

Introduction: Windows onto the World

And one of us is you, who read these words.

*And one of us is Roger Buck, who writes these words to
you, dear Lector.*

DEAR LECTOR—such is the way I would like to address any one of you who renders me the gift of careful, sympathetic attention. I greet you warmly in this long book, written in four different European countries over eight years from 2008–2016.

In this chapter, originally drafted in eastern France, I talk a little of this one of us who is Roger Buck. This book is not autobiography *per se*. Nonetheless, elements of my life story appear throughout. These fragments from memory are not offered from a hunger to share my tale with you, Lector. Rather, they have another end. For each life-story renders unique points of vantage—or different windows onto the world. What I would extend to you is a chance to gaze at the world, through windows different from your own. St. Paul said we see through a glass darkly, and, of course, the glass in these windows is clouded. I want to have no pretensions to certainty and comprehension I do not possess. I simply offer you these vantage points, inadequate as they are, in case you find them useful to grapple with the world.

By the *world*, I principally have in mind the life of humanity as this Third Millennium dawns. Clearly, this world is possessed of unimaginable diversity. Yet, however, inconceivable this diversity is, we urgently need to try to imagine it. With this aspiration, I wrote my prologue imagining all the different “ones of us” featured in our world. And, plainly, it is a world of real tragedy and real love. Yet beyond the good and evil, which have ever marked our fallen state, it is also a world that appears set for centuries on a course of continuously deepening materialism.

Regarding Materialism

MATERIALISM. It is a word many associate solely with the commercial ethos that saturates our modern existence. Here are thoughts initially drafted from “the Christmas season” in a large French city. And I imagine, dear Lector, you will feel the heartbreak of such materialism, as I do. Christmas is the time to celebrate the moment His Sacred Heart began beating in this world. This Heart came to liberate us from the purely materialistic. Yet this Christmas in France, the very opposite surrounds me: the endless incitation to buy, buy, buy, the shopfronts, which entice desire of material luxury, technological gratification, and more. There are many forms of such materialism. For on the way to the Holy Mass today, I passed a sex shop, where the human body is marketed as object. And there are graphic images outside, which would have been unthinkable two or three generations ago.

Now, in speaking of materialism, I have the tragedy of such commerce in mind—but I mean other things by that word as well. I invoke not simply consumerism, but *a centuries-long process of scientific or philosophical materialism*, where thinkers considered the world in increasingly material terms, gradually eliminating everything else. The men and women of the Middle Ages never questioned a spiritual reality. Not only did they never question the reality of God, they also did not query the presence of angels and demons or even ghosts. They did not doubt the Communion of Saints, who interceded in this vale of tears. And they did not doubt the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist. The greatest minds of the Middle Ages took all this as granted and would certainly see our modern doubt as an extraordinary and pathological condition.

Doubt. This single word expresses so much of what was set in motion by the modern age, as philosophers—Descartes, Hume, Kant, and all the rest—called everything of Faith into question. And Science? Science, from Copernicus to Darwin and beyond has frequently fostered the same agenda. The result? This book will be a meditation on the results, which many of us see. Suffice it to say, a trajectory, which began as doubt, has culminated in denial. For today, it is not just “one of us,” but many souls, who seek “to eliminate all God talk and metaphysical nonsense.”

Yes, increasing numbers now seek to reduce the universe to matter alone. And they believe humanity will benefit from their reductionistic projects! Such souls often include the most intelligent, able, and influential minds of our age. They create highly effective forms of education, media, and propaganda, telling us that all that matters—is matter. They

Introduction: Windows onto the World

seek sincerely to liberate us from what they confidently declare to be illusion!

Clearly, this philosophical and scientific materialism is not unrelated to commercial materialism: the pursuit of happiness in things—without regard to God, His Blessed Mother, or the Holy Church. And neither can these variegated forms of materialism be disentangled from the secular, liberal, and capitalist ambitions of modern times.

Secular, liberal, capitalist. These words describe *intertwined historical processes* in recent centuries, which have nurtured ever more worldly values. And so in this book, dear Lector, you will often find the terms conjoined. For example, I frequently speak of *Secular Materialism* to describe the ideology that dominates the West today.

