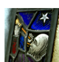
In Baroque Catholicism, it appeared for a while that the old Christian wisdom tradition had come back to life again in a new and vital form. For, although much in Baroque spirituality and theology was medieval in its origins, there were other elements in the Baroque synthesis, such as the devotio moderna, favored by the Brothers of the Common Life and by the Jesuits, the literary humanism of Baroque education, and the style of Baroque art and architecture that clearly owed their origin to the Renaissance. On closer inspection, moreover, even Baroque theology, medieval though it might appear to be in form, differed in its spirit from the theology of the high Middle Ages. Catholic theology was required to be defensive in its opposition both to the attacks of the Reformers and to the increasing secularism of Europe's absolute monarchies, and it was also challenged by a new set of moral problems arising from Europe's overseas expansion and the birth of modern capitalism. Baroque theology , therefore, had to be more problem conscious and controversial in its approach than medieval theology had been, and its intellectual horizon was restricted by the immediate needs of an embattled Church. Writing in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, before the development of scientific history , Baroque scholastic theologians were not yet ready to deal in a lastingly satisfactory way with the new historical problems which faced the post-Reformation Church. Those deficiencies of Baroque theology have frequently been noted.[12] They should not cause us, however, to overlook the importance of the Baroque period in the history of the Christian wisdom tradition. Among the lasting contributions which it made to Christianity were the ecclesiology, moral theology, and political philosophy of the Baroque Dominican and Jesuit theologians. Vitoria, Soto, Bellarmine, Molina, Suarez, and Lessius are still great names. The work of those theologians proved to be of invaluable worth in the revival of Catholic theology and social thought during the last two centuries. Even to this day, the possibilities of their Baroque theology for further development in the areas of just war theory, social justice, and international law have not yet been exhausted.

The Impact of Modern Enlightenment Reason

Baroque Christian wisdom remained a vital force in European culture for the first three decades of the seventeenth century. After that, however, its own diminishing vigor and an increasingly hostile cultural climate led to its decline. By mid-century, the Peace of Westphalia had shown that the long campaign to restore the religious unity of Europe by force had not succeeded, and, from that time forward, Europe took a secular approach to state- craft. The legitimate role of the Church in the direction of secular society, which the medieval Emperors had never denied to her, was now rejected or progressively curtailed. Although the Empire itself managed to survive in a weakened state, it had lost its sacred character. In modern Europe, therefore, Church and state could no longer play the roles which the medieval Christian wisdom tradition had granted them and which, in its Baroque revival, Christian wisdom had still assigned to them.

The mechanist physics of Galileo and Newton was not reconcilable with the older Greek philosophy of form and finality on which the Christian wisdom tradition had relied to justify its ascent from the world to God.[13] The modern philosophy represented by Descartes and his rationalist or empiricist successors, to which the seventeenth-century mechanist science looked for justification, required the rigid separation of Christian revelation from natural knowledge of the world through philosophy and science. Intentionally or not, therefore, the gulf between Christian revelation and critical natural reason, which modern philosophy had created, fostered the growth of agnosticism and deism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[14]

The secularization of culture was also encouraged by the modern philosophy of mind and body, which post-Cartesian epistemology required. The isolated, impersonal reason of the post-Cartesian subject had no intrinsic bond to the extra-mental world or to the bodily machine with which it found itself contingently united. Unlike the intellect of Aristotle, which was both speculative and practical in its operation, modern post-Cartesian reason was purely speculative. Furthermore, unlike the intellect of both Plato and Aristotle, post-Cartesian reason was claimed to function equally well in every subject. The soundness of



modern reason's judgment, therefore, was unaffected by the moral conduct or social history of its possessor. In principle, therefore, contrary to the ethics of both Plato and Aristotle, any possessor of modern reason was equally competent to pass judgment on moral or religious issues, since the presence or absence of moral virtues in the judging subject in no way influenced the soundness of his moral judgment. This meant that the purely abstract reason of moral philosophy was a totally abstract reason, divorced from the concrete life of virtue. It was also an unhistorical, individual reason, independent of any social context or concrete cultural history .In the course of the eighteenth century , this abstract, isolated, lifeless, unhistorical reason became the reason of Enlightenment philosophy, politics, and culture.**15**

