Radical Catholic Traditionalism: a Translation of Gérard Leclerc's *Lefebvristes: le retour*

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines some of the difficulties and challenges associated with translating a work about the Catholic religion from French into English. I have chosen to translate excerpts from the book *Lefebvristes: le retour* by Gérard Leclerc which deals with radical Catholic traditionalism and its rejection of the Second Vatican Council. The first section of the thesis gives the background and context of the Council as well as a brief history of the group known as Lefebvrists and their schism from the Roman Catholic Church that occurred in 1988. The second section then examines some of the theoretical considerations involved in the translation, including why I chose to translate this book and a discussion of the difficulties encountered along with my strategies for resolving them. Particular attention is paid to the scarcity of works translated from French into English on the topic of the Lefebvrists, difficulties with terminology, intertextuality and ecumenical language. The thesis concludes with my translation of the introduction and chapters one, four and five of Leclerc's book.

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Introduction

Much press is given to liberal dissenters within the Catholic Church, such as those who dispute its moral and theological teachings, but how many people have ever heard of the radically conservative dissenters who feel that the Catholic Church has become too liberal and made too many harmful changes since the reforms of the 1960s? There is a small, but vocal group of radical traditionalists who cling to the Traditional Latin Rite of the Mass and who reject the new catechisms and the new theological directions that the Catholic Church has taken in the past fifty years since the Second Vatican Council. One of the most well-known factions of this group is the Society of Saint Pius X (SSPX, also called *Lefebvrists*) which was founded by the French Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre in 1970 and which, unable to accept the reforms made after the Second Vatican Council, broke away from the Catholic Church in 1988. However, the Vatican did not write them off after this moment, but has in fact spent many years in talks with the SSPX, hoping to find a path to full reconciliation. As Marcel Lefebvre was French, and many French people today adhere to the SSPX movement, no less than twelve books about radical traditionalism have been published in French since 1976, and only one of them has been translated into English! In the English language there have been only two books published on the topic, and none since 2005 (not including self-published works).

I spent some time in the north of France and was surprised and taken aback by the popularity of the SSPX among French Catholics. However, this is not

an issue confined to that country alone, but has spread out to many countries, including Canada. This is the reason why I chose to translate significant sections of Gérard Leclerc's book *Lefebvristes: le retour*, namely to make some of this material available in English for English-speakers who want to learn more about the issue and are unable to read the original French. On the back cover of my edition of the book, a small blurb explains that this book is an opportunity to explore "pourquoi les leitmotive lefebvristes méritent attention et dialogue" ("why the Lefebvrist leitmotifs are worthy of attention and dialogue"). In this way I believe that the author and I share a motive for wanting to disseminate this information: to convince people not to write off the Lefebvrists as fringe radicals, but to examine their arguments, engage them in dialogue and include them in the pursuit for reconciliation and unity.

My thesis is split into three sections. The first section examines the historical context and background of the Second Vatican Council, as an understanding of this council and the reforms made is essential to understanding the SSPX schism. I will examine and briefly explain the most controversial topics that were discussed and elaborated at Vatican II: "La Nouvelle Théologie", *ressourcement* and *aggiornamento*, religious freedom, ecumenism, collegiality, continuity versus rupture and the reform of the liturgy. I will also include a brief history of Marcel Lefebvre, his founding of the *Society of Saint Pius X*, and his entrance into formal schism with the Catholic Church in 1988 after his illicit consecration of four new bishops.

The second part will focus on my translation, why I chose it, the challenges I encountered, and the theoretical framework that helped to guide me. I will briefly review what works are available on this subject in French and English and why a current English translation is needed. I will also discuss what the SSPX themselves publish, why it is important to publish critical examinations of their publications, and also why it is important to treat them respectfully and to promote goodwill and reconciliation. I will then discuss some of my difficulties in translating terminology, why I included a small amount of "foreignization" and what the current theory has to say about this translation strategy. I will also discuss the idea of "intertextuality", and in particular what Lawrence Venuti has written about it, and connect it to some of the difficulties I encountered in recognizing and understanding the references made by Leclerc and the other texts to which he refers. Finally, I will briefly examine several other difficulties I encountered including the use, or lack thereof, of ecumenical language in the book, the many uncited sources it contains and the French use of the pronouns "we" and "I".

The final section of my thesis is my translation of the introduction and three chapters from Leclerc's book. Due to space constraints, I chose to only translate those chapters I deemed to be the most relevant and that go straight to the heart of the matter. I chose not to translate chapters two and three because they deal with the history of Marcel Lefebvre and the Second Vatican Council,

two topics already discussed in my commentary. I left out the conclusion because I felt it was unnecessary, as it doesn't say anything new or essential.

This thesis is useful to the field of translation studies because it focuses on a topic that so far has been largely ignored by scholars. My work will help shed light on an important issue in the Catholic Church as well as on the issues surrounding the translation of religious materials from French into English, and provide some resources for those who wish to study and understand the Lefebvrist movement, or for those also wishing to translate within this area. In this way, it can contribute to reconciliation among all Catholics and to the breaking down of the barriers that have been set in place between the SSPX and the Roman Catholic Church ever since the closing of the Second Vatican Council, as well as inspire more translations to be undertaken on this subject.

Part I: Background

The Second Vatican Council

In the 1960s the western world was going through many significant societal changes, and the Roman Catholic Church convened an ecumenical council (the 21st of such councils since Nicea in 325) to address these changes and discuss the role of the Catholic Church amidst this societal upheaval. John XXIII, the pope who called the Second Vatican Council (commonly known as Vatican II), declared his intentions at the opening speech of the first session in 1962: "The greatest concern of the Ecumenical Council is this: that the sacred deposit of Christian doctrine should be guarded and taught more efficaciously. That doctrine embraces the whole of man, composed as he is of body and soul" ("Opening Speech to the Council"). He explains that the primary aim of the Council is "a step forward toward a doctrinal penetration and a formation of consciousness in faithful and perfect conformity to the authentic doctrine, which, however, should be studied and expounded through the methods of research and through the literary forms of modern thought" ("Opening Speech to the Council"). In other words, the Council was not convened to debate and decide upon one or several specific items of doctrine, but rather to make all the doctrines of the Church available in a more pastoral language (as opposed to the rigid doctrinal and juridical language of the past), updated to fit with modern ways of thinking, speaking and researching. This was a significant departure from the past councils, which were generally called in response to heresy or some

undecided doctrinal matter that needed urgent clarification, such as at the Council of Trent, which met in the 16th century in response to the Protestant Reformation. The language that was used at these councils to refer to other Christians or those deemed to be heretics was often defensive, polemical and condemning (O'Malley, "Vatican II: Did Anything Happen" 70). As O'Malley puts it, "The fundamental assumption governing councils from their very inception, was that they were legislative bodies that issued ordinances regarding doctrinal formulations and public behaviour – *fides et mores*. To these ordinances were often attached penalties for violators" ("Did Anything Happen" 69). Although this type of language was normal and was meant to protect the Catholic Church and guide all Catholics to salvation, he calls this type of discourse, "the language of adversarial relationships", which doesn't leave much room for pastoral or ecumenical dialogue ("Did Anything Happen" 71). Vatican II was a significant departure from the previous councils in that John XXIII was hoping to avoid contentious and condemning language and ordinances; however, this "pastoral" approach was later seized upon by the Lefebvrists as a reason for rejecting the Council, since it was not considered to be "dogmatic", as the councils of the past had been. In other words, it did not convene in order to decide upon specific dogmatic issues. As well, the ecclesiology (the way the Church describes itself) of the Roman Catholic Church in the centuries between Trent and Vatican II was very defensive and juridical. As a reaction against the Reformation idea of a purely invisible Church and the Protestant rejection of the papacy, the Catholic

Church started to place a heavy emphasis on its visible and institutional character, which resulted in a definition of the Catholic Church based on being "against" something else. This is what Frederick J. Parrella terms "Tridentinism", in which the Church is understood as a fortress and its own "perfect society" (*societas perfecta*) (322). According to this philosophy, the Church contains within itself everything that it needs to attain its proposed end, in this case the salvation of souls. It is a complete and self-sufficient society that is distinct and independent from any other society. Parrella writes that as a result of this way of thinking, "This Church stood solidly for centuries in a defensive mode against the modern world; it was in constant battle against the errors of the Protestant Reformers and such threats as Gallicanism[1], rationalism, Darwinism, Modernism, Communism and Secularism" (322). To protect itself, the Catholic Church hardened its walls and became increasingly centralized, with all authority being concentrated in the hands of the Pope and the magisterium. The result of this centralization also brought with it a desire for uniformity in all things, such as in the insistence on using only the Latin liturgy. This ecclesiology, although instrumental in defending the Catholic Church from its enemies, tended toward intransigence. For the most part, "the Church" was equated with the Roman Catholic Church alone, and all other Christian communities separated from Rome were not considered to be churches nor Christian (Granfield 6). New ideologies

[1] A doctrine originating in France that stresses the civil authority's and French Church's freedom from the ecclesiastical authority of the papacy ("Gallicanism", Cross and Livingstone).

and ways of thinking were treated with suspicion. This was the type of thinking that dominated Marcel Lefebvre's theological formation in the 1920s, and which can still be found among the extreme traditionalists of today. However, John XXIII as well as many of the council fathers and theologians wanted to take a more pastoral and ecumenical approach this time around, using a language that would be more charitable, welcoming and positive, rather than condemning, juridical and adversarial. This was another way in which Vatican II departed from past norms. As John XXIII put it, "Nowadays…the Spouse of Christ prefers to make use of the medicine of mercy rather than that of severity" ("Opening Speech to the Council"). The documents of the Council are divided into three "classes" of documents: the constitutions, the decrees and the declarations. The Council issued four constitutions, nine decrees and three declarations.

A solid understanding of the Council and its context is necessary in order to understand the Lefebvrist schism, as they consider this event to be the moment in which everything started going downhill for the Church. Indeed, whether for good or for bad, the historian James Hitchcock called it, "the most important event within the [Catholic] Church in the past four hundred years" (quoted in Komonchak, "Interpreting the Council" 17). Lefebvre called it the greatest disaster in the history of the Church (Komonchak, "Benedict XVI and the Interpretation of Vatican II" 326). Many young people born years after the closing of the Council take for granted such ideas as religious freedom and ecumenical dialogue, and are unaware of just how controversial many of these

subjects were at the time of the Council and during the decades leading up to it. For the Lefebvrists today, many of these topics are still treated with skepticism, or rejected outright, and Leclerc often touches on them in his book. They are major stumbling blocks in the way of the SSPX being fully reconciled with the Roman Church.

La Nouvelle Théologie

"La nouvelle théologie", often treated with mistrust and skepticism by the Lefebvrists, was the term used to describe a shift in theological thinking in post-war Europe, which was particularly influential in France. Previously, a brand of Thomism ("neo-Thomism", that is, a revival of the study of and reverence for the works of Thomas Aquinas) specifically approved and enforced by the Church, along with neoscholasticism and strong antimodernist sentiments, were the major influences on Catholic theology. However, after the trauma of two devastating world wars, perspectives started to change and a group of theologians started espousing views that favoured a more historical, personalist[2], biblical and patristic approach to theology as opposed to the sterile scholasticism of former times (Egan 57). These theologians hoped to take seriously the shifting modes of thinking in the modern world and to apply new academic developments to the study of theology, such as applying historical-

[2] Personalism is an approach to philosophy that emphasizes the centrality of the person, focusing on the experience, status and dignity of human beings and their unique place among other beings in general. Developed in reaction to approaches that were perceived as being impersonal and overly rationalistic ("Personalism").

critical methods to scripture exegesis and accepting a plurality of philosophical approaches (Egan 48). In France, the best-known faces of "la nouvelle théologie" were Yves Congar, who was an ardent promoter of ecumenism (a movement that seeks visible Christian unity), Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who attempted to relate Christian thinking to contemporary scientific understandings of nature and evolution, and Henri de Lubac, who opened up a rediscovery of pre-Tridentine Christian tradition and whose work *The Splendor of the Church* Leclerc comments on as being essential for fully understanding the Vatican II constitution *Lumen Gentium,* "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church" (Cross and Livingstone; Leclerc 84[3]). Leclerc speaks about two schools of "la nouvelle théologie": the Fourvière School, which included Hans Urs von Balthasar and to whom we owe the great work *Sources chrétiennes*, a collection of patristic writings edited in part by de Lubac and Jean Daniélou, and the Saulchoir School, which included Congar and the priest Marie-Dominique Chenu (83). Initially this nouvelle théologie was treated with suspicion, accused of being a "novelty" (in other words, heterodox) and of trying to marry orthodox Catholic thinking to the errors of modernism. These theologians were often censored by the Vatican, forbidden to republish or translate their works, and even removed from their teaching positions, as happened to Congar and de Lubac (Leclerc 83). However, many of them were formally vindicated at the Second Vatican Council, when they were called on by

[3] The page numbers for citations from Leclerc are taken from the original French book unless otherwise indicated.

John XXIII to help with the preparations and the drafting of the documents. As Egan points out, "All the conciliar documents assimilated the new insights of twentieth-century theology" with "a real sense of relating the faith dynamically to current concerns and historical developments" (67). Leclerc states that his own personal "thesis" is that the *traditionaliste*[4] dissent stems from an incomprehension of these new theological movements which were stirring before the Second Vatican Council (30). He argues in defense of "la nouvelle théologie", saying that of all the theologians of the 20th century, it was those in the "nouvelle théologie" camp who were able "to overcome the pitfalls that hindered the development of Christian thought for quite a while" (84; my translation: 90). However, Lefebvre and his followers seemed to be locked into the old theology and rigid Thomism of the pre-World War II decades, and their rejection of the Vatican II Council stems from their lack of knowledge about "la nouvelle théologie" (Leclerc 84-85).

Ressourcement and Aggiornamento

The ideas of *ressourcement* and *aggiornamento* were two of the major driving forces behind the Council and important aspects of "la nouvelle théologie". *Aggiornamento*, Italian for "updating" or "modernizing", expressed the need for the Church to adapt in the present age to better guide people to the truth instead of remaining stagnant in its theology (O'Malley, *What Happened at*

[4] See section "Terminology" for explanation of why this word appears in French and italicized.

Vatican II 38). *Ressourcement*, French for "return to the sources", sought to look to the past in order to better conform to tradition, the Gospel and the historical Church. The idea of returning to the sources is what inspired a revival of Thomism in the Catholic Church of the 19th century and O'Malley explains that, "some form of *ressourcement* lay behind every reform movement in Western Christianity – and behind every reform movement in Western culture – at least up to the Enlightenment" (*What Happened at Vatican II* 41).

Controversial Subjects of Vatican II

Although all the documents of Vatican II were signed by a majority of the Council fathers present, a conservative minority (of which Lefebvre was a part, commonly called "the minority") still found many aspects controversial, and on the other side of the spectrum, some progressive thinkers didn't think the Council went far enough in its declarations. Understanding these controversial subjects will help to shed light on the reasons behind Lefebvre's split from Rome and his attacks on the conciliar documents, and why many people today adhere to the SSPX schism.

