Theology After the Revolution

by R.R. Reno

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Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians:
From Chenu to Ratzinger
by Fergus Kerr
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Over the last decade, a Scottish Dominican named Fergus Kerr has produced a series of books designed to orient readers to contemporary trends. In the 1997 *Immortal Longings*, he discussed a range of philosophers, teasing out the latent theological tendencies that bear out the truth of the Augustinian insight that our hearts are restless. In the 2002 *After Aquinas*, he introduced readers to contemporary strands of thought that draw on the Angelic Doctor. Now Kerr has produced *Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians*, a smartly done survey of the figures who reshaped Catholic theology before, during, and after the Second Vatican Council.

Kerr did not set out to write a full history of twentieth-century Catholic theology, and his book does not pretend to be comprehensive in scope. There is no discussion of liberation theology, for example, and no treatment of the many "theologies of _____" that proliferated at the end of the century. Indeed, he gives only a summary account of the neoscholastic theology that dominated the Catholic world for the first half of the twentieth century. Instead of breadth, Kerr opts for a focused account of ten figures who came to prominence in the decades prior to and following the Second Vatican Council: Marie-Dominique Chenu, Yves Congar, Edward Schillebeeckx, Henri de Lubac, Karl Rahner, Bernard Lonergan, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Hans Küng, Karl Wojtyla, and Joseph Ratzinger.

One can dispute the choices. I would drop Schillebeeckx and Küng. More representative than original, they are not important thinkers, and both are largely irrelevant to the future of Catholic theology. The role of Wojtyla and Ratzinger as John Paul II and Benedict XVI, leading the Church, complicates any assessment of their intellectual contributions, as Kerr notes (and as Ratzinger himself observed of his own work while prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith). Disagreements and caveats aside, however, Kerr points us in the right direction. The men he discusses were leaders of what we might call the Heroic Generation. They fundamentally changed the way in which the Church thinks.

Kerr agrees with Walter Kasper's observation that "there is no doubt that the outstanding event in Catholic theology of our century is the surmounting of neoscholasticism." The change was dramatic. In 1950, Pius XII published *Humani Generis*. This papal encyclical was widely read as an unequivocal reaffirmation of the neoscholastic tradition that had come to dominate Catholic responses to modernity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By 1970, that tradition was utterly eclipsed and superseded by the new modes of Catholic theology developed and articulated by the theologians Kerr surveys. With fresh and informed readings of their work, Kerr charts many of the intellectual and personal factors in this revolution.

The Heroic Generation was a diverse group. They did not form a unified school of thought. They did not share the same concerns or interests, and, in retrospect, it is clear they did not make equal contributions. Fortunately, Kerr does not try to force these theologians into a single mold, nor does he advance a grand thesis about the fundamental achievement (or failure) of the revolution in twentieth-century Catholic theology.

But modesty does not preclude genuine insight. As Kerr works his way through some of the more interesting and important figures, a distinct reality comes into view. The most creative members of the Heroic Generation are now strangely inaccessible to us. Their achievement has been hollowed out—in part, at least, by its own success. Their revolution destroyed the theological culture that gave vitality and life to their theological projects.

This paradox may be the strangest and most significant feature of the Heroic Generation. Kerr's appreciative treatment of Bernard Lonergan illustrates what I mean. It is commonplace to observe that Enlightenment philosophy works with contrastive dualisms that lead to intractable problems. In early modern theories of knowledge, the obvious importance of concepts tended to push such figures as Descartes and Leibniz toward various forms of rationalism, while the seemingly equal importance of data and facts encouraged Locke and Hume toward empiricism. A similar dualism emerged in political and moral philosophy. On the one hand, authority seems a necessary force to guide us toward truth and justice. On the other hand, freedom seems necessary for any genuine embrace of truth or experience of justice.

The defining feature of Catholic thought from 1850 through 1950 was the considered and well-argued judgment that all modern solutions—from Descartes to Locke, from Kant to Comte, from Rousseau to Mill, from Schleiermacher to Hegel—had failed. Instead, the Catholic tradition argued, the basic structure of the Thomistic theory of knowledge and the Thomistic account of nature and grace provided a lasting solution. This reasoned judgment—and not some amorphous "fear of modernity" that contemporary church historians too often adduce—animates the notorious (and to my mind accurate and prescient) *Syllabus of Errors* of 1864, with its lists of mistaken "isms." The same judgment about modernity shaped the documents of Vatican I and gave intellectual confidence to the antimodernist campaign in the early twentieth century.

