

A CENTURY OF MODERNISM

1907-2007

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Introduction – Sources

I. Modernism in the era of St Pius X

- The general climate in the Church at the end of Leo XIII's pontificate.
- The Modernist system.
- The Modernist frame of mind
- The philosophical bases of Modernism.
- Modernism in theology
- Modernist ways of arguing
- Modernist behaviour and methods
- St Pius X's counter-attack

II. Neo-Modernism at the time of Pius XII

- The general climate in the Church in the years 1945-1958.
- How it weakened traditional circles.
- Neo-Modernist doctrines in the years 1945-1958
- The loss of the sense of truth
- Neo-Modernist behaviour and methods
- Pius XII's counter-attack: the encyclical *Humani generis*

III. Neo-Modernism in the Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Epoch

- Reasons for the success of neo-Modernism
- The neo-Modernist frame of mind
- Neo-Modernist philosophical errors tied to those of Modernism
- Neo-Modernist ways of arguing
- Neo-Modernist behaviour and methods
- Neo-Modernism in 2007

IV Conclusion

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A CENTURY OF MODERNISM 1907-2007

Can we talk about the survival of Modernism in 2007? The Modernist error, which was widespread at the beginning of the 20th century, has it not now disappeared? That is certainly the current opinion on the subject.

And yet, the facts are not in accord with that opinion. As soon as one studies contemporary errors, one almost always discerns the Modernist roots of these making an appearance. Modernism, has pervaded, among others, the new exegesis², the new catechism³, the new theology⁴ (a system based on the non-gratuitous nature of the supernatural order)⁵.

Another example illustrates the permanence of Modernism. In the Declaration *Dominus Jesus* of 6th August 2000, Cardinal Ratzinger states the following regarding some 'relativist theories which seek to justify religious pluralism':

"The roots of these problems are to be found in certain presuppositions of both a philosophical and theological nature, which hinder the understanding and acceptance of the revealed truth. Some of these can be mentioned: the conviction of the elusiveness and inexpressibility of divine truth, even by Christian revelation; relativistic attitudes toward truth itself, according to which what is true for some would not be true for others; the radical opposition posited between the logical mentality of the West and the symbolic mentality of the East; the subjectivism which, by regarding reason as the only source of knowledge, becomes incapable of raising its "gaze to the heights, not daring to rise to the truth of being"."

The word modernism is not used. But the presuppositions indicated by the Cardinal constitute the characteristic elements of Modernism of the 1900s, those which were condemned by St Pius X.⁶

In these conditions the diagnosis of Modernism made thirty years ago by Jacques Maritain and Paul VI

² Cf. the study by Msgr. Spadafora "*The triumph of modernism over Catholic Exegesis*" which appeared in issues 156-165 (1995) of *Courrier de Rome*, BP. 156, 78001, Versailles Cedex, and the dossier by Louis Millet, "*The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*" which appears in this issue of *Apropos*.

³ Cf. The *Action Familiale et Scolaire* brochure *La catéchèse française d'après ses documents*, (French Catechesis according to its documentation) supplement to AFS No. 151 October 2000.

⁴ Cf. the book, *La nouvelle théologie*, (*The New Theology*) published by *Courrier de Rome*.

⁵ Which leads to confusing the natural order with the supernatural order.

⁶ By the decree *Lamentabili* of 3rd July 1907 and by the encyclical *Pascendi* of 8th September 1907.

remain fully valid today. In his book, *Le paysan de la Garonne* (The Peasant of the Garonne) published in 1966, Maritain spoke about:

‘The neo-Modernist fever, which was very contagious, at least in so-called “intellectual” circles, compared with which the Modernism of St Pius X’s time was only a mild hay-fever.’ (p. 16).

In 1972, speaking about ‘the errors which can completely ruin the Christian conception of life and history’ Paul VI remarked:

‘Modernism was the characteristic expression of these errors, and it still exists today, under other names.’⁷

This system which is called Modernism and which encompasses a general frame of mind and a set of characteristic errors is therefore very much alive today, a century after it appeared in force in the Church.

We propose to describe it in outline by examining its different components (its frame of mind, ideas, method of argument, methods, resources) at three epochs in history:

- Modernism during the papacy of St Pius X (1903-1914)
- Neo-Modernism during the papacy Pius XII (1939-1958)
- Neo-Modernism of the conciliar and post-conciliar period.

SOURCES:

The present analysis will only give a broad outline of the phenomenon studied. Below are the titles of some documents etc. which deal with this or that aspect of the subject in more depth. They are listed under the headings of the three epochs mentioned above – those of St Pius X, Pius XII and the conciliar & post-conciliar eras.

Modernism in the time of St Pius X⁸

The decree *Lamentabili* of St Pius X dated 3rd July 1907

The encyclical *Pascendi* of St Pius X dated 8th September 1907

⁷ Pope Paul VI, General Audience January 19th, 1972, quotation taken from *The Teachings of Pope Paul VI*. Vol. 5. 1972 p. 12, published by Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

⁸ One will find a more complete study of this question in the *Action Familiale et Scolaire* (AFS) brochure, *Le modernisme hier et aujourd’hui* (Modernism yesterday and today) by François Desjars.

The letter *Notre charge apostolique* of St Pius X on the Sillon dated 25th August 1910.

Histoire du catholicisme libéral et du catholicisme social (History of liberal and social Catholicism) by Abbé E. Barbier (1924)

Modernism in the time of Pius XII

La Nouvelle théologie, où va-t-elle? An article by Fr Garrigou-Lagrange (1946) reproduced in the book *La nouvelle théologie* (The New Theology) mentioned below;

The encyclical *Humani generis* of Pius XII dated 12th August 1950;

La crise actuel du catholicisme français, by Jean Calbrette (1959) ;

L'intégrisme, histoire d'une histoire by Jean Madiran (1964) ;

Face au Modernisme, article by Louis Jugnet (1968)

Modernism in the conciliar and post-conciliar epoch

L'hérésie du XX^e siècle by Jean Madiran (1968)

Réclamation au saint père, by Jean Madiran (1974)

Le concile en question by Jean Madiran ;

Éditoriaux et chroniques (1956-1981) by Jean Madiran (1983-1985)

Gethsemane by Cardinal Siri (1981)

The Rhine flows into the Tiber by Ralph Wiltgen (1982);

Iota Unum by Romano Amerio (1987)

Open Letter to Confused Catholics by Mgr Lefebvre (1987)

Brève apologie pour l'église de toujours, by Fr Calmel (1987)

La nouvelle théologie by Courrier de Rome (1994)

Trouvera-t-il encore la foi sur terre, Claude Barthe (1996)⁹

Studies dealing with all three epochs:

Le modernisme hier et aujourd'hui by François Desjars – AFS (1989) ;

Cent ans de modernisme - Généalogie du concile Vatican II by Abbé Dominique Bourmaud (published by Clovis 2003) ;

Face au modernisme, article by Louis Jugnet (1968) ;

⁹ [One might also add Fr John McKee's work, *The Enemy Within the Gate – The Catholic Church and Renascent Modernism*, published by Lumen Christi Press, Houston, Texas, in May 1974. Ed. *Apropos*]

Des modernistes aujourd'hui, in issue No. 179 (Sep-Oct 2007) of *Fideliter*

Further material may also be found in reviews such as *Pensées catholique*, *Itinéraires*, *Courrier de Rome*, *Fideliter*, *Sel de la terre*, [*The Angelus*, *Approaches*, *Apropos*, *The Remnant*, *Catholic Family News*, *Christian Order*]

I. MODERNISM AT THE TIME OF ST PIUS X

▪ General Climate in the Church at the end of Leo XIII's pontificate

In 1903, Leo XIII died. He was Pope for 25 years. His pontificate had been marked by an amazing contrast between:

- Very firm **teaching**, recalling and reinforcing the previous condemnation of the Church's Magisterium on Liberalism;
- A **government** which pushed very far for conciliation with liberal political powers and which was opposed frequently by those who took seriously his teaching on Liberalism.¹⁰

From whence arose the situation in the Church characterised by Louis Jugnet:

*'Everyone, today, knows at that time, despite the wholesome and profound doctrine so magnificently illustrated by Leo XIII, the end of his pontificate was marked by the growth of false ideas in the Church, in Germany, in France, in England and in Italy. One has only to read the memoirs of Loisy¹¹ to see how philosophy, theology, history, exegesis, ecclesiastical discipline and socio-political thought were pervaded by the errors then in fashion. But thanks to Loisy who was named with the delightful euphemism "a strong force of opinion and truth" by very influential pressure groups (St Pius X will speak later of "clandestinum foedus", clandestine association) having their ramifications throughout the seminaries, the Catholic faculties, the episcopate, and in certain curial circles, it had been nigh impossible to obtain the least useful measure from the Roman Magisterium.'*¹²

▪ The Modernist System

We call Modernism **the set of errors** to which Louis Jugnet alluded and also the movement (one could say the **apparatus**) which supports them.

