

A THEOLOGY OF INFORMED JUDGMENT*

FREDERICK D. AQUINO

Abilene Christian University

What is informed judgment, and what factors contribute to it? What role does theological reflection as a mature expression of informed judgment play in shaping ecclesial life? The end result of such inquiry is a richer understanding of ways informed judgment shapes the process of belief formation and theological reflection within an ecclesial setting.

The capacity to connect knowledge of God and ecclesial context requires informed judgment. As an acquired skill, informed judgment aptly assesses and applies theological ideas to particular situations. It is indispensable for ministering proficiently to people in ecclesial, social, academic, and other contexts. This essay highlights the process by which informed judgment takes place within a communal context as people learn to think theologically and to connect theological themes with real world environments.

Forming Theological Judgment

Formation of theological judgment reflects a social process in which people learn to develop theological skills and to render apt judgment about particulars. Knowing how to think theologically comes by habit and by imitation, not by the mere acquisition of isolated facts. Proficiency in theological judgment stems from knowledge enhanced by interaction with mature practitioners of Christian faith. The aim of informed judgment is to achieve a coherent account of Christian faith, which is another way of defining a fundamental task of theology.

Forming theological judgment requires the integration of at least two elements: praiseworthy dispositions and wisdom. The first element depends upon a proper disposition of the mind, which is indispensable for reasoning proficiently about theological matters. For example, habitual practices such as studiousness, prayer, concern for truth, and a desire for an informed

* The following essay is a shorter version of chapter 5 in my book *Communities of Informed Judgment: The Significance of John Henry Newman's Notion of the Illative Sense for Shaping Accounts of Rationality* (Catholic University of America Press, forthcoming).

understanding of Christian faith solidify a properly disposed faith into good theological judgments. In essence, a rightly disposed faith fuses both intellectual and moral dimensions of Christian faith, realizing that communal well-being depends upon good theological practices. In its mature form, theological judgment involves an earnest and long-term commitment to cultivate the “gift of Christian wonder or curiosity, which is the specifically theological mode of faith.”²

Without praiseworthy dispositions, individuals adopt theological excesses and deficiencies (e.g., dogmatism, narrow-mindedness, or fanaticism). By contrast, a rightly disposed faith aids a Christian in forming a mind of holiness that facilitates proper love for, and obedience to, God. As William J. Wood has recently suggested, “we come to knowledge of God and other religious truths only if our affections are rightly ordered. Just as our ability to grasp scientific truths requires that we be equipped with the requisite training and abilities, so our capacity to grasp religious truths requires that we be the right sorts of persons.”³

In addition, praiseworthy dispositions have a communal dimension. They display integration of moral, theological, and cognitive habits necessary for forming and sustaining a community of informed judgment. Cognitive and moral vices, by contrast, cripple a community and prevent it from fulfilling its theological goals. For instance, vices such as intellectual dishonesty, closed-mindedness, and rash judgments preclude the possibility of refining theological judgment and of participating in conversations with others. They also distract a community from its correlative ground of thought, affection, and behavior, namely, the triune God, who calls people to love him with all of their mind, heart, and being. Dispositions such as love, humility, honesty, courage, and other-mindedness ensure proper development of theological judgment within the life of a community of informed judgment.

Maturation of theological judgment also depends on knowledge of the tradition to which one belongs. For example, a community without sufficient historical knowledge of doctrinal developments lacks proficiency in assessing contemporary theological options. Consequently, praiseworthy dispositions take their shape from a particular theological vision embedded within communal practices. Worship, preaching, experience, prayer, and catechesis play a crucial role in nurturing praiseworthy dispositions into

² Aidan Nichols, *The Shape of Catholic Theology* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1991), 19.