Like the other genuinely creative members of the Heroic Generation, Lonergan fundamentally accepted the nineteenth-century Catholic judgment against typical modern solutions in favor of a Thomistic approach. But like the rest of the Heroic Generation, Lonergan was influenced by emerging tends in twentieth-century European philosophy that was itself rebelling against the usual modern solutions (most characteristically phenomenology but, in Lonergan's case, also philosophy of science). The effect of this influence was to refine and deepen Lonergan's insights into the problems and implications of a contrastive relationship between concept and fact, between authority and freedom, and between nature and grace. With perceptions sharpened, he returned to the typical nineteenth-century Catholic accounts of the Thomistic solution. Again, like the other members of the Heroic Generation, he analyzed the standard formulations and found them covertly dependent on the very modern dualisms they purported to overcome. Finally, again like his comrades, he set about to draw on some contemporary resources to reformulate and perfect the Thomistic solution.

In Kerr's reading, Lonergan was the most serious and disciplined philosophical thinker of the Heroic Generation. And yet what's most revealing is the fate of his work. In a series of articles published in the 1940s, Lonergan offered a brilliant solution to centuries-long debates about grace and freedom. Kerr observes that Lonergan's reformulated Thomistic solution guides us away from the contrastive dualisms that have characterized so much of modern philosophy, political theory, and theology.

But brilliant arguments are not the same as intellectual influence. The articles were published in book form in 1972 under the title *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas*. "Ironically," writes Kerr, "when the articles were reprinted, his reconstruction of Aquinas' theology of grace dropped into a post-Vatican II environment in which younger Catholic theologians barely understood what the debate was ever about." This is the paradox of which I spoke: Lonergan was part of the Heroic Generation that re-

belled against the limitations and failures of their teachers—for the sake of the deep judgments about knowledge, freedom, and grace that they shared *with* their teachers. And the end result was perverse. After effecting a revolution against the limitations of neoscholasticism, Lonergan seems to have contributed to the emergence of a new and impoverished theological culture in which his own commitments and insights are unintelligible. What he achieved could not be integrated into the contemporary theological scene.

Lonergan was not the only member of the Heroic Generation to suffer this fate. Henri de Lubac's most important contribution to Catholic theology was a sustained analysis of the relation between nature and grace. In the 1930s he argued that standard theologies of the neoscholastic tradition used a metaphysically rigid, dualistic account of human destiny that ironically confirmed rather than overcame the modern suspicion that our everyday lives and concerns (nature) have no intrinsic contact with or need for the life of faith (grace). Instead of overcoming the dualisms that have tended to drive modern thought and life toward contrastive and fruitless antinomies, neoscholasticism unwittingly absorbed the tendency into itself.

When de Lubac claimed that the fundamental structure of neoscholasticism was a covert form of modernism, he was making a direct attack on the modes of theology that dominated the Church in the first half of the twentieth century. Not surprisingly, he became a suspect character in the eyes of church authorities. In the 1950s he was silenced by his superiors in the Society of Jesus.

One would think that, as a result, de Lubac would have embraced the spirit of innovation that flourished after Vatican II. He did not. Near the end of his life he wrote a small and bitter book, *A Brief Catechesis on Nature and Grace*. In its pages he sought to address what he regarded as a fundamental misunderstanding of his basic insights, and its main thrust is a defense of the core theological judgments of the neoscholastic tradition he spent his life criticizing.

The message is clear: Readers cannot understand Henri de Lubac's theology of nature and grace unless they know and accept the basic outlines of classical Thomistic theology. Thus the paradox, once again. By the 1980s, Henri de Lubac, the great critic of dry and dusty neoscholasticism, saw that the younger generation needed to be catechized into the standard, baseline commitments of Catholic theology. *Ressourcement* does not work if students have neither context nor framework in which to place the richness and depth of the tradition. Like Lonergan, de Lubac is characteristic of the Heroic Generation: He helped destroy the theological culture that, however inadequate, provided the context for a proper understanding of his generation's lasting achievements.

