

## Presidential Address

### FIFTY YEARS OF THEOLOGY

One night in October, 1945, two months after the end of World War II, members of the board of editors of the *American Ecclesiastical Review* got into a discussion. Paulist Eugene Burke insisted on the need of a professional society of Catholic theologians; and Edmond Benard and Joseph Fenton agreed with the idea that the Redemptorist Francis J. Connell was the one who should lead the way. And so he did. Before Christmas he met with other professors of Catholic University, and with Archbishop Spellman for his blessing and permission to hold the first meeting in New York City. In late January 1946, thirty-eight priests responded to an invitation for a planning meeting at St. Paul's Parish on West 59th Street. Preparatory committees were formed, drafts of constitutions were written, and the first formal meeting of the new society began on June 25, 1946. The first corporate act was to assist at Mass of the Holy Ghost at St. Patrick's Cathedral before the two days of sessions at this very hotel, then the Hotel Commodore, at which the Catholic Theological Society of America was formally self-constituted.<sup>1</sup>

These first fifty years of our Society, roughly corresponding to the last half of the twentieth century, have witnessed dramatic changes in the life of the church generally, the Roman Catholic Church in particular, and, not least, its theology. In this final address of our fiftieth anniversary convention I will analyze those changes in Catholic theology as they are displayed in the history of our conventions. I take the record of our *Proceedings* as a controlled example of developments in Catholic theology at large.

The Second Vatican Council provides a marker for characterizing Catholic theology before and after it. This suggests a natural division for my analysis into three periods: the first period consists of the first twenty years including the years of Vatican II; the second is the middle ten-year period between 1966 and 1975 when the effects of Vatican II were felt; the third period reaches to our present.

A more difficult decision for this analysis concerned a practical method of controlling the vast array of topics considered under the umbrella of theology and the ceilings of our meeting rooms. I have solved this problem by selecting four topics that relate to the foundations of theology and are suggested by the sheer

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<sup>1</sup>An account of the founding of the CTSA is provided by Joseph C. Fenton, "The Foundation and Progress of the Society," *CTSA Proceedings* 2 (1947) 5-12.

number of times they are explicitly or implicitly addressed at our meetings. These are (1) conceptions of the nature and task of theology, (2) authority and its relation to theology, (3) the impact of historical consciousness, and (4) the relation of the Church to the world. These categories represent large areas of theological reflection and they overlap considerably. Together, however, they provide a heuristic framework of continuity across the three periods in which one can measure the changes that occurred, especially after the Second Vatican Council.

### THE FIRST TWENTY YEARS

How are we to characterize the theology represented in the Catholic Theological Society of America during the first twenty years of its existence? Before I answer that question, let me make some observations about the context of this theology. Although we are describing theology done in North America, the most relevant context for this theology, with some notable exceptions, is less American society and more the ecclesiastical world of the Catholic Church. The earliest members of the CTSA were all priests, the great majority of whom had degrees from Europe and taught in seminaries or religious houses of study. The xerox machine was not yet invented. Most professors taught from manuals or private sets of notes that followed a fairly standardized track of established doctrine. In some seminaries the law that theology be taught in Latin was observed. The depression, the war, subsequent world events, and the development of North American society are less important for understanding Catholic theology at this time than Vatican I, the condemnation and suppression of Modernism in the early part of the century, papal encyclicals on Scripture and the Mystical Body, the beginnings of a "nouvelle théologie" in France during the 1930s and 1940s, the definition of the doctrine of the Assumption, and especially the cooling effect of the encyclical *Humani Generis* in 1950.

Against this background I would describe the Catholic theology as represented by our Society in the following terms: Catholic theology was a speculative analytic discipline closely tied to Church authority; its analysis was less a critical questioning, more a dissection of meaning; it was conscious of historicity, but not in the way it would become; and the church-world relationship was not a central but an attendant practical theme. Let me put some flesh on this skeletal description.

