

# Changing Roman Catholic Perspectives

This volume provides an introductory survey of the major theological treatises of systematic theology. At a time of declining theological literacy, an introductory volume should necessarily provide a basic knowledge not only for collegiate religion majors, and not only for beginning theology students in master's programs, both academic and ministerial, but also for interested and informed general readers.

In the twenty years since the appearance of the first edition of these volumes, much has changed in the world, the churches, and theology. The preface to the first edition defined five goals: (1) to explain the diverse theological currents of the Second Vatican Council; (2) to describe the impetus that historical-critical studies of the Scriptures and the Roman Catholic Church's traditions and practices have had on the renewal of theology at the time of Vatican II and on the council's theological, ecclesial, and liturgical reforms; (3) to appropriate and to show the significance that recent hermeneutical theories and philosophical developments had on

contemporary theology; (4) to draw attention to some recent ecumenical and bilateral statements issued by the various Christian churches; and (5) to take into account the current emphasis on practice that exists across diverse liberation theologies.

In approaching the task of revising and updating the essays, the authors have selected various approaches. Some have added to their chapters reflection on developments in the past two decades; others have completely revised their essays. Three original authors—Catherine LaCugna, Monika Hellwig, and Regis Duffy—have died, so new authors were selected: Anthony Godzieba has written a new chapter 3 on the triune God, and Jeannine Hill Fletcher has written a new chapter 10 on eschatology. And since David Power wrote on individual sacraments in the first edition, he was asked to expand his work on chapter 9 to cover all the sacraments except for the section on marriage. Moreover, at the end of every chapter, a new annotated bibliography has been provided.

Avery Cardinal Dulles died soon after he finished his revision of chapter 2 for this volume. We are fortunate that Cardinal Dulles had the same fidelity to deadlines as he has had over the years to his teaching, writing, and service to the church as a theologian. A former colleague at the Catholic University of America, he was extremely encouraging when I first spoke to him about the idea and goals of the original project.

Though the five goals set for the original edition remain the same and are still significant, the context in which they existed has changed. These changes affect the goals, so it is necessary to reflect on how these goals must be expanded, modified, and applied anew. In the four decades since Vatican II, the Roman Catholic Church has seen a continuing discussion of the meaning of the council and the theological currents expressed in it. The theological, cultural, and global situation today is very different from the 1960s, when the council took place or from the 1980s when the first edition was planned and these changing circumstances have widened the scope of the original goals.

The first goal was to present an interpretation of the theological context, background, and consequences of Vatican II. Today the interpretation of the council has moved even more into the center of discussion. Some are questioning the value and significance of the council, and others are even criticizing significant teachings of the council. At the risk of oversimplifying a complex set of issues, these interpretations can be classified into three groups: misinterpretations of the council, basic disagreements with the council documents, and important challenges the council has advanced that still remain as tasks for the Roman Catholic Church.

The misinterpretations of the council often center on *Gaudium et spes* (Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the World of Today),

*Dignitatis humanae* (Declaration on Religious Freedom), and *Lumen gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church). It is alleged that *Gaudium et spes* has a too-optimistic attitude toward the modern world and that the declaration on religious freedom operates with the presupposition of the individualism of modern liberalism. Nevertheless, a careful reading of *Gaudium et spes* shows that while it acknowledges the rapid growth in science and technology in the modern world, it criticizes the increased exploitation of the poor as well as the growing distance between the rich and the poor, not only within nations, but also among nations. *Dignitatis humanae* does not ground religious freedom in the private realm and make religious freedom merely an issue of individual preference or choice. Instead, it grounds religious freedom in human dignity (as its Latin title expresses) and in its contribution to the welfare of all.

A somewhat different misinterpretation takes place regarding *Lumen gentium* such that the minority position is now sometimes presented as if it were the decisive meaning. Examples of this include the question of whether the church of Christ is totally and exclusively identical with the Roman Catholic Church or whether the more modest “subsist in” language of the council allows for acknowledgment of the ecclesial reality of other Christian communities. Likewise, the deliberations at the council pointed to the importance of episcopal conferences. *Lumen gentium* clearly underscores the mutual relation between the local churches and the universal church. The local church is not simply the administrative agent of the papacy in a local area. Nor is the universal church simply the aggregate of the local churches.

