

Disconnected

The second Vatican Council is still controversial, and is seen as a nexus of much strife within the Catholic world. It is a point of at least two major deflections from the perception of the pre-conciliar Church. One was a movement from a theological landscape dominated by Scholasticism towards a more diverse environment in which competing humanistic approaches to theology took precedence. The other movement was from a temporal vision of Christendom complete with confessional states as brothers in the Faith, towards a vision of Christendom as an immanent force within the state leading it towards transcendence. It is these two movements and the views they represent of which I wish to make an initial and cursory examination. I emphasize cursory, as the wealth of material to be examined in these matters is immense, and I am by no means a master of it, and initial, as this is representative of the first dive into some of that material.

We begin with a bit of an overview of Scholasticism. Scholasticism is a philosophically heavy theological system. The main philosophical influences are Plato and Aristotle, and often understanding these philosophers is of great assistance in understanding the theology. This approach towards theology tends towards using reason to understand and explore the Faith. It uses dialectical and conceptual analysis to make various distinctions, and to understand how particular concepts are related to each other within theology. Scholasticism sees theology very much as a science. In which we study God and all things as they relate to God because He is God. Practical applications of which (practical theology) may thereby redound to our lives. The practical flows from the speculative, and the speculative has priority. God is not a means to an end, rather created souls are to "...subordinate themselves to this Truth and not to subordinate Him to their real or artificial needs. We must "serve God" and not make God serve us."¹

It has been the dominant form of theological approach for centuries. Saint Anselm of Canterbury is widely considered the "Father of Scholasticism" and he lived roughly in the 11th century. We can see the dominance of this approach in that the history of theology is generally noted as a move from the time of the fathers to the rise of scholasticism, into high scholasticism, and then a sort of decadent scholasticism and various scholastic resurgences up to and including the Leonine neo scholastic revival of the last century. The very history of theology within the Church for the last several centuries is often put in terms of Scholasticism. It would be false to say that non-scholastic approaches didn't exist, but they were generally less dominant. It would also be false to say that all scholastics were united in thought. Scotus, Aquinas, Bonaventure, Suárez, even Ockham could all be considered generally as "scholastic",

¹ Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Thomistic Common Sense: The Philosophy of Being and the Development of Doctrine* (Emmaus Academic, 2021), pg. 220

however they certainly had disagreements with each other. Disagreements which still persist across the centuries and echo even in the modern theological vista.

The last scholastic revival, the neo scholastic one, resulted in a myriad of flavors of Thomism. Leo XIII, in the encyclical *Aeterni Patris*, recommended scholastic theology in general and St. Thomas Aquinas in particular as models of the way forward. He believed Thomas' thought could deal with the errors manifest in much of modern thought. The renewed interest led to many different approaches to Thomas and his work. From demanding a strict historical view of reading him in light of the many commentators on his work over the centuries, to attempting to reconcile his thought with various elements of modern philosophers. We thus end with Thomas and Scholasticism being seen almost as synonyms in common parlance, juxtaposed with the reality of many non-scholastic thinkers who would identify as Thomist.

Contemporaneously, a revival in the interest of the thought of the Church Fathers was also prevalent. The *ressourcement* movement, often used synonymously with *nouvelle theologie*, was looking to a different approach to theology. The emphasis being less on a type of logos of theology and more rooted in a pathos of theology. A desire to approach modernity with a renewal in theology of mysticism, symbolism, and intuition to counter the scientific reductionism prevalent in the world. They emphasized persons and relationships, love and dignity. As Tracey Rowland says of De Lubac (a prominent figure within the movement) and I think applies to the movement more broadly, they "wanted to fight secularism, relativism, liberalism and modern ideologies in general with Patristic humanism, its anthropology, its passion, its union of love and reason, not with syllogisms, not with hair-splitting logic and concepts arranged into systems for rote learning."² This emphasis reflected both an interest in Patristic theology and an interest in more modern philosophies, especially Marxism, existentialism, phenomenology and the budding personalist movement.

