneutical theorists argue that one should understand religion not merely as an expressive phenomenon but rather as a cultural linguistic phenomenon.¹¹⁶ Others argue, on the contrary, that the cultural linguistic view of language is basically a further development that includes transcendental philosophy but goes beyond it.¹¹⁷ The hermeneutical view of the relation between language and experience has had signifi-

cant influence on theological reflection. In this regard, the philosophers Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur have been especially influential.

CLASSICS:

THE AUTHORITY OF A TRADITION

Gadamer's major point is that "understanding is to be thought of less as a subjective act than as participating in an event of tradition, a process of transmission in which past and present are constantly mediated."¹¹⁸ Employing several key ideas, Gadamer explicates this notion of understanding as a participation in tradition. The notion of the classic is central to Gadamer's hermeneutics. Classics are significant as outstanding exemplifications of human understanding. Moreover, classics have an "effective-history" to the extent they influence our horizon and specify our self-understanding. Opposing the Enlightenment's prejudice against tradition, Gadamer argues for a "pre-judgment" in favor of the classics. The endurance of the classic through history demonstrates its value and significance. A classic encounters us with a certain authority and claim.

The interpretation of classics is further explicated with the idea of the "fusion of horizons." Understanding takes place not insofar as one abstracts from one's horizon and places oneself in the shoes of the author, but rather insofar as one merges one's own horizon with that of the text and its author. The "fusion of horizons" is achieved when the classic is so interpreted that

116. This is the important argument made by George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 2009). His criticisms of Karl Rahner and of David Tracy tend to minimize the role of hermeneutical reflection within their theologies.

117. Charles Taylor, *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 1:213–92.

118. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, rev. ed. (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 290.

34 its claim upon one's own present is acknowledged.¹¹⁹

Gadamer's hermeneutical theory has been further developed and in part modified by Paul Ricoeur's explication of the significance of metaphor and narrative structure, as well as by his stress on the importance of interrelating the modes of explanation and understanding.¹²⁰ Commenting on Aristotle's definition of a metaphor in terms of similarity,¹²¹ Ricoeur suggests that a metaphor does not merely further explicate a similarity between images and ideas that is already present. Instead a metaphor produces a resulting similarity. Meanings, previously dissimilar, are brought together. The resulting "semantic shock" creates new meaning. A metaphor, therefore, forges a new meaning by bringing together opposing meanings. Ricoeur extends his analysis from the use of metaphor in sentences to the narrative structure of the whole text. The emplotment of a narrative creates new meaning by bringing together a plot and the characters, occasions, episodes, and events of the story.

Paul Ricoeur modifies Gadamer's hermeneutical approach by introducing "explanation" as complementary to "understanding." The hermeneutical focus on "understanding" takes into account the role of pre-understanding and life-relation vis-à-vis the subject matter of a text. Yet there are also methods of "explanation"—for example, historical-critical, social-critical,

and literary-critical analysis, and especially for Ricoeur, the structuralist analysis of sentences and texts. A full interpretation of the subject matter of the text must include not only the attention to our pre-understanding and life-relation, but also structural and analytical analyses.

Using the hermeneutical theories of Gadamer and Ricoeur, David Tracy explores the nature of religious and Christian classics. In addition, he defines systematic theology primarily as hermeneutical and proposes that the task of Christian systematic theology is the interpretive retrieval of the meaning and truth claims of the Christian classic.¹²² In explicating his conception of systematic theology as hermeneutical, Tracy accepts Gadamer's notion of understanding as participating in a tradition. However, he accepts Ricoeur's modifications of Gadamer and appropriates some of Ricoeur's categories. Therefore, Tracy underscores the importance of the explanatory modes of historical-critical, literary-critical, and social-critical analysis as complementary to interpretive modes of understanding.

BEYOND HERMENEUTICS

The development of hermeneutical theology coincides with the emergence of several crises. These crises affect not only our understanding of tradition and the sources of theology, but also our understanding of present-day experience.

119. *Ibid.*, 369–79. For two good expositions of Gadamer, see Joel C. Weishammer, *Gadamer's Hermeneutics: A Reading of Truth and Method* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); and Georgia Warnke, *Gadamer: Hermeneutics, Tradition and Reason* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987).

120. Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multidisciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977); *idem*, *Time and Narrative*, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984–88). See also Josiah Thompson, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

121. Aristotle, *Poetics* 1459a.4–8.

122. David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 99–153; *idem*, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987).

The first crisis involves the meaning and significance of tradition. The importance of hermeneutics increases the degree to which the meaning, significance, and validity of the religious tradition become remote and obscure to the present. The more the meaning and the authority of the traditional sources of theology become remote and obscure, the more it becomes necessary to interpret them so as to explicate their meaning and significance.¹²³ To the extent that the historical, cultural, and social distance between the past and the present increases so as to make the past more obscure, irrelevant, or even oppressive, the need for an interpretation of past traditions increases.

A second crisis affects personal experience. The more personal experience is no longer viewed as transparent, the more the need increases for a hermeneutics of experience. Today one often gives psychological, social, and behavioristic interpretations of human intentions and actions. The meaning of human action is no longer simply identified with the agent's self-interpretation of that action. The result is a conflict of interpretations of human action: one based on conscious intention, explicit motives, and self-interpretation, and another based on unreflective causes, social factors, and hidden reasons. The interpretation of experience and action becomes necessary insofar as the meaning of experience and action is no longer assumed to be manifest and evident.

These two crises lead to a third crisis, the crisis of hermeneutics itself, which emerges when interpretation alone does not suffice to re-

solve the other two crises.¹²⁴ This crisis occurs when not merely the application of a tradition's meaning and significance is at issue, but rather when the tradition itself is radically challenged or when the conflicts within the tradition are incapable of ready reconciliation. This crisis also occurs when an experience itself is challenged. Then the question is no longer a question how to interpret the experience itself, but rather the adequacy of the experience itself. In Claude Geffré's words, "The crisis of hermeneutics is not simply a crisis of language—it is a crisis of thought."¹²⁵ It is then necessary to go beyond interpretation to a reconstruction of either tradition or experience. What is at stake is not just the meaning of a tradition or experience, but its truth. As Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger notes, "Christian theology does not just interpret texts: it asks about truth itself."¹²⁶

Analytical Approaches to Theology

Some approaches are analytical insofar as they provide analytical tools that help one to carry out the theological task and to clarify theological issues. Two analytical approaches have become especially influential within contemporary Roman Catholic theology. These approaches attempt to underscore either (1) the significance of a metatheory, specifically epistemology for method in general and theological method, (2) or the significant role (often implicit) of models and paradigms in theological reflection.

123. See Odo Marquard, *Farewell to Matters of Principle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

124. Claude Geffré, *The Risk of Interpretation: On Being Faithful to the Christian Tradition in a Non-Christian Age* (New York: Paulist, 1987), 21–45.

125. *Ibid.*, 32.

126. Joseph Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics* (New York: Crossroad, 1988), 154.

**METATHEORY:
METHOD IN THEOLOGY**

Bernard Lonergan has contributed to contemporary Roman Catholic theology by showing that it is important for theology to address some basic questions of epistemology: What is the nature of human knowledge? What are the basic procedures of human cognition? Lonergan argues that such questions are much more basic than specific theological controversies and that they even underlie particular methodological issues, for epistemological assumptions, often implicit and unexamined, determine the outcome of these theological controversies and methodological issues. Such epistemological assumptions need to be examined, for they are fundamental not just to theology, but to every discipline and to every form of inquiry.

Lonergan has examined such basic questions and assumptions. He has developed an epistemological “metatheory” of human cognition and demonstrated its relevance for theological method. As a metatheory, his analysis of human cognition entails a high degree of abstraction. It analyzes cognitional structures and procedures that are often presupposed but not explicated in concrete theological debates. By examining the issues of epistemological metatheory involved in theological controversies, Lonergan has thereby related concrete theological issues to more general classic and perennial philosophical debates (for example, idealism versus materialism, subjectivism versus objectivism). He often resolves the theological issues with reference to philo-

sophical solutions. He shows that his philosophical advocacy of a critical realism over and against idealism and materialism is significant not only for epistemology, but also for concrete theological issues.¹²⁷

Lonergan develops his understanding of critical realism in relation to the transition from the classical Aristotelian understanding of scientific method to a modern empirical method.¹²⁸ He affirms that the result of every scientific method is open to further correction and revision. Thereby he emphasizes that genuine objectivity is not a naive realism that equates knowledge with simply taking a look. Objective knowledge is not merely a passive reception; it entails a critical realism in which the subjectivity of the knower also actively orders the world of meaning. This activity of human subjectivity needs to be taken into account in theological method. Lonergan’s account of theology does this in two ways: (1) by explicating the structures of human cognition; and (2) by developing the relation between the horizon of subjectivity and the structure of cognition.

Structure of Knowing and Theological Method ☉ Lonergan argues that knowing involves a fourfold structure: the experience of data, the understanding of their meaning, the assessment of their value, and finally an evaluative decision. Since this pattern of knowing takes place in all acts of knowledge, its structure is relevant to all disciplines and sciences, not just philosophy or theology. To illustrate its relevance for theological method, Lonergan

127. For example, Lonergan makes the cognitional issues relevant to Christology. See his *The Way to Nicea: The Dialectical Development of Trinitarian Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976). The development of trinitarian theology is sketched in relation to epistemology: Tertullian represents the approach of a materialist, Origen an idealist, and Athanasius a critical realist.

128. See Bernard Lonergan, *Insight* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957); idem, *A Third Collection* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985); and the commentary in Vernon Gregson, *The Desires of the Human Heart* (New York: Paulist, 1989).

proposes that the methods and tasks of theology are rooted in the more basic invariant structure of human consciousness with its movement from experience to understanding, to judgment, and finally to decision.

This structure provides a basis for classifying the diverse tasks of theology as diverse functional specialties. Lonergan relates the fourfold structure of knowing to specific intentional objects and to specialties of theology so as to divide the theological task into two phases. The first phase of theology corresponds to the fourfold cognitional structure. It involves research (assembling data), interpretation (understanding its meaning), history (judging the implied assertions and data), and dialectic (clarifying the issues and making a decision or taking a stand). These four procedures are transcendental in that they form the structure of all human knowledge. Everyone (believers, nonbelievers, scientists, philosophers) follows the same basic procedure. If someone wanted to criticize this cognitional scheme, Lonergan argues, that person would in fact prove its validity because he or she would need to assemble data, interpret and evaluate the data, and finally, make a decision.

The second phase of the theological task begins after one has made a decision and taken a stance. This phase, involving the subjective horizon of the theologian, encompasses foundations, doctrinal theology and systematic theology, and communications. It again follows the cognitional structure but in reverse. One moves from the foundation of a decision (foundational theology), to judgments of truth (doctrinal the-

ology), to understanding (systematic theology), and finally, to experience (communications—practical theology).

Conversion and Theological Method ❁ Crucial to the second phase of the theological task is the foundational role of the decision that is explicated by the category of conversion.¹²⁹ The notion of conversion brings out the significance of the intentionality of the knowing and believing subject for the constructive task of theology. Moreover, Lonergan's concrete explication of conversion expands his treatment from the realm of metatheory to a transcendental theology. Lonergan incorporates the intentionality of the knowing and believing subject into theological method through an analysis of conversion. He explicates the intentionality of conversion as intellectual, moral, and religious. Intellectual conversion involves deciding that knowing is not the same as simply taking a good look at the data or forming concepts. Intellectual conversion entails a decision and a movement of self-transcendence, for knowing entails a complex and reflective human operation of continued questioning for evidence, reasons, and comprehensive viewpoints.

Moral conversion changes the criteria for moral decisions from satisfaction to value.¹³⁰ Moral conversion entails opting for what one judges to be truly valuable and good, even when value and satisfaction conflict. Such judgments of value comprise knowledge of reality and an intentional response to value. Therefore, moral conversion presupposes intellectual conversion. Moreover, to the degree that value is placed

129. For contemporary expositions and further developments of Lonergan's notion of conversion, see Walter Conn, *Conscience: Development and Self-Transcendence* (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1981); Stephen Happel and James J. Walter, *Conversion and Discipleship: A Christian Foundation for Ethics and Doctrine* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986).

130. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Crossroad, 1972), 241.

38 above satisfaction, moral conversion is a form of self-transcendence and can be related to cognitive, moral, and affective development.¹³¹

Religious conversion, like intellectual and moral conversion, entails self-transcendence. Religious conversion, however, goes beyond the self-transcendence of intellectual and moral conversion insofar as it is constituted by that self-transcendence entailed in the shift to ultimate meaning and value. Lonergan characterizes religious conversion with the following set of terms: “being grasped by ultimate concern,” “other-worldly falling in love,” and “unrestricted love.”¹³² Religious conversion is not simply a matter of becoming religious, but is rather a total reorientation of one’s life.

Lonergan’s synthesis is not without its critics. Liking Lonergan to Schleiermacher, Langdon Gilkey has argued that the foundational role given to conversion lessens the public dimension of the theological tasks and opens Lonergan’s method to the charge of subjectivism.¹³³ Although such a charge raises an important issue, it overlooks the hermeneutical dimension of all experience. Understanding presupposes a life-relation to the subject matter to be understood. Therefore, religious knowledge and the interpretation of religious texts presuppose a life-relation to the subject matter of the text. The interpretation of religion involves a double hermeneutic, for that interpretation should be

based not only on the model or category that the interpreter uses to understand or to explain a religious event, action, or symbol, but also on the meaning that the religious agents themselves attribute to that religious event, action, or symbol.¹³⁴ Lonergan’s notion of conversion, coupled with his critical realism, seeks to hold in balance the tension between objectivity and subjectivity in a way that undercuts the criticism.

In addition, the critical question emerges whether major authors and positions in the history of philosophy (Hume, Kant, or Hegel) or in the history of theology (Tertullian, Origen, Athanasius) can be reduced to abstract epistemological categories such as materialistic empiricism, idealism, or critical realism, as Lonergan has often done. Nevertheless, Lonergan has provided an invaluable service. In applying his cognitional metatheory to specific historical theological controversies, he has highlighted the significance of epistemology for concrete theological positions.

MODELS AND CATEGORY ANALYSIS

The use of the term *model* has become widespread in a variety of disciplines. In the natural sciences, a model is a way of representing a phenomenon so as to illustrate some of its basic properties and their interconnections.¹³⁵ A model highlights certain features and neglects others. In so doing, it provides an arrangement

131. For the relation of Lonergan’s understanding of conversion to moral and psychological theories of development, see Walter Conn, *Christian Conversion: A Developmental Interpretation of Autonomy and Surrender* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1986).

132. *Ibid.*, 241–44.

133. See Langdon Gilkey, “Empirical Science and Theological Knowing,” in *Foundations of Theology*, ed. Philip McShane (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1972), 76–101. In the same volume, David Tracy raises a similar criticism; see “Lonergan’s Foundational Theology: An Interpretation and a Critique,” 197–222.

134. See my *Foundational Theology* (285–301) for arguments for the hermeneutical dimension of experience and the double hermeneutic that seeks to show that appeals to a neutral public or common experience overlook the conditioned nature of all experience.

135. Marx W. Wartofsky, *Models: Representation and the Scientific Understanding* (Boston: Reidel, 1979).

of concepts that delineates a specific vision of a phenomenon from a particular perspective. An analogous use of models has become current within systematic theology to illumine the perspectival nature of theological categories.

