

**Heather M. Erb**

Great Books Academy  
USA

## **MODERNISM AND THE GROWING CATHOLIC IDENTITY PROBLEM: THOMISTIC REFLECTIONS AND SOLUTIONS**

Being Catholic makes one a member of a people set apart, a royal priesthood,<sup>1</sup> made clean and steadfast in the Faith,<sup>2</sup> sanctified as the Bride of Christ. According to the Catholic Catechism, it also denotes universality as the correct and complete confession of faith and full sacramental life, and a mission to make all persons members of the People of God.<sup>3</sup> The Church’s missionary task involves raising up the truth and goodness God has distributed among men, “to purify them from error and evil.”<sup>4</sup> To effect Her remedy, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Church promoted a stable, universal philosophical system embedded in the “catholicity” of reason to promote the faith. It was a “battle-ready” Thomism bolstering both the front lines and the field hospital of faith.<sup>5</sup>

Today, many Christians suffer from an identity crisis—a false reign of the heart or caricature of charity detached from the work of reason and the gift of supernatural wisdom. But pragmatic collective activism is not

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Peter 2:9, cited in *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), 803.

<sup>2</sup> See Aquinas on the meaning of “sanctity” as both “being made clean” and “being steadfast” in faith: S.Th., II–II, 81, 8.

<sup>3</sup> CCC, 837–838; 845.

<sup>4</sup> CCC, 856.

<sup>5</sup> Maritain refers to the “catholicity” of reason in *St. Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Meridian Books, 1958, original French ed. 1930), 76: “This double unity, this double catholicity of reason and grace, of the human spirit and the Church, needs an intellectual organ to manifest it, strengthen it, and diffuse it.” The Ignatian language of the Church as a “field hospital” after battle has been used by Pope Francis I, in his interview with the director of Italian Jesuit magazine *Civiltà Cattolica*, Fr. Antonio Spadaro (August 19, 23, 29, 2013).

contemplation in the world, as Maritain knew, and is arguably a denial of the universal call to holiness. Although today authentic Thomism often stands in practical disuse, it is still the unique measure by which we can identify and denounce Promethean forms of humanism which dominate our culture.

Modernism's dichotomies have cost the Church three jewels of Catholic identity, purchased at great price: the metaphysical unity of Western culture, a sound sense of human nature on which it is built, and a Thomist spirituality which once infused philosophy and theology and guided pastoral practice. The Catholic modernist, not surprisingly, welcomes his crisis of identity. Under Henri Bergson's inspiration, Scholasticism and Thomism are viewed as closed, static systems void of life, while contradiction denotes the energy of change, progress, and creativity.

The modernist notion of truth underlies the antinomian atmosphere in the Church today, and a solution to the cultural confusion and malaise it engenders is found along three Thomist lines: a reaffirmation of the vitality of speculative order, a sense of the contribution of affectivity, contemplation, to the integration of natural, revealed and mystical wisdoms, and the rehabilitation of an objective spirituality and liturgy. Gilson's nuanced position on the encounter of Thomism, the Magisterium and modernism grafts a historical, textual approach onto Pope Leo XIII's Thomistic mandate of *Aeterni Patris*. In conjunction with the insights of Gilson, the Thomist solution is argued to condition the Church's ability to reverse its modernist course of pragmatism, pluralism and a pastoral rhetoric that suppresses Catholicism's contemplative charism.

### **The Role of Philosophy in the Church's Mission**

To the extent that it has wedded Aquinas's thought to the Church's mission of salvation of souls, the Magisterium reveals the power of dogma and theology to shape pastoral practice. Aquinas's precise distinctions and his assimilative and creative vision were nourished by an interiority emanating from the eternal heart of the Church. The ebb and flow of Thomism in Church documents through time, however, has been far from even. After a lengthy term of disuse, Aquinas's thought was retrieved in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, languishing under a tide of Cartesian and Kantian interpretations. Pope Leo XIII led a revival of authentic Thomistic studies in ecclesiastical formation while Étienne Gilson's his-

torical approach also rightly put the focus back onto Aquinas's own texts. Neo-Thomist philosophers (such as Maritain, Garrigou-Lagrange, and Gilson) and the Magisterium, each in their own way, called for the integral formation of members of Christ's body in the modern world. This was to be achieved in various ways: by promoting Aquinas's principles and doctrines derived from study of the new critical editions, by developing the insights of Aquinas in relation to the plurality of schools in Scholasticism,<sup>6</sup> and by applying the commentatorial and manual traditions to contemporary problems.

Prior to the Second Vatican Council, the Church's theological and pastoral life was often sustained by a commitment to Aquinas's vision of the relation between faith, reason, and culture. In the fourteenth century, Pope Urban VI promoted Aquinas's teaching as the true and Catholic doctrine. Pius V boldly declared Aquinas a Universal Doctor (1567) and "the most brilliant light of the Church" whose philosophical categories underpinned the sacramental system.

Leo XIII recommended Aquinas above all other philosophers as "the chief and master" of all Scholastic Doctors (*Aeterni Patris*, 1879), and Vatican I's *Dei Filius* (1870) propounded a Thomist view of natural theology in contrast to modernist agnosticism in the guise of rationalism and naturalism. Focusing on faith and reason, the encyclical *Aeterni Patris* struck a balance between fideism and rationalism. Philosophy, in particular that of St. Thomas, was to serve three functions. First, there is its apologetic task. Aquinas's philosophy establishes the preambles of faith, and defends it to the nations by an "extrinsic" method using signs and miracles. Second, it endows sacred theology with the habit and nature of a science, by organizing the data of revelation in a coherent set of arguments. Third, it furnishes theology with arguments to combat her opponents.<sup>7</sup> Aquinas's

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<sup>6</sup> "Scholasticism" (meaning literally "of the schools") refers to a medley of medieval thinkers, in particular, Bonaventure, Thomas, Scotus, and Suarez, as these used the heritage of Christian Scripture, the Church Fathers, and a host of philosophical insights from Greek philosophy. It includes not only Aristotelian influences, but a strong Neoplatonic stream. "Neoscholasticism" refers to the revival of Thomism in the modern era. On these terms, see Philip A. Egan, *Philosophy and Catholic Theology: A Primer* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2009), 49–50.

<sup>7</sup> On *Aeterni Patris*, see, e.g., Gerald McCool, *Nineteenth Century Scholasticism: The Search for a Unitary Method* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1977), 228–240; Gerald McCool, *The Neo-Thomists* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1994), 34–36. McCool uses Gilson as an example of the defeat of the supposed unitary scholastic doctrine, an interpretation that was vigorously challenged among Thomists, as seen in a set of essays in *Tho-*

thought carried the advantage of universality and unity, for it absorbed the heritage of patristic thought and unity of doctrines which “had long lain dispersed like scattered limbs.”<sup>8</sup> It lent the objective universality of Aristotle’s principles to all branches of theology, in contrast to post-Kantian individualism and the confusing medley of modern philosophies.<sup>9</sup>

Pius X crowned St. Thomas once again as the Church’s preferred *magister* in his *24 Thomistic Theses* (1914), and as the cure for modernist errors in both the *Lamentabili Sane* (1907) and *Pascendi Dominici gregis* (1907), support for which was reiterated in *Sacrorum antistitum* (the Oath Against Modernism, 1910). Pius XI’s *Studiorum duces* (1923) made Aquinas’s “method, doctrine, and principles” mandatory in clerical formation, and *Deus scientiarum Dominus* (1931) echoed *Aeterni Patris*, while Pius XII’s *Humani generis* (1950) continued the theme of St. Thomas’s pride of place in priestly formation, to combat the errors that flow from relativism.

Despite the efforts of Pope John Paul II to revive Aquinas as a beacon following his de-emphasis in the Second Vatican Council,<sup>10</sup> post-conciliar Thomism has nearly collapsed, alongside the Western canon and the contemplative ideal, due in large part to modernism’s de-Hellenization of the Church.<sup>11</sup> Pockets of dedicated Thomist scholars exist,<sup>12</sup> but the

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*mistic Papers VI*, ed. John X. Knasas (Houston, Texas: The Centre for Thomistic Studies, 1994).

<sup>8</sup> Pope Leo XIII, *Aeterni Patris*, 108. In this section of his encyclical, Leo describes the Scholastic method in the words of Sixtus V (1585–1590), as outlining “that appropriate and interconnected coherence of things and causes.”

<sup>9</sup> McCool (*Nineteenth Century Scholasticism*, 233) views scholastic philosophy to contain several weaknesses. These include its supposedly ahistorical nature, and its failure to acknowledge diversity among philosophers and even commentators such as Cajetan. In addition, the criterion of truth for a Thomistic doctrine was not the texts of Aquinas himself, but unanimous agreement among Thomistic commentators.

<sup>10</sup> In *The Decree on Priestly Formation* (*Optatam totius*, 15), the “perennial philosophy” is lauded, and Aquinas is recommended as a guide (id., 16). In the *Declaration on Christian Education* (*Gravissimum educationis*, 10), the Church is exhorted to follow “in the footsteps of the Doctors of the Church, especially those of St. Thomas Aquinas.” Previous Magisterial recommendations and mandates are not mentioned. On this topic, see Jose Pereira, “Thomism and the Magisterium: From *Aeterni Patris* to *Veritatis splendor*,” *Logos. A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 5:3 (2002): 170–171.

<sup>11</sup> On the demise of the so-called “Thomistic revival,” see, e.g., Daniel McNerny, “The Revivification of Sound Christian Philosophy,” *New Oxford Review*, part I (May 2015), and part II (June 2015). Ratzinger noted that modernism rejected the “Hellenization” of the Church through Greek and medieval philosophy, and many modernists substantiate this rejection (starting with Bergson—see, e.g., his work on mysticism). Bernard Lonergan—in

institutional weight in Catholicism has largely shifted towards anthropologies and spiritualities provided by the Jesuit (transcendental Thomist) school. One interpretation of events is that the demise was caused by popes' attempted transmission of a "unitary system"—and indeed, *Pascendi* warns teachers not to abandon Aquinas's metaphysics at their intellectual and spiritual peril.<sup>13</sup> Scholasticism (and philosophy, and thus theology) is complex, and the legislative approach did not withstand the explosion of "Thomisms" in the twentieth century, ranging from Louvain Neo-Scholasticism, to transcendental, phenomenological, analytic, and existential varieties.

