

# THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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## A THEOLOGICAL OVERVIEW

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## Returning from Exile

### *Catholic Theology in the 1930s*

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"That's where it all began," Marie-Dominique Chenu remarked. He was talking about a series of developments that led to a more engaged Catholicism and displayed their fruits most visibly at the Second Vatican Council, and he was claiming that they all began in the 1930s.<sup>1</sup> That was, of course, a decade of crisis, marked and determined from beginning to end by the Great Depression, which seemed to prove the internal contradictions of liberal capitalism and to vindicate socialist alternatives. It also saw the disappointment of the great hopes that World War I, "the war to end all wars," would make the world "safe for democracy" and that the League of Nations would provide a framework of international community and cooperation. Instead, by the end of the decade totalitarian regimes were in power in Russia, Italy, and Germany; liberal democracies were in crisis elsewhere; a revival of imperialist colonialism had led Italy to invade Ethiopia; and the Spanish Civil War had proven to be a dress rehearsal for a second world war. A literature of crisis appeared, initiated by Spengler's *Decline of the West* (1918-22) and illustrated by such diverse works as Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930), Benda's *La trahison des clercs* (1930), Ortega y Gasset's *The Revolt of the Masses* (1930), Huizinga's *The Crisis of Civilization* (1935), and Husserl's *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften* (1936).<sup>2</sup>

Pius XI reigned as pope during most of the decade, offering a grand project and a new practical orientation that were both responses to the general crisis. The goal was "the peace of Christ in the reign of Christ," the return of Western society and culture to their roots in the truths and values of Christ as mediated by the Catholic church. The pope shared the view common since the French Revolution that the cause of the problems of modernity lay in the abandonment of the faith that had inspired and di-

rected the great achievement of medieval Christendom, which remained for him the ideal embodiment of Christ's authority over society and culture.<sup>3</sup> To promote "the social reign of Christ," a common slogan of the time, he published a number of encyclicals that set out a critique both of liberal modernity, particularly in its economic consequences (*Quadragesimo anno*, 1931), and of the new threat represented by the rise of totalitarianism (*Non abbiamo bisogno*, 1931; *Mit brennender Sorge*, 1937; *Divini Redemptoris*, 1937); to inspire Catholics in the pursuit of that goal, he established the feast of Christ the King (1925).<sup>4</sup> As a practical means for achieving his purpose, he placed much less faith in the organization of Catholics into political parties than in the new forms of Christian engagement in the world represented by Catholic Action, instruments of what was then known as the "lay apostolate." Pius XI's vision and practice were to inspire two generations of Catholics in the years ahead.

In France, according to René Rémond, the 1930s were the first of two "golden ages" of Catholic intellectual life.<sup>5</sup> In literature the great names were those of Charles Péguy, Paul Claudel, Georges Bernanos, and François Mauriac. In philosophy, while Maurice Blondel was bringing his lifework to fulfillment, Jacques Maritain, Étienne Gilson, Gabriel Marcel, and Emmanuel Mounier were beginning or extending their influence. In theology the work of a younger generation began to become known: Teilhard de Chardin, M.-D. Chenu, Yves Congar, Henri de Lubac, Gaston Fessard. What contrasted most notably with the work of the previous generation, particularly in philosophy and theology, was the movement toward active and critical engagement with a society and culture in crisis that three decades later would make Vatican II possible.

This revival was enabled and encouraged, first, by the relaxation of tensions between the church and the Third Republic and, second, by two developments in the life of the church. The bitter hostility that had characterized relations after the Law of Separation (1905) had been eased by the fervent participation of Catholics in World War I and by the government's gradual move away from anticlericalism in the 1920s. The *ralliement* to the Republic that Leo XIII had unsuccessfully urged on French Catholics now seemed to be occurring, except, of course, among the ranks of Catholics linked to Action française. But in 1926 Pius XI forbade Catholic participation in that movement, largely because of its extreme nationalism and its subordination of the religious to the political (*politique d'abord*). His action, traumatic as it was for many bishops and intellectuals, spared the new generation of French intellectuals the crises of conscience that had divided their elders and enabled them to conceive of their work, not as a principled rejection of modernity, but as an effort to discriminate among its achievements and to work for a reconciliation of the church and the modern world.

