

Conservative vs. Traditional Catholicism: Distinctions with Philosophical Differences

by Fr. Chad Ripperger, F.S.S.P.

In 1996, a group of friends had lunch in Rome at the Czechoslovakian college. One of the priests who offers Mass according to the new rite was a bit dumbfounded. He had written an article in which he had discussed certain aspects of the liturgical reform. His puzzlement came from the fact that traditionalists had attacked his article and he could not understand why. A traditionalist seminarian said to the priest, “We agree that something has to be done about the liturgy, but we do not agree on what should be done.” Traditionalists and neoconservatives often find each other mystifying, and the reason for this has to do with the relationship each position holds with respect to ecclesiastical tradition.

The term “traditionalist” has two different meanings. The first is the heresy condemned by the Church, i.e., a philosophical/religious system that depreciates human reason and establishes the tradition

of mankind as the only criterion for truth and certainty. This heresy denies the ability of reason to know the truth and thus maintains that truth must be gained through tradition alone. It is different from the current movement in the Church which clearly recognizes the ability of reason to know the truth but which sees the good of the tradition

vatives, are different insofar as the conservatives of the earlier period sought to maintain the current ecclesiastical traditions that were eventually lost.

All of these labels have a certain inadequacy, of course, but since they are operative in the current ecclesiastical climate we will use them here in order to denote certain theological

and philosophical positions. It should be noted, however, that the term “liberal” is often misleading. Many “liberals” are, in fact, unorthodox and do not believe what the Church believes. One can legitimately be a liberal if and only if one upholds all of the authentic teachings of the Church and then in matters of discipline or legitimate debate holds a more lenient posture. But often liberalism is merely another name for what is really unorthodox.

In classical theological manuals, textbooks and catechisms, the word

“tradition” was given a twofold meaning. The first meaning of the term “tradition” was taken from its Latin root – *tradere* – meaning “to pass on.” In this sense, the word tradition refers to all of those things that are passed on from one generation to the next. This would include all of the divine truths that the Church passes on to subsequent generations, including the Scriptures.

The second, or more restrictive sense of tradition, refers to a twofold division within what is passed on and not written down. In this case, Scripture is distinguished from



Fresco, Saint Thomas Aquinas

of the Church and would like to see it re-established.

The term “neoconservative,” on the other hand, refers to those who are considered the more conservative members of the Church. More often than not they hold orthodox positions, but they would not assert that it is strictly necessary to reconnect with ecclesiastical tradition. The prefix “neo” is used because they are not the same as those conservatives in authority in the Church immediately before, during and after the Second Vatican Council. The current conservatives, that is, the neoconser-

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tradition as Scripture is written, whereas tradition, in the stricter sense, refers to those unwritten things that were passed down. Tradition in the stricter sense, then, is divided into divine tradition and ecclesiastical tradition. Divine tradition is further divided according to dominical tradition (that which was given directly by Our Lord while on earth) and apostolic tradition (that which the apostles passed on under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost).¹

Divine tradition is that tradition which constitutes one of the sources of revelation, i.e., a source of our knowledge about those things that were revealed to man by God. This means that divine tradition is intrinsic to the Deposit of Faith, which constitutes all of the divinely revealed truths necessary for salvation and passed on by the Church in an uninterrupted tradition. Since it is intrinsic to the Deposit of Faith, this form of tradition is sometimes called intrinsic tradition, prime examples of which are the Magisterium of the Church and the sacraments, since they were established by Jesus Christ and passed on and will be passed on until the end of time.²

Ecclesiastical tradition comprises all of those things that are not intrinsic to the Deposit of Faith but which form the heritage and patrimony of the work of previous generations graciously passed on by the Church to subsequent generations for their benefit. Because it is extrinsic to the Deposit of Faith, ecclesiastical tradition is also called extrinsic tradition, examples of which include the Church's disciplinary code as set out in canon law and non-infallible teachings of the ordinary Magisterium. This would include such things as those contained in apostolic exhortations and encyclicals in which infallibility is not enjoyed – such as, for example,

when Pope Leo XIII in *Immortale Dei* asserts that the Church is a perfect society.

