



THE GREAT FAÇADE

The Regime of Novelty in the Catholic Church
from Vatican II to the Francis Revolution

Second Edition

CHRISTOPHER A. FERRARA
THOMAS E. WOODS, JR.

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*The Regime of Novelty in the
Catholic Church from Vatican II
to the Francis Revolution*



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&
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CONTENTS

[Foreword to the Second Edition](#)

[Author's Preface to the Second Edition](#)

[Introduction](#)

[PART I](#)

[The Scope of the Problem](#)

[CHAPTER 1: *Defining Terms*](#)

[CHAPTER 2: *The Problem of Novelty*](#)

[CHAPTER 3: *Viruses in the Body of Christ*](#)

[PART II](#)

[Accusation and Defense](#)

[CHAPTER 4: *Liturgical Minimalism*](#)

[CHAPTER 5: *Making a Virtue Out of Doing Nothing*](#)

[CHAPTER 6: *The Charge of "Integrism"*](#)

[CHAPTER 7: *Private Judgment?*](#)

[CHAPTER 8: *Pitting One Pope Against Another?*](#)

[CHAPTER 9: *Schism?*](#)

[CHAPTER 10: *A Question of Resistance*](#)

[CHAPTER 11: *A Nest of Contradictions*](#)

[PART III](#)

[Toward a Solution](#)

[CHAPTER 12: *Returning to the Council? A Case Study*](#)

[CHAPTER 13: *Dominus Iesus: An Ambiguous Answer to Heresy*](#)

[CHAPTER 14: *The Great Façade*](#)

[PART IV](#)

[Thirteen Years Later](#)

[CHAPTER 15: *The Benedictine Respite*](#)

[CHAPTER 16: *The Rise of Bergoglianism*](#)

[CHAPTER 17: *Year of the Synod*](#)

[CHAPTER 18: *The Gathering Storm*](#)

[CHAPTER 19: *The Regime of Novelty Goes “Green”... and Red*](#)

[CHAPTER 20: *Synod II*](#)

[CONCLUSION: The Thirteenth of October](#)

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The responsibility for the book's content is, of course, solely our own. We offer it well aware of the magnitude of the task we have undertaken, but hopeful that it will help Catholics to understand what has happened to their Church over the past several decades and how, with the help of God, she may return to the stature and health she enjoyed not too long ago.

CHRISTOPHER A. FERRARA
THOMAS E. WOODS, JR.
April 2002

TO THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

Mater et Magistra

Peter has no need of our lies or flattery. Those who blindly and indiscriminately defend every decision of the supreme Pontiff are the very ones who do most to undermine the authority of the Holy See—they destroy instead of strengthening its foundations.

—MELCHIOR CANO,
Theologian of the Council of Trent

Foreword to the Second Edition

by John Rao

Prophecy, Righteous Anger, and the Unending Neo-Catholic Conundrum

Although the word *prophet* is popularly understood primarily in conjunction with an inspired prediction of future events, its most common meaning in Sacred History concerns public witness to the Truth—whatever the personal consequences (often very unpleasant) for the men and women bearing the heavy burden of that testimony may be. Biblical prophets, whether warning of dire days to come or hammering at contemporary failure to follow God’s commands, are also known to us as figures filled with righteous anger. Professional modern iconoclasts are wont to attribute such zeal more to bigotry than to laudable spiritual fervor. Yet a reading of the prophets suggests another, more accurate explanation for their explosions of ire—exasperation: exasperation with the self-destructive behavior that they saw flourishing around them; exasperation with the giddy acceptance of this folly, as though it could and should go on forever.

I am certain that the authors of *The Great Façade*, first published in 2002, do not consider themselves inspired seers. Nevertheless, there is no doubt in my mind that their work has indeed been prophetic in the broader scriptural sense of the term. They saw that Catholicism was under obvious assault, that the consequences of its rout would be dreadful, and that their failure to take up arms against a sea of enemies would be a punishable dereliction of duty. Like the prophets of old, they were filled with a righteous anger. This was directed not only at the main source of the problem in the openly modernist enemy camp, but also against a novel and exasperating “conservative” apologetic. This latter contingent bristles at the mere suggestion of heretical influence in the new ecclesiastical order, while justifying, step by step, one and then another of its clear manifestations. Because such a peculiar “alliance” of outright modernists and fellow-traveling believers has remained strong down to the present day, the collapse of the Catholic Church has also continued almost unabated. No special divine inspiration was required to predict that unhappy development. The authors’ Faith and Reason alone demonstrated that the one would flow inexorably from the other.

Those new to the crisis in the Church as well as old soldiers seeking to recharge intellectual batteries run low in this wearisome Fifty Years War can make use of *The Great Façade*’s succinct outline of the modernist positions in matters of faith and morality that so swiftly rode to dominance on the back of the Second Vatican Council. The success of these innovations, as the authors clearly indicate, did not come through any direct teaching of error on the part of the Holy Synod. Their triumph was due to the victorious progressive faction’s appeal to the much more subtle and purely human *modus operandi* that proponents of an “enlightened Catholicism” had been encouraging since the eighteenth century. This called for a “gentle and pastoral” as opposed to a “harsh and doctrinal” approach to treatment of the problems of evangelization in a world turned upside down by heresy and secularization.

Unfortunately for Catholic Truth, such temperate (and therefore, supposedly, more

“positive”) attempts to tackle the evils of the *Zeitgeist* mercilessly tempt Providence. They take for granted three “facts of life” which, far from being self-evident, are actually totally false: 1) that the modern non-Catholic world is really not “triumphalist” in character, and has no intention of utilizing the opportunity that a Church of No Hassles grants it to raze to the ground already badly tottering Christian ramparts; 2) that the precise meaning of the word “pastoral” is not itself subject to contrary interpretations precisely dependent upon one’s basic doctrinal or ideological orientation; and 3) that all of the men who aided in the victory of the “positive” approach *inside* the Council chambers were perfectly honorable and orthodox believers.

The Council of Trent understood the perils of separating pastoral from doctrinal issues, firmly linking the two together at every step of its quite laborious path. It realized that utilizing any other tactic in the troubled intellectual and spiritual environment of the day would be tantamount to handing over the rules of pastoral combat to the Church’s Protestant opponents. Trent was also aware of the tragic presence and impact of an “enemy within”—made all the more painfully apparent due to the birth and growth of the Reformation under the auspices of a formerly Catholic clergy and laity.

Vatican Two, at least once the progressives hijacked its leadership and refashioned its original program, tore teaching and pastoral practice asunder. Far from being on its guard against an easily demonstrable internal subversion, it invited the open enemies of the Faith inside the council’s parlor to advise and even judge its goals and battle plans. A reading of *The Great Façade* alongside the pioneering works of Michael Davies and the recent volume of Dr. Roberto de Mattei catalogues the modernist manipulation that followed this self-defeating strategy like night upon day—*during* the Council and not merely afterwards. This book is of great value for understanding the nature and progress of the modernist viruses that have “pastorally” handcuffed the Church’s traditional teachings, institutions, and personnel. Yet its authors’ greater contribution lies in their discussion of the mentality of the personnel constructing “the façade” designed to masquerade the extent of the ensuing disaster. That discussion carries on the traditional work of a number of famous critics of ecclesiastical madness from other poignant epochs in Church history. Sadly, the *Ship of Fools* that the authors set sail before our eyes, just like that launched by men such as Sebastian Brandt (1457–1521) in the immediate pre-Reformation era, carries more than enemy fifth-columnists on its decks. It also hosts those curious defenders of the faith who by all indications want the Ark of Salvation to get to safe port but block their ears to warnings of icebergs already tearing mercilessly at its porous modernist hull. It is these basically well-intentioned but befuddled souls—the men and women who deny the blatant spiritual, intellectual, and physical sabotage of the greatest seaworthy vessel in history, and dedicate their energies to its camouflage—that *The Great Façade* calls “neo-Catholics.”

Admittedly, the desire of diverse groups of people to construct a “Ship of Fools” façade to cover up calamity is not a particularly difficult phenomenon to grasp, beginning with those personalists among the progressive faction at the Council who were openly eager to encourage the destruction of traditional Catholic precepts and practice. This ruinous design stemmed from a conviction that true Christianity demanded submission of the Church, its teachings, and its liturgy to a panoply of “energetic mystiques”—effectively wiping out any distinctly corrective influence of supernatural Revelation and Grace.

Happy as they were with the opportunity unexpectedly provided them to implement their vision, such innovators were by no means sure of their uncontested dominance of Holy Mother Church once the Council's doors slammed shut. This led them to engage in that type of façade-building which took the form of praise for every modernist advance as a breathtaking victory for a dangerously hyperactive Holy Spirit. The mobilization of *His* name on *their* behalf would prove to be highly effective in paralyzing the defensive measures of pious believers otherwise likely to oppose the innovative *Blitzkrieg*.

Bureaucratic involvement in erecting the façade is also easily comprehensible. Yes, many competent ecclesiastical functionaries may have swiftly recognized the reality of Church collapse through the evidence piling up on their desks daily. On the other hand, the willingness of some to declare the dismantling of parishes, schools, and Christianity itself infallible signs of a Second Spring makes a certain perverse sense. After all, careerists in every realm of life cultivate the habit of following the orders of their current chiefs, whoever they may be. Functionaries across time and space have always been eager to support administrative Munich Pacts guaranteeing them “jobs in their lifetime.”

Even the contribution of ordinary believers to building the contemporary “Ship of Fools” façade can well be understood. Disturbed though they may have been when their children first returned from catechism class with news of the abolition of the Trinity, Creation, Original Sin, and the physical Resurrection of the dead, actually admitting that something was indeed dreadfully wrong, that the customary clerical authorities were derelict in their duty at best, and, worse still, that the laity had to take steps to find out what to do to correct evil developments were daunting prospects. This was especially true in a world that told them that “time was money,” that material prosperity was the only practical God-blessed activity, and that they had just been liberated from a clerical tyranny suffocating their repressed desires to boot. Besides, they had the neo-Catholics there to reassure them, and in ever-more strident tones the worse the situation became, that the façade was the reality; that the Catholic God was still in His heaven and all right with the new ecclesiastical order; that the past remained present; and that those “integrists” suggesting otherwise were really the only remaining worthwhile candidates for excommunication and eternal perdition.

It is the stubborn blindness of these neo-Catholics that most accounts for the exasperated righteous anger electrifying the pages of *The Great Façade*—so much so that the book might easily be subtitled: “How Could They?” What makes such apologists for a frightful masquerade more difficult to understand and confront than construction of the façade in and of itself is their real initial passion for defense of the Faith. It would appear that everything that the authors of *The Great Façade* defended in 2002 the neo-Catholics once also approved. Nevertheless, in their insistence that the grotesque innovations facilitated by the work of the Council could not possibly harm Sacred Tradition, they gradually but inevitably opened the gates to everything they seemed to oppose. In order to defend the indefensible they badly distorted the nature of the Church they loved; cultivated and intensified certain innate weaknesses in their broader intellectual position that pre-conciliar Catholicism had kept within less harmful limits; and ended by actually becoming the most *effective* promoters of the evils whose very existence they steadfastly denied.

The Great Façade clearly shows that false ecclesiology is the most deadly of the neo-Catholic distortions. This manifests itself in a hopelessly exaggerated Ultramontanism—an adulation of papal power that attributes both infallibility and sanctity to every action of the Holy See, administrative and pastoral as well as doctrinal. Adopting such bad theology as their buckler and their shield, our misguided apologists for the new ecclesiastical order then chastised critics of the papal-backed Vatican Council as adherents of a “private religious judgment” reflecting a dangerous and heretical Protestant spirit.

Many telling historical illustrations of the absurdity of espousing such blatantly *anti-Catholic* papolatry can be found throughout this prophetic work. One further instance that came to my mind while reading through them all is connected with the fight against that very Protestantism that the neo-Catholics appear to see everywhere—except in a Council that openly consulted the sons of the Reformation in formulating impossibly “infallible” pastoral decrees. This concerns the commission of cardinals created by Pope Paul III in the 1530’s to study the causes of the revolt against the Church. Interestingly enough, that commission placed the primary blame for creating the conditions in which heresy had prospered precisely on the canonical exaltation of arbitrary papal rule in the later Middle Ages and the equation of each and every act of the Holy See with the will of God. Paul III acted accordingly with the commission’s recommendations. Neo-Catholics would apparently have excommunicated its authors as enemies of the Faith—just as they have the authors of *The Great Façade*.

Still, neo-Catholics did not emerge fully armed from the Second Vatican Council alone, like Minerva from the head of Zeus. They represented a preexisting mentality that had its own impact upon the creation of the new ecclesiastical order, and which was in turn freed by the Council’s innovations to carry to logical fruition the errors that the big, bad, pre-conciliar Church had more or less restrained. This is the mentality expressed by pluralism, history’s most effective tool for implementing the vision of John Locke and the so-called “Moderate Enlightenment.” And that vision “gently” prevents the Mystical Body of Christ from exercising its essential corrective and transforming influence over both society at large and individual men and women.

John Locke, the Moderate Enlightenment, and the “Whig” movement that was their political tool were designed to make the world safe for a concept of individual freedom suspicious of all social authority and ultimately materialist in character. Spiritual influences contrary to such an outlook had to be weakened, and the best way that that goal could be achieved was by encouraging a doctrine of “religious liberty” giving *droit de cité* to the endless forms of post-Reformation Christianity. Denominations benefiting from such liberty felt that its authors were God-friendly; but, in practice, the multiplication of religious factions was merely designed to render all of them equally impotent to trouble the social order. This was itself deprived of any offensive authoritative secular clout through the emasculation of the powers of the State. Society could thus be reduced to what, in Locke’s eyes, it was meant to be: the toy of individual men struggling peacefully to obtain and protect their property.

Pluralism, which, due to its original New World base of operations, was first called “Americanism,” effectively added nothing more to this Whig socio-political project than to extend its offer of “liberty” to all religious and ethnic groups. Having done so, it then

claimed that the United States had perfected “mankind’s last and best hope” for securing social peace and freedom simultaneously. This it did—temporarily at least. But it did so only at the price of preventing any and all religious and intellectual worldviews from leaving the private clubhouses within which they were permitted to be cultivated in order to exercise an unacceptably “divisive” influence over social life. And it did so only at the price of “uniting” men in the same pursuit of an individual, materialist, banal, Babbitt-like “happiness.”

Mankind’s last and best hope went global after World War Two. Taking advantage of a demoralized European civilization, it claimed that anything that stood in its way and still sought to shape society authoritatively according to some grand overriding worldview was obviously disruptive of social peace, the enemy of human freedom, and either Fascist or Communist in spirit. Many Catholics, convinced by the freedom they enjoyed inside their own religious clubhouse in the United States that pluralism was truly God-friendly, joined in the chorus. And this supposedly God-friendly pluralist mentality then helped to hypnotize the Fathers at Second Vatican Council into thinking that a gentle, pastoral activity based upon religious liberty and non-doctrinal, non-authoritative, non-divisive “witness” was the voice of the Holy Spirit, peace, and freedom as opposed to that of John Locke.

But just as an army of Catholic opponents of continental supporters of “Whig Catholicism” from the eighteenth century onwards had predicted, a pastoral spirit influenced by American pluralism did not promote the cause of Christ. Instead, it did exactly what it was intended to do from the beginning of the Moderate Enlightenment enterprise: free the arbitrary individual materialist will from outside constraint and render the social authority of the Church to correct and transform fallen man utterly impotent. Moreover, it did so in a modern Catholic environment in which personalism was also influential. What this meant was that the freedom from Church restraint that it guaranteed could be used by willful individuals who did not have precisely the same concerns as the property-minded individualists whom Locke had in mind. In other words, it opened up the Church to the Triumph of the Will in as many forms as human madness might engender. This was equally true of the United States itself, whose Peaceable Kingdom and surface social unity were already fast dissolving and now had one of the last obstacles to its further disruption—namely, the influence of Catholics who had never heeded the pluralist message—authoritatively censored.

“Logical nightmare” is the only term that can be used to describe the situation in which the Spirit of Vatican Two has thus left the neo-Catholics; and it is this conundrum that concerns the exasperated authors of *The Great Façade* the most. It is almost physically painful to see how bad the dilemma of the defenders of the indefensible really is. Emerging from pluralist roots themselves, they cannot criticize in any but the most general fashion the anarchy within the Church without casting aspersions upon the basic claims of “mankind’s last and best hope” as such. They must praise the Pluralist Church as being more Catholic than ever before—even when its local branches allow their members to abandon their faith in an otherwise always-infallible Papacy. I say this because some of the post-conciliar abuses—those proceeding from the more “traditionally American” Moderate Enlightenment errors, now striving to fulfill all of their logical potential—are whitewashed with special loving care. Hence, the willingness of many neo-Catholics to

support the intensified campaign for unrestrained individual economic freedom waged by the libertarian camp; or to wave the Cross next to the bloody flag of neo-conservatism in its wars to make the world safe for American hegemony. What happened to Catholic Social Doctrine? What happened to Catholic Just War Theory? Apparently these were nothing but figments of the imagination of intransigents and popes on whose total infallibility the Statute of Limitations had long expired.

And then there is the conundrum provided by the ever-troublesome “others”: those who have used the pluralist, personalist, pastorally infallible Council in ways that almost all of the neo-Catholics seemed to disapprove, from the earliest abuses in the liturgy to support for abortion, gay marriage, and what really must now be called the Homosexual Heresy. How can they *effectively* call for vibrant, doctrinal, authoritative Church action in ways that both offend some individual wills and are also socially divisive?

In the final analysis, the only crutch upon which they can rely is that unrelenting appeal to the Triumph of the Will that props up their whole position. This begins with adulation of a willful Papacy—which has found in the reigning pontiff a champion who has brought the contradiction of a supposedly renewed Church of rational, pastoral humility that actually operates tyrannically as well as mindlessly to its final pathetic culmination. It ends with the neo-Catholics’ insistence on their own arbitrary right to limit the proper use of freedom to the realms that they approve.

Logically, however, such defenders of willfulness cannot prevent either Church or State from giving in to whatever faction is strong enough to make a failure to cede to its desires socially disruptive and divisive. To paraphrase Justice Scalia, let someone create a “right” and the neo-Catholics will eventually find a means of explaining why the new ecclesiastical order and moribund Christendom must find some means of accommodating—without, of course, openly approving—it. In practice, the neo-Catholics have repeatedly demonstrated that they consider the demands of the outside, anti-Christian, pluralist world to be more compelling than their own highly confused commitment to the debris of Faith and Reason. Hence, they who live with reference to the Triumph of the Will die through its victory at the hands of the stronger.

The authors of *The Great Façade* point the neo-Catholics down the only pathway leading them out of their unending conundrum: opening their eyes to the fullness of the Sacred Tradition. This clearly teaches the difference between infallible dogmatic truth and all-too-human pastoral and administrative weaknesses. It demonstrates that solid pastoral action must always be rooted in authoritative teaching. And, as Christopher Ferrara in his subsequent works has brilliantly shown, it also lays bare just how anti-Catholic the so-called Moderate Enlightenment is, and just how much more effective its Anglo-American, Whig-Pluralist expression has been in “gently” habituating the mind and spirit of Church, State, and individuals to evils which then proceed logically to their most radical conclusions. All Catholics will benefit from a razing of the great façade, an acceptance of the existence of the hideous reality around them, and the need for a full “bath” in Sacred Tradition. For failure to probe the problem to its deepest roots will allow the gentle pastoral heresy to corrupt and change anyone—even a prophet who lets his guard down.

Author's Preface to the Second Edition

Thirteen years have passed since this book first appeared. In that brief span of time the Church has witnessed a series of momentous events whose rapid succession stands in stark relief to the generally glacial movement of Church affairs: the death of John Paul II, the election of the former Cardinal Ratzinger as Benedict XVI, Benedict's astonishing and seemingly inexplicable abdication of the papacy, and the election of an obscure Argentinian Jesuit prelate, Jorge Bergoglio, as Pope Francis. These events have been accompanied by a series of disciplinary and liturgical developments, occurring during Benedict's truncated pontificate, which have vindicated the position this book defended: that a recovery of the Church's preconciliar liturgy, discipline and doctrinal firmness "is no nostalgic dream, but an inevitable provision of God's providence, for the current abysmal state of the Church's liturgy, preaching and general discipline cannot possibly serve as the foundation for her mission in the future."¹

Pope Benedict's correction of longstanding errors in the vernacular translations of the Novus Ordo Mass; his liberation of the traditional Latin Mass by *Summorum Pontificum*, which declared that it was "never abrogated" in the first place; and his lifting of the excommunications of the four bishops of the Society of Saint Pius X; all demonstrated that the "regime of novelty" this book assessed thirteen years ago is not some irreversible development, a kind of Hegelian out-rolling of ecclesiastical history, but merely a series of prudential judgments the Pope could, if he wished, undo with the stroke of a pen. Under Benedict, therefore, the faithful witnessed the beginning of a worldwide revival of the traditional liturgy and the rapid growth of orders and communities that adhere to it. These included the Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate (FFI), the majority of whose members exercised their right to the Church's liturgical patrimony, which *Summorum* had seemingly placed beyond any future attempt at cruel suppression.

With the election of Pope Francis, however, the movement toward restoration appeared not only to come to a halt, but even to reverse itself in a return to a state of affairs that resembles nothing so much as the ecclesial climate of the 1970s, with its liturgical, theological and disciplinary dissolution accompanied by utopian boasting about a marvelous new age of the Church. By order of Francis, the FFI were abruptly commanded to celebrate only the New Mass and forbidden to offer the traditional Mass without specific permission. Thereafter the order was effectively demolished under the sway of an apostolic commissioner Francis appointed. The Pope's move against the FFI was part of a series of radically progressive papal statements and gestures unlike anything in the annals of the papacy, earning Francis something the Church has never seen before: widespread acclaim for a Roman Pontiff from "principalities and powers ... the rulers of the world of this darkness ... the spirits of wickedness in the high places (Eph. 6:12)." The world hails "the Francis Revolution" on magazine covers and in print and video journalism. Lauded even by Barack Obama, Francis is the first Pope ever invited to address a joint session of the United States Congress.

In the blink of an eye, historically speaking, the Church has gone from a Pope who, writing as Cardinal Ratzinger, admonished that "[t]he authority of the Pope is not

unlimited; it is at the service of Sacred Tradition,” and who as Pope acted accordingly, to a Pope who dreams of “a missionary impulse capable of *transforming everything*, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today’s world *rather than for her self-preservation*” From a Pope who declared to the universal Church that “What earlier generations held as sacred, remains sacred and great for us too, and ... cannot be all of a sudden entirely forbidden or even considered harmful,”² the governance of the Church has passed to a Pope who has used an apostolic exhortation to mock “the self-absorbed promethean neopelagianism of those who ultimately trust only in their own powers and feel superior to others because they observe certain rules or remain intransigently faithful to a particular Catholic style from the past.”³ The Pope who, as had John Paul II, used the occasion of a synod to affirm the Church’s 2000-year-old discipline of “not admitting the divorced and remarried to the sacraments, since their state and their condition of life objectively contradict the loving union of Christ and the Church signified and made present in the Eucharist,”⁴ has been succeeded by a Pope who seems determined to abandon that very discipline (as he did when Archbishop of Buenos Aires) through the instrumentality of a Synod on the Family now seen by cardinals, bishops and millions of members of the laity as a direct *threat* to the family.

It is as if, over the past thirteen years, the tiller of the Barque of Peter was turned slightly to the right in an attempted course correction only to be yanked violently to the left again. The “regime of novelty” this book described in 2002 seems to have returned with interest, so much so that today many members of the faithful outside traditionalist circles are finally expressing alarm. In this unparalleled situation—which is saying a great deal, given the past fifty years—I felt compelled to undertake the labor of bringing this work up to date with new chapters. The new material is largely adapted from my writings in *The Remnant* and elsewhere over the past thirteen years; but, like my contribution to the original work, it has been synthesized and greatly expanded. (As for the text of the original co-authored edition, which appears at [Chapters 1–14](#), in order to avoid undue editorial complexities all references to then-living figures, including Pope John Paul II, remain in the present tense.)

The new chapters are essentially a traditionalist’s assessment of the pontificates of Benedict and Francis, whose brief reigns mark what historians call a climacteric: a critical historical period, perhaps the most critical in the history of both the Church and the world. Let the reader be forewarned: the view of Francis’s pontificate presented here is thoroughly negative. There is no search for bits and pieces of orthodoxy and personal papal piety in a mosaic of words and deeds whose composite image delights the world while it troubles and even terrifies faithful Catholics. The Bergoglian pontificate is a phenomenon rightly described as “the Francis effect” by the (thus far) adoring mass media, a down-ward vector of acceleration along the ecclesial trajectory we know as “the post-conciliar crisis.” The picture cannot be grasped by “accentuating the positive” at one place or another but only by standing back and viewing its overall sense, which Francis relentlessly pursues. There is, however, one piece of the mosaic that stands out in stark relief as an exception to the general picture: Francis’s apparent solicitude for the Society of Saint Pius X, the traditionalist society still falsely accused of “schism” by liberal and “conservative” Catholics alike despite the remission of the excommunication of its four

bishops by Pope Benedict XVI in 2009. Francis's surprising move in favor of the Society in 2015 has eliminated any conceivable basis for this continued calumny, while providing one reason for the note of hope on which these new chapters conclude.

The new chapters are largely adapted from my writings in *The Remnant* and elsewhere during both pontificates; but, like my contribution to the original work, it has been synthesized and greatly expanded. Unlike the original work, however, I have written the new chapters as a more or less chronological account of events since 2002 in order to develop the work's original theme: that the regime of novelty has been a continuous disaster which can be ended only by a return to the path from which so much of the human element of the Church has departed in the name of the Second Vatican Council. The dismantling of that regime and a return to integral Tradition will have to involve overcoming what Monsignor Guido Pozzo, head of the Pontifical Commission Ecclesia Dei under both Benedict and Francis, has called a "para-Conciliar ideology" that "transforms dialogue from an instrument whose primary purpose and end are the Church's pastoral work, emptying it of meaning more and more and obscuring the urgency and the call of conversion to Christ *and adherence to His Church*." Monsignor Guido's prescription is the one this book presents thematically: "Against such deviations, it is necessary to retrieve and recover *the spiritual and cultural foundation of Christian civilization*, that is, faith in God, transcendent and Creator, provident and Judge, whose Only-begotten Son became incarnate, died, and rose again for the redemption of the world, and who has poured out the grace of the Holy Spirit for the remission of sins and for making men sharers in the divine nature."⁵ And since ours is precisely an incarnational religion, this retrieval of foundations must involve a recovery of the Church's liturgical tradition, without which we have witnessed what Cardinal Ratzinger called "the collapse of the liturgy."⁶ For as Cardinal Ratzinger so wisely observed: "But when the community of faith, the worldwide unity of the Church and her history, and the mystery of the living Christ, are no longer visible in the liturgy, where else, then, is the Church to become visible in her spiritual essence?"⁷

The observations and conclusions I present in these new chapters are entirely my own, and the responsibility for them is solely mine. The facts presented, however, belong to the history of a time that will surely be seen by future ecclesiastical historians as what the aptly named Bishop Athanasius Schneider calls "the fourth great crisis" in the history of the Catholic Church.⁸

CHRISTOPHER A. FERRARA
Richmond, VA
September 1, 2015

¹. Cf. Chapter 13.

². Letter to Bishops concerning publication of *Summorum Pontificum*, July 7, 2007 @w2.vatican.va.

³. *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 94.

⁴. Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* (2007), n. 29.

⁵. "Msgr. Pozzo on Aspects of the Ecclesiology of Vatican II," July 2, 2010 @roratecaeli.org; Italian original text @ <http://www.fssp.org/it/pozzo2010.htm>. Emphasis added here and throughout, unless otherwise indicated.

⁶. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Milestones: Memoirs 1927–1977* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998), p. 148.

[7.](#) Ibid., p. 149.

[8.](#) “Bishop Athanasius Schneider: ‘We are in the fourth great crisis of the Church.’” Interview with *Catholic Herald*, June 6, 2014 @ catholicherald.co.uk.

Introduction

That the period following the Second Vatican Council has been a debacle for the Catholic Church is now beyond serious dispute. The widespread infiltration of the Catholic clergy by homosexuals over the past forty years, and the systematic attempt by bishops to conceal thousands of criminal acts by sexually deviant priests (not to mention the once-unthinkable emergence of a “gay culture” in the Catholic priesthood), are but further symptoms of an ecclesial disease that is raging out of control after being left untreated for decades.

Predictably enough, the Church’s liberal critics have seized upon the recent scandals to call for the abandonment of clerical celibacy, and even the popular election and recall of bishops and local pastors—as if such measures could solve the problem of homosexual corruption in the clergy. While the liberal prescriptions are as dishonest as they are illogical, they provide an insight into the origin of the current crisis in the Church, for liberals are always ready to prescribe cures for the diseases liberalism itself causes in the institutions it infects. The liberals are now prescribing cures for yet another institution infected by liberalism: the Roman Catholic Church. The invasion of the human element of the Church by liberalism—and only this—is what has triggered the current ecclesial crisis.

As we will endeavor to demonstrate in this book, the post-conciliar infection of the Catholic Church by liberalism was self-induced. Through a series of decisions without parallel in Church history, the Church’s own leaders, including the conciliar Popes, have imposed what can only be called a *regime of novelty* upon the Church since Vatican II. The effect of that regime (whether or not intended) has been largely to strip the Church of her natural defenses against infiltration and corruption. The Council’s much-vaunted “opening to the world” was, in truth, a suppression of the Church’s immune system, resulting almost immediately in the many-faceted disease that now afflicts her. In reaction to this regime of novelty, there has emerged in the postconciliar epoch a movement known as Roman Catholic traditionalism, which seeks a restoration of the elements of traditional Catholic teaching and *praxis* that have been suppressed under the new regime. This book is both a defense of that movement and a call for Catholics to join it.

This book began as a series of essays written in the summer of 2000 for *The Remnant*, a biweekly traditional Catholic newspaper published in St. Paul, Minnesota. We were so gratified by reader response, and so convinced of the importance of the subject matter, that we decided to make them available in a single volume. At least that was our first intention.

In the process, however, we edited, revised, completely rearranged and greatly expanded what we had written, more than doubling our original text. The essays grew into a book written around a theme. While the finished product retains some of the feel of a collection of essays, this is not altogether regrettable. At the same time, there is an identifiable continuity throughout the pages that follow. What we are attempting here is a brief overview of the past forty years, as well as a series of reflections on how faithful Catholics can make sense of the present confusion.

In order to understand some of what follows, however, it is helpful to recount the events that led us to write the essays in the first place. Earlier in 2000, *The Wanderer*, a weekly

Catholic newspaper, had begun to serialize a pamphlet (by a former *Remnant* columnist) entitled *Traditionalists, Tradition and Private Judgment*.¹ Although presented as a reliable guide to the “errors” of Roman Catholic traditionalism, it seemed to us to contain nothing more than the same tired, illogical accusations that have been hurled at Catholic traditionalists since the close of the Second Vatican Council.

In addition to the author of *Traditionalists, Tradition and Private Judgment* (henceforth “the Pamphlet”), there are other players in the drama that led to this collection of essays. *The Wanderer* was apparently induced to publish the Pamphlet by the appearance of a tract entitled *We Resist You to the Face*, written by Michael Matt (editor of *The Remnant*), John Vennari (editor of the traditionalist newspaper *Catholic Family News*), Atila Guimarães, and Dr. Marian Horvat. *We Resist You to the Face* takes its title from St. Paul’s famous rebuke of St. Peter at Antioch because of Peter’s scandalous refusal to sit at table with the Gentiles he was charged by Our Lord Himself to convert: “I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed” (Galatians 2:11). This episode is cited by St. Thomas Aquinas as an example of how the faithful may, in certain cases, have the right and even the duty to rebuke their prelates, not excluding the Supreme Pontiff himself.

Unfortunately, the title of the tract was exploited by demagogues in the “conservative” Catholic camp, who cried “schism” and endlessly recited the title without ever addressing the merits of the authors’ contentions. (We will refer to *We Resist You* henceforth as “the Statement.”) The result was a classic case of judging a book by its cover. While we do not subscribe to every formulation of the Statement, a considerable part of our work was a defense of its basic thesis: that Catholic teaching itself demonstrates that Catholics have the right and even the duty to oppose certain papally approved innovations of the postconciliar period, because these innovations—all without precedent in Church history—have manifestly caused confusion among the faithful and grave harm to the common good of the Church.

Personal relations between the *dramatis personae* must also be noted. One of the Statement’s authors, Michael Matt, is the cousin of *The Wanderer*’s current editor, Alphonse Matt, who has made *The Wanderer* into the flagship of “conservative” opposition to the traditionalist position and the defense of “conservative” accommodation to the postconciliar reforms. Their respective fathers, Walter Matt and Alphonse Matt, Sr., had a parting of the ways at *The Wanderer* back in 1967, when Walter left to found *The Remnant*. Their parting resulted from the controversy that persists in the Church to this day: Alphonse Matt, Sr., maintained that Vatican II and the reforms it engendered could not be criticized, whereas Walter Matt perceived a duty, for the good of the Church, to express loyal opposition to the conciliar and postconciliar novelties, especially the liturgical reforms imposed by Paul VI. We make no secret of which position we believe has been wholly vindicated in the ensuing quarter-century of doctrinal confusion, clerical scandal and general deconstruction in the Catholic Church.

We split the reply to the Pamphlet between us, with each of us writing something of a rebuttal to each installment of the Pamphlet as it appeared in *The Wanderer*. We cannot emphasize enough, however, that what motivated us then, and what motivates us to publish this book now, was not any sense of an urgent necessity to refute the Pamphlet in its actual content. The Pamphlet, we found, was not especially insightful, to say the least;

it was, in fact, diffuse, meandering, reckless in its accusations and in many parts simply inane.

But what the Pamphlet did accomplish by finding its way into *The Wanderer* was to provide a public provocation in the form of two principal accusations: First, it claimed that there was an equivalence between traditionalists, to whom it applied the label “integrists” (a term the Pamphlet’s author never got around to defining), and modernists, in that both “integrists” and modernists “thrive on opposition to the living Magisterium” of the Church. Second, it accused certain traditionalists/integrists—by obvious implication the authors of the Statement—of the canonical crime of “schism,” of breaking communion with the See of Peter and thus ceasing to be Catholics. But the Pamphlet failed to substantiate these grave accusations with any systematic argument or presentation of evidence. Not only did the Pamphlet fail to identify any doctrines of the “living Magisterium” from which traditionalists supposedly dissent, but it also failed to provide so much as one quotation from the statements of any traditionalist to support its charges of heterodoxy and schism. The Pamphlet was, in fact, little more than a collection of epithets.

Indeed, in reviewing the Pamphlet’s exceedingly slim presentation, we were reminded of Cardinal Newman’s *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, in which he gave this assessment of the infamous pamphlet written against him by his justly forgotten accuser, Charles Kingsley: “[T]he Pamphlet ... is as slovenly and random and futile in its definite charges, as it is iniquitous in its method of argument.” In our own use of the term “the Pamphlet” throughout this book, we mean to recall the plight of Cardinal Newman in having to confront baseless accusations against him only because an incompetent and dishonest accuser had managed to circulate them widely. We do not mean to suggest any grandiose comparison of this little book with Newman’s work of genius in the *Apologia*.

Thus it was not any merit of the Pamphlet that prompted our essays, but rather the prominent exposure given its provocative, if completely unproven, charges by *The Wanderer*, a widely respected Catholic newspaper with a large readership. Such a provocation could not, we thought, be allowed to pass without comment in the historical record.

Because there was so little one could say about the meager content of the Pamphlet itself, however, our reply quickly developed into something far more substantial than a mere rebuttal. It became, rather, a restatement and defense of the main lines of the entire traditionalist position, written from the perspective of two reasonably well-informed lay Catholics, whose principal qualifications are that they know the Faith and that they are eyewitnesses to the results of what can only be called the postconciliar debacle in the Catholic Church.

As we have already noted, the controversy has usually been described as a split between “conservative” and “traditionalist” Catholics. Robert Lewis Dabney, one of the most influential Southern theologians at the time of the War Between the States, once observed wryly that Northern conservatives had never managed to conserve anything. The same verdict applies to those who until now have been generally described as “conservative” Catholics. Since they have not in fact *conserved* anything, but rather have defended every one of the abrupt changes in the life and activity of the Church imposed upon Catholics with Vatican approval in the wake of the Second Vatican Council, we believe that the term

“conservative” invites confusion among casual readers, for whom it carries a positive connotation, while attaching a venerable designation to people whose actions—or inaction, as the case may be—merit no such honor.

Publisher Neil McCaffrey introduced the term “right-wing liberal” to describe the figure we have in mind. The “right-wing liberal” is orthodox on doctrine: he believes in the seven sacraments, the four last things, the Commandments, the absolute and binding nature of traditional Catholic morality. Following the experimental trail blazed by Vatican II, however, he considers all else to be negotiable. Anything that does not touch directly upon the Deposit of Faith is subject to change. The only real *essentials* of the Catholic faith, according to him, are moral and doctrinal propositions.

This position is superficially plausible. It is accurate in the sense that, from the perspective of traditional Catholic theology, while a Catholic who pertinaciously denied a central dogma of the Church—original sin or the Virgin Birth, for example—would be liable to condemnation as a heretic, a man of good will who believed that contingent circumstances called for adaptation of the Church in its external manifestations, though perhaps naïve, unwise, or even grossly mistaken, would not call down upon himself the same condemnation. It is the difference between opposing the *depositum fidei* and making an error, however catastrophic, in prudential judgment.

However, too great a deprecation of so-called “nonessentials” fails to reckon with the role played by practices which, as the Popes themselves have taught, are hallowed by tradition and popular piety and are in fact necessary to the transmission, preservation and common understanding of what is “essential” to Catholicism—in short, the ecclesiastical traditions, as opposed to those which are strictly Apostolic (descended from the Apostles themselves). These “nonessentials” are, in fact, the very things that mediate the *depositum fidei* into the living reality of the Faith as something that is lived and experienced by members of the Church. The Rosary and a multitude of other devotions, for example, are crucial to the spiritual lives of the faithful, even if they are not, strictly speaking, “essential” to Roman Catholicism. It was precisely by suppressing such alleged “nonessentials” that the Protestant Reformation in England was able gradually to diminish the Catholic faith that those devotions had nourished among the population.²

Likewise, while the form of the liturgy is not, strictly speaking, an article of faith, it is the principal means by which the Faith has been taught to generation after generation of Catholics at Sunday Mass. To treat the form of the liturgy carelessly is to invite disaster. It was no less than Pope Pius XII (when he was still Msgr. Pacelli) who confided to Msgr. George Roche his fears about the rise of liturgical innovators in the Church and the “suicide of altering the faith in her liturgy.”³ Cardinal Alfons Stickler, who served on Vatican II’s Liturgy Commission, has argued that the Greek Orthodox, lacking the visible center of unity that the Catholic Church possesses in the person of the Pope, nevertheless maintained the dogmatic aspects of the Christian faith in their integrity precisely because of their reverence for their traditional liturgy, the sacred purveyor of that faith.⁴ Moreover, there is a certain piety that animated the saints, and that ought to inform the Catholic conscience today, that positively forbids us to treat even the so-called “changeable” aspects of the Faith as dispensable. With good reason, then, did Pope Pius IV prescribe a profession of faith that included the following: “The apostolic and *ecclesiastical*

traditions, and all other *observances* and institutions of that same Church I most firmly admit and embrace.... I also receive and admit the received and approved *ceremonies* of the Catholic Church used in the solemn administration of all the aforesaid sacraments.” We can learn a great deal in this regard from St. Teresa of Avila, who once said that she would die a hundred deaths for the smallest ritual of the Catholic Church.

The so-called “conservative” Catholic is, therefore, rather too easily acclimated to the radical changes in the texture of Catholic life that have followed the Council. He is unlikely to raise much of an objection to postconciliar practices perennially considered unthinkable in the Church, such as Holy Communion being received in the hand or distributed by the unconsecrated hands of female “extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist.” As long as the teaching on the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist is officially retained, the “conservatives” say, such innovations are of no great moment.

Again, however, the matter is not so simple. When the German Protestant Martin Bucer suggested that English Protestants introduce the practice of Communion in the hand, he did so because, as he said at the time, this novel practice would undermine two Catholic teachings at once: the priesthood and the Real Presence. Allowing the faithful to receive the Eucharist in their hands would tend to establish the belief that the Host was nothing more than ordinary bread (so indeed why shouldn’t the faithful be able to touch it?) and that there was nothing special or unique about the priest that should entitle him alone to handle the sacred species. Bucer knew full well what he was doing.

We can also indict the “conservative” position for having utterly failed to stem the revolutionary tide of the past thirty-five years. Its approach simply has not worked. The Left has proceeded with determination and severity in its forcible introduction of novel practices throughout the life of the postconciliar Church, including but not limited to the liturgy. The so-called conservatives, on the other the hand, made concession after concession to these vandals, claiming that since these changes were not to dogma *per se*, they were not worth fighting over. The Left was sure of itself; the Right hedged. The result should have surprised no one.

Thus the “conservative” position has several major failings, all of which we will explore in these pages. The one on which we will focus the most attention is the conservative’s dogged insistence on ignoring or explaining away glaring differences between preconciliar and postconciliar practice and ecclesial attitudes, and even common teachings below the level of Catholic dogma. Novelties that were condemned as intolerable threats to the Faith are suddenly recommended as the work of the Holy Ghost. (As we will discuss, while these new practices—ecumenism, for instance—are not in themselves strictly matters of Catholic doctrine, in the traditionalist view they tend materially to undermine doctrines to which the Catholic is absolutely bound.) That there is absolutely no parallel for this in all of Church history should go without saying. The conservative position, however, has generally been to accept the novelties without question, regardless of the warnings of previous Popes and of the terrible trials these novelties have visited upon the Church. The conservatives have been positively hostile toward those of us who have demanded to know how the novelties can be reconciled with the condemnation of those very novelties before the Council. For example, “conservatives” see no contradiction of Church tradition in a “simplified” Mass said

entirely out loud in the vernacular, when Pope Pius VI condemned the Synod of Pistoia's demand for precisely such a Mass as "rash, offensive to pious ears, insulting to the Church, favorable to the charges of heretics against it [the traditional Latin Mass]."⁵ The current Will of the Legislator, rather than the coherence and faithfulness to ecclesiastical tradition one has the right to expect from the Vatican, has suddenly become the supreme norm. Given the Church's emphasis over the centuries on the importance of human reason, the legal positivism of the "conservatives" seems to us ludicrous and impossible to accept. As we will demonstrate from the teaching of Church fathers and doctors, this attitude of blind obedience to every single act of ecclesial authority without exception is not Catholic; it makes of the Church exactly what the Protestants falsely claim it to be: an absolute dictatorship governed by an absolute monarch.

For these reasons, we have employed the term "neo-Catholic" to refer to Catholic personalities in the mold of the Pamphlet's author.⁶ This term eliminates the confusion that the complimentary term "conservative" might cause, and better evokes the willingness of this group to accept the introduction of novelties affecting virtually every aspect of the Faith as it is lived and practiced by Catholics in the pews, even if those novelties patently lack any continuity with ecclesiastical tradition and are palpably offensive to the *sensus catholicus*.

As for the controversy over the Pamphlet itself, in the end there is little one can say about the affair except that it was a sad and tiresome thing. It demonstrated yet again the neo-Catholic's perverse inclination to complain merely about the effects of the postconciliar crisis (including the rise of militant traditionalism), without ever acknowledging the ultimate cause. Surveying the devastated vineyard, the neo-Catholic will not even entertain the possibility that the state of the kingdom has something to do with the acts and omissions of the king.

So, for example, in typical neo-Catholic fashion, the Pamphlet's introduction suggests that the liturgical revolution that drove the author himself from his own parish was entirely the fault of nameless "liturgical experts." But here are the facts:

- Those same "experts" were summoned to their task by Vatican Council II in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, which called precisely for the use of "experts" to revise the liturgy from top to bottom.
- These "experts" were unleashed upon every diocese of the world by the will of Paul VI, who approved their destruction of the traditional Latin liturgy.
- Pope John Paul II surveyed the same destruction during his many travels and pronounced it a great "renewal" on the twenty-fifth anniversary of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, later adding altar girls to the mix.

It is not as if the Roman rite was dismantled while the conciliar Popes were momentarily distracted. Yet as the neo-Catholics would have it, the one man on earth divinely appointed to guard the sacred liturgy throughout the Church is the only one who is *not* responsible for its present condition.

We have every reason to hope that good will come from this exploration of the controversy between Roman Catholic traditionalists and those we call neo-Catholics. As we have already indicated, the publication of the Pamphlet, empty provocation though it was, served as an occasion to restate and refine the entire case for the restoration of Roman Catholic Tradition in all its integrity—not merely the return of a few bits and pieces of what was taken from the faithful overnight some thirty-five years ago, but the

integral whole in its original condition.

And perhaps more than a few readers of this book will be prodded to confront, if they have not done so already, the cause that lies behind the innumerable symptoms of the raging disease whose progress *The Wanderer* itself has chronicled in such minute detail for so many years. We will have accomplished a great deal if we persuade even a few of those Catholics who are not yet traditionalists that, in their own efforts to understand the postconciliar crisis, the time has come for them to turn their attention, at long last, to Rome.

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- [1.](#) *The Wanderer*, June 22, 2000, and six subsequent weekly issues.
 - [2.](#) Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c. 1400-c. 1580* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992).
 - [3.](#) Msgr. Georges Roche, *Pie XII, Devant L'Histoire* (Paris: Editions Robert Laffont, 1972), p. 52. The same book recounts Pius XII's astonishing prediction of the postconciliar revolution in light of the Message of Fatima. This is discussed in [Chapter 3](#).
 - [4.](#) Alfons Maria Cardinal Stickler, "Erinnerungen und Erfahrungen eines Konzilsperitus der Liturgiekommission," in Franz Breid, ed., *Die heilige Liturgie* (Steyr, Austria: Ennsthaler Verlag, 1997), p. 166.
 - [5.](#) Pius VI, *Auctorem Fidei* (1794), in Henry Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma* (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder, 1955), section 1533. (Hereafter DZ, followed by section number.)
 - [6.](#) This term was first suggested by the Presbyterian convert Gerald Christian Matatics. Mr. Matatics, while still a Protestant, was a careful observer of the phenomenon of "neo-evangelicalism," by which the more traditional Protestants underwent a process of liberalization that he was aghast to see in the Catholic Church after his conversion.

PART I

THE SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

Defining Terms

There is nothing more useless than a debate in which the parties fail to define their terms and the exact nature of the controversy between them. This book presents the controversy between Roman Catholic traditionalists and those we call neo-Catholics. Following up on the Introduction, we will endeavor to define these terms more amply.

First of all, what do we mean by the term “traditionalist”?¹ As suggested by the Introduction, a traditionalist is nothing more or less than a Catholic who continues to worship as Catholics had always worshipped and to believe as Catholics had always believed until approximately 1965, when, in the name of Vatican II, the Church began to undergo a series of unprecedented “reforms” that altered virtually every aspect of ecclesial life.

Regarding the liturgy, traditionalists continue to believe what the Popes had constantly taught for more than nineteen centuries, up to and including Pope John XXIII in *Veterum Sapientia* (1962): that the traditional Latin liturgy of the Roman Rite, a work of the Holy Ghost down the ages, was not subject to radical revision.

As for Christian unity, traditionalists continue to regard the Church as Catholics had always been taught to regard her before 1965: that is, the one true Church to which the separated brethren must *return*, not merely the most perfect of many “Christian churches and ecclesial communities” moving toward “full communion” at some unknown terminus of the “ecumenical movement.”

Only thirty-five years before the bronze doors opened on Vatican II, Pope Pius XI forcefully restated the traditional teaching on true Christian unity in his encyclical *Mortalium Animos*, which condemned the developing “ecumenical movement” as a threat to the very foundations of the Christian faith, and forbade any Catholic participation in it:

So, Venerable Brethren, it is clear why this Apostolic See has *never* allowed its subjects to take part in the assemblies of non-Catholics; for the union of Christians can *only* be promoted by promoting *the return to the one true Church* of those who are separated from it Let them therefore return to their common Father, who, forgetting the insults heaped upon the Apostolic See, will receive them in most loving fashion. For if, as they continually state, they long to be united with Us and ours, why do they not hasten to enter the Church, the Mother and mistress of all Christ’s faithful? Let them hear Lactantius crying out: “The Catholic Church is alone in keeping the true worship. This is the fount of truth, this the house of Faith, this the temple of God: if any man enter not here, or if any man go forth from it, he is a stranger to the hope of life and salvation.” Let none delude himself with obstinate wrangling. For life and salvation are here concerned, which will be lost and entirely destroyed, unless their interests are carefully and assiduously kept in mind.²

The traditionalist maintains that in point of fact no Catholic is obliged to embrace a single one of the novelties imposed upon the Church over the past thirty-five years. For example, there is no actual papal command that Catholics participate in interreligious prayer meetings with Hindus, Muslims and rabbis, or joint liturgical services with pro-abortion Protestant “bishops,” even though Pope John Paul II engages in these activities himself and commends them as realizations of Vatican II. Indeed, no Catholic is even obliged to attend the new rite of Mass devised by Pope Paul VI, since throughout the

liturgical revolution other rites of Mass untouched by the Pauline innovations (principally the Eastern rites) have always remained available. Nor, for that matter, has any papal decree of the past thirty-five years actually banned the traditional Latin Mass in the first place, as John Paul II's own cardinalate commission informed him in 1986.³

Finally, a traditionalist is someone who believes that the postconciliar novelties—especially the new liturgy and the new ecumenism—ought to be abandoned because they have caused grave harm to the Church, as shown by overwhelming empirical evidence of drastic ecclesial decline in nearly every area immediately following the appearance of the novelties. This is not simply (as neo-Catholics constantly argue) the fallacy of *post hoc ergo propter hoc*,⁴ but rather an inference of cause and effect virtually compelled by the available evidence.

For example, the imposition of the new Mass was followed immediately by drastic declines in Mass attendance; the reform of the seminaries by the immediate emptying of the seminaries; the abandonment of attempts to convert Protestants in favor of “ecumenical dialogue” by a drastic decline in conversions. To attribute all of these developments to “coincidence” is ridiculous.⁵

What, then, do we mean by the term “neo-Catholic”? Before answering, we must first anticipate the banal objection that we are “generalizing” about neo-Catholics and neo-Catholicism. Of course we are. The focus of this book is the *idea* of neo-Catholicism as a system of novel practices and attitudes that first emerged in the Church during the 1960s. While the neo-Catholic idea can be illustrated with the objective statements and actions of particular individuals who are part of this new constituency of the Church (many of whom will be quoted here), it is not for us to make any judgment about the Catholic fidelity and personal piety of these people—even though (as we shall also show) the leading lights of neo-Catholicism are all too ready to denounce their traditionalist brethren as “schismatics” and cast them into outer darkness, without benefit of any canonical declaration by competent Church authorities.

In fact, we are quite prepared to admit that the lively faith of many who would fit the description “neo-Catholic,” as we define the term, puts to shame many of those who call themselves traditionalists.⁶ (And, naturally, in many cases the converse is just as true.) That individual neo-Catholics are pious, however, is beside the point. The point of this book is to demonstrate that in both theory and practice the neo-Catholic *idea* has caused enormous damage to the life of the Church as a whole, as seen by the sudden postconciliar decline in baptisms, conversions, vocations, Mass attendance and general adherence to Catholic doctrine on the part of those who still call themselves Catholic.

So, based on the objective words and deeds of some of the more prominent neo-Catholics, we can safely generalize about the neo-Catholic idea. Particular applications aside, it is the idea that with the advent of the Second Vatican Council a new sort of orthodoxy suddenly arose in the Church—an orthodoxy stripped of any link to ecclesiastical traditions once considered an untouchable sacred trust. It is the idea that by virtue of Vatican II the Church has, in some manner never clearly explained, progressed beyond what she was before the Council to a new mode of existence, and that this progression requires an assent on the part of the faithful that is somehow different from

the assent required to the constant teaching of all the previous councils and Popes. When neo-Catholics say—as they do with depressing regularity—that traditionalists are “anti-Vatican II,” they are saying more than they seem to realize. They are saying that in large measure our Faith has come to be defined, not by the entire teaching of a Magisterium that can never change, but by a single Council and the revolutionary reforms and new attitudes it engendered—all of them outside the realm of Catholic doctrine as such. This is why, when pressed to do so, neo-Catholic critics of traditionalism are unable to identify any *doctrines* of the Magisterium to which traditionalists have failed to assent in their alleged “rejection of Vatican II.”

What this means is that the neo-Catholic idea is nothing less than a form of progressive or liberal Catholicism—whether a given neo-Catholic knows it or not, or is, subjectively speaking, a liberal by intention. For, as we will demonstrate, the distinctive legacy of Vatican II that the neo-Catholic celebrates and demands that we all embrace does not consist in doctrine, but in a *defense of ecclesial novelties*, many of which were explicitly reproved before the Council.

If this assessment seems harsh and uncharitable, let it be confirmed by a leading neo-Catholic himself. In a recent article in *Crisis* magazine entitled “Sensibly Center-Right,” neo-Catholic luminary George Sim Johnston lauds the book *Being Right: Conservative Catholics in America*, a compendium of the views of a host of Johnston’s fellow neo-Catholic leaders, lumped together with pieces written by doctrinaire liberals. In the process of praising the book, Johnston lays bare the whole truth about the neo-Catholic idea:

The featured players [James Hitchcock, Helen Hull Hitchcock, George Weigel and James Sullivan, formerly of Catholics United for the Faith] do not locate themselves on the theological “right.” They embrace Vatican II, don’t pine for the Tridentine liturgy, and support the *historically radical ecumenism* of John Paul II By any historical measure, the “conservatives” in this volume *are progressive Catholics*. Until recently, their views on the role of the laity *would not have played well with the Roman curia*. Nor would their choice of philosophical mentors: von Balthasar, de Lubac, Congar, Danielou—not to mention John Courtney Murray.... Unlike the Sadducees on the Catholic left and the Pharisees on the truly Catholic right, the “conservatives” in this volume understand the pontificate of John Paul II because they understand the Second Vatican Council. They understand that Christ founded a teaching Church whose doctrines are not subject to whim and manipulation. But they also realize that the Church, being human and organic, *has to change*. *Vatican II was the antidote to the triumphalism, legalism, clericalism, and, yes, Jansenism, that plagued the Church forty years ago.*⁷

This passage contains the neo-Catholic idea in a nutshell: the devastated Roman rite is a mere Tridentine artifact not worth “pining” over. Liberals are Sadducees, traditionalists are Pharisees, while the progressive “conservatives” are “sensibly center-right.” The preconciliar Church is casually denigrated as legalistic, clericalistic and even Jansenistic, while Vatican II is presented as a font of divine illumination that revived a moribund Church. Johnston goes on to note that “*neo-conservative Catholics like ... [George Weigel] are not looking for a ‘nostalgia-driven restoration in which modernity is rejected root and branch’*”—as if Catholic ecclesiastical traditions that stood for centuries were nothing but a collection of memorabilia to be discarded like the detritus of popular culture. “Rather,” says Johnston, “they [the neo-conservative Catholics] would like to see the deepest dynamics of Vatican II finally come into play.”

What is meant by the “deepest dynamics of Vatican II” is anyone’s guess, but this kind of talk is typical of the neo-Catholic idea. According to Johnston, the “neo-conservative

Catholics” and the “historically radical” ecumenist, John Paul II, understand each other, because they all understand “the deepest dynamics of Vatican II.” The Council has become a kind of semi-gnostic key to the practice of the Faith—its ineffable teachings understood by few, but without possession of which one is no longer fully Catholic. Johnston even claims that the Pope is serving as the “guide and inspiration [for] a genuine Catholic renewal” which he describes as “a populist phenomenon ... unfolding outside the official Catholic apparatus.” (This “populist phenomenon” does not include any traditionalists or Tridentine Masses.) This gnostic-progressivist vision of the Church is the neo-Catholic idea in full swing, cut loose from all the ecclesiastical traditions, customs and practices that were abandoned in the postconciliar reforms.

A neo-Catholic, then, is someone who more or less lives according to the neo-Catholic idea. The neo-Catholic will maintain that every single one of the postconciliar novelties—including such things as altar girls—must be accepted and defended as legitimate “developments” of Catholic Tradition, even though they are utterly without precedent in the history of the Church. The one and only test that neo-Catholics recognize for the legitimacy of these “developments” is that they were approved by the conciliar Popes. As we will show from neo-Catholic writings, the axiom that papal approval renders something traditional is fundamental to neo-Catholic thought. Thus, in *The Pope, the Council and the Mass*, a lay treatise that has become the bible of neo-Catholicism, we find the following: “If the Church officially approved of a practice ... it follows that what the Church approves is, *by definition*, compatible with Catholic Tradition; for the Church, especially the Holy See, is, again, the arbiter and judge of tradition.”⁸ The neo-Catholic, therefore, recognizes no real qualitative distinction between the Pope’s doctrinal teaching and his legislation, commands, administration or public ecclesiastical policy. In essence, whatever the Pope says or does in the exercise of his office is *ipso facto* “traditional” and incontestable by the Pope’s subjects.

Under this principle, of course, tradition is robbed of all objective content, becoming essentially whatever the Pope says it is. Thus, altar girls would have to be accepted as a “traditional” practice, and the new Mass of Paul VI, which he himself called “this novelty,”⁹ as a “traditional” rite of Mass. In fact, *The Pope, the Council and the Mass* seriously proposes that what Paul VI explicitly called novel was *not* novel: “The Novus Ordo and the other postconciliar liturgical reforms were thus hardly novel and unheard-of when they came about.”¹⁰ And yet in the same book it is admitted that after Vatican II “the Catholic Church embarked on a series of reforms and changes which have scarcely left a single Catholic unaffected; and which, in many respects, have *changed the external image of the Church*”¹¹ When the neo-Catholic remarks this fact, he remarks it blandly, as if it were not a calamity beyond words that for the first time in Church history those entrusted with preserving her common good would dare to alter the very image of the Bride of Christ by stripping away her immemorial liturgy, her immemorial customs and a host of other precious ecclesiastical traditions almost overnight, causing grave confusion and scandal among the faithful. Surveying the vast effects of this incalculable disaster some thirty-five years later, the neo-Catholic (Johnston being a perfect example) professes to wonder what all those “nostalgic” traditionalists are fussing about.

In sum, neo-Catholics gladly defend and practice a form of Catholicism that would have

horrified any Pope before 1960. To appreciate this, one need only imagine Pope St. Pius X attending what today's neo-Catholic would consider a "reverent Novus Ordo Mass," with women, their heads uncovered, serving as "lectors," altar girls assisting the priest and handling the sacred vessels, the priest facing the people over a table, horrendous and doctrinally suspect vernacular translations proclaimed entirely in a loud voice, ecumenically oriented "Eucharistic prayers" that omit every reference to the Mass as propitiatory sacrifice, banal hymns and even pop music, the handshake (or hug) of peace, Communion in the hand, and lay men and women distributing the Sacred Host and Precious Blood to standing communicants. How would St. Pius X react to this spectacle? Obviously, he would react as traditionalists do; and, as Pope, he would order it to cease immediately. But for the neo-Catholic, the same spectacle poses no problem whatever, and in his view of the situation calls only for "obedience" to the ruinous innovations that produced it.

Whether he knows it or not, therefore, the neo-Catholic has broken with Tradition. This is not just a question of the appearance of the Church as a visible commonwealth in her worship and other *praxis*, but also of novel orientations, attitudes and liberal tendencies never been before seen in Catholics who considered themselves faithful.

A prime example is the "Catholic charismatic renewal," an "ecclesial movement" of babbling, "Spirit-filled," interdenominational congregations, who gather in sports arenas and other large venues to be thrilled by raucous music and the exhortations of "anointed" preachers, many of them Protestant ministers.¹² The movement is founded on a clearly heterodox pneumatological conception of the Church, which regards the institution of the Catholic Church as but a visible manifestation, however admirable, of a preexistent pan-denominational "union in the Holy Spirit" with objective heretics. This grotesquerie has penetrated nearly every diocese in North America, and is vigorously promoted by the decidedly neo-Catholic Franciscan University of Steubenville and Mother Angelica's Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN), the media flagship of neo-Catholicism. (That EWTN's strange brew of traditional devotions and appalling novelties is considered rock-solid Catholicism today only indicates the depth of the current crisis.)

Another example is the "neo-Catechumenal Way," a movement whose very name would suggest it is the perfect embodiment of neo-Catholicism. Active in dioceses throughout the world, this Judaized, semi-gnostic, intra-ecclesial sect conducts private, closed-door Saturday night "liturgies" which have been dispensed from all compliance with even the radically liberalized liturgical laws of the Novus Ordo. The neo-liturgy of this sect has no Offertory, and the congregation dances the *horah* around the altar-table before consuming a Host the size and consistency of a personal pan pizza, which tends to crumble and leave fragments all over the floor. The sect's lay founders, Kiko Arguello and Carmen Hernandez, who exhibit a shocking familiarity with the Pope, have concocted a neo-catechism in which the movement's adherents are trained to varying levels of gnostic initiation into the thinking of Kiko and Carmen. This "catechism" is rife with heterodoxy, including the proposition that the Church went astray after the eighth century and became obscured by an accretion of unnecessary customs and structures—precisely what the Protestants say—until its essence was freed again by Vatican II. The sect is armed with a letter of commendation from the Pope himself—which, sad to say, is quite authentic.¹³ (The Pope has repeatedly praised this "ecclesial movement" as one of the "fruits of

One could multiply the examples of neo-Catholic movements that have sprouted like weeds in the devastated vineyard of the postconciliar Church. (The pan-denominational Focolare and Communion and Liberation movements are two others.) But even if these movements do not claim a majority of neo-Catholics as formal members, they are all compatible with the neo-Catholic mentality, which defends them because it has learned to accept the most outrageous and destructive ecclesial innovations as a matter of course, and even as a sign of health and “ferment” in the Church. What is common to all these movements is a rejection of the Church’s supposedly “triumphal” and hide-bound past, her immemorial Latin liturgy and her divinely conferred status as the one true Church outside of which there is neither Church nor salvation.

Moreover, as we will demonstrate, whether or not they have actually joined one of the more overtly pathological, anti-traditional “ecclesial movements,” the generality of neo-Catholics has yielded ground in a number of areas implicating Catholic doctrine: on *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* (the dogma that there is no salvation outside the Church); on the liturgy; on sacred music; on the anti-modernism of the preconciliar Popes; on the preconciliar papal warnings regarding Masonic conspiracies against the Church (which many neo-Catholics find amusing); on the constant condemnation of worship in common with non-Catholics; on the duty of every man and every *nation* to profess the Catholic faith; on the necessity of the Social Kingship of Christ as embodied in the Catholic confessional state; on the right and duty of the Catholic state to restrain the public manifestations of false religions; on the condemnation of the errors of modern liberalism in the *Syllabus* of Pius IX, including “freedom of religion,” “freedom of speech” and “freedom of conscience”; on the literal truth of the Bible as history, especially the first three Chapters of Genesis; on evolution; on classroom sex education (neo-Catholics generally approve “chastity education” curricula, which involve children in classroom discussion of sex); on mixed marriages, and so on.

If one considers as an ensemble all the postconciliar novelties the neo-Catholics have either embraced or defended in the short span of thirty-five years, one sees a mode of religion that is all but unrecognizable as Catholic from the preconciliar standpoint. We know this not by our own lights, as if we were the Magisterium, but by a simple empirical comparison of what was always practiced and believed before the Council with what we see today. Speaking of the new liturgy alone, Msgr. Klaus Gamber has rightly observed:

A Catholic who ceased to be an active member of the Church for the past generation and who, having decided to return to the Church, wants to become religiously active again, probably would not recognize today’s Church as the one he had left. Simply by entering a Catholic church, particularly if it happens to be one of ultra-modern design, he would feel as if he had entered a strange, foreign place. He will think that he must have come to the wrong address and that he accidentally ended up in some other Christian religious community.¹⁵

In addition to the liturgy, one can also make a comparison between the classic precision and kingly majesty of preconciliar Church teaching (seen in the above-quoted passage from *Mortalium Animos*, issued only thirty-seven years before Vatican II) and the current muddle of ambiguous “pastoral” and ecumenical formulations. Every objective sign of the vigor of the Church tells us that the conciliar changes comprising neo-Catholicism have eroded adherence to the infallibly defined dogmas, especially *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*.

The general result has been a *de facto* detachment of the greater part of Catholics from the Church's own precisely crafted dogmatic framework, leaving them to drift in a kind of quasi-Catholicism that may not contain any explicit heresy, but that the preconciliar Popes simply would not regard as authentically and integrally Catholic. Anyone who honestly considers the absolutely unparalleled postconciliar transformation of the vocabulary and *praxis* of the Church would have to admit this.

Neo-Catholicism claims to be motivated by “true” fidelity to Tradition and “true” obedience to the Magisterium, even if that fidelity and obedience have required a series of humiliating about-faces that have undermined the very credibility of the Church. As Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, has admitted regarding the suppression of the traditional Mass by Paul VI: “A community is calling its very being into question when it suddenly declares that what until now was its holiest and highest possession is strictly forbidden, and when it makes the longing for it seem downright indecent.”¹⁶ Yet the neo-Catholic is not disturbed by this threat to the Church's credibility, nor by any of the other self-inflicted blows to her image that have followed in rapid succession, with Vatican approval, since the Council. The neo-Catholic “follows” the Pope, no matter what: “I would rather be wrong with the Pope than right without him” is one of the more risible neo-Catholic bromides.

It needs to be stressed again that we have no intention of suggesting an *en bloc* condemnation of neo-Catholics as a counterweight to the *en bloc* condemnation of traditionalists as “integrist” and “schismatic” by certain neo-Catholic luminaries—charges we discuss in the second Section of this book. That the neo-Catholics have accommodated themselves to the postconciliar revolution does not entitle us to question their orthodoxy or personal piety—any more than neo-Catholics are entitled to question (as they so often do) the Catholic *bona fides* of traditionalists who do not share their quiescent attitude in the face of disaster.

The very emergence of neo-Catholicism reflects an unparalleled situation in the Church, giving rise to a crisis of conscience concerning what our duty as Catholics requires. For while there have always been would-be innovators in the Church, and traditional Catholics to oppose them, *never in the history of the Church have the innovators been the Popes themselves*. As Msgr. Klaus Gamber observed in *The Reform of the Roman Liturgy*: “It is most certainly *not* the function of the Holy See to introduce Church reforms. The first duty of the Pope is to act as primary bishop, *to watch over the traditions of the Church*—her dogmatic, moral and liturgical traditions.”¹⁷ But what happens when the Popes, for the first time ever, venture novelties that effectively abolish a number of those traditions? Neo-Catholicism is one attempt at an answer to that question—an answer we presume has, in most cases, been arrived at in good faith, even if history is already demonstrating that this answer is profoundly wrong.

In sum, traditionalists are convinced that the correct answer to the current ecclesial crisis is a total restoration of the ecclesiastical and apostolic traditions that were abandoned or suppressed an historical moment ago for the sake of the unprecedented postconciliar experiment in reform, and a return as well to the uncompromising Scholastic clarity and vigor of the preconciliar Magisterium. The neo-Catholics, on the other hand, see no fundamental problem with the approved postconciliar novelties (all of which they

defend as consistent with Catholic Tradition), and tend to question the Catholicity of traditionalists for believing otherwise.

These, then, are the parties—traditionalist and neo-Catholic—and this is the controversy between them. The final outcome of the controversy may well determine the direction of the Roman Catholic Church in the Third Millennium.

1. It is essential that we make clear at the outset that this book is not intended to lend any support to the claim that the See of Peter is currently vacant due to the “heresy” of the Pope (“sedevacantism”), or that Paul VI promulgated an invalid rite of Mass. Those who attack traditionalists on the basis of these views are, so far as we are concerned, jousting with straw men. We do not deny that the former hypothesis is an accepted theological opinion in the Church, recognized as such by doctors of the Church, commentaries on canon law and so forth. We do deny, however, that present-day sedevacantists have proven their claim that the conciliar Popes lost their offices due to heresy, which involves the obstinate post-baptismal denial or doubt of an article of divine and Catholic faith (for example, the Assumption), not just any teaching of the Magisterium (for example, the undoubtedly vindicated preconciliar papal condemnation of the ecumenical movement). Cf. Canon 751.

2. Pius XI, *Mortalium Animos*, nn. 10,11. Emphasis ours here and throughout, unless otherwise indicated.

3. This question is discussed at length in [Chapter 7](#).

4. Literally, “after this, therefore because of this.” Such reasoning is at work anytime someone claims a causal connection between events A and B simply because B followed A in temporal sequence.

5. It is an empirical fact, demonstrated by every available statistic, that the postconciliar liturgical reform and the commencement of programmatic “ecumenism” and “dialogue” were followed immediately by precipitous declines in the number of priests, the number of new ordinations, the number of seminarians, the number of conversions and baptisms, and the percentage of Catholics attending Mass. In the immediate aftermath of the Council, an astounding 50,000 priests defected, and today there remain approximately 50,000 fewer Catholic priests than there were *thirty-one years ago*. In 1997 there were fewer baptisms in the United States than there were in 1970! See, e.g., statistical analysis of the priesthood in *L’Osservatore Romano*, 13/20 August 1997, and “The Index of Leading Catholic Indicators,” *The Latin Mass*, Winter 2000, presenting extensive data from the Vatican’s *Statistical Yearbook of the Church* and other standard reference works.

6. Traditionalist writer Michael Matt made this point in an article entitled “The Ugly Traditionalist,” which appeared in *The Remnant* of February 15, 2000. That article demonstrates that the leaders of the traditionalist movement are capable of recognizing problems within the traditionalist current, unlike neo-Catholic leaders, who admit to no excesses within their own ranks, even including the bizarre charismaticism promoted by such neo-Catholic organs as the Franciscan University of Steubenville.

7. *Crisis*, May 1996, p. 6.

8. James Likoudis and Kenneth D. Whitehead, *The Pope, the Council and the Mass* (rev. ed., W. Hanover: The Christopher Publishing House, 1981), pp. 71–72. (Hereafter PCM.)

9. Cf. Audience address of November 26, 1969.

10. PCM, p. 75.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

12. John Vennari, “A Catholic Charismatic Jubilee,” a five-part series that appeared in the August, September, October, and November 2001 and January 2002 issues of *Catholic Family News*. Vennari has been the primary chronicler of the charismatic movement, and has documented its behavior via videotape, audiotape, and studies of their own literature. He has also written at length on EWTN’s promotion of charismaticism.

13. Fr. Enrico Zoffoli has written an extensive expose of the movement entitled *La Via Neo-Catechumenale*, a compendium of testimonies documenting the heterodoxy and gross liturgical abuses of the movement in Italy, where (as in the United States) it is systematically undermining the parish structure and the integrity of the family by dividing spouses from each other. The movement’s neo-catechism and gnostic characteristics have been exposed by former “neo-catechumenate” Mark Alessio in a series of articles in *Catholic Family News*.

14. “The catechumens of the first centuries were a very important reality in the Church: I believe that what they did for the faith in those days, *the Neocatechumenal Communities are doing today*.” (Papal visit to the parish of St. Timothy,

Rome, 10 February 1980.) John Paul II's many tributes to the movement are collected at members.aol.com/hta/fatherpius/neo3.html. A letter from John Paul II to Msgr. Cordes of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, dated August 30, 1999, specifically approving the movement's activities, appears to be genuine. See members.lycos.co.uk/jloughnan/append7.htm.

15. Klaus Gamber, *The Reform of the Roman Liturgy: Its Problems and Background* (Harrison, NY: Foundation for Catholic Reform, 1993), p. 107.

16. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, trans. Adrian Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997), p. 176.

17. Gamber, *The Reform of the Roman Liturgy*, p. 97.

The Problem of Novelty

“Pass not beyond the ancient bounds which thy fathers have set”—Proverbs 22:28

As the Introduction and previous [chapter](#) suggest, our debate with the neo-Catholics centers around one word: *novelty*. We have noted that the neo-Catholic tends to condemn the traditionalist Catholic for the latter’s instinctive opposition to novelty. What the neo-Catholic fails to recognize is that this instinct is as important to the health of the Church as the instinct of self-preservation is to the health of living creatures.

The Church’s perennial counsel against the embrace of substantial ecclesial novelties of any kind, not just doctrinal ones, was recapitulated by Pope St. Pius X in his monumental encyclical *Pascendi*:

But for Catholics nothing will remove the authority of the second Council of Nicea, where it condemns those “who dare, after the impious fashion of heretics, to deride the *ecclesiastical traditions*, to invent novelties of some kind ... or endeavor by malice or craft to overthrow *any one of the legitimate traditions* of the Catholic Church.”... Wherefore the Roman Pontiffs, Pius IV and Pius IX, ordered the insertion in the profession of faith of the following declaration: “I most firmly admit and embrace the apostolic *and ecclesiastical* traditions and *other observances* and constitutions of the Church.”

Elsewhere in the encyclical the Pope exclaimed, “Far, far from our priests be the love of novelty!”

The Magisterium’s constant abhorrence of ecclesial novelty is nowhere more apparent than in the anathemas of the Second Council of Nicea, cited and reaffirmed by Saint Pius X in *Pascendi*. Convened by Pope Hadrian I in 787 to deal with the iconoclast heretics and the bishops who had supported them with illicit decrees, Nicea II issued these anathemas:

If anyone does not *confess* that Christ our God can be represented in his humanity, let him be anathema.

If anyone does not *accept* representation in art of evangelical scenes, let him be anathema.

If anyone does not *salute* such representations as standing for the Lord and his saints, let him be anathema.

And, lest there be any doubt that all of the received and approved ecclesiastical traditions of the Church are to be regarded as part of the Church’s untouchable patrimony:

If anyone rejects *any* written or *unwritten* tradition of the church, let him be anathema.

Does this mean, as the neo-Catholics charge, that traditionalists are “immobilists” who hold that *nothing* in the Church may ever change and that the Church must remain frozen in time? This is a caricature of the traditionalist position. Traditionalists, being Catholics, recognize and embrace legitimate change in the Church through *gradual growth in the content* of ecclesiastical tradition. The Rosary is the perfect example of a gradually developed devotion that is now an integral part of the Church’s spiritual patrimony. What Pope would dare to abolish or rewrite the prayers of the Rosary? And yet the neo-Catholics tell us there was nothing terribly amiss in Paul VI’s *de facto* abolition of the received and approved traditional rite of Mass and his revision of the entire liturgy by committee! Never, before Paul VI, had there been ecclesial change in the sense of a sudden *amputation* of something the Church had received and approved over the centuries

as one of her traditions. (Which is not to mention that the traditional Mass combines both Apostolic and ecclesiastical tradition, as we discuss elsewhere.) Nor had the Church ever seen, before Vatican II, the abrupt introduction of innumerable ecclesiastical novelties in virtually every area of the Church's life.

Neo-Catholics have no answer to the claim that St. Pius X would be even more horrified than today's traditionalist by the postconciliar novelties, especially the new liturgy and the new "ecumenical" activity of the Church. They have no answer because they know it is true. The *sensus catholicus* abhors innovation; and not just innovation in what neo-Catholics misleadingly call the "substance" of the Faith—as if everything else could be changed with safety. The teaching of St. Pius X, echoed by all his predecessors, is that not only apostolic Tradition, but *all* the ecclesiastical traditions and customs that have been woven into the life of the Church over the centuries must be defended against unnecessary and dramatic change, lest the Church's commonwealth be so disrupted that the faithful are thrown into a state of confusion and alienation that endangers the Faith itself.

That is precisely what has happened in the postconciliar epoch. Since 1960 the Church has been overtaken by a swarm of novelties without precedent: a new rite of Mass, a new liturgical calendar, new sacramental rituals, a new ecumenism, a new rapprochement with non-Christian religions, a new "dialogue with the world," a new rule of life in seminaries, priestly orders and convents, a "new evangelization," and even a "new theology," whose new vocabulary has largely replaced what the Pamphlet (in typical neo-Catholic fashion) belittles as "high metaphysical abstractions" in the Church's preconciliar teaching.

As John Henry Cardinal Newman showed in his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, the sudden emergence of some novelty in the Church that is not the natural and almost imperceptible outgrowth of everything that came before it would be a sign, not of life and growth, but of corruption—just as the sudden emergence of a tumor is a sign of corruption in the human body. As Newman put it, a proposition "is likely to be a true development, not a corruption, in proportion as it seems to be the *logical issue* of its original teaching" (emphasis in original). Likewise, as "developments which are preceded by definite indications have a fair presumption in their favor, so those which do but contradict and reverse the course of doctrine which has been developed before them, and out of which they spring, is certainly corrupt."¹ It is manifest that every one of the suddenly emergent postconciliar novelties has produced a corresponding corruption in the Church:

- The new liturgy has produced a loss of Eucharistic faith and respect for the Blessed Sacrament and a decline in Mass attendance.
- The new liturgical calendar and cycle of readings have produced (as Msgr. Klaus Gamber noted) a loss of the sense of place and a diminished inculcation of scriptural lessons, especially the "hard sayings" of Scripture, which have been largely eliminated or neutralized by tendentious translations that are really dishonest paraphrases.
- The new ecumenism has produced a relative protestantization of the Catholic liturgy and faithful, accompanied by the confirmation of Protestants in their errors and the accelerated moral and doctrinal decomposition of Protestant sects over the course of the "ecumenical dialogues." (Ironically enough, the evangelical sects that have shunned the ecumenical venture, such as the Missouri Synod Lutherans and the Southern Baptists, are those that remain closest to Catholic moral teaching.)
- The new rapprochement with non-Christian religions has produced the near-extinction of the Church's

traditional missionary activity which aimed at saving souls whose false religions imprisoned them in darkness (as Pius XI described Islam, for example); and this development has been accompanied by the perception that good hope is to be entertained for the salvation of all non-Christians—the very proposition condemned in Pius IX’s Syllabus of Errors.²

- The new sacramental rituals have produced a loss of the understanding of what the sacraments mean, baptism in particular having become in practice a mere initiation rite, with the subject of original sin barely mentioned, if at all.
- As Paul VI admitted, “the opening to the world has produced a veritable invasion of the Church by worldly thinking”;³ the world, on the other hand, has only hastened to descend toward utter barbarity, while Church authorities continue to insist upon “dialogue” rather than teaching with the authority of God, condemning error and warning the world that its sins merit eternal damnation.
- The reform of the seminaries, the priestly orders and the convents has produced an emptying of all three, and a deeply neo-modernist formation in the few men and women who still enter. (Only a return to the traditional rule and formation in some places has produced new vocations in any great numbers.)
- The “new evangelization” (in conjunction with the new ecumenism and the new liturgy) has produced a profound decline in conversions and vocations compared with the immediate preconconciliar period, but also a great number of semi-autonomous “ecclesial movements” of bizarre character. These include a frenzied, pan-denominational, charismatic gnosticism, horrifying to behold, which replaces the sound piety and inward composure exemplified by the saints of the Church.

On the matter of the Church’s new vocabulary, the search for a new way of “speaking to the world” has produced a bewildering collection of neologisms lacking any of the classical precision of Catholic doctrine: “collegiality,” “dialogue,” “dialogue with the world,” “interreligious dialogue,” “ecumenism,” “ecumenical venture,” “ecumenical dialogue,” “partial communion,” “imperfect communion,” “reconciled diversity,” “the Church of the new Advent,” “the new springtime of Vatican II,” “the new Pentecost,” “the new Evangelization,” “the civilization of love,” “the purification of memory,” “responsible parenthood,” “solidarity,” “the globalization of solidarity,” “the Spirit of Assisi,” “what unites us is greater than what divides us,” and so on. Although these words and phrases evade any precise definition, they have become the watchwords of post-conciliar thinking.

Never before in Church history has the activity of the Church come to be governed by slogans and buzzwords that appear nowhere in the perennial Magisterium. In consequence, never has the Church’s message been so uncertain, as even the 1999 Synod of European bishops was forced to admit.⁴

In sum, the historical record of the postconciliar novelties is indisputably a record of corruption, failure and confusion in every area those novelties have touched. As Cardinal Ratzinger has candidly admitted:

The results of the Council seem cruelly to have contradicted the expectations everybody had, beginning with John XXIII and Paul VI.... [W]e have been confronted instead with *a continuing process of decay* that has gone on largely on the basis of appeals to the Council, and thus has discredited the Council in the eyes of many people.⁵

Cardinal Ratzinger went on to say: “It is my *opinion* that the misfortunes the Church has met with in the last twenty years are not due to the true Council itself, but to an unleashing *within the Council* of latent, aggressive, polemical and centrifugal forces.” Some seventeen years after the Cardinal’s remarks, however, the evidence of an even deeper “process of decay” permits us to advance beyond the Cardinal’s opinion—and he

was careful to say it was only that—to express an opinion of our own: that the “true Council” is indeed part of the problem. And the problem is novelty.

Part 4 of the Pamphlet, in accord with neo-Catholic thinking, claims that John Paul II has decreed definitively that the Council and all the innovations it engendered are perfectly in line with Tradition, and that no one may suggest or even think otherwise. To support this extravagant claim, the Pamphlet quotes, not an encyclical, a *motu proprio* or some other formal papal teaching addressed to the universal Church, but a single sentence from a speech by John Paul II to a symposium on the implementation of Vatican II: “To read the Council assuming it supposes a rupture with the past, when in reality it is aligned with the everlasting faith, is clearly erroneous.”⁶

In the first place, the Pamphlet exhibits typical neo-Catholic confusion about the scope of the Magisterium when it asserts that a papal speech to a symposium means that “Rome has spoken” and that “the question is closed for any Catholic.” If papal speeches to particular groups could bind the universal Church, then it would be inevitable that the Pope would bind the Church to error. For example, every Catholic would now be required to believe, as the Pope declared in a sermon on the death penalty, that “the dignity of human life must *never* be taken away, even in the case of someone who has done great evil” and that the death penalty should be abolished as “cruel and unnecessary.”⁷ Clearly, no Catholic is obliged to believe that the death penalty may *never* be imposed or that it should be abolished as a moral evil. Such a teaching is undeniably contrary to all Tradition, as was (to give a remote historical example) the repeated sermonizing of Pope John XXII on the particular judgment, wherein that fourteenth-century Pope denied that the blessed departed enter immediately into eternal beatitude after purgatory, and the condemned immediately into hell after judgment.⁸ In neither case was the Pope speaking with any intention to bind the universal Church to a matter of doctrine. (John XXII retracted his erroneous view on his deathbed.)

Moreover, to say that the Council is “aligned with the everlasting Faith” or that the Council as a whole does not “suppose a rupture with the past” (it is remarkable that a Pope would even have to make such protestations about an ecumenical council) is not quite the same thing as saying that every novel formulation in the conciliar texts is perfectly in line with Tradition. We recall that in the *nota praevia* (preliminary note) to *Lumen Gentium* the council expressly disclaimed any intention to formulate binding doctrine unless it openly declared such intention.⁹ The Council wished to have the freedom to indulge in non-traditional “pastoral” formulations, whose very novelty alarmed a number of the Council fathers, leading to the *nota praevia*. On this point we have the posthumously revealed testimony of Bishop Thomas Morris, a Council father: “I was relieved when we were told that this Council was *not aiming at defining or giving final statements on doctrine*, because a statement of doctrine has to be very carefully formulated and I would have regarded the Council documents as *tentative and liable to be reformed*”¹⁰ Once the Council was over, however, we were suddenly told that it had been a veritable Vesuvius of Catholic doctrine. This hardly seems fair to the Council fathers, who were assured otherwise by the Council’s theological commission.¹¹

Considering the Pope’s symposium statement further, it does not seem to us that the Holy Father was saying exactly what the Pamphlet’s author claims he said. Here we find

that the author has carefully cropped a quotation to avoid certain words he evidently viewed as inconvenient. In the immediately preceding sentence in the Zenit news account from which the Pamphlet quotes, the following appears: “[I]t is necessary not to lose the genuine intention of the Council Fathers; on the contrary, it must be recovered, overcoming cautious and partial interpretations that impeded expressing to the maximum the *novelty* of the Council Magisterium.”

In other words, the Pope said that the Church has been *too cautious* in expressing “to the maximum” the *novelties* of Vatican II. Here John Paul II echoes the sentiment of Paul VI, who declared: “The important words of the Council are *newness* and updating ... ; the word *newness* has been given to us as an *order*, as a program.”¹² What this statement could possibly mean is among the innumerable mysteries of postconciliar thinking.

And when one consults the original text of the Pope’s symposium remarks, one finds the following sentence immediately *after* the one selected for the Pamphlet: “What has been believed by ‘everyone, always and everywhere’ is the authentic *newness* that enables every era to perceive the light that comes from the word of God’s Revelation in Jesus Christ.”

The Pamphlet’s misuse of the papal address is shameful, but it serves as a good example of how neo-Catholics strive to conceal the full import of what the Pope says so often about Vatican II, in order to maintain the fiction that it fits seamlessly into the line of all the other councils. It cannot be denied, however, that Vatican II is the first council in the history of the Church whose strict continuity with Tradition *is not self-evident*.¹³ If it were self-evident, Cardinal Ratzinger would not have been motivated to publish comments like the following:

The Second Vatican Council has not been treated as part of the entire living Tradition of the Church, but as an end of Tradition, a new start from zero.... That which was previously considered most holy—the form in which the liturgy was handed down—suddenly appears as the most forbidden of all things, the one thing that can safely be prohibited. It is intolerable to criticize decisions which have been taken since the Council; on the other hand, if men make question of ancient rules, or even of the great truths of the faith ... nobody complains or only does so with great moderation.... *All of this leads a great number of people to ask themselves if the Church of today is really the same as the Church of yesterday, or if they have changed it for something else without telling people.* The one way in which Vatican II can be made plausible is to present it as it is; one part of the unbroken, the unique tradition of the Church and of her faith.¹⁴

But why should the Council have to be “*made plausible*” if, as the neo-Catholics would have it, the Council’s plausibility—that is, its complete harmony with Tradition—is already perfectly clear?

That the Council and the conciliar Popes have given us *something* utterly novel is admitted in Pope John Paul II’s inaugural encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis*. Referring in part to “the new ecumenical orientation” of the Church introduced by the Council and the conciliar Popes, His Holiness declared:

Entrusting myself fully to the Spirit of truth, therefore, I am entering into the rich inheritance of the recent pontificates. This inheritance has struck deep roots in the awareness of the Church in an *utterly new way, quite unknown previously, thanks to the Second Vatican Council*, which John XXIII convened and opened and which was later successfully concluded and perseveringly put into effect by Paul VI¹⁵

Before Vatican II, when has a Pope ever proclaimed a whole “new orientation” of the

Church, ecumenical or otherwise? And what other council in Church history disclosed anything “utterly new” and “quite unknown previously” in the realm of doctrine? How can a *doctrine* of the Church, if it is a doctrine, be something “quite unknown” before 1965? Are we now to understand that the Holy Spirit could have left the Church unaware of some important truth of the Faith for nearly 2,000 years?

Unlike the author of the Pamphlet, some neo-Catholic commentators are honest enough to admit that the Council and the conciliar Popes have introduced true novelties into the Church. Taking the bull by the horns, they openly declare that John Paul II is an innovator, who sees in Vatican II (as did Paul VI) a mandate for previously unheard-of progressivist undertakings. A striking example of candor in this regard is found in John Beaumont’s review of neo-Catholic George Weigel’s biography of the Pope: “One possible cause for concern in relation to the phenomenon of Pope John Paul II is the sometimes *breathhtaking nature of his innovative teaching*. It is *natural* for Catholics to be wary *and wonder whether all of this can fit in with the tradition*.”¹⁶ It certainly would be only natural to wonder whether “breathhtaking” innovations are traditional! Beaumont lets this bomb drop without seeming to notice the explosion. He contents himself with the later observation that, since we have a “guaranteed Church,” we should assume that breathtaking innovations are merely “developments” of settled doctrine.

But such explanations are unsatisfactory. They offer no answer to the sedevacantists, who pounce upon such lame arguments and pronounce victory: “See,” they exclaim, “a change in Church teaching is admitted! But since the Church cannot change her teaching, those who have changed it, including the Pope, cannot be members of the Church!” In rebutting the sedevacantists, we must offer a more sensible explanation for the “phenomenon of John Paul II” and the postconciliar developments as a whole than: “Fear not, all these breathtaking innovations are traditional.”

Let us propose an explanation here.

When the Holy Father used the phrase “everyone, always and everywhere” in the address to the symposium on Vatican II, he was referring to the criterion by which the Church knows that a doctrine is Catholic: that everyone, everywhere in the Church, has *always* believed it. To use the classic formula of St. Vincent Lerins: *quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est* (what has been believed everywhere, always and by everyone). Even papal pronouncements respect this criterion, and cases of the infallible definition of doctrine are aimed precisely at declaring what has been believed *quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus*. John Paul II here proposes a resolution of the apparent oxymoron of novel tradition by suggesting that the Church has always believed in “authentic newness.” But if the Church has always believed in authentic newness, whatever that means, then why has the Church not always said so? And in what, exactly, does this authentic newness consist *in terms of Catholic doctrine*? Is there any real *doctrinal* content to the conciliar “program” of “newness” remarked by Paul VI and carried out by his successor?

Or is John Paul II referring to Catholic doctrine at all when he uses such phrases as “utterly new,” “quite unknown previously,” and “the new ecumenical orientation”? What is the import of such phrases if they do not refer to *doctrines* a Catholic must believe?

As the First Vatican Council solemnly declared, not even the Pope can give us new doctrines of the Faith. “For the Holy Spirit was not promised to the Successors of Peter that by His revelation they might disclose new doctrine, but that by His help they might *guard* the revelation transmitted through the apostles and the deposit of faith, and might faithfully set it forth.”¹⁷ The Pope is divinely appointed to guard, explicate and pass on the content of Revelation descended from the apostles, but he is incapable of discovering therein any new doctrines, because *they have not been revealed to us by God*. No one denies that there has been legitimate development of doctrine over the centuries in the sense of more explicit and binding statements of what has *always* been believed. But as the First Vatican Council also solemnly declared: “Hence, also, that understanding of its sacred dogmas must be perpetually maintained, which Holy Mother Church has once declared; and there must never be a recession from that meaning *under the pretext of a deeper understanding*.”¹⁸ Thus, so far as Catholic *doctrine* is concerned, “breathtaking” innovations in the space of a single pontificate, or “developments” that are “utterly new” and “quite unknown previously” are, as the Church herself infallibly teaches, beyond the power of the Magisterium.

Therefore, it would appear to us to be impossible that the postconciliar novelties in teaching (we are not here considering disciplinary measures or canon law that are subject to change) could be Catholic doctrines in the proper sense. Yet we have before us today a multitude of seemingly novel teachings, especially in the previously non-existent fields of “ecumenism” and “dialogue.” What precisely is this unparalleled profusion of ecclesial novelties? Are we dealing with Catholic doctrine that we must embrace? Has the Church discovered in the past thirty-five years theological truths that had been hidden for nearly twenty centuries? Has the impossible happened?

We invite the reader to consider whether any of the postconciliar novelties we have already outlined are reducible to a concrete statement of Catholic doctrine that would bind the universal Church to adhere with either a religious assent or the assent of faith to a *proposition* Catholics had not always believed before Vatican II. We are convinced that no such discrete doctrinal propositions can be found anywhere in the teaching of the Council or the conciliar Popes, nor anywhere in the entire vast program of postconciliar innovation. Rather, it seems to us that the postconciliar novelties all operate below the level of the authentic Magisterium and are to be found entirely in the realm of the pastoral in various forms: activities, “orientations,” undertakings, initiatives, dialogues, exhortations, opinions, observations, predictions and statements of fact, and ambiguous new expressions—all of which lack the character of binding Catholic doctrine.

As a matter of fact, the failure of the postconciliar novelties to rise to the level of formal, binding doctrine, even though they are “teachings” of a kind, is the reason the sedevacantists are wrong to accuse the Council and the conciliar Popes of heresy and to declare the papal throne vacant. As already noted, there can be no heresy without the obstinate denial of some article of divine and Catholic faith, and this cannot be found in any of the pronouncements of the conciliar Popes; nor can their conduct, as such, constitute a formal heresy, for heresy is a *propositional* offense, not a form of physical misconduct, even if that misconduct gives scandal.

This is not to say that one cannot find, at a level *below* the universal Magisterium,

numerous apparent propositional contradictions between pre- and post-conciliar teaching concerning a number of lesser matters, and neo-Catholics are at their most unreasonable when they deny this.¹⁹ But none of these apparent contradictions involves the formal repudiation of any article of divine and Catholic faith, even if it can be shown that the new teachings tend *materially* to oppose Catholic tradition. It is no use ignoring such things as the following:

- A line of preconciliar Popes condemned any collaboration with Communists or participation in Communist movements because of danger to the faith of Catholics from any close cooperation with atheists, but in *Pacem in Terris* Pope John XXIII taught the novel distinction that the supposedly positive aims of Communist movements could be supported apart from the immoral founding principles of Communism—the very distinction rejected as a trap for the faithful by Pius XI in *Divini Redemptoris*.²⁰
- The preconciliar Popes uniformly condemned the contention that the received and approved rite of Mass had fallen into obscurity and ought to be “simplified,”²¹ but Paul VI approved an entirely new and simplified rite which Cardinals Bacci and Ottaviani were constrained to protest as “a striking departure from the Catholic theology of the Mass as it was formulated in Session XXII of the Council of Trent.”
- The preconciliar Popes taught that the Latin liturgy must be preserved as a barrier against heresy and a bond of unity in the Church, but Paul VI taught that it must be abandoned because “understanding of prayer is more important than the silken garments in which it is royally dressed”²²—thus contradicting even the teaching of his own immediate predecessor, Pope John XXIII.²³
- The preconciliar Popes and Councils condemned the idea of an all-vernacular Mass in which the Roman Canon was said aloud, but Paul VI approved it and pronounced it good, as does his successor.²⁴
- After forbidding women altar servers in *Inestimabile Donum* 18, in line with an unbroken 2,000-year-old tradition, John Paul II suddenly reversed himself and now teaches that altar girls are an enrichment of the liturgy.²⁵
- The preconciliar Popes condemned any common worship with Protestants as a danger to the Faith, but the Council opened the door to it and John Paul II (expressly and by example) teaches that common prayer and even joint liturgies with Protestant ministers (who condone abortion, contraception and divorce) is essential to the “search” for “Christian unity.”²⁶
- The preconciliar Popes taught that the schismatic Orthodox must return to the Catholic Church, but the Balamand Statement, whose teaching is commended by the Pope in *Ut Unum Sint* 60, states that thanks to “radically altered perspectives and thus attitudes” engendered by Vatican II, the Catholic Church will train new priests “to pave the way for future relations between the two Churches, passing beyond *the outdated ecclesiology of return to the Catholic Church*.”²⁷
- The constant teaching of the Church is that the New Covenant supersedes the Old, but Cardinal Walter Kasper, speaking as the papally appointed President of the Pontifical Council for Religious Relations with the Jews, declared that “*the old theory of substitution is gone since the Second Vatican Council*. For us Christians today, the covenant with the Jewish people is a living heritage, a living reality.... Therefore, the Church believes that Judaism, i.e., the faithful response of the Jewish people to God’s irrevocable covenant, *is salvific for them*, because God is faithful to his promises.”²⁸
- The preconciliar Popes taught that the Catholic Church and the Mystical Body of Christ were one and the same thing and that the Catholic Church was the one true Church, but the Balamand Statement on relations between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox declares that “the Catholic Churches and the Orthodox Churches recognize each other as sister Churches, responsible together for maintaining the *Church of God* in fidelity to the divine purpose....”²⁹
- The act of consecration of the world to the Sacred Heart, promulgated by Pius XI only thirty-five years before Vatican II, prays for the deliverance of souls from “the darkness of idolatry or of Islamism,” and their entry “into

the light and kingdom of God,” but Vatican II teaches in *Lumen Gentium* 16 that Muslims “together with us adore the one merciful God.”

- Although the Church has condemned and opposed the diabolical religion of Islam since it was first invented by the man called Muhammad, John Paul II (citing *Lumen Gentium* 16) recently declared that “the two religions [Catholicism and Islam] can be signs of hope, making the world more aware of the wisdom and mercy of God,” and he further declared in March 2000, “May St. John the Baptist protect Islam....” [30](#)

- *Mortalium Animos* by Pius XI condemned as error the belief that all religions are more or less good and praiseworthy, whereas John Paul II has taught that God has bestowed spiritual treasures on every people in the form of their various religions; and in keeping with this view the Pope has repeatedly invited “representatives” of all religions—monotheistic, polytheistic and even non-theistic—to Assisi to offer prayers for world peace (which prayers he evidently regards as pleasing to God), even allowing the use of rooms in the Sacred Convent of St. Francis to conduct pagan rituals in honor of various gods and spirits during the Assisi event in 2002. [31](#)

- In *Quanta Cura* and the appended *Syllabus of Errors*, Bl. Pius IX condemned the errors of liberalism on which modern political societies are based, including the principle that “liberty of conscience and of worship is the proper right of every man, and should be proclaimed and asserted by law in every correctly established society,” but in *Dignitatis Humanae* Vatican II taught that “religious freedom must be given such recognition in the constitutional order of society as will make it a civil right.” Cardinal Ratzinger openly admits that *Dignitatis Humanae* (together with *Gaudium et Spes*) is “a countersyllabus, a revision of the *Syllabus* of Pius IX” which corrects “the one-sidedness [!] of the position adopted by the Church under Pius IX and Pius X.” [32](#)

- The preconciliar teaching (repeated even in the 1992 version of the Catechism, but deleted in the 1997 version) affirmed the right and duty of the state to impose the death penalty for sufficiently grave offenses, but John Paul II has recently taught that the death penalty is “cruel and unnecessary” and should never be imposed “even in the case of someone who has done a great evil”—thus contradicting not only the 1992 version of the Catechism, but even the 1997 version, which at least allows for the death penalty in certain unspecified though “practically non-existent” cases. [33](#)

- While Pius XII, in *Humani Generis*, forbade the presentation of the theory of evolution as if it were a proven fact, [34](#) John Paul II has given numerous statements which do precisely that, including his famous 1996 declaration that evolution is “more than a mere hypothesis.” [35](#)

- While the constant teaching of the Church, reflected in the Apostles’ Creed and even the new Catechism (§631, et seq.), is that after the Crucifixion and before the Resurrection, the Soul of Christ descended into Hell (*sheol*, or the Limbo of the Fathers) to deliver the souls there into Heaven, John Paul II asserted in his audience address of January 1, 1989, that this teaching means only that Christ’s Body experienced death and was placed in the earth (i.e., the Tomb), while His soul was glorified in Heaven. [36](#)

- While the *de fide* teaching of the Church, revealed by Christ himself, is that the souls of the damned are in hell, John Paul II has suggested that it has not been revealed to us that any human beings at all are in hell. [37](#) Here the Pope appears to flirt with the thesis of von Balthasar that one can “hope” that *not a single malefactor in all of human history* has gone into eternal punishment. [38](#) (The Pope wished to bestow the cardinal’s red hat on von Balthasar, who dropped dead only hours before receiving it.)

- The preconciliar Popes, following the teaching of St. Paul, taught that the wife was subject to the authority of the husband and must obey him as the Church obeys Christ (assuming the husband’s commands are just and moral), but John Paul II has taught that St. Paul meant that this subjection was *mutual* and that he was merely speaking in a way suited to the culture of his time. [39](#)

The Pope’s teaching on wifely subjection to the husband, just noted, bears particular examination as an example of apparent contradictions between the teaching of the pre- and postconciliar Popes. In his encyclical *Arcanum*, on Christian Marriage, Leo XIII forcefully and clearly restated the traditional teaching:

The husband is *the chief of the family and the head of the wife*. The woman, because she is flesh of his flesh, and

bone of his bone, *must be subject to her husband and obey him*; not, indeed, as a servant, but as a companion, so that her *obedience* shall be wanting in neither honor nor dignity. *Since the husband represents Christ, and since the wife represents the Church*, let there always be, both *in him who commands and in her who obeys*, a heaven-born love guiding both in their respective duties. For “the husband is the head of the wife; as Christ is the head of the Church.... *Therefore, as the Church is subject to Christ, so also let wives be to their husbands in all things.*”

In *Mulieris Dignitatem*, however, John Paul II states:

The author of the Letter to the Ephesians [i.e., St. Paul] sees no contradiction between an exhortation formulated in this way and the words: “Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife” (5:22–23). The author knows that this way of speaking, so profoundly rooted *in the customs and religious tradition of the time*, is to be understood and carried out in a new way: as a “mutual subjection out of reverence for Christ” (cf. Eph 5:21)... Whereas in the relationship between Christ and the Church, the subjection is *only on the part of the Church*, in the relationship between husband and wife, the “subjection” is *not one-sided but mutual*.

It must be noted, first of all, that John Paul II presents his teaching in *Mulieris Dignitatem* as a personal “meditation” written in the first person.⁴⁰ This is typical of the manner in which, during the postconciliar era, the faithful have been presented with a profusion of papal pronouncements whose level of authority and binding nature are far from apparent, but which neo-Catholics portray as definitive teaching that no one may question.

To all appearances, this meditation on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians flatly contradicts the teaching of Leo XIII, who emphasized precisely the point that Ephesians 5:22-23—which is to say, God Himself—teaches that subjection is required not “*only on the part of the Church*” to Christ, as John Paul II asserts, but *also on the part of the wife to her husband*, because in the order of familial authority the husband represents Christ and the wife represents the Church, as Pope Leo taught explicitly in the above-quoted passage. It is significant that John Paul II quotes only the beginning of the key sentence from Ephesians—“For the husband is the head of the wife”—while omitting the conclusion: “*as Christ is the head of the Church.*”

John Paul II also apparently contradicts Pius XI on the same point. In *Casti Connubii*, Pius XI, referring explicitly to the teaching of Leo XIII, affirmed that the order of the family ordained by divine law “includes ... the *primacy of the husband* with regard to the wife and children, *the ready subjection of the wife and her willing obedience*, which the Apostle commands in these words: ‘Let women be subject to their husbands as to the Lord, *because the husband is the head of the wife, and Christ is the head of the Church.*’” Pius XI further taught that “this subjection of wife to husband in its degree and manner may vary according to the different conditions of persons, place and time. In fact, if the husband neglect his duty, it falls to the wife to take *his place* in directing the family. But the structure of the family *and its fundamental law, established and confirmed by God*, must always and everywhere be maintained intact.” That is, wifely submission to the husband’s authority to direct the family is part of divine law itself.

Indeed, it is impossible to see how authority could exist any more in the family than in the Church if there were a “mutual subjection” and no ruler-subject relation between the spouses. The whole notion of “mutual subjection” is a conundrum, since there cannot be a subject without a ruler, nor a ruler without a subject, and neither the Church nor the family can have two heads.⁴¹

Also troubling is the Pope’s suggestion that St. Paul’s teaching is but “a way of

speaking” arising from “the customs and religious tradition of the time.” In the first place, the “religious tradition of the time” was Christianity. Furthermore, does not St. Paul mean exactly what his words signify, and what Pope Leo XIII and Pope Pius XI both affirmed they signify—that the wife is subject to the husband as the Church is subject to Christ? Is not God Himself the author of those words, which were written “wholly and entirely, with all their parts, *at the dictation of the Holy Ghost*,” to recall the teaching of Pope Leo in *Providentissimus Deus*? Are the Catholic faithful to conclude, then, that God dictated His revelation of the divinely ordained constitution of the family in language that was culturally determined and needed to be “unpacked” by historico-critical exegesis, and that Pope Leo, Pope Pius and all their predecessors misinterpreted Ephesians by reading it too literally? What then of St. Paul’s teaching on homosexuality, and all the other “hard sayings” of the New Testament? Were these, too, “ways of speaking” that are now to be understood in some different sense? That is surely not what Pope John Paul II intends, but that is what his apparent revision of the “hard saying” on wifely subjection would suggest to some.

This example alone suffices to demonstrate that it will not do to insist, as the neo-Catholics do, that one is not even allowed to think that there could be a contradiction between the teaching of the conciliar Popes and their predecessors on any point, because every papal utterance is *ipso facto* consistent with Tradition. To assert that one Pope may never contradict another in anything he proposes as Catholic teaching is to expand the charism of papal infallibility to include every single papal utterance touching on Catholic doctrine, contrary to the strict limits on papal infallibility in the definition of Vatican I, which we discuss further on. Given that the published statements of John Paul II (according to his neo-Catholic biographer, George Weigel) occupy ten linear feet of shelf space, the neo-Catholic notion of the utterly inerrant papacy is an invitation to disaster. Words have their objective meanings, and if two statements appear impossible to reconcile then a problem exists, whether or not the neo-Catholics choose to see it.

One could multiply the examples of apparent contradictions between pre-and postconciliar teaching on matters that—we emphasize—are not strictly *de fide*. But an exhaustive treatment of this problem is beyond our scope here. Added to these apparent contradictions are the many unprecedented and often scandalous papal actions in line with the new teachings, especially in the previously unknown realms of ecumenism and “interreligious dialogue”—actions the mere sight of which would have reduced the preconciliar Popes to a state of apoplexy. It requires very little imagination to envision how Pope St. Pius X would have reacted to such spectacles as John Paul II’s interreligious prayer meetings at Assisi.

No one has more succinctly summarized the net result of the conciliar and postconciliar novelties than the recently deceased Bishop James W Malone, of Youngstown, Ohio, who was an episcopal press liaison at Vatican II: “Like everyone else who internalized the Council, it changed everything that I was taught to believe.”⁴² As with all such statements of neo-Catholic sentiment, there was no explanation of what this could possibly mean. But in view of the statements of neo-Catholic commentators to which we have alluded, and the statements of John Paul II himself, Bishop Malone’s remark is not nearly so extravagant as it might seem at first blush. The situation of the Church today readily lends itself to such assessments. And it is hardly “extreme traditionalism” to object that the ecclesial sea

change remarked by so many neo-Catholics—even as they contradict themselves by insisting there has been no departure from Tradition—has produced confusion and real damage to the Church.

Now, for someone who is willing to overlook crucial distinctions and leap to unwarranted conclusions about the present crisis, it would be easy to say, with the sedevacantists, that all of these novelties and apparent contradictions of past teaching are “heresy,” and that in consequence we have had no Pope since John XXIII or even Pius XII. The neo-Catholic’s very insistence that no one may doubt that everything a Pope teaches is free from error plays right into the sedevacantist argument; for they need only demonstrate some error somewhere in the Pope’s voluminous writings or speeches in order to “prove” that, according to the neo-Catholic’s own principle of papal inerrancy, John Paul II cannot be the Pope.

But a careful examination of these novelties and apparent contradictions, one by one, shows that none of them involves the formal denial of an article of divine and Catholic faith, or an attempt to impose upon the Church, as a matter of *doctrine* to be held by the faithful, any explicit theological error. Not even John Paul II’s recent statement “May St. John the Baptist protect Islam” is heresy, properly speaking, since the Pope’s public expression of a wish that a false religion receive divine protection, while certainly scandalous and even stupefying, does not translate into a direct denial of any article of divine and Catholic faith.

The sedevacantists can point to innumerable facts that support the conclusion that we are living through the worst crisis in Church history, but they cannot show that the conciliar Popes have lost their offices through heresy—a judgment only the Church herself could make in any case. Yet in view of the mountain of empirical evidence of precipitous ecclesial decline immediately following the Council, can it be denied any longer that the swarm of novelties the Council engendered, the program and order of “newness” remarked by Paul VI, have tended *materially* to oppose the preconciliar teaching of the Church? What else can account for the “process of decay” admitted by Cardinal Ratzinger?

As Paul VI himself rightly observed (without yet admitting the cause of it all): “It is almost as if the Church were attacking herself.”⁴³ On another occasion he admitted that “the opening to the world has become a veritable invasion of worldly thinking. We have perhaps been too weak and imprudent.”⁴⁴

Whatever can go wrong will go wrong, even in the Catholic Church. Our Lord’s promise of divine assistance to His Church does not mean that her human members are unable to inflict upon her the gravest possible wounds, short of the fatal wound of a formal defection from the Faith. That everything that can go wrong seems to have gone wrong within one generation is no excuse for abandoning the Holy Father to the unproven theological theory of the vacant papal chair, nor for leaving him to the tender mercies of the neo-Catholics, who think that mindless applause for every papal word and deed is the way to show true loyalty to the Pope.

The sedevacantists and the neo-Catholics are animated, then, by the same error: that the Magisterium embraces whatever the Pope says or does in the exercise of his office.

Proceeding from this error, they reach different but equally untenable conclusions: the latter claim that we must embrace the oxymoron of novel tradition or a “Magisterium” that appears to contradict itself, while the former claim that we have had no Pope since John XXIII.

On the other hand, the traditionalists we would defend have been in just the right place all along: the postconciliar novelties are neither Magisterial nor formally heretical; they do not actually bind the Church to *an act of belief* in what is wrong. The Pope is still the Pope, and yet this is the worst crisis the Church has ever endured, in part because the conciliar Popes, helped along by the blind “obedience” of the neo-Catholics, have refused to acknowledge that there is a crisis, but instead persist in the very novelties that have engendered it.

What are Catholics to do in the face of this terrible and mysterious situation, which has no parallel in the history of our beloved Church? Shall we do nothing? Shall we applaud what even Paul VI lamented as the “self-demolition” of the Church?⁴⁵ Or shall we do what the authors of the Statement have done and declare our loyal opposition to what is happening?

1. John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (1878; repr., Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), pp. 195, 199.

2. “We must have at least good hope concerning the eternal salvation of all those who in no wise are in the true Church of Christ.” Syllabus, n. 17. It should be noted that the doctrines of baptism of desire and invincible ignorance cannot allow one to say that there is “good hope” for the salvation of those who belong to non-Catholic religions, since Pius IX himself forbade any speculation to that effect in his allocution *Singulari quadem*:

Not without sorrow we have learned that another error, no less destructive, has taken up its abode in the souls of many Catholics, who think that one should have good hope of the eternal salvation of all those who have never lived in the true Church of Christ. Therefore, they are wont to ask very often what will be the lot and condition after death of those who have not submitted in any way to the Catholic faith.... Far be it from Us, Venerable Brethren, to presume the limits of divine mercy, which is infinite [His Holiness then expounds the doctrine of invincible ignorance], but as long as we are on earth, weighed down by this mortal mass which blunts the soul, let us hold most firmly that, in accordance with Catholic teaching, there is ‘one God, one faith, one baptism’ [Eph. 4:5]; it is unlawful to proceed further in inquiry (DZ 1646–1648)

3. Speech of November 23, 1973.

4. Archbishop Varela, for one, admitted that “The mammoth evangelising and educational task of religious orders ... has altogether disappeared in some areas or sectors. There can be no doubt that the reasons for this alarming situation are numerous and complex. Nonetheless, it is certain that its deepest roots are to be found in *secularisation within the Church*, that is, in the diminishing or *abandonment* of the Truth of faith in our own lives and pastoral commitments.” See “European Synod: Bishops Begin to Admit Postconciliar Crisis,” @[UnaVoce.org](https://www.unavoce.org).

5. *L’Osservatore Romano*, November 9, 1984, later to be known as *The Ratzinger Report*.

6. Zenit news report, February 27, 2000.

7. *L’Osservatore Romano*, weekly English edition, N. 5–3, February 1999, p. 8.

8. “John XXII,” *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1913; Philip Hughes, *A History of the Church*, vol. 3: *The Revolt Against the Church: Aquinas to Luther* (1947; repr., London: Sheed and Ward, 1979), pp. 153–55.

9. “In view of the conciliar practice and *pastoral purpose* of the present Council, the sacred Synod defines matters of faith and morals as binding on the Church only when the Synod itself openly declares so.” Addenda to *Lumen Gentium*, Explanatory Note of the Theological Commission, in Walter M. Abbott, S.J., ed., *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: America Press, 1966), pp. 97–98. In disobedience to the command of Paul VI, the Preliminary Note was demoted to the status of an addendum to *Lumen Gentium* in published editions of Council documents.

[10.](#) *Catholic World News*, January 22, 1997. This testimony was confided to Catholic journalist Kieron Wood with the understanding that it would not be published until after Bishop Morris' death, which occurred recently.

[11.](#) In *The Pope, the Council and the Mass*, the authors assert: "The term 'pastoral council' as applied to Vatican II is merely a popular description and does not refer to any specific type of council recognized by the authority of the Catholic Church (the teachings and decisions of which would not necessarily be as binding upon members of the Church as a 'dogmatic' council)" (p. 33). The authors ignore the *Nota Praevia*. Further, as Cardinal Ratzinger observed in 1988: "The truth is that this particular Council defined no dogma at all, and deliberately chose to remain on a modest level, as a merely pastoral council. ..." (Address to the Chilean Bishops, July 13, 1988). The claim that Vatican II was not a pastoral council is part of neo-Catholic mythology.

[12.](#) *L'Osservatore Romano*, July 3, 1974, quoted in Romano Amerio, *Iota Unum* (Kansas City, MO: Sarto House, 1996), p. 112.

[13.](#) The only possible exception to this statement is the Second Council of Constantinople, which we discuss in [Chapter 12](#).

[14.](#) Statement to the Bishops of Chile, 1988.

[15.](#) *Redemptor Hominis*, n. 6.

[16.](#) "A Life for These Times," *Culture Wars*, May 2000, pp. 46–47.

[17.](#) Denzinger, 1836.

[18.](#) Denzinger, 1800, citing Vatican Council I, can. 3.