The second ecclesiastical factor was the waning of the anti-modernist zealotry that had nearly smothered Catholic intellectual life in the two decades after the condemnation of 1907. In theology the new atmosphere

was illustrated in two courageous articles published at the beginning of the 1930s in comment on Jean Rivière's *Le modernisme dans l'Église* (1929). Bruno de Solages found in the poverty of ecclesiastical instruction both the cause and the consequence of the modernist crisis and argued that only improvement in clerical education could prevent a recurrence of the problem.<sup>6</sup> Marie-Dominique Chenu so departed from the common apocalyptic interpretation of the crisis that he could offer an analysis of modernism as "a normal crisis of growth," "a normal effect of the intellectual growth of Christian society," comparable to and no more surprising or to be feared than the crises that had marked two earlier moments which had proven to be very fruitful for the life of the church and the quality of theology: the renaissances of the Carolingian period and of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. As the introduction of grammar had marked the first and the introduction of philosophical dialectics the second, so the rise of historical consciousness occasioned the modernist crisis. Since Christianity is not simply a set of timeless doctrines but faith in historical events, theology could not be content to be a "sacred metaphysics but would have to engage the challenge represented by modern history while avoiding the two extremes of historicism and theologism. If these extremes had dominated the modernist crisis, it was now time for a mediating position inspired by and modelled after the work of Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth-century disputes.<sup>7</sup>

The political, cultural, and ecclesiastical situation in France, then, had greatly changed, and Catholics embarked upon an engagement with the events of the decade that contrasted greatly with the bitter alienation of the first decade of the century. If French Catholics remained divided in their political allegiances, at least they were no longer sitting on the sidelines, sullenly muttering their "*Non possumus*." An impressive number of new journals became forums for vigorous Catholic debates on public questions (*La Vie intellectuelle*, *Sept*, *Esprit*, and others). The 1930s were also the era of manifestos by Catholic intellectuals that responded to successive controversies over rearmament, nationalism, the threat of communism, the social question (corporatism and workers' rights), the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, and the Spanish Civil War. Obviously there were problems enough throughout the decade and, toward its end, a growing sense of looming crisis, and French Catholics were full participants in the general debates.

The impact of these developments on the development of Catholic intellectual life, particularly in philosophy and theology, is the subject of this chapter. I will illustrate it by brief discussions of three important figures, Jacques Maritain, M.-D. Chenu, and Henri de Lubac.

### Jacques Maritain

Maritain's conversion to Catholicism had been mediated by a Dominican priest, Humbert Clérissac, who, along with another Dominican mentor,

Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, steered him in the direction of Action française, in which they thought they found a politics in accord with Aquinas' philosophy. Maritain's early books are typified by the title he gave to one of them: *Antimodernisme*. But he accepted Pius XI's condemnation of Catholic participation in the movement and even became one of the most prolific defenders of the papal action. His early defenses attempted to place the pope's condemnation in the context of the classic doctrine of the indirect power of the papacy in temporal matters, exercised *ratione peccati*. But soon, perhaps in response to criticisms, he began to interpret it rather as an exercise of the properly spiritual authority to teach.<sup>8</sup>

More significantly, Maritain began to construct a theory of relations between church and society that, while it derived an inspiration from the Christian Middle Ages, found only an "analogous" ideal in them and recognized that any desirable "new Christendom" would have to be constructed in a different world, under different cultural "skies." Among the features of this new situation, now positively evaluated as indications of a coming of age, were a greater sense of humanity's historic self-responsibility, the just claim for human rights reflected in democratic political orders, whose roots he traced to Christian principles, and the inevitability of religious and cultural pluralism. The sacral, theocentric Christendom was gone forever, he argued, and a new concrete historical ideal had to be pursued, a secular, anthropocentric Christendom. A "humanism of the incarnation" was to be constructed in opposition to both the bourgeois humanism of capitalism and the revolutionary humanism of atheistic communism. In the inevitable conditions of pluralism the state would cease to be the secular arm of the church and, respecting the autonomy and rights of conscience, would not use the coercive power to defend or restore religious uniformity that in countries Maritain dismissed as "decoratively Christian" too often had inhibited the construction of a genuinely Christian society. Accompanying this political analysis were critiques both of capitalism and of socialism and of the tendency, common to both, to counterpose individual and society, a dichotomy that Maritain replaced by a non-adversarial theory of person and community.<sup>9</sup>

