

Before Vatican II Come Experience the Light: Remembering Vatican II Morning
Enrichment Wednesday, September 12, 2012 9:15 AM COR Center

Today my goal is to speak to **how the Church got to Vatican II**. So I'm not speaking really about Vatican II; I'll talk about that in October: what were the results of Vatican II. But now it's really how we got to Vatican II.

In the century before Vatican II there were of course many challenges, but on the whole **the Church was growing very prosperous and very strong**, as Sister mentioned. In fact, during the 1950's from within the Church, it seemed like a golden age. I don't know if you have ever heard of Lenny Bruce? Lenny Bruce was a Catholic, although not a very good one, and he said, memorably, that the Catholic Church was the only "the Church," and that was very true.

Now **there were many prominent Catholics and they were renowned as Catholics**. So the spirit of that era even in the secular world was different from today. I doubt very much that most of you could name the faith of various people in, for example, **science or entertainment**. There are actually some Catholics in entertainment. But in those days everybody knew who was a Catholic. There were authors, **renowned authors**; for example, one of the most esteemed authors of the English language was Graham Greene. He was really a convert to Catholicism. There were other very fine writers: Evelyn Waugh was regarded as a very fine writer. J.F. Powers in the United States, Edwin O'Connor, Flannery O'Connor—these were well-known people, very popular and very accepted, and they wrote about Catholic themes. It wasn't that they were just like everyone else; they were very different. **They wrote about Catholic issues, moral issues, spiritual problems**.

The most popular TV show in the 1950's was Bishop Fulton J. Sheen. Bishop Sheen had a bigger audience than any other program. And there were many other prominent Catholic actors and entertainers. In fact, when I went to my cousins' house—I remember this vividly—we'd sit and watch the Ed Sullivan Show—Ed Sullivan was Catholic—we'd sit and watch the Ed Sullivan Show and my cousins would say, "Now, Mom, is she Catholic? Mom is he a Catholic?" And they had to know, every single one. And of course there were many prominent ones, like, for example, Loretta Young, and Bing Crosby. Grace Kelly captured the whole world's attention as an actress and later as a princess of Monaco. She was a woman who was very public in her devotion to God and to the Catholic faith. And **this was not uncommon that people were very public in their devotion to their Catholic faith**.

By and large Catholics projected an image of superiority—**they projected an image of superiority**. They were, as Lenny Bruce said, "the Church," the only true Church. All other Christians were defective, and they would use that word. Their churches were defective, their bodies were defective, their doctrines were defective, but they sang well. They would say that: "Well, they sang well, but their faith is not quite right." And not only that, but Catholics were discouraged, would be putting it mildly, sometimes forbidden, to go into **other churches**. Once I felt rather guilty because I actually looked into a Lutheran Church on the corner, but I wanted see what it was like. But **the idea of actually going and participating—absolutely not, never**.

Now this of course changed. **Pope John Paul II himself has led many ecumenical and inter-faith services, but even there he has been criticized;** he has been criticized for doing this. So **this is something that we are in transition with.** I wouldn't say that everything happened at Vatican II: it went from this to that—no. **A new approach was inaugurated, but not necessarily in a victorious way.**

J. Edgar Hoover, in those days of high reputation, said that he only wanted **Catholics** in the FBI because they were reliable and **they were moral, moral men;** he could trust them. That's part of what was the situation.

Now in academia also there were **many great Catholic intellectuals,** in fact, I would say probably more than a hundred years before or a hundred years after. I mean, I think that that was a real unusual time, especially the 30s, 40s, and 50s. People, for example, in the area of philosophy, which today hardly anybody studies. I suppose Alcester Macintyre would qualify as a philosopher, but he doesn't really do much philosophy; he more studies philosophy. But there were actually people like Etienne Gilson and Jacques Maritain, who were renowned world wide. Maritain was the one who actually laid out the plan for democracy in Europe after World War II. That was basically Maritain's idea and doing. And he did it on the basis of Catholic moral principles, now called "Social Democracy."

Among the clergy there were some of the finest minds in a long time. There are no such minds like that today, such as, **Yves Congar.** One of his marvelous books was called *Tradition and Traditions.* And this made quite a wave because in general religion is conservative and what you inherit, what's you've learned, tends to be what you think is the tradition. Well, Congar said that's not really true. Congar said that some traditions, yes, they really are valid and they go back to the very earliest days of the Church. But many of them are not; they are actually very recent. So in *Tradition and Traditions,* he was saying **Tradition is that body of belief and practice that has been with the Church for all time going back to the beginning, but traditions, those are just extra things added on.** And his idea was the Church is very free to get rid of those traditions. Now a lot of people didn't like that. But **it was one of the basic principles the bishops used at Vatican II for determining what to do.**

Karl Rahner was sometimes impenetrable, but a brilliant man, truly brilliant man. **Jean Danielou** later became a cardinal—so did Congar—I think Danielou was really Belgian, wasn't he—but he was a very bright, open man. He was actually a Jesuit and so was **Bernard Lonergan.** Some have claimed Lonergan was the best philosopher in four hundred years. I studied Lonergan's works and I studied under one of his students. He was a very brilliant man. **Henri de Lubac** is probably almost the most prominent; he was a Jesuit, and I will talk more about him later. He also became a cardinal. Then there were others that were pushed by the Church authorities out into the shadows, like **Teihard de Chardin.** He was also a Jesuit, actually a very brilliant man and a great poet, actually. But for whatever reason, he upset his superiors, so they sent him to China. Well, he did have an interest in anthropology, archeology, and so on, so they said, well, go do archeology in Mongolia, and really that's what he did for about thirty years. He was not happy necessarily; he said he made himself happy doing that, but he didn't really want to do that. He wanted to live in Paris. Later on he did get permission to move to New York for a while.