[19.](#) We say *apparent*, because only the Church herself can finally resolve these matters, and this is one reason the authors of the Statement call upon the Holy Father to open a "respectful discussion with Church authorities" about how these apparent contradictions, which have never before been seen in the Church, can be resolved.

[20.](#) See John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*. "It should be remembered that false philosophical doctrines on the nature, origin, and destiny of the universe, and of man, cannot be identified with historical movements that have economic, social, cultural, and political goals...." Having thus severed Communist movements from Communist doctrine, Pope John commended the "positive elements" of Communist movements which "conform to the dictates of right reason and are the spokesmen of the just aspirations of the human person."

Compare: Pius XI: "In the beginning, Communism showed itself for what it was in all its perversity, but very soon it realized that it was thus alienating people. It has therefore changed its tactics [by] hiding its real designs behind ideas that are in themselves good and attractive.... Under various names that do not suggest Communism ... [t]hey try perfidiously to worm their way even into professedly Catholic and religious organizations ... , [t]hey invite Catholics to collaborate with them in the realm of so-called humanitarianism and charity; and at times make proposals that are in perfect harmony with the Christian spirit and the doctrine of the Church.... See to it, faithful brethren, that the Faithful do not allow themselves to be deceived." *Divini Redemptoris*, n. 57.

[21.](#) See, e.g., the apostolic constitution *Auctorem Fidei* (1794), wherein Pius VI condemned the Synod of Pistoia when it proposed "'recalling it [the liturgy] to a greater simplicity of rites, by expressing it in the vernacular language, by uttering it in a loud voice'; as if the present order of the liturgy, received and approved by the Church, had emanated in some part from the forgetfulness of the principles by which it should be regulated—rash, offensive to pious ears, insulting to the Church, favorable to the charges of the heretics against it."

[22.](#) General Audience, November 26, 1969. Compare *Mediator Dei*, 59–60, wherein Pius XII condemned liturgical innovators "who make use of the vernacular in the celebration of the august eucharistic sacrifice" and reminded the faithful that the use of Latin in the Roman liturgy "is a manifest and beautiful sign of unity, as well as an effective antidote for any corruption of doctrinal truth...."

[23.](#) See *Veterum Sapientia* by John XXIII: "In the exercise of their paternal care they [the bishops] shall be on their guard lest anyone under their jurisdiction, *eager for revolutionary changes*, writes against the use of Latin in the teaching of the higher sacred studies or *in the liturgy*, or through prejudice makes light of the Holy See's will in this regard or interprets it falsely." *Veterum Sapientia*, February 22, 1962. It can hardly be a sign of the working of the Holy Ghost that this Apostolic Constitution was discarded within months of the close of Vatican II.

[24.](#) Cf. *Auctorem Fidei*, Pius VI, nn. 33, 66.; Council of Trent, Can. 9 on the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass: "If anyone says that the rite of the Roman Church, according to which a part of the canon and the words of the consecration are pronounced in a low tone, is to be condemned, or that the Mass ought to be celebrated in the vernacular only ... let him be anathema."

25. Angelus Address, September 3, 1995: “To a large extent, it is a question of making full use of the ample room for a lay and feminine presence recognized by the Church’s law. I am thinking, for example, of theological teaching, *the forms of liturgical ministry permitted, including service at the altar....* Who can imagine the great advantages to pastoral care and the new beauty that the Church’s face will assume, when the feminine genius is fully involved in the various areas of her life?” The suggestion that the Church has neglected the “feminine genius” for 2,000 years is rather a harsh implicit judgment on all the Pope’s predecessors, to say nothing of the entire assembly of saints. We are unaware of any among the Church’s many female saints who would have been anything but horrified and appalled at the suggestion that their presence at the altar would have been an enrichment of the liturgy rather than a profanation.

26. Cf. the 1917 Code of Canon Law, cc. 1258 and 2316, forbidding any active participation by Catholics in worship with Protestants; *Mortalium Animos* by Pius IX; and the 1949 Instruction of the Holy Office on the “ecumenical movement,” which forbade any form of common worship at discussion groups authorized by the local bishop, and required that the “Catholic truth” on “the return of the dissidents to the one true Church” be presented.

27. Balamand Statement, nn. 13 and 30. The Balamand Statement (1993) was cited approvingly by Pope John Paul II in *Ut Unum Sint*, n. 59.

28. Address at the 17th meeting of the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee, New York, May 1, 2001.

29. Balamand Statement. What exactly is this “Church of God,” and how can it be faithful to “the divine purpose” if it is jointly maintained by the Catholic Church and churches that reject the papal primacy and are not in communion with the Holy See?

30. General Audience Address, May 5, 1999; Prayer and Exhortation on March 21, 2000, in Wadi Al-Kharrar: “May St. John the Baptist protect Islam....”

31. In *Mortalium Animos*, Pius XI taught that pan-denominational congresses “can nowise be approved by Catholics, founded as they are on *that false opinion which considers all religions to be more or less good and praiseworthy*, since they all in different ways manifest and signify that sense which is inborn in us all, and by which we are led to God and to the obedient acknowledgment of His rule. Not only are those who hold this opinion *in error and deceived*, but also in distorting the idea of true religion they reject it, and little by little turn aside to naturalism and atheism, as it is called; from which it clearly follows that *one who supports those who hold these theories and attempt to realize them, is altogether abandoning the divinely revealed religion.*”

Compare John Paul II in *Redemptoris Missio*, 55: “He [Christ] does not fail to make himself present in many ways, not only to individuals but also to entire peoples through their *spiritual riches*, of which *their religions* are the main and essential expression, even when they contain ‘gaps, insufficiencies and errors.’” And compare also n. 6: “In the process of discovering and appreciating the manifold gifts—especially the *spiritual treasures*—that *God has bestowed on every people*, we cannot separate those gifts from Jesus Christ, who is at the center of God’s plan of salvation.” Likewise, *Redemptor Hominis*, 11 speaks of the Church’s “deep esteem for the great spiritual values, indeed for the primacy of the spiritual, which in the life of mankind finds expression in religion.... The Fathers of the Church rightly saw in the various religions as it were so many reflections of the one truth, ‘seeds of the Word,’ attesting that, *though the routes taken may be different, there is but a single goal* to which is directed the deepest aspiration of the human spirit as expressed in its quest for God....” No distinction is made between revealed and natural religion.

It must be noted that when the early Fathers spoke of “seeds of the Word,” they were referring to Greek philosophy, not the pagan religions, which they considered diabolical. In his *First Apology*, St. Justin Martyr, for example, refers to the execution of Socrates on account of his efforts to persuade the pagan polytheists of the existence of one God: “Socrates attempted to make these things known and *to deliver men from demons* ... he was put to death through the agency of men who delight in evil.”

32. Cardinal Josef Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), p. 381.

33. Sermon at World Trans Dome, January 27, 1999, published in *L’Osservatore Romano*, Weekly English Edition, N. 5–3, p. 8. Section 2266 of the 1992 version of the Catechism of the Catholic Church provides that “*the traditional teaching of the Church* has acknowledged as well founded *the right and duty* of legitimate public authority to punish malefactors by means of penalties commensurate with the gravity of the crime, not excluding, in cases of extreme gravity, the death penalty.” The 1997 definitive Latin version of the Catechism, however, changes “the traditional teaching” to: “The traditional teaching of the Church does not exclude recourse to the death penalty, *if this is the only possible way of effectively defending human lives against the unjust aggressor....*” The 1997 Catechism then goes on to state that such cases are [according to Pope John Paul II in *Evangelium Vitae*] “rare if not practically non-existent” because “of the possibilities which the state has for effectively preventing crime, by rendering one who has committed an offense incapable of doing harm....”

It is self-evidently false that the state can now render aggressors “incapable of doing harm,” since imprisoned murderers often kill other prisoners or prison guards, or kill again among the general population if paroled. Thus, the alleged “development” of Catholic teaching in the space of *five years* between the 1992 and the 1997 versions of the Catechism is based entirely on an error of fact concerning the capabilities of modern penal systems. Further, the 1997 Catechism fails to explain why the supposed “possibilities” of preventing *future* violence by convicted killers would eliminate the need of capital punishment as just retribution for *past offenses*. There appears to be a confusion here between punishment and protection of society.

[34.](#) N. 16: “Some, however, rashly transgress this liberty of discussion, when they act as if the origin of the human body from pre-existing and living matter were already completely certain and proved by the facts which have been discovered up to now....” The liberty of discussion to which Pius XII referred was to be restricted to those with expertise in *both* theology and the natural sciences. DZ, 2327. Pius XII’s prudent caution in this area rightly followed from the solemn teaching of Vatican I (which in turn cited the Fourth Lateran Council) that God “*immediately* from the beginning of time fashioned *each creature out of nothing*, spiritual and corporeal, namely angelic and mundane; and then the human creation, common as it were, composed of both spirit and body.” DZ, 1783. Neo-Catholic proponents of “theistic evolution” have never demonstrated how their views can be reconciled with the Catholic teaching that Eve was (in some manner) created *from* Adam in the literal sense, as the Pontifical Biblical Commission of Saint Pius X bound Catholics to believe. DZ, 2123.

[35.](#) In typical neo-Catholic fashion, leading neo-Catholics attempted once again to distance the Pope from his own words and actions, claiming that his statement to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences on October 22, 1996, that the theory of evolution is “more than a mere hypothesis” should have been translated from the French (*plus qu’une hypothèse*) as “more than one hypothesis” when it clearly denotes “more than *a* hypothesis.” The proposed translation was nonsensical in context, as the English edition of *L’Osservatore Romano* later noted in a correction providing the proper translation. (See *Catholic World Report*, February 1997, p. 4.) The official Italian language translation in *L’Osservatore Romano* was correct from the beginning: The Pope said “more than a mere hypothesis” (*piu che una mera ipotesi*). In any case, the Pope has frequently stated his belief that the theory of evolution is a proven fact. As just one of many examples, on April 26, 1985, the Pope addressed a symposium entitled “Christian Faith and the Theory of Evolution,” praising the assembled evolutionists for their work, and declaring: “[B]elief in evolution and the properly understood teaching of creation do not stand in one another’s way. Creation represents itself in the light of evolution as an event extending through time.... Therefore I welcome this symposium....” *L’Osservatore Romano*, April 27, 1985, p. 4.

[36.](#) Cf. Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (1955; repr., Rockford, IL: TAN, 1974), ch. 3. § 12. As John Paul stated on that occasion: “His soul, separated from the body, was glorified in God, but his body lay in the tomb as a ‘corpse’.... Jesus experienced the state of death, that is ‘the separation of body and soul,’ as in the case of all people. This is the primary meaning of the words ‘he descended into hell’.... Obscure as it is [!], the Petrine text confirms the others concerning the concept of the ‘descent into hell’.... It is Christ—laid in the tomb, but glorified in his soul admitted to the fullness of the beatific vision of God—who communicates his state of beatitude to all the just, whose state of death he shared with regard to the body.” Thus, the descent of Christ into hell, according to this address, means merely Christ’s bodily descent into death and His entombment in the ground, not any literal descent into the region of Hell (sheol) where the souls of the just were waiting for the Redemption. This novel opinion was in no way imposed upon the Church.

[37.](#) Audience Address and catechesis of July 28, 1999: “Damnation remains a real possibility, but without a special revelation it has not been given to us to know *if* and which human beings are definitely involved.” (La dannazione rimane una reale possibilità, ma non ci è dato di conoscere, senza speciale rivelazione divina, se e quali esseri umani vi siano effettivamente coinvolti.) While we do not know *which* human beings are in hell, we certainly know *if* human beings are there. Otherwise, one would have to hold that Our Lord’s parable of the sheep and the goats and His admonition that “few there are” that find the narrow way of salvation are only bluffs.

[38.](#) Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Dare We Hope “That All Men Be Saved”?* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988).

[39.](#) Compare *Arcanum* by Leo XIII and *Casti Connubii* by Pius XI with *Mulieris Dignitatem* by John Paul II on this point.

[40.](#) “And it seems to me that the best thing is to *give this text the style and character of a meditation*” (the Pope’s own emphasis).

[41.](#) There is certainly a sense in which husband and wife, unlike Christ and the Church, are subject to each other—in the order of charity. But the precise teaching of St. Paul in Ephesians relates to the order of authority, as Leo XIII and Pius XI made clear. In the order of authority there cannot be “mutual subjection” without authority being destroyed.

[42.](#) *The Latin Mass*, vol. 9, no. 3, Summer 2000, p. 9.

[43.](#) Speech of Dec. 8, 1968, to the Lombard College, quoted in Amerio, *Iota Unum*, p. 6.

[44.](#) Speech of November 23, 1973.

[45.](#) “The Church is in a disturbed period of self-criticism, or what could better be called self-demolition.” Speech to the Lombard College, December 7, 1968.

Viruses in the Body of Christ

“A day will come when the civilized world will deny its God, when the Church will doubt as Peter doubted.”

—Msgr. Eugenio Pacelli (before he became Pius XII)

During a conversation when he was still Msgr. Pacelli, serving as Vatican Secretary of State, Pius XII made an astonishing prophecy about the coming upheaval in the Church:

I am worried by the Blessed Virgin’s messages to Lucy of Fatima. This persistence of Mary about the dangers which menace the Church is a divine warning against *the suicide that would be represented by the alteration of the faith, in her liturgy, her theology and her soul....* I hear all around me innovators who wish to dismantle the Sacred Chapel, destroy the universal flame of the Church, reject her ornaments and make her feel remorse for her historical past.¹

Pius XII’s biographer, Msgr. Roche, noted that at this moment in the conversation, according to a Count Galeazzi, “the gaze of the Pope, seen through the lenses of his glasses, became supernatural, and there emanated from his tall and slender body an irresistible mystical force.” Pius XII then said (in answer to an objection from a curial cardinal):

A day will come when the civilized world will deny its God, *when the Church will doubt as Peter doubted.* She will be tempted to believe that man has become God. In our churches, Christians *will search in vain for the red lamp* where God awaits them. Like Mary Magdalene, weeping before the empty tomb, they will ask, “Where have they taken Him?”²

Pius XII had his own plans for an ecumenical council—a council to combat the neo-modernist insurgency described in his own prophecy and which he himself would condemn in his encyclical *Humani Generis*. Pius XII was never able to summon his council before he died, but Blessed John XXIII summoned his. Pope John claimed that his council was “completely unexpected, like a flash of heavenly light.”³ In the short span of years following this “completely unexpected” council, all of Pius XII’s fears about the Virgin’s messages to Sister Lucia have come to pass. Which of our neo-Catholic accusers has not himself “searched in vain for the red lamp” in some denuded sanctuary of the postconciliar “liturgical renewal”?

The neo-Catholics will generally deny that Vatican II had anything to do with the current state of the Church, but eyewitnesses without an agenda can offer more objective testimony. No eyewitness is more compelling than Msgr. Rudolf G. Bandas, himself a conciliar *peritus*. Only two years after the Council had ended, Msgr. Bandas was constrained to ask: “How could our Church be so profoundly blighted in so short a time?” Answering his own question, Msgr. Bandas cited progressivist Bishop Helder Camara’s praise of Pope John for his “courage on the eve of the Council in naming as conciliar experts many of the greatest theologians of our day. Among those whom he appointed were many who emerged from the black lists of suspicion”—that is, from the censures and condemnations of Pius XII and his Holy Office.⁴

Two of the many who emerged from the “black lists of suspicion” to take key roles at

the Council were Edward Schillebeeckx and Hans Küng. It was Schillebeeckx who wrote the crucial 480-page critique employed by the “Rhine group” bishops to coordinate their public relations campaign against the traditionally formulated preparatory schemas for the Council, which led to abandonment of the Council’s entire meticulous preparation. The ultimate result was the ambiguity-laden conciliar texts that afflict the Church today.⁵ Schillebeeckx was later placed under Vatican investigation (but never disciplined) for his outrageously heterodox views on the historicity of the Virgin Birth, the institution of the Eucharist, the Resurrection, and the founding of the Church. He even dared to argue that the words “This is My Body ... This is My Blood” were never actually spoken by Our Lord, and that Our Lord never planned to found a Church.⁶ Küng, as is widely known, was finally stripped of his license to teach Catholic theology, after an eleven-year investigation culminating in the 1979 decree of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (formerly the Holy Office). Yet Küng remains to this day a priest in good standing, who still teaches theology at a secular institute at the University of Tübingen, to which Küng’s heterodox activities were transferred by the College of Catholic Theology at Tübingen in an obvious ploy to circumvent even the limited sanction imposed upon him.⁷

Looking back on the Council, Msgr. Bandas was forced to conclude that the amnesty Pope John had naively extended to “great theologians” like Schillebeeckx and Küng had been a catastrophic mistake:

No doubt good Pope John thought that these suspect theologians would rectify their ideas and perform a genuine service to the Church. But exactly the opposite happened. Supported by certain Rhine Council Fathers, and often acting in a manner positively boorish, they turned around and exclaimed: “Behold, we are named experts, our ideas stand approved.”... When I entered my tribunal at the Council, on the first day of the fourth session, the first announcement, emanating from the Secretary of State, was the following: “No more periti will be appointed.” But it was too late. The great confusion was underway. It was already apparent that *neither Trent nor Vatican I nor any encyclical would be permitted to impede its advance.*⁸

We have been careful to make clear that none of the postconciliar novelties consists of binding Catholic doctrine as such. The Magisterium cannot have given us any new Catholic doctrines in the postconciliar era, for this is impossible. That is why our neo-Catholic accusers are never able to formulate their accusation of traditionalist infidelity to “the Council” or the conciliar Popes in terms of any explicit doctrinal proposition; traditionalists are accused of “dissenting”... dissenting from *what*? From novel programs and novel attitudes, perhaps, but not from anything Catholics are actually commanded to embrace as a matter of faith and morals.

If, as we endeavored to show in the previous [chapter](#), the postconciliar novelties are not discrete and identifiable doctrines of the Faith, then what are they? There is, first of all, the new liturgy devised by Paul VI, which Msgr. Klaus Gamber justly describes as “the destruction of the Roman rite.”⁹ There is also a welter of non-Magisterial pronouncements by the Pope and high-ranking prelates, some of them presented in the preceding chapter, which seem to repudiate prior teaching on lesser matters, not at all *de fide*, such as the Pope’s opinion that in “modern society” the death penalty must never be imposed. Having separated out these elements of novelty, it seems to us that we are left only with certain *notions* operating below the level of Catholic doctrine. These notions literally cannot be put into words in any doctrinal sense.

For our present purposes we focus on two of these notions: “ecumenism” and “dialogue,” both of which were introduced into the Church at Vatican II. These two notions, together with the new liturgy, are the three basic elements of the unparalleled postconciliar innovation of the Church. We propose an analogy as a means of understanding these notions and their effect upon the Mystical Body in the postconciliar epoch—the analogy of the virus.

Stedman’s Medical Dictionary defines the word “virus” as “an infectious agent which lacks an independent metabolism and is incapable of growth or reproduction apart from living cells.” That is, a virus is not itself a living thing, but rather a mere particle of RNA or DNA. This particle cannot reproduce unless it finds a living cell whose machinery it can employ to make copies of itself. A virus contains just enough information to reproduce itself by finding cells to infect and turn to its purpose. In fact the *only purpose* of a virus is self-replication.

By analogy, then, we maintain that certain verbal “viruses” have infected the Mystical Body of Christ. These viruses are *pseudo-concepts*, which, like actual viruses, have minimal informational content. Just as a virus hovers between life and non-life, these pseudo-concepts hover between meaning and non-meaning. They *seem* to mean something, but upon close examination we find no real meaning. As viruses are particles of RNA or DNA rather than complete living cells, so these pseudo-concepts are *particles of an idea* which do not amount to an intelligible abstract concept. These viral pseudo-concepts in the Mystical Body of Christ, like actual viruses, exist only to reproduce themselves, which they do by infecting the understanding of *genuine* concepts with precise meanings—namely, the perennial teachings of the Magisterium.

We contend that by introducing “ecumenism,” “dialogue” and various other “viral” pseudo-concepts into the Mystical Body, Satan has found a means to confuse, divide and wreak havoc upon the human element of the Church, *without the Church ever having taught an actual error of doctrine*, which is impossible. Quite the contrary: the pseudo-concepts in question cannot be called doctrinal errors as such, because they are not reducible to a proposition whose words would signify the formal contradiction of an existing Catholic doctrine. Indeed, the terms “ecumenism” and “dialogue” contain nothing in themselves that contradicts prior Church teaching; like actual viruses, these terms remain inert until they come into contact with something they can infect. That is why when neo-Catholics say that traditionalists “dissent” from “ecumenism,” for example, they are unable to articulate precisely what it is about this notion that requires our assent. That is because *this notion does not involve any intelligible Catholic doctrine*.

This is easily demonstrated. Any Catholic doctrine will fit nicely into the template phrase “X means that ...,” where X is the Catholic doctrine in question. Thus, the Immaculate Conception *means that* from the first moment of her conception the Blessed Virgin Mary was preserved free from all stain of original sin. Likewise, transubstantiation *means that* at the moment of the Consecration the substance of the bread and wine are miraculously changed entirely into the substance of Christ—Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity—so that nothing of the bread and wine remains, but only the appearances of these.

Applying our template phrase to “ecumenism,” however, we immediately encounter an

intellectual dead end. The phrase “ecumenism means that” cannot be completed, just as the phrase “an elephant means that” cannot be completed. Ecumenism, like an elephant, cannot be defined as an abstract concept, but only *described or indicated*, as in: that is an elephant. Ecumenism, like an elephant, is a *thing*, or rather a collection of things known as “ecumenical activities.” Ecumenism certainly *is* something, just as an elephant *is* something. Ecumenism *is*, so they say, “a movement for Christian unity.” But movements are by their nature contingent and ever-changing things, and no Catholic can be obliged to believe in a “movement” as if it were a definable Catholic doctrine.

The same is true of “dialogue.” Dialogue is not a Catholic doctrine, but rather the name given to a collection of activities: a series of endless conversations with various non-Catholics that have thus far led nowhere and produced nothing of value.

Satan understands better than any other creature that the Magisterium can never officially teach error. But what if the human members of the Church could be induced to embrace non-doctrines and *non*-teachings that cause confusion and division over the meaning of the actual doctrines of the Magisterium? We are convinced that this is what has happened in the postconciliar Church: Verbal “viruses” have invaded the Mystical Body, disguising themselves as Catholic doctrines to which we are expected to adhere. And yet we find that we cannot adhere to them, because they do not have any doctrinal content; they are not definite teachings that oblige our assent to some definite proposition. While these viruses have been able to infect many individual cells of the Mystical Body, they have not actually altered the Deposit of the Faith, because we have the divine assurance that the Church can never *officially* teach error.

Exploring the analogy further, we note that a virus has certain characteristics that are analogous to the pseudo-concepts with which we seem to be dealing in the postconciliar Church. First, the virus appears suddenly, from outside the body; that is, it is foreign to the body. Second, it can enter the body successfully only if there is some opening to it in the immune system. Third, once the virus enters, it adds nothing to the life of the body, but rather causes only disorder and weakness, rendering the body unable to engage in normal, vigorous activity. We believe all three of these elements are present with the verbal viruses “ecumenism” and “dialogue.”

We first consider “ecumenism.” There is no question that this verbal virus entered the Church from outside her, as Pope John Paul II has frankly admitted. In his encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*, His Holiness noted that “the ecumenical movement really began within the Churches and Ecclesial Communities of the Reform” around 1920.^{[10](#)} That is, “ecumenism” originated with Protestant sects, not the Catholic Church; and being a “movement,” as opposed to a doctrine, it obviously has no roots in the perennial Magisterium. Quite the contrary, in 1928 Pius XI promulgated *Mortalium Animos* in order to declare the Church’s opposition to any involvement in this new movement of Protestant origin. Pope Pius issued his condemnation after duly noting (with evident contempt) the pretense of a “longing for unity” on which the new movement sought to engage Catholics:

This undertaking is so actively promoted as in many places to win for itself the adhesion of a number of citizens, and it even takes possession of the minds of very many Catholics and allures them with the hope of bringing about such a union as would be agreeable to the desires of Holy Mother Church, who has indeed nothing more at heart than to recall her erring sons and to lead them back to her bosom. *But in reality beneath these enticing words and blandishments lies hid a most grave error, by which the foundations of the Catholic faith are completely*

destroyed.... And here it seems opportune to expound and to refute a certain *false opinion*, on which this whole question, as well as *that complex movement by which non-Catholics seek to bring about the union of the Christian churches depends*. For authors who favor this view are accustomed, times almost without number, to bring forward these words of Christ: “That they all may be one.... And there shall be one fold and one shepherd,” with this signification however: *that Christ Jesus merely expressed a desire and prayer, which still lacks its fulfillment....* [A]lthough many non-Catholics may be found who loudly preach fraternal communion in Christ, yet you will find none at all to whom it ever occurs to submit to and obey the Vicar of Jesus Christ.... For if, as they continually state, they long to be united with Us and ours, why do they not hasten to enter the Church, the Mother and mistress of all Christ’s faithful?^{[11](#)}

Pius XI recognized that the Protestant proto-ecumenists were cynically exploiting the prayer of Our Lord (which was in fact fulfilled 2,000 years ago with the founding of His Church) in order to induce the Church to open itself to a non-Catholic movement whose effects could only be harmful to the faithful. Activating the Church’s immune system, Pius XI repelled the virus of ecumenism by forcefully restating the Church’s constant teaching on the only acceptable means of achieving true Christian unity: “And so, venerable brethren, it is clear why this Apostolic See has never allowed its subjects to take part in the assemblies of non-Catholics; for the union of Christians can only be promoted by promoting the *return to the one true Church* of those who are separated from it, for in the past they have unhappily left it.... Let them therefore return to their common Father, who, forgetting the insults heaped upon the Apostolic See, will receive them in most loving fashion... .”^{[12](#)}

This teaching was repeated emphatically in the 1949 admonition of the Holy Office of Pius XII concerning the “ecumenical movement.” The admonition instructed the bishops that in any “ecumenical” discussions they might authorize, the Protestant interlocutors must be presented with “the Catholic truth” and “the teaching of the Encyclicals of the Roman Pontiffs on the return of the dissidents to the Church.”^{[13](#)} The Catholic doctrine of the return of the dissidents was stressed again by Pius XII himself on December 20, 1949, a scant thirteen years before the opening of Vatican II: “The Catholic doctrine will have to be proposed and exposed totally and integrally: what the Catholic Church teaches about the true nature and means of justification, about the constitution of the Church, about the primacy of the jurisdiction of the Roman Pontiff, about the only true union which is accomplished with *the return of the dissidents* to the only true Church of Christ will not at all be obliged to be passed over in silence or covered over in ambiguous words.”^{[14](#)} (As we discuss in [Chapter 8](#), the ecumenical virus has induced an open repudiation of this teaching at the highest levels of the Church, including Presidents of Pontifical Councils.)

A remarkable historical note is that in keeping with this constant teaching, the bishops of the Netherlands issued a pastoral letter in 1948, a scant fourteen years before Vatican II, explaining that Catholics could not attend an ecumenical congress in Amsterdam because “the division among Christians can be ended *in only one way*, by the return to the Church, by the return to that unity which in her has remained intact....” The Dutch bishops noted that such congresses could not produce anything of value because “the *dissidents* are so far away from and so foreign to the Church that they no longer understand her language,” and that if the Church participated in congresses with the dissidents “she would by that very fact concede that the unity which Christ has willed has not endured in her, and that strictly speaking the Church of Christ does not exist”—a direct reference to the teaching of *Mortalium Animos*.^{[15](#)} Instead of ecumenical congresses and common prayer with the

dissidents, the Dutch bishops prescribed a “votive Mass for the removal of schism.”

Today, less than sixty years later, the Dutch hierarchy is the most liberal in the world, and Catholicism is all but dead in the Netherlands. It is inconceivable that the Dutch hierarchy, or any other national hierarchy, would affirm today the teaching on the return of the dissidents as the only way to Christian unity. What happened? We maintain that what happened was the injection of a verbal virus—the virus of ecumenism—into the Church.

Continuing with our analogy, the virus of ecumenism can be seen entering the Church through an opening in her immune system—namely, the Second Vatican Council. One can even pinpoint the precise historical moment when the Council presented such an opening and it was instantly exploited. On October 13, 1962—the third day of the Council and the anniversary of the Miracle of the Sun at Fatima—the Council Fathers met to vote on the composition of the conciliar commissions for review of the Council’s preparatory schemas. In a typical exercise of the Church’s immune system, some three years had been devoted to the preparatory schemas after Pope John’s sudden announcement of the Council. The result had been a collection of documents written in a traditionally precise, scholastic manner (the schema on the liturgy being the lone exception, as we shall see). Under the Council’s rules of procedure, the October 13 meeting was to be limited to a vote on the candidates the curia had proposed for the conciliar commissions, although each Father was free to write in his own choices. In violation of the procedural rules, Cardinal Achille Liénart seized the microphone and began reading a declaration demanding consultations among the electors and national bishops conferences before any vote. The vote was postponed and Pope John was cowed into allowing entirely new slates of candidates to be proposed, after a suitable period for politicking by the conciliar liberals. The liberal bishops of the Rhine countries ultimately succeeded in packing the commissions with their candidates, achieving majorities or near-majorities on all the key commissions once the election was held. As Fr. Ralph Wiltgen observed: “After this election, it was not hard to see which group was well organized enough to take over leadership at the Second Vatican Council. The Rhine had begun to flow into the Tiber.”¹⁶

As reported in the French journal *Figaro*, Liénart’s seizure of the microphone “had deflected the course of the Council and made history.”¹⁷ Moments later a Dutch bishop shouted out to a priest friend, as he left the Council hall: “That was our first victory.”¹⁸ Amerio notes that it was “one of those points at which history is concentrated for a moment, and whence great consequences flow.”¹⁹ That this could not have been a happy moment for the Church is demonstrated by the exultation of the modernists over the consequences of Liénart’s action. For example, Hans Küng declared that “what had once been the dream of an *avant garde* group in the Church had ‘spread and permeated the entire atmosphere of the Church, due to the Council.’” Even Cardinal Ratzinger lauded “the strong reaction against the spirit behind the preparatory work,” and “the truly epoch-making character of the Council’s first session.” He pronounced the resulting absence of a single approved text during the first session a “great, astonishing and genuinely positive result.”²⁰

Almost immediately the Council’s preparatory schemas were discarded, the one exception being the highly ambiguous schema on the liturgy, which the ultra-modernist Fr. Schillebeeckx had pronounced “an admirable piece of work.”²¹ That schema ultimately

became the Council's liturgy constitution, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, whose disastrous loopholes merit a chapter of their own in this book (see [Chapter 12](#)). Incredibly enough, Liénart's seemingly impulsive—but actually carefully planned²²—maneuver resulted in leaving the Second Vatican Council with no written preparation. As we know, the preparatory schemas were entirely replaced with more “pastoral” formulations, drafted in large part by the same people who had been (to recall the words of Msgr. Bandas) on “the black lists of suspicion” during the reign of Pius XII, including Schillebeeckx, Rahner, Congar and Murray. The ambiguities in these documents—the verbal viruses they contain—continue to bedevil the Church to this day. As Msgr. George A. Kelly observed: “The documents of the Council contain enough *basic ambiguities* to make the postconciliar difficulties understandable.”²³ Ecumenism is certainly one of those basic ambiguities.

Thus, the “sterile” preparatory schemas were thrown into the wastebasket and replaced by documents laced with verbal viruses, chief among which was “ecumenism.” The conciliar document *Unitatis Redintegratio* (UR) is replete with references to the term, which it never defines but only describes as a “movement, fostered by the grace of the Holy Spirit, for the restoration of unity among all Christians.” The immediate question that arises is this: Given that before Vatican II the Church constantly taught that the only way to Christian unity was the return of the dissidents to the one true Church, what precisely does the “ecumenical movement” add to the picture? UR gives no clear answer to this question, but simply announces that Catholics are now to embrace this ill-defined “movement,” even though it had been condemned by Pius XI only thirty-four years earlier as a threat to “the foundations of the Catholic faith.”

Article 4 of *Unitatis Redintegratio* states that “The Sacred Council exhorts, therefore, all the Catholic faithful to recognize the signs of the times and to take an active and intelligent part in the work of ecumenism.” What are the signs of the times that one is exhorted to recognize? UR does not say. And what is “the work of ecumenism,” given that ecumenism itself is not defined? Again, no answer is given.

To this day Catholics have been given no clear idea of what “the work of ecumenism” is. In Article 6 of UR we are told that “the participation of Catholics in ecumenical work is distinct from preparation and reception into the Church [of those who] desire full communion.” That is, ecumenism is something other than evangelization or catechesis, but UR does not explain precisely *what* that something is. We are told only that Catholics must now engage in the ill-defined “ecumenical movement” which involves ill-defined “ecumenical work.” Such nebulous directives have no parallel in any prior conciliar or papal document at any time in Church history.

UR further states: “The change of heart and holiness of life, along with public and private prayer for the unity of Christians, merits the name, ‘spiritual ecumenism.’” In the absence of any definition of ecumenism, it is impossible to determine precisely what is meant by *spiritual* ecumenism. What *kind* of public and private prayer is called for? More specifically, what is to be the prayer intention? Is it the return of the dissidents to the one true Church? If the answer is yes, then why must we embrace an “ecumenical movement” as opposed to praying for the return of the dissidents and offering votive Masses for their return, as even the Dutch bishops had done a few years earlier? If the answer is no, where is the Council's explanation of exactly what kind of “unity” Catholics are to pray for, if it

is not the unity that would be achieved by the conversion of the dissidents to Catholicism?

Having failed to define ecumenism, UR nevertheless employs the term repeatedly, as if it had always had definite meaning: “Sacred theology must be taught with due regard for an ecumenical point of view.” What is an ecumenical point of view? “Catholics engaged in missionary work in the same territories as other Christians ought to know, particularly in these times, the problems and the benefits which affect their apostolate because of the ecumenical movement.” What problems, and what benefits? UR specifies none. Yet suddenly Catholics are informed that the very movement Pius XI condemned now offers missionaries benefits and problems—at one and the same time.

Though ecumenism received absolutely no satisfactory theological definition in the conciliar decree on ecumenism, it spread virus-like throughout the entire Church with phenomenal rapidity. The hitherto unheard-of notion literally erupted into the documents of the postconciliar Church. One of these earlier documents is the 1970 Directory on Ecumenism. The document’s headings alone suffice to demonstrate how this verbal virus—which, as we can see, means almost nothing—has thoroughly infected the thinking of the Church:

“General principles and aids to ecumenical education.”

Although Catholics at large had never heard of ecumenism before the Council, they are now informed that there must be “ecumenical education” only a few years after the Council.

“The ecumenical dimension of religious and theological education.”

What is an “ecumenical dimension,” given that there is no definition of ecumenism itself? No effort is made to explain the term.

“The ecumenical aspect in all theological teaching.”

All theological teaching must suddenly acquire an “ecumenical aspect.” But what is an “ecumenical aspect,” given that “ecumenical” is not defined?

“Conditions of a genuine ecumenical mind in theology.”

What is a “genuine ecumenical mind”? The Directory gives no indication.

“Ecumenism as a special branch of study.”

“Particular guidelines for ecumenical education.”

“Those who have special ecumenical tasks.”

And so on, and so forth, all the way down to the present day. Although the term ecumenism has found innumerable applications since it first emerged in UR, it has yet to receive an intelligible definition in any Vatican document.

The virus of ecumenism spread so rapidly throughout the Body of Christ that by 1995 Pope John Paul II could say in his encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* that ecumenism “is not just some sort of appendix which is added to the Church’s *traditional activity*. Rather, ecumenism is an organic part of her life and work, and consequently *must pervade all that she is and does....*” Although *Ut Unum Sint* is devoted entirely to “ecumenism,” nowhere in its 110 pages is the term defined. One will search 2,000 years of Church history in vain

for another example of an undefined neologism pervading all that the Church “is and does.”

Perhaps the best evidence that no one knows exactly what ecumenism means, or exactly where it is leading us, is the Pope’s own declaration to some Protestant ministers on October 5, 1991, during an “ecumenical prayer service” in front of St. Peter’s tomb: “Ecumenism is a journey which is made together, *but we are not able to chart its course or its duration beforehand.*”²⁴ That is, ecumenism requires the Church to embark on a “journey” with Protestants along an uncharted course! Before the Council, the course toward Christian unity was well marked out by repeated papal teaching: the dissidents must return to the one true Church. Catholics, on the other hand, were not expected to make a “journey” anywhere, as they were already residing in the ark of salvation, which others had left or failed to enter.

That no one can provide a sensible definition of ecumenism has not prevented the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity from producing an entirely new “directory” on how the Church is to implement “ecumenism.” In paragraph 16 of *Ut Unum Sint*, the Pope notes that he specifically approved issuance of the 1993 *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*. This document calls for nothing less than the “ecumenical formation” of every man, woman and child in the Catholic Church—from the highest prelates to the smallest child in catechism class. This is to be accomplished by, among other means, “workshops and seminars for the ecumenical formation of both clergy and laity, for the appropriate realization of *an ecumenical dimension to all aspects of life...*”²⁵ It should come as no surprise that neither the term “ecumenical formation” nor the term “ecumenical dimension” is defined. How there can be “an ecumenical dimension” to all aspects of life is left to one’s imagination. But, amazingly enough, a notion unknown to Catholics at large before 1964 is now presented as something integral to their very existence. In physics, the search is on for a Theory of Everything. In the postconciliar Church, ecumenism has become a kind of ecclesial Theory of Everything, even if no one can explain the theory with any clarity.

Over and over again the *Directory* speaks of “the search for Christian unity,” as if unity were something Catholics had to search for. The *Directory* informs us that there must be “flexibility of methods in this *search* for unity.”²⁶ Flexible is putting it mildly. The *Directory* calls for joint “non-sacramental liturgical services” at Protestant churches, in which Catholics “are *encouraged* to take part in the psalms, responses, hymns *and common actions* of the Church in which they are guests.”²⁷ What would St. Pius X have thought of this recommendation? Further, if these joint liturgical services are held in a Catholic parish, the visiting Protestant ministers “may have the place and *liturgical honors proper to their rank....*” What “rank” would that be, exactly, given that they lack holy orders and are thus mere laymen? And what “liturgical honors” should Catholic parishes bestow upon non-Catholic “ministers” whose doctrines stand condemned by the entire Magisterium, and whose moral teachings, after forty years of fruitless “ecumenical dialogue,” are a sty of corruption?

The *Directory* provides (in accordance with postconciliar changes in canon law) that “the funeral rites of the Catholic Church may be granted to the members of a non-Catholic Church or ecclesial community,” provided the local bishop deems it appropriate, *and the*

*departed Protestant would not have objected!*²⁸ Yes, members of Protestant sects who rejected Catholic doctrines and dogmas may now receive a Catholic burial as if they had been loyal members of the Church.

In provisions that would be impossible to believe if they were not written for all to see, the *Directory* decrees that the bishops' conferences are free to establish norms for *joint ownership of church properties with Protestant congregations*—provided the local bishop thinks there is a good reason, and there is “a good ecumenical relationship between the communities.”²⁹ What constitutes a “good ecumenical relationship” is, like everything else about ecumenism, left undefined. The *Directory* recommends that “Before making plans for *a shared building*, the authorities of the communities concerned should first reach an agreement as to how their various disciplines shall be observed, particularly in regard to the sacraments.”³⁰ In other words, a Pontifical Council, in a document explicitly approved by the Pope, recommends that Catholic priests work out guidelines with Protestant ministers for celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass—in their jointly owned churches!

And what is to be done with the Blessed Sacrament in the contemplated Catholic-Protestant edifices? The *Directory* provides that “when authorization for such ownership *is given* by the diocesan bishop”—meaning that the Vatican really expects this sort of thing to go forward—“judicious consideration should be given to the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament ... taking account of the sensitivities of those who will use the building, e.g., by constructing a separate room or chapel.”³¹ That is, when Catholics and Protestants acquire their joint worship facility, the Catholics ought to make sure that the Blessed Sacrament is kept out of it in order to accommodate Protestant “sensitivities.” We recall here the prediction of Msgr. Pacelli before he became Pius XII: “In our churches, Christians will search in vain for the red lamp where God awaits them. Like Mary Magdalene, weeping before the empty tomb, they will ask, ‘Where have they taken Him?’”

This, then, is what the virus of ecumenism has produced in the Church within a few short years. Anyone who is honest about our situation would have to admit that the preconiliar Popes would view the results with utter horror. But the “ecumenical venture” goes on, despite the lack of any clear notion of where it is leading us. The Pope's recent address on ecumenism is a remarkable, though surely unintended, admission that ecumenism is an ever-receding, inexpressible mirage. Speaking to the plenary assembly of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity on November 13, 2001, the Pope urged that “words like ‘crisis,’ ‘delays,’ ‘slowness,’ ‘immobility,’ and ‘compromises’ be eliminated” in ecumenical dialogue, and that instead “key words such as ‘confidence,’ ‘patience,’ ‘constancy,’ ‘dialogue,’ and ‘hope’ be adopted.” That is, one must resolutely avoid describing the *true state* of ecumenical activity.

The Pope went on to proclaim: “Prayer and constant listening to the Lord are indispensable, as he is the one who, with the force of the Spirit, converts hearts and makes possible all progress in the way of ecumenism.” But what is it that the Lord is supposed to be telling us about “progress in the way of ecumenism”? And what is “the way of ecumenism” in the first place? In what sense is ecumenism a *way*? In what does this way consist, and where does it lead? What exactly will we find at the end of this way? How is

the “way of ecumenism” different from the return of the dissidents to the one true Church? After some forty years of ecumenical activity, there are still no answers to such questions, for the questions are unanswerable. They are unanswerable, we believe, because the word *ecumenism* has no real meaning. It is a virus in the Body of Christ.

Even more troubling is the Pope’s remark that “With rigorous and serene theological research, with constant imploring for the light of the spirit, we will be able to address even the most difficult and seemingly insurmountable questions in so many of our ecumenical dialogues, as, for example, that of the Bishop of Rome....” When did the authority of the Vicar of Christ (now called “the Bishop of Rome”) become a “seemingly insurmountable question” in “many ecumenical dialogues,” as opposed to *a divinely revealed truth* that Protestants must accept as a matter of faith in order to be united with us? And what is it that we are imploring the Lord to tell us about such “insurmountable questions,” if it is not what the Magisterium has already taught as Catholic doctrine for centuries? Here again, there are no answers, for none can be given.

We next consider the course of the virus of “dialogue” in the postconciliar Church; and it is no less disturbing to Catholics with any sense of the Church’s constant teaching and practice before 1965. No one can improve on Romano Amerio’s description of the sudden appearance and rapid spread of this utter novelty throughout the Church:

The word was *completely unknown and unused in the Church’s teaching before the Council*. It does not occur *once* in any previous Council, or in papal encyclicals, or in sermons, or in pastoral practice. In the Vatican II documents, it occurs 28 times, twelve of them in the decree *Unitatis Redintegratio*. Nonetheless, through *its lightning spread* and an *enormous broadening in meaning*, this word, which is very new in the Catholic Church, became *the master-word determining postconciliar thinking*, and a catch-all category in the newfangled mentality. People not only talk about ecumenical dialogue, dialogue between the Church and the world, ecclesial dialogue, but by an enormous catechesis, a dialogical structure is attributed to theology, pedagogy, catechesis, the Trinity, the history of salvation, schools, families, priesthood, sacraments, redemption—and to everything else that has existed in the Church for centuries *without the concept being in anybody’s mind or the word occurring in the language*.³²

What Amerio describes is the spread of a verbal virus in the Mystical Body, which, like ecumenism, was injected into the Church via the documents of Vatican II—that is, the documents that replaced the Council’s hastily discarded and virus-free preparatory schemas. The most striking admission of the virus’s spread may be a statement by the Archbishop of Avignon, published in *L’Osservatore Romano* some eleven years after the Council: “At the Council the Church began again to love *this* world [emphasis in original], to open itself to it, *to become dialogue*....”³³ The Church opens herself to this world; the virus of dialogue enters the Church; the Church then *becomes* dialogue. We are reminded here of Pope Paul’s famous lament that “the opening to the world became a veritable invasion of the Church by worldly thinking.”³⁴ And this development was lauded by an archbishop in the Pope’s own newspaper.

Now, unlike “ecumenism,” which is a pure neologism, the word “dialogue” is a classical word with a definite meaning; it means a conversation, usually around a theme. But what exactly does dialogue mean in the context of the postconciliar Church? As Amerio’s remarks would suggest, it has evolved into a pseudo-concept that worms its way into everything. Like “ecumenism,” the term “dialogue” has achieved an extension so broad as to lose to all real meaning.

This is demonstrated by a key Vatican document on “dialogue” entitled “Dialogue and Proclamation” (DP), issued by the Pontifical Council on Interreligious Dialogue in 1991. In DP we see that the notion of “interreligious dialogue” acts as a kind of co-virus with “dialogue,” and that, like “dialogue,” eludes precise definition. Hence DP frankly declares that “Interreligious dialogue between Christians and followers of other religions as envisaged by the Second Vatican Council is *only gradually coming to be understood*.”³⁵ That is, since Vatican II the Catholic Church has been busily engaged in an activity *she does not yet understand*! The Pontifical Council thus admits that the term “interreligious dialogue” is largely incomprehensible.

While the document makes no attempt to define either “dialogue” or “interreligious dialogue,” it does inform us that there are different *forms* of dialogue: “the dialogue of life,” “the dialogue of action,” “the dialogue of theological exchange,” “the dialogue of religious experience.”³⁶ In other words, as we have said, “dialogue,” like “ecumenism,” is not a doctrine but a *thing*—a collection of activities—which, like ecumenism, is now said to permeate not just the entire life of the Church but *all of human existence*.

Accordingly, the document announces that “All Christians are called to be personally involved in these *two ways* of carrying out the one mission of the Church, namely proclamation and dialogue.”³⁷ After 1,961 years of Church history, we are informed for the first time that Our Lord did not commission the Church simply to proclaim the Gospel, but also to “dialogue” with other religions—an activity which “is only gradually coming to be understood”!

Since “dialogue” has suddenly become part of the divine commission, DP recommends that there be “special courses and study sessions to train people for *both* dialogue and proclamation.” But how does one train for dialogue if the Church herself is only gradually coming to understand it? No answer is even suggested. DP further informs us that the Catholic Church “is invited by the Spirit to encourage all religious institutions to meet, enter into collaboration, and to purify themselves in order to promote truth and life, *holiness*, justice, love and peace....” There is not slightest suggestion here that the mission of the Church is to make converts to the true religion in order to save souls. Rather, the Church is presented as a collaborator with other religions so that other religions can become holier and promote peace and justice through “interreligious dialogue,” which the Church is only gradually coming to understand.

DP does allow that despite the Church’s newfound obligation to engage in interreligious dialogue, “it is useful to point out once again that to proclaim the name of Jesus and to invite people to become his [sic] disciples is a sacred and major duty which the Church cannot neglect. Evangelization would be *incomplete* without it... .”³⁸ That evangelization would be “incomplete” without an “invitation” to become a disciple of Christ is a rather curious way of putting it, given that the very purpose of evangelization is to make Christians of those who are evangelized. Also curious is that the document does not even suggest that the “invitation” to become a disciple of Christ involves becoming a formal member of the Roman Catholic Church. One of the symptoms of the viruses of ecumenism and dialogue is that the words “Catholic Church” have all but disappeared from postconciliar Vatican pronouncements. In keeping with this startling development, DP fails to mention the *Catholic* Church even once. A non-Catholic reader of DP would

have no idea that proclamation of the Gospel has anything to do with people becoming Catholics.

Indeed, the very point of “dialogue” and “interreligious” dialogue” is to avoid any suggestion to the non-Catholic interlocutor that the Catholic Church alone speaks with the authority of its divine founder and is in possession of the totality of His revelation to man. For example, when introducing the Vatican *Instruction* on “dialogue” in 1968, Cardinal König told the press: “Dialogue puts the partners on an equal footing. *The Catholic is not considered as possessing all the truth*, but as someone who has faith and is *looking for that truth with others*, both believers and non-believers.”³⁹

No doubt the height of the fever engendered by the virus of dialogue was the World Day of Prayer for Peace at Assisi in October 1986. In the plaza outside the Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi, the “representatives of the world’s great religions” stepped forward one by one to offer their prayers for peace. These “prayers” included the chanting of American Indian shamans. The Pope was photographed standing in a line of “religious leaders,” including rabbis, muftis, Buddhist monks and assorted Protestant ministers, all of them holding potted olive plants. The official Vatican publication on the World Day of Prayer for Peace at Assisi, entitled “World Day of Prayer for Peace,” pays tribute to the “world’s great religions” by setting forth their prayers, including an Animist prayer to the Great Thumb. The “world’s great religions” are honored by the Vatican in alphabetical order: the Buddhist prayer for peace; the Hindu prayer for peace; the Jainist prayer for peace; the Muslim prayer for peace; the Shinto prayer for peace; the Sikh prayer for peace; the Traditionalist African prayer for peace (to “The Great Thumb”); the Traditionalist Amerindian prayer for peace; the Zoroastrian prayer for peace. In a glaring symptom of the end result of ecumenism and dialogue in the Church, the only prayer not included in the official book is a *Catholic* prayer for peace. There is only a Christian prayer for peace, which appears after the prayers of the “world’s great religions”—and after the Jewish prayer. Catholicism has been subsumed into a generic Christianity.

At the beginning of this list of prayers of the world religions, there is an amazing statement by Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, president of the Pontifical Council on Interreligious Dialogue. According to Etchegaray, “Each of the religions we profess has inner peace, and peace among individuals and nations, as one of its aims. Each one pursues this aim in its own distinctive and *irreplaceable* way.” The notion that there is anything “irreplaceable” about the false religions of the world seems difficult to square with the *de fide* Catholic teaching that God’s revelation to His Church is complete and all-sufficient for the spiritual needs of men. Our Lord came among us—so Catholics were always taught—precisely to *replace* false religions with His religion, with even the Old Covenant undergoing this divinely appointed substitution. Yet the members of all the “the world’s great religions” were invited to Assisi and asked for their “irreplaceable” prayers for world peace—the “irreplaceable” prayers of false shepherds who preach abortion, contraception, divorce, polygamy, the treatment of women like dogs, reincarnation of human beings as animals, a holy war against infidel Christians and countless other lies, superstitions and abominations in the sight of God.

Ten years after the “World Day of Prayer for Peace,” Cardinal Etchegaray said something we would not have believed if it had not appeared on the Vatican’s own

website: “The spirit of Assisi is gliding over the bubbling waters of the religions and is already creating marvels of fraternal *dialogue*.... Spirit of Assisi, come upon us all!” What precisely is “the Spirit of Assisi”? What has the “spirit of Assisi” produced in the world that Catholics should call it down upon themselves? When a cardinal at the Holy See publicly enthuses about a novel spirit gliding over the bubbling waters of false religions, calls this novel spirit down upon the faithful, and praises false religions as “irreplaceable,” Catholics with any sense of Tradition are instinctively aroused to opposition.

The “Spirit of Assisi,” like ecumenism and dialogue, has produced nothing but more of itself—in the manner of a virus. The events of September 11, 2001, which make a mockery of “the Spirit of Assisi,” need not be discussed here; they are already burned into the memory of the world. Suffice it to say that, in the years following the World Day of Prayer for Peace in 1986 (and reprises of the event in 1993, 1999, and 2002), Muslim militants have been shooting Christians on sight in various nations. In India, Hindu fundamentalists have been torturing and killing priests and nuns routinely since the “representatives of the world’s great religions” held their potted plants for photographers. After the Hindu nationalist government of India set off three atomic bombs underground in 1998, people in New Delhi were dancing in the streets, shouting praise to their Hindu gods⁴⁰—including Shiva, the Destroyer. Or perhaps the Hindu praise was directed to Shiva’s wife, Kali, the goddess of death and destruction. Shiva is a very popular idol in some parts of India, where the people sacrifice goats to him. Irreplaceable? We do not think so.

The Assisi event was repeated on January 24, 2002, when members of the various religions were assigned rooms in the monastery attached to the Basilica of St. Francis to perform various pagan rituals. Thus at a profoundly sacred Catholic site, where for centuries holy monks had prayed for the conversion of such souls, a (polytheistic) Jainist minister burned wood chips in his sacred urn, and practitioners of the other religions, including voodoo, observed their own “traditions.”⁴¹ They came to Assisi from the Vatican in what Church authorities called a “peace train,” consisting of seven cars: one for the Pope, one for the cardinals and bishops, one for the Orthodox, one for the Jews and Muslims, one for the Protestant “ecclesial communities,” one for the Buddhists, the Tenrikyoists, the Shintoists, the Confucianists and the Jainists, and, bringing up the rear, a caboose filled with Hindus, Zoroastrians and Sikhs.

The whole spectacle was carried out in the name of world peace. On the following day, India tested a nuclear missile and Israel bombed the Palestinian territories. Within a few weeks of Assisi 2002, Hindu and Muslim fundamentalists in India were slaughtering each other by the hundreds in a new wave of religious conflict, while the Arab-Israeli conflict escalated to the verge of all-out war, as the Israeli army conducted a massive invasion of the unofficial Palestinian capital of Ramallah, drawing protests even from members of the Israeli cabinet.⁴²

This is how our warring world responded to the “Spirit of Assisi” and “interreligious dialogue.” Yet the “dialogue” goes on and on, and the Vatican no longer says to the world that it must become Catholic, that it must submit to the Social Kingship of Christ, in order to find true peace and eternal salvation. Instead, we have the Assisi events and statements from the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, such as the one which declares

that Catholics and Muslims should “share their faith,” and that the “call to Islam” and “Christian mission” should be conducted “in a spirit of *collaboration*, and as a *service to mankind*”⁴³ Not even the events of “9/11” could persuade the practitioners of dialogue that there can be no “collaboration” and “sharing” between the true religion established by God and the religion invented by Muhammad.

In 1571, Pope St. Pius V, who gave us our Roman Missal, prayed for the defeat of the Islamic forces at Lepanto. Before he had even received news of the victory of the Christian fleet, he suddenly stood up, went to the window, and declared: “This is not the moment for business; make haste to thank God, because our fleet this moment has won a victory over the Turks.”⁴⁴ Even the neo-Catholic historian Warren H. Carroll declares that “In more ways than one, he [St. Pius V] had saved Christendom.”⁴⁵ But today, with Christendom in ruins, the neo-Catholics have nothing to say as the Vatican sends a delegation to the first mosque ever to be built in Rome, while a pontifical council tells us that the Catholic Church will now *collaborate* with Islam, which provides a “service to mankind.”

What do our “neo-Catholic” friends say when confronted by astonishing reversals like these? They say nothing. For how can they admit the evidence of a catastrophe they have refused all along to recognize?

To recall, then, the three points of our analogy:

First, a virus appears suddenly, from outside the body; that is, it is foreign to the body.

Second, it can enter the body successfully only if there is some opening to it in the immune system.

As to the first and second points, the analogy clearly holds true. Ecumenism and dialogue suddenly appeared at an ecumenical council, whose entire preparation Pope John allowed to be tossed into the wastebasket, leaving the Church’s immune system open to the ambiguities that found their way into the final documents approved by Pope Paul. Granted, none of the conciliar documents contains any explicit doctrinal error; and Paul VI did act decisively in several instances to prevent outright errors from being promulgated as Catholic doctrine.⁴⁶ But that is the point of this chapter: to explain how the Church could have fallen into its current state of confusion and weakness *without* a systematic failure of the Magisterium, which is impossible. It happened because of the introduction into the Church of verbal viruses, operating below the level of Catholic doctrine.

Third, once the virus enters, it adds nothing to the life of the body, but rather causes only disorder and weakness, rendering the body unable to engage in normal, vigorous activity.

Can there be any doubt that the viruses of ecumenism and dialogue have nearly paralyzed the missionary activity of the Church, while tending to leave those outside her confirmed in their errors? The divine commission to make disciples of all nations necessarily exists in tension with these novel notions, which cannot but inhibit the Church’s traditionally forthright proclamation that she alone is the ark of salvation—a dogma reaffirmed in Pius XI’s rejection of the “ecumenical movement” a mere thirty-seven years before Vatican II.⁴⁷

Are we not witnessing, then, what the third element of our analogy to the virus

suggests: a drastically weakened Church, unable to engage in its normal vigorous activity of gathering souls to itself? What else but these verbal viruses could have induced such weakness in the Church—a weakness that developed suddenly after the Council, and in precisely those areas impacted by the new notions?

And yet, we must stress again, in the process of being infected by these viruses, the Church has never actually taught any doctrinal error at the level of the Magisterium, as opposed to having adopted ill-defined *ecclesiastical policies* to which neither a religious assent (i.e., the assent of prudence) nor an assent of faith can be required, policies not being proper objects of Catholic faith.

If, then, our thesis is correct, in the postconciliar epoch the Adversary has unleashed his most brilliant stratagem—perhaps the final stratagem—in his long war against the Church: the use of non-doctrine to erode adherence to doctrine; the harnessing of good intentions and the dissipation of ecclesial energy in an almost feverish pursuit of illusory concepts, incapable of being realized or even adequately explained. Here we hasten to emphasize that in no way do we mean to imply any judgment on the subjective disposition of the churchmen who bid us to adhere to ecumenism and dialogue. Much less would we wish to give any impression of a judgment on the person of the Holy Father, whom no one on earth may judge.

Yet we cannot fail to note that papal policies and practical decisions, such as the decision to embark on an “ecumenical venture” with Protestants, do not enjoy the divine protection from error that attends a Pope’s doctrinal teaching. As Dietrich von Hildebrand observed, a loyalty to the Pope by which “practical decisions of the Pope are accepted in the same way as *ex cathedra* definitions or encyclicals dealing with questions of faith or morals ... is really false and unfounded. It places insoluble problems before the faithful in regard to the history of the Church. In the end this false loyalty *can only endanger the true Catholic faith.*”⁴⁸ (Just how problematical such blind loyalty can be is illustrated by the historical example of Pope Stephen VI, who had the corpse of his predecessor, Formosus, exhumed and thrown into the Tiber, declaring all his papal acts annulled, including ordinations. Stephen VI was reversed by Pope Theodore II, who was in turn reversed by Pope Sergius III, who declared once again that the ordinations of Formosus were invalid.⁴⁹ Had there been any neo-Catholics around in those days, they would have twisted themselves into pretzels denouncing as “schismatic” those who objected to any of the conflicting decisions of this line of Popes—decisions that had serious consequences for the Church.)

What is more, even lay people have eyes to see, and they can recognize an illness when they see it. Many, and not just traditionalists, have observed that the Mystical Body of Christ is now suffering from an illness unlike any she has ever suffered before. Not even the Arian crisis can compare with the multifarious ecclesial disorder and debility we are witnessing at this moment in history.

Aside from the widely acknowledged destruction of the liturgy, what else can account for the Church’s current unexampled condition, if not these novel notions we have described as viruses in the Body of Christ? What other cause could have produced that seemingly impossible state of affairs foretold by Pius XII in the prophetic warning with which we began this chapter? If there is another answer to these questions, postconciliar

history has yet to reveal it.

- [1.](#) Roche, *Pie XII Devant L'Histoire*, p. 52.
- [2.](#) Ibid, p. 53.
- [3.](#) *Council Daybook*, National Catholic Welfare Conference, Washington, DC, vol. 1, p. 26.
- [4.](#) *The Wanderer*, August 31, 1967, p. 7. The year 1967 was the very year in which Walter Matt left *The Wanderer* to found *The Remnant* because of his dispute with Alphonse Matt, Sr., over *The Wanderer*'s editorial blindness toward the Council as the origin of much of the current crisis. Walter Matt has confirmed to us that the publication of Bandas' eyewitness testimony in *The Wanderer* was a precipitating cause of the rift between the two brothers, as Alphonse Matt would not hear any criticism of the Council. Msgr. Bandas was, in fact, Walter Matt's pastor at St. Agnes Church in St. Paul, Minnesota, during the 1960s. Mr. Matt reports that Bandas went to the Council "full of hope, and returned a broken man."
- [5.](#) Ralph M. Wiltgen, *The Rhine Flows into the Tiber* (1967; Devon, England: Augustine Publishing Company, 1978), p. 23.
- [6.](#) Carl Bernstein and Marco Politi, *His Holiness* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), p. 417.
- [7.](#) R. Wining, *La Theologie contemporaine* (Paris: Centurion, 1983), p. 451; cited in Atila Sinke Guimaraes, *Animus Delendi—I* (Los Angeles: Tradition In Action, Inc. 2000), p. 158.
- [8.](#) *The Wanderer*, August 31, 1967, p. 7.
- [9.](#) Gamber, *The Reform of the Roman Liturgy*, p. 97.
- [10.](#) *Ut Unum Sint*, n. 65.
- [11.](#) *Mortalium Animos*, nn. 4, 5, and 7.
- [12.](#) Ibid., nn. 7, 10, and 11.
- [13.](#) AAS 42–142.
- [14.](#) "On the Ecumenical Movement," December 20, 1949.
- [15.](#) Pastoral letter of Netherlands Bishops, July 31, 1948.
- [16.](#) Wiltgen, *The Rhine Flows into the Tiber*, p. 19.
- [17.](#) December 9, 1976, quoted in Amerio, *Iota Unum*, p. 85.
- [18.](#) Wiltgen, *The Rhine Flows into the Tiber*, p. 17.
- [19.](#) Amerio, *Iota Unum*, p. 85.
- [20.](#) Wiltgen, *The Rhine Flows into the Tiber*, p. 59. Words like "astonishing" and "surprising" are routinely ascribed to the Council, even by those considered to be theologically conservative. Cardinal Ratzinger, for example, has written of the Council: "After all the *surprises* that had emerged in the realm of theology proper, there reigned a feeling at once of euphoria and of frustration. Euphoria, because it seemed that nothing was impossible for this Council, which had the strength to *break with attitudes that had been deeply rooted for centuries...*" *Principles of Catholic Theology*, pp. 380–81. That theological "surprises" are alien to the perennial Catholic Magisterium poses no difficulty for the neo-Catholic mentality.
- [21.](#) Wiltgen, *The Rhine Flows into the Tiber*, p. 23.
- [22.](#) Fr. Wiltgen's book reveals how Cardinal Liénart and Cardinal Frings of Germany planned a strategy to interrupt the business meeting and prevent any vote on the curial candidates. Ibid., p. 16.
- [23.](#) Msgr. George A. Kelly, *The Battle for the American Church* (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1981), p. 20.
- [24.](#) *L'Osservatore Romano*, May 21, 1997.
- [25.](#) *Directory*, n. 44(d).
- [26.](#) Ibid, n. 56.
- [27.](#) Ibid, n. 118.

[28.](#) Ibid, n. 119.

[29.](#) Ibid, nn. 137–138.

[30.](#) Ibid, n. 140.

[31.](#) Ibid., n. 119.

[32.](#) Amerio's view carries considerable weight, since he was a *peritus* at Vatican II, who advised the Bishop of Lugano, a member of the Council's Central Preparatory Commission. He was thus intimately familiar with the process by which the Council's documents were created.

[33.](#) *L'Osservatore Romano*, Italian Edition, September 3, 1976: "La Chiesa, al Concilio, ha ricominciato ad amare questo mondo, aprisi ad esso, e farsi 'dialogo'" (emphasis in original).

[34.](#) Speech of November 23, 1973.

[35.](#) *Dialogue and Proclamation* (1991), n. 4b.

[36.](#) Ibid. n. 42.

[37.](#) Ibid., n. 82.

[38.](#) Ibid., n. 76.

[39.](#) Amerio, *Iota Unum*, p. 355, quoting I.C.I., No. 322, October 15, 1968, p. 20.

[40.](#) *New York Times*, May 17, 1998.

[41.](#) EWTN and the other neo-Catholic organs did not show images of the sacrileges which then took place in those rooms, even though the images were broadcast, uncensored, on Italian television—as the Vatican wished them to be. One who followed EWTN's coverage of the event would have had no idea of what the Vatican apparatus itself was proud to have everyone see. Why are the neo-Catholics so intent on hiding this information?

[42.](#) "Terrified Muslims Fill Refugee Camps in India," [CNN.com](#), March 12, 2002; "Israel's Tactics Prompt a Fiery Disagreement in the Cabinet and Censure Abroad," *New York Times*, March 14, 2002, p.A15.

[43.](#) *L'Osservatore Romano*, May 28, 1997, p. 11.

[44.](#) Warren H. Carroll, *The Cleaving of Christendom*, Vol. IV (Front Royal, Virginia: Christendom Press, 2000), p. 355.

[45.](#) Ibid., p. 356.

[46.](#) The most famous example is Pope Paul's intervention forcing the Council to include the *Nota Praevia* to *Lumen Gentium*, which corrects LG's erroneous suggestion that when the Pope exercises his supreme authority he does so only as head of the apostolic college, wherein the supreme authority resides. Paul was alerted to this problem by a group of conservative Council Fathers, who finally persuaded him of LG's destructive potential: "Pope Paul, realizing finally that he had been deceived, broke down and wept." Wiltgen, *The Rhine Flows into the Tiber*, p. 232. In this instance, conciliar conservatives acted as "antibodies" against another verbal virus in the conciliar documents. But, as Amerio notes, "[I]n the whole history of the Church there is no other example of a gloss of this sort being added and organically joined to a dogmatic constitution such as *Lumen Gentium*.... It seems inexplicable ... that the Council should issue a doctrinal document so imperfect as to require an explanatory note at the very moment of its promulgation." Amerio, *Iota Unum*, p. 91. It is only typical of the maneuvering at the Council that the *Nota Praevia*, which was supposed to introduce *Lumen Gentium*, was somehow demoted to the status of an appendix and "printed after it." Ibid.

[47.](#) "The Catholic Church is alone in keeping the true worship. This is the fount of truth, this the house of Faith, this the temple of God: if any man enter not here, or if any man go forth from it, he is a stranger to the hope of life and salvation. Let none delude himself with obstinate wrangling. For life and salvation are here concerned, which will be lost and entirely destroyed, unless their interests are carefully and assiduously kept in mind." *Mortalium Animos*, n. 11, quoting Lactantius.

[48.](#) *Satan at Work*, p. 45; cited in Michael Davies, *Pope John's Council* (Kansas City, MO: Angelus Press, 1977), p. 174.

[49.](#) Michael Davies, *Pope John's Council*, p. 175.

PART II
ACCUSATION AND DEFENSE

Liturgical Minimalism

“[S]ee what things the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary....”—Psalm 73:3

One of the great bromides of neo-Catholicism is its claim that despite the recent profusion of liturgical and other novelties in the Church since Vatican II, “nothing of substance” has been changed. As the neo-Catholics would have it, we traditionalists are merely carping about non-essential “externals,” whereas beneath the surface of the postconciliar changes the “substance” of the Faith remains intact.

The question, of course, is what is meant by “substance.” If the substance of the Faith is narrowly defined as a set of doctrinal propositions that one can find in a book somewhere, and the bare essentials of the sacramental forms, one could easily demonstrate that this “substance” has not been changed by the postconciliar revolution in respect of any formal contradiction or explicit repudiation by some authoritative pronouncement of the Magisterium. For example, one can find classical restatements of Catholic teaching in the new Catechism, bobbing there like life buoys in a sea of excess verbiage and ambiguous Vatican II-speak, the likes of which have never been seen in any previous Roman catechism. Likewise, the new liturgy has not ended the valid confection of the Holy Eucharist—as if one could leave it at that and ignore the effects of the new liturgy upon Eucharistic faith and the life of the Church as a whole.

Thus, the Church has not failed in the sense that she has suffered the *total* loss of any of her *essential* elements, for this would be impossible, given the promises of Our Lord. But Our Lord never promised that the Church would be immune to the self-inflicted disruption, obscurantism and loss of institutional memory that afflict her today. The Arian crisis and the current crisis show us the alarming extent to which, as we have said, whatever can go wrong will go wrong, even in the Catholic Church. It is entirely possible that, just as in the time of Arius, the “substance” of the Faith can suffer dramatic loss, even to the point of the apparent near-death and near-disappearance of the Church itself. 79 The divine assistance is no guarantee of the Church’s size or vigor in any given epoch.

After some forty years of innovations that would have been considered unthinkable by the preconciliar Popes, only the willfully blind will still deny that the postconciliar era has been witness to what St. Pius X condemned in *Pascendi*: the ascendancy of those who “deride the *ecclesiastical traditions* ... invent novelties of some kind ... or endeavor by malice or craft to overthrow *any one of the legitimate traditions* of the Catholic Church.” That this disaster could indeed befall the Church is the very reason Pius IV and Blessed Pius IX sought to prevent it by requiring a profession of faith—the “substance” of the Faith—that refers to *both* apostolic and ecclesiastical tradition. For the one cannot survive without the other, any more than the brain and the body can survive if separated. That the visible body of the Church has not died during the current crisis means only that the severance between apostolic and ecclesiastical traditions is not so complete as to be fatal. Here again the promises of Our Lord are at work. The Church clings to life despite her gaping wounds, just as she clung to life during the Arian crisis.

The claim that the “substance” of the Faith has not been changed by the onslaught of conciliar and postconciliar changes in the Church is, we submit, nothing but pretense that is impossible to maintain consistently in the face of reality. Every now and then a Vatican prelate, and even the Pope himself, will issue a statement that implicitly admits the stunning magnitude of the change. We have noted some of these statements in earlier chapters.

Perhaps the most dramatic example of this is to be found in a passage from John Paul II’s 1988 *motu proprio*, *Ecclesia Dei*, which declares the excommunication and putative “schism” of Archbishop Lefebvre and the four bishops he consecrated for his Society of St. Pius X (SSPX), and also announces the establishment of the *Ecclesia Dei* Commission. The Holy Father’s statement of the Commission’s purpose is most revealing: “facilitating full ecclesial communion of priests, seminarians, religious communities, or individuals until now linked in various ways to the Fraternity founded by Mons. Lefebvre, who may wish to remain united to the Successor of Peter in the Catholic Church while preserving *their spiritual and liturgical traditions....*”

Now it is obvious that as of 1988 the members of the SSPX had not invented their own peculiar spiritual and liturgical traditions, nor have they invented any spiritual or liturgical traditions in the ensuing fourteen years. What, then, is meant by “*their* spiritual and liturgical traditions”? There can be only one answer: “*their*” spiritual and liturgical traditions are none other than those of the Roman Rite—which is to say, *our* spiritual and liturgical traditions before Vatican II. Since those traditions have been abandoned, from the Pope’s perspective a special Vatican commission is now required to determine how those who continue to adhere to the former traditions of the Roman Rite may be “facilitated” in remaining united to “the successor of Peter.”

The very suggestion in *Ecclesia Dei* that there now exists a kind of tension between the preservation of Catholic spiritual and liturgical traditions and communion with the Pope is itself utterly astonishing. But there it is for all to see. When our traditions suddenly became “*their*” traditions, adherence to those traditions just as suddenly became a *problem* with respect to ecclesial “communion.” Since the Pope and nearly all the hierarchy have moved away from those traditions, Catholics who declined to move with them are perceived as having ruptured their “communion” with the Pope. At the same time, legions of liberal clerics, including bishops, are considered as being in full “communion” with the Pope, even though they undermine or openly dissent from settled Catholic doctrine and brazenly disobey papal disciplinary measures, many of which are repealed as a reward for their disobedience. Again, the only “schism” that alarms the Vatican is the “schism” of traditional clergy. The *de facto* schism of much of the hierarchy (noted by Cardinal Gagnon as to North America) is completely ignored.

Here we are confronted with empirical confirmation of the most profound crisis in Church history: a papal document has noted an apparent antinomy, which the Vatican thinks must be resolved, between adherence to the spiritual and liturgical traditions of the Roman Rite and adherence to the Vicar of Christ. And yet we are expected to believe that this situation does not represent any “substantial” change in the Church. No, the traditionalists in the SSPX—all traditionalists—are hallucinating; we are all worried about a mere illusion of change.

But even in denying a real change in the Church, the Vatican prelates who preside over the postconciliar revolution cannot help but admit the truth. In a recent magazine interview, for example, Cardinal Dario Castrillón Hoyos, head of the Ecclesia Dei Commission, declared that “one of the pastoral *emergencies* of our time and which everyone is having to address is to show that the Church today *is the same Church it has always been....*”¹ But why should it be a “pastoral emergency” to show that the Church has not changed, unless there were very good grounds to think otherwise? Since when has the Vatican had to “show” the faithful that their Church is still the same as always?

According to the neo-Catholics, however, nothing “of substance” has been changed. Having been deprived of the great feast of the Church’s patrimony, especially in the liturgy, the neo-Catholics profess to wonder why anyone would think the faithful need more than the remaining crumbs. And even those few neo-Catholics who are willing to admit that the Mass of Paul VI is “inferior” to the rite of Mass that came down to us from Pope St. Gregory the Great (who in turn received it from his predecessors, adding only collects and prefaces), seem untroubled by their own admission of a liturgical catastrophe.

But if even some neo-Catholics can see the inferiority of the new rite, what possible excuse can there be for the Supreme Pontiff of the Catholic Church not to see that a huge mistake has been made? The problems of the new rite extend well beyond aesthetics, or the hubris of its architects in discarding beautiful prayers hallowed by tradition in favor of manufactured substitutes. The new rite is also markedly inferior in its presentation of Catholic doctrine. Anyone even minimally versed in Catholic Eucharistic teaching can see that the three new Eucharistic prayers are clearly deficient in their presentation of doctrine; the traditional teaching on the Catholic priesthood and its uniqueness vis-a-vis the priesthood of the faithful is likewise obscured. And yet if even a moderately educated Catholic can see this, how can the Pope fail to see it?

Predictably, the Pamphlet trots out the old “bad advisers” line, claiming that Paul VI was talked into promulgating the new missal by Annibale Bugnini. First of all, even had the combined rhetorical abilities of Socrates and Cicero been brought to bear on the matter, it is impossible to imagine Pope St. Pius X, or indeed *any* preconiliar Pope, allowing himself to be persuaded that the new Mass was in any way acceptable, let alone a positive good. Moreover, what was Paul VI doing talking to Bugnini in the first place? Advisers are not a mysterious given, like the sea and the stars. The Pope does not one day suddenly find himself surrounded by them. He chooses them himself. Paul *chose* Bugnini. And as Cardinal Alfons Stickler recalls, since Bugnini’s work as secretary of the Council’s Preparatory Commission for the Liturgy had not been considered satisfactory, he had not been named secretary of the Conciliar Commission itself. It was Pope Paul himself who rehabilitated Bugnini by naming him secretary of the new Consilium responsible for the implementation of the reform.

Moreover, even in the absence of Bugnini’s counsel it is obvious that Paul VI strongly favored the new rite over the old—not just as a way, supposedly, of attracting Protestants, but as a great thing in itself. Thus in his General Audience of November 26, 1969, Pope Paul noted with evident satisfaction that the new rite would draw the faithful “out of their customary personal devotions or their usual torpor.” This cruel and unwarranted insult to the piety of many centuries of Catholic faithful—their *usual torpor*?—is a classic example

of the contempt in which the postconciliar establishment holds the preconciliar Church, and we here see that even a Pope is not immune. Speaking of the importance of “participation,” by which the Pope seems to have been referring to participation in its merely exterior manifestation, Paul VI noted that the new rite would be especially welcome to “modern people, so fond of plain language which is easily understood and converted into everyday speech.” Here is yet another example of the spirit of Vatican II at work, and out of the lips of a Pope, no less: the perennial traditions of the Church, he says, are to give way in the face of modern sensibilities. In practice, the “plain language” of which “modern people” are so fond turned out to be banalities that read like instructions for operating a microwave oven. These same modern people, in turn, in whose name the liturgy was deformed and its language made “plain,” no longer finding in the Mass the mysterious and supernatural, stopped attending Mass altogether. For this and many other reasons, neo-Catholic efforts to deny any connection between the Council, the “spirit of Vatican II,” and the devastation in the Church cannot be taken seriously.

Anxious to persuade us of the new rite’s validity, which we accept, the Pamphlet assures us: “Its General Instruction, together with a subsequent Foreword in 1970, stated explicitly that the *Novus Ordo Missae* was intended to express the traditional faith.” Stop right there. Here we have a typical example of the fundamental dishonesty of the neo-Catholic position. Again, we do not disagree with the basic point the author is making here—namely, that the new Mass is valid as a rite. But the author conveniently neglects to tell us exactly *why* the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM), published in 1969, had to be supplemented by “a subsequent Foreword in 1970.” The author surely remembers the answer from his days as a traditionalist, but his “monograph” mysteriously fails to account for this frantic shuffling of Vatican documents. The short answer is that the GIRM was so scandalously remiss in its minimalist delineation of the Mass as “the Lord’s Supper” that by overwhelming demand the Vatican was forced to revise it. This episode alone suffices to reveal the absurdity of the neo-Catholic position: in 1969 they would have denounced anyone who dared to question the doctrinal rectitude of the GIRM; in 1970 they would have attacked anyone who *didn’t* question it.

To claim that the new Mass represents a striking departure from tradition, which it obviously does, is not necessarily to say that it is invalid *per se*. We certainly do not think so, and neither do the overwhelming majority of traditionalists. Archbishop Lefebvre himself never held such a position. Having said this, however, surely we have a right to insist on more than *the bare minimum of mere validity*. No one hosting an elegant dinner party announces with pride that nothing at the table is fatally poisonous.

But for the neo-Catholic the bare minimum seems quite enough, and everything else is dispensable “externals.” Thus, in *The Pope, the Council and the Mass*, we find the following defense of liturgical minimalism: “But Christ must always remain the proper object of our faith, and *never the externals of liturgical practice which admittedly have been confusing* over the past few years... .”² It does not seem to have occurred to the authors that the “externals” of Catholic worship are what mediate faith in Christ and the Blessed Eucharist to the members of His Church, and that when the externals become “confusing” (as the authors admit), the faithful themselves become confused, and no longer believe as they once did. *Lex orandi, lex credendi*. The way one worships determines the way one believes.

Moreover, if so-called “externals” are dispensable, why even have a Mass liturgy at all? If the “essentials” of the Mass are just the bread, the wine and the words of the Consecration, why not have the priest simply confect the Sacrament, administer it, and send everyone home? Perhaps even this contains too much of the “external”; why not simply have laymen distribute previously consecrated Hosts to the faithful? (Come to think of it, this is one of the “legitimate options” the neo-Catholics defend.) And if indeed the neo-Catholic, faced with the logical conclusion of his thinking, grudgingly concedes that externals do count for something after all, how can he justify radical departures from “externals” that nourished the Catholic faith of nearly two millennia of worshipers? Why would anyone even want to?

As for the authors’ false antithesis between Christ and “externals,” this is something one would expect to encounter in Protestant theology, with its rejection of the incarnational aspect of divine worship. For the Catholic, the Incarnation of Our Lord has clear implications for divine worship. Although we must be careful not to be seduced by the false pleasures of this world, it is not a fundamentally evil world. God Himself lived in it, interacted with it, and used it to convey His Word. We, too, ought to use the created things of this world for the glory of God, to sanctify the created order in every area of endeavor—from philosophy to the arts, from literature to liturgy. For that reason, we wish to adorn our churches with beautiful things: statues, stained-glass windows, an impressive high altar, stunning vestments, and the sounds of Gregorian chant. For the same reason, we treat with great reverence the earthly vessels through which the things of God are transmitted to us.

The Protestant world, on the other hand, more or less ignores these implications of the Incarnation, and in general (there are indeed exceptions) holds in contempt the liturgical and incarnational aspects of Catholic life and worship. Luther reduced the sacraments to two, Baptism and the Eucharist, and denied the need for a sacramental priesthood to administer them. Other Protestants dispensed with the sacramental system altogether. The believer needed nothing other than his own, lonely faith. None of the things that he can encounter in this world are of any avail to him—not sacraments, not priests, not the Mass, and certainly not art, architecture, or sacred music. Where the Catholic wished to dignify these natural things by consecrating them to the service and worship of God, the Protestant rejects them as diabolical distractions from the worshipper’s purely spiritual and individualistic path toward God.

As an incarnational religion, Catholicism should be the last to suffer gladly the dismantling of its traditional forms of worship. And yet that is what the new rite has done, as a whole and in its parts. We all know what a new-rite Mass looks like, with its denuded sanctuaries, embarrassing “hymns,” and barren architecture. The Last Gospel, which was St. John’s own meditation on the Incarnation, was removed. The wonderful texture of the liturgical year, with its various seasons, the Ember Days, and its countless traditions, has been flattened out into what the new rite refers to as “ordinary time,” a designation we believe speaks for itself. One could go on and on. The neo-Catholic insistence that all that matters are the so-called “essentials”—e.g., the words of Consecration—reflects a profoundly sterile and anti-incarnational attitude that would have filled churchmen with contempt in every other generation but our own. It is, truly, a Protestant approach to worship, emphasizing the purely spiritual nature of worship and neglecting our created

nature as human beings. The view that the sacred traditions of Catholic worship can safely be viewed as matters of indifference has absolutely no pedigree within the Catholic tradition.

Even when certain neo-Catholics admit that there is a liturgical crisis, they refuse to concede that anything dramatic should be done about it by Rome; their counsel, instead, is little more than to grin and bear it. One of the more preposterous neo-Catholic arguments is that we must accept the current condition of the liturgy as a penance, rather than as an outrage to be rectified in vindication of the infinite dignity of God. In *The Pope, the Council and the Mass*, after a discussion of the ruined state of the liturgy—for which the authors naturally blame everyone but Rome—we are offered this spiritual advice: “But in the face of all this, as in the face of other problems that will always confront us in this life, Christ still asks us for faith and still asks us *to take up His cross with regard to the liturgy too* if that is what is involved.... As a practical matter, this means following the Pope and the Council *even if it means suffering for us*.”³ We have reached the very depths of the neo-Catholic idea when we find ourselves being asked to view the sacred liturgy as a cross to be borne, and the prescriptions of the Council and the conciliar Popes as good occasions for penitential suffering.

Referring to traditionalist organizations that do not view the wreck of the liturgy as a great opportunity for spiritual advancement, the author of the Pamphlet notes that “ironically, it is these very groups which turn out to be the most serious obstacle to true liturgical reform today, since many bishops, who would otherwise be open to more of the orthodox liturgical diversity which has always characterized the Church, are afraid of opening what they perceive to be a Pandora’s Box.”

We are to understand, then, that there are prelates out there who are sympathetic to a wider availability of the traditional Mass, but who balk at taking any major steps in this direction because a few small traditionalist publications are critical of the Vatican? In an article on his website, the author went further, arguing that if we traditionalists would only cease our polemics and approach the bishops “lovingly,” then they would respond to the needs of their flock.

There is no point in reviewing the countless cases of good people humbly petitioning their bishops for a traditional Latin Mass under the terms of the papal indult, only to be ignored or actually scolded. Suffice it to say that the overwhelming majority of bishops are at best indifferent and at worst actively hostile to the kind of Catholic restoration of which the traditional Mass is so crucial a part. They will feel this way no matter what *The Remnant* or any other traditionalist newspaper says. Our own opinion is that there is room in the traditionalist movement for a number of different strategies—including both principled confrontation and gentle persuasion. At this stage our motto is: *whatever works*.

What we must not do, however, is deceive ourselves into thinking that all we need in order to win the bishops’ favor is a fair hearing. Take the Most Rev. Thomas O’Brien, Bishop of Phoenix, Arizona. Not long ago O’Brien conferred the Sacrament of Confirmation at Phoenix’s professional baseball stadium, where during the Mass people ate popcorn and hot dogs and sang hymns to the tune of “Take Me Out to the Ball Game.” Nothing of “substance” has changed in the Diocese of Phoenix, eh?

Or perhaps we could approach the Most Rev. J. Kendrick Williams, Bishop of Lexington, Kentucky. A friend of ours met him once at her campus Mass, where each Sunday a different parishioner bakes the bread for Holy Communion. At the reception after Mass, His Excellency was clad in a polo shirt and khakis. But here, too, nothing “of substance” has changed. His Excellency is doubtless so concerned about his solemn duty of maintaining the traditions of the Church undefiled, surely all we need do is approach him lovingly and with sincerity, and he will grant us the spiritual nourishment we need. After all, he already allows the traditional Mass twice a month, at 5:00 p.m., and although the church bulletin contains no mention of its existence at the parish, surely we can understand His Excellency’s circumspection when dealing with so subversive a thing as the traditional Roman rite.

We are living through the consequences of one of the most catastrophic decisions in the history of the Church. Popes and churchmen of centuries past had looked at the liturgy with a sense of awe, aware of how the Holy Ghost had guided its development over the centuries. They could scarcely have imagined laying their hands on it. Today, our shepherds have been infected by the hubris of modern man, which tells them that there is absolutely nothing, no matter how sacred, that is not subject to human modification. More than that, they have taken a theologically perfect and aesthetically stunning rite that even a civilized pagan could see was something extraordinary and stupendous, dumbed it down so that a second-grader would be insulted by the finished product, and actually called it an improvement.

Meanwhile, our neo-Catholic brethren either deny the problem altogether, or claim that nothing is wrong, because, after all, the formula of consecration is still present, so the “essentials” are untouched. “The Mass is the Mass!” they proclaim with smug certitude. Other neo-Catholics, being a bit more ambitious, long for the chance to have *their* committee revise the traditional rite, thus buying into the modernist premise that the product of over 1,500 years of tradition may rightly be subject to human manipulation—and by a committee, no less.⁴

It is true that some neo-Catholics will admit a “preference” for the traditional rite, but without admitting that this preference relates to anything “substantial.” Nor do the neo-Catholics have any intention of laying the blame for this appalling act of vandalism where it obviously belongs. But it is only by facing the truth squarely that we can possibly hope to reverse the situation and begin the process of restoration. The liturgical minimalism of the neo-Catholics will get us nowhere.

¹. *30 Days*, N. 11, 2000, p. 17.

². PCM, p. 25.

³. PCM, p. 159.

⁴. The neo-Catholic call for an “authentic” reform of the Mass, led by the *Adoremus* organization, is discussed in [Chapter 12](#).

Making a Virtue Out of Doing Nothing

“Not to oppose error is to approve it; and not to defend truth is to suppress it.”

—Pope St. Felix III

Despite the fact that Rome itself cannot disclaim responsibility for the postconciliar debacle, it is also true that some of the most extreme devastation that has been visited upon the Church has taken place against the declared will of the Vatican, at the hands of people and organizations on the far left. That Rome has itself embraced a stunning series of novelties since the Council has been established. At the same time, the Pope and other top Vatican officials have spoken out in official statements about difficulties presented by, among other things, moral relativism, liberation theology, homosexual activism, and the secularization of Catholic universities. These are but a few areas in which our neo-Catholic brethren agree that the Church is undergoing serious trials at the hands of neo-modernists, clerical sexual predators and other subversives within her visible ranks.

Even here, however, it is difficult to come to agreement with them regarding the source of these problems or their possible solution. One reason for this is that the neo-Catholics cling to the most strained and contrived explanations for Rome’s mystifying failure to defend the Church in a manner at all appropriate to present circumstances. Among other things, they argue that this failure to act against the Church’s enemies—without and within—is not only not a sign of weakness, but is actually an act of genius.

Thus, when traditionalists raise objections to the Vatican’s inaction, they are accused of lack of “trust in the Church” by their neo-Catholic critics. The basic neo-Catholic position is that Rome’s ecclesial governance is a kind of zero-sum game in which it does not matter what Rome does or fails to do concerning threats to the Church’s commonwealth, since it will all come out the same if we just sit back and let God handle it through His trusted ministers in the Vatican. “God is in charge of the Church,” they solemnly assure us, as if God Himself wishes the Church to suffer gravely from a Pope’s entirely preventable prudential errors. In the neo-Catholic view, the Pope cannot be blamed if he fails to do something—really *do* something—about the current crisis. For if Rome fails to act for decades, well, there was nothing Rome could have done anyway. But if Rome finally does act—say, by issuing some toothless document lamenting the crimes of homosexual predators in the clergy and stating that thousands of homosexuals really should not have been ordained to the priesthood over the past forty years—the neo-Catholic commentators will hail Rome’s bold response. Then again, if no document is issued, Rome must have a reason for remaining mute. Under this peculiar standard of governance, one wonders how neo-Catholics could call any Pope, including the present Pope, great. Are they not all equally great, since (as the neo-Catholics would have it) the sum of all papal acts and omissions will always turn out to be zero in terms of relative harm or benefit to the Church, since “God is in charge”?

Yet when it comes to bishops other than the Bishop of Rome, the neo-Catholic has no difficulty recognizing that while “God is in charge of the Church” misgovernment by the

Church's human element can cause grave harm that could have been prevented or rectified by good governance, and that the faithful have the right to be governed well. Thus, *The Wanderer*, for example, complains often and loudly about the malfeasance and nonfeasance of the world's bishops (and even cardinals outside the Vatican), while turning a blind eye toward Rome's general failure to reign in the heresy, scandal and subversion of the Church that *The Wanderer* itself has chronicled weekly for decades.

Let us first consider the matter of Freemasonry. In keeping with the unanimous testimony both of the preconciliar Popes and of the Masons themselves, traditionalists consider Freemasonry a serious threat to the welfare of the Church, and not a matter to be taken lightly. But for some reason it became fashionable in neo-Catholic circles in the decades following Vatican II to mock and to laugh at such concern. No such threat exists, they assure us. Thus Likoudis and Whitehead, in *The Pope, the Council and the Mass*, blithely dismiss the suggestion that any serious organized threat to the Church and the Mass could come from Masonic quarters. Their argument, advanced apparently in all seriousness, is that "[t]he Rock-man Peter is not at the mercy of conspirators of whatever persuasion."¹

Evidently, the "Rock-man," in the person of Blessed Pius IX, lacked this neo-Catholic confidence in the Pope's magical power of immunity from conspiracies. Having failed to appease the Masonic forces of revolution in Italy by granting an ill-advised amnesty to political exiles and prisoners, the Pope fled for his life from the besieged Quirinal palace, disguised as a simple priest, after the Masons had stabbed his prime minister to death and fired into his anteroom, killing his secretary, Bishop Palma.² What followed was the temporary occupation of Rome, and St. Peter's itself, by Masonic militia, the destruction of the papal states, the total loss of the pope's temporal power, the erection of "democracy" in a "unified" Italy, and the ascendancy throughout Christendom of the very errors of liberalism that Bl. Pius IX—no longer a "political liberalist"—would later condemn in his *Syllabus*. The claim that the "Rock-man is not at the mercy of conspirators of whatever persuasion" rests upon nothing but ignorance (or willful disregard) of Church history.

It is far from clear why any sensible Catholic would airily dismiss a concern that has inspired more papal documents than any other since the birth of Freemasonry in the eighteenth century.³ Although enforcement has obviously been lax since the Council, a prohibition of Catholic membership in Masonic organizations is understood to form part of the 1983 Code of Canon Law (even if for some reason explicit reference to Masonry has been removed). Thus in 1983 the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith instructed the faithful as follows:

Therefore, the Church's negative judgment in regard to Masonic associations remains unchanged, since their principles have always been considered irreconcilable with the doctrine of the Church, and, therefore, membership in them remains forbidden. The faithful who enroll in Masonic associations are in a state of grave sin and may not receive Holy Communion. It is not within the competence of local ecclesiastical authorities to give a judgment on the nature of Masonic associations which would imply a derogation from what has been decided above, and this in line with the declaration of this sacred congregation issued Feb. 17, 1981.

It is scarcely necessary to descend to the fever swamps of conspiracy theory to be concerned about an organization that over the years has repeatedly stated both its objectives and the means it intends to employ in order to meet them. Given the obstacle

the Church poses to radicalism of all sorts, as well as her refusal to ratify all the demands of human ambition and desire, it would be amazing if there *weren't* an organized effort to harm and undermine Catholicism. Many Communists, remember, devoted their lives to what they considered the sacred cause of infiltrating secular organizations, even national governments, in order to weaken and destroy sources of resistance to the spread of the workers' paradise. (They also made some success of efforts to infiltrate the seminaries with their men—after all, the Church was a rather considerable obstacle to their plans.) Why is it so difficult for neo-Catholics to believe that the Freemasons, who have pledged themselves to destroy the Church—the institution they perceive as thwarting human desire through her commandments and inhibiting worldwide brotherhood by her exclusivist claims—might attempt to do the same to her?

According to the *Permanent Instruction of the Alta Vendita*, a Masonic document that both Blessed Pius IX and Leo XIII desired to be published, this was precisely how they aimed to proceed:

Our final end is that of Voltaire and the French Revolution, the destruction forever of Catholicism and even of the Christian idea which, if left standing on the ruins of Rome, would be the resuscitation of Christianity later on.... The work which we have undertaken is not the work of a day, nor of a month, nor of a year. It may last many years.... Let the clergy march under your banner in the belief always that they march under the banner of the Apostolic Keys. You wish to cause the last vestige of tyranny and oppression to disappear? Lay your nets like Simon Bar-jona. Lay them in the depth of sacristies, seminaries, and convents.... You will bring yourselves as friends around the Apostolic Chair. You will have fished up a revolution in Tiara and Cope, marching with Cross and banner....

But since the admonitions and condemnations issued by an unbroken line of preconciliar Popes seem to hold so little weight with our interlocutors (see [Chapter 11](#)), let us consider a neglected postconciliar source: Bishop Rudolf Graber. Bishop Graber was an eminently respected and mainstream figure. Ordained in 1926, he served as a professor of Church history, theology, and mysticism at the Academy for Philosophy and Theology at Eichstatt, and was ordained Bishop of Regensburg by Pope John XXIII in 1962. Following Vatican II, he published a book in 1974 entitled *Athanasius and the Church of Our Times*, in which he compared the postconciliar crisis to the time of the Arian heresy in the fourth century. He also devoted considerable space to warning that we were seeing the realization of a long-standing Masonic program.

After quoting several enemies of the Church, including the Italian Communist party, as having observed a parallel between the French Revolution and Vatican II, Bishop Graber quotes one Pierre Virion as saying: “The great revolutions—and we are in the middle of one—do not come about spontaneously, but have their precursors, often only clandestinely, their prophets, sowing around themselves the seeds of revolt, and finally, their leaders and executors. They are preceded by the subterranean phase, which is followed by a second, that of incubation, before the eruption then takes place.”⁴ Discussing the Masonic vision of society and the world, Graber introduces the concept of *synarchy*: “What we are faced with here is the sum-total of the secret forces of all the ‘orders’ and schools which have joined together to set up an invisible world government. In the political sense, synarchy aims at the integration of all the financial and social forces which the world government, under socialist leadership naturally, has to support and promote. Catholicism, like all religions, would consequently be absorbed into a universal syncretism. Far from being suppressed, it would be integrated, a course which is already

being steered in the principle of fellowship between clerics.” We can only imagine what Bishop Graber would have thought had he lived to see such spectacles not simply between various Christian denominations, but among Buddhists, Sikhs, animists, and countless other “great religions,” a development he could scarcely have imagined.⁵

Bishop Graber also cites ex-canon Roca, who had been made an honorary canon of the Church in 1869. Later excommunicated, canon Roca continued to preach revolution and “the coming of the divine synarchy under a Pope converted to scientific Christianity.” Graber describes what Roca predicted: “The new church, which might not be able to retain anything of the Scholastic doctrine in the original form of the former church, will nevertheless receive consecration and canon jurisdiction from Rome.... [T]he divine cult, in the form directed by the liturgy, ceremonial, ritual and regulations of the Roman Church, will shortly undergo a transformation at an ecumenical council (!), which will restore it to the venerable simplicity of the golden age of the apostles in accordance with the dictates of conscience and modern civilization.”⁶ That scenario sounded a little familiar to Bishop Graber.

“The papacy will fall, it will die under the hallowed knife which the fathers of the last council will forge,” Roca went on to say. “The papal Caesar is a Host crowned for the sacrifice”—by which he meant that the Pope, though not himself a Mason, would do their bidding. “Thus you will be proclaiming a revolution against the tiara and by the cope ... a revolution which needs only a little spurring on to light the blaze of the four corners of the world.”⁷

Such testimonies abound, says Graber. He quotes the Rosicrucian Dr. Rudolf Steiner on the revolution that he and his associates sought within the Church: “We need a council and a Pope to proclaim it.” Paraphrasing a French heresiarch, Abbé Melinge (who used the pseudonym Dr. Alta), Graber points to the revolutionary program of “the replacement of the Roman faith by a ‘pluri-confessional’ pontificate, able to adapt to a polyvalent ecumenism, such as we are seeing established today in the intercelebration of priests and Protestant pastors.” Melinge here refers to the actions of certain renegade priests, done without Vatican approval; today the Pope himself conducts joint services, including Vespers, with Protestant “bishops”—another development that would have shocked Graber.⁸

After quoting yet another Masonic admission, Bishop Graber concludes: “If in the face of these unambiguous admissions anyone still holds to the opinion that the events in the Church are marginal phenomena or transitional difficulties which will die down of their own accord in time, *he is simply beyond hope*. But all the greater is the responsibility of the leading men in the Church if they do not occupy themselves with these questions and imagine—cf. what was said above—that everything can be repaired by patching it up here and there.”⁹ Thus what we have on our hands, according to this widely respected churchman, is not a few reforms gone wrong, or the “unintended consequences” of a program instituted by men of good will (even if some men of good will may have consented to the new orientation through a catastrophic error in judgment), but a systematic, internally consistent attempt to evacuate the Church of her vigor and zeal, and indeed her very reason for existence. Once again, Graber was an eminent theologian and a respected and admired bishop—and here he warns about the machinations of a group the

neo-Catholic sourcebook assures us is powerless to do the Church and the “Rock-man” any harm.^{[10](#)}

Let us now proceed to the central contention of this chapter: namely, that the neo-Catholics have developed a systematic apologetic in favor of postconciliar papal inaction and timidity. It is well known that Blessed Pope John XXIII began the Second Vatican Council on a note of almost surreal optimism, happily proclaiming a suspension of the Church’s condemnation of error: “Nowadays ... the spouse of Christ prefers to make use of the medicine of mercy rather than the arms of severity. She considers that she meets the needs of the present day by demonstrating the validity of her teaching rather than by issuing condemnations.... We feel we must disagree with those prophets of gloom, who are always forecasting disaster, as though the end of the world was at hand.”^{[11](#)} Those sentiments became a kind of template for the next forty years, and we have seen the results of the new attitude.

The Pamphlet gamely defends Pope John’s unfounded optimism, even today: “Yes, it is true that Pope John XXIII openly rebuked the joyless ‘prophets of doom’ who were too often unbalanced in their apocalyptic tractarian approach to the faith and modern world, but this was in the interests [sic] of the balance of the Church’s kerygma.” A balance of the Church’s kerygma? What does this mean? Is there a kerygma-meter the Pope must consult to ensure that the Church’s teaching contains equal measures of optimism and pessimism, regardless of how bad the condition of the world may be in a given era? Must the Church say (to borrow Jeremiah’s lament) peace, peace, when there is no peace?^{[12](#)}

This is by no means the position only of the Pamphlet’s author, but is fairly standard fare within neo-Catholic circles. Optimism about the compatibility of the values of modernity with those of the Church is routinely accepted as if it were dogmatic teaching—yet another reflection of the neo-Catholic inability (or refusal) to distinguish the opinions of particular churchmen from universally binding teaching.

Yet even the neo-Catholics cannot be completely unaware that the foremost “prophets of doom” in the twentieth century were *the preconciliar Popes*. Any reasonably diligent student of their teaching can easily find such statements as these:

St. Pius X:

We felt a sort of terror considering the disastrous conditions of humanity at the present hour. Can we ignore such a profound and grave evil, which at this moment much more than in the past is working away at its very marrow and leading it to its ruin? ... Truly whoever ponders these things *must necessarily and firmly fear* whether such a perversion of minds is not the sign of announcing, and the beginning of the last times.... (*E Supremi*)

Pius XI:

With God and Jesus Christ excluded from political life, with authority derived not from God but from man,... the chief reason of the distinction between ruler and subject has been eliminated. The result is that society is *tottering to its ruin* because it no longer has a secure and solid foundation. (*Quas Primas*)

Pius XII (after the end of WWII):

We are overwhelmed with sadness and anguish, seeing that the wickedness of perverse men has reached a degree of impiety that is *unbelievable and absolutely unknown in other times*. (Letter of February 11, 1949)

Venerable brethren, you are well aware that almost the whole human race is today allowing itself to be driven into two opposing camps, for Christ or against Christ. *The human race is involved today in a supreme crisis*, which

will issue in its salvation by Christ, or in its destruction. (*Evangelii Praecones*, 1950)

In view of the repeated admonitions of his own immediate predecessors, what can be said about Pope John's optimism—especially when one considers that these Petrine “prophets of doom” issued their warnings about the incomparably bad state of the world *before* the worldwide legalization of abortion? The most succinct assessment belongs to Romano Amerio: “On this point, papal foresight indisputably failed.”¹³

But not according to the Pamphlet. Not only does its author doggedly defend Pope John's optimism, but he also lauds it as “a stroke of psychological genius—the genius of the Holy Spirit to the eyes of faith.” As the Pamphlet explains, the Pope's apparent folly was really a clever gambit of *reverse psychology*:

Few expected such talk in such an hour ... to pronounce on such optimistic things at just such a time, when the Soviet Union was exporting its atheistic opiate all over the globe.... The Communists would have preferred good old-fashioned anathemas, which would be easy enough for them to mock!

Here at least the Pamphlet delivers a somewhat novel observation. Unfortunately, it lacks any connection with reality. Did the author read any books or primary source material that lends support to this unheard-of contention? Or is this just another application of the neo-Catholic principle that since the Pope is the Vicar of Christ, his acts and omissions receive *a priori* confirmation as strokes of genius, regardless of what common sense may say to the contrary?

Common sense tells us that the Communists certainly would not have preferred to be anathematized by the Second Vatican Council, and history bears this out. Only weeks before the Council, the Vatican-Moscow agreement was negotiated in Metz, France, between Cardinal Tisserant and Orthodox Metropolitan Nikodim (head of the KGB-controlled Russian Orthodox Church). The very object of the agreement, whose existence is an historical fact confirmed by Msgr. Roche, Tisserant's personal secretary, was to bind the Council *not* to issue anathemas or condemnations against Communism.¹⁴ In exchange, Pope John would be granted his fond wish that two Orthodox observers—which is to say, KGB agents in black robes—would come to attend the Council. The bargain was made, the observers came, and any Council Father who stood up to denounce Communism was told politely by Tisserant to sit down and shut up. Meanwhile, the written intervention by Archbishop Lefebvre and 450 other Council Fathers, calling for a conciliar treatment of Communism in line with the solemn condemnations of Pius XI and Pius XII, was deliberately withheld and left in the desk drawer of the Secretary for the Joint Commission that was drafting the Constitution on the Church in “the Modern World,” *Gaudium et Spes*.¹⁵

The Pamphlet's “stroke of genius” theory thus encounters a major problem: Why would Nikodim have negotiated with the Vatican to *prevent* any condemnation of Communism by the Council if the Russians would have *preferred* condemnations to the Council's warm invitation to dialogue?

So the Council that met to discuss the problems of “the modern world” preposterously failed to mention the biggest problem of all: Communism, the worst form of systematized evil in human history, which was devouring Catholics by the millions at the very moment the Council began. The word “Communism” does not appear even once in the *Acta* of the

Council.

As the Pamphlet assures us, however, everything surrounding the Council was divinely inspired—not only the refusal to condemn Communism, but also Pope John’s decision to toss its classically formulated, orthodox preparatory schemas into the garbage after the Council began, leaving the Council with no written agenda. Another stroke of genius, presumably, which anyone with the “eyes of faith” can see.

Now let us return to serious history. The Communists were delighted with the Council, thanks to the Vatican-Moscow Agreement. For them the Council was a dream come true. As the Italian Communist Party declared at its nth Party Congress in 1964: “The extraordinary ‘awakening’ of the Council, which is rightly compared with the Estates General of 1789, has shown the whole world that the old politico-religious Bastille is shaken to its foundations.”¹⁶ And who could forget the unsolicited advice to Paul VI in *L’Unita*, the official publication of the Italian Communist Party, regarding Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, a leader of traditionalist opposition to the conciliar liberals: “Be conscious of the danger that Lefebvre represents. And continue the magnificent movement of approach begun with the ecumenism of Vatican II.”¹⁷

Extending the argument for his novel theory to the present day, the Pamphlet’s author asserts that this “stroke of genius” on the part of John XXIII “could not be fully appreciated, perhaps, until Pope John Paul II and the fall of Communism which he helped to bring about, and which left the Church still standing and proclaiming her saving message to the nations!” But wasn’t it supposed to be John Paul II’s return to the Church’s *condemnation* of Communism (within the rhetorical limits dictated by Cardinal Casaroli’s pernicious *Ostpolitik*) that brought about the alleged fall of Communism, first in Poland and then in the rest of the former Soviet Union? Then there was Reagan’s famous “evil empire” and “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!” Not much in the way of “dialogue” there.

In any event, the Pamphlet’s suggestion that the Church is “still standing” and proclaiming her message today simply because John XXIII agreed that the Council would *say nothing* and *do nothing* about Communism is—how shall we put this?—a bit extravagant. What is more, it should be no surprise to anyone that the “fall of Communism” is looking more and more like a very clever reorganization: The former Soviet Union continues to be governed by a collection of “ex-Communists” and recycled KGB agents. Since the “fall of Communism,” the abortion rate has skyrocketed throughout Eastern Europe, where there are now more than two abortions for every live birth in Russia and one abortion per live birth in the rest of the region.¹⁸ The Russian population is decreasing at the rate of 2,500 people per day, life expectancy is down, and pornography, the Russian mob and alcoholism are ravaging what is left of Russian society, causing many to clamor for the return of full-blown Communism. Vladimir Putin has systematically shut down the independent mass media¹⁹ and is re-centralizing Moscow’s authority over the former Soviet Union, which apparently is emerging from the political equivalent of [Chapter 11](#): the same entity with a new name. No less a figure than Solzhenitsyn himself has declared that “Russian democracy is a myth,” and that Russia’s demographic trends are “frightening.”²⁰ Even the Russian Orthodox Patriarch, Alexy II, has decried the spiritual degeneration of Russian society into occultism, satanism and

assorted non-Christian sects since Communism's "fall."²¹

As for the position of the Catholic Church in Russia, in 1997 the Communist-dominated Russian parliament enacted, and Boris Yeltsin signed into law, a bill on "freedom of conscience" that severely restricts the right of the Church even to exist in Russia without official permission, and the law prohibits any effort to proselytize the Orthodox. Besides which, as we have noted, the Vatican's representative, Cardinal Cassidy, agreed in the 1993 Balamand Statement that the return of the Orthodox to the Catholic Church was "outdated ecclesiology."²² So much for Pius XII, all of his predecessors since the Greek Schism, and Our Lady of Fatima. Not surprisingly, despite the "fall" of Communism there are very few conversions to the Faith in the "former Soviet Union," where Muslims outnumber Catholics by at least 10 to 1.

In short, there is no sign of the conversion of Russia promised by Our Lady of Fatima if Russia were consecrated to her Immaculate Heart. There is no sign that Russia will even rise to the level of a morally decadent consumerist-democracy like the United States, the home of partial-birth abortion. As the neo-Catholics almost unanimously insist, however, we can be certain that Russia is converting because the Vatican informed us on June 26, 2000, that everything predicted in the Third Secret had already come to pass, and that (per Msgr. Bertone) the Consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary must no longer be requested—by anyone. As for the triumph of the Immaculate Heart prophesied at Fatima, Cardinal Ratzinger tells us in his commentary on the Message of Fatima that this triumph occurred when Mary agreed to be the Mother of God. That is, the triumph of the Immaculate Heart took place 2,000 years ago.²³ (In which case, why did Our Lady of Fatima say in 1917: "*In the end*, my Immaculate Heart *will* triumph?")

In the neo-Catholic scheme of things, we're not really supposed to discuss any of this—not even after the events of "9/11," which should make anyone uncomfortable with the Vatican's claim that the Message of Fatima is over and done with. The unparalleled evil observed by the preconciliar popes has only intensified. There is no peace, and the holocaust of abortion burns ever higher in the sight of God. Meanwhile, overt Communism still enslaves one-third of the world's population, while in Red China the Catholic Church endures persecution worthy of the Stalinist era, as the American bishops (claiming *sub rosa* Vatican approval) provide seminary training for future priests of the schismatic Catholic Patriotic Association, the pro-abortion "Catholic" church of the Chinese Communist regime.²⁴

But just wait, the Pamphlet's author would say. Pope John's stroke of genius has not yet been manifested in all its plenitude. Any decade now we will understand completely how the Council's silence on Communism and its abandonment of condemnations saved the Church and the world.

But what do the neo-Catholics have to say about the Vatican's present failure to take any truly decisive action against the *internal* enemies of the Church? No one is being disciplined today, they tell us, because the Vatican is deftly avoiding the emergence of a schism, which an excessive application of discipline would surely bring about. In response to this claim (which is always advanced with no real evidence to support it), we ask the following: If the Pope is really so afraid of a schism that he will not impose strict

discipline on anyone, then why did he immediately impose strict discipline and *personally declare* a schism as to Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre and the bishops he consecrated in 1988? Apparently, the alleged fear of schism extends only to disobedient *liberals*. (It has to be said, however, that the declaration of the Lefebvre “schism” is clearly a decision the Pope regrets, as witnessed by his recent insistence on reconciling the Society of St. Pius X by every means possible.)

While the neo-Catholics ponder this gaping hole in their theory, let us pose a related question: If the Pope is serious about reforming the Church, why does he appoint so many liberals to the highest positions of authority? Why, for example, did he elevate to the rank of cardinal Bishop Walter Kasper, who (as we show in [Chapter 8](#)) openly declares that Vatican II “abandoned” the teaching of the preconciliar Magisterium that Christian unity requires the conversion of Protestants and their return to the Catholic Church? Why did he appoint this man as head of the very Pontifical Council that is supposed to deal with the matter of Christian unity? Or, as another example, why did His Holiness create as a cardinal Bishop Karl Lehmann, who dissented from the ban on administering the sacraments to divorced and remarried “couples,” and led the German hierarchy in its longstanding resistance to the Pope’s rather timid effort to order the German bishops to cease issuing counseling certificates that women were using to obtain abortions under German law?²⁵

At the very moment in history when the Church desperately needs strong-willed and fiercely Catholic prelates, the neo-Catholics are inexplicably *lowering* their expectations of churchmen. In a recent mailing, *Crisis* magazine, apparently in all seriousness, advertised an upcoming symposium on the late John Cardinal O’Connor with these words: “Catholic leaders from around the country share their favorite stories and reminiscences about this wonderful man who is *easily* one of the greatest leaders in 2,000 years of Church history!” (emphasis theirs). This is the problem. Certainly, O’Connor was better than, say, Mahony or Gumbleton; yet he was still a liberal by any historical measure of the Church militant. For example, the same Cardinal O’Connor gave his *blessing* on national television to a young man who left the Catholic Church and converted to Judaism.²⁶ Cardinal O’Connor also co-authored a book (*His Eminence and Hizzoner*) with New York’s former mayor, Edward Koch, one of the nation’s leading proponents of abortion on demand and “gay rights.” The Cardinal’s public hobnobbing with pro-abortion politicians such as Koch and Mario Cuomo was notorious. At one point even *The Wanderer* ran a half-page ad publicly calling the Cardinal to account for giving scandal to the Church. The very fact that today certain neo-Catholics will heap praise upon a prince of the Church whose behavior would have caused international outrage forty years ago is a sobering indication of the depths to which we have sunk.

To this the neo-Catholics will reply that in recent years the tide has been turning with more “conservative” papal appointments. They cite the appointment of the likes of Cardinal Francis George, an excellent example of a churchman who, by the neo-Catholics’ absurdly low standards, is now considered downright heroic. The “ultra-conservative” Cardinal George was recently seen in a Chicago-area mosque, attending the Muslim celebration of the end of Ramadan, together with a group of priests and nuns from his Archdiocese. The news account noted that George was “the first Chicago archbishop to attend such an event,” and that “as the last verses of the Imam Senad Agic’s melodious

prayer resonated under the white and gold dome ... clerics and lay people of both faiths bowed their heads.”²⁷ On another occasion, this “ultra-conservative” was photographed for the *Chicago Tribune* as he held hands with a Muslim cleric and a Baptist minister during an “interfaith service” at “the Progressive Baptist Church”²⁸—the sort of conduct expressly forbidden as gravely sinful under the preconciliar code of canon law.²⁹

Then there is that other “ultra-conservative” elevated by the Pope: New York’s Cardinal Edward Egan. During a “Mass of Supplication” in St. Patrick’s Cathedral following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, traditional Catholics were horrified to watch Egan leave the sanctuary and administer hugs to the Mayor of New York City, Rudolph Giuliani, and New York State’s Governor, George Pataki, both of them militantly pro-abortion politicians who are directly complicit in the mass murder of children in the womb, not to mention the advancement of “gay rights” in New York. The “Mass of Supplication”—which contained no reference to making reparation for sin—was interrupted repeatedly for standing ovations by the interfaith congregation.³⁰ This thoroughly Americanized and neutralized prelate is what passes for a rock of orthodoxy in the current ecclesial climate.

