1983

The Politics of Heresy

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Available at: https://works.bepress.com/lester_kurtz/16/
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Heresy and orthodoxy, it is argued here, are two aspects of the social process within which belief systems are defined and articulated. A number of characteristics of heresy are outlined: it is both near and remote at the same time, and the heretic is a deviant insider. Heresy has social origins but in turn influences social arrangements. The heresy hunt, in which heresy is labeled and heretics are suppressed, serves as an anxiety-relieving ritual for institutional elites and facilitates their dominance within the institution. A case study of heresy, the "modernist controversy" in Roman Catholicism, is examined as one of the most important events in early modern culture and an important aspect of the conflict between science and religion.

History is one long, desperate retching, and the only thing humanity is fit for is the Inquisition. [Msgr. Umberto Benigni]

Belief systems cannot be fully comprehended without some attention to the heresies which have emerged from within them. The role of heresy in the formation of orthodoxy is central, and yet heresy is little understood by sociologists. Beliefs are most clearly and systematically articulated when they are formed *via negativa*. The boundaries of what is true and acceptable are marked out through a systematic identification of what is false and unacceptable. What people do not believe is often more clearly defined than what they do believe, and it is through battles with heresies and heretics that orthodoxy is most sharply delineated.

Definitions of heresy are also crucial in the maintenance and transformation of social institutions. Group solidarity is seldom strengthened by anything as much as the existence of a common enemy, and the heretic, as a "deviant insider," is close at hand. The identification of heretics shores

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1 An earlier version of this paper was delivered at the 76th annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, 1981, in Toronto, and is part of a larger study (Kurtz 1980). I am grateful to Terry N. Clark, Steven C. Dubin, Joe R. Feagin, John Root, Edward A. Shils, Teresa A. Sullivan, David Tracy, Alec Vidler, Louis A. Zurcher, Jr., and anonymous reviewers for comments and suggestions. I am also indebted to the members of the library staff at the St. Andrews University Library, the British Library, and the Bibliothèque nationale, as well as Sister Teresa, Prioress of the Carmelite Monastery, London, and Katherine Pierre, for access to archival materials and permission to quote from them. Requests for reprints should be sent to Lester R. Kurtz, Department of Sociology, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas 78712.

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0002-9602/83/8806-0001$01.50

AJS Volume 88 Number 6 1085
up the ranks, enables institutional elites to make demands of their subordinates, and reinforces systems of dominance. As Georg Simmel put it, "The resistance which has to be eliminated is what gives our powers the possibility of proving themselves" (1971, p. 48).

The purpose of this paper is, first, to clarify aspects of the process of defining heresy and the effects of that process on the content of belief systems and the organization of social institutions. Second, I will analyze a case study in heresy, the "modernist controversy" in the Roman Catholic church beginning toward the end of the 19th century. The series of conflicts surrounding modernism proved to be one of the most important events in early modern culture, an important aspect of the conflict between science and religion, and a pivotal controversy in Roman Catholicism. In the course of the analysis, I hope to provide some insights into two important topics heretofore virtually ignored by sociologists: the broader problem of heresy and the issue of Catholic modernism. The discussion that follows has grown out of a larger study of Catholic modernism (Kurtz 1980) in which I have examined various archival collections of letters and papers preserved by the modernists, as well as published works and letters by both modernists and their opponents (specific letters and papers are cited in text).2 My conceptualization of the nature of heresy was originally developed from a study of the modernists but was subsequently broadened and then used as a tool for interpreting the modernist crisis.

AN ANATOMY OF HERESY

Heresy, in its formal sense in Roman Catholic Canon Law and moral theology, refers to "a sin of one who, having been baptized and retaining the name of Christian, pertinaciously denies or doubts any of the truths that one is under obligation of divine and Catholic faith to believe" (Buckley 1967, p. 1069). The etymology of the term is instructive, since it is an English transliteration of the Greek ἀφερσίς which lacked the pejorative sense that the term has since acquired. It originally meant simply an act of choosing or attachment, then a course of action or thought, and finally,

2 The sources I have consulted are the following: Bibliothèque nationale, Paris: Papers of Alfred Loisy, 33 vols.; Papers of Albert Houtin; letter addressed to William Gibson, Lord Ashbourne, 1 vol.; letters to and from Marc Hébert, 1 vol.; Papers of Raymond Poincaré, 1 vol.; Papers of Félix Sartiaux, 2 vols.; Papers of Louis Scarpattet, 1 vol.; Papers of "Sylvain Leblanc" (Henri Bremond), 1 vol. British Library, London: Correspondence of George Tyrrell and Baron Friedrich von Hügel, 5 vols.; correspondence of von Hügel and Maude Petre, 2 vols.; Papers (letters and diary) of Maude Petre, 17 vols. St. Andrews University Library, St. Andrews, Scotland: Baron von Hügel's Papers and Library; 41 vols. of his diaries; over 1,000 letters addressed to him; copies of letters to Archbishop Mignot; letters to Henri Bremond and Norman Kemp Smith; A. L. Lilley Papers; Wilfred Ward Papers; Juliet Mansel Papers; G. W. Young Papers. For information on modernist archival sources see Loome (1979).
a philosophical principle or set of principles and a party or sect (cf. Cross 1925, p. 614; McShane 1967, p. 1062). The idea of heresy as evil emerged in the bitter battles fought in the early church, which resulted in a series of councils that condemned various false doctrines and formulated fundamental aspects of traditional Christian orthodoxy (Hughes 1961). The term as it has developed can provide a useful concept for the study of the relation between belief systems and social organization. In order to develop the concept, I would like to suggest a number of characteristics of heresy. It is both near and remote at the same time and has social origins but in turn influences social arrangements. The labeling and suppression of heresy and heretics, furthermore, serve as rituals for institutional elites and facilitate their dominance within the institution.

Nearness and Remoteness

First, heresy refers to an intense union of both nearness and remoteness.\(^3\) Heretics are within the circle, or within the institution; consequently, they are close enough to be threatening but distant enough to be considered in error. For the Catholic church, a heretic is a baptized, professing Catholic; no unbaptized person, and not even a non-Catholic Christian (e.g., a Protestant) is guilty of “formal heresy.” Such persons may be guilty of “material heresy,” which is the outcome of ignorance but is not defined as a sin “so long as there is no doubt in the heretic’s mind regarding his false position” (Attwater 1954, p. 227). The heretic is, furthermore, differentiated from the schismatic (see Firey 1948) or infidel, who is outside the church. When the medieval scholastics developed catalogs of heresies, they were concerned not so much with abstract heresy as with guilty heretics (Lawlor 1967, p. 1063), persons within the community who were defined as a threat to the faith and to the institution.

Heresy thus has an important social dimension—the heretic is a deviant insider. Every heresy implies a political stance and every heretic is the leader of an insurrection, implicitly or explicitly. In 1890, Merry del Val, an ardent antimodernist who later became Vatican secretary of state, complained of “a group of traitors in the camp.” He challenged their com-

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\(^3\) The idea of the combination of nearness and remoteness is suggested by Georg Simmel in his essay on the “stranger” as one who is “near and far at the same time” (1971, p. 148). What is interesting about the stranger is that despite his or her presence, a distance characterizes his relationship with others present. “The stranger is an element of the group itself, not unlike the poor and sundry ‘inner enemies’—an element whose membership within the group involves both being outside it and confronting it” (1971, p. 144). Thus, the heretic is a stranger, in Simmel’s sense of the term, and a certain degree of freedom and objectivity for the stranger/heretic grows out of the distance between him and others. It is precisely that freedom which heretics seek and elites refuse to grant them. Similar dynamics can be found in the deviance literature, notably Erikson (1966) and Szasz (1975).
mitment to the church—a frequent charge against heretics—suggesting that one such suspect, William Gibson, "seems to be walking thro' the church on his way elsewhere, like people walk to and fro thro' S. Stefan's Cathedral in Vienna, going in by one door and out by the other to make a short cut" (Merry del Val to Ward, June 5, 1899, Wilfred Ward Papers VII 205a, MS deposit 21, St. Andrews University Library). The combination of nearness and remoteness refers to beliefs themselves as well as to the social relationship between heretics and the guardians of orthodoxy. As Dante observed in his *Divine Comedy*, "Every contradiction is both false and true" (*Paradise*, canto 4). What makes heresy so potent is that it bears such a close resemblance to orthodoxy. It is developed within the framework of orthodoxy and is claimed by its proponents to be truly orthodox. Like the heretic, heresy itself is both near and remote at the same time.