There was **Dietrich von Hildebrand** that was such a towering mind, and his wife also was a towering mind, a layman, but Pope Pius XII said he is another Father of the Church, so I mean he was an extraordinary man. **John Courtney Murray**, another Jesuit who was an American, was a person who studied the politics of modern European societies and American societies from the time of the Enlightenment, and **he came up with a very strange idea at the time that became accepted at the Council that actually democracy was the best possible environment for the Church.** Now up till then the Church had not accepted that. They had fought democracy ever since the French Revolution. Now the French Revolution had not been very nice to the Church, so you could understand why they had a negative attitude. Well, they really didn't think it was a good thing. So they fought it and held on to the idea that **the old idea of the imperium** was a superior idea, where the Church and state more or less co-existed, one helping the other, so to speak. John Courtney Murray convinced the fathers at the Council that that was not a good idea and that **the time for that had passed and that they should get with something different.**

Now **the Church flourished throughout the United States**, as Sister mentioned; our churches were jam-packed at all Masses. And they were not necessarily beautiful ceremonies either. I remember going to Mass at St. Petronille; we had one beautiful Mass on Sunday. It was called the "High Mass." There was a beautiful choir, but the others were silent. So you went to pray or sleep. I remember walking into church, and I was actually as a child rather devout, taken with the Mass; I was very much into it, but I noticed a lot of people weren't. They would just sit there or they would have a three-point-landing—you know what that is? kneel and sit at the same time. But nonetheless the Church was thriving. And very often there was an element of a little bit of fear involved because **a lot of things done in the Church were done out of fear because if you didn't, it was sinful, so that was really a powerful motivation for a lot of people.**

Now I remember a man who used to sit—I would sit up front; I was not a good Catholic—I sat up front and this other man would sit in the same pew with me and he never had his wife with him—I remember that. He would be there all the time, but he would never answer one prayer or do anything. Of course, you didn't really do that much; there was not too much answering, but even later on when we started having answering prayers, he didn't. Anyway I saw him in downtown Glen Ellyn, where I lived, quite a few years later. And he says, "Aren't you the boy that went to the seminary?" I said, "Yes, I'm still there." And he said, "You know, I used to go to church." And I said, "Oh, I remember you; you used to sit next to me in the front." He said, "I thought you were the one." He said, "You know, I don't go to church anymore. Do you want to know why?" I said, "I think you are going to tell me anyway." He said, "Well, when we went to church Msgr. Luke"—Father Tom knew Msgr. Luke very well—"he used to say, he used to pound the pulpit, and he would talk about all the terrible things that evil people did, and I said to myself, 'well, see, I don't do any of those things,' and now they never talk about that at all anymore!" So that was his reason for leaving the Church, so he told me.

Meanwhile, especially after World War II, but actually even before, but it became more obvious after, the Church was involved in fierce and **brutal conflicts especially with the communist nations.** Now in Russia it started early on, but after World War II it spread. There were terrible persecutions in China; in Romania and Albania were some of

the most murderous, but really everywhere. In Poland and Hungary the Church stood up to communism, and this created a new reputation for the Church in the United States. **All of a sudden the Church became an ally of the United States.** And people who had before despised Catholicism all of a sudden liked Catholicism. It was like, oh, yes, you are our friends; you are going to help defeat these terrible communists. So the reputation of Catholics and of the Church soared in the 1950's and late 40's, where previously there was a lot of anti-Catholicism in the US. **Now the anti-Catholicism didn't totally disappear, but it was definitely modified with this sense of this fight against communism—solidarity.**

Meanwhile, and this is really hard to understand for those of us who don't live under this or never did, but **the spirituality of the Church was a spirituality of absolute obedience to whoever was your local superior.** So if you were a nun in the convent, your mother superior was God, or Jesus Christ. I mean, they would say, "The voice of Christ, the voice of God." If you were in a parish, whether you were a layman, laywoman, nun, or if you were another priest, the pastor was the voice of God. You did what the pastor said. Priests had absolutely no say in the running of parishes if they weren't the pastor. The pastor alone—there were no pastoral councils. My pastor, Msgr. Luke, before I was born, my dad told me this story, when he first came to the parish, he stood up in the church and he said, "I have heard criticisms of the way I am directing this parish. Well, let me tell you something: it is directed from this side of the communion rail, and if you don't like it, you can go somewhere else." And that was not unusual really; that was the way it was. **The pastor was king in his parish. The mother superior was queen in her convent. The bishop was the boss in his diocese,** although now other pastors could fight with the bishop, because pastors had authority in canon law. So my pastor told Bishop Blanchette, "Bishop Blanchette, you run your diocese; I'll run my parish." But this absolute obedience, for example, Teilhard de Chardin allowed himself to be exiled for many, many years, twenty years or more, out of obedience to his superior. And he said somehow this would all work out for the best. People did that; they did whatever they were told and they did not question, or if they questioned, it didn't matter; they did it anyway.

