

Theodor Haecker: In the Footsteps of John Henry Newman

Günter Biemer

There was nearly a contradictory impression between the intensive influence Haecker exercised with his writings and the atmosphere he created as a person. And even after half a century it is not easy to approach him as a historical personality. He left little about his personal life in the sense of autobiographical notes. Richard Seewald, a painter and friend of his for several decades who has left us two portraits of Haecker, describes him in a farewell article: "He was one of the most quiet and most taciturn men I knew." Most people who met him may have had "great respect for his uprightness and a little fear to be pierced through by his clear blue eyes radiating with an unusual power ... They seemed to ask all the time: Do you quite seriously mean what you are saying? Does your life correspond to your words?"¹ On the other hand Sophie Scholl, one of the "White Rose" martyrs, told her friend about the "impressive hours" she spent with Haecker in the afternoon of February 4th 1943, when he read for a circle of friends from his theodicy *Schöpfer und Schöpfung* (Creator and Creation)²: "His words fall slowly like drops which you can see gathering in advance and which fall under this expectation with a very special weight. He has a very quiet face, a look as though he would look toward the inside. Nobody ever convinced me with his countenance as he did."³ A fortnight later, on February 18th 1943, Hans and Sophie Scholl were arrested; Haecker's apartment was searched by the Gestapo, and it was only through the fortunate initiative of his daughter Irene that the manuscript of Haecker's *Journal in the Night* was smuggled out of the house and brought to the parish priest, a friend of the family.

Who was Theodor Haecker? There are also contradictory judgments about his importance as a philosophical mind. When Walter Benjamin reviewed Haecker's *Vergil, Vater des Abendlands* (Virgil, Father of the West)⁴ he testified to his "brilliant talents as a writer" but "very modest gifts as a thinker" and regretted that he had the wrong perspective on Virgil.⁵ Matthias Laros, on the contrary,

impressed by *Satire und Polemik* (1922) and *Christentum und Kultur* (1927) says: "Since Nietzsche no more passionate thinker has risen ... His passionate love concerns genuineness and existential truthfulness, and therefore his wrath is unlimited against everything that seems to endanger genuineness and truthfulness ... Haecker is as he says himself not so much a *zoon politikon* as a *zoon polemikon*."⁶ Indeed, not all those whom he criticized as ambiguous or insincere had the sovereign tolerance of the Hanseatic Thomas Mann who noted in his diary on August 23, 1934: "Haecker is a Catholic thinker and a powerful writer with the manners of a zealot. But although he attacks me several times hard (and in a way not to be misunderstood), I feel a deep sympathy for his Christian humanity (in *Was ist der Mensch?*) and was moved by his brave apology of the spirit."⁷

What rôle had John Henry Newman's world of thought in Haecker's life?

I Theodor Haecker's Early Development

Theodor Haecker was born on June 4th, 1879, in Ebersbach near Künzelsau in Schwaben; his parents married four years later and lived in Esslingen. From his family background he was Protestant. He lost his mother when he was twelve. Following his father's wish he left the *Gymnasium* at the age of sixteen and became an employee in business. Having spent three years abroad in Antwerp, in 1903 Haecker tried the university of Berlin as a student attending various lectures and living "in melancholy and loneliness". In 1905 he accepted his friend Ferdinand Schreiber's invitation to edit an illustrated family magazine in the F. Schreiber publishing house in Munich, his lifelong occupation. He nevertheless continued his studies at the university of Munich, in philosophy, especially with Max Scheler, and in classical literature until 1910. He was self taught.

In 1913 he published his first book: *Sören Kierkegaard und die Philosophie der Innerlichkeit*. Haecker introduced the Danish theologian to his contemporaries as a man of passionate dedication to God and of personal credibility because of his ethical sincerity. As a consequence of this philosophical approach some twenty years later — in 1935 — Haecker will write: "This history of the person ... is the very core of the history" of mankind⁸ and the freedom of personal will includes the duty "to make (man) the moral creator of his ethical self".⁹ Though the roots of his insight into the connection between individual responsibility and general history are to be found in his

encounter with Kierkegaard, the origin of his dedication to sincerity is his personal concern. This is why the early Haecker took to Carl Hilty the Swiss Protestant lawyer whose main work *Glück*¹⁰ showed that blissfulness was built on Christian faith and on the realisation of the ethical postulates of everyday life. This is why Haecker had a high regard for Karl Kraus whom he called “the only great polemicist and satirist of the time with ethical quality”¹¹; and this is why Haecker had a lifelong admiration and personal sympathy for Kierkegaard’s passion for truth.

Looking back on his publications between 1913 and 1920 he called them “seven years of darkness”¹², a statement which refers us indirectly to the light he discovered while translating John Henry Newman’s *Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* in 1920.

II The Encounter with Newman

Haecker’s Way to Certitude in Matters of Faith.

Haecker discovered in reading Newman how to demonstrate the legitimate rôle of reason in the act of faith. Realizing that this texture of reason and faith is the noetic basis of Catholic tradition Haecker was to be received into the Roman Catholic Church. But this is only a conclusion from facts. There is no personal description of his journey of faith by Haecker himself. Maybe, in his shyness as regards the subjective side of reality, he thought already in 1920/21 what he stated in his *Journal in the Night* in 1940: “Autobiographies belong to the most mendacious [literature]”.¹³ We have to gather the evidences from his writings and known facts of his life to reconstruct the details of his path to Catholicism: (1) analyzing the correspondence with the Oratorians in Birmingham when he was translating the *Grammar of Assent*; (2) compiling the reasons which he gives himself indirectly for his move; (3) looking for the consequences which he draws.