They believed, while scholasticism could indeed refute errors, that it would fail to address the concerns of modern man. Merely refuting errors would be insufficient to call man to God. The scholastic method was seen as cold and distant, overly rationalistic, and ultimately inadequate. Their approach is one which lays heavier emphasis on the particular and the concrete. A shift towards a more practical theology than the scholastic mindset seemed to generate. As put by Danielou SJ, "Theoretical speculation which is separated from action and not engaged with life has had its time. It is commonplace among otherwise antagonistic philosophies, such as Marxism or Existentialism, that thinkers should be engaged. The same tendency may be found within Christian thought."³

² Tracey Rowland, *Catholic Theology: Doing Theology*, Bloomsbury Publishing, pg 107, 2015 Kindle

³ Danielou, Jean SJ, "Current Trends in Religious Thought" 1946 in *Ressourcement Theology*. Patricia Kelly pg 61 kindle, Bloomsbury Publishing

This approach set them in contention with the dominant scholastic school of thought. The clashes covered a lot of issues. I will note here two main areas under which some of these can be viewed. These being areas with problems, the *nouvelle théologie* believed unanswerable by Thomism, especially the neo scholastic version of Thomism. Loosely configured, these can be grouped around “the historical problem” and the “anthropological problem”. The historical problem relates to issues surrounding how history relates to truth, exegesis, dogmatic statements, and notions of progress, direction, and meaning as time flows forward. The anthropological problem deals with questions surrounding human dignity, freedom, and rights.

It was felt that modernity required a robust approach to history. Something approaching a philosophy of history that could put theological events and ideas in the context of the historical reality and circumstances in which they occurred. Something was deemed to be lost in the abstractions of the Scholastic schools. And what was lost was needed in order to address the concerns of modernity. Concerns around how to understand varying aspects of the faith given recent scientific advances and presuppositions. It was not merely a matter of exposing errors in modern thought, but of addressing demythologizing tendencies, the claims of historical critical analysis, and the desire to pit a Jesus of faith against a Jesus of history. It was also needed in order to understand what was meant by particular dogmatic statements made through the centuries, using a grammar and terminology that had long since shifted.

The other historical need was to place things within the dynamic flow of events across time. There was a consistent theme across various modern philosophies that history was directional. The world was progressing towards something in its journey. Whether this was Marx’s worker’s paradise, the pantheistic process theological notion of God coming to understand Himself, or Teilhard de Chardin’s omega point. History couldn’t simply be reduced to just a series of events. We see this reflected in the idea that modern man has “matured” over time, that he has grown into a better understanding of himself. We even see it in the current culture in the idea of “being on the right side of history”. And any response to the modern world would need to be able to place itself within this flow, and point itself towards progress.

The anthropological problem centered around how we understand man as man. Much of the world had depersonalized the understanding of man. Man was seen consistently being reduced to an object. He was quickly becoming a cog in the machine of the state, or the factory, or the slave of the very tools with which modern technology equipped him. There was a desire to push back against these tendencies. The modern world had left classical Christendom behind and was now being fought over by fascists, communists, and liberals on the political front. And by socialist and capitalists on the economic front. Meanwhile, science had seemed to be able to give a complete explanation of man absent any spiritual reality. Evolution could explain his origin, psychology his behavior, sociology his group dynamics, leaving man as a biological

machine devoid of meaning. At the same time, there was a rise in the awareness of human dignity and freedom. The classical Thomistic anthropology was seen as providing an insufficient understanding of the person to fully address these issues.

The 'rise in awareness of human dignity', is an oft noted but rarely explained point. This leaves a rather vague notion as to what is meant. It is also criticized as while this supposed awareness was happening, massive displays of the rejection of human value were in extent. One has only to note the Holocaust, the Holodomor, the rape of Nanjing, and the seemingly endless list of atrocities to wonder what they are pointing at. Maritain attempts to explain it thus, "It is a certain prise de conscience, it is the growth in awareness of an offended and humiliated human dignity, and the growth in awareness of a historical mission."⁴ Further, he notes on the same page something I found helpful in wrestling with this notion, he writes, "The prise de conscience in question has been given a name in the Socialist vocabulary; it is the coming of the proletariat to 'class-consciousness'". He goes on to note the defects of socialism's class consciousness, but it is the comparison that sheds light on what is meant by this "rise in awareness of human dignity'. It is the realization of the masses of men that "A man's a man for a' that" to quote poet Robert Burns. This comes about in part arguably due to the change in structure of society. Previously, all classes of men contributed to the common good of society in a fairly clear manner at least in theory, if not in practice. It was also organized in a fairly clear, hierarchical manner. This was no longer obviously the case as efficiency, profit, power and other ends had replaced the idea of the good common life of man. Left in a paradoxical state in which liberalism said authority was derived from a mandate by the masses, while being systematically used as objects by those to whom they were the supposed arbiters of authority, one can see why a certain discontent arose. The average man could no longer remain a contented serf.