Religious Freedom

As stated in the "Declaration on Religious Liberty", The Vatican Council declared "that the human person has a right to religious freedom" (§2). The Declaration goes on to explain that every individual should be immune from coercion in religious matters and never forced to act against their convictions by

any individual, social group, or human power. It states that this right to religious liberty is inherent in the dignity that all human beings possess and that the very act of faith must in itself constitute a free act on the part of the human person (§2, §10). However, it clarifies that all people are duty bound to seek the truth, follow their conscience, and adhere to the truth once they come to know it. This right to religious freedom "continues to exist even in those who do not live up to their obligation of seeking the truth and adhering to it" (§2).

O'Malley writes that this way of thinking was very counter-intuitive for many Catholics, aside from the American bishops, who supported it whole-heartedly. For the most part, the Catholic teaching before Vatican II was that since the Catholic faith is the only true faith, it is the only religion that has a right to freedom. In order to protect the rights of Catholic citizens, it was considered that it was sometimes necessary to supress or discourage other religions. Those opposed to the Declaration worried that it would lead to religious indifferentism, would break with Tradition, and would promote liberalism and modernism (*What Happened at Vatican II* 211-218).

Ecumenism

One of the major goals of the Council was to use an ecumenical language and to show openness towards other Christian communities. Ecumenism was a movement that arose among Protestants in the beginning of the 20th century and which sought greater visible unity among separated Christian communities.

Initially the Popes were wary of this movement, and Pius IX wrote in his encyclical *Mortalium Animos* that Catholics were not allowed to participate in ecumenical gatherings. For the most part, "ecumenism" in the Catholic Church before Vatican II consisted of insisting that all separated Christians (if they could even be called "Christians") return to the Roman Catholic Church, the One True Faith (see *Mortalium Animos*).

However, a great shift in ecclesiology and language occurred with the final draft of the document *Lumen Gentium*, "The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church". Section 8 of *Lumen Gentium* says that the one true Church of Christ "subsists in" the Roman Catholic Church, which is a significant departure from saying that the true Church of Christ *is* the Roman Catholic Church. Now there was an explicit recognition that elements of Christianity can be found outside of the Roman Catholic Church and that separated brothers and sisters are worthy of the title "Christian". As well, the Council gave a positive evaluation of the ecumenical movement in its "Decree on Ecumenism" and encouraged Catholics to participate in the movement, as long as they follow the guidelines set down by the Catholic Church.

Some of the more conservative council fathers worried that the ecumenical movement promoted an obscuring of essential truths for the sake of a shallow surface unity (even though this type of approach is specifically condemned in section 11 of the Decree on Ecumenism). Some worried it would mean an end to all missionary work and would promote relativism and

indifferentism, as now one could be considered a Christian outside of the Roman Catholic Church.

Collegiality

The debate surrounding collegiality has to do with the relationship between the pope and the other bishops, and the level of authority that each one exercises. Much discussion occurred around the question of whether bishops were simply an arm of the all-powerful papacy, or whether they exercised authority in their own right by virtue of their office as bishop. The word "collegiality" refers to the way that the bishops form a governing body with an important and authoritative role in the Catholic Church, as opposed to concentrating all power and authority into the hands of the pope alone. This issue touched many nerves at the Council and "surely occupied more time and attention during the two preceding sessions of the Council than any other issue. No other issue resulted in so much activity both open and covert; nor was any other issue subjected to such a careful and meticulous voting" (Ratzinger[5] 162). On the one side, those who supported collegiality believed that they were on the side of tradition and *ressourcement*, and claimed that collegiality had been the norm during the first millennium of the Church, and had progressively been pushed aside in favour of greater and greater papal primacy (O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* 302-303). On the other side of the debate were those

[5] Later to become Pope Benedict XVI

who understood papal primacy as an absolute monarchy, and were worried that a positive evaluation of collegiality would hurt the way the Catholic Church functions and would damage the authority of the pope. Perhaps it would even lead to "conciliarism" (the idea of councils having authority over the pope). They did not see how collegiality and papal primacy (which had formally been defined at the First Vatican Council) could be reconciled (O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* 303).

Yet, the Council did believe that the two concepts could go hand-in-hand. The Council declared that the college of bishops does exercise authority over the Catholic Church, and that the pope is a part of this college. However, the college of bishops cannot function separately from the pope. The college can exert its full power and authority in the context of a council, but this council must be at least "accepted" by the pope (Ratzinger 167-168). Overall, the Council preserved the doctrine of papal primacy, but gave a greater recognition to the role that the bishops play in the governing and shepherding of the Catholic Church. A conservative decision by all accounts, but there were still those in the "minority" who worried that this was democracy and the French Revolution creeping into the very structure of the Catholic Church.

Continuity versus Rupture

One important aspect in the debate surrounding Vatican II is the question of "continuity" versus "discontinuity" in the conciliar teachings. If simplified into

two extremes, one could identify on the one side those who claim that Vatican II was a massive rupture with tradition and changed everything, or on the other side, those who argue that the conciliar teachings were in perfect continuity with the history of the Catholic Church and that the Council did not significantly change a single thing. In between those two extremes are any number of middle-ground positions. It is an extremely complicated and controversial question, because on the one hand any mention of discontinuity can be met with accusations that the Council taught heresy and betrayed the faith, therefore it should be rejected (as the radical traditionalists often claim), yet some also go so far as to say that nothing at all changed, in which case, what was the point of the Council? O'Malley argues that "today a strong, and at least semiofficial, interpretation of the council insists in such an exclusive way on the council's continuity with the Catholic past that it seems to minimize the council's significance" (*Did Anything Happen* 1-2). Perhaps this stress on the continuity of the Council emerged as a reaction against those who argued in favour of a rupture with the past, a position often held by those deemed to be "progressive" or "liberal", and, ironically, the extreme traditionalists. Whereas the former would see this a positive situation, the latter see it as a major crisis in the Catholic Church.

In his Christmas address to the Roman Curia on December 22, 2005, Benedict XVI spoke of the "hermeneutic of rupture" and the "hermeneutic of reform." While he disagrees with the interpretation that sees Vatican II as a

complete rupture with the past, he does argue that there were areas of necessary discontinuity, but that this discontinuity in no way threatens the consistent identity of the Church over time (Komonchak, "Benedict XVI" 333). Moreover, one cannot speak of reform without necessarily speaking of some discontinuity (Komonchak, "Benedict XVI" 326). However, for the Lefebvrists, Vatican II was a "rupture" that was unfaithful to Tradition, Church history and the deposit of the faith (Bagnard 11).

Reform of the Liturgy

The Reform of the liturgy and what is often called the *novus ordo* (the new rite of the Mass) are major sticking points for the radical traditionalists, who cling fervently to the Tridentine Mass (the pre-reform rite). The radical traditionalist refusal to accept the validity of the new rite is one of the largest stumbling blocks to reconciliation with the Vatican, and one of the major driving forces behind the schism. Catholics on both sides of the debate are often misinformed about how and why the liturgical changes took place. Contrary to what many people believe, the Second Vatican Council did not change the liturgy of the Mass. It did not even do away with Latin as the language of the Mass. What the Council did do was promulgate a document called *Sacrosanctum Concilium,* "The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy", which laid down some guidelines and principles for how to proceed with a reform of the liturgy and of the sacramental rites. Among other things, the document says that the Latin language should be preserved (§36.1; §54), that no innovations are allowed,

unless approved by Rome (§23) and that sacred music is to be preserved, with Gregorian chant having pride of place (§114; §116). After the closing of the Council in 1965, Paul VI established a commission, called the *Consilium*, which was to oversee and implement the principles for liturgical renewal (O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* 139). Debate began as to whether the "spirit" of the council called for changes and revisions that were not explicitly approved in the Constitution. O'Malley suggests that the Constitution contained within itself a dynamism that led to changes that some could argue "were required by its most fundamental principles" (*What Happened at Vatican II* 140). Within only a few years, major changes started taking place that affected almost every aspect of the Roman liturgy, such as the Mass being entirely in the vernacular and the priest facing the people instead of the altar (O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* 139). But many parishes started introducing changes at an alarming rate that were not officially approved, with things sometimes getting out of control. Many parishes did away with sacred music, sacred art and traditional devotions and introduced unapproved innovations into the liturgy. Likoudis and Whitehead, in commenting on the "traditionalist" reaction to the reform, write that:

> Not all of the "changes" which the average Catholic in the pew has experienced over the past decade[s] and more were necessarily decreed, or even desired, by the Council or by the Holy See, as far as we can judge by their official acts. Some of the most characteristic and best known of

> the post-conciliar changes – "the guitar Mass, the handshake of peace, nuns wearing lay garb", as one post-conciliar survey, superficially, has described them – really seem to have arisen out of what many Catholics evidently *thought* that Vatican II called for or meant. (11)

These unexplained and sudden changes left many Catholics confused and concerned for the future of their Church. In many places the reform seemed to take on a life of its own, and zealous reformers advocated secular ideas and teachings that were indeed contrary to the Catholic faith. As Leclerc puts it, "Christian communities were crumbling, carried away with the evolution of morals and often misunderstood ecclesiastical reforms" (61; my translation: 71). He continues with: "It is not surprising then that under these circumstances a movement called *traditionaliste* grew and spread in the midst of a world on the verge of collapse" (61; my translation: 71), a sentiment shared by Likoudis and Whitehead as well (16).

The Lefebvrist Schism

When it comes to the coverage of the Catholic Church in the media, not much attention is given to the "extreme traditionalist" controversy, and as a result not many people have ever heard of it. However, it is a big debate within the Catholic Church itself, especially in, but not limited to, French-speaking areas. According to one of their websites, the *Society of Saint Pius X* is present in 63 countries and as of 2013 has 589 priests working for it ("Statistics of the SSPX

Worldwide"; "General Statistics"). The Society is present in Canada as well and says Mass in 6 cities in Alberta (http://fsspx.com/MassCentres.htm). This controversy is part of the ongoing debate in the Catholic Church surrounding the Second Vatican Council and its interpretation.

The SSPX was founded by Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, who was born in 1905 in Tourcoing, a small city in Northern France that is part of the Lille Métropole. In 1923 he travelled to Rome to attend seminary and completed a doctorate of theology in 1930 (Tissier de Mallerais 29, 69). He was ordained as a Spiritan Missionary and was sent to French-speaking Africa, eventually to become the first Archbishop of Dakar, Senegal (Madrid and Vere 23-24). Archbishop Lefebvre was present at the Second Vatican Council and was an outspoken voice of the conservative *minority*. As mentioned above and commented on by Leclerc, the decades following the closing of Vatican II were a time of much confusion and turmoil in the Catholic Church, with many people disagreeing on the proper implementation of the Council. Paul VI is famously quoted as saying in 1972 that "Through some crack, the smoke of Satan has entered the Church" [6] ("Omelia di Paolo VI"; my translation). The situation was especially extreme in parts of France, and there were accusations made that traditional-minded seminarians were being squeezed out of the seminaries and asked not to return (see for example *La Blessure* by Jean-Pierre Dickès). Madrid

[6] "da qualche fessura sia entrato il fumo di Satana nel tempio di Dio".

and Vere quote an anonymous seminary professor as saying that, “More than any others, the French took modernization further than what the conciliar fathers had intended at the Second Vatican Council. They admitted open Communists to their seminaries, but often there was no room at the inn for young men seeking to live a life of service and prayer” (25-26). Some of these rejected seminarians approached Lefebvre in 1969 and asked him to help them. He formed an association meant to assist in priestly training, and in 1970 the *Society of Saint Pius X* was formed with its headquarters in Ecône, Switzerland (Tissier de Mallerais 412, 433). The Society only said the Traditional Latin Mass that was in use before the reform of Pope Paul VI and taught theology as it had been in previous decades before the Council.

Lefebvre and the Society kept running into trouble with the magisterium of the Catholic Church, as he became more and more outspoken against the Council and “modernist Rome”. He accused the new liturgy of being “poisoned” and said he refused to follow “the Rome of neo-Modernist and neo-Protestant tendencies such as were clearly manifested during the Second Vatican Council” (qtd. in Tissier de Mallerais 465; qtd. in Madrid and Vere 35). In 1974 he published a sort of “manifesto”, known as the “Declaration” in which he accuses the reforms and the Council of contributing to the destruction of the Catholic Church and the priesthood. He declares that no conscientious Catholic can in good faith adhere to the reforms, which arose from a spirit of heresy (“The 1974 Declaration of Archbishop Lefebvre”). This “Declaration” was a cause of much

concern for Rome, and in 1975 the bishop of Fribourg, Bishop Mamie, tried to suppress the Society and Paul VI formally approved the decision (Madrid and Vere 36, 42). Lefebvre ignored the suppression and on June 29th, 1976, he ordained his first set of seminarians to the priesthood, for which he received from the Vatican a suspension from all priestly duties (Madrid and Vere 50). Lefebvre continued his work anyway, arguing that the Vatican had no right to suspend him, constantly appealing to Canon Law and saying that the censures levelled at him were invalid. On August 29th, 1976, he celebrated a large Mass in Lille, France in front of roughly seven thousand people piled into Lille's exhibition centre (Tisser de Mallerais 489). Leclerc alludes to Lefebvre's ever-increasing criticisms of the pope and of the Vatican, which were particularly strong at the Lille Mass, during which he called the new Mass a "bastard rite" and the new sacramental rites "bastard sacraments." The priests being formed in the Roman Catholic seminaries were "bastard priests" who do not understand what a priest truly is (qtd. in Davies). This was also the moment during which he praised the dictatorship of General Videla in Argentina, a move that would not soon be forgotten.

Lefebvre further provoked the Vatican when he started performing "reconfirmations" of children who had already been confirmed in the new rite, effectively showing that he did not believe in the validity of the new sacramental rites (de Penanster 99). Things continued to intensify, and Lefebvre's actions were covered not only by the French media, but internationally as well. De

Penanster claims that around 1976, surveys revealed that close to 1 out of 4 people in France, whether practising Catholics or not, sympathized with Lefebvre's actions (123).

