JPJRS 17/1 ISSN 0972-33315, January 2014: 101-118

DOI:10.5281/zenodo.4273645
Stable URL: http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4273645

Christian Faith, Philosophy, and Culture:
The Triumphs and Failures of Wisdom

George Karuvelil, SJ
Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth,
Pune 411014

Abstract: Convinced that those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it, this paper looks at the history of the interaction between Christian faith and culture in the Western tradition. Presenting two millennia of history in such limited space is bound to be fragmentary. But it serves the limited purpose of uncovering the dynamics of the interaction between faith and culture. It is seen that faith flourished as long as it remained faithful to this dynamics and it declined when it failed to do so, i.e., from the modern period to the present. The latter can be seen as a failure of wisdom inasmuch as wisdom consists in creatively responding to a given situation. This realization, in turn, prompts another look at Aquinas to see if he can function as an exemplar for integrating reason and faith in the contemporary world.

Keywords: God-man, Aquinas, Philosophy, Theology, Culture

Introduction

Recent pontiffs have been insistent on linking faith and reason.[1] While there is more than one reason for this insistence, the most clearly stated reason is a perceived crisis in "postconciliar theology".[2] Some observers see this crisis existing already before Vatican I (1869-70)[3], and still others trace it to the Enlightenment.[4] The depth of the crisis can be gauged from the Church's incoherent, flip-flop responses to modernity. After an initial period of welcoming modernity the Church began to build the protective walls of neo-scholasticism around its theology, culminating in the anti-modernist oath; then it demolished that carefully, constructed fortress with one stroke and

embraced the new currents at Vatican II; presently there is the rather ambiguous stand of seeing Thomas Aquinas as an "exemplar" of integrating faith and reason, without giving his thought an official stamp.[5] This stand is ambiguous inasmuch as it can be read either as an open ended statement or as an attempt to return to scholasticism. What is clear is the mandate to study "the relationship between reason and Christian faith – that is, between philosophy and theology – from a systematic and historical point of view".[6] This demand seems to be prompted by the realization that those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it.[7] Prodded on by this realization, the following study looks at the history of the interaction between philosophy and Christian faith, in the briefest possible manner. It will be seen that the interaction between the two cannot be studied in isolation from culture. Thus, a dynamic, triadic relationship is seen between Christian faith, prevailing culture, and philosophy. History of their mutual interactions shows a pattern such that creative response to cultural changes enabled Christian faith to flourish whereas the failure to do so led to its decline, of which the present theological crisis is a symptom.

The structure of the paper is as follows: after some terminological clarifications regarding rationality of faith and its relation to culture there will be three brief sections dealing with three important moments in the history of Christianity that instantiate this relationship. The fifth section examines in greater detail the exemplary character of Aquinas' manner of relating Christian faith to culture, and finally some reflections on the opportunities and dangers presented by contemporary culture for Christian faith.

1. Preliminary Considerations

'Culture' is understood as a humanly constructed environment as opposed to the natural environment; it is a human achievement and not a given.[8] It is made up of diverse components, like art and architecture, science and technology, economic and political organization of society, and above all, language, ideas, and the values underlying these human constructions (i.e., philosophy, theology, and sciences). Of these, we will be primarily concerned with the last (ideational) component. The significance of culture is that they

provide a pattern of acceptable forms of life and behaviour (cultivated behaviour as against instinctual behaviour) such that one does not have to start by re-inventing the wheel for oneself.[9]

