

Cracks in the Masonry

(1982)

by Rama Coomaraswamy

Was Abp. Lefebvre invalidly ordained by a Mason?

SOME MONTHS AGO I read an article in a mimeographed publication which "proved" that Archbishop Lefebvre was — of all things — an Arian. The "evidence" for this charge was the claim that he refused to read the Last Gospel. The poor soul who wrote the article, however, seemed unaware that a bishop at Pontifical High Mass does not read the Last Gospel at the altar, but rather recites it to himself on the way out — as prescribed by the rubrics.

Now, while one can ignore such attacks on the Archbishop's integrity, there is one which strikes at the heart of the Society of Saint Pius X and every traditional Catholic — for it is claimed by some lay "popes" (pardon the quotation marks) that Archbishop Lefebvre is himself not validly ordained and consecrated. If such is true — they say — then all the priests he has ordained are also incapable of providing the sacraments, and the Society itself is without function or purpose.

It would be impossible to respond to every possible criticism and calumny, based as they are on insinuations, distortions and half-truths. But an attack on the validity of His Excellency's ordination and consecration warrants a clear and unequivocal response.

The latter is based on the story that Achille Cardinal Liénart, the man who ordained Archbishop Lefebvre a priest and consecrated him a bishop, was a Freemason of high rank. In responding to this, we must answer three questions;

(1) What is the evidence that Cardinal Liénart was a Freemason, and how much confidence can we place in this evidence?

(2) If Cardinal Liénart had been a Freemason, would this have invalidated the ordination and consecration of Archbishop Lefebvre?

(3) What was the Church's practice in the past in the case of Holy Orders conferred by a prelate who unquestionably *was* a Mason?

1. Was Cardinal Liénart a Mason?

Obviously, this is a critical issue. If Cardinal Liénart was *not* a Freemason, then there would be no basis for impugning the validity of the Archbishop's orders. What then is the evidence for the assertion?

The most specific source is a book entitled *Papal Infallibility (L'Infaillibilité Pontificale)* by the French writer Marquis de la Franquerie. This individual is said to be "a papal Secret Chamberlain who lives in Luçon, Vendée, France," and "a learned historian with special knowledge in the field of

penetration of the Catholic hierarchy by Freemasonry in France." He is said to be a traditionalist, and a friend of Archbishop Lefebvre.

On page 80 of his book, during the course of a discussion of the modernist maneuverings in preparation for Vatican II, the Marquis mentions, almost in passing, that Cardinal Liénart was a "luciferian" who attended "black Masses." Toward the end of a lengthy footnote on another topic that continues onto the following page, the Marquis adds:

"This attitude of the Cardinal could not surprise those who knew his membership in the Freemasonic and Luciferian lodges. This was the reason why the author of this study [i.e., the Marquis de la Franquerie] always had refused to accompany Cardinal Liénart in the official ceremonies as Secret Chamberlain.

"The Cardinal had been initiated in a lodge in Cambrai whose Venerable was Brother Debierre. He frequented a lodge in Cambrai, three at Lille, one in Valenciennes, and two in Paris, of which one was in a special way composed of parliamentarians. In the year 1919, he is designated as 'Visitor' (18th Degree), then, in 1924, as 30th degree. The future Cardinal met in the lodges Brother Debierre and Roger Solengro. Debierre was one of the informers of Cardinal Gasparri who had been initiated in America, and of Cardinal Hartmann. Archbishop of Cologne, a Rosicrucian.

"The Cardinal belonged to the International League against Anti-Semitism, where he met up again with Marc Sangnier and Father Violet.

"It was given to us to meet in Lourdes a former Freemason who, on July 19, 1932, had been miraculously cured of a wound suppurating on his left foot for fourteen years — a cure recognized by the Verification Bureau on July 18, 1933. This miraculously-healed gentleman, Mr. B..., told us that, at the time when he frequented a Luciferian lodge, he met there the cardinal whom he recognized and was dumbfounded."

Another source cited is Archbishop Lefebvre himself. In a talk given in Montreal, Canada on May 27, 1976, he stated:

"Two months ago in Rome, the traditionalist periodical *Chiesa Viva*, published — I have seen it in Rome with my own eyes — on the back side of the cover, the photograph of Cardinal Liénart with all his Masonic paraphernalia, the day of the date of his inscription in Masonry..., then the date at which he rose to the 20th, then to the 30th degree of Masonry, attached to this lodge, to that lodge, at this place, at that place. Meanwhile, about two or three months after this publication was made, I heard nothing about any reaction, or any contradiction. Now, unfortunately, I must say to you that this Cardinal Liénart is my bishop, it is he who ordained me a priest, it is he who consecrated me a bishop. I cannot help it... Fortunately, the orders are valid... But, in spite of it, it was very painful for me to be informed of it."

