

CHURCH AND THEOLOGY IN THE MODERNIST CRISIS

The first task that our subject presents us with is one of definition. According to the encyclical *Pascendi dominici gregis* published by Pius X in September 1907, modernism is a coherent system. Although it manifests itself in a variety of spheres and disciplines, the key to its strength and its destructiveness is its philosophy. Its two basic doctrines are "agnosticism" and "vital immanence." Their implications count for most of what is distinctive in modernist theology, history, biblical criticism and apologetics.

What helps to make the proponents of this system "the most pernicious of all the adversaries of the Church"¹ is the fact that they operate not outside but within the community of faith. They include priests and members of religious orders and they present themselves to the unwary as Church reformers. They claim to form no coherent movement but to be responding as conscientious individuals to contemporary needs and scholarly developments. In fact, however, the encyclical argues, their theories consist "in a closely connected whole, so that it is not possible to admit one without admitting all." The system represents "the synthesis of all heresies." It means "the destruction not of the Catholic religion alone, but of all religion."²

There can be no doubt about the seriousness with which the authors of the encyclical view the movement. It threatens "to destroy the vital energy of the Church" and "to subvert the very Kingdom of Christ."³ The pope's pastoral responsibilities and in particular his task of guarding the deposit of faith do not allow him to remain silent. Words, however, are not enough. Action must be taken to eliminate the poison and to protect especially the younger clergy and seminarians from infection. Councils of vigilance are to be set up in dioceses, censorship is to be made more rigid, and whatever smacks of novelty is to be kept out of seminaries. An increased emphasis must be given to Thomistic philosophy. Although positive theology has its place, it is not to be allowed in any way to undermine the scholastic approach. "There is no surer sign," the encyclical affirms, "that a man

¹The Latin text of *Pascendi dominici gregis* can be found in *Acta Sanctae Sedis* 40 (1907), 593-650. There is an English translation in V. A. Yzermans, ed., *All Things in Christ: Encyclicals and Selected Documents of Saint Pius X* (Westminster: The Newman Press, 1954), pp. 89-132. Here, p. 90.

²*Ibid.*, p. 117.

³*Ibid.*, p. 89.

is tending to modernism than when he begins to show his dislike for the scholastic method."⁴

Most of the writers and scholars who were thought to belong to the modernist group repudiated the encyclical's presentation of their position as a caricature and distortion. Tyrrell, writing in the *Times*, claimed "that whereas the encyclical 'tries to show the Modernist that he is no Catholic, it mostly succeeds only in showing him that he is no scholastic.'"⁵ Von Hügel echoed this view when he wrote that in the end the encyclical proved only one thing: "the incompatibility between any honest interpretation of the results of critical scholarship and scholastic epistemology."⁶ According to Loisy, "the so-called modernist system is a compilation of bits and pieces unified only by artificial combinations." The sources are easily discernible: "on the one hand, the critical study of the Bible and of Christian origins; on the other, the philosophical system which its authors, at least in France, designate under the name '*dogmatisme moral*.'" ⁷ The encyclical's reconstruction "of the modernist doctrines is almost a whim (*fantaisie*) of theological imagination."⁸ "Pius X attributes to the modernists a system developed on the model of scholastic theories, a system in which none of them will be able to recognize himself."⁹

Recent scholarship has tended to agree with such judgments. It has on the whole moved away from an earlier practice of making the definition of *Pascendi* a key to historical reconstruction.¹⁰ Although it remains an important element in the controversy, historical understanding must begin elsewhere. The tendency today is to situate the encyclical and its concerns within the context of a variety of developments that marked especially, but not only, the European Church at the turn of the century. Loome, for example, thinks it is best "to speak of a single intellectual *crisis* manifest in a wide variety of individual *controversies*, the crisis spanning the last years of Leo XIII's pontificate and lasting until the death of Pius X."¹¹

This approach has changed our way of looking at the situation in Germany. In 1907 and since there has been widespread agreement that modernism had little repercussion in that country. German theologians on the whole were not interested in the so-called "*dogmatisme moral*" with its emphasis on action, life and ex-

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 121.

⁵G. Daly, *Transcendence and Immanence: A Study of Catholic Modernism and Integralism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), pp. 204-205.

⁶A letter of von Hügel to Loisy, 26-27 September 1907, in A. Loisy, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire religieuse de notre temps*, Vol. II (Paris: E. Nourry, 1931), p. 569.

⁷A. Loisy, *Simple réflexions sur le Décret du Saint-Office Lamentabili sane exitu et sur l'Encyclique Pascendi dominici gregis* (Ceffonds: chez l'auteur, 2nd. ed., 1908), pp. 16-17.

⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 149-50.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 150.

¹⁰Cf. the standard older Catholic treatment, J. Rivière, *Le Modernisme dans l'Eglise: Etude d'histoire religieuse contemporaine* (Paris: Letouzey, 1929).

