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Charred Root of Meaning: Rupture and Continuity in Christian Tradition

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Abstract

Until very recently, the theological literature approached tradition almost exclusively as a phenomenon of continuity. But tradition involves several forms of rupture, both in its beginning and in its development. This paper distinguishes four: irruption (of the divine), forgetting, 'destruction' (together with retrieval/repetition), and exclusion. The argument draws on philosophers such as Martin Heidegger, Michel Foucault, and Jean-Luc Marion, but it is scripturally rooted and finds confirmation in Christian authors like Denys the Carthusian, Martin Luther, and Henri de Lubac.

Before Luther's *sola Scriptura* battle-cry, tradition was not a major topic of theological reflection.[1] Its role in the transmission of the Christian faith was naïvely assumed rather than examined and justified.[2] In response to *sola Scriptura*, the Council of Trent explicitly affirmed the validity of tradition as a source of doctrine. Whether this was intended by the council or not, in the wake of Trent the notion of tradition hardened, in particular in the concept of the *loci theologici*, the 'places' or sources of theological

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1   The most comprehensive account of the history of discussions of tradition is Jean-Georges Boeglin, *La question de la Tradition dans la théologie catholique contemporaine*, Cogitatio fidei 205 (Paris: Cerf, 1998).
2   Thus, Yves Congar writes about discussions of tradition in the medieval period, 'The Middle Ages […] had little idea of the argument from tradition in the modern sense of the word. How could they? They lacked a critical interest in history as such. But, above all, *living* naïvely

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argument. Some have spoken of a 'reification' of both Scripture and tradition as, separated, they assumed the status of proof-texts rather than living and lived testimonies. Thus, Reformation and Counter-Reformation were divided over the status of tradition in relation to Scripture; yet paradoxically they shared similar conceptions of how they functioned.[3] This reified understanding was not challenged until the 19th-century discovery of the role of time and history in the very structure of reality—consider Hegel's contribution to philosophy, Darwin's to biology, and the rise of historical studies. In theology, the discovery, or perhaps rediscovery,[4] of the dynamism of tradition is most prominently associated with John Henry Newman, whose work threw into relief that the truth of faith is not simply and not only timeless, but also unfolds in time. As Newman famously put it, his 'principle of *dogma*' maintained that 'supernatural truths [are] irrevocably committed to human language, imperfect because it is human but definitive and necessary because given from above.'[5]

Introducing history into the heart of dogma—that is to say, emphasizing the historical contingency of tradition—produces the risk opposite to the reification of tradition that occurred following the Council of Trent. This risk is that, once we discover that tradition is not insulated from the play of political power, or from personal weakness and intrigue, it becomes invisible as the vehicle for the transmission of an authentic body of doctrine. The more we learn about the history of the Church, therefore, the more urgent does a question become that Andrew Meszaros pointedly formulates in his recent study of Newman and Congar: '*how is one to theologically account for, and therefore make credible, doctrines whose content is allegedly revealed (coming from God) and therefore absolute and immutable, but whose existence and form rely on historical and human contingencies?*'[6]

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according to tradition, this medieval, pre-critical period did not have to prove to itself that it was right' (*Tradition and Traditions: An Historical and a Theological Essay*, trans. Michael Naseby and Thomas Rainborough [London: Burns & Oates, 1966], 89).

3   See Peter M. Candler, Jr, *Theology, Rhetoric, Manuduction, or Reading Scripture Together on the Path to God*, Radical Traditions (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 18: 'Moreover, the reification of Scripture into the anti-chronic space of the printed page has as its correlate the Tridentine conception of "Tradition".'

4   In the medieval period, discussions of tradition often appear in the guise of reflections on revelation—revelation not understood as the *product* of a divine unveiling, but rather as *process*. Large parts of Joseph Ratzinger's *Habilitationsschrift* are devoted to this topic: *The Theology of History in St Bonaventure*, trans. Zachary Hayes, OFM (Chicago, IL: Franciscan Herald Press, 1989), esp. 57–59, 86–94. Because it was so controversial—almost costing him his academic career—the full text of the pope's *Habilitationsschrift* has become available only recently: Joseph Ratzinger, *Offenbarungsverständnis und Geschichtstheologie Bonaventuras. Habilitationsschrift und Bonaventura-Studien*, Gesammelte Schriften 2 (Freiburg: Herder, 2009). This text treats the meaning of *revelatio* in scholastic theology, and especially in Bonaventure, in comprehensive detail.

5   John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 6th ed., Notre Dame Series in the Great Books (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 325. Emphasis original.

6   Andrew Meszaros, *The Prophetic Church: History and Doctrinal Development in John Henry Newman and Yves Congar* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 11–12. Emphasis original.

I draw attention to this question in order to underscore its significance. I believe that it can be answered along the lines of a Thomistic theory of primary and secondary causality: the secondary causes of the created world—'horizontal' in their effectiveness, as it were—are ultimately dependent on God's primary—or 'vertical'—causality. Their autonomy is real, but also relative. The relationship between horizontal and vertical causality means, for the case of tradition, that the vicissitudes of its historical unfolding do not stand outside its divinely willed economy.[7]

Until very recently, the theological literature approached tradition almost exclusively as a phenomenon of continuity. Yves Congar, whose magisterial treatment of *Tradition and Traditions*[8] constitutes the 20th century's most influential contribution to the subject, could still declare: 'Tradition, then, comprises two equally vital aspects: one of development and one of conservation.'[9] No word here about rupture or discontinuity, although Congar was quite aware of the fact that the historic unfolding of doctrine did not always follow a linear, progressive path.[10] It is only in much more recent contributions that the disruptive elements in tradition have come into focus. Yet theologians still recoil from calling rupture by its name. For example, John Thiel includes what he calls 'dramatic development' in his account of the 'senses of tradition.' As Thiel himself recognises, 'dramatic development' is a euphemism for rupture and loss. He explains his terminological choice:

> To portray the loss of tradition as 'dramatic' may seem to be too mild for the phenomenon sketched in the previous definition or, worse, an outright obfuscation of it. Perhaps, though, this somewhat euphemistic way of speaking […] is necessary to describe a regard for tradition that, prior to our own time, was not only indescribable but also unthinkable. The prospective orientations of premodern and modern conceptions of tradition precluded the loss of established tradition other than by its faithless betrayal. Whereas the apostate was capable of 'dramatic development,' the tradition was not.[11]

It is not difficult to see what has rendered 'dramatic development' thinkable in our own day. In many Western countries—such as Ireland, the country where I teach—an 'interruption'[12] of the Christian tradition has occurred. Tradition in this cultural sense is

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7   For further discussion of the metaphysics of horizontal and vertical causality, one may read my *Omne agens agit sibi simile: A 'Repetition' of Scholastic Metaphysics*, Louvain Philosophical Studies 12 (Louvain: Leuven University Press, 1996), 279–305. For the application of the distinction to the relationship between history and revealed doctrine, see Meszaros, *Prophetic Church*, 215–39.

