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QUAESTIO DISPUTATA: CATHOLIC THEOLOGY AND THE HISTORY OF EXEGESIS

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[The author argues that it is important for systematic theologians to join the conversation between exegetes and those who investigate the history of exegesis. To demonstrate what might be gained from such an intersection of disciplines, she explores the work of some ressourcement *theologians such as de Lubac, Daniélou, Bouyer, and others, all of whom discussed the allegorical and typological exegesis of the Church Fathers and attempted to bring it into harmony with the historical-critical interpretation of the Bible.]*

IN A RECENT ARTICLE published in *Theological Studies,* Michael Cahill envisions a conversation between scholars exclusively engaged with the historical-critical method and those who would make a place for the history of exegesis, not only as a study in itself but as part of the full conversation about the exegetical meaning of a text.[1] His interest in a new conversation suggests, first of all, that the historical-critical meaning of the original text, standing alone, does not uncover the full meaning of the original text and, secondly, that the history of a text's reception is part of that full meaning, especially for theologians. Cahill imagines a new roundtable of scholars where those engaged in the history of exegesis are welcome guests, though not yet full partners. Cahill insists that the historical-critical method is to retain the privileges of the chair, even though the "exegetes of the past are not gate-crashers "

In spite of his title, Cahill does not seem to envision theologians as a part of this enlarged conversation. Perhaps he believes that too many of them may be identified as theological ideologues who, as he says, retreat to the history of exegesis because they are terrified of the results of the historical-

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[1] Michael Cahill, "The History of Exegesis and Our Theological Future," *Theological Studies* 61 (2000) 332–47

critical method, or because they find patristic exegesis, often understood uncritically, to be more spiritual. This is a salutary warning. Yet surely many Catholic systematic theologians stand in quite a different relationship to the hermeneutical issues implicit in such a conversation. Although they are convinced of the inestimable value of the historical-critical method, the majority of systematic theologians have not yet developed a satisfactory method for utilizing it in the service of theological argument. They find it a helpful and salutary corrective to proof-text methodology and some established teaching, but in constructive, as distinct from critical, theology they find its constraints prohibitive. At the same time, most Catholic systematic theologians—as distinct from patristic scholars—have not consistently shown interest in patristic and medieval exegesis, indeed they have rarely consulted pre-Reformation literature outside of work by Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. Absorbed by the more recent challenges of modernism and postmodernism, they often seem to stand at a distance from the historical-critical meaning of the biblical text and to be unfamiliar with the lengthy history of its reception

Yet theologians' questions are important to any conversation seeking to move beyond a simple adherence to the historical-critical meaning of the biblical text Put simply, the questions are these. how are systematic theologians to incorporate the biblical witness into their varied theological projects? Does an enlarged conversation—between historical-critical exegetes and historians of exegesis—offer renewed possibilities for the systematic theologians? Does the history of exegesis offer a way out of the impasse for those who accept the validity of the historical-critical method yet find themselves denied the possibility of applying it to later communities and questions by the very insistence of the exegetes themselves? Are theological questions important to a more complete understanding of the relationship of text to meaning? Perhaps a bit of recent theological history may prove instructive.

THE DEBATE IN FRANCE ON TYPOLOGY

Midway through the 20th century, a group of Roman Catholic theologians raised questions and issues quite pertinent to the conversation that Cahill seeks to enliven As part of their intensive program of *ressourcement,* Henri de Lubac, Yves Congar, Jean Daniélou, and others engaged in a lively debate over allegorical exegesis approximately between 1940 and 1959, the year in which de Lubac published his monumental four-volume study *Medieval Exegesis*[2] It was a debate that arose equally from their

[2] *Exégèse médiévale Les quatre sens de l'Écriture,* 3 vols in 4 (Paris· Aubier, 1959–1964) English translation *Medieval Exegesis,* 2 vols , trans Mark Sebanc

concern to integrate historical-critical method into their theology and from their belief in the value of the history of exegesis. A careful look at that debate and at the specific questions and contributions of several participants may illumine what systematic theologians can contribute to the present discussion as well as what they may hope to gain from it. First, some historical background.