The conflict reached its apex in June of 1988, when Lefebvre ordained four new bishops for the Society against the express wishes of Pope John Paul II and with a clear warning from the Vatican that such an act would incur excommunication for him and those ordained (Madrid and Vere 65-66). Lefebvre went ahead with the ordinations anyway and this is usually considered to be the moment at which the SSPX entered into formal schism with the Roman Catholic Church (although many adherents to the SSPX deny that the consecrations actually incurred excommunication, arguing that a "state of necessity" existed which would have allowed them to proceed without formal papal approval) (Dinges 253-254). In 2009 Pope Benedict XVI lifted the excommunications in a renewed attempt at reconciliation; however, contrary to popular opinion, this did not reintegrate the SSPX into the Catholic Church. The lifting of the excommunications paved the way for a renewed dialogue, but much work still needs to be done to heal the schism. Shortly after the lifting of the excommunications, Benedict XVI published a letter explaining that the SSPX does not have a canonical status within the Church and their ministers do not exercise a legitimate function in the Church (their Masses remain "illicit") (qtd. in Heneghan). Part of the reason that Benedict XVI had to issue a clarifying letter was because the lifting of the excommunications caused a small outrage among

Catholics and non-Catholics alike, as it occurred right around the same time that the SSPX bishop Richard Williamson was making headlines around the world for having denied the gas chambers and the Holocaust on Swedish television, citing the (discredited) *Leuchter Report* (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k6C9BuXe2RM). People mistakenly believed that the Pope had readmitted a holocaust denier back into the Catholic Church.

Lefebvre died in 1991 and today the *Society of Saint Pius X* continues the work that he started. The movement remains controversial within the Catholic Church and the Society continues to publish works that oppose the Second Vatican Council and that are highly critical of the contemporary Roman Catholic Church and its leaders. One of their publications from 2010 calls religious liberty and ecumenism "[t]he two most harmful conciliar errors" and "[t]o these must be added the teachings of episcopal collegiality" (Gaudron 53). Fr. Gaudron, an SSPX priest, claims that, "These three errors of the Council—religious liberty, collegiality, and ecumenism—correspond exactly to the principles of the French Revolution: liberty, equality, fraternity" (53). Needless to say, for the Society the principles of the French Revolution are false and harmful ideas. They are opposed to "la nouvelle théologie", boldly asserting that it "adopted the modernist theses condemned by St. Pius X in 1907" (Gaudron 35). The Society and its adherents are strictly opposed to anything that hints of "modernism", today a sort of catch-all phrase for anything they perceive to be doctrinal error,

but which was at one time strictly defined and rejected by Pope Pius X in two encyclicals: *Lamentabili Sane* ("The Syllabus of Errors") and *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*. Egan defines it as "more a movement or atmosphere than a clearly defined or systematic set of positions" that includes a rejection of metaphysics and the supernatural, a reduction of faith to mere personal conviction and a modernizing of the faith to fit with new liberal ideas (54). Gaudron also asserts that the new Mass is "displeasing to God", "a danger to our faith" and thus "it must be rejected" (152).

Part II: Theoretical Considerations

Why I Chose this Translation

One of the first books written about Lefebvre and the *traditionaliste* movement (by a non-adherent) was *Le drame d'Écône* by Jean Anzevui in 1976. Around nine months later Yves Congar published *La crise dans l'Église et Mgr Lefebvre.* It was immediately translated into English by Paul Inwood under the title *Challenge to the Church: the Case of Archbishop Lefebvre.* Since then, no other French-language book specifically on the topic of *lefebvrisme* has been translated into English, although a couple books have been written in English: *The Pope, the Council and the Mass* by James Likoudis and Kenneth D. Whitehead (1981) and *More Catholic Than the Pope: An Inside Look at Extreme Traditionalism* by Patrick Madrid and Pete Vere (2005). As well, the lay apologist Dave Armstrong has written and self-published two books addressing the issue:

Pensées on Catholic Traditionalism (2007) (re-published and revised in 2013 as *Thoughts on Radical Catholic Reactionaries*) and *Mass Movements: The Extreme Wing of "Traditionalism", the New Mass, and Ecumenism* (2012; revised in 2013 as *Mass Movements: Radical Catholic Reactionaries, the New Mass, and Ecumenism*). I do not know of any other English-language book devoted solely to Lefebvrism and extreme traditionalism, aside from the ones published by the SSPX themselves and their adherents[7]. Those books tend to be apologetics for the SSPX and severe critiques (sometimes even bashing) of the reformed Roman liturgy and so-called "modernist Rome", and can cause much consternation for Catholics who are faithful to the Roman magisterium. William D. Dinges sums up this corpus of radical traditionalist writings: "Vatican II [they say] was a 'false' and 'heretical' deliberation, the work of a satanic-driven conspiracy of humanistic, Protestant, liberal, socialist, and Masonic forces that have been working since the French Revolution to 'de-Christianize' the West and destroy 'Catholic civilization'" (252). Many of these works are written in French (sometimes German) and later translated into English. As for books about the SSPX written by those who do not adhere to the SSPX, a great many have been

[7] More recently, an ebook was published by Tom Breen entitled *Is the Pope Catholic? A Journey through the Strange World of Radical Traditionalism*, but rather than focusing on Lefebvrism, it exposes the very extreme fringe traditionalist movements, the kind that go so far as to declare their own popes and who preach the imminent end of the world. As well, several books on the topic of religious fundamentalism (*Being Right* by Weaver and Appleby, *Fundamentalism* by Frey and *Fundamentalisms Observed* by Marty and Appleby) include chapters that discuss and document extreme traditionalism (usually in an American context only).
Michael W. Cuneo has a book from 1997 called *The Smoke of Satan* which contains some chapters on extreme traditionalism in America.

published in French. After Yves Congar, there is *Un Papiste contre les Papes* by Alain de Penanster (1988), *Du refus au schisme: le traditionalisme catholique* by Franck Lafage (1989), *L'Affaire Lefebvre* by Luc Perrin (1989), *La tempête apaisée: reprise du dialogue entre Rome et Écône* by Huguette Pérol (2006), *L'Église se-trompe-t-elle depuis Vatican II?* by Francis Frost (2007), *La crise intégriste* by Nicolas Senèze (2008), *Pour la nécessaire réconciliation* by Michel Lelong (2011), and *Rome et les lefebvristes* by Gérard Leclerc, first published in 2009 and then republished in 2012 with a second book attached to it, and re-titled *Lefebvristes: le retour.* In 2013 a new book called *Rome-Écône: l'accord impossible?* by Christophe Geffroy was published. Many other French authors of history, politics and religion have touched on Lefebvrism in their writings.

Clearly there are many more works published in French on this issue than in English, with a new one being published almost every year since 2006, hence the need for a current English-language translation of at least one of these works, especially considering that the most current English book, by Madrid and Vere, dates from before the lifting of the excommunications in 2009. Moreover, the SSPX has many English translations of its works available, yet there is hardly anything available for those wishing to read about the subject from a different and more critical viewpoint. Likoudis and Whitehead wrote in 1981 that:

> A more serious and nuanced traditionalist literature is […] now being produced—which employs all the trappings of scholarship and is sometimes published by regular publishing houses. It is interesting how

> plausible and persuasive such literature can be within its own terms of reference. Once certain traditionalist premises are accepted, the case that can be built is quite imposing, and it would be a mistake for anyone who cares about the Church to dismiss it. We cannot regard the widespread circulation of such literature as anything but a serious *malaise* in the post-conciliar Church. (18)

Dinges also observes the abundance of extreme traditionalist literature in "We are What You Were: Roman Catholic Traditionalism in America":

> For three decades, traditionalist apologists have produced popular and semischolarly literature denigrating virtually all aspects of *aggiornamento* while repudiating the conservative position that the crisis in the postconciliar church is merely a normative one related to abuses and distortions. (252)

As a translator, I want to use my influence to make available in English a book about Lefebvrism that is not written from the Lefebvrist viewpoint, and that treats the situation critically. However, Likoudis and Whitehead go on to assert that, "we do believe that the traditional questions are serious questions that deserve serious answers and that is what we have tried to provide [in this book]" (19). Leclerc also treats the *traditionalistes* respectfully, even though he doesn't fully agree with them and thinks that "there is a stumbling block in their point of view" (87-88; my translation: 93). He approaches the issue in a professional and

serious way, which is one reason why I chose this book over others, such as *La crise intégriste* by Senèze, which in its very title betrays a negative and accusatory stance towards the *traditionalistes*, as the word "intégriste" has very negative connotations (similar to the English "fundamentalist"). Leclerc also laments the fact that too often the *traditionalistes* are dismissed by the media as being unrepentant *intégristes* who are closed to all dialogue (19). However, Leclerc believes that it is necessary to support the Pope's desire for reconciliation, and therefore wishes to provide some keys for understanding the situation (24). Indeed, Benedict XVI had this to say about the situation:

> I myself saw, in the years after 1988, how the return of communities which had been separated from Rome changed their interior attitudes; I saw how returning to the bigger and broader Church enabled them to move beyond one-sided positions and broke down rigidity so that positive energies could emerge for the whole. Can we be totally indifferent about a community which has 491 priests, 215 seminarians, 6 seminaries, 88 schools, 2 university-level institutes, 117 religious brothers, 164 religious sisters and thousands of lay faithful? Should we casually let them drift farther from the Church? […] Can we simply exclude them, as representatives of a radical fringe, from our pursuit of reconciliation and unity? What would then become of them? (qtd. in Heneghan)

Here is another one of the driving forces behind this translation project. Through making this information known and available in other languages, it can contribute to the reconciliation movement, by helping concerned Catholics to become informed and explore the roots of the problem. The book also helps to clear up much of the confusion and anger surrounding Bishop Williamson and the Pope's decision to lift the excommunications. Like Leclerc and Benedict XVI, although I disagree with the Lefebvrist position, I do not believe they should be ignored and dismissed. This is the legacy left by Yves Congar himself, one of the most important Catholic pioneers of the ecumenical movement and one of the first to write a response to the accusations of the radical traditionalists. He wrote in the introduction to his 1976 book: "As far as I am concerned, the seminarians of Ecône, and the faithful in the Salle Wagram or the sports stadium at Lille, are brothers – but brothers who are mistaken about the Council and the Eucharistic liturgy promulgated by Paul VI" (8). I hope to challenge the appalling lack of translations into English that exist on this topic, and in doing so help shed light on this ongoing debate within the Catholic Church, but in a way that promotes respect and peaceful reconciliation.

Terminology

There is some specific terminology in Leclerc's book which is not simple to translate. One major example of this is his use of the word "*traditionalistes*" to describe those who adhere to Lefebvre's movement. This is problematic for several reasons and cannot be simply rendered into English as "traditionalists".

Judging from the way that Leclerc uses this word, it would appear that in France it is acceptable to refer to the Lefebvrists as “traditionalists”, and perhaps that is the association that most French Catholics would make if one were to use this word. However, things are not so simple in English and there are a handful of words tossed around to describe those who frequent the SSPX chapels: traditionalists, radical traditionalists, rad trads, extreme traditionalists, ultratraditionalists, Lefebvrists, schismatics, integrists, Catholic separatists and radical reactionaries. The reason for having so many different terms is that recently many writers and lay Catholics have shied away from using the term “traditionalist” to refer to this group. The debate centres on the definitions of “traditionalist” and “tradition” and the question of who gets to lay claim to these labels. Nathaniel Marx, in his doctoral thesis from 2013, writes that most previous attempts to describe Catholic traditionalism have defined it as "a sectarian movement at odds with the institutional church” (67). Dissent was seen as one of the defining characteristics of “traditionalism”. However, many Catholics are starting to reject this definition of traditionalism. One reason is that “Tradition” is one of the very pillars of the Catholic faith (the three commonly cited pillars of the Catholic faith are Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition and the teaching magisterium) and thus many would argue that *all* Catholics are necessarily “traditionalists” and the Lefebvrists do not hold a monopoly on tradition. The Catholic apologist Dave Armstrong writes:

> I continue to consistently put "traditionalist" in quotes because I deny that the self-identified group has a unique or exclusive monopoly on Catholic tradition, or understanding of it that is qualitatively different from that of any orthodox Catholic. With all due respect, it's an ultimately improper and unnecessary use […] I put it in quotes, to register a "protest" of sorts. ("Definitions: Radical Catholic Reactionaries, Mainstream 'Traditionalists', and Supposed 'Neo-Catholics'")

Armstrong also rejects the use of the term "traditionalist" to refer to the Lefebvrists because he defines the term "traditionalist" as "a sub-group of the larger category of orthodox Catholics, characterized by particular and distinctive concerns and preferences (most often having to do with authentic Catholic liturgical tradition)" ("Definitions"). In other words, he uses "traditionalist" to refer to Catholics in good standing with Rome who simply prefer to frequent Latin Masses and continue to perform traditional devotions. To further complicate matters, Leclerc uses the term "traditionalist" at least once in his book to simply refer to conservative, orthodox belief, when he claims that John XXIII was of "traditionalist sensibility" (72). He makes no distinction when he uses the term to refer to those in schism.

In 2013 Armstrong re-published his book *Mass Movements* and replaced the term "radical traditionalist" with "radical Catholic reactionary" to refer to those who frequent dissident movements or who reject the Second Vatican Council. However, as far as I know he is the only one who uses this term.

Another reason that writers avoid the use of the term "traditionalist" is because they are concerned that applying the word "traditionalist" to one set of Catholics and to one rite of the Mass implies a dichotomy in which other rites and other groups of Catholics could be considered "heterodox" or "heretical" (Marx 22). Much of the current literature on the topic of Lefebvrists and dissident traditionalist Catholics either puts the term "traditionalist" in quotes (Marx, Likoudis and Whitehead), adds the distinction "extreme" or "radical" (Madrid and Vere, Hand, Frey), adds the qualifier "self-proclaimed" (Dinges), or finds a way to avoid the term altogether (Armstrong). Lefebvre himself found the term odd, and he wrote in *An Open Letter to Confused Catholics*:

> Do not let yourselves be taken in, dear readers, by the term "traditionalist" which they would have people understand in a bad sense. In a way, it is a pleonasm because I cannot see who can be a Catholic without being a traditionalist. I think I have amply demonstrated in this book that the Church is a tradition. We are a tradition. They also speak of "integrism". If by that we mean respect for the integrality of dogma, of the catechism, of Christian morality, of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, then yes, we are integrists. And I do not see how one can be a Catholic without being an integrist in that sense of the word. (166)

As a translator, I am forced to make a decision. Since the translation focuses almost exclusively on Lefebvre and the SSPX, I have often chosen to use the word "Lefebvrist" in my commentary in order to refer specifically to this group of

people (as there are actually many different, although much smaller, schismatic groups at varying levels of separation from Rome). As for the translation, I felt I could not simply use the English word “traditionalist”, knowing what I do about the controversy surrounding the use of the word and my own personal dislike for it. I initially wanted to add the word “radical” in front of every instance of “traditionalist”, but I did not want to add a distinction that would be unfaithful to the original author’s intent. I instead opted for keeping the word in French and italicizing it. This immediately draws the reader’s attention to the word, guards the author’s original meaning, and reminds the reader that this is a French book using French terminology.