The term 'faith' could be understood either in a generic, philosophical sense or in a more specific religious sense. In a generic sense, faith is the ultimate stand one adopts towards life in the world. In this sense everyone lives by faith.[10] However, the word 'faith' is more commonly used in the context of religious faith. Since I will be concerned only with Christian faith, which is one specific form of religious faith, I shall identify its core with a commitment to the mystery of the God-man, or the divine as experienced in the human person of Jesus. That hyphenated term (God-man) is meant to indicate the bifocal vision of that lies at the heart of Christianity, which makes it a kind of humanism that is rooted in the Transcendent. Unlike the secular humanism of the modern era that saw God as a threat to human autonomy (see section 4 below), the humanism that lies at the heart of Christian faith sees God as the source and the guarantor of human fulfillment. This humanism was best put by St. Irenaeus (130-202 C.E.) when he proclaimed that the glory of God is man fully alive. This bifocal vision of Christian faith gives it an identity that is inseparable from its mission. On the one hand, since nothing human is alien to the Christian, Christian faith assumes a trans-cultural character. It has a point of access to any culture inasmuch as that culture is human; no culture is alien to it. On the other hand, Christian faith is not completely at home in any culture because as mere human products, every culture needs to be touched and transformed by the mystery of the God-man. This built-in tension between Christian faith and culture was most succinctly put by the author of the second century document *Epistle to Diogenetus* where it is said that for Christians "every alien homeland is theirs and every homeland alien".[11] If this formulation of the dynamic relationship between faith and culture comes from the beginnings of Christianity, its latest expression comes from Pope Francis. His affirmation that "every culture offers positive values and forms which can enrich the way the Gospel is preached, understood and lived"[12] indicates its access to all cultures; his statement that "no single culture can

exhaust the mystery of our redemption in Christ"[13] emphasizes its trans-cultural character.

The word 'reason' too has diverse meanings and since I cannot deal with them here, I merely suggest that Peter's address at the temple after the Pentecost (Act 2: 12 ff) be taken as the first attempt at showing the rationality of Christian faith. Here is a situation of perplexity and lack of understanding; the disciples are accused of being irrational, drunk, out of their minds. Peter tells them that such is not the case and helps them to understand the situation by referring them to the words of Prophet Joel. If this is taken as a model for linking reason and faith, then it has two implications. First, rationality of faith consists in bringing the content of one's faith (object of one's *shraddha*) accessible to others whose faith (object of *shraddha*) differs from one's own. Second, to make one's faith so accessible is to relate it to those beliefs that are already accessible to the listeners. In other words, Peter would not have been able to explain his faith with the help of the Prophet, if his listeners were not Jews. The implication is that the rationality of faith can change from time to time and from culture to culture. This is a crucial point for exploring the rationality of faith down the centuries, as done in this paper.

What about wisdom? It concerns "sound and serene judgment regarding the conduct of life".[14] Wisdom is a practical matter; so are techniques. Knowledge, understood as information, is basic to both wisdom and techniques. But techniques are context free; anyone who knows the principle of the lever can use it to lift weights. Wisdom calls for a creative response to the uniqueness of given situations. Learning to use a gun is to learn a technique; but determining when to use it calls not only for knowledge of the situation but also for wisdom. Reflectiveness and judgment are the two basic components of wisdom.[15] Therefore, wisdom tends to be creative whereas technique is repetitive. If rationality of faith consists in making one's faith accessible to the people of a given culture, doing it creatively without undermining the built-in tension between faith and culture demands wisdom. We shall see that successful responses to cultural change maintained this tension whereas the other responses undermined it. The present crisis of

Christian theology can be seen as an instance of the unfolding of this dynamics. In order to show this I shall divide the history of Western Christianity into three main stages.

2. Pre-Thomistic Christianity (Beginnings to the 12th century)

Placing this large chunk of history into one category might seem arbitrary, as a lot had changed during these centuries. Christianity had changed from being a persecuted religion to becoming the successor to the Roman Empire, uniting the whole of Europe; Islam had emerged as a powerful force about which the Church did not feel very comfortable. In spite of such major changes, there are three reasons for placing this part of history into one category. First, the Greco-Roman culture into which Christianity was born was an enchanted one, permeated with gods, goddesses, and spiritual powers. It remained so throughout this period and beyond. Second, while the philosophers were unsparing in their criticism of vanity of their deities, their philosophies –especially neo-Platonism and Stoicism—remained spiritual pursuits. Philosophy in the ancient world was not theoretical speculation, but a way of life.[16] In a world that was saturated with philosophies of this kind, Christianity was consciously cultivated as a distinct philosophy.[17] This brings me to the third reason for placing this part of history into one category. Throughout this period, there is no distinction between philosophy and theology. Whether it was Justin martyr or Origen of old, or Augustine or Anselm of later centuries, their theology is philosophy. Anselm goes to the extent of trying to explain the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation in a manner "as if nothing were known about Christ".[18]