Avery Dulles and Models in Theology ☉

Avery Dulles, one of the leading contemporary Roman Catholic theologians in North America, has consistently made use of models within theology. He has used models to understand the church, revelation, the ecumenical movement, Christology, and Catholicism. His most influential application of models concerns the understanding of the church.¹³⁶ In *Models of the Church*, Dulles argues not only that various ecclesiologies differ in their understandings of the church, but also that this difference is in part due to the employment of different models of the church. He identifies institution, mystical communion, sacrament, herald, and servant as different models prevalent in contemporary theology. In later writings, he adds the model of discipleship as another comprehensive model.¹³⁷

The importance of this method (and, in part, a reason for the influence of Dulles's book) is that it enabled Roman Catholics of diverse theological persuasions to understand one another and to engage in a cooperative conversation. Theologians and ministers with an outlook based on the model of the church as institution did not understand the horizon of theologians and ministers influenced by a vision of the church based on the model of communion. The awareness of diverse models implies that each perspective grasps, in a particular way, a significant and indispensable dimension of the church,

while at the same time showing that other perspectives are equally valid. In the era following the Second Vatican Council, when diverse ecclesiologies often clashed with one another in theory and practice, such an approach contributed greatly to recognition and acceptance of diverse positions.

In his study of revelation, Avery Dulles proposed the following diverse models for interpreting different theologies of revelation: doctrine, history, inner experience, dialectical presence, and new awareness.¹³⁸ He proposes that an understanding of revelation as symbolic can best incorporate the perspectives of each of these models. These diverse models of revelation, moreover, often affect and underlie diverse conceptions of theological method as well as ecumenism.

Category Analysis ☉ In addition to analyzing implicit epistemologies and models, contemporary theology has become sensitive to the use of diverse categories within theology. There is thus an increasing awareness of the significance and diversity of categories that underlie theological affirmations. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has taken up this problem in its document *Mysterium ecclesiae*, which deals with the historicity of Christian doctrine.¹³⁹ This document affirmed several points: (1) the incompleteness of every doctrinal affirmation; (2) the contextuality of doctrinal affirmations insofar as they are responses to particular questions; (3) the linguisticity of all doctrines; and (4) the distinction between the truth affirmed in a particular doctrinal formulation and the philosophical categories and worldviews used to express that truth.

136. Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (New York: Doubleday, 1974).

137. Avery Dulles, *A Church to Believe In* (New York: Crossroad, 1982).

138. Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation* (New York: Doubleday, 1983).

139. The official English translation is "In Defense of Catholic Doctrine," *Origins* 32 (July 19, 1973): 97, 99–100, 110–23. See Ratzinger's commentary in *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 228–30.

40 *Mysterium ecclesiae*, written in response to Hans Küng's criticism of papal infallibility,¹⁴⁰ asserts that while doctrinal statements are historically and linguistically conditioned, they still are determinate affirmations of the truth. It maintains that doctrinal statements not only approximate the truth, but express some determinate aspect of truth, albeit in a historical, contextual, linguistic, and categorically specific manner. This affirmation of the historicity of the expressions and categories contained in doctrinal expression poses an important challenge for the understanding and assessment not only of the content of the doctrinal statements, but also of the categories central to theological method.

Traditional doctrines have been formulated with categories borrowed from particular philosophical traditions. Today the adequacy of such categories is often challenged and questioned. Does "transubstantiation" or "transignification" best express the Roman Catholic beliefs about the Eucharist? Is the formula "two natures and one person" adequate to express what traditional christological dogmas affirm? Is the reality expressed by the concept of "hypostatic union" better stated by the concept of "hypostatic identification"? Should the efficacy of the sacraments be expressed with the categories of Aristotelian causality or with categories drawn from a phenomenology of encounter? Hence, within theology, there is debate over whether the new categories or formulations are more or less adequate than the traditional ones. The philosophical debate underlying the theological debate is just as complex. The distinction between con-

tent and category or conceptual scheme is as much challenged as it is advocated.¹⁴¹

The analysis of basic categories is important for an understanding not only of doctrinal formulations, but also of theological method. Much of contemporary theology cannot be understood unless one takes into account certain shifts in basic categories. One example of such a shift is the result of Martin Heidegger's influence on Roman Catholic theology. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger argued that the ontological categories used from Greek philosophy to Descartes are inadequate to describe the temporality, historicity, and facticity of human existence in the world. Therefore, he sought to replace these categories with categories drawn from an analysis of human existence in its temporality.¹⁴² These categories, which he called "existential," characterize what is specific to human existence: being-toward-death, care, and self-interpretation.¹⁴³ Much of Rahner's theology can be adequately understood only when one realizes that beyond traditional Scholastic categories, he has appropriated Heidegger's "existential." In a similar fashion, Lonergan has shifted "from a faculty psychology to intentionality analysis" with the result "that the basic terms and relations of systematic theology will not be metaphysical, as in medieval theology, but psychological."¹⁴⁴ Similar examples could be drawn from other theologians (Edward Schillebeeckx, Piet Schoonenberg, Charles Curran) or from theological movements (e.g., liberation theology). Consequently, contemporary theology needs to engage in metatheoretical reflection

140. Hans Küng, *Infallible: An Inquiry* (New York: Doubleday, 1971).

141. See Donald Davidson's classic essay "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme," now in his collection *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984), 183–98.

142. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 41–49.

143. *Ibid.*, division 2, 277–487.

144. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 343.

on the basic categories employed in theological affirmations.

BEYOND METATHEORY

An important point in considering all metatheories, be they epistemological theories or analyses of models and categories, is that such metatheories are in themselves not theological methods, despite all their utility for theology and theological method. This point has been forcefully raised by Karl Rahner. In his comments on Lonergan's notion of functional specialties in theology, Rahner questions whether Lonergan's method is sufficiently and specifically theological.¹⁴⁵ In his view, Lonergan is not so much developing a theological method as he is describing the cognitional structures involved in every act of human inquiry from searching the skies for clues to the origin of the universe to searching a cookbook for data on how to bake a cake. The very title of Lonergan's book indicates this fact, for the work is not entitled "theological method" but rather *Method in Theology*.¹⁴⁶ A similar criticism can be raised against the use of models in theology. They provide helpful analysis, but theological reflection needs to go beyond merely analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of each model; it needs to take up theology's constructive and systematic task. In this regard, the following approach, employing a method of correlation, provides a more comprehensive view of theological method.

The Method of Correlation

The method of correlation emerged in the nineteenth century as an explicit theological method. In the twentieth century, it became widely accepted, particularly due to the influence of Paul Tillich. Some modified form of the method of correlation has been taken over by many major Roman Catholic theologians. A sketch of Paul Tillich's use of the method of correlation will provide background to its use in contemporary Roman Catholic theology.

BACKGROUND

The method of correlation has its origins in the "mediation theology" (*Vermittlungs-theologie*) of mid-nineteenth-century German Protestant theology that was a nineteenth-century reaction to Schleiermacher.¹⁴⁷ This theological movement sought to mediate between the traditional theological starting point of Scripture and Schleiermacher's starting point of religious experience. It advocated a method of correlation as a means to mediate science and faith as well as Scripture and reason.

Paul Tillich developed the method of correlation with a specific understanding of correlation.¹⁴⁸ The three possible types of correlation are (1) statistical, as in the correlation of data; (2) logical, as in the interdependence of concepts (for example, whole and part); and (3) real, as in the interdependence of things and events. These three types are also present in theology.

145. "Lonergan's theological methodology seems to me to be *so generic that it really fits every science*, and hence is not the methodology of theology as such, but only a very general methodology of science in general, illustrated with examples taken from theology." Karl Rahner, "Some Critical Thoughts on 'Functional Specialties in Theology,'" in McShane, *Foundations of Theology*, 194.

146. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*.

147. Ragnar Holte, *Die Vermittlungstheologie* (Uppsala: University of Uppsala Press, 1965).

148. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951–63), 1:59–66; see also 2:14. See John P. Clayton, *The Concept of Correlation: Paul Tillich and the Possibility of a Mediating Theology* (New York: De Gruyters, 1980).

42 The statistical correlation between religious symbols and what they symbolize constitutes the problem of religious knowledge. The logical correlation between concepts of the divine and those of the human determines the meaning of language about God and the world. And the correlation of the real interdependence of things and events is found in the correlation between one's ultimate concern and that about which one is ultimately concerned. This third correlation is specific to the relationship between the divine and the human within religious experience. This correlation in the divine-human relation expresses a real correlation between the divine and the human on the real and ontological level.

Tillich's definition and application of the method of correlation are diverse. He elaborates the method of correlation in terms of the correlation between question and answer as well as in terms of the correlation between form and content. Concerning the former correlation, he writes, "Theology formulates the questions implied in human existence, and theology formulates the answers implied in divine self-manifestation under the guidance of the questions implied in human existence."¹⁴⁹ His concrete application of the method of correlation is very complex, for he uses correlation not only to express the correlation between question and answer. He also uses the method to express the correlation between the form and content of human experience of finitude and human religious symbolization.¹⁵⁰ Tillich analyzes reason, being, existence, and history to underscore the emergence of a basic question that can then be

correlated with the symbols of revelation, God, Christ, Spirit, and the kingdom of God.

CORRELATION IN CONTEMPORARY ROMAN CATHOLIC THEOLOGY

Today many Roman Catholic theologians maintain that a method of correlation best expresses the theological task. As Hans Küng notes, a widespread consensus exists that theology deals with two poles and that these two poles must be correlated. Despite this consensus, important differences exist regarding how each of these poles should be understood and how they should be correlated. A brief description of five particular examples of the method will illustrate significant similarities and differences. These five are Edward Schillebeeckx's critical correlation and structural principles, Hans Küng's use of a critical confrontation between the historical Jesus and the present, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger's correlation between philosophical and theological inquiry, Rosemary Radford Ruether's correlation with the prophetic principle,¹⁵¹ and David Tracy's mutually critical correlation.

Critical Correlation and Principles of Identity: Schillebeeckx ☉ Schillebeeckx formulates the method of correlation as a "critical correlation between the two sources of theology . . . on the one hand the tradition of Christian experiences and on the other present-day experiences."¹⁵² This formulation of correlation differs from Paul Tillich's conception. Tillich distinguishes between the medium and source of revelation in order to affirm that experience is a medium but not a source of revelation. In dis-

149. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 1:61.

150. See Langdon Gilkey, *Gilkey on Tillich* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 56–78, 171–96.

151. Naturally, Ruether's work can also be categorized in relation to liberation theology and feminist theology—an indication that there is a considerable overlap or crisscrossing in the appropriation of different methods.

152. Edward Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report on the Books "Jesus" and "Christ"* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 50.

tion, Schillebeeckx's correlation is between "two sources" of theology, which he labels the two poles of theology: the experiences of the tradition and present-day experiences. He calls for a "critical correlation and on occasion the critical confrontation of these two 'sources.'"¹⁵³ Schillebeeckx further delineates these two poles.

In analyzing the tradition of Christian experience (the first pole), Schillebeeckx maintains that despite their diverse theologies, the New Testament writings have an underlying unity in a basic experience of salvation from God in Jesus. It is "this basic experience that is interpreted in diverse ways but nevertheless the same."¹⁵⁴ That experience is composed of four formative principles: (1) the belief that God wills the salvation of all (theological-anthropological principle); (2) the belief that Jesus is the definitive disclosure of God's starting point (christological mediation); (3) the belief that God's story in Jesus continues in the message and lifestyle of the church (ecclesial mediation); and (4) the belief that the story of salvation cannot be fulfilled on earth (the eschatological dimension).

In analyzing contemporary experience (the other pole), Schillebeeckx proposes that it is characterized by two contrasting elements: its hopeful orientation to the future and its confrontation with an excess of suffering and senseless injustice. The utilitarian individualism of Western modernity is a major reason and cause for this contrast. This utilitarian individualism leads both to the hope for the future and to suffering and injustice. While its central value is freedom, this freedom is permeated with utilitarian individualism, which, linked with science

and technology, often becomes a means of maximizing self-interest.

Schillebeeckx argues that a critical correlation should take place between the story of Jesus and modern utilitarian individuals. The story of Jesus evokes and calls us to conversion. The evoking of this metanoia is the goal of a critical correlation. Therefore, for Schillebeeckx, critical correlation primarily means the confrontation with the story of Jesus that elicits conversion. Underlying Schillebeeckx's understanding of the method of correlation is a distinction between ephemeral, conjunctural, and structural history. Ephemeral history is the fact-constituted history of the events of every day that come and go. Conjunctural history is much more expansive and includes the long cultural axes of history. Structural history is invariable, serving as the axis around which the ephemeral and conjunctural revolve.¹⁵⁵ The aim of a critical correlation is to ascertain the structural identity of Christian experience expressed in the diverse categories of conjunctural epochs, for example, Palestinian or Hellenistic. The purpose of ascertaining the structural identity within the conjunctural is to enable the identity of the Christian story to have an impact on the present Christian experience and thereby to allow the story of Christ's salvation to become for us an offer of salvation that confronts modern experience and critically corrects modern attitudes of individualism and possessiveness.

Critical Confrontation and the Living Jesus: Küng ☉ Preferring the term *critical confrontation* over *critical correlation*, Hans Küng has developed the method of correlation as a method of critical confrontation between the living Jesus

153. Ibid., 51.

154. Ibid.

155. See Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology* (New York: Crossroad, 1979).

44 and the present situation.¹⁵⁶ Küng changes the term *correlation* to *confrontation*; he prefers to speak of “two poles” rather than “two sources”; and he describes the two poles quite differently than Schillebeeckx does.

The task of theology is to bring about a critical confrontation between the living Jesus and the present situation. The first pole is the living Jesus, rather than the biblical symbol or the Christ of faith. Although, in the course of his writings, Küng has modified his position to include the Christian tradition, his emphasis is on the earthly Jesus. The earthly Jesus—the early Jesus as known through historical-critical research—is the norm and criterion for the Christian faith. In Küng’s words, historical-critical research on Jesus can help us see that “the Christ of faith in whom we believe is really the man Jesus of Nazareth and not someone else nor, by some chance, no one at all.”¹⁵⁷ Historical-critical research helps us avoid construction or adhering to false images of the Christ of faith. It brings us into contact with the Jesus of history, the norm and criterion of the Christ of faith.

In critically confronting the first pole with the second one, Küng also disagrees with Schillebeeckx’s description of the pole of contemporary experience. Küng does not follow Schillebeeckx’s view of modernity. It is not so much a utilitarian individualism that characterizes modernity and leads to the excessive suffering of modernity. Instead, modernity is characterized by the proliferation of bureaucracies and a lack of individual freedom. The freedom of Jesus’ critique of the law stands in critical

confrontation with the law of this bureaucratic modernity.

Correlation between Faith and Reason: Ratzinger ☉ In underscoring the distinctive and specific nature of Christian theology, Ratzinger argues that the Christian faith views the truth not as a particular truth about some specific thing but rather as the truth of our very being. Though Christian truth becomes accessible in faith, this truth illuminates the meaning of reality and addresses our intellect. Faith does not eliminate the human relation to truth, nor does it bypass analogy of reason. Analogy can be broadened and deepened, but it is not eliminated. Within the limitations of human possibilities, human reason is ordered to the truth. Consequently, Ratzinger maintains that “rationality belongs to the essence of Christianity.”¹⁵⁸

In his defense of analogy, Ratzinger takes sharp exception to Karl Barth’s critique of both the *analogia entis* and the role of metaphysics in theology. Ratzinger sets his understanding of correlation in contrast to Barth’s opposition to the continuity between the philosophical search for ultimate causes and the theological appropriation of the biblical faith. Ratzinger develops this contrast to Karl Barth by outlining three levels of correlation. The “first level of correlation between philosophical and theological inquiry” emerges when both philosophy and theology confront human mortality and ask about the origin, destination, and meaning of humanity.¹⁵⁹ The “second level of correlation” takes place when “faith advances a philosophical, more precisely, an ontological claim when it professes

156. Küng’s basic essay on the method of correlation appeared in Leonard Swidler, ed., *Consensus in Theology? A Dialogue with Hans Küng and Edward Schillebeeckx* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980), then with modifications in Hans Küng, *Theology for the Third Millennium* (New York: Doubleday, 1988).

