

Modernism

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Origin of the word

Etymologically, *modernism* means an exaggerated love of what is modern, an infatuation for modern ideas, "the abuse of what is modern", as the Abbé Gaudaud explains (*La Foi catholique*, I, 1908, p. 248). The modern ideas of which we speak are not as old as the period called "modern times". Though Protestantism has generated them little by little, it did not understand from the beginning that such would be its sequel. There even exists a conservative Protestant party which is one with the Church in combating modernism. In general we may say that modernism aims at that radical transformation of human thought in relation to God, man, the world, and life, here and hereafter, which was prepared by Humanism and eighteenth-century philosophy, and solemnly promulgated at the French Revolution. J.J. Rousseau, who treated an atheistical philosopher of his time as a modernist, seems to have been the first to use the word in this sense ("Correspondance à M. D.", 15 Jan. 1769). Littré (*Dictionnaire*), who cites the passage; explains: "Modernist, one who esteems modern times above antiquity". After that, the word seems to have been forgotten, till the time of the Catholic publicist Périn (1815-1905), professor at the University of Louvain, 1844-1889. This writer, while apologizing for the coinage, describes "the humanitarian tendencies of contemporary society" as modernism. The term itself he defines as "the ambition to eliminate God from all social life". With this absolute modernism he associates a more temperate form, which he declares to be nothing less than "liberalism of every degree and shade" ("*Le Modernisme dans l'Eglise d'après les lettres inédites de Lamennais*", Paris, 1881).

During the early years of the present century, especially about 1905 and 1906, the tendency to innovation which troubled the Italian dioceses, and especially the ranks of the young clergy, was taxed with modernism. Thus at Christmas, 1905, the bishops of the ecclesiastical provinces of Turin and Vercelli, in a circular letter of that date, uttered grave warnings against what they called "Modernismo nel clero" (Modernism among the clergy). Several pastoral letters of the year 1906 made use of the same term; among others we may mention the Lenten charge of Cardinal Nava, Archbishop of Catania, to his clergy, a letter of Cardinal Bacilieri, Bishop of Verona, dated 22 July, 1906 and a letter of Mgr Rossi, Archbishop of Acerenza and Matera. "Modernismo e Modernisti", a work by Abbate Cavallanti which was published towards the end of 1906, gives long extracts from these letters. The name "modernism" was not to the liking of the reformers. The propriety of the new term was discussed even amongst good Catholics. When the Decree "Lamentabili" appeared, Mgr Baudrillart expressed his pleasure at not finding the word "modernism" mentioned in it (*Revue pratique d'apologetique*, IV, p. 578). He considered the term "too vague". Besides it seemed to insinuate "that the Church condemns everything

modern". The Encyclical "Pascendi" (8 Sept., 1907) put an end to the discussion. It bore the official title, "De Modernistarum doctrinis". The introduction declared that the name commonly given to the upholders of the new errors was not inapt. Since then the modernists themselves have acquiesced in the use of the name, though they have not admitted its propriety (Loisy, "Simples réflexions sur le decret 'Lamentabili' et sur l'encyclique 'Pascendi' du 8 Sept., 1907", p. 14; "Il programma dei modernisti": note at the beginning).

Theory of theological Modernism

The essential error of Modernism

A full definition of modernism would be rather difficult. First it stands for certain tendencies, and secondly for a body of doctrine which, if it has not given birth to these tendencies (practice often precedes theory), serves at any rate as their explanation and support. Such tendencies manifest themselves in different domains. They are not united in each individual, nor are they always and everywhere found together. Modernist doctrine, too, may be more or less radical, and it is swallowed in doses that vary with each one's likes and dislikes. In the Encyclical "Pascendi", Pius X says that modernism embraces every heresy. M. Loisy makes practically the same statement when he writes that "in reality all Catholic theology, even in its fundamental principles the general philosophy of religion, Divine law, and the laws that govern our knowledge of God, come up for judgment before this new court of assize" (Simples réflexions, p. 24). Modernism is a composite system: its assertions and claims lack that principle which unites the natural faculties in a living being. The Encyclical "Pascendi" was the first Catholic synthesis of the subject. Out of scattered materials it built up what looked like a logical system. Indeed friends and foes alike could not but admire the patient skill that must have been needed to fashion something like a coordinated whole. In their answer to the Encyclical, "Il programma dei Modernisti", the Modernists tried to retouch this synthesis. Previous to all this, some of the Italian bishops, in their pastoral letters, had attempted such a synthesis. We would particularly mention that of Mgr Rossi, Bishop of Acerenza and Matera. In this respect, too, Abbate Cavallanti's book, already referred to, deserves mention. Even earlier still, German and French Protestants had done some synthetical work in the same direction. Prominent among them are Kant, "Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der reinen Vernunft" (1803); Schleiermacher, "Der christliche Glaube" (1821-1822); and A. Sabatier, "Esquisse d'une philosophie de la religion d'après la psychologie et l'histoire" (1897).

