

si si no no

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Let your speech be, "Yes, yes," "No, no"; whatever is beyond these comes from the evil one. (Mt. 5:37) • September 2006
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St. Pius X and the Duel Between Modern Thought and Catholic Theology

PART

3

CONCLUSION

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Modernism

After a rather long but necessary exposition, we can now begin a rapid analysis of *Pascendi Gregis*. Let us not forget that our objective was specifically to understand as well as possible the genesis of the forms of thought against which the great pontiff St. Pius X fought, the genesis of this *bad philosophy* that polluted, or rendered less effective, Christian philosophy and

René Descartes
Friedrich Nietzsche
Gottfried Leibniz

Pope St. Pius X
St. Thomas Aquinas
St. Augustine

theology, and led to the noxious success of modernist thought.

If we have understood the premises, and if you have accepted my interpretive proposition, according to which idealism, as well as Marxism, constitutes a violent return of ancient gnosis, then it is easy enough to take the next step. If idealism is the last form of Western metaphysics, and if we are still in its shadow, we are *de facto* under a heavily heretical and gnostic shadow, even beyond, obviously, the intentions and conscious choice of the authors.

It was on these theoretical bases, especially in France,¹ a country in which the Church was the object of terrible persecutions,² that philosophy developed in a way that was incapable of withstanding the ground swell of modern subjectivism and immanentism. We know who the authors are; they are the authors *Pascendi* does not directly name, but which are substantially, notoriously, the authors whom St. Pius X and the theologians who helped him in the redaction of the Encyclical had in mind: Laberthonnière, Loisy, Le Roy, and Blondel in particular. Blondel's case even made some noise, and everyone knows that Ernesto Bonaiuti, the Italian modernist *par excellence*, while in the seminary secretly got hold of a copy of the French philosopher's *L'Action* because it was a book forbidden by the Church and intently read by all those who were avid for novelties.

Among all these modernist philosophers we find common philosophical principles that we are now in a position to understand. We should now be able to grasp the philosophical and cultural essence of modernism, its underlying structure.

Laberthonnière,³ if we schematize the meaning of his thought, tells us, using categories that had been developed in modern thought, that *truth is only such in the measure that we recreate it*. If I open the Catechism of St. Pius X, I read that the principle mysteries of Christianity are: **1)** the unity and trinity of God; and **2)** the incarnation, passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Laberthonnière tells us: no, that's not right; I cannot simply receive from

the exterior a clear, absolutely limpid, dogmatic truth about which there can be no confusion even if we are faced with a mystery, but a mystery that is clearly stated; that is just not right. Rather, I must recreate in myself this truth, which amounts to saying that nothing can be true except that which I form in some way within myself, by reflecting, by reasoning, by listening to myself, by entering into myself, by *descending within myself*. Do you remember the idea of the Cabala: enter in oneself and discover God within? Here we encounter the same idea, in a certain sense. There is no value in the study and objective apprenticeship of dogma; there is only value in a truth that I construct, so to speak, interiorly, that I draw forth from myself. There is no clearer idea of what we mean by immanentism and subjectivism in theology.

Loisy⁴ in turn tells us that the essential of the Faith is not in dogmas, but in immediate and subjective religious experience of a purely spiritual type. There is a vague religious experience that must not necessarily be established or translated by dogmatic affirmations that my mind understands as clear ideas, but, precisely, must be an experience that is only authentic if it is immediate and subjective, true before all else on the existential plane. Note that it is difficult to resist an idea of this kind, for it is inevitably seductive. Indeed, it is clear to everyone that, for example, my feeling of love for a person is true if it is immediate and subjective, and if I really feel it. Indeed, how could I think that I loved someone if I did not feel what I say that I do?