The kind of tension that an enchanted world brings to Christian faith concerns the nature of the deity. Thus we have the great Christological controversies. Christian thinkers steadfastly maintained the tension between their faith and culture by resisting all attempts to deny either the humanity or the divinity of Jesus.

3. Aquinas and the Aristotelian Christianity

From our perspective the first major cultural change took place in the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries. The twelfth century is marked by the rise of two brilliant Peters: Peter Abelard dazzled with his logical sharpness and Peter Lombard became a shining star on account of his brilliance in synthesizing faith statements from the stalwarts of the previous millennium. These two Peters, together, prepared the way for the great scholastic flourishing that followed. Further, universities like Paris and Oxford that would hold sway over Christendom in the following centuries came into existence at this time. Most important of all, scholarly contact with the Islamic world brought the major works of Aristotle into limelight and began to gain wide circulation. Unlike the Augustinian model that studied nature (Book of nature) under the guidance of the Bible (Book of scripture) to see the imprints of God in nature, Aristotle was seen to study nature on its own terms. This posed a major challenge to Christian faith. The initial reaction was to ban the study of Aristotle's natural philosophy, but without much success. It was the genius of Aquinas that overcame this problem and made Aristotle look almost a Christian. To put in contemporary parlance, he was the first one to recognize the autonomy of the sacred and secular without allowing that autonomy to become a division or fragmentation.

In order to accomplish that, Aquinas had to address two problems. The first was the problem of integrating the natural philosophy of Aristotle with the transcendent focus of Christian faith. This was not too difficult, as Aristotle himself had shown a way of doing this by linking his physics with metaphysics, by arguing from the observed world to an Unmoved Mover to explain the observed change and motion in the world. Aquinas followed this model and what he accomplished came to be known as the famous Five Ways. The fact that thirteenth century European culture was still an enchanted one that placed a high premium on metaphysics made this passage from physics to metaphysics smooth and effortless.

The second problem arose from Aquinas' realization that, as far as Christian faith was concerned, logic and philosophy can go so far and no further. Unlike Anselm, he was very clear that some

doctrines of Christian faith (like the Trinity) cannot be made accessible to all. This was a more difficult problem to handle than the first as he had no model solutions available; he had to devise one himself. His solution consisted in making a sharp distinction between "natural" reason and supernatural revelation, philosophy and theology. He argued that these two ways of knowing cannot conflict; on the contrary they complement each other inasmuch as the one tells us *that* God exists and the other tells us *what* God is. Thus philosophy functions as preambles to theology. Thus Aquinas managed to maintain the tension between faith and culture by distinguishing theology and philosophy and yet dynamically linking the one with the other.

4. The Challenge of Modernity

The biggest cultural challenge to Christian faith came with modernity, that amalgam of disparate factors that came to be called Enlightenment rationality. It included the scientific revolution with its enormous potential to predict and control the natural phenomena, the Renaissance or the rebirth of the classical humanist cultural traditions of ancient Greece and Rome, the Reformation and counter-Reformation with their focus on ecclesiastical reforms, and the French revolution with its promise of fraternity, equality, and liberty in place of feudal monarchy and ecclesiastical hierarchy. The combined result was that in many respects human beings began to occupy the place reserved for God in the earlier era.[19] It was a declaration of human independence from God and the world, from society and its inherited traditions, including the Christian heritage.