In many ways, this Secular Materialism emerged from the Protestant cultures of recent centuries. For in these cultures, many elements of the Mystery Catholics had guarded for 1,500 years were thrown to the wind. We speak, falteringly, of a vast, multifaceted Mystery entailing the Holy Sacraments, Mary, Mother of God and Queen of Heaven, the Holy See, an Ordained Hierarchy, and the Revelation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

I am writing as a *Catholic of Faith*. Here is a term I use to distinguish from lapsed or nominal Catholics—as well as many still-practicing liberal Catholics, who have lamentably set aside many, if not all, aspects of the traditional Faith. Writing as a Catholic of Faith means I do not believe the Catholic Mystery is there for nothing! Thus, I do not believe that rejecting that Mystery—as happened in the Reformation—can be without grave consequence for humanity.

Here I have no wish to offend Protestant Christians, who so often valiantly uphold faith in Jesus Christ in our troubled times. Nonetheless, as this book unfolds, it should become evident to you, Lector, why I think Luther and Calvin's Reformation, which stripped Catholicism from much of the West, has contributed significantly to global materialism. For I hope it will be apparent why I believe the repression, often brutal, of the Catholic Mystery has fostered a materialistic mindset—one which grows all the more cold and individualistic for being denied the warming Sacraments of the Church.

I will also elaborate what would seem obvious indeed: that commercial materialism and economic liberalism are *ruining life on earth*. Not only environmental degradation sets in, leading to slow catastrophe, as ice begins to melt and a planet starts to burn, but the human soul becomes fettered, stunted, and mechanical.

The New Age and the Catholic Mystery

HERE are grim things I see through my windows onto this world. Yet I also wish to offer windows onto worlds of hope—worlds which can remedy the crisis of materialism. These worlds are non-material; they are worlds of spirituality and mystery, for lack of better terms.

But which spirituality and which mystery? For long years, I was committed to the New Age movement. That movement stands (and falls!) on the thesis that every religion expresses but a single, timeless, universal spirituality. This universal spirituality, it is said, *transcends* “limited and narrow” religions like Christianity. Likewise, such religions suffer from a sectarian Babel of largely linguistic differences that lead to the illusion of *significant* religious divisions. Beneath the surface, there is really only *one-ness* (an important word, as we shall see, for New Agers). Here is a New Age dogma in a movement claiming to be free from dogmas. But is the dogma really true? Or could it be that a Christian Mystery exists, which actually *differs* from New Age spirituality? Could it be a false dogma that every spiritual approach essentially amounts to the same thing? If so, could this dogma render New Agers blind to the Church, because they are all too self-assured that whatever the Church offers is already subsumed beneath their “perennial and universal” New Age umbrella?

This book offers a meditation on such questions after more than three decades of personal experience with New Age spirituality. The first two decades involved profound sympathy with the New Age movement, during which I worked actively to promote it. But for over a decade now, I have grown ever more disturbed by the New Age, even whilst I continued to engage old friends and family bound up with the movement.

After thirty-five years of reflecting on New Age matters, I believe much is being done to conceal from New Age folk—most often good, decent folk!—the Mystery guarded by the Catholic Church. The New Age dogma of “no genuine religious differences” is one of many forms of obscurantism, which is all the more insidious because of its subtlety.

Thus, in this book, I hope to offer windows into the Catholic Mystery. Does this mean I think New Age mysteries are simply wrong? False mysteries—simply and purely to be discarded in favor of the Mystery, beating at the Heart of the Church? “Simply and purely.” Lector, to such a profound question as this, there can be no facile answer! But my entire book turns around this question. And it certainly entails the story of why I left New Age mysteries behind to pursue the Mystery of His Sacred Heart, and also why I pray others will find the same liberation through the Holy Church that I found.

When I speak of the Church, I invoke the Hierarchical and Sacra-

Introduction: Windows onto the World

mental Church, as it existed in both West and East for fifteen centuries before Luther, and as it has been maintained since the Reformation—in spite of countless assaults (e.g., the wholesale extirpation of the monastic houses in Britain and Ireland by Henry VIII). To what extent can one legitimately use the word “Church” for the manifold Protestant communities? This, I confess, I do not know. This may sound scandalous. But I mean no disrespect by my confession of “not knowing.” As a Catholic, I note how recent Vatican documents speak of the Eastern Orthodox Churches as “Churches.” But these same documents refer to the Protestant denominations as “Ecclesial Communities,” rather than “Churches.”¹ In issuing these, I do not think the recent Popes, like Benedict XVI, intended disrespect either.