The general idea of modernism may be best expressed in the words of Abbate Cavallanti, though even here there is a little vagueness: "Modernism is modern in a false sense of the word; it is a morbid state of conscience among Catholics, and especially young Catholics, that professes manifold ideals, opinions, and tendencies. From time to time these tendencies work out into systems, that are to renew the basis and superstructure of society, politics, philosophy, theology, of the Church herself and of the Christian religion". A remodelling, a renewal according to the ideas of the twentieth century -- such is the longing that possesses the modernists. "The avowed modernists", says M. Loisy, "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" (op. cit., p. 13). "Our religious attitude", as "Il programma dei modernisti" states (p. 5, note 1), "is ruled by the single wish to be one with Christians and Catholics who live in harmony with the spirit of the age". The spirit of this plan of reform may be summarized under the following heads:

- A spirit of complete emancipation, tending to weaken ecclesiastical authority; the emancipation of science, which must traverse every field of investigation without fear of conflict with the Church; the emancipation of the State, which should never be hampered by religious authority; the emancipation of the private conscience whose inspirations must not be overridden by papal definitions or anathemas; the emancipation of the universal conscience, with which the Church should be ever in agreement;
- A spirit of movement and change, with an inclination to a sweeping form of evolution such as abhors anything fixed and stationary;
- A spirit of reconciliation among all men through the feelings of the heart. Many and varied also are the modernist dreams of an understanding between the different Christian religions, nay, even between religion and a species of atheism, and all on a basis of agreement that must be superior to mere doctrinal differences.

Such are the fundamental tendencies. As such, they seek to explain, justify, and strengthen themselves in an error, to which therefore one might give the name of "essential" modernism. What is this error? It is nothing less than the

perversion of dogma. Manifold are the degrees and shades of modernist doctrine on the question of our relations with God. But no real modernist keeps the Catholic notions of dogma intact. Are you doubtful as to whether a writer or a book is modernist in the formal sense of the word? Verify every statement about dogma; examine his treatment of its origin, its nature, its sense, its authority. You will know whether you are dealing with a veritable modernist or not, according to the way in which the Catholic conception of dogma is travestied or respected. Dogma and supernatural knowledge are correlative terms; one implies the other as the action implies its object. In this way then we may define modernism as "the critique of our supernatural knowledge according to the false postulates of contemporary philosophy".

It will be advisable for us to quote a full critique of such supernatural knowledge as an example of the mode of procedure. (In the meantime however we must not forget that there are partial and less advanced modernists who do not go so far). For them external intuition furnishes man with but phenomenal contingent, sensible knowledge. He sees, he feels, he hears, he tastes, he touches this something, this phenomenon that comes and goes without telling him aught of the existence of a suprasensible, absolute and unchanging reality outside all environing space and time. But deep within himself man feels the need of a higher hope. He aspires to perfection in a being on whom he feels his destiny depends. And so he has an instinctive, an affective yearning for God. This necessary impulse is at first obscure and hidden in the subconsciousness. Once consciously understood, it reveals to the soul the intimate presence of God. This manifestation, in which God and man collaborate, is nothing else than revelation. Under the influence of its yearning, that is of its religious feelings, the soul tries to reach God, to adopt towards Him an attitude that will satisfy its yearning. It gropes, it searches. These gropings form the soul's religious experience. They are more easy, successful and far-reaching, or less so, according as it is now one, now another individual soul that sets out in quest of God. Anon there are privileged ones who reach extraordinary results. They communicate their discoveries to their fellow men, and forthwith become founders of a new religion, which is more or less true in the proportion in which it gives peace to the religious feelings.

The attitude Christ adopted, reaching up to God as to a father and then returning to men as to brothers -- such is the meaning of the precept, "Love God and thy neighbour" -- brings full rest to the soul. It makes the religion of Christ the religion *par excellence*, the true and definitive religion. The act by which the soul adopts this attitude and abandons itself to God as a father and then to men as to brothers, constitutes the Christian Faith. Plainly such an act is an act of the will rather than of the intellect. But religious sentiment tries to express itself in intellectual concepts, which in their turn serve to preserve this sentiment. Hence the origin of those formulae concerning God and Divine things, of those theoretical propositions that are the outcome of the successive religious experiences of souls gifted with the same faith. These formulae become dogmas, when religious authority approves of them for the life of the community. For community life is a spontaneous growth among persons of the same faith, and with it comes authority. Dogmas promulgated in this way teach us nothing of the unknowable, but only symbolize it. They contain no truth. Their usefulness in preserving the faith is their only *raison d'être*. They survive as long as they exert their influence. Being the work of man in time, and adapted to his varying needs, they are at best but contingent and transient. Religious authority too, naturally conservative, may lag behind the times. It may mistake the best methods of meeting needs of the community, and try to keep up worn-out formulae. Through respect for the community, the individual Christian who sees the mistake continues in an attitude of outward submission. But he does not feel himself inwardly bound by the decisions of higher powers; rather he makes praiseworthy efforts to bring his Church into harmony with the times. He may confine himself, too, if he cares, to the older and simpler religious forms; he may live his life in conformity with the dogmas accepted from the beginning. Such is Tyrrell's advice in his letter to Fogazzaro, and such was his own private practice.