Early in his pontificate, John Paul II accepted philosophical pluralism<sup>14</sup> and in his 1993 encyclical *Veritatis splendor*, abrogated his predecessors' imposition of Thomism on the Church,<sup>15</sup> reinforcing this position in *Fides et ratio*.<sup>16</sup> Aquinas is embraced as a metaphysical guide for theology,<sup>17</sup> yet the Second Vatican Council's openness to modern philosophy is lauded as well.<sup>18</sup> Philosophy as such is promoted in ecclesiastical study and

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his *Doctrinal Pluralism* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, Aquinas Lecture, 1971) among other works—berates the influence of Hellenization, as did Hans Urs von Balthasar, in his *Razing the Bastions: On the Church in this Age* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993, original German edition 1952).

<sup>12</sup> On the situation of post-conciliar Thomism in various institutions of philosophy and theology, see, e.g., D. Q. McInerney, "The Rise and Fall of the Thomistic Renewal, Part II: A Revival Cut Short," *New Oxford Review* (June 2015). McInerney rightly blames a resurgent modernism (among other reasons) for the collapse of the Thomistic renewal, and points to the existence of a few faithful Catholic colleges and universities as a safe harbor for disseminating the Thomistic worldview.

<sup>13</sup> Pius X, *Pascendi Dominici gregis*, 39–40.

<sup>14</sup> In his address on the occasion of the first centenary of *Aeterni Patris*, for instance. See John Paul II, *Pontificia Universitate S. Thomae Aquinatis, saeculo expleto a datis Encyclicis "Aeterni Patris,"* AAS 71 (August–December 1979): 1480, where other "philosophical currents" are considered as "natural allies" of Aquinas. See Pereira, "Thomism and the Magisterium," 176.

<sup>15</sup> John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor*, 29: "Certainly the Church's Magisterium does not intend to impose upon the faithful any particular theological system, still less a philosophical one."

<sup>16</sup> John Paul II, *Fides et ratio*, 49: "The Church has no philosophy of her own nor does she canonize any one philosophy in preference to others."

<sup>17</sup> Footnote 115 (of *Fides et ratio*, 97) refers the reader to John Paul II's 1979 *Angelicum* address, in which Aquinas is recommended to the youth for study, due to his "openness" and "universalism," and in particular, due to his realism which is based on the *actus essendi* and directs the mind towards "pure Act, namely, to God."

<sup>18</sup> Aquinas's contributions are highlighted in *Fides et ratio*, 43–44, and the Council's references are discussed in *id.*, 59–61. In paragraph 59, various modern (and modernist) philoso-

formation (*Fides et ratio*, 62) and Aquinas stands as a model for the relationship between faith and reason. The Magisterium has a positive role of providing data for inspiration,<sup>19</sup> yet it does not interfere in the autonomy of philosophy's method and principles, which proceed according to the light of human reason (id., 49). The "unity of truth" encompasses a variety of paths towards it (id., 51), and the original vocation and dignity of philosophy consists in cultural formation through the gift of thought (id., 6).

Both Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI affirmed that the Church is the guardian and promoter of the goods basic to human life and flourishing, over and against the reductionist tyrannies of the world of work, hedonism and nihilism. As Guardini and Pieper predicted, She alone is left with the task of philosophy—not just as an academic pastime, or ensconced in seminaries as a stepping stone to theology and the pastoral challenges of the "real" world, or as aesthetic frippery, but as an indispensable cornerstone to human culture.

While Benedict XVI sees a parallel between prophets and philosophers in that both strive towards the *Logos*, Christianity surpasses ancient philosophy's segregation of religion and truth.<sup>20</sup> Reason, not blind will or matter, is at the origin of creation, or reason abolishes itself.<sup>21</sup> Benedict describes himself not as a Thomist but as an "Augustinian," as faith is the path to understanding,<sup>22</sup> and an epistemology based not on an illusory notion of "pure nature" but on the will's and mind's purification through

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phies are mentioned as "parallel to Pope Leo's call," producing philosophical works of great influence and lasting value."

<sup>19</sup> *Fides et ratio*, 60 notes the role of Vatican Council's *Gaudium et spes* as a "virtual compendium of the biblical anthropology from which philosophy too can draw inspiration." On the relation of *Fides et ratio* to the study of Aquinas, see John F. Wippel, "Fides et ratio's Call for a Renewal of Metaphysics and St. Thomas Aquinas," in *The Vocation of the Catholic Philosopher: From Maritain to John Paul II*, ed. John Hittinger (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 145–165.

<sup>20</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 139–141. Pope Benedict's famous 2006 Regensburg Address addresses the issue of reason or the *logos* in relation to religion.

<sup>21</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, "The Truth of Christianity," Sorbonne Address, 25–27 November 1999, trans. Maria Klepacka, cited in Tracey Rowland, *Ratzinger's Faith: The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 63.

<sup>22</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth: The Church at the End of the Millennium. An Interview with Peter Seewald* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 33, 41.

faith, makes Augustine his preferred “counterweight” to Aquinas.<sup>23</sup> With the relaxation of the imposition of Thomism on the Church, philosophy’s status as “handmaid” remains in Christian philosophy, but the general handling of diverse philosophies and cultural worldviews lacks the safeguard of Thomistic metaphysical principles, which also guarantee theology’s objective and universal truth.<sup>24</sup>

### Modernism’s Characteristics

Catholic modernism has been defined in opposite terms by its friends and enemies. Whether as the “sum of all heresies” or as a transformation of consciousness inspired by evolutionary theory and the progress of science, its new definition of truth impacts on dogma, ecumenism, and the role of Aquinas and classical culture in the Church. Modernist sympathizers laud it as a “renaissance,”<sup>25</sup> and as “a purification of the religious sense and an integration of Catholic truth,”<sup>26</sup> and as a “movement for reform which received official expression in the Second Vatican Council,”<sup>27</sup> while those opposed to it have called it the “synthesis of all heresies” (Pius X) and its departure from Aquinas’s philosophy a rejection of the Magisterium itself (Pius XII).<sup>28</sup> Modernism was defined and even created as a movement, its friends tell us, by its papal opponents, particularly, Leo XIII

<sup>23</sup> Id., 60. Cf. Joseph Ratzinger, “Commentary on *Gaudium et Spes*,” in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, iii, ed. H. Vorgrimler (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 155. Cf. Rowland, *Ratzinger’s Faith*, 4–6.

<sup>24</sup> As Thomas Joseph White, O.P., puts it: “The Catholic philosophical and theological response to our own secular and pluralistic age will require, among other things, the renewal of a more robust philosophical Thomism present within the intellectual life of the Church” (“Toward a Post-Secular, Post-Conciliar Thomistic Philosophy: *Wisdom in the Face of Modernity* and the Challenge of Contemporary Natural Theology,” *Nova et vetera* 10:2 (2012): 530).

<sup>25</sup> Nicholas Lash, “Modernism, *Aggiornamento*, and the Night Battle,” in *The Bishops and Writers: Aspects of the Evolution of Modern English Catholicism*, ed. Adrian Hastings (Wheatthampstead: A. Clarke, 1977), 55.

<sup>26</sup> Alexander Dru, Illyd Trethowan, *Maurice Blondel: The Letter on Apologetics and History and Dogma* (London, 1964), 32.

<sup>27</sup> Alexander Dru, “Modernism and the Present Position of the Church,” *Downside Review* 82 (1964): 110.

<sup>28</sup> Leo XIII, *Aeterni Patris*, and Pius XII, *Humani Generis*, cited in James Weisheipl, “The Revival of Thomism as a Christian Philosophy,” in *New Themes in Christian Philosophy*, ed. Ralph McInerny (South Bend, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), 183.

and Pius X, who tried to halt the reconciliation of the Catholic faith with freedom in historical, biblical and scientific research.<sup>29</sup>

For modernists, “living” philosophy is known by change, the quality by which we recognize life. But Thomists<sup>30</sup> view the *philosophia perennis* as “living” from its point of origin. Because its first principles are above time, it can, over time, incorporate new truths at home with those principles.<sup>31</sup> Aquinas’s thought, modernists add, has little to do with the “dry,” “rigid,” and “wooden” introductory textbooks of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The mantra that Scholastic philosophy is “a-historical” stems from the manuals’ impersonal style. But they offered condensed solutions to problems priests would encounter, including the need for a Catholic worldview in a pluralist society.<sup>32</sup> In fact, Aquinas’s thought is often at the root of the unfairly maligned scholastic manuals.<sup>33</sup> The charge of a-historicity also stems from the view that Aquinas erected a system of created “eternal truths” in an intransigent philosophical essentialism, a misconception corrected by members of the Toronto school.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> See, e.g., Harvey Hill, *Politics of Modernism*, 195 (cited in Joseph Kelly, *History and Heresy: How Historical Forces Create Doctrinal Conflicts* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 110) says that Pius X created the movement of modernism by calling it a heresy in *Pascendi* (1907); while Gabriel Daly, O.S.A. (“Theology and Philosophical Modernism,” in *Catholicism Contending with Modernity: Roman Catholic Modernism and Anti-modernism in Historical Context*, ed. Darrell Jodock (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 89) says that Rome did much to create the monster it slew, by erecting an “artificial criterion” for modernism.

<sup>30</sup> Such as Maritain and Garrigou-Lagrange.

<sup>31</sup> Jacques Maritain, “Theonas,” in Jacques and Raissa Maritain, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 2 (Fribourg, Switzerland: Éditions Universitaires; Paris: Editions Saint-Paul, 1987), 896, 899. Cf. Lawrence Dewan, *Wisdom, Law and Virtue* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 88.

<sup>32</sup> The scholarship of Edward Feser (*Scholastic Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction* (Heusenstamm, Germany: *Éditiones Scholasticae*, 2014), 7), James Schall (“Is Scholasticism Making a Comeback?,” *Crisis Magazine*, 19 January 2015), and John Lamont (“Attacks on Thomism,” *Rorate Caeli*, 1 January 2015) concur on this point.

<sup>33</sup> On the negative characterization of Thomism in general and the manual tradition in particular, see Lamont, “Attacks on Thomism.”

<sup>34</sup> Namely, Gilson, Maurer and Phelan, for example. Gilson discusses why Aquinas’s thought is existentialist, not essentialist, in *Being and Some Philosophers*. Maurer refutes the view that Aquinas asserted there were created “eternal truths” or eternal truth outside of the Divine Mind, in “St. Thomas and Eternal Truths,” *Mediaeval Studies* 32 (1970): 91–107. Phelan also discusses the charge in his discussion of Fackenheim’s work on the topic, in *St. Thomas and Historicity*, Marquette Aquinas Lecture (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1961).