¹⁰ On this subject see the study on the Ralliement in the AFS brochure *Politique et religion* and also *L'affaire du Ralliement* in No. 101 of AFS

¹¹ Abbé Loisy (1857-1940), one of the principal leaders of French Modernism.

¹² Louis Jugnet *Comment combattre une hérésie* (How to fight a heresy) *Itinéraires* No. 87, p.126.

The errors touch upon several aspects of the Church's life and appear disparate; but they are united by logical ties and common principles and by this fact constitute a **system** (a word used in the encyclical *Pascendi* §5¹³).

At the beginning of his pontificate, Saint Pius X methodically attacked Modernism and managed to set it in decline through effective measures of a doctrinal and disciplinary nature.¹⁴

In the outline of the Modernist phenomenon which we give later we will distinguish between the Modernist frame of mind, doctrines, methods of argument, and methods. We will refer ourselves above all to two documents of St Pius X: the decree *Lamentabili* (3rd July 1907) and the encyclical *Pascendi* (8th September 1907).

▪ **The Modernist Frame of Mind**

The Modernist is characterised by the concern to be modern, in other words by the love of novelties in every domain, even in those where novelty has no *raison d'être*.

From this we find the Modernist frame of mind characterised thus by Louis Jugnet:

*'An aggressive scorn for the past and tradition, a blind and irrational adoration of the future, a belief in inevitable and continual progress.'*¹⁵

All this translates itself into a systematic desire for change; nothing can be stable, nothing can be immutable in the Church. (cf. *Pascendi* §38).

*'For the Modernist, writes Fr Calmel, as the name suggests, religion is essentially modern. **It is not dominated by time; it is immersed wholly in the adventures of humanity on the move.** There is no revelation, given once and for all, teaching the divine mysteries. There is no sacrifice having merited grace once for all. There is no new and eternal testament. But there is an indefinite evolution. It is in this sense that religion is called modern.'*¹⁶

The love of novelties, the canonisation of change, indefinite evolution -- it is such a state of mind that

¹³ [All quotations from *Pascendi* are taken from the book *My words will not pass away – doctrinal writings St Pius X*, Published by Sinag-tala Publishers, Philippines 1974 – Editor, Apropos. The translation of *Pascendi* used in this book was that originally used by Burns, Oates and Washbourne in the publication, *The Doctrines of the Modernists*.]

¹⁴ See the paragraph ahead entitled St Pius X's Counter-attack

¹⁵ Louis Jugnet, *Face au Modernisme*, a study published by *Ordre français*.

¹⁶ Rev. Fr Calmel, *Préface au catéchisme sur le modernisme du Père Lemius*, the text of which was reproduced in *Le Sel de la terre*, Special edition 12, Couvent de la Haye-aux-Bonshommes, 49240 Avrillé, France. This was a special issue consecrated to Fr Calmel. M. de Lassus' emphasis.

one finds throughout the history of the Modernist phenomenon.¹⁷

▪ **Philosophical Bases of Modernism**

In an article comparing the Modernism of St Pius X's time with the Neo-Modernism of St Pius XII's time, Louis Jugnet¹⁸ writes:

*'If Modernism is rightly a religious error, and even "the synthesis of all heresies" as it was called by St Pius X in "Pascendi", its tap root is in philosophy: the "falsa philosophia" (false philosophy) – such is the poisoned origin from which all ensues.'*¹⁹

A false philosophy principally comprising two errors, bearing scholarly names but simple to define: agnosticism and "vital immanence" or immanentism.

○ **Agnosticism**

➤ **Definition**

An error according to which human reason is confined within the field of phenomena and finds itself incapable of grasping the intelligible in the perceptible.

*'According to this teaching human reason is confined entirely within the field of **phenomena**, that is to say, to things that appear, and in the manner in which they appear; it has neither the right nor the power to overstep these limits.'* (Pascendi §6)

➤ **Consequences**

By virtue of their agnosticism, Modernists:

- Depreciate the realistic impulse of intelligence;
- Systematically depreciate intellectual knowledge
- Arrive at ruining the notion of truth

They thus display evidence of radical Nominalism²⁰ (Nominalism is a theory according to which ideas

¹⁷ [Such also characterises the history of the post-conciliar period – the liturgy being a prime example of Modernism in action – Editor, Apropos]

¹⁸ Louis Jugnet (1913-1973), Professor of Philosophy, author of the book *Pour connaître la pensée de Saint Thomas d'Aquin* published by *Nouvelles éditions latines*. On this subject see the articles in No. 150 (Aug. 2000) and 172 (Apr. 2004) of AFS.

¹⁹ *Face au modernisme*, p.7. Available from AFS.

²⁰ [Jean Marie Vaissière in *Introduction to Politics* (An Approaches study document – now out-of-print) states: 'What value is to be ascribed to the permanent and universal character of our ideas? As is clear from its very name, Nominalism

are only the arbitrary production of the mind without any relationship to reality)

“Blind” they are, and “leaders of the blind”, puffed up with the proud name of science, they have reached that pitch of folly at which they pervert the eternal concept of truth.’ (Pascendi §13)

➤ **Analogy with Protestantism**

Even before the Modernists, Luther had proved himself a radical Nominalist. This explains the relationship between Protestantism and Modernism²¹, a movement which St Pius X remarked – would develop the Christian world in the same direction:

‘These reasons suffice to show superabundantly by how many roads Modernism leads to atheism and to the annihilation of all religion. The error of Protestantism made the first step on this path; that of Modernism makes the second; atheism makes the next.’ (Pascendi §39)

○ **Immanentism** (or vital immanence)

The Latin word *immanens* means “remaining at the interior of”.²²

Jolivet’s vocabulary of philosophy defines Immanentism (or theories of immanence) thus:

‘Doctrines professing that all of a moral and religious order must explain itself adequately as a spontaneous product of the human conscience.’

Speaking of this characteristic of Modernism, Cardinal Mercier presented it in a formula which should be learnt by heart (just as we find in applications around us).

The heart of Modernism is really this: that the religious soul draws the object and motive of its own

answers this question by denying their reality and considers them merely as signs or names (hence NOMinalism). That is, a conventional value which allows us to make useful classifications. Hence for this school of thought, intelligence and reason have merely a pragmatic and utilitarian character; that is they “break up” or “atomise” reality into a number of categories and visions which are intellectually convenient but which, by the Nominalist argument, are utterly void of truth... To the Nominalist the evidence of our senses is the most authentic manifestation of reality and our senses are a more trustworthy channel of knowledge than intelligence and reason, since the latter (he argues) inevitably tend to imprison in fixed categories something (viz., reality) which is of its very nature in a continuous state of flux... If we consider the extensions of this mode of thought in the sphere of religious belief, it would follow that Faith would cease to be assent given by the intelligence, illumined by Grace, to a dogmatic and universal teaching received ex auditu but would become that “blind religious sense arising from the obscure depth of the subconscious, morally trained by the impulse of the heart”, which the Church has anathematised in the wording of the anti-Modernist oath.’ Footnote added by Editor, Apropos.]

²¹ On this subject see the Apropos study document: *The Rudiments of Protestantism*, Apropos No. 10.

²² [A friend comments: ‘ “immanentism”, as distinct from the Transcendent, means “the perfection resides—dwells— WITHIN”, and only WITHIN, as “within time” or “within history” or “within the individual consciousness”. In +Maneo (to dwell within) in Latin.’ Editor, Apropos.]

*faith from within itself, and not from outside.*²³

St Pius X saw in Immanentism, the engine of Modernist doctrines, as the positive side of the Modernist system (the negative side being agnosticism).

➤ **Consequences**

The faith resides in a certain private sentiment created by a need for the divine.

This sentiment is a revelation, or at the very least a beginning of revelation.

From this arises the equating of religious consciousness and revelation.

From this arises the law which erects religious consciousness as a universal rule.

Here are some passages from *Pascendi* where these points are developed.

'Therefore, as God is the object of religion, we must conclude that faith, which is the basis and the foundation of all religion, must consist in a certain interior sense originating in a need of the divine.'
(*Pascendi* §7)

'Modernists find in this sense not only faith, but in and with faith, as they understand it, they affirm that there is also to be found revelation. (...)

Is not that religious sense which is perceptible in the conscience, revelation, or at least the beginning of revelation? (...)

From this, Venerable Brethren, springs that most absurd tenet of the Modernists, that every religion, according to different aspect under which it is viewed, must be considered as both natural and supernatural. It is thus that they make consciousness and revelation synonymous. From this they derive the law laid down as the universal standard, according to which religious consciousness is to be put on an equal footing with revelation, and that to it all must submit, even the supreme authority of the Church, whether in the capacity of teacher, or in that of legislator in the province of sacred liturgy or discipline.' (*Pascendi* §8)

➤ **Analogy with Protestantism**

We find here again striking analogies with Protestantism (the issue of private interpretation), as well as the theories of Kant and Rousseau (who make conscience the supreme criterion of morality)²⁴ and with what is taught in our modern [French] catechetical courses.

➤ **From vital immanence to pantheism**

²³ Pastoral Letter for Easter 1908; quoted by Romano Amerio, *Iota unum*, p.39.

