

Gianluigi Pasquale

THE INFLUENCE OF PROTESTANT THEOLOGY ON THE  
CATHOLIC "HISTORIA SALUTIS" 'S CONCEPT. THEOLOGICAL  
DEBATE IN EUROPE

Utjecaj protestantske teologije na katolički koncept "historia salutis".  
Teološka rasprava u Europi

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*Summary*

*Protestant theology has positively influenced the development of the concept "history of salvation" which is accepted in Catholic theology and in mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, for the first time, included in the dogmatic constitution "Dei Verbum" (No. 2) of the Second Vatican Council. In fact, since the middle of the fifties Protestantism has criticized Catholic theology that it has completely forgotten the historical-salvation scenario which should be in the focus of any theology that truly wants to be a Christian theology, starting from Christocentrism the incarnation of the Son of God Jesus Christ in time and in history. In reality, Catholicism has never been fully satisfied with the contemplation of "teologia naturale", which is different from the supernatural. The Catholics have rather been aware that theology should have, as E. Schillebeeckx (1914-2009) reminds back in 1953, a historical-salvific foundation to be able to talk about God. Joseph Ratzinger has also recognized this "merit", but, he noted that the centre of the problem revolves around the relationship between (immutable) God's existence and history (in progress) in which He has wanted to reveal himself. For Catholic theology, God's immutableness is not entirely incompatible with the time in which salvation happens. On the contrary, this is the only way one can correctly speak of Christian theology in the proper sense. Therefore, ever since Dei Verbum No.2, Catholic theology has ceased to simply talk about the storia sacra ("sacred history") and began to speak of "salvation history", the only one*

*that can explain how modern man and woman can encounter the meaning of their own existence in time, how to be saved.*

Key words: *Protestants, Catholics, historia salutis, historia sacra, Dei Verbum*

## 1. INTRODUCTION: PROBLEM IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PROTESTANT REFORM

The need for a definition of the pre-argumentative context preceding and concurrent to the birth of the category of *historia salutis*, was already stated in 1967 and, later, in 1982, by J. Ratzinger, who pointed out: “This, it seems to me, is the form in which the question of salvation history is being asked in Catholic theology today, and it is here that we should discover the contribution that Catholic theology can and ought to make to the study of the question. The attempts to find an answer are not as numerous as one might hope”<sup>1</sup>. To the best of my knowledge, in the German-speaking countries, where the debate began, Gottlieb Söhngen<sup>2</sup> was the first to address the question, in dialogue with Karl Barth and Emil Brunner; in France, it was especially Jean Daniélou who concerned himself with the issue, debating the work of Oscar Cullmann, and we shall focus even on the concurrent theological discussion in Italy in particular. At this stage of the debate, the expression “history of salvation” took on an antithetical meaning: the theology of salvation history presented itself as antithetical to metaphysics and theology considered in metaphysical terms, since up to then the term “sacred history” had been preferred.

With this observation, not only did Ratzinger open up the *status quaestionis* requiring an explanation as to how and why the century of theology of history actually succeeded in leading

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph RATZINGER, *Theologische Prinzipienlehre. Bausteine zur Fundamentaltheologie*, E. Wewel Verlag, Munich, 1982, p. 180-181, quoted here in the English translation by Sister Mary Frances McCARTHY, *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 1987, p. 162

<sup>2</sup> See Gianluigi PASQUALE, *La base storico-salvifica della teologia nel Vaticano II. La «soluzione ecumenica» tra pensiero protestante e cattolico*, in: *Sapere teologico e unità della fede. Studi in onore del Prof. Jared Wicks*, ed. C. APARICIO VALLS – C. DOTOLI – G. PASQUALE, Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Rome, 2004, pp. 534-552.

to the privileged use, in theology, of the concept of “salvation history”, but he also pinpointed the core of the entire question: whether transient history can truly be an intermediary with the essential, i.e., supernatural salvation that comes only from the eternal God. This possibility was stigmatized as a hypothesis to be verified not just by philosophy of history, which,<sup>3</sup> ineluctably, confined God to an “idea” immanent to any historical process - the only *rationalitas* of concrete reality - but even by the Protestant critical view, accusing the Catholic theology of having compromised the essential historical quality of the Christian message, through metaphysical antithesis.