Maritain's was one of the earliest and certainly the most famous and most influential of proposals for a "new Christendom."<sup>10</sup> The term *Christendom* is ambiguous, of course, not least of all because of the close links between religious and secular power that characterized medieval Christendom.<sup>11</sup> These linkages, on the one hand, would lead Catholics of the right, particularly in Italy, Spain, parts of Latin America, and Canada, to conclude that what was new in Maritain's historical ideal—democracy, human rights, and a lay state—disqualified it as a "Christendom" and reduced it to "integral naturalism." On the other hand, they also led Emmanuel Mounier, who was much more critical than Maritain of the "established disorder" of capitalism and the Third Republic, to reject the idea of a new Christendom in favor of what he called a "personalist and communitarian

revolution." But the term continued to be invoked by an impressive number of Catholic thinkers who meant by it something like the concrete social, political, and cultural difference Christianity can and ought to make in the world.<sup>12</sup> Understood thus generally, they were unanimous in the view that there can and must be many "Christendoms" precisely because worlds and times differ. The large body of material that can be cited under this rubric thus represents various efforts to rethink the relationship between Christianity and modernity and to enable Catholic thought redemptively to re-enter the public, history-shaping discussions from which it had largely been kept absent and to which the dominant intransigent attitude and strategy had kept it alien. But this effort to rejoin the debate would require that theology also would have to return from exile, and illustrations of this effort to promote this restoration of a publicly significant theology are found in two figures who represent two of the main lines of the twentieth-century renewal of their discipline.

### M.-D. Chenu

Already apparent in Chenu's analysis of the modernist crisis, cited above, was the historical sensitivity that led him to establish a program in the history of doctrines at Le Saulchoir and to embark upon a type of historical inquiry into medieval theology, particularly that of St. Thomas, that would have close links with the *Annales* school of historiography. The great works of medieval theology would be studied in the context of and as an engagement with the economic, social, and cultural changes that constituted the renaissance of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. It was not surprising, then, that at the same time the "other Chenu" would begin to propose that a theology faithful, as was required, to Aquinas would have also to engage the no less powerful transformations taking place in his own time. Historical consciousness would acquire a second sense: "presence to one's own times."

In 1937 Chenu published "Dimension nouvelle de la Chrétienté," an article written for chaplains of the Jeunesse ouvrière chrétienne (Jocists), with whom he had closely associated himself.<sup>13</sup> This Catholic Action movement, founded by Canon Joseph Cardijn, exemplified the apostolate of milieu to milieu in which Pius XI was placing so much confidence. Chenu regarded it as one of the many signs that the church was abandoning "the state of siege" during which "the Church was, it seems, 'irrelevant' (*inactuelle*), always falling short of the present moment, without imagination in face of the future, without effective control over contemporary institutions and developments, and, what is worse, without that constant newness which inexhaustible and deep resources of discovery bring to a society. It seemed that history would be made without the church."

What was the world into whose course the church was now inserting itself? It was one marked by the overcoming of liberal individualism in a

growing awareness of collective interdependencies in nearly every area of human life and, more particularly, the insight gained from Karl Marx of the dehumanizing effect of the collective organization of modern labor.<sup>14</sup> This consciousness of communal solidarities represented a new appreciation of a dimension of the human condition, unfolding according to natural laws and dynamics. To this new phenomenon Chenu applied the analogy of the Incarnation, in which all that was human was taken up into union with the divine Word. The law of Incarnation now required the church to take up this newly appreciated collective dimension, "to incarnate the life of grace in social 'milieux.'" To be content with the salvation of the individual, without the salvation of society, would be to frustrate the law, logic, and dynamism of the Incarnation.<sup>15</sup>

For too long a magnificent apostolic zeal was designed to "protect" the Christian from his milieu, to create an artificial milieu for him in which he could take refuge and live in a Christian way in the pious atmosphere of a closed-off group, apart from a pagan or perverse ambience. It was, perhaps, inevitable at a particular moment, but its narrow empiricism led us to a Christianity of *émigrés*, cut off from life, from its daily reality, from its states, its classes, and thus to a Christianity that had no bite and no boldness, a disincarnate Christianity, . . . abandoning to its misery the damned and disgraceful mass of a pagvanized proletariat.<sup>16</sup>

The Jocists had broken with this strategy. They represented an effort to realize a new Christendom, particularly by inserting themselves into the collectivity of the masses that had so often crushed and dehumanized workers and there undertaking an apostolate of their milieu. This new apostolic method, which supplemented the traditional parish-centered apostolate, too tied to earlier forms of social aggregation, displayed the church's incarnational adaptability to the emergence of social classes and was in that respect analogous to the new methods introduced by the mendicant orders in response to similarly transformative developments in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

This book ended with Chenu's expression of deference to the chaplains with whom he often conversed at Le Saulchoir, deference not only for friendship's sake but "the deference of a theologian for the Christian fact (*le donné chrétien*) on which he reflects, whose religious intelligibility he seeks." In the Jocists, Chenu saw Christendom in travail, laboring toward a new incarnation. The life of the church is the first object of the theologian: "There it is that he finds his proper and immediately inspiring matter: to do theology is to be present to the revelation given in the present life of the church and the present experience of Christendom. . . . The theologian keeps his eyes upon Christendom in travail. This is how he is *present* to his time; this is the very law of his knowledge" (350-51).