There is indeed something comprehensible—that's obvious, things don't just spring out of nowhere by chance—in this modernist thesis, at least from the standpoint of psychology. But, on the basis of these premises, it lacks the kerygmatic, or proclamatory, dimension of the Christian Faith. The eyewitnesses of supernatural events, which the Apostles are first and foremost, announce to us these events at the same time as the words and the revelation given by the One who produced them and who is the protagonist; and I, *ex auditu*, by hearing this truth and by coming to the conclusion that the testimony is credible, as is the Church that transmits this testimony to me and provides me its correct interpretation, adhere to it, believe in it. Of course, this occurs through the influence

¹ This is not surprising, for it was there that the Revolution was born and where it was particularly furious, and thus where, if orthodoxy and Tradition have always been defended, the destructive force of the Revolution there has long been.

² It suffices to reread the history of the sanctuary of Lourdes, for example, in order to get an idea of the legal obstacles that the Masonic Republican government erected in its desire to prevent the Church from having the land. The anti-Catholic persecution was expressed in thousands of other acts and laws.

³ Lucien Laberthonnière [Oratorian] (1860-1932), *Essais de philosophie religieuse* (1903), *Le réalisme chrétien et l'idéalisme grec* (1904), *Sur la voie du catholicisme* (1912), *Études sur Descartes* (1935), *Études de philosophie cartésienne et premiers écrits philosophiques* (1937).

⁴ Alfred Loisy (1857-1940), *L'Évangile et l'Église* (1902), *Autour d'un petit livre* (1903) (these are the two works from which were excerpted in large part the propositions or theses condemned in *Pascendi* and in the decree *Lamentabili*), *La religion d'Israël* (1901), *Le quatrième évangile* (1903), *La religion* (1917), *La discipline intellectuelle* (1919), *La morale humaine* (1923). Still unrivaled in finesse and profundity, see the critiques of Loisy's fanciful exegesis developed by G. Ricciotti in his *Life of Jesus*.

of grace and catechesis and my understanding of the teaching, but it must not be forgotten that the starting point is the proclamation, and that even the New Testament, as written document, follows and does not precede it (lest it be transformed into a sort of Lutheran-Calvinist “Koran”).

Would Christianity have come into being without an announcement, one would like to ask Laberthonnière and Loisy. But the answer is clear: No. Man had already had numerous religious experiences thousands of years before when he lived in the caves, where he painted bulls, arrows and men with their stylized bows, but *religious experience* does not signify Christianity. Christianity signifies God who becomes incarnate and speaks, who works miracles that testify that He can only really be God made man. I accept the things revealed by the Lord; thus there is an adherence of the mind, and not just feeling. If the hard nugget of Christianity is suppressed (that is to say, ultimately, if *apologetics* as the demonstration of the credibility and authenticity of the Christian Faith even in purely rational terms is suppressed), then everything crumbles, and no life of faith worthy of the name is possible any longer.

According to Le Roy,⁵ *the dogmas are merely symbols of moral exigencies*: the Faith is reduced to morality. This approach, which is in fact completely heretical, is based upon upon the philosophical principle represented by Bergson’s teaching on the immediacy of intuitive thought, which must have the absolute certitude of lived life: only what is living is true, a theme that had already been developing in German circles (with Simmel, for example) and which will erupt in the existentialism of Barth, Jaspers, and Heidegger. Only the praxis in which I am ensconced on the existential plane is true. A static truth, immobile, immutable, capable of preceding and transcending my reason, and to which my reason bends by faith, such a truth cannot be true. But immediacy, for whomever knows the weaknesses of Bergsonian and existentialist thought, is a *myth*, and we know that it is, on the contrary, eminently unstable.

On the basis of this reading of religion and the life of faith developed by modernism, it is impossible not to slip into the most extreme relativism and subjectivism on both the moral and the dogmatic levels, with all the consequences which it is unnecessary to develop here analytically, because, among other reasons, they can be reduced to the notion of the demolition of the Catholic Church (or self-demolition when it is carried out

by religious, and in particular by a more or less significant part of the teaching Church).⁶ Cornelio Fabro has made an insightful remark about modern atheism: either God is understood in the totality of His attributes, the attributes of the Christian God, or else philosophy falls into atheism. Obviously, this reasoning holds all the more true for theology. Thus when philosophy, for the sake of convenience or to better dialogue with the world or to be more politically correct, renounces a single attribute of the Christian God or a single article of its perennial doctrine, it slides inexorably towards atheism: modernism proves this all too clearly. Moreover, St. Thomas has already explained how the salvation and the integrity of the spiritual life of a person are compromised by the renunciation of the least part of the truths of Faith: to disbelieve a part of the *depositum* or to disbelieve all the *depositum* are two dimensions spiritually and morally equivalent. Today, it seems that one can say, think, or do anything while continuing to believe oneself to be Catholic.⁷ Many modernists ended up by losing the Faith, at least formally.

