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The true notion of Tradition

Originally printed in English in the January 1997 issue of *Si Si No No*, this is an abridged text of the French discourse given by Bishop Bernard Tissier de Mallerais at Versailles on May 19, 1995.

Modernist Rome has declared us schismatics because we hold a supposedly false notion of Tradition. I am going to show that it is the faithful of Tradition who have the true notion of Tradition and, consequently that it is those who declare us schismatics, the neo-modernists, who have a false evolutionary notion of Tradition, which they call "*living tradition*."

Tradition is essentially immutable, unchangeable: That however does not prevent it from being living - we will show in what manner - nor from undergoing a homogeneous development. To begin, let's look at the first point.

Tradition is essentially immutable

Cardinal Billot, under Pope Pius XI, explained this in a work entitled: *De Immutabilitate Traditionis Contra Modernam Haeresim Evolutionismi* (*Concerning the Immutability of Sacred Tradition* - 1929; the literal Latin title is: *The Immutability of Tradition against the Modern Heresy of Evolution* - Ed.). This is no invention or opinion, it is the most classic doctrine of the Church: Tradition does not change. In fact, the word tradition comes from the Latin *tradere* which means to *transmit*. Tradition is the transmission without change of that which has been deposited. If in the course of the transmission there is a change, then in deed there is a breach of faith, there is a falsification of the deposit transmitted. We see this, for instance, if the transmission of *popular* tradition (*i.e.*, folklore); but fidelity is so much more important in the transmission of the supernatural deposit of divine revelation, that is to say the treasure of truths revealed by the prophets, Our Lord Jesus Christ and ending with the Apostles. The revealed deposit is completed at the time of the death of the last Apostle

St. Pius X in the decree *Lamentabili* (1907) condemns the following:

Revelation, constituting the object of the Catholic faith, was not completed with the Apostles. (Proposition 21)

The proposition was condemned because it meant that there could have been other later revelations which could have been added to the revelation given to the Apostles. The Magisterium of the Church has solely the role of preserving and faithfully explaining this deposit of Revelation. This is what Vatican Council I says in the decree *Pastor aeternus*:

The Holy Spirit has not been promised to the successors of Peter that, under His revelation, they might make known a new doctrine, but in order that, with His assistance, they sacredly preserve and faithfully set forth the revelation transmitted by the Apostles, that is to say, the deposit of the faith.

Pope Pius IX had many years before condemned the error of progression in matters of doctrine held by those who said doctrine must evolve as human knowledge advances in his encyclical *Qui pluribus* (1846):

It is by as great a fraud...that these enemies of divine revelation, who bestow the highest praises on human progress, wish, with a truly reckless and sacrilegious audacity, to bring it [the progressive error] into the Catholic religion, as if religion was not the work of God, but that of men, or was some philosophic discovery that human methods could perfect.

Let us hold firmly to the essential immutability of the divine tradition. It is a deposit to faithfully transmit— and that's that! Later we will explain in what way there is a certain progress, but **this** principle must be clearly established and firmly held; otherwise, we cannot continue.

Tradition is living because each of us lives in it

This essential immutability does not prevent Tradition from being living. The modernists speak of "living tradition." We also speak of the living tradition, but not in the same way, as we are going to see.

Here is what we understand by "living tradition":

That tradition is immutable does not prevent it from being living; that is to say that Catholics of yesterday, today and tomorrow live in it. Tradition is living because one lives in it.

We are going to see the life and development of divine tradition first as it concerns the individual; then as it manifests itself in the Church considered as a whole. It is very important to make a distinction between these two things.

Tradition is the revealed deposit. What is in the revelation? Essentially, the revelation is the intimate life of God which is communicated to us by grace and by the sacraments. The intimate life of God is God displaying himself in three divine Persons, and the entirety of this life is communicated to us by grace, the sacraments, and Our Lord Jesus Christ. That is the essential core of the Christian revelation, the very terms of this deposit one must keep. Living tradition is the same as saying that one lives the life of God, that one is imbued with this divine life, that one lives it by the intellect, by the will, by faith, by hope, by charity and by all the virtues.