Because God Himself entrusted the Deposit of Faith to the Catholic Church, the Catholic Church is inherently traditional. Since all men by nature desire to know,³ the Church cannot help but develop an ecclesiastical tradition. Once man was given the Deposit of Faith, he naturally reflected upon the Deposit resulting in a greater understanding of it. That understanding was then passed on. This also means that the Church herself would pass judgment upon the Deposit in magisterial acts and these magisterial acts become part of the ecclesiastical tradition. The ecclesiastical tradition, therefore, was formed over the course of time, in the life of the Church throughout the twenty centuries of its existence. This also indicates that one must

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distinguish between that which pertains to the Deposit and that which does not. The Church sometimes passes judgment on the Deposit of Faith in order to clarify the teaching contained within the Deposit for the good of the Church, such as when Pius IX declared the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady. Other magisterial acts are merely extrinsic to the Deposit of Faith and do not necessarily point to anything within the Deposit, but which may be connected to the Deposit in some way. This would include some ordinary magisterial acts as well as matters of discipline. However, more is contained in ecclesiastical tradition than just the acts of the Magisterium.

Historically, ecclesiastical (or extrinsic) tradition developed according to two principles:

The first principle was the Deposit of Faith itself. Catholics used teachings within the Deposit to develop schools of spirituality, Church discipline and legislation, as well as all of the other things that pertain to ecclesiastical tradition. Since the teaching of Christ must govern the life of the Church, it was necessary for any authentic extrinsic tradition (e.g., canon law) to be consistent with those teachings. Anything that was contrary to the teachings contained in the Deposit caused the Church great affliction but over time was cut off from the life of the Church. Here we have in mind those who develop heterodox teachings of their own (heresies), as well as spiritualities and customs which are contrary to the teachings of the Church.

The second principle was the nature of man. Scripture itself tells

us a great deal about man, and as philosophical systems advanced in an understanding of the nature of man, especially in the medieval period, the extrinsic tradition was based upon the knowledge of that nature. Furthermore, it was known to be a wounded nature, that is, one affected by Original Sin, so the extrinsic tradition was designed to aid man in his condition. For example, many schools of spirituality and rules of the religious orders were designed in order to help man overcome his proclivity to self-will and concupiscence in order to conform himself to the ideals taught within the Deposit. Those who fashioned the extrinsic tradition were often saints who were guided and helped by divine aid in establishing some custom or aspect of the extrinsic tradition that was passed on

to subsequent generations. The extrinsic tradition came to form the magnificent patrimony and heritage of all Catholics.

As the Modernist crisis grew under the impetus of modern philosophy, the extrinsic tradition was eroded and subverted due to several factors. The first was a change of view about the nature of man. With the onslaught of rationalism, then empiricism and later Kantianism and other modern innovations about the nature of man, the Thomistic, realist view of man was supplanted. At first, this occurred outside the Church and was kept at bay by formal teaching within the Church that maintained a proper view of man. The Protestants, not having an intellectual heritage, quickly succumbed to the modern philosophies. As the Modernist crisis spread within the Church and the

Spinoza, who systematically attacked the authenticity of oral tradition regarding the Scriptures,⁴ and through his philosophy he began to change people's view of the world. As empiricism rose, the view of man as simply a material being led to fixing man's meaning in the "now" or always in the present. Since for the empiricist man's meaning is found in what he senses and feels, this development led eventually to a lack of interest in the past since the past as such (and the future for that matter) can neither be sensed nor fulfill our sensible desires. With the advent of Hegel, who held that there was only one existing thing in a constant state of flux, the intellectual groundwork was laid for a wholesale lack of interest in and distrust of tradition. The coupling of the Hegelian dialectic with the skepti-

terior reality is not important except to the extent that we can express ourselves in it. What is really important is what is within ourselves. Immanentism came from many sources but three are of particular importance:

The first was Kant, who, through an epistemology that was founded on Cartesian and empirical skepticism regarding the senses, left one locked in his own mind, logically speaking. This meant that everything was within oneself or his own mind, which in turn meant that man's experiences were essentially immanent – that is, they are within or remain within himself.

