

INTRODUCTION:  
ODYSSEUS' BOW AND THE CATHOLIC PHILOSOPHER

"To epitomize the intellectual task confronting Thomas, and which he set for himself, I must use the image of Odysseus' bow, which was so difficult to bend that it took almost superhuman strength to draw the ends closer together. I have said that almost as soon as Thomas awoke to critical consciousness he recognized that it was his life's task to join these two extremes which seemed inevitably to be pulling away from one another."

—Josef Pieper,  
*Guide to Thomas Aquinas*

The theme of this collection of essays, *The Vocation of the Catholic Philosopher*, is inspired by the life and work of Jacques Maritain, especially his work *The Peasant of the Garonne*.<sup>1</sup> Written immediately after Vatican Council II, the book set out a vision for renewal of the Church and society through the kindling of "true new fires" of love and wisdom: "the true new fire, the essential renewal, will be an inner renewal."<sup>2</sup> The renewal will incorporate genuine discoveries and "Christian consciousness will penetrate deeper and further into the truth by which it lives and the evangelical reality."<sup>3</sup> Maritain understood the intention of the Council to be that accomplishment achieved by Aquinas centuries earlier. Pope Paul VI said of Thomas Aquinas: "Without doubt, Thomas possessed supremely the courage of the truth, a freedom of spirit in confronting new problems, the intellectual honesty of those who allow Christianity to be contaminated

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<sup>1</sup> Jacques Maritain, *The Peasant of the Garonne: An Old Layman Questions Himself About the Present Time*, trans. Michael Cuddihy and Elizabeth Hughes (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 65. (Jacques Maritain was present at the closing of Vatican Council II, on December 8, 1965; the preface to *The Peasant* was written on December 31, 1965, with the work being first published, in French, in the year following.)

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*; see also the opening chapter of Karol Wojtyła, *Sources of Renewal: The Implementation of Vatican II* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980): "The implementation of Vatican II, or the process of Conciliar renewal, must be based on the principle of the enrichment of faith.... In the present study, designed to help towards the realization of Vatican II, we shall concentrate on the consciousness of Christians and the attitudes they shall acquire."

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neither by secular philosophy nor by a prejudiced rejection of it. He passed therefore into the history of Christian thought as a pioneer of the new path of philosophy and universal culture. The key point and almost the kernel of the solution which, with all the brilliance of his prophetic intuition, he gave to the new encounter of faith and reason was a reconciliation between the secularity of the world and the radicality of the Gospel, thus avoiding the unnatural tendency to negate the world and its values while at the same time keeping faith with the supreme and inexorable demands of the supernatural order."<sup>4</sup> Josef Pieper suggested the image of "Odysseus' bow" to indicate the tremendous tension inherent in such a vocation.<sup>5</sup> In his own way, Maritain was just such a pioneer of the new path of philosophy combining the "secularity of the world and the radicality of the Gospel." And Vatican II put forward a grand vision for lay spirituality and the universal call to holiness as the source for the renewal of the Church and the temporal structures of the world.

Thus, Maritain tied the vocation of the Catholic philosopher to the meaning and import of the Council. Does the position of the Church in the modern world require the abandonment of the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas and the embrace of modern philosophy? Does respect for the autonomy and progress of the secular world require a separation from the guidance of doctrine and the formation of faith? Is it the fate of Catholic philosophers to be absorbed into the professional cadres of academia and fragmented into the rival ranks of secular philosophies? Must the great tradition of Catholic philosophy disappear, with but a faint trace in the journals of the historically minded? Not according to the man who fermented Catholic intellectual life for decades prior to the Council and who was considered a mentor by Pope Paul VI, namely Jacques Maritain. And not according to the man who was present at the Council and who worked to craft one of its key documents (*The Church in the Modern World*), one who later became the

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<sup>4</sup> See John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio* #43, note #47, quoting Paul VI's Apostolic Letter *Lumen Ecclesiae* (20 November 1974), 8: AAS 66 (1974), 680.

<sup>5</sup> See Josef Pieper on a theologically founded worldliness as the heart of "the west," in *Guide to Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Random House, 1962), chaps. 11, 12.

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Pope who steadied the Church in its post-Conciliar wavering, namely Karol Wojtyła.

According to their lights, the Church and the world need the philosophy of St. Thomas now more than ever. The efforts of the laity to “build the earth” and discover the excellence of the everyday call for the aid of divine grace and the light of faith. Catholic philosophers and thinkers—however dispersed throughout the ranks of academia and wherever present in the deliberations of the councils of the world or engaged in dialogues in galleries and assemblies—must retain the strong flavor of the salt of the gospel. Neither giddy with the superficial hopes of the progressives nor embittered with the shrill despair of the traditionalists, Maritain and Wojtyła brought the strength of their philosophical character (*habitus*) to confront the many challenges that face the Church in the modern world.

In 1966, Maritain offered his book, *The Peasant of the Garonne*, as a corrective, a rebuke to the two extremes he playfully named the “Sheep of Panurge” and the “Ruminators of the Holy Alliance,” the so-called progressives and traditionalists, both of whom shunned the Council and distorted its fundamental meaning and significance. Maritain attempted to stabilize the core meanings of the Council in light of history, spirituality, and philosophy.<sup>6</sup> Pope John Paul II has accomplished the corrections and he has stabilized the core meanings much in the vein traced by Maritain in *The Peasant*. But much still waits to be discovered. The call for renewal is still waiting for intelligent and generous responses. Maritain’s account of the intellectual and spiritual conditions for a true renewal provides us with much to consider. Pope John Paul II’s encyclical *Fides et Ratio* expands and deepens these considerations. So what is the vocation of the Catholic philosopher in their view of the post-Conciliar era?

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<sup>6</sup> Pope Paul VI also made such attempts on the theological front with his post-conciliar writings; see especially Pope Paul VI, *On the Mystery of Faith* (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1966) and *On Saints Peter and Paul* (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1967). See also Candido Pozo, *The Credo of the People of God: A Theological Commentary*, trans. Fr. Mark A. Pilon (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1980).

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### 1. What Is Philosophy?

What is philosophy? Maritain said: "Philosophy is the science which by the natural light of reason studies the first causes or highest principles of all things—is in other words, the science of things in their first causes, in so far as these belong to the natural order."<sup>7</sup> Maritain's philosophical efforts must be traced back to his metaphysical habitus, especially his notion of the intuition of being.<sup>8</sup> Maritain feared that the emphasis upon efficacy and pragmatism had obscured the fundamental principles and dynamic of philosophy. In the age of an increasing influence of technology, the love of truth, the superior value of truth, will have a liberating effect on the human heart and mind. Men look for substitutes in myths and fables, because science itself is unable to answer the deeper personal questions about man, God and the world.<sup>9</sup> Maritain entitled one collection of his *The Range of Reason* to signify the full sweep of philosophical achievement as it encompasses an approach to God, the soul, justice, and truth. Science will try to extrapolate from science to create fables and myths to answer these questions. Maritain was critical of Teilhard de Chardin because he viewed his efforts as an extrapolation, a poetic myth of science, covering over the deeper yearning for a true philosophical approach to the big issues. Also, he criticized the forms of contemporary philosophy because they bracket the question of being. As forms of epistemological idealism, they trap the thinker within his own mind and never experience the relish of true being. The great vision of Christian renewal of temporal structures, the true activation of the temporal mission of the lay Christian, requires a preparation in the order of philosophy and

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<sup>7</sup> Jacques Maritain, *An Introduction to Philosophy* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1930). See the discussion in *The Peasant*, 136, on the theological light proper to theology and the need for a renewal of Thomism through the proper light of philosophy. Cf. *Fides et Ratio* §9.