A more general misinterpretation is the casting of the debate within the categories of a hermeneutics of continuity versus a hermeneu-

tics of discontinuity, as if the choices in interpreting the council were between understanding the council as advocating a discontinuity with the past (one alternative) or a continuity with the past (the other alternative). Such a contrasting alternative simplifies the debate and distorts the interpretations. Many points of reform and change within the council were achieved through a *ressourcement* (return to sources) leading to a recovery of what Karl Rahner would have called the forgotten truths about the church and its sacraments. This approach is evident even where the council broke new ground, such as its efforts to overcome anti-Semitism in the wake of the Holocaust and its grounding of religious freedom in traditions that emphasize God's universal love, human dignity, and the good of human society.

In addition to misinterpretations, there are also the criticisms and disagreements. The schismatic group known as the St. Pius X Fraternity has indeed viewed the decline in religious vocations, the drop in attendance at the Eucharist, and the decreased participation in the sacraments as effects and results of the council itself. The group has also advocated against the ecumenical developments in the council and has contested the council's teaching on religious freedom. These criticisms represent important disagreements between the council and its critics who refused to accept the authority and teaching of the council. As this volume goes to press, the Vatican is engaged in dialogue with the group. The Vatican maintains that anti-Semitism is incompatible with Roman Catholicism, and it affirms the importance of religious freedom while it also objects to religious relativism.

Finally, there are the multiple challenges that the Second Vatican Council lays out with its interpretation of the signs of the time. The council's various diagnoses present unfinished

tasks to the Roman Catholic Church that must be taken up. In the wake of the council, we have become even more aware of the multiple challenges entailed in the tension between pluralism and globalization, in the shift from economic and cultural colonialism to the increasing post-colonial resistance to such imperialism, and in the competing imperatives of modernity and postmodernity. Karl Rahner's classical essay about Vatican II best exemplifies this challenge when he explains that the council constitutes a shift in the practice, life, and self-understanding of the church from a European church to a world church. This shift has become increasingly true in the ensuing decades, and its challenge must be met and incorporated into the Catholic Church's theology and practice. Today we are even more aware of the negative impact of European colonialism and imperialism. The awareness of the diverse cultures and practices in which Christianity is embedded contributes to the depth and breadth of the "catholicity" of Christianity.

The first edition achieved its second goal by underscoring the historical diversity and changes that took place in the understanding of theology, God, Christ, the church, the saints and Mary, grace, and the sacraments. The awareness of these historical trajectories has become part and parcel of Catholic theology's self-understanding, one that moved from a more deductive or analytical approach to a more historical and development-oriented perspective. If previously a historical consciousness was viewed as hostile toward Roman Catholic faith, the achievement of Vatican II and of the theology preceding and following it was to retrieve historical studies and to integrate them into the Christian faith. The application of historical-critical studies to the Scriptures and theology had been a point of critical controversy at the turn from the nineteenth to the twentieth

xxviii century. However, papal encyclicals and documents of the Pontifical Biblical Commission began to pave the way for the historical criticism that came to fruition in Vatican II.

In the time since Vatican II, two significant developments in historical-critical studies have occurred. One has been the focus on the diverse reception histories of the biblical texts. This has led to an emphasis on the traditional fourfold meaning of Scripture as a way of understanding the meaning and the significance of a text as it was “received” or understood. Consequently, in addition to the historical-critical study of Scripture, there has been a renewed focus on probing the diverse understandings of the multiple meanings of Scripture throughout the ages. How have different groups and different theologians appropriated the Scriptures? In approaching the meaning of the text, the theological task includes not only examining its historical meaning, but also exploring the diverse receptions and interpretations of the Scriptures throughout Christian history, traditions, and practices. Such an approach attends to the rhetoric of the text as well as to an ethics of reading and interpretation. Rather than viewing historical-critical studies as hostile, such an approach takes into account how historical studies have been expanded through social, anthropological, and rhetorical studies.