The backdrop to the following essay is the awareness, developed around the 1950s, that history could represent an objective genitive for theology, and the possibility that contemporary theology must even be a “theological theory of history”.<sup>4</sup> We shall start by laying out the *status quaestionis*, presenting then the positive influence which Protestant theology had on Catholic theology, concluding, finally, with speculative suggestions and outlines of thought for the theology of Revelation and systematic Christology, based on theological reflection on history itself. The frame of reference in the background is always the celebration of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) - an ecclesial event that is relatively recent, having been celebrated a “mere” fifty years ago - where, de facto and for the first time, the term “history of salvation” (*historia salutis*) was coined.

In other words, in consideration of the events of the twentieth century, although the question of whether the only horizon of theology can be history remains open, theology of history certainly places back at the center of everything and foremost God, who in Jesus Christ offers salvation to man revealing himself as Father, in the death and resurrection of the Son, whose redemption in words and works of salvation is perpetuated in the time of the Church by the Holy Spirit, in the past, the present, and the

<sup>3</sup> See Gianluigi PASQUALE, *Finding Reason in History. For a Philosophy of History as a Science*, Academia Verlag, Sankt Augustin, 2014, pp. 276-289

<sup>4</sup> This is the opinion of Toronto Jesuit R. M. Doran, general editor of the works of B. Lonergan (1904-1984), according to whom, after the change that took place in Catholic theology in the twentieth century as critically interpreted history penetrated it, “the mediated object of systematic theology is history itself” and “systematic theology is to be a theological theory of history”. Robert M. DORAN, *System and History: The Challenge to Catholic Systematic Theology*, in: *Theological Studies*, 59 (1998), pp. 569-607

future of time. This sheds light, therefore, on the title of my paper – “The influence of Protestant theology on the Catholic *historia salutis* concept: Theological discussion in Italy” - which aims to guide, from the very first steps, the analytical and then speculative path that now opens up before us.

2. THEOLOGY “SUB RATIONE DEITATIS” OR “SUB RATIONE CHRISTI”? : THE PROTESTANT PROVOCATION TO CATHOLIC THEOLOGY OF HISTORY

In order to place the Catholic theology of history in its proper context, we need to consider a further important element, which that theology was questioningly consulted for, i.e., what the champions of kerygmatic theology proposed through the theological implication of the coining, for those years, of the Protestant concept of *Heilsgeschichte*<sup>5</sup>. For it is, by now, indubitable that the publication of Oscar Cullmann’s work *Christus und die Zeit* in 1946<sup>6</sup> and, albeit to a lesser degree, his later *Heil als Geschichte*<sup>7</sup>, contributed quite significantly to a considerable resumption of Catholic studies in theology of history, causing an even more substantial increase in them<sup>8</sup>, since any theology that was disassociated from salvation history was denounced as contaminated by Hellenistic thought<sup>9</sup>.

The following hypothesis thus appears to take shape: first of all, and inasmuch as I could learn, the awakening of Catholic theology of history in the mid-twentieth century was not originally due to the Protestant influence, but rather to much more ample and profound reasons, which had undoubtedly also touched Evangelical theology: idealist, Marxist, and existentialist cues<sup>10</sup>. Furthermore, although the unequivocally Protestant

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<sup>5</sup> See Alan RICHARDSON, *History sacred and profane*, SCM Press, London, 1964, pp. 139-144.

<sup>6</sup> Oscar CULLMANN, *Christus und die Zeit. Die urchristliche Zeit- und Geschichtsauffassung*, Evangelischer Verlag, Zollikon-Zürich, 1948<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> Oscar CULLMANN, *Heil als Geschichte. Heilsgeschichtliche Existenz im Neuen Testament*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 1965.

<sup>8</sup> See Henri DE LUBAC, *La Rivelazione divina e il senso dell'uomo. Commento alle Costituzioni conciliari “Dei Verbum” e “Gaudium et Spes”*, Jaca Book, Milano, 1985<sup>2</sup>, pp. 41-45

<sup>9</sup> See O. CULLMANN, *Christus und die Zeit*, pp. 186-189; O. CULLMANN, *Heil als Geschichte*, pp. 6-10.

<sup>10</sup> See A. DONI, *La riscoperta delle fonti*, in: *Storia della teologia*. III. *Da Vitus Pichler a Henri de Lubac*, ed. R. FISICHELLA, Edizioni Dehoniane, Rome, 1996, pp. 443-474,

re-evaluation of the historical-salvific dimension, so important for theology, definitely oriented Catholic studies of history toward further exploration of that which after the Second Vatican Council was incorporated in the concept of *historia salutis*, that re-evaluation was certainly not the origin of the reflection on history of salvation, which had never been absent even in what is known as “natural theology”<sup>11</sup>. Rather, as we shall show, the Christological prominence, so quintessential to the historic-salvific determination of theology of history and theology as a whole, began at this point to assert itself ever increasingly.