157. Küng, *Theology for the Third Millennium*, 111.

158. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius: 1995), 56.

159. *Ibid.*, 23.

the existence of God, indeed of a God who has power over reality as a whole.”¹⁶⁰ The third level of correlation incorporates the element of love.

Ratzinger illustrates this final step of correlation in relation to two answers that Bonaventure presents in justifying the use of philosophical discourse to comprehend the biblical message. The first answer stems from 1 Peter 3:15, the classic scriptural reference within medieval Christianity for the justification of theology. The Greek text clearly underscores what is affirmed, that one should be prepared to give a defense (*apologia*) for the reason (*logos*) of our hope. This involves more than the apologetic function—though significant—of explaining to others the reason for what one believes. Such a function shows that faith is not simply a private matter left to individual decision. But on a more profound level, it indicates a missionary function: “Faith has the right to be missionary only if it truly transcends all traditions and constitutes an appeal to reason and an orientation to the truth itself.”¹⁶¹ In addition, Ratzinger notes that there is another justification for theological reflection. Realizing there is a violence of reason that cannot be correlated with faith, Bonaventure posits another motive for inquiry, namely, love.

Correlation and the Prophetic Principle: Ruether ☉ Rosemary Radford Ruether develops the method of correlation from a feminist theological perspective and with an emphasis

on the prophetic principle. She does not propose the method of correlation as a method of general consensus, as Hans Küng does. Instead, noting that the method of correlation can be diversely applied, she seeks to develop a liberation theology that takes race, class, and gender into account.¹⁶² She understands the prophetic principle as a dynamic critical principle.¹⁶³ It is a principle insofar as it does not refer to a specific tradition or set of texts; rather, it is a principle within diverse traditions and texts. As a dynamic principle, it is not static but changes and is transformed. As a critical principle, it criticizes oppression in the forms of classism, racism, and sexism. In her words, “Feminist theology that draws on Biblical principles is possible only if the prophetic principles, more fully understood, imply a rejection of every elevation of one social group against others as image and agent of God, every use of God to justify social domination and subjugation.”¹⁶⁴ As she has developed feminist theology, she has sought to broaden its scope beyond the method of correlation and has sought to incorporate environmental and global concerns.¹⁶⁵

Mutually Critical Correlation: Tracy ☉ David Tracy suggests that a “widely accepted definition” of the theological task is “to establish mutually critical correlations between an interpretation of the Christian tradition and an interpretation of the contemporary situation”; it is “a revised correlation method” that is “in fact

160. *Ibid.*, 24.

161. *Ibid.*, 26.

162. Rosemary Radford Ruether, “Is a New Christian Consensus Possible?” in Swidler, *Consensus in Theology?* 33–39.

163. See Rosemary Radford Ruether, “Feminist Interpretation of the Method of Correlation,” in *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Letty M. Russell (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), 111–24.

164. Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon, 1983). See her more recent interpretation in *Feminist Theologies: Legacy and Prospect* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007).

165. Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Integrating Ecofeminism, Globalization, and World Religions, Nature’s Meaning* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005).

46 nothing other than a hermeneutically self-conscious clarification and correction of traditional theology."¹⁶⁶ It is hermeneutically self-conscious because it does not so much appeal to the Christian fact as it appeals to mutually critical correlations between two sets of interpretations.¹⁶⁷

In elaborating his conception of the method of correlation, David Tracy takes over and develops the distinction that Schubert Ogden has proposed between criteria of appropriateness to the tradition and criteria of intelligibility to the situation.¹⁶⁸ Taking over the analytical distinction between truth and meaning, Ogden argues that the criteria of appropriateness, drawn from the apostolic witness, determine the meaning or identity of Christianity. The criteria of intelligibility to the situation provide criteria for the truth of the Christian faith.

Tracy carefully distinguishes and defines these criteria in developing his conception of the method of correlation. The criteria of appropriateness, understood as theological criteria, imply that it is "theologically crucial to judge every later theological statement in terms of its appropriateness to the apostolic witness expressed normatively in the Scriptures."¹⁶⁹ Such an interpretation of appropriateness differs consider-

ably from Ruether's emphasis on the prophetic principle or Küng's emphasis on the living Jesus. In distinction to Küng, it is "not the 'historical Jesus' but the confessed witnessed Christ that is theologically relevant."¹⁷⁰

The criteria of intelligibility address or correlate the message to the present situation. The criteria of intelligibility concern the issue of "relative adequacy" to contemporary experience and situation. It is important that the criteria of relative adequacy to the contemporary be such that they allow the classic event to have a disclosing and transformative impact on the situation. Tracy develops the nature of correlation with the help of the dialectic of event and response, the dialectic of explanatory and interpretive modes, and a model of conversation. The correlation between the two poles is understood as a conversation and a critical correlation. This correlation can differ insofar as the correlation can be one of identity, similarity-in-difference, or even confrontation.¹⁷¹

The diversity of approaches advocating that the proper method of theology is a method of correlation indicates how widespread is its acceptance. The method of correlation has much in common with classic conceptions of theology

166. Robert M. Grant with David Tracy, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 170.

167. David Tracy, "What Is Fundamental Theology?" *Journal of Religion* 54 (1974): 13–34. Revised as chapter 2 of *Blessed Rage for Order* (New York: Crossroad, 1975).

168. See Schubert Ogden, *On Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), 1–22. In addition to *Blessed Rage for Order*, see Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination* and *Plurality and Ambiguity*.

169. Grant and Tracy, *Short History*, 175. Tracy is aware that such a criterion can be taken to imply identity and exclude criticism from later development. Therefore, he nuances his statement: "Criteria of appropriateness insist that all later theologies in Christian theology are obliged to show why they are not in radical disharmony with the central Christian witness expressed in the Scriptures. In that restricted sense, Scripture, as the original apostolic witness to Jesus Christ, norms but is not normed (*norma normans sed not normata*) by later witnesses" (p. 176).

170. Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination*, 301–2 n97. See Elizabeth A. Johnson, "The Theological Relevance of the Historical Jesus; A Debate and a Thesis," *The Thomist* 48 (1984): 1–43.

171. David Tracy, "The Uneasy Alliance Reconceived: Catholic Theological Method, Modernity and Postmodernity," *Theological Studies* 56 (1989): 548–70.

yet also differs from these conceptions. On the one hand, it assumes the authority and validity of the pat religious tradition, correctly interpreted, and seeks to apply it to the present. On the other hand, it perceives a greater distance between past message and present situation than did traditional theology. Therefore, correlation is not simply a fact, but rather the result and the goal of the theological task. In working toward this goal, one often combines the theological method of correlation with other methods, such as a transcendental analysis of the religious dimension of human subjectivity or a hermeneutical retrieval of the significance of religious traditions.

BEYOND CORRELATION

Several reservations can be advanced regarding the method of correlation. However, in view of the diverse conceptions of correlation, these reservations are not equally applicable to all. First, the method of correlation often rests on a distinction between language and the reality expressed in language. Such a distinction downplays the historicity of language and culture, for it assumes that different cultural expressions, categories, and language can change while the reality expressed in and through these categories remains the same and, therefore, can be correlated.

Second, the method of correlation emphasizes continuity and identity. It does not sufficiently take into account change and non-identity in the development of faith and theology. Unless one excessively formalized the tradition to an abstract formula, it is necessary to understand the tradition in categories that go beyond correlation and include development, transformation, and change.

Third, the method of correlation does not sufficiently take into account the need for a critique of tradition. The critique I refer to is not simply a matter of criticizing the formulations of tradition in order that the underlying experience or affirmations of the tradition might more readily shine forth. Rather, this critique reexamines the experiences and affirmations themselves.

Liberation Theologies

The term *liberation theology* does not refer to a single theological method but rather to diverse theological movements. In a narrow sense, liberation theology is a contemporary theological movement within Latin America. According to this restricted definition, liberation theology is a movement that focuses on the political, economic, and ideological causes of social inequality within Latin American countries and between Latin America and North America. Strongly influenced by Johann B. Metz's development of a political theology,¹⁷² Latin American theologians offer a distinctive interpretation of modern society, eschatology, and political change. They advocate liberation rather than development as the central theological, economic, and political category. Even within this narrow sense, there is, however, a broad diversity of theological positions and method among Latin American liberation theologians.

In a broad sense, the term *liberation theology* refers to any theological movement that criticizes a specific form of oppression and views liberation as integral to the theological task. Feminist theologies, African-American theologies, and certain Asian theologies are major types of liberation theology. The term has also been appropriated by American Indians, ethnic groups, and

172. See Johann Baptist Metz, *Theology of the World* (New York: Crossroad, 1969).

48 other minority groups to express a mode of theological reflection. Despite significant differences among diverse liberation theologians, several common features characterize their methods. These characteristics allow one to speak of a shared method with four distinctive steps in common.

STARTING POINT

Liberation theologies take an analysis of their concrete sociopolitical situation as their starting point. Their analysis seeks to uncover oppression, exploitation, alienation, and discrimination. The interpretation of experience as an experience of oppression is common to all liberation theologies. For example, the stark contrast between the rich and poor within individual countries as well as between the advanced and developing nations leads Latin American liberation theologians to single out the relations of dependency and exploitation between nations as decisive contributing factors to this inequality.¹⁷³ African-American liberation theology focuses on the discrimination against Africans and African-Americans in the history of Christianity. Feminist theologians focus on the oppression of women in patriarchally structured societies.

CRITIQUE OF IDEOLOGY

The second common step is to read the tradition from the perspective of the experience of the oppressed. This reading involves a “herme-

neutics of suspicion” or a critique of ideology. It looks for ideological distortions in the tradition that led to oppression, and it critiques those elements. The degree and extent of suspicion in this hermeneutic vary from theologian to theologian. Quite often, Latin American liberation theologians seem to indicate that only the tradition subsequent to the New Testament or subsequent to the historical Jesus evidences ideological distortions. Many will, for example, critique this interpretive tradition in order to return to the original intention of the New Testament writings or to the historical Jesus, who was clearly on the side of the poor.¹⁷⁴

Within feminist liberation theology, the reading of the situation is much more complex.¹⁷⁵ First of all, the New Testament traditions are diverse. Whereas some traditions and texts are permeated with ideas and attitudes discriminatory toward women, other traditions proclaim the equality of male and female in Christ. An example of the former is the household codes of the New Testament that refer to the subordination of women to men and that incorporate an Aristotelian patriarchal order. They originated in an attempt to respond to charges that Christianity was antifamily or against Roman social order. Insofar as Christianity allowed women and slaves to convert to Christianity independently of their “head” or “owner” (the *paterfamilias*), Romans viewed and criticized Christianity for being antifamily and subversive of the social order. The household codes are in

173. See Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, rev. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988). On the relation between political and liberation theology, see Francis Fiorenza, “Political Theology and Liberation Theology: An Inquiry into Their Fundamental Meaning,” in *Liberation, Revolution and Freedom: Theological Perspectives*, ed. Thomas McFadden (New York: Seabury, 1975), 3–29.

174. Juan Luis Segundo, *The Historical Jesus of the Synoptics* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1985); John Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1987).

175. For the difference between the approach of Juan Luis Segundo and a feminist critical theory of liberation, see Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone* (Boston: Beacon, 1984), 43–63.

part explainable by this charge.¹⁷⁶ Consequently, the critique of ideology is in some feminist theologies applied not only to the interpretation of the New Testament, but to the New Testament itself.

Standpoints for the critique of ideology differ within liberation theologies. Some liberation theologians relate the current experience of oppression to other standards, such as the historical Jesus or the prophetic principle. The critique of ideology rests then on the correlation between the two standards. For others, such a correlation is often advanced with insufficient historical discernment. For them, the experience of oppression becomes a standard by which the Scriptures are read. Not only is the tradition of interpreting the New Testament “reread” in light of experiences of oppression, but the New Testament itself is also reread in light of those experiences. Therefore, the criterion of the critique becomes the experience of oppression; that experience serves as the basic criterion by which other criteria are evaluated.

SUBJUGATED KNOWLEDGE

In addition to criticizing ideological distortions of past and current cultural traditions, liberation theology understands the retrieval of subjugated knowledge as a part of its constructive theological task. The theological task thus includes retrieving forgotten religious symbols, neglected

ecclesiastical practices, and ignored experiences. While history often records the memory and interpretation of the victors, it often silences the voices and interpretations of the victims.¹⁷⁷ A task within liberation theology, therefore, is to bring to light the knowledge and experiences of those whose voices have been silenced.¹⁷⁸ Liberation theology uncovers in the past not archetypes, but prototypes of liberation.¹⁷⁹

PRAXIS AS CRITERION

Praxis is, within liberation theologies, not just a goal but also a criterion of theological method.¹⁸⁰ The Greek term *praxis* is deliberately used by liberation theologians to accentuate an important distinction that in fact goes back to Aristotle. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle distinguished practice (*poiesis*) as a technical skill, involved in making something, from practice (*praxis*) as a way of life. Whereas the former is a matter of technical skill (*techne*), the latter expresses a basic way of living.¹⁸¹ Adopting this Aristotelian notion of praxis, critical theorists and revisionist Marxists have sought to take up Karl Marx’s emphasis on social and political praxis while avoiding Marx’s technocratic and economic reduction of the notion.¹⁸² Liberation theologians have followed this direction insofar as when they affirm that praxis is both the goal and criterion of their theologies, they are affirming that their goal is not some technocratic

176. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her* (New York: Crossroad, 1983): 251–84. See also *idem*, *Bread Not Stone*, 65–92.

177. See especially Johann Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society* (New York: Crossroad, 1980); *idem*, *The Emergent Church* (New York: Crossroad, 1986); and Matthew Lamb, *Solidarity with Victims* (New York: Crossroad, 1982).

178. Sharon Welch, *Communities of Resistance and Solidarity* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1985).

179. Rebecca Chopp, *The Power to Speak* (New York: Crossroad, 1989). See her systematic appropriation of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza’s notion of prototype in chapter 2.

180. Clodovis Boff, *Theology and Praxis* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1987); Rebecca Chopp, *The Praxis of Suffering* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1986).

181. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 6.2.1139a.19–20; 6.4.1140a.1–23; 6.7.1141b.16.

182. See especially Jürgen Habermas, *Theory and Practice* (Boston: Beacon, 1973).

50 organization, some social structure, or some economic plan, but rather a way of life. The term *praxis* specifies that the liberation they seek is more than a mere technocratic or economic development—it is a liberation that has religious, social, political, and personal dimensions.

Toward a More Comprehensive Theological Approach

Contemporary theology faces challenges that make the ever-complex task of theology even more complex. Such challenges are cultural, religious, economic, scientific, and political. Moreover, how theologians interpret these challenges often determines how they understand the theological task. If theologians assess the present situation as secularized, as being characterized by the absence of past moral values and the demise of traditional religious meanings, then they view the retrieval of these values and the reactualization of these meanings as the paramount theological task. If they place the political, social, and racial oppressions in the forefront, then overcoming these oppressions is a major goal of theology. If they take human alienation or personal inauthenticity to be the basic problem, then the attainment of authenticity and the overcoming of alienation are their primary goals.

