Wounded Witness

Reclaiming the Church's Unity in a Time of Crisis

Michel Paulding Therrien, STL, STD

"We profess a Church that is one and universal, and yet we find our institutions divided and oppositional. Dr. Therrien shows us a way to fulfill our credal call — a way of mutual understanding and Gospel love. We need this book now."

MIKE AQUILINA
Executive Vice President, St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology

"Michel Therrien is convinced that grappling with the issue of paradigms—and the paradigm-blindness that is inevitably associated with any given paradigm—is a mission-critical issue for the church as it seeks to become self-conscious and aware of the unique calling and responsibility that the Lord has for us in these times. I wholeheartedly agree. Lack of awareness and clarity at the level of paradigm undermines all else that we seek to do. This book is the strong medicine needed to bring us to attention so that we might be found faithful in our day. Highly recommended."

ALAN HIRSCH
Award-winning author on missional leadership, organization, and spirituality. Founder of *Movement Leaders Collective* and *Forge Missional Training Network*.

"Michel Therrien's *Wounded Witness* is a provocative, thoughtful treatment of the rise of the 'nones' in our age. Eschewing the kind of apocalyptic accounts of secularization that tend to dominate pastoral life today, Therrien describes how intra-ecclesial feuding is the real problem. The Church caught in a left-right dichotomy has not taken up the missionary mandate given to us by Jesus Christ. After reading *Wounded Witness*, you'll think differently about the task of evangelization in a post-Christendom age. Evangelization does not leave behind the liturgical, sacramental, or contemplative gifts of Christian life but far more intentionally is grounded in a personal encounter with Christ and discernment of the Spirit."

DR. TIMOTHY O'MALLEY, PH.D
Director of Education, McGrath Institute • Editor of *Church Life Journal*

"Michel Therrien provides a uniquely penetrating insight into five theological paradigms, which have formed us as Catholics, illuminating

their strengths and weaknesses in a way that allows us to recognize in them tendencies and phases of our own spirituality and relationship to Christ and the Church. These considerations prepare us to be propelled into mission and evangelization through Christian discipleship by entering more personally into a transforming relationship with Christ. This book is extremely important among the increasing literature on discipleship, but takes it right to its heart: Jesus Christ."

FR. THOMAS ACKLIN OSB
Author of *The Unchanging Heart of the Priesthood*

"*Wounded Witness* is an exceptional analysis of the complex issues hindering effective evangelization. Unparalleled in its depth, breadth, and scope, Michael Therrien has thoughtfully and eloquently articulated within these pages the prescription needed by the Church to heal division and foster unity within the Body of Christ. *Wounded Witness* is the handbook that will allow the true work of missionary discipleship to begin: having the personal experience of a deep and abiding love for Jesus Christ, then going forth to make disciples for Jesus who can bring others into union with God."

DEACON HAROLD BURKE-SIVERS
Author of *Building a Civilization of Love: A Catholic Response to Racism*

"Dr. Michel Therrien provides an insightful and encouraging resource here to help Catholic Christians escape both our malaise and tribalism. For anyone wondering how we got here, and how we reclaim our missionary purpose as disciples of Jesus Christ, read this book!"

JACKIE & BOBBY ANGEL
Authors and evangelists

"Mission, evangelization, discipleship...what does it look like to spread the Gospel in the twenty-first century? I am so grateful to Dr. Michel Therrien and Divine Renovation for giving us this in-depth look at evangelization in the Church—not only how we got here, but compelling ideas on where we go from here This book will be a gift to many!"

SARAH SWAFFORD
Speaker and author of *Gift and Grit*

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In loving memory of my father,
John Paulding Therrien

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Foreword

"But what about the poor?"

The question was in earnest but had a certain edginess to it, a slight tone of disapproval, tinged with suspicion that the person being asked the question didn't quite care at all about the poor. The person being so-quizzed had just made an impassioned case for the importance and urgency of pro-life work which, in her opinion, was greatly undervalued in our diocese.

There were about ten of us gathered around a table with our bishop. We had been called to this meeting to begin to discern where God was calling us as a diocesan Church. We represented different ministries that were active in the diocese. As I listened to this exchange, I grew frustrated with most of those around the table because they were clearly not seeing the obvious: that the most important task we have before us as a Church was to fulfill the Great Commission and go and make disciples of all people, to evangelize. It was essential that we all work to make our parishes centres of missionary outreach where people within parishes and on the outside could encounter Jesus in a personal way and experience God's love being poured into their hearts by the Holy Spirit. Everything else would follow from this. It was beginning to be clear to me that most of the people in this conversation just didn't love Jesus as much as I did.

This was actually a moment of clarity. I realized that every person around that table was so colored and shaped by their particular passions, their calling, their charisms and ministries that we were unconsciously judging one another for not being as passionate about our particular ministry as ourselves. The truth is that no one person will ever be called to do everything. No one person can ever be equally passionate about everything. We cannot form this kind of "balanced" disciple, but we must form this kind of "balanced" Church.

I am convinced that most of what we do is done because we believe that it is what we are supposed to do. This call to action from the heart of God is filtered through our own theological presumptions, which operate as a kind of theological firmware. It's hidden, it "runs" behind the scenes, but it runs the hardware that runs the operating system of our ecclesial experiences. This, in turn, determines which apps we choose to download from the Catholic app store. From this, we create our own ecclesial environments within the Church. From this customized version of the Catholic faith, we then form into our different tribes.

I first met Michel Therrien through a mutual friend and heard about the manuscript he had just finished writing. He shared with us an overview of the main thesis of his book: that theological tribalism is the cause of a deep wound to the essential unity of our Church and the resulting disunity hampers our mission. As we know from John 17:23, the greatest threat to the witness of the Church is our failure to show the world a oneness that reflects the life of the Trinity, a oneness that has been perfected by the power of the High Priestly prayer of Jesus. Without this witness, the world will not believe. Despite the astuteness of our apologetics, the beauty of our liturgies, our work for justice, the intensity of our experience and the comfort brought by our pastoral ministry, the world will not believe unless our unity is visible and tangible.

Michel Therrien proposes five principal theological paradigms that dominate the imagination of most Catholics today. He provides an insightful analysis of each of these paradigms, looking at their historical

roots, their development and analyzing their strengths and their weaknesses. He does this not only with keen theological acumen but also by reflecting on his own personal experience of having lived personally in each of these camps.

