

Rousselot, Pierre, SJ (1878–1915)

Pierre Rousselot was born on December 29, 1878, in Nantes, France, and died on April 25, 1915, in Eparges, France. He received licentiates in classical and modern languages from the Sorbonne in 1899, studied philosophy at the French Jesuit House of Studies, Jersey, England, from 1900 to 1903 and theology at the French Jesuit House of Studies, Hastings, England, from 1905 to 1909. He earned a Ph.D. at the Sorbonne in 1908. Rousselot entered the Jesuits in Canterbury in 1895 and was ordained a priest in 1908. He was a professor of dogmatic theology at the Institute Catholique, Paris, from 1909 to 1914. In that year he was mobilized and was killed in action in 1915.

Rousselot pursued a philosophy of knowledge, love, participation, and connaturality in the work of St. Thomas for his two Sorbonne theses: *L'intellectualisme de saint Thomas* (1908) and *Pour l'histoire du problème de l'amour au Moyen Âge* (1908). The first of the transcendental Thomists, Rousselot demonstrated that the “intellectualism” of St. Thomas was completely different from static rationalism and discursive reason. He showed that for Thomas, the highest form of knowledge was the preconceptual insight of the *intellectus*, an immediate grasp of the singular under the influence of love, the kind of knowledge exercised by God and the angels and also by humans in the Beatific Vision. Likewise, intelligence for Thomas is the synthesis of cognition and affection. His interpretation of Thomas significantly influenced Joseph Maréchal and Bernard Lonergan.

Rousselot applied this philosophy to the theology of faith in his essay, “Les yeux de la foi” (1910). The eye of faith is an act of insight by which a person, under the influence of love and connaturality, grasps a truth of faith.

Father Włodzimierz Ledóchowski, the superior general of the Jesuits, issued a letter July 15, 1920, forbidding Rousselot's opinions to be taught or defended by Jesuits. Father General Jean-Baptiste Janssens later upheld the prohibitions on the basis of passages in Pius XII's encyclical *Humani generis* (1950) on the rational character of the credibility of the Christian faith. Since Vatican II, these prohibitions are no longer considered to be binding.

See also France; Philosophy; Theology