<sup>8</sup> See Jacques Maritain, *The Peasant*, 99-101, 110-11, 132-35. See also John P. Hittinger, "The Intuition of Being: Metaphysics or Poetry?" in *Jacques Maritain: The Man and His Metaphysics*, ed. John F. X. Knasas (Notre Dame, Indiana: American Maritain Association, 1988), 71-82; reprinted in *Liberty, Wisdom and Grace: Thomism and Democratic Political Theory* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2002).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 112-20.

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spirituality. It requires “a great and patient work of revitalizing in the order of intelligence and the order of spirituality.”<sup>10</sup>

Philosophy aims at spiritual renewal through the search for wisdom. Philosophers must respect the work of scientific inquiry; but science for its part must exercise self-discipline and refrain from extrapolating from its findings a new mythology or ideology. The search for wisdom begins with its enduring sense of wonder; the philosopher lies in between beasts and gods in a position of the metaxy.<sup>11</sup> Modern intellectuals tend to enclose themselves within a rational self-sufficiency and assume the position of a god-like autonomy. The ever-recurring temptation of science is the one first initiated so well by Lucretius—the poeticizing of the mechanisms of the world. Edward Wilson consciously invokes this same muse.<sup>12</sup> The great questions of meaning about man, God, and the world must lie beyond the scope of science. But science will make its poetic attempts to generate a comprehensive account, often doing bad theology rather than doing none at all. As Maritain says, the bad money chases out the good. The great hunger of the soul goes unfed. What is needed is an attention to the very intrinsic order of human intelligence, not an indiscriminate mixing together of science, poetry, and philosophy.

On the Feast of the Triumph of the Cross, 1999, Pope John Paul II issued the encyclical letter *Fides et Ratio* (On the Relationship between Faith and Reason). The mystery of the cross plays a prominent role in the relationship between faith and reason—the cross is said to be a “reef” whose submerged mystery will either break up the relationship between faith and reason (actually, he says that reason may come to grief on the shoals of its devising) or reason will be freed through the mystery of the cross to set forth upon a “boundless ocean of truth.” With such nautical metaphors, one thinks by way of contrast of both the timidity of a Locke and the temerity of a Nietzsche. Locke says at

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>11</sup> See the new translation of Josef Pieper, *Platonic Myths* (South Bend, Indiana: Saint Augustine Press, 2011).

<sup>12</sup> Edward O. Wilson, *Consilience—The Unity of Knowledge* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1998), and his essay “Resuming the Enlightenment Quest,” *The Wilson Quarterly* 22, no. 1 (1998): 16-27.

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the outset of the *Essay* that we should avoid the "vast Ocean of Being" wherein a man has no sure footing; he recommends that the mind rest content with its short tether, because, if the mind is not suited for metaphysical speculation, it is suited for practical matters—"convenience" and "virtue," he says. Nietzsche, by contrast, explains that the death of God, in erasing all points of reference and orientation, allows one to embark on an unbounded sea. For John Paul II, the cross represents the mystery of love, which cannot be eliminated and which provides the "ultimate answer" reason seeks. Neither Locke nor Nietzsche would be characterized as philosophers of love. Jacques Maritain, on the other hand, was often characterized thusly. He saw fit to include a text of Raïssa in *The Peasant of the Garonne*: "The True Face of God, or Love and Law." Thus the last line of his book is Raïssa's—"Love creates trust." So much for the myth of the bitter old man's last testimony! Maritain was a philosopher who lived in the mystery of the cross. Maritain's was a Christian philosophy, a "philosophical speculation conceived in dynamic union with faith" (§76). The questions about the meaning, coherence, and desirability of Christian philosophy were a matter of much debate a generation ago. The Pope's encyclical provides a new stimulation for revisiting those debates and for overcoming the widespread denial of the relationship, the position Pope John Paul II called the "drama of the separation of faith and reason." These essays draw upon the resources of Maritain's work to understand the corresponding aspects of the urgent project to rediscover or re-found their proper integration. It is a project that Maritain, in *The Peasant of the Garonne*, calls a "vast labor of reason" and a life of prayer.

In *Fides et Ratio*, Pope John Paul II commends specific thinkers by name as examples of the proper relationship between faith and reason: Edith Stein, John Henry Cardinal Newman, Antonio Rosmini, Étienne Gilson, and Jacques Maritain (§74). They exhibited the "indispensable requirements" for an authentic philosophy "consonant with the Word of God" (§80-84). "One thing is certain," said John Paul II: "attention to the spiritual journey of these masters can only give greater momentum to both the search for truth and the effort to apply the results of that search to the service of humanity." Common to their lives as Catholic philosophers was an effort to destroy the firewall between faith and reason set up by many Catholics of their day and to find a living

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synthesis between them. Yves R. Simon, who could well be added to the list of exemplars of philosophers in faith, offered some interesting reflections of his own. Yves R. Simon studied, wrote and taught during the challenging era prior to and after World War II. "One of the brightest in the history of philosophy"—so Yves R. Simon described the period between the wars, referring in particular to his mentor Jacques Maritain and also Étienne Gilson:

Having understood that philosophy needs the light of faith, the Christian philosopher is saved from entertaining two kinds of truths and risking the divorce of his intellectual from his spiritual life. In my opinion it is this union of philosophical intelligence and Christian faith, brought about by the labor of a few great minds, that makes this period one of the brightest in the history of philosophy.<sup>13</sup>

He pointed out that their work is premised on a rejection of the notion that a firewall separates philosophy and faith. Simon found too many scholars accepted some version of the "two truth theory," according to which one may compartmentalize one's science and scholarship and isolate them from faith, holding in effect "two truths," never bothering to verify "whether there was any agreement." Simon clearly understood that these trends of thought contradict the Catholic understanding of faith. Yet he encountered "university conformism" in the standard rejection of the role of faith in the life of the philosopher. Their strictures were demanding, such that "authors were to be read or not read, journals consulted or not consulted, questions raised or not raised—in short the whole style of research, thought and expression was preset," all in an effort to banish faith from academia. Then it was Descartes and French rationalism; today it is deconstruction, existentialism, or linguistic analysis. The question remains: does the philosopher make room for faith?