Catholic and Modernist notions of dogma compared

The tradition of the Catholic Church, on the other hand, considers dogmas as in part supernatural and mysterious, proposed to our faith by a Divinely instituted authority on the ground that they are part of the general revelation which the Apostles preached in the name of Jesus Christ. This faith is an act of the intellect made under the sway of the will. By it we hold firmly what God has revealed and what the Church proposes to us to believe. For believing is holding something firmly on the authority of God's word, when such authority may be recognized by signs that are sufficient, at least with the help of grace, to create certitude.

Comparing these notions, the Catholic and the modernist, we shall see that modernism alters the source, the manner of promulgation, the object, the stability, and the truth of dogma. For the modernist, the only and the necessary source is the private consciousness. And logically so, since he rejects miracles and prophecy as signs of God's word (II programma, p.

96). For the Catholic, dogma is a free communication of God to the believer made through the preaching of the Word. Of course the truth from without, which is above and beyond any natural want, is preceded by a certain interior finality or perfectibility which enables the believer to assimilate and live the truth revealed. It enters a soul well-disposed to receive it, as a principle of happiness which, though an unmerited gift to which we have no right, is still such as the soul can enjoy with unmeasured gratitude. In the modernist conception, the Church can no longer define dogma in God's name and with His infallible help; the ecclesiastical authority is now but a secondary interpreter, subject to the collective consciousness which she has to express. To this collective consciousness the individual need conform only externally; as for the rest he may embark on any private religious adventures he cares for. The modernist proportions dogma to his intellect or rather to his heart. Mysteries like the Trinity or the Incarnation are either unthinkable (a modernist Kantian tendency), or are within the reach of the unaided reason (a modernist Hegelian tendency). "The truth of religion is in him (man) implicitly, as surely as the truth of the whole physical universe, is involved in every part of it. Could he read the needs of his own spirit and conscience, he would need no teacher" (Tyrrell, "Scylla and Charybdis", p. 277).

Assuredly Catholic truth is not a lifeless thing. Rather is it a living tree that breaks forth into green leaves, flowers, and fruits. There is a development, or gradual unfolding, and a clearer statement of its dogmas. Besides the primary truths, such as the Divinity of Christ and His mission as Messiah, there are others which, one by one, become better understood and defined, e.g. the dogma of the Immaculate Conception and that of the Infallibility of the Pope. Such unfolding takes place not only in the study of the tradition of the dogma but also in showing its origin in Jesus Christ and the Apostles, in the understanding of the terms expressing it and in the historical or rational proofs adduced in support of it. Thus the historical proof of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception has certainly been strengthened since the definition in 1854. The rational conception of the dogma of Divine Providence is a continual object of study; the dogma of the Sacrifice of the Mass allows the reason to inquire into the idea of sacrifice. It has always been believed that there is no salvation outside the Church, but as this belief has gradually come to be better understood, many are now considered within the soul of the Church who would have been placed without, in a day when the distinction between the soul and the body of the Church had not generally obtained. In another sense, too dogma is instinct with life. For its truth is not sterile, but always serves to nourish devotion. But while holding with life, progress and development, the Church rejects transitory dogmas that in the modernist theory would be forgotten unless replaced by contrary formulae. She cannot admit that "thought, hierarchy, cult, in a word, everything has changed in the history of Christianity", nor can she be content with "the identity of religious spirit" which is the only permanency that modernism admits (Il programma dei Modernisti).

Truth consists in the conformity of the idea with its object. Now, in the Catholic concept, a dogmatic formula supplies us with at least an analogical knowledge of a given object. For the modernist, the essential nature of dogma consists in its correspondence with and its capacity to satisfy a certain momentary need of the religious feeling. It is an arbitrary symbol that tells nothing of the object it represents. At most, as M. Leroy, one of the least radical of modernists, suggests, it is a positive prescription of a practical order (Leroy, "Dogme et critique", p. 25). Thus the dogma of the Real Presence in the Holy Eucharist means: "Act as if Christ had the local presence, the idea of which is so familiar to you". But, to avoid exaggeration, we add this other statement of the same writer (loc. cit.), "This however does not mean that dogma bears no relation to thought; for (1) there are duties concerning the action of thinking; (2) dogma itself implicitly affirms that reality contains in one form or another the justification of such prescriptions as are either reasonable or salutary".

Various degrees of Modernism and its criterion

Modernist attacks on dogma, as we have already remarked, vary according to the degree in which its doctrines are embraced. Thus, in virtue of the leading idea of their systems, Father Tyrrell was an agnostic modernist, and Campbell (a Congregationalist minister) is a symbolic modernist. Again the tendency to innovation is at times not at all general, but limited to some particular domain. Along with modernism in the strict sense, which is directly theological, we find other kinds of modernism in philosophy, politics, and social science. In such cases a wider meaning must be given to the term.