In 1937 Chenu published for circulation in Dominican circles a little book describing the structure and logic of studies at Le Saulchoir.<sup>17</sup> At almost every point he contrasted the work being done there in historical studies, in philosophy, and in theology to the ahistorical, systematized, and deductivistic methods common elsewhere, and especially, as it was not hard to conclude, in Rome, which showed its displeasure by placing the book on the Index in 1942. The law of Incarnation once again played a great role, visible also in Chenu's notion of tradition, not as a set of formulas, but as the life and experience of a church that is present to its time, and in his emphasis upon the role of discovery (*invention*) in theology. A brief description of contemporary developments set out what he would later call signs of the times. The church's missionary expansion in an age when colonialism was in decline was bringing a new sense of wider dimensions of the world, of its solidarities and autonomies, of the pluralism of civilizations reflecting "the divine suppleness of grace," and, in particular, of the treasures of Eastern Christianity. Beneath a nascent ecumenical movement lay a new appreciation of the unity of the church. In society the masses were coming to self-consciousness, posing not only practical problems, but also "the great problem of a new Christendom in gestation, a mystical body in which work will attain its spiritual status and the person his human condition between wealth and misery." And in all this, the militant church "is finding again in this new world a new youth, by a new method of conquest, in which lay people share in the hierarchical apostolate, bringing in their milieu the witness and life of Christ: a prolonged incarnation, in which all the density of human society, in its professions and classes, is taken up into the institutions that are the specialized movements, the typical structure of this new Christendom." "These are theological *loci en acte*," he concluded, "for the doctrine of grace, of the incarnation, of redemption. . . . Poor theologians are they who, buried away in their folios and their scholastic disputes, are not open to these remarkable developments, and not only in the pious fervor of their hearts, but formally, in their science: here is a very profitable theological datum, in the *presence* of the Spirit."<sup>18</sup>

There are visible in Chenu's approach not only his own irrepressible optimism and enthusiasm but also a strong theological basis in the doctrine of the Incarnation and a methodological orientation, borrowed from Aquinas, that Chenu believed was the only one appropriate to the world disclosed by that great and defining fact. The most intimate and complete union with God did not destroy or even compromise but rather elevated and integrated the humanity of Christ, and any theology faithful to the logic of Incarnation had to respect the integrity of the human in all its dimensions—personal, communal, and social. There are few words that appear more often in these writings of Chenu than the word *autonomy*. There was not only the autonomy of the created order, having its own substance and density, following its own laws, but also the autonomy of the sciences and disciplines that study it, which is not to be compromised by facile

efforts at concordism or by premature and undifferentiated theological explanations.

Given his own role in the renewal of Catholic theology in the twentieth century, it is worth noting how Chenu's student and colleague, Yves Congar, in one of his first essays, echoed Chenu's analysis when he offered a theological analysis of the responses given to a poll on the causes of unbelief in France:

We believe we have not betrayed either the truth or the responses to the survey in finding the most general reason for present unbelief in a certain hiatus between faith and life, a hiatus that affects the faith in one of its essential properties and determines collective conditions unfavorable to belief. The constitution of a spiritual and even religious world, of a *total* human life outside of Christianity, on the one hand, the contraction of the Church, its self-withdrawal into a special world and the fatal defensive attitudes it has adopted, on the other hand: two major and correlative facts that have together created this hiatus between faith and life and made Catholicism appear as *a part* of the world, a group apart, and even, in the eyes of some, as a sect or a party. Thus the very conditions in which the faith is presented to the modern world constitute a difficulty and almost a contradiction.

Congar's solution was also similar to Chenu's:

The faith has to become humanly present, as Christ was. A policy of presence; not a policy of prestige on behalf of some sort of ecclesiastical imperialism, but a policy of the presence of the faith in all that is human, in order to take up every human value and thus to manifest the total value of faith with regard to human life.<sup>19</sup>

### Henri de Lubac

At roughly the same time that Chenu published his analysis of the modernist crisis, Henri de Lubac, in one of his first published articles, offered an analysis of the state of theology and a proposal to restore its original task. For the young French Jesuit, the problem was the separation of theology and apologetics, particularly when the latter is conceived as a positivistic demonstration uninterested in the links between grace and nature and the former as a set of separate truths to be understood in themselves.