We cannot conclude this extremely brief summary of modernist thought without saying a

⁶ Apropos of efforts to destroy the Catholic Church, we know that Freemasonry is at the forefront. In this regard, a few interesting observations can be made concerning the most important and influential Italian modernist, Ernesto Bonaiuti [an excommunicated, defrocked priest, d. 1946–Ed.]. In 1904, his brother Alarico joined the *Veritas* Lodge of the Great Lodge of the Orient at Tunis, beginning an important career in Masonry. In 1920, Bonaiuti—the Grand Orient boasts of it, because the Freemasons quite openly publish their role in modern history—appointed a specialist in Masonic symbolism to head a review he had founded (information provided by the website of the Grand Orient of Italy). This does not necessarily mean that Bonaiuti was a Freemason (at least I do not have information on that score), but it is interesting to observe this curious family tie.

⁷ An episode I experienced recently will perhaps be instructive on this point. I had an occasion to talk with some people who believe themselves to be, I think, good Catholics, upon their return from an ecumenical study week organized by the Secretariat for Ecumenical Activities (SEA). Participants included Catholic theologians, rabbis, Protestant and Waldensian pastors, etc. At one point my interlocutors listed four “discoveries” they made during the session: Mary is not a virgin, priestly celibacy is a medieval invention introduced for reasons of power and inheritance, Jesus is only a man very beloved by God, the Trinity is a post-biblical notion invented by medieval theologians that has no relation to Scripture. Other ideas that emerged: in sexuality, there is nothing wrong (*sic!*); one must not speak of priests, but only of pastors; an atheist is someone who does not love, not someone who does not believe. Since the acts of the SEA are generally published, the following question arises: how is it that no authority in the Roman Curia has warned, excommunicated, or punished in some way the misdeeds of a congress organized by Catholics that allows people to adopt ideas such as those I have named? Confronted by error and heresy, the Authority’s silence risks signifying complicity and approbation, not to mention scandal for the faithful.

⁵ E. Le Roy (1870-1954), *Science et philosophie* (1899-1900); *Dogme et critique* (1907), *L’exigence idéaliste et le fait de l’évolution* (1927), *Le problème de Dieu* (1929).

word about Blondel.⁸ This philosopher develops and brings to its ultimate conclusions the *method of immanence* named and condemned by *Pascendi* several times. Blondel is the real grand master of numerous thinkers and theologians of the 20th century, and, in fact, he had an enormous, extraordinary influence. He also wrote under the pseudonym Bernard de Saily in the review *Annales de Philosophie Chrétienne*, which was the most important French modernist publication. After the promulgation of *Pascendi*, he prudently retired, but his influence on the theological culture of the 20th century remained very great.

What is the essence of the method of immanence? Blondel carries out the following philosophical operation: since it is impossible to reach God by the classic ways of natural theology and through rational and universally rigorous demonstrations (one must not forget the climate of irrationality on the one hand, and on the other the scientific and anti-metaphysical bent of the philosophy of the late 19th century), it is necessary to show how religion, and in particular the Christian religion, is the only possible and fully satisfying response to the incessant struggle of man with himself, since as a subject endowed with will and acting in the world, man otherwise finds himself destined to a continual and irremediable failure. Action that is open and unceasingly renewed by man's will condemns the subject to a negative dialectic which cannot but be resolved in a complete opening to the supernatural, in a resolute yes to God. The Blondelian methodological critique consists, in short, in showing that, in the finite nature of man, there is a structural need for the infinite, that is to say the need for God. The inescapable ontological poverty of man gives testimony of his natural vocation to believe, and of his need for God as a need not temporally or culturally given, but inscribed in his essence at the deepest level.⁹