Such Protestant communities undoubtedly serve humanity profoundly. But is it strictly accurate to call them “Churches”? It all depends on one’s definition. If one defines the Church according to the understanding *established for fifteen centuries* before the Reformation, one speaks necessarily of an apostolic succession and a hierarchy, oriented to the Seven Sacraments, above all to the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist. By such a definition, many a Christian congregation cannot be called a Church, even if, it too, points the way to Christ.

No, I do not think Benedict XVI meant disrespect. His pontificate was plainly filled with burning compassion for humanity. In that compassion, he tried to orient us toward the original meaning of that somisunderstood word: *Church*. He saw how greatly humanity suffers, deprived of this crucial understanding.

This book is also concerned with such suffering. For we survey the tragedy of global materialism. We explore a society famished for meaning and mystery: the New Age movement, psychotherapy, holistic healing, and countless other phenomena—all these bear ample testimony to deprivation. Such hunger! Such terrible hunger! Thus, I try to throw open windows to the Mystery at the Heart of the Church. For Our Lord Jesus Christ is *One of us* and His Heart is still beating still for us all. One may meet the God-Man through His Church, if one practices Her traditions and receives Her Sacraments. One can meet the Mystery of Divine Humanness and draw strength in this dehumanizing world.

On Vatican II

ALAS, however, a problem exists here. For the Catholic Church is in grave danger of losing many of her traditional practices, since the time

¹ Most notably *Dominus Jesus*, 2000.

COR JESU SACRATISSIMUM

of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965). The Council Fathers, of course, sought to help the Church, not harm Her. However, they tried to open the Church to the world or even accommodate Her to the world—at the expense of tradition. Thus (to cite a single instance of what I mean) Fr. Karl Rahner campaigned energetically to ensure the Council refused the traditional image of Our Lady, for fear, perhaps, of upsetting both Protestants and modern liberal theologians alike.²

At any rate, after the Council, dramatic changes were undertaken to diminish Catholic distinctiveness—what separated the Church from the world. Perhaps the most obvious change occurred in the Mass, which had been celebrated exclusively in Latin for centuries. Now, it was replaced by a popularized vernacular version. But the new Mass was only symptomatic of a wider change whereby a new spirit of acquiescence and accommodation could be observed: the so-called “spirit of Vatican II.” “So-called,” I say, because much—very much—that was done in the name of the Council was not at all willed by the Council Fathers. Yet, whatever the true sources of this so-called “spirit of Vatican II,” the Catholic Mystery has been devastated.

Perhaps this is nowhere more tragically evident than with the Sacraments. In the so-called developed world, at least, the numbers speak for themselves: Precipitous drops in priestly ordinations, baptism, confirmation, confession, and Mass attendance—everywhere a general weakening of the Catholic Mystery. In a materialistic world, famished of meaning, is it surprising how many folk have deserted the Church since Vatican II (in many cases for New Age pastures)? A central idea in this book is this: In the failure to guard sacred tradition, the modernizing elements within the Catholic Church have not only failed to meet the true needs of our time—but betrayed them.

The Sacred Heart beating at the center of the Church has not abandoned Her and never will. But how often that Sacred Heart is obscured! Many a modern Mass is replete with banal—or even bizarrely inappropriate—liturgy, yet His Sacred Heart remains beating there. It is as though this Heart is wrapped in banks of fog. Such irreverent celebrations of the Holy Mass are not sufficient to destroy Christ’s presence; they only blind people to it.

The results are as manifold as they are grievous. But perhaps few are as saddening as this: Catholics, even when they continue to practice, are lost. They are no longer really sure of their Faith or why it matters. The

² Ralph Wiltgen, *The Rhine Flows into the Tiber: A History of Vatican II* (Rockford, IL: TAN, 1991), 91.

Introduction: Windows onto the World

Church is torn apart by warfare between liberals and conservatives. And a house divided against itself cannot stand. Individually and collectively, Catholics are unable to stand effectively, as the once-Christian West falls beneath the double-barreled assault of Secular Materialism and New Age neo-paganism. And so this book issues a cry—a cry for the Church to surrender the spirit of compromise and accommodation which has both robbed Catholics of their Faith and their capacity to stand erect in a world going under.