In 1907, Cardinal Mercier<sup>35</sup> defined modernism as the view that believers draw the object and motive of their faith from within, denying historically revealed truth and the teaching authority of the Church—in short, promoting faith as “private judgment.”<sup>36</sup> Weisheipl called it an intellectual spirit advanced by zealous non-isolationist clerics trying to meet a liberal and rationalist world, by explaining dogma’s evolutionary quality.<sup>37</sup>

Leaders of the movement include lay scholars (Blondel, le Roy, and Baron von Hugel) and priests (Tyrell and Loisy, both excommunicated, and Laberthonnière), each stressing either a philosophical, theological, or mystical aspect. Influenced by Nietzsche’s emphasis on the will and by the Bergson’s evolutionary metaphysics, and repelled (as was Leo XIII<sup>38</sup>) by the incursion of Cartesian philosophy in Catholic seminaries for over more than a century, modernists unanimously denounced Aristotle and Greek philosophy in general.<sup>39</sup> They opposed Thomist apologetics, which used natural theology, to their new “method of immanence” and to a pragmatist notion of truth in relation to dogma. Modernism exchanged a rational basis for belief in God and the supernatural for an emotional view of faith as a motion of the heart, a feeling which becomes the measure of dogmatic truths.<sup>40</sup>

The irony of their turn to pragmatism and immanence lay in the fact that Descartes himself championed pragmatism and immanence by de-throning theology to make us “masters of nature” and by obliging philoso-

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<sup>35</sup> Archbishop of Malines and Primate of Belgium, who died in 1926.

<sup>36</sup> And thus, modernism is a Protestant heresy according to Mercier. See Cardinal Desiré Joseph Mercier, “Letter on Modernism” (1907). See Fergus Kerr, *Twentieth Century Catholic Theologians* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2007), 5. Bernard Reardon popularly defined it as “the attempt to synthesize the basic truths of religion and the methods and assumptions of modern thought, using the latter as necessary and proper criteria” (Bernard Reardon, *Roman Catholic Modernism* (London, 1970), 9).

<sup>37</sup> Weisheipl, “The Revival of Thomism as a Christian Philosophy,” 178.

<sup>38</sup> On Pope Leo XIII’s replacement of Cartesian manuals with Thomistic ones in seminaries, see Thomas A. Hartley, *Thomistic Revival and the Modernist Era* (Toronto, Canada: Institute of Christian Thought, University of St. Michael’s College, 1971), 33.

<sup>39</sup> On this, a particular view of Laberthonnière, see James C. Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought*, Vol. I: “The Enlightenment and the Nineteenth Century,” 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1997), 364.

<sup>40</sup> On this, see Philip Egan, *Philosophy and Catholic Theology: A Primer* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2009), 54.

phers to proceed in “angelic” fashion, starting with God and with thought.<sup>41</sup>

### The Church’s Reaction to Modernism

Weisheipl gave two reasons for the modernist crisis, which also explain the Church’s reaction to it. First, there was the false view among philosophers and theologians that they had to make a choice between Thomistic principles and modern insights, and second, the failure to return to Aquinas himself in the intellectual formation of the clergy.<sup>42</sup>

As early as 1864, restoring Thomism to schools and seminaries formed the Church’s strategy of engagement. Pius IX appended a *Syllabus of Errors* to his encyclical *Quanta Cura (Condemning Current Errors)*, condemning rationalism, its denial of the supernatural, and condemning those who would make the Roman Pontiff “reconcile himself to and agree with progress and liberalism.”<sup>43</sup> Pope Leo XIII’s Thomist restoration comprised four actions: 1) the 1879 encyclical *Aeterni Patris* mandating Christian philosophy for schools and seminaries according to Aquinas’s principles, 2) instituting the Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas (the Angelicum) to centralize the dissemination of Thomism, 3) founding the Leonine Commission in 1880 for the critical edition of Aquinas’s works, and 4) proclaiming Aquinas the patron of Catholic education.<sup>44</sup>

Pius X’s “legislative” or “disciplinary” Thomism<sup>45</sup> returned to Pius IX’s method of making lists of errors. *Lamentabili Sane* (1907, “With Truly Lamentable Results”) listed 65 errors taken from the writings of

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<sup>41</sup> See Jacques Maritain, *Science and Wisdom*, trans. Bernard Wall (London: Geoffrey Bles: The Centenary Press, 1940), 29.

<sup>42</sup> Weisheipl, “The Revival of Thomism,” 185, 179 §37.

<sup>43</sup> On the 1864 *Syllabus*, see Egan, *Philosophy and Catholic Theology: A Primer*, 3–4.

<sup>44</sup> In his letter *Cum Hoc Sit* (4 August 1880). On these four acts, see Thomas A. Hartley, *Thomistic Revival and the Modernist Era* (Toronto, Canada: Institute of Christian Thought, University of St. Michael’s College, 1971), ch. 2. The earlier *Syllabus of Errors* published by Pius IX in 1864 (appended to the encyclical *Quanta Cura*) listed 80 errors (in 10 categories), in a condemnation of political liberalism.

<sup>45</sup> The difference between Leo XIII’s and Pius X’s approach to Thomism was in part the agenda of legislation with respect to the restoration of Thomism in the pontificate of Pius X. On this distinction, see, e.g., Russell Hittinger, “*Pascendi Dominici Gregis* at 100: Two Modernisms, Two Thomisms: Reflections on the Centenary of Pius X’s Letter Against the Modernists,” *Nova et vetera* 5:4 (2007): 843–880.

Loisy,<sup>46</sup> and *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* (1907, “Feeding the Lord’s Flock”) formed his anti-modernist manifesto. The 1910 *Oath Against Modernism* (taken by all clerics until 1967), the *Index of Prohibited Books*, and the censuring and removal of modernists from European teaching posts was accompanied by newly-formed parish “vigilance” committees. The *Summa theologiae* was mandated as a textbook in theology by pontifical degree-granting institutions, and a 1914 *motu proprio* (*Doctoris Angelici*) warned against deviating “so much as an iota from Aquinas, especially in metaphysics.”<sup>47</sup>

Finally, the Congregation of Studies issued a list of 24 fundamental Thomist theses in philosophy, serving as “stabilizers, guaranteeing uniformity” in philosophy<sup>48</sup> for Catholic thinkers and clerics—a core group of philosophical theses dealing with being, nature, soul, and God—a summary of Catholic reason when many theologians were opting for the claims of personal “experience” and feeling.<sup>49</sup> Through the concepts of potency and act, God’s transcendence is secured and a philosophy of creation could be erected; natural science is possible due to intrinsic principles and teleology; human immortality is secured through immaterial cognition, and God’s existence is demonstrable from principles of reasoning and from cues from the natural order.

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<sup>46</sup> See Weisheipl, “The Revival of Thomism as a Christian Philosophy,” 178. A list of the contents of the Church’s legislative response to modernism under Pius X can be found in Alec Vidler, *The Modernist Movement in the Roman Church: Its Origins and Outcome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934), 217–233.

<sup>47</sup> See Weisheipl, “The Revival of Thomism as a Christian Philosophy,” 180. Interestingly, John Paul II returns to extolling Aquinas’s metaphysical guidance in *Fides et ratio*. He takes the position that although the Church has no philosophy “of her own,” she should nonetheless revere Aquinas, especially in the study of metaphysics. Since metaphysics gives the first principles to the other areas of philosophy, Aquinas’s pride of place is tacitly affirmed. While the precise version of Thomism is not specified, the commendation of existential Thomism as found in Gilson and his school is apparent. In his own philosophical works, John Paul II promoted phenomenological Thomism.

<sup>48</sup> Hartley, *Thomistic Revival and the Modernist Era*, 56.

<sup>49</sup> See, e.g., Kerr, *Twentieth Century Catholic Theologians*, 3–5. Kerr refers to Alessandro Maggolini, “Magisterial teaching on experience in the twentieth century from the Modernist crisis to the Second Vatican Council,” *Communio* 23 (1996): 224–243. In his article “Thomism and NeoModernism,” John Lamont defends the 24 theses as a clear, succinct, and useful summary of Aquinas’s teaching, thus debunking the modernist critique of them as a set of rigid and simplistic aphorisms designed to stifle creativity and the philosophic spirit. Similarly, Lamont persuasively argues that the manuals’ economical presentation served the purpose of training clerics, and that the critique of manuals ignored this pastoral necessity.

In contrast to today's ecclesial extroversion, the Church knew that Her own house required interior order before She ventures out to the margins and peripheries. Her traditions and intellectual life are not an inauthentic cocoon (or museum) which only an updating or *aggiornamento* can correct. Showing the compatibility of faith and reason prepared the Church to turn "outwards" to the world,<sup>50</sup> and towards the problems created by modern philosophy.

The papal reaction, called a "reign of terror"<sup>51</sup> by modernists culminated in Pius XII's 1950 encyclical *Humani generis*. Inspired by Garrigou-Lagrange, it critiques efforts to "free" dogma from scholastic concepts, and warns against errors flowing from philosophical relativism, which starts with empiricism and positivism.

### Modernist and Traditional Definitions of Truth

Although modernists such as Blondel and Laberthonnière rejected immanence as a doctrine (for it implies pantheism), they adopted it as an indispensable *method* to construct their argument for God's existence. Christian apologetics, reasoned Blondel, must begin with our interior life of consciousness and ferret out its demands, and ignore the old "extrinsicist" apologetics which relied on external proofs from the world, and on miracles. As Tyrell put it in 1909, the lay Catholic's place is not just "to receive the faith passively as one receives a traveller's tale of regions beyond his ken, a tale which he repeats to others . . . but with no guarantee of personal experience or conviction."<sup>52</sup> He detached the truth of the Gospel from historical claims, making the Gospel's "proof its capacity to act as a medium of experience."<sup>53</sup> This squared with Bergson's exchange of what he called "the direct perception of the essence of life, the flux of experienced duration,"<sup>54</sup> for classical realism. God was actually a "continuous

<sup>50</sup> The necessity of "turning inwards" before "turning outwards" is detailed by J. J. Denier, as cited in Hartley, *Thomistic Revival and the Modernist Era*, 45.

<sup>51</sup> Weisheipl, "The Revival of Thomism as a Christian Philosophy," 178, e.g.

<sup>52</sup> George Tyrell, *Medievalism*, 3<sup>rd</sup> revised and enlarged edition in 1909 (Turnbridge Wells: Burns and Oates, 1994), 59, as quoted in Kerr, *Twentieth Century Catholic Theologians*, 6.

<sup>53</sup> Bernard Reardon, "Demythologizing and Catholic Modernism," *Theology* 59 (1956), as cited by Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought*, 378.

<sup>54</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, as quoted in Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *God: His Existence and His Nature: A Thomistic Solution of Certain Agnostic Antinomies*, Vol. I, trans. Dom Bede Rose (St. Louis, Mo.; London: B. Herder Book Co., 1934), 29.

projection” of unceasing change and action, essentially unknowable except through mystical intuition.