8   See Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, cited in n. 2 above.

9   This quotation is from the abridged version of Congar's larger study, *The Meaning of Tradition*, trans. A. N. Woodrow (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 2004), 117.

10   Meszaros distinguishes Congar's pre-conciliar views (as expressed in *Tradition and Traditions* as well as *The Meaning of Tradition*) from his more critical post-conciliar stance; see *The Prophetic Church*, 182–97.

11   John E. Thiel, *Senses of Tradition: Continuity and Development in Catholic Faith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 101.

12   The Belgian theologian Lieven Boeve develops the notion of 'interruption' of the Christian tradition in several recent publications; see, for example, *God Interrupts History: Theology in a Time of Upheaval* (New York/London: Continuum, 2007).

different from tradition in its theological sense as a source of doctrine other than Scripture. It is not far-fetched to believe, however, that the cultural notion is influencing the theological one.

My paper is devoted to a deepening of our understanding of the role of rupture in the constitution of the Christian tradition.[13] Explicitly as well as implicitly, my reflections upon this aspect of tradition draw on contemporary, so-called 'postmodern' philosophers such as Martin Heidegger and Michel Foucault. This is because the elements of otherness, difference, and transgression are the focus of the postmodern philosophical movement, which regards history not as an unbroken unfolding of truth, but rather as a series of breaks that involve exclusion and destruction. Foucault is the paramount proponent of such a conception of history.

In what follows, I will speak of tradition neither in its broad cultural sense nor in its strictest theological sense. I will, rather, discuss the type of tradition which the strict theological notion presupposes: in this sense, tradition is, in the words of Yves Congar,

> an offering by which the Father's gift is communicated to a great number of people throughout the world, and down the successive generations, so that a multitude of people, physically separated from it by space and time, are incorporated in the same unique, identical reality, which is the Father's gift, and above all the saving truth, the divine Revelation made in Jesus Christ. […] tradition comprises equally the holy Scriptures and, besides these, not only doctrines but things: the sacraments, ecclesiastical institutions, the powers of the ministry, customs and liturgical rites—in fact, all the Christian realities themselves.[14]

Irruption

The fount of the Christian tradition is a divine irruption. By 'irruption' I mean the upsetting, disruptive, and utterly transformative way in which the transcendent God breaks into the human sphere. To illustrate this concept, we turn to the Mount Sinai narrative in the Old Testament, an episode which Walter Brueggemann has said functions as the 'paradigm for all future covenantal confrontations' between God and his people.[15] Exodus relates how the Lord appears on the mountain amidst thunder, lightning, and the deafening sound of trumpets (Exod. 19:16, 19). '[A]nd all the mount was terrible,' is how the biblical text describes the overwhelming experience (Exod. 19:18; DRC). The Exodus text repeatedly emphasizes the dangers that are involved in meeting God. Thus, boundaries must be established around the mountain to prevent regular people from approaching the Lord, on pain of death (Exod. 19:13, 21, 24). Only the chosen few are allowed to ascend Mount Sinai, and only Moses is permitted to enter the cloud, where he dwells with the Lord but does not see his face; for it is impossible to see the Lord face-to-face and live (Exod. 33:20). When Moses finally descends from the mountain after receiving the Law, he is

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13   The paper represents a very condensed version of my new book, *Charred Root of Meaning: Continuity, Transgression, and the Other in Christian Tradition*, Interventions (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2018).

14   Congar, *Meaning of Tradition*, 12–13.

15   Walter Brueggemann, 'The Book of Exodus,' in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 1 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1994), 834.

transformed. According to Jerome's translation—which is no longer the favoured one but is not implausible, apart from having a long tradition behind it—Moses grew horns after dwelling with the Lord for forty days (Exod. 34:29, 30, 35).[16] In other words, he lost his human face. Having turned into a divine monster, he must wear a veil in order not to scare his people. The result of Moses's divine encounter is, of course, the dispensation of the Law, which spells out the Lord's covenant with his chosen people. It translates the irruption of the divine on the mountain into structures of everyday life.

In the New Testament, we learn how Jesus Christ, the 'new Moses,' takes up, renews, and transforms the covenant.[17] In Jesus, the Lord no longer hides his face; for the Son *is* the Father's face. In Jesus, the Lord thus genuinely shows himself, as opposed to appearing exclusively as voice. In the Son, moreover, the Father loses his terrifying aspect; for Jesus has come to join humanity as one of us, and in order to preach a message of love.

All this is not to say that in Jesus, the disruptive dimension of God's entering into the human world has vanished. The Incarnation transgresses the line between the immanent and the transcendent. The challenge of the Incarnation, of the God-man, confronts us most dramatically in the Cross, where it becomes clear that in Jesus, the Lord takes upon himself the violence of the world. Two millennia of Christian liturgy, art, and theology have inured us to the transgressive power of the Cross, its 'Godlessness,' as Fleming Rutledge dramatically puts it in her recent book on the crucifixion.[18] The first Christians were under no illusions regarding the 'foolishness' of the Cross (1 Cor. 1:18–29): how can one believe in a God tortured to death like the basest criminal, stripped not only of his divinity but of his very humanity? At the heart of the Christian faith, therefore, a transvaluation of all religious values forces us to rethink fundamentally our conception of the divine.

The significance of these points is twofold in our context. First, the irruption of the divine of which Scripture tells us establishes that the continuity of tradition is rooted in a foundational discontinuity, a violent rupture. As Foucault would say, the root of Christian meaning is 'charred.'[19] If the tradition hands down what can be said about God, how he should be worshipped, and how his people should live his message, then this tradition is based upon an ultimately unspeakable divine intervention—unspeakable in terms of the wisdom of the world.

My second point is a philosophical one. Since Kant's 'Copernican revolution,' according to which truth resides not in an *adaequatio intellectus ad rem*, but rather

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16 The Hebrew root that Jerome translated as 'horned'— קרן (*qeren*)—occurs dozens of times in the Old Testament, and in each case means 'horn.' On the topic of the horned Moses, especially in art history, see Ruth Mellinkoff, *The Horned Moses in Medieval Art and Thought* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1970).

