

**BISHOPS, THEOLOGIANS, AND PHILOSOPHERS
IN CONFLICT AT THE UNIVERSITIES
OF PARIS AND OXFORD:
THE CONDEMNATIONS OF 1270 AND 1277**

In one of his letters from prison Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote:

The movement beginning about the thirteenth century (I am not going to get involved in any arguments about the exact date) towards the autonomy of man (under which I place the discovery of the laws by which the world lives and manages in science, social and political affairs, art, ethics and religion) has in our time reached a certain completion. Man has learned to cope with all questions of importance without recourse to God as a working hypothesis. In questions concerning science, art, and even ethics, this has become an understood thing which one scarcely dares to tilt at any more. But for the last hundred years or so it has been increasingly true of religious questions also: it is becoming evident that everything gets along without "God," and just as well as before.¹

Bonhoeffer's perceptive remark shows how important it is to examine our medieval past as well as other pasts if we are to understand our present. His allusion to the medieval movement towards human autonomy directs our attention to a number of conflicts between churchmen and theologians from the eleventh century on. We shall examine the most dramatic of these—the condemnations in 1270 and 1277 at the University of Paris by Étienne Tempier, bishop of Paris, and an almost simultaneous condemnation in 1277 at Oxford University by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Kilwardby. Kilwardby's condemnations were renewed in 1284 by his successor as Archbishop of Canterbury, John Pecham.²

¹Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, translation of *Widerstand und Ergebung—Briefe und Aufzeichnungen aus der Haft* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, s.d.), (London: S.C.M. Press, 1953; London: Collins Fontana Books, 1959), pp. 106-107.

²Studies of these events include É. Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (New York: Random House, 1955), pp. 385-427, 717-50 (needs some revision in view of newly edited texts and recent studies); A. Maurer, *Medieval Philosophy* (2nd ed.; The Étienne Gilson Series, 4; Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1982), pp. 192-219, 407-10, 439-41; J. Miethke, "Papst, Ortsbischof und Universität in den Pariser Theologenprozessen des 13. Jahrhunderts," in A. Zimmerman, ed., *Miscellanea mediaevalia*, vol. X: *Die Auseinandersetzungen an der Pariser Universität im XIII. Jahrhundert* (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1976), pp. 52-94; F. Van Steenberghen, *Maître Siger de Brabant*, *Philosophes médiévaux*, 21 (Louvain: Publications universitaires, 1977) [good bibliography]; R. Hissette, *Enquête sur les 219 articles condamnés à Paris le 7 mars 1277*, *Philosophes Médiévaux*, 22 (Louvain: Publications universitaires, 1977) [good bibliog-

Earlier tensions had grown with the rise of the cathedral schools of France in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Lanfranc and local councils against Berengar of Tours, Bernard of Clairvaux and William of St. Thierry against Abelard, Bernard and Gerhoh of Reichersberg against Gilbert of Poitiers—these struggles were usually the reflection of two different ways of doing theology, one the so-called “monastic” theology linked with the monks’ *lectio divina* and ordered to pious contemplation rather than probing into new questions, the other the more professional (we would say “academic”) theology of the new schools, or “scholastic” theology, which applied dialectics and speculative grammar within faith, examined apparently conflicting authoritative texts from Scripture or the Fathers, and raised many new questions for discussion. Less controversial, but beginning the trend noted by Bonhoeffer, was the discovery of natures in created things, especially in the twelfth-century school of Chartres.³

In the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries the organization of the new University of Paris coincided with the entry into the West of Aristotle’s physics, psychology, metaphysics, and ethics, together with commentaries on them by Avicenna, Averroes and others. In 1210 and 1215 ecclesiastical authorities forbade lecturing on (but not personal reading of) this whole new wave of teachings that fascinated many scholars.⁴ These prohibitions were renewed in 1231 by Pope

raphy]; A. Bernstein, “Magisterium and License: Corporate Autonomy against Papal Authority in the Medieval University of Paris,” *Viator* 9 (1978), 291-307; R. Hissette, “Étienne Tempier et ses condamnations,” *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 47 (1980), 231-70; C. Ryan, “Man’s Free Will in the Works of Siger of Brabant,” *Mediaeval Studies* 45 (1983), 155-99.

³On these developments see G. Paré, A. Brunet, and P. Tremblay, *La renaissance du XIIe siècle: Les écoles et l’enseignement* (Paris: Vrin; Ottawa, Institut d’Études Médiévales, 1933); Gilson, *History*, pp. 128-78, 613-36; Maurer, *Med. Phil.*, pp. 47-92, 390-95, 430-32; M.-D. Chenu, *La théologie au douzième siècle* (Paris: Vrin, 1957), only partially translated (9 of 19 chs.) as *Nature, Man and Society in the Twelfth Century*, ed. and trans. J. Taylor and L. Little (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968); J. Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture*, 2nd ed., trans. C. Misrahi (New York: Fordham University Press, 1974); J. Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. III: *The Growth of Medieval Theology (600-1300)* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 177-245; W. Principe, *Introduction to Patristic and Medieval Theology*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1982) [photocopied class notes], pp. 177-245.