Present life experiences and praxis provide liberation theologians not only sources from which they criticize tradition and the present situation, but also criteria for the assessment of theological affirmations. At the same time, a liberated praxis is also the goal of liberation theology. As such, praxis is the other side of the coin of a hermeneutics of suspicion or the critique of

ideology. This emphasis on praxis within liberation theology can be seen as a sort of consequentialism within theology. As a key concept, however, it is in need of clarification. The appeal to praxis is often an appeal to the immediacy of experiences of oppression. Yet at the same time such appeals to praxis as a normative source and an anticipated goal raise the question of the assessment of praxis itself. If judgments are to be made about praxis, then certain legitimate and necessary questions emerge: What is the interpretive framework of such judgments? What background theories are implied or assumed in such judgments? How is praxis itself interpreted and assessed? Such questions move one to a theological method that includes praxis as a central theological and political element, but is a method necessarily broader in scope.

Characteristics of the Modern Situation

This section discusses three characteristics of the modern situation constituting a challenge for the theological task. These characteristics are not external challenges to theology, but are internal to theology and affect the very nature of theological reflection. These challenges are basic ambiguities that characterize our present situation. They are pluralism and unity, rationality and its critique, and, finally, power and its oppressiveness.

AMBIGUITY OF PLURALISM AND UNITY

The impact of cultural pluralism on theology is obvious. Pluralism has philosophical, religious, and political implications for theology. In a widely noted essay, Karl Rahner has argued that previously one could assume a particular philosophy or worldview as a standard

to which one could appeal to link theology and culture.¹⁸³ This philosophy, whether Thomist, transcendental, phenomenological, existential, or analytical, served as an accepted philosophical standard. Today, however, no single philosophy or philosophical view exists as such a standard or cultural medium for theological reflection. If one expresses Christian belief in particular philosophical categories, then one has not *eo ipso* made that belief more public or more warranted. Philosophical views are often no less particularistic than the religious beliefs themselves.

For theology, the consequences of such pluralism are twofold. First, one can no longer expect a synthesis between theology and culture. Some hold a romantic ideal that such a synthesis occurred in medieval times, and they long for its return, but that is a mere pipe dream. The pluralism of the culture itself hinders such syntheses. Second, this pluralism also implies that theology does not appeal to a particular philosophy as a link between faith and rationality. Instead, theology itself takes up the task of mediation in full awareness of the historicity of philosophy and the pluralism of theology.¹⁸⁴ Theology then seeks to articulate the Christian faith as existing within a pluralistic culture.¹⁸⁵

In addition to philosophical pluralism, the theological task must confront religious pluralism. The presence of other world religions and the reality of other faiths increasingly make their imprint on Christian theology. The ques-

tion of Lessing's "Parable of Nathan the Wise" has become paradigmatic for contemporary theology. In this parable, each son (representing Judaism, Islam, and Christianity) maintains that he alone has received the true ring (divine revelation) from his faith. The sons go before a court judge with their contesting claims. The judge observes that the ring is alleged to have a magic power affecting the life-practice of each bearer. Yet not one of them lives such an exemplary life of love that would prove possession of the true ring. The judge concludes that perhaps no one has the ring or maybe only in the future will the ring's power be manifest in one of them. The question remains unresolved and is left to some future and infinitely more capable judge to decide.

Lessing's position is somewhat enigmatic.¹⁸⁶ Is he affirming that no religion possesses the true ring, or is he more likely pointing to the importance of life-practice? Lessing's parable challenges us ever more today. We are more than ever aware that Christianity is one religion among many. Not just Islam and Judaism, but also Buddhism, Confucianism, and many other religions display the vitality and claims of their paradigmatic religious visions. When viewed together, they display the plurality of religious visions. They thereby challenge Christian theology to articulate the significance, meaning, and unconditionality of the Christian vision, not in isolation from other religious visions, but in relation to them.

183. Karl Rahner, "Pluralism in Theology and the Unity of the Creed in the Church," *Theological Investigations* (New York: Crossroad, 1974), 11:3–23.

184. For a contemporary account of rationality, see Hilary Putnam, *Reason, Truth and History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), esp. 103–218.

185. See Claude Geffré, "Pluralité des théologies et unité de la foi," in *Initiation à la pratique de la théologie*, ed. Bernard Lauret and François Refoulé (Paris: Éditions de Cerf, 1982), 117–42; Yves Congar, *Diversity and Communion* (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1985), 9–43.

186. See Henry E. Allison, *Lessing and the Enlightenment* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1966).

Yet modernity is characterized not only by the growing awareness of philosophical and religious pluralism, but also by the increasing realization of the unity of the world. Economic systems increasingly link nations and groups of nations with each other. Population growth and technological development take place in all nations within a natural ecosystem. Interdependency among all nations is not only economic, but also environmental. All humans depend on the ecosystem. In addition, the increased awareness of human rights (along with their violation) and democratic ideals as extending to all races, nations, and genders points to an increasing awareness of a “common humanity” of all peoples of the earth—an earth increasingly smaller through the growth in communications technology.

The task for theology is both to take pluralism seriously and to explore the particularity and significance of the Christian vision without reducing religious language to an isolated language game that neglects other religious visions and the global situation of humanity.

AMBIGUITY OF RATIONALITY AND ITS CRITIQUE

The task of theology relates to conceptions of rationality. The nature of rationality within the modern world faces a double challenge. It faces the challenge of the modern Enlightenment, and it faces the growing critique of the Enlightenment.¹⁸⁷ Both the Enlightenment and

its critique challenge theology. The Enlightenment and its modern conception of rationality have been significant for Roman Catholic theology, for in the Roman Catholic tradition, theology has always sought a unity between faith and reason. As Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger has recently argued, “Faith is not to be placed in opposition to reason, but neither must it fall under the absolute power of enlightened reason and its methods. . . . It has always been clear from its very structure that Christian faith is not to be divorced from reason.”¹⁸⁸

However, the Enlightenment had a very specific conception of rationality and knowledge. It believed that science had developed correct and cumulative methods of acquiring knowledge. By replacing ancient superstitions, traditional religions, and unexamined authorities, these methods gave promise for eliminating poverty and ignorance, for decreasing disease and hunger, and for providing an increase in material goods and happiness.¹⁸⁹ Today we are aware of the limitations of science and scientific rationality. Though we are aware that scientific rationality has led to great advances in technology and to significant material advantages, we are also aware of its limitations and dangers. The result is that we face a crisis of rationality. This crisis of rationality was articulated forcefully in the critical theory of the 1940s,¹⁹⁰ and the crisis is at the center of the current postmodern critique of technocratic as well as scientific rationality.¹⁹¹ The modernist belief in the progress of science

187. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Seabury, 1972).

188. Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 325.

189. See Langdon Gilkey, *Society and the Sacred* (New York: Crossroad, 1988), 3–14, 73–105. See also his earlier work, *Religion and the Scientific Future* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970).

190. Max Horkheimer, *Critique of Instrumental Reason* (New York: Seabury, 1967). See also, from a different perspective, Alvin Gouldner, *The Dialectics of Ideology and Technology* (New York: Basic, 1976).

191. See Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); idem, *The Differend* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988). For a general survey, see

and reason is intensely criticized for overlooking the negative side of this progress and for a “substitutional universalism,” that is, for claiming as universal what is in reality a specifically Eurocentric viewpoint.¹⁹²

This ambiguity of rationality and its critique presents a particularly acute challenge to theology. On the one hand, theological reflection cannot neglect the growth of methodology that has so affected the humanities. The theological analysis of religious classics and even the Scriptures cannot neglect the application of contemporary methods to these texts. In addition, many religious beliefs presuppose particular scientific worldviews, and these worldviews have at least been expressed in the religious beliefs. For theology to overlook the growth in scientific knowledge and rationality would be to withdraw into a ghetto. At the same time, theological reflection needs to avoid scientific positivism that apes the scientism of technocratic rationality. Moreover, since theology articulates the religious belief in transcendence, it has as its task to underscore what transcends scientific rationality. Thereby, theology offers a challenge to positivist and reductionist conceptions of human reason.

AMBIGUITY OF POWER AND ITS OPPRESSIVENESS

The modern world has witnessed an impressive growth of scientific, technological, and political power. The domination of nature and the structural organization of society have led to an increase in material well-being. Yet at the same time, this increase in wealth and health has gone

hand in hand with an increase in poverty and hunger. The domination of nature has gone hand in hand with exploitation and devastation of large segments of the globe. Growth in the standard of living has been limited to some people, nations, and continents. Alongside of increased prosperity is increased poverty. These exist not only in separate parts of the world, but side by side in the very same cities and towns. The growth in political power, freedom, and equality for some has been accompanied by racial genocide, gender discrimination, and national oppression. Power is two-edged: it not only enables positive control, but also makes possible exploitative domination.

This ambiguity of power challenges a reflective faith in two ways. First, the ambiguity presents a challenge that affects the mission and structure of faith. It calls for a faith that does justice, for a faith sensitive to the imbalances of power and wealth, for a faith with eyes turned toward the downtrodden and poor. Second, the poor and oppressed bring a view of society and history that is otherwise often neglected.¹⁹³ The sociology of knowledge has exposed the degree to which the material conditions of life shape culture and influence thought. The categories with which individuals understand reality or interpret their past develop within structures of power and domination. We stand in a life-relation and a power-relation that influence how we understand ourselves, our world, and others.

Consequently, as liberation theologians emphasize, the task of theology involves not only the critique of nonreligious ideologies that dominate the consciousness of societies, but also the

Steven Connor, *Postmodernist Culture: An Introduction to Theories of the Contemporary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989). For a critical view, see Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* (Boston: Beacon, 1987).

192. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, “The Impact of Feminist Theory on My Work,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* (Spring 1991).

193. Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor in History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983).

54 critique of the very ideologies permeating and fostered by religious traditions. The ambiguity of power challenges theology to be self-critical in its service to God, to humanity, and to nature.

Four Elements of a Theological Approach

The task of Christian theology is the elaboration of the Christian vision and identity in the face of these challenges. This vision encompasses not only discourse about God and Christ, but also discourse about the Christian community in its relation to other communities. Such a complex task is not arbitrary, but entails diverse criteria.

RECONSTRUCTIVE HERMENEUTICS: THE INTEGRITY OF THE TRADITION

The task of elaborating the Christian vision and identity encompasses many elements, including an interpretation of the Christian community's tradition, Scriptures, creeds, councils, practices, and past reflection. It also encompasses the attempt to bring the Christian community's tradition into relation with philosophical and scientific discourse, with the ongoing experience and practice of faith in the world, and with other communities of discourse with which the Christian community interacts.

Scripture and Tradition ☉ The interpretation of the Christian community's past involves an interpretation of the authority of its tradition. Within the context of the authority of the tradition, the role of Scripture and its relation to tradition are important issues that have become controverted since the Reformation. They received new significance through the Second

Vatican Council. The major impetus for the renewal of these issues came from intense historical research on the early Christian writers and the early church's liturgy and from the application of historical-critical studies to the Bible. The emergence of the biblical movement within the Roman Catholic Church has shown the importance of the Scriptures for Catholic spirituality, church life, and doctrine. This movement has led to a reexamination of the Council of Trent's teaching in relation to the Reformation's *sola scriptura*.

Two basic views of tradition have emerged, as can be illustrated by the debate between Joseph Geiselmann and Joseph Ratzinger. Geiselmann maintains that tradition is the living presence of Scripture. Tradition does not so much add to Scripture as it has translated Scripture into the living presence of the church. Geiselmann seeks to underscore his argument through a careful interpretation of the Council of Trent's position on the relation between Scripture and tradition and maintains that every age relates to Scripture.¹⁹⁴

Ratzinger makes a twofold argument that is important for our understanding of tradition. First, Geiselmann's position minimizes the role of the early Christian writers in the post–New Testament times and thereby dehistoricizes tradition. It overlooks that lacunae in the historical foundation do not speak against tradition. The dogmas of 1854 and 1950 affected the Roman Catholic understanding of tradition, for they presupposed that a historical demonstration did not mean that one had to demonstrate that a dogma was explicitly believed in at the beginning of the church, but only that a cross section

194. Joseph Rupert Geiselmann, "Das Konzil Trient über das Verhältnis der Heiligen Schrift und der nicht geschriebenen Traditionen," in *Die mündliche Überlieferung*, ed. Michael Schmaus (Munich: Kösel, 1957); idem, *The Meaning of Tradition* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1966).

of the church at times believed in it. Ratzinger in fact maintains that “whatever the whole Church holds to have been revealed *has* been revealed and belongs to the authentic tradition of the Church.”¹⁹⁵ The significance of the post–New Testament church has been eliminated by a historical-critical method that reduces faith to the Scriptures.

Second, Ratzinger shows that the understanding of tradition worked out by the Council of Trent was indeed nuanced and complex. Trent combined pneumatological, liturgical, and doctrinal views to emphasize diverse strata within the concept of tradition. Revelation is inscribed not simply in the Bible but also in the hearts of Christians. Consequently, the Spirit speaks through the whole life of the church, including its conciliar and liturgical activity. Trent’s teaching on tradition sought to affirm that the revelation of God in Christ “was accomplished in historical facts, but has also its perpetual reality today, because what was once accomplished remains perpetually living and effective in the faith of the Church, and Christian faith never simply refers to what is past but equally to what is present and to what is to come.”¹⁹⁶

Hermeneutics of the Tradition • The importance of tradition and its presence within the Christian church raise the issue of an adequate approach to the interpretation of tradition in regard to both its ongoing development and the continual reconstruction of its integrity. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith’s *Mysterium ecclesiae* points out the importance of linguistic categories, historical contextualization, incompleteness, and worldviews in a way

that acknowledges the historicity of tradition. It criticizes a position that in a Neo-Platonic fashion views tradition primarily as approximations to the truth, rather than as historically and linguistically conditioned affirmations of faith. An interpretation of tradition must seek to take into account the historicity of tradition as well as the significance of its affirmations.

It is important to avoid some basic misreading of the nature of tradition. These are views of tradition as static identity, decay, or progressive development. Each of these views captures some aspect of tradition but erroneously extrapolates this aspect into a total view of tradition:

In the view that affirms a *static identity*, neither decay nor development, neither change nor growth takes place. Instead, tradition appears as the affirmation of what always was, is, and will be. This view attempts to crystallize the value of tradition through an affirmation of a lack of change and development.

The second extreme, which views tradition as *decay* away from pristine origins, is more common within a direction of liberal theology influenced by Albrecht Ritschl’s critique of metaphysics than within Roman Catholic theological circles, though one does encounter it there also. It views the postbiblical period as a period of decay. The development of doctrine or the institutional growth and development of the church consist of a falling away from the pristine biblical charism. Today some even locate this decay within the New Testament itself. They seek to distinguish sharply between the historical Jesus or the early Christian community’s explication of its faith in the Christ

195. Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 139. See also Albert Lang, *Der Auftrag der Kirche* (Munich: Hueber, 1962), 2:290–92; Joseph Ratzinger, “Revelation and Tradition,” in Karl Rahner and Joseph Ratzinger, *Revelation and Tradition*, ed. Karl Rahner and Joseph Ratzinger (New York: Herder & Herder, 1966).

196. Joseph Ratzinger, “On the Interpretation of the Tridentine Decree on Tradition,” in Rahner and Ratzinger, *Revelation and Tradition*, 65.

56 and the later development of organized structures representing early Catholicism. This view correctly grasps the primal significance of the early New Testament witnesses to Jesus. However, it overlooks the significance of later development, be it the first centuries of Christian community or the medieval and modern development of Christianity. The essence of Christianity should not be reduced to an archaeology of beginnings.¹⁹⁷

The third view, which considers tradition as a *progressive development* or evolution, often presupposes an organic model of tradition. All development is looked upon as a progressive improvement. Such a view neglects the possibility of distortions. Moreover, it is important to acknowledge that previous ages of Christianity do not relate to the present as childhood or adolescence to maturity, for the non-contemporaneity of a previous stage can be a genuine challenge to the prejudices of modern developments.