According to Vatican II's *Church in the Modern World*, the "split between the faith which many profess and their daily lives deserves to be counted among the most serious errors of the age" (§36). Virtually

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<sup>13</sup> Yves R. Simon, "Philosophy and Faith: Extracts from the Memoirs of a French Philosopher," *Notes et Documents de l'Institut International Jacques Maritain* XIV (January-March 1979): 5-8.

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every Catholic university and college in the United States, save those conspicuous few, is under the sway of this error, ironically in the name of renewal and Vatican II. Yes, philosophy, along with temporal matters in general, has its own proper autonomy, because "all things are endowed with their own stability, truth, goodness, proper laws and order. Man must respect these as he isolates them by the appropriate methods of the individual sciences or arts" (§36). So too, believers must "keep the laws proper to each discipline, and labor to equip themselves with a genuine expertise in their various fields" (§43). But the autonomy of temporal affairs, philosophy included, does not mean that "created things do not depend upon God or that they can be used without reference to their creator" (§36). Moreover, grace is needed to cling to what is good and achieve integrity even within the natural order (§37). All human activity must be purified and perfected by grace, philosophy no less than other works and virtues. The life and work of Maritain and Simon are a testimony to the unity of life, in this case rigorous academic and intellectual work with devout faith, envisioned by Vatican II.

In his later essays, Maritain coins a new term to replace "Christian philosophy." He says that he would put in its place the phrase "philosophy fully considered as such" or "philosophy forging ahead" as distinguished from "Philosophy considered simply as such" or "stumbling philosophy."<sup>14</sup> He abandons the term Christian philosophy because of the unfruitful debates of previous decades; but he further radicalizes it, in light of Vatican II. He fears that the term Christian philosophy "runs the risk of being completely misunderstood, as if the philosophy in question were more or less reined in by confessional proprieties." He claims that "the reality is quite different. Given the naturally high estate proper to philosophical problems and at the same time the limitations of human intelligence, as well as the wounds of nature which affect the human mind itself, we should not be surprised that even among the greatest minds philosophy *considered simply as such* might very well become a stumbling block. All the same we must feel sorry for those who have never felt the flame burn brighter in them on reading Plato or Plotinus.... Whether there is question of a philosopher

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<sup>14</sup> Jacques Maritain, *Untrammelled Approaches*, trans. Bernard Doering (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 1997), 421.



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or of any man of faith, that faith impregnates the Christian intelligence completely. It deputizes philosophical reason to the single search for Truth, delivering it from its subjection to the world and from any form of servility to the fashions of the times. This is why what we call 'Christian philosophy' is a philosophy set free, and ought to be called philosophy *understood fully* as such."<sup>15</sup> The fulfillment and completion of the tasks and vocation of philosophy leads to the life of faith, and "faith impregnates the Christian intelligence completely."

Pope John Paul II makes two overarching claims about the *relationship* between faith and reason: (a) "Each contains the other, and each has its own scope for action" (§17); (b) "Each without the other is impoverished and enfeebled" (§48). We must precisely avoid the danger of pursuing faith without reason because, "deprived of reason, faith has stressed feeling and experience and runs the risk of no longer being a universal proposition" (§48). But reason should not be deprived of faith, and so he challenges the Catholic philosopher to develop a "philosophy consonant with the word of God" (§81). What would it take for a philosophy to feed the fires of faith, hope and love, and contribute to the "true new fire" of renewal?

"To be consonant with the word of God," says Pope John Paul II, "philosophy needs first of all to recover its *sapiential dimension* as a search for the ultimate and overarching meaning of life." On this essential task for philosophy itself, the Word of God will actually assist in restoring philosophy to its original vocation. For "the fundamental conviction of the 'philosophy' found in the Bible is that the world and human life do have a meaning and look towards their fulfillment, which comes in Jesus Christ" (§80). The Pope notes how contemporary men and women, those to whom the Christian must be concerned for the new evangelization, are caught in a "crisis of meaning" because of a culture of doubt and deconstruction, leading to "skepticism, indifference and various forms of nihilism" (§81). The modern mind is deeply introverted and "locked within the confines of its own immanence without reference to any kind of transcendence" (§81). Faith can shock or snap the modern mind back to the ardor of its quest for meaning, to recover its wisdom, or sapiential dimension. Pope John

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 266.

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Paul II reminds us that “the mystery of the Incarnation will always remain the central point of reference for an understanding of the enigma of human existence, the created world and God himself” (§80). We also call to mind that hermeneutical key to Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* §22: in the mystery of Christ, man finds his true meaning. Thus, “the challenge of this mystery pushes philosophy to its limits, as reason is summoned to make its own a logic which brings down the walls within which it risks being confined.” Finally, it will be the mystery of the cross, the mystery of love, which pushes philosophy to face directly, without illusion or posturing, the full mystery and meaning of human existence (§23).

The contours of a philosophy consonant with the word of God must be more fully laid out. Pope John Paul II lays down two more requirements for such a philosophy—epistemological realism and a full metaphysical range of thought. Thus he says that “this sapiential function could not be performed by a philosophy which was not itself a true and authentic knowledge, addressed, that is, not only to particular and subordinate aspects of reality—functional, formal or utilitarian—but to its total and definitive truth, to the very being of the object which is known. This prompts a second requirement: that philosophy verify the human capacity to know the truth, to come to a knowledge which can reach objective truth by means of that *adaequatio rei et intellectus* to which the Scholastic Doctors referred” (§82). Although the Pope does commend modern philosophy for its discoveries in the realm of subjectivity and in the differentiation of the sciences, he cautions against the loss of a sense of being that accompanies the modern philosophy. The Cartesian gambit must be thoroughly understood and its impact upon the subsequent centuries of thought be brought out for display. But the radical turn to subjectivity will not finally be consonant with the word of God, or to the original vocation of philosophy as a quest for truth, a quest for the divine ground of all being.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, the “two requirements already stipulated imply a third: the need for a philosophy of genuinely metaphysical range, capable, that is, of transcending empirical data in order to attain something absolute,

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<sup>16</sup> See John P. Hittinger, “Exorcizing the Ghost of Descartes,” in *Liberty, Wisdom, and Grace*, 189-201.

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ultimate and foundational in its search for truth" (§83). We must form a philosophy that can confidently cover the great questions of philosophy, to treat adequately of "a solid and harmonious knowledge of the human being, of the world, and of God."<sup>17</sup> A solid and harmonious knowledge must range through philosophy of nature, anthropology, and ethics, reaching up finally to reach truths of a metaphysical order—"Wherever men and women discover a call to the absolute and transcendent, the metaphysical dimension of reality opens up before them: in truth, in beauty, in moral values, in other persons, in being itself, in God" (§83). These three themes mark the work and achievement of Jacques Maritain, as well as Yves R. Simon, from beginning to end.