### 2.1. *The proleptic symptom caused by Heilsgeschichte theology*

In any case, we need to assess the extent of the influence of the concept of *Heilsgeschichte* coming from Protestant theology, because it is based on an entirely new assumption. At the exact historical moment analyzed, one needs to distinguish on the one hand the context preceding the argumentation, i.e., the situation wherein the study of the datum of history, which led to the subsequent development of historical awareness, took place, and, on the other hand, the heated debate that was already building up in Protestant theology concerning the idea of “history of salvation”.

With respect to the former and within Protestantism, as early as the nineteenth century and particularly in German theology, the theology of salvation history (*heilsgeschichtliche Theologie*) had largely caught on, especially with Tübingen theologian<sup>12</sup>

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here pp. 469-471, and Felix FLÜCKIGER, *Die protestantische Theologie des 19. Jahrhunderts*, in: *Die Kirche in ihrer Geschichte. IV. Theologie und Philosophie im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. B. MOELLER, Vandenhoeck und Rubrecht, Göttingen, 1975, pp. 1-97, here pp. 31-34.

<sup>11</sup> See Gottlieb SÖHNGEN, *Natürliche Theologie und Heilsgeschichte. Antwort an Emil Brunner*, in: *Catholica. Jahrbuch für Kontroverstheologie* 4 (1935), pp. 97-114, here 102-103

<sup>12</sup> In truth it must be specified that the entire “Tübingen School” thought historically, both in the Protestant and in the Catholic field. It can then be demonstrated that the prompts towards penetration of the concept of *Heilsgeschichte* in theology did not only come from the former - albeit from this point of view it was the most influential - but by the latter, too, although, to be precise, “insofern das Problem der Geschichte und die Sache der Überlieferung eine Herausforderung an das Denken darstellen”, as observed in Max SECKLER, *Im Spannungsfeld von Wissenschaft und Kirche. Theologie als schöpferische Auslegung der Wirklichkeit*, Herder, Freiburg im Breisgau, 1980, p. 191, with regard to the Catholic academia

Johann Tobias Beck (1804-1878) and the main representative of the Erlangen School, Johannes Christian Konrad von Hofmann (1810-1877)<sup>13</sup>, who, in agreement with a century that thought historically, used historical-salvific categories as those most suitable to theology, against the formalisms of Scholastic conceptualism and the supernaturalism of traditional theology.

On the Lutheran side, the existential position of Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976) was opposed to the historical-salvific position of Oscar Cullmann (1902-1999)<sup>14</sup>. According to Bultmann, Christ eschatologically announces the end of old time and the definitive advent of new time and, therefore, the end of history<sup>15</sup>.

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of Tübingen, Seckler clarifies that for Catholic theologians “wichtiger war ihnen die Einsicht, daß der Geist des Menschen der Wahrheit nur durch *geschichtliche Vermittlung* innewerden kann”, M. SECKLER, *Im Spannungsfeld von Wissenschaft und Kirche*, p. 192. Quoting the renowned member of Tübingen’s Catholic faculty, J. S. Drey (1777-1853) – “der ‚geistige Initiator‘ und ‚Gründer‘ der Katholischen Tübinger Schule” (M. SECKLER, *Im Spannungsfeld von Wissenschaft und Kirche*, p. 178 - Seckler wrote: “es geht darum, die Logik der Geschichte im Fleisch der Geschichte zu erfassen, um dadurch die einzelnen Gegebenheiten vom *Sinn des Ganzen* her begreifen und würdigen zu können. Dies ist die Aufgabe der systematischen Theologie, die für Drey die wissenschaftliche Theologie schlechthin ist”, M. SECKLER, *Im Spannungsfeld von Wissenschaft und Kirche*, p. 193. It is noteworthy that, among the early historical signs of the revival of a theology of history which occurred at the middle of the 20th century, the *Catholic* contribution of the School of Tübingen has only been recognized in the past few years, especially with Drey. See Georg ESSEN, *Geschichtstheologie*, in: *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, IV, ed., Michael BUCHBERGER - JOSEF HÖFER - Karl RAHNER, Herder, Freiburg-Basel-Wien, 1985<sup>3</sup>, pp. 563-568, here p. 566.

