THE HISTORY OF THEOLOGY: FORTRESS OR LAUNCHING PAD?

To speak of the history of theology as a source of theology may provoke quite different reactions from theologians situated at opposite ends of the methodology spectrum. At one extreme we might find theologians who would agree with French President François Mitterand's dictum: "Nothing is more important than history." At the other extreme we might find theologians who would prefer the pithy remark of Henry Ford, Sr.: "History is bunk!" Let me hasten to say that while one of the places where I teach is the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, one of our founders, Étienne Gilson, always held that the act of existing is crucial philosophically and theologically—and that means existing not in the historical past but at this moment; following him, I would not accept Mitterand's dictum literally. I was also much influenced by working with Marie-Dominique Chenu, whom I consider one of the greatest theologians of our century. Chenu was able to move back and forth between the history of medieval theology on the one hand, and contemporary theology and sociology on the other; for him each area illuminated his research in the others. So successful was he that one seminary rector, who had to introduce him for a conference to his seminarians, thought there were two different Chenu's, one the medievalist and the other the avant-garde theologian, and he wasn't sure which one he had present to introduce! On the other hand, were I to agree with Henry Ford that history is bunk, in this city that houses the *Lonergan* Centre, I would be troubled by the wraith and wrath of that great theologian: for in a seminar here at the Institute of Mediaeval Studies Lonergan introduced me to historical-textual studies of Aquinas' Trinitarian theology; and, far more importantly, in his *Method in Theology* he carefully examined the third functional specialty, history and, within the specialty of doctrines, the historicity of dogmas.

The historicity of dogmas and the historicity of theology: that is perhaps the place to start our considerations. The growth of historical consciousness, together with the development of critical history, sociology, ethnology, and social psychology, has convinced most theologians that all truth is grasped in an historically conditioned way, that therefore dogmatic statements and theology are historically conditioned. How could it be otherwise when human persons and societies work out their destiny through time and history, when they achieve their personal and social identity through historical memories that give them meaning in the present and that thrust them into their futures? In this respect some may be surprised by the conclusions of an essay by my colleague, Armand Maurer, who has shown that for Thomas Aquinas "there is no room . . . for *created* ETERNAL truths, for this would imply that God could give truths eternal being, which is reserved

to him alone,''[1] and that for Aquinas ''the discovery of truth itself has a temporal and historical dimension.''[2]

Many recent studies have taken up this question.[3] Karl Rahner, in an essay published posthumously in 1985, speaks indeed of his ''rather cool relationship to the history of dogma'' (not, however, to the history of theology). But despite his reservations, he declares emphatically: ''The history of faith-consciousness is not at its end, and its future will always be brought about *in company with* reflection on what has gone before. This is self-evident for a historical religion, which is something other than a metaphysics with its tendency to eliminate its historical conditioning as much as possible.''[4]

To follow the historical development of any theological theme helps us to see how the mystery of God and of God's saving work transcends the conceptual and institutional frameworks that developed through history. The history of theology can liberate us from excessive attachment to the concepts and even the questions of our own day; it can help us to see the relativity of our human analogical concepts with relation to the fundamental mysteries that can never be adequately expressed. It is a liberating and at the same time a humbling discipline. At the outset of our investigation, then, we can say that the very historicity of truths, as well as the historicity of human persons and societies that bear and develop these truths,

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[1]''St. Thomas and Eternal Truths,'' *Mediaeval Studies* 32 (1970) 91-107; this quotation is from 105: emphasis mine.

[2]Ibid. 106. In this article Maurer shows that early modern discussions of the nature of eternal truths were influenced by the Suarezian metaphysics of essence rather than by Aquinas' doctrine of esse.''

[3]Before Lonergan's *Method,* several studies of the late 1960's had already examined this question, among them: Winfried Schulz, *Dogmenentwicklung als Problem der Geschichtlichkeit der Wahrheitserkenntnis,* Analecta Gregoriana, 173 (Rome: Univ. Gregoriana, 1969); George Vass, '' On the Historical Structure of Christian Truth, I & II,'' *Heythrop Journal* 9 (1968) 125-42, 274-89; *Truth and the Historicity of Man: Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 43 (Washington, Catholic Univ. of America, 1969); *Neuntes Forschungsgespräch: Geschichlichkeit der Theologie,* ed. Thomas Michels (Salzburg-Munich: Anton Pustet, 1970); more recently, *Dogmengeschichte und katholische Theologie,* ed. Werner Löser, Karl Lehmann, and Matthias Lutz-Bachman (Wurzburg: Echter, 1985).

[4]See his ''Dogmengeschichte in meiner Theologie,'' in *Dogmengeschichte,* 323-28. The quotation, from p. 325, reads as follows in the original: ''Die Geschichte des Glaubensbewusstseins ist nicht zu Ende und ihre Zukunft wird immer auch durch eine Reflexion auf die Vergangenheit *mit*bewirkt. Das ist für eine geschichtliche Religion, die etwas anderes ist als eine Metaphysik mit ihre Tendenz, ihre geschichtlichen Bedingtheiten nach Kräften auszuschalten, selbstverständlich'' (emphasis his). He adds (ibid.): ''Die Lehre der Schrift und der Glaube der Väter bleiben immer eine wesentliche Norm für das Glaubensbewusstsein der Kirche, auch für jededenkbare Zukunft. Und darum muss das Glaubensbewusstsein, wie es in der Schrift und in der darauf folgenden Tradition gegeben ist, präsent bleiben, also immer wieder neu erforscht werden.'' Rahner's reservation is about the possibility of new dogmas being formulated from within the history of *dogmas* (a problematic that perhaps reflects Rahner's own somewhat baroque scholastic historical conditioning), but he speaks very positively about the role of the history of *theology,* ibid. 326-28, in ways that are somewhat akin to our own.

require us to look to the history of theology as a source of contemporary theology. We cannot begin theology in a state of amnesia.

But how is the history of theology to be used as a source? Before coming to that, a couple of distinctions are in order. First, the *history of theology* is not, as I see it, the same as *historical theology,* although the two have been and are confused by some.[5] Historical theology I understand to be a method of doing contemporary theology by reflecting on past theology and its historical contexts. It is, I believe, the important second step to be taken, but only after we have taken the first step, that is, only after we have carefully investigated past theology and its contexts. The distinction between them may be compared to that between exegesis and interpretation of biblical texts on the one hand and the hermeneutic that helps make the past texts come alive with meaning in the present. The historical theologian first reflects on what she or he has learned from the history of theology—and this already involves a good deal of interpretation, with all its problems. From this reflection he or she then develops insights that are significant for today's theology. This paper is, in fact, such an exercise in historical theology: it is not a study or interpretation within the history of theology, although examples will be given; rather, it attempts to reflect on the history of theology itself and the past use of this history in order to gain some insights—insights related, in this case, to contemporary method in theology.

A second distinction. "Source" or "sources" of theology may be understood in two ways. The first meaning has some background in certain texts of Augustine, in some twelfth-century theologians;[6] and in some important texts of Aquinas;[7] it equates "source of theology" with a *topos* or *locus* adapted from rhetoric. For Cicero, depending here on Aristotle, a *topos* or *locus* meant the basis or foundation (*sedes*) on which to build an argument.[8] Using Cicero, in part through the influence of Rudolph Agricola [Roelof Huysman], Melchior Cano systematized

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[5]Examples from the past: William Cunningham, *Historical Theology: A Review of the Principal Doctrinal Discussions in the Christian Church since the Apostolic Age,* 2 vols. (Edinburgh 1867 for vol. 2), which is basically a history of doctrines; John Stoughton, *An Introduction to Historical Theology: Being a Sketch of Doctrinal Progress* (London: n.d., 19th c.), which has some concluding reflections on the history of doctrines described; more recently, Geoffrey W. Bromily, *Historical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), a history of doctrines and theologies, and the title "Bulletin de théologie historique" used in the *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* for what is basically a review of works in the history of theology.

