

A History Of Theological Studies

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Excerpt

Theological Studies was founded in 1940 when the papal condemnation of Catholic Modernism still lingered in the air, when Europe was already in the throes of World War II, and our country was arguing, before Pearl Harbor, whether or not we should enter the war. Could the American Jesuits manage a journal on their own? Would there be enough readers willing to pay five dollars for a total of four issues each averaging some 200 pages? Perhaps since there was no U.S. counterpart to the European Jesuit journals such as the *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* (1869), *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* (1876), *Recherches de Sciences Religieuses* (1913), *Gregorianum* (1920), or *Bijdragen* (1938). Surely the then six theological faculties manned by the Society of Jesus in the United States: Alma College (California); St. Mary's (Kansas); West Baden (Indiana); Weston College (Massachusetts); and Woodstock College (Maryland), as well as the diocesan seminary in suburban Chicago, St. Mary of Lake (Mundelein), could sponsor a first-rate theological journal. One was especially needed since several academic voices of American Catholic theological scholarship had been silenced by such measures as the suppression of the short-lived *The New York Review* (1905-1908), an academic journal published out of St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie, N.Y., and the suspension, at least temporarily, of the *American Ecclesiastical Review* (1889-1903). In the first issue of *Theological Studies* there was no editorial outlining its mission statement. This is not surprising because if the real reason had been formulated it might have annoyed some highly placed churchmen. Already in the early issues there appeared the typical cross section of material on systematics, moral theology, Scripture, patristics, liturgy, canon law, even archeology.

During its first fifty years *Theological Studies* had only three editors. The first editor was William J. McGarry, S.J., who only two years previously had been appointed president of Boston College. He was "promoted" to be the first editor of the journal that was originally produced at the offices of the weekly *America*, then located on West 108 Street, New York City. But McGarry died suddenly only one year later on September 23, 1941, standing "on the hot 59th Street platform of New York's Broadway subway."

The second editor from 1942 until his death in 1967 was John Courtney Murray, S.J., well-known champion of religious freedom and one of the first U.S. Jesuits to move American Catholics from their intellectual ghetto into the modern world. Murray moved the editorial offices to theologate at Woodstock College in rural Maryland, where he was teaching. He was not shy about publishing his own material in the journal during the early years. Some twenty-one of his articles were to appear there up to 1964. In fact, one of the longest articles ever published in *Theological Studies* was his own two-part 81-page study on religious freedom (6 [1945] 85-113, 229-280). Courtney Murray strongly criticized the "received" Catholic teaching that since the

Catholic Church was the only true religion, it alone has a strict right to public existence and expression. Error has no rights, in that view he criticized. Wherever possible, so it was argued by his opponents, Catholicism should be recognized as the sole religion of the state and public expression of religious error should be repressed by governmental intervention. This view described the situation at that time in Spain, and was a view championed by Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani of the Vatican's Holy Office. From 1955 on, for some seven years, Murray was banned by Rome from writing on the topic of religious freedom, although, as we know, ultimately Catholic so-called "official teaching" was formally rejected by the Second Vatican Council's decree on "Religious Freedom" sketched in part by Murray himself and promoted at the Council by Cardinal Francis Spellman of New York. When Murray died of a heart attack while riding in a taxi cab in Manhattan on August 16, 1967, this was the end of an era for the journal.

Walter J. Burghardt, S.J., still a member of the American Theological Society, now 86 and an active lecturer and writer, was Murray's successor. He had already been involved with the journal for 21 years as its managing editor; he served as editor in chief for 24 more years from 1967 to 1990. This was a time of movement, both physical and theological. The journal moved briefly back to Manhattan from 1969 to 1974 (located in headquarters of the National Council of Churches, the so-called "God Box" in Morningside Heights) and then, after the unexpected closing of Woodstock College, moved this time to the "Car Barn" located near Georgetown University, adjacent to the outdoor setting of the movie "The Exorcist." This passage of theology from the old-time seminary to the university opened Catholic theology in ways that could not have been envisioned.

Following the retirement of Burghardt, the editor's position was taken by Robert J. Daly, S.J., of Boston College who published the journal from 1991 to 1995 (twenty issues). My joining the staff as editor occurred in 1996.

FAMOUS ARTICLES AND WRITERS

Would you believe that the journal *Theological Studies* has actually had a doctoral dissertation written about it? Last year, Helen Stegall Phelps produced a dissertation for the University of North Texas on "The Second Vatican Council and American Theological Research: A Bibliometric Analysis of *Theological Studies*: 1940-1995." Since hers is not a theological dissertation but a study in bibliometrics, a branch of information science, I will not attempt to summarize her argument..