1) *Haecker’s correspondence with the Oratorians in Birmingham between November 1920 and November 1924*

On November 18, 1920 Haecker wrote to Fr. Francis Joseph Bacchus (1860–1937): “From love to Cardinal Newman’s mind and works I have the intention of translating into German the Grammar of Assent. I feel obliged to you, if you will inform me whether this can be done without any break of the existing law of Copyright or the privileges of the Oratory.”¹⁴ Henry Tristram almost twenty years later remembered the day when the letter arrived: “Even now I vividly recall the moment when Fr. Joseph Bacchus ... rushed in upon me and

with a certain excitement exclaimed that a German translation of the *Grammar of Assent* was in course of preparation and that you were the translator.”¹⁵

In a second letter dated November 30th Haecker asked for a more recent edition of the *Grammar* since he was using a first edition “which has an autograph from the Cardinal himself”, a gift from “the library of Döllinger, now at the university’s disposal”. A copy of the newest edition which Fr. Bacchus sent got lost; Haecker acknowledged the receipt of another copy on January 19, 1921.¹⁶

What were Haecker’s motives for translating the *Grammar* beside his “love to Cardinal Newman’s mind and works”? The philosophical importance of explaining the act of faith and its public and personal importance for religious life: There was a *kairos* on the German philosophical scene, according to Haecker, since Husserl’s school of phenomenology had established an alternative to Hegel’s German Idealism as well as to a fashionable psychologism. “Some ten or twenty years ago,” he wrote to Fr. Bacchus, “the deep originality of Cardinal Newman’s thinking would, even by our philosophers, scarcely have been recognized at all, but now, since the late development of philosophy in Germany, mainly owing to Edmund Husserl’s ‘Logische Untersuchungen’ [one] has largely abandoned the prejudicial view and arbitrary abstract constructions of a sceptical Psychologism in favour of a candid examination of the mind’s real structure.”¹⁶ In this context Haecker inserts his personal assessment of the *Grammar*: “The plainly classic explanation of the ‘substantiveness’ of Assent and Certitude will be fully understood and deservedly appreciated by the educated class of my country, and still I am not speaking of the great religious benefit which the work possibly can do.”¹⁷ Looking back two years later Haecker confirms once again: “Certain parts of the *Grammar of Assent* are to me simply classic and of more than only a transient or preparatory importance.”¹⁸

The religious benefit of Haecker’s preoccupation with Newman’s thoughts in translating the *Grammar* is, certainly in his own understanding, to be seen in his reception into the Catholic Church. Though that event took place between the two letters to Fr. Bacchus (Nov. 1920 and Nov. 1922) Haecker did not mention anything about the great day: 5th April 1921. Only two years later did the Oratorians learn about his conversion in his letter of January 13, 1923: Haecker, who had meantime received ten of Newman’s books from the Oratory, thanked them “for the fine copy of the *Apologia*” and added: “I am forwarding to you my book ‘*Satire und Polemik*’. The articles

which it contains were written and published before I had become a Catholic.”¹⁹

Years later Henry Tristram referred to Haecker’s conversion when he wrote in his congratulatory letter in summer 1939: “Has Newman done anything for you in return for what you have done for his memory? As I cannot speak with the certainty of knowledge, you will perhaps permit me to surmise. During the time when you were engaged upon the translation of his works,²⁰ you received the grace of conversion. It is not idle to suppose that you owe the light of faith to him. If so, then you are in your own person a living example of the general rule, that no man of intellectual mark in more recent times ever becomes a Catholic except directly or indirectly under his influence. We trust that it was so in your case.”²¹

2) *The philosophical and theological reasons for T. Haecker’s step from Kierkegaard to Newman*

Haecker wrote no account of his spiritual journey between 1917 when he mentioned Newman’s name for the first time²² and 1921 when after translating the *Grammar* he was received into the Church. However, he describes the difference in the philosophical and theological positions of Kierkegaard and Newman, which explains his conversion indirectly. The first source is the Postscript to *Philosophie des Glaubens* (1921)²³. Haecker brings out the singular importance the *Grammar* has for philosophy, theology, and Christian faith including his own faith-story.

(a) The subtlety, differentiation, and originality of Newman’s description of the process of (religious) recognition fascinated and convinced Haecker. First of all the difference between *notional* and *real*. While Continental philosophy was purely intellectual, a product of abstraction and systematization, Newman’s approach guaranteed nearness to reality, to the concrete. If image stands for real as concept for notional, the image even if blurred or defective still conveys the trace of reality, while the concept is only existing in the mind of the thinking individual. There is a special access to the incarnational and sacramental truth in this noetic approach.

(b) The second important element for assent in religion is *conscience*, dear to Haecker from his Kierkegaardian background. But Newman introduces conscience “in relations and parallels to other acts of the mind” so that conscience becomes an “organ and mediator of knowledge” whose content is difficult to grasp but only because it is “the transcendent hidden God”.²⁴