[6]Yves Congar, *La foi et la théologie* (Tournai: Descleé, 1962) 143, lists Abelard, Hugh of St. Victor, and Robert of Melun; he relies on Grabmann, De Ghellinck, and E. R. Curtius.

[7]Especially *Summa theologiae* I, q. 1, a. 8 ad 2m.

[8]See *Topicorum,* c. 2: "Sic enim appellatae ab Aristotele sunt hae quasi sedes quibus argumenta promuntur. Itaque licet definire locum esse argumenti sedem"; and *Orator,* c. 14: "Aristoteles . . . locos sic enim appellat, quasi argumentorum notas tradidit, unde omnis, in utramque partem, traheretur oratio." Quoted by Gardeil in "Lieux théologiques," *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* 9/1 (1926) col. 716; whole article, cols. 712-47.

the various *loci* according to ten divisions.[9] Cano's work was at the head of a movement using these sources to *prove,* or at least to qualify by theological "notes," the degree of certitude of dogmatic and theological propositions. This use tended to be rather narrow, juridical, and almost casuistic.[10]

The other meaning of "sources of theology" is much more general than the first; it is the one used in the last fifty years or so in phrases such as "return to the sources" or "ressourcement." Yves Congar speaks about sources in this sense as "organs that communicate truth and life in truth, organs that are coextensive with the building up of the Church."[11]

In speaking of the history of theology as one of the sources of theology, I want to take "sources" in this broader sense. This means that in speaking of it as a source, I am understanding the history of theology, as Congar puts it, "as situated in an overall theology of the Church, of knowledge by faith, and of Tradition."[12]

Earlier I mentioned biblical and historical interpretation and hermeneutics. This topic brings in a whole complex of questions and problems that are indeed related to both the history of theology and historical theology. (It could be the entire topic of this paper, but I will only mention a few points and leave that area open for discussion afterwards.) First, I agree with Bernard Lonergan, who admits that the techniques of critical history cannot eliminate historical relativism *totally* but who nevertheless goes on to say, "I affirm all the more strongly that [these techniques] can and do effect a partial elimination."[13] Lonergan holds that this partial escape

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[9]*De locis theologicis* (Salamanca, 1563), Agricola's work, *De inventione dialectica,* was published at Cologne in 1527 and at Paris in 1529. For his influence on Cano, as well as that of Cicero see Gardeil, cols. 714-22.

[10]This is Yves Congar's judgment in *La foi et la théologie,* 143: "Depuis lors, ce traité a été mis au point, non sans une focalisation de l'attention sur le magistère, et même le magistère romain. Il a pris souvent aussi une allure dialectique, juridique, presque casuistique, faute d'être situé dans une théologie d'ensemble de l'Église, de la connaissance de foi et de la Tradition." Although there is this danger of theology degenerating into trying to prove theses by appeals to various levels of authority precisely as authorities (as in the old manuals of theology), theological notes do have an important pastoral use in helping to distinguish what is truly of faith from what is taught by the Church or even by the body of theologians but is not a matter of faith. Failure to make this distinction clear in catechisms and preaching has led to constant worries among many in the church that changes in official teachings that are not of faith are contrary to faith. For some of these changes see my article, "When 'Authentic' Teachings Change," *The Ecumenist* 25/5 (July-August 1987) 70-73.

[11]Ibid. 143-44: "Pourtant, que sont les 'lieux' (si l'on tient à garder cette expression), sinon les médiations, diverses et dégradées, par lesquelles, en deçà de la Parole, Dieu instruit et édifie son Église? Il ne s'agit pas seulement ici de références scientifiques diversement qualifiées, mais des organes d'une communication de vérité et d'une vie dans la vérité, qui sont coextensives à la construction de l'Église."

[12]See the quotation above, n. 10.

[13]*Method in Theology* (New York: Seabury, 1972; 2nd ed., 1973; paperback, 1979) 195: emphasis mine. That relativism can be partially overcome is clear from two examples: (1) the difference between a poor and a good edition of a patristic or medieval text that arises from an editor's poor or good knowledge not only of the language and subject of the text,

from relativity is made possible by what he calls the "ecstatic" aspect of historical inquiry. By "ecstatic" he means that when new data and new questions arise, a historian who acts with probity is led by the new data and questions to "stand out from," that is, to modify previous assumptions and perspectives.[14]

At the same time, modern hermeneutical discussions have alerted us to the problems in interpreting history generally and the history of theology in particular. For instance, the hermeneutics of suspicion has led theologians to investigate the masculine and patriarchal bias of ecclesiastical documents and theology; it has led liberation theologians to question doctrinal decisions and theological positions supporting privileged groups in society. Along these lines, a recent study of the medieval theology of the papacy led me to such a hermeneutics of suspicion regarding the views of some of my own favorites, Bonaventure, Albert, Aquinas, and other Mendicant theologians. That is, I was led to ask whether their strong advocacy of universal papal power in teaching and jurisdiction arose at least partially from the fact that the Mendicants were the popes' favored communities, with special privileges for preaching and teaching, privileges that at times brought them into conflict with pastors and university teachers in the local churches. These and other hermeneutical principles need to be applied universally to past conciliar documents, to past official pronouncements, indeed to all the works of past theologians.[15] This makes the task of historians of theology and historical theologians more difficult, almost forbidding; yet for my part I wish I were near the start of my career in order to do more of this work because I think it is one of the most exciting and liberating movements in contemporary theology.

Leaving this vast problem for now, we turn to the title of this paper. It asks whether, as a source of theology, the history of theology is a fortress or a launch-

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but also from how extensive is his or her knowledge of the different contexts that influence the text; (2) the illumination of historical events or doctrines that comes with a historian's corrections of previously held positions by new research, these corrections finding general acceptance in the scholarly community that is knowledgeable about the matter.

[14]Ibid. 187-88: "Now if one is on the right track long enough, there occurs a shift in the manner of one's questioning for, more and more, the further questions come from the data rather than from images based on surmises. One still has to do the questioning. One still has to be alert. But one has moved out of the assumptions and perspectives one had prior to one's investigations. One has attained sufficient insight into the object of one's inquiry to grasp something of the assumptions and perspectives proper to that object. . . . To describe this feature of historical invesigation, let us say that the cumulative process of datum, question, [188] insight, surmise, image, formal evidence, is ecstatic. It is not the hot ecstasy of the devotee but the cool one of growing insight. It takes one out of oneself. It sets aside earlier assumptions and perspectives by bringing to light the assumptions and perspectives proper to the object under investigation." Interesting reflections on and application of hermeneutical principles are to be found in a recent article by John W. O'Malley, "Priesthood, Ministry, and Religious Life: Some Historical and Historiographical Considerations," *Theological Studies* 49/2 (June 1988) 223-57. In the same issue, the articles by Jacques M. Gres-Gayer ("The *Unigenitus* of Clement XI: A Fresh Look at the Issues," 259-82), and by Mary Ann Donovan ("Alive to the Glory of God: A Key Insight in St. Irenaeus," 283-97) also demonstrate the importance of fresh interpretations of past documents.

[15]See below, p. 33 and n. 35.

ing pad. The image of a fortress is meant to raise the question whether using the history of theology as a source of theology can be compared to certain uses of a fortress or castle. Ancient and medieval rulers used fortresses for security, for defence against attacking enemies; it was a place where those who possessed title, territory and wealth could protect their goods, a place from which they could sally forth to attack invaders. Fortresses could be good or bad things. Preserving territories, cultural goods, and the very lives of people against destroying marauders such as Norsemen or Muslims would certainly be good for those who accepted the rule of the castle dwellers. But fortresses and castles could also be used to bolster positions of privilege, to resist social change, to exploit those less privileged persons who were governed by the castle rulers: how readily, when it was possible, did so many serfs leave feudal estates to swell the population of the burgeoning cities of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The history of theology, I think, has been used as a source for a theology like a fortress in both a good and a bad sense.