The issue of *Chiesa Viva* was No. 51, March, 1976. In it there is an article entitled "Il Cardinale Achille Liénart era Massone."

However, the Archbishop's memory was faulty, for the photograph involved was a picture of Cardinal Liénart in ordinary ecclesiastical attire, and below this a drawing which shows a monumental entrance door to a building around which Freemasonic symbols are grouped. This second picture carried the designation: "Entrance door to a Freemasonic temple."

The article, whose author is not named, says that the source of his information is pages 80 and 81 of *Papal Infallibility*, the book quoted above.

Another Italian journal, *Si Si, No, No*, also informs us that Cardinal Liénart was a Freemason. Its source, however, also turns out to be the Marquis de la Franquerie's *Papal Infallibility*.

Now, gentle reader, this is the sum total of the "evidence" brought forth for Cardinal Liénart being a Freemason! And it **all** goes back to the assertions of the Marquis de la Franquerie.

It may interest the reader to learn that according to a paper called *The Sword of Truth*: "From an irrefutable source, [Is there any other kind?], we learned recently that John XXIII was initiated into the Knights Templar Order of Freemasonry in 1935. Now we know why he took the name of the anti-Pope John XXIII..."

And for those who would prefer a pre-Conciliar Masonic Pontiff, we have it on the authority of a Brother Joseph Mc-Cabe (*A History of Freemasonry*) that Pius IX was also a Freemason. According to this source Pius, "the most vitriolic critic of the Masons before Leo XIII, had himself been a Mason; and at one time the French put into circulation a portrait of him in full Masonic regalia... Dudley Wright gives in his *Roman Catholicism and Freemasonry* the official proof that the charge is true. Pius was admitted to the Elerna Catena lodge at Palermo in 1839, when he was already a 46-year-old priest; and other documents show that as a Papal emissary in South America he was received in the lodges of Monte Video."

Of course, in the first case, the "irrefutable source" remains unidentified. How convenient! In the second case, we are told that "a portrait was circulated." Lost now, perhaps? And "documents show" Pius was received as a Mason. And where are *these* documents? Did they go down with the *Titanic*?

The Marquis provides a similar paucity of evidence — a "Mr. B..." who knew of this matter in 1932, but, despite his gratitude to the Blessed Virgin for a miraculous cure, and despite the fact that he knew Achille Liénart was teaching in the Seminary of Lille, ordaining priests and consecrating bishops, decided not to share his precious secret. Nothing like an "irrefutable anonymous source"!

Was "Mr. B..." afraid the Freemasons would do away with him? But then, why share it at a later date when he had no greater immunity?

I have been told — unfortunately, not by an irrefutable source — that the documents showing the Cardinal's signatures at these various lodges can be produced. Now I ask you, if one were a churchman obviously on the rise in the hierarchy and within a secret and diabolical organization, would one casually pop into the local lodge and place one's signature on the guest book? I rather doubt it. One should have far too much respect for the Freemasonic organization than to believe that a real "agent provocateur" would be even *seen* in a lodge. As for "documentation," in this day and age it can be easily produced by a variety of technical methods.

What are the sources for the Marquis' assertions, you may ask? Other than the anonymous "Mr. B..." he does not give any. For his *other* factual claims about Masonic infiltration, the Marquis provides references in his book that can be verified; for the accusation against Cardinal Liénart, he gives *no*

documentary sources at all. He just asserts something — he does not offer proof or solid evidence.

Finally, the author, the Marquis de la Franquerie, informs us that **he knew about this all for decades**, and as a result would not accompany Cardinal Liénart "in the official ceremonies as Secret Chamberlain."

Now, I find it extremely strange that the Marquis, who received this high papal honor of being named a Secret Chamberlain, did **nothing** to expose this terrible situation when he had access to Church authorities prior to Vatican II. Why did he also wait until the mid-seventies to provide the world with this information?

It seems, then, that we cannot really take any of the evidence seriously. It is sensationalist tittle-tattle that proves nothing.

We are therefore morally obliged to find the "defendant," Cardinal Liénart, not guilty of the charge.

2. What If Liénart *Had* Been a Mason?

But purely for the sake of argument, let assume the claim is true.

The question then would be: Would this affect the validity of ordinations performed by Cardinal Liénart?

Those who have attacked the Archbishop claim it would, and they make much of the chronology of the alleged sequence of events. The sequence they give is the following:

Cardinal Liénart: Born, 1884; ordained, 1907; became Mason, 1912; promoted to 30th degree, 1924; became bishop 1928; ordained Archbishop Lefebvre, 1929; became Cardinal, 1930.

Now, the question of the validity of the ordination depends upon the usual criteria for the validity of any sacrament. The essential requirements are "intention, matter, form, minister, and disposition of the recipient."

