

# Thomism

As a

# Perennial Philosophy

CHAPLAIN'S DAY  
ADDRESS

by  
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THE subject of this afternoon's talk, "Thomism as a Perennial Philosophy," has been chosen for two reasons. First, it was selected by the Chaplain, whose day this is. Second, a new tension within Thomism developed in Europe after the war in 1945, and in the U.S. after 1960. A younger generation, thinking that Thomism is not modern enough, feels that philosophy in colleges, seminaries, and universities ought to be a study of the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), the phenomenological existentialism of his distinguished disciple, Martin Heidegger (1889-), the existentialism of Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), or even the analytic method of Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) and the Vienna Circle. The Second World War not only rescued Kierkegaard from oblivion, but created a restless reaction to all complacent systems of thought through the vivid writings of Jean Paul Sartre (1905-), Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-), and especially Fr. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955). Young Catholic readers, depressed by war and distressed with complacent answers found in Thomistic manuals, are on the verge of rejecting Thomism altogether as a perennial philosophy and of seeking truth in something more restless, personal, existential, and psychologically descriptive. Already in France the cult of Teilhard de Chardin has replaced that of St. Thomas. In Oct. 1962 I received a letter from Prof. Etienne Gilson in which he said, "In Paris, Thomas went out of fashion. The theology-fiction of Teilhard de Chardin is the new fad. They are literally crazy about it." On the other hand, educators and administrators responsible for the training of future priests, Sisters, Brothers, and an educated laity fully realize the intrinsic dangers of a new modernism that would reject a perennial philosophy for a passing fad or a pressing need. By educators and administrators I mean popes, bishops, the Sacred Congregation of Studies, presidents of colleges, academic boards, and professionally experienced philosophers. Thus a modern tension is created between experienced educators and inexperienced beginners, both motivated by apostolic zeal and personal concern. The question is, "Can this modern tension be resolved satisfactorily for the good of the Church today and tomorrow?"

It may come as a surprise that the tension of which I speak is not entirely new. The existential situation is indeed new, but the desire for modernity in Catholic philosophy is not at all new. In order to appreciate our modern dilemma in Thomism, it is important to see the path by which we have come. The

famous German physicist, Ernst Mach, who late in life became a serious student of the history of mechanics and a pioneer of relativity, had a deep appreciation of the historical approach to ideas and problems. In his *History and Root of the Principle of the Conservation of Energy*, Ernst Mach wisely said, "One can never lose one's footing, or come into collision with facts, if one always keeps in view the path by which one has come." (Chicago 1911, p.17) This afternoon, therefore, I would like to point out the path by which Thomism was revived in the 19th century, legislated in the early 20th century during the Modernist Crisis, and is now on the threshold of a new era inaugurated by Pope John XXIII.

The Thomistic revival under Pope Leo XIII cannot be understood without appreciating two significant facts in the development of Catholic thought since the Reformation. The first is that Catholic universities and seminaries were greatly influenced by "modern" philosophers, non-scholastic thinkers, many of whom were non-Catholic. The second is that many 19th-century Catholic intellectuals had a sincere, ardent desire to defend Catholic doctrine and to make it acceptable in an age of rationalism, skepticism, naturalism, and liberalism. This last fact produced what is now called 19th-century apologetics.

Modern philosophical thought, even in Catholic circles, goes back to the French Catholic philosopher and scientist, René Descartes (1596-1650). Descartes was taught an unsatisfying form of scholasticism by the Jesuits at La Flèche. After discovering analytic geometry in 1619, Descartes wanted to reconstruct the whole of speculative philosophy, which at that time still included the natural sciences. Rejecting outright all previous thinkers, he elaborated a new philosophy, which he hoped would be acceptable to Catholic schools. To win over theologians of his day, he dedicated a Latin exposition of his basic philosophical principles (*Meditationes de primis principiis*) to the Dean and Faculty of Theology of the Sorbonne in 1641. The theologians were unimpressed. As might have been expected, some resented this innovation by a layman, while others were antagonistic to the un-scholastic character of Descartes' philosophy.