The launching-pad metaphor means to raise the question whether using the history of theology as a source of theology can be compared to employing those bases from which human explorers travel into outer space to search for new truths about the universe and indeed the human condition. Can the history of theology serve today to stimulate, to open new horizons, to raise questions from the past that lead to insights about the present and even the future? I shall contend that indeed it can, that this is its most important contribution to theology. However, launching pads and the equipment launched from them can also be dangerous and, as we have seen only recently, they can even be fatal to the explorers. And if they are used to launch atomic missiles, they are deadly and destructive of others. So, too, research in the history of theology and use of it as a source for contemporary theology, if not properly conducted, if not correctly employed for good purposes, if not ecstatic in Lonergan's sense, can be harmful in theology and church life.

Let us explore the fortress image first. The history of theology has been used, I believe, as a fortress sometimes in a bad sense and sometimes in a good sense. In the bad fortress sense, the history of theology has sometimes been invoked to maintain certain authoritative or theological teachings in the face of legitimate inquiry and new developments. In particular, it has been used (a) for polemical purposes against theological opponents; (b) to bolster new decisions by overstating the witness of the past; (c) to try to maintain continuity, apparent or real, in authentic Catholic teaching; and (d) to maintain the status quo. I shall give examples of each, drawing mostly on areas where I have done some work.

An example of polemical use of past theology against opponents can be found in the Second Council of Constantinople's condemnation of the Three Chapters (Theodore of Mopsuestia [†428], Theodoret of Cyr [†ca.466], and Ibas of Edessa [†ca.457]), who had been dead for nearly or more than a century. This judgment of theologians of the past was part of the drive of Justinian and eastern bishops to attack Antiochene Christology and, to some extent, the Council of Chalcedon.[16]

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[16]See articles in the various encyclopedias on 'Three Chapters,' the 2nd Council of Constantinople, Monophysitism, and the three theologians who were condemned. E.g., F. X. Murphy, "Three Chapters," *New Catholic Encyclopedia* 14 (1969) 144-45; *The Oxford*

In this case past theology was unjustly used for a present purpose—unjustly used, we now know, because modern scholarship generally holds that these theologians were orthodox (many at the time said the same and opposed the condemnation). Indeed, Pope Paul VI, by quoting Theodore as a patristic authority (albeit on the Eucharist), seems to have rehabilitated Theodore as orthodox.[17]

This, by the way, is but one instance of a long-standing bad fortress use of the history of theology for polemical purposes. To put down an adversary and maintain one's position, nothing could be better than unfairly to find in his or her positions hints of heresies or errors such as Arianism, Nestorianism, Monophysitism or, in our day, "a fundamental Marxist option."[18]

Another example of this kind of polemic use would be amusing if it were not so sad. In 1058 Cardinal Humbert of Silva Candida went on a mission to the East on behalf of Rome. After debating points of difference between the Eastern and Western Churches, the exasperated cardinal excommunicated the patriarch, Michael Cerularius. In doing so, he accused the Greeks of daily sowing heresies: you are, he charged, like simoniacs, Valesian Gnostics, Arians, Donatists, Nicolaites. He even charged them with having cut the *Filioque* out of the Creed![19]

Dictionary of the Christian Church, 2nd ed., eds. F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone (Oxford: University Press, 1974, rpt. with corrections, 1978). "The Three Chapters" referred at first to certain *kephalia* (chapters) of their writings but soon came to be applied to the persons, that is "the three subjects condemned by the Emperor Justinian in an edict of 543-44, viz. (1) the person and works of Theodore of Mopsuestia, (2) the writings of Theodoret against Cyril of Alexandria, and (3) the letter of Ibas of Edessa to Maris. As all three were considered sympathetic to Nestorius, Justinian issued the edict in the hope of conciliating the Monophysites by a display of anti-Nestorian zeal" (ibid. 1375).

[17]See his encyclical on the Eucharist, *Mysterium Fidei,* in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 57 (1965) 571: "His verbis S. Ignatii Antiocheni licet addere ea quibus Theodorus Mopsuestenus, hac in re fidei Ecclesiae testis fidelis, populum est allocutus: Dominus enim non dixit: Hoc est symbolum corporis mei, et hoc symbolum sanguinis mei, sed: *Hoc est corpus meum et sanguis meus.* Docet nos non attendere naturam rei subiectae ac sensibus propositae: ea enim per gratiarum actionem et verba super eam pronuntiata, in carnem et sanguinem mutata est" (*In Matth. Comm.,* c. 26; PG 66:714). (English translation in *The Pope Speaks* 10 [1965] 320.) Although the pope says that Theodore is a faithful witness "on this point," the *stylus Romanae curiae* would forbid his being quoted at all as an authority in anything if he were stilled considered heretical in his christology. This also seems to be a historical correction of the Council by the pope. See also a letter of Paul VI to Cardinal Willebrands, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 66 (1974) 620-25, especially 622-23, for an example of Paul VI's freedom in criticizing past councils. He blames the intransigence and lack of sensitivity to Greek concerns on the part of western representatives at the 2nd Council of Lyons (1274) for the quick failure of the union reached at that council between East and West. (French translation of the letter in *Documentation Catholique* 72, no. 1668 (19 January 1975) 63-65. This is an example of how present history of theology can help to correct past views and to teach lessons for the present.

[18]The last is the judgment of Cardinal Ratzinger concerning liberation theology. See my forthcoming article in *Franciscan Studies,* "Catholicity, Inculturation, and Liberation Theology: Do They Mix?"

[19]See *Excommunicatio qua feriuntur Michael Caerularius atque ejus sectatores,* ed. Cornelius Will (Leipzig, 1861; rpt. Frankfurt am Main: Minerva, 1963) 153-54. He says

An example of the use of past theology to bolster new magisterial teaching can be seen from a working seminar, soon to be published, that was recently held at the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies. The seminar dealt with the religious ideal of the papacy between 1150 and 1300. Taking only that relatively short time span, we saw that proponents of absolute papal primacy and universal jurisdiction buttressed their views with appeals to the history of theology that would be considered dubious today. They narrowed the differing patristic and medieval interpretations of the Petrine scriptural texts to the one that favored papal supremacy; they misapplied the image of the two swords; they skewed the metaphor of marriage between Christ and the church: Innocent III pushed the metaphor to the extent of declaring himself, as successor of Christ, the Bridegroom of the Church, and comparing the Church of Rome to Sarah, Abraham's wife, and the other local churches to Hagar, the slave girl brought in to Abraham to bear children. They also replaced the title "Vicar of Peter" with the title "Vicar of Christ" and as such "Head of the Church."[20] Many of these developments continued later and were used to enhance Vatican I's teachings on the papacy, teachings that found liturgical application when Pius XII established a special common for popes in the liturgy, something quietly eliminated and hardly missed after Vatican II's reform of the liturgy.