In fact, this is also a type of translating strategy known commonly as “foreignization”. Choosing to “foreignize” a translation involves several different practices, one of which is to “make visible the presence of the translator and to highlight the foreign identity of the ST [source text]” (Munday 219). This is a strategy that has been popular ever since Friedrich Schleiermacher, writing in 1813, described it as a method that “leaves the author in peace as much as possible and moves the reader toward [the author]” which would allow the reader “to remain aware that the author lived in another world and wrote in another tongue”(49, 60). That is to say, the “foreignizing” method should challenge the reader to consider the cultural and linguistic origins of the text rather than effacing the linguistic differences in an effort to make the translation read as fluently and smoothly as possible, almost as though the text had been

composed in the target language. Venuti calls this the "illusion of transparency", which fools readers into thinking they are reading the "original" (*The Translator's Invisibility* 1). Known as "domestication", Venuti calls this strategy "an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to receiving cultural values" (*Invisibility* 15).

While Venuti's methods have been the subject of much debate and criticism among translation theorists, I agree that some foreignization is beneficial to a text. It reminds the reader that the text comes from a different cultural and linguistic context and it also demonstrates confidence in the intelligence of readers, who do not need to have every single thing explained and simplified for them. For this project I did not use a heavily foreignized approach, but I did seek to keep some words and concepts in French. For example, the concepts *traditionaliste*, *traditionalisme*, *intégrisme* and *lefebvrisme* were kept in French, as well as some movements such as *l'Action française*, *Silencieux de l'Église*, *la nouvelle théologie*, the *surnaturel* (of Henri de Lubac) and the *Front national* (of Jean-Marie le Pen). I kept Lefebvre's French title as "Mgr" rather than changing it to "Bishop", as "Mgr" (*Monseigneur*) is the French address for a Bishop, and included Charles Maurras' title of "le maître de Martigues." Along with various other words and phrases, I kept the slang word "*tradi*" as short for traditionalist instead of translating it to the English equivalent "trad" (occurs once in the translation).

Intertextuality

The theory of "intertextuality" has also been influential in my approach, specifically as articulated by Venuti in his essay "Translation, Intertextuality, Interpretation" and the way he connects it to translation. The term "intertextuality", according to Graham Allen, was first coined by Julia Kristeva in the 1960s and describes the way in which every text is bound by its relationships to other texts and previously established ways of thinking and speaking within a language and culture (3). Writers and artists do not make their choices in a vacuum, rather they "select words from a language system, they select plots, generic features, aspects of character, images, ways of narrating, even phrases and sentences from previous literary texts and from the literary tradition" (Allen 11). As Allen further explains, "No longer the product of an author's original thoughts, […] the literary work is viewed not as the container of meaning but as a space in which a potentially vast number of relations coalesce" (12). Venuti then takes the theory of intertextuality and applies it to translation, arguing that the translator must make him or herself aware of the intertextual relations in the text they are translating. Venuti writes that, "Every text is fundamentally an intertext, bound in relations to other texts which are somehow present in it and from which it draws its meaning, value and function" (157). This is just as true for non-fiction works as it is for literary works. A translator should be able to recognize the works (whether translated or from the source culture) that have influenced and informed the source text, judge their importance and value for the source text, and attempt to find an analogous relation in the target language.

Venuti explains that the theory of intertextuality "demands […] that translators develop a theoretical self-consciousness which allows them to explore the links between verbal choices and interpretive moves in their practice" (158). This can become extremely complicated, because even words and ideas that appear to be one-to-one translations can actually have very different connotations and meanings from one language to another. Therefore, it is important that the translator be always thinking about intertextual relations and be able to recognize and justify his or her own strategy for translating them.

Must one have a background in religion and theology in order to translate texts about religion? Could a translator who has no knowledge of Catholicism or philosophy fully understand all the references made by Leclerc in this book? In my own case, my background in theological studies and my familiarity with the history of the Second Vatican Council helped me to determine the accurate vocabulary and collocations used in this specific context. For example, some translations that seemed too literal were actually accurate uses of the terminology in English, such as talking about the "spirit" of the Council versus the "letter" (specifically in regards to Vatican II, this is a major debate in the Catholic Church), using the word "intervention" to refer to a speech made by a council father during one of the sessions, or recognizing that the word "ressourcement" did not need to be translated. I actually italicized "ressourcement" in the translation, as that is how the word is very often found in English documents.

However, I had much difficulty in understanding and translating all the references that Leclerc made to different philosophers and theologians with which I was not familiar. He also often took quotes from different philosophers and Catholic writers without mentioning the source. Sometimes the figures were only briefly mentioned in a sentence, in which case I did not need to do any extensive research in order to understand the context. However, sometimes entire paragraphs were unintelligible to me and I needed to do some digging in order to not only understand the point that Leclerc was trying to make, but also as a way to discover the vocabulary that related to that specific context. I needed to understand how certain words and concepts had previously been translated into or articulated in the English language. One example of this relates to Leclerc's discussion of Charles Maurras and how his movement *Action française* was condemned by the Vatican. *Action française*, founded by Maurras in 1899, was an anti-revolutionary, nationalist and pro-monarchist movement seeking to restore the old regime in France. Leclerc argues that the intellectual movements within the *Action française* were not the same as those found within Catholic traditionalism (contrary to what many people believe). He states:

> Many reproaches have been levelled at Maurras for his referencing Auguste Comte, Taine and even Renan, without realizing that his royalism had a particular tenor that was influenced by the thought of Bonald and of de Maistre, as well as that of the representatives of Catholic anti-liberalism. If Pius XI censured Maurras, it was not because of his

> traditionalism, but rather his modernism, which is to say his positivism. (27; my translation: 60)

To start with, I was mostly unfamiliar with Comte, Taine, Renan, Bonald and de Maistre, and so lacked the context needed to understand this assertion. Moreover, how can Leclerc assert that someone who is a royalist is also a modernist? The two ideologies seem to conflict, as one normally associates royalism with traditionalism and conservatism. I could not be comfortable with my translation until I knew that I understood what Leclerc was saying. After much reading and researching, I learned that Maurras was a positivist, hence the reference to Comte, who was the philosophical father of positivism, a philosophical belief that excludes metaphysics and holds that all knowledge is based on hard data and facts alone (Bourdeau; "positivism"). Bonald and de Maistre were Catholic anti-revolutionaries and monarchists who favoured ecclesiastical rule ("Joseph de Maistre"; "Louis-Gabriel-Ambroise, viscount de Bonald"). It would appear, then, that Maurras was a positivist and religious skeptic and at the same time was influenced by the thought of ardent pro-Catholic monarchists. Further digging revealed that, although a modernist in some senses, he believed the pre-Revolution France and the old regime needed to be restored. He was also an opportunist who, although being non-religious himself, saw the Catholic religion as simply a unifying force for the French people, a tool to achieve his political ends (Sutton 2, 207, 211). One could call Maurras an agnostic monarchist. In the end, it was this opportunism and desire

to use Catholicism as a mere political tool divorced from its spiritual aspects that led the pope at the time, Pius XI, to condemn Maurras and his movement.

I now understood how Maurras could be called a modernist and a monarchist at the same time, and I could see why Leclerc would argue that the political issues surrounding the *Action française* were quite different from those surrounding Lefebvre's traditionalist movement. Approaching this text as a translator allowed me to uncover certain issues and to delve further into the context than if I had just been reading it. As a reader, I probably would have skimmed over this section. However, as a translator, I came to have an even greater appreciation for and understanding of Leclerc's arguments. I only find it unfortunate that Leclerc did not explain himself better and expand upon his comments, but perhaps the French public in general has a better understanding of the issues. I added a brief translator's note to explain the *Action française* and Charles Maurras, as it is unlikely that most English-speakers will be familiar with this movement. In the English translation of Yves Congar's *Challenge to the Church*, an entire appendix of three pages was added to explain the *Action française* to the Anglophone readership.

Venuti writes about the importance of understanding both "distinctive lexicon[s] and syntax related to a genre or discourse" and "discourse[s] in the sense of a relatively coherent body of concepts, problems, and arguments", that guide the translator in choosing "interpretants" that give a particular interpretation of a concept, as the translator seeks to achieve some sort of

equivalence in the target language (“Translation, Intertextuality, Interpretation” 162-163). The word “interpretant” was initially developed by Charles Sanders Peirce in his theory of signs. Peirce articulated a theory in which the world is made up of “signs” that represent or “mean” something, “objects”, which are the “things” meant or signified by the sign, and “interpretants”, which are like a mental second signifier of the object (Burch). The interpretant is the mental sign that somebody associates with an object, which Peirce calls “the interpretant of the first sign” (qtd. in Eco 1461). For Venuti, a translator applies interpretants, which are intertextual, in their interpretation of the text and in their effort to mediate between two languages and cultures to develop a coherent translation. Venuti explains that “It is the translator’s application of interpretants that recontextualizes the foreign text, replacing foreign intertextual relations with a receiving intertext, with relations to the translating language and culture which are built into the translation” (“Translation, Intertextuality, Interpretation” 163). I would argue therefore that while one need not necessarily be an expert in Catholicism and the Second Vatican Council in order to translate this work, someone with no background in this area would need to do extensive reading and research on the topic in order to fully understand the arguments made by the author and re-construct them in the target language with an appropriate and coherent lexicon and syntax. While possible, it would probably be more efficient to leave the task up to someone who already has the required background knowledge and who can properly interpret the text.

Another intertextual strategy I employed in this translation was to try to find as often as possible an already published translation of the quotes that Leclerc includes, a translating strategy which is called using "parallel texts", which also helps a translator to pinpoint proper terms, expressions and thematic concepts (Delisle 62). For example, I discovered that many of his quotes from Lefebvre came from the archbishop's biography by Bernard Tissier de Mallerais entitled *Marcel Lefebvre: the Biography* and translated into English by Brian Sudlow. This is probably the most in-depth and comprehensive work about Marcel Lefebvre, and many Catholic traditionalists, "radical" or otherwise, are familiar with it. For the sake of consistency across texts, I decided to borrow from Sudlow's translation as often as I could. One of Lefebvre's most well-known and oft-repeated quotes is: "The masterstroke of Satan has been to trick the Church through obedience into disobeying her Tradition", which Leclerc quotes on page 64 of his book. The French word for masterstroke is "coup de maître", which could be translated in several different ways, generally meaning "a great success"; however, some initial research has revealed that this quote is almost always rendered into English with the word "masterstroke", so it would not have made sense for me to change it into something else (such as "the great success of Satan" or "Satan's stroke of genius"…) and it is important to know this little bit of information so as to not confuse the readers. However, sometimes there was no English translation available for a given quote in Leclerc's book. My strategy in

that case was to briefly research the author of the quote in order to understand the context and then to provide my own translation.

Other Difficulties

There were other various translation difficulties that do not fit into the above categories. One particular struggle for me was Leclerc's occasional use of the words "Christian" and "Church" to refer to the (Roman) Catholic Church. France has traditionally been a country with very few Protestants ever since the Huguenots were suppressed there, so it is not too surprising that a French writer would associate Christianity with the Catholic Church alone; however, in my eyes it betrays a certain ignorance of contemporary ecumenical practice within the Catholic Church. At the Second Vatican Council, the Constitution *Lumen Gentium* affirmed that the "church" (Christianity) *subsists in* the Catholic Church, but does not *equal* (is not coextensive to) the Catholic Church (§8). In other words, while Catholics believe that the best expression of Christianity is found within the Catholic Church, they no longer believe it is correct to say that Christianity is *only* found within the Catholic Church. Therefore I would argue that one should specify "Catholic Church" and "Catholic Christianity" when speaking about Vatican II, unless specifically referring to all Christians. Usually context lets us know that a writer is talking about the Catholic Church, but there were several instances in this book that jumped out at me as incorrectly using the term "Christian" or "Church." A few examples:

- […] even more so for those who believe that the Holy Spirit is the primary cause of a Council that brought together the entire Church. (73; my translation: 80)

Although there were some Orthodox and Protestant observers at the Council, most Protestants do not view the Council as having any authority over them, therefore I argue it would be more correct to specify "the entire Catholic Church."

- He wasn't quite at the point yet of aligning himself with *Nostra Aetate,* this declaration from Vatican II which changed the very nature of the relationship between Christians and Jews. (18; my translation: 53)
- […] the declaration *Nostra Aetate,* in which the Council aimed to clarify the relationship between non-Christian religions and the Church. (85; my translation: 90-91)

Here again one must be careful to not inadvertently claim to be speaking for all Christians everywhere. This Council document spoke about the relationship between the *Catholic Church* and the Jews. However, in order to be faithful to Leclerc and his work, I chose not to modify these examples.

In one instance I did add the descriptor "Catholic" in order to clarify:

- Father Congar thus recommended that references to Vatican I and Trent be added to the conciliar texts, which would demonstrate the continuity of Catholic Christian teaching. (86; my translation: 92)

In my opinion it would simply be incorrect to state that the documents of Vatican II represent all of Christian teaching, unless one deliberately meant to exclude all Protestant teachings.

These examples pose the questions of whether a translator has the right to "correct" what he or she perceives as being incorrect in the source text. This also relates to the debate about "fidelity" or "loyalty" to the source text and the original author. In writing about translation ethics, Andrew Chesterman prefers to use the term "trust", which he says is a relationship between equals (153). To put it simply, "The client must trust the translator, and so must the original writer if he or she is present; so must the readers. Without such multidirectional trust, communications fails" (153). While there is no simple way to approach translation ethics, for the sake of "trust" between translator and source author, I tried not to change too much of what Leclerc originally wrote, even if I personally perceived it as being incorrect. Leclerc is a published journalist and published author, so I trust that he knows what he is doing. On the other hand, I allowed myself some leeway to tweak certain usages that don't work in the English language.

Another difficulty I had, briefly mentioned already, was the way in which Leclerc would quote people in the body of his text and not cite the source. I am used to academic papers in which sources are always carefully cited, but sometimes books meant for the general public do not follow such strict guidelines. This sometimes made it difficult for me to translate the quote or idea,

as without a source it is difficult to fully grasp context. Some examples of people he quotes without giving the source are Adam Mickiewicz, Bernard Fellay, Emile Poulat, Jean Madiran, Marcel Lefebvre, Pope John XXIII, Max Weber, Gilles Lipovetsky, Cardinal Ratzinger, Marie-Dominique Chenu and Maurice Clavel. I did as much research as I could to try to find previous translations and proper context, but sometimes all I could do was go with my instincts and translate it as best as I could.

Finally, Leclerc's switching between using the pronouns "we" and "I" was a journalistic tactic unfamiliar to me. It is not the way I would have personally written, but I decided to keep the pronouns for reasons of trust and fidelity, as explained above.

Conclusion

While it may be tempting to ignore the SSPX and radical traditionalists altogether, and to write them off as a tiny fringe group of no importance, the research done in this work shows that, in fact, they are a growing concern all over the world and are prolific in the works that they publish opposing the current magisterium of the Catholic Church and the reforms of the Second Vatican Council. The abundance of work written about them in French, and the relatively tiny amount written in English shows the great need for translation into English on this topic. There is much confusion and misunderstanding surrounding the SSPX controversy and the Second Vatican Council, even among

Roman Catholics, which is why this thesis opened with an explanation of the context and historical background of the Council, including a look at the most controversial subjects debated as well as the much-misunderstood liturgical reform, and a brief overview of Marcel Lefebvre and the founding of the SSPX. The main issue in the controversy revolves around the SSPX's miscomprehension and lack of knowledge about "la nouvelle théologie" and the theological evolution that occurred in the Catholic Church in the 20th century. The Lefebvrist inability to accept the liturgical reform also remains a major stumbling block to the SSPX coming back into full communion with Rome.