<sup>13</sup> See F. FLÜCKIGER, *Die protestantische Theologie*, p. 31, where he writes: “Der erste, der die historische Betrachtungsweise in der Theologie konsequent angewendet hat, war der Begründer der (jüngeren) Tübinger Schule, *Ferdinand Christian Baur*”. See also H. DE LUBAC, *La Rivelazione divina*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>14</sup> See O. CULLMANN, *Christus und die Zeit*, pp. 8-9 (foreword to the second edition of 1948<sup>2</sup>), and, twenty years later, O. CULLMANN, *Heil als Geschichte*, pp. 51-56.

<sup>15</sup> In order to understand how lively the discussion was even within Protestant theology, suffice is to mention the burning criticism by Rudolf Bultmann, the theologian of demythologization, to the study by Johann Christian Konrad von HOFMANN, *Weissagung und Erfüllung*, published in 1841-1844, contained in a work by the same name in which he stated, in no uncertain terms, that “Hofmanns Weise, von Weissagung und Erfüllung zu reden, ist offenbar eine durch Hegel beeinflusste *Geschichtsphilosophie*, die ihren christlichen Charakter nur dadurch gewinnt, daß für ihn *Christus das Ziel der Geschichte* ist”. Rudolf BULTMANN, *Weissagung und Erfüllung*, in: *Glauben und Verstehen. Gesammelte Aufsätze*, II, Mohr-Siebeck, Tübingen, 1965<sup>4</sup>, p. 170. According to Bultmann, on the other hand, “nach dem Neuen Testament ist Christus das Ende der Heilsgeschichte nicht in dem Sinne, daß er das Ziel der geschichtlichen Entwicklung bedeutet, sondern weil er ihr eschatologisches Ende ist” (R. Bultmann, *Weissagung und Erfüllung*, p. 171); see also Rudolf BULTMANN, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*,

The position supported by Cullmann, according to whom, on the contrary, the New Testament indicates the event of Christ as the central fact on the line of time<sup>16</sup>, introduces a new division of time itself, to be interpreted in the Biblical dialectics of “already” and “not yet”<sup>17</sup>, or, in other words, the time before Christ and that after Christ, as the universal calendar for the computation of time was itself split into two.

This opposition, which was formalized as such by Bultmannian theologian Ernst Fuchs (1903-1983)<sup>18</sup>, originated, according to another Bultmannian theologian Hans Conzelmann (1915-1989)<sup>19</sup>, from the early Catholic derivation of not having been able to see that the New Testament tradition of Luke already contained *in nuce* a germinal theological concept of history of salvation. And the reason given seemed to be that of a Hellenistic contamination of the concept of time and, therefore, history<sup>20</sup>.

## 2.2. Outline of the problem: the relation between essence and history

Within this framework of interpretation, which for the time being is still historically outlined, it is illuminating to observe how the Catholic counterpart reacted. In this respect, at a conference held in Brussels in 1953 under the revealing title of *Salva-*

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Mohr-Siebeck, Tübingen, 1958<sup>3</sup>, pp. 38-39 and 254-260. From this point of view, Jean DANIELOU, in: *Geschichtstheologie I. Begriffsbestimmung und Geschichte der Geschichtstheologie*, in: *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, IV, ed. Michael BUCHBERGER - JOSEF HÖFER - Karl RAHNER, Herder, Freiburg-Basel-Wien, 1969<sup>2</sup>, pp. 793-796, here p. 796, in a statement appended to Bultmann's theology of history, is very precise: “Die Systeme R. Bultmanns, P. Tillichs und H. Dumérys sind dagegen *keine* Geschichtstheologie, weil die Geschichte bei ihnen nur als Verhalten des Menschen zur Transzendenz erscheint”, emphasis mine.

<sup>16</sup> See O. CULLMANN, *Heil als Geschichte*, pp. 153-155.

<sup>17</sup> See O. CULLMANN, *Christus und die Zeit*, pp. 74-75; O. CULLMANN, *Heil als Geschichte*, pp. 147-153; see also Zoltan ALSZEGHY – MAURIZIO FLICK, *I primordi della salvezza*, Piemme, Casale Monferrato, 1979, pp. 21-23, and Teodorico MORETTI-COSTANZI, *Il senso della storia*, Edizioni Alfa, Bologna, 1963, pp. 299-301.