*Theology.* I begin with the nature and task of theology. In 1952 Edmond Benard, in what was really the first presidential address, responded to the question "What do theologians do?" with a straightforward answer: they devote themselves to contemplation and the pursuit of wisdom. More practically they teach and write for journals; they are the intellectual consultants of general Church

life.<sup>2</sup> This pursuit of wisdom was not completely peaceful and serene; there were significant challenges coming from the outside. John Sweeney called attention to the changing conception of the origin of human existence mediated by cultural anthropology, historical biology, and archaeology. "A theology that does not confront this phenomenal growth in human knowledge," he wrote, "is a theology without meaning or influence for our contemporaries."<sup>3</sup> Intrinsically theology was contemplative; sociologically its task was to communicate; it was, however, being challenged from outside the Church.

*Authority.* Turning to the place of authority during the first twenty years, it may be said that the magisterium was the premise and foundation of Catholic theology. This dependence on authority was built into the neo-Scholastic argument and method exemplified in this early period.<sup>4</sup> An adequate theological argument consisted in deductive reasoning from revealed propositions and proving historically that something was the intended meaning of official Church teaching.<sup>5</sup> But the strongest statement of the role of authority in theology came from George Shea who saw the encyclical *Humani Generis* as a result of a lack of reverence and submission to the magisterium. He argued that Catholic theology is intrinsically dependent on this authority which has the exclusive right to teach Christ's truth. In his words, "there can be no legitimate magisterium withdrawn from the authority, guidance and vigilance of the sacred magisterium."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Edmond D. Benard, "What do the Theologians Do?" *CTSA Proceedings* 7 (1952) 34-37.

<sup>3</sup>John Sweeney, "The Challenge to Theology," *CTSA Proceedings* 13 (1958) 191.

<sup>4</sup>The paper by Edmond Benard, "The Doctrinal Value of the Ordinary Teaching of the Holy Father in View of *Humani Generis*," *CTSA Proceedings* 6 (1951) 78-107 is a classic display of a knowledge of the ecclesial framework of the discussion, a delineation of the question, careful definition of terms, historical research, citation of authorities, application of Thomistic analyses of the act of faith, canonical distinctions and reasoning, a practical sense of the audience and use of his conclusions.

<sup>5</sup>Essentially this is the burden of the argument of Joseph C. Fenton, "The Theology of Church and State," *Proceedings* 2 (1947) 15-46. In 1954 the President and the Board found the theological "notes" which qualified the level of the authority of various theological doctrines in the manuals confusing enough to commission a paper to try to sort them all out. See Martin J. Healy, "Theological Qualifications and the Assent of Faith," *Proceedings* 9 (1954) 104-22.

<sup>6</sup>George Shea, "Theology and the Magisterium," *Proceedings* 12 (1957) 220-21; also 217, 229. A few years later Aloysius McDonough proposed that the theologian be conceived as an instrumental cause of the teaching Church, and thus an extension of the magisterium. This is an advance over the former position because it provides an active role to the theologian: "In relation to the hierarchy, the position of the theologian in the economy of the Teaching Church is auxiliary, subsidiary, but notwithstanding that subordination, his contribution is professionally reliable, influential, invaluable." "The Professional Theologian—An Instrumental Cause in the *Ecclesia Docens*," *Proceedings* 17 (1962) 269-75.

The very structure of theology as a discipline was enveloped in this hierarchical authority.

*Historicity.* Relative to historicity, how can we judge the historical consciousness of Catholic theology during this period? One way is to consult the theories of the development of doctrine and tradition which were on everyone's mind in the wake of the "new theology" in France, *Humani Generis*, and the definition of the Assumption. In 1950 the first distinguished member of our society by the name of John Galvin surveyed recent theories of development of French theologians. As Galvin laid it out, the problem of development is development itself; how is it possible when "[s]tability of doctrine is an essential characteristic of the faith, [and] since Christian revelation ceased with the death of the last Apostle."<sup>7</sup> Walter Burghardt developed a theology of tradition in 1951 that helped to account for the doctrine of the Assumption.<sup>8</sup> But it was Cyril Vollert who stated sharply the two factors that made development possible: the magisterium and the Holy Spirit. "[T]he Church, and especially its magisterium culminating in the Roman Pontiff, is empowered by divine illumination to read progressively in the initial deposit the full truth which God the Revealer meant to include in the concepts, propositions, and formulas in which His message to mankind is expressed."<sup>9</sup> That was in 1957. By 1964, under the influence of the council and thinkers such as Maurice Blondel, one sees a new sense of historicity; tradition is existentialized and understood as the historical life of the Church as such. In this light, "not only is development reasonable and to be expected. It is even necessary."<sup>10</sup> Things were thus beginning to change from the preconciliar period where the supposition was stasis and the problem lay in the very possibility of development.