Today, the German bishops’ adoption of modernists’ historicist, evolutionary philosophy stems also from their embrace of Hegelian idealism. In an introductory theology text, Cardinal Kasper describes Christianity as an inextricable element in a Heraclitean cosmic dance: “Everything is involved in upheaval and change; hardly anything fixed or solid is left. Not even the Church and its understanding of the faith have escaped this historical transformation.”<sup>55</sup> The experiential imperative of this view has been taken up recently by the German Catholic Bishops in the Family Synod. Cardinal Marx has pointed to the reality of “life” as constituting a decisive factor in dogma and in this context calls the synod “historically important.”<sup>56</sup>

Opposing the manuals’ abstract apologetics,<sup>57</sup> Blondel’s idea of truth as “adequation of mind with *life*” was said to appeal to the “whole person,” reflecting the perspectives of cultural and personal history. Not only our knowledge of God, but even our knowledge of being, is subject to a prior “option” or freedom, as Blondel understands it:

We must implicitly place before ourselves the problem of our destiny, and subordinate to option all that we are and all that concerns us. We cannot acquire the notion of being and of beings, except by

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<sup>55</sup> W. Kasper, *Einführung in den Glauben* (Matthias-Grünewald Verlag, 1972, 4th edition 1975), trans. V. Green as W. Kasper, *An Introduction to Christian Faith* (Burns and Oates, 1980), 155 (English translations are from this text). Cf. Kasper’s approval of Hegel’s statements: “For Hegel, truth is the whole. ‘But the whole is nothing other than essence consummating itself through its development . . . The True is thus the Bacchanalian revel in which no member is not drunk’” (id., 156).

<sup>56</sup> On quotes from Cardinal Marx, Archbishop of Munich and Chairman of the German Bishops Conference, and Bishop Bode, Bishop of Osnabrück, regarding the synod, see *Rorate Caeli*, 26 February 2015, quoting Regina Einig, *Die Tagespost*, 25 February 2015: “the comments of two of the three bishops chosen as delegates for the synod . . . were made to journalists during the spring meeting of the German bishops’ conference. Below are its main excerpts, with emphases added by us. The main point seems to be the new German Bishops’ attitude of moving on alone, which could indicate that they foresee that they will not be able to ‘guide’ the Synod as easily as they had thought possible. Blackmail is in the air in the German Conference . . .”

<sup>57</sup> Blondel attempted to avoid skepticism by reasoning that there must be a way out of the immanence of consciousness posited by Kant, and man’s interior life of consciousness must be the point of departure. See Maurice Blondel, *L’action: essai d’une critique de la vie et d’une science de la pratique* (Paris: Alcan and Presses Universitaires de France, 1893).

way of this alternative . . . being becomes known, not before, but after this freedom of choice.<sup>58</sup>

Even metaphysics has its “substance in the will” and has no truth apart from it, for him—Garrigou calls this a metaphysical voluntarism.<sup>59</sup> Aquinas’s definition of truth as an “adequation” or conformity of the mind with things was deemed static, arid and intellectualist.

Ironically reminiscent of the Cartesian interiority it sought to overcome, Blondel’s method of immanence has the subject reflecting on its own “dynamism” of thought and will, where the believer experiences God as a subject<sup>60</sup> rather than as a mere object. The will’s ineradicable longing for the infinite, points to an unavoidable “free option”—either to open oneself with humility to the possibility of supernatural revelation, or to refuse, and forfeit the quest for life’s meaning.<sup>61</sup> This choice follows on the primary freedom he spoke of earlier, which he says shapes our knowledge of being. As with James’s pragmatism, ideas are ratified by action, or their success in the world, and remain subjective until such verification.

#### *Effects of the Modernist Notion of Truth*

The first effect of the new notion of truth is a misinterpretation of the evolution of dogma. In his 1908 book *The Gospel and the Church*, Loisy made dogmatic definitions relative and variable, related to the form of human knowledge at the time of their creation. He points to the Hellenization of early Jewish Christianity as an example, stating “the dogmas may be divine in origin and substance, but they are human in structure and composition.”<sup>62</sup> Heaven and hell are no longer understood spatially, for example, and the formula is the mere “auxiliary of faith, the guiding line of thought.”<sup>63</sup> For Loisy, concepts are the dress in which immutable judgments are culturally transmitted.

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<sup>58</sup> Id., 436.

<sup>59</sup> Id., 297, as quoted by Garrigou-Lagrange, *God: His Existence and His Nature*, 37, 34.

<sup>60</sup> That is, the goal or horizon of all of his acts of knowledge and love.

<sup>61</sup> On Blondel, see, e.g. Gerald McCool, *The Neo-Thomists* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1994), 45–50.

<sup>62</sup> Alfred F. Loisy, *The Gospel and the Church*, trans. Christopher Home, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (London, 1908), 210–211. Loisy made revelation a matter of man’s interpretation of his own fluctuating experience, identified religious faith with feeling or sentiment, and discarded traditional causal proofs of God as irrelevant.

<sup>63</sup> Id., 224–225.

For le Roy,<sup>64</sup> dogmas function as rules of practical conduct and not affirmations of truths and objects in themselves. The dogma that “God is personal” means that we “should conduct ourselves in relation to God as we do in relations with others,” while the Resurrection simply means that God’s activity is still at work in the world.<sup>65</sup>

In 1944, Henri Bouillard charged Thomists with near-univocity in their view that we have some access to God’s essence, and he distinguished between “eternal affirmations” about God in dogma, and “temporal representations” conditioned by history and culture.<sup>66</sup> Although Aristotelian distinctions and terms are not themselves dogmas, for Thomas, the dogmas of transubstantiation and Trinitarian doctrine are nonetheless bound to these concepts.<sup>67</sup>

In its emphasis on cultural concreteness and personal experience, pragmatist truth marginalized speculative theology in favor of *praxis* at all levels. Liberation, feminist, ecological, “Christian” Zen and other ideologies point to this tendency. De Lubac focussed on “mystery,” “paradox” and the unknowable transcendence of God, in contrast to “propositional” theology of the manuals. Some even today view Aquinas’s and Vatican I’s insistence that certain preambles of faith, truths about God, are knowable by natural reason alone, as a kind of presumption or “univocity” which threatens the mystery of divine transcendence and the paradoxes of our encounter with this luminous darkness.<sup>68</sup>

For Aristotle and Aquinas, in contrast, paradox is the mere embrace of contradiction unless it is dissolved by the speculative intellect, and with contradiction, an abyss of disorder is opened. Dogmas, such as that con-

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<sup>64</sup> Le Roy developed views which incited the Dominican Garrigou-Lagrange to take up the cudgels against modernism. The head of Bergson’s school of thought, le Roy applied his Heraclitean revolution in metaphysics to the issue of dogma. “Life,” the *élan vital* or sheer becoming as the first principle of reality, meant agnosticism about transcendence.

<sup>65</sup> Edouard le Roy, *Dogme et Critique* (Paris 1907), 19–20, 25.

<sup>66</sup> See Henri Bouillard, “Notions conciliaires et analogie de la vérité,” *Recherches de science religieuse* 35 (1948): 254; *Conversion et grace chez S. Thomas d’Aquin: Étude historique, Théologie*, no. 1 (Paris: Aubier, 1944), cited in Hans Boersma, *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2011), 167. There is also Bouillard’s strange notion (controverted by Garrigou) of the “analogy of truth”—just as being is analogous between God and creature, so is truth. Thus, our truth is only similar to, not identical with truth in God.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, 168.

<sup>68</sup> The claim of overly positive knowledge of God, and even of univocity, is developed by Hans Boersma’s work on *nouvelle théologie*, for instance: *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry*.

cerning marriage, can be altered radically, because the identity of a nature is changeable according to circumstances, desire, or, as the modernists say, “life.” For Aquinas, by contrast, a nature is not an accidental feature of life, but refers to the necessities of the species itself.<sup>69</sup>

The “law of gradualism” follows from this notion of dogma: since moral rightness is conceived to lie with the subject,<sup>70</sup> we shouldn’t fret about being judged harshly against the natural law. The midterm *relatio* of the 2014 Vatican Synod on the Family introduced the concept as a justification for the admission of the divorced and remarried to Holy Communion, although references to this law were removed from the final *relatio*. The “law of gradualism” refers to the often slow nature of the work of grace, enabling a Christian to grow in virtue (John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio*, 34), whereas the “gradualness of the law” is a false idea that there are “different degrees of forms of precept in God’s law for different individuals and situations.”

The law of gradualism reappears in the 2015 Vatican Synod on the Family *instrumentum laboris* (§121) to justify integrating the divorced and remarried into pastoral life. There is no mention of the fact that confusion of the “law of gradualism” with the “gradualness of the law” can lead to the view that marriage might be redefined according to heterodox criteria. Most modernists insist that the language alone changes, so that we might go out to meet the age,<sup>71</sup> but is a short step to viewing human nature as having “evolved” towards an inclusiveness defined by powerful elites. A sign of the failure of *Humani generis*’s attempt to suppress modernism, is that both versions of the *instrumentum laboris* (2014 and 2015) recom-

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<sup>69</sup> S.Th., II–II, 154, 12. He says, “the order impressed on human nature is prior to and more firm than any subsequently established order—such that sins against nature are more grievous than even the depravity of sacrilege.”

<sup>70</sup> The midterm *relatio* of the October 2014 Synod drew on the “law of gradualism” but its emphasis on affirming “positive” aspects of irregular unions (including cohabitation and homosexual unions) implied a dependence on the “gradualness of the law” as well.

<sup>71</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar’s clarion call against tradition begins with *Razing the Bastions: On the Church in this Age*, trans. from the original German (1952) by Brian McNeil (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), a text which he stands by until his later career (*Test Everything: Hold Fast to What Is Good* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989) 13). Von Balthasar states “Perhaps she [viz. the Church] continued all too long after the Reformation to hand on the old intellectual framework of the middle ages . . . the Church’s representatives remained immersed in their own tradition . . . the Church’s sidelines-position and self-preoccupation . . .” (*Razing the Bastions*, 18).



mend altering our language about natural law,<sup>72</sup> and call for the pastoral innovations of “gradualism” and “inclusion” in the continuation of *aggiornamento* of an “inward looking” Church.<sup>73</sup>

A second result of the modernist notion of truth is that the practical intellect is left on its own to determine the “workable” truths of religion in a secular world. Paradox is no longer seen as the holding together in tension of merely apparent opposites that theoretical reason strives to dissolve. Rather, it means entertaining dichotomies and resolving them by appeal to what appears to “work” for an individual or culture, in a kind of “hermeneutic of discontinuity.” Various familiar false dichotomies, such as “dynamic” and “relevant” social justice vs. dry and rigid Scholasticism; the conciliar vs. the hierarchical; the “outward” vs. the “inward” looking or fortress mentality Church;<sup>74</sup> the “prophetic” and personal vs. the institutional; “mercy” vs. “judgment;” “openness” and novelty vs. security, au-

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<sup>72</sup> The *instrumentum laboris* for the October 2014 Vatican Synod on the Family calls for a new language to communicate the traditional “natural law”: “The language traditionally used in explaining the term “natural law” should be improved so that the values of the Gospel can be communicated to people today in a more intelligible manner” (Synod of Bishops, *The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization, instrumentum laboris* (Vatican City 2014), § 30).