We can presume that matter and form fulfilled the necessary requirements of the Church, for in such solemn and public ceremonies an error in this regard would not have escaped unnoticed.

With regard to the minister, it is a teaching of the Church that neither faith nor the state of grace is required. Sinful, heretical, schismatic and apostate priests or bishops can still validly (though sinfully and illicitly) confect the sacraments, provided that they use the proper matter and form and have the necessary intention.

The question (if Bishop Liénart had been a Mason) would NOT be whether he *could* have validly administered a sacrament at all, but whether *in fact* he did so. In other words, did he either *withhold* his intention, or have an intention *contrary* to that which is considered necessary?

The obvious answer is that we do not know and cannot know — because we cannot look back into his heart in 1929. The requirement established, or rather defined, at the Council of Trent is that the minister must "intend to do what the Church does." (Sess. 7, Can. 11)

Is it possible for a Freemason to intend to do what the Church does? The answer is yes. It is also possible for him to withhold this intention and to have a contrary intention — but, then, it is possible for *any* priest or bishop to do the same with *any* sacrament.

To backtrack a little, intention can be characterized as "external" and "internal." External intention is reflected in performing the rites correctly, but it does not suffice. If the minister does not have the correct internal intention, he would be acting in his own name or by his own power, rather than in Christ's name and with Christ's power. He would be performing a purely natural act — and not a supernatural one.

The crux of the issue is how can we know and recognize this "internal intention" on the part of the minister?

Pope Leo XIII spoke to this issue when discussing Anglican orders:

"Concerning the mind or intention, inasmuch as it is in itself something internal, the Church does not pass judgment; but insofar as it is externally manifested, she is bound to judge of it. Now if, in order to effect and confer a Sacrament, **a person has seriously and correctly used the matter and form, he is for that very reason presumed to have intended to do what the Church does.** It is on this principle that the doctrine is solidly founded which holds as a true Sacrament that which is conferred by the ministry of a heretic or a non-baptized person [as in Baptism] as long as it is conferred in the Catholic rite." (Emphasis supplied.)

Perhaps it would be more correct to say that the Church *cannot* pass judgment purely on internal intentions for the simple reason that she cannot ever really know them.

Thus, those who claim that Cardinal Liénart was a Mason and for this reason did not validly confer priestly ordination arrogate to themselves the right to do something even the Church has no power to do — pass judgment on the **unexpressed** intentions of the ministers of a sacrament.

All this is not to say that the correct performance of the external rites, absent any intention at all, suffices for validity — indeed, this opinion was condemned by the Church.

In the absence of external evidence which *clearly* shows that the intention was withheld, the Church always presumes that the minister did in fact have the intention of doing what the Church does.

And thus we find St. Thomas Aquinas teaching that "the minister of the sacrament acts in the person of the whole Church, whose minister he is; while in the words uttered by him, the intention of the Church is expressed; and that this suffices for the validity of the sacrament, except the contrary be expressed on the part either of the minister or of the recipient of the sacrament." (*Summa*, Part III, Question 64, 8 and 2).

Now, it is not necessary for the minister of a sacrament to be either morally pure or orthodox. Augustine teaches that "the evil lives of wicked men are not prejudicial to God's sacraments, by rendering them either invalid or less holy." St. Thomas in discussing this states that "the ministers of the Church work instrumentally in the sacraments... Now an instrument acts not by reason of its own form, but by the power of one who moves it... The ministers of the Church do not by their own power cleanse from sin those who approach the sacraments, nor do they confer grace on them: it is Christ Who does this by His own power while He employs them [the ministers] as instruments." (*Ibid.*, 6, ad 1).

Putting this somewhat differently, the minister acts as a conduit for Christ's grace, providing he in no way obstructs

Christ and the Church's intent by using his free will to intend a contrary purpose.

We have also said that the minister need not be orthodox. As St. Thomas teaches:

"Since the minister works instrumentally in the sacraments, he acts not by his own, but by God's power. Now, just as charity belongs to a man's own power, so also does faith. Wherefore, just as the validity of a sacrament does not require that the minister should have charity, and even sinners can confer the sacraments, so neither is it necessary that he should have faith, and even an unbeliever can confer a true sacrament, providing that the other essentials be there... Even if his faith be defective in regard to the very sacrament that he confers, although he believes that no inward effect is caused by the thing done outwardly, yet he does know that the Church intends to confer a sacrament by that which is outwardly done. Wherefore, his unbelief notwithstanding, he can intend to do what the Church does, albeit he esteems it to be nothing. And such an intention suffices..." (*Ibid.*, 64,9)

While we are on St. Thomas, let us also note that illicit administering of the sacraments in no way invalidates them. He states that "if a man be suspended from the Church, or excommunicated or degraded, he does not lose the power of conferring sacraments, but the permission to use this power. Wherefore he does indeed confer the sacrament, but he sins in so doing." (*Ibid.*, 64; 10 and 3)

The recipient would of course sin in knowingly receiving the sacrament from such an individual "unless ignorance excuses him." And thus, as Pope Paschal II states, "instructed by the examples of our Fathers, who at diverse times have received Novatians, Donatists, and other heretics into their order [i.e., acknowledged the validity of the orders received in their heretical sects]: we receive in the episcopal office [i.e., as true bishops] the bishops of the aforesaid kingdom who were ordained in schism. . ."

