

*[Editor's note - The article that follows was published a few weeks ago by Don Curzio Nitoglia, a well known Italian priest closely connected to SSPX. Don Curzio looks after the spiritual needs of the sisters of the Disciples of the Cenacle at Velletri, near Rome. This community of nuns was founded by Don Francesco Putti who was a friend of Archbishop Lefebvre and founder of the anti-Modernist review Si Si No No which, until recent times, used to be provided in monthly English translation by The Angelus magazine. By publishing the hard-hitting review, which was even widely read within the Vatican, Don Francesco became, in the words of Archbishop Lefebvre, a Herald of the Catholic Faith.]*

*Between them Don Curzio and the Disciples of the Cenacle continue to produce 'Si Si No No' and to further the work established by Don Francesco. Don Francesco was himself personally formed for many years by Padre Pio and then encouraged by the saint to become a priest at the age of 40! It was Don Francesco who exposed the presence of hidden microphones in confessionals used by Padre Pio, placed in an attempt by his Liberal enemies at the Vatican to discredit the saint.]*

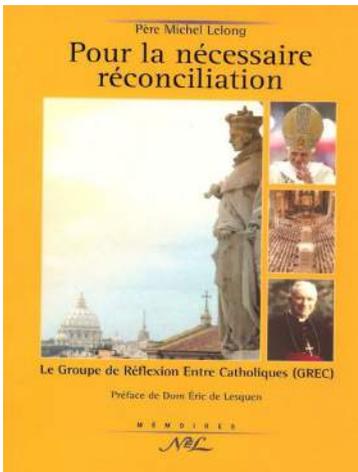
## **GREC: An Agreement that is “Discrete, but not Secret”**

**The two levels of meeting:**

**Dialogue that is “diplomatic” and that which is “doctrinal”**

### **Introduction**

In December 2011, an interesting book was published, written by Reverend Father Michael Lelong of the ‘Society of the White Fathers’ (Emeritus Professor at the Institute of the Theological Science of Religion in Paris, Laureate in Literature & qualified in Arabic Language & Literature,). The book is entitled ‘Pour la nécessaire réconciliation’; le Groupe de Reflexion Entre Catholiques (GREC), Nouvelles Editions Latines, Paris[1], and is a stimulating read, that I recommend to all.



### **Private & Discrete Meetings**

The “White Father”, ordained priest in 1948, recounts the history of the dialogues held by the “Groupe de Reflexion Entre Catholiques (Group for Reflection between Catholics) (GREC), with certain leading members of the Society of Saint Pius X, dialogues which he defines as “discrete, but not secret” (p.29), with the view to a full agreement between the SSPX and the Vatican; this after having accepted the interpretation of the Second Vatican Council in the light of Tradition, or the Hermeneutic of Continuity, and having received the freeing of the Traditional Mass, the lifting of the excommunications and full canonical systemisation.

Padre Lelong defines himself as a lover both of the traditional Liturgy (p.25) and at the same time, of the Second Vatican Council, especially as regards the interreligious relations promoted by Nostra Aetate, the ‘Declaration on the Rapport between the Catholic Church and non-Christian religions’ (p.17), as well as Gaudium et spes, Unitatis Redintegratio, Dignitatis Humanae and Sacrosantum Concilium (pp. 75-82), all of which, in his opinion, are perfectly readable in the light of Tradition. He, along with other leading traditionalists brought together in GREC, has sought to bring forward this dialogue that he calls ‘more charitable and diplomatic than it is

doctrinal' (pp.21-2), in order to arrive at an agreement as to the compatibility between Vatican II and Tradition.

One of the figures who inspired the forming of GREC was the ex-French ambassador for Italy, Dr. Gilbert Perol (d.1995), who from 1963 to 1967, had already exercised an important role at Eliseo alongside President Charles de Gaulle, afterwards being elected 'General Secretary' for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and then ambassador for Tunisia, Tokyo & lastly Rome from 1988 to 1991 (p. 17 & 24). The French ambassador was of the same opinion as Father Lelong, that a number of texts of the Second Vatican Council were in themselves good, but had been wrongly interpreted by some of the Progressives (p.18) and that, in order to arrive at the "necessary reconciliation" with the Traditionalists, one needs to interpret these texts in the light of Tradition, or according to the hermeneutic of continuity, remaining faithful to the traditional Liturgy (p. 18).