### 2. What Is Vocation?

In what way may we speak of the vocation of the philosopher? Vocation has various meanings. It could mean the suitability for a person to a certain task. It is an important consideration how one is equipped or trained for the life of philosophy. But this is not its primary meaning. A second meaning is the call or confirmation by someone to some other person to accomplish a task or to assume a role. The professions take up this notion of calling and specify the nature of responsibility to society at large in the various professions. This also has significance for the philosopher, especially the relationship of philosophy to the city and political life. But the third, most proper meaning of vocation is the call from God to serve Him. Thus, Francis de Sales provides a classic definition as follows: "A true vocation is nothing other than the firm and constant will possessed by the person called, to want to serve God in the manner and in the place where the Divine Majesty calls her."<sup>18</sup> The Catholic must understand vocation in all three meanings of the term, but obviously the supernatural vocation is most important of all.

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<sup>17</sup> John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio* §60, note #83, quoting Vatican II's *Decree on Priestly Formation (Optatam Totius)*, 15.

<sup>18</sup> St. Francis de Sales, "Spiritual Conferences," conf. 16: *Œuvres de S. François de Sales*, vol. 6, 312. See Carl Franklin Kelley, *The Spirit of Love: Based on the teachings of St. François de Sales*, foreword by Jacques Maritain (London: Longmans, 1952), 89, 98-99, 103, 219-21.

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Maritain speaks about the dual vocation, spiritual and temporal, of all lay Christians, and this has bearing upon the vocation of philosophy. The spiritual vocation is to live the life of grace; its final end is the kingdom of God and is not of the world. The temporal vocation is to live and work as laborer of the world for its progress, beauty, and well being ("building the earth").<sup>19</sup> The vocation of philosophy in its origin is a temporal vocation, especially as seen in its practical philosophy, ethics and politics. It is an examination of the human good available to natural capacity and rational power. Nevertheless, even in ancient philosophy, the vocation is an unusual one, since its end transcends the city and culminates in contemplation of the eternal order. It is a natural end, contemplation of the truth, knowledge of the causes of natural things, as knowable by reason. It is not a matter of infused grace or supernatural revelation. That is the nature of philosophical thinking. But the state of the Catholic philosopher, as a member of the Church in the modern world, makes it rise to the level of a supernatural vocation. Thus Maritain said "without contemplative love and infused prayer, and the participation of souls given over to them in the redeeming Cross, and without the invisible support which they bring to the work of all in the mystical body, and to that strange traffic which Providence carries on here below, the task demanded of the Christian, of all Christians, would be too heavy, and the great hope which is rising would be in vain."<sup>20</sup> Clearly Maritain envisions the Catholic philosopher of the future to respond to the initiative of divine grace.

In *Fides et Ratio*, Pope John Paul II makes three references to "vocation." Early in the work, he speaks about the failure of those whose vocation it is to educate the young about the meaning of life and to provide reference points for their learning. Philosophy must respond to this vocation or call to provide some foundation for personal and communal life: "those whose vocation it is to give cultural expression to their thinking no longer look to truth, preferring quick success to the toil of patient enquiry into what makes life worth living. With its enduring appeal to the search for truth, philosophy has the great responsibility of forming thought and culture; and now it must strive

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<sup>19</sup> Jacques Maritain, *The Peasant*, 208.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 82-83.

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resolutely to recover its original vocation" (§6). Later, he discusses the search for the "ultimate and overarching meaning of life" as the "sapiential dimension" or wisdom dimension. He says this search will stimulate "philosophy to conform to its proper nature." This aspect of vocation "is all the more necessary today, because the immense expansion of humanity's technical capability demands a renewed and sharpened sense of ultimate values. If this technology is not ordered to something greater than a merely utilitarian end, then it could soon prove inhuman and even become potential destroyer of the human race" (§81). The vocation to search for wisdom and meaning also lays down the requirement of a respect for truth and for the metaphysical range of philosophy, as we mentioned above.

In the final section of *Fides et Ratio*, John Paul II says "between the vocation of the Blessed Virgin and the vocation of true philosophy there is a deep harmony" (§108). He considers the life of Mary "a true parable illuminating the reflection contained in these pages." Mary lost none of her humanity in giving assent to Gabriel's word; so, too, "when philosophy heeds the summons of the Gospel's truth its autonomy is in no way impaired." All the more do its enquiries "rise to their highest expression." In other words, philosophy needs to embrace faith and find its culmination as philosophy in such an embrace. The life of faith will enhance the excellence of reason, not detract from it. John Paul II invokes the Seat of Wisdom in the concluding section of *Fides et Ratio* and he exhorts the reader to philosophize in Mary ("*philosophari in Maria*," §108).

We see this parable lived out in the life of Jacques Maritain, who heeded the summons of the Gospel truth, and who saw his inquiries rise to a very high expression. His devotion to Mary was intense. His devotion to Mary was learned from his godfather, Léon Bloy, and formed by the apparition at La Salette in 1846. In *We Have Been Friends Together*, Raïssa said that La Salette was the most important religious event in centuries.<sup>21</sup> Our Lady at La Salette formed deeply the hearts

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<sup>21</sup> At La Salette, Mary appeared before two young shepherd children; she sat and wept and told them of the impending chastisement of France and the world for its blasphemies and its failures to honor the Sabbath. Maritain wrote a manuscript on the apparition which he personally delivered to the Vatican and discussed with Pope Benedict XV in a private audience. He was

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successors; and they receive for this an explicit mission."<sup>27</sup> The interest in lay apostolate anticipated Vatican II. One-time associate of the Maritain circle, Yves Congar explained that since the French Revolution the idea and practice of Catholic action has been underway as a way to confront "aggressive and widespread unbelief, the disappearance of props to the faith provided by political power." The structures of the world are separated from Christ by "hostility or indifference," full of new forces, unknown values, heedless, often ignorant of Catholic faith.<sup>28</sup>

In a previous chapter in *Scholasticism and Politics*, Maritain connects contemplation with Catholic action, as he will also do in *The Peasant*—"I have always insisted that all souls are called in some degree to the contemplation of the saints, which, because it is a contemplation of love, abounds in action. But now, and as corresponding to this call of God deep in our hearts, we are to meditate on another call, the call to action, apostolic action, which the Church addresses in some degree to all the faithful." But Catholic action depends upon contemplation. As an apostolic work, by its very nature, Catholic action must "proceed from a superabundance of contemplation." It may not be contemplation in its "typical and sublime form," but at least "*masked contemplation*."<sup>29</sup> It is the Holy Spirit who must form Catholic action.

Maritain presented a very eloquent and important statement about the spirit of Catholic action: "Behold of what spirit they are, who enter

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<sup>27</sup> Jacques Maritain, "Catholic Action" in *Scholasticism and Politics*, 185-89, referencing Pope Pius XI's "Discourse to the Committee on Italian Catholic Action" (March 9, 1924), and his Encyclical *Non Abbiamo Bisogno* (June 29, 1931); my italics.

