

The Reception and Application of the Encyclical *Pascendi*
The Reports of the Diocesan Bishops and the Superiors
of the Religious Orders until 1914

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Reports from the non-German Speaking Parts of Austria-Hungary

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Abstract The bishops of Austria-Hungary presented themselves as very keen in fulfilling the regulations of *Pascendi*, but they almost unanimously emphasized that there was no trace of ‘modernism’ to be found in theology or the ecclesiastical discipline within their respective dioceses. The term ‘modernism’ was mainly used to refer to a so-called ‘practical modernism’, i.e. a ‘liberal’ way of life in the parishes, to describe political and social movements (primarily the Christian Social Party, but also movements of national independence as in Bohemia) or, as in a few cases, to label criticism of ecclesiastical authorities.

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Keywords Modernism. Czechia. Slovakia. Hungary. Croatia. Galicia (Poland).

1 Overview

This article will examine the episcopal reports sent to Rome by non-German Austrian dioceses according to the regulations of the encyclical *Pascendi* (and other Roman decrees) in the years 1908 to 1914. Whether they correspond to the reality cannot be said with certainty. The little that is known about the actual situation in the dioceses, e.g. about the Hungarian Székesfehérvár and the bishop Prohászka¹ as well as Bohemia,² does not correspond entirely with the reports. But this problem will be addressed later on. First, only this remark: the reports reveal little about concrete ‘modernist contagions’ and say nothing on ‘theological modernism’, but they do reveal a lot about the slow decay of the ‘multinational state’ and the nationalizing aspirations of various communities within the Danube

1 Cf. Reichmann, *Bischof Ottokár Prohászka*.

2 For a short synthesis and bibliography of the research on Czech modernism see Petráček, “Předmluva k českému vydání”.

monarchy, with its historically developed over-regional ecclesiastical provinces, since the 1890s.³ Such nationalizing efforts were, in the reports of the bishops of the monarchy, associated with 'modernism'; however, it must be conceded that the national independency aspirations in Bohemia actually had something to do with 'modernism' in a broader sense.

Let us review briefly the average content of the reports, apart from the problem of nationalism/modernism. It is stated unanimously that no modernist contagion existed in the surveyed dioceses, that the various provisions of *Pascendi* had been put into practice and that only scholastic philosophy and the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas were being taught - with the additional information that the professors and seminary directors were highly educated and many a bishop could boast of having studied at the Gregorian University in Rome or with the Jesuits at Innsbruck. Also among students in the 'Tridentine' seminaries no trace of modernism could be found. Most bishops claimed they did not even know 'modernist' or other forbidden books and periodicals and that the reading of dangerous writings was strictly prohibited. Furthermore, the ecclesiastical printing license (*Imprimatur*) was being respected. Periodicals and newspapers were being controlled by censors. Conferences of priests - if held at all - could only take place with the permission of the ordinaries. The booksellers were being observed and possibly prevented from selling forbidden books. Finally, some bishops stressed that they, as *Pascendi* demanded, critically observed writings on the 'social question' as well as Christian Democratic parties (*Christsoziale*), which often represented modernist ideas. After the directive concerning the anti-modernist oath, it was quickly emphasized that this had been required immediately or would, in the few remaining cases, be administered immediately.

It was pointed out by most bishops that they had immediately established the Monitoring Committee (*Consilium a vigilantia*) requested by the Encyclical *Pascendi*. The same was being done for the also required diocesan and religious clergy censors. However, individual bishops mentioned that difficulties were arising due to the expansion of the dioceses. They indicated that it was hardly possible for the members of these commissions to meet at short intervals. Thus, in 1912, the Bishop of Olomouc (Olmütz), Cardinal Franz Sales Bauer, pointed out that his diocese was very large and vast - reaching beyond Austria (including the German Upper Silesian region of Katscher).⁴ In 1908 the later Viennese Cardinal Franz Xaver Nagl, bishop of Trieste and Capodistria, mentioned that the immediately established censoring committee had not been able to

³ For an introduction to the religious history of the Danube Monarchy cf. Klieber, *Jüdische - christliche - muslimische Lebenswelten*.