(c) “Completely new” in comparison to Locke’s *Essay concerning*

3) *Haecker's reception into the Roman Catholic Church*

Theodor Haecker had married Christine Margarete Braunsberg (1889–1935) in February 1918, when he was 38. They lived in Munich and had a boy, Johannes, in 1919 and a girl, Irene, on March 30, 1921. Six days after her birth, on 5th April 1921, Theodor Haecker was received into the Roman Catholic Church.³¹ Considering Haecker's indirect and objective style when he speaks about his own life it is possible to conclude that this step was under Newman's influence and patronage: "The case of Christianity is to a higher degree decided by persons rather than by systems. The Catholic Church teaches by divine grace and promises the true system of faith, this is unshakably true; but taken by itself without the person this would only be echoing bronze and the clash of cymbals were there not such holy souls as Newman." And again: "The mystery of Newman's power of convincing is situated in the fact that he saw clearly the intellectual difficulties which exist for the faith in our time and . . . [he] never thought one could answer them with a naked syllogism ... rather with gentle humanity and the holy virtues of love, truth, and justice. Thus he has helped the arm of God as far as a man can do that".³²

4) *Consequences*

Looking back on his life in autumn 1921, the year of his conversion, Haecker commented on his work so far. "I not only fought for a Lord or an idea or an ideal and with fury, because the heritage of the fathers lay before dogs and pigs ... I also fought for myself, against encroaching despair and for my own cognition. There may be many people who are with themselves at once; I don't belong to them, I had to make long detours before I came to myself."³³ But judging about his written work he says in the same context: "Not very much I would have to change today. In aesthetic things less than nothing, but also in ethical ones not much ... The only essential and principal change — from doubt to certitude — I have to indicate distinctly in religious and theological questions." And Haecker at once adds his retractations: "Is there anything in this book [which contains the major articles of the past years, GB.] that expresses doubt in the authority of the Catholic Church in all questions of doctrine or ethics ... it is as if not written..."

5) *Lasting attachment to Kierkegaard's passion for truth in the light of Newman's holiness*

Even though Haecker had discovered Kierkegaard's philosophical deficiency he did not give up his sympathy for him. Two of Haecker's important essays show his abiding estimation: "The concept of Truth" (1929) and "Kierkegaard the Cripple", posthumously published.

a) Haecker starts 'The concept of Truth' quite touchingly: "Still too powerfully under the impact of Kierkegaard on my youth I cannot speak of him ... without admiration and thanks."³⁴ He calls him a festive thinker as no other thinker of recent times in utter contrast with "that crowd of private philosophical system-makers who fill the university chairs of philosophy". On the other hand: "In front of God even a genius is a nihil. One of the favourite sentences of Kierkegaard as a genius."³⁵ — Dealing with the act of faith, Haecker makes a distinction: there is both truth and error in Kierkegaard's approach. It is true that one does not need to have scientific, philosophical, or theological proofs in order to become a Christian. There is no primacy of knowledge over faith, as Newman explains in his *Grammar*; so far Kierkegaard is right against Hegel.³⁶ But his "huge error was to presume that it is only the *fides qua* that matters" and that the act of faith needs no certainty, may even appear as absurd. "This is the desperate giving up of reason itself," Haecker complains: against the rules of creation and creator, against the dignity of man. On the other hand: there is an apparent agreement in Kierkegaard's and Newman's understanding of the individual conscience: what you know in secret, in the innermost recesses of your mind, that God exists, means that the most objective truth is given to you most subjectively; valid only for you, because communicated to you in your conscience. "Truth is in subjectivity".³⁷

b) Haecker continued to publish translations of Kierkegaard's diaries and sermons till 1938. The manuscript "Kierkegaard the cripple" was edited two years after his death in 1947. It was not any bodily difficulty which kept Kierkegaard from marrying, it was his insurmountable melancholy about the sinful *condition humaine* which was the basis of the vocation that made him lead a single life. For the last time Haecker criticized Kierkegaard in comparison with Newman. "In the great works of the great man that Kierkegaard was, this was always my very greatest disappointment and lack of understanding to find in him not the zeal ... for the white immaculate and snowy purity of the true doctrine, of which the Apostles and the Fathers give such intensive testimony and for which Newman was

restlessly buffeted about at the same time until he finally with a bleeding heart left his beloved step-mother the Anglican Church for truth's sake."³⁸ To Kierkegaard's assertion that one should not talk so much about correct doctrine but do what is right Haecker replies: "Both constitute the entirety!" and he adds: "Newman is not less in favour of doing, of 'realizing' — which includes indeed a spiritual doing, love e.g. — ... he had the light of intellect, i.e. truth and the fire of the heart, i.e. love of God, but both as a unity."³⁹

III Newman "Like a Church-Father":

Further Translations

In 1921 Haecker translated Newman's *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (published in 1922). In his Postscript he calls the *Grammar* the noetic introduction to the *Essay on Development*. He emphasizes that Newman's concept of development is of analogical: it contains notions both of the intellectual life of ideas and of the biological world of growth. That is why it serves well for the explanation of changes in Christian doctrine and in the salvific history of the Church. The *Essay* presents theology with an important theory. It also proves to be characteristic for understanding Newman's style of thinking. Haecker's intention is to render a service with his translation to those who seek God, because, in his own experience, "a book may be of great importance on the preparatory way... and a necessary link."⁴⁰

Although 16 years were to pass before Haecker published the third of his seven Newman books in 1938, it is instructive to see how Newman remained his "constant companion". In 1926, pleading against the artificial separation of *intellect* and *life* in philosophical controversy Haecker declares: "We remember one of the main words of Cardinal Newman to be the word *realize*: man should endeavour all through his life to realize both what has been given to him through natural knowledge and what is granted to him through grace — *realize*: the very word [Max] Scheler uses too, i.e. not to let go at a theoretical or dead faith." Mind and faith should be united as personified in Newman himself — "that last unity of a genius with holiness" — having been "one of the most inwardly directed Christians that ever lived."⁴¹

