

Madiran Introduced

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As eldest daughter of the Church, France has always had thinkers and writers in the forefront of the defence of the Church, and modern times are no exception. In the confusion and disarray of Catholics arising immediately out of the end of the Second Vatican Council in 1965, an outstanding pioneer of what would come to be “Traditional” thinking was the Frenchman Jean Madiran (1920–2013), creator and editor of the right-wing and nationalist monthly magazine “Itinéraires” (Itineraries) from 1956 to 1996. Already a genuine defender of the Faith before the Council, he made his magazine a centre-piece of that defence after the Council, when it became essential reading for many Catholics trying not to lose their heads or their faith.

In the 1960’s Madiran certainly contributed to maintaining in France the literate public that would provide a basis of support in the 1970’s for Archbishop Lefebvre to be able to lead a “Traditional” movement in France to oppose the destruction of the Church from within by the Conciliar clergy. Madiran and his magazine may also have seriously helped the Archbishop himself to arrive at his momentous decision at the end of the 1960’s to found in French Switzerland the Society of St Pius X, destined to make its decisive contribution to the saving of Catholic Tradition over the next 40 years. The one time that this writer can remember having seen the Archbishop run was when Madiran was once visiting the seminary in Écône, and the Archbishop had to catch him just before he returned to Paris.

Alas, their collaboration came to an end when John-Paul II became Pope in 1978, and Madiran thought that he would rescue the Church, but as far as the Archbishop was concerned, Madiran had had his good influence, and “Tradition” was by now well established. We need today to remember just how

unthinkable it was in the 1950's and 1960's for Catholics to doubt their clergy. Here is the enormous merit of Madiran: a true faith unshaken by an almost entire Catholic hierarchy gone astray, together with the courage to stand up and write in public against the mass of people either "faithfully" following that hierarchy out of "obedience," or faithlessly rejoicing in its undermining of the Church by freemasonry. That Madiran let himself be subsequently misled by John-Paul II only testifies to the force of the magnetism of Rome which for a crucial period of time he himself had succeeded in overcoming in the service of Catholic Truth.

That something in him never wavered is suggested by the fact that among all the books that he wrote in a long and productive life, the one in which he himself said that he best said what he essentially wanted to say was the book we are going to look at in these "Eleison Comments" – *L'hérésie du vingtième siècle*, The Heresy of the 20th Century. It first appeared in 1968, in other words in the thick of the controversy swirling around Vatican II. It contains a Prologue and six Parts, making perhaps seven issues of these "Comments," because the book is a classic, even if it has not had many – or any – translations.

It is a classic because it takes a thomistic philosopher to take modernism to the cleaners – how does one analyse a fog? – and Madiran was a thomistic philosopher. But not just any thomistic philosopher, because the mass of Vatican II bishops had been drilled at their seminary or Congregation in the principles of the philosophy of St Thomas Aquinas. But they had not learned or understood how those principles apply to reality. This is because it is relatively easy to teach that philosophy like a coherent telephone book. Catholic pupils are docile and they drink it all in, without necessarily grasping that it is the one and only possible account of the one and only reality around us. But who can teach reality to pupils born in central heating and suckled on television? Madiran was

of an earlier generation, which helps, but even then, to see modernism as clearly as he did, he needed a special grace of realism, like Pius X de Corte, Calderón and a select few others.

Fasten your seat-belts. Madiran is worth it. Next week perhaps, his Foreword.

Kyrie eleison.