<sup>73</sup> The 2014 Synod’s final document, approved by Pope Francis I, reflected the will of its writers more than the discussions of the bishops. The *instrumentum laboris* of the Oct. 2015 synod vaguely recommends “an itinerary of reconciliation or a penitential path under the authority of the [diocesan] bishop,” and only “in situations of irreversible cohabitation,” in line with the final *relatio* of the 2014 Synod (§52). Cf. the §121 of the same *instrumentum laboris*, regarding parishes’ “integration” of the divorced and civilly remarried: “the process [must] be accompanied by raising the sensitivity of the Christian community to receive these persons; and this work be done according to the law of gradualness (cf. *Familiaris consortio*, 34), while respecting the maturation of consciences.”

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Hans Urs von Balthasar’s early book, *Razing the Bastions*, a contemptuous rejection of all things Scholastic.

thority, and tradition,<sup>75</sup> etc., are open warnings against the social dangers of speculative reason and the contemplative order.<sup>76</sup>

A third result of the modernist notion of truth is the embrace of various types of pluralism in Catholic curricula in seminaries and colleges. The modernist triumph over natural theology and a Scholastic method based on a few perennial principles, created what we now experience as an incoherent medley in liturgy, catechesis, morals, and a host of ecumenical and ecclesial initiatives. Hybrid Thomisms with existentialist, Kantian, phenomenological and analytical foundations have come to dominate seminaries and colleges. Garrigou's strict-observance Thomism has given way to the anti-Scholastic, anti-metaphysical approaches in institutions within the Jesuit orbit.<sup>77</sup>

A fourth result concerns mystical theology. Given Blondel's method, we cannot be surprised at the post-conciliar makeover of Christian spirituality. Not only dogma, but Thomistic mystical theology itself, largely promoted by Garrigou-Lagrange and his interlocutors, would, by the Second Vatican Council, be suppressed, and replaced with Protestant imports, such as the charismatic movement and Kantian theologies such as

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<sup>75</sup> Pope Francis I's 2013 Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii gaudium*, critiques "pelagian" traditionalists as overly abstract, legalist, emotionally immature, in contrast to those who courageously embrace novelties: id., 93–94. In id., 93, "spiritual worldliness" is defined as the seeking of human glory hiding behind the "appearance of piety." In id., 94, Francis says that this "worldliness" is fueled by "the self-absorbed promethean neo-pelagianism of those who ultimately trust only in their own powers and feel superior to others because they observe certain rules or remain intransigently faithful to a particular Catholic style from the past. A supposed soundness of doctrine or discipline leads instead to a narcissistic and authoritarian elitism . . ."

<sup>76</sup> C. S. Lewis was also concerned about modern education's herd mentality, which ensures conformism and discourages creative thought. See, e.g., his *The Abolition of Man* (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 1943).

<sup>77</sup> These approaches have increased the already contested divisions in Thomism, from strict-observance textual Thomism of thinkers such as Garrigou-Lagrange, to existentialist Thomists such as the school of Gilson, to the transcendental, Kantian inspired approaches of Lonergan and Rahner, to phenomenological Thomists such as Karol Wojtyła (Pope John Paul II), and the more recent "analytical" Thomism inspired by 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy of language. The recent book edited by Craig Paterson and Matthew Pugh, *Analytical Thomism* (London: Ashgate, 2006) has a helpful introduction outlining the field of analytical Thomism. Anscombe, Geach, Haldane, and others use the tools of analytic philosophy to place Aquinas in dialogue with the English-speaking philosophical world. One has only to glance at Lonergan Institute publications across North America (or read Gerald McCool's works, such as *From Unity to Pluralism*) for evidence of the charge of "dry," "rigid," and "static" Thomism applied to Thomists of the "strict observance" such as Garrigou.

those of Lonergan and Rahner. The demand for diversity buried the unity of natural, mystical or ascetic and moral theologies promoted by Garrigou, and the project of reintegration through grafting Greek principles and distinctions onto the enterprise of Christian wisdom was put to a halt by the Council's implementers, more interested in the turn outwards and in subjective experience.<sup>78</sup>

A fifth result was noted by *Humani generis*—a false *irenicism* that ignores the salutary and costly struggle for truth. This could not help but be the case, given the subordination of the intellect to the passions, and to the will that modernists put to play.<sup>79</sup>

Underlying the modernist notion of truth is its confusion of practical and speculative intellects, and of intellect and will, resulting in a clerical intellectual anemia which, by separating thought from action, engages neither God nor life with our full powers.<sup>80</sup>

### Gilson and Modernism

Throughout a career of examining the roots and branches of a variegated Scholasticism, Gilson admired lay philosophers' (such as Blondel and Bergson) contributions. While the Magisterium's legislative mandate of classical Thomism was embodied in the work of Garrigou-Lagrange, Gilson increasingly fixed his attention on the principles and doctrines of St. Thomas. Nonetheless, he often stood in the crosshairs of the modernist debates within the Church, as seen, for example, in his correspondence with Henri de Lubac.<sup>81</sup> If Gilson and Maritain had not been laity, Gilson

<sup>78</sup> The 1950 text of *Humani generis* (largely inspired by Garrigou) was a resurrection of the "syllabus-of-errors approach" to theology. From relativism, several errors (immanentism, subjectivism, agnosticism, etc.) were said to emerge.

<sup>79</sup> Garrigou notes this blurring of faculties by modernists in his discussion of *Humani generis*: "The structure of the encyclical *Humani generis*," trans. from the Italian *La sintesi tomistica* (Brescia, Queriniana, 1953): 541–554 by A. Aversa.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Garrigou-Lagrange, *God: His Existence and His Nature*, 39.

<sup>81</sup> For example, Gilson's letter of 8 July 1956 in *Lettres de M. Étienne Gilson adressées au P. du Lubac et commentées par celui-ci*, ed. Henri de Lubac (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1986), 20. The English edition is: *Letters of Étienne Gilson to Henri de Lubac (annotated by Father de Lubac)*, trans. Mary Emily Hamilton (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988). An example of his long-standing praise for his mentor Bergson is found in "On Behalf of the Handmaid," in *Theology of Renewal: Proceedings of the Congress on the Theology of the Renewal of the Church, Centenary of Canada 1867–1967*, Vol. 1 (Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1968), 241. Like Maritain, he praises the metaphysical revival that Bergson's evolutionary thought introduced.

maintained, they would also have been censured, due to their exchange of a systematic Aristotelian Thomist Scholasticism for either historical exegesis (Gilson) or a creative synthesis (Maritain).<sup>82</sup>

Gilson's castigation of Garrigou-Lagrange's<sup>83</sup> "authoritarian Thomism"<sup>84</sup> which imposed one philosophy as an "official ideology"<sup>85</sup> of the Church, and which "de-theologized"<sup>86</sup> Thomas, is less well-known than is his insistence on Aquinas's "theological method" and his advocacy of philosophical pluralism within Scholasticism. Modernist tendencies had gained ground in seminaries due to the adoption of Cartesian manuals which promoted the autonomy of philosophy, which in Cartesian terms meant the exile of theological concerns or the separation of faith and reason. The tendency of some neo-Scholastics to forward a medieval "pure" philosophy (de Wulf) or a Kantian "criteriology" (Mercier) in response to Kant exacerbated the problem for Christian philosophers who intuited the theological font of philosophical wisdom.

Gilson's historical focus and assertion of philosophical pluralism within Scholasticism would seem to reflect sympathy for some aspects of modernism.<sup>87</sup> Yet at least four factors combine to define his thought as anti-modern: his firm rejection of Teilhard de Chardin's evolutionary thought<sup>88</sup> and of the Louvain school's Kantian response to Cartesianism,<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> See *Letters of Étienne Gilson to Henri de Lubac*, 69.

<sup>83</sup> As well as that of Sertillanges and Mandonnet.

<sup>84</sup> Letter 4, in *Letters of Étienne Gilson to Henri de Lubac*, 73.

<sup>85</sup> Letter 2, in id., 53.

<sup>86</sup> Letter 9, in id., 105.

<sup>87</sup> In fact, Gerald McCool (*From Unity to Pluralism*) used Gilson's assertion of pluralism in order to create the impression that Gilson rejected Pope Leo XIII's call for a return to a "unitary system" supposedly promoted by *Aeterni Patris*. On this issue, see *Thomistic Papers VI*. In fact, Leo XIII recommended not a unitary system but the "way" of philosophizing of those who to the study of philosophy unite obedience to the Christian faith. On this topic in Gilson, see "What is Christian Philosophy?" in *A Gilson Reader*, ed. Anton Pegis (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Image Book, 1957), 186.

<sup>88</sup> And his eventual rejection of Bergson's Heracliteanism. Gilson maintained that Bergson revitalized metaphysics, and had a "naturally religious soul as did Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus" but that his anti-intellectualism impeded his grasp of dogma and made a Christian God and Christian philosophy impossible (*The Philosopher and Theology*, trans. Cécile Gilson (New York: Random House, 1962), 135, 137–139, 144). There are two chapters in *The Philosopher and Theology* ("The Bergson Affair" and "Wisdom Takes a Holiday") devoted to the analysis of Bergson.

<sup>89</sup> Gilson rejected "critical realism" and argued for "common sense" realism in *Thomist Realism and the Critique of Knowledge*, trans. Mark A. Wauck (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986, French original 1983). On a comparison of Garrigou, Gilson, and Maritain on

the priority given to revealed theology as a guide for philosophy, and his rejection of Pope Paul VI's call for a "new" approach to the five ways.<sup>90</sup> His later career, moreover, was darkened by an "anti-modernist gloom" heightened by his inability to combat the naïve myth of a post-conciliar "renewed Church."<sup>91</sup>

The responsibility for the tragedy of modernism within the Church, Gilson argued, lay at the feet of Suarezian-Thomist manuals, which transmitted a "dull rationalism" linked to deism, easier to teach than the authentic Aquinas:<sup>92</sup> "The rotten theology promulgated by its opponents was in large part responsible for modernism's errors."<sup>93</sup> But the cure for modernism does not lie in a Scholastic "synthesis" or unitary system,<sup>94</sup> reasoned Gilson, but rather in a return to Thomas's theology and his "theological method." Like his medieval contemporaries, Aquinas did not develop an independent philosophy, but harvested the fruits of reason guided by revelation and theology, which in turn guaranteed philosophy's progress and fecundity.<sup>95</sup> Only a Christian can fully understand Thomas's philosophy,

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the topic of critical realism, see Jason West, "Gilson, Maritain and Garrigou-Lagrange on the Possibility of Critical Realism" *Études maritainiennes/Maritain Studies* 17 (2001): 49–69.

