

# CONTRA LEFEBVRISM

## PART III: ON COLLEGIALITY

### 1. Abstract

The Society presents the argument that Vatican II, in contrast to the strict, hierarchical structure that defined that Church's governance, instead promoted a democratic model of authority, in which Church doctrine and discipline, rather than coming from God, comes instead from the majority opinion of the people.

But as seems evident from the documents themselves, Vatican II actually, in no uncertain terms, reaffirms the traditional hierarchical structure of the Church, albeit with the roles of the religious and laity more clearly defined. What the Council, along with the subsequent Popes, teaches instead is that it is not majority opinion that determines Church teaching, but instead the will of the Holy Spirit, which is discerned best when the Church acts as one, just as the Persons of the Trinity act as one.

### 2. The Position of the Society of St. Pius X:

*“Collegiality is the destruction of personal authority, the authority of God, of the Pope, and of the bishops.”*

The Society claims that in the Vatican II Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, the Church opened up the possibility of democratizing Church authority, in which the Church, rather than governed by a hierarchical structure (in which the Pope makes the final decisions on faith, morals and discipline), is instead governed through the opinions of its subordinates. In the Society's FAQ video, presented by Fr. McDonald, the argument is distinguished between the Catholic and Modern understandings of religious collegiality. For Catholicism's part:

- Truth seeks and defends the primacy of God's objective reality.
- God created the universe with a hierarchical order, reflected in the organization of the Church (i.e. from God to the Pope). The bishops also exercise immediate jurisdiction over their Dioceses, subject only to the Pope's authority and intervention.

Conversely, when it comes to Modernism:

- Truth is the subjective expression of each man's individual opinions.

- The Pope is free to have his say, but is bound to consult with the bishops, just as the bishops must hear the opinions of their priests, and the priests the opinions of the laity, in the name of preserving the rights of people.

The Society states that collegiality threatens the hierarchical structure of the Church by insisting that “a strict democratic process should govern the Church at all times,” and that this type of democratic discussion would, in short order, break proper authority and hinder the actions of its leaders.<sup>1</sup> They go on to accuse *Lumen Gentium* of fostering this type of “democratization” by

- Suggesting that the Bishops should rule as peers with the Pope.
- Introduces a new collaborating Spirit (collegiality).
- Dilutes Church authority within its governance.
- Destroys the authority of the Pope over the bishops and priests, religious, and the faithful.

As a result of that fostering, the Society further claims that the fruits of this document include Episcopal Conferences (and at a lower level, Parish councils) that:

- Replace Papal instruction by making its own decisions binding on its members.
- Reducing Bishops to “presidents” or “mere commissioners”.

While the Society concedes that the Pope, bishops, priests and laity ought to consult with one another, it should only be when appropriate, and in order to bring their light together to help those in authority to decide.

### **3. The Documents at Issue:**

The Society centers on the Dogmatic Constitution, *Lumen Gentium*. No specific passage is cited by the Society as problematic, however Ch. 3, “On the Hierarchical Structure of the Church and In Particular on the Episcopate” seems the likely source of its complaint.

### **4. The Position of the Second Vatican Council:**

In the document *Lumen Gentium*, the word “college” is defined as “a stable group, over which [Jesus] placed Peter chosen from among them.” Further, *Christus Dominus* defines it as “body”. Used in this sense, (and not as, for example, an educational institution), “college” appears 40 times, with 27 uses in *Lumen Gentium*

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<sup>1</sup> SSPX FAQ, #11.

(Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), 6 in *Christus Dominus* (Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops), 4 in *Ad Gentes* (Decree on the Mission Activity of the Church), 2 in *Unitatis Redintegratio* (Decree on Ecumenism) and once in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Constitution on the Liturgy). Outside of *Lumen Gentium*, *Christus Dominus*, and *Ad Gentes*, the concept of “college” isn’t explored or defined in any meaningful sense, so the focus of this analysis will be limited to those three documents, whose positions will be presented and summarized here in the order of which the documents were promulgated (with *emphasis* added by the author).