¹¹T. M. Loome, *Liberal Catholicism, Reform Catholicism, Modernism: A Contribution to a New Orientation in Modernist Research* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald, 1979), p. 197.

perience, or in the kind of New Testament criticism and reconstruction in which Loisy was involved. And yet, paradoxically, the Roman Curia and Pius X were deeply concerned about Germany and were inclined to see it as the "*Hauptther des Modernismus*," the principal home of modernism.¹² The reasons why this was so are important for our theme. They reveal that the real issue was far broader than the heretical positions defined in *Pascendi*. If, for example, as the encyclical suggests, Protestantism was an important factor in the development of modernism, then Germany was a priori under suspicion given its Protestant tradition. If, on the other hand, scholasticism represented the sole real safeguard of orthodoxy and historical theology a danger, then once again the relative positions of both of these disciplines in Germany presented a cause for concern. Other concerns related to the existence of Catholic theological faculties at state universities and to the relative independence of various lay movements including the Catholic Zentrum party.¹³

A series of incidents underline Rome's nervousness in regard to the German Church. In 1898 several of Hermann Schell's writings were put on the Index. This seems to have been provoked less by his scholarly work than by a more popular pamphlet entitled *Katholizismus als Princip des Fortschritts*.¹⁴ The thesis and challenge implicit in the title fitted in with a number of reform movements that came to be known as *Reformkatholizismus*. The range of concerns was considerable. Many of them were related to a perceived cultural inferiority of German Catholics. The *Kulturkampf* had tended to foster a ghetto mentality that rendered the involvement of educated Catholics in contemporary cultural developments problematic. The effort to break out of this situation led to publications and meetings that gave rise in Rome to considerable concern. The furor around the proposed *Grabdenkmal* for Schell in 1906 was symptomatic of an atmosphere of fear bordering on panic.¹⁵

In Italy, too, a great deal more was going on in those years than one used to think.¹⁶ Although dependent in the theological area on developments in France and England, the Italian renewal movement took on a more popular form and was inseparable from a broadly felt need to overcome the cultural and political isolation that had resulted from the reaction of Pius IX to liberalism, the *Risorgimento*

¹²N. Trippen, *Theologie und Lehramt im Konflikt: Die kirchlichen Massnahmen gegen den Modernismus im Jahre 1907 und ihre Auswirkungen in Deutschland* (Freiburg: Herder, 1977), p. 33.

¹³*Ibid.*, pp. 34ff.

¹⁴H. Schell, *Der Katholizismus als Princip des Fortschritts* (Würzburg: Andreas Göbel's Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1897).

¹⁵Cf. Trippen, *Theologie und Lehramt*, pp. 37-45, 192-218. On *Reformkatholizismus*, cf. O. Schroeder, *Aufbruch und Missverständnis: Zur Geschichte der reformkatholischen Bewegung* (Graz, Vienna, Cologne: Styria, 1969), especially pp. 369-431 and E. Hanisch, "Der katholische Literaturstreit," in E. Weinzierl, ed., *Der Modernismus: Beiträge zu seiner Erforschung* (Graz, Vienna, Cologne: Styria, 1974), pp. 125-60.

¹⁶Cf. P. Scoppola, *Crisi modernista e rinnovamento cattolico in Italia* (3rd ed.; Bologna: Il Mulino, 1961, 1975) and L. Bedeschi, *Interpretazioni e sviluppo del Modernismo cattolico* (Milan: Bompiani, 1975).

and the loss of the papal states. The renewal of theology and biblical studies was in turn related to the need for popular education. This was tied in with a desire to develop a new ecclesiological vision and practice, one that would highlight the Church as community rather than as institution or hierarchy. In Murri, at least for a time, these concerns were united to others that came to be identified with Christian Democracy. The older tradition of Italian liberal Catholicism fed into the more élite perspective of the largely lay group associated with the journal *Rinnovamento* in Milan. Close in many ways to Tyrrell, they were primarily concerned "with religious interiority, primacy of conscience and freedom in scientific research."¹⁷

France remains the key to what has been called *le modernisme savant*.¹⁸ The primary sources for the material in the Roman condemnations were the writings of French authors even though the disciplinary activity that the antimodernist movement unleashed was more severe and extensive in Italy. The situation in the French Church was complex. The majority of the clergy and the bishops were of a conservative bent. Many theologians were committed to scholasticism. The camp of the reformers itself was far from united. Poulat divides it into three groups: on the right, the so-called progressives, people like Batiffol, Lagrange and Grandmaison; on the left, the rationalists, the best known of whom were Hébert, Houtin and Turmel; and in the middle the enigmatic figure of Alfred Loisy.¹⁹ Fitting into none of these categories and yet central to the period were thinkers and writers like Blondel and Laberthonnière. The mention of these last two names recalls a major area of debate. Blondel's philosophy of action and its apologetic development in the direction of a method of immanence was, until the publication of Loisy's *L'Evangile et l'Eglise*, the major bugbear of the scholastics. Laberthonnière's more mystical and spiritual as well as more comprehensible interpretations of his philosophical mentor became a favorite target of Roman theologians. This may well be because he more than anyone else, with the possible exception of Tyrrell, "concentrated his fire on what he saw as the ravages wrought in theology by the influence of Aristotle."²⁰ He identified scholasticism with intellectualism and saw both as destructive of authentic Christianity.

