

Can Tradition (Not) Change? Truth in the History between God and Humanity¹

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Can Tradition change? One could claim that this is a very catholic question. In our private lives, but also in political, economic and scientific life, the time in which we live could rather lead us to the opposite question: Can Tradition not change? The rapidity of the changes around us and their often imperceptible impact make us even forget sometimes that, after all, we are still influenced and even determined by historic developments and contexts. What makes things even more complicated is the fact that the general feeling of rupture and discontinuity, and which goes hand-in-hand with an ever-growing pluralism, is by no means in contrast to different kinds of attachments to particular traditions in families, parishes or other communities, even if this is not automatically rooted in a deep historical consciousness. On the contrary, many feel free to combine elements of different traditions without any further inquiry. At first sight, this contradictory present-day context seems to complicate questions of truth and Tradition-bound truth claims. Nevertheless, the Christian faith is not dispensed from any reflection concerning these questions. When we take a closer look, reflections on truth and history, Tradition and traditions², can even become a great opportunity for the Christian faith in the present. In this sense, we can consider this quest for truth in history as a “sign of the times”³

1. I would like to thank Colby Dickinson for his linguistic help and Karim Schelkens for enriching conversations. I also would like to thank the participants of the GOA-meeting of 20 mai 2009 – where this text was presented – for the stimulating discussion.

2. Y. CONGAR, *La Tradition et les traditions*: Vol. 1. *Essai historique*. Vol. 2. *Essai théologique*, Paris, Cerf, 1960-1963, distinguishes between Tradition and traditions. The first is the whole process with its specific theological dignity and its christological, pneumatological and ecclesiological implications, to be explored by theological categories. The second refers to single aspects of this Tradition, certainly structured and influenced by it, but to be examined by a historical critical methodology as well. If one has certainly to go on with this definition of “Tradition”, the distinction between these two aspects still can have an epistemological interest which makes it easier to handle with the specific kind of Tradition or tradition spoken about.

3. The notion of the “signs of the times” became popularized at Vatican II. Theologically, their roots reach back in 20th century theology. Since the 1930’s, Marie-Dominique Chenu has spoken of “lieux théologiques en acte” (see M.-D. CHENU, *Une école de théologie: Le Saulchoir, avec les études de Giuseppe Alberigo, Étienne Fouilloux, Jean Ladrière et Jean-Pierre Jossua*, Paris, Cerf, 1985, p. 142; see also ID., *Les signes des temps*, in *NRT* 97 [1965] 29-39). For the contemporary discussion see P. HÜNERMANN (ed.), *Das Zweite*

which in fact serves to question our understandings of time and history.

In this contribution, I will suggest a model for dealing with changes occurring within Tradition, considering them from within a vision of truth which is not conceived in a rather static way but rather as a relationship between God and Humanity in history⁴. In a first paragraph, I want to introduce Vatican II at the meeting point of continuity and discontinuity. Vatican II, conceived of as a part of and as an expression of the living Tradition, invites us to accept historicity and plurality as framing conditions for a proper understanding of truth (I.1.). This favors and perhaps even requires a topological structure for theology, considering the different *loci theologici* and their interconnections (I.2.). To explore further the modes and the dynamic of these interconnections, in a second paragraph, I will try to evaluate some challenges made by the post-Vatican II category of “interruption”. This first implicates a reflection of our comprehension of the Incarnation as its historical and theological center (II.1.). We will also have to consider the consequences resulting from that for evaluating the relationship between Scripture and Tradition as ways of transmission of Incarnation-bound truth (II.2.). This Incarnation-boundness of theological truth in fact leads to a reflection on some challenges emerging for our contemporary understanding of time and history (II.3.). More precisely, this latter point will be a critical evaluation of the question as to whether it is sufficient to “charge” the category of “interruption” with “Incarnation”. The question thereby arises as to whether or not it would be necessary rather to consider an interconnectedness of the notions of “interruption” and “Salvation History”. The contingencies and limitations of a “recontextualisation” of this notion raising more questions than human reason can answer, we need nevertheless an epistemology which is able to conceive of truth in this historical complexity. In a third paragraph, I will therefore explore an ecumenical epistemological model as possible answer to our question. In fact, it results of the collaboration between Church Historians and Systematic Theologians, the “differentiated consensus”. For I want to examine, if this epistemology can sustain itself, in an analogous way, a model for the collaboration between

Vatikanische Konzil und die Zeichen der Zeit heute, Freiburg, Herder, 2006; J. VERSTRAETEN (ed.), *Scrutinizing the Signs of the Times in the Light of the Gospel* (BETL, 208), Leuven, Peeters, 2007; J. OSTHEIMER, *Zeichen der Zeit lesen: Erkenntnistheoretische Bedingungen einer praktisch-theologischen Gegenwartsanalyse* (Praktische Theologie heute, 92), Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 2008.

4. The exemplifying research topics in the following paragraphs are obviously anything but exhaustive. They were chosen with respect both to the unpublished presentation of the research project “The Normativity of History: Theological Truth and Tradition in the Tension between Church History and Systematic Theology” and to my own research, notably M. QUISINSKY, *Geschichtlicher Glaube in einer geschichtlichen Welt: Der Beitrag von M.-D. Chenu, Y. Congar und H.-M. Féret zum II. Vatikanum* (Dogma und Geschichte, 6), Münster, Lit, 2007 (doctoral thesis presented at the Faculty for catholic theology, Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg i. Br.).

Church History and Systematic Theology (III.1.). By means of dealing with the very incompleteness of all our dealings with the quests for truth *in statu viae*, in itself part of the history between God and Humanity, I will conclude with some remarks on the eschatological dynamic of the interconnection of Christian truth-claims as a constitutive dimension of a Tradition housed in its multiple dimensions (III.2.).

I. POST-VATICAN II THEOLOGY BETWEEN THE CONTINUITY AND DISCONTINUITY OF CHRISTIAN TRUTH-CLAIMS

1. *Vatican II: A Part of Tradition*

The question of whether Tradition can (not) change can be examined both in a more general and in a more specific way. In a more general way, it is certainly possible to find examples in Church History for both evident and surprising continuities, and for no less evident or surprising discontinuities as well. Obviously, this claim presumes a broad definition of Tradition as a living process of the transmission of faith. Within this large concept of Tradition, which certainly needs further differentiation, we have to explore in every single case the concrete impact of elements of continuity and discontinuity. But in general, the togetherness of continuity and discontinuity, conceived of in terms of Tradition and innovation, is in a certain sense constitutive for the Christian faith⁵. In a more specific way, the question of whether Tradition can (not) change is a major topic of the hermeneutics of Vatican II⁶. Vatican II itself is part of both history and Tradition, as both rooted in them and producing them⁷. The Council also has a dimension of an on-going presence: both the inspirations and

5. K. LEHMANN, *Tradition und Innovation aus der Sicht eines systematischen Theologen*, in W. GEERLINGS – J. MEYER ZU SCHLOCHTERN (eds.), *Tradition und Innovation: Denkanstöße für Kirche und Theologie* (Paderborner Theologische Studien, 33), Paderborn, Schöningh, 2003, 119-132.

6. Among an abundant literature, it may be sufficient to refer to A.E. HIEROLD (ed.), *Zweites Vatikanisches Konzil: Ende oder Anfang?* (Bamberger Theologisches Forum, 7), Münster, Lit, 2004; P. BORDEYNE – L. VILLEMEN (eds.), *Vatican II et la théologie: Perspectives pour le XXI^e siècle* (Cogitatio Fidei, 254), Paris, Cerf, 2006; G. ROUTHIER, *Vatican II: Herméneutique et réception* (Héritage et projet, 69), Montréal, Fides, 2006; P. HÜNERMANN – B.J. HILBERATH (eds.), *Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil*. 5 volumes, Freiburg, Herder, 2004-2006 (in the following mentioned as *HTK Vat II*); F.X. BISCHOF, *Steinbruch Konzil? Zu Kontinuität und Diskontinuität kirchlicher Lehrentscheidungen*, in *MTZ* 59 (2008) 194-210.

7. P. HÜNERMANN und Kommentatoren, *Schlusswort: Eine "kalligraphische Skizze" des Konzils*, in *HTK Vat II* (n. 6) 5 (2006) 447-469. It is worthy to quote the titles of the chapters of this conclusion: "Einleitung: Das II. Vatikanum. Ereignis in der Geschichte" (the category "Ereignis" is used with reference made to Martin Heidegger), "Das II. Vatikanum resultiert aus der Geschichte", "Das II. Vatikanum schreibt sich ein in die Geschichte: Die erneuerte Tradition", "Das Konzil erwirkt eine Geschichte".

the unresolved problems of Vatican II underlie large parts of contemporary theology. This continuing dynamic of Vatican II is a very intention of John XXIII who convoked the Council because he wanted an aggiornamento of faith. Contemporary theological research is determined in many ways by this intention. Thus, the question of whether Vatican II was a Council of continuity or of discontinuity is too narrow. At the same time, the question of whether Tradition can (not) change is too narrow.

Both interconnected questions indicate that apparently, there is a problem in understanding the relationship between truth and history. If we deal with this latter problem, which is certainly one of the most important post-Vatican II research issues, the Council itself can open our views and widen our approach. For it was, like Archbishop Bruno Forte says, a Council of history⁸. It was a Council of history because of the very simultaneousness of its openness to the history and historicity of faith, on the one side⁹, and of its openness to the presence of the faith in its contemporary context, on the other¹⁰. After Vatican II, and because of it, Tradition can therefore be conceived of as an “ongoing process of recontextualization”¹¹ of the

8. B. FORTE, *Le prospettive della ricerca teologica*, in R. FISICHELLA (ed.), *Il Concilio Vaticano II: Recezione e attualità alla luce del Giubileo*, Cimisello Balsamo, Edizioni San Paolo, 2000, 419-429, p. 423. This is not a rather accidental expression of Forte but charged with a rich theological background: On his theology of history see C. BETTEGA, *Theologie der Geschichte: Zum trinitarischen Ansatz der Geschichtstheologie Bruno Fortes* (Studien zur systematischen Theologie und Ethik, 50), Münster, Lit, 2007. On the meaning of Jewish-Christian dialogue for theological reflection about history see B. FORTE, *Gott der Geschichte – Gott in der Geschichte: Zehn Thesen zum “neuen Denken” im Dialog mit Franz Rosenzweig*, in G. AUGUSTIN – K. KRÄMER (eds.), *Gott denken und bezeugen*. FS. Walter Kardinal Kasper, Freiburg, Herder, 2008, 33-42.

9. In many respects, Vatican II refused an unhistoric way of thinking and living of the Christian truth. E.g., it implicitly or explicitly accepted insights of historic research (see e.g. GS 54), it re-evaluated the Church’s relationship to the modern times by resourcing Christian thinking through its own tradition (see e.g. R. SIEBENROCK, *Theologischer Kommentar zur Erklärung über die religiöse Freiheit Dignitatis humanae*, in *HTK Vat II* [n. 6] 4 [2005] 125-218, p. 199: “Es zeichnet das Konzil und diese Erklärung aus, dass sie die Herausforderung durch die Entwicklung der Neuzeit in radikaler Weise beantwortet, indem nach den verborgenen Wurzeln des Anliegens in der eigenen Tradition, insbesondere in der Schrift gefragt wird”), endorsed the state of historical-critical methods in exegese (see e.g. R. BIERINGER, *Biblical Revelation and Exegetical Interpretation according to Dei Verbum 12*, in M. LAMBERIGTS – L. KENIS [eds.], *Vatican II and Its Legacy* [BETL, 166], Leuven, Peeters, 2002, 25-58), it came to a resourced view of tradition (see e.g. H. HOPING, *Theologischer Kommentar zur Dogmatischen Konstitution über die göttliche Offenbarung Dei Verbum*, in *HTK Vat II* [n. 6] 3 [2005] 695-831, pp. 771s.), it opened the view beyond the history of Church to the history of salvation and the history of mankind (R. SIEBENROCK, *Theologischer Kommentar zur Erklärung über die Haltung der Kirche zu den nichtchristlichen Religionen Nostra aetate*, in *HTK Vat II* [n. 6] 3 [2005] 591-693, p. 597, considering this aspect of NA as a consequence of LG 7).