After I read his manuscript, I really had a strong sense that this was an important book for this moment in the Church. The problem, as Michel had experienced, was that his manuscript was too theological for many popular Catholic publishers, even those who publish books of "popular theology," and not theological enough for the publishers who send their books into the theological stratosphere.

At Divine Renovation, we discerned in Michel's work the same impulse and desire for renewal that has driven our ministry and the broader parish renewal movement throughout the world. This book you are now holding is a book with a cause, a cause that we believed God was calling us to support.

"Three Keys Publishing" was born out of a desire to support books like Michel's. The three keys refer to the three essentials of the Divine Renovation model of parish renewal: the Power of the Holy Spirit, the Primacy of Evangelization, and the Best of Leadership. The first book to be published under this label was "Preaching on Purpose" (2022), a book on missionary preaching. We are thrilled that *Wounded Witness* will be the second book under this label.

Theology matters. It shapes how we see God, how we see ourselves and how we act as a Church. Theological self-refection is essential if we are going to move into the freedom that the Lord desires for his Church so that our visible unity can once again proclaim that He and the Father are One. The world is hurting, it is fractured and divided. This is our moment to repent of our suspicions and judgements of one another, to gather around the table in union with our pastors and fulfill the mission that Jesus has given us.

Fr. James Mallon

Introduction

The Church is a wounded witness today. Pope Francis focuses so much on the theme of missionary discipleship and the need to be a welcoming and inclusive Church for those at the margins because Catholics have lost track of the Church's missionary mandate to go out and make disciples of Jesus Christ.[1] We have forgotten how much Jesus can—and does—transform lives. This is why Pope Francis wrote *Evangelii Gaudium* (*The Joy of the Gospel*) and why he continues to challenge the Church to adopt the synodal way of listening and dialoguing. In *Evangelii Gaudium* he describes how Catholics can be stuck in an inward-facing, excessively institutionalized, and even sour approach to their faith.[2] In fact, it seems that in recent decades Catholics have become content with suffering decline. It is as if the world around us has defeated the faith.[3]

What makes the story of our decline complicated, however, is how this loss of missionary impulse came about. In speaking about mission,

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[1] Francis, Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel), (Vatican City: 2013), no. 28. "We must admit, though, that the call to review and renew our parishes has not yet sufficed to bring them nearer to people, to make environments of living communion and participation, and to make them completely mission-oriented."

[2] Ibid. nos. 6, 25–26.

[3] Ibid. nos. 85.

I am not referring to social activism, apologetics, or catechesis. I mean the deeply Christian inclination to joyfully go out into the world to spread the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ and to bring the redeeming grace of this message to the lost and broken (Luke 4:18). The problem is that few Catholics have a deeply personal sense of purpose around the saving mission of the Church. In general, our parishes cultivate a consumeristic faith of self-maintenance while managing declining congregations. In my observation, one thing explains this: most Catholics do not see mission as an essential part of being a member of the Church. Why is that?

The idea of mission, apart from a somewhat activist approach to particular social issues, has all but vanished for most Catholics in the western world. We may devote time and energy to the works of social justice, advocacy, apologetics, or catechesis, but these are not identical to evangelization, the mission to which Jesus calls us.[4] Some might rally to causes, but most do not feel any urgency to bear witness to the Gospel of salvation.[5] For a variety of reasons, Catholics of the Western Hemisphere in particular are rather uncomfortable with evangelization and the idea of leading people to conversion. As I have personally heard from many committed Catholics across the United States, evangelization is awkward, if not outright offensive, and many incorrectly consider it "a Protestant thing." The idea of inviting conversion is seen as judgmental.

As I will show, Christians without a commitment to mission demonstrate a lack of spiritual maturity in their relationship with Jesus. This issue is cyclical. It is difficult for believers to witness outwardly to the Lord in an ardent way if they have not intimately encountered Jesus for themselves. Evangelization produces disciples and disciples tend to evangelize others.[6] Thus, if discipleship is in decline, it is because we

[4] Ibid., nos. 34–39.

[5] See Ralph Martin, The Urgency of the New Evangelization: Answering the Call (Huntington IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2013), chap 3.

[6] Francis, Evangelii Gaudium, nos. 9–13.

have stopped evangelizing. This internal cycle of deterioration partially explains our rapidly shrinking and aging parishes.[7]

Quoting Pope St. John Paul II, Pope Francis states, "'there must be no lessening of the impetus to preach the Gospel' to those who are far from Christ, 'because this is the first task of the Church'. Indeed, 'today missionary activity represents the greatest challenge for the Church' and 'the missionary task must remain first.'"[8] This is what Pope Francis has been clearly aiming at as he continues to put the concept of "missionary discipleship" squarely in front of the universal Church. Missionary discipleship is the heart of evangelization. "All of us are called to take part in this new missionary 'going forth ... from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the 'peripheries' in need of the light of the Gospel.'"[9]

Mission is central to the identity of the Church, and all Catholics need to assume personal responsibility for the work of evangelization.[10] As all the popes since Pope St. Paul VI have indicated, the "new" evangelization is not a programmatic solution to the Church's missionary malaise—although this is how it often seems in parish life.[11] Rather, the New Evangelization is a call to a systemic change in the way we think and how we approach the pastoral life and ministry of the Church in

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[7] See Pew Studies on religious observance at http://www.pewforum.org/2018/08/01/why-americans-go-to-religious-services. See also (http://www.pewforum.org/2018/05/29/religious-practice-and-belief/). Accessed on October 20, 2018.

[8] Francis, Evangelii Gaudium, no. 15, citing John Paul II, Redemptoris Missio (Vatican City: 1990).

[9] Ibid., no. 20.

[10] Paul VI, Evangelii Nuntiandi, (Vatican City: 1975), no 14: "Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize, Forming that is to say, in order to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners with God, and to perpetuate Christ's sacrifice in the Mass, which is the memorial of His death and glorious resurrection."

[11] On the Evangelization of Peoples (1974). John Paul II first used the term in an address given in Port-au-Prince, Haiti in 1983. Address to CELAM (Opening Address of the Nineteenth General Assembly of CELAM, 9 March 1983, Port-au-Prince, Haiti), L'Osservatore Romano English Edition 16/780 (18 April 1983), no. 9: "evangelization will gain its full energy if it is a commitment, not to re-evangelize but to a New Evangelization, new in its ardor, methods and expression."

our times.[12] Minor shifts in our programs, rhetoric, and tactics will not achieve the objective; better catechetical materials alone, or better liturgy alone, are also totally insufficient, even when good and necessary. Rather, we need to form our people as disciples of Jesus Christ who possess the enthusiasm to reach out to those who do not know the saving grace of the Gospel.