Now this Christian life-this life of tradition in our hearts, persons, and surroundings-is a participation in the immutable life of God. God does not change. The blessed in heaven contemplate the immutable God in eternity which

fills them with an immense joy for all eternity. They are delighted to contemplate the same and unchanging God forever, the Source of an inconceivable and inexpressible life. This is their eternal rejoicing, and nevertheless they are fixed in the immutable. See then the error of the progressists, who wish that this would not be constant change... No! - The spiritual life is the most **unchangeable**! Look at the saints in their contemplation. They are fixed on God and that is sufficient for them and nourishes their lives. I am not speaking of the ecstasies possible on earth with the body almost suspended. I am speaking of the soul who, while conducting his ordinary activities, is completely immersed and transformed in God, firm and unchangeable. We understand well that the more we live this Tradition, the more we will be fixed in the immutable who is God, and the further we will be removed from the evolution of perpetual change.

For the modern evolutionists on the contrary, life consists of perpetual change. It is very difficult for them to conceive that the highest life which already exists here on earth for the saints, for the contemplatives and those who devote themselves to prayer and meditation, consists of the contemplation of the unchangeable - and yet, thus it is!

But this life of tradition, this contemplation of the unchangeable, should nevertheless progress within each one of the faithful. There is a progression, a progressive deepening in the course of the spiritual life;

1. First, there is a development in the object of the faith. The faithful should not only learn more and more about the scope of all the revealed truths but also the consequences of the revealed truths in practical life, *e.g.*, the consequences of the divinity of Jesus Christ for social and political life, etc....
2. There is also a development in the intensity of the faith, in the extent that we live this revealed truth more vigorously (*ST Ia, IIae Q. 52*). Great saints have a deeper faith because they adhere more steadfastly to God and His revelation.
3. There is also another development as regards the individual. This is the advancement in the power of faith when the Christian submits his entire life to the rule of the Faith. As Sacred Scripture says: *"The just man lives by the faith"* (Rom. 1:17).
4. Finally, in the individual, there is also a development in the fruits of the faith. A living faith is accompanied by charity and the entire retinue of the infused virtues and gifts of the Holy Ghost, whose intrinsic law is to grow without ceasing, provided that the tendencies toward vice are fought. The Faith is then the root of the progress of each Catholic towards holiness.

It is undeniable that living tradition exists in each individual, provided that there has been authentic transmission, and that this tradition has been increased within the individual by the deepening and fruitfulness of the faith.

False ideas of development

This development of the Faith, of Christian virtues, of the life of Tradition does not apply to the Church taken in her totality. In effect, neither in the sources of the spiritual life nor in the case of the holiness of the most saintly among the Catholics, nor in the number of saints, can one establish a spiritual development.

1. Let us first consider the sources of this life of Tradition. These sources do not increase, do not change. The Church possesses from Her inception the seven sacraments. No one can add an eighth sacrament, as the charismatics do with their laying on of hands. No one can suppress one or another of the sacraments as the modernists do, as for example in the case of Confirmation or of Penance. The sources of holiness are always the same. They are always as plentiful. One has only to drink at them.
2. Can there be an evolution in the model of holiness? - No, there is no development. The model of sanctity no longer evolves because "the form of all perfection" is Our Lord Jesus Christ, as it states in the ritual for the taking of the habit by religious sisters. Though saints may appear different, they are only variations on the same theme, ...different arrangements of the same flowers of the same bouquet, as St. Francis de Sales explains. Thus the code of the sanctity of the Church does not change, just as the code of morality does not change. This is of equal value for all times. To wish to establish a new religious life in the 20th century is an illusion. It is an error. Opus Dei, with that which could be its motto: "Work, Commitment, Influence" is the very example of this illusion.
3. Perhaps you could object: *"But nevertheless, in the degree of sanctity there is a development in the Church. In the 20th century the saints are much more holy than before! There are some great saints in the 20th century!"* ...Count them on the fingers of one hand! Martyrs have been canonized, it is true. St. Pius X was canonized, it is true, but that was before the Council. Padre Pio is just before the Council. After the Council does one find saints? Surely, there will always be some of them, but they are few indeed and I promise that they are not of the Conciliar Church! We are far from progress. In fact, there is a regression.

However, let us admit that an increase in sanctity in the Church over time is not necessary. However, let us admit that an increase in sanctity in the Church over time is not *necessary*. God raises up the saints as He wishes, when He wishes, to lift the level of each century, but one does not observe that one century regularly produces more great saints than the preceding century. We do not have this imaginary progress in which the modernists believe. Let us then refute the ideas of this pseudo-progress.