Integrity of the Tradition ☉ In the interpretation of tradition, it is important to distinguish between the idea of a principle of Christian faith and the idea of the foundation of Christian faith. This distinction between principles and foundation is often used in moral philosophy and in epistemology.¹⁹⁸ One can illustrate this distinction in regard to the Christian tradition with the example of slavery. Today, as Christians, we affirm that slavery is wrong and that one cannot be a Christian and advocate slavery. Yet we cannot trace to the foundational origins of Christianity a prohibition against slavery. Quite the contrary. Yet today the incompatibility of slavery and Christianity is a principle of Christian faith and morals.

The tradition develops and changes in a way that constantly reconstructs what it considers to be paradigmatic, what it considers to be its vision or “essence.” How it does so cannot be adequately addressed in terms of categories of static identity, decay, or development. Instead, there is a constant reconstruction of its understanding of what is paradigmatic to its vision. In this reconstruction, background theories, retroductive warrants, and the community of discourse play important roles. Each of these will be further elucidated in detail in one of the following sections. In brief, background theories are implicit assumptions, philosophical or scientific, about the world and science; the notion of retroductive warrants refers to the way contemporary practices and experiences work backward to affect interpretations or hypotheses and their validation; and finally, the concept of communities of discourse refers to the fact that meaning and assessment take place in the context not of a form of abstract human reason, but in a specific historical tradition and linguistic community.

BACKGROUND THEORIES

The term *background theory* is currently used in the philosophy of science and in ethical theory to designate those implied theories that have an impact on considered hypotheses and judgments. The term has its origin in the philosophy of science. Henri Poincaré coined the term *auxiliary hypotheses* to describe the presupposed hypotheses about physical phenomena that are necessarily assumed in a given practical application of geometry. If the hypothesis does not agree with the observation, then one achieves coherence either by adopting different axioms

197. Joseph Ratzinger, *Das Problem der Dogmengeschichte in der Sicht der katholischen Theologie* (Cologne: Opladen, 1966).

198. See Alan Donagan, *The Theory of Morality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977).

or by modifying relevant auxiliary hypotheses. Within ethical theory, the application of ethical principles to practice entails relevant background notions about human nature or human society. In general, everyone makes use of some sort of background theories, but specific theories vary from person to person and from age to age.

Historically Considered ☉ Since background theories are implicit, they are often presupposed or assumed without explicit reflection. It is therefore important in reflecting about theological method to attend to the presence of implicit background theories. Judgments about Christian identity or Roman Catholic identity as judgments about the meaning of a religious tradition often rely on implicit background theories not only about the self, society, and the world, but also about the means and methods of interpreting past tradition and present experience. These background theories affect one's judgments about one's Christian or Catholic identity, just as one's judgments about identity affect one's assessment of the nature and appropriateness of various background theories.

The preceding discussion of the history of theological method referred to certain background theories: Augustine's understanding of Christian doctrine presupposed the Neo-Platonic theory of signs, the notion of interior light, and self-transcendence. Aquinas's understanding of *sacra doctrina* presupposed Aristotle's division of sciences, his notion of subalternate science, and the explanatory role of Aristotelian causality. Karl Rahner presupposed in part a transcendental understanding of experience and language as well as Heidegger's analysis of the existential of human *Dasein* (being-there). Con-

temporary hermeneutical theory, with its exposition of the classic, metaphor, and narrative, presupposed an understanding of the relation between language and experience that differs from that of the transcendental approach.

Systematically Considered ☉ The contemporary shift in philosophical background theory has been described by Bernard Lonergan as a shift from logic to method, from essences to systems, from a division of sciences according to formal and material objects to one according to fields and methods, from necessary deduction to probable inferences, and from faculty psychology to intentionality analysis. This shift from logic to method entails for Lonergan a conception of theology as an ongoing process of revision and correction.¹⁹⁹

My description of theology as encompassing diverse elements—the reconstructive hermeneutic of the tradition, relevant background theories, retroductive warrants, and the community as a community of discourse—concurs with Lonergan's basic description of the shift from logic to method. It suggests that one essential element of the systematic task of theology is the explication of theological reflection in relation to diverse background theories. Such theories are quite diverse. They include philosophical theories about human nature, ethical theories about social justice, psychological theories about personal development, scientific theories about the beginnings of the universe, epistemological theories about human cognition, and literary theories about interpretation—to name a few of the relevant background theories. Each can play a role in the development of a theology.

199. Nevertheless, insofar as my proposal suggests a method of broad reflective equilibrium, it places less emphasis than Lonergan does on intentionality analysis and the transcendental analysis of structures of cognition. Instead, it suggests that such analyses of human subjectivity and its structures of cognition provide one of several background theories.

The notion of reflective equilibrium suggests that theological reflection advances in part through a critical interaction between one's interpretation of the Christian tradition and one's interpretation of relevant background theories. The correction is mutual. It may very well be that a background theory influences the interpretation of the tradition. Scientific theories of evolution and literary theories about genre have influenced the interpretation of the Genesis accounts of creation. The Christian tradition's understanding of the dignity of the human person has influenced the assessment and adoption of psychological theories of human development. Sometimes the mutual influence is reciprocal: the biblical notion of solidarity with the poor and disadvantaged related to theories of social justice and the notion of a "difference principle" whereby the least advantaged in society are accorded rights.²⁰⁰

Any consideration of the relation between background theories and the interpretation of the Christian tradition needs to take into account the historicity of culture and the pluralism of society so that no one background theory is uncritically accepted as an infallible norm, even if it be the latest phenomenological theory about human intentionality, the most recent epistemological theory about the structures of human cognition, or the latest anthropological and psychological account of gender differences. Scientific and philosophical viewpoints of our culture are indeed also historically conditioned and subject to revision. A modernist theology that takes these background theories as infallible standards—be the theory an Aristotelian

account of virtue, a Husserlian account of subjectivity, or the latest philosophical theory espousing particularism and relativism—fails to recognize the historicity of culture.

RETRODUCTIVE WARRANTS

The terms *retroductive* and *retroductive warrants* are not commonplace. However, the terms have a specific meaning in current methodological discussion within contemporary philosophy of science, epistemology, and ethics, as well as a specific relevance to theological method. The meaning of the term *retroductive warrant* and its use within theological reflection can be illuminated in various strata: by its use within contemporary philosophy of science, by Newman's illative sense, by liberation theology's appeal to the hermeneutical role of the oppressed, and by Rahner's indirect method of theology.

Theoretical and Practical Fruitfulness ☉ A retroductive warrant within the philosophy of science of epistemology refers to the fertility of a hypothesis, idea, or theory.²⁰¹ It refers to the ability of the hypothesis or theory to carry forward the scientific enterprise. Retroductive warrants differ from experimental justifications. A retroductive warrant is not so much an inductive confirmation as it is the theoretical and practical fruitfulness that flows from the imaginative construal of all the available evidence. A warrant is retroductive to the extent that it offers the most feasible and comprehensive explanation of the phenomenon, accounts for unexpected and unanticipated phenomena, and enables the scientific endeavor to move on in practice.

200. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, "Politische Theologie und liberale Gerechtigkeits-Konzeption," in *Mystik und Politik: Johann Baptist Metz zu Ehren*, ed. Edward Schillebeeckx (Mainz: Grünewald, 1988), 105–17.

201. See Ernan McMullin, "The Fertility of Theory and the Unit for Appraisal in Science," *Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science* 39 (1976): 395–432.

This theoretical and practical fruitfulness is both prospective and retrospective. It is prospective in that a good theory anticipates novel phenomena, that is, phenomena not belonging to the data to be explained. The more novel and unexpected phenomena are predicted and explained, the more adequate the theory. Such fruitfulness prevents a theory from being merely an ad hoc explanation. Such fruitfulness is also retrospective to the extent that it is better able to help organize, integrate, and explain the past data and phenomena.

Recently, Ernan McMullin, a philosopher of science, has compared a scientist's development of a theory to a poet's development of a metaphor.²⁰² The poet develops the metaphor not by implication but by suggestions. The metaphor explores what is not well understood in advance, and through creative suggestion, it illumines past, present, and future experience. In my opinion, the situation is analogous for theology. Theological theory advances not simply by implication or correlation, but rather through the creative suggestion by which the experience of the community's past, present, and future is illuminated. Theological reflection advances when it offers creative metaphors that enable the community to carry forth and reconstruct its tradition in relation to its ongoing experience.

Illative Sense ☉ The idea of retroductive warrants from experience can also be illustrated by John Henry Newman's notion of an illative sense.²⁰³ This notion of the illative sense

in particular influenced twentieth-century Roman Catholic fundamental theology (especially Rahner and Lonergan).²⁰⁴ With his notion of the illative sense, Newman anticipated much of the contemporary neopragmatic and hermeneutic critique of an abstract conception of reason or of a strictly formal conception of method and rational argumentation. Modern pragmatic philosophers have criticized a Cartesian type of foundationalism that starts from absolute doubt. The illative sense represented Newman's attempt to criticize abstract starting points and steer a middle path between reducing religion to a matter of emotion or sentiment and reducing argumentation to a formal logical or deductive reasoning. He drew on Aristotle's notion of prudent practical judgment (*phronesis*) to illustrate a type of knowledge that he called the illative sense. This illative sense, however, has a theoretical dimension that goes beyond Aristotle's limitation of prudential knowledge to practical knowledge.²⁰⁵ The detective, the farmer, and the scholar make judgments based on their reflective intuitions. These judgments are related to their experience and character.

Religious judgments are similar to moral judgments. They are not simply the outcome of abstract logic, but result from practical reasoning. Just as practical reason is based on a learned experience, so too does a link exist between moral knowledge and ethical experience. The illative sense is therefore linked to the character and experience of individuals that affect the

202. Ernan McMullin, "The Motive for Metaphor," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 55 (1982): 27–39; idem, "A Case for Scientific Realism," in *Scientific Realism*, ed. Jarrett Leplin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 8–40, esp. 26–35.

203. John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), esp. chs. 8–10.

204. See Thomas J. Norris, *Newman and His Theological Method* (Leiden: Brill, 1977); Avery Dulles, *Newman* (New York: Continuum, 2002).

205. Gerard Verbeeck, "Aristotelian Roots of Newman's Illative Sense," in *Newman and Gladstone Centennial Essays*, ed. James D. Bastable (Dublin: Veritas, 1978), 177–95.

60 beginning, process, and conclusion of reasoned and considered judgments. In short, practical experience determines what persons become; it affects not only who they are but also their whole process of reasoning, ranging from the selection of principles to the mode of argumentation, to the construction of conclusions.

Hermeneutical Role of the Oppressed ☉ The determinations of reasoning by character and experience—determinations illustrative of the illative sense—receive a concrete specification in the various theologies of liberation. Liberation theology attributes a hermeneutical significance to the experience of the oppressed. This experience of oppression affects how the tradition is read, interpreted, and applied. The experience of oppression serves as a retroductive warrant in that it challenges that which is often taken as a matter of course; it provides a view of history from the underside of history; and it suggests new readings and applications of the tradition.²⁰⁶

Two examples can illustrate the retroductive and retrospective character of the experience of oppression. The first example has been brought to the fore by feminist theology. Classical theology always emphasized the transcendence of God to all human categories, and it developed theories of analogy that relativized the application of human categories of God, as, for example, when the Fourth Lateran Council affirmed that in every similarity between God

and creature, the dissimilarity is even greater.²⁰⁷ Nevertheless, in popular Christian religious imagery, male language and metaphors have outweighed female metaphors to express God. This popular practice has been philosophically justified by linking male paternity with God's creativity insofar as male paternity has been viewed as the principle of creativity. Today, due to the impact of feminist theology, we are beginning to retrieve nonmale and nonpatriarchal images of God from the Scriptures and from classical attributions.²⁰⁸ The experience of women is thereby serving as a retroductive warrant for the retrieval, reconstruction, and construction of myriad images of the incomprehensible God. Another significant event for Christianity has been the Holocaust.²⁰⁹ For centuries, the Christian tradition distinguished its Christian identity from Jewish identity with language, metaphors, and arguments that were often negative and often fed into anti-Judaism or anti-Semitism. The experience of the Holocaust serves as a retroductive warrant propelling Christians to understand their identity in a way that is neither hostile nor degrading to Jews.

Indirect Method ☉ With reference to Newman's illative sense, Karl Rahner has introduced in fundamental theology the notion of an "indirect method."²¹⁰ While acknowledging the importance of historical arguments, Rahner argues that historical arguments need to be

206. See Lee Cormie, "The Hermeneutical Privilege of the Oppressed," *Catholic Theological Society of America, Proceedings* 33 (1978): 155–81.

207. Denzinger-Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion symbolorum*, 806: "because it is not possible to affirm a similarity between creator and creature without affirming an even greater dissimilarity" (my translation).

208. Elizabeth Johnson, "The Incomprehensibility of God and the Image of God Male and Female," *Theological Studies* 45 (1984): 441–65; idem, *She Who Is* (New York: Crossroad, 1992); idem, *Quest for the Living God* (New York: Continuum, 2007). For a systematic retrieval of the images of God as mother, lover, and friend in a linguistic, constructive, and pragmatic theological approach, see Sallie McFague, *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987).

209. See Johann Baptist Metz, *The Emergent Church*, 17–33.

210. Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 8–10, 346–68.

supplemented by an indirect method. Such an indirect method appeals in part to formal transcendental considerations and in part to practical experience. A Christian moves from what he or she experiences as a Christian back to a consideration of particular historical beliefs. The indirect method presupposes that the criteria of theological argument are not simply historical or inductive or deductive, but also have a practical experiential dimension. Though more elusive than induction or historical arguments, such an approach moves from Christian experience and practice to an interpretation of one's community and tradition. This indirect method is for Rahner a decision of practical reason directed toward the presence of God in the contingencies of history.²¹¹

THEOLOGY AND THE COMMUNITY OF THE CHURCH

These diverse dimensions of retroductive warrants show that theology is a theoretical-practical discipline. It entails prudential and considered judgments. These prudential judgments have a basis not only in tradition, but also in an ongoing experience. The plurality of criteria, the practical dimension of experience, and the prudential character of judgments lead to a final consideration: Whose judgments? The question of theological method is not simply a question of academic expertise or individual opinion. Theology relates to a community—a community of discourse and of faith.²¹²

Roman Catholicism has a long tradition that points out the relation between the dis-

cipline of theology and the community of the church. This venerable tradition affirms that Roman Catholic theology, to be genuinely Roman Catholic, should be “catholic” (that is, universal) and should stand in accord with the bishop of Rome. Roman Catholic identity has been defined in terms of “catholicity” and in terms of unity with the bishop of Rome. This tradition indeed affirms both as intertwined. For an individual, community, theologian, or theological school to separate from communion with the bishop of Rome means detachment from the Roman Catholic Church and thereby loss of the individual's or group's catholicity.

The importance of communion with the bishop of Rome is often translated into the affirmation of obedience to the Roman magisterium. Though such an affirmation expresses a central affirmation of Roman Catholicism, it does not, if taken by itself, totally encompass the relation between the discipline of theology and the community of church or the nature of theology itself. Such a view needs to be complemented by other considerations: the nature of the magisterium within the church; the possibility of dissent and free speech within the church; and the methodological question of how the magisterium itself does theology.²¹³ Since the first and second issues are treated below in Avery Dulles's chapter on faith and revelation and in Michael Fahey's chapter on the church, the focus here will be on the third issue.