One of the downsides to all the recent talk about discipleship, however, is that "discipleship programs" risk becoming trendy and superficial (and branded). Since the release of *Evangelii Gaudium*, conversations and presentations have been brimming with discipleship jargon. Yet just beneath the surface, the basic perspectives represented by various subcultures within the Church remain unchanged. The Church today seems like a conglomerate of theological tribes and not the intended unified assembly of Jesus' living body. That is not a criticism of any group, but never in my lifetime have I seen the Church so divided along ideological lines.

Over decades serving in a variety of ministerial and teaching environments, a suspicion has grown within me that the loss of the Church's missionary impulse is connected to a kind of tribalism that has prevailed within Church life since Vatican II. We have not been able to focus on the mission because there are too many internal rivalries about what it means to be Catholic. There is very little agreement about the Church's mission—and no organization can flourish without internal agreement on its purpose. We have a fragmented identity, and thus a weak sense of unity. Now, as a direct consequence, we have no compelling witness. Catholics focus too much attention on intramural debates, rather than figuring out how to advance the cause of salvation. The faithful are polarized between various theological paradigms. We talk about mission but do not seem to know how to go out to others.

[12] Francis, Evangelii Gaudium, nos. 19–49. See also the entire text of the V General Conference CELAM, The Aparecida Document (www.celam.org/aparecida/Ingles.pdf). Accessed on October 21, 2018. Joy of the Gospel is drawn largely from the proceedings of this gathering.

While it is true that the Christian faith is not itself a paradigm, it is equally true that all Catholics operate within theological paradigms, or perspectives, that define and influence what it means to be a disciple. There are clear brand identities, political jockeying, and prejudices within the flock, which shift our attention onto internal power struggles within the Church. My hunch about this, which I explore in what follows, is that our current situation results from the profound influence modernity has had on Christian peoples.[13] While the faith is transcendent and universal, it is still lived out in the believer's time and place. What is most characteristic of (post) modernity is its profound ability to dissolve unity in favor of particularism and individuality. The universal and transcendent are eclipsed by aspects that are culturally conditioned and subjective. This undermines any real attempts for unity within our Church—and it should be obvious that a divided community does not grow.

The story behind this present reality is the story I hope to tell in this book. I cannot see a way to overcome the current impasse and develop a greater unity of witness without first coming to terms with how much theological paradigms affect our experience of the Church—paradigms that isolate various elements of what God intends to be a unified whole. For Catholics, the years following Vatican II created a political vacuum within which several theological paradigms have competed.[14] As

[13] For the most part, I use the term modern in its more technical sense to mean the time from roughly 1400–1960. The postmodern period begins in the late 19th century, but only becomes culturally pervasive after the social upheavals of the 1960s. In my view, "post" modernity is the cultural ruins of the moral and philosophical collapse of the via moderna. See Romano Guardini, The End of the Modern World, (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 1998), chapter 2. My designation of "(post) modern" simply indicates the continuum of modernity and postmodernity that affects us today. Within this period, we live by principles of both historical eras. For example, we abide by "modern" principles of science (immutable laws), while also denying modern ethics in favor of the postmodern relativism of personal choice. Consider gender reassignment therapies and surgeries, which are thoroughly modern in their scientific frameworks, while the idea of a right to choose one's gender is completely postmodern.

[14] For one version of this story, see Ralph McInerny, What Went Wrong with Vatican II: The Catholic Crisis Explained (Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press, 1998).

Christians, our signature character should be how we work through our differences in the spirit of charity. There is something especially scandalous about Christian tribalism and, even worse, schism. It cuts to the very heart of what we as Christians claim for the world—communal unity, the witness of divine love, and the ministry of reconciliation (Colossians 1:21–23). In sum, the spirit of the modern age has fragmented the Church's mission, weakening our missionary effectiveness.

How can outsiders take us seriously, let alone be attracted to our message, when we can't even agree on essential matters we claim to profess? Yes, the Church has always been the home of diversity and a whole slew of charisms. That is not the issue. The fragmentation I'm talking about is more like watching several sets of hands tearing a garment to pieces. Catholics have torn apart particular elements of Christian life, represented by different theological paradigms, and now juxtapose these against each other. For example, we pit law against personal experience; authority against freedom; office against charism; the new against the old and vice versa; tradition against progress; the living against the unborn; inclusion against morality; Latin against the vernacular; history against truth; faith against reason—and the list goes on.

Where is Jesus in all of this? Is any of this about him? My conclusion is that the contentiousness is not about Jesus or his mission, since so many ordinary baptized Catholics have just been moving along with the currents of change both within and outside the Church. Most of the older generation of parishioners are simply wondering why their children do not practice the faith anymore. Increasingly, more of our younger people just walk away and fall into the categories of nones, dones, or the unaffiliated.[15] All of this happens as alleged apologists for one tribe or another polarize the Church, create confusion, and incite tone-deaf debates within their echo chambers.

[15] Sherry Weddell, Forming Intentional Disciples: The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus, (Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 2012), chap. 1, "God Has No Grandchildren."

The thesis of this book is that the Church will not grow until we move beyond our theological factions and work toward greater unity of witness. This will happen when we refocus our pastoral strategies on the mission of Jesus Christ and see parish ministry as a means to this end. The heart of that mission is rooted in Jesus' final command to "make disciples of all nations." We are kind of moving in this direction, but we're not moving decisively enough. There is still too much resistance throughout the Church. However, the theological concept of missionary discipleship provides a good lens through which we can make this happen.[16] It captures the essence of who Christ desires every Catholic to be, in virtue of their baptism. We are called to be disciples of the Lord and to orient our lives toward mission. We are meant to make disciples of *Jesus*—not devotees of our brand identities.

Therefore, if our theological commitments and convictions are not in every way connected directly to who Jesus is and what he taught, then what we are ultimately professing is merely our own agendas. Jesus states it plainly: "By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples" (John 15:8–9). This call to bear fruit doesn't depend on our own personal virtues or Christian piety. Rather, it relies on the principle of spiritual multiplication—that one Christian, through his or her witness, can lead others to Christ and mentor them to do the same. This practice "multiplies" Christians in the world and the influence of the Gospel. As spiritual multiplication is based on authentic witness, it can happen only by means of the unity of our witness to others as the Church. As Jesus prays in John 17:

[16] Benedict XVI, Aparecida Document, (June 2007), https://www.celam.org/aparecida/Ingles.pdf, no. 29: "We want the joy that we have received in the encounter with Jesus Christ, whom we recognize as Son of God incarnate and redeemer, to reach all men and women wounded by adversities; we want the good news of the Kingdom of God, of Jesus Christ's victories over sin and death, to reach all who lie along the roadside, asking for alms and compassion (cf. Lk 10:29–37; 18:25–43) ... Knowing Jesus is the best gift that any person can receive; that we have encountered Him is the best thing that has happened in our lives, and making him known by our word and deeds is our joy."