The Social Construction of Heresy

A second characteristic of heresy is that it is socially constructed in the midst of social conflict. The interests of conflicting parties become attached either to a defense of the alleged heresy or to the refutation of it. The problem of heresy, therefore, is essentially a problem of authority. According to Catholic doctrine, a stubbornness of will is required for true heresy (Lawlor 1967, p. 1063). Saint Augustine pointed out that "not every error is a heresy" (Augustinus 1956, p. 59)—only that which is held in explicit opposition to ecclesiastical authority. The labeling of heresy is intimately tied both to self-interest and to group interest, so that it involves what Seymour Martin Lipset has called "status politics." As social groups find an "affinity" between their status interests on the one hand, and a particular configuration of ideas or world view on the other, they identify with that definition of the situation and use it to legitimate or enhance their social status. That is not to imply that either the authorities or the heretics are necessarily malicious or self-serving, although they may be. Although the attempt to discern the motives of actors in a conflict is a risky business, it is essential to do so in order to understand the nature of heresy. The difficulty can be seen, for example, in the fact that "duty" and "interests" may seem to imply differing motivations, the former presumably unselfish ones and the latter self-serving ones.

4 "Status politics refers to political movements whose appeal is to the not uncommon resentments of individuals or groups who desire to maintain or improve their social status" (Lipset 1965, p. 168; Gusfield 1963). Similar dynamics were found among persons involved in antipornography campaigns studied by Zurcher et al. (1971).

5 "Elective affinities" (*Wahlverwandtschaften*) was a term used by Weber to describe by analogy the relationship between ideas and interests (Weber 1947, p. 83; 1946; cf. Howe 1979).
In the real world, however, actors usually perform duties because it is in their interest to do so. Authorities frequently defend, sometimes at high personal cost, what they perceive to be a genuine threat to what is considered sacred. Similarly, "heretics" frequently battle against aspects of orthodoxy that they consider destructive, even to the belief system and its institution. That is particularly true in religious institutions in which roles are defined so that interests include a considerable emphasis on altruism. Thus, when I speak of either the Vatican or the modernists pursuing their "interests," I do not in all cases mean to imply self-serving motivations; both sides of the conflict, for the most part, maintained a definition of the situation which identified their own personal and group interests with those of the Catholic faith and even the church. A completely cynical view, as Goffman has pointed out (1959), may be as inaccurate as one which accepts actors' statements of motivation at face value. "Sacred" doctrines and institutions require perpetual defense from destructive forces; institutional authorities are charged with carrying out the defense, whatever the cost. It must be remembered, however, that heretics, too, play an important role in the formation of orthodoxy and that heretics usually believe themselves to have the interests of the sacred institution and tradition at heart. Furthermore, one generation's heresy is frequently the next generation's orthodoxy.

The Social Consequences of Heresy

A third characteristic of heresy is that it has social consequences as well as social origins. The conventional view of heresy is that it is divisive and disruptive, an affront to authority and the social order. Barrows Dunham has defined heresies as "ideas that disrupt an existing society in such a way as to change, or to threaten to change, the distribution of power within it" (1967, p. 5). The Chancellor in Goethe's Faust who rails against heresy as an enemy of the social order exemplifies the attitude generally taken toward heresy and heretics (Goethe [1832] 1952, p. 203):

Through Lawless men the vulgar herd
To opposition have of late been stirred;
The heretics these are, the wizards, who
The city ruin and the country too.

Heresy is a two-edged sword, however; it is not only disruptive but can be used for the creation of intragroup solidarity and for purposes of social control, as I suggested at the beginning of this paper. Through the labeling and suppression of heresy, institutional elites can rally support for their positions through battle with a common enemy. Ironically, then, elites may actually be involved, sometimes inadvertently, in the development of heret-
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ical movements. They do so, first of all, by beginning to portray a trend of thought in a particular way, defining it as having a form, substance, and consistency that it might not have had until suggested by the elites. Second, adherents of questionable views may be driven together to form a movement for their common defense against an attack on their views by the institutional hierarchy.

The Doctrinal Consequences of Heresy

The process of defining and labeling heresy has doctrinal as well as social consequences. It is in the heat of escalating conflicts that orthodoxy is formulated, often through explicit disagreement with a position held by "heretics," sometimes at the expense, and sometimes for the benefit, of the belief system in question. As positions polarize and persons within the conflict begin to choose sides, it becomes increasingly difficult to mix positions and beliefs that have conflicting political implications.

During the modernist controversy, and throughout the century leading up to it, it became increasingly difficult to be both an advocate of scientific methods of inquiry, particularly scientific criticism, and an orthodox Catholic. Much of the "warfare of science with theology" (see White 1896–97) owes less to inherent differences between the two methods of seeking truth, although there are some (see Barbour 1960), than to conflicts concerning the authority of traditional Christian institutions, especially the Roman Catholic church, in the modern world. In order to understand a particular set of orthodox beliefs, therefore, one must examine the historical context in which they were formed and the types of heresies which arose in opposition to them.

The Heresy-Hunt Ritual

A fifth defining characteristic of heresy is that the process of defining and denouncing heresy and heretics is a ritual. Like most rituals, the suppression of heresy has as one of its functions the relief of anxiety. Rituals serve to relieve social and psychological tensions and to focus anxiety on that which is controllable (see Gennep [1909] 1960; Turner 1969). Anxiety over the weather is channeled into anxiety over the proper performance of weather-oriented rituals such as the rain dance. Anxiety over longevity can

6 Erikson, following Durkheim, has noted that institutions created for the suppression of deviant behavior (e.g., prisons and mental hospitals) often ironically promote the type of behavior they are supposed to eliminate (Erikson 1966; cf. Ben-Yehuda 1980; cf. Bergesen 1977). Durkheim has pointed out that even in a society of saints there will be crime and punishment: "Faults which appear venial to the layman will create there the same scandal that the ordinary offense does in ordinary consciousness" ([1895] 1938, p. 69). Violations of social norms can be evaluated only vis-à-vis that which is valued in the society.

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be translated into concern over keeping certain religious commandments ("That it may go well with thee and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth" [Deut. 4:40; cf. Weber 1968, pp. 399-400]).

As with a rain dance, it is not clear that the denunciation of heresy is effective in fulfilling the explicit purpose of the ritual; nonetheless, such denunciations provide ritual occasion for church authorities to do something about the difficulties the church is facing. Christian rituals for denouncing heretics began with the crises of church and state surrounding the first councils and were elaborated considerably in subsequent crises. They reached their apotheosis with the formation of the Inquisition and the use of the Augustinian formula *coge intrare,*7 which gave infidels and heretics two choices: conversion and submission or extirpation (see Weber 1968, pp. 474, 480).

The Vatican's condemnation of modernism, the elaborate system of control established throughout the church to root out modernist heretics, the placing of books on the *Index of Prohibited Books* (1930)—all of those activities formed a response to the crisis in which the Catholic church was embroiled in the modern era. A closer examination of that crisis and the Vatican's response to it will help clarify the concept of heresy and the process of its development and suppression.

There is also a certain negative aspect of affinities between ideas and interests in that certain foes are ideal foes. Modernism was the ideal heresy for the Vatican to attack, and scholasticism was the ideal foe for the Catholic modernists.