4a. The Position of *Lumen Gentium* (November 21, 1964):

The Lord Jesus called to Himself the twelve apostles and formed them as a “college”, or stable group, over which He appointed St. Peter. They were given the mission to make all peoples His disciples, and to sanctify and govern them. This mission was confirmed on the day of Pentecost and would last until the end of the world (Ch. 3, §19-20).

The college of bishops today are the successors of the Apostles, and just as the office and mission of the Pope (the successor of St. Peter) is perpetual,<sup>2</sup> so is the office and mission of the bishops, with the aid of their assistants, the priests and deacons (Ch. 3, §20-21).

Also, just as St. Peter and the apostles together constituted one apostolic college, so too do the Pope and the bishops. The college of bishops is organized in the manner of Christ, with a head (the Pope) and its members (the bishops), and thus exercise authority together. However, no number of bishops can exercise authority without the Pope, nor can a council be considered “ecumenical” without the Pope (Ch. 3, §22).

The unity of the college is manifested in the character of the Pope, the visible principle and foundation of unity of the whole Church. Each individual bishop likewise is the visible representation of the unity of his diocese, but all bishops together with the Pope represent the whole Church. By governing well their own diocese, they effectively contribute to the good of the whole Church (Ch. 3, §23).

A bishop, in communion with the Pope, is the authentic teacher of the faith, endowed as he is with the authority of Christ. A religious submission must therefore be shown by the faithful to the bishops on matters of faith and morals, since they speak in the name of Christ on matters of faith and morals. All the more so should this submission be shown to the teaching authority of the Pope, even when he is not speaking *ex cathedra*; this teaching can be expressed from his documents, repetition of the same doctrine, or manner of speaking. Though bishops do not share the prerogative of infallibility, they

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<sup>2</sup> cf. *Pastor Aeternus*.

nonetheless proclaim teaching infallibly when, while maintaining communion with the Pope, they agree on a position that must be definitively held, especially in the context of an ecumenical council. The Pope's definitions, of themselves and not by consent of the Church, are irreformable, they need no approval of others, and are not appealable (Ch. 3, §25).

A "college" is not understood solely juridically (i.e. as a group of equals who give their powers to a president), but as a stable group whose structure and authority can only be understood in the light of Revelation. It cannot exist without its head (the Pope), nor can it exercise its collegial power, let alone constitute a college, without him (Appendix, §1, 3 & 4).

4b. *The Position of Christus Dominus (October 28, 1965):*

Bishops are united in a college with respect to the universal Church of God as far as teaching authority and pastoral government (Preface, §3).

By virtue of sacramental consecration and hierarchical communion with the Pope, bishops constitute the episcopal college, the successor of the college of the apostles. Together, and never without, the Pope, they exercise complete power over the Church, and are called to show care for the whole Church (Ch. 1, §4-6).

4c. *The Position of Ad Gentes (December 7, 1965):*

Bishops, each with their own college of priests, are called to intimate communion with the whole Church and to foster a sense of communion with the whole universal Church. Especially to the younger churches (i.e. in mission territory), they should devote themselves to spreading the Gospel and to cooperate with missionaries to that end (Ch. 3, §19-20).

All bishops are consecrated not just for one diocese, but for the salvation of the whole world. The mandate to preach the Gospel to every nation in the first place concerns them, both with Peter and under Peter (Ch. 6, §38).

## **5. Pre-Conciliar & Post-Conciliar Teachings:**

5a. *Pre-Conciliar Teaching:*

The Catholic concept of "collegiality" expressed in full by *Lumen Gentium* above seems to be prefigured in Vatican I's dogmatic constitution *Pastor Aeternus* (July 18, 1870):

“This power of the supreme pontiff *by no means detracts from that ordinary and immediate power of episcopal jurisdiction, by which bishops, who have succeeded to the place of the apostles by appointment of the holy Spirit, tend and govern individually the particular flocks which have been assigned to them. On the contrary, this power of theirs is asserted, supported and defended by the supreme and universal pastor*; for St Gregory the Great says: ‘My honour is the honour of the whole church. My honour is the steadfast strength of my brethren. Then do I receive true honour, when it is denied to none of those to whom honour is due.’” (Ch. 3, §5).