It is safe to say, using Cardinal Ottaviani as a benchmark, that in the current college of cardinals, appointed almost entirely by John Paul II, *there is not a single true conservative*. Cardinal Alfons Stickler is the lone exception, though he lost his right to vote in the conclave when he turned 80—the casualty of yet another senseless postconciliar innovation.³¹

Sometimes, though, neo-Catholics will argue that the Pope doesn’t really have much influence over the appointment of bishops. Here we see how the neo-Catholic, when pressed to confront the reality of Rome’s complicity in the debacle, will retreat into an impenetrable shell of non-falsifiable excuses for papal acts and omissions. Everyone and everything is blamed for the condition of the Church except the one man ordained by God to serve as the Church’s very center of unity and discipline. At any rate, surely the Pope has consciously and deliberately chosen at least *some* of the prelates who have given us the post-conciliar debacle.

If Catholics at large become complacent about the papacy because its present occupant upholds Catholic moral teaching and the natural law—which, really, constitutes just about the least one should expect from the Supreme Pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church—it becomes very easy to conclude that the problems in the Church must be beyond Rome’s control. But if we are to evaluate our present situation accurately and dispassionately, we need always keep in mind the greatness of the Popes with which the Church was blessed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, through Pius XII, and we need also to be realistic and honest in our assessment of the current Pontiff. John Paul, for one thing, really believes that we are witnessing a “new springtime” of Christianity. Doubtless our critics can dig up an old quotation from 1980 or 1981 in which the Pope deplores the confusion reigning within the Church, but such isolated statements are swamped by his almost infinitely more numerous rhapsodies about the fruits of the Council. He has traveled the world ceaselessly and has nary a criticism of the virtually institutionalized profanations of the liturgy to be found everywhere, in many of which he participates himself. The bulldozing of beautiful sanctuaries has caused him no visible anguish.

Meanwhile, however, the Pope's Ecclesia Dei Commission, against the will of the overwhelming majority of the priests of the traditionalist Fraternity of St. Peter, recently suspended the Fraternity's election of its own superior, imposed Fr. Arnaud Devillers as superior general in place of the deposed Fr. Josef Bisig, and ordered the removal of two perfectly orthodox rectors at the Fraternity's two seminaries, for no other reason than "to avoid and combat a certain spirit of rebellion against the present-day Church"—meaning insufficient docility toward the postconciliar novelties.³² Cardinal Castrillón, who heads the Commission, told the Fraternity: "I promise that the papal Commission will be more present, from now on, in the seminaries and the other houses of the Fraternity, and will watch attentively for their good behavior. It may also happen that the Ecclesia Dei Commission will intervene again, should it become necessary."³³

Did the Vatican "watch attentively" over the past forty years for "good behavior" at all the Novus Ordo seminaries that were becoming infested with homosexuals, whose criminal acts are, as we write, currently bringing ruin and disgrace to diocese after diocese throughout the world? Will the Jesuits and the Dominicans, whose orders have become sewers of heresy and scandal bearing absolutely no resemblance to their past or indeed anything related to Catholic tradition at all, also be subject to this kind of close Vatican supervision during John Paul's pontificate? To ask these questions is to answer them.

While we have no wish to delve into the details of the exploding homosexual priest scandal that Catholic dioceses have been attempting to hide for decades, we would like to hear the neo-Catholic excuse for why the same Vatican apparatus that "watches attentively" over traditionalist orders and seminaries to suppress "a certain spirit of rebellion" against various recent novelties in the Church, has done virtually nothing about the mountain of complaints and reports it has received from the faithful about sexual predators in the Novus Ordo. After forty years of the Vatican's total failure to enforce its own 1961 instruction that homosexuals should not be ordained or admitted to the seminary,³⁴ the homosexual infiltration of the hierarchy is now international in scope, with criminal convictions, lawsuits and payouts not only in the United States and America, but also in Austria, France, England, Ireland, Spain and even Poland.³⁵ With at least 80 priests having been handed over to the police in the Archdiocese of Boston alone in 2002, we have surely seen only the tip of a massive iceberg.³⁶ As even *The Wanderer* has reported, homosexual infiltration of the Catholic clergy has become so widespread that "straight" priests who honor their vows are being subjected to harassment and retaliation for speaking out against the "gay subculture" in the Church.³⁷ The same *Wanderer* piece notes that papal spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls has publicly questioned the validity of the ordinations of homosexuals—a statement with profound implications for the entire Church. The problem of homosexuality in the priesthood has been something of an open secret in the years since Vatican II, and if its practitioners' ordinations may actually be invalid, one can scarcely contemplate the number of invalid Masses that have been offered through the decades as a result. The procedural norms of "collegiality"—a term which all too often serves as sophisticated nomenclature for a simple refusal to discipline errant bishops—appear to have trumped any concern about this institutionalized sacrilege.

Then, too, there is the commonplace sexual abuse of women in Africa by priests who seem to regard their vows of celibacy as optional. Concerning this scandal, Reuters

reported: “The Vatican is monitoring the situation ... but *no direct action has been taken*”³⁸ Vatican spokesmen Fr. Bernardo Cervellera (director of Fides, the Vatican’s missionary news service) offered the astounding excuse that “the problem was limited to sub-Saharan Africa and related to negative cultural views there of women and of the value of celibacy....” The *value* of celibacy? What about the priestly vow of celibacy before God? Fr. Cervellera added: “These are not cases of ‘psychopathic’ violence against women, but instead a ‘cultural way of living’ that is common throughout the region... .”³⁹ We shall let that answer speak for itself.

We recall the neo-Catholic argument that there must be some brilliant strategy behind Rome’s inaction in the face of the worldwide collapse of the Faith and the spread of heresy and scandal throughout the seminaries and the religious orders. Well, the neo-Catholics are going to have to think up some new explanation for all the disorder, because we have now seen that Rome is prepared to intervene and use its authority quite immediately—but only against Roman Catholic traditionalists. And this is the regime Catholics are supposed to applaud?

It is not as if we were without numerous historical examples of brave Popes who used all the force at their disposal to vindicate traditional Catholicism. Consider the position of Pope St. Gregory VII (1073–85): The Church was in desperate need of reform in his day. Simony was rampant and clerical celibacy had been all but abandoned. When Gregory moved to reinstate Church tradition, he was met with demonstrations of priests across Europe threatening to resist the Pope forever rather than relinquish their wives. The overwhelming majority of German bishops opposed him. But he did not back down. In fact, he became more aggressive still, going so far as to excommunicate Henry IV. It occurred to him that the reason he was having such difficulty implementing his reform program was that so much of the practical authority of naming and investing bishops had passed into the hands of the state. If he were to have any hope of achieving real reform, he had to reclaim the Holy See’s critical prerogative of naming bishops. For centuries, the bishops’ literacy and administrative talent had been tapped by kings and the emperor to perform temporal duties around the realm. Sympathetic bishops were considered essential to the lay monarch, not only for what they could do in the area of administration, but also for serving to check upstart nobles who were always seeking to undermine the king’s position. The suggestion that the power to invest such bishops ought to be taken from him struck Henry IV as the height of insanity. Gregory knew he faced opposition of a kind that modern Popes can scarcely imagine. Yet he did what was right, and although he did not live to see ultimate victory, which came a generation later, his fearlessness vastly increased the prestige of the papacy and set the Church on the road to the independence she needed to carry out her supernatural mission.

The Pamphlet devotes considerable space to a quite illegitimate appeal to the precedent of the Great Western Schism of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. As the argument goes, the Western Schism is an example of the unintended damage that can be done when a Pope is too vigorous in pressing the cause of reform. This is supposed to make us feel impertinent for so much as suggesting that papal vigor might be the recipe for the current crisis. But even a passing examination of the Western Schism reveals nothing of the kind.

For a variety of reasons, during the period from 1305–1377, the papacy resided not in

Rome but in Avignon. Shortly after returning the papacy to Rome, Pope Gregory XI died. During the Avignon papacy, naturally, the French presence within the sacred college had grown enormously, consisting now of ninety Frenchmen, fourteen Italians, five Spaniards, and one Englishman. When the conclave to elect a successor to Gregory XI was summoned, the assembled cardinals deliberated amid the sounds of uproar and tumult outside. The local population wanted some kind of assurance that the papacy would not once again move to Avignon; what they wanted, therefore, was a Roman Pope, or at the very least an Italian. At one point, part of the mob managed to break into the conclave itself and demand that a Roman be elected. The conclave was also interrupted more than once by rocks being thrown through the windows and the sound of axes striking the doors.

At last Bartholomew Prignani (an Italian, though not a Roman) was elected, taking the name Urban VI. He moved vigorously against corruption and worldliness among churchmen—as *had other Popes in the past, without incident*. Urban, however, upon assuming the papal office, began acting in an extremely peculiar and belligerent way, quite uncharacteristic of the temperate Prignani the cardinals had known. We have testimony to the effect that he began publicly insulting his cardinals, even striking one. Cardinals appearing before him on standard Church business were violently denounced. Significantly, he told the French cardinals that he intended to add so many Italians to the sacred college that French influence would dwindle to nothingness—doubtless alarming to a French cardinalate that had grown accustomed to its newfound dominance. But he so alienated his cardinals through his abusive behavior that *every single one of them*, Frenchman and non-Frenchman alike, assembled in a second conclave to elect a new Pope. In fact, it was seriously suggested not only by cardinals at the time, but even today by quite a broad range of historians, that his unexpected elevation to the papacy had rendered Prignani mentally unbalanced, even insane.

It was in this context that we must understand the cardinals' decision to declare the original election—which had taken place under duress—nullified and to elect a new Pope, Clement VII. As historian Msgr. Philip Hughes notes: “Had Urban shown ordinary tact and prudence, there would never—it seems certain—have been the second conclave and the election of 1378.”⁴⁰ If the Western Schism had really been a simple case of a vigorous pro-reform party leading to the walkout of a party of corruption, then why didn't all the saints favor the Roman (that is, pro-reform, anti-corruption) line of Popes? Are we going to suggest that some saints favored worldliness and corruption, the accusation Urban VI hurled at the cardinals? St. Catherine of Siena, St. Catherine of Sweden, Blessed Peter of Aragon, and Blessed Ursulina of Parma sided with Urban, it is true, but St. Vincent Ferrer, Blessed Peter of Luxemburg, and St. Colette all sided with Clement. The Western Schism was an extraordinarily complex event in which a variety of factors unique to that episode played a part—of which French-Italian rivalry within the episcopate, the apparent mental imbalance of Urban VI, and the unusual circumstances of the first conclave are but a few. It obviously cannot be used to support a sweeping generalization about the alleged dangers of papal vigor—especially since papal vigor was quite successful when pursued by the non-insane St. Gregory VII and St. Pius X, to name but two.

Indeed the example of Pope St. Pius X has prompted two mutually exclusive neo-Catholic responses (sometimes, as in the case of the Pamphlet, offered by the same person): either that ecclesiastical discipline wasn't really so tough in the old days, after all,

or that the strict discipline of the old days would be inappropriate to present circumstances.

Let us now consider the first of these arguments: the Pamphlet's repeated claim that even St. Pius X, after all, did not excommunicate wave upon wave of Modernists. As the Pamphlet's author was advised by one of us even before he advanced this argument, there were, naturally, disciplinary measures short of excommunication to which the Pope could and did have recourse. A recent history notes that, contrary to the Pamphlet's suggestion, "[t]he disciplinary regime laid down in the final section of *Pascendi*—nearly 20 percent of the whole text—was extremely detailed and rigorous."⁴¹ Thus, in *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, St. Pius X's encyclical against Modernism, the Pope commands that *vigilance committees* be established in every diocese to guard against the spread of Modernism, and that in the year following the issuance of the encyclical, and every three years thereafter, every bishop report to Rome on the progress of his efforts to eliminate this heresy. Pius X's instructions to the bishops in *Pascendi* deserve to be quoted at unusual length:

But of what avail, Venerable Brethren, will be all Our commands and prescriptions if they be not dutifully and firmly carried out? In order that this may be done it has seemed expedient to us to extend to all dioceses the regulations which the Bishops of Umbria, with great wisdom, laid down for theirs many years ago. "In order," they say, "to extirpate the errors already propagated and to prevent their further diffusion, and to remove those teachers of impiety through whom the pernicious effects of such diffusion are being perpetuated, this sacred Assembly, following the example of St. Charles Borromeo, has decided to establish in each of the dioceses a Council consisting of approved members of both branches of the clergy, which shall be charged with the task of noting the existence of errors and the devices by which new ones are introduced and propagated, and to inform the Bishop of the whole, so that he may take counsel with them as to the best means for suppressing the evil at the outset and preventing it spreading for the ruin of souls or, worse still, gaining strength and growth." We decree, therefore, that in every diocese a council of this kind, which We are pleased to name the "Council of Vigilance," be instituted without delay. The priests called to form part in it shall be chosen somewhat after the manner above prescribed for the censors, and they shall meet every two months on an appointed day in the presence of the Bishop. They shall be bound to secrecy as to their deliberations and decisions, and in their functions shall be included the following: they shall watch most carefully for every trace and sign of Modernism both in publications and in teaching, and to preserve the clergy and the young from it they shall take all prudent, prompt, and efficacious measures. Let them combat novelties of words, remembering the admonitions of Leo XIII: "It is impossible to approve in Catholic publications a style inspired by unsound novelty which seems to deride the piety of the faithful and dwells on the introduction of a new order of Christian life, on new directions of the Church, on new aspirations of the modern soul, on a new social vocation of the clergy, on a new Christian civilization, and many other things of the same kind." Language of the kind here indicated is not to be tolerated either in books or in lectures.

We order that you do everything in your power to drive out of your dioceses, even by solemn interdict, any pernicious books that may be in circulation there. The Holy See neglects no means to remove writings of this kind, but their number has now grown to such an extent that it is hardly possible to subject them all to censure. Hence it happens sometimes that the remedy arrives too late, for the disease has taken root during the delay. We will, therefore, that the Bishops, putting aside all fear and the prudence of the flesh, despising the clamor of evil men, shall, gently, by all means, but firmly, do each his own part in this work, remembering the injunctions of Leo XIII in the Apostolic Constitution *Officiorum*: "Let the Ordinaries, acting in this also as Delegates of the Apostolic See, exert themselves to proscribe and to put out of reach of the faithful injurious books or other writings printed or circulated in their dioceses." In this passage the Bishops, it is true, receive an authorization, but they have also a charge laid upon them. Let no Bishop think that he fulfills his duty by denouncing to Us one or two books, while a great many others of the same kind are being published and circulated. Nor are you to be deterred by the fact that a book has obtained elsewhere the permission which is commonly called the Imprimatur, both because this may be merely simulated, and because it may have been granted through carelessness or too much indulgence or excessive trust placed in the author, which last has perhaps sometimes happened in the religious orders. Besides, just as the same food does not agree with everyone, it may happen that a book, harmless in one place, may, on account of the different circumstances, be hurtful in another. Should a Bishop, therefore, after having taken the advice of prudent persons, deem it right to condemn any of such books in his diocese, We

give him ample faculty for the purpose and We lay upon him the obligation of doing so. Let all this be done in a fitting manner, and in certain cases it will suffice to restrict the prohibition to the clergy; but in all cases it will be obligatory on Catholic booksellers not to put on sale books condemned by the Bishop. And while We are treating of this subject, We wish the Bishops to see to it that booksellers do not, through desire for gain, engage in evil trade. It is certain that in the catalogs of some of them the books of the Modernists are not infrequently announced with no small praise. If they refuse obedience, let the Bishops, after due admonition, have no hesitation in depriving them of the title of Catholic booksellers. This applies, and with still more reason, to those who have the title of Episcopal booksellers. If they have that of Pontifical booksellers, let them be denounced to the Apostolic See.

St. Pius X made it clear that these measures, however comprehensive, were inadequate in themselves: “It is not enough to hinder the reading and the sale of bad books—it is also necessary to prevent them from being published. Hence, let the Bishops use the utmost strictness in granting permission to print.” There was also the matter of periodicals:

With regard to priests who are correspondents or collaborators of periodicals, as it happens not infrequently that they contribute matter infected with Modernism to their papers or periodicals, let the Bishops see to it that they do not offend in this manner; and if they do, let them warn the offenders and prevent them from writing. We solemnly charge in like manner the superiors of religious orders that they fulfill the same duty, and should they fail in it, let the Bishops make due provision with authority from the Supreme Pontiff. Let there be, as far as this is possible, a special censor for newspapers and periodicals written by Catholics. It shall be his office to read in due time each number after it has been published, and if he find anything dangerous in it let him order that it be corrected as soon as possible. The Bishop shall have the same right even when the censor has seen nothing objectionable in a publication.

St. Pius X did not simply issue documents with no effort at enforcing compliance, as is the current practice. On September 1, 1910, three years after the promulgation of *Pascendi*, the Pope issued his *motu proprio Sacrorum Antistitum*, promulgating the Oath Against Modernism and commanding that it be administered to “all clergy, pastors, confessors, preachers, religious superiors, and professors in philosophical-theological seminaries,” even including men being ordained to the subdiaconate. All but a handful of dissident theologians in Europe took the Oath. Thus, *every bishop and other Catholic cleric at the Second Vatican Council* had sworn the Oath Against Modernism. As Michael Davies notes:

The first part of the oath is a strong affirmation of the basic Catholic truths opposed to Modernism: the demonstrability of God’s existence by human reason; the value and suitability of miracles and prophecies as criteria of revelation; the historical institution of the Church by Christ; the inviolable character of Catholic tradition; the reasonableness and supernaturalness of faith.

The second part of the oath is an expression of interior assent to the decree *Lamentabili* and the encyclical *Pascendi* with their contents.^{[42](#)}

It is a fact of history that Vatican II was largely an exercise in tearing down the disciplinary bulwark Pope St. Pius X had erected, and which had held back the tide of Modernism for nearly sixty years, until the opening of the Council.

Two years after the Council, Paul VI abolished the Oath Against Modernism, along with the Index of Forbidden Books, a decision that Bishop Rudolf Graber rightly described as “incomprehensible.”^{[43](#)} The Church’s primary defenses against Modernism were deliberately dismantled, evincing not merely a failure to take action against heresy, but *a positive papal decision not to punish it*.

What do the neo-Catholics have to say about these events in the course of their constant excuses for Rome’s failure to reign in the chaos of the postconciliar Church? Nothing.

Yes, it is true that St. Pius X did not excommunicate many people. But would any honest person, in discussing St. Pius X's disciplinary program, leave it at that and make no mention of any of the measures just discussed—the very measures repudiated by the conciliar Popes? What grade would be assigned to a student writing a paper on *Pascendi* whose conclusion, after reading the above, was simply: “St. Pius X did not excommunicate many people”? Yet that is the Pamphlet's conclusion. To call that conclusion misleading would be the mildest thing one could say about it. And what, besides an intention to mislead, could account for this neo-Catholic attempt to present St. Pius X's vast and quite successful campaign against Modernism as if it were an historical example of papal *leniency* in the face of danger to the Church?

We will know when we have a Pope who is serious about reversing the disaster of the past thirty-five years. He is not here yet.

1. PCM, p. 146.
2. Michael Ott, “Pope Pius IX,” *Catholic Encyclopedia* (1908).
3. Freemasonry has been condemned in encyclicals and other papal pronouncements by Benedict XIV, Clement XIII, Pius VI, Pius VII, Leo XII, Gregory XVI, Leo XIII, St. Pius X, Pius XI, and Pius XII. The pertinent papal condemnations are catalogued and discussed in Paul A. Fisher's excellent study, *Their God Is the Devil* (American Research Foundation, 1991). Worthy of particular study is Pope Leo XIII's *Humanum Genus* (1884), in which His Holiness warned that the Freemasons “especially desire to assail the Church with irreconcilable hostility, and ... they will never rest until they have destroyed whatever the Supreme Pontiffs have established for the sake of religion.”
4. Bishop Rudolf Graber, *Athanasius and the Church of Our Times* (Hawthorne, CA: Christian Book Club of America, 1974), p. 32.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
6. Marquis de Franquerie, *L'infallibilité pontificale: Le syllabus et la crise actuelle de l'Eglise*, undated manuscript, p. 48; cited in *ibid.*, p. 35.
7. Franquerie, *L'infallibilité pontificale*, p. 45; cited in *ibid.*
8. Graber, *Athanasius and the Church of Our Time*, p. 37.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 70–71.
10. The eminent Catholic laywoman Dr. Alice von Hildebrand recently wrote in *The Latin Mass* (Summer 2001) about the extensive documentation of both Communist and Masonic infiltration of the Church by Fr. Luigi Villa, of the Diocese of Brescia, Italy, who produced two books on the subject at the request of Padre Pio. She noted that every Italian bishop was given a copy of Fr. Villa's book *Paub Sesto Beato?*, and that none has challenged any of his claims. Among other things, Villa claimed that Bishop Montini of Milan, the future Paul VI, had engaged in unauthorized secret correspondence with the Soviets while serving Pius XII as Undersecretary of State, and that a Vatican mole, Alghiero Tondi, S.J., a close advisor to Montini, identified to the Soviets the clandestine priests Pius XII had sent into Russia, after which the priests were arrested, tortured, executed or sent to the gulag. In typical neo-Catholic fashion, historian Warren Carroll immediately attacked Mrs. von Hildebrand's veracity on the EWTN website, while providing no evidence that Mrs. von Hildebrand (or Fr. Villa) was unworthy of belief. Only after a protest by Mrs. von Hildebrand were Carroll's baseless remarks removed from the website.
11. *Council Daybook*, National Catholic Welfare Conference, Washington, DC, vol. 1, pp. 25, 27.
12. Jeremiah 6:14.
13. Amerio, *Iota Unum*, p. 82.
14. *Itinéraires*, no. 285, p. 152; cited in *ibid.*, p. 76 n. 6.
15. The entire intrigue is detailed by Wiltgen, *The Rhine Flows into the Tiber*, pp. 274–77. Wiltgen was an eyewitness to the furor over the “disappearance” of the written intervention of the 450 Council Fathers against Communism, hand-delivered to the Council's General Secretariat by Archbishop Lefebvre. Reception of the document

was at first denied but then admitted. In any event, it was never allowed to reach the Council floor.

[16.](#) Graber, *Athanasius and the Church of Our Time*, p. 64.

[17.](#) Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, *They Have Uncrowned Him* (Kansas City, MO: Angelus Press, 1988), p. 229. Here Lefebvre also notes that the Communist newspaper *Izvestia* demanded that Paul VI condemn him and his seminary at Ecône.

[18.](#) Zenit, September 24, 1999.

[19.](#) As reported by the London Times online edition of January 12, 2002: “Russia’s last independent television station was closed yesterday, leaving the country’s entire broadcast media under Kremlin control.”

[20.](#) [NewsMax.com](#), March 21, 2000.

[21.](#) [CWNews.com](#), December 12, 1998.

[22.](#) Balamand Statement (1993), nn. 22, 30.

[23.](#) As Ratzinger wrote in the Commentary: “I would like finally to mention another key expression of the ‘secret’ which has become justly famous: ‘my Immaculate Heart will triumph.’ What does this mean? The Heart open to God, purified by contemplation of God, is stronger than guns and weapons of every kind. *The fiat* of Mary, the word of her heart, has changed the history of the world, because it brought the Savior into the world—because, thanks to her Yes, God could become man in our world and remain so for all time.” Notice that the Cardinal removed the key words “*In the end*” from Our Lady’s prophesy, thus eliminating any need to discuss the four future events she predicted: the triumph of her Immaculate Heart, the consecration of Russia, Russia’s consequent conversion, and a period of peace for mankind. By judicious editing of Our Lady’s words, four future events were transformed into one event 2,000 years ago, thus making the Fatima prophecy utterly pointless.

[24.](#) See [www.cardinalkungfoundation.org](#) for the many details of the Vatican’s inaction toward the Red Chinese regime’s persecution of the Catholic Church.

[25.](#) According to *The Tablet* (April 28, 2001), the Vatican Secretary of State, Angelo Sodano, “had originally supported Lehmann’s position.... The question was whether the Church was colluding in abortion by issuing certificates confirming that pregnant women in distress had been given counselling, if these were then used to secure a termination. It had been Sodano’s opinion that such matters could be decided by the local bishops’ conferences, but eventually he was forced to sign a decree together with Ratzinger which compelled the German Catholic bishops to pull out....”

[26.](#) John Vennari, “Cardinal O’Connor Blesses Apostasy,” *Catholic Family News*, May 1999, pp. 3, 22. The Cardinal’s verbatim statement on the television show *Nightline* is quoted at [Chapter 8, note 30](#).

[27.](#) “George Breaks Fast with Muslims,” *Chicago Tribune*, January 21, 1998, Section 2, p. 3.

[28.](#) *Chicago Tribune*, March 12, 1998, Metro Chicago Section, p. 1.

[29.](#) Canon 1258: “It is forbidden to actively participate in the worship of non-Catholics” (*communicatio in sacris*); see also Canon 2316: “One who cooperates *communicatio in sacris* contrary to the provision of Canon 1258 is suspected of heresy.” It should be noted that the 1949 Instruction of the Holy Office on “the ecumenical movement” strictly forbade “any communication whatsoever in worship” with Protestants at mixed theological congresses permitted under strict conditions (including the requirement that Protestants be presented with “the teaching of the Encyclicals of the Roman Pontiffs on the return of the dissidents to the Church”). AAS 42–142. The Instruction did allow such congresses to begin and end with an Our Father or “some prayer approved by the Catholic Church”—a far cry from “interfaith prayer services” in Baptist temples, or the joint Vespers services and other liturgies the Pope himself has conducted with Protestant ministers in St. Peter’s Basilica.

We do not intend to suggest that the cited canons are *defide* teachings of the Church. Nevertheless, because of the obvious dangers to the faith of Catholics, the Church constantly forbade any form of *communicatio in sacris* with non-Catholics until 1983. The results of abandoning that prohibition speak for themselves.

[30.](#) The entire spectacle was broadcast live on Fox News network.

[31.](#) The “80 and out” rule was imposed by Paul VI in an obvious effort to keep cardinals with a “preconciliar” outlook from voting in the next conclave. In 1999, John Paul II reaffirmed the new rule with the curious explanation that “the reason for this provision is the desire not to add to the weight of such a venerable age the further burden of choosing the one who has to lead Christ’s flock” (Reuters, May 15, 1999). Since a cardinal can *be* the Pope at age 80, it is absurd to argue that he is too old to vote for the Pope—all the more absurd in view of John Paul II’s constant defense of “human rights.” Why should a cardinal’s *age* deprive him of the right to cast a vote in a papal conclave, especially given the

wisdom that comes with age? Here again we see the tacit principle of the postconciliar revolution at work: all innovations must be defended, whether or not the defense is just or logical.

[32.](#) Letter to the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter, June 29, 2000.

[33.](#) Ibid.

[34.](#) As reported by Catholic News Service, March 6, 2002, the Vatican instruction provided that “Those affected by the perverse inclination to homosexuality or pederasty should be excluded from religious vows and ordination.”

[35.](#) Archbishop Juliusz Paetz of Poznan, Poland is under investigation by the Vatican after numerous priests complained for years that he was sexually exploiting them. See report by *Associated Press*, March 8, 2002.

[36.](#) [Newsday.com](#), March 7, 2002. A series of American dioceses has followed suit, disgorging lists of credibly accused sexual predators after hiding the names for decades. See, e.g., “Church Scandals Turn Into Avalanche,” *Sun Sentinel*, March 10, 2002.

[37.](#) Paul Likoudis, “Debates Rage Over Homosexuals in the Priesthood,” *The Wanderer*, March 14,

[38.](#) Reuters, March 20, 2001.

[39.](#) CNN, March 21, 2001.

[40.](#) Hughes, *A History of the Church*, vol. 3, p. 234.

[41.](#) Marvin R. O’Connell, *John Ireland and the American Catholic Church* (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1988), p. 347.

[42.](#) Michael Davies, *Partisans of Error* (Long Prairie, MN: Neumann Press, 1983), pp. 104, 71.

[43.](#) Graber, *Athanasius and the Church of Our Time*, p. 54.

The Charge of “Integrism”

One of the most peculiar aspects of the neo-Catholic system is on display in the Pamphlet: namely, the accusation that traditionalists are “integrists.”

There can’t be one in a thousand Catholics who have the faintest idea what this word means, so the actual effect of using it—and it is difficult to escape the conclusion that this was in fact the intended effect—is to make traditionalists sound as if they have some kind of clinical disorder. This has been a favorite tactic of the Left for decades now.

What does the term actually mean? The Pamphlet never provides a definition. But an anonymous article about “Integrism” on a website maintained by the Pamphlet’s author is helpful in this regard—although not to the Pamphlet’s position. The article notes that the word “integrism” was coined by French theologians during the pontificate of St. Pius X to describe those who, in reaction to the rise of Modernism, tended to believe that certain long-standing theological opinions in the Church should be regarded as binding Catholic doctrine in areas where the Church allowed free discussion. For example, an integrist might hold that since Thomistic philosophy was the perennial philosophy of the Catholic Church, it would be heresy to disparage the Thomistic system. While it would be imprudent and wrong to disparage the Thomistic system, and a clear sign of Modernist tendencies (as St. Pius X taught in *Pascendi*), to do so is not heresy, properly speaking. An integrist, therefore, would be someone who makes too great a claim for some element of Catholic truth, such as the preeminence of the Thomistic system—even though what he defends is *true*.

None of this is to suggest that either *The Remnant* or the authors of the Statement are “integrists.” Rather, the point here is that the very article the Pamphlet’s own author provides to define the key term at issue undermines his position that “integrism” is some sort of grave threat to the good order of the Church and that “integrists” are not orthodox Catholics.

That integrists are neither heretics nor schismatics was affirmed by none other than Dietrich von Hildebrand, whom the Pamphlet rightly praises as an “exemplary churchman.” The Pamphlet ignores that it was von Hildebrand who observed in *The Devastated Vineyard* that while an “integrism” may be unduly narrow-minded about certain things, his views “are also *in no way incompatible* with Christian Revelation.”¹ In other words, the term “integrism,” rightly understood, refers to people who are Roman Catholics in good standing. As von Hildebrand put it: “The narrowness of the integrists may be regrettable, *but it is not heretical*.” In fact, integrists are “pious, *orthodox* men.” He went on:

A short while ago, a well-known and important French theologian, who deplores the present devastation of the vineyard of the Lord, said to me that “integrists” were just as bad as “modernists”.... *This is obviously a great error*. The narrowness of the integrists may be regrettable, but it is *not heretical*. *It is not incompatible with the teaching of Holy Church*. Therefore, it is *completely senseless* to place those who hold a philosophic thesis to be inseparable from Christian Revelation ... on a level with those who promulgate philosophic theses which are in radical contradiction to the teaching of Holy Church.... [I]t is still *a great mistake* to believe that the integrists,

who are pious, *orthodox* men, are just as dangerous to the Church as declared heretics.... This attack from within is being conducted by all available means and propagated by the mass media; it is an epidemic which is growing more widespread every day. This is *the real danger*, a disintegration of the Church. With the integrists, on the other hand, *there can be no question of such a danger*.

Is this what the Pamphlet means by “integrist”—an orthodox Catholic in good standing with the Church who is simply overzealous in his insistence on certain points? Clearly not. The Pamphlet appears to attribute to the word a meaning held by no one but its author. The term is tossed about so carelessly as to become a mere epithet, applicable to any traditionalist holding any opinion on the postconciliar crisis that is at odds with the neo-Catholic position that all of the Vatican-approved changes in the postconciliar Church must be accepted with docility, and even defended as good.

For example, there is the incident in which the Vicar of Christ kissed a copy of the Koran, the Muslim holy book, presented to him during a visit by a delegation of Iraqi representatives. For this the Pope was praised by the Catholic Patriarch of Iraq, Raphael I.² The Koran condemns the Holy Trinity as a blasphemy worthy of eternal hellfire,³ and denies that Our Lord was crucified.⁴ One can easily imagine a line of Catholic martyrs going to their deaths rather than consenting to kiss that book. Here is what the Pamphlet’s own author wrote of the scandal in 1999: “We must pray for the Pope. For gestures are symbolic and, despite disclaimers, suggest a *less-than-Catholic approach* to other religions, especially in the context of worship of a God Who is alleged to guide ‘three monotheistic religions’ to salvation.” The author was right to express this objection. But the same author, having recently embraced the neo-Catholic position, now proclaims in the Pamphlet that such legitimate opinions are “integrist.”⁵

Many neo-Catholics invest the term “integrist” with connotations of a formal canonical delict, which it never had in its original usage. According to the Pamphlet, when the “integrist” prescinds from any of the papally approved novelties that have arisen in the Church since 1965, he ceases to be an orthodox Catholic, because he is rejecting “the living Magisterium.”

In particular, the Pamphlet (in another about-face on the author’s own earlier views) insists that “Catholic ecumenism” as practiced since Vatican II is part of the “living Magisterium” that “integrists” are obliged to embrace if they would remain Catholics in good standing. On the contrary, “Catholic ecumenism” involves no explicitly stated doctrine requiring religious assent to a specific proposition; it involves, rather, a new ecclesial attitude and program that, as we have demonstrated amply, defy precise definition. Further, there are compelling reasons to prescind from the purely prudential judgments by which “Catholic ecumenism” is animated in practice. Not even the Pamphlet denies that the preconciliar Popes would blanch in horror at what forty years of “Catholic ecumenism” have done to the Holy Catholic Church. (This is not to mention what they would think of the Pope kissing the Koran.)

Let us remember that the chief feature of “Catholic ecumenism” at the papal level consists of elaborate public ceremonies that purport to demonstrate an obviously non-existent “Christian unity” with non-Catholic sects. During these ceremonies, the adamant purveyors of the grossest heresy and immorality are given the false appearance of ecclesiastical dignity, causing enormous scandal and confusion among the faithful. A

recent example is the Vicar of Christ pushing open the Holy Door of St. Paul's Outside the Walls together with the "Archbishop" of Canterbury—a layman in a bishop's costume, whose abominable sect teaches that abortion is permissible as a matter of conscience and that women may be ordained as "priests."

Another recent example is the joint Vespers service that the Pope conducted in St. Peter's Basilica with Lutheran "bishops" on November 15, 1999. Two women Lutheran "bishops" were in attendance at this travesty.⁶ Like the Anglicans, the mainline Lutherans (including those who negotiated the deplorable "Lutheran-Catholic Accord") preach that abortion is permissible and that women may be priests. And this is the state of Lutheran doctrine *after* forty years of "ecumenical dialogue." Luther himself would condemn today's Lutherans as heretics! Yet the Pope celebrates Vespers with the very preachers of the culture of death, as if they were authentic clerics who belong to a legitimate church that the Immaculate Bride of Christ should treat as a worthy partner in "ecumenical dialogue."

Such ceremonies reveal "Catholic ecumenism" as a grotesque failure that has descended to the level of self-parody. Obviously, no Catholic is bound to embrace as part of "the living Magisterium" a pastoral program that gives places of honor in public ecclesiastical ceremonies to impostor clerics who condone the murder of children in the womb. Yet this is the very stuff of "Catholic ecumenism" at its highest level.

Then there are Pope John Paul's Lenten apologies in 2000 for sexism, anti-Semitism, crimes against indigenous peoples, violence in the service of truth, lack of respect for other religions—and so on. The papal apologies remind Catholics that John Paul II routinely does things that his admirers would never dream of doing. Would the neo-Catholics themselves have made these apologies? Do they really feel the accumulated weight of guilt for the catalogue of sins against liberalism solemnly recited on that shameful day? What is so intellectually contemptible about the neo-Catholic position is that if we had told a few of our critics a year or two ago that a rank dissident like Fr. Richard McBrien or Hans Küng had proposed that the Church apologize for all these things, we would have had a good laugh together at the inanity of such a suggestion. But when the Pope suggests *the very same thing*—and even some relatively conservative cardinals were uncomfortable about the whole spectacle—it is suddenly a sign of "integrisim" to express outrage or disbelief.

Joe Sobran put it this way: "We must ask: What is the fruit of the hundred or so apologies this Pope has now uttered? Is there any evidence that they have drawn any souls to the Church? Do they not, on the contrary, confirm every malicious common belief about the Church, while discouraging faithful Catholics and confusing weak ones? What on earth is the *point*?" (The desire to ask such questions is the first sign of "integrisim.")

Predictably, the apologies were greeted by the squeaking and squawking of the unappeasable—the Pope hadn't gone far enough! "But what, one must ask, did the Holy Father expect?" Sobran wonders. In fact, though, "his list of sins and transgressions was indeed incomplete, from a Catholic point of view; it seems to have been composed with an eye to what modern liberalism regards as evil. In short, it has a fatal whiff of trendiness about it. It's easy to condemn sins of excessive zeal in the past, to which few are now tempted. But what might Catholics of the past (or the future) condemn in the Church

today? They certainly wouldn't accuse us of excessive zeal. They might be shocked by our lukewarmness, our cowardice masquerading as tolerance, our laxity, our willingness to countenance heresy, sacrilege, blasphemy, and immorality within the Church itself, our eagerness to ingratiate ourselves with the secular world—of which the papal statement itself is a symptom.”

The *American Spectator*'s Tom Bethell had this to say: “The Pope has excused St. Catherine of Siena's involvement in the Crusades by saying that she was a daughter of her times. Well, so is he of his, and his list of errors resembles nothing so much as a catalogue of the things that modern liberals accuse the Church of. They include, to quote [the] *New York Times*, ‘religious intolerance and injustice toward Jews, women, indigenous peoples, immigrants, the poor and the unborn....’ We now have bishops who have receded to a point where they are inconspicuous in national life, and the Pope might apologize for that. Instead, he apologizes for a time when the Church tried to evangelize the world. But tried too hard.” And then the best and most telling line of all: “A priest I spoke to in Washington DC the other day said that if the Pope is going to apologize, he should apologize to the elderly conservative priests and nuns who are living out their lives in the wreckage that they find around them.”

If objecting to this kind of behavior at the Vatican is “integrism,” then no Catholic need fear being an “integrist.” Rather, Catholics should fear the consequences of remaining silent about one scandal after another as the damage to the Church continues to mount. The naked emperor was not well served by his subjects in the crowd who marveled at his new suit of clothes. Neither does the neo-Catholic papal apologist well serve the Holy Father by continuing to pretend that the postconciliar *aggiornamento*, with its ruined liturgy, its incessant amiable “dialogue” with enemies of the Faith, its constant papal apologies and self-abasement, has been good for the Church—or even for those outside of her.

The great irony here is that it is actually our neo-Catholic accusers who are “integrists” in their defense of every papally approved novelty as if it were a matter requiring the assent of faith. This classic neo-Catholic position is presented in Likoudis and Whitehead's *The Pope, the Council and the Mass*, the aforementioned apologia for the postconciliar revolution. Like the authors of that unfortunate treatise, the Pamphlet completely obscures the distinction—in terms of the duty of obedience—between the immutable teaching of the Church on faith and morals over two millennia and the papally approved liturgical innovations and novel ecclesial attitudes of the past thirty-five years, whose fruits are the emptying of the pews, the seminaries and the convents, and the rapid dwindling of conversions and vocations from a preconciliar torrent to a postconciliar trickle. Neo-Catholics defend the innovations with all the fervor of the hypothetical traditionalist “integrist” in his defense of something like Thomism, but with this difference: The neo-Catholic “integrist” defends novelties that have obviously done the Church no good, whereas the traditionalist “integrist” defends ancient and venerable things from the Church's patrimony.

It is also important to recall here that the definition of papal infallibility agreed upon at the First Vatican Council (1869–70) was very precise, and for a reason. It declared that the Roman Pontiff,

when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when carrying out the duty of the pastor and teacher of all Christians in accord with his supreme apostolic authority he explains a doctrine of faith or morals to be held by the universal Church, through the divine assistance promised him in blessed Peter, operates with that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer wished that his Church be instructed in defining doctrine on faith and morals; and so such definitions of the Roman Pontiff from himself, but not from the consensus of the Church, are unalterable.

What is most striking about the Vatican I definition are the strict conditions it imposes upon the charism of infallibility. As Cardinal Newman noted in his discussion of the definition, “these conditions of course contract the range of infallibility most materially.”⁷ Newman further noted the crucial distinction between the divine *inspiration* of the original Apostles, and the divine *assistance* provided to the Church throughout history: “Hence the infallibility of the Apostles was of a far more positive and wide character than that needed by and granted to the Church. We call it, in the case of the Apostles, inspiration; in the case of the Church, *assistentia*.”

It is hardly an “integrist” error to note, then, that it is only by divine *assistance*, not divine inspiration, that the Pope is protected from any possibility of error—and then only when he defines *a matter of faith and morals* as a doctrine *to be believed by the whole Church*. Lesser matters are subject to the possibility of papal error, however rare and extraordinary that may be. Newman gives the striking example of Pope Nicholas I, whose declaration on the validity of the minister of Baptism (whether it could be a Jew or a pagan), noted in passing (according to Bellarmine) that “Baptism was valid whether administered in the name of the three Persons or in the name of Christ only.”⁸ Would it be “integrism” to point out that Pope Nicholas I had taught theological error in a papal pronouncement on an important doctrinal matter?

There is a reason that the Council decided to define papal infallibility in such a limited way. There was, at the time, a strain of thought within Catholic circles that claimed that every utterance of the Pope was positively infallible. Thus WG. Ward, the editor of the *Dublin Review*, held, according to one historian, that “the infallible element of bulls, encyclicals, etc., should not be restricted to their formal definitions, but run through the entire doctrinal instructions; the decrees of the Roman Congregations, if adopted by the Pope and published by his authority, thereby were stamped with the mark of infallibility; in short, ‘his every doctrinal pronouncement is infallibly directed by the Holy Ghost.’”⁹ A still more extreme position was reprobated by an American bishop at the Council, whose concern over the matter led him to suggest the following canon: “If anyone says that the authority of the Pope in the Church is so full that he may dispose of everything by his mere whim, let him be anathema.” This position was understood by the assembled bishops to be so patently ludicrous and unworthy of the attention of an educated Catholic that the bishop who had suggested it was told that the bishops had not assembled at Rome “to hear buffooneries.”¹⁰

This particular buffoonery, though, happens to be the neo-Catholic position—the very position that Vatican I, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, was exceedingly careful *not* to adopt in its infallible definition. Even Cardinal Ratzinger, who can hardly be called an “integrist,” remarked recently that the good of the Church demands that this point be appreciated once again. “After the Second Vatican Council,” he writes, “the impression arose that the Pope really could do anything in liturgical matters, especially if he were acting on the mandate of an ecumenical council.” This idea, vigorously defended by the

neo-Catholics, has yielded terrible consequences, Ratzinger insists. “Eventually, the idea of the givenness of the liturgy, the fact that one cannot do with it what one will, faded from the consciousness of the West.”¹¹ All of this happened because of the adoption of an exaggerated view of papal authority nowhere sanctioned by the Church:

In fact, the First Vatican Council had in no way defined the Pope as an absolute monarch. On the contrary, it presented him as the guarantor of obedience to the revealed Word. The Pope’s authority is bound to the Tradition of faith, *and that also applies to the liturgy*. It is not “manufactured” by the authorities. Even the Pope can only be a humble servant of its lawful development and abiding integrity and identity.

In sum, the authority of the Pope “is not unlimited; it is at the service of Sacred Tradition.”¹²

The Pamphlet, like the entire neo-Catholic attack on Roman Catholic traditionalism, is based, therefore, upon a patently false premise. To quote the Pamphlet: “Modernists and Integrists are actually twins. Both thrive on opposition to the living Magisterium.” The Pamphlet fails utterly to demonstrate how the legitimate grievances of traditionalists concerning a state of ecclesial affairs even the Pamphlet’s author deplores constitute opposition to the “living Magisterium” of the Church. What are the *doctrines* of this “living Magisterium” the “integrists” are said to deny—doctrines, we say, as opposed to ill-considered reforms and changes of ecclesial attitude? None are identified, because none exist. Nor does the Pamphlet cite a single statement by any of the “integrists” it condemns by name (i.e., the authors of the Statement) to demonstrate their “integrist” dissent from Magisterial teaching. No statements are provided because none exist.

But the neo-Catholic position depends upon this false equivalence between modernist heretics and faithful traditional Catholics. For if the neo-Catholic critique of Roman Catholic traditionalism involves no Catholic doctrine as such, then traditionalists have the perfect right to state their case. From this it follows that the neo-Catholic position *contra* traditionalism loses all color of authority, revealing itself as a mere opinion among other opinions in the Church, including the opinions of traditionalists.

Sad to say, the unjust equivalence between traditionalists and modernists is advanced not only by the author of the Pamphlet, but also by a Catholic bishop who provided an introduction to it. We are referring to His Excellency Fabian W. Bruskewitz, Bishop of Lincoln, Nebraska.

His Excellency’s introduction lauds the Pamphlet’s denunciation of the ill-defined “integrists” as a great service to the Church, and warns Catholics to have nothing to do with those sorry traditionalists who would remove an eyeball along with the cinder and then “replace its empty socket with cinders and decayed matters.” (Why these poor creatures would *replace* the cinders into their eye-sockets after having just removed them so painfully must remain a mystery.) Equally to be shunned are those who “sometimes say, ‘I wish I could cut off my head to cure my headache.’” Horrors!

His Excellency declares that “integrists” are no better than the seventeenth-century Jansenist nuns of Port-Royal, France, described by the Archbishop of Paris as “pure as angels but as proud as devils.” Subtle, His Excellency isn’t.

More to the point, His Excellency rightly notes (as if anyone did not already know) that “down through the centuries there have been countless sects, denominations, cults and

churches which have broken off from the Catholic Church under the pretense of being ‘holier than thou.’” His Excellency seems to be suggesting the existence of a present-day analogue of these dissident groups. But it is evidently not present-day Anglicans or Lutherans whom His Excellency has in mind, given that he has presided over an ecumenical prayer service and breakfast together with an Anglican “bishop” and assorted Lutheran “ministers.” The Methodists, then? Apparently not, since His Eminence respectfully attended the “consecration” of Methodist “bishop” Joel Martinez, who has publicly recalled (in a sermon on May 21, 2000) the joyous day his mother left the Catholic Church and returned to the Methodist fold, along with Martinez’s grandmother. Nor does it appear that His Excellency was thinking of the more obscure local Protestant sects in his own diocese, such as the Congregational Christian Church or the First Congregational Christian Church. One of His Excellency’s own parishes conducts what it calls a “Sermon a la Carte” program, in which parishioners are urged to attend sermons by the ministers of these very sects, as well as the local Methodist and Lutheran “churches.” Yes, in the Diocese of Lincoln, the sheep are actually being encouraged to go and listen to false shepherds. It is equally clear that His Excellency was not contemplating the modern descendants of the Pharisees, who, in the worst schism of all, cut themselves off from the true religion when they rejected the Messiah in their midst and had Him put to death. Quite the contrary, His Excellency conducted an interfaith Seder Supper with a group of rabbis in his own cathedral during Holy Week.¹³

No, by “sects, denominations and cults” of the present day, His Excellency does not mean the Protestant ministers and rabbis with whom, in true neo-Catholic fashion, he prays, breakfasts and sups in happy concord—even though these false shepherds condone abortion, contraception and divorce, not to mention innumerable gross heresies. His Excellency means the “integrists,” and only them. It was only to denounce *his fellow Catholics* that Bishop Bruskewitz lent the weight of his episcopal office to the accusations of the Pamphlet.

The Bishop’s leap to public judgment is not surprising. In the neo-Catholic view of things, the “integrists” have committed the one unpardonable sin in the postconciliar Church: they have refused to cease being what Bishop Bruskewitz himself was only forty years ago, when Catholics were taught to avoid like the plague the very things they are now being told they can embrace without reservation—including such things as the polka Masses that have been featured in at least six parishes in the Diocese of Lincoln.

Let us repeat that neither Michael Matt nor the other traditionalists whom the Pamphlet and *The Wanderer* have condemned are “integrists” in the first place. Nevertheless, the neo-Catholic accusation is impaled on the point driven home by von Hildebrand: that the real danger to the Church (as always) is heresy, not any such thing as “integrism.” To recall the words of von Hildebrand, it is a “great error,” and “completely senseless,” to equate the two. Yet that senseless error is the very foundation of the neo-Catholic critique of the traditionalist position. It is time that foundation was removed, so that the neo-Catholic critique can be allowed to collapse into the uninformed opinion it really is.

1. Dietrich von Hildebrand, *The Devastated Vineyard* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973), p. 16.

2. “On May 14th I was received by the Pope, together with a delegation composed of the Shiite imam of Khadum mosque and the Sunni President of the council of administration of the Iraqi Islamic Bank. At the end of the audience the

Pope bowed to the Muslim holy book the Koran presented to him by the delegation and he kissed it as a sign of respect. The photo of that gesture has been shown repeatedly on Iraqi television, and it demonstrates that the Pope is not only aware of the suffering of the Iraqi people, he has also great respect for Islam” (*Fides* news agency, Rome, June 4, 1999).

Some neo-Catholics obstinately deny that the incident occurred, while others explain it away. Photographs of the event abound. See e.g., www.garykah.org/html/Popekoran.htm

3. Surah V, *al-Maa'idah* (*The Table Spread*), verses 72—73: “They surely disbelieve who say: Lo! Allah is the Messiah, the son of Mary.... Lo! Whoso ascribeth partners unto Allah, for him Allah hath forbidden paradise. His abode is the Fire. For evildoers there will be no helpers. They surely disbelieve who say: Lo! Allah is the third of three; when there is no God save the one God. If they desist not from so saying, a painful doom will fall on those of them who disbelieve.” Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Glorious Koran* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1976 ed.).

4. Surah IV, *al-Nisaa'* (*Women*): “They slew him not nor crucified him, but it appeared so unto them.... But Allah took him up to Himself.” Ibid.

5. It seems clear enough that the Pope’s gesture was impetuous, and not intended to bless the many errors and blasphemies of the Koran. But if the sedevacantists have made too much of the incident, neither can the scandal be minimized. Gestures like these hardly reinforce the Church’s teaching that Christ, and He alone, is the savior of men. It is well nigh impossible for any Vatican document to counter the impact of such papal conduct, which in this case was exploited to the hilt by the Iraqi mass media. Protestant fundamentalists have also exploited the incident to poison the minds of potential converts. See, e.g., David W. Cloud, *Fundamental Baptist Information Service*, www.abide-in-truth.com.

6. “Joint Catholic-Lutheran Vespers at Vatican,” CWNews.com, November 13, 1999: “Archbishops G.H. Hammar and Jukka Paarma—the Lutheran primates of Sweden and Finland, respectively—and Bishops Anders Arborelius of Stockholm and Czeslaw Kozon of Copenhagen joined with the Holy Father for the Vespers service. Several other Lutheran bishops from the Scandinavian countries were present for the ceremony, including two female bishops.”

7. John Henry Newman, *Certain Difficulties* (London, 1876), cited in Michael Davies, *Lead Kindly Light The Life of John Henry Newman* (Long Prairie, MN: Neumann Press, 2001), p. 179.

8. Ibid., pp. 181–82.

9. B. C. Butler, *The Church and Infallibility* (London: Catholic Book Club, 1954), p. 91.

10. Michael Davies, *Pope Paul’s New Mass* (Kansas City, MO: Angelus Press, 1980), p. 593.

11. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. John Saward (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), pp. 165–66.

12. Ibid.

13. John Vennari, *Catholic Family News*, January 1999. The authors have examined the original diocesan publications on which this article was based.

Private Judgment?

Perhaps no accusation has been leveled at traditionalists with such frequency and with such undeserved effect as the claim that they engage in “private judgment.” As the Pamphlet’s own title—*Traditionalists, Tradition and Private Judgment*—suggests, the author advances the basic neo-Catholic thesis that since the Pope is the “sole arbiter” of Tradition, anything the Pope approves or commands is *a priori* consonant with Tradition, regardless of what our memories and our senses may tell us, and that to say otherwise is to engage in “private judgment” of a Protestant character. The same absurd thesis was advanced in *The Pope, the Council and the Mass*.

The thesis is absurd because it deprives Catholic Tradition of objectively knowable content, requiring Catholics to suspend the use of their reason and submit to a kind of ecclesial legal positivism which itself is contrary to Tradition. For example, as the neo-Catholic would have it, even though Paul VI himself referred to his new rite of Mass as “this novelty,” “this innovation,” “this grave change” in his audience addresses of November 1969, no Catholic may conclude that a novelty of such unprecedented magnitude represents a departure from Tradition, because even novelties must be viewed as consonant with Tradition if they are approved by the Pope. Yet as Cardinals Ottaviani and Bacci noted in their famous *Intervention*, the text and rubrics of the new Mass represented a “striking departure from the theology of the Mass” as taught by the Council of Trent—that is, a departure from Tradition.¹ This was no “private judgment.” It was a statement of what was manifest.

Traditionalists, it is alleged, belong in the same category with liberals and even Protestants, because both call certain decisions of those in authority into question. That an obvious qualitative difference separates traditionalist arguments from Protestant ones does not seem to deter our critics from advancing this easily refuted charge. The Pamphlet portrays the neo-Catholic parallel thus: “If the former (our liberal dissidents) are like Judas and prefer their own way to the way of the Master, the latter (the Integrists or extreme Traditionalists who concern us here) are like the nervous disciples in the boat who are scandalized that the Lord sleeps while the boat is whipped in the storms which threaten to plunge them into the deep (Lk. 8:22–25). They forget or hesitate over the divine authority and sovereignty of the Master and would seize control of the Ship themselves if they could—not because they are wicked necessarily, but because, at the end of the day, they do not completely trust the divine ‘always’ and ‘whatsoever.’” The Pamphlet thus asserts that in place of confidence in the “divine ‘whatsoever,’” traditionalists substitute their “private judgment.”

Let us, therefore, proceed to this central claim with recourse to an initial example. A traditionalist deplores the Vatican’s decision to allow Eucharistic ministers, because he believes that by compromising the priest’s exclusive custodianship of the Eucharist, they strike at the heart of the meaning and mystery of the holy priesthood, robbing the sacerdotal function of the manliness and awe that entice young men to enter the seminary. Hans Küng, who is no doubt delighted with Eucharistic ministers, does not even believe

that Christ instituted the Catholic priesthood. By what strange calculus are these two positions in any way equivalent?

We have a Magisterium, the neo-Catholic says, that provides Catholics with a unique source of stability and constancy. Agreed. But with what precisely is the Magisterium concerned? To this question neither the Pamphlet in particular nor neo-Catholics in general are willing to offer a clear answer. Since the neo-Catholic will brook no criticism of any major ecclesial fad that has the support of the Vatican, the neo-Catholic version of the Magisterium seems a quite expansive thing indeed. Is the “ecumenical movement,” condemned by Pope Pius XI as a threat to the Catholic faith, a part of Magisterial teaching? Is a Catholic bound in conscience, on pain of mortal sin, to believe against all available evidence that the ceaseless parade of ecumenical gatherings since the Council is a *traditional* Catholic undertaking? (Incidentally, if the neo-Catholics can name one good fruit that has emerged from more than three decades of “ecumenical dialogue” that in any way compensates for the confusion, indifferentism, and theological ambiguities that have been its obvious and quite predictable side effects, we would like to hear what it is.)

The Pamphlet, hewing to neo-Catholic convention, will brook no criticism of papally approved ecumenism. The Pope approved it; therefore it is “private judgment” to object to any of the Pope’s ecumenical activities. Some priests doubtless go too far, the author says, but Rome’s program is unobjectionable—for, after all, the Pope approved it. In a commentary sent to his supporters, the author even called one of us a “Pharisee” for expressing our objections to the continuing scandal of ecumenical activities with pro-abortion Protestant “bishops” and other bogus clerics in Protestant “ecclesial communities.”

At least one Catholic bishop, however, agrees that traditionalists have a right to be heard in opposition to the Pope’s ecumenical endeavors:

There are people who in the face of the difficulties or because they consider that the first ecumenical endeavors have brought negative results would have liked to turn back. Some even express the opinion that these efforts are harmful to the cause of the Gospel, are leading to a further rupture in the Church, are causing confusion of ideas in questions of faith and morals and are ending up with a specific indifferentism. It is perhaps a good thing that the spokesmen for these opinions should express their fears.

The bishop in question is Pope John Paul II, writing in his inaugural encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis* (1979). It is true that the Pope went on to say that he considered such fears to be misplaced. But it is also fairly significant that the Pope himself says “it is perhaps a good thing” that traditionalists “should express their fears,” including the fear that ecumenical activities “are harmful to the cause of the Gospel, are leading to a further rupture in the Church, are causing confusion of ideas in questions of faith and morals and are ending up with a specific indifferentism.” Thus, oddly enough, it is the neo-Catholics who are engaging in “private judgment” when they denounce traditionalists for disloyalty to the Pope for voicing precisely that opinion which the Pope is willing to hear. Here, as in many other places, it is the neo-Catholics who reveal themselves as rigorists and “integrist”—though only when it comes to defending postconciliar innovations.

If the previously unheard-of novelties that traditionalists deplore were Magisterial teachings, then we would indeed be in trouble. For starters, the Catechism would have to be produced in disposable missalette form, just to keep up with it all. Thankfully—and,

again, quite obviously—this is not the case.

Especially scandalous to the author of the Pamphlet and his neo-Catholic fellows is that traditionalists are not altogether pleased with Vatican II. The central traditionalist criticism of Vatican II, as we have noted, is that it fundamentally changed the Church's orientation in a direction that tended to undermine her divine mission. Again, by what arcane reckoning do neo-Catholics conclude that an *orientation* could itself be a Magisterial teaching? How can an orientation be "true" or "false"? It can only be wise or unwise, fruitful or barren. Thus if the Pope were to declare that the pastoral experiment inaugurated by Vatican II, having produced more dissension and confusion than genuine good, was to be abandoned in favor of the Church's traditional posture, that would be entirely his prerogative. If the optimism of Vatican II has fallen far short of expectations, it can ultimately be rejected by the Church, like any other contingent pronouncement or provision of Popes and councils. For example, in the wake of the Council of Trent and in the face of the Protestant Revolt, the Church granted the request of some of her members that Communion be offered to the faithful under both species. Over time the practice seemed to produce more confusion than piety—some laymen could not be persuaded from the superstitious notion that one receives more grace by receiving under both kinds. And so the very churchmen who had originally requested the Holy See's permission for this experiment finally asked that the previous discipline be restored.

But in matters that truly pertain to the Magisterium—such things as the Holy Trinity, Our Lady's Immaculate Conception, the intrinsic immorality of artificial contraception—the Church can do no such thing. These teachings cannot be revised or rejected no matter what. A pastoral strategy, however, is not a dogmatic definition. There is a fairly obvious qualitative difference between the statement, "Jesus Christ, true God and true man, is the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity," and the statement, "Perhaps the Church should consider a more irenic relationship vis-a-vis other religions." This simple distinction is at the heart of the traditionalist position, and it really borders on the amazing that anyone could actually fail to understand it.

Moreover, it is entirely possible that an ecumenical council can simply fail in its stated goal. The fifteenth-century Council of Ferrara-Florence failed to bring about a lasting reconciliation with the Orthodox. The Second Council of Constantinople (553) seems only to have confused people further about the controversy surrounding Monophysitism. In the present day, Vatican II has manifestly failed to bring about the "new springtime" of Christianity that its proponents predicted. Cardinal Ratzinger himself insisted in late December 1984: "I am repeating here what I said ten years after the conclusion of the work: it is incontrovertible that this period has definitely been unfavorable for the Catholic Church."² If neo-Catholics are going to argue that this disaster has occurred *in spite of the* new orientation advanced by Vatican II, then it is they who are the integrists; for they are asserting, without any Church teaching to support them, that the Church has been given a divine guarantee that she will always follow the soundest and most fruitful pastoral approaches, and that if she recommends them they simply have to work. Where in any catechism has the Church ever said that she possessed such an assurance? If nowhere, then why do our critics insist, as if they had Holy Scripture itself behind them, that to doubt the wisdom of the pastoral directives of Vatican II is to cut oneself off from communion with the Church? What Catholics do have is a guarantee that in faith and morals she will not

teach error. That is a far cry from guaranteeing that every suggestion offered even by an ecumenical council will be necessarily successful or wise.

Pope John XXIII set the tone for the postconciliar period when he remarked that it was better to overcome error by putting forth the beauty of the truth in all its radiance than to resort to the iron fist of discipline and punishment. There is something superficially plausible and even beautiful about such a statement, but it altogether discounts the baneful effects of Original Sin on the human intellect. John Milton notwithstanding, the truth can rarely be victorious in the free marketplace of ideas without the special assistance of divine grace. The briefest glance at the state of our own civilization should be all the refutation this cliché requires.

The same is true of doctrinal error in the Church. Error can have a seductive attraction to our fallen nature. As Pope St. Pius X said of the Modernists: “It is pride which puffs them up with that vainglory which allows them to regard themselves as the sole possessors of knowledge, and makes them say, elated and inflated with presumption, ‘We are not as the rest of men,’ and which, lest they should seem as other men, leads them to embrace and to devise novelties even of the most absurd kind.” Rather than be small fish in a big pond, writing books that merely elaborate on what the Church has taught for millennia, the Modernists, thirsting for fame, notoriety, and the applause of the world, chase after errors in order to ingratiate themselves with the Church’s influential enemies. St. Pius X would have laughed at the suggestion that in this fallen world truth was its own defense, or that it was somehow uncharitable to have recourse to excommunication and other ecclesiastical penalties. Why, then, is it “private judgment” for traditionalists, with the wisdom of previous Popes behind them, to point out the fallacy behind this postconciliar approach, whose results have been so devastating?

It is blasphemous in the extreme to compare, as the Pamphlet does, the embarrassing and scandalous shenanigans coming out of today’s Vatican to Our Lord sleeping in the boat. It is, of course, an extraordinary consolation to recall that Christ is always with us through these terrible trials. But does that mean that we should sit back and let them run their course? One of our peculiar traits, according to the Pamphlet, is that we wish that Church authority might be exercised as it was in generations past. In the author’s words, we “demand that it be exercised today as it was yesterday.” Guilty as charged. But who in his right mind *wouldn’t* like to see that? One must remember what St. Thomas teaches: It is one thing to suffer injustices committed against oneself, following Christ’s injunction to turn the other cheek. It is quite another to do nothing while other people suffer injustice. If neo-Catholics wish to delight in the weakness and disciplinary laxity of the past several Popes as a poignant example of the mysterious working of divine providence, that is all very well. The rest of us prefer the rather less narcissistic goal of the salvation of souls, a task made somewhat difficult by the fact that we must reckon with religious orders more concerned with transcendental meditation or massage therapy than with living the Gospel, beautiful sanctuaries and statues replaced with tables and felt banners, bishops who corrupt Catholic youth with sex education—we all know the catalogue of folly, error, and blasphemy that some dare to call “the springtime of Vatican II.” So yes, traditionalists cling to their “private judgment” that the Pope really ought to do something about all this.

Can the best approach to the postconciliar debacle really be to say nothing, to do

nothing, and to simply allow a veritable revolution that is causing the Church unspeakable damage to proceed unhindered? What kind of loyal son of the Church can watch the Bride of Christ in such agony and remain silent, or, what is worse, engage in the intellectually sterile and egregiously dishonest effort to claim that everything is just fine? What impulse can account for the stoic determination of the neo-Catholic to deny reality?

Now, if Fr. Richard McBrien had quoted favorably from Teilhard de Chardin (on whose works Pope John XXIII placed a *monitum*), held a special meeting with female altar servers, and even publicly *kissed the Koran*, in neo-Catholic eyes this would no doubt constitute still further evidence of the man's perverse delight in dissent. But when the Pope did these very things, the neo-Catholic response was an embarrassed silence.³ It is heartbreaking to have to speak publicly against some of the practical judgments of the Pope, but to do so is neither without precedent nor a sign of disrespect, either for the person of the Pope or his sacred office. Public correction is the only mechanism available to the concerned Catholic today; it is not possible to remonstrate privately with top churchmen or to receive a lengthy audience with them. As we note elsewhere in this book, St. Thomas Aquinas himself taught that public reproof of a prelate, even including the Pope, can be a requirement in charity in order to avoid scandal to the Faith. For all Catholics are bound together in charity, the highest and the lowest.

By far the greater scandal would be to follow neo-Catholic example, making a phony virtue out of doing nothing. How many conservative Protestants turned away in disgust from the Church for good after the Koran episode? The evolution statement? The inexplicable campaign against the death penalty, a punishment obviously sanctioned in Holy Scripture and Tradition? That traditionalists voice their opinions because they love the Catholic Church and can see that certain trends are causing her harm, whereas radicals like Küng write their books because they loathe the Church and want to see her destroyed, would seem to most people to be a fairly significant difference. Why the neo-Catholics pretend not to see this it is impossible to say.

A word about Dietrich von Hildebrand, the revered philosopher whom the Pamphlet claims for the neo-Catholic side: Sorry, but von Hildebrand was a traditionalist. In fact, so much did von Hildebrand lack the neo-Catholic's version of what constitutes "trust" in the Church (which seems to boil down to: be utterly unconcerned with the disciplinary laxity and weekly scandals emanating from Rome, and commit the sin of presumption by blithely insisting that the Holy Spirit will work everything out if only we sit around and do nothing) that he actually secured a private audience with Pope Paul VI, a recourse which a man of his stature could arrange with relative ease. We know that von Hildebrand there pleaded with the Pope (in vain, as it happened) to use his authority as Vicar of Christ to put a stop to the alarming spread of dissent, error and institutional decay within the Church. Later, von Hildebrand would write that when a papal decision "has the character of compromise or is the result of pressure or the weakness of the individual person of the Pope, we cannot and should not say: *Roma locuta, causa finita*. That is, we cannot see in it the will of God; we must recognize that God only permits it, just as He has permitted the unworthiness or weakness of several Popes in the history of the Church.... On account of my deep love for and devotion to the Church, it is a special cross for me not to be able to welcome every practical decision of the Holy See, particularly in a time like ours, which is witnessing a crumbling of the spirit of obedience and of respect for the Holy Father."⁴

In determining to seek out the Holy Father and, yes, correct him to his face, von Hildebrand apparently failed to appreciate the neo-Catholic insight, much on display in the Pamphlet, that papal laxity is like Christ asleep in the boat, and that we ought neither to worry about nor question such a state of affairs. We trust we can be forgiven for being slow to believe that the man whom Pius XII called “the twentieth-century American doctor of the Church,” whose brilliance has edified good Catholics for decades, was all this time in need of fraternal correction from the likes of the Pamphlet’s author.

Now, not even the Pamphlet’s author can be entirely ignorant of previous examples in Church history in which the highest prelates, including the Pope, have been criticized for their failings. The example of St. Catherine of Siena and her rebuke of Pope Gregory XI should come immediately to mind. In addition, the Third Council of Constantinople, held in 680–81, condemned Pope Honorius I as having essentially held the Monothelite heresy (a variation of Monophysitism that claimed that Christ possessed only one will). In confirming the decisions of the Council, Pope Leo II himself sharply criticized his predecessor, but not for actually having held the heresy himself, as the council seemed to suggest, but for having done so little when the heresy was ravaging the Church. In a letter to the Spanish bishops, Pope Leo II explained how he wished the Council’s view of Honorius to be understood: “Honorius ... did not, as became the Apostolic authority, extinguish the flame of heretical teaching in its first beginning, but fostered it by his negligence.” That is, he agreed that “the whole matter should be hushed up.”⁵

The *Catholic Encyclopedia* describes the case in no uncertain terms: “It is clear that *no Catholic has the right to defend Pope Honorius*. He was a heretic, not in intention, but in fact; and he is to be considered to have been condemned in the sense in which Origen and Theodore of Mopsuestia, who died in Catholic communion, never having resisted the Church, have been condemned.” Are the neo-Catholics prepared to claim that in rendering such a judgment on a Pope, an ecumenical council of the Church, as well as Pope Leo II, also failed to appreciate the “divine ‘whatsoever’”?

The great irony of this whole controversy is that if anything, it is the neo-Catholic who truly partakes of the spirit of Protestantism. Philosophically speaking, Protestants generally are what are known as nominalists, that is, those who assess actions as good not out of their conformity to natural law or the common good, but merely because they flow from the will of the legislator. God, therefore, could, without contradiction, decree tomorrow that murder is a good and holy thing. (This frame of mind, incidentally, helps to account for Calvin’s notion of a rigid and absolute predestination both to heaven and to hell—it is just another arbitrary decision of an arbitrary God in an irrational universe.) Nominalism is what neo-Catholics practice every time they intone “obey, obey, obey” in place of reasoned discussion. These are the same people who considered altar girls an abomination in 1980 when the Pope forbade them (in *Inestimabile Donum*), but a potential enrichment to the Church in 1994, when the Pope finally caved in and approved the innovation. That is a central feature of Protestantism: the denial that good and evil, truth and falsehood, are, in the very nature of things, fixed and eternal, and not merely arbitrary designations that Authority may change at its good pleasure.

The nominalism of the neo-Catholics is evident in their approach to the liturgical devastation of the past thirty years. Neo-Catholics routinely advance the argument that it

constitutes “private judgment” to claim that the postconciliar liturgical reform inaugurated by Paul VI marked a break with ecclesiastical tradition. The Pope alone, so the argument goes, may determine what is and is not in conformity with ecclesiastical tradition. Therefore, whatever liturgical innovation the Pope approves, even altar girls, is *ipso facto* “traditional,” and no one may say otherwise. In other words, it would seem that according to the neo-Catholics the Pope is *ontologically incapable* of departing from liturgical tradition.

But consider the text of the traditional papal coronation oath, in existence for many centuries after its introduction by Pope St. Agatho in the seventh century:

I vow to change nothing of the received Tradition, and nothing thereof I have found before me guarded by my God-pleasing predecessors, to encroach upon, to alter, or to permit any innovation therein;

To the contrary: with glowing affection as her truly faithful student and successor, to safeguard reverently the passed-on good, with my whole strength and utmost effort;

To cleanse all that is in contradiction to the canonical order, should such appear;

To guard the Holy Canons and Decrees of our Popes as if they were the Divine ordinances of Heaven, because I am conscious of Thee, whose place I take through the Grace of God, whose Vicarship I possess with Thy support, being subject to the severest accounting before Thy Divine Tribunal over all that I shall confess;

I swear to God Almighty and the Savior Jesus Christ that I will keep whatever has been revealed through Christ and His Successors and whatever the first councils and my predecessors have defined and declared.

I will keep without sacrifice to itself the discipline and the rite of the Church. I will put outside the Church whoever dares to go against this oath, may it be somebody else or I.

If I should undertake to act in anything of contrary sense, or should permit that it will be executed, Thou wilt not be merciful to me on the dreadful Day of Divine Justice.

Accordingly, without exclusion, We subject to severest excommunication anyone—be it ourselves or be it another—who would dare to undertake anything new in contradiction to this constituted evangelic Tradition and the purity of the Orthodox Faith and the Christian Religion, or would seek to change anything by his opposing efforts, or would agree with those who undertake such a blasphemous venture.

Note carefully what the Pope is called upon to say here. He solemnly swears that he will uphold the sacred Tradition of the Church and do nothing to the contrary. He is acutely aware of the judgment that awaits him should he act otherwise: “Thou wilt not be merciful to me on the dreadful Day of Divine Justice,” the oath warns.

Now if the neo-Catholic position—namely, that it is inherently impossible for the Pope to act contrary to Tradition—were correct, the entire papal coronation oath would be rendered nugatory and laughable. Why would the Pope be required to swear not to do something he is inherently incapable of doing?

Nevertheless, this axiom of neo-Catholicism was recently affirmed in an editorial in *The Wanderer*, which declares quite simply: “All approved rites are traditional.”⁶ It is hardly surprising that both authors of the editorial were born after Pope Paul’s suppression of the traditional Latin rite. They are thus chronological as well as intellectual neo-Catholics. For them, the recently concocted Novus Ordo Mass is the Church’s primary liturgical patrimony, even though the Novus Ordo (like the authors) is barely thirty years old, and (unlike the authors) is already falling to pieces—“the collapse of the liturgy” is how Cardinal Ratzinger put it.⁷

Now unless, which God forbid, the Catholic faith demands the suppression of the evidence of our senses and indeed of the intellect itself, then surely when an unprecedented new liturgical form manifestly departs from immemorial tradition one ought to be able to say so. Human reason itself tells us that no man's mere *ipse dixit*, no matter what his rank, can compel us to believe that white is black or that what is novel is traditional.

It is helpful, although by no means necessary to this conclusion, that Pope Paul VI himself openly admitted that his new rite was a novelty that represented a startling and bewildering break with the past. As he declared in his audience address of November 19, 1969:

We wish to draw your attention to an event about to occur in the Latin Catholic Church: the introduction of the liturgy of the *new rite* of the Mass.... This change has something astonishing about it, something extraordinary. This is because the Mass is regarded as *the traditional and untouchable expression of our religious worship and the authenticity of our faith*. We ask ourselves, *how could such a change be made?* What effect will it have on those who attend Holy Mass? Answers will be given to these questions, and to others like them, arising from this *innovation*.

In his audience address of November 26, 1969, only a week later, Pope Paul could not have been more explicit in his intention to depart from the Church's ancient liturgical tradition:

We ask you to turn your minds once more to the *liturgical innovation* of the new rite of the Mass.... A new rite of the Mass: *a change in a venerable tradition that has gone on for centuries*. This is something that affects our hereditary religious patrimony, *which seemed to enjoy the privilege of being untouchable and settled*.... We must prepare for this many-sided inconvenience. It is the kind of upset caused by every *novelty* that breaks in on our habits.... So what is to be done on this special and historical occasion? First of all, we must prepare ourselves. This *novelty* is no small thing. We should not let ourselves be surprised by the nature, *or even the nuisance*, of its exterior forms. As intelligent persons and conscientious faithful we should find out as much as we can about *this innovation*.

Pope Paul's description of what he had decided to do regarding the traditional Latin liturgy would be impossible to believe if he had not said it publicly and for the historical record:

It is here that the greatest newness is going to be noticed, the newness of language. No longer Latin, but the spoken language will be the principal language of the Mass. The introduction of the vernacular will certainly be *a great sacrifice* for those who know the beauty, the power and the expressive sacrality of Latin. *We are parting with the speech of the Christian centuries; we are becoming like profane intruders in the literary preserve of sacred utterance*. We will lose a great part of that stupendous and incomparable artistic and spiritual thing, the Gregorian chant. We have *reason indeed for regret, reason almost for bewilderment*. What can we put in the place of that language of the angels? *We are giving up something of priceless worth*. But why? What is more precious than *these loftiest of our Church's values*?⁸

Pope Paul's answer to his own question—"But why?"—is even more astonishing:

The answer will seem banal, prosaic. Yet it is a good answer, because it is human, because it is apostolic. Understanding of prayer is worth more than the silken garments in which it is royally dressed. Participation by the people is worth more—particularly participation by modern people, so fond of plain language which is easily understood and converted into everyday speech.

It is hardly "private judgment" to note, as a purely factual matter, that there was no evidence whatever to support Pope Paul's claim that his liturgical innovations were necessary to accommodate a supposed need of "modern people" for "plain language." As Cardinals Ottaviani and Bacci observed in their famous Short Critical Study of the new

rite in 1969 (which later came to be known as *The Ottaviani Intervention*), the people themselves had never asked for and did not want this change: “If the Christian people expressed anything at all, it was the desire (thanks to the great St. Pius X) to discover the true and immortal treasures of the liturgy. They never, *absolutely never*, asked that the liturgy be changed or mutilated to make it easier to understand. What the faithful did want was a better understanding of a unique and *unchangeable* liturgy—a liturgy *they had no desire to see changed*.”⁹ In fact, when the liberal German bishop William Duschak of Calapan proposed in a speech during Vatican II that there be a new rite of Mass in the vernacular, he was asked whether his proposal had originated with the people he served. Duschak replied: “No, *I think they would oppose it*. But if it could be put into practice, I think they would accept it.”¹⁰

And Bishop Duschak, it must be noted, was only suggesting that a new vernacular rite be implemented on an experimental basis *alongside* the traditional Latin rite, not in place of it. The *de facto* abolition of the traditional Mass would have been unthinkable to the vast majority of Council Fathers. In fact, when Cardinal Browne expressed to his fellow Council Fathers the fear that if the Council allowed the vernacular into the liturgy the Latin Mass would disappear within ten years, he was greeted with incredulous laughter. But as Fr. John Parsons notes, “The pessimistic reactionary proved to be more in touch with the flow of events than the optimistic progressives. The Council Fathers’ incredulous laughter at Cardinal Browne helps to remind us that a general council, like a Pope, is only infallible in its definitions of faith and morals, and not in its prudential judgments, or in matters of pastoral discipline, or in acts of state, or in supposed liturgical improvements. It is thus false to assert that a Catholic is logically bound to agree with the prudential judgments a council may make on any subject. It is still more illegitimate to extrapolate from the negative immunity from error which a general council enjoys in definitions of faith and morals, to belief in a positive inspiration of councils, as if the bishops were organs of revelation like the Apostles....”¹¹

But that is exactly what the neo-Catholic does. The aforementioned *Wanderer* editorial only expresses the basic neo-Catholic position when it contends that “infallibility is *intrinsic* to an ecumenical council,” even as to those matters that the Magisterium has not definitively settled or matters of discipline or pastoral prudence. Here again we see that in a manner quite contrary to Catholic teaching, the neo-Catholic obliterates any distinction between the ordinary and extraordinary Magisterium, between the doctrinal and disciplinary decrees of Popes and Councils—it’s all infallible.

At any rate, if Pope Paul’s own declarations do not describe a break with ecclesiastical tradition, then words have lost their meaning. And for the neo-Catholics, many words *have* lost their meaning—including, as we can see here, the words “liturgical tradition.” But while Pope Paul’s admissions ought to settle the question as to whether it is “private judgment” to say that the new Mass departs from that tradition, we will nevertheless undertake a further demonstration of what is obvious to everyone but neo-Catholics.

A systematic overview of the new liturgy is well beyond our scope, and in any case has already been undertaken by eminent scholars such as the great Msgr. Klaus Gamber. A single example suffices for present purposes: the new Offertory prayers—or, as the official text has it, the “Prayer over the Gifts.” One of the ground rules of the liturgical reform,

according to Vatican II, was that “any new forms adopted should in some way grow organically from forms already existing.”¹² Let us see to what extent that instruction was observed in this case.

Traditional Catholics are familiar with the beautiful and doctrinally rich words in which the Host is offered in the traditional liturgy:

Accept, O holy Father, almighty and eternal God, this unspotted host, which I, Thy unworthy servant, offer unto Thee, my living and true God, for my innumerable sins, offenses, and negligences, and for all here present: as also for all faithful Christians, both living and dead, that it may avail both me and them for salvation unto life everlasting. Amen.

This magnificently Catholic prayer has been replaced with:

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this bread to offer, which earth has given and human hands have made. It will become for us the bread of life.

Quite apart from its utter blandness, this new prayer in no way grows organically “from forms already existing.” Quite the contrary, it does not have the slightest relation to the original prayer, which summarized the Catholic teaching so beautifully and concisely. According to Fr. Peter Coughlan in his book *The New Mass: A Pastoral Guide* (1969), it was not even intended to bear such a relation. The new prayer, he says, “is a combination of a prayer taken from the Jewish meal ritual and the concept of man’s work consecrated to the Lord, an idea which the Pope himself wanted to be expressed in some way at this point in the Mass.”¹³

Therefore, one might think, the new Offertory prayers break radically with ecclesiastical tradition because—as had never happened before—Mass texts were concocted on the spot from borrowed elements cobbled together by a papally appointed committee, Pope Paul’s Consilium, to express “ideas” that the Pope wished to include in his new creation. The same is true for the new rite as a whole, including the Consilium’s composition of three new “Eucharistic prayers” to supplant the 1,600-year-old Roman Canon, which is now, quite incredibly, reduced to the status of a disused “option”—in favor of texts written in the 1960s.

In view of the wholesale liturgical changes imposed by Pope Paul, that the new liturgy is a dramatic rupture with the Church’s entire liturgical past is a matter of simple common sense. Cardinal Ratzinger himself has argued that the imposition of the new rite represents a break with tradition. Clearly commenting on the work of the Consilium, Ratzinger says, “In the place of liturgy as the fruit of development came fabricated liturgy. We abandoned the organic, living process of growth and development over centuries, and replaced it—as in a manufacturing process—with a fabrication, a banal on-the-spot product.”¹⁴

This was also the view of Msgr. Gamber, who explained what would be apparent to any impartial observer when he noted that the new Mass represented not a case of liturgical development but of “fabricating a new liturgy by committee.”¹⁵ Gamber, a liturgist of great renown, is a scholar whose authority and credentials are disputed by no one. Beginning in 1962, he headed the liturgical institute in Regensburg, and edited an eighteen-volume monograph series entitled *Studia Patristica et Liturgica*, as well as fifteen volumes of *Textus Patristici et Liturgici*. His devastating critique of the liturgical reform, *The Reform of the Roman Liturgy: Its Problems and Background* (English

translation, 1993), for whose French-language edition Cardinal Ratzinger wrote a laudatory preface, merits careful study. (Cardinal Ratzinger describes Msgr. Gamber as “the one scholar who, among the army of pseudo-liturgists, truly represents the liturgical thinking of the center of the Church.”)¹⁶

For Gamber there was no question that the new Mass constituted a clear and tragic break with tradition, and he said so flatly. He observed that while the liturgy had evolved gradually and imperceptibly over time, “there has never actually been *an actual break with Church tradition, as has happened now*, and in such a frightening way, where almost everything the Church represents is being questioned.”¹⁷ “We can only pray and hope,” he added, “that the Roman Church will *return to Tradition* and allow once more the celebration of that liturgy of the Mass which is well over 1,000 years old.”¹⁸ Msgr. Gamber would have been baffled at the anti-intellectual position of the neo-Catholic, whereby radical novelty conforms with tradition as long as ecclesiastical authority says it does, despite all evidence to the contrary and in spite of the very demands of logic itself.

Here is how Gamber viewed our present situation:

Today, those who out of a sense of personal belief hold firm to what until recently had been strictly prescribed by the Roman Church are treated with condescension by many of their own brothers. They face problems if they continue to nurture the very rite in which they were brought up and to which they have been consecrated....

On the other side, the progressives who see little or no value in tradition can do almost no wrong, and are usually given the benefit of the doubt, even when they defend opinions which clearly contradict Catholic teaching.

To add to this spiritual confusion, we are also dealing with the satiated state of mind of modern man, who, living in our consumer society, approaches anything that is holy with a complete lack of understanding and has no appreciation of the concept of religion, let alone of his own sinful state. For them, God, if they believe in Him at all, exists only as their “friend.”

At this critical juncture, the traditional Roman rite, more than one thousand years old and until now the heart of the Church, was destroyed.¹⁹

Here we have Gamber at his most devastating. A radical rupture with tradition has taken place, he notes with sadness, and at the worst possible moment. At a time when the spiritual idiocy of modern man has reached appalling proportions, the traditional liturgy, which conveys the sense of tradition and of the transcendent that he so desperately needs, has been vandalized beyond recognition. It is hardly possible to elaborate upon that sentiment.

Gamber in fact went even further than merely stating that the new liturgy constituted a radical break with tradition—that much should be obvious, he thought. More interesting was the question, which Gamber dared to pose, of whether the Pope in fact possessed the authority to change the traditional rite of Mass in such a wholesale manner.

According to Gamber, “It most certainly is not the function of the Holy See to introduce Church reforms. The first duty of the Pope is ... to *watch over* the traditions of the Church—her dogmatic, moral, and liturgical traditions.”²⁰ This is a critical point: the Pope’s first duty is to *preserve* what has been handed down, not to introduce novelty or to discard what is ancient and venerable. The fundamentally conservative role of the papal office, as we note elsewhere in this book, was described specifically at the First Vatican Council: it is the Pope’s task to *guard* the *depositum fidei*, not to change or augment it.

Gamber concludes: “Since there is no document that specifically assigns to the

Apostolic See the authority to change, let alone to abolish the traditional liturgical rite; and since, furthermore, it can be shown that *not a single predecessor of Pope Paul VI has ever introduced major changes to the Roman liturgy*, the assertion that the Holy See has the authority to change the liturgical rite would appear to be debatable, to say the least.”²¹ As we have already noted, in *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (2000), no less an authority than Cardinal Ratzinger all but endorses this view. “The authority of the Pope,” Ratzinger concludes, “is not unlimited; it is at the service of Sacred Tradition.”²²

Likewise, the new Catechism teaches that “Liturgy is a constitutive element of the holy and living Tradition.... Even the supreme authority in the Church may not change the liturgy arbitrarily, but only in the obedience of faith and with religious respect for the mystery of the liturgy.”²³ But since the neo-Catholics hold that it is impossible for the Pope to change the liturgy arbitrarily, without the obedience of faith, or without religious respect for the mystery of the liturgy—all papal liturgical innovations being “by definition” traditional—they would no doubt hold this teaching of the Catechism to be quite superfluous, if not in itself an exercise in “private judgment.”

Alfons Cardinal Stickler, the retired prefect of the Vatican library and archives, who served as a *peritus* on Vatican II’s Liturgy Commission, apparently also concurs in the “private judgment” condemned by the neo-Catholics. After noting that he had never called into question the validity of the *Novus Ordo*, the Cardinal adds that the juridical question was another matter. Basing his judgment on “my intensive work with the medieval canonists,” the Cardinal points out that there are certain things so essential to the life of the Church that “even the Pope has no right of disposal” over them, as indeed the Catechism teaches. He suggests that the liturgy should be considered among these essential things.²⁴

Cardinal Stickler has distinguished between the two rites by noting that while what he calls the *corpus traditionum* was alive in the old Mass, the new is plainly “contrived.”²⁵ He endorsed Gamber’s contention that, in the Cardinal’s words, “today we stand before the ruins of a 2,000-year tradition, and ... it is to be feared that, as a result of the countless reforms, the tradition is in such a vandalized mess that it may be difficult to revive it.”²⁶

But according to the neo-Catholics, these eminent churchmen have no right to remark what is obvious, since Catholic fidelity requires us to ignore all empirical evidence and cling to the *a priori* assumption that whatever the Pope approves must be traditional.

Not long after Annibale Bugnini, the head of the Consilium, had finished what observers from across the spectrum have described as the destruction of the traditional Roman rite, he proposed the “renewal” of the Rosary. It was to be shortened and rearranged, with the Our Father recited only once at the beginning, and the Hail Mary edited to include only “the biblical portion of the prayer.” The “Holy Mary, Mother of God” would be said “only at the end of each *tenth* Hail Mary.” There would also be a new “public” version of the Rosary, consisting of readings, songs, homilies, and “a series of Hail Marys, but limited to one decade.”²⁷

Paul VI responded to this preposterous proposal through the Vatican Secretary of State: “[T]he faithful would conclude that ‘the Pope has changed the Rosary,’ and the psychological effect would be disastrous.... Any change in it cannot but lessen the

confidence of the simple and the poor.”²⁸ It was a clear sign of the incoherence of the postconciliar program that the very grounds on which the Pope rejected changes to the Rosary were ignored in the decision to make even more radical changes to the traditional rite of Mass. What about the disastrous psychological effects of changing on a few weeks’ notice the rite of Mass that people had known their whole lives and that dated back in Church history to the time of Pope St. Gregory the Great? How is it “private judgment” to note that a radical change to the foundation of the Church’s divine worship has had more serious consequences than Bugnini’s rejected plans for a revision of the Rosary?

Certain neo-Catholics even propose the ludicrous thesis that the Mass of Paul VI was completely in line with a supposed “longstanding process” of “liturgical reform” launched by none other than Pope St. Pius X. In *The Pope, the Council and the Mass*, for example, the authors cite St. Pius X’s *Divino Afflatu* (which merely rearranged the distribution of the Psalter to restore balance between the Psalms and an increasing number of prayers to saints and blessed), and his call for “active participation” (i.e., deeper *internal* participation) in the *traditional liturgy*. From these things the authors leap to the conclusion that St. Pius X “was *in favor* [their emphasis] of orderly liturgical change, as required by the times....” The suggestion that St. Pius X would approve of Pope Paul VI’s demolition of the traditional Roman rite in favor of a new rite drawn up by a committee cannot be taken seriously by anyone with even a minimal knowledge of the Church’s liturgical history. As Michael Davies rightly notes, the attempt to use minor liturgical adjustments by supremely conservative preconciliar Popes to justify the unheard-of Pauline innovations “is not simply unscholarly, but dishonest.”²⁹

Equally bankrupt, it seems to us, is the neo-Catholic claim that it is “private judgment” to argue that Paul VI never explicitly and *de jure* “banned” celebration of the traditional Latin rite, and that its use has never actually been prohibited by papal command. As the authors of *The Pope, the Council and the Mass* put it: “[W]e cannot conclude other than that the revised Roman Missal with the New Order of Mass has been lawfully established and that the celebration of the Tridentine Mass is forbidden except where ecclesiastical law specifically allows it (aged or infirm priests celebrating *sine populo*, or under special circumstances where a papal indult applies, as in England and Wales under certain special circumstances).”

Leaving aside the *non sequitur* that approval of the new Mass constituted a prohibition of the old Mass, we note that this vintage neo-Catholic claim was demolished by Cardinal Stickler’s revelation in 1995 that a commission of nine cardinals convened by Pope John Paul II in 1986 had, by a vote of 8 to 1, agreed that Paul VI *never legally suppressed the traditional Latin rite*, as opposed to simply promulgating his own revised Missal, and that every priest remained free to use the old Missal. (The commission was composed of Cardinals Ratzinger, Mayer, Oddi, Stickler, Casaroli, Gantin, Innocenti, Palazzini, and Tomko.) The Cardinal further disclosed that in view of the commission’s findings, the Pope was presented with a document for his signature, declaring that any priest of the Roman Rite was free to choose between the traditional Missal and the new Missal. Cardinal Stickler also confirmed reports that the Pope was dissuaded from signing the document by certain cardinals who claimed it would cause “division.”³⁰ The Pope later settled on the *Ecclesia Dei* indult of 1988, thus in effect granting permission for what had

never actually been forbidden in the first place.

Further, Annibale Bugnini admitted in his own memoirs that (long before the cardinalate commission's vote) he had failed in his bid to obtain a definite Vatican ruling that the old Mass had been abolished *de jure*. Bugnini was informed by the Secretary of the Pontifical Commission for the Interpretation of Conciliar Documents that he would not be given permission to seek such a ruling, because to declare the formal prohibition of the Church's own traditional rite of Mass would be "an odious act in the face of liturgical tradition."³¹ Yet it is this same "odious act" that neo-Catholics stubbornly ascribe to Paul VI. Are they willing, then, to accuse eight distinguished cardinals of "private judgment" in holding that the odious act of "banning" the Mass of the ages never really occurred?

It is quite a commentary on the current state of the Church that Pope John Paul II needed a commission of cardinals to tell him exactly what his predecessor had done to the traditional Roman rite, but the commission only confirmed what was obvious in the "private judgment" of traditionalists. As we have seen throughout, however, denial of the obvious is basic to the neo-Catholic system.

There appears to be no limit to the audacity with which certain neo-Catholics will defend the inane axiom that any criticism of papally approved innovations constitutes "private judgment." In a *Wanderer* editorial, for example, the authors seriously adduce, in defense of the new liturgy, canon 7 of Session XXII of the Council of Trent, which defended the traditional liturgy *against* innovation: "If any one saith, that the ceremonies, vestments, and outward signs, which the Catholic Church makes use of in the celebration of masses, are incentives to impiety, rather than offices of piety; let him be anathema." The cited canon was obviously addressed to the errors of Luther and the other Protestant "reformers," who wanted to see something very much like the Mass of Paul VI offered according to Eucharistic Prayer II, the most commonly used option today, which is practically indistinguishable from an Anglican communion service.

It is typical of the neo-Catholic's selective deference to prior Church teaching (see [Chapter 11](#)) that the *Wanderer* editorial fails to mention Trent's declaration in canon 13 of Session VII:

If any one saith, that the received and approved rites of the Catholic Church, wont to be used in the solemn administration of the sacraments, may be contemned, or without sin be omitted at pleasure by the ministers, *or be changed*, by any pastor of the churches whomsoever, into other new ones; let him be anathema.

The editorialists also omit canon 10 from Session XXII:

If any one saith, that the rite of the Roman Church, according to which a part of the canon and the words of consecration are pronounced in a low tone, is to be condemned; *or, that the mass ought to be celebrated in the vernacular only*; or, that water ought not to be mixed with the wine that is to be offered in the chalice, for that it is contrary to the institution of Christ; let him be anathema.

Also conveniently ignored is the Profession of Faith of the Council of Trent (contained in the Bull *Iniunctum nobis* of Pius IV), which declares as follows: "The apostolic *and* ecclesiastical traditions and *all other observances* and constitutions of that same Church I most firmly admit and embrace."³²

Even when they are forced to confront the anathemas of Trent, neo-Catholic apologists for the current liturgical ruin will propose the argument that Popes are at liberty to do here

what they anathematize in others. That is, the liturgy is sacred and untouchable for every member of the Church *except* the Pope—the very one who is supposed to act as primary guardian of liturgical tradition, as Gamber, Ratzinger and the Catechism note.

In staking out this untenable claim, the neo-Catholic fails to consider *why* the infallible Magisterium anathematized the stated liturgical innovations and opinions in the first place. They were anathematized not merely because they trench upon some imagined exclusive prerogative of the Pope to indulge in radical liturgical innovation, but because *such innovation is wrong in itself*—and thus wrong for everyone. Putting aside, then, all the wearisome argumentation over whether Paul VI had the raw power to “abrogate” or “obrogate” St. Pius V’s Bull *Quo Primum* (which canonized the traditional Latin Mass as the norm of the Roman Rite), one can see in the Tridentine anathemas, and in like anathemas throughout Church history, the Magisterium’s unwavering intention to protect the Church from any possible rupture of liturgical tradition, *no matter who causes it*. Surely in this matter the Pope himself must set the highest example, even if we assume (as the neo-Catholics do) that a Pope can cast aside all the liturgical proscriptions of his predecessors. And is this not why, before Paul VI, no Pope in Church history dared to concoct a new rite of Mass and impose it upon the Church?

How the neo-Catholics propose to reconcile a Catholic’s obligation to embrace ecclesiastical traditions and observances with Paul VI’s *de facto* suppression of the traditional Roman liturgy remains a mystery. In fact, the neo-Catholics have a difficult enough task attempting to reconcile Pope Paul’s act with the teaching of Vatican II in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*: “[I]n faithful obedience to tradition, the sacred Council declares that holy Mother Church holds all lawfully acknowledged rites to be of equal right and dignity; that she wishes to *preserve them* in the future and to *foster them in every way*.” Surely even the most determined neo-Catholic proponent of the principle that The Pope Can Do No Wrong will admit that in suppressing the traditional Latin rite Pope Paul was not following the Council’s teaching that the traditional rite must be given equal dignity and preserved and fostered in every way.³³

Nor are the neo-Catholics likely to mention the Church’s past solemn condemnations of the very same liturgical innovations approved by Paul VI. Some 200 years after Trent, Pope Pius VI condemned various errors of the illicit Synod of Pistoia in his Apostolic Constitution *Auctorem Fidei*. Among the Synod’s many errors, Pius VI identified

the proposition of the Synod by which it shows itself eager to remove the cause through which, in part, there has been induced forgetfulness of the principles relating to the order of liturgy, “by recalling it [the liturgy] to *greater simplicity of rites*, by expressing it *in the vernacular language or by uttering it in a loud voice*,” as if the present order of the Liturgy, received and approved by the Church, had emanated in some part from the forgetfulness of the principles by which it should be regulated.

This proposition Pius VI condemned as “rash, offensive to pious ears, insulting to the Church, favorable to the charges of the heretics...”.³⁴ Also condemned was

the proposition asserting that “it would be against apostolic practice and the plans of God unless *easier ways were prepared for people to unite their voice with that of the whole Church*”; if understood to signify introducing *use of popular language* to the order prescribed for the celebration of the mysteries.

Pius VI called this proposition “false, rash, disturbing to the order prescribed for the celebration of the mysteries, *easily productive of many evils*.”³⁵ Who can doubt the

wisdom of that warning after thirty years of bitter experience with the new vernacular liturgy?

It must be noted that Paul VI (citing the Council's liturgical document *Sacrosanctum Concilium*) attempted to justify his liturgical innovations along the very lines condemned by Pius VI, and for the very reasons advanced by the Synod of Pistoia. Defending the sudden abandonment of Latin in the liturgy, for example, Pope Paul declared: "If the divine Latin language kept us apart from the children, from youth, from the world of labor and of affairs, if it were a dark screen, not a clear window, would it be right for us fishers of souls to maintain it as the exclusive language of prayer and religious intercourse?"³⁶ Pope Paul's discovery that the Latin language was "a dark screen" that obscured the meaning of the Mass from the people would have delighted the Pistoian liberals, but it would also have come as a complete surprise to every one of Paul's predecessors—not to mention the faithful themselves, who had never requested Mass in the vernacular. Nor did Pope Paul seem to notice that perfectly splendid vernacular translations of the traditional Mass had already been printed in Roman Missals in all the principal languages of the world.

Auctorem Fidei cannot be dismissed, in the usual neo-Catholic manner (see [Chapter 10](#)), as outmoded teaching that has been superseded by a change of ecclesial circumstances. In *Mediator Dei*, his monumental encyclical on the sacred liturgy issued a mere fifteen years before Vatican II, Pope Pius XII cited as authoritative the condemnations by Pius VI we have just quoted. The context was Pius XII's stern rebuke of the innovators of the so-called "liturgical movement" during the immediate preconciliar period.³⁷ In particular, Pius XII declared that "the temerity and daring of those who introduce novel liturgical practices, or call for the revival of obsolete rites out of harmony with prevailing laws and rubrics, deserve severe reproof." As for Mass in the vernacular: "It has pained Us grievously to note, Venerable Brethren, that such innovations are actually being introduced, not merely in minor details but in matters of major importance as well. We instance, in point of fact, those who make use of the vernacular in the celebration of the august eucharistic sacrifice.... The use of the Latin language, customary in a considerable portion of the Church, is a manifest and beautiful sign of unity, as well as *an effective antidote for any corruption of doctrinal truth*."³⁸ Another wise warning disregarded by Pope Paul.

If more proof were needed of the Church's constant abhorrence of liturgical innovation for the first 1,962 years of her history, there is the Apostolic Constitution *Veterum Sapientia*, issued by Pope John XXIII only a few months before the first session of Vatican II. Calling for nothing less than a total restoration of the Church's traditional use of the Latin language in all aspects of her life, Pope John admonished the bishops: "In the exercise of their paternal care, they shall be on their guard lest anyone under their jurisdiction, *eager for revolutionary changes*, writes against the use of Latin in the teaching of the higher sacred studies *or in the liturgy*, or through prejudice makes light of the Holy See's will in this regard or interprets it falsely."³⁹ As Pope John declared regarding the Latin liturgy, only a few years before his successor suddenly discarded it: "Finally, the Catholic Church has a dignity far surpassing that of every merely human society, for it was founded by Christ the Lord. It is altogether fitting, therefore, that the

language it uses should be noble, majestic, and *non-vernacular*.” The almost immediate trampling of *Veterum Sapientia* in the stampede of liturgical destruction following the Council ranks as one of the most remarkable facts of the postconciliar revolution.

In the face of all this evidence, to assert, as the neo-Catholics do, that Paul VI, being himself a Pope, was not bound by the teaching of prior Popes and councils on the Latin liturgy, is to admit implicitly that Paul did depart from his predecessors in what they regarded as the preservation of a vital ecclesiastical tradition. Worse, the neo-Catholic view makes of the Pope an absolute monarch whose teaching on what is prudent and good for the Church applies to everyone but himself. That is precisely what the Pope is not; for (as Ratzinger, Gamber, the new Catechism and our own common sense make clear) the Pope is a servant of the Church’s traditions, not their master.

And so, the neo-Catholic would apply the anathema of Trent to traditionalists because they object to the new rite of Mass that the Fathers of Trent, had they seen it, would have viewed with a mixture of horror, disbelief and terrified incomprehension. Trent’s condemnation of liturgical innovation is stood on its head to *justify* innovation. Amazingly enough, we are told that it is inadmissible “private judgment” to say that the Pope has departed from liturgical tradition, even when, as in the case of Paul VI, *he expressly states that he has done so*. We are even told that when a Pope approves the very innovations his own predecessors condemned, we must have blind faith that the Pope has acted in conformity with Catholic tradition.

In confronting this neo-Catholic notion of what constitutes “private judgment,” we encounter the very core of neo-Catholic thinking. And what one finds there is nothing but a very un-Catholic, and quite unreasonable, demand for willful self-delusion. Ultimately, the neo-Catholic program of sitting back as the destruction takes its course, while blandly dismissing objections to the destruction as “private judgment,” might be a nice strategy if Catholics wanted to be perceived as a bunch of quietist morons who smile inanely while the structures of their Faith are being dismantled. But some of us have set our sights a bit higher than that.

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1. Alfredo Cardinal Ottaviani and Antonio Cardinal Bacci, *The Ottaviani Intervention* (Rockford, IL: TAN, 1992).
 2. *L’Osservatore Romano* (English edition), December 24, 1984.
 3. “The Eucharist is also celebrated in order to offer ‘on the altar of the whole earth the world’s work and suffering,’ in the beautiful expression of Teilhard de Chardin.” Pope John Paul II, *Gift and Mystery* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), p. 73.
 4. Dietrich von Hildebrand, *The Charitable Anathema* (Harrison, NY: Roman Catholic Books, 1993). pp. 30–32.
 5. Hubert Jedin, *Ecumenical Councils of the Catholic Church: An Historical Survey*, trans. Ernest Graf, O.S.B. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1960), pp. 47–48; Warren H. Carroll, *A History of Christendom*, vol. 2: *The Building of Christendom* (Front Royal, VA: Christendom College Press, 1987), pp. 252–54; “Honorius I, Pope,” *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1913.
 6. Shawn McElhinney and Pete Vere, “What Makes Us Traditional Catholics?,” *The Wanderer*, December 6, 2001, p. 4.
 7. “I am convinced that the ecclesial crisis in which we find ourselves today depends in great part on the collapse of the liturgy.” Ratzinger, *La Mia Vita*, quoted by Michael Davies in *The Latin Mass*, Fall 1997.
 8. The authors of *The Pope, the Council and the Mass* actually cite this text in an appendix in support of their claim that the new Mass is not novel. Comment would be superfluous.

- [9.](#) Ottaviani and Bacci, *The Ottaviani Intervention*, p. 32.
- [10.](#) Wiltgen, *The Rhine Flows into the Tiber*, p. 39.
- [11.](#) Fr. John Parsons, “Reform of the Reform? [Part II],” *Christian Order*, December 2001. Fr. Parsons is a diocesan priest in Australia and a renowned Catholic scholar. His bishop has not, to our knowledge, accused him of “private judgment.”
- [12.](#) Abbott, ed., *The Documents of Vatican II*, p. 147.
- [13.](#) Davies, *Pope Paul’s New Mass*, p. 320. It would strike some as ominous that the new offertory prayer, like the rejected sacrifice of Cain, explicitly offers to God only fruits of the earth, rather than the “firstling of his flock” offered by Abel: “And it came to pass after many days, that Cain offered of the fruits of the earth....” Gen. 4:3.
- [14.](#) Gamber, *The Reform of the Roman Liturgy*. Excerpts from Cardinal Ratzinger’s preface to the French-language edition appear on the back cover.
- [15.](#) Ibid., p. 99.
- [16.](#) Ibid., p. xiii.
- [17.](#) Ibid., p. 109.
- [18.](#) Ibid., pp. 113–14.
- [19.](#) Ibid., pp. 98–99.
- [20.](#) Ibid, p. 38.
- [21.](#) Ibid., p. 39.
- [22.](#) See [Chapter 6](#), [note 11](#).
- [23.](#) *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §§ 1124, 1125.
- [24.](#) Cardinal Stickler’s memoirs originally appeared as “Erinnerungen und Erfahrungen eines Konzilsperitus der Liturgiekommission,” in Franz Breid, ed., *Die heilige Liturgie* (Steyr, Austria: Ennsthaler Verlag, 1997), pp. 160–95; an English translation appeared as “Recollections of a Vatican II Peritus,” trans. Thomas E. Woods, Jr., *The Latin Mass*, Winter 1999, pp. 24–36. All pagination refers to this translation.
- [25.](#) Stickler, “Recollections of a Vatican II Peritus,” p. 34.
- [26.](#) Ibid., p. 36.
- [27.](#) Annibale Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990), p. 876.
- [28.](#) Ibid.
- [29.](#) *Pope Paul’s New Mass*, p. 16.
- [30.](#) The Cardinal’s revelations, to which one of us was an eyewitness, took place at the Christifideles Conference in Fort Lee, NJ, on May 20, 1995. The revelations were widely reported in *The Latin Mass* and other organs of the Catholic press and have not been denied by the Vatican.
- [31.](#) Annibale Bugnini, *La Riforma Liturgica* (Rome: Ed. Liturgiche, 1983), p. 298.
- [32.](#) DZ, 995.
- [33.](#) *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 4. On the other hand, as we discuss in [Chapter 12](#), the open-ended ambiguities and “yes-no” style of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* can be used to justify precisely what the document seems to forbid. Thus, in the sentence immediately following the one quoted, we find: “The Council also desires that, where necessary, the rites be revised carefully in the light of sound tradition, and that they be given new vigor to meet *the circumstances and needs of modern times*.” But “sound tradition” always forbade revising the ancient rites of the Church to suit the “needs of modern times”—least of all the received and approved Latin Mass of the Roman Rite, which Paul VI himself described as “our hereditary religious patrimony, which seemed to enjoy the privilege of being untouchable and settled.”
- [34.](#) DZ, 1533.
- [35.](#) DZ, 1566.
- [36.](#) Audience Address, November 26, 1969.

[37.](#) *Mediator Dei*, footnote 53.

[38.](#) While the same encyclical allows for the possibility of papal permission for “the use of the mother tongue in connection with several of the rites”—that is, rites other than the received and approved rite of Mass, such as the rite of Baptism in mission countries—it is beyond genuine dispute that Pius XII would have regarded as unthinkable the creation by committee of a new rite of Mass to be offered entirely in the vernacular.

[39.](#) *Veterum Sapientia*, February 22, 1962.

Pitting One Pope Against Another?

A corollary of the neo-Catholic axiom that all criticism of the papally approved postconciliar novelties is “private judgment” is the claim that comparisons of recent Popes with earlier ones are also somehow suspect. The Pamphlet, following the neo-Catholic line, condemns the practice as “pitting one Pope against another.”

We confess that we do not see what is wrong with such comparisons. The fact is, Popes have differed, and sometimes on fairly significant matters. This does not necessarily make one a heretic and the other an angel, which is how neo-Catholics generally interpret the traditionalist position. It does mean, however, that one may have been right and the other wrong.

Let us take as an example Pope St. Gregory the Great (590–604), one of the most celebrated and revered pontiffs in Church history. His accomplishments were manifold: he arranged for the evangelization of Britain, he codified the chant that bears his name, he stared down the ravaging Lombards and provided for the sick and hungry of Rome. At the same time, it is a fact that he was part of that minority of churchmen who subjected philosophers to withering ridicule and were extremely critical of efforts to synthesize the wisdom of Greek philosophy with the data of divine revelation. In the second century, St. Justin Martyr had used the term “seeds of the Word” to describe the truths that the Greeks, living before Christ, had been able to discover. As Justin saw the matter, it was as though God had prepared the intellectual terrain for the coming of His Son. This intellectual project was carried on by some of the Church’s brightest lights: Clement of Alexandria, St. Augustine, the Cappadocian Fathers (St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and St. Gregory Nazianzen), and countless others, culminating in the extraordinary philosophical edifice constructed by St. Thomas Aquinas. The angry claim of the likes of Tertullian and Hippolytus that such a synthesis was both pointless and dangerous loses its force when we recall that it was they themselves, and not those Church Fathers who were eager to mine the wisdom of the Greeks, who ultimately fell into heresy. (St. Hippolytus, as we know, died reconciled.)

Yes, we suppose we are “pitting one Pope against another” when we say that Pope St. Gregory the Great, however much we may (rightly) venerate him for his extraordinary accomplishments and personal holiness, was gravely mistaken on this issue and that Pope Leo XIII, to choose just one example, was absolutely correct (cf. *Aeterni Patris*, 1879). So what? In suggesting that “pitting one Pope against another” is a sign of schism or heresy or whatever, the Pamphlet is deliberately stacking the deck against us, ruling out much of our evidence in advance. A neat trick. But we have no intention of playing by the neo-Catholic’s arbitrary rules, especially since, as this example reveals so strikingly, they require that we ignore Church history.

Thus, for example, there can be no rational objection when traditionalists compare the tone of optimism apparent in the past several pontificates with the warning and foreboding that characterized the Popes of earlier this century (who lived at a time when the state of

civilization was not nearly as bad as it is now). Despite his denunciations of the “culture of death,” it is difficult to escape the conclusion that John Paul—and *Gaudium et Spes* before him, whose fatuous optimism even the liberal Eamon Duffy found hard to take—does not fully appreciate the gravity of the situation the Church faces in the modern world. We no longer hear the kinds of constant exhortations of the faithful, so typical of his preconciliar predecessors, that they rally in defense of the Church against her enemies. (This absence is also apparent in the insipid propers of the new Mass. Although standard in the old rite, when was the last time a prayer was heard at the new Mass begging God that by the grace of the Eucharist we might be strengthened against our enemies? That kind of thing is doubtless considered old-fashioned in the age of dialogue and ecumenism.)

Consider John Paul’s reflections upon addressing the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO): “At UNESCO, for example, I was amazed by how the Assembly reacted to certain key thoughts and observations that my experience has led me to regard as essential. I felt that there existed in this world a vast accord—though not always conscious—a broad consensus, not only about certain values, but about certain threats. My audience represented countries from all over the world and came from every continent. I felt that it was the representatives of the young nations and of the new states who reacted the most warmly to my elaboration of the meaning of culture and of the conditions for its development. It gave me much to think about.”

Such statements can be multiplied many times over. What broad consensus can the Pope possibly have in mind? Decades earlier, when the world was in vastly better shape culturally and morally (though, of course, not perfect by any means), here is how Pope Pius XI perceived the situation: “The two opposing camps are now clearly marked; each man should choose his own. Men of goodwill and men of evil will face one another. The uninterested and the cowards face their fearsome responsibility. They will have their names changed if they do not change their behavior: they will be called traitors.”¹ On another occasion Pius remarked: “Only by being radicals of the right will Catholics have the dynamism to withstand the radicals of the left and to conquer the world for Christ.”²

Like statements from Pope St. Pius X could be provided almost without end, but we shall confine ourselves to one: “There is no need for Us to remind you that, when the enemy approaches and is at our doors, it is time for the call to arms. But for you, it is not only a question of sounding the alert; the enemy is in the very interior of the Empire.... All the faithful, then, must be gathered together, and especially the most valiant among them. We exhort you to do this with all your strength.”³

To put it mildly, we are still more persuaded by the preconciliar Popes’ posture, and it can hardly be called “integrism” to conclude, based on the evidence, that one position better accords with the objective situation than another. Moreover, can it really be a surprise that in the days when the Church portrayed herself as a standing rebuke to a sinful world, and as the institution that alone could sanctify and transform a world succumbing to decadence, she attracted so many tough, intelligent, and disciplined men to the priesthood? It was precisely the Church’s *defiance* of modernity that was at the root of its vibrancy early in the twentieth century. The Church was the one institution that dared to hurl a defiant *no* at the modern world. And people responded, intellectuals among them, for here was something exciting and exhilarating. Hilaire Belloc remarked that “the more

powerful, the more acute, and the more sensitive minds of our time are clearly inclining toward the Catholic side.”⁴ Although St. Pius X found himself the subject of ceaseless ridicule at the hands of many European intellectuals for the vigor with which he battled Modernism, for others this otherwise gentle man’s obstinacy seemed to be the mark of a true man of God. In fact it was only *after* the issuance of *Lamentabili Sane* (1907), the list of condemned errors of the Modernists, that many of the Church’s great converts made their way into her fold. In England, for instance, the great historian Christopher Dawson entered the Church in 1914, the former Anglican Ronald Knox in 1917 and G.K. Chesterton in 1922. Dawson vigorously defended Pope Pius IX’s *Syllabus of Errors* as an antidote to modern secular liberalism, which denied “the subordination of human society to divine law.” As for the United States, Peter Huff notes that the American Church “witnessed such a steady stream of notable literary conversions that the statistics tended to support Calvert Alexander’s hypothesis of something suggesting a cultural trend.” The pre-Vatican II Catholic Church in the United States was, he argues, “a highly imaginative world of myth, meaning, and ritual, based upon the classical vision of Catholicism’s cultural mission.”⁵ Surveying this cultural phenomenon, historian William Halsey describes pre-Vatican II American Catholicism as constituting a full-fledged “countersociety.” His partial listing of Catholic organizations runs as follows:

In chronological order from 1900 to 1950, Catholics organized: The National Catholic Educational Association (1904), Catholic Press Association (1911), Catholic Writers Guild of America (1919), American Catholic Historical Association (1919), Catholic Library Association (1921), American Catholic Philosophical Association (1926), Catholic Association for International Peace (1926), Catholic Anthropological Association (1928), Catholic Book Club (1928), Catholic Poetry Society of America (1931), Catholic Biblical Association of America (1936), Catholic Art Association (1937), Catholic Theatre Conference (1937), American Catholic Sociological Society (1938), Catholic Renaissance Society (1940), Catholic Economic Association (1941), Catholic Commission on Intellectual and Cultural Affairs (1946), and the American Catholic Psychological Association (1947).