Although spurned by the Sorbonne, Descartes' philosophy became widely popular after his death both in the vernacular and in the scholastic tongue. Not only was Cartesian philosophy taught in French, Belgian, Dutch, and English universities, but his

principle of rejecting all pre-17th century thought became universal. Protestants welcomed the rejection of scholasticism, and even Catholics rejoiced in the downfall of Aristotelianism. Catholic colleges and seminaries in France, Belgium, and Italy taught Cartesian philosophy or some form of it, as late as 1850. It became fashionable to ridicule the Middle Ages, scholasticism, and Aristotelianism even without bothering to explain why.

Isaac Newton's definitive rejection of Cartesian physics (1713), Voltaire's popularization of Newtonian physics in France (1738), Clarke's Newtonian annotations to the standard Cartesian textbook by Rohault, and growing acceptance of universal gravitation and the new system of the world had their effect on seminary textbooks. Henceforth Newtonian physics was fitted into Cartesian metaphysics, and the whole ensemble was adjusted to the schema of Christian Wolff's concept of philosophy.

Christian Wolff (1679-1754), a disciple of Leibniz, systematized his master's philosophy for use in schools. Wolff's 15 v. course in philosophy was widely used in Germany, and highly influential in Italy, France, Spain and the low countries. The influence of Wolff can easily be recognized in the separation of experimental science from rational philosophy, the identification of philosophy with metaphysics and ethics, and the subdivision of metaphysics into ontology and special metaphysics.

In the 18th and 19th century countless Catholic textbooks were produced presenting a "Christian philosophy" based on the Scriptures, Descartes, Newton and Wolff. Just to take two random examples, there was the widely used 18th-century *Institutiones philosophicae* in 5 v. by Fr. Joseph Valla and sponsored by the Archbishop of Lyons. This *Philosophia Lugdunensis*, as it came to be called, was "le cours classique du cartesianisme" that freely quoted from Sacred Scripture, St. Jerome, St. Augustine, Cicero, Seneca, Bossuet, Fénelon, French poets and contemporary philosophers without ever mentioning St. Thomas. Thomists are mentioned once in the discussion of Molinism. Surprisingly, Fr. Valla sided with Bossuet and the Thomists against Molina and the Calvinists! Then there was the standard textbook in Spanish seminaries during the first half of the 19th century by Fr. Andrea de Guevara y Basoazabal, *Institutionum elementarium philosophiae*, in 6 v. Here the latest theories and principles of physics were taught with Cartesian metaphysics and psychology. Gravitational forces attracting bodies at a

distance, for example, were presented as highly conducive to theism and religion.

Catholic philosophy books in this period were frankly *apologetical* in character, venturing to defend the possibility of revelation, miracles, the Incarnation, the Eucharist, and other supernatural mysteries.

Historically speaking, it must be admitted that Catholic textbooks of philosophy produced during the 18th and early 19th century were very much "up to date" in the sense of being *modern*. The latest findings of modern science were incorporated; the Bible and post-Cartesian philosophers were generously quoted, while Aristotle and scholastic philosophers were rarely mentioned, except in a brief historical survey. Thus modern science and modern philosophers were used to defend the ancient religion.

At the beginning of the 19th century, however, a number of Catholic thinkers did not consider this endeavor modern enough. For our purpose it will be sufficient to consider only two of the most distinguished Catholic philosophers of the early 19th century, George Hermes and Anton Günther.

George Hermes (1775-1831) was undoubtedly the most distinguished and influential Catholic thinker in Germany. His own study of Kant and Fichte at the University of Münster produced many religious doubts, but these Hermes put to one side temporarily until he could work out an over-all solution to the problem of religion. Eventually he worked out a new rationalist introduction to religion which "demonstrated" from within the Kantian system the truth of Catholicism. Since Kantianism was widely popular in Germany at the time, Hermes' theological rationalism was enthusiastically received by many. His distinguished physical appearance, his extraordinary professional ability, and his exemplary priestly life earned for him unusual respect and devotion in western Germany. Having received many academic honors from innumerable universities, even Lutheran universities, he was appointed "Rector Magnificus" of the Catholic University of Bonn in the diocese of Cologne. During the 1820's all leading Catholic professors of philosophy and theology in Bonn, Cologne, Breslau, Münster, Braunsberg, Trier, countless cathedral chapters and smaller colleges were Hermesians. Even the Archbishop of Cologne, Baron von Spiegel, was an advocate of Hermes against the suspicions of Rome. The inevitable controversy between Hermesians and non-Hermesians became sharp and bitter. No action, however, was