This notion of bishops not being mere “vicars of the Pope”, but exercising their own unique ordinary power, as well as the sharing of authority with the Pope (provided, of course, they are in communion with him), is confirmed also by Pope Leo XIII in *Satis Cognitum* (On the Unity of the Church, June 29, 1896):

“But if the authority of Peter and his successors is plenary and supreme, it is not to be regarded as the sole authority. For He who made Peter the foundation of the Church also “chose, twelve, whom He called apostles” (Luke vi., 13); and just as it is necessary that the authority of Peter should be perpetuated in the Roman Pontiff, so, by the fact that the bishops succeed the Apostles, they inherit their ordinary power, and thus the episcopal order necessarily belongs to the essential constitution of the Church. Although they do not receive plenary, or universal, or supreme authority, *they are not to be looked as vicars of the Roman Pontiffs; because they exercise a power really their own, and are most truly called the ordinary pastors of the peoples over whom they rule.*

“But since the successor of Peter is one, and those of the Apostles are many, it is necessary to examine into the relations which exist between him and them according to the divine constitution of the Church. Above all things the need of union between the bishops and the successors of Peter is clear and undeniable. This bond once broken, Christians would be separated and scattered, and would in no wise form one body and one flock. ‘The safety of the Church depends on the dignity of the chief priest, to whom if an extraordinary and supreme power is not given, there are as many schisms to be expected in the Church as there are priests’.<sup>3</sup> It is necessary, therefore, to bear this in mind, viz., that nothing was conferred on the apostles apart from Peter, but that several things were conferred upon Peter apart from the Apostles. St. John Chrysostom in explaining the words of Christ asks: ‘Why, passing over the others, does He speak to Peter about these things?’ And he replies unhesitatingly and at once, ‘Because he was preeminent among the Apostles, the mouthpiece of the Disciples, and the head of the college’.<sup>4</sup> He alone was designated as the foundation of the Church. To him He gave the

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3 S. Hieronymus, Dialog, contra Luciferianos, n. 9

power of binding and loosing; to him alone was given the power of feeding. ***On the other hand, whatever authority and office the Apostles received, they received in conjunction with Peter. 'If the divine benignity willed anything to be in common between him and the other princes, whatever He did not deny to the others He gave only through him. So that whereas Peter alone received many things, He conferred nothing on any of the rest without Peter participating in it.'***" (§14).

*5b. Post-Conciliar Teaching:*

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, promulgated by Pope St. John Paul II in 1992, gives the definitive interpretation of *Lumen Gentium*, which would seem to confirm the traditional teaching of the Church's hierarchical authority:

880. When Christ instituted the Twelve, "he constituted [them] in the form of a college or permanent assembly, at the head of which he placed Peter, chosen from among them." Just as "by the Lord's institution, St. Peter and the rest of the apostles constitute a single apostolic college, so in like fashion the Roman Pontiff, Peter's successor, and the bishops, the successors of the apostles, are related with and united to one another."

881. The Lord made Simon alone, whom he named Peter, the "rock" of his Church. He gave him the keys of his Church and instituted him shepherd of the whole flock. "The office of binding and loosing which was given to Peter was also assigned to the college of apostles united to its head." ***This pastoral office of Peter and the other apostles belongs to the Church's very foundation and is continued by the bishops under the primacy of the Pope.***

882. ***The Pope, Bishop of Rome and Peter's successor, "is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful." "For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, and as pastor of the entire Church has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered."***

883. ***"The college or body of bishops has no authority unless united with the Roman Pontiff, Peter's successor, as its head."*** As such, this college has "supreme and full authority over the universal Church; but this power cannot be exercised without the agreement of the Roman Pontiff."