17 Dale C. Allison, Jr, explores the theme of the 'new Moses' in detail in his book, *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993).

18 See Fleming Rutledge, *The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015). Chapter 2 is entitled, 'The Godlessness of the Cross.'

19 The phrase 'charred root of meaning' (*racine calcinée du sens*) occurs in the preface to the first edition of *History of Madness*, ed. Jean Khalfa, trans. Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalfa (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), xxxii. For the French text of this preface to the first edition (omitted in later editions), see *Dits et écrits, 1954–1988*, ed. Daniel Defert, François Ewald, and Jacques Lagrange, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), # 4, 1:187–95.

an *adaequatio rei ad intellectum*, philosophers have sought a way to break out of the subject-centredness of modern thought. Will the thing-in-itself remain inaccessible behind the impenetrable veil of the human cognitional framework in which it appears, or are there situations in which it breaks through that veil? In attempting to answer this question, which is of as much theoretical as practical import (since philosophical theory and lived practice mirror each other), Jean-Luc Marion has developed the notion of a 'saturated phenomenon.'[20] The saturated phenomenon is one that, instead of appearing within our ordinary horizons of understanding, exceeds and shatters them. The result of such shattering is not, however, the absence of cognitional horizons—or a prioris, in Kantian language—but the constitution of new ones, constituted around the saturated phenomenon and constructed to accommodate it.

A theory of tradition that reflects Marion's insights represents a valid response to the Kantian challenge, without being forced to return to pre-critical metaphysics. The irruption of the divine that we have been discussing corresponds perfectly to what Marion attempts to think under the label of 'saturated phenomenon.' (Marion himself is aware of this fact, since for him revelation qualifies as the saturated phenomenon *par excellence*.[21]) Thus, the Christian tradition is the horizon within which God's gift of self-giving has been accommodated. This tradition has its 'charred root' in the divine irruption that burnt inadequate conceptions of the divine. The challenge, for authentic tradition, is to remember its root. Of this challenge, I will speak now.

Forgetting

As mentioned earlier, sustained reflections on tradition arose only once tradition could no longer be taken for granted. As long as tradition is lived naïvely, it has the status of an implicit presupposition that is not rendered explicit, questioned, or justified.

It is therefore not surprising that one of the first texts, as far as I am aware, that discusses the structures of the Christian tradition in detail was composed at the dawn of modernity, in an intellectual climate where the period that we now call the 'Middle Ages' was seen as drawing to a close and calling for renewal and reform. The author of this text was a Dutch Carthusian who had taken the name of Denys. In his monumental oeuvre, Denys set himself the task of creating a *summa* of the intellectual efforts preceding him. The time had come to take stock.

Without using the term 'tradition,' Denys the Carthusian (1401/02–1471) discusses its reality in a remarkable passage from the preface to his commentary on Peter Lombard's *Book of Sentences*.[22] Denys writes:

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20   See, for instance, Jean-Luc Marion, *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena*, trans. Robyn Horner and Vincent Berraud, Perspectives in Continental Philosophy 27 (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002).

21   Revelation combines the four types of saturation (event, idol, flesh, icon) that Marion distinguishes.

22   Kent Emery, Jr, the leading (indeed lone) scholar of Denys the Carthusian in our time, draws attention to this passage in his study, 'Denys the Carthusian and the Doxography of Scholastic Theology,' in his *Monastic, Scholastic and Mystical Theologies from the Later Middle Ages*, Variorum Collected Studies Series CS 561 (Aldershot and Brookfield, VT: Variorum, 1996), essay IX, esp. 332–33.

Yet, although the deficiency, smallness, and paucity of the wisdom of the way are enormous by comparison with the wisdom of the Fatherland, nonetheless the wisdom revealed at the time of the evangelical law is very splendid and great. [This wisdom was revealed] first by Christ, then by the mission and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, next by the glorious apostles and evangelists, then by the holy Fathers, and finally by the Catholic and scholastic doctors, excellently learned not only in the divine Scriptures but also in all philosophy. [This wisdom] powerfully exceeds (*vehementer transcendens*) that of the philosophers, but also of the theologians of the Old Testament and of the natural law. For—as Gregory testifies—just as wisdom grew in the course of time (*per temporum processum crevit*) before the coming of the Saviour, so it also does in the meantime [since his coming]. And most of all from the time when Master Peter Lombard, bishop of Paris, collected his *Book of Sentences*, wisdom appears to have received much and great elucidation, growth, and abundant increase. Which Isaiah once foresaw, saying, *the earth is filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the covering waters of the sea* [Isa. 11:9], that is to say, very abundantly. And those things that were hidden have been brought forth into the light; the difficulties of the Scriptures have been unknotted; and points that can be objected to the Christian faith, and have been objected by the faithless, have been solved outstandingly. Indeed, the aforesaid Master and illustrious learned scholastics who have written famously on the *Book of Sentences*, have subtly discussed, magisterially made clear, and Catholically treated not only the more difficult places of Scripture, but also the words and writings of the holy Fathers, who have written much that is difficult and obscure in their expositions of the Scriptures and other treatises.

Since it is known, however, that almost innumerable people have already written upon this *Book of Sentences*, and that moreover even today some are writing [on it]—perhaps even more than is expedient, as due to some less illustrious writings of recent people (*scripta quaedam novorum minus praeclara*), the more illustrious writings of the older ones (*scripta antiquorum praeclariora*) are less attended to, read, and investigated—hence it is my intention in this work to prepare a kind of collection of extracts from the commentaries and writings of the most authoritative, famous, and excellent doctors, and to bring the reflection of these doctors back into one volume (*in unum volumen redigere*). For just as the very text of the *Book of Sentences* is gathered from the words and testimonies of the holy Fathers, so this work too is put together (*adunetur*) from the doctrines and writings of the aforesaid writers upon the *Book of Sentences*.[23]

This text is striking in a number of ways. It conveys a lucid grasp of the unfolding of the Christian intellectual tradition in a succession of layers that are centred upon the Incarnation. Denys's account gives pride of place to the *Book of Sentences*, in which the wisdom preceding it was summed up, before Peter Lombard's work became in its turn the centre of a wave of explanation and commentary. Denys is also clear about the principal objectives behind the labours of Christian writers: to elucidate Scripture, as well as the Fathers who have written upon Scripture, and thereby to clarify and defend the faith, all with the goal to increase our wisdom by bringing to light the divine mysteries.[24]

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23   D. Dionysii Cartusiani *Commentaria in primum librum Sententiarum*, Doctoris Ecstatici D. Dionysii Cartusiani Opera Omnia 19 (Tournai: Typis cartusiae S. M. de Pratis, 1902), prooemium, 36. The translation is mine. A parallel passage is found in the prologue to the *Elementatio theologica*, Opera Omnia 33 (Tournai: Typis cartusiae S. M. de Pratis, 1907), 112.