**HERESY IN MODERN CATHOLICISM**

Although heresy has long been an integral part of religious life in all of the world's cultures, it has become particularly important in modern Western culture, in which there is a fascination with heretical ideas. So violent has been the conflict between "modern culture" and the Roman Catholic church that Pope Pius X condemned "modernism" in 1907 as the "synthesis of all heresies." The full force of the Roman hierarchy was mobilized in an effort to destroy the "modernist movement" within the church. The Holy Office, successor to the Inquisition, placed numerous modernist books on the *Index of Prohibited Books* (1930). Careers of Catholic clergy were ruined by Rome in order to punish and deter those labeled modernist heretics. An antimodernist oath was administered to all clergy. A secret international organization (the Sapinire) and diocesan vigilance committees were instituted to detect and report heresy throughout the church. Count-

7 As Weber points out (1968, p. 480), *coge intrare* or *compelli intrare,* "to force [them] to join," justifies the use of force against heretics and is derived from an allegorical interpretation of Luke 14:23.
less individuals were harassed and censured, relieved of their posts, and stripped of their credentials (Poulat 1969).

Roman condemnations of modernism were an outgrowth of a crisis concerning definitions of Catholic orthodoxy that dominated 19th-century ecclesiastical history (see Fremantle 1963). Most threatening to the church were attempts to develop a "science of criticism." When, in the name of science, people began to attack the accuracy of the creation story in Genesis, the authorship of various parts of the Bible, the virgin birth, and the authority of the pope, it was not just specific doctrines that were at issue but the entire body of Catholic dogma (see McCool 1977; Kümmel 1972). Because of violent anticlerical attacks on the church throughout the 19th century (Dansette 1961; Reardon 1966), such questions took on the aura of an attack on the very existence of Catholicism, even in cases in which they were not intended as such. Historical criticism, furthermore, was used by anticlericals who saw scientific research as a valuable tool in their battle against Catholicism and its legitimating role in the ancien régime. The Enlightenment philosophes of the 18th century paved the way for the French Revolution and set the tone for 19th-century intellectual debates (Gay 1966–69). To be "enlightened" was to be at war with the ancien régime and consequently with Catholicism, the source of that regime's legitimation. Conflicts between Catholic tradition and modernist culture rose to a fever pitch in the second half of the 19th century, exacerbated by Charles Darwin's theories of evolution and other scholarly works which challenged the validity of the account of creation in Genesis (Poulat 1962). Ernest Renan's famous Vie de Jésus ([1863] 1965) contended that Jesus was no more than the pinnacle of human greatness; George Sand remarked, "That is the end of Jesus for all time." Renan, however, was not as negative toward the church as many thought. In a letter to Abbé Isidore Farion, Renan claimed that "the Catholic Church is ... a grand thing" and that its "present situation is so extraordinary and so tragic." Nonetheless, he felt that "our old mother [the church] is still fertile" (April 20, 1884, MSS, N.a.fr. 15700, Bibliothèque nationale).

Catholic intellectuals, especially in Europe, were exposed to critical currents in the secular intellectual milieu (Chadwick 1975; cf. Clark 1973). That encounter created strains in their relationship with the Roman hierarchy, particularly for clerical scholars. Many felt that the answer to their intellectual difficulties lay in the formation of a scientific historiography within the Catholic tradition. The very idea of such a development created a scandal in Rome and elsewhere (Vidler 1934), however, and the Vatican's response reveals much about the nature of heresy. "The partisans of error," Pius X later declared, "are to be sought not only among the Church's open enemies; but, what is to be most dreaded and deplored, in her very bosom ..." (Pius X 1908b, p. 232). Even more scandalous than
anticlerical attacks from outside the church were attacks on the authority of Rome from clericals within the church. Those “heretics,” moreover, used the scientific methods of anticlericals in formulating works allegedly created to defend the church. Although Rome’s war on modernism appeared to be waged against science itself, it was primarily a dispute over the boundaries of science and the incursion of scientific methods of inquiry into what was perceived by the Vatican as sacred ground. As a consequence of the escalating conflict, many issues were swept into the debate that had not initially been involved, such as the efficacy of scientific method itself.

No reform movement per se actually developed until after the ecclesiastical authorities had begun to suppress the work of a few relatively isolated scholars (see Barmann 1972). A loosely knit network of relationships did begin to form toward the end of the 19th century, however, among Catholic intellectuals who were concerned with reconciling the church and modern culture. The chief intellectual figure in the movement was the young French priest and biblical scholar Alfred Loisy (see Loisy 1930–31). The major cultivator of the modernists’ networks was the wealthy English lay scholar Baron Friedrich von Hügel (Vidler 1970; cf. Loome 1973). Despite the networks that connected them, there were several divergent approaches among those called modernists.

There were at least three distinct types of Catholic modernism, according to Alec Vidler (1934): first, “doctrinal modernism,” that part of the movement most commonly meant by the term. It was within that sector of the movement, under the leadership of Loisy, von Hügel, and Jesuit priest George Tyrrell (Petre 1912; Tyrrell 1912), that attempts at the intellectual redefinition of the Catholic world view took place, particularly through the use of critical methods and the articulation of implications for the church that grew out of the use of those methods.

Second, there was a group of “philosophical modernists,” located primarily in France and including Maurice Blondel (although he had a fierce disagreement with Loisy and von Hügel; see Marlé [1960]), Édouard LeRoy, and Lucien Laberthonnière. Blondel, Laberthonnière, and especially LeRoy were concerned with the nature of dogma itself and questioned the narrow definitions of Catholicism developed by the scholastic theologians (see Haight 1974).

Finally, there were organizations interested in reconciling the church with democracy, particularly Marc Sangnier’s Sillon (“the furrow”) (see Caron 1966) in France and Don Romolo Murri’s Lega Democratica Nazionale in Italy (Scoppola 1957). The movements led by Sangnier and Murri were only loosely related to the doctrinal and philosophical modernists and will not be discussed much in this study. There were, however, some affinities among the three groups, affinities which grew stronger when they were all lumped together by the Vatican in its denunciations of all forms of
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modernism. For many traditional Catholic officials, all forms of modernism came to be viewed as different aspects of the same conspiracy to destroy the Catholic faith.

The church’s enemies, in the minds of such “integralist” Catholics as Msgr. Umberto Benigni, formed a unified whole that ran the gamut from anticlericalism to liberalism, antipapism, radicalism, feminism, republicanism, immanitarianism, interconfessionalism, socialism, syndicalism, individualism, and intellectual modernism (Poulat 1969, pp. 121–23). The ecclesiastical elite defined its interests, and eventually Catholicism itself, almost exclusively within the framework of neoscholasticism and a revival of the theology and philosophy of Thomas Aquinas. In the decree “Lamentabili” (July 2, 1907; Pius X [1908a]) and the encyclical “Pascendi” (September 8, 1907; Pius X [1908b]), the Roman hierarchy condemned the “modernist heresy” as the “synthesis of all heresies.” The modernists’ science, it was charged, questioned the very core of the Catholic faith and challenged the authority of the Roman hierarchy and the pope. As Pius X put it, the modernists “lay the axe not to the branches and shoots, but to the very root, that is, to the faith and its deepest fibres” (1908b, p. 234). Heresy in modern culture questions not particular dogmas but the very notion of dogma (LeRoy [1905] 1918) and the authority of an institutional hierarchy to dictate interpretations of what is the truth and what is not.

HERESY AS NEARNESS AND REMOTENESS

Members of the Roman hierarchy responded to the modernist crisis with a massive mobilization of the institution’s defenses against an alleged international conspiracy that was a caricature of the modernist movement. Modernism, in fact, was a movement only in the sense of a general, multifaceted direction of thinking precipitated by the attempt of various scholars to apply “scientific methods” to the study of religious history and issues. To their adversaries, the modernists came to represent all that was wrong with the modern world. Modernism was perceived as a deliberate conspiracy to destroy the church, while at the same time those charged with heresy claimed that they, too, were attempting to defend Catholicism by creating a definition of their faith that was not repugnant to the modern intellect. As Pius X put it, “Many who belong to the Catholic laity, and, what is much more sad, to the ranks of the priesthood itself, . . . thoroughly imbued with the poisonous doctrines taught by the enemies of the Church . . . put themselves forward as reformers of the Church; and, forming more boldly into [a] line of attack, [they] assail all that is most sacred in the work of Christ . . .” (Pius X 1908b, pp. 232–33). An ethos or spirit of antimodernism so captured the imagination of many highly placed leaders in the church that the Roman hierarchy instituted a widespread vigi-
lance campaign to wipe out the heresy (Poulat 1969). The antimodernist campaign created what many called a "reign of terror" within the church for a number of years. What is puzzling at first glance is why there was so much concern on the part of a powerful institution over the work of a few somewhat isolated scholars and their sympathizers. Some of the opposition can be traced to some inherent conflicts between Christianity and intellectualism in all its forms (see Weber 1968, p. 512). The Vatican hierarchy was not opposed to all intellectualism or scholarship, however, and modernism was much more than an intellectual movement. In part, even modernist scholarship represented an effort to free Catholic thought from the alleged straitjacket of scholastic intellectualism of the late 19th century. There was, furthermore, a strong mystical element in the movement, as can be seen particularly in the work of von Hügel, Tyrrell, and Fogazzaro. What threatened the Vatican was not scholarship per se but only those forms of it which threatened its definition of Catholicism and subverted the hierarchy's authority.

