

Defending the Faith: An Anti-Modernist Anthology. Ed. and Trans. William H. Marshner. Introduction by C. J. T. Talar. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 2017. Pp. xxii + 340. \$34.95.

This anthology of key texts by critics of the so-called Modernists is valuable and useful provided it is read with critically historical sensitivity. I will explain this proviso in due course. The anthology is valuable in that it collects a variety of interconnected views critical of Modernist scholars, views published in the heat of the Modernist Crisis and not sufficiently noticed by most later commentators. As a result, readers of later commentators have perhaps come away with an impression too ignorant of various anti-Modernist positions and therefore too slanted in favor of those identified as “Modernists.”

The collection draws on the views of competent and thoughtful anti-Modernists—Pierre Batiffol, M.-J. Lagrange, Eugène Portalié, Eugène Franon, Léonce de Grandmaison, and Johannes Wehrlé—all published in prominent French Catholic journals. M.’s English translations are accurate and elegant and therefore especially useful for non-French readers.

The nub of the discord among the Modernists and anti-Modernists included in this volume can perhaps be specified as the problematic of conceptualizing divinely revealed dogmas. Modernists regarded dogmatic conceptualizations as metaphoric; anti-Modernists regarded such characterizations as short-changing the literal truth of dogma.

Truth to tell, however, not all the figures appearing here would accord the same value to the literalism of dogmatic definitions. For example, I would be surprised if they would all agree with Wehrlé’s contention: “I posit first-off, as a fact, that ‘God has spoken’ literally” (312). Clearly some of the figures represented here are open to discussing the epistemological problematic of formulating dogmas, but most tend simply to dismiss it, e.g., Loisy’s exegetical method and Le Roy’s arguments against over-literalizing dogmatic statements.

Lagrange is certainly among the anti-Modernists with whom Loisy could have had serious and respectful conversations over appropriate and appropriately “modern” exegetical methods. This could not be said of, e.g., Batiffol, who, as far as Roman Catholic Church leaders and “orthodox” scholars were concerned, won the day over Loisy. But this was part of the problem between the two “sides,” namely, that one was seeking to bury the other, not to have a conversation toward a workable accommodation. Those represented by, e.g., Batiffol, Portalié, and Franon were too intolerant of ambiguities left in church teaching if one allowed it a too generous portion of metaphor.

That said—and so much more needs to be said on these essays and the very complex issues they raise—a fabulous education awaits graduate students and their professors who intelligently work through these essays. The texts broach most, if not all, the key issues raised during the Modernist crisis. As such, diligently studying these essays with an open mind will yield readers at least two major returns: first, an eye-opening understanding of the deeper reality of the Modernist crisis; and, following from this, a

realization of why the papal condemnations of Modernism, which simply lumped the identified “Modernists” together and drove them either out of the church or underground, were such a tragedy, in that the condemnations postponed the historically necessary conversation with modern thought to the post-World Wars era leading up to the Second Vatican Council. Indeed, I would go so far as to contend that one cannot understand the historical necessity of Vatican II and the development of today’s church without taking the trouble to labor through the issues raised by the texts in this volume.

Now for the proviso in my opening sentence. The value of this collection will be missed if it is not approached from a sufficiently substantial and critically historical perspective. If one were to read these essays without a deep understanding of the historical currents running through the waters of the long nineteenth century, one would almost certainly misunderstand them. One must come at them with a thorough grasp of Enlightenment thought and the socio-cultural turbulence it generated from the French Revolution throughout the nineteenth century and, indeed, up to the present day. Not the least of these currents was the rise of schools of philosophy and theology that contended with, and over against, ahistorical Scholasticism.

Talar’s introduction, itself worth the price of this collection, expertly moves in the right direction. However, much more toward the historical contextualization of the essays is required if this volume is to make the kind of contribution it promises. A naïve reading could lead to the conclusion that authors who tended to dismiss the arguments of the “Modernists” were right and Vatican II was unfortunate.

David G. Schultenover, SJ
Marquette University

The Roots of Pope Francis’s Social and Political Thought: From Argentina to the Vatican. By Thomas R. Rourke. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016. Pp. viii + 221. \$80.

According to the author of this book, one of the challenges in understanding Francis’s teachings dwells in the fact that the Latin American theological and ecclesial context is unknown to many American readers. His intention, therefore, is to offer a summary of the most relevant sources that have shaped Francis’s social and political thought.

Rourke begins his work by analyzing the influence that the Jesuit missions among the Guarani had on Bergoglio, especially their fusion of the evangelizing mission with the practice of justice. This missionary model enabled the development of the Guarani culture, ensuring them access to universal goods. Hence, the preaching of the word became incarnate in all the dimensions of life.

R. highlights the influence on Bergoglio of Francisco Suárez, a Jesuit theologian whose theory of popular sovereignty acknowledges the human being as a social entity in search of the common good and concretely posits the people as a collective subject. The principle of popular sovereignty guarantees that rational absolutes and abstract ideologies will not be imposed on the people’s culture.