

Revisiting the Seminary Formation During the Twentieth Century

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Tracing the history and development of seminary formation during the twentieth century is admittedly a herculean endeavor, not to say ambitious. From the present standpoint, it is like doing a "backward glance" to a practically long and labyrinthine period. However, with a century that had had various eras to speak of, there are vignettes that need essaying, even as there are events and ideas that require remembering. For, to some great extent, they had influenced, if not played a vital role in, the formation of the clergy in the course of one hundred years.

It is then my stand that seminary education was far from unaffected by the flood of events and intellectual affairs that occurred within the Church and outside it during the last ten decades. There were historical moments from the global perspective that wound their way into the Church. Depending upon one's viewpoint, the intellectual climate of particular eras within the century posed either as opportunities or threats to the Church's understanding of man, culture, progress and society. And since priesthood is an institution that deals squarely with these areas, it could not escape being affected by the world's turn of events and the intellectual (not to say "juridical") mood of the times.

The development of this paper is largely expository in character. It goes through the twentieth century in one hurried but clean sweep,

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marks out the historical events and intellectual affairs in the world and in the Church, and finally indicates their significance to seminary formation.

TURN OF THE CENTURY AND MODERNISM

The twentieth century broke into history brewing with controversies and discussions. Earlier on, Pius IX had succeeded in putting down the liberal Catholic Movement. Vatican I had defined the papal infallibility, and had ratified the Church's resistance against modern culture. Christian doctrine was being challenged in the light of the scientific development. Later, Leo XIII, in his effort to reconcile the Church with modern life and culture, had issued an encyclical, *Aeterni Patris*, proposing that St. Thomas Aquinas' teaching is the very touchstone of Catholic orthodoxy.¹ The Church, affected by the intellectual state of affairs, resembled a massive, organized fortress defending Herself against the main cultural and political movements of the day. Thomistic spirit had taken possession of all university chairs in Rome and from there had spread to the entire Catholic academia. This way, Neo-Thomism—that was how the restoration of Scholasticism came to be called—triumphed completely.

A number of Catholic scholars, however, felt uneasy over the papal directive. For them, Neo-Thomism in all its marvel was not the answer, as it was not broad enough to deal with the manifold problems of the faith in the face of modern culture. These scholars were especially concerned with the general ignorance of historical method manifested by the leading Neo-Thomists. Breaking out of the Neo-Scholastic mold, they searched for ways of expressing their Catholic faith that would make sense to the modern man. They would later earn the epithet, "Modernists."²

¹ Leo XIII, Enc. *Aeterni Patris* (4.VIII.1879), trans. Spanish in *El Magisterio Pontificio Contemporaneo* [MPC], I, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos [BAC], Madrid 1991, pp. 111 ss. This book is by far among the most recent compilations of Papal Documents.

² "Modernism" in *The New Dictionary of Theology* (1987) 668. The term, "modernism," was coined in 1905, and was intended as a pejorative description of these scholarly trends developing in the Catholic Church. The leaders of this movement were a small group of scholars active in many fields: Duchesne, Loisy and Labethonnière in Church History, biblical exegesis and philosophy, respectively; the Italian priests Gennocchi, Minnoch and Semeria in biblical exegesis; the English Jesuit Tyrell and

The reaction of the Church was reflected in the decree of the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office entitled, *Lamentabili sane exitu*, which appeared on July 3, 1907.³ It was followed shortly afterward on September 8, 1907, by the encyclical, *Pascendi domini gregis*, in which the condemnation was explained in great detail.⁴ In this encyclical Pius X saw that modernism was an error which consisted in maintaining agnostic concepts towards a real proof of the existence of God and in a moral principle that was founded on a so-called divine or vital immanence in place of an objective norm of morality. The pope looked at this error as having stemmed from rationalism, the concepts of which had begun to penetrate the Church.⁵

In that same encyclical, what concerned the pope the most was that modernism had started to infiltrate the Church in the area of education. As a remedy to this, he proposed a return to scholastic philosophy. The pope spelled out what he meant by scholastic philosophy: "We have in mind particularly the philosophy which has been transmitted by St Thomas Aquinas."⁶

In particular Pius X cautioned that the study of positive theology, based on the sources of other sciences, should not overthrow the speculative theology, which is based on scholastic theology.⁷

Two other decrees directed to seminaries came in succession. First was a *motu proprio*, entitled, *Praeestantia*, ordering bishops to "refuse to ordain to the priesthood young men who give the slightest reason for

the French layman Blondel, both in philosophy; the Italian novelist Forgazzaro, and the English layman Von Hugel; the only two members of the hierarchy prominently identified with them were Archbishop Mignot of Albi and Bishop Lacroix of Tarentaise. A description of the modernist debacle is also offered by T. BOKENTOTTER, *A Concise History of the Catholic Church*, Doubleday, New York ³1990, pp. 310-319.

³ S. CONGREGATION OF THE HOLY OFFICE, *Lamentabili* (4.VII.1907) in MPC, BAC, Madrid 1991, pp. 148 ss.

⁴ PIUS X, Enc. *Pascendi Domini gregis* (8.IX.1907) in MPC, BAC, Madrid 1991, pp. 153 ss.

⁵ *Ibidem*; also cfr. P. E. KENDALL, *Intellectual Formation in the Major Seminary Curriculum: Principles and Considerations, a Historico-Canonical Study*, Catholic University of America, Washington 1971, pp. 378-379. This is actually a published dissertation by the same author.

⁶ PIUS X, o. c., n. 46.

⁷ *Ibidem*, n. 47.

thinking that they are attached to condemned doctrines and dangerous novelties.”⁸

The other decree was the *motu proprio*, *Sanctorum Antistitum*, issued on September 1, 1910.⁹ The document summarized the principal provision of the encyclical. *Pascendi*. It elaborated the theme that the seminary is a place of piety and study, and insisted that a “cleric must strive to acquire a standard of learning way above the ordinary, and practically on the level of an expert.”¹⁰

Sacrorum Antistitum also required all seminary instructors to make a profession of faith and the oath against modernism. With these unprecedented provisions, the Holy See made a decisive advance at exerting control over the seminary – an influence which would be felt henceforth. The impact that She created would be far-reaching. Slowly She was making seminaries all over the world a venue for professional learning as She maintained a strong stance against the current intellectual life of the modern world.

THE 1917 CODE OF CANON LAW AND SEMINARY EDUCATION

One that left a deepest mark in the Church during the pontifical reign of Pius X (1903 to 1914) was the codification of Canon Law – a work that reshaped disparate church legislations into a unified code. However, he died in 1914 leaving the project at midpoint.¹¹ His successor, who took the name, Benedict XV, continued the work and promulgated it on the Feast of Pentecost; it went into effect on May 19, 1918.¹²

The Tridentine Spirit

The Council of Trent had been convoked four centuries earlier, but being the pivotal event of the Catholic Reformation, it carried with

⁸ PIUS X, M.P. *Praestantia* (18.IX.1907), in *Acta Sanctae Sedis* [ASS] 40 (1907) 725.

⁹ PIUS X, M. P. *Sacrorum Antistitum* (1.IX.1910), in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* [AAS], 17 (1910) 655-680.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 667-668.

¹¹ PIUS X, in J.N. KELLEY (ed), *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes* (1986) 313-314.

¹² BENEDICT XV, Apost. Const. *Providentissima Mater Ecclesia* in *Corpus Iuris Canonici* [CIC], Typis Polyglottis Vaticani, Romae 1917, pp. 5-8.

it a tremendous significance. It dramatically mirrored the vital energy once more pulsating throughout the Church, even as it defined key doctrines and set the whole Church on the path of Reform.