The Vatican's war on modernism must be accounted for within a context of the threat which modernism of all sorts presented to Rome and in terms of the relationship between the formation of dogma and conflict as a social form. Any explanation must take into account not only the specific historical circumstances surrounding the controversy, notably the decades of anticlerical attacks on the church, but also the general characteristics of dissidence and of heresy. The effects of dissidence are relative; that is, they involve not only the intellectual content of a given protest but also the social relationship between the critic and the criticized, between the heretic and the orthodox.

The Relativity of Dissidence

Ideas and interests are dialectically related. That is to say, the way in which belief systems are formulated and articulated is largely shaped and influenced not only by their actual content but also by the interests of the groups adhering to them, particularly in times of social conflict. Particular definitions of religious beliefs, world views, and political orientations are chosen not only because they make sense to people intellectually but also because those definitions of reality have an affinity with the interests and life-styles of those who are choosing them (Weber 1946; cf. Geertz 1973). Both those who came to be known as "modernists" and the ecclesiastical hierarchy defined Catholicism and science in ways that served their respec-

8 In Simmel's sense of the concept of social forms (1971). The crucial observation is that religious dogmas and canons (see Weber 1968, p. 459) are usually fashioned in situations of conflict, in opposition to persons and ideas perceived by religious elites as threatening.
tive interests and then gave to their definitions an aura of objective truth and universality.

Responses to heterodoxy within an institution, therefore, are the function of both the "social distance" between dissidents and institutional authorities and the "ideational distance," that is, the degree of divergence between the beliefs of elites and those of dissidents. There is, in other words, a "relativity of dissidence" which is analogous to the dynamics of relative deprivation, as conceptualized by Tocqueville ([1856] 1955) and Merton (1968). The relativity of dissidence leads to two propositions: (1) Criticism from within a social organization may be more intellectually offensive than external criticism. (2) Mechanisms of control will be activated by elites only when social distance, as well as ideational distance, reaches but does not exceed a critical level. With regard to the first proposition, modernist criticism cut to the heart of the Catholic belief system. Although the modernists adhered to some of the standard criticisms of the anticlericals and nonbelievers, they claimed to be Catholic defenders of the faith. Church authorities often identified them with external critics, especially "rationalists," Protestants, and modernists of all sorts. External critics, unlike the modernists, used non-Catholic standards and non-Catholic terms and imagery that could be more easily ignored by the faithful and by members of the hierarchy alike. Outsiders were less likely to mislead the unsuspecting faithful because they made no claims to orthodoxy.

"Ideational distance" is crucial in the dynamic situation that evolves whenever there is a heresy, which is more dangerous to those in power than are critiques which operate from extrinsic assumptions. Thus, some members of the Roman hierarchy complained that Alfred Loisy was more threatening to the Catholic faith than the Protestant Adolf von Harnack ([1903] 1958), for example, just as the priest Luther had been perceived as more threatening than the secular King Henry VIII. Loisy, like several modernists, had grown up in a family of solid rural orthodox Catholics (see Loisy 1930–31). Nonetheless, he found his faith challenged by his academic studies, particularly at the Institut catholique in Paris. His *L’Evangile et l’église* [1903] 1976) was an effort to demonstrate the historical legitimacy of the Roman church in the face of arguments to the contrary by Harnack and others (Loisy [1913] 1968, p. 227; 1908a).

Although the work was praised by many, it drew criticism from Protestants (e.g., *Hibbert Journal* editor Percy Gardner; Gardner to von Hügel, March 18, 1903, von Hügel’s Papers, 2591, St. Andrews University Library) and Catholics alike (e.g., a series of articles by Abbé Bayraud in the *Univers*; Tyrrell to von Hügel, February 14, 1903, Add. MS. 44928,

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9 The concept of relative deprivation refers to situations in which one feels deprived because of one's perception of the conditions of others, or of past conditions, rather than as a consequence of absolute deprivation at the given moment.
British Library). If the book was an anti-Protestant polemic, why did it create such a storm among the Catholic hierarchy and evoke a tirade against it in the Catholic press? It was, in fact, because the anti-Protestant polemic was less important to the Roman hierarchy than the neo-Catholicism outlined in the book (cf. Poulat 1962, p. 114). Whereas Loisy genuinely disagreed with Harnack’s Protestant definitions of Christianity, his work was implicitly directed against scholasticism and official Catholic theology (Loisy [1913] 1968, p. 229).

Loisy directly attacked Roman definitions of papal authority. The political side of Catholicism, he argued, “is wholly external, even accessory” to the church, which exists only for “the preservation and propagation of religion in the world” ([1903] 1976, p. 173). Consequently, although it might appear different to those outside Catholicism, “the faithful do not exist for the sake of the hierarchy, but the hierarchy for the sake of the faithful. The Church does not exist for the sake of the Pope, but the Pope for the sake of the Church” ([1903] 1976, pp. 173–74). The Roman hierarchy was scandalized. “Very few books have been produced,” Abbé Félix Klein later wrote, “in the world of religion,” which have evoked “so much noise and emotion” (Klein 1951, 4:9). Some compared Loisy with the controversial Renan (see Siegfried 1932, 2:395).

The second proposition listed above is that mechanisms of control will be activated by elites only when social distance, as well as ideational distance, reaches but does not exceed a critical level. That is, the relationship between ideational distance and social distance, on the one hand, and suppressive activities by elites, on the other, is curvilinear. If the ideational or social distance is either too high or too low, the critique may well be ignored. At a critical point between the two extremes, however, the ideas of dissidents will become defined as dangerous. Because the dissidents themselves are within the sphere of the elites’ institutional authority, the elites demand action.

Dissidents working within an organization are located within its networks and authority structure and are therefore more likely to attract followers than is an external critic who has no legitimate position. Deviant insiders are a more direct threat than external dissidents who are “outside agitators” and can be “defined out of the scene” of relevant persons and easily dismissed as “not one of us.” Critics within an organization, furthermore, are more easily subject to the control of the elites than are those outside the circle. Immediate sanctions are often available and effective. Internal critics, furthermore, might be used as “scapegoats” when they can be linked to external critics who make no effort to be considered orthodox and yet constitute a threat to both an institution and its belief system.

10 On the importance of social networks for the recruitment of membership in social movements, see Snow, Zurcher, and Eklund-Olson (1980).
Critics outside the church were not under the Vatican's control, but the modernists—particularly the clergy—were subject to the authority of the hierarchy. The truth in Pius X's statement that modernism was the synthesis of all heresies is that the Roman hierarchy's perception of modernism was precisely that. After the labeling of modernist heretics, Catholicism could be defined not only on the basis of papal and traditional authority but also in terms of a common enemy. The Catholic faithful at all levels of the institution could be called on to oppose the heresy in their midst. The issue of modernism was, fundamentally, a conflict between ecclesiastical authority and the authority of scholars. "There exist critics and pedants," Cardinal Merry del Val complained, "who recognize no law but themselves and claim a monopoly of wisdom and accuracy" (Merry del Val to Ward, May 31 [no year], Wilfred Ward Papers VII 205, St. Andrews University Library). The Roman leadership and the Catholic press cultivated a spirit of antimodernism that pervaded the church, in an effort to control the alleged heresy. In the process, the heresy itself and the orthodoxy from which it was alleged to deviate were socially constructed.