⁴See H. Denifle, ed., *Chartularium universitatis Parisiensis* (hereafter referred to as *CUP*), 4 vols. (Paris, 1889-1897; rpt. Brussels: Culture et Civilisation, 1964), no. 11; I (1889), 70 (for the year 1210): “nec libri Aristotelis de naturali philosophia nec commenta legantur Parisius publice vel secreto, et hoc sub pena excommunicationis inhibemus” (Decree of Master Peter of Corbeil, Archbishop of Sens and Bishop of Paris). The 1215 decree came from the papal legate, Cardinal Robert Courson; see *ibid.*, no. 20; I, 78-79: “Non legantur libri Aristotelis de *methafisica* et de *naturali philosophia*, nec *summe* de eisdem.” In these texts *legere* refers to lecturing in public or private, not to personal reading, which certainly was done, as is clear from quotations of Aristotle and others by authors of the period. It should also be noted that these restrictions applied only at the University of Paris; other universities such as Toulouse invited students to come in order to share the greater freedom in lecturing on these authors.

Gregory IX, but he also appointed a commission of theologians to review the works and purge them of error so that they could be used safely. The commission seems, however, not to have completed this work. In any case, after Gregory's death in 1241, lectures on these works began to be given, and in 1255 a statute of the university actually legalized and prescribed times for the study of all the known works of Aristotle for the Faculty of Arts.⁵

These prohibitions seem to have been observed more faithfully in the Faculty of Theology, which indeed may have been the source of the pressure to have them introduced. Although all theologians in the first half of the thirteenth century used some elements of Aristotelian and Avicennian (and to a lesser extent Averroistic) philosophy, they subordinated these elements to their neo-Augustinian theology which had assimilated a good measure of Neoplatonism, more attuned as it was to their kind of Augustinianism than was the new Aristotle.⁶ From this trend among theologians, led by Bonaventure and after his death in 1274 by John Pecham and Henry of Ghent, came strong opposition to the enthusiastic appropriation of Aristotle and his commentators (especially Averroes) by professors in the Faculty of Arts in the sixties and seventies of the thirteenth century. Suspicion also grew concerning those theologians, Thomas Aquinas in the lead, who made thorough, systematic use of Aristotle in their theology, although it must be stated emphatically that Aquinas was not simply an Aristotelian or different only because of his use of Aristotle: the new philosophy in Aquinas was always governed by and subordinate to faith and to his continuous lecturing on scripture throughout his life as a master of theology; moreover, it was balanced by healthy doses of Augustine and other Fathers as well as by the Neoplatonism of the Pseudo-Dionysius and others, and was surpassed in profundity by his own original philosophy of *esse* or *actus essendi* applied within theology.

Thomas Aquinas was caught in a kind of whirlpool formed by two opposing currents. Like modern theologians who draw elements out of Freudian or Jungian or other psychology, or who use modern existentialist or phenomenological or process or linguistic philosophies, or who apply categories from Marxist or other sociologies, Thomas came under attack from the more conservative theologians, in this case the neo-Augustinians. Bonaventure may have had Thomas in mind when he accused some theologians of diluting the wine of Sacred Scripture with the water of mundane philosophy.⁷ The other current was that flowing from some

⁵For Gregory's text see *ibid.*, no. 87 (I, 143-44), and for the 1255 statute *ibid.*, no. 246 (I, 277-79).

⁶For the use of Averroes (which was to be crucial in the 1260s and 1270s) in this earlier period see W. Principe, "Richard Fishacre's Use of Averroes with Respect to Motion and the Human Soul of Christ," *Mediaeval Studies* 40 (1978), 349-60, especially pp. 349-53.

⁷"Therefore, not so much water of philosophy should be mixed with the wine of sacred scripture that the wine becomes water; that would be the worst of miracles. We read that Christ made wine from water, not the other way around." *Collationes in Hexaemeron* 19, 14; in *Opera omnia* V (Quaracchi, 1891), p. 422b. The alternate version edited by F. Delorme (Quaracchi, 1934) is somewhat more forceful; it concludes: "In modern times wine is changed into water and bread into stone, contrary to the miracles of Christ" (III, 7, 14;

professors in the Faculty of Arts (and perhaps even more from their students, who as so often may have exaggerated the more careful statements of their professors). Aquinas saw some of these philosophers excluding doctrines of faith in their inquiries and he shared the opposition to this, but in his own special way. He not only opposed their exclusion of doctrines of faith but argued against their philosophical conclusions by showing that they were based on a false reading of Aristotle and on unsound reasoning. The doctrines he most opposed were the acceptance in philosophy of one intellect in all humans, the denial of creation from nothing, and the rejection of personal immortality.⁸