Obviously, that type of modern reason could not be reconciled with the patristic understanding of the human mind as the living, developing, dynamic image of God. For the patristic theology of the mind, as we recall, was inspired by an older conception of man which belonged to the classical philosophy of knowledge, man, and nature which the new post-Cartesian epistemology and the purely mechanical world of seventeenth-century science could no longer accommodate. Conflict between the modern seventeenth- century worldview and the classical Christian wisdom tradition, therefore, was inevitable. For without the theology of man as the image of God and the metaphysics of man and nature which justified it, Christian spirituality could never have been integrated with philosophy and science in the medieval synthesis of knowledge which the Baroque revival of Christian wisdom had brought to life again. Furthermore, once modern philosophy had severed the link between its disembodied thinking mind and the extra-mental world of material reality and once modern science had excluded intrinsic finality from its mechanical world of nature, both philosophy and science worked together in undermining the Platonic and Aristotelian foundations of medieval political philosophy, the philosophy which the Baroque revival of Christian wisdom had taken over, modernized, and extended in its own social thought. Once those foundations had been destroyed, the ground had been cleared for the construction of the very different sort of political philosophy, the new political theory which post-Cartesian epistemology and metaphysics made necessary , and in that political philosophy the relation

between the individual and society would differ radically from what their relationship had been in the classical philosophy of the Christian wisdom tradition.[16]

In the eighteenth century, Enlightenment reason set the tone for culture in Europe and, largely because of that, the deism and agnosticism which Enlightenment reason fostered became wide-spread among the educated classes. Christian revelation, which modern reason systematically excluded from its consideration, could then be more easily dismissed as an outmoded superstition. In the natural world of Enlightenment reason, even the laws of society had to be mechanical and so, like all mechanical laws, they were timeless and impersonal. Nothing, therefore, like social or religious tradition had any claim to rational consideration. Society, like any other artifact, could be no more than a contingent assemblage of individual elements put together by human reason. The political philosophies of Locke and Rousseau were intended to explain how individual consent or an implicit social contract could perform that task, while Hume, perhaps more realistically, justified the legitimacy of society through reason's recognition of its utility. By the end of the century, when the leaders of republican and Napoleonic France overturned the thrones and altars of Europe, rewrote its laws, and transformed its educational system, modern scientific reason would be given as the justification for their revolutionary action. Nineteenth-century anti-clerical liberalism, the lay state, and the lay school of nineteenth-century Europe would later be justified in the same way.

Faithful Catholics were dismayed and demoralized by the triumph of Enlightenment reason and the hold which it had acquired on the governments and educated class of Europe. In order to meet its challenge, early in the eighteenth century, some Catholic theologians replaced their inherited Baroque scholasticism with the modern theology inspired by the French Oratorian, Nicholas Malbranche. That theology was to survive the French Revolution and reappear in the nineteenth century under the form of Ontologism. Modifying the epistemology of the self-enclosed Cartesian subject by linking it to an Augustinian intuition of the divine ideas, eighteenth-century Ontologism could not avoid the mind-body dualism of Descartes, and its finite extra-mental world was also the

mechanical natural world of Cartesian physics. That meant, of course, that in eighteenth-century Ontologism, the world-view of the Christian wisdom tradition had already been abandoned.

As the century wore on, other theologians began to lose their faith in it as well. This was true even of Jesuit theologians. For, although Jesuits were still devoted to Baroque literary humanism in their international network of colleges, Jesuit theologians no longer maintained the same fidelity to the scholastic theology of their great Baroque predecessors. Sometimes under government pressure, as in Austria, and sometimes due to their own failure of nerve, Jesuit theologians also began to come to terms with Enlightenment reason. The outcome of their effort to compromise with it was an attempted synthesis of traditional scholasticism and modern rationalist philosophy, an unstable amalgam which, lacking conviction and coherence, was bound to be short-lived. Eventually a number of Jesuits simply gave up scholasticism entirely. Bendict Stattler, for example, the last great Jesuit theologian to teach in Austria before the suppression of his order in 1773, made no pretence of remaining faithful to the Baroque Christian wisdom tradition.17The Christian wisdom tradition was not killed by the French Revolution, as we might suppose. It was already dead before the Revolution, and the reason for its demise was its failure, in the eighteenth century, to weather the assault of Enlightenment reason.