In spite of everything, there is, in this immutable Tradition, an admirable capacity for application to all contingent circumstances. It is a matter of applying the eternal and unchanging principles to the problems and necessities of each century. The Council of Nicea is not the same as the Council of Florence, the Council of Florence is not the same as the Council of Trent, the Council of Trent is not the same as Vatican Council I. In each there is a different application, but the principles were always the same. Hence, we see here that there is a vitality to tradition in that it is capable of applying itself to each era.

Tradition is alive in that it applies itself above all to struggling against the errors of each era, against the dangers which threaten the souls of each century. It was of this that Pope Pius IX was speaking in *Gravissimas Inter* (1862):

The Church, because of her divine institution, must take the greatest care to keep intact **and inviolate** the deposit of the divine faith, keep unceasing watch over all her efforts for the salvation of souls and pay great attention **to driving away and eliminating** everything which can be opposed to the faith and can put in danger, in one way or another, the salvation of souls [His Excellency's emphasis added - Ed.].

Doctrine has this marvelous faculty of application! —to condemn, to eliminate, to reject everything which opposes the Faith and salvation of souls.

The false *aggiornamento* of Vatican II

After Vatican Council II, the opposite was done. No one any longer wished to condemn anything and there was talk of adaptation, of *aggiornamento*. But this is a false adaptation! The proof of it was they did not wish to condemn the contemporary errors such as Communism. The 400 signatures gathered by Archbishop Lefebvre to condemn it remained in a desk drawer. They did not want to condemn the contemporary errors of Liberalism, of Modernism, etc.... They did not want to apply the revealed deposit to the danger which was currently threatening souls. This unrealistic claim of adaptation on the part of the modernists is nonsense!

Vatican II wanted to make an adaptation that was a mutation *a priori*, artificial, with a Protestant and modernist interpretation. Catholic application is not a mutation. It is simply the applying of unchangeable principles to contingent circumstances. The principles are living because they apply *themselves*! That is the important thing! It is precisely because the transmission is living, that is to say applied, that the Church constantly draws new propositions from her own and immutable treasure...new condemnations of heresies for example, or new dogmatic definitions. It is necessary at certain times to put the finger on certain errors, to add a certain dogmatic precision, as for example when the Council of Trent defined (against the Protestant errors) the Mass. That is applying the immutable principle to the needs of the era. That is what Vatican Council II did not do. It let the principles fall, under the pretext of adaptation, to the thinking of the modern world! Where there is a *true* adaptation, there is a battle in proportion to the errors to be battled and to the dangers which menace the eternal life of souls.

It remains to be shown how, in this matter of application in the course of time, tradition undergoes a homogeneous development.

The homogeneous development of dogma

This application, this necessity to respond to the needs of each era and protect souls against errors properly constitutes, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit,

the divine force of a certain development of doctrine, *e.g.*, new dogmatic definitions. But be on guard! This development is *homogeneous*. It is **not** a mutation but a homogeneous development. This is contrary to the view of the modernists who wish it to be an evolutionary development. The homogeneous progress of the Tradition of the Church is entirely a progress in

1. precision, and
2. explanation.

That is to say, that which had been universally believed in previous times is, in later years, isolated and embossed. It is like a rough diamond, having been mined from the quarry and not yet very pretty, taken to the gem cutter who is going to chisel it into a thousand surfaces in order that one can view it from all its angles with thousands of reflections. But it is the same diamond! There is simply a development in the *particulars* - all the colors of the rainbow are going to be refracted but there is no development in *substance*. A gem cutter who might want to re-chisel it afterwards would fail. This is development in precision.

There is also a development in explanation. There is a passing from the implicit to the explicit. That which one believed implicitly is going to be believed explicitly. For example, the primacy of jurisdiction of the Pope over all the bishops of the world. This has always been believed, but implicitly (otherwise the Church would not have survived). After Vatican Council I, this is now believed explicitly.

St. Thomas, while addressing the growth of the articles of Faith in the course of the Old Testament, sets forth a doctrine that can also, in a certain way, be applied to the New Testament:

...alone must say then that the articles of faith are never increased in their substantial content, as time goes by, because all that the later men have believed had been contained, although implicitly, in the faith of the Fathers who preceded them [thus, that which Isaiah said was contained in the faith of Moses, for example, was already in the faith of Abraham].