> As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world ... I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they all may be one ... that they may be perfectly one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them (John 17:18–23).

What Jesus prays for in his high priestly prayer is a unity of faith and love among the disciples that draws every soul into the communion of the Father and the Son. This is Christian holiness, and this is the purpose of evangelization. In the decades following Vatican II we have been failing at this, which is evident in our parishes and, more tragically, in the world around us.

MY PURPOSE AND METHOD

First, let me issue a warning to the reader. Because of how I develop my arguments, I strongly discourage you from jumping ahead to the paradigms that most interest you. That will likely lead to a misunderstanding of my purpose and a lost sense of the deep empathy with which I approach each paradigm. Each chapter builds upon the previous ones, so I encourage a slow, careful, and prayerful reading of the entire book. What we need today, more than ever, is not a reactionary defensive posture, but honest self-assessment, humility, and a much deeper conversion to the heart of Jesus. I hope this book is an aid to that purpose. How, then, can we make the mission of God (missio dei) a living reality in our parishes and dioceses? The first step is understanding how we have arrived at our current polarized situation. To this end, I will focus on several basic objectives. The first is to sketch the principal ways modernity framed Christian life prior to the Second Vatican Council. I will discuss this in the first chapter. In chapter 2 I will present five paradigms that have given rise to different perspectives on what it means to be a disciple. Each paradigm has its own perspective on what discipleship means. I will begin by examining the Neo-Scholastic

paradigm, which largely shaped Christian life before Vatican II. I will then describe the four post-conciliar paradigms, which emerged after Vatican II as reactions to neo-scholasticism:

1. The Liberationist paradigm that arose in the 1960s due to the influence of a Marxist critique of western civilization and its history
2. The Psycho-Spiritual paradigm that emerged from the meeting of modern psychology and eastern spirituality during the 1970s
3. The Charismatic-Evangelical paradigm that emerged in the 1970s through the Charismatic Renewal
4. The Neo-Traditionalist paradigm that arose during the 1980s in reaction to the last three and seeks a return to aspects of the pre-Vatican II Church

After a brief personal testimony in chapter 3, in chapters 4 through 8 I will sketch each paradigm's most divisive blind spots, but then present how core values of each paradigm are present in Jesus' personal life and ministry.

While sketching a paradigm's blind spots, it may seem as though I am appealing to stereotypes or unhelpful caricatures of different groups. My intention is not to be disrespectful but to shed a light on the various ways the average Catholic contextualizes their faith experiences and convictions, as well as what they seem to miss or overlook. This helps us understand how those who identify with one set of convictions can miss important elements of Christian discipleship in other paradigms, or how they can reduce those in other paradigms to a stereotype without appreciating the legitimate Christian values at play from other points of view. Sketching the paradigms is not a perfect science but more anecdotal. I am not trying to suggest that every person who identifies with a paradigm fits the description perfectly and without exception—I know that is not human nature. Nevertheless, the sketches represent general attitudes and perspectives one typically finds within each group.

The next task, which I address in chapter 9, is to examine how the contentiousness among the advocates of these paradigms poses a serious threat to Church unity and the power of Christian witness today. It's easy to see this threat when we consider the disparity—and deeply emotional nature—of views on the leadership of recent popes and other key issues in our Church. Each paradigm represents various aspects of our faith and teachings. The problem, however, is that the paradigms represent these views *in isolation* from each other, rather than as the united whole they are meant to be. These isolated fragments can develop into practical dissent and distortions of Christian living.

Many Catholics will deny that they function within paradigms, or that (post) modernity has an adverse influence on them. I hope to show that, in truth, we are mostly all children of (post) modernity, and we all need to understand what that means. To some extent, it is impossible not to be. I am not suggesting that (post) modernity is all bad, but some influences of this age have distorted our understanding of the Gospel. This exercise thus becomes a matter of discernment and deeper conversion for all of us, and it is a call to grow in honest self-awareness. The more I examine this problem the less I believe the demographic nosedive of our parishes is the fault of secularizing influences in the world;[17] rather, it is the direct consequence of having lost our missionary focus. And this missionary focus, intended to be a defining feature of our Church, has succumbed to internal rivalries influenced by elements of (post) modernity within the Church that predate the Council. These rivalries result from over-politicizing theological stances that are based on opposing perspectives—but political solutions will not remedy the crisis. Decades of magisterial authority and pronouncements have only

[17] As I will argue throughout, I fundamentally disagree that the decline in religious practice is caused by Vatican II and its aftermath. Rather, the post-conciliar decline of faith is only symptomatic of a much deeper problem that predates the Council, and which the Council sought to address. Much less do I believe that the Novus Ordo Mass has caused the decline, which is an argument based in the fallacy of causality—that because the decline in faith happened at the same time the Novus Ordo was promulgated, the Novus Ordo must have caused the decline.

served as rallying points for the various camps. I will discuss some ironies about this along the way.

The final task, discussed in chapter 10, is to consider a path for moving beyond the impasse, a way for us to rediscover and reclaim Jesus' method for attracting and forming his disciples. The way forward cannot be for one paradigm to triumph over the others. Instead, we need to seek ways, in and through parish ministry, to help Catholics integrate the truthful elements of each paradigm. This requires an exercise of separating the wheat from the chaff. That is, we must separate the essential elements of Christian discipleship and witness from the unessential ones—foreign or culturally conditioned elements that distort our understanding of Christianity over time. The standard against which this discernment must occur is that which Jesus models in the Gospels.

The intended readership of this book is Church leaders within the Catholic Church, although much of what is addressed pertains to Protestant congregations as well. I do not intend to lay out all the theoretical foundations behind each paradigm or name their academic proponents, but I hope to provide enough historical context for my argument. I endeavor to describe how each paradigm gives shape to a particular view of discipleship and, consequently, a particular view of what it means to be a faithful Catholic. I wish to explore how each paradigm has affected the ways various groups within the Church believe they ought to live the faith. I will look at how these theological paradigms have shaped and affected the pastoral life of the Church in the West, particularly within the United States, as well as how they have affected the faithful in their struggle to understand what it means to follow Jesus Christ in the Catholic Church today.