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION AND CONSEQUENCES OF HERESY

Heresies and efforts to define and suppress them are not created ex nihilo but through responses to situations of social conflict. As belief systems become institutionalized, those in power begin to attach their interests to certain definitions of orthodoxy and become convinced that the belief system itself would be endangered if their definitions of orthodoxy were challenged. In times of social conflict, those on each side of a conflict construct belief systems and definitions of those systems that have an affinity with their perceived interests; those belief systems in turn help to shape the way in which parties to the conflict define their interests.

Within the Catholic church, the power to define orthodoxy was gradually limited to the offices of the pope and to the ecumenical councils which he convened. Max Weber's analysis of the relationship between orthodox Confucianism and the heterodox doctrines of Taoism in China provides an instructive parallel: "Ultimately, the substantive differences between orthodox and heterodox doctrines and practices... had two sources. On the one

11 Hence, the McCarthy hearings during the Cold War of the 1950s were directed not against the Soviets or other external threats, over which the U.S. government had no direct control, but against American dissidents and progressives, who were considered "heretics," in a sense. It should be remembered that many of those attacked by the House Un-American Activities Committee (e.g., Alger Hiss) had been "orthodox" members of Roosevelt's New Deal administration during the 1930s and had not substantially altered their political philosophies. What had changed was the character of the American government's relationship to the Soviets and the political elites' definition of the situation.
hand, Confucianism was a status ethic of the bureaucracy educated in literature; on the other hand, piety and especially ancestor-worship were retained as politically indispensable foundations for patrimonialism. Only when these interests appeared to be threatened did the instinct of self-preservation in the ruling stratum react by attaching the stigma of heterodoxy” (1968, p. 213). Doctrines of papal supremacy and infallibility were not official Catholic doctrine until the first Vatican Council in 1870 (see Hughes 1961; Butler 1936; Hasler 1981). The philosophical system of scholasticism, which was used to legitimate the notion of the apostolic succession of authority, became, in effect, a “status ethic” for the hierarchy of the Roman church. The interests and status of the bishops, and even more of the burgeoning clerical bureaucracy of the Vatican, became attached to and associated with the prestige of the papacy and the doctrines on which it was based. It was when opposing ideas threatened those interests that “the instinct of self-preservation in the ruling stratum react[ed] by attaching the stigma of heterodoxy” (Weber 1968, p. 213). The development of such definitions of the situation leads almost inevitably to the persecution of heretics.

It is necessary to place the modernist crisis in the historical context of a conflict between the Roman church and scientific and political movements in the 19th century. The growth of modern science was accompanied by countless conflicts between scientists and church officials, in part because the organized skepticism required by the norms of science (Merton [1949] 1968, pp. 601–2; Harvey 1966) frequently led to refutations of the established doctrines of the church. It was the lethal combination of anticlerical movements in western Europe (during the 18th and 19th centuries) with popular theories of evolution and the development of scientific criticism that created the Roman church’s greatest challenges in the latter half of the 19th century. Conflict between the advocates of science and defenders of traditional Christianity was so intense that it became a key issue in late 19th-century social thought and a central theme in the work of such thinkers as Durkheim, Weber, Pareto (Aron 1970, 2:2), and Freud. As Marx put it, “The basis of all criticism is the criticism of religion” ([1843] 1972, pp. 11–12).

Elective Affinities

Scientific arguments became weapons for anticlericals who attacked the church not so much because of its cultural traditionalism as much as because it was a symbol of the hated ancien régime (Tocqueville [1856] 1955, p. 6). Anticlericals began to recognize an affinity between their hatred of the church and the ideas of science which could be used to attack the church’s doctrines, thereby weakening its hold on the populace.
As the 19th-century political and intellectual climate developed in western Europe, battle lines were frequently drawn so that affinities were defined between particular approaches to scientific and religious thought, on the one hand, and various political and social alliances, on the other. If one supported the replacement of the monarchy with a republic, especially in France (Dansette 1961), one was expected also to oppose Catholicism and to favor the expansion of scientific research. On the other hand, most who elected to be defenders of the Catholic faith were also inclined to oppose republicanism and defend the monarchy, as well as to defend the faith from scientifically informed "heresies." Such positions were taken, less because of inherent qualities of the respective beliefs, than because of the way in which definitions of interests developed among conflicting parties. Monarchical models of authority were used by clericals to defend Catholic orthodoxy just as frequently as scientific models of inquiry were used by anticlericals to attack that orthodoxy and the monarchy which it legitimated.

The ecclesiastical elite defined its interests within the framework of neoscholasticism and a revival of the theology and philosophy of Thomas Aquinas (see McCool 1977). The orderly, hierarchical thought of that famous theologian was consistent with the ethos of the ecclesiastical absolutism developed in defense against anticlerical attacks (despite the ironic fact that Aquinas himself was at first thought to be a heretic because he deviated from the orthodoxy of his day). Scholasticism legitimated the monarchical model of ecclesiastical government that had been taken to its extreme in the doctrine of papal infallibility (see Sanks 1974; Thibault 1972). Notions of papal authority developed in the 14th century (see Ullman 1962; Congar 1962) were further elaborated. Catholic orthodoxy was defined within the boundaries of scholasticism and papal authority. For many in Rome, all was heresy outside the boundaries of scholastic theology and all were heretics who defied the authority of the pope.

The time of crisis could best be responded to, thought the ecclesiastical hierarchy, by a show of unity behind the pope. That unity was much easier to affirm than to accomplish, however; despite the declarations of unity at the First Vatican Council in 1870, the Roman church was deeply divided. In addition to natural political and nationalistic divisions, and genuine theological differences, and despite the increasing centralization of ecclesiastical authority, the Roman church was undergoing considerable structural differentiation throughout the 19th century. Both within the Vatican itself and elsewhere, the bureaucratization of various tasks resulted in the development of competing institutional centers within the church, as with the creation of Catholic universities (e.g., in France in the 1870s) for the exercise of the church's teaching functions (see MacCaffrey 1910; cf. Ozouf 1963). That differentiation exacerbated strains created by political conflict.
of the period, precipitating a situation of "sociological ambivalence" (Merton and Barber 1976) for Catholic scholars. Revolutions in transportation and communication, and the expansion of the church through missionary efforts and migrations to the New World, resulted in heterogeneous demands being made on the central ecclesiastical structure. There was an increasing centralization of the institution but increasing resistance to centralization as well within some circles and especially among scholars, who were developing their own institutional base in the universities. It should be noted, however, that there was little visible resistance to Rome in the period following the First Vatican Council of 1870 when such resistance seemed futile (Butler 1936, 2:190). The development was similar to that which Durkheim discerned in the broader society as a consequence of the division of labor—increasing individuality, with a simultaneous increase in the unity of the entire society, because of the interdependence of various specialized parts ([1893] 1933).

Specialization of academic research resulted in the creation of a world of scholars, even among priests, in which members of the hierarchy were often unwanted strangers (Loisy [1913] 1968). The basic problem that emerged from structural changes in the church was that the pope, who was given authority to interpret scripture and tradition for the church, did not function in that capacity on a day-to-day basis. The institutionalization of specialized scholarship meant that the pope became far removed from the experts actually performing the task of study and interpretation. As long as differences were minimal, such arrangements were satisfactory. When radical disagreements arose between scientifically oriented scholars and church authorities defending the church against both science and anticlericalism, however, that division of labor became problematic.

For a number of scholars, scholasticism was a distortion of reality; science and scientific criticism were valid methods of inquiry, and the two worlds of scholasticism and science were defined by the Vatican as mutually exclusive. Much of the controversy concerned the nature of religious truth. The scholastics, and the Vatican authorities, contended that Christian truths were universal and unchanging, to be interpreted through the teaching authority of the church. Historical scholarship, on the contrary, had suggested that religious dogmas evolved and changed over time.12 As often occurs in such situations, each side elaborated its definitions of the conflict so as to exclude parts of the opponents' definitions, simply because the opponents believed in them.