So now **early in the twentieth century**—now I am shifting a little bit, going a little bit farther back—**among Protestants there had been an interest in some kind of unity,** because Protestantism is something like a tower of Babel; it speaks in so many different languages and they recognized this, and so they really were working for a type of unity, but it was a unity based on compromise and eventually it really didn't do much. But it was a movement; let's put it that way. Interesting enough, **the Vatican opposed this.** Why? **In the mind of the Church, the Church is the center of unity.** For Protestants to start a unity among themselves—what was that? So they opposed it.

Now **among Protestants,** however, as I said, the unity never really came about. What happened was rather **splintering into different groups.** So you have what is called the liberal Protestant—now liberal doesn't necessarily mean what you might think. **Liberal means they follow the lead of what was called "biblical criticism."** That means they **study the Bible through literary and historical means and subjecting faith to a rational analysis, so liberal really means rational.** Liberal Protestants were more

rational. They would believe what seemed reasonable. **The idea of a supernatural faith, that did not seem reasonable to them.**

Now they were, of course, opposed by fundamentalists. **Fundamentalists were people who believed that the Bible was written by God himself—every word—and that faith was a supernatural gift and absolutely necessary for salvation, and those who didn't have this were damned to hell.** Now fundamentalism was really an attempt by this extremely, shall we say, **traditional Reformation style theology to unite itself** because already you had Lutheranism, you had Presbyterianism, you had Congregationalism, and so on and so on, so in order to unite that this idea of fundamentals, **there were some fundamentals that they could all agree on.** The main point was the **fundamentals could not come from outside of the Bible,** because already going back to the Reformation *sola scriptura* was a principle. Now that's not in the Bible, *sola scriptura*, but it was adhered to by many, almost most, Protestants. So in order then to agree on things that were not outside the Bible they found certain statements within the Bible that they said now those are fundamental Christian beliefs, and we can all agree to them because there's no external authority. **They denied the authority of any church to establish a creed.**

Now it is not only the Catholic Church that had creeds. The Calvinist churches all had creeds. The Presbyterians said that they could have creeds connected to other Presbyterian churches—Congregationalists, each congregation could have its own creed. So those reformed churches did believe in the value of creeds. The Lutheran Church kept the Creed of Nicaea. But the fundamentalists said, no, those are all human; **we are not going to have any human creeds; we are going to have the words of God.** Now once in a while there was a very sophisticated fundamentalist that said, well, of course I know the words of God were originally in Hebrew or Greek, and what we have is a translation. Once in a while they would admit something like that, but not necessarily. Some really thought that God spoke through the King James Version, and I have heard people say that.

Meanwhile, **Pentecostalism and prophecy churches,** like Moody Bible Institute, **were open to new revelations and miracles** and from the Protestant viewpoint that was unusual. **Most Protestants had moved away from the belief in miracles: the liberals because they weren't rational, and the fundamentalists because they almost always ascribed to a theory called "dispensationalism,"** whereby the period of miracles was over, just like the period of the Church was over. **You had a period of the Church that was over; miracles were over, now we are in the period of individualism, individual belief—that's fundamentalism.**

But now came this other group not well accepted by either liberals or fundamentals—**Pentecostals.** And they really were open-minded, and they really **believed in experiencing faith.** And they believed that God continued to reveal himself through words of knowledge, through the charisms, through various expressions, and many of them copied or mirrored Catholic beliefs, particularly **the belief in miracles, the belief in consolations, the belief in private revelations.** And then of course **Moody Bible Institute was looking for revelations concerning end-times** in particular. And they tended to mix their ideas of end-times up with the belief that the Soviet Union was a satanic empire and that God would bring about Agamemnon and destroy communism and

the Soviet Union and bring about the end of the world. **All this created in Rome a sense of foreboding in regard to other religions.** It's like, oh, they are all crazy. We have to hold the line—we have to hold the line. **So when you talk about the study of Scripture, no, no, you may study only the literary forms—that's all.** You don't study history. You don't study forms. Forms mean the parts that led to the development of the whole. You study the whole; stick to that, and don't bother figuring out how it came about.

And this went along with **a tremendous fear of modern thinking, which was called “Modernism.”** Modernism, of course, it's hard to say what it really was, but it was a movement, if you want to call it a movement, it was really just **the way in which people adapted to a world in which there was historical consciousness arising; there was a great deal of what I would have to call “Romanticism,”** especially in Germany among German philosophers and theologians. **Romanticism is a positive, idealistic view of life.** And this was actually considered consistent with Catholic thinking; it was not considered with traditional Protestant thinking, but it had **its own particular twist that Rome thought was dangerous.** Rome was very upset with the development of **Positivism, a materialistic philosophy. Obviously it's contrary to spirituality. And very upset with Relativism**—and Relativism did become prominent even at the turn of the century—I'm talking about the beginning of the twentieth—early on there were renowned philosophers who wouldn't talk about **moral issues. They said they are simply a matter of opinion** and so on. Well, Rome didn't like any of this and so opposed all this, and, in fact, Catholics had to take oaths against Modernism. **You couldn't have office in the Church without an oath against Modernism.** The result of this is that **Catholic theologians were for the most part not up to snuff in regard to what was going on in the secular world.**