*Church-World.* The last category for characterizing Catholic theology, the church-world relationship, was not as prevalent in this period as it would become after *Gaudium et Spes*. But during this early period members entertained many of the topics that are current today in two distinct ways, in the discussion of social-ethical problems and the problem of church and state. Regarding the first, there was a Committee on Current Problems which pinpointed practical social issues that should be addressed at conventions. A list of what was addressed during this early period will indicate the keen awareness of what was happening in society: the morality of war, industrial problems, the duty to preserve life by extraordinary means, government aid to education, labor law, racism and segregation, contraception, overpopulation, business ethics, human intervention into

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<sup>7</sup>John J. Galvin, "A Critical Survey of Modern Conceptions of Doctrinal Development," *Proceedings* 5 (1950) 46.

<sup>8</sup>Walter J. Burghardt, "The Catholic Concept of Tradition in the Light of Modern Theological Thought," *Proceedings* 6 (1951) 42-75.

<sup>9</sup>Cyril Vollert, "Doctrinal Development: A Basic Theory," *Proceedings* 12 (1957) 70.

<sup>10</sup>Wilfrid F. Dewan, "The Meaning of Tradition," *Proceedings* 19 (1964) 8.



nature.<sup>11</sup> These problems were discussed objectively and analytically, for the most part by an application of Church teaching or scholastic moral principles to the problems.

The second church-world topic was the relation between Church and state. John Courtney Murray was assigned this topic for the second CTSA convention, but due to illness, Joseph Fenton delivered a paper in Murray's stead.<sup>12</sup> The next year Murray took up the theme in a lengthy essay entitled "Governmental Repression of Heresy."<sup>13</sup> The differences between these two papers were dramatic, especially on the level of method. Fenton's argument was purely theological; he argued in a deductive way from revealed propositions toward the duties of the state towards the one true religion and bolstered this argument with papal teaching. By contrast Murray declared that this whole question had "to be viewed in historical perspective."<sup>14</sup> But history in turn presented enormous problems because the face-off between state and Church had occurred in so many different contexts that the very terms of the problem were never the same. In an extended analytic and historical argument Murray showed that some things often taken as universal teachings were time-conditioned and contingent on circumstances. In its historical consciousness Murray's essay stands in contrast not only to Fenton's but to most of the theology of this whole period.

*Summary.* Let me summarize this first period of Catholic theology prior to Vatican II. Catholic theology was a speculative analytic discipline closely tied to Church authority; it was minimally conscious of historicity; the church-world relationship was an area of significant discussion but it was not at the center of Catholic theology. At the end of the first twenty years, just prior to the end of Vatican II, Gerald Van Ackeren isolated three problems that had to be engaged in the future: historical consciousness and the laws of doctrinal development; a dialogue with the world of secular and scientific knowledge; and the nature of

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<sup>11</sup>The following articles are some of those representing the listed topics: Thomas Owen Martin, "Problems in Morality of Warfare," 2 (1947) 47-71; 1941: Godfrey Schmidt, "Industrial Problems in a Democracy," 3 (1948) 122-25; John A. Goodwine, "The Physician's Duty to Preserve Life by Extraordinary Means," 7 (1952), 125-38; Thomas Owen Martin, "Distributive Justice and Aid to Education," 8 (1953) 157-73; J. Cronin and F. Carney, "The Morality of Right to Work Laws," 12 (1957) 193-214; Francis J. Gilligan "Moral Aspects of Segregation in Education," 13 (1958) 51-60; John Lynch, "Moral Aspects of Pharmaceutical Fertility Control," 13 (1958) 127-35; Anthony Zimmerman, "Morality and Problems of Overpopulation," 14 (1959) 5-27; A. H. Hayes and D. Lowery, "Moral Problems in Business Practice," 16 (1961) 117-46; Owen Garrigan, "Moral Problems Arising from Man's Intervention in Nature," 19 (1964) 131-38.