Kerr helps us move toward a nuanced understanding of the Heroic Generation with cool and levelheaded analysis of the individual thinkers, and there are important questions he raises that should be pursued further. Of special importance is a clearer and more critical understanding of the persistent interrelation of debates about epistemology (specifically, St. Thomas' account of the act of knowing) with theological questions of nature and grace.

Before engaging in the theological substance, however, we need to set aside specific debates about whether Lonergan—or de Lubac or Rahner or Congar or Balthasar—was right or wrong about particular issues facing theology and the Church. We cannot even begin to enter into the nuances of their positions until we achieve some clarity about the kinds of theologies they advanced and the mode of theology they practiced.

Theology is not a singular, unified thing. It is instead a fluid, multifaceted reality and plays many roles in the Church. Biblical interpretation is a kind of theology. Philosophical arguments for the existence of God or discussions of the nature of the human person play different roles. Historical analysis of ancient creeds counts as still another mode. And yet, amid all this diversity, theology has one important and consistent role. The Magisterium of the Church never sat down one day to work out an overall account of Christian truth. Because of-

ficial doctrine tends to be responsive rather than speculative, directed to specific problems rather than worked out as a system, the relation between doctrines defined at various times is rarely apparent. If doctrine is to adequately shape and inform the lives of believers, then these relations need to be analyzed, explained, and applied. This work is one of the main vocations of theology.

In the broadest sense, Catholic theology presumes subjective assent and material conformity to church doctrine: One can hardly be a theologian of the Church unless one thinks with the Church. But subjective assent and material conformity are entirely consistent with criticism of past efforts of theological synthesis and with creative new explorations. What the Church teaches admits of a wide range of interpretive and systematic treatments, and the open and largely latent structure of official doctrine invites conceptual innovation and dramatic new proposals for synthesis. This is why the study of theology is so exciting, and this is also why theologians can fall so quickly into deep and bitter arguments. (Kerr reminds us that, in 1597, Pope Clement VIII had to intervene into a particularly bitter debate between Dominicans and Jesuits about the operations of divine grace in order to force the two sides to stop calling each other heretics.)

In nearly all cases, the Church trusts in the faithfulness of those committed to serve her. Yet the Church must have more than loyal theologians who undertake exciting, new explorations. The Church is not a community of independent scholars, each pursuing individualized syntheses, however important or enriching these projects might be. The Church needs teachers and priests to build up the faithful. To do this work effectively, the Church needs theologians committed to developing and sustaining a standard theology, a common pattern of thought, a widely used framework for integrating and explaining doctrine. Otherwise, theological nuances become idiosyncrasies, and new proposals lack a context for reception.

Any historian of Christian theology will recognize the difference between the exploratory mode of theology and its counterpart, the widely accepted, standardized form of theology. The first type is creative and personal. It is born out of a loyalty to doctrine, but it is not ecclesially normative. This exploratory theology serves the Church in ways that leaven, extend, and enrich her theological culture—often by criticizing and questioning the adequacy of the standard views. St. Bernard was of this type, and so was St. Francis de Sales. So were Erasmus, Chateaubriand, and John Henry Newman. Each made remarkable and lasting contributions to Catholic theology, but none provided a pattern or mode of theology that came to serve as a widely taught baseline for communal understanding of doctrine.

The second, or standard, type of theology necessarily appears as more pedestrian. It accepts the vocation of explaining and teaching a widely accepted approach, not innovating so much as improving, not rejecting and beginning afresh but instead refining and renewing through careful additions, adjustments, and adumbrations of what has been long taught.

No patron saint of this standard mode of theology began at the center. St. Thomas waxed and waned in popularity over the centuries. Instead, standard theologies consolidate around the work of an original thinker: Thomism, Calvinism, Augustinianism, and so forth. The point is not that every Thomist agrees or thinks along the same lines. Rather, what makes a standard theology standard is broad agreement about a general framework and a common vocabulary. The effect is to create a school, a scholasticism, that tends toward internal reinforcement by way of ongoing research and internal adjustment. To assist in this process, standard theologies give rise to a tradition of textbooks designed to introduce students into the common framework and vocabulary, to prepare them to become full participants in the theological project.

With a distinction between exploratory and standard theologies in mind, we can see the paradox of the Heroic Generation. By and large, the figures surveyed by Kerr exemplify the first, experimental type of Catholic theology. Not surprisingly, the exploratory mode has

been influential. I think I am typical of my own generation in being trained, during my graduate studies, to prize this kind of writing. Smitten by the poetic virtuosity of de Lubac and the conceptual innovations of Balthasar, I was and remain keenly aware of the enriching potential of their work.