A Touch of Autobiography

HERE is what I witness through my windows onto the world. Now, these windows, of course, are framed by my biography. And to orient my book, dear Lector, I would share with you a brief outline of my life. I was born fifty-two years ago of English parents on the West coast of America. I grew up in both Britain and the United States. One might observe, then, that I am *quintessentially Anglo-American*. I am forever marked by two great Protestant nations of modern times. That marking had an effect: it rendered the Catholic Mystery *invisible* to me for decades. Here lies another theme to this book: that peculiarly Anglo-sphere blackout of the Holy Church. A *cultural blanketing* exists in the English-speaking world, which frequently buries the Catholic Church so deeply as to make Her not simply invisible, but also incomprehensible—even when or if She is at last discovered.

But let me return to my childhood, which, after my earliest years in California, was mainly spent in a very “White Anglo-Saxon Protestant” part of Oregon. My upbringing was not especially religious; I was not baptized as a child. Still, my father possessed real faith in God, a gift beyond price to his son. When I was young, he read the Bible. Later, he turned to the Koran—but not before teaching me the *Pater Noster*. And so, as a child, I prayed to Our Father nightly—though I saw scarcely anything at all that pointed to Jesus Christ. Yet, all my early years, I believed in God—but a God seen purely as transcendent. I would not know the God Incarnate, the Word made Flesh, until many years later. Nothing in my childhood provided a clue as to the God who became *particular and personal*. Nothing showed me that since nearly two millennia, God now had a human heart.

Thus, it was the idea of God as transcendent spirit, spirit alone, that I carried into my initial explorations of New Age culture, thirty-five years ago. For around 1979, age 15, I began reading about the New Age community at Findhorn in the far north of Scotland. The following year, I made my first journey there. Findhorn—much more will be said of it

COR JESU SACRATISSIMUM

anon. For now, suffice it to say that many regard it as the leading New Age community in the world.

In 1986, I went to live at Findhorn for the best part of three years. I spent long hours in Eastern forms of meditation and studying esoteric books, those of Alice A. Bailey in particular. In fact, it was the Bailey writings which first brought the term “New Age” to popular usage. And should you wish to look there, Lector, you can find the doctrine (articulated in depth) that traditional Christianity is now being superseded by a dawning Age of Aquarius. Christianity, so it is said, will shortly be replaced by modern forms of spirituality more appropriate for a New Age.

After leaving Findhorn, I aspired to bring my so-called “modern spirituality” to the wider world—which I considered free of dogmas, doctrines, and sectarian bias. (Whether such is truly the case is a question we leave for later on.) I had met a woman at the community, and we left together for the express purpose of bringing spirituality “Findhorn style” to Cambridge, England. We established, in this medieval town with its ancient seat of learning, an educational charity to promote our “non-religious spirituality.” Our city-center premises contained a library of books and a room for meditation. We also hosted lectures and workshops by well-known figures in the New Age movement, including Peter Russell, Rupert Sheldrake, Caroline Myss, and Sir George Trevelyan.

Here in Cambridge, I also began to study the Anthroposophy of Rudolf Steiner. Steiner had once been a Theosophist and is therefore often confused with the New Age. The truth is somewhat different: Steiner broke from Theosophy, precisely because he rejected the anti-Christian thrust present within it. This is not to justify his Anthroposophy, which remained severely critical of the Church! However, Anthroposophy remains a very different entity from the New Age movement. Here we only touch on complex matters which also form part of my past, although I hardly enter into them in this book.

No, in the present volume, I am far more concerned with making reparation for my New Age past. For in Cambridge, I worked, hard, to evangelize the spirit of the New Age. I genuinely assumed this spirit was countercultural. In some sense it was. Plainly, it rejected certain aspects of mainstream materialism. But it would take me years to see how, in so many ways, my beloved New Age movement was hardly countercultural at all! It jived to the beat of the secular, liberal, capitalist culture. Thus, it could never truly defy that culture (as the Church has done repeatedly and courageously).

All this escaped me at the time. The Nineties went on; with the Cambridge project, weariness set in. I felt loss of life and enthusiasm. Enthu-

Introduction: Windows onto the World

siasm: I knew that word derived from the Greek *en theos*, but still my lassitude did not trouble me. I never doubted this New Age spirituality was crucial for the world. And so I labored on.