<sup>12</sup>See n. 5, above.

<sup>13</sup>*Proceedings* 3 (1948) 26-98.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 34.

authority that will respect scholars and the freedom of Christian thought.<sup>15</sup> He was right on the money.

### THE MIDDLE YEARS

Let us move then to the middle years. The ten years between 1966 and 1975 mediated a sudden and complex revolution in American Catholic theology. It is rare to be able to read such corporate excitement and confusion in the pages of formal theological prose. Sudden discontinuity, change, and new beginnings suffused the context of these years. This context can be evoked by a list of words and phrases each one of which represents a cluster of experiences, ideas, and imperatives that came rushing into the Catholic theological imagination over this short period of time. Many of you remember what was symbolized by *Gaudium et Spes*, Dutch theology, and Medellín; civil rights, Vietnam, and the assassination of public figures; *Humanae Vitae*, liturgical experimentation, and laicization; poverty, student protest, and secularization; biblical criticism, experience, and relevance; ecumenism, Protestant divinity schools, and American theology. Against this background, I will characterize the changes that occurred in those ten years, once again in terms of the nature of the discipline, the location of authority, the appreciation of historicity, and the church-world relationship.

*Theology.* In four successive years, from 1967 to 1970, each of the presidents of the Society addressed the state of theology in North America.<sup>16</sup> They testify to an experience of revolution within the discipline: it had changed overnight in its situation, premises, and the problems it faced. Regarding the intrinsic nature of the discipline, all four agree on these five points: first, the phenomenon of change—Church doctrine was being reformulated; second, the impact of historical consciousness, which included questioning the relevance of the past to the present and the need for an indigenous American theology; third, the sudden abandonment and loss of a unified framework for theology, for scholasticism was suddenly gone; fourth, a turn to experience as a medium of God's Spirit which was found everywhere from the Protestant churches to the secular world; and, fifth, a crisis if not a breakdown in the credibility of Church authority. Besides these internal changes which touched the nature of the discipline, external shifts in the situation of Catholic theology were noted: theology began moving from the seminary to the university; it was beginning to interact with other academic disciplines; lay people were joining the ranks of Catholic theologians.

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<sup>15</sup>Gerald Van Ackeren, "Crises in Contemporary Theology," *Proceedings* 20 (1965) 147-56.

<sup>16</sup>These were Paul E. McKeever, "Development of the CTSA in the Post-Conciliar Church," *Proceedings* 22 (1967) 309-15; Walter J. Burghardt, "Towards an American Theology," *Proceedings* 23 (1968) 20-27; Austin B. Vaughan, "Presidential Address," *Proceedings* 24 (1969) 142-50; Charles E. Curran, "Presidential Address," *Proceedings* 25 (1970) 218-33.

Austin Vaughan captured the confusion of the period better than others with a story of Catholic professionals who came to consult with four moral theologians on basic issues. The four moralists disagreed on so many vital points that they mystified their clients and left them with the impression that theology represented "little more than a professional debating society."<sup>17</sup> It was Lonergan, however, who labeled the development a revolution.<sup>18</sup> The method of Catholic dogmatics had been based on the supposition of one normative culture, a classical framework allowing universally relevant understanding. This was replaced by an empirical notion of culture and historical consciousness: cultures are pluriform and have histories. Understanding thus became a kind of inculturation, expressing the Gospel message in a local language in which it had not been known before.<sup>19</sup> In this context, Lonergan said, "contemporary hermeneutics and history have made the old style dogmatic theologian obsolete."<sup>20</sup>

*Authority.* What about the perception of authority in this period? The social context was one in which respect for authority was being undermined. *Humanae Vitae's* forbidding what was called artificial birth control had its price. Richard McCormick wrote in 1969 that "the hierarchical magisterium is in deep trouble. For many of the educated faithful it has ceased to be truly credible."<sup>21</sup>