24   I have discussed this text in several previous publications, most recently in *Charred Root of Meaning* (n. 13 above), 105–13.

But these are not the points on which we must focus in the present context, in which we want to discuss the role of forgetting in the constitution of tradition. In this connection, the final paragraph of our passage is notable, in that it demonstrates Denys's awareness of the two sides of tradition: with its objective of successively revealing deeper levels of God's revealed wisdom, tradition also runs the risk of obscuring that very wisdom. Later authors crowd out, as it were, earlier ones who were 'more illustrious,' and overshadow their insights. Sheer quantity seems to be an issue here, so that an effort to summarize the unmanageable stream of writings becomes necessary. A dispersal has occurred that requires a movement of collection and unification, which is the task that Denys pursues in his *Sentences* commentary.

But Denys's talk of the 'less illustrious writings' of more recent authors also implies a value judgement. The newer authors have written 'more than is expedient,' he suggests, because their contribution to the tradition is inferior, detracting from wisdom already attained rather than adding to it. This is why, in drawing up his *summa* of the tradition, Denys will concentrate on the 'most authoritative, famous, and excellent doctors'—by which he means the great scholastics of the 13th century, whose thought Denys often gives a Dionysian, mystical bent.

That tradition is prone to forgetting, indeed obscuring previous layers in its unfolding is an insight that 20th-century philosophy has developed in reaction to Hegel's teleological conception of the development of Spirit towards increasing levels of self-transparency and self-consciousness. There is no need or room in our context to dwell on the way in which much of the 'Continental' philosophy of the 20th century represents a response to Hegel's absorption of history and God into metaphysics. The main point is that, whereas Hegel regarded history as governed by Reason, his Continental successors emphasize its absolute contingency. This is why tradition becomes an object of critical analysis.

Heidegger's discussion of tradition in *Being and Time* is an influential example. His critique of tradition is not of the naïve rationalist kind that one would find in the Enlightenment, with its belief in the need for human reason to emancipate itself from all heteronomy in order to become fully self-determining. Heidegger, on the contrary, acknowledges that human existence is historical through and through. It is utterly exposed to, 'thrown into,' the contingency of time. Tradition, then, is nothing to be rejected, but is a reality at the heart of human existence, whether we like it or not. In the best of cases, tradition enables us to live 'authentically' out of the past into the future as we continuously re-appropriate the past in fresh and imaginative ways. But that, unfortunately, is not how tradition functions much of the time. Instead of opening up the past, it closes it off. Heidegger writes:

> When tradition (*Tradition*) reigns in this manner, it does so in such a way that what it 'transmits' (*'übergibt'*) is made so inaccessible, proximally and for the most part, that it rather becomes concealed (*verdeckt*). Tradition takes what has come down to us and delivers it over to self-evidence (*Selbstverständlichkeit*); it blocks our access to those primordial 'sources' (*zu den ursprünglichen 'Quellen'*) from which the categories and concepts handed down to us have been in part genuinely drawn. Indeed, it makes us forget that they have had such an origin, and

makes us suppose that the necessity of going back to these sources is something which we need not even understand.[25]

Husserl used the metaphor of 'sedimentation' to describe what Heidegger is attempting to convey in this passage.[26] Brilliant insights, genuine intellectual breakthroughs, of previous generations of thinkers come to be so much taken for granted that they are no longer questioned. These insights and breakthroughs come to form a sediment hidden under increasingly thick layers of subsequent intellectual edifices. Thus hidden, they become inaccessible to critical examination, with the consequence that the ground on which we stand finally eludes us. We no longer see the intellectual assumptions and decisions that represent the foundation of our own reflections. In this fashion, what was once a brilliant insight sinks to the level of an unquestioned triviality, perhaps even an unconscious presupposition.

Such forgetting of origins may be a necessary element of tradition-building. Joseph G. Mueller has spoken of a certain 'homeostatic' forgetting that is required for the functioning of a finite human mind, which is incapable of holding on to the totality of its past.[27] In a similar vein, in *Advantages and Disadvantages of History for Life*, Nietzsche already cautioned against crippling the human mind with an overload of historical detail. And yet, there is a loss if tradition transforms original insight into banal self-evidence. This type of concealment no longer allows us to see the contingency of the past, that is to say, the fact that what is now a self-evident presupposition was once one of a number of possible answers to a given problem. That answer may have worked for a long time before generating surface effects, so to speak, that produce insoluble problems. For Husserl, Galileo's mathematization of nature, taken for granted, eventually drove the European sciences into crisis. Heidegger for his part believes that Western civilization is now paying the steep price for a forgetting of the question of Being that goes back to the very beginnings of our philosophical tradition.

Destruction

The remedy for the tendency towards forgetfulness and sedimentation that is inherent in tradition is called 'destruction.' This term must be understood etymologically, like all of Heidegger's terminology. The Latin *destructio* comes from the verb *de-struere*, which literally means 'to un-build.' In fact, Husserl used the German word *Abbau* to describe the response to sedimentation; *Abbau* likewise means 'un-building.'[28]

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25 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1962), 43. Translation amended in light of the German text: *Sein und Zeit*, Gesamtausgabe 2 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1977), 29.

26 Husserl discusses 'sedimentation' in *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. David Carr (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 52.

27 Joseph G. Mueller, 'Forgetting as a Principle of Continuity in Tradition,' *Theological Studies* 70 (2009): 751–81, at 766.

28 See J. Claude Evans, 'Phenomenological Deconstruction: Husserl's Method of Abbau,' *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 21:1 (1990): 14–25.

When in *Being and Time*, therefore, Heidegger calls for a 'destruction of the history of ontology' he does not have in mind laying to waste the ontological tradition, or tearing it down to leave it in ruins. Rather, the task is one of careful de-sedimentation, of a meticulous digging that proceeds like an archaeological excavation, removing layer after layer of intellectual constructs in order to lay bare their foundations. Heidegger explains:

> If the question of Being is to have its own history made transparent, then this hardened tradition must be loosened up, and the concealments (*Verdeckungen*) which it has brought about must be detached. We understand this task as one in which by taking *the question of Being as our clue*, we are to *destruct* the traditional content of ancient ontology until we arrive at those primordial experiences (*die ursprünglichen Erfahrungen*) in which we achieved our first ways of determining the nature of Being—the ways which have guided us ever since.