And yet, Halsey goes on to argue, although Catholics established an extraordinary array of parallel associations, they did so not because they cherished separateness or exclusion *per se*. What at times was an institutional isolation did not indicate a lack of concern with the nation as a whole; on the contrary, Catholics understood that it was only through cultivating a robust Catholic culture that they could truly serve their country. Catholic culture, he writes, “was an attempt to save middle-class culture from its own decadence. While isolating themselves from disillusionment, these agencies were busy affirming values which were either under attack, forgotten, or going through the disquieting process of transformation.”⁶

We have set forth for the reader’s consideration numerous examples of papally approved reversals and apparent contradictions of prior Church teaching and practice in the postconciliar Church, taking care to note that none of these changes actually appears in the form of a binding Magisterial pronouncement of Catholic doctrine or an obligatory practice required of all the faithful. To argue that it is “pitting one Pope against another” to point out these discrepancies is nothing but an exercise in begging the question. The question is whether there *are* contradictions and reversals, and, if so, what Catholics are to make of them, given that Rome itself has offered no explanation of how the discrepancies can be reconciled.

The “pitting one Pope against another” argument presumes that lay people are incapable

of understanding their own faith and the history of their own Church sufficiently to know whether a given proposition or practice contradicts what they have been taught or what they have practiced before. It makes of the Pope the leader of a kind of gnostic sect, whose members depend upon the latest auguries from Rome in order to know the content of their belief and praxis. And, as is the case with the neo-Catholic claim that papal innovations are “by definition” traditional, the argument presumes *a priori* that no Pope can possibly contradict his predecessors in any matter of substance. Here it must be noted, however, that some neo-Catholics modify the *a priori* argument by conceding the existence of reversals or contradictions, but holding that since only the Pope can determine if these are necessary “developments” to meet changing conditions, no one may criticize or oppose the changes. The combination of the two arguments renders the neo-Catholic position non-falsifiable; the Pope becomes, for all practical purposes, not merely infallible according to the strict limits of the Vatican I definition, but utterly inerrant—and not just in doctrinal matters, but in all matters.

Thus far we have argued that the novelties of Vatican II and the postconciliar Popes have never actually been imposed as Catholic doctrine. We have also argued that in many cases these novelties defy precise definition and cannot be reduced to distinct propositions to which Catholics are bound to give assent. The difference between Catholic dogma (e.g., the Immaculate Conception, the seven sacraments) and the postconciliar novelties (ecumenism, dialogue, and liturgical innovation) should be obvious enough to the intelligent observer. But let us digress briefly to consider the following. Suppose, in fact, that Vatican II did propose some teaching that seemed to involve Catholics in a contradiction in the area of actual doctrine. What ought Catholics to think? Is such a scenario absolutely impossible?

First of all, as we have indicated elsewhere in this book, and as the Church’s highest authorities repeatedly pointed out, Vatican II expressly refrained from issuing doctrinal definitions, and thus prescinded from the exercise of that authority that the Church refers to as her solemn or extraordinary Magisterium. But since, nevertheless, the Council did intend to teach, it must have done so at the level of the ordinary Magisterium.

This is an important point in itself: the Church’s Magisterium is exercised in different ways. There is, first and foremost, the solemn or extraordinary Magisterium, which consists of solemn definition or anathema, issued by a Pope or by an ecumenical council confirmed by a Pope, manifestly intended to bind the universal Church on a matter of faith or morals.

There is also the ordinary Magisterium, which involves infallibility in a different way. Thus when a Pope issues a statement that is not in itself infallible as a result of its status—that is, a papal statement on a given subject, rather than a solemn definition invoking the extraordinary Magisterium—it may nevertheless be infallible by virtue of its repetition of a teaching that the Church has held since time immemorial. Such is the general reckoning of the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* (1968) on contraception: while the document itself is not infallible *per se*, the teaching that artificial contraception is intrinsically immoral is infallible because it repeats the constant, uninterrupted moral tradition of the Church.

In an important study of the nature of the Church’s ordinary Magisterium, Fr. Paul Nau explained in 1956 that the duty of Catholics toward the ordinary Magisterium was “one of

inward assent, not as of faith, but as of prudence, the refusal of which could not escape the mark of temerity, unless the doctrine rejected was an actual novelty or involved a manifest discordance between the pontifical affirmation and the doctrine which had hitherto been taught.”⁷ Thus Fr. Nau suggests that while the natural Catholic instinct is one of deference and obedience even to the ordinary Magisterium, it is not inherently impossible that there could arise a situation in which assent to a novel teaching, presented in the name of the ordinary Magisterium, might be withheld by a faithful Catholic. If such novelties were impossible and every formulation of the ordinary Magisterium were *ipso facto* infallible, there would be no point in distinguishing between the ordinary and extraordinary Magisterium. In that case, every statement would form part of the extraordinary Magisterium, and the distinction between the two would be meaningless.

Germain Grisez made a similar point in the July 1984 *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*:

Obviously, teachings which are proposed infallibly leave no room for dissent on the part of faithful Catholics. However, other teachings of the Ordinary Magisterium can be mistaken, even though they may require and demand religious submission of mind and will. Such teachings can deserve acceptance inasmuch as they are the Magisterium’s current best judgment of what God’s word requires of Christians. However, that judgment, on the leading edge of developing doctrine and in truly prudential matters, can be mistaken, and faithful Christians can be led by superior claims of faith itself to withhold their submission to it.⁸

William Marshner, chairman of the theology department at Christendom College, took the same basic position in a special issue of *Faith and Reason* devoted to *Dignitatis Humanae* (DH), the Vatican II document on religious liberty. In spite of the fact that Marshner himself believed that DH could be reconciled with prior teaching, he added the following:

At the same time, however, I join with all other theologians in saying that the new ground is non-infallible teaching. So when I say that the possibility exists that Vatican II is wrong on one or more crucial points of *Dignitatis Humanae*, I do not simply mean that the Council’s policy may prove unfruitful. I mean to signal a possibility that the Council’s teaching is false.

But may a Catholic theologian admit that such a possibility exists? Of course he may. The decree [sic] *Dignitatis Humanae* is a non-infallible document, and the teaching which it presents is admitted to be a “new development,” hence not something which is already acknowledged dogma *ex magisterio ordinario*. Therefore the kind of religious assent which Catholics owe to that teaching is the kind of assent which does not exclude the logical possibility that the teaching is wrong; rather our assent excludes any probability that the teaching is wrong.⁹

Let us consider an actual example of a teaching of the ordinary Magisterium that was later found to be false and actually reversed by a Pope. The fifteenth-century Council of Florence taught in the name of the Magisterium that the matter of the Sacrament of Holy Orders was the presentation of the chalice and the paten, and that the form consisted of the words, “*Accipe potestatem offerendi sacrificium in ecclesia pro vivis et mortuis, in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti.*”¹⁰ Pope Pius XII, in his constitution *Sacramentum Ordinis* (1947), changed this teaching, on the basis of the findings of sound research into the Church’s ancient practice. Having established to his satisfaction that the presentation of the chalice and the Host went back no earlier than the tenth century, the Pope declared “by virtue of the supreme Apostolic authority” that the matter of the sacrament was in fact only the imposition of hands, and that the form was the prayer of the Preface of Ordination.¹¹ This change provides a clear example of the difference between the ordinary Magisterium and the extraordinary Magisterium: the teaching of the Council of Florence

was not what the Church had always and everywhere believed, and was (for that reason) later found to be in error.

None of the authors we have cited suggests that withholding assent from teaching of the ordinary Magisterium could be justified in any but the most rare and unusual of circumstances, but neither do they exclude the possibility entirely. The neo-Catholic system, however, *does* exclude it for all intents and purposes. The neo-Catholic holds that if an organ of the Magisterium has made a pronouncement—any pronouncement, no matter how novel—then *a priori* the pronouncement must be true. The traditionalist, on the other hand, recognizes (as do the cited theologians) that the confidence Catholics are expected to have in a statement by the “ordinary” Magisterium comes from its objective conformity to what the Magisterium has *always* taught. The neo-Catholic refuses to consider the question of objective conformity to past teaching; his inquiry begins and ends with the confirmation that authority has spoken recently. He is thus unable and unwilling to confront the ruinous effects of the swarm of true ecclesial novelties that has emerged, for the first time, during the postconciliar period.

As mere laymen, we make no claim to have anything like the final or definitive word in this matter. But since Rome has made no effort to explain how apparent contradictions between current novelties and previous teaching can be reconciled, the traditionalist approach seems to us the only way to make sense of the current situation in the Church.¹² The crisis we are presently enduring may well be the epoch in which the significance of the ordinary/extraordinary distinction was destined to become manifest.¹³

As our previous discussion should make clear, aside from the demolition of the traditional Roman rite, nowhere is the apparent contradiction of prior papal teaching and Church practice more evident than in the “ecumenical venture” launched at Vatican II.

The Pamphlet adopts the neo-Catholic argument that Pius XI’s *Mortalium Animos* (1928), which forbade Catholics to participate in the ecumenical movement of the day, condemned only “indifferentist ecumenism” (whatever that may mean), and is therefore quite compatible with the ceaseless ecumenical gatherings and common prayer meetings of the past thirty-five years. This is quite false. Absolutely nothing in the document would lead an impartial reader to such a conclusion. The fact is, though, that even on these grounds the Pamphlet’s argument fails, since the major ecumenical initiatives of recent years have *all* been indifferentist.

Before examining a few of these, we note that the Pamphlet, like neo-Catholic sources in general, fails to provide a single concrete example of a successful postconciliar ecumenical initiative. It mentions supposed progress with the Orthodox, who have not moved one inch closer to communion with Rome over the past thirty-five years of “ecumenical dialogue.” But (to no one’s surprise), the Pamphlet says nothing about the scandalous Balamand Statement of 1993, negotiated by the Vatican’s Cardinal Cassidy, which renounces the return of the Orthodox to Rome as “outdated ecclesiology.”¹⁴ Likewise, the Vatican’s Cardinal Kasper, as we have noted in [Chapter 3](#), repudiates prior papal teaching on the return of the Protestants to the one true Church: “today we no longer understand ecumenism in the sense of a return, by which the others would ‘be converted’ and return to being ‘catholics.’ This was expressly abandoned by Vatican II.”¹⁵

If the Church's ecclesiological teaching can become "outdated," then why not her other teachings? This is progress? Well, yes, it is—for the Orthodox and the Protestants! The Pamphlet also says nothing about the encouragement of joint worship with non-Catholics, which is indeed quite unprecedented and, as we have discussed, stood condemned by preconciliar Church teaching and canon law. The Pamphlet's entire chapter on ecumenism, in fact, is a series of vapid generalizations about the need to go after the straying sheep—as if the shepherd had hitherto been neglectful in taking the traditional approach: direct evangelization of individual dissidents aimed at their return to Rome.

Ecumenical relations with the Anglicans provide a good first example of how ecumenism has degenerated into an utter debacle in its departure from the pre-conciliar teaching on the return of the dissidents. In 1966, Pope Paul VI and the Archbishop of Canterbury officially opened channels for dialogue between Catholics and Anglicans. Toward this end, the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) was established. Over the course of the 1970s, this body drew up so-called "Agreed Statements" on the Eucharist, ministry, and authority. Anyone familiar with the liturgical changes that brought us the new Mass would recognize in these "Agreed Statements" the same kind of equivocation regarding sacrifice, the priesthood, and other such issues that seem to be present in parts of the new rite. (The whole story is told in Michael Davies' book *The Order of Melchisedech*.) These dreadful and apparently deliberate ambiguities were ultimately repudiated by Rome in the early 1990s. This is to be welcomed. But do we draw any lessons from this? None, apparently. Instead, Pope John Paul II has approved the convocation of yet another Anglican-Catholic "working group," addressing this new collection of Catholic bishops and Anglican "bishops" with these words: "On this significant occasion our minds turn spontaneously to the meeting between Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Ramsey in 1966, from which there came the first Anglican and Roman Catholic International Commission. In their Joint Statement, the Pope and the Archbishop spoke of the need for 'a serious dialogue which, founded on the Gospels and on the ancient common traditions, *may lead to that unity in truth for which Christ prayed*.' Now we can look back and say that that dialogue has continued fruitfully in the years since then."¹⁶ What are the fruits of the Anglican-Catholic "dialogue" since 1996? The Anglicans' ordination of women? Their denial of the torments of hell? Their support for abortion, contraception and divorce? And how does one reconcile John Paul II's statement to the "working group" that Anglican-Catholic dialogue "may lead to that unity in truth for which Christ prayed" with Pius XI's condemnation in *Mortalium Animos* of the very notion that "Christ Jesus merely expressed a desire and prayer, which still lacks its fulfillment"?¹⁷ But there we go, pitting one Pope against another.

Perhaps the crisis in the Church is grave enough that the restoration of order within Catholicism itself must take precedence over ecumenical initiatives, if only because, as we have seen time and again, the very liberalism that is wreaking havoc in the Church is also, in the realm of ecumenism, producing distinctly unhelpful and ludicrously ambiguous joint statements. Must we not put our own house in order, remembering that *charity begins at home*? In the meantime, as far as non-Catholics are concerned, there is always the old-fashioned way of missionary work and individual conversion, which used to work pretty well.

Regarding the Orthodox, the Vatican is now actively discouraging proselytism, contrary

to the teaching of the preconciliar Popes on the necessity of an Orthodox reunion with Rome. It suddenly transpires that the Catholic and Orthodox Churches are “Sister Churches, responsible together for maintaining the Church of God”—which is apparently something other than the Catholic Church.¹⁸ As we have noted, the quotation comes from the Balamand Statement of 1993, drawn up under the auspices of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. The Vatican’s Cardinal Edward Cassidy, who headed the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity until he was replaced by Cardinal Kasper, was part of this commission. The relevant passage goes on: “To pave the way for future relations between the two churches, passing beyond the outdated [!] ecclesiology of return to the Catholic Church connected to the problem which is the subject of this document, special preparation will be given the formation of future priests.... In the search for reestablishing unity, there is no question of conversion of people from one Church to the other....” Merely to catalogue the novelty and betrayal in this statement would require a chapter in itself. Was any Catholic ever taught in catechism class that the Catholic and Orthodox Churches were “Sister Churches, responsible together for maintaining the Church of God”?

Much has already been written on the Catholic-Lutheran Joint Statement on Justification that was signed on November 1, 1999, and that has since been praised by the Pope on numerous occasions. A good deal of this criticism has found the text ambiguous (do things ever change?). Conservative Lutherans, for instance, consider the document a lawyers’ agreement that can satisfy both sides without really resolving anything. But potentially even more significant in the long run is a statement buried within the text: “Based on the consensus reached,” it reads, “continued dialogue is required in order to reach full church communion, a unity in diversity in which remaining differences would be reconciled and no longer have a divisive force.” What in the world does that mean? What “remaining differences” would be “reconciled”? And what is meant by “unity in diversity”? Are we to understand that the restoration of “full church communion” between the churches would be characterized by a diversity of belief?

And then there is this bombshell, tucked into the final paragraph of the document: “We give thanks to the Lord for this decisive step forward on the way to overcoming *the division of the church*. We ask the Holy Spirit to lead us further toward that visible unity which is Christ’s will.” Here we find yet another affirmation of the opinion Pius XI condemned in *Mortalium Animos* as the fundamental error of the “ecumenical movement”: that the unity of the Church is something yet to be achieved. Again, how are we to reconcile the condemnation by Pius XI with an affirmation of the condemned proposition in the Catholic-Lutheran accord? True, Vatican II’s decree on ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, declares that “[w]e believe that this unity subsists in the Catholic Church as something she can never lose, and we hope that it will continue to increase until the end of time.”¹⁹ But this rather timid restatement of the dogma of the Church’s divinely bestowed note of unbreakable unity has been buried in an avalanche of seemingly contradictory Vatican pronouncements since the Council, including the aforementioned statement of John Paul II to the new Catholic-Anglican “working group” that its efforts “may lead to that unity in truth for which Christ prayed.” May *lead* to it? The unity in truth for which Christ prayed has always existed in the Catholic Church, which is why the

preconciliar Popes unanimously taught that the Protestants and the Orthodox must *return* to that unity.

Happily absorbing the contradiction of “unity in diversity,” the neo-Catholic periodical *Pro Ecclesia* expounds and defends the views of Pope John Paul II and his cardinals: “Can there be *church-dividing* differences that are not, ipso facto, heresies to be condemned? Certainly the Joint Declaration shows how. The mutual anathemas regarding the dogmatic expression of justification no longer apply in a meaningful way. There is consensus on the meaning and intention of the biblical teaching of justification, if not on its precise theological formulation. *The paradigm of visible unity as the Church being a communion of communions, one Church in a diversity of churches, is sustained by the acceptance of historically developed differences as mutually edifying diversity within a certain core of the one Church.* We cannot mistake those cultural, historical developments as irreformable truths.”

It is bad enough that the agreement could even lend itself to such an interpretation, but is such an interpretation really justified? Unfortunately, it is. In fact, reconciled diversity has been the paradigm for Catholic-Lutheran “reconciliation” for some years now. The pertinent document, signed by representatives of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity in 1984, is called “Facing Unity: Models, Forms, and Phases of Catholic-Lutheran Church Fellowship,” and includes this passage:

There have always been tendencies within the ecumenical movement that aimed at an ecumenical fellowship in which the existing ecclesial traditions with their particularity and diversity would remain in integrity and authenticity.... [T]he model of “unity in reconciled diversity” has recently been developed.... The idea of “unity in reconciled diversity” means that “expression would be given to the abiding value of the confessional forms of the Christian faith *in all their variety*” and that these diversities, “when related to the central message of salvation and Christian faith,” and when they “ring out, [are] transformed and renewed” in the process of ecumenical encounter and theological dialogue,... “lose their divisive character and are reconciled to each other ... into a binding ecumenical fellowship in which even the confessional elements” are preserved.

It seems impossible that representatives of a pontifical council could endorse such a statement, even if its doctrinal value is nil. An anonymous seminary professor has published a more detailed objection to the self-contradiction of reconciled diversity.²⁰ It is quite telling that advocates of “reconciled diversity” speak without repercussions even within the Eternal City itself, whereas a seminary professor warning against it has to be published anonymously. So much for the Church of Openness and Dialogue.

“Reconciled diversity” emerged in the pontificate of Paul VI. In Paul’s January 23, 1969 speech, he observed: “From theological discussion it can emerge what the essential Christian doctrinal patrimony is, how much of it is communicable authentically and together in different terms that are substantially equal and complementary, and how it is possible for everyone to make the final victorious discovery of that identity of faith, in freedom, and in the variety of its expressions, from which union can be happily celebrated.”²¹ This is only one of innumerable Vatican statements that create the impression that the differences that separate the Church from the various Protestant sects can ultimately be reduced to mere semantics. Where in statements such as these is there the slightest indication of the undeniable truth that Protestants must change their erroneous beliefs in order to achieve union with us? And since when does the Catholic Church need to engage in theological discussions with Protestants in order to determine “what the

essential Christian doctrinal patrimony is”? The Pope’s implication that the Magisterium does not already know with infallible certitude what is “essential” to Christianity is staggering.

In early 2000, Bishop (now Cardinal) Walter Kasper declared in *L’Osservatore Romano* that prior to Vatican II the Church “understood the reestablishing of Christian unity exclusively in terms of ‘return of our separated brothers to the true Church of Christ ... from which they have at one time unhappily separated themselves.’”²² That is a direct reference to the language of Pius XI in *Mortalium Animos*, which Kasper wishes to make clear has been repudiated. This is no longer the Church’s “position,” he went on to explain. Kasper thus confirmed what we have been claiming: contrary to all preconciliar papal teaching, ecumenism simply does not seek the return of non-Catholics to the one true Church. “The old concept of the ecumenism of return,” he said, “has today been replaced by that of a common journey which directs Christians toward the goal of ecclesial communion understood as unity in reconciled diversity.” The old idea of “ecumenism of return” is “no longer applicable to the Catholic Church after Vatican II.”

In 2001, Most Rev. Cormac Murphy-O’Connor, Archbishop of Westminster (and recent John Paul II appointee), joined this chorus, noting that “if we look at all the Roman documents in recent years, it is clear that they do not spell a turning back to the ‘ecumenism of return,’ or ‘you-come-inism.’ The direction and dialogue of convergence were firmly set by the Second Vatican Council and endorsed and confirmed six years ago by *Ut Unum Sint*”²³ And this prelate is considered “conservative” by postconciliar standards.

Even more disturbing is Cardinal Ratzinger’s comment that “the end of all ecumenical effort is to *attain*[?] the true unity of the Church. For the moment, I wouldn’t dare venture to suggest any concrete realization, possible or imaginable, of this future Church. We are at an intermediate stage of unity in diversity.”²⁴

Now note well: Pope John Paul II appointed Cardinal Ratzinger as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. He also appointed Cardinal Kasper, whose orthodoxy was known to be in question, to his current post just last year. He appointed Murphy-O’Connor to be Archbishop of Westminster. Thus, far from condemning the despicable capitulation called “reconciled diversity,” John Paul appointed to his council on Christian unity one of its best-known advocates, and Cardinal Ratzinger himself endorses the concept. Note also that Cardinal Kasper made no effort to argue, as the Pamphlet does, that the positions of Pius XI and John Paul II were somehow compatible, and that traditionalists were engaging in “private judgment” and rashly “pitting one Pope against another” when they pointed out the contradiction. Kasper frankly admitted that Pius XI’s “model” *no longer applies*. One of the heads of a pontifical council, then, is apparently secure in his job, despite having *pitted one Pope against another*. Maybe the neo-Catholics will raise the same uproar against Cardinal Kasper—a man whose views have implications for Catholics around the world—for committing the very act for which they indignantly condemn traditionalists. Or maybe not.

The Vatican’s “ecumenical” policy is today so confused and chaotic that we have to go to Karl Rahner, not an authority to whom we would ordinarily advert, for brutal honesty. “Either recognize the irreconcilability of the different denominations,” he said in 1982, “or

be content with a merely verbal unity, or admit that the different denominations constitute a single faith.”²⁵

The postconciliar Vatican has not been altogether straightforward regarding the Jews’ need for conversion either. The fashionable doctrine these days—again, contrary to all prior papal teaching—is the claim that the Old Covenant that God established with the Jews, far from having been superseded by the New Covenant of Christ and the Church, is in fact still in effect. Thus we have John Paul II telling a Jewish audience: “The first dimension of this dialogue, that is, the meeting between the people of the Old Covenant, *never revoked by God*, and that of the New Covenant, is at the same time a dialogue within our Church, that is to say, between the first and second part of her Bible.” “Jews and Christians,” he went on to say, “as children of Abraham, are called to be a blessing to the world” by “committing themselves together for peace and justice among all men and peoples.”²⁶ Such statements seem impossible to reconcile with the Church’s divine commission to convert the Jews for the salvation of their souls. In fact, Cardinal Kasper, whom the Pope has also made President of the Pontifical Council for Religious Relations with the Jews, has repudiated the conversion of the Jews as explicitly as he has repudiated the return of the Protestant dissidents to the one true Church:

*[T]he old theory of substitution is gone since the Second Vatican Council. For us Christians today the covenant with the Jewish people is a living heritage, a living reality.... Therefore, the Church believes that Judaism, i.e., the faithful response of the Jewish people to God’s irrevocable covenant, is salvific for them, because God is faithful to his promises.... Thus mission, in this strict sense, cannot be used with regard to Jews, who believe in the true and one God. Therefore—and this is characteristic—there does not exist any Catholic missionary organization for Jews. There is dialogue with Jews; no mission in this proper sense of the word towards them.*²⁷

Once again, Kasper received no correction from the Pope or any Vatican dicastery. On the contrary, he has received only a promotion to his current positions of authority. What can one conclude but that the Vatican has *de facto* abandoned the conversion of the Jews, and the return of the Orthodox and the Protestants to Roman Catholic unity? And yet, as in all other areas of postconciliar novelty, we are not dealing with any formal change in binding Catholic doctrine, as opposed to a welter of sub-Magisterial pronouncements, including papal speeches to small groups, which are allowed to create the impression of a real and permanent change.

A fundamental ambiguity is evident everywhere, particularly in the new Good Friday liturgy. *Catholic Family News* editor John Vennari recently compared the papally approved prayer for the Jews in three versions of the Roman liturgy: those of 1954, 1964, and 1974. In 1954, the prayer read:

We pray for the perfidious Jews: that Our Lord and God may lift the covering off their hearts, so that they may acknowledge Jesus Christ Our Lord. Let us pray. Almighty, eternal God, who does not reject the Jews in Your own mercy: hear our prayers which we offer for the blindness of this people, that acknowledging the truth of Your light which is Christ, they may be pulled out of their darkness. Through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen.

The only difference in the 1964 version of the prayer is that the word “perfidious” has been removed; the remainder of the text is unchanged. The 1974 prayer, however, which is what we have now, reads as follows:

Let us pray for the Jewish people, the first to hear the word of God, that they may continue to grow in the love of His Name and in faithfulness to His covenant. Almighty and eternal God, long ago You gave Your promise to Abraham and his posterity. Listen to Your Church as we pray that the people You first made Your own may arrive

at the fullness of redemption. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

That the language of this prayer is as insipid and uninspiring as we have come to expect from the reformed liturgy is the least of its problems. Does Rome want the Jews to convert to belief in Christ or not? If so, why not just say so, rather than forcing good Catholic priests to repeat every Good Friday the meaningless sentiment that the Jews “continue to grow in the love of [God’s] Name and in faithfulness to His covenant”? What does that mean? The appeal to God later in the prayer that the Jews “arrive at the fullness of redemption” is no less vague. Are we praying that the Jews arrive at the fullness of redemption through belief in Christ and membership in His Church? If so, why not just say so? Here, as in so many other areas, the viruses of ambiguity abound, with a resulting debilitation of the teaching Church.

It is a false charity that engages the Jews in irenic dialogue without making clear their need for conversion, a need that extends to the entire human race. *Everyone* needs Christ; what kind of charity wants to deprive anyone of the means of salvation? Christ Himself was clearly not speaking of a people who could be confident of their salvation in their present state when He said, “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldest not? Behold, your house shall be left to you, desolate” (Matt. 23:38–39). The patristic testimony on the matter is unanimous and resounding.^{[28](#)}

But the new teaching on the religious status of the Jews now appears to be taken for granted. Thus Cardinal Francis George of Chicago, admired as a conservative by neo-Catholics, could write in his diocesan newspaper that “the Church has also sinned against the Jewish people, first of all, in teaching that God’s covenant with Israel is no longer valid for them... .”^{[29](#)}

Even *The Wanderer* criticized the late Cardinal John O’Connor, and rightly so, for giving his blessing on national television to a young man who was repudiating his Catholic faith for Judaism. The *Nightline* anchor asked if this young man had the Cardinal’s blessing. His Eminence replied, “Oh yes. Oh yes. He doesn’t need it, but he has my blessing, if we’re going to call it such, because I believe that’s what the Church teaches.... Christ came into the world as a Jew. Ethnically, religiously, a Jew. We believe He was the Son of God. But He came for everybody.” Toward the end of the program, the Cardinal added: “I would be keenly disappointed if there are Christians, and most particularly Catholics, who watch this at Christmas time and have animosity towards Stephen, towards what has happened. If they want to have animosity, I’d rather they have it toward me If they want to consider me wrong, that’s fine. But I think that he is happy in his choice. I think that his mother is peaceful in his choice, and I think God is smiling on the whole thing.”^{[30](#)}

In late 2001, the Pontifical Biblical Commission released a book entitled *The Jewish People and the Holy Scriptures in the Christian Bible* that confirmed the radical (but non-Magisterial) drift of Rome’s position vis-a-vis the Jews. The book argues that the Jews’ continued wait for the Messiah is validated and justified by the Old Testament. “The expectancy of the Messiah was in the Old Testament,” papal spokesman Joaquín Navarro-Valls explained, “and if the Old Testament keeps its value, then it keeps that as a value,

too. It says you cannot just say all the Jews are wrong and we are right.” Asked by reporters whether his statements might be taken to suggest that the Messiah may not in fact yet have come, Navarro-Valls replied, “It means it would be wrong for a Catholic to wait for the Messiah, but not for a Jew.” The latest position of the Vatican apparatus (not to be confused with the Church’s constant Magisterium) is, in essence, that the Jews are perfectly entitled to live as if Christ had never come. They wait for “their” Messiah and we wait for ours. So much for the objective truth of the matter!

Cardinal Ratzinger put it this way: “The difference consists in the fact that for us, he (sic) who will come will have the same traits of that Jesus who has already come.”³¹ The *same traits* of *that* Jesus (is there more than one?)—and only “for us”? Would it make the slightest bit of sense to say that, for us, the head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has the same traits of *that* Cardinal Ratzinger who occupies the offices of the CDF? What is to account for this apparent dread aversion to the simple, straightforward declaration that the Messiah for everyone, not just “for us,” is Jesus Christ crucified in the flesh, and none other than He?

To say the least, the Cardinal’s novel locution obscures the fact that when Christ returns it will as be as clear to the Jews as it is to everyone else in the world that this is the One Whom the Pharisees rejected when He walked amongst His people 2,000 years ago—the God Incarnate, Who said to the Pharisees, “Before Abraham was, I am,” and Who sternly admonished them that “you shall not see me henceforth till you say: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord” (Matt. 23:38–39).

Evidently, we are to assume that the Holy Catholic Church was mistaken in the teaching of her traditional Good Friday liturgy. Now we are told that it is suddenly no longer a question of a hardening of the heart or of blindness, but merely a difference of opinion about whether there will be one or two comings of the same Messiah! The Cardinal’s implication that the whole question of Jewish conversion can be reduced to the observation that Christ’s return will represent His Second Coming for us but only a first coming for the Jews, with no eternal consequences arising from “the difference,” dispenses with the entire tradition of the Church.

The response from the neo-Catholic establishment this time was a stony silence. One can hardly blame them; every Catholic instinct must recoil in revulsion at this most recent (and almost unbelievable) display of cowardice. Jewish commentators delightedly hailed it as a marvelous innovation. “This is a total novelty,” said Chief Rabbi Joseph Levi of Florence.³² Rabbi Alberto Piattelli, a professor and Jewish leader in Rome, remarked: “This is something *altogether new*.... It recognizes the value of the Jewish position regarding the wait for the Messiah, changes *the whole exegesis of biblical studies* and restores our biblical passages to their original meaning. I was surprised.”³³ And so yet another “surprise” is added to the mountain of surprises we have only attempted to sketch in this book.

But, as always with these postconciliar reversals, no binding Magisterial pronouncement actually obliges us to accept it. Instead, as the *New York Times* report noted, there was a statement from the Vatican’s press spokesman: “Everything in the report is now considered part of official church [sic] doctrine, Dr. Navarro-Valls said.” Thus a characteristic feature of the postconciliar program of innovation emerges again: the

insistence that novel teachings, never presented in such a way as to bind the faithful, constitute “official Church doctrine”—as though the overturning of 2,000 years of biblical exegesis could be accomplished by a lay Vatican spokesman, answering questions at a press conference about a book of theological reflections belatedly discovered by the Italian press in Vatican-area bookstores. Even more ludicrous is that the study in question was released by the Pontifical Biblical Commission, which no longer serves as an organ of the Magisterium (as it did under Saint Pius X), but rather as a kind of theological think-tank whose opinions bind no one. Navarro-Valls thus had no right to describe this embarrassing and despicable capitulation as in any way constituting “official Church doctrine.” But as we have shown throughout our presentation, the *impression* that speeches, books, press conferences and other such non-Magisterial statements bind the whole Church is essential to maintaining the neo-Catholic façade of novelty.³⁴

In an earlier article in *L'Osservatore Romano*, as if to pave the way for this latest reversal, the Cardinal expressed the opinion that after the Holocaust “a new vision has formed of the relationship between the Church and Israel, a sincere desire to overcome every form of anti-Judaism and to embark on a constructive dialogue for mutual knowledge and reconciliation.”³⁵ Still another “new vision” arises in the postconciliar period, although one will find no proclamation of “new visions” in the constant Magisterium of the Church before the Council. In this “new vision,” the Church merely seeks “reconciliation” with “Israel”—whatever that means. There is no longer to be any suggestion that it is individual Jews, along with the rest of humanity, who need be reconciled with Jesus of Nazareth.

Casting the first stone at dead Catholics (as is the fashion these days), Ratzinger further opined in the same article that in former times “Christians considered their mother [i.e., Israel] blind and obstinate,” and that the “somewhat insufficient resistance on the part of Christians to these [Nazi] atrocities can be explained by the anti-Judaic legacy of the soul in none too few Christians.” Is the traditional Good Friday liturgy now to be viewed as part of this “anti-Judaic legacy of the soul”? Is that why it was abandoned? If so, then why should anyone believe in a Church that could be so mistaken, and so uncharitable, for so long, in the teaching of her universal liturgy? Or is it perhaps this new attitude which is mistaken and lacking in true charity toward the Jews? For how is charity served by abandoning the Church’s public prayer for their conversion, when they are no less in need of the grace of Christ than the rest of humanity?

So we are apparently expected to accept, without the slightest explanation, the sudden disappearance of the Church’s perennial approach to the Jews. Yet it was this approach that produced the post-Holocaust conversion to Catholicism of none other than Israel Zolli, the chief rabbi of Jerusalem. Zolli took Eugenio as his baptismal name, in honor of the Pope whose example of true solicitude for the Jews was instrumental in Zolli’s gradual conversion, which he had promised God he would complete if he survived the war.³⁶ As Zolli declared after becoming a Catholic, in answer to the question whether he believed the Messiah has already come: “Yes, positively. I have believed it many years. And now I am so firmly convinced of the truth of it that I can face the whole world and defend my faith with the certainty and solidity of the mountains.”³⁷ Zolli clearly knew nothing of Cardinal Ratzinger’s “new vision” of Catholic-Jewish relations that the Holocaust

supposedly engendered—and neither did Zolli’s dear friend, Pope Pius XII.

Nor would Zolli recognize as at all Catholic the current program of lauding the goodness of decadent Protestant sects and seeking “unity in diversity” with them. When asked why he had not simply joined one of the Protestant denominations, Zolli gave an answer that the current Vatican apparatus would regard as an intolerable breach of ecumenical etiquette: “The Catholic Church was recognized by the whole Christian world as the true Church of God for fifteen consecutive centuries. No man can halt at the end of those 1,500 years and say that the Catholic Church is not the Church of Christ without embarrassing himself seriously. I can accept *only* that Church which was preached to all creatures by my own forefathers, the Twelve (Apostles), who, like me, issued from the Synagogue.”

The stirring testimony of Israel Zolli, given only some fifty years ago, is a rebuke to the entire postconciliar program of ecumenism and Christian-Jewish “dialogue,” which has gone nowhere and produced nothing but embarrassment for the Church. It is hardly surprising that the same Jewish leadership the Vatican futilely attempts to supplicate today denounced Zolli as a traitor and a fraud, even though he had been lauded as a great Old Testament scholar before his conversion.^{[38](#)}

As we say, the abandonment of the traditional approach to the Jews is too much even for some neo-Catholics to accept. But the view that the Jews are no longer obliged to convert to Christianity, along with the view that the return of the Orthodox and the Protestants to Roman Catholicism was also “abandoned” at Vatican II, are now presented as Catholic doctrine by the Pope’s own men. We are to believe, then, that some of the most important and influential cardinals in the world are radically at odds with the Pope in these matters?

In the midst of all of these peculiar developments, the wisdom and foresight of St. Pius X in condemning Modernism with such vigor have been fully vindicated. St. Pius X included quite a number of errors under this heading, but undergirding the whole heresy was a retreat from the idea that God and the truth of the Catholic religion were objectively demonstrable. The Modernists tended instead to focus on the subjective aspect of religion—feeling, emotion, and sentiment—to the exclusion of all else. Hence, religious dogmas were not absolutely true statements of belief presented for our assent by an infallible teaching authority, but merely the inchoate expression of an ineffable religious “sentiment” to be found within all men. As St. Pius X correctly noted, there is no place for religious error in such a calculus, for if religion is based ultimately on subjectivity and sentiment, how can anyone ever really and definitively be wrong? How can we say that one person’s *feeling* is true and another’s false?

Much of the ecumenical movement in our age, therefore, betrays very strong Modernist influences. In the Modernist schema, religious dogma is not absolute and irreformable, but rather a vague, imprecise reflection of a common religious “feeling” within a human race that is in a constant state of evolution and flux, so it becomes difficult to believe that religious reconciliation could really be based on the “static” formula of the simple return of dissidents to the one true Church and the acceptance of all her doctrines without the slightest alteration. Instead, the ecumenical *apparatchik* imagines a shared spiritual journey, in which the religious sentiment common to the human race comes to its full

realization in some new dispensation that is the exclusive possession of no single group.

Returning to the matter at hand, if none of what we have just described qualifies as “indifferentist ecumenism,” what on earth does? But it does not end there. Cardinal Ratzinger has said that the Church must be concerned about more than “reconciled diversity” with Protestants, and must look for “ways of conducting ecumenism *across the religions*.”³⁹ Here we are confronted with such appalling novelties as the pan-religious World Days of Prayer for Peace at Assisi in 1986 and 2002, which have been the source of endless controversy.

In his welcoming remarks at the 1986 event, Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, stated: “We are here together without any trace of syncretism”—thus providing neo-Catholics with the requisite fig leaf to explain away the whole episode. If there is no trace of syncretism (the attempt to combine or reconcile differing beliefs), why say anything in the first place? Similar disclaimers were repeated endlessly at the 2002 event. The disclaimer is about as effective as a man explaining to his wife and children that while he will be spending the night with the woman next door, they will be “together without any trace of adultery.” It might be perfectly true, but how could such conduct fail to undermine the family’s confidence in its head?

We have already noted Cardinal Etchegaray’s remark at the 1986 Assisi event that “[e]ach of the religions we profess has inner peace, and peace among individuals and nations, as one of its aims. Each one pursues this aim in its own distinctive and irreplaceable way.”⁴⁰ Neo-Catholics call traditionalists all kinds of names for perceiving syncretism in remarks such as these, but it is not easy to understand how this kind of statement coming from a Vatican cardinal could actually *fail* to inspire alarm in an educated Catholic. Can anyone seriously contend that a cardinal expressing such sentiments during the reign of St. Pius X would have escaped censure, or that the Assisi events of 1986 and 2002 would not have been denounced by this great Pontiff?

The Assisi events are too much to swallow even for some of those who could normally be expected to laud John Paul II’s innovations. Thus, Vito Messori, the Pope’s favored interviewer, was constrained to remark (as summarized by Catholic News Service) that “despite organizers’ intentions,” the Assisi event of 2002 “sent the message that one religion is as good as another.... The appearance of relativism eroded the Pontiff’s authority on moral issues like divorce and abortion.” As Messori himself put it, “If the doctrine of every religion is acceptable to God, why persist in following the Catholic one, which is the most severe and rigid of all?”⁴¹

Messori was merely observing the obvious when he stated that Assisi 2002 implied that the doctrine of every religion is acceptable to God. For example, the invited representative of Voodoo (spelled Vodou by its native practitioners), Chief Amadou Gasseto from Benin, was allowed to sermonize on world peace from a high wooden pulpit suitable for a cathedral, set up in the lower plaza outside the Basilica of Saint Francis. The Chief declared to the Vicar of Christ and the assembled cardinals and Catholic guests: “The invitation to take part in the Prayer for Peace at Assisi is a great honour for me, and it is an honour for all the followers of Avelekete Vodou *whose high priest I am*.” The high priest of Avelekete Vodou then gave the Pope and all the Catholic faithful the Vodou prescription

for world peace, which included “asking forgiveness of the protecting spirits of regions affected by violence” and “carrying out sacrifices of reparation and purification, and thus restoring peace.”⁴² This would involve slitting the throats of goats, chickens, doves, and pigeons and draining their blood from the carotid arteries according to a precise ritual prescription.⁴³ In other words, the Pope invited a witch doctor to give a sermon to Catholics on world peace.

Among other “representatives of the various religions” who came to the pulpit was one Didi Talwalkar, the representative of Hinduism. Talwalkar declared that the “divinization of human beings gives us a sense of the worth of life. Not only am I divine in essence, but also everyone else is equally divine in essence....” Talwalkar went on to exclaim: “My divine brothers and sisters, from much above the station of life where I am, I dare to appeal to humanity, from this august forum, in the blessed presence of His Holiness the Pope....” While Talwalkar acknowledges that the Pope is a holy man, he is only one of many such holy men who lead the various religions. Didi prefers to follow another holy man: the Reverend Pandurang Shastri Athawale, who heads something called the *Swadhyaya parivari*, which teaches “the idea of acceptance of all religious traditions” and the need to “free the idea of religion from dogmatism, insularity and injunctions.”⁴⁴ Just the thing Catholics of the postconciliar period need to hear.

The spectacle of Assisi 2002 staggers the Catholic mind, and human language fails in its attempt to adequately describe the unparalleled ecclesial situation in which we now find ourselves—a situation even the Arian heretics of the fourth century would find incredible. Yet, true to form, the neo-Catholic press organs reported the event as if it were a triumph for the Catholic faith—while carefully avoiding any of the shocking images and words that would give scandal to any Catholic who has not been spiritually lobotomized by the postconciliar changes in the Church.

The willful blindness of the neo-Catholic commentators aside, it is not only a Catholic like Messori who can see the deadly indifferentism implied in such gatherings; even the Lutherans recognize it! Twelve days after the September 11 attacks in the United States, Lutheran pastor David Benke took part in an interfaith service at Yankee Stadium, along with a Muslim imam, a rabbi, Sikh and Hindu leaders, and Cardinal Egan. For this he is now at risk of being deposed as president of the Missouri Synod’s Atlantic District. As one Lutheran pastor told the *New York Times*,

When we’re dealing with those who are not Christians—Hindus and Muslims—in those cases, St. Paul talks about not being yoked with unbelievers.... The danger there is people see the differences as unimportant. You can’t chop up the Christian faith into little departments, and say, “We believe in 9 of 10.” If you introduce error in one place, it’s going to show up throughout. The Gospel is imperiled by any of these errors. That’s something that’s required of a Christian, to not just say we agree, but to say we disagree.

Herman Otten, publisher of the Lutheran newspaper *Christian News*, added that Lutherans “don’t hate the Muslims, the Jews, the Sikhs. We love them; therefore we want to let them know they are lost, they are eternally lost, unless they believe in Jesus.”⁴⁵

That is how the Catholic Church, in her solicitude for souls, spoke just a few decades ago, as typified in her public prayer on Good Friday for the conversion of unbelievers. Today, ecumenism and “interreligious dialogue” have placed the Vatican apparatus squarely to the left of the more conservative Lutherans, who happily pose as the unique

guardians of Christianity. But the spectacles go on.

At this point in our presentation, we earnestly implore neo-Catholics to examine their consciences and recall how many times they themselves have taken an active part in joint ecumenical liturgies or pan-religious prayer meetings. We retain enough confidence in their good sense to expect that the answer is very few, if any. We can anticipate the objection that these novelties do not, in themselves, amount to a formal contradiction of prior dogmatic teaching, which is certainly true, but they clearly *are* something that Rome very much wants us to be doing. (Thus Cardinal Cassidy has urged Catholics and Lutherans to do as much as possible together without violating their consciences.⁴⁶ That Vatican-approved activities now carry the risk of *violation of a Catholics conscience* does not trouble our neo-Catholic friends in the least.)

Do any neo-Catholics plan to attend any episcopal “consecrations” of our “separated brethren” anytime soon? Our bishops certainly do, and none of them has been censured by the Vatican. Faced with this sorry spectacle, one is forced to wonder: Do these bishops believe or do they not believe that they alone, having been duly consecrated by bishops in apostolic succession from the first days of the Church, are in exclusive possession of the authority and charism that belong to the episcopal office? If so, then what can their presence at the flagrantly invalid “consecration” of a Protestant “bishop” possibly signify? Is it just a gesture of “good will”?

Is the author of the Pamphlet or any of his fellow neo-Catholics planning any public prayer sessions with prominent Anglicans who favor abortion and women’s ordination? Apparently not. Yet that is how the Pope opened the Jubilee Year.

Are certain Catholic apologists of the neo-Catholic stripe going to remove from their websites and magazines all the articles aimed at converting Protestants and the Orthodox to Catholicism and having them return to Rome? Are they going to stop publishing the “conversion stories” of Protestants who “came home to Rome” or were “surprised by truth”? It would not seem so.

The neo-Catholics fail to see that by their own avoidance of ecumenical activities and jargon and their persistence in the notion that Protestants should convert to Catholicism and return to Rome, *they themselves are in a de facto state of resistance* to the Pope’s entire ecumenical agenda, even as they attempt to defend it against all criticism.

Especially disturbing about the pan-Christian and pan-religious ecumenism is how clearly they repudiate the insistent and tireless teaching of earlier twentieth-century Popes, without ever explaining to the faithful where and why those Vicars of Christ had been mistaken. Are we really no longer allowed to follow their teaching? That seems like rather a peculiar demand to make of the faithful, especially in the absence of any effort to point out the deficiencies in the Church’s previous posture. We can easily imagine a neo-Catholic responding that the “signs of the times” call for this radical change; the Pope himself noted that the “tension” existing in the world in 1986 demanded some kind of pan-religious response (hence the Assisi meeting). But the preconciliar Popes, it should be remembered, *lived through two world wars* without suggesting that a ceremony that could be *misinterpreted* as implying any kind of equivalence between the Catholic Church and other religious communions was at all appropriate. Philadelphia Archbishop Dennis

Dougherty, to offer only one example, was acting as a fairly typical American prelate *when he refused to take part in ecumenical ceremonies marking the end of World War I.*⁴⁷ The great Cardinal Mercier, moreover, warned that World War I was a divine punishment visited upon mankind for having placed the Catholic Church at the same level as false religions. And we have already mentioned the refusal of even the Dutch bishops to participate in an ecumenical congress just after World War II, even though the theme of the conference was laudable enough: “The Plan of God and the Disorder of the World.” There was no confusion about Catholic identity in those days. These are but three of an endless supply of anecdotes from another world.

And so we freely confess that we *are* pitting one Pope against another. But we are doing so not to convict anyone of heresy. We are doing so because if words still have meaning, the postconciliar and the preconciliar teaching in these matters (and the many others we have mentioned) obviously *are* contradictory, no matter what the neo-Catholics may tell us. Back when the problem was nowhere near as serious as it is now, the preconciliar Popes were terrified by the spread of indifferentism. Within the space of a few years, the view of the preconciliar Popes was completely replaced by a baffling and inexplicable optimism about the same non-Catholic sects, whose conditions *have only degraded* since the ecumenical venture began. What is to account for this paradox of a growing “respect” for non-Catholic sects that are ever less deserving of it?

In the midst of all this, traditionalists are also impertinent enough to ask what has happened to the teaching on the *Social Kingship* of Christ. Has that been abandoned? If so, why? What was wrong with Pope Pius XI’s teaching in *Quas Primas* (1925) apart from the fact that it greatly displeased the modern world? We want to know why Rome, having in its official statements beaten a glaring retreat from the call for the enthronement of Christ the King over all human societies, has instead adopted almost exclusively the language of tolerance and human rights. It cannot be a coincidence that in the revised calendar the Feast of Christ the King has been moved to the end of the liturgical year, a shift whose clear implication is that the Kingship of Christ is something we await at the end of time and not anything to be established here and now.

These kinds of capitulations are all the more inexplicable in the present spiritual milieu. In our age, it would be difficult to think of an idea that is more prevalent than the basic equality of all religions. Why would we want to do anything that could even inadvertently lend credence to this view? There is nothing that a diehard globalist would like more than to see all the Christian denominations, or indeed all the world’s religions, absorbed into a blob that would in consequence be so meaningless and so incapable of commanding the loyalty of its adherents that it would pose no threat whatever to the brave new world they are so eager to impose on us. In this context, it is helpful and even a bit unsettling to recall what we consider one of the most memorable lines of St. Pius X’s entire pontificate. We are witnessing, he said, a “great movement of apostasy being organized in every country for the establishment of a one-world Church which shall have neither dogmas, nor hierarchy; neither discipline for the mind, nor curb for the passions... .”⁴⁸ Apparently, as the neo-Catholics would have it, the situation in the world has improved so much since then that we are no longer in need of such warnings.

By any conceivable interpretation of traditional Catholic teaching, it is dramatically

urgent that the members of the Protestant sects and the assembled non-Catholic religions at Assisi convert to the true Faith, and as quickly as possible. Is this urgency so much as hinted at by any of the Catholics involved in ecumenical and pan-religious activities? Here is how Pope Pius IX discussed this issue in his Allocution *Singulari Quadem* (1854), touching on a point that would later appear in his *Syllabus of Errors*: “Not without sorrow we have learned that another error, no less destructive, has taken possession of some parts of the Catholic world, and has taken up abode in the souls of many Catholics, who think that one should have good hope of the eternal salvation of all those who have never lived in the true Church of Christ.” Pius IX taught that the “invincible ignorance” of those who had never known Christ would not be reckoned by God as a sin. He also said, though, that “it must be held by faith that outside the Apostolic Roman Church no one can be saved; that this is the only ark of salvation; that he who shall not have entered therein will perish in the flood.... Truths of this sort should be deeply fixed in the minds of the faithful, lest they be corrupted by false doctrines, whose object is to foster an indifference toward religion, which we see spreading widely and growing strong for the destruction of souls.”

This traditional tone and content in papal pronouncements on the one true religion has vanished. In *Ut Unum Sint*, John Paul II wrote: “Along the ecumenical path to unity, pride of place certainly belongs to *common prayer*, the prayerful union of those who gather together around Christ himself. If Christians, despite their divisions, can grow ever more united in common prayer around Christ, they will grow in the awareness of how little divides them in comparison to what unites them.” In fact, in its 1949 *monitum* on the “ecumenical movement,” the Holy Office warned bishops not to allow any mixed congresses they might approve to be conducted on “*the false pretext that more attention should be paid to the points on which we agree than to those on which we differ [lest] a dangerous indifferentism be encouraged....*”⁴⁹ Today, however, we are told that this false pretext provides the very basis for once-forbidden ecumenical prayer meetings. Yet the suggestion that more unites Christians than divides them is clearly false, as demonstrated by the catastrophic collapse of Protestantism into outright liberalism over the course of the twentieth century. But even taking into account the more conservative Protestants, the question can be raised: How can a Faith that teaches us to strive for holiness and to purify our souls through the sanctifying grace we receive from the sacraments be said to be very similar to one that considers such things to be the foulest sins and the grossest presumption? And how can a Faith that enjoins the absolute sanctity of marriage and life in the womb be very similar to one that teaches that divorce, contraception and abortion are acceptable to God?

Today the doctrine of the one true Church, the Ark of Salvation, gives way to a celebration of diversity. This development doubtless warms the hearts of the enemies of religion around the world, who are thrilled to see the seriousness and the hard edge of the traditional faith visibly subsiding, but for Catholics with any sense of tradition, it is a repudiation of the efforts and instincts of the whole assembly of saints. And yet the neo-Catholics actually maintain that we have no right to object to any of it.

Surveying the state of Christian and pan-religious ecumenism, Romano Amerio, a *peritus* at Vatican II, had this to say:

The present temper of ecumenism, involving an effective renunciation of an expansion of the Catholic faith, is

clearly evident in John Paul II's speeches in Nigeria in 1982: there is no mention of conversion to Christ, but in a special message to Muslims, which was not actually received by any Muslims or in any way replied to, the Pope hoped for cooperation between the two religions "in the interests of Nigerian unity" and "to make a contribution to the good order of the world as a new civilization of love." As we have noted, harmony in the world is no longer presented in terms of a single religion, but of a single civilization... [50](#)

In this connection, it would be well to recall an important teaching of Pope St. Pius X. In August 1910, the Pope issued his apostolic letter *Our Apostolic Mandate*, directed at the French Sillon. The Sillon was a social and political organization that sought to base civilization and civic progress exclusively upon human good will and to leave out of the equation those things, religion especially, that divide people. The Pope quoted one of its adherents thus: "Catholic comrades will work between themselves in a special organization and will learn and educate themselves. Protestant and Free-Thinking Democrats will do likewise on their own side. But all of us, Catholics, Protestants and Free-Thinkers will have at heart to arm young people, not in view of the fratricidal struggle, but in view of a disinterested emulation in the field of social and civic virtues."

The Pope answered:

Here we have, founded by Catholics, an interdenominational association that is to work for the reform of civilization, an undertaking which is above all religious in character, for there is no true civilization without a moral civilization, and no true moral civilization without the true religion: it is a proven truth, a historical fact. The new Sillonists cannot pretend that they are merely working on "the ground of practical realities," where differences of belief do not matter.... But stranger still, alarming and saddening at the same time, are the audacity and frivolity of men who call themselves Catholics and dream of reshaping society under such conditions, and of establishing on earth, over and beyond the pale of the Catholic Church, "the reign of love and justice" with workers coming from everywhere, of all religions and of no religion, with or without beliefs, so long as they forego what might divide them—their religious and philosophical convictions—and so long as they share what unites them—a "generous idealism and moral forces drawn from whence they can." When we consider the forces, knowledge and supernatural virtues which were necessary to establish the Christian State, and the sufferings of millions of martyrs, and the light given by the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, and of the self-sacrifice of all the heroes of charity, and a powerful hierarchy ordained in heaven, and the streams of Divine Grace—the whole having been built up, bound together, and impregnated by the life and spirit of Jesus Christ, the Wisdom of God, the Word made man—when we think, I say, of all this, it is frightening to behold new apostles eagerly attempting to do better by a common interchange of vague idealism and civic virtues. What are they going to produce? What is to come out of this collaboration? A mere verbal and chimerical construction, in which we see, glowing in a jumble, and in seductive confusion, the words of Liberty, Justice, Fraternity, Love, Equality, and human exaltation, all resting upon an ill-understood human dignity. It will be a tumultuous agitation, sterile for the end proposed, but which will benefit the less-Utopian exploiters of the people. Yes, we can truly say that the Sillon, its eyes fixed on a chimera, brings Socialism in its train.

Compare the teaching of St. Pius X with the "Final Declaration of the Interreligious Assembly" of October 1999, the Vatican gathering that commemorated the Assisi event of October 1986. This document called on the world's religions to "confront together, responsibly and courageously, the problems and challenges of our modern world (i.e., poverty, racism, environmental pollution, materialism, war, proliferation of arms, globalization, AIDS, lack of medical care, breakdown of family and community, marginalization of women and children, etc.)." Likewise, in an audience address extolling Islam, the Pope declared that the Catholic Church "regards Muslims with respect, convinced that their transcendent faith in God contributes to the construction of a new human family, based on the highest aspirations of the human heart.... Walking together on the path of reconciliation ... the two religions [Christianity and Islam] will be able to offer a sign of hope, by reflecting in the world the wisdom and mercy of that one God."[51](#)

How is this program different from the pan-religious utopianism condemned by St. Pius X? In fact, is it not (considering the pan-religious prayer meetings at Assisi) vastly worse than anything St. Pius X had in view? But this, the neo-Catholics will tell us, is “pitting one Pope against another”—an exercise we admit is prompted by our commitment to the Law of the Excluded Middle,⁵² that elementary principle of logic to which traditionalists continue to have such stubborn recourse.

The world in which we find ourselves is one that, whether it realizes it or not, needs a tough and militant Catholic Church more than ever. It was the *militancy* of the Church, and the grace that her sacraments transmit, that gave the saints the strength and fortitude to live lives of truly heroic virtue. It was no conception of the Church as a “joint custodian” of the Church of God with this or that other church that encouraged the saints in their heroism; the Catholic Church was the Church of God! It was this conviction that set on fire the souls of the nuns whose self-sacrifice in the Catholic hospitals of the eighteenth century amazed even the freethinking Voltaire, who loathed the Catholic Church, but who admired and could not explain the seemingly superhuman strength of these great women. It was this conviction alone that can account for the great St. Isaac Jogues, a Jesuit missionary who was so horribly mutilated by the Indians in North America that he was not recognized when he returned to Rome, but who nevertheless returned to mission territory two years later, where he met his martyrdom.

The novelties and innovations in the postconciliar years, ecumenism and the new liturgy chief among them, are not irreversible. They constitute a prudential program that, in the name of the Church’s welfare, we have the right and duty to oppose. The words of the Dominican theologian Melchior Cano, an important figure at the Council of Trent, could have been written for the neo-Catholics of the postconciliar era: “Peter has no need of our lies or flattery. Those who blindly and indiscriminately defend every decision of the supreme Pontiff are the very ones who do most to undermine the authority of the Holy See—they destroy instead of strengthening its foundations.”⁵³

The Catholic Church (and not the Union, as Abraham Lincoln foolishly suggested, or the United Nations, as Paul VI declared) is truly the last, best hope of earth. Only the Church, with her sacraments and her ancient and compelling rituals and traditions, can sustain us in holiness in a world in which impurity and vice are aggressively and ubiquitously present. Have we not learned from the failed experiments of the postconciliar years that the *traditional Catholic faith alone* can restore a sense of piety, reverence, and humility to a world that is making war on the very idea of the sacred, refusing in its hubris to acknowledge that there might exist any belief, institution, or code of conduct not subject to human revision?

The Catholic Church, wrote the *American Ecclesiastical Review* in 1899, is “the greatest, the grandest, and the most beautiful institution in the world.” And so she is. We can only pray that her leaders will start acting like it once again. Meanwhile, do we traditionalists compare the past few pontificates unfavorably with those in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries? Guilty as charged. And the reason, in a nutshell, is that those great Popes, *at a time when the world was in much better shape than it is today*, sounded the alarm for the faithful to guard against the lures of the modern world and to press on in seeking its conversion to the one true religion.

We can hardly be blamed for advocating a return to the Church's own perennial teaching.

[1.](#) Quoted in Archbishop Arrigo Pintonello, "A Bishop to His Brother Bishops," *Christian Order*, November 1977, p. 671.

[2.](#) Letter to Cardinal Archbishop of Paris, quoted in *The Latin Mass*, Winter 1998, p. 63.

[3.](#) Pius X, *Il Fermo Proposito*, June 11, 1905.

[4.](#) Hilaire Belloc, *The Great Heresies* (1937; repr., Rockford, IL: TAN, 1991), p. 160.

[5.](#) Peter A. Huff, *Allen Tate and the Catholic Revival: Trace of the Fugitive Gods* (New York: Paulist Press, 1996), pp. 28–29, 23.

[6.](#) William M. Halsey, *The Survival of American Innocence: Catholicism in an Era of Disillusionment, 1920–1940* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980), pp. 56–57.

[7.](#) Dom Paul Nau, O.S.B., "The Ordinary Magisterium of the Catholic Church," in *Pope or Church?: Essays on the Infallibility of the Ordinary Magisterium* (Kansas City, MO: Angelus Press, 1998), p. 29.

[8.](#) *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, July 1984, p. 14; cited in Davies, *The Second Vatican Council and Religious Liberty*, p. 260.

[9.](#) *Faith and Reason*, Fall 1983; cited in Michael Davies, *The Second Vatican Council and Religious Liberty* (Long Prairie, MN: Neumann Press, 1992), p. 261.

[10.](#) DZ 701.

[11.](#) Rev. Canon René Berthod, "The Infallibility of the Church's Ordinary Magisterium," in *Pope or Church?*, pp. 60–61.

[12.](#) On the question of religious liberty, for instance, many Council Fathers expressed their own astonishment at the new teaching and were unable to explain how it could be reconciled with prior statements; it was not only Archbishop Lefebvre who failed to see the compatibility of the two positions. Thus Fr. Yves Congar, a theological celebrity at the Council and afterward, spoke of the tension between the traditional teaching and the conciliar document *Dignitatis Humanae*: "It cannot be denied that a text like this does *materially* say something different from the *Syllabus* of 1864, and even almost the opposite of propositions 15 and 77–9 of that document" (emphasis in original). Since the document also claims that it "leaves intact the traditional Catholic doctrine of men and communities toward the one true religion and the only Church of Christ," even while it goes on to introduce a series of novel ideas in support of which it could appeal to no Church document before 1960, one may well be justified in concluding that *Dignitatis Humanae* is simply too confused to offer any coherent teaching. Professor Oscar Cullmann, one of the Protestant observers at the Council, later remarked that on "far too many occasions" the definitive texts of the Council "juxtapose opposing viewpoints without establishing any genuine internal link between them." See Davies, *The Second Vatican Council and Religious Liberty*, pp. 198–209, 174.

[13.](#) Nor do we mean to suggest that there could be such a thing as the "fallible Magisterium," a kind of collection of rare errors existing alongside the infallible Magisterium. Should some pronouncement of a pope or council be false, that statement would, obviously, not really be part of the Magisterium. To hold otherwise would be to adopt a false equivalence between truth and authority, as Fr. Nau notes. It is this false equivalence that is at work in the neo-Catholic system.

[14.](#) See [Chapter 2](#), [note 27](#).

[15.](#) *Adista*, February 26, 2001: "La decisione del Vaticano II alla quale il papa si attiene, è assolutamente chiara: noi intendiamo l'ecumene oggi non più nel senso dell'ecumene del ritorno, secondo il quale gli altri devono 'convertirsi' e diventare 'cattolici.' Questo è stato espressamente abbandonato dal Vaticano II."

[16.](#) *Address to Anglican-Roman Catholic Working Group*, November 24, 2001.

[17.](#) *Mortalium Animos*, 7: "And here it seems opportune to expound and to refute a certain *false opinion*, on which this whole question, as well as that complex movement by which non-Catholics seek to bring about the union of the Christian churches depends. For authors who favor this view are accustomed, times almost without number, to bring forward these words of Christ: 'That they all may be one.... And there shall be one fold and one shepherd,' with this signification however: that Christ Jesus merely expressed a desire and prayer, *which still lacks its fulfillment*. For they

are of the opinion that the unity of faith and government, which is a note of the one true Church of Christ, has hardly up to the present time existed, and does not to-day exist. They consider that this unity may indeed be desired and that it *may even be one day attained through the instrumentality of wills directed to a common end*, but that meanwhile it can only be regarded as mere ideal.”

18. The question has not been resolved with the publication of *Dominus Iesus* in September 2000. We discuss the lingering confusion over the notion of “the Church of God” (also called “the Church of Christ”) and the Vatican’s backpedaling from DI in [Chapter 13](#).

19. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 4.

20. R.B., “Full Communion in Reconciled Diversity,” *The Latin Mass*, Summer 2000, pp. 24–28. The selection from “Facing Unity” appears on pp. 24–25.

21. Amerio, *Iota Unum*, p. 553.

22. *L’Osservatore Romano*, January 20, 2000; *The Latin Mass*, Summer 2000, p. 7.

23. De Lubac lecture, Salford University, January 18, 2001.

24. John Vennari, “Pantheon of the Gods at the Vatican,” *Catholic Family News*, December 1999, p. 27.

25. Amerio, *Iota Unum*, p. 578, n. 77.

26. Address to Representatives of the Jewish Community in Mainz, West Germany, November 17, 1980.

27. Address at the seventeenth meeting of the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee, New York, May 1, 2001.

28. On the question of the conversion of the Jews, see Fr. Arthur B. Klyber, *The One Who Is to Come*, ed. Matthew J. McDonald (New Hope, KY: Remnant of Israel, 2000). Fr. Klyber, a Jewish convert to Catholicism, dedicated his life to the conversion of the Jews.

29. Cardinal Francis George, “The Sins of the Church: God’s Forgiveness and Human Memories,” *Catholic New World*, March 19, 2000.

30. Vennari, “Cardinal O’Connor Blesses Apostasy,” pp. 3, 22.

31. The whole matter was reported in Melinda Henneberger, “Vatican Says Jews’ Wait for Messiah is Validated by the Old Testament,” *New York Times*, January 18, 2002.

32. Zenit, January 18, 2002.

33. Henneberger, “Jews’ Wait for Messiah.”

34. Ibid.

35. *L’Osservatore Romano*, Dec. 29, 2000, reprinted in *30 Days English* edition, No. 12, 2000.

36. “Before the Dawn: The Mysterious Conversion of Rome’s Chief Rabbi,” *Inside the Vatican*, February 1999.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.

39. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Many Religions—One Covenant* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1999), p. 95.

40. Pontifical Commission “Justitia et Pax,” *Assisi: World Day of Prayer for Peace*, 1987, p. 110.

41. CW News briefs, February 5, 2002.

42. One of us attended the Assisi event as a reporter with a Vatican press credential. The voodoo chieftan’s remarks are taken *verbatim* from the Vatican’s official booklet for the 2002 Assisi event, entitled “Together for Peace,” and can be found at pp. 5–52.

43. A website article describes a typical voodoo session in Benin: “The women kowtow, as Daagbo, a huge man draped in stiff white cotton and necklaces of seashells, lifts a goat to the sky before slitting its throat, draining its blood on an iron altar of rusty car parts, as it bleats for life.” <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/34/010.html>.

44. “Together for Peace,” pp. 56–59.

[45.](#) Daniel J. Wakin, “Seeing Heresy in a Service for Sept. 11: Pastor is Under Fire for Interfaith Prayers,” *New York Times*, February 8, 2002, pp. B1, B5.

[46.](#) *L’Osservatore Romano*, English weekly edition, November 24, 1999.

[47.](#) Charles Morris, *American Catholic: The Saints and Sinners Who Built America’s Most Powerful Church* (New York: Random House, 1997), p. 172.

[48.](#) *Notre Charge Apostolique*, apostolic letter on the Sillon Movement in France, 1910.

[49.](#) AAS 42–152.

[50.](#) Amerio, *Iota Unum*, p. 578.

[51.](#) Vennari, “Pantheon of the Gods,” p. 26; Audience Address, May 5, 1999.

[52.](#) The rule of logic that every proposition is either true or false.

[53.](#) Cited in John Jay Hughes, *Pontiffs Who Shaped History* (Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 1996), p. 11.

Schism?

Another accusation neo-Catholics frequently hurl at their traditionalist brethren is that traditionalists are “schismatics” on account of their conscientious opposition to certain papally approved conciliar and postconciliar novelties, first and foremost the new liturgy of Paul VI, the new “ecumenism” and the new “dialogue.” (In fact, a traditionalist is basically nothing more or less than a Roman Catholic minus this troika of dissolvent novelties, none of which is an article of Catholic faith.) The charge of “schism” is routinely trotted out in place of a substantive response to traditionalist arguments, which are generally left unanswered.

The Wanderer and its editor have led the neo-Catholic establishment in denouncing traditionalists as “schismatics.” We have mentioned *The Wanderer*’s accusation (in its editor’s preface to the Pamphlet) that “one can conclude from a careful reading of *We Resist You* that its authors are on a schismatic trajectory that can only have tragic consequences.” In the usual mode of this accusation against traditionalists, editor Alphonse Matt fails to give the reader the benefit of his “careful reading” of the Statement, which he neglects to quote even once.

Perhaps the most outrageous example of this neo-Catholic phenomenon is an article by Paul Likoudis published by *The Wanderer* in early 1995.¹ In this article Likoudis lamented the supposed “schism” of certain Roman Catholic traditionalists. *The Wanderer*’s accusation of “schism” was, quite simply, a gross calumny—but all too typical of the neo-Catholic’s approach to his traditionalist brethren. Writing people out of the Church without evidence or a canonical process by Church authorities is something neo-Catholic commentators would never dream of doing with any of the neo-Modernist Church-wreckers who happily infest the hierarchy and the seminaries; but the same commentators cry “schism” with great abandon when it comes to traditionalists.

An amusing example is a recent article in *The Wanderer* by one Peter Vere. Mr. Vere’s own biography reveals that he was a former Catholic, then a former occultist and socialist, then a former Protestant Pentecostal, then a former *traditionalist* (affiliated with the Society of St. Pius X), before arriving at what he now considers home: “a harmonious blend of charismatic action and traditionalist contemplation.”² While we do not begrudge any man his own spiritual journey back to the Church, we do object to Mr. Vere’s rude and noisy arrival, which includes public denunciations of his former Catholic traditionalist friends for holding opinions he himself had vigorously defended only months before.

In his *Wanderer* piece, Vere, now armed with a freshly minted canon law degree, informs us that “I conclude a diocesan bishop may declare as schismatic an author who publicly resists the Second Vatican Council and Pope John Paul II.”³ How exactly does one “resist” the Second Vatican Council? Did the Council generate some kind of ecclesiastical force field to which Catholics must submit, as if to the ministrations of a hypnotist? What *teaching* of Vatican II does Vere claim traditionalists are “resisting”? What does Vatican II require Catholics to *believe* that they had not always believed before

the Council? The same questions apply with respect to John Paul II. The answers, of course, are nothing and none. As we have already demonstrated abundantly, the things from which traditionalists have prescinded are novel practices, notions, attitudes and ecclesial policies of the postconciliar epoch, none of which has actually been imposed upon Catholics as a requirement of their faith.

For example, there is the “ecumenical venture,” an ill-defined and hitherto unknown ecclesial policy, which no Catholic can be compelled to believe as if it were an article of faith. Neo-Catholic authorities like Vere seem unaware of Pope John Paul II’s own teaching in *Redemptor Hominis* (1979), previously mentioned, that it is “perhaps a good thing” that traditionalist spokesmen express the concern that ecumenical activities “are harmful to the cause of the Gospel, are leading to a further rupture in the Church, are causing confusion of ideas in questions of faith and morals and are ending up with a specific indifferentism.” But not according to the eminent Mr. Vere! *He* concludes that to express such concerns is “resistance” amounting to “schism.” That the competent authorities of the Church have made no such declaration poses no obstacle for neo-Catholics; they simply arrogate that function to themselves—while carefully refraining from any application of the word “schism” to the neo-modernist Church-wreckers who truly qualify.

If demagogic traditionalist-bashers like Vere would only think about it for a moment, they would realize that it is quite impossible for a Catholic to go into “schism” over such things as the “ecumenical venture,” in the sense of breaking all communion with the See of Peter and thus ceasing to be Catholic. Are traditionalists less than Catholic because they strenuously object to and refuse to participate in common prayer with pro-abortion Protestant ministers or prayer meetings with rabbis, muftis and witch doctors, as the Pope has done? Obviously, this kind of activity can never be imposed upon Catholics as an obligation of their religion. The Holy Ghost would not allow it.

Contrary to what most neo-Catholics assume, schism does not consist in resistance to certain papal commands or policies, but rather a rejection of the Pope’s authority *in itself*. As the *Catholic Encyclopedia* notes: “[N]ot every disobedience is schism; in order to possess this character it *must* include, besides the transgression of the commands of superiors, *denial of their divine right to command*.”

Thus, for example, there was no schism involved in the refusal of Polycrates of Ephesus and the synods of Asia Minor to obey the command of Pope Victor I that they abandon the quartodeciman Easter. Polycrates and his fellow bishops *resisted*—as in “we resist you”—on the grounds that they had adjudged—as in “private judgment”—that the Pope had no right to order them to abandon a custom they claimed was descended from St. John himself. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* makes the very distinction that neo-Catholics recklessly ignore: “The *resistance* of the Asiatic bishops involved no denial of the supremacy of Rome. It indicates solely that the bishops believed St. Victor to be abusing his power in bidding them renounce a custom for which they had Apostolic authority.” All the more so today!

Likewise, there was no act of schism when, in 1331, certain French theologians and Cardinal Orsini denounced Pope John XXII as a heretic after he preached and developed in a series of sermons the thesis that there was no particular judgment immediately after

death, but that the beatific vision of the saved and the eternal punishment of the damned awaited the final judgment of God on the Last Day. Cardinal Orsini even called for a council to pronounce the Pope a heretic, yet Church history does not record that Orsini or those who agreed with him (including King Louis of Bavaria) were in “schism,” even though their motives were evidently more political than religious. On the contrary, history records that when he was *resisted* in his novel teaching, John XXII replied that he had not intended to bind the whole Church, and he impaneled a commission of theologians to consider the question. The commission *informed the Pope that he was in error*.⁴

A well-known modern example of licit resistance, even to papally approved doctrinal novelties, is the public furor over the astoundingly defective definition of Holy Mass in Article 7 of the General Instruction to the Roman Missal, prepared by Bugnini for the promulgation of Pope Paul’s new rite of Mass:

The Lord’s Supper or Mass is the sacred assembly or congregation of the people of God met together, with a priest presiding, to celebrate the memorial of the Lord. For this reason Christ’s promise applies supremely to a local gathering together of the Church: “Where two or three come together in my name, there am I in their midst” (Mt. 18:20).

Any Protestant would be quite pleased with this definition. It was only after publication of the *Ottaviani Intervention*, which exposed this outrage, that Paul VI was forced to rescind this quasi-heretical definition of the Mass and order it replaced with one that made some mention that the Mass was the unbloody Sacrifice of Our Lord on Calvary, made present on the altar by the priest acting *in persona Christi*. There were no neo-Catholics around in those days to accuse Cardinals Ottaviani and Bacci of “schism” for protesting this atrocious definition of the Mass, not to mention their protest of the new rite in its entirety.⁵

One more example may help to illustrate how the *Church* views the crucial canonical and theological difference between schism and simple disobedience in a particular matter: Hans Küng has been quite disobedient to the Pope; he has even condemned John Paul II as a despot who “rules in the spirit of the Spanish Inquisition.” Yet the Vatican does not consider Küng a schismatic as such. On the contrary, he remains a priest in good standing in the Diocese of Basle, and Cardinal Ratzinger has referred to him (along with Rahner, Congar and Schillebeeckx) as “a great scholar.”⁶ Why is this? Because Küng has avoided any explicit denial of *the papal office itself* so he cannot be convicted of schism, which involves a positive breaking of communion with the See of Peter. Thus, while Küng is supposedly no longer allowed to call himself a Catholic theologian, he is allowed to remain a Catholic priest.

By what right, then, do lay neo-Catholics such as Vere and *The Wanderer*’s editor condemn traditionalists as schismatics, when the Vatican regards the likes of Küng as being in communion with the Holy See? By no right at all. The charge is a calumny.

From all of this, it follows that even if the signers of the Statement were wrong in their stated resistance to certain postconciliar novelties, they would not for that reason be guilty of schism, because they have not denied the divine office of the papacy in itself. As we have just shown, the offense of schism does not arise merely because resistance to a particular papal act is not successful or especially well grounded. Rather, the offense depends upon whether the Pope’s authority is *generally denied* by the resister. To hold

otherwise is to hold that any act of disobedience to any papal command immediately creates a schism and instantly places the one who disobeys outside the Church. Are the neo-Catholics prepared to say this, for example, about all the bishops and priests who for years disobeyed papal liturgical laws against communion in the hand, altar girls and communal penance, or those who openly dissented (and still inwardly dissent) from *Humanae Vitae*? Obviously not. And yet the neo-Catholics suddenly perceive a “schism” when traditionalists object to novelties, many of which, paradoxically enough, were authorized only after *disobedient clerics* demanded them.

Like the faithful Catholics who challenged teachings by John XXII and Paul VI, the signers of the Statement have not generally denied the Pope’s authority. To the contrary, they have *appealed* to it:

Most Holy Father, the Catholic laity who direct themselves to you in this declaration of resistance are among the most ardent supporters of the papacy. For us, the monarchical institution of the Church with the Pope at its apex is the perfect summation of the universe created by God.... And the Pope is the natural link that joins the Glorious Christ with the Church, and the Church with heaven. We recognize, therefore, that there cannot be a more elevated position than that of the Supreme Pontiff, nor one more worthy of admiration. *It is based on this premise that we direct this document to Your Holiness.* We humbly beg the Incarnate Wisdom to illuminate your intelligence, and guide your will to do what should be done for the glory of God, the exaltation of Holy Mother Church, and the salvation of souls.

Schismatics do not beg the Pope to exercise his supreme authority; they do not recognize that authority in the first place. This passage from the Statement completely extinguishes the frivolous charge of schism—not only as to the authors, but also as to all other traditionalists of like mind and action.

Today our beloved Church is infested with scandal and neo-modernist heresy, and heterodox literature denying or undermining dogmas and doctrines of the Faith abounds in Catholic seminaries and universities, while the neo-Catholics say nothing of schism. But the same neo-Catholics cry “schism” as loudly as possible upon the appearance of a Statement signed by four traditional Catholics, and *The Wanderer* devotes *seven issues* to the tract—while managing to avoid any real discussion of its contents!

And what is so exquisitely ironic here is that the signers of the Statement, and traditionalists in general, are denounced as “schismatics” because they propose an intellectual resistance to novelties that have served to undermine the papacy itself—as, for example, the Pope’s shocking invitation to Protestant theologians in *Ut Unum Sint* to help him seek a new way of exercising the papacy that they might find acceptable, without sacrificing anything “essential” to the primacy.⁷ (The invitation was followed by the creation of a papal commission, including Protestants, to “study” the “question” of the papal primacy. But if nothing “essential” to the papacy is to be sacrificed, then this exercise, like the rest of the “ecumenical venture,” is a waste of time, since Protestants adamantly reject the very essence of the primacy: the Pope’s supreme governance of the Church in matters of faith and morals.) To the neo-Catholic mind, then, it is an act of “schism” to *defend papal authority* by raising the objection that even if this “study” of the papal primacy comes to nothing (as it surely will), the divinely instituted office of the papacy can only be debased when the Pope himself allows it to be scrutinized for possible changes by Protestant dissidents who reject the primacy but *accept murder in the womb*.

As the present controversy demonstrates, it is the very existence of a large body of

quiescent neo-Catholics that has allowed the postconciliar revolution to advance as far as it has into the structure of the Church. The basic function of the neo-Catholic in the dynamic of the revolution has been the marginalization of traditionalists, whom neo-Catholic leaders helpfully denounce for their simple refusal to cease being what neo-Catholics were only thirty-five years ago. In his book *The Remaking of the Catholic Church*, arch-liberal Richard P. McBrien noted this very phenomenon: “Criticism of the extreme right by moderate conservatives is far more effective than by moderate progressives.”⁸ How right he is. With the traditionalists safely marginalized, the soft wood of the neo-Catholics is the only resistance the termites have encountered. The results speak for themselves.

This is not to say that neo-Catholics as a group are subjectively complicit in the advances of the postconciliar revolution. Most neo-Catholics have accepted all the changes in good faith, hewing to the false notion of holy obedience peddled by their prominent spokesmen, who serve as *de facto* apologists for the revolution, which they find a hundred ways to minimize and explain away. With the preconciliar past now hazy at best, most neo-Catholics do not recognize that in the Church’s long history we have seen time and again a principled resistance by loyal Catholics to sudden changes in the Church, even in relatively trivial matters. Just as it was licit for the Asian synods to refuse Pope Victor’s direct command to change the date on which they observed Easter, so also is it licit to resist the hugely destructive changes being imposed upon us in the post-conciliar period, and to work and pray for the ultimate reversal of these changes. We certainly do not advocate here anything approaching the violent (and successful) resistance of the people of Milan to papal efforts to eliminate the Ambrosian rite of Mass.⁹ But even these violent resisters of an abuse of papal power are not viewed as schismatics by Church history.



If we may be permitted to indulge in a bit of amateur psychology, we would venture that the strange preoccupation of certain neo-Catholics with the “schism” of traditionalists—whom they denounce far more often and far more harshly than they do any true enemy of the Church—is but a reflection of an inner conviction that traditionalists legitimately oppose the ruinous postconciliar changes they themselves should have opposed, but did not. Neo-Catholic leaders understand, at least implicitly, that the very existence of a traditionalist movement *within* the Church demonstrates that they too could have resisted the changes without ceasing to be Catholics, yet history will record that they did absolutely nothing. It would be very convenient indeed if traditionalists could somehow be declared non-Catholics, so that the neo-Catholics’ failure to act could thus be seen as exemplary “trust in the Church” and the only Catholic way to behave.

And so, just as liberals in secular society employ epithets—“anti-Semite,” “homophobe,” “racist”—to marginalize and destroy people whose arguments they are unable to answer and do not wish to be heard, prominent neo-Catholics hurl the epithet “schism” to marginalize and destroy traditionalists. But worse than the secular liberals, neo-Catholics use this demagogic trick against their own brothers in the Faith.

We can think of no other answer to the mystery of why neo-Catholics are so eager to accuse traditionalists of the crime of schism, yet so loath to make the same accusation

against any of the neo-modernists who are dismantling the Church before their very eyes, often in direct disobedience to explicit papal commands to refrain from what they are doing. If there is another explanation for the mystery, we would like to hear it.

1. Paul Likoudis, "What's a Catholic to Do as the Allure of Schism Grows Stronger?," *The Wanderer*, February 16, 1995.

2. "The Trentecost Experience," *New Covenant*, June 2001.

3. *The Wanderer*, November 22, 2001, p. 4.

4. Eric John, *The Popes: A Concise Biographical History* (1964; repr., Harrison, NY: Roman Catholic Books, 1994), p. 253.

5. We do not take up here the alleged "retraction" of the *Intervention* in a letter purportedly signed by Cardinal Ottaviani shortly before his death, when he was virtually blind and gravely ill. We note only that his Secretary, Msgr. (now Cardinal) Gilberto Agustoni, did not deny the public accusation of Jean Madiran that he (Agustoni) had obtained the "retraction" by deception, and/or that the signature, markedly different from others by Ottaviani on recent documents, was a forgery. Further, the "retraction" is full of flowery praise, quite uncharacteristic of Ottaviani, for the very Mass text whose imposition Ottaviani had only recently denounced as "an incalculable error" and a departure from the theology of the Mass canonized by the Council of Trent. In any case, Cardinal Bacci, Ottaviani's intimate friend, never retracted, and the arguments of the *Intervention* remain valid and unrefuted. See Davies, *Pope Paul's New Mass*, pp. 485–92.

6. Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, p. 388.

7. "I am convinced that I have a particular responsibility in this regard, above all in acknowledging the ecumenical aspirations of the majority of the Christian Communities and in heeding the request made of me to find *a way of exercising the primacy* which, while in no way renouncing what is essential to its mission, is nonetheless open to *a new situation*." *Ut Unum Sint*, 95.

8. Richard P. McBrien, *The Remaking of the Catholic Church* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973), p.146.

9. See *Catholic Encyclopedia* (1913), "Ambrosian Liturgy and Rite."

A Question of Resistance

It can no longer seriously be denied that the unprecedented barrage of ecclesial novelties since Vatican II has induced a crisis whose scope equals and even exceeds the Arian crisis. Even a perceived “moderate,” Msgr. Gamber, confirms the traditionalist view of the crisis:

Great is the confusion! Who can still see clearly in this darkness? Where in our Church are the leaders who can show us the right path? Where are the bishops courageous enough to cut out the cancerous growth of modernist theology that has implanted itself and is festering within the celebration of even the most sacred mysteries, before the cancer spreads and causes even greater damage? What we need today is a new Athanasius, a new Basil, bishops like those who in the fourth century fought courageously against Arianism when almost the whole of Christendom had succumbed to heresy.

Gamber was right. Despite the appearance of order and regularity in the Church’s merely logistical functioning, today we find ourselves in a situation little different in substance from that faced by the victims of the Arian onslaught. In his treatise *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine*, Cardinal Newman provided a description of the Arian wasteland in the Church that cannot fail to remind us of the postconciliar wasteland:

The body of bishops failed in their confession of the Faith.... They spoke variously, one against another; there was nothing, after Nicea, of firm, unvarying, consistent testimony, for nearly sixty years. There were untrustworthy Councils, unfaithful bishops; there was weakness, fear of consequences, misguidance, delusion, hallucination, *endless, hopeless, extending into nearly every corner of the Catholic Church*. The comparatively few who remained faithful were discredited and driven into exile; the rest were either *deceivers or deceived*.¹

The point of Cardinal Newman’s treatise was that it was the laity, clinging to the defined dogma of the faith, along with a few good bishops such as Athanasius, who kept the faith alive during the Arian crisis. Today, as Gamber notes, we do not even have an Athanasius or a Basil to guide us. As any traditional Catholic parent who has had to remove his children from the corrupting influence of a *Catholic* school will attest, we are more or less on our own in the great ecclesial darkness observed by Gamber.

As we noted in the Introduction, *The Wanderer*’s decision to publish the Pamphlet’s scattershot critique of Roman Catholic traditionalism was what prompted us to write the essays that became this book. We also noted that *The Wanderer* justified its decision as a response to the *We Resist You* statement of traditionalist opposition to papally approved novelties. In view of all the considerations we have thus far presented, we can now return to the Statement and confront its most controversial aspects from the proper perspective—the perspective of an ecclesial crisis almost beyond imagining.

The signers of the Statement declare:

In the face of the situation described ... the lay Catholics who direct this document to Your Holiness are obliged in conscience to declare themselves in a state of resistance relative to the teachings of Vatican Council II, Popes John XXIII and Paul VI, and your teachings and actions that are objectively contrary to the prior ordinary and extraordinary papal Magisterium.

In conjunction with this, the signers also declare a “suspension of obedience to the aforementioned progressivist teachings and the authorities who desire to impose them

upon us.”

It would be easy, if one were malicious, to extract these statements from their total context—and from the entire historical context of the crisis itself—and use them to indict the signers for “schism” or some other trumped-up delict. That is precisely what *The Wanderer*’s editor did in declaring that the signers (including the editor’s own cousin, Michael Matt) “are on a schismatic trajectory that can only have tragic consequences.” But this exercise of publicly writing fellow Catholics out of the Church involves deliberately overlooking the crucial point, made perfectly clear by the signers: that they are resisting only certain postconciliar novelties and have not rejected papal authority in itself, but rather *appeal to papal authority* for the undoing of the novelties. (It is yet another indication of neo-Catholic inconsistency that *The Wanderer* paid less attention to the actual text of the Statement than the Vatican does in dealing with texts published by outright heretics.)

Despite the signers’ obvious intention to elicit discussion and debate with a highly provocative title, upon close examination the Statement advocates nothing more than we have endeavored to present here: a balanced approach to the crisis that seeks to account for, rather than ignore, the empirical evidence of an ecclesial disaster. While the vast conciliar and postconciliar program of innovation tends *materially* to oppose the perennial teaching of the Church in a number of areas, it does not involve any *formal* contradiction of an article of divine and Catholic faith. The postconciliar novelties have not been imposed upon the universal Church as matters of Catholic doctrine and belief, so that the indefectibility of the Church has not been implicated in the new teachings and practices. The conciliar Popes are valid Popes. All of this the signers of the Statement have affirmed, both publicly and privately to us.

As this entire discussion should make clear, moreover, the posited “suspension of obedience” operates largely in the potential. If one thinks about it for a moment, one can see that there is no doctrinally binding papal command that the signers are actually disobeying at present. For example, no Catholic is required to participate in any of the scandalous activities that are the staple of “Catholic ecumenism.” But let us suppose that the Pope were to order everyone in the Church to attend joint liturgical services with pro-abortion Protestants, such as the Vespers service His Holiness conducted with Lutheran “bishops” (including women “bishops”) in St. Peter’s Basilica. Any reasonable Catholic would agree that such a command would have to be resisted.

As for those cases in which the signers are referring to an actual teaching they see as “objectively contrary to the prior ordinary and extraordinary papal Magisterium,” the resistance still operates in the potential, since none of these teachings has been imposed upon the universal Church. For example, no Catholic is obliged to believe, with Pope John Paul II, that altar girls are an enrichment of the liturgy, that the new liturgy as a whole is a joyously accepted liturgical “renewal,” that Protestant ministers are (as *Ut Unum Sint* repeatedly calls them) “disciples of Christ,” that God has not revealed whether any human beings at all will ever be in hell, or, concerning the death penalty, that “the dignity of human life must *never* be taken away, even in the case of someone who has done great evil.” Likewise, the Pope’s assurance to a hypothetical grieving mother in *Evangelium Vitae* that her aborted child is now “living in the Lord”—an opinion that would appear to

abolish Limbo—was binding on no one, and was in fact later struck from the definitive Latin text.² Nor is any Catholic bound to adhere to Pope Paul VI's repeated references to the Anglican sect as a "sister Church" or his teaching that the new liturgy was a great improvement over the old, or, for that matter, Blessed Pope John XXIII's departure from the repeated teaching of his predecessors on the moral duty to avoid any collaboration with Communist-led or Communist-inspired movements. The examples of such dubious novelties, which we have only partially indicated in this book, would require a multi-volume study to discuss fully. As far as the Pope's novel view on the death penalty is concerned, both Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia and columnist Patrick J. Buchanan have publicly stated the obvious: that the current pope has no power to abolish the Church's 2,000-year-old approbation of capital punishment as a matter of natural justice. As Buchanan put it in a column defending Scalia's "dissent" from the Pope's opinion: "For Scalia had not contradicted or defied any Catholic doctrine. Rather, it is the Holy Father and the bishops who are outside the Catholic mainstream, and at odds with Scripture, tradition and natural law."³

Integrists! Schismatics!—so the *Wanderer* would proclaim were this remark to come from the editor's cousin, Michael Matt, and his fellow signers of the Statement. But since Buchanan has written for *The Wanderer*, and since Justice Scalia is, well, Justice Scalia, *The Wanderer* will doubtless save those epithets for hurling at safer targets, like the editor's cousin. Yet here we see a Supreme Court justice with many children and a son in the priesthood, and alongside him one of America's staunchest Catholic commentators, doing precisely what the Statement's lowly signatories have done: *resisting* a "progressivist teaching" which obviously has no warrant in Scripture, tradition or natural law. But what else should a Catholic do when faced—as we have been so often since the Council—with an apparent departure from what the Church has always taught?

Concerning other "progressivist teachings" from which the Statement's signers prescind (with no less cause than Scalia and Buchanan), they are careful to note that the sheer volume of postconciliar Vatican pronouncements, in so many varied places and forms and on so many different subjects, makes it impossible to know for certain which are doctrines for the Church and which are the opinions of a private doctor. Consequently, the signers rightly note that "the clarity of the degree of obedience has been lost." Let the Church, then, and not the neo-Catholic establishment, tell the signers (and us) what is the degree of obedience, if any, owed to each of the pronouncements in the *ten linear feet* of shelf space occupied by the writings and speeches of John Paul II alone.

That the "suspension of obedience" does not relate to any identifiable binding Catholic doctrine is the very reason the author of the Pamphlet failed to answer our challenge to identify exactly where the signers were guilty of "opposition to the living Magisterium." There is no question, however, that the phrase "suspension of obedience" served to highlight the gravity of the current situation and to act as the vehicle by which the signers gained wide publicity for their contention that the postconciliar program of innovation should be resisted. That resistance, however, really involves nothing more than prescinding from—that is, not attaching oneself to—certain novelties that Catholics have never been clearly bound to embrace as doctrine or practice in the first place. The resistance also involves presenting arguments against the novelties and petitioning for their rescission. In the process, neither the signers nor any other traditionalist whom we

would defend has denied any Catholic doctrine, violated any law of the Church or broken communion with the Roman Pontiff.

But is even such limited “resistance” justifiable for a Catholic? In [Chapter 8](#) we demonstrate that resistance to the Pope or bishops in *particular matters* involving the postconciliar novelties does not constitute schism, since even if traditionalist resistance were unfounded, traditionalists do not deny, but rather affirm and appeal to, the authority of the hierarchy. Granted that resistance in particular matters is not strictly schismatic, does that make it right? Quite obviously, we believe the answer is yes. Further, we believe that Catholics have a *duty* to oppose the damage that is being done to the Church, even if it is being done with Vatican approval and in the name of the Second Vatican Council.

The Pamphlet, in line with neo-Catholic thinking in general, ignores the unanimous teaching of Catholic theologians, including Doctors of the Church, that the members of the Church, like the citizens of any commonwealth, have the natural right and even the duty to resist unjust actions by their rulers that threaten harm to the common good. The notion that every papal command must be obeyed blindly, without resistance or open objection under any circumstances, is not a Catholic notion. The *Catholic* position was stated classically in the oft-quoted passage from St. Robert Bellarmine’s work on the Roman Pontiff:

Just as it is licit to resist the Pontiff that aggresses the body, it is also licit to resist the one who aggresses souls or who disturbs civil order, or, above all, who attempts to destroy the Church. I say that it is licit *to resist him by not doing what he orders and by preventing his will from being executed*; it is not licit, however, to judge, punish or depose him, since these acts are proper to a superior.⁴

It must be noted that St. Robert Bellarmine presented the case for licit resistance to papal commands in order to refute the Protestant contention that the Pope is some sort of absolute despot whom Catholics were never allowed to resist, no matter what he said or did. Thus the neo-Catholic position on papal authority is very much in line with the Protestant caricature.

The eminent sixteenth-century theologian Francisco Suarez explained the same principle thus:

And in this second way the Pope could be schismatic, if he were unwilling to be in normal union with the whole body of the Church, as would occur if he attempted to excommunicate the whole Church, or, as both Cajetan and Torquemada observe, if he wished to *overturn the rites of the Church based on Apostolic Tradition*.... If [the Pope] ... gives an order contrary to right customs, he should not be obeyed; *if he attempts to do something manifestly opposed to justice and the common good, it will be lawful to resist him*; if he attacks by force, by force he can be repelled, with a moderation appropriate to a just defense.⁵

It is remarkable that in the sixteenth century an esteemed theologian would matter-of-factly discuss the possibility that a *Pope* could be guilty of schismatic acts that his own subjects would be forced to resist. We have no intention of suggesting that the conciliar Popes were guilty of schism, but we do note that there were no neo-Catholics in the sixteenth century to denounce Suarez as an “integrist” or “extreme traditionalist” for discussing the possibility of a Pope taking schismatic actions in the abuse of his authority.

Does any of this mean, however, that there can be a *duty* to resist the harmful actions of a Pope, as opposed to a mere excuse from culpability if one does so? On this question we need go no further than the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas. In the *Summa Theologica*,

under the question “Whether a man is *bound* to correct his prelate,” St. Thomas teaches as follows: “It must be observed, however, that if the faith were endangered, a subject *ought* to rebuke his prelate even publicly. *Hence Paul, who was Peter’s subject, rebuked him in public, on account of the imminent danger of scandal concerning faith....*” (Peter had scandalized potential converts and threatened the mission of the Church by continuing to follow Mosaic dietary laws and refusing to eat with Gentiles.) St. Thomas here observes that the public rebuke of a prelate “would seem to savor of presumptuous pride; but *there is no presumption in thinking oneself better in some respect*, because, in this life, *no man is without some fault*. We must also remember that when a man reproves his prelate charitably, it does not follow that he thinks himself any better, but merely that he offers his help to one who, ‘being in the higher position among you, *is therefore in greater danger*,’ as Augustine observes in his Rule quoted above.”⁶

In a rather desperate bid to deny that the teaching of St. Thomas refers to the first Pope as an example of legitimate resistance to prelates, one of the authors of *The Pope, the Council and the Mass* actually defended an absurd “exegesis” of Galatians 2:11, according to which the Cephas rebuked by St. Paul was not Peter, but some other Cephas. Thus the neo-Catholic becomes a scriptural revisionist, if that is what it takes to defend the current novelties.⁷

That even a Pope may have to be resisted if he takes actions against the common good of the Church is, after all, just a matter of common sense; for the Pope more than any other ruler must show himself to be subject to the requirements of justice and charity. Thus, when traditionalist members of the Church’s commonwealth raise objections to the Pope’s behavior or his lackluster administration of commonwealth affairs, no reasonable man concludes from this that traditionalists are thereby denying that the Pope is, in fact, the Pope. The reasonable interpretation of traditionalist grievances is that we, too, love the commonwealth of the Church and are simply petitioning its ruler—because he *is* the ruler—to address urgent problems with its governance and threats to its common good. This, we are convinced in conscience, is our duty. It would take malicious intent, and a great deal of effort, to arrive at any other interpretation of our position.

We offer here one key example of why we believe there is not only a right, but a duty, to resist the postconciliar novelties: the incalculable damage they have caused to the sacred liturgy, and thus the entire life of the Church—and indeed the world!

The “traditionalist” position regarding the liturgy in particular was expressed in 1969 by Cardinal Ottaviani (former Prefect of the Holy Office) and Cardinal Bacci in their famous “intervention” against the new Mass, which we have discussed already. As the Cardinals warned with prophetic accuracy:

The innovations in the Novus Ordo and the fact that all that is of perennial value finds only a minor place, if it subsists at all, could well turn into a certainty the suspicions already prevalent, alas, in many circles, that truths which have always been believed by the Christian people, can be changed or ignored without infidelity to that sacred deposit of doctrine to which the Catholic faith is bound forever. Recent reforms have amply demonstrated that fresh changes in the liturgy could lead to nothing but complete bewilderment on the part of the faithful, who are already showing signs of restiveness and of an indubitable lessening of faith.

Rather than submitting with docility to the destruction of the Roman rite, traditionalists have been guided by the axiom of moral theology stated in the *Intervention*: that subjects

of a legislator, even subjects of the Pope, “have always had the right, nay the duty, to ask the legislator to abrogate the law, should it prove to be harmful.” Traditionalists have never ceased to exercise that right and duty, and to this day have never embraced the postconciliar reforms—above all, the reform of the liturgy, which they regard in conscience as an abuse of papal authority which no Pope before Paul VI would have dared to impose upon the Church.

We have mentioned more than once in this book Klaus Gamber’s view that we have witnessed the destruction of the Roman rite, and Cardinal Ratzinger’s opinion that the consequences of Paul VI’s radical liturgical reform could only be tragic. Ratzinger, furthermore, has stated that the Pope is not an absolute monarch, but rather is bound by liturgical tradition.

If all this is true—and it obviously *is* true—then is it not obvious that the Pope’s subjects had not only the right but the *duty* to use all licit means, short of judging or deposing him, to resist the incalculable damage that was about to be inflicted upon the Church? A simple analogy should suffice to bring this point home for even the most determined neo-Catholic defender of the fallacy of irresistible papal authority: Suppose a Pope were to order the immediate destruction of every marble altar in every church, chapel and cathedral in the world. Only a lunatic would insist that such a command must be obeyed; on the contrary, one would have a duty to impede its execution. What, then, is more important to the Church: *the form of the altar or the form of the Mass*? If one could rightly resist a papal command to destroy altars, by what tortured logic would one be forbidden to resist a papal command to destroy the traditional Roman rite itself?

For traditionalists, licit resistance to the Pope has meant simply refusing to abandon the traditional rite of Mass in favor of the new liturgy, or to practice any of the other novelties that suddenly appeared in the Church during the 1960s. One of the aims of this book has been to show that history has already proven that traditionalists were right to do so, as Cardinal Ratzinger’s own statements about the new liturgy would tend to prove, even if he himself would not embrace the traditionalist position.

In finally disposing of the neo-Catholic argument against any resistance to papally approved acts of ecclesial destruction, we need only note that the Pamphlet’s author is guilty of precisely what he condemns in traditionalists. We have mentioned that in Part 3 *of his own tract against traditionalists*, the author declares as follows: “I myself consider the new rite of Mass *inferior* so far (we expect improvements to come) to the traditional Latin Mass.” And on his own Internet site, he further declares: “[O]ur real crisis today focuses on the liturgy and in the *dangerous ambiguity* of Conciliar texts and events.”⁸

Thus, the same neo-Catholic commentator who demands absolute obedience to “the living Magisterium” publicly declares that the Church is in crisis because the conciliar Popes imposed an *inferior* rite of Mass on the Church and an ecumenical Council promulgated *dangerously* ambiguous texts. The author of the Pamphlet fails to recognize that he himself, along with millions of other Catholics, is more or less in a state of resistance, explicit or implicit, to the post-conciliar debacle. As the author’s entire position extinguishes itself in this fatal self-contradiction, we may bid him goodbye. He provided a useful provocation with his tract, but we may now say of him what Newman said of Kingsley: “And now I am in a train of thought higher and more serene than any which

slanders can disturb. Away with you, Mr. Kingsley, and fly into space. Your name shall occur again as little as I can help, in the course of these pages. I shall henceforth occupy myself not with you, but with your charges.”

1. John Henry Newman, *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1961), p. 77.

2. Msgr. John F. McCarthy discusses this controversy, and possible theological solutions, in an article in the July 1996 edition of *Living Tradition*, revised in January 1999. Msgr. McCarthy, noting the correction of the Pope’s opinion in the Latin text, concludes that, until the Magisterium definitively decrees that aborted babies are saved, “the faithful may not presume this....” But that is precisely what the Pope did in the original text of *Evangelium Vitae*!

3. Quoted in Msgr. John F. McCarthy, *Living Tradition*, July 1996, www.rtforum.org/lt/lt65.html, *WorldNetDaily*, February 8, 2002.

4. St. Robert Bellarmine, *De Romano Pontifice*, Book II, Chapter 29.

5. *De Fide*, Disp.X,Sec.VI,N.16.

6. ST, Q.33,Art. V, Pt. II-II.

7. James Likoudis, “Were the Apostle Peter and Cephas of Antioch the Same Person?,” *Serviam* Newsletter, Jan./Feb. 1996 and March 1997; credo.stormloader.com/Doctrine/cephas.htm. In this article Mr. Likoudis admits: “There is no question that mainstream opinion in the Church has held that the Apostle Peter and the Cephas whom St. Paul rebuked in Galatians were the same person.” By “mainstream opinion,” Likoudis means the Church’s constant belief as seen in the teaching of the Doctors and Fathers, including St. Jerome and St. Thomas. Against this overwhelming weight of Church authority, Likoudis pits one Fr. Pujol, a nineteenth-century French Jesuit! Notice how Likoudis, true to neo-Catholic form, demotes traditional Church teaching to “mainstream *opinion*” when it gets in the way of the neo-Catholic system—in this case, the neo-Catholic view of the Pope as irresistible, absolute monarch. Likoudis takes the position that the papal *primacy* depends on showing that it was not Peter who was rebuked by Paul. He thus confuses primacy with irresistibility.

8. <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Itahaca/3251/ecumod.html>.

A Nest of Contradictions

From all that we have presented thus far, it should be apparent that what we call neo-Catholicism is essentially *a defense of novelty* in the Church. Never before in Church history have Catholics felt obliged to defend ecclesial novelty on a vast scale, because ecclesial novelty on a vast scale was never attempted (or even imagined) by any Pope before Paul VI. On the contrary, as we have noted, the counsel of all the preconciliar Popes was unanimous: Catholics should abhor novelty. To recall the words of St. Pius X in *Pascendi*: “[F]or Catholics nothing will remove the authority of the second Council of Nicea, where it condemns those ‘who dare, after the impious fashion of heretics, to deride the *ecclesiastical traditions*, to invent *novelties of some kind* ... or endeavor by malice or craft to overthrow *any one of the legitimate traditions* of the Catholic Church’.... Far, far from our priests be the love of novelty!”

Yet the neo-Catholics have counseled blind acceptance of novelties that would have elicited righteous fury from all the great preconciliar Popes. In adopting this mentality, they have become what fellow neo-Catholic George Sim Johnston contentedly describes as “progressive Catholics.” That is, the neo-Catholic is nothing more or less than a kind of liberal, even if he conforms to the moral teaching of the Church and espouses no formal heresy as such. As we have shown, the generality of neo-Catholics has accepted or acquiesced in many of the propositions condemned in the *Syllabus of Errors* (#13, #16, #17, #18, #24, and #77–80). In many respects, the neo-Catholic fits Pius X’s description in *Pascendi* of “the modernist as reformer,” i.e., one who disparages the Thomistic system, favors dramatic liturgical reform, the decentralization of power in the Church (collegiality), abolition of the Index of Forbidden Books and the Holy Office, and the Americanist emphasis on the active virtues, which is the very hallmark of Vatican II’s call for an “open” and activist Church, engaged in dialogue with the world. (Once again, we stress that we are speaking here only in the objective realm of ideas, without presuming to judge the subjective faith of any individual—even if neo-Catholics are only too happy to pronounce judgment on the traditionalists they denounce publicly by name as “schismatics” and “integrists.”)

Neo-Catholicism, being a moderate form of liberalism, cannot avoid the self-contradictions that inevitably arise from the internal conflict between true and false principles in liberal thinking. Mindful of the true principle that Catholics are obliged to preserve the Church’s patrimony, yet clinging to the false principle that whatever a Pope approves is traditional, many neo-Catholics seek ways to relieve the insupportable tension of their own position. The result is a series of self-contradictions and inconsistencies in the neo-Catholic system. We will examine a few of them here.

We note, first of all, that while neo-Catholics may agree that *priests, bishops and cardinals* (outside of the Vatican) may be rebuked when they take actions that harm the common good of the Church, they somehow conclude that the Pope and his collaborators in the Vatican apparatus are exempt from the same basic principle of natural law. Hence neo-Catholics may often be seen criticizing high-ranking prelates for doing *what the Pope*

does.

For example, *The Wanderer* recently lambasted Cardinal Keeler for conducting a public prayer for forgiveness of the alleged historical sins of Catholics in the Archdiocese of Baltimore, including their supposed “racism.”¹ Yet this ceremony was no different in kind from the Pope’s own Day of Pardon liturgy, in which he begged forgiveness for the historical “sins” of deceased Catholics in every nation, including “acts of discrimination on the basis of racial and ethnic differences,” “sins against the dignity of women” and “sins against love, peace and respect for cultures and religions.”² *The Wanderer* even featured an irate letter of protest to Cardinal Keeler from a layman, *reciting precisely the same theological objections raised by traditionalists* against the Pope’s substantially identical ceremony—including the objection that it is outrageous to accuse the dead of sins when they cannot defend themselves, or that it is theologically impossible to ask forgiveness from God for the sins of departed souls who have already been judged. Likewise, in 1997 *The Wanderer* complained about “churchmen who publicly issue ‘apologies,’ not for their own sins, but for the alleged sins of dead men who obviously cannot defend themselves.”³

So the neo-Catholic will publicly rebuke a cardinal and other churchmen for *following* the Pope’s example, while defending the Pope when he engages in precisely the same activity! Such is the confusion of the neo-Catholic mind.

In like manner, certain neo-Catholics spend a great deal of time decrying the abysmal state of the liturgy, without ever seeming to notice that it results from practices fully permissible under Vatican guidelines. Without exceeding a single Vatican permission, any local bishop can authorize the repellent spectacle of a charismatic guitar Mass with babbling parishioners speaking “in tongues,” altar girls, female “lectors,” communion in the hand, and even readings by a Protestant minister—all conducted in a church used jointly by a Catholic parish and a Protestant sect, as allowed and even encouraged by the utterly astounding 1993 Directory on Ecumenism.⁴

To give another example of blaming middle management for what the boss allows, neo-Catholics can often be heard complaining about the scandal of “sex education” in Catholic schools; for decades *The Wanderer* has been condemning the local bishops who allow it to go on. Yet neo-Catholics never seem to notice that for thirty years the Holy See has been well aware of the pornographic content of “Catholic” sex-ed curricula and has taken no action to remove them from Catholic classrooms, much less punish the bishops, priests and nuns who force this filth upon innocent children.⁵ On the contrary, despite the preconciliar papal condemnation of any form of “sex education”⁶—yet another preconciliar teaching given the heave-ho since 1965—Cardinal Ratzinger refused to put a stop to the disgusting “New Creation” sex-ed program in American Catholic schools, declaring that “anxiety about doctrinal aspects of the program ... would seem to be without foundation.” Ratzinger passed the matter over to Cardinal Baum, then head of the Pontifical Council for the Family, who likewise approved it and sent it back to America, where “New Creation” has been destroying the innocence of children ever since.⁷ While the Vatican goes on allowing little children to be scandalized in Catholic classrooms around the world, the neo-Catholics heap lavish praise on a toothless 1995 Vatican

document, issued thirty years too late, which contains the laughable advice that “it is *recommended* that respect be given to the right of the child ... to withdraw from any form of sexual instruction imparted outside the home.”⁸ Recommended? It is an intolerable outrage in the first place that a Catholic child should have to withdraw from a Catholic classroom in order to preserve his innocence.

The same curiously selective indignation is seen in the neo-Catholic’s approach to papal collaboration with the very forces of secularism the preconciliar Popes condemned. Thus, certain neo-Catholic luminaries (among them Mother Angelica) condemned Ted Turner—quite rightly—for donating a billion dollars to the increasingly evil United Nations.⁹ Yet the neo-Catholics will hear no criticism of the Vatican’s staunch support of the U.N., where it enjoys permanent observer status and subscribes, with useless “reservations,” to U.N. documents that only advance the organization’s godless agenda.¹⁰ Neither will neo-Catholics tolerate criticism of the conciliar document *Gaudium et Spes*, which called for establishment of a world government,¹¹ or any opposition to papal endorsements of the U.N. Thus, while condemning the U.N. out of one side of their mouths, out of the other the neo-Catholics will defend Paul VI’s speech in tribute to the United Nations, in which he called the Tower of Babel on the Hudson “this lofty institution” and “the best hope of the world,” declaring: “May unanimous trust in this institution grow; *may its authority increase... .*”¹² Nor will the neo-Catholics hear any objection to the pro-UN. policy of Pope John Paul II, a major contributor to *Gaudium et Spes*. In his own speech to the General Assembly, the current Pope proclaimed the “esteem of the Apostolic See and of the Catholic Church for this institution” and pronounced the U.N.—worldwide promoter of contraception, abortion and atheistic humanism—“a great instrument for *harmonizing and coordinating* international life.” The Pope even declared that the U.N. “has the historic, even momentous, task of promoting this qualitative leap in international life, not only by serving as a center of effective mediation for the resolution of conflicts, but also by fostering values, attitudes and concrete initiatives of solidarity....”

How can neo-Catholics condemn Ted Turner for giving a billion dollars to the United Nations, while defending lavish papal praise and support for the same utterly corrupt institution? But one cannot expect consistency from neo-Catholics on this score, given their adherence to the axiom that The Pope Can Do No Wrong—even when he is doing what neo-Catholics condemn in others.

It seems, moreover, that even some of the UN’s population-control propaganda has taken its toll on certain individuals within the neo-Catholic ranks. Pope Pius XII taught that large families point to “the physical and moral health of a Christian people; a living faith in God and trust in His Providence; the fruitful and joyful holiness of Catholic marriage.”¹³ But Fr. Stephen F. Torraco, who answers questions on morality for EWTN’s website, argues that those who do not use Natural Family Planning (NFP) and “leave procreation in the hands of God” are following a “deficient” and “less than human” approach. Fr. Richard Hogan, who answers questions specifically pertaining to NFP, contends that “it is better to have 2 or 3 children you can educate all the way than 7 or 8 you can only take so far.”¹⁴ It would take an entire book to address all the implications of this position, but suffice it to say that one of the most influential neo-Catholic sources has somehow transformed the concession allowed by Pius XII and Paul VI into a positive

obligation, the neglect of which constitutes dereliction of duty.

Another indefensible disparity in the neo-Catholic system is its whole approach to the question of schism—a term neo-Catholics no longer apply to real schismatics, but only to Roman Catholic traditionalists! While neo-Catholics harshly condemn the putative schism of Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, they observe a strange silence regarding the blatant schism of the Communist-controlled Catholic Patriotic Association (CPA) in Red China, yet another of the series of contradictions and double standards that our critics have adopted.

On June 30, 1988, Archbishop Lefebvre consecrated four bishops without a papal mandate—an offense that, under Canon 1382, carries the penalty of excommunication, subject to various excuses from culpability under Canons 1321–23. One of these excuses is that the offender acted out of necessity or to avoid grave inconvenience. Another is that the offender sincerely believed, however mistakenly, that his action was justified, and he was thus not subjectively culpable for the offense. Given the current chaotic state of the Church, Lefebvre argued that his action was necessary to preserve some semblance of Catholic tradition. We do not take up that defense here, but merely note three things:

- First, that the defense of necessity was raised by the Archbishop, and that, right or wrong, His Eminence no doubt acted with a good intention, as envisioned by Canons 1321 and 1323.
- Second, the penalty for illicit episcopal consecrations under Canon 1382 is *latae sententiae*—that is, automatic and without need of a formal declaration by ecclesiastical authority. However, the effects of the penalty become much more severe if the penalty is then declared by ecclesiastical authority (Canon 1331). For one thing, the declared penalty cannot be remitted by a confessor in situations of urgency, outside of the danger of death (Canon 1357).
- Third, the 1983 Code of Canon Law nowhere provides that an illicit episcopal consecration constitutes in itself the canonical crime of schism. In fact, Cardinal Castillo Lara, President of the Pontifical Commission for the Authentic Interpretation of Canon Law, admitted to *La Repubblica* that “the act of consecrating a bishop (without a papal mandate) is not in itself a schismatic act... ”¹⁵ (Cardinal Lara claimed that Lefebvre was guilty of schism before the 1988 consecrations, for which claim he offered not the slightest proof.)

As we know, the Vatican’s reaction to the Lefebvre consecrations was immediate: On July 2, 1988, only two days later, the Pope issued his *motu proprio Ecclesia Dei*, which declares that “Archbishop Lefebvre and the priests Bernard Fellay, Bernard Tissier de Mallerais, Richard Williamson and Alfonso de Galarreta have incurred the grave penalty of excommunication envisaged by ecclesiastical law.” The *motu proprio* went even further than what the cited canon provides, declaring that “such disobedience—which implies in practice the rejection of the Roman primacy—constitutes a schismatic act.” Yet the canonical admonition sent to Lefebvre before the consecrations had contained no warning that his action would be deemed schismatic; the only possible penalty cited was that of *latae sententiae* excommunication. The result was rather like being charged with only one offense, but then convicted of two. The *motu proprio* also warns that “formal adherence to the schism is a grave offense against God and carries the penalty of excommunication decreed by the Church’s law.” But the term “formal adherence” is nowhere defined. (Later, however, the Vatican made it clear in particular decisions that mere attendance at an SSPX chapel in Arizona is not an act of schism, nor even recourse to an SSPX bishop for the sacrament of Confirmation at an independent chapel in Hawaii.)