Marie Dominique Chenu issued a prologue to the debate in an essay entitled "A School of Theology" published in 1937. In it, he called for a renewal of Roman Catholic theology and articulated the three premises on which it should be based. First, theology was to be, first and foremost, a constructive study, rather than a polemic defense, of divine revelation. Second, theology should take seriously the concrete historicity of the Church's life and faith. Third, an authentic theology was to be profoundly continuous with the mystical life of the Church. Chenu's essay brought him to the immediate attention of the Holy Office and, after extended controversy behind the scenes, his pamphlet was put on the Index of Forbidden Books in February 1942.[3]

The Birthpangs of Sources Chrétiennes

Though they recognized Rome's resistance to a theology that took both history and the mystical life as seriously as philosophy, de Lubac and Daniélou began to correspond with various editors about the possibility of publishing a new series of texts, the project that would become *Sources chrétiennes*.[4] They envisioned a scholarly, critical edition of original texts with a lengthy introduction of some 60 to 80 pages, a new translation, and scholarly notes. De Lubac and Daniélou began with the Greek Fathers because they were generally less accessible than their Latin counterparts and were, in their judgment, the theologians who best integrated rigorous scholarship with a "spiritual orientation." In fact, the prospectus for the series, written by Daniélou and corrected by de Lubac, noted that in the Greek Fathers, "liturgy, theology and mysticism are fused in a remarkable way" that would never again be achieved. The content of the series shows its connections to Chenu's vision. Like Chenu, Daniélou and de Lubac were committed to exposing the spiritual riches of theology. At the same time, they were convinced that historical studies must inform and

(Grand Rapids Eerdmans, 1998–2000) The fact that this monumental work is only now receiving its first English translation and being published by a Protestant publishing house signals the current interest in these issues

[3] Giuseppe Alberigo, Marie-Dominique Chenu et al., *Une école de théologie. le Saulchoir* (Paris: Cerf, 1985)

[4] See Étienne Fouilloux, *La Collection "Sources Chrétiennes"* (Paris: Cerf, 1995) especially 7–42

correct all aspects of theology.[5] So although they seem to fall among those whom Cahill identifies as attracted to exegetical history because of its "more satisfying spiritual and pastoral application," they also anticipated his program of "systematic application of historical-critical method to the various layers or periods of the history of exegesis."

Their prospectus also described four specific groups of people whom the editors envisioned as the potential audience for the series. First, it was intended for those Christians, lay or clerical, who were hungry for spirituality with deep theological roots, secondly, for those who experience Christian disunity as a source of suffering.[6] The editors also believed that these texts would appeal to members of the academic community because of their historical significance for Western culture. Finally, poets and artists were seen as potentially interested in the Fathers' symbolic vision of the world. Clearly, for de Lubac and Daniélou this was not an in-house project, nor a conversation designed for Catholic theological circles alone. The invitation was to a wide, scholarly audience. By the autumn of 1941, the first volumes of *Sources chrétiennes* were ready for publication.

By late 1941, circumstances arose from the Nazi occupation of France, the continuing war created new obstacles. De Lubac and Daniélou had successfully negotiated the problem of religious censors. Now they had to maneuver the maze of two governments, political boundaries, and scarcity of resources. One of the early manuscripts went from Dijon to Daniélou in Paris, then on to de Lubac in Lyons for final editing, before being returned to Paris for printing. Such multiple journeys across heavily armed borders challenged the political fates and the spare resources of the postal service. Paper supplies were gradually accumulated with great difficulty from all over France and sent on to the printer in Paris, sometimes arriving by bicycle. Printing licenses and censors' releases had to be obtained from both the German authorities and their French counterparts. Daniélou's edition of Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of Moses* was delayed for several months because it was suspected of being Jewish propaganda. The edition was finally published in 1942 as the first volume of the series, without the critical Greek text because of the scarcity of paper. The dogged determination of these theologians to achieve their purpose in spite of overwhelming hurtles reflected their strong convictions about the theological impor-