Loisy is a central figure in any analysis of the period and in particular of any appreciation of modernism in the narrower sense. The scholastic theology he learned in the seminary never appealed to him. Subsequent exposure to Duschene and historical research and to Renan and biblical criticism determined his scholarly vocation. Unlike Lagrange he was convinced early on that the new approach to the Bible necessarily entailed a rethinking of the whole of theology. It was his effort to reinterpret the categories of inspiration, revelation, dogma and faith, not to mention traditional doctrines relating to Christ and the Church, that brought the crisis to a head. The key books were *L'Evangile et l'Eglise*, Loisy's 1902 re-

¹⁷Scoppola, *Crisi modernista*, p. xvii.

¹⁸E. Poulat, *Histoire, dogma et critique dans la crise moderniste* (2nd ed., Paris: Casterman, 1979), vii.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 269.

²⁰G. Daly, *Transcendence and Immanence*, p. 177. Cf. L. Laberthonnière, *Le Réalisme chrétien et l'idéalisme grec* (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1904).

sponse to Harnack's *Wesen des Christentums*, and the subsequent *Autour d'un petit livre* in which he spelled out the implications of the earlier work in regard to a number of controverted points. By December of 1903 Pius X, who had become pope the previous August, placed these and three other works of Loisy on the Index. It was the beginning of a series of acts that would culminate in *Lamentabili* and *Pascendi* in 1907 and in the imposition of the antimodernist oath in 1910.

Other elements would have to be added to this outline if one wanted to be even marginally complete. England was represented above all by Tyrrell and von Hügel. Their roles were considerable, on the continent perhaps even more than at home. In the United States the feelings provoked by the condemnation of Americanism had hardly died down before *Pascendi* became the occasion of new conflicts.

Given the above it is no exaggeration to suggest that at the turn of the century the Church was passing through a period of considerable upheaval. It had to do in the broadest sense with the nature of Catholicism and with its relation to modernity, its relation to the cultural, social, scientific and political values and structures of the modern Western world. What made the confrontation so difficult was the relatively late date at which it was taking place. Although the time lag varied in the different countries, time lag there was, and it was a factor in the intensity of the innovators and in the fear and intransigence of the conservatives.

The more one studies the period, the more it becomes evident how complex the situation of theologians and Catholic thinkers was. For most of them theology or for that matter history or philosophy were far more than purely academic disciplines. They studied and wrote about them as members of the Christian community. A good part of their motivation and energy came from their perception of a dichotomy or dislocation between the Church and contemporary society and their desire to contribute in their various areas of competency to overcoming it.

The situation and the task was spelled out at some length in Albert Ehrhard's *Der Katholizismus und das zwanzigste Jahrhundert im Licht der kirchlichen Entwicklung der Neuzeit* originally published in 1902. He traced the problem to the middle ages and to the fact that so many of the ideological and institutional elements of the Church had been formed at that time. Because of the failure to adapt these to the developments of the modern period many Catholics perceived important features of contemporary society as incompatible with their religion. The present task, he argued, is to show not only that "there is no absolute contradiction between Catholicism and the modern world," but that in fact "a positive relationship exists between them."²¹ "The overcoming of the conflict between the modern world and the Catholic Church represents the most significant and important task" facing Catholics in the twentieth century.²² Tyrrell in 1909 described a modernist as "a churchman, of any sort, who believes in the possibility

²¹A. Ehrhard, *Der Katholizismus und das zwanzigste Jahrhundert im Licht der kirchlichen Entwicklung der Neuzeit* (Stuttgart and Vienna: Joseph Roth, 1902), p. 337.

²²*Ibid.*, pp. 349-50.

of a synthesis between the essential truth of his religion and the essential truth of modernity."²³

The conservatives, whether in Rome or elsewhere, saw the same dichotomy but judged it differently. Bridge-building was at best an illusion and at worst a conscious abandonment of the Catholic ideal and identity. This attitude had not grown up overnight. It had been the attitude of the *Syllabus* and for some the real meaning of the decrees of Vatican I. In Germany the *Kulturkampf* had reinforced it, as the apparently insoluble Roman Question had done in Italy. In France the attempt of Leo XIII to encourage a *ralliement* to the republic had failed, and the opening years of the new century saw the sealing amid great bitterness of the separation between Church and state.²⁴

The rebirth of neo-scholasticism in Italy around 1850 was part of the development of this defensive mentality. It produced its first fruits at Vatican I and was given a new status in its Thomistic form in 1879 with *Aeterni Patris*. In spite of a genuine desire on the part of Leo XIII to be more open and conciliatory than his predecessor, his vision remained to a large degree theocratic and backward-looking.²⁵ Even in the social order, the ideal was that of restoration. It was more medieval than modern in spite of a real concern for the plight of the working class.