On a theological level two distinct analyses of the nature and role of religious authority virtually contradicted its former status in theology. The first was that of Anselm Atkins. He studied magisterial propositions linguistically in relation to the transcendence they express and showed their metaphorical character. As metaphorical they cannot communicate with the exactness of science. It follows that magisterial expressions must always "be interpreted as a kind of religious metaphor even when their literary form and supposed intention do not encourage such treatment."<sup>22</sup> Because of the inexactness of metaphor and the need of interpretation, doctrines can no longer serve as a premise in a deductive argument that yields a single conclusion. The second analysis was that of Hal Sanks who applied the principles of the sociology of knowledge to authority and yielded the following conclusion: the teachings of the magisterium can be viewed "as a product of society, as a process of signification and legitimation of the institutions of that society, and subject to all the conditions, limitations, and rela-

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<sup>17</sup>Vaughan, "Presidential Address," 147.

<sup>18</sup>Bernard Lonergan, "Revolution in Catholic Theology," *Proceedings* 27 (1972) 18-23.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 19-20.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>21</sup>Richard A. McCormick, "The Teaching Role of the Magisterium and of Theologians," *Proceedings* 24 (1969) 251.

<sup>22</sup>Anselm Atkins, "Transcendence and the Expressions of the Magisterium," *Proceedings* 23 (1968) 92.

tivities of the social base from which it originates and which it continues to support."<sup>23</sup>

These conclusions should not be read as an attack on authority but as essays at understanding its nature, its relation to theology, and its role in the Church. Constructively there was an effort to distinguish and relate the competencies and roles of hierarchical teaching, on the one hand, and theological interpretation, on the other. The pastoral and doctrinal competency of the hierarchy is one thing; the scientific, analytic, and interpretive competency of the theologians is another. The witnessing authority of the hierarchy was autonomous; but also to perform its function well theology should enjoy academic freedom, argued Robert Hunt.<sup>24</sup> Both need the other, and the fullness of teaching competence lies in neither alone. In this period of a crisis of authority in the Church the two must collaborate with each other.<sup>25</sup>

In sum, on a social level people pointed to a crisis of authority: the magisterium was not credible. Theologically, magisterial teaching was relativized in relation to transcendence and society. Positively, a proposal was made for cooperation between the distinct competencies of the magisterium and theology.

*Historicity.* The revolution in theology can also be seen in terms of a deepening of historical consciousness. What happened was this: gradually theologians formulated the historicity of human existence itself and the problem of the development of doctrine as it was formerly conceived simply disappeared. There were three paths leading in this direction.

The first was a call for an American theology which was repeated several times during this period. The premise of such an appeal is an appreciation of the historical uniqueness of traditions, cultures, and societies.<sup>26</sup>

The second approach was that of Robert Richard when he asked whether there was anything unchangeable or unchanging in conciliar teaching.<sup>27</sup> Whereas

<sup>23</sup>T. Howland Sanks, "Sociology of Knowledge and the Problem of Authority," *Proceedings* 28 (1973) 215.

<sup>24</sup>Robert E. Hunt, "Academic Freedom and the Theologian," *Proceedings* 23 (1968) 265.

<sup>25</sup>"In other words, the doctrinal-pastoral charism of the hierarchy can only function adequately and effectively in the Church if it is in close association with what we have called the scientific charism of theologians and the prophetic charisms of others in the Church." McCormick, "The Teaching Role of the Magisterium and of Theologians," 252.

<sup>26</sup>Calls for an American theology came from Walter Burghardt in his presidential address of 1968 (see n. 14) and again in "American Church and American Theology: Response to an Identity Crisis," *Proceedings* 28 (1973) 1-14. This last paper was the keynote address to the convention theme of an American theology in an American church. See also Anthony T. Padovano, "American Culture and Theology," *Proceedings* 26 (1971) 116-21.