taken against George Hermes during his lifetime. After Hermes' death, Pope Gregory XVI condemned the Hermesian system on Sept. 26, 1835 as "subversive of Catholic faith," and the major writings of George Hermes were placed on the *Index*. The most stubborn Hermesians did not submit to the Church until 1860, 25 years after the condemnation. But the First Vatican Council found it necessary to express traditional Catholic teaching more clearly because of him. Out of priestly zeal for the Church George Hermes had developed a Christian Kantian philosophy which claimed to demonstrate the necessity of supernatural mysteries.

More significant, in a way, was the philosophical system of Anton Günther (1783-1863), a Bohemian priest and prolific writer who lived much of his life in Vienna. Günther's writings were directed primarily against the Pantheism of Hegel, whose influence in Germany was supplanting that of Kant. Rejecting scholasticism completely, Anton Günther elaborated a Christian Hegelianism to prove the transcendence of God, the Trinity of Persons (thesis-antithesis-synthesis), creation from nothing, and the supernatural destiny of man. Although never a professor, this zealous and holy priest started a far-reaching movement that included some of the most distinguished Catholics of mid-19th century Germany. At the zenith of this movement many of the outstanding Catholic professors of philosophy were Güntherians, notably at Salzburg, Prague, Krems, Graz, Tübingen, Trier, Augsburg, Bonn, and Breslau. Günther himself was offered professorships at Munich, Bonn, Breslau and Tübingen, but he refused all of these in the hope of receiving an offer from the University of Vienna, which never came. He was a personal friend of St. Clement Mary Hofbauer, Cardinals Schwarzenberg and Diepenbrock, and many other eminent clerics. However, after much careful examination and amicable interrogation in Rome, the Holy Office decided to place the works of Günther on the *Index* on Jan. 8, 1857. Pope Pius IX explained in a letter to Card. von Geissel, Archbishop of Cologne, that Günther's handling of Christian dogmas was not consistent with the teaching of the Church, and the pontiff listed reasons. This came as a terrible blow to Günther, who submitted. But followers of Günther refused to submit. After the First Vatican Council most of the living Güntherians left the Church to join the Old Catholics.

Here it is not necessary to add the better known attempts of Abbé de Lammenais and Padre Antonio

Rosmini to create a "new philosophy" in the name of apologetics and modernity.

All of these eminent and zealous priests were motivated by the highest Catholic ideals. But they did not have a solid enough philosophical foundation to save them from heretical and dangerous expressions of Catholic doctrine. What was needed was a sounder philosophy to apply to current problems. This sounder philosophy was soon seen by many to lie in the principles of St. Thomas.

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Thomism was never entirely dead. Somehow it did remain in the Dominican Order, drastically reduced by the ravages of the Reformation, the French Revolution, and the Napoleonic occupation. Repeated legislation of General Chapters, beginning after the death of St. Thomas, as well as the Constitutions of the Order, required all Dominicans to teach the doctrine of St. Thomas both in philosophy and in theology. However, even a greatly reduced order had to be reminded in 1748 of ancient obligations. In 1757 the Master General, Juan Tomás Boxadors, observed that some, not sufficiently versed in Thomistic doctrine, were proposing non-Thomistic novelties. This was the age of Hume, Condillac, Voltaire, and Immanuel Kant. Boxadors reviewed the Order's legislation and insisted that all return immediately to the solid teaching of the Angelic Doctor. This long letter was included in the Acts of the General Chapter that met in Rome in 1777.

That same year, 1777, Salvatore Roselli, O.P., published a six volume *Summa philosophica*, which he dedicated to Boxadors, who had been created Cardinal and allowed to remain Master General. In his dedication to Card. Boxadors, Roselli noted, "There are some men in the Order, very few indeed, who, not knowing well the doctrine of St. Thomas, have dared to depart from it, and to embrace some other, novel opinions." Roselli sincerely wanted to renew Thomism in the Order. Actually his influence extended beyond the Order to everyone who had anything to do with the revival of Thomism in Italy, Spain, and France. There were three complete editions of Roselli's monumental work, each of which was quickly exhausted. In 1837, a four volume compendium was published in Rome. The editor of this compendium remarked, "Although young philosophers accuse the Rosellian philosophy of extreme Aristotelianism, it is so highly esteemed that even though there have been many editions, scarcely or never at all can a copy of this work be found."