Here, however, it is needful to speak a word of warning against unreasonable attacks. Not every novelty is to be condemned, nor is every project of reform to be dubbed modernist because it is untimely or exaggerated. In the same way, the attempt fully to understand modern philosophic thought so as to grasp what is true in such systems, and to discover the points of contact with the old philosophy, is very far from being modernism. On the contrary, that is the very best way to refute modernism. Every error contains an element of truth. Isolate that element and accept it. The

structure which it helps to support, having lost its foundation, will soon crumble. The name modernist then will be appropriate only when there is question of opposition to the certain teaching of ecclesiastical authority through a spirit of innovation. The words of Cardinal Ferrari, Archbishop of Milan, as cited in "La Revue Pratique d'Apologétique" (VI, 1908, p. 134), will help to show the point of our last remark. "We are deeply pained", he says, "to find that certain persons, in public controversy against modernism, in brochures, newspapers and other periodicals, go to the length of detecting the evil everywhere, or at any rate of imputing it to those who are very far from being infected with it". In the same year, Cardinal Maffei had to condemn "La Penta azurea", an anti-modernist organ, on account of its exaggeration in this respect. On the other hand, it is regrettable that certain avowed leaders of modernism, carried away perhaps by the desire to remain within the Church at all costs -- another characteristic of modernism -- have taken refuge in equivocation, reticence, or quibbles. Such a line of action merits no sympathy; while it explains, if it does not altogether justify, the distrust of sincere Catholics.

Proofs of the foregoing views

But does the principle and the quasi-essential error of modernism lie in its corruption of dogma? Let us consult the Encyclical "Pascendi". The official Latin text calls the modernist dogmatic system a leading chapter in their doctrine. The French translation, which is also authentic, speaks thus: "Dogma, its origin and nature, such is the ground principle of modernism." The fundamental principle of modernism is, according to M. Loisy, "the possibility, the necessity and the legitimacy of evolution in understanding the dogmas of the Church, including that of papal infallibility and authority, as well as in the manner of exercising this authority" (op. cit., p. 124). The character and leaning of our epoch confirm our diagnosis. It likes to substitute leading and fundamental questions in the place of side issues. The problem of natural knowledge is the burning question in present-day metaphysics. It is not surprising therefore that the question of supernatural knowledge is the main subject of discussion in religious polemics. Finally, Pius X has said that modernism embraces all the heresies. (The same opinion is expressed in another way in the encyclical "Editae" of 16 May, 1910.) And what error, we ask, more fully justifies the pope's statement than that which alters dogma in its root and essence? It is furthermore clear -- to use a direct argument -- that modernism fails in its attempt at religious reform, if it makes no change in the Catholic notion of dogma. Moreover, does not its own conception of dogma explain both a large number of its propositions and its leanings towards independence, evolution, and conciliation?

Modernist aims explained by its essential error

The definition of an unchangeable dogma imposes itself on every Catholic, learned or otherwise, and it necessarily supposes a Church legislating for all the faithful, passing judgment on State action -- from its own point of view of course -- and that even seeks alliance with the civil power to carry on the work of the Apostolate. On the other hand, once dogma is held to be a mere symbol of the unknowable, a science which merely deals with the facts of nature or history could neither oppose it nor even enter into controversy with it. If it is true only in so far as it excites and nourishes religious sentiment, the private individual is at full liberty to throw it aside when its influence on him has ceased; nay, even the Church herself, whose existence depends on a dogma not different from the others in nature and origin, has no right to legislate for a self-sufficing State. And thus independence is fully realized. There is no need to prove that the modernist spirit of movement and evolution is in perfect harmony with its concept of ever-changing dogma and is unintelligible without it; the matter is self-evident. Finally, as regards the conciliation of the different religions, we must necessarily distinguish between what is essential to faith regarded as a sentiment, and beliefs which are accessory, mutable, and practically negligible. If therefore you go as far as making the Divinity a belief, that is to say, a symbolical expression of faith, then docility in following generous impulses may be religious, and the atheist's religion would not seem to differ essentially from yours.

Modernist propositions explained by its essential error

We make a selection of the following propositions from the Encyclical for discussion:

- the Christ of faith is not the Christ of history. Faith portrays Christ according to the religious needs of the faithful; history represents Him as He really was, that is, in so far as His appearance on earth was a concrete phenomenon.

In this way it is easy to understand how a believer may, without contradiction, attribute certain things to Christ, and at the same time deny them in the quality of historian. In the "Hibbert Journal" for Jan., 1909, the Rev. Mr. Robert wished to call the Christ of history "Jesus" and reserve "Christ" for the same person as idealized by faith;

- Christ's work in founding the Church and instituting the sacraments was mediate, not immediate. The main point is to find supports for the faith. Now, as religious experience succeeds so well in creating useful dogmas, why may it not do likewise in the matter of institutions suited to the age?
- The sacraments act as eloquent formulae which touch the soul and carry it away. Precisely; for if dogmas exist only in so far as they preserve religious sentiment, what other service can one expect of the sacraments?
- The Sacred Books are in every religion a collection of religious experiences of an extraordinary nature. For if there is no external revelation, the only substitute possible is the subjective religious experience of men of particular gifts, experiences such as are worthy of being preserved for the community.