CHAPTER ONE:

The Modern Context of Christian Discipleship

As a first step, I wish to delve deeper into the concept of a theological paradigm, which has been a topic of controversy.[1] Some say that the Catholic faith is not a paradigm, and so we shouldn't speak of it in that way. The point these commentators are making is that paradigm shifts do not apply to matters of faith and morals—our faith and our morals should be unchanging, even if our context or perspective shifts.[2] While I agree, it is also true that modern people contextualize their ideas and experiences through paradigms. It is one of the consequences

[1] The context of the controversy are the comments Cardinals Pietro Parolin and Blaise Cupich made about Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation Amoris Laetitia representing a "paradigm shift" on the pastoral care of marriage. Their comments stirred strong reactions among several commentators. See Alessandro Gisotti, "Cardinal Parolin: il 2018 di Francesco all'insegna di giovani e famiglia," https://www.vaticannews.va/it/vaticano/news/2018–01/card—parolin—il-2018-di-francesco-allinsegna-di-giovani-e-fami.html (Accessed October 31, 2018); Michael Sean Winters, "No Paradigm Shifts, Weigel Says—but church history is full of them," https://www.ncronline.org/news/opinion/distinctly-catholic/no-paradigm-shifts-weigel-says-church-history-full-them (accessed October 31, 2018); Dorothy Cummings McLean, "Scholar stumps Cardinal Cupich, asks if Pope's 'paradigm shift' means 'radical' doctrinal change," https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/scholar-stumps-cardinal-cupich-asks-if-popes-paradigm-shift-means-radical-d (accessed October 21, 2018).

[2] See George Weigel, "The Church Doesn't Do 'Paradigm Shifts,'" https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2018/01/the-catholic-church-doesnt-do-paradigm-shifts (Accessed October 21, 2018). See also Jeremy A. Kee, "Paradigm Shifts in the Catholic Church?" https://www.crisismagazine.com/2018/on-paradigm-shifts (Accessed October 21, 2018).

of the Scientific Revolution, as well as an element of the modern turn toward subjectivity.

Thomas Kuhn, an American physicist and philosopher, coined the term "paradigm shift" in his 1962 publication *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.[3] A paradigm refers to a framework of understanding within a science, which enables those of a common academic discipline to organize their principles, concepts, and findings into a coherent view of reality. Newtonian physics, for example, provided a coherent framework for scientists for a long time and served as a framework for putting together a successful space program in the 1950s and 1960s. When quantum theory was developed, it emerged as a new paradigm and demonstrated the limits of Newtonian physics by better enabling scientists to delve into reality on a subatomic level. Although the world around them had not changed, new scientific principles and theories gave new insights and understandings of reality, and scientists began speaking and thinking of their work in new ways.

Theoretical paradigms are a product of the Scientific Revolution and a scientific age. The purpose of any scientific method is to create a systematic body of knowledge that can explain the nature of various realities. Scholars have extended the scientific method to disciplines such as history, psychology, sociology, and philosophy, and so paradigms operate in these disciplines as well as in the hard sciences. Paradigms tend to function in and through theoretical models that provide a lens through which people explore certain realities. These new lenses for exploration can, in turn, bring about new schools of thought.

Paradigms shed a certain light on reality, but the danger is that we can ascribe to them more explanatory power than they truly have. A paradigm cannot explain everything. A good example of this is the theory of evolution, which accounts for a great deal, but not everything. Evolutionary biologists might apply the theory of evolution to eliminate

[3] Thomas Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 3rd Fiftieth Anniversary ed. (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

the need for God or attempt to make evolution explain more than it can about human behavior.[4] However, other biologists believe in the exact same theory of evolution but see it as the way in which God created our world. The theory of evolution may be right and may be very helpful to explain phenomena of evolutionary change, but that doesn't mean it can adequately explain our divine creator.

People sometimes apply paradigms subjectively because of their own biases or ideologies. Since the modern turn to the subject and the rise of philosophical skepticism, modern people tend to think in terms of mental constructs. That is, we think from within a particular set of mental maps, beliefs, or ideals. We use our particular mental constructs to contextualize our experiences or observations. Let's return to the example of evolution. An evolutionary biologist who also happens to struggle with personal belief in God might assert that God does not exist on the basis of their commitment to the theory of evolution.

With some degree of intentionality, we allow paradigms to filter our interpretations of reality and personal experience. When we refuse to acknowledge the limits that a paradigm imposes upon reality itself, the paradigm loses its usefulness. Put another way, it is a common temptation to reduce reality simply to what you want the paradigm to explain. You might try to explain everything in terms of the paradigms you prefer, which often leads to a distorted perception of reality. Paradigms easily become a mental structure one imposes, which falsely reduces reality to the paradigm's limited perspective.[5]

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[4] For a book that shows beautifully how little the paradigm of evolutionary biology explains, see Benjamin Wiker, A Meaningful World: How the Arts and Sciences Reveal the Genius of Nature (Downers Grove IL, InterVarsity Press, 2006). See also, Christoph Cardinal Schonborn, Chance Or Purpose?: Creation, Evolution, and a Rational Faith, trans. Henry Taylor (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007).

[5] To advance the example of evolutionary biology, see Leon Kass, "The Permanent Limits of Biology," chap. 10 in Life, Liberty and the Defense of Dignity: The Challenge for Bioethics, (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2002).

THEOLOGICAL PARADIGMS

An innovative Protestant author by the name of Alan Hirsch applies the concept of paradigms to Church life. While he identifies paradigms of the Church quite differently than I will in this book, I quote him here for the sake of clarifying the concept for theology:

> [A paradigm] is a way of perceiving our world, of filtering out what is considered real or unreal, of creating mental models of how things should be. Once established, paradigms in many ways do our thinking for us; that is their purpose … Although paradigms help us make sense of our world by giving us ways to interpret it, they also create what is called paradigm blindness: an incapacity to see things from outside that particular perspective or paradigm. And this can account for how people fail to see certain important things that might be glaringly obvious to others. It can also account for many of the problems we in the Church now face.[6]

What is true of all modern theoretical sciences is also true of theology, which the Church considers a science. By this, I am not suggesting that revelation is a paradigm. However, our attempts to understand and conceptualize the meaning of revelation create theological paradigms or schools of thought.[7]

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[6] Alan Hirsch, Permanent Revolution: Apostolic Imagination and Practice for the 21st Century Church (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012), p. XXXii.

