

# INTEGRITY

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**SUBJECT~ADAPTATION**

in regard to modern "conveniences," hygienic or otherwise. If they serve as instruments to further the aims of religious life they should be adapted without hesitation; if their only purpose is to pamper the body or satisfy the passions, they should be rejected.

Certainly personal caprice or a desire for novelty cannot be the guiding spirit in the delicate task of adaptation; only the desire to live more faithfully according to the primitive ideals in the midst of new conditions can bring it about successfully. In practice, only the constituted authorities, moved by prudent zeal and a deep love of real perfection, can bring about a renewal of an institution without changing its spirit.

If those on whom this responsibility for the future of religious life rest know how, in the words of Pope Pius XII, "to make their institutes seem new," then every order and every congregation will become a seedbed of apostles, a nursery of doctors, a flowering field of sanctity. Novitiates will be thronged with fresh and confident youths, anxious to run in the way of the counsels in order to find Christ more easily and sacrifice themselves more completely for the redemption of their brothers.

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**PRAISE, NOT SATIRE**

Straight, with crooked lines He writes,

A pattern of new approaches,

Francis prevails without his birds,

And Dominic rides in coaches.

## Isn't Thomism Outmoded?

In view of recent admonitions issuing from Rome that the Church in her varied fields of influence must adapt herself to modern needs and conditions, it would seem paradoxical that the encyclical *Humani Generis* should reiterate the ordinations of previous Popes that Thomism, both as a philosophical and theological system, is to be steadfastly maintained and faithfully taught. For if Catholic doctrine must be restricted within the confines of a medieval system of thought, how can anyone possibly conceive of an application of that doctrine which will be efficacious and in harmony with present-day systems of thought? In facing this dilemma, certain modern theologians, while manifesting the greatest zeal for an adaptation of the Church's doctrine to modern times, have shown an equally strong disdain for the traditionally honored scholastic philosophy and theology.

Let it be understood at the outset that the proponents of this new trend in theology are by no means numerous nor do they represent a universal tendency in the Church. The beginnings can be traced to certain intellectual groups in France but unfortunately they have found eager disciples in England, Germany, and the United States. By this time it is known to all that these persons were the occasion of the new encyclical *Humani Generis*.

### The Argument Against Scholasticism

The apparently harmless proposition advanced by this group is that Catholic doctrine must be brought to modern man, whether he be intellectual or no, and in order to effect this, the doctrine must be presented in modern man's language. More than that, it must be adapted to modern man's cultural and emotional background because religion is an immanent and vital thing which is constantly changing with man himself. Now if the language of Catholicism is not intelligible to the man of today, how can we reach him unless we speak his tongue? If we further take into account the many non-Catholic sects, both Protestant and schismatic, which will not admit the parlance of scholasticism in any discussion, what recourse is left but to return to Scripture itself and the Fathers of the Church? Many non-Catholics will hear the words of an Augustine, a Jerome, or a John Chrysostom, but will close their ears and hearts to an Aquinas or a Bonaventure.

There is, of course, a great deal of truth in this new tendency and many of the men who support it are among the best thinkers and most zealous workers in the Church today. No theologian worthy of the name would deny that sound doctrine alone is not

enough; the theologian must also be coefficient with his age, being keenly aware of the temper of the times and the condition of man. But through their vague and obscure terminology one can see that the modern reformers are striking at something much more profound than language and methods. The Holy Father points out that if they only aimed at adapting ecclesiastical teaching and methods to modern conditions and requirements, there would scarcely be any reason for alarm.

### Shades of Modernism

When one studies the doctrine of these persons on the value of Patristic writings, the role of philosophy in deducing theological conclusions, the teaching authority of the Church, and the nature of the supernatural order, it becomes evident immediately that the Church today is faced with a mitigated form of Modernism. The encyclical *Humani Generis* is easily accessible to all who wish to see the precise points of doctrine on which the modern reformers are in error, but it is interesting to recall the words of Pope Pius X, writing in his encyclical *Pascendi* in 1907, for they apply very neatly to the present condition:

It remains for us now to say a few words about the Modernist as reformer. From all that has preceded, it is abundantly clear how great and how eager is the passion of such men for innovation. In all Catholicism there is absolutely nothing on which it does not fasten. They wish philosophy to be reformed, especially in the ecclesiastical seminaries. They wish the scholastic philosophy to be relegated to the history of philosophy and to be classed among obsolete systems, and the young men to be taught modern philosophy which alone is true and suited to the times in which we live. They desire the reform of theology: rational theology is to have modern philosophy for its foundation, and positive theology is to be founded on the history of dogma. As for history, it must be written and taught only according to their methods and modern principles. Dogmas and their evolution, they affirm, are to be harmonized with science and history. In the Catechism no dogmas are to be inserted except those that have been reformed and are within the capacity of the people. Regarding worship, they say, the number of external devotions is to be reduced, and steps must be taken to prevent their further increase, though, indeed, some of the admirers of symbolism are disposed to be more indulgent on this

head. They cry out that ecclesiastical government requires to be reformed in all its branches, but especially in its disciplinary and dogmatic departments. They insist that both outwardly and inwardly it must be brought into harmony with the modern conscience, which now wholly tends to democracy; a share in ecclesiastical government should therefore be given to the lower ranks of the clergy, and even to the laity, and authority, which is too much concentrated, should be decentralized. . . . The ecclesiastical authority must alter its line of conduct in the social and political world; while keeping outside political organizations, it must adapt itself to them, in order to penetrate them with its spirit. With regard to morals, they adopt the principle of the Americanists, that the active virtues are more important than the passive, and are to be more encouraged in practice. They ask that the clergy should return to their primitive humility and poverty, and that in their ideas and action they should admit the principles of Modernism; and there are some who, gladly listening to the teaching of their Protestant masters, would desire the suppression of the celibacy of the clergy. What is there left in the Church which is not to be reformed by them and according to their principles?

### Lack of Docility to the Church

Not content with the promulgation of dangerous doctrines, our modern reformers add to their mischief by refusing to accept the corrections made by the Holy See. Even *Humani Generis* has been met with lack of docility in some quarters.

What are we to think of those who, in spite of the papal decrees, which have been especially numerous since the time of Pope Leo XIII, have consistently and stubbornly held to their own opinions? The pronouncements have been crystal clear; each one more specific. "Nor must it be thought," says the present Pontiff, "that what is expounded in Encyclical Letters does not of itself demand consent, since in writing such letters the Popes do not exercise the supreme power of their Teaching Authority. For these matters are taught with the ordinary teaching authority, of which it is true to say: 'He who heareth you, heareth Me'; and generally what is expounded and inculcated in Encyclical Letters already for other reasons appertains to Catholic doctrine. But if the Supreme Pontiffs in their official documents purposely pass judgment on a matter up to that time under dispute,