In the second part of this thesis I examined the reasons why I believe a current English-language translation from this corpus of writing about the Lefebvrists is needed, not only to make one of these works available to English speakers, but also to help clear up many of the misunderstandings surrounding the controversy and the recent lifting of the excommunications of the SSPX bishops. My struggles with properly translating the terminology in Leclerc's book led me to adopt a slight foreignizing approach in certain areas, which also led to other benefits such as reminding the reader that this a French work with a French context. My intertextual strategies helped me to produce an understandable translation that is partly based off of other writings already done on the topic, such as Brian Sudlow's translation of Lefebvre's biography.

Benedict XVI has said that we cannot afford to ignore such a large community as the SSPX, and that reconciliation can help to break down one-

sidedness, misunderstandings and animosity. My work can contribute to that reconciliatory will, as well as to the history of the translation of religious topics between French and English, and can help shed light on the technical issues of translating documents with a religious and philosophical flavour from French into English.

Part III: My Translation of *Lefebvristes: le retour* by Gérard Leclerc

Introduction

The year 2009 started with a series of sudden new developments. It was as if all the media had joined forces against a single target: Pope Benedict XVI. It all started with the lifting of the excommunications of the four bishops that had been illicitly consecrated by Mgr Marcel Lefebvre in 1988. This story broke at the same time that another sensational news story was being broadcast all over: one of the four bishops in question had denied the Holocaust and the gas chambers the previous November during an interview on Swedish television. This bishop, Richard Nelson Williamson, was without a doubt the most zealous of the four, unpredictable and uncontrollable, even according to his superior, Bishop Bernard Fellay. An interesting convergence of two events. The magazine *Der Spiegel*, from Hamburg, certainly played a role in this affair: it was the first to reveal the content of the scandalous interview… as if by chance at exactly the same time that the Vatican made public the lifting of the excommunications.

Emotions were running high all over. The top news story had changed in nature. It was no longer: "The Pope has lifted the excommunication of four Lefebvrist bishops!" It was now: "The Pope has readmitted a Holocaust denier to the Church!" Some obvious manipulation is noticeable in this incident.

Benedict XVI had not expected such a provocation. Everything points towards him being completely surprised and even dumbfounded in the days

following the revelation. In fact, the entire Vatican seemed aghast for a couple weeks: nobody saw it coming and no one knew quite how to deal with such a media catastrophe. While they should have reacted forcefully from day one by honestly and impeccably clarifying the situation, the response was in fact rather spread out over several stages, and the media furor was never effectively halted. Finally, the Secretariat of State intervened with an unambiguous declaration: given the current state of things, it is not conceivable for Bishop Williamson to exercise any ministry in the Church. Benedict XVI explained it clearly in a long letter addressed to all the bishops of the world: he recognized the weaknesses in his administration which should have, at the very least through consulting the internet, discovered the information, the knowledge of which would have helped them avoid this surge of fury against the Church. In such a climate, what became of the problem posed by the *traditionalistes*[8]' dissent? While in Rome, in the mind of the pope and his principal collaborators, there was a doctrinal clarification to be made, with regards to the misunderstandings and disagreements surrounding the Second Vatican Council, when it came to Mgr Lefebvre and his followers, everything became distorted, the most common interpretation being that Benedict XVI had been led astray by a movement of the

[8] The words *traditionaliste* and *traditionalisme* have been left in French and italicized when the words are used to refer to the "extreme" or "radical" Catholic traditionalists, and left un-italicized and in English when used to refer to traditionalism in the sense of conservative belief, in order to not confuse the two and in light of the fact that English speakers almost always add a qualifier such as "extreme" or "radical" when referring to the Lefebvrist-type "traditionalists" [Translator's note].

extreme right which was linked to a dubious past, and which had never fully rid itself of its anti-Semite obsessions. Was this really the case?

Those who were the most vindictive were not necessarily the most well-informed when it came to having a precise knowledge of the Lefebvrist milieu. For those who went straight to the source for their information, it was clear that the storm caused by the Williamson scandal had profoundly shaken the *Society of Saint Pius X*, that is, the community founded by Mgr Lefebvre and run by his Swiss successor, Bishop Bernard Fellay. Even if there were some obvious connections between the *Society of Saint Pius X* and certain groups on the far political right, there was no evidence that the Lefebvrists were Holocaust deniers. From its very first communiqués, the heads of the *Society of Saint Pius X* were distancing themselves from Williamson. As the days went on, it became clear that the awareness of the affair required Bishop Bernard Fellay and his entourage to take into account the entirety of the scandal. The author of the present book fully realized this when he found himself, along with this colleague Samuel Pruvot, in the heart of Switzerland to interview directly the superior of the *Society of Saint Pius X*: “The murder of the innocent cries out toward Heaven. And rightly so, because this was the murder of an entire people.” There could no longer be any ambiguity: the Holocaust was fully recognized for what it was, with its exceptional character.

Samuel and I got the impression that our interview subject had been disconcerted by this storm, a storm which he certainly hadn’t expected. He tried

to respond, searching for that which, in the recent history of the Catholic Church, could serve as an argument against the accusation of anti-Semitism. Thus, he appealed to the declaration issued by the Holy Office in 1928, which forcefully condemned all anti-Semitism on the part of Christians. Even more significant, he recalled the words of Pope Pius XI, shortly before his death: "Spiritually, we are all Semites." Initially, Mgr Fellay even transformed the pope's phrase in a rather attractive way: "We are all Semites at heart." He wasn't quite at the point yet of aligning himself with *Nostra Aetate,* this declaration from Vatican II which changed the very nature of the relationship between Christians and Jews. It was *Nostra Aetate* that allowed Pope John Paul II to reaffirm the expression of his illustrious compatriot, the poet Adam Mickiewicz: "The Jews are our elder brothers." Elder brothers in faith, because they are the heirs of the First Covenant, which the New One did not erase, since, as the apostle Paul says in his letter to the Romans: "For the gifts of God are irrevocable." No, Bernard Fellay wasn't quite at that point yet, but he was captured by the Israel question with an intensity that up until then had been unknown in the small Lefebvrist world. The journalists who were most caught up in denouncing the pope were very far from noticing the crisis being lived out by the *Society of Saint Pius X.* It was easier to just leave it at a few slogans and a summary analysis about an unrepentant *intégrisme*[9] that was closed to any truthful dialogue. This provided fodder for their indictment of the pope, whose determination to lessen the Lefebvrist

[9] *Intégrisme* is similar to the English "fundamentalism" (in the religious sense) [Translator's note].

schism was incomprehensible, even unacceptable. Indeed, the Ratzinger pope was suspected at the same time of wanting to radically turn back the clock on the evolution that the Church had undergone since Vatican II. During the entire time that the former Archbishop of Munich headed the *Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith*, the media never ceased targeting him, to the point of saddling him with the ridiculous nickname, the *Panzerkardinal*. A tenacious legend was attributed to a theologian who allegedly was a self-professed progressive at the time of Vatican II, but who gradually became conservative, if not reactionary, especially after 1968. It is possible that it was Hans Küng, a former colleague of Ratzinger's at Tubingen University, who was at the start of this rumour. However, this rumour is without any foundation, because only somebody without any knowledge whatsoever of the personal history of Joseph Ratzinger and his itinerary as a theologian would place him in such categories. For those who have seriously studied his work, right from his very first thesis on Saint Bonaventure, it becomes clear that his thought has developed organically, even with a few different reorientations, in a consistent direction.

Ratzinger, a progressive at Vatican II? This is totally absurd. It's enough to get acquainted with the documents that he helped draft during the four sessions of the Council to fully perceive his fidelity to Catholic tradition, as Newman defined it in the preceding century. It is a tradition faithful to the stream of the entire history of Christianity, which from its origins and throughout the centuries never stops taking into account the new questions posed by the challenges of

the culture. Ratzinger truly played a key role at Vatican II, notably in the development of several of its essential texts. In first place is *Dei Verbum*, a dogmatic constitution and an important doctrinal development precisely about Holy Scripture and Tradition. This document was all the more important in that it aimed to put an end to the polemics surrounding the Reformation of the 16th century, which had been brought up again due to the modernist crisis and scientific exegesis. Cardinal de Lubac wrote afterwards that *Dei Verbum* was the crowning achievement of Vatican II. The fact that Ratzinger helped write it is significant. Moreover, in his book, *My Journal of the Council*, Yves Congar remarked that, as soon as there was any difficulty to be resolved with regards to the council commissions, Ratzinger was always there to respond, obtaining everyone's approval.

It is necessary to understand that Benedict XVI is the last remaining survivor of the great participants of Vatican II, and that he has every reason to ensure lasting respect for the Council whose riches and prophetic role in leading the Church into the current era of history he knows better than anyone else. Of course, there were moments of strong tension at Vatican II. For instance, the memorable intervention on the part of Cardinal Frings, Archbishop of Cologne, who denounced the inadmissible methods and practices of the Holy Office toward certain theologians. True, it was Joseph Ratzinger, 35 years old at the time and Fring's secretary, who wrote up this intervention. Does this justify the reputation he was given for being a progressive, then and afterwards? Surely

not. The drafts drawn up at the Council, as mentioned above, also show some reluctance on the part of the young theologian about certain directions in which the first drafters wanted to take the constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, which concerned the role of the Church in the modern world. In line with the leanings of the German episcopate, which often opposed the dominant tendencies of the French episcopate, he was indignant about the exaggerated historical optimism that he saw as related to a kind of *Teilhardism*.

Getting back to the theological thought of Joseph Ratzinger, it is one that falls into line with that of many great figures – Henri de Lubac, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Louis Bouyer…– who profoundly renewed Catholic theology in the 20th century. It is thus very far removed from the themes of what is often called *intégrisme*. To reproach Benedict XVI for wanting to return to the pre-Vatican II days would be to make a groundless accusation against him and especially to betray ignorance of his work and the key highlights of his pontificate. It is true that the pope was involved in a process of reconciliation with the movement that is called *traditionaliste*, in spite of the risks that would certainly be involved. For this he must have had very good reasons. For the successor of Peter, the guarantor of unity within the Church, it is unacceptable to allow a "schism" to perpetuate. Mgr Lefebvre's schism is still a recent one, and history has shown that disagreements that once could have been overcome often become insurmountable with the passage of time, as impenetrable walls are put up. It should be noted as well that Benedict XVI's predecessors also wanted to halt the

course of the rupture: Paul VI and John Paul II had both already held talks with Mgr Lefebvre. When the consecration of the four bishops occurred, which incurred the excommunication, John Paul II had already made the first gesture by permitting the celebration of the Mass according to the Tridentine Rite. Benedict XVI went even further with his *Motu Proprio* that "liberalized" the ancient Mass and with his deliberate will to bring about a reconciliation.

For a while, the Williamson clash managed to slow down the procedure set in motion for reconciliation between Rome and the Lefebvrists. However, we can expect it to be taken up again, within the framework chosen by the Pope. From now on the *Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith* will be responsible for the doctrinal case file. It is under its auspices, therefore, that a negotiation will unfurl whose length it will be difficult to predict, especially considering the very serious obstacles that are standing in the way of the *traditionalistes* fully accepting Vatican II: this study wishes to assess the disagreements and the potential rapprochements, without underestimating the difficulty of coming to a full agreement. Mgr Bernard Fellay should be commended for his honesty and frankness in declaring that only a full elucidation of the disagreements can eventually lead to reconciliation with Rome. The *Society of Saint Pius X* did not fight for decades, with that energy of which we are all aware, only to abdicate now in mid-battle. The Pope and his cohort, on the other hand, are not willing to brush aside the teachings of an ecumenical council and the authority of the post-conciliar magisterium.

The goal of this study is to provide some keys to understanding the dossier. These keys are simultaneously of a historical, sometimes historico-political and theological order. The differences between this interpretation of events and others that are ongoing will be pointed out without hesitation. Sides will be taken, sometimes with a presumption of goodwill, with our most firm conviction being that it is necessary to support the Pope's reconciliatory will, not at the price of dubious compromise, but in favour of an elucidation, which will allow us to advance as far as possible towards understanding the Great Tradition of the Church. It is this Tradition that must determine everything.

Chapter 1: A Brief Return to History

It is not possible to understand the Lefebvre affair without understanding the history that preceded it. It is a history that concerns the Catholic Church, but France as well, especially post-Revolution France. It has become a habit to link the rupture of the "Rebel Bishop" with the 1926 condemnation of *l'Action française,* as if this were another episode following the series of spats between Charles Maurras's[10] movement and Pius XI. I will say quite simply that I believe this vision of events to be erroneous. For two essential reasons.

The first concerns the properly religious nature of the disagreement that separated Marcel Lefebvre from the Church of Vatican II. The beginnings of what

[10] Charles Maurras was the founder of *l'Action française* in 1899, a nationalist, anti-Revolution, pro-monarchy movement. He saw Catholicism as a mere tool by which to achieve his political goals [Translator's note].

we call *traditionalisme* started with the French Revolution itself and the series of events that ensued, during which the Church attempted to establish relations with this new world that was born in the wake of 1789. A precise study of the subject would lead to an examination of what Emile Poulat calls *intransigentism* which characterized a Catholicism radically opposed to the principles of the Revolution. Did not every pope in the 19th century condemn the principles of 1789, and more broadly that which was called liberalism, with the doctrine of the rights of man and freedom of conscience? It is true that during the 19th century a conciliatory movement did appear, which desired a rapprochement with this new society. The priests Lacordaire and Lamennais, as well as Montalembert, embodied this tendency in a certain way. Mgr Lefebvre accused the Council of having denied the popes' opposition to modernism and of rallying behind the liberal Catholic movement. It's an extremely complicated dossier, one on which Emile Poulat has worked extensively. But it's the most relevant with regards to the disputes that broke out during the 1960s.

The second reason for which there should be some distance taken from hastily associating Lefebvre with the *Action française* crisis is that Marcel Lefebvre was never significantly touched by the neo-royalist movement and the opinions of Charles Maurras. It is probable that he never read a single work by the "maître de Martigues." On the other hand, it is true that he was profoundly marked by the departure of Father le Floch, the superior of the French Seminary in Rome, whose departure Pius XI had demanded after the condemnation of the

Action française. Father le Floch's leanings put him close to the condemned movement, for reasons of political proximity. This was the case for most of those in the Church who claimed to adhere to anti-modernism and who were wary of any rapprochement with the French Republic. But if Marcel Lefebvre was very attached to his seminary superior, it was by virtue of a properly spiritual link and it is probable that the condemnation of the *Action française* itself hardly affected him. His biographer, Bernard Tissier de Mallerais, recalls that after the condemnation occurred, Lefebvre brought his parents to an audience with Pius XI who blessed them during this occasion. If they had been *Action française* militants, it is highly unlikely that at such a time they would have desired the blessing of a pope who had been roundly denounced in the columns of the newspaper run by Maurras.