[7] The Church recognizes the difference between the realities in which we believe and our human modes of expressing these truths. CCC, no. 43: "In defending the ability of human reason to know God, the Church is expressing her confidence in the

Interestingly, the systematic organization of doctrine underwent a revolution when Aristotle's theories were brought to Europe just before the dawn of the modern period.[8] Throughout the universities of medieval Europe, which were then just emerging on the historical landscape, a tremendous work was underway by scholastic churchmen who endeavored to organize and systematize the whole body of theological works handed down since the time of the Church Fathers.[9] What gave the effort a paradigmatic quality is how this endeavor was influenced by the writings of Aristotle. This systematic approach produced vast volumes or summaries of theology, the most famous being St. Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*. For over 500 years, the *Summa Theologiae* served as a primary framework within which the science of theology developed during the modern period. The history of scholasticism is too rich and varied to recount here, but I mention it because it represents the theoretical framework from which the modern period developed.

Aquinas's framework was not the only operative paradigm in the medieval period, however. Others emerged, resulting in centuries of internal rivalries over the resolution of certain disputed questions. In particular, the Dominican and Franciscan schools of thought developed divergent theological approaches that rivaled one another vehemently at times.[10]

Hirsch's definition is based on the paradigms created within the scholastic tradition. That is not to say that the scholastic tradition has been harmful. On the contrary, the West built an entire civilization up from this vigorous and engaging period of intellectual development,

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possibility of speaking about him to all men and with all men, and therefore of dialogue with other religions, with philosophy and science, as well as with unbelievers and atheists." From the same paragraph: "Admittedly, in speaking about God like this, our language is using human modes of expression; nevertheless it really does attain to God himself, though unable to express him in his infinite simplicity."

[8] John Paul II, Fides et Ratio, (Vatican City: 1998), nos. 36–44.

[9] R.W. Southern, chap. 1 in Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe, vol. 1, Foundations (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1997).

[10] See Louis Dupre, Passage to Modernity: An Essay in the Hermeneutics of Nature and Culture (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

and medieval scholasticism is responsible for tremendous advances in our understanding of revelation. But scholasticism precipitated the Scientific Revolution, which has, throughout the past 500 years, produced several other paradigms that gradually shifted the foundations of Christian society. We call this new historical context *modernity*.

Concisely, certain strands of scholastic thought evolved into modern political philosophy and other sciences, which in turn precipitated the Enlightenment and, eventually, established the framework of modern secularism.[11]

For example, the philosophy of liberalism drastically altered the social landscape and almost entirely reshaped life in the modern period.[12] More importantly, this and other paradigms deeply influenced the science of theology in the past 500 years. Our theological paradigms have shifted and continue to shift under the influence of modern thought. New paradigms emerged and contended with older ones. As a result, the Church and the cultural landscape today are vastly different than they were when the *Summa Theologiae* assumed the place of honor on the high altar of St. Peter's Basilica during the Council of Trent (1545–1563).

Theological paradigms arise when scholars using a particular intellectual framework form a unique and somewhat independent theological school of thought. This is not bad in and of itself—the kind of intellectual creativity that relies and builds upon the thoughts and work of others has always been part of the science of theology. Augustine's thought is distinct in his reliance on Plato. Aquinas's work is unique for its Aristotelianism. Pope St. John Paul II built up his Theology of the Body through engagement with the philosophy of Max Scheler's phenomenology. Theologians forming their own theories is nothing new—the human mind has always sought truth, and there is nowhere

[11] Ibid. See also Charles Taylor's large tome A Secular Age (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2007).

[12] See Pierre Manent, An Intellectual History of Liberalism, trans. Rebecca Balinski (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).

better to do it than in the content of divine revelation. And it is only natural that this search would be carried out based on the knowledge systems that we have already encountered and understood, limited though they may be. The ongoing relationship between the content of divine revelation and the philosophical nature of the human mind is integral to the history of theology as a discipline of inquiry.[13] However, what makes the modern period unique is the contentious "politics" that theological paradigms engendered within Western Christianity and its spheres of influence.

Paradigms are not inherently problematic until scholars attempt to make everything fit into a paradigmatic system without continuing to engage with the actual content of reality—or in this case, the content of revelation. No system exhausts truth. And yet, theoretical reductionisms are all too easy to embrace, especially in today's highly subjectivist culture. Even worse for Christianity is when elements from outside systems of thought begin to reshape the meaning of revelation or interpret God's Word in ways that are at odds with the intentions of the divine and human authors. We can also become blind to aspects of the faith that do not fit within the paradigms of our choosing.

Each of the theological paradigms I will address in this book includes essential truths of the Christian faith—this is not a matter of one viewpoint being right and the others being wrong. The problem is that these truths should not stand in isolation. When they do, our perception of the faith becomes distorted. And when Christians cling too rigidly to paradigms and do so as a matter of personal identity or a belief that this is the *only* way to see the faith, the blind spots (which exist in every paradigm) end up causing division in the Church.

In this book I discuss paradigmatic blindness as one of the issues with theological paradigms in the Church. As Hirsh defines it, paradigmatic blindness refers to an inability to perceive certain realities because of the blind spots of our specific paradigms. However, it does

[13] John Paul II, Fides et Ratio, nos. 16–35.

not stop there. At times, paradigmatic blindness can also become willful prejudice toward those who operate in paradigms other than our own.

In practice, blind spots have a tendency to silence dialogue, and those who have them tend to cling to a closed system that admits few or no considerations or perspectives from outside the paradigm.[14] Not only can paradigms make us selective in our beliefs, but they can also lead us to reject or deny essential aspects of the faith, especially if these aspects do not fit within our preferred paradigms. Hirsch states, "Paradigms ... are good only as long as they match and interpret external conditions. When the context shifts significantly [paradigms] can become problematic because they can prevent an organization from readily seeing its way beyond them."[15] What Hirsch states here is one reason Pope St. John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council in 1962. The Neo-Scholastic paradigm had become tired, and it seemed to be undermining the Church's witness, making Christianity less influential and relevant in modern secular society.