The second source of immanentism was the location of the theological experience within the emotions. This was developed by Friedrich Schleiermacher. For Schleiermacher, religion was primarily an expression of piety, and piety was to be found only in the emotions. Religion could not be satisfied with metaphysical treatises and analysis – that is, a rational approach – but rather had to be something emotional. This led to the immanentization of religion since piety or religious experience was viewed as something within the individual. We often see this immanentization today: people expect the liturgy to conform to their emotional states rather than conforming themselves to an objective cult which in turn conforms itself to God.

The third source that led to immanentization and therefore provided an intellectual foundation for acceptance only of the present and a rejection of the past was the work of Maurice Blondel. Blondel held:

[M]odern thought, with a jealous susceptibility, considers the notion of immanence as the very condition of philosophizing; that is to say, if among current ideas there

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curiosity and fascination with modern philosophy grew, the view of man held by Catholics began to change in the latter part of the nineteenth century and during the twentieth.

Rationalism also changed how man viewed revelation. Since rationalists do not believe that one can come to true intellectual knowledge by means of the senses, then that which pertained to the senses was systematically ignored or rejected. Since revelation is something introduced into sensible reality, revelation came under direct attack. Moreover, if one is cut off from reality, then one is locked up inside himself and thus what pertains to one's own experience becomes paramount. After Descartes came

cism of Spinoza regarding the sources of Scripture, the past (including all forms of tradition) came to be considered outmoded or outdated and tradition distrusted. As a consequence, those who wanted to impose some religious teaching based upon tradition or history became suspect.

At the same time in which the intellectual underpinnings for trusting tradition collapsed in the minds of modern intellectuals under the impetus of modern philosophy, a growing immanentism arose. Immanentism is a philosophy that holds that anything of importance is contained within the individual; the individual becomes the measure or standard by which things are judged. Immanentism essentially holds that

is one which it regards as marking a definitive advance, it is the idea, which is at bottom perfectly true, that nothing can enter into a man's mind which does not come out of him and correspond in some way to a need for expansion and that there is nothing in the nature of historical or traditional teaching or obligation imposed from without that counts for him...."⁵

For Blondel, only those things that come from man himself and which are immanent to him have any meaning. No tradition or history has any bearing upon his intellectual considerations unless it comes somehow from himself.

These three sources of immanentism as they influenced the Church during the waning of an intellectual phase of Modernism in the 1950s and early 1960s⁶ provided the foundation for a psychological break from tradition as a norm. As Peter Bernardi observes, Blondel was "working at a time when the Church was just beginning to become conscious of a certain break in its tradition." The work of Blondel and the influx of the other modern philosophical points of view, which were antithetical to the ecclesiastical tradition, had a drastic impact on Vatican II.⁷ By the time Vatican II arrived, the intellectual foundation was in place for a systematic rejection of all aspects of ecclesiastical tradition.

In summary: Blondel and others, under the influence of modern philosophy, thought that modern man could not be satisfied with past ways of thinking. They provided an intellectual foundation upon which the Church, with a Council as a catalyst, could "update" itself or undergo an "*aggiornamento*." With the foundations for the extrinsic tradition having been supplanted, the

extrinsic tradition was lost. In other words, since the view of man had changed and since the view of the Deposit of Faith was subjected to a modern analysis, the extrinsic tradition, which rested upon these two, collapsed. We are currently living with the full-blown effects of that collapse. Catholics today have become fixated on the here and now, and in consequence the Church's traditions have come to be treated not only as irrelevant but also as something to be distrusted and even, at times, demonized.