Another example of past use of theology for support was the Council of Trent's decrees on original sin and purgatory. The fathers of this council bolstered their statements not only about the main doctrine, but also about many details of original sin, by saying that they were following "the witness of sacred scripture and of the holy fathers and of the most trustworthy councils as well as the judgment and consent of the Church" (DS 1510). The doctrine of Purgatory, they added, is taught from the sacred writings and the ancient tradition of the fathers in the sacred councils (DS 1820). It would be difficult, it seems to me, to find the details of either doctrine as expounded by the council in the scriptures or with any unanimity in the Fathers (one thinks of the different approach of the eastern and western Fa-

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(153): "Quantum autem ad Michaëlem abusive dictum patriarcham, et ejus stultitiae fautores, nimia zizania haereseon quotidie seminantur in medio ejus. Quia sicut Simoniaci donum Dei vendunt; sicut Valesii hospites suos castrant, et non solum ad clericatum sed insuper ad episcopatum promovent; sicut Ariani rebaptizant in nomine sanctae Trinitatis baptizatos, et maxime Latinos; sicut Donatistae affirmant excepta Graecorum ecclesia ecclesiam Christi et verum sacrificium atque baptismum ex toto mundo periisse; sicut Nicolaitae carnales nuptias concedunt et defendunt sacri altaris ministris; sicut Severiani maledictam dicunt legem Moysis; sicut Pneumatomachi vel Theumachi absciderunt a symbolo Spiritus sancti processionem a Filio. . . . "

[20]See *The Religious Roles of the Papacy: Ideals and Realities, 1150-1300,* ed. Christopher Ryan (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1988 or 1989), for essays by Karlfried Froehlich (on the exegetical tradition) and by myself (on the school theologians' teachings, and on the monastic, episcopal, and apologetic theology of the papacy). A certain pattern also emerged in these studies: those seeking reform of local abuses, but finding it difficult or impossible to achieve reform, would often appeal to the pope to intervene, justifying his intervention by exalting the pope's power and authority. Such requests, together with subsequent papal interventions, done with the best intentions, nevertheless tended to subject local churches more and more to the central papal authority.

thers on original sin, and of the strong influence of the particular Augustinian teaching on it in the West).[21] As for the theme of original sin in our time, it seems that particular historical theological views about the transmission of original sin influenced Pope Pius XII, in his encyclical *Humani Generis* of 1950, to reject the possibility that there was more than one pair of first human ancestors (DS 3897).

Another concern, that of maintaining continuity of doctrine, even in matters not of faith, has led to a similar fortress use of past theology. Thus in christology a strong but relatively late western theological tradition held that Christ's human knowledge included the beatific vision; this tradition influenced the Holy Office in 1918 to insist that Christ had beatific knowledge, that he knew in the Word everything that God knows by knowledge of vision, and that in Catholic schools one was not allowed to teach a limited human knowledge in Christ (DS 3645-47). In 1943 Pius XII maintained and further specified this western tradition by saying that "through that blessed vision by which, scarcely conceived in the womb of the God-bearer, [Christ] enjoyed bliss, he had all the members of his Mystical Body continually and perpetually present to himself, and embraced them with his saving love" (DS 3812).

With respect to maintaining continuity of teaching, John Maxwell notes in his study on slavery that "the common Catholic teaching concerning the moral legitimacy of slavery was not corrected before 1965." One of many reasons for this, he says, was "the overriding influence of the principle of continuity of doctrine. Popes, bishops, canonists and moralists in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries could not easily accept that a moral doctrine which had been commonly taught for over 1,400 years could possibly be mistaken."[22]

Another fortress use of the history of theology, this time to maintain the status quo, is well known because it is so recent and so evidently intended to prevent any consideration of change. I refer to the document on the question of womens' ordination. Here both scripture and tradition, viewed through a particularly narrow historical lens, are invoked to reject such ordination. It is argued, first, that Christ ordained only men,[23] even though we have to ask the historical question whether Christ himself actually ordained the Twelve or some group of apostles or indeed anyone to a ministerial order distinct from the service he expected of all his fol-

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[21]On the other hand, it is interesting to see that the Council does appeal as well to the "judgment and consent of the Church."

[22]*Slavery and the Catholic Church* (London, 1975) 13.

[23]Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Declaration on the Question of Admission of Women to the Ministerial Prieshood* (Vatican City: 15 October 1976) 6: " . . . The Church, in fidelity to the example of the Lord, does not consider herself authorized to admit women to priestly ordination. . . . But over and above considerations inspired by the spirit of [patristic] times [that is, the writers recognize some anti-feminine prejudices in some Fathers], one finds expressed — especially in the canonical documents of the Antiochian and Egyptian traditions — this essential reason, namely, that by calling only men to the priestly Order and ministry in its true sense [!], the Church intends to remain faithful to the type of ordained ministry willed by the Lord Jesus and carefully maintained by the Apostles." See also no. 2 (p. 6): "Jesus Christ did not call any women to become part of the Twelve."

lowers, or whether ordination to such a distinct order developed only in the early church.

Second, it is argued that in the subsequent history of the church women have not been ordained priests, so that unchangeable tradition holds that such ordination is impossible today or in the future.[24] What amazes me about this appeal to unchanging tradition is how clearly opposed it is to the notion of a living, developing tradition that theologians have had to produce when speaking about Mary's Immaculate Conception or Assumption, or when defending the definitions concerning the papacy. The history of theology and the notion of tradition seem to be able to be manipulated to fit the purposes of those who hold the fortress.[25]

These are a few examples of what I consider to be bad fortress use of the history of theology as a source. But I think the good side of the fortress image should also be pointed out. Fortresses or castles not only preserved status and privilege; they also served a good purpose by preserving lives, valuable possessions, and cultural treasures. It seems to me that the history of theology, as a source of theology, can function like a good fortress or castle in an analogous way.

The first such good use is the history of theology's recalling the unanimous or quasi-unanimous agreement of the Fathers and the early church on fundamental points of doctrine. This use of the history of theology, however, is becoming more and more difficult to sustain as we come to know the Fathers better. We observe the considerable time span covering them, the historical changes within these times, the great varieties in their cultural contexts, their diverse responses to theological problems, and their own distinctive theologies. In fact, I have been toying with the question whether this notion of a common consent among the Fathers is not a chimera. It does seem to me, however, that the consensus reached by the Fathers and received by the early church on some basic doctrines can stand as a fortress preserving fundamental truths of Christianity and can help Catholic theologians to avoid useless by-paths. Although hermeneutical principles must be employed to make these doctrines meaningful today, I would include among them the belief that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not each other and yet are one God; that the Word or Son of God is the subject in a fully human Christ; that Christ rose from death in a bodily but transformed state; that original sin is a real evil and not the mere negation of supernatural elevation; that Christ's body and blood are present in the Eucharist, however this presence is explained.

Another point. We theologians generally like to proceed unhampered in our research, and any talk of limitation or restriction is not very popular. But must we not admit that one task of theology is to defend against errors that have evil pastoral effects? Think of the Gnostic doctrines that endangered the early church. Think of how the church has had to fight Docetism, Manicheism, and other related views in order to protect the goodness of marriage and of the human body. Think of the

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[24]See ibid. nos. 3-4 (pp. 8-11).

[25]I proposed a study of these conflicting notions of tradition as a topic for the International Theological Commission, but the suggestion met with the same silence that greeted another suggestion, a reexamination of the ecumenicity of the councils since the split between East and West.

early church's fight against fate and her insistence on human free will. In our day, think of the inroads of fundamentalist preachers on TV and in Latin America, or of Shirley MacLaine and the New Age brand of religiosity, to say nothing of astrology or of California friends of a president's wife. In meeting these contemporary errors, the history of theology can be helpful. Although, as I have said, the history of theology can be used to tag opponents unfairly with heretical labels, it can also give us models of theological positions of the past that can alert us to corresponding affinities in present-day ideas.

A more positive "fortress" use of the history of theology leads into the launching pad theme. As a fortress, the history of theology preserves for contemporary theologians an abundance of riches that can be forgotten. When the study of the history of theology recalls these riches, it can and often does launch researchers into new theological skies. Proof of this is found in the return to sources that began toward the end of the last century, a return that issued in the biblical movement, the liturgical movement, changes in theological methodology, and finally the Second Vatican Council. Louis Bouyer has said that an incipient liturgical movement in the seventeenth century failed for lack of solid historical research, whereas the more recent one grew successfully out of decades of solid preparatory studies.

Thus the history of theology has launched theologians into new orbits with respect to *methodology*. Whereas the decadent neo-scholastic theology of the textbooks seemed to ape the deductive methods of the sciences, the study of the Fathers and of monastic and other spiritual authors of the middle ages has helped theologians to recall the value of symbolism, rhetoric, metaphor, and other literary techniques. Chenu has written a stimulating article on literature as a theological "place." He points out how the Fathers and some medieval authors were able to bring their theology into vital symbiosis with their culture because they used literary techniques; he blames later scholastics, who imitated Wolff, for the isolation of theology from culture in recent centuries.[26] Again, in the 1940's there was an intense controversy in France and Italy between traditional neo-scholastic theologians and those espousing a "new theology" that employed a wide range of historical studies. The arguments against the introduction of history and new methods into theology seem quaint and obscurantist today, given the evident fruits of these new methods.