As regards theological method, the issue of the relation to the magisterium involves the complementary and indeed basic methodological

211. Rahner seeks to bring Newman's illative sense in relation to Ignatius of Loyola's theology of decision. See “Reflections on a New Task for Fundamental Theology,” in *Theological Investigations* (New York: Crossroad, 1979), 16:156–66.

212. See Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, “Foundations of Theology: A Community's Tradition of Discourse and Practice,” *Proceedings of the CTSA* 41 (1986): 107–34.

213. For a helpful treatment of the magisterium, see Francis Sullivan, *Magisterium: Teaching Authority in the Catholic Church* (New York: Paulist, 1983).

62 question: How does the magisterium do theology? To the extent that the tradition is challenged by new background theories, by new experiences, and by the emergence of conflicts within the tradition itself, a fundamental methodological question is: How should the magisterium itself meet these challenges, and how does it meet them? For example, in the nineteenth century, the growing acceptance of theories of evolution and the increasing influence of Darwinian views appeared to challenge traditional beliefs about the divine creation of humans. Theories of evolution appeared, at first glance, to discredit the biblical accounts of the creation of the first human couple. They also appeared to invalidate the Aristotelian teleological accounts of human nature and to challenge the specific “dignity” of human nature. Over the past half century, except in certain biblicist or fundamentalist circles, Roman Catholic teaching has shifted away from rejecting theories of evolution. It has acknowledged the diverse literary genres and traditions in the composition of Genesis, and it has sought to integrate Christian belief in divine creation with a theory of evolution and with a historical-critical analysis of the biblical texts.

The shift took place across several fronts: an increasing influence of scientific theories about the evolution of the human race, the increasing acceptance of the applicability of literary forms to an understanding of the Genesis accounts, and the increasing replacement of Aristotelian biology and its notion of teleology by other philosophical and biological conceptions of human nature. Within Roman Catholic theology, the influence of Teilhard de Chardin and Karl Rahner enabled Roman Catholics to understand

evolution in a way that was not reductionistic but ennobling. It enabled them to combine a belief in divine creation with a conviction about evolution. At first, some of these attempts were resisted. The Vatican’s Pontifical Biblical Commission moved from a cautious, if not negative, stance toward the historical-critical method toward a more positive acceptance. This shift contributed in part to a reinterpretation of the tradition that enabled bringing together new scientific background theories about human origin with the Christian faith in creation. Such an example shows that any account of theology and theological method should include and explain how changes (entailing discontinuity along with continuity) take place within the church, both within official magisterial statements and within the church in general. This broader problem underlies the sensitive and difficult ecclesiological question of the role of a teaching office within the church. It is a distinct, even if not completely separate, issue from that of the nature of authority within the church.

One of the best-known Roman Catholic church historians of the twentieth century, Hubert Jedin, an expert on the Council of Trent, offers a helpful survey and typology of models of how the exercise of theology and the exercise of the teaching office or magisterium *de facto* existed throughout the history of Roman Catholicism. By describing five historically different models of the exercise of the teaching office within the history of the Roman Catholic Church, Jedin highlights historical facts often neglected, and he suggests that the Roman Catholic community should strive to avoid the one-sidedness and possible weaknesses within each of these historical models.²¹⁴

214. Hubert Jedin, “Theologie und Lehramt,” in Remigius Bäumer, ed., *Lehramt und Theologie im 16. Jahrhundert* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1976), 7–21.

1. During the classical period of early Christianity, the leading theologians were bishops, with few major exceptions (Tertullian, Origen, and Clement of Alexandria). In the West, the bishop-theologians were Ambrose and Augustine; in the East, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom, and Cyril of Alexandria. The teaching authority was exercised individually and through episcopal synods and ecumenical councils.

2. In the early Middle Ages, the controversy about transubstantiation in the case of Berengar of Tours provided a typical example of the magisterial judgment and decision making in regard to doctrinal issues. First, local synods in Paris (1051) and Tours (1054) evaluated and rejected Berengar's understanding of the Eucharist. Then the case was referred to the bishop of Rome, and the case was discussed by the Roman synod. Finally, the case was referred to the Fourth Lateran Council, as the largest and most universal synod. There were three stages: local synod, Roman synod, and the council as universal synod called and directed by the pope.

3. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the significant role of university faculties of theology is evident. As Jedin notes, "In the late middle ages, the theological faculties of the universities exercise quite clearly magisterial functions, especially the faculty of the Sorbonne. They condemn theological errors that are known to them or brought before them."²¹⁵ Since Pope Innocent III, canons of general councils obtained the power of law only when they were given to the faculties of law and made the subject matter of instruction.²¹⁶ Not only did the university theology faculties exercise a teaching office within

the church, but they were corporatively invited to councils along with bishops and abbots. At the Council of Constance, doctors of theology and of canon law were incorporated with voting rights. A concrete illustration of the significance of their right to vote is the Council of Basel. In the vote of December 1436, cardinals and bishops represented less than one-tenth of the voting members.

4. The practice of the Council of Trent provides another model. Theologians were invited to the council by the pope, by the bishops, by superior generals of the religious orders, or by civil rulers (the emperor and the kings of Spain and France). As a general council, Trent had to have representatives of the Christian laity, hence the invitations by the "Christian Princes." In the third session (1561), the earlier medieval practice was followed in that the universities (Louvain, Cologne, and Ingolstadt) were invited as official representatives to Trent. Yet at Trent, many of the bishops, especially the Italian and Spanish bishops, were educated theologians and were influenced by the humanist movement. This was especially true of Italian and Spanish bishops who were members of religious orders.

5. A final model is illustrated by the First and Second Vatican Councils. Here no university faculty of theology was corporatively invited as in the medieval period or as at Trent. The bishops were the voting members, and theologians were present primarily as advisers to the bishops.

Jedin's brief survey shows how the tradition and practice of the Catholic church throughout its history have varied. Today one often encounters one-sided views: Only bishops are teachers

215. *Ibid.*, 12.

216. Knut Wolfgang Nörr, "Päpstliche Dekretalen und römisch-kanonischer Zivilprozess," Walter Wilhelm, ed., *Studien zur europäischen Rechtsgeschichte* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1972), 53–65.

64 within the church. Or: Only academic theologians have expertise. The tradition of the Catholic Church has been much broader and more varied. Today, when the task of theology has become so complex, the questions so varied, the problems so pressing, it is important that the voices of diverse faithful within the church be heard and have a rightful impact upon the decision making within the church.

Transitioning to the Twenty-First Century

Whereas Vatican II invoked the image of the church's opening its windows to let in the fresh air of modernity, in the post-Vatican II period, Roman Catholic theology has increasingly faced and sought to engage the criticisms of modernity. Moreover, even though the Second Vatican Council is often reproached for being too open to modernity, it should not be overlooked that it was in fact also critical of modernity. For example, *Gaudium et spes* highlighted the discrepancy between the modern advances in science and technology and the increasing growth of poverty and exploitation.²¹⁷ It attacked the growing disparity between the rich and the poor. The post-Vatican II period, however, can be characterized by increased tensions between the calls for further modernization and the criticisms of the very process of modernization.²¹⁸ These tensions have become increasingly intensified as the debate has continued among the contrasting

directions and opposing views of how theology and the church should go forward. One could say that, on the one hand, there are the diverse liberation theologies, the postcolonial theories, the avant-garde of some postmodern philosophical currents, and the increased awareness of religious and cultural pluralism. On the other hand, there is also the restorationist reaction to modernity and the return to more classical resources and attitudes. But even this contrast is complex. Postcolonial theories bring to the fore the exploitative nature of modernity and therefore seek to accentuate voices and experiences that have been neglected not only in the tradition of the past, but also within the modern West.

The term *postmodern* is often used to interpret these shifts. It remains a popular but ambiguous term that refers to quite distinct attitudes. One direction accentuates the critical aspects of modernity (e.g., Marx's critique of capitalism, Nietzsche's critique of morality, and Freud's analysis of culture). This direction sees postmodernity as an extension of certain critical aspects of modernity and underscores the pluralism of modernities. A contrasting direction highlights the importance of the pre-modern and the traditional. "Postmodernity" originally emerged as a contrast image to "modernity." The term was used in architecture as a contrast to the formal and functional architecture of modernism. It has become extended to include social and economic theories that have criticized theories of modernization.²¹⁹ Where-

217. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, "Gaudium et spes and Human Rights," in *The Church and Human Freedom: Forty Years after Gaudium et spes*, ed. Darlene Fozard Weaver (Villanova: Villanova University Press, 2006), 38–65.

218. John W. O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008); Ormond Rush, *Still Interpreting Vatican II: Some Hermeneutical Principles* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2004).

219. Jean-François Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition: Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); idem, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983); idem, *The Postmodern* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992).

as developmental theories advocated that Third World countries should “modernize” in order to become more like Western European countries, postmodern theories critically note the degree to which such modernization theories stripped these countries of their cultural traditions and resources. The critique of modernity, therefore often goes hand in hand with a critique of modern European colonialism.

The theological attempts to appropriate postmodern trends for the understanding of theological method have taken diverse and distinctive paths across diverse Christian traditions.²²⁰ In the United States, Hans Frei and George Lindbeck have advocated a “postliberal” direction that has come to be called “the Yale School.”²²¹ Strongly influenced by Karl Barth’s criticism of natural theology and the analogy of being, this school criticizes the universalism of transcendental theology, especially as represented in the work of Bernard Lonergan and Karl Rahner. Whereas George Lindbeck advocates a cultural linguistic approach to theology, Hans Frei underscores a thick description of a commu-

nity’s practices and the plain use of scripture.²²² In England, John Milbank has spearheaded a movement called Radical Orthodoxy, which is critical of modernity. He traces the roots of its error back to Duns Scotus. His theology advances a Neo-Platonic theory of participation, retrieves the Eastern fathers, and seeks a radical integration of nature and grace.²²³

Within Roman Catholic theology, the engagement with the postmodern takes a different turn than either the Yale School or Radical Orthodoxy. While this engagement shares in some of the basic criticisms of modernity, it seeks to counter the relativism and particularism of some postmodern theologies. For example, in contrast to Lindbeck, Pope John Paul II strongly advocates universal values in the way he links faith and reason.²²⁴ Ratzinger’s advocacy of natural law in the defense of the universality of human rights takes a much more favorable attitude toward natural law than is found in either Karl Barth or in Radical Orthodoxy.²²⁵ His advocacy of a correlation between faith and reason represents a distinctively Roman Catholic approach

220. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, ed., *Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

221. George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*, 25th anniversary ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009); Hans W. Frei, *Types of Christian Theology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992). See Mike Higon, *Christ, Providence, and History: Hans W. Frei’s Public Theology* (New York: T&T Clark, 2004).

222. For criticisms of this direction, see Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, “The Cosmopolitanism of Roman Catholic Theology and the Challenge of Cultural Particularity,” *Horizons* 35 (Fall 2008): 298–320; idem, “From Interpretation to Rhetoric: The Feminist Challenge to Systematic Theology,” in *Walk in the Ways of Wisdom*, ed. Shelly Matthews, Cynthia Briggs Kittredge, and Melanie Johnson Debaufre (Philadelphia: Trinity, 2003), 17–45; idem, “Systematic Theology and Hermeneutics,” in *Between the Human and the Divine: Philosophical and Theological Hermeneutics*, ed. Andrzej Wiercinski (Toronto: Hermeneutics Press, 2002), 510–30.

223. John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward, *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology* (New York: Routledge, 1999); and the critical assessment by W. J. Hankey and Douglas Hedley, *Deconstructing Radical Orthodoxy: Postmodern Theology, Rhetoric, and Truth* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005).

224. John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor* (August 6, 1993), http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_06081993_veritatis-splendor_po.html.

225. Pope Benedict XVI, Address to the General Assembly of the United Nations Organization, New York, April 18, 2008, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2008/april/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20080418_un-visit_en.html.

66 to theology and ethics, as does his critique of relativism.²²⁶

The contrasting trends within post-Vatican II Roman Catholic theology involve a decentering of subjectivity through aesthetics and phenomenology; the critique of methodological objectivism; the appeal to memory, tradition, and interruption against a progressive understanding of history; the relevance of lived experience and spirituality in relation to academic approaches; and a move from an individualistic to a dialogical understanding of truth.

Decentering Subjectivity: Aesthetics and Phenomenology

The modern focus on epistemology (theory of knowledge) and on religious experience or religious consciousness as the starting point of theology has been characterized as the anthropocentric turn toward the human subject.²²⁷ The reaction has been to shift the focus to the object of theology through a turn toward aesthetics and phenomenology. Though this appeal had been already present, as the work of Hans Urs von Balthasar documents, in the decades following the council, his influence has increased, just as the influence of phenomenology has grown especially through the writings of Pope John Paul II and Jean-Luc Marion.

The turn toward aesthetics involves two goals. The first implies a specific view of aesthetics in which the beauty and action of the object is emphasized as taking hold of and captivating

the human person. This view highlights the degree to which the object of theology should determine and influence human subjectivity. The second goal is directed against a specific interpretation of modernity as a secularization that views nature as having become disenchanting and desocialized.²²⁸ Max Weber identifies this disenchantment of the world with two sources: the scientific revolutions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the disciplinary practices within Calvinist theology that prefigured the development of capitalism. An aesthetic view of the world seeks to reclaim the world from its disenchantment against theologies of secularization. It notes that ability to wonder at the beauty and sublimity of the world is a central presupposition for a Christian understanding and practice of sacramental life.

Hans Urs von Balthasar's advocacy of aesthetics is paradigmatic for this approach within theology in that his view of aesthetics seeks to undercut a subject-centered theology.²²⁹ For this reason, the influence of his theology has grown in the past two decades. Just as Karl Barth has criticized modern Protestant theology for its anthropocentrism, so too has Hans Urs von Balthasar criticized similar tendencies within Roman Catholic theology. *Love Alone Is Credible* criticizes Karl Rahner's anthropocentric turn and objects that the openness to modern secularity and humanism overlooks the mediation points between immanence and transcendence. It thereby weakens the sensitivity for the transcendence of the divine.²³⁰

226. See also Joseph Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance: Christian Belief and World Religions* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2004).

227. For an attempt to link the notion of freedom in Karl Rahner with postcolonial thought, see Susan Abraham, *Identity, Ethics, and Nonviolence in Postcolonial Theory* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

228. Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

229. See Edward T. Oakes and David Moss, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

230. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Love Alone Is Credible* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2004).

Von Balthasar's theological method itself is complex and incorporates complementary imperatives. (1) He consistently maintains the importance of the analogy of being in relation to the analogy of faith and that at the same time underscores the centrality of the Christian faith as an interpretation of the form of reality. (2) His theological method, therefore, does not echo Barth's critique of the Roman Catholic affirmation of natural theology. Instead, it gives fundamental theology its significant place but underscores the importance of ascetic development of the spiritual senses and an aesthetics experience. (3) Finally, criticizing the neglect of the aesthetics within modern theology, especially modern Protestant theology, von Balthasar develops his distinctive aesthetic theory and shows its importance for the understanding of theology, as well as for Christian and sacramental life.²³¹

His major work has a tripartite structure in which aesthetics is complemented by drama and by logic. The theological aesthetics is followed by a theo-drama and by a theo-logic. Each set of volumes is correlated with the transcendentals (i.e., the attributes of all being): Beauty, Goodness, and Truth.²³² As von Balthasar notes, "Our trilogy, presenting a theological aesthetics, dramatics, and logic, is built from within this mutually illuminating light. What one calls the properties of Being that transcend every indi-

vidual being (the 'transcendentals') seem to give the most fitting access to the mysteries of Christian theology."²³³ The theological aesthetics underscores the objective that theology should see the form of God's self-disclosure. The dramatics deals with action, seeing the link between the divine and human action. The mystical and existential knowledge of God and response in freedom are witnesses to God's prior initiative and action. The logic in the theo-logic is not an abstract logic but seeks to display the logic of Christian reality through the Christian living witness to incarnation and through the presence of the Spirit.