This has had several effects. The first is that those things that pertain to the extrinsic tradition and do not touch upon the intrinsic tradition are ignored. This manifests itself in the fact that some ecclesial documents today do not have any connection to the positions held by the Magisterium prior to the Second Vatican Council. For example, in the document of Vatican II on ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, there is not a single mention of the two previous documents that deal with the ecumenical movement and other religions: Leo XIII's *Satis Cognitum* and Pius XI's *Mortalium Animos*. The approach to ecumenism and other religions in these documents is fundamentally different from the approach of the Vatican II document or *Ut Unum Sint* by Pope John Paul II. While the current Magisterium can change a teaching that falls under non-infallible ordinary magisterial teaching, nevertheless, when the Magisterium makes a judgment in these cases, it has an obligation due to the requirements of the moral virtue of prudence to show how the previous teaching was wrong or is now to be understood differently by discussing the two different teachings. However, this is not what has happened. The Magisterium since Vatican II often ignores previous documents which

may appear to be in opposition to the current teaching, leaving the faithful to figure out how the two are compatible, such as in the cases of *Mortalium Animos* and *Ut Unum Sint*. This leads to confusion and infighting within the Church as well as the appearance of contradicting previous Church teaching without explanation or reasoned justification.

Moreover, the problem is not just with respect to the Magisterium prior to Vatican II but even with the Magisterium since the Council. For instance, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) in 1975 (*Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics*, as found in the official English translation of the Vatican by The Wanderer Press, 128 E. 10th St., St. Paul, MN 55101) asserts the following regarding masturbation: "The main reason is that, whatever the motive for acting this way, the deliberate use of the sexual faculty outside normal conjugal relations essentially contradicts the finality of the faculty." This indicates that regardless of one's intention or motive, the act is in itself gravely immoral. Then, in the Catechism of the Catholic Church,⁸ a definition is given that seems to allow for different intentions to modify whether such an act is evil or not: "*Masturbationis nomine intelligere oportet voluntarium organorum genitalium excitationem, ad obtinendam ex ea veneream voluptatem*" ("by the name masturbation must be understood the voluntary excitement of the genital organs to obtain venereal pleasure"). The last part of the definition therefore includes in the act of masturbation a finality – "to obtain venereal pleasure." This appears to contradict the prior teaching of the Church as well as the teaching of the CDF. If one does not do it for the sake of pleasure, does that mean that it is not masturbation? For example,

if one commits this act for the sake of determining one's fertility, does this justify it? One can rectify the situation by arguing that when it is done for the sake of pleasure it is an instance of masturbation, but that the actual definition is what the Church has always held. Clearly, however, this example is testimony to how careless the Magisterium has become in its theological expression.

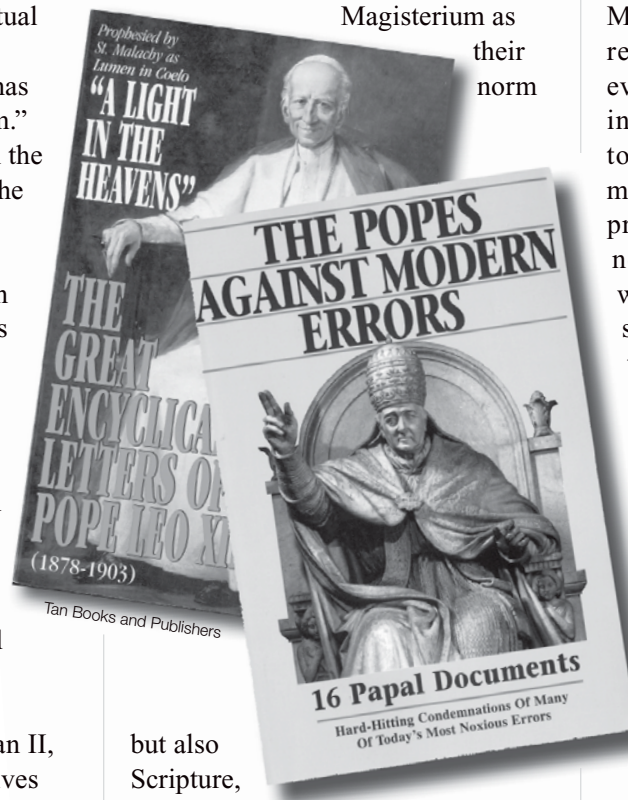
This type of behavior, coupled with the modern philosophical encroachment into the intellectual life of the Church and the bad theology resulting therefrom, has led to a type of "magisterialism." Magisterialism is a fixation on the teachings that pertain only to the current Magisterium. Since extrinsic tradition has been subverted and since the Vatican tends to promulgate documents exhibiting a lack of concern regarding some previous magisterial acts, many have begun ignoring the previous magisterial acts and now listen only to the current Magisterium.