²⁴ On the role of conscience in morality, see note 52, p.165.

This path has been described thus in *Pascendi*:

The philosopher has declared: “The principle of faith is immanent”; the believer has added: “This principle is God”; and the theologian draws the conclusion: “God is immanent in man”. Thus we have theological immanence.’ (Pascendi §19)

The encyclical *Pascendi* (*Pascendi* §19) distinguishes the three meanings of the word *immanence* in the Modernists’ thinking:

1. God working in man is more intimately present in him than man is in even himself, and this conception, if properly understood, is irreproachable.
2. The divine action is one with the action of nature... and this would destroy the supernatural order.²⁵
3. God is confused with his creature: i.e. pantheism.

• **Modernism in Theology**

There are two theological consequences which can be seen coming from the philosophical error of vital immanence:

- The tendency towards pantheism
- The confusion of the natural with the supernatural

The encyclical *Pascendi* insists on this in the chapter on the Modernist apologist²⁶:

‘There are Catholics who, while rejecting immanence as a doctrine, employ it as a method of apologetics, and who do this so imprudently that they seem to admit, not merely a capacity and a suitability for the supernatural, such as has at all times been emphasised, within due limits, by Catholic apologists, but that there is in human nature a true and rigorous need for the supernatural order.’ (Pascendi §37).

If the supernatural is required by nature, it becomes natural... The confusion of the supernatural/natural is the basis of what today we call the new theology the principal protagonist of which was Fr (later Cardinal) de Lubac.²⁷

²⁵ Let us recall that by supernatural, theology means a type of reality which surpasses the power, the demands, and even the natural design of every creature. The supernatural is by no means synonymous with the spiritual or immaterial. Man finds himself in the supernatural order. There is no other for him. Regarding this see the brochure, *Le naturalisme*, by Fr Emmanuel (Published by DMM) and the brochure, *Catholicisme, foi et problèmes religieux*, by Louis Jugnet.

²⁶ Let us remember that *Pascendi* analyses Modernism while distinguishing: the philosophy, the believer, the theologian, the historian, the critic, the reformer.

Modernism is a vehicle of even more theological errors. We present below some Modernist definitions which constitute so many errors:

Faith	Perception of immanent God
Dogma	Reflection of intelligence on the immanent God
Sacraments	Respond to the need to give religion a “visible body”.
Scripture	A collection of experiences made by believers.
The Church	A response to man’s social needs, it is the fruit of the collective conscience.
Ecclesiastical authority	A vital product of the Church, derived from the community of the faithful.
Church and State	Strangers one to the other by virtue of their different ends: hence separation

- **Modernist ways of arguing**

- **Avoiding all methodical exposition of doctrine**

‘It is one of the cleverest devices of the Modernists (as they are commonly and rightly called) to present their doctrines without order and systematic arrangement, in a scattered and disjointed manner, so as to make it appear as if their minds were in doubt or hesitation, whereas in reality they are fixed and steadfast.’ (Pascendi §4)

To mix errors and truth

‘This will appear more clearly to anybody who studies the conduct of Modernists, which is in perfect harmony with their teachings. In their writings and addresses they seem not infrequently to advocate doctrines which are contrary one to the other, so that one would be disposed to regard their attitude as double and doubtful. But this is done deliberately and advisedly, and the reason of it is to be found in their opinion as to the mutual separation of science and faith. Thus in their books one finds some things which might be approved by a Catholic, but on turning over the page one is confronted by other things which might well have been dictated by a rationalist. When they write history they make no mention of the divinity of Christ, but when they are in the pulpit they profess it clearly; again, when they are dealing with history they take no account of the Fathers and the Councils, but when they catechise the people, they cite them respectfully.’ (Pascendi §18).

- **Modernist methods and behaviour**

- **To act within the bosom of the Church**

²⁷ Regarding Fr de Lubac’s new theology, see p.166. See also in no. 187 of AFS, the dossier: *A propos du père de Lubac: la gratuité de l’ordre surnaturel.*

With Modernism we are in the presence:

*'Of a revolution the aim of which, avowed or not, is to substitute Man for God, in making Man the measure of all things, and which for the first time in the history of the Church is taking place in the bosom of the Church itself.'*²⁸

This confirms the judgement made by Abbé Dominique Bourmaud:

*'Modernism is not only a heresy or an apostasy, it is a fifth column.'*²⁹

- **To arrange an efficient resource exercising action under many forms**

'What efforts do they not make to win new recruits! They seize upon professorships in the seminaries and universities, and gradually make of them chairs of pestilence. In sermons from the pulpit they disseminate their doctrines, although possibly in utterances which are veiled. In congresses they express their teachings more openly. In their social gatherings they introduce them and commend them to others. Under their own names and pseudonyms they publish numbers of books, newspapers, reviews, and sometimes one and the same writer adopts a variety of pseudonyms to trap the incautious reader into believing in a multitude of Modernist writers. In short, with feverish activity they leave nothing untried, in act, speech and writing.' (Pascendi §43)

- **To act like a secret society**

Pascendi speaks about a 'band of Modernists' (Pascendi §42). The *Motu proprio* of 1st November 1910 is more explicit:

'The Modernists, even after the encyclical Pascendi had removed the mask they used to cover themselves, have not abandoned their designs to trouble the Church's peace. They have not ceased, indeed, to seek out new adepts and to group them in a secret association.'

'A band of Modernists', 'A secret association of Modernists' ('*clandestinum foedus*'): These expressions indicate what Jean Madiran would later call the 'secret society of Modernists':³⁰ an association of restricted circles, infiltrating Modernism everywhere and who are more or less hidden; the degree of concealment depending on the measure of opposition they meet in high places.

- **Saint Pius X's counter-attack**

²⁸ Marcel de Corte, *Itinéraires* No 87. p.25.

²⁹ *Cent ans de modernisme*, p. 24 ; our emphasis.

³⁰ See the chapter bearing the title of his book, *L'intégrisme, histoire d'une histoire*.

Faced with this hydra-headed error and with its apparatus, the first measure taken under the pontificate of St Pius X was to put the principal works of the French Modernist leaders on the Index (A. Loisy, A. Houtin, L. Laberthonnière, Ed. Le Roy).

In 1907 more general measures were taken to complete this action:

- the decree *Lamentabili* of 3-4th July 1907;
- the encyclical *Pascendi* of 8th September 1907

The Sillon movement which was a form of Catholic Liberalism pervaded with Modernist philosophy was the subject of the Pope's letter *Notre charge apostolique* of 25th August 1910.³¹

On the 1st September 1910, the *Anti-Modernist Oath* was published which every candidate for ordination had to take, an oath which remained obligatory until the end of the Second Vatican Council.

At the time of St Pius X's death, in 1914, these different measures had begun to bear fruit; the Modernist network, seriously and efficiently fought by the Roman authorities and numerous bishops, was constrained to hide itself and to behave like an underground current ready to come to the surface at an opportune moment.

Regarding St Pius X's action, Cardinal Mercier passed the following judgement in 1915:

*If, at the birth of Luther and Calvin, the Church had possessed Pontiffs of the temper of Pius X, would the Reformation have detached from Rome a third of Christian Europe? Pius X... has saved Christendom from the immense peril of Modernism, that is to say not one heresy, but all the heresies at one time.*³²

We have stressed the Modernism of St Pius X's era, because it constitutes the first form of a system of ideas and methods which will reappear after the 1914-18 war to triumph today.

II - Neo-Modernism during the papacy of Pius XII

Vigorously fought by Saint Pius X, Modernism pursued its activities in a discrete manner. It reappeared in force at the time of the *Action Française* affair (1926). It profited from the passion for novelties which characterised the immediate post-war period (1940-45) to reinforce its position; from this was born the movement of ideas which would be called Neo-Modernism.

³¹ On the *Sillon* see the brochure by AFS, *Le Sillon, Saint Pie X et la crise du catholicisme français*; see also the chapter *Le dilemme de Marc Sangnier* in Charles Maurras's book *La démocratie religieuse* (published by *Nouvelles éditions latines*).

³² Cardinal Mercier, pastoral letter, 2nd February 1915.

- **General climate in the years 1945-1958**

It was marked by:

- Increased penetration of Catholic milieus by **Protestant and Marxist ideas**, a penetration facilitated by the double victory over Germany by the USA and the USSR;
- **The weakening of traditional Catholic milieus** resulting in a double purging, that (of an ecclesiastical nature) which followed the condemnation of Action Française in 1926³³ and that (of a political origin) which accompanied the liberation of 1944-45;
- A certain **intellectual deterioration of leading Catholic milieus**, allowing the success of inconsistent systems like those of Teilhard de Chardin.³⁴

How the weakening of traditional Catholic milieus was effected.

It was principally by an ecclesiastical path, in discrediting *Action Française* by an arbitrary condemnation, that this weakening had occurred in the years preceding the pontificate of Pius XII (Pope from 1939 to 1958).