The Modernist movement

The late M. Périn dated the modernist movement from the French Revolution. And rightly so, for it was then that many of those modern liberties which the Church has reproved as unrestrained and ungoverned, first found sanction. Several of the propositions collected in the Syllabus of Pius IX, although enunciated from a rationalist point of view, have been appropriated by modernism. Such, for example are, the fourth proposition which derives all religious truth from the natural force of reason; the fifth, which affirms that revelation, if it joins in the onward march of reason, is capable of unlimited progress; the seventh, which treats the prophecies and miracles of Holy Scripture as poetical imaginings; propositions sixteen to eighteen on the equal value of all religions from the point of view of salvation; proposition fifty-five on the separation of Church and State; propositions seventy-five and seventy-six, which oppose the temporal power of the pope. The modernist tendency is still more apparent in the last proposition, which was condemned on 18 March, 1861: "The Roman Pontiff can and ought to conform with contemporary progress, liberalism, and civilization."

Taking only the great lines of the modernist movement within the Church itself. we may say that under Pius IX its tendency was politico-liberal, under Leo XIII and Pius X social; later, under Pius X, its tendency became avowedly theological.

It is in France and Italy above all that modernism properly so-called, that is, the form which attacks the very concept of religion and dogma, has spread its ravages among Catholics. Indeed, some time after the publication of the Encyclical of 8th September, 1907 the German, English, and Belgian bishops congratulated themselves that their respective countries had been spared the epidemic in its more contagious form. Of course, individual upholders of the new error are to be found everywhere, and even England as well as Germany has produced modernists of note. In Italy, on the contrary, even before the Encyclical appeared, the bishops have raised the cry of alarm in their pastoral letters of 1906 and 1907. Newspapers and reviews, openly modernist in their opinions, bear witness to the gravity of the danger which the Sovereign Pontiff sought to avert. After Italy it is France that has furnished the largest number of adherents to this religious reform or ultra-progressive party. In spite of the notoriety of certain individuals, comparatively few laymen have joined the movement; so far it has found adherents chiefly among the ranks of the younger clergy. France possesses a modernist publishing house (La librairie Nourry). A modernist review founded by the late Father Tyrrell, "Nova et Vetera", is published at Rome. "La Revue Moderniste Internationale" was started this year (1910) at Geneva. This monthly periodical calls itself "the organ of the international modernist society". It is open to every shade of modernist opinions, and claims to have co-workers and correspondents in France, Italy, Germany, England, Austria, Hungary, Spain, Belgium, Russia, Rumania and America. The Encyclical "Pascendi" notes and deplors the ardour of the modernist propaganda. A strong current of modernism is running through the Russian Schismatic Church. The Anglican Church has not escaped. And indeed liberal Protestantism is nothing but a radical form of modernism that is winning the greater number of the theologians of the Reformed Church. Others who oppose the innovation find refuge in the authority of the Catholic Church.

The philosophical origin and consequences of Modernism

The origin

Philosophy renders great service to the cause of truth; but error calls for its assistance too. Many consider the philosophic groundwork of modernism to be Kantian. This is true, if by Kantian philosophy is meant every system that has a root connection with the philosophy of the Königsberg sage. In other words, the basis of modernist philosophy is Kantian if, because Kant is its father and most illustrious moderate representative, all agnosticism be called Kantism (by agnosticism is meant the philosophy which denies that reason, used at any rate in a speculative and theoretical way, can gain true knowledge of suprasensible things). It is not our business here to oppose the application of the name Kantian to modernist philosophy. Indeed if we compare the two systems, we shall find that they have two elements in common, the negative part of the "Critique of Pure Reason" (which reduces pure or speculative knowledge to phenomenal or experiential intuition), and a certain argumentative method in distinguishing dogma from the real basis of religion. On the positive side, however, modernism differs from Kantism in some essential points. For Kant, faith is a really rational adhesion of the mind to the postulates of practical reason. The will is free to accept or reject the moral law; and it is on account of this option that he calls its acceptance "belief". Once it is accepted, the reason cannot but admit the existence of God, liberty, and immortality. Modernist faith, on the other hand, is a matter of sentiment, a flinging of oneself towards the Unknowable, and cannot be scientifically justified by reason. In Kant's system, dogmas and the whole positive framework of religion are necessary only for the childhood of humanity or for the common people. They are symbols that bear a certain analogy to images and comparisons. They serve to inculcate those moral precepts that for Kant constitute religion. Modernist symbols, though changeable and fleeting, correspond to a law of human nature. Generally speaking, they help to excite and nourish the effective religious sentiment which Kant (who knew it from his reading of the pietists) calls *schwärmerei*. Kant, as a rationalist, rejects supernatural religion and prayer. The modernists consider natural religion a useless abstraction; for them it is prayer rather that constitutes the very essence of religion. It would be more correct to say that modernism is an offshoot of Schleiermacher (1768-1834), who though he owed something to Kant's philosophy, nevertheless built up his own theological system. Ritschl called him the "legislator of theology" (*Rechtf. und Vers.*, III, p. 486). Schleiermacher conceives the modernist plan of reforming religion with the view of conciliating it with science. Thus would he establish an *entente cordiale* among the various cults, and even between religion and a kind of religious sentimentality which, without recognizing God, yet tends towards the Good and the Infinite. Like the modernists, he has dreams of new religious apologetics; he wants to be a Christian; he declares himself independent of all philosophy; he rejects natural religion as a pure abstraction, and derives dogma from religious experience. His principal writings on this subject are "Ueber die Religion" (1799: note the difference between the first and the later editions) and "Der Christliche Glaube" (1821-22). Ritschl, one of Kant's disciples, recognizes the New Testament as the historical basis of religion. He sees in Christ the consciousness of an intimate union with God, and considers the institution of the Christian religion, which for him is inconceivable without faith in Christ, as a special act of God's providence. Thus has he prepared the way for a form of modernism more temperate than that of Schleiermacher. Though he predicted a continual development of religion, Schleiermacher admitted a certain fixity of dogma. For this reason it seems to us that modernists owe their radical evolutionary theory to Herbert Spencer (1820-1903). It was through the writings of A. Sabatier (1839-1901), a French Protestant of the Broad Church type) that the religious theories we have spoken of, spread among the Latin races, in France and in Italy. It is in these countries, too, that modernism has done greatest harm among the Catholics. Sabatier is a radical modernist. He has especially drawn upon Schleiermacher for the composition of his two works on religious synthesis ("*Esquisse d'une philosophie de la religion d'après la psychologie et l'histoire*", Paris, 1897; *Les religions d'autorité et la religion de l'esprit*", Paris, 1902).