⁴ ASV, *Congr. Concist.*, *Positiones*, Olomuc 1, prot. 1412/1912.

convene yet due to the individual members living widely apart from each other and having various other obligations.⁵ Antun Mahnić, bishop of Krk (Veglia) argued in his letter: he had not set up the censoring committee in the episcopal curia yet, because of the diocese being very large. Furthermore there was only little to monitor, because besides himself only two or three other priests even published at all.⁶

2 The Individual Relations

Although the bishops almost unanimously emphasized that there was no trace of 'modernism' to be found in theology or the ecclesiastical discipline within their respective dioceses, the word 'modernism' was mentioned nonetheless. The term was mainly used to refer to a so-called 'practical modernism' i.e. a 'liberal' way of life in the parishes, to describe political and social movements or, as in a few cases, to label criticism of ecclesiastical authorities.

2.1 Czechia

Let us start with the area that is today Czechia. Already since 1830, but especially during the revolutionary year of 1848, Czech opposition against the monarchy and the Established Catholic Church of late Josephinism had led to a national movement that strove for more democracy in church and state. Czech liberal-Catholic papers such as the *Christian Idea* or the *White Flag* had fought for decades for a reconciliation between church doctrine and modern science. Also, German Reform Catholicism noticeably influenced the debate. Eventually it came to the establishment of a Czech Christian-Social party which was banned by the bishops after the appearance of *Pascendi* in 1907. Part of the 'rebels' capitulated but others radicalized and challenged – as in the periodical *Nezmar* – liturgical and disciplinary regulations. The Cardinal-Archbishop of Prague, Leo von Skrbensky (from whom no report is available), responded to such 'modernist' activities by dissolving associations and dismissing and punishing the clergy. Subsequently the radical wing of the Czech 'modernist' reform movement, led by Karel Farský after the First World War, broke away from the Roman Church. Following, in 1920, a Czech national church was established that originated because of modernism.⁷

5 ASV, *Congr. Concist., Positiones*, Trieste-Capodistria 1, prot. 402/1908.

6 ASV, *Congr. Concist., Positiones*, Krk 1, prot. 363/1909.

7 On Farsky and Czech modernism, cf. Němec, *The Czechoslovak Heresy and Schism*; Kučera, Lášek, *Modernismus – historie nebo výzva?*

This brief depiction of the development in the Czech region, paradigmatic for the other countries of the Habsburg monarchy as well, seemed necessary in order to better grasp what the individual relations of the Czech dioceses entailed. Special attention should be given to the report of the German Bishop of Brno (Brünn), Paul Graf Huyn, who, contrary to most other bishops in the monarchy, admitted 'modernism' to be present in his diocese in 1908.⁸ However, he added that he, like his predecessor, had been taking action against modernism since he took office in 1904 and had restored the right faith after the publication of *Lamentabili* and *Pascendi*. But he still had to report on some Czech priests who had spoken out against ecclesiastical discipline. He blamed two Czech modernist periodicals which circulated in the dioceses Prague and Olomouc in large numbers and had been spread in his diocese as well. Fortunately though, a third periodical full of liberal and modernist ideas would soon be discontinued. Overall he stated that modernism had almost completely withdrawn – even among the younger clergy who had previously been infected with the ideas from Germany. In a renewed report from 1911⁹ Graf Huyn was then able to conclude that because of the established *Consilium a Vigilantia*, modernism had virtually disappeared in his diocese. Only five priests had still been representing modernist ideas, but of these two had renounced and two had retired, leaving only one speaking up against his superiors. Unfortunately, however, these incorrect views were still prevalent among the teachers of the 'trade schools' (*Handelsschulen*: secondary vocational schools).