One of the most famous articles (actually a five-part series of articles) was published in *Theological Studies* from 1946 to 1949 by Bernard Lonergan, S.J., entitled "The Concept of *Verbum* in the Writings of St. Thomas Aquinas" (7 [1946] 349-392; 8 [1947] 35-79; 404-444; 10 [1949] 3-40; 359-393). Nowadays that series of articles probably would not be accepted by an editor of *Theological Studies* since there is a reluctance to publish even a two-part article, the reason being that the material belongs in a book rather than in a journal, and that the space needs to be available for other authors. Lonergan wrote a number of articles for the journal over a 37 year period from 1941 to 1977.

Perhaps the single most famous article and one that in retrospect was the most prophetic and daring (in light of the fact that it was written during World War II one year before the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki) was an article by John Cuthbert Ford, S.J., “The Morality of Obliteration Bombing” (5 [1944] 261-309) in which he categorically stated that obliteration bombing is “an immoral attack on the rights of the innocent.” Remarkably, on the average of once every two or three months, I still receive requests to reproduce or reprint that article (since *Theological Studies* holds the copyright) even from an international U.S. Army training center located in Europe. That army center has also had the text translated into a number of foreign languages including Russian.

Karl Rahner, S.J. appeared only twice in *Theological Studies*: a lecture he gave at the Weston Jesuit School of Theology entitled “Towards a Fundamental Interpretation of Vatican II” (40 [1979] 716-727) and then more recently a posthumous piece entitled “Experiences of a Catholic Theologian” (61 [2000] 3-15). He appeared infrequently or hardly at all because of *Theological Studies*’ policy of generally not publishing material in translation that has appeared elsewhere, though several exceptions have been made.

Other theologians who have contributed to *Theological Studies* over long periods of time include: Walter Burghardt, 50 years, Francis Sullivan, 47 years; Bernard Lonergan, 37 years; Avery Dulles, 36 years; Joseph Fitzmyer, 35 years; John Crehan (British liturgist), 32 years; George Tavard, 25 years; Edward Kilmartin, 24 years; Cyril Vollert, 22 years; and Raymond Brown, 20 years. Most of these writers began publishing with us in the 1940s or 1950s (although Brown began in 1962, and Kilmartin in 1971). These authors were all clergymen, most taught at least for a lengthy period of time in a theologate or divinity school where they had relatively lighter teaching schedules, rarely directed doctoral dissertations, and had fewer departmental meetings to attend. Does this suggest to us some of the reasons why today’s writers are not publishing as much?

MORAL THEOLOGY AND *THEOLOGICAL STUDIES*

Many associate, and rightly too, the yearly Notes on Moral Theology as one of the more original and valued contributions to *Theological Studies*. The notes began modestly with a few pages in (1 [1940] 190-192, 315-316, more fully with 32 pages that year (412-443) by the editor McGarry who treated a panoply of topics ranging from biblical fundamentalism to testicular transplants. The prominence given to ethical/moral issues, although not snuffing out systematic and historical topics, can be explained by the Jesuits long association with casuistry, a form of moral learning and teaching recently rescued from its bad reputation by theologians such as James Keenan.

The genre of “Notes on Moral Theology” was invented by John Cuthbert Ford, S.J., and Gerald A. Kelly, S.J., beginning already in volume 2 (1941) and continued by them until 1954. They discussed, analyzed, and critiqued aspects of ethical teaching published especially in North American and European periodicals. Richard A. McCormick, S.J., joined the ranks of authors of Moral Notes in 1965 and continued his association with it until 1987 (a total of 23 years). In 1977 he became the sole author of the Notes, although in 1986 and 1987 he collaborated with other

moralists. James M. Gustafson at one time claimed that in the “Notes” McCormick left us “a model of scholarly comprehensiveness and precision to emulate.” McCormick from 1957 to 1974 had taught at Chicago’s Jesuit theologate but then became Rose F. Kennedy Professor of Christian Ethics at Georgetown University, and in 1986 until his death in 2000 was John A. O’Brien Professor of Christian Ethics at the University of Notre Dame. McCormick, who died at the age of 77 on Feb. 12, 2000, had in a sense followed the path of *Theological Studies* itself emerging from the protective womb of the theologates into the university setting interacting with students and professors even of other disciplines. McCormick provided a useful history of the “Moral Theology 1940-1989: An Overview” (50 [1989] 3-24) in which he argued that moral theology in the future had to be: open to the world church; ecumenical; insight-oriented; collegial; honest; scientifically informed; adult, through its stress on personal responsibility; realistic; Catholic and catholic; inspired by the teachings of Jesus. On the achievement of Richard McCormick I recommend the comprehensive tribute written in the journal by his friend and colleague Charles Curran, an obituary wryly entitled: “Notes on Richard A. McCormick” (61 [2000] 533-542).