In the years leading up to the Council, Catholic leaders had a deep sense that the cultural paradigms outside the Church had so drastically shifted that the Church needed to find a new form of engagement with modern society. We needed an approach that would make the Gospel fresh and ever new to a world that had grown deeply wary of neo-scholastic formulations of the faith.[16] While the Church had dependably borne the legacy of the scholastic tradition well into the 20th century, it seemed timely to engage with recent currents of philosophical and theological thought. I will return to this part of the story in a moment.

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[14] Joseph Ratzinger, On the Nature and Mission of Theology: Approaches to Understanding Its Role in the Light of Present Controversies, trans. Adrian Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), pp. 32–34; 73–98.

[15] Ibid., XXXiii.

[16] See John O'Malley, What Happened at Vatican II (Cambridge MA: Belknap Press, 2008), 43–52.

The concepts of paradigm and paradigm shift are essential to this book, so I want to be clear in what I'm saying about them. A paradigm is not necessarily a bad thing, and the organization and systemization of knowledge so characteristic of the modern age has increased knowledge significantly within certain disciplines. However, the blind spots that come with paradigms are also very significant. We can only be effectively missionary if we can understand the paradigms active in our Church today—and their blind spots. If we remain in our blind spots—that is, in practice, remain divided and polarized over the internal subcultures within the Church—we will struggle to attract people to the redeeming grace of Jesus Christ and continue to lag behind the cultural architects and influencers of today.

MODERNITY AND NEO-SCHOLASTICISM

To explain neo-scholasticism and the reactions to it after Vatican II, I want to first describe its modern foundations. *Neo-* (or new) scholasticism has not been in play much since the Council, but I will address it here because, in some crucial ways, it is the cause of the theological fragmentation after the Council.[17] Neo-scholasticism bears an important distinction from its medieval predecessor, *scholasticism*. The "new" scholasticism came into its own in the 18th century as scholars gradually filtered generations of Thomistic commentaries through modern philosophical distillations. As others have already detailed, scholars took St. Thomas Aquinas's original *Summa* and reduced it to theological manuals with no source material from Scripture and the Fathers of the Church.[18] These manuals set out medieval speculations, doctrinal for-

[17] See Fergus Kerr, Theology After the Revolution (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007). More important for my purpose is a review of Kerr's book by R.R. Reno, "Theology After the Revolution," First Things (May 2007), pp. 15–21.

[18] Because of the importance of the history of the manuals of moral theology and the central focus they had on law, see Servais Pinckaers, O.P., The Sources of Christian

mulations, and moral norms with little room for imagination, creativity, or relevance to the questions of the age. Prior to Vatican II, the manuals were a tremendous source for uniformity of thought within the Church.

Neo-scholasticism was an impressively disciplined system that had most everyone rowing in the same direction. Yet as I will suggest later, the focus on law and doctrinal conformity led them to neglect other essential aspects of Christian life. This paradigm fostered an unhealthy formalism. Most concerningly, despite giving rise to so many aspects of modern thought, this paradigm was unable to engage with modern culture evangelistically or fruitfully.[19]

Paradigmatic blindness becomes deeply problematic when some aspect of a school advocates for something contradictory to the essence of Christian faith—which is how most heresies in the Church arise. By way of example, this is what happened when medieval scholastic theology passed through the philosophical lenses of the modern period (roughly 1500–1950)—that is to say, when neo-scholasticism emerged.[20] Prior to 1960, the Christian understanding of morality was a theological framework that relied increasingly upon a philosophically modern

Ethics, trans Mary Thomas Noble, O.P (Washington D.C.: CUA Press, 1995), chapters 10–11.

[19] James F. Keenan, A History of Catholic Moral Theology in the Twentieth Century: From Confessing Sins to Liberating Consciences (New York: Continuum, 2010), pp. 29–30: "Manualist theology at the beginning of the twentieth century shaped the clergy's own disposition toward the pastoral care of Catholics on moral matters. Manualists operated out of a very legalistic world in which the principles themselves were safeguarded by their very interpreters. These principles were indelibly linked to a vision of moral truth that was fairly certain, universal, ahistorical, and remote ... As the century unfolded, however, five developments occurred within the manualist tradition. First, the Vatican defined more and more ... Second, the agenda of moral theology was altered by these teachings ... Third, with greater research into human psychology, the manualists perception of the lay Roman Catholic as a wounded and uncertain penitent became more and more evident... Fourth, he became more and more opposed to innovation. In particular, he chided those who looked for moral theology to be more integrated into both dogmatic and fundamental theology and ascetical or devotional theology ... Fifth, the metaphysical principles that the manualists followed were unable to address the real critical issues of the day."

[20] Yves Congar, O.P., A History of Theology (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968), Chapter 6. See also Robert Barron The Priority of Christ: Toward a Postliberal Catholicism (Grand Rapids, Brazos Press, 2007), chapter 8.

understanding of law.[21] Law is an important biblical concept, but one shaped by the context of God's covenant relationship to his people. In the biblical tradition, the moral law is primarily a teacher and liberator (Galatians 3:23–26), not an expression of absolutism.

The divine law expresses God's profound love for humanity and his merciful desire to deliver us from misery and oppression, from the bondage of sin and death (Deuteronomy 6:4–25). The Old Covenant (Mosaic) law prefigured the plan of salvation that God would eventually unveil in the Paschal Mystery of Jesus' death and resurrection. St. Paul describes the law of the New Covenant as the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, who works inwardly to perfect the human heart in charity and virtue, while bestowing numerous spiritual gifts and charisms for the building up and perfecting of the human family (Galatians 5:16–26; Romans 8).

In the modern period, however, philosophers distorted the Christian idea of divine law in ways that made God's intentions seem arbitrary and opposed to human flourishing.[22] Modern philosophies of law, such as those espoused by Machiavelli, Hobbes, Kant, and others, stressed the absolute character of the sovereign's will and reduced the relationship between the ruler and their subjects to that of mere obedience to precepts and the fear of punishment. For many Christians, it was not possible to reconcile the principles of this paradigm with the genuine reality and experience of divine love and mercy. This viewpoint, therefore, cast God as a character whose very being stands in opposition to the freedom of humanity. On a social level, it undermined the relational aspect of biblical charity by framing human relationships as legal obligations.[23]

The language adopted within the modern paradigm of law was that of rights, a framework that constructed social life in terms of pre-established social obligations and duties surrounding what was proper and acceptable according to an elaborate set of social

[21] I will rely largely on Pinckaers, Sources of Christian Ethics.

[22] Pinckaers, Sources, 344–345.