The masters in the Faculty of Arts, led by Siger of Brabant and Boethius of Dacia, held that natural reason, as shown by the philosophy of Aristotle and his commentators, reached conclusions opposed to doctrines taught universally in the schools until then; in some cases their conclusions were opposed to Catholic belief. Their modern counterparts would be philosophers of religion or professors of religious studies proceeding in their disciplines on strictly rational grounds apart from an accepted revelation or a personal or ecclesial faith-commitment; if such professors were to proceed in this way in a Catholic university, one can see that their conclusions might cause concerns similar to those felt by theologians and ecclesiastics with respect to the conclusions of the professors in the Faculty of Arts at Paris.

Concerning these professors, however, a number of erroneous and over-simplified judgments have been corrected by recent research. Siger, for example, was always careful to insist that faith must prevail even if human reasoning and philosophical authority reached an opposed conclusion. No one has found him or Boethius of Dacia, or any of the others whose texts we have, teaching the so-called "double truth."⁹ Their trust in reason and the philosophy of Aristotle and Averroes as they saw it left them, however, in a kind of fideism that seemed hypocritical to the opposed theologians and ecclesiastics and personally dangerous even if sincere—and their sincerity seems to be more readily accepted today by scholars.¹⁰ Also, recent editions of Siger's works show that he paid close attention to

p. 217). One wonders if Bonaventure was consciously taking up an earlier text of Aquinas and replying to it: in his *In librum Boethii De Trinitate*, Proem., q. 2, a. 3, ad 5 (ed. M. Calcaterra, *S. Thomae Aquinatis opuscula theologica*, vol. II [Turin/Rome: Marietti, 1972], p. 334), Thomas says that "those who use philosophical doctrines in sacred scripture, leading them back to service of faith, do not mix water with wine but rather change the water into wine."

⁸See especially his *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas*, ed. L. Keeler (Rome: Pont. University Gregoriana, 1936); it was written at Paris in 1270. At the same time Aquinas wrote an equally strong-worded reply against the neo-Augustinian theologians (in this case, likely John Pecham) defending his own position that the world could have been created from all eternity; see his *De aeternitate mundi contra murmurantes*, ed. R. Spiazzi, *Divi Thomae Aquinatis opuscula philosophica* (Turin/Rome: Marietti, 1954), pp. 105-108. On Aquinas's relation to the philosophers at Paris see F. Van Steenberghen, *Thomas Aquinas and Radical Aristotelianism* (Washington DC: Catholic University Press, 1980).

⁹See F. Van Steenberghen, *Thomas Aquinas*, p. 151.

¹⁰See *ibid.*, p. 92.

Thomas Aquinas's criticisms of his teaching and modified some elements of it;¹¹ he and the masters of arts had great respect for Thomas Aquinas, as is shown by the letter the masters of the Faculty of Arts sent in 1274 at the time of his death asking for his body and for a number of philosophical writings they understood he had begun in Paris and, they thought, had completed in Italy.¹² This moving letter teaches a lesson for today. Academics will respect theologians who can discuss matters with them competently and fairly rather than those who only sit in undiscussed and perhaps ignorant condemnation of them.

In the late 1260s Bonaventure's *Collationes de decem praeceptis* (1267) and his *Collationes de donis Spiritus Sancti* (1268) had singled out and discussed a few errors circulating in the schools, and Giles of Lessines had sent a list of such errors to his former teacher, Albert the Great.¹³ Many of the errors they mention are found in a list of thirteen propositions condemned on 10 December 1270 by the rather tempestuous and strong-willed bishop of Paris, Étienne Tempier, himself formerly a master of theology at Paris. Condemned as errors are propositions asserting that God does not know individual things or things other than himself, and that human acts are not ruled by God's providence (nos. 10-12); that the world is eternal and there never was a first human being (*homo*) (nos. 5, 6); that all human beings have one and the same intellect numerically, and that it is false or improper to say that they understand (nos. 1, 2); that the soul, the human form, is corrupted when the body is corrupted, and that God cannot give immortality or incorruption to a corruptible or mortal thing (nos. 7, 13); that the human will wills and chooses necessarily, free choice being a passive power necessarily moved by the desired object (nos. 3, 9); that the heavenly bodies necessitate everything done here in the lower regions (no. 4); that after death a separated soul does not suffer from bodily fire (no. 8).¹⁴

Tempier's condemnation of these propositions includes the excommunication of all those "who taught them knowingly (*scienter*) or asserted (*asseruerint*) them." To "assert" a proposition or doctrine is a technical medieval term for definitely accepting the proposition or doctrine as true (as opposed to summarizing a position or stating a doctrine for the purpose of a theological question or debate). Whether anyone asserted these condemned propositions or only gave them as expositions of the philosophers' doctrines, the bishop maintained they could not be held by Christians; the majority of them would indeed be judged incompatible with Christian faith.