Another development of historical-critical studies has been the increased attention to popular religiosity and popular religious practices, areas that scholarship had neglected. If previously American religious history focused on religious and theological leadership, today studies seek to uncover the religious practices of immigrant Roman Catholics in the ethnic enclaves of cities or the lived religion embedded in the pious practices and customs of ordinary Catholics. Similar shifts can be seen in the importance

granted the saints and mystics as sources of religious knowledge. In the study of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, similar shifts in historical research are apparent. One classic study of the influence of the Council of Trent examined the role of five leading bishops as they implemented the council’s reforms in their dioceses. More recently, scholars such as Robert W. Scribner examine the religious practices in the post-Reformation period to discover to what extent specific traditions persisted, even within Protestant areas.

An excellent example of this development is Elizabeth Johnson’s treatment of the communion of saints and Mary. She not only presents the historical, theological, conciliar, ecumenical, and papal teachings, but also shows the significance of the grassroots diversity, paradigmatic witnesses, and lived religion in Christian communities.

The third goal of the first edition was to incorporate recent hermeneutical theories and philosophical developments. Here change has been substantial, though different fields of theology have a more or less philosophical orientation and consequently are affected differently. In the decades before the Second Vatican Council, several developments took place. There was the blossoming of historical studies of Thomas Aquinas and of Scholasticism that overcame the one-sided interpretation of Neo-Scholasticism. Martin Grabmann, Louis Bertrand Geiger, Étienne Gilson, Cornelio Fabro, and Johannes Hirshberger were just a few of the leading historians of Thomism. At the same time, under the influence of *la nouvelle théologie*, the role of Augustine became increasingly emphasized. In addition, the later development of transcendental Thomism sought to bring Thomas into critical confrontation with Kantian philosophy, as in the transcendental Thomism of Joseph

Maréchal, Karl Rahner, Bernard Lonergan, and Emerich Coreth. Further, a unique brand of Thomism represented by Jacques Maritain became influential, especially with his work at the United Nations and on human rights and in political philosophy.

The shift from Kantian philosophy to post-Kantian philosophy has entailed a shift from epistemology to hermeneutics, aesthetics, and social-political philosophy, even though Kant's influence in aesthetic and political philosophy remains strong today in some circles. More recently, in some quarters, there has been a re-emergence of metaphysics, as exemplified by the influence of "Radical Orthodoxy," and its Neo-Platonic metaphysics. At the same time, the influence of Martin Heidegger's critique of Western metaphysics has influenced attempts to understand God beyond the categories of being. The strong emphasis on phenomenology in Europe comes not only from the writings of Pope John Paul II, but also from leading philosophers and theologians such as Jean-Luc Marion and Louise-Marie Chauvet.

Moreover, hermeneutic theories that pointed to the surplus meaning of the text (Paul Ricoeur) or the outstanding and enduring characteristics of classics (Hans-Georg Gadamer) have found a complementary and even alternative emphasis in deconstruction on the aporia of texts (Jacques Derrida) or the postcolonial critique of some of the classics of the West. One can see this shift in David Tracy's writings that moved from an analysis of Bernard Lonergan's method, to an appropriation of hermeneutical theory and then to an appreciation of postmodern theories. His approach to the understanding of God in this volume gives evidence of the latter, especially in its sensitivity to the diversity of resources for theological language about God. David Power's own work on the sacra-

ments displays the shift in recent sacramental theology away from a transcendental approach to one emphasizing the importance of symbol and the category of gift. His chapters on the sacraments illustrate these shifts through his exposition of the work of others and his own systematic construction.

If this volume were complemented by a volume on ethics and social ethics within Roman Catholicism, one would also have to include such diverse strands as the renewed emphasis in Aristotle, the alternative emphasis on John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas, or the emphasis on the communitarian, and the reemphasis of a virtue ethics.