What a shabby theology it is that treats the object of faith as an object of science, that does not know how to discern religion in its inner and universal reality and so sees it only as a system of truths and precepts,

imposing themselves only on the basis of a certain number of facts! It confines dogma to the extremities of knowledge, in a distant province, out of touch with other provinces. It makes dogma a kind of "superstructure," believing that, if it is to remain "supernatural," it must be "superficial" and thinking that by cutting it off from all human roots, it is making dogma all the more divine. As if God were not the author of both nature and grace, and of nature in view of grace.<sup>20</sup>

A "shabby theology," he called it, unfaithful to the tradition of the Fathers and Aquinas, a "separated theology tagging behind a separated philosophy" itself unworthy of the line of Justin, Augustine, Aquinas, and Pascal. "Theology should not be conceived as simply 'the science of revealed truths,' simply an understanding of the faith; what is needed is an understanding of all reality *by means of faith*, an integrated fundamental theology in which the invitation to faith is mediated, not by extrinsic demonstration, but by an exposition of how revelation and grace illumine and empower the human mystery.

It is indicative that in this essay de Lubac anticipated that his proposal would be criticized either for naturalizing the supernatural or for supernaturalizing the natural. The same criticisms had been addressed to the man from whom he had begun to learn the need for a more integrated Christian anthropology than the one then reigning in Catholic theology. De Lubac would later recall his debts to Maurice Blondel and the influence of the dispute between Blondel and Pedro Descoqs over Catholic allegiance to Action française. A compartmentalized anthropology had permitted Descoqs and many other theologians to accept the agnostic and positivistic social analysis of Maurras, to which the supernatural was simply added as a necessary but extrinsic complement. For Blondel, as also for de Lubac, this theory legitimized authoritarian views both of society and of the church and inhibited the ability of Christians to bring the light and power of the faith to bear upon the whole of reality in an integral Catholicism that could inspire respect for democracy and the struggle for social justice. The recovery of the dynamic links between nature and grace, between Christianity and history, would be the aim of a good part of de Lubac's work during the 1930s, resulting in his two great books, *Catholicisme and Supernature*.<sup>21</sup>

The first of these set out to restore to Catholic consciousness what he called in its subtitle "the social aspects of dogma."<sup>22</sup> Drawing in particular on the thought of the Fathers of the church, de Lubac sought to overcome the widespread perception expressed in two quotations, one saying of the Christian that "in his blessedness he passes through the battlefields with a rose in his hand," the other Renan's comment that "Christianity is a religion made for the inner consolation of a few chosen souls." In the early chapters he set out a Christian vision of creation and history focused on the theme of unity. God had created the human race as one; sin had splintered

that unity; the redemption wrought by Christ consisted in the restoration of that unity, finally in the kingdom of God but already anticipated in history in the reconciling and integrating work of a genuinely catholic church. In a chapter entitled "Person and Society," de Lubac insisted that, unlike many modern theories, the Catholic understanding did not require one to choose society over the person, the collectivity over the individual. Catholic inclusiveness insists upon and exalts both Person and the Whole.

If *Catholicisme* set out the objective, communal, and historical framework of the Christian response to the dissociating effects of sin, *Surnaturel* attempted to explain how it happened that Christian thought came in the modern world to be marginalized and lost its ability to influence the course of its history.<sup>23</sup> Responsibility for this, de Lubac argued, lay not only with the secularizing of Western thought, but also with the capitulation of theologians to a naturalistic anthropology that so dwelt upon the natural powers and finality of human nature that an appeal to the supernatural powers and finality of grace had almost inevitably to appear as an extrinsic and almost arbitrary addition. "There was," he would later write, "a sort of unconscious conspiracy between the movement which led to secularism and a certain theology, and while the supernatural was exiled and proscribed, we began to think that the supernatural was thus placed beyond the reach of nature, in the only realm where it is to reign."<sup>24</sup> The dynamism of human spirit, unsatisfied short of the vision of God, was lost from view. The fulfillment of natural powers and desires could be left to the masters of the human order, while theologians could be left to tend their walled-off supernatural garden. An integrated view of the only order that exists—an order with an intrinsic supernatural destiny—was rendered impossible. In *Surnaturel* de Lubac sketched an anthropology to match the cosmic, historical, and ecclesial vision of *Catholicisme*.

