

Claude Debussy
Jean Cocteau

from 1885 to 1918
from 1918 to 1963

and from 1963 until the advent of the new order, the Abbé Ducaud-Bourget.

For what is the Prieuré de Sion preparing? I do not know, but it represents a power capable of confronting the Vatican in the days to come. Monsignor Lefebvre is a most active and redoubtable member, capable of saying: "You make me Pope and I will make you King."¹²

There are two important new fragments of information in this extract. One is the alleged affiliation with the Prieuré de Sion of Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre. Monsignor Lefebvre, of course, represents the extreme conservative wing of the Roman Catholic Church. He was vociferously outspoken against Pope Paul VI, whom he flagrantly and flamboyantly defied. In 1976 and 1977, in fact, he was explicitly threatened with excommunication; and his brazen indifference to this threat nearly precipitated a full-scale ecclesiastical schism. But how could we reconcile a militant "hard-line" Catholic like Monsignor Lefebvre with a movement and an order that was Hermetic, if not downright heretical, in orientation? There seemed to be no explanation for this contradiction, unless Monsignor Lefebvre was a modern-day representative of the nineteenth-century Freemasonry associated with the Hiéron du Val d'Or—the "Christian, aristocratic and Hermetic Freemasonry" that presumed to regard itself as more Catholic than the Pope.

The second major point in the extract quoted above is, of course, the identification of the Prieuré de Sion's grand master at that time as Abbé Ducaud-Bourget. François Ducaud-Bourget was born in 1897 and trained for the priesthood at—predictably enough—the Seminary of Saint Sulpice. He is thus likely to have known many of the Modernists there at the time—and, quite possibly, Émile Hoffet. Subsequently he was conventual chaplain of the Sovereign Order of Malta. For his activities during the Second World War he received the Resistance Medal and the Croix de Guerre. Today he is recognized as a distinguished man of letters—a member of the Académie Française, a biographer of important French Catholic writers such as Paul Claudel and François Mauriac, and a highly esteemed poet in his own right.

Like Monsignor Lefebvre the Abbé Ducaud-Bourget assumed a

stance of militant opposition to Pope Paul VI. Like Monsignor Lefebvre he is an adherent of the Tridentine Mass. Like Monsignor Lefebvre he has proclaimed himself a "traditionalist" adamantly opposed to ecclesiastical reform or any attempt to "modernize" Roman Catholicism. On May 22, 1976, he was forbidden to administer confession or absolution—and like Monsignor Lefebvre he boldly defied the interdict imposed on him by his superiors. On February 27, 1977, he led a thousand Catholic traditionalists in their occupation of the Church of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet in Paris.

If Marcel Lefebvre and François Ducaud-Bourget appear to be "right-wing" theologically, they would seem to be equally so politically. Before the Second World War Monsignor Lefebvre was associated with Action Française—the extreme right of French politics at the time, which shared certain attitudes in common with National Socialism in Germany. More recently the "rebel archbishop" attracted considerable notoriety by warmly endorsing the military regime in Argentina. When questioned on this position, he replied that he had made a mistake. He had not meant Argentina, he said, but Chile! François Ducaud-Bourget would not appear to be quite so extreme, and his medals, at any rate, attest to patriotic anti-German activity during the war. Nevertheless, he has expressed a high regard for Mussolini and the hope that France would "recover its sense of values under the guidance of a new Napoleon."¹³

Our first suspicion was that Marcel Lefebvre and François Ducaud-Bourget were not, in fact, affiliated with the Prieuré de Sion at all, but that someone had deliberately attempted to embarrass them by aligning them with the very forces they would, in theory, most vigorously oppose. And yet according to the statutes we had obtained from the French police, the subtitle of the Prieuré de Sion was Chevalerie d'Institutions et Règles Catholiques, d'Union Indépendante et Traditionaliste. An institution with such a name might very well accommodate individuals like Marcel Lefebvre and François Ducaud-Bourget.

There seemed to us a second possible explanation—a farfetched explanation admittedly, but one that would at least account for the contradiction confronting us. Perhaps Marcel Lefebvre and François Ducaud-Bourget were not what they appeared to be. Perhaps they were something else. Perhaps, in actuality, they were *agents provocateurs* whose objective was systematically to create turmoil, sow dissent, foment an incipient schism that threatened Pope Paul's pontificate. Such tactics would be in keeping with the secret socie-

ties described by Charles Nodier, as well as with the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. And a number of recent commentators—journalists as well as ecclesiastical authorities—have declared Archbishop Lefebvre to be working for, or manipulated by, someone else.¹⁴

Farfetched though our hypothesis might be, there was a coherent logic underlying it. If Pope Paul were regarded as "the enemy," and if one wished to force him into a more liberal position, how would one go about it? Not by agitating from a liberal point of view. That would only have entrenched the Pope more firmly in his conservatism. But what if one publicly adopted a position even more fiercely conservative than Paul's? Would this not, despite his wishes to the contrary, force him into an increasingly liberal position? And that, certainly, is what Archbishop Lefebvre and his colleagues accomplished—the unprecedented feat of casting the Pope as a liberal.