A Roman correspondent for *Année Dominicaine* wrote in 1857: "Goudin or Roselli are the authors that the students have in their hands in Italy . . . although the work of the latter [Roselli] is rare in Italy, it has found its way to Spain."

For beginnings of Italian Thomism outside the Dominican Order five men are generally singled out for their substantial contribution — Canon Buzzetti, the two Sordi brothers, the Jesuit Liberatore, and the diocesan priest Sanseverino.

Canon Vincenzo Buzzetti (1777-1824) of Piacenza was taught the philosophy of Locke and Condillac by the Vincentian Fathers of the Collegio Alberoni. But at the theological college of San Pietro he did have one Spanish Jesuit exile, Fr. Baltasar Masdeu, who occasionally lamented the abandonment of scholastic philosophy. Buzzetti discovered St. Thomas by reading the scholarly six volume work of Roselli and a smaller, simpler text by Antoine Goudin, O.P., that was first published in 1671. Buzzetti taught philosophy in the diocesan seminary in Piacenza from 1804 to 1808, during which time he wrote an unpublished *Institutiones logicae et metaphysicae* "iuxta Divi Thomae atque Aristotelis inconcussa dogmata" — a title borrowed from Goudin. This fundamentally Thomistic work suffers somewhat from the unfortunate influence of Christian Wolff. In 1808 Buzzetti was promoted to the chair of theology, and six years later he was appointed a Canon of the Cathedral. During a visit to Rome in 1818, Buzzetti revealed to the Holy Father his desire to enter the Society of Jesus that was restored four years earlier, in 1814. Pius VII. however, discouraged the idea saying that the 41 year old Canon could do more good in the diocese of Piacenza. Among Buzzetti's disciples were two Sordi brothers, who later became Jesuits, and Joseph Pecci, brother of the future Leo XIII.

Serafino Sordi (1793-1865), the brilliant younger brother, was the first to enter the Society of Jesus. In 1827 the General of the Society proposed that Sordi teach logic at the Roman College (Gregorianum), but Pavani, the Provincial, dissuaded the General from making such an appointment because "a strong opposition would rise among the professors of the Roman College . . . so strong are the prejudices against Fr. Sordi because he is a Thomist." (Let. Oct. 2)

Describing the Roman College at this time (1827) where the future Leo XIII was then studying philoso-

phy, Fr. Curci, who later founded *Civiltà Cattolica*, wrote in his memoirs:

I deplored the Babylon to which the Roman College seemed to have been reduced. With regard to philosophy, everyone was free to teach what he liked best, provided he detested and ridiculed the so-called "Peripatus", although nobody had ever told us what the "Peripatus" was or what it pretended to be.

Domenico Sordi (1790-1880) followed his younger brother into the Society of Jesus, but he was a hot-tempered individual who made many enemies. Among his disciples was Luigi Taparelli, S.J. When Taparelli became Provincial of the Naples Province, he wanted to secure Domenico Sordi for the Jesuit College in Naples. Taparelli wrote to Sordi saying that he had already purchased many copies of Goudin for the College. Finally in 1831 Sordi began teaching philosophy in Naples. At the College Fr. Sordi formed a kind of "secret society," that met in his room to discuss the revival of scholasticism. Within two years rumors of this intellectual underground movement reached Rome. In 1833 Fr. Giuseppe Ferrari, Visitor General with full powers, came from Rome and dissolved the "revolutionary" clique. Sordi was deprived of all teaching and sent into pastoral work; Taparelli was discharged and sent to Palermo as teacher of French and music.

Matteo Liberatore (1810-1892) was appointed to succeed Domenico Sordi as professor of philosophy in Naples, because he had not belonged to Sordi's secret circle. Although Liberatore published his famous *Institutiones* at Naples in 1840, it was not until 1853 that he became convinced of Thomism. By 1855 he was completely won over to the Thomist cause, largely through the influence of *Civiltà Cattolica*, founded in Naples in 1850 by Fr. Carlo Maria Curci, assisted by Fathers Taparelli and Liberatore.