It should also be noted that there is an intellectual difference between the Maurrassian trend and that of the *traditionalisme* that developed in the 19th century. Many reproaches have been levelled at Maurras for his referencing Auguste Comte, Taine and even Renan, without realizing that his royalism had a particular tenor that was influenced by the thought of Bonald and of de Maistre, as well as that of the representatives of Catholic anti-liberalism. If Pius XI censured Maurras, it was not because of his traditionalism, but rather his modernism, which is to say his positivism. This is thus an altogether different class of doctrinal debate than that which concerns Mgr Lefebvre. It should be

added that the disciples and distant successors of Charles Maurras welcomed the Council and its aftermath in a very contrasting way.

Today, on the side of historiography, we are in the habit of proclaiming Jean Madiran as the sole heir of *maurrassisme*. This is eminently debatable, for various reasons. The first is that the former editor of the magazine *Itinéraires* never, properly speaking, continued the political aim of the *Action française.* He distanced himself from it after the Second World War. If one must name a more exact heir, it would be Pierre Boutang. The latter never agreed to enter into a direct polemic with the Council nor with the popes, from Jean XXIII to John Paul II, who incurred the mistrust of the *traditionalistes*. It is important to insist at length on the case of Pierre Debray, who went from Christian progressivism to the *Action française* under the influence of Boutang, and who, after the Council, founded the movement *Silencieux de l'Église*. True, Debray denounced progressivism, but he never placed himself in opposition to the Council and always claimed to believe in the authority of the popes. He was also greatly encouraged, in this sense, by the Cardinal Jean Daniélou, who had been his instructor when he studied at the Sorbonne.

The case of Jean de Fabrègues, editor of *La France Catholique*, is also an interesting one to examine. He had been very close to Maurras in his youth and he devoted an important work to him near the end of his life. Fabrègues did not have any problem entering into the inner workings of Vatican II. He also fought against progressivism and denounced its deviations from the true doctrine of the

Council, but he always positioned himself within the teaching magisterium of the popes. What's more, *La France Catholique* quickly became a rallying point for all those who identified with the great texts of the Council and firmly adhered to the orientations of Paul VI. Need we be reminded that after the Council the latter became the target of those who promoted an even more radical openness to modernity? In 1968, after the publication of the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, which opposed artificial means of contraception, this opposition reached its peak. Soon after, new divisions began to replace those that had occurred in the midst of the Vatican II sessions.

It is necessary therefore to return more rigorously to the true causes of Mgr Lefebvre's rebellion, which were above all theological. No doubt politics had a part to play in these specific causes: obviously it was not the militant leftist Christians who joined the traditionalist camp, but rather those on the right, even the extreme right. But even there it is important to introduce several nuances into the picture. The traditionalist right can sometimes line up with the political far right. This was already seen with the *Front national* of Jean-Marie le Pen, but not without friction and sometimes even divisions. Fascism of the Mussolini kind does not correspond ideologically to this type of *traditionalisme*. Moreover, it has been noted that some Gaullists, and not the least among them, were interested in what went on at Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet[11]. I can still

[11] A church in Paris forcibly occupied by the SSPX in 1977 and still under their control [Translator's note].

remember the words of my friend André Frossard, who was worried about several of his academic colleagues who were frequenting the dissident movement.

Even though the political dimension is important, it remains subordinate to the basic fundamental positions. It is not ideology that is in charge here, but rather a certain culture that is that of Catholic intransigence, also called *intégralisme*. Therefore, the investigation should not be aimed at the *Action française*, even if it is an important part of the picture, but rather at everything that anticipates doctrinal inflexibility with regards to Vatican II. It is quite possible – and it is also my own personal thesis – that the primary cause of traditionalist dissent is a radical incomprehension of the theological evolution which led to the formulation of important documents such as *Lumen Gentium, Dei Verbum* and even the Declaration on Religious Liberty. For Marcel Lefebvre and his friends, it is very simple: there are two camps which are implacably opposed, the traditional camp and the liberal camp, and it is the victory of the latter which led the Church into an unprecedented crisis. Leaving all nuances aside, the liberal camp is assimilated into modernism, which was severely condemned by Saint Pope Pius X. For them, this modernism is guilty of deviationism, which has led to what was called progressivism in the post-war years, that is, complicity and even collaboration with communism.

The above, once analyzed, rather resembles an amalgam that finds its justification only in appearances, sometimes in ambiguities, but most often in

misunderstandings. Modernism, which certainly implies heterodox shifts in meaning, can be explained by the confrontation between classic theology and historical research of a scientific intent. The conflict dates back to the 17th century, when Spinoza wanted to undertake a critical study of Scripture and when Richard Simon, tragically misunderstood by the great Bossuet, wanted to grab a hold of this critique and place it within an orthodox framework. However, the apex of the crisis occurred during the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, with Protestant Liberalism in Germany that completely effaced the religious message of the Gospels and the divinity of Christ, with some repercussions in France too – the case of Loisy being the most significant. The inevitable battle against modernism was not always fought with the appropriate discernment, and a lot of the damage should have been avoided. Nevertheless, according to the old Latin saying, *opportet hæreses esse*, heresies can be useful. This confrontation allowed a veritable Catholic exegesis to form, one that could aptly utilize scientific methods without losing the substance of Revelation. With Father Lagrange, with Monsieur Pouget, immortalised by Jean Guitton, and a whole posterity, experience had shown that the obstacles could be victoriously overcome. Moreover, it was the entirety of Christian thought that was being called upon to renew itself by casting off its complexes, notably those which had been inflicted by the Enlightenment and the interruption of the French Revolution. Indeed, after the upheaval of the revolutionary decade, everything needed to be rebuilt, as Chateaubriand showed. The first to do so, Félicité de

Lamennais, was a precursor with his *Paroles d'un croyant (Words of a Believer*), which powerfully affected a certain Dom Guéranger, the restorer of the Benedictine order in France. Unfortunately, Lamennais eventually left Christianity and it is possible that he was the initiator of several subsequent heterodox ideas, at least those ones stigmatised by Lefebvre and his followers.

But there were other examples in Europe: Möhler of Tübingen in Germany, and Newman in England, two distinguished theologians who showed that a *ressourcement* was possible for affirming the strength of a witness to a still vibrant Christianity. Möhler and Newman influenced the subsequent developments, where what was called "la nouvelle théologie" in the 1950s can clearly be seen. But it is necessary to insist upon one crucial element which marked the intellectual evolution of Catholicism in the 20th century: at the turn of the 20th century, Pope Leo XIII revived the teachings and methods of Saint Thomas Aquinas. This was a case of innovation and restoration occurring at the same time. Indeed, the Pope wanted to adopt a dynamic approach toward the philosophical challenges of the time: rationalism, positivism, scientism…. The Catholic Church needed this push to recover its momentum when it came to doctrine and its exposition within the climate of the contemporary culture. Thus was born a philosophical school known as *neo-Thomism,* which actually contained a wide range of thought and influenced both conservative and progressive positions. Here is where we can find one of the origins of *lefebvrisme*.

When the young Marcel Lefebvre came to Rome to study theology, he took courses at the Gregorianum, the pontifical university run by priests from the Society of Jesus. The dominant figure at this university was by far Cardinal Louis Billot. He reached the height of his career under the pontificate of Pius X, but up until the condemnation of the *Action française* in 1926, he was also one of the key figures in Pius XI's entourage. Louis Billot's Thomism was characterized by a strong philosophical structure, which was not without consequences for his treatment of theology. Later on, he was accused of removing Saint Thomas from his historical context, developing a sort of sacred metaphysics. This was far removed from what is called positive theology, that is, from Scriptural sources, from entrenched patristic roots and from the development of Christian doctrine throughout the centuries. Yet, it is this brand of Thomism that Marcel Lefebvre learned during his years in Rome and it shaped the essentials of his thought and his reflexes. (We will take this up again in the following chapter, in order to better grasp his particular background[12]). However, one can see right away that during his entire life, and notably during and after Vatican II, his reactions were determined by this initial education, firmly planted in the context of the 19th century and the aftermath of the French Revolution. Cardinal Billot and his school defined themselves as being anti-liberal; they

[12] The subsequent chapter is not included in this excerpt [Translator's note].

retained from the Popes' teachings a fundamental hostility toward modernist and revolutionary principles.

We can thus determine some of the causes that led to the ruptures which occurred roughly forty years later. When Marcel Lefebvre, former Archbishop of Dakar, heard his fellow clerics speaking in St. Peter's Basilica of Rome, he was dumbfounded: liberalism was triumphing. Everything that he had learned in Rome during the time of Cardinal Billot and Father le Floch was being rejected, even ridiculed. Whence his revolt. Their battle was aimed at a society that wanted to exclude Christianity and replace it with Revolutionary humanism. The young Marcel Lefebvre had learned early on to identify those in the Church who were willing to collaborate with liberalism. They would forever be his adversaries.

[…]

Chapter 4: From Dissent to Schism

When the Council ended, Marcel Lefebvre was still in charge of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost Fathers. This would last for another three years. The atmosphere had changed among the Spiritans as well, and the enthusiasm that had accompanied his nomination to the head of the congregation was progressively fading. This he acknowledged by voluntarily leaving his position, which was given in 1968 to Father Joseph Lécuyer, one of the most notable figures from this religious family.

At Vatican II, Lécuyer was not at all on the same wavelength as Mgr Lefebvre, but his undeniable value as a theologian gave him an aura that even the resigning superior could acknowledge. He was "the least bad successor" that he could have hoped for. At 63 years of age, Mgr Lefebvre was not yet in a retiree's state of mind, yet he had very few responsibilities, and was somewhat adrift. However, he did not remain for long without some sort of project or activity. In particular, he remained in contact with the *Coetus Internationalis* with which he was determined to lead new offensives against the progressive influence that had never before been so strong and assured. At this time, he was not yet in the mindset of rejecting Vatican II altogether. He believed it was necessary to fight to preserve sound doctrine, by convincing the Holy Father that those in whom he had placed too much trust were driving the Church to ruin. He started publishing a journal called *Fortes in Fide*, which managed to stay afloat, according to Bernard Tissier de Mallerais, with a few hundred subscribers. But the archbishop's destiny was to take a completely different direction when he was asked by several seminarians to start a project which would maintain the traditional priesthood, a priesthood for whose future Lefebvre was starting to seriously fear. At the same time, the reform of the liturgy was entering into its decisive phase. An entire movement was taking shape on the *traditionaliste* side that opposed a new liturgy which they claimed contradicted the Eucharistic doctrine of the Council of Trent. To be completely fair, it should be remembered that Marcel Lefebvre was not the first to oppose the initiatives taken by Annibale

Bugnini, the prelate that Paul VI put in charge of overseeing the liturgical changes. It was actually Jean Madiran, editor of the journal *Itinéraires,* who boasted this glorious title numerous times. He was the first to oppose the abolition of the "traditional Catholic Mass*,* Latin and Gregorian according to the Roman Missal of Holy Pius V", the question of the Mass being associated with the traditional interpretation of Holy Scripture and with Roman catechism. In the mind of Madiran, the conciliar *aggiornamento* was turning into a failure; the Church was in danger. With his friends, he set out to block the project, holding tightly to these three primary objectives, since they concerned the very integrity of the faith.

At this point, we need to step back for a moment from *traditionalisme* itself in order to try and understand what happened after Vatican II. First of all, almost all the great councils of the Church have been followed by periods of extreme turmoil, as Cardinal Ratzinger noted. It is impossible to undertake large-scale reforms in an institution as considerable as the Catholic Church without provoking disruptions, unease and even revolts. French Prime Minister Michel Debré explained it one day from a different angle: if the French State had undertaken the same type of reforms as the Church, it would have been profoundly shaken, and all of society with it. But things get even more complicated if one considers that the internal debates which arose during the Council were not arbitrated in a definitive way. A group of theologians who identified with the conciliar enthusiasm claimed that the *spirit of the council*

demanded that things be taken considerably further than that which the *letter of the council* recommended. Among the most notable experts who participated in the elaboration of the texts, clearer and clearer oppositions started to arise.

A single example suffices to show the extent of the division that ensued. The principal theologians who identified with the great texts of Vatican II had wanted to continue their work in the context of a journal called *Concilium.* However, two opposing tendencies within the group very quickly became apparent, to the point of making a common undertaking impossible. Joseph Ratzinger, Henri de Lubac and Jean Daniélou left the board of editors. With Balthasar, they started another journal of international theology entitled *Communio*. Cardinal Wojtyla became involved in the project from Krakow, along with bishops, theologians and intellectuals from at least a dozen different countries. Evidently, at *Concilium*, they were resisting the policies of Paul VI; at *Communio*, their writings were perfectly in line with the Holy Pontiff. Moreover, western society during the 1960s was in full revolution. This was clearly manifested in the events of May 1968, when the students' protests in France were at their peak. But the Church herself was affected by the movement, with a sinister crisis among the clergy. Every intellectual class in society was affected by this breakdown, the clergy even more so, since its very ontological characteristics were being corroded. Priestly celibacy no longer seemed conceivable in a society that laid claim to the sexual revolution, the spiritual vocation no longer seemed relevant, as primacy was now given to political engagement, and doctrinal

orthodoxy seemed defeated in a culture that was becoming more and more relativistic. Aside from the priests, Christian communities were crumbling, carried away with the evolution of morals and often misunderstood ecclesiastical reforms.

It is not surprising then that under these circumstances a movement called *traditionaliste* grew and spread in the midst of a world on the verge of collapse. Were those responsible always aware of the extent of the societal upheaval that was occurring? Weren't they tempted to place the responsibility for a global breakdown entirely on the Church leaders? There were some similar instances in history: it is not possible to impute to the Church alone all the responsibility for the great changes and upheavals caused by the Renaissance and the Reformation as well as the Enlightenment. If the Second Vatican Council hadn't taken place, it is doubtful that the Catholic Church would have more easily weathered the cultural revolution of the 1960s; the opposite is probably true. In my opinion, Vatican II equipped the Church to better respond to societal challenges; perhaps incompletely, but it was not possible to predict and prepare for every single challenge in advance.

On October 13, 1969, Mgr Lefebvre founded the "Pius X Association for Priestly Training" in Fribourg, Switzerland, with the encouragement of the diocesan bishop. Fribourg is home to a much respected faculty of theology, run by the Dominicans. At the same time and in the same place, the priest Marie-Dominique Philippe, at the request of several young people, planned to found

what would eventually become the *Community of St. Jean*. The two undertakings barely crossed paths and took rather different courses. While the community of Mgr Lefebvre ended up breaking with Rome, that of Father Philippe resulted in a well-known canonical project which has become more and more present within the Church since the 1980s. Yet no one can accuse Father Philippe of having made compromises with the spirit of the age.