Turning from methodology to individual theological *themes,* we can say that in practically every theological theme the history of theology can help to launch theologians into new explorations and insights. I should like to dwell on four themes that examine what I think are some of the most crucial problems facing the church and so theologians today. These themes are (1) true catholicity or varieties of inculturation within Catholic unity; (2) the question of women's role in the church

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[26]See his article, "La littérature comme 'lieu' de la théologie," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 53 (1969) 70-80. See also several chapters describing similar aspects of twelfth-century theology in his study, so seminal for all medievalists, *La théologie au douzième siècle* (Paris: Vrin, 1957); the English translation by Jerome Taylor and Lester Little, *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968) unfortunately omits a number of important chapters.

and world, itself an outstanding example of the need for catholicity and inculturation; (3) the meeting of Christianity with the other great world religions (and, within this, the special problem of Christianity and Judaism); and (4) the ecumenical movement among Christians. In each of these fields the treasures preserved by the history of theology, treasures often to be regained and exploited, can make important contributions to theology. (I leave aside another very important area, issues in morality, since I have done less in that field, except for spirituality.)

(1) With respect to catholicity and inculturation, the history of theology can lead theologians to discern principles for inculturating the gospel. Examples that immediately come to mind are the inculturation of the Gospel in Greek and in Roman societies, and later in the societies of western Europe and of the Slavic peoples in eastern Europe. A more recent example is found in liberation theology. At an international meeting of theologians in Brussels in 1970, sponsored by *Concilium*, I heard Gustavo Gutiérrez state that the theology of this meeting had relied too much on past European theology for its problems and categories of inquiry; he said that something new would have to be launched and worked out for South America. And so he went back and further developed the theology of liberation he had already sketched for the bishops of CELAM at Medellin.[27] More recently still, Juan Luis Segundo has looked to principles of inculturation to understand what he calls a shift in or a second phase of liberation theology, one that is even more inculturated and less dependent on European concepts.[28]

In the past, on the other hand, most missionaries and theologians, ignoring past diversities and examples of inculturation, simply exported a western brand of Christianity everywhere or resisted attempts at inculturation. I saw this on my visits in China, and one has only to recall the curial rejection of Matteo Ricci's attempts at inculturation in China. Then there are the examples of the native peoples of North and South America (where, however, the Jesuit missionaries quite exceptionally tried to achieve a true inculturation of the Gospel among the various peoples they served), of the aborigines of Australia, of the peoples of Africa and Brazil, where modern syncretist religions show that Christianity has not taken full cultural roots. Here in Toronto, as in many larger North American cities, immigration has introduced an amazing variety of cultures all jostling together; theologians must help pastors to understand the need for varieties of inculturation even within one city. Past history and theology were not known sufficiently to give principles or guidance for undertaking inculturation, including the necessary critique of cultural traditions opposed to the Gospel but also the enriching of Chris-

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[27]His first major work on this theme, *Teología de la liberación*, appeared in 1971. He had made his first sketch of this theology in 1968, he says in an interview he gave in late 1983 or early 1984; for the interview see *La Documentation Catholique*, no. 1881 (7 octobre 1984) 906-909.

[28]See an interview published ibid. 912-17, as well as his Toronto lecture, *The Shift within Latin American Theology* (Toronto: Regis College, 1962), and chapter 4 of his book, *Theology and the Vatican: A Response to Cardinal Ratzinger and a Warning to the Whole Church*, trans. John W. Diercksmeier (New York: Winston Press, A Seabury Book; London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1985).

tianity by the gospel's coming alive in these new cultures. Today our scriptural and patristic scholars have shown us the diversity that existed in the early church; historical studies have made us more aware of Near Eastern varieties of Christianity, as in Syria, Lebanon, Ethiopia, and Coptic Egypt; we have learned about movements by missionaries to China attempting a synthesis between Christian and Buddhist thought.[29] All these and other historical research can shed light on the need for a variety of theologies and, yes, of catechisms and liturgies related to different cultures.

The very history of the notion of true catholicity could also contribute. The early Fathers were astounded by the fact that such a variety of peoples and cultures could be one in fundamental faith. I have attempted a brief sketch of the application of different notions of catholicity historically in relation to local cultural identities.[30] A thorough history of the interpretation of this theme and of how it has been applied would be a fruitful kind of study.

(2) With respect to the theology of women, we can see the history of theology becoming a launching pad for new theological insights if we look at how much scholars in this field are having recourse to historical studies—biblical, patristic, medieval, and modern. These historical studies help us to discern how we got where we are, and to understand developments that are not only contingent historically but also destructive of gospel values. Although some of this research needs to be critiqued,[31] much of it is exceptionally good and is raising fundamental questions for all theology.[32] Although some in this area of research might say that history is bunk and that we simply have to begin afresh, unfettered by the past, these his-

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[29]A doctoral thesis at St. Michael's by John Kasserow of the Maryknoll Missionaries has studied this attempt at inculturation; he bases his work on both written documents and artistic remains.

[30]This was done in a paper read at the International History of Religions Conference in Sydney, Australia, in 1986, whose theme was "Identity Issues and World Religions." The paper was entitled: "Catholicity: A Threat or a Help to Identity?" It examined how the interpretation of catholicity has varied from unity within variety to uniformity and how these and other interpretations have affected different cultural situations and identities.

[31]One influential example that a group of us read and discussed is the work, interesting and valuable for its historical data but quite unilateral and tendentious, of Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (New York: Knopf, 1976). A great deal of good scholarship cannot hide the bias, narrowness, and unfounded sweeping generalizations of the work. Warner ignores or denies the beneficial role of Marian devotion, despite its evident aberrations, in overcoming exclusively masculine symbolization of God, the role of popular religious practice in the pastoral field, or the profound psychological import of a benevolent female intercessor. Her introduction seems to reveal the reason for her bias in seeing Marian devotion almost exclusively as a source of guilt for those who do not measure up to Mary.

[32]For example, Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her* (New York: Crossroad, 1984); Elizabeth Gussmann's studies and editing of a series of volumes of texts in her *Archiv für philosophie- und theologiegeschichtliche Frauenforschung* (Munich: Iudicium, 1984 ff.); Joanne Wolski Conn, ed., *Women's Spirituality: Resources for Christian Develoment* (New York: Paulist Press, 1986); Anne Carr, *Transforming Grace: Christian Traditions and Women's Experience* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988).

torical studies of theology in various cultural contexts are proving to be a liberating and stimulating launching pad. Thus, for example, every conference on medieval thought or culture has several papers or even several sessions recovering the important thought and role of women. The intellectual, artistic, and spiritual importance of medieval women such as Hrostvitha von Gandersheim, Hildegard of Bingen, Heloise, Julian of Norwich, Catherine of Siena and many others is being highlighted, and this includes their contributions to theology as well as to the culture in which theology developed.[33]

(3) For the meeting of Christianity with other religions there is perhaps less in the way of positive good to be found in the history of our theology since until recently so much of it negated the value of other religions. Yet two points come to mind: (a) I remember Canon Moeller of Belgium describing how, in preparing documents on non-Christian religions for the Second Vatican Council, the drafters appealed to the teaching of some of the Fathers about the Word's constantly coming into the world, to pagans as well as to Christians; (b) The history of the doctrine that outside the church there is no salvation and the changing interpretation of this doctrine through history (not yet fully researched), is an extraordinary example of how past theology, meeting with new human and Christian experiences, can set theologians off in new directions.

(4) As for the ecumenical movement, anyone who has participated in ecumenical study and dialogue knows how much the history of theology has contributed to dissipating incorrect judgments about others, to mutual understanding, to finding common grounds of agreement. How could the various agreed statements (ARCIC, Catholic-Lutheran, BEM) have come about without the presence and contribution of theologians fully acquainted with the history of theologies concerning ministry, authority, the sacraments, justification, and other basic problems of the churches?