<sup>90</sup> See Gilson, "On Behalf of the Handmaid," 237: "Particularly disturbing is the obligation laid upon us by the Pope to find a 'new affirmation' of God. For indeed, if the old ones are not convincing, what chance have we to discover a more convincing one?" He also argues that instead of altering language, we should recognize that it is not the "handmaid's" responsibility to teach minds incapable of metaphysics the meaning of metaphysical terms (id., 245). There are, of course, many other indications of his anti-modern tendencies.

<sup>91</sup> Henri de Lubac likened Gilson to an elderly, eccentric curmudgeon in Letter 18 of *Letters of Étienne Gilson to Henri de Lubac*, 167. One of his main concerns was the new translation of the Nicene Creed, which dropped the term "consubstantial" as arcane. Without Thomistic metaphysical underpinnings, Gilson argued, systematic theology foundered. See Letter 13, in id., 146–148.

<sup>92</sup> Letter 9, in id., 105.

<sup>93</sup> Letter 1, in id., 23–24.

<sup>94</sup> Étienne Gilson, "Historical Research and the Future of Scholasticism," *Modern Schoolman* 29 (1951): 6.

<sup>95</sup> Id., 8–9: "The future of Scholasticism . . . is by bringing philosophy under its influence that medieval theology has liberated metaphysics from physics without enslaving it to itself . . . it is by tending towards this heaven of faith that metaphysics achieves its own liberty and realizes its true equilibrium." In this article, Gilson defends two theses. First, that the separation of philosophy from theology in the study of medieval thought ends by reducing Scholastic philosophy "into a general technique that becomes increasingly poorer in originality and, in the end, identifies itself with the philosophy of Aristotle as seen by Avicenna or Averroes" (id., 5), and second, that interpreting medieval philosophies within their natal theologies guarantees their originality, for Western philosophy's progress in the Middle Ages was secured by its status as an instrument of theology (id., 6).

since his most profound and original ideas flow from a theological source.<sup>96</sup>

Finally, Gilson grappled with Thomism's relevance to modernity (and by implication, with modernism) in chapter four of *The Spirit of Thomism*, entitled "Living Thomism."<sup>97</sup> While the principles and doctrines of Aquinas are both perennial and vital, Thomists must strive to apply his thought to contemporary issues, after the manner of Aquinas himself, and in the creative manner of Maritain.<sup>98</sup>

### Thomist Solutions to the Identity Problem

#### *Retrieval of the Speculative Order: Truth and Dogma*

Modernists depart from classical realism by viewing truth as the verification of ideas in the realm of experience—we "make" truth when we see an idea's tendency to "work" in a certain context. Optimism, for instance, is "more" true than pessimism since cheerfulness helps the mountain climber leap over a chasm. For the father of modernism, Henri Bergson, there are no natures, only events, and we modify our beliefs in a process of *inventing* truth to *use* reality, in a way similar as we make mechanical devices to harness nature.<sup>99</sup> So the truth of dogma is measured by its practical advantage.<sup>100</sup> Contemplation loses its character of an end, for there is no science of "useless" things—truth is what is made or done<sup>101</sup>—desirable goods to be achieved by the practical intellect.

<sup>96</sup> Gilson, *The Philosopher and Theology*, 210–211.

<sup>97</sup> See Étienne Gilson, *The Spirit of Thomism* (New York: P. J. Kennedy, 1964, reprinted: New York: Harper and Row Torchbooks, 1966). On the chapter entitled "Living Thomism," see Victor Brezick, "Maritain and Gilson on the Question of a Living Thomism," in *Thomistic Papers VI*, 1–28.

<sup>98</sup> Gilson, *The Spirit of Thomism*, 100. As is well-known, Gilson did object to Maritain's reliance on "corrupt" interpreters such as John of St. Thomas and Cajetan, however.

<sup>99</sup> Henri Bergson, "Sur le pragmatisme de William James, vérité et réalité," preface to James's *Pragmatism*, trans. E. LeBrun (Paris: Flammarion, 1911), as cited in Armand Maurer, "A Thomist Looks at William James's Notion of Truth," *Monist* 57 (1973): 164.

<sup>100</sup> William James, *The Meaning of Truth* (New York: Longmans, 1909), 174. The truth of the idea of "tigers in India," for instance, is measured by its efficiency in our experience with real tigers (id., 44–45). As Maurer notes ("A Thomist Looks at William James's Notion of Truth," 159), aesthetic, moral and theoretical propositions have truth for James when they "cohere" with objects, a consistency that is registered by "theoretic delight."

<sup>101</sup> That is, *operabiles*. True ideas for James reap profit in our concrete lives.

But in fact not all truth is “conformity to right desire,”<sup>102</sup> nor is all truth directed to action. Aquinas says that in practical truth, the rectitude of the will determines one’s moral choice and vision. But in speculative truth, the mind and will are *not* the measure of things—rather, the reverse is the case.<sup>103</sup> God’s mind measures and is not measured; the human mind is both measured and a measure.<sup>104</sup> The will can help direct the mind to reality, and can remove obstacles to our focus on the truth, but does not specify reality’s content. Modernists confuse speculative and practical intellects and their objects, as well as the interplay of intellect and will.

Aquinas’s account of truth corrects these errors. He combined truth as the essence of a thing (its determinate nature) and as the relation of a thing to a knowing intellect, and asserted the priority of the Divine Mind as the source of all truth. Our intellects are essentially receptive, and only accidentally creative in acts of making and doing. Unlike God, we do not create *ex nihilo*, and so are the source of neither a thing’s being nor its truth—we change nothing in the act of knowing. A house, for example, is related essentially to the architect’s mind because he makes it.<sup>105</sup> But even though Sacred Doctrine and dogma are partly practical (not just speculative), they are not artifacts, and so are not essentially dependent on our minds. Dogma is practical only as ordaining us through our actions, to God.<sup>106</sup>

Beings exist in three ways: in God’s mind, in things, or in our mind.<sup>107</sup> Truth occurs when the mind, which operates in a vital immanent act, “becomes” the thing after its own mode, and compares two acts of existence in a judgment. The mind achieves the truth when two modes of existence are set side by side and compared, viz., a thing’s extra-mental and its intra-mental being. Truth for Aquinas is thus in a reflective judgment, which involves combining or dividing concepts—the proposition

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<sup>102</sup> Whereas James places all truth on the side of conformity to desire, practical truth for Aquinas concerns conformity to “right desire,” and practical truth is only one aspect of truth in general. On Aquinas’s definition of practical truth, see S.Th., I-II, 57, 5, ad 3. Cf. Garigou-Lagrange, *God: His Existence and His Nature*, 43.

<sup>103</sup> Aquinas, *De Ver.*, I, 2; *In 1 Ethic.* 1, 1, 1–2.

<sup>104</sup> *De Ver.*, I, 2.

<sup>105</sup> S.Th., I, 16, 1.

<sup>106</sup> S.Th., I, 1, 4.

<sup>107</sup> *De Ver.*, 21, 2, 4, ad 4. Cf. Gerald Phelan, “*Verum Sequitur Esse Rerum*,” in *G. B. Phelan, Collected Papers*, ed. Arthur G. Kirn (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1967), 144. In creating, God produces and establishes an essential relation or dependence of things on Him.

about this being that, or this being not that, is borne out as factual or not, in the world.<sup>108</sup> Judgment and concepts work together to form the relation of truth in the mind.

For modernists, the concepts and language in which dogma is presented are changeable. Dogmas' immutability stemmed from the judgment about *x* or *y* being the case. This is the reverse of Aquinas's view that judgments do not attain immutability while concepts are merely their changing "representations." The modernist account of the traditional theory of truth also involves the straw man fallacy, by instituting the copy theory whereby we know concepts, not extra-mental reality—in brief, a representationalism at home with a pluralism of philosophies and theologies. Through its focus on judgment and existence, Aquinas's realism, on the other hand, is closer to a unitary philosophical method because it reaches the nonnegotiable truth of things.<sup>109</sup> Limiting knowledge to our concepts breeds relativism, which precludes a universal system of philosophy.<sup>110</sup> Ray Dennehy has convincingly argued against the possibility of a plurality of Thomisms on the basis that such a view would require the antithesis of realism.<sup>111</sup>

Aquinas insists that truth is not our creature, because it is based on the reality of things, as well as on the creative power of the Divine Mind. We are not creators of being, but can share in the Self-knowledge of God

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<sup>108</sup> On truth as being in the judgment in an act of comparing two modes of existence, see, e.g., S.Th., I, 85, 5, ad 3; De Ver., I, 3c. This is treated by Phelan in "*Verum Sequitur Esse Rerum*," 144–145, e.g.

<sup>109</sup> The link between representationalism and pluralism, and between classical realism and a unitary philosophical method (Thomism) is found in R. Dennehy, "The Philosophical Catbird Seat: A Defense of Maritain's *Philosophia Perennis*," in *The Future of Thomism*, ed. Deal Hudson (South Bend, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 65–76. Representationalism, he argues, is unable to procure a unitary method, because its criterion of truth is the conformity of one concept to another (the "representation" of a real thing), a view which makes the mind the measure of the real, not vice-versa.

<sup>110</sup> Since natural wisdom is embodied, Aquinas's perennial philosophy is the result of various historical strands, but takes its point of departure in things, which are the mind's measure.