¹¹See W. Dunphy, ed., *Siger de Brabant: Quaestiones in metaphysicam: Édition revue de la reportation de Munich—Texte inédit de la reportation de Vienne*, Philosophes médiévaux, 24 (Louvain-la-Neuve: Éditions de l'Institut Supérieur de Philosophie, 1981), pp. 30-31, and A. Maurer, ed., *Siger de Brabant: Quaestiones in metaphysicam: Texte inédit de la reportation de Cambridge—Édition revue de la reportation de Paris*, Philosophes médiévaux, 25 (Louvain-la-Neuve: Éditions de l'Institut Supérieur de Philosophie, 1983), pp. 17-20.

¹²See *CUP*, no. 447; I, 504-505.

¹³On Giles's list see J. Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas d'Aquino: His Life, Thought, and Work* (Garden City NY: Doubleday, 1974), pp. 276-77.

¹⁴For the condemnation and list of propositions see *CUP*, no. 432; I, 486-87.

This condemnation of a relatively few propositions failed to produce the desired effect, so that in 1277 the continuing unrest at Paris drew to itself the attention and then intervention of Pope John XXI (Peter of Spain, a renowned professor of philosophy before his election as pope, who had written well-known treatises on logic and the psychology of the human soul that reflected the Augustinian-Avicennian tradition).¹⁵ What happened next is the subject of debate and uncertainty. It is clear that the pope ordered Étienne Tempier to ascertain the authors of the errors and to send him the information. Tempier, however, seems to have acted at once before the pope received the information. He gathered a commission of theologians, including Henry of Ghent, which hastily threw together a list of 219 propositions for condemnation.

The list lacks order, is sometimes unclear and, at least once, self-contradictory. In the introduction Tempier says:

We excommunicate all those who have taught the errors we have spoken of or any one of them, or who have dared to defend or maintain them in any way, as well as those who have listened to them [this probably means regularly attending lectures teaching them] unless within seven days they decide to report it to us or to the Chancellor of Paris; nevertheless we shall proceed to inflict other penalties against them as the law requires according to the nature of the offence.¹⁶

In his introduction Tempier also says that these false teachers hold that there are things that "are true according to philosophy but not according to catholic faith, as if there were two contrary truths, and as if there were truth in the sayings of the damnéd pagans that are contrary to the truth of sacred scripture."¹⁷ This statement is likely the source of the often repeated but erroneous judgment (so far as any evidence shows) that these professors taught the position of a double truth.

The majority of the wide-ranging propositions deal with philosophy, but some forty are directly theological.¹⁸ All are presented as either contrary to faith or as implying such danger to faith that they must be proscribed. Although many of them, both now as then, would indeed be considered certainly unorthodox, quite a number could not be judged so today—for example, some statements about angels and heavenly intelligences, the role of various intellectual powers, various ethical questions, propositions concerning Christian virtues, and so forth. Theologians of the time, for example Godefroy of Fontaines and Giles of Rome, objected to some of the condemnations either because the condemned propositions were not clearly

¹⁵On Peter of Spain's philosophy see Gilson, *History*, pp. 319-23, 680-82.

¹⁶*CUP*, no. 473; I, 543.

¹⁷*Ibid.*: "Dicunt enim ea esse vera secundum philosophiam, sed non secundum fidem catholicam, quasi sint due contrarie veritates, et quasi contra veritatem sacre scripture sit veritas in dictis gentilium dampnatorum."

¹⁸The text of the 219 propositions is given *ibid.*, pp. 544-55. An English translation of the prologue and propositions, gathered in more logical groups than in the original, is given together with an introduction by E. Fortin and P. O'Neill in *Medieval Political Philosophy*, ed. R. Lerner and M. Mahdi with the collaboration of E. Fortin (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe [Macmillan], 1963), ch. 18, pp. 335-53.

contrary to faith or because some of the condemnations themselves implied contradictions.¹⁹

Among the condemned propositions were a number that state positions held by Thomas Aquinas. Scholars differ as to the exact number, some listing as many as twenty. Although Thomas was not condemned by name,²⁰ there seems little doubt that his rivals and critics among the neo-Augustinians had some of his teachings in mind. The suggestion has been made that the choice of the date of Aquinas's death, March 7, for issuing the condemnations is a hint that Thomas, despite his good reputation, was one of those in view, but this is a highly speculative suggestion. The condemned propositions that touch on Aquinas's teachings deal with the oneness of the world, individuation by matter, the relation of separate substances to the physical world, the faculties of intellect and will in the human person and the relations between these two faculties.²¹