[5] This conviction about the value of history extended to great appreciation for the historical-critical exegesis of Scripture. Daniélou's correspondence for instance reveals ongoing consultation with scholars such as Stanislaus Lyonnet and Oscar Cullmann, his friendship with Cullmann and his professional correspondence with him lasted from 1948 to 1973. The letters are preserved in the Jesuit Archives of the French Province, Vanves.

[6] The original list of scholars invited to edit specific volumes included laity (women as well as men) and Eastern Orthodox scholars.

tance of their project. This was no arcane intellectual project pursued in a university library, but was a project so dear that it brooked no obstacle. The explicit conversation about allegorical exegesis or the four senses of Scripture began with the introductions to the first several volumes of *Sources chrétiennes*.[7]

Allegorical Exegesis

In his introduction to the first volume, Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of Moses*, Daniélou developed two themes that set the agenda for that conversation. He first wanted to establish that Gregory's interpretation of the Jewish texts of the life of Moses is genuinely historical and not simply an elaboration based on imagination or polemical distortion.[8] He carefully distinguished a patristic understanding of "historical" from the contemporary use of the term. While current methods require that the interpreter set a text within its historical situation and discern the original meaning of the language, Gregory's understanding of "historical" interpretation required him to set the life of Moses within the literary traditions that governed it. Daniélou showed how Gregory's historical interpretation explains the text both as a continuation of Jewish haggadah and as an early form of Christian hagiography whose purpose was to expose moral truth and teach moral values. Daniélou acknowledged that Gregory follows Philo to a remarkable degree in this species of interpretation.

Secondly, Daniélou sought to place Gregory's use of the allegorical method within a coherent theoretical framework. He emphasized Gregory's departure from Philo precisely in the "higher" or extended interpretation of the text, which Gregory called "theoria" and not "allegory." Though he showed Gregory's dependence on Philo for the general conception of his interpretation as well as for some of its details, Daniélou believed that Gregory transformed Philo so thoroughly that the latter became merely a vehicle for expressing a radically new reality. Daniélou

[7] In spite of the early focus on the Greek Fathers, Daniélou spoke of future plans to study medieval authors. In his review of Ceslas Spicq's *Esquisse d'une histoire de l'exégèse latine au Moyen Age* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1944), he wrote that Origen and Gregory of Nyssa come first, but "tomorrow Rabanus Maurus and Rupert of Deutz will be just as famous" (*Etudes* 245 [1945] 279).

[8] It is almost impossible to avoid all confusion in terminology. What contemporary scholars call "the historical meaning" of the text is close, but not identical, to what patristic and medieval theologians called the historical meaning. By it, they generally meant "what happened" at the time narrated in the text, unburdened by the literalism of fundamentalists, they often used "literal" and "historical" interchangeably. Since they took the literary character of the sacred texts quite seriously, their notion of "literal meaning" included its literary character and rhetorical strategies.

identified Gregory's interpretation as "typology," a genuinely historical hermeneutic that points to a new reality disclosed within the text. In Gregory's interpretation, "the events and institutions of the Exodus are not just images of a spiritual reality, but of a reality that is historical and spiritual at the same time, the reality of Christ"[9] and of the Church unfolding in history Daniélou identified typology with the Pauline and Johannine texts of the New Testament Throughout the subsequent debate he continued to insist on the distinctive meaning of this term. Daniélou clearly wanted to distinguish allegory (with its implications of extravagance and arbitrary capriciousness) from another kind of extended meaning that discloses realities grounded in history, the life of Christ and of the Church. He also wanted to disengage Greek patristic exegesis and especially that of Gregory of Nyssa, from the work of Philo. He showed that it was intrinsic to New Testament literature and an unbroken tradition of ecclesial interpretation