But in 1997, as this book shall tell, everything changed. In a few short weeks that autumn, I stumbled on the road to Aquarius. I received a blessing from a Catholic Priest, discovered Catholic theology and a miracle befell me: Perhaps I even touched the Hem of His Garment. By now, I was working for my New Age dream with another woman—Kim. Yet by events of formidable Providence, we were soon baptized as Anglicans and married as Christians.

In all this, I was assisted by an unusual Catholic author: Valentin Tomberg, who wrote a masterpiece entitled *Meditations on the Tarot*. This book is concerned with the *images*—rather than cards—of the Tarot, steeped as these images are in medieval Christendom. Whilst it contains not even a single sentence about telling fortunes, its unusual nature may trouble some readers. For myself, I know the GRIP of the New Age. Without Tomberg, I do not know if I would ever have been liberated from it. And I believe his book can liberate others like myself, pointing the way to Jesus Christ and His Church. Much more, then, will be said about Tomberg in terms of freeing people from New Age bondage.

The ensuing years saw many changes. We left Cambridge for a trail of new cultures, beginning with Germany, Switzerland, and Wales. On Easter night 2000, Kim and I were confirmed Catholic. A mysterious, wholly unexpected joy descended that night and, to this day, my Confirmation remains one of the greatest joys of my life. Despite this startling plenitude, I still remained somewhat aloof from the Church at first. New Age beliefs die hard. My attachment to many secular dogmas was also tenacious indeed. I was a thoroughly liberal Catholic. Indeed, it seems to me as though I was something like a liberal New Age Protestant—who just happened to have been confirmed in the Church of Rome. I did not engage deeply with the Tradition, at first. It was years before I would pray the Rosary. Sometimes I missed Mass, ignoring the Sunday obligation. But the Sanctifying Grace of my Confirmation continued to work in the depths of my soul. Slowly, I entered more fully into the Mystery of the Church.

The Sacred Heart and Integral Catholic Culture

My entry into the Catholic Mystery was facilitated as our semi-nomadic life continued and we left Protestant countries behind to inhabit a series of Catholic cultures: Spain, France—but first of all *Ireland*.

COR JESU SACRATISSIMUM

It was in the west of Ireland that I first really encountered a culture that had been utterly steeped in Catholicism. Here I discovered very different attitudes from the liberal and secular certainties, which characterized my own Protestant Anglosphere. For, in Ireland, I experienced the afterglow, at least, of an *integrally Catholic culture*. This is to say, a culture where the Faith had formed, until very recently, a *sine qua non*—i.e., it was integral. The Irish society I encountered in 2004 had known, within living memory, an immersion in prayers, Sacraments, and traditions, inconceivable in America and England.

Ireland—how different you were to anything I knew in my youth! For the Catholic Mystery was *not* well-nigh invisible on your blessed island! And your people possessed a spirit of piety, warmth, and community—unlike anything I had witnessed *anywhere* before.

Ireland, this book is dedicated to your Christian soul, because your profoundly Catholic culture guided me to what lies at the heart of this volume. Not only did you lead me deeply into the Mystery of the Church, you also showed me the only hope I have for Western civilization.

Yet this book is also dedicated to France, where my soul has been transformed, particularly in a little town called Paray-le-Monial. In Paray in 1673, the Master of Love revealed His Sacred Heart to humanity. And from Paray, the Cult of the Sacred Heart was born, whence it spread rapidly, across France, Ireland, Spain, Latin America—indeed the entire Catholic world of that time. This, of course, is the world which remained Catholic after the Reformation divided Christendom, leaving northern Europe and her colonies firmly Protestant.

Here we evoke a distinction, then, between societies whose religious development was never interrupted by the Reformation—and those that suffered rupture from tradition. For English and other northern European cultures did not participate in Catholic tradition as she continued to evolve after the Sixteenth Century. Thus, when devotion to his Sacred Heart spread across the Catholic world, it did not reach England and her colonies. Or at the very least, this devotion did not reach her easily. It was outright repressed at first, along with Catholicism itself. Later on, when Catholicism was legally permitted, other means were found to marginalize or suppress devotion to His Sacred Heart. For example, it was ridiculed as nothing more than mere sentimentalism or Jesuit fanaticism.