In 1927, Haecker appeals to Newman's *Illative Sense* as an example for a positive use of dialectics in the process of perceiving reality. In art, mysticism, and phenomenology. it "may be shown that Cardinal Newman's theory of the Illative sense does more justice to reality and truth, and the process of many a recognition is explained

better and more easily with the individually different activities of this dialectical Illative sense than ... by referring to undialectical perception.”⁴²

In 1927 also Haecker’s translation of Hilaire Belloc’s *The Jews* appeared. Commenting on Belloc’s view that the Jews, after a unique salvation history and their unfortunate relationship to the Messiah Jesus, have a secular political fate on a religious background, Haecker refers again to Newman: “The clearest and most beautiful presentation of this fact of faith in recent times has been given by Newman in his *Grammar of Assent*”.⁴³ Among many remarkable observations Haecker quotes Belloc saying that the “mental attitude and behaviour of the average citizen is at stake” and he adds: “The average citizen in Germany however is a latent anti-Semite.”⁴⁴

In 1930 a year after he mentioned Newman in “The concept of truth”⁴⁵ Haecker wrote his *Dialogue about Christianity and Culture*. The vision of a new Europe turns up on the basis of a common Christian heritage; and a representative figure for Haecker is Newman, “the great Cardinal celebrated as the last unity of a natural flash of genius and holiness in our time”.⁴⁶ Dealing with satire as an element of literary style Haecker asks whether a Christian writer should refrain from using it because Newman refrained from republishing his satire about Charles Kingsley, “the most devastating [satire] European history of literature knows of”.⁴⁷

Haecker experienced his most fruitful period as a writer in the early ‘thirties, publishing a book every year. *Vergil, Vater des Abendlandes* (1931) was not only one of his most successful but proved, together with translations of the *Bucolics*, the wide horizon of Haecker’s vision of a new Christian Europe. Describing Virgil’s influence on the history of Christianity he tells us that Augustine read half a book of the *Aeneid* every day before he became a Christian, but he also refers to Newman as “the last gentle *anima Vergiliana*” and “the English Cardinal Newman who ... has written the apotheosis of Virgil’s importance.” Haecker quotes the passage from the *Grammar* about the real assent which a person can give only after years of life experience to some lines by Virgil he or she has learnt in childhood. Only now he can realize “the power over the mind, and a charm which the current literature of his own day with all its obvious advantages is utterly unable to rival. Perhaps this is the reason of the medieval opinion about Virgil, as if a prophet or magician; his single words and phrases, his pathetic half lines, giving utterance, as the voice of Nature herself, to that pain and weariness, yet hope of better things, which is the experience of her children in

every time.”⁴⁸

In 1934 Haecker published *Schöpfer und Schöpfung* (Creator and Creation), discussing the possibility of *tragic existence in the interplay of God, man, and evil*. His outstanding examples of tragic men are Newman and Kierkegaard. “To a still more stupendous extent [than Kierkegaard] Newman is a tragic person though his holy soul was blessed in the undestroyable certitude of believing in being saved in Christ ... *He* was not responsible for the apostasy of England ... His indescribable sufferings when he had to break with his beloved step-mother ... were tragic sufferings.”⁴⁹ “No conversion from infidelity or indifference is tragic; each one however is that comes from an authentic living fidelity betrayed somehow for something higher, even if it is the victory of eternity. All depends: if somebody looks back he may become the most melancholy man in the world ... though he gained the faith.”⁵⁰

There were many reasons to inquire about *God's apparent absence* from the German political scene in the 'thirties. Haecker had recourse to Newman's theological analysis of the course of the world in the *Grammar*: “What strikes the mind so forcibly and so powerfully is, His absence — if I may so speak — from His own world. It is a silence that speaks.” And Haecker agrees with Newman's alternative: “Either there is no creator or He has disowned his creatures ...” He also agrees with Newman's solution: “My true informant, my burdened conscience, gives me at once the true answer ..., it pronounces without any misgiving that God exists: — and it pronounces quite as surely that I am alienated from him ... Thus it solves the world's mystery and sees in that mystery only a confirmation of its own original teaching.”⁵¹

One year later, in 1935, Haecker published *Der Christ und die Geschichte*, a kind of *theology of history* in which he deals also with the rôle of Divine Providence. He borrowed from Newman's account of Napoleon's excommunication by Pope Pius VII. Newman sees a connection between Napoleon's question whether the Pope would suppose that the arms would fall from his soldiers' hands and his defeat in Russia. And Haecker agrees that there are “no blind coincidences” in the events of history but rather “acts of Divine Providence”, elements of a salvation history.⁵²

It was from this manuscript that Haecker gave a talk in Freiburg im Breisgau on May 19th, 1935, which was greeted with coarse remarks and a tumult by members of the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Studentenbund (NSDStB). A note in the local newspaper warned against further activities of “political Catholicism”. Martin

Heidegger criticized Haecker's philosophical method and called "this kind of writing without weight and importance."⁵³

In 1936 in reflecting on the work of God's Providence in history Haecker reminds the reader of "Cardinal Newman [who] in one of the most important chapters of his *Grammar of Assent* expressed his view that God can reveal and does reveal his existence, his essence, his guidance more, and in a more specific way, in coincidence than in the causality of nature."⁵⁴

In 1937, two years before the translation of the *Dream of Gerontius* appeared in print, we find a quotation from Newman's great poem in the last of Haecker's own books, *Der Geist des Menschen und die Wahrheit*. Endeavouring to sketch the experience of nothingness which is the "fate of lie and liars" Haecker refers to "Gerontius on his deathbed [who] describes nothingness saying:

As though my very being had given way
As though I was no more a substance now
And could fall back on nought to be my stay.⁵⁵

Living in the midst of a political system of despisers of humanity Haecker insists on the value of truth and takes Newman as a witness that there is in God's presence the danger of falling into nothingness.