Moreover, the present agenda of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches invites the churches to a common expression of apostolic faith today; this is being done by taking as the basic reference point the Nicene-Constantinople Creed. Meetings based on this creed have already been held with respect to creation and to confessing Christ crucified in our social, cultural and ethical settings; others this year and next will examine ecclesiology and pneumatology. The evocation of so historically situated a creed as this for a test of apostolic faith clearly indicates the role that the history of theology will play in these years preparatory to the next General Assembly of the World Council in Canberra in 1991.

An example here in Canada is an official dialogue between Catholics and the United Church of Canada (which grew out of Congregationalist, Methodists, and some Presbyterians); of late we have been examining the notion of authority in the two traditions and therefore studying the papacy. It was very instructive to bring

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[33]For brief accounts of these medieval women see, among others, Sandro Sticca, "Hrostvitha," *Dictionary of the Middle Ages* 6 (1985) 313-16; Ernst H. Soudex, "Hildegard of Bingen," ibid. 228-29; Valerie M. Lagorio, "Julian of Norwich," ibid. 7 (1986) 179-80; "Abelard, Peter," ibid. 1 (1982) 16-20; (Heloise is considered only under Abelard!). For Catherine of Siena, curiously neglected in this dictionary, see other encyclopedias.

into the discussions the history of how the theology of the papacy developed over the centuries. Especially valuable was the historical re-examination of the true teaching of the First Vatican Council over against the exaggerated interpretations that have often prevailed since then. As one example, the statement that the pope is infallible of himself and not by the consent of the church has been shown to have been directed against a Gallican juridical requisition and not against the need for the pope to be in intimate contact with the faith of the whole church. This historical clarification has opened the way for developing the theology of consensus of the faithful and of reception. (Here, by the way, is an immense field of historical research that should be illuminating—the history of how reception has taken place in the past and what was and what was not received. Margaret O'Gara's recent book on the attitude of the French minority at Vatican I can serve as an example of illuminating historical research that can help contemporary theology.)[34]

With respect to ecumenicity and ecclesiology in general, historical research opens four areas that have been neglected too long: (a) The application of contextual historical hermeneutics to Catholic conciliar statements and definitions. These are time-conditioned statements and must be understood in their context and in relation to the precise question being asked. Historical studies of past conciliar statements can also lead to a better understanding of the restricted meaning given by earlier councils to terms such as "faith," "heresy," and "anathema." Examination of this hermeneutical question grew significantly in the late sixties and early seventies;[35] (b) The question whether the general councils held in the West since the split between the Eastern and Western Churches are truly ecumenical or are only general synods of the West: the 2nd Vatican Council's recognition of the Orthodox as "Church" raises this question about western councils (those of the Lateran, Lyons, Vienne, Constance, Florence, Trent, Vatican), in which the Or-

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[34]It is entitled *Triumph in Defeat: Infallibility, Vatican I, and the French Minority Bishops* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1988).

[35]See my article, "The Hermeneutic of Roman Catholic Dogmatic Statements," *SR: Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 2 (1972) 157-75, which includes references to a number of pioneering articles of the late sixties and early seventies by Albert Lang, Piet Fransen, Piet Schoonenberg, Karl Rahner, E. Schillebeeckx, Gregory Baum, Avery Dulles and others. One important result of Lang's historical studies is to see that councils prior to Vatican I used the terms "faith," "heresy," and "anathema" in a broader, less precisely defined sense than that of Vatican I. These referred primarily to separation from the unity of the church because of persistent disobedience to the church, but did not mean that the teachings being upheld against those proclaimed heretics or anathema were divinely revealed truths. Yet this is what most unhistorically trained theologians have held when assigning "theological notes" to various propositions. See Albert Lang, "Der Bedeutungswandel der Befriffe 'fides' und 'haeresis' und die dogmatische Wertung der Konzilsentscheidungen von Vienne und Trient," *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift* 4 (1953) 133-46. See also Piet Fransen, "Réflexions sur l'anathème au Concile de Trente . . . ," *Ephemerides Theologicae Louvanienses* 29 (1953) 659-72; idem, "The Authority of the Councils," in John M. Todd, ed., *Problems of Authority* (Baltimore: Helicon, 1962), 43-78; and idem, "Einige Bemerkungen zu den theologischen Qualifikationen," in Piet Schoonenberg, ed., *Die Interpretation des Dogmas,* trans. H. A. Mertens (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1969) 111-37.

thodox did not participate;[36] (c) The hierarchy of truths, indicated long ago by Thomas Aquinas[37] and stated clearly in the context of ecumenism by Vatican II, opens up important possibilities for dialogue among the churches. Once again historical studies can help to clarify not only this notion but also the content of this hierarchy.[38] (d) The recognition by Vatican II of the distinctive theological elaborations of doctrines by the traditions of the Orthodox and the West, as well as appreciation of their distinctive liturgies, spiritualities, and canonical traditions, also invites historical investigation that can give new insights and possibilities to theologians.[39] These are four issues that, I think, will launch us into blue-sky thinking that may be unsettling for some but liberating and hopeful for others.

In ecclesiology, the history of theology can also illumine the current discussion about the theological character of episcopal conferences. The theology of the historical patriarchs and their synods, of the role and doctrinal contributions of regional and local councils, and the history of the development of various organs of local or national church government, can help perspectives on this issue, which to many looks a like an assertion of curial power against episcopal bodies. In this struggle there have been several statements to episcopal conferences by Pope John Paul II in which he seems to have distanced himself from some of his curial officials.[40]

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[36]Yves Congar, Jean-Marie Tillard and others have raised this question; they seem to think that even if the councils since Second Nicea (or perhaps even since Chalcedon) are not truly ecumenical and have not been received by the Orthodox or by other Christians, they still represent a generally valid teaching by and for one broad section of the church, much as did local, regional, or national synods in the past. Some of them suggest that church union might be envisaged without requiring the other churches to accept the teachings of these western councils. Luis M. Bermejo's book of essays, *Towards Christian Reunion: Vatican I: Obstacles and Opportunities* (Gujaharat Sahitya Prakash, Anand, Gujarat, 388 001, India, 1984), is more radical. Vatican II's recognition of the Orthodox as Church and of Anglicans and Protestant bodies as ecclesial communities means for him that Vatican I's definition of infallibility of papal teaching and of universal jurisdiction has no claim to ecumenical conciliar authority.

[37]See *Summa theologiae* II-II, q. 1, aa. 6-10, on the articles of faith.

[38]See *Decretum de oecumenismo,* 11; in *Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta,* 3rd ed., ed. G. Alberigo et al. (Bologna, 1973) 915: "Insuper in dialogo oecumenico theologi catholici . . . una cum fratribus seiunctis investigationem peragentes de divinis mysteriis . . . meminerint [in comparandis doctrinis] existere ordinem seu 'hierachiam' veritatum doctrinae catholicae, cum diversus sit earum nexus cum fundamento fidei christianae."

[39]See ibid. 15-17; ed. Alberigo, 916-19. Note no. 17 (p. 919): "Quae supra de legitima diversitate dicta sunt, eadem placet etiam de diversa theologica doctrinarum enuntiatione declarare. Etenim in veritatis revelatae exploratione methodi gressusque diversi ad divina cognoscenda et confitenda in Oriente et in Occidente adhibiti sunt. Unde mirum non est quosdam aspectus mysterii revelati quandoque magis congrue percipi et in meliorem lucem poni ab uno quam ab altero, ita ut tunc variae illae theologicae formulae non raro potius inter se compleri dicendae sint quam opponi." The Council goes on to point out special valuable characteristics of Eastern theological traditions.