But, meanwhile, the popes of the twentieth century **encouraged theologians to study the tradition of our Church, in particular St. Thomas Aquinas,** but not only, also the **Fathers of the Church and the various traditions and councils and so on.** And this push was called *ressourcement, going back to the sources.* And it resulted in, I think, an unintended consequence. The unintended consequence was that these theologians having studied the past said, guess what, what we are dealing with today is terrible; our theology is lousy. And that theology was called **Neo-Scholasticism.** They said this is terrible theology; it's **completely impoverished;** it has none of the riches that belong in our tradition, none of the riches that the saints wrote about or Fathers of the Church or the theologians or the doctors, none of the mystics—it's all lost! It's just dry, dreary clarity, so to speak.

So this began a new movement in the Church really at the behest of the popes, which they couldn't stop because it was they who asked for it. And yet it created **a great reaction among conservative theologians, especially within the Vatican itself, such as Garrigou-Lagrange.** Then they wrote and they called this **the new theology, *la nouvelle theologie.*** They intended that to be a term of derision like the Big Bang was a term of derision. This was a term of derision, the new theology. And **the reason why it was a derisory term was in the Neo-Scholastic idea truth was eternal, so anything new couldn't be true.**

Now I would like to mention a few things about the difference between the old and the new approach of theology, which became prominent late 30s, 40s, 50s.

So I will put on this side the Neo-Scholastic; on this side what's called the Nouvelle Theologie. In the Neo-Scholastic view truth is immutable. Now in a sense **truth is immutable, but not our truth, not our conception of the truth. Our conception is limited.** So going back to St. Thomas—see, this is Neo-Scholastic, sometimes called neo-Thomist. But then real good scholars, such as Marechal and Lonergan would go back and say, well, you know, St. Thomas really never said our expression of the knowledge is immutable, just truth itself. In itself that's called the *id quod*, that which we know, but the way we know it though **the concepts, ideas, and so on, those are ours, that's not immutable.**

So these **Nouvelle theologians said**, okay, so expressions change, **expressions of truth change in time—getting better or worse**, not necessarily getting better all the time. Another thing about this **Neo-Scholastic view is there was this idea that as the Church grew it was always getting better**; it had to get better; it could not but get better. And so as theology developed we knew more and more and that was an irreversible process. Now what the Nouvelle theologians point out is actually that's not a theological idea. That is really borrowed from—what? The idea of progress, the secular idea of progress which comes from Hegel—Hegel. So they said, well, you know, you think you are very Scholastic and very Thomistic, you're not.

So over here in **Neo-Scholastic we have truth formulated in propositions.** What's a proposition? Do you know what a proposition is? A proposition is a statement; it's a statement, a clear simple statement. An example of a proposition would be: there is one God subsisting in three divine persons—that's a proposition. So in the Neo-Scholastic view that's faith—**faith is the proposition.** In the **Nouvelle theology**, no, **faith is really a mystery in which we participate**, and our understandings are nothing compared to the mystery itself. So we participate **through intuition, intimation, but we don't really know.**

Now interestingly enough, the **Neo-Scholastics** said we can't possibly understand the propositions we believe, but we will when we die, but **while we live we can't understand them.** So they admitted that there was a mystery to it, but it wasn't important to grow in or participate in the mystery; in fact, it was considered impossible, although not for everybody. There were some theologians that would really spend time trying to contemplate the mysteries, but that **contemplation in Neo-Scholasticism was considered optional**; it was optional; it was something that maybe someone wanted to do for some odd reason, but that's not really necessary. But here **on the Nouvelle side it's actually necessary; you can't do theology without contemplation—you can't!** It's not theology.

Now this **Neo-Scholastic approach had clarity and distinctions**, and where did the desire for clarity come from? Who talked about clear and distinct ideas? Rene Descartes. So, again, they're saying, oh, you think you are Thomistic, but that's Rene Descartes. And the problem is it's clear and distinct, **but not creative—no creativity.** Creativity would get in the way of clarity. If you are clear, you stay clear; you don't need to muddy it up with new ideas—no creativity. So over here in the **Nouvelle theology** a little muddy; it was a little muddy, but **creative.**

This **Neo-Scholastic side was allergic to paradox**; you could not have paradox. Paradox was a sign of your being stupid. But over in the **Nouvelle theology it was all paradox. Paradox means something that appears contradictory, but it's really a truth that just can't be put into a simple, clear statement.** Well, Neo-Scholastics wanted to say all truth could be put into simple, clear statements. This was taking place in the 50's. Well, the Neo-Scholastic is the Baltimore Catechism, but that comes really from Trent.

This is ahistorical. Like an atheist doesn't believe in God, well, **the Neo-Scholastic doesn't believe in history; it was ahistorical.** You know what that means is everything is just the way it is. **The truth is the truth; it doesn't have history to it.** It is. It's abstract. It doesn't live in time. It's timeless; timeless truth—that's what we are about. Over here in the **Nouvelle theology everything is historical.** So when they would study, for example, the councils and the determinations of our Creed and so on, and they would say, well, you have to understand the language of the time, the history of the time, the disputes of the time; you have to look behind everything. So it's a very historically conditioned approach. On the Neo-Scholastic side ideas exist in a vacuum; on the Nouvelle theology side they all exist in **an historically conditioned context**, so the importance of context.