What I was not trained to notice is the important role that a widely known, standard theology plays in a healthy theological culture—and in this, too, I am typical of American academics. All of us tend to treat neoscholasticism, the standard theology of the early twentieth century, as part of the dead past, and we focus all our attention on mastering and continuing the work of the innovators.

But the Church can no more function like a debating society that happens to meet on Sunday mornings, forever entertaining new hypotheses, than a physics professor can give over the classroom to eager students who want to make progress by way of freewheeling discussions. As Leo XIII recognized in *Aeterni Patris* (1879), the encyclical that threw papal authority behind the nineteenth-century ascendancy of the theology of St. Thomas, believers need a baseline, a communally recognized theology, in order to have an intellectually sophisticated grasp of the truth of the faith. Indeed, without a standard theology, the Church will lack precisely the sort of internally coherent and widespread theological culture that is necessary for understanding and employing bold new experiments and fruitful recoveries of past traditions.

But here we also encounter the great limitation of the Heroic Generation. They bitterly opposed the school theology of their day. In his accounts of Chenu, Congar, de Lubac, Rahner, and the others, Kerr gives many examples of their dismissive comments, angry denunciations, and mocking characterizations of neoscholasticism. They regarded the standard theology of their day as philosophically inept, spiritually dead, and hopelessly outmoded—and they said so again and again. In the end, they killed neoscholasticism so thoroughly that contemporary students of Catholic theology know it only, to use Kerr's accurate description, "as a spectral adversary" to the great figures of the Heroic Generation that we now dutifully read and study.

There is much to object to in the textbooks that the Heroic Generation found so unsatisfying. Their criticisms may have been hyperbolic, but they were often justified and nearly always understandable given the rigid atmosphere of conformity that predominated. What talented student has not rebelled against the inevitable limitations of standardized modes of thought? But these days theological teachers who look up from their lecture notes and pay attention to their students recognize that few know enough to be able to appreciate and absorb the strikingly fruitful and innovative insights of the Heroic Generation. Without a standard theology, an exploratory theology will remain eccentric and indigestible—or worse. Without a stable theological culture, innovations come unhinged, and real achievements become destructive slogans.

The Heroic Generation regularly criticized neoscholasticism for its insensitivity to history. Unfortunately, an easy, reductive historicism is often retailed these days as their greatest insight. They denounced the neoscholastic textbooks as soulless exercises in empty logic—and now we have a Catholic theology preoccupied with symbol and experience and almost devoid of careful arguments. They tried to reintegrate sacramental life into theology—and today we are told that the essence of Catholicism is a sacramental imagination. They wanted to overcome a fortress mentality that closed the Church off from the world—and this has been reduced to a contextualized method that encourages theology simply to restate secular ideas in theological terms.

The collapse of neoscholasticism has not led to the new and fuller vision sought by the Heroic Generation. It has created a vacuum filled with simple-minded shibboleths.

Yes, the danger of destroying a standard theology without putting anything in its place is significant, and I think the danger most poignant in the case of Hans Urs von Balthasar. "Widely regarded as the greatest Catholic theologian of the century," reports Kerr, Balthasar had a literary gift and an intellectual genius that intensified the paradox of twentieth-century Catholic theology. His remarkable and lasting insights should be integrated into the future of Catholic theology—but he does little to provide a foundation for absorbing and applying his contributions. This becomes all the more of a problem when we recognize that many today look to Balthasar as the way forward out of the dead-ends of the liberal Catholic theology that predominated after Vatican II.

I remember my first encounters with Balthasar. As a young graduate student I was romanced by his lyrical prose and his extraordinary intellectual creativity. Reading *Mysterium Paschale*, his account of the mystery of the cross, gave me my first and most powerful experience of the doctrine of the Trinity as the *sine qua non* of saving truth. He excited me with bold thrusts through the history of ideas. His little book *Love Alone Is Credible* opens with two short chapters that provide a simple and profound way of understanding the development of Western theology from Irenaeus to the present.