Trapped between the Vatican culture and the demands of a secular intellectual culture, the modernists experienced considerable sociological am-

12 Von Hügel, for example, claimed that "the Divine . . . amongst us men grows and energizes; . . . nothing that is, in us, eternal, is there simply fixed and static" (von Hügel to Tyrrell, September 30, 1900, Add. MS. 44927, British Library).
bivalence (Merton and Barber 1976). They were in a situation, that is, in which they were confronted with contradictory normative demands, from scientific scholarship, on the one hand, and the ecclesiastical hierarchy, on the other. They denied the pope’s authority to limit their research and struck a sensitive nerve with the Vatican. Not only were the modernists using suspect “scientific methods” in their research; they were also defying the authority of the pope which had been used by clericals to defend the church against scientific attacks (Pius X 1908b).

Catholic officials found affinities not only between their interests and scholasticism and papal absolutism but also with the spirit of antimodernism, which saw in modernism a symbol of all that threatened the church (see Poulat 1969). Catholic modernism at the end of the 19th century was not an organized movement, however, but simply the work of a few relatively isolated scholars. A group of Jesuits organized around the review Civiltà cattolica, published in Rome, provided the core of the neo-Thomist movement from the middle of the 19th century on, and they exerted a powerful influence within the Vatican (McCool 1977, p. 135). Their unqualified opposition to everything “modern” was part of a well-organized drive to defend the church from the modern world by developing a Thomist revival. The work of Loisy, Tyrrell, Fogazzaro, and others did not fit into their plan; all modern systems and methods of intellectual inquiry were for them intrinsically unsatisfactory. According to the Civiltà cattolica Jesuits, the modernists could be attacked in an effort to define and maintain the boundaries of orthodox Catholicism on the basis of the neo-Thomist philosophy that the Jesuits themselves were refining, with the blessing of the papal office (Thibault 1972). Gradually, through a series of book reviews and articles, the construction of an image of the modernists as a heretical conspiracy began to take shape (see Ranchetti 1969), culminating in denunciations of the modernists. One unintended consequence of the attacks was the forcing of the modernists to seek one another out in order to form a more solidified position for their common defense, although the effort was never successful.

The Civiltà cattolica Jesuits were opposed to modernist ideas not only from an intellectual and religious point of view but also because their privileged position in the ecclesiastical hierarchy was threatened by any group with rising popularity and an ability to operate in the sphere of doctrinal interpretation. Vatican officials themselves joined in the campaign against the modernists and finally took over the direction of that campaign. The question of authority, as in all cases of heresy, was in the final analysis

13 For more information on the internal workings of the Roman hierarchy, see Turvasi’s important work (1979), which includes translations of and comments on the correspondence between the well-placed Roman clergyman Giovanni Genocchi and Loisy.
at the core of the controversy. Once developed, such controversies have a dynamic of their own which precipitates further escalation and polarization. The social construction of heresy, carried out by both the orthodox elite and the heretical dissidents, has radical social consequences, as the conflicting parties battle for authority within the institution. Such scholars as George Tyrrell could not understand the intensity with which the Vatican moved against them. As Tyrrell put it in a letter to von Hügel, "[I am] still young and inexperienced enough to marvel at the fatal blindness that makes Rome devour her most serviceable children, not in exceptional deliria of purposed fear but steadily and systematically. . ." (November 1, 1903, Add. MS. 44928, British Library). Through the publication of antimodernist articles in the Catholic press in scholarly journals, through behind-the-scenes charges and innuendos, a number of groups began to portray the modernists as a symbol of all enemies of the church. By campaigning against the modernists and their ideas, persons concerned about the crisis of the church were able to do something in defense of the church. Little could be done to silence the Renans and the Ferrys, or the anticlericals who attacked the church in the French parliament and elsewhere, but Loisy, Tyrrell, von Hügel, Fogazzaro, and the other "traitors inside the camp" could be reprimanded and, if necessary, silenced. What began as an unofficial, fragmented campaign of innuendo and public charges here and there developed into a full-scale attempt by the hierarchy to defend the church against modernism. Several powerful forces in Rome, including scholastic theologians, the Civiltà cattolica Jesuits, and Cardinal Merry del Val, were instrumental in forging Vatican policy. Once the institutional mechanisms for the control of heresy were set in motion, there was no room for compromise on either side; the drama had to be played out to its bitter end. "No taste or moderation in statement," von Hügel wrote to the moderate editor of the Dublin Review, "will make the militant scholastics tolerant of what you and I have got in common" (von Hügel to Ward, Octo-

14 A similar process occurred during a controversy over the same issues in the Vatican's condemnation of "Americanism" in 1899. The critical issues of the controversy centered on the degree to which the Catholics should adapt their doctrines and practices to new social circumstances, particularly the "democratic" milieu of the United States. Ironically, most of the controversy developed not in the United States but in Paris and Rome, in a debate between those who wished to reconcile Catholicism with democratic principles and those who wished to align Catholicism with monarchical forms of governance, both within the church itself and within the secular world (for a thorough treatment of the controversy, see McAvoy [1957]).

15 Merry del Val, an antimodernist long before any modernist "movement" began to coalesce, was promoted to the powerful position of Vatican secretary of state and wielded considerable influence under Pius X. Many moderates, such as Lord Halifax (who declared to Ward that he was unconvinced by Loisy's criticism; Halifax to Ward, January 31, 1910, Wilfred Ward Papers VII 1242, St. Andrews University Library), felt that Merry del Val was "a real misfortune to the Church" (Halifax to Ward, June 24, 1908, Wilfred Ward Papers VII 1242, St. Andrews University Library).
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ber 10, 1907, Wilfred Ward Papers VII 143, St. Andrews University Li-

brary).

DOCTRINAL CONSEQUENCES

A series of official proclamations against modernist ideas culminated in the
decevers "Lamentabili," issued July 2, 1907, and the encyclical "Pascendi"
of September 8, 1907, containing an extensive systematization of the al-
leged doctrines of the modernists and a plan for the suppression of the
movement.16 "Anyone who is in any way found to be tainted with modern-
ism," the pope declared, "is to be excluded without compunction" from
offices throughout the church. The authorities condemned critical scientific
historiography and a number of specific implications growing out of that
methodology—religious knowledge was defined as compatible with some
types of science and incompatible with others. Also, the Vatican's pro-
nouncements drew boundaries between religious and scientific knowledge on
the basis of subject matter. Questions of scriptural interpretation were not
to be subject to rules of scientific investigation but only to the guidelines
and decisions established by ecclesiastical authorities (Pius X 1908b).

Three themes appeared repeatedly in the papal encyclical. First, the mod-
ernists attacked the very root of the Catholic faith and threatened its very
existence (Pius X 1908b, p. 234). Second, "the danger is present almost
in the very veins and heart of the Church, whose injury is the more certain
from the very fact that their knowledge of her is more intimate" (Pius X
1908b, p. 234). That is, the dissidents were within the organization and
therefore more of a threat to the hierarchy. The modernists, the Vatican
charged, were really impostors. Third, the modernists failed to remain
obedient to the authority of the church's hierarchy. "There is the fact
which is all but fatal to the hope of cure," the pope declared, "that their
very doctrines have given such a bent to their minds, that they disdain all
authority and brook no restraint" (1908b, p. 235). The causes of modern-
ism can be reduced to two, according to the encyclical—curiosity and pride
—and pride sits in Modernism as in its own house" (p. 315).