On the **Neo-Scholastic** side grace: we know where grace is—**where's grace? In the Church, in the sacraments.** Now later on, again, people like **Lonergan** 1941 and 42, Lonergan wrote the "*Gratia Operans*" articles, in which he showed that **St. Thomas did not in anyway limit grace to the sacraments or to the Church.** He was moving way beyond that. So on the **Nouvelle theology side we have grace is prevenient everywhere**; in other words, before you are there, grace is there. And grace precedes everything that happens, precedes our coming into the world, that **the whole world is graced.**

And grace is relational. They would write articles about: Can the believer experience God the Father as differentiated to God the Son? Can the believer experience the Holy Spirit? Can the believer experience the Son? The Neo-Scholastics said, no, you can only experience God, if you can experience God, but not the individual persons. But the Nouvelle theologians said, well, that's not what the tradition says; look up what St. So and So said, and so on. So it's relational. In fact, the understanding of the beatific vision according to St. Thomas is that we experience the Father as Jesus experiences the Father. Neo-Scholastics would agree with that, but only after you are dead in heaven, but not on earth. The **Nouvelle theologians** said, well, that's not what the mystics say. So we can—it doesn't mean you will or everyone will—but **it is possible that we can experience the persons of the divine Trinity as relations already in the present.**

And so the importance of lived experience. **Lived experience is not important to Neo-Scholasticism, although St. Thomas does talk about graces overflowing the soul into the body.** In fact, the way he talks about Baptism everyone should be a mystic. He says the graces of Baptism overflow into the body and can be experienced sensibly. And he talks about the infusion of faith, meaning enlightenment, the infusion of enlightenment and hope and divine charity and prudence, justice, temperance, fortitude. When you get done with that, you wonder why everyone isn't a walking saint through the infusion of

baptismal grace. Now, in fact, we don't experience life quite like that. But that shows you that **St. Thomas anticipated quite a bit of the Nouvelle theology.**

Under **Neo-Scholasticism outside the Church no salvation.** Now **this was not believed literally** because when someone sited it literally then they were corrected; in fact, one priest was excommunicated in 1952 I believe—Father Fenny from Harvard was excommunicated because he said literally outside the Church there is no salvation. And Pope Pius XII said, no, **what the Church teaches is if you know that the Catholic Church is the true church and you refuse to join it, then there is no salvation.** So it was never quite literally taken. But on this **Nouvelle theology side God desires the salvation of all and provides for it from the time of Adam**—from the time of Adam. Now that goes to Clement of Rome. Clement of Rome said that God desires the salvation of all people and has provided for it from the time of Adam. But **Clement of Rome had been forgotten about around the fourteenth century.** When you study history you start saying, well, yes, I know we said that, but look at the history, and why? What did it mean? And was it true even then because Boniface VIII's very strong statement was never accepted even at that time.

So now the result of all this: the result of these two competing theologies, of course, caused all kinds of ferment—naturally. Now one thing I want to make clear is **the Nouvelle theology was very critical of Neo-Scholasticism and the Counter-Reformation. The Counter-Reformation means the Church's attitude toward the Reformation**—very critical of that and the kind of philosophy and theology that came out of it, but that does not mean for one moment that they were positive about the Reformation. No, **they thought the Reformation was as bad as the Counter-Reformation**—or worse—**because they saw that as also another impoverished approach to theology, an impoverished approach to the idea of sacramentality and liturgy and faith and even Bible,** even though the Protestants did open up the Bible, but **they interpreted it literally, and in the history of the Church, it had never been interpreted literally.**

So what happened **at the Reformation was the Bible was made to do something it wasn't meant to do.** Now I think this was misunderstood by a lot of laypeople because I have heard people say things like, “Well, finally the Council admitted that the Reformation was right!” No, it did not, nor did **the new theologians** ever admit that the Reformation theology was right. **What they said is they had some correct insights and they had some good intentions** and so on, **but they never said the Reformation as itself was a good thing or a theologically justifiable thing. So the Nouvelle theologians wanted to say nix to the Reformation and nix to the Counter-Reformation; let's go beyond that back to a richer past.**

Now the problem with that is **this richer past some say never did exist,** but they believed it, and they called it the “*catholica*.” They spelled it with a “c,” but actually there was a term *katholica* spelled with a “k” in the early Church. It meant a sense of discerned unity among bishops and, therefore, their churches. So they did use that word, but maybe they thought this was a richer, more robust form of unity than it really was, because as time went on and the history continued to grow and develop and scholarship continued, **what was discovered were a lot more disputes than was believed by the early Nouvelle theologians.** They seemed to think that if we just get back far enough, we

will have this period of harmony and agreement. The term “**Nouvelle theologians**” does not represent every theologian, but in general **it’s a term used for all those people moving toward development.**

Now many of them were Thomists, and there are **different kinds of Thomism.** There was **transcendental Thomism** promoted by people like **Marechal, Rahner, and Lonergan.** And then there is another kind of **Thomism promoted by laymen, like Maritain and Gilson,** and that was more **critical,** you could call it. And then there was another form promoted by others, called **Suarezian or conceptual,** and that was the subject of a great deal of disputation because that fitted to this idea of **more of a closed system.** And **what the Nouvelle theology did it broke open the system and said closed systems are not truthful systems.** So then **the role of paradox had to be honored and the need for contemplative prayer and the penetration of the mysteries of faith put in the center of the theological enterprise.**

After the break, there was a wonderful summary, but unfortunately the wrong button on the recorder was pressed, and so three minutes were lost. What follows is a copy of the outline notes:

The Church retained her great importance in the work of the kingdom, but the Church is not the kingdom.

