

GREC – I

March 2, 2013

Just over one year ago was published in France a little book of some 150 pages which has to be a big embarrassment for the leaders of a certain religious Society, because it shows how their promotion of union with the Newchurch goes back many years, at least to the 1990's. Of course if they are proud of that promotion, they will feel no embarrassment, but if they have for many years been disguising that promotion, then let at least readers of the little book open their eyes.

“For the Necessary Reconciliation” was written by a Newchurch priest, Fr Michel Lelong, no doubt because he for one is openly proud of the leading part he played in GREC's attempt to bring about the “necessary reconciliation” of Vatican II with Tradition, or of the Roman authorities with the Society of St Pius X. Ordained in 1948, and heavily involved in inter-religious relations even before Vatican II, he welcomed “with joy and hope” (does that ring a bell? – *Gaudium et Spes*?) the Council that would strive to relate the Church to modern times. One of the lay collaborators in his work was a distinguished French diplomat and high government official, Gilbert Pérol, French Ambassador to the Vatican from 1988 to 1992.

As a professional diplomat and practising Catholic, Pérol believed profoundly in reconciling the truly Catholic SSPX with the assuredly Catholic Vatican. How could there be such a clash between the two? Both were Catholic! The clash was not reasonable. So in 1995 he sketched out a solution in a brief text which would serve like a charter for what became GREC, a Parisian think-tank for Catholics, named from the initials of *Groupe de Réflexion Entre Catholiques*. Expressing the concern of millions of Catholics torn from the 1960's onwards between the Council and Tradition, Pérol's text deserves a moment's attention.

Not being a theologian, he says, he thinks that the present situation of Church and world requires that the problem of the divisions between Catholics following on the Council "should be stated in entirely new terms." It is rather as a diplomat that he proposes that on the one side Rome should admit that it has gravely mistreated the Tridentine rite of Mass, and it should suspend the excommunications of 1988, while on the other hand the SSPX must not totally reject the Council and it must recognize that Rome is still the highest authority in the Church.

In other words as a diplomat Pérol proposed that if only there were a little give and take on each side, then the agony could be emptied out of the clash between the Council and Tradition, and all Catholics could once more live happily ever after. Thus he and millions of other Catholics would no longer be faced with having to either abandon Rome for the sake of Tradition, or abandon Tradition for the sake of Rome. Lovely! Back to the comfort zone of the 1950's! But the 1950's are gone, and gone for ever. Then where is the flaw in his thinking?

It is at the very outset when he says he is no theologian. True, he may have been no professional theologian, but every Catholic must be an amateur theologian, or, better said, must know his catechism, because only in the light of its doctrine can he judge questions of the Faith. Our Lord's warning to discern between sheep and wolves (Mt.VII, 15–20) was not addressed only to professional theologians! So Pérol's renouncing "theology" in favour of diplomacy is yet one more example of modern man's failure to grasp the importance of doctrine. This failure is the most important lesson to be drawn from this book on GREC.

Kyrie eleison.