> In thus demonstrating the origin of our basic ontological concepts by an investigation in which their 'birth certificate' is displayed, we have nothing to do with a bad relativizing of ontological standpoints. But this destruction (*Destruktion*) is just as far from having the *negative* sense of shaking off the ontological tradition. We must, on the contrary, stake out the positive possibilities of that tradition, and this always means staking out its *limits* (*Grenzen*); these in turn are given factically in the way the question is formulated at the time, and in the way the possible field of investigation is then bounded off. The destruction (*Destruktion*) does not relate itself negatively towards the past; its criticism is aimed at 'today' and at the prevalent way of treating the history of ontology, whether it is conceived in terms of doxography, intellectual history, or as a history of problems. But to bury the past in nullity is not the purpose of this destruction (*Destruktion*); its aim is *positive*; its negative function remains unexpressed and indirect.[29]

We note several points about the objectives of the destruction. First, it aims at laying bare 'primordial experiences' which have guided human thinking about reality, but which have subsequently been covered up. This means that the tradition arising from these experiences is rooted in something to which it no longer has access: tradition, in handing down insights, betrays its origins. Secondly, destruction aims at understanding tradition by uncovering its positive possibilities as well as its limits—these are in fact two sides of the same coin. Heidegger is thinking in Kantian terms here: tradition sets the framework within which reality, or a certain aspect of reality, is able to be experienced and conceptualized; at the same time, the field of experience that the framework opens up also has boundaries, beyond which no experience is possible. Thirdly and finally, destruction challenges standard accounts of a tradition; it is thus revisionist, forcing conventional accounts to be rewritten. If destruction therefore has a critical dimension, this does not concern the past, but representations of the past.

But where have we strayed? This paper is about Christian tradition, and we are discussing Heidegger's concept of destruction! The connection is much closer than one might think.

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29   Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Macquarrie/Robinson, 44 (German, 30–31). Translation amended.

We begin with the observation that, in discussing the notion of destruction, Heidegger eschews the German term *Abbau*, with which he was well familiar,[30] in favour of the Latinizing *Destruktion*—and this despite the fact that *Abbau* does not carry the negative connotations that *Destruktion* does; despite the fact, as well, that Heidegger generally prefers terms that are philosophically suggestive because of their German etymology. One possible explanation as to why Heidegger prefers *Destruktion* over *Abbau* is that the former term possesses overtones that he wants to preserve. These overtones happen to be Christian—Lutheran, to be precise.

Heidegger scholars have known for some time that *Destruktion* has its origins in what one could call Heidegger's 'Lutheran' period: the 1920s, after his renunciation of Catholicism and before his turn to National Socialism and, later still, to neo-paganism. S. J. McGrath has gone so far as to claim that, in *Being and Time*, Heidegger 'deliberately designed a philosophy symbiotic with Lutheran theology.'[31] The notion of destruction is central in this symbiosis. Heidegger adapted it from the *Heidelberg Disputation*.[32] There Luther uses *destruere* as a synonym for the Vulgate's *perdere* in 1 Cor. 1:19: *Scriptum est enim: Perdam sapientiam sapientium, et prudentiam prudentium reprobabo* ('For it is written: I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the prudence of the prudent I will reject'). The context of Luther's treatment of destruction is the way in which the Cross confounds human wisdom. What is at stake, in other words, is the foundational divine irruption that subverts our conceptions of God. In the *Heidelberg Disputation*, Luther contends that the so-called 'theology of glory' of the tradition has been allowed to obscure the 'theology of the Cross.' But let me put this more precisely: Luther, in fact, regards God, rather than the tradition, as the primary agent of concealment. God has hidden himself on the Cross, so that believers are called to embrace his divinity in its very concealment. In thesis 21, on the difference between the 'theologian of glory' and the 'theologian of the Cross,' Luther writes:

> This is clear: He who does not know Christ does not know God hidden in suffering (*absconditum in passionibus*). Therefore he prefers works to suffering, glory to the Cross, strength to weakness, wisdom to folly, and, in general, good to evil. These are the people whom the Apostle calls 'enemies of the Cross of Christ' [Phil. 3:18], for they hate the Cross and suffering and love

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30 Heidegger employed the term *Abbau* in the lecture course *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, which dates from 1927, the year in which *Being and Time* appeared. See *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Hermann, Gesamtausgabe 24 (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1975), 31.

31 S. J. McGrath, *The Early Heidegger and Medieval Philosophy: Phenomenology for the Godforsaken* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2006), 168. More specifically on Heidegger's appropriation of Luther's notion of *destructio*, see Benjamin D. Crowe, *Heidegger's Religious Origins: Destruction and Authenticity*, Indiana Series in the Philosophy of Religion (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006).

32 Heidegger commented on the *Heidelberg Disputation* on two occasions in the early 1920s, namely, in a lecture course and in a paper that he contributed to a seminar taught by Bultmann. For references, see Christian Sommer, *Heidegger, Aristote, Luther. Les sources aristoté-liciennes et néo-testamentaires d'*Être et temps, Épiméthée (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2006), 36–38.

works and the glory of works. […] Therefore the friends of the Cross say that the Cross is good and works are evil, for through the Cross works are destroyed (*destruuntur*) and the old Adam, who is especially edified (*aedificatur*) by works, is crucified. It is impossible for a person not to be puffed up by his good works unless he has first been emptied (*exinanitus*) and destroyed (*destructus*) by suffering and evil until he knows that he is nothing (*sciat seipsum esse nihil*) and that his works are not his but God's.[33]

Fellowship of Christ means friendship with the Cross, which in turn requires a self-emptying, indeed self-annihilation, that mirrors Jesus' *kenosis*. The need for a destruction of the tradition, in the form of the 'theology of glory,' arises from the fact that it conceals God's self-concealment on the Cross. It has alienated the believer from the primordial Christian experience, as Heidegger would say.

The structure of Luther's theological argument carries over into Heidegger's metaphysical argument. For the 'forgetfulness of Being' of which Heidegger speaks in *Being and Time* turns out to be the concealment of an original concealment: it is only because beings conceal Being that Being can subsequently come to be forgotten.