10. Above all expressed in its intention to scrutinize the signs of the times in light of the Evangile (see P. HÜNERMANN [ed.], *Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil* [n. 3]), but also with respect to a renewed theology of mission and as a new way to conceive of other religions.

11. L. BOEVE, *Interrupting Tradition: An Essay on Christian Faith in a Postmodern Context* (Louvain Theological & Pastoral Monographs, 30), Leuven, Peeters, 2003, p. 26.

Christian faith. Tradition and presence are thus not opposite aspects of faith, but complementary expressions of its complex historical nature¹². This “nature” is not realized outside of historicity, but historicity is co-constitutive of it. Yet since historicity means encountering an unavoidable pluralism, the faith needs signposts in its very historic expressions.

For contemporary theology, Vatican II, conceived within and as part of Christian Tradition, is the major signpost¹³. Yet, within a complementary view of the “ghost” and the “letter” of Vatican II, the character of this signpost is, notwithstanding its factual and textual aspects, a dynamic one¹⁴. For its “style”¹⁵, Vatican II is an example of a certain way of dealing with reality. Furthermore, the interference between its pastoral and dogmatic dimensions¹⁶ is a model of Christian living and thinking which opens the post-Vatican II-theology toward upcoming issues of society, culture, human sciences and philosophy¹⁷. The Council’s references to both concrete and general issues of its time are therefore all but a sign of its doctrinal weakness¹⁸. E.g., one should rather consider it as a great

12. Incidentally, the complementary dimension of the theologies of Yves Congar and Marie-Dominique Chenu can exemplify this: whereas Congar revalorized the notion of Tradition (see above n. 2), Chenu insisted on the “présence” of faith. He links Tradition and présence as follows: “Or la Tradition, c’est, dans la foi, la présence même de la révélation” (CHENU, *Une école de théologie* [n. 3], p. 142).

13. In this aspect lies the justification to claim a “gewisse Ähnlichkeit” between the conciliar text and a constitutional text as it does P. HÜNERMANN, *Der Text: Werden – Gestalt – Bedeutung: Eine hermeneutische Reflexion*, in *HTK Vat II* (n. 6) 5 (2006) 5-101, p. 11 n. 9.

14. As I tried to exemplify in M. QUINSKY, *Seelsorge zwischen Buchstabe und Geist des Konzils: Das II. Vaticanum im Spiegel der Zeitschrift “Lebendige Seelsorge”, in Kirchengeschichte – Frömmigkeitsgeschichte – Landesgeschichte*. FS. Barbara Henze, Remscheid, Re Di Roma, 2008, 201-219, a collaboration between Church History and Systematic Theology is particularly helpful to explore the interference between the too-often easily opposed categories such as the “ghost” and “letter” of Vatican II.

15. G. ROUTHIER, *Vatican II comme style*, in Id., *Penser l’avenir de l’Église*, Montréal, Fides, 2008, pp. 53-92.

16. On this interference see e.g. M.-D. CHENU, *Un concile “pastoral”*, in Id., *La parole de Dieu: Vol. 2. L’Évangile dans le temps* (Cogitatio Fidei, 11), Paris, Cerf, 1964, 655-672.

17. P. WALTER, “Ziel der Kirche ist es, zu evangelisieren, und nicht, Kultur zu treiben” (*Pius XI.*): *Zum spannungsvollen Verhältnis von Glaube und Kultur*, in T. BÖHM (ed.), *Glaube und Kultur: Begegnung zweier Welten?*, Freiburg, Herder, 2009, 15-37, p. 25, calls *Gaudium et spes* a “milestone” of doctrinal reflection for this very reason.

18. While one can ask if they really understand the intention, the nature and the proceeding of Vatican II, some commentators of *Gaudium et spes* within the academic theological circles or outside of them criticize the pastoral constitution rather for the concrete analyses of society issues of the 1960s (e.g. A. KISSLER, *Der Anfang eines Anfangs: Schlangenlinien. Die Akten des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils* [= Review of K. RAHNER – H. VORGRIMLER (eds.), *Kleines Konzilskompendium*, Freiburg, 2008], in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* [24 march 2009], Feuilleton p. 14 – incidentally, it is not correct to speak of “Akten” with respect to the documents of Vatican II), some commentators criticize the pastoral constitution for the underlying general relationship with modernity. For an analysis of the latter see e.g. L. BOEVE, *Gaudium et Spes and the Crisis of Modernity: The End of the Modernity with the World?*, in LAMBERIGTS – KENIS (eds.), *Vatican II and Its Legacy* (n. 9), 83-94.

opportunity for post-Vatican II theology that the Council did not “canonize” a certain philosophy¹⁹. Theology can therefore not only enter into a profound dialogue with an ever-changing context, but there is a doctrinal relevance within such a dialogue. With Vatican II, the very notion of Tradition swells and Christians can thus make the evangelical message even more fruitful in “open narratives”²⁰.

If this epistemological model of “open narratives” – which refers both to orthodoxy and to orthopraxis – reflects the very intention of Vatican II, it could at first sight be accused of doctrinal and historical emptiness. Yet it is rather the contrary which is true since this epistemology refers both to the Gospel transmitted to us throughout a multifaceted Tradition and to the specific contemporary context. Open narratives thereby “open” in different ways. Taken as a hermeneutical principle, the Gospel-bound word “open” can thus be used in different, yet interconnected ways. It can be used in a descriptive way: the trueness of a Christian truth-claim is open toward the trueness of other truth-claims. It can be used in a methodological way: the different ways of dealing with truth-claims should be open for the insights of other research approaches. It can be used in a performative way: whoever deals with an “open” truth-claim can be “opened” by the “opening” dynamic of it, being referred to the Christian truth which is Jesus Christ. It can be used in a spiritual way, describing a Christian *habitus* which is both more and less complicated than spiritual specialisations. It can be used in a deliberating way: whenever a single truth-claim, instead of being “open”, is overestimated or absolutized, Christian truth is compromised as it is thus deprived of setting free its inherent dynamic and becomes oppressive.

2. After Vatican II: A Topological Theology

To clarify the specific Christian nature of “openness” we can stress an analogy between the exposed “open” character of theology and the idea of *loci theologici*, in a synthetic way established by the Spanish Dominican Melchior Cano (~1509-1560)²¹ in his *De locis theologicis libri XII* (printed after his death in 1563)²². In pre- and even more in post-Vatican

19. Rather critical about this renouncement seems to be K. MÜLLER, *Vernunft und Glaube: Eine Zwischenbilanz zu laufenden Debatten* (Pontes, 20), Münster, Lit, 2005, pp. 59-62. Yet this was the very reason that younger theologians could discuss upcoming philosophical challenges during and after Vatican II, thus preventing Vatican II from becoming a project philosophically dominated and determined by the insights of the generation of its episcopal and theological protagonists, even if the latter’s insights were groundbreaking: see M. QUINSINSKY, *Philosophie et théologie: Quelques intuitions du Père Chenu revisitées par ses héritiers*, in *RSPT* 92 (2008) 571-589, pp. 584s.

20. BOEVE, *Interrupting Tradition* (n. 11), pp. 85-146.

21. B. KÖRNER, *Cano, Melchior*, in *LTK*³ 2 (1994) 924s.

22. B. KÖRNER, *Melchior Cano, De locis theologicis: Ein Beitrag zur theologischen Erkenntnislehre*, Graz, Styria, 1994.

II-theology, this methodological and epistemological model was rediscovered and continues to be explored. Obviously, one has to ask whether and in which way contemporary theology has the right and the possibility to be inspired by Cano. Yet one can ask in the opposite direction if such a “diachronic dialogue” of faith does not structure every synchronic perceiving of our faith. If this would not be so, we would have no right to be inspired by saints or theologians of the past. We certainly have to make sure that we do not proceed in an anachronistic way and we must become clear about the specific research and other presuppositions of such diachronic dialogues, but this should not exclude any possibility of “reactualizing” a historically situated and spiritually grounded theological “intuition”²³ within a *communio* of faith throughout history²⁴. As to Melchior Cano, both with respect to the *loci proprii* from within the faith – according to Cano these are Scripture, Tradition, Ecclesia catholica, Councils, Roman Church, Church Fathers, theologians – and with respect to the *loci alieni* from its outside – reason, philosophers, history –, a topological theology promises to explore the interconnections of particular truth-claims and particular approaches to truth. If this is a first point of interest of Cano’s theological epistemological intuition for the collaboration of Church Historians and Systematic Theologians, its very “career” is a second one: For in the history of 20th century theology, it was not so much an abstract meta-reflection about *loci theologici* that lead to new theological insights. What lead to the rediscovery of a somehow topological structure of theology were multifaceted researches which were both historical and theological. The very research issues of historicity and Tradition show this at its best: for example, since the 1930s, there was an evolution towards a topological theology in the works of Yves Congar and Marie-Dominique Chenu, the first with an accent on the Tradition and the second with an accent on the new *loci theologici* emerging in his own historic situation²⁵. Nowadays,

23. I tried to present some of the insights of Marie-Dominique Chenu as “intuitions”. Rather than being in contrast to a scientific approach, these human and spiritual motivations, insights and interests underlie the scientific research by whom they are explicated and concretized: see M. QUINSKY, “Heilsökonomie” bei Marie-Dominique Chenu *OP: Kreative Rezeption ostkirchlicher Theologie im Vorfeld und Verlauf des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils*, in *Cath(M)* 59 (2005) 128-153, pp. 132s.

24. Without insisting on the expression, one could conceive of this both synchronic and diachronic dialogue with faith testimonies as “communal dealing with history”. It is like this that one can characterize an aspect of the thinking of Marie-Dominique Chenu, who conceived of a “*communio* of faith” throughout history which determines the historical approach on theology insofar as every conceiving of historical expression of faith is always at least partially an interpretation of history with respect to the research or other interest of the researcher (see QUINSKY, *Geschichtlicher Glaube* [n. 4], pp. 62s.135s.).

25. M. QUINSKY, *Congar avec Chenu et Féret au Saulchoir des années 1930*, in *Transversalités: Revue de l’Institut Catholique de Paris* 98 (2006) 3-35, pp. 27s. For their later thinking inspired by Vatican II and determining in many ways their writings see above all: M.-D. CHENU, *La littérature comme lieu de la théologie*, in *RSPT* 53 (1969) 70-90; ID., *Les lieux théologiques chez Melchior Cano*, in *Le déplacement de la théologie* (Le point

the ideal of a topologically structured theology attracts more and more theologians²⁶. For it promises a way of dealing with Tradition's ongoing plurality of faith testimonies in history and present. Within topological theology, a special attention can also be given to the "signs of the times"²⁷, permitting unforeseeable insights of faith with respect to new contexts and situations²⁸. The research on *auctoritates*, *traditiones* and *novitates* has no

théologique, 21), Paris, Beauchesne, 1977, 45-50; Y. CONGAR, *Die Geschichte der Kirche als "locus theologicus"*, in *Conc 6* (1970) 496-501. See also for the generation of Chenu's pupils J.-P. JOSSUA, *Immutabilité, progrès ou structurations multiples des doctrines chrétiennes?*, in *RSPT 52* (1968) 173-200 (and a *mise en perspective* of this article with respect to a topological theology in QUINSKY, *Philosophie et théologie* [n. 19], p. 586).