<sup>28</sup> Yves Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, (Maryland: Newman, 1956), 359. Both Maritain and Congar acknowledge the work of Pius X. But Congar credits Pius XI most of all because with him Catholic action took on a new tone and meaning, along three lines: "i. the insistence on the properly apostolic nature of Catholic action; ii. the generalized character of the appeal and the wide scope of the movement; iii. the pronounced aspect of a lay task, corresponding to the Christian's engagement in the more clearly recognized secular field," 362.

<sup>29</sup> Jacques Maritain, "Action and Contemplation" in *Scholasticism and Politics*, 177-78.

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There is a striking affinity between Maritain's devotion to La Salette and Pope John Paul II's advice to "philosophize in Mary." In *Fides et Ratio*, John Paul II talks about the cross as providing the authentic critique of a self-sufficient reason (§23). The cross is a challenge to reason because "reason cannot eliminate the mystery of love which the cross represents, while the cross can give to reason the ultimate answer which it seeks." To philosophize in Mary requires one to stand there also before the cross, meditating upon the meaning of the sacrifice. For Jacques and Raïssa, as well as for Pope John Paul II, we find a deep confidence that Mary, the Seat of Wisdom, would be a sure haven for all who devote their lives to the search for wisdom. John Paul II ended the encyclical with this prayer: "May their journey into wisdom, sure and final goal of all true knowing, be freed of every hindrance by the intercession of the one who, in giving birth to the Truth and treasuring it in her heart, has shared it forever with all the world."

Whatever the specific tasks in academia or culture the Catholic philosopher may take on, whatever specialization the Catholic philosopher may cultivate; the embrace of revelation and a response in faith are essential to the vocation of the Catholic philosopher. The Catholic philosopher must philosophize in Mary. This is not a pious exercise to be draped over a secular endeavor, but a transforming spirituality that affects both the head and heart. Cardinal Newman articulated a similar theme in his *Oxford Sermons* §15 ("The Theory of Developments in Religious Doctrine") in which he said: "St. Mary is our pattern of Faith, both in the reception and in the study of Divine Truth. She does not think it enough to accept, she dwells upon it; not enough

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should make an effort to revisit that apparition at La Salette so greatly overshadowed by Lourdes and Fatima. Léon Bloy wrote a profound and stirring account of the apparition and its meaning for the modern world; the book is entitled *She Who Weeps: Our Lady of La Salette*, trans. and intro. Emile la Douceur (Fresno, California: Academy of Library Guild, 1956), a few excerpts of which can be found in Léon Bloy, *Pilgrim of the Absolute*, selections by Raïssa Maritain, intro. Jacques Maritain, trans. John Coleman and Harry Lorin Binsse (New York: Pantheon Books, 1947). See also Jacques Maritain, *Notebooks*, 81-99, and Raïssa Maritain, *We Have Been Friends Together*, trans. Julie Kernan (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1942), 183-92, and its sequel, *Adventures in Grace*, trans. Julie Kernan (New York, Longmans, Green & Co., 1945), 220-23, 241-45.

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to possess, she uses it; not enough to assent, she develops it; not enough to submit the Reason, she reasons upon it; not indeed reasoning first, and believing afterwards, with Zacharias, yet first believing without reasoning, next from love and reverence, reasoning after believing. And thus she symbolizes to us, not only the faith of the unlearned, but of the doctors of the Church also, who have to investigate, and weigh, and define, as well as to profess the Gospel; to draw the line between truth and heresy; to anticipate or remedy the various aberrations of wrong reason; to combat pride and recklessness with their own arms; and thus to triumph over the sophist and the innovator."<sup>23</sup>

### 3. Lay Apostolate and the Vocation of the Catholic Philosopher

The vocation of the philosopher, considered from the standpoint of the tasks to be performed, serves as an example or species of "Catholic action," because it serves both the city and the Church. In an essay in *Scholasticism and Politics*, Maritain explains that the notion of "Catholic action" opens up for purview three levels of action: (1) the activity of the Church as such, concerned with the spiritual and the kingdom of God; (2) the temporal or political action, concerned with the political temporal common good; (3) the realm of Catholic action—the intersection of the spiritual and temporal.<sup>24</sup> Catholic action is situated in-between the temporal and the spiritual, between Caesar and the Church. On this third level of action, where "the spiritual is considered as joined to the temporal," belongs the apostolate, "but to the apostolate as touching things of earth; I mean so far as it has for its purpose to infuse evangelical vitality into the temporal life." Although philosophy is a secular activity, and it directly aims at a good of the natural, or natural finalities, it is also a matter for an apostolate. One can see this already in the concluding words to his second published essay, written in 1910 and later published in *Antimoderne*: "And now if

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<sup>23</sup> John Henry Newman, *Oxford Sermons Preached Before the University of Oxford between A.D. 1826 and 1843* (London: Rivington, 1980); new edition with Mary Katherine Tillman (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 1997), 313-14.

<sup>24</sup> Jacques Maritain, *Scholasticism and Politics*, ed. Mortimer J. Adler (New York: Macmillan, 1940).



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philosophy is anything at all, it has as its first duty to prepare there the pathways of grace. Undoubtedly it will preach in the desert.”<sup>25</sup> His embrace of the faith and the guidance of Thomas Aquinas indicate his self-understanding as an apostle; for Aquinas was the “Apostle for our Time” because the disease afflicting the modern world is in the first place a disease of the mind. Aquinas’ thought will get to the roots of the disease. At the heart of the disorder is a rupture of the proper relationship of faith and reason, the “organic link” commended by Pope John Paul II in *Fides et Ratio*. Maritain saw the split of faith and reason as the seed of an impending nihilism. Man has been “split asunder” and “nothing in human life is any longer made to man’s measure, to the rhythm of the human heart.” Man is at the center of a world “inhuman in every respect.”<sup>26</sup> Maritain and John Paul II both considered the greatest sign of the time to be the capacity of technology to dominate, oppress and ultimately degrade human life, rather than to serve human flourishing.

In order to engage this modern culture at its root, Maritain envisioned the philosopher’s role in Catholic action. He acknowledged the great role of Pope Pius XI; he “precisely stated its meaning and made its applications explicit, the central, essential importance which he attaches to Catholic action, his affirmed will to develop it everywhere, the solicitude with which he watches over it.” Maritain said: “These words, which should be retained and carefully weighed, show how far, in the thought of the Pope, Catholic action is a thing of the Church and has the same finalities as the Church’s pastoral ministry itself: laymen are called to assist the Church in the integral fulfillment of her pastoral office; *they are called to the apostolate, to that same apostolate with which Christ has charged the Twelve and their*

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<sup>25</sup> Jacques, Maritain, “La Science moderne et la raison,” originally published in *Revue de Philosophie* XVI (June 1910), 577-603, and then republished as the first essay of *Antimoderne* (Paris: Éditions de la Revue des Jeunes, 1922), 68; translation by Richard Lemp for the forthcoming volume in the *Notre Dame Collected Works of Jacques Maritain*.

<sup>26</sup> Jacques Maritain, *The Dream of Descartes*, trans. Mabelle L. Andison (New York: Philosophical Library, 1944), 146.