<sup>111</sup> In a representationalist epistemology, "being is walled in by concepts," and "you can never get into the catbird seat which would allow you to compare your concept with the object it allegedly expresses to see if the former is a veridical expression of the latter. The concept of the object and the object of the concept have become one!" (Dennehy, "The Philosophical Catbird Seat," 71). Consideration of the possibility of a unitary scholastic method is also found in the various contributions to John X. Knasas' *Thomistic Papers VI*, in a critique of Gerald McCool's *From Unity to Pluralism*.



when studying theology. In this way, the truth of dogma joins us to the immutable divine life.<sup>112</sup>

Our speculative intellect's nobility stems from two qualities. First, it extends to all reality, and in a certain sense he says, it becomes "all in all" because it knows universals, and is analogous to God in whom all things exist.<sup>113</sup> Second, all practical action is based on the speculative intellect's access to truth. Speculative reason "becomes" practical when what is true is desired as good, and put into action.<sup>114</sup> Speculative truth is the foundation of the building on which conformity to right desire is built, just as the knowledge of being precedes free choice.<sup>115</sup>

### *Contemplation, Affectivity, and the Unity of Wisdoms*

Maritain knew that the integration of wisdoms is natural, since metaphysics opens into mysticism in its desire for union with the infinite,<sup>116</sup> and the Church's prayer is sustained by thought, as interwoven with dogma. In this way, according to Romano Guardini and Benedict XVI, the heart is guided and purified by the mind.<sup>117</sup> The dovetailing of mystical and

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<sup>112</sup> See, e.g., the opening pages of the *Summa Theologiae*, where Aquinas describes the functions of *sacra doctrina*: It is salvific: "man's whole salvation, which is in God, depends upon the knowledge of this truth" (S.Th., I, 1, 1); it proceeds from the science of God and the blessed (S.Th., I, 1, 2); it helps join us to God and has a practical dimension of ushering us into eternal bliss (S.Th., I, 1, 4–5); and the wisdom it contains transcends natural theology by treating of God "so far as He is known to Himself alone and revealed to others" (S.Th., I, 1, 6).

<sup>113</sup> De Ver., 2, 2; S.Th., I, 80, 1, quoting De Div. Nom., 5, 1. Cf. Josef Pieper, *Living the Truth: "The Truth of All Things" and "Reality and the Good"* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989; original German editions: 1966, 1963), 84–85. At S.Th., I, 76, 5, ad 4, Aquinas says that "because the spiritual soul can grasp universal essences, it has a potential unto infinity."

<sup>114</sup> S.Th., I, 79, 11, sed contra. See Pieper, *Living the Truth*, 143.

<sup>115</sup> The analogy of the foundation and the rest of the building is taken from Pieper, *Living the Truth*, 143.

<sup>116</sup> Jacques Maritain, "The Natural Mystical Experience and the Void," in Jacques Maritain, *Distinguish to Unite, or The Degrees of Knowledge*, 4th edition, trans. Gerald Phelan (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), 255–289. Maritain called this feature of metaphysics its "hyper-finality."

<sup>117</sup> Romano Guardini, *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, original ed. 1918), ch. 1. Cardinal Ratzinger warned of the dangers of false dogmas masquerading as authentic Catholic prayer in his *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of Christian Meditation* (15 October 1989). In particular, he writes: "Pope John Paul II has pointed out to the whole Church the example and doctrine of St. Teresa of Avila who in her life had to reject the temptation of certain methods which proposed a leav-

religious contemplation occurs throughout Aquinas's treatise on the contemplative life (S.Th., II-II, 179-182), where we learn that all types of contemplation unite in their First Principle, Whose loving gaze seeks our own.<sup>118</sup>

Aquinas's schema of types of wisdom quells the modernist complaint that his idea of truth ignores the richness denoted by the concept of "life." Texts on eternal life, for example, contain a seamless blend of natural, revealed and supernatural wisdoms. Eternal life, he says, refers primarily to God Himself as immutable truth and love.<sup>119</sup> Since knowing is our chief operation, knowing *is* life in the best sense.<sup>120</sup> His syllogism is as follows: "Since intellectual understanding is living activity, and to understand is to live, it follows that to understand an eternal reality is to live with an eternal life. But God is an eternal reality, and so to understand and see God is eternal life."<sup>121</sup> Our path of eternal life is through the goodness of Christ bestowed through His Incarnation, Passion and Resurrection, and made present in the sacraments.<sup>122</sup>

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ing aside of the humanity of Christ in favor of a vague self-immersion in the abyss of divinity" (id., 34, n. 12).

<sup>118</sup> S.Th., II-II, 179, 3, ad 1 and ad 3. Cf. Heather McAdam Erb, "*Pati Divina: Mystical Union in Aquinas*," in *Faith, Scholarship and Culture in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, ed. Alice Ramos, Marie I. George (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2002), 78.

<sup>119</sup> John 17:3: "Now this is eternal life; that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." The High Priestly Prayer is found in John 17, where our Lord says that eternal life for man is know the Father and the Son.

<sup>120</sup> In 17 Joann. lect. 1, §2186. Since the intellect actively knows by being united with its object, perfect understanding involves eternal life.

<sup>121</sup> Id.

<sup>122</sup> The way to the eternal life which is the enjoyment of God, or Life Itself, is through Christ, as Aquinas states in the Prologue to the *Summa's* Tertia Pars: "Forasmuch as our Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ, in order to save His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21), as the angel announced, showed unto us in His own Person the way of truth, whereby we may attain to the bliss of eternal life by rising again, it is necessary . . . that after considering the last end of human life, and the virtues and vices, there should follow the consideration of the Saviour of all, and of the benefits bestowed by Him on the human race. Considering this we must consider 1) the Saviour Himself, 2) the sacraments . . . 3) the end of immortal life . . ." An excellent treatment of the relation of the Incarnation, Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ to the sacraments as means of salvation, is found in Thomas Weinandy, "The Human Acts of Christ and the Acts That Are the Sacraments," in *Ressourcement Thomism: Sacred Doctrine, the Sacraments, and the Moral Life: Essays in Honor of Romanus Cessario, O.P.*, ed. Reinhard Hutter and Matthew Levering (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 150-168.

For Aquinas, *contemplatio* is an analogous term, referring to three levels of intellectual vision: natural, revealed, and mystical or properly supernatural contemplation—all of which require the speculative intellect. These three wisdoms converge in their focus on God, whether as First Cause of being, in the natural contemplation which is the work of philosophy, as the fruit of theological study, where God is known from revealed principles, through the imperfect medium of faith, or in mystical contemplation, where the soul, infused with charity, shares in God's inner life through a supernatural mode.<sup>123</sup> So, the unity of wisdoms is founded on an analogous sense of contemplation in Aquinas.<sup>124</sup>

The modernist focus on our practical and affective nature finds its answer, ironically, in the nature of speculative theology. Far from being a detached, wooden discourse, theology borrows from God's own knowledge in the data of revelation.<sup>125</sup> Our experiences are studied only in relation to God (*sub ratione Dei*), as principle or as end.<sup>126</sup> But theology also has a practical dimension, as ordered to the perfect attainment of charity.<sup>127</sup> But we don't "do" theology—God is not at our disposal. Rather, we situate ourselves in relation to Him, our Origin and End.<sup>128</sup> Contemplation involves the will, since beatitude involves due order to the end: "Attaining

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<sup>123</sup> On the distinction of three types of contemplation, see Erb, "*Pati Divina: Mystical Union in Aquinas*," 79–80. On the division of theology into natural and revealed, see In de Trin., 5, 4, ad 7. On the *philosophi* vs. the *sancti*, see I Sent., Prol. (Erb, "*Pati Divina: Mystical Union in Aquinas*," 80, n. 36). On mystical contemplation, whose term is in the appetite, see S.Th., II–II, 180, 1 (Erb, "*Pati Divina: Mystical Union in Aquinas*," 80, n. 37).

<sup>124</sup> Cf. Erb, "*Pati Divina: Mystical Union in Aquinas*," 79–80. On the distinction between the contemplation of the *philosophi* and the *sancti*, see In I Sent., Prol. On the distinction of natural and revealed theology, see In de Trin., 5, 4, ad 7. Although theology grasps God "in Himself," this is not quidditative knowledge, since neither in this life nor the next will we exhaust knowledge of God. Only in the beatific vision will we have knowledge of God "through His own essence" but we remain finite, so cannot contain it in its fullness. Cf. John Wippel, "Quidditative knowledge of God," in John Wippel, *Metaphysical Themes in Thomas Aquinas*, Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy, Vol. 10 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1984), 215–241.

<sup>125</sup> This refers to the theory of "subordination" of sciences. Theology borrows its first principles from the knowledge of God and the blessed. See In I Sent., Prol., a. 3; In Boeth. De Trin., 2, 2, ad 5. Cf. Jean-Pierre Torrell, "St. Thomas Aquinas: Theologian and Mystic," *Nova et vetera* 4:1 (2006): 4.

<sup>126</sup> S.Th., I, 1, 7. On this, see Torrell, "St. Thomas Aquinas: Theologian and Mystic," 4.

<sup>127</sup> "The ultimate end of this *doctrina* is the contemplation of the first truth in the fatherland" (In I Sent. Prologue, a. 3, in Torrell, "St. Thomas Aquinas: Theologian and Mystic," 5).

<sup>128</sup> See Torrell, "St. Thomas Aquinas: Theologian and Mystic," 5.

happiness depends on the will, in its first movement of love, its hope which causes the search, and in delight resulting from perfect union.”<sup>129</sup>

Not surprisingly, the will and passions find their fulfilment in mystical theology. Mystical contemplation is a connatural or “lived” knowledge of divine things springing from the Gift of wisdom. By this Gift, Aquinas says that the soul has a certain passivity, and “suffers the things of God” (*pati divina*), and tastes the sweetness of His inner life.<sup>130</sup> The principle and term of this experiential knowledge is in the appetite,<sup>131</sup> a contact with Christ as “the Word breathing forth Love,” in a “loving knowledge” whose effect is to “melt hardness of hearts”<sup>132</sup> and to transform our judgment of human actions.

So while it belongs to natural wisdom to judge correctly about divine things, supernatural wisdom produces a judgment by the conformity of our nature to them. This wisdom’s cause and term are in the appetite, through charity, and this practical aspect marks spiritual wisdom as the “true pragmatism” in the words of Garrigou.<sup>133</sup> Here, the will and appetite are transformed, and even our desires are regulated by the light of faith—but both faith and our natural knowledge of God precede the spiritual experience of the Gifts.<sup>134</sup>

The integration of philosophical and theological wisdom, we have seen, takes place not only on a theoretical, but on a concrete level. The truth about God which reason investigates is a knowledge on which our very salvation depends, says Thomas.<sup>135</sup> And when we love the revealed truths of faith, or have the “prompt will to believe,” we will turn to philosophy, and study the truth from every angle, to see if some reasons for it

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<sup>129</sup> S.Th., I–II, 4, 3–4. See Heather M. Erb, “The Mountain and the Valley: Medieval Orderings of Contemplation and Action,” in *Human Nature, Contemplation & The Political Order: Essays Inspired by Jacques Maritain’s ‘Scholasticism and Politics’*, ed. Peter Koritansky (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2014), 214.

<sup>130</sup> S.Th., II–II, 45, 2. On this topic, see Erb, “*Pati Divina*: Mystical Union in Aquinas,” 78ff. Aquinas derives this type of wisdom here (*sapientia*) from the word “taste” (*sapor*): S.Th., II–II, 45, 2 and ad 1.

<sup>131</sup> S.Th., I–II, 180, 1. Cf. Erb, “*Pati Divina*: Mystical Union in Aquinas,” 80.