26. See e.g. E. KLINGER, *Ekklesiologie der Neuzeit: Grundlegung bei Melchior Cano und Entwicklung bis zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil*, Freiburg, Herder, 1978; K. LEHMANN, *Dogmengeschichte als Topologie des Glaubens*, in W. LÖSER – K. LEHMANN – M. LUTZ-BACHMANN (eds.), *Dogmengeschichte und katholische Theologie*. FS. Alois Grillmeier, Würzburg, Echter, 1985, 513-528; M. SECKLER, *Loci theologici*, in *LTK³ 6* (1997) 1014-1016; P. HÜNERMANN, *Dogmatische Prinzipienlehre: Glaube – Überlieferung – Theologie als Sprach- und Wahrheitsgeschehen*, Münster, Aschendorff, 2003, esp. pp. 207-251; H.-J. SANDER, *Das singuläre Geschichtshandeln Gottes: Eine Frage der pluralen Topologie der Zeichen der Zeit*, in *HTK Vat II* (n. 6) 5 (2006) 134-147; Id., *Gott: Vom Beweisen zum Verorten*, in T. FRANZ – H. SAUER (eds.), *Glaube in der Welt von heute: Theologie und Kirche nach dem Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil: Vol. 1. Profilierungen*. FS. Elmar Klinger, Würzburg, Echter, 2006, 574-596.

27. HÜNERMANN, *Dogmatische Prinzipienlehre* (n. 26), pp. 248s., deals of them within his actualisation of the history as one of Cano's *loci alieni*. He states: "In diesem Sinn spiegeln die Zeichen der Zeit nicht einfach das, was sich in der Geschichte durchgesetzt hat, oder den 'Zeitgeist', sondern erfordern die geistgeleitete 'Unterscheidung der Geister' und die ethische Reflexion. Die Zeichen der Zeit entspringen nicht einer distanzierten Reflexion auf Geschichte, sondern haben ihren Erkenntnisort in der messianischen Praxis der Gemeinschaft der Glaubenden, für die gerade die Widersprüche und das Negative in der Geschichte als Kontrasterfahrung Anlass zur Entdeckung und zur lebenspraktischen Bewährungen der Verheissungen des Evangeliums werden" (pp. 249s.).

28. The question raises if there was really a potential of perceiving of "otherness" in Cano himself and his "loci alieni", as it is claimed e.g. by H.-J. SANDER, *Das Aussen des Glaubens: Eine Autorität der Theologie. Das Differenzprinzip in den Loci Theologici des Melchior Cano*, in H. KEUL – H.-J. SANDER (eds.), *Das Volk Gottes: Ein Ort der Befreiung*. FS. Elmar Klinger, Würzburg, Echter, 1998, 240-258, p. 253. To answer this question, a first research avenue would be the historical-critical examination of Cano's presentation of the single *loci*. Are they conceived of with respect to a obvious or hidden "otherness"? Do they refer to or even contain elements of "interrupting" otherness by the way of structure (e.g. the Bible as history of Revelation within a both common and confrontative history of Israel and the surrounding people), presupposition (e.g. with respect to elements and insights of pre-christian philosophy such as Aristotle or Plato), implication (e.g. of resulting consequences from its own presuppositions within a certain comprehension context), rejection (e.g. the refusal of confessional otherness or of non-christian religions as the Islam at time of the Reformation) or dealing with surprising discoveries (e.g. with respect to the "New World" discovered in the 15th century)? If this would be so, became by the same token these elements a partially structuring element of the whole system of *loci theologici*? A second research avenue could be a more phenomenological investigation: can there be, and in which sense, within an imaginative purely "inner-christian" topology an element of otherness emerging from the confrontation (or "interruption") of different truth-claims which is not contained in the single truth-claims or *loci* as such? So is plurality in itself an element of "otherness" and if yes in

difficulties in situating itself within such a topological structure of theology²⁹; on the contrary, these can be a very complementary approach.

For the underlying problem is very similar. The research on concrete *auctoritates*, *traditiones* and *novitates* allows us to discover an unsurveyable multitude of truth-claims. A truth-claim respectively examined is, notwithstanding its relative autonomy, in relationship with other truth-claims and even with all other truth-claims. If we conceive of them within a topologically structured Tradition, it will become relatively obvious that there are both continuities and discontinuities and therefore changes. Incidentally, the mutual relationship between truth-claims also allows us to discover that there can be, simultaneously, both a certain dynamic of change and a certain resistance to changes. Within Tradition conceived of as a manifold interconnection between *auctoritates*, *traditiones*, *novitates* and other truth-claims, a main question therefore becomes how the unity of the faith can be conceived of in its very plurality. This also includes a reflection on the “hierarchy of truth”³⁰, even if we have to concede that this expression refers to a problem as well as to its answer. Because of the interactive and dynamic structure of a topological theology, two answers to the question of whether Tradition can (not) change are excluded: the first would be to try to establish a purely speculative notion of Tradition; the second would be to try to write an exhaustive history of traditions. Since both answers are, in fact, impossible, we rather have to take a set of concrete topics as a point of departure, and examine them with the scientific possibilities at our disposal. But we also have to ask where we can find the criteria that would orientate us within this multitude of truth-claims in the *loci*. These criteria should, in a certain sense, transcend the particularity of a single *locus* by situating it within the Tradition and, by this way, exploring whether and in which way it can be conceived of as an access to the universal³¹.

which way? Can such elements of otherness justify the even far-reaching “re-contextualisations” of *loci alieni*? Another element should be considered: which is, within a history of the common faith, the role of the theologian who establishes a topology? Can there be a kind of “otherness” resulting from the single fact that he investigates (whether it was in the time of Cano or in a contemporary context) the *loci* from within his own personal preconditions? Can the *relecture* by another contemporary or later theologian be the place of an “otherness” which is not a sign of usurpation but of opening and even creative appropriation?

29. On “auctoritates” within history of dogmas as topological conceiving of faith see LEHMANN, *Dogmengeschichte* (n. 26), p. 521.

30. On UR 11 see B.J. HILBERATH, *Theologischer Kommentar zum Dekret über den Ökumenismus Unitatis redintegratio*, in *HTK Vat II* (n. 6) 3 (2005) 69-223, pp. 147-157. It is noteworthy that Archbishop Andrea Pangrazio (Gorizia), who introduced the expression in the debate of Vatican II on 25 november 1963 *in aula*, situated it in a Salvation Historical vision of the Church (*ibid.*, pp. 149s.). See also H.-J. HÖHN, *Unten ist oben: Thesen zu einer “Hierarchie der Wahrheiten”*, in *Wort und Antwort* 50 (2009) 17-21.

31. Such a conceiving of the relationship between particular and universal is legitimated by Vatican II, see P. BORDEYNE, *La réappropriation de Vatican II en théologie morale: Une redécouverte de la particularité chrétienne*, in ID. – VILLEMEN (eds.), *Vatican II et la théologie* (n. 6), 153-176, p. 167.

Insofar as we work with *loci* as truth-claims, the orientation required for dealing with the multitude can be delivered in a certain way by the claimed truth itself. We certainly have to bear in mind that there is a hermeneutic circle present when we try to examine a truth-claim by truth. Yet we are at least partially within such a circle once we accept the faith as faith, even if, among others, theological-philosophical dialogue concerning the credibility of Christian truth-claims shall avoid an unresponsible circularity³². Also, there are aspects of truth, as it can be conceived of within a topological theology, that help us to avoid a purely circular argumentation. First, there are *loci alieni*, especially in the dialogue *ad extra*, interrupting our truth-claims and even making possible *novitates* in the conceptualisation of the faith *ad intra*. Secondly, the interconnection of truth-claims *ad intra* creates a structure of on-going inquiry, refusing to identify the universal with something particular which nevertheless aims at the universal. This makes it imperative to explore these interconnections, what can illuminate in a new way the quest for truth both in its universality and as it is claimed in the single truth-claims. In a certain way, this interconnection of *loci theologici* can be conceived of as mutual interruptions of truth-claims³³. In every case, we obviously have to consider the way in which we can concretely adopt this rather abstract epistemology, and this is so due to the very historicity of every *locus theologicus*. Thirdly, and most decisively, Christian truth is first of all a person: Jesus Christ. We therefore should ask more concretely what a single *locus theologicus proprius* or *alienus*, or – in an analogous way – a single *auctoritas, traditio* and *novitas* as well as the mutual interruptions of these truth-claims can teach us about the truth of Incarnation. So, in the last instance, we can try to formulate a central research hypothesis as: what interrupts within a topological interconnection does so because it is Incarnation-bounded. An even partially mutual interruption of truth-claims, whether we conceive of them as *loci theologici* or as *auctoritates, traditiones* and *novitates*, could thus refer us to the interrupted and the interrupting truth of the Incarnation expressed in specific truth-claims. Incidentally, exploring this Incarnation-boundness could be one of the most important contemporary criteria of a post-Vatican II renewing and actualizing of the topological intuition.

32. BOEVE, *Interrupting Tradition* (n. 11), p. 179.

33. "It is such interruption that has the potential to become the locus in which God is revealed to Christians today ... For Christians, the challenge introduced by otherness then becomes a *locus theologicus*. As a particular narrative, the Christian narrative is interrupted by the God it testifies to as the One who interrupts closed narratives, and by whom it is challenged to become itself interrupter of closed narratives. In and through this double praxis of interruption, the Christian community lives its Christian identity and contributes to the recontextualization of a narrative tradition, both retrieving and renewing it, for the sake of its contemporaries and future generations" (L. BOEVE, *God Interrupts History: Theology in a Time of Upheaval*, New York, Continuum, 2007, p. 48).

II. A POST-VATICAN II THEOLOGICAL CATEGORY CHALLENGING CHURCH HISTORY AND SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY: "INTERRUPTION"

1. *Interruptions and Their Foundation: Incarnation*

What I said up till now implies that the category of "interruption"³⁴ is able to be, at least in the provisional sense which owns to every human quest for truth, an adequate way to deal with the question of discontinuity and continuity in Tradition and therefore with the question of truth in the history between God and Humanity. In a context of detraditionalization, the Christian message can interrupt our behaviours and our presumed securities. At the same time, contemporary experiences can interrupt an understanding of the Christian faith, becoming thus a part of it. Within theology itself, we can make an analogous use of the category of interruption insofar as it seems to be possible that, for our perceiving of them, the interconnections between *loci theologici* and their complementary openness can be conceived of as mutual interruptions. So the category of interruption is both Tradition-rooted and context-bound: it is Tradition-rooted because of its very intention to be both an expression and a way of the on-going recontextualisation of Tradition. It is context-bound because it results from a theological dialogue with contemporary life and secular thinking³⁵.

As well as the unsurveyable innerfaith plurality revealed by a topological structure of theology, the radicalized plurality brought to light by sociological and philosophical theories shows the inalienable particularity of every expression of human thinking and living. In fact, deconstructivist philosophical theories especially have radicalized our understanding of this plurality which seems to permit no place for Christian or other truth-claims. Thus the category of "interruption" becomes very attractive for proposing an epistemology which is able to conceive of the particular as such to be constitutive for Christian truth. The question nevertheless remains as to how we can "charge" the use of the category of "interruption" both historically and theologically. This "charging" should be able to establish a relationship between the truth-claims and their foundation. Because of the topological structure of theology, it also should be able to establish a link between single interruptions and their respectively produced truth-claims. In fact,

interruption is not a *formal, empty category*; it is charged rather with the narrative tradition of the God of love revealed in concrete history, of the God who became human among humans. *Imitatio Christi* then summons

34. BOEVE, *Interrupting Tradition* (n. 11); ID., *God Interrupts History* (n. 33).

35. BOEVE, *God Interrupts History* (n. 33), pp. 43s. Incidentally, within such a dialogue, the rediscovery of negative theology in secular contemporary philosophy is a most interesting meeting *locus* of Christian Tradition and postmodern thinking: BOEVE, *Interrupting Tradition* (n. 11), pp. 147-162.

Christians to a praxis of being both interrupted and interrupting – respecting the very otherness of the other while at the same time also becoming the other of the other, questioning, challenging the other, criticizing him or her where he or she tends to become hegemonic³⁶.