Autonomy from God resulted in the secularization of society, that "process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols".[20] This was an entirely different kind of humanism from the Christian humanism coming from the inspiration of the God-man. This was a self-enclosed humanism that derived entirely from within the alleged nature of human beings than from any rootedness in transcendence.[21] It would be no exaggeration to say that modernity replaced the God-man with Man-god where man[22] created gods to suit his thinking. Typical was the idea of a deistic god that satisfied the human need

for explaining the origins of the world; this was in distinct continuity with the Aristotelian-Thomistic natural theology. But unlike that tradition, this god was not permitted to intervene in a world that functioned on the basis of mechanical scientific laws.

Emerging from an era of plagues and Black Death modern man declared his autonomy from nature. Now on he was to control nature rather than being controlled by it. Nature was seen as a machine, not a source of awe and wonder. Aristotle's complex rationality of four-fold causes gave way to just one of those causes, namely, efficient causality or empirical reason. Eventually, empirical sciences would be considered as the only legitimate paradigm of human knowledge. This results in philosophy (that was the handmaid of theology for the scholastics) becoming the under-labourer of science (Locke). Theology, the old queen of sciences, was dethroned and sent into exile, into the margins of modern universities. Sciences themselves, devoid of the unity provided by either the ancient metaphysics or by God, would become numerous autonomous disciplines, resulting in the fragmentation of knowledge and life.

Moderns declared their autonomy not only from God and nature but also from society and received traditions. "Have the courage to use your own reason" (Kant) became the motto of the age. Reason was understood as an individual achievement, a matter of bringing under conscious scrutiny and control. Earlier, human life was seen as having a built-in *telos*, a journey towards God. Modernity had no place for such *telos*, except those goals which human beings themselves put in place. Thus, modern man recognized himself as instinctual and selfish, free to accumulate (growth of capitalism occurs at this time) and copulate, but as rational beings, these activities could be done in an orderly fashion by freely coming together in a social contract.

4.1. Responses to Modernity

The Catholic Church rightly saw that modern culture and its self-enclosed humanism was at loggerheads with its own vision and mission. Its response to such comprehensive dissonance with the prevalent culture came in the form of *Aeterni Patris* (1879), the

encyclical that made scholasticism its official philosophy and theology, culminating in the anti-modernist oath of 1910. These moves gave an identity to the Church that made it distinct from the prevailing culture as well as from the protestant traditions struggling to cope with the modernity. But it also meant that while Aristotle was out of favour in the surrounding culture, Aristotelian thinking remained the heart of the Church's intellectual life. While the identity fostered by the scholastic fortification led to a vibrant life within the Church, it was an identity bought at the cost of its mission. It could not reach out to the men and women steeped in modern culture. The built-in tension between faith and culture was managed by isolating itself from culture. If the original identity of Christian faith was inseparable from its mission, there existed a gap between its new identity and its mission. Mission was still emphasized, but it meant reaching out to faraway lands that had not heard of Christ than becoming a leaven in one's surrounding culture.

It is this realization of its compromised identity and mission that led to Vatican II.[23] In his opening address to the Council Pope John XXIII said, "our duty is not just to safeguard this treasure, as though it were some museum piece and we the curators, but earnestly and fearlessly to dedicate ourselves to the work that needs to be done in this modern age of ours, pursuing the path which the Church has followed for almost twenty centuries".[24] In the words of Mercellino D'Ambrosio, "The goal of the council was to equip the Church to effectively re-evangelize the world through a compelling proclamation of Jesus Christ in a language that the world could understand (ecclesia ad extra)."[25] In this understanding of mission, it was not a matter of taking the gospel to faraway lands as was done during the advent of modernity but taking it to the alienated children of modernity.

If the Council was occasioned by the situation in the West with its specific focus on re-evangelizing those parts of the world that had gone away from its Christian moorings, this goal clearly has not borne tangible fruits in the postconciliar period. There are no indications of a new Europe breathing in the fragrance of the gospel. If anything, the signs point in the other direction.