The truth is very different. The Sacred Heart had appeared as a burning furnace of charity for a great purpose. Tridentine Catholicism—the era following the Council of Trent (1549–1563) until Vatican II—would soon be thoroughly permeated and transformed by the wildfire devel-

Introduction: Windows onto the World

opment of the Sacred Heart devotion. And in this book we suggest that Tridentine Catholic culture was thereby *warmed* by this furnace of His Love. It was protected by it. By contrast, we argue that the countries deprived of this devotion were more prone to the icy rationalism which has led to present-day Secular Materialism.

And yet was not France a leading force amongst the nations that pioneered modern secular culture? Is not France—in many people’s minds, at least—that great revolutionary nation which threw off its Catholic “shackles” to become the country of “superb” rationalism, urbane sophistication, and secularism it is today? At first blush, France would certainly appear little different to the Protestant nations in terms of secularization.

At first blush, we repeat. For the truth is different—because before it was destroyed by aggressive de-Christianization, there was once *another* France, a France that struggled to remain faithful in the face of religious persecution. Like Ireland, Nineteenth-Century France had also been home to an astonishing, vital, integral Catholic culture. Yet, as we shall see, French Catholicism was repeatedly attacked for over a century by revolutionary forces which worked ruthlessly and systematically: to destroy the monasteries, to expel religious from French soil, to close Catholic schools, to forcibly appropriate the property of the Church—not to mention a thousand other means more subtle and insidious.

Yes, France was once very different to the Anglo-American sphere. Countries like England and America did not need to brutally repress opposition to secularism, because *opposition to secularism scarcely existed in those countries!* By contrast, France was once home to a far-reaching culture of Catholic Counter-Revolution, which resisted secularization to the teeth! We explore this Counter-Revolution later in this book.

Let it suffice, for now, that Protestant countries generally secularized far more rapidly and easily than those traditional Catholic societies, warmed and animated by the Heart of the Church. Instead, an *alternative world-vision to Secular Materialism* once powerfully manifested itself in Catholic cultures—in sharp contrast to Anglo-American culture.

Perhaps few things bear witness to this Catholic contrast than a national flag, once seriously proposed in such countries. Catholic France, Catholic Ireland—both were countries for whom His Sacred Heart has been particularly important. And it is a well-known fact that, for decades, vast numbers of Catholic French sought to place His Sacred Heart upon the middle band of the French tricolor: Blue, White, and Red. It is much less known that at the birth of the Irish Free State in 1922, there was a similar campaign to place His Sacred Heart upon the

COR JESU SACRATISSIMUM

Irish tricolor: Green, White, and Orange.³ Such notions may sound bizarre indeed to British and Americans. One cannot easily imagine initiatives like this on the Union Jack or the Stars and Stripes!

On Christendom

By invoking such potentially startling images, I hope to illumine the very different cultural attitudes Catholic countries possessed, even relatively recently, compared to Protestant ones. Clearly, the image of the Sacred Heart on the flag reveals a rejection of secularism. It points to a yearning to see the nation devoted to Christian values rather than materialistic ones. This is to say, the yearning for Christendom renewed.

Is this book then a call to Christendom renewed? Yes. However, you will not find any grandiose political project outlined in these pages, nor will you see, I hope, a simplistic nostalgia for an impossible return to the past. What you will find is my conviction that Secular Materialism is killing us, body and soul, and that Catholics have a duty to resist this. We have a duty to work toward a civilization animated by Christ and His Church.

Such a civilization will inevitably look different to that envisaged by the Counter-Revolutionaries of yesteryear. However, I lovingly evoke the memory of those original Counter-Revolutionaries. I am personally indebted to these people. They *forged* the Catholic Ireland and Catholic France which opened my eyes and transformed my soul.

Likewise, I am indebted to another set of people—today’s *Catholic traditionalists* who also lovingly remember these cultures. These are the people concerned that the post-conciliar Church sacrificed far too much of its tradition. Generally speaking, they are usually identified by their love for the old Latin Mass. The truth is more complex. For these Catholics also believe the post-conciliar church has been far too conciliatory toward secularism and, like the Counter-Revolutionaries of old, remember Christendom.

In this regard, it is striking that Catholic traditionalism has emerged from one country above all—*France*. It is also notable that the French have a name for these Catholic traditionalists—*integrists*, which has no exact equivalent in common, ordinary English. Now, one sometimes finds the word rendered “integralist” in scholarly English texts. Still, by and large, English speakers do not readily recognize the words integral-

³ Mary Kenny, *Goodbye to Catholic Ireland: A Social, Personal and Cultural History from the Fall of Parnell to the Realm of Mary Robinson* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1997), 102.