We must remember this very important doctrine of St. Thomas: in the Old Testament, the number of articles of the faith increased because the Holy Spirit disclosed more and more explicitly the revealed truths (*ST* IIa ,IIae, Q.1, A. 7).

After the New Testament (with the death of St. John) there is no more *revelation*. But there is the *proposition* by the Magisterium of the Church. In the Old Testament there had been an increase of the Revelation and thus of the articles of Faith. In the New Testament there is an increase in the *proposition* by the organs of Tradition, especially the Magisterium, and hence a passage from the implicit to the explicit. In the Old Testament it is God's Revelation itself which passes from the implicit to the explicit; in the New Testament, Revelation is ended, it is the proposition by the Church which passes from the implicit to the explicit. There is then a development, not in the articles of the Faith but in the explanation of the truths of the revealed deposit.

It is a homogeneous development. It is a development like a bud which blossoms... like a bud which opens up very beautifully, but remains the same bud. There is an unfolding, but without alteration; a displaying of all that which had been contained within from the outset. One calls this homogeneous because there is no mutation. It is the same living species, the same plant, it is a development without mutation, it is the same reality unfolding itself and making explicit all its details, but it is the same reality.

The unsurpassable summit

Finally, this homogeneous development leads to a point which cannot be surpassed, which is, precisely, the defined truth. Once a truth is defined, for example, *ex cathedra* by a pope or in an ecumenical council, as was the Immaculate Conception (by Pope Pius IX) or the Assumption of the Most Holy Virgin (by Pope Pius XII), that truth, thus defined, constitutes an unsurpassable peak. One cannot improve upon it.

Catholic doctrine says that defined truths are irrevocable. They are no longer susceptible to development. They must always be believed in the same meaning *in eodem sensu eademque semper sententia* as the *Anti-Modernist Oath* puts it. They have been stated precisely with the assistance of the Holy Ghost. They are no longer subject to a subsequent development, even, I would say, in their formulation. The dogmatic formulas, the words employed, are no longer subject to improvement. Take for example the word *transubstantiation* used to express the conversion of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ at the Mass... The word *conversion* is a very vague word in Latin. It means change and/or passage from one condition to another, but it does not suffice. One must state precisely that it is a transubstantiation: all the substance of the bread is changed into the Body of Christ, all the substance of the wine is changed into the Blood of Christ. And indeed it could never be better stated. One cannot imagine of a new formulation which could say it better, because this is the diamond finely crafted by the Holy Ghost. And all the subsequent heretics are going to try to find another word, for example Fr. Schillebeeckx, who invents the word *transignification* and falls into heresy. Time and again, in each newly defined dogma, the Church eventually attains an unsurpassable height. That is to say that the truths which have not yet been defined have not yet reached their unsurpassable summit, and, therefore, they can still have an homogeneous development.

It remains no less true that, in the aggregate, the doctrine of the faith grows and develops itself homogeneously. It is open to development by a further preciseness in the explanation of points which have not yet been defined.

Development and change

This is the way we must understand what St. Vincent of Lerins said in his celebrated *Commonitorium* which affirms the immutability of Tradition and at the same time homogeneous development, too.

But perhaps someone will say "*is there then within the Church no progress in*

religion?" Assuredly there is, and a very great progress, for who is there who would be so hardened against men and so hateful towards God that he would dare oppose such a progress? It is however in this manner; there is a progress, there is in truth an advancement in the faith, but not a change.

St. Vincent of Lerins (d. 445) remains very timely, replying to today's modernists that there *is* a development in the faith, but not a change, not a mutation: *"There is a development when a thing in itself is enlarged; there is a change when something is changed into another thing"* (RJ 2174).

This change is inadmissible for tradition, for the deposit of the faith. St. Vincent wrote:

...[u]nderstanding, knowledge and wisdom must increase and powerfully grow in one and in all, both in each individual man and in the Church, during the passage of time and of the ages, but grow solely within its own species, that is to say within the same dogma, in the same sense and in the same meaning. *In eodem dogmate, eodem sensu, eademque sententia* [This expression was lifted textually by Vatican Council I and for the Anti-Modernist Oath - Ed.].