Whether our conclusions were valid or not, it seemed clear that Archbishop Lefebvre, like so many other individuals in our investigation, was privy to some momentous and explosive secret. In 1976, for example, his excommunication seemed imminent. The press, indeed, was expecting it any day, for Pope Paul, confronted by brazen and repeated defiance, seemed to have no alternative. And yet at the very last minute the Pope backed down. It is still unclear precisely why he did so, but the following excerpt from the *Guardian*, dated August 30, 1976, suggests a clue:

The Archbishop's team of priests in England . . . believe that their leader still has a powerful ecclesiastical weapon to use in his dispute with the Vatican. No one will give any hint of its nature, but Father Peter Morgan, the group's leader . . . describes it as being something "earth-shaking."¹⁵

What kind of "earth-shaking" matter or "secret weapon" could thus intimidate the Vatican? What kind of Damoclean sword, invisible to the world at large, could have been held over the Pontiff's head? Whatever it was, it certainly seems to have proven effective. It seems, in fact, to have rendered the archbishop wholly immune to punitive action from Rome. As Jean Delaude wrote, Marcel Lefebvre did indeed seem to "represent a power capable of confronting the Vatican"—head-on if necessary.

But to whom did he—or will he—allegedly say: "You make me Pope and I will make you King"?

THE CONVENT OF 1981 AND COCTEAU'S STATUTES

More recently some of the issues surrounding François Ducaud-Bourget seem to have been clarified. This clarification has resulted from a sudden glare of publicity the Prieuré de Sion, during late 1980 and early 1981, has received in France. This publicity has made it something of a household name.

In August 1980 the popular magazine *Bonne Soirée*—a kind of cross between a British Sunday supplement and the American *TV Guide*—published a two-part feature on the mystery of Rennes-le-Château and the Prieuré de Sion. In this feature both Marcel Lefebvre and François Ducaud-Bourget are explicitly linked with Sion. Both are said to have paid a special visit fairly recently to one of Sion's sacred sites, the village of Sainte-Colombe in Nevers, where the Plantard domain of Château Barberie was situated before its destruction by Cardinal Mazarin in 1659.

By this time we ourselves had established both telephone and postal contact with the Abbé Ducaud-Bourget. He proved courteous enough. But his answers to most of our questions were vague if not evasive; and not surprisingly, he disavowed all affiliation with the Prieuré de Sion. This disavowal was reiterated in a letter which, shortly thereafter, he addressed to *Bonne Soirée*.

On January 22, 1981, a short article appeared in the French press,¹⁶ which is worth quoting the greater part of:

A veritable secret society of 121 dignitaries, the Prieuré de Sion, founded by Godfroi de Bouillon in Jerusalem in 1099, has numbered among its Grand Masters Leonardo da Vinci, Victor Hugo and Jean Cocteau. This Order convened its Convent at Blois on 17 January 1981 (the previous Convent dating from 5 June 1956, in Paris).

As a result of this recent Convent at Blois, Pierre Plantard de Saint-Clair was elected grand master of the Order by 83 out of 92 votes on the third ballot.

This choice of grand master marks a decisive step in the evolution of the Order's conception and spirit in relation to the world; for the 121 dignitaries of the Prieuré de Sion are all *éminences grises* of high finance and of international political or philosophical societies; and Pierre Plantard is the direct descendant, through Dagobert II, of the Merovingian kings. His descent has been proved legally by the parchments of Queen

members of the order, if not indeed many, are Jewish. And again we were confronted with a baffling contradiction. Even if the statutes were spurious, how could we reconcile an order with Jewish membership and a grand master who embraced extreme Catholic traditionalism—and whose close friends included Marcel Lefebvre, a man known for statements verging on anti-Semitism?

M. Chaumeil made other perplexing statements as well. He spoke, for instance, of the "Prince de Lorraine," who was descended from the Merovingian bloodline and whose "sacred mission was therefore obvious." This assertion is all the more baffling in that there is no known Prince of Lorraine today, not even a titular one. Was M. Chaumeil implying that such a Prince did actually exist, living perhaps incognito? Or did he mean "prince" in the broader sense of "scion"? In that case the present prince (as opposed to Prince) of Lorraine is Dr. Otto von Hapsburg, who is titular duke of Lorraine.

On the whole M. Chaumeil's answers were less answers than they were bases for further questions—and our researcher, in the short time of preparation allowed her, did not know precisely which questions to ask. She made considerable headway, however, by stressing the BBC's interest in the matter; for the BBC, on the continent, enjoys considerably more prestige than it does in Britain and is still a name to be conjured with. In consequence the prospect of BBC involvement was not to be taken lightly. "Propaganda" is too strong a word, but a BBC film that emphasized and authenticated certain facts would certainly have been attractive—a powerful means of gaining credence and creating a psychological climate or atmosphere, especially in the English-speaking world. If the Merovingians and the Prieuré de Sion became accepted as "historical givens" or generally acknowledged facts—like, say, the Battle of Hastings or the murder of Thomas à Becket—this would patently have been to Sion's advantage. It was undoubtedly such considerations that prompted M. Chaumeil to telephone M. Plantard.

Eventually, in March 1979, with our BBC producer, Roy Davies, and his researcher functioning as liaison, a meeting was arranged between M. Plantard and ourselves. When it occurred, it had something of the character of a meeting between Mafia godfathers. It was held on "neutral ground" in a Paris cinema rented by the BBC for the occasion, and each party was accompanied by an entourage.

M. Plantard proved to be a dignified, courteous man of discreetly aristocratic bearing, unostentatious in appearance, with a gracious, volatile but soft-spoken manner. He displayed enormous erudition