Introduction: Windows onto the World

ist and integralism. The reason why is instructive. It is because the Anglosphere (Ireland excepted) never possessed integral Catholic cultures, which included integristes who resisted secularism.

What is an integriste? An integriste (or integralist) is someone who seeks *to maintain Catholicism as an integral part of culture*. He looks to the world of the Catholic past, where the Catholic Mystery was not well-nigh invisible—as it has become today. He looks to a world where the bells of the Angelus summoned people to prayer morning, noon, and night. He looks to a world where his children might have had a thousand cultural reminders of the Catholic Mystery—instead of a thousand cultural reinforcements of secular ideology and consumer excess. This is to say, he mourns the fact that where his children might once have seen the Cross trumpeting the Central Mystery of the world, they now see a pair of golden arches trumpeting hamburgers.

In short, he looks to Christendom rather than Secular Materialism.

Integriste. In France, the word is usually used pejoratively: as though these integristes were simply backwards fundamentalists, who do not believe in progress or freedom. But is it true progress and true freedom to render children a purely materialistic education? Is it true progress and freedom to render the Catholic religion buried and invisible? Is it true progress and freedom to eradicate Catholic imagery (e.g., crucifixes) from the public square—whilst global corporations impose a million other images upon us, which, moreover, are expressly designed to manipulate the human psyche? Is not such advertising far more aggressively invasive than the peals of church bells? Yet how these integristes are mocked for not keeping in step with the “spirit of the times.” Or should that be *lockstep*—which is to say: forced to march in time? For in this book, we suggest a soulless crushing conformism characterizes our brave new global world, created in large measure by the new global corporations.

A Little Note on Globalization

HERE we arrive at Globalization—another concern of this book. Controversially, however, I suggest another term—Anglo-Americanization—might sometimes describe this phenomenon better. It is difficult saying this, knowing that I, an Anglo myself, will be labelled an “Anglophobe.” Still, on closer examination, “Globalization” often functions as a polite, politically-correct word, masking reality. For much, if not all, of what we call Globalization is driven by the Anglosphere. America, but also Britain, have been key players here. The British Empire of the Nineteenth Century covered a quarter of the world’s territory—wherein

COR JESU SACRATISSIMUM

(famously or infamously) the sun never set—laying the foundations for the linguistic dominance of English today. Arguably, the American empire of the Twentieth Century proceeded much, much further. As the world's greatest economy and outstanding superpower, she dominated the world of the Twentieth Century, militarily, economically, and culturally.

None of this is to deny Globalization also means what the word itself implies: that our globe becomes ever more interconnected and interdependent, as communications technology soars ahead and political boundaries crumble beneath mighty transnational corporations. Still, there is abounding evidence of Anglo-American hegemony: Whether it is the growing use of English throughout the former English colonies in Africa, Asia Oceania or the “British invasion” of pop spearheaded in the 1960s by the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, etc.; whether it is the mighty reach of Hollywood and American media generally or Information Technology giants such as Microsoft, Yahoo, IBM and all the rest. (Indeed, the French even have an acronym: GAFA—Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon—for what they regard as American cultural imperialism.) Even aspects of Globalization that one does not normally consider Anglo-American begin to look different under closer examination. For example, we argue, in these pages, that the growing New Age movement is, *above all, an Anglo-American phenomenon.*

And so, whether it be controversial or not, I declare that our easy, casual use of the word “Globalization” often hides how very much the world today is driven by Anglo-American cultural attitudes. Globalization risks being a euphemism for an Anglo-Americanization of the world which advances by stealth—at least sometimes.

A Little More on Windows

IT SHOULD be clear this book is controversial—radically dissenting from mainstream secular narratives. I hope what follows will serve to evoke conundrums of a profound nature. There are indeed vast problems and vast questions in these pages. What is the very future of the world? What are the roots of world materialism? What are the occluded wellsprings of the New Age movement? What is the fate of the Church in the endeavor to modify Herself according to a so-called “spirit of Vatican II”? What has the Protestant dismissal of the Sacraments done to Western Civilization?