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successors; and they receive for this an explicit mission."<sup>27</sup> The interest in lay apostolate anticipated Vatican II. One-time associate of the Maritain circle, Yves Congar explained that since the French Revolution the idea and practice of Catholic action has been underway as a way to confront "aggressive and widespread unbelief, the disappearance of props to the faith provided by political power." The structures of the world are separated from Christ by "hostility or indifference," full of new forces, unknown values, heedless, often ignorant of Catholic faith.<sup>28</sup>

In a previous chapter in *Scholasticism and Politics*, Maritain connects contemplation with Catholic action, as he will also do in *The Peasant*—"I have always insisted that all souls are called in some degree to the contemplation of the saints, which, because it is a contemplation of love, abounds in action. But now, and as corresponding to this call of God deep in our hearts, we are to meditate on another call, the call to action, apostolic action, which the Church addresses in some degree to all the faithful." But Catholic action depends upon contemplation. As an apostolic work, by its very nature, Catholic action must "proceed from a superabundance of contemplation." It may not be contemplation in its "typical and sublime form," but at least "masked contemplation."<sup>29</sup> It is the Holy Spirit who must form Catholic action.

Maritain presented a very eloquent and important statement about the spirit of Catholic action: "Behold of what spirit they are, who enter

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<sup>27</sup> Jacques Maritain, "Catholic Action" in *Scholasticism and Politics*, 185-89, referencing Pope Pius XI's "Discourse to the Committee on Italian Catholic Action" (March 9, 1924), and his Encyclical *Non Abbiamo Bisogno* (June 29, 1931); my italics.

<sup>28</sup> Yves Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, (Maryland: Newman, 1956), 359. Both Maritain and Congar acknowledge the work of Pius X. But Congar credits Pius XI most of all because with him Catholic action took on a new tone and meaning, along three lines: "i. the insistence on the properly apostolic nature of Catholic action; ii. the generalized character of the appeal and the wide scope of the movement; iii. the pronounced aspect of a lay task, corresponding to the Christian's engagement in the more clearly recognized secular field," 362.

<sup>29</sup> Jacques Maritain, "Action and Contemplation" in *Scholasticism and Politics*, 177-78.

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the lists for Catholic action. This spirit requires them to turn first toward wisdom and contemplation. This spirit is by definition an evangelical spirit. It does not ask us to train troops so as to execute orders at beck and call, disregarding or denying the 'interior man' and his conscience in order to act, to speak, to write or vote as the journal of a party prescribes; it asks us to prepare human persons to understand in the depths of their conscience the word of the Church herself and to discern the meaning of it." The second thing Maritain observes about Catholic action is that it will overcome the "*separatism* and *dualism* which have reigned too long in the Christian world." Modernity has fractured life such that "the Christian world obeyed two opposed rhythms, a Christian rhythm in matters of worship and religion, and, at least among better men, in things of the interior life; and a naturalistic rhythm in things of the profane life, the social, economic and political life, things too long abandoned to their proper carnal law."<sup>30</sup> An "organic and vital unity" must be restored.

The preparation for Catholic action requires prayer; it is inspired by love. But Maritain notes that "the most sincere love risks not performing any good, or even performing a great deal of evil, unless it passes through the Word and through Truth." The lay apostle must be intellectually formed. This is the work of Maritain's intellectual life: "An immense and difficult task here imposes itself upon Christian intelligence.... the effort must be freed from these myths and errors" of the day. The achievements of the modern age must be radically challenged, not to create some new synthesis, but to purify them through Catholic doctrine. "Let us not forget that the social, the economic, and the political, are intrinsically dependent on ethics, and that, *by this title*, for this formal reason, the social, the political, and the economic, are concerned with eternal life, and therefore with the pastoral ministry of the Church."<sup>31</sup> The Catholic mind must be illuminated by a doctrinal firmament and so relies upon theological wisdom. It was again in *Antimoderne* that he said: "By the Faith, intelligence

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<sup>30</sup> Jacques Maritain, "Catholic Action" in *Scholasticism and Politics*, 190-91.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

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directly and infallibly receives the divine substance without which it dies of hunger; by the Faith it possesses the Truth.”<sup>32</sup>

This philosophy formed by and consonant with the word of God will equip Catholic laity for the new evangelization. Vatican II speaks about the transformation of culture insofar as the Church “fosters and takes to herself, in so far as they are good, the abilities, the resources and customs of peoples. In so taking them to herself she purifies, strengthens and elevates them” (*Lumen Gentium* §13). The effect of her work is that “whatever good is found sown in the minds and hearts of men or in the rites and customs of peoples, these not only are preserved from destruction, but are purified, raised up, and perfected for the glory of God, the confusion of the devil, and the happiness of man” (*LG* §17).

Maritain’s life and work is a prophetic witness to the vision of Vatican II on lay apostolate. What first emerged as Catholic action developed through the twentieth century under the influence of Catholic laymen such as Maritain to become the more specific notion of “lay apostolate” used in the documents of Vatican II. Whereas Catholic action places the laity directly under the guidance of clergy for the achievement of the goals of the hierarchy, lay apostolate pertains to the freedom of the laity as they perform their daily activities in the ordinary labors of the world. The new, central and vital role for lay people emerges from the original intention for the Council and from the deepest aspirations for reform and renewal. They provide the backdrop for the notion of lay apostolate put forward in the document *Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People (Apostolicum Actuositatem)*. The nature of the apostolate and the variety of possibilities for its implementation are quite challenging. But the document provides very concrete and specific plans for education and training. Indeed, the document states that “a training, at once many-sided and complete, is indispensable if the apostolate is to attain its full efficacy” (§28). *Lumen Gentium* presents an affirmation of lay apostolate: “The laity, however, are given this special vocation: to make the Church present and fruitful in those places and circumstances where it is only through them that

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<sup>32</sup> This is also from “Science moderne et la raison” in *Antimoderne*, 38: see note #25.

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she can become the salt of the earth. Thus, every lay person, through those gifts given to him, is at once the witness and the living instrument of the mission of the Church itself 'according to the measure of Christ's bestowal' (Eph. 4: 7)" (§33). The laity are said to share in the kingly, priestly, and prophetic ministry of Christ. But the exercise of these ministries is primarily in the world, in secular activities, structures, and communities: "Even by their secular activity they must aid one another to greater holiness of life, so that the world may be filled with the spirit of Christ and may the more effectively attain its destiny in justice, in love and in peace. The laity enjoy a principle role in the universal fulfillment of this task. Therefore, by their competence in secular disciplines and by their activity, interiorly raised up by grace, let them work earnestly in order that created goods through human labor, technical skill and civil culture may serve the utility of all men according to the plan of the creator and the light of his word" (§36).