During the 1930s de Lubac also published various essays that addressed contemporary public matters. These included an effort to demolish what he considered the ahistorical argumentations of Maritain and Charles Journet on the church's temporal power, and a critique, on the basis of the catholicity of the church, of a Maurrasian justification of renaissance nationalism in France. He would continue such efforts during the Nazi occupation of France, most notably in essays on anti-semitic ideologies and on the causes of the decline of the sense of the sacred and in *The Drama of Atheistic Humanism*, which is a scarcely veiled critique of the master sources of the Nazi ideology.<sup>25</sup> And de Lubac would match these essays by active participation in the *Résistance*.

Certain features distinguish de Lubac's effort from Chenu's. De Lubac's favored sources are the Fathers of the church, whose "symbolic inclusions" he fiercely defended as genuine theology and which he much preferred to the "dialectical antitheses" characteristic of "scientific" medieval scholasticism. He was far less enthusiastic than Chenu about the Thomist achievement,

which he not only thought was precarious but in his view had also made possible the compartmentalized anthropology of his later commentators, however much this latter contradicted Aquinas's intent, method, and position. There is much less insistence on one of Chenu's favorite themes, that of the autonomy of the created order and of its substantive and disciplinary laws, and much more stress on the supernatural finality of creation.<sup>26</sup> The horizontal finality of nature seems almost absorbed in the vertical supernatural finality of its destiny. There is less emphasis on economic questions and the phenomenon of the masses, and de Lubac was much more reserved about possible alliances with Marxism than was Chenu. At the Second Vatican Council their differences would typify two different approaches to theology, particularly in the preparation of *Gaudium et spes*. After the council they offered two different analyses and appreciations of the post-conciliar situation. At the risk of oversimplifying, one might say that de Lubac found his model for the Christian engagement with culture in the great patristic achievement and Chenu his in the Thomist achievement.<sup>27</sup>