Although Thomas's doctrine of the unity of substantial form in composite beings was opposed by many of his contemporaries (partly because of implications they saw in it for the unity of the living and dead body of Christ), this teaching was not condemned in the Paris document. On 18 March 1277, however, that is, eleven days after the Paris condemnation, the bishop of Canterbury, the Dominican Robert Kilwardby, aimed a number of his condemnations at this particular doctrine. This former master of arts at Paris had specialized in grammar and logic and then had studied theology at Oxford; his theological affinities, like those of many of the Dominicans before Albert or Aquinas, were with the neo-Augustinian group. Kilwardby, like Tempier, claimed to have the support of all the masters of Oxford for his condemnations. That sixteen propositions "in naturalibus" should be condemned, including the statement that "the vegetative, sensitive, and intellective are one simple form" (no. 12), was already strange enough, but what is even more amazing is that the condemnations embraced four propositions in grammar and ten in logic! Condemned as errors in grammar were such statements as "Ego currit," "tu currit," "currens est ego"; condemned logical errors included "animal est omnis homo" as well as the statement that "every true proposition about the future is necessary."²² Errors in grammar or logic they might well be, but it is astounding to see that those who taught or defended such state-

¹⁹Godefroy of Fontaines points out that propositions 219 and 204, which deal with the place of the angel and the precise reason why an angel is in place, are self-contradictory. See his text in Hissette, *Enquête*, pp. 104-105, n. 1. Godefroy adds: "In the same way also it can be said about several other of the aforesaid articles that they seem to imply self-contradictions (*incompossibilia*) in themselves and among themselves" (*ibid.*, p. 105).

²⁰Only two works are mentioned by name, the *De amore* of Andreas Capellanus (several of the propositions deal with sexual matters: *nil novi sub sole!*) and a work called *De geomantia*, mentioned together with various superstitious practices that seemed to be prevalent at the time. Andreas is not named, but his work is identified by the incipit and explicit.

²¹See Gilson, *History*, p. 728, n. 52. Hissette, *Enquête*, analyzes each proposition carefully and discusses the relation of the text with positions of Thomas Aquinas where he may be in view. Cf. his "Étienne Tempier," pp. 246-47.

²²Text of the condemnation in *CUP*, no. 474; I, 558-59. The introduction says: "Isti sunt errores condempnati a fratre R. Kilewardebi archiepiscopo Cantuariensi de consensu omnium magistrorum tam non regencium quam regencium apud Oxoniam." (p. 558).

ments were—on ecclesiastical authority—to be removed from the mastership or, if they were still bachelors, not to be promoted to the mastership.²³

Kilwardby's action, however, did not go unchallenged by some of the Oxford masters or by Peter of Conflans, a fellow Dominican who was Archbishop of Corinth. In reply to Peter, Kilwardby stated that his condemnation was not of the kind used to exclude express heresies but was a prohibition against such teachings in the schools. Some of the propositions, he said, were manifestly false, others were inconsistent with philosophical truth, while others were close to errors that could not be tolerated, and still others were clearly evil because in conflict with Catholic faith. He insisted that he had the consent of all the masters of Oxford and that many of them had urged him to the action.²⁴ Undoubtedly the neo-Augustinian theologians at Oxford were his supporters, but Kilwardby soon found that his claim to universal consent was unjustified.

The subsequent history is a sordid one, involving increasing hostility between Franciscans and Dominicans. Franciscan general chapters forbade the teaching of Thomas's condemned propositions and Franciscan theologians published correction-guides for reading his *Summa theologiae*; Dominican general chapters upheld Thomas and repeatedly prescribed the teaching of his doctrines by all Dominicans, while their theologians published replies to the Franciscan correction-guides. In 1284 Archbishop John Pecham, Kilwardby's successor and himself a Franciscan who had been active regarding the Parisian condemnations, renewed Kilwardby's earlier condemnations; this action itself showed that many Oxford masters had ignored the 1277 condemnation.²⁵ To complete the story con-

²³"Qui sustinet, docet, vel defendit ex intencione propria aliquid istorum predictorum, si sit magister, ab officio magisterii deponatur ex communi consilio, si bachelarius, ad magisterium non promoveatur sed ab Universitate expellatur" (*ibid.*, p. 559).

²⁴See F. Ehrle, "Der Augustinismus und der Aristotelismus in der Scholastik gegen Ende des 13. Jahrhunderts," in F. Pelster, ed., *Franz Kard. Ehrle: Gesammelte Aufsätze zur englischen Scholastik*, Storia e Letteratura, 50 (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1970), pp. 3-57. Kilwardby's reply, which is a short treatise defending plurality of forms and attacking the unity of form as an opinion untenable "sine preiudicio fidei atque morum" (p. 54), is given by Ehrle on pp. 18-54. In his preface to Peter he says that "dampnatio ibi facta non fuit, qualis solebat esse expressarum heresum, sed fuit prohibicio in scolis determinando vel legendo vel alias dogmatizando talia asserendi; tum quia quidam sunt manifeste falsi; tum quia quidam sunt veritatis philosophice devii, tum quia quidam sunt erroribus intolerabilibus proximi, tum quia quidam sunt apertissime iniqui, quia fidei catholice repugnant. . . . Solus non fui in ista prohibitione, imo, ut scripsistis, omnium magistrorum Oxoniensium assensus accessit, et eciam multorum magis provectorum quam sum ego theologorum et philosophorum suasio compulit ad hoc ipsum" (pp. 18-19).