Thus, St. Vincent of Lerins insists on continuity. There is a development he says, but a homogeneous development. There is no substantial change.

THE HOMOGENEOUS DEVELOPMENT OF THE LITURGY

The liturgy has also experienced a homogeneous development. The so-called "Mass of St. Pius V" is the result of centuries of liturgical developments which have, little by little, sculptured the prayers of the Mass and the other liturgical prayers of the missal, to form that inestimable jewel that the holy Pope St. Pius V codified. The Canon, the essential part of this Mass, was already completed by the time of St. Gregory the Great (reigning 590- 604). There had previously been a whole development; and indeed afterwards prayers were added, by no means secondary, such as those of the Offertory. We don't in the least assert that the Mass of St. Pius V "descended from heaven," for that would not conform to reality. It was perfected during the 11th to the 14th century. But when St. Pius V codified it his bull *Quo Primum* (1570), it becomes an unsurpassable summit. It is the completed liturgical expression of the dogmas of the Mass (e.g., Real Presence, Eucharistic Sacrifice, true sacrifice which is one and the same as the Sacrifice of the Cross) and of the veneration which is due to that which is effected by the holy Mass. And St. Pius V codified this *Ordo Missae* precisely as the insurmountable barrier raised up against the Protestant heresy and all subsequent heresies.

One must affirm then that this Mass is an unsurpassable expression of faith and adoration, and, therefore, we must affirm that the fabrication by Pope Paul VI of a new Mass - by his experts, notably Archbishop Bugnini - by the reconstitution of ancient formulas which had fallen into disuse and which, in particular, had not been retained by St. Pius V, is something artificial. It is not a homogeneous development. It is a thing artificially constrained and not a time-honored and spontaneous advancement. They attempted an abrupt development, but this was

erroneous.

This new Mass is no longer a precise manifestation of the Faith, rather it is a regression. The dogmas are less clearly manifested, the Real Presence is less affirmed, the propitiatory Sacrifice is toned down. One passes from the explicit to the implicit, from the clear to the ambiguous. It is the *opposite* of an homogeneous development which is an *advancement* in explanation. The New Mass is the opposite of true progress and that is why we do not accept it. That is the reason that we ask the faithful to not assist at the New Mass except for reasons of expediency. And if one assists at the New Mass, at such a time, it is in a passive way. One cannot assist actively at the New Mass because the Mass does not express the Faith and the respect due that which is taking place. This Mass "*represents a striking departure from*" the dogma on the Holy Mass, defined at the Council of Trent (Session 22), as Cardinals Ottaviani and Bacci wrote to Pope Paul VI (*The Ottaviani Intervention*, September 1969).

The "living tradition" of the neo-modernists

What about the evolutionary concept of the so-called "living tradition" of the Conciliar Church. What do the modernists mean by this term? —They mean a non-homogeneous evolution, hence, a **change**. By the term "living tradition," the Conciliar Church does not mean an inviolate transmission of a deposit which one lives and which progresses in a homogeneous fashion through explanation. It is not that at all! What is it then? —It is an evolutive tradition! —evolutive via a twofold process:

1. The assimilation of elements foreign to the revealed deposit. (One is going to add exterior elements to the revealed deposit —extraneous elements.)
2. By regression from the explicit to the ambiguous, from the clear to the equivocal.

Regarding the second point, you have a clear illustration of this regression from the explicit to the ambiguous in the New Mass. Indeed the many mixed doctrinal declarations (catholico-protestant and/ or catholico-orthodox) of recent years produce some ambiguous texts where truth and error blend together under the sign of equivocation.

Let's talk about the first process of the evolution of tradition as understood by modernists, that is, the assimilation of extraneous elements into the revealed deposit. Vatican Council II, in a passage perhaps too little understood, makes a declaration of intention:

The Council intends **above all** to judge by this light [of the Faith] the values most highly esteemed by our contemporaries, and to link them again to their divine source. (*Gaudium et Spes*, #11 [emphasis added])

What are those values esteemed by our contemporaries? ...Roger Aubert, a priest-precursor of the council, will tell us that they are democracy and freedom. It is a case then of introducing them into the doctrine of the Church, by the re-

linking of these values "*to their divine source.*" The Council continues:

In fact, these values [of our contemporaries], to extent that they originate in human nature, which is a gift of God, are very good, but the corruption of the human heart often turns them from the requisite order, and that is why they need to be purified.