<sup>27</sup>Robert L. Richard, "Changeable and Unchangeable Elements in Conciliar Teaching," *Proceedings* 22 (1967) 21-31.



the problem of the development of doctrine was the coming to be of doctrines, Richard asked whether doctrines could be changed or pass out of being. The question was discussed in Lonerganian terms which dictated the conclusion. One had to distinguish between truth and relevance, or relatedness to a culture. If the idea of a universal or classical culture was dead, then there could be no unchangeable conciliar expressions of Christian truth; all were wedded to particular, contingent situations and thus subject to change. Richard located the unchanging essence of Christian truth in a kerygma that found expression in the Scripture and in Creeds in simple, basic, and holistic statements.

The third and final path to uncovering the historicity of theology and doctrine was traced by Gustave-Pierre Leonard at the 1973 convention.<sup>28</sup> The point of his paper was to resituate the question of the development of doctrine within the context of historical consciousness. Drawing on a wide spectrum of thinkers, including Dilthey, Aron, Gadamer, and Ricoeur, Leonard established a historical anthropology: human existence is in history, is historical, indeed *is* history.<sup>29</sup> Human existence includes constant interpretation of the past in ever new situations. On this basis Leonard called into question the basic theory developed by Vollert in the first period at its three essential points. There is no homogeneous and continuous development; all development is dialectical involving discontinuity, reversal, and error.<sup>30</sup> Second, the Holy Spirit cannot so easily be used as a support of authentic development: "The Holy Spirit nowhere guarantees that each step of the magisterium is going to be an illustration of his presence."<sup>31</sup> And, third, "the magisterium is not the key to the problem of the development of dogma."<sup>32</sup> In sum, Leonard's paper completely transposed the earlier problem of development. Given the historicity of human existence, development is a premise, and the question is whether a continuous Christian message is possible.

*Church-World.* Finally, in the area of the relationship between the Church and the world, one sees another major shift of understanding reflected in a paper by Peter Henriot in 1973 calling for an American political theology.<sup>33</sup> The premises for this change were twofold: Vatican II's description of the Church in its relation to the modern world, and the subsequent development of political and especially liberation theology in the latter half of the 1960s. By political theology Henriot meant

theological reflection brought to bear upon the problems—issues and structures—of contemporary public policy. By explicating the values of that policy, evalu-

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<sup>28</sup>Gustave-Pierre Leonard, "History and Dogma," *Proceedings* 28 (1973) 103-23.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 103, 117.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>33</sup>Peter Henriot, "An American Political theology: The Church and Social Change," *Proceedings* 28 (1973) 157-66.

ating these values in the light of biblical values, and judging those systems which embody the values, the theologian strives to translate theology into policy.<sup>34</sup>

Some of the specific issues that Henriot had in mind were of global import: property and private ownership of it, environment and resources, governmental authority and ethics, individual rights and the social good.

Henriot's thinking significantly transformed the church-world reference of the earlier period. In the first place the church-state discussion was subsumed into the larger framework of the church-world relationship. Brian Hehir analyzed this transition at the 1986 convention.<sup>35</sup> Vatican II's *Dignitatis Humanae* on religious freedom had concluded the church-state debate, and *Gaudium et Spes* laid down a new framework of discussion. Secondly, the objective analytical discussions of social issues were drawn into the center of Church life and made a topic of the Church's mission in the world. There is thus a new binding together and reciprocal interaction between theology and ethics, ecclesiology and social mission, faith and action. These developments too were an outgrowth of historical consciousness. Theology was influenced by the moral imperatives of social ethical issues; and social ethics was transformed from objective discussion to issues of Christian life and spirituality. In the end, under the influence of Vatican II and liberation theology, the church-world relationship became prominent and social ethical issues became ecclesiological issues.

Let me compactly summarize the revolution of the middle years. It consisted in, first, Catholic theology's loss of its fundamental neo-Scholastic paradigm and the assumption of a freeing and disorienting historical consciousness; second, its loss of complete dependence on authority and the assumption of responsibility for disciplined interpretation; and, third, its reorientation from facing inward toward the Church to facing outward toward the world.

