

La condanna del modernismo: Documenti, interpretazioni, conseguenze. Edited by Claus Arnold and Giovanni Vian. (Rome: Viella. 2010. Pp. 260. €30.00 paperback. ISBN 978-8-883-34440-4.)

by **David G. Schultenover**

The 2002 opening of the Vatican archives to scholars through 1922 has enabled a series of highly illuminating publications on the modernist period, the most recent being the present volume. Claus Arnold introduces this superb collection with an astute observation: To understand the modernist crisis on its own terms, one must see it in the context of the struggle between Christianity and “modernity” from the early Renaissance to the present; ecclesiastical opponents saw modernism as but an acute phase of this age-old confrontation. Decisions made during this acute phase had, Arnold observes, precedents in Pope Leo XIII’s interventions regarding biblical criticism, which Pope Pius X escalated to a worldwide antimodernist campaign with chilling consequences lasting to the present day.

Annibale Zambarbieri begins his chapter on the censure of Ernesto Buonaiuti by thanking Hubert Wolf and his associates for publishing descriptions of Vatican archival holdings that facilitate research into the microhistory and thus the composition of the “mosaic” of the modernist crisis, with sharper delineations of the protagonists, the theological issues, and the enduring repercussions. Zambarbieri’s contribution outlines the charges against Buonaiuti, among which were “ambiguous language,” the dangerous influence of Maurice Blondel, and failure sufficiently to credit the intellectual content of Christian beliefs as incompatible with the contemporary mentality.

Arnold details the internal story of the process against Alfred Loisy from the initial “indexing” of five of his works (1903) to the drafting of *Lamentabili*, and the publication of *Pascendi dominici gregis* (1907) – the latter accompanied by Pius X’s letter to the world’s bishops and religious superiors on the execution of antimodernist measures. Arnold provides the drama that other kinds of historical treatments cannot supply. No one interested in the historical development of modern theology should miss this section.

Giovanni Vian’s chapter on the reception of *Pascendi* by the bishops of France and Italy adds a fascinating and chilling piece to the mosaic. The

church-state friction particularly in these two countries heightened the bishops’ vigilance against modernism. Most hierarchs around the world, aided by apostolic visitations (promoted by the staunchly antimodernist Cardinal Gaetano de Lai), adhered strictly to the provisions of *Pascendi*. References to the encyclical in church documents “into the third millennium have been frequent enough to reinforce church discipline to combat” modernist seductions (p. 136).

The relationship between Lucien Laberthonnière and Blondel following the publication of *Pascendi* is fairly well known from previously published works. Giacomo Losito, however, fills out the story, using the minutes of the fifty-seven meetings of the vigilance committee (1907–25) of the Archdiocese of Paris and important unpublished correspondence. Far clearer now is why the two collaborators had a falling out after the Holy Office “indexed” the series of the *Annales de philosophie chrétienne* edited by Laberthonnière.

Judith Schepers’s account of the curial interpretation of the antimodernist oath of 1910 guides readers through the oath’s complex development within the Holy Office, its debated wording, and its final official interpretation, thus clarifying the oath’s enduring historical significance – how, until 1967, it permanently stamped many church officials with a paranoia about “modernists” as the Church’s “fifth column.” An appendix includes key Latin documents.

The most affecting chapter is the one by Raffaella Perin, who details how the antimodernist campaign played out in the fractious Diocese of Vicenza. Using heretofore unknown correspondence, Perrin shows the terrible toll the campaign took (and continues to take) on the lives of flesh-and-blood clerics as well as on the Church as a whole. She appropriately highlights the role of De Lai, who was “rigidly antimodernist” (p. 208n5).

This collection shines a bright light into some dark corners of contemporary ecclesiology.

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