The various canons on the priesthood revealed that the Code was still firmly entrenched to the Tridentine ideals both in spirit and in letter. The priest was obliged to "lead a more saintly interior and exterior life than the laity, and to give them example by excelling in virtue and righteous conduct" (can. 124). He was to confess his sins regularly and should daily fulfill the spiritual exercises of mental prayer, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, recitation of the rosary in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the examination of conscience (can. 125). Priests were to have a retreat annually (can. 126), and to recite the canonical hours daily "as prescribed by the approved liturgical books" (can. 135). Other canons prescribed behavior that distinguished the priests from the laity, such as requirements of the ecclesiastical dress and prohibitions against engaging in business, politics, or military service (cc. 137-140). In short, what had been the priestly ideal and spirituality four centuries earlier had now become normative, legislated as they were in the various canons scattered throughout the code.¹³

The seminary curriculum

The code addressed the seminary in canons 1352 to 1383, which, however, went beyond the simple provisions of the seminary decree embodied in the Council of Trent. The canons outlined the basic characteristics of the seminary as it had evolved since the sixteenth century. Canon 1352 insisted on the Church's right to educate the Catholic clergy free of interference from the state; can. 1353 treated the necessity of a vocation from God as a condition for ordination. One measure for discerning ecclesiastical vocation was an estimation of the intentions and personal gifts of the candidates for the priesthood, such as an aptitude for learning that gives promise of success in the priesthood.¹⁴

The subsequent canons (cc. 1354-1361) treated the seminary as an institution. Every diocese was to have a seminary at a suitable place,

¹³ For citations on the canons, refer to AAS 9/2 (1917) 31ss. A similar discussion is made in J. M. WHITE, *The Diocesan Seminary in the United States. A History from the 1780's to the Present*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame 1989, pp. 269-270.

¹⁴ J. M. WHITE, see *supra*, p. 270.

determined by the bishop. This provision rendered Trent's decree unnecessary, since the Tridentine order was to place the seminary within the confines of the Cathedral.¹⁵ Moreover, the Code decreed that in large dioceses two seminaries, minor and major, were to be erected if possible. "If a diocesan seminary cannot be erected, or if in such seminary a proper course in philosophy and theology cannot be given," the code continued, "the bishop should send the students outside the seminary, unless an interdiocesan or provincial seminary has been established with the authority of the Holy See."¹⁶

It was from canon 1354 that the major division of major seminary from minor seminary was made. The prescription on the minor seminary was a throwback to the Tridentine decree in which the bishop was advised to receive boys into the seminary at an early age (the minimum beginning twelve years), if they showed signs of priestly vocation.¹⁷

Canons 1364 and 1366 treated academic issues in the seminary. For the minor seminary, the instructions were to be studied in very general terms, "in a manner adapted to the age and intelligence of the students," and to be equivalent to the education offered in local secular institutions. Religious instruction and Latin were emphasized. The major seminary was to cover six years. The Code specified that at least two years were to be spent in the study of philosophy and at least four

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶ Canon 1354, par. 2 & 3. The English translation is taken from S. WOYWOOD, *A Practical Commentary on the Code of Canon Law*, Joseph Wagner, Inc., New York 1957, pp. 119-120.

¹⁷ Sessio XXIII, cap. 18, *De Reformatione*, in N. P. TANNER (ed.), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Council*, II, English and Latin Texts, Sheed and Ward, New York 1990.

¹⁸ In his study, Kendall gives an extensive treatment of the Code of Canon Law with respect to the seminary curriculum. Here he mentions that shortly after the Code was promulgated, the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries and Universities issued *Ordinamento dei seminari*, a circular letter to the Italian bishops on the subject of seminary curriculum, the subjects of which are those listed above. The source of this division owes its validity to the one proposed by Christian Wolf (1679-1754) and came into use with the early philosophical manuals of the 19th century. From the revival of philosophy in the seminaries of the 19th century the curriculum was first legislated in the French local Councils of 1850-1868. Then through the circular letters of the Popes and the Sacred Congregation before and after the Code of Canon Law of 1917, this division of courses came into use in many seminaries around the world. See P. E. KENDALL, *o. c.*, pp. 421-442.

years in the study of theology. The two years of study of philosophy embraced academic years comprising in all twenty-one months, exclusive of three months of vacation after the second year. These two years were to be devoted to the philosophy in all its branches — logic, general metaphysics, cosmology, psychology, theodicy, ethics and natural law¹⁸— accompanied by the study of vernacular language, Latin, Greek, history, natural sciences and mathematics. In similar fashion the study of theology was extended over four academic years comprising in all forty-five months exclusive of the three months of vacation after the fourth year. The four years of theology were prescribed for dogmatic and moral theology, Sacred Scripture, Church history, canon law, liturgy, sacred eloquence and ecclesiastical chant. The Code also prescribed the study on pastoral theology, with practical exercises on the method of teaching catechism, hearing confessions, visiting the sick, and assisting the dying.¹⁹

The Code did not fix a plan of studies for all the seminaries, but left it to the bishops to arrange with the advice of the seminary boards, the plan of studies for his own diocese. When Benedict XV published his *motu proprio*, *Cum novum juris*,²⁰ which prescribed the teaching of the new code in the seminaries, the spirit and purpose of seminary life soon became based on Canon Law, and in effect raised its legislative character to a universal level.

THE APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTION *DEUS SCIENTIARUM DOMINUS*

Benedict XV died in 1922, and the new pope took the name, Pius XI. On the ninth year of his pontificate, he issued what was by far the most important and far reaching juridical act in the area of clergy formation, the Apostolic Constitution, *Deus Scientiarum Dominus*, on May 24, 1931. The document called for studies in sacred disciplines with the aim at acquiring scientific knowledge, and should the occasion permit, at teaching correctly the truths of the Catholic faith and defending it against the attacks and fallacies of its adversaries.

In this constitution Pius XI imposed uniform standards on pontifical faculties for advanced studies in philosophy, theology and canon

¹⁹ S. WOYWOOD, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-127; J. M. WHITE, *op. cit.*, p. 271.

²⁰ BENEDICT XV, *M.P.*, *Cum Novum Juris* (7.VIII.1917) AAS 9 (1917) 439; cfr. J. M. WHITE, *op. cit.*, p. 316.

law. The papal document ended the quick doctorates of theology and canon law which were earned only after written and oral examinations at the end of the ordinary seminary course. By virtue of the constitution, pontifical universities had to meet minimum standards of course work and seminars. In theology, for example, a minimum of four years was required for the licentiate and a fifth year for the doctorate. The latter would even take longer, since a dissertation was already required. In canon law, a priest who had already taken an ordinary theology program was to take at least two years of study for the licentiate and a third year for the doctorate with the dissertation required. With the dissertation, the research component was introduced into the theological study, thus bringing critical and historical methods into Catholic theology.

The provisions in the constitution created a wide impact in the seminaries, especially in the pontifical universities all over the world. In effect, these institutions had to draft new constitutions to conform to the standards and submitted them to the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries and Universities. Those who could not meet the required norms were ordered closed.²¹

THE CURRICULUM BETWEEN THE CODE AND THE COUNCIL

The years between the 1917 Code of Canon Law and the Second Vatican Council (1963) were a period of discussion on the seminary curriculum. With the universal legislation now precise and definite, seminary educators gathered on a regular basis to discuss and debate on matters regarding curriculum revision and reorganization. Even from the level of the Apostolic See, various documents of the popes came in succession echoing and amplifying the legislation of the Code.

Discussion on the Theology Curriculum

Four main problems ran continually throughout all literatures on theological formation.²² First, there was the desire to integrate

²¹ J. M. WHITE, *op. cit.*, pp. 277-278.

²² P. E. KENDALL, *op. cit.*, pp. 465-467. The discussion on the problems concerning the academic curriculum had bias towards the seminaries of the United States. But given that among the sources of information were papal documents and thus are of universal value, we have considered the problems worth citing in this article.

courses in the curriculum and, while retaining the major core subjects, to avoid overlapping of content in the principle courses. Second, there was the expressed hope among seminary educators that useless, obsolete and extraneous matters be removed from the course content, and that courses no longer needed be removed from the curriculum. Third was the desire to introduce new courses and new content to present courses in order to meet the demands of constantly changing social structure and also to meet the needs of the priestly ministry particularly in the pastoral practice area. And fourth, came the concern that by overloading the class hours of the major seminarian the curriculum had developed a tendency towards a superficial treatment of many important areas, thus producing a lack of depth in his ministry.