Being banned from writing Haecker turned his attention to translating and editing selections of Newman's sermons. In 1938 he published *Die Kirche und die Welt*, fifteen of Newman's *Sermons bearing on Subjects of the Day*. The title is taken from the first sermon "The Church and the World" and explains Haecker's choice: "Faith and the World", "The Christian Church an imperial Power", "Sanctity the Token of the Christian Empire". But there are also several of the *Parochial and Plain Sermons* like "The Religion of the Day" or "The Mind of Children". Haecker left the volume without comment. Newman's words could convey the message on the subject of these days by themselves. The first sermon e.g. ends: "You must either conquer the world or the world will conquer you. You must be master or slave, take your part then, and 'stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free'."⁵⁶

In 1939 *Der Traum des Gerontius* was printed by Herder, Freiburg, with a threefold introduction: a chronology of Newman's life, an assessment of the place which *The Dream* holds among Newman's writings, and an interpretation of its importance. Although this poem "came into existence via inspiration, nay a vision apparently without preparation and ... disappeared from his

memory afterwards, nevertheless it contains in condensed precious fullness and vividness his living faith and the dogmatic system and the theology of the Catholic Church in inseparable connection.”⁵⁷ “Each Christian piece of art” says Haecker, “in order to be called Christian at all should possess the possibility to bring him who is receptive of God nearer to God”. In this sense Haecker calls Newman’s work: “the poetry of a theologian. With the grace to render the infallible doctrine of the Church faultless, like a Church Father, he connects the art of giving to what is general the most personal form. *The Dream of Gerontius* seems somehow to have come into existence by the inspiration of angels.”⁵⁸

In 1940 Haecker published a second volume with twelve of Newman’s *Parochial and Plain Sermons*. The title *Das Mysterium der Dreieinigkeit und der Menschwerdung Gottes* expresses the two main foci of the selection. In his Postscript Haecker emphasizes that these sermons are “in a strict sense theological, even dogmatic, which is rarely the case with sermons in recent time.”⁵⁹ He describes with delight how in the history of Christian doctrine its purity depended once on one iota in the *homoousion* and that this story of the Arian controversy “was the first theme for Newman’s young talent”. “I believe there has scarcely been anything greater, more heroic in the history of Catholic theology,” Haecker insists, “than the fight for establishing the dogmas which deal with the mysteries of the Trinity and Incarnation.”⁶⁰ Impressive is Haecker’s description of the participants in the struggle of salvation history: the invincible grace of the Holy Spirit, good and lapsed angels, the “lowliness of the world”, faithfulness of the simple believers, and the pure faith and genius of a chosen bishop: Athanasius whose main works Newman has “translated into his royal English.” Since English philosophy stood mostly for pragmatism, “it is all the more beautiful that such a mind [Newman] shows us how necessary zeal and anxiety are for the immaculateness of the doctrine ... The purity of doctrine has led Newman to the Catholic Church, since there was no lack of people full of deep piety and active goodness in the Anglican Church.”⁶¹

Theodor Haecker translated more of Newman’s books than he could publish in Nazi-Germany during the war. He left among his manuscripts the translation of Tract Nr. 83 “Advent Sermons on Antichrist”, and extensive parts of the “Historical Sketches” (both published posthumously).⁶²

IV Salvation History Versus the Powers of Darkness: Newman in Haecker's *Journal in the Night*

In *Truth and Life* (1930)⁶³ Haecker requires the “ideal historiographer” “to stick to the reality of a contingent fact with the fidelity of a witness” and secondly “to develop on the occasion of that contingent fact the knowledge of the essence of man” which consists of his worldly and eternal tasks. Haecker kept a diary from October 1939 till February 9, 1945, in which he pursued the inconsistency of those two dimensions: “To explain to myself the incomprehensible ... though I do not get as far as to make absolutely clear that it is incomprehensible”.⁶⁴ He tried to interpret the actual politics of a hellish dictatorship in the light of Christian faith and to find in the night the golden thread of salvation history as a consolation for the terror of the day. *Tag-und Nachtbücher* as Haecker's manuscripts were called when they were published in 1947 contain many worlds of thought, but looking for the six places where Haecker mentions Newman we concentrate on the perspective of a theology of history.

The most important reference to Newman is in connection with the British retreat from Dunkirk: due to bad weather conditions a good number of British ships managed to reach safety. Haecker comments: “1st/2nd June 1940: When the report said that the weather was impenetrable, I remembered Newman's theory about the remarkable coincidence of natural events at certain hours as ‘signs’ of divine guidance. Thus the Cardinal, were he still live, could have preached today: An angel smoothed the Channel where at this time storms rage and at the same time spread the darkness of impenetrable fog across the sea. That is how tens of thousands were saved.”⁶⁵ To interpret Haecker's comment consider Newman's sermon on “The powers of nature” the translation of which he had published two years before: “As far as Scripture communications go, we learn that the course of Nature which is so wonderful, so beautiful, and so fearful, is effected by . . . unseen beings . . . The fiery lava of the volcanoes which (as it appears) was the cause of Sodom and Gomorrah's ruin, was caused by the two angels who rescued Lot...” As regards “those holy Children whom Nebuchadnezzar cast into the fiery furnace: The Angels were bid to change the nature of the flames and make it harmless to them... And although centuries have passed and we seem to know so much about the course of the world, yet the angels are ever most useful in enabling us to apply the course of His Providence and the ordinances of his will to the benefit of man.”⁶⁶