[40]My private study done for the Canadian Episcopal Conference (7 March 1987) contains many texts of John Paul II stating the truly collegial character of episcopal conferences working with him. These are conveniently ignored by the preparatory document sent

I mentioned spirituality, and here as well the history of theology is an illuminating source for contemporary theological spirituality, that is, a spirituality that feeds, as I think it should, on the whole of theology. The history of theological spirituality is recovering many treasures from different Catholic traditions; at the same time, it cautions against a fundamentalist application of past authors and spiritualities to contemporary times: a hermeneutic of past authors and spiritualities is as essential as a hermeneutic of scripture, dogmatic definitions, or theol-

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out by the Congregation for Bishops. Some but not all of the pope's statements have been collected by Adriano Garuti, *La collegialità oggi e domani* (Bologna: Edizioni Francescane Bologna, 1982). These statements were ignored as well as by the document issued by the International Theological Commission, *L'unique Église du Christ* (Paris: Le Centurion, 1985); Latin text: *Themata selecta de ecclesiologia occasione XX anniversarii conclusionis Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II,* Documenta, 13 (Vatican City, 1985). It claims instead that episcopal collegiality belongs to the very structure of the church by divine right (*jure divino*), but that institutions such as episcopal conferences belong to the organization of the concrete figure of the church (*jure ecclesiastico*), and concludes that the use concerning these latter of terms such as "college," "collegiality," and "collegial" "ne peut donc relever que d'un sens *analogique, théologiquement impropre*" (p. 38: emphasis mine; Latin text, 34). To apply a distinction between what is of divine right and what is of ecclesiastical right in this case is highly questionable; even worse is the statement that terms used analogically are "theologically improper." This amounts to saying that all theology, which can only speak analogically about God and the divine mysteries, speaks "improperly"! The inconsistency of the document is shown by the fact that earlier, speaking about the theology of the Trinity, it says: "Nous pouvons appliquer analogiquement(!) ces réflexions à la théologie de l'Église" (p. 35; Latin text, 31). The commission could hardly mean that its analogical application to the church is to be taken as "théologiquement impropre"! The credibility of the phrase, "sens analogique, théologiquement impropre," as well as the whole teaching of the document at this point, is seriously weakened by the circumstances leading to its acceptance by the commission (it passed by a vote of only sixteen out of the twenty-seven who voted; the other nine either voted negatively or abstained); I was a member of the commission at the time, and this account is based on things recorded during the meeting. The whole paragraph containing this rejection of the proper collegiality of episcopal conferences was added to the earlier draft of the text by the sub-commission preparing the document and was given to the members only as they gathered for its meeting. This final draft was put to a vote without the members being allowed to discuss the change and without the usual procedure of voting chapter by chapter. This unusual procedural decision was made by a majority (only) of the sub-commission and was approved by Cardinal Ratzinger, the president of the commission; this represented a conflict of interest on his part because the opinion added to the text is that of Cardinal Ratzinger himself. (I regard this account as no violation of confidence since such procedures have no right to protection from exposure; the church needs criticism of these kinds of activities.) Further criticism of the document by John Thornhill (also a member of the commission at the time) in "The Church and the Churches," *The Tablet* (23 November 1985) 1242-43. The phrase in question was quoted, but then contradicted twice, in the preliminary document on episcopal conferences sent out by the Congregation for Bishops (12 January 1988). For judgments on this document see Avery Dulles, "What is the Role of a Bishops' Conference?" *Origins* 17, no. 46 (28 April 1968) 789, 791-96; idem, "The Mandate to Teach," *America* (19 March 1988) 293-95; James H. Provost, "Questions of Communion and Credibility," ibid. 296-98; Ladislas Orsy, "Some Questions from History," ibid. 299-301; Joseph A. Komonchak, "Bishops Conferences and Collegiality," ibid. 302-304.

ogies of the past. One has to reckon, for instance, with the Platonism and/or Stoicism found in many of the Fathers to see possible elements of distortion in their spirituality. In the middle ages, the theme of *contemptus mundi* influenced many monastic spiritualities and is hardly a good guide for lay persons living in the world.[41]

I was originally asked to speak in this paper about medieval theologians, and especially Thomas Aquinas, as sources of theology, and I would like to say at least a few words about this. Earlier I mentioned Chenu's contribution in calling attention to the importance of symbolism, literature, and the rest for theological method. I remember asking him one time in the early 1950's, as I was somewhat overwhelmed by the new biblical, patristic, and contemporary movements in theology in Paris, what was the point of studying medieval theology, including Thomas Aquinas. His reply was that the medieval scholastics, while limited in many ways, can teach us a certain rigor and discipline in theology, a rigor and discipline that might sometimes be less operative today as theologians try new methods in their research. Moreover, theologians such as Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas, by daring to use newly-acquired philosophies and natural sciences within faith, challenge us to do in our day what they did in theirs with respect to the new resources at our disposal.

Again, although the practice of medieval theologians of making distinctions no longer appeals to moderns, at least in its later exaggerated forms, the moderate use of distinctions by the great medieval theologians can show us how we can absorb into a synthesis those aspects of an opposed position that are congenial with our own; making distinctions can also allow various elements of a problem to be given their respective due: ''distinguish in order to unite'' according to Jacques Maritain's phrase.[42]

There are also some fundamental insights not only in great patristic authors such as Origen, Basil, the Gregories, or Augustine, but also in theologians like Aquinas, Bonaventure, Albert, Duns Scotus and others—insights that can continue to nourish contemporary theologians, or at least remind or even challenge them in their research. The day is long past, thank God, when it was enough to settle a theological discussion to say: ''St. Augustine says,'' ''St. Thomas says'' (or for Franciscans, ''Scotus'' or ''Bonaventure'' or perhaps ''Ockham says'').

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[41]On how to study spirituality see my article, ''Toward Defining Spirituality,'' *SR: Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 12 (1983) 127-41, and the brochure, *Thomas Aquinas' Spirituality,* The Étienne Gilson Series, 7 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984).

[42]This is part of the title of one his most famous books, *Distinguer pour unir, ou Les degrés du savoir,* 2nd ed. (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1946). See the Préface: '' 'Personne, dit Tauler, n'entend mieux la vraie distinction que ceux qui sont entrs dans l'unité; et de même personne ne connaît vraiment l'unité s'il ne connait aussi la distinction. Tout effort de synthèse métaphysique, particulièrement s'il porte sur les complexes richesses de la connaissance et de l'esprit, doit donc distinguer pour unir.'' See also M.-D. Chenu, *Toward Understanding St. Thomas,* trans. A.-M. Landry and D. Hughes (Chicago: Regnery, 1964) 173-76; French original: *Introduction à l'étude de S. Thomas d'Aquin* (Montréal-Paris, 1954; rpt. 1972) 146-50.

But who can doubt that these great theologians merit continuing historical study? If you look at the offerings in philosophy in any worthwhile university department of philosophy, at least on the graduate level, you will always find courses in Aristotle, Plato, Plotinus, Descartes, Kant, Hume, Locke, Leibniz, Spinoza, Hegel, Husserl, etc.—and here at Toronto, because of St. Michael's College and our Institute, medieval thinkers are well represented in philosophy as well. These are not taken as last-word authorities, but as great moments in the history of philosophy; they have set the course of so much later philosophy; without them we cannot understand contemporary thought; they continue to provide insight and inspiration without their being repeated uncritically. To meet a great mind of the present or past is one of the most important things any student or scholar can do—this is true for the history of theology, especially study of texts of the great classics. The work of David Tracy on the importance of classics, and the questions of interpretation involved in reading them, naturally come to mind here.[43]

How, I ask, can a serious school or department of Catholic theology allow students to proceed to doctorates without requiring them to know at least some of the classics of the patristic, medieval, or earlier modern period of Catholic theology? Among those reviewing theological education, there is a growing concern about the tendency of young research scholars to ignore the great figures of the past and to work only in contemporary theologians; the work of these contemporary theologians may be exciting for the moment but their durability and even the lasting value of their problematic is far from proven. Study of the history of theology shows the relativity of particular periods and views—and is thus a warning to ourselves not to take our own period as the final and best answer.