The debate over the relationship between scientific inquiry and Catholic
doctrine which has continued to rage within the Roman church until the
present time received much of its framework from the modernist crisis,
since both the modernists and the Vatican defined the controversy as a con-
ict between science and orthodox Catholicism, particularly scholastic Ca-
thericism (Loisy [1913] 1968, p. 90; Pius X 1908b, pp. 328–29; cf. Root
1977). The nature of scholarship and doctrinal definition in Catholicism
was also profoundly affected by the controversy, as the Vatican proposed

16 For Loisy's comments on the proclamations, see Loisy (1908b).
Politics of Heresy

a series of remedies to deal with the crisis. First, all "science" was to be placed within a framework of scholastic philosophy, which was to "be made the basis of the sacred sciences" (Pius X 1908b, p. 325). Although the natural sciences could be studied, Catholics should study them only within the boundaries established and not to the neglect of "the more severe and lofty studies" (Pius X 1908b, pp. 327–28). Second, educational institutions within the church were to be expunged of all who adhered to modernist errors, and publication by Catholic scholars was to be strictly regulated. "It is the duty of the Bishops," the pope's encyclical declared, "to prevent [the publication or reading of] writings of Modernists, or whatever savours of Modernism or promotes it. . . . No books or papers or periodicals whatever of this kind are to be permitted to seminarists or university students" (Pius X 1908b, pp. 330–31).

The Vatican's "Reign of Terror" was never really put to rest until the Second Vatican Council in 1962–65. It was indicative of a new spirit in the church that that council did not pronounce a single anathema (see Bourke 1970, p. 32). However, Roman solutions to the crises of the late 19th and early 20th centuries continue to affect doctrinal decisions in contemporary Catholicism, particularly the centralization of authority in the papacy. The crucial question to be asked in evaluating current controversies in the Roman church, which despite their distinctiveness have many parallels to the modernist controversy, is not whether the conflict between science and religion, or scholarship and faith, has been resolved. It is, rather, whether the ecclesiastical hierarchy identifies its interests with an opposition to particular types of research, especially into questions of faith and doctrine, and the historicity of the scriptures and traditions of the church. How much scientific skepticism does the hierarchy believe can be tolerated at the expense of traditional (or what are defined as traditional) doctrines? Those questions are not easy to answer. Certainly John Paul II does not view scientific criticism or the role of scholars with the same distaste as did Pius IX and Pius X. There has been some effort, especially since the Second Vatican Council, to introduce a new pluralism into the church's theology (Tracy 1975; Schillebeeckx 1970) and to redefine the nature of the magisterium (Gutwenger 1970). There is, nonetheless, considerable conflict over the extent to which authority is to be allocated to scholars within the church, as can be seen most clearly in the controversies surrounding Hans Küng (see Sheehan 1980; Swidler 1981).

As with the modernist controversy, the Küng controversy centers less

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17 The question of papal infallibility, e.g., should continue to be a major controversy in the Roman church (on its origins, see Butler [1930]). In a recent study of American Catholic youth (Fee et al. 1981, p. 17), only 25% of the respondents agreed that "under certain conditions the pope is infallible (cannot be wrong) when he speaks on matters of faith and morals."
on particular issues than on the broader question of the authority of the church's tradition and institutional hierarchy. Following Künَg's censure by the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in December 1979, Joseph Cardinal Hoffner, president of the West German Bishops' Conference, told the press that "the chief issue is Künَg's stand on infallibility [of the pope]" (Sheehan 1980, p. 40; cf. Swidler 1981). Künَg (1970, 1981; cf. Häring and Kuschel 1980) has deliberately and openly challenged conventional interpretations of the notion of papal infallibility. Because of his "contempt for the magisterium of the Church," as the congregation put it, and his stands on the issues of infallibility, the divinity of Jesus, and the virginity of Mary, Künَg was barred from his chair of dogma and ecumenical theology at the State University at Tübingen. There are striking differences between that censure and the censure of modernist scholars, in terms of both their intensity and their scope. Künَg has not been declared a heretic, although the controversy may not yet be over. It is too early to predict the outcome of the Künَg controversy or of similar controversies elsewhere, but whatever decisions are made by the Vatican, it should be remembered that in terms of the history of the papacy, the modernist controversy was a relatively recent event, and we can be sure that there is a residue of influence from that controversy that will affect contemporary styles of papal governance. Furthermore, in the midst of demands that he stand firm and defend the faith from attacks, John Paul II has chosen to identify the enemy within the church rather than outside the institution, to quarrel with heresies rather than with non-Christians (with the exception of Marxism, although there, too, he has been more concerned with Marxism within the church than outside it).

THE RITUAL OF THE HERESY HUNT

Both the extent of the antimodernist campaign and the later suppression of the antimodernists by the Vatican show that the real issue surrounding modernism, at least by the time of its condemnation, was much more than a series of specific objections to particular modernist ideas, or even the use of scientific methods for historical and textual research. The real issue Pius X addressed in his pronouncements was a broadly perceived challenge of the authority of Catholic orthodoxy, of the Roman church, and of those who ran the institution. The conflict exemplified the character of conflict in cultural institutions and the dynamics of the heresy hunt.

There were five broad mechanisms of control available to the hierarchy for the suppression of modernism. First, articles or books that were declared heretical could be placed on the Index of Prohibited Books (1930).
Second, the careers of Catholic clergy could be ruined, either directly or indirectly, in order to force compliance with the Vatican's wishes. Clergy, of course, were subject to more sanctions than laity, and members of religious orders more than diocesan (or "secular") priests. Third, the heretical ideas of an individual or a group could be condemned by a decree of an ecclesiastical body (such as the Congregation of the Holy Office or the Congregation of the Index) or by an encyclical from the pope.

In such an event, individuals could be required to make a public retraction of all errors in their work, even to the extent of agreeing with the language of the condemnation that was placed in direct opposition to that work, a requirement which more than one scholar accused of modernism found particularly distasteful. A fourth mechanism was the institutionalization of structures designed to detect and punish persons found guilty of those heresies denounced by an ecclesiastical body or the pope. Finally, behind all the other measures was a fifth weapon used by the Vatican—excommunication. Excommunication denies individuals "communion" with the church and its members; they are not allowed to attend mass and to receive or give the sacraments, and members of the church are to avoid all communication with them (Attwater 1954, p. 182). All five types of control mechanisms were used by the Roman hierarchy in an escalating campaign against modernism.

Few of the modernists, and even those who deliberately disassociated themselves from the modernists (e.g., Louis Duchesne, Loisy's teacher at the Institut catholique in Paris, and Père Lagrange) escaped having works placed on the Index of Prohibited Books (1930). Major clergy in the movement, particularly Loisy and Tyrrell, found their careers stifled by Rome so as to minimize the direct effects of their writing or teaching on the Catholic population. Sometimes even those who were in contact with the heretics were affected; Loisy's students, for example, were barred from ordination by Cardinal Richard in Paris (Petre 1944). Censors were to be appointed in each diocese, and a "Council of Vigilance" was to meet in a secret session in each diocese in order to "watch most carefully for every trace and sign of modernism both in publications and in teaching . . . ." (Pius X, 1908b, pp. 340–41). An antimodernist oath was instituted to be taken by all clerics who were to be promoted to major orders and by all clergy who exercised ministerial functions. There were no significant movements of protest except in Germany where university professors were ex-

18 Von Hügel found it difficult to be sympathetic to Lagrange when the latter's works were condemned because he had worked "actively, in word and deed, for Loisy's condemnation (whilst knowing very well how . . . Loisy was in the right)" (von Hügel to Ward, October 18, 1907, Wilfred Ward Papers VII 143, MS deposit 21, St. Andrews University Library).
empted so as not to be “humiliated before their Protestant colleagues” (Vidler 1934, p. 219).

As expected, major visible figures in the movement were excommunicated (“If there are to be excommunications,” Robert Dell wrote in a letter, “the more the better . . .” [Dell to A. L. Lilley, October 25, 1907, MS. 30607, St. Andrews University Library]. Finally, a secret international organization, the Sodalitium Pianum, or Sapinière, was organized in 1909 for the purpose of combating modernism. Working through a network of “integralist Catholics,” the Sapinière, under the leadership of Msgr. Umberto Benigni, launched violent anonymous attacks against anyone and everyone suspected of modernist ideas or unorthodox doctrines. Papers seized by the Germans in Belgium during World War I have opened up the veil of secrecy covering the organization, although the papers were not fully disclosed until Emile Poulat (1969) compiled them in his work *Intégrisme et catholicisme intégral*.