### Conclusion

What began in the 1930s was the end of the cultural isolation of Catholic theology, dramatically described by Karl Rahner when he said that it would be difficult to discern any significant differences between a textbook of theology published in 1750 and one on the same subject published in 1950 even though in the meantime "cultural and spiritual transformations have taken place which, to say the least, are comparable in depth and extent and power to mould men's lives, with those which took place between the time of Augustine and that of the golden age of scholasticism."<sup>28</sup> What de Lubac called separate philosophy and separate theology, Chenu described as theology in exile serving a "Christianity of émigrés." What de Lubac proposed as an understanding of all reality in the light of faith, Chenu pursued as a theological reflection on the experienced life of the church laboring toward a new incarnation in the dynamics of history. If de Lubac's main contribution was the recovery of the broad and deep Catholic tradition that had been narrowed down and only superficially represented in a modern system that was mistaken in thinking itself traditional, Chenu's contribution, apart from his important technical work on medieval theology, was to insist that theology found the object of its critical reflection not only in the scriptures and in the monuments of the tradition but in the life and experience of the church. In both cases theology became an expression of the church's engagement with society, culture, and history and thereby regained the genuinely catholic, integral character it had lost during the time when it was considered to be mainly for domestic consumption within an alienated church.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> "C'est de là que tout est parti." Jacques Duquesne, *Jacques Duquesne interroge le Père Chenu. "Un théologien en liberté"* (Paris: Centurion, 1975), 85. The words quoted end a chapter entitled "La germination des années trente" (64-85).
- <sup>2</sup> See Giorgio Campanini, "Il pensiero politico cristiano e la crisi degli anni trenta," in *Cristianesimo e democrazia: Studi sul pensiero politico cattolico del '900* (Brescia: Morcelliano, 1980), 19-40.
- <sup>3</sup> See Joseph A. Komonchak, "Modernity and the Construction of Roman Catholicism," *Cristianesimo nella Storia* 18 (1997), 353-85.
- <sup>4</sup> See Daniele Menozzi, "Liturgia e politica: l'introduzione della festa di Cristo Re," in *Cristianesimo nella Storia: Saggi in onore di Giuseppe Alberigo*, ed. A. Melloni et al. (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1996), 607-56.
- <sup>5</sup> Jacques Julliard and Daniel Lindenberg, "L'histoire des intellectuels catholiques: Interview de René Rémond," *Mil neuf cent: Revue d'histoire intellectuelle (Cahiers Georges Sorel)* 13 (1995), 18. Rémond's other golden age was the decade after the Second World War. Yves-Marie Hilaire also speaks of the 1930s as "a golden age of Christian thought and letters" (*Histoire religieuse de la France contemporaine*, vol. 3, 1930/1988, ed. Gérard Cholvy and Yves-Marie Hilaire [Toulouse: Privat, 1988], 24-29).
- <sup>6</sup> Bruno de Solages, "La crise moderniste et les études ecclésiastiques," *Revue apologetique* 51 (July 1930), 5-30.
- <sup>7</sup> Marie-Dominique Chenu, "Le sens et les leçons d'une crise religieuse," *La vie intellectuelle* 13 (December 1931), 357-80.
- <sup>8</sup> Jacques Maritain, *Une opinion sur Charles Maurras et le devoir des Catholiques*, in Jacques et Raïssa Maritain, *Oeuvres complètes* (Fribourg: Ed. Universitaires, 1984), 3:739-80; "De l'obéissance au Pape," *La vie spirituelle* 90 (March 1927), 755-57; *Primaauté du spirituel*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, 3:783-988; *The Things That Are Not Caesar's* (New York: Scribner's, 1930); "Le sens de la condamnation," in *Pourquoi Rome a parlé, Oeuvres complètes*, 3:1223-67.
- <sup>9</sup> Jacques Maritain, *Religion et culture*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, 4:193-255; "Religion and Culture," in *Essays in Order*, ed. Christopher Dawson (New York: Macmillan, 1931), 1-61; Jacques Maritain, *Du régime temporel et de la liberté*, in *Oeuvres complètes* (Fribourg: Ed. Universitaires, 1982), 5:319-515; *Freedom in the Modern World* (New York: Scribner's, 1936); *Integral Humanism: Temporal and Spiritual Problems of a New Christendom* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973).
- <sup>10</sup> For the power and persistence of the theme, see Giovanni Miccoli, *Fra mito della cristianità e secolarizzazione* (Casale Monferrato: Marietti, 1985), 23-92; Daniele Menozzi, *La Chiesa cattolica e la secolarizzazione* (Torino: Einaudi, 1993), 15-71.
- <sup>11</sup> See Giuseppe Alberigo et al., eds., *La chrétienté en débat: Histoire, formes et problèmes actuels* (Paris: Cerf, 1984).
- <sup>12</sup> Recalling the debate of the 1930s, and the ambiguity of the word, Chenu later remarked: "What does 'Christendom' mean? It means the Church insofar as it has found its setting (*assiette*) in the world. . . . But if the temporal is autonomous, then the Church no longer is temporal. That, of course, is idealism: the Church will always imply a Christendom. I have always opposed those who dream of a pure Church, with a pure faith, with no temporal engagement. I admit that there will always be a Christendom, but I relativize, I say that it will change. In the year 2000 there will be the same Church but Christendom will be quite different. And if one day there exists a strong Chinese Church, as there now is in India, it will be quite different. In other words, there is a plurality of Christendoms in the one Church" (Duquesne, *Un théologien en liberté*, 84).

<sup>13</sup> M.-D. Chenu, "Dimension nouvelle de la Chrétienté," *La vie intellectuelle* 53 (1937), 325-51.

<sup>14</sup> "The proper task of a Christian critique of Marxism," Chenu, echoing Maritain, wrote, "is to free this insight from the materialistic metaphysics in which it was conceptualized" ("Dimension nouvelle de la chrétienté," 341; see also 348-49). In the 1930s Chenu introduced a course on Marx into the program of studies at Le Saulchoir.

<sup>15</sup> For this theme in Chenu, see Christophe Potworowski, "Dechristianization, Socialization and Incarnation in Marie-Dominique Chenu," *Science et Esprit* 43 (1991), 17-54. For a differently grounded but parallel analysis of the new collective consciousness, see Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, "La crise présente: Réflexions d'un naturaliste," *Études* 222 (1937), 145-65: "We now have to recognize that humanity is entering what is probably the greatest period of transformation that it has ever known. . . . Something is happening in the general structure of human consciousness. Another species of life is beginning" (145).