While the *motu proprio* applied the excommunication and the delict of schism by name

only to Lefebvre and the four priests he consecrated, since then, true to form, neo-Catholic commentators at EWTN, *The Wanderer* and elsewhere have with great alacrity denounced as “schismatic” not only Lefebvre and the four SSPX bishops, but all the priests of the Society, any member of the faithful who frequents their chapels, and anyone who defends Lefebvre’s actions. The neo-Catholics have even coined the terms “Lefebvrist” and “Lefebvrism” to stigmatize “extreme traditionalists” in general.

Thus, in the case of Lefebvre, we have the following: an immediate declaration of excommunication, and, going beyond what the express terms of the Church’s law provide, the declaration of a schism; the unauthorized extension of those delicts by neo-Catholic organs to an entire class of Catholics who are not at all embraced in the original *motu proprio*; and, for good measure, the demonization of Archbishop Lefebvre and all his followers and sympathizers. Yet there is no question that those whom the neo-Catholics denounce as “Lefebvrists”—including the bishops, priests and laity actually affiliated with the SSPX—possess the Catholic faith and follow the moral teaching of the Church, as even Cardinal Castrillón admitted in the course of the recent negotiations toward “regularization” of the SSPX. Further, “Lefebvrist” priests and bishops profess their loyalty to John Paul II and pray for him at every Mass, along with the local ordinary.¹⁶

We now consider the events of January 6, 2000. On that date, the Catholic Patriotic Association (CPA) illicitly consecrated five bishops—one more than Lefebvre—without a papal mandate. The Red Chinese regime created the CPA in 1957 to replace the Roman Catholic Church in China, which it declared illegal and drove underground, where loyal Chinese Catholics have been forced to worship ever since, following the example of their spiritual father, the great martyr Cardinal Ignatius Kung. Including the five bishops illicitly consecrated on January 6, 2000, since 1957 the CPA has illicitly consecrated *one hundred bishops* without a papal mandate. What is more, unlike the four SSPX bishops consecrated by Archbishop Lefebvre, the CPA bishops dare to assert territorial jurisdiction over sees from which the Communists drove the legitimate bishops of the Catholic Church.

The CPA constitution requires express disavowal of allegiance to the Roman Pontiff. As the Kung Foundation website points out: “The Patriotic Association’s own fundamental and explicit principle is autonomy from the Pope’s administrative, legislative, and judicial authority”—the very definition of schism under Canon 751. By comparison, the SSPX professes its acceptance of papal authority and has entered into papally ordered negotiations for regularization as an apostolic administration directly under the Holy Father. (As Cardinal Castrillón told the press, Bishop Fellay said to him that “when the Pope calls, we run.”) And while there is no question that Archbishop Lefebvre’s acts constituted disobedience to a particular papal command, disobedience in particular matters is not in itself schism—which, as we discussed in [Chapter 9](#), is defined by rejection of the papal office itself. But since denial of the Pope’s right to command is the founding principle of the CPA, it is undeniably schismatic by definition. CPA bishops swear their allegiance not to the Pope, but to Premier Jiang and the Red Chinese regime, of which they are pawns. Thus, in 1994, the CPA bishops issued a “pastoral letter” calling upon Chinese Catholics to support China’s population control policies, including forced abortion, and, as the Cardinal Kung Foundation notes, “the Patriotic bishops passionately denounced the Holy Father’s canonization of the 120 Chinese martyrs on Oct. 1, 2000.”

The CPA, therefore, is a Communist-created, Communist-controlled, blatantly schismatic, pro-abortion organization founded by the devil himself, acting through Mao Tse-Tung and the Red Chinese regime, now headed by “President” Jiang. Accordingly, in the performance of his apostolic duty, Pope Pius XII issued an encyclical denouncing the CPA as an assault on the integrity of the Catholic faith and the Mystical Body. “For under an appearance of patriotism,” the Pope wrote, “which in reality is just a fraud, this association aims primarily at making Catholics gradually embrace the tenets of atheistic materialism, by which God Himself is denied and religious principles are rejected.” Pius XII went on to condemn the CPA’s illicit consecration of bishops as “criminal and sacrilegious,” declaring that CPA bishops had no authority or jurisdiction whatsoever, and were subject to a *latae sententiae* excommunication, reserved to himself.¹⁷

Now, what was the reaction of the neo-Catholic establishment to news of the CPA’s five illicit episcopal consecrations on January 6, 2000? According to the Zenit news agency, Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls “criticized Beijing’s decision, expressing ‘surprise’ and ‘disappointment,’ and stating that ‘this gesture will raise obstacles that certainly hinder the process’ of normalization of relations between the Vatican and China.” Surprise and disappointment! A hindering of the process of normalization! But no declared penalty of excommunication. No declaration of schism. Not even a statement to the faithful in China that, as Pius XII warned even before the CPA condoned forced abortion, the CPA has the aim of “making Catholics gradually embrace the tenets of atheistic materialism, by which God Himself is denied and religious principles are rejected.” That indeed is why the “underground” Catholics in China, following the example of Cardinal Kung, have endured fierce persecution rather than join the CPA.

Ironically enough, the ecclesiastical public law reflected in Canon 1382, under which Lefebvre and the four bishops were punished, originated with the pre-conciliar Holy Office’s announcement in 1957 of a *latae sententiae* excommunication for illicit consecrations in Communist China. That is, the penalty envisioned by Canon 1382 arose to address Communist interference with the Apostolic Succession.¹⁸ But far from declaring the excommunication or schism of the CPA bishops, the Vatican apparatus has assiduously courted them, to the applause of the neo-Catholic gallery. In September of 2000, some nine months after the five illicit consecrations, Cardinal (“Spirit of Assisi, come upon us all!”) Etchegaray went to China to attend a conference on “Religions and Peace” (which is rather like attending an Herbalife rally on death row). During his trip, Etchegaray was shuttled around by CPA bishops, while being denied access to underground bishops loyal to Rome. CWNews.com (another neo-Catholic organ) favorably reported Etchegaray’s remark that “Basically it is a question of one Church, and one common faith, trying bit by bit to overcome the unhappy separation into ‘underground’ and ‘official.’”¹⁹ So, the CPA, which condones abortion, rejects submission to the Pope and denounces his canonization of Chinese martyrs is part of the same Church as the loyal Catholics who have been driven underground because they refused submission to the CPA. To demonstrate this view, the Cardinal celebrated Mass in a Marian shrine the Communists stole from the Catholic Church and turned over to the CPA “hierarchy.”

What about the five illicit episcopal consecrations the previous January? According to Etchegaray, “This is a very serious fact that affects ecclesiology. If it is repeated, there is a

risk of impeding the rapprochement among Catholics.” A mere *risk* of “impeding rapprochement”—if it is *repeated*? Well, it *has* been repeated—a hundred times! Etchegaray added: “I had the opportunity to say it clearly to the official bishops of Beijing and Nanjing. The question of the ordination of bishops is a crucial point for the Church and state; it can neither be avoided nor easily resolved, given the *differences and points of view*. However, history shows that reasonable solutions can be found in all political climates.” So, when it comes to the illicit episcopal consecration of abortion-condoning Communist puppets, the Vatican’s representative speaks of “differences and points of view” and says that “reasonable solutions can be found in all political climates.” But as for Archbishop Lefebvre, it took the Vatican only 48 hours to cast him and all his supporters into outer darkness, while warning the faithful to have nothing to do with him or his Society.

Cardinal Etchegaray wished to make it clear, however, that “none of my steps should be interpreted as an approval of the structures of the official [state-approved] church.” (What would give anyone that idea?) Notice the careful hedging: the Cardinal does not approve the structures of the CPA, but as for its adherents, Etchegaray clearly rejects the notion that they are schismatics: “The fact that I recognized *the fidelity to the Pope* of the Catholics of the official church [i.e., the CPA] can in no way diminish my recognition of the heroic fidelity of the silent Church.”²⁰ Let us see if we can make sense of this remark: The adherents of an organization whose very constitution rejects submission to the Pope and which condones forced abortion are *faithful* to the Pope. But the underground Catholics have *heroic* fidelity to the Pope because they suffer persecution—for refusing to join the *faithful* Catholics of the CPA! It seems we have reached a new height of postconciliar absurdity.

Cardinal Etchegaray is not just a lone wolf in this matter. The Kung Foundation notes that Cardinal Tomko, one of the Pope’s closest advisors, has been quoted as saying that the “‘two groups in the Church in China’ (the underground Roman Catholic Church and the CPA) are ‘not two Churches because *we are all one Church*,’ and that the ‘true enemy’ of the Church is ‘not inside the Church but outside the Church.’”²¹ Even more telling is the Kung Foundation’s Open Letter of March 28, 2000, addressed to Cardinal Sodano, Archbishop Re, Cardinal Ratzinger and other members of the Vatican apparatus, which notes that CPA priests have been trained in American seminaries, given faculties in American parishes with Vatican approval (according to Archbishop Levada and other American prelates) and are being supported by Catholic charities, while loyal seminarians and priests of the underground Church receive no support. The Vatican’s answer to the Open Letter has been a resounding silence.

It is only typical of neo-Catholic thinking that they would find a way to endorse the Vatican’s disgraceful pandering to the CPA. Catholic World News, for example, has adopted the line that adherents of the CPA, “while openly loyal to the government association, secretly pledge allegiance to the Pope.”²² CWN seems to have forgotten Our Lord’s teaching about the impossibility of serving two masters. Cardinal Kung spent thirty years in solitary confinement rather than utter one word dictated to him by his Communist persecutors. But it seems the neo-Catholics have invented a new standard of Catholic fidelity—“secret loyalty”—to go along with all the other novelties they have embraced.

We are familiar enough with the phenomenon in the political realm whereby liberals praise and lionize butchers like Mao Tse-Tung as benevolent “agrarian reformers,” while savagely attacking such comparatively harmless right-wing figures as Joe McCarthy. The disparity of treatment between the PCA and the members of the Society of Saint Pius X is but one of innumerable examples of the close parallel between this kind of behavior in secular politics and the double standard that neo-Catholics follow in the Church. For Catholics of the “extreme Right,” there is uncompromising rigor, fierce denunciation and ostracism, while putative Catholics of the extreme Left are shown every possible indulgence and given every benefit of the doubt, even where no doubt exists.

This is a tale of two schisms: the one illusory or at best technical, the other very real and very deadly to souls; the one incurred in an effort (however misguided some may think it to be) to defend Catholic Tradition, the other incurred to subject the Catholic Church to Communist domination. Sad to say, we are not in the least surprised to see which schism the neo-Catholics condemn, and which they ignore.

Another example of the tendency to self-contradiction in the neo-Catholic system is the program being advanced by those neo-Catholics who advocate a “reform of the reform” in the liturgy—that is, a revision of Paul VI’s Missal more in line, supposedly, with the intentions of Vatican II. The leader of this neo-Catholic constituency group, an organization called *Adoremus*, announced some six years ago that it was launching “a new liturgical movement” for a “reform of the reform,” declaring with a fanfare of bulletins and advertising that “Our work will be guided by the intention of the Second Vatican Council as expressed in its decree on liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.”²³ *Adoremus* did not seem to notice the repeated teaching of both Paul VI and John Paul II that they themselves *have already carried out* the “intention of the Second Vatican Council.” As we noted earlier, Paul VI insisted that his new rite of Mass was *precisely* what the Council intended, and that he was imposing it on the Church in obedience to the Council’s “mandate”;²⁴ and on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the conciliar document on the liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, John Paul II lauded the “liturgical renewal” begun by his predecessor as “the most visible fruit of the work of the Council,” observing that “for many people the message of the Second Vatican Council has been experienced principally through the liturgical reform.” His Holiness later added altar girls to boot.

Thus, while condemning traditionalists for declining to accept the new liturgy with utter docility, these same neo-Catholics implicitly accuse two Popes of erring gravely in their implementation of the supposed conciliar “mandate” for liturgical reform, and they announce to the whole Church that *they* will seek to fulfill the Council’s true intention. No “private judgment” there!

A further example of neo-Catholic self-contradiction concerning the liturgical debacle is to be found in the Pamphlet, whose author declares: “Now it is important to insist here that Catholics may legitimately criticize aspects of the new rite of the Mass, and seek for its improvement, just so long as they do not question its validity. There have been hosts of well-balanced Catholics, ranging from Dietrich von Hildebrand to Una Voce to the traditional Mass orders to Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger himself, who have, each in their own way, responsibly criticized the new rite on various grounds, and this is perfectly legitimate if done constructively, without polemics.... I *myself consider the new rite of the Mass*

inferior as a rite so far (we expect improvements to come) to the traditional Latin Mass and to certain Eastern Catholic rites.... But we are not allowed to say it is not a genuine rite of the Church!”

A great deal can be said about this paragraph. For one thing, it seems rather arbitrary, and a bit too convenient, that the one significant disagreement the author has with the current Vatican regime, namely the liturgy, just happens to be the one area in which the author (along with a goodly number of neo-Catholics) concedes that criticism of papal decisions is permissible. Also, was Dietrich von Hildebrand (whom the author claims to admire) writing “without polemics” when he penned a book entitled *The Devastated Vineyard*, in which he declared: “Truly, if one of the devils in C. S. Lewis’ *The Screwtape Letters* had been entrusted with the ruin of the liturgy, he could not have done it better”?²⁵

We also find in this passage of the Pamphlet the neo-Catholic’s self-contradictory admission that the new Mass is an “inferior rite” compared with the traditional Latin liturgy. Pope Paul VI certainly did not think so, and neither does John Paul II. Here the author forgets himself and openly dissents from papal proclamations that the new Mass represents a marvelously successful “liturgical renewal,” even as he castigates traditionalists for doing the same. Moreover, if, as these same neo-Catholics insist, “all approved rites are traditional,” what Catholic tradition favors the replacement of a received and approved ancient rite of Mass with what they themselves admit is an inferior substitute?

We next consider what we believe to be the single most important self-contradiction in the neo-Catholic system. As we have seen, the neo-Catholic demands blind adherence to the postconciliar novelties simply and only because they enjoy papal approval; but this demand puts the neo-Catholic at odds with the teaching of the preconciliar Popes against the same novelties. Faced with this conflict of authority (which the Vatican has made real no effort to resolve), the neo-Catholic will think nothing of disparaging the teaching of preconciliar Popes wherever it appears to conflict with the postconciliar program of innovation.

A telling case in point is neo-Catholic luminary Alan Schreck, a professor of theology at the Franciscan University of Steubenville, which has somehow acquired a reputation for uncompromising orthodoxy. In discussing the *Syllabus of Errors* of Pius IX, which orthodox theologians regard as a probably infallible condemnation of the false principles of modern liberty and Church-State relations, Schreck remarks: “Unfortunately, the *Syllabus* condemned most of the new ideas of the day and gave the impression that the Catholic Church was against everything in the modern world.... The Catholic Church looked like it was becoming a fortress Church, standing in opposition to the modern world and rejecting all new ideas.”²⁶

But a fortress against “new ideas” is what the Catholic Church is meant to be by her divine Founder. The Church has no need of the world’s “new ideas” (which are really old heresies with new faces), since she is the repository of everything that has already been revealed to us by God for our salvation. Schreck’s slighting of the *Syllabus* is in stark contrast to the obsequious submission neo-Catholics demand toward the novelties and fallible pastoral directives of the postconciliar era.

Schreck's assessment of the definitive acts of Pius X against the modernists is even more revealing of this self-contradiction within the neo-Catholic system: "It is probably true that Pius X overreacted against the threat of Modernism, which led to the stifling of creative Catholic research, especially in the area of biblical and historical studies, over the next fifty years... ." ²⁷ In other words, Schreck castigates Pope St. Pius X for having *succeeded* in suppressing the "creative" theology that afflicts the Church today.

So Pope St. Pius X, perhaps the greatest Pope in Church history and the only Pope to be canonized in the past 450 years, is blithely accused of "overreacting" by Professor Schreck of Steubenville. Yet Schreck would never dream of accusing Pope Paul VI of "overreacting" in his quest for "Christian unity" when he suddenly imposed upon the entire Church a new rite of Mass concocted with the aid of six Protestant advisors—under the guidance of a suspected Mason who was later dismissed and packed off to Iran! ²⁸

It almost goes without saying that Schreck and his neo-Catholic colleagues discount the anti-modernist decisions of the Pontifical Biblical Commission during the reign of St. Pius X (another example, we suppose, of the sainted Pope's "overreaction" to "creative Catholic research"). Under St. Pius X the Commission was an organ of the papal Magisterium. Among other decisions against the modernists, the Commission (and thus St. Pius X himself) forbade a modernist reading of the first three chapters of Genesis that would deny "the special creation of man; the formation of the first woman *from* the first man" and "the transgression of the divine command through the devil's persuasion under the guise of a serpent." The Commission answered in the *negative* the query whether "the literal and historical sense can be called into question" where these elements of the Genesis account were concerned, since they are "*facts ... which pertain to the foundations of the Christian religion.*" ²⁹

Today, however, neo-Catholic commentators blithely dispense with the special creation of man and the formation of Eve from Adam, generally citing John Paul II's favorable opinion of evolution in his 1996 speech to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, which (unlike the decisions of the Pontifical Biblical Commission) was addressed to a few people rather than the universal Church. For example, in an article entitled "The Pope and Evolution," George Sim Johnston (a critic of "materialistic" evolution) declared that "It makes no difference whether man is descended biologically from some ape-like creature, so long as we understand that there had to be what the Pope calls an 'ontological leap' to the first human person"—a direct reference to the 1996 papal speech. Johnston offers no metaphysically or scripturally plausible scenario for how an ape—by an "ontological leap"—suddenly became a man with an immortal human soul. Given that Catholics may not hold (consistent with the dogma of Original Sin) that there was more than one first man (cf. Pius XII, *Humani Generis*), did God instantaneously transform one existing ape into a man, thus doing violence to the order of His own creation, like some mischievous god of Greek mythology? If so, why doesn't Genesis mention this transmogrification of an ape into Adam, which would have been no more difficult to convey in simple language than the special creation of Adam from the dust of the earth? Or would Johnston say instead that Catholics are free to believe that God *gradually* created Adam by "evolving" a line of apes into one human body with an animal soul, and that God then "swapped out" the animal soul for a human soul in a kind of metaphysical software upgrade? If so, why

are these things not revealed in Genesis? And what about Eve? Neo-Catholics seem to think they can just forget St. Pius X's teaching on the necessity of believing that Eve was created from the flesh of Adam, such that woman is of one flesh and bone with man.

In any case, neo-Catholic thinkers generally see no problem with the grotesquery that Adam (and Eve) had animal parents—which would mean that *Christ Himself* is descended from animals. But if even Christ stands in the line of evolutionary development, who is to say where that line will end? Will man always be man as he is at this stage of evolution—a unity of physical body and spiritual soul—or will he finally “ascend” to the ultimate convergence of all things at Teilhard's Omega Point, the terminus of evolutionary “complexification” at which the “arbitrary” distinction between matter and spirit will no longer be seen? It should not be surprising at this point that Cardinal Ratzinger (when he was Father Ratzinger) dabbled in this very notion: In his *Introduction to Christianity*, Ratzinger, after several favorable references to Teilhard's “thought,” speculates: “If the cosmos is history and if matter represents *a moment in the history of spirit*, then there is *no such thing* as an eternal, neutral combination of matter and spirit but a final ‘complexity’ in which the world finds its omega and unity.” Thus Ratzinger openly declares: “Paul [St. Paul] teaches *not the resurrection of physical bodies* but of persons... .”³⁰ But it was the *physical Body* of Our Lord that was gone from the Tomb after the Resurrection, the same Body that had died on the Cross, the same Body whose wounds could be seen and touched by doubting Thomas. This was no *illusion* of corporeality. Indeed, the *bodily* Assumption of Mary into heaven anticipates the resurrection of our own physical bodies, which is likewise an article of the Catholic faith.³¹ Moreover, there is probably a reason that for 2,000 years Catholics have buried their dead rather than cremating them—possibly something having to do with the resurrection of the body.

As even this passing discussion shows, neo-Catholics are quite content to allow the corrosive acid of evolutionary thinking to be poured over the joints and ligaments of Catholic theology, paying no heed to anything as inconsequential as the decisions of the Pontifical Biblical Commission of St. Pius X. But great is their outrage at anyone who dares to question the thinking of Cardinal Ratzinger or the current Pope's opinion on evolution in a speech to a group of scientists.

We shall provide one further instance of the neo-Catholic's amazingly cavalier attitude toward the teaching of the preconciliar popes. This is found in *The Pope, the Council and the Mass*. Back in 1978, the authors asserted that Catholic fidelity required us to accept even the abominable ICEL translation of the Mass into English approved by Vatican bureaucrats—even though the Vatican is now (thirty years too late) calling for correction of the very translations it approved!³² The authors concede that the Catechism of the Council of Trent clearly teaches that the words of Our Lord over the Chalice of His Blood are to be translated *pro vobis et pro multis*—for you and for *many*—because the Church has always taught that the fruits of the Sacrifice of the Mass benefit only the elect, not all men.³³ Yet ICEL mistranslates “for many” as “for all,” even though not even Protestant versions of the Bible, nor even the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, have ventured such a falsification of Our Lord's words at the Last Supper.

Faced with an undeniable conflict between a solemnly promulgated Catechism of the universal Church and a currently approved vernacular translation of the Mass, the authors

give the Catechism the heave-ho: “[I]t [the Catechism] was not issued by the Council of Trent, but was only prepared afterwards at the request of the Council.”³⁴ But the authors fail to mention that the Tridentine Catechism was promulgated by the authority of Pope Pius V, a canonized saint!

In further support of a mistranslation that alters the very theology of the Mass and contradicts Trent, and which Msgr. Gamber rightly calls “truly scandalous,” the authors cite a lone theologian who claimed in 1963 that “Christ had no intention of establishing a rigid formula.”³⁵ Thus, the neo-Catholics will even pit the opinion of a single theologian against the Catechism of a sainted Pope in order to justify the innovations of the postconciliar period. What happened to their abhorrence of “private judgment”?

In their defense of current novelties against the Church’s own past, neo-Catholics do not hesitate to engage in the most audacious denigration of the preconciliar Church as a whole. We have already seen neo-Catholic George Sim Johnston’s tribute to his fellow “neo-conservative Catholics” as the champions of Vatican II’s deliverance of the Church from her own legalism, clericalism and Jansenism of forty years ago. In the same vein is *The Pope, the Council and the Mass*, which informs us: “It was providential, then, that the Council later under the guidance of Pope John XXIII and Pope Paul VI clearly addressed itself to the removal of some of the past Church patterns of externalism, legalism, and formalism which in some ways had served to paralyze the evangelizing efforts of priests, religious and lay people in spreading the Gospel among the peoples of the modern world already undergoing vast cultural and technological changes.”³⁶ What an insult to all the great preconciliar Popes, who (despite the threat of modernism and neo-modernism) delivered a robust Church into the hands of the Fathers of Vatican II!

The neo-Catholic myth of a moribund preconciliar Church is exploded by none other than Blessed Pope John XXIII himself, who declared in the very document convoking the Council that the Church was in the midst of “the rise and growth of the immense energies and of the apostolate of prayer, of action in all fields. It has seen the emergence of a clergy constantly better equipped in learning and virtue for its mission; and of laity which has become ever more conscious of its responsibilities within the bosom of the Church, and, in a special way, of its duty to collaborate with the Church hierarchy.”³⁷ Likewise, during the debate on the schema concerning the bishops, a prominent Council Father declared that “the Church, notwithstanding the calamities that plague the world, is experiencing a *glorious era*, if you consider the Christian life of the clergy and of the faithful, the propagation of the faith, and the salutary universal influence possessed by the Church in the world today.”³⁸ That assessment is completely confirmed by the empirical data on rising conversions, baptisms and vocations before the Council—all of which underwent a sudden and unparalleled decline during the “springtime of Vatican II.”

Evincing that avoidance of reality that is such an important element of the neo-Catholic system, the authors of *The Pope, the Council and the Mass* venture the hypothesis—supported by no evidence whatsoever—that the vigorous condition of the Church in America just before the Council was only a “façade” that hid great weakness: “No greater proof of the weakness underlying much *traditional Catholic observance and practice* can be found than in the amazingly quick collapse of the formerly imposing *façade* of American Catholicism that has been manifested since the Second Vatican Council and the

rapid changes which followed in its wake.”³⁹ The authors resolutely refuse to consider that the “rapid changes” in “traditional Catholic observance and practice” which they themselves note might have had something to do with the “amazingly quick collapse” of the “façade” of a Church into which converts had been flocking in record numbers before the changes began. And now that the “façade” has collapsed, what do the authors claim to see standing in its place—the “real” Church? As some thirty-five years of bitter experience have shown us, it was only *after* the Council that a great façade was erected—the façade of the postconciliar “renewal.”

Even more insulting to the preconciliar Church, if that were possible, are the remarks of prominent neo-Catholic (and former ‘60s liberal) Michael Novak, who is positively giddy over Pope John XXIII’s fabled liberation of the Church from its hidebound Scholastic tradition—that is, from the teaching of a long line of preconciliar Popes: “He cast the church free from *the island of Latin Scholasticism on which she has for some centuries been marooned*, and launched her once more on the currents of human history with hope, with courage, with joy, with the exhilaration proper to those who see in the darkness the star of eternal life. So doing, he made it possible for Catholics to speak of good news to their companions who do not see, and to learn from those who do not see the humility of the human situation.”⁴⁰ Had this been the exuberant soliloquy of a naive ‘60s observer who had not yet seen the catastrophe that would follow, we would not have embarrassed him by resurrecting this passage. But these words were written *in the year 2000*, long after such sentiments could still be uttered even jokingly.

Thus according to Novak, thanks to Scholasticism the Holy Catholic Church had become pretty much useless for proclaiming the Gospel, until her great liberation at Vatican II. Here Novak happily incurs the condemnation of the *Syllabus*, which listed among the condemned propositions (proposition 13) the claim that “the method and principles according to which the ancient scholastic doctors treated theology are by no means suited to the necessities of our times and the progress of the sciences.” Novak also incurs the condemnation of St. Pius X in *Pascendi*, which, citing the *Syllabus*, teaches that “the passion for novelty is always united in them [the Modernists] with hatred of scholasticism, and *there is no surer sign that a man is on the way to Modernism than when he begins to show his dislike for this system.*”⁴¹ But, as we can see, neo-Catholics feel no sense of obedience to preconciliar papal teaching perceived to be at odds with the reigning novelties, nor any sense of wonderment over the disappearance of that teaching into the postconciliar memory hole.

Novak’s suggestion that the Church was “marooned” during the pontificates of such great Popes as St. Pius V, Gregory XVI, Leo XIII, Blessed Pius IX, St. Pius X, Pius XI and Pius XII is completely outrageous. Yet no neo-Catholic complains about his blithe indictment of centuries of Church teaching. It never occurs to the neo-Catholics that this kind of talk has helped to undermine the faith of millions of Catholics in their own Church. But when traditionalists offer comparatively mild critiques of the contingent novelties of the past *forty years*, they are loudly denounced as “schismatic” by the neo-Catholic establishment, led by such organs as *The Wanderer* and EWTN. One can easily imagine the neo-Catholic furor that would arise if some prominent traditionalist were to declare that the Church needs a new Pope to free her from the “island of ecumenism” on

which she has been “marooned” since Vatican II, so that the Church can be “launched once more on the currents of human history.”

This neo-Catholic denigration of the Church’s entire past is hardly peculiar to Novak. An entire book could be devoted to similar examples in neo-Catholic writings. Neo-Catholic luminary Janet E. Smith, for another, writing in the neo-Catholic organ *Catholic Dossier*, declared: “The faithful Catholics of my generation have rushed to the intellectual ramparts. We have been determined to do so not in any *pre- Vatican II formulaic fashion*, but to do so by *reformulating the basics in terminology more accessible to our times* and to draw upon the best of modern thought [especially that of John Paul II] to deepen our understanding and the understanding of others.”⁴² The casual disparagement of the teaching of the preconciliar Church as “formulaic” is a staple of neo-Catholic thinking. As for Smith’s grand project of “reformulating” Catholic teaching to make it “more accessible to our times,” it is hard to think of a time (except perhaps the Arian crisis) in which Catholic truth has been *less* accessible, and less heeded, than our own.

Smith’s call for greater reliance on “the best of modern thought” and the “*thought of John Paul II*,” rather than the perennial Magisterium, is another common form of neo-Catholic disparagement of the Church’s past. For many neo-Catholics, the current Pope is viewed as if he were an oracle of new insights, ignoring the fact that he should be instead a faithful custodian of what has been handed down by his predecessors. Neo-Catholic leader Helen Hull Hitchcock summarizes this attitude in one pithy phrase: “Whatever the Pope thinks, and whenever he thinks it.”⁴³ Likewise, Smith marvels at “the kids” who “look like the rest of their age group, slovenly and even sometimes sporting ear-rings and colorful hair,” but who “follow the Pope and His Church *wherever he goes*.”⁴⁴ Here we see the neo-Catholic notion of the Pope as a kind of mobilist guru who “goes” places to which everyone must follow, as opposed to an occupant of the Chair of Peter, who does not *go* anywhere but rather stays firmly seated in traditional teaching.

The Pamphlet provides another example of this disparagement of the “formulaic” Church of the preconciliar dark ages. The author presents the standard neo-Catholic explanation of “the reasons” for the Second Vatican Council. One of these reasons, he claims, was “a desire to understand and speak to modern man.”

It is amazing that neo-Catholics never perceive the implications of this bromide, which they repeat so dutifully. How could the Church, commissioned by Our Lord Himself to save souls, lose for even a moment her divinely endowed capacity to understand man and speak to him in any age? Who knows more about man than the Holy Catholic Church? The very term “modern man” is an unwarranted concession to the *Zeitgeist*, since it implies the very claim the Church has always rejected: that man could somehow progress by evolution to a point at which he becomes ontologically superior to his predecessors and thus truly and objectively “modern” with respect to all of the men who have gone before.

Besides the capacity to sin hugely with the aid of high technology, what was so different about the “modern man” of the 1960s that an ecumenical council was needed to “understand” him and learn how to “speak” to him of the Gospel? The Pamphlet offers another staple of neo-Catholicism when it claims that a Council was needed because “more and more laymen in the modern age were able to avail themselves of postsecondary school education, and ... they were asking more penetrating and sophisticated questions

than was ever the case in the largely peasant cultures of times past.”

Here we must pause and admire this neo-Catholic perspective on Church history. Surveying all of the epochs and ages in which the Church has pursued her divine mission for the past 2,000 years—from the Roman Empire to the time of the Arian heresy and the barbarian invasions; from the Gregorian epoch to the rise of Islam; from the Age of Charlemagne and the Greek schism to the Age of Hildebrand and the emerging Christian commonwealth of Europe; from the Crusades to the rise of the great medieval heresies; from the glorious thirteenth century of Aquinas and Dante to the Babylonian captivity of the Popes and the great Western Schism; from the Renaissance to the Protestant Revolt; from the French Revolution to the First Vatican Council—surveying this panorama in all its vastness, the author detects one common factor to explain why it was not until the 1960s that the Church encountered any special difficulty in dealing with contemporary man: “largely peasant cultures.”

As the author sees it, for most of her history the Church had only ignorant peasants to contend with, whose feeble theological objections (if they even dared to raise them) could be parried effortlessly by the local parish priest. As for the occasional uppity intellectual, he could easily be burned at the stake. Back in the days of “largely peasant cultures,” the Church could make do with the likes of St. Thomas Aquinas in dealing with challenges to her teaching. But the Angelic Doctor was no match for the “penetrating and sophisticated questions” of people with college degrees obtained in the Sixties. Some of these “modern men” even had doctorates in theology from major universities! And what penetrating and sophisticated questions these “modern men” of the Sixties were posing! Let us recall several of them:

Is God dead?

Where have all the flowers gone?

What’s new, pussycat?

Faced with questions like these—not to mention those posed by such theological titans as Teilhard de Chardin and Hans Küng—the Church had no choice, so the neo-Catholic fable goes, but to Do Something Extraordinary. The only way out of this crisis of very sophisticated questions by people with college degrees was ... an ecumenical council. No matter that there had been little demand for a council by anyone but the modernists. In fact, as Pope John told it, the whole idea had sprung into his head while he was strolling in the Vatican gardens. “Like a flash of heavenly light, shedding sweetness in eyes and hearts,” is how he put it.

The Pamphlet goes on to observe: “As a consequence, it was apparent that high metaphysical abstractions—even though surely true—needed to incarnate themselves, as it were—make themselves more amenable to—the language of the twentieth century.” Here again we see the neo-Catholic bromide expressed by Janet Smith: that the very teaching of the Magisterium down through the centuries had somehow crystallized into a set of dry abstractions that no longer had any real meaning for people. But if that were really so, then how would the neo-Catholics explain the great harvest of converts and vocations drawn by the Church’s “high metaphysical abstractions” and ancient customs before the Council, as compared with the precipitous decline in conversions and vocations

immediately after the Church adopted the “language of the twentieth century” and abandoned her ancient liturgy in the postconciliar *aggiornamento*?

Neo-Catholics do not seem to recognize that their denigration of the Church’s past makes them far harsher critics of the Church’s human failings than any traditionalist. The traditionalist merely says, with St. Peter Canisius, Doctor of the Church, that “it behooves us unanimously and *inviolably* to observe the ecclesiastical traditions, whether codified or *simply retained by the customary practice of the Church*.” This perennial Catholic attitude of perfect conservatism—a fierce protection of all things that are good, not merely apostolic Tradition with a capital T—only reflects the perfect conservatism of the immutable God Who founded the Church. The typical neo-Catholic, however, is perfectly prepared to argue, alongside the very modernists who have always agitated for revolutionary reforms, that the Church needed the Council in order to *cast off* numerous ecclesiastical traditions and customs, and even her traditional way of speaking, because they had become actual impediments to the Church’s very mission on earth.

The neo-Catholic has thus swallowed whole the modernist critique of the Church as a visible institution. And if the Church had become obscured throughout the centuries by mere accretions of useless and dispensable things, if her ancient and always untouchable liturgy had gone wrong after 1,965 years and needed to be thrown off to make the Church more appealing to her suddenly respectable Protestant critics, then perhaps the Church, having gone wrong in so many of her ancient features, was wrong about many other things as well. And if that is the case, then perhaps (as Küng and the other neo-modernists contend) the Church is not the divinely founded institution she had always claimed “triumphally” to be. At least that is what many of the faithful in the pews concluded when they wandered out of the Church at around the same time evangelism became “dialogue,” Latin became English, and the altar became a table.

And here it must be asked: By what peculiar standard of Catholic discourse do neo-Catholics claim the right to denigrate the supposed “formalism,” “externalism,” “legalism,” “clericalism,” and so forth, of the preconciliar Church, while at the same time questioning the loyalty of traditionalists who mention the liberalism, false irenicism and indifferentism that have invaded the Church since Vatican II? At least traditionalists can point to Paul VI’s own admission that the Council’s “opening to the world became a veritable invasion of the Church by worldly thinking. We have perhaps been too weak and imprudent.” Which Pope, on the other hand, sustains the neo-Catholic thesis of a preconciliar dark age in the Church?

There is another irony here: While the Pamphlet claims that the Council was needed to address the problem of “high metaphysical abstractions” getting in the way of the Gospel, is it not obvious that the proliferation of vague abstractions *since* the Council has caused untold confusion in the Church and in the preaching of her message? What inspirations of faith has the world received from preaching laden with such slogans as “ecumenism,” “dialogue,” “ecumenical dialogue,” “interreligious dialogue,” “collegiality,” “inculturation,” “solidarity,” “the civilization of love,” “the spirit of Assisi,” and so forth? The drastic decline in the Church’s vital statistics since this lingo was adopted answers that question.

Another very recent example of this kind of thinking is the book *Triumph: The Power*

and Glory of the Catholic Church by one H.W Crocker III. While Crocker admits to the “inarguably disastrous results”⁴⁵ of Vatican II and does a great deal to dispel myths about the Church’s past (papal apologies notwithstanding), he nonetheless faithfully adheres to the neo-Catholic line when he says that at the Council “Catholic triumphalism was erased at its borders so that the Eastern Orthodox churches and Protestant sects were recognized as containing important aspects of the truth.”⁴⁶

What is this “Catholic triumphalism” the neo-Catholics and the neo-modernists are always deriding? The term appears to connote the Church’s perennial claim that she alone is the ark of salvation, or as Pope Pius XI put it in *Mortalium Animos* (quoting an ancient Church Father): “The Catholic Church is *alone* in keeping the true worship. This is the fount of truth, this the house of Faith, this the temple of God: if any man enter not here, or if any man go forth from it, he is a stranger to the hope of life and salvation.” So much for that! Now we are solemnly assured that the Orthodox and Protestant creeds contain “important aspects of the truth”—as if a heretic’s possession of part of the truth were a luminous conciliar insight hidden for 2,000 years, rather than a statement of the obvious about heretics. Obviously, non-Catholic “believers” (as they are now called) accept certain truths of Revelation, while rejecting others. The question, however, is whether non-Catholic religions, all of which corrupt truth by mixing it with error, are objectively adequate unto salvation. If so, then who needs the Catholic Church? If not, then *what is the point* of emphasizing that non-Catholics possess “important aspects of the truth”? What of it? Would a doctor tell a man with a potentially fatal disease that he possesses “important aspects of health,” without warning him that he will die unless he immediately receives the proper treatment? Is it now “triumphalism” for Catholics to say to non-Catholics, in union with Pius XI and all the preconciliar Popes, that actual membership in the Catholic Church is, objectively speaking, the only known way to heaven?

In splendid neo-Catholic fashion, Crocker praises Pope John Paul II because “he saw that the old altar-and-throne model of Catholicism had died with the Hapsburg Empire after World War I, though the Church had never conceded this.” Foolish Church, refusing to concede to reality! And what vibrant, modern thing has the current Pope preached in place of the “altar-and-throne model of Catholicism”? The table-and-pluralist model, perhaps? And since the neo-Catholics (along with the neo-modernists) are now talking about “models of Catholicism,” it might be asked: How will we know when this new model has become obsolete? Must we have another Council for the rolling out of the next model?

Crocker further enthuses: “When the Council decided to put the liturgy into the vernacular”—a decision the Council never in fact made—“the future Pope [John Paul II] saw springs of popular renewal.” If “springs of popular renewal” means the most precipitous decline in Mass attendance in Church history and widespread loss of faith in the Real Presence, then the future Pope’s vision was quite accurate.

Now, when neo-Catholics contradict themselves by disparaging the preconciliar Church, its outdated teaching and its outmoded liturgy—while condemning traditionalist criticism of a few current novelties—they are not conducting some sort of rogue operation disapproved by the Vatican. We have already discussed how Vatican-level prelates, with at least the tacit approval of Pope John Paul II, have openly declared the abandonment of

prior papal teaching on the Church's relation to non-Catholics, and how the postconciliar Popes departed from the teaching of their predecessors on the grave duty to preserve the Latin liturgical tradition. And when it comes to repudiating the teaching of the anti-liberal and anti-modernist Popes of the preconciliar period, it is not any lay neo-Catholic commentator, but none other than Cardinal Ratzinger, who provides the most striking example.

In his *Principles of Catholic Theology*, republished five years after he became Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Cardinal Ratzinger all but declared that Blessed Pius IX's *Syllabus of Errors* and St. Pius X's *Pascendi* were officially abandoned at Vatican II. Before discussing this claim, some further details concerning the *Syllabus* are in order.

The *Syllabus of Errors* (1864), together with the appended encyclical *Quanta Cura*, comprised Blessed Pius IX's systematic condemnation of the errors of liberalism, which already stood at the heart of modern societies and were threatening the integrity of the Catholic faith. The propositions Blessed Pius IX condemned (along with his predecessors in various encyclicals and other papal pronouncements) include the following:

- so-called "liberty of worship" for all sects, even in Catholic countries (propositions 15, 77 and 78);
- unbridled freedom of the press (proposition 79);
- abandonment of all legal penalties for external violations of the Catholic religion in Catholic societies (*Quanta Cura*);
- proclamation by law of liberty of conscience and of worship as the inalienable right of every man (*Quanta Cura*);
- strict separation of Church and state (proposition 15);
- secularization of public education (propositions 40, 45 and 48);
- abolition of the Pope's civil power (proposition 76);
- reconciliation and adaptation of the Pope to progress, liberalism and modern civilization (proposition 80);
- the claim that the Church has no right to use force, and that she has no temporal power, either direct or indirect (proposition 24);
- the claim that it is no longer expedient that Catholicism should be the religion of the state to the exclusion of all others (proposition 77);
- the claim that Protestantism is just another form of the true Christian religion in which it is possible to serve God as well as in the Catholic Church (proposition 18);
- the claim that salvation is possible in the practice of any religion (proposition 16);
- the claim that we must have at least good hope for the salvation of all those who are not in the Catholic Church (proposition 17);

In short, the *Syllabus* condemns the founding principles of modern, post-Christian civilization and Liberal Catholicism, whose ruinous results are manifest everywhere today.

In his classic little work *Liberalism Is a Sin* (1899), Fr. Felix Sarda y Salvany noted that faithful Catholics had hailed the *Syllabus* "with an enthusiasm equaled only by the paroxysm of fury with which the Liberals received it," while "Liberal Catholics thought it more prudent to strike at it indirectly by overwhelming it with artificial interpretations [and] emasculating explanations."⁴⁷ It is a sad indication of the difference between then and now that when a liberal Spanish priest, a certain Fr. de Pazos, submitted Father Sarda's book to the Sacred Congregation for the Index for what he hoped would be a condemnation, the Congregation responded by commending Fr. Sarda's book and condemning the writings of de Pazos! Today, traditionalists who take Fr. Sarda's position in defense of the *Syllabus* are derided as "integrist" and "schismatic," while neo-Catholics who embrace the views of the liberal Spanish priest are considered exemplars of

responsible orthodoxy. The results of this radical reversal speak for themselves.

Abandoning all pretense of deference to the perennial Magisterium, certain neo-Catholics and neo-modernists alike now seek to relegate the *Syllabus* to the dustbin of history. Yet history has demonstrated that the very errors Blessed Pius IX condemned have led to the total collapse of the moral order in the secularized, pluralist regimes that are enslaved by them, as well as a loss of faith and discipline in the Church, in which many of the condemned propositions are now considered received wisdom by a thoroughly liberalized clergy and laity.

No one has done more to neutralize the teaching of the *Syllabus* with “emasculating explanations” than Cardinal Ratzinger. In *Principles of Catholic Theology*, Ratzinger opines as follows concerning the conciliar document *Gaudium et Spes*: “If it is desirable to offer a diagnosis of the text as a whole, we might say that (in conjunction with the texts on religious liberty and world religions) it is a *revision of the Syllabus of Pius IX, a kind of countersyllabus*.” The Cardinal goes on to say that

the *one-sidedness* of the position adopted by the Church under Pius IX and Pius X in response to the situation created by the new phase of history inaugurated by the French Revolution was, to a large extent, *corrected via facti*, especially in Central Europe, but there was still no basic statement of the relationship that should exist between the Church and the world that had come into existence after 1789. In fact, *an attitude that was largely pre-revolutionary continued to exist in countries with strong Catholic majorities*. Hardly anyone will deny today that the Spanish and Italian Concordat strove to preserve *too much of a view of the world that no longer corresponded to the facts*. Hardly anyone will deny today that, in the field of education and with respect to the historico-critical method in modern science, anachronisms existed that corresponded closely to this adherence to *an obsolete Church-state relationship*.⁴⁸

Having pronounced the “pre-revolutionary attitude” and “position adopted by the Church under Pius IX and Pius X” to be one-sided and passe, and the Catholic confessional state exemplified by Spain and Italy “obsolete” because it no longer corresponds to “the facts,” Ratzinger reiterates his opinion that “the text [*Gaudium et Spes*] serves as a *countersyllabus* and, as such, represents, on the part of the Church, an attempt at an official reconciliation with the new era inaugurated in 1789.”⁴⁹ That is, according to the Cardinal, the Church must reconcile with the new order of things simply because *the Church’s enemies have succeeded in overthrowing Catholic social order*.

But this very capitulation to “the facts” was condemned by the *Syllabus* itself, in which Blessed Pius IX enumerated as condemned proposition #80 the following: “The Roman Pontiff can and ought to reconcile himself and come to terms with progress, liberalism and modern civilization.” Moreover, why should the Church even desire an “official reconciliation” with the “new era inaugurated in 1789,” when the “new era” constitutes the worst moral, spiritual and social debacle in human history? Has it not occurred to the Cardinal that the very errors condemned in the *Syllabus* have something to do with the state of the world today?

Lest there be any doubt that he considers the *Syllabus* a dusty relic, Ratzinger adds that “*there can be no return to the Syllabus*, which may have marked the first stage in the confrontation with liberalism but cannot be the last stage.”⁵⁰ Obviously, to say that there can be no *return* to the *Syllabus* is to say that the *Syllabus* is no longer the teaching of the Catholic Church. In nearly 2,000 years of pre-conciliar Church history, one will find no example of this kind of repudiation of a solemn papal teaching by a Vatican prelate.

As for the Cardinal's claim that the *Syllabus* represents only an outmoded early stage in the confrontation with liberalism, the suggestion that the Church's "opening to the world" at Vatican II is a more advanced strategy ignores reality. The abandonment of the *Syllabus* has been accompanied by the triumph of Liberalism in all its forms (from Chinese Communism to American pluralist democracy) throughout the world, and Liberalism has made huge inroads into the Church itself. We have noted that as early as 1973 none other than Pope Paul VI admitted that "the opening to the world has become a veritable invasion of the Church by worldly thinking." In the very same year Dietrich von Hildebrand observed that "the poison of our epoch is slowly seeping into the Church herself, and many have failed to see the apocalyptic decline of our time."⁵¹ That failure of vision certainly seems to afflict the current Vatican apparatus.

And one can only shudder at Cardinal Ratzinger's recommendation of a future strategy for the Church's confrontation with the forces of the world: "The fact is, as Hans Urs von Balthasar pointed out as early as 1952, that 'the demolition of bastions' is a long-overdue task.... She [the Church] must relinquish many of the things that have hitherto spelled security for her and that she has taken for granted. *She must demolish longstanding bastions* and trust solely the shield of faith."⁵² The advice that the Church which has already undergone a process of auto-demolition (as Paul VI lamented) now get busy "demolishing bastions" would be dismissed as neo-modernist ranting if it came from anyone else. What bastions, exactly, are left to demolish? And how long can the Church hold on to "the shield of faith" without the sword she laid down at Vatican II? Cardinal Ratzinger's proposed advance beyond the condemnations of the *Syllabus* looks very much like a retreat from the field of battle. Is it not the grand delusion of Vatican II that there is no battle with the world at all, but only dialogue?

It is not as if the Cardinal's repudiation of the Church's entire preconciliar posture toward Liberalism is limited to a book of theological reflections. In 1990, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued an "Instruction on the Theologian's Ecclesiastical Vocation." In explaining the Instruction to the press, Cardinal Ratzinger asserted that certain teachings of the Magisterium were "not considered to be the final word on the subject as such, but serve rather as a mooring in the problem, and, above all, as an expression of pastoral prudence, a kind of *temporary disposition*." As examples of these "temporary dispositions," Ratzinger cited "the statements of the Popes during the last century on religious freedom, as well as the anti-modernist decisions at the beginning of this century, especially the decisions of the Biblical Commission of that time."⁵³ (The Cardinal thus dispenses with St. Pius X's injunctions against an evolutionary reading of Genesis, which we discussed earlier.)

Ratzinger went on to say, "Their core remains valid, but [speaking of the anti-Modernist decisions of the Church during the reign of Pius X] the details of the determination of their content were later superseded once they had carried out their pastoral duty at a particular moment." The Cardinal did not elaborate on the precise meaning of this elusive and rather strange remark, or explain how a statement's "core" can remain valid while its details pass away. How does His Eminence propose to disentangle what exactly constitutes the "core" of the *Syllabus*, as opposed to its time-bound details, especially since Blessed Pius IX appeared to be defending universal principles, not bound by time and place? No answer is

provided.

We are not told which particular aspects of these prior teachings are “temporary dispositions” and which still bind the faithful. No specific preconciliar papal document is labeled as “expired.” The precise expiration date for the “temporary provisions” in major preconciliar encyclicals is likewise not provided. But at least as of 1990, according to Cardinal Ratzinger’s non-binding opinion at a press conference, theologians are now free to disregard some or all—and who knows which?—of the *Syllabus* of Blessed Pius IX, *Pascendi* by St. Pius X, along with the decisions of his Biblical Commission, and (it would appear) the anti-liberal encyclicals of Leo XIII, Gregory XVI and any other preconciliar Pope whose teaching does not comport well with the novel attitudes and programs of the conciliar *aggiornamento*.

An example of how such a principle may work in practice occurred in mid-2001 when the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith declared “superseded” the 1887 condemnations of the writings of Fr. Antonio Rosmini (1797-1855). The condemned statements of Rosmini, available at DZ 1891, certainly appear erroneous, including references to the “natural” state of the soul after death and a frankly apparent pantheism. But the CDF now claims that the intellectual milieu in which Rosmini’s propositions had been condemned was one in which his arguments could not be properly understood. In other words, Pope Leo XIII and his Holy Office got it wrong. “The adoption of Thomism,” the CDF explains, “created the premises for a negative judgment of a philosophical and speculative position, like that of Rosmini, because it differed in its language and conceptual framework from the philosophical and theological elaboration of St. Thomas Aquinas.” Conceding that Rosmini’s system contained “concepts and expressions that are at times ambiguous and equivocal,” the CDF document nevertheless explains away Pope Leo XIII’s 1887 condemnation as the result of “historical-cultural and ecclesial factors of the time.” Having argued that the prior Magisterium had misunderstood Rosmini, however, the CDF nowhere explains precisely how the interpretations of Rosmini held by Leo XIII’s Holy Office were mistaken, or how Rosmini’s system could be given a Catholic meaning. The document simply concludes by declaring that “the plausibility of the Rosminian system, of its speculative consistency and of the philosophical and theological theories and hypotheses expressed in it remain entrusted to the theoretical debate.”⁵⁴

Liberal theologian Gregory Baum was delighted at this development. “Never before,” he wrote, “has the Magisterium applied the historical-critical method to its own teaching.” Ratzinger, according to Baum, “has shown that the condemnation of Rosmini’s propositions in 1887 ... [was] justified in terms of the Church’s pastoral policy and hence could be lifted without inconsistency later. Yet *he does not raise the truth question*.” That is, people who had read the condemnation “were made to believe that these propositions were *erroneous*: They were not told that they were erroneous only when read from a neo-Thomist perspective... .”⁵⁵

But what, then, is a Catholic to do? How are Catholics to know which solemn condemnations in papal encyclicals and other pronouncements were only “temporary dispositions” or “moorings in the problem,” and which are still binding? How can one tell whether a given condemnation was based on “historical-cultural and ecclesial factors of

the time,” as opposed to an objective error in the proposition itself? Will there be periodic bulletins from the CDF on which condemned errors were not really errors at all, but only misunderstandings that can now be cleared up?

Further, if Pope Leo XIII and his Holy Office got it wrong because they viewed the Rosminian propositions from within a Thomistic “conceptual framework,” then how do we know that Cardinal Ratzinger has gotten it right from within his *non*-Thomistic framework? And if papal condemnations of theological error are now to be judged according to the “conceptual framework” in which they were issued, how indeed will we ever get to what Baum calls the “truth question”—namely, whether a proposition is simply *wrong*, always and everywhere, regardless of the “framework” in which the proposition is judged?

There is really no cause for alarm, however. As with all the other novel Vatican pronouncements that have been issued since the Council, Cardinal Ratzinger’s opinions at the 1990 press conference and his historical-critical methodology in the Rosmini matter do not bind the universal Church, any more than they can actually overrule the teaching of B1. Pius IX or Leo XIII. There has been no encyclical or other definitive statement by the Pope confirming the reputed expiration of the *Syllabus* or any other formal papal condemnation of error. Once again the faithful are left with the impression, but not the reality, of an official retraction of what the Church taught before the Council. And so it has gone for the past forty years.

With all due respect to the Cardinal, we believe his approach in this area represents the neo-Catholic contradiction at its most extreme. For if the Cardinal can declare that the teaching of prior popes was “one-sided,” a mere “position adopted by the Church” but rendered obsolete in the “new era” following the French Revolution, a collection of “temporary dispositions,” a time-bound artifact of past “historical-cultural and ecclesial factors” or the product of a superseded “conceptual framework,” on what ground can traditionalists be attacked for their critique of novelties that were unheard of in the Church before 1962? As we have endeavored to demonstrate throughout this book, unlike the solemn condemnations of the *Syllabus*, such things as the “ecumenical movement” are clearly historically contingent pastoral experiments rather than Catholic doctrines. Ratzinger himself describes an “attempt” by the Council to reconcile the Church with “the new era inaugurated in 1789.” By what standard of Catholic fidelity, then, is the Council’s *attempt* to teach something held to be immune from traditionalist criticism, while the solemn and definite teaching of a whole line of preconciliar Popes is dismissed by neo-Catholics as temporary and outmoded? The answer is: by the neo-Catholic standard.

To be perfectly fair, and for the sake of completeness, it needs to be said that some neo-Catholic commentators at least make an effort to demonstrate that the *Syllabus* and other anti-liberal teachings of the preconciliar Popes have not expired or been “countered” or “corrected,” but have rather been “developed” by the Council’s teaching, especially *Dignitatis Humanae*.

Avery Dulles, for example, suggests that this “development” was needed because the earlier Popes

were speaking within the relatively narrow horizon of Catholic Europe and Latin America, where traditional religion was under attack from militant secularist liberalism represented by the Jacobinism of the French

Revolution and the Italian laicism typified by Count Cavour. Gregory XVI in his encyclical *Mirari Vos* (1832) condemned the extreme liberalism of Félicité de Lamennais, which would allow all kinds of unfounded, libelous, and subversive opinions to be circulated without any legal restrictions. In this context he characterized as “insanity” (*deliramentum*) the view “according to which freedom of conscience must be asserted and vindicated for everyone whatsoever.” Pius IX in his encyclical *Quanta Cura* (1864) repeated this condemnation.⁵⁶

But Dulles fails to notice at least three things: First, the attack of “militant secularist liberalism” has hardly abated since the nineteenth century, but rather has become an institutionalized feature of so-called democracies. Second, the “extreme liberalism” of Lamennais is now the norm in Western democracies. Third, the nineteenth century secularist regimes condemned by Popes Leo, Pius and Gregory were *far more conservative of the moral order* than the secularist regimes (either Communist or democratic) of the conciliar and postconciliar period. Abortion, for example, was a criminal offense in the nineteenth century, as were the sale of contraceptives, the publication of pornography, obscene public speech and adultery.

Thus, if anything, the condemnations of liberalism by the preconconciliar Popes, especially in the *Syllabus*, ought to apply with even more force today. Granted, the harshest aspects of overt repression of the Church in, say, Jacobin France or Cavour’s Italy have been replaced by the modern notion of “religious liberty,” but the papal condemnations were not limited to overt persecution of the Church. The nineteenth-century Popes condemned *moral and philosophical errors* that are now accepted as the foundational truths of modern democracy.

Further, Dulles himself concedes that modern “religious liberty” is largely a sham:

The greatest threat to religion, in my estimation, is the kind of secularism that would exclude religion from the public forum and treat churches as purely private institutions that have no rightful influence on legislation, public policy, and other dimensions of our common life. When churches speak out on issues such as abortion, euthanasia, marriage, and divorce, they are accused of transgressing the barrier between Church and State. Even the courts often interpret the non-establishment provision of the First Amendment so as to prevent any public role for religion, thereby inhibiting the free exercise of religion. Legal, fiscal, and regulatory pressures render it difficult for Catholic charitable and educational institutions to maintain their distinctive identity.

Dulles describes a state of affairs in which, despite the appearance of “religious liberty,” the Church now has even less influence over society than she did in the post-revolutionary republics of nineteenth-century Europe. That fact, combined with the utter depravity of contemporary public law, makes the *Syllabus* more relevant than ever—at the very moment in history when the neo-Catholics, joining the neo-modernists, pronounce it a dead letter!

Confronted with Cardinal Ratzinger’s frank repudiation of the *Syllabus*, some neo-Catholic commentators trot out the reliable “what the Cardinal [the Pope, the Council] *really* means to say” defense. Neo-Catholicism has developed a cottage industry of lay and clerical commentators who inform us what the Pope and Vatican prelates “really” intended by a given statement or gesture⁵⁷—as if the members of the upper hierarchy were somehow incapable of accurately expressing their own thoughts.

In an article entitled “The Counter-Syllabus Canard,” one I. Shawn McElhinney, who maintains a website decrying the errors of “ultra-traditionalists,” concedes that Cardinal Ratzinger’s reference to a “counter-syllabus” is “unfortunate.” But, McElhinney assures us, “the *intended meaning* of the Cardinal Prefect was that the condemnation of errors in

the *Syllabus* could logically be seen as being countered by positive teaching in GS [*Gaudium et Spes*] that encapsulates the elements of truth contained in the aforementioned errors. Seen in this light, the negative element of the summary condemnations, complimented [sic] by the later positive and elaborated teaching encapsulating what elements of truth the previously condemned errors contained, results in the climate moving from negative and reactive to positive and pro-active... .”⁵⁸

That explanation—if anyone can follow it—at least has the merit of being no more contorted than other efforts to explain how a teaching that is “counter” to another can be “complementary” to it. As for McElhinney’s thesis that the errors condemned by Blessed Pius IX contained “elements of truth,” this is about as sensible as the claim that the proposition $2 + 2 = 5$ contains elements of truth. Errors are errors and truths are truths. The two may be mixed together into a series of propositions, the whole of which contains both true and false statements (e.g., “ $2 + 2 = 5$, and $5 + 5 = 10$ ”), but Blessed Pius IX condemned errors singly, in a numbered list, not some combination of true and false propositions.

At any rate, in the usual neo-Catholic manner of covering up embarrassing discrepancies between pre- and postconciliar thinking at the Vatican, McElhinney neglects to mention Cardinal Ratzinger’s further statements, which we have just quoted, that the *Syllabus* was “one-sided,” “obsolete,” represented “a view of the world that no longer corresponded to the facts,” and was “corrected” by historical events, and that “there can be no return to the *Syllabus*.” How these things can be said of a document that McElhinney claims is *complementary* to the Council’s teachings is one of the many problems neo-Catholic apologists encounter in their vast enterprise of denying the obvious.

In the end, the efforts of neo-Catholics like Dulles to harmonize the *Syllabus* of Pius IX with the “counter-*Syllabus*” of Cardinal Ratzinger only devolve into the same objection raised by the neo-modernists: that prior papal condemnations of error are limited to their “historical context.” The authors of *The Pope, the Council and the Mass* are quite explicit in their claim that the *Syllabus* is no longer applicable: “When Pius IX condemned the proposition that it was no longer expedient that the Catholic religion should be held as the only religion of the state, this was no doubt a valiant attempt to recall the governments of Catholic countries to their plain duty; today, however, *hardly a government exists any longer in the world that would recognize that it has any such duty to Catholics or to the Church*. This fact does not make Pius IX’s teaching any less true, but it does mean that *there is no longer any situation in the world to which Pius’ particular teaching applies*.”⁵⁹ So, if Catholic countries reject their duty to God by becoming secularized “democracies,” then Church teaching on that duty no longer “applies” to them.

The authors are equally dismissive of Pope Leo XIII’s teaching in *Libertas* that “Since, then, the profession of one religion is necessary in the State, that religion must be professed which alone is true, and which can be recognized without difficulty, especially in Catholic states, because the marks of truth are, as it were, engraven upon it.”⁶⁰ According to the authors, “There is nothing at all wrong with Leo XIII’s teaching; it is as true as ever; it even applies to individuals today with the same force as it ever did. *Once again, however, it doesn’t apply to the conditions of today as far as the state is concerned....* Not even in Ireland, Portugal, or Spain does there exist any government

which any longer seriously heeds the Church's insistence that the state has a duty to uphold true morality and true religion."⁶¹

So, when governments no longer “seriously heed” Church teaching, the teaching ceases to apply to governments, but still applies to individuals! But then, why would the teaching apply even to individuals, if they too no longer “seriously heed” it? It would be hard to find a neo-modernist whose abandonment of solemn papal teaching is more cavalier than that of the authors of *The Pope, the Council and the Mass*—who, paradoxically enough, see themselves as defenders of strict loyalty to the Magisterium as opposed to the traditionalists’ “disobedience.”

It must be noted that in both *Libertas* and *Immortale Dei* Pope Leo condemned the very notion that the State could somehow exempt itself from the moral duties owed to God by individuals; for, after all, society is ordained by God as a collective in which individuals can be better enabled to carry out their duties to Him.⁶² From this it follows that there must be an organic *union* between Church and State, which is not to be confused with a *co-penetration* of the two powers. Pope Leo XIII described the proper Church-State relation as follows:

But, inasmuch as each of these two powers has authority over the same subjects, and as it might come to pass that one and the same thing—related differently, but still remaining one and the same thing—might belong to the jurisdiction and determination of both, therefore God, who foresees all things, and who is the author of these two powers, has marked out the course of each in right correlation to the other.... There must, accordingly, exist between these two powers a *certain orderly connection, which may be compared to the union of the soul and body in man*.⁶³

Clearly Leo was right: the severance of the soul of the Church from the body of the State produces a morally dead, soulless State—like that which afflicts America today. The proper relation existed, Pope Leo noted, in the Christian commonwealths of pre-“reformation” Europe:

There was once a time when States were governed by the philosophy of the Gospel. Then it was that the power and divine virtue of Christian wisdom had diffused itself throughout the laws, institutions, and morals of the people, permeating all ranks and relations of civil society. Then, too, the religion instituted by Jesus Christ, established firmly in befitting dignity, flourished everywhere, by the favor of princes and the legitimate protection of magistrates; *and Church and State were happily united in concord and friendly interchange of good offices*. The State, constituted in this wise, bore fruits important beyond all expectation, whose remembrance is still, and always will be, in renown, witnessed to as they are by countless proofs which can never be blotted out or ever obscured by any craft of any enemies.

Moreover, in his encyclical letter to the American hierarchy, *Longinqua Oceani* (1895), Pope Leo rejected the notion that the American pluralistic regime represented the best situation for the Church, and he reaffirmed the Catholic ideal of an organic Church-State union in a Catholic confessional state: “[I]t would be very erroneous to draw the conclusion that in America is to be sought the type of the most desirable status of the Church, or that it would be universally lawful or expedient for State and Church to be, as in America, dissevered and divorced.” Pope Leo taught that notwithstanding the Church’s liberty in America, “she would bring forth more abundant fruits if, in addition to liberty, she enjoyed *the favor of the laws and the patronage of public authority*.”

The same neo-Catholic commentators who lambaste traditionalists for their alleged “rejection of Vatican II”—whatever that means—make bold to say that Pope Leo’s

teaching on Church-State relations is purely dispensable, even though it is based on that of his predecessors (Gregory XVI in *Mirari Vos* and Blessed Pius IX in *Quanta Cura* and the *Syllabus*) and was affirmed by his successors St. Pius X (in *Vehementer Nos*) and Pius XI (in *Quas Primas*, on the Social Kingship of Christ). Neo-Catholic historian James Hitchcock is typical of this dismissive attitude toward a whole corpus of preconciliar papal encyclicals: “The lingering belief ... that *Catholic theory required the union of Church and state* has been finally laid to rest. It was a skewed way of looking at the world and an albatross that impeded Catholic influence.”⁶⁴ The suggestion that the Church has *greater* influence today because she has abandoned the “theory” of Gregory XVI, Blessed Pius IX, Leo XIII, St. Pius X and Pius XI can hardly be taken seriously.

Surprisingly enough, the very teaching on Church-state relations dismissed by neo-Catholics as outdated or merely provisional was affirmed by Vatican II itself. Article 1 of DH states that the Council “leaves untouched traditional Catholic doctrine on the moral duty of both men *and societies* toward the true religion and the one Church of Christ.”⁶⁵ That the Council had to assure everyone it was leaving the traditional teaching “untouched” was in itself without precedent in conciliar documents. Such assurances were no doubt deemed necessary, however, in view of DH’s surprising announcement that there was a *natural right* to immunity from coercion by the State in any religious matter, including the *public* activities of false sects—a right never mentioned in the extensive preconciliar teaching of the Church on the nature of liberty in society and the Christian constitution of states.⁶⁶

Equally surprising was DH’s announcement that even when “special legal recognition is given in the constitutional order of society to one religious body,” government must still ensure that “equality of citizens before the law ... is *never* violated for religious reasons, whether openly or covertly. Nor is there to be *any* discrimination among citizens.”⁶⁷

How the State can profess and protect Catholicism as the one religion of the State under the “untouched” traditional teaching, while avoiding *any* discrimination among citizens based on religion, is one of the many mysteries the Council has left everyone to ponder. For one thing, a Catholic confessional state cannot long remain such if no barrier is erected to the holding of public offices and judgeships by those who reject and seek to undermine Catholic teaching as reflected in public law. The great Gabriel Garcia Moreno, President of Ecuador, was assassinated by the Masons precisely because he took bold measures to restore Catholic social order in Ecuador, including amendments to the 1869 constitution that made Catholicism the religion of the State and required that both political candidates and voters be Catholic. Garcia Moreno predicted his own assassination, which occurred in 1875.⁶⁸ Blessed Pius IX ordered a solemn Requiem Mass to be celebrated in the Church of Santa Maria in Trastevere and had a monument built in Rome whose inscription praised Garcia Moreno’s Catholic fidelity and obedience to the Holy See.⁶⁹ Nothing more needs to be said about Blessed Pius IX’s view of Garcia Moreno’s implementation of the Catholic teaching reflected in the *Syllabus*—which the neo-Catholics (and the neo-modernists) now tell us no longer “applies.” We can all see the results of the *Syllabus*’ supposed inapplicability to present-day societies.⁷⁰

Volume upon volume has been written to “demonstrate” how DH can be reconciled

with prior papal teaching—an exercise that was never seen as necessary with any other conciliar document in the entire history of the Church.⁷¹ But it is neither our wish nor our task to enter deeply into the endless debate over whether DH and the rest of Vatican II’s ambiguous “counter-syllabus” proposes a formal or material contradiction of the *Syllabus* and the related teaching of the preconciliar Popes. Only the infallible Magisterium can resolve the issue.⁷² Our aim here is only to demonstrate the self-contradiction involved in the neo-Catholic’s less-than-deferential approach to prior papal teaching, as compared to his slavish defense of present-day novelties.

As we have shown, the neo-Catholic’s deference to papal authority is drastically skewed in favor of the postconciliar innovations of the Church, including “the ecumenical movement,” “dialogue with the world” and “the liturgical renewal,” even though these clearly provisional matters are what truly belong in the category of “temporary dispositions” into which Cardinal Ratzinger would place the *Syllabus* and *Pascendi*. In a flagrant self-contradiction, the neo-Catholic dissents as readily as any modernist from prior papal teaching, and on the same grounds condemned by the preconciliar Popes—that solemn encyclicals condemning error are limited to their “historical context.”

The neo-Catholic’s adherence to what he asserts is the “living Magisterium” is therefore not *diachronic*—extending throughout time—but merely chronologic, focusing on the *recency* rather than the *constancy* of a given pronouncement or practice in the Church. In the neo-Catholic system, the distinction between fallible and infallible exercises of the Magisterium, and between Magisterial and non-Magisterial pronouncements as such, is allowed to be asserted *only* as to preconciliar teaching perceived to be at odds with the prevailing novelties. As for current Vatican pronouncements, no such distinctions are allowed to traditionalists—or anyone else. We believe it is quite literally the case that if, *per impossibile*, the Vatican were to announce tomorrow that contraception was permissible, at least some neo-Catholics would feel compelled to defend the new teaching, just as they discovered the virtue of altar girls after the Pope revoked not only a 2,000-year-old tradition, but also his own teaching, in approving the innovation.

We stress once again that none of this is to suggest that the neo-Catholic is not a true Catholic. Rather, we mean to say that he is a true Catholic who, in our opinion, has fallen into self-contradiction because a misguided sense of loyalty to Church leaders counsels him to defend novel notions and practices that run counter to the Church’s traditions. As Blessed Pius IX himself observed concerning Catholics of this tendency: “Assuredly these associations [of Catholics] are not wanting in the obedience due to the Church ... but they might be pushed into the slippery path of error by the force of those opinions called Liberal; opinions accepted by many Catholics *who are otherwise honest and pious*, and who, *even by the very influence which gives them piety*, are easily induced to profess the most pernicious maxims.”⁷³

The only difference today is that many of the liberal opinions condemned by Blessed Pius IX in the *Syllabus* now appear to have the approval of the Vatican itself, and certainly the approval of most of the hierarchy and laity at large. This is why the Church is now undergoing the most profound crisis in her long history—the invasion of the Church by the worldly thinking rued by Paul VI. It is our conviction that we would not be witnessing this crisis were it not for rise of the neo-Catholic system with its self-contradictory

approach to Church teaching.

1. *The Wanderer*, Jan. 11, 2001, "From the Mail."
2. See *Solemn Prayer of the Faithful Confessing Sins and Requesting God's Pardon*. EWTN's website happily reported: "There was a confession of sins in general, of sins committed in the service of truth, of sins that have harmed Christian unity, of sins against the people of Israel, of sins against love, peace and respect for cultures and religions, of sins against the dignity of women and the unity of the human race, and of sins related to the fundamental rights of the person. Each category was introduced by representatives of the Roman Curia and was followed by the Holy Father's prayer and the chanting of a triple Kyrie eleison." See www.ewtn.com/library/papaldoc/jp2dyprd.htm
3. "Catholics Protest Apologies for 'Sins' of the Past," December 11, 1997, p. 11.
4. See *Directory for Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*, n. 138, which authorizes shared ownership of church premises if the Bishop deems it financially or otherwise appropriate, and there is "a good ecumenical relationship" with the Protestant co-owners—whatever that means. In such case, "*consideration*" should be given to removal of the Blessed Sacrament from the *jointly owned sanctuary*, in order to accommodate the "sensitivities" of "those who will be using the building" (n. 139). In his encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*, Pope John Paul II confirms that the Directory was "issued with my approval" as the basis for applying ecumenism in "the pastoral sphere" (*Ut Unum Sint*, n. 16).
5. One of us served as legal counsel to Catholic parents whose ten-year-old daughter was expelled from a "Catholic" school in the Archdiocese of Miami because the parents refused to allow their little girl to study the details of sexual intercourse in the classroom—including descriptions of private parts and sexual actions so explicit that a local TV news reporter *could not read them on the air*.
6. See, for example, Pius XI's 1929 encyclical *Divinis Illius Magistri*, condemning all forms of classroom sexual instruction, and cautioning that if "some instruction" is to be given *in private*, that it not descend to details.
7. "The Sodomization of Innocence: Homo Church Invades the Catholic Kindergarten," by Randy Engel, www.dotm.org/r-engel.htm. The postconciliar Vatican's shameful failure to put an end to the scandal of "Catholic" sex education has been exhaustively documented by the redoubtable Mrs. Engel—another of those "private judgment" Catholics who finds herself forced to oppose Vatican policy.
8. *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, n. 120.3 (1995).
9. In anticipation of dishonest criticism of this book, we hasten to reiterate here that our entire discussion of neo-Catholicism relates to *ideas*, not to the personal holiness of those who, in our opinion, are associated with the neo-Catholic phenomenon. Thus, there is no intention here to question the Catholic fidelity of Mother Angelica or anyone else, but simply to discuss the implications of objective words and deeds of persons who participate in what we call the neo-Catholic system in the postconciliar Church.
10. For example, the Vatican is a signatory "with reservations" to the deplorable U.N. Convention on the "Rights of the Child."
11. *Gaudium et Spes*, nn. 77 and 82.
12. Address to United Nations, October 4, 1965.
13. Pius XII, Address to the Directors of the Associations for Large Families of Rome and of Italy, January 20, 1958.
14. "John Galvin Responds to the Commentaries," *The Latin Mass*, Winter 2002, p. 24.
15. *La Repubblica*, October 7, 1988.
16. In fact, the Vatican's private approach to SSPX would indicate that the "Lefebvre schism" is illusory, and is really nothing more than an internal disciplinary problem of the Church. For example, as Cardinal Cassidy admitted in a letter of March 25, 1994, the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity "is not concerned with the Society of St. Pius X. The situation of the members of this Society is an internal matter of the Catholic Church. The Society is not another Church or Ecclesial Community in the meaning used in the Directory."
17. Pius XII, *Ad Apostobrum Principis*, June 29, 1958.
18. The decidedly neo-Catholic commentary on Canon 1382 by the Canon Law Society of America (CLSA) dishonestly suggests that Canon 1382 was "perhaps" enacted as the result of the "increasingly intense Holy See/Archbishop Lefebvre conflict in the late 1970s and early 1980s." This is a complete fabrication of canonical

legislative history, since there was not the slightest suggestion at that time that Lefebvre would consecrate bishops some eight or nine years later. Clearly, Canon 1382 was carried over from the 1957 Holy Office penalty directed at communist-controlled episcopal consecrations. In typical neo-Catholic fashion, a footnote to the commentary argues that there could be an exemption from the penalty in the case of the Chinese consecrations due to “extreme governmental pressure.” That is, the CLSA is willing to give communist schismatics the benefit of the doubt, but not Archbishop Lefebvre.

[19.](#) Catholic World News, September 25, 2000.

[20.](#) Zenit, September 28, 2000.

[21.](#) Kung Foundation online newsletter, July 2001.

[22.](#) CWN news report, June 20, 2001.

[23.](#) *Adoremus Bulletin*, December 1995, p. 2.

[24.](#) “This change has something astonishing about it, something extraordinary. This is because the Mass is regarded as the traditional and untouchable expression of religious worship and the authenticity of our faith. We ask ourselves: How could such a change be made? Answer: *It is due to the will of the Ecumenical Council held not long ago....* It is an act of obedience.” Audience Address of November 19, 1969.

[25.](#) Von Hildebrand, *The Devastated Vineyard*, p. 71.

[26.](#) Alan Schreck, *The Compact History of the Catholic Church* (Ann Arbor: Servant Books, 1987), p. 95.

[27.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 105.

[28.](#) See Davies, *Pope Paul’s New Mass*, chapter 24.

[29.](#) DZ, 2123.

[30.](#) Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), p. 277. Defenders of the Cardinal will protest (without citing any proof) that the views of Father Ratzinger are no longer the views of Cardinal Ratzinger. Yet this book was republished with his knowledge and consent in 1990. To our knowledge, the Cardinal has yet to retract any of the questionable opinions that fill his books, interviews and addresses.

[31.](#) For example, the Fourth Lateran Council declared that on the Last Day all the dead “will arise with their bodies *which they now bear*, that they may receive according to their works....” DZ, 429. The state of the transfigured bodies in heaven and the suffering bodies in hell is open to theological debate, but they *will* be physical bodies united to spiritual souls.

[32.](#) See *Liturgiam Authenticam*.

[33.](#) *Catechism of the Council of Trent* (Hawthorne, CA: Christian Book Club, 1829), p. 220.

[34.](#) PCM, p. 106.

[35.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 103.

[36.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 27.

[37.](#) Apostolic Constitution *Humanae Salutis*, December 25, 1961.

[38.](#) Wiltgen, *The Rhine Flows into the Tiber*, p. 113, quoting the Armenian Patriarch of Cilicia, who spoke against the forces determined to diminish the authority of the Roman Curia, then led by Cardinal Ottaviani.

[39.](#) PCM, p. 24.

[40.](#) *Commonweal*, August 11, 2000, p. 16.

[41.](#) *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, n. 42.

[42.](#) *Catholic Dossier*, Nov.–Dec. 1997, p. 60.

[43.](#) *The Catholic Register*, week of November 17, 1997, p. 21.

[44.](#) *Catholic Dossier*, Nov.–Dec. 1997, p. 61.

[45.](#) Crocker’s admission represents something of a breakthrough. Traditionalists have been writing and speaking about the Council’s disastrous results for more than thirty-five years, bearing the brunt of condemnation by the neo-

Catholic establishment for the offense of remarking the obvious. Crocker appears to be the first neo-Catholic commentator to recognize explicitly that the Council caused an ecclesial disaster.

[46.](#) H.W. Crocker III, *Triumph: The Power and Glory of the Catholic Church* (New York: Random House, 2001), pp. 420–21.

[47.](#) Felix Sarda y Salvany, *Liberalism Is a Sin* (Rockford, IL: TAN, 1993), p. 52.

[48.](#) Joseph Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), pp. 381–82.

[49.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 381.

[50.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 191.

[51.](#) Von Hildebrand, *The Devastated Vineyard*, p. 75.

[52.](#) Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, p. 391.

[53.](#) *L'Osservatore Romano*, English Weekly Edition, July 2, 1990, p. 5.

[54.](#) See Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, *Note on the Force of the Doctrinal Decrees Concerning the Thought and Work of Fr. Antonio Rosmini Serbati*.

[55.](#) Gregory Baum, “Ratzinger Explains How Condemnation Was Right Then, Wrong Now,” *National Catholic Reporter*, January 25, 2002.

[56.](#) “Religious Liberty: Innovation and Development,” *First Things*, December 2001.

[57.](#) Concerning the Pope’s kissing of the Koran, neo-Catholic historian Warren Carroll asserted on the EWTN website that “In kissing the Koran ... the Pope was not blessing their errors; he was recognizing common ground among those who, in our secular ‘God is dead’ age, still share our belief in one God.” The papal kiss, however, was not accompanied by any such disclaimer.

[58.](#) <http://matt1618.freeyellow.com/syllabus.html>

[59.](#) PCM, p. 188.

[60.](#) *Libertas* (1888), N. 21.

[61.](#) PCM, p. 189.

[62.](#) *Libertas*, 8: “What has been said of the liberty of individuals is no less applicable to them when considered as bound together in civil society. For, what reason and the natural law do for individuals, that human law promulgated for their good, does for the citizens of States.” See also *Immortale Dei*, n. 6: “As a consequence, the State, constituted as it is, is clearly bound to act up to the manifold and weighty duties linking it to God, *by the public profession of religion!*” See also *Vehementer Nos* (1906) by Pope St. Pius X, who, citing Pope Leo, declared: “That the State must be separated from the Church is a thesis absolutely false, a most pernicious error ... for the creator of man is also the Founder of human societies, and preserves their existence as he preserves our own. We owe Him, therefore, not only a private cult, *but a public and social worship* to honor Him.”

[63.](#) *Immortale Dei*, 13–14.

[64.](#) “The Real Post-Conciliar Reforms,” *Catholic Dossier*, Nov.–Dec. 1997, p. 50. Within the ellipsis is the phrase “that the Church would suppress religious liberty if it had the chance”—a caricature of Catholic teaching we do not address here.

[65.](#) *Dignitatis Humanae*, n. 4.

[66.](#) *Ibid.*, n. 2:” [T] he human person has a right to religious freedom. This freedom means that all men are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or social groups and of any human power, in such wise that in matters religious no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs.” This much is clearly in line with prior teaching, since the Church has always taught that no man may be forced to embrace a religion not his own. However, DH goes further and states: “Nor is anyone to be restrained from acting in accordance with his own beliefs, whether privately *or publicly*, alone or in association with others, within due limits.... The Synod further declares that the right to religious freedom has its foundation in the very dignity of the human person.” Subject only to “due limits,” then, DH announces a natural right not to be restrained from propagating a false religion even publicly. No Pope before Vatican II even hinted that there could be such a natural right, as opposed to a revocable civil right of *tolerance* of the public propagation of religious error, conceded by the State for prudential reasons. See, e.g., *Libertas*, n. 33: “For this reason,

while not conceding *any right* to anything save what is true and honest, she does not forbid public authority to *tolerate* what is at variance with truth and justice, for the sake of avoiding some greater evil, or of obtaining some greater good.” But Pope Leo warned that this tolerance must be “*strictly confined* to the limits which its justifying cause, the public welfare, requires. Wherefore, if such tolerance would be injurious to the public welfare, and entail greater evils on the State, it would not be lawful; for in such case the motive of good is wanting” (n. 34).

[67.](#) *Dignitatis Humanae*, n. 6.

[68.](#) See “Gabriel Garcia Moreno,” *Catholic Encyclopedia* (1913).

[69.](#) *Religionis integerrimus custos*

*Auctor studiorum optimorum
Obsequentissimus in Petri sedem
Justitiae cultor; scelerum vindex.*

[70.](#) Obviously, we are speaking here of the Catholic *ideal* defended in preconiliar papal teaching discussed above, which presupposes a Catholic body politic that would have the right to remain such through appropriate legal measures, not excluding legitimate control of immigration. Indeed, the notion that non-Catholics coming to Catholic countries should be allowed the public profession of any form of worship was condemned in the *Syllabus* (proposition 79). We are obviously not suggesting that such measures be forcibly imposed on apostate populations today. But the duty to strive to *restore* Catholic social order remains: “First and foremost, it is the duty of all Catholics worthy of the name ... to endeavor to bring back all civil society to the pattern and form of Christianity which We have described” (*Immortale Dei*, n. 46). Nations, no less than individual Catholics, are objectively obliged to embrace the true religion. The nation/individual distinction in this prime duty toward God is rank Protestantism, and is now also a feature of neo-Catholicism.

[71.](#) Abbé Basil of St. Madeleine de la Barroux has written six volumes on the subject. The estimable Fr. Brian Harrison, O.S., has devoted an entire book and numerous articles to a demonstration of DH’s compatibility with the teaching of Blessed Pius IX, Leo XIII and St. Pius X. In the March–April 2000 issue of *Catholic Dossier*, Fr. Harrison concluded that although “the conciliar Church has indeed *departed from tradition here*” (as to the public exercise of non-Catholic religions in predominantly Catholic societies), DH involves “discarding a traditional *policy*, not a traditional *doctrine*.” Even if that is so, in our view Fr. Harrison and others have not shown how DH’s enunciation of a *natural right* to immunity from state coercion in the *public* activities of non-Catholic sects can be reconciled with prior papal teaching, which allows the mere *tolerance* of such activities by the State as an *exception* that must be “strictly confined.” (See [Chapter 11](#), [note 64](#).) The preconiliar Popes say absolutely nothing about a generalized natural right to *be* tolerated. Thus, DH seems to take the prior exception and turn it not only into the rule, but also into a rule grounded in a natural right of which the pre-conciliar Popes were apparently unaware. Only the Magisterium, not commentators, can definitively demonstrate DH’s harmony with prior teaching. That so much commentary has been generated only demonstrates the need for a Magisterial resolution of the problem.

[72.](#) Even if there were an actual doctrinal contradiction between DH and preconiliar teaching—and DH seems far too ambiguous to allow that conclusion—it cannot be forgotten that the Church has never claimed to be infallible in all her pronouncements, but only in what she has constantly taught (always, everywhere and by everyone) or solemnly and explicitly defined as binding Catholic doctrine. See discussion in [Chapter 8](#). As we discussed in [Chapter 2](#), this distortion of Catholic teaching only plays into the sedevacantist argument that Vatican II is a “false council” and the conciliar Popes “false Popes.”

[73.](#) Address to Bishop of Quimper, quoted in Sarda, *Liberalism Is a Sin*, p. 49.

PART III

TOWARD A SOLUTION

Returning to the Council? A Case Study

“Considering the results of the Second Vatican Council, perhaps it is time the Holy Father called for a second Council of Trent”

—Patrick J. Buchanan

Among the neo-Catholic commentators who at least admit that the Church is in the midst of a grave crisis, the received wisdom is that we must “go back to the Council” and implement its ambiguous decrees according to their “true intention.” Why the Council’s “true intention” has proven to be so elusive over the past forty years is never explained. But Janet Smith, in a typical expression of this longing after the Council’s lost intention, proclaims: “Those of us who have labored in the trenches are most grateful for and appreciative of the reinforcements and new troops the Holy Spirit is raising up, for soon we may see the Church the Council envisioned.”¹

What is meant by “the Church the Council envisioned”? Smith cannot say exactly—and neither, it seems, can anyone else. But Smith does observe that

perhaps the time for weeping is coming to an end. The ravages of ICEL are being reconsidered, the U.S. bishops are revisiting norms for building churches, *permission for Latin liturgies is being extended*, Eucharistic adoration is becoming an *underground movement* [!] of immense proportions. It is a good sign that at the University of Dallas, the students *have spontaneously begun to sing the ordinary of the Mass in Latin* at some of the liturgies. It is now a truism to say that *the more traditional orders and dioceses are attracting by far the greater number of vocations*.

It seems, then, that the Church “envisioned” by Vatican II involves something strangely reminiscent of the Church *before* Vatican II. Perhaps, in time, the neo-Catholics will admit explicitly that a return to integral Catholic tradition is what is needed. Meanwhile, they continue to speak of an indescribable conciliar apotheosis, which is always—just there!—on the horizon.

In the same vein is neo-Catholic luminary George Weigel: “Unlike other ecumenical councils, Vatican II did not provide ‘keys’ to its teaching in the form of creeds, canons or anathemas.” In other words, one cannot learn what Vatican II teaches simply by reading its documents. Understanding the Council requires a set of “keys” that the Council itself did not provide. Weigel claims that these “keys” have been provided by John Paul II: “It has been left to the pontificate of John Paul II to provide an authoritative interpretation of the council....” That the teaching of Vatican II is so obscure as to require an “interpretation” seems to trouble no one in the neo-Catholic camp.

But, in any event, what *is* the “authoritative interpretation” of the Council? Weigel proposes the following, based upon his understanding of the thinking of John Paul II:

Like Blessed John XXIII, John Paul II thinks of the Second Vatican Council as a new Pentecost—a privileged moment in which the Holy Spirit prepared the Church for a springtime of evangelization. Contrary to the conventional readings of the meaning of Vatican II proposed by both Catholic traditionalists and Catholic progressives, John Paul II has insisted that the council was not primarily about the distribution of authority and jurisdiction inside the Church. Rather, the council was meant to revivify within the Church a profound sense of itself as the sacrament of the world’s salvation: the “communio” in which we experience, here and now, a

foretaste of what God intends for humanity for all eternity. In Karol Wojtyla's experience of the council as one of its most active Fathers, and in his authoritative interpretation of the council as Pope, Vatican II was meant to prepare the Church, theologically and spiritually, to rediscover itself as a great evangelical movement in history, proclaiming to the world the truth about the human person, human community, human origins and human destiny.²

So, as Weigel understands it, the "authoritative interpretation" of Vatican II developed in the teaching of John Paul II is as follows:

- Vatican II was a new Pentecost,
- to prepare for a springtime of evangelization;
- it was not about distribution of authority in the Church, but rather was meant to:
- revivify the Church's profound sense of itself,
- provide a foretaste of what God intends for humanity for all eternity, and
- prepare the Church to rediscover itself as a great evangelical movement in history.

As we can see, this "interpretation" of Vatican II requires an interpretation of its own. The neo-Catholic explication of "the real meaning" of Vatican II never amounts to much more than the rhetorical equivalent of tinted steam. But this is not the fault of the neo-Catholic commentators; the nebulosity of their subject matter makes anything approaching concreteness impossible.

Nevertheless, the misty search for the Council's true intention goes on. Cardinal Ratzinger, with reference to the postconciliar crisis, has written: "Does this mean the Council itself must be revoked? Certainly not. It means only that the real reception of the Council has *not yet even begun*. What devastated the Church after the Council was not the Council but the refusal to accept it The task, therefore, is not to suppress the Council but to *discover the real Council* and to deepen its *true intention* in the light of present experience."³

But what is meant by "the real Council"? And why, nearly forty years after the Council ended, are we still seeking to divine its "true intention"? Like Smith, Cardinal Ratzinger cannot really say, although he does give an indication of why "the real Council" has been so difficult to "discover." Speaking of the preface to *Gaudium et Spes*, the Cardinal writes that "the history of its influence is not to be separated from the spirit of this preface and is, to a large extent, stamped with its *ambiguity*." And speaking of the need for present-day "diagnoses" of *Gaudium et Spes* and the other key conciliar texts, Ratzinger observes that "*the lack of clarity* that persists even today about the *real meaning of Vatican II* is closely associated with such diagnoses."⁴

Let us state the point as frankly as possible: Observations like Smith's and Ratzinger's only confirm what has long been known: that the documents of Vatican II are a hopeless muddle of ambiguity from which it is impossible to discern the "real Council," let alone the fabled "Church the Council envisioned." To "discover the real Council" is, therefore, only to return to the source of our current difficulties, and we will find there no more guidance than was to be had forty years ago. The fact is that wherever the Council did not simply repeat the constant teaching of the Church, it offered nothing definite in the way of Catholic doctrine. The "real Council" is, therefore, a chimera.

Here it is apropos to note a proposition neo-Catholic commentators seem never to have entertained: that it was *Vatican II*, not the preconconciliar Popes, that gave us a “one-sided” (to recall Cardinal Ratzinger’s assessment of the *Syllabus* and *Pascendi*) and a “skewed” view of the world that ought now to be discarded. No one has made this point more tellingly than Fr. Stanley Jaki, whose membership in the Pontifical Academy of Sciences ought to squelch neo-Catholic objections to this assessment of the Council: “Do not the texts of Vatican II bespeak of a *lopsided optimism*, at least in the sense that they contain *no appropriate presentation of mankind’s fallen predicament* and of the chain of ongoing historical tragedies implied therein?... They [the conciliar *periti*] looked forward to the emergence of a new humanism most sympathetic to the most cherished cultural objections of the Church. Such a hope proved itself very hollow when the legalization of rank immoralities made great strides in such Catholic countries as Ireland and Poland... .”⁵ (These are the very same countries in which the *Syllabus* and the teaching of Pope Leo XIII “no longer apply,” according to neo-Catholic commentators.)

Jaki is only remarking the obvious, but the obvious is something the neo-Catholic establishment refuses to admit. Here yet again we see the recurring double standard in neo-Catholic thinking: Neo-Catholics see nothing wrong with declaring outmoded the teaching of a whole line of preconconciliar Popes, but they instantly denounce as disloyal to the Church any traditionalist who holds that it is the worldview of Vatican II, rooted in the false optimism of the 1960s, that is hopelessly *passe*.⁶

The Council’s ambiguity could simply be allowed to pass into memory were it not a continuing source of enormous problems in the Church. As Msgr. George A. Kelly put it in *The Battle for the American Church*: “Gregory Baum, who was at the Council, once thought that Pope John smiled in two directions. Critics of Pope Paul suggest that he prayed the same way. The problems of the postconciliar Church reflect this predicament. The documents of the Council contain enough *basic ambiguities* to make the postconciliar difficulties understandable.”⁷ And, as Fr. Jaki has observed: “In adopting this non-dogmatic, or attenuatedly dogmatic approach, Vatican II unintentionally opened the flood-gates to vagueness, ambiguity, and indecision (all, of course, in the disguise of ‘pastoral’ solutions) that do not cease to take a heavy toll on the Catholic life—priestly, religious and lay.”⁸

Nowhere is this more apparent than with the Council’s document on the sacred liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC). We will discuss it here at some length, as a prime example of why we (and so many others) believe the Council is a cause of such great havoc in the Church.

For the better part of thirty years, traditionalists have listened to neo-Catholics argue that the postconciliar devastation of the Roman rite has nothing whatever to do with the language of SC. To the contrary, they argue: SC actually contains the solution to the current liturgical crisis. If only SC were implemented “as the Council intended,” they claim, we would finally have the “authentic reform” of the liturgy that the Council really intended. (We have mentioned that the neo-Catholic liturgical group *Adoremus* has been the leading exponent of this thesis.)

As we have noted, it is one of the many self-contradictions of the neo-Catholic system

that those who advocate a “correct” implementation of SC as the solution to what Cardinal Ratzinger has called “the collapse of the liturgy” are themselves engaging in the same sort of “private judgment” they condemn in traditionalists. That is, they are implicitly contradicting Pope Paul VI’s declarations in November 1969 that the new Mass is what SC authorized and therefore what the Council intended. They also contradict Pope John Paul II’s address on the twenty-fifth anniversary of SC, in which he praised SC and “the reforms which it has made possible,” declaring that “the liturgical reform is the most visible fruit of the whole work of the Council.” These facts are very difficult for certain neo-Catholics to acknowledge. For if both Paul VI and John Paul II agree that the provisions of SC warranted the creation of the very liturgy we see today, then the neo-Catholic must either agree with the Popes’ reading of SC, in which case the “authentic reform” of the liturgy has already occurred, or they must accuse two Popes of erring gravely in their authoritative interpretation of a conciliar document. Quite a quandary.

Putting this neo-Catholic difficulty aside, we ask: is the solution to the liturgical crisis—which after all is at the heart of the postconciliar crisis as a whole—really to be found in some new implementation of SC, or what *Adore-mus* has called “a reform of the reform”? We are convinced the answer is in the negative. To read SC attentively, line by line and word by word, is to understand that SC is *part* of the liturgical crisis, not its solution. In light of our actual experience with the document, anyone with a modicum of perspicuity can see (if only in retrospect) that SC was designed by its principal draftsman, Annibale Bugnini, to authorize a liturgical revolution, while giving the appearance of liturgical continuity. It is a nest of deadly ambiguities that the Council Fathers can only have approved in the confidence that the liturgical tradition of the Roman Rite could not possibly suffer a dramatic rupture, because it had never happened before. As we have earlier mentioned, Cardinal Browne was subjected to incredulous laughter when he worried aloud that SC’s ambiguous permission for vernacularization of the Mass might lead to abandonment of the Latin liturgy within a few years. Who’s laughing now?

A lawyer knows that the dangers in a contract from his client’s perspective lie not so much in what the terms of the contract provide as in what they permit the other party to do. The danger is in the loopholes. Quite simply, SC permits all manner of drastic things to be done to the Roman liturgy. It is one long collection of loopholes. If a lawyer entrusted with the task of protecting the Roman liturgy from harmful innovation had drafted this document, he would be guilty of gross malpractice. It is amazing that anyone who claims to have read SC thoroughly could still maintain that its “true” interpretation precludes the liturgical innovations that have been inflicted upon us. If Paul VI and John Paul II did not think so, why should the neo-Catholics?

We present here a brief discussion of what can be called the “conservative” and “liberal” norms of SC. Two themes in SC are apparent from the provisions we shall quote: the first is an open-ended authorization for liturgical reform on what is potentially a vast scale, but without requiring that any particular reform of the liturgy be enacted or avoided; and the second is “democratization” of the liturgy by ceding effective liturgical control to the “ecclesiastical territorial authority” of each country, and the liturgy commissions to be established in each diocese. These two themes are couched in language that seems to inhibit the scope of potential reform in the light of tradition, but does so in a way that always admits of immediate exceptions to suit local needs, conditions and circumstances

as determined by “territorial ecclesiastical authority,” subject only to Rome’s approval or *ex post facto* confirmation—which has rarely been withheld. The playing out of these two themes over the past thirty years has meant nothing less than what Msgr. Klaus Gamber called “the real destruction of the Roman rite,” with the consequent loss of unity of cult in the Western Church. Yet again, the results speak for themselves.

The careful reader of SC will readily observe a characteristic typical of the other ambiguous documents of the Council: an interplay between “conservative” and “liberal” phraseology, the latter serving to undermine and even negate the former. In reading SC’s “liberal” norms, one wonders how the Council Fathers, including the late Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, could have been induced to approve such an open-ended document. As Msgr. Gamber observed in *Reform of the Roman Liturgy*: “The Council Fathers, when publishing the *Constitution on Sacred Liturgy*, simply did not expect to see the avalanche they had started, crushing under it all traditional forms of liturgical worship, even the new liturgy they themselves had created... “⁹ As we have seen, today’s neo-Catholics evince a similar blindness, even though they, unlike the Council Fathers, have had the benefit of seeing the document interpreted and implemented by two Popes, with disastrous results.

Let us examine first the “conservative” norms in SC.

Art. 4 ... Holy Mother Church holds all lawfully recognized rites to be of equal right and dignity;... she wishes to *preserve them in the future and to foster them in every way.*

Undoubtedly this norm went a long way toward persuading the Council Fathers to adopt SC, despite the swarm of liberal norms that follow in the document. Assuming SC is still operative, traditionalists are certainly entitled to rely on this norm to support a return to the traditional liturgy by preserving and fostering the traditional rite of Mass, still untouched by the reform, in every way.

Yet, in typical conciliar fashion, the quoted sentence is followed by a disclaimer: “The Council also desires that, where necessary, the rites be revised carefully in the light of sound tradition, and that they be given new vigor to meet the circumstances and needs of modern times.” But the “sound tradition” of the Church is entirely contrary to the revision of ancient rites in order to suit “the circumstances and needs of modern times”—whatever that means—much less a radical alteration of the Roman rite as a whole, which would have been unthinkable to any Pope before Vatican II.

Art. 23 ... [T]here must be no *innovations* unless the good of the Church genuinely and certainly requires them, and care must be taken that any *new forms adopted* should in *some way* grow organically from forms already existing....

To say that there will be no innovations “unless,” means, of course, that there will be innovations. And there *were* innovations—lots of them. This “conservative” norm introduces two novel concepts into the liturgical discipline of the Church: “innovations” in the liturgy and the adoption of entirely “new forms” of liturgy, as opposed to the gradual, almost imperceptible liturgical refinements of preceding centuries. The requirement that “any new forms adopted should in some way grow organically from already existing forms” opens the way to entirely new liturgy, whose resemblance to the preceding immemorial form is vestigial at best.

To follow the language of this “conservative” norm: Is not the Mass of Paul VI an

“innovation” that he deemed to be “genuinely and certainly required” for the good of the Church, a “new form adopted” that grew “in some way” from the existing form of the Mass? At least that is how Pope Paul VI presented it to the faithful.

Certainly, this norm can also be given a strict interpretation, prohibiting any revisions to the preconciliar Mass whatsoever; and traditionalists are entitled to promote this strict interpretation as against the neo-Catholic interpretation, which assumes the existence of some hypothetical “authentic reform” yet to be discovered. This presupposes that SC is still an operative document. But now that two Popes have told us that SC has been faithfully implemented, why do certain neo-Catholics constantly refer back to SC as though it provides a mandate for still more liturgical change? Is SC to be viewed as a permanent charter for liturgical innovation? So much, then, for the “authentic reform” of the liturgy supposedly envisioned in SC.

Art. 36 ... (1) The use of the Latin language, *with due respect to particular law*, is to be preserved in the Latin rites.

Certain neo-Catholics argue that this norm has been “violated” by a “liberal faction” of reformers in the Church, and by some liberal bishops—by which they mean to say (but do not have the candor to say) two Popes and nearly the entire hierarchy. But has Art. 36 really been violated by the postconciliar reforms? As two Popes have told us: not at all.

In the first place, the norm provides only that *use* of the Latin language is to be preserved, not the traditional Latin Mass or even the Roman Canon. More important, this qualified protection for the Latin liturgy is undermined by the phrase “with due respect to particular law.” The framework of “particular law” erected under SC’s liberal norms completely negated this conservative norm *ab initio* by permitting extended use of the vernacular in the Mass and adaptation of the liturgy to local customs and conditions, as deemed “useful” by “territorial ecclesiastical authority.”

Regarding this disastrous effect of SC, the omnipresent Bugnini declared in triumph:

For four centuries all power has been reserved to the Holy See in liturgical matters (Canon 1257). The bishops’ role was limited to seeing that the liturgical laws were observed.... *The Constitution has broken down this centuries-old barrier.* The Church is now in the process of restoring to the competent territorial authorities—the word “territorial” is *decidedly elastic*—many problems pertaining to the liturgy, including ... *the introduction, the use and the limits to the use of the vernacular in certain rites.*¹⁰

In 1964, only a year after SC was enacted, Pope Paul VI issued his *motu proprio Sacram Liturgiam*. Article 9 of *Sacram Liturgiam* authorized all national hierarchies to approve vernacular translations of the Mass, subject only to Rome’s *ex post facto* approval, which was given in every case.

So much for the “use of Latin” in the Roman liturgy. The “particular law” exception swallowed up this much-vaunted conservative norm within a year, as Bugnini clearly anticipated it would. Anyone who says that Article 36 of SC has been “violated” and the Council “disobeyed” by reason of the all-vernacular new liturgy either has never read SC in its entirety, or is pretending that two Popes and nearly the entire hierarchy have not already shown us that SC freely authorizes (even if it does not mandate) Mass entirely in the vernacular.

Arts. 114–116 [114] ... The treasury of sacred music is to be preserved and cultivated with great care. [**Art. 116]**

... *Other things being equal* [Gregorian chant] should be given pride of place in liturgical services....

The phrase “other things being equal” partially undermines the phrase “pride of place,” and the remaining provisions of SC (discussed below) complete the undermining by vesting “territorial ecclesiastical authority” with total control over the adaptation of church music to “local needs,” along with the rest of the liturgy.

And now we come to SC’s “liberal” norms, from which most of the subsequent mischief flowed.

Art. 1 The sacred Council has set out to impart an ever-increasing vigor to the Christian life of the faithful; to *adapt more closely to the needs of our age* those institutions which are subject to change; to foster whatever we can to *promote union among all those who believe in Christ*.... Accordingly, it sees *cogent reasons for undertaking a reform* ... of the liturgy.

This norm actually cites “Christian unity” and adapting Church institutions to the “needs of our age”—whatever that means—as “cogent reasons” for revising the immemorial and hitherto sacrosanct liturgy of the Roman Rite. That the Council authorized unspecified reforms to our 1,500-year-old rite of Mass for these reasons is almost incredible. It is widely known that Paul VI later confided to his intimate friend Jean Guittou that the new Mass was specifically designed to resemble as closely as possible a Calvinist communion service, evidently with this norm in mind.^{[11](#)}

Art. 4 ... The Council also desires that, where necessary, the rites be revised carefully in the light of sound tradition, and that they be given new vigor to meet present-day circumstances and needs.

As Michael Davies has noted, the Council did not explain how a rite can be revised “in the light of tradition,” when all tradition is against revision of our ancient rites, especially the rite of Mass. Nor did the Council give the slightest indication of which “present-day circumstances and needs” would suggest a revision of the liturgy, as opposed to the “circumstances and needs” of any other time in Church history.

Art. 14 ... In the restoration and promotion of the sacred liturgy, the full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered *before all else*, for it is *the primary and indispensable source* from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit.

This norm exalts participation by the people above every other consideration in the Mass. Although this norm does not relate to liturgical revision as such, but rather to the “promotion and restoration” of the liturgy, its elevation to the paramount concern in the liturgy certainly impacts on those norms governing liturgical reform at Article 21, *et seq.*

Art. 21 In order that the Christian people may more certainly derive an abundance of graces from the sacred liturgy, holy Mother Church desires to undertake with great care *a general restoration of the liturgy itself*. For the liturgy is made up of unchangeable elements divinely instituted, and of *elements subject to change*. These latter not only may be changed but *ought to be changed with the passage of time*, if they have suffered from the intrusion of anything out of harmony with the inner nature of the liturgy or *have become less suitable*. In this restoration both *texts and rites should be drawn up so as to express more clearly the holy things which they signify*.

The phrases “general restoration of the liturgy” and “texts and rites should be drawn up” imply that the “experts” to be “employed” under Article 25 are to undertake a totally unprecedented (and completely unspecified) wholesale revision of the Roman liturgy, “drawing up” new texts and rites as they see fit. And that is what the Consilium did, giving us a new Mass and rites for the other sacraments, all with the full approval of Pope Paul VI.

This norm clearly implies that the reason for the “general restoration” and the drawing up of new texts and rites is that the existing rites for the Mass and sacraments in the Roman Rite do not express clearly enough “the holy things which they signify.” It also suggests constant adaptation of the liturgy whenever any of its elements become “less suitable”—but “less suitable,” like all the other terms in SC, receives no definition whatsoever.

Art. 25 The liturgical books are to be revised as soon as possible. Experts are to be employed on this task, and bishops from various parts of the world are to be consulted.

This norm, for the first time in Church history, authorizes the simultaneous revision of all the liturgical books of the Roman Rite by unknown “experts,” without providing any specific guidelines whatsoever for their work. The “experts,” with the full approval of Paul VI, quickly proceeded to do exactly what the Council had permitted, with this open-ended license: to revise all the liturgical books in consultation with the bishops of the world. The bishops’ own liturgical “experts” then proceeded to ruin the Roman liturgy with vernacular translations and other local adaptations they were empowered to make under the following norms of SC.

Art. 34 ... The rites should be distinguished by a noble simplicity. They should be short, clear, and free from useless repetitions. They should be within the people’s powers of comprehension, and normally should not require much explanation.

Does not this norm imply that the Damasian-Gregorian-Tridentine liturgy of 1,500 years’ standing—the Roman Rite’s greatest treasure—was too long and complicated and should be “simplified” in some *completely unspecified* manner? (This is not to mention the rites for the other sacraments.) What is meant by such terms as “noble simplicity,” “short” and “clear”? Which repetitions are “useless”? The Council defined absolutely nothing in this “time-bomb” of a norm; it delegated “experts” in Article 25 to interpret these open-ended terms after the Council.

Also, what was to be done to the Mass to bring it within the “people’s powers of comprehension,” given that Pius XII had taught only *fifteen years earlier*, in his definitive liturgical encyclical *Mediator Dei*, that those who could not comprehend the Roman Missal could still actively and fruitfully participate at Mass by praying the Rosary or engaging in other prayers and devotions? The Council did not answer this question either. But the “experts” did answer it, by giving us the new, stripped-down, easily comprehended, vernacular Mass of Paul VI.

Art. 36 (2) But since the use of the vernacular, whether in the Mass, the administration of the sacraments, or in other parts of the liturgy, may frequently be of great advantage to the people, *a wider use may be made of it*, especially in [but not limited to!] readings, directives and in some prayers and chants.... *[I]t is for the competent territorial ecclesiastical authority mentioned ... to decide whether, and to what extent, the vernacular language is to be used.* Its decrees have to be approved, that is, *confirmed*, by the Apostolic See.

This norm gave the bishops the power to introduce as much vernacular into the Mass as they liked, subject only to Rome’s confirmation after the fact. This norm is reflected in Article 9 of *Sacram Liturgiam*, under which Rome soon approved the all-vernacular national liturgies we now have, which shattered the unity of liturgical cult in the Roman Rite.

Art. 38–40 [38] Provided that the substantial unity of the Roman rite is preserved, provision shall be made, *when revising the liturgical books*, for legitimate variations and adaptations to different groups, regions and peoples,

especially in [but, again, not limited to!] mission countries. This should be borne in mind when *drawing up the rites and determining rubrics*. [39] Within the limits set by the typical editions of the liturgical books, *it shall be for the competent territorial ecclesiastical authority to specify adaptations*, especially in the case of *the sacraments, the sacramentals, processions, liturgical language, sacred music, and the arts*; but according to the fundamental norms laid down in this Constitution. [40] In some places and circumstances, however, *an even more radical adaptation of the liturgy is needed*....

These norms flung open the door to the winds of change in the Roman rite. They authorized a complete transformation of the face of Catholic worship by “adaptation” of the liturgy—even *radical* adaptation—to suit local customs and preferences, as the bishops saw fit. They empowered the bishops to alter virtually every aspect of the liturgy, including the “liturgical language” to be used in celebrating Mass.

Has not the Holy See approved this radical transformation of the liturgy at every step of the way, according to the “fundamental norms” of SC—norms that posed no real impediment to what Gamber rightly called the “avalanche they [the Council Fathers] had started”?

Art. 40 (1), (2) ... (1) The competent territorial ecclesiastical authority mentioned in Article 22:2 must, in this matter, carefully and prudently consider which elements from the traditions and cultures of individual peoples might appropriately be admitted into divine worship. Adaptations which are considered useful or necessary should then be submitted to the Holy See, by whose consent they may be introduced. (2) To ensure that adaptations may be made with all the circumspection necessary, the Apostolic See will grant power to this same territorial ecclesiastical authority to permit and to direct, as the case requires, the necessary preliminary experiments over a determined period of time among certain groups suitable for the purpose.

Are not these “certain groups” launched by SC among the prime causes of the destruction of the Roman rite and its replacement by a vernacular, inculturated liturgy, constantly being adapted to the “present-day circumstances and needs” referred to in Art. 4?

Art. 50 The rite of the Mass is to be revised in such a way that the intrinsic nature and purpose of its several parts, as well as the connection between them, may be more clearly manifested, and that devout and active participation by the faithful may be more easily achieved.... For this purpose the rites are to be simplified, due care being taken to preserve their substance. Parts which with the passage of time came to be duplicated, or were added with little advantage, are to be omitted. Other parts which suffered loss through accidents of history are to be restored to the vigor they had in the days of the holy Fathers, as may seem useful or necessary....

How exactly does the traditional liturgy of the Roman Rite fail to manifest clearly the nature and purpose of its parts and the connection between them? Which parts of the Mass have been “added with little advantage” over the past 2,000 years? Which parts are “duplicated”—any part involving a repeated prayer or gesture, or only some repeated prayers or gestures? Which parts have “suffered loss” or must be restored to “vigor”? And what is the “substance” of the rites that should be preserved during all the revisions suggested, but not specified, by this norm?

The Council provided no answers to these questions. It simply turned the Roman liturgy over to the Article 25 “experts” for their decisions, as approved by the Pope. The only standard given for their work is, incredibly, whatever “may seem *useful* or necessary.” The result was the Mass of Paul VI. In fact, in his Audience address of November 19, 1969, Pope Paul relied expressly on Article 50 to justify his imposition of the entirely new rite devised by Bugnini’s Consilium.

Art. 54 A suitable place may be allotted to the vernacular in Masses which are celebrated with the people, especially in the readings and “the common prayer,” and also, as local conditions may warrant, in those parts which pertain to the people, according to the rules laid down in Article 36 of this Constitution.... *Wherever a*

more extended use of the vernacular in the Mass seems desirable, the regulation laid down in Article 40 of this Constitution is to be observed....

This norm opened the way to “a more extended use of the vernacular” than just in the readings and “common prayer,” as long as it “seems” desirable to the “territorial ecclesiastical authority” under Article 40. Under this norm and the previously cited norms, and *Sacram Liturgiam*, which proceeded from these norms, Rome very quickly approved the decision of each national hierarchy that it would be “desirable” to extend the vernacular to the entire Mass.

Art. 63 Because the use of the vernacular in the administration of the sacraments and sacramentals can often be of very great help to the people, *this use is to be extended* according to the following norms: (a) In the administration of the sacraments and sacramentals the *vernacular may be used* according to the norm of Article 36. *The competent territorial ecclesiastical authority ... shall forthwith prepare, in accordance with the new edition of the Roman Ritual, local rituals adapted linguistically and otherwise to the needs of the different regions.* These rituals, on authentication by the Apostolic See, are to be followed in the regions in question....

This norm opened the way to vernacular rites for the other sacraments to go along with the all-vernacular Mass, with both to be adapted to local customs and needs as the local bishops would see fit.

Art. 81 Funeral rites should express more clearly the paschal character of Christian death, and should correspond more closely to the circumstances and traditions found in various regions. This also applies to the liturgical color to be used.

This norm suggests the inculturated funeral Masses we see today, in which a white-vested priest assures us that the departed soul is a saint who will have a glorious resurrection like Our Lord’s.

Art. 107 The liturgical year is to be revised so that the traditional customs and discipline of the sacred seasons shall be preserved or restored to suit the conditions of modern times.... If certain adaptations are necessary because of local conditions, they are to be made in accordance with the provisions of Articles 39 and 40.

This norm authorized a complete revision of the Church’s ancient liturgical calendar, but provided absolutely no guidance on how it was to be done. It opened the way to destruction of the traditional liturgical cycle of readings of over 1,300 years’ standing—to “suit the conditions of modern times.” And, like all other aspects of the liturgy, the liturgical year was subjected to local variations under Article 40. Was not the loss of the traditional liturgical year, an integral part of our liturgical home, a prime cause of the confusion and loss of faith after the Council, as Gamber demonstrates in *Reform of the Roman Liturgy* and as Cardinal Stickler recalls in his memoir of the Council?¹²

Art. 119 In certain countries, especially in mission lands, there are people who have their own musical tradition, and this plays a great part in their religious and social life. For this reason *their music should be held in proper esteem and a suitable place is to be given to it*, not only in forming their religious sense but also *in adapting worship to their native genius*....

This norm permits the introduction of folk music into the sacred liturgy of the Mass, and the “adaptation” of the Mass to such music in any country with “its own musical tradition” and “native genius.” Are not the “folk Masses” and African tribal liturgical dancing exactly what this norm has produced in practice? With good reason did Pope St. Pius X, Pope Pius XII and all their predecessors forbid any secular music whatever at Holy Mass. This norm casts off that wise proscription and invites the profane melodies and rhythms of the world into the holy sanctuary.

Art. 120 . . . But other instruments [besides the traditional pipe organ] also may be admitted for use in divine worship, in the judgment and with the consent of the competent territorial authority....

This norm opened the way to the introduction of pianos, guitars and other profane instruments into the sacred liturgy, as long as the newly empowered “competent territorial authority” judges them acceptable. Has not the result been “lounge music” during Holy Mass? This norm casts off the explicit proscriptions on the use of profane musical instruments such as guitars (as opposed to bowed instruments) which were found in the Holy See’s preconciliar instructions on sacred music, up to and including the pontificate of Pius XII.

Art. 123 ... *The art of our own times from every race and country shall also be given free scope in the Church, provided it bring to the task the reverence and honor due to the sacred buildings and rites....*

This norm encouraged the intrusion of modern art into the Church, including grotesquely distorted images of Our Lord and the detested and ridiculous felt banner. The most widely recognized example of this is the hideous “Resurrection of Christ” by Pericle Fazzini, a diabolically grotesque image of Our Lord that disfigures the stage of the Paul VI Audience Hall at the Vatican.