The dominant attitude in Rome remained one of intransigence. The ideal was that of integral Catholicism. Commenting in 1899 on the condemnation of Americanism, the quasi-official *Civiltà cattolica* stated: "Catholic principles do not change either because of the passage of time, or because of different geographical contexts, or because of new discoveries, or for reasons of utility. They always remain the same, those that Christ proclaimed, that popes and councils defined, that the saints held and that the doctors defended. One has to take these as they are or leave them. Whoever accepts them in their fullness and strictness (*rigidezza*) is Catholic; whoever wavers, drifts, adapts to the times or compromises can call himself whatever he likes, but before God and the Church he is a rebel and a traitor."²⁶

The attitude reflected here seems to have been that of Pius X. On the occasion of his election he explained his choice of name by referring to earlier popes of the same name "who, in past centuries, had courageously fought against sects and rampant errors."²⁷ In his first, programmatic encyclical *E supremi apostolatus* in

²³G. Tyrrell, *Christianity at the Crossroads* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1963), p. 26.

²⁴On this general background, cf. among others, R. Aubert et al., *The Church in a Secularised Society*, Vol. V of *The Christian Centuries* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1978) and *History of the Church*, ed. by H. Jedin, Vol. IX, *The Church in the Industrial Age*, by R. Aubert et al. (New York: Crossroad, 1981).

²⁵Cf. O. Köhler, "The World Plan of Leo XIII: Goals and Methods," in Aubert et al., *The Church in the Industrial Age*, pp. 3-25.

²⁶"Leo XIII e l'Americanismo," *Civiltà cattolica*, March 18, 1899, p. 653, cited in Bedeschi, *Modernismo cattolico*, pp. 66-67. E. Poulat in his *Intégrisme et catholicisme intégral: Un réseau secret international antimoderniste: La Sapinière, 1909-1921* (Paris: Casterman, 1962), p. 81 dates it March 15, 1899.

²⁷Aubert et al., *The Church in the Industrial Age*, p. 384.

which he proclaimed his desire "to restore all things in Christ," he revealed his concern for doctrinal purity. "What was first needed to put his plan into action was a clergy filled with zeal, ardour, and charity, whose only thought was for God and the care of souls, and who would not be led away 'by the insidious suggestions of a new, mistaken science that is not infused with Christ, and, with disguised and cunning arguments, seeks to let in the errors of rationalism and semi-rationalism.'" ²⁸ The laity, too, he acknowledged, has an important role to play, but their attitude must be the correct one, "not using (their) own judgment and ideal, but always directed and ordered by the bishops; for no one, apart from (them), whom the Holy Spirit has appointed to rule the Church of God, is to teach, order, or preside over the Churches." ²⁹ A little more than two months after this was published five of Loisy's books were placed on the Index. The writings of many others soon followed. In a speech before a group of cardinals on April 17, 1907, the pope revealed the same anxiety and anger that are so striking a feature of *Pascendi*. "Alas, there are rebels who profess and spread in subtle form monstrous errors on the evolution of dogma, on a return to the Gospels. . . . on the emancipation of the Church . . . and finally on the Church's need to adapt itself to the times in everything; . . . We, who must defend what has been entrusted to Us with all our strength, are right to be troubled by this new attack which is not a heresy, but the compendium and poison of all heresies, which undermines the foundation of the faith and denies Christianity." ³⁰ "We count a great deal on your work, Venerable Brethren, in letting the bishops, your suffragans in your own districts, know who these sowers of tares are, in joining us in the struggle against them, in informing Us of the danger to which souls are exposed, in denouncing their books to the Holy Office and . . . by solemnly condemning them." He goes on to urge them "to combat error and defend the truth even to the point of bloodshed." ³¹

A central figure in the integralist movement that was so strong an element during the last years of Pius X and that has continued in a mitigated form to be one of the abiding poles of twentieth-century Catholicism, was the Roman prelate Umberto Benigni. From 1906 to 1911 he was an under-secretary in the Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs (after 1908 a part of the Secretariat of State). In May of 1907 he began a bulletin entitled *Corrispondenza romana* that two years later became the *Correspondence de Rome* and that remained until its suppression at the end of 1912 an important instrument of the antimodernist campaign. He also founded a kind of secular institute, "the Sodality of St. Pius V," *Sodalitium Pianum*. It was neither very large nor very successful, but it became a symbol, especially in France, of *intégrisme*. Poulat has argued that its significance has been exaggerated in order to shift from the pope and more senior curial officials the blame for the antimodernist excesses. In fact, he says, Benigni's concerns were very much in line with "*le mouvement catholique*" of the time. ³²

²⁸M. Ranchetti, *The Catholic Modernists: A Study of the Religious Reform Movement 1864-1907* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 124.

²⁹*Ibid.*

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 195.

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 196.