Both Haecker's entry in his *Journal* and Newman's theory of the

angels working in the course of nature and human history contain the same formal structure which we find in Newman's and Joseph Butler's concept of analogy. It is explicated in Newman's critical review of "Milman's view of Christianity"⁶⁷ where he says: "The visible world is the instrument, yet the veil, of the invisible — the veil, yet still partially the symbol and index." Divine "Providence is secretly concurring and co-operating with that system which meets the eye."⁶⁸ For both Haecker and Newman the basis for this symbolic or co-operative structure is the principle of analogy. In Haecker's words: "by virtue of the substantial similarity of all being and by virtue of the formal principle of analogy."⁶⁹

A principle which Newman took from salvation history and miraculous events for a theory of God's Providence in personal life Haecker tried to apply to the current political scene. It worked for Dunkirk; but the more Hitler's military successes the greater the need of an explanation and the deeper Haecker's "melancholy". At the beginning of his Journal we read about "the stupidity of the leaders and of those who are led. It is deeply shocking how reasoning dies. Somebody may say that man is changeable, but the German is eternal. And he is not capable of drawing the conclusion that consequently the German is certainly not a human being."⁷⁰ And in his last but one entry he writes:

Let us not forget that God created us in such a way that we do not understand Him. ... But maybe that He does not understand Himself either? I think, the way we understand that one understands oneself. But then it would be better not to talk of understanding any more.

Another topic which reminds Haecker of Newman is the language used for the proclamation of the Gospel in sermons. "A style will be and must be. Neither Peter nor Ambrose or Augustine or St. Thomas or Newman will have spoken colloquial language. But has today's valid style not become ... a rusty vessel? Perverse as well as unnatural? Is there not a correlation (and which one?) between evil words, wrong thinking, and lying and mendacious feeling? However my eyes are too weak to see the connecting threads ..."⁷¹ This entry from April 27th, 1940 may have been prompted by Haecker's engagement with Newman's sermons which he published that year. In the postscript he speaks of Newman's sermons as being "in a strict sense theological, nay dogmatic; this is rarely the case with sermons in recent time". Toward the end of that year he reflected again on the value of language in the proclamation of the Gospel; and Newman is among the examples he refers to: "The eternal truths have to get a

new body in time again and again. Newman or Kierkegaard or Hilty had to and could say things which Thomas or Augustine couldn't, though they say *the same*. It would of course be actually unjust, if the talents and sufferings of a Newman, Kierkegaard, Hilty would have only had the result of unnecessary repetitions."⁷²

The broad horizon of his reflections about the value and validity of the Christian proclamation is visible in another phrase he wrote the same night: "The issue is whether mankind sets the seal on man's end with the victory of the lie; ... Whether the 'German' is predestined to establish the realm of darkness for this aeon."⁷³ On the contrary Haecker expected a victory of truth. An entry which reminds one of Newman's *Arians* runs: "Athanasius the Great said about the Emperor Julian ... he was a cloud that would soon pass away. In less than two years the cloud was gone. Today things are different. Maybe because there is no Athanasius. Let's persevere! Watch and pray!"⁷⁴

Though Haecker's Journal does not mention Newman very often, Newman was his guarantor in all matters of truth and Christian faith, but also for Christianity and culture, Haecker's specific concern. "You can divide the great minds of the 19th century into those who had the prophetic spirit and those who hadn't. Kierkegaard, Newman, Dostoevski had it" — his last mention of Newman's name.⁷⁵ The Journal confirms what Henry Tristram had written about Haecker in 1939: "You have, ever since I first heard your name, occupied in my thoughts a niche peculiarly your own, as the solitary thinker who, overstepping the frontiers of nationality and mastering the difficulties of an alien tongue, has found in the writings of our Cardinal a treasure, both spiritual and intellectual, beyond price."⁷⁶

Theodor Haecker died of diabetes on April 9th, 1945, in Ustersbach near Augsburg where he had moved in November 1944, after his apartment had been destroyed by bombs. "He died a hard death", a likeness of his life. In his last letter to Richard Seewald we read: "God has taken me into a hard school, merciless, merciful."⁷⁷

The plaque at his childhood home in Esslingen reads: "Theodor Haecker, a decided Christian, a genuine thinker, a master of the word."

V Promising Topics in Haecker's Life and Work

Although Haecker's *Complete Works* appeared in five volumes in 1958–1967, a critical edition of his *Tag-und Nachtbücher* was completed only in 1989. Few detailed studies have been published on his life and work. Themes worth pursuing would include the following:

- The meaning of satire and irony in the works of Newman,

Kierkegaard and Haecker⁷⁸

- Haecker "the hierarchist" as he calls himself in his understanding of the Thomistic "ordo" and Newman's Thomism (cf H. Francis Davis' work on Newman)
- The *kairos* of Newman-translations in Germany between Haecker's edition of the *Grammar* (1921), Matthias Laros' edition of Maria Knoepfler's *Apologia* (1922), and Erich Przywara's edition of Edith Stein's *Briefe und Tagebücher ... 1801–1845* (1928)
- Haecker's notes on his meeting with Edmund Husserl in 1926 and Husserl's importance for understanding Newman's epistemology
- The Jews: a comparison Newman's anti-Judaism, Belloc's theological and political suggestions, and Haecker's prophetic view (1927) in the light of Vatican II's *Nostra aetate* ch. 4
- Martin Heidegger's critique of Haecker's metaphysical interpretation of history (in 1935)
- Reinhold Schneider and Theodor Haecker: their approach to Newman's understanding of history under God's Providence.