It is necessary to open oneself to the Faith because man, in his effort to will, in this negative dialectic of action, in this defeat that he endures repeatedly in his clash against the inertia and solidity of the world, cannot, by himself, satisfy the need for meaning of which his action itself is a witness. Man, at the extreme limit of his human

possibilities, opens himself to God as to something he finds, so to speak, naturally in conformity with his need for truth and plenitude. In this philosophical perspective, God becomes the answer to a need of man, God is born, is based upon, and is credible because He responds to my needs, these needs that I have explored and to the limits of which I have reached, when I knew how to descend into the play of my will and my desire. Such is the essential kernel of Blondel's thought.

Pascendi

It was at this juncture, against this thought, that the Encyclical *Pascendi* was written (preceded a few months earlier, it must not be forgotten, by the Decree *Lamentabili* of July 3, 1907, which is at least as important as the great encyclical). *Pascendi* was promptly attacked and accused by the most progressive element of the Catholic world, of being a reactionary text and of bringing to a dramatic halt the advance of Christian thought. In reality, we know that it is an extraordinary text, especially in regard to philosophy, because of the finesse with which it comprehends the essential methodology and metaphysics of modernism.

The first important notion developed in the encyclical underscores that the modernist attack against the Church is tragic because carried out with duplicity. Before, the heretic would leave the Church; today, he stays in the Church: the strategy has changed. The encyclical points out the action of a strategy that we might term "Gramscian," the conquest of cultural hegemony by a Bolshevik minority.¹⁰

¹⁰ We are using the category of *Bolshevism* to designate the systematic recourse to lying, violence, and deceit by a minority in the pursuit of gaining power. It should not be forgotten either that all the modern revolutions have always been revolutions led by disciplined minorities convinced of the legitimacy of the subversion of order, even against the overwhelming majority of the citizens, and this is manifestly verified for the first time with the Jacobin movement during the French Revolution (even though the *primum* was constituted by the revolutionary attempts of the Anabaptists during the 16th century and by Cromwell's Puritan Revolution in the 17th). A disorganized and passive majority has no chance of resisting an organized minority that acts cohesively with military discipline (cf. G. Mosca, *The Political Class* [Italian; Bari, 1966, 1994]). The strategy of the innovators during Vatican II respected this rule perfectly: the reforms, and in first place the liturgical reform, were certainly neither expected nor requested by the multitude of the faithful, who were on the contrary disconcerted, but were imposed by a minority of neo-modernist bishops, capable of steering the choices of the Council and of stirring up an artificial execration towards conservative priests, bishops, and theologians (cf. also G. Baget Bozzo, *The Antichrist* [Italian; Milan, 2001], a book that, except for a few heterodox opinions on the theme of the eternal pain of hell for the damned, grasps with great finesse and depth the "political" and cultural dynamics that engendered and guided the Council and the post-Council, underlining the aggressiveness of the Protestantizing modernist minority).

⁸ Maurice Blondel (1861-1949), *L'Action: Essai d'une critique de la vie et d'une science de la pratique* (1893); *Lettres sur les exigences de la pensée contemporaine en matière apologétique* (1896); *Histoire et Dogme* (1904).

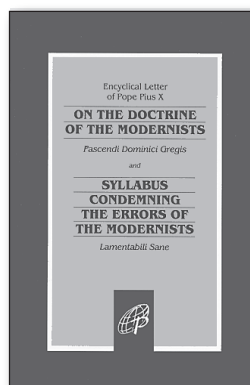
⁹ Let us remark that the theological problem posed by the *method of immanence* is the risk of an almost absolute continuity between the natural order and the supernatural order, that is to say, a confusion between the two orders. If this distinction is suppressed, then in a certain sense the very idea of Revelation is suppressed, and, consequently, faith *ex auditu*.