Addressing the concerns on seminary formation, the major seminaries modified their academic curriculums. Various courses were developed and took on some adjusted shapes. This development can be summed up as follows: the concept of positive theology was introduced, allowing the students in theology to venture into the sources of Christian tradition; Sacred Scriptures became emphasized as the prime foundation of all theology; more pastoral and practical courses were developed in the major seminary curriculum, such as liturgy, sacred music and catechetics.

In the end, there appeared eleven courses considered as areas of theological study: Dogmatic Theology, Moral Theology, Sacred Scripture, Church History, Canon Law, Liturgy, Homiletics, Sacred Music, Pastoral Theology, Catechetics and Ascetical Theology. The last area, though not found in the legislation, was deemed an important element of the major seminary curriculum.

On the Teaching of Philosophy

Most of the seminary-related documents coming from Rome during the more than four decades before Vatican II concerned themselves with the requirement that philosophy be "taught by professors absolutely according to the method, doctrine and principles of the Angelic Doctor..."²³ Two elements characterized the teaching of philosophy as

²³ Canon 1366 §2; cfr. S. WOYWOOD, *op. cit.*, p. 23. The documents referred to are the following: PIUS XI, Enc. *Officiorum Omnium* (1.VIII.1922), in AAS 14 (1922) 449-458; PIUS XI, Enc. *Studiorum Ducem* (29.VI.1923), in AAS 15 (1923) 309-326;

gleaned from these documents. First, philosophy was presented as a preparation for theology and as defense of the dogmas of the Church against errors. Second, the philosophy of St Thomas was considered a system that had reached perfection in the thirteenth century, a philosophy whose principles and doctrine were assured as true by the extrinsic authority of the Church.

It was in view of these tendencies that there arose some controversies on the teaching of philosophy during the period before the Council. There were two main areas of criticism. In the first place, the authors opined that there had been too much emphasis on the principles and doctrine of St Thomas and not enough on his method of philosophizing. This tendency, according to them, produced a closed and stagnant system, mainly catechetical and apologetical in character, and which had not been relevant to the needs of the modern major seminaries; it, too, had caused the seminarian to view philosophy to be endured rather than made effective in his education. Secondly, it was their view that the value of St Thomas as a guide to the study of philosophy had been misunderstood, saying that his work had not been presented in its original form, but in the nineteenth century Neo-Thomist manualists. This form, so they said, had become *a priori*, stylistic and consequently sterile vehicle for his thought. And thirdly, the teaching of philosophy had become stylized, traditionalistic, departmentalized, and so remote from the real problems of life rendering the student convinced neither of life nor of its values, nor of its validity. Simply put, the philosophy curriculum was misunderstood in the purpose of its course. More concerned with the imparting of information, professors taught philosophy with a series of theses to be committed to memory.

It was only towards the end of the period shortly before the Vatican Council II that the proper function of the seminary philosophy was realized: that it was to prepare the student for theology, and lead him to develop a reflective mind, an ability to think and a philosophic mental habit.²⁴

PIUS XII, Allocut. *Sollemnis Conventus* (24.VII.1939), in AAS 31 (1939) 245-251; PIUS XII, Enc. *Humani Generis* (12.VIII.1950), in AAS 42 (1950) 561-578; PIUS XII, Enc. *Menti Nostrae* (23.IX.1950), in AAS 42 (1950) 657-702.

²⁴ P. E. KENDALL, *op. cit.*, p. 485.

PIUS XII, THE NOUVELLE THEOLOGIE, AND *HUMANI GENERIS*

The year 1940 saw the initial stages in the pontificate of Pius XII²⁵, a Roman-born career diplomat and Secretary of State who was elected Supreme Pontiff on his sixty-third birthday, on March 2, 1939. The early period of his reign was marked by his absorption in the diplomatic affairs, heightened, too, by the Second World War that started in September 1939.

The Second World War, which lasted until 1945, brought not merely great changes in the material fortunes of many nations, but also radical shifts in the world of thought. It was right in the eye of these intellectual controversies that Pius XII found himself engaged. No sooner than when the hostilities began to die down and the frontiers of Europe were opened, a new factor arrived on the scene, this time on the intellectual plane — a new philosophy “difficult to define, even by those who taught it, but nevertheless of great influence, especially in France.”²⁶ For want of term, the new philosophy was given the name of *Existentialism*, and it was not long before it would have influence in the science of Theology.

The controversy raged like wildfire in the ecclesiastical circles. The apprehension towards an emerging way of thought was justified when, in 1946, during the course of two allocutions — one to the General Chapter of the, Jesuits and the other to the Dominicans — the pope himself made some references to what he called a “new theology.”²⁷ He pointed out that, while questions under dispute among Catholic theologians were important and cannot be neglected, nevertheless, the problem which confronted theologians was the defense of the very foundations of the perennial philosophy and theology. The problem centered on the intimate relationship between human intellect and faith. It was in his allocution to the Jesuits that the Pope mentioned the new theology by that name:

²⁵ Born Eugenio Pacelli. See “Pius XII,” in J. N. D. KELLEY, *o. c.*, pp. 318-320.

²⁶ D. L. GREENSTOCK, “Thomism and the New Theology,” in *The Thomist* 13 (1950) 567.

²⁷ Cf. PIUS XII, Alloc. *Ad Patres Societatis Jesu in XXIX Congregatione Generali electores* (17.IX.1946), in AAS 38 (1946) 381-385; PIUS XII, Alloc. *Ad Patres delegatos ad capitulum generalem Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum* (22.IX.1946), in AAS 38 (1946) 385-389.

There is a great deal of talk...about a 'new theology,' which must be in constant transformation, following the example of all other things in the world, which are in constant state of flux and movement, without ever reaching their term. If we were to accept such an opinion, what would become of the unchangeable dogmas of the Catholic Faith, and what would become of the unity and stability of that Faith?²⁸

It was observed that this new theology did not have very clear ideas of its basic doctrines. All that its proponents did was attack the old traditional system, arguing that the Church in modern times should adopt modern methods of approach, especially modern philosophies, in order to present the truth of the faith in a way appealing to the ordinary people. They were preoccupied with "the man on the street" who, for them, could be won not by concepts of Scholastic philosophy, but by a direct use of modern methods and concepts which are in common use among present-day philosophers. In other words, they were rallying for a theology that is in synch with the times, and not one that is out of touch with reality, or one which takes little, if ever, account of modern philosophical systems. Those at the center of this movement—the Dominican Marie-Dominique Chenu and the Jesuits Henri de Lubac, Jean Daniélou, Karl Rahner, among others—were convinced that traditional theology has lost a mass of notions, ideas and even methods of expounding the faith. As an approach, they—particularly the Jesuits—proposed for the recovery of the methods well known to the Fathers of the Church and for their incorporation into theology, even if it meant rejecting Aristotelianism, or even Thomism.²⁹

Pius XII's reaction was not only mirrored in the papal audiences he had with the Dominicans and the Jesuits on different occasions in 1946. Early in 1950 the whole of Europe was awash with rumors that action was being taken in Rome against the new movement, and that some kind of a syllabus would be published. What came out, however, was not a syllabus, but an Encyclical, *Humani Generis*,³⁰ published on the twelfth of August 1950.

²⁸ Alloc. *Ad Patres Societatis Jesu...*, *op. cit.* p. 385.

²⁹ D. L. GREENSTOCK, *o. c.*, pp. 569-570; 572-573.

³⁰ G. WEGEL, SJ, "The Historical Background of the Encyclical, *Humani Generis*," in *Theological Studies* 12 (1951) 208 ss.