The 'rise in an awareness of freedom' is confronted with similar issues. There is the critique that a form of liberalism has crept into the Church in the guise of this 'expanded awareness'. This critique is not without some merit. The modern world's understanding of freedom had indeed gone wrong. Leo XIII wrote an entire encyclical, *Libertas*, on just this issue. Even those influential within the movement weren't immune to this error. Mounier wrote, "The ability to sin, that is, to refuse his destiny, is essential to the full exercise of liberty. Far from being a scandal, it is the absence of this that would alienate man from God."⁵ To put it another way, the oft used saying that "God is a gentleman, He doesn't force Himself on you" can easily be seen to imply that I am in fact free to reject Him. That is problematic. A man with a broken limb may be able to place that limb in unnatural positions, he is not thereby using his limb as it was meant to be used. A man whose intellect and will are unhealthy due to sin may be able to reject

⁴ Jacques Maritain, *Integral Humanism: Temporal and Spiritual Problems of a New Christendom* (Cluny Media, 2024), pg.211

⁵ Mounier, Emmanuel, *Personalism*, Boughton Press 2011 Kindle, Location 130

God, he is not thereby exercising his freedom properly. Our freedom is bound by truth, including the truth of our nature. It would seem likely given the sheer prevalence of this that it is an error to be vigilant against. Both in our own behavior and in the communities in which we live. All of that notwithstanding, John Paul II and Benedict XVI repeatedly noted the connection of freedom with truth. It would be uncharitable and unfounded to state some sort of broad hypocrisy in which the magisterium verbally and textually reinforced the traditional norm while acting systematically in a contrary fashion in accord with a ubiquitous popular error. Individual acts or statements of particular churchmen or Vatican institutional machinery aside, it does not appear that this error was in fact what was meant by the 'expanded awareness of freedom'.

Another possibility, which I think is more likely, is that this points to our ability to shape our lives as a whole through our individual choices. This idea is very much in line with the themes of the existentialist thought that was so influential. It is also consistent with, expands upon and brings front and center, a theme within classical thought. Our actions shape us as persons. The idea, broadly speaking, is that one's choices shape our habits and our passions. Our intellect judges the good act, and we act on that judgment. We do so repeatedly, building a habit. A virtue is a habit conformed to right reason, and a habit is a stable disposition. By exercising certain virtues we become the kind of people who act in certain ways (out of habit as it were), we also thereby become the kind of man who loves certain things (as we are disposed to them as the good we desire). We become a man who acts and loves rightly. And it is we who choose to act. A lifetime of choosing in different circumstances creates a particular and unique individual. Put another, more personalistic way, we choose how we relate to ourselves and towards others. Both ourselves and the other are persons. The proper relation to persons is love. In choosing to love ourselves and others, we become men of love. And it is we who choose to love.

There is no necessary conflict in the thinking herein, but rather a dual radical shift of emphasis. The first radical shift being the move from an emphasis of a reliance on external factors built and maintained to guide an individual's actions towards holiness to an insistence on internal engagement of the faith. This puts the ball in the court of the individual person. It entails emphasis on another existentialist theme: personal responsibility. The shift is seen in movements from legislating that one abstain from meat on Fridays, and forbidding the reading of certain books; towards, choose a penitential act that best expresses and grows your spiritual life and avoid reading material destructive of it. From the structures within the Church providing guidelines to the intellect via laws, customs, the ordering of the structures and activities provided, and other such external assistance to an approach of providing encouragement to form and build relationships with others, and within oneself, and various programs designed to help with just such things.