Balthasar's hyper-Cyrillian Christology and his whirlwind synopses of history, literature, and theology were heady stuff, but, as is always the case with exploratory theology that takes for granted the standard theology of the day, it did little to orient me to the main lines of Catholic theology. In the years leading up to Vatican II, Balthasar made common cause with Karl Rahner and others against the manual theology of the seminaries and the fortress mentality of the hierarchy. Yet, soon after the council, Balthasar published a harsh attack on what he saw as tendencies toward anthropomorphism and secularization in new sorts of theologies then emerging, tendencies encouraged by Rahner's transcendental approach. What was I to make of this shift in theological alliances? I'm not altogether sure, because, like so much of what Balthasar wrote, the polemics against Rahner lacked the patient engagements with standard modes of theological analysis that are necessary for any work of scholarship to have a pointed and lasting effect.

There are exceptions, of course, to Balthasar's theological eccentricity. His early book *The Theology of Karl Barth* has been justly praised for its exposition of the great Protestant theologian. Even more lasting is the third part of the book, "The Form and Structure of Catholic Thought." There Balthasar lays out and defends the underlying logic of Tridentine theology against Barth's relentless reduction of Catholicism to the double-headed monster of Pelagianism and idolatry. It is a *tour de force* in which Balthasar shows how the central categories of neoscholastic theology—nature, grace, and the *analogia entis*—can be deployed to do the greatest possible justice to the *sola gratia*, *sola fide,* and *solus Christus* commitments of Barth's own Protestantism.

Whether or not they are interested in Karl Barth, students of Catholic theology should read *The Theology of Karl Barth* to gain a more complete understanding of the relentlessly soteriological structure and latent Christocentrism of the post-Reformation Catholic tradition that we ignore today.

And yet, even here, the problem of the Heroic Generation emerges. Balthasar never followed up on his profound defense of the Christian genius of Tridentine judgments and categories with a disciplined engagement with neoscholasticism, the tradition that carried those judgments and categories forward into the twentieth century. On the contrary, he was one of the Young Turks in the decade prior to Vatican II who offered only criticism, much of it bitter and dismissive, and he launched out in new directions with little regard for the official, mainstream theologies of the day.

Because Balthasar rarely slowed down long enough to suggest how his thought fit (or did not fit) into standard theologies, it would never occur to me to assign one of his books to a

student who wanted an introduction to Catholic theology. The same is true for most of what was written by Chenu and Congar and de Lubac and Lonergan.

Yes, they wrote seminal books that changed the way in which the Church now views any number of important questions. Yes, their work opened up new vistas. But a student today will have a difficult time seeing the importance of their ideas, because the grand exploratory theologies of the Heroic Generation require fluency in neoscholasticism to see and absorb their significance. Or the theories introduce so many new concepts and advance so many novel formulations that, to come alive for students, they require the formation of an almost hermetic school of followers . The cult of Lonerganians is perhaps the clearest example of this type.

In these and many other ways, the Heroic Generation's zest for creative, exploratory theology led them to neglect—even dismiss—the need for a standard theology. They ignored the sort of theology that, however pedestrian or inadequate, provides a functional, communally accepted and widely taught system for understanding and absorbing new insights.

We need to come to terms with this and other failures, but we must avoid the temptation to rebel against the revolutionaries who did so much to shape the Catholic Church of the second half of the twentieth century. To a great extent, the one-sidedness of the Heroic Generation was exacerbated by the equal and opposite blindness of the leading figures of early-twentieth-century neoscholasticism, who also neglected the full range of theological work and at times used their power within the Church to prohibit and suppress the properly exploratory mode of theology. The pressures were intense, and the Heroic Generation felt that they had to throw some hard elbows to make room for a deepening of the Catholic tradition. In their formative years, such figures as Congar, de Lubac, and Balthasar must have felt that the monolith of neoscholastic control over the seminaries and theology faculties would survive even with their pointed opposition.

For that matter, not everyone is cut out to be a Schoolman. In one of his self-reflective moments, Balthasar wrote, "Is it not better for me to come right out and confess that I am impatient?" Like so many figures in the Heroic Generation, he was a brilliant man whose mind seemed to operate with sudden insights and through bold syntheses. Is it surprising that he and others found the scholastic manuals of their day painfully constricting and uninspiring? I can easily imagine Balthasar sighing inwardly during a lecture at seminary, "Why can't we get on to the really exciting stuff?"