A similar decentering of the subject and turn toward the object is evident in the renewed influence of the method of phenomenology within contemporary French Roman Catholic theology. Jean-Luc Marion speaks of the "givenness" of the object with the category of "saturated phenomenon." In talking about God without being, he seeks to think of God after onto-theo-logy.²³⁴ This post-metaphysical thinking of God takes up Heidegger's critique of Western metaphysics and its conception of God. It seeks to avoid the idols of being and of subjectivity in dealing with the God question.²³⁵ Jean-Yves Lacoste takes Heidegger's notion of being in the world and interprets it with the category of liturgy. Michel Henry understands the Gospels as a phenomenology of Christ and refers to the "auto-affectation"

231. John D. O'Connor, "Theological Aesthetics and Revelatory Tension," *New Blackfriars* 89 (2008): 399–417.

232. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 7 vols. (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1982–89); idem, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, 5 vols. (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988–98); idem, *Theo-Logic*, 3 vols. and *Epilogue* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2004–5)

233. Urs von Balthasar, *Epilogue*, 46.

234. Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness; Cultural Memory in the Present* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002); idem, *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002); *Reduction and Givenness: Investigations of Husserl, Heidegger, and Phenomenology* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998).

235. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, "Being, Subjectivity, and Otherness: The Idols of Gods," in *Questioning God*, ed. John D. Caputo, Mark Dooley, and Michael Scanlon (Indianapolis: University of Indiana Press, 2001), 320–50.

68 of life.²³⁶ Jean-Louis Chrétien uses phenomenology to appeal to a certain religious solicitation or address made to us in experience.²³⁷ This appropriation of phenomenology within theology has not gone without its critics. Dominique Janicaud considers it an illegitimate appropriation of philosophy. In response, it is argued that Janicaud represents a modernist and even Neo-Scholastic understanding of “pure” philosophy.²³⁸ Any full account of human experience should include religious experience in view of the insight of Henri de Lubac and *la nouvelle théologie* (the new theology), which affirmed that there is not de facto pure human nature and underscored the interrelation of grace and nature. In this respect, both Hans Urs von Balthasar and contemporary French theological phenomenologists follow in the footsteps of *la nouvelle théologie*.

Decentering Method and the Interpretation of Meaning

The modern emphasis on scientific objectivity has led to the emphasis on method in general and to development of the historical-critical method within the study of history and the in-

terpretation of historical documents, including the Scriptures. The twentieth century of Roman Catholic theology saw the gradual acceptance of the historical-critical method not only for the study of the history of Christianity, but also for biblical studies.²³⁹ This critique of method has had a significant impact upon systematic theology.²⁴⁰ In the wake of Vatican II, a shift has taken place, evident in the discussions about the limits of the historical method. Both the influence of hermeneutics (theories of interpretation) and the retrieval of classical motives have shown that important parallels exist between some insights of contemporary hermeneutics and more classical approaches to the interpretation of Scripture.²⁴¹ Hans Georg Gadamer’s emphasis that a classic has a claim not just its own age, but on subsequent ages, Paul Ricoeur’s stress on the surplus of meaning, and Hans Jauss’s development of a reception hermeneutic make possible the retrieval of more traditional models of interpretation. Today there is both an increasing appeal to classical interpretations of Scripture, from Henri de Lubac to Joseph Ratzinger, and a defense of the enduring significance of historical criticism.²⁴² Whereas historical criticism has

236. Michel Henry, *Paroles du Christ* (Paris: Éditions du seuil, 2002); idem, *I Am the Truth: Toward a Philosophy of Christianity: Cultural Memory in the Present* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003); idem, *Phénoménologie de la vie* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2003); Michel Henry and Magali Uhl, *Auto-Donation* (Montpellier: Prétentaine, 2002).

237. Jean-Louis Chrétien, *The Call and the Response* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004); idem, *Hand to Hand: Listening to the Work of Art* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003).

238. Dominique Janicaud, *Phenomenology “Wide Open”* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005); idem, *Phenomenology and the “Theological Turn”* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000).

239. For a defense of the historical critical method, see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Interpretation of Scripture: In Defense of the Historical-Critical Method* (New York: Paulist, 2008).

240. For Hans Urs von Balthasar’s defense of the critique that his theology lacks method, see his *Theo-Logic*, 2:363–65.

241. For a comparison between classical interpretation and contemporary hermeneutics, see Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, “The Conflict of Hermeneutical Tradition and Christian Theology,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 27 (2000): 3–31.

242. Compare Matthew Levering, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis: A Theology of Biblical Interpretation; Reading the Scriptures* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), with Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Interpretation of Scripture: In Defense of the Historical Critical Method* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2008).

the goal of discovering the singular meaning of a text based on a grammatical and linguistic interpretation of the text in relation to its historical context, contemporary hermeneutical theory underscores the surplus meaning of a text with its diverse metaphors and narratives. In this sense, the classical multiple meaning of Scriptures that developed during the medieval period is finding a renewed justification in hermeneutical theory. If historical criticism emphasized the objectivity of interpretation to the exclusion of the interpreter's subjectivity, contemporary hermeneutics points to the importance of the interpreter's pre-understanding and social location in the interpretation of texts.²⁴³ Hence, the ancient understanding of pre-understanding (underscored by Augustine's teaching about spiritual purification and ascent) finds its correspondence in the personal orientation toward the question to be posed to the text. If historical criticism emphasized that the text's meaning is located within its conception, hermeneutics underscores that the meaning of the text transcends its context and makes a claim on the present. The distinction between a biblical scholar explaining what a text meant and a systematic theologian asking "What should be the meaning today?" falls by the wayside.²⁴⁴ The tension between historical criticism and other modes of interpretation presents one of the ongoing challenges of theological method today.

Decentering Progress: Tradition and Memory as Interruption

One of the hallmarks of modernity has been the emphasis on progress, especially through scientific method and technological advance. This understanding of progress has come increasingly under critique. The Frankfurt School's critique of the positivism and scientism of the Enlightenment had argued that its critique of mythology and advocacy of the progress of science had in turn produced a new myth, namely, the myth that science and technology by themselves inevitably lead to progress and happiness.²⁴⁵ The critique of this myth of progress has been explicitly taken up and developed in various directions.

Johann Baptist Metz makes the memory of suffering central to his theology. The Gospels contain the "dangerous memory" of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Such a memory interrupts history insofar as it brings to the fore the injustice within history and expresses a solidarity with the victims of injustice within history. Metz criticizes the theologians of the preceding generation who lived through the Holocaust yet did not make it a central or even explicit aspect of their theologies.²⁴⁶ Metz's emphasis on memory of suffering is not only critical of the church's response to the Holocaust within the twentieth century, but is also a critique of viewing history as progressive. The appeal to the memory of

243. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, "The Conflict of Hermeneutical Tradition," specifically 22–24.

244. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone*, especially the critique of the distinction between what a text meant and means today as employed by Krister Stendhal and Raymond E. Brown. See also her *Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999).

245. Max Horkheimer, and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1960).

246. Johannes Baptist Metz, *Memoria Passionis: Ein Provozierendes Gedächtnis in Pluralistischer Gesellschaft* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2006). Helmut Peukert, *Science, Action, and Fundamental Theology* (Cambridge: MIT, 1994) has applied Metz's understanding of the memory of victims of injustice to fundamental theological questions. For a development of Metz's notion of interruption in terms of contemporary concerns, see Lieven Boeve, *God Interrupts History: Theology in a Time of Upheaval* (New York: Continuum, 2007).

70 suffering underscores the inadequacy of views of history that take Darwin's evolutionary biology as a pattern for the understanding of history and thereby understand social history as progressive. Such a view does not take into account the injustices of history. The emphasis on memory and interruption is a corrective to any political theology that justifies present political power relations and sees history as unfolding only in a progressive fashion.

Ratzinger decenters the progressive understanding of modernity in several ways. He explicitly takes over the critique or dialectic of the Enlightenment that the early Frankfurt School (Adorno and Horkheimer) had elaborated—namely, that the critique of myth and the positivist scientific method turns in on itself and makes this method into a myth itself.²⁴⁷ Ratzinger focuses his critique specifically on what he considers a modern approach to truth and understanding. Within modernity, the traditional equation of truth and being has been replaced by an empirical focus on “facts.” Facts are what we can know through scientific method and through historical method. Moreover, the turn toward technical thinking sets as paradigmatic a method that combines mathematics and devotion to facts in terms of experiment.²⁴⁸

The question of progress and tradition becomes central within Ratzinger's interpretation of Vatican II. On the one hand, he acknowledges that Vatican II has made irreversible progress in going beyond and correcting Pius X's *Syllabus of Errors*. The constitution on religious freedom clearly moves beyond Pius X's collection of errors. On the other hand, he interprets the contribution of Vatican II primarily as a renewal

through *ressourcement* (that is, as an appropriation of the best within the tradition), rather than as a progressive innovation. Whereas the former approach interprets Vatican II primarily in continuity with the tradition, the latter emphasizes the innovation and the discontinuity. Ratzinger argues against an interpretation of the Second Vatican Council that divides the texts into two parts—an acceptable progressive part versus an unacceptable old-fashioned part, an acceptable ecclesiology versus a traditional, unacceptable ecclesiology. This becomes clear when one examines how in the Vatican II documents the concept of *communio* is united the understanding of the church and that of the Eucharist.

Decentering Elites: Lived Experience and Spiritual Practices

Historically, theological reflection has taken place and takes place in diverse social and personal contexts: the pastoral activity of the bishop in antiquity, the prayerful life of the monk, the academic discipline of the university, from the medieval to the modern, the contemplative experience of the mystic, and the lived experiences of believers in everyday life. In each context, believing Christians reflect on the meaning of their faith in relation to their lives and activities. Their reflection can be considered a form of theological reflection. However, the more systematic, methodic, and conceptual activity as exercised in the universities has come to be paradigmatic for theological reflection to the detriment of other ways. Too often, the academic conception of theology has neglected other ways of theology.

247. See also his debate with Habermas in Jürgen Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger, *The Dialectics of Secularization* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2005).

248. Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity* (New York: Seabury, 1969), 57–79.

Moreover, such an awareness affects not only theology, but also philosophy. It has become evident through more recent studies that philosophy in antiquity was not understood as abstract method or conceptual discipline, but rather represented a way of life and a discovery of one's self. The philosopher was much more a spiritual adviser than a professor. He exhorted his students to mold themselves through a conversion of attention and through spiritual exercises to follow the paths of wisdom. As Pierre Hadot has noted, the discourse on the transcendent and the spiritual experience of the transcendent, sought in antiquity in philosophy as well as theology to foster a new way of life that required a transformation of the self.²⁴⁹ In the medieval period, the distinction between the monastic and scholastic approaches has been a constant theme of scholarship that underscored the importance of lived experience, devotion, and spirituality.²⁵⁰

Today the emergence of the academic study of religion in the university in the form of religious studies has created a tension that highlights both sides. On the one hand, there has emerged a positivistic understanding of religious studies as an objective discipline that aims for a purely neutral study that precludes any subjective pre-understanding and commitments.²⁵¹ It seeks a vision of religious studies that in distinction to other humanistic studies

in the universities celebrates its neutrality and objectivity.²⁵² On the other hand, the emergence of ethnographic studies, participatory sociology, and engaged anthropology has underscored the importance of taking the participants' view of their actions into account in interpreting them. In this view, the academic study of religion entails a study of the lived experiences of the diverse members and groups of a religious community. The study of popular religious practices and rituals, as well as the narratives and lives of the saints, becomes central not only for the study of religions, but these practices and rituals also become sources of theology.²⁵³

Decentering Individualism: Dialogical Communities of Discourse

The individualism is counterbalanced by dialogical and communal understanding of truth that emphasizes the significance of communities of discourse. The modern approach to philosophy and theology is often associated with Descartes's appeal to consciousness, Kant's appeal to the subject's conditions of knowledge, and Schleiermacher's emphasis on religious experience. This starting with individual consciousness or with religious experience is often interpreted in an individualistic fashion and in a foundational sense, in that an individual's experience provides certitude. Descartes's starting point

249. Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, ed. Arnold Ira Davidson (New York: Blackwell, 1995).

250. Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture* (London: SPCK, 1978).

251. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, "Religious and Theological Studies: The Contest of the Faculties," in *Shifting Boundaries: Contextual Approaches to the Structure of Theological Education*, ed. Barbara Wheeler and Edward Farley (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 119–49.

252. For a critique, see Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, "Theology in the University," *Bulletin of the Council of Societies for the Study of Religion* 22 (April 1993): 34–39; idem, "Response to Wiebe," *Bulletin of the Council of Societies for the Study of Religion* 23 (April 1994): 6–10.

253. This point has been made by Hans Urs von Balthasar's classic essay, "Theology and Sanctity," now reprinted in *Explorations in Theology*, vol. 1, *The Word Made Flesh* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1989), 181–210.

72 for philosophical certitude is often taken as an example, though Schleiermacher's emphasis on the community could serve as a counterexample. Kant thinks that through his analysis of the structures of human cognition, philosophy can achieve a progress similar to that in the natural and mathematical sciences. The Neo-Kantian movement of the early twentieth century sought one-sidedly to reduce Kant's philosophy to a positivistic method of science, to the neglect of what transcended such method in his writing. In reaction, twentieth-century philosophers Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig, and Ferdinand Ebner developed a dialogical philosophy and emphasized the I-Thou relationship, and more recently, Emmanuel Levinas placed emphasis on the Other.²⁵⁴ The Cartesian, "I think, therefore I am" has been replaced with "We exist only in dialogue, and we arrive at truth through dialogue." This dialogical nature of truth has come to expression not only in philosophy but also in theology and ethics—though not without considerable debate. The theological debate concerns the notion of *communio*, the ethical debate concerns a discourse ethics, and the fundamental theological debate concerns the relation between the truth and pluralism.

In theology, the notion of *communio* has become central. The patristic conception is of the church as a *communio* and that we Christians are in communion with each other through our communion with Christ in the Eucharist. The notion of *communio* links local churches not only with other local churches, but also with the past communities. The understanding of *communio*

central to the reflections leading up to Vatican II has in its significance and meaning been at the heart of recent debates.²⁵⁵ At the twentieth anniversary of the journal *Communio*, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger reflects on the reception of the Council and suggests that there was a more progressive, in his view, interpretation of the concept of "people of God" as expressing a contrast to hierarchy by emphasizing popular sovereignty and common democratic determination. The notion of *communio* was absorbed into the concept of people of God.²⁵⁶ The Council brought the notion of *communio* into the forefront not to discard other notions nor to reject the tradition, but instead to integrate *communio* into other understandings of church within the Catholic tradition. This interpretation highlights the importance of relating present understandings of community as *communio* not in opposition to the past, but precisely in communion or in dialogue with the past.

At the same time and in a completely different context, during the last decades the awareness of the importance of community to knowledge and understanding has become central as a result of the linguistic turn and the influence of Wittgenstein's understanding of language on philosophy and theology. This awareness has been sharpened under the influence of Michel Foucault's analysis of the interconnection between power and discourse. His view moves against the binary conception of power of one agent over another agent or group, but shows that power is dispersed through the community. Every community has its set of

254. See Samuel Moyn, *Origins of the Other: Emmanuel Levinas between Revelation and Ethics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).