The scope of the work and apostolate is vast; *Gaudium et Spes* outlines and elaborates upon key areas such as family, culture, economics, politics, and international cooperation. A sound education is vital because the lay apostolate requires both faith and reason—one must know the matters of faith so that by a "well-formed Christian conscience" they may "see that the divine law is inscribed in the life of the earthly city." But also they must develop their own competence and training and make a unique contribution to the problems at hand—"Let the layman not imagine that his pastors are always such experts, that to every problem which arises, however complicated, they can readily give him a concrete solution, or even that such is their mission. Rather, enlightened by Christian wisdom and giving close attention to the teaching authority of the Church, let the layman take on his own distinctive role." What is demanded of the lay person is a "vital synthesis" of "humane, domestic, professional, social and technical enterprises" with religious values, under whose "supreme direction all things are harmonized unto God's glory" (§42). Therefore, in *Apostolicum Actuositatem*, the training of lay people is said to require "an integral human education" (#29). The foundation for this education must be "living by faith in the divine mystery of creation and redemption." The knowledge of revelation through scripture and tradition (*Dei Verbum*) must come first in the education for lay

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apostolate. And the training must include participation in the liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*). In addition to this spiritual formation, the lay people need to be educated in theology, ethics, and philosophy (*Apostolicum Actuositatem* #29). The vocation of the Catholic philosopher serves to benefit both the city of man and the city of God. The life and work of both Maritain and Wojtyła show to us that the vocation of the Catholic philosopher is defined by lay apostolate to culture.

### 4. The Essays in this Volume

The authors of these essays display the vital connection between faith and reason, and they explore many of the themes we have noted above. The essays were first presented at the 2005 annual meeting of the American Maritain Association on “The Spiritual Conditions of Renewal” held at the Catholic University of America. The conference was held in order to commemorate the 40 year anniversary of the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council (December 8, 1965) and the completion of Maritain’s *The Peasant of the Garonne* (whose preface was written on December 31, 1965).

In Part I, “Spiritual Renewal and the Apostolate of Philosophy,” the essays establish the importance of the spiritual context for understanding the vocation of Catholic philosophy. Richard Schenk, O.P., provides a masterful account of the significance of the recent council in his essay, “Vatican II and Jacques Maritain: Resources for the Future? Approaching the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Council.” Rev. Daniel B. Gallagher, in his essay “‘The Obedience of Faith’ in *Dei Verbum*: A Pauline Phrase and its Implications for Catholic Intellectual Life,” explains the precise meaning and significance of faith; it is crucial for any use of a formula about “faith and reason.” As Pope Benedict XVI has said, we must refer to “ecclesiastical faith,” the faith of the Church, as expounded by the documents of Vatican II. Sr. Prudence Allen, R.S.M., in “Mary and the Vocation of Philosophers,” shows just what a profound notion is contained in Pope John Paul II’s encouragement for philosophers to “philosophize in Mary.”

Part II, the “Vocation of the Philosopher,” gathers essays on the various aspects of the vocation of the philosopher as a thinker. The first essay, “Yves R. Simon: A Question of Calling,” by Ralph Nelson, explores the life and thought of Yves R. Simon in order to come to a better understanding of the precise philosophical demands on the vocation.

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This volume is dedicated in part to Ralph Nelson, a Catholic philosopher who was dedicated to the legacy of Maritain and Simon. He died in 2009; this essay is an excellent tribute to his contribution to the Association, his colleagues, and students. Michael Torre, in his "To Philosophize for the Faith: Jacques Maritain's Intellectual Vocation," argues that Maritain's whole work is better seen as that of a lay theologian than of a philosopher only. In the essay by Cornelia A. Tsakiridou, "'Redeeming Modernism': Jacques Maritain and the Catholic Vocation," we come to a better understanding of Maritain's impatience with traditional Thomism and his pioneering efforts to engage modern philosophy, a task that Pope John Paul II would also take on as a Catholic philosopher. John G. Trapani, Jr., in "Gatekeeper of Small Mistakes: An Example of the Philosopher's 'Other' Vocation," explains how one may engage the intellectual currents of the day in a style that characterized Maritain.

In Part III, on "Pope John Paul II's *Fides et Ratio*," the first essay by Msgr. John F. Wippel, "*Fides et Ratio*'s call for a Renewal of Metaphysics and St. Thomas Aquinas," provides a masterful analysis of the text to show the manner in which Pope John Paul II renewed the Church's affirmation of the role of Thomas Aquinas in the intellectual life of the Church, and in philosophy specifically. Lawrence Dewan, O.P., in "St. Thomas and the Renewal of Metaphysics," considers why the full metaphysical range of philosophy must come to learn from Thomas Aquinas. Both of these essays are important for understanding the vocation of the Catholic philosopher according to both Maritain and Wojtyła. Both are committed to the restoration of the thought of Thomas Aquinas and the centrality of a realistic metaphysics of being. Finally, John F. Morris, in "*Fides et Ratio* and Pope John Paul II's Call to Catholic Philosophers: Orthodoxy and/or the Unity of Truth," explains that the classic understanding of the unity of truth continues to serve as a foundation for the life of reason.

Part IV, containing the concluding essays on "Contemporary Challenges," gives some indication of the lay apostolate of the Catholic philosopher at work. Edmund D. Pellegrino, professor and physician, makes the case against the secularist understanding of human nature and medicine in "Humanism and Bioethics: The Prophetic Voice of Jacques Maritain (1882-1973)." James Hanink turns to the crisis in the contemporary world concerning the family, in "Vocation, Family, and

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the Academy: *Signa Perscrutandi*." Both of these essays show the importance of Catholic action/lay apostolate where the temporal and spiritual intersect. In the final essay by Heather McAdam Erb, "Chosen for Glory: Aquinas on Vocation to the Supernatural," we conclude with an appreciation of man's highest vocation to supernatural life in heaven. It would thus be fitting to end with the justly famous motto of the Maritains, taken from their spiritual master Léon Bloy: "there is but one sadness, not to be a saint."

### 5. Conclusion: On the Paradoxes of Vocation

The meaning of the vocation of the Catholic philosopher has suffered the same confusion as the Church at large did after Vatican Council II. More often than not, the distinctive Catholic identity was lost. Many Catholics yearned to become contemporary and "up to date." But, in following the trends of the secular world, it was all too easy to vulgarize the *aggiornamento* of Popes John XXIII and Paul VI. The trends of the modern world diversified and threatened to fragment the common purpose of the Church and destroy the communion of faith. Maritain and Wojtyła, by holding fast to a Christocentric faith and the metaphysical realism of Thomistic philosophy, envisioned a renewal of Catholic life and purpose. Both men understood that Vatican II was above all about "progress in evangelical awareness and attitudes of heart rather than with defining dogmas." They understood the need for a more profound synthesis of faith and reason. They understood that the key to a renewal of Catholic philosophy would require a deeper unity of faith and life in the person, in the subjectivity of the philosopher. To bring into a vital synthesis, in heart and mind, life in all of its diversity and richness and the faith in its mystery of revealed truth would require conversion of heart and philosophical vigor. Such a vision of Catholic philosophy is hard to realize because of its paradoxical character. Much like Odysseus' bow, the paradoxes pose a formidable challenge. Catholic philosophy must be secular and religious; it is guided by both faith and reason. Catholic philosophers are free to develop an open philosophy and they will exhibit a pluralism of method and schools, as they also acknowledge the work of Thomas Aquinas. Finally, the vocation to Catholic philosophy will be intensely personal and free in its decisions and directions, but it must remain "ecclesial." As Pope Benedict XVI recently said at The Catholic University of America, "each and every aspect of your learning