Prior to 1940 Catholic theology in the U.S. in general and moral theology in particular involved a seminary discipline found in the manuals. Students of theology were basically responsible for memorizing the textbook. There were no outside readings, no classroom discussions, no papers to be written. Moral theology was primarily intended to prepare men as confessors and pastoral judges.

Since 1987 *Theological Studies’* Notes on Moral Theology have gradually changed as indeed change was demanded by the complexity of the field. No longer are the Notes a review of the year’s periodical literature in many areas of moral theology, but now they present the collaboration of three theologians who cover a longer period of time frame on only several ethical issues. Under the supervision of James Keenan, S.J., who serves as my advisor in this area, the journal has tried to cover not just Europe and North America. Over the last several years, the journal has focused on moral theology in Europe, Asia, Africa, and next year will cover Latin America.

The “Notes on Moral Theology” have always had a strong emphasis on sexual ethics, especially within marriage. More recently biomedical and bioethical issues also emerged as important, and with the passage of time more social justice issues. One idea the Notes consistently overlooked in their coverage will be noted later.

THE NOW

Let me say a few words about the present situation of the journal, especially since I took over the publishing with the March 1996 issue. Originally I was appointed for a five-year term until December 2000, but because it has not been easy to provide a Jesuit replacement for me, I have been reappointed by the board of directors for another five years until December 2005.

Theological Studies is truly international. It has subscribers in 88 different countries, including not only those nations where English is the dominant language, but also by individuals or centers of learning in Italy, Germany, France, Spain, and more surprisingly Brazil, Indonesia, China,

and Japan. One out of four subscribers lives out of the U.S., many in far-flung countries such as Lithuania, Fiji, Greenland, Lesotho, and Eritrea.

Financially, unlike most other Jesuit periodicals, it receives no subsidy, but manages to operate on its subscriptions and on income from modest investments. This is possible in large measure due to the donated services of its editor and book review editor, and from the rent-free office space provided by Marquette and Creighton University. The journal has a website: www.ts.mu.edu that includes general information and guidelines for submitting articles.

Besides a board of directors (nine Jesuits from across the country including Francis Clooney) there is a rotating group of women and men editorial consultants (including Beth Johnson) who advise me on editorial matters. Sometimes other specialists read manuscripts that fall under their area of expertise and make suggestions. Both the board and the editorial consultants meet annually in June for working sessions during the annual convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America.

The journal appears four times a year, averaging each issue about 200 pages: six or seven articles and some 50 books reviewed (either as reviews or shorter notices). For a total of some 800 pages the subscription price is a bargain. Where can one buy a 800-page book nowadays for \$24?

One of my first priorities was to increase the number of women theologians who publish in the journal. Beginning with my first issue, March 1996, Beth Johnson's article "Does God Play Dice? Divine Providence and Chance" each issue has had at least one article by a woman, and some issues have an equal number of women and men contributors.

The journal receives yearly on the average about 200 unsolicited submissions of which only 25 to 30 are published. One of my principal tasks therefore is to write rejection letters. When an article is submitted, if it looks at all promising, it is typically sent out to one or more "referees" experts in the area. They in turn recommend acceptance or rejection, but approval usually involves a recommendation to rewrite some sections of it, for clarity, accuracy, or conciseness. The typical article will be 11,000 to 13,000 words. Once an article is accepted the author provides a disk copy from which the editor formats and copy edits the text.

Who writes for *Theological Studies* has dramatically changed over the six decades of its existence. In the first decade (1940-1949) 144 of the 185 articles published were written by seminary professors (mostly, but not exclusively, by Jesuits). In the second decade (1950-1959) the statistics were not significantly different: 147 from seminaries, 38 from elsewhere, but the outreach was broadening to include authors located in Oxford, Montreal, Paris, Solesmes, Glasgow, Hiroshima, London, Rome, and Jerusalem. The third decade (1960-69) moved slowly toward greater university participation, 109 contributions from seminaries, 93 from universities. In the fourth decade (1970-79), the decade following Vatican II, only 85 from seminaries, whereas 146 were from universities. The fifth decade (1980-1989) only 63 contributors stemmed from seminaries, whereas 199 authors were professors and colleges or universities. For the 50th anniversary volume (1989) of *Theological Studies* only five of the twenty-eight contributors hailed from seminaries.