It seems that to really address these matters, one would need to be a theologian, a philosopher, a historian, and a sociologist—all at the same time! And I must confess frankly that I am not even any single one of

Introduction: Windows onto the World

these things. Given that I am master of none of these disciplines, what have I to offer? Perhaps the best I can say is that I am a writer and one who cares deeply about these matters and ponders them daily. Any soul who dedicates himself to such a task inevitably garners impressions over the course of time. Here you will find a tapestry of impressions taken from my life. And if you are interested in questions like the above, perhaps my impressionistic approach might contribute a little to your own exploration.

In any event, here is what I mean by windows: impressions—for example, of the New Age movement or Catholic France and Ireland. And if, Lector, Holy Providence has guided your life in a different direction to my own, and you know little of such things, perhaps you may gain a little from my reckonings. Perhaps I can contribute a jot to people across the planet, who ask the same aching questions as myself. Thus, no exhaustive exegesis is essayed here—only limited impressions across a vast terrain: darting here, darting there—and sometimes not darting, but meandering a little.

Some final notes about these windows onto the world: Nearly all of them stem from my own life. But, unusually, there are windows from other lives, too. Thus, Lector, you will meet certain friends of mine here. I have already introduced Kim, my wife. Her experience will be present at times. But here is the place to say I belong to a little cyber-network of old friends. They are souls who strike me as unusually concerned about the world, though little else appears to unite them. Some are very secular in their orientation. Others seem to me decidedly New Age. None, apart from Kim, are passionately Catholic. And my reason for including them? I find their windows valuable.

Again: We need to *imagine* all the very different “ones of us.” Thus, I try to listen to the voices of my friends, who, as I say, care deeply about the world and yet—I will be frank—frequently lack the least idea of the Catholic Mystery. Too much has been done by our culture to conceal it from them. Now, the voices you will occasionally hear in these pages largely come from messages sent within this private cyber group. I reproduce them with the barest of editing. For it seems to me that in listening to these voices as they are, often crude and hurried, in the crushing, soulless pace of modern life, we gain a particularly authentic set of windows onto the world.

From France to Ireland

IS THERE anything else to add? Just this, I think. A little earlier, I addressed you, Lector, from France, where this chapter was first drafted.

COR JESU SACRATISSIMUM

You will find I often, if not always, speak from France in this book. This is because its initial draft exploded in me over a few short weeks, whilst I lived in France. However, that initial combustion was eight years ago now. Since then, providence guided me from France to Spain. The original draft expanded considerably in the process, where more was written in the Sierra Nevada and then Madrid. Whilst living in the Sierra Nevada, Kim and I also began a website—likewise called *Cor Jesu Sacratissimum*.⁴ Fruits from this website fed my expanding manuscript. Later, we left Spain travelling very slowly through France in a camper-van to England. There, Lourdes and the Vendée—those last, lonely outposts of Catholic France—pierced my heart. In Britain, we tarried for a while in an Irish Catholic neighborhood in Liverpool. Finally, I resettled in my beloved Ireland, which, years ago, had first opened my eyes to the world beyond my own White Anglo-Saxon Protestant conditioning. There, most of the final chapters were written.

Thus, this book represents a literal as well as figurative journey. In the course of that journey, I address you, the reader, from points across a Catholic landscape which, even today, remain considerably different from the ascending Anglo-American world matrix. My brief interim return to England only poignantly heightened my sense of this—and how desperately “Anglo-Americans,” like myself, need to listen to the Catholic cultures that shaped this book.

Thus, I greet you, Lector, at the close of this first chapter, from Ireland. It is an Ireland which once exemplified, *par excellence*, Catholic resistance to secularization, but which is now devastated by the very things that concern us here—whether it be Secular Materialism, a Globalization which is much more Anglo-American than is often admitted, the rise of New Age neo-paganism or the ebbing away of the Catholic Mystery.

Lest all this sound too heavy for your heart to bear, I hasten to add that I greet you with trust and hope as well. For if the Catholic Church can regain full participation in *all* Seven Sacraments, in Her traditions, and a renewed refusal to compromise Her identity, *real hope exists*. Some might doubt whether this is possible. However, the Catholic Church has recovered repeatedly across two millennia. Time and again she has defied those who regularly predicted her impending demise. And each time She recovered, *it has been through faithfulness to Her tradition—not negation*. The Catholic Church will recover once more, offering real hope for a world, which is so afflicted by the very things to which we now turn in earnest.

⁴ <http://corjesusacratissimum.org>.