The Nineteenth-Century Revival

With the rise of the Romantic movement in nineteenth- century Europe, however, a reaction set in against the Enlightenment reason of the eighteenth century , and, in a scattered, piecemeal way, the Christian wisdom tradition slowly returned to life. Among its first great representatives were the German theologians of the Catholic Tiibingen School and the French Traditionalists, especially Joseph de Maistre, whose philosophy, like the philosophy of the Tiibingen theologians, had been shaped by German idealism.18 The German theologians had no interest in returning to Baroque scholasticism. Instead, they looked for inspiration to the early philosophy of Schelling. Like Schelling, they hoped to escape confinement in Kant's finite world of discursive consciousness through an immediate

intuitive contact with the Infinite Absolute and, for them, Schelling's Absolute was also the God of Christian revelation. The God who created the finite universe revealed His vital presence through the dynamic finality of nature and through the history of the diverse communities, to one or other of which each individual belonged by nature. Unlike the mechanical, unhistorical world of Enlightenment reason, the world of the Tiibingen theologians, therefore, was a living historical world. Its evolution was actively directed by its Provident Creator and, for that reason, the vital presence of His formative divine ideas could be discerned in it. Far from being the contingent product of a social contract, society, in the world of the Tiibingen theologians, was a natural community, whose culture, history , and tradition were needed for the emergence and development of individual reason. Consequently, the autonomous isolated reason of the Enlightenment was an illusion, since no individual mind could begin to function on its own until it had been stirred to life through communication with another human mind in the inherited language of their shared historical community. Yet, in order for that language and community to come into existence at the start of human history , the first human beings must have experienced an immediate intuitive contact with God's Infinite Intelligence in what, for Traditionalism, constituted God's "primitive revelation" to the human race.

In both the German and the less philosophically grounded French forms, Traditionalism became an important movement in early nineteenth-century Catholicism. Thanks to its influence, the notions of revelation, the presence of God in dynamic nature, history , tradition, inherited culture, and community, which individualistic eighteenth-century reason had banished as relics of the past, were taken seriously again. Later in the century, for a number of reasons, the influence of Traditionalism diminished. In Germany, the great systems of German idealism, which had inspired it, fell out of favor. In France, the reactionary politics of Joseph de Maistre, which identified the Church with the ancient regime, worked against its survival. Above all, the Neo-Thomists, whose influence in Rome increased during the latter portion of the century, considered Traditionalism's "primitive revelation" incompatible with orthodox Catholic teaching on faith and reason.[19]

Nevertheless, although it was not recognized at the time, Catholic Tiibingen theology had made a lasting contribution to the revival of the Christian wisdom tradition. The theology of Johann Anton Moehler, the greatest of its representatives, would be taken up again in the twentieth century by Catholic theologians Joseph Geiselmann and Yves Congar, for example, and through them, the heritage of the Catholic Tiibingen school would be given its proper due in contemporary theology.[20] Post-Kantian idealism was attractive to other Catholics committed to the revival of Catholic thought. German idealism, after all, had been influenced by Neo-Platonism, and to Catholics reacting against Enlightenment individual reason, Schelling's idealism seemed to be a natural ally. Antonio Rosmini, a brilliant and saintly Italian philosopher , was one of them. Long before twentieth-century Thomists thought of it, Rosmini had seen that, in some aspects, the post-Kantian starting point and method could be reconciled with the philosophy of St. Thomas. The Jesuit disciples of St. Thomas, who were violently opposed to both, attacked Rosmini savagely for that, and eventually secured the Church's condemnation of his teaching. In *Fides et Ratio*, John Paul gave Rosmini the recognition which the failure of his opponents to understand him had denied him but, because of them, the contribution which Rosmini could have made to Catholic thought could not be given at that time.[21]

In England, however, John Henry Newman made his own distinctive contribution to that revival. Newman was an independent thinker with no links either to German idealism or to Baroque scholasticism. His own theology had been shaped by his knowledge of the Greek Fathers, English philosophy, and Aristotelian ethics, and his approach to education had been influenced by his personal experience of Oxford's transition from the older Anglican community of scholars to a modern secular institution whose ideal was the autonomous reason of the Enlightenment. Newman's own opposition to Enlightenment reason was due to his patristic conception of the world as a sacramental universe in which God's presence revealed itself. It also came from his conviction that history was an evolutionary process in which the implications of what Newman called living ideas worked themselves out. It was fostered as well by his firm conviction that God's presence in the

human mind manifested itself in man's moral judgments. Unlike his more rationalistic scholastic contemporaries, Newman showed an appreciation of the role of probability and of insight in the reaching of concrete conclusions, a role for which impersonal, abstract Enlightenment reason could find no place.