³ William J. Wood, *Epistemology: Becoming Intellectually Virtuous* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 190.

communal judgments about theological issues.⁴ The church, then, is where people cultivate properly disposed faith, acquire theological skills of excellence, and learn to discern theological truths.⁵

Though knowledge of the Christian tradition is necessary for developing theological judgment, it is not sufficient for rendering informed judgment about particular theological issues. Procuring knowledge without evaluative proficiency bars people from determining whether the material acquired is worthy of consideration. Such a deficiency necessitates the insights of the second element of informed judgment, namely, wisdom. Informed judgment entails an expansive base of knowledge, yet without wisdom “knowledge lacks nuance, since decision-making requires constant shifts in judgment in assessing information and circumstances.”⁶ Accumulating isolated facts exhibits a basic level of reasoning, but wisdom enhances theological judgment, enabling people to connect knowledge and particular situations. Such acts of theological discernment require communal support; without reliable social channels of wisdom, refinement of theological reflection suffers, and, subsequently, communal understandings of Christian faith lack a coherent pattern of expression.⁷

Wisdom empowers people to grasp complex issues, integrate knowledge and experience, and make apt judgments for particular situations. In grasping the overall significance of various pieces of data, wisdom weaves

⁴ Ellen T. Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 27. See also Nancey Murphy, “The Role of Virtues in Epistemic Practices,” in *Philosophy and Theological Discourse* (ed. Stephen T. Davis; New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 226–27.

⁵ Avery Dulles, *The Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 9.

⁶ Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds*, 4.

⁷ William A. Christian (*Doctrines of Religious Communities: A Philosophical Study* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987]) captures the process in which religious communities extend doctrinal formulations into a coherent pattern of life. “It seems a fair generalization to say that each of the major religious communities teaches its members to live in a certain way, in accord with a certain pattern of life, and that it teaches them how to live in that way. It nurtures them in that pattern of life. The beliefs, valuations, and courses of action which are proposed in its primary doctrines are constituents of the pattern. By way of precepts, backed by accounts of how the world is, by way of examples, pointing to individuals whose lives have manifested and defined the pattern concretely, and by way of direct induction of its members into certain practices and habituation in those practices, a community aims at shaping the lives of its members. It instills habits of appreciation, of overt behavior, and of thought, which hang together as a more or less coherent pattern of life” (5).

ideas, experiences, and practices into a community's theological life.⁸ Without wisdom, a community ignores various possibilities for filtering crucial insights into its own locus of knowledge. For example, the difference between a person of informed judgment and a novice lies in the former's ability to decipher relevant pieces of data, not to acquire a quantity of information.⁹ Collecting massive pieces of evidence uncritically implies deficient evaluative skills in determining the worth of the information acquired. People of informed judgment recognize important clues for evaluating particular issues and know how to integrate relevant information into their community's locus of knowledge. Accumulating knowledge and experience does not weigh down people of informed judgment; they are not simply extended brains saturated with facts.¹⁰ Though people of informed judgment operate from an extensive base of knowledge and wisdom, the distinguishing mark is recognizing patterns, connecting ideas, and seeing the big picture.

The art of medical diagnosis aptly illustrates the point. Though technology and science greatly aid medical diagnosis, skillful judgment distinguishes good physicians from average ones. Physicians of skillful judgment have sufficient medical knowledge, but they also possess the gift of informed judgment, a quality that "cannot be captured by a set of rules, and cannot be taught except by personal influence."¹¹ To take another example, good teachers apply knowledge to particular learning situations rather than simply dispensing isolated facts. Knowledge and wisdom, though connected with the same subject matter, are distinct phenomena. On one level, basic knowledge of the subject matter is essential for informing students, but it does not ensure proficient evaluation of the information acquired. Along with knowledge, teachers acquire skillful judgment by means of experience and employment of specific pedagogical virtues (e.g.,

⁸ Linda T. Zagzebski (*Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996], 50) rightly points out that wisdom "is neither a matter of the properties of propositional beliefs, nor is it a matter of the relations among such beliefs; it is a matter of grasping the whole of reality."

⁹ James Shanteau, "How Much Information Does an Expert Use?" *Acta Psychologica* 81 (1992): 79.

¹⁰ Gary Klein, *Sources of Power: How People Make Decisions* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), 147. Klein (149) points out that two primary sources of expertise are pattern matching and mental simulation. "Pattern matching (intuition) refers to the ability of the expert to detect typicality and to notice events that did not happen and other anomalies that violate the pattern. Mental simulation covers the ability to see events that happened previously and events that are likely to happen in the future."

