I-Thou Relation

Thomas C. Anderson 1935-  
Marquette University, thomas.anderson@marquette.edu

balanced relationship with ordinary believers. Their efforts to root Christian identity in certainties that are historical and temporal betray a kind of fundamentalist tendency. The conciliar impulse nevertheless triggered processes of renovation: the spread of direct contact with the Bible, participation in the liturgy, and a slow but ongoing diffusion of historical and theological studies on Christianity in the university. All these are helping to overcome centuries of passivity and marginalization of lay believers. In the 1980s, while Catholic Action was losing vitality, other commitments developed. The voluntary sector involves many Christians in services on the "frontier," such as assistance and rehabilitation of drug addicts, assistance of the elderly, and service in Two-thirds World countries.

Church and state relations in Italy have extended to the Reformed churches, which became beneficiaries of public funds; a similar agreement was made with the Jewish communities. The rapid decapsulation of the Christian Democratic Party after the fall of the Berlin Wall necessitated a strenuous search for a new mode of presence in Italian society. The climate of greater freedom, resulting from Vatican II and the ecumenical initiatives of contact and dialogue, has calmed the tensions between Christian confessions, while the rapid evolution toward a multireligious tradition has profoundly changed the spiritual climate and the increasingly secularized culture of Italy.

Statistics: Population (2000): 57.3 million (M): Christians, 47 M, 82% (baptized Roman Catholics, 55.6 M [10 M are "disaffiliated" and only 6% attend Mass regularly]; Protestants, 0.4 M; marginal Christians, 0.4 M; independents, 0.4 M; Orthodox, 0.1 M; Muslims, 0.7 M, 1%; nonreligious, 9.3 M, 17%. (Based on World Christian Encyclopedia, 2001.)

GIUSEPPE ALBERIGO

I–Thou Relation, an intimate, loving union, usually between persons, human or divine, who view each other as free, self-directed individuals possessing intrinsic value and dignity. (The English "thou" is a translation of the familiar form of "you" in French [tu], German [dir], and other languages). It is contrasted with an I–him/her relation between persons who view each other as separate things or objects whose value lies in their particular features and functions. The loving bond between I and thou enhances each party, for it entails a sharing of lives and experiences while respecting the mysterious uniqueness of each. See also BUBER, MARTIN; MARCEL, GABRIEL; LEVINAS, EMMANUEL; HETERONOMY; RELATIONALITY.

THOMAS C. ANDERSON