The reports of the Bishop of Brno, even if somewhat 'sugarcoated', nevertheless appear to describe the actual situation of the Catholic Church in Bohemia quite accurately, especially when the influence of Czech modernist periodicals or Germany is mentioned. This is not self-evident. In fact, the reports of bishops from other non-German dioceses of the monarchy, even those in Bohemia, differ. For example, in 1912 the Bishop of Olomouc Cardinal Franz von Sales Bauer thanked God that there was no modernism to be found in his diocese and in the seminaries. Allegedly, modernist writings were neither published nor read.¹⁰ Similarly, Bishop Joseph Dubrowa of Sadowa (Königgrätz) wrote in 1908: the clergy and the people of the great diocese stood loyally by the Church, the professors of theology were teaching the correct doctrine and for any publication the imprimatur was required.¹¹

8 ACDF, *Stanza Storica*, Q 4 cc, ff. 198-200.

9 ASV, *Congr. Concist.*, *Positiones*, Brno 1, prot. 1748/1911.

10 ASV, *Congr. Concist.*, *Positiones*, Olomuc 1, prot. 1412/1912.

11 ACDF, *Stanza Storica*, Q 4 cc, ff. 192-5.

2.2 Hungary

Let us get to Hungary (Transleithania). Here, the diocese of Stuhlweissenburg (Székesfehérvár; Alba Reale) is of particular interest. Since 1905 the highly respected Ottokár Prohászka¹² was bishop; an outstanding dogmatic theologian who was well-known beyond Hungary's borders, a pioneer of a new ministry that took the people seriously, a member of the Catholic People's Party and inspired by the ideas of the Christian Social movement. The latter certainly made him look like an advocate for 'social modernism' in Rome. But Prohászka's reform ideas went even further. In 1905 he published the book *Modern katolicizmus* (Modern Catholicism), in which he sought a reconciliation between faith and knowledge. He believed that rationally dissecting ideas did not work with matters of faith, but that the religious experience and the 'doing' were fundamental to finding truth, which was, as *Pascendi* clearly stated, a modernist view. Furthermore, in 1909, in an article of the periodical *Több békességet* (More Peace), he argued for a democratic regime and demanded the distribution of ecclesiastical estates. In 1910 he then spoke out against the unilateral Roman 'intellectualism' in his inaugural address to the Hungarian Academy. The result was the prohibition of his three publications in 1911, which the secretary of the Congregation of the Index, P. Thomas Esser, called "completely contaminated with modernism".¹³ As a leading figure of Hungarian Catholicism, it is understandable that he submitted to the Roman judgment. It is also understandable that his report of 1911 – it is one of the shortest – was limited to the sentence: "There are no modernist ideas in this region of Hungary".¹⁴

At least Prohászka had sent a report to Rome. Not all Hungarian bishops did this, like the bishops of Gran (Esztergom) and Eger (Cheb). Next to Prohászka's report, apparently only three other relations were sent. These were from the northwestern Hungarian diocese of Győr (Raab; Giavarino)¹⁵ and two dioceses in the southeast of Hungary – one in the Banat diocese of Seged-Csanád (Tschanad)¹⁶ with the former episcopal seat in Timisoara (an area which partly had to be ceded to Romania after 1918) and the other the diocese of Kalocsa (Kollotschau).¹⁷

12 On him Reichmann, *Bischof Ottokár Prohászka*.

13 Cf. Weiß, "P. Thomas Esser, Sekretär der Indexkongregation".

14 ASV, *Congr. Concist., Positiones*, Székesfehérvár 1, prot. 1800/1911.

15 ASV, *Congr. Concist., Positiones*, Győr 1, prot. 1546/1911.

16 ASV, *Congr. Concist., Positiones*, Csanád 1, prot. 391/1912.

17 ASV, *Congr. Concist., Positiones*, Kalocsa 1, prot. 11/1912

The reports from these three dioceses differed very little from Prohászka's, they were only slightly longer. For example, the bishop of Győr, Árpád Lipót Varády, wrote in his report of 1911¹⁸ that the theology professors stood faithfully behind the teachings of the Church and Scholasticism. Modernist writings were not available. Also, books had been censored and the clergy had been monitored for a long time already. The monitoring authority demanded for in *Pascendi* had been installed. Clerics had taken the anti-modernist oath. The bishop of Timisoara, Gyula Móri Glattfelder, asserted in 1912: in his diocese there was no modernism to be found – neither in public nor in private. The *Consilium Vigilantiae* had been established. The education in the seminaries was being imparted in the spirit of the Church and the publications were subjected to censorship. The clergy had taken the anti-modernist oath except for a young priest who did not have any modernist ideas, but admitted to “carnal love” of a girl. He had since left the priesthood and become a Calvinist. The Slovakian (and later also Cardinal) János Csernoch, Archbishop of Kalocsa, co-founder of the Catholic party, wrote in 1912 that he was pleased to announce good news. The professors were teaching scholastic philosophy and theology, theology students had an excellent discipline. Dangerous writings were banned in the diocese.¹⁹