Art. 128 The canons and ecclesiastical statutes which govern *the provision of external things* which pertain to sacred worship *should be revised as soon as possible*, together with the liturgical books.... These laws refer especially to the worthy and well-planned construction of sacred buildings, *the shape and construction of altars, the nobility, placing, and security of the Eucharistic tabernacle, the suitability and dignity of the baptistery, the proper ordering of sacred images, and scheme of decoration and embellishment*. Laws which seem less suited to the reformed liturgy should be amended or *abolished*.... In this matter, especially as regards the material and form of sacred furnishings and vestments,... powers are given to territorial episcopal conferences *to adapt such things to the needs and customs of their different regions*.

Notice how this norm anticipates a massive liturgical upheaval, which Bugnini was already planning before the Council. This norm is a rather lawyerly “catch-all” provision opening the way to an iconoclastic revision of *every Church law regarding the externals of Catholic worship*. This norm gave the territorial bishops’ conferences complete authority (subject only to Rome’s rubber stamp) to adapt all of the ancient, traditional externals to “the needs and customs of their different regions,” and to *abolish* all traditional tabernacles, altars, vestments, statues, church furnishings and *church structures* if they merely seem “less suited to the reformed liturgy”—which reformed liturgy was not even specified to begin with!

Are we not afflicted today by all the things this norm permitted? Consider: a liturgy nearly devoid of traditional sacred images, vestments, music and rubrics; the marble high altar replaced by a wooden table because the altar “seems less suited to the reformed liturgy” in the judgment of the bishops; the tabernacle relegated to the side of the sanctuary or to a different room altogether, under the bishops’ authority to determine its “placing”; and the sanctuary itself subject to gutting at the architectural pleasure of each bishop, with the Holy See upholding the bishop’s iconoclasm in practically every instance.

In conclusion, SC is a case study of why “a return to the Council” is no solution to the crisis in the Church. No one who reads SC carefully in the light of our experience since the Council can deny that it constitutes a blank check for liturgical reform, with the amount to be filled in depending entirely upon who wields the pen in the postconciliar period. The few neo-Catholic norms that seem to limit the possibility of liturgical change

were clearly overwhelmed by the far more numerous and pervasive liberal norms, which create an almost unlimited potential for destruction of the liturgy.

Yet, except for restoring the prayer of the faithful in Article 53, *SC does not actually mandate a single specific change in the text or rubrics of the traditional Order of Mass*. This would appear to be the main reason the Council Fathers were induced to vote for the document, since in containing virtually no outright mandates, it did not threaten any apparent harm to the Latin liturgical tradition. And it is also the reason that neither the neo-Catholics nor anyone else can determine from a reading of SC “the authentic reform” supposedly intended by the Council.

We believe the same is true concerning the effort to “discover the real Council” as a whole. All the key conciliar documents are marked by the same sort of vagueness and open-endedness that made SC a recipe for liturgical disaster.

What, then, do we propose? We propose that the time has come to consider whether the Church ought simply to close the book on Vatican II, thus beginning the process of forgetting that this confusing and divisive Council ever happened. It is a process that we believe will occur sooner or later. Why not sooner?

Here we are not without historical precedent. There was a roughly analogous situation much earlier in the Church’s history, of which traditionalists and neo-Catholics alike are possibly unaware: the Second Council of Constantinople, held in 553. In 1934, historian Msgr. Philip Hughes described it as “the strangest of all the general councils.”¹³ It was indeed strange. This was an ecumenical council, the fifth of the twenty-one the Church has convoked from Nicea to Vatican II. Strictly speaking, it taught nothing erroneous. Yet, as Vatican II has proven to be, Constantinople II was an unmitigated disaster, and was recognized as such by a great many contemporary observers. Neo-Catholics who condemn traditionalist critics of Vatican II ought to become familiar with this ill-starred council.

The roots of this council extend at least to the Council of Chalcedon, held just over a century earlier, and even to the Council of Ephesus, which condemned the Nestorian heresy. The primary purpose of the Council of Chalcedon (451) had been to render judgment on the Monophysite heresy that denied Christ’s human nature. The orthodox formula of two natures (human and divine) in one Person is what Chalcedon, under the direction of Pope Leo the Great, ultimately decreed.

The Monophysites were not so easily dispensed with, however, and continued to have a strong presence throughout the Christian world, particularly in the East. Church and secular rulers alike deplored this unfortunate situation. The Emperor Justinian was particularly concerned about overcoming the heresy and reestablishing a unified Christian world.

Toward this end, Justinian put forward a suggestion that a confidant had offered to him: he would uphold the teaching of Chalcedon, but he would condemn the writings of three theologians whose work offended the Monophysites—the so-called “Three Chapters.” Theodore of Mopsuestia, whose work was fatally imbued with Nestorianism, was to be condemned personally and in his writings. Some of the writings of Theodoret of Cyrillus, who had played an important role at Chalcedon, would likewise be condemned, as would a famous letter of Ibas of Edessa to the Persian bishop Maris, giving his account of the

Council of Ephesus. Yet all three of these authors had died in the good graces of the Church. Thus began the raging “Three Chapters” controversy.

Justinian hoped that a solemn condemnation of the Three Chapters would mollify the Monophysites, without actually retreating from the positions adopted by the Council of Chalcedon. That the condemnation of three dead Catholics was not the most straightforward way of handling the problem of lingering Monophysitism is something of an understatement. A good many Catholics at the time had serious misgivings about this approach. According to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, “There were no good precedents for thus dealing harshly with the memory of men who had died in the peace of the Church.” Moreover, the condemnation “was not demanded to crush a heresy, but to conciliate heretics who were implacable enemies of the Council of Chalcedon.”¹⁴

At first, Pope Vigilius absolutely refused to condemn the Three Chapters. But as time went on he gradually warmed to the idea, and in 548 he issued a public condemnation of these celebrated writings. But he again hedged in 553, the year of the Council, and it was months after the Council had closed that he definitively approved the condemnation once and for all—thus issuing three contradictory statements in the span of five years.

A number of bishops later protested to Justinian that the Pope’s condemnation of the Three Chapters had been done “to give satisfaction to the Monophysites.”¹⁵ Msgr. Hughes shared this assessment: the condemnation of the Three Chapters was a “tricky attempt to conciliate the Monophysites.”¹⁶ Rather than reiterating or elaborating upon the irreformable teaching of Chalcedon, Constantinople II sought *both* to uphold Chalcedon *and* to call to account three long-dead theologians—two of whom had been intimately associated with Chalcedon! How could such a strategy *not* have generated confusion and discord among the faithful? As the great historian W.H.C. Frend described it: “At the council itself the bishops turned intellectual somersaults in their efforts to uphold Chalcedon yet condemn the Three Chapters.”¹⁷

For all that, the desired reconciliation with the Monophysites was not achieved. Still another great historian, Henry Chadwick, concludes that the “painful affair of the Three Chapters did nothing to reconcile even moderate Monophysites, and actually had the reverse effect to that intended.” As for the segment of the Catholic world that was fully orthodox and supported the Council of Chalcedon, “the immediate effect was to produce temporary schisms in the West; and the *successive contradictory utterances* of [Pope] Vigilius did not enhance the authority of the Roman see.”¹⁸ Would our neo-Catholic friends care to denounce these eminent historians for “private judgment” in their disparaging references to Pope Vigilius and the Council?

Rome’s attempts to heal these various schisms supply us with some useful insights. The situation in Milan is especially apt. Bishop Lawrence II of Milan reestablished communion with the Holy See in 571. Unfortunately, we do not possess his correspondence with Pope John III, but based on correspondence between his successor, Archbishop Constantine, and Pope St. Gregory the Great, we can infer at least something about the terms on which he was welcomed back into the unity of the Church. According to Charles Hefele, one of the great historians of the Church’s ecumenical councils, Bishop Lawrence was instructed that, if asked, he must not swear that he had refused to condemn

the Three Chapters. This proviso leads Hefele to conclude: “There must, therefore, have been a concession contained in it [the letter] in regard to the anathema on the three chapters.”¹⁹ Perhaps the Bishop had been told that while he did not necessarily have to subscribe to the anathema, neither could he swear that he had not.

That the Popes were in fact counseling silence in this matter becomes clearer during the pontificate of Pope St. Gregory the Great. As noted, Lawrence’s successor in Milan was Archbishop Constantine. Shortly after his consecration, Constantine found himself deserted by three of his suffragan bishops as well as by the Lombard Queen Theodelinda, all of whom withdrew from communion with him because they believed he had anathematized the Three Chapters. Pope St. Gregory responded by conveying a letter to Constantine to be delivered to Theodelinda, in which the Pope himself vouched for the orthodoxy of the Second Council of Constantinople, as well as of Archbishop Constantine, to whom he urged Theodelinda to return.

Not long afterward, Archbishop Constantine wrote back to Pope St. Gregory to say that he had not in fact delivered the letter to the Queen, since it mentioned the Second Council of Constantinople! Archbishop Constantine wanted to know: Would the Pope agree to send another letter, this one assuring the Queen of his (Constantine’s) orthodoxy without making any reference whatever to Constantinople II? This Gregory did, mentioning only the first four ecumenical councils in his next letter. (It does not appear that Gregory denounced Archbishop Constantine as a “schismatic” or “integrist” for declining to deliver the Pope’s letter because of its reference to a widely rejected council.)

Further, Pope St. Gregory recommended that Constantine deal with the inhabitants of Brescia (who were demanding that he swear that he had not condemned the Three Chapters) simply by not mentioning Constantinople II at all. Instead, explains Hefele, Constantine ought to “declare to them in a letter that he neither infringed upon the faith of Chalcedon himself in the least degree, nor would receive into his communion anyone who should venture to infringe it; that he condemned all who condemned the Council of Chalcedon, and recognized all who had recognized that.” “The Pope, therefore,” Hefele points out in conclusion, “not only himself was silent to the Lombardian Queen on the fifth [council], and on the three chapters, but he requested that Constantine also should be silent on the subject, and that he should direct his efforts to one point, ‘restoration of union with Rome.’”²⁰ This prelate, then, was instructed by no less than Pope St. Gregory the Great simply to *remain silent* about the fifth ecumenical council of the Catholic Church. Gregory could see that Archbishop Constantine possessed the Catholic faith; what more was necessary? We have no record of anyone accusing Constantine of having thwarted “the spirit of Constantinople II.”

A Catholic has to be free to say of the Second Council of Constantinople what is obvious to anyone who has ever studied it: it did nothing to bring back the Monophysites into the bosom of the Church, and in fact alienated many of them still further. Given the confusing nature of what the Council was attempting to do, orthodox Catholics, for their part, could not help but be perplexed and demoralized by this Council, and for decades afterward whole areas of the West refused to acknowledge it as an ecumenical council at all, convinced that it had in some way repudiated or vitiated the teaching of Chalcedon. Basing ourselves, therefore, on the testimony of human reason, we are surely free to

conclude that this council, although it taught nothing certainly erroneous, was an appalling catastrophe that ought never to have been convoked. It is not possible to imagine any grounds on which even the most hardened neo-Catholic could describe this fifth ecumenical council as a boon to the Church.

The example of the Second Council of Constantinople serves to demonstrate not only the confusion that an ecumenical council can introduce into the Church, even without teaching dogmatic error, but also that the entire life of the Church need not be organized around the decrees of the most recent council. Yet today, after nearly forty years of bitter postconciliar experience, we still hear exhortations that the entire life of the Church must be reordered in conformity with Vatican II's decrees, that all the Church's activity must take place in light of "the Council." Following Constantinople II, on the other hand, when churchmen could see that the most recent council had caused only division, confusion, and strife, we hear no such exhortations. As we have shown, Pope St. Gregory the Great actually counseled a bishop troubled by the Council to remain silent on the matter, holding fast to the Catholic faith as expounded at the Council of Chalcedon. Gregory and the other Popes of the sixth and seventh centuries were intelligent enough to see that an obsessive emphasis on "the Council" would have perpetuated schism and continued to demoralize the orthodox party. Whenever possible, then, Church leaders simply ignored it. "Subsequent leaders of the western churches," writes historian Judith Herrin, "often excused Pope Vigilius's apparent support for the council and *consigned its decisions to oblivion.*"²¹

If Pope St. Gregory could advise silence about the fifth ecumenical council, it cannot be inherently unlawful to advise a similar approach to an ambiguous council of our own time. Certainly it was legitimately convoked, and holds the status of an ecumenical council. Everyone recognizes that. But if it has introduced only confusion and discord, why insist on treating it as an idol, emphasizing it to the exclusion of all else, when history proves such an attitude to be neither necessary nor desirable?

In the same way, without denying the validity of the new Mass, we may legitimately hope and pray that the "renewal of the liturgy" is forgotten, and that the traditional Roman rite of Mass returns to preeminence in the Church. This, too, is far from an historical impossibility. As Msgr. Gamber has observed:

All this, of course, has happened before! Levitin-Krasnov tells us about a similar attempt at reform in the Russian Orthodox Church during the years following the October Revolution. At that time, different attempts were made to no longer celebrate within the sanctum of the altar room, but instead in the center of the Church. The liturgy was translated into modern Russian, and prayers were supplemented by using parts from other liturgies. The private prayers of the priest were recited publicly so that the faithful could hear them. The singing of church hymns by the faithful was introduced to replace the traditional chants sung by the choir, and so on and so forth.

The liturgical crisis in Russia has now passed and the traditional forms of liturgy have been restored.²²

Why not also in the Holy Catholic Church? Is it really impossible for Catholics to admit that the conciliar *aggiornamento* is a wreck that should be allowed to collapse of its own weight? Can the victims of Vatican II not move on to the next chapter in the Church's history, as did the victims of Constantinople II? Can we not simply *stop talking* about the Second Vatican Council?

Meanwhile, the continued neo-Catholic pursuit of "the Church envisioned by the

Council” and the “authentic reform of the liturgy” only demonstrates that unless this incessant recourse to the Council’s ever-elusive “true intention” is finally abandoned, the postconciliar crisis will not end. Turbulent demands for “renewal” by neo-modernists on the one hand, and for “authentic renewal” by neo-Catholics on the other, will continue to swirl about the Council’s problematical documents, so long as they continue to serve as a warrant for the perpetual reformist mentality that Vatican II unleashed upon the Church.

- [1.](#) “The Wake of Vatican II,” *Catholic Dossier*, November 2000.
- [2.](#) Zenit interview, March 8, 2002.
- [3.](#) Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, p. 390.
- [4.](#) Ibid, pp. 378–79.
- [5.](#) Stanley L. Jaki, *Newman’s Challenge* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2000), p. 11.
- [6.](#) As Cardinal Ratzinger recalled, “[S]omething of the Kennedy era pervaded the Council, something of the naive optimism of the concept of the great society. We can do everything we want to do, if only we employ the right means. It was precisely the break in historical consciousness, the self-tormenting rejection of the past, that produced the concept of a zero hour, in which everything would begin again, and all those things that had formerly been done badly would now be done well. The dream of liberation, the dream of something totally different, which, a little while later, had an increasingly potent impact on the student revolts, was, in a certain sense, also attributable to the Council; it was the Council that first urged man on and then disappointed him....” *Principles of Catholic Theology*, p. 372.
- [7.](#) Kelly, *The Battle for the American Church*, p. 20.
- [8.](#) Jaki, *Newman’s Challenge*, p. 9.
- [9.](#) Gamber, *The Reform of the Roman Liturgy*, p. 23.
- [10.](#) Quoted in Davies, *Pope Paul’s New Mass*, p. 25.
- [11.](#) “ [T]he intention of Pope Paul VI with regard to what is commonly called the Mass, was to reform the Catholic liturgy in such a way that it should almost coincide with the Protestant liturgy.... [T]here was with Pope Paul VI an ecumenical intention to remove, or at least to correct, or at least to relax, what was too Catholic in the traditional sense, in the Mass, and, I repeat, to get the Catholic Mass closer to the Calvinist mass” (Dec. 19, 1993), *Apropos*, #17, pp. 8f; quoted in *Christian Order*, October 1994.
- [12.](#) Gamber, *Reform of the Roman Liturgy*, pp. 99–100; Stickler, “Recollections of a Vatican II Peritus,” p. 32.
- [13.](#) For the many details of this bizarre controversy, a kind of antitype of the present confusion, see Philip Hughes, *A History of the Church*, vol. 1: *The Church and the World in Which the Church Was Founded* (1934; London: Sheed and Ward, 1979), p. 282.
- [14.](#) Ibid., pp. 279–80.
- [15.](#) Charles Joseph Hefele, *A History of the Councils of the Church*, vol. IV, trans. William R. Clark (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1895), p. 352.
- [16.](#) Hughes, *A History of the Church*, vol. 1, p. 280.
- [17.](#) W.H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), p. 853.
- [18.](#) Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church* (New York: Penguin, 1993), p. 210.
- [19.](#) Hefele, *A History of the Councils*, p. 357.
- [20.](#) Ibid., p. 363.
- [21.](#) Judith Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 124. Herrin adds that Pope Gregory the Great “on occasion advised acceptance of the first four ecumenical councils only.” Ibid.
- [22.](#) Gamber, *Reform of the Roman Liturgy*, pp. 93–94.

Dominus Iesus: **An Ambiguous Answer to Heresy**

The publication of Cardinal Ratzinger's *Dominus Iesus* (DI) on September 5, 2000, is one of the most important events in the history of the post-conciliar Church, although not for the reasons neo-Catholics suggest. True to neo-Catholic form, *The Wanderer* heaped nearly hysterical praise upon the document, pronouncing it "a new *Syllabus* of Errors." In this we see yet another self-contradiction in neo-Catholic thought. As we discussed in Chapter 11, certain neo-Catholics openly dismiss the *Syllabus* as outmoded. In [Chapter 5](#) we observed that other neo-Catholics have argued that the reason the Vatican no longer issues "harsh" condemnations of error like those found in the *Syllabus* is that in "modern" circumstances they would only be counterproductive, perhaps even leading to a schism, which John Paul II is trying to avoid by refraining from strict measures for the universal Church. Yet when the neo-Catholics perceive in DI what they believe to be a return to the firmness of preconciliar condemnations of error, they suddenly reverse position and joyfully proclaim the arrival of a new *Syllabus*. They thus reveal their implicit recognition that the Church desperately *needs* a new *Syllabus*, along with a general restoration of her former rigor in exposing and condemning errors against the Faith.

Is DI a roadmap out of the postconciliar crisis? Is it, like the *Syllabus*, a major corrective measure that will shore up Catholic orthodoxy in a time of peril to the Faith? Unfortunately, the suggestion that DI is a new *Syllabus* does not correspond to reality. As we showed in [Chapter 11](#), it is none other than DI's principal author, Cardinal Ratzinger, who has assured us that "there can be no return to the *Syllabus*" and that the documents of Vatican II are "a countersyllabus," whose aim is to attempt "an official reconciliation" with an era whose institutions are now founded on the very errors the *Syllabus* condemns. To expect anything like a new *Syllabus* from the current Vatican apparatus is to indulge in fantasy.

To begin with, Catholics have been perplexed by DI's use of the ancient Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381), which refers to the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father (see DI 1). Although there is obviously nothing wrong with this early creed *per se*, the Council of Constantinople was merely concerned with affirming the divinity of the Holy Spirit against the Pneumato-machians, who denied it. (It should be mentioned, however, that the *filioque* does appear in the version of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed by Dionysius Exiguus.) Subsequent councils, however, (Lyons and Florence) explicitly affirmed the *filioque* (the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son together) as a *de fide* teaching of the Church against the Greek schismatics. As the Council of Lyons declared: "In faithful and devout profession, we declare that the Holy Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father *and* the Son, not as from two beginnings but from one beginning, not from two breathings, but from one breathing. The most Holy Roman Church, the mother and teacher of all the faithful, has up to this time professed, preached and taught this; this she firmly holds, preaches, declares and teaches; the unchangeable and true opinion of the orthodox Fathers and Doctors, Latin *as well as*

Greek, holds this.”¹

But in DI, the *filioque* is suddenly dropped in favor of a fourth-century creed that did not address that theological question. So much for the “development of doctrine” that neo-Catholics are always citing! Neo-Catholics are constantly wavering between “development of doctrine” and “return to antiquity” in defending the current unexampled novelties (which follow neither principle).

At any rate, the pointed omission of the *filioque* from DI is curious in a document promulgated to defend the salvific role of the Son. Why diminish the Catholic teaching about the Son even slightly by omitting the *filioque*? Evidently, the Vatican did not wish to offend present-day Greek schismatics by being as forthright as the Council of Lyons about what the Catholic Church teaches. “Ecumenism” strikes again.

Now, it cannot be denied that DI refutes some very basic errors against the Faith: that Christ is not the sole mediator between God and man, but only one of many faces of the divine Logos; that His revelation is not complete and definitive; that there is an economy of salvation outside the Word Incarnate; that the salvific action of the Word is separable from the human nature of Christ; that one religion is as good as another. But while it is certainly a good thing to refute such errors, they are so obvious as to be little more than theological straw men. No self-respecting neo-modernist of the Third Millennium would traffic in such crudities.

DI delivers whopping roundhouse blows at these straw men, but nary a jab at the most subtle error in postconciliar thinking: not that all religions are equal, but rather that all religions are *good enough* for salvation, given the proposed action of God’s grace through all religions. Instead of refuting that proposition, which renders actual membership in the Catholic Church irrelevant to salvation, DI announces the commencement of a vast theological project to demonstrate that “other religions” (i.e., all religions) participate, more or less, in the one mediation of Christ, *whether or not their followers know it*:

Bearing in mind this article of faith [the unique mediation of Christ], theology today, in its reflection on the existence of *other religious experiences and on their meaning in God’s salvific plan*, is invited to explore *if and in what way the historical figures and positive elements of these religions may fall within the divine plan of salvation*. In this undertaking, theological research has a vast field of work under the guidance of the Church’s Magisterium. The Second Vatican Council, in fact, has stated that “the unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude, but rather gives rise, to a manifold cooperation which is but a participation in this one source.” The content of this participated mediation should be explored more deeply, but ... those solutions that propose a salvific action of God beyond the unique mediation of Christ would be contrary to Christian and Catholic faith.

Accepting Cardinal Ratzinger’s invitation, the neo-modernists can now recycle their pan-religious heresies by the simple expedient of incorporating the phrase “participation in the unique mediation of Christ,” or something equivalent. Thus, the religion of Islam, which explicitly *rejects* the unique mediation of Christ, could be said to *participate* in that mediation to the extent that it contains what DI calls “positive elements.” But how is the invited thesis different from Karl Rahner’s “anonymous Christianity”? Some may see in this aspect of DI what lawyers call a distinction without a difference.

Rahner held that, thanks to “modern theological developments,” the Christian “will regard non-Christians ... *not as having no part in Christianity, but rather as anonymous Christians*, who do not realize what they truly are in virtue of grace in the depths of their

own consciences; what they are, namely, in virtue of *something* that they achieve at a level which is perhaps wholly unadduced, but is nonetheless real... .”² Rahner accordingly viewed missionary work not as a process of making converts who are delivered from Original Sin and the snares of the devil through the sanctifying grace of Holy Baptism, but rather of presenting to “anonymous Christians” that which *they already possess*: “[W]hen the Christian preaches Christianity to the ‘non-Christian,’ he will take as his starting point not so much the basic attitude of wanting to make the other something which he simply has not been hitherto. Rather he will attempt to *bring him to himself*.... God, in his grace, and because of his will to save all human beings universally, has already long before *offered* [Rahner’s emphasis] *the reality of Christianity in its truest and deepest essence* to the individual, and ... it is perfectly possible, *and even probable*, that the individual *has already freely accepted this reality* without consciously adverting to it.”³

Note well: Rahner claims it is probable that Christianity in “its truest and deepest essence” is present in non-Christians *without baptism, without any adherence to Christian doctrine, and without even an explicit act of faith in Christ*. Obviously, this notion spells the death of the missions, no matter what one may say to the contrary. Fr. Giovanbattista Mondin, the vice rector of the Pontifical Urban University, observed that “[w]hat is taking place today is actually a ‘demissionization’ of the Catholic Church.” He noted that the “suicide of the missions” began at the end of the 1960s, a development he attributes to Rahner’s “anonymous Christianity” and “the salvific function of the non-Christian religions.”⁴

Is DI inviting theologians to attempt a vindication of Rahner’s view that non-Christian religions are really in some measure *Christian* religions that can, accordingly, suffice unto salvation? If so, *what is this point of this exercise?* If the Church has never taught this thesis in 2,000 years, if the so-called “participation” of non-Christian religions in the mediation of Christ has not already been revealed by God, how could the Church now adopt this novelty as binding Catholic doctrine?

We are saved from disaster by the single word “if” in Cardinal Ratzinger’s phrase “*if* and in what way the historical figures and positive elements of these religions may fall within the divine plan of salvation.” Since DI identifies this subject as a matter of free debate, we believe it is our right and duty to say that it would be a serious mistake to encourage the notion that false religions and their false prophets can be said to “participate,” even partially, in the mediation of Christ.

Meanwhile, however, what, if anything, does DI do to arrest “the suicide of the missions”? The good news is that DI does affirm, after a long silence on the matter, that objectively speaking the followers of other religions “are in a gravely deficient situation in comparison with those who, in the Church, have the fullness of the means of salvation” (DI 22). But by the time DI is through *praising* other religions, one wonders why anyone should be very concerned about the “gravely deficient” situation of their adherents, let alone risk his life as a missionary to bring about their conversion to Catholicism. The very phrase “*fullness of the means of salvation*” suggests, at least to us, that non-Christian religions already possess the means of salvation, even if they are not as “full” as those possessed by the Catholic Church. So far as we can see, DI does nothing to negate this impression.

Concerning what it calls the “sacred books of other religions,” DI 8 asserts that “it must be recognized that there are some elements in these texts which may be *de facto* instruments by which *countless people throughout the centuries have been and still are able today to nourish and maintain their life-relationship with God.*” DI 8 also declares: “Nevertheless, God, who desires to call all peoples to himself in Christ and to communicate to them the fullness of his revelation and love, does not fail to make himself present in many ways, not only to individuals, but also to entire peoples through *their spiritual riches, of which their religions are the main and essential expression*, even when they contain gaps, insufficiencies and errors. Therefore, the sacred books of other religions, which *in actual fact direct and nourish the existence of their followers*, receive from the mystery of Christ *the elements of goodness and grace which they contain*” (internal quotations omitted).

DI 10 likewise speaks of “the manifold gifts—especially the spiritual treasures—that God has bestowed on every people”; while DI 22 states: “Certainly, the various religious traditions contain and offer religious elements which come from God, and which are part of what ‘the Spirit brings about in human hearts and in the history of peoples, in cultures, and religions.’”

If “other religions” (without distinction) all contain spiritual riches and treasures bestowed by God as part of what “the Spirit brings about in human hearts”; and if the “sacred books of other religions” (also without distinction) all contain “elements of goodness and grace” from Christ that sustain “countless people” in a “life-relationship with God,” then what becomes of the “gravely deficient” situation of Muslims, Hindus and so forth? Further, is there any substantial difference between DI’s praise for the “positive elements and historical figures” of other religions and what Pius XI in *Mortalium Animos* condemned as “that *false opinion* which considers all religions to be more or less good and praiseworthy, since they all in different ways manifest and signify that sense which is inborn in us all, and by which we are led to God and to the obedient acknowledgment of His rule”? (We recall here that Pius XI condemned this false opinion as to nominally Christian sects; all the more would it apply to non-Christian sects.)

Moreover, how does one reconcile DI’s esteem for the value of “other religions” (again, without distinction) with two propositions condemned in the *Syllabus*:

In the worship of any religion whatever, men can find their way to eternal salvation, and can attain salvation (Proposition 16).

We must have at least good hope concerning the salvation of all those who in no wise are in the true Church of Christ (Proposition 17).

Does DI in its teaching on the value of other religions deny either of these propositions, or does it not tend to favor them, even if it does speak of a “grave deficiency” in the same religions it describes as possessing riches and treasures bestowed by God?

It is impossible to ignore the stark contrast between DI’s praise for the riches and treasures of other religions and the critical view of all the preconconciliar popes, as exemplified by the teaching of Blessed Pius IX in his encyclical *Quanto conficiamur moerore*. While making due allowance for the unknowable subjective state of the invincibly ignorant, the Pope makes it perfectly clear that there is no prospect of salvation in the “positive elements” of false religions or in their “historical figures,” who are

nothing but false prophets:

Here, too, our beloved sons and venerable brothers, it is again necessary to mention and censure *a very grave error* entrapping some Catholics who believe that *it is possible to arrive at eternal salvation although living in error and alienated from the true faith and Catholic unity*. Such belief is *certainly opposed to Catholic teaching*. There are, of course, those who are struggling with invincible ignorance about our most holy religion. Sincerely observing the natural law and its precepts inscribed by God on all hearts and ready to obey God, they live honest lives and are able to attain eternal life by the efficacious virtue of divine light and grace. Because God knows, searches and clearly understands the minds, hearts, thoughts, and nature of all, his supreme kindness and clemency do not permit anyone at all who is not guilty of deliberate sin to suffer eternal punishments.

Also well known is the Catholic teaching that no one can be saved outside the Catholic Church. Eternal salvation cannot be obtained by those who oppose the authority and statements of the same Church and are stubbornly separated from the unity of the Church and also from the successor of Peter, the Roman Pontiff, to whom “the custody of the vineyard has been committed by the Savior.” The words of Christ are clear enough: “If he refuses to listen even to the Church, let him be to you a Gentile and a tax collector”; “He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you, rejects me, and he who rejects me, rejects him who sent me”; “He who does not believe will be condemned”; “He who does not believe is already condemned”; “He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.” The Apostle Paul says that such persons are “perverted and self-condemned”; the Prince of the Apostles calls them “false teachers ... who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master ... bringing upon themselves swift destruction.”

It must be said that DI’s generous praise for the “positive elements” of “other religions”—all of them!—is not shown by DI to have any roots in the Church’s traditional teaching. Not one of the sources cited in support of this optimism is older than the Second Vatican Council. The amazing thing is the emergence of such optimism at a time when, as Pope Pius XII declared even before the worldwide legalization of abortion, “the wickedness of perverse men has reached a degree of impiety that is *unbelievable and absolutely unknown in other times*.”⁵

We do not deny that whatever limited truth there is in false religions comes from God, who is the ultimate source of all truth. The problem arises, we believe, with DI’s invitation to an optimism which, with Rahner, would view virtually any religion that teaches something true as an adequate (if only barely so) vehicle of salvation—by “participation” in the one mediation of Christ. That concern does not appear to us to be allayed by DI’s declaration that the Church’s mission is “announcing the necessity of conversion to Jesus Christ and of adherence to the Church through Baptism and the other sacraments, in order to *participate fully* in communion with God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit” (DI 22). Is the Church still in the business of saving souls from hell, or does she now offer *only* “full participation” in “communion with God”?

All told, it appears to us that DI forcefully restates, but then substantially undermines, three neglected truths of the Faith:

First, DI affirms the distinction between the saving supernatural virtue of theological faith in our religion and mere natural belief in “other religions” (DI 7), but then asserts a “life relationship with God” which is “nourished” in “countless people throughout the centuries” by the “elements of grace and goodness” in the “sacred books of *other religions*” (DI 8, 12, 21).

Second, DI affirms that only the Old and New Testaments can be considered divinely inspired texts (DI 8), but then asserts that the “elements of *grace* and goodness” in the “sacred books” of other religions come from “the Mystery of Christ” and are part of what “*the Spirit brings about in human hearts* and in the history of peoples, in cultures, and

religions” (DI 8, 21).

Third, DI notes the “gravely deficient” condition of the followers of other religions (DI 22), but then praises the spiritual “riches” and “treasures” to be found in the religions of “every people” (DI 8, 10), and the elements of grace and goodness in their sacred books, by which the aforesaid “countless people throughout the centuries” are able to “maintain their life-relationship with God.”

We cannot see how the followers of other religions would have any idea from reading DI as a whole that they (like we) are objectively in need of the helps that only the Catholic Church provides in order to save their souls from hell. The overall impression is quite to the contrary. We recall that Blessed Pius IX (in *Singulari Quadem*) declared the question of the salvation of those objectively outside the Catholic Church a matter so fraught with danger that it ought not to be pursued (“It is unlawful to proceed further in inquiry,” he said). But the great research project that Ratzinger outlines for theologians in DI—namely, if and in what way the “historical figures and positive elements” of other religions “may fall within the divine plan of salvation”—not only disregards this papal warning, but also raises fairly serious questions. Is it conceivable that the “spiritual treasures” of other religions could “fall within the divine plan of salvation” in such a way as to provide good assurance of the salvation of their adherents? If so, then the Catholic Church serves no indispensably salvific purpose, particularly if one can be saved though the “positive elements” of a religion that allows its members to give free rein to libertinism and license. On the other hand, if, in spite of their “spiritual treasures,” the various religions nevertheless cannot provide sufficient means of salvation, then, again, what is the point of attempting a theological demonstration of their *insufficient* “participation” in Christ’s mediation? With the unceasing missionary work of countless generations of martyrs and saints a dramatic testimony against this novel view (why would these heroes have wasted their time and even risked their lives?), is it not better to restate without ambiguity the Church’s traditional position, rather than give a false sense of security to people at risk of losing their souls?

The traditional tone of pessimism regarding the prospects of eternal bliss for those objectively outside the Catholic Church is hardly a dispensable adjunct of the Catholic faith; our need for the sacraments in order to keep our souls in a state of sanctifying grace, and hence pleasing to God, is a fundamental truth of our religion. We also acknowledge that without the aid of the sacraments it is much more difficult to remain in the state of grace. Even the saints, the Church’s holiest members, were terrified of hell and the prospect that they themselves might merit its punishments.⁶ Thus the conclusion is inescapable that in a state of nature, so to speak, in which a man has embraced either a false religion or none at all, he is at much greater risk of being damned. Why not say so, as a matter of prudence and honesty? And if this conclusion is not true—if in fact one may just as easily cling to the state of grace in a state of nature—then why be a Catholic? Is not the principal reason for membership in the Church, namely, having recourse to the means by which God purifies souls in order that they might spend eternity with Him, thereby fatally vitiated?

Characteristic of the confusion in the Church since Vatican II is that Ratzinger himself, in 1966, clearly recognized both the novelty and the danger of this kind of optimism:

In the meantime, a teaching had gained more and more acceptance, although it was previously regarded as only a marginal thesis, namely, that God wills and is able to save outside the Church, though, in the end, not without her. Thereby, an optimistic understanding of the world religions was recently brought forth, the consideration of which once again makes clear that not all of the favorite thoughts of modern theology are at the same time biblically sound. For if anything may be called foreign, yes, even opposed to Sacred Scripture, then it is the current optimism with regard to the world religions which, in fact, conceives these religions as means of salvation, a view which can hardly be reconciled with their standing in biblical perspective.⁷

Ratzinger's misgivings were well-founded. A year before the publication of DI, neo-Catholic author Stratford Caldecott revealed where such thinking inevitably led:

As the Church teaches, a member of another religion may be saved without hearing of Christ, and without converting. At the same time we are obliged by our fidelity to Christ and our love to proclaim Christianity to all. And once we have done so, the other may find himself in a radically new situation. He may be at a stage where he could only understand conversion to Christianity as a betrayal of the truth he knows. But if he is at the point where he could integrate the truth he knows with the truth that is proclaimed to him, and chooses not to; if his rejection of our words is in any way due to his own closure to truth, rather than to our own sins and inadequacy; then his own religion is no longer such a safe refuge, and his salvation is no longer so certain. It is God who obliges us to put him into this state of spiritual danger, for the sake of his soul and our own.⁸

This is where the conciliar and postconciliar optimism regarding other religions ultimately takes us. Pause for a moment to consider the radicalism of what Caldecott is saying, bearing in mind that this is a neo-Catholic, rather than a professed liberal, who is speaking. According to Caldecott, missionary activity, though binding on us by Christ's command, may well place souls in spiritual danger, in comparison with their spiritual "safety" (through blissful ignorance) in other religions. Our Lord's promise that "ye shall know the truth and the *truth* shall set you free" is thus negated, for whether he knows it or not, Caldecott implicitly presumes (in keeping with the new optimism) that those who do *not* know the truth are already free. Although Caldecott and like-minded neo-Catholic commentators commend missionary activity because Christ tells us it is a good work, according to their own logic it no longer makes much sense, and might actually be dangerous. For if followers of other religions will acquire the truth in the next life anyway, no one is doing them a favor by burdening them with the truth and its many obligations during this life. That is the conclusion Caldecott demonstrates (unwittingly or not) in an article filled with conciliar and postconciliar references. Such is the confidence of the postconciliar establishment in the salvific power of the "positive elements" of other religions—a confidence that the *Syllabus* of Pope Blessed Pius IX forbade us to have even about Protestants and schismatics, let alone non-Christians. What more can one say?

In light of all this, it should come as no surprise that while DI is subtitled "On the Unicity and *Salvific* Universality of Jesus Christ," not once does the main text of the document mention what it is that the Savior saves *us from*. Salvation from hell is mentioned only in footnote 45. To us, this says a great deal. In DI, as in the postconciliar Church at large, hell has become a mere footnote to the Church's teaching; yet the threat of hell has never loomed larger in human history.⁹

While Cardinal Ratzinger claims "there can be no return to the *Syllabus*," is it unreasonable to suggest that a return to the kind of teaching represented by Blessed Pius IX is exactly what the Church needs at a time of unparalleled worldwide depravity? Can even the neo-Catholics seriously contend that Blessed Pius IX or St. Pius X, looking at the world today, would issue an invitation to theologians to demonstrate exactly how "the

historical figures and positive elements” of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Zoroastrianism “may fall within the divine plan of salvation” or that such Popes would be praising the “riches” and “treasures” of pagan religions and their adherents’ “life-relationship with God”?

Unfortunately, DI’s approach to the status of Protestants and the Orthodox appears to be as ambiguous as its teaching with respect to non-Christian religions. DI clearly continues along the lines of the same “ecumenical venture” that has led to open repudiation of the preconiliar teaching on the return of the dissidents to the Catholic Church, a development we discussed in [Chapter 7](#).

Here we note first of all that DI contains a number of propositions to which it attaches such admonitions as “must *be firmly believed*” or “must be firmly held.” Each of these propositions must indeed be firmly believed and held, for each is a statement of the constant teaching of the Magisterium. One of these is DI 16, which teaches that “the unicity of the Church founded by him must be *firmly believed* as a truth of Catholic faith. Just as there is one Christ, so there exists a single body of Christ, a single Bride of Christ: ‘a single Catholic and apostolic Church.’” As far as this goes, DI is a strong reaffirmation of a basic Catholic truth.

DI, however, contains many statements that appear *between* the teachings proposed as binding, including its optimistic statements about other religions. To these statements are attached no admonition requiring an assent of faith. This omission is consistent with our basic thesis that not a single one of the theological novelties of the past forty years has ever been imposed upon the faithful as Catholic doctrine. It is here, in what could be called the theological interstices of DI, that we encounter what we believe is an *attempt* by Cardinal Ratzinger to demonstrate how the novel, optimistic, “pastoral” formulations of Vatican II can be harmonized with the preconiliar teaching on the identity between the Mystical Body of Christ and the Roman Catholic Church, and the return to the one true Church by those outside her as the *only* means of achieving true Christian unity.

As our brief discussion of DI’s teaching on non-Christian religions would suggest, what is said in the interstices of DI tends to undermine what is said in its principal headings—in much the same fashion as the documents of Vatican II themselves do. In particular, the just-quoted teaching of DI 16 on the unicity of the Church, which the faithful are instructed they must embrace, seems to be undermined by the teaching on the ecclesial status of the Orthodox and Protestant confessions at DI 17, which the faithful are *not* instructed they must embrace. DI 17 teaches as follows:

Therefore, there exists a single Church of Christ, which subsists in the Catholic Church, governed by the Successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him. The Churches which, while not existing in perfect communion with the Catholic Church, remain united to her by means of the closest bonds, that is, by apostolic succession and a valid Eucharist, are true particular Churches. Therefore, the Church of Christ is present and operative also in these Churches, even though they lack full communion with the Catholic Church, since they do not accept the Catholic doctrine of the Primacy, which, according to the will of God, the Bishop of Rome objectively has and exercises over the entire Church.

Before proposing our concerns, we stress that of course we recognize that, as mere laymen, we have no right to pronounce theological judgments on DI. But DI itself does not deny to the faithful the right to pose questions that clearly arise from DI’s obvious effort to integrate the ambiguous “pastoral” formulations of Vatican II with the far more

precise teaching of the preconciliar Popes. We pose those questions here, and submit ourselves to the judgment of the Church, should it ever be rendered.

By way of background on this issue, we note that when Cardinal Ratzinger was still Father Ratzinger, a former *peritus* at the Council, he provided in his *Theological Highlights of Vatican II* the following explanation of the Council's teaching on Christian unity and Church membership:

The new text describes the relationship between the Church and non-Catholic Christians without speaking of "membership." By *shedding this terminological armor*, the text acquired a much wider scope.... The Catholic has to recognize that his own Church is not yet prepared to accept the phenomenon of multiplicity in unity; *he must orient himself toward this reality.... Meantime the Catholic Church has no right to absorb the other Churches.* The Church has not yet prepared for them a place of their own, but this they are legitimately entitled to A basic unity—of Churches that remain Churches, yet become one Church—*must replace the idea of conversion*, even though conversion retains its meaningfulness for those in conscience motivated to seek it.¹⁰

This remarkable text, which Cardinal Ratzinger has never repudiated, declares that the Magisterium can "shed" its own established terminology on membership¹¹ in the Church, that the Bride of Christ had neglected to "prepare" itself for acceptance of the "reality" of non-Catholic confessions, that organizations indisputably founded by mere men in a rebellion against divine authority have a positive right to exist and be given "a place" by the one true Church, and that Protestants *need not convert to Catholicism* unless they are "motivated" to do so. In all candor, we do not see how Father Ratzinger's opinions here could have avoided censure during the reign of any preconciliar Pope.

As we have already demonstrated abundantly, these opinions are quite in line with the current thinking of Cardinal Ratzinger's fellow German bishop, Cardinal Walter Kasper, the new head of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity. We have noted that in the Italian journal *Adista*, Kasper declared that "today we no longer understand ecumenism in the sense of a return, by which the others would 'be converted' and return to being 'catholics.' This was expressly abandoned by Vatican II."¹² Any Catholic should be horrified to see the head of a pontifical council ostensibly devoted to "Christian unity" placing contemptuous quotation marks around the very words *converted* and *Catholics*. According to Cardinal Kasper, Vatican II "abandoned" what the Holy Office in 1949 described as "the teachings of the encyclicals of the Roman Pontiffs on the return of the dissidents to the one true Church" and "the Catholic truth regarding ... the only true union by the return of the dissidents to the one true Church."

And yet the context of Kasper's remarks in *Adista* was a *defense* of DI against Protestant critics! Nor did Cardinal Ratzinger offer any correction of Kasper's opinion, which Kasper expressed within days of his elevation to the rank of cardinal. These facts do not inspire confidence that DI represents a major course correction in the Church's postconciliar drift from her prior clarity of teaching about the condition of the dissidents who need to return to the one true Church.

Before Vatican II, it was perfectly obvious that there could never be Christian unity unless the Orthodox and the Protestants assented to every single point of Catholic doctrine, thus *becoming Catholics* themselves. It is just as obvious that anyone who prescind from even the least point of Catholic doctrine can never be united with us. As Pope Leo XIII taught in *Satis Cognitum*: "The practice of the Church has always been the

same, as is shown by the unanimous teaching of the Fathers, who were wont to hold as outside Catholic communion, and alien to the Church, whoever would recede *in the least degree* from *any* point of doctrine proposed by her authoritative Magisterium.”

Equally obvious is that to embrace the whole of Catholic doctrine without reservation is necessarily to turn away from the human institutions in which that doctrine was more or less corrupted, and to turn instead toward the Catholic Church, in which the Deposit of the Faith has always been preserved undefiled. That is what *conversion* means. Even in today’s ecumenical confusion, we still hear about the “conversion stories” of ex-Protestants.

How, for example, could any Lutheran come to an acceptance of the whole of Catholic teaching under the influence of God’s grace, yet continue to insist upon belonging to an organization named after a psychotic, foul-mouthed, womanizing drunkard of a monk, who ran off and married a nun, indeed the greatest arch-heretic in Church history, who referred to the Vicar of Christ as an “ass-head”? What could the husk of Luther’s decrepit human organization possibly offer any Lutheran that is not found in superabundance in the Roman Catholic Church? Could anyone who would cling to the notion of belonging to Luther’s version of a church ever be in union with us? On the other hand, if the Lutherans, by some miracle of grace, all suddenly decided to abjure every one of Luther’s errors—in which case, why would they wish to be associated any longer with the name of Luther?—the Catholic Church would have no reason, much less a *duty*, to make “a place” for Luther’s “church.” It would simply cease to exist as a separate organization, the Lutherans having become Catholics. Is this really something that is debatable today? Apparently so.

That Christian unity can somehow be accomplished without all Christians becoming Catholics is one of the Zen-like notions that abound in postconciliar thinking. But not only has Cardinal Ratzinger never retracted Father Ratzinger’s opinions, we also now find that they have become Vatican policy at the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity. Nor does it appear that DI in any way reproves Kasper’s opinions. To the contrary: in discussing DI with the press, Cardinal Ratzinger affirmed his own support for the novel notion of “reconciled diversity” that we discussed earlier:

Question: So then, after the publication of your document, is the ecumenical formula of “reconciled diversity” still valid?

Ratzinger: *I accept the concept of a reconciled diversity*, if it does not mean equality of content and the elimination of the question of truth so that we could consider ourselves one, even if we believe and teach different things. To my mind this concept is used well, if it says that, *despite our differences*, which do not allow us to regard ourselves as mere fragments of a Church of Jesus Christ that does not exist in reality, *we meet in the peace of Christ and are reconciled to one another*, that is, we recognize our division as contradicting the Lord’s will and this sorrow spurs us *to seek unity* and to pray to him in the knowledge that we all need his love.^{[13](#)}

Notice that Ratzinger acknowledges that we could not consider ourselves one with Protestants unless we all believed the same things. But in the meantime he proposes that “despite our differences” we can all be “reconciled to one another” as we “seek unity.” Ratzinger does not explain—because quite obviously he *cannot* explain—how we can ever “find” unity with Protestants without their return to the one true Church. Nor does he explain what it is that Catholics are “seeking” in terms of “unity,” given that they already have the true Faith in the unity of the one true Church. Perhaps this is why Ratzinger has declared that “for the moment, I wouldn’t dare venture to suggest any concrete realization,

possible or imaginable, of this future Church. We are at an intermediate stage of unity in diversity.”

Thus, according to Cardinal Kasper and (it would appear) Cardinal Ratzinger, there are no longer any dissidents who must return to the one true Church, but only “Christians” engaged in a joint ecumenical “search for unity.” The notion that the conversion and return of non-Catholics to the Catholic Church has suddenly been replaced by some other (as yet undefined) “model” of unity obviously has important implications for our understanding of DI. For if a return to the one true Church is no longer seen as necessary for Christian unity, then it can hardly be necessary for salvation as such. This would mean that the members of heretical and schismatic confessions are presumed by DI to be adequately secured in their salvation, without need of formal membership in the Catholic Church and recourse to her sacraments.

How can DI’s apparent abandonment of the return of the dissidents to the one true Church be reconciled with the perennial Magisterium? As recently as 1943, Pope Pius XII declared in his monumental encyclical *Mystici Corporis*:

They, therefore, walk in the path of dangerous error who believe that they can accept Christ as the Head of the Church, while not adhering loyally to His Vicar on earth. They have taken away the visible head, broken the visible bonds of unity and left the Mystical Body of the Redeemer so obscured and so maimed *that those who are seeking the haven of eternal salvation can neither see it nor find it.*

For this reason, Pius XII implored all who would call themselves Christians “to correspond to the interior movements of grace, and to seek to withdraw from that state in which they cannot be sure of their salvation.” Pius XII was warning heretics and schismatics as charitably as he could that they were risking eternal damnation if they did not *correspond to grace* and enter the Catholic Church. Where do we find this teaching affirmed in DI 17 or anywhere else in the document, or, for that matter, anywhere in the vast “ecumenical venture” as a whole? And is it not this very teaching that needs affirming, in view of the moral decrepitude of the Protestant sects?

In short, *what has happened to the Church’s perennial concern for the danger to souls lost in error?* Where do we see today anything like the solicitude for souls expressed by B1. Pius IX in *Quanta Conficiamur Moerore*:

God forbid that the children of the Catholic Church should even in any way be unfriendly to those who are *not at all united to us* by the same bonds of faith and love. On the contrary, let them be eager always to attend to their needs with all the kind services of Christian charity, whether they are poor or sick or suffering any other kind of visitation. First of all, *let them rescue them from the darkness of the errors into which they have unhappily fallen and strive to guide them back to Catholic truth* and to their most loving Mother, who is ever holding out her maternal arms to receive them lovingly back into her fold. Thus, firmly founded in faith, hope, and charity and fruitful in every good work, *they will gain eternal salvation.*

As laymen, we are mystified that today’s Vatican apparatus expresses no concern about the eternal fate of souls who, by every objective measure, are in far greater danger of damnation than the comparatively upright Protestants B1. Pius IX had in view—Protestants, moreover, who would regard their own pro-abortion, pro-” gay rights” descendants as worthy of hellfire.

Turning to the particular language of DI 17 we pose some additional concerns:

First, how is it possible that the schismatic churches of the East can be “united to her

[the Catholic Church] by the closest of bonds”? Here it seems we are facing yet another novelty of postconciliar thought: the concept of *unity in schism*. How can this be anything but an oxymoron?

As Pope Leo taught definitively in *Satis Cognitum*, there can be no unity in the Mystical Body without *visible* unity under its earthly head, the Vicar of Christ. This is because the visible and invisible aspects of the Church are as inseparably united as the body and soul in human nature, and the divine and human nature in Christ Himself:

The connection and union of both elements is as absolutely necessary to the true Church as the intimate union of the soul and body is to human nature. The Church is not something dead: it is the body of Christ endowed with supernatural life.... The union consequently of visible and invisible elements because it harmonizes with the natural order and by God’s will belongs to the very essence of the Church, must necessarily remain, so long as the Church itself shall endure.... Furthermore, the Son of God decreed that the Church should be His mystical body, with which He should be united as the Head.... As He took to Himself a mortal body, which He gave to suffering and death in order to pay the price of man’s redemption, so also He has one mystical body in which and through which He renders men partakers of holiness and of eternal salvation.... Scattered and separated members cannot possibly cohere with the head so as to make one body.

Now the neo-Catholics have no problem affirming this doctrine most strongly when it comes to “extreme traditionalists,” including members of the Society of St. Pius X, whom they denounce as “schismatics” with great relish, as they piously intone the necessity of strict communion with Peter for membership in the Church. But when it comes to the Protestants and the Orthodox, who are objectively guilty of both schism and heresy, the neo-Catholics, along with DI, retreat into the ambiguities of Vatican II.

According to DI 17 (which refers to *Lumen Gentium*’s use of the term *subsistit*), the Church of Christ *subsists* in the Catholic Church but is also “*present and operative*” in the Orthodox churches as *true* particular churches, even though they lack “full communion” with the Catholic Church. This goes even beyond what is said of the Protestant sects—i.e., that they possess “ecclesial elements,” though they are not proper churches. But as we know, in *Humani Generis* 27, Pope Pius XII taught that the Catholic Church and the Mystical Body of Christ are identical: “Some say they are not bound by the doctrine, explained in Our Encyclical Letter of a few years ago,¹⁴ and based on the Sources of Revelation, which teaches that *the Mystical Body of Christ and the Roman Catholic Church are one and the same thing* [quae quidem docet corpus Christi mysticum et Ecclesiam Catholicam Romanam unum idemque esse].”

This leads to further questions: If the Church of Christ can *subsist* in the Catholic Church while also being *present and operative* in Orthodox churches, does this not mean that the Church of Christ is an entity greater in scope than the Roman Catholic Church, and therefore not identical to it as Pius XII taught? If the Church of Christ can be present and operative in the Orthodox churches *at the same time* the Orthodox churches lack communion with the *Catholic* Church, then how can the Church of Christ and the Catholic Church be one and the same thing?

For the past thirty-five years, traditionalists have been claiming that the term “subsists” was inserted by the conciliar liberals to imply that the Church of Christ is “larger” than, and thus not identical to, the Roman Catholic Church, whereas our neo-Catholic brethren insisted that “subsists” was merely a more powerful way of expressing that the Church of Christ *is* the Roman Catholic Church. Well, it appears that at least as far as the principal

author of DI is concerned, we were right and they were wrong. In an extensive interview in the German newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine* following publication of DI, Cardinal Ratzinger addressed various non-Catholic objections to DI's teaching on the nature of the Church. Here is what the Cardinal said about the Council's use of the term *subsistit*:

When the Council Fathers replaced the word "is" with the word "subsistit," they did so for a very precise reason. The concept expressed by "is" (to be) is far broader than that expressed by "to subsist." "To subsist" is a very precise way of being, that is, to be as a subject, which exists in itself. Thus the Council Fathers meant to say that *the being of the Church as such is a broader entity than the Roman Catholic Church*, but within the latter it acquires, in an incomparable way, the character of a true and proper subject.¹⁵

If the Mystical Body of Christ and the Roman Catholic Church are one and the same thing, then what exactly is this "Church of Christ" whose "being as such is a broader entity than the Roman Catholic Church," and which subsists in the Roman Catholic Church while also being present and operative in the Orthodox churches? How can there be an ecclesial entity broader than the Mystical Body itself? As Catholic laymen who believe they understand their Faith, we do not see how Cardinal Ratzinger's opinion can be reconciled with the teaching of Pius XII; and we also believe we have the right to ask how it *can* be reconciled.

It might be argued that what Ratzinger means to teach is that the Church of Christ is identical to the Mystical Body, and that the Mystical Body (being identical to the Church of Christ) subsists in the Catholic Church. But if the Church of Christ is identical to the Mystical Body, and if Pius XII taught that the *Roman Catholic Church* is identical to the Mystical Body, then the Church of Christ and the Roman Catholic Church must likewise be identical, since if A=B and C=B, then A=C. But in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* interview, Cardinal Ratzinger explicitly denies that the Church of Christ and the Roman Catholic Church are identical:

In his Encyclical, Pius XII said: The Roman Catholic Church "is" the one Church of Jesus Christ. This *seems* [!] to express a complete identity, which is why there was no Church outside the Catholic community. However, this is not the case: according to Catholic teaching, which Pius XII obviously also shared, the local Churches of the Eastern Church separated from Rome *are authentic local Churches*.

Cardinal Ratzinger provided no proof that what "seems" to be the complete identity between the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of Christ in the teaching of Pius XII is "not the case." Further, Ratzinger's *Frankfurter Allgemeine* interview provides no demonstration that Pius XII "shared" the teaching of DI 17 that the Orthodox churches are "authentic local churches." If Pius XII or the other preconciliar Popes had ever taught such a thing, one supposes their teaching would have been cited rather prominently in DI to show its continuity with the perennial Magisterium. To the contrary, in *Satis Cognitum*, Leo XIII taught the following about the ecclesial status of non-Catholic sees:

[I]t must be clearly understood that Bishops are deprived of the right and power of ruling, if they deliberately secede from Peter and his successors; because, by this secession, they are *separated from the foundation* on which the whole *edifice* must rest. They are therefore *outside the edifice* itself; and for this very reason they are *separated from the fold*, whose leader is the Chief Pastor; they are *exiled from the Kingdom*, the keys of which were given by Christ to Peter alone.

Likewise, in his letter on reunion with the Eastern churches, St. Pius X declared as follows:

Let, then, all those who strive to defend the cause of unity go forth; let them go forth wearing the helmet of faith,

holding to the anchor of hope, and inflamed with the fire of charity, to work unceasingly in this most heavenly enterprise; and God, the author and lover of peace, will hasten the day when the nations of the East shall *return* to Catholic unity, and, united to the Apostolic See, *after casting away their errors*, shall *enter the port of everlasting salvation*.

There is an urgent need for the Church to explain, in a definitive and binding pronouncement, how churches that lack all jurisdiction, are separated from the very foundation of the Church, are outside the edifice of the Church, not within the fold, exiled from the Kingdom, and not yet in the port of everlasting salvation, can be “true particular churches” or “authentic local churches.”

It is not enough to say that *individual members* of the schismatic Orthodox churches may be inculpable of the personal sin of schism. That is not the point here. The point is that, according to every preconiliar papal pronouncement on the subject, the Orthodox churches, *as institutions*, are in a state of schism—cut off from Peter, the very foundation of Christian unity. (Again, neo-Catholics have no problem saying this when it comes to the alleged schism of the Society of St. Pius X.) The departure of the Orthodox churches from a number of Catholic doctrines and their permission for the sin of divorce and remarriage demonstrate the dire consequences of that cutting off.

Granted, the Orthodox churches would *become* true particular churches the moment they abjured their errors, submitted to the Vicar of Christ and thereby entered “the port of eternal salvation,” to recall the words of St. Pius X. But then any Jew would become a Christian the moment he was baptized and professed the Faith. The *potential* state of churches or individual people is not the same as their actual state. But it seems to us that confusion between the actual and the potential is at the heart of ecumenism, and that DI 17 only perpetuates the confusion.

Indeed, if Leo XIII and St. Pius X were not addressing their teaching to the actual, objective condition of Orthodox churches and their adherents, what was the point of their teaching? Are we to suppose that these two great Popes lamented an ecclesial condition from which no one was actually suffering any longer, merely because the Orthodox schism had perdured for centuries and all the Orthodox could be presumed to be in good faith? Or has the ecclesial standing of the Orthodox somehow been elevated since the pontificates of Leo and Pius?

Furthermore, one must ask: Of *which* Church are the Orthodox churches said to be “true particular churches”? Are they true particular churches of the Catholic Church? This is obviously untenable. Are they, then, true particular churches of the posited Church of Christ, which DI says is “present and operative” in Orthodox churches despite their lack of communion with the Catholic Church? In that case, the Church of Christ would have to be regarded as an entity capable of being present and operative without the Catholic Church also being present and operative—meaning, once again, that the Church of Christ and the Catholic Church are distinct from each other, a conclusion whose harmony with Catholic teaching is not apparent.

Then again, if the Orthodox churches are said to be particular churches of *neither* the Catholic Church nor the Church of Christ, but merely particular churches standing alone, how can use of the phrase “particular churches” be justified, since the concept of a particular church has meaning only with reference to the universal church? By analogy, if

one of the American states had permanently seceded from the Union before the Civil War—say, Virginia—would we still call it a state today, or would it not simply be the independent commonwealth of Virginia?

More questions present themselves: If the Orthodox churches are said to be “true particular churches,” does this mean that they are part of the Mystical Body of Christ? But how could this be true, in view of the solemn teaching of Pius XII in *Mystici Corporis* that churches not in communion with the Pope are not part of the Mystical Body, since they are not part of the visible Catholic Church? Pius teaches:

Actually, *only* those are to be included as members of the Church who have been baptized and profess the true faith, and who have not been so unfortunate as to separate themselves from the unity of the Body, or been excluded by legitimate authority for grave faults committed.... It follows that *those who are divided in faith or government cannot be living in the unity of such a Body*, nor can they be living the life of its one Divine Spirit.

Here, Pius XII was repeating the teaching of his predecessor, Pius XI, in *Mortalium Animas*:

For since the mystical body of Christ, in the same manner as His physical body, is one, compacted and fitly joined together, it were foolish and out of place to say that the mystical body is made up of members which are disunited and scattered abroad: *whosoever therefore is not united with the body is no member of it*, neither is he in communion with Christ its head.

Pius XII clearly meant his teaching to apply to the schismatic churches of the East, whose members he described in his encyclical *Orientalis Ecclesiae* as “those who are wafted *towards* her [the Catholic Church], as it were, on wings of yearning desire”—the same yearning and desire Pius attributed to morally upright, good-faith Protestants in *Mystici Corporis*. In *Orientalis Ecclesiae*, Pius also spoke of “promoting the *reunion* of all our separated sons with *the one Church of Christ*.” Obviously, the Orthodox churches cannot be part of the Mystical Body if they are wafting *toward* the Catholic Church and need to be *reunited* with “the one Church of Christ,” which Pius XII clearly identifies with the Catholic Church. And if the Orthodox churches need to be *reunited* with “the one Church of Christ” referred to by Pius XII, how can “the Church of Christ” referred to by Cardinal Ratzinger *already* be “present and operative” in the Orthodox churches as “true particular churches”? Furthermore, how can the Orthodox churches “remain united” to us “by the closest of bonds,” as DI asserts, if, as Pius XII taught, there must be a *reunion* of the Orthodox with the one Church of Christ, i.e., the Catholic Church? What sense does it make to speak of the Church being united with those who have not yet *reunited* with her?

These questions all arise from the conundrum caused by the postconciliar “optimism” that refuses to view heretics and schismatics, even *objectively* speaking, as outside the Church—as in the defined dogma that *outside the Church there is no salvation*. Yet the Council of Florence was surely speaking about the *actual* state of *somebody* when it declared infallibly that the Church “firmly believes, professes and proclaims that those not living *within the Catholic Church*, not only pagans, but also Jews, heretics and schismatics, cannot become participants in eternal life, but will depart ‘into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels,’ unless before the end of life the same have been added to the flock....” If that was true of pagans, Jews, heretics and schismatics in the fifteenth century, it holds all the more today, in an age of moral depravity that even the likes of Luther would find unbelievable.

On the other hand, if it is admitted that the Orthodox churches are *not* part of the Mystical Body and thus are *outside* the one true Church, then how can they possibly be “true particular churches”? Can there be a true particular church outside the visible aspect of the Mystical Body, which is inseparable from its invisible aspect? How is this possible? DI offers no apparent answer to any of these questions.

Perhaps the difficulties we have noted here explain why DI contains not a single reference to the Catholic doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ. DI 16 does refer to “a single body of Christ,” but makes no mention of the *Mystical* Body of preconciliar teaching, consisting of a visible Church inseparably united to its soul, the Holy Ghost, and identified so precisely with the Roman Catholic Church by Pius XII and Leo XIII. Are we witnessing the “shedding” of more “terminological armor” for the sake of ecumenism?¹⁶

It is our sincere conviction as laymen that the attempted integration of Vatican II’s ambiguities with the teaching of the preconciliar Popes is completely bewildering, and seems to leave the doctrine of the Mystical Body in shambles. As a consequence, the whole concept of *membership* in the Church—the very term Father Ratzinger disparaged as “terminological armor”—is almost completely lost, and with it the teaching that Church membership is objectively necessary for salvation. Fifty years almost to the day after publication of Pius XII’s *Humani Generis*, the publication of *Dominus Iesus* finds us in what seems to be the very state of affairs Pius XII condemned in his encyclical:

Some say they are not bound by the doctrine, explained in Our Encyclical Letter of a few years ago, and based on the Sources of Revelation, which teaches that the Mystical Body of Christ and the Roman Catholic Church are one and the same thing. *Some reduce to a meaningless formula the necessity of belonging to the true Church in order to gain eternal salvation.*

Beyond its fundamental points of doctrine, which no Catholic can dispute, we believe DI raises more questions than it answers. Only the infallible Magisterium can explain what has happened to the teaching on the Mystical Body of Christ, and how that teaching can be integrated with a “Church of Christ” that is not identical to the Roman Catholic Church. Our own conviction is that such a pronouncement will never come. Rather, we believe that sooner or later we will see an end to the exercise of attempting a merger between the perennial clarity of the Magisterium and the ambiguous terminology of a council that departed from Scholastic theological precision, only on the assurance that the resulting novel formulations were not meant to serve as statements of binding Catholic doctrine.

Having said all this, we are not here denying that DI is a positive development in certain respects. Not only does it refute some blatant theological errors, but it also affirms two key doctrinal points that have been obscured in the haze of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue: that the salvation of every man is through Christ and Him alone, and that Protestant sects are not churches in the proper sense because they lack Holy Orders and the Holy Eucharist. Jewish and Protestant leaders have loudly objected to these teachings. Thus, for the first time in a long time, a Vatican document has at least proclaimed enough of the truth to give serious offense to Jews and Protestants. That, at least, is something. But even here the benefit has already been lost through Vatican backpedaling and equivocation.

Incensed by DI’s teaching that all salvation comes through Christ, the chief rabbi of

Rome, Elio Toaff (in whose synagogue John Paul II infamously appeared), announced that Jewish representatives would not be attending the “day of Judeo-Christian friendship” at the Vatican on October 3, causing the event to be canceled.¹⁷ As for the Protestants, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches expressed “dismay and disappointment” over DI’s long-overdue affirmation that Protestant sects were not churches.¹⁸ Manfred Kock, head of the Council of Evangelical Churches in Germany, complained that DI was “a step backward in ecumenical dialogue,” while the “Archbishop” of Canterbury, George Carey, huffed that DI failed to reflect “the deeper understanding that has been achieved through ecumenical dialogue and cooperation during the past thirty years.”¹⁹ Carey insisted that his pro-abortion debating society of lay people in clerical costumes “believes itself to be part of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church of Christ.”²⁰

That Jews and Protestants were put off by DI’s affirmation of such basic truths raises an obvious question: What on earth has the Vatican been *discussing* during the past thirty-five years of ecumenical and interreligious “dialogue”? After more than three decades of palaver about our respective religions, it seems that, as of the date of DI’s publication, the Vatican’s experts in dialogue had not reached matters as fundamental as the one mediation of Jesus Christ and the ecclesial status of Protestant sects. What better evidence is there that the interminable dialogues launched by Vatican II are an exercise in futility? Obviously, the Vatican’s Jewish and Protestant interlocutors have not advanced even one millimeter toward an acceptance of the divine claims of the Catholic Church. Rather, they are outraged to learn that the Catholic Church has not advanced as far as they had thought toward *their* positions. How long will it take for the Vatican to recognize that non-Catholics view “dialogue” with the Church in the same way the Soviets viewed “peaceful coexistence” with the West—as a means to wear down the opposition while strengthening their own position?

From the Jewish and Protestant perspectives, it has appeared, at least in the immediate aftermath of DI’s publication, that the whole process of “dialogue” has been nothing but a protracted tease, suggesting a result that could never really have occurred—namely, that the Catholic Church would finally admit that Judaism and Protestantism were divinely recognized co-equals of herself. But let us be honest where the neo-Catholics are not: It is Pope John Paul II’s own actions and pronouncements over the years that have contributed mightily to these false expectations.

We cannot forget that this is the only Pope to enter a synagogue in 2,000 years—in tribute, not to preach conversion to Christ. We have noted that in various speeches, exhortations and addresses of a non-Magisterial character, John Paul II and his Vatican collaborators have referred to the Jews as “our elder brothers” and “the people of the Covenant,” proclaiming their “irrevocable calling” and pronouncing the Old Covenant “irrevocable,” without placing any qualification on these affirmations. His Holiness has prayed at the Wailing Wall that God would forgive the putative sins of Christians against “the people of the Covenant,” as if that place were a locus of communion with God, rather than an alleged remnant of the very temple God destroyed to mark the passing of the Old Covenant.²¹ Not once in the past twenty-three years, to our knowledge, has His Holiness even suggested, much less explicitly taught, that the mission of the Church to make disciples of all nations extends to the Jews. The same is true of the Vatican apparatus as a

whole and virtually the entire postconciliar hierarchy, as we have shown by various examples.

As for Protestant expectations, throughout his pontificate John Paul has been conducting joint liturgical services and administering public blessings side by side with Anglican, Lutheran and other Protestant ministers, even in St. Peter's Basilica itself, and in *Ut Unum Sint* he repeatedly refers to these false prophets as "disciples of Christ," despite their preaching of all manner of gross heresy and immorality. Were the Protestants expected to infer from these activities and pronouncements that they were *not* the ministers of true churches?

Given these facts, it is hardly surprising that Jewish and Protestant leaders would perceive a double-cross when the same Pope suddenly affirmed (via Cardinal Ratzinger) that all salvation was through Christ and that Protestant sects were not true churches. We would venture to say that this is why DI was issued by Cardinal Ratzinger instead of the Pope himself. Would it not have been impossibly awkward for John Paul II to sign a document that signaled at least a partial retreat in principle from what his entire pontificate has implied in practice?

Thus we think it is fair to say that DI is intended at least in part to put the brakes on a situation largely of John Paul II's own making, even though anonymous theologians from Asia have been assigned all the blame. The proof is in the pudding: *No document of John Paul II regarding Christ, ecclesiology, salvation or non-Catholic religions has ever provoked protests like those elicited by DI.* That is because Jews and Protestants have been uniformly pleased, even delighted, with the Pope's pronouncements and innovations in these areas. It does no good to deny the obvious.

As the flap over DI illustrates, the novelty of postconciliar "dialogue" exists in tension with the Church's divine commission to preach to non-Catholics, by the peremptory authority of God Himself, in order to convert souls to the one true religion. The past thirty-five years of meandering ecumenical and interreligious dialogue do not square well with Our Lord's injunction: "And whosoever shall not receive you, *nor hear your words*: going forth out of that house or city shake off the dust from your feet. Amen I say to you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city" (Matt. 10:14-15). What are the conciliar "dialogues" if not interminable conversations with those who will not hear His words? Considering their promotion of abortion alone, are not the adamant unbelievers of today also headed for a fate worse than that of Sodom and Gomorrah?

This tension between "dialogue" and the Church's perennial mission of converting souls has produced a kind of institutional schizophrenia in the Church. Churchmen who are supposed to proclaim the truth are also compelled *not* to proclaim it, lest the dialogue come to a screeching halt, as it did with Toaff and his fellow rabbis in the protest over DI. This institutional schizophrenia became frankly symptomatic in Cardinal Cassidy's attempt to induce Toaff to come back to the dialogue table. Within a few weeks of DI's publication, the Cardinal offered to the press the very revealing excuse that DI "is not directed to the ecumenical and interreligious realm, but to the academic world." Cassidy criticized the "scholastic" nature of the text, which requires it to say: "this is true and this isn't."²² Well, we can't have that!

In a slap at Cardinal Ratzinger, Cassidy said that “those of us whose ears are more attuned to the nuances of dialogue” would have written a different document—that is, a document that does a better job of obscuring the truth.²³ Cassidy minimized the importance of DI by claiming it was really meant for “theology professors in India, because in Asia there is a theological problem over the oneness of salvation.”²⁴

Cassidy’s comments demonstrate that in order to accommodate “dialogue” the institutional Church has given itself a split personality: one personality engages in dialogue, while the other (at least in theory) sets forth Catholic doctrine. This is a kind of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde arrangement. Dr. Jekyll (Cardinal Cassidy) inhabits the realm of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, while Mr. Hyde (Cardinal Ratzinger) inhabits the “scholastic” realm. In the case of DI, both personalities made their appearance at the same time, causing great commotion among the Church’s “dialogue partners.”

The backpedaling from DI continued when the official theologian of the papal household, Fr. Georges Cottier, OP, as much as stated that its publication to the world was all a big mistake—like Mr. Hyde escaping from the laboratory. “To be sure,” Cottier said, “*Dominus Iesus* was not addressed to a Jewish audience.... However, it would be an illusion to think that today such a document could remain exclusively in the hands of the particular audience to which it was addressed. With the international press coverage, a statement like this is immediately brought to the attention of the general audience.”²⁵

Just a moment: DI was introduced *at a press conference called by the Vatican* on September 5, 2000. Why, then, would Cottier imply that the “international press coverage” of DI was an accident the Vatican regrets? In any event, the problem as Cottier saw it was that because of press coverage the Jews *found out* what the Church still teaches about the sole mediation of Christ! Do we need more proof that the conciliar “dialogues” depend upon hiding as much of the truth as possible, lest it offend the other party? Bushel basket, anyone?

Soothing ruffled feathers, Cottier assured Jewish leaders that “while [DI] repeats that the Church ‘possesses’ the fullness of the means of salvation, it does not exclude salvation for the Jews.” What does that mean? Did Fr. Cottier intend to suggest that the Jews have sufficient means of salvation without faith in Christ or baptism, even if the Church can offer them the “fullness” of means? Cottier did not explain himself. Perhaps this was intentional, given that the very fuel of “dialogue” is unresolved ambiguity.

Cardinal Ratzinger himself began backpedaling almost immediately at the September 5 press conference itself. According to the Italian bishops’ newspaper *Avvenire*, when asked whether DI taught that the Jews could not be saved without faith in Christ, Ratzinger offered the following non-answer: “Every Catholic theologian recognizes the salvific role of that people.”²⁶ Granted that “salvation is of the Jews,” as our Lord taught us (John 4:22), but as He says immediately afterward: “But the hour is coming, *and now is*, when the true adorers shall adore the Father in spirit and in truth”—that is, the Messiah has arrived and shall be adored by those who worship truly. Having rejected the Messiah, however, what “salvific role” does modern Israel play today? When pressed on whether an *individual* Jew could be saved without recognizing Christ, the Cardinal replied that “it is *not necessary* that he recognize Christ the savior, and it is not given to us to explore how

salvation, the gift of God, can come even for him.”²⁷ Ratzinger went on to say that “Christ is a reality that changes history, even for those who do not recognize him.” Are we to take from this that Christ saves the Jews whether they recognize him or not, simply because His existence “changes history”?

However, it appears that at the same press conference Ratzinger gave a more nuanced answer, apparently in response to another questioner:

[W]e are in agreement that a Jew, and this is true for believers of other religions, *does not need to know or acknowledge Christ as the Son of God in order to be saved*, if there are insurmountable impediments, of which is he not blameworthy, to preclude it. However ... Christ in history affects us all, even those who are opposed or cannot encounter Christ. This is a reality that transforms history; it is something important for others, without violating their conscience.²⁸

Now, which is it—that a Jew need not recognize Christ in order to be saved, or that a Jew need not recognize Christ *if* there is an “insurmountable impediment”? Note also that Cardinal Ratzinger here repeats the suggestion that the mere presence of Christ in history “affects” Jews who reject him. What does this *mean*? One thing all these remarks mean is a diminution of the impact of DI’s teaching that Christ is the sole mediator and the only way of salvation for all men—a teaching DI itself nuances nearly to the point of irrelevance.

Since the publication of DI was supposed to be the occasion for clarifying confusion about Christ and salvation, why not end a long period of postconciliar confusion by stating forthrightly what the Church always taught before the Council: “Yes, *objectively* speaking, a Jew must come to Christ and be baptized in order to be saved, just like everyone else in the human race; for Christ is God and He commissioned His Church to make disciples of all nations. This is what the Catholic Church has always taught and always will teach.” Instead, Cardinal Ratzinger immediately focused on “insurmountable impediments.” And what is an “insurmountable impediment” in the first place? Is this notion something even broader than the ever-expanding category of “invincible ignorance”? Cardinal Ratzinger gave no indications. However, if one of Rabbi Toaff’s own predecessors as chief rabbi of Rome, Rabbi Israel Zolli, was able to follow God’s grace into the Roman Catholic Church immediately after World War II, then why not Rabbi Toaff himself or any other Jew alive today—especially after thirty-five years of “Jewish-Christian dialogue,” which was supposed to engender greater understanding of the Church on the part of Jews?

Or is the mere fact of *being* a Jew, immersed in Jewish religion and culture and facing ostracism if one converts, now to be considered an “insurmountable impediment” to conversion? If so, then no Jew from St. Paul to the present day has ever been subjectively obliged to join the Church; nor has anyone else in religious, emotional or cultural circumstances that would make conversion difficult. But this would mean that the only people obliged to become Catholics are those who would not find conversion unduly burdensome. Everyone else has an “insurmountable impediment.” That is the very thesis being promoted by some of the more liberal exponents of “invincible ignorance,” who speak of “unconscious psychological blocks” and other elaborate pseudo-scientific excuses for not becoming a Catholic that have proliferated since Vatican II. There is very little place for the power of God’s grace in this kind of semi-Pelagian thinking. We are not here contending that Cardinal Ratzinger himself actually teaches anything like this, but in

view of the veiled nature of his remarks it is difficult to know what he *is* teaching. A clarification of DI's "clarifications" is already urgently needed.

Cardinal Ratzinger's lack of clarity persisted at an October 6 press conference to promote the publication of his new book, *God and the World*. When asked if "Jews must, or should, acknowledge Jesus as the messiah," Ratzinger answered:

We believe that. That does not mean that we should force Christ upon them. The fact remains, however, that our *Christian conviction* is that Christ is also the Messiah of Israel. Certainly it is in the hands of God how and when the unification of Jews and Christians in the people of God will take place.²⁹

The duty of the Jews to embrace Christ is a truth that God has revealed to all men, including the Jews. Yet Cardinal Ratzinger, in the manner of all postconciliar churchmen, seems instinctively to present revealed truth as merely the belief or conviction of Christians—which is obviously so, but hardly what the question required. Surely Cardinal Ratzinger understands as well as anybody that to modern ears the words "we believe" mean only one thing: "That's what we believe, but you don't necessarily have to believe it." Why do modern churchmen insist on presenting divine truths necessary for salvation as if they were merely the consensus of a group of people called Catholics? The Church does not teach that Jews are obliged to convert because the Church "believes" this; the Church teaches this *because God has revealed it and thus it is true*. If one is asked whether 2 + 2 is equal to 4, one does not say, "I *believe* that." One says yes. When will today's churchmen recover the ability to say yes in response to a simple question about what is true? "Let your speech be yea, yea, no, no. But that which is over and above these is of evil" (Matt. 5:37).

It should also be noted that Ratzinger subtly shifted from what the questioner wished to know—i.e., whether individual Jews have a duty to embrace the Messiah—to "the unification of Jews and Christians in the people of God"—not in the Catholic Church, of course!—at some unknown point in the hazy future. The question of individual conversion to Christ for *salvation* was obscured and avoided by yet another vague conciliar-style reference to "unity" and communal activity, as opposed to the eternal fate of individual souls, which is the Church's primary concern. In keeping with Vatican II's novel focus on the collective, and its equally novel *loss* of focus on the Last Things (a development John Paul II himself has admitted), Ratzinger stated that "we wait for the instant in which *Israel* will say 'yes' to Christ, but we know that it has a special mission in history now ... which is significant for the world."³⁰ Here is yet another exercise in distraction: the question is the eternal salvation of *individual Jews* through faith in Christ, not some unidentified "special mission" for Israel in today's world. At any rate, what "special mission" does the Cardinal mean, and what does it have to do with the salvation of Jews as individual people who have as much need of the grace of Christ as any Catholic?

As things now stand, Cardinal Ratzinger has yet to give a direct answer to one of the most important questions the public has about DI: Putting aside all the excuses one can conjure up for particular cases of subjective inculpability, are the Jews under the same *objective* obligation as the rest of humanity to believe in Christ the Savior and join His Church in order to be saved? *Yes or no?*

With the publication of *The Jewish People and the Holy Scriptures in the Christian Bible* (which we discussed in [Chapter 8](#)), the post-DI backpedaling on the question of

Jewish conversion has turned into a complete rout of the Church's traditional teaching, as evidenced by the universal expressions of delight over the book, which Rabbi Joseph Levi called "a total novelty." And this is the state of affairs which obtains after promulgation of what was supposed to have been a monumental reaffirmation of the sole and unique mediation of Jesus Christ as the Savior of all men, including the Jews.

Cardinal Ratzinger's post-DI equivocations concerning the Lutherans represent another apparent retreat from the Church's traditional claims. When asked what DI teaches about the salvation of Luther's followers, Ratzinger said:

We all recognize objectively that the Church should be one, and we should all desire to find ourselves in a renewed Catholic Church on the road toward the future. However, *this objective necessity must be distinguished from the state of conscience of persons who learn their faith in their community and are nourished by the Word of God in it.*³¹

What does Cardinal Ratzinger mean by "learn *their* faith"? What about *the* Faith? And what does the Cardinal mean by "nourished"? Are we to understand that merely because Protestants "learn their faith" and feel "nourished" by the grossly corrupted version of "the Word of God" provided in their pro-abortion, pro-contraception, pro-divorce "ecclesial communities," they are *ipso facto* in a state of conscience that exculpates them from their failure to enter the one true Church? How is this different from saying that contented Protestants are not obliged to become Catholics? Cardinal Ratzinger might not have meant to suggest this, but how can the tenor of such remarks do anything but confirm Protestants in their errors?

Here, as with the Jews, Cardinal Ratzinger casts the conversion of Lutherans solely in terms of the objective necessity "that the Church should be one." Once again, in typical postconciliar fashion, the concepts of unity and communal activity obscure the duties owed to God by individual men. In any case, the Church is already one, and the Lutherans are not in it. The true objective necessity is—as it has always been—that the Lutherans abandon Luther's religion and return to the one true Church.

Ratzinger's backpedaling continued in an interview on October 9 in the German newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine*. Here Ratzinger observed that when the Council stated that the true Church "subsists" in the Catholic Church, which DI repeats, the Council "wished to say also that, although the Lord maintains his promise, *an ecclesial reality exists outside the catholic community*, and it is just this contradiction [?] which is the strongest impulse to pursue unity."³² So while DI states that Protestant sects are not churches in the proper sense, we are evidently to understand this to mean that there is nonetheless an "ecclesial reality" in these sects outside the "catholic community" that somehow presents an unacceptable "contradiction" to the Church's unitary existence.

An "ecclesial reality" is apparently something less than a true church, but something more than no church at all. What the Protestants are supposed to infer from this notion is anybody's guess. Does it mean they already possess enough "church" to be saved? If they do, then why should any Protestant become a Catholic? And if they do not, then what is the point of stressing an "ecclesial reality" that is not a true church sufficient for salvation?

Ratzinger also declared that "the Catholic Church acknowledges that other Christians participate in the life of *the Church*."³³ Which Church? The Catholic Church? The Church

of Christ? Or the “ecclesial reality” outside the “catholic community” that we must make part of the Church? How do the members of the pro-abortion Lutheran World Federation, for example, participate in “the life of the Church”?

Minimizing the doctrinal import of his own document, Ratzinger protested that “the ecclesiological and ecumenical questions” in DI “take up only a small portion of the document” and that “the real point of the statement was to invite all Christians to rededicate themselves to Jesus Christ in this Jubilee.”³⁴ So DI was not intended primarily as “a new *Syllabus*” as the neo-Catholics proclaim, but rather as a kind of theological pep talk for the great ecumenical family of Christians we have all become, thanks to “ecumenical dialogue.” We are apparently supposed to overlook the fact that many of the “Christians” in this ecumenical family insist that mortal sins are positive goods and that the Catholic Church is a medieval invention.

Finally, the Pope inevitably took his own turn at backing away from DI. It happened as follows:

It seems that the aforementioned World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) was very upset that DI declared that “the church of Christ ... continues to *exist fully* only in the Catholic Church.” The Church is now so tightly bound by the chains of “ecumenical dialogue” that our “dialogue partners” object if the Vatican rattles the chains by attempting to defend even the ambiguities of Vatican II. Does the phrase “exist fully” imply that the Church of Christ exists *partially* in other places, such as WARC? If not, then why use the phrase “exist *fully*” at all, as opposed to saying simply, “the Church of Christ continues to exist only in the Catholic Church”? The use of the phrase “*continues to exist*” is also problematic. Could the situation change?

The Secretary of WARC fired off a letter to Cardinal Cassidy, complaining that “when statements in that declaration seem to contradict commitment to ecumenical cooperation within the Christian family, or *even to take us back to a pre- Vatican II spirit*, we are concerned.... Among other things, it raises questions concerning how we can continue in dialogue with integrity—trusting and respecting one another.” But WARC need not have worried about any return to the dreaded “pre-Vatican II spirit,” otherwise known as the traditional attitude of the Catholic Church. The mere threat that WARC was going to walk prompted a personal appearance by the Vicar of Christ at the all-important meeting of the “dialogue commission” of Catholics and WARC. The Pope assured WARC that “the commitment of the Catholic Church to ecumenical dialogue is irrevocable.”

A few days later the Pope assured all the Protestants in the world that DI “does not mean to express little consideration for other churches and ecclesial communities.” His Holiness declared that far from being a retrenchment, DI “expresses once again the same ecumenical passion which is at the core of my encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*.”³⁵ The message was clear: Rest easy, all you Protestants: DI changes nothing.

With all due respect to the Pope, after more than thirty-five years of utterly fruitless ecumenical activity, have we not heard enough of this sort of thing? Why should the Immaculate Bride of Christ have *any* consideration for “ecclesial communities” that are nothing but human organizations arising from the rebellion of the King of England and the monk of Wittenberg? How can the Bride of Christ have anything other than *righteous*

contempt for “communities” whose doctrines are an ever-deepening pit of theological and moral decay? And how much longer must we endure the postconciliar paradox of increasing “respect” for decreasingly respectable organizations?

It is also legitimate to ask how it is possible for the Pope to make “ecumenism” into something “irrevocable” when it was unheard of before 1965, and when, according to the neo-Catholics, not even the 1,500-year-old received and approved rite of Mass could be made irrevocable by the most solemn papal decree of St. Pius V. And what does the Pope mean by “ecumenical passion”? Is it his desire for Christian unity? If so, then why does the Holy Father not call the dissidents home to Rome in the manner of every one of his predecessors, including Pius XI in *Mortalium Animos*:

Let them therefore return to their common Father, who, forgetting the insults previously heaped on the Apostolic See, will receive them in the most loving fashion. For if, as they continually state, they long to be united with Us and ours, *why do they not hasten to enter the Church*, “the Mother and mistress of all Christ’s faithful”?

Why indeed?

As far as Jews and other non-Christians are concerned, the Holy Father let it be known in his Message to Cardinal Cassidy on September 21, 2000, that “interreligious dialogue” will continue just as before DI, because interreligious dialogue is a “providential gift for our time.” How do we know this? Because the pan-religious prayer meeting at Assisi in 1986 “had an explosive *spiritual force*: It was like a spring from which new *energies of peace* began to flow. For this reason, I hoped that the ‘spirit of Assisi’ would not be extinguished, but could spread throughout the world and inspire new witnesses of peace and dialogue. Indeed, this world, marked by so many conflicts, misunderstandings and prejudices, has the utmost need for peace and dialogue.... You [Cardinal Cassidy] know well that dialogue does not ignore real differences, but neither does it deny *our common state as pilgrims bound for a new heaven and a new earth*. Dialogue is also an invitation to strengthen that friendship which neither separates nor confuses. We must all be bolder on this journey, so that men and women of our world, to *whatever people or belief they* belong, can discover that they are *children of the one God* and brothers and sisters to one another....”

What can one say? In view of papal statements like these, DI’s declaration that the followers of other religions are in a “gravely deficient” situation will surely not be interpreted to mean that they are actually facing eternal damnation unless they enter the Church. Rather, as we mentioned earlier, DI itself concludes by stating that baptism and membership in the Church are necessary, not for salvation as such, but “in order to participate fully in communion with God.” No salvation outside the Church seems to have become no *full participation* outside the Church.

At the Day of Prayer for Peace in Assisi in 2002, which Vito Messori rightly criticized for promoting religious indifferentism, the Vatican arranged for representatives of the religions of the world to ride on a “peace train” from Rome to Assisi and pray for world peace at the Pope’s invitation, according to their various “traditions.” No one seemed especially concerned about their “gravely deficient” condition. Indeed, what other impression can one take from this event than that the Vatican apparatus now views all religions as passengers on the same train—the train of “participation in the one mediation of Christ” (cf. *Dominus Iesus*)—even if they ride in different cars? As always, it seems,

Cardinal Ratzinger frankly confirmed the traditionalist diagnosis. The Zenit news agency uncritically reported the Cardinal's remarks on the pan-religious "peace train" as follows:

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger described the train that took religious leaders from the Vatican to Assisi as "a symbol of our pilgrimage in history.... *Are we not all, perhaps, passengers on the same train?*... Is not the fact that the train chose as its destiny peace and justice, and the reconciliation of peoples *and religions*, a great inspiration and, at the same time, a splendid sign of hope?"³⁶

Such remarks hardly reflect a pressing concern about the "gravely deficient" condition of the followers of "other religions." The apparent lack of such concern is remarkable, given that the Assisi event itself brought modern-day pantheists and polytheists into close proximity with the Vicar of Christ and into the Vatican itself. *What possible claim of "invincible ignorance" of the true religion can exist for these people*, who fly on jet planes to attend peace conferences with the Pope and have access to computer technology that puts the Gospel and the entire teaching of the Catholic Church at their fingertips—if only they will lift a finger? A modern-day witch doctor who attends Vatican gatherings and makes use of the Internet hardly qualifies as the hypothetical blissfully ignorant pagan on a desert isle. Will no one at the Vatican warn these people that eternal punishment awaits those who do not follow Christ once they learn of Him and His Church?

A mere thirty-seven years before the "springtime of Vatican II," Pius XI directed the entire Church to pray publicly the following prayer on the Feast of Christ the King:

Be Thou King of those who are deceived by erroneous opinions, or whom discord keeps aloof, and call them back to the harbor of truth and unity of faith, so that soon there may be but one flock and one shepherd. Be Thou King of all those who are still involved in the darkness of idolatry or of Islamism and refuse not to draw them all into the light and kingdom of God. Turn Thine eyes of mercy toward the children of that race, once Thy chosen people. Of old, they called down upon themselves the Blood of the Savior, may it now descend upon them a laver of redemption and life.

That the present-day Vatican would regard this prayer as unthinkable, even though it was promulgated within the lifetime of John Paul II, says a great deal about the nature of the current crisis. *After 2,000 years, the Church has suddenly stopped calling for the conversion of non-Catholics to save them from hell.* It is that simple. Masses are no longer being offered for the conversion of Protestants, Jews, Muslims and other non-believers, although a single papal Mass for that intention would accomplish infinitely more for the cause of true spiritual unity than endless "dialogue" or pan-religious prayer meetings at Assisi. But the Church has laid down such spiritual arms, lest the parties to "dialogue" be offended by their use.

It is self-evident that in the postconciliar period the Church's traditional solicitude for the salvation of individual souls outside her visible confines has been suppressed. DI's slight movement toward a recovery of that tradition has been downplayed by the Vatican itself in response to Jewish and Protestant howls of protest. This is why the publication of *Dominus Iesus* is such an important event: the Vatican's response to the document's hostile reception demonstrates that we are nowhere near the end of the postconciliar crisis. In fact, the crisis continues to deepen.

Little more than two years after the publication of *Dominus Iesus*, we seem to have arrived where we started: the Vatican is no longer willing to say forthrightly to the world that Jews, Protestants and the followers of other religions are *obliged* to belong to the one true Church, or even to have explicit faith in Christ, in order to save their souls. The Jews

have a “special mission” until “Israel” decides to join the Church. The Protestants are “nourished by the Word of God” in the “ecclesial reality” of their “ecclesial communities.” The followers of other religions possess “spiritual riches,” “spiritual treasures” and “sacred books” that “sustain their life relationship to God,” and they are united with us as “pilgrims bound for a new heaven and a new earth” in the spirit of Assisi. It appears that the only people who must be Catholics are Catholics—unless they decide to convert to Judaism, in which case prelates like the late Cardinal O’Connor (may God rest his soul) will give them a blessing on national television.

The good points presented in DI have done nothing to change a situation in which the defined dogma *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* has become in practice the empty formula condemned by Pius XII in *Humani Generis*. Weakened by the viruses of ecumenism and dialogue, the human element of the Church hobbles along on an ecumenical and interreligious road to nowhere—an enfeebled caricature of what it was less than forty years ago, publicly arguing with itself over how the world should take its own pronouncements.

Dominus Iesus has not proven to be the answer to the postconciliar crisis. No Vatican document will be. It is our conviction that the only way out of the crisis is *the full restoration of Roman Catholic ecclesiastical tradition, classical theology, classical preaching and Scholastic philosophy*. That is, a restoration of the Church to her basic condition a mere forty years ago. We are also convinced that such a restoration is no nostalgic dream, but an inevitable provision of God’s providence, for the current abysmal state of the Church’s liturgy, preaching and general discipline cannot possibly serve as the foundation for her mission in the future. Sooner or later, God will intervene, if those who govern the Church will not do what has to be done to bring her back to health.

In the next [chapter](#) we consider one way, perhaps the only way, that this restoration can be accomplished, humanly speaking, in the present epoch.

1. DZ, 460.

2. Karl Rahner, *The Content of Faith* (New York: Cross Road, 1999), p. 393; excerpting from *Theological Investigations X*, trans. David Bourke (New York: Herder and Herder, 1973), pp. 14–24.

3. Ibid., p. 399.

4. *Fatima Crusader*, issue 29 (1992), p. 22.

5. Letter of February 11, 1949.

6. Cf. Fr. Martin von Cochem, O.S.F.C., *The Four Last Things* (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1900), p. 175.

7. *Die letzte Sitzungsperiode des Konzils* (Cologne, 1966), p. 60; cited in Fr. Johannes Dormann, *Pope John Paul II’s Theological Journey to the Prayer Meeting of Religions in Assisi, Part I: From the Second Vatican Council to the Papal Elections* (Kansas City, MO: Angelus Press, 1994), p. 29.

8. Stratford Caldecott, “Christianity and Other Religions,” *The Sower*, September 1999.

9. While DI begins with a citation to Mark 16:15–16—“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; he who does not believe will be condemned”—the verse is never discussed or even mentioned again.

10. Joseph Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II* (New York: Paulist Press, 1966), pp. 61, 68.

11. Pius XI, *Mortalium Animos*: “ [I]t were foolish and out of place to say that the mystical body is made up of members which are disunited and scattered abroad: whosoever therefore is not united with the body is *no member* of it, neither is he in communion with Christ its head”; Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*: “Actually *only* those are to be included as

members of the Church who have been baptized and profess the true faith, and who have not been so unfortunate as to separate themselves from the unity of the Body, or been excluded by legitimate authority for grave faults committed.”

[12.](#) See [chapter 8](#), [note 15](#).

[13.](#) *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, September 22, 2000.

[14.](#) That is, *Mystici Corporis*.

[15.](#) *L'Osservatore Romano*, Italian edition, October 8, 2000, p. 4: “Quando i Padri conciliar sostituirono la parola ‘è’ con la parola ‘subsistit’ lo fecero con un scopo ben preciso. Il concetto espresso da ‘è’ (essere) è più ampio di quello espresso da ‘sussistere.’ ‘Sussistere’ è un modo ben preciso di essere, ossia essere come soggetto che esiste in sé. I Padri conciliari dunque intendevano dire che l’essere della Chiesa in quanto tale è un’entità più ampia della Chiesa cattolica romana.”

The *L'Osservatore* translation, however, curiously omits several key words from the Cardinal’s remarks to *Frankfurter Allgemeine*. The original German reads, “... die Konzilsväter das von Pius XII gebrauchte Wort ‘ist’ durch ‘subsistit’ ersetzen”—literally, “... the Council Fathers replaced the word ‘is,’ used by Pius XII, with ‘subsistit.’” This apparently deliberate omission is of great importance. *L'Osservatore*’s translation makes it appear that the word “is,” as in the Mystical Body of Christ is the Catholic Church, was simply a way of speaking that had somehow become part of the Church’s intellectual milieu. But the Cardinal’s German words reveal an acknowledgment that the use of the word “is” in this context *can be traced directly to a pope*, and a recent one at that: Pius XII. Excising these words obscures the degree of novelty contained in Ratzinger’s position.

The *L'Osservatore* translation is also deficient in another regard: In the last sentence of this passage, the original German reads, “So wollten die Väter sagen: Das Sein der Kirche als solches *reicht viel weiter* als die römisch-katholische Kirche,”—literally, “Thus the Fathers meant to say: the being of the Church as such *extends much further* than the Roman Catholic Church.” The *L'Osservatore* translation, above, which translates this phrase to say that “the being of the Church as such is a broader entity than the Roman Catholic Church,” once again plays down the radical nature of what Ratzinger is saying. “Extends much further” is a fairly startling statement, certainly more troubling than the admittedly problematic “is a broader entity.”

The entire passage in the original German reads: “Als die Konzilsväter das von Pius XII gebrauchte Wort ‘ist’ durch ‘subsistit’ ersetzen, hatte dies einen sehr genauen Sinn. Der Begriff ‘ist’ (sein) ist weiter als der Begriff ‘subsistieren.’ ‘Subsistieren’ ist eine bestimmte Weise des Seins, nämlich Sein als eigenes in sich stehendes Subjekt. So wollten die Väter sagen: Das Sein der Kirche als solches reicht viel weiter als die römisch-katholische Kirche, aber in ihr hat sie in einzigartiger Weise den Charakter eines eigenen Subjekts.” *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, September 22, 2000.

[16.](#) *Mystici Corporis* is relegated to a footnote in support of a reference unrelated to the doctrine of the Mystical Body. See DI, footnote 92.

[17.](#) Zenit news account, September 26, 2000.

[18.](#) Catholic News Service, September 25, 2000.

[19.](#) *Avvenire* On Line, September 27, 2000.

[20.](#) [CWNews.com](#) report, September 5, 2000.

[21.](#) See, for example, *Discourse at the Rome Synagogue*, April 13, 1986; General Audience of April 28, 1999.

[22.](#) “*Dominus Iesus* Not an Ecumenical Document, Cardinal Says,” [CWNews.com](#), September 26, 2000.

[23.](#) Ibid.

[24.](#) “Cardinal Cassidy Appeals to Jews to Renew Dialogue,” Zenit news story, September 26, 2000.

[25.](#) “Vatican-Jewish ‘Misunderstandings’ Seen,” [CWNews.com](#), September 26, 2000.

[26.](#) “Ogni teologo cattolico riconosce il ruolo salvifico di quel popolo.”

[27.](#) “Non è necessario che riconosca Cristo salvatore e non ci è dato di esplorare come la salvezza, dono di Dio, possa venire anche per lui.”

[28.](#) “Are Believers of Other Religions Saved?” Zenit news story, September 5, 2000.

[29.](#) *National Catholic Reporter*, October 6, 2000.

[30.](#) Ibid.

[31.](#) Ibid.

[32.](#) Quoted in *L'Osservatore Romano*, Italian daily edition, October 8, 2000; translation ours.

[33.](#) CWNews.com, October 9, 2000.

[34.](#) Ibid.

[35.](#) VIS news report, October 1, 2000.

[36.](#) Zenit news report, February 21, 2002.

The Great Façade

Where do we traditionalists stand today, and where do we go from here? With Msgr. Gamber, we ask: “Is this the spring people had hoped would emerge from the Second Vatican Council? Instead of a genuine renewal in our Church, we have seen only novelties. Instead of our religious life entering a period of new invigoration, as has happened in the past, what we see now is a form of Christianity that has turned towards the world.”¹

Despite a mountain of evidence that the current novelties have been ruinous for the Church, the search for the conciliar apotheosis goes on, with the Vatican staging one novel publicity stunt after another aimed at demonstrating the emergence at last of the “new humanity” extolled in *Gaudium et Spes* and the “new advent of the Church connected with the approaching end of the second millennium” proclaimed by John Paul II in *Redemptor Hominis*. More than thirty-five years after the Council, we are still bobbing in its tempest of ineffable intuitions, passed off as “developments” of Catholic doctrine.

The spirit of Vatican II continues to prowl about the Church, seeking some epochal manifestation of itself—a kind of lost soul in search of its body. Since 1985, we have been told that the World Youth Days the Pope invented are just such a manifestation. At World Youth Day 2000, Cardinal Stafford pointed to the throngs of youngsters gathered in Saint Peter’s Square and declared: “Here are the children of Vatican II!” Here indeed they are. But how many of these “children of Vatican II” could answer correctly ten basic questions about the Catholic faith? And how many of the “children of Vatican II” from the first World Youth Day in 1985 are practicing the Faith today, including the Church’s teaching on marriage and procreation, now that they have reached adulthood?

Behind the façade of these great spectacles lurks the reality of an entire generation deprived of anything approaching a solid formation in the Catholic faith; these youngsters are practically defenseless against the forces of the world. A striking demonstration of this is a recent fundraising piece published by Catholic Answers, whose president, Karl Keating, notes with alarm that “*Thousands of Catholic teenagers are in danger of losing their faith at the Pope’s ‘World Youth Day’ in July [2002] (his emphasis).*” The dire threat to the faith of thousands of young Catholics is the anti-Catholic literature of Chick Publications, which Protestant fundamentalists plot to distribute at all the World Youth Days. Keating cites as the worst example of this “vicious anti-Catholic propaganda” a ludicrous comic book in which a faceless Christ, sitting in the Judgment Seat, sends a Catholic to hell because the poor man thought that he could be saved by going to Mass and confession and praying his Rosary, “just like the Pope does.” Keating urgently requests donations so that he and his organization—not the priests who have charge of these youngsters, not their bishops, not the Pope—can save the faith of thousands of World Youth Day attendees. This will be done by handing out a Catholic Answers pamphlet to counter the Jack Chick comic books.

Without denying that this is a worthy and even necessary undertaking that Catholics

should support, it must be observed that its very necessity reveals the utter bankruptcy of the conciliar “renewal.” These “children of Vatican II,” surely among the Pope’s most fervent admirers and the very future of the Church, are apparently so ignorant of Roman Catholicism that one must be afraid that a *comic book* could suddenly persuade *thousands* of them that the very pillars of their religion—the Mass, the sacraments, devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary—are damnable inventions that will cause them to go to hell! In which case, one must ask: What exactly do these youngsters think they are doing when they travel to the World Youth Days in such vast numbers? Are they going to show their loyalty to the Vicar of Christ and the Church he heads, or merely to attend a festival presided over by a beloved celebrity, whose actual influence over their lives is less than that of an asinine comic book? How can they be said to be followers of the Pope at all, if they could be so easily persuaded that the Pope and the Church have usurped Christianity with false and damnable claims? Is there no one in their Catholic schools, no one in their parishes, who has armed them against such silly propaganda? Did they not receive the Sacrament of Confirmation? Were they not told what that Sacrament means and the obligations it imposes upon them? Where, in short, is their Catholic faith and their Catholic militancy in the midst of the “great renewal” of Vatican II?

Such questions do not seem to trouble the promoters of these spectacles. For them, the emotion engendered by cheering crowds who make the Pope happy is sufficient evidence of ecclesial well being. The gushing over World Youth Day 2000 at a neo-Catholic website is typical of this mentality:

As Pope John Paul II looked out at the vast throng of joyful youth, hearing their shouts of “Viva il Papa” and “Giovanni Paulo” and “JP II, we love you!” ringing in the air—everywhere they gathered with the Holy Father—no wonder he wiped tears from his eyes, swayed with the young as they sang, waved his arms in the air, and let a glorious smile break through, again and again. Here he saw, before his very eyes, the fulfillment of the words of Vatican II to the young, in its blossoming and growth (since the first World Youth Day, over 15 years ago).²

So an ephemeral outpouring of mass sentiment from a boisterous crowd is “the fulfillment of the words of Vatican II.” The crowd sways. The Pope sways with them. All is well. The phenomenon of *feelings* is the triumph of Vatican II. All empirical evidence of the actual condition of the Church is ignored in favor of a phenomenal event.

It is not merely facile to say that World Youth Day is the Catholic version of Woodstock. We have heard the same extravagant claim for both events: that the world can be changed for the better if only vast numbers of young people—just because they are young—can be gathered together in one place for the promotion of love and peace. Cardinal Stafford, quoting one youngster, enthused that WYD 1997 in Paris was nothing less than “a revolution of love.” But the “revolution of love” in Paris was evidently not accompanied by a revolution of honesty. According to the Catholic World News service (CWN), the French bishops’ conference was left with \$5 million in debts because only about 100,000 of the 500,000 participants in WYD 1997 paid the registration fee. (Oddly enough, the proportion of gatecrashers at Woodstock was about the same.) As Bishop Michael Dubost complained: “I see many of the youngsters buying T-shirts, Coca-Cola, and numerous unnecessary objects, but not [registration] badges, which shows they are not prepared to help.” Neither was this revolution in love accompanied by a revolution in generosity to the Church. A collection taken up from the 1.3 million people who attended the Pope’s outdoor Mass at a racetrack yielded \$330,000—an average of 33 cents per

congregant.³ The same people undoubtedly expended vastly more money for souvenirs of Paris. Could one find a more graphic representation of the “fruits of Vatican II”?

Nevertheless, WYD ‘97 was pronounced a “papal triumph” by CWN, the neo-Catholic press organ.⁴ Had not the Pope attracted a huge, cheering crowd? What is more, “400,000 young people took to the streets of Paris, spreading out across the roads, and at precisely 10:50 a.m. joined their hands in a human chain that stretched over twenty miles.” What was the point of this human chain? According to CWN, the chain faced away from the center of Paris, because “the organizers had sought to demonstrate the commitment of young people to be ‘open to the world,’ and a press statement explained that this was ‘a symbol of friendship, of gathering, and an overture to the five continents—a universal appeal for peace.’”⁵ Openness to the world, friendship, gathering and peace. Secular aims for what was, in essence, a secular festival. As CWN notes: “Tolerance was also the theme of the papal message on Saturday. In the morning at the Church of St. Etienne du Mont, speaking to delegates of the World Youth Day crowd—representing the 140 countries which sent contingents to Paris—the Pope said: ‘The Spirit of God sends you forth, so that you can become, with all your brothers and sisters throughout the world, builders of a civilization of reconciliation, founded on brotherly love.’”⁶

It should be evident from everything we have shown that this “civilization of reconciliation” does not mean anything like the Catholic social order presented as the ideal in the teaching of the preconciliar Popes. That ideal has been replaced by something quite different. As the Pope would later observe in his Message for World Day for Peace 2001:

Dialogue leads to a recognition of diversity and opens the mind to the mutual acceptance and genuine collaboration demanded by the human family’s basic vocation to unity. As such, dialogue is a privileged means for building *the civilization of love and peace* that my revered predecessor Paul VI indicated *as the ideal* to inspire cultural, social, political and economic life in our time.... *The different religions too can and ought to contribute decisively to this process.* My many encounters with representatives of other religions—I recall especially the meeting in Assisi in 1986 and in St. Peter’s Square in 1999—have made me more confident that mutual openness between the followers of the various religions can greatly serve the cause of peace and the common good of the human family.

There is no question here of making converts of the followers of other religions in order to save their souls, nor any mention of Our Lord’s admonition about the consequences of the world’s rejection of His Gospel and His Church: “Do not think that I came to send peace upon the world: I came not to send peace but the sword” (Matt. 10:27). Also forgotten is the teaching of Pius XI in *Quas Primas* that there can be no peace worthy of the name without the Social Kingship of Christ over every man and every nation. That is not what World Youth Day and the “civilization of love” are all about. As we have seen throughout this book, that is not the program of the postconciliar Vatican apparatus.

Yes, World Youth Days are filled with exhortations that young people who are already baptized Catholics “follow Christ,” but only in the context of a pan-religious brotherhood in which the beliefs of others are respected and even admired, not viewed as forms of darkness from which souls must be rescued. And while there are outdoor Masses with pop-rock liturgical music, and an opportunity to go to confession, trendy Mass liturgies and even confession can be had at any local parish. Clearly, it is not these things that draw the vast World Youth Day crowds. The rock music, the camaraderie, the chance to be close to a great celebrity—the *Woodstock* of it all—are what attract so many of the same

youngsters who would, with equal alacrity, attend a performance of heavy-metal rock music.

There is great danger in this use of pop culture to entice Catholic youngsters to attend huge festivals in faraway places. Putting aside the temptation that arises when thousands of immodestly clad teenage girls are thrown together in a bivouac with thousands of teenage boys, there is the incalculable potential for sacrilege. The Catholic convert Gerry Matatics attended WYD '93 in Denver. The enactment of the Stations of the Cross with a woman in the role of Jesus was nothing compared to what he saw at the outdoor papal Mass:

We had camped out the night before on the ground to be sure that we would have a place for the papal Mass. We all had grimy faces and "sleeping-bag" hair. The assisting priests who were to distribute Holy Communion, implementing enculturation, accommodated themselves to the heat and humidity by wearing tee shirts, shorts, flip-flops and baseball caps along with their stoles. Priests similarly attired were listening to confessions beforehand.

The crowd had been roped off into quadrants, about a hundred of us in each one. When the time came for reception of Holy Communion I knelt at the front of my little quadrant in an attempt to receive the Sacred Host my knees. Hosts were being distributed from big, shallow bowls that could have been used for punch or potato chips. People were reaching over each other's shoulders to grab the consecrated Hosts from the priests. I saw Hosts falling into the mud, where they were being trampled on. I reached down and rescued as many as I could and consumed them.

I had been going to the Tridentine Mass since the fall of 1992 and [to] the Novus Ordo on weekdays. At that moment I realized that if this kind of sacrilege could occur at a *papal Mass* because of the Novus Ordo rubrics, I could no longer be a party to the new liturgy. It was the last Novus Ordo Mass I ever attended.

Michael Matt offers testimony perhaps even more horrific:

At an outdoor papal Mass in Des Moines during the Pope's visit to that city, consecrated Hosts were being distributed from cardboard boxes that were passed through the crowd. A group of Hell's Angels helped themselves to Holy Communion. I saw them washing down the Body of Christ with cans of beer. I was only a child then, but I will never forget that awful sight as long as I live. [The practice of Communion in the hand ensures that even the papal Masses in St. Peter's Square will result in sacrilege, including the spiriting away of Hosts by Rome's many Satanists.]

Sacrileges unimaginable in 1965 are now commonplace on the Pope's endless road trips in search of the civilization of love, the new humanity and the new Advent of the Church. One must ask how any alleged spiritual good from these events can possibly outweigh the mounting insults to God that their very structure engenders. Who will make reparation for these sacrileges, heaped upon all the others made possible by the postconciliar "reforms"?

The grotesque attempt to fuse Catholicism with pop culture, to make a Woodstock of the Faith, is perhaps a last desperate struggle by the spirit of Vatican II to find a place where it can be seen to live. Everywhere in the Church the awful experiment is being tried. The Pope has allowed his personal (and suitably non-denominational) prayers to be recited on mass-marketed CDs by the likes of Britney Spears and the lead singer for Aerosmith, a Woodstock-era band still plying its trade on the concert circuit. The Pope's life has been made into a comic book, which he heartily approves. ("Karol, Karol, look out!" shouts one of Wojtyla's friends as he runs after a soccer ball with an opposing player in hot pursuit.) There is even a Vatican-branded VISA card—which raises an interesting question about the application of Church teaching on usury. The Woodstock of the Faith is now complete with merchandising tie-ins.

In America, as was to be expected, the fusion of Catholicism and pop culture (which

Michael Matt aptly describes as “cool Catholicism”) has already reached its absolute nadir. One of the most striking recent examples to come our way is a neo-Catholic magazine called *Envoy*, whose editorial policy seems to be that Catholicism must be pitched to the level of a moron in order to be attractive to young people.

Envoy’s website features an animated cartoon that must be seen to be believed: It begins with a 98-pound weakling, a Catholic named Joe, being confronted at the beach by a Protestant Bible-thumper, who kicks theological sand in Joe’s face by quoting Scripture passages to support his attacks on the Catholic Church. Having been embarrassed in front of his bikini-clad girlfriend (who is lounging on the sand with her belly button in view), Joe goes home and bones up on *Envoy* magazine. We next see Joe in front of a mirror admiring his now-massive physique, covered only by a pair of bikini-briefs, and exclaiming: “Boy, it didn’t take me long to brush up on my catechism. Now I have a deeper understanding of my Catholic faith, and a deeper faith too!” (Joe’s deeper faith apparently does not include any sense of modesty.) In the next panel, Joe is back on the beach quoting Scripture to the Protestant bully, as his bikini-clad girlfriend (still lounging on the sand and displaying her belly button) exclaims, “Wow!” The strip concludes with the girlfriend rubbing up against Joe and clutching his brawny biceps as she oozes: “Oh, Joe, you make me proud to be a Catholic.” In the background, another bikini-clad girl lounging on the beach says: “What a masterful grasp Joe has of the truth and beauty of the Faith.” To which her boyfriend replies: “He’s an *Envoy* reader.”

Envoy’s website reports that *Envoy* cannot survive unless it obtains 50% more subscribers. That is hardly surprising. *Envoy* can be expected to fail, along with the entire postconciliar venture of debasing the Faith in a vain attempt to make it more appealing to an unbelieving world. The same lack of subscribers is what plagues the Church throughout the world today. For those who now govern the Church have renounced the divine aloofness which makes Our Lord Himself, and thus His Church, so attractive to the world-weary soul in search of the narrow road that leads away from this place to eternal beatitude. Yes, Our Lord entered the world to be a friend to His fellow man, a friend *par excellence*. But that friendship is premised on obedience to Him who is our King as well as our friend. And who would dare to slap this Friend on the back as one would some merely earthly companion!

The postconciliar program of “openness to the world” is an invitation to backslapping familiarity with the Bride of Christ: See? The Church is your friend. The Church can speak your language, after all. After so many centuries of preaching to you, the Church now wishes to *dialogue* with you and *understand* you. The Church has come to recognize your good faith, even if, in the exercise of your religious liberty, you choose not to believe. The Church no longer wishes to address you from on high or to frighten you with the prospect of God’s eternal punishment. The Church now wishes, instead, to accentuate the good in all people, all cultures, and all religions. Look!—we have provided music and festivities for everyone, and even a new liturgy that will be more to your liking should you care to join us. Come, link your hands with ours in the human chain of peace, along with the members of every religion or no religion at all. Oh, and yes, we do *invite* you to consider the Gospel of Christ, which we now, at last, present to you in a non-threatening, less “ecclesiocentric” way. For the Church has discovered, after many centuries of presuming the contrary, that all or most of you are following the one path of Christ in your

own way, whether you know it or not. Let us proclaim to you the good news of your salvation.