[23] Barron, Priority of Christ, 12–16.

conventions. This mode of social existence was highly formal, rationalistic, and preoccupied with external appearances—how things seemed within a set of social contexts and expectations.[24] The concept of the social contract emerged, an unwritten agreement that governs behavior and expectations in a given society, giving a legal framework to all human relationships. This created within society a culture of officiousness, compliance, and legality. Community discipline came in the form of shaming, social alienation, and harsh punishments.[25] Scapegoating was a common practice, while society protected those in positions of power by structures of authority and proper appearances. Think about how Christian society handled out-of-wedlock pregnancies by isolation of the mothers or dealt with homosexuality and drunkenness by means of public humiliation.[26] Suffice it to say, Jesus models nothing of the kind in the Gospels; that is, if his encounters with the woman at the well or the woman caught in adultery are any indication (John 8:1–11; 4:4–26).

One could describe the modern approach to law as punitive, rigid, and ideological in its attempt to eradicate evil by disciplinary force, especially the sins of the flesh.[27] Influenced by the spirit of the modern age, Catholic expressions of morality suffered from many, but not all, of these attributes. In general, Catholics were especially harsh toward

[24] Within the Catholic intellectual tradition, the theory of rights emerged during the period of late medieval scholasticism in Salamanca, Spain. See Charles Rogers, S.J. The Catholic Tradition from Genesis to Centesimus Annus, vol. 1, From Biblical Times to the Late Nineteenth Century (Herefordshire: Gracewing, 1998), 256–286. Social contract theory was developed by modern political philosophers such as John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Read any Jane Austen novel for a clear picture of the formality I describe.

[25] While not the authoritative source on modern forms of punishment, see "List of Methods of Torture," Wikipedia, accessed October 22, 2018, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_methods_of_torture.

[26] Ironically, the liberal culture that has resisted the practice of shaming and scapegoating (especially in the arena of sexuality) as a means to moral conformity, has today become perhaps even more proficient at deploying these same strategies for the postmodern canons of political correctness and the politics of gender.

[27] Taylor, A Secular Age, chapter 4.

the sins of the flesh. As the late Fr. Servais Pinckaers, O.P. points out in his *Sources of Christian Ethics*, what made Catholic morality characteristically modern after 1500 was its exaggerated focus on law, as opposed to virtue and the gifts of the Spirit, as the ordering principle of Christian living. We lost our attentiveness to the graces of the Holy Spirit and the life of Christian virtue and the beatitudes.[28]

One last feature of modernity's fixation on law is also evident in the Scientific Revolution and its fascination with the laws of nature. In discovering these, it quickly became evident how much we might benefit from commandeering a certain control over nature to improve our material existence, primarily through the invention of new technologies that allowed us to overcome many of the challenges of our mortality.[29] Think for a moment of the advances in medicine since 1500—truly staggering.

While the passions were an object of moral consideration in this time period, cultural elites within the Enlightenment tradition often dismissed love and other emotions as mere romanticism. This was especially true of thinkers with a strong sentiment for the past and traditional forms of social life. There was little need for subjective and unpredictable emotions. Charity and other Christian virtues, on the other hand, were considered purely the result of willpower—a legacy of the spirit of rational idealism and legal positivism.[30] Today some people still romanticize the modern period with its Elizabethan formality and sense of propriety—its progress. Yet Christians in this period often reduced charity to a sheer triumph of will over circumstance in the satisfaction of justice and duty. In its idealized form, and by way of contrast, romantic passion emerged as a principal motivation for mislaid

[28] Pinckaers, Sources, chapter 8.

[29] Michael Waldstein wrote an excellent account of this in his introduction to the second English translation of John Paul II's Theology of the Body. Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body (Boston: Pauline Books, 2006).

[30] We have Emmanuel Kant to thank for this. See his Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals: On a Supposed Right to Lie because of Philanthropic Concerns, trans. James W. Ellington (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1981).

lovers and sentimentalists.[31] Yet for the most part, moderns subjected emotions such as lust, fear, anxiety, personal esteem, doubt, and anger to what I would call behavioral objectification.

Objectification here means that moderns dealt with interior emotions externally, following formal rules for behavior that masked what was really happening within the human heart. The moral life was a perpetual restraining order on human passion. They learned to live with all sorts of contradictions and hypocrisy as public and private life grew increasingly apart. They condemned passions as the simple legacy of fallen human nature and suppressed them—and they considered this to be the virtuous approach, because Christians believed that emotions were the source of social dissolution and personal vice. The goal was to establish social order by directing behavior through a naked authoritarianism that often masked less desirable internal states.[32]

One could describe the modern philosophy of law as determined to eradicate deviancy by brute disciplinary force—but only for some. Others could hide behind the veneer of good manners and social status. The culture did not address the underlying causes of sin in healthy and integrating ways. What resulted was a growing contradiction between lived reality and the socially constructed appearances of proper behavior. These developments in the theory of law would be excusable if they had arisen naturally, as a normal progression of thought. Instead, it seems that this tendency to deny and suppress emotion and deviancy resulted from a rejection of earlier treatments of the passions within ethics. A case can be made that the medieval treatment of human emotion and the interior life of virtue are far more robust than the modern one.[33] We lost centuries of healthy Christian moral psychology because

[31] Literature is quite telling of what I am describing. Victor Hugo's Les Misérables dramatizes these social dynamics and paints a clear picture of the modern age.

[32] Taylor, A Secular Age, chapter 2.

[33] The sheer volume of Aquinas's treatment of the passions and the virtues in the Summa Theologiae is proof enough. Pinckaers points out that modern manualists reduced this entire treatise on the moral life to his treatise on law. Pinckaers, Sources, Chapter 11.

of the philosophical problem of *voluntarism*, which focuses on the primacy of the will in human action—and which helped to establish the foundations of modern ethical formalism.[1] Influenced by the spirit of the modern period, neo-scholasticism suffered from all these attributes. While Christians were especially harsh toward the sins of the flesh, ironically, they were quite supportive of war violence and public shaming through corporal forms of punishment. I find it curious that devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus emerged and gained popularity in this time. This is a devotion that speaks to the boundless love and mercy that can overcome all obstacles, yet it was quickly tooled into modernity's highly formalistic thought patterns. Modernity's fixation on law exerted a profound influence on religion, and this created a growing tension within western societies—a tension that eventually blew the lid off social mores by the 1960s.

[1] I expound on voluntarism and its effects on Christian discipleship in the Appendix. Voluntarism placed an inordinate amount of emphasis on the autonomy and absolute sovereignty of the will in decision making.