2.3 Slovakia

Let us continue with the multicultural Slovak County Zips (Spiš, Szepes, Scepusio), the only Slovak diocese of which there is a relation similar to the one from Kalocsa. The Hungarian-born Bishop Alexander Párvy succinctly declared in 1911 that the theology professors were following the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas and had taken the oath as dictated by *Sacrorum antistitum*. The *Consilium a Vigilantia* met every month. Modernist books were neither edited nor read. The two periodicals which appeared in the diocese were written in the spirit of the Church.²⁰

2.4 Slovenia

Next we will discuss today's Slovenia, then being part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire albeit divided into the northeastern region belonging to Upper Styria around Maribor (Marburg) and the southwestern region of the capital, Ljubljana (Laibach). The ecclesiastical landscape was also divided: Maribor, in the northeast, since 1869 the episcopal seat of the diocese

18 ASV, *Congr. Concist., Positiones*, Gyor 1, prot. 1546/1911.

19 ASV, *Congr. Concist., Positiones*, Kalocsa 1, prot. 11/1912.

20 ASV, *Congr. Concist., Positiones*, Spis 1, prot. 1558/1911.

of Lavant (belonging to the ecclesiastical province of Salzburg), and the diocese of Ljubljana, in the west, belonging to the ecclesiastical province of Gorizia (Görz). But with its almost exclusively Slovene-speaking population, the diocese of Ljubljana was starting to break away from Gorizia.

As for the reports of the two 'Slovenian dioceses', both agreed that in their dioceses no trace of modernism could be found and all Roman regulations were being followed. Both, however, differed in style and above all in the length of their letters. The *relatio* by bishop Mihael Napotnik, signed on the 25th of November 1908 in Maribor was, with its 25 pages, by far the longest of all the studied relations.²¹ It was stated that the directors of the seminaries were exemplary, that the highly trained professors and students only taught scholastic theology and philosophy, that all other sciences were considered as "handmaidens of theology", that the alumni lived in a "Tridentine Seminary", that in 1903 (even before *Pascendi*) book censors had been appointed, that a *Consilium a Vigilantia* had also already been assembled, that the relics were being honoured and pious traditions maintained, that social activities had always been monitored, etc. etc., - all this being proven in the footnotes by quotations of earlier measures taken by the diocese. Even though the two reports from 1908²² and 1911²³ by the bishop of Ljubljana, Antonio Bonaventura Jeglič, were not as long, precise and extensive as the report by Napotnik, regarding their content the two 'Slovenian dioceses' essentially said the same. Only one additional wish was mentioned by bishop Jeglič: that the detachment of the diocese from Gorizia should be carried out.

2.5 The County of Gorizia (Görz) and its Suffragan Dioceses

Most reports by non-German dioceses of the Habsburg monarchy came from the region of today's *Croatia*, which at the time was a separate Austrian crown land. Here Istria stood out with numerous reports from bilingual or trilingual (Croatian, Italian, Slovenian) dioceses along the Dalmatian coast including the offshore islands. At that time these dioceses belonged to the ecclesiastical province of Gorizia. Gorizia itself, which (for the most part) belongs to Italy today, was politically an independent Austrian crown land which stretched far into today's Slovenia. The prevailing language was Italian. Let us now turn to the said dioceses of Istria.

21 ASV, *Segr. Stato, Spoglio Pio X* 7, fasc. 30.

22 ACDF, *Stanza Storica*, Q 4 cc, f. 206.

23 ASV, *Congr. Concist., Positiones*, Ljubljana 1, prot. 120/1910.

The reports from Gorizia (1909²⁴ and 1912²⁵) were a little out of the ordinary. The Archbishop Francis Borgia Sedej declared in 1908 that everything was in order (like most dioceses proclaimed), stating that the *Concilium a Vigilantia* had been established and a *Societas* constituted to verify the orthodoxy of the priests. In 1912, however, he reported sorely that one of his censors, a Franciscan, put forth a new doctrine in a journal for tertiaries: Jesus had fallen on the Via Crucis only once; Simon of Cyrene had carried the cross up to Golgotha. Also, he reported of tensions “between Italians and Slavs” in the clergy.