<sup>18</sup> A recognized landmark for this formalization is the conference held on January 21, 1949 at the Tübingen Evangelical Theology Faculty by Ernst FUCHS, *Christus das Ende der Geschichte*, in: *Evangelische Theologie*, 8 (1948-49), pp. 447-461, here pp. 450-454.

<sup>19</sup> See Hans CONZELMANN, *Die Mitte der Zeit. Studien zur Theologie des Lukas*, Mohr-Siebeck, Tübingen, 1962<sup>4</sup>, pp. 172-188.

<sup>20</sup> See H. CONZELMANN, *Die Mitte der Zeit*, pp. 195-204. See also Alan RICHARDSON, *History sacred*, pp. 147-153; Roberto GIBELLINI, *La teologia del XX secolo*, Queriniana, Brescia, 1992, pp. 272-278.

tion history, a basis for theology<sup>21</sup>, E. Schillebeeckx (1914-2009) clearly affirmed that the Catholic theology of history was, in those years, subject to a tendency to completely depreciate speculative thought on faith - typical of Scholastic theology found in manuals - as a tendency that opposed theology *and* salvation history. According to Schillebeeckx, the Catholic - especially Thomistic - tradition, while using the concepts, left the mystery intact, thus placing it accurately as the mystery of salvation; the new historical-salvific characterization of Protestant theology found fault with the approach of Catholic theology as renouncing the “*sub ratione Christi*” foundation for a unilateral choice “*sub ratione deitatis*”<sup>22</sup>.

Nevertheless, the totally new assumption on which, according to Schillebeeckx, the Protestant *Heilsgeschichte* theology was based was not exactly that of freeing the original - and therefore authentic - early Christian reflection on history from the alleged Hellenistic contamination regarding the conception of time and becoming<sup>23</sup>, but it betrayed instead a clear influence of existential thought, i.e., of a thought that, having also penetrated in those years into certain types of theology, turned its back on purely conceptual reflection, i.e., on concepts cut off from experience.

In this way, Schillebeeckx not only criticized the same premises from which Cullmann’s theology of history wanted to detach itself, but explicitly ratified the dual concept according to which, in the early Fifties, Catholic theology of history had already begun to venture, as the most adequate one for a correct contextual pre-understanding: the relationship between essence and history, i.e., the consideration of the relation between *theologia* and *oikonomia*, starting first of all from a theology of salvation history.

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<sup>21</sup> The conference *De heilshistorische basis van de Theologie* was held at the Vlaams Werkgenootschap voor Theologie, with the subtitle *Theologia of Oikonomia?*, and its text can be found in Edward SCHILLEBEECKX, *Theologische Peilingen*. I. *Openbaring en Theologie*, Nelissen, Bilthoven, 1964, pp. 265-281.

<sup>22</sup> See E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Theologische Peilingen*, p. 266.

<sup>23</sup> As had, instead, been expressly stated by O. CULLMANN, *Christus und die Zeit*, p. 50: “Wo es innerhalb der dogmengeschichtlichen Entwicklung zur Auseinandersetzung zwischen Griechentum und Christentum gekommen ist, hat sie im Grunde ihren Ausgang fast immer in der Verwirklichung der zweitgenannten Möglichkeit, der Hellenisierung des Christentums, gefunden, *insofern* das zeitliche Heilsschema des Neuen Testaments dem räumlich-metaphysischen des Griechentums unterworfen worden ist”, emphasis mine.

This was also why, in 1950, Pius XII's *Humani generis* encyclical reacted, with reason, against those theologians who wanted to ban from theology the conceptual dimension, removing the essential term from the investigation of the relationship between economy and theology, i.e., its formalization<sup>24</sup>.

Initially considered a provocation, the orientation offered by the Protestant historical-salvific concept of *Heilsgeschichte*, which entered the Catholic theology in a significantly influential manner thanks to the mediation of Oscar Cullmann, corrected, in any case, the already existing Catholic effort to rediscover the sense of salvation history "Christologically": it is no coincidence that Cullmann's book bore the title of *Christus und die Zeit*. If, then, on one hand, Catholic theology was wary of any existentialist contaminations in the revival of studies around the concept of *Heilsgeschichte*, there is no doubt that, on the other hand, it was preparing to form a new synthesis in theology of history, following at least two newly acquired guiding criteria: the awareness that it had never had behind it a *theologia naturalis* completely severed from a reflection on salvation history, and the possibility of fixing theology of history within the pre-argumentative relation between essence and history, i.e., between *theologia* and *oikonomia*, without, to this end, having to give up the support coming from its strictly conceptual formalization. All this took place around 1950. We now need to analyze how this positive innovative Protestant German current managed to enter the theological thought in Italy and what effects it produced there. To be brief, we shall dwell only on the totalizing impact it had on the Jesuit theologians of the Pontificia Università Gregoriana.