Thus the greatest failure of the Heroic Generation was not any particular theological mistake or set of mistakes. Instead, their failure was cultural and almost certainly unanticipated. Today English-speaking theology is an aimless affair. The post-Vatican II professors who are now retiring and who trained so many of us were themselves students of the Heroic Generation. They perpetuated the myth that nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Catholic theology is a vast desert of dry and dusty theology empty of spiritual significance. Who assigns Joseph Kleutgen, Johann Baptist Franzelin, or Matthias Scheeben; Charles Journet, Cardinal Mercier, or Garrigou-Lagrange? Because of this neglect, the old theological culture of the Church has largely been destroyed, while the Heroic Generation did not, perhaps could not, formulate a workable, teachable alternative to take its place.

There is one exception. Karl Rahner was not the most brilliant thinker of his generation, and he certainly was not the most original. But he emerged as the dominant figure after Vatican II because he was patient. Rahner's dry, technical essays carefully integrated—some would say insinuated—his novel ideas into the standard frameworks of the day. As Kerr observes of Rahner, "Whatever revision or innovation he proposed, he wanted to expound in continuity with neoscholasticism, *die Schultheologie*, which he so often lambasted." He worked within the system to show how his transcendental theology could be molded into a teachable, textbook system in which the scaffolding of older ways of thinking was redeployed

to serve a new direction in theology. Balthasar and others might criticize the emerging Rahnerian consensus after Vatican II, but the vacuum they created ensured its triumph.

Today the failure of Rahner's misbegotten, post-Kantian, *faux* scholasticism is plain to see. What is needed is not a new exploratory project, however traditional in intent. Our current situation is absurd. Unlike professors in most disciplines, America's theology faculties offer almost no introduction to the basic logic of their subject. Instead, like Kerr's list of the good and the great in twentieth-century Catholic theology, most professors socialize their students into all the innovations and complexities of the Heroic Generation. We teach the extraordinary insights of Balthasar, Congar, Lonergan, and de Lubac, and we do so without first framing their work in terms of a settled, comprehensive, and well-argued systematic theology. Fearing the narrowness derided by the Heroic Generation, we end up with a shallowness they would have despised.

Precisely because the Heroic Generation has so much to offer, it is imperative for Catholic theology to achieve a modicum of stability. We need to learn from Lonergan's brilliant essays on St. Thomas' theology of grace. Henri de Lubac's profound analysis of nature and grace begs to be fully understood and absorbed. Balthasar's ambitious Trinitarian theology needs to be weighed and assessed, and his striking ability to bring the idioms of Scripture into systematic theology must serve as a model for us all.

Yet, we can profit from and build on the achievements of the Heroic Generation only if contemporary Catholic theologians stop idealizing them and teaching their insights as the sum total of Catholic theology—to say nothing of renouncing the jejune ideal of perpetual exploration and permanent revolution. We need to overcome the now old modern myth of new beginnings and recognize that the Heroic Generation achieved so much of permanent value because they were formed in a church culture already shaped by a refined, cogent, and considered standard theology.

A theologian friend recently made the plaintive observation that our generation seems to lack thinkers of the stature of previous generations. Is that so surprising? We lack the coherent church culture that gave their theologies precision, depth, and scope. Theologians can innovate to their hearts' content, but without a standard theology the total effect of our efforts is far less than the sum of its parts.

Just what a renewed standard theology will look like I cannot say. But this much is clear: Instead of the current, misguided dismissal of the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century figures, we need a cogent account of the basic shape and structure of the nineteenth-century theologies that gave rise to and were enriched by the first great council of the modern era, Vatican I, and informed the remarkable resistance of Catholicism to so many destructive trends in the modern era.

We need to recover the systematic clarity and comprehensiveness of the neoscholastic synthesis, rightly modified and altered by the insights of the Heroic Generation and their desire for a more scriptural, more patristic, and more liturgical vision of the unity and truth of the Christian faith. We need good textbooks—however much they might not satisfy a literary genius like Hans Urs von Balthasar and the soul of a poet like Henri de Lubac—in order to develop an intellectually sophisticated faith.

To overcome the poverty of the present, our generation must base its theological vision on a fuller, deeper form of *ressourcement*, one that discerns the essential continuity of the last two hundred years of Catholic theology. After an era of creativity, exploration, and discontinuity, much of it fruitful and perhaps necessary, we need a period of consolidation that allows us to integrate the lasting achievements of the Heroic Generation into a renewed standard theology.

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