Today, says St. Pius X, the attack is coming from within: those who apostatize from the Catholic Faith stay in the Church.¹¹ Let us observe with what clarity and depth St. Pius X describes the modernists, understanding not only their ideology, but even the recesses of their psychology:

Let authority rebuke them as much as it pleases—they have their own conscience on their side and an intimate experience which tells them with certainty that what they deserve is not blame but praise. Then they reflect that, after all there is no progress without a battle and no battle without its victims, and victims they are willing to be like the prophets and Christ Himself. They have no bitterness in their hearts against the authority which uses them roughly, for after all it is only doing its duty as authority. Their sole grief is that it remains deaf to their warnings, because delay multiplies the obstacles which impede the progress of souls, but the hour will most surely come when further delay will be impossible, for if the laws of evolution may be checked for a while, they cannot be finally evaded. And thus they go their way, reprimands and condemnations notwithstanding, masking an incredible audacity under a mock semblance of humility. While they make a pretense of bowing their heads, their minds and hands are more boldly intent than ever on carrying out their purposes. And this policy they follow willingly and wittingly, both because it is part of their system that authority is to be stimulated but not dethroned, and because it is necessary for them to remain within the ranks of the Church in order that

they may gradually transform the collective conscience. And in saying this, they fail to perceive that they are avowing that the collective conscience is not with them, and that they have no right to claim to be its interpreters. It is thus, Venerable Brethren, that for the Modernists, whether as authors or propagandists, there is to be nothing stable, nothing immutable in the Church.¹²

St. Pius X quite rightly affirms that the snare is all the more insidious as it is laid within the interior of the Church. The modernists' strategy consists, by fair means or foul—by exerting constant pressure, by compromises, by vacillating between orthodoxy and violent heterodoxy—in pushing the Church “for its own good” to come to terms with the modern world, for, essentially, the advance of modernism depends on the failure of churchmen and the faithful to withstand the rising tide of a world that, alas, is the overthrow of *Christianitas*, of what was *Christianitas*.¹³



Pascendi Dominici Gregis

On the Doctrine of the Modernists (Pope St. Pius X, 1907)

The prophetic encyclical of Pius X which defined Modernism, cut it up, and let it hang out to dry. Modernists can't hide from this light.

77pp, STK# 5306. \$4.50

¹¹ When Hans Kung, after a long contention with Rome, was not excommunicated, but only received limited sanctions for what he said (he was suspended from his chair, but kept other assignments), he said that he was happy he could still consider himself a Catholic theologian. One cannot fail to see how serious this is, because if we must think that Kung is a Catholic by being a renowned theologian who has written important, totally heretical books, denying, for example, the divinity of Christ and the infallibility of the pope, then how can we be Catholics like Kung? How can we find ourselves with him in the Church? Who is right? the Catholics who believe what has always been taught by the Church, or Kung? The problem is significant, and not without gravity, for we cannot be at the same time (honest Catholics not having lost the Faith and Kung) Catholics and in the truth, on the basis of the principle of non-contradiction. Either Kung is wrong, or we are. But it is the Church that must rule, and not the simple faithful, or rather the faithful must also decide if the hierarchical Church does not, but this situation already presages a situation of extraordinary, almost unprecedented crisis. This coexistence, within the bosom of the Church, of every theological and doctrinal opinion, and especially of categorically opposite opinions, is a real drama, something of metaphysical proportions. On the assuredly heretical content of Kung's thought, cf. L. Jammarrone, *Hans Kung, Heretic* (Brescia, 1977). Professor Pasqualucci has written (*Politics and Religion*) that the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council is the most important event in the history of the 20th century. He is perfectly right, for the Church is the Mystical Body of Christ; consequently, what happens in the bosom of the Church has metaphysical, and not just temporal or sociological, implications. Cf. also Fr. Roger Calmel, *For a Theology of History* [French] (1967). Comparing the Kung case to the incredible persecution and defamation of Archbishop Lefebvre and the Society of Saint Pius X, as well as the sanctions levied against them, one cannot fail to conclude that today in the Church it would seem that *obedience to authority* (independently of what the authority does or says) is deemed a higher value than *obedience to the Truth*, which is to say, ultimately, than God Himself. Obviously, Authority was made and instituted for the Truth, and not the Truth for Authority.

¹² *Pascendi*, §§27-8 [English version and section numbers are from the Daughters of St. Paul edition—*Translator's note*.]