Origen's Contribution

De Lubac's first exposition of the allegorical interpretation was also written for *Sources chrétiennes* He provided the introductions to the two-volume collection of Origen's homilies on Genesis and Exodus, published in 1944 and 1947 as volumes 7 and 16 of the series The context is important. Origen had been criticized—not to say, vilified—from the fourth century onward, and modern readers were even less sympathetic to his emphasis on the spiritual order of reality than were his first critics. Therefore, to introduce these exegetical works of Origen, de Lubac set out to defend him First, he defended him from the charge that he hellenized Christian exegesis De Lubac considered Origen's formation to have been almost entirely ecclesiastical and believed that, in his exegetical work, he was preoccupied with Jewish and Gnostic attacks upon Christian teaching De Lubac showed that Origen believed his hermeneutics to be the tradition of the Church, far from an accommodation to the rationalist élite, his allegorical interpretation is the fruit of a profound belief in the divine origin of the entire biblical corpus He also defended Origen from the charge of ignoring the literal meaning of the Scripture. He demonstrated that Origen understood the relationship between literal and spiritual meaning as the relationship between the body and the divine Word in Christ. Just as Christ needed a human nature in his earthly existence to carry out the work of redemption, so he required a bodily or historical meaning in Scripture in order that it might be effective in the ongoing work of redemption. De Lubac argued that Origen, in practice, excluded an historical meaning in very few texts. Further, Origen often demonstrated that it is only the spiritual meaning of the text that makes the historical credible. Why indeed

[9] *La Vie de Moise* (Paris Cerf, 1945) 22 (translation mine)

would the Holy Spirit intend a sacred purpose to the war narratives in Joshua and Judges unless they had a higher meaning?

When de Lubac analyzed Origen's theory of the spiritual sense, he proposed that his exegetical practice was more reassuring than the speculative framework found in *De principiis*. He acknowledged that Origen's understanding of history would not accord with a modern understanding, but he did find in Origen a sense of the historical development of revelation. The heart of Origen's doctrine was the definitive character of Christ's coming. For Origen, as read by de Lubac, it is not the human understanding of divine mysteries that changes with Christ. Rather it is the substantial reality of things themselves that has changed. In other words, Christ does not simply initiate a new way of interpreting Scripture; he initiates a new historical trajectory that continues to unfold in the life of the Church. When Origen—or other patristic exegetes—use allegorical interpretations to describe this new history, they remain in the realm of the historical. All of the events narrated in Scripture happened for others; the text, a historical artifact that related them, was intended for us. The history of the text is its enactment *in ecclesia*.

De Lubac's study of Origen's work, like that of Daniélou, led him to conclude that his methods of biblical exegesis were traditionally Christian and not Hellenistic in origin. He concluded that the allegorical method was not an arbitrary application of the text that comes out of a merely practical attempt to make Scriptures usable. Like Daniélou, he considered patristic allegory to be a truly theological method that results from an understanding of the definitive revelation of the mystery of God in Christ. But since Christian faith believes that Christ lives on in the Church ongoing in history, so allegory is not antithetical to history but a fuller, though specifically Christian, understanding of it.

Both of these theologians used careful historical-critical methods in their analysis of earlier authors. Both understood that it is the supposed lack of historical attentiveness in patristic exegesis that has undermined its worth for modern exegetes. They took pains to identify the degree to which that attentiveness is present both in Origen and in Gregory of Nyssa. Cahill's conviction that the history of a text's reception not be omitted from its interpretation is echoed by their analysis. De Lubac, in particular, spoke of the history of the text in ways that seemed to anticipate—at least to some degree—a postmodernist understanding The conversation that followed the publication of these two essays continued to address the issues that Cahill has once again brought to scholarly attention.