Just as the truth-claims within a topological structure of theology are founded in the Incarnation, the truth-claims generated by interruptions in open narratives are also founded in Jesus Christ:

Christianity has the potential to be an open narrative because of the image of Jesus, which stems from its earliest sources, and allows us to encounter him as the *revelation of God's open narrative*. It is for this reason that we can describe Jesus as *God's interrupter*³⁷.

Actually, this refers us to the paradoxical mystery of Jesus Christ who is not only the Incarnated Word but also the One who died on the Cross and resurrected from death. Within our attempts to comprehend this very mystery, our insights are always interrupted by its different dimensions and this fact creates a dynamic inherent to our faith as a history between God and Humanity.

The question right now is not only if we can conceive of contemporary Christian living and thinking in terms of interruption, but in which way this category can help us to conceive of Tradition. At least in a certain way, it can be conceived of as a history of mutually interrupting truth-claims. When we say that truth-claims do interrupt each other, they do it precisely because every Christian truth-claim is an Incarnation-bound truth-claim. Consequently, within our comprehension, the Incarnation-boundness of one *locus* interrupts the Incarnation-boundness of another. More simply said: if, for example, Scripture permits us a specific perspective about Jesus, the Christological Councils of the Old Church present another one and our own faith experience presents still another one, we are more interested in the insights resulting from a confrontation of these different perspectives. Once again, we can see right now that a topological theology, as an epistemological approach that tries to make intelligible the truth-claims transmitted in this Tradition, is “grounded” in the Incarnation and “opened” for the truth of the Incarnation and the Incarnation of truth³⁸.

36. BOEVE, *God Interrupts History* (n. 33), p. 48.

37. BOEVE, *Interrupting Tradition* (n. 11), p. 145.

38. This complementary approach to Incarnation and truth is explored by L. BOEVE, *La vérité de l'incarnation et l'incarnation de la vérité: Épistémologie théologique, particularité et pluralité*, in B. VAN MEENEN (ed.), *La Vérité* (Théologie), Bruxelles, Publications des Facultés universitaires Saint-Louis, 2005, 29-47. See also M. QUISINSKY, *Inkarnation: Jesus Christus – Ermöglichung und Herausforderung christlichen Lebens und Denkens*, in H.A. MOONEY – K. RUHSTORFER – V. TENGE-WOLF (eds.), *Theologie aus dem Geist des Humanismus*. FS Peter Walter, Freiburg, Herder, 2010, 292-331.

2. *Interruption in History: Scripture and Tradition*

If we have knowledge of Jesus as God's interrupter, it is due to the Scriptures transmitted to us via Tradition. For a further exploration of the category of "interruption", it is thus necessary not only to ask for its biblical foundations, but also for the relationship between these foundations and the transmitting process produced by them. As for Vatican II, the "signpost" of contemporary theology, the discussion there about Tradition was intrinsically linked with the question of the Scripture³⁹. For our subject, this means first of all that there can be no Tradition that does not consider its biblical foundation, the latter one being the permanent source of renewal and "innovation", in the sense that it "interrupts" us with the vivifying gospel⁴⁰. Just as Tradition does not exist without Revelation, there is always a relativisation of Tradition by it, one which can even render it necessary to criticize (and change?) Tradition⁴¹. With respect to Jesus Christ as the culminating point of Revelation and the Incarnation-boundness of Tradition, it seems more precise to speak of a relationalisation than relativisation. In this sense, Christology can be conceived of as "Relativitätslehre"⁴². Such an approach would also explain the relative,

39. H. SAUER, *Erfahrung und Glaube: Die Begründung des pastoralen Prinzips durch die Offenbarungskonstitution des II. Vatikanischen Konzils* (Würzburger Studien zur Fundamentaltheologie, 12), Frankfurt, Lang, 1993; R. BURIGANA, *La Bibbia nel Concilio: La redazione della costituzione "Dei verbum" del Vaticano II* (Testi e ricerche di scienze religiose: Nuova serie, 21), Bologna, Il Mulino, 1998; HOPING, *Theologischer Kommentar* (n. 9).

40. Since we cannot further develop the very complex debate on the relationship between Scripture and Tradition, it may at least be resumed the challenge discussed in this debate with Cardinal Lehmann: "Noch mehr als alles Neue und Alte sich wechselweise aufeinander bezieht – sonst kann man gar nicht von ihnen sprechen –, muss das theologische Traditionsverständnis in seiner engen Herkunft von der 'Innovation' her begriffen werden, d.h. vom Evangelium her, wie es sich in der Person Jesu und ihrem Wirken ergibt" (LEHMANN, *Tradition und Innovation* [n. 5], p. 125).

41. On this aspect see the commentary to DV 8: J. RATZINGER, *Kommentar zum Prooemium, I. und II. Kapitel*, in *LTK.E II* 504-528, pp. 519s. Referring to the *interventio in aula* of Cardinal Albert Meyer (Chicago) of september 30, 1964, Ratzinger points out: "Nicht alles, was in der Kirche existiert, muss deshalb auch schon legitime Tradition sein, bzw. nicht jede Tradition, die sich in der Kirche bildet, ist wirklich Vollzug und Gegenwärtigung des Christusgeheimnisses, sondern neben der legitimen gibt es auch die entstehende Tradition ... für diese unerlässliche Traditionskritik stehe als Maßstab die Heilige Schrift zur Verfügung, auf die daher Tradition immer wieder zurückzubeziehen und an der sie zu messen sei" (p. 519). Ratzinger himself, who approves the general line of the Cardinal's intervention, to comment: "Das II. Vaticanum hat in diesem Punkt bedauerlicherweise keinen Fortschritt gebracht, sondern das traditionskritische Moment so gut wie völlig übergangen. Es hat sich damit einer wichtigen Chance des ökumenischen Gesprächs begeben; in der Tat wäre die Herausarbeitung einer positiven Möglichkeit und Notwendigkeit innerkirchlicher Traditionskritik ökumenisch fruchtbarer gewesen als der durchaus fiktiv zu nennende Streit um die quantitative Vollständigkeit der Schrift" (p. 520).

42. J. RATZINGER, *Einführung in das Christentum: Vorlesungen über das Apostolische Glaubensbekenntnis*, München, Kösel, 1968, p. 146.

i.e. relational sense of the Tradition: throughout history, true Tradition relates a specific context, one wherein it realizes, concretizes, actualizes and contextualizes itself, to God's self-Revelation culminating in the Incarnation and vice versa. In such a fashion, the Incarnation serves as a unifying tie of the unsurveyable multitude of expressions and testimonies of the Christian truth, but without being uniforming at the same time⁴³. For as biblical truth-claims implicate both a certain inner-biblical plurality and a concentration on Jesus Christ as God's self-revelation, Revelation itself aims to make life possible in multifarious ways⁴⁴. The Incarnation, therefore, is both the foundation of our personal realization of Christian identity and of a profound communion of faith between us throughout history⁴⁵, beyond our all-too-human differences in matters of sensitivity. As the truth that Jesus Christ *is*, Incarnation makes us free both for diversity and for unity. This is the very foundation of both the "topological" and the "interrupting" character of Tradition.

The Scripture which professes a Revelation culminating in the Incarnation is therefore a preeminent, though not the only, *locus theologicus*⁴⁶. At the same time, we have to concede that it is not at all easy to determine and recontextualise biblical-bound truth-claims⁴⁷. In their very historical dimension, biblical-bound truth claims challenge our understanding of history and historicity⁴⁸. But if, in this sense, every truth-claim tries to relate us in a more or less explicit way to the Incarnation in which its truth is rooted, can we limit our understanding of the interrupting nature of the Incarnation to a certain extent, for example, by

43. "It is one of the great virtues of an incarnational theology that, despite appearances to the contrary, it is profoundly sensitive to the reality of cultural and religious relativity. In a sense, the only constant in Christian tradition is the memory of Jesus Christ. Of course, the church has developed recognizable patterns of speech, life and action to sustain this memory, and these have acquired a certain authority in the course of time. Nevertheless, they themselves are subject to the criterion against which every human construct, for a Christian, has to be measured, namely, their contribution to the project of human salvation initiated by Christ" (T. MERRIGAN, *What's in a Word? Revelation and Tradition in Vatican II and in Contemporary Theology*, in LAMBERIGTS – KENIS [eds.], *Vatican II and Its Legacy* [n. 9], 59-82, p. 81).

44. K. RUHSTORFER, *Christologie* (Gegenwärtig Glauben Denken: Systematische Theologie, 1), Paderborn, Schöningh, 2008, p. 264.

45. This underlies what I stated above concerning the "communal dealing with history" (see n. 24).

46. K. RUHSTORFER, *Die Quelle des Glaubens und Denkens: Zum theologischen Ort der Heiligen Schrift heute*, in T. SÖDING (ed.), *Geist im Buchstaben? Neue Ansätze in der Exegese* (QD, 225), Freiburg, Herder, 2007, 98-149.

47. On the quest for truth as part of the exegese see e.g. T. SÖDING, *Aufbruch zu neuen Ufern: Bibel und Bibelwissenschaft in der katholischen Kirche bis zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil und darüber hinaus*, in Id. (ed.), *Geist im Buchstaben?* (n. 46), 11-34, pp. 32s.

48. K. BACKHAUS – G. HÄFNER, *Historiographie und fiktionales Erzählen: Zur Konstruktivität in Geschichtstheorie und Exegese* (Biblich-Theologische Studien, 86), Neukirchen-Vluyn, Neukirchener, 2007.

conceiving of Incarnation as an historically situated event? Do we not rather need to conceive of the Incarnation within a History of the Revelation of the God of Relationship and therefore as part of the Trinitarian mystery of God⁴⁹? Obviously, these dimensions of the historicity of the Incarnation have great repercussions for our very understanding of the category of “interruption” and we have even to ask if Incarnation, in a way specifically left yet to explore, does not interrupt all kinds of knowledges and methods while we as Christians deal with history.

3. *The “Charging” of “Interruption” : Incarnation-Bound Truth Claims, Tradition and Salvation History*

Once pushed towards its rootedness in Scripture, the reflection on Tradition, conceived of with the help of the incarnation-bound category of interruption, becomes aware that the relationship between the particular and the universal is not a dangerous postmodern idea of relativists, but a consistent element of the history between God and Humanity as it is testified to in the Scriptures. Our quest for truth, in its general dimensions, as well as in its multifarious specific concretisations, has therefore to deal with this history between God and Humanity. Vice versa, if we deal with the concreteness of the history conceived of as history between God and Humanity far beyond the testimony of the Scriptures, the question of truth emerges. One could by now refer to the notion of a Salvation History and likewise propose it as a solution to the questions linked with the Incarnation and the Incarnation-bound truth-claims posited within time and history. In fact, in 20th century theology there were many attempts to explore the notion of Salvation History⁵⁰. Among other insights, this notion permitted the implicit or explicit dealings of Vatican II with the historical dimensions of Christian living and thinking⁵¹. Against the background of a rather non-historical approach, like many of

49. “Christianity, as a religious tradition, offers us a radically ‘personal’ God, a God who ‘adopts’ personhood as the preferred medium for His self-communication. What had already been indicated, and, from a christian perspective, ‘prepared’, in the history of Yahweh’s dealings with Israel, is fully realized in the history of Jesus of Nazareth, namely, the self-revelation of God as a God of relationship, of intersubjectivity, of communication and communion. The relational character of the Godhead even extends inwards, so to speak, to its own inner life. God is community of love, the Trinity” (MERRIGAN, *What’s in a Word?* [n. 43], p. 76).

50. For an exhaustive survey see G. PASQUALE, *La teologia della storia della salvezza nel secolo XX*, Bologna, Edizioni Dehoniane, 2001; see also ID., *La base storico-salvifica della teologia nel Vaticano II: La “soluzione ecumenica” tra pensiero protestante e cattolico*, in C. APARICIO VALLS – C. DOTOLÒ – G. PASQUALE (eds.), *Sapere teologico e unità della fede: Studi in onore del Prof. Jared Wicks*, Rome, Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 2004, 535-552.