¹¹ John Casey, *Pagan Virtue* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 151.

love of truth, compassion, intellectual integrity, wisdom, knowledge of audience, good skills of communication, and patience).¹² More importantly, combining knowledge and wisdom enables teachers to render qualified judgments for particular situations. Pre-established rules are no replacement for informed judgment within concrete moments of existence.

Wisdom as a mature exercise of informed judgment also involves “sympathetic imagination” in which a community sees different proposals in all their complexity and considers “how well each position is able to accommodate the strengths of the other and to remedy its own weakness.”¹³ Without living voices of wisdom, a community of theological judgment struggles both to assess competing claims and to develop a coherent understanding of Christian faith. By contrast, maturation of theological judgment enables a community to connect practices and ideas, mirroring the unity to which the triune God has called it. Thus proficiency in theological judgment reflects knowledge of Christian faith and of recognized patterns of experience.

However, the contextual nature of theological judgment does not rule out exchange with others; rather, it demands an exercise of extended judgment. The goal of a community of informed judgment is to expand particular expressions of thought into communal forms of judgment. The precondition for exercising mature judgment is the capacity to evaluate and weave insights from other sources of informed judgment into a community’s locus of knowledge. By ignoring insights from others, a community exhibits theological narrow-mindedness and suppresses the urge to connect ideas from larger domains of thought.

In this regard, wisdom considers and connects three items: truth-conduciveness, theological virtues, and consultation of other sources of informed judgment. First, theological judgment is a matter of truth-conduciveness since its goal is to guide communally established practices in ways that yield true beliefs over false ones. The task of theological judgment is to foster good understandings of Christian faith, identify deficiencies, and achieve greater levels of truth-conduciveness. Second, theological virtues shape judgment. Any communal inquiry that is a matter of truth-conduciveness requires habitual formation of theological qualities of excellence (e.g., knowledge, love, faith, hope, humility, courage, and wisdom). Third, a community ascertains whether its theological proposal shows continuity with other sources of theological judgment. Social transmission of theological

¹² For a good and practical discussion on pedagogical virtues, see James M. Banner Jr. and Harold C. Cannon, *The Elements of Teaching* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

¹³ Basil Mitchell, “Newman as a Philosopher,” in *Newman after a Hundred Years* (ed. Ian Ker and Alan G. Hill; Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), 244.

judgment requires confidence in sources from which we derive knowledge and consensus. Again, consensus does not imply attainment of theological truth; rather, theological collaboration protects a community from isolationism.

Of course, different communities are bound to disagree, but incorporation of truth-conduciveness, theological virtues, and consultation with other sources enhances the probability of informed judgment. Any community of theological judgment shows interest in following a reliable social process that yields true beliefs over false ones. In spite of methodological and interpretive differences, communities of theological judgment have a common interest in pursuing truth and in avoiding falsehood. Entering the public domain guards a community of theological judgment from uncritical acceptance of its own ideas. Wisdom demands a public hearing!

A community's reservoir of wisdom structures the "internalization of models within the context of a tradition."¹⁴ The end result is the creation of people who reflect the presence of God in the world; rightly ordered thought leads to mature expression of Christian faith both within the life of the church and within the larger context of society. Theological judgment grows directly under the influence of mature practitioners of Christian faith or indirectly from "helping individuals to develop the skills needed to learn more effectively from their own experiences."¹⁵ Such training equips people to extend personal and communal forms of theological judgment to larger domains of inquiry.

Managing the Theological Load

A community of informed judgment understands formation of theological discernment as a collaborative process. Solitary theological discernment is an illusion; rarely does a person make judgments in isolation from other agents of theological discernment. However, highlighting a communal dimension of theological judgment does not suggest annulment of individual contributions. Rather, it stresses social conditions under which people materialize a specific theological vision. John Thiel expresses the complexity of the relationship between individual contributions and the communal context of theological reflection:

The exercise of theological talent involves judgments that draw the theologian's individual experience into such intimate relationship with the communal realities of church and society that it is virtually indistinguishable from them. Indeed, theological talent is measured by its ability to speak in an intellectually defensible

¹⁴ Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds*, 27.