884. "The college of bishops exercises power over the universal Church in a solemn manner in an ecumenical council." But ***"there never is an***

***ecumenical council which is not confirmed or at least recognized as such by Peter's successor.***”

885. “This college, in so far as it is composed of many members, is the expression of the variety and universality of the People of God; and of the unity of the flock of Christ, ***in so far as it is assembled under one head***” (Pt. 1, §2, Ch. 3, Art. 9, ¶4).

The apostolic letter *Apostolos Suos* (On the Theological and Juridical Nature of Episcopal Conferences), issued *moto proprio* by Pope St. John Paul II on May 21, 1998, likewise confirms the above:

“Collegially, the order of Bishops is, ‘together with its head, the Roman Pontiff, and never without this head, the subject of supreme and full power over the universal Church’. As it is well known, in teaching this doctrine, the Second Vatican Council likewise noted that ***the Successor of Peter fully retains ‘his power of primacy over all, pastors as well as the general faithful. For in virtue of his office, that is, as Vicar of Christ and pastor of the whole Church, the Roman Pontiff has full, supreme and universal power over the Church. And he can always exercise this power freely***’.

“The supreme power which the body of Bishops possesses over the whole Church cannot be exercised by them except collegially, either in a solemn way when they gather together in ecumenical Council, or spread throughout the world, ***provided that the Roman Pontiff calls them to act collegially or at least freely accepts their joint action***. In such collegial acts, the Bishops exercise a power which is proper to them for the good of their faithful and of the whole Church, and, although conscientiously respecting the primacy and pre-eminence of the Roman Pontiff, head of the College of Bishops, they are not acting as his vicars or delegates. There, it is clear that they are acting as Bishops of the Catholic Church, for the benefit of the whole Church, and as such they are recognized and respected by the faithful” (II, §9).

### *5c. The Teaching of the Current Pontificate:*

Leading up into the present pontificate, the Society is likewise critical of the concept of synodality, which has been promoted by Pope Francis throughout his pontificate, for similar reasons noted above. However, a review of the apostolic constitution *Episcopalis Communio* (On the Synod of Bishops), issued September 15, 2018, affirms the unique authority of the Pope and rejects the notion of “democratization”:

“During every Synodal Assembly, consultation of the faithful must be followed by discernment on the part of the Bishops chosen for the task, united

in the search for a consensus that springs not from worldly logic, but from common obedience to the Spirit of Christ. Attentive to the *sensus fidei* of the People of God – ‘which they need to distinguish carefully from the changing currents of public opinion’ – the members of the Assembly offer their opinion to the Roman Pontiff so that it can help him in his ministry as universal Pastor of the Church. From this perspective, ‘the fact that the Synod ordinarily has only a consultative role does not diminish its importance. In the Church the purpose of any collegial body, whether consultative or deliberative, is always the search for truth or the good of the Church. ***When it is therefore a question involving the faith itself, the consensus ecclesiae is not determined by the tallying of votes, but is the outcome of the working of the Spirit, the soul of the one Church of Christ***’.<sup>5</sup> Therefore the vote of the Synod Fathers, ‘if morally unanimous, has a qualitative ecclesial weight which surpasses the merely formal aspect of the consultative vote’” (*Episcopalis Communio*, §7).

## 6. Observations:

Because a teaching of the Church isn’t considered authentic unless made in communion with her magisterium, this analysis will not consider the misrepresentations of those acting in the name of some nebulous “spirit” of the council; indeed, the “spirit of Vatican II”, or the “para-council”, is an unreliable authority principle given the varied and often contradictory forms it tends to take. Therefore, only the letter of the documents themselves, in concert with the promulgated teachings of the Popes, and bishops in communion with him, regarding said documents, should be considered when judging its intentions, since that interpretation alone is preserved from error by the Holy Spirit. The political or ideological leanings or motivations of those who wrote it, or who claim to represent it, are therefore irrelevant.

