

MOVEMENTS OF RENEWAL

Initial Context

18th Century: age of imitators—no real creativity; at the margins of intellectual and cultural developments; the same questions, methods, vocabulary, etc. (Karl Rahner's comment); theology is largely for domestic consumption;

19th Century: philosophical eclecticism; debased Thomism; lack of scholarship; faith and reason: oscillation between rationalism and fideism/traditionalism; effort to find a middle ground;

Vatican I on faith and reason and on infallibility of papal magisterium; growing number of papal interventions and condemnations; increased centralization

Leo XIII: positive struggle; encyclicals on political theory and economics; restoration of the Christian philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas; opening of Vatican archives;

The Modernist Crisis (ca. 1890-1910)

Awakening of historical consciousness, particularly through the application of critical historical methods to the Scriptures (authorship, dating, credibility, etc.) and the history of the Church; challenge to the traditional mediation of Church's constitutive past; development of doctrine (Newman); [Alfred Loisy]

Turn to the subject in philosophy: Descartes, Kant, Hegel; metaphysics and epistemology; relativism and historicism; relation between doctrine and religious experience; [George Tyrrell]

Papal condemnation (1907): *Lamentabili*, a collection of mistaken positions found in writings of "Modernists;" *Pascendi*, long encyclical setting out system of "Modernism" which is condemned as heresy; severe practical measures in appointments of professors, monitoring and censoring of books, vigilance committees, delations; climate of fear; retarding of development of scholarship, particularly in biblical area;

1930s: The Breakthrough Decade

Sense of crisis: liberal modernity seems to be tottering: economics (Great Depression); democracy (rise of three forms of totalitarianism); international community (failure of League of Nations; revival of nationalism; Italian invasion of Ethiopia; Spanish Civil War);

With liberalism failing and socialist and communist alternatives no better, sense that the Catholic worldview, rejected by both, might now be able to recommend itself; call of Pius XI to restore Christian influence; his support for "Catholic Action," efforts to rechristianize society and culture; group of major twentieth-century Catholic thinkers emerges and begins to rethink relation between Church and world; examples:

Jacques Maritain: lay French Catholic philosopher, Thomist, wide range of interests; proposal of a “new Christendom;”

Christopher Dawson: lay English historian: relation between religion and culture; Christian roots of Europe; need to restore influence of Christianity;

Teilhard de Chardin: French Jesuit paleontologist; mystic; reconciliation of Christianity and modern scientific worldview, particularly evolution; global movements of progress;

M.-D. Chenu: French Dominican priest; medieval scholar interested in contextualizing Thomist achievement; need to do today what he did then; need of Church to incarnate itself in neglected or abandoned milieux and to create “new Christendoms;”

Yves Congar: French Dominican priest; historian of ecclesiology; ecumenist; need to span gap between Church and modern intellectual culture;

Henri de Lubac: French Jesuit; recovery of great patristic and early medieval synthesis; critique of alienation of philosophy and theology; catholicity as redemptive integration; search of a theological interpretation of reality;

Bernard Lonergan: Canadian philosopher/theologian; first explorations of a theology of history: Christ as the new head of humanity; historical meaning of redemption;

Dimensions of the Renewal

Biblical studies: gradual return to serious scholarship; endorsement by Pius XII of the historical-critical method (e.g., literary genres) in encyclical *Divino afflante Spiritu* (1943); rapid growth in quantity and quality of Catholic biblical studies; concerns begin to be expressed;

Patristic studies: high-quality work all along here; critical texts; historical analyses; popular translations; recovery of broad, rich, and deep Catholic vision before divisions of the Church; implicit and sometimes explicit preference for vital, existential character of patristic and early medieval thought in contrast to scholastic (academic) theology, at least in its modern form;

Medieval studies: recovery of actual thought of Aquinas as distinct from that of his disciples and commentators; great variety of medieval thought; splits among modern Thomists; the example of Aquinas;

Liturgical movement: origins go back to 19th century; beginnings of reform: first communion; Gregorian chant; papal encyclical *Mediator Dei* (1947); call for greater lay participation, vernacular, etc; reform of paschal triduum (1956);

Ecumenical movement: first tentative efforts in 19th century, largely failures; encyclical *Mortalium animos* (1928) warns against it; some efforts undertaken in 1930s and 1940s, but all are very closely watched by Rome;

Theology of the laity: rethinking their place in the Church; not simply passive recipients of clergy’s ministrations; special responsibility for rechristianizing the world;

Church-world relations: search for more nuanced consideration of modernity and liberalism; insufficiency of top-down approach (Concordats); need to rethink Church-State relations and legitimacy of constitutional guarantees of religious freedom for all; theologies of history, of work, of “temporal realities;” Roman suspicions;

Crisis over “la nouvelle théologie”

Even before World War II first indications of Roman suspicion of new directions both in theology and in Church-world relations; Chenu’s book put on Index of Forbidden Books;

Controversy immediately after War: “Where is the new theology heading?” Answer: toward relativism and heresy; French Jesuits are the main target: disparagement of Thomism and scholasticism in favor of vague, “unscientific,” biblical and patristic thought; historical and doctrinal relativism;

Encyclical *Humani generis* (1950) sides with critics of new movements; disciplinary actions taken against French Jesuits (1950), French Dominicans (1954), and American Jesuit, John Courtney Murray, for his work on rethinking of Church-State relations and religious freedom in the modern state; return of climate of fear and suspicion during last decade of reign of Pius XII.