Sometimes I am asked: why don't the "theological" stars write for the journal as frequently as they used to in the past. The fact is that they are older, retired, or deceased. How many new

insights can persons acquire in a lifetime? Is it not important to encourage, mentor, and launch younger theologians who hopefully will be the Congars, de Lubacs, Murrays, Rahners, of the future?

One of the milestones in recent times was the production of a theme issue for December 2000 on "The Catholic Reception of Black Theology." This fascicle was conceived as a Catholic response to mark the 30th anniversary of James H. Cone's *Black Theology of Liberation*. I was assisted in this editorial task by my colleague at Marquette University, womanist theologian Shawn Copeland. The six African American theologians who collaborated with this issue are all very busy theologians or historians, much in demand, and it was not easy for them to meet deadlines. Several postponements of the theme issue were required. But the publication has been a resounding success. Fortunately we had 1000 extra copies printed because demand for extra copies has been phenomenal.

One unpleasant truth regarding the Notes on Moral Theology that I learned to my shame at that time was that in all the years that *Theological Studies* published the Notes not once did they address racism as a moral or ethical issue in American society. This astounding fact, reported by Bryan Massingale, took me aback. In his article, Massingale also studied 21 published statements by U.S. Catholic bishops from 1990 to 2000 on different aspects of racism. According to his analysis only two of these 21 pastoral letters correctly perceive the deepest issue of racism, namely social sinful structures.

I am pleased to report that with the assistance of Francis Clooney another theme issue will appear in June 2003 treating "Vatican Statements on Christ, the Church, and Living Faiths Viewed in a Comparative Perspective." This will contain Jewish, Christian, Islamic, Hindu, as well as Indian, Tibetan, Japanese Buddhist perspectives.

As I expected, no sooner had the African American issue appeared than I received a specific proposal from members of the Hispanic, Latina/o community to have a similar theme issue which we hope to prepare for 2004.

CENSORSHIP ISSUES

One question that I am occasionally asked by friends of the journal is the degree of ecclesiastical "censorship" that we have experienced, especially from the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. To answer that question I did some rummaging through the archives, and came up with only one instance that involves the intervention of the Vatican Secretary of State in 1974 to stop the publication of an article by the then Archbishop of Durban, South Africa, Denis E. Hurley, O.M.I., who had submitted and had had accepted for publication a provocative essay entitled "Population Control and the Catholic Conscience: Responsibility of the Magisterium" (35 [1974] 154-163). How Rome received advanced word of the text remains unclear, but Rome felt that the Archbishop's arguments about the need for a more nuanced Catholic teaching on birth control was out of line. The Vatican Secretariat of State contacted Jesuit Headquarters in Rome and instructed the American Assistant to the Jesuit Superior General to request halting its publication. This was in the days before FAX machines, E-mail, and even the regular use of transatlantic phone calls. By the time the telegram arrived with these instructions, Editor Burghardt informed Rome that the *Theological Studies* issue had already gone to bed, that the

presses were rolling, and that there was no way the article could be blocked. This is the only ante factum intervention I discovered.

A less invasive and indirect censorship, this time initiated by the Jesuit headquarters in Rome, occurred recently when the missiologist Jacques Dupuis, S.J., author of *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Orbis, 1997), a work then under scrutiny by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, submitted to me a lengthy analysis in Italian addressing various theological objections to his book. We had decided, after having Dupuis's article refereed by a couple of experts, to publish the text in English when we were informed that Jesuit headquarters judged that its publication at that particular juncture (shortly before an anticipated Vatican official response to his book) might be considered as provocative. We held off with the publication, although, in fact, it may still be published at a more opportune moment.

Occasionally, post factum, after an article that treats one of the neuralgic areas in Catholicism today: (radical) feminism, same sex unions, ordination of women, in vitro fertilization, etc., a Roman office (which surely has been alerted to the article by a worried American associate) will contact the author's bishop (especially if the author is a priest or a religious) and ask for a clarification of the argument that seems to be opposed to official teaching. The author will be asked for a written clarification, and the hope is expressed that his or her argument be reworked for orthodoxy and will be republished in a corrected form. Although the editor of the journal is not contacted, the author is. One recent example of this process concerns an author who had taken issue with Vatican statement that homosexuality represents an "objective disorder." The matter seems to have been resolved by the exchange of letters and reports, without a public retraction.

