MARITAIN, Jacques (November 18, 1882, Paris – April 28, 1973, Toulouse)

Jacques Maritain was a leader among those who attempted to update and transform Catholic teaching for the modern world. Born to a Protestant republican, he converted to Catholicism alongside his wife in 1906. At the time, French Catholicism was a profoundly conservative force, and Maritain was closely involved with Charles Maurras and the monarchist, anti-Semitic *Action française*. Maritain was above all a revitalizer of the Thomist tradition, and in these early years he interpreted Thomas in support of the agnostic Maurras. After 1926, when the Vatican condemned Maurras, Maritain embarked on his own course. As described in *The Primacy of the Spiritual* (1927), Maritain now argued that Aquinas counseled a strict separation between the political and spiritual realms. This separation had political consequences, which he explored most famously in *Integral Humanism* (1936). Here Maritain attempted to imagine a “new Christendom” that would accept the modern order and even parliamentary democracy. The work was controversial at the time, but paved the way for the new church of the post-1945 era and Vatican II. Maritain himself did not always welcome these developments, but it is doubtless true that he had, at least partially, inspired them.

Bibliography: “Jaques Maritain,” entry at Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/maritain/#Bib

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