¹³ On the notion of the *Middle Ages* as ideologically conceived and inadequate to define medieval European society and history, cf. M. Tangheroni in his preface to Regine Pernoud's *Light of the Middle Ages* (1978). Today in particular, Catholic thought has been devastated by what I call a theological Stockholm Syndrome: one identifies with the aggressor, and in order to be heard and given space in the great daily newspapers, [certain Catholics], probably believing themselves to be of good faith and doing good, say exactly the things the aggressor wants to hear, the things which the enemies of Christ wish to see affirmed by the Church. A typical case is that of Cardinal Martini, who was “invented” as...leader of the progressive party by a cold calculation of the lay leftist press (and thus by the circles of power and authority behind this press), both Italian and European, with interviews and continual articles in the daily newspapers (for example, *La Repubblica*, founded by the journalist E. Scalfari, related to a family with a long Masonic tradition), with great importance attached to his heterodox assertions in the domains of doctrine and morals, and his seduction by the continual reference—in the clearly lay and anti-Catholic press—to his person as “papabile.” It is clear that only genuine holiness could enable a prelate to resist this incessant media courting by the enemies of Christ! (*Continued on p.24.*)

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The outcome of modernism, according to *Pascendi*, is agnosticism.¹⁴ Indeed, according to St. Pius X, the negation of natural theology and the credibility of Christianity, and the method of *vital immanence* are the source of a radical crisis, if not the loss of faith. Let us list the essential aspects of the new, heretical theology developed by modernism as it appears in the encyclical: the conscience is designated as the place where God is found, without external revelation, but only by following one's desire and feeling; Christian doctrine is said to spring from listening to myself and my desires, and to be coherent with my needs, of which it must become a reflection. It excludes every possibility of regulating my life on the basis of immutable and objective criteria of good and evil, or of too precise dogmatic theses, which would imply an authentic faith and humility before mystery. Religion, in us as in Jesus Christ, is the spontaneous fruit of nature. Jesus slowly and gradually came to understand who He was, He did not have all at once divine knowledge, and, finally, He is no longer authentically thought of as true God.

The list of modernist heresies goes on: dogma must evolve; it must be adapted to the *vital sentiment* of the believer; all religions are in some sense true, they have a fund of truth because everything is rooted in a profound need and in man's religious sentiment (it means thus the fall of *extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*); science and faith must be separated, but in case of conflict, faith must defer to science. The principle of faith is immanent

in man; this principle is God, and thus God is immanent in man; consequently, without there being a need for an explicit act of faith, every man can be considered to be a believer.¹⁵ Naturally, there should be democracy in the Church; the papacy and the episcopacy must be rethought, and authority weakened and reviewed. There must be, besides, separation between Church and State in the name of a lay vision of politics (naturally, the fruit of the French Revolution). Everything must be historicized, beginning with dogmas, to adapt them to the comprehension of new times and new historical conditions. In the domain of Christianity, it is necessary to distinguish between the Christ of faith and the historical Jesus. The modernists, moreover, following the analysis of *Pascendi*, demand the priority of the active virtues over the passive virtues, falling into the already condemned heresy of Americanism. They also call for the reform and simplification of the liturgy; the suppression of numerous devotions and practices of popular piety; the reform—in reality, the suppression—of the Holy Office and of the Congregation of the Index; a poor Church; prelates and bishops without external signs of honor, the abolition of the celibacy of priests, the decentralization of power and democracy in the Church with the involvement of the laity in the choice of pastors and bishops. Before this flood of errors, St. Pius X defines modernism as “the synthesis of all heresies,” and thus a royal road to atheism: “Undoubtedly, were anyone to attempt the task of collecting together all the errors that have been broached against the Faith and to concentrate into one the sap and substance of them all, he could not succeed in doing better than the Modernists have done.”¹⁶

Considering this tide of errors condemned by *Pascendi*, one is tempted to wonder if it is really a century-old encyclical or a current document. Today, indeed, we are faced with the same errors, even more temerarily, radically, and openly affirmed, and this even by illustrious representatives of the teaching Church, the episcopacy. The