Secondly, the shift moves away from a roughly standard Thomistic account to one rooted in a more personalist inspired relational account. This shift is seen in much of the “new anthropology” that was meant to be used to address the “anthropological problem”. Reminding man of his dignity and its roots in being made in the image of God. In a societal structure which dehumanizes and objectifies man, this approach reminds man of his humanity. It does so by reminding him of his worth, rooted in his being made in the image of God. Indeed, you can’t throw a stone in the modern catholic theological landscape without being reminded of this. This combats the nihilistic tendencies within modernity to see man as an object of use. It rejects it outright and insists on the value of man as man.

This is not to say that this way of viewing things is without negative consequences. The structure of a theocentric humanism, that is, placing man in the center of things, and then the image of God in man as the center of man⁶, has advantages and disadvantages. It does give us a sort of common ground, a humanistic framework, with which to speak to a world dominated by various forms of atheistic humanism. To speak to them of what it means to love man, that it requires understanding man. And that such understanding can not be done apart from God. It does speak of value, love, and hope to persons crushed by the existential weight of the world. It also requires vigilance that the image of God point does not become seen to be superfluous. The more man is referred to apart from God, the easier that will become. It necessarily emphasizes persons and relationships, which men find just less interesting. In a world needing priests, formatting theology in terms of things men are naturally less interested in isn’t likely to be helpful. Theology is now often put in terms of things women are more naturally interested in than their male counterparts. It should therefore be of no surprise at the phenomenon of a feminization of the Church. The line between psychology and theology gets blurred. When does spiritual direction become counseling? Medieval man wasn’t concerned about the spiritual significance of his suffering from a “father wound”. Focusing on building and maintaining relationships can often push back against penitential notions, as does the focus on reminding a man of his value. If man has become sacred, one has to address how we punish the sacred. Persons as persons are inherently equal, the default terrain shifts from a hierarchy of being in which equality is the exception to be explained, to an egalitarian field in which hierarchy is the exception needing explanation. Terminology shifts, penance becomes reconciliation, the Beatific Vision becomes Union with God. Church structures shift to support these changes. Intended and unintended consequences, both good and bad, occur.

⁶ This construction of a theocentric humanism is drawn from Maritain’s Integral Humanism. I chose this rather than Tracey Roland’s ‘patristic humanism’, as I consider it more useful for the purposes herein to describe the structure of the construct over the inspiration of its source.

One of these consequences is the gap between the teaching of the Church in the past and current teaching. Teaching developed, but has done so in a way that leaves it disconnected with the past. Benedict the XVI somewhat famously talked of a hermeneutic of continuity. That we should understand the teachings in continuity with the past. This will allow for a connection with the past that is vital in an institution who has teachings spanning the centuries, and with claims to unchanging truth. It is also vital for the people within the Church to be rooted in a community spanning generations. Such a hermeneutic would act as a bridge. The issue seems to be the bridge is, as it were, currently under construction. To complicate this, some claim the teachings can not be reconciled, and posit that a hermeneutic of rupture is the only correct way to view the clash. All the while, what we often get from official sources is a 'hermeneutic of silence', wherein new teaching is proclaimed, declared a development of teaching and left unconnected with the past. Whether this is a wholesale leaving behind certain expressions, for example, limbo being shelved or *Dignitas Infinita's* "we must move away from the logic of the legitimacy of war"⁷; or more indirectly in which past teaching and how it relates to what is being put forward is just not mentioned. It would be helpful if authorities could pump the brakes on developing everything everywhere all the time and relate what they have recently taught back to the tradition. An excellent example of a teaching being positioned with past teaching is *Casti Connubii* paragraphs 4-5. Here Pius XI explains, and reaffirms past teaching, including the teaching of the previous encyclical on the subject and positions what he is going to be doing and why he is doing it. The entire document flows and fits within a space he has laid out for it. This is a contrast to the now famous line from *Dignitatis Humanae* that it "leaves untouched traditional Catholic doctrine on the moral duty of men and societies toward the true religion and toward the one Church of Christ."⁸ and over which arguments still rage. It is just left there intact and seemingly unconnected to the rest of the document in a famously ambiguous manner.