¹⁵ Robert J. Sternberg et. al., *Practical Intelligence in Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 212.

manner on behalf of these groups and the truth they have to tell about God, humanity, and the world. But there is no denying that theological talent, like any talent, is fundamentally an individual affair and that mediating the sources of theology, though responsible to the church, is an act of the personal imagination.¹⁶

Recognizing individual contributions is important, but adequate distribution of theological labor still requires a communal process of discernment. Clearly, a community of theological judgment must guard against squelching unfamiliar voices, for unwillingness to listen to others implies a lack of community wisdom. Nevertheless, a community of theological judgment maps out ways in which distribution of labor contributes to fulfillment of a common vision.

Proper exercise of theological judgment requires effective distribution of labor. Identifying a reliable belief-forming process is indispensable for enhancing theological judgment. Without reliable social channels of knowledge and wisdom, maturation of theological judgment suffers. Depending exclusively on personal reflection impedes a communal process of rendering apt theological judgments. Consequently, a community stresses the importance of social practices for acquiring requisite qualities of theological judgment. It also recognizes that theological judgment, though connected with a common goal, is multifaceted. For example, some focus on conditions of belief formation as an exercise in theological method, while others tackle doctrinal or pastoral issues. Both practices contribute to the theological life of a community, but they use different resources. Within a community of theological judgment, not all focus on the same issues; rather, they combine individual efforts in order to achieve a common goal. Proficiency in theological judgment results from successful distribution of tasks that enhance both growth and fulfillment of theological goals.

Implications for Contemporary Theology

Thus far I have focused on the formation and management of theological judgment. The next logical move involves exploring its relevance for contemporary theology. It is evident from reading contemporary theology that many proposals exist, some compatible and others not. Is there a way of seeing through the methodological fog and coming to a clearer but broader understanding of theology? The fundamental premise of informed judgment—the urge to connect—unfolds new possibilities for engaging contemporary theology. Hence, I offer a brief foray into contemporary theology and show what a theology of informed judgment means in this arena.

¹⁶ John E. Thiel, *Imagination and Authority: Theological Authorship in the Modern Tradition* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 207.

Contemporary theology is a multifaceted enterprise. At least five options appear on the current theological landscape.¹⁷ The first option sees theology principally as a philosophical enterprise and takes the broader philosophical climate as its point of departure. It construes the task of theology as a constructive activity, not as a description of the grammar of Christian faith. The goal is to construct theological ideas that cohere with broader criteria of meaningfulness and universality rather than simply articulating the material claims of Christian faith.¹⁸ The church is not the exclusive domain of theological reflection.

The second option reverses the order of priority and roots theological reflection in the life of the church. As an ecclesiastical discipline, theology involves critical reflection on the church's discourse about God. The norm of theology emerges from the internal witness of Christian faith, not from some general theory of knowledge. Transporting alien epistemic schemes into the life of the church distorts the task of theology, compromises the integrity of Christian faith, and shackles the freedom of God. Divine revelation is the starting point for theological reflection.¹⁹

The third option, though compatible with the second, differs slightly. It understands the task of theology mainly as a description of the grammar of Christian faith. As a nonfoundational enterprise, theology concentrates on communally established practices. Within this context, one learns the internal logic of Christian discourse, like a language, and understands the truth claims of the Christian story.²⁰ Consequently, Christian discourse cannot be assessed by some independent standard of justification. In other words, the task of theology is to unpack the internal logic of Christian discourse and to live out faith from that perspective.

The fourth option anchors theological reflection in concrete moments of human existence. It sees an unbreakable linkage between praxis and theological reflection, especially within the context of oppressed communities. Experience is the starting point for thinking theologically.

¹⁷ My narrative has been shaped by, but differs in some ways from, two sources: Hans Frei, *Types of Christian Theology* (ed. George Hunsinger and William C. Placher; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); and David F. Ford, *Theology: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

¹⁸ See Gordon D. Kaufman, *An Essay on Theological Method* (rev. ed.; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1979).

¹⁹ See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (vol. 1.1 of *The Doctrine of the Word of God*; 2d ed.; trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975).

