

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-09764-2 - Baron Friedrich Von Hugel and the Modernist Crisis in England

Lawrence F. Barmann

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CAMBRIDGE
At the University Press

1972

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521081788

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First published 1972

This digitally printed version 2008

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Catalogue Card Number: 77-153014

ISBN 978-0-521-08178-8 hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-09764-2 paperback

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DEDICATED TO MY MOTHER

Weber LaMar Barmann

Accipe confessiones meas et gratiarum actiones, Deus meus, de rebus innumerabilibus etiam in silentio. Sed non praeteribo quidquid mihi anima parturit de illa famula tua, quae me parturivit, et carne, ut in hanc temporalem, et corde, ut in aeternam lucem nascerer.

– St Augustine, *Conf.* 1x, 8

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PREFACE

In the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth a conflict of ideas arose within the Roman Catholic church which history now knows as the modernist crisis. In this struggle the party supported by the Roman church's full moral authority and coercive power inevitably prevailed. At no point was the crisis really a conflict between truth and error, nor even, for the most part, between genuine Christian orthodoxy and genuine heterodoxy. The group that eventually dominated did so not because what they said was true, but because what they said was enforceable. In the sixty years following that conflict much has been written about modernism, though mostly from partisan standpoints. Modernists have been concerned to defend themselves and their aims, and anti-modernists have been equally concerned to justify the conduct of the Roman authorities and the positions of Roman theologians. But for several decades now the last major figures in that historical drama have been dead, and at last the time seems ripe for a comprehensive history of the complex modernist phenomenon, expressed with as much objectivity as historical scholarship can muster, to be written.

In preparing my study of Baron von Hügel and the modernist crisis in England I have had no illusions about the nature and limitations of my work. I have not written that awaited comprehensive history of modernism, but I have tried to contribute substantially to such a future work. Before anything like a definitive history of modernism can be produced, detailed monographs on individual men and groups of men who, in their varying circumstances, constituted the so-called movement, will have to be researched and published. Any synthesis of worth necessarily presupposes careful analysis. During the past decade the monographs of Pietro Scoppola in Italy and of Émile Poulat in France have been major contributions to this analysis, though the latter, at least, has also been something of a preliminary synthesis as well. But to the extent that Poulat has been synthetic, he has also, perhaps, been somewhat premature, since, contrary to his suggestion, I cannot accept that modernism was mainly a French thing, nor that the root problem underlying the conflict was that created by biblical criticism. Historical criticism as applied to the bible was the aspect of the problem on which some of the conflict centred, especially in France. But the primary problem at issue

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was the larger apologetic problem – that of justifying to oneself and for one's contemporaries structural Christianity in general, and structural Roman Catholic Christianity in particular.

When a comprehensive history of the modernist phenomenon is eventually written, we can anticipate that it will have drawn on the researches of Poulat and others, but especially of others yet to come. Not only must the French and Italian scenes be further explored, but the English, German and American situations as well. Modernism was not merely, nor even primarily, a matter of certain individuals and certain books. It was the more or less simultaneous awakening of a number of Roman Catholics, in different places and different circumstances, but mostly rather well educated, and all strikingly aware of the intellectual and other advances of their own era and milieu, to the serious inadequacies of the Roman Catholic ecclesiastical system of thought and practice then current. Such an awakening and awareness transcended specific problems of biblical criticism, church–state relations, philosophy of religion and social action. This awareness was what George Tyrrell, Alfred Loisy, Romolo Murri and others shared in common, rather than the particular areas of life in which each eventually focused his awareness in an effort to change, by a diversity of means, concrete structures. This common awareness in the men who were modernists is what will, eventually, make a synthetic and comprehensive history of modernism possible. But before it can be written we must have further detailed analyses of the thought and activity of the socio-political modernists in Italy and France, of the philosophical and theological modernists in England, France, Germany and America, and of the historico-critical modernists everywhere. It is the variety of concrete undertakings, inspired by this common awareness, and aspiring to reform the Catholic system of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries from within, which is the historical fact denoted by the term *modernist movement*.

The single man, more than any other, who was the rallying point for modernist thinkers and their activities in western Europe was Baron Friedrich von Hügel. He alone of the modernists was truly cosmopolitan. His interests were scholarly and religious, and his orientation was broadly European. His own studies were chiefly concerned with the historical criticism of the bible and with the philosophy of religion, though he followed with informed interest the church–state developments in France and Italy, and was acquainted with some of the social action reformers in those countries as well. The free pursuit of biblical criticism and

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religious philosophy within the Catholic church in the late nineteenth century brought him into conflict with entrenched theological positions, and, eventually, with Roman authorities. However, they also brought him into contact with the best of those men who seemed to promise most as instruments of reform within the Roman Catholic ecclesiastical system nearly three-quarters of a century ago.