The tendency is to categorically approve or disprove of the shift. Either Vatican II was the best thing since sliced bread and only radical traditionalist heretical schismatics say otherwise, or it was some free masonic victory over the Church and anyone who supports it is a modernist heretic. I don't think those attitudes are particularly helpful. Decisions made reflecting a pastoral note are likely to have mixed results, especially given the sheer size of those being "pastored" as it were. And it is not always easy to see where the line of those effects fall. I can not say to what extent the exodus post Council was an effect of lack of engagement of people with their faith, and to what extent it was having the structures, rules, and customs they leaned on rapidly removed from them. Furthermore, I cannot say where the line of the type of symbolic interpretation done by Jordan Peterson is strictly psychology and when it crosses some

⁷ Dicastery of the Doctrine of the Faith, Vatican City, "*Dignitas Infinita*" § 39

⁸ Vatican II, *Dignitatis Humanae* (Declaration on Religious Liberty), 1965 § 1

invisible threshold and is theology. I can say his approach is very popular and reaches many ears. There is a similar rise and fascination with typology in scripture, Scott Hahn can pack a room to listen to him pontificate on just such things. Stories do have power to move people, Christ Himself taught through parables. As it is, the direction of the Church supports the rise of a repairer of relationships over a hammerer of heretics. For good or ill, this is the direction that was chosen. And chosen by those with authority.

This was one of two big shifts at the Council. The shift from away from some form of scholastic dominance in theology to a humanistic dominance. The image of handmaids is one familiar to Catholic usage. In the realm of handmaids, there is a hierarchy. The lead handmaiden of scholastic theology was reassigned to scullery maid, and someone new took her place in advising the Church and aiding her in presenting herself to the world. There seemed to be a lot of instability and craziness, at first, as the transition was effected. Shortly after the Council, those in favor of the shift split. *Communio* and *Concilium* “schools” of theology centered around theological journals of the same names. This diversity was enlarged with liberation theologians, feminist and eco-feminist theologians joining the landscape. Clown Masses and notoriously bad catechesis, the push back to *Humanae Vitae* as exemplified by the Winnipeg statement, and in regard to Catholic education as per the Land o Lakes statement give witness to some of the internal instability. St. John Paul II’s long reign seemed to have a stabilizing effect. It normalized and promoted a Thomistic personalism that one sees reflected in the catechism which he promulgated. A new handmaid was in charge. One with more theocentric humanist leanings.

The second big change from the council was a shift away from the vision of Christendom as it was understood for millennia. The best description I have come across is given by Jacques Maritain:

“It was, amid a swarm of passions and crimes, a simple movement of ascent, of the intellect toward the object, of the soul towards perfection, of the world toward a social and juridic structure unified under the reign of Christ. With the absolute ambition and unpremeditated courage of childhood, Christendom built then an immense stronghold on the summit of which God would sit; it was preparing for Him a throne on the earth, because it loved Him. All the human was thus under the sign of the sacred, ordered to the sacred and protected by the sacred, at least as long as love made it live on the sacred. What mattered the losses, the disasters? A divine work was being accomplished by the baptized soul. The creature was severely lacerated and in this even magnified; it forgot itself for God”⁹

This is the dream undergirding what Maritain refers to as the *Sacrum Imperium*.¹⁰ A dream which Maritain himself describes as beautiful if naive. It is the dream which shaped modern western civilization. A dream in which brother nations were unified by

⁹ Maritain *Integral Humanism* pg 13

¹⁰ Maritain, *Integral Humanism*

faith. They may fight and squabble, but it was the fighting and squabbling of men unified as brothers in the faith. It is not the dream put forward in the post Council world. While they may not be contradictory dreams, they were not identical. It was seen by some as if the past dream was rejected in toto, as if, in order for the new dream to thrive, the old must die. And dreams do not die easily.