It was effected by a classic method which the Modernists had used in the case already cited (that of *Action Française* in 1926) and resumed several times later (in 1962 against *La Cité Catholique*, in 1966 against *Itinéraires*, and in 1969 against the Abbé de Nantes):

*‘Condemnations of this sort have never been gratuitous. One learns after the blow that they have served, in each occasion, to prepare the paths for a well planned Modernist offensive. The condemnation of Action Française in 1926 served to install a Catholic Action in the form of philosophical societies, and the instilling of a Masonic ethos in Christian temporal structures. In 1962 to open the doors to the conciliar plot there was a worldwide campaign against La Cité Catholique with the watchword universally taken up: “The integrists are the worst enemies of the Church, more dangerous than the Communists”. This was the hateful and vengeful reversal of the sentence of St Pius X on the Modernists, the worst enemies of the Church. This reversal contained in substance the opening to the world, the opening to the Left, the replacement of Tradition by Modernism, the historic compromise with Communism. In 1966, to inaugurate the post-conciliar era and to prepare for the suppression of the Catechism, we saw the condemnation of Itinéraires by the French episcopate. During the summer of 1969, a reprimand by cardinals occurred while consideration was taking place of the means necessary to ensure that the celebration of the traditional Mass would not be stopped; the disqualification of the Abbé de Nantes came to present **an analogous diversion with the***

³³ See No. 128 of AFS (December 1996) the article, *Un anniversaire instructif – La condamnation de l’Action Française*.

³⁴ Cf. this remark by Etienne Gilson: ‘Fr Teilhard de Chardin’s thought does not seem to me to have attained the minimum degree of consistency to enable one to speak of it in terms of a doctrine; that is why I speak only of the case of Teilhard de Chardin’. (*Les tribulations de Sophie*, p.73).

Regarding Teilhard de Chardin, see the brochure by Dom Frenau, *Pensée philosophique et religieuse du père Teilhard de Chardin* and the article by Daniel Jacob *Une figure moderne de l’Anti-Christ* available from AFS.

precedents of 1966, 1962 and 1926, seeking once more to focus the faithful on the defence of unjustly attacked individuals, during which the essential evil blows were delivered elsewhere.³⁵

We know the results of these arbitrary condemnations:

To weaken the traditional milieu with a view to breaking it up;

To purge (if it had not already been done) - or at least **to neutralise** – those persons holding posts of influence and who were hostile to Modernism;

To operate a diversion ‘*seeking once more to focus the faithful on the defence of unjustly attacked individuals, during which the essential evil blows were delivered elsewhere.*’

Such was the case with the condemnation of *Action Française* in 1926. In the years 1927-1930, many churchmen who were fundamentally anti-Modernist had resigned their posts at the time of this affair (for example, take Cardinal Billot and Abbé Le Floch, Director of the French Seminary in Rome). The posts left empty were often occupied by Modernists.

Elsewhere, at the end of 1927, the anti-Modernist reaction (at the religious level) and counter-revolutionary action (at the political level) weakened. So much so that Jean Calbrette in his book *la crise actuelle du catholicisme français* (The current crisis in French Catholicism) p.29, was able to write with proof to support it:

‘Just as the Dreyfus affair has torn France apart, the Action Française affair has broken apart Catholicism. It has resulted in what Dansette calls with pride a “second ralliement”³⁶ – to democratism.’

A ralliement to democratism, in other words to the ideas which had been condemned by St Pius X in his letter on the Sillon of 25th August 1910.

▪ **The neo-Modernist doctrines of the period 1945-1958**

These had developed under the influence:

- Of an old Modernist current which had always remained;
- Of the general climate which prevailed after the 1940-45 war;

³⁵ Jean Madiran, *Éditions et chroniques*, Vol III, p. 177 (Article *Mutinerie à bord* of Dec. 1978 – our emphasis).

³⁶ [The first “*Ralliement*” or rallying was that of Leo XIII towards the French Republic. See “*The Ralliement (1892)*” pp. 271-272 in the article “*The Fundamentals of Democracy*” in *Apropos* 19/20 Pentecost 1999. Ed. *Apropos*.]

- Of new thinkers such as Fr de Lubac, Fr Teilhard de Chardin, Emmanuel Mounier...

From this we have the system – called neo-Modernism – made up of errors in philosophy, theology, exegesis, bringing in its trail errors in the liturgy, the priesthood, the Magisterium; a system which helped spread Marxist ideas in Catholic circles.

One found there tendencies which had marked Modernism at the beginning of the century, in particular:

- A passion for novelties
- A contempt for scholastic philosophy and by contrast the promotion of erroneous philosophical systems (idealism, immanentism...);
- Confusing the natural with the supernatural (to which Fr de Lubac had brought a new lustre).

▪ **The loss of the sense of truth**

This is what resulted from the contempt for scholastic theology indicated above; one finds, in the neo-Modernism, of the time of Pius XII, a concept of truth as harmful as the agnosticism described in *Pascendi* (§6)³⁷. It was explained thus by Fr Garrigou-Lagrange O.P. in the appendix to his works *La synthèse thomiste*.³⁸

*'Where is the new theology going? It is returning to Modernism. Because it has accepted the proposition that was made to it³⁹: that of substituting the traditional definition of truth: *adaequatio rei et intellectus* (the conformity of intelligence with the thing), as if it was chimerical, with the subjective definition: *adaequatio realis mentis et vitae* (the conformity of intelligence with life) (...) Truth is no longer the conformity of judgement with extramental reality and its immutable laws, but the conformity of judgement with the exigencies of action and human life which is always evolving. For the philosophy of being or ontology has been substituted the philosophy of action which defines truth no longer as a function of being but of action.'*⁴⁰

³⁷ See p.143.

³⁸ This appendix is reproduced in appendix V of the book *La nouvelle théologie* published by *Courrier de Rome*.

³⁹ In particular by Maurice Blondel (1861-1949). Regarding his philosophy see Chapter 3 of *La nouvelle théologie*.

⁴⁰ Text quoted in *La nouvelle théologie* p.193 [Regarding action, one should recall the influence of Maurice Blondel's book, *l'Action*. Published when he was only thirty-two years of age, Maurice Blondel's 1893 work, entitled *l'Action*., has been very influential upon this new orientation of thought and its newly proposed criterion of truth, especially in Modernist circles. Later in his life, Maurice Blondel (1861-1949) revised his seminal, but deleterious, book, *l'Action: Essai d'une Critique de la Vie et d'une Science de la Pratique*, and expanded the original single volume into two volumes, publishing them sequentially in 1936 and 1937, respectively. Literally rendered, the full English title of the original 1893 volume is: *Action: An Essay on a Critique of Life and on a Science of the Practical*. The title itself already implies a Policy (and Strategy) of Expediency! Addition to footnote by Editor of *Apropos*]

- **Neo-Modernist methods and behaviour**

These are the same as those outlined below:

- **To act within the bosom of the Church**

A method exposed by Fr Teilhard de Chardin:

'I still do not see any better means of bringing about what I anticipate than to work towards the reformation from within: that is, by remaining sincerely attached to the "phylum" whose development I expect to see...I find only the Roman stem, taken in its entirety, can provide a biological support vast enough and varied enough to carry out and underpin the transformation to which I look forward.'

- **The methodology of philosophical societies**

Let's go back to Jean Madiran's remark:

'The condemnation of Action Française in 1926 served to install a Catholic Action in the form of philosophical societies, and the instilling of a Masonic ethos in Christian temporal structures.'

This has been noted by an author who would never be classed as anti-Modernist, Joseph Follet, in *Chronique sociale* of 30th October 1958:

'In certain groups of Catholic Action, in particular at the local level, I have been able to verify the observations made by Augustin Cochin on the philosophical societies⁴¹ which preceded the French Revolution – notably the tendency for the group to close in on itself in an ideological orthodoxy (I'm not speaking here, of course of Catholic orthodoxy, but of a added or supererogatory group orthodoxy) inspired by a small central group of which the members found themselves, some in relation to others, in a state of constant one-upmanship.'

If a part of Catholic Action was oriented towards Modernism and towards an opening to socialism and to communism, it is that it has been remote-controlled in this sense, something made possible by the technique of philosophical societies and directing nuclei.

Can one not see behind all this the "*clandestinum foedus*", otherwise known as the secret society of Modernists?

⁴¹ We know the structure and techniques of philosophical societies were systematically adopted by Freemasonry. On this subject see *Apropos 22 (Elementary Guide to Freemasonry)* by Arnaud de Lassus) pp. 97-98, and the brochure, *Groupes réducteurs et noyaux dirigeants* by Adrien Loubier (available from AFS). See also pp. 227-242 of *Fundamentals of Democracy* by Arnaud de Lassus which appeared in *Apropos* 19/20. '*Philosophical societies*' was translated as '*consensus societies*' in the last.]

- **Pius XII's counter-attack: the encyclical *Humani generis***

By his encyclical *Humani generis*, of 12th August 1950, bearing the sub-title 'Concerning some false opinions threatening to undermine the foundations of Catholic doctrine', Pius XII reacted vigorously on the intellectual level.