- 1 R. Seewald u.a., Abschied von Theodor Haecker, in: *Der Brenner* 16 (1945) 259
- 2 1st edition: Leipzig 1934; WW vol IV, München 1965.
- 3 Cf. T.Haecker, TNB p. 15.
- 4 Leipzig 1931; München 1952; Engl. transl. by A. W.Wheen, London 1934.
- 5 Walter Benjamin. Privilegiertes Denken. Zu Theodor Haeckers Vergil. in: *Schriften* vol II Frankfurt a M 1955, 315–323.
- 6 Matthias Laros, Theodor Haecker, in: *Literarischer Handweiser* 1927/28, 165–170; 167
- 7 Thomas Mann. *Tagebücher 1933–1934*. Ed. Peter de Mendelsohn. Frankfurt a M 1974. 252 and 513. "Was ist der Mensch?" appeared in 1933 the year of Hitler's *Machtübernahme* .
- 8 T. Haecker. *Der Christ und die Geschichte*. Leipzig 1935. 264
- 9 *Ibid.* 252
- 10 C. Hilty, *Glück*, 3 vols, 1891 -1899
- 11 T. Haecker, *S.Kierkegaard und die Philosophie der Innerlichkeit*, München 1913, 57f.
- 12 T. Haecker. *Satire und Polemik*, l.c. 11
- 13 Excerpts from Haecker's letters made by Henry Tristram in the Archives of the Birmingham Oratory.
- 14 From a letter by H.Tristram to the Editor of *Hochland* in August 1939 as a contribution for a *Festschrift* in honour of Th. Haecker on the occasion of his 60th birthday (June 4, 1939). H.Tristram used his manuscript which is still preserved in the Oratory Archives for an obituary on T. Haecker in *The Tablet*: "Newman in Germany. A Note on Theodor

Haecker" (Oct. 6th, 1945. p. 165). Tristram surmises rightly that the *Festschrift* was "perhaps never published, owing to the outbreak of the war". However a personal copy of all the articles including H. Tristram's letter was made for Haecker:

- 15 Cf. manuscript of H. Tristram's letter of 1939
- 16 Cf. above note 13. As regards Husserl's *Logische Untersuchungen*, 3 vols. Tübingen 1900–1901: vol. II/1 deals with "newer theories of abstraction", including Mill, Spencer, Locke, Berkeley and Hume.
- 17 Letter to Fr. F. J. Bacchus November 30th. 1920.
- 18 Letter November 14. 1922.
- 19 Letter January 13, 1923.
- 20 Having completed the translation of the *Grammar* Haecker started translating the *Essay on the Development : Die Entwicklung der christlichen Lehre und der Begriff der Entwicklung*, München 1922; second edition: *Über die Entwicklung der Glaubenslehre*. Durchgesehene Neuauflage der Übersetzung von Th. Haecker ... von Joh. Artz, Mainz 1969.
- 21 cf. note 17
- 22 J. H. Kard. Newman, *Philosophie des Glaubens* München 1921, 429–448.
- 23 Ibid. p.437.
- 24 Ibid. 439.
- 25 Ibid. 441.
- 26 Ibid 441, cf J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*. Uniform Ed. vol. IV 82f.
- 27 J. H. Newman. *Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, ed. 1. Ker, Oxford 1985. 232 = *Philosophie des Glaubens*. München 1921. 307.
- 28 Nachwort. in: *Philosophie de Glaubens*, 1.c. 442.
- 29 Ibid. 442–443.
- 30 Cf. Sielken, T.H. 19 "Übertritt in die katholische Kirche." There is no entry in any Parish Register traced so far, neither in St. Boniface nor in St. Ursula, München, the parishes to which Haecker would have belonged. The baptismal entry of his second son Reinhard, born in 1927. in St. Peter, calls him a Catholic.
- 31 T. Haecker, Nachwort. in: *Philosophie des Glaubens*, 1. c. 444 and 447f.
- 32 T. Haecker. *Satire und Polemik*. Innsbrück 1922, Vorwort.
- 33 T Haecker. Der Begriff der Wahrheit bei S.Kierkegaard, in: *Hochland* 26, 1929. 476–493: 476. An expanded form was published in 1932, and again in T. Haecker. *Opuscula*, Olten 1949, 153–223.
- 34 *Opuscula* 1c. 177.
- 35 Cf. *ibid.* 211f.
- 36 Cf. *ibid.* 223. 'Man's truth is in becoming', Haecker interprets Kierkegaard's concept of truth (*ibid.* p.195), and again cf. Newman's notion of realizing: truth is something to be done rather than to be said. Cf. *Parochial and Plain Sermons* vol. 1 p.27.
- 37 T. Haecker. Der Buckel Kierkegaard's. in: *Opuscula* 1c. 225–310, 257f.