The teaching post Council is perhaps given best form by St' John Paul II's Civilization of Love. The idea here is one in which even in a world in which the Soviet Union had won the Cold War, in which the communist revolution had succeeded, the Church in some manner could thrive. The governments of the world had largely accepted some form of secularism, a wall of separation between the Church and State had been placed. Liberalism, Fascism, Communism, were squabbling over who gets political control of the world. None of these or really any modern political philosophy/ideology were inherently Catholic friendly. Whoever won the squabble, we were once again, as a community, on the outside of the polis in some manner. We were and are in a situation closer to ancient Rome than to medieval France. Mournier wrote that

... this crisis is not the end of Christianity, but only of a kind of Christianity. Perhaps the decomposing hulk of a world that Christianity built, that has now slipped its moorings, is drifting away, and leaving behind its pioneers of a new Christianity. Or it would seem that, having for many centuries flirted, as it were, with the Jewish temptation, of trying to directly establish the Kingdom of God upon the plane of terrestrial power, Christianity is slowly returning to its first position; renouncing government upon earth and the outward appearances of sanctification to achieve the unique work of the Church, the community of Christians in the Christ, mingled among all the men in the secular work, - neither theocracy nor liberalism, but a return to the double rigours of transcendence and incarnation."¹¹

Since the family is the building block of any civilization, we start there. Holy families lead to a holy civilization. The central relationship of the family is marriage. Whatever the government, "the times are never so bad but that a good man may live in them" (often attributed to St. Thomas More). It is an internal focus on the smallest society, a grassroots movement if you will. This is really in accord with the activation of the laity. The laity is composed of families. Strengthening the family requires members of the family to strengthen their relationships, it requires them to engage their lives with intentionality, to love rightly. It also fits well with the "new evangelization". A Catholic family, living their faith, will be a strong witness and likely lead to evangelization of the neighbor families. The issue is that this writ large does not necessarily lead to a brotherhood of Catholic nations. It is not equivalent to the vision of the Sacrum Imperium. The point of unity in a civilization of love, is love, most notably love of man.

¹¹ Mournier, Personalism pg 122 kindle ed

All men are our neighbors, and we are called to love them all. The point of unity in the *sacrum imperium* was the faith. These are not contradictory, but they are not identical. And we get two separate visions of Christendom, left unconnected.

I would note here that while the notion of persons and relationships became central, expanded as it were, the notion of the common good was shrunk. This is somewhat necessary in order to avoid direct ideological conflicts with states and other religions. If improving relations and working with our fellow man in a common task was the way to proceed, we need a view of a common political good that could function for all involved. In order to engage the modern world in a dialogue, we needed a common grammar. The grammar of personalism, with its rights, relationships, and human dignity, has been chosen. A common grammar to bridge the gap. The shared task, to build a society in which the common good can be most closely achieved. The common good as "the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily."¹² Those conditions depend on the realization of the rights of man. " ... in the matter of the realization of the rights of men, we should note what follows: since the value of human dignity makes it the highest good to be pursued in the moral order and the basis of juridical obligation, human rights must be clearly defined and given juridical expression."¹³ There is a noticeable lack of the explicit mention in these ideas of God, the life of virtue, or religion. One can certainly argue that such notions are necessarily implicit given that man is made in the image of God, but it is not explicitly indicated and could easily be interpreted apart from such a notion. In fact, the atheistic and secular humanisms with whom we dialogue will necessarily interpret them according to their own presuppositions. Presuppositions which tend to preclude God, the life of virtue, or religion. Constricting the common good in this fashion allows for facilitating ease of dialogue and interaction with those outside of our belief system in a common work. It allows for a space to act in a secular society. Once you posit God, the life of virtue or religion, as necessary to the common good, conflicts cannot but arise. The Church suddenly becomes not just another dialogue partner, a co-worker, in the task at hand; but, She becomes *Mater et Magistra*, a figure of authority which commands obedience. And that is an authority that the world has rejected. The problem, of course, is that is exactly who she is, even if the world fails to see it. Any dialogue with the world is not objectively one of equals. A point often overlooked, but the reality of the relationship is not removed simply because one party rejects it. Any dialogue a man has with his mother can hardly be done apart from the nature of the relationship that exists between them.