In the nineteenth century, Newman was generally praised for his English style, and his talent as a Catholic apologete was thoroughly appreciated. By showing the place of Christian revelation in an integral liberal education and by his defense of the Catholic university as a community of believing scholars, Newman's *The Idea of a University* made a powerful case for the schools and universities through which the Church hoped to compete with the secular educational system of the anti-Catholic liberal state. These were extremely valuable contributions to the Catholic intellectual revival, and for them Newman's co-religionists were genuinely grateful. Nevertheless, the power and depth of Newman's theology was not yet fully understood. Neither was the affinity of Newman's thought to the historical theology of the Tiibingen school and to important aspects of St. Thomas' philosophy. That would not be properly appreciated until the twentieth century.**22** During the nineteenth century, Newman was destined to remain an isolated thinker. He was not always properly understood and, at times, he was unjustly distrusted by fellow Catholics whose knowledge of their own tradition was not as broad and extensive as Newman's knowledge of it.

In the nineteenth century, the religious orders, which had suffered seriously during the French Revolution, regained their vitality, and although the liberal anti-clerical governments of Europe made life difficult for them, their numbers and influence increased. In France, Prosper Gueranger established the Benedictines, and his monastery at Solesme became the fountainhead of an international Benedictine movement to restore the authenticity and dignity of the Church's liturgy. Henri-Dominique Lacordaire refounded the Dominicans in France, and in a number of European countries, the Jesuits reestablished themselves. Thanks to the increase in priestly and religious vocations, the Church was able to maintain its place in education and to influence the thought and culture of Europe. Toward the end of the century, Leo XIII was anxious to increase that intellectual influence, and he was also anxious

to challenge the moral basis of secularist Enlightenment liberalism in the areas of civil government and social-justice. In order to do that, the Pope turned to the philosophy of St. Thomas, to which he was personally favorable.

The consequences of the Pope's decision were momentous. Leo's encyclical *Aetemi Patris* recommended that, in the education of the clergy, the philosophy and theology of St. Thomas should be followed. Leo's encyclical on the "Condition of the Working Classes," *Rerum Novarum*, laid down the principles for a just solution to the problem of capital and labor, a solution which neither individualist liberalism nor collectivist Marxism had been able to find. Those principles had been taken from the restored philosophy of St. Thomas. Decades of Catholic social teaching followed from *Rerum Novarum*, and *Aeterni Patris* inaugurated a fruitful period of textual and historical research, first in medieval and later in patristic and biblical studies. Without that research, Vatican II would never have been possible.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the restored philosophy of St. Thomas had become the principal integrating force in the Christian wisdom tradition. Thomism shaped the formation of the clergy, and it justified the integration of knowledge in Catholic liberal education. It restored coherence to Catholic thought and gave confidence to Catholics in their dialogue with contemporary philosophy and culture. Nevertheless, there were serious deficiencies in nineteenth-century Thomism. Although it believed itself to be the common philosophy of St. Thomas and the other medieval Doctors, it was in reality the revived Thomism of the Baroque theologians. **23** Nineteenth-century Thomists were unaware of the difference between Baroque scholasticism and the theologies of St. Thomas and the Church Fathers. Furthermore, their resolute hostility to modern philosophy blinded them to the possibilities of dialogue with it which Rosmini and Newman had held out. The same blindness cut them off from the historical theology of the Tiibingen School, whose emphasis on tradition and community would later prove to be so valuable.

The nineteenth-century revival of the Christian wisdom tradition was neither mature nor complete. Its historical and theoretical foundations had not yet been fully mastered. Largely

because of that, its great representatives often failed to understand each other and were often hostile to one another. More work remained to be done before the scattered pieces of the Christian wisdom tradition could be fitted together to form a whole.

Twentieth-Century Development of the Tradition

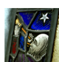
In the first half of the twentieth century, the revived Christian wisdom tradition came to maturity, the historical heritage of medieval philosophy and theology was recovered, and accurate texts of St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure, and other medieval Doctors became available. Scriptural research and study of the Church Fathers were encouraged, and the quality of that research had reached a very high level by the middle of the century. Catholic universities in Belgium, Austria, and Italy became respected centers of intellectual activity, while in the United States an extensive network of colleges and universities gave the Church an effective voice in national culture as they educated an increasing number of Catholic leaders. Vocations to religious orders and congregations flourished and, thanks to the Church's colleges and universities, the number of committed Catholics among the intellectual leaders of Europe grew. Catholic scholarly publications, especially in philosophy and theology, were published in the major European languages.