One final note: 'destruction' is not 'deconstruction.' No one knew this better than the philosopher most associated with deconstruction, Jacques Derrida. He explicitly, almost angrily renounced the Heideggerian heritage of destruction, which he felt was irredeemably tainted by its Christian roots: 'Let us never forget,' Derrida urges, 'the Christian, in fact, Lutheran, memory of Heideggerian deconstruction (*Destruktion* was first *destructio* by Luther, anxious to reactivate the originary sense of the Gospels by deconstructing theological sediments). Let us never forget this, lest one mix up all the "deconstructions" of this time. And of the world. But in truth, one can never forget this Christian (Lutheran, Pascalian, Hegelian, Kierkegaardian, Marxian, and so forth) memory when one reads Heidegger, when one also questions his denials. A "deconstruction of Christianity," if it is ever possible, should therefore begin by untying itself from a Christian tradition of *destructio*.'[34] Derrida is exactly right: 'destruction' remains a Christian notion, despite Heidegger's protestations in footnotes of *Being and Time* that seek to distance his work from its Christian roots.[35] The difference between 'destruction' and 'deconstruction' stems from the fact that destruction is not an end in itself. Not content with the mere dissipation of meaning, the unmasking of the tensions and inconsistencies in a text, destruction is completed by a movement of retrieval, to which we now turn.[36]

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33 *Luther's Works*, vol. 31: *Career of the Reformer I*, ed. Harold T. Grimm (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1957), 53. I have amended the translation in light of the Latin text: *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesammtausgabe*, vol. 1 (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1883), 362.

34 Jacques Derrida, *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*, trans. Christine Irizarry, Meridian (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 60. For the French original see Derrida, *Le toucher. Jean-Luc Nancy* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 2000), 74. It is ironic that, in a passage in which he underlines the distance between *déconstruction* and *Destruktion*, Derrida translates the latter in terms of the former! There is no 'deconstruction' in Heidegger, who never used the term.

35 As an example, consider, in section 62, the footnote that is devoted to the notions of being-guilty and sin (*Being and Time*, 496).

36 On the difference between destruction and deconstruction, Hans-Georg Gadamer has incisive reflections in his essay, 'Destruktion und Dekonstruktion,' in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol.

Retrieval

Destruction and retrieval, then, belong together. The un-building of strata of the tradition that have betrayed aspects of the very 'primordial experience' which it is tradition's task to hand down has the goal to open up the situation where a particular aspect of reality was first conceptualized; where a thinker first wrestled with the question of how to frame a particular problem. In this way, destruction aims to retrieve the meaning-generating moments behind the tradition, which the tradition itself has a tendency to obfuscate.

The English term 'retrieval' renders *Wiederholung* in *Being and Time*. On the face of it, the most straightforward translation of *Wiederholung* is 'repetition,' but *Wiederholung* possesses an important ambiguity that 'repetition' does not convey. Depending on how *Wiederholung* is pronounced—with emphasis on the first or on the third syllable—it means respectively a 'bringing back' or a 'repeating.' Thus, *Wiederholung* is not a matter of just mechanically repeating an aspect of the past, a kind of nostalgic return to an intellectual constellation long left behind. Rather, *Wiederholung* is an attempt to 'bring back' that constellation, to bring it back to life, so that we may confront anew the intellectual challenge that a thinker faced, 'see' the problem as he saw it, and thus grasp the force of the solution he provided. But *Wiederholung* does not end there. This is how Heidegger describes it in *Being and Time*:

> *Repeating (Wiederholung) is handing down explicitly*—that is to say, going back into possibilities of the Dasein that has-been-there. […] But when one has, by repetition, handed down to oneself a possibility that has been, the Dasein that has-been-there is not disclosed in order to be actualized over again. The repeating of that which is possible does not bring again something that is 'past,' nor does it bind the 'present' back to that which has already been 'outstripped.' […] repetition does not let itself be persuaded of something by what is 'past,' just in order that this, as something which was formerly actual, may recur. Rather, the repetition makes a *reciprocative rejoinder* (*erwidert*) to the possibility of that existence which has-been-there. But when such a rejoinder (*Erwiderung*) is made to this possibility in a resolution, it is made *in a moment of vision; and as such* it is at the same time a *disavowal* (*Widerruf*) of that which in the today is working itself out as the 'past.' Repetition does not abandon itself to that which is past, nor does it aim at progress. In the moment of vision authentic existence is indifferent to both these alternatives.[37]

Repetition—or, rather, let us use the term 'retrieval'—is not aimed at making the past recur, nor does it attempt to use the past in a contemporary progressive project. Retrieval takes the past seriously, but not, significantly, with an emphasis how it *actually* was. Instead, retrieval brings us back to the *possibilities* of the past. Retrieval opens up an intellectual situation as it presented itself to a thinker of the past, considers the way in

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2: *Hermeneutik II* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr/Paul Siebeck, 1993), 361–72. Jeff Mitscherling comments usefully on Gadamer's distinction in 'Deconstruction, *Destruktion*, and Dialogue,' *Analecta Hermeneutica* 6 (2014): 1–8. Mitscherling, who describes destruction as a step beyond deconstruction, does not seem to see the connection between destruction and retrieval.

37   *Being and Time*, trans. Macquarrie/Robinson, 437–38 (German, 509–10).

which this thinker responded, but feels in no way obliged to repeat the solution. On the contrary, the retrieval may lead to a 'reciprocative rejoinder,' which is the slightly clumsy but accurate translation of the German term *Erwiderung. Erwiderung* contains the root *wider*, which means 'against.' Thus, retrieving a past debate may well lead to an exploration of possibilities *not* pursued in that past—that is to say, in our tradition—*against* that past, *against* that tradition. Such a move, of course, will also have to involve challenging the present, to the extent that the present is always the present appropriation of a particular past.

Let me try to translate this philosophical language back into a more theological idiom, to show its theological relevance. We started our discussion of the disruptive elements that are constitutive of the Christian tradition by speaking of divine 'irruptions.' These 'saturated phenomena' shatter the religious, intellectual, and moral paradigms of the world, while opening up new horizons in which God's people will henceforth live and think. They found a tradition, or traditions (such as the Jewish and the Christian one), which hand down the memory of the initial encounter with God, explaining it, drawing out its moral and intellectual consequences, defending it against criticism, and applying it to new circumstances. In performing these functions, the tradition has a tendency to bury the initial dramatic encounter in layers that become increasingly 'normalizing.' At some point, therefore, a sense arises that something has been lost—perhaps something very, very important. We saw this unease expressed, with different degrees of forcefulness according to their different characters, in both Denys the Carthusian and Martin Luther, who both formed part of the reform movement of the long 15th century.[38] The recognition of the forgetfulness that is inherent in tradition leads to the desire to return to the roots, to dig up what has been covered in layers of commentary; for sometimes, more has been written than is expedient, to repeat Denys's beautifully diplomatic phrase. Perhaps what needs digging up the most is God's destruction of our worldly wisdom in the sacrifice of his Son on the Cross. Remembering that destruction calls for a destruction of the layers of wisdom that have mediated the Cross to us, unfolded its meaning to us, in ways both helpful and unhelpful at the same time. What is necessary, then, is a retrieval of that primordial experience, that divine irruption, in order to recover it in its radical possibilities.