What went wrong? While mainstream Catholic theologians like Rahner valiantly tried to reach out to modern culture by reworking on the modernist claim that religious truth is an articulation of the human experience of the divine,[26] at the hands of lesser theologians Catholic theology began to look like mere restatement of "secular ideas in theological terms".[27] What makes this assessment credible is that it comes not from the opponents of the Council but from its leading lights, who, often at great personal cost to themselves, pioneered the revolutionary changes. If Louis Bouyer talked about the "foolish capitulation to the spirit of the times" Henri de Lubac warned of "the servile adaptation to the world and its changing idols".[28] Similar sentiments are found in the writings of Congar.[29] *Fides et Ratio* echoes them when it talks of theologians being "swayed uncritically by assertions which have become part of current parlance and culture".[30] Although it should not be generalized, to the extent that it says something right about much postconciliar theology, this theology is as guilty of failing to maintain the tension between faith and culture as neo-scholasticism. Whereas neo-scholasticism resolved the tension between faith and culture by withdrawing within the walls, much postconcilar theology resolved it by losing itself in the prevalent culture. Neither solution befits the Christian spirit that calls for maintaining a creative tension between the two, such that the good news can be heard in the culture without being lost in it. In other words, Christian faith calls for actively engaging with a given culture; it can neither isolate itself from culture nor dissolve itself into it.

It is one thing to observe that much postconciliar theology failed to maintain the tension between faith and culture and quite another to understand why it happened. It seems to me that this has to do with the very nature of the *ressourcement* movement that led to the conciliar changes. Faced with the aridity and formalism of neo-scholasticsm and its inability to reach out to their contemporaries, the pioneers of this movement sought to return to the sources of Christian faith, the patrimony the Catholics shared with the Protestants, i.e., the scriptures and the Fathers of the Church. This came to be known as *ressourcement*. The logic of *ressourcement* was simple. It was the early thinkers who had first struggled to

integrate their Christian commitment with an alien culture and thought pattern. Therefore by returning to them, they hoped, one could learn valuable lessons for reaching out to the present times. Moreover, it would have tangible ecumenical benefits.

What was overlooked in the process was that the Fathers were relating their faith to a culture that was consonant with the overall Christian pursuits. Not only was it an enchanted culture but also a culture where philosophy was understood as a way of life. Christian theology, in that culture, took the form of a distinct philosophy as we have seen. In other words, theology functioned as the direct mediator between faith and culture, then. Neither of these consonant features existed in modern culture: it was neither enchanted, nor was modern philosophy a way of life. It was Thomas Aquinas, and not the early Fathers, who faced a comparable situation in the past. This is what makes him an exemplar for our times. When the Church says that the "Church's preference for his method and his doctrine is not exclusive, but 'exemplary'"[31], it seems to recognize that yesterday's solution cannot work for today's problems, but we can learn from it to address the contemporary situation. Therefore let us return to how Aquinas managed to maintain the tension between his faith and culture.

5. Aquinas as Exemplar

Aquinas's solution, we have seen, had two components. The first was linking the natural world to the religious world. This took the form of arguments. In an enchanted culture Aquinas could overlook the difference between a theistic God and the Aristotelian terms like the "Unmoved Mover" and declare as a conclusion to each of his five ways by saying, "and this everyone understands by God." Although the genius of Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) had seen through the impossibility of such identification, Catholic apologists kept pouring the old Aristotelian-Thomistic argumentative wine into the newer Newtonian bottles but to no avail.[32] Protestant thinkers who followed Schleiermacher turned to religious experience as the starting point of theology. This was in keeping with anthropocentrism of modernity, but Karl Barth found its fruits so unpalatable to his

Christian sensibilities that he revolted against it. In the postconciliar period Rahner tried to rework the path of religious experience, as we have noted, but the success of that attempt to reach out to modern culture remains debatable.

It is the second component of Aquinas' solution for maintaining the tension between faith and culture that has a special significance today. This is the distinction and the relationship he saw between philosophy and theology. We noted that he makes a clear distinction between philosophy and theology or what he called "sacred doctrine".[33] Philosophy functioned as preambles or prolegomena to theology. The need for preambles assumes a gap between Christian faith and culture, between what can be communicated to all in a culture and those Christian doctrines that cannot be directly communicated to all.[34] And it was the task of philosophy to bridge this gap. As a mediator, philosophy must be accessible to all, Christians and non-Christians. If it is to be accessible to all it must use the resources available to all and speak the common language that Aquinas termed "natural reason". But, unlike in Anselm and others of the earlier period, philosophy does not deal with the "sacred doctrine". "Sacred doctrine" goes beyond the common language; it is accessible only to those who have accepted the preambles.