#### CONCLUSION: THE INFLUENCE ON CATHOLIC THEOLOGY IN EUROPE

There are many authors that should be taken into consideration here. We shall mention only an invaluable collection, published in 1954 in *Gregorianum* by two Jesuits, Maurizio Flick (1909-1979) and Zoltán Alszeghy (1915-1991), entitled *Teologia della storia*<sup>25</sup>. In it, the two Roman theologians prepared a comprehensive albeit succinct review of the main monographs regar-

<sup>24</sup> See PIUS XII, Encyclical Letter *Humani generis* (12.8.1950), in: *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 42 (1950), pp. 561-578, here pp. 564-570.

<sup>25</sup> M. FLICK – Z. ALSZEGHY, *Teologia della storia*, in: *Gregorianum*, 35 (1954), pp. 256-298.

ding the theology of history published among major Catholic theologians up to 1954, comparing them with others by non-Catholic - Protestant and Orthodox - theologians. In that article, they pointed out that the problem of theology of history was then acquiring an ever more definite outline, but, nevertheless, there was “the essential requirement to pursue solutions that are less and less vague and generic and can be therefore more precisely assessed, in light of the supreme theological principles”<sup>26</sup>.

These are works that show the reasons of the interest in theology of history and clarify its work method, connecting it to the question of the meaning of the course of events and that of human life<sup>27</sup>. In Italy, in conclusion, there are evidently sufficient reasons to cease to speak of an indefinite, indefinable “sacred history”, preferring, instead, the concept of “salvation history” (*Heilsgeschichte*). These reasons can be essentially grouped around two main types of provocation: first of all, the ebullient entrance of the category of historicity in every sector of thought<sup>28</sup> had forced theology to clarify that the evolving of reality was not in any case at the mercy of fate<sup>29</sup>; in the second place, there was a need to offer *theological* answers to the great development that philosophy of history had taken on, along with its modernist, rationalist, and Marxist-leaning epigones which, sometimes, had characterized it<sup>30</sup>. Moreover, it was felt that the then significant tendency to practice a philosophy of life, existentialism<sup>31</sup>, i.e., of the inevitable turning to the experience of human life rather than to the voice of God who speaks to conscience, was due to an increasing aversion toward Scholastic thought, whose link to

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<sup>26</sup> See M. FLICK – Z. ALSZEGHY, *Teologia della storia*, p. 291.

<sup>27</sup> See Optatus VAN ASSELDONK, *Theologie der Geschiedenis in het Verleden en het Heden*, in: *Katholiek Archief*, 8 (1948), pp. 265-312, here p. 266.

<sup>28</sup> In substance, “history today makes itself acutely heard. The overwhelming events raging in the century excite wonder and thus become starting points for reflection. Daily experience teaches us that the reality that surrounds us is in a constant state of flux. Even the average man nowadays feels the need to apply the category of history even to what used to be regarded as stationary”: M. FLICK – Z. ALSZEGHY, *Teologia della storia*, pp. 256-257.

<sup>29</sup> See Optatus VAN ASSELDONK, *Theologie der Geschiedenis*, p. 265.

<sup>30</sup> See Optatus VAN ASSELDONK, *Theologie der Geschiedenis*, pp. 265-266.

<sup>31</sup> This is the opinion of O. van Asseldonk: “Min of meer in dezelfde geest als Congar, maar uitgesproken positie-fbijbelsen concreet-existenteel, beschouwt deze schrijver de diepste zin van het wereldgebeuren”; Optatus VAN ASSELDONK, *Theologie der Geschiedenis*, p. 291, emphasis mine.

real, concrete life, and therefore human history, grew progressively weaker<sup>32</sup>.