The fundamental error of the modernist philosophy is its misunderstanding of the scholastic formula which takes account of the two aspects of human knowledge. Doubtless, the human mind is a vital faculty endowed with an activity of its own, and tending towards its own object. However, as it is not in continual activity, it is not self-sufficient; it has not in itself the full principle of its operations, but is forced to utilize sensible experience in order to arrive at knowledge. This incompleteness and falling short of perfect autonomy is due to man's very nature. As a consequence, in all human knowledge and activity, account must be taken both of the intrinsic and of the extrinsic side. Urged on by the finality that inspires him man tends towards those objects which suit him, while at the same time objects offer themselves to him. In the supernatural life, man acquires new principles of action and, as it were, a new nature. He is now capable of acts of which God is the formal object. These acts, however, must be proposed to man, whether God deigns to do so by direct revelation to man's soul, or whether, in conformity with man's social nature, God makes use of intermediaries who communicate exteriorly with man. Hence the necessity of preaching, of motives of credibility, and of external teaching authority. Catholic philosophy does not deny the soul's spontaneous life, the sublimity of its suprasensible and supernatural operations, and the inadequacy of words to translate its yearnings. Scholastic doctors give expression to

mystical transports far superior to those of the modernists. But in their philosophy they never forget the lowliness of human nature, which is not purely spiritual. The modernist remembers only the internal element of our higher activity. This absolute and exclusive intrinsicism constitutes what the Encyclical calls "vital immanence". When deprived of the external support which is indispensable to them, the acts of the higher intellectual faculties can only consist in vague sentiments which are as indetermined as are those faculties themselves. Hence it is that modernist doctrines, necessarily expressed in terms of this sentiment, are so intangible. Furthermore, by admitting the necessity of symbols, modernism makes to extrinsicism a concession which is its own refutation.

The consequences

The fact that this radically intrinsic conception of the spiritual or religious activity of man (this perfect autonomy of the reason *vis-à-vis* of what is exterior) is the fundamental philosophical conception of the modernists, as the alteration of dogma is the essential characteristic of their heresy, can be shown without difficulty by deducting from it their entire system of philosophy. First of all, of their agnosticism: the vague nature which they attribute to our faculties does not permit them, without scientific observation, to arrive at any definite intellectual result. Next, of their evolutionism: there is no determined object to assure to dogmatic formulae a permanent and essential meaning compatible with the life of faith and progress. Now, from the moment that these formulae simply serve to nourish the vague sentiment which for modernism is the only common and stable foundation of religion, they must change indefinitely with the subjective needs of the believer. It is a right and even a duty for the latter freely to interpret, as he sees fit, religious facts and doctrines. We meet here with the *a priorisms* to which the Encyclical "Pascendi" drew attention.

We wish to insist a little on the grave consequence that this Encyclical puts especially before our eyes. In many ways, modernism seems to be on the swift incline which leads to pantheism. It seems to be there on account of its symbolism. After all, is not the affirmation of a personal God one of these dogmatic formulae which serve only as symbolic expressions of the religious sentiment? Does not the Divine Personality then become something uncertain? Hence radical modernism preaches union and friendship, even with mystical atheism. Modernism is inclined to pantheism also by its doctrine of Divine Immanence that is, of the intimate presence of God within us. Does this God declare Himself as distinct from us? If so, one must not then oppose the position of modernism to the Catholic position and reject exterior revelation. But if God declares Himself as not distinct from us, the position of modernism becomes openly pantheistic. Such is the dilemma proposed in the Encyclical. Modernism is pantheistic also by its doctrine of science and faith. Faith having for object the Unknowable cannot make up for the want of proportion that modernists put between the intellect and its object. Hence, for the believer as well as for the philosopher, this object remains unknown. Why should not this "Unknowable" be the very soul of the world? It is pantheistic also in its way of reasoning. Independent of and superior to religious formulae, the religious sentiment on the one hand originates them and gives them their entire value, and, on the other hand, it cannot neglect them, it must express itself in them and by them; they are its reality. But we have here the ontology of pantheism, which teaches that the principle does not exist outside of the expression that it gives itself. In the pantheist philosophy, Being or the Idea, God, is before the world and superior to it, He creates it and yet He has no reality outside the world; the world is the realization of God.