It might now be superfluous to describe the papal document in detail. Suffice it to say that when it was promulgated, various commentaries were brought to light, and lengthy studies made. We can pick out some interesting points. First, although the Pope stressed the perfection of the doctrine and the principles of St Thomas, he also indicated that there was a need to modernize the presentation of philosophy:

"However, even in these fundamental questions (principles and tenets that touch Catholic doctrine) we may clothe philosophy in a more convenient and richer dress, make it more vigorous with a more effective terminology, divest it of certain scholastic aids found less useful, prudently enrich it with the fruits of progress of the human mind."³¹

Another, since the document discussed at length on the matter of the teaching authority of the Church and the new theology. The Holy Father named the elements that he considered dangerous in this new teaching: dogmatic relativism, the separation of dogmatic inquiry from the teaching authority of the Church, and finally, an interpretation of Scriptures not based on Church authority.³²

With all that was said about the encyclical, its tenor was, in the words of one Msgr. Fontenelle, "an affectionate warning rather than a breach of condemnation." He added, "When the Pope points out the imprudent actions [of his sons], he feels it his obligation to intervene in the affairs and, with much firmness, prevent them from falling into further error."³³

³¹ PIUS XII, Alloc. *Humani Generis*, op. cit., n. 30. Translation by P. E. KENDALL, o. c., p. 481.

³² *Humani Generis*, cit.; P. E. KENDALL, cit., p. 501. Kendall further cites other papal documents where the Pope continued to argue against new developments in dogmatic theology that seemed to him to undermine the sound doctrine of the teaching authority of the Church. Recapitulating all these documents, Kendall lists five characteristics of this *nouvelle theologie*: first, the separation of theology from the teaching authority of the Church; second, the inordinate thirst for novelty, and a minimization of the distinction between the priesthood of the laity and the hierarchy; fourth, a limitation of the powers of the bishop over the people; fifth, an unbridled spirit of criticism based on a false freedom of conscience (*Ibidem*, p. 505).

³³ LA PRESSE FRANÇAISE, "Autour de l'Encyclique, *Humani Generis*," in *La documentation catholique* 47 (1950) 1295: "Certes, c'est un document doctrinal de première importance, mais qui est dans l'ensemble une affectueuse mise en garde plutôt

Surprisingly, the encyclical mentioned no names and condemned no individual. Nor was any one censured after the document was published, the reason —probably—being that the leaders of the movement belonged to two religious orders (Society of Jesus and Order of Preachers). All that the superiors of these religious groups did was more of a domestic arrangement. For example, some outstanding figures lost their professional chairs. But no one was “silenced,” nor was any of their books officially condemned. Such was the critical situation surrounding the encyclical.³⁴

Still, however much did the Holy See try to quiet it down, the *nouvelle theologie* grew in volume and influence and introduced new patterns and methods in the teaching of theology in the seminaries.

VATICAN II ON SEMINARY FORMATION

Pius XII died on October 9, 1958, and nineteen days later, the seventy-seven year old Patriarch of Venice was elected pope, and took the name John XXIII. On January 25, 1959, the new pope announced his intention to hold a general council in the Church.³⁵

By the year 1959 the world was undergoing social, political and cultural transformation of an unprecedented magnitude. Europe, or the world for that matter, was on a threshold of a new era. Profound scientific, cultural and social developments had changed the conditions of life that one felt separated from the previous four hundred years by a wide gap. Technology was revolutionizing the modes of communication and transportation; the automobile, radio, movies in color and sound — they were all ushering man into an era of global village.³⁶ This was

qu'une dure condamnation... Le Pape rend hommage, à plusieurs reprise, aux mérites et à l'orthodoxie des maîtres à penser dans l'Eglise. Quand el signale des imprudences, voire des erreurs, il s'empresse d'en relever le caractère plutôt exceptionnel. Mais sa suprême charge de Docteur et ses entrailles de Père commun l'obligent à intervenir et à prévenir, avec autant de fermeté que de délicatesse...”

³⁴ G. WEIGEL, SJ, *o. c.*, p. 505.

³⁵ “Su Santidad anuncia la celebración de un concilio ecuménico” (cited from *L'Osservatore Romano*, dated January 26-27), in *Ecclesia* 19 (1959) 149.

³⁶ T. BOKENTOTTER, *A Concise History of the Catholic Church*, Doubleday, New York ³1990, pp. 356-357; J. M. ROBERTS, *History of the World*, Oxford University Press, New York 1993, pp. 808 ss.

the world swept by the hurricane winds of change when the news came that John XXIII was calling for an ecumenical council.³⁷

On October 11, 1962, John XXIII opened the Ecumenical Council at the Vatican. Sadly, though, the pope did not live long enough to direct the course of the Council.³⁸ He died on June 3, 1963. His successor, Paul VI, took the cudgels and under him the Council went forward as planned, and was concluded.

Some Notes on the Conciliar Documents

When the Council closed, the Council Fathers issued a body of documents: four constitutions, nine decrees, and three declarations, all touching upon about all aspects of Church life and Her relation to the world. Yet, most of the conciliar documents had a say on issues related the priesthood and the seminary. We go through some of them in their barest essentials, especially in so far as they touch on formation and priestly life.³⁹

The document, Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World, or *Gaudium et Spes*, announces that the Church was already willing to turn outward and come to terms with the political, social, intellectual and moral situation of the world. This stance put an end to the Church's posture of rigid aloofness for the world, and her almost myopic approach to addressing contemporary problems. In a word, the document places the Church at the service of the world.⁴⁰

The Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, explains the Church from the viewpoint of biblical and patristic sources. Here the Church is defined as the People of God, for whom baptism confers a common priesthood, one that is different from the ministerial priesthood. The document likewise affirms that bishops are successors of the apostles whose jurisdiction is derived from episcopal powers, and

³⁷ Cf. JOHN XXIII, Apost. Const. *Humanae Salutis* (25.XII.1961), in *Ecclesia*, 22 (1962) 5-7. In this document the Pope cites the reasons for convoking the Council.

³⁸ "Impresionante sesión inaugural del Concilio ecuménico," in *Ecclesia* 22 (1962) 1285-1287.

³⁹ I hereby cite Joseph White for his work at summarizing the main and focal points of the Council. See J. M. WHITE, *o. c.*, pp. 406-412.

⁴⁰ *Gaudium et Spes*, nn. 2-3.

who form a college with the pope.⁴¹ The collegiality is given more flesh and substance in the Decree of the Pastoral Office of the Bishops in the Church, or *Christus Dominus*.⁴²

Lumen Gentium defines the concept of the diocese as one headed by the bishop and assisted by priests who exercise their priestly ministry under his authority. It also affirms that the priest is the image of Christ the Eternal High Priest, and that his duties are preaching the gospel, shepherding the faithful and celebrating divine worship as priests of the New Testament – duties that correspond to Christ in his threefold office as Teacher, Shepherd and Priest respectively.

The Decree on the Ministry and Life of the Priest, better known as *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, explains at greater length the idea concerning the ordained ministry. Threading through the decree is the theme on service, especially as it describes the priest's ministry to teach, administer the sacraments (especially the Eucharist), and govern the people of God. A very salient point is the familiar relationship that bishops and priests are to have of each other, thus modifying, if not reversing, the conservative master-servant relationship between the two. Another is the idea of the laity, with respect to the latter's role, and its rights and duties in the Church.⁴³

The Council's first document, the Constitution on Sacred Liturgy, entitled, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, stresses on the corporate nature of worship and the participation of the laity. Corollary to this was the liturgical renewal that was effected in the Church, and was addressed to the seminarians undergoing formation. Liturgy, which in the past, was taught as a minor course, was raised to the status of a principal seminary course.⁴⁴

Among the more, if not the most, important documents of the Council is the Constitution of Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*. Here, the document defines the function of Scriptures in the life of the Church.

⁴¹ *Lumen Gentium*, n. 10.

⁴² *Christus Dominus*, nn. 36-38.

⁴³ *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 7, 9. A recommended reading is one by Joseph Cunnane and Archbishop Denis E. Hurley, OMI. Father Cunnane writes on the life and work of priests in the light of the conciliar decree; D. E. HURLEY - J. CUNNANE, *Vatican II on Priests and Seminaries*, Scepter Publishers, Ltd., Dublin 1967, pp. 11-61.

⁴⁴ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 16.