- **Content of the encyclical**

Msgr P. Parente synthesizes the content in the Catholic Encyclopedia as follows:

*'Pius XII had had a prompt and precise intuition of the danger and in the encyclical *Humani generis*, he diagnosed the virus and its way of development; he had known himself to apply useful remedies, detecting very quickly the march of modern culture in the direction of **universal evolutionism, existentialism and historicism**, which led towards the negation or devaluation of the absolute in being and in thought, to the benefit of a philosophy of contingency, of **a positivism and of a relativism, which made metaphysics and thus theology impossible.***

*Under the pretext of a return to sources, scorn was cast upon systematic theology with its technical notions and terminology; the more simple and more flexible language of the Fathers was preferred. The solid doctrinal corpus defined by the Church in the course of the centuries was neglected in favour of an appeal to Scripture, in explaining it by an arbitrary symbolism, as if Jesus Christ had not instituted the Church the sole depository and interpreter of the Word of God. By this process dogmatic formulae were devalued, reducing their content to a minimum so that they could be adapted to no matter what philosophical or religious system. **Dogmatic relativism** which had already begun to produce its poisoned fruits.*

*Even more audacious was the attack **against scholastic philosophy, which, according to the innovators, did not respond to the exigencies of modern thought** irritated by rigid metaphysics and fixed outlines. The enemy of immutable truth, it all tended towards the flux of life in the future. The devaluation of reason and first principles, of theodicy and ethics, the fideist option of truth through sentiment and will, the alliance of the most opposed systems in the attempt to express an elusive truth. Such was the vital philosophy which they wanted to substitute for scholastic philosophy.*

*From there comes the famous "living tradition" invented in our days against the immutable, unique apostolic tradition, the *depositum fidei* as St Paul said.*

Humani generis* confirmed Catholic doctrine, defined clearly by the First Vatican Council, and then by St Pius X, reaffirming the validity of Thomism, the immutability of doctrine, the primordial importance of the pontifical Magisterium, the norm of truth, **the absolute inerrancy of Sacred Scripture, the historic value of the first chapters of Genesis ...'⁴²*

- **The attitude towards truth**

In the encyclical, Pius XII put in relief the attitude which the faithful must have regarding truth (philosophical and religious):

⁴² Msgr. Spadafora, Dom Francesco Putti, founder of *Si Si No No, héraut de la foi catholique*, p.148. Published by *Les amis de St François de Sales*, Case postale 2346, 1950-Sion 2, Suisse. Our emphasis.

'God, the highest Truth, has created and guides the human intellect, not that it may daily oppose new truths to rightly established ones, but rather that, having eliminated errors which may have crept in, it may build truth upon truth in the same order and structure that exist in reality, the source of truth.'
(*Humani Generis* §30).

- **Despite the encyclical, Modernism continued on its way**

Badly helped by certain episcopates, in which many held to certain Modernist positions, scarcely able to count on the support of milieus controlled by Catholic Action, having only a little support from the traditional milieus weakened as we explained below, Pius XII was not able to create a strong anti-Modernist reaction. The encyclical was not accompanied by disciplinary measures. Modernism continued to progress.

III Neo-Modernism in the Conciliar and post conciliar eras

By virtue of the absence of disciplinary measures arising from the encyclical *Humani generis* of 1950, the neo-Modernists were able to continue to develop their action in the bosom of the Church in the years 1950-58 (the end of Pius XII's pontificate). They knew how to take advantage of the excitement arising from The Second Vatican Council. So much, that in 1967, in his book *Le Paysan de la Garonne*, Jacques Maritain was able to compare the Modernism at the time of St Pius X as a mild hay fever if one was to compare it with the Modernism then triumphant (cf. the quotation from Maritain below).

The neo-Modernism of the conciliar and post-conciliar eras is an immense subject and we will only touch on some aspects here: those which allow us to see better the continuity of the Modernist phenomenon since the beginning of the 20th century. One may find a more complete analysis in the AFS brochure *Le modernisme hier et aujourd'hui* especially on the subject of the Modernist philosophical society of today.

- **Reasons for the success of neo-Modernism**

Here is how Fr Calmel explains them in his preface to the *Catéchisme sur le modernisme du Père Lemius* [Fr Lemius' Catechism on Modernism] (p.102 of No 12 of *Sel de la Terre*).

'How do we explain how the virus has penetrated so far into the organism. One may enumerate three principal reasons:

*Firstly the imposture of Vatican II, the only one of all the Councils which refused to be doctrinal;
Secondly, the progressive occupation of the most elevated positions by Modernist prelates;
Thirdly, the debility of the theological life amongst all the Christian people, and beginning at its head.*

A council which betrayed, prelates who betrayed, a Christian people incapable of resisting the treason, because they were spiritually debilitated. Here, at least in part, is what has passed between the two Modernisms; that of St Pius X who was a saint; that of Paul VI who rather evokes Honorius I.'

- **The neo-Modernist mindset**

We find in it, as in the Modernism of St Pius X's time, the love of novelties in all domains where they have no *raison d'être*.

One of the key words of Vatican II was *Aggiornamento* (update):

*'The insistence which is made in the texts of the Council to this claim of Aggiornamento for adaptation to the world has created in the Catholic world a climate of constant tension towards the new, an agitation (which perdures today) towards some indeterminate thing, which one always firmly desires. This agitation (or "mobilism" as Amerio calls it⁴³) is not Catholic; it is typical, to the contrary, of the spirit of the world; at any rate it surely does not come from the Holy Spirit: "The word novus occurs two hundred and twelve times in Vatican II; much more frequently than in any other Council... Paul VI repeatedly proclaimed the newness of the conciliar thought: "The important words of the council are newness and updating... the word newness has been given to us as an order, as a program." (L'Osservatore Romano, 3rd July 1974)'⁴⁴. And when the "new", as one sees it, reveals itself for what it is, indeed: a cheap and even banal adaptation of the Church's doctrine and thought towards profane doctrines, the anxiety did not come to a stop, but to the contrary it grew, because the novelty of such an adaptation (treacherous) is such that it not content with something definite; it is condemned to surpass continually its objectives, in discussing and in criticising everything and wishing all to dissolve in a something new yet to be realised, ad infinitum.'*⁴⁵

This irrepressible desire for novelty, for modernity as been translated into facts. Thus, we have had a new Mass, a new liturgical calendar, a new catechism, new doctrines on many points, a new exegesis, a new canon law...

We can find in Romano Amerio's book *Iota Unum*, much more developed explanations on the Modernist mindset, especially in chapters V (*The Post-Conciliar period*), XVI (*Dialogue*) and XVII (*Mobilism*).⁴⁶

- **Neo-Modernist philosophical errors linked with those of Modernism**

We will deal here with the loss of the sense of truth and with immanentism (everything coming from within, from conscience).

- **The loss of the sense of truth**

⁴³ R. Amerio, *Iota Unum*, p.359-366.

⁴⁴ Romano Amerio, *Iota Unum*, p. 112

⁴⁵ *Courrier de Rome* No. 224 (June 2000), p.5, article *Réflexions sur l'invalidité possible de Vatican II*. Our emphasis.

⁴⁶ Published by Sarto House and distributed by The Angelus Press, 2918 Tracy Ave, Kansas City MO 6419 USA.

We will give by way of example a text of Abbé Delzant, of the Jean Bart centre⁴⁷ entitled *Croire dans un monde scientifique* (Believing in a scientific world) and published in 1975.

Abbé Delzant distinguishes three worlds, world A (which we have moved from), world B (or the intermediary world) and world C (the world to which we tend) and he presents them as follows in quoting the expressions unique to each of them:

World A: “Christendom”, “submission to authority of the Church”, “It is necessary to teach doctrine, dogma, to transmit the truths of the faith, to put into practice the moral laws”, “the age of metaphysics”. The key words in this type of explanation are “substance”, “soul”, “raison d’être”, “good”, it is the age of “the imaginary”, which “is no longer suitable”.

World B: “encounter, dialogue, witness, presence, incarnation, engagement, progress, mandate, mission...” “Discern the signs of the time”, “put at a distance the instruments or objects of faith”.

World C: “diaspora” “more discussion ! a hypothesis, an analysis, a work, a production...” “Change of ‘system’”. To dare “other things”, the age “connections and relations”. “order of mutual recognition”, “the order of alliance”.

Here are two other more concise explanations of this evolution of a system of thought to another which produces neo-Modernism:

‘For the philosophical categories of being and of substance are substituted, so as to think of the world, those of exchange, of relation, of communication.’⁴⁸

‘The modern man tends to value research much more than discovery, the question rather than the reply (...)

He has a keen conscience that the truth is not something to be received as fact, that it is to be conquered progressively. Man does not receive the truth, he builds it.’⁴⁹

One finds here the same conception of truth among the neo-Modernists at the time of Pius XII (cf. p.156 below): truth will be in conformity with the exigencies of action and human life which is always evolving.

▪ Immanentism

Let’s remind ourselves of the definition which one may give to this philosophical and theological error:

⁴⁷ Pastoral, liturgical and sacramental centre for the dioceses of the Paris region.