³²Poulat, *Intégrisme*, pp. 66ff.

Benigni "grew up in the 'intransigent' Catholicism of the *Syllabus* and of the *Non expedit*. . . . He belongs to those who accepted the challenge that 'modern society' was offering to the Church, a society that came out of the 'bourgeois revolution' and that was imbued with 'liberal maxims.' The struggle will be one of society against society, of principles against principles, without accommodation or compromise. He is not a conservative but a 'counterrevolutionary,' the indomitable foe of every manifestation in which Satan is seen to be at work."³³

The programme of the *Sodalitium Pianum* offers an illuminating insight into a mentality that seems to have been shared to a large degree by many Church leaders at the time.³⁴ "We are," it begins, "integral Roman Catholics. As the word indicates, the integral Roman Catholic accepts integrally the doctrine, the discipline, the directions of the Holy See and all their legitimate consequences for the individual and for society. He is 'papal,' 'clerical,' antimodernist, antiliberal, antisectarian. He is thus integrally counterrevolutionary because he is the enemy not only of the Jacobin revolution and sectarian radicalism, but also of religious and social liberalism."³⁵

"We fight for the principle and for the fact of authority, of tradition, and of religious and social order in the Catholic sense of these words.

"We consider the spirit and fact of so-called Catholic liberalism and democracy, as well as of intellectual and practical modernism whether it be radical or moderate, together with their consequences, as wounds on the human body of the Church.

"We know that amidst temporary and local contingencies there is always, at least at the deepest level, the centuries old struggle between the two great organic forces: on the one side the unique Church of God, the Roman Catholic Church, and on the other, its external and internal adversaries. The external ones (Jewish-masonic sects and their direct allies) are in the hands of the central power of the Sect; the internal ones (modernists, Catholic liberals and democrats etc.) serve it consciously or unconsciously as instruments of infiltration and decomposition among Catholics."³⁵

The text then goes on at some length to list what integral Catholics are for and what they are against. The lines are clear and the attitude is uncompromising. The issue is not knowledge but choice. One is either with them or against them.

According to Bedeschi the Curia was to some degree taken in by the claims of the extremists that an "international modernist Freemasonry," a "Catholic Freemasonry against the Church," was secretly at work in the various reform movements.³⁶ This would help to account for the antimodernist oath and for many of the other repressive measures taken between 1907 and 1914.

All of this seems to endorse the thesis that what we have in the modernist period is a confrontation in the Church of two different mentalities, two different

³³*Ibid.*

³⁴The programme in its entirety can be found in Poulat, *Intégrisme*, pp. 119-23.

³⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 119f.

³⁶Bedeschi, *Modernismo cattolico*, p. 90.

understandings of Catholicism and of its relation to contemporary society. To say this is not to suggest that the reformers were in agreement among themselves about everything. Such was far from being the case. What they did share was a sense of the need for adaptation and change, whether in theology or Church life, whether in regard to political, cultural or social attitudes and stances. They believed that the Church should and could adapt itself to the modern world. What they encountered was a mentality that denied this possibility or wanted at least to restrict adaptations to peripheral matters.³⁷

The fact that some of the proposed changes were radical and some of the language used provocative, heightened among integralists the feeling that action had to be taken. Rome became particularly alarmed at the reports of the unrest that was being created among the younger clergy and the seminarians in France and in Italy. That this was an important part of the crisis is witnessed to by all sides.³⁸ That Pius X saw it as a major issue is self-evident given the quite specific and inflexible disciplinary norms that he enacted in *Pascendi* and in *Sacrorum Antistitum*.

The suspicion of state universities and the desire to control the education of the future clergy in closed seminaries continued long after the period of crisis. In Germany itself there had been a current of thought for some time that was against the presence of seminarians at university faculties.³⁹ Bishop Ketteler of Mainz was one of the most influential persons to hold this opinion in the middle of the nineteenth century. It was reinforced for many by the debacle surrounding Döllinger and several other historians after Vatican I. The issue was raised again in the post-*Pascendi* debate, a debate that in Germany focused on the disciplinary part of the encyclical.

In 1908 Ehrhard published an article on the implications of *Pascendi* for Catholic theology.⁴⁰ He argued that the practical measures imposed by the encyclical represented a threat to the existence of Catholic faculties at the universities. It made it difficult to deny the charge of the non-Catholic colleagues "that all historical-critical work is frowned upon by the encyclical." The insinuations contained in it against Catholic authors "who simply applied the rules of historical criticism to their best knowledge and following their consciences" was painful. Even more painful was the suggestion that they are motivated by vanity.⁴¹

³⁷Cf. Poulat, *Histoire, dogma et critique*, p. 111 and Scoppola, *Crisi modernista*, pp. 76, 82. Scoppola refers to a "conflitto di mentalità" which he calls "la causa prima della crisi modernista," p. 82.

³⁸For a moving personal testimony, cf. François Mauriac quoted in Poulat, *Histoire, Dogme et critique*, p. 278. For Italy, cf. Scoppola, *Crisi modernista*, pp. 229 and 237f.