So, if one "purifies" these values of "liberty," of "democracy," of "the rights of man," etc, they are very good and can be assimilated into Catholic doctrine. This is to say that the new profane "dogmas" of the French Revolution - liberty, equality, fraternity, democracy, the rights of man, all that - must be assimilated by Catholic doctrine. One is going to find religious liberty, freedom of conscience, ideological pluralism in the State, and the free concurrence of ideologies (as proclaimed by Pope John Paul II when he spoke at Strasbourg to the European Parliament[1] in letting it be understood that Communism is ultimately a chance for the Church, a competition between two rival ideologies, etc.).

This assimilation of dubious elements, completely foreign to revelation, is an alienating hodge-podge and thus an execration which profanes the deposit of the Faith and, moreover, has been condemned by the popes. Here is the authorized commentary on *Gaudium et Spes* (#11), that Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger proposes:

The problem of the 1960s was to acquire the better of the values drawn from two centuries of "liberal" culture. There are in fact some values which, although born outside the Church, can find their place purified and corrected in its vision of the world. This is what has been done.[2]

Thus, under the pretext that Tradition and divine Revelation should be adaptable to the contemporary mentality, they want to introduce into Catholic doctrine these contemporary ideas, these false principles of the contemporary spirit, which is to say the liberal, revolutionary spirit.

Now that which Vatican II says in *Gaudium et Spes* (#11), one finds in the works of Cardinal Congar (deceased), and also in those of Roger Aubert, a specialist in Church history. Yves Congar and Roger Aubert were writing in that vein around 1950, 15 years before *Gaudium et Spes*. They are truly the precursors of the Council. *Gaudium et Spes* (#11) is an implicit citation of Fr. Congar:

The progressivists of the 19th century [e.g., Fr. Felicite-Robert de Lamennais, the French liberal hero of the 19th century] too often took, just as they stood, ideas born in another and often hostile world, ideas still laden with a hostile spirit, and tried to introduce them into Christianity-thinking, that is, to "baptize" them Reconciling the Church with a positive modern world [which was ruled upon and condemned in its entirety by the *Syllabus* 1864] *could not be done by introducing the ideas of the modern world into the Church just as they stood. That required a work in depth by which the permanent principles of Catholicism would take a new development by assimilating, after extracting and purifying as necessary , the valid*

contributions of that modern world.[3]

Note that this last sentence will be repeated exactly in *Gaudium et Spes* (#11)!... It is thus a development of doctrine by assimilation of liberal ideas; an assimilation absolutely inadmissible, absolutely impossible.

Secondly, it is an illusion to wish to "extract and purify" these ideas of the modern world. The popes have condemned them purely and simply. They did not seek to "purify" them. But Yves Congar is mightier than all those popes! ? ...than Pius VI, Pius VII, Gregory XVI, Pius IX, Leo XIII and St. Pius X who have condemned these errors without appeal.

In 1951, Church historian Fr. Roger Aubert takes up the Congarian thesis of purification and assimilation:

The collaborators of *I'Avenir* [the newspaper of De Lamennais] had not taken sufficient care in rethinking the principles which were going to permit them, by means of the necessary discernments and purifications, to assimilate into Christianity the ideas of democracy and liberty, which, born outside of the Church, had developed in a spirit hostile to it.[4]

And so you see how modernists use, the tactic of copying one another in order to propagandize their false doctrine. Yet, despite this false credibility, the Church can never rectify and assimilate elements foreign to Her and condemned by Her.

But a disciple of Fr. Congar and of Roger Aubert, Fr. Bernard Sesboue, SJ, recycles the Congarian thesis and dresses it up as a critique, explicit this time, of the popes of the 19th century:

The drama of those pontifical declarations is that they had not discerned the element of Christian truth which lay hidden in demands that appeared at that time as attacks against religion and as a revolt against the rights of God. ...Thus the ideal which was signified by "the rights of man" was blocked off for a long time because men did not succeed in recognizing there the distant heritage of the Gospel.
[5]

The popes did not lack discernment! They condemned those errors. Those errors were condemned and remain condemned. The popes have declared these pseudo-values incapable of being assimilated into Catholic doctrine.[6] To claim that these popes had not known how to make the distinction, to assert that the condemnation of liberal "values" is therefore a mistake, is an act of impiety against these popes; it is an injustice; it is a lie. The popes have done their duty, with the assistance of the Holy Ghost. They have vigorously excluded any attempt at reconciliation between the Church and the principles of the Revolution. They have been genuine witnesses of Tradition, witnesses of a Tradition which lives because it combats.