The Church, of course, presumes the normal intention on even the part of heretics — that is, the intention to do what the Church does.

And finally it should be noted that none of the lay "popes" who have spread the Masonry allegations have ever been able to cite even **one** Catholic theologian — still less, a real pope — who taught that Holy Orders conferred by a Mason must be presumed invalid on grounds of lack of proper intention.

3. A Historical Precedent: Bp. Talleyrand

Obviously, if the Church did not presume in the absence of contrary evidence that the minister always intends to do what the Church does, we would be in a serious state. We would *always* have to question the minister as to his intent, and still have to have faith in his word. How would any of us ever know the reality of *any* of the sacraments? Indeed, how would we even know if we were Christian? Perhaps the baptizing minister was a secret Freemason who withheld his intention!

Let us look then to discover a historical precedent about a Masonic bishop. According to the *Catholic Encyclopedia* (1908), Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord was born of good parentage in 1754, and owing to an accident that rendered him lame, was forced by his parents into the priesthood. "He went to

St. Suplice and, against his inclination became an abbé [priest]. He then read the 'most revolutionary books,' and at length, giving up his priestly life, plunged in the licentiousness of the period..."

Despite this, he was given several wealthy benefices, including that of St. Denis, and continued to rise in the Church as well as in the government. Finally, through the insistence of his father (to whom the king was greatly indebted) he obtained the episcopal see of Autun and was consecrated Bishop on January 16, 1789. He continued to live his profligate life in Paris, and only went to Autun when he saw this as a means of being elected member of the *États-Generaux* — the French National Assembly which would eventually foment the Revolution.

According to Talleyrand's biographer, Louis Madelin of the Academie Française (New York: Roy 1948), "He belonged to all the great masonic lodges, from the Philalatheans, whence sprang the Jacobin Club, to the Re-united Friends, where the great ringleaders of the future were already preparing the Revolution." He also had close ties to the Duc d'Orléans, the future Philippe Egalité, and one of the principal leaders of the French Revolution. As a member of the Constitutional Committee, he took part in the "Declaration of the Rights of Man." He was one of the most influential members of the Assembly, and was the individual most directly responsible for the confiscation of Church property; the taking over of education by the state, and the establishment of the "Constitutional Church," a schismatic body set up by the Masons to serve the ends of the state.

Talleyrand publicly said sacrilegious Masses. After most of the traditional and loyal bishops fled France, it fell his lot to consecrate (together with the infamous apostate, Bishop Gobel) all the "Constitutional Bishops" that replaced them. After this act, he took off his ecclesiastical attire and never wore it again. His own priests, the Cathedral Chapter of Autun, described him as deserving "infamy in this world and damnation in the next."

One must not imagine that Freemasonry was an unknown entity in those days. Popes Clement XII (1730-1740), Benedict XIV (1740-1758) and Clemenr XIII (1758-1769) had already clearly condemned it.

Talleyrand was excommunicated by a pontifical brief in April, 1791. This excommunication was later lifted, on condition that he lived a life of celibacy. He promptly married, then exiled his wife to England and formed a series of "alliances" from which several illegitimate offspring resulted. He was a bad priest, an apostate bishop, a Freemason, a Christian barred from communion and an individual who for forty-nine years could not receive the sacraments of the Church.

Now, the point of all this is that most of the bishops of France derived their Apostolic Succession through Talleyrand and his two associates (also supporters of the Revolution). Not only were all Talleyrand's episcopal consecrations recognized, but when the Concordat between Napoleon and Pope Pius VII was signed, the exiled bishops who had remained loyal to Pope Pius VI were asked to resign.

Rome allowed the bishops of the Constitutional Church, all of whom derived their orders from the Mason Talleyrand, to remain in their positions, as diocesan ordinaries. The fact

that Talleyrand was a Mason and a revolutionary made no difference.

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TO SUM UP what we have said:

(1) There is **no credible evidence** which shows that Cardinal Liénart was a Freemason.

(2) If Cardinal Liénart had been a Freemason, **it would not have invalidated the sacraments he conferred.**

(3) The case of Talleyrand demonstrates in the practical order that **the Church does *not* regard ordinations performed by Freemasons as invalid.**

So much then, for tall tales of Masonry!

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