²⁰ See George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984).

More specifically, the praxis of liberation functions as the norm by which communities judge the adequacy of theological statements.²¹

The fifth option defines theology as critical correlation of the broader contours of human experience and the Christian message. Theological reflection entails a dipolar process, an interaction between the Christian tradition and the contemporary situation. Neither pole dominates theological reflection. Rather, each pole informs and challenges theological reflection, expressing a mutually critical process, not a level subordination.²²

How does a theology of informed judgment speak to this vast range of theological perspectives? The landscape of contemporary theology is oriented toward various communities and is essentially a social enterprise. Proliferation of theological approaches occasionally hinders the urge to connect, creating what appears to be incommensurate boundaries. As a social enterprise, however, contemporary theology exhibits levels of epistemic dependence, deriving insights from work in biblical studies, science, philosophy, history, sociology, psychology. Thus contemporary theology would benefit by making its epistemological commitments explicit.²³

A theology of informed judgment calls for greater levels of integration among different fields of knowledge without blurring their distinctive modes of inquiry. A fitting example is a recent project in which biblical scholars and theologians seek to bridge a long-standing gap between their disciplines by exploring ways in which biblical interpretation informs the task of theology.²⁴ As a person trained in both theology and biblical studies, I can attest to the importance of this conversation. A theology of informed judgment implicitly guides such activity since its fundamental premise calls

²¹ See Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Essential Writings* (ed. James B. Nickoloff; Maryknoll: Orbis, 1996).

²² See David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1981).

²³ For example, George Hunsinger (*How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1991], 32–35) shows how a particularist epistemology factors into Barth's theological proposal. Barth takes an epistemological line of inquiry derived from a specific theological framework, not from a general theory of knowledge. In this sense, Barth is concerned with the question of how people in the church speak, hear, and come to know the Word of God. Roderick M. Chisholm (*The Problem of Criterion* [Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1973]) argues that particularists carve out an account of knowledge from what they know rather than from some general account of knowledge. Barth offers a thoroughgoing theological particularism.

²⁴ See Joel B. Green and Max Turner, *Between Two Horizons: Spanning New Testament Studies and Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

for integration. Unpacking epistemic commitments is crucial for continuing the conversation.

Canonizing an epistemology is not what I have in mind here. Rather, a theology of informed judgment balances specificity and comprehensiveness, avoiding extremes such as epistemic imperialism and theological sectarianism. Acknowledging philosophical commitments does not imply that they govern the task of theology. Theology, like other domains of thought, has its own methodological concerns, material forms of witness, and particular questions. However, acknowledging the contextual nature of theology does not justify theological sectarianism or suppression of methodological commitments. Uncovering epistemic points of reference opens up possibilities both for enhancing communal self-understanding and for connecting with other communities.

Various stripes of contemporary theology would benefit from a theology of informed judgment. Two examples should suffice. First, a theology of liberation (option 4) reminds us of the human potential for involvement in dehumanizing activities. Theological reflection must engage the struggles of life. Specific focus on concrete experiences of life is indispensable for engaging in the task of theology. Yet a theology of liberation should seek comprehensive understanding of Christian faith and the broader context of human experience. Inclusion entails a multiplicity of perspectives, but not at the expense of some common end. Cultivating informed judgment makes us better practitioners of theological reflection, exposing our idiosyncratic tendencies while connecting us with the rest of creation.

The second example combines options 2 and 3. Both options rightly stress the importance of paying close attention to the internal logic of Christian faith and to securing their theological proposals from resources such as Scripture and tradition. The outcome is an informed understanding of the Christian message. Both, however, must guard against quickly subsuming contemporary concerns into classical formulations of Christian faith. One has to give only cursory attention to contemporary expressions of theology to see how powerfully they have been impacted by intellectual developments of the last four centuries. In fact, a theology of informed judgment could be read as a critical response to two long-standing tendencies in Christian theology, namely, fideism and evidentialism. The point here is that theological reflection is multifaceted, but its elasticity does not warrant theological balkanization.