If I may spend a moment on Thomas Aquinas, I would like to point out a few areas where I think he can contribute to contemporary theology.

—He was a scriptural theologian all his life—his main teaching was his continual commenting on scripture; his example, and the richness of his commentaries, can urge us always to remain in close contact with the biblical sources of our theology.

—He is constantly aware of mystery. Thus he says we know more *quomodo Deus NON sit* than *quomodo Deus sit;* he is always aware of the inadequacy of our analogical terms. When he uses created concepts analogically, he so frequently makes what I call "mental genuflections," prefixing the terms with *quidam, quaedam, quoddam, quasi* to indicate their inadequacy to the mystery. For example, for him Christ's humanity is "quoddam instrumentum," "a kind of instrument," and when he speaks about Christ's saving us by way of *redemption,* he says that Christ's blood, was "quasi quoddam pretium"—"as it were, a kind of price"! Would that modern theologians were always so aware of the inadequacy of the terms we use about the mysteries. How often we take analogies as adequate to the mystery!

—His original theology of *esse* or the *actus essendi,* together with themes of participation by creatures in divine *esse,* which allow him to account for a con-

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[43]See his recent work *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987).

tinuing presence of God in the deepest level of our being even while God transcends us infinitely.

—His theology of the missions and indwelling of the Trinitarian persons, showing the link of the inner life of God with salvation-history; this is one indication of how fully historical and personalist Thomas is, despite frequent misjudgments.[44]

—His theology of creation. Thomas gives natures their due; he has respect for intrinsic finalities of creatures. This makes his theology a source of a spirituality for laity in the world. This, however, is not the so-called "creation-centered spirituality" of Matthew Fox; Aquinas' theological spirituality is God-originating and God-oriented, but it does, within that orientation, respect the good of creatures and their development to their full potential.[45]

—His theology of diversity within creation and within the order of grace, this diversity giving greater glory to God than if there were none. This is a basis for ecological theology, for respect for every degree of being and respect for each person; it is an explanation of the variety of gifts, graces, and charisms in the church.

—The human person as the image of God and the Trinity, as the key to personal development spiritually; as the basis of moral prudential judgment, for, like God, the human intellectual agent is a free actor and decision-maker. This yields a morals of intrinsic values, not of obligation or external command.

— His theology of the New Law of Christian freedom, which has been praised by S. Lyonnet as a faithful recovery for the West of Paul's doctrine.[46] For Thomas the New Law is the grace of the indwelling Holy Spirit; written laws, commands, etc., are secondary, educative, and dispositive, and could, if made primary, be deadly.

—Thomas' stress on prudence and self-counselling rather than on unthinking obedience to superiors, directors, etc., obedience being required in relation to the common good and not simply to the will of the superior as such.

—The way Thomas integrates the emotions or passions in moral life, not their suppression as in so much Christian spirituality of the will. The role of the virtues of temperance and fortitude in ordering, from within the sensitive appetites, the passions or emotions. Christ as the supreme example of this.

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[44]Max Seckler, in the introduction to his *Das Heil in der Geschichte: Geschichtstheologisches Denken bei Thomas von Aquin* (Munich, 1964), tells how he started his research by looking to Thomas Aquinas as a foil to later more history-linked theology, only to find that Aquinas is so historical in his theology that Seckler devoted his entire Habilitationsschrift to Thomas' doctrine. French translation of his work: *Le Salut et l'histoire: La pensée de saint Thomas d'Aquin sur la théologie de l'histoire,* Cogitatio fidei, 21 (Paris, 1967).

[45]See Chenu, *St Thomas d'Aquin et la théologie,* Maîtres spirituels, no. 17 (Paris: Seuil, 1960), or my essay, *Thomas Aquinas' Spirituality,* The Étienne Gilson Lecture, 1984, The Étienne Gilson Series, 7 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984).

[46]"St. Paul: Liberty and Law," in *The Bridge: A Yearbook of Judaeo-Christian Studies* IV, ed. John M. Oesterreicher (New York: Pantheon, 1962) 229-51.

—The instrumental role of Christ's humanity. By this approach Thomas integrates the whole theology of Christ's life—and especially his resurrection together with the passion and death—in ways that recapture the Pauline theology.

—His theology of sacramental sign and causality by signification, the basis for some in their work in the liturgical renewal.

—His theology of the church. The centrality of Christ's Headship by grace and of the Holy Spirit as the Heart of the church, the one identical person of the Holy Spirit giving the most fundamental unity to the church.

— His notion of catholicity based on his doctrine of the role of diversity in creation and in grace.

—His theology of faith, which integrates intellectual and affective aspects in the act of faith. For him the act of faith goes beyond and through propositions to the very reality of the mystery of God. This gives a solid basis for understanding the development of dogma and for relativizing propositions about the mysteries of faith.

—His theology of charity as friendship with God, and the overflow of intense union with God by love into a contemplative mystical knowledge by connaturality.[47]

Conclusion

From all that I have said, I think you can see my answer to the question in the title. The history of theology can be and has been used badly as a source of theology, but it can also be a good source as a fortress preserving the treasures of the past to be used with probity, with "cool ecstasy" in the present; it can thus serve as a launching pad sending theologians into new spheres of research and insight. There are many other launching pads today —sciences such as psychology, sociology, semiotics, and linguistics; methods such as narrative or praxis; new philosophies to use within faith. I would suggest that we construct one of these launching pads within the courtyard of the fortress of the history of theology. Using the past as a launching pad for creative theologies in the present and future will prevent a stagnating fortress use of past theology and at the same time (to change the metaphor) provide a gravitational pull that will keep space-travelling theologians from floating off into the darkness of outer space.

Finally, I would invite you to look at the history of theology within the history of salvation. God's saving grace comes to individuals and to the whole human community within history.[48] Part of that saving grace is surely the communication and reception of the Word of God, and this takes place in history; therefore, theo-

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[47]Some of these items have been dealt with in the essay on Thomas Aquinas' theological spirituality indicated above, n. 45. Others will be presented in an essay to be published in *Spiritualities of the Heart,* ed. Annice Callahan (New York: Paulist Press, 1989 [at the press]), entitled: "Affectivity and the Heart in Thomas Aquinas' Spirituality."

[48]See the stimulating chapter, "The History of Salvation and Revelation," in Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith,* trans. William V. Dych (New York: Seabury, 1978) 138-75.

logical reflection on the Word of God and on the Christian community's experience of this Word also takes place in history. (I try to emphasize this especially to students preparing for either lay or ordained ministry, especially at the beginning and end of a course of theology. For this particular group, to be studying theology together in preparation for ministering the Word of God to people of this time and many places is itself an important moment in salvation-history for today and for the moments of history in which they will minister.) To ignore the history of theology would be to cut oneself off from an aspect of salvation-history itself that has been and is important for the Christian community.[49] In the liturgy we engage in thankful eucharistic *anamnesis* of God's wondrous saving works; so we theologians should engage in thankful *anamnesis* of God's saving activity on our behalf, that is, God's saving activity of calling and aiding theologians in the ministry of research and teaching in order to bring God's saving word to God's people in each generation and culture. Our joyful if sometimes difficult ministry and service involves us in using the history of theology as both a good fortress activity and a good launching pad. To put it differently, here in Canada we have a political party whose name, if not its policies, might express it in another way: theologians must be progressive conservatives, or perhaps conservative progressives. But Jesus put it best: we should hope to be scribes "trained for" (RSV) or "instructed in" (TOB)) the kingdom of heaven, so as to be like the wise householder, who brings forth from the household treasure *kaina kai palaia:* "what is new and what is old."

WALTER H. PRINCIPE, C.S.B.
Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Toronto

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[49]On this, see the recent posthumous essay by Karl Rahner, "Dogmengeschichte in meiner Theologie," in *Dogmengeschichte* (see above, n. 4) 324-25.