Daniélou's Further Elaboration

Daniélou continued to develop the topic of spiritual exegesis and allegory in a series of essays written between 1945 and 1948 and published in

Recherches de science religieuse, in *Dieu vivant*, and in *Ephemerides theologicae lovaniensis*.[10] The first two journals were Catholic with long-standing reputations. *Dieu vivant*, on the other hand, was a new journal for a newly self-aware, ecumenical readership of Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox theologians. Daniélou's piece on the symbolism of the baptismal rites was the lead article in the journal's first issue. Two of the three essays focus on the liturgical use of Old Testament narratives and symbols in the Christian rite of baptism. Baptism emerged as a point of unity among all Christian traditions. Also, for Daniélou, the liturgical experience of the biblical text was an essential characteristic of all precritical Christian exegesis As the concrete actions of a particular worshiping community, liturgy lies in the realm of the historical Understood theologically, liturgy is a means of access to realities that transcend history, a perfect parallel and hermeneutic principle for the consistent Christian understanding of the biblical text. Throughout these essays, the essential points of Daniélou's position on patristic exegesis were exposed. He insisted on the essential unity of the biblical corpus and pointed to a universal patristic understanding that the full meaning of the Old Testament is found in the New Testament He insisted as well on a distinction between typology, an extended meaning of the biblical text that arises from its liturgical use and is therefore historical, and allegory which extends the meaning of the text beyond the liturgy to other aspects of Christian life and thought.

Daniélou consistently referred to liturgical practice, relatively consistent since the time of the Fathers, as the key to biblical interpretation This point, I believe, is worthy of attention by those who would introduce the history of exegesis into exegetical interpretation Surely liturgical usage is intrinsic to the history of a text's reception In many cases, it predates patristic exegesis and usually grounds it, as Daniélou repeatedly pointed out He did not deny the validity of allegorical interpretation As Daniélou noted, the Christ revealed in Scripture is the whole Christ, head and members And from this simple principle comes the authentic possibility for applying the text to different situations: to the historical person of Christ, to the Church, to the final coming of Christ at the end of time. For Daniélou, all of these various meanings are one, namely the Christological meaning of the texts understood through typology, the larger, all-inclusive term. He was determined to distance himself from the term "allegory" because of his commitment to opening a conversation with scholars who found it so abhorrent that it prevented them from going further.

[10] "Le symbolisme des rites baptismaux," *Dieu Vivant* 1 (1945) 17–43, "Traversée de la Mer Rouge et baptême aux premiers siècles," *Recherches de science religieuse* 33 (1946) 402–30, "Les divers sens de l'Écriture dans la tradition chrétienne primitive," *Ephemerides theologicae lovaniensis* 24 (1948) 119–26

De Lubac and Leclercq's Responses

In an essay that de Lubac also published in *Recherches de science religieuse* in 1947, he took issue with Daniélou's distinctions between allegory and typology.[11] He argued, first of all, that allegory as a hermeneutic method was not pagan in origin but arose within the Christian and Jewish exegetical schools almost simultaneously.[12] De Lubac then surveyed the Christian theological use of allegorical hermeneutics and, though he is most interested in patristic usage as foundational, he included substantive reference to medieval writers through the 13th century, a foretaste of his future work. He concluded that, far from designating only the spiritual or nonhistorical meaning of the text, the term allegory was used for the totality of strategies by which the reader arrives at the full and multivalent meaning of the text. He noted the elasticity of hermeneutic language and practice. He also noted that as late as Hugh of St. Victor, the term designates both the whole process of finding different levels of meaning and a particular level of meaning within that range. In practice, exegetes claimed to discover sometimes three, sometimes four different levels of meaning. But always, wrote de Lubac, allegory designated the theological order of reality revealed by the text, that is, the actions and faith of the Church and its sacraments What Daniélou had specifically reserved for typology, then, de Lubac has demonstrated to be consistently the preserve of allegory.[13] In de Lubac's analysis, allegory is not a pejorative term, used to describe the point at which the interpreter's commentary takes leave of the text, it is the appropriate term, sanctioned by long use, which encompasses the full history of Christian appropriation of the Scriptures.[14] It sums up, indeed, the profound theological conviction that God, as the source of the biblical corpus (however far removed), has acted consistently on behalf of the human community and has revealed what is one long, disparate, but essentially coherent story of salvation. Its authentication by tradition overrides any distaste it may cause for modern scholars. *Exégèse médiévale* is the fruit of his determination to show its centrality to the tradition and its complete and complex meaning; the first stones in the foundation of that monumental work are laid down here.