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<sup>5</sup> This approach of Pope Francis is observed as follows by Bishop Robert Barron of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester, MN, USA:

“In the course of our conversation, the theme of synods and synodality indeed came up, and Francis was clear and explicit. He told us, in no uncertain terms, that a synod is ‘not a parliament,’ and that the synodal process is not simply a matter of canvassing the participants and counting votes. And then he added, with particular emphasis, that ***the ‘protagonist’ of a synod is not any of the delegates to the gathering, but rather the Holy Spirit***. This last observation is of signal importance. The point of a democratic assembly is to discern the will of the people, for in a democratic polity, they are finally sovereign. But in a synod, the point is discerning, not the will of the people, but the will of the Holy Spirit, for the Spirit in that context is sovereign, or in the language of Pope Francis, the ‘protagonist.’

“Having heard the Pope on this score, I couldn’t help but hearken back to that moment at the Youth Synod of 2018. ***Whatever Pope Francis means by ‘synodality,’ he quite clearly doesn’t mean a process of democratization, or putting doctrine up for a vote. He means, it seems to me, a structured conversation among all of the relevant ecclesial players—bishops, priests, and laity—for the sake of hearing the voice of the Spirit.***”



Overall, the Society's argument (both the FAQ video and the related articles on their website) is somewhat confused and distracted. Much is made about the political maneuvering before and after the promulgation of *Lumen Gentium*, possibly trying to appeal to the teaching of Matthew 7:16 ("You will know them by their fruits") to draw conclusions about the Constitution's intentions. This is an improper use of that teaching; God can no more be judged by the fruits of the devil any more than the documents of the Council can be judged by the dishonest representations of those claiming to act in its name, however numerous they may be.

As to the subject of collegiality itself, the Society's argument lacks foundation. This is likely due to a simple obfuscation in terms; it is possible, given the frequent references to the heresy of Gallicanism in their arguments, that the Society confuses "Collegiality" with "Conciliarism". If true, then this is a non-issue; the principle of "Conciliarism" (the idea that Ecumenical councils can assume a higher authority than that of the Pope) was soundly rejected by both the Fifth Lateran Council and the First Vatican Council. Thus, traditional teaching seems to preclude the possibility that Catholic teaching, let alone Truth itself, can be a matter of popular vote.

However, from a cursory look at the documents in question, Vatican II clearly endorses neither conciliarism nor a democratization of its hierarchical structure. Rather, "collegiality" seems to be the simple idea that bishops can exercise magisterial authority by virtue of their office, but *only* in communion with their head, the Pope. Numerous examples of this traditional teaching could be cited from *Lumen Gentium* alone, but the three provided here should serve to demonstrate that the documents of Vatican II simply do not allow for the kind of destruction of divine authority the Society claims is contained within their pages:

*From Ch. 3: "On the Hierarchical Structure of the Church and In Particular on the Episcopate":*

**"But the college or body of bishops *has no authority unless it is understood together with the Roman Pontiff, the successor of Peter as its head. The pope's power of primacy over all, both pastors and faithful, remains whole and intact.*** In virtue of his office, that is as Vicar of Christ and pastor of the whole Church, the Roman Pontiff has full, supreme and universal power over the Church. And he is always free to exercise this power. The order of bishops, which succeeds to the college of apostles and gives this apostolic body continued existence, is also the subject of supreme and full power over the universal Church, provided we understand this body together with its head the Roman Pontiff and never without this head. This power can be exercised only with the consent of the Roman Pontiff. For our Lord placed Simon alone as the rock and the bearer of the keys of the Church,

and made him shepherd of the whole flock; it is evident, however, that the power of binding and loosing, which was given to Peter, was granted also to the college of apostles, joined with their head. This college, insofar as it is composed of many, expresses the variety and universality of the People of God, but insofar as it is assembled under one head, it expresses the unity of the flock of Christ. In it, the bishops, faithfully recognizing the primacy and pre-eminence of their head, exercise their own authority for the good of their own faithful, and indeed of the whole Church, the Holy Spirit supporting its organic structure and harmony with moderation. The supreme power in the universal Church, which this college enjoys, is exercised in a solemn way in an ecumenical council. ***A council is never ecumenical unless it is confirmed or at least accepted as such by the successor of Peter; and it is prerogative of the Roman Pontiff to convoke these councils, to preside over them and to confirm them.*** This same collegiate power can be exercised together with the pope by the bishops living in all parts of the world, provided that the head of the college calls them to collegiate action, or at least approves of or freely accepts the united action of the scattered bishops, so that it is thereby made a collegiate act” (§22).