A more critical attitude toward church/state relations arose questioning the traditional values that had been widely accepted.

The grace of God works through the sacraments, but is not bound by the sacramental system, not by way of exception, but as a matter of course.

While truth may be immutable, our concepts are not, and therefore have to be able to reformulate the ancient truths of faith; here the work of John Henry Newman came to the fore.

Everything has to be seen in its historical context.

New insights into grace pushed the focus away from the salvation of souls and focused on saving society because God is the intended goal of all creation and human society needs to organize itself in ways that are consistent with divine justice or it will disintegrate.

The mistake was discovered and then the right recorder button was pressed:

Faith serves the common good of society and society really needs faith, so they cannot be kept apart. One of the results was the worker priest movement created by a man called Cardinal Cardijn. Now **the worker priest movement didn’t really work very well,** but it was an idea that priests would go into factories since the people, the factory workers, had left the Church. They didn’t believe the Church cared about them.

So Cardinal Cardijn thought, well, we will send missionaries into the factories, and the only missionaries he could think of were priests. That shows you the thinking of the time. Now one of his quotations was, when people said the role of the priest was to save souls, and he said, “I’ve never seen a soul.”

So now we have this new **emphasis on evangelization taking on a social nature**, and this all led to this **new understanding of the supernatural**. So the topic that brought all these concerns together was the nature of the supernatural, and the writer, **the principal writer was Henri de Lubac**. Now de Lubac eventually became a cardinal. He died in 1991 very disappointed with the Council. In his mind it did not effect what he intended, but then he had very romantic intentions. And I really honestly believe John XXIII too. They had these very romantic, ideal ideas, and they thought they could get somewhere real fast. Well, we might get there some day, but not real fast.

So in **Neo-Scholasticism the supernatural was something over and above the natural world. Grace was totally gratuitous**; that’s what the word “grace” means. It means it’s not something owed. It’s like if you give a tip; technically you don’t owe a tip; it’s a gratuity. Well, grace is gratuitous in the sense that **God doesn’t owe it to anybody**. It’s a free gift. And **it leads eventually to the beatific vision, which is a relationship to the Father as Jesus has**. But **according to Neo-Scholasticism the world can know God in a purely natural way**. Now whether this is true or not, I don’t know, but it was the assumption the world could know God in a purely natural way. Unbaptized children who die, enjoy a natural beatitude in what is called limbo. It’s the natural result of thinking this way. God wouldn’t want innocent children to suffer all deprivation, so he would give these children some kind of natural beatitude, but it wasn’t the supernatural beatitude, which only comes from sacraments. See the difference. Now it is very interesting that John Paul II eliminated limbo; one day he said, well, we don’t believe in that. And that was the end of that and no one disputed it.

Now in the **Nouvelle theology** there was a complaint that the Neo-Scholastic view is not grounded in Scripture and it didn’t see the creation as God created it; it was an artificial sort of view. **In Scripture God creates the world because God wants the world to relate to him. So a purely natural world without the grace of God, that’s not descriptive of anything that is**; whether it could be or not is another matter, but it isn’t. In truth **God wants all his children to come into his inner life—that’s the plan. The supernatural needs to be seen as harmoniously connected to nature**. It is what St. Thomas would call connatural; in other words, it isn’t part of nature; it’s more than nature and yet it just fits perfectly with nature because it has been created to do that. **The world by God’s design is supposed to flow into God**.

The universe’s purpose is tied up with the history and fate of humankind. Now this is something modern people will never accept, but that is the traditional Christian view that the universe’s purpose is tied up with the history and fate of humankind. That would be called today anthropocentric, but that is a Christian view. So there is no purely natural order even though the actual fulfillment of God’s design depends totally upon grace which cannot be earned and cannot be thought of as somehow due human beings. **Eternal life is not a right, but it’s a gift, and yet without it the life of humanity has no purpose**. That’s the key of du Lubac’s statement. It’s true; eternal life is a gift. It’s not

a right, but without it there's no purpose to life—that's true, there is no purpose to life without God.

Therefore **atheism threatens the very meaning of life and the very fabric of society** that is woven together with shared meaning. So de Lubac and many others were very concerned about the growth of atheism, which starting—already Henry Newman was concerned about it. It's proceeding apace. C.S. Lewis was a convert from atheism; so was I think G.K. Chesterton and several others. But it went the other way too. So atheism was seen as **a very serious problem**. Actually it went all the way back to the time of the Greeks, but even at the time of Thomas Aquinas there were atheists, but not a very big issue, not as a movement gaining followers. And **usually atheism is associated with a pure materialism too, almost always**.