An Example: *Corpus mysticum*

There may still be a lingering sense that the language of rupture which I have developed in this paper can lead only to a distorted reading of the Christian and, in particular, the Catholic tradition. If it is the case that 'destruction' has Lutheran roots (and we have not even touched on the Kierkegaardian provenance of 'repetition'!), then applying this

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38 Luther's glosses on Peter Lombard's *Book of Sentences* demonstrate very well how the Reformer's thought grew out of a movement 'back to the sources' that was characteristic of 15th-century theology; on this point, one may read Philipp W. Rosemann, *The Story of a Great Medieval Book: Peter Lombard's 'Sentences,'* Rethinking the Middle Ages 2 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), chap. 4: 'The Long Fifteenth Century: Back to the Sources' (137–83).

concept to Christian tradition will lend support to suspicions regarding its value. We will end up not 'destructing,' but destroying tradition. It is possible, it seems to me, to dispel such concerns.

Henri de Lubac's *Corpus mysticum* is one of the classics of Catholic theology in the 20th century. Its argument is so well known that it hardly needs to be rehearsed. In brief, there has been a '*conversio completa*' in the application of the term 'mystical' to the body of Christ.[39] In the early Church and until about the 12th century, Christ's Eucharistic body was called his 'mystical' body. Calling it 'mystical' involved not the slightest denial of what later came to be termed 'real presence.' Christ's mystical body was, however, considered in the closest connection with his ecclesial body—that is to say, the Church, which, in de Lubac's famous phrase, the Eucharist 'makes.'[40] Later, however, the qualifier 'mystical' was transferred to the ecclesial body while the Eucharistic body was conceived as the 'true' one. This inversion occasioned a further shift. In the older paradigm, the sacramental and the ecclesial body were seen in close union; in the paradigm that replaced it, Christ's sacramental body is associated with the historical one while a 'caesura' is introduced between these two, on the one hand, and the ecclesial body, on the other.[41] The result has been an impoverished understanding of the Eucharist that privileges static presence and individual devotion over the 'incorporation' of the Church into the body of Christ.

Our focus here is not on the theological substance of de Lubac's argument, but on the methodology of his historical research. *Corpus mysticum*, which was not written as a treatise on methodology, is nonetheless interspersed with reflections on how de Lubac conceived of his approach to historical theology.

Cardinal de Lubac's interest in the term *corpus mysticum* was triggered when he immersed himself in the theology of the 9th century. To his surprise, he found no trace there of the terminology current in the theology of his own time, a terminology taking it for granted that the Church was properly designated as Christ's 'mystical' body. In the research that was to become *Corpus mysticum*, de Lubac therefore engaged in a genealogy—to employ another postmodern term—of the concept of the 'mystical body.' This genealogy led him to lay bare the layers by which the tradition constructed its theology of the Eucharist. He arrived at the conclusion that the Tradition (which in the preface to the second edition he spells with a capital *T*) had 'buried a treasure trove' that needed to be 'exhumed.'[42] Towards the end of his study, he cautions that 'there is always a risk of forgetting':[43] 'We need to relearn from our Fathers, those of Christian antiquity and also

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39   Henri Cardinal de Lubac SJ, *Corpus mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages. Historical Survey*, trans. Gemma Simmonds CJ with Richard Price and Christopher Stephens, ed. Laurence Paul Hemming and Susan Frank Parsons, Faith in Reason (London: SCM, 2006), 187. For the French text, see *Corpus mysticum. L'Eucharistie et l'Église au moyen âge. Étude historique*, 2nd ed., Théologie 3 (Paris: Aubier, 1949), 210. The Latin phrase appears as such in de Lubac's original text, while the English translation has 'total conversion.'

40   Ibid., 88/104 ('L'Eucharistie *fait* l'Église').

41   Ibid., 256/288.

42   Ibid., xxiii/7 ('la joie d'avoir exhumé une parcelle du trésor enfoui de la Tradition').

43   Ibid., 261/293.

those of the Middle Ages, to see present in the unique Sacrifice the unity of the "three bodies" of Christ.'[44]

Having diagnosed the forgetfulness that is an inherent risk of tradition, de Lubac's remedy consists in reconstructing the intriguing mix of continuity and rupture that characterizes the tradition. He endeavours to be balanced. It is nonetheless clear that his sympathies lie with the earlier conception of Christ's three bodies in their unity. The loss of this unified conception amounts to a 'fatal evolution.'[45] But then, he reflects, 'these sorts of ruptures are the indispensable condition of new syntheses.'[46] Furthermore, the ruptures are never absolute. They occur at first imperceptibly, in

> traditional formulations that perpetuate themselves by changing, or, above all, whose meaning changes gradually while they remain themselves unchanged in their letter. Furthermore, in all this a real doctrinal continuity is maintained. It is very rare that an innovation […] cannot claim authority from some earlier text […].[47]

In this process of gradual yet radical change, the role of the Magisterium (a word that occurs just once in *Corpus mysticum*) is to uphold authentic tradition: 'The Magisterium, from far off, recalled the essence: theology, without contradicting it, did not always listen to it, or merely proved itself its feeble echo.'[48] De Lubac, therefore, did not view *Corpus mysticum* in the least as a critique of magisterial teaching, but rather as an attempt to recover it.