#### THE LAST TWENTY YEARS

Let me now evoke the context of the last twenty years with another list of words summarizing clusters of social experience: Presidents Carter, Reagan, and Bush; John Paul II and Archbishop Romero; liberation theology, black theology, and feminist theology; the Code of Canon Law, the ecclesiastical mandate, the Oath of Fidelity, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, the Universal Catechism, *Veritatis Splendor*, and *Ordinatio sacerdotalis*; basic ecclesial communities, woman church, and Acthus; Nicaragua, El Salvador, and *Economic Justice for All*; inculturation, Charles Curran, religious pluralism, and interreligious dialogue. Despite the powerful experiences symbolized by these words, there have been no sudden wrenching shifts in Catholic theology during this period comparable to the ten

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 159.

<sup>35</sup>Brian Hehir, "Church-State and Church-World: The Ecclesiological Implications," *Proceedings* 41 (1986) 54-74.

years after Vatican II. Rather, during the last twenty years the fundamental insights internalized after Vatican II developed into settled patterns of thought and were deepened by new problems and continued reflection.<sup>36</sup> And encompassing the whole development, the movement of feminist theology grew to maturity and added a new perspective on each issue. In this third part I will identify some developments within each of the four areas.

*Theology.* Regarding theology generally at least two developments have been solidified over the past twenty years. The first was summed up well by Joseph Komonchak. Theology has broken out of ecclesial boundaries in its method and task. Theology has become mediation between religion and culture, correlation between text and situation. "It unites into a single interpretative moment the two goals which had formerly been kept separate: the self-constitution of the Church and the Church's engagement with the society."<sup>37</sup> Theology is not seen as defense of Church teachings, and its criteria transcend simple obedience to the Church's magisterium. The second development is that Catholic theology has become irreducibly pluralistic in method and content. It now reflects Christian theology generally.<sup>38</sup>

*Authority.* As for authority, corresponding to the developing sense of autonomy within Catholic theology Avery Dulles reflected at length on the distinct authority of Catholic theologians as a body. His thesis is that "the Church has and needs two kinds of teachers—a class of official teachers whose task is to establish the official doctrine of the Church and a class of theologians whose function is to investigate the questions concerning faith in a scholarly way. These two classes are inseparably united, reciprocally dependent, but really and irreducibly distinct."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>This development within a broadly speaking newly established paradigm is reflected in two developments in the structure of the CTSA conventions. First, beginning in the early 1970s the conventions were organized around general themes, and often the theme corresponded more or less closely with one of the four issues I have analyzed here. Thus the issue was explored more deeply and from multiple angles. Second, there gradually arose continuing seminars dedicated to a specific theme which included reflection on one or other of the themes analyzed here. In other words, these areas were subjected to continuous reflection and development even when they were not the explicit topics of plenary addresses or papers.

<sup>37</sup>Joseph Komonchak, "The Ecclesial and Cultural Roles of Theology," *Proceedings* 40 (1985) 27.

<sup>38</sup>Monika Hellwig, in her presidential address entitled "Who Is Truly a Catholic Theologian?" *Proceedings* 42 (1987) 91-100 displays the different roles played by the Catholic theologian, a point that correlates with a deeper pluralism in method and content.

<sup>39</sup>Avery Dulles, "The Two Magisteria: An Interim Reflection," *Proceedings* 35 (1980) 155. These reflections follow his presidential address of 1976 entitled "The Theologian and the Magisterium," *Proceedings* 31 (1976) 235-46 in which he first developed the view of two magisteria following Thomas Aquinas.

But even while Dulles was arguing for a new collaboration between the hierarchical magisterium and theologians in order to revitalize the authority of the Church, the relation between these two groups deteriorated further. John Boyle chronicled the situation in his presidential address of 1985.<sup>40</sup> Since then hierarchical authority and theology have seemed to move in opposite directions: the one towards tighter catechetical definition, the other towards open dialogue with the world. Today episcopal authority and theology regard each other with a good measure of mutual distrust.