Describing the Scriptures as the "soul of theology," and not just subordinate to dogmatic theology, the constitution recommends that Scriptures be taught to students for the priesthood in a thorough manner so as to be able to proclaim the Word of God effectively.⁴⁵

Unitatis Redintegratio, or Decree of Ecumenism, is the document wherein the Council commits the Catholic Church to the restoration of Christian Unity. In effect, seminarians are to be instructed in an ecumenical perspective in order to broaden their vision of the Church as they learn information about other Christian communities.⁴⁶

The Decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches, or, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, speaks of the rights and duties of the various branches of the Eastern Church that were in communion with Rome. In this document, seminarians and priests of the Latin rite were enjoined to be instructed with interritual matters, an implicit recognition that the Latin rite is not the only way to be Catholic, and that there are so much to learn from the Eastern churches.⁴⁷

The Decree on Priestly Formation, better known as *Optatam Totius*, this decree is among the Council's shortest, and as it shows, is intended for the formation of diocesan priests, although religious orders were to adopt aspects related to their situation. It addresses the task of promoting vocations to the priesthood through the Catholic school system by means of the activities of the priests, taking into account the principal and modern techniques of psychology and sociology. During the council discussions, the role of minor seminaries sparked some controversy, with some bishops questioning its value on account of the artificiality of the environment in which the seminarians live. In the end, the minor seminary was recommended, not as a place for developing priestly formation, but as a place for developing Christian maturity.⁴⁸

Quite expectedly, the decree stresses and strongly endorses, the major seminary as necessary for priestly formation. Candidates are to be trained and formed for the ministry of the Word, of the Sacrament, and the role of a shepherd.

⁴⁵ *Dei Verbum*, n. 24.

⁴⁶ *Unitatis Redintegratio*, n. 10.

⁴⁷ *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, n. 4.

⁴⁸ Cfr. *Optatam Totius*, n. 3. For the history of the decree, see D. E. HURLEY, OMI - J. CUNNANE, o. c., pp. 171-180.

With regards to the academic curriculum, the old and the new elements of studies were combined, with the study of philosophy so vigorously commended. Theology is to be taught so that “students will accurately draw Catholic doctrine from Divine Revelation.” The same decree also exhorts on the study of Scriptures, and encourages the use of the exegetical method. In the study of dogmatic theology, the decree suggests the introduction of biblical themes along with the support of Tradition of the Church Fathers. Students are to learn “speculative reason under the tutelage of St Thomas Aquinas.” History is to be taught as a principal subject. In keeping with ecumenical intents, given attention is to be directed to a better understanding of the churches and ecclesiastical communities separated from the Church.⁴⁹

THE SEMINARY UNDER PAUL VI

When the Second Vatican Council ended, there pervaded a general feeling for an overhaul of the seminary. On October 1966 the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries and Universities issued a letter authorizing seminaries to experiment with seminary life according to the principles of *Optatam Totius*. In that letter was an instruction to the national episcopal conferences to the effect that a national program on priestly formation be designed. This letter signaled the course towards seminary renewal. It was also in that general curial reorganization in 1967 that the congregation was renamed, Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education.⁵⁰

The Basic Norm for Priestly Formation

During the First International Synod of Bishops held in Rome in October 1967, the synodal fathers endorsed a proposal to the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education that they draft a plan for seminaries according to the spirit of the *Optatam Totius*. The plan was to serve as a guide to the episcopal conferences in drafting their own program of priestly formation. Thus, on January 6, 1970 the Basic Norm for Priestly Formation, or *Ratio Fundamentalis*, was published. Affirming the conciliar document, *Optatam Totius*, the basic norms outlines the basic elements of the seminary for the bishops' conferences to guide

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, n. 4.

⁵⁰ J. M. WHITE, *o. c.*, p. 415.

them in their national programs of priestly formation.⁵¹

In the basic plan there is a short section about the minor seminary, an institution where, so the plan acknowledges, "initial signs" of vocation could be recognized.⁵² A large part, however, is devoted to the major seminary, where formation to the priesthood formally takes place. The seminary officials are outlined as follows: rector, vice-rector, spiritual director, prefect of studies, pastoral director, prefect of discipline, bursar and librarian – all presumably are priests. Professors for the sacred subjects, "as a general rule" should be priests, should possess at the least a licentiate degree, and should be trained in the teaching methods⁵³ The document further directs the academic formation program in the seminary by specifically stating that a formation in the Arts and Sciences, Philosophy and Theology be given the formands. Various arrangements of studies are suggested, and the episcopal conferences are given the discretion as to what system they choose to approve.⁵⁴

The Post-Vatican II Seminaries

The period of the council and immediately afterward was a particularly exciting time. It was an era when issues on seminary reform were widely discussed, views on formation aired at national gatherings and articles carrying the same themes published in professional journals. Seminarians themselves caught on to new ideas. When seminary formators discussed seminarians they often spoke of the "New Breed" —a term used in latter part of the sixties to describe seminarians who noticed the defects of traditional seminary training, questioned its practices, and were not inclined to accept seminary isolation and minute regulation as appropriate preparation for the active life of the priest.⁵⁵

⁵¹ S. CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (6.I.1970) in AAS 62 (1970) 321-384.

⁵² *Ibidem*, nn. 11-19.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, nn. 27-38.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, nn. 59-99.

⁵⁵ J. M. WHITE, *op. cit.*, p. 412.

Henri Nouwen, a renowned author of books that carry pastoral and spirituality-related themes, compared two types of seminarians in an essay published in 1969:

"It is not too long ago that the stereotype of the seminarian offered the picture of a very nice, sweet boy, somewhat talkative, easily excited about such innocent things as a recent article, naïve, inexperienced especially in matters of sex, but always good-natured, friendly, smiling, and ready to help even when not asked.

"That stereotype is changing rapidly. What we see today is far from an easy-going, optimistic young man. We are struck by quite different characteristics. We are more likely to find a problem-ridden, struggling student who takes himself, his world and his future very seriously, who wants to debate and discuss many issues, who is seldom relaxed, but inclined to experience his youth as a long and dark tunnel the end of which he does not see."⁵⁶

Towards the seventies, the spirit of *aggiornamento* propounded by Vatican II went even further. Take it from John Dalrymple whose article offers a bird's eye-view of the seminary institutions during those times, by showcasing the notable changes in the seminary regimen. He compares the "meal-settings" of the 1960's from the 1970's.⁵⁷ Fixed,

⁵⁶ H. J. M. NOUWEN, "Depression in the Seminary," in *Intimacy. Essays in Pastoral Psychology*, Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., New York 1969, p. 79.

⁵⁷ J. DALRYMPLE, "Los seminarios en los años sesenta y setenta," in *Seminarios* 22 (1976) 358-359. The following is taken from that article:

"Una manera de calibrar a una comunidad es tener una [comida] con los miembros de esa comunidad. Comer juntos es el gran acto comunitario de una familia y la clase de relaciones existente entre los que integran esa familia se muestra [en el modo] como ellos realizan tal acto. La comida de familia es una manifestación del espíritu de la familia. El que hubiera visitado los refectorios de los seminarios en 1960 se habría dado cuenta de que las comidas se tenían de una manera muy formal. Había una mesa de preferencia en la que el rector ocupaba el centro y los demás superiores se colocaban a su derecha o a su izquierda por orden de antigüedad. Los seminaristas, también en sitios fijos, ocupaban sus respectivas mesas. Todo el mundo llevaba sotana y guardaba silencio. La bendición de la mesa era en latín y larga. Durante la mayor parte de la comida se leía en público la Biblia, algún libro serio y el Martirologio Romano. La atmósfera no era tensa, ni mucho menos. Pero aquél era un acto estilizado, jerárquico. Allí no había tensiones precisamente porque ello era una auténtica representación de la vida que se llevaba en el seminario que era, también, estilizada y jerárquica.

Si esa misma persona hubiera visitado el seminario en 1970, habría encontrado un acto bien distinto. Probablemente, habría notado, en primer lugar, una diferencia negativa con respecto al de 1960: ninguna mesa de preferencia, ninguna distinción

formalized and closed rules of the former were removed to give way to the more spontaneous, informal and open relationships of the latter. The natural development of the person was encouraged by means of one's uninhibited discussion among peers with superiors. This "180-degree" turn was seen as a positive sign, as it removed those formal barriers that separated seminarians from their superiors, and even from among themselves.