A l'occasion d'un congrès à Albano – M. l'abbé Emmanuel du CHALARD, M. l'abbé Frantz SCHMITBERGER et l'ambassadeur de France, Gilbert PÉROL

With this firmly in mind, that Vatican II cannot be rejected as a whole (p. 22), but rather that its teachings have been misapplied, above all in matters of Liturgy (p. 22), from 1988 (the year in which the four bishops were consecrated by Mons. Lefebvre, as well as that in which Perol arrived in Rome in his role as ambassador), the French ambassador did all in his power to repair this fracture, discretely visiting the SSPX Priory of Albano Laziale and also, a short time before his death, writing a text which influenced the forming of GREC and, as a result, the 'discrete' meetings with leading figures

the SSPX (p.29) in which took place this "dialogue, more charitable and diplomatic than doctrinal" (pp. 21-2). From this, ten years later, thanks to Benedict XVI and his 'battle horse' on the 'hermeneutic of continuity and not of rupture' sprang – at least according to Father Lelong – the concession of the Motu Proprio in 2007 (p. 49), the lifting of the excommunications of the four bishops consecrated by Mons. Lefebvre in 1988 and therefore, the 'public' doctrinal discussions between the Vatican and the SSPX (pp. 50-52).

After his death, the work of Dr. Gilbert Perol has been brought forward by his wife, Huguette Perol, herself authoress of two interesting books exploring the same subject[2]. Father Lelong relates of how at the start of 1996, he became acquainted with certain leading figures in the SSPX. Before all, he refers to Don Emmanuel du Chalard of the Priory at Albano Laziale (p.24) who 'has never ceased to offer his support to GREC, just as precious as it is discrete' (p.24), and in 1997 with Father Alain Lorans, ex Director of the SSPX Seminary at Econe, then of the Institute of Saint Pius X in Paris and finally, Editor of the SSPX's official publication DICHI (p.24). The meetings took place at the home of Huguette Perol at Rue de Rome in Paris; they were attended above all by Mrs Perol, Fr. Lelong, Fr Lorans who accounted for them to the SSPX Superior General

(p.29), and Father Olivier de La Brosse, a Dominican who later became the official spokesman for the French Episcopal Conferences (pp. 24 & 25).

### Public Meetings

On 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2000, GREC progressed from holding ‘discrete and diplomatic’ meetings to those that were ‘public and doctrinal/ theological’, attended by both Traditional priests and conservatives in which they openly discussed the key themes of the Council and expounded their different points of view; this change was thanks to the help of one of its original supporters, Michel Brisacier, responsible for ‘Direction of Faiths’ in the French Ministry of Internal Affairs (p.26).

The now public meetings of GREC were also attended by leading figures of the Institute of the Good Shepherd, the Society of Saint Peter, the Institute of Christ the King and the High Priest Gricigliano, as well as by Father Claude Barthe, and many cardinals, bishops and university professors (p. 27).

In early 2000, the highest Vatican authorities came to be informed of these GREC meetings – never secret, no longer discrete and by now completely public (p.29) – and amongst these the names of the Nunzio Apostolico of Paris and the President of the French Episcopal Conferences stand out (p.29).

Huguette Perol, Fr. Lorans and Fr. Lelong were received by many Vatican authorities (pp. 30 & 31). Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, in his role as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith was notified about them (p. 48), as was Cardinal State Secretary Angelo Sodano (pp. 42-3).



Father Charles Morerod of the Dominicans – who became Master of the Holy Palace, the Pope’s official theologian – began to take part in the meetings, or *public and theological* debates, in which Father Patrick de La Rocque of the SSPX also participated, (who later in 2010 also took part in the official meetings between the Vatican and the Holy See (p. 57)), Fr. Gregoire Celier (pp.62-5) and Fr. Troadec (p.67), Director of the SSPX Seminary at Flavigny.

The interview that Fr. Paul Alagnier (ex SSPX Superior of France from 1973 – 1994, then assistant to the Superior General until 2002 and now member of the Institute of the Good Shepherd) has allowed Fr. Lelong to publish (pp.98-114) is of interest. In it, one learns that in 1984 the then Superior General of the SSPX, Fr. Franz Schmidberger, had forwarded a petition to Pope John Paul II to obtain the freeing of the Mass of St Pius V, and in response the Pope had granted (3<sup>rd</sup> October 1984) an “indult” with the “drastic” (p.103) conditions to recognise in full the orthodoxy of Vatican II and of the Novus Ordo Mass of Paul VI, conditions that nonethe-

less were listened to relatively favourably by Fr. Schmidberger[3], but not by Mons. Lefebvre, not by Mons. Antonio de Castro Mayer, who immediately defined it as “fraudulent”. Fr. Aulagnier goes on to recount the initial, informal discussions with the Dominican Fathers and French Benedictines (both favourable towards the Vatican II texts, read in the light of Tradition), discussions that had already occurred in early 1992 and in which he had participated along with Fathers Celier, Lorans, Boubee, Boivin and Laisney (p.107).