The grammatical and logical doctrines involved in the condemnation have been examined in their Oxford context by O. Lewry, "The Oxford Condemnations of 1277 in Grammar and Logic," in H. Braakhuis et al., eds., *English Logic and Semantics from the End of the Twelfth Century to the Time of Ockham and Burleigh* (Nijmegen: Ingenium, 1981), pp. 235-78.

²⁵Text in *CUP*, no. 517; I, 624-26. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 518; I, 626-27. These documents and several letters by Pecham concerning the matter are published in F. Ehrle's study, "John Pecham über den Kampf des Augustinismus und Aristotelismus in der zweiten Hälfte des 13. Jahrhunderts," in *Gesammelte Aufsätze* (see n. 24), pp. 59-86.

cerning Thomas Aquinas, he was canonized on 23 July 1323, and on 14 February 1325 Étienne Buret, the bishop of Paris, revoked any of the condemned propositions that might seem—or be asserted by some—to touch his doctrine.²⁶ Henceforth Aquinas's doctrine might be argued about but was considered safe for teaching and could no longer be attacked as suspect in terms of faith.

At this point we may ask what questions or lessons these past events imply for us today. The first is: What is the appropriate way for the Church to respond to teachings opposed to doctrines of faith? Since many of the condemned propositions—at least as they stood in the text of the condemnation—were certainly unorthodox directly or by fairly immediate implication, the concerns of the bishops (at least of Tempier) were legitimate, as were those of the pope, who like his predecessors had a special interest in the University of Paris. The methods used in this case, however, make us aware of how delicate a process such reactions to error must be if they are to maintain truth and justice, to say nothing of charity. The 1277 condemnations at Paris were drawn up hastily and, so far as we can judge from the texts of the philosophers available so far, were in many cases tendentious in interpretation or arbitrary in that statements were taken out of context. The severity of the penalties was also exaggerated, given the confused state of the propositions and their sweeping scope. And both in his own day and in ours Tempier has been strongly criticized for his haste and impetuosity.

Today the legitimate concern of all Catholics for sound doctrine must certainly be respected. But we can ask what safeguards are available for theologians today, or for Catholic professors in religious studies, the philosophy of religion, or other disciplines related to religion and doctrine, against hasty or unjust misinterpretations and condemnations. The new *Code of Canon Law*, to be sure, lists many rights of Christians, among them certain rights of scholars and theologians. But it rarely speaks of the corresponding duties of church authorities in relation to these rights, nor does it do much in the way of providing for institutional or procedural means of securing these rights.²⁷ That this is not a purely speculative question should be clear enough from a number of events in recent years.

Second, there is an interesting point for us today regarding Tempier's intervention. Many scholars criticize him for seeming to have gone beyond the pope's order by issuing condemnations himself. (There is, to be sure, evidence that he did inform the pope as requested, but it seems clear that he did not wait to rubber-

²⁶On the canonization, see Weisheipl (n. 13), pp. 343-50; cf. *CUP*, no. 824; II (1891), 273. For Buret's text see *CUP*, no. 838; II, 280-81.

²⁷On rights in the area of sacred sciences see canons 218 and 219. Canons 220 and 221 do state general principles about the right to a good name and to equitable judgment *ad normam iuris*, but canons 223, 2, and especially canons 253, 3, leave questions both theoretical and practical.

Rights of Christians in the Church are discussed in my paper, "The Dignity and Rights of the Human Person as Saved, as Being Saved, as to be Saved by Christ," in *Human Dignity and Human Rights: International Theological Commission Working Papers*, in *Gregorianum* 65 (1984), 389-430, especially pp. 422-26 (these pages, however, do not fully present the original stronger and more detailed presentation; see note 61).

stamp a papal directive.) The point it raises for us today is that of the pope's role in relation to the role of the local ordinary. Even if the bishop can certainly be criticized for his way of acting and for the severity of his censures, was he not within his rights in acting concerning a problematic situation in his particular church? (Kilwardby's pronouncements on grammar, logic, and natural science are hardly justifiable.) Behind much of the present-day criticism of Bishop Tempier is the unspoken assumption that only the pope has such powers. But this assumption seems to me to reflect a view of the Church that needs reexamination, especially in the light of the Second Vatican Council's attempts to restore their proper role to the particular churches. Can one not argue that a local situation would be better understood and dealt with by local persons, provided of course that they act intelligently and justly, with accurate unbiased information, and that they take impartial and competent advice in difficult matters of doctrine and theology? Are not local ordinaries or, far better in my opinion, episcopal conferences, working in conjunction with sound theological advisers open to the legitimate variety of theological and philosophical positions, more suited to handling such matters than the pope and officials of the Roman curia drawing on limited, distant knowledge, and their own particular and sometimes exclusive kind of theology?