“(T)his infallibility with which the Divine Redeemer willed His Church to be endowed in defining doctrine of faith and morals, extends as far as the deposit of Revelation extends, which must be religiously guarded and faithfully expounded. ***And this is the infallibility which the Roman Pontiff, the head of the college of bishops, enjoys in virtue of his office, when, as the supreme shepherd and teacher of all the faithful, who confirms his brethren in their faith, by a definitive act he proclaims a doctrine of faith or morals. And therefore his definitions, of themselves, and not from the consent of the Church, are justly styled irreformable, since they are pronounced with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, promised to him in blessed Peter, and therefore they need no approval of others, nor do they allow an appeal to any other judgment.*** For then the Roman Pontiff is not pronouncing judgment as a private person, but as the supreme teacher of the universal Church, in whom the charism of infallibility of the Church itself is individually present, he is expounding or defending a doctrine of Catholic faith. The infallibility promised to the Church resides also in the body of Bishops, when that body exercises the supreme magisterium with the successor of Peter. To these definitions the assent of the Church can never be wanting, on account of the activity of that same Holy Spirit, by which the whole flock of Christ is preserved and progresses in unity of faith” (§25).

From Appendix: “Preliminary Note of Explanation”:

“As Supreme Pastor of the Church, the Supreme Pontiff can always exercise his power at will, as his very office demands. Though it is always in existence, the College is not as a result permanently engaged in strictly collegial activity; the Church's Tradition makes this clear. In other words, the College is not always fully active [*in actu pleno*]; rather, it acts as a college in the strict sense only from time to time and only with the consent of its head. The phrase ‘with the consent of its head’ is used to avoid the idea of dependence on some kind of outsider; the term ‘consent’ suggests rather communion between the head and the members, and implies the need for an act which belongs properly to the competence of the head. This is explicitly affirmed in n. 22, 12 and is explained at the end of that section. The word ‘only’ takes in all cases. It is evident from this that the norms approved by the supreme authority must always be observed.”<sup>6</sup>

***“It is clear throughout that it is a question of the bishops acting in conjunction with their head, never of the bishops acting independently of the Pope. In the latter instance, without the action of the head, the bishops are not able to act as a College: this is clear from the concept of ‘College.’ This hierarchical communion of all the bishops with the Supreme Pontiff is certainly firmly established in Tradition.” (§4).***

Logical problems aside, it is noted with astonishment that the Society would mount such an impassioned defense of the Church’s hierarchical authority, yet, in practice, flout that same authority by dismissing directives, especially those of an ecumenical council, that clash with their own personal understanding of Tradition as an inauthentic directive or teaching.<sup>7</sup> This subjecting of magisterial authority<sup>8</sup> to private judgment is entirely reminiscent of Archbishop Lefebvre’s disregard for

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6 cf. Modus 84

7 Pope St. Paul VI remarked on that very contradiction in his 11 October, 1976 letter to Archbishop Lefebvre:

“Finally, your behavior is contradictory. You want, so you say, to remedy the abuses that disfigure the church; you regret that authority in the church is not sufficiently respected; you wish to safeguard authentic faith, esteem for the ministerial priesthood and fervor for the eucharist in its sacrificial and sacramental fullness. Such zeal would, in itself, merit our encouragement, since it is a question of exigencies which, together with evangelization and the unity of Christians, remain at the heart of Our preoccupations and of Our mission.