¹² Catechism of the Catholic Church, § 1906 https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P6K.HTM

¹³ International Theological Commission, *The Dignity and Rights of the Human Person*, 1983 §3.2.2, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_1983_dignita-diritti_en.html

There are a couple of dangers to note here. It also puts a layer of distance between the words we use and the ideas corresponding to them and their theological underpinnings, making it easier to lose sight of those concepts. This does put us one step closer to seeing the *imago dei* as superfluous and succumbing to the very error engaged against. To lose sight of the supernatural order altogether and collapse it into just another attempt at positing a temporal utopia in an attempt to love man as man apart from God. This vision, even if achieved, can be done in a pluralistic fashion that leaves it quite separate from any notion of a brotherhood in the faith of various nations. It could be done in such a fashion that, on a functional level, I do not believe it could be easily separated from what is traditionally understood as the Masonic ideal of the brotherhood of man. While, it is true enough, that pluralism (and hence indifferentism), would be a necessity in such a system, one could argue that it would be an evil which is worth tolerating. Either, because given current political, and social environments it is best to suffer such evil on a practical level. Or, because one believes that a greater good results forthwith.

One can find both arguments being made. That, given current global conditions, accompanying the world, engaging it in dialogue, and leaving it in a secular state is the best possible option. The state, and the people, accept secularism. Far better to work together to build conditions in which persons can most freely choose God, apart from coercion, and to exercise their faith apart from persecution. Choosing to fight against the notion of secularity is the wrong battle to fight, at least, here and now. The rebuttal is that this may well be true within particular nations at particular times, but applying it globally is not in accord with the teaching of the pre-councillor encyclicals.¹⁴ I would note that Von Balthazar in his *Razing the Bastions*, tends to acknowledge a tendency towards globalization and this seems to be echoed in post-councillor approaches. There tends to be a more global focused approach rather than a more localized national approach to many problems. This may be due in part to increased globalization, making international and global problems more pronounced and the need to address them more imminent.

One can also find the argument being made that it is in making these conditions available to persons that the way forward most in accord with the dignity of man is found. That, as God respects our freedom, so also should man. We should be given the conditions in which to make our choice, and secularity is the best environment in which to make it. The secular state is a 'neutral ground' on which man can best choose freely and apart from coercion. This allows us to, as it were, own our decision. This line of reasoning I find problematic. It seems to rely on a theological liberalism rooted in a false understanding of freedom that ends up not tolerating indifferentism as an evil, but committing it as if it were a positive good.

¹⁴ This would be my understanding of some of the various arguments presented by Marcel Lebevre in *They have Uncrowned Him*.

Scholasticism and the ideals of a “sacrum imperium” have shaped the Catholic imagination. For that matter, they have affected the shape of the western mind. They have done so over numerous centuries, across nations and empires, cultures and societies. While one can speak to the inspiration of the time of the early Church and the Fathers, one can not ignore the weight of the intervening centuries. Connections are needed, the gaps bridged, relationships built. How exactly is an affront to human dignity related to the traditional schemata of sin as an offense against God? Can one still dream of a unity of faith, or must such dreams be crushed in order for a pluralistic unity of a love of man to become realized? How are the dreams of the past to relate to this strange new (returning?) dream? How do we go about maintaining a theocentric outlook without losing ourselves in a humanism divorced from God?

I have written almost nothing of liturgy. This may seem odd given it is such a point of contention. I have written little both as a point of personal ignorance, and that whatever change was meant to be effected; almost no one believes that either liturgical abuses, such as the aforementioned clown masses (thankfully reduced in number) or the propensity towards a banality typified by a lack of an experience of transcendence often noted in a common parish setting, was in fact the goal of the liturgical renewal following the Council. (I would note that we should not forget that someone thought/thinks these things were/are a good thing, and that is most definitely a problem) Liturgy is also the point through which Pope Benedict XVI, intentionally, sought to start building some connections. Building bridges through not so much theological reasoned arguments (logos), nor through some mystical or charismatic movement (pathos), but through the lived liturgical experience of the *sensus fidelium* played out in dialogue (ethos). I find it regretful and unfortunate that such wisdom has been set aside. We have become so intent on building bridges with the world, on forging new and wondrous relationships in the global environment, we have failed in some sense to maintain relationships within our own community which extends not only across the globe, but across the centuries.

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