Both the limits and the theme of this book are expressed in its title. I have not undertaken to write a comprehensive history of the modernist crisis. I have studied von Hügel's involvement in the movement in its specifically English setting and circumstances. Because of his temperament, interests and values, von Hügel would probably have come into conflict with prevailing Roman theology and discipline wherever he had lived. But it was largely in the English environment that he thought and wrote and spoke, and it was usually in England and from England that his ideas and personality and writings had their first repercussions. The English side of the development of his mind, and the English aspects of the modernist conflict with Roman authority have never been adequately studied in themselves. By restricting my focus to von Hügel's activities in relation to the English scene I have tried not to misrepresent his relationship to other individual modernists and to the modernist movement as a whole. I believe that I have said enough about von Hügel's international activities to keep the pictures from ever becoming distorted, but at the same time it is evident that I have not exhaustively detailed the non-English dimensions of his work.

Hopefully, the present volume is a genuine contribution to a future comprehensive history of modernism. I have tried to clarify once and for all von Hügel's place in the movement – a place that has been misrepresented both by some of the modernists themselves and by the ecclesiastically approved Roman Catholic historiographical tradition which has grown up around von Hügel's memory and that of modernism. I believe that I have also added some fresh information and a new focus on the English dimension of the movement as a whole. The modernist crisis in England, as mostly elsewhere too, did not grow out of earlier nineteenth century liberal Catholicism. A general introduction to liberal English Catholic thought in the nineteenth century might have been interesting, but not especially relevant to the purposes of this book. The same thing might be said of the liberal schools of thought on the continent. Von Hügel was not a continuator of a school of thought, nor did he in turn influence a school. The individuals who did in fact influence

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him represented among themselves a variety of backgrounds, and his own relationships to them were always highly individualistic and personal. The liberal Catholic movement in England, as elsewhere, prior to 1870, was almost totally checked by the decrees of the First Vatican Council and by the practical interpretation given to them by the papacy and the majority of Catholic bishops and theologians. Significantly, it was not to English Catholic thinkers, but to the more liberal Anglican scholars, that von Hügel looked for support in the 1890s.

This book owes much to many people whose kind generosity contributed so largely to whatever of merit these pages contain. To those who have made a special effort to make available to me either their own family papers or the resources of the archives and libraries of which they are the custodians I owe a word of public gratitude and acknowledgement. These include Mrs Frank Sheed (Maisie Ward); the members of the late Canon A. L. Lilley's family – especially the Canon's daughter, the late Miss Barbara Lilley, and his grandson, Mr John L. Creed; the daughter of the late Professor Norman Kemp Smith, Mrs Janet Ludlum, and the Professor's literary executors; the Earl of Halifax and his Archivist, Major Thomas Ingram; His Eminence, John Cardinal Heenan, and the Archivist of the Archdiocese of Westminster, Miss Elizabeth Poyser; the Abbot of Downside Abbey and the Downside Librarian, Dom Mark Pontifex; Doctor Alec R. Vidler; the Librarian at St Andrews University, Mr D. MacArthur, and the St Andrews Library staff; the Fathers of the Birmingham Oratory and especially the Reverend C. Stephen Dessain; Miss Juliet Mansel; the Provincial of the English Province of the Society of Jesus and the Province Archivist, the Reverend Francis Edwards, S.J.; Mr E. V. Quinn, the Librarian at Balliol College, Oxford; the staff of the University Library, Cambridge; the staff of the Department of Western Manuscripts at the Bodleian Library, Oxford; and the Trustees of the British Museum. But my special gratitude, and that which it is a particular privilege to acknowledge, is due to Professor W. Owen Chadwick, whose suggestions, criticisms and encouragement, throughout the period of my research in England, were such important factors in my perseverance. The opinions, judgments and shortcomings of the book are, of course, the sole responsibility of the author.

LAWRENCE F. BARMANN

9 June 1970

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ABBREVIATIONS

- AAW – Archives of the Archdiocese of Westminster.
- AEPSJ – Archives of the English Province of the Society of Jesus.
- AS des B – Archives de la Société des Bollandistes.
- Autobiography and Life* – M. D. Petre, *Autobiography and Life of George Tyrrell*, 2 vols., London: Edward Arnold, 1912.
- BCL – Balliol College Library, Oxford.
- BL – Bodleian Library, Oxford.
- BM, Add. Mss. – British Museum. Additional Manuscripts.
- BOA – Birmingham Oratory Archives.
- DAA – Downside Abbey Archives.
- Diaries* – The forty-three volumes of manuscript diaries of Baron Friedrich von Hügel.
- HP – The Hickleton Papers, the Archives of the Wood family of Hickleton and Garrowby, Yorkshire.
- LFP – The A. L. Lilley Family Papers.
- Mém* – Alfred Loisy, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire religieuse de notre temps*, 3 vols., Paris: Émile Nourry, 1930–1.
- Minutes of the LSSR* – Manuscript Minutes of the London Society for the Study of Religion, vol. 1, 1904–25.
- SAUL – Saint Andrews University Library.
- WFP – The Wilfrid Ward Family Papers.