And the world replies: Since you are now open to the world, to the good in all religions, to different points of view, since you no longer threaten us with hell if we reject what you teach, since you presume that we are in good faith, why must we listen to you? And what, in the end, do we really need you for? At the very heart of the postconciliar crisis lies the inability of postconciliar churchmen to give a compelling answer to that question. And yet before the Council the answer was always promptly and clearly given: To save your soul from hell.

After some forty years of ecclesial innovations that have exceeded the worst nightmares of the great preconciliar Popes, the Roman liturgy is in ruins, the missions are practically extinct, conversions and vocations have dwindled at the same time Islam has become the fastest growing religion in former Christendom, contemporary churchmen have *de facto* embraced the errors of liberalism condemned in the *Syllabus*, and the average Catholic in the pew no longer considers himself bound to follow any teaching on faith or morals which impairs his chosen “lifestyle.”

And yet there is still no admission by the Vatican that the postconciliar debacle is, in fact, a debacle. Instead, Cardinal Ratzinger opines that Catholics should get used to the “numerical reduction” of their Church, and learn to accept forms of limited participation in her life:

The mass Church may be something lovely, but it is not necessarily the Church’s only way of being. The Church of the first three centuries was small, without being, by this fact, a sectarian community.... The process of numerical reduction, which we are experiencing today, will also have to be addressed precisely by exploring *new ways of openness to the outside*, of *new ways of participation* by those who are outside the community of believers. I have nothing against people who, though they never enter a church during the year, go to Christmas midnight Mass, or go on the occasion of some other celebration, because this is also a way of coming close to the light. Therefore, there must be different forms of involvement and participation.⁷

Nearly 2,000 years after Christ gave His Church the divine commission to make disciples of all nations, the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith seriously proposes “exploring” occasional Mass attendance as a legitimate “new way of participation” in the Church. The “mass Church” embracing all the peoples of the world is not a divine imperative but only “something lovely.” It has come to this.

Like an overconfident physician who will not admit that his clinical judgment could be wrong, those who have presided over the postconciliar debacle continue to prescribe more of the same medication to a patient who is not only failing to show any sign of improvement, but has gone into a coma. Is it right that the same physicians who have induced this coma should now expect us to believe that despite all appearances the coma is a good thing, and that the patient’s robust health only a short while ago was merely “something lovely” that could not be expected to last?

The most our ecclesial physicians seem willing to do is cut back a bit on the dosage, as the neo-Catholics hail the bold new treatment. According to such neo-Catholic organs as *The Wanderer*, for example, we are supposed to cheer the great recovery when the Vatican declares in *Liturgiam Authenticam* that vernacular translations of the new Mass which *the Vatican itself approved* thirty years ago are defective and must be made better. Perhaps in

another thirty years the errant bishops who foisted liturgical trash on the people for an entire generation will have obeyed by improving somewhat the quality of the trash. Or perhaps not. In either case, the new liturgy will remain a disaster area—a place where even Protestants are appalled by the lack of dignity and seriousness.

Meanwhile, the Vatican does next to nothing about the doctrinal dissent and sexual scandal that riddle the Catholic hierarchy, yet is quite careful to monitor the traditional seminaries of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter for any signs of deviancy from postconciliar correctness. At the same time, traditionalists are herded into reservations known as “indult Mass centers,” where the received and approved ancient liturgy of the Roman Rite is treated as if it were a strain of anthrax that must be contained at all costs.

In his letter to the traditionalist priests of the Priestly Fraternity, explaining why he had suspended their chapter election, imposed a new superior chosen by himself and removed the rectors of the Fraternity’s wholly orthodox seminaries, Cardinal Castrillón inadvertently revealed the heart of the current ecclesial crisis. The letter claims that these heavy-handed interventions were necessary to “combat a certain spirit of rebellion against the present-day Church” among the seminarians.⁸ In a later interview in *30 Days* magazine, Cardinal Castrillón stated that the “Fraternity’s members must be helped in their endeavor to strike a balance between their original charism ... and *the outcome of their insertion within the ecclesial reality of today.*”⁹

Not even the neo-Catholics can dispute that the priests and seminarians of the Priestly Fraternity are members of the Holy Catholic Church, and that they belong to a society of apostolic life approved by the Pope himself. Nor is there any doubt that these priests and seminarians follow the teaching of the Church on faith and morals and are loyal to the Pope who chartered their society. According to Cardinal Castrillón, that is not good enough. These faithful priests and seminarians must also cease their “rebellion against the present-day Church,” and must consent to “the outcome of their insertion within the ecclesial reality of today.” But if these men are already members of the Catholic Church, what is meant by “the present-day Church” and “the ecclesial reality of today”? What exactly is this thing into which they are supposed to be inserted? If pressed on the matter, the Cardinal would not be able to explain with any precision what he means by “the present-day Church” and “the ecclesial reality of today,” for no one has been able to do so over the past forty years. But of one thing he would no doubt be certain: traditionalists must submit to them, whatever they are.

Here, then, is our problem as Roman Catholic traditionalists at the beginning of the Church’s third millennium: no matter what the evidence of its failure, the ineffable vision of Vatican II continues to dominate the thinking of postconciliar churchmen. In some way not even they can explain, the conciliar vision is at odds with Catholic tradition, such that completely orthodox priests and seminarians must be forced to adhere to it, although nothing is lacking in their Catholic faith as such. The great façade of postconciliar novelty and “renewal” must be kept standing at all costs, and we must all salute it—even as it totters and groans under the weight of priestly scandal, liturgical ruin, rampant heresy and disobedience among neo-modernist clergy and laity, and widespread loss of the integral Catholic faith among nominal Catholics in the pews, who contracept, abort their children and divorce about as readily as their non-Catholic neighbors.

“Moses and Aaron went in, and said to Pharaoh: Thus saith the Lord God of Israel: Let my people go, that they may sacrifice to me in the desert.” Nearly forty years after the bronze doors closed on Vatican II, those who have simply gone on being what Catholics always were before 1965 find themselves presenting a similar petition to those who run the Vatican. No, the Pope is not a hardhearted Pharaoh. To the contrary, there is every indication that the Pope (if only out of a certain sense of ecclesial pluralism) might well be inclined to give traditionalists practically everything they have been asking for, and thus begin the Church’s restoration. But there are those around the Pope whose opposition to any “return to the pre-Vatican II spirit” would rival Pharaoh’s obduracy. And so our petition to be released from the bondage of “the ecclesial reality of today” is continually denied by postconciliar pharaohs, both low and high, as we watch one plague after another descend upon the Church.

Is there any way out of the bondage in which Catholic Tradition now finds itself? Have we, in fact, gone beyond the stage of crisis, as some have suggested, to the point where the Church cannot recover what she has lost without direct divine intervention? Perhaps. But there seems to us at least one mechanism by which a return to Tradition in all its fullness might be accomplished—and not just for traditionalists, but for the Church as a whole, failing which no solution to the crisis would be adequate.

Over the past year, many traditionalists have begun to learn of a canonical structure known as an apostolic administration. Such an arrangement would make an order of priests—such as the Society of St. Pius X, to whom the idea was reportedly proposed—answerable to the Pope alone, and would allow them to operate without interference from the local bishop.

It is an extremely attractive idea, to be sure. Most obviously, it would allow the work of true reform to be carried forward, without its being sabotaged by unfriendly bishops. It would also address the difficulties traditionally associated with the so-called “indult” Mass: unsympathetic pastors, little or no parish life, weddings and funerals frequently denied, architecture unsuited to the traditional liturgy, and the like. Under an apostolic administration, traditional priests could establish entire parishes and even virtual dioceses of their own.

We stress that we do not propose that any such arrangement be accepted on condition of remaining silent about the postconciliar debacle and what traditionalists believe to be its causes. The “Church of openness and dialogue” that tolerates the likes of Hans Küng can hardly demand silence from loyal Catholics; let us not be ridiculous. Nor should traditionalists consent to any canonical arrangement that would quarantine “their spiritual and liturgical traditions” forever, like some disease, or subject completely orthodox priests and bishops to discipline and arbitrary removal from office for an alleged failure to be “inserted” into the “ecclesial reality of today.” Our whole aim is to make the ecclesial reality of today *go away*, so that the Church whose traditional motto is *semper idem*—always the same—can be the same once again.

Addressing and resolving all the difficulties we have discussed in this book will not be easy. But an apostolic administration, or perhaps even a patriarchate of the kind to which the Uniate Eastern churches belong, is an arrangement that could serve to preserve the cause of Tradition within the Church and, we hope, one day to bring about its restoration

throughout the Roman Rite at large. Now that this idea has, almost overnight, become practically mainstream—thanks to Rome’s contacts and negotiations with the Society of St. Pius X—we believe that bringing about such a serious and sweeping accommodation of traditionalism is a realistic goal, and the one toward which all traditionalists should strive.

This kind of structure is not altogether without precedent. During another desperate period of Church history, a similar arrangement was granted to a small group of reformers whose accomplishments would ultimately rank among the most impressive in Church history.

The year was 910. For the past century, Europe had been ravaged not only by the disorder and war brought on by the infighting among the heirs of Charlemagne, but also and more importantly by wave upon wave of invasions by the Vikings, the Magyars, and the Muslims.

Monastic discipline had all but collapsed throughout the West. Simony, the sale of clerical offices, was rampant, and clerical celibacy was in many cases a distant memory. When a poor monk named Erluin suggested that his monastery return to strict observance of the *Rule of St. Benedict*, his fellow monks ripped out his tongue and blinded him. So much for that.

But in 910, an institution was founded whose influence would extend far beyond anyone’s expectations, and that would play a historic role in reforming monastic life throughout Europe. In that year, William the Pious, Duke of Aquitaine, established the monastery of Cluny fifteen miles northwest of Mâcon in Burgundy. Immediately after doing so, he renounced any authority he might have enjoyed over the institution as a lay ruler. Lay control of churches and monasteries had been the source of much mischief in those days, and, thanks to Duke William, it would not interfere with Cluny’s great work.

That great work was nothing less than the restoration of religious life in Europe. Cluny would be blessed with a number of saintly abbots, who were determined to direct religious life according to the traditional Benedictine model—and then to spread their work and influence beyond the walls of their abbey. It would become a key center of Church reform, with no fewer than four reforming Popes eventually emerging from Cluniac backgrounds.

Although Cluny was not alone in promoting monastic reform, it played a role vastly disproportionate to its size. Its plan consisted both of founding new houses across western Europe and in encouraging existing monasteries that contained anything of the reform spirit to become affiliates. Here was where Cluny departed from standard Benedictine practice: while each such monastery had previously been entirely independent of all others, Cluny introduced a centralized system of administration through which it governed the houses under its charge. Thus all the Cluniac monasteries operated under the authority of the abbot of Cluny. Cluny’s abbot, though he traveled a great deal, could not be everywhere at once, so the day-to-day operations of affiliated monasteries were overseen by priors—appointed not by each individual community, as had been standard in the Benedictine tradition, but by the abbot of Cluny. Every monk, in turn, was expected to spend some time at Cluny itself. Over time, Cluny would come to direct many hundreds of monasteries: 314 by the twelfth century, and 825 by the fifteenth. As many as a thousand

others, while not subject to Cluniac control, would adopt its constitutions and spirit.

On a regular basis, Cluny held a general chapter at which all the priors were to be present. These meetings symbolized Cluny's great work of bringing together into one great federation so many of the previously isolated islands of reform sentiment. Thus the great Church historian Msgr. Philip Hughes writes: "In that age of general dislocation, when unity of any kind seemed but an impossible dream, and when alone the monasteries retained a semblance of stability, the importance of the new departure that bound up in one huge federation all these cells of new religious life can hardly be exaggerated."¹⁰

In order to allow Cluny to undertake its spiritual mission without outside interference, William of Aquitaine had declared it independent of all lay control, including his own; there remained, however, the question of ecclesiastical control. From the beginning, Cluny had worked to gain exemption from the control of local bishops, some of whom were hostile to its mission, and many of whom had attained their offices through simony. At first, this exemption took the form of Pope Gregory V's declaration in the late tenth century that "no bishop or priest should dare to enter the venerable monastery of Cluny for the ordination of priests or deacons, for the consecration of a church, or for the celebration of Mass, unless invited by the abbot." In 1016, Pope Benedict VIII declared Cluny "absolutely free from the authority of kings, bishops, and counts, being subject only to God, St. Peter, and the Pope."¹¹

This was what Cluny had been seeking all along: an implicit reform mandate from Rome and, much more importantly, immunity from the bishops in carrying out that reform. Top churchmen doubtless recognized that all too many of the bishops had been appointed for the wrong reasons; recall that Cluny took hold before the outbreak of the so-called investiture controversy, in which the Church struggled to reclaim from secular authorities the right to name Church officials, including bishops. With bishops who had often been awarded their offices in exchange for a fee, or for their loyalty or other service to a secular ruler (or because they were fortunate enough to be related to some secular ruler), and with abbots of monasteries also generally appointed by kings, dukes, and counts as well, it was essential that these potential sources of corruption be bypassed entirely.

This is not to say that Cluny encountered no obstacles. Some bishops were annoyed at Cluny's privileges and resented the Pope's special arrangement with this meddlesome monastery. This frustration became all too apparent when in several cases the two sides actually found themselves in violent confrontation, such as in Clermont and Macon. The French historian Henri Daniel-Rops records an incident at Orleans in which, after one of the bishops had seized a vineyard belonging to the abbey of Fleury (a Cluniac house), the religious "won it back by the use of a most curious instrument of warfare in the shape of two caskets full of sacred relics, before which the episcopal troops fell back in disorder!"¹²

Such incidents aside, Cluny's work proved especially fruitful. By the time of Peter the Venerable's tenure as abbot (1122–56), the *Catholic Encyclopedia* reports, it had become "second only to Rome as the chief center of the Christian world." Even in its early years, it gave the Church a small litany of saintly abbots: St. Odo, St. Maieul, St. Odilo, and St. Hugh. It had managed all this with a congregation that had begun with St. Berno, the first

abbot, and twelve companions.

We should not be too hasty in drawing comparisons between the general collapse of the ninth and tenth centuries and the disastrous situation the Church faces today. The differences are clear enough. For one thing, the problem that Cluny and other Church reform movements faced, awful as it was, almost certainly constituted less of a threat to the Church's long-term health than do the problems of our day. The problems of the religious orders then were primarily matters of discipline—scandalous and lamentable to be sure, but at least susceptible of relatively straightforward remedy. Bishops and abbots guilty of simony or even of violations of celibacy may certainly have been corrupt and despicable, but they did not attempt to impose new dogmas or a supposedly updated version of Catholicism on the poor souls under their authority.

The problem today is far worse. Since Vatican II, a liberalism utterly alien to traditional Catholic thought has insinuated its way into every aspect of Catholic life, even among many people who consider themselves orthodox and exemplary. Disciplinary scandals abound now as then, but, in addition to these problems, our adversaries have attempted to remake Catholicism altogether, offering us a substitute that bears more resemblance to liberalism, Modernism, and the Enlightenment than to the traditional faith.

Having inserted this caveat, however, the example of Cluny is quite pertinent to our present impasse, for it shows how resilient the Church can be, under the worst of conditions, when even the tiniest minority of her members is passionate about genuine reform. The case of Cluny reminds us of just how much can be accomplished in the Church by a small band of rebuilders.

The success of Cluny also demonstrates the potential of the canonical structure referred to today as an apostolic administration. By allowing the Cluniac houses to bypass the authority of the bishops—who, in their day as in ours, were so often opponents of true reform—the Church gave this divinely inspired movement the room it needed to carry out its mission. Even though our situation is arguably worse than what Cluny faced, the immunity from the bishops that Cluny enjoyed would give us the ability to rebuild at least one segment of the Church. That is what Cluny did, and the rest of the Church ultimately followed.

Moreover, as Msgr. Hughes noted, this special arrangement allowed all the little cells of reform to be brought together under one umbrella, under the protection of the Holy See. That is what this structure could do today: take all the isolated (and often frustrated and demoralized) centers of Tridentine devotion around the globe, and regularize and unite them into a vibrant structure that would guarantee traditional Catholics the sacraments and spirituality that are their birthright, and that historically have borne such great fruit throughout the world. This is the message that a single tenth-century monastery, with a vision for true Catholic reform, has for us today.

In other dark periods of Church history, we find pockets of piety and reform struggling against the tide—and ultimately prevailing. The Catholic faithful who rallied to St. Athanasius during the Arian crisis come to mind. The monastery of Cluny, which we have just discussed, is yet another example. Beginning in the late fifteenth century, on the cusp of the less-than-edifying behavior of some of the Renaissance Popes, groups like the

Oratory of Divine Love quietly but persistently emphasized holiness and the spiritual life.

Our time presents its own challenge: nothing less than the wholesale revival of traditional Catholicism. It is a task that will require hard work and great sacrifice on the part of traditional faithful around the world, even when Rome does grant some kind of administrative structure for traditionalists—new parishes to be opened, churches to be built, schools to be staffed, and the like. For most of us, it is a labor of love whose potential fruits transcend human calculation.

During the recent Vatican talks aimed at “regularizing” the SSPX, Bishop Bernard Fellay, the order’s Superior General, reported that during a brief audience with John Paul II, the Pope, his head bent forward, looked at the Bishop out of the corner of his eye and said, “Je suis heureux”—I am happy. Entrapped by the body that has betrayed him, our poor Pope could not even turn his head to face the Bishop when he said these words.

We have no doubt that the Holy Father *would* be happy if he could effect an agreement to “regularize” the SSPX, establish the apostolic administration we propose here, and annul the “excommunication” of Archbishop Lefebvre as pronounced in *Ecclesia Dei*—the document that declared a “schism” the Vatican privately does not view as such.¹³ But we also have no doubt that there are those in the Vatican apparatus who will do everything possible to prevent any papal act concerning the SSPX that would recognize that “their spiritual and liturgical traditions” have never for a moment ceased to be our traditions, and that the adherents of the SSPX have never ceased to be Catholics.

Behind the great façade of the “springtime” of Vatican II, busy eminences no doubt labor to prevent the Pope from poking a great hole through the façade so that everyone may finally see the truth. It is supremely ironic that the very Council that was supposed to have ended “rigorism” in the Church has given rise to the greatest rigorism of all, a rigorism that seeks by every means possible to suppress—or, failing that, to limit with almost laughable strictness—the Church’s recovery of her own traditions.

Yet there are signs that the Holy Father, torn between the failed vision of an ill-starred Council and his own *sensus Catholicus*, is now struggling, however weakly, to make right what has gone so terribly wrong. One encouraging development occurred in early 2002: the erection of an apostolic administration for the traditionalist Society of St. John Vianney (SSJV), an order of priests in Campos, Brazil. The Pope granted to these priests the very canonical structure we here suggest, permitting them to work and to expand without (it would seem as of this writing) the consent of the local diocesan bishop. Bishop Licinio Rangel, who was ordained for the SSJV by three of the SSPX bishops in 1991, has been named Auxiliary Bishop of Zarna and the Apostolic Administrator for the SSJV.

It is highly significant for our thesis that in order to be “reconciled” with Rome and “end the schism,” SSJV had merely to affirm what it never denied in the first place: that John Paul II is the Pope, that the Mass of Paul VI (when correctly celebrated according to the proper intention) is valid, that Vatican II is a Council of the Church, and that open questions are to be studied with humility and charity.¹⁴ This was nothing more than what Archbishop Lefebvre was willing to affirm in the aborted 1988 protocol of agreement between SSPX and the Vatican. The SSJV clergy and lay adherents abjured not one of their views and altered not one of their traditions—which are, after all, the traditions of the

Roman Rite.

The ease with which this “reconciliation” was accomplished only proves that nowhere in the postconciliar program of innovation is there is anything a Catholic must embrace in order to remain a Catholic. In other words, the “schism” in Campos was a legal fiction. Despite the face-saving language in SSJV’s affirmation, it is the Vatican apparatus that has reconciled itself to the resistance in Campos. It is difficult to see on what ground anyone could now stand to claim that the SSPX “schism” is any less a legal fiction—especially with the Vatican assiduously avoiding any declaration of schism on the part of the pro-abortion, Communist-controlled “bishops” of the CPA “church” in Red China.

Whether SSJV’s “reconciliation” proves to be an embrace or a death-grip for the traditionalists of Campos remains to be seen. There are disturbing indications that certain elements within the Vatican apparatus regard the Campos accord as nothing more than a technique to subdue one of the few pockets of resistance to the ruinous postconciliar novelties. In a very conspicuous interview within days of the accord, no less than Fr. Georges Cottier, the official theologian of the papal household, declared that “Many Lefebvrists maintain that ‘our’ Paul VI Mass is not valid. At least now this group [Campos] will not be able to think such a thing. *Little by little we must expect other steps as well: for example, that they also participate in concelebrations in the reformed rite.* However, we must not be in a hurry.”¹⁵ The smugness and condescension in this remark certainly justify the belief that traditionalists have little reason to trust a Vatican apparatus which—despite the postconciliar debacle it has presided over—still views a strong attachment to the Church’s immemorial traditions and practices as if it were some sort of disease that needs to be cured through gradual therapy. This attitude is at the heart of the postconciliar crisis; and it is this attitude, not traditionalism, that is the real illness in the Church today. Perhaps the physician should consider healing himself.

Major questions remain to be answered, and it cannot be predicted whether the flourishing traditionalist parishes of Campos will be harassed with demands for “insertion into the ecclesial reality of today,” as the Fraternity of St. Peter has been, or left in peace. While, humanly speaking, we have every reason to be pessimistic in view of the past forty years, we should not lose hope that the Holy Ghost will prevent the Campos accord from being subverted in the manner openly predicted by Cottier. If Campos does succeed as a model for the restoration of integral Catholic tradition, the suffering and sacrifices of traditional clergy and faithful these past few decades will soon bear fruit that even a few years ago we could scarcely have imagined.

A great deal remains to be done, to say the least. Very likely it will not be this Pope who finally begins the work of tearing down the great façade in earnest. Perhaps it will be the next, or the one after him. But until it happens, traditionalists will go on resisting the crisis to the limits that Catholic loyalty allows, encouraged by the example of perseverance given by the traditionalist clergy and laity of Campos, Brazil.

Meanwhile, the evidence is overwhelming that this is the great ecclesial crisis foretold in Holy Scripture and by Our Lady of Fatima and Our Lady of La Salette. It was no less than Pope St. Pius X, arguably the greatest Pope in Church history, who declared in *E Supremi* his moral certainty (only fifty-nine years before the Council) that the world had entered into the beginning of the last times foreseen in the Book of the Apocalypse.

And was it not the present Roman Pontiff himself who, in his beautiful sermon at Fatima on May 13, 2000, warned the Church to avoid the dragon described in [Chapter 12](#) of the Apocalypse, the dragon whose tail sweeps one third of the stars, the consecrated souls, from heaven? From deep within the failing vision of a renewed Church and a perfectible world in which he has immured himself—the vision of *Gaudium et Spes*, which he helped to craft—our Pope sends out to the Church a warning, a warning that dispels the beguiling vision and reminds us that he is, after all, our father and that we must love him.

And so, in the end, our considerations lead back to where they must: to the man who governs all Catholics by the will of Christ. For in the papal office alone rests the power to cause or to cure a crisis throughout the Church. Our Pope is a man of mystery and contradiction. The same Pope who ended all further debate on women's ordination also gave us the scandal of altar girls. The Pope who has condemned the "culture of death" and fixed upon the world a phrase that rebukes it in an unforgettable way, has also legitimated Protestant preachers of the culture of death by giving them places of honor beside himself in public liturgical ceremonies, without rebuking them at all. The Pope who has presided over great liturgical destruction and called it a renewal has also given the banished traditional liturgy a precious and ever-widening foothold within the official structure of the Church. The Pope who beatified Pius IX, the fierce opponent of "the modern world," also beatified John XXIII, "the first modern Pope." The Pope who has said that Revelation does not tell us that any human souls at all will be in hell, has also preached at Fatima that many souls go to hell because they have no one to pray and make sacrifices for them. He is our Pope, our father, this man of mystery and contradiction; and like any father he needs his children, just as his children need him.

As St. Thomas teaches, sometimes children must resist their father as an act of charity. Those who condemn traditionalists so rashly have blinded themselves to the ultimate cause of the great crisis of which traditionalist resistance is but a symptom. Yet while the neo-Catholics counsel silence and submission in the face of disaster, at least some of the Pope's children cry out in protest to their wandering father in his ceaseless travels throughout an unbelieving world—a world that will not even follow his teaching on the natural law, no matter how far he travels, no matter how many crowds there are to cheer him on. Come home, Father, they cry, and put our house in order. But their brothers rebuke them for crying out, and defend the absence of the distant father.

History will render the final verdict on whether the children who cried out, or those who remained silent, were the ones who served the father more truly.

1. Gamber, *The Reform of the Roman Liturgy*, p. 102.

2. <http://www.praiseofglory.com/childrenvat2.htm>

3. "French Bishops Mull Debts Following World Youth Day," CWN report, August 26, 1997.

4. "World Youth Day Concludes in Papal Triumph," CWN report, August 25, 1997.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Zenit news interview, October 1, 2001. The occasion was an interview with the Cardinal concerning his new book, *God and the World*.

- [8.](#) Letter to General Chapter of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter, June 29, 2000.
- [9.](#) *30 Days*, N. 11–2000.
- [10.](#) Philip Hughes, *A History of the Church*, vol. 2: *The Church and the World the Church Created* (1935; repr., London: Sheed and Ward, 1952), p. 207.
- [11.](#) Henri Daniel-Rops, *The Church in the Dark Ages*, trans. Audrey Butler (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1959), p. 580.
- [12.](#) Ibid.
- [13.](#) Cf. Protocol N. 539/99, September 28, 1999, by Msgr. Camille Perl, Secretary of the Ecclesia Dei Commission, wherein he concedes that members of the faithful incur no penalty if they attend Sunday Mass at SSPX chapels in Arizona with the motive of “an attraction to the earlier form of the Roman rite,” even though such Masses are “illicit.” If the SSPX were really in a state of true and proper schism, Perl would hardly allow that the Sunday obligation could be fulfilled at its chapels. Moreover, Perl has been quoted in *The Latin Mass* as having said of SSPX adherents, “everyone knows they are Catholics.” And in [Chapter 11](#) we noted Cardinal Cassidy’s statement that the SSPX question is a matter of *internal* Church discipline.
- [14.](#) See *Statement of Administrator*, by Bishop Rangel, at unavoce.org.
- [15.](#) Zenit, January 20, 2002.

PART IV

THIRTEEN YEARS LATER

The Benedictine Respite

On April 2, 2005, the former Cardinal Ratzinger became Pope Benedict XVI, leaving behind forever his life as a scholar-theologian. The first edition of this book was sharply critical of the theological speculations of Ratzinger as theologian (cf. Chapter 11), the ambiguous non-doctrinal commentary interspersed among the points of infallible doctrine defended in *Dominus Iesus* (cf. Chapter 13), and the former Cardinal's attempt to demystify the Message of Fatima, the Marian apparition that had preoccupied a series of Popes, above all John Paul II, and would preoccupy Pope Benedict as well (cf. Chapter 5). Those criticisms became academic with Cardinal Ratzinger's elevation to the papacy, and for the reasons he himself expressed in assessing John Paul II's pontificate:

John Paul has exchanged the classical "We" of the papal style for the immediate, personal "I" of the writer and speaker. One should not underestimate such a stylistic revolution. It struck us all at first as something long overdue, as putting an end to an antiquated custom that was no longer suited to our contemporary world. But we must not forget that this "We" was more than a courtly flourish.

When the Pope speaks, he does not speak in his own name. For ultimately it does not matter what private theories or opinions he has worked out for himself over the course of time, even if they should be of high intellectual caliber. The Pope does not speak as a private scholar, with his personal "I", as a soloist, so to speak, on the stage of intellectual history. He speaks in another mode, from the "We" of the faith of the entire Church, and the first person singular must step back behind it Thus in many respects it is not an entirely inconsequential thing to replace the "We" with "I."¹

One of the many signs of the grace of state one must piously hope will enable a Pope to surpass his own private opinions was, as we shall see, Benedict's conspicuous return to "the classical 'We'" in the most significant document of his all-too-brief pontificate: *Summorum Pontificum*. With *Summorum* and a few other acts of papal governance, Benedict XVI would favorably alter the ecclesial landscape in ways traditionalists could only have dreamed of thirteen years ago. The hallmark of what can now be called the Benedictine Respite was Benedict's valiant attempt to loosen the grip of the postconciliar regime of novelty over the Church's divine worship in order to address what the former Cardinal Ratzinger, writing ten years earlier, had described as nothing less than "the collapse of the liturgy."²

At the very beginning of his pontificate, in a Christmas address to the Roman Curia, Benedict famously lamented an interpretation of the Second Vatican Council "that I would call 'a hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture'; it has frequently availed itself of the sympathies of the mass media, and also one trend of modern theology," which "risks ending in a split between the pre-conciliar Church and the post-conciliar Church."³ Above all in the realm of the liturgy, Benedict would attempt to heal that rupture.

Fixing the False Translations—at Last

Benedict's first move toward addressing the liturgical aspect of the rupture was to order the correction of the egregious mistranslations in various vernacular versions of the Latin typical edition of the *Novus Ordo*, including the English version produced by the infamous International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL). Here Benedict was

implementing the suggestions of the universally ignored Vatican document *Liturgiam authenticam* issued in 2001 by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments (CDW). While asserting—contrary to all evidence—that “the liturgical renewal thus far has seen positive results,” the CDW had nevertheless deplored “[t]he omissions or errors which affect certain existing vernacular translations.... Consequently, the Church has been prevented from laying the foundation for a fuller, healthier and more authentic renewal.”⁴ The CDW’s own observation was a dramatic indication of the liturgical collapse Cardinal Ratzinger had lamented: the Vatican had waited more than thirty years to admit that erroneous translations of the New Mass had been allowed to proliferate, preventing the laying of the very foundation of so-called authentic renewal. Perhaps this lack of a foundation explains why the “renewal” was in reality a liturgical collapse.

The most important correction Pope Benedict ordered was the error discussed in [Chapter 11](#): the rendering of Our Lord’s words “*pro multis*” (for many) at the first Mass as “for all”—a blatant falsification that Msgr. Gamber, in the very book the Pope had endorsed when he was Cardinal Ratzinger, described as “[t]ruly problematic, in fact truly scandalous” and “inspired by modern theological thinking but not found in any historical liturgical text.”⁵ Indeed, not even Protestant liturgical texts and versions of the Bible had dared to change Our Lord’s “for many” into “for all.” Yet, as [Chapter 11](#) shows, in the 1981 edition of *The Pope, the Council, and the Mass* (PCM) Likoudis and Whitehead defended this tampering with the very words of God Incarnate.⁶ The authors persisted in their defense of the indefensible in the 2006 edition of PCM, published only months before the error was finally corrected, going so far as to offer the risible suggestion that “‘for all’ might even be a more faithful translation of the original sense of scripture... .”⁷

Wrong again. Only five months after PCM 2006 appeared, on October 17, 2006, Francis Cardinal Arinze, then Prefect of the CDW, issued an instruction to the presidents of the world’s episcopal conferences advising with respect to “for all” that “[i]n line with the Instruction *Liturgiam authenticam*, effort should be made to be more faithful to the Latin texts of the typical editions” by translating “*pro multis*” as “for many.” As the Cardinal observed: “A text corresponding to the words *pro multis*, handed down by the Church, constitutes the formula that has been in use in the Roman Rite in Latin from the earliest centuries,” whereas “[i]n the past 30 years or so, some approved vernacular texts have carried the interpretative translation ‘for all,’ ‘*per tutti*,’ or equivalents.” This “interpretative translation”—that is, mistranslation—was at long last to be corrected:

The Bishops’ Conferences of those countries where the formula “for all” or its equivalent is currently in use are therefore requested to undertake the necessary catechesis of the faithful on this matter in the next one or two years to prepare them for the introduction of a precise vernacular translation of the formula *pro multis* (e.g., “for many,” “*per molti*,” etc.) in the next translation of the Roman Missal that the Bishops and the Holy See will approve for use in their country.⁸

Thus, after 30 years of allowing a defective translation of Our Lord’s very words at the first Mass to become established in vast areas of the Church, the CDW now saw it as necessary to “undertake the necessary catechesis of the faithful” regarding the correct translation, a measure that demonstrated the theological significance of the error at last being corrected. But, Cardinal Arinze hastened to add: “There is no doubt whatsoever

regarding the validity of Masses celebrated with the use of a duly approved formula containing a formula equivalent to ‘for all’....” Like so many other developments during the post-Vatican II epoch, this extraordinary declaration assuring the validity of the Church’s approved form of divine worship in the vernacular had no precedent.

So much, then, for the neo-Catholic defense of an egregious mistranslation of the words of Our Lord that had falsely implied that the Redemption effected universal salvation, contrary to the teaching of the Council of Trent and Pope Saint Pius V (cf. Chapter 11). On November 28, 2006, Cardinal Arinze further advised the world’s bishops that Benedict had ordered all episcopal conferences “to prepare for the introduction of a new translation of the phrase in approved liturgical texts ‘in the next one or two years.’”⁹ Also corrected were other blatant mistranslations to which traditionalists had long objected, including the utterly banal “and with you also” instead of the correct “and with your Spirit”; the ambiguous “one in being with the Father” instead of “consubstantial,” the precise term hallowed by tradition; and “we believe” at the beginning of the Creed instead of the traditional personal affirmation of faith: “I believe....”

The American bishops finally accepted the corrected translation in 2009. Both the Italian and German hierarchies refused to implement the correct translation of “*pro multis*.” In 2012, near the end of his pontificate, Pope Benedict would be reduced to sending a personal instruction to the head of the German bishops’ conference, Archbishop Robert Zollitsch, in which he practically pleaded with him to get the German bishops to obey his decision. This text is very revealing of the depth of the theological concern Benedict had aimed to address with the correction:

During your visit on 15 March 2012, you informed me that there is still no unanimity among the bishops of the German-speaking world with regard to the translation of the words “*pro multis*” in the Eucharistic Prayers of the Mass....

There seems to be a risk that in the new edition of *Gotteslob* that is due to be published shortly, some parts of the German-speaking world wish to retain the translation “for all”, even if the German Bishops’ Conference should agree to use “for many”, as requested by the Holy See. I promised that I would write to you on this important matter, in order to circumvent a division of this kind at the very heart of our prayer....

The word must be presented as it is, with its own shape, however strange it may appear to us; the interpretation must be measured by the criterion of faithfulness to the word itself, while at the same time rendering it accessible to today’s listeners....

In this context, the Holy See has decided that in the new translation of the Missal, the words “*pro multis*” should be translated as they stand, and not presented in the form of an interpretation. In the place of the interpretative explanation “for all,” the simple rendering “for many” must appear....

I hope that all of this can at the same time nourish a deeper participation in the Holy Eucharist and thus take its place within the great task that lies ahead of us in the “Year of Faith.” I hope too that the catechesis will be presented soon and will thus become part of the renewal of worship that the Council strove to achieve from its very first session.¹⁰

To this day, neither the German nor the Italian hierarchy has adopted the correct translation of Our Lord’s words, retaining the error neo-Catholic spokesmen would undoubtedly still continue obdurately to defend.¹¹

Summorum Pontificum

As significant as the “*pro multis*” affair was, it paled in comparison with what took place

on July 7, 2007. On that date, going far beyond the mere correction of a few glaring defects in the vernacular text of a liturgy that had long since collapsed, Pope Benedict established nothing less than a turning point in the history of the Church—and thus the world—by liberating the traditional Latin Mass from its absurd Babylonian captivity since the Council. From its opening words *Summorum Pontificum* signaled a dramatic shift in the program of seemingly endless liturgical innovation and consequent degradation that had afflicted the Church since the New Mass was introduced: “Up to our own times, it has been the constant concern of supreme pontiffs to ensure that the Church of Christ offers a worthy ritual to the Divine Majesty, ‘to the praise and glory of His name,’ and ‘to the benefit of all His Holy Church.’”¹²

This resounding recollection of the forgotten supreme end of the liturgy—to give glory to God—was followed by praise for the liturgical conservatism of Pope Saint Gregory the Great and none other than Pope Saint Pius V, the very Pope who canonized the traditional Latin Mass “in perpetuity” with the Bull *Quo Primum* (1570) following the Council of Trent (1545-1563). St. Pius V is a veritable icon of the supposedly hidebound “Tridentine” past that was supplanted forever by the Church’s “new orientation” after Vatican II, according to both the neo-Modernist and the neo-Catholic narrative.¹³ *Summorum*’s pointed reference to both of these sainted Popes reminded the Church of an unbroken liturgical tradition spanning more than a thousand years before Trent and continuing for another four hundred years until the entirely unprecedented “liturgical renewal” of the ill-starred 1970s.

Summorum is a counterrevolutionary document that rolls back the greatest advance of the “postconciliar revolution,” revealing The Great Façade for what it is: a collection of ephemeral novelties that had concealed but could not destroy the Church’s liturgical patrimony. In a triumph for justice in the Church, *Summorum* dispelled the myth that had hung over the ecclesial commonwealth like a funeral pall for nearly forty years, a myth assiduously promoted by neo-Modernist and neo-Catholic commentators alike (cf. Chapter 7): that Paul VI had forbidden the celebration of the traditional Latin Mass without special “permission” in the form of an indult. Art. I of *Summorum* and Pope Benedict’s accompanying Explanatory Letter to the bishops left no room for argument:

Summorum, Art. 1:

The Roman Missal promulgated by Paul VI is the ordinary expression of *the Lex orandi* [Law of prayer] of the Catholic Church of the Latin rite. Nonetheless, the Roman Missal promulgated by St. Pius V and reissued by B1. John XXIII is to be considered as an extraordinary expression of that same *Lex orandi*, and must be given due honour for its venerable and ancient usage....

It is, therefore, permissible to celebrate the Sacrifice of the Mass following the typical edition of the Roman Missal promulgated by B1. John XXIII in 1962 and never abrogated, as an extraordinary form of the Liturgy of the Church....

Explanatory Letter:

As for the use of the 1962 Missal as a *Forma extraordinaria* of the liturgy of the Mass, I would like to draw attention to the fact that this Missal was never juridically abrogated and, consequently, in principle, was always permitted....

What earlier generations held as sacred, remains sacred and great for us too, and it cannot be all of a sudden entirely forbidden or even considered harmful.¹⁴

Never abrogated. Always permitted. Cannot be entirely forbidden. Pope Benedict himself had confirmed, precisely as traditionalists had always contended, that as a matter of ecclesiastical law Pope Paul had never done anything more than promulgate his own Missal. While the Pauline rite in its vernacular translations had become in practice the “ordinary form” of Mass in the Western Church, with the traditional Latin Mass thus becoming “extraordinary,” this development in no way amounted to a *de jure* prohibition of the traditional Missal last codified by Pope John XXIII in 1962.

For nearly forty years, however, the impression of a prohibition had been carefully cultivated, and not without the cooperation of Paul VI himself, although he never dared to declare outright that he had forbidden use of the 1962 Missal. Only privately, however, would Pope Paul admit the truth that he had never forbidden the traditional Latin Mass. As revealed by *Inside the Vatican* in 2004, Father Jean-Marie Charles-Roux, “one of the priests who celebrated Mass for Mel Gibson in Rome during the filming of *The Passion of the Christ*,” had an audience with Pope Paul in at Castel Gandolfo in 1971 during which he told the Pope: “For 18 months I have celebrated the new Mass, but I cannot continue. I was ordained to celebrate the old Mass, and I want to return to it. Will you permit me to do so?” Pope Paul replied: “Certainly, I never forbade celebration of the old Mass; I have only offered an alternative.”¹⁵

Here it must be recalled that the first edition of this book (cf. Chapter 7) noted Annibale Bugnini’s admission in his ponderous apologia for the “liturgical reform” that it was precisely an outright prohibition he had tried and failed to obtain from the Pope. When Bugnini requested a declaration by the Holy See that “the Missal of Pius V,” as he misleadingly called it, was “definitively abrogated by the 1969 apostolic constitution *Missale Romanum*,” by which Pope Paul’s new Missal was promulgated, he was informed by the Vatican Secretary of State that such a “juridical response from Rome” would be “interpreted as ‘casting odium on the liturgical tradition.’”¹⁶ On the same pages, however, Bugnini further revealed something this work’s first edition did not mention: that in 1973 Monsignor Sustar, secretary of the Council of European Episcopal Conferences, “insisted on a statement being issued as to whether the Mass of Pius V was unconditionally prohibited” as this was far from clear. Tellingly, the Secretary of State advised Bugnini to reply “in an entirely personal form and in an unofficial letter bearing no protocol number.” As Bugnini grumbled: “What was wanted was a clarification that would offend no one.” In other words, what was wanted was a major element of The Great Façade: a clarification that would clarify nothing, have no binding effect and leave ample room for plausible deniability later on, including *Summorum*’s ultimate admission that Paul VI had never actually prohibited the traditional Mass. Such was the dishonesty that propelled the liturgical revolution, along with all the other elements of ecclesial innovation since Vatican II, not one of which has ever been imposed upon the faithful by a command of the Roman Pontiff.

Bugnini finally had to settle for a 1974 “notification” by his own Congregation for Divine Worship that “when the bishops decide on the introduction of the vernacular Missal, whether in whole or in part, it becomes obligatory in both its Latin and its vernacular forms”—thus punting the issue to the bishops without a definitive papal declaration imposing the new Mass on the universal Church to the exclusion of the traditional Mass. This notification, Bugnini complained, “did not suffice to do away with

the difficulties.”¹⁷ Nine months later, the Congregation was dissolved and Bugnini abruptly dismissed and packed off to Iran to serve as Apostolic Pro Nuncio—a classic “promotion-removal”—after Pope Paul, by Bugnini’s own admission, was presented with a dossier documenting allegations that he was a Freemason.¹⁸ Whether Bugnini was a Freemason is beside the point, for what he did fulfilled the wildest Freemasonic dreams. Tellingly, Bugnini himself hailed the new liturgy “a major conquest of the Catholic Church.”¹⁹

In declaring that the traditional Mass had never been forbidden, *Summorum* and the Explanatory Letter only reflected truths about the Church that Pope Benedict had acknowledged when he was still Cardinal Ratzinger: “the Church, throughout her history, has never abolished nor forbidden orthodox liturgical forms, which would be quite alien to the Spirit of the Church...”²⁰ That is, to “forbid” celebration of the traditional Latin Mass would be contrary to the Church’s very nature as a supernatural institution made indefectible by the protection of the Holy Ghost. It would also be contrary to the very nature of the Petrine office as the guardian of liturgical tradition, which *Summorum* made clear with its opening homage to Saints Gregory the Great and Pius V. As the former Cardinal Ratzinger wrote only seven years before he promulgated *Summorum* as Pope:

After the Second Vatican Council, the impression arose that the pope really could do anything in liturgical matters, especially if he were acting on the mandate of an ecumenical council. Eventually, the idea of the givenness of the liturgy, the fact that one cannot do with it what one will, faded from the public consciousness of the West. In fact, the First Vatican Council had in no way defined the pope as an absolute monarch. On the contrary, it presented him as the guarantor of obedience to the revealed Word. The pope’s authority is bound to the Tradition of faith, and that also applies to the liturgy. It is not “manufactured” by the authorities. Even the pope can only be a humble servant of its lawful development and abiding integrity and identity.²¹

The same Cardinal Ratzinger had also written that the suppression of the traditional Missal (under the false pretext of a *de jure* abolition) “introduced a breach into the history of the liturgy whose consequences could only be tragic.... [T]he old building was demolished, and another was built.... [T]his has caused us great harm.”²²

In sum, precisely as this book contended in 2002, Paul VI did not—indeed, could not—actually forbid the Church’s own received and approved rite of Mass. With *Summorum* the traditionalist position respecting the incommutability of liturgical tradition had been confirmed by papal legislation binding upon the universal Church. *Summorum* was not a mere “universal Indult,” a grant of “permission” for something otherwise strictly forbidden. Nor was it a mere enlargement of the 1984 and 1988 “indults.” Rather, it simply abolished them by substitution: “the conditions for the use of this Missal as laid down by earlier documents *Quattuor abhinc annos* and *Ecclesia Dei*, are substituted as follows....”—substituted, not expanded.

The remainder of *Summorum* is, accordingly, a series of provisions to clarify and implement the patently preexisting right of the faithful to have recourse to the Church’s own liturgical tradition without “permission” from anyone, even the Pope. Hence, Article 2 declares that every priest is free to use the 1962 Missal for his private Masses without permission from the bishops or even the Pope, while Article 4 provides that such “private” Masses “may ... also be attended by faithful who, of their own free will, ask to be admitted.” So much for the pharisaical hairsplitting by which a few bishops had

grudgingly allowed “private” Latin Masses while hermetically sealing them off from the people. By offering private Masses open to the faithful, every priest in the Roman Rite was now declared free to act as an agent of liturgical restoration even without a parish of his own.

But that was only the beginning. Article 3 provides that every canonically recognized community of priests in the entire Western Church is free to use the traditional Roman Missal without episcopal or even papal permission. As this Article further provides, the traditional Missal can be adopted “permanently” by any priestly community or institute upon the decision of “the Superiors Major, in accordance with the law and following their own specific decrees and statutes”—again, without episcopal or papal permission.

Moreover, under Article 5 a pastor is deemed obliged to provide the traditional Mass whenever “a stable group of faithful” requests it: “the pastor should willingly accept their requests to celebrate the Mass according to the rite of the Roman Missal published in 1962....” The limitation to “one such celebration” on Sundays is problematical, but this should be seen as a concession to panic-stricken bishops who foresee the transformation of *Novus Ordo* parishes into traditional Latin Mass parishes by priests who have been freed from the revolutionary liturgical dictatorship of the liberal episcopate.

Article 5 further declares that the pastor of any parish is free to “allow celebrations in this extraordinary form for special circumstances such as marriages, funerals or occasional celebrations, e.g. pilgrimages,” while Article 9 authorizes pastors “to grant permission to use the earlier ritual for the administration of the Sacraments of Baptism, Marriage, Penance, and the Anointing of the Sick, if the good of souls would seem to require it.” That is, every pastor was declared free to return to the traditional liturgical books for the administration of all the sacraments without permission from his bishop.

Finally, Article 10 affirms that, as before, any local bishop is free to erect “a personal parish in accordance with can. 518 [of the 1983 Code of Canon Law] for celebrations following the ancient form of the Roman rite, or to appoint a chaplain” for that purpose—that is, to establish exclusively Latin Mass parishes.

With a few simply worded provisions *Summorum* had in principle overthrown the liturgical tyranny of the sons of Bugnini and provided the means to depart from the lockstep march toward liturgical dissolution inherent in his creation, which some still dare to call “the liturgical renewal.” The Supreme Pontiff—what a joy it was to see that traditional honorific again in a papal document—had removed what the Italian Catholic intellectual Antonio Socci rightly called “the sinister suffocating gag on the Latin voice of the Mass,”²³ thereby rectifying perhaps the greatest injustice in Church history. And it was of no little significance that with *Summorum*, an act of universal governance for the Church, Benedict had employed the royal “we” to express the Pope’s will in the matter:

We order that everything We have established with these Apostolic Letters issued as Motu Proprio be considered as “established and decreed,” and to be observed from 14 September of this year, Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, whatever there may be to the contrary.

From Rome, at St. Peter’s, 7 July 2007, third year of Our Pontificate.

In a statement issued within days of *Summorum*, Bishop Bernard Fellay, head of the Society of Saint Pius X (SSPX), stated that the SSPX “rejoices to see the Church thus

regain her liturgical Tradition, and give the possibility of a free access to the treasure of the Traditional Mass for the glory of God, the good of the Church and the salvation of souls, to the priests and faithful who had so far been deprived of it. The Priestly Society of Saint Pius X extends its deep gratitude to the Sovereign Pontiff for this great spiritual benefit.”²⁴ Long before *Summorum*’s appearance, the SSPX had already proposed just such a document as a sign of good faith preparatory to discussions with Vatican representatives regarding the Society’s reconciliation with Rome and its longstanding criticisms of Vatican II’s problematic texts, concerning which Pope Benedict called for a “hermeneutic of continuity.” Benedict launched those discussions in 2009, although they would ultimately fail to achieve an agreement leading to canonical regularization.

Howls of Protest

Indicating the secular world’s instinctual comprehension of *Summorum*’s alarming potential to revive a moribund Church that still represented the last remaining obstacle to the final triumph of the Zeitgeist, *The New York Times* issued a protest—one of many in the mass media. Among other things, the liberation of the traditional liturgy would mean a revival of the Church’s traditional Good Friday prayer for the conversion of the Jews (the abandonment of which in favor of the *Novus Ordo*’s vapidly ambiguous substitute is discussed in [Chapter 8](#)). In view of this development, the *Times* none-too-subtly played the “anti-Semitism” card:

Amid opposition from other Jewish groups, the Anti-Defamation League condemned the change on Saturday, calling it a “body blow to Catholic-Jewish relations.” While an earlier reference to “perfidious Jews” was removed officially from the Tridentine Mass just before the council, which set the stage for progressively better relations between Jews and Catholics, the group condemned a remaining prayer on Good Friday calling for Jews’ conversion.²⁵

Abe Foxman, head of the B’Nai B’Rith Anti-Defamation League (ADL), complained bitterly: “We are extremely disappointed and deeply offended that nearly 40 years after the Vatican rightly removed insulting anti-Jewish language from the Good Friday Mass [i.e., in the Mass of Paul VI], that it would now permit Catholics to utter such hurtful and insulting words by praying for Jews to be converted.”²⁶ In a commentary entitled “A Triumph for Traditionalists”—and for the Church as a whole—Pat Buchanan retorted: “If one believes, as devout Catholics do, that Christ and his Church hold the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven, it would be anti-Semitic not to pray for the conversion of the Jews. Even Abe.”²⁷

Foxman and his collaborators did not get what they were clamoring for in the days following promulgation of *Summorum*: excision of the call to Jewish conversion from the traditional Latin Mass. What they got instead—and one may debate the prudence of Benedict’s tampering with the traditional prayer at all to suit Jewish objections—was the last thing they wanted. Benedict reformulated the traditional Good Friday prayer in way that is, if anything, even more objectionable from their standpoint. Still entitled “Prayer for the Conversion of the Jews,” the revised prayer reads as follows:

Let us pray also for the Jews.

May our God and Lord *enlighten their hearts*, so that they may acknowledge Jesus Christ, *savior of all men*.

Let us pray.

Let us kneel.

Arise.

Almighty and everlasting God, who desires that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of truth, mercifully grant that, as the fullness of the Gentiles enters into Thy Church, *all Israel may be saved*. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen. (all emphasis mine)

While references to “blindness” and “darkness” in the traditional prayer are gone, like the traditional prayer (which never actually uses the word “conversion”) the revised prayer explicitly calls upon God to enlighten the hearts the Jewish people “so that they may acknowledge Jesus Christ, saviour of all men.” By comparison the traditional prayer states: “that they may also acknowledge Our Lord Jesus Christ.” The traditional prayer, moreover, does not contain the revised prayer’s petition that “all Israel may be saved.” In fact, neither the word salvation nor saved appears anywhere in the traditional prayer.

Foxman understood exactly what had happened. His press release for the ADL barely concealed his rage over the new prayer’s call for the enlightenment of the Jewish people, their acknowledgment of Christ, and the ultimate conversion of the entire nation of Israel in keeping with the prophecy of Saint Paul, the most renowned Jewish convert in salvation history: “For I would not have you ignorant, brethren, of this mystery, (lest you should be wise in your own conceits), that blindness in part has happened in Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles should come in. And so all Israel should be saved... .”²⁸ As the ADL protested: “The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) said the Vatican’s changes to the Latin Good Friday prayer for the conversion of Jews amount to ‘cosmetic revisions’ and the prayer remains ‘deeply troubling’ because it calls for Jews to ‘acknowledge Jesus Christ as the savior of all men.’” Foxman was quoted directly as follows:

While we appreciate that some of the deprecatory language has been removed from a new version of the Good Friday prayer for the Conversion of Jews in the 1962 Roman Missal, we are deeply troubled and disappointed that the framework and intention to petition God for Jews to accept Jesus as Lord was kept intact.

Alterations of language without change to the 1962 prayer’s conversionary intent amount to cosmetic revisions, while retaining the most troubling aspect for Jews, namely the desire to end the distinctive Jewish way of life. Still named the “Prayer for Conversion of the Jews,” it is a major departure from the teachings and actions of Pope Paul VI, Pope John Paul II, and numerous authoritative Catholic documents, including *Nostra Aetate*.

Nostra Aetate says nothing about the Church’s abandoning her call for Jewish conversion, but its irenic ambiguities concerning Judaism and other religions had certainly allowed for that impression—another element of The Great Façade exposed as such by the revised Good Friday prayer.

ADL’s press release reveals that it had feared precisely that its own squawking might produce an adverse outcome: “ADL wrote to Pope Benedict on January 22 expressing concern that a revised Good Friday prayer that Jews abandon their own religious identity, would be devastating to the deepening relationship and dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people.”²⁹ In other words, Foxman and the ADL regarded the revised prayer as a disaster and a total defeat of their campaign to browbeat the Pope into an official repudiation of the conversion of the Jews. Pope Benedict had provided Foxman and company with a classic demonstration of the old adage about being careful what one wishes for.

Within the Church, *Summorum* equally distressed ecclesiastical liberals. For example,

Msgr. Luca Brandolini, one of Annibale Bugnini's faithful disciples, was grief-stricken: "I do not wish to speak [about it], for I am living the saddest day of my life as a priest, as a bishop, and as a man. The episcopal ring which I carry on my finger belonged to Archbishop Annibale Bugnini, the father of the conciliar liturgical reform. I was, at the time of the Council, a disciple of his and a close co-worker. I was close to him when he worked in that reform and I always recall with how much passion he worked for liturgical renewal. Now, his work has been canceled."³⁰ Brandolini was right; for the "renewal" Bugnini masterminded had always depended upon sheer coercion under the appearance of law to keep it going. With *Summorum* that coercion had been lifted; and without it, the liturgical revolution seemed suddenly to be at a standstill, its force finally spent. The howls of outrage and disappointment from the likes of Foxman and Brandolini provided an all-but-infallible inverse confirmation that *Summorum* was a great boon to the Church.

But the liberation of liturgical tradition would undoubtedly have taken place much sooner if not for a neo-Catholic polemic that had helped perpetuate the myth of the forbidden Latin Mass while defending the New Mass as a "renewal" rather than a break in the history of the liturgy whose consequences were tragic, as the future Pope Benedict had admitted. As Darío Castrillón Hoyos revealed in his interview concerning *Summorum* in the prestigious Italian daily *Il Giornale*: "Pope Wojtyla intended to prepare a *motu proprio* similar to the one now promulgated."³¹ This had long been known from the groundbreaking research of the late, great traditionalist Michael Davies. As this book noted in 2002, the document was reportedly presented to the Pope in draft form after a commission of nine cardinals advised John Paul II in 1986 that Paul VI had never "banned" the Latin Mass and that every priest remained free to celebrate it.³² Indeed, Cardinal Castrillón declared in the same interview that "[t]he ancient Mass was never abolished nor forbidden." That the ancient Mass had never been forbidden is precisely what the neo-Catholic polemic had been denying for decades in opposition to the traditionalist defense of the truth in the matter.

There is no question that neo-Catholic opposition helped delay, for decades, the correction of an unjust and indeed preposterous suppression of the Church's liturgical tradition. As Cardinal Castrillón further revealed in the same interview, over the years "[t]housands of letters arrived in Rome from those who asked for the freedom to be able to participate in the old rite."³³ *Summorum* itself refers to "the insistent prayers of these faithful, long deliberated upon by our predecessor John Paul II." One can well imagine how many more thousands of letters would have arrived at the Vatican, and how much sooner a corrective *motu proprio* would have appeared, had the neo-Catholic establishment joined forces with traditionalists instead of providing cover for the liturgical revolutionaries by spending nearly forty years insisting upon false "obedience" to a papal command that had never been given.

The Neo-Catholic Retrenchment

Among the leaders of the neo-Catholic constituency on this issue were Likoudis and Whitehead. To recall what this work first noted in 2002, in the 1981 edition of PCM the authors derided traditionalists for "A vast underground literature now circulat[ing] 'proving' such things as that Paul VI did not truly abrogate the Tridentine Mass...."—precisely what Pope Benedict confirmed in *Summorum* and the Explanatory Letter.

Purporting to provide “Answers to the Questions the ‘Traditionalists’ Are Asking,” the authors of PCM confidently declared in 1981 that “we cannot conclude other than that the celebration of the Tridentine Mass is *forbidden* except where ecclesiastical law specifically allows it... .”³⁴ PCM further declared, quite falsely, that “there can be no real doubt ... that attendance at a Mass celebrated according to the revised Roman Missal is now obligatory for Catholics of the Roman Rite.” No Roman legislation, much less a binding papal decree, had ever imposed such an obligation, as everyone now knows.

PCM even offered the astounding opinion that the traditional Roman Rite, including the venerable Roman Canon of probable apostolic origin, was a mere accoutrement the Pope had the power to discard at his pleasure: “As Catholics we have to accept the decisions of the Pope and the Holy See not only with regard to the Tradition and the doctrine of the faith, but also with regard to what we have called changeable ‘traditions’—practices of worship and devotion ... they are really ‘customs’ or ‘practices’ not part of Tradition... .”³⁵ In his Explanatory Letter Pope Benedict XVI demolished this classic neo-Catholic canard:

In the history of the liturgy there is growth and progress, but no rupture. What earlier generations held as sacred, remains sacred and great for us too, and it cannot be all of a sudden entirely forbidden or even considered harmful. It behooves all of us to preserve the riches which have developed in the Church’s faith and prayer, and to give them their proper place.

Pope Benedict had restored the traditional Latin Mass to its proper place in the Church—a place it had never, in reality, ceased to occupy. In taking that courageous step, however, the Pope had no help from the neo-Catholic establishment.

Despite *Summorum*, neo-Catholic commentators have refused to admit their errors respecting the liturgy. Quite the contrary, even as rumors of *Summorum*’s imminent publication swirled about—four years after the first edition of this book appeared—PCM 2006 neither retracted nor even softened any of its contentions concerning the legal status of the traditional Mass. As the authors declared once again: “we cannot but conclude that ... the celebration of the Tridentine Mass is forbidden except where ecclesiastical law specifically allows it.”³⁶ Not only did the authors persist in their obstinate contention that Paul VI had forbidden the celebration of the traditional Mass throughout the Church, by way of addendum they offered further “evidence” in the form of a juridically meaningless address by Pope Paul published in *L’Osservatore Romano* on June 3, 1976. In that address—a favorite of liturgical revolutionaries—Paul suggested that use of the new Missal is “certainly not left to the free choice of priests or faithful.”³⁷ The only authority Pope Paul cited for this proposition was not any command of his own but an “Instruction” of June 14, 1971, from none other than Bugnini’s Congregation for Divine Worship. But that Instruction was merely a “notification” by the same Vatican congregation Paul hastily dissolved at the same time he removed its secretary, Bugnini, upon reading the aforementioned dossier on his alleged Masonic affiliation.

Clearly, Pope Benedict was not persuaded that the 1971 “notification” (or the aforementioned “notification” of 1974, which even Bugnini admitted was ambiguous) amounted to a prohibition of the ancient Mass by his predecessor. The “notification” does not rate even a footnote in *Summorum* or in the Explanatory Letter. Yet in PCM 2006 Likoudis and Whitehead newly trumpet the document as Exhibit A in support of their

soon-to-be-demolished contention that Paul VI had universally prohibited the celebration of the traditional Latin Mass absent an indult. On this slimmest of slim reeds the neo-Catholic polemic continued to insist that Paul VI had banned the received and approved rite of Mass in the Latin Church of fifteen centuries' standing.

Revealing a fundamental liturgical ignorance that had not been helped by the passage of time, the “Afterwords [sic]”³⁸ to PCM 2006 recited the neo-Catholic canard that the ancient liturgy contained in the Roman Missal of Saint Pius V “only dates back to 1570.”³⁹ *Summorum* shows otherwise, as noted above. In fact *Quo Primum* merely standardized and codified the immemorial Roman Rite, the Damasian-Gregorian liturgy going back more than a thousand years before Pius V to the reign of St. Gregory the Great, and before him to the reign of Pope Damasus I (366–384). Yet *Quo Primum*, evincing that Catholic sense of liturgical conservatism, recklessly disregarded after Vatican II for the first time in Church history, allowed for continuation of local variants of the Roman Rite, such as the Ambrosian Rite of Milan, if they had been in use for at least two hundred years.⁴⁰ In *The Reform of the Roman Liturgy*, cited in [Chapter 7](#) of this book—to which, again, the future Pope Benedict wrote the French-language preface—the renowned liturgist Msgr. Klaus Gamber observed the historical truth the authors of PCM 2006 ignored along with the rest of the neo-Catholic establishment: “The reform introduced by Pius V did not create anything new. It was simply a comprehensive review of the Missal, editing out some additions and changes that, over time, had found their way into the text. Even so, older unique rites, if they dated back at least two hundred years, were left untouched... “ [41](#)

Continuing to blunder about in the field of the Roman liturgy in which Gamber was preeminent, PCM 2006 cited only the lone opinion of a “medievalist historian” at Cambridge, David Knowles. Knowles was excommunicated *latae sentitiae* and exclaustated from the Benedictine order after he took up residence outside his monastery in defiance of his superiors—an ironic choice of authority indeed, given PCM’s dogged insistence on unquestioning obedience to any and all ecclesiastical commands (and even the mere appearance of a command respecting the traditional Mass).⁴² According to Knowles, the New Mass of Paul VI “eliminated many of the medieval additions, and the framework of the Roman Mass has been almost completely restored to that of the Roman Church in the sixth century.”⁴³

Here PCM 2006, like the 1981 version, promoted the historical revisionism inherent in the liturgical revolution Bugnini unleashed upon the Church. Bugnini’s revolutionary creation of new “Eucharistic prayers” and a new liturgical calendar by committee had nothing to do with the Roman Mass of the sixth century; much less did the introduction of Mass entirely in the vernacular—the very novelty condemned by Pope Pius VI when it was proposed by the pseudo-Synod of Pistoia.⁴⁴ Regarding the abandonment of Latin, the authors of PCM 2006 seemed unfamiliar with the warning of none other than Pope John XXIII, on the very eve of the Second Vatican Council: that the bishops “shall be on their guard lest anyone under their jurisdiction, eager for revolutionary changes, writes against the use of Latin in the teaching of the higher sacred studies or in the Liturgy, or through prejudice makes light of the Holy See’s will in this regard or interprets it falsely.”⁴⁵

As for Bugnini's reduction of the venerable Roman Canon to a mere option alongside the newly invented "Eucharistic prayers," this would have been as unthinkable to any Pope of the sixth century as it was to any Pope in the entire history of the Church before Paul VI, including John XXIII. Yet as recently as 2006, Likoudis and Whitehead evidently still viewed it as a good thing that the "father" of the "liturgical reform" had destroyed 1,300 years of gradual liturgical development in order—so the story goes—to strip down the Mass to its supposed sixth-century form. The authors defended what Pope Pius XII, in his monumental encyclical on the Roman liturgy *Mediator Dei*, called "that exaggerated and senseless antiquarianism to which the illegal Council of Pistoia gave rise." In fact, the total abandonment of Latin in the liturgy is actually contrary to the supposed aim of recovering "ancient simplicity," as the received and approved rite of Mass for the Latin Church had always been in Latin. Here the neo-Catholic scoffs about "mere externals" over which Catholics should not greatly trouble themselves.

Apparently confident that the postconciliar regime of novelty was irreversible and that traditionalists were bound to be disappointed with Pope Benedict, PCM 2006 belittled as mere insolent "demands" by the SSPX precisely that freedom for the Latin liturgy Pope Benedict would imminently grant to the whole Church:

One of the SSPX demands, made in the course of negotiations with Rome ... was that every priest in the world should be given the right to say the Tridentine Mass.... [T]he idea that Catholic priests should have the right to go against what a general council of the Church has *decreed* can surely in no way be considered a *traditional* Catholic doctrine.... [emphasis in original]

[R]umors abounded concerning just what measures the Pope might be intending to take. One of these rumors is that the Pope would issue a *motu proprio* allowing universal use by Catholic priests of the 1962 Missal. All along this had continued to be one of the demands of the SSPX, which has long contended that any Catholic priest should have the "right" to celebrate Mass in accordance with the old Missal. How such "rights talk" had ever become part of "the Catholic tradition" was generally not explained. How such a right could be considered compatible with Vatican II's directives that the liturgy should be reformed was similarly not clear—but then possibly because the SSPX continued to "demand" this right probably because granting it could be interpreted by them as an official repudiation of the Council and its directives by the Church.⁴⁶

A year later, in the Explanatory Letter, Pope Benedict himself engaged in what Likoudis and Whitehead had derided as "rights talk" by impudent traditionalists: "What earlier generations held as sacred, remains sacred and great for us too, and it cannot be all of a sudden entirely forbidden...." Benedict also tossed aside the neo-Catholic chestnut that any sort of widespread return to the traditional Mass would be contrary to "Vatican II's directives that the liturgy should be reformed." *Summorum* had made it clear that the new Mass was merely another "usage" of the Roman Rite and that the ancient use remained available to all who desired it.

Unbowed even two days after *Summorum* was promulgated, Likoudis professed to welcome the document, while mischaracterizing it as merely a broader indult "permitting" the still otherwise "forbidden" Latin Mass:

Like liturgically concerned Catholics in many countries, I welcome *Summorum Pontificum* by Pope Benedict XVI, which allows any priest of the Latin rite to celebrate Mass according to the Missal of 1962 (the so-called Tridentine Latin Mass) in a far more generous manner than was previously allowed. As the Pope explained, the Church has "two usages of the one Roman rite," the ordinary form promulgated by Paul VI in accordance with the desires of Vatican II, and the older extraordinary form cherished by those Catholics having "a deep, personal familiarity with the earlier form of liturgical celebration."

In the revised 2006 edition of *The Pope, the Council and the Mass*, in which Kenneth Whitehead and I defend the liturgical reforms of Vatican II, we took care to observe that Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger had written books and articles indicating that “the sacred liturgy has long been one of his abiding interests and concerns.” We also noted his view that “the liturgical reforms mandated by the Second Vatican Council have not been an unqualified success in all respects.” We wrote that it was expected that as Pope he would take measures toward an authentic “reform of the reform in accordance with the true mind of Vatican II”.... Pope Benedict has now done so in a striking and sensitive manner... [47](#)

Likoudis conspicuously avoided any mention of the declarations in *Summorum* and the Explanatory Letter that the traditional Mass had never been abrogated or forbidden. He also falsely suggested that Cardinal Ratzinger’s view of the new liturgy was merely that the “the liturgical reforms mandated by the Second Vatican Council have not been an unqualified success in all respects.” Here Likoudis was quoting himself in PCM 2006, [48](#) not Cardinal Ratzinger, whose true opinion, as we have seen, is that there has been a “collapse of the liturgy” and that the imposition of the New Missal was a “break in the history of the liturgy whose consequences could only be tragic.” Moreover, the Council never “mandated” a new liturgy in the first place, much less a new liturgy entirely in the vernacular. [49](#)

Like Likoudis and Whitehead, *The Wanderer*—whose multi-part broadside against traditionalists was the impetus for the first edition of this book—continued its traditionalist-bashing even after *Summorum* was issued. In the July 19, 2007 issue, George A. Kendall went so far as to accuse traditionalists of being “so obsessed with restoring the old Mass that it becomes a kind of idol to the point where Gregorian chant, incense, Latin, bells at the consecration, and so on become more important, really, than the love of God.” So, even as the Supreme Pontiff was vindicating the traditionalist defense of the traditional Mass, the neo-Catholic arsenal of calumnies expanded to include a new charge: idolatry! Traditionalists are idolaters who worship chant, incense, bells “and so on.” Kendall even declared that traditionalists are facing eternal damnation for their sin of idolatry: “It is a terrible thing to think of anyone losing his soul because of inordinate love for the old Mass, yet there is no doubt it is possible. Idolatry does not consist in loving bad things too much, but in the disordered love for good things, and the higher the good we turn into an idol, the worse the idolatry is. The old Mass is a very great good and a very great spiritual consolation, and Satan can use it very effectively to draw souls away from God.” And here Kendall was speaking not only of sedevacantists and those who deny the validity of the New Mass, but “others who stop short of going that far”—that is, traditionalists in general.

So, in the Orwellian neo-Catholic view of our situation, the traditional Mass is a tool of the devil, while attendance at the *Novus Ordo* is our ticket to heaven! As Kendall would have it, a true and faithful Catholic is one who never resisted the liturgical revolution, but rather resigned himself to whatever debauched liturgy his liberal bishop provided in the absence of a convenient “indult” Latin Mass, “because this is happening by God’s permissive will. This deprivation is, it seems, a means by which God can work with us to bring us to greater spiritual maturity, forcing us to *live by faith alone*, without the comfort of a beautiful liturgy.”

So much devastating nonsense was compacted into so few words. Could Kendall not see this? “Live by faith alone,” Kendall wrote. Could there be a more telling admission of how little the New Mass provides in the way of the worship due to God, and how little it

instructs people in the Faith despite its essential validity? In the midst of the still-prevailing liturgical wasteland, Kendall was reduced to uttering the Lutheran prescription for the practice of the Christian religion. How fitting, really, considering that the new liturgy embodies so much—in fact, practically everything—Luther demanded in his drive to destroy the Mass. As Luther himself declared: “If I succeed in doing away with the Mass, then I shall believe I have completely conquered the Pope. On the Mass, as on a rock, the whole of the papacy is based, with its monasteries, bishoprics, colleges, altars, services and doctrines.... If the sacrilegious and cursed custom of the Mass is overthrown, the whole must fall.”⁵⁰ Lost on Kendall, of course, was the almost apocalyptic reality that the New Mass as it is practiced in the average parish today would appall even Luther.

“The comfort of a beautiful liturgy....” That is how Kendall regarded the received and approved rite of Mass in the Western Church, the foundation of the great liturgical polity that was Christendom, the highest and most perfect form of doxology ever devised by man under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, the inspiration of countless saints, and the veritable font of Western culture. For him it was little more than the liturgical equivalent of “comfort food”—a plate of cookies and hot chocolate it would certainly be very nice to have but which real Catholics can do without in a spirit of penance on their way to “greater spiritual maturity.” Completely forgetting what is due to God in divine worship, which is the principal focus of the liturgy, Kendall declared that he had no need of liturgical “comfort,” which he even suggested might be an impediment to spiritual progress. Such is the neo-Catholic mentality. As far as the neo-Catholic establishment was concerned, the unjust suppression of the traditional Mass and the consequent dissolution of the life of the Church could have gone on forever. Indeed, as they would have it, the liturgical crisis was a positive spiritual aid, because it forced one to rely on the “essentials” of the Faith. How typically American—which is to say, utilitarian—is this view of the sacred liturgy.

Adding a dash of hilarity to Kendall’s farrago of calumny and inanity, the editor, Alphonse Matt, Sr.—who had just run an article accusing traditionalists of idolatry—declared in his editorial on *Summorum*: “Let us hope that the contentious spirit which has marked so many of those on both sides will be replaced with good will and charity among all Catholics who seek to focus Sacred Liturgy on the praise and glory and love of the Holy Trinity.” There are some things that simply cannot have been written in good faith. This was one of them.

A Return to Paradise?

None of the preceding is meant to suggest that under Pope Benedict traditionalists were returned to a liturgical Garden of Eden where everything suddenly recovered its original integrity. For one thing, Benedict rather mysteriously declined to celebrate Mass according to the 1962 Missal himself, at least publicly, despite having pronounced it a sacred inheritance that must be given its proper place in the Church. It was almost as if Benedict feared rioting in the streets by the liturgical Bolsheviks still predominating in the dioceses if he dared to celebrate the Church’s own traditional liturgy. That the Church has been reduced to a condition in which even the Roman Pontiff apparently felt obliged to refrain from celebrating the Mass according to the traditional Roman Rite was a dramatic sign that the postconciliar regime of novelty was still very much in command of the Church’s

human element.

Moreover, while Pope Benedict's papal liturgies, predominantly in Latin, were a generally a vast improvement over the abysmal ad hoc affairs that had marked the papacy of his predecessor, the "Papal Mass" at World Youth Day in Sydney, a year after *Summorum* was promulgated, demonstrated the continuing dominance of a liturgical establishment intent on perpetuating what Msgr. Gamber had called "the real destruction of the Roman Rite." Contrary to everything Benedict had written and said on the subject, the "liturgy" in Sydney was "the heresy of formlessness" in action: a farrago of occasional Latin phrases interspersed in a banal vernacular text, accompanied by cheesy orchestral music passed off as solemn and reverent. There were, as always, casually attired lay readers and presenters of "the gifts," and bidding prayers by the laity, including a ludicrous petition by a teenage girl (who laughed because her microphone was off) that the Holy Spirit would "inflame the hearts" of the Pope and the bishops to preach the Gospel.⁵¹

The *Kyrie*, the *Gloria* and the *Sanctus*—if one can even call them by those names—were nothing but starting points for outbursts of musical exhibitionism. The sung parts of the "Papal Mass" were pompous oratorios filled with declamatory drivel such as "You have made us a new creation!" The traditional liturgical words were shamelessly distorted to suit vocal melodramatics. Throughout there were trilling violins, rousing march tempos (thrum-thrum-thrum went the strings during the *Kyrie*), ham-handed tympani booms, and schmaltzy arrangements that sounded like they were written by a Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer contract composer in the early 1960s under the instruction: "Make it lush, bubala!" In short, the cultured Pope must have undergone nearly two hours of mental torture.

And, of course, there was that great contribution of John Paul II: liturgical "inculturation." During the "Gospel procession" a band of well-muscled Fiji islanders in grass kilts or loincloths, with black splotches painted on their faces, proceeded to hop, twirl, gyrate and squat their way up a long and winding ramp leading toward the altar platform, while jabbing sticks in the Pope's direction or toward the book of the Gospels they were carrying on some sort of sedan chair.⁵² It looked as if the little tribe was whipping itself up to attack the Roman Pontiff, incited by the rhythmic chanting and clacking wood block of a "choir" sitting on the floor in flowered shirts. The Pope, it must be said, was visibly disgusted by this display, which probably explains why the camera did not focus on him for more than a second or two during this part of the "Papal Mass."

And then this telling tableau: When it came time for the distribution of Holy Communion, a velvet kneeler was produced so that the Pope could administer the Host in the traditional manner to fifty or so people, in keeping with his desire to end the abuse of communion in the hand to which Paul VI had surrendered. At the same time, however, every one of the clerics distributing Holy Communion to tens of thousands of other people blithely ignored the Pope's example. It was understood that the Pope was merely expressing his "preference" in an age of collegiality and liturgical diversity. One could not ask for a more evocative image of the state of the Church today: the Pope and his kneeler, attempting to restore some degree of reverence for the Blessed Sacrament, surrounded by a vast sea of irreverence and general liturgical dissolution he seemed powerless to overcome.

The spectacle in Sydney demonstrated that in order to restore a liturgy left in ruins by

the postconciliar “reforms,” the Pope would have to govern with an iron hand, just as Pope Saint Pius X did during the first Modernist crisis. But since the Second Vatican Council, Popes do not seem willing to govern the Church at all, much less with the severity required to end the crisis. Benedict could not govern the Church as it must be governed not only because it was foreign to his kindly nature to make heads roll, but also because he was a Pope of the Council and its novelties, including a nebulously described “collegiality,” which continue to neutralize the Church’s divinely established monarchical constitution even if the conciliar texts alter nothing of the deposit of the Faith. What this book argued thirteen years ago is just as true today: the “spirit” of the Council must be exorcized before a true restoration can begin; and that must mean, in the end, moving beyond the Council itself.⁵³

Nevertheless, with Benedict’s liberation of the Latin Mass and the correction of the errant translations of the *Novus Ordo*, the liturgical aspect of The Great Façade was beginning, at long last, to fall. As the arch-Modernist Richard P. McBrien grumbled in 2011, the long overdue correctives “were inspired and promoted, not by liturgists, but by traditionalists in the hierarchy and a minority of ultra-conservatives within the Catholic church [sic] generally.” Those dastardly traditionalists, he continued, “were never supportive of the liturgical reforms initiated by the Second Vatican Council: turning the altar around so that the priest would face the congregation during Mass, receiving Holy Communion in the hand, celebrating the Mass in the vernacular, having altar girls as well as altar boys, and so forth.”⁵⁴ Vatican II had never actually ordered any of these “liturgical reforms,” which were introduced in the name of the Council but without any conciliar mandate. Yet, as we have seen, neo-Catholic opinion generally aligns itself with the likes of McBrien regarding these ruinous liturgical innovations, defending or passively accepting them all—including even the bizarre spectacle of altar girls, which John Paul II had so rashly approved after first rejecting the innovation in *Inestimabile Donum* (cf. Chapter 2).

Even today, seven years after *Summorum* exposed the liturgical element of the regime of novelty for the fraud it always was, neo-Catholic commentators still inhabit a kind of Land Where Time Stood Still: a land where no one knows that Vatican II did not “decree” the replacement of the traditional Latin Mass with a new Mass in the vernacular, or altar tables or communion in the hand; a land where everyone still thinks Paul VI “prohibited” the traditional Mass; a land where no priest or member of the laity has any birthright to the Church’s liturgical inheritance; a land where no Pope would ever admit that the traditional Mass was never abrogated, was always permitted and that every priest was free to offer without “permission” from anyone; a land where legitimate pleas for restoration of the Church’s 1500-year-old Latin liturgy, our birthright as Catholics, can be dismissed with a rhetorical sneer as “rights talk.”

Lifting the SSPX Excommunications

The Great Façade crumbled further and most dramatically on January 21, 2009, when, by order of Pope Benedict, a decree of the Congregation for Bishops rescinded what traditionalists has always viewed as the dubious excommunications of the four bishops of the SSPX, consecrated by Archbishop Lefebvre in 1988. As the decree explained:

His Holiness Benedict XVI—paternally sensitive to the spiritual unease manifested by the interested party due to

the sanction of excommunication and trusting in the effort expressed by them in the aforementioned letter of not sparing any effort to deepen the necessary discussions with the Authority of the Holy See in the still open matters, so as to achieve shortly a full and satisfactory solution of the problem posed in the origin—decided to reconsider the canonical situation of Bishops Bernard Fellay, Bernard Tissier de Mallerais, Richard Williamson, and Alfonso de Galarreta, arisen with their episcopal consecration.

With this act, it is desired to consolidate the reciprocal relations of confidence and to intensify and grant stability to the relationship of the Fraternity of Saint Pius X with this Apostolic See. This gift of peace, at the end of the Christmas celebrations, is also intended to be a sign to promote unity in the charity of the universal Church and to try to vanquish the scandal of division.⁵⁵

Bishop Fellay's response to the decree was as gracious as it was unsparing concerning the continuing reality of the ecclesial crisis: "We express our filial gratitude to the Holy Father for this gesture which, beyond the Priestly Society of Saint Pius X, will benefit the whole Church. Our Society wishes to be always more able to help the pope to remedy the unprecedented crisis which presently shakes the Catholic world, and which Pope John Paul II had designated as a state of 'silent apostasy.'"⁵⁶

Neo-Catholic commentators, however, remained as obdurate as Modernists à la Hans Kung in their determination to continue marginalizing the SSPX and its adherents, along with the rest of the traditionalist movement, while defending a deteriorating ecclesial status quo in which—irony of ironies—it is only the traditionalist orders that exhibit robust health and steady growth. Three years before the lifting of the excommunications, PCM 2006 recited more of the usual cant concerning traditionalists, heedless of the Vatican's decided thaw toward the Society, including repeated statements by Vatican prelates that neither its clergy nor laity were in state of formal schism.⁵⁷ In their "Afterwords [sic]," bearing the already embarrassingly outdated title "The Lefebvre Schism," Likoudis and Whitehead confidently asserted: "the Church has ... basically surmounted the crisis of faith and practice that indeed came upon her in the postconciliar era. It's over. Neither the dissenters, nor the do-it-yourself liturgical abusers—nor, indeed, the Traditionalists, for that matter—are going to prevail."

It is quite a testament to neo-Catholic blindness to the reality of our situation that the authors of PCM could make such an assertion in the midst of a still-ongoing homosexual priest scandal throughout the Church; the diocesan bankruptcies resulting from it; the emergence of a "gay Mafia" in the seminaries, the priesthood and the hierarchy; the continued closing of parishes and Catholic schools; the dire lack of priestly and religious vocations outside of a few traditional orders; the prevalence of heterodox teaching in the remaining schools and seminaries of the *Novus Ordo*; the hemorrhaging of Catholics into Protestant sects in Latin America; and the worldwide mass defection of the laity from the Church's most basic teachings on faith and morals.⁵⁸ As one French archbishop lamented, apparently without recognizing his own role in the post-conciliar debacle: "In almost twenty years of episcopate, I have buried one hundred and twenty priests, and I have ordained only one... ."⁵⁹ Far be from it the neo-Catholic establishment to acknowledge that the liturgical and other "reforms" supposedly "mandated" by the Second Vatican Council—which, in fact, had not mandated a single one of them—had anything to do with this vast ecclesial disaster.

Oblivious to the growing signs that the Pope himself would soon quash all further talk of the non-existent "Lefebvre schism," PCM 2006 continued twanging the old and rusty

neo-Catholic saw this book addressed twelve years ago,⁶⁰ declaring that “the Traditionalists have not only been no better than the dissenters and radical modernizers on ‘the left’; they have actually done more harm to the Church than the latter.”⁶¹ There was no attempt to demonstrate the patently ridiculous contention that Catholics who have simply continued practicing the faith in the manner of their ancestors are more harmful to the Church than those who publicly dissent from her infallible teaching on faith and morals and demand radical changes in her doctrine and discipline. But, as this book argues thematically, such is the function of the neo-Catholic constituency in the dynamic of the crisis: to provide cover for the heterodox “left” by helpfully denouncing the orthodox “right”—precisely for being orthodox.

Surely by the time *Summorum* was issued and the SSPX excommunications were lifted, however, anyone possessed of the faculty of critical thought could see this neo-Catholic canard for what it was: a calumny of faithful Catholics whose concerns the Pope himself was accommodating in the most dramatic manner—not only for the sake of traditionalists, but also for the good of the whole Church. In explaining why he had lifted the excommunications, the Pope delivered a rebuke that apparently has yet to penetrate the neo-Catholic mind. Addressing the furor his decision had aroused in a letter to the world’s bishops, the Pope asked: “Sometimes one has the impression that our society needs at least one group for which there need not be any tolerance; which one can unperturbedly set upon with hatred. And who dared to touch them—in this case the Pope—lost himself the right to tolerance and was allowed without fear and restraint to be treated with hatred, too.”⁶² Exactly so.

Then again, one cannot fail to note Pope Benedict’s comment in the same letter concerning the priests, seminarians, and laity of the SSPX: “Should we casually let them drift farther from the Church? I think for example of the 491 priests. We cannot know how mixed their motives may be. All the same, I do not think that they would have chosen the priesthood if, alongside various distorted and unhealthy elements, they did not have a love for Christ and a desire to proclaim him and, with him, the living God. Can we simply exclude them, as representatives of a radical fringe, from our pursuit of reconciliation and unity? What would then become of them?” It is yet another telling indication of the depth of the crisis in the Church that the Pope had been reduced to pleading the case for tolerating a tiny group of traditional Catholics, despite its supposedly “distorted and unhealthy elements,” at the same time the Vatican had supinely accepted a civilizational defection from the Faith and the consequent destruction of what was left of Catholic social order. Did the Pope not see any “distorted and unhealthy elements” in the Church at large, which was exhibiting what his own predecessor had called “silent apostasy”? Had not the faithful in general, all over the globe, “drifted farther from the Church” since Vatican II, either ceasing to practice the faith altogether or picking and choosing the teachings to which they would adhere while continuing to occupy the pews of fewer and fewer Catholic parishes? Where was Pope Benedict’s letter to the world’s bishops about their responsibility for the collapse of faith and discipline throughout Catholic Church—a collapse seen almost everywhere except in traditionalist societies, including the Society of Saint Pius X?

At any rate, sad to say, the lifting of the excommunications was not followed by what

many observers expected: the creation of a canonical structure, probably a personal papal prelature, for regularization of the SSPX, which could have been accomplished with a stroke of the papal pen on a technical canonical decree. Any such prospect was doomed, however, after the worldwide scandal provoked by Bishop Williamson's inexplicable preoccupation with minimizing the number of Jewish victims of the Hitler regime. Williamson was silenced by the SSPX's Superior General, Bishop Fellay, and was ultimately expelled from the Society on October 4, 2012.⁶³

The “Full Communion” Canard

The Williamson affair aside, one would have thought that at least with the lifting of the excommunications of the four bishops all further talk of the SSPX's being in “schism” would end. But neo-Catholic polemicists were quick to move the goal post, adopting the new argument that despite the remission of the excommunications the SSPX still lacked an elusive quality known as “full communion,” to be distinguished from “partial communion” in the lexicon of obscurantist postconciliar neologisms. Typical of this contention was an “official statement” in 2011 by one Terry Carroll of what was then called Real-CatholicTV: “The SSPX are not in full communion with the Church and are invited by the Church to rediscover this path.”⁶⁴ For the many reasons already stated, it is simply bizarre to speak of the SSPX's lack of “full communion” in the midst of worldwide dissent from papal teaching and ecclesiastical law by Catholics in the pews, priests and even bishops.

At any rate, how exactly would one achieve “full communion” if being a believing Catholic who is not excommunicated does not suffice? It would seem that “full communion” represents an elusive ambiguity that does not involve a simple adherence to what the Church has always taught, but rather the acceptance of a single super-dogma: the ineffable teachings of Vatican II—a Council the same, yet different, from all the other Councils; novel yet traditional; new yet old; pastoral yet doctrinal; an opening of ecclesiastical chakras to certain energies of the modern world; an “event” whose meaning can only be intuited, but never made explicit, according to a “true interpretation” that is lurking somewhere but has yet to be found. Listen carefully, Grasshopper, and you will hear the true meaning of the Council in soft breezes flowing through poplars on Roman hills: it is the sound of one hand clapping.

To be serious, and perfectly fair to Mr. Carroll, Pope Benedict himself had suggested the Society's lack of “full communion” in his 2009 Apostolic Letter *Ecclesiae Unitatem*, concerning the reorganization of the Ecclesia Dei Commission. In an *obiter dictum* Benedict observed that in remitting the excommunications he had “intended to remove an impediment that might have jeopardized the opening of a door to dialogue and thereby to invite the Bishops and the ‘Society of St Pius X’ to rediscover the path to full communion with the Church.” So, the Pope himself used the phrase. But what could it possibly mean as to membership in the Catholic Church as opposed to a technical canonical regularization? Consider the language of the decree remitting the excommunications, cited above:

In virtue of the faculties that have been expressly conceded to me by the Holy Father, Benedict XVI, in virtue of the present decree, I lift from Bishops Bernard Fellay, Bernard Tissier de Mallerais, Richard Williamson and Alfonso de Galarreta the censure of excommunication *latae sententiae* declared by this congregation on July 1,

1988, and declare void of juridical effects beginning today the decree published then.

Void of juridical effects! And what were the “juridical effects” of excommunication now considered void? According to the 1983 Code of Canon Law:

Can. 1331 §1. An excommunicated person is forbidden:

1. to have any ministerial participation in celebrating the sacrifice of the Eucharist or any other ceremonies of worship whatsoever;
2. to celebrate the sacraments or sacramentals and to receive the sacraments;
3. to exercise any ecclesiastical offices, ministries, or functions whatsoever or to place acts of governance.

Thus, the juridical and spiritual consequences of excommunication are essentially these: (1) forbidden to administer sacraments, (2) forbidden to receive sacraments, (3) forbidden to exercise any office or ministry in the Church. From which it follows that the lifting of the excommunication of the SSPX bishops should have meant—if words have meaning—that they were now able to administer and receive sacraments and exercise offices and ministries in the Church—along with the Society priests, who were never excommunicated—so that all that was lacking was a canonical structure. All the more would it mean that the lay adherents of the Society had never ceased to be Catholics in good standing, as they were never under any sentence of ecclesiastical authority, and that consequently they had always been free to receive the sacraments from any priest or bishop in the Church without need of any special showing of “full communion.” Yet the Society—bishops, priests and laity alike—was still said to lack “full communion.” That the accusation must be meaningless and of no spiritual consequence is shown by reason itself:

First, thanks to Pope Benedict, the four bishops of the SSPX were no longer under a sentence of excommunication, if indeed they ever were.

Second, the priests and faithful of the SSPX were never excommunicated in the first place, which is why Pope Benedict had no need to revoke any excommunication as to them.

Third, one who is not excommunicated from the Church is able to receive all the sacraments of the Church, including Holy Communion; and no one in the Vatican, much less the Pope, has even suggested otherwise regarding the SSPX.

Fourth, neither the SSPX bishops, nor its priests, nor its religious, nor its lay faithful are accused of heresy, which would involve obstinate doubt or denial of an article of “divine and Catholic faith” (cf. Canon 751)—that is, an infallible dogma, which Vatican II neither defined nor contradicted.

Fifth, one who is baptized in the Church, is not excommunicated, is able to receive all the Sacraments, and is not a heretic can only be a Catholic.

Sixth, Catholics are in communion with the Catholic Church.

Seventh, there is no such thing as a “partial” Catholic, and thus no such thing as a true Catholic in “partial communion” with the Church.

Eighth, the SSPX are Catholics.

Ninth, no one at the Vatican has ever claimed that the SSPX are not Catholics, but on the contrary numerous Vatican prelates and the Pope himself have declared that they are true Catholics whose organization is in a canonically irregular situation (which could be rectified by an appropriate decree).

Tenth, the SSPX are not non-Catholics.

Eleventh, according to the principle of non-contradiction the clergy and laity of SSPX cannot be Catholic and not Catholic at one and the same time.

Twelfth, according to the principle of the excluded middle, the statement “the clergy and laity of the SSPX are Catholics” is either true or false, objectively speaking (subjective dispositions of particular individuals being beyond our ken); and if they are Catholics, they cannot lack “full communion” with the Catholic Church.

Quite simply then, if the clergy and laity of the SSPX are Catholics, how can they not be in full communion with the Catholic Church? What possible impediment could affect these Catholics so as to leave them in a kind of canonical limbo inhabited by no one else in the Church, including the hundreds of millions who ignore the Church’s infallible teaching on marriage and procreation and are now morally indistinguishable from liberal Protestants? Pope Benedict’s attempt to elucidate the impediment in his letter to the bishops concerning the remission of the excommunications revealed the nature of the problem. Explaining why the SSPX has no recognized canonical status in the Church, Benedict spoke not in terms of a canonical irregularity that could be rectified with a technical papal decree, but rather of doctrine:

The fact that the Society of Saint Pius X does not possess a canonical status in the Church is not, in the end, based on disciplinary but on doctrinal reasons. As long as the Society does not have a canonical status in the Church, its ministers do not exercise legitimate ministries in the Church. There needs to be a distinction, then, between the disciplinary level, which deals with individuals as such, and the doctrinal level, at which ministry and institution are involved. In order to make this clear once again: until the doctrinal questions are clarified, the Society has no canonical status in the Church, and its ministers—even though they have been freed of the ecclesiastical penalty—do not legitimately exercise any ministry in the Church.

Now, the Church has no power to reveal new doctrines, as the First Vatican Council solemnly declared in defining the narrow scope of papal infallibility⁶⁵ and therefore the infallibility of the teaching of ecumenical councils, which has no binding effect without papal approval. Yet, having removed what he himself called the “impediment” of excommunication in *Ecclesiae Unitatem*, Benedict was here suggesting that there was still another impediment to the canonical status of the Society, one involving “doctrinal questions” that needed to be “clarified.” But what questions, concerning which doctrines?

Quite portentously, the same statement suggested that as individuals the priests of the Society were no longer under any canonical penalty that would prevent them from exercising a ministry: “[t]here needs to be a distinction, then, between the disciplinary level, which deals with individuals as such and the doctrinal level, at which ministry and institution are involved.” Accordingly, the Society’s individual clerics would incur no impediment to exercising a priestly ministry should they leave the Society and come under the jurisdiction of a local ordinary in a diocese. In fact, a few have done so without being required to make any profession of faith or any other act of reconciliation to demonstrate their “full communion” with the Church.

What is more, it appeared that behind the scenes Vatican authorities had been treating the SSPX clergy as if they already had a valid canonical mission, as well as jurisdiction for the sacraments. For example, on May 28, 2011, Father Daniel Couture, the Society’s District Superior of Asia, was delegated by Bishop Fellay to accept the vows of Mother Mary Micaela, who had transferred from the Congregation of the Dominican Sisters of New Zealand, a *Novus Ordo* congregation, to the Dominican Sisters of Wanganui, established by Bishop Fellay. A report on the development notes that Mother Mary “had special permission from the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes in Rome to

do this.”⁶⁶ According to a report from the SSPX, Vatican authorities advised the Catholic bishops of Gabon that the sacraments administered by the Society’s missionary priests, including marriages, should be entered into the diocesan sacramental registries.⁶⁷ And while amateur casuists in the neo-Catholic blogosphere blithely suggest that the million or so lay adherents of the SSPX are neither validly married⁶⁸ nor absolved⁶⁹ by the Society’s clergy and thus in danger of eternal damnation, the Vatican itself had quite conspicuously never issued any such warning or even so much as suggested that this was so. This thunderous official silence would indicate either a complete indifference to the endangerment of so many souls or a tacit recognition that, technicalities aside, the sacraments administered by the SSPX are valid in the sight of God and the conscience of the lay faithful of the Society need not be disturbed. The latter would mean that the official position that the Society lacks a canonical mission in the Church is essentially a cover story hiding a different reality in practice—yet another element of The Great Façade. At the very least, the Vatican’s studious silence has allowed doubt to arise regarding sacramental validity, which in itself would give rise to a presumption of validity under the 1983 Code of Canon Law.⁷⁰

In any event, the only stated impediment to the Society’s canonical mission was an unspecified clarification of unspecified doctrinal questions affecting only the Society corporately in its canonical mission. What is the basis in Church teaching for a collective canonical impediment respecting a society of apostolic life based on unspecified doctrinal questions that need to be clarified? None seems apparent. It is self-evident that the Church today is filled with clergy and laity whose doctrine is in dire need clarification on fundamental points of faith and morals. Yet there are no Vatican pronouncements on the inability of these people to administer or receive the sacraments, exercise a ministry, or conduct canonical missions in the Church until their doctrine is clarified. Therefore, it is fair to ask: Has this impediment of a need for clarification of doctrinal questions—meaning, of course, questions about Vatican II and nothing else—been erected ad hoc for the Society and only the Society? Is not the impediment itself in need of clarification? In particular, what specific doctrinal propositions must the Society affirm in order overcome the nebulous impediment of a need for doctrinal clarification? Are we not dealing with what could be called “the Vatican II impediment,” whatever that might mean?

And that is the ultimate question: Does “the Vatican II impediment” have any meaning at all? What is most curious is the consistent refusal of the Pope or the Vatican authorities either to specify the precise doctrines of Vatican II the Society must affirm or to condemn specific alleged errors of the Society against the Council’s teaching. The Society is asked simply to “accept the Council” as if the mere event of the Council were a doctrine in itself, albeit one that cannot be expressed in so many words. Indeed, this refusal to specify precisely what teachings of Vatican II the Society must affirm as discrete verbatim propositions would seem to indicate a tacit understanding that merely to attempt such a specification would demonstrate that the “impediment” is not really doctrinal all, but rather consists of a demand that one accept precisely the Council-as-event. To recall the strange words of Paul VI noted in [Chapter 2](#): “The important words of the Council are newness and updating ... ; the word newness has been given to us as an order, as a program.” That is, the Society must accept the conciliar “newness” if it is to have a canonical mission in the Church.

But the Church is not some gnostic sect with increasing levels of initiation involving secret knowledge of such matters as “newness,” progressively revealed until “full” membership is attained. Thus, despite Pope Benedict’s statements in his letter to the bishops and in *Ecclesiae Unitatem*, there would appear to be only one reasonable conclusion: the contention that the Catholics of the SSPX are not in “full communion” with the Catholic Church of which they are indubitably members is illusory; it is part of The Great Façade that continues to separate much of the human element of the Church from her own perennial doctrine and praxis, and this for the sake of exalting the last ecumenical council even though it did not, and could not, teach any new doctrine as such. The mystification of Vatican II continued even as Benedict, acting according to his own sense of justice, took measures favorable to Tradition.

It must also be said that the SSPX affair demonstrates how the ambiguous conciliar neologism “full communion” and the correlative “partial communion” have caused enormous damage to the Church. Non-Catholics, now received with open arms as honored guests at innumerable “ecumenical” gatherings and prayer meetings, are deemed to have a nebulous “partial communion” with the Church which allows them to be described as “brothers and sisters in Christ” despite their adamant rejection of numerous Catholic doctrines and dogmas. Yet the wholly orthodox SSPX, dedicated to defending the traditional teaching and liturgy of the Church, is effectively ostracized for lacking an equally nebulous “full communion.” Thus does the “full communion/partial communion” novelty operate both as a shield protecting non-Catholics in their patent errors against the Faith and a sword wielded against the faithful Catholics of the SSPX to exclude them from “full communion” with other Catholics based on differences over “doctrinal questions” that have never even been stated clearly, much less answered definitively by the Magisterium. Could the situation be more absurd?

Keeping the Purge Alive

In their conduct of a *post-Summorum* campaign for the continued marginalization of the SSPX—and with them traditionalists in general—neo-Catholic commentators went even beyond an illusory exclusion from “full communion.” Despite Pope Benedict’s remission of the excommunications, neo-Catholic polemicists persisted in their contention that the SSPX—bishops, priests and laity alike—was outright “schismatic.” Here they resolutely ignored what this book first noted in 2002: that the Vatican had been making it clear in one statement after another, including many by Cardinal Castrillón Hoyos, then Secretary of the Ecclesia Dei Commission,⁷¹ that the Society was never in formal “schism” to begin with—and certainly not its lay and priestly adherents, who had never been excommunicated.⁷²

The claim of “schism” was prominently advocated by the celebrity priest Father Jonathan Morris, then still a member of the Legionnaires of Christ,⁷³ the neo-Catholic flagship order that was devastated by the revelation of the numerous crimes of its founder, Marcial Maciel Degollado. Father Maciel was a neo-Catholic icon until his crimes, including serial pedophilia, fathering children and drug abuse, finally caught up with him during the pontificate of Pope Benedict, who in 2006 sent him off to a monastery to die in disgrace. John Paul II, on the other hand, would hear nothing against this clerical predator during his reign, calling the child molester “an efficacious guide to youth” and feting him

at a ceremony in Saint Peter's Square in 2000.⁷⁴

Speaking as a Fox News commentator, Father Morris explained the SSPX's non-existent "schism" in the tones of a society gossip columnist. After noting the "hair-raising headline announcing the Vatican has 'welcomed back', 'rehabilitated,' or 'made peace with' an unrepentant, Holocaust-denying, anti-Semitic, schismatic bishop [Williamson]," he provided his troubled fans with "the skinny on a complicated but important story." The "skinny" was that Pope Benedict had merely "offered an impressive carrot to the estimated 600,000 followers of an ultra-conservative schismatic group...".⁷⁵ That is, the SSPX's ultraconservative schismatic donkeys failed to see they were being lured back into the *Novus Ordo* corral by a canonical treat dangling from the end of the Pope's stick. Father Morris assured his public that "until the leaders of the schismatic Society of St. Pius X accept the Pope's invitation to come back home ... this group remains illegitimate."

Come back home? But if the Society's adherents were Catholics and if none of them were even arguably excommunicated any longer, were they not already home? Father Morris had the neo-Catholic answer to this perplexing question: Home is Vatican II, as opposed to simply the Catholic Church and the Catholic religion. The Society cannot "come home" without "recognition of the Second Vatican Council that officially and famously condemned all forms of anti-Semitism." But the Society had never said it did not recognize the Council as such. Indeed, its own founder, Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, was a Council Father who subscribed to all its documents (including *Dignitatis Humanae*, but only after voting against it). Those documents included *Nostra Aetate*, whose irenic statements concerning the Jewish people have since been wildly exaggerated to embrace everything from the Church's apology for 2,000 years of sins against the Jews to the Church's abandonment of the teaching that the New Covenant supersedes and replaces the Old Covenant. In fact, Lefebvre's own father died in a Nazi concentration camp in Sonnenburg, Germany.⁷⁶

Never did Archbishop Lefebvre contend that Vatican II, for all its problems, was not a legitimately convoked ecumenical council. Nor does the Society say so today. Rather, to quote Bishop Fellay's statement on the subject in his letter to the Vatican immediately preceding the annulment of the excommunications, the Society's adherents "express some reservations" about the Council.⁷⁷ But by the year 2009 who, besides neo-Modernists and assorted neo-Catholic luminaries, had not expressed reservations about the Council? Those with reservations included Pope Benedict himself, whose criticism of *Gaudium et Spes* as Cardinal Ratzinger is widely known. The prominent theologian Tracey Rowland, Dean of the John Paul II Institute in Melbourne devoted an entire chapter of her book to a discussion of Cardinal Ratzinger's critique of *Gaudium*, including his view that it presents a "colorless doctrine of freedom" based upon "an unhistorical reading of Scripture but also an unhistorical and therefore unreal view of man," which "cannot therefore stand up to theological or philosophical criticism." The Cardinal even declared that when *Gaudium et Spes* speaks of human freedom, it "falls into 'downright Pelagian terminology'...." It would appear that, as Father Morris would have it, even the Pope had not quite come home to Vatican II.⁷⁸

John Allen, writing in the *National Catholic Reporter*, played up the anti-Semitism

theme, suggesting that the Williamson affair evidenced “A troubled history with Judaism” that “has long been part of the Catholic traditionalist movement associated with the late French Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre.”⁷⁹ The innuendo is that the whole movement because it is “associated” with Archbishop Lefebvre, whose “anti-Semitism” Allen simply presumes, even though the Archbishop’s own father died in a Nazi concentration camp. Well, perhaps not the whole movement, Allen admitted. But there are “some traditionalist and Lefebvrite circles” which evince “open hostility toward Jews and Judaism that is anything but latent.” What did Allen mean by “some”? He meant “some strains of traditionalist Catholicism” or, further on, “this strain” of traditionalist Catholicism, which “reaches a crescendo in Williamson....” So, according to Allen, “some strains” or “this strain” of Catholic traditionalism reached “a crescendo” in the opinions of one man. But how many traditionalists would Allen estimate are infected by the crescendo of the strain or strains? He did not say, and therein lies the effectiveness of the innuendo: it is better not to have anything to do with these traditionalist types, since the deadly virus of “anti-Semitism” circulates so freely among them.

Allen at least had the decency to admit that as a set of basic propositions it cannot be said that Roman Catholic traditionalism is “anti-Semitic” per se, at least according to anonymous “observers” and “experts” who have apparently reported back to him the results of their field investigation into this weird species of Catholic:

Observers of the traditionalist landscape caution people not to paint with too broad a brush, as if every Catholic attracted to the older Latin Mass or to traditional views on doctrinal matters is somehow tainted by anti-Semitism. Similarly, experts also warn that critics of Catholic traditionalism can sometimes be quick to label as ‘anti-Semitic’ attitudes that may be controversial theologically or politically, but that don’t in themselves reflect real prejudice. For example, traditionalists often uphold a robust missionary theology, insisting that the church cannot renounce its duty to evangelize any group, including Jews. Similarly, traditionalists often challenge Vatican II’s teaching on religious freedom, church-state separation, and interreligious dialogue. Neither position, observers say, necessarily conceals latent anti-Semitism.

Thus, Allen allowed that Catholics who (a) adhere to the traditional Latin Mass; (b) call for the conversion of all peoples to the Faith, including the Jews; and (c) “challenge” Vatican II’s teaching on religious freedom and interreligious dialogue are not necessarily anti-Semitic. Since Allen’s description applies to every traditionalist in the world (except sedevacantists), who among them can be suspected of “anti-Semitism”? The answer Allen clearly wishes to convey is: everyone and no one, so be on your guard against these undesirables.

As Allen looked down upon “the traditionalist landscape” with a kind of zoological condescension, one wondered if it had ever occurred to him that it is actually his constituency that is a zoo. “Observers” of the “*Novus Ordo* landscape” survey a scene of ecclesial devastation that is almost impossible to believe: mass defections from the priesthood and religious orders; a sudden “collapse of the liturgy” after 2,000 years of divine worship; pandemic homosexual predation of boys by priests; plummeting Mass attendance, baptisms and marriages; overwhelming rejection by the remaining pew Catholics of the Church’s teaching on marriage and procreation; a catastrophically declining birth rate; and a dwindling priesthood on the verge of extinction in most Western nations. John Paul II summed up the state of Allen’s constituency with two unforgettable words not long before he died: “silent apostasy.”

The “traditionalist landscape,” on the other hand, features Catholics with large families in which contraception is unthinkable and divorce almost unheard of, full seminaries and convents that have to turn away applicants, regular Mass attendance, and assent to the traditional teaching of the Church on all things rather than the failed novelties of the past fifty years. In short, the “traditionalist landscape” is simply the Catholic landscape as it was meant to be, a landscape that extended throughout the Church before Vatican II. Who, then, are the oddballs and who are the normal citizens of the commonwealth of the Church? That the critics of traditionalists somehow occupy moral high ground today is but another sign of a Church and a world turned upside down.

Overreaching hugely, George Weigel, perhaps the world’s most prominent neo-Catholic commentator, tried to gin up the Williamson affair into an indictment of “Marcel Lefebvre’s war,” not only “against modern liturgy” but also “modernity, period.”⁸⁰ The Archbishop, Weigel sneered, actually believed that modernity “involved aggressive secularism, anti-clericalism, and the persecution of the church by godless men.” Wherever did the Archbishop get that strange idea? Perhaps he got it from a long line of anti-liberal Popes whose insistent warnings about the errors of modernity Weigel and his fellow liberal Catholics would like us all to forget.⁸¹ Or perhaps the late Archbishop was informed by the world in which he lived and suffered with heroic virtue, as opposed to the think tank in which Weigel envisions a happy reconciliation with modernity, even as modernity continues its rapid descent into total depravity.

More moderately neo-Catholic commentators also hopped aboard the “still in schism” bandwagon. EWTN’s story on *The World Over* asserted that the 1988 consecrations created a “formal schism,” a contention exactly the opposite of the Vatican’s position under Pope Benedict and even during the latter years of John Paul II’s pontificate. But now that John Paul “the Great” was gone, who cared about what the Pope thinks anymore: this was an emergency! According to EWTN the Pope’s decision had not brought the Society “into communion” with the Church, but “those talks are expected to continue.” Clearly Catholic, not excommunicated, yet still not “in communion” with the Church. What must a poor traditionalist do to obtain a “full communion” certification?

Philip Lawler, writing for CatholicCulture.org and the neo-Catholic media flagship EWTN, depicted the remission of the excommunications as merely “a bold move toward ending a split that began more than 20 years ago.” In other words, there was still a “schism.” Lawler referred to the “insightful *Newsweek* column” by “my friend George Weigel” in concluding that “[t]he process of reconciling the SSPX with the Holy See is far from complete.” But as every adherent of the Society is a Catholic, and now not even its bishops were deemed excommunicated, what exactly would this mysterious “process” involve and how could it be “far” from complete? Lawler seemed to think the “process” would involve “discussions leading toward full reconciliation...”⁸² The SSPX itself had requested discussions with the Vatican, but not for the purpose of earning some sort of gnostic verification of a “full reconciliation” not required of anyone else in the Church. Rather, the Society wished to address the problematical texts of the Second Vatican Council, and the Vatican was willing to engage in those discussions without any demand that the Society “affirm” or “embrace” any particular doctrinal proposition.

“Doctrinal” Babble

Lawler is a man of evident intelligence rightly considered a Catholic journalist of the first rank. Yet his commentary on the coming SSPX-Vatican discussions, which would end in failure, only demonstrated the utter futility of the endless debate over the Council's continuity with Tradition. To read Lawler's analysis is to appreciate anew the suggestion this book made in 2002: that we have heard quite enough about this vexed Council and that its many ambiguities of uncertain doctrinal import should be allowed to pass into history without further comment.⁸³

Lawler noted that “[f]rom the traditionalists’ perspective, a key problem is the authority of *Dignitatis Humanae*, the Vatican II statement on religious freedom. Portions of that document, the SSPX argues, are in conflict with previous authoritative teachings of the Catholic Church. Nor is the SSPX alone in making that claim. Liberal Catholics, too, have described the Vatican II document as a sharp break in Church teaching....” Evidently, then, Lawler believes that both parties are wrong, that there is no break with the past. If so, then how precisely should *Dignitatis Humanae* (DH) be read to avoid such a break? Lawler did not explain. He merely noted that Pope Benedict “rejects that interpretation of *Dignitatis Humanae*” and has “insisted that the documents of Vatican II must be interpreted using a ‘hermeneutic of continuity.’”

According to Lawler, then, one will avoid the error of both the traditionalists and the liberals by applying the Hermeneutic of Continuity (HOC) to avoid a Discontinuity of Teaching (DOT). But how exactly does the HOC prevent a DOT with respect to DH, or indeed any other conciliar document that appears problematical? Again, Lawler did not explain. Rather, he wrote: “If a conciliar document appears to conflict with previous Church teachings, then something is wrong—either with our reading of that document or with our understanding of tradition. The Church teaches the truth, and the truth does not change, so by finding the continuity between old and new expressions we can attain a better understanding of that truth.”

Agreed: the Church cannot change her own teaching because the truth does not change. So, by applying the HOC to what merely appears to be a DOT, we can arrive at a Reconciliation of Teaching (ROT) between a conciliar document and a prior document of the Magisterium. Note carefully, however, what Lawler proposed: under the HOC, we could find that the problem is merely the misreading of a conciliar document that is really perfectly traditional. Fair enough, and indeed the position taken by many traditionalists. But he also suggested that the HOC could reveal a problem with our understanding of Tradition. That is, according to him, the HOC could lead to a Revised Understanding of Tradition (RUT). But it is hard to see how Lawler's idea—certainly not taught by any Pope or Council, including even Vatican II itself—could be reconciled with Saint Pius X's Oath Against Modernism, prescribed for priests, seminarians and theologians. The Oath is premised on the Church's own infallible teaching that Tradition is not “reinterpreted” or “reread” on a continuing basis according to the times, but rather is a permanent deposit that has always had the same meaning and sense as expressed in the irreformable, infallible definitions of Popes and Councils or the constant teaching of the “universal ordinary” Magisterium. To quote the Oath—which, not surprisingly, was promptly abandoned⁸⁴ after Vatican II:

I sincerely accept the doctrine of Faith in the same sense and always with the same meaning as it has been handed

down to us from the Apostles through the officially approved Fathers. And therefore, I wholly reject the heretical notion of the evolution of dogmas, according to which doctrines pass from one sense to another sense alien to that which the Church held from the start.

One might object that DH does not involve the strict deposit of Faith as such, which is the object of the Oath, but only a “development” of the Church’s doctrine on Church-State relations to address “modern circumstances.” But then DH would fall into the category of a contingent teaching no more irreformable than the contingent circumstances it purported to address. The faithful would thus be at liberty to express doubts about whether DH was a wise response to political modernity and to argue that a reaffirmation of the teaching of Blessed Pius IX in the *Syllabus Errorum*⁸⁵ is urgently necessary, given the clearly ruinous sociopolitical outcome of the very principles the *Syllabus* prophetically condemned as threats to Catholic social order. And if one were to respond to that contention with the objection that the *Syllabus* is “outdated,” why would DH be immune to the same objection?

It is clear, however, that the *Syllabus* was not “repealed” by Vatican II (nor could it be) and that its formal condemnations of error remain binding in conscience, whereas DH, with its ambiguous and seemingly self-contradictory “compromise” formulations and uncertain doctrinal status, remains a source of confusion and contention in the Church. Is this not precisely why the Vatican invited the SSPX to engage in discussions concerning DH and other issues arising from the Council? Is that not precisely why there is a need for a “hermeneutic of continuity” between the Council and prior Church teaching? What other ecumenical council in the entire history of the Church has required a demonstration of its continuity with all the previous councils?

Rather than explain how the Society dissents from DH as reconciled with prior teaching by the HOC, Lawler opined: “the purpose of this ‘hermeneutic of continuity’ is to understand the Church as she understands herself.” Well, of course we must understand the Church’s teaching as the Church understands it. But the question is precisely what is the mind of the Church concerning a reconciliation of DH (and other problematic Council documents) with prior teaching in accordance with the HOC? Like neo-Catholic commentators in general, Lawler proposed no answer. He had no answer because, in fact, the Church has never provided one. Thus, Lawler was unable to demonstrate precisely where the SSPX was guilty of doctrinal deviation, and the same is true of the Society’s other neo-Catholic critics.

Lawler continued: “To date, at least, the Lefebvrists have refused to accept correction from the Holy See.” What correction from the Holy See? When had the Holy See issued any document from the CDF or made any statement whatever correcting the Society’s purported doctrinal errors? What exactly are the errors? Lawler failed to cite a single example because none exists. Lawler’s own failure of proof, typical of the neo-Catholic polemic on this score, suggested (for the umpteenth time) that the problem with Vatican II is not strictly doctrinal, but rather one of ambiguity giving rise to doctrinal difficulties of uncertain contours.