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communities reverberates within the ecclesial life of faith. Only in faith can truth become incarnate and reason truly human, capable of directing the will along the path of freedom (cf. *Spe Salvi*, 23).<sup>33</sup>

It is a vocation both secular and religious. The vocation to philosophy must be defined in terms of its secularity. Philosophy arises from the stirring of wonder within human experience and it is constituted by precise logical demands. The disciplines of philosophy, such as ethics, philosophy of nature, anthropology, and metaphysics emerge out of human practice and speculation. The vocation of philosophy is clearly differentiated from that of the theologian. Philosophy has its own discourse and its own methods. In the contemporary world, philosophy has its own profession, organization, and standards. But, as it follows its own course, as it is true to its Socratic roots and to its sapiential goal, philosophy cannot but reach out to theology. Grace provides moral steadiness and personal illumination. A higher wisdom provides a point of orientation and a promise of the perfection of its mission.

A second paradox defines Catholic philosophy, that of using both reason and faith. The Catholic philosopher discovers that each without the other is “impoverished and enfeebled.” Reason pursues its own life and possesses its “autonomy,” but it is stimulated from within to act ever more strongly as such. In the contemporary world, “the parrhesia of faith must be matched by the boldness of reason” (*Fides et Ratio* §48). The paradoxical assertion of both faith and reason, each calling for and demanding the specificity and strength of the other, is hard to grasp, let alone to practice. Rationalism and fideism are constant temptations.

Two more paradoxes face the Catholic philosopher today. It is an age of pluralism. There are many routes to the same goal; there are 1001 goals. The philosophy of St. Thomas is no longer the exclusive philosophy of choice for Catholic thinkers today. His presence in Catholic universities and departments of philosophy has dwindled, if not disappeared. The reading of the signs of the times has led many to study and embrace diverse currents of thought, from analytic philosophy to phenomenology. And yet, if a philosopher responds to

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<sup>33</sup> Benedict XVI, “Address to Catholic College Presidents” (Washington, D.C.: April 17, 2008).

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the inner need for a philosophy “consonant with the Word of God,” one inevitably returns to Thomas Aquinas. One understands the reason why Thomas Aquinas receives the continual endorsement of the Church. A Catholic philosopher along the lines of Wojtyła and Maritain today will be Thomistic in spirit and in appreciation, if not in fact. Thomism is systematic, but not a system; it is open to further development and engagement with truth.<sup>34</sup> Aquinas represents the paradox of Catholic philosophy at its most fundamental level: “a reconciliation between the secularity of the world and the radicality of the Gospel” (*Fides et Ratio* §43).

Catholic philosophy serves the essential aim of the Church—evangelization. But it does so in its own way: not by proselytism, not by serving up a crypto-theology, but by the authentic search for truth in everyday life and in all secular venues of truth seeking. Pope John Paul II refers to these venues as the “Areopogai of culture.”<sup>35</sup> Philosophy is and must be a free response and it is therefore under the sign of personal freedom. And yet the intensely personal decision to set out on the path of philosophy bears an ecclesial orientation; as Pope Benedict XVI said, “the ecclesial life of faith” is to reverberate in our life and work. The words of the prophet Isaiah (55:10-11) ring true: “as the rain and snow come down from heaven, and return no more thither, but soak the earth, and water it, and make it spring, and give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be which shall go forth from my mouth: it shall not return to me void, but it shall do whatsoever I please, and shall prosper in the things for which I sent it.”

Maritain explained that the spiritual and supernatural vocation and the temporal and secular vocation involve the same work; the object of

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<sup>34</sup> See Maritain, *The Peasant*, 208-10; Josef Pieper, *The Silence of St Thomas* (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine Press, 1999); and Ralph M. McInerny, *Thomism in an Age of Renewal* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1968).

<sup>35</sup> “The modern world reflects the situation of the Areopagus of Athens, where Saint Paul spoke. Today there are many ‘areopagi’, and very different ones: these are the vast sectors of contemporary civilization and culture, of politics and economics. The more the West is becoming estranged from its Christian roots, the more it is becoming missionary territory, taking the form of many different ‘areopagi’.” *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* §57; cf. *Redeemer of Man*, §33; *Mission of the Redeemer*, §37.

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work is the temporal vocation; whereas the manner or mode of work is the spiritual vocation. If a Catholic philosopher lives from Christ that should change the manner or mode or the spirit in which philosophy is done. Maritain refers to the "radiance of the gospel shining through the daily task itself."<sup>36</sup> Vatican II called for an end to the duality of faith and life, a great error of our day. Maritain insists upon the concrete unity of the person: vocation in some way must ultimately be one. He says of the temporal and spiritual callings, as a philosopher and as a Catholic, that "the two vocations are distinct, they are not separate." For one is "not a laborer of the world with a certain portion of his being, and a member of the church with another portion." The Catholic philosopher also must be "a member of the Church who is a laborer of the world, sent to the land of the things which are Caesar's." A vocation is a call to mission. Sent into the "land of Caesar," or into the realm of the temporal and secular, the "modern world," a Catholic philosopher is a citizen of two cities: a pilgrim in the one, seeking his true home in the other.

We must conclude with that oft-quoted passage from Maritain's *Notebooks* for a parting thought about the vocation of the Catholic philosopher. May we always cherish Maritain's deep sense of mission, combined with his stubborn sense of independence!

What am I, I asked myself then. A professor? I think not; I taught by necessity. A writer? Perhaps. A philosopher? I hope so. But also a kind of romantic of justice too prompt to imagine to himself, at each combat entered into, that justice and truth will have their day among men. And also perhaps a kind of spring-finder who presses his ear to the ground in order to hear the sound of hidden springs, and of invisible germinations. And also perhaps, like every Christian, despite and in the midst of the miseries and the failures and all the graces betrayed of which I am becoming conscious in the evening of my life, a beggar of Heaven disguised as a man of the world, a kind of secret agent of

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<sup>36</sup> Jacques Maritain, *The Peasant*, 208.

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the King of Kings in the territories of the prince of this world,  
taking his risks like Kipling's cat, who walked by himself.<sup>37</sup>

John P. Hittinger,  
*Feast of the Annunciation, 2011:*

“Ecce ancilla Domini: fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum.” Lk. 1:38

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<sup>37</sup> Jacques Maritain, *Notebooks* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), Preface. The reference is to Rudyard Kipling, “The Cat that Walked by Himself,” in *Just So Stories* (1902).