It was also noted how these changes were likewise felt in the new approaches to theology. It was towards the latter part of the 60's that a new theological revolution in the seminaries, both in its ideological content and its teaching method, was felt. Owing to its origins from the theological thought then current in Europe, this method put the antiquated, essentialist and scholastic theology in its death throes and substituted it with an "existentialist" form. Commonly termed as "doing theology," in contrast to "theology as such," this theological form referred to a theology as lived in the here and now, and thrives along with the modern culture. This theological method included the consideration of the Bible and the modern events as its main sources, more than Denzinger, the main seminary textbook at the time. It reduced classes from their usual magisterial types to more manageable sizes. The pastoral dimension began to form an integral part of the academic curriculum, and not just an appendix. This form of doing theology, so Dalrymple claimed, was not to teach the seminarians something called, theology, an academic course necessary to become priests, but to teach them to think in theological terms about their priestly life and about the world where they were to work. "Theology is not something to learn; it is a way of understanding that living relationship with God — which we call faith."⁵⁸

entre superiores y alumnos, ningún lugar fijo, nada de silencio, nada de lecturas, nada de bendiciones en latín, nada de sotanas. Posteriormente podría haber apreciado las cosas positivas. Un ambiente de libertad y de naturalidad envuelto en mucha informalidad. Allí podría ver un gran numero de invitados casuales y tal vez, una reunión de fin de semana de un grupo de jovenes o de personas mayores haciendo retiro. Otra notable diferencia hubiera sido que, si el visitante era una mujer, sería aquella la primera visita, ya que solo hombres hubieran sido admitidos a una comida en 1960. En conjunto, el acto de 1970 sería mucho más abierto e informal y mucho menos clerical: la comida familiar de una comunidad no estilizada y abierta a su circunstancia ambiente."

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 364-465. Also see J. L. ILLANES - J. I SARANYANA, *Historia de Teología*, BAC, Madrid 1995, pp. 372-373; 386-388. In this latter work, José Luis Illanes discusses how in the late sixties and the seventies a theological method slowly began

The Latin American seminaries did not exempt themselves from taking on an existentialist mold, although with a distinctive character. It had to do with an appearance of "liberation theology," which, according to its practitioners,⁵⁹ represented "a new way of doing theology". While classical theology aimed at a deeper understanding of faith (*fides quaerens intellectum*), liberation theology aimed at transforming the world, and struggling against the social forces of oppression. The advances in social justice and love were seen as partial realizations of the kingdom, and steps towards its final consummation.

Unsurprisingly, the seminarian of that era had values entirely different from those of the previous generation. He spoke a different "language," and lived in a new set of values and attitudes. He talked about liberation, socialization, incarnation, solidarity. These were his terminologies for breakfast, lunch and dinner. While the seminarian of the previous generation associated himself with the establishment and an imposing system, the seminarian of the seventies went against the current.⁶⁰

SECULARIZATION AND ITS EFFECTS

By the late sixties and the early seventies, the culture of modernization which started immediately after World War II, had reached fe-

to develop a new shape. Johann Metz is the representative of the theological method that moves from existential hermeneutics to the socio-political. Edward Schillebeeckx is cited for his theory on "experiential hermeneutics." Then there is Karl Rahner for his concept of fundamental option. Other theologians view theology as an explanation of faith —*explicatio fidei*—and has an intimate link with biblical and patristic sources (Hans Urs von Balthazar, Louis Bouyer, Joseph Ratzinger, etc.)

⁵⁹ The leaders of this theological movement included: Helder Camara (Brazil), Juan Luis Segundo, SJ (Uruguay), Gustavo Gutierrez (Peru), Enrique Dussel (Mexico), Segundo Galilea (Argentina), G. Arroyo, SJ (Chile), Jose Miguez Bonino (Argentina), Jon Sobrino, SJ (El Salvador), and Leonardo Boff (Brazil). This list is provided by Thomas Bokentotter; see T. BOKENTOTTER, *o. c.*, pp. 410-411.

⁶⁰ R. H. DI MONTE, "Experiencias diversas en los seminarios," in *Seminarios* 17 (1971) 513: "El seminarista de hoy ha nacido dentro de una cultura existencialista, con distintos valores que los nosotros recibimos. Por eso habla —naturalmente— distinto que nosotros. No es una diferencia simplemente semántica, sino que dentro de nuevos valores y actitudes que los obligan al uso de un vocabulario diverso. Socialización, liberación, encarnación, solidaridad, etc., son términos de su desayuno, almuerzo, y cena... Mientras nosotros instivamente, nos sentíamos solidarios con el orden establecido y el sistema imperante, la estructura en la cual nos movíamos, el seminarista de hoy se pone contra el sistema."

ver pitch. Harvey Cox could not have said it any better than what he wrote in his famous book, "The Secular City":

"[Secularization is] the liberation of man from religious and metaphysical tutelage, the turning of his attention away from other worlds towards this one."⁶¹

The worldwide trend was not just a matter of "quantity," or the world population gone up to epidemic proportions. It was the "form" of society, a process of the age that was moving towards greater autonomy in the temporal order, especially in the fields of sciences, arts and social structures. While it was a global phenomenon, it was felt at varying degrees among continents. Urbanized Europe and North America picked it up at a rapid pace and immediately encompassed the government and the people. On the other hand, Africa, South America and some parts of the Far East went slow. This was explained by the fact that many of the countries in these continents had strong Christian or religious values, or had wide characteristics of rurality among their cultures. This process at first ran underground until one day, it began to be felt strongly and eventually emerged into the scene affecting a strong impact on all dimensions of life.

Sooner than expected, this process had gained headway worldwide. The effects (or weren't they causes, too?) were manifold, and a Vatican "stalwart," Cardinal Garrone, the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, could not just ignore them. In a position paper published in many a journal he mentioned some of these factors: the crisis among the clergy; the "new generation" and the problem of obedience and authority; the ecumenical phenomenon; the reaggregation of seminaries; the crisis of youth; and crisis of theology.⁶² As these were global issues that touched on all aspects of life, they certainly affected seminary formation in more ways than one. There was a notable drop of vocations to the priesthood. Issues on secularism brought to the fore the identity crisis among priests. Seminary formators became scarce.

⁶¹ H. COX, *The Secular City. Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective*, SCM Press Ltd., London 1967, p. 17.

⁶² G.-M. GARRONE, "Las problemas actual de los seminarios," in *Seminarios* 17 (1971) 127-141. This article was published against the backdrop of the *Ratio Fundamental* published in January of the previous year; also, G.-M. GARRONE, "Position actuelle des problèmes des séminaires," in *Seminarium* 22 (1970) 580-596.

Vocations

The most striking and profound change that took place in the seminaries after the council, more particularly, as an effect of the secularization process was related to their number, enrollment and composition. The countries in Europe and North America were the ones that were largely affected, as they experienced a sharp decline of the number of candidates for the priesthood. In the United States alone, in 1966 the number of students enrolled in the seminaries reached its highest level at 8, 916, only to decline through the later part of the decade, In the 1972, and there were only about 5,804 and 4, 244 in 1984.⁶³

The number of seminaries also declined drastically. Many minor seminaries system virtually collapsed in the years after the council. They were abolished after seminary formators experienced an excessive drop-out rate of students. It, too, became recognized that separating boys from a normal family and school environment was not suited to their personal development. Besides, the number of priests produced from the minor seminaries was getting smaller, rendering their continuation unfeasible.⁶⁴

Quite consolably, the major seminaries survived the trend of closures, although a good number dropped their college programs.

Crisis of Priestly Identity

The secularized world also brought to the fore the identity crisis among priests. No postconciliar trend had been so disturbing to the bishops as the spectacular exodus of priests, brothers and nuns, many of whom had lived their priesthood and religious life in a state of disil-

⁶³ J. M. WHITE, *op. cit.*, pp. 423. An article showing the downward trend of enrollment seminaries in Italy is by R. S. CHAMOSO, "Los seminarios en Italia," in *Seminarios* 18 (1972) 559-594.