Such details are absent in the relations by the suffragans of Gorizia. Thus, in 1908, Franz Xaver Nagl, bishop of Trieste and Koper (Capodistria), reported with only a few lines that everything was in order and the Collegium of censors had been established but had not yet met.²⁶ Likewise, in 1908, bishop Ivan Flapp from Pula (Parenzo-Pola) succinctly noted that everything was in order.²⁷ The report from 1911, however, was different: even though the bishop emphasized that *il Concilio di Vigilanza* was functioning – with monthly reports not only on matters of theology but also on the political and social conditions – he had to admit that the faithful were following a sort of ‘practical modernism’. They were infected by the pagan lifestyle of modern society.²⁸

In 1909 the conscientious publicist Antun Mahnić, as a Slovene, had been appointed by the emperor as bishop of Krk (Veglia) to calm ethnic tensions between Croats and Italians. The clergy, he asserted, kept faithfully to the church on the topic of modernism. Clerics were trained in Gorizia where a good spirit prevailed. The censors required by the encyclical had not yet been appointed, because the diocese was very large and next to the bishop only two or three other priests even published anything. However, individual deviations in the clergy were noticeable. One priest asked during a speech whether the ecclesiastical regime could be improved by implementing some forms of democratic practices. This priest had been reprimanded, whereupon he had distanced himself from such modernist ideas.²⁹

24 ASV, *Congr. Concist., Positiones*, Gorizia-Gradisca 1, prot. 105/1909.

25 ASV, *Congr. Concist., Positiones*, Gorizia-Gradisca 1, prot. 337/1912.

26 ASV, *Congr. Concist., Positiones*, Trieste-Capodistria 1, prot. 402/1908.

27 ASV, *Segr. Stato*, 1908, rubr. 82, fasc. 8, ff. 63r-64v.

28 ASV, *Congr. Concist., Positiones*, Parenzo-Pola 1, prot. 613 e 1643/1911.

29 ASV, *Congr. Concist., Positiones*, Krk 1, prot. 363/1909.

2.6 The Other Regions of Dalmatia

In addition to the dioceses belonging to Gorizia, the former crown land Dalmatia comprised of six other dioceses all of which belonged to the ecclesiastical province of Zadar (Zara). Of these six, three relations are available: from Zadar, from Šibenik and from Split-Makarska.

The Metropolitan Vinko (Vinzenz) Pulišić of Zadar stressed that in his diocese both the panel of the censors as well as the *Consilium a Vigilantia* had been installed.³⁰ The *Consilium* also covered the suffragan dioceses. Modernist or liberal views were unknown. However, the priest Biankini, member of the Austrian *Reichsrat* in the diocese of Lesina (Hvar), had published a critical periodical. Furthermore, in the diocese of Ragusa (Dubrovnik), a priest named Prodan had spoken out against the church authorities in a periodical he edited. Both men were reprimanded and the periodicals had been removed from the seminaries. In 1914 the Metropolitan Pulišić had to realize that both periodicals were still publishing critical articles.³¹ In any event, the alumni were not allowed to read political and secular periodicals. They now stood loyally to the monarchy. Sympathy for Russia or Serbia did not exist any longer.

The report (1909) of the suffragan bishop (and later Archbishop) of Šibenik (Sebenico) Pulišić,³² stressed that none of his priests was influenced by modernism and that the censuring and controlling measures had been implemented. Also Filip Frano Nakić, pastor of the united dioceses of Split (Spalato) and Macarska (Macarsca), emphasized in 1909³³ that in general no modernism could be found in his dioceses. The Board of Censors and the *Consilium a Vigilantia* had been installed. They had an eye on the periodical *Sloboda* (Freedom), which represented certain modernist ideas. Also, dangerous publications were being brought into circulation secretly, mainly by Jewish booksellers. There were problems only with the worship of the diocesan patron St. Domnius (an early Christian martyr).

