

## HISTORICAL STUDIES, I

Topic: "The Generation that Resuscitated Historical Theology"  
Convener: Sandra Yocum Mize, University of Dayton  
Presenter: Jürgen Mettepenningen, Leuven, Belgium  
Respondent: William Portier, University of Dayton

Dr. Mettepenningen traced the first and the second phase of the *nouvelle théologie* as the gradual developments and responses that the condemnation of modernism necessitated in twentieth century European theology. He focused on the Dominicans, Yves Congar, Marie-Dominique Chenu and L. Charlier, who sought through their scholarship an alternative to scholasticism. Their alternative was judged by the neo-scholastics to be a dangerous theological innovation—hence, the term, *nouvelle théologie*. The Jesuits, Henri de Lubac, Jean Daniélou and Henri Bouillard, are described as the instigators of the second phase or generation of *nouvelle théologie*. In seeking alternative theological approaches to neo-scholasticism, the proponents of *nouvelle théologie* emphasized the concept of the supernatural, sought ways of utilizing historical method within theology including *ressourcement* (back to Scripture, liturgy and Fathers), and sought to connect life, faith, and theology in ways seldom found in neo-scholasticism. Despite condemnations of this “new theology” in mid-twentieth century, most notably in *Humani Generis*, these theologians’ works anticipated the renewal identified with Vatican II. In his response, William Portier affirmed the careful work presented in Dr. Mettepenningen’s paper. He did, however, call for a more nuanced reading of papal responses to the “new theology,” particularly when compared with the 1907 condemnation of Modernism. John XXIII’s interactions with *nouvelle théologie* were also highlighted in the response. Audience participation included questions to both Mettepenningen and Portier with a focus on the development of theology during this period and whether papal attempts to halt the “new theology” lessened as the century unfolded. Mettepenningen’s paper, Portier’s response, and the subsequent discussion highlighted the need for more historical research concerning the period between the condemnation of Modernism (1907) and the opening of the Second Vatican Council. Much of the period’s theological developments remain understudied.

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