However, it is essential to understand the process which led from the founding of a seminary, initially approved by another Swiss bishop, Mgr Charrière, to a more and more forceful distancing from Roman authority. In the interim, Mgr Lefebvre acquired the property of Ecône, where he planted the seeds of what would become a veritable seminary. Candidates flocked to it, most of them coming from French dioceses. This could only be badly perceived by the Bishops' Conference of France, especially considering that France was experiencing a drop in priestly vocations. Could reproaches be levelled at Ecône for the way they formed their priests? The style was classic, to be sure, but in the same way that seminaries were before the Council. Was this not the spirit of the *messieurs* of Saint-Sulpice and the other congregations that ran the seminaries since the time of the decisions of the Council of Trent? In a strained atmosphere, on the side of the French episcopate as well as of Mgr Garrone in Rome, an investigation was carried out by Rome which ended in a rather positive judgement. That being said, one could question a theology taken from old textbooks and that did not account for the developments in Christian thinking

since the First Vatican Council. Moreover, the new seminary was created in opposition to the orientations of the conciliar Church and it was understood that it was not very open to what was going on outside the walls of Ecône, all the more so as the confrontation between Mgr Lefebvre and the Vatican turned more and more sour. The Rebel Bishop rejected the new *ordo* of the Mass promulgated by the Pope. A doubt was cast on the orthodoxy and the validity of the Mass of Paul VI. The conciliar liturgy appeared, to say the least, "poisoned"… Marcel Lefebvre's statements became more and more pointed. He stigmatized what he called "false obedience to an equivocal liturgy, an ambiguous catechism, promulgated through a series of conflicting orders, circulars, constitutions and orchestrated or manipulated pastoral letters." From there dates the famous distinction between *Eternal Rome* and *earthly Rome*, influenced by the ideas of the modern world. The tone steadily rose to the point of becoming accusatory when the superior of the *Society of Saint Pius X* explained that, "the masterstroke of Satan has been to trick the Church through obedience into disobeying her Tradition." Through fidelity to the *ancient* Rome, Lefebvre rejected the *new* Rome infected by modernism and Protestantism. How could the Pope not react in the face of such invectives? They were now heading toward rupture, in spite of the very serious action taken by the Holy See to dissuade Mgr Marcel Lefebvre from persisting in his dissident determination.

Our intention has not been to rewrite a complete history of *lefebvrisme*. A reminder of the principal events is merely useful to better grasp the nature of

the disagreement. For now it is enough to say that the series of events that led up to the fateful outcome of June 30, 1988 can be explained by an ever-increasing feeling of resentment toward the conciliar Church. Mgr Lefebvre was even more inclined to heighten his tone as he perceived some support in his favour among Catholic opinion. When he was sanctioned with a *suspens a divinis* after having illicitly proceeded with the priestly ordinations of 1976 against Rome's wishes, the media attention that ensued brought him a great deal of publicity. On August 29th of the same year, he celebrated a Mass in Lille before six thousand of the faithful. The effect was amazing and a survey revealed that a non-negligible number of Catholics sympathized with his actions. Unfortunately, during his homily, he got caught up in giving an apologetic speech in favour of General Videla's dictatorship in Argentina… It was a mistake that came back to bite him. Indeed, he associated himself with an ideology and a political undertaking while claiming a spiritual struggle. The link between religious *intégrisme* and the extreme right was established.

But let's get back to the issue at hand. Paul VI passed away in 1978 and was replaced by the ephemeral John Paul I. John Paul II succeeded him and firmly grabbed the reins of a Church that he wished to bring out of its crisis. Perhaps the Polish Pope would be more sympathetic to the *traditionaliste* movement? Shortly after his election, he received Mgr Lefebvre and was frank: he was thinking of a true reconciliation, and we know now that a project was drawn up by Ratzinger, starting in 1982, to revisit the question of Ecône and the

Mass. Alas, everything got muddied up and there was disillusionment on both sides. The teachings of John Paul II were not at all agreeable to Mgr Lefebvre and several of the Pope's initiatives repulsed him. The discord reached its height at the interreligious meeting at Assisi in 1986. Mgr Lefebvre protested vehemently against the "scandal."

The misunderstandings between John Paul II and Marcel Lefebvre were total. Where the Pope hoped to create a climate of dialogue and respect in order to facilitate international peace among different religions, which everywhere were being accused of stirring up violence in the world, the *traditionaliste* bishop could only see a betrayal of the truth of the Christian message. As though John Paul II could be accused even for one second of compromising with the faith… But, for the *traditionalistes*, interreligious dialogue falls under the same type of reasoning as ecumenical openness, which they say relativizes Christian dogma. Before Vatican II things were simple: there were false religions and there was the One True Religion, revealed by Christ. They changed things and now it is all relative. It is necessary to try and get inside the head of the former missionary bishop, who in his youth left to go work among pagans in order to bring them the baptism of salvation. Moreover, it is possible that the questioning surrounding the plurality of religions shook the certitudes of old, whence the crisis in many missionary groups that are experiencing a drop in vocations, while at the same time associations and institutions that aid in development have grown enormously. However, it is nothing new for Christian reflection to be

interested in what has classically been called the salvation of infidels. Mgr Lefebvre was scandalized to read in the writings of John Paul II that every person is marked by the incarnation of Christ, from the very moment of their conception. He responded, “Where does he speak of incorporation into Christ through baptism?” In a general way, Wojtyla’s writing style was impossible for him to penetrate: “Reading these pages in this modern and unintelligible style leaves me feeling overwhelmed. It is sickening! They are not simple, enlightening, and supernatural in the style of the faith of the Church.” This degree of incomprehension made any effort at explanation impossible. Through the eyes of an outside observer, it is strictly indefensible. In fact, if one were to evaluate the entirety of John Paul II’s magisterium, one could not help but be surprised by the judgements of the *traditionaliste* movement, which misunderstood the essential articulations of his teaching, to which they seem to be indifferent. Under these conditions, is it surprising that Marcel Lefebvre went so far as to effect a rupture with Rome?

We have already seen that right after the Council, he remained very prudent in his doctrinal judgements. However, his accusatory tone steadily increased. And yet, he condemned all “sedevacantism”, that is, the idea that the See of Peter would be vacant as a result of the “betrayal” of Vatican II. For Lefebvre, both Paul VI and John Paul II were the legitimate successors of Peter. Moreover, for quite a long time he had resisted the idea of himself consecrating a bishop to succeed him. However, he took the step in 1988, not without

knowing that such a transgression would result in an automatic excommunication. In Rome, where they feared a surge of *traditionaliste* discord, they suggested a mediation that could satisfy the rebellious development. It was even Joseph Ratzinger himself, prefect of the *Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith,* who got involved in the process. Things went so far that Mgr Lefebvre signed the reconciliation document proposed by the cardinal. Alas, that same night he retracted his signature. Nothing could make him change his mind, not even the interventions of Cardinal Thiandoum, of Jean Guitton and of many others.

On June 30th, Mgr Marcel Lefebvre, assisted by Mgr Antonio de Castro Mayer, bishop emeritus of Campos in Brazil, proceeded with the consecration of four bishops. Excommunication of the consecrators and of those consecrated resulted *ipso facto* from the transgression itself, which was later publicly declared by Cardinal Gantin, prefect of the *Congregation for Bishops*. At least the founder of the *Society of Saint Pius X* had the satisfaction of seeing his work continue beyond himself, he who died, three years later, on March 25th 1991, at the Martigny hospital, not far from Ecône.

From Paul VI to John Paul II, the *traditionaliste* dissent proved to be a thorn in the side of the Church. Even Paul VI was supposedly looking for a solution that would prevent a rupture. John Paul II, who lived through the drama of the schism, opened another road to reconciliation with the creation of the commission *Ecclesia Dei*; in 1984 he allowed the celebration of the Mass

according to the Tridentine Rite under certain conditions, but unfortunately this permission was practically unapplied. The French episcopate has always been reluctant to give concessions to Ecône. True, after the controversial consecrations, a large part of the *traditionaliste* group broke from the *Society of Saint Pius X* to be reconciled with Rome, whence came the reintegration of the Abbey Sainte Madeleine in Le Barroux, France, which up until then had identified with Mgr Lefebvre's movement, and the creation of the *Priestly Fraternity of Saint Peter.* Benedict XVI took this cause to heart from the first moment of his election and further expanded the possibility of celebrating the ancient rite with his Motu Proprio *Summorum Pontificum* on "the use of the Roman liturgy prior to the reform of 1970" (July 7, 2007). In January of 2009 he went so far as to lift the excommunications of the four bishops: Bernard Fellay, Bernard Tissier de Mallerais, Alfonso de Galarreta and Richard Nelson Williamson. We are well aware of the media uproar that ensued, as we noted in the introduction to this book.

Chapter 5: The Extent of a Disagreement

We often forget that the First Vatican Council also experienced a certain amount of opposition right up until its closing. In a way, this reaction was even more severe than that of the *minority* at Vatican II. Noticeable also was the departure from Rome of the primary representatives of the opposition to the doctrine of papal infallibility. However, most of them submitted after the texts were promulgated by Pius IX and there remained only a weak dissidence which

formed around the group *Old Catholics.* The *traditionalisme* that opposed Vatican II had much weightier consequences in the decades that followed the closing of the Council, at least in Western Europe. It is important now to measure its extent.

When John XXIII took it upon himself to call a new ecumenical council, he was thinking about the foremost necessity of reflecting upon the conditions for evangelisation in the modern world. He repeated over and over: his first concern was pastoral. This is not to say that he meant to reject any and all dogmatic preoccupations, even if he did not wish to engage in the defining of new dogma. In order to touch the hearts of men and women in the 20th century, the Church needed to broadly open up to them the spiritual riches of Christianity. With this goal in mind, it became necessary to employ an accessible language without entering into doctrinal complications and by refraining from starting a polemic with modernity. Being of traditionalist sensibility himself, John XXIII feared the reflexes of withdrawal and rejection of the contemporary world. This is why, in his opening address at Vatican II, he used very strong words against the "prophets of doom", guilty in his eyes of always seeing the present in the gloomiest of colours.

When the first schemas prepared by the Curia were rejected by the assembly of bishops, the Pope did not oppose the course being taken by the events. Things were more or less going his way, even if it was not certain that he personally approved of every orientation of the moment. Did he fully grasp what

was at stake in what he had started? One cannot know for sure. Moreover, it is doubtful that those who had precise ideas about the objectives of the Council were fully aware of what they were dealing with. It was Marx who claimed that the major actors of history never know the history that they are making; even more so for those who believe that the Holy Spirit is the primary cause of a Council that brought together the entire Church. It should also be noted that the beginning of the 1960s corresponded with a period of international optimism: it was the era of Kennedy-Khrushchev and hope for an end to the Cold War, in spite of the Cuban Missile Crisis scare. Later on, certain conciliar texts were accused of having been too influenced by this global optimism, which was associated with the views of Teilhard de Chardin. But wasn't this a risk that needed to be taken, since they wanted to bridge the gap with concrete aspects of contemporary civilization?

Like it or not, in the background of the Council there was a strategic desire to emphasize the historical data of the evolution that had changed the whole world over the course of several centuries. The Enlightenment of the 18th century changed the face of Europe, led to the creation of the United States of America and, bit by bit, the emergence of a planet with a radically transformed internal equilibrium. This can be seen in the very make-up of the episcopal body of Vatican II. As minorities, Africa and Asia were present with their young episcopates and the influence of Latin America was already decisive. In a general way, what Max Weber termed "the disenchantment of the world" was at work

with secularization. Old Christian Europe was far from a regime of Christendom. More and more it was pushing Churches into a juridical regime of common law. As for the United States, since their founding they had been flying the flag of pluralism and thus of religious freedom. That Vatican II wouldn't take this global evolution into account is unthinkable. It is a weakness of the *traditionaliste* position to have misunderstood this, even if the redefining of the relationship between the Church and State did involve a difficult reflection on the ways in which the Gospel is present today.

Looking back now, it is possible to accuse Vatican II of having overly espoused a progressive attitude, linked to the industrial expansion of the day, which the oil crisis in the 1970s would then shake. The same could be said about a certain form of humanism, closely linked to the ideologies of the previous centuries, including Marxism. The uprising in France of May 1968 produced, a few years later, a veritable explosion of this type of ideology, including what was called the end of the great systems of meaning. It was individualism that gained the upper hand in a climate that the sociologist Gilles Lipovetsky termed "the era of emptiness." However, an unequivocal evaluation of the conciliar leanings is not without its problems. Henri de Lubac, a first rate theologian, actually reacted very strongly against global optimism, refuting the idea that Teilhard de Chardin had ever underestimated the weight of evil throughout history. When the constitution *Gaudium et Spes* was being elaborated, there was radical discord between the French and the Germans, the latter accusing the former of

underestimating the imbalance caused by sin. The theologian Joseph Ratzinger ended up becoming the spokesman for this opposition.

If one attempts to take a panoramic view of Vatican II, what should be retained as being most important? First of all, of all the councils in the history of Christianity since Nicea, Vatican II was by far the most prolix. This abundance was due to the desire to expose as explicitly as possible all the riches of the Christian tradition. At Nicea, the goal was to counter the Arian heresy; at Trent, it was to respond to the challenges of the Reformation; at Vatican II, the goal was to expose in all its breadth the salvific project that God has for humanity. This meant it would be necessary to spend a great deal of time examining the mystery of the Church.

During the time of Christendom and the centuries that followed, the Church was considered to be the institution that encompassed every aspect of social life, since, by definition, nobody escaped ecclesial membership. In the 16th century, the break-up of Christendom required a new way of seeing things. This was the start of political emancipation. With the Enlightenment of the 18th century, things were taken one step further. Not only was the Sate considered autonomous, but it also strived for complete freedom from Church control. Better yet, among many theorists of political philosophy such as Hobbes and Spinoza, there was supremacy of the political, and thus subordination of the spiritual to the temporal. With the French Revolution, the metaphysical overthrow reached the point of risking the abolition of religious authority

altogether. When Pius VII was Napoleon's prisoner, the possible future of the papacy was in jeopardy. Hannah Arendt highlighted a fundamental difference between the American Revolution and the French Revolution: In the United States, religion remained the foremost of institutions – as Tocqueville noted– even though the Constitution stipulates the separation of Church and State, whereas in France, the totalitarian enthusiasm of 1793 led as far as the prospect of abolishing the Catholic Church altogether. It was the American historians who were the first to become interested in the "totalitarian origins of democracy." Nevertheless, a middle ground slowly emerged over the course of the first half of the 20th century, favouring a calmer relationship between Church and State in France. Even if the evolution of other European countries followed different paths, it is undeniable that they were heading toward an arrangement favourable to a common law. In the 16th century, it was the religion of the Prince that determined the religion of the region, but now freedom of conscience allows each citizen to adhere to the confession of his or her choice, and the non-confessional state guarantees the freedom of worship, having abdicated all claims to competence in dealing with metaphysics and religion. Vatican II became a tributary of a historical evolution from which we now draw our conclusions.