⁴⁸ O Dubuisson and E Germain, *Catéchèse de l’Eucharistie; changement ou permanence? Catéchèse* No 76 (July 1979). These authors played an important role in the elaboration of the New Catechism. On this subject see the AFS brochure, *La catéchèse française d’après ses documents*.

⁴⁹ Régine du Charlat, a card, *Révélation et vérité du dossier La Foi mot à mot*, Adult Service of the National Centre for Religious Education (1973)

*'That the religious soul draws the object and motive of its own faith from within itself, and not from outside.'*⁵⁰

If conscience is the source of religion, freedom of conscience in the liberal sense (the claimed right to think and to believe what one wishes, even in religion and morality) is the rule - the freedom of conscience dear to Protestants, since it follows from one of the principal foundations of their religion, interior illumination.⁵¹

Here are some expressions of this error in some recent texts:

'The social doctrine of the Church is set in reference to the natural law and to the rights of people, as an expression of the collective conscience of humanity.' (The Diocesan Bulletin of Metz, 1st May 1968).

*'The norm for the regulation of births according to the encyclical *Humanae vitae* of 1968 represents a position which cannot be substituted for the responsibility of the conscience of the faithful.'* (Declaration of Cologne, by 163 Professors of theology, 25th January 1989; a declaration entitled *Contre la mise sous tutelle, pour une catholicité ouverte – Against being put under supervision – for an open Catholicity*)

'The Church's word is neither an ideology, nor a doctrine; neither is it a third way. The Church, respectful of human autonomy, only claims solely to help man today to make his own response. In this sense, the Church has no response to the problems of society. It is no longer, as it appeared in the past, mistress of truth in that which concerns ethical questions or social relationships for example.' (Pastoral Guide for Catholic Teaching 1989).

One finds in these texts the tendency to make conscience into the supreme rule in religion and morals,⁵² a typical Protestant tendency. (cf. *Pascendi* §8 & 23)

- **Neo-Modernist theological errors akin to those of Modernism**

We will limit our consideration here to the confusion of the natural with the supernatural.

This error, already present in Modernism (see below p.148) constitutes the foundation for what we call the New Theology.⁵³

⁵⁰ Cardinal Mercier's Pastoral Letter for Easter 1908; quoted by Romano Amerio, *Iota Unum*, p.39.

⁵¹ The other principal foundations of Protestantism are: *sola scriptura* Scripture is the sole source of Revelation and exclusive authority in matters of faith, and *sola fide*, justification by faith alone. See pp.6-14 of the supplement to Apropos No. 10. *The Rudiments of Protestantism* by Arnaud de Lassus.

⁵² Here are some reminders on the role of conscience in morality: *'the (moral) conscience is an act of practical intelligence which judges the honesty or malice of an act which one must make at the time.'* (Berthier).

Human acts have a double rule: the conscience, a proximate and interior rule and the moral law, a distant rule, exterior and supreme; *'The individual conscience is not the supreme moral criterion; it must conform to the moral law.'* (John Paul II, 18th August 1983).

Fr de Lubac⁵⁴ (1896-1991) has contributed to substantiate it in using the Modernist method which consists in maintaining two incompatible concepts one with the other. Here is how this was presented by Cardinal Joseph Siri in his book *Gethsemane*:

*'He (Fr de Lubac) unfolds and interlaces syllogisms and speculations with an astonishing sagacity, thus endeavouring to bring together in balance the two concepts: on the one hand the supernatural implied in nature from the creation, and on the other hand the gratuitousness of the supernatural, of grace.'*⁵⁵

The thesis of the supernatural implied in nature can only benefit from such ambiguity.

One sees the consequences of such a thesis.

If nature can identify itself with the supernatural, can we not conclude that all the world is in a state of grace, that the whole world is saved, that no one is in hell? We will therefore see the disappearance of the prediction of the last times.⁵⁶ Salvation being universal, all religions may be considered as means of attaining it.

De Lubac was made Cardinal in 1991. One can judge his influence by these words of Cardinal Ratzinger, at a speech given at the French Embassy at the Vatican on 11th May 1998:

*'In 1948, we learned of the book *Surnaturel* by Father Henri de Lubac: this book, with its new anthropology, with its profound sensitivity for modern man and his profound message of the Christian faith was an event for us. It opened up to us a new vision of the world and presented a new synthesis between modernity and tradition. A little later, I discovered other French theologians such as Congar, Daniélou, Chenu: my thinking was formed in contact with these masters and in whom I found an exemplary synthesis between spirituality and science, between intuition and methodological rigor (...).'* (Osservatore Romano French Edition, 19th May 1998)⁵⁷

- **Neo-Modernist methods of arguing**

⁵³ See the book *La nouvelle théologie*, published by *Courrier de Rome*, BP 156, 78001 Versailles cedex.

⁵⁴ [Henri Rambaud in *The Strange Faith of Teilhard de Chardin*, advises us '*Fr de Lubac has guaranteed Teilhard's "absolute loyalty to Catholicism". According to the former, Teilhard's wording might well offend orthodoxy here and there ...but he never had any intention of offending against orthodoxy. "Fr Teilhard has always been careful to remain, in his inner self and in his writings, theologically and traditionally in agreement with the Faith of the Church".*' Rambaud remarks that de Lubac has misled countless people regarding Teilhard and suggests that were such people to read Teilhard rather than de Lubac's assessment, '*They would discover a Catholic very different from the one described by Fr de Lubac, and they would probably find the severity of Rome more understandable.*' Note added by Editor, *Apropos*.]

⁵⁵ Cardinal Joseph Siri, *Gethsemane – Reflections on the Contemporary Theological Movement*, p. 61. One will find a very good critique of Fr de Lubac's thesis in this book. See also in AFS No. 187 (October 2006), the dossier, *A propos du cardinal de Lubac: la gratuité de l'ordre surnaturel*'.

⁵⁶ On the last times, see the article *Trois études du Père Emmanuel* in No. 139 (October 1998) of AFS, and the brochure '*Du nombre des élus*' by Dom Bernard Maréchaux OSB (Couvent de la Haye-aux-Bonshommes, 4920 Avrille).

⁵⁷ See the article in No 138 (August 1998) of AFS, *Renouveau charismatique et nouvelle théologie*.

Few in-depth studies exist on this subject. The best – to our knowledge – seems to be Romano Amerio's account in his book *Iota Unum*. It has been summarised in the article *Concile ou conciliabule* (Council or confabulation) in the June 2000 issue of *Courrier de Rome*.

Here is some evidence of methods of arguing presented by Romano Amerio:

- **Circiterisms**

‘The “circiterism” is something which occurs frequently in the arguments of the innovators. It consists in referring to an indistinct and confused term as if it were something well established and defined, and then extracting or excluding from it the element one needs to extract or exclude. The term spirit of the council or indeed the council is just such an expression. I remember instances in pastoral practice, of priestly innovators violating quite definite rules which had been in no way altered since the council, and replying to the faithful, who were amazed at their arbitrary proceedings, by referring them to “the council”.’⁵⁸

- **Part taken for the whole**

‘To this they add another technique, characteristic of those who disseminate error: that of hiding one truth behind another so as to be able to behave as if the hidden truth were not only hidden but non-existent.’⁵⁹

An example: the definition of the Church as “the people of God on a journey” (a greatly privileged definition – let’s remember – in the conciliar texts) a formula which is not false in itself, but an incomplete formula, used in a manner to make us forget that the Church invisible is part of the Church and that it is even the most important part. Ah well! This definition has led in fact to the elimination of the cult of the Saints. With this method, one can use a part of the truth as if it acts as the whole truth (pars pro toto) and force it until it comes to represent a new doctrine which is wholly unacceptable.’⁶⁰

- **An obvious contradiction**

This is a method of arguing based on the use of the conjunction “but”, which signifies opposition:

‘For example to attack the principle of religious life they write: “The foundations of the religious life are not in question, but the style of its realisation”.⁶¹ Again to get round the dogma of the virginity of Our Lady in partu (while giving birth) they say that doubts are possible “Not concerning the belief itself, the dogmatic credentials of which are not contested by anyone, but as to its exact object, which does not necessarily include the miracle of giving birth without rupture of the body.”⁶² And to attack the

⁵⁸ *Iota Unum* p. 104.

⁵⁹ *Iota unum* p. 104.

⁶⁰ *Courrier de Rome*, June 2000, p.1-2.