<sup>132</sup> On the effects of love as a passion, see S.Th., I–II, 38, 5. Cf. Erb, “*Pati Divina*: Mystical Union in Aquinas,” 85.

<sup>133</sup> Garrigou-Lagrange, *God: His Existence and His Nature*, 42.

<sup>134</sup> Id., 43.

<sup>135</sup> In *Meta.*, Prol., as quoted by Lawrence Dewan, “St. Thomas and the Renewal of Metaphysics,” in Lawrence Dewan, *Wisdom, Law and Virtue* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 168.

can be found.<sup>136</sup> The Gifts of the Spirit join philosophical and theological wisdoms to the deepest center of our life, and in the movement of descent<sup>137</sup> God enters into the heart of humanity. Our identity forged through the integration of wisdoms is growth in charity and detachment—of humble, earthly dwellings, not a worldly Christendom.<sup>138</sup> In contrast to modernism's excesses, we need passivity for spiritual progress in the Gifts, and a glimpse of the emptiness of our soul's natural powers in comparison with the plenitude of grace. With John of the Cross, the soul is led to its hiding place in God, Who leads it by the hand, away from its autonomous agency and into supernatural wisdom.<sup>139</sup>

### *Objective Worship and Catholic Formation*

In contrast to paranormal and therapeutic varieties of spirituality, Catholic identity is expressed in objective worship. This worship is objective for three reasons. First, worship is an act of the virtue of religion, itself an ontological relation. Worship signifies the correct order within being by reflecting the orientation of rational creatures towards God through the primary internal acts (devotion and prayer) and secondary external acts (sacrifice, ceremony, ritual) of religion.<sup>140</sup>

Second, worship is objective as gearing the creature towards divine transcendence, by awakening contemplation and love within him. Because its purpose is the sanctification of men and the glory of God, worship is less a subjective expression of sentiment than it is a conformity of the members of the Body of Christ to the divine mysteries. Natural reason dictates that we should revere God through acts by which we are ordered to Him in a "becoming manner." Worship involves the doctrine of creation, for it is neither mere self-expression nor ponderous legalism, but reflects

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<sup>136</sup> S.Th., II-II, 2, 10.

<sup>137</sup> Maritain refers to the movements of "ascent" and "descent" in his discussion of the various Christian wisdoms, as well as of pagan wisdoms, in Maritain, *Science and Wisdom*, 3–33.

<sup>138</sup> Id., 130–133.

<sup>139</sup> John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul*, II, 16, as found in *The Dark Night of the Soul, a Spiritual Canticle, and the Living Flame of Love of Saint John of the Cross*, trans. David Lewis (London: Thomas Baker, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1891).

<sup>140</sup> Even the three definitions of religion Aquinas considers reflect its objective character, as a pondering of divine things through reading (Cicero: *re-lego*), as a continual conversion and choice of God above all (Augustine: *re-eligo*), and as a binding of oneself back to God (*re-ligo*): S.Th., II-II, 81, 1. Cf. Joseph Bobik, *Veritas Divina: Aquinas on Divine Truth* (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2001), 53–59.

that part of justice by which we deign to give God His due<sup>141</sup> as a Father, Who begets and governs, as the First Principle and Governor of creation.<sup>142</sup>

Worship thus deals with the means to revere God as our final end by proportioning ourselves to the degree we can, to His excellence. Pseudo-Dionysius teaches that Scripture and liturgy are the principal means by which we ascend to the “simple ray of Light itself” Who is the Father of Lights (James 1:17). This Light “grants to creatures the power to rise up, so far as they may, toward itself,” by being “upliftingly concealed in a variety of sacred veils which the Providence of the Father adapts to our nature as human beings.”<sup>143</sup> Although absolute equality is absent, equality “in consideration” still exists, in terms of “man’s ability and God’s acceptance.”<sup>144</sup> So, as a moral virtue, religion is a “mean” exercised in fitting worship rituals, prayer and devotion. These acts presuppose meditation and contemplation, since every act of the will proceeds from a good understood, since the will arises from the intelligence.<sup>145</sup> Love is awakened by this consideration undertaken by the mind, blocking presumption so we might lean on God’s strength.<sup>146</sup>

The purpose of worship is reiterated by Vatican II’s Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy: “the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 10). A dialectical relation between liturgy and Catholic identity exists. As a work of redemption, liturgy both nourishes and assumes our identity. Yet liturgy is equally the clearest expression of the mystery of Christ, as both human and divine, active and contemplative, immediate and mediating, showing forth the members of the Body of Christ as in yet not of this world—a sign lifted up among the nations (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 2). The sacraments and sacramentals, the divine office, the liturgical year, and the Church’s art and music,<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> See S.Th., II–II, 81, 2.

<sup>142</sup> S.Th., II–II, 81, 3.

<sup>143</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Celestial Hierarchy*, 121B–C, as found in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid, *Classics of Western Spirituality Series* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 146. In the Dionysian tradition, liturgy is a ceremonial reflection of the cosmic hierarchy.

<sup>144</sup> S.Th., II–II, 81, 5, ad 3.

<sup>145</sup> S.Th., II–II, 82, 3.

<sup>146</sup> Id.

<sup>147</sup> That is, the elements of the Church’s public worship.

emanate from this eternal font to illumine the faithful,<sup>148</sup> while devotion and prayer accomplish their ends through Scriptural meditation and petition in acts of the will and practical intellect.<sup>149</sup> Worship is also deepened by natural contemplation of God, perfecting our nature by joining the beautiful and the true.

Third, worship is objective in its end of sanctifying individuals and society. Being “holy” or “sanctified” entails being made clean as “*sanguine tinctus*,” sprinkled with blood<sup>150</sup> and strong, as backed by the divine law. Through worship, the mind becomes pure as directed towards God (as opposed to earthly things), and strong as unchangeable in adhering to God as its ultimate end.<sup>151</sup> Worship sanctifies through signs and language which train the passions and appetites on God, which themselves prod the will to direct our minds heavenwards. So without the acts of religion, the internal ordering of appetites, passions, intellect and will, the moral virtues are weakened and even civic order evaporates.<sup>152</sup> Without religion, the other virtues would not be directed towards the glory of God, says Aquinas.<sup>153</sup> Thus, as a key element of Catholic identity, worship orders the will to its proper object, God as the universal good, expanding our moral vision, and that of society as a whole. Eucharistic Adoration and processions are such neglected exercises in prayer and evangelization.

### Conclusion

In the name of experience and historical consciousness, various forms of Catholic modernism celebrate pluralism by rejecting Scholasticism as a basis for theology. In the process, modernism also suppresses the speculative intellect, jeopardizes the immutability of dogma, and ejects

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<sup>148</sup> The public acts of the Church’s worship are detailed in the Second Vatican Council’s document, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.

<sup>149</sup> Aquinas distinguishes the external and internal acts of worship, and explains the way in which devotion is preparatory to prayer, and prayer is primarily an act of petition by the practical intellect: S.Th., II–II, 83, 3, ad 1 (on devotion as an act of will), and id., II–II, 83, 1 (on prayer). On these topics, see Lawrence Dewan, “Philosophy and Spirituality: Cultivating a Virtue,” *Homiletic and Pastoral Review* (November 1993): 25–30.

<sup>150</sup> In ancient times the purified were sprinkled with the blood of the sacrificial animal.

<sup>151</sup> S.Th., II–II, 81, 8. See Bobik, *Veritas Divina*, 57–58.

<sup>152</sup> So, Kevin E. O’Reilly, O.P., argues convincingly that worship is the condition of both civic order and the correct use of reason, in “The Significance of Worship in the Thought of Thomas Aquinas: Some Reflections,” *International Philosophical Quarterly* 53:4 (2013): 453–462.

<sup>153</sup> S.Th., II–II, 81, 1, ad 1.

much of traditional spirituality that is our Catholic patrimony. On the other hand, Thomistic contemplation, mystical theology and worship are bound by a traditional notion of truth that can help us respond to the yearning for affectivity, paradox, and lived truth in a way that transcends the pitfalls of modernist subjectivism and relativism. Gilson's anti-modern stance is based on his affirmation of perennial Thomistic principles, but his emphasis on the "theological method" and his appreciation of the diversity within Scholasticism<sup>154</sup> distance him from less historical, more Aristotelean Neo-Scholastics.

Greek metaphysical principles provide continuity between natural, revealed, and mystical theology in Aquinas, as seen in his texts on eternal life. The perennial philosophy's versatile stability adds a breadth and depth which enables his followers to avoid the modernist theological disorientation and its disastrous pastoral consequences, which finally sees Christianity as a currency invented to maximize our experiences' cash-value.

The richness of Aquinas's thought that suits it as a template for theology flows from its Scriptural, Patristic, and Greek roots. Grounded in the world of being, these roots ensure contact with perennial problems, permitting Thomists to handle the fertile soil of life in which the passions and the will can grow and flourish. With the help of philosophy, Aquinas proved himself to be the theologian of his own Inaugural Lecture—a radiant and pure defense upon the mountains and a channel for grace within the Church.

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#### **MODERNISM AND THE GROWING CATHOLIC IDENTITY PROBLEM: THOMISTIC REFLECTIONS AND SOLUTIONS**

##### SUMMARY

Philosophical forces gathered in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Catholic Modernism have crystallized into theological views which permeate the antinomian atmosphere in the Church today, resulting in an ongoing Catholic identity problem, both within the Church and in relation to the world. In place of the perennial philosophy and its contemplative ideal, many now welcome the incoherence of broad philosophical and theological pluralism, while pastoral practice is infused with the fruits of pragmatism and the rhetoric of false

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<sup>154</sup> The various Scholastic systems, in particular, those of Aquinas, Bonaventure, Duns Scotus, and Suarez, are all treated in depth by Gilson in degrees of similitude to the truths grasped by St. Thomas.



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dichotomies (justice/mercy, intellectual/pastoral, tradition/living faith, speculative truth/charity, for example). To reverse this anti-intellectual course, rehabilitation of Aquinas's positions on the primacy of the speculative order and contemplative charism, his integration of natural, revealed and mystical wisdoms, and his sense of objective worship, is needed. A brief account of the robust role of philosophy in the Church's mission and of Gilson's nuanced position on the encounter of Thomism and Modernism supports this assertion.

**KEYWORDS:** Catholic Modernism, Catholic identity, Aquinas, Gilson, Garrigou-Lagrange, Blondel, perennial philosophy, worship, pluralism, speculative truth, pragmatism, Leo XIII, Pius X, Pius XII, John Paul II, *Aeterni Patris*, *Dei Filius*, *Humani Generis*, *Fides et Ratio*, manualists, gradualism, Scholasticism, contemplation, dogma, mystical theology, Vatican Synod on the Family.