If philosophy is to function as preambles to Christian theology, not any philosophy that is prevalent in the culture can do this job; only a philosophy that accords with the Christian faith can perform that function. In other words, only a Christian philosophy can be a preamble to Christian theology. Aquinas knew this very well. This realization prompted him to reject or modify those elements of Aristotelian philosophy that did not accord with the Christian faith.[35] (In doing so, he followed the example of the earlier thinkers who carved a Christian philosophy out of available cultural material). Such modifications, of course, were done through reasoning and arguments. The resulting philosophy provided an integral way of life that resonated with faith and culture at the same time.

Even after modifying Aristotelian teachings to make them conform to the Christian revelation, such philosophy (even a Christian one!) still remained a philosophy; it still fell short of what was revealed by

God in Jesus Christ. The philosophy of Aquinas, thus, becomes the immediate interface between the Christian faith and the surrounding culture, theology being the more mediate interface. Theology, for Aquinas, functions like the balancing pole of a tightrope walker where philosophy is the rope that is tied across the chasm between faith and culture. In this tightrope walk between Christianity and culture, theology can do its balancing act only as long as a philosophical rope is firmly tied to the Christian faith on the one end and the prevalent culture on the other. Tying it too close to a culture would sacrifice Christian faith at the altar of cultural fashion and fastening it too close to Christian faith would sacrifice its mission at the altar of identity. The Christian philosophy of Aquinas managed to hold on to both without compromising either. When Aquinas' philosophy and theology is not understood in this integral fashion, it runs the risk of treating his natural theology as a sort of missionary manual,[36] and his theology into doctrinal statements without a context. Michael Buckley tells us that the former was the sin of Christian theologians in their initial encounter with modernity[37] and the *ressourcement* thinkers taught us that the latter was the mistake of neo-scholasticism.

This understanding of theology and philosophy –theology as the mediate, and a Christian philosophy as the immediate, interface between Christian faith and culture—helps to explain the seeming incoherence of the various responses of the Church to modern culture. The Church's hither-thither moves become inevitable because the demise of scholasticism left it bereft of a tightrope for theology to walk on. The pre-conciliar Church took to fortifying the scholastic walls because it mistook scholasticism to be a permanent achievement and not as a bridge between Christian faith and a particular culture. Strengthening (neo-)scholastic philosophy in the new culture was like erecting an artificial wall onto which the cultural end of the rope could be fastened; the rope was tight but it had nothing to do with the living culture to which the Church needed to reach out in mission. The *ressourcement* thinkers helped us to demolish that artificial wall so that it became possible to reach out to the existing culture.

If preconciliar theology relied on a tightrope that was tied to an earlier culture, postconciliar theology largely did away with all tightropes, as the Protestants had done before. If the Protestants

consciously sought to return to an earlier time when Christianity was not "corrupted" by Aristotle, the Catholic attempt at *ressourcement* unconsciously took it to the same pre-Thomistic period. What was overlooked in both instances was the Thomistic insight that relating Christian faith to a dissonant culture calls for an intermediary between the two, that theology cannot be related directly to such a culture. This attempt at a theological walk without a philosophical tightrope explains why even a theological giant like Rahner has been described as a "theologian in search of a philosophy".[38] It is the realization of the urgent need for a new philosophical tightrope that has led the Church to clearly affirm in more recent times that there can be "no Catholic theology without – the right – philosophy".[39]

Although some are likely to see this as a call to return to the safety of the scholastic walls, the Church seems sufficiently clear that it is not looking at quick-fix solutions but setting a long term agenda, "one of the tasks which Christian thought will have to take up through the next millennium of the Christian era"[40]. Moreover, the very idea of an exemplar is that of someone to be imitated, not parroted. To imitate Aquinas today is to build a tightrope to contemporary culture as he did to his culture. Seen thus, the Church is inviting its intellectuals to forge a new tightrope between Christian faith and contemporary culture on which its theological artists can walk firmly to reach out to the men and women of our times with the good news.