This problem is exacerbated by our current historical conditions. As the theological community began to unravel before, during and after Vatican II, those who considered themselves orthodox were those who were obedient and intellectually submissive to the Magisterium, since those who dissented were not orthodox. Therefore the standard of orthodoxy was shifted from Scripture, intrinsic tradition (of which the Magisterium is a part) and extrinsic tradition (which includes magisterial acts of the past, such as Pius IX's Syllabus of Errors), to a psychological state in which only the current Magisterium is followed.

Neoconservatives have fallen into this way of thinking. The only

standard by which they judge orthodoxy is whether or not one follows the current Magisterium. As a general rule, traditionalists tend to be orthodox in the sense that they are obedient to the current Magisterium, even though they disagree about matters of discipline and have some reservations about certain aspects of current magisterial teachings that seem to contradict the previous Magisterium (e.g., the role of the ecumenical movement). Traditionalists tend to take not just the current

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but also Scripture, intrinsic tradition, extrinsic tradition and the current Magisterium as the principles of judgment of correct Catholic thinking. This is what distinguishes traditionalists and neoconservatives s

Inevitably, this magisterialism has led to a form of positivism. Since there are no principles of judgment other than the current Magisterium, whatever the current Magisterium says is always what is "orthodox." In other words, psychologically the neoconservatives have been left in a position in which the

extrinsic and intrinsic tradition are no longer included in the norms of judging whether something is orthodox or not. As a result, whatever comes out of the Vatican, regardless of its authoritative weight, is to be held, even if it contradicts what was taught with comparable authority in the past. Since non-infallible ordinary acts of the Magisterium can be erroneous, this leaves one in a precarious situation if one takes as true only what the current Magisterium says. While we are required to give religious assent even to the non-infallible teachings of the Church, what are we to do when a magisterial document contradicts other current or previous teachings and one does not have any more authoritative weight than the other? It is too simplistic merely to say that we are to follow the current teaching. What would happen if in a period of crisis, like our own, a non-infallible ordinary magisterial teaching contradicted what was in fact the truth? If one part of the Magisterium contradicts another, both being at the same level, which is to be believed?

Unfortunately, what has happened is that many neoconservatives have acted as if non-infallible ordinary magisterial teachings (such as, for instance, the role of inculturation in the liturgy as stated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church) are, in fact, infallible when the current Magisterium promulgates them. This is a positivist mentality. Many of the things that neoconservatives do are the result of implicitly adopting principles that they have not fully or explicitly considered. Many of them would deny this characterization because they do not intellectually hold to what, in fact, are their operative principles.

As the positivism and magisterialism grew and the extrinsic tradition no longer remained a norm for judging what should and should not be done, neoconservatives accepted the notion that the Church must adapt to the modern world. Thus rather than helping the modern world to adapt to the teachings of the Church, the reverse process has occurred. This has led to an excessive concern with holding politically correct positions on secular matters. Rather than having a certain distrust of the world – which Christ exhorts us to have – many priests will teach something from the pulpit only as long as it is not going to cause problems. For example, how many priests are willing to preach against anti-scriptural feminism? The fact is that they have adopted an immanentized way of looking at what should be done, often from an emotional point of view. Coupled with political correctness, this has incapacitated ecclesiastical authorities in the face of the world and within the Church herself where the process of immanentization, with its flawed understanding of the nature of man and his condition as laboring under Original Sin, has severely undermined discipline. Even those who try to be orthodox have become accustomed to softer disciplinary norms, which fit fallen nature well, resulting in a lack of detachment from the current way of doing things and a consequent reluctance by neoconservatives to exercise authority – precisely because they lack the vital detachment required to do so.