The psychological causes of Modernism

Curiosity and pride are, according to the Encyclical "Pascendi", two remote causes. Nothing is truer; but, apart from offering an explanation common to all heretical obstinacy, we ask ourselves here why this pride has taken the shape of modernism. We proceed to consider this question. In modernism we find, first of all, the echo of many tendencies of the mentality of the present generation. Inclined to doubt, and distrustful of what is affirmed, men's minds tend of their own accord to minimize the value of dogmatic definitions. Men are struck by the diversity of the religions which exist on the face of the earth. The Catholic religion is no longer, in their eyes, as it was in the eyes of our ancestors, the morally universal religion of cultured humanity. They have been shown the influence of race on the diffusion of the Gospel. They have been shown the good sides of other cults and beliefs. Our contemporaries find it hard to believe that the greater part of humanity is plunged in error, especially if they are ignorant that the Catholic religion teaches that the means of salvation are at the disposal of those who err in good faith. Hence they are inclined to overlook doctrinal divergencies in order to insist on a certain fundamental conformity of tendencies and of aspirations.

Then again they are moved by sentiments of liberalism and moderation, which reduce the importance of formal religion, as they see in the various cults only private opinions which change with time and place, and which merit an equal respect from all. In the West where people are of a more practical turn, a non-intellectual interest explains the success of heresies which win a certain popularity. Consider the countries in which modernism is chiefly promulgated: France and Italy. In these two countries, and especially in Italy, ecclesiastical authority has imposed social and political directions which call for the sacrifice of humanitarian and patriotic ideas or dreams. That there are important reasons for such commands does not prevent discontent. The majority of men have not enough virtue or nobility to sacrifice for long, to higher duties, a cause which touches their interest or which engages their sympathy. Hence it is that some Catholics, who are not quite steady in their faith and religion, attempt to revolt, and count themselves fortunate in having some doctrinal pretexts to cover their secession.

The founder of the periodical "La Foi Catholique", a review started for the purpose of combating modernism, adds this explanation: "The insufficient cultivation of Catholic philosophy and science is the second deep explanation of the origin of modernist errors. Both have too long confined themselves to answers which, though fundamentally correct, are but little suited to the mentality of our adversaries, and are formulated in a language which they do not understand and which is no longer to the point. Instead of utilizing what is quite legitimate in their positive and critical tendencies, they have only considered them as so many abnormal leanings that must be opposed . . ." (Gaudeau, "La Foi Catholique", I, pp. 62-65). Another point is that the intrinsic nature of the movement of contemporary philosophy has been too much despised or ignored in Catholic schools. They have not given it that partial recognition which is quite consonant with the best scholastic tradition: "In this way, we have failed to secure a real point of contact between Catholic and modern thought" (Gaudeau, *ibid.*). For lack of professors who knew how to mark out the actual path of religious science, many cultured minds, especially among the young clergy, found themselves defenseless against an error which seduced them by its speciousness and by any element of truth contained in its reproaches against the Catholic schools. It is scholasticism ill-understood and calumniated that has incurred this disdain. And for the pope, this is one of the immediate causes of modernism. "Modernism", he says "is nothing but the union of the faith with false philosophy". Cardinal Mercier, on the occasion of his first solemn visit to the Catholic University of Louvain (8 December, 1907), addressed the following compliment to the professors of theology: "Because, with more good sense than others, you have vigorously kept to objective studies and the calm examination of facts, you have both preserved our Alma Mater from the strayings of modernism and have secured for her the advantages of modern scientific methods." ("Annuaire de l'Université Catholique de Louvain", 1908, p. XXV, XXVI.) Saint Augustine (De Genesi contra Manicheos, I, Bk. I, i) in a text that has passed into the Corpus Juris Canonici (c. 40, c. xxiv, q. 3) had already spoken as follows: "Divine Providence suffers many heretics of one kind or another, so that their challenges and their questions on doctrines that we are ignorant of, may force us to arise from our indolence and stir us with the desire to know Holy Scripture." From another point of view, modernism marks a religious reaction against materialism and positivism, both of which fail to satisfy the soul's longing. This reaction however, for reasons that have just been given, strays from the right path.

Pontifical documents concerning Modernism

The semi-rationalism of several modernists, such as Loisy for instance, had already been condemned in the Syllabus; several canons of the Vatican Council on the possibility of knowing God through his creatures, on the distinction between faith and science, on the subordination of human science to Divine revelation on the unchangeableness of dogma, deal in a similar strain with the tenets of modernism.

The following are the principal decrees or documents expressly directed against modernism.