When Marcel Lefebvre and his friends in the *minority* refuse to admit this, they are blinded to the fact that they are caught up in a curious paradox. Indeed, they defend the competence of the State to deal in religious matters,

without recognizing that the modern secular State can never be heir to the Christian princes of old. It is curiously inconsistent to want to grant spiritual powers to leaders whose opinions are sometimes blatantly hostile to the Christian faith. And even if certain state leaders claim to have Catholic convictions, it is in no way a given that they will act in accordance with the values that they claim. This was the case with the homily that Marcel Lefebvre gave in Lille, in which he entered into a defense of the dictatorship of General Videla in Argentina. This dictatorship produced thousands of victims. It was surely not a good example to use to justify the denial of freedom of religion and freedom of conscience!

We insist upon this point, because it is central to Marcel Lefebvre's opposition to the Council and the magisterium of Paul VI and John Paul II. But this was not the only reason for the *traditionaliste* dissent from the conciliar leanings. We saw as well that the liturgical reform was also a cause of their repudiation. For the *Society of Saint Pius X*, the new *ordo* of Paul VI is contrary to the doctrine of the Council of Trent. In opposition to the Reformation, Trent had established the sacrificial nature of the Mass, which made truly and really present the sacrifice of the Saviour's Cross. For the SSPX, the new liturgy, notably in its modification of the Offertory prayer, downplays the notion of sacrifice in favour of the aspects of community in the Eucharistic gathering, where they say the faithful take the place of the priest, who, according to Tridentine doctrine, is the only true minister of the liturgical action.

From the very first questionings of his reform, Paul VI took exception to the accusations leveled against it. He even hardened his position with regards to the *traditionalistes* by forbidding the celebration of the old rite, such was his worry that it might become a battle standard by which to refuse the Council and deny the new rite of the Mass. However, the liturgical issue has evolved quite a bit since the 1970s. For starters, many of the abuses that accompanied the first days of the reform have been dealt with and the Catholic Church as a whole has become much stricter about the norms and quality of its celebrations. But most of all, it was Ratzinger's great interest in the liturgy that was the most consequential for the debates occurring between those in favour of and those opposed to what the *Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith* has termed "the reform of the reform." When Joseph Ratzinger became Benedict XVI, it was immediately noticeable that the Pope was consistent with his own principles. The change of *ceremoniaire*, the new style of celebrations, the practical changes in the positioning of the altar, etc., caught the attention of the entire Church. And when, with his *Motu Proprio*, the Pope allowed for an extension of the celebration of the old rite, it became obvious that he expected some impact with regards to a reinforced understanding of the significance of the rites. It was no longer the situation of resistance as during the pontificate of Paul VI. The Tridentine Rite has received official status, while one could wonder if it hadn't formerly been forbidden altogether. And so, there could now be a re-examination of the fundamental principles of the liturgy. The writings of a

religious Benedictine, Father Cassingena-Trévedy[13], a monk from Ligugé and professor at the Catholic Institute of Paris, are characteristic of another phase of reflection, which previously hadn't been possible. This does not mean that the constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* of Vatican II has been denied. The Pope is in no way about to contradict the masters, who, in Germany, have allowed for a return to the continuous history of rites from their very origins. How could he deny the work of the Benedictines Maria Laach, Pius Parsch or Romano Guardini? These references are often rejected by the Lefebvrists, who consider these initiators of the modern liturgical movement to be guilty of post-conciliar deviations. This is not at all an opinion shared by Benedict XVI, who found, in the return to the sources effected by his precursors, the road to a general re-examination of the question.

This suppression of questionings of the reform, caused by the summary oppositions of the 1960s, is now lifted. We can henceforth interrogate, without scruples, what the great Claudel once called "*la messe à l'envers"* (the backwards Mass). The iconoclastic tendencies, which led to the dismantling of sacred spaces[14], should be reconsidered and it is now acceptable to question the imposed reforms, without being accused of bad faith.

[13] François Cassingena-Trévedy, *Te Igitur*, Ad Solem, 2007.

[14] Here the author is referring to the people who, after Vatican II and having misunderstood its intent, went into their churches and removed or destroyed statues, paintings, icons, high altars and other sacred items [Translator's note].

But let's return to the theological education of the *traditionalistes*. We have remarked several times that Mgr Lefebvre's formation at the Gregorianum in the 1920s locked him into one type of doctrine. This type of rather narrow theology made him impermeable to all the streams of theology that allowed for theological renewal in the 20th century. That is not to say that the Thomism of Cardinal Louis Billot was completely deprived of any value or depth, but there is nevertheless a real difficulty. Was this Thomism really faithful to Saint Thomas Aquinas? It is too often forgotten that Saint Thomas, before being a philosopher imbued with Aristotelianism, was a theologian who took his inspiration and the major themes of his ideas primarily from Holy Scripture. Thomas Aquinas was also very knowledgeable about the Fathers of the Church, and, after the Bible, cites Saint Augustin the most often in his references. After the death of its initiator, the fate of Thomism fell into a certain decadence, which was at the origin of Luther's revolt. Moreover, there is often more interest in the works of the great commentators such as Cajetan and John of St. Thomas than in the actual works of the *Angelic Doctor* himself. When Leo XIII revived Thomism, he favoured a wide variety of initiatives, since there are many contemporary schools of Thomism. The priest Pierre Rousselot, who suffered a premature death at Les Éparges in France during the First World War, was at the origins of a school of thought associated with certain names closely linked to Vatican II such as Lubac and Balthasar. But the teachings of the Gregorianum did not all fall into this stream. It is actually closer to the *24 Thomistic Theses* written by a Jesuit

priest named Mattiussi and approved in 1912 by the *Roman Congregation of Seminaries and Universities*. The Dominican Marie-Dominique Chenu opposed, and not without vehemence, this tendency which drew from St. Thomas:

> a philosophical tool which set aside the very substance of his thought and his theology. It made no allusion to the Gospel message. It removed the doctrines of Saint Thomas from their historical context, detemporalized them and made them into a sacred metaphysics. The theology of Billot was completely ignorant and oblivious of the historicity of the economy of Christianity, unfamiliar with Scriptural sources, elaborated apart from the pastoral experience of the Church and even more so from the Christian people. At its roots, it implied a theology of faith entirely defined by conceptual and juridical authority, without any methodological influence of the mystery which is, for all that, its very object[15].

This extremely severe evaluation of the situation could no doubt use some tempering, because it is not true that the Roman theology at that time was completely foreign to scriptural inspiration. One of its representatives, the priest Garrigou-Lagrange, was particularly interested in mysticism. Nevertheless, it can't be denied that this theology did create a gap with the other theological

[15] Partial English translation taken from Potworowski, Christophe F. *Contemplation and Incarnation: The Theology of Marie-Dominique Chenu.* Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 2001: 43. *Google Books.* Web. 19 December 2014.

movements of the time, those which eventually found themselves validated at Vatican II. We already pointed out the influence of two precursors, Möhler and Newman; we should also mention, from Germany, Erich Przywara and Romano Guardini. In France, in spite of Lubac's disagreement with this expression, the "Fourvière School" was spoken of. Lubac himself along with Fessard, Montcheuil, Daniélou and Balthasar were associated with it. We owe to this school of thought the return to the Fathers of the Church with their collection entitled "*Sources chrétiennes*" (Christian Sources)[16]. Similarly, the Dominicans should be mentioned, with Chenu and Congar as the distinguished representatives of the "Saulchoir" School. In the 1950s a fierce controversy emerged, first in the Roman milieus, around this "*théologie nouvelle*", which was accused of breaking with scholastic rigour in favour of more vague and fuzzy notions. A veritable persecution ensued, of which Lubac and Congar became victims, suspended for several years from holding any teaching post. These same theologians were formally rehabilitated when John XXIII called on them to help with the preparations for Vatican II.

It is not possible here to enter into the details of the controversy which surrounded, for example, the concept of the *surnaturel* (supernatural) in the theology of Father de Lubac. Yet at the same time it would be too hasty and seriously unjust to impute to these various schools of theology a heterodox

[16] No English translation available [Translator's note].

deviation. It is just as unjust to accuse them of modernism or progressivism. Modernism and progressivism were reoccurring temptations in the Church of the 20th century, but these thinkers, who actually lived after the crisis of the turn of the 20th century, are characterized by their ability to overcome the pitfalls that hindered the development of Christian thought for quite a while. We have already mentioned the theology of *ressourcement*, which took all possible profit from a renewal of biblical, patristic, liturgical and historical studies, placing itself in the momentum of the Great Ecclesial Tradition of the last two millennia. It was Newman who demonstrated its organic coherence of uninterrupted development.

For the *traditionalistes*, one of the greatest difficulties in understanding the doctrinal elaborations of Vatican II comes from their lack of knowledge about the so-called "*nouvelle théologie*." Had they ever read a work as important for contemporary ecclesiology as that of Father de Lubac entitled *The Splendor of the Church* (*Méditation sur l'Église*)? Truly, without these types of references, the elaboration of the constitution *Lumen Gentium* is thoroughly unintelligible. Similarly, the study of the work by Louis Bouyer, *The Paschal Mystery* (*Le mystère pascal*), was the prerequisite required for the Constitution on the Liturgy. As for the conciliar openness toward ecumenism and interreligious dialogue, it is illuminated by the books of Yves Congar, the Catholic pioneer of rapprochement with Orthodoxy and Protestantism. The three works still in print by Henri de Lubac on Buddhism made it possible to enter into the declaration *Nostra Aetate,*

in which the Council aimed to clarify the relationship between non-Christian religions and the Church. It is necessary to note that the *traditionaliste* opposition often had insufficient knowledge of this immense doctrinal labour, frequently reducing it to a few singled-out propositions, in order to disparage its authority and even to stigmatize it as having gravely deviated.

It should be further noted that Congar and Lubac were in no way strangers to St. Thomas, having perfect knowledge of him and always deferring to him. But how could a thoughtful debate be possible as long as tenacious suspicion was preventing true communication? One of the keys to the disagreement comes from the rejection of the schemas initially prepared by the Curia. They were rejected because they were thought to be too permeated with a juridical conception of the Church. In order to portray the originality of the message in a civilization that was becoming more and more cut off from its cultural origins, it was necessary first of all to affirm the profound nature of the mystery of the Church. The Church was not merely the “perfect society” of the canon lawyers, but everything that the Bible had announced in the terms “people of God”, “Body of Christ”, or even “Bride.” Another dimension of the doctrinal renovation concerned Holy Scripture itself. The constitution *Dei Verbum* represented a remarkable advancement in integrating at the same time the repercussions of the Protestant controversy as well as the discoveries of contemporary exegesis. The temptation was to harden the oppositions born from the old polemics which had wound up, for example, disassociating the two

sources of Revelation. Against the *Sola Scriptura* of Luther, Catholicism had always affirmed its fidelity to *Tradition*. *Dei Verbum* in no way contradicted this fidelity, but showed the indissoluble complementarity between Scripture and Tradition. Another problem: the consequences of the modernist crisis left in suspense the status of the interpretation of Scripture. Was it under the authority of the science that was imposing itself in order to determine a fixed meaning of the texts? No. Faith was the master of hermeneutics.

John XXIII's wish not to delve into doctrinal controversies, in order to remain true to a project of a pastoral exposition of Christianity, quickly discovered its limits, as it was not possible to examine the great propositions of the faith without falling into elucidations that themselves came out of the recent history of the Church. How could one overlook the relationship to history? Father Congar thus recommended that references to Vatican I and Trent be added to the conciliar texts, which would demonstrate the continuity of Catholic Christian teaching. We bring up these reminders in order to refresh the memory of or even just to explain Vatican II to the younger generations, for whom this is an event further and further removed from their lifetimes. But these reminders are also an important part of the necessary dialogue with *traditionalisme*. Having a helpful discussion is unthinkable as long as the preconceived notions about "la nouvelle théologie" are still in place. All of Vatican II, as well as the subsequent magisterium of the Church, will remain foreign so long as one refuses to completely reopen the doctrinal dossier.

Perhaps we could be accused of having been too severe with regards to *traditionalisme* and its theological culture. We do think that there is a stumbling block in their point of view and that the conversations, which will happen within the framework of the *Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith,* must include an examination of the manifest incomprehension of Tradition, as understood by *lefebvrisme*, with regards to the *ressourcement* that preceded Vatican II. But we do not wish to suggest that the *traditionalistes* are without merit or intelligence. We have had many opportunities to converse with them, and, in spite of our disagreements, we were able to appreciate their tenacity and their desire to be absolutely faithful to the transmitted deposit of faith. The rebellion of their principal leader can be explained by just causes as well. It is undeniable that in the 1960s and the years following, the Church got carried away in a sea of change in which many essential things foundered. Paul VI spoke of an auto-demolition in the Church. The theologians who were the inspiration for Vatican II, such as Daniélou, Balthasar, Bouyer and Lubac, denounced with sadness and anger "the assassins of the faith" and "the betrayal of the Council." Many among them approved of Maurice Clavel when he launched his terrible invective: "You did not go to the world, you surrendered to the world."

The *traditionalistes* have some enemies within the Church. This became clear at the start of 2009, when Benedict XVI lifted the excommunications. The Williamson Affair came at an opportune time for those wishing to demonize *lefebvrisme* once and for all, as though every one of them were destined to live

forever cut off from the Great Church. A curious attitude coming from those who never stop singing the praises of pluralism and of dialogue with those furthest away! If certain aversions can be admitted, it is necessary to question the interdictions that are preventing every attempt at meeting and discussing. Without a doubt our "*tradis*" can sometimes be unbearable and their aggressiveness is fueled by their position as internal *émigrés*. Nevertheless, the experiences we have had as guests at several colloquiums have not been without results. Of course, the oppositions have remained marked, but how can one remain unmoved by the gratitude of people who thank you for not considering them to be lepers?

At the most crucial moment of the rupture caused by the episcopal consecrations, we heard several impressive testimonies about the great esteem in which Mgr Lefebvre was held, in spite of his inadmissible attacks against the Pope and the Church. To cite several renowned figures, now deceased, we recall the memories of Cardinals Lustiger and Thiandoum, as well as those of the great Jesuit Albert Chapelle. The former archbishop of Paris was keen to recall the respect he had for one of his brothers in the episcopate, whose qualities he knew well. Father Chapelle remembered what a great missionary bishop the former papal legate to Western Africa had been. As for Cardinal Thiandoum, the proper successor of Marcel Lefebvre in Dakar, he telephoned us one time with unforgettable words: "I have been to Ecône twenty-six times, and I can assure you that in this affair, the wrongdoing is shared by both sides."

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