

Madiran's Foreword

October 3, 2020

In the Foreword to his book on *The Heresy of the 20th Century* Jean Madiran begins with the direct statement that it is the Catholic bishops who are responsible for the heresy of the 20th century (p.17 in the 2018 re-edition of the book from via.romana@yahoo.fr). Knowing that he will be accused as a mere layman of speaking out of turn, he states defiantly (28) that when the shepherds or bishops have turned into wolves or destroyers of the Faith, he needed as a baptised Catholic neither to ask for, nor to be given, any mandate to defend the Faith

And he makes (26) a crucial distinction which announces the thesis of his whole book. Heresy in the strict sense of the word means the wilful denial of what one knows to be a defined proposition of the Faith, but in the broad sense it means the acceptance of a whole teaching radically alien to the Faith. The heresy he will be attacking is in this broad sense, going far beyond the contradiction of just any one proposition of the Faith. The "20th century heresy" is to be found rather "in the night, in emptiness, in nothingness."

And how did the French bishops get emptied out? Madiran writes (20) that for 100 years, reaching back then to the middle of the 19th century, they had been out of touch with Rome, at that time the truly Catholic Rome of Pius IX and the Syllabus, because their whole mentality (21) had slipped away from Rome. Theirs was Catholic discipline without conviction, Catholic obedience without understanding of what the obedience was for. In a few words Madiran is hitting on the essence of the pre-conciliar Church: under the influence of the modern world, a progressive loss of Catholic faith had resulted in a Church where the appearances were still standing but the substance behind the appearances was gone. How the true Church needed to

resist that new Revolutionary world the anti-liberal Popes did lay out, especially Popes Pius IX, Leo XIII and Pius X in their social teaching, but of their Encyclicals Madiran (23) says that the bishops in the 1950's knew virtually nothing.

Graver still for Madiran, foreshadowing the whole Part VI of the book to come, the 20th century heresy of these bishops was their all-engulfing faithless mentality, which denies that there is any such thing as the natural law (24). Magnetised by the modern world, infected by its liberalism, they had long been mentally slipping away from Rome and rejecting its social doctrine, but in the 1950's they were still mouthing certain formulae of the old catechism. However, in their hearts all sense of the natural law was being lost, and this meant that in the years immediately following the Council they were ready to lay hands on dogma and the catechism which they had left up till then outwardly intact. Thus their disagreement with Rome on social doctrine contained implicitly that total uprooting of the Christian religion from which the entire Church suffered in the aftermath of the Council (25).

For if there is no natural law or rational order embedded by God in all of Creation around us, then all reason and faith are shipwrecked, and while the formulae of the Gospel and the dogmatic definitions may for a while be accurately recited and repeated, their substance has been drained out and all religion has been radically subverted. Bishops without natural law have no more access to the Gospel or to dogmatic definitions. They can no longer preserve or hand down anything (26). They are ripe to swing left towards the substitute religion of modernity, which is Communism (26).

And to conclude the Foreword, Madiran appeals to a compatriot who foresaw this decadence in the clergy even before the First World War. Charles Péguy (1873–1914) wrote in 1909 that the clergy (30) were successfully destroying Christianity by wanting it to progress with the times. They were themselves

losing the faith (32), accepting its disappearance as something natural.

Kyrie eleison.