[11] "Typologie et allégorisme," *Recherches de science religieuse* 37 (1947) 180–226

[12] De Lubac cites John Chrysostom, in his Commentary on 2 Corinthians, as the authority who credited Paul, not with borrowing hermeneutical terminology but with transforming it

[13] He does note one exception to the long-standing tradition Peter Damian had made a slight distinction similar to Daniélou's and out of similar concern for liturgical practice.

[14] He does acknowledge that it is probably impossible to recover the original and full meaning of the term.

Jean Leclercq, in an essay entitled "La 'lecture divine,' " approached the subject from his own perspective, a result of long years of study in the monastic tradition.[15] What he proposed there bore most significantly upon the medieval tradition, the theologians that range from Gregory the Great to Bernard of Clairvaux, and include, among others, Rabanus Maurus, Walafrid Strabo, Anselm, Rupert of Deutz and Peter Cellus Not surprisingly, his assumption was that Scripture must above all nourish the life of the Church He demonstrated the importance of the monastic practice of *lectio divina* as the ground of both medieval theology and piety. He analyzed the practice of these authors, pointing out two important points. First, medieval authors generally gave full attention to the historical sense of the text insofar as they could establish it Second, they read the text in conjunction with whatever patristic commentary to which they had access (usually the great Latin writers such as Bede, Gregory the Great, Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine). Thus they understood Scripture as complemented by the theological tradition, each illuminating the other. One might say that, in Leclercq's perception, the medieval writers followed a kind of project similar to that suggested by Cahill, a study of the original historical meaning of the text understood in the light of previous interpretations To most patristic and medieval theologians, of course, later interpretations were, in some sense, historical because they emerged from sacred history continued in the life of the Church

Leclercq went on to describe the medieval process of *lectio divina* in some detail Throughout he was careful to demonstrate that in the medieval tradition there is no opposition between the human meaning of Scripture and its revealed content and furthermore no opposition between theology and spirituality. Implicitly, then, Leclercq held up the medieval theologians as exemplifying what Chenu, Daniélou, and de Lubac had been seeking: a theology grounded in historical understanding bearing the fruit of authentic spirituality Leclercq clearly shared the conviction that allegorical exegesis can and must be acquitted of the charge that it is ahistorical, or even anti-historical He is among those who study precritical exegesis out of a conviction that it bears a "more satisfying spiritual and pastoral application " But he brought to the fore an anthropological premise that certainly is pertinent to the discussion Cahill envisions: the unity between the human meaning of the scriptural text and its religious meaning, both theological and spiritual. In any conversation about the relationship between the historical-critical meaning of the text and the meanings attributed to it during the course of its exegetical history, this question is of central importance What philosophical and theological assumptions about the human person, as author of the text and reader of it, ground the work

[15] *La Maison-Dieu* 5 (1946) 21–33

of the exegetes and other interpreters? It is the question that theologians ask and an important part of their contribution to the conversation