51. J.S. ARRIETA, *Die heilsgeschichtliche Schau der Kirche auf dem Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil*, in F. CHRIST (ed.), *Oikonomia: Heilsgeschichte als Thema der Theologie. Oscar Cullmann zum 65. Geburtstag gewidmet*, Hamburg, Reich, 1967, 322-341.

the neo-scholastic theologies before Vatican II, the Council regained a notion of Salvation History⁵² which was deepened in the post-conciliar period⁵³. Yet as we can see after Vatican II and up until now, the Salvation historic dimension of faith, as it is founded in the Bible and expressed in the Tradition, has raised at least as many questions as it has resolved⁵⁴. For example, the theologies of history as they were discussed in the 1940s up to the Council had to be re-examined⁵⁵. Furthermore, the achievements of the complex history of both theological and historical approaches to theology up to the Council, not only had to be continued, but it also indeed had to be completed by new philosophical, sociological and other approaches and insights⁵⁶. For example, one noted a danger of ideologisation⁵⁷ or claimed that, with respect to the danger of removal from a concrete history, a contemporary notion of Salvation History should be able to show that the particular can give access to the universal⁵⁸. Nowadays, and not without an inspiration prompted by Vatican II, Systematic Theologians dealing by profession in an at least partially speculative way with Revelation show a growing interest in concrete history⁵⁹. This fact justifies the

52. H. HOPING, *Die Lehraussagen des Konzils zur Selbstoffenbarung Gottes und zu seinem Handeln in der Geschichte*, in *HTK Vat II* (n. 6) 5 (2006) 107-119, p. 118, speaks of "salvation-historical narratives" ("heilsgeschichtliche[n] Erzählungen") in the documents of Vatican II. In his contribution, he refers essentially to DV, LG, NA, AG, DiH and GS.

53. J. FEINER – M. LÖHRER (eds.), *Mysterium Salutis: Grundriss heilsgeschichtlicher Dogmatik*, Zürich, 1965s.

54. See K. KOCH, *Die heilsgeschichtliche Dimension der Theologie: Von der heilsgeschichtlichen Theologie zur Theologie der Geschichte*, in *Theologische Berichte VIII. Wege theologischen Denkens*, Zürich, 1979, 135-188; ID., *Heilsgeschichte. III. Systematisch-theologisch*, in *LTK*³ 4 (1995) 1341-1343; PASQUALE, *La teologia della storia della salvezza* (n. 50), pp. 67s.; SANDER, *Das singuläre Geschichtshandeln* (n. 26), pp. 134-144.

55. Already before and during Vatican II, the state of the discussion evolved enormously: see e.g. R. AUBERT, *Discussions récentes autour de la théologie de l'histoire*, in *Coll. Mech.* 33 (1948) 129-149; W. KASPER, *Grundlinien einer Theologie der Geschichte*, in *TQ* 144 (1964) 129-169. On the contemporary state of the question see also C. THEOBALD, *À quelles conditions une théologie "biblique" de l'histoire est-elle aujourd'hui possible?*, in D. DORÉ (ed.), *Comment la Bible saisit-elle l'histoire? XXI^e congrès de l'Association catholique française pour l'étude de la Bible (Issy-les-Moulineaux 2005)* (Lectio Divina, 215), Paris, Cerf, 2007, 253-279.

56. For a shift from the generation of council theologians, rather interested in the relationship between theology and history, to the generation of their pupils, trying to complete and continue more philosophically the thinking of their teachers, see QUISINSKY, *Philosophie et théologie* (n. 19).

57. G. MÜLLER-FAHRENHOLZ, *Heilsgeschichte zwischen Ideologie und Prophetie: Profile und Kritik heilsgeschichtlicher Theorien in der Ökumenischen Bewegung zwischen 1948 und 1968*, Freiburg, Herder, 1974.

58. BORDEYNE, *La réappropriation de Vatican II* (n. 31), pp. 165.167.

59. As examples of this insight within a more abstract vision of historicity: J. WERBICK, *Den Glauben verantworten: Eine Fundamentaltheologie*, Freiburg, Herder, 2000, pp. 355 et al.; G.M. HOFF, *Offenbarungen Gottes? Eine theologische Problemgeschichte*, Regensburg, Pustet, 2007, pp. 263 et al. As an example of a theological dealing with concrete

question of how, and in which way, vice versa, Church Historians can integrate systematic topics within their research. This is a question which is subject to profound discussion. Incidentally, the *loci theologici* seem to offer a possibility of integrating historical thinking as such into theology⁶⁰. The underlying problem is how to conceive of history in the terms of a theology, since it is said: “God does not stand outside history, nor is God a factor therein”⁶¹. In order to better comprehend this paradoxical togetherness, which reflects the Chalcedonian principle⁶² “without either confusion or change, without division or separation”, we can refer to the Incarnation-bound category of “interruption” which helps us in the same measure as it “appears to be an adequate means to conceive of God’s salvific engagement with history”⁶³. Beyond inner-Christian challenges resulting from this insights concerning Incarnation, Salvation and history, e.g. for the collaboration between Church History and Systematic Theology, this raises obviously a number of important questions linked to the understanding of the History of Humanity, especially within the interreligious dialogue. This inalienable dimension of contemporary Christian living and thinking leads Claude Geffré to speak of a “histoire du salut différenciée”⁶⁴, a term which challenges a possible “recontextualisation” of the notion of “Salvation History”.

But how can we become aware of God in History? It could certainly be a first attempt to examine in which way an *auctoritas*, a *traditio* or a *novitas* testifies of or refer to an aspect of Salvation History or to a specific notion of Salvation History. As well as there are references made to Salvation Historical aspects and their interpretations within the Scripture⁶⁵

history as a history between God and Humanity see B. UKWUIJE, *Trinité et inculturation*, Paris, DDB, 2008, 386-395, where he proposes, in a theological epistemology based on Eberhard Jüngel, a “relecture théologique de l’histoire concrète d’anciens esclaves africains” (p. 386) of the Amistad in 1839. For Ukwuije, this is an example of “comment des destins apparemment bloqués s’ouvrent de nouveau quand des êtres humains rencontrent l’histoire de l’humanité de Dieu en Jésus-Christ” and of a “histoire de la grâce” (p. 388).

60. H. WOLF, *Zwischen Theologie und Geschichte: Zur Standortbestimmung des Faches Kirchengeschichte*, in *TRev* 98 (2002) 379-386; on the *loci theologici* see also ID., *Den ganzen Tisch der Tradition decken: Tendenzen und Perspektiven neuzeitlicher Kirchengeschichte*, in *TQ* 184 (2004) 254-276, pp. 271s.

61. BOEVE, *God Interrupts History* (n. 33), p. 201.

62. See L. BOEVE, *Christus Postmodernus: An Attempt at Apophatic Christology*, in T. MERRIGAN – J. HAERS (eds.), *The Myriad Christ: Plurality and the Quest for Unity in Contemporary Christology* (BETL, 152), Leuven, Peeters, 2000, 577-593, pp. 581s.

63. BOEVE, *God Interrupts History* (n. 33), p. 48.

64. C. GEFFRÉ, *De Babel à Pentecôte: Essais de théologie interreligieuse* (Cogitatio Fidei, 247), Paris, Cerf, 2006, p. 64.

65. I prefer to speak of “aspects” rather than of “events”, claiming by that that there is always a complex relationship between historic events and their interpretation even within the horizon of Revelation. See WERBICK, *Den Glauben verantworten* (n. 59), esp. pp. 355-360. Incidentally, Werbick insists on the pneumatological dimension of Revelation, Tradition and testimony, which I cannot further explore in my contribution.

– such as the memory of the exodus or the prophetic tradition – there are references made to them throughout Tradition. Can these elements of memory and recontextualisation be conceived of in terms of interruption within their conceptualisation throughout history and of our comprehension of them in the present? Exploring the charging of an *auctoritas*, a *traditio* or a *novitas* with Salvation Historical elements would offer a first criteriological element which could both illustrate the theological content of these truth-claims and contribute to a deeper understanding of aspects or notions of Salvation History – which often are not very easily accessible to our contemporary reason. Yet it is right here that one of the most crucial questions of historical thinking in theology arises. Can our historical-critical methodology, which deals with the History of Church, just simply stop at the biblical period without asking further about biblical history as Revelation history, which is nothing less than the foundation of Christian faith expressed in Church History? Does an exclusive methodological agnosticism – which has surely a certain place in Church History – not risk considering God and its Revelation in biblical times and beyond as “Deus ex machina” or “stopgap God”, revivifying by that, as a reverse of the medal, an extrinsic or “instruction-theoretical”⁶⁶ understanding of Revelation⁶⁷? So it is not enough that Church Historians and Systematic Theologians work together, but there is an urgent need that exegetes also join in this collaboration⁶⁸.

Pushing the reflection further, we have to ask right now if we should also conceive of the very concept of Revelation in terms of interruption⁶⁹. This is made possible and perhaps even required by a post-Vatican II understanding of Revelation, which considers Revelation in its very historicity. For in order to conceive of Revelation, one can state that it is, on one side, something what “Man cannot say by themselves to

66. On this terminology see M. SECKLER, *Der Begriff der Offenbarung*, in W. KERN – H.J. POTTMEYER – M. SECKLER (eds.), *Handbuch der Fundamentaltheologie: Vol. 2. Traktat Offenbarung*, Freiburg, Herder, 1985, 60-83.

67. Actually, one can analogously apply this to a theological dealing with history, or what BOEVE, *God Interrupts History* (n. 33), p. 129, says of the relationship between faith and sciences, that God “runs the risk of being no more than a stopgap, filling the (provisional) holes in the theories provided by science” – or: historic research!

68. BIERINGER, *Biblical Revelation* (n. 9), p. 51. On this relationship see also P. GIBERT – C. THEOBALD (eds.), *Le cas Jésus Christ: Exégètes, historiens et théologiens en confrontation*, Paris, Bayard, 2002; EID. (eds.), *La réception des Écritures inspirées: Exégèse, histoire et théologie*, Paris, Bayard, 2007.

69. This seems to be the incarnation theological consequence, now as a matter which was our starting point of reflection. So taking contemporary experience as a starting point, Lieven Boeve links Tradition, context and (a certain dimension of) Revelation: “Interruption becomes an interpretative key for tradition and context to track where God can let Godself be known today ... The faith experience of interruption”, referring us to the Kingdom of God which is both realised and promised in Jesus Christ. “causes interruption. And it is here that God is revealed today” (BOEVE, *God Interrupts History* [n. 33], p. 88).

themselves”⁷⁰. On the other side, it is not external to human experience. The Revelation thus can be systematically conceived of as human-divine “history of communication and relation”⁷¹. Within such a conceiving of Revelation and its history, one cannot limit the signification of the category of interruption to the Incarnation taken as a single event. So how can we take the Incarnation-theological insights concerning the relationship between the particular and the universal as a starting point for rethinking Salvation History? Jesus himself refers to the Scripture which defines the identity of Jewish people in terms of history⁷². Incarnation itself is made manifest in a complex relationship with the Jewish tradition before and the Christian tradition after Jesus, both of whom can, as well as our comprehension of them, be analyzed, certainly not in an exclusive way, with the help of the category of interruption. Via these two directions of considering time, through Israel and the Church, Creation and Salvation enter our field of view⁷³. The term and the processes of “interruption” are therefore “charged” with the Incarnation in its Salvation historical dimension. At the same time, this means a certain radicalization of the mutual interruption in Tradition since a personal life with all its questions and experiences can “interrupt” not only the Tradition, but in a certain sense also the “great narrative” which is the history between God and Humanity from Creation to Salvation as it is professed by Christians in their multifaceted Tradition.