Now from the standpoint of the **Nouvelle theologians** in a way **it's the Church's fault that atheism is growing because it's too into itself**; it's too set apart; it's just taking care of its own matters and letting the world be; it isn't reaching out to the world. And it's not speaking in such a way the world can understand what it is saying.

Now in 1943, Garrigou-Lagrange, who was a Neo-Scholastic and living in Rome, supported Vichy France. I don't know if you know Vichy France? It was a group that allied themselves with the Nazis. And he did that because he said they are the only legitimate government, see, this concept of legitimacy. And he actually said that support of Charles de Gaulle was a mortal sin. Lucky most people didn't listen to him.

But anyway in 1943 **de Lubac was asked to discuss, Why is it that in the modern world the sense of the sacred is disappearing? He answered four reasons**. The first is the secular education is so great and people are so advanced in terms of the nature of the world, science, technology, and so on, but **in their own personal faith** they are children. **They have not kept up with any kind of adult formation**. The second reason: theology, Neo-Scholasticism, is too concerned with opposing heresies that existed centuries ago and **not even aware of contemporary issues**, and it completely ignores the rich nourishment found in many of the traditions, the saints, the theologians of the past and so on, and the liturgy. **The liturgy had become stultified**. It was mechanical. In fact, priests were almost mechanical as they walked around. So that's not a way of consciously filling the soul. So that was another problem. The third, which I just mentioned, the **separation of the natural and the supernatural**. And fourth, a **rationalistic attitude among theologians—rationalism**. We found rationalism in liberal Protestantism. Well, he said it's also in Neo-Scholasticism. **Rationalism can exist anywhere where people draw nice, neat little boxes and stay within them**. He said they have **turned theology into a museum**, where they are the curators and going around now this is this and this is that, but it's all dead; it's all from the past; it has nothing to do with life. And he said the Neo-Scholastic theologians were not even interested in sharing their knowledge with others. They are only interested in being the experts. So in many ways, de Lubac and many theologians said that in this way **the Church was letting the world down**, letting the world die, if you want to put it that way.

So when the Council gathered in 1962, **the first subject matter was the Church**, and the schema that was presented was so terrible that the bishops voted to reject the whole thing and rewrite it. So the first session they didn't do anything except reject what had

been presented to them by these commissions that the pope had set up, the Curia set up really, and **asked for more people to come forward and devise a document on the Church.** And they finally did, and they called it *Lumen Gentium*, **Light of Nations.**

Now it happens to be very interesting that the word *gentium* comes from *gentes*. It is the word in the Bible for gentiles. And this signifies already one of the great successes of the Council which is distinguishing what the role of the Church is vis-à-vis the Jews. And as we look at the result of the Council, we can say that regardless of many disappointments **the one group that really accepted the overture of the Church was the Jewish people**, because really **the Council made overtures to all people**, all groups: “separated brothers” they called Protestants. They didn’t use the word “protestant”—“separated brethren” they called them. They made overtures for reunion. **When Pope John called the Council he wanted four things: reunion, reform, *aggiornamento*, and a concentrated effort to work for peace and justice in the world with everybody who wanted to do it.**

Well, the first one, **reunion, has never really worked.** The first object of reunion was, of course the Eastern Orthodox Churches, who were regarded as Churches, that is, they have the Eucharist. It’s the Eucharist that makes a Church. They were regarded as Churches, but the patriarch Athanargoras was favorable at first and he did meet with the pope, Paul VI, but most were indifferent. And the Russians were hostile—the Russian Orthodox.

Then when it comes to the separated brethren, as first the Anglicans and Lutherans were on commissions and talking about different things, but then they have their own problems. The Lutheran Church is divided into different rival synods; they won’t even allow the others to go to Communion with them. The Anglicans have all their kind of problems, especially between the mother church and the churches in Africa and Asia. So at this time, **at this particular time, reunion is not quite possible. But it was a goal; and it is a goal.**

Reform, well, next time in October I’ll talk about the reforms that the Vatican II really did effect.

Aggiornamento—well, that word means **updating.** I must say that that was not totally accepted by a lot of people. Even Paul VI didn’t like the word; he replaced it with *renovamento*, meaning renewal, but he didn’t like the word *aggiornamento* because he said it implied that the world was setting the agenda, and he said that really is impossible. So there are still things to talk about in terms of the Council, what it tried to do, what it did, and what it didn’t do.

Question about calling the Council to change or revamp the Church:

Well, in the constitution *Lumen Gentium* **pastors are told to consult with the laity according to their education, competence, or excellence**, or something like that, esteem—I know there are three qualifications. Actually there is a limited opening to laypeople in terms of their competence or their education. Even today, at least around here, every parish has pastoral councils; there is consultation with the people.

Question as to what would be an example of a faith-based paradox:

Well, today in the reading, St. Paul says that **this world is passing away**. Well, is it passing away? What does that mean? Passing away—when? Passing away now? Passing away literally? Well, it is passing away. There is something that is completely insubstantial about the world if by “world” you mean what we make, because the world is what we perceive it to be, how we create it to be, and the meaning we give to it, and so on, that is insubstantial. So that is passing away in one way. But it will still be here next year, and there will still be a world in a hundred years and thousand years, most probably. Eventually the earth will pass away when the sun blows up and so on. But the world is passing away in this one sense. In another sense the kingdom of God is with us, and that’s substantial and that will grow and that will remain. **So it is a paradoxical way of talking; it’s true but not true; it’s true but not literally true. You have to kind of find what it really means.**

Comment on how things used to be:

There were different points of view though in all that. Now we had School Sisters of St. Francis, just like Sister Madelyn, and those women were very advanced for that time. So they didn’t tell us about that stuff, but I heard it from others that went to other schools, they would say, “Oh, you can’t go to the ‘Y,’ you can’t do this,” and so on.