2.7 Croatia

Croatia (under the protection of the Hungarian crown). While the Dalmatian coastal region – with its predominantly Croatian population – belonged to Cisleithania and was thus a part of the Austrian crown land, the rest of today's Croatia was completely separated from Dalmatia and was

30 ASV, *Congr. Concist., Positiones*, Zara 1, prot. 1750/1911.

31 ASV, *Congr. Concist., Positiones*, Zara 1, prot. 1934/1914.

32 ASV, *Congr. Concist., Positiones*, Šibenik 1, prot. 792/1909.

33 ASV, *Congr. Concist., Positiones*, Split-Makarska 1, prot. 246/1909.

a somewhat independent country in the Hungarian realm. It had two ecclesiastical provinces with each two suffragan dioceses. However, there is only one relation available – from the Metropolitan seat in the Croatian capital Zagreb (Agram, Zagabria).

Anton Bauer, having been appointed Coadjutor Archbishop of Zagreb and consecrated by the secretary of state Merry del Val just a year before, had only good news to report on the 8th of December 1911: the professors taught a scholastic theology, modernist writings were unknown, the Board of Censors and the *Consilium a Vigilantia* were installed and the anti-modernist oath had been taken by the majority of the priests and ministers.³⁴

2.8 Lviv

Lviv (principal town of Austria-Poland, Galicia), today Ukraine.³⁵ The relation by the strongly pastorally and socially oriented archbishop of Lemberg, Józef Bilczewski (canonized by Pope John Paul II in 2001), was completely out of the ordinary in comparison to the other reports addressed to the Cardinal Secretary of State.³⁶ His report differed, because the bishop did not end the matter with assurances of compliance with the Roman rules. He expanded his report to a *Relatio de Statu fidei* of his diocese by illustrating why, unfortunately, not everything in his diocese represented an ideal situation. The bishop affirmed that he had communicated the provisions of *Pascendi* to the clergy. Also, the *Consilium a Vigilantia*, consisting of high prelates and superiors of the religious orders, had been established. He had so far only encountered obedience. But there were reasons why some things were not as he wished them to be. Unfortunately, in the cities believers were being deceived by newspapers to turn towards socialism. Certainly there were many faithful Catholics in the country. The problem, however, were the emigrants (to America, Prussia, Denmark, Sweden) who came back with liberal ideas. Furthermore, there were some scholars and learned people who were of the opinion that faith impeded science. They were not enemies of faith, but indifferent to it.

Also, the priests in the parishes were overloaded with work. Some parishes included twenty or more villages with inhabitants not only from Poland but also from Germany and Hungary, and had to deal with influences

³⁴ ASV, *Congr. Concist., Positiones*, Zagreb 1, prot. 1745/1911.

³⁵ The last Armenian Catholic archbishop of Lviv (Leopolis) Józef Teodorowicz (1864-1938), from whom no report is available, brought himself temporarily into trouble by a public discourse on 'modernism' and 'reform catholicism' (especially Herman Schell), which he held shortly before the conference of the Austrian bishops at Vienna in November 1907. Cf. ASV, *Segr. Stato*, 1908, rubr. 82, fasc. 4, ff. 67r-71v.

³⁶ ASV, *Segr. Stato*, 1908, rubr. 82, fasc. 8, ff. 9r-18r.

from the many schismatics and Jews.³⁷ Bishop Bilczewski mentioned he understood that some clergy were dissatisfied and hoped for changes but did not want to call this 'modernism'. Also, he said there were problems with the teaching of religion in schools and he wished that laymen could give lessons in the primary and secondary schools. Nevertheless, his catechists were faithful. One catechist at the high school, however, had issued an article which spoke of the "psychological reasons of faith". The article had been removed from publication and the catechist had submitted to the censure. Other than that religious periodicals were strengthening faith in the diocese. Regarding the seminary, his auxiliary bishop, as the director of the seminary, made sure that the decrees by Rome were being followed. The university professors who had been educated at the Gregorian University and at the Innsbruck Jesuit faculty were only teaching *ad mentem* S. *Thomae*. Bishop Bilczewski concluded by reiterating that no trace of modernism was to be found in his diocese.

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37 For the wide field of Catholic anti-semitism in the Polish context and an overview of the initial situation around 1900, cf. e.g. Pollmann, *Untermieter im christlichen Haus*.