Third, the history of these events reinforces for us the need for church authorities and all theologians today to distinguish clearly between what is of faith and what is a subject of legitimate theological discussion and diversity of opinion. It is only too clear that in 1270 and 1277 the bishops and the theologians they consulted or who pressured them frequently confused their own theological opinions with doctrines of faith, or at least held that some of the condemned positions, including those of Thomas Aquinas, would lead to contradictions of faith. To us today it seems incredible that doctrines such as the unity of substantial form or individuation by matter or others of the condemned propositions could be thought contradictory or at least dangerous to Catholic faith. Yet that was the conclusion of the bishops and of theologians closed off from discussion concerning the new thought.

Is there not a similar problem at times today? Is there not the danger that the *particular* theology of popes, bishops, curial officials, or officially favored theologians may be mistakenly assumed to be the only possible theology compatible with faith, and that divergent theologies may too quickly be judged unorthodox simply because they disagree with these more favored theologies? And have not some condemnations, warnings, or silencings failed to recognize the legitimacy of different theologies? In this connection, the growth in the last century or so of theologizing by popes in encyclicals, instructions, and the like, and theological pronouncements by curial officials or "Roman experts" (perhaps unreflectively thought to enjoy a kind of "participated infallibility") presents special problems. With the definition of infallibility of papal teaching (which, Congar reminds us, is not infallibility of the pope) and the heightening of papal and curial intervention, these theological pronouncements tend for many to carry a stamp of dogmatic certitude that they do not warrant.²⁸

One way to avoid making their particular theology seem to be the *only* possible theology is to do what was done by the Canadian bishops in a document concerning Jesus Christ as center of the Christian life. Preliminary drafts of this document benefited from wide consultation with theologians throughout Canada, including the ecumenical faculty of the Toronto School of Theology and other ecumenical groups. The document itself clearly states that the bishops recognize a variety of theologies of Christ as possible within the riches of Scripture, tradition, and subsequent theological development; it states expressly that the bishops consider their document to be only one among several possible theologies of Christ.²⁹

Fourth, a serious consequence of the 1277 condemnations was to cut off discussion and mutual criticism between, on the one hand, the bishops and most theologians and, on the other, those philosophers and theologians interested in the new waves of thought. Although the condemnations were local in nature, they did seem to have a more general impeding effect on those theologians trying to come to grips with the newly acquired doctrines of Aristotle or with the particular commentaries of Averroes. Except for the Dominicans who were followers of Thomas Aquinas, the work of reconciliation that he undertook, together with critical judgment, seems to have been undermined for many theologians. Petty rivalry between Dominicans and Franciscans furthered this undermining. In the period after 1277 the split between professors in arts and those in theology gradually become more and more complete. The secularist trends noted by Bonhoeffer were well on their way, with consequences lasting into our present day. Whether these consequences would have come without the 1270 and 1277 condemnations and the ensuing breakdown of communication we do not know, but these dramatic events stand at least as a sign of the times to come.

For today the issue is that hasty condemnations of theologians trying to draw the good from secularly oriented philosophies and other disciplines—indeed from any contemporary movements of thought or culture—can only serve to isolate Catholic faith and thought from the mentalities and concerns of most people today. Catholic theology could be driven out of the public domain into the isolation of sacristy, seminary, or protected “hot-house” Catholic universities undeserving of the names “university” or “Catholic,” leaving the secular world to go its way uninfluenced by any interaction with Christian theology. Further, priests and

²⁸See the pertinent remarks of Y. Congar, “Bref historique des formes du ‘Magistère’ et de ses relations avec les docteurs,” in his *Droit ancien et structures ecclésiastiques* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1982), pp. 99-113, especially pp. 109-13. Cf. his essay, “Pour une histoire sémantique du terme ‘Magisterium’,” *ibid.*, pp. 85-97; also R. Gryson, “L’autorité des docteurs dans l’Église ancienne et médiévale,” *Revue théologique de Louvain* 13 (1982), 63-73, and R. Guelluy, “La place des théologiens dans l’Église et la société médiévales,” in *Miscellanea historica in honorem Alberti de Meyer* (Louvain, 1946), pp. 571-89.

²⁹See Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Jesus Christ, Centre of the Christian Life* (Ottawa: Publications Service of the CCCB, 90 Parent Avenue, K1N 7B1, 1981), notes 2 and 4 (p. 37).

other ministers formed in a theology lacking contact with contemporary cultural and scientific interests would be sadly unprepared to deal with people, including the Catholic laity, who share these cultural and scientific interests.