Another thing I did not mention, another element in this, not technically part of Nouvelle Theologie, but also going on at the same time was **a renewed interest in the Eastern spirituality and theology of the Church already at the time of Pius XI**. Pius XI started reading the theology and spirituality of Eastern Fathers and Eastern writers, and so on, and he said it brought tears to his eyes it was so beautiful. So he was interested. And there was this kind of promotion, and Pope John XXIII, one of his assignments was in Turkey as the papal representative in the country of Turkey, in Ankara, Turkey, and that opened his eyes to this Eastern Church. So that was another one of the developments that later on **when the Eastern fathers came to the Council** and they stood up, they were **remarkably well schooled and articulate** and the other bishops were really amazed at how smart they were, how much they had to say. Of course a lot of them had also been persecuted; they suffered a lot.

One of the first things they said was, you know, you are always talking about the “Roman Catholic Church.” Well, we are a member of this Church, but we are not Roman. Roman is a rite. It is true most Catholics are Roman Catholic, but we are not. So how many were there that were not Roman Catholic? About ten million, maybe as many as twenty million, but not that many. So the bishops said, okay, we are not going to call ourselves Roman Catholic Church anymore; it never has since then. **No Vatican document has ever referred to the Roman Catholic Church since 1962 or 3**. And yet here our Protestant brothers and sisters do not go along with that. I have constantly been called Roman Catholic in ecumenical meetings. And I point out to them, you know, we don’t use that term anymore. And they don’t care, and so they keep referring to us as Roman Catholic. But that is for a good reason; it’s a theological reason. **It is the Catholic Church not the Roman Catholic Church**. The Roman Catholic Church in a sense is the Western Church, and since 1054, the great schism between East and West, then there is a Roman Catholic Church, and a lot of our history is all bound up with that. But then these Eastern Rites said, yes, but that’s not the whole Church, and that’s not the whole history. We belong to something else, but we are part of the Catholic Church; we are in

communion with you. **So communion took on a new meaning**, so they changed that word, and that was a significant event in one way, I mean that they were actually thinking now in a broader sense, a broader way.

Question about the Council:

Pope Pius XII had appointed very smart bishops; he was interested in good, theological bishops, unlike most popes. That's one reason the Council was so successful because when these bishops arrived they were actually able to do theology. Now today I don't know if they could do it. It's a different world. They don't have the scholarship that they did then. **And Pius XII in a way was the grounding of the Council because he appointed all those wonderful men who were themselves very, very bright and very scholarly and knew how to deal with all this.** That's different from being a canon lawyer; it's not the same thing. It was just right. It was the right time. Pope John said it came into his head, but **it was just the right time for that.** The bishops were present; they were available; everything worked out. In another time, in another place, it would not have had the same effect.

Question as to who were the other people who were observers, well educated laity and so forth:

I can't answer that exactly, but there were some. I don't know exactly how they were chosen. It was not at first. It was **after the first session the bishops went to the pope and said how about if we have more lay observers**, and he said okay.

Question as to how many sessions were there?

Well, there was one in 62, 63, 64, 65—four.

Question about people leaving the Church at that time:

Well, there are two very different reasons. **Some people left the Church and some people left their vocations.** Now if you understand this, you understand **you can be very active in the apostolate of the Church and not be ordained or not be religiously connected.** So many of them said, well, I can live my life better in a lay state or as a layperson. So that's different from leaving the Church. But a lot of people left the Church I think because the old system was mechanical and it was very minimalistic, didn't require much. The new says, hey, you gotta participate; you gotta get going. That was part of it; **it was about being a full participant, consciously.**

Question about changes in the Church:

We had a professor, a teacher, in religion, a priest, and this was about 1964, and he said, well, you might have heard that there are going to be some changes in the Church. Well, according to the pope, the canon of the Mass will always be in Latin. And I remember Father John Barrett, he is around here, he told me that not too long ago. Oh, he said, I will never forget it. He said, we were told no matter what happens the canon will always be in Latin—and then it changed! There was a very devout Catholic that said, I don't see why the Mass has to be in English; after all, I learned Latin; why can't everyone? So that's an attitude.

Question about Latin:

There is a story that in the Council they had a terrible problem because the bishops who were well educated and **they could speak Latin to some degree, but they couldn't understand each other because of their accents.** So the Spanish bishops spoke Latin in such a way the German bishops said, what are they talking about? And the German bishops talked in such a way, the Italians said, what are they talking about? **So it wasn't so universal.**

Question about Mass in Latin:

Recently a woman said to me that she had been at the Latin Mass at Sts. Peter and Paul, and that she wondered if we were ever going to do it here and was kneeling during the whole thing part of it? And I said absolutely—it was. It doesn't have to be, but it was.