The one most responsible for the revival of Thomism in Italy was Gaetano Sanseverino (1811-1865), a diocesan priest of Naples. As a young man he was a convinced Cartesian, but around 1840 he seems to have been influenced by Roselli's book, and possibly by a visit from Domenico Sordi. In 1841 Sanseverino obtained the cooperation of Taparelli and Liberatore for his periodical *Scienza e Fede* that systematically criticized current rationalism, idealism and liberalism. By 1849 Sanseverino learned a great deal about St. Thomas, and by 1853 he was a thoroughly convinced Thomist. In his renowned *Philosophia Christiana* of 1853 (5 v.) Sanseverino wrote:

After many years of exclusive philosophical studies, I finally arrived at the conclusion that for a restoration

of philosophy it was absolutely necessary to go back to the doctrine of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church.

The importance of Sanseverino's work in the Thomistic revival was clearly recognized by the Dominican, Zeferino Gonzales, who later became Cardinal. Ironically, Gonzales criticized Sanseverino for being too Thomistic. Writing in 1865, the year of Sanseverino's death, Gonzales noted two shortcomings in Sanseverino's *Philosophia Christiana*: first, it is too verbose, and second, "it is too narrowly attached to the philosophy that it defends; Sanseverino accepts St. Thomas' conclusions even in the minutest details, and despises modern thought as altogether vain and worthy of contempt." Nevertheless, Sanseverino contributed substantially to the revival of Thomism in Naples, and his work was continued notably by Fr. Nunzio Signoriello, a diocesan priest.

Other disciples of Sanseverino began publishing the works of St. Thomas at Naples from 1845 onward. By 1850 the two great *Summas*, the *Catena aurea*, and the *Sermons* were published there after almost a century of universal neglect. Within the following decade, the *Summa theologiae* was also published in Parma, Bologna, and Paris, where there also appeared two complete translations in French. Thereafter many editions were published in France and Italy.

The efforts of Sanseverino and Liberatore were brought to completion by Josef Kleutgen, S.J., in Germany, by Dominicans and Roux-Lavergne in France, Zefelino Gonzales, O.P. in the Philippines and Spain, and by Tommaso Zigliara and Pope Leo XIII in Italy. In the minds of all these pioneers only the solid, perennial principles of St. Thomas Aquinas could serve as a safe starting point for solving modern problems and avoiding errors condemned in the *Syllabus* of 1864 and the First Vatican Council (1869-70). An inspiring example is the case of Zeferino Gonzales, a Spaniard who joined the Dominican Order in 1844, studied in Manila for ten years, taught in the University of Santo Tomàs for six years before returning to Spain in 1867. Later he was to become Bishop of Córdoba (1875), Archbishop of Seville (1883), Cardinal (1884), and Archbishop of Toledo (1886). Through his teaching and many publications prior to *Aeterni Patris* he contributed substantially to the restoration of Thomism. To a profound knowledge of Thomistic philosophy he added an extensive appreciation of modern thinkers and a deep interest in the physical sciences.

To him Thomism was not a closed system, but a progressive, living tradition capable of renewing itself and of assimilating the progress of science. In his last publication, *La Biblia y la ciencia* (2 v. Madrid 1891-4), Gonzales presented the scriptural problem clearly and formulated solid principles of resolution that were adopted by Fr. Joseph Maria Lagrange in *Revue Biblique* (1892) and by Leo XIII in *Providentissimus Deus*. It was in this spirit that Leo XIII wished to restore Thomism as a perennial philosophy.

The first encyclical issued by Pope Leo XIII concerned socialism and the general need of a sound Christian philosophy. This was followed by the now famous *Aeterni Patris* of Aug. 4, 1879, in which the Pope called for the restoration of St. Thomas' basic doctrine as the only sound Christian philosophy capable of answering modern needs. The first draft of *Aeterni Patris* may have been written by the Jesuit, Josef Kleutgen, known in Germany as *Thomas redivivus*, or by the Dominican Zigliara, who was made Cardinal that year, put in charge of the Leonine edition of St. Thomas' works, appointed president of the Roman Academy of St. Thomas, founded by Leo XIII that year, and who wrote the first draft of *Rerum novarum* for Leo XIII.