³⁹Cf. E. Bishop in Loome, *Liberal Catholicism*, p. 376 and the bibliography *ibid.* p. 383, nn. 25 and 26.

⁴⁰A. Ehrhard, "Die neue Lage der katholischen Theologie," in *Internationale Wochenschrift für Wissenschaft, Kunst und Technik*, 2 (1908), 65-84. It appeared in a series of articles on *Pascendi* that included contributions from Troeltsch, Hermann, Eucken, Harnack and Schnitzer. For excerpts of the article, cf. Schroeder, *Aufbruch und Missverständnis*, pp. 413-17. For the controversy that the article provoked, cf. Trippen, *Theologie und Lehramt*, pp. 125-44.

⁴¹Cf. Trippen, *Theologie und Lehramt*, p. 131.

Particularly distasteful to his Roman critics was the charge that the reason why modernism was more rampant in France and Italy was that they remained "until the end of the nineteenth century the classical centers for scholasticism in both philosophy and theology. How miserable was the state of Catholic theology and how small was its influence on the cultural life of both countries."⁴² Nor did he hesitate to contrast their situation with the great tradition of historical scholarship in the Catholic faculties of Tübingen and Munich. This tradition was now threatened. "If the practical norms of the encyclical were to be imposed in Germany, then the life blood of theological research would be cut off here too. . . . Then the Catholic theological faculties in Germany would disappear just as they have disappeared in France and Italy."⁴³

Norbert Trippen in his important and detailed *Theologie und Lehramt im Konflikt: Die kirchlichen Massnahmen gegen den Modernismus im Jahre 1907 und ihre Auswirkungen in Deutschland* has documented the almost hysterical reaction that this article provoked in Rome. It was still not forgotten in 1919/20 when the Catholic faculty at Bonn ventured to offer a position to Ehrhard who had been obliged to leave Strasbourg at the end of the war. The trouble began with the inability of Cardinal Hartmann of Cologne to accept responsibility for giving ecclesiastical approval to the appointment. He appealed to the papal nuncio in Munich, Eugenio Pacelli, who in turn sought instructions from Rome. Because the faculty believed that Hartmann had already approved the appointment, a negative answer at this point would have been an embarrassment. Pacelli writes, however, that Rome's position is that "even if the rejection of Professor Ehrhard would entail the elimination of the theological faculties, the Vatican holds as unacceptable the naming of a person who in a public way was blamed and punished. Among other things this would be a scandal for young theologians."⁴⁴ What is extraordinary about this statement is that it was written in 1919 about a priest and professor who was by no stretch of the imagination a heretic, who had never been excommunicated or suspended and who since 1903 had been a respected member of the Catholic theological faculty at Strasbourg. Fortunately after a number of diplomatic maneuvers, a way out was found and the appointment was approved. Trippen concludes his account of the incident by describing it as "a perfect example of how a problem that has not been theologically worked through but simply repressed, such as modernism was, can suddenly resurface at the most inopportune time and in regard to the wrong object."⁴⁵ It also underlines how dangerous the indecisiveness of local ordinaries can be, and how little Rome appreciated the significance and the contribution of the German Catholic faculties.

I have stressed at some length the broader picture and the general attitudes because they give us an idea of the atmosphere within which the specific theological issues were being played out. They help to illuminate, for example, one of the most remarkable features of the period, the fact that people did not listen to one

⁴²*Ibid.*

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 132.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 163.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p. 182.

another or if they did, they had difficulty in understanding what each other was saying. This was true not only of the representatives of the two basic mentalities but even among the reformers themselves. The divisions among Batiffol and La-grange on the one hand and Loisy and von Hügel on the other are notorious. One of the most important exchanges of the period, that among Loisy, Blondel and von Hügel on the issue of history and dogma, was clearly undermined by the inability of the first two really to enter into each other's way of thinking.

The task of understanding was made more difficult by the use of stereotypes and generalizations. Recourse was constantly being had to 'isms' of every kind. Blondel's *L'Action*, for example, was condemned as Kantianism, psychologism and subjectivism. References to life and experience were rejected as fideism, false mysticism and pragmatism. Laberthonnière repudiated scholasticism under whatever form as intellectualism, and Tyrrell called the system that challenged him Vaticanism, Jesuitism and Medievalism. The atmosphere, in short, was not conducive to either understanding or discussion. The tendency to polarization was an important factor in all that happened.