255. See Walter Kasper, *That They May Be One: The Call to Unity Today* (New York: Continuum, 2004). See also Ingolf Dalferth's review of Kasper in *Ecclesiology* 2 (2005): 131–37.

256. Joseph Ratzinger, "Communio: A Program," *Communio* 19, no. 3 (1992): 436–49; Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Communio—a Program," *Communio* 33 (2006): 153–69.

practices and rules through which meaning and power are mediated.

The understanding of the interconnection among community, knowledge, and power moves in several distinct directions. One direction points to particularity of communities, its experiences, practices, and meanings. This highlights the particular practices and experiences of specific communities and cultures in order to understand their beliefs, values, and claims. Many of the liberation theologies, African American, feminist, Latin American, and Hispanic, take this direction a step further. They point to the experience of a particular community and its culture as illuminating the blind spots of a dominant culture.

Another direction highlights the radical pluralism of knowledge and the significant differences among cultures over against any abstract acknowledgment of universal values, meaning, and truth. In this direction, the experience of particular communities and cultures becomes integral to theological reflection. A third direction points to the role of scientific background knowledge and to the intersection of culture and nature. In this perspective, the unity of nature and the natural environment provides the human race with a basis for unity. Human persons have, despite all cultural differences, some basic similarities. They face sickness, aging, and death. They need food, medicine, and housing. Their housing faces the same laws of gravity and need to offer protections from the hazards of the environment. Peoples of all cultures face dangers from pollution and global warming.

This direction leads many to construct a set of universal rights based on human nature or basic human capabilities.

A position that mediates among these diverse directions is the most helpful and can be expressed by combining the notion of a community of discourse with that of discourse in general. The location of a community within a social-historical context and the interconnection with other communities both become important for fundamental theology, theological method, and ethics. Such a position has to take into account the plurality of cultures and experiences and the necessity of learning from one another. Thus, the particularity of communities exists in relation and in dialogue with other communities. This middle position also underscores the importance of understanding the intersection between the particular discourses and other discourses, and it points to the particularity in a way that one moves beyond particularity insofar as one engages in discourse with other communities.

This pluralism of cultures presents a challenge within Roman Catholic theology and Christian theology, for Christianity exists not across multiple cultures, but within multicultural contexts.²⁵⁷ In Roman Catholicism, Vatican II is often taken as a watershed. In its wake, as Karl Rahner has argued, Christianity has become a world church.²⁵⁸ The question of pluralism is often taken as a question of the relation between the individual church and the church as a whole. But the issue of pluralism is much more complex. One aspect of the issue comes to the fore in the debate (for example, between Kasper

257. See Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, "Pluralism: A Western Commodity or Justice for the Other," *Searching Wisdom: Essays in Honor of Wendel Dietrich*, ed. Theodore Vial and Mark Poster (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 389–424.

258. Karl Rahner, "The Abiding Significance of the Second Vatican Council," in his *Theological Investigations* (New York: Crossroads, 1981), 20:90–102.

74 and Ratzinger) about the proper role of the unity versus the plurality.²⁵⁹ A further penetrating debate comes to the fore in the disagreement between von Balthasar and Rahner, wherein von Balthasar seeks to show that the pluralism within the church and theology should be more like the pluralism within a symphony: the various pieces combine to form a unified harmony. Karl Rahner, in contrast, underscores the irreducible nature of pluralism on the cultural level and the positive significance of pluralism within Christianity.²⁶⁰ Jean-Yves Lacoste contends, “‘Theology is a pluralistic discipline by nature. To maintain a plurality of discourses necessarily gives rise to an unstable balance. Were it a merely liturgical discourse, theology would cease to respond to the demands of missionary apologetics. Were it merely scientific, it would not respond to the needs of believers’ spiritual lives.’ What we have here is the recognition that the language of theology consists more of a polyphony.”²⁶¹

Conceiving Christian theology and ethics in terms of pluralism invokes an intersubjective theological dialogue with other communities and traditions not only in acknowledging the meaning and truth of other religious traditions, but also in realizing the differences in the relevant background theories and the diverse assessments of the integrity of the tradition in terms of its priorities, paradigms, and relation to lived practice. Theology and ethics practiced

as discourse and dialogue understand not only that we exist in community, but also that our moral obligations stem from our responsibility toward the other and that we stand together a united cosmos and environment. The other as a religious and moral other makes claims on us not only morally, but also intellectually and religiously.

Conclusion

This chapter sought to introduce the nature of theology by presenting a history of the understanding of Christian theology through the centuries, first analyzing three classic paradigms of theology (Augustine, Thomas, and Neo-Scholasticism), then reviewing five contemporary approaches during the last decades of the twentieth century. The elements of these approaches overlap one another. Next, the chapter proposed four elements of a more comprehensive understanding of theology. Finally, the chapter presented new emphases and developments that are apparent as we shift from the twentieth to the twenty-first century.

The task of theology entails a constant challenge to the church as a community of faith and discourse. The challenge is to reconstruct the integrity of the church’s tradition in light of relevant background theories and warrants from

259. See the debate between Ratzinger and Kasper on the unity of the church versus the pluralism of local communities in Walter Cardinal Kasper, “On the Church,” *America* (April 23–30, 2001); and Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, “The Local Church and the Universal Church: A Response to Walter Kasper,” *America* (November 19, 2001).

260. Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 367–69. For a comparison between Karl Rahner and George Lindbeck with her own constructive proposal, see Jeannine Hill Fletcher, *Monopoly on Salvation? A Feminist Approach to Religious Pluralism* (New York: Continuum, 2005).

261. Jean-Yves LaCoste, “Theology,” in *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology*, ed. idem (New York: Routledge, 2005), 1554–62, quoting from 1561. See also Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, “Changes in Culture and Society and the Interdisciplinarity of Theology,” in *Reconsidering the Boundaries between Theological Disciplines*, ed. Michael Welker and Friedrich Schweitzer (Münster: LIT, 2005), 201–16.

contemporary experience. Such a task is extremely complex. Bernard Lonergan has noted that it entails a shift from logic to method, and such a shift entails a profound change in consciousness.²⁶² However, today we are increasingly aware that the shift from logic to method does not suffice. In the decades since Vatican II, it is becoming increasingly clear that the emphasis on method belongs to an academic and scientific approach to theology. It becomes evident that other voices, practices, and discourses need to be attended to. In other words, Lonergan's call for a change in consciousness requires an openness to discourse within the community, heeding not only its past, but also the future. Such a discourse becomes open to the integrity of the past and future when it takes into account the voices of other communities and listens to voices that have not been heard. Theology entails much more than method. It rests on the experiences and discourses of many communities and cultures.

My emphasis on combining retroductive warrants, background theories, the integrity of the tradition, and the catholicity of the church as a community of discourse is not a task that can be simply viewed as a method. It embraces many elements. It seeks to go beyond an understanding of theology as correlation and encourages an understanding of theology that extends beyond the modern focus on method. An adequate theological approach embraces diverse sources, diverse experiences, and a plurality of criteria. It does not simply correlate contemporary questions with traditional answers or symbols. Instead, theological method consists of making

judgments about what constitutes the integrity of the tradition and what is paradigmatic about the tradition. It consists of reflecting on the relevant background theories (both of the tradition and of one's own situation) and taking into account the ongoing practice and experience of the community, as expressed in diverse voices, so that it can be a truly catholic theology.

The shift that is taking place is a move away from method to substantial issues and to issues reflecting the impact that the concrete beliefs and pluralist views are having on theology. The various liberation theologies have called theology to task for failing to reflect on the needs of the poor and disinherited. Postcolonial theology underscores and uncovers the Western and modern biases of much of theology. As Kathryn Tanner has recently noted:

Such a shift reflected thereby a greater theological respect for the pluralistic world in which we live. Enlightenment challenges to the intellectual credibility of religious ideas could no longer be taken for granted as the starting point for theological work once theologians facing far more pressing worries than academic respectability gained their voices in Europe, the US, and around the globe. Theologians were now called to provide, not so much a theoretical argument for Christianity's plausibility, as an account of how Christianity could be part of the solution, rather than simply part of the problem, on matters of great human moment that make a life-and-death difference to people, especially the poor and the oppressed.²⁶³

262. Lonergan, *A Third Collection*, 3–22.

263. Kathryn Tanner, "Shifts in Theology over the Last Quarter Century," *Modern Theology* 26 (2010): 39–44.

76 For Further Reading

Histories and Dictionaries of Theology

Beinert, Wolfgang, and Francis Schüssler Fiorenza. *Handbook of Catholic Theology*. English language ed., with new materials. New York: Crossroad, 1995.
This one-volume dictionary of systematic theology has been translated from the German and supplemented with some American articles.

Congar, Yves. *A History of Theology*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968.
A somewhat dated but still valuable introduction to the history of the understanding of theology. It originally appeared as an article in the classic French encyclopedia Dictionnaire de théologie.

Harnack, Adolf von. *History of Dogma*. 7 vols. New York: Dover, 1961; German ed., 1900.
A classic and still informative treatment, though dated. Von Harnack's view of doctrine as a postbiblical, Hellenistic development has been modified by recent work on the Hellenistic period of Judaism.

Jordan, Mark D. *Ordering Wisdom: The Hierarchy of Philosophical Discourses in Aquinas*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986.
A collection of the finest studies on Thomas's conception of theology from a leading medievalist. It contains important observations on the rhetorical context of Thomas's work as well as its reception.

Kerr, Fergus. *Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians: From Neoscholasticism to Nuptial Mysticism*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007.
This survey of some central twentieth-century Catholic theological authors is selective in the choice of theologians. Somewhat Eurocentric in orientation,

it does consider several important contemporary movements within theology.

Lacoste, Jean-Yves, ed. *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology*. New York: Routledge, 2005.
This three-volume English version is the translation of a one-volume French volume of systematic theology. It takes into account contemporary French Catholic theological currents. Jean-Yves Lacoste has also edited Histoire de la théologie (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2009), which is an excellent history of Roman Catholic theology. Pierre Gibert has written the biblical section, Patrick Descourtix the patristic and byzantine section; Marc Ozilou and Gilles Berceville cover the medieval period; and Jean-Yves Lacoste, the editor, covers the sixteenth to twentieth centuries.

Livingston, James C. *Modern Christian Thought*, vol. 1. James Livingston and Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, *Modern Christian Thought*, vol 2. 2 vols. 2nd ed. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006.
This two-volume history of modern Christian theology deals primarily with the nineteenth century (volume 1) and twentieth century (volume 2). The second volume has several chapters on Roman Catholic theology, including Vatican II and its context.

McBrien, Richard, and Harold W. Attridge. *The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism*. New York: HarperCollins, 1995.
A comprehensive encyclopedia of Roman Catholicism that is comprehensive in its coverage, brief in its presentation, and written in language easily understood by non-theologians.

Pelikan, Jaroslav. *The Christian Tradition*. 5 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971–88.
A complete and masterful survey. Written as a counterpoint to von Harnack, the volumes take into

account the role of liturgy and piety as sources of theology. The annotated bibliography in volume 1, pp. 358–76, provides an important guide.

Rahner, Karl. *Encyclopedia of Theology: The Concise Sacramentum Mundi*. New York: Crossroad, 1984.

Karl Rahner was the editor of the multivolume German encyclopedia *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*. This volume collects several of Rahner's own essays.

Nature, Tasks, Divisions, and Method of Theology

Dulles, Avery. *The Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System*. New York: Crossroad, 1992.

A collection of essays dealing with the nature of theology.

Ebeling, Gerhard. *The Study of Theology*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978.

Ebeling, a German Lutheran theologian, proposes a conception of theology with attention to the distinct disciplines of theology.

Farley, Edward. *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983.

A historical presentation of the origin of theology's division into the fourfold pattern: biblical, historical, systematic, and practical.

Fiorenza, Francis Schüssler. *Foundational Theology: Jesus and the Church*. New York: Crossroad, 1984.

A discussion of the major problems of fundamental theology, the resurrection of Jesus, the foundation of the church, and the nature of fundamental theology with reference to Neo-Scholastic, transcendental, hermeneutical, and contemporary approaches to theology.

Jenson, Robert W. *Systematic Theology*. 2 vols. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

A two-volume systematic theology from a Lutheran perspective.

Jones, Serene, and Paul Lakeland, eds. *Constructive Theology: A Contemporary Approach to Classical Themes*. Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2005. Print with CD-ROM.

A collaborative attempt of several theologians to present systematic theological issues, taking into account both historical development and contemporary postmodern and postcolonial concerns.

Kasper, Walter. *The Methods of Dogmatic Theology*. Shannon, Ireland: Ecclesia, 1969.

A booklet that outlines the shift from a Neo-Scholastic approach to theology to contemporary and more historically oriented approaches.

Kaufmann, Gordon D. *An Essay on Theological Method*. AAR Studies in Religion, no. 11. Rev. ed. Missoula, Mont.: Scholars, 1979.

A contemporary reformulation of a liberal Protestant understanding of the theological method and the constructive task of theology.

Küng, Hans. *Theology for the Third Millennium*. New York: Doubleday, 1988.

A collection of Küng's essays that deal with the nature of theology and theological method.

Lindbeck, George. *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*. 25th anniversary ed. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2009.

This monograph is much more than its title indicates. It suggests a cultural linguistic approach to theology over against propositional and expressive approaches.

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

- 78 Lonergan, Bernard. *Method in Theology*. New York: Crossroad, 1972.
Lonergan explains the significance of human cognitional structures for the use of method within theology and for an eightfold division of disciplines within theology.
- McGrath, Alister E. *Scientific Theology*. 3 vols. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001–3.
A three-volume systematic theology subdivided into nature, reality, and theory.
- Metz, Johannes Baptist. *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology*. New York: Crossroad, 2007.
This new translation by Matthew Ashley of Metz's collection of essays illustrates the basic concept of fundamental theology as a practical theology and as a political theology. The introduction and study questions by Ashley are helpful for students.
- Pannenberg, Wolfhart. *Theology and Philosophy of Science*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976.
Pannenberg, a German Lutheran theologian, presents various conceptions of science and history, a history of conceptions of theology, and his own conception of theology as the history of religion. A sketch of the diverse disciplines of theology is provided.
- Rahner, Karl. *Foundations of Christian Faith*. New York: Seabury, 1978.
This book exemplifies Rahner's transcendental fundamental theology as developed in relation to the basic idea of Christianity and the contents of the Christian faith.
- Ratzinger, Joseph. *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology*. San Francisco: Ignatius, 1987.
A collection of Cardinal Ratzinger's essays on Scripture and tradition, church and theology, faith and theology.
- Schleiermacher, Friedrich. *Brief Outline on the Study of Theology*. Atlanta: John Knox, 1966.
This classic of Protestantism has had enormous influence on the division of theological disciplines.
- Sobrinho, Jon, and Ignacio Ellacuría. *Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996.
*A collection of essays from a large work, *Mysterium Liberationis*, which was patterned on the first edition of this work.*
- Tracy, David. *The Analogical Imagination*. New York: Crossroad, 1981.
In this, his first volume, Tracy outlines how the imagination, the use of metaphor, and hermeneutical theory contribute to the theology.
- . *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.
This second volume by Tracy takes into account more recent deconstructive approaches.
- von Balthasar, Hans Urs. *The Glory of the Lord*. 7 vols. San Francisco: Ignatius, 1982–89.
- . *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*. 5 vols. San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988–98.
- . *Theo-Logic*. 3 vols. and *Epilogue*. San Francisco: Ignatius, 2004–5.
Von Balthasar's multivolume systematic theology is the culmination of his lifelong work. It exemplifies his basic themes and approaches to theology.