Elucidations by Louis Bouyer

Bouyer entered the conversation with an article in *La Maison Dieu* entitled "Liturgie et exégèse spirituelle."[16] In his work on behalf of liturgical renewal, he had discovered that pastors generally resisted attempts to promote a necessary and consequent biblical renewal. For them, the historical-critical method of interpretation rendered all scholarly work on the Bible irrelevant to worshiping communities of faith. Bouyer's essay is a careful attempt to promote "spiritual exegesis" as a scholarly method of biblical interpretation equal in value to "critical exegesis" and, in fact, dependent upon it. This position put him at odds both with Catholic pastors and with the historical critics and skeptics who dominated the French academic world and he acknowledged the criticisms of both as he proceeded through his argument. In that argument, Bouyer carefully defined spiritual exegesis and demonstrated that it is intrinsic, not only to the history of exegesis, but to the very development of the biblical corpus itself.

For Bouyer, spiritual exegesis is theological exegesis.[17] He identified it with allegorical interpretation, but defined the latter according to his reading of the patristic tradition (and, implicitly, in agreement with de Lubac). For him also, allegory includes the historical or literal sense, the typological sense (referring the text to Christ and the Church) and the anagogical sense (referring to the persons who hear and read the text).[18] The core of his argument was a demonstration that, far from being an arbitrary framework imposed upon Scripture, such theological interpretation, in fact, constitutes the content of a large part of the biblical corpus itself. Not limiting himself to explaining Paul's use of the term "allegory," he detailed the many ways in which the writers of the New Testament texts were reinterpreting, through allegory or typology, the events and persons of the Jewish Scriptures. He further demonstrated that their practice was a careful continuation of the methods of the Jewish authors themselves. Bouyer saw the prophetic writings, in particular, as the result of a process by which earlier texts and experiences were reinterpreted in the light of later historical

[16] Louis Bouyer, "Liturgie et exégèse spirituelle," *La Maison Dieu* 7 (1946) 27–50

[17] In French the word "spirituelle" means intellectual and witty as well as "having to do with the spirit as opposed to matter"

[18] Bouyer does not take up the questions of whether there are three or four senses within allegory or whether allegory is the larger category or merely one of the plurality of senses. His task is to justify the validity of theological interpretation as a whole

realities [19] Further, within the developing narrative, legal, and wisdom traditions of Israel, Bouyer saw a movement that he named "providential divine pedagogy," by which God leads the chosen people to understand their foundational religious experiences ever more deeply. For him the preaching of Jesus and the Apostles, as found in the New Testament, are simply the next stage in this ongoing and vital process, an allegorization of the great Jewish themes of kingdom, messiah, and sacrifice.

Bouyer understood this transformation of ideas as a vital process, involving both radical change and organic continuity He drew an epistemological conclusion: the kind of knowledge required to enter into this ongoing process of interpretation and revision—the process of interpretation—is not logical but poetic, not linear but reflexive, not bound to roads already laid out but open to creative intervention and intuition. If this, indeed, is part of the process by which Scripture came to be, then, for Bouyer, spiritual or theological exegesis is the kind of interpretation most appropriate to its specific nature and most faithful to the historical reality of its genesis. The theological interpretation he described did not deal with textual details, arbitrarily and fancifully decided upon, but with the great matrix of theological ideas found in Christian doctrine. The corpus of revealed doctrine, articulated by the Church in its creeds, becomes a touchstone against subjectivity and superficiality. Theological interpretation of this kind must have access to the original meaning of the text, the creative transforming insight of the original author. Hence it depends on the historical-critical method and is complementary to it.

Daniélou's Summary and American Participation

By 1947, Danielou was able to point to the extensive scholarly conversation that the multivalent notion of spiritual exegesis had provoked [20] He reviewed the material published on the Continent to demonstrate that what he calls "the typological interpretation of the Old Testament" had engaged the interest of Catholic and Protestant theologians alike. But he noted also a wide array of articles, by patristic and medieval scholars as well as by art historians, to show that the issue of biblical interpretation also engaged diverse scholars beyond the community of theologians. In reviewing all of this work he revealed, once again, what he believed to be the ultimate goal of this conversation: nothing less than a reappropriation of the patristic method of biblical interpretation transformed by all of the biblical science of the previous century.