The Sapinière, with the highest authority of the Vatican, created tremendous disruptions in the lives and careers of countless Catholics and provided a strong undercurrent of suspicion and mistrust throughout the church, virtually paralyzing scholarly inquiry, from its founding until the outbreak of the war in 1914. One of the most significant outcomes of the entire affair is that gradually the Sapinière itself came under the suspicion of forces who instigated the antimodernist campaign in Rome, the *Civiltà cattolica* Jesuits. Finally, in 1914 Pope Benedict called for an end to dissensions within the church, and a number of integralist books were actually placed on the *Index* (see Weber 1962).

Modernism as a movement was virtually eradicated long before the Sapinière was considered no longer necessary (von Hügel to Petre, November 1918, Add. MS. 45362, British Library; von Hügel 1927, p. 248). However, the effects of its denunciation were widespread and long lasting. The Vatican was able to mobilize various aspects of the Roman church and to reassert its authority.

The Roman hierarchy’s misleading caricature of modernism was probably not a deliberate, malicious fabrication but a genuine effort to save the church from what was perceived as a grave threat to its very existence. When members of the hierarchy charged modernists with cleverly disguising their thought by making it appear unsystematic, they were probably describing the situation for the most part as they actually perceived it. Not only did church officials define modernism as a definite system of thought, but they tended to link Catholic modernism with all forms of modernism—political, literary, and artistic.

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19 The Sapinière was closely aligned with the well-known Action française, a reactionary group in France growing out of the Dreyfus affair in the 1890s (Vidler 1962, p. 25). For more on the Action française see Weber (1962).
HERESY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Even the most muddled thinkers attempt to systematize their definitions of situations and world views, at least so that there is apparent consistency among all their component parts (see Festinger 1957; Geertz 1973). This tendency toward consistency means that when any one part of a system of thought is attacked, the rest of the system, too, may be perceived as threatened. That process is even more salient when the system of thought in question concerns ultimate issues and, in the case of religious systems such as Catholicism, one's ultimate fate. Thus, when, in the name of science, people began to attack the accuracy of the creation story in Genesis, the authorship of the Bible, and the authority of the pope, it was not just the specific doctrine in question that was under discussion but the entire body of Catholic doctrine. Violent anticlerical attacks on the church throughout the 19th century meant that such questions took on the aura of an attack on the existence of Catholicism and the Roman church, even when they were not intended to do so.

Not only is there to be consistency within a belief system, but there should also be consistency at that interface of belief systems and social organization, that is, within the beliefs and attitudes held by various groups of people. When an institution and the system of thought it represents are under attack, the leaders of the institution demand a high level of consensus from its members. When the modernists, especially the priests among them, claimed the right to hold opinions outside the boundaries of official Catholicism, their claim was defined as a deliberate attack on the institution. Furthermore, as the conflict between modernists and church authorities escalated, the issues of the conflict shifted from specific questions surrounding Catholic doctrines and the use of scientific historiography to the issue of the amount of authority allocated to the modernist scholars, on the one hand, and to church authorities and Vatican theologians, on the other. Both sides claimed to champion the Catholic faith and to defend it from its ultimate demise in the modern world, to be on the side of good in a battle with evil forces. Each claimed legitimate authority in matters of mutual concern. Catholic scholars, oriented toward the norms of the scholarly community, demanded their right to do scientific research freely, even if the results of their research challenged official church teachings. Not to do so would have been radically inconsistent with their own definitions of scholarly inquiry, which demanded the unfettered pursuit of "the facts," wherever that pursuit might lead them.

The church hierarchy responded to its crisis in the 19th century by focusing on the authority of the church and the papal office because that office was the traditional guardian of the faith and was also a major focus of attacks by anticlericals and Protestants. Operating within the norms of
the magisterium, the teaching authority of the church, church leaders demanded the right to have the final word on all doctrinal matters and to require the silence of the Catholic scholars who dared to oppose them on matters of faith. In fact, because the crisis of the moment seemed to require absolute consistency, Vatican authorities demanded that they not only discontinue teaching and writing their false doctrines but also discontinue believing them.

There is nothing inherent in the role of a scholar which requires rebellion against the Vatican. That is, there is no inevitable determination of belief systems by social structural arrangements. Instead, belief systems grow out of definitions which people in particular social statuses create in their historical situations, searching for ideas which have affinities with perceived interests. That does mean, however, that concrete structural arrangements have a powerful influence on the way in which ideas are shaped, particularly in social conflict situations. Similarly, the ideas and beliefs to which people adhere have a powerful influence on whom they will associate with and what statuses and roles they will hold.

Catholic modernists were faced with conflicting demands. As they defined their situations at the end of the 19th century, the norms of scientific research required a certain suspension of judgment concerning the objects of their investigation. There is nothing inherent in the role of ecclesiastical leader that requires one to suppress scholars. But Vatican officials were also faced with contradictory demands in the acting out of their roles. They believed it was their duty to demand total submission and to defend Catholic orthodoxy, on the one hand, but to rely on Catholic scholars for the development of Catholic teaching institutions, on the other. Both modernists and antimodernists found themselves in ambivalent situations and sought ways of thinking and acting that were not ambivalent.

Modernism and antimodernism alike evolved out of the way in which certain (not all) Catholic scholars and some (not all) Catholic officials defined their interests and those of Catholicism. They were shaped out of adaptations of scientific thought and scholasticism, respectively, as the modernists and antimodernists found an affinity between their goals and perspectives, on the one hand, and either scientific or scholastic thought, on the other.

It was not, however, simply the ambivalence of their situations and the conflicts between science and scholastic theology that precipitated the modernist crisis. It was also the Vatican's posture of heresy hunting that ironically elicited a reform movement among scholars who might otherwise never have created one. In many ways the Vatican policy itself was responsible for provoking an organization of scholars into existence, keeping it within limits by frustrating it at every turn, and eventually destroying it.
Why, then, did church authorities even bother with the modernists and their scholarship, if their actions were provoking the formation of a reform movement? In part, it was perhaps because they were not cognizant of the consequences of their actions. More important, however, it was because the existence of the modernist movement was not only a threat, it was also a source of strength. The modernists served as a symbolic focus for the hierarchy's attack on subversive forces responsible for the church's many problems. That curious development is less baffling when one recognizes the central role that heresy plays in the process of belief formation and in the mobilizing of people in voluntary religious institutions.\(^{20}\) Heresy and orthodoxy are two sides of the same coin; they are two aspects of the same social process within which belief systems are defined. Belief systems are not created by people sitting around passively contemplating the universe (although some passive contemplation may play an essential role) but by groups of people interacting with other groups of people, dialoguing, debating, and sometimes fighting. Of particular importance in the process is the interaction between heretics and the orthodox, between heresy and orthodoxy, Heresy, which is remote and near at the same time (as are heretics), which has social origins and social consequences, grows out of and then feeds back on particular belief systems. The study of the process of labeling heresies sheds light on the process of belief formation and the relationship between beliefs and social organization.

People tend to act in a routine fashion, operating within boundaries established by the normative requirements of their roles. In times of crisis, however, structures and beliefs alike are shifted, transformed, and recreated. People break the rules and redefine their situations. Unanticipated consequences inevitably ensue from such situations, and it is important for sociologists to examine these processes of change and redefinition, to recognize the importance of conflict in the formation of beliefs and values. The dynamics of the heresy hunt can be seen in the development of religious and nonreligious belief systems alike. It is important that we learn how to identify the ways in which unanticipated consequences of social and cultural changes are brought about so that they can be anticipated, but without simply arguing that for every Trotsky there must be a Stalin or for every counterculture, a Nixon.

\(^{20}\) One example of how that process of symbolic focusing on the modernists worked can be seen in an incident described by Giovanni Genocchi in a letter to Loisy: "The day before yesterday, the Pope, speaking of Minocchi, said that he was loysien. On the contrary, was the reply, he contests Loisy on many points! Even so, his method is loysien (This is confidential)" (Genocchi to Loisy, January 18, 1904, MSS N.a.fr. 15654, Bibliothèque nationale; see Turvasi [1979], p. 129, for complete translation of the letter).
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American Journal of Sociology