During the pontificate of Leo XIII the doctrines of St. Thomas were promulgated by the Holy See in every way possible. In great encyclicals on social problems, government, human liberty, Sacred Scripture, Catholic Action, marriage and education, Leo employed the teaching of St. Thomas to solve modern problems. Outstanding Catholic scholars in every country directed their ability to developing the philosophy and theology of the Angelic Doctor, and Thomistic institutes were established in Rome, Perugia, Naples, Paris, Louvain, Washington and various places in Germany, Spain and Holland. The work of Cardinal Mercier at Louvain is sufficiently well known.

But after the death of Leo XIII in 1903, the situation changed. A younger generation of clerics felt that Thomism was not "modern" enough. Particularly in Italy and France a number of young clerics, devoid of a Thomistic formation, wished "to live in harmony with the spirit of the age." The desire to be modern stemmed mainly from the impact of German Higher Criticism on Catholic biblical scholars, historians, and apologists. The Abbé Loisy of the Institute Catholique in Paris, perhaps the most distinguished of the so-called Modernists, summed

up the situation: "The avowed modernists form a fairly definite group of thinking men united in the common desire to adapt Catholicism to the intellectual, moral, and social needs of today."

Actually Modernism was not a single body of doctrine; it had no founder; the name itself is unfortunate and ambiguous. Rather it was an intellectual modernizing spirit simultaneously evoked in many countries of Europe by zealous clerics who wished to be up-to-date and non-isolationists in a world that was liberal, rationalistic, and evolutionistic. Modernists, such as Loisy, Laberthonnière, Le Roy, Tyrell, Minocchi and Murri dealt mainly with the nature, source, and promulgation of Catholic dogma. They insisted on the evolutionary, or developmental character of Catholic dogma and on modern man's ability to demonstrate these truths rationally and historically. There can be no doubt that the Modernists did not have the necessary philosophical and theological formation to deal with these difficult questions.

No doubt the Church during the reign of Pope St. Pius X had to take drastic measures to suppress the heretical errors of Modernism. But for the next 50 years a literal reign of terror existed in Catholic circles. On May 6, 1907, Pius X issued a severe warning that sacred studies and scholastic philosophy must be restored and that the training of the clergy be guarded most carefully. Two months later the Holy Office published the decree *Lamentabili*, listing 65 Modernist errors taken mainly from the writings of Alfred Loisy. This was followed in September by the famous encyclical *Pascendi* of Pius X on the errors of Modernism. During the next three years there were at least ten important decrees, injunctions, and letters from the Holy See, the Biblical Commission, the Holy Office, and other authoritative sources on the question of Modernism and the proper training of the clergy. Since Sept. 1, 1910, all candidates for higher orders, newly appointed confessors, preachers, parish priests, canons, the benefited clergy, the bishop's staff, Lenten preachers, superiors and all professors in religious congregations have been obliged to take an oath against Modernism, an obligation that is still binding. I myself have taken the oath at least 20 times. Books were placed on the *Index* without explanation. Informers among the laity were encouraged to report suspicious Modernist tendencies among the clergy. Through such informers complete dossiers were compiled of charges against the editorial staff of *Civiltà Cattolica*, the entire Dominican faculty of Fribourg, Cardinal

Mercier of Belgium, Msgr. Faulhauber of Munich, and even against the future Pope John XXIII.

Pius X was understandably upset by numerous attempts to evade the apiration and decree of Leo XIII regarding Thomism. Many wished to teach an eclectic type of scholasticism, while many others made no attempt whatever to return either to St. Thomas or to scholasticism. In a *Motu proprio* of June 29, 1914 (*Doctoris Angelici*) Pius X explicitly stated that by "scholasticism" is meant "the principal teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas." One month later, the Congregation of Studies clarified this by issuing a list of 24 fundamental theses in philosophy. On March 7, 1916, the Congregation of Seminaries and Universities confirmed this list as essential, and insisted that the *Summa theologiae* be a textbook or at least a major reference work for speculative theology.