With regard to the method, one consisted of cataloguing the Catholic historians of theology - distinguishing them first of all from Eastern Orthodox and Protestant historians - into various trends, which therefore offered a first approach of interpretation to their own thought<sup>33</sup>. Italian theologians, however, have not always agreed on including the same Catholic theologian of history in the same current - for instance the incarnationist or eschatological movement, as the French would have - and this difference was perhaps due either to a different assimilation of the theologian's thought or to a non-unanimous view of where the lines between the chosen classifications lay<sup>34</sup>. The other methodological approach chosen by Italian theologians consisted of comparing theologians with the idealist, Marxist, and existentialist philosophy of history, tracing backwards the *loci theologici* present in the Holy Scripture, in the Fathers, and in the reflection of the history of theology. The focus was therefore on the *loci theologici* that had spoken of a possible theology of history, i.e., a reflection on the meaning of historical evolving, which thus significantly attracted the philosophies of history of those years<sup>35</sup>.

The outcome in Italian theology of the influence of Protestant theology with the concept of *Heilsgeschichte* was quite interesting. First of all, the books of the Bible ceased to be called "Sacred History," and the term was replaced by "Bible." In the second place, pictorial illustrations, inserted here and there, were replaced by ever more precise, specific, and exegetically expanded footnotes. Third, theology and the Church understood that man always had a greater need for salvation than for erudition, and erudition, if needed, is merely needed to understand God's merciful salvation.

Finally, with respect to "salvation history", Italian theology has decidedly changed the method of approach. If theology is pursued scientifically today, it must fall into a historical perspective, i.e., offer answers to the questions of mankind today. And it is of salvation because the science which, among all, most

<sup>32</sup> See Optatus VAN ASSELDONK, *Theologie der Geschiedenis*, p. 268.

<sup>33</sup> See Optatus VAN ASSELDONK, *Theologie der Geschiedenis*, pp. 284-298.

<sup>34</sup> See Gianluigi PASQUALE, *Teoria e teologia della storia. L'uomo alla ricerca del proprio senso*, Carocci Editore, Rome, 2016, pp. 615-622.

<sup>35</sup> See Optatus VAN ASSELDONK, *Theologie der Geschiedenis*, pp. 269-278.

attracts man is that which offers a finite sense to all that man experiences, lives, and for which he suffers. In other words, the science which, while studying the appearance of being, declares that the entire existing world is there, before man, to tell him how much and in what way God loves him: desiring man and all creation saved in time and, therefore, for eternity, since the latter is a time with no before and after.

UTJECAJ PROTESTANTSKE TEOLOGIJE  
NA KATOLIČKI KONCEPT "HISTORIA SALUTIS".  
TEOLOŠKA RASPRAVA U EUROPI

76

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*Sažetak*

*Protestantska teologija pozitivno je utjecala na razvoj pojma "povijest spasenja" koji je u katoličkoj teologiji prihvaćen i polovicom 20. stoljeća uključen, po prvi put, u dogmatsku konstituciju "Dei Verbum" (br. 2) Drugog vatikanskog sabora. Od polovice pedesetih godina prošlog stoljeća, zapravo, protestantizam je kritizirao katoličku teologiju da je u potpunosti zaboravila povijesno-spasenjski scenarij kojim bi se trebala baviti svaka teologija koja želi uistinu biti kršćanska, i to polazeći od kristocentrizma utjelovljenja Sina Božjega Isusa Krista u vremenu i povijesti. U stvarnosti, katoličanstvo se nikada nije u potpunosti zadovoljilo razramtranjem "teologia naturale", a koja je različita od one nadnaravne. Katolici su radije bili svjesni da teologija treba imati, kako podsjeća E. Schillebeeckx (1914-2009), još 1953. godine, jedan povijesno-spasenjski temelj za moći govoriti o Bogu. Ova "zasluga" prepoznata je također od Josepha Ratzingera, koji je, međutim, zapazio da se središte problematike okreće oko odnosa između (nepromjenjivo) biti Bože i povijesti (u nastajanju) u kojoj se On htio objaviti. Za katoličku teologiju, nepromjenjivost Božja nije u potpunosti nekompatibilna s vremenom u kojem se spasenje događa. Naprotiv, samo se tako može ispravno govoriti o kršćanskoj teologiji u pravom smislu. Dakle, od Dei Verbum, br. 2, katolička teologija je prestala jednostavno govoriti o "storia sacra" ("sveta povijest") i započela govoriti o "povijesti spasenja", jedina koja može objasniti na koji način suvremeni muškarac i žena mogu susresti smisao vlastite egzistencije u vremenu, kako se mogu spasiti.*

*Ključne riječi: protestanti, katolici, historia salutis, historia sacra, Dei Verbum*