This could be an element of “recontextualising” the notion of Salvation History. Yet since it has become difficult to speak in “great narratives”, it also has become difficult to conceive of Salvation History in terms of a grand narrative. So we have to be aware of the personal dimension of faith, even if it must be clear that every human being is always in a specific way contextually and historically conditioned. Nevertheless, within an Incarnation-bound theology, we could rediscover the human conscience

70. On this concept of Revelation see WERBICK, *Den Glauben verantworten* (n. 59), p. 295, with reference made to the concept of Revelation of Vatican II. On Revelation see also M. BONGARDT, *Einführung in die Theologie der Offenbarung*, Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2005; HOFF, *Offenbarungen Gottes?* (n. 59).

71. WERBICK, *Den Glauben verantworten* (n. 59), p. 253.

72. BOEVE, *God Interrupts History* (n. 33), p. 155. For some repercussions of this aspect of Jewish identity on Christian dealings with historiography see also H. DESTIVELLE, *L'œcuménisme entre histoire et mémoire dans l'enseignement catholique récent*, in *Istina* 53 (2008) 227-254, p. 253.

73. “The radical personalization of God which finds place in and through the history of Jesus Christ and which comes to dogmatic expression in the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Trinity, cannot [*sic*] be understood apart from the distinctive Jewish notion of human history as the locus of God’s salvific activity (Heilsgeschichte). Whatever salvation might be, ... it is at the very least human salvation and, as such, possessed of a historical dimension. Christianity, while certainly not immune to what we might describe as ‘spiritualizing’ tendencies, can only remain faithful to its origins when it insists, *extra mundum nulla salus*, i.e., outside the world there is no salvation” (MERRIGAN, *What’s in a Word?* [n. 43], p. 76).

as a point of connection between subjectivity and Salvation History⁷⁴. As Terrence Merrigan says: “An incarnational theology valorizes human *subjectivity* and accords it a central role in the realization of God’s revelatory and salvific project in history”⁷⁵. Amidst all kinds of psychological, philosophical or sociological definitions, and sometimes even reductionisms of our time, the dignity of the human subject appears in its greatness as well as in its very imperfection. The mutual interruption of personal lives and Salvation History which makes every human life a part of God’s history with Humanity gives both an inalienable dignity to human individuals and to humanity as a whole⁷⁶. Doing so within a Christian perspective, the Incarnation-boundness of the truth permits to conceive of Incarnation as unifying tie between the interrupted and interrupting individuals. This is a very reason why the most far-reaching topic of Salvation History can coincide not only with a new attention paid to the individual and its freedom⁷⁷, but also with a new attention paid to social and historic developments. This includes numerous researches linked to other topics such as experience⁷⁸,

74. See the Lay decree of Vatican II: “In fulfilling this mission of the Church, the Christian laity exercise their apostolate both in the Church and in the world, in both the spiritual and the temporal orders. These orders, although distinct, are so connected in the singular plan of God that He Himself intends to raise up the whole world again in Christ and to make it a new creation, initially on earth and completely on the last day. In both orders the layman, being simultaneously a believer and a citizen, should be continuously led by the same Christian conscience” (AA 5). It is not the place here to discuss especially the ecclesiological implications of this statement of Vatican II.

75. MERRIGAN, *What’s in a Word?* (n. 43), p. 82.

76. SIEBENROCK, *Über die religiöse Freiheit* (n. 9), esp. pp. 185-191, points out the salvation-historical argumentation in Vatican II’s teaching about religious liberty which has incidentally a strong impact on the relationship between its dogmatic and pastoral dimension. See also J. WERBICK, *Herausforderungen für eine Gotteslehre, die sich das Erschrecken über das Abhandenkommen Gottes noch nicht abgewöhnt hat*, in AUGUSTIN – KRÄMER (eds.), *Gott denken und bezeugen* (n. 8), 99-126, p. 118.

77. Going on with the thinking of Karl Rahner, Jürgen Werbick states that God does not act in History without or against the action of Man. Without diminishing the role of the grace on the one side and the experiences of God’s absence on the other side, he states that one can conceive of the relational dimension of God’s presence in history as follows: “God acts where his will is to be done” (“Gott handelt, wo sein Wille geschieht”). On this theological and historical both challenging and promising sentence see J. WERBICK, *Jesu Auferweckung: Gottes “eschatologische Tat”? Die theologische Rede vom Handeln Gottes und die historische Kritik*, in ID., *Von Gott sprechen an der Grenze zum Verstummten*, Münster, Lit, 2004, 133-178, p. 171 (on Rahner: *ibid.*, p. 170). See also ID., *Den Glauben verantworten* (n. 59), esp. pp. 342-355; on “Gottes Wille” see ID., *Gott verbindlich: Eine theologische Gotteslehre*, Freiburg, Herder, 2007, chapter 6.

78. L. BOEVE – Y. DE MAESENEER – S. VAN DEN BOSSCHE (eds.), *Religious Experience and Contemporary Theological Epistemology* (BETL, 188), Leuven, Peeters, 2005; L. BOEVE – H. GEYBELS – S. VAN DEN BOSSCHE (eds.), *Encountering Transcendence: Contributions to a Theology of Christian Religious Experience* (ANL, 53), Leuven, Peeters, 2005; H. GEYBELS, *Religious Experience: From Process to Product*, in M. LAMBERIGTS – L. BOEVE – T. MERRIGAN – D. CLAES (eds.), *Theology and the Quest for Truth: Historical and Systematic-Theological Studies* (BETL, 202), Leuven, Peeters, 2006, 183-197.

subjectivity⁷⁹ and testimony⁸⁰, but also a theoretical and practical engagement for those who need our solidarity⁸¹.

Recontextualising the notion of Salvation History thus does not mean repeating a kind of Christian “grand narrative” in the philosophically criticized sense of the word. It equally does not mean to write Church History on behalf of a doctrinal interest⁸². But neither does it intend to negate that a Christian’s regard for History, notwithstanding the methods which he has in common with historians, implicates specific theological research interests and even, in a way which needs to be determined in every single case, specific faith presuppositions. And, finally, it does not mean to renounce completely any attempt to form a certain kind of general Christian vision of reality and history, trying rather to conceive of reality as Creation destined to Salvation and being qualified by Incarnation⁸³. Within this attempt, some of the most important questions are: can we have, from within the Tradition that forms our perspective on reality⁸⁴, a Christian notion of history which is neither oppressive nor naïve? Can we have a notion of our faith in the common history of the whole humanity which is neither fundamentalist nor relativist? Incidentally it could be helpful to explore further the notion of an “economy of salvation” in order to more easily respect the different levels implicated when we consider history as a whole as an Incarnation-centred history between God and Humanity⁸⁵.

79. As to the discussion of the “subject”, reference should be made to the debates around the theologies of Hansjürgen Verweyen and Thomas Pröpper. For our context, see especially the contributions of Knut Wenzel, Gregor Maria Hoff, Saskia Wendel and the discussion documented in chapter II (“Hermeneutik und Subjektivität”) of: K. KREUTZER – M. STRIET – J. VALENTIN (eds.), *Gefährdung oder Verheißung? Von Gott reden unter den Bedingungen der Moderne*, Ostfildern, Grünewald, 2007, 61-120. See also K. MÜLLER – M. STRIET (eds.), *Dogma und Denkform: Strittiges in der Grundlegung von Offenbarungsbegriff und Gottesgedanke* (Ratio Fidei, 25), Regensburg, Pustet, 2005.

80. WERBICK, *Den Glauben verantworten* (n. 59), pp. 352-356.

81. GEFFRÉ, *De Babel à Pentecôte* (n. 64), p. 240, speaks of “Un salut personnel et solidaire”.

82. G. ALBERIGO, *Neue Grenzen der Kirchengeschichte?*, in *Conc(D)* 6 (1970) 486-495, p. 487.

83. With this general vision, reference is made to the structure of the *Summa Theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas as it was interpreted by Marie-Dominique Chenu, centered around the relationship of Creation – Salvation – Incarnation. Paradoxically, a general vision of History of Salvation has to bear in mind that “(i)n the history of salvation nothing is taken for granted” because of God’s respect for liberty (B. FORTE, *Jesus von Nazareth, History of God, God of History: Trinitarian Christology in a Pluralistic Age*, in MERRIGAN – HAERS [eds.], *The Myriad Christ* [n. 62], 99-120, p. 118).

84. BOEVE, *Interrupting Tradition* (n. 11), p. 178.

85. Exploring the Incarnation-boundness of truth-claims could probably show the complementary dimension of both “salvation-historical” and “salvation-economical” approaches. Marie-Dominique Chenu is a historic example of a both incarnational-structured and “salvation-economical”-structured theology: see QUISINSKY, “*Heilsökonomie*” (n. 23). If we certainly have to go on with Chenu’s dealing with an “economy of salvation”, this seems even more urgent as we can observe a continuing, but not clearly defined use of this term in contemporary theology: While the interpretation of HOPING, *Die*

A question therefore arises as to which way we can imagine the mutual interruption between individuals and Salvation History as a point of encounter between Church Historians and Systematic Theologians. From a systematic perspective, this implicates further reflection on the theological notion of Salvation⁸⁶. It has to be pointed out that salvation is present, but not yet accomplished, that salvation is a graceful act performed by God, but not at the expense of human freedom. From a historical perspective, this implicates dealings with all kinds of scientific approaches to history. A special regard could nevertheless be taken for history as a result of spiritually inspired human acting and thinking (and by this, we should not only think at the acting and thinking of the “winners” of history⁸⁷) and as a “history of the believed God”⁸⁸. Incidentally,

Lehraussagen des Konzils (n. 52), p. 110, insists rather on the Incarnation-boundness of the expression, P. DE MEY, *Revelation and Experience in Dei Verbum: An Evaluation in the Light of Postconciliar Theology*, in LAMBERIGTS – KENIS (eds.), *Vatican II and Its Legacy* (n. 9), 95-105, p. 101, refers, quoting Hans Waldenfels, rather on the theocentrism expressed by the term “economy” in opposition to the more person-centered notion of history; see also C. APARICIO VALLS, *La Plenitud del Ser Humano en Cristo: La Revelación en la “Gaudium et Spes”* (Tesi Gregoriana: Serie Teología, 17), Rome, Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1997, p. 202 and p. 205 n. 19, diagnosing an identification of the “economía de la Revelación y la historia de salvación” in GS and DV; HOFF, *Offenbarungen Gottes?* (n. 59), pp. 194s., with reference to *Nostra Aetate*, developing an “economy of salvation of the religion-theological differences”, referring to the predominant role of Israel (p. 197 n. 366) and speaking of an “alternative economy of salvation” with respect to the poor (p. 252); GEFFRÉ, *De Babel à Pentecôte* (n. 64), p. 65, within its approach that also pays special attention to Israel, adopting a trinitarian definition.

86. On Salvation see J.-L. LEUBA (ed.), *Le salut chrétien: Unité et diversité des conceptions à travers l'histoire* (Jésus et Jésus Christ, 66), Paris, DDB, 1995.

87. On the history in the perspective of victims as to Vatican II see also SIEBENROCK, *Über die religiöse Freiheit* (n. 9), p. 133.