The semimonthly Jesuit journal *Civiltà Cattolica*, published in Rome as a "semi-official organ" of the Vatican has—at least up to the recent past—regularly submitted its galleys in advance for approval by the Roman dicasteries. Their officials are nervous about the usage in the periodical of certain sensitive words or opinions. Nothing of that nature has ever affected *Theological Studies*.

This Roman sensitivity has taught me however the importance of tone and attitude in submitted manuscripts. As editor I assist writers, especially young and untenured apprentices, how to formulate potentially controversial and difficult statements in a diplomatic and sensitive manner that hopefully will not offend persons who take opposite views, but will reflect respect for those holding opposite views. Respectful tone and carefully crafted prose (with solid documentation or reasoning) prevent much conflict and confrontation.

THE FUTURE

Will the journal in its present form still be published for its 100 anniversary in 2040? I doubt it. At least not in its present form. Paper copies of journals will by then probably be non-existent. We will have access via computer, in a format that will be easier on the eyes. But will we still be able to control the quality of the prose and the research? I wonder. Will our journal still be until the editorship of a Jesuit? I doubt it. Like the presidency of Georgetown University, the editorship of this journal will surely pass to a lay associate. This is a natural development, and parallels what happened historically at hospitals and colleges founded under religious auspices but now administered by lay or secular persons.

In the June 2001 issue of *Theological Studies* an article will appear entitled “The Influence of Information Technologies on Theology.” The article aims to show how information systems already affect theology in many ways. (For instance, I certainly appreciate checking footnotes to Migne’s *Patrologia latina* on line, rather than pulling down dusty folios from the library shelves.) The Internet makes texts easily searchable and linked—but without any internal guideposts. Unfortunately, the on-line editions of the original languages are often not critical, and the English translations of patristic or modern documents are often inferior. Will there be a student increase in the ability to read Hebrew, Greek, Latin, as well as German, French, or Italian? Perhaps computers will be able to come up with a less cumbersome method of translation. Anyone can put a Web page, appropriating the name “theological” or “Christian” without any official sanction (and without the refereeing process that journals of distinction now perform). Because of bibliographical retrieval systems of such resources as the ATLA CD-ROM, people are becoming aware of valuable articles written in the past but still well worth reading and studying, and we are now getting frequent requests for “back orders” although most of these articles are available electronically from our agents.

The media audience is not passive; it will sometimes draw conclusions quite different from those who create the messages. Logical patterns of analysis will give way to image, word, sound, and movement. Theologians of course are already collaborating world-wide in research, publication, conventions, and workshops. They are sponsoring joint projects, courses, and programs, cutting across institutional lines. They are putting books, articles, bibliographies, even video-clips online. But the new technologies offer even greater possibilities as theologians learn to work collaboratively via e-mail, ListServes, and chat rooms, and team up with experts in communications, graphics, and sound to present theology in enticing and accessible formats. Will theologians go beyond an initial awareness and attempt to produce attractive presentations that captivate the imagination as well as inform—much as film, video, and MTV producers?

My own conviction is that many academic journals such as *Theological Studies* have a further life-expectancy of only some five to ten years. The printed journal as we know it will disappear and will be replaced by electronic versions. This poses several ethical and cultural questions:

1) how will access to these new forms of media be accessible to those who live in economically depressed regions of the world—where the availability of electricity is unreliable and where the choke of poverty reigns?

2) how will the present-day processes of winnowing superficial or ephemeral articles from excellent studies occur? Will it be possible for experts to screen input by some sort of referring process?

3) how will the fairness and reliability of descriptions of religious teachings be regulated if no overseeing teaching office (*Lehramt*) is calculated into the process?

4) how will scholars and students marshal the use of their time to assure prudent choices amid the myriad resources?

5) how will the all-important personal presence of others be provided, so that what we gain through tone of voice, facial expression, body language will be available?,

And finally, 6) how will the financial costs of producing electronic copy be met?

The future of communication, especially communication via the traditional academic journals that all of us have known since our college days, remains something of a mystery. How all the pieces will hang together is a puzzle. We all hope that our values of accuracy, fairness, tolerance, excellence, continuity, and wonder before the personal revelation of God to humankind will survive. Most of the challenges I have enumerated will be met not by the one or two generations present in this room this evening, but by generations that will succeed us.

There will surely be some surprises. *Theological Studies* was founded as an American Catholic largely in-house journal especially for seminary professors and future priests but it has been transformed into an international resource for women and men, mostly in university teaching, ecumenical, inter-faith in outreach, global in appeal. What other surprises lie ahead of us?