A proposal of informed judgment characterizes theology as an enterprise of wisdom in which practitioners embody an urge to connect. It rejects the temptation to hibernate in theological enclaves. Affirming the particular without concern for broader expressions of Christian thought creates an unnecessary impasse. It tends to see the task of theology as a one-dimensional enterprise. Focus on social location is important, but not at the expense of conversation with other theological communities.

Implementation of good theological habits should create greater possibilities for authentic forums of dialogue. The urge to connect does not imply sacrifice of particular theological commitments; rather it calls for growth of theological wisdom.

Concluding Remarks

The relevance of my proposal can be summed up in the following way. A theology of informed judgment renders a phenomenological account of the landscape of contemporary theology. It observes concrete ways in which contemporary theologians go about their business. Obviously, the aim of a particular theological option will impact division of labor. For example, option 1 places a high premium on philosophical inquiry; options 2 and 3 rely heavily on insights from biblical studies and history; option 4 depends on insights from political philosophy and sociology. Option 5 tries to correlate the Christian message with insights from various fields of knowledge. Nevertheless, all work with implicit philosophical assumptions. The key is balance rather than uncritical endorsement of one resource of theological reflection. Comprehensiveness and specificity are essential poles of theological reflection. Insulating Christian theological discourse from broader philosophical thought creates the problem of relativism while subsuming theological discourse into an epistemic scheme compromises the integrity of Christian faith.

A theology of informed judgment has many components. It seeks to weave biblical, historical, philosophical, moral, and social insights into a coherent account of Christian faith. Obviously, ways of prioritizing these resources vary according to how each community works out issues in theological prolegomena. Furthermore, greater awareness of epistemic dependence may increase informed understanding of radically different proposals. As I have shown, a theology of informed judgment furnishes insights for thinking about the process of belief-formation, but not at the expense of particular theological traditions. With this in mind, a theology of informed judgment seeks to render a synthetic understanding of Christian faith, implementing insights from various dimensions of contemporary theology.

A theology of informed judgment also stresses the communal nature of theological reflection. Without a communal presence of wisdom, the process of theological judgment is left to personal choice. Under the tutelage of mature people of theological judgment, a community learns to connect key ideas within concrete moments of human existence. Learning to think theologically requires something greater than mastery of information. A theology of informed judgment recognizes the difference between acquiring facts and filtering information for particular situations. As an acquired skill, theological judgment fuses contemporary issues with biblical and historical expressions of Christian faith.

A proposal of informed judgment sees the nature of theological judgment in holistic terms. Since theological judgment is context- and agent-sensitive, it cannot be reduced to a formal process of reflection that claims to discern theological truths independently of the theological agent. Rather, theological judgment, like all modes of reflection, stems from the “activity of the living person”; thus it includes personal outlook as well as moral and social dimensions of reflection.²⁵

I have offered some brief suggestions on the formation of theological judgment. Cultivating praiseworthy dispositions and wisdom enhances the probability of informed judgment. Rejection of wisdom hinders the process by which a community internalizes and articulates the content of Christian faith. A vital aspect of the habit of theological judgment is the urge to connect.²⁶ Without informed judgment, a community fails to secure a coherent understanding of its own material witness; moreover, it never achieves the capacity to converse with other communities of informed judgment. A theology of informed judgment sees theological reflection as a process in which people connect ideas without losing communal particularity. Extended judgment, as a mode of being in the world, sustains healthy communities of theological judgment.

²⁵ Thomas J. Norris, *Newman and His Theological Method: A Guide for the Theologian Today* (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 89–90; Francis Schüssler Fiorenza (“Systematic Theology: Task and Methods,” in *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*, vol. 1 [ed. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza and John P. Galvin; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991], 3.87) adds that theological judgments, like moral judgments, “are not simply the outcome of abstract logic, but result from practical reasoning. Just as practical reason is based upon a learned experience, so too does a link exist between moral knowledge and ethical experience. . . . In short, practical experience determines what persons become; it affects not only who they are but also their whole process of reasoning, ranging from the selection of principles, to the mode of argumentation, to the construction of conclusions.”

²⁶ Nichols, *The Shape of Catholic Theology*, 25.