To strengthen this legislated Thomism, the *Code of Canon Law* promulgated under Benedict XV (1917) required that all professors of philosophy and theology hold and teach the method, doctrine, and principles of the Angelic Doctor. Pope Pius XI reiterated the mind of his predecessors in *Studiorum duces* issued on the 6th centenary of the canonization of St. Thomas, June 29, 1923, and the Apostolic Constitution *Deus scientiarum dominus*, May 24, 1931, presented a detailed curriculum of studies for all seminaries, imposed with the fullest apostolic authority.

During the 1930's and 40's French theologians became impatient with the closed Thomism created by legislation and fear. They yearned for a new theology, a *théologie nouvelle*, inspired mainly by modern philosophies of evolutionism, historicism and existentialism. They had a sincere desire to revitalize a world shaken by two World Wars and threatened by another. This new theology was to be more biblical, patristic, and liturgical in approach than the sterile approach of modern Thomism, such as is frequently taught in colleges and seminaries. As a philosophical preparation for this new theology, French theologians such as Teilhard de Chardin, Henri Bouillard, Henri De Lubac and Msgr. de Solages, claimed that an Hegelian philosophical experience was the best means today of attaining a vital, meaningful theology. The point for them was that scholasticism in general and Thomism in particular is too conceptual, too systematic, too essentialist and dry for a vital theology capable of moving modern man to spiritual heights. Aristotle may have been suitable for St. Thomas, but he is of no use

today. Even St. Thomas, they maintained, cannot give modern man a vital experience of a living Christianity. Hegelianism, on the other hand, particularly as it was developed by Kierkegaard, Bergson, Marcel and Blondel, is concrete, existentialist, and personalist in its spiritual perception of the evolution of man in this world redeemed by Christ.

The growing concern of Roman authorities, who had watched this movement for a long time, culminated in Pope Pius XII's encyclical *Humani generis*, of August 12, 1950. In it, Pope Pius XII not only condemned the fundamental errors of the *théologie nouvelle*, but he also emphasized the importance of returning to the perennial philosophy of St. Thomas in our own day. He said:

"How deplorable it is then that this philosophy, received and honored by the Church, is scorned by some who shamelessly call it outmoded in form, and rationalistic, as they say, in its method of thought."

This encyclical came as a shock to French theologians, but it did not diminish admiration for Teilhard de Chardin among the masses. Salons devoted to the cult of Chardin sprang up all over Paris. On June 30, 1962, the Holy Office issued a *Monitum* against the "ambiguities and even grave errors" contained in the writings of the late Father Teilhard de Chardin.

It was really not until the Second Vatican Council got under way that a breath of fresh air was introduced into ecclesiastical circles, thus bringing to an end — we hope — the Modernist Crisis and all its attendant suspicions.

After this brief review of the revival of Thomism in the 19th century and the subsequent Modernist Crisis, I would like to present four points that may be useful in evaluating the present tension in Catholic schools.

1. It is a social historical fact that the hope of Leo XIII has never been universally realized in Catholic colleges, universities, and seminaries. Not even the ardent efforts of St. Pius X, Benedict XV, Pius XI, or Pius XII were able to effect anything more than a closed, safe, and sterile Thomism, imposed by legislative authority. Legislation did not stimulate a return to the true thought and spirit of St. Thomas relevant to our day. Legislation led rather to the production of safe textbooks that demolished adversaries (*sententiae oppositae*) with presumptuous conviction. But this merely led students to pass easily, as Pius XII noted in 1950, "from despising scholastic theology to the neglect of and even contempt for the teaching authority of the Church itself, which gives such authoritative approval to scholastic theol-

ogy." Pius XII might just as easily have used the terms "philosophy" or "Thomism" in this context. Until the program of Leo XIII is seriously attempted in a thorough and spontaneous manner, there will always be zealous priests and laymen who react to what they only half understand. Reactions against Thomism in the past half-century have been, in fact, to a pseudo-Thomism, a half-understood St. Thomas.