***“But how can you at the same time, in order to fulfill this role, claim that you are obliged to act contrary to the recent Council in opposition to your brethren in the episcopate, to distrust the Holy See itself—which you call the “Rome of the neo-modernist and neo-Protestant tendency”—and to set yourself up in open disobedience to Us? If you truly want to work ‘under Our authority,’ as you affirm in your last private letter, it is immediately necessary to put an end to these ambiguities and contradictions.”***

8 It should be reminded that this authority extends beyond faith and morals to both discipline and governance (cf. *Pastor Aeternus*, ch. 3 [18 July, 1870], also cf. Pope St. Pius X, “Love for the Pope”, Allocution to the members of the Apostolic Union [18 November, 1912]).

legitimate papal directives<sup>9</sup> to (1) shut down his seminary following his November 1974 declaration, (2) to not ordain priests, and (3) to not consecrate bishops.<sup>10</sup> Such a history of questionable conduct on matters of authority and discipline strains the credibility of the Society's arguments on this matter to the breaking point.

Since every Church teaching is meant to build virtue within us, one could well be at a loss to explain how such flippant and, to this day, ongoing refusal to submit to Christ's vicar could ever foster loving obedience to Christ Himself, let alone His Church. By actively destroying trust in the Church's teaching authority<sup>11</sup> and deciding for its followers which of the Pope's directive to bind on its members, the Society unfairly, if inadvertently, places the burden of judging the Church's teachings and their conformity to tradition squarely on the shoulders of the faithful. Not only is this not their job, but it constitutes the very model of the Church the Society is claiming to fight against; an upside-down model where the teachings of the Popes have no authority unless validated by the faithful, or at least those sympathetic to traditionalism. And, in a sort of irony both comical and cruel, it would indeed result, using the Society's own words, in the "(destruction) of the authority of the Pope over the bishops and priests, religious, and the faithful" in favor of a society of priests that "replace(s) Papal instruction by making its own decisions binding on its members."

For how could it be otherwise? The Society has no more authority to definitively interpret Tradition than any other institution outside of the Church's canonical structure. Why should the faithful defer to the teachings of Archbishop Lefebvre (SSPX) over those of, for example, "Bishop" Daniel Dolan (Independent), "Bishop" Clarence Kelly (SSPV), "Bishop" Donald Sanborn (Independent), Fr. Anthony Cekada (Independent), Fr. Francesco Ricossa (IMBC), Bishop Williamson (Resistance), etc. each with their own interpretation of Tradition (to say nothing of the various other reactionary sects unaffiliated with both the Society and the Vatican)? History has proven time and again the disastrous consequences of substituting the authority of the Magisterium with a static, pale facsimile of the deposit of faith. Indeed, the traditionalist movement, with its often-competing doctrines and tragic infighting among members, has already begun to mirror the fractioning of the various Protestant sects, each with their own interpretation of the Bible, that followed the Reformation.

## 7. Conclusion

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9 cf. P. Vere, JCL, A Canonical History of the Lefebvrite Schism, 1999.

10 This last act was called both "a schismatic act" and "an act of disobedience" by Pope St. John Paul II himself (cf. *Ecclesia Dei*, 1988).

11 cf. Matthew 16:18.

From the three Vatican II documents, in concert with the pre- and post-conciliar teachings, all cited above, it is impossible to conclude that *Lumen Gentium* effects the erosion of the personal authority of the Church that the Society describes. Quite the contrary: *Lumen Gentium*, along with the rest of the conciliar documents, affirms papal supremacy at every turn.

The best one could come up with are isolated statements that could be exploited out of context, but it would be well for the Society to consider that any magisterial document, pre- or post-conciliar, even the Bible itself, could be misinterpreted, willfully or otherwise, if one does not consider context, which is clearly necessary for discerning what Vatican II actually taught.<sup>12</sup>

In short, proof-texted statements (or in the words of author Michael Davies, “time bombs”) that *could* be interpreted to be modernist teaching in disguise does not constitute a sufficient foundation to claim that Vatican II teaches error; not on collegiality, nor on any other issue. The Society’s argument on collegiality should therefore be rejected.

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12 cf. Pope Benedict XVI, “Address to the Roman Curia” (22 December, 2005).