- The pope's address on 17 April, 1907, to the newly-created cardinals. It is a résumé which anticipates the Encyclical "Pascendi".
- A letter from the Congregation of the Index of 29 April, 1907, to the Cardinal Archbishop of Milan with regard to the review "Il Rinnovamento". In it we find more concrete notions of the tendencies which the popes condemn. The letter even goes so far as to mention the names of Fogazzaro, Father Tyrrell, von Hügel and the Abbate Murri.
- Letters from Pius X, 6 May, 1907, to the archbishops and bishops and to the patrons of the Catholic Institute of Paris. It shows forth clearly the great and twofold care of Pius X for the restoration of sacred studies and Scholastic philosophy, and for the safeguarding of the clergy.

- The decree "Lamentabili" of the Holy Office, 3-4 July, 1907, condemning 65 distinct propositions.
- The injunction of the Holy Office, "Recentissimo", of 28 August, 1907, which with a view to remedying the evil, enjoins certain prescriptions upon bishops and superiors of religious orders.
- The Encyclical "Pascendi", of 8 September, 1907, of which we shall speak later on.
- Three letters of the Cardinal Secretary of State, of 2 and 10 October, and of 5 November, 1907, on the attendance of the clergy at secular universities, urging the execution of a general regulation of 1896 on this subject. The Encyclical had extended this regulation to the whole Church.
- The condemnation by the Cardinal-Vicar of Rome of the pamphlet "Il programma dei modernisti", and a decree of 29 October, 1907, declaring the excommunication of its authors, with special reservations.
- The decree Motu Proprio of 18 November, 1907, on the value of the decisions of the Biblical Commission, on the decree "Lamentabili", and on the Encyclical "Pascendi". These two documents are again confirmed and upheld by ecclesiastical penalties.
- The address at the (Consistory of 16 December, 1907).
- The decree of the Holy Office of 13 February, 1908, in condemnation of the two newspapers, "La Justice sociale" and "La Vie Catholique". Since then several condemnations of the books have appeared.
- The Encyclical "Editae" of 26 May, 1910, renewed the previous condemnations.
- Still stronger is the tone of the Motu Proprio "Sacrorum Antistitum", of 1 September, 1910, declared:
- by a decree of the Consistorial Congregations of 25 September, 1910. This Motu Proprio inveighs against modernist obstinacy and specious cunning. After having quoted the practical measures prescribed in the Encyclical "Pascendi", the pope urges their execution, and, at the same time, makes new directions concerning the formation of the clergy in the seminaries and religious houses. Candidates for higher orders, newly appointed confessors, preachers, parish priests, canons, the beneficed clergy, the bishop's staff, Lenten preachers, the officials of the Roman congregations, or tribunals, superiors and professors in religious congregations, all are obliged to swear according to a formula which reprobates the principal modernist tenets.
- The pope's letter to Prof. Decurtins on literary modernism.

These acts are for the most part of a disciplinary character (the Motu Proprio of September, 1910, is clearly of the same nature); the decree "Lamentabili" is entirely doctrinal; the Encyclical "Pascendi" and the Motu Proprio of 18 March, 1907, are both doctrinal and disciplinary in character. Writers do not agree as to the authority of the two principal documents; the decree "Lamentabili" and the Encyclical "Pascendi". In the present writer's opinion, since the new confirmation accorded to these decrees by the Motu Proprio, they contain in their doctrinal conclusions the infallible teaching of the Vicar of Jesus Christ. (For a more moderate opinion cf. Choupin in "Etudes", Paris, CXIV, p. 119-120.) The decree "Lamentabili" has been called the new Syllabus, because it contains the proscription by the Holy Office of 65 propositions, which may be grouped under the following heads: Prop. 1-8, errors concerning the teaching of the Church; Prop. 9-19, errors concerning the inspiration, truth, and study of Holy Writ, especially the Gospels; Prop. 20-36, errors concerning revelation and dogma; Prop. 37-38, Christological errors; Prop. 39-51, errors relative to the sacraments; Prop. 52-57, errors concerning the institution and organization of the Church; Prop. 58-65, errors on doctrinal evolution. The Encyclical "Pascendi" in the introduction laid bare the gravity of the danger, pointed out the necessity of firm and decisive action, and approved of the title "Modernism" for the new errors. It gives us first a very methodical exposition of modernism; next follows its general condemnation with a word as to corollaries that may be drawn from the heresy. The pope then goes on to examine the causes and the effects of modernism, and finally seeks the necessary remedies. Their application he endeavors to put into practice by a series of energetic measures. An urgent appeal to the bishops fittingly closes this striking document.

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About this page

APA citation. Vermeersch, A. (1911). Modernism. In *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York: Robert Appleton Company. Retrieved April 27, 2009 from New Advent: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10415a.htm>

MLA citation. Vermeersch, Arthur. "Modernism." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 10. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911. 27 Apr. 2009 <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10415a.htm>>.

Transcription. This article was transcribed for New Advent by Gerard Haffner.

Ecclesiastical approbation. *Nihil Obstat*. October 1, 1911. Remy Lafort, S.T.D., Censor. *Imprimatur*. +John Cardinal Farley, Archbishop of New York.

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