⁶¹ [A quotation from the Report of the Union des supérieurs de France, 3 vols, cited in *Itinéraires* No. 155, 1971, p.43 – note by Romano Amerio in the text]

⁶² [See J.H. Nicolas, *La virginité de Marie*, Fribourg, Switzerland 1957, p.18 who argues against the unorthodox thesis of

enclosure of nuns they write, “Enclosure must be maintained *but* it must be adapted according to the circumstances of place and time”⁶³

And thus while appearing to maintain one’s position on the virginity of Our Lady on the religious life and on the enclosure of nuns, one is asserting that what is more important than a principle, are the ways of adapting it to times and places. But what sort of principle is inferior rather than superior to its realisations. Is it not obvious that there are styles which destroy rather than express, the fundamentals they are meant to embody?’⁶⁴

- **Another example**

‘So too at the Synod of Bishops in 1980, French Language Group B wrote: “The group adheres without reserve to *Humanae vitae*, but the dichotomy between the rigidity of law and pastoral flexibility must be overcome”. Thus adherence to the encyclical becomes purely verbal, because bending the law to conform with human weakness is more important than the encyclical’s teaching.’⁶⁵

- **The systematic recourse to ambiguity**

What R. Amerio calls the “obvious contradiction” only constitutes one of the forms of ambiguity of which the Modernists are fond. One could say that ambiguity to them was connatural. Ambiguity introduced voluntarily in a text has as its aim to permit several interpretations. Thus, one may go from an orthodox sense to a heterodox sense (contrary to traditional doctrine).

It is a fact that one finds ambiguity throughout the life of the Church today: ambiguity in the new liturgy, in the new catechism, in numerous pontifical texts, in conciliar texts...

Let’s confine ourselves to this last field of ambiguity. Here is how it was presented by Jean Madiran and Fr Calmel:

*‘The conciliar texts have been completed (in the case of the *Nota praevia*⁶⁶) or even drawn up in a manner which is sufficiently traditional to be able to be voted on almost unanimously, and nevertheless in a manner sufficiently cunning to allow, as the sequel was to demonstrate, subsequent developments which at the time the council Fathers would have refused.*

We have known for a long time that (the conciliar texts) are compromise texts. We also know that a Modernist fraction wished to impose a heretical doctrine.

A. Mitterer, *Dogma und Biologie*, Vienna 1952. – footnote by R. Amerio in the text.]

⁶³ [*Supérieurs de France* op.cit. footnote by R. Amerio in the text.]

⁶⁴ *Iota Unum*, p.106.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* p. 106.

⁶⁶ A *nota praevia* is a preliminary note of explanation added to the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, to clarify the sense of certain words and expressions which one finds there.

*Prevented from succeeding, it succeeded all the same in adopting informal texts; these texts present **the double advantage for Modernism of not being able to be accused of clearly heretical propositions but nevertheless are able to be used in a sense opposed to the faith.** We will wait later to combat them direct? We gave this a thought for a moment. The difficulty is that they do not give us chance to argue; they are too spineless. When you try to challenge a formula which appears worrying to you, there – in the same page - you will find another entirely irreproachable. When you seek to back up your preaching or your teaching on a solid text, impossible to get around, likely to transmit to your audience the traditional content of the faith and morality, you will soon note that the text you have chosen on the subject for example on the liturgy, or regarding the duties of societies regarding the true religion, that this text is insidiously weakened by a second text which, in reality, extenuates the first so that it has the air of complementing it. Decrees succeed the constitutions, and messages in the declarations without giving the spirit, save in the rare exception, a sufficient hold.'*

Fr Calmel's judgement on the systematic use of ambiguity (through a mixture of truth and falsehood) is remarkably like that of St Pius X in §18 quoted below, p. 149. Which goes to show that the Modernist continuity is found not only in doctrines but also in methods of arguing and – as we are going to see – in behaviour.

- **Neo-Modernist behaviour and methods**

On the whole, the behaviour of the neo-Modernists of the conciliar and post-conciliar era is the same as that of Modernists at the time of St Pius X, with this difference however that their action has less need to be hidden since the resistance to oppose them in the Church has become very weak.

- **The wish to remain in the Church**

We who remain in the Church, we have very good motives to do so ... It's a matter not only of interpreting the reality of the Church, but to change it. (Hans Kung, 1967)⁶⁷

Amongst the Modernist leaders there are not only those who remain in the Church, but those who have occupied important posts, let's take the case of Fr de Lubac who was an expert at the Second Vatican Council and a member of the International Theological Commission before being named a cardinal.

- **The hope for a council to exploit**

Well before Vatican II, the neo-Modernists had wished for the opening of a council, because they had foreseen the part that they would be able to play.

In 1923 Pius XI had consulted Cardinal Billot on the opportunity of convoking a council; the Cardinal's reply was wholly unfavourable:

⁶⁷ Compare this with what Teilhard de Chardin said – see below, p. 17.

'Finally here is the principal reason which makes me absolutely opposed. The resumption of the Council is desired by the worst enemies of the Church, that is to say the Modernists who, as some indications suggest, are preparing to profit from the general state of the Church to carry out a revolution, the new 89⁶⁸, the object of their dreams and hopes.'

- **The manipulation of the Second Vatican Council**

Cardinal Billot's forecasts would be realised 40 years later. The neo-Modernist's expectations were fulfilled in the Second Vatican Council; they knew how to manipulate it as can be seen from the quotations from Jean Madiran and Fr Calmel given below, p. 170.

Fr Ralph Wiltgen's book *The Rhine flows into the Tiber* is most informative about their activities at the Council.

- **Opposition between moderate neo-Modernists and radical neo-Modernists**

After the Second Vatican Council an opposition more apparent than real was systematised between moderate neo-Modernists and radical neo-Modernists, tendencies illustrated by the revues *Concilium* and *Communio*.⁶⁹ The latter seek to apply the Council in order, to pursue Modernist objectives in a gradual and pragmatic manner. The former seek to arrive rapidly at the ultimate consequences of the Council.

We say that it is an opposition more apparent than real; it has deceived and continues to deceive many of the faithful who take as a truly doctrinal reaction, a false reaction mixing the truth and falsehood and – an incontestable sign of its fallacious character – always showing itself loyal to the Council texts.

- **The keeping-in-place of well organised resources**

Even when there are many of their men installed in posts of command, the neo-Modernists always keep in place discreet resources which, most often, keep the reality of power in their sector.

⁶⁸ [An allusion to the French Revolution of 1789. Archbishop Lefebvre in his book, *An Open Letter to Confused Catholics*, writes: 'It was Cardinal Suenens who exclaimed, "Vatican II is the French Revolution in the Church" and among other unguarded declarations he added, "One cannot understand the French or the Russian revolutions unless one knows something of the old regimes which they brought to an end....It is the same in church affairs: a reaction can only be judged in relation to the state of things that preceded it."' p.105. – Editor *Apropos*.]

⁶⁹ St Pius X had already made the distinction between 'more moderate modernists' and 'modernists – he wrote - that we may call integral' in observing that the second were more coherent than the first 'with the rest of their doctrine'. Cf. *Courrier de Rome* No.203 (July-August 1998, p.6)

Among the books dealing with this subject, less well known it is true to say, with precise information is the book by G Adler and G Voegelien *Un siècle de catéchèse en France 1893-1980*, written in 1981 and that of Jean-Claude Didelot *Clérocration dans l'Église de France*.⁷⁰

In a note by G Adler and G Voegelien, one can see outlined the Modernist resource acting in France in the domain of catechesis.⁷¹

'A curious phenomenon punctuates the catechetical movement; it is the periodic polarisation of its agents or writings around certain words or expressions. This craze phenomenon presents many characteristics;

a. the appearance of these expressions is difficult, if nigh impossible, to figure out. Circulating first of all in restricted circles, they appear in the future on the scene on the occasion of a book launch, a congress, or an article or in their use by a person "unknown" in catechetical "circles". They are picked up in diocese after diocese thanks above all to the Diocesan networks. This is the creative period where these expressions mobilise and stimulate action.

b. functioning in a symbolic way, these words carry a hope, a conviction. They are signs of recognition and assure a certain sharing between those "who think like us" and others.

c. when these terms are reused in a standard manner in the meeting of the leaders or in the official texts of the hierarchy, they arrive at the end of their career, becoming dead stars from which creative spurt has been exhausted.'

A revealing text: one sees the initiative of a restricted circle *'They are picked up in diocese after diocese thanks above all to the Diocesan networks'* to be taken up finally in the official documents of the hierarchy. This is the method of philosophical societies.⁷²

- **Neo-Modernism in 2007**

In restoring the Mass of all times, in depriving the new Mass of its de facto monopoly in the Latin Church, the *Motu Proprio* of 7th July 2007 presents incontestably as a weighty anti-Modernist measure. At an interval of 100 years, it echoes the decree *Lamentabili* of 3rd July 1907 and of the encyclical *Pascendi* of 8th September 1907.

⁷⁰ Regarding this book see the article by François Desjars, *A propos de "Clérocration dans L'Église de France"* in No.99 (February 1992) of AFS and that of Ennemond Beth *Évangélisation et structures – En lisant le communiqué du conseil permanent de l'épiscopat français* in no. 100 of AFS. J.C. Didelot is interested essentially in the structures of a particular clerical bureaucracy and doesn't deal with the ideology behind the action.

⁷¹ In 1984, there were in France 150,000 catechists, 70,000 leaders, (figures published by the Episcopal Commission for Religious Teaching following an enquiry cf. "Thabor", p.262). The numbers today must be of the same magnitude.

⁷² On these philosophical societies and their methods of working see the study by Augustin Cochin and the last 40 pages of François Furet's book *Penser la révolution française*. On the application of these methods in the Church please see the brochure by Jean Madiran, *Structures et techniques des sociétés de pensée dans le catholicisme* (Supplement to *Itinéraires* No. 79).