6. Concluding Observations

Contemporary culture is rightly called postmodern. Let me conclude by making some preliminary observations about building a tightrope to this culture. To do for our culture what Aquinas did for his would require that (1) we should know the similarities and the differences between his culture and ours; (2) discern the opportunities and dangers offered by the ideational component of contemporary culture for Christian faith; and (3) dialogue with our culture on the basis of that discernment. Such is the challenge for anyone who would take Aquinas as an exemplar for our times.

The most important similarity between his culture and ours is the autonomy of the secular realm, including, and especially, of the sciences. But there is an important difference: whereas the sciences (natural philosophy) were unified under metaphysics and handed over to the queenship of theology during his time, there is no unifying metaphysics now and theology is found only on the fringes of academics. As a result the different sciences are not only autonomous but also fragmented. Another difference is that although the mechanical philosophy of nature propagated by modernity has loosened its grip with the arrival of quantum theory, it has not re-instated the mysteriousness of nature in any significant way. On the contrary, the omnipresent electronic media and internet have led to demolishing all distinctions between nature and culture, reality and virtual reality, human persons and robots (imagine the talk of machine rights similar to human rights!) The gods who were banished by modernity are allowed to return as long as the gods are content to remain human constructions and not claim any independent reality that can put restraints on the human freedom to construct. If the moderns specialized in talking about God, post-moderns prefer that we talk to God,[41] if we so choose. But in the absence of any real God we can listen to, our talk would end up as monologues to deaf idols of our own making.

The contemporary world is not without its opportunities. Its anthropocentrism offers an opportunity for Christian humanism, if it can be rescued from its self-enclosed character. Although the move away from the modern mechanical philosophy to a more complex understanding of the world does not amount to any re-enchantment of nature, it does permit a more wondering attitude toward it. Replacing the misplaced self-assurance of the moderns who identified the self with the conscious, rational self with the more mysterious and unconscious dimensions of the self, together with the manifold advances in the study of religious experiences, do offer avenues for moving beyond the self-enclosed humanism of the past towards the transcendent humanism of Christian faith. This is the challenge of relating a living faith to contemporary culture. It is the challenge of being able to listen to a living God and speaking

of what one has heard to that culture, with the freshness and creativity that wisdom alone provides.

Notes

1. Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Fides Et Ratio* (Mumbai: Pauline Publications, 1998); Pope Benedict XVI, "Address to the German Bundestag" on September 22, 2011; Pope Francis, *Lumen Fidei*, nos. 32,33,34.
2. *Decree on the Reform of Ecclesiastical Studies of Philosophy* (2011) issued by the Congregation for Catholic Education (CCE), henceforth, *Decree*, no. 9.
3. Fergus Kerr, "A Different World: Neoscholasticism and Its Discontents," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 8, no. 2 (2006), 129.
4. Thomas Reese SJ, "2001 and Beyond: Preparing the Church for the Next Millennium," *America* June 21(1997), 16.
5. *Decree*, no.12.
6. *Decree*, no. 60, 1°b.
7. Winston Churchill, addressing the House of Commons on 16th November 1948. This is a modification of George Santayana who said in his book *Reason in Common Sense*, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it". See the Wikipedia article on George Santayana. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Santayana
8. Geertz refers to it as "webs of significance he himself [human being] has spun". See, Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 5.
9. Geertz goes to the extent of saying that culture is "the role it plays in social life". See, Ibid. vii.
10. See, Terrence W. Tilley, *Faith : What It Is and What It Isn't* (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2011).
11. Cited in Margaret Mary Mitchell, Frances M. Young, and K. Scott Bowie, eds., *Cambridge History of Christianity*, Vol. 1. Origins to Constantine (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 300.
12. Pope Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium* (Vatican Press, 2013), no. 116; see also, no. 75.
13. Ibid. no. 118.