The weak and marginalized Church of the early nineteenth century had become a strong and confident one by the middle of the twentieth. Catholic scholars and artists held their own with the leaders of Europe's Enlightenment culture and expressed themselves with a courage and optimism born of intellectual confidence in what they had to say. French authors like Leon Bloy, Paul Claudel, Francois Mauriac, and Georges Bernanos were unabashed in the profession of their Catholicism. The same could be said of Sigrid Undset in Norway, of Gertrude von le Fort in Germany, and of G.K. Chesterton and Christopher Dawson in England. A mature Christian humanism, inspired and guided by the Christian wisdom tradition, had come back to life. In France and especially in Germany, the liturgical movement, of which Prosper Gueranger had been the pioneer, flourished, and, together with the interest in Benedictine art, architecture, and spirituality stimulated by it, drew the attention of Catholic scholars to the monastic theology of the earlier medieval period before

the rise of scholasticism. That scholarly study of the liturgy and of early medieval and patristic thought helped to prepare the ground for the liturgical and theological reforms of Vatican II.

The most potent influence in the revival of the Christian wisdom tradition, however, was the Neo-Thomist movement. Its importance grew in the first half of the century as its major representatives, both clerical and lay, made a name for themselves in Europe and America. At first, as might have been expected, these disciples of St. Thomas were content to carry on the tradition of Baroque scholasticism. Jesuits, like Pedro Descoqs or the Austrian theologians at Innsbruck, were usually followers of Suarez. Dominicans, like Ambroise Gardeil and Reginald Garrigou- Lagrange, took over and developed the Baroque scholasticism of Cajetan, as Jacques Maritain, in his early days, was also inclined to do.[24]Gradually, however, the historical research of scholars like Maurice de Wulf, Etienne Gilson, and Marie-Dominique Chenu revealed the significant difference between St. Thomas' own philosophy and the philosophies of both the Baroque scholastics and the other medieval Doctors, and, by doing so, showed that the common scholastic philosophy which Leo XIII had opposed to modern post-Cartesian philosophy did not exist. Further historical research by scholars like Cornelio Fabro also revealed that there were significant Platonic elements in St. Thomas' thought which the Baroque scholastics had failed to see.[25]

St. Thomas' own thought was more original and more complex than the earlier neo-scholastics had realized. It might also be more open to dialogue with both Kantian and post-Kantian than those neo-scholastics had thought when they attacked Rosmini on that score. Beginning with Pierre Rousselot and Joseph Marechal, the stream of Neo-Thomist thought, from which both Karl Rahner and Bernard Lonergan emerged, took over the Cartesian subjective starting point in its philosophy and then endeavored to find its way back to objective reality through the use of Kant's transcendental method. [26] Their diversities in the interpretation of St. Thomas led to contention among the Neo-Thomists, but they also lent a vitality and rigor to Thomist thought which won for it a respected place in university philosophy.



One of the greatest services which the revived philosophy of St. Thomas rendered to the Church was its renewal of political philosophy. In the early years of the nineteenth century, European Catholics, on the whole, were sympathetic to Europe's traditional monarchies and hostile toward the anti-clerical Enlightenment liberal rationalism of the French Revolution. As Joseph de Maistre had done, continental Catholics continued to oppose the historical tradition of their national community and the established union of throne and altar to a revolutionary liberalism, based on the individual, non-historical reason of the Enlightenment. Leo XIII, however, was not convinced of the validity of that approach, and, like Taparelli and Liberatore among the nineteenth-century scholastics, he believed that a sounder basis for the Church's dialogue with contemporary society could be found in the scholastic philosophy which the Baroque theologians had used in their political philosophy. This led, as we have seen, to Leo's issuing his encyclicals *Aeterni Patris* and *Rerum Novarum*. In the last years of his pontificate, against the opposition of many French Catholics, Leo also tried to work out a reconciliation between the Church and the French Republic.