<sup>16</sup> A parallel essay made a similar point: "I think with sadness of that narrow Christendom, strictly individualistic, which has been unable to recognize, beneath its deviations, this immense fraternal aspiration. A disembodied Christendom that fears the earthly power of man and his collective destiny, which is unwilling to follow the movement of history, and makes its believers live as if nothing were happening. Absent from its time, not even knowing how to speak its language, imprisoning its theology of grace and its social morality in outdated categories, it has lost that creative sense and that permanent discovery that would enable it to take initiatives" (M.-D. Chenu, "Classes et Corps mystique du Christ," *La vie intellectuelle*, Serie de juillet 2 [Januar 31, 1940], 9-31, at 27).

<sup>17</sup> A new edition, with critical essays, appeared as Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Une école de théologie: le Saulchoir* (Paris: Cerf, 1985).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 142-43.

<sup>19</sup> Yves Congar, "Une Conclusion théologique à l'Enquête sur les raisons actuelles de l'incroyance," *La vie intellectuelle* 37 (1935), 214-49, at 248-49.

<sup>20</sup> Henri de Lubac, "Apologetics and Theology," first published in *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* in 1930, now included in Henri de Lubac, *Theological Fragments*, trans. Rebecca Howell Balinski (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 91-104.

<sup>21</sup> See Joseph A. Komonchak, "Theology and Culture at Mid-century: The Example of Henri de Lubac," *Theological Studies* 51 (1990), 579-602.

<sup>22</sup> Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism: Les aspects sociaux du dogme* (Paris: Cerf, 1938); *idem*, *Catholicism: A Study of Dogma in Relation to the Corporate Destiny of Mankind* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1958).

<sup>23</sup> Henri de Lubac, *Surnaturel: Études historiques* (Paris: Aubier, 1946; Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1991).

<sup>24</sup> This sentence is from an essay first published in 1942, "Internal Causes of the Weakening and Disappearance of the Sense of the Sacred," in Henri de Lubac, *Theology in History* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 232.

<sup>25</sup> See the works summarized in Komonchak, "Theology and Culture at Mid-century," 596-601.

<sup>26</sup> In his essay on the modernist crisis, Chenu posed the issues in terms that one never finds in de Lubac: "Reason claims the right to examine and to analyze the facts of sacred history, to discover their linkages and causes, as once it claimed the right to examine and analyze nature, the concepts in which these nature are expressed, and the intrinsic causes of these nature. Will there be an autonomous history of humanity, in the same way and to the same degree that there is an autonomous philosophy of the world and of man?" ("Le sens et les leçons d'une crise religieuse," 364).

<sup>27</sup> See Joseph A. Komonchak, "Vatican II and the Encounter between Catholicism and Liberalism," in *Catholicism and Liberalism: Contributions to American Public Philosophy*, ed. R. Bruce Douglass and David Hollenbach (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 76-99; and idem, "Interpreting the Council: Catholic Attitudes toward Vatican II," in *Being Right: Conservative Catholics in America*, ed. Mary Jo Weaver and R. Scott Appleby (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1995), 17-36.

<sup>28</sup> Karl Rahner, "The Prospects for Dogmatic Theology," *Theological Investigations* (Baltimore: Helicon, 1961), 1:2.

## 5

## The Great Depression

*The Response of North American Theologians*


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 DONALD SCHWEITZER
 

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The Great Depression was a global crisis that shook free enterprise capitalism and its liberal institutions and values. This chapter will only analyze creative Christian theological responses to this that occurred in the United States and Canada. The two most striking of these responses were Reinhold Niebuhr's critique of the liberal Social Gospel and the radical theology of a Canadian group, the Fellowship for a Christian Social Order.<sup>1</sup> In provoking these the depression stimulated the rise of a new realism in Protestant thought, opened Protestant theologians to Marxist social analysis, moved many to the political left, and inspired an important debate over what Christians can hope for in history.

The depression is generally reckoned to have begun with the crash of the New York stock market on October 29, 1929. Partly as a result of technological developments, the process now known as globalization had created a nascent world community with an interlocked economy. The stock market crash initiated a spiral of price deflation that spread to industries and agriculture around the world, resulting in an unprecedented number of people becoming unemployed.<sup>2</sup> Even many with work suffered searing frustration and humiliation as they struggled for years to make do on inadequate incomes. Economic slumps were not new in the modern economy, but previously they had been brief. The depression was unique in its global reach, severity, and duration. In the United States and Canada in 1933 roughly one in four people depended on meager public relief to survive. In 1938 the figure was approximately one in five.

Pastoral responses to the depression in Canada and the United States varied. In the revival of individualistic evangelical fervor and the reactionary radio broadcasts of Father Coughlin it was interpreted as God's judgment on a lack of religious piety. Anti-semitism intensified. An awareness of the