(Continued from p.23) But beyond the seduction of the weakest and most fragile elements of the episcopacy—or those most inclined to adhere to heretical positions—one must also take into account the unbelievable pressure, direct and indirect, on whomever is faithful to Tradition: the *conspiracy of silence* (of which St. Pius X speaks with boundless holiness) towards those who are orthodox, the faithful, those who do not yield to the perverse demolition of traditional doctrine; the insulting of those who stand fast, and at the same time, the seduction of whoever begins to bend and begins to speak as the world wants. Let us cite how *Pascendi* describes the strategy against faithful churchmen: “...there is little reason to wonder that the Modernists vent all their bitterness and hatred on Catholics who zealously fight the battles of the Church. There is no species of insult which they do not heap upon them, but their usual course is to charge them with ignorance or obstinacy. When an adversary rises up against them with an erudition and force that render them redoubtable, they seek to make a conspiracy of silence around him to nullify the effects of his attack. This policy towards Catholics is the more invidious in that they befall with admiration which knows no bounds the writers who range themselves on their side, hailing their works, exuding novelty in every page, with a chorus of applause. For them the scholarship of a writer is in direct proportion to the recklessness of his attacks on antiquity, and of his efforts to undermine tradition and the ecclesiastical magisterium. When one of their number falls under the condemnations of the Church the rest of them, to the disgust of good Catholics, gather round him, loudly and publicly applaud him, and hold him up in veneration as almost a martyr for truth” (§42).

¹⁴ We are now paraphrasing and summarizing the most important notions set forth in the encyclical.

¹⁵ This modernist thesis opens the door to immanentism and to the anthropocentrism of Karl Rahner; it is already *anonymous Christianity*, for if God, by virtue of the incarnation of Christ, is immanent in man (“he united himself in some way to every man,” as the celebrated conciliar passage puts it!), every man, even without knowing it, is anonymously Christian, thus not excluded from salvation, and all are saved without need of the sacraments, faith, morality, or conformity of their lives to our Lord Jesus Christ. And if all are saved, it is no longer necessary for the Catholic Church to be missionary, for the Catholic Church is only an enlightened avant-garde, the avant-garde of the “pneumatic,” of those persons who possess the full gnosis, and who must bring it to others, though without too much haste or decisiveness, lest their naturally Christian sentiment be wounded.

¹⁶ *Pascendi*, §39.

situation is thus worse because of the scope of the contagion.

Pascendi is the prophetic photograph (for holiness is often accompanied by this capacity to see the evil before it becomes apparent, this capacity to see while it is still in the bud all its horror, as if it had already brought forth its tragic consequences) of all that we find today in *Jesus*, the *Famiglia Cristiana*, *Il Regno*, in *Concilium*, at Bose, in parish bulletins, in the Catholic dailies, and alas, also in the most important pontifical and magisterial documents. In the Church today, we find precisely all the theological and doctrinal distortions advocated by modernism. And we are not speaking of the fact that, if we were to analyze in detail the Decree *Lamentabili*, and were we to consider the 65 propositions condemned and anathematized by it, we would find an exact representation of a great part of current theology and doctrinal visions. *Pascendi* would appear to be a document dated not 1907, but 2005. The modernists, today as yesterday—I take the modernist to signify the perfect incarnation of the type of man who slides into heresy—think of themselves as the only *enlightened ones*, the Gramscian minority that acts on the *collective conscience* of the inert, manipulable, anonymous collective, subject to a sort of continual theological rape (we are thinking of the new liturgy which, in socio-political terms, was imposed by the equivalent of a terroristic, bloody coup d'état). In the space of 30 or 40 years, the modernist revolution in the Church took place, the Church's 1789, a revolution that imposes, by means of the theological Koran of the *politically correct*, the rights of man and the appeal for a peace such as the world gives, without there being any possibility of refutation of or even of dialogue about its heterodox theses and its veritable heresies, its perverse and diabolical will to destroy the Church of Christ.