2. Judging from present appearances, one can hopefully say that the Modernist Crisis passed with the opening of Pope John's Council. I, for one, would not like to see a return to those days of suspicion, fear, and denunciation. Everyone knows something of the methods employed by the German Gestapo during the Third Reich, but the story of ecclesiastical methods employed by Catholics during the Modernist Crisis still needs to be told. Modernism arose because philosophers and theologians thought they had to make a choice between the old and the new, a choice between Thomistic principles and modern insights. This disastrous dichotomy between what is perennial and what is contemporary can lead only to a false problem, a problem that is more Platonic than Aristotelian. If there is anything perennial in the intellectual realism of St. Thomas, then nothing is accomplished by rejecting it or rendering it irrelevant. The real problem at hand is to know St. Thomas well, to acknowledge valid insights of modern thinkers, and to get on with the business of tackling modern problems, many of which lie in the areas of natural law, sexual morality, international justice, psychology, ethics, and religious values. This, at least, was the aspiration of Leo XIII and other pioneers of the Thomistic revival.

3. We must realize that many important truths have been discovered since St. Thomas. Moreover, many valuable insights have been re-captured by modern thinkers. On the one hand, there are the marvellous refinements of historical method, the extraordinary insights of psychology and psycho-analysis, the provocative data of demography, the fascinating discoveries of archeology, philology, comparative religion, to say nothing of discoveries in modern physics, genetics, anthropology, and paleontology. On the other hand, contemporary philosophers have recaptured insights that are a substantial contribution to a Thomism capable of embracing truth wherever and by whomever revealed. Only six contemporary philosophies need be mentioned here:

i. Historicism, although erroneously identifying being with history, *esse* with *agere*, can

help us to appreciate the uniqueness of historical situations in all their concrete, evolutionary complexity.

- ii. Existentialism, although erroneously denying all universality of ideas and morality, can help us to appreciate the unique freedom of man's personal commitment to the existential situation.
- iii. Evolutionism, although erroneously denying the distinction and discontinuity of real species in nature, can help us to realize that species do come-into-existence and pass-out-of-existence. It can further teach us that natural species are not eternal, nor clearly defined, except in the mind of God. This can help Thomists to overcome the Platonic world picture that many have unconsciously assumed.
- iv. Dialectical Materialism, as we all know, is clearly wrong in denying the possibility of God's existence and the spirituality of man's soul; nevertheless it can still teach Western Materialists, and even Thomists, much about man's responsibility to society as a whole and the qualitative difference between a human being and an irrational animal.
- v. Even linguistic analysis, while underestimating the power of rational principles and overestimating the validity of verbal analysis, can remind us of the importance of etymology and logical meaning in the dialectical approach of Aristotle and St. Thomas to solving real problems of mind and reality.
- vi. Martin Heidegger is much more difficult to evaluate because he seems to be so close to living Thomistic thought. Heidegger may be right in saying that philosophers, including Aristotle and St. Thomas, have missed the central problem of metaphysics, namely ontological *Sein* in the context of *Zeit*. If this is true, then there is work for the contemporary Thomist. On the other hand, Heidegger's correlation of ontology (*Sein*) and linguistics (*Wahrheit*) seems to lie in the core of Thomistic epistemology. Moreover, Heidegger's appreciation of man's unique existence (*Dasein*) in all its ontological, finite, *Angst* sheds extraordinary light on St. Thomas' doctrine of contingency, providence, and free will.

None of these insights of modern philosophy — and I have mentioned only a few — can afford to

be neglected by modern Thomists. What I am suggesting is not a new eclecticism or a watered-down scholasticism, but a true, vital Thomism in the spirit of Cardinal Gonzalez, Cardinal Zigliara, and Pope Leo XIII. It is a Thomism that begins with recognized, established, perennial principles and confronts realities of today.

4. Finally, according to the clear mind of the Church, only the sound philosophical principles of St. Thomas Aquinas are capable of creating a modern Catholic *Weltanschauung* that will move forward with the modern world and save it for Christ. *Ite ad Thomam* is not the cry of an antiquarian pope. Rather it is the call of a prophet who sees what can be the millenium of Christianity in the modern world. Therefore a great responsibility is ours. It is up to us Thomists and Catholics throughout the entire world to show that we can incorporate everything that is good and modern in our age — and take the great step forward to tomorrow.