All of the aforesaid has resulted in neoconservative rejection of the extrinsic tradition as the norm. This is why, even in “good” seminaries, the spiritual patrimony of the saints is virtually never taught. Moreover, this accounts for why the neoconservatives appear confused about the real meaning of tradition. Since it is

not a principle of judgment for them, they are unable to discuss it in depth. In fact, they ignore extrinsic tradition almost as much as do the “liberals.” Even when neoconservatives express a desire to recover and follow the extrinsic tradition, they rarely do so when it comes to making concrete decisions.

It now becomes clearer why there is a kind of psychological suspicion between neoconservatives and traditionalists: they have fundamentally different perspectives. The neoconservatives have psychologically or implicitly accepted that extrinsic tradition cannot be trusted, whereas the traditionalists hold to the extrinsic tradition as something good, something that is the product

influence of modern philosophy looked at the present, but through the eyes of her Lord Who gave her His teaching when He was on earth (i.e., in the past). Only at the time of Christ was it possible to look authentically at the past through what was then the eyes of the present, since Christ was the fulfillment of the past. But once the work of Christ became part of history and He ascended into heaven, we must always look back to Christ and to our tradition for an authentic understanding of the present.

This fundamental shift in perspective has left traditionalists with the sense that they are fighting for the good of the extrinsic tradition without the help of and often

Traditionalists tend to take not just the current Magisterium as their norm but also Scripture, intrinsic tradition, extrinsic tradition and the current Magisterium as the principles of judgment of correct Catholic thinking. This is what distinguishes traditionalists and neoconservatives – their perspectives regarding the role of ecclesiastical tradition and how the current Magisterium relates to it.

of the wisdom and labor of the saints and the Church throughout history. For this reason, the fundamental difference between neoconservatives and traditionalists is that the neoconservative looks at the past through the eyes of the present while the traditionalist looks at the present through the eyes of the past. Historically, the *mens ecclesiae* or mind of the Church was expressed through the extrinsic tradition. That is to say that the Church, since it receives both its teaching from the past and the labor of the saints and previous Magisterium by tradition, always looked at the present through the eyes of the past. In this, she looked at the present not as man under the

hindered by the current Magisterium. Liturgically, traditionalists judge the *Novus Ordo* in light of the Mass of Pius V and the neoconservatives judge the Tridentine Mass, as it is called, in light of the *Novus Ordo*. This comes from Hegelianism, which holds that the past is always understood in light of the present; the thesis and antithesis are understood in light of their synthesis. This outlook leads to a mentality that newer is always better, because the synthesis is better than either the thesis or the antithesis taken alone. Being affected by this, the neoconservatives are often incapable of imagining that the current discipline of the Church may not be as

good as the prior discipline. There is a mentality today that holds that “because it is present [Hegelianism], because it comes from us [immanentism], it is necessarily better.”

Furthermore, neoconservatives’ very love for the Church and strong emotional attachment to the Magisterium cause them to find it unimaginable that the Church could ever falter, even with regard to matters of discipline. Like the father who loves his daughter and therefore has a hard time imagining her doing anything wrong, neoconservatives have a hard time conceiving that the Holy Ghost does not guarantee infallibility in matters of discipline or non-infallible ordinary magisterial teaching. Traditionalists, confronted by a Church in crisis, know that something has gone wrong somewhere. As a result, they are, I believe, more sober in assessing whether or not the Church exercises infallibility in a given case. That, allied to their looking at the present through the eyes of the past, helps traditionalists to see that the onus is on the present, not the past, to justify itself.

The dominance of Hegelianism and immanentism also led to a form of collective ecclesiastical amnesia. During the early 1960s, there existed a generation that was handed the entire ecclesiastical tradition, for the tradition was still being lived. However, because they labored under the aforesaid errors, that generation chose not to pass on the ecclesiastical tradition to the subsequent generation as something living. Consequently, in one generation, the extrinsic tradition virtually died out. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, seminary and university formation in the Catholic Church excluded those things that pertained to the ecclesiastical tradition. Once the prior generation had chosen this course – not to remember and teach the things

of the past – the tradition was never passed on and thus those whom they trained (the current generation) were consigned to suffer collective ignorance about their patrimony and heritage.