But where a revolution has taken place, there should be counterrevolutionaries, recusants and reactionaries who do not understand the new spirit traversing the present. Thus, in the "Conciliar" Church (this strange elastic and amorphous entity that has the curious pretension of being "new"), there is a term to designate those who refuse the Church of Vatican II: *fundamentalists*. Moreover, we know that the French Vendéans were called brigands, as were the Bourbons, and that all those who opposed the Bolsheviks were labeled *kulaks*. Well, we have *kulaks* in the Church: they are the priests and faithful of the Society of Saint Pius X. There is no totalitarian power, even in the domain of the Faith, where there is not an absolute

enemy, and we know that the absolute enemy must be destroyed, he cannot be talked with; I can dialogue with everybody, but not to someone who denies that one can dialogue with everybody.

What is the reason for all this? Why have we this crisis of modernism that has been present from the time of St. Pius X? *Pascendi* does not fail to give us a precise, profound answer:

They are possessed by the empty desire of having their names upon the lips of the public, and they know they would never succeed in this were they to say only what has always been said by all men.¹⁷

These are only a few lines, but they say everything. This is exactly what we see today in the theological domain: no one can fail to be original if he wants to be taken for somebody; but we know that in reality, nothing has happened in the history of civilization, nor even in history as such, that hasn't been born of a desire to be faithful to tradition, to that which has always been considered true. We know, in sum, that all the great revolutions—true, profound, constructive—are born of dreams of fidelity. St. Thomas, the "dumb ox," certainly did not seek to be original: in his teaching, he had a precise syllabus of *questiones* to respect, about which he had to speak. What is true for culture is also true for holiness: the saint does not want to be original, but only to be humbly faithful to Christ; holiness, which is the greatest manifestation of the spiritual integrity of a person, only arises from a complete renunciation of all purely human and carnal originality.

In the history of Christianity, greatness arises from dreams of fidelity that become—because grace works like that—mysteriously fecund and capable of newness, but the newness is never willed for its own sake. A supreme example of this principle is given by the reform of the Roman Missal effected by St. Pius V. Nothing is more typical of Catholicism (when it is healthy, and not vitiated by Protestant and modernist influences) than a genuine hatred of, a spontaneous hostility toward, any change, in no matter what area, that might have been introduced out of the love of novelty for its own sake, so much so that certain gestures proper to the liturgy have been conserved even though their practical meaning has disappeared.

It is the *modern revolution*, beginning with Luther and Calvin, then Cromwell and the Puritan

¹⁷ *Pascendi*, §43.


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Revolution, that is animated by a gnostic desire to destroy the present because it does not manage to see its splendor, beauty, and grandeur; because it no longer has eyes or heart to comprehend the centuries of toil it took to build it. The rebellion of the modernists at the time of St. Pius X, as today, arises from pride, from self-love pushed to the contempt of God; it arises from the triumph of the flesh over the spirit. One cannot, after all, please God and the world at the same time.

And yet, faced with the scenario of ruin that meets the eyes of anyone who looks at the Church today, a Church in agony that advances by stumbling continually as she makes her way to the Calvary reserved for her, reasons for hope are not lacking. The first of all is the fact that the Mass of all time continues to be celebrated the world over (and this definition is already a seal of truth). Today, of course, not all understand the importance of this Mass: its beauty is too great for this adulterous and perverse generation to understand; it is a ray of light too intense and profound in the obscurity of time, at the hour of darkness, for the world to appreciate it. Our world, indeed, no longer knows how to love beautiful things, things full of silence, peace, heaven, light, truth. Life must act in us in the depths so that we can become truly capable of this; it will talk almost a miracle. Nevertheless I think of Dostoevsky's line: "Beauty will save the world." Even after contemplating this harsh and severe tableau, one cannot fail to have confidence in the incredible treasure of the holy Mass that the priests of the Society also keep for us, with a humble, reserved love and also with an old-fashioned kindness; a treasure that cannot be dilapidated,

that cannot be forgotten; a standard, ultimately, that cannot be lowered, that will never be lowered. And it little matters, really, if today it is torn and offended by so many sacrilegious hands, and if so few persons still know how to love it devoutly and with a sincere filial love. 

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