Edmund Bishop, the English Catholic lay liturgical scholar, argued that the whole reform movement was a mistake. There was in the Church at that time no real possibility for any significant change in regard to issues like the role of the laity or freedom for scholarly research. This, for him, was the lesson of the 1860s and above all of the famous Munich Brief⁴⁶ in which Pius IX repudiated Döllinger's call for scholarly independence.⁴⁷

If Catholics imbued by the historical spirit have come so signally to grief in our times, if that spirit itself is looked on with suspicion more or less concealed or expressed, why is it? The explanation, I suppose, is a quite simple one: viz., that the historical and the theological methods of mental training are, in fact, here and now, different, and so different as to be, at this time of day, almost—I fancy I may say quite—antagonistic. And the antagonism has, in some minds, become a perfectly conscious, or, indeed, a formulated one.⁴⁸

This was written in 1900. In 1904 he wrote the following to Cuthbert Butler, OSB:

I look on it that a Catholic worker on pure critical lines in N.T. and quite early things still has to work, it appears by Loisy's condemnation, with a rope round his neck. Moreover, the people who hold the end of it and can at any moment tighten the noose and strangle a man, or half, hold all such work in suspicion.⁴⁹

⁴⁶*Tuas libenter*, December 21, 1863, in Denzinger-Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum, Definitionum et Declarationum de rebus fidei et morum* (33rd ed.; Rome: Herder, 1965), 2875-80.

⁴⁷Cf. e.g. Bishop's remark to von Hügel in a letter of May 31, 1912: "The events of 1863-1870 did not kill, did not even affect, my curiosity or desire to know. But it dried up, seemed to kill, the desire to communicate, to print. There was no need to wait for the pronouncements of Pius X of . . . 1907 to learn, to know, the respective place(?) of the 'docent' and 'descent' Catholic; and how the sole duty of the latter was to say 'ditto' to the former." Loome, *Liberal Catholicism*, p. 423.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, p. 377.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, p. 389.

I should say (if it were not question of *truth* and its interests and the probable future interests of the Christian people themselves)—give up altogether & not bother oneself about good studies at all.⁵⁰

The condemnation of 1907 only reinforced Bishop's interpretation of the abiding significance of the events of the 1860s. They had created the atmosphere within which the "Authorities" continued to operate.

While in no way wishing to undermine the fundamental significance of the general mentalities and of the various social, political, cultural and economic factors that helped to determine the basic conflict, it is important to recall that individuals in specific offices could have an impact. Without exaggerating the openness of Leo XIII it is clear that the accession of Pius X to the papal office made a real difference in the way the crisis was resolved. Leo himself was under the influence of various advisors. It is generally agreed that Cardinal Mazzella pushed him in a more conservative direction than did Cardinal Rampolla. It was the former who is thought to have been responsible for the notorious statement of the Holy Office in 1897 on the Comma Johanneum. Leo was apparently so embarrassed by this that he subsequently stayed clear of specific statements and condemnations in regard to biblical topics. After the death of Mazzella in 1900 "the climate became more open and more tolerant."⁵¹

Very few local ordinaries come off well in the accounts of the period. The general consensus is that they were intellectually inadequate to the issues that were being raised. Monsignor Eudoxe-Irénée Mignot, Archbishop of Albi, was a notable exception. The course of events would in all probability have been different had he rather than Cardinal Richard been Loisy's ordinary throughout the crisis. The failure of Archbishop Stein of Munich to enter into any kind of significant exchange with Schnitzer suggests that the situation was not much different in Germany.⁵² The relative sophistication and sensitivity of the Munich nuncio Andreas Frühwirth, O.P., during the Schnitzer episode exemplifies the impact an individual could have.⁵³

Granted that some kind of intervention on the part of the magisterium was inevitable and necessary, the actual form that the condemnation of modernism took had a number of deleterious effects. While rejecting what various Catholic scholars were doing, it neglected to offer any positive suggestions for dealing with the new issues that developments in philosophy, history and biblical criticism were raising. This meant in practice that the problems to a large degree were simply repressed. Their return in the post-conciliar context is surely a major factor in recent confusion and polarization in the Catholic Church.

The ambiguity at the heart of *Pascendi* was particularly unfortunate. The definition in the dogmatic part was quite specific and it was relatively simple for theologians to measure their position against it. The people who could reasonably be

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, p. 390.

⁵¹Scoppola, *Crisi modernista*, p. 57.

⁵²Cf. Trippen, *Theologie und Lehramt*, pp. 288, 403.

⁵³*Ibid.*, p. 404.

called modernists were very few indeed. The disciplinary part of the same encyclical, however, gave a different impression. Bishops are encouraged to be vigilant in making seminary and university appointments.

Anyone who in any way is found to be tainted with Modernism is to be excluded without compunction from these offices, whether of government or of teaching, and those who already occupy them are to be removed. The same policy is to be adapted towards those who openly or secretly lend countenance to Modernism either by extolling the Modernists and excusing their culpable conduct, or by carping at scholasticism and the Fathers and the magisterium of the Church, or by refusing obedience to ecclesiastical authority in any of its depositories; and towards those who show a love of novelty in history, archeology, biblical exegesis.⁵⁴