Continuing with the empty accusations that are typical of neo-Catholic propaganda contra traditionalists, Lawler declared: “The deadly mistake that Archbishop Lefebvre made—the mistake for which the SSPX is still paying—was the decision to set himself up

as a teaching authority separate from the Holy See.” But Lefebvre never made any such “deadly mistake.” Quite the contrary, he insisted that he was simply adhering to what the Church had always taught before 1962, pointing to a long line of Popes from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries, who consistently condemned the tenets of Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment liberalism—the chickens that have come home to roost with a vengeance in the modern state system. Lefebvre and the SSPX profess their adherence, for example, to the *Syllabus* of Pius IX; the teaching of Leo XIII (*Libertas, Immortale Dei*) condemning “modern liberties” and the religiously “neutral” state and affirming the obligatory doctrinal character of the Social Kingship of Christ (which even DH purports to affirm in Article I); the teaching Saint Pius X against Modernism (*Pascendi*) and his Oath and own *Syllabus* against it; the teaching of Pius XI (*Mortalium Animos*) that the return of the separated brethren is the only way to Christian unity; and the teaching of Pius XII (*Humani Generis, Mystici Corporis*) that the Mystical Body of Christ and the Roman Catholic Church are “one and the same thing” and that non-Catholics are thus not members of the Mystical Body.⁸⁶

Having affirmed these teachings of the preconciliar Popes, the late Archbishop and the priestly society he founded simply ask how it is possible that the Council did away with all of them. Do neo-Catholic spokesmen such as Lawler maintain that the Council repudiated these prior teachings in whole or in part? If so, then how can the HOC save us from a DOT except by an ROT that is a RUT? On the other hand, if neo-Catholic critics of the traditionalist position are prepared to admit that all preconciliar papal teachings remained in full force after the Council, and indeed that under the HOC there is no conflict between those teachings and the Council’s teaching, then—once again—what precisely is the doctrinal problem with the Society according to Lawler?

Showing just how confused is the demand for the Society’s “reconciliation” with the teaching of Vatican II, Lawler further declared: “To complicate matters for themselves, the Lefebvrists have maintained that the Church founded by Jesus Christ exists only in the institutional Catholic Church.” It doesn’t? Since when? Does the Council teach that the Church founded by Christ “exists” elsewhere besides the visible Catholic Church? Evidently, Lawler thinks the Council’s use of the locution (in *Lumen Gentium*) that the Church of Christ “subsists in” the Catholic Church, rather than simply “is” the Catholic Church as Pius XII taught, means precisely that. But he and his fellow neo-Catholics of the same opinion were wrong. In a further demonstration of Benedict’s pursuit of a “hermeneutic of continuity,” in 2007 the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith finally resolved the ambiguity by declaring definitively: “The use of this expression [*subsistit*], which indicates the full identity of the Church of Christ with the Catholic Church, does not change the doctrine on the Church.... In fact, precisely because the Church willed by Christ actually continues to exist (*subsistit in*) in the Catholic Church, this continuity of subsistence implies an essential identity between the Church of Christ and the Catholic Church.” As the CDF’s accompanying doctrinal commentary noted, “contrary to many unfounded interpretations, therefore, the change from “*est*” to “*subsistit*” does not signify that the Catholic Church has ceased to regard herself as the one true Church of Christ.”⁸⁷

Therefore, as the Vatican had finally clarified, the Church founded by Jesus Christ does not, as Lawler suggested, “exist” outside of the Catholic Church. Rather, said the CDF, Vatican II meant to teach only that there are ““numerous elements of sanctification and of

truth' which are found outside her structure, but which 'as gifts properly belonging to the Church of Christ, impel towards Catholic Unity'....” But that is manifestly the case and always has been. For example, the Church has always recognized that non-Catholic ministers baptize validly if the proper formula and intent are present. The Church also views marriages contracted between baptized Protestants as valid sacramental unions.⁸⁸ The baptisms and marriages of non-Catholic Christians thus involve “elements of sanctification” to be found outside the Church’s visible structure, even if the Church does not “exist” in Protestant sects. Indeed, baptized Protestants who die as infants attain eternal beatitude, but only as members of the Catholic Church, which is one and the same thing as the Mystical Body of Christ. To use Vatican II’s own phraseology, baptized infants are “impelled towards Catholic unity” by a baptismal grace that will also impel an adult toward Catholic unity if he seeks the truth in good faith.

Likewise, no one would deny that “elements of truth” are possessed by non-Catholic confessions in their versions of the Bible and in their preaching, for whatever those elements are worth in their deracinated context. The very definition of “heresy”—derived from the Greek *hairesis* (a taking or choosing, a choice)—implies the selective acceptance of some elements of revealed truth and the rejection of others. These elements of truth can and have led Protestants to the one true Church, as many have testified. This is not to say, however, that Protestant sects as such are extensions of the Catholic Church.

For these reasons, said the CDF, “It is possible, according to Catholic doctrine, to affirm correctly that the Church of Christ is present and operative in the churches and ecclesial Communities not yet fully in communion with the Catholic Church....” There we have it at long last: it is merely possible to affirm correctly a certain presence or operation of the Church outside her visible structure. But neither the Society nor any other Catholic can be required to affirm a proposition that it is merely possible but not necessary to affirm in order to be a Catholic. Here the Council imposed no new doctrine but only adopted a manner of speaking about the state of those who are not members of the Church. If the Council had meant to propose anything more than a positively worded description of the negative condition of baptized non-Catholics, why did Archbishop Lefebvre vote for and subscribe to *Lumen Gentium*?⁸⁹

On the subject of “ecumenism,” an ill-defined collection of previously unheard-of activities whose doctrinal content is nil,⁹⁰ Lawler leveled this accusation of infidelity against the SSPX: “Unhappy with the Vatican II formulation that the universal Church founded by Christ ‘subsists’ in the Catholic Church, they have insisted that all other Christian bodies are lost in error, and the only practical goal of ecumenical affairs is to convince these erring Christians of their errors, so as to bring them back into the Catholic fold.” It isn’t? Then Vatican II would have repudiated the teaching of Pius XI in *Mortalium Animos* only 35 years before the Council, noted on these pages thirteen years ago:

So, Venerable Brethren, it is clear why this Apostolic See has never allowed its subjects to take part in the assemblies of non-Catholics: for the union of Christians can only be promoted by promoting the return to the one true Church of Christ of those who are separated from it, for in the past they have unhappily left it.⁹¹

Having made the accusation, it was incumbent on Lawler to identify which “Christian bodies” other than the Catholic Church are not lost in error. Could any Catholic seriously

propose, for example, that the Anglican Church, the Vatican's principal "ecumenical dialogue partner" since the Council, is not lost—hopelessly lost—in a welter of moral and doctrinal errors? Concerning the schismatic Eastern churches, what of the declaration of Saint Pius X, noted on these pages thirteen years ago,⁹² that Catholics must work to "hasten the day when the nations of the East shall return to Catholic unity, and, united to the Apostolic See, after casting away their errors, shall enter the port of everlasting salvation"?⁹³ Have the errors of the Orthodox disappeared since St. Pius X issued this solemn pronouncement? Are the Orthodox not still outside "the port of everlasting salvation" and thus objectively lost in error? Was Pius X wrong in 1908? Or is it perhaps the case that error emerged following the prudential turn toward a "Catholic ecumenism" in 1964 with Vatican II's *Unitatis Redintegratio*?

The neo-Catholic polemic Lawler's discussion so well exemplifies also needs to explain how Vatican II could reject what Lawler seemed to think was the error of believing "the only practical goal of ecumenical affairs is to convince these erring Christians of their errors, so as to bring them back into the Catholic fold." It isn't? Did Vatican II overrule this most emphatic teaching of Pius XI in *Mortalium Animos*? What of Pius XI's declaration in the same encyclical: "Let, therefore, the separated children draw nigh to the Apostolic See,... not with the intention and the hope that 'the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth' will cast aside the integrity of the faith and tolerate their errors, but, on the contrary, that they themselves submit to its teaching and government." Was this firm statement of the traditional teaching on true Christian unity stricken from the annals of the Magisterium in 1962? And what of the 1949 Instruction of the Holy Office, issued a mere 13 years before the Council, which mandated that in any discussions about the Faith with Protestant representatives, the Catholic participants must not give the impression "that the teachings of the Encyclicals of the Roman Pontiffs on the return of dissidents to the Church, on the constitution of the Church, on the Mystical Body of Christ, should not be given too much importance... ." ⁹⁴ Are all of those encyclicals to be deemed repealed by *Unitatis Redintegratio*? Surely that would have been news to the Council Fathers.

On the other hand, if one were to argue that the Church's preconciliar teaching on the necessity of the return of the dissidents to the Church was only a prudential counsel and not a doctrine touching on salvation and that Vatican II merely proposed a new and different prudential approach to achieving Christian unity, then the "problem" with the Society *vis-à-vis* the Council's teaching on "ecumenism" would involve a perfectly permissible *dubium* concerning a prudential judgment as opposed to binding doctrine. With regard to that *dubium*, does anyone still seriously maintain that after more than a half-century of "ecumenical dialogue" our "dialogue partners" are closer to union with Catholics they were in 1964? Is it not perfectly obvious that precisely the opposite is the case? Are Catholics, then, suddenly no longer to be concerned about the eternal consequences of error for souls outside the Church? Since when did the salvation of souls cease to be the *sine qua non* of the Church's pastoral approach to those separated from her unity?

Leaping to a conclusion for which he had not established any premises, Lawler queried: "Are the traditionalists ready to acknowledge their own grievous error, which set them

apart from the universal Church?” What grievous error? Notice the suggestion that traditionalists in general, not just the SSPX, have set themselves apart from the Church. How so? This empty accusation is central to the neo-Catholic polemic. In the same vein Lawler averred: “This is the central theological struggle of our time: to understand the nature of Christ’s Church. On this crucial question, the views of SSPX leaders remain at odds with the authoritative teachings of the magisterium.” What authoritative teachings of the Magisterium? How can one be said to dissent from a “struggle” to “understand the nature of Christ’s Church”? If the understanding involves a “struggle,” there would be no defined doctrine from which dissent would be possible. And since when has the Church had to struggle to understand her own nature? Answer: since Vatican II. Here we encounter the quasi-gnosticism at the heart of the neo-Catholic idea: the demand that traditionalists embrace the *je ne sais quoi* of the Council’s teaching, with clarifications to be provided in the hazy future once the “struggle” to achieve them has ended.

Addressing the rather important question why the SSPX bishops were dealt with so severely in 1988 while outright Modernists have been coddled by the conciliar Popes and Vatican authorities, Lawler offered this extraordinary explanation: “[U]nlike the SSPX, the liberals have not been excommunicated. The Vatican has openly rejected their views ... but invariably the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has urged erring theologians to reconsider their views.” Lawler failed to perceive how devastating his own statement was to an argument that had already foundered for lack of proof. When it comes to certain liberals (few and far between), the CDF has indeed identified specific theological errors and then formally condemned those errors in binding doctrinal pronouncements, such as Cardinal Ratzinger’s *Dominus Iesus*. But no such pronouncements exist in the case of the Society because the Society is not guilty of theological errors. Lawler had unwittingly extinguished his own charge that the SSPX is heterodox.

Piling on gratuitous accusations for which he offered no support, Lawler offered this supremely condescending advice: “No doubt traditionalists will be uncomfortable when they are compared with liberals, and vice versa. So much the better! They should be uncomfortable, since they are at odds with the authority of the Church.” Once again Lawler stealthily expanded his accusation to embrace all traditionalists, not just the SSPX. But exactly how are traditionalists at odds with the authority of the Church? Precisely which authoritative teachings are they accused of rejecting? Lawler provided no examples because none are to be had. Evidently, like neo-Catholic spokesmen in general, Lawler just felt that traditionalists dissent from “the authority of the Church,” even if he could not articulate the grounds for his impression. Such is the neo-Catholic’s fatally defective indictment of traditionalists: conclusory accusations supported by nothing.

Descending still deeper into the fog of postconciliar confusion, Lawler’s argument moved from the unproven to the unintentionally amusing: “The debates over the nature of Christ’s Church are not restricted to Roman Catholic prelates and theologians.” Are we now to understand that the very nature of Christ’s Church is up for debate with non-Catholics, two millennia after Christ founded the Catholic Church on the rock of Peter? But if, in light of the Council, the nature of the Church is now a debatable theological subject—so debatable that even the genuinely schismatic Orthodox are asked for their contribution—how can the SSPX be said to be dissenting from any binding teaching of the Council on the nature of the Church? Lawler once again implicitly refuted his own

allegation regarding the SSPX's supposed doctrinal deviations.

Or perhaps the proposition that the nature of the Church is debatable is the very “doctrine” from which the Society is alleged to be dissenting by adhering to what Pope Pius XII, in *Mystici Corporis*, called “the doctrine, explained in Our Encyclical Letter of a few years ago, and based on the Sources of Revelation, which teaches that the Mystical Body of Christ and the Roman Catholic Church are one and the same thing [*quae quidem docet corpus Christi mysticum et Ecclesiam Catholicam Romanam unum idemque esse*].” Had the Council overruled Pius XII’s teaching that the Mystical Body and the Catholic Church are identical, even though Pius declared it to be based on Revelation? As we have just seen, in 2007 the CDF clearly answered in the negative. But even if it were the case that Vatican II had somehow revised the teaching of Pius XII, how could the “one and the same thing” really mean “not one and the same thing”? On the other hand, if the Council imposed no change at all in Pius XII’s teaching, as the CDF explicitly declared in 2007, then—once again—what exactly is the doctrinal problem with the Society? Lawler seemed not to notice that according to his own argument no doctrinal problem exists. Rather, there is a “debate” over the meaning of the Council’s teaching that would be addressed in the talks in which the Society would participate now that the excommunications had been lifted. Here the incoherency of Lawler’s argument rose to the level of the hilarious:

So let me say it again: The struggle to attain a proper understanding of the nature of Christ’s Church is the central theological challenge of our time. As we wait to see what changes the new Patriarch might bring within the Russian Orthodox Church, we Catholics can be thankful that another critical discussion is underway closer to home, and pray for the successful resolution of the talks between the Vatican and the SSPX. May those talks lead to true reconciliation for the traditionalists. And for all of us, may they yield a better understanding of what it means to belong to the one true Church.

Thus Lawler proposed in one and the same commentary that (a) the Society’s leaders “remain at odds with the authoritative teachings of the magisterium” concerning “the central theological struggle of our time: to understand the nature of Christ’s Church,” and (b) the Society’s talks with the Vatican would help all of us in the “struggle” to attain that same understanding!

Lawler’s confusion was only typical of neo-Catholic obscurantism in general regarding the Council: neo-Catholic critics of traditionalists are quite convinced there must be something new in the Council’s teaching traditionalists are obliged to affirm—they just know it—but they cannot articulate the ineffable new doctrine or “development” of doctrine in so many words a Catholic would have to affirm in order to be a Catholic in good standing. Like actual fog, the fog of Vatican II slips through their fingers as they try to grasp it in order to hurl their nebulous anathema at traditionalists. And in the midst of his own foggy confusion about the Council’s teaching, Lawler appealed to the Society to help the Vatican shed light on the very “doctrine” from which he accused the Society of dissenting.

No wonder Bishop Fellay, writing to the Society’s lay faithful, declared: “We are ready to write the Creed with our own blood, sign the anti-Modernist oath, the Profession of Faith of Pope Pius IV, we accept and make our own all the Councils up to the First Vatican Council. Yet we cannot but confess reservations concerning the Second Vatican Council, which intended to be a Council ‘different from the others.’”⁹⁵ Given Lawler’s incoherent

argumentation, Cardinal Ratzinger's own critical comments on the Council's problematical texts, and the very need for what the Cardinal called a "hermeneutic of continuity" in order to reconcile those texts with prior teaching, can anyone fail to appreciate the Society's reservations?

Why the SSPX-Vatican Talks Failed

As was to be expected from the indications given here, the SSPX-Vatican II talks ultimately went nowhere. The outcome after three years of palaver was an evolving "Doctrinal Preamble" that was supposed to serve as the introduction to a decree regularizing the Society. The September 2011 version of the Preamble, which the Society considered unacceptable as written, was slightly modified by Bishop Fellay, signed by him, and sent to the Vatican in April 2012. Rumors of the Society's imminent regularization then abounded. But the Vatican not only rejected the modifications, it added entirely new conditions, including "recognition of the continuity of the conciliar texts in relation with the preceding Magisterium, which contradicted the doctrinal declaration that mentioned, on the contrary, their non-reconcilable character. Moreover, the authorities introduced the need to recognize the 'liceity' of the new mass, a new term that had ... never been demanded, neither in 1988, nor of the different institutes regularized up to that moment." These new demands, wrote Côme de Préigny in the summer of 2013, had "left the impression that there was a desire to interrupt the process very elegantly as well as suddenly, by the introduction of inadmissible points."⁹⁶

In essence, the discussions failed because the Society would not affirm unequivocally that the disputed points of Vatican II are in line with the prior Magisterium and that the new liturgy was not only valid (which the SSPX had never denied) but also licit. Here it must be said that both conditions could have been accepted. The Society would not have been relinquishing its right to critique the Council's ambiguities and to insist that the Council must be read as having left the traditional teaching of the Church intact in all respects—precisely as a "hermeneutic of continuity" would require. Nor would the conditions have precluded continued opposition to the results of the "liturgical reform," which even Pope Benedict had described as a "collapse of the liturgy" and Msgr. Gamber, with the future Pope's approval, had called "the real destruction of the Roman Rite."

Given the entirely predictable outcome of its discussions with the Vatican, why did the SSPX persist in them for three years? When asked that question in January of 2013, Bishop Fellay revealed that he had been given false hopes by Vatican officials who assured him "that the pope was not in agreement with hard-line official pronouncements from the Vatican." Fellay related that Cardinal Castrillón Hoyos in particular "had told him in March 2009 that the Society would be formally recognized," that the demand for "acceptance of the Council" was only "'political' and 'administrative'" and that "by the way, that is not what the pope thinks." Fellay noted that "he continued to get similar messages from other Vatican officials, even as the formal talks continued. The verbal and written messages were very credible, he said, because they came from officials who saw the pope 'every day or every two days.'"⁹⁷

Whatever one thinks of the Society's position respecting the Doctrinal Preamble, one could only marvel at the sheer spectacle of it all: In the midst of a massive postconciliar

crisis of faith and discipline, here was the Vatican demanding “acceptance of Vatican II” and its “reforms” in a formal document to be signed by the leader of a small traditionalist society whose members had kept the Faith. At the same time, the entire clergy of the universal Church had generally been dispensed from the Oath Against Modernism or any other vow to uphold all the infallible teachings of the Magisterium; clergy and laity alike were openly dissenting from Church teaching all over the world; “silent apostasy” had spread through the once Christian nations of the West; and Pope Paul’s New Mass had degenerated into a worldwide liturgical disaster area more Catholics were abandoning with each passing year.

In the end, the Vatican had demanded one thing and one thing only for the regularization of the SSPX: a verbal acceptance of the post-Vatican II regime of novelty. This acceptance has become the de facto Credo of the postconciliar era. Consider, for example, the statement on the SSPX-Vatican discussions by the feckless French bishops, who since the Council have presided over the shipwreck of the Faith in a nation that was once known as “the eldest daughter of the Church.” The French episcopate declared that despite the Pope’s gestures toward the SSPX “the Second Vatican Council will not be negotiable.”⁹⁸ The very survival of Catholicism in France is negotiable, but not Vatican II. Vocations can disappear, the faithful can apostatize, but “the Council”—as an event quite apart from its literal texts—must be defended down to the last thoroughly modern prelate. Meanwhile, in France, where less than five percent of nominal Catholics still attend Mass weekly, the majority of those in attendance are traditionalists worshiping according to the traditional rite, including those of the SSPX. The unintended positive consequence is that with neo-Catholicism dying in France “the traditionalists are taking over.”⁹⁹

The French bishops revealed the heart of the matter under discussion here: Modernists and neo-Catholics alike will never admit that the SSPX is in “full communion” with them so long as it remains what it is: a sign of unwavering opposition to the “updating” of the Church and its catastrophic results. When the French bishops declared that Vatican II is non-negotiable, when Father Morris said that the Society must “come home,” when Philip Lawler wrote that the “process of reconciliation is far from complete,” they were all employing a cipher for what they all more or less meant: that the Society, along with every other traditionalist, must accept the recent liberalization of the Catholic Church as permanent and irreversible. No one has ever expressed the brute injustice of this demand better than the Catholic commentator Steve Skojec:

If the SSPX really are fully Catholic, if everything they believe is what the Church believes, if the disobedient consecration of the bishops in 1988 has really been taken off the table by Pope Benedict’s lifting of the SSPX excommunications, what’s left to keep them out?

I’ll tell you what’s left. Nothing. Nothing except that Rome wants to make them bow and scrape to the new paradigm.¹⁰⁰

Yet Benedict himself had demonstrated that the liberalization of Church was far from irreversible; he had in significant measure reversed it. And that reversal seemed to be gaining unstoppable momentum as 2012 drew to a close—to the horror of those who feared for the future of the regime of novelty. Writing for *The Telegraph* (London) just after the SSPX excommunications had been lifted, the columnist Gerald Warner praised Pope Benedict’s pro-traditionalist initiatives:

Benedict XVI grows in stature as his reign progresses. To the momentous achievement of the *motu proprio Summorum Pontificum*, freeing the Tridentine Mass, he has now added the sagacious and just lifting of the excommunications imposed on the four bishops of the Society of St Pius X. Although there was widespread scepticism about the validity of those censures, their lifting removes a roadblock to the restoration of the Church after the damage wrought by the Second Vatican Catastrophe.^{[101](#)}

The Second Vatican Catastrophe indeed. By 2009 it was long past time for all Catholics of good will to acknowledge the evidence of their senses and admit the catastrophe that surrounded them. But the neo-Catholic establishment continued to dig in its heels, conspicuously avoiding any praise for the Pope's pro-traditionalist measures as a necessary step toward ecclesial restoration versus a mere concession to Catholics of a certain "liturgical preference." They continued to maintain the fiction of a conciliar "renewal" of the Church despite the continuing decline of every index of ecclesial health outside those orders and communities that had returned to Tradition in both liturgy and priestly formation. As Warner put it in the same article: "To describe this unprecedented collapse of the Church as 'renewal' is insane; to attribute it to the operation of the Holy Ghost is blasphemous. The Catholic Church is in the same position as an alcoholic: until it admits to the problem, no cure is possible." The staunch defenders of the regime of novelty were still very far from such an admission, however. To admit that the novelties they had defended for decades were the cause of so much harm to the Church would be to forfeit the moral high ground they had occupied in their long campaign to marginalize and discredit the traditionalist movement, which had opposed those novelties from their inception.

The "Para-Conciliar Ideology"

In the midst of Benedict's all-too-brief pontificate, Msgr. Guido Pozzo, Secretary of the Pontifical Commission *Ecclesia Dei*, delivered an historic address on the ecclesial situation Benedict was facing after half a century of the "continuing process of decay" he had noted as Cardinal Ratzinger.^{[102](#)} Speaking to the priests of the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Peter at the Fraternity's seminary in Wigratzbad, Msgr. Pozzo laid out a wide-ranging indictment of the entire regime of novelty that had emerged at the Council's close.^{[103](#)} "Ever more widespread," he said, "is the idea that the Christian mission does not have to pursue the goal of the pagans' conversion to Christianity, but the mission is limited either to a mere witnessing to one's own faith or to working in solidarity and fraternal love to bring about peace among peoples and social justice." The result had been "loss of the question of Truth" so that "the essence of religion no longer is differentiated from that of mystification." It was, therefore, "necessary and urgent to recall today the fixed points of Catholic doctrine on the relation between the Church and other religions as concerns the question of truth and salvation...."

Alluding to Pope Benedict's address to the Roman Curia in 2005, Pozzo went on to admit that there had indeed been a "hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture with Tradition." This he attributed to a "Conciliar, or more exactly the para-Conciliar ideology, which was imposed on the Council from the beginning and which overshadowed it." This "para-Conciliar ideology" had "operated in large part towards a mystification of the Council" as a "point of departure rupture with the past and a radical change in history ... a new form of the Church in rupture with the past, even if the roots of this rupture had been present for some time in certain Catholic circles." The identification of the Council itself

as the locus of the para-Conciliar ideology's emergence was a crucial development. The Council, however guardedly, was at last being seen as the origin of the ecclesial crisis.

Msgr. Pozzo identified three factors in the crisis that figured prominently in this work's diagnosis in 2002. The first is "the renunciation of anathema, that is, the clear contradistinction between orthodoxy and heresy..." Pozzo outlined the problem thus:

The condemnation of errors and the anathema pronounced by the Church in the past on all that is incompatible with Christian truth has been distinguished from the pastoral character of the Council's teaching, which never intended to condemn or censure but only to exhort, illumine, and give witness. In reality, there is no contradiction between a firm condemnation and refutation of errors in the area of doctrine and morals and the attitude of love towards the one who falls into error, as well as respect for the dignity of persons. Indeed, precisely because a Christian has a great respect for the human person, he is endlessly obliged to free him from error and from false interpretations of religious and moral reality.

The second factor Pozzo identified is "the translation of Catholic thought into the categories of modernity," which involves nothing less than "a theological and intellectual work that substantially proposes once more the idea of Modernism, condemned at the beginning of the 20th century by St. Pius X."¹⁰⁴ Here the para-Conciliar ideology had promoted the idea that "the Christian message must be secularized and reinterpreted according to the categories of modern culture both inside and outside the Church, compromising her integrity, or rather under the pretext of an 'opportune adaptation' to the times. The result is that religion is secularized and the Faith made mundane." It is precisely this "opportune adaptation to the times" that the neo-Catholic polemic, belittling the anti-Modernist teaching of Saint Pius X and Blessed Pius IX, defends as necessary to open up the "fortress Church" of the preconciliar centuries to a supposedly invigorating encounter with "the modern world."¹⁰⁵ Yet, as Pozzo observed, "[n]eo-modernistic and secularist theology sought an encounter with the modern world just as the 'modern' was beginning to dissolve."

The results of the "updating" for the Church hailed by the neo-Catholic narrative had been disastrous, as Pozzo admitted:

This pretext has led the Catholic world to undertake an *aggiornamento* [updating] which in reality constituted a progressive and, at times, unconscious blending of the Church's mentality with the reigning subjectivism and relativism. This surrender has brought with it disorientation among the faithful, depriving them of the certainty of faith and of hope in eternal life as the highest end of human existence.

The third factor Pozzo discussed was "the interpretation of the *aggiornamento* desired by Vatican Council II" The "para-Conciliar ideology" promoted an *aggiornamento* that amounted to "a demolition of the Church in the face of the modern world: from antagonism to receptivity ... a reconciliation between the Church and the modern world [that] led, paradoxically, to forgetting that the anti-Christian spirit of the world continues to be at work in history and in culture." Here Pozzo quoted the famous lamentation of Paul VI, which this work highlighted thirteen years ago; but he further noted Pope Paul's own stunning conclusion:

By some fissure there has entered into the temple of God the smoke of Satan: there is doubt, uncertainty, problems, unrest. Doubt has entered our consciences, and it has entered through the windows which were meant to have been opened to the light. This state of uncertainty reigns even in the Church. It was hoped that after the Council there would be a day of sunlight in the history of the Church. Instead, there came a day of clouds, of darkness, of groping, of uncertainty. How did this happen? We will confide Our thoughts to you: there has been interference from an adverse power: his name is the devil, that mysterious being to whom frequent allusion is

With admirable candor, Pozzo went on to observe what this work documented abundantly: “Unfortunately, the effects as enumerated by Paul VI have not disappeared. A foreign way of thinking has entered into the Catholic world, stirring up confusion, seducing many souls, and disorienting the faithful. There is a ‘spirit of self-demolition’ that pervades modernism, which has wrested control over, among other things, most of the Catholic press.” A key aspect of this “foreign way of thinking” figured prominently in this work’s original analysis: what Pozzo described as “the ideology of dialogue.” The para-Conciliar ideology instrumentalizes dialogue for the subversion of the Church by “emptying it of meaning more and more and obscuring the urgency and the call of conversion to Christ and adherence to His Church.” That is precisely what this work contended thirteen years ago.¹⁰⁶

To address the ecclesial situation he had so frankly described, Pozzo called for nothing other than what this book urged thematically when it first appeared:¹⁰⁷ a return to the traditional teaching and salvific mission of the Holy Catholic Church, divinely commissioned to make disciples of all nations:

[I]t is necessary to retrieve and recover the spiritual and cultural foundation of Christian civilization, that is, faith in God, transcendent and Creator, provident and Judge, whose Only-begotten Son became incarnate, died, and rose again for the redemption of the world, and who has poured out the grace of the Holy Spirit for the remission of sins and for making men sharers in the divine nature.

The unity of the entire human race ... does not have to be understood, therefore, in the sense of achieving concord between and the unification of various ideas, religions, or values in a “common or convergent kingdom,” but it is attained by drawing all to the one Truth, of which the Catholic Church is the depository entrusted therewith by God Himself....

It is necessary ... to take on this latter orientation in order to confront areas of controversy, and thereby free, so to speak, the Council from the para-Council—which has been intermingled with it—and preserve the principles of the integrity of Catholic doctrine and of complete fidelity to the deposit of faith handed on by Tradition and interpreted by the Church’s Magisterium.

The Beginning of a Restoration?

Traditionalists continued to gain ground during the last three years of Pope Benedict’s reign—so much so that in late 2012 even *The Economist* took notice of what simply had to happen sooner or later. In an article entitled “A traditionalist avant-garde,” the author observed that—horror of horrors—traditional Catholicism was attracting young people all over the world:

Since the Second Vatican Council in 1962, the Roman Catholic church [sic] has striven to adapt to the modern world. But in the West—where many hoped a contemporary message would go down best—believers have left in droves.... Yet as the mainstream wanes, traditionalists wax.... Like evangelical Christianity, traditional Catholicism is attracting people who were not even born when the Second Vatican Council tried to rejuvenate the church...¹⁰⁸

“It’s trendy to be a traditionalist in the Catholic Church” said the subtitle of the piece, suggesting the paradoxical reality: it was the now elderly partisans of a failed conciliar “renewal” who were standing in the way true progress in the Church—progress toward a restoration of the precious things that had been cast aside in a frenzy of reckless innovation. “The return of the old rite causes quiet consternation among more modernist Catholics,” the article noted. The homosexual activist Fr. Timothy Radcliffe, former head

of Britain's Dominicans, "sees in it 'a sort of Brideshead Revisited nostalgia'...." As *The Economist* concluded: "Some swings of pendulums may be inevitable. But for a church hierarchy in Western countries beset by scandal and decline, the rise of a traditionalist avant-garde is unsettling. Is it merely an outcrop of eccentricity, or a sign that the church took a wrong turn 50 years ago?"

Both Modernist and neo-Catholic commentators seem constitutionally incapable of even considering the possibility that the Church took a wrong turn at the Council. Yet, as this work noted in 2002,¹⁰⁹ the neo-Catholic defenders of novelty are quite willing to declare that the Church had taken a wrong turn before the Council, during the reigns of some of the greatest Popes in Church history spanning an arc of centuries, and that the "renewal of Vatican II" was an urgently needed course correction. A more recent example of this casual denigration of the staunch conservatism of the preconciliar popes was the video paean to John XXIII by the neo-Catholic luminary Father Thomas Rosica in 2010. Rosica, a Vatican media attache and consultant, declared that Pope John had "revived the Church from her historical and ecclesial slumber at a moment when no one really expected it."¹¹⁰ That the "historical and ecclesial slumber" might actually have begun in the postconciliar period—indeed when no one, including the weeping Paul VI, "really expected it"—is as inconceivable to the neo-Catholic mind as the spectrum of color is to the blind.

In the neo-Catholic narrative popes and their decisions seem to have become irreproachable only since the Council—the "zero hour, in which everything would begin again, and all those things that had formerly been done badly would now be done well," to recall Cardinal Ratzinger's ironic commentary.¹¹¹ The myth of "good Pope John's" conciliar renewal is not spoiled by such inconvenient data as the report by Jean Guittou, the only lay *peritus* at the Council, that on his deathbed Pope John, who thought the Council would be over in three months, had exclaimed: "Stop the Council! Stop the Council!" It was supremely ironic, Pope John, who had insisted upon retention of the Latin liturgy, did not live long enough to sign a single one of the Council's documents or to witness the destruction that would be wrought in its name. While acknowledging that "I have heard that report and it is probably true," one of EWTN's online experts resolutely declared: "the Holy Spirit is bigger than the plans of men, even holy men. The present Pope [then John Paul II] is giving an authentic interpretation of the Council."¹¹² Apparently, as the neo-Catholic narrative would have it, the Holy Spirit was not "bigger than the plans of men" during the Church's "historical and ecclesial slumber" for century-upon-century until the fabled great awakening in 1962.

Until the end of Pope Benedict's reign, the traditionalist movement continued to make progress in the Church, receiving, at last, a measure of justice from Rome. And thanks to *Summorum*, barriers to the traditional liturgy began to fall all over the world as young priests and seminarians were being attracted to it. Among these youthful clerics were the Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate, founded in 1970 by Fr. Stefano Maria Manelli and Fr. Gabriel Maria Pellettieri and erected as an Institute of Religious Life with Pontifical Right by Pope John Paul II in 1998. In 2008 the General Chapter of the FFI had exercised its right under *Summorum* to adopt the traditional Latin Mass alongside the New Mass, establishing "bi-rituality" in the rapidly growing order, present on six continents with

some 300 priests and an equal number of sisters. This and other developments, including the multiplication of Latin Mass locations in the United States, Europe and even Asia and Africa, appeared to signal unstoppable momentum for the increasingly youthful “traditionalist avant-garde.” *The Economist* cited some of the encouraging signs of an ecclesial restoration at the end of 2012:

The Latin Mass Society of England and Wales, started in 1965, now has over 5,000 members. The weekly number of Latin masses is up from 26 in 2007 to 157 now. In America it is up from 60 in 1991 to 420. At Brompton Oratory, a hotspot of London traditionalism, 440 flock to the main Sunday Latin mass. That is twice the figure for the main English one. Women sport mantillas (lace headscarves). Men wear tweeds.

But it is not a fogeys’ hangout: the congregation is young and international. Traditionalist groups have members in 34 countries, including Hong Kong, South Africa and Belarus. Juventutem, a movement for young Catholics who like the old ways, boasts scores of activists in a dozen countries. Traditionalists use blogs, websites and social media to spread the word—and to highlight recalcitrant liberal dioceses and church administrators, who have long seen the Latinists as a self-indulgent, anachronistic and affected minority. In Colombia 500 people wanting a traditional mass had to use a community hall (they later found a church).^{[113](#)}

Nevertheless, bishops on every continent were defying *Summorum* by continuing to act as if the traditional Mass were prohibited without their personal permission. This open defiance of papal authority had prompted Benedict, in April 2011, to order the issuance of an Instruction on the application of *Summorum* entitled *Universae Ecclesiae*, reminding the bishops once again of what traditionalists had maintained for the past half-century:

The Holy Father, having recalled the concern of the Sovereign Pontiffs in caring for the Sacred Liturgy and in their recognition of liturgical books, reaffirms the traditional principle, recognised from time immemorial and necessary to be maintained into the future, that “*each particular Church must be in accord with the universal Church not only regarding the doctrine of the faith and sacramental signs, but also as to the usages universally handed down by apostolic and unbroken tradition. These are to be maintained not only so that errors may be avoided, but also so that the faith may be passed on in its integrity, since the Church’s rule of prayer (lex orandi) corresponds to her rule of belief (lex credendi)*” [emphasis in original].^{[114](#)}

The Instruction also reminded the bishops: “It is the task of the Diocesan Bishop to undertake all necessary measures to ensure respect for the *forma extraordinaria* of the Roman Rite, according to the *Motu Proprio Summorum Pontificum*.” In that regard the Instruction laid down “Specific Norms” that brushed aside all the excuses certain bishops had contrived to limit or even continue banning the Latin liturgy and use of the traditional liturgical books in parishes and by religious orders:

- All religious orders are free to adopt the liturgical books in effect in 1962. (Art. 34)
- Every priest has the right to celebrate his private Masses without permission from anyone. (Art. 23)
- Access to the Latin Mass was not to be limited merely to those faithful who had requested it before *Summorum* but was also to be made available to all those who are newly attracted to it. (Art. 15)
- Visiting priests at parishes and oratories are not to be denied their right to celebrate Mass according to the traditional rite. (Art. 16)
- Any “stable” group of the faithful, no matter how small, may request a church for the regular celebration of the traditional Mass, and pilgrims to various sanctuaries must be given access to the traditional Mass if a qualified priest is available. (Art. 17)
- Celebration of the traditional Latin liturgy cannot be denied on the ground that priests are insufficiently schooled in Latin: “Every Catholic priest who is not impeded by Canon Law is to be considered *idoneus* (‘qualified’) for the celebration of the Holy Mass in the *forma extraordinaria*” provided only that he has “a basic knowledge ... allowing the priest to pronounce the words correctly and understand their meaning.” Moreover, “priests are

presumed to be qualified who present themselves spontaneously to celebrate the *forma extraordinaria*, and have celebrated it previously.” (Art. 20)

- The new rubrics and readings of the *Novus Ordo* cannot be imposed on the traditional Mass, which must be celebrated correctly according its rubrics; and the traditional rites of Confirmation and Holy Orders are available to traditionalist societies and institutes under the Ecclesia Dei Commission. (Arts. 24–31)
- All priests are free to use the traditional Breviary in effect in 1962. (Art. 32)

Was the postconciliar revolution in the Church nearly at an end? Had the process of restoring order to the devastated vineyard finally begun in earnest? In 2011–2012 one would have been tempted to think so. But there were disturbing contrary signs: Pope Benedict’s efforts to regularize the SSPX, which would have represented a definitive breakthrough for the cause of Tradition, had foundered on the shoals of a Doctrinal Preamble that elevated the never sufficiently explained ambiguities of the last Council and the collapsed liturgy of the *Novus Ordo* to the status of quasi-dogma—indeed, the only things the SSPX would have to affirm to achieve the elusive prize of “full communion,” a status apparently invented solely for this group of indubitable Catholics. Moreover, despite *Summorum* and the directives of the Instruction, many bishops, seemingly intent on ecclesial suicide, were still subjecting the traditional Latin Mass to a virtual quarantine as their dioceses continued to decline, the remaining priests of the *Novus Ordo* continued to age, parishes and schools continued to close for lack of new vocations, and the sheep continued to wander from a dwindling sheepfold.

By beginning of 2013, Benedict had apparently given up on the SSPX initiative. With the Society’s regularization the entire neo-Catholic position against traditionalism would have collapsed, for no traditionalist, not even the “radical traditionalists” of the SSPX, could be stigmatized any longer as lacking “full communion” with Rome; and it would finally be apparent that loyalty to the Church had never required loyalty to the novelties of the postconciliar epoch. One sensed that an absolutely critical moment for true ecclesial restoration had passed.

An Unprecedented Papal Abdication

And then, on February 10, 2013, Benedict gave up on the papacy itself. The shocking news came during a consistory at which Benedict performed three canonizations: first, the martyrs Antonio Primaldo and 799 companions, beheaded at Otranto, Italy, in 1480 by invading Turkish soldiers after they refused to convert to Islam (it is said that the headless body of Primaldo, a humble tailor, stood erect and could not be toppled until every last of one his companions had been martyred); second, Laura di Santa Caterina da Siena Montoya y Upegui (1874–1949), the virgin foundress of the Congregation of the Missionaries of Mary Immaculate, who led a mission to convert the Indians of Latin America; third, Maria Guadalupe Garcia Zavala (1878–1963), foundress of the Handmaids of St. Margaret Mary and the Poor and a victim of the Mexican government’s persecution of the Catholic Church. Tellingly, Pope Benedict’s final three acts of canonization involved only classic candidates for sainthood. Their heroic virtues were patent and were accompanied by the highest fidelity to their stations in the Church. Benedict did not, and never would, canonize his immediate predecessor, however, for on this very date he abdicated the Chair of Peter:

Dear Brothers,

I have convoked you to this Consistory, not only for the three canonizations, but also to communicate to you a decision of great importance for the life of the Church. After having repeatedly examined my conscience before God, I have come to the certainty that my strengths, due to an advanced age, are no longer suited to an adequate exercise of the Petrine ministry. I am well aware that this ministry, due to its essential spiritual nature, must be carried out not only with words and deeds, but no less with prayer and suffering.

However, in today's world, subject to so many rapid changes and shaken by questions of deep relevance for the life of faith, in order to govern the barque of Saint Peter and proclaim the Gospel, both strength of mind and body are necessary, strength which in the last few months, has deteriorated in me to the extent that I have had to recognize my incapacity to adequately fulfill the ministry entrusted to me.

For this reason, and well aware of the seriousness of this act, with full freedom I declare that I renounce the ministry of Bishop of Rome, Successor of Saint Peter, entrusted to me by the Cardinals on 19 April 2005, in such a way, that as from 28 February 2013, at 20:00 hours, the See of Rome, the See of Saint Peter, will be vacant and a Conclave to elect the new Supreme Pontiff will have to be convoked by those whose competence it is.

BENEDICTUS PP XVI^{[115](#)}

Never in the entire history of the Church had a Pope resigned the papacy solely for reason of declining “strength of mind and body.” The cited reason was all the more inexplicable given Benedict’s obvious full possession of his faculties and, moreover, the ability of medical science in “today’s world” to combat chronic disease and mental decline. Indeed, Benedict’s own predecessor, afflicted by Parkinson’s disease, had relied on constant medical intervention in order to serve until his dying breath in the manner of all his predecessors. The only exceptions had nothing to do with declining health. Pope Celestine V (1215–1296) resigned in 1294, after less than six months in office, because he recognized that his pontificate was a disaster of bad governance—an act of humility that figured in his canonization only seventeen years after his death, under his name before elevation to the papacy.^{[116](#)} Gregory XII (1325–1417), the last Pope to resign before Benedict, abdicated voluntarily in 1415 in order to bring an end to the Great Western Schism, while the anti-Pope John XXIII was declared deposed by the controversial Council of Constance during the Schism.^{[117](#)}

Given the way things have gone in the Church since the Council, however, one might almost have expected Benedict’s subsequent characterization of his decision, which introduced yet another troubling ambiguity into the turbulent sea of ambiguity that is the postconciliar epoch. The formal decree of resignation on February 10 stated simply: “I renounce the ministry of Bishop of Rome, Successor of Saint Peter” on grounds of physical and mental decline. In his address to the clergy of Rome four days later, the Pope further declared: “although I am about to withdraw, I remain close to all of you in prayer, and I am sure that you too will be close to me, even if I am hidden from the world.”^{[118](#)} But in his final audience address of February 27, Benedict placed curious qualifications upon his resignation the day before it went into effect:

The real gravity of the decision was also due to the fact that from that moment on I was engaged always and forever by the Lord. Always—anyone who accepts the Petrine ministry no longer has any privacy. He belongs always and completely to everyone, to the whole Church. In a manner of speaking, the private dimension of his life is completely eliminated....

The “always” is also a “for ever”—there can no longer be a return to the private sphere. My decision to resign the active exercise of the ministry does not revoke this. I do not return to private life, to a life of travel, meetings, receptions, conferences, and so on. I am not abandoning the cross, but remaining in a new way at the side of the crucified Lord. I no longer bear the power of office for the governance of the Church, but in the service of prayer I remain, so to speak, in the enclosure of Saint Peter. Saint Benedict, whose name I bear as Pope, will be a great

example for me in this. He showed us the way for a life which, whether active or passive, is completely given over to the work of God.^{[119](#)}

Benedict had clearly suggested that he was retaining the office of the papacy in a passive sense, even if its active exercise—the power of governance—would fall to his successor. What was involved here was nothing so crude as simply the emergence of two rival Popes; nor did Benedict call into the question the validity of his resignation as such. Rather, he had introduced yet another obscure, postconciliar theological innovation: the concept of a Pope Emeritus—the first in Church history, as his successor would note.

Contrary to what the papal spokesman Federico Lombardi had affirmed, Benedict decided that he would not be known as Bishop of Rome Emeritus after his resignation became effective. Rather, he would have the title “His Holiness Benedict XVI, Roman Pontiff Emeritus,” would continue to wear the papal white (in simplified form), would retain his papal coat of arms, and would sign documents with the papal style “Benedictus, P.P.” Nothing of the sort had ever happened before. Pope Celestine became the hermit Peter Marrone once again, while Gregory XII became Cardinal-Bishop of Porto e Santa Rufina until his death in 1417. In fact, when John Paul II required surgery to mend his broken leg in 1994 he told his doctor: “Doctor, you and I have only one option. You have to cure me. I have to heal. Because there is no place for a Pope Emeritus.... It is not foreseen that the Successor of Peter can go into retirement.”^{[120](#)} But in the drifting currents of novelty that had been sweeping the Church since Vatican II, it seemed anything was possible, as the next pontificate would demonstrate with vertiginous rapidity.

The nature of Benedict’s innovation was not lost on Robert Moynihan, editor of *Inside the Vatican*, who can hardly be accused of “radical traditionalism.” Wrote Moynihan on the very day of Benedict’s address to the Roman clergy:

We are now less than 24 hours away from a “sede vacante? an empty See of Peter. A vacant papal throne.

And yet, if Benedict’s words of this morning mean anything—and I acknowledge that my way of interpreting the situation may seem quite mysterious and strange—they also mean that the See is not totally vacant. They mean that, in some mysterious way, since Pope Benedict is still alive, and still committed to the office he was called to in 2005, and still committed to living inside Vatican City, though entirely hidden from the world, there is a sort of continuity, there is something of the papal office that continues, a strand of vibrant, spiritual continuity, even as he publicly sets the main part of that office down.

I hesitate to formulate it in this way, as it may seem that I am proposing that there are two Popes, or soon could be. This is not the case. Rather, there are emerging two ways of exercising the Petrine office, one of action, the other of prayer and contemplation.

In this interpretation, the new Pope will take up the active office, while the “emeritus Pope” continues that aspect of the office which is of prayer and contemplation.

This is what Benedict seems to be saying—disconcerting, perplexing, confusing as it may seem.^{[121](#)}

Disconcerting. Perplexing. Confusing. Three words that aptly described not only Benedict’s innovation, but the entire postconciliar regime of novelty. Neo-Catholic commentators predictably ridiculed traditionalists for noting, with Moynihan, that Benedict had suggested that “in some mysterious way” there would be two Popes in the Church after the next conclave. Once again they were proven wrong. It would not be long before the press and public would be speaking matter-of-factly of “the two Popes” and Benedict, who was supposed to remain “hidden from the world,” would resume public

life in the novel capacity of Pope Emeritus, appearing with his successor at major events in the Vatican. Pope Francis would proclaim that Benedict had created new “institution” in the Church to which Francis himself might contribute himself by retiring from office.¹²²

Precisely what it all meant was unclear, although the implication was that an office traditionally understood to involve a grace of state for the guidance of the one man who sits on the Throne of Peter (who nevertheless retained his free will) was now to be viewed as rather like the office of a college president, who becomes President Emeritus upon retirement. Whatever its implications, the innovation appeared to reflect the creeping anthropocentrism that had obscured the supernatural foundations of the Church after the Council’s vaunted “opening to the world.” Now, for the first time in Church history, the Pope would be exposed to the same pressure as the CEO of a secular corporation to retire in favor of a younger man once it became apparent that he was “off his game” or had “lost a step” as manager. Now it would become unseemly for a Pope to “hang on” to his office until death, as if the grace of state were no longer of any real account in the conduct of the papacy.

In his address to the parish priests and clergy of Rome, quoted above, Pope Benedict made one more important contribution to correcting the Church’s “wrong turn” at the Council: he admitted, however guardedly, that there had indeed been a wrong turn, although he blamed it on what he called a “virtual Council” or the “Council of the media.” Benedict’s lengthy remarks were delivered without notes—an exercise hardly consistent with his claim of mental incapacity for the papacy. They bear quoting at length, for they represent a sweeping indictment of the entire regime of novelty:

I would now like to add yet a third point: there was the Council of the Fathers—the real Council—but there was also the Council of the media. It was almost a Council apart, and the world perceived the Council through the latter, through the media. Thus, the Council that reached the people with immediate effect was that of the media, not that of the Fathers....

It was a political hermeneutic: for the media, the Council was a political struggle, a power struggle between different trends in the Church. It was obvious that the media would take the side of those who seemed to them more closely allied with their world.... There were those who sought the decentralization of the Church, power for the bishops and then, through the expression “People of God”, power for the people, the laity. There was this threefold question: the power of the Pope, which was then transferred to the power of the bishops and the power of all—popular sovereignty....

So too with the liturgy: there was no interest in liturgy as an act of faith, but as something where comprehensible things are done, a matter of community activity, something profane.... Sacrality must therefore be abolished, and profanity now spreads to worship: worship is no longer worship, but a community act, with communal participation: participation understood as activity. These translations, trivializations of the idea of the Council, were virulent in the process of putting the liturgical reform into practice; they were born from a vision of the Council detached from its proper key, that of faith....

We know that this Council of the media was accessible to everyone. Therefore, this was the dominant one, the more effective one, and it created so many disasters, so many problems, so much suffering: seminaries closed, convents closed, banalized liturgy ... and the real Council had difficulty establishing itself and taking shape; the virtual Council was stronger than the real Council.

But the real force of the Council was present and, slowly but surely, established itself more and more and became the true force which is also the true reform, the true renewal of the Church. It seems to me that, 50 years after the Council, we see that this virtual Council is broken, is lost, and there now appears the true Council with all its spiritual force....

Of course, it was not the mass media that had caused the disasters, the problems, the

suffering, the closing of seminaries and convents, and the banalization of the liturgy. Nor had any journalist or media commentator decreed “sacrality must ... be abolished, and [that] profanity now spreads to worship...” The “virtual Council” was simply the Council the conciliar Popes and the bishops had actually implemented and John Paul II had resolutely insisted was a great renewal, contrary to all evidence of an ecclesial catastrophe. One can understand Benedict’s all too human desire to divert blame from the parties who were obviously directly responsible, but the attempt to assign primary fault to the mass media and anonymous allies in the Church rang hollow. So did the claim that after fifty years the hold of the “virtual Council” had been finally broken and now the “true Council”—whatever that means—was becoming manifest. If “true renewal of the Church” was evident at all, it was only on account of Benedict’s own historic decisions in favor of Tradition, especially his liberation of the traditional Mass—not from the mass media, but from the bishops and the Vatican bureaucracy that had ruthlessly enforced its de facto suppression under the false appearance of a papal command.

Nevertheless, it was of historic importance that Benedict had at least admitted, finally, a direct connection between the event of the Council and the precipitous decline of the Church immediately thereafter. In fact, Benedict’s pontificate as a whole was marked by the abandonment of the “springtime of Vatican II” narrative of the previous pontificate. Gone as well was the absurd conciliar optimism about a “modern world” clearly bent on self-destruction. Rather, in numerous pronouncements during his brief reign, Benedict had followed a line very similar to that of the papal “prophets of doom”¹²³ Pope John had ridiculed at the start of the Council he had convoked. Quoth Benedict:

The darkness that poses a real threat to mankind, after all, is the fact that he can see and investigate tangible material things, but cannot see where the world is going or whence it comes, where our own life is going, what is good and what is evil. The darkness enshrouding God and obscuring values is the real threat to our existence and to the world in general.¹²⁴

In our days, when in vast areas of the world the faith is in danger of dying out like a flame which no longer has fuel, the overriding priority is to make God present in this world and to show men and women the way to God.... The real problem at this moment of our history is that God is disappearing from the human horizon, and, with the dimming of the light which comes from God, humanity is losing its bearings, with increasingly evident destructive effects.¹²⁵

In the Old and New Testaments, the Lord proclaims judgment on the unfaithful vineyard.... Yet the threat of judgment also concerns us, the Church in Europe, Europe and the West in general. With this Gospel, the Lord is also crying out to our ears the words that in the Book of Revelation He addresses to the Church of Ephesus: “If you do not repent I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place” (2:5).¹²⁶

“[M]oral consensus is collapsing, consensus without which juridical and political structures cannot function. Consequently, the forces mobilized for the defense of such structures seem doomed to failure.... The very future of the world is at stake.”¹²⁷

As the Benedictine Respite came to an abrupt end with an unprecedented abdication, who could forget the Pope’s own words at the beginning of his pontificate: “Pray for me, that I may not flee for fear of the wolves.”¹²⁸ It appeared that Benedict had done just that: the Pope who had relinquished the Petrine ministry on grounds of declining mental and physical health had shown himself still to be in possession of both. Only a day before his resignation became effective, Benedict was able to deliver, without notes, a discourse in elegant Italian fit for immediate publication on the Vatican website. Yet this supposedly

incapacitated Pope would be succeeded by a 76-year-old man who had had most of one lung removed and whose intellect—to be perfectly candid—was simply not comparable to that of the Pope he would succeed under such extraordinary and mysterious circumstances.

In violation of the oath of strict secrecy surrounding papal conclaves, one or more Cardinals leaked the details of the balloting during the 2005 conclave to the media. Cardinal Bergoglio had been the choice of the progressives and had garnered as many as 40 votes, remaining in second place after Cardinal Ratzinger on each ballot. But on the fourth ballot Ratzinger emerged as the compromise choice, an interim Pope before the eventual ascension of Bergoglio, according to some accounts.¹²⁹ And at the next conclave it was indeed Bergoglio who was most unexpectedly elected—a candidate who did not even figure as a dark horse in the predictions of veteran Vatican journalists. Something was clearly missing from the story of Benedict’s abdication. But in the end, one can only agree with the view of the traditionalist writer and former neo-Catholic luminary Louis Varecchio: “I certainly don’t claim to know the whole story, but one thing I’m fairly certain about is this, the declaration of February 10, 2013 isn’t it.”¹³⁰

The traditionalist commentator Hilary White expressed with understandable bitterness the sentiment of many faithful, given all that the Church had endured in “the spirit of Vatican II” and the promise Benedict’s pontificate had held for setting things right: “This is an aspect of that event that very few are willing to talk about. He ditched us.”¹³¹ The sense of being ditched would later be reinforced by the previously unheard-of spectacle of a “Pope Emeritus” appearing with the new Pope at public events, much in the manner of a retired President of the United States who is still called “Mr. President.” Like so much else in the Church over the past fifty years, the papacy had been lowered to the level of the merely mundane.

With the astounding resignation of Pope Benedict, the “para-Conciliar ideology” identified by Msgr. Pozzo would resurge with a vengeance, along with the “spirit of self-demolition” it had relentlessly promoted for nearly half a century. The regime of novelty would enter a new and even more dangerous phase in which precisely what Pozzo noted would become more prominent than ever: the specious distinction between doctrine and its “pastoral application.” The Church’s fundamental moral teaching, seemingly her last intact bastion, would come under attack as the Benedictine Respite gave way to what the world would soon hail as “the Francis Revolution.”

1. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Legacy of John Paul II: Images and Memories* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005 [1998]), p. 12.

2. “I am convinced that the ecclesial crisis in which we find ourselves today depends is to a large extent due to the disintegration [*crollo* or collapse, in the original Italian edition] of the liturgy.” Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Milestones: Memoirs 1927–1977* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998), p. 148.

3. *Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to The Roman Curia Offering Them His Christmas Greetings*, December 22, 2005, @ vatican.va.

4. *Liturgiam authenticam* (2001), nn. 3, 6.

5. Klaus Gamber, *The Reform of the Roman Liturgy: Its Problems and Background* (San Juan Capistrano, CA: Una Voce Press; Harrison, NY: The Foundation for Catholic Reform, 1993), pp. 55–56.

6. James Likoudis and Kenneth D. Whitehead, *The Pope, the Council, and the Mass* (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus

Road Publishing, 1981), p. 97 ff.

- [7.](#) *PCM* (2006), p. 109; see also pp. 110–11.
- [8.](#) “Letter from Cardinal Francis Arinze on the Translation of *Pro Multis*,” October 17, 2006 @ usccb.org.
- [9.](#) *CWN*ews, November 28, 2006.
- [10.](#) Letter of April 14, 2012, @ vatican.va. Paragraph breaks added.
- [11.](#) As of October 2013, the new translation had been “tabled” indefinitely by the German bishops.
- [12.](#) “Apostolic Letter Given *Motu Proprio*, *Summorum Pontificum*, on the Use of the Roman Liturgy Prior to the Reform Of 1970,” July 7, 2007, @ w2.vatican.va.
- [13.](#) Cf. chapters 1 and 11.
- [14.](#) For these and other citations to the documents cf. *Summorum Pontificum* and Explanatory Letter @ vatican.va.
- [15.](#) Robert Moynihan, “Restore the Old Mass,” *Inside the Vatican*, May 2004. The article presents Moynihan’s personal account of Father Charles-Roux’s testimony.
- [16.](#) Annibale Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy: 1948–1975* (Collegeville, MN.: The Liturgical Press, 1990; English edition), p. 300.
- [17.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 299–300.
- [18.](#) Cf. Chapter 11; see also Bugnini, *op. cit.*, pp. 90–92. Bugnini denied the allegations but admitted that, when they became public after his removal from office, he was met by “the silence of the Holy See,” which conspicuously failed to come to his defense. *Ibid.*, p. 92.
- [19.](#) Quoted in Michael Davies, “How the liturgy fell apart: the Enigma of Archbishop Bugnini,” *AD2000*, Vol. 2, No. 5 (June 1989), p. 17.
- [20.](#) Address by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Ergife Palace Hotel, Rome, Saturday 24 October, 1998.
- [21.](#) Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), pp. 165–66.
- [22.](#) Joseph Ratzinger, *Milestones* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997), pp. 156, 148.
- [23.](#) “Socci Manifesto,” English translation. @ <http://rorate-caeli.blogspot.com/2006/12/italian-intellectuals-sign-tridentine.html>
- [24.](#) “Press Release from General Superior of the Priestly Society of Saint Pius X about the *Motu Proprio*,” July 7, 2007; accessed at <http://www.fsspx.org>.
- [25.](#) Ian Fisher, “Pope Eases Restrictions on Latin Mass,” *The New York Times*, July 8, 2007, @ www.nytimes.com.
- [26.](#) “ADL Calls Vatican Prayer for Conversion of Jews ‘A Theological Setback’ and ‘A Body Blow to Catholic-Jewish Relations,’” July 20, 2007, @ <http://archive.adl.org>.
- [27.](#) *WorldNetDaily* commentary, July 10, 2007, @ wnd.com.
- [28.](#) Rom. 11:25, 26.
- [29.](#) “Prayer for Conversion of Jews Remains Troubling Despite Vatican Changes,” February 5, 2008 @ <http://archive.adl.org/>.
- [30.](#) *La Repubblica*, July 8, 2007.
- [31.](#) “*Decisione che spalanca le porte al ritorno dei fedeli lefebvriani*” [“Decision that flings open the doors to the return of the Lefebvrist faithful”], *Il Giornale*, July 8, 2007, @ www.ilgiornale.it.
- [32.](#) Cf. Chapter 7.
- [33.](#) *Ibid.*
- [34.](#) *The Pope the Council and the Mass* (W. Hanover, MA: The Christopher Publishing House, 2006 [1981]), pp. 16, 67–68.
- [35.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 93.

- [36.](#) Ibid, p. 68.
- [37.](#) Ibid, pp. 68-69.
- [38.](#) Ibid., p. 293.
- [39.](#) Ibid., p. 307.
- [40.](#) Cf. Davies, *Pope Paul's New Mass*, Chapter 1 and pp. 10–13; see also Gamber, *The Reform of the Roman Liturgy*, pp. 10–16.
- [41.](#) Gamber, op. cit, p. 16.
- [42.](#) Cf. Adrian Morey, *David Knowles: A Memoir* (Greenwood, SC: Attic Press, 1979).
- [43.](#) Ibid., 281.
- [44.](#) Cf. Chapter 7.
- [45.](#) John XXIII, Apostolic Constitution *Veterum sapientia*, February 22, 1962.
- [46.](#) PCM (2006) pp. 307, 321–22.
- [47.](#) Quoted in Leon Suprenant, “Pope Benedict and the Tridentine Mass,” July 9, 2007. Accessed at <http://www.cufblog.org/pope-benedict-xvi-and-the-tridentine-mass/>.
- [48.](#) PCM 2006, p. 316. As one can see from consulting the cited page, Likoudis was not presenting Ratzinger’s stated view at all, but merely Likoudis’s characterization of the Cardinal’s supposed awareness: “He [Cardinal Ratzinger] is certainly well aware that the liturgical reforms mandated by the Second Vatican Council have not been an unqualified success in all respects.” That would qualify for an Understatement of the Century award.
- [49.](#) Cf. Chapter 12.
- [50.](#) Hartmann Grisar, *Luther* (London, 1913), p. 320.
- [51.](#) Cf. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hjgLMkm9j4A> for a video of entire sorry affair.
- [52.](#) Cf. <https://youtube/hjgLMkm9j4A?t=2054> for this particular segment.
- [53.](#) Cf. Chapter 12.
- [54.](#) Richard P. McBrien, “Dealing with the New Translation of the Mass,” *National Catholic Reporter*, December 26, 2011, @ ncronline.org.
- [55.](#) Congregation for Bishops, *Decree Remitting the Excommunication “Latae Sententiae” of the Bishops of the Society of Saint Pius X*, January 21, 2009, @ vatican.va.
- [56.](#) See Press Release, Society of Saint Pius X, January 24, 2009, @ www.fsspx.org.
- [57.](#) For example, in an interview in *30 Days* magazine, published in September 2005 following a meeting at Castel Gandolfo between Pope Benedict and SSPX Superior General Bishop Bernard Fellay, Cardinal Castrillón Hoyos (then in charge of Vatican relations with the SSPX) stated: “Unfortunately Monsignor Lefebvre went ahead with the consecration and hence the situation of separation came about, *even if it was not a formal schism!*” [“*Purtroppo monsignor Lefebvre andò avanti nella consacrazione e quindi si verificò quella situazione di distacco, anche se non si tratta di uno scisma formale.*”] “Intervista di S. Em.za il Card. Darío Castrillón Hoyos Presidente della Pontificia Commissione Ecclesia Dei,” September 2005 @ www.unavox.it. In 2002, this book noted that as early as 1994 the Vatican was already intimating that the SSPX “schism” had never, in fact, existed. See [Chapter 11](#), [note 56](#).
- [58.](#) A study of 40 countries by the Pew Research Center in 2013–2014 revealed mass defection from Church teaching on abortion, homosexuality, adultery, sexual relations outside of marriage, divorce, and contraception, with only the Catholic populations in Africa and a few Latin American countries (excluding Brazil and Argentina) exhibiting general adherence to the teaching. See, e.g., “On Homosexuality and Abortion, the Voice of the Third World” @ chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it.
- [59.](#) “*En bientôt vingt arts d’épiscopat, j’ai enterré cent vingt prêtres et n’en ai ordonné qu’un...*” From an editorial by Msgr. Yves Patenôtre, Archbishop of Sens-Auxerre, quoted in *Riposte catholique*, November 19, 2013, @ <http://www.riposte-catholique.fr>.
- [60.](#) Cf. Chapter 7.

- [61.](#) PCM 2006, pp. 294–95.
- [62.](#) “Letter of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI to the Bishops of the Catholic Church Concerning the Remission of the Excommunication of the Four Bishops Consecrated by Archbishop Lefebvre” @ vatican.va.
- [63.](#) Cf. “Communique of the General House of the Society of Saint Pius X (October 24, 2012)” @ www.dici.org.
- [64.](#) Quoted in Christopher A. Ferrara, “Gnostic Twaddle and Other Cosmic Connections,” February 9, 2001, @ www.remnantnewspaper.com.
- [65.](#) Cf. Chapter 2.
- [66.](#) “*Lætetur mons Sion, et exsultent filiae Iudæ*” @ rorate-caeli.blogspot.com. All links to the original source on the Sisters’ website have been expunged, but the Vatican has never denied the widely reported story.
- [67.](#) “Valid: SSPX confessions and marriages,” January 14, 2004, @ <http://sspx.org>.
- [68.](#) Jimmy Akin, “Marriage Involvement 4,” <http://jimmyakin.com>. Akin is a Protestant convert with no canonical training.
- [69.](#) Jimmy Akin, “SSPX Confessions,” <http://jimmyakin.com>.
- [70.](#) Can. 144 provides that in cases of “legal common error and in positive and *probable doubt of law or of fact*, the Church *supplies executive power of governance* for both the external and internal forum” respecting both confessions (can. 966) and marriages (1111, §1). Here the Church, in cases of doubt, takes care to insure “the salvation of souls, which must always be the supreme law in the Church....” Can. 1752.
- [71.](#) See, e.g., Brian Mershon, “Cardinal Castrillón: SSPX not in schism: Catholics who attend SSPX masses not schismatic,” *Renew America*, April 10, 2007, collecting numerous statements by the Cardinal that “the Society of St. Pius X (SSPX) is not a case of formal schism” and that “Catholics incur no penalty and no sin for merely fulfilling one’s Sunday obligation at a church or chapel served by the SSPX” @ www.renewamerica.com.
- [72.](#) Cf. chapters 9 and 14.
- [73.](#) Now incardinated in the Archdiocese of New York, Father Morris did not abandon his membership in the Legionaries until 2010.
- [74.](#) See Jason Berry, “Legion of Christ’s deception, unearthed in new documents, indicates wider cover-up” @ ncronline.org.
- [75.](#) “The Pope and the Anti-Semitic Bishop—The Real Story,” Fox Forum @ www.foxnews.com.
- [76.](#) Tracey Rowland, *Benedict XVI: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Continuum Books, 2010), p. 44.
- [77.](#) Letter to Cardinal Castrillón Hoyos, dated December 15, 2008.
- [78.](#) Tracey Rowland, *Ratzinger’s Faith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 38.
- [79.](#) “Lefebvre movement: long, troubled history with Judaism,” *NCR*, January 26, 2009.
- [80.](#) “Rome’s Reconciliation: Did the Pope heal, or deepen, the Lefebvrist schism?,” News-week.com, January 26, 2009.
- [81.](#) Cf. Chapter 5.
- [82.](#) Philip Lawler, “Analysis: Why Further Talks between Vatican and SSPX Are Crucial,” January 28, 2009, @ www.ewtn.com.
- [83.](#) Cf. Chapter 12.
- [84.](#) Cf. Chapter 5 and note 43.
- [85.](#) Cf. Chapter 11.
- [86.](#) As Pius XI taught in *Mortalium Animos*, only 35 years before Vatican II: “For since the mystical body of Christ, in the same manner as His physical body, is one, compacted and fitly joined together, it were foolish and out of place to say that the mystical body is made up of members which are disunited and scattered abroad: whosoever therefore is not united with the body *is no member of it*, neither is he in communion with Christ its head.” *Mortalium Animos* (1928), n. 10.
- [87.](#) “Responses To Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects Of The Doctrine On The Church” (2007) @

88. “Consequently, a valid marriage contract cannot exist between baptized persons without its being by that very fact a sacrament.” CIC 1983, Can. 1055, §2.

89. The teaching of Pius XII in *Mystici Corporis* clearly leaves room for a certain ambiguity on this point. Concerning those “who, on account of regrettable schism, are separated from Us,” Pope Pius declared: “For even though by an unconscious desire and longing they have *a certain relationship with the Mystical Body* of the Redeemer, they still remain deprived of those many heavenly gifts and helps which can only be enjoyed in the Catholic Church. Therefore may they enter into Catholic unity and, joined with Us in the one, organic Body of Jesus Christ, may they together with us run on to the one Head in the Society of glorious love.” *Mystici Corporis* (1943), n. 103. Pius XII would hardly have demanded, however, that Catholics *affirm* as a strict doctrinal proposition that Protestants have “a certain relationship with the Mystical Body,” as that very phrase lacks the clarity required for a doctrinal proposition as opposed to a theological speculation, however probable it might be.

90. Cf. Chapter 3.

91. Cf. Chapter 1 and note 12.

92. Cf. Chapter 13.

93. *Quidquid Consilii* (1908).

94. AAS 42—142; Holy Office, Instruction, 20 Dec, 1949. <Periodica>, 39—204 (Hurth); <Monitor Ecclesiasticus>, 1950, p. 21 (Boyer); <The Jurist>, 10 (1950), p. 206. Accessed at <http://www.ewtn.com/library/CURIA/CDFECUM.HTM>.

95. “Letter to the Faithful,” January 24, 2009.

96. Come de Prévigny, “A Year Later” @ rorate-caeli.blogspot.com.

97. Quoted in Carol Glatz, “SSPX head says Vatican sent mixed messages during reconciliation talks,” Catholic News Service, January 13, 2013, @ www.catholicnews.com.

98. “Statement by the Permanent Council of Bishops of France concerning the lifting of the excommunications,” January 28, 2009, @ rorate-caeli.blogspot.com.

99. Hilary White, “Liberalism Killing French Catholic Church: Traditionalists Taking Over,” January 12, 2010, LifeSiteNews @ www.lifesitenews.com. As White reported: “Between 1965 and 2009, the number of French identifying themselves as Catholics fell from 81 per cent to 64 per cent. The number attending Mass once a week or more fell from 27 per cent to 4.5 per cent in the same period. The statistics, published in the Catholic weekly *La Croix*, show the effects of institutionalized ‘liberalism’ in Catholic teaching. Sixty-three per cent of those who still consider themselves Catholic believe that all religions are the same; 75 per cent asked for an ‘aggiornamento’ in the Church to reconsider Catholic teaching forbidding artificial contraception, while 68 per cent said the same thing for abortion.”

100. Steve Skojec, “Bishop Schneider and the SSPX,” August 14, 2015, @ onepeterfive.com.

101. “Fifty years on: time to revisit and reform the Second Vatican Catastrophe,” Telegraph. co.uk, January 27, 2009.

102. Cf. Chapter 2.

103. “Msgr Pozzo on Aspects of the Ecclesiology of Vatican II,” July 2, 2010, @ roratecaeli.blogspot.com; Italian original text @ <http://www.fssp.org/it/pozzo2010.htm>.

104. Cf. Chapter 5.

105. Cf. Chapter 11 and the opinions of Alan Schreck and Janet Smith cited therein.

106. Cf. Chapter 3 and its discussion of the novelty of dialogue.

107. Cf. in particular Chapter 8.

108. “A traditionalist avant-garde: It’s trendy to be a traditionalist in the Catholic Church,” *The Economist*, December 15, 2012, @ www.economist.com.

109. Cf. Chapter 11.

110. Fr. Thomas Rosica, CSB, “John XXIII: A Reflection,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wXcGdiv9-2M>.

111. Cf. Chapter 12 and note 4.

112. Dr. Richard Geraghty, “Pope John XXIII regretted the Council?” Answer to query, November 4, 2002, @ www.ewtn.com.

113. “A traditionalist avant-garde,” *loc cit*.

114. April 20, 2011, Pontifical Commission *Ecclesia Dei*, “Instruction on the Application of the Apostolic Letter *Summorum Pontificum* of His Holiness Benedict XVI Given *Motu Proprio*,” n. 3 @ vatican.va.

115. *Declaratio*, February 10, 2013, @ www.vatican.va.

116. While Celestine cited “weakness of body” and “personal infirmity,” he also cited “want of knowledge” and “the malignity of the people,” who were outraged by the assorted blunders of this holy man, who never wanted the office to which he was, quite astonishingly, elected after he wrote a letter protesting the deadlock over the election of a successor to Pope Nicholas IV. An “ascetic and reputed miracle worker,” this former monk and hermit returned to his hidden life, confined to a cell by his successor, the formidable Boniface VIII, who annulled all of Celestine’s official acts. Celestine was canonized under his former name as Saint Peter Morrone. Cf. Eric John, *The Popes*, p. 238.

117. In 1959, Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli rather mysteriously took the name of the deposed anti-Pope as his own and, contrary to all expectations that he would be a mere “caretaker Pope,” convened the Second Vatican Council. It is interesting to note that the Council Pope John convened has become a kind “super-council,” while the very Council that deposed the first John XXIII, the Council of Constance, falsely declared the supremacy of conciliar teaching over papal teaching in its decree *Haec Sancta Synodus*, which the Church has never accepted as part of her doctrine. The disputed status of the Council of Constance was but a reflection of “the temporary wreckage of the traditional authority of the Apostolic See, and the rapid growth of false teachings equally ruinous to Church and State” during the Schism. See “Council of Constance,” *Catholic Encyclopedia* (1908) (describing the Council as “partly” ecumenical). These parallels seems instructive.

118. February 14, 2013, Address at Meeting with the Parish Priests and the Clergy of Rome @ www.vatican.va.

119. General Audience Address, February 27, 2013, @ vatican.va.

120. “Professore, io e lei abbiamo un’ unica scelta: lei mi deve curare e io devo guarire, perche’ non c’ e’ posto per un Papa emerito? Quoted in Luigi Accatoli, “Non c’ e’ posto per un Papa emerito.” The article also reports as follows: “Il Pontefice al medico curante: professore non abbiamo scelta lei deve curarmi e io guarire perche’ non e’ previsto che il successore di Pietro possa andarsene in pensione.” *Corriere della Sera*, May 18, 1994, @ archivistorico.corriere.it.

121. Robert Moynihan, “Benedict Steps Down,” *Inside the Vatican*, March 5, 2013, @ insidethevatican.com.

122. See Philip Pullella, “Pope Francis Open To Retirement, Says Concept Of ‘Pope Emeritus’ Could Become Normal,” *Reuters*, May 27, 2014.

123. Cf. Chapter 5.

124. Homily for the Easter Vigil, April 7, 2012.

125. “Letter of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI to All the Bishops of the World,” March 10, 2009.

126. Pope Benedict XVI, “Homily for the opening of the 11th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops,” Rome, October 2, 2005.

127. Benedict XVI, Christmas Greetings to the Roman Curia, December 20, 2010.

128. Homily at Mass for Papal Installation, April 24, 2005, @ www.vatican.va.

129. See, e.g., John Allen, *The Rise of Benedict XVI: the Inside Story of How the Pope Was Elected and Where He Will Take the Catholic Church* (New York: Random House, LLC, 2005), 1827–1886. (Kindle Edition). Allen does not subscribe to the theory that Ratzinger was to be a placeholder for Bergoglio in order to placate progressive Cardinals. Yet nothing else seems to explain how a virtual unknown such as Bergoglio could have been the second-place candidate in 2005, and then the Pope in 2013 after Benedict’s astonishing abdication. The schoolboy myth about the Holy Ghost choosing Popes has no place in a serious discussion of the history of papal conclaves, which is rife with political maneuvering and expedient compromise.

130. Louis Vercchio, “Abdication Fascination,” June 18, 2014, @ www.harvestingthefruit.com.

131. Hilary White, “Abandonment Issues,” April 1, 2014, @ anglocath.blogspot.com.

The Rise of Bergoglianism

In one of the most explosive public statements ever uttered by a layman concerning a reigning Roman Pontiff, the Argentinian journalist Marcelo Gonzalez, writing under the sensational title “The Horror!”, offered this scathing opinion of Jorge Mario Cardinal Bergoglio within hours of his election as the 266th Pope of the Catholic Church:

Famous for his inconsistency (at times, for the unintelligibility of his addresses and homilies), accustomed to the use of coarse, demagogical, and ambiguous expressions, it cannot be said that his magisterium is heterodox, but rather non-existent for how confusing it is

He has not missed any occasion for holding acts in which he lent his Cathedral to Protestants, Muslims, Jews, and even to partisan groups in the name of an impossible and unnecessary interreligious dialogue. He is famous for his meetings with Protestants in the Luna Park arena where, together with preacher of the Pontifical House, Raniero Cantalamessa, he was “blessed” by Protestant ministers, in a common act of worship in which he, in practice, accepted the validity of the “powers” of the TV-pastors.

This election is incomprehensible: he is not a polyglot, he has no Curial experience, he does not shine for his sanctity, he is loose in doctrine and liturgy, he has not fought against abortion and only very weakly against homosexual “marriage,” he has no manners to honor the Pontifical Throne....

May God help His Church. One can never dismiss, as humanly hard as it may seem, the possibility of a conversion ... nonetheless, the future terrifies us.¹

This indictment, coming at the very beginning of a pontificate, was appalling even to traditionalist critics of the postconciliar regime of novelty, including this author.² Its timing and prudence aside, however, Gonzalez’s assessment of the new Pope would shortly find confirmation in a rapid succession of disturbing papal words and deeds the likes of which had never been seen with any Pope, not even during the previous fifty years of revolutionary upheaval in the Church.

[Chapter 3](#) of the first edition of this work employed a biological analogy—“viruses in the body of Christ”—to explain how the Church has been invaded by novel and ideas and practices which have the only appearance of Catholic doctrine, a process akin to that by which viruses, which have only the appearance of living things, invade living cells and use their own cellular machinery to disable them. Within months of the election of Pope Francis another biological analogy suggested itself: that of a rebound infection. The Benedictine Respite could be likened to an attempt to treat a serious, disabling infection with a course of antibiotics interrupted before it is finished, resulting in the infection returning with a vengeance and the patient being even worse off than before treatment began. With the ascension of Francis, the “spirit of Vatican II” rebounded with astonishing rapidity. It was if the proponents of the “para-Conciliar ideology,” like microbes that survive an incomplete course of antibiotics, had been suppressed temporarily under conditions that had only made them stronger. Francis, and the progressivist advisors with which he immediately surrounded himself, made clear from the outset of his pontificate that the supposed “triumphalism” the new Pope would repeatedly condemn in traditionalists was to be answered with a resurgent triumphalism of the Council, whose apparently never-ending “dynamics”³ would once again be invoked as the warrant for still

more innovation in the Church.

Lacking the charisma and suavity of John Paul II and the subtle intellect of Benedict, almost from the moment he appeared on the loggia of Saint Peter's Basilica after his election Francis exhibited precisely what Gonzalez had described: a predilection for "coarse, demagogical, and ambiguous expressions." His first words as Pope: "Brothers and sisters, good evening" already suggested an ostentatious lowering of the office of the papacy with a resulting exaltation, in the eyes of the world, of the man who now occupied it. The first moments of the new papacy were filled with disturbing signs of a determined singularity. Francis refused to wear the traditional papal cope in his first appearance (a symbol of the authority of the One whose vicar he had just become, not a personal fashion statement). And while Cardinal Tauran, announcing the election from the same balcony moments earlier, had uttered the traditional declaration *Habemus Papam*—We have a Pope!—the Pope-elect seemed intent on revising the formula to "We have a Bishop!" It was, Francis said, "the duty of the Conclave ... to give a bishop to Rome," and now "the Bishop and the people" would embark on "this journey of the Church of Rome which presides in charity over all the Churches.... My hope is that this journey of the Church that we begin today, together with the help of my Cardinal Vicar, may be fruitful for the evangelization of this beautiful city."

The point had been driven home with all the subtlety of a wooden mallet: Francis would have none of the monarchical pretensions of his predecessors. This was a humble Pope; a mere Bishop of Rome; perhaps a *primus inter pares* as some of the Orthodox might be inclined to view him. And so it went from the very beginning of the pontificate: Francis, the media were delighted to report, paid his own bill at the Casa Santa Marta, where he had been lodged with the other cardinals during the conclave. He had ridden there on a bus with his fellow cardinals after his election. He would not wear the traditional red slippers of his predecessor, but humble black shoes (custom made orthotics). He would not live in the "papal palace" but rather in a "humble apartment" at Casa Santa Marta (considered a five star hotel, wherein the Pope's facilities would quickly expand to include an entire wing). And he would be driven around in a cheap car rather than a Mercedes (which had been donated to the Vatican at no cost to the faithful).

Despite his apparent aversion to the title of Pope, however, Francis would have no hesitancy in exercising papal authority to the fullest whenever it suited his new program. And that program began almost immediately when, on March 28, he dispensed with the traditional *mandatum* of Holy Thursday—the washing of the feet of adult males in a church to signify Our Lord's inauguration of the sacred priesthood—in favor of his own version of a foot-washing ceremony conducted, not in Saint Peter's Basilica, but in a Roman prison for juvenile offenders. Francis not only washed, but kissed, the feet of two women prisoners, one a Muslim, along with ten other inmates aged 14 to 21. The traditional ceremony, with its rubric forbidding the washing of the feet of women or children, had been abandoned in favor of Francis's personal display of humility, with the cameras rolling.

The regime of novelty had clearly returned with interest, and the media gleefully took their cue. "Pope Francis' first moves hint at break with past," exulted the BBC.⁴ *The Telegraph* was positively exuberant: "Pope Francis continued his gleeful abandonment of

tradition by washing the feet of a young Muslim woman prisoner in an unprecedented twist on the Holy Thursday tradition.” The author noted: “Catholic traditionalists are likely to be riled by the inclusion of women in the ceremony because of the belief [!] that all of Jesus’ disciples were male.”⁵

Meanwhile, following the neo-Catholic principle that The Pope Can Do No Wrong,⁶ neo-Catholic commentators fell strangely silent concerning an abuse they had harshly condemned before Francis committed it. For example, Michael Voris, a neo-Catholic video commentator on the Internet of a more conservative stripe, had only a year earlier condemned similar ceremonies by various bishops as a “grave abuse” because the washing of the feet is “intrinsically linked to the priesthood... “⁷ The Modernists, he, noted, “like to distort this part of the Holy Thursday liturgy” in order to “push the cause for women priests.” Voris proceeded to provide an explanation of the deep historical roots of the *mandatum*, going all the way back to the Old Testament and affirmed by Christ Himself when he washed the feet of the Apostles, the first members of His sacred priesthood. Voris ridiculed the U.S. bishops’ contention that the foot-washing on Holy Thursday is merely “an act of charity” that can be directed to women as well as men (as Francis seemed to think), noting that the Vatican had “blown that contention out of the water with the document *Paschalis Somenitatis*,” insisting upon the limitation of the ritual to “chosen men” —actually, “proven men” (*virī probati*), and certainly not women or incarcerated juvenile offenders. After displaying a photograph of Pope Benedict conducting the ritual in the proper traditional manner, Voris concluded that washing the feet of women is “a grave abuse because it tears away from the sacred character of the priesthood instituted by Christ Himself on this most holy of nights.”

But now that Francis had done the same thing—upping the ante by washing and kissing the feet of a Muslim woman—true to neo-Catholic form the grave abuse suddenly became immune from criticism by Voris or any other member of the neo-Catholic commentariat. But what is the use of criticizing liturgical abuses of any sort when committed by lower members of the hierarchy if the same abuses are deemed perfectly acceptable once committed by a Pope? Indeed, what happens to the concept of liturgical abuse itself if, by an exercise of sheer papal positivism, yesterday’s abuse—committed contrary to all tradition—becomes today’s acceptable practice? For that matter, what happens to all manner of Church discipline if a Pope can disregard it at will?

These early gestures were the first scenes of a new act in the drama of the postconciliar debacle. Following his initial enthusiasm for the new pontificate, Antonio Socci—no traditionalist—would describe the development thus: “It is a shift in the Church that is making the faithful very disorientated and has provoked the curious phenomenon of sudden ‘conversions’ to ‘Bergoglianism’ among churchmen and intellectuals.”⁸

Loosening Moral Strictures

The historic phenomenon of “Bergoglianism” merits a book in itself. In this Chapter only an overview of its essential elements is possible. The first of these is a dramatic, albeit rhetorical, loosening of the Church’s moral strictures in the realm of marriage, procreation and human sexuality generally. This element first emerged in July 2013 with a remark that would become a hallmark of Francis’s entire pontificate, haunting the Church from that

moment forward. During an unplanned press conference he insisted on staging during the plane flight home from Brazil, Francis delighted the world media with this answer to a question about his reported intention to address the problem of a “gay mafia” in the Vatican: “If someone is gay and he searches for the Lord and has good will, who am I to judge?”⁹ To which he added: “I have yet to find on a Vatican identity card the word ‘gay.’” The first Pope in history to use the word *gay* had already appointed a notorious “gay” cleric, Msgr. Batista Ricca, as Prelate (clerical overseer) of the Institute for Works of Religion, whose operations include both the so-called Vatican Bank and the Casa Santa Marta, in which Francis resides. Francis would ignore the massive evidence of Ricca’s “gay” affairs, documented by no less than Sandro Magister,¹⁰ one of the world’s most respected Vaticanists. In fact, the very question that elicited “Who am I to judge?” concerned Ricca in particular and the alleged existence of a clerical “gay Mafia” in the Vatican in general, concerning which Francis had reportedly said privately that it does indeed exist and that “we need to see what we can do.”¹¹ What Francis did was to appoint a notoriously “gay” cleric as overseer of Vatican finances and his very household.¹²

Typifying the media’s near delirium over the new “gay-friendly” Pope, *The New York Times* reported that “Francis’s words could not have been more different from those of Benedict XVI, who in 2005 wrote that homosexuality was ‘a strong tendency ordered toward an intrinsic moral evil,’ and an ‘objective disorder’ [and that] ... men with ‘deep-seated homosexual tendencies’ should not become priests.” While, *The Times* noted, “Vatican experts were quick to point out that Francis was not suggesting that priests or anyone else should act on their homosexual tendencies,... the fact that he made such comments—and used the word ‘gay’—was nevertheless revolutionary, and likely to generate significant discussion in local dioceses, where bishops are divided over whether to accept priests who are gay but celibate.”¹³ In other words, the Pope’s remark was being construed as a green light to a “gay culture” in the priesthood, as well as in the society at large. Just how true that was would become undeniably apparent, as we shall see, with the now infamous Synod of October 2014 and its “midterm report.”

During the same in-flight press conference Francis also suggested a relaxation of the Church’s bimillennial discipline based on the indissolubility of sacramental marriage, according to which divorced and remarried Catholics are denied admission to the sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist absent a commitment to abstain from sexual relations in a second “marriage” the Church views as a continuing state of adultery, in keeping with Our Lord’s own admonition: “Whosoever shall put away his wife and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if the wife shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery (Mk 10:11–12).” Appearing to chip away at the discipline, Francis stated: “With reference to the issue of giving communion to persons in a second union ... I believe that we need to look at this within the larger context of the entire pastoral care of marriage. And so it is a problem. But also—a parenthesis—the Orthodox have a different practice. They follow the theology of what they call *oikonomia*, and they give a second chance, they allow it. But I believe that this problem—and here I close the parenthesis—must be studied within the context of the pastoral care of marriage.”

That the constant discipline of the Church in defense of the indissolubility of marriage

—reaffirmed by John Paul II a mere 32 years earlier¹⁴—had suddenly become a “problem” that needed to be addressed in the name of “pastoral care,” and that the Orthodox practice of allowing multiple marriages is something the Catholic Church should consider, would become an almost obsessive theme of “Bergoglianism.” That theme would reach a crescendo with the Extraordinary Synod of 2014, at which the proposal of Cardinal Kasper to admit the divorced and remarried to Holy Communion “on a case-by-case basis” would be presented for serious debate, provoking strong opposition from bishops and cardinals and prompting speculation in the media of nothing less than a schism provoked by the Pope’s initiative.¹⁵

Three months later, in an explosive interview that appeared in *La Civiltà Cattolica* and in English translation in the ultra-liberal Jesuit magazine *America*, Francis would confirm the emergent leitmotif of a relaxation of moral rigor in practice (while affirming it in principle). Here he introduced a previously unheard-of disjunction between the “fragrance of the Gospel” and the high moral standard the Faith demands:

We cannot insist only on issues related to abortion, gay marriage and the use of contraceptive methods. This is not possible. I have not spoken much about these things, and I was reprimanded for that....

The dogmatic and moral teachings of the church are not all equivalent. The church’s pastoral ministry cannot be obsessed with the transmission of a disjointed multitude of doctrines to be imposed insistently....

We have to find a new balance; otherwise even the moral edifice of the church is likely to fall like a house of cards, losing the freshness and fragrance of the Gospel. The proposal of the Gospel must be more simple, profound, radiant. It is from this proposition that the moral consequences then flow.

But the proclamation of the saving love of God comes before moral and religious imperatives. Today sometimes it seems that the opposite order is prevailing.¹⁶

The idea that one must “proclaim the Gospel” before one speaks of “moral and religious imperatives” had no parallel in prior papal preaching and seemed impossible to reconcile with the proclamation of the Gospel itself. As Christ declared with precisely that divine simplicity to which Francis alludes: “If you love me, keep my commandments.... If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him. He that loveth me not, keepeth not my words (Jn. 14:15, 23-23).” Or, as Saint Paul declared in his own very simple preaching of the Gospel: “Know you not that the unjust shall not possess the kingdom of God? Do not err: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor the effeminate, nor liars with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor railers, nor extortioners, shall possess the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9–10).” Then there are the first Pope’s words to the three thousand he converted at the very beginning of the Church’s mission: “Do penance, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins: and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.... And with very many other words did he testify and exhort them, saying: Save yourselves from this perverse generation (Acts 2:38–40).”

Perhaps the most telling example of a suggested moral loosening in this interview was Francis’s presentation of a hypothetical woman “with a failed marriage in her past and who also had an abortion. Then this woman remarries, and she is now happy and has five children. That abortion in her past weighs heavily on her conscience and she sincerely regrets it. She would like to move forward in her Christian life. What is the confessor to

do?” The confessor, of course, would absolve the woman if she had repented of the abortion, but would not be able to absolve her continuing adultery in the civil “remarriage” without the commitment to abstain from adulterous relations the Church has always required in such situations. The suggestion that a confessor faces some sort of dilemma when dealing with a woman who has killed her own child in the womb, divorced her husband, remarried civilly and is now supposedly “happy” could only be seen as seditious of the Church’s entire moral teaching. A pair of Italian Catholic intellectuals, Alessandro Gnocchi and Mario Palmaro, cited the Pope’s hypothetical in an early public objection to the early drift of the pontificate in an article entitled “We do not like this Pope.”¹⁷ They described it as:

A discourse cleverly constructed to be concluded by a question after which one moves on and changes the subject, almost as if to underline the Church’s inability to respond. A disconcerting passage if one considers that the Church has answered this question for two thousand years with a rule that permits absolution of the sinner, provided she is repentant and commits not to remain in sin. Yet, overcome by the overflowing personality of Pope Bergoglio, legions of Catholics have imbibed the fable of a problem that in reality has never existed. All of them are there, with a sense of guilt for two thousand years of supposed outrages against poor sinners, to thank the bishop come “from the end of the world,” not for solving a problem that wasn’t, but for having invented it.

The neo-Catholic response to such heartfelt criticisms is to blast them as “disloyal” to the papacy if not “crypto-sedevacantist.” In this case, however, the neo-Catholic’s tendency to mindless papolatry was undone by Francis himself who, knowing Palmaro was terminally ill, personally telephoned him to thank him for the article. “I was astonished, amazed, above all moved,” Palmaro later wrote after the phone call was made public against his wishes. “But,” he continued, “I felt the duty to remind the Pope that I, together with Gnocchi, had expressed specific criticisms regarding his work, while I renewed my total fidelity [to him] as a son of the Church.” To this the Pope replied that “he had understood that those criticisms had been made with love, and how important it had been for him to receive them.”¹⁸ It does not appear, however, that the Pope’s reception of those criticisms altered the unprecedented progressivist program of his pontificate, as this discussion will show.

Accelerating the Indifferentist Tendency

A second element of “Bergoglianism” involves another purported loosening of the Church’s teaching: that regarding the spiritual condition of atheists and non-Catholics in general. In a letter Francis sent to Eugenio Scalfari, the militant atheist and co-founder and former editor of the leftwing Italian daily *La Repubblica*, Francis addressed questions Scalfari had publicly posed to him on the pages of that newspaper in July and August of 2013. The Catholic world was stunned, and the secular world delighted, to read the following answer:

First of all, you ask if the God of the Christians forgives those who do not believe and do not seek faith. *Given that—and this is fundamental—God’s mercy has no limits if he who asks for mercy does so in contrition and with a sincere heart, the issue for those who do not believe in God is in obeying their own conscience.* Even for one who does not have faith, there is sin when one goes against conscience. In fact, listening to and obeying it means making a decision in the face of what is perceived to be good or evil. The goodness or the wickedness of our behavior depends on this decision.¹⁹

First of all, the italicized sentence seemed unintelligible: Scalfari’s question was whether God will forgive one who does not believe and does not seek faith in Him. Francis’s

answer, however, confusingly referred to the mercy of God toward one who “asks for mercy ... in contrition and with a sincere heart” only to change the subject within the same sentence to God’s view of those “who do not believe in God” for whom the issue is “obeying their own conscience.” As it is obvious that one who does not believe in God or seek faith cannot be asking Him “for mercy ... in contrition and with a sincere heart,” the reference to God’s limitless mercy was pointless in context.

Moreover, the Pope’s reply to Scalfari omitted the revealed truth that “without faith it is impossible to please God. For he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and is a rewarder to them that seek him (Heb. 11:6).” That is, it is impossible for an atheist be saved if he dies as such. If it were otherwise, there would be no need for religion at all, much less the Catholic Church and her sacraments. The Pope’s letter appeared to conflate the ultimate salvation of atheists with the question whether they are guilty of personal sin if they follow the dictates of conscience in the wayfaring state. Worse, the letter had said nothing of the problem of the malformed conscience as a guide to action. Francis had failed to caution Scalfari that a conscience deformed through habitual sin no longer excuses from culpability. On this point Francis’s predecessor, writing as Cardinal Ratzinger, had provided admirable clarity. Ratzinger’s 1991 address on “Conscience and Truth” refuted the idea that Francis (if only by omission) had appeared to advance:

It is of course undisputed that one must follow a certain conscience or at least not act against it. But whether the judgment of conscience or what one takes to be such, is always right, indeed whether it is infallible, is another question. For if this were the case, it would mean that there is no truth—at least not in moral and religious matters, which is to say, in the areas which constitute the very pillars of our existence. For judgments of conscience can contradict each other. Thus there could be at best the subject’s own truth, which would be reduced to the subject’s sincerity.²⁰

Thus, Ratzinger continued, even if one is “sincerely” convinced that his immoral actions are moral, “it can very well be wrong to have come to such askew convictions in the first place, by having stifled the protest of the anamnesis of being,” meaning the law God has inscribed in our nature. In the case of an errant conscience, malformed by sin, “[t]he guilt lies then in a different place, much deeper—not in the present act, not in the present judgment of conscience but in the neglect of my being which made me deaf to the internal promptings of truth.” The error that the “sincere” sinner is *ipso facto* subjectively innocent leads to absurd and destructive results:

In the course of a dispute, a senior colleague, who was keenly aware of the plight to being Christian in our times, expressed the opinion that one should actually be grateful to God that He allows there to be so many unbelievers in good conscience. For if their eyes were opened and they became believers, they would not be capable, in this world of ours, of bearing the burden of faith with all its moral obligations. But as it is, since they can go another way in good conscience, they can reach salvation.

What shocked me about this assertion was not in the first place the idea of an erroneous conscience given by God Himself in order to save men by means of such artfulness—the idea, so to speak, of a blindness sent by God for the salvation of those in question. What disturbed me was the notion that it harbored, that faith is a burden which can hardly be borne and which no doubt was intended only for stronger natures—faith almost as a kind of punishment, in any case, an imposition not easily coped with.

According to this view, faith would not make salvation easier but harder. Being happy would mean not being burdened with having to believe or having to submit to the moral yoke of the faith of the Catholic Church. The erroneous conscience, which makes life easier and marks a more human course, would then be a real grace, the normal way to salvation.... Man would be more at home in the dark than in the light. Faith would not be the good gift of the good God but instead an affliction.

As the future Pope Benedict concluded: “In the last few decades, notions of this sort have discernibly crippled the disposition to evangelize.” They certainly had, as this book demonstrated abundantly thirteen years ago.²¹ And those who espouse such notions, wrote Cardinal Ratzinger, were afflicted by—note well—an “almost traumatic aversion many have to what they hold to be ‘pre-conciliar’ Catholicism...” Francis himself appeared to be exhibiting precisely this aversion.

Francis would reiterate his theme of the unqualified autonomy of conscience in a later interview with Scalfari, upping the ante by seeming to reject, in the crudest of terms, the very idea that the Church should be seeking to make converts to what Catholic churchmen used to call the one true religion:

“Each of us has a vision of good and of evil. We have to encourage people to move towards what they think is Good.”

- “And I repeat it here. Everyone has his own idea of good and evil and must choose to follow the good and fight evil as he conceives them. That would be enough to make the world a better place.”
- “Proselytism is solemn nonsense, it makes no sense.”
- “... I believe in God, not in a Catholic God, there is no Catholic God.”
- “The Son of God became incarnate to instill in the souls of men the feeling of brotherhood.”
- “I believe I have already said that our goal is not to proselytize but to listen to needs, desires and disappointments, despair, hope. We must restore hope to young people, help the old, be open to the future, spread love.”
- “The world is crisscrossed by roads that come closer together and move apart, but the important thing is that they lead towards the Good.”²²

For Francis, it seemed, the apostasy of Western civilization was not a particularly pressing concern. What was needed was not conversion to the Faith for the salvation of lost souls, but rather “to listen to needs, desires and disappointments, despair, hope.” Accordingly, in the same interview Francis made the stupefying pronouncement that “The most serious of the evils that afflict the world these days are youth unemployment and the loneliness of the old.” Lest it be thought that this notion of do-goodism supplanting the supernaturally infused virtue of faith was merely an artifact of the spontaneous give-and-take of an interview, the Pope stressed the same theme in one his homilies: “The Lord has redeemed all of us, all of us, with the Blood of Christ: all of us, not just Catholics. Everyone! ‘Father, the atheists?’ Even the atheists. Everyone! ... ‘But I don’t believe, Father, I am an atheist!’ But do good: we will meet one another there.”²³

This “coarse and ambiguous” way of speaking, in the manner of an ill-prepared parish sermon, made no distinction between the objective redemption of humanity and its subjective application to each individual man in the indispensable act of faith (itself the result of divine grace). The Pope’s remark was quite predictably hailed throughout the world as a revolutionary papal declaration that atheists can be saved merely by doing good. That development, as John Allen noted, prompted the papal spokesman Fr. Thomas Rosica to issue “a 2,300-word clarification May 23 insisting Francis had ‘no intention of provoking a theological debate on the nature of salvation.’”²⁴ In the manner of so many postconciliar Vatican statements, the clarification clarified nothing.

As for non-Catholic Christians, Francis explicitly dismissed as irrelevant the vast doctrinal differences between Catholicism and Protestantism in its myriad forms. For example, during a meeting with the “Ark Community,” a breakaway Anglican sect that purports to ordain women as priests, he opined: “We are sinning against Christ’s will because we continue to focus on our differences.... [O]ur shared baptism is more important than our differences.”²⁵ The idea that a Catholic sins against Christ’s will by focusing on the errors of the Protestant sects turns on its head the teaching of Pius XII, who condemned the false notion that in the Church’s approach to Protestants “things which are rather accidental be not so emphasized, that what is most essential, namely the defection from the Catholic faith, be scarcely any longer seen or felt.” As this work noted in 2002, Pius insisted in line with all his predecessors that “by no means is it permitted to pass over in silence or to veil in ambiguous terms the Catholic truth regarding the nature and way of justification, the constitution of the Church, the primacy of jurisdiction of the Roman Pontiff, and the only true union by the return of the dissidents to the one true Church of Christ.”²⁶

Francis’s welter of astonishing remarks on the spiritual state of non-Catholics deepened the already prevalent postconciliar impression this book documented thirteen years ago: that holding the Catholic faith, however desirable it might be, was now simply irrelevant to salvation, and the Church unnecessary for it.²⁷ In his personal manifesto *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG), however, Francis moved from the realm of various informal remarks to a formal papal document, however dubious its authority may be. EG called for yet another “New Evangelization” whose mantra is: “It is not by proselytizing that the Church grows, but ‘by attraction.’” According to this notion, “[i]nstead of seeming to impose new obligations,” Catholics “should appear as people who wish to share their joy, who point to a horizon of beauty and who invite others to a delicious banquet.”²⁸ The world’s response to an amorphous sharing of joy without “proselytization” or any mention of religious and moral obligations or that the salvation of one’s soul was at stake has been a collective yawn, as the past fifty years have demonstrated. After all, one can always share this joy, whatever it is, in the next life—if there is a next life—especially if no “new obligations” are involved in obtaining it and there is no risk to one’s soul in saying “Thanks, but no thanks.” And, to the modern mind, there are “delicious banquets” aplenty in the here and now.

This is not to deny that the Church grows by attraction—of course she does—but this spiritual attraction is aided, not impeded, by what Francis derided as “proselytizing.” And what is proselytizing? It is nothing more than preaching the necessity of conversion for salvation, which is precisely Our Lord’s divine commission to His Church: “And he said to them: Go ye into the whole world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned (Mk. 16: 15–16).” More is involved in this saving activity than a nebulous “attraction.” An actual effort must be made to persuade people of the truth of the Gospel and the necessity of membership in the Church. Francis here seemed to dispense with the divine commission in any active sense, which would mean to dispense with the divine commission as such.

Eager, as always, to defend the indefensible, neo-Catholic commentators rushed to fill

the breach. James Akin of Catholic Answers, for example, admitted that the Pope's declaration that "proselytism is solemn nonsense" "could sound strange since, historically, the word 'proselyte' has simply meant a convert, and proselytism has simply meant making converts." Having admitted the obvious, however, Akin proceeded to deny it, asserting without any real proof that "evangelization is high on [Francis's] priority list" and that by "proselytizing" Francis meant only "inappropriate tactics."²⁹ Francis made no such distinction. He had clearly rejected the very idea of any effort to persuade people to become members of the Catholic Church. This would become ever clearer as his pontificate progressed.

From the first moment of the Church's existence, when Peter, the first Pope, preached baptism and repentance to the three thousand who converted on the spot through his "proselytism," down through all the Christian centuries, the Church has grown through the preaching of her missionaries on the divine imperative of conversion. But in vain did one search any of Francis's utterances for even a trace of the fundamental Catholic belief that membership in the Catholic Church and obedience to her teaching are necessary for salvation. Rather, in EG, Francis persisted in the theme he had earlier expressed in the *America* magazine interview: between a supposed "obsession" with "disjointed doctrines" and "rules" and an "attractive" proclamation of the Gospel:

Pastoral ministry in a missionary style is not obsessed with the disjointed transmission of a multitude of doctrines to be insistently imposed.... [T]he message has to concentrate on the essentials, on what is most beautiful, most grand, most appealing and at the same time most necessary....

If this invitation does not radiate forcefully and attractively, the edifice of the Church's moral teaching risks becoming a house of cards.... [I]t is not the Gospel which is being preached, but certain doctrinal or moral points based on specific ideological options. The message will run the risk of losing its freshness and will cease to have "the fragrance of the Gospel."

[M]y hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within ... rules which make us harsh judges....³⁰

What did Francis mean by "fragrance of the Gospel"? What is the Gospel if not the teachings of Christ and the Apostles, which are not an incessant "sharing of joy" but rather are replete with "hard sayings," condemnations of sin and admonitions concerning damnation as the consequence of sin, which Christ mentions far more often than heaven. And yet, with this, there is also the sure hope of eternal happiness for those who respond to grace, believe, are baptized and persevere in obedience to Christ's commandments. There is nothing particularly "fragrant" about Our Lord's warning that on the Last Day "he shall say to them also that shall be on his left hand: Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41)." In postconciliar preaching, including Francis's, we hear endlessly that God loves us, but why do we never hear that we must love Him in return and show our love by following His teaching? "If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him (Jn. 14:23-24)."

Further, which doctrines was Francis proposing as the "essentials" of a "beautiful," "grand" and "appealing" pastoral ministry? And which doctrines were to be omitted: mortal sin? hell? purgatory? the necessity of baptism? the papal primacy? the status of the Catholic Church as the only ark of salvation? Mary as Mediatrix? the Church's "hard sayings" on marriage and procreation? the impossibility of remaining for very long in the

state of grace without the sacraments? And what did Francis mean by the posited opposition between the “fragrance of the Gospel” and “certain doctrinal or moral points based on specific ideological options”? What ideological options? Did not this entirely open-ended disparagement of “certain doctrinal or moral points” potentially expose all of Catholic theology to dismissal as mere ideology compared with “fragrant” Gospel preaching?

This “fragrant” Gospel was the same half-truth the overwhelming majority of the Church’s pastors had been preaching since the Council: mercy without judgment and salvation without the threat of eternal damnation. Francis even went so far as to assert, “To understand this reality we need to approach it with the gaze of the Good Shepherd, who seeks not to judge but to love....”³¹ The Gospel, however, says exactly the opposite: “For as the Father hath life in himself, so he hath given the Son also to have life in himself. And he hath given him power to do judgment, because he is the Son of man. Wonder not at this; for the hour cometh, wherein all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And they that have done good things, shall come forth unto the resurrection of life; but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment (Jn. 56:26–29).” Also at odds with EG is the very *Credo* Catholics recite as foundational to the Faith: “From thence he will come again to judge the living and the dead.”³² And it is none other the Good Shepherd who warns us, in one of the most “fragrant” passages of the Gospel, that “when the Son of man shall come in his majesty, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit upon the seat of his majesty. And all nations shall be gathered together before him, and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats (Matt. 25:31–32).” We all know the fate of the goats, but Francis did not seem interested in letting the world in on the story, as if Our Lord’s most dire warnings were bluffs finally called at Vatican II.

In EG, Francis further extended, if that were possible, the line of what can only be called the doubletalk of “interreligious dialogue.”³³ While declaring that “evangelization and interreligious dialogue, far from being opposed, mutually support and nourish one another,” he also declared that “an attitude of openness in truth and in love must characterize the dialogue with the followers of non-Christian religions, in spite of various obstacles and difficulties, especially forms of fundamentalism on both sides.... In this way we learn to accept others and their different ways of living, thinking and speaking.”³⁴ But how can the Church make disciples of all nations in keeping with the divine commission if “interreligious dialogue” requires the avoidance of “fundamentalism” and the acceptance of “different ways of living, thinking and speaking”? Citing nothing more than the International Theological Commission, a progressivist Vatican think tank with no magisterial authority whatsoever, EG further asserts that “non-Christians, by God’s gracious initiative, when they are faithful to their own consciences, can live justified by the grace of God,” that the rituals of pagan religions “can be channels which the Holy Spirit raises up in order to liberate non-Christians from atheistic immanentism,” that “the same Spirit everywhere brings forth various forms of practical wisdom which help people to bear suffering and to live in greater peace and harmony,” and that “[a]s Christians, we can also benefit from these treasures built up over many centuries, which can help us better to live our own beliefs.”³⁵

Whitewashing the Darkness of Islam

Respecting Islam, EG had nothing but the usual post-Vatican II praise, which Francis managed to bring to a new level. EG presents Mohammed's invention as pleasing to God and a suitable vehicle for the salvation of Muslims (along with pagan religions and their Holy Ghost-inspired rituals).³⁶ For starters, citing only the patently false factual contention of *Nostra Aetate*, EG declares that Muslims "profess to hold the faith of Abraham, and together with us they adore the one, merciful God..." Going further than Vatican II, however, EG also refers to "[t]he sacred writings of Islam," which "have retained some Christian teachings...." And what of the plenitude of Mohammed's errors, beginning with his denial of Christ's very divinity? According to EG, "interreligious dialogue" with Muslims requires "suitable training ... for all involved, not only so that they can be solidly and joyfully grounded in their own identity, but so that they can also acknowledge the values of others, appreciate the concerns underlying their demands and shed light on shared beliefs." EG thus represents a definitive abandonment of the traditional teaching of the Church as reflected in the traditional Good Friday intercessions for the salvation of non-Christians and the prayer composed by Leo XIII which Pius XI, a mere 37 years before Vatican II, instructed the entire Church to pray on the Feast of Christ the King: "Be Thou King of all those who are still involved in the darkness of idolatry or of Islamism, and refuse not to draw them into the light and kingdom of God."³⁷

Worse, if that were possible, was Francis's assumption of the role of Koranic exegete in order to exculpate Mohammed's cult from its historic connection to the conquest and brutal persecution of Christians: "Faced with disconcerting episodes of violent fundamentalism, our respect for true followers of Islam should lead us to avoid hateful generalisations, for authentic Islam and the proper reading of the Koran are opposed to every form of violence."³⁸ Disconcerting episodes? The bloody persecution of Christians by various Islamic entities was endemic in the Middle East and was posing an ever-greater threat to the heart of Europe itself. This development, predicted nearly eighty years ago by Hilaire Belloc,³⁹ was a bit more than "disconcerting."

Moreover, Francis did not seem to notice that it was not a few "fundamentalists" who were not "true followers of Islam" but rather the government of Pakistan that had sentenced Asia Bibi to death for "insulting the Prophet." (Francis has to date done nothing to save her, although Benedict publicly called for her pardon by the President of Pakistan⁴⁰ as part of an international movement to stop her execution.) Nor was it a few fundamentalists but rather the government of Sudan that had sentenced Meriam Ibrahim to death for converting to Christianity and jailed her to await her execution, to take place after she gave birth to her unborn child in prison. She was freed only after a storm of international protest to which Francis contributed nothing (although he did pose with her for photos in the Vatican after her release). It is Saudi Arabia, not a few fundamentalists, that routinely beheads people for "blasphemy" and "apostasy" from Islam.⁴¹ And what of Kuwait, where "blasphemy" against the Sunni version of Islam is also punishable by death?⁴² What, for that matter, of the Islamic world in general, in which flogging, imprisonment and death are commonly imposed for offenses ranging from insulting the Islamic religion or "the Prophet" to adultery. As for adultery, in Islamic nations no one heeds Our Lord's counsel that he who is without sin should cast the first stone; rather, the

legal barbarism that preceded the Gospel, including that which Our Lord condemned among the Pharisees, persists to this day in Islamic legal systems.

Was Francis prepared to tell the rulers of Pakistan, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and elsewhere that they are not “true followers of Islam” and that their reading of the Koran is not “authentic”? Perhaps the Muslims who control these governments and their Muslim clerics know better than Francis what “authentic” Islam is. Perhaps they have demonstrated what authentic Islam is by the laws and institutions they have erected to enforce the dictates of that man-made religion. That “authentic Islam” is not, and never has been, a “religion of peace” but rather quite the opposite is why Our Lady appeared at Fatima, named after a Muslim princess who became a Catholic following the reconquest of the Muslim-dominated regions of Portugal by Christian forces in the 12th century. In fact, Princess Fatima married the very knight who had captured her, taking the Christian name Orea, for which the nearby Portuguese town of Ourém is named.

Francis’s willful blindness to the nature of Islam would account for his consistent refusal to issue anything beyond a few generic protests against terrorist violence as Christians are being butchered or driven from their homes throughout the Middle East and Africa by The Islamic State (ISIS), Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab. Instead, he would pray in the Blue Mosque of Istanbul with an Imam and stage a Prayer for Peace event in the Vatican gardens at which an Imam sang: “grant us victory over the heathen/disbelieving/infidel” (reading from Sura 2: 286) to the embarrassment of those who understood Arabic and of Vatican Radio, which censored those words from the broadcast.⁴³ The planting of an olive tree by Francis, Israeli President Shimon Peres and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on that occasion was so ludicrous it was parodied by a popular non-traditionalist Catholic website: “Peace Breaks Out In Israel Moments After Magic Olive Tree Planted.” In fact, only days after the event the worst violence in decades erupted in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and elsewhere in the Middle East, prompting this parodic report: “But less than one day after receiving news that every single Middle East conflict had been resolved, the magic Olive Tree that Francis, Peres, and Abbas had shoddily planted into the ground toppled over with a gust of wind, instantaneously causing a chain reaction of violent outbreaks all across the Middle East.”⁴⁴

In stark contrast to Francis’s absurd whitewash of Islam was Benedict’s realistic assessment in the famous Regensburg address, which had resulted in a storm of denunciations in the media and even fears for his life: “Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached.”⁴⁵ But then Benedict was not much concerned with his standing before world opinion, which had held him in contempt throughout his short reign.

Repudiating Jewish Conversion

As for the Jews, EG—citing no authority whatsoever, much less the perennial Magisterium—exceeded all post-conciliar deviations to date by simply declaring outright that the practitioners of Judaism are in a continuing covenant relationship with God and have no need of the Church: “We hold the Jewish people in special regard because their

covenant with God has never been revoked, for ‘the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable’ (Rom. 11:29)... God continues to work among the people of the Old Covenant and to bring forth treasures of wisdom which flow from their encounter with his word.”⁴⁶ But what of the Gospel? EG says nothing more than this: “While it is true that certain Christian beliefs are unacceptable to Judaism, and that the Church cannot refrain from proclaiming Jesus as Lord and Messiah, there exists as well a rich complementarity which allows us to read the texts of the Hebrew Scriptures together and to help one another to mine the riches of God’s word.”⁴⁷ The Gospel, and with it the entire New Covenant, is thus shunted aside as “unacceptable to Judaism,” as if Christ came for the Gentiles only—but not, of course, to demand the Gentiles’ conversion or membership in His Church in order to be saved. On the other hand, no teaching of Judaism, including its adamant rejection of the Messiah, is viewed as “unacceptable” to the Church.

But Francis had no power to dispense with divine revelation. The Old Covenant passed away with the establishment of the New Covenant in the Blood of Christ, just as the Old Testament found its fulfillment and perfection in the New Testament. This is why God rent the Temple veil from top to bottom at the moment of the Crucifixion, and why there has been no sacrifice in the synagogues for the past 2,000 years. As Saint Paul teaches infallibly, it is precisely because of God’s original election of the Jews that a remnant of them, beginning with Saint Paul and his contemporary Jewish converts, will accept Christ and be saved by the grace obtained through the New Covenant, without the works of the