The fourth goal of the previous edition—to include the results of ecumenical advances as recorded in recent bilateral statements—was evident in the statements noted in that edition, and these have been updated. In the chapter on the communion of saints and Mary, Elizabeth Johnson discusses the important dialogues between Lutherans and Roman Catholics on that issue. Roger Haight, in his updated chapter on grace, discusses the important and recent joint statement on justification by Roman Catholics and Lutherans. Michael Fahey has been very engaged in the dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodox churches. His chapter on the church also reflects on the disillusionments and self-doubt that have emerged in recent times within the ecumenical movement itself. To the extent that these dialogues, especially those between Roman Catholic and Lutheran theologians, were a part of the first edition, they have also become a part of this second edition. Although the dialogues in Rome between the Vatican and science do not formally constitute bilateral statements, they do represent an important dialogue taking place in the contemporary Catholic Church.

xxx Anne Clifford's chapter on creation addresses this dialogue, and to the extent that "Intelligent Design" has become a central topic (less within than outside of Roman Catholic theological circles), she deals with this issue in the second edition. Likewise, the influence of some Eastern theologians has led to a more "social" conception of the Trinity in contemporary Western interpretations of the triune God, as Anthony Godzieba indicates.

The fifth goal, which was to include an emphasis on praxis, with specific reference to the diverse liberation theologies, has changed and expanded. Current liberation theologies themselves have undergone changes. They have moved even more clearly and strongly away from any suspicion of a Marxist understanding of praxis. Latin American liberation theology increasingly underscores indigenous American spirituality as well as Christian spirituality as a basis for further understanding the meaning of praxis. At the same time, postcolonial and postmodern theories have decisively influenced the understanding of praxis. This goal is clearly evident in Roger Haight's exposition of grace and in Jeannine Hill Fletcher's presentation of eschatology not only in relation to liberation but also in relation to pluralism. Moreover, with critical theory, there has been an increased critique of the modern West's overemphasis on scientific and technological praxis. Critical theory has also underscored the difficulty in understanding liberation and emphasized a more indeterminate or open-ended conception. The importance of spiritual and liturgical practices also has come increasingly into the center of theological reflection.

As we adopt these five goals and interpret them anew for this edition, the fundamental question that emerges is this: What constitutes Catholicism? In other words, what is the mean-

ing of the book's subtitle, "Roman Catholic Perspectives"? An answer to this question cannot be reduced to a simple or singular formula. Any attempt to contrast Roman Catholic with Lutheran or Reformed approaches to theology is often misleading, because a focus on the areas of disagreement overlooks the more basic Christian beliefs that each shares with the others. Likewise, the contrast between the "Catholic sacramental and substantial" versus the "Protestant prophetic principle" overlooks that much of the substance of Christianity exists in the Reformation churches and much of the prophetic in the Roman Catholic Church. In a similar fashion, the polemic that understands the difference as one between an "either/or" or a "both/and," with the latter representing Roman Catholicism, neglects how the Reformation traditions cannot be limited to the former characterization.

The answer that each of the chapters in this volume seeks to provide is that a Roman Catholic theological approach attempts to articulate the Christian faith and beliefs through an analysis of their biblical roots, the historical developments in their traditions and practices, and their ecclesial fidelity as evident in the explication of the teaching of the various councils and statements of the papacy. Such attempts bring to the fore sacramentality, universality, and union with the bishop of Rome as goals to be reflected in theology. However, these characteristics can best be understood in the categories of "already" and "not yet." One seeks to uncover their presence, but at the same time, one seeks them as a goal yet to be achieved. Such attempts are made in Roman Catholic theology, as Joseph Ratzinger has emphasized, through various forms of correlation between faith and reason, between Christian belief and critical reflection. To the extent that this volume was generated out of the spirit of Vatican II, the authors view the chal-

lenges laid down by Vatican II and the Holy Spirit that engendered the council as significant tasks to be taken up and developed in the theological history and reflection of the individual chapters.

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The second edition of this volume is dedicated to our colleagues and coauthors of the first edition who are no longer with us but are still fondly remembered as scholars and as friends. Avery Cardinal Dulles, known for his writing in fundamental, systematic, and ecumenical theology, was supportive of the idea from its very beginning. He managed to submit his revised contribution just weeks before his death. Catherine LaCugna's passing took away a scholar in her prime; her contributions to trinitarian theology have provided a decisive marker in subsequent discussions. Monika Hellwig was known for her contribution to liberation theology and practical theology, as was Regis Duffy for his contributions to sacramental theology and pastoral ministry. North American Roman Catholic theology has been enriched by the singular and outstanding contributions of all four theologians, three of whom were presidents of the Catholic Theological Society of America. We are all indebted to them for their contributions to theology. The dedication of this edition to them can only express that gratitude in a small way.