What does this recovery involve? An 'antiquarian fantasy' is not enough, declares the eminent theologian.[49] The point of his book is 'in no way to urge an imagined return' to the methods or ways of thinking of a lost age.[50] In fact, recognizing the brokenness of the tradition prevents us from ever naïvely idealizing any one aspect of it: 'The periods from which we have to cull most of the material for our explorations were, as any other, troubled times, eras where disunity and hypocrisy ruled […].'[51] Likewise, despite impressions that de Lubac acknowledges he may have encouraged, *Corpus mysticum* does not intend to put 'rational thought and classical theology on trial.'[52] Neither idealization of the past nor denigration of the present is the goal. What is at stake in de Lubac's project, rather, is something he terms a 'reinvention' (*réinvention*) of the past.[53] This begins with the recognition that, when tradition evolves, the problems themselves change, not just the solutions.[54] De Lubac provides an example: only when the sacramental body of

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44   Ibid., 260/293.
45   Ibid., 246/277.
46   Ibid., 246/277.
47   Ibid., 257/298–99; trans. amended.
48   Ibid., 259/291.
49   Ibid., xxiv/8 ('un rêve archaïsant').
50   Ibid., xxiv/8 ('… prôner un chimérique retour à ses méthodes ou à ses habitudes de pensée').
51   Ibid., 260/293; trans. amended.
52   Ibid., xxiii/7; trans. amended. The French text has *pensée rationnelle* ('rational thought'), not *pensée rationaliste* ('rationalist thought,' as in the English translation).
53   Ibid., 260/293.
54   See ibid., 256/288.

Christ comes to be conceived in terms of 'real presence' does the problem arise as to whether Christ is 'really present' for the heretic who receives his body. As long as sacramental body and ecclesial body were held together, the heretic could not be 'incorporated' Eucharistically.[55]

Reinvention, then, requires the recovery—one might be tempted to say, retrieval—of alternative ways of seeing a problem, that is to say, the recovery of a different theological framework. The purpose of such recovery is not to rush to quick conclusions, but to open a space for authentic theological contemplation, for the play of possibilities. De Lubac ends the preface to the second edition with the following words:

> Amid so many varied riches that claim our attention, we shall always ask that one act like a child of Plato, that is to say, every time that there is at least the possibility of so acting, not to make a choice. A unity too quickly affirmed has no power to stimulate. Eclecticisms are without consequence. But the methodical welcoming of contrasts, once these are grasped, is fruitful. Not only does it guard against over-eager partiality; not only does it open us up to an awareness, in depth, of unity: it is also one of the preconditions that prepare us for new departures.[56]

Exclusion

We have now assembled a network of four concepts to describe the unfolding of Christian tradition: irruption, forgetting, destruction, and retrieval. A crucial element is still missing, however, and it may be the most difficult one yet. Christian tradition is not possible without exclusion.

We begin with a powerful text by Foucault, excerpted from the preface to the first edition of *History of Madness*:

> One could write a history of *limits*—of those obscure acts, necessarily forgotten as soon as they are accomplished, through which a culture rejects something that will be the Outside (*l'Extérieur*) for it; and throughout the course of its history, this hollowed-out void, this white space by means of which it isolates itself, defines it as much as its values. For, these values it receives and maintains in the continuity of history; but in that region of which we want to speak, it exercises its essential choices, operating the division (*partage*) which gives it the face of its positivity; here the original depth where it forms itself is to be found. To question a culture about its limit-experiences (*expériences-limites*) is to question it in the confines of history, about a tearing-apart which is like the very birth of its history. In a tension that is continually in the process of resolving itself, there occurs the confrontation between the temporal continuity of a dialectical analysis and the unveiling of a tragic structure at the threshold of time.[57]

If we replace the word 'culture' with 'tradition' in this passage, it yields an uncannily accurate description of the relationship between the Christian faith and its intimate Outside: Judaism.

This topic is so vast and so difficult that it would be misguided to attempt to treat it in a couple of pages. But the topic is so vast and so difficult because, in a significant sense,

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55   See ibid., 257–58/289–90.
56   Ibid., xxv–xxvi/9–10; trans. amended.
57   *History of Madness* (cited in n. 19 above), xxix (= *Dits et écrits*, 1:189); trans. amended.

the Christian tradition *is* its relationship to the Jewish tradition. And that relationship is deeply ambiguous in the way Foucault describes: the Jewish tradition is the rejected 'Outside' of the Christian one, which constituted itself over against its Jewish roots, but also in continuity with its Jewish roots, such that the Jewish 'other' has forever remained at the heart of what it means to be Christian. This intimate otherness, that proximate distance, accounts for the fact that Jewish–Christian relations have never been easy: too much is at stake. What does the 'fulfilment' of the Law mean of which the Lord speaks in Matthew 5:17? The apostles themselves already struggled over this question, as is evidenced so dramatically in the incident at Antioch (Gal. 2:11–14), where Peter and Paul clashed over the rules under which Gentiles could share a table with the Jewish members of the emerging Christian community.[58] It is in this conflict that we encounter the first recorded anathema among the followers of Jesus: ἀνάθεμα ἔστω, an agitated Paul shouts in the face of those who challenge his preaching of the gospel (Gal. 1:9). The very name 'Christians' (Χριστιανοί) first emerged in this context of exclusion, as Acts 11:26 reports, together with a term for those Christians who remained too Jewish. These people were guilty of 'Judaïzing' (ἰουδαΐζειν). This term, which is a hapax legomenon in the New Testament (Gal. 2:14), came to exercise a key function in the Christian tradition, where it was frequently invoked to mark the boundaries with the Jewish 'Outside.'[59]

   Yet this boundary has to remain porous and fluid. In the Christian tradition, identity and exclusion form a dialectical whole just as Foucault envisages it: 'throughout the course of its history, this hollowed-out void, this white space by means of which it isolates itself, defines [the tradition] as much as its values.' That the Law is 'fulfilled' means that it is neither definitively overcome, nor does it abide unchanged in its Jewish form. While Christians believe that the Old Testament foreshadows the New, it can never be superseded in its validity as God's authentic revelation to the people of Israel. The truth resides in a space in-between whose precise shape must be staked out ever anew. Far from ever being able to be left behind in the Christian tradition, the questions regarding its Jewish roots will always remain its future. They represent its founding exclusion, the charred root from which it derives its meaning.

Acknowledgements

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58 My account of the incident at Antioch is informed by the treatment in James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul, and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (Lexington, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1990).

59 Kittel's short entry on ἰουδαΐζειν adverts to the one use of the word in the Septuagint (Est. 8:17). See Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. and trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965), 383. Gilbert Dagron, 'Judaïser,' *Travaux et Mémoires* 11 (1991): 359–80, offers reflections on the use of the term in Byzantine theology. For further literature, see the footnotes in Róbert Dán, '"Judaizare"— The Career of a Term,' in *Antitrinitarianism in the Second Half of the 16th Century*, ed. Róbert Dán and Antal Pirnát, Studia humanitatis 5 (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó; Leiden: Brill, 1982), 25–34.

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