The First World War swept away the Empires of Austria, Germany, and Russia, and in the postwar years, the liberal democracies of Europe, still very much in the tradition of the Enlightenment, found themselves locked in combat with powerful anti-Christian collectivist movements--Communism, Fascism, and Nazism. In Europe's changed political climate, the crucial conflict now appeared to be the fight to the death between liberal individualist reason on one side and atheist collectivism on the other, the struggle between an artificial society, created by the independent individuals within it, and a collectivism which swallowed up the individuals and sacrificed them in the name of its own interests. Clearly, a sound middle ground between these two extremes was needed, and Catholic social thought came forward to provide it. Part of the Catholic effort on that score was made on the theoretical level and, on that level, Jacques Maritain and John Courtney Murray drew on the thought of St. Thomas in their twentieth-century defense of democracy and religious freedom. Part of the effort was also made on the level of social action justified by theoretical reflection. Apostolic movements, like Catholic Action and Young Christian Workers, were founded, and centers

of instruction for Catholic workers, like Action Populaire in France or the labor schools in America, were opened. Nineteenth-century Germany and pre-war Austria already had their Catholic political parties, and after World War II, Christian Democratic parties, inspired by the political philosophy of Jacques Maritain and Luigi Sturzo, played an important role in the political life of Europe and of Latin America.27 The revival of St. Thomas' social thought was largely responsible for that. Later in the century , the same revival and the flowering of Catholic social thought nourished by it were reflected in the documents of Vatican II, as can be seen in that Council's Declaration on Religious Liberty and in its Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World.

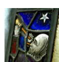
The challenge of collectivist ideologies, particularly in France, and the influence of the liturgical movement and popular social movements in Germany caused theologians to reflect more deeply on the dynamic and social nature of the Church. In the Baroque period, in reaction to Reformation theology , theologians like Robert Bellarmine emphasized the exterior, juridical nature of the Church, and in the individualistic climate of the Enlightenment, Catholic piety tended to become private and individual as well. The notion of the Church as an historical community enlivened by the Holy Spirit was lost to sight. Between the wars, however, that notion returned to favor, and Pius XII was favorable to it in his encyclical on the Mystical Body, *Mystici Corporis*. The work of Joseph Geiselmann in Germany brought the vital, communitarian theology of the Catholic Tiibingen School back from its undeserved obscurity and focused attention once more on its great ecclesiologist, Johann Adam Moehler.28 Thanks to Yves Congar, Moehler's communitarian vision of the Church gained popularity in France and then in England and America. The old Traditionalist vision of the Church, preserving God's revelation through its tradition and nourishing individual reason through contact with it, had been recovered. In the twentieth century, however, it could be re-incorporated into the Christian wisdom tradition in an erudite, rigorous, and convincing way.

Henri de Lubac, whose name was linked to that of Yves Congar in the "New Theology" controversy, was also troubled by the Church's failure to draw upon the richness of her

tradition to counter the attraction of atheist collectivism. De Lubac's Catholicism, which, according to Hans Urs von Balthasar, contained the essence of de Lubac's theological agenda, returned to the patristic theology of nature, history , and community in its response to the challenge of Marxism.**30** Another of his early works, *Surnaturel*,**29** lamented the unfortunate narrowing of the Church's theological horizon in controversial Baroque scholasticism, and his later, four-volume masterpiece, *Exegese Medievale*,**31** revealed the richness of the older monastic allegorical interpretation of Scripture. Like Congar and the others associated with him in the "New Theology" movement, de Lubac was a Thomist. Like them, however, he had learned, from his patristic and medieval studies, that the metaphysics of nature, man, and being which underpinned the Christian wisdom tradition was not restricted, as earlier Neo-Thomists thought, to the limits of Thomistic metaphysics, particularly in its Baroque form. As a realistic metaphysics of act, form, and finality, it was clearly opposed to the mechanist, individual reason of the Enlightenment. But it had been present in patristic theology and in the monastic theology of the early Middle Ages, and it was not so alien to the vital communitarian idealism of Hegel, from which Marxism had come, that a fruitful dialogue between Catholicism and an open-minded Marxism could not take place. A broader understanding of that metaphysics, therefore, could better account for the integration of culture which the Christian wisdom tradition had achieved in the twentieth century, and it held out great promise for the future. That at least was the conviction which de Lubac and many others carried with them when they began their work at Vatican II.

A Double Collapse After Vatican II?