It is not hard to understand how such a passage encouraged defenders of orthodoxy to pursue people whose positions had little to do with "agnosticism" and "vital immanence." It was not long, in fact, before the inquisitors were focusing their attacks on "semi-modernists" and on "modernizers."⁵⁵ This is the development that Ehrhard foresaw and lamented in his 1908 article and that Laberthonnière referred to when he said that the encyclical aimed at everyone.⁵⁶ In spite of their efforts to distance themselves from Loisy, Batiffol suffered the ignominy of having a book put on the Index, and Lagrange had to stop publishing exegetical and historical studies for a number of years. In a particularly strange case, Fritz Tillmann was reported to Rome in 1912 for defending the two-source theory in regard to the synoptics. Suspected of modernism he had to transfer from New Testament to what at the time was considered the relatively safe field of moral theology.⁵⁷ In some ways the saddest fate was that of Lucien Laberthonnière. In 1913 the whole series of the *Annales de philosophie chrétienne* of which he had been editor was put on the Index, and he himself was forbidden to publish anything in the future. The prohibition remained in force until his death in 1932. The personal dramas that the condemnations provoked were many.⁵⁸

The atmosphere of fear and recrimination was enough to dissuade many young priests from embarking on scholarly careers at all. A particularly striking example of the untold cost to Catholic scholarship can be found in a 1922 letter of Cuthbert Butler to von Hügel. He refers to the baron's regret that he, Butler, is not working in the history of early Christianity.

(Y)ears ago I recognized that these things—Xtian Origins, New Testament, History of Dogma etc.—have been made impossible for a priest, except on the most narrow apologetic lines. A priest can publish nothing without 'imprimatur.' The only freedom in Biblical things and the rest is that of a tram, to go ahead as fast as you like

⁵⁴*Pascendi*, p. 124f.

⁵⁵Bedeschi, *Modernismo cattolico*, p. 78.

⁵⁶Loisy, *Mémoires*, II, p. 578.

⁵⁷Trippen, *Theologie und Lehramt*, p. 363.

⁵⁸Cf. Bedeschi, *Modernismo cattolico*, pp. 75ff. and Scoppola, *Crisi modernista*, pp. 333ff.

on rails, but if you try to arrive at any station not on the line, you are derailed. Textual criticism of the most technical kind is the only form of biblical study open; the case of patristics is not much better.⁵⁹

If the situation kept priests from scholarship, it also forced them back into a protected intellectual environment. One of the results of the condemnation was to reinforce a tendency that Tyrrell had earlier decried under the name "protectionism." By that he meant the desire to guard the laity, if possible, and seminarians, certainly, from the issues and problems of the day. Its effect was to rob the Church of spontaneity and originality, to hamper authentic growth and to foster an excessive preoccupation with orthodoxy and legalism.⁶⁰ What such clergy could mean to intellectually alive lay people was poignantly spelled out by Edmund Bishop:

Yes: this seems to me the moral, the definite summing up, of all one side of my experience as a Catholic; the 'layman' has to shift for himself, alone; the priests (except as 'ministers of the board and sacraments') are—as for the *mind*, and therefore in some sense for the depth of the needs of the *soul*—useless for him.⁶¹

According to M. Petre authority was "the root problem of the whole modernist controversy."⁶² "(H)ad it been feasible for the different sections of modernism to unite in the insistence on one point, which should be vital to all, that point would have been the character and limits of ecclesiastical authority."⁶³ As right as Petre is, the issue of authority was inseparable from the broader issue of mentality and of one's understanding of Catholicism and its relationship to modern culture. From the point of view of theology it is clear that what was needed at the turn of the century was an opportunity and freedom to deal with new problems and to develop new methods. Equally important was time, time for growth, testing and dialogue. The prerequisite for both was an openness on the part of authority to the issues and possibilities with which contemporary society was confronting the Church. The self-understanding and practice of the majority of those in positions of responsibility, however, were not conducive to such attitudes. In this, neo-scholastic theology played an important role. Its understanding of revelation, dogma and faith reinforced a reactive and defensive exercise of centralized authority.⁶⁴

The fear and panic that marked many of the interventions of authority at the time raise questions about fundamental spiritual attitudes, about faith in God and his providence and in the reality of the Spirit in the Church. Sometimes fear is the antithesis of faith. The issues then as now were complex. Mistakes and exaggerations were inevitable. The possibilities of collaboration, however, remained considerable. Whatever the specific theological challenges the Church has to face in

⁵⁹Loome, *Liberal Catholicism*, p. 442.

⁶⁰Cf. D. Schultenover, *George Tyrrell: In Search of Catholicism* (Shepherdstown: The Patmos Press, 1981), pp. 184-87.

⁶¹Letter to von Hügel, January 27, 1913, in Loome, *Liberal Catholicism*, p. 428.

⁶²M. Petre, *Modernism: Its Failure and Its Fruits* (London and Edinburgh: T. C. and E. C. Jack, 1918) p. 141.

⁶³*Ibid.*, p. 153.

⁶⁴Cf. Daly, *Transcendence and Immanence*, pp. 218f.

a particular age, a measure of trust, patience and openness is required on the part of everyone if theologians are to have the opportunity to deal with them in a creative and positive way.

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