A further effect of what we have considered is that no prior teaching has been left untouched. In other words, it appears as if more documentation has been issued in the last forty years than in the previous 1,960. Every past teaching, if the current Magisterium deems it worthy of note to modern man, is touched upon anew and viewed through the lens of present-day immanentism. The impression is given that the teachings of the previous Magisterium cannot stand on their own and must be given some form of “relevance” by being promulgated anew in a current document. Moreover, the current documents often lack the clarity and succinctness of the prior Magisterium, and, with relatively few exceptions, are exceedingly long and tedious to read in their entirety. As a result, the frequency of the documents, taken together with their length, have eroded their authority because, as a general rule, people simply do not have the emotional or psychological discipline to plow through them.

In summary, then, the differences between traditionalists and neoconservatives are rooted in their respective attitudes to extrinsic or ecclesiastical tradition. Even if a neoconservative holds notionally⁹ that the extrinsic tradition is of value, nevertheless in the daily living of his life and in his deliberations he simply ignores a large portion if not all of it. But there is hope, even outside the circles that hold to tradition. Many of the young, even those in neoconservative seminaries, are no longer weighed down by the intellectual baggage that afflicted their counterparts of the previous

generation. Because they have been taught virtually nothing about religion, they lack a perspective that might influence them negatively in favor of one particular view of extrinsic tradition. Many of them are eager to learn the truth and do not have any preconceived ideas about the current state of the Church. As a result, if they are provided with or are able to arrive at the knowledge of their patrimony, many seeking it out on their own, then we can be assured of a brighter future. But this requires knowledge of the problem and the willingness to adopt or connect to the extrinsic tradition by embracing it as something good. It is unlikely that the role of ecclesiastical tradition will be sorted out soon, but we can hope that its restoration is part of God’s providential plan. ✠

1 Christian Pesch, *Praelectiones Dogmaticae* (Herder & Co., Friburgus, 1924), vol. I, p. 397f.

2 Vatican I, *Pastor Aeternus*, ch. 2 (Denz. 1825/3058).

3 Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Bk. I, ch. 1 (980a22).

4 David Laird Dungan, in his text *A History of the Synoptic Problem* (Doubleday, New York, 1999), recounts how Spinoza developed the historical/critical exegetical method and that from that point on, Scripture studies began to deteriorate outside the Catholic sphere. Later, these same problems would enter into the Church with the uncritical adoption of the same methods.

5 “Letter on Apologetics” as found in the article by Peter J. Bernardi, “Maurice Blondel and the Renewal of the Nature/Grace Relationship,” *Communio* 26 (Winter 1999), p. 881.

6 The heresy of Modernism has occurred in four phases. The first was the initial phase, which began around 1832, when it was called liberalism, until the beginning of the First Vatican Council in 1869. The second phase was the intelligentsia phase in which it began to infect the Catholic intelligentsia more thoroughly. This occurred from 1870 to 1907, at which time Pope St. Pius X formally condemned Modernism. Then from 1907 until about 1955 to 1960, the underground phase occurred, in which the Modernist teachings were propagated by some of the intelligentsia in the seminaries and Catholic universities, though quietly. Then, in the latter part of the 1950s, a superficial phase began in which the intellectual energy was exhausted and what was left was the practical application of the vacuous teachings of Modernism, which occurred during the period in which the Second Vatican Council was in session and persists until this date. Vatican II was the catalyst or opportunity seized by the past and current superficial intellectuals who teach things contrary to the teachings of the Church.

7 Bernardi observes this but in a positive way in loc. cit.

8 Editio typica, Libreria Editrice Vatican, 1997, para. 2352.

9 In philosophy, a distinction is made between notional and real assent. Notional assent is when the person may make an intellectual judgment that something is true, but it does not really determine his action or thinking. Real assent is when a person makes an intellectual judgment about the truth of some matter and actually lives and thinks according to it.