88. Among contemporary concepts of Church History, I therefore esteem two of special interest for their dealing with theological topics: while Barbara Henze conceives of Church History as a way to “humanize” human subjects in history, Andreas Holzem conceives it as a way to explore the “believed God”: See B. HENZE, *Menschwerdung im Verstehen der Vergangenheit: Eine kirchengeschichtliche Perspektive, erläutert am Fall der Beginen*, in ID. (ed.), *Studium der Katholischen Theologie: Eine themenorientierte Einführung* (UTB für Wissenschaft: Uni-Taschenbücher, 1894), Paderborn, Schöningh, 1995, 101-130; on the significance of a Church historian’s belief “dass Gott seit Erschaffung der Welt um des Heils jedes einzelnen Menschen mit ihm im Gespräch war und es noch ist” see esp. *ibid.*, p. 127; A. HOLZEM, *Die Geschichte des “gegläubten Gottes”: Kirchengeschichte zwischen “Memoria” und “Historie”*, in A. LEINHÄUPL-WILKE – M. STRIET (eds.), *Katholische Theologie studieren: Themenfelder und Disziplinen*, Münster, Lit, 2000, 73-103; ID., *Praktische Theologie in der Vergangenheitsform: Die Geschichte des Christentums als Geschichte des “gegläubten Gottes”*, in D. NAUER – R. BUCHER – F. WEBER (eds.), *Praktische Theologie: Bestandsaufnahmen und Zukunftsperspektiven. Otmar Fuchs zum 60. Geburtstag* (Praktische Theologie heute, 74), Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 2005, 388-397; on the critical distance to this concept to a “älteren Heilsgeschichte der Kirche ..., die einen unverwandelbaren Wesenskern der Kirche unangreifbar durch die dem Wandel unterworfenen Äußerlichkeiten des Geschichtlichen auf das Eschaton sich zu bewegen sah” see esp. *ibid.*, p. 391; and on Cross and Resurrection as theological categories within an interpretation of faith history as a process of self- and God-research see esp. *ibid.*, p. 396.

this includes also historically situated and context-bound attempts of philosophical or speculative expressions of faith in search of a theological “rationality”⁸⁹. With the multitude of personal involvements in History between God and Humanity resulting from this point of view, an important task of meta-reflection is to hold the single testimonies or “personal narratives”⁹⁰ open for one another and to look for possibilities to express what they rely upon between them. Discovering and interpreting them, both as Church Historians and as Systematic Theologians, a further question becomes which elements can help us to avoid an “atomisation”⁹¹ of the infinite pluralism of Christian living and thinking in both history and the present. If we do not do so, the principally more than justified “micro-theologies” resulting from testimony and “living in the truth”⁹², rather than exclusively from speculation, risk to disintegrate theology into single historical or contemporary narratives spoken in languages that are foreign to one another. This is so to say the counterpart to the risk of unjustified hegemonic claims of theological “grand narratives”. Here, the notion of Tradition has its very place, both as, in a general way, a linking point of different criteria within a topological theology and, more concretely, as the linking point of single research topics. As both the foundation and permanent interruption of this Tradition, we encounter once again the Incarnation-boundness of truth as unifying tie within their very plurality.

So if it remains difficult to speak of the History of Salvation, could it nevertheless be possible to conceive of both the Church and world history, in past and present, as localities – *loci* – of innumerable interrupting histories between God and Humanity, discernibles for us from within our Christian Tradition? Even if we concede that this kind of Christian dealing with history raises new problems, especially in the “interruptions”

89. For an instructive survey see MÜLLER, *Vernunft und Glaube* (n. 19), 198-214. As to Müller himself and the other protagonists of the research of a “Letztbegründung” (however it is to be called), one can ask if they deal already sufficiently with the “salvation-historical” (however one has to conceive of it) dimension of faith and the historicity of human reason. On the other hand, one has to concede that within a “salvation-historical” approach to faith, one cannot neglect the challenges of the reasonability of faith they try to answer. On the epistemological challenge see also the debate on a renewed notion of metaphysics, e.g. R. HEINZMANN, *Metaphysik und Heilsgeschichte: Zur Frage nach der Identität des Christentums*, in *MTZ* 53 (2002) 290-307.

90. See for this J.B. METZ, *Theologie als Biographie?*, in Id., *Glaube in Geschichte und Gesellschaft: Studien zu einer praktischen Fundamentaltheologie*, Mainz, Grünewald, 1992, 211-219; E.-M. FABER, *Gottesrede als Geschehen “glücklicher Kontingenz”*, in P. WALTER (ed.), *Gottesrede in postsäkularer Kultur* (QD, 224), Freiburg, Herder 2007, 96-133; HOFF, *Offenbarungen Gottes?* (n. 59), p. 263.

91. For this expression see P. PRÉTOT, *La constitution sur la liturgie: Une herméneutique de la tradition chrétienne*, in BORDEYNE – VILLEMEN (eds.), *Vatican II et la théologie* (n. 6), 17-34, p. 31.

92. BOEVE, *Interrupting Tradition* (n. 11), p. 99.

caused by interreligious dialogue⁹³ and by the dialogue between faith and the natural sciences⁹⁴, it seems to be possible to conceive of the question of whether Tradition can (not) change in a very specific, i.e. “relational”, sense as a secondary one. Certainly, however, secondary does not mean superfluous. Indeed, we must take a closer look at a possible epistemological model for dealing with innumerable singular topics and the problematic of the relationship between unity and diversity.

III. HOW TO DEAL WITH TRUTH IN THE HISTORY BETWEEN GOD AND HUMANITY?

1. *A Promising Model of Theological Epistemology? The “Differentiated Consensus”*

In the search for an epistemology which integrates historical and systematical theology, can we once again be inspired by Chalcedonian dogma with its paradoxical togetherness? Yet in any attempt to be inspired by this dogma, we have to come back once again to the relationship between Scripture and Tradition. This relationship is an opportunity and a possibility for riches, but it is also a challenge. A short survey of historical and systematic literature in this regard shows us the varying accentuations of the relationship between Scripture and Tradition which obviously cannot only be considered in itself. This plurality reflects the multi-layered character of Revelation as it is made present in Tradition. A most prominent example of handling with the accentuations resulting from different points of view, starting points and forms of thinking (“Denkformen”) is the ecumenical research that led, after a complex hermeneutical process, to a remarkable event in post-Vatican II history: on Reformation-Day in 1999, the Common Declaration about the Doctrine of Justification was signed in Augsburg. Justification, a central faith topic of Reformation History, has a strong Christological impact, since the “intention of this doctrine is to invite us to participate in the salvation founded in Christ’s vicarious suffering and death”⁹⁵. So there is not

93. For a survey of insights of Vatican II with respect to a “Universalität der Heilsgeschichte, die gerade von ihrer Fülle in Jesus Christus her als solche gedeutet werden muss” and challenges emerging for post-conciliar Church and theology see R. SIEBENROCK, *Die Wahrheit der Religionen und die Fülle der Selbstmitteilung Gottes in Jesus Christus*, in *HTK Vat II* (n. 6) 5 (2006) 120-133 (quotation p. 121).

94. Without approving all of his conclusions, one can refer to an excellent survey of the challenges by K. VON STOSCH, *Gott – Macht – Geschichte: Versuch einer theodizeesensiblen Rede vom Handeln Gottes in der Welt*, Freiburg, Herder, 2006.

95. M. BRINKMANN, *Christological Implications of the Ecumenical Agreement on Justification*, in MERRIGAN – HAERS (eds.), *The Myriad Christ* (n. 62), 567-575, p. 573. Obviously, this implicates a critical stance to History: “In our baptism we die and rise with him and are liberated from the burden of our sinful collectivistic and individualistic past” (p. 574).

only an incarnation-theological motive present, but also a relationship that can be established throughout history between Salvation in Christ and the innumerable lives of man and women⁹⁶. With this Declaration, which therefore requires a further reflection on the relationship between Salvation and History, the Catholic Church engaged itself in a way of conceiving of its Christ-bound unity in terms of diversity. This is true not only with respect to the inner structure of the Catholic Church, but also with respect to other Christians. Within a “differentiated consensus”, it is thus possible to express and recontextualise the Christian faith diachronically and synchronically in different ways, although this does not mean an absence of criteria. Based not only on the ecclesiological theses of the theologians but on a magisterial act, the “differentiated consensus” permits us furthermore to conceive unity in terms of relational openness of truth-claims for complementarity rather than in terms of exclusivism. More concretely, the Common Declaration deals with *auctoritates* like Paul, Luther and the Council of Trent⁹⁷, with *traditiones* like the Lutheran and the post-Tridentine confessional developments⁹⁸, and also with *novitates* such as the ecumenical inspirations of the 20th century⁹⁹. One can say that in its conceiving of Tradition, the “differentiated consensus” is a *novitas* generated by the Tradition itself via a common attempt to relate to *auctoritates*, *traditiones* and *novitates*¹⁰⁰. Because of the very Tradition-rootedness of this *novitas*, it relies upon a fidelity to the history of faith with an openness for growing in unity in faith as it was expressed throughout the 20th century. The Common Declaration points out that a common reading of the Scripture allows us to discover new insights within our faith, which are within the inner-biblical plurality conceived of as both Incarnation-bound and eschatological¹⁰¹. So Tradition, transmitting the truth-claims of our Scripture-based faith, can also be conceived of as plural, Incarnation-bound and eschatological.

Because ecumenical theology is both a historic and a systematic science¹⁰², the hermeneutical implications of a “differentiated consensus” for

96. See e.g. D. SATTLER, *Ist ein Mensch trotz seines Lebens in Sünde gerecht(fertigt)? Schwierigkeiten und Möglichkeiten der Verkündigung der Rechtfertigungsbotschaft heute*, in U. SWARAT – J. OELDEMANN – D. HELLER (eds.), *Von Gott angenommen – in Christus verwandelt: Die Rechtfertigungslehre im multilateralen ökumenischen Dialog* (Beiheft zur Ökumenischen Rundschau, 78), Frankfurt, Lembeck, 2006, 331-349, pp. 346s.

97. E.g. for Paul *Common Declaration* 10 and for Luther and the Council of Trent the “sources” in the annexe of the Declaration.

98. E.g. *Common Declaration* 1,41.

99. E.g. *Common Declaration* 13.

100. H. LEGRAND, *Le consensus différencié sur la doctrine de la Justification (Augsbourg 1999): Quelques remarques sur la nouveauté d'une méthode*, in *NRT* 124 (2002) 30-56.

101. *Common Declaration* 8. On the eschatological dimension of the “differentiated consensus” see LEGRAND, *Le consensus différencié* (n. 100), pp. 47-49.

102. L. LIES, *Grundkurs Ökumenische Theologie: Von der Spaltung zur Versöhnung. Modelle kirchlicher Einheit*, Innsbruck, Tyrolia, 2005, p. 242.

Church and theology as a whole seems to be a promising supplementary research question¹⁰³. Especially, we can claim an analogy of the “differentiated consensus” with a topological structure of theology, with the structure of mutual interruptions of truth-claims and with the mutual interruptions of Salvation History and contemporary experiences. If one can find exaggerated to claim an analogy between the “differentiated consensus” and the Chalcedonian expression of the mystery of Incarnation, perceiving a human-divine relationship without either confusion or change, without division or separation, it nevertheless should be explored in which way this epistemological principle could help to express the Incarnation-boundness of mutually interrupting truth-claims within a “differentiated consensus”.

It is thus that we can formulate some hypotheses: The “differentiated consensus” can be an epistemological model which considers both the multitude and the contingency and context-boundness of truth-claims. It relies upon different approaches to a Christian understanding of Humanity and Salvation without thereby confusing these different approaches¹⁰⁴. More concretely applied to our question of the truth in the history between God and Humanity, could it be possible to conceive of the relationship between Church History and Systematic Theology in a way analogous to the “differentiated consensus”, respecting the very methods, perspectives and research results of them both¹⁰⁵? A “differentiated consensus” between Church History and Systematic Theology could mean that for every truth-claim, we could adopt – at least – two perspectives at the same time¹⁰⁶. Not

103. As to important research domains, within the Common Declaration reference is made to the research in biblical studies, the history of theology and the history of dogma as well as to ecumenical dialogue since Vatican II as preconditions for a common understanding (*Common Declaration* 13). For that reason, the doctrine of justification as it is theologically conceived within the Catholic and Lutheran traditions can be seen in a “new light” (*Common Declaration* 40).

104. A. BIRMELE, *La compréhension de l'humain devant Dieu: Ontologie substantia-liste ou ontologie relationnelle. Un enjeu majeur du dialogue œcuménique*, in O.H. PESCH – J.-M. VAN CANGH (eds.), *L'homme, image de Dieu: Données bibliques, historiques et théologiques* (Publications de l'Académie Internationale des Sciences Religieuses), Paris, Cerf, 2006, 189-205.