The fruits of sterility and of death

The faithful transmission of Tradition is the necessary condition of its spiritual fecundity, just as sterility, when such is the case, is an infallible sign of infidelity in the transmission of the deposit. It is an illustration of Our Lord's words on the false prophets:

By their fruits you will know them. Do men gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. (Mt. 7:17- 18)

Thanks be to God, there is good fruit amongst us. Therefore the tree is good and the Tradition authentic. It is fruitful in zeal for one's own conversion by the *Spiritual Exercises*; for the conversion of one's neighbor by the work of the apostolate. It bears the fruit of families with numerous children, where the flame of the Faith is passed on to a whole new generation. It is fruitful in priestly and religious vocations, etc...

On the contrary, we verify that wherever Tradition has been adulterated, there we find the fruits of sterility and of death. In general, the so-called Conciliar Church is languishing and dying of sterility. Parents no longer have children. Catholics no longer get married. There are no longer large families, thus no more vocations, and, as a result, seminaries are closing. Novitiate houses are empty, churches also, and they are being sold. It is the apostasy of the young generation. The young are completely lost. They abandon the Faith which has not been passed on to them. There has been a break in its transmission.

Let us remember this lesson. Tradition is alive as long as the deposit of the Faith is accurately transmitted. On the contrary, it dies of sterility where the transmission has been interrupted. Neo-modernism has killed Tradition because it has not transmitted it. It has falsified it; it has adulterated it, disarming it when faced with error in order to join it to the error. Archbishop Lefebvre had the great grace of simply passing on that which he had received, as was engraved on his tombstone at Ecône, according to the words of St. Paul (I Cor. 11:23): ***Tradidi quod et accepi...*** *I have transmitted that which myself have received.* But to transmit it faithfully, what a struggle he had to carry on! What intrepid resistance to all the pressures exerted on him to make him adopt the New Mass! - to prevent him from continuing the seminary and his work in 1975-76! What a heroic struggle in 1988 to resist the enticement of a booby-trapped consecration and to proceed with Operation Survival of Tradition, even against the wishes of the pope!

This is the fighting Tradition which assures, by its struggle, the necessary conditions of its integral transmission and of its vitality. It is especially the Holy Mass of all times, which needs neither permission nor indulgence to remain in force and to make the Christian life fruitful. It is the Mass which constitutes "*tradition at its highest degree of power and solemnity,*" as our teacher Dom Guillon loved to say, following the lead of Dom Gueranger.[7] By its permanence and its fruits in the midst of the "*anti-liturgical heresy,*"[8] it is the traditional Roman Mass which sums up and focuses the essential struggle and the combative vitality of the authentic tradition of the Church. Pray then to God that He gives us the grace of fidelity to this Mass, and this Mass will assure us of receiving the genuine Tradition and of transmitting it faithfully to a whole new generation.

Footnotes

1 *Discours au Parlement Europeen*, II act. 1988 n.8.

2 Interview with Vittorio Messori, "*Pourquoi la foi est en crise*," in the monthly *Je'sus*, #11 November 1984, p.2.

3 *Vraie et faus-se reform dans l'Eglise*, Cerf, Paris 1950, pp.345-346.

4 *In Tolerance et Communauté Humaine*, Rencontre de la Sarte 'a Huy, Castermann, act. 1951, pp.81-82.

5 "*La doctrine de la liberte religieuse est-elle contraire ala tradition de l'Eglise?*." In *Documents Episcopat*, the bulletin of the Secretariat of the Bishops' Conference of France, #15, act. 1986, p15.

6 Cf. *Syllabus*, the last condemned proposition (#80): "*The Roman Pontiff can, and ought to, reconcile himself, and come to terms with progress, liberalism and modern civilization.*" (Dz 1780).

7 The liturgy is "*tradition at its highest power*" Dom Gueranger says in his *Institution Liturgiques* in the chapter entitled "La Composante Antiliturgique du Protestantisme." Dom Gueranger's expression, *ibid*.