14. Brand Blanshard, "Wisdom," in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Donald M. Borchert (Thompson Gale, 2006), 793.

15. Ibid. 794-795.

16. Pierre Hadot and Arnold I. Davidson, *Philosophy as a Way of Life : Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, trans. Michael Chase (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1995).

17. Winrich Löhr, "Christianity as Philosophy: Problems and Perspectives of an Ancient Intellectual Project," *Vigiliae Christianae* 64, no. 2 (2010), 160-88.

18. St. Anselm, "Cur Deus Homo," Fordham University Center for Medieval Studies, http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/anselm-proslogium.html, preface.

19. Frank B. Farrell, *Subjectivity, Realism and Postmodernism: The Recovery of the World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 2.

20. Peter L. Berger, *The Social Reality of Religion* (Hammondsworth, Middlesex: Penguine Books Ltd, 1973), 113.

21. Cf. *Lumen Fidei* says, "Modernity sought to build a universal brotherhood based on equality, yet we gradually came to realize that this brotherhood, lacking a reference to a common Father as its ultimate foundation, cannot endure".(no. 54); Charles Taylor calls it the "immanent frame". See, Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambride, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007), especially chapter 15.

22. I deliberately use the word "man" here (and in this section on modernity) not because of gender insensitivity but for two unrelated reasons: (1) because of the linguistic ease in showing the reversal of the God-man to Man-god, and (2) because modern philosophy as a whole had a typical male character in terms of its aggression and insensitivity to the other.

23. Apart from the need to reach out in mission to the modern culture, the Council was also prompted by the realization that the neo-scholasticism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was far from the scholasticism of Aquinas, and a need to return to the Christian roots.

24. Pope John XXIII, "Address at the Opening of Vatican Council II," (http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?RecNum=3233, 1962)

25. Marcellino D'Ambrosio, "The Vision of Vatican II: Bringing Aggiornamento to the Church-Part 1," Good News Archives March/

April, no. http://www.ccr.org.uk/archive/gn0603/g05.htm#top1 (2006)

26. Mary E. Hines, *The Transformation of Dogma : An Introduction to Karl Rahner on Doctrine* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989).

27. R.R. Reno, "Theology after the Revolution," *First Things* 173, May (2007), 19.

28. Marcellino D'Ambrosio, "Ressourcement Theology, Aggiornamento, and the Hermeneutics of Tradition," *Communio* 18, no. winter (1991), f.n.74.

29. Flynn and Murray, eds., *Ressourcement : A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology* 10.

30. Fides et Ratio no. 55.

31. *Decree* no.12

32. Michael Buckley, S.J., *At the Origins of Modern Atheism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

33. "Theology that is included in the sacred doctrine differs in kind from that [natural] theology which is part of philosophy". ST 1, q.1, a.1.

34. Aquinasclarifies that this is not on account of any shortcoming in the revelation from God but "on account of the weakness of our intelligence" and the need "to make its [divine] teaching clear" (ST 1, a.5.reply to obj. 1 and 2).

35. For a list of Aristotelian teachings that were found to be incompatible with Christian faith, see Wippel, *Mediaeval Reactions to the Encounter between Faith and Reason* 14–18.

36. See, Rudi A. Te Velde, "Natural Reason in the Summa Contra Gentiles," *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 4 (1994) 43–45.

37. Michael Buckley, S.J., *At the Origins of Modern Atheism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

38. See, George Vass, S.J., *A Theologian in Search of a Philosophy* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1985).

39. This is Kerr's evaluation of Fides et Ratio. Kerr, "A Different World: Neoscholasticism and Its Discontents" 129.

40. *Fides et Ratio*, no. 85; *Decree* no.5.

41. Stanislaus Swamikannu, "Post-Moderns Prefer Praying to Speaking About God: Don Cupitt- an Example," in *God-Talk: Contemporary Trends and Trials*, ed. Kurian Kachapilly (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2006), 172-93.