105. Incidentally, it would be interesting to explore if there can be any – Incarnation-bound? – epistemological similarities of the “differentiated consensus” and a “bifocal Christian Theology of Religions” (W. VALKENBERG, *Christ and the Spirit: Towards a Bifocal Christian Theology of Religions*, in MERRIGAN – HEARS [eds.], *The Myriad Christ* [n. 62], 121-129).

106. What I claim right here is not only based on the Common Declaration but also inspired by the attempts of dealing with the complementary perspectives of historic and systematic theology by O.H. PESCH, *Der “katholische” und der “lutherische” Luther*, in Id., *Gerechtigkeit aus Glauben: Luthers Frage an die Kirche*, Freiburg, Herder, 1982, 95-144 (reference is made to Pesch because he can be considered as a forerunner of the “differentiated consensus”: see H. LEGRAND, *La légitimité d'une pluralité de “formes de pensée” [Denkformen] en dogmatique catholique: Retour sur la thèse d'un précurseur. Otto Hermann Pesch*, in F. BOUSQUET et al [eds.], *La responsabilité des théologiens: Mélanges offerts à Joseph Doré*, Paris, Cerf, 2002, 685-704) and WERBICK, *Jesu Auferweckung* (n. 77), pp. 166-178.

only would they not be mutually exclusive, but they would permit the search for complementary common perspective that integrates the insights of the two specific perspectives. They would interrupt each other, challenging one truth-claim to open itself for the aspect of truth which is expressed in another truth-claim. Incidentally, it is precisely this readiness for mutual interruption – and therefore enrichment – which intrinsically lead to further search for truth. This includes not only a permanent enrichment by the truth-challenge of another truth-claim, but it is an eschatological dynamic of common truth quest, that can avoid the danger of a “differentiated consensus” as being only a description of a *status quo*. At the same time, a “differentiated consensus” between Church History and Systematic Theology, by being situated within a topological theology, relativises the very question of collaboration between these disciplines, opening its research processes and research results for other theological and epistemological insights in the truth of Incarnation. In an important analogy with the mutual interruptions within a topological theology, the mutual interruptions of church historical and systematic theological perspectives are humble steps along a way of seeking after truth which are in the same time testimonies of faith. This way of an Incarnation of truth can help us as Christians, in a theologically, spiritually and pastorally promising way to “open history”¹⁰⁷.

It is from this place that we can return to our starting question whether Tradition can (not) change and within this question to the research on *auctoritates*, *traditiones* and *novitates*. In this research, the “differentiated consensus” between Church Historians and Systematic Theologians can be concretely applied. If they are respectively conceived of from a twofold perspective, the very Tradition could appear, at least in an exemplified way, in its vital rather than its static dimension. Historical research especially discovers the complexity and the particularity of every single *auctoritas*, *traditio* and *novitas* as well as of their interconnections, and it would also be sensitive toward their respective contributions in the theological quest for truth. Systematic research especially explores the implications of the relationship to Incarnation and the possible insights about Incarnation-bound truths. By doing so, Incarnation-bound truth would be conceived of in its very complexity and particularity. In a meta-reflection, both disciplines could concretely show, rather than only postulate, that “theological truth is co-constituted by the all-too-human, by concrete history and context”¹⁰⁸. Yet Incarnation would not only appear as a criteria of truth-claims in *auctoritates*, *traditiones* and *novitates*. It would also be considered as a unifying tie: In light of every single aspect, the attempt at universality can be “opened” for concreteness, and in light of a dynamic aiming at humanly unreachable universality, every single aspect can be “opened” for universality.

107. “L’histoire s’ouvre...” (LEGRAND, *Le consensus différencié* [n. 100], p. 56).

108. BOEVE, *God Interrupts History* (n. 33), p. 177.

For we can even claim that a “differentiated consensus” has all to win and probably not very much to lose to be conceived of within a topologically structured theology which is in the same time conceived as Incarnation-bounded and in terms of a theology of interruption. It even promises to be helpful for a recontextualisation of Salvation History: As to the religious pluralism, Claude Geffré does not hesitate to ask for possibilities to conceive of God’s “plan of Salvation” in terms of a “differentiated Salvation History”, a “differentiated economy of Revelation” and a “differentiated Revelation”¹⁰⁹. So it would be interesting to explore in which way one could consider History within an epistemology model analogous to a “differentiated perspective”, conceiving an historic event in a both from a perspective of “World History” and a perspective of “Salvation History”¹¹⁰.

2. *Tradition on Its Way through Time: Eschatological Truth in the History between God and Humanity*

An incarnational structure of faith is in its value the same as it is for the Christological dogma which “does what it expresses and expresses what it does”¹¹¹. This “doing” means that there is also a certain dynamic in every expression of Incarnation-bound truth-claims as we encounter them, as well as in the *loci theologici* as in the *auctoritates*, *traditiones* and *novitates* as in the “differentiated consensus”. This dynamic is neither a rather annoying endlessness of interpretations, nor the absence of criteria¹¹². This dynamic rather is an expression of the inherent eschatological tendency of every expression of faith in Christian living and thinking. Vatican II reminded us that Tradition itself has an eschatological dimension, qualifying its very ecclesiality. As DV 8 points out, the Church, “in her teaching, life and worship, perpetuates and hands on to all generations all that she herself is, all that she believes” and “moves forward toward the fullness of divine truth”¹¹³. In a certain analogy with the eucharistic prayer, one

109. GEFFRÉ, *De Babel à Pentecôte* (n. 64), p. 64 (“histoire du salut différenciée” and “la révélation générale se particularise selon une économie diversifiée”), pp. 65.67 (“révélation différenciée”).

110. If one cannot adopt the term “differentiated *consensus*” in a Christian dealing with non-Christian religions, one can nevertheless explore the intuition of Geffré and adopt, as faithful Christians and from within a Christian dealing with history of religions, a “differentiated perspective”.

111. BOEVE, *Christus Postmodernus* (n. 62), p. 585. And Boeve to explain: “The christological dogma not only consists of a reference to the religious truth which took shape in Jesus Christ, but offers at the same time the method of this reference”.

112. See the statement of Gregor Maria HOFF, *Diskussion zu den Vorträgen von K. Wenzel, G.M. Hoff und S. Wendel*, in KREUTZER et al. (eds.), *Gefährdung oder Verheißung?* (n. 79), 102-120, pp. 115s.

113. It seems evident that one cannot consider DV 8 without LG 48 and vice versa. On the different aspects of history and historicity within an eschatological dynamic mentioned in DV 8, including also their ambiguities, see SAUER, *Erfahrung und Glaube* (n. 39), pp. 433s.544-583.

could speak of the Tradition as a pilgrimage on earth¹¹⁴. It is then right here that we ask in which way Tradition and history are normative. They are normative with respect to the Incarnation-boundness they express and they make possible. Yet they are normative, not only because of that what has been, but also because of what we believe to come, since interruptions refer to the eschatological dimensions of Incarnation-bound faith. From this perspective, it is not only the quality of an *auctoritas* or a *traditio* that refers to the Incarnation and which determines its authority, but it is also its inherent capacity of expressing an eschatological dynamic of the Christian faith, naturally in a close relationship to the Incarnation. If we concede that it can be a *novitas* and an interruption called for by it which opens or reopens eschatological perspectives, we can give a principally positive status to the *novitas* as such, since a *novitas* can reorientate us to the *novitas Christiana* which is the “new man” Jesus¹¹⁵. Within a living Tradition, intensifying this eschatological and messianic dynamic is one of the most important challenges of the “signs of the times” to be scrutinized in the light of the Gospel. As ecumenical hermeneutic shows, a “differentiated consensus” is not an attempt to proceed with a superficial harmony¹¹⁶. Yet it is a kind of “third way”¹¹⁷ between relativism and fundamentalism. At the same time, within an Incarnation-bound topological theology, this epistemological model helps us not to forget that, notwithstanding all our epistemological instruments and hermeneutical concepts, and beyond the accentuations resulting from different philosophical-theological starting points, it’s the gospel that shall illuminate our understanding of time and history¹¹⁸. It should not be forgotten, that after Vatican II, there is also the pneumatological dimension of Tradition to be further explored¹¹⁹.

As I said, the question of whether Tradition can (not) change is therefore not at all superfluous, but, in a very precise, i.e. relational, sense, a secondary one. The main question therefore is not if there are changes or not. Certainly there are. Yet the main question is how we can conceive of

114. “strengthen in faith and love your pilgrim Church on earth” (Eucharistic Prayer III).

115. LEHMANN, *Tradition and Innovation* (n. 5), p. 124.

116. See W. THÖNISSEN, *Dogma und Symbol: Eine ökumenische Hermeneutik*, Freiburg, Herder, 2008; and T. LINDFELD, *Einheit in der Wahrheit: Konfessionelle Denkformen und die Suche nach ökumenischer Hermeneutik* (Konfessionskundliche und kontroverstheologische Studien, 78), Paderborn, Schöningh, 2008.

117. LEGRAND, *Le consensus différencié* (n. 100), p. 55, from where I take the expression “third way”, calls the “differentiated consensus” therefore a “service rendu à nos sociétés”.

118. On this condition for reflection on faith see HOFF, *Offenbarungen Gottes?* (n. 59), pp. 253s., with reference both to the “signs of the times” as they are conceived by *Gaudium et Spes* and the theology of Marie-Dominique Chenu.

119. During Vatican II, this was reclaimed by the non-catholic observers such as N.A. NISSIOTIS, *Bericht über das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil*, in *ÖR* 15 (1966) 120-136. As to Yves Congar, one of the great theologians of “Tradition”, this insights produced by the discussions at Vatican II lead to an article which can be read as a working program for (his) postconciliar theology: Y. CONGAR, *La pneumatologie dans la théologie catholique*, in *RSPT* 51 (1967) 250-258.

them – both in a more generally claimed and in a more specifically explored way – as conversions to the truth of Incarnation in the history conceived of as a history between God and Humanity: If Tradition can change, then it is because it can change men and women and convert them to the message of the Gospel. If Tradition can change men and women, then it can change and convert its own dynamic with respect to the message of the Gospel whenever it risks becoming an all-too human tradition. In a meta-reflection assuming both the church historical and the systematic theological perspective, we will be confronted with questions such as whether and in which way Tradition and traditions can relate us to the God who revealed himself in the Incarnation, to the God who created us and to the God who wants to be our Salvation. In a time characterized by a certain speechlessness with respect to the historicity of our world and to the sense of our human existence in history, our common challenge is to recontextualize a Christian vision of history and historicity. For being Christian, this vision is both open to the all-too-often uncomprehensible contingency and particularity of life and open to the confidence that the present-absent God, who interrupts history in Jesus Christ and who is present in history in the Holy Spirit, will be all in all (1 Cor 15,28).

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ABSTRACT. — In search of responses to the question whether Tradition can (not) change, a promising research avenue could be to consider Tradition from within a vision of truth which is a relationship between God and Humanity in history. Vatican II, conceived as a part and expression of the living Tradition, can be conceived as a signpost for this research. This favors a topological structure for theology, considering the different *loci theologici*. To explore further the modes and the dynamic of their interconnections, some challenges made by the post-Vatican II category of “interruption” are explored. A central topic is a critical evaluation of the question as to whether it is sufficient to “charge” the category of “interruption” with “Incarnation”. The question thereby arises as to whether or not it would be necessary rather to consider an interconnectedness of the notions of “interruption” and “Salvation History”. In search of an epistemology which is able to conceive of truth in its historical complexity, the “differentiated consensus” promises to give an important inspiration for further researches dealing with the question whether Tradition can (not) change. Since quests for truth *in statu viae* are in itself part of the history between God and Humanity, some concluding remarks concern the eschatological dynamic of the interconnection of Christian truth-claims as a constitutive dimension of a Tradition housed in its multiple dimensions.