⁶⁴ There is a long and absorbing article by James Michael Lee concerning the administrative problems related to seminaries. In that article he cites various reasons for the abolition of minor seminaries: 1) the excessive drop-out rate of students; 2) their inferior quality standards; 3) the need of youth to experience a normal family life during the adolescent years; 4) the need for an individual to experience life in the world in which he is later to work, 5) the fact that these youths are removed from their peers at the very time when they can most dynamically interact with them. See J.-. M. LEE, *Overview of Educational Problems: II - Administration*, in J.-M. LEE - L. J. PLUTZ (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 129-135.

lusionment, fatigue, disorientation, and gloom. There were some major factors to explain this effect:⁶⁵

One, there was the crisis in the civil society. Where before the priest was an "all around person," or a person of culture, of life, of counsel, and at times a political head, —in other words, a religion incarnate—this time, the priest had ceased to be the center. At times, the civil authority showed its power by imposing pressure upon the religious, effecting a "dislocation" of the priest's image in the minds of the faithful.

Two, the crisis in the Church. There was the clergy's unconformity to a kind of an effective priesthood that came as a result of a determined historico-cultural process. There existed a climate of distrust and discontent among the clergy. Some priests viewed the visible structures of the Church as inadequate, and that they felt there was a need for a major overhaul for an effective evangelization of the world.

The secularized world had far-reaching negative effects for the priest. There was the crisis of faith, due mainly to his deficient formation, or to his inadequate preparation to confront the problems of the actual world, like atheism, politics, etc. Then came the crisis of obedience where the priest had become wary of the "verticality of the decisions," or decisions that come from above, along with a system of superimposed strata. In a "horizontal" (i.e., democratic) society, the "priest-in-crisis" wanted to participate in the decision-making. Then finally, the crisis of celibacy where, not only was it influenced by an erotic society, but by the discoveries and new orientations related to sex in modern natural sciences, sociology and psychology.⁶⁶

Further, when the doctrine of the "common priesthood" became theologically relevant, even the priests themselves could not but be stirred. It spawned a deep discussion among them that, to the eyes of not so few, it was suggestive of an idea meant to secularize the ordained ministry. This prompted Cardinal Karol Wojtyla to deplore such misconception in a retreat he preached to Pope Paul VI and to the Roman Curia. The Polish Cardinal was heard to have said, "The conciliar doctrine on the common priesthood does not mean to say that every-

⁶⁵ R. H. DI MONTE, "Secularización y seminarios latinoamericanos," in *Seminarios* 18 (1972) 509-527.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 517-518.

thing is to be reduced to the laical state, even if the richness of laical vocation in the Church has been recognized and is now being brought to the fore."⁶⁷

Seminary Formators

In a more particular fashion the impact of secularization affected the seminary formators. Priests committed to apostolate of seminary formation became scarce. Many of them felt unsure and ill-prepared for the task. Oftentimes, they lacked the virtue to work as a team, owing perhaps to the an individualist formation they received in their seminary years. A lot of them were deficient in modern pedagogical training. Other times, many formators, attracted by the pastoral work outside, were inside the seminary only "in passing." They attended to the seminarians, and went out to work in an apostolate outside. This way, seminary work had become "an added thing" to the pastoral work, something that caused some ill-effects to seminary work attitudes. For one thing, there arose a misconception of the theological meaning of the pastoral work, as if the humano-priestly formation to which a priest is entrusted in the seminary were not a pastoral work. Another, priests who found the difficulties of seminary life unbearable were the ones most prone to develop escapist attitudes, preferring the "more challenging" world in the parish or any kind of ministry outside the seminary.⁶⁸

JOHN PAUL II AND SEMINARY EDUCATION

The election of John Paul II to the papacy has created significant impact on measures related to seminary training. Having grown up in

⁶⁷ E. DE LA LAMA, *La vocación sacerdotal. Cien años de clarificación*, Palabra, Madrid 1994, pp. 20-22. The quotation from Cardinal Wojtyla is a free English translation of the following text: "La doctrina conciliar sobre el sacerdocio común no quiere decir que haya que reducirlo todo al laicado, aún cuando se descubra una enorme riqueza en la vocación de los seglares en la Iglesia." Quoted by de la Lama from K. WOJTYLA, *Signo de contradicción*. Meditaciones, Madrid 1979, pp. 164-165.

⁶⁸ Cfr. R. H. DI MONTE, "Secularización..." *op. cit.*, 525: "La experiencia pastoral de ser formador de seminario es necesaria. Pero cuando el seminario pasa a ser 'algo más' en el trabajo pastoral del formador, puede haber dos causas: o una desubicación frente del sentido teológico de lo pastoral, como si la formación humano-sacerdotal a la que está entregado en el seminario no fuera pastoral; o un 'escapismo' frente a los dificultades propias de un seminario de hoy."

an environment that struggled against the forces of Communism, the pope has carried with him a background steep in catholic tradition. His vision of seminary formation has been marked by a policy of reaffirming its traditional aspects.

Sapientia Christiana

In the early part of the pontificate of John Paul II, on April 29, 1979, the Apostolic Constitution, *Sapientia Christiana*, which was under preparation in 1967 under Paul VI, was promulgated,⁶⁹ superseding *Deus Scientiarum Dominus*. The new constitution relates directly the status of advanced theological studies, taking into account the experience of the post-conciliar period. It also reaffirms the teaching of Vatican II, and likewise the experience acquired during the recent years. The constitution recognizes the existence of the ecclesiastical faculties throughout the world (Faculties of Theology, Philosophy and Canon Law),⁷⁰ but it lays down the requirements for granting academic degrees with the purpose of acquiring a certain substantial unity. The degrees to be conferred are the Baccalaureate, Licentiate and Doctorate. The licentiate enables one to teach in a major seminary, and the doctorate, which requires a dissertation, enables one to teach in the faculty. Aside from the three mentioned faculties, the constitution likewise grants permission to the canonical erection of other faculties which may be of service to the Church.⁷¹

The Code of Canon Law of 1983 and Seminaries

Barely five years since the start of his pontifical reign, John Paul II, on January 25, 1983, signed an apostolic constitution promulgating another monumental achievement in the Church of the post-modern

⁶⁹ S. CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, Apost. Const. *Sapientia Christiana* (15.IV.1979) in St. Paul Editions, Boston 1979; also found in AAS 61 (1979) 469-521. Paul VI was about to promulgate it when he died in 1978; likewise John Paul I was prevented by a sudden death from doing so. This document is simply referred to as, *Sapientia Christiana*.

⁷⁰ *Sapientia Christiana*, arts. 65-83; also, S. CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, *Norms of Application of the Apostolic Constitution, Sapientia Christiana* (29.IV.1979), in St. Paul Editions, Boston 1979 (from hereon, the document will be simply, *Norms for Sapientia Christiana*) arts. 50-62.

⁷¹ *Norms for Sapientia Christiana*, arts. 63 and 64. Appendix II of the Apostolic Constitution is a list of areas or divisions of ecclesiastical studies.

era – the New Code of Canon Law.⁷²

The “seminary canons,” so to speak, are from canons 232 to 264. There are three significant differences between the revised Code and the 1917 Code as regards this section. First, while the 1917 Code entitled this section, “Seminaries,” the 1983 Code uses the title, “Formation of Clerics.” The reason is that the revised Code does not want to emphasize the institution of learning but the entire process of preparing the person to be a cleric. The second significant change is the location of this section in the Code. In the 1917 Code this legislation is placed in Book III, Part IV under the title, *De magisterio ecclesiastico*, but the new code places this in Book II which treats of the people of God. It was gathered that the revision committee did not judge the section, *De magisterio ecclesiastico*, appropriate for the formation of clerics, and that there was more to the training of persons for the ordained ministry than their doctrinal education. In the minds of the professional canonical societies, all formation for ministry including that of clerics, should be viewed in the broader framework of the Church’s total educational enterprise. The third significant difference is the length of the section, or the number of canons. The 1917 Code covered this material in twenty canons (cc. 1352-1371), while the 1983 Code contains thirty-three canons (cc. 232-264).⁷³

The new Code still commends the minor seminary, “and other institutions of similar nature” (c. 234). But, unlike the 1917 Code which obliged each diocese to establish a minor seminary, the 1983 Code is careful not to impose such legislation. Bishops are urged to retain or establish such institutions but are not required to do so.⁷⁴

The major seminary is to last at least six years consisting of a two-year study of philosophy and four years in theology (c. 235 and c. 250). It lists the seminary personnel as follows: rector, vice-rector, financial administrator, spiritual director, and professors (c. 239). Doctrinal instruction is not to be seen as a dimension isolated in itself, but

⁷² JOHN PAUL II, Apost. Const. *Sacrae Disciplinae Leges*, (25.I.1983), English trans., St. Paul Editions, New York n. d. 7 pp. Also found in AAS 75/2 (1983) vii-xiv.