Will the recovery in the liturgical domain be accompanied by a recovery in the doctrinal domain, and especially a return to the doctrine of Christ the King which today has been abandoned? Will the *Motu Proprio* be the start of a general anti-Modernist reaction? It is too soon to tell.

For the time being, fidelity to the Second Vatican Council appears to be one of the norms of the new pontificate⁷³. Now this council, made by Modernists, is of a Modernist spirit. It constitutes on many points, a rupture with the past; in so far as it breaks with the past, it cannot be interpreted in the sense of continuity. By the very fact of this fidelity to Vatican II, Modernist errors remain strongly present in the Church.

In doctrinal matters, nothing is settled; the basic problems remain. We have therefore, more than ever, to fight Modernist excesses.

Conclusion

The analysis which we have presented on the neo-Modernism of the conciliar and post-conciliar era has only given some aspects of this complex phenomenon. But these suffice to demonstrate the continuity of the phenomenon since the beginning of the 20th century.

A common essence exists, a spirit common to the Modernism of St Pius X's time, the neo-Modernism of St Pius XII's time and that of the conciliar and post-conciliar era; the first of these common characteristics being the loss of the sense of truth, such as we have indicated on pages 143, 155, and 159 below.

Here are three quotations which sum up the essentials:

'Blind that they are, and leaders of the blind, inflated with a boastful science, they have reached that pitch of folly where they pervert the eternal concept of truth.' (Pascendi §14)

*'The heart of Modernism is really this: that the religious soul draws the object and motive of its own faith from within itself, and not from outside.'*⁷⁴

*'Modern Catholicism (for the Modernists) can be reconciled with true science only if it is transformed into a non-dogmatic Christianity; that is to say, into a broad and liberal Protestantism.'*⁷⁵

Modernism has not essentially changed; it has perfected itself. What has changed is its attitude regarding the Roman authorities. Saint Pius X and Pius XII fought it. Through his teaching and his governance, Paul VI now fought it, now favoured such or such aspect of Modernism (let us compare

⁷³ Cf. this text of Benedict XVI: *However, the great legacy of the Council which opened up a new road endures; it is still a magna carta of the Church's journey, very essential and fundamental.* (Meeting with the clergy of the dioceses of Belluno-Feltre and Treviso, 24th July 2007).

⁷⁴ Pastoral Letter for Easter 1908; quoted by Romano Amerio, *Iota unum*, p.39.

⁷⁵ Decree *Lamentabili* of 3rd July 1907 – the last proposition condemned in the decree.

for example his encyclical *Mysterium fidei* of 3rd September 1965 and the New Mass). One finds the same with Pope John Paul II.⁷⁶

Modernism today must be fought more methodically than in the past: in its doctrines, in its fallacious arguments; in its networks to which it devotes a thousand active and competent persons.⁷⁷

It is less easy to fight today than yesteryear due to the support it has from authority; we meet here the classical difficulty: in opposing an abuse of power, one must avoid calling into question the principle of authority.⁷⁸

Be that as it may, to fight is necessary - and all the more urgent as most of the faithful see no necessity for same. There is a blindness there which risks being prolonged if we remain passive.

APPENDIX I

Some Secret Societies at work in the Church

Secret societies, Masonic or not, exist in the bosom of the Church today. To affirm this fact one is often seen as a crank, believing in the “mythology” of “secret societies”, an adept of “conspiracy theory”.

But this reality has deep historical roots. Already in 1775, Pope Pius VI wrote in his encyclical *Instructabili* (25th December 1775):

‘Freemasons will attempt even to pervade the sanctuary.’

In the 20th century the Rampolla⁷⁹, Tondi⁸⁰ and Bugnini⁸¹ affairs show the presence, at high level, of ecclesiastics linked to secret societies or semi-secret societies.

⁷⁶ It suffices here to cite, some measures coming to the support of Modernism, the praise and favours which have been given to some of its greatest leaders:

- the letter of the Secretary of State on the occasion of the centenary of the birth of Teilhard de Chardin (*Osservatore Romano* 10th June 1981);
- The elevation to dignity of Cardinal, Fathers De Lubac and Urs von Balthazar;
- The eulogy to Fr de Lubac by Cardinal Ratzinger (text below).

⁷⁷ On the doctrinal level, we come back to the books already mentioned *Iota Unum* and *La nouvelle théologie* (published by *Courrier de Rome*) and to the brochures which feature under the heading “Crisis in the Church” in the AFS catalogue. In matters of exegesis we return to Mgr Spadafora’s study published in No. 156-165 of *Courrier de Rome*.

⁷⁸ See the brochure *The Social Doctrine of the Church in the current doctrinal crisis* – the fourth part in particular entitled *How to deal with current deficiencies in authority*.

⁷⁹ Cf. AFS no. 191 June 2007 p. 136-138 and the last edition of the AFS brochure, *Elementary Knowledge of Freemasonry* (2007) [Cardinal Rampolla was early favourite to succeed Pope Leo XIII but was the subject of a veto by the Austrian-Hungarian emperor voiced by Cardinal Puzyna of Krakow. No reason was given but several writers assert it was because of the Cardinal’s membership of a Masonic order.]

⁸⁰ See *Pour qu’il règne* by Jean Ousset, p.260 [Professor Tondi, Professor at the Gregorian University, Rome, admitted in two revolutionary publications, *L’Unita* and *El Paese* that he had adhered to Communism for many years. - Editor Apropos]

⁸¹ Cf. The dossier, *Quelques aspects de la pénétration maçonnique dans l’Eglise*, in No. 161 of AFS p. 33. [Archbishop

[One has only to consider the infiltration of the Church by Communist informers such as the Polish Dominican, Konrad Hejmo, who infiltrated the Vatican at the highest level, to accustom oneself to the fact that external bodies, societies or states seek to infiltrate the Church for their own ends. If such be the case, why are people so hesitant about believing in Masonic infiltration of the Church – particularly where the adepts of that organisation have boasted of their intention to do just that? Added by Editor, *Apropos*]

The studies on Modernism published on the occasion of the centenary of the encyclical *Pascendi* of St Pius X (8th September 1907) encourage us to return to this important subject. In his *Motu Proprio Sacrorum Antistitum* of 1st September 1910, ‘establishing laws to repel the peril of Modernism’ saint Pius X actually wrote :

‘(The Modernists) have not ceased (...) to look for new adepts and to group them into a secret association.’

*‘A secret association’, ‘clandestinum foedus’- as the Latin says. Jean Madiran comments thus on these two words in his book *L’intégrisme, histoire d’une histoire*:*

‘This is about a secret society

Now historians have never made mention of this secret society.

(...)

The stories of the Modernist crisis, the assessments of Modernism, the judgements passed are radically invalidated through systematic ignorance and concealment of such an important element of appraisal. Until his death, Saint Pius X had fought with great energy this secret society installed at the interior of the Church. He had fought it without the power to defeat it or suppress it; he himself had said: “a secret society which succeeds in surviving when one fights it, will it not prosper when no one fights it?” After the death of St Pius X, we were occupied with other things, comprising doctrinal, social and juridical Modernism (...) but we were not occupied with this secret society installed in the bosom of the Church. The normal consequence of such abstention is that the secret society reinforces its installation, advances its progress, develops its power; its occult power has become greater; it has become much stronger in pushing its adepts forward, in liquidating its opponents, and in stopping people from talking about it: to impose a public silence about itself is the common objective of all secret societies. Did it take place? It is still a plausible hypothesis; a hypothesis which one cannot dismiss a priori; a hypothesis which merits more reflection.’⁸²

Annibale Bugnini, the architect of the New Mass, was demoted, from Secretary of The Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, to Apostolic Pro Nuncio in Iran following evidence being presented to Pope Paul VI that Bugnini was a Freemason. As Michael Davies reports in *Pope Paul’s New Mass: ‘A Roman priest of the very highest reputation came into possession of evidence which he considered proved Msgr. Bugnini to be a Freemason. He had this information placed into the hands of Paul VI with the warning that if action were not taken at once he would be bound in conscience to make the matter public. Msgr Bugnini was then dismissed and his entire congregation dissolved.’* p. 505.]

⁸² *L’intégrisme, histoire d’une histoire*, 1964, Chapter XXIV, “*La société secrète des modernistes*. p. 248

And today, in 2007, the facts seem to have been borne out according to Jean Madiran's hypothesis of 1964.

What conclusion can we draw from this? That one must weigh heavily 'such an important element of appraisal'. This presupposes that the characteristics of secret societies are sufficiently known (ideology, organisation, methods of work, weak points) at a general level. This presupposes using the facts thus acquired to understand better the crisis in the Church. It is not necessary to see secret societies everywhere, but to take account of the fact that we are dealing with adversaries – ecclesiastical or lay – who advance most often hidden.

Such is the lesson valuable as much today, as that given us by St Pius X in speaking of '*clandestinum foedus*'.

Arnaud de Lassus.