Fifth, another point for today is that it is now generally accepted by scholars that Siger of Brabant and Boethius of Dacia were sincere when they asserted that faith must always have the last word, even if they themselves could not see how philosophical conclusions contrary to faith could be proved false. What this meant for them, as I have suggested, is a kind of practical fideism. I wonder if this is not a problem for a number of Catholics today. I am thinking especially of professors of religious studies using the methods of their discipline as distinct from those of theology, or of some professors of theology or Scripture, or for many educated Catholic laity trained in and exercising skills in the secular world. I have no statistical evidence, and would not want to repeat the kind of objectively sinful rash judgments typical of some archconservatives who set themselves up as judges of the faith or other interior dispositions of particular persons, but I wonder if there is not a considerable malaise among a number of persons in this regard. What I mean is that the Catholic faith, especially as expounded theologically by the pope, many bishops, some theologians, and many pastors, may be or seem to be in conflict with their own intellectual convictions, and that they may be hanging on to their faith only by a type of fideism not unlike that of these thirteenth-century philosophers. I am sure that we have all met people in this situation; it is part of our pastoral concern as theologians to try to minister to persons in this difficult position, often by clarifying where opposition is genuine and where only apparent.

Sixth, one contrast between 1277 and today is worth noting. My impression is that these fierce, lively debates were contained pretty well within a small circle of intellectuals and highly placed ecclesiastics. More research is needed to see what effect all this had on the ordinary clergy or the laity. Except perhaps for the relatively small number of clerics educated at the universities who then went into parish work, I suspect that most clerics and the laity in general remained untouched by these debates. Today, however, both ecclesial authorities and theologians must realize how different the situation has become. The media have become increasingly interested in theological debates: the *New York Times* has followed recent controversial cases with front-page stories and continual follow-ups; the religious editor of the largest Toronto paper told me that for articles in the religion section (and, I presume in more general coverage) they were chiefly interested in controversy—which means, of course, that bishops, priests, and laity hear mainly of the controversial cases and rarely of the less spectacular but steady work of the great majority of theologians. With this in mind, and given the far better education of our laity today than in the thirteenth century, it seems to me that theologians have a serious obligation for pastoral reasons to take care how they present their hypotheses and tentative conclusions. Should we not discuss them among ourselves and subject them to mutual criticism before going to the media or pulpit with declarations that can startle or upset people not able to assimilate them? And have we done enough to educate those in ministry and all our people so that they can understand what is going on in new matters of theology?

Serious obligations also rest on ecclesial authorities in this changed modern situation. They can no longer issue condemnations, summon for examination and

judgment, or impose silence without evoking in the media and among educated people images of Galileo, the Inquisition, or the totalitarian practices of the Soviets or of other dictatorial regimes. Ecclesial authorities must ask themselves if such measures are not counterproductive when in our day the often hostile media or the educated laity are indisposed to accept a simple ecclesiastical fiat.

Finally, seventh, the 1277 condemnations teach us, in matters of orthodoxy and heterodoxy, not only our need for intelligence, justice, and charity, but also for a sense of history and for the relevance of historical research to our situation. Part of the problem for the bishops and their theologians was that they were so wedded to their particular intellectual and cultural framework that they could not envisage theological developments as valid if they differed from their time-conditioned mentalities.

The problem still exists today. Many bishops, theologians, and Catholic philosophers seem to be so unaware of the history of doctrines and of the history of theologies that they are fixed in an a-temporal mentality. Any new development, especially if it results from use of contemporary philosophies, psychologies, sociologies, linguistics, religious studies, economic or political analysis, anthropology, and so forth, seems to upset them—this because they are unaware of how continuously there have been analogous developments over the centuries. In this respect history is the most liberal and most liberating of all disciplines.³⁰

But it is not only the more conservative who can suffer from lack of knowledge of history and historical development. Those who are probing ahead, if they forget history, can get tied into the latest particular doctrine or even intellectual or cultural fad. They can also repeat mistakes made in the past whose deficiencies would be clear to them if they knew more history. Their theologizing may appeal to a particular decade but, I suggest, it will soon become outmoded as new ideas or new fads enter the scene—how many exciting books of the sixties now gather dust on our shelves? In my opinion, only a good grasp of the history of doctrines and of theologies can keep modern theologians from trivialities or from short-range but ultimately ineffectual positions similar to those of the bishops and theologians of 1277.

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³⁰The liberating value of historical studies with respect to a too literal and a-temporal reading of dogmatic statements can be seen from the application of hermeneutical principles to such statements; see this author's "The hermeneutic of Roman Catholic dogmatic statements," *SR: Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 2 (1972), 157-75, which indicates a number of articles and studies in this field.