⁷³ P. L. GOLDEN, *Introduction to Canons 232-264*, in J. A. CORIDEN - T. A. GREEN - D. E. HEINTSCHEL (eds.), *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary*, Geoffrey Chapman, London 1985, p. 174.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 179.

integrated and harmonized with spiritual formation (c. 244). The Code even directs that doctrinal formation be such that it be “appropriate to the needs of place and time” (c.248). It encourages not only the proficiency of the vernacular, but Latin as well (c. 249).⁷⁵

In philosophy the new Code recommends a training based upon “that heritage which is perennially valid,” i.e., principles of St. Thomas, but joined to the other valid systems, both historical and contemporary (c. 251).⁷⁶

The following theological disciplines are requisite courses: Sacred Scriptures, dogmatic theology, morals, pastoral theology, canon law, liturgy, ecclesiastical history, and “other auxiliary and special disciplines” (cc. 252, 255, 257). It likewise orders the instruction of catechetics and homiletics, divine worship human relationships, and parish administration (c. 256).⁷⁷

Subsequent Decrees and Instructions

In 1990, from September 30 to October 28, the eighth General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops was held, the theme of which centered on the priesthood and the basic formation that the candidates may undergo.

The fruit of the Synod was the Apostolic Exhortation entitled, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, promulgated on March 25, 1992, and was directed especially to the priests and all dedicated to the formation work.⁷⁸ It develops a theme on priestly formation vis-à-vis the challenges of the end of the second millennium, the nature and mission of the ministerial priesthood, the spiritual life of the priest, and his pastoral activity in the Church. Greater stress is laid on the formation of the candidates to the priesthood, with all the four dimensions—human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral—discussed and intricately woven into one related whole. As for the intellectual formation, the constitution acknowledges the value of the philosophy if one were to know more deeply a

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 179, 183, 185.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 186

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 186-187.

⁷⁸ JOHN PAUL II, Apost. Exh. *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (25.III.1992), in AAS 84 (1992) 657-804.

person, his freedom, his relationship with the world and God.⁷⁹ Above all, there is that requirement to study the sacred doctrine and theology. "True theology comes from Faith, and leads one to Faith."⁸⁰ Worth of note, too, is its continued commendation of the minor seminary where the students may easily recognize the "seeds of vocation to the priesthood, and be more capable of responding to it."⁸¹

Among the various measures indicated in the apostolic exhortation is the promotion of the pedagogical style in the seminaries.⁸² Docketing this point, the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education issued a document on November 4, 1993 entitled, *Directives Concerning the Preparation of Seminary Educators*. It is addressed to all those responsible for the task of educating future priests: the bishops, seminary administrators, formators, teachers and others.⁸³ This document examines the present situation of the educators of the clergy, salient of which is its dearth, and the need to put a more dynamic and active pedagogy.⁸⁴ It offers some proposals of criteria for seminary educators, presents some indications regarding their formation, and indicates some measures which can help render operative and effective the ministry of formation in the Church.⁸⁵

Another document that came as a fruit of the Synod of 1990 was the *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, this time published by the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy on January 31, 1994.⁸⁶ This document somehow stamps a definite mark on John Paul II's concern for the priestly ministry. As a directory, it recalls the doctrinal elements which are the bases of the identity, spirituality, and continuous formation of priests. It is not an exhaustive exposition of the priesthood, nor

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, n. 52.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, n. 53.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*, n. 63.

⁸² *Ibidem*, n. 66.

⁸³ S. CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, *Directives Concerning the Preparation of Seminary Educators* (4.XI.1993), in St. Paul Books and Media, Massachusetts 1994.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, n. 6-32.

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, nn. 33-47,

⁸⁶ S. CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests* (31.I.1994), in St. Paul Books and Media, Massachusetts 1994.

a repetition of what has been developed before; it is more of the Church's response to the principal question placed upon priests of today. Although not directed primarily to seminary educators, implicitly the text is meant for the deepening of the priest's identity, the growth of his spirituality—both of which are the basic elements of formation which happens not only in the seminary, but after ordination.

SUMMARY

This discussion spanned the entire breadth of the twentieth century. Its presentation consisted of an array of ideas and insights: theological suppositions, ideologies, church legislations, historical events and experiences. We have noted the various intellectual tendencies that confronted the world and the Church, and how She faced the challenges of the modernist, secularist and existentialist trends through the encyclicals, decrees and letters which the Popes—from Leo XIII to John Paul II—issued one after the other. These Church statements have provided us a picture of the image of the priest as it developed till our very day. They have treated a range of issues related to the ideal priest and his education and formation.

We have also seen how issues of seminary reform were widely discussed, especially in the years following Vatican II. It was a period of what they called, "the sound and fury of the renewal," when seminary educators aired their views on seminary formation and published them on journals; it was the time when a new breed of seminarians caught on to new attitudes relative to formation and education.

Concomitant to these new attitudes to formation are the rave of ideas that have been affecting theological circles. New ways of understanding theology have become debated issues, whose implications in the seminary educational programs have come as a natural consequence.

The election of John Paul II has had significant impact on seminary formation. His pontificate has been marked by a policy of reaffirming elements of the Catholic tradition that have been questioned in the various aspects of Church life: either in theological inquiry, in the pastoral practices, or in the areas of political thought and activity.

EPILOGUE

It was said that when Vatican II was in the works, the whole Church was lambasted by critics from all sides. Yet, John XXIII, strong

in his resolve, countered: "No, we can never agree with those prophets of doom and their forecasts of a disastrous end."⁸⁷ That statement hit even the far-flung corners of the earth. It is thirty-five years after the Council and the Church is still beset by seemingly insoluble problems. Yet, She has remained unbowed and unflinching. She keeps on. After all, is it not that the march of history is a result of that mysterious convergence between the divine will and human freedom, and that it reflects the vagaries of the eternal struggle between light and darkness?⁸⁸

The wisdom of the Church is never to succumb to discouragement and faithlessness. She draws Her strength on that promise that "the gates of hell will not prevail against it" (Mt. 16, 18). This was a divine assurance of perdurability despite the bestial attacks arising both from without and, yes, even from within the Church. Remarks Jose Orlandis "Twenty centuries of existence is...to the eyes of an historian, like a prodigious moral miracle and an argument of credibility of [that] divine institution. Simple history...is the best apologia of Christ's Church."⁸⁹

In a small but proportionate measure, the same may be said of seminary formation.

The seminaries all over the word journey in time. More than just disinterested travelers on the road, they claim a rightful share in the deep concerns of the Church as She trudges Her way into the third millennium. Both the seminary formators and the formatees are facing a vast field to labor on. They are looking at that vision of the Lord's vineyard presently wanting of dedicated laborers for the harvest. There, too, are the set of goals that need their full realization, as well as a list of programs and activities that await implementation.

If there is something that can be done, it is to look back at the past. The lessons of history instill a serenity of mind especially upon those who feel uneasy by the ferment about them. These are not mere interesting accounts of the past, but, they give witness to God's faithfulness and offer us guidance for the decisions that are to be made. □

⁸⁷ Cfr. JOHN XXIII, *Gaudet Mater Ecclesiae*, in AAS (1962) 789.

⁸⁸ Cfr. J. ORLANDIS, "Algunas reflexiones en torno a la "Historia de la Iglesia," in *Anuario de la Historia de la Iglesia* 1 (1992) 17.

⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 18-19.