- 38 Ibid. 258
- 39 J. H. Newman, *Entwicklung der christlichen Lehre* Ic. 464
- 40 T. Haecker, Geist und Leben. Zum Problem Max Scheler. in: *Hochland* 2, 1926. 129–155: cf. WW Vol I *Essays* 238 and 254f; Haecker criticizes his fellow countrymen: it is “not a good sign for the German Catholics that this man and his works find astonishingly little echo”.
- 41 T. Haecker, *Christentum und Kultur*. München 1927: cf WW vol.1. *Essays* 194. Haecker refers to Newman’s *Philosophie des Glaubens* 293ff (ch. IX on “The Illative Sense”).
- 42 T. Haecker, Nachwort. in: H. Belloc. *Die Juden*. München 1927 215–232. (Haecker refers to *Philosophie des Glaubens* 370 ff. cf ed. Ker p. 278.)
- 43 Ibid. p.230. Cf 232: “Der Übersetzer ... hat das Werk für das deutsche Volk und die Juden in Deutschland übersetzt mit keiner anderen Absicht als eben dieser: Friede sei Israel!” Analysis of hidden Anti-Judaism (!) in Newman’s as well as in Haecker’s writings does not yet exist; cf. Günter Biemer – Ernst Ludwig Ehrlich. eds., *Lernprozeß Christen Juden*. 10 vols., Düsseldorf – Freiburg, 1980–1995.
- 44 Cf. above n. 36–39.
- 45 T. Haecker. *Opuscula* 1. c. 334.
- 46 Ibid. 394 f. Wahrheit und Leben in: *Hochland* 2, 1930, H.7, 1–26, Haecker has recourse the *Essay on Development*: “When Cardinal Newman considered which principle of Christian doctrine he could place in the beginning of his systematic summary ... he chose the reality of the doctrine of the incarnation (WW I *Essays*. p. 295).
- 47 T. Haecker, *Vergil* (1931) in WW vol. V 141 f; cf.the same passage in: *Schönheit* (1936). in: WW vol.V264 f.–J.H Newman,*Grammar*. ed. I.T.Ker. Ic. p.57.
- 48 T. Haecker. *Schöpfer und Schöpfung* (1934), in: WW vol. IV 419.
- 49 Ibid. 420.
- 50 Ibid. 365–367, quoted from *Grammar* ed. I. Ker, l.c. 255 f..
- 51 T. Haecker. *Der Christ in der Geschichte*, Leipzig 1935: Cf. WW vol. IV 277 f, 295 f; cf. *Grammar*, 1. c. 275.
- 52 Siefken. T.H. 52 f.
- 53 T. Haecker. *Schönheit. Em Versuch*, Leipzig 1936. cf. WW vol V 258.
- 54 T. Haecker. *Der Geist des Menschen und die Wahrheit*, Leipzig 1937: cf. WW vol.111, *Satire und Polemik*, 1961. p. 375f.
- 55 J. H. Newman, *Die Kirche und die Welt*. München 1/1938: 3/1951; cf *Sermons on Subjects of the Day*, Uniform Edition 111.
- 56 J. H. Newman *Der Traum des Gerontius*. 1. c. p.4.
- 57 Ibid. 9 f.
- 58 T. Haecker, Nachwort, in: J. H. Newman, *Das Mysterium der Dreifaltigkeit und der Menschwerdung Gottes*, München 1/1940, 2/1950, 209–217.
- 59 Ibid. 213 f.
- 60 Ibid. 217 f.
- 61 *Der Antichrist nach der Lehre der Väter*, mit einem Nachwort von

- Werner Becker, München 1951. *Historische Skizzen*. deutsch von Th. Haecker und einer Übersetzung von Else Seelenfreund. mit einem Nachwort herausgegeben von Werner Becker, München 1948.
- 62 T. Haecker. *Wahrheit und Leben. Ein Vortrag*. Hellerau 1930; cf. *Opuscula* I. c. 93–152: 141.
- 63 Siefken. T.H. p. 57.
- 64 TNB p.71 f. n. [297].
- 65 J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*. vol. II 360–363; cf. *Kirche und Welt*. I. c. 194–196.
- 66 J. H. Newman. *Essays Critical and Historical*. Uniform Edition. vol. II 86–248; cf. G. Biemer. L'historiographie selon Newman: une reconstruction de la vie, in: Claude Lepelley, Paul Veyriras. *Newman et l'histoire*. Lyon 1992. 147–168.
- 67 *Essays Critical*. I. c. 192.
- 68 TNB p. 23 n. [20].
- 69 Ibid. p. 21 n. [2f].
- 70 Ibid. p.52 f. n. [194]. “Colloquial language” stands for “wie ihnen der Schnabel gewachsen ist” = as their beak is grown.
- 71 Ibid. p.145 n. [683] December 30, 1940.
- 72 Ibid. p.144 n [679].
- 73 Ibid. p. 52 n. [192]
- 74 Ibid. p.197 n.[916] July 15th, 1941. We omit n. [569]. where Newman is mentioned in connection with the problem of classic languages for students of economy. and n. [898] where the “stupidity” of philosophical arguments is compared with the arguments of Christian faith.
- 75 cf. above n. 17.
- 76 R. Seewald. Wo würde Haecker heute stehen? In: *Hochland* 63. 1971. 92.
- 77 cf I. Ker. Newman the Satirist, in: I. Ker – A. G. Hill, *Newman after a hundred years*. Oxford 1990, 1–20.
- 78 Cf. TNB n.[452] p.101 and the commentary p. 287.

ABBREVIATIONS: Siefken, T.H. = *Theodor Haecker (1879–1945)*, bearbeitet von Heinrich Siefken, *Marbacher Magazin* 49. (With a list of Haecker's publications by Eva Dambacher).
 TNB = Theodor Haecker, *Tag- und Nachtbücher 1939–1945*. Erste vollständige und kommentierte Ausgabe, ed. H. Siefken, (Haymon) Innsbrück 1989.
 WW = Edition of the Collected Works in 5 volumes, München 1958–1967
 Translations are mine.