*Historicity.* Regarding historical consciousness, a sense of human historicity was deepened over the past twenty years by the discussion of religious pluralism. In 1984 Wilfred Cantwell Smith brought the following question to our meeting: Is the religiously pluralistic situation of the world today what God intends, the way God has chosen to work with human beings? Or is it an unfortunate situation, against God's will, to be overcome, so that all will be Christians?<sup>41</sup> No one member more than Paul Knitter has kept that question alive in our discussions by insisting that our new appreciation of religious pluralism creates a new context for theology and a new way of doing it.<sup>42</sup> A deepened sense of historicity was also behind the 1989 convention theme "Providence and Responsibility: The Divine and Human in History." Anne Carr, speaking on God's providence, demonstrated that the impact of historical consciousness transcends method in theology and affects its very content.<sup>43</sup>

*Church-World.* The dramatic shift in the church-world relationship that was launched by *Gaudium et Spes* has become an established framework for understanding the Church. As Brian Hehir analyzed it, national and regional churches, conscious of their cultural identity, became self-realizing entities which were in turn active in the public, sociopolitical sphere.<sup>44</sup> This has been true of the American Church and its theology.

Finally this period saw the emergence and growth of African-American theology, Latino American theology, and feminist theology. These have been nurtured in continuing seminars and workshop and have become prominent and distinctive voices in our discussions. One senses that the future is theirs.

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<sup>40</sup>John P. Boyle, "The Academy and Church Teaching Authority: Current Issues," *Proceedings* 40 (1985) 172-80. The theme of the convention that year was "Theology: Academic and Ecclesial."

<sup>41</sup>Wilfred Cantwell Smith, "The World Church and the World History of Religion: The Theological Issue," *Proceedings* 39 (1984) 56.

<sup>42</sup>Paul Knitter, "The Impact of World Religions on Academic and Ecclesial Theology," *Proceedings* 40 (1985) 160-62.

<sup>43</sup>Anne Carr, "'Not a Sparrow Falls': On Providence and Responsibility in History," *Proceedings* 44 (1989) 19-38.

<sup>44</sup>See n. 35, above.



### SOME CONCLUSIONS

Let me conclude this analysis by simply naming four of the achievements of the last fifty years and the challenges they present us.

First, regarding the nature, method, and task of theology, Catholic theology has been transformed from an ecclesiocentric and Church-contained discipline to one that dialogues with the world—the world of secular experience, social events, scientific knowledge, and the wisdom of intellectual culture. But within this established framework there is much to do and the observation of John Sweeney in 1952 is still valid: there is a considerable amount of human knowledge that Catholic theology has not yet confronted or engaged, and until it does it will lack meaning for many of our contemporaries.

Second, with regard to authority, during the years that have followed Vatican II the extrinsicism and heteronomy which had characterized Catholic theology for so long, and which had been the target of modernism, was finally transcended. Catholic theology has found its legitimate theonomy and has defined its distinctive competence of critical interpretation within the sphere of a Church authority to which it is bound in service. But the newly internalized critical function of theology and, with some notable exceptions, the lack of cooperation between bishops and theologians, have resulted in a large gap of cognitive dissonance and mutual distrust between these two magisteria. If theology is to be in service of the Church, this very large item needs conscious attention.

Third, with regard to historicity, Catholic theology has become a pluralistic discipline. Fifty years ago Catholic theology was in many respects monolithic; today it is deeply pluralistic. Historicity has not only been recognized as a premise for theology; it has worked its way into the discipline itself so that more and more distinct and sometimes eccentric voices are included in the Catholic conversation. This historically mediated pluralism presents us with the challenge of not letting our collective theologizing become a meaningless babble among multiple parties who cannot understand each other. We have to keep talking with and listening to each other as we face the realities of the world; we have to communicate with each other what we perceive, what we understand, and what we propose to do about it.

And, fourth, with a stimulus from Vatican II, the church-world relationship emerged as one of the dominant perspectives of Catholic theology, and its influence was felt across the subdisciplines. One of the most significant results of this has been a confrontation between theology and social praxis and, more generally, a new explicit binding together of theology and ethics. Ethics has been so integrated into theology that praxis has become a source and basis for theological reflection and a criterion for relevant and credible theological conclusion. In a variety of ways biblical and systematic theology have been integrated into Catholic ethical reasoning. Among the challenges in this area is that of binding

together still further the individual and social dimensions of human existence and action and relating this to Christian faith and spirituality.

In the end, I am confident that the CTSA will help lead the way in meeting these challenges.

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