[19] "... le remploi et la réinterpretation des anciens récits, aboutissant à des transpositions qui sont de véritables métamorphoses, apparaît comme le secret de la composition des écrits de l'Ancien Testament sous leur forme achevée" (35)

[20] "Autour de l'exégèse spirituelle," *Dieu Vivant* 8 (1952) 123–26

Two points should be noted about his vision. First, Daniélou saw patristic exegesis, if not as normative, then certainly as privileged practice for understanding the biblical text. Biblical scholars are not likely today to accept this judgment and even those who engage in the history of exegesis would find such an affirmation problematic. The second point is that Daniélou understood the theological interpretation of Scripture not only as possible but indeed the *telos* of all Scripture study. For him, the historical-critical method is in service to theology, having the potential to revivify it, as he says. Cahill seems to portray the dynamic interplay among disciplines in exactly reverse terms: the historical-critical method is the given and the work of the history of exegesis is to be included insofar as it serves the purposes of historical-critical exegesis. Obviously, this is simply the different point of view of the scholar who saw his own discipline as independent and normative. But it also suggests an important and wide range of questions regarding the ultimate goal and mutuality of what are independent but related sciences.

American Catholic theologians were soon invited to make their own contribution to this discussion. In 1948, a group of distinguished theologians published in *Theological Studies* reviews of 19 volumes from the *Sources chrétiennes* series.[21] In 1950 Walter Burghardt wrote a lengthy review article concerning the debate over allegory and typology in the same journal.[22] Toward the end of his review article, he offered a "modest critique " He asked two questions that are still in my opinion pertinent today some 50 years later. The first question is addressed to historical researchers: "in what measure has this research reproduced the thought of the [patristic or medieval authors]?"[23] With this question Burghardt asked for studies similar to those that Cahill calls for, that is, careful historical-critical studies of the exegesis of earlier periods. Burghardt, in fact, asked for more specific work; each significant exegete from the precritical tradition must be given thorough historical evaluation Even though such studies have not yet been widely taken up, ongoing, rigorous attempts to answer Burghardt's second question should not be delayed: "granted this thought faithfully recaptured, what is its validity for hermeneutics or biblical theology?" This is indeed a major question but one critical to the pursuit of theology. How can the biblical text be a foundation for theological reflection? Are the patristic and medieval applications of the text to the questions and life of their later communities an aberrant reading no longer justified by our understanding of the text? Has the value of the historical-critical method made all other readings of the text suspect? Does decon-

[21] *Theological Studies* 9 (1948) 250–89

[22] Ibid. 11 (1950) 78–116.

[23] Burghardt's review dealt only with the debate over patristic exegesis

struction remain the only option in extending the meaning of the text? Must one nullify any objective meaning to the text in order to make it live today, even if in doing so, one risks a greater subjectivity than that which is criticized in pre-critical theologians?

CONCLUSION

The issue of the multiple senses of Scripture was extremely important to the community of Catholic theologians in the 1940s and 1950s. Their intent in pursuing it was not simply to justify an outmoded denominational tradition. They were persuaded that it had great ecumenical potential. They were imbued with the conviction that the results of scientific study of the Bible and the theological insights produced by the multiple senses were not at odds, nor insignificant to one another. They were optimistic that a lively interaction between both kinds of study would give a more complete understanding of the text, one that allowed the biblical text to be a living word as well as a historical record. They believed that the patristic and medieval method of the multiple senses of Scripture—whether identified as allegory or typology—allowed theologians to respect the historicity of the text without being limited to the historical-critical method. At the same time it provided a means by which Scripture could be an authentic foundation for theology, worship, and Christian life. These are some of the convictions and questions that historical theologians might bring to Cahill's roundtable discussion.