## Conclusion

The book is interesting in that it distinguishes *the two levels of the meetings* or discussions between the Traditionalists and the Vatican: 1) the level where the dialogue is “*diplomatic and discrete, but not totally secret*”, open to accepting the hermeneutic of continuity and seemingly considered *of real value for the Vatican and the leading figures of the SSPX* (1997-2001); 2) *The public, theological and doctrinal* (2000-2010) level which appears to be unwilling to accept the hermeneutic of continuity, insisting rather on the importance of the points of contradiction between the Council and Tradition, seemingly considered *of little value, almost as though throwing dust in the eyes of the traditional priests and faithful*.

The book helps us to understand how by 2001, it may have been possible for the Superior General to arrive at the statement that in his opinion “95% of Vatican II is acceptable” (cfr. DIC1, n. 8, 18<sup>th</sup> may 2001)[4], a statement that was met with immediate opposition by Mons. Williamson in his “Letter to friends and benefactors”, printed in a pamphlet by the SSPX American Bulletin in which he called these “contacts with Rome... a betrayal”. Later, at the meeting of the SSPX Italian District at Albano Laziale, 26<sup>th</sup> April 2002, the statement was essentially locked up and the key thrown away, and passed for a decade under an *embarrassed silence*, only to be brought to light again with the expulsion of Mons. Williamson from the SSPX in September/October 2012, after becoming too great an obstacle to “diplomatic” agreement, in the words of Cardinal Castrillon Hoyos to the priests of the Society of Saint Peter in Germany, 11<sup>th</sup> May 2001.

From the very start of these “discrete, but not secret” discussions, held in a manner more charitable and diplomatic than doctrinal (pp. 21-22), the SSPX have been at the point of an almost total yielding, at least in words if not yet, fortunately, in legally and canonically obliging actions.

There is nothing objectionable as to on the holding of these public debates on the question of the orthodoxy of the Council documents, but one is left surprised at these meetings that are *more charitable and diplomatic than doctrinal* (pp. 21-22) and conducted in the light of the “hermeneutic of continuity”. According to Father Lelong, these meetings, from 2001 - 2012, have brought forward the reconciliation of the SSPX with the Vatican, only delayed by the “Williamson Case” of 2008 (cfr. Father Lelong, cit. P.120)

I do not permit myself to cast judgement on the subjective intentions of the priests and prelates in question, only God knows and I would like to hope that they may be subjectively blameless, even if materially and objectively they are in error.

That which will happen in the near future, now that the obstacle of the British bishop is removed, only God knows. “Man proposes, God disposes”. That which one knows is that

the internal disbanding of the Traditional front is in parallel with that which was provoked by John XXIII in 1959 with the announcement of the Second Vatican Council. To such a state only God can provide a remedy with miraculous intervention; we must not be discouraged, but rather confide in the help of Our Lady who at Fatima, 1917 assured us: “In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph!”.

**Fr. Curzio Nitoglia**

January 24, 2013

Footnotes:

[1] [www.editions-nel.com](http://www.editions-nel.com), 159 pages 20 euro

[2] *Les sans-papiers de l'Eglise*, Paris, Francois-Xavier de Guibert, 1999; *La tempete apaisee, reprise du dialogue entre Rome et Ecône*, Paris, Francois-Xavier de Guibert, 2006.

[3] “Despite these [the conditions imposed by John Paul II, ndr] we rejoice at this decision...” (Fr. Franz Schmidberger, Rikenbach, 18th October 1984)

[4] *DICI*, the official SSPX publication cites the interview with Mons. Bernard Fellay from the newspaper ‘La Liberte’ of 11th May 2001, which cites the Swiss newspaper *St Galler Tagblatt e Basler Zeitung*, in which he says “Cela donne l’impression que nous rejetons tout de Vatican II. Or, nous en gardons 95%. C’est plus a un esprit que nous nous opposons, a une attitude devant le changement. (It could seem that we refuse in full all of Vatican II. But we accept 95% of it. Rather, it’s the spirit, the attitude that we oppose...)”

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