Despite its lasting accomplishments, the unanticipated consequences of Vatican II, at least in the short run, have dismayed a good number of Catholics. The strong and confident Church in which they grew up has gone, and in that weakened Church, the Christian wisdom tradition has lost the support which it enjoyed earlier in the century. Theology and philosophy seem to have lost their unity and focus. Questions of basic orthodoxy and fundamental method are raised today which, earlier in the century, would have seemed



inconceivable. In its present state of confusion and uncertainty, theology seems to be in no condition to undertake the task of integrating Catholic culture. Indeed Catholic culture today is not easy to find. Authors, artists, and composers proud of their faith and confident in its profession have become something of a rarity. Catholic universities, we are told, are becoming increasingly secular, and for some of them at least, their Catholic identity presents a problem. Defections from the priesthood and religious life and a dearth of vocations have seriously weakened the network of Catholic schools on which the Christian wisdom tradition depended for its dissemination. Even Catholic political philosophy, whose prospects seemed so bright after World War II, has lost its luster and vitality. Europe's Christian Democratic parties differ little in their conduct and their approach to statecraft from their secular competitors and with the collapse of Marxism, the justification for their existence seems less apparent. Marxism's collapse, it also would appear, has diminished the appeal of Liberation Theology for third-world Catholics. The twentieth-century revival of the Christian wisdom tradition might seem then to have run its course.

Yet, in the three decades since Vatican II, the Enlightenment reason, which challenged the Christian wisdom tradition in the seventeenth century and engaged in a running battle with it during the nineteenth and twentieth, has also fallen completely out of favor. In recent years, the Cartesian foundations of that reason have been completely undermined, and the mechanical world of Enlightenment nature is no longer the world of contemporary science and history. Present day anti-foundationalist philosophers now assert that Descartes' subjective starting point failed in its attempt to provide a certain foundation for science and philosophy through a set of basic principles or fundamental facts available to every human mind. Many linguistic philosophers indeed no longer believe that any such set of foundational truths could possibly be found. For those linguistic philosophers, truth can be no more than the warranted assertibility of a given proposition within an accepted linguistic framework. Philosophy, therefore, must restrict its work to the clarification of strictly delimited problems. Larger questions, like the meaning of the world or the goal of human life, are completely beyond its grasp. Contemporary Deconstructionists, in the tradition of

Nietzsche and Derrida, are even more radical in their skepticism. From the Deconstructionist point of view, no justification can be found even for the existence of a stable knowing subject, to say nothing of a world of stable objects. Truth, for the Deconstructionist, is nothing, simply the product of the will to power. Science, culture, art, morality, and law, therefore, have no basis other than the arbitrary will of a society's oppressive dominant class. All of them can be challenged by the equally arbitrary will to power of the excluded classes. In the past thirty years, this sort of radical distrust of reason has become the dominant force in Western society. It has caused the present day crisis of meaning, the pervasive despair of finding any meaning for human life or for the world in which that life is lived. Human life and its purpose are now considered riddles to which no reasonable answer can be given. In *Fides et Ratio*, John Paul II tells us that, in his opinion, this crisis of meaning is the major challenge to the Christian faith today.**32** Before Vatican I, Enlightenment reason was the major challenge to the Catholic faith. After Vatican II, the collapse of Enlightenment reason has become that challenge.

Although *Fides et Ratio* makes no mention of the term, we could argue that the Christian wisdom tradition would be the means through which John Paul II hopes to confront the contemporary crisis of meaning. In the text of that encyclical, John Paul defends the realistic philosophy of knowledge, man, and being which, in one form or another, has structured the Christian wisdom tradition since its inception. The Pope also praises the philosophers and theologians who, in the community of the Church and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, have preserved and explained Christian revelation in the context of a changing culture. John Paul's account of the interplay of faith and reason in the history of the Church often parallels the history of the Christian wisdom tradition adumbrated in this article.

The present pope is a philosopher, theologian, pastor and humanist. As his writings show, he is also well versed in spirituality and social theory. If he can be optimistic, then other defenders of the Christian wisdom tradition can also be. After all, they do not have to start their work from scratch as the pioneers of the nineteenth century were obliged to do. The rich heritage of the great twentieth-century philosophers, theologians, humanists, and

social thinkers remains available to them. The liberal model of the university and the secularized legal system – inherited from the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, and post-Napoleonic Germany – have lost their intellectual justification. They can no longer claim, as they did in the nineteenth century, to be the unprejudiced voice of timeless universal reason. Catholics can now dispute the liberal domination of education, and they can do so as vigorously as the Deconstructionists have done. On better intellectual grounds, they can also vindicate the right of their schools and universities to integrate culture in the light of traditional Christian wisdom, provided, of course, that Catholics still possess the knowledge of their own tradition and the courage and intelligence to do so.

History can also give some encouragement to Catholics who are willing to assume that task. It will remind them that the nineteenth-century revival, far from being a mass movement, was the work of small groups. A small community of able disciples at Solesme made it possible for Gueranger to restore the liturgy and spirituality of the Benedictines. The small group assembled by Lacordaire brought Dominican theology and spirituality back to life in France and, from there, carried it to much of Europe. The number of Jesuit neo-scholastics was far from large. Newman' s everyday world was limited at first to the Oriel common room and then to the Oratory at Birmingham. None of these great pioneers understood the Christian wisdom synthesis in its later fullness, but over time they managed to bring about its revival. There is no need to wait for a mass movement to begin the work of bringing the Christian wisdom tradition back to life once more. History has shown us that inspiring leaders and a group of able collaborators can do the job and, let us hope, some of those leaders may be already working at it.

Notes

1. [back] John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio: On the Relationship between Faith and Reason* (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1998).

2. [back] *Fides et Ratio*, 89-92.

3. [back] *Fides et Ratio*, 84-85.

4. [back] *Fides et Ratio*, 66-67.

5. [back] *Fides et Ratio*, 103-05.

6. [back] For an excellent exposition of Newman's theory of liberal education, see Vincent F. Blehl, "Newman, the Fathers and Education," *Thought*, 45 (1970), 196-212.

7. [back] For an authoritative account of medieval monastic humanism, see Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1974).

8. [back] For the more literary theological humanism of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, see David Knowles. *The Evolution of Medieval Thought* (New York: Vintage Books, 1964), 71-141. See also Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Nature, Man and Society in the Twelfth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).

9. [back] Gerald A. McCool, *Nineteenth-Century Scholasticism: The Search for a Unitary Method* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1989), 158-66, 228-29.

10. [back] See Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, 187-232; and Etienne Gilson, *The Unity of Philosophical Experience* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1955), 92-122.

11. [back] Gerald A. McCool, "Why St. Thomas Stays Alive," *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 30 (1990), 275-87, esp. 282-83.

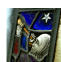
12. [back] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Henri de Lubac* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 28-322.

13. [back] Michael J. Buckley, *The Origins of Modern Atheism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987),68-144.

14. [back] It was against the agnosticism of the "libertines" that Blaise Pascal argued in his defense of Christianity. See Paul Hazard, *The European Mind* (New York: Meridian Books, 1968), 155-79.

15. [back] See Alisdair MacIntyre. *Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 9-31.

16. [back] For the difference between the two, see Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and*



History (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953).

17. [back] See Thomas F. O'Meara, *Romantic Idealism and Roman Catholicism: Schelling and the Theologians* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), 41, 47, 67.

18. [back] See Wayne L. Fehr, *The Birth of the Catholic Tubingen School: The Dogmatics of Johann Sebastian Drey*(Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981).

19. [back] McCool, *Nineteenth-Century Scholasticism*, 57-58.

20. [back] Joseph R. Geiselmann, *Die katholische Tubinger Schule* (Freiburg: Herder, 1964).

21. [back] *Fides et Ratio*, 91.

22. [back] Bernard Lonergan has written of his debt to Newman. See Bernard Lonergan, "Insight Revisited," in *A Second Collection* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), 263.

23. [back] McCool, *Nineteenth-Century Scholasticism*, 213-15.

24. [back] This is very evident in Maritain's early masterpiece, *The Degrees of Knowledge* (New York: Centenary Press, 1937, 1937).

25. [back] Cornelio Fabro, *Participation et Causalite' selon Saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Louvain: Presses Universitaires, 1961).

26. [back] Gerald A. McCool, *The Neo-Thomists* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1994), 97-135, 160-61.

27. [back] The most important of these parties were found in Italy and Germany.

28. [back] For Moehler's theology, see O'Meara, *Romantic Idealism and Roman Catholicism*, 146-50. See also the splendid account of Moehler's ecclesiology in Michael J. Himes, *Ongoing Incarnation: Johann Anton Mohler and the Beginnings of Modern Ecclesiology* (New York: Crossroad, 1997).

29. [back] Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988).

30. [back] Henri de Lubac, *Surnaturel: Etudes Historiques* (Paris: Aubier , 1946).

31. [back] Henri de Lubac, *Exegese Medievale*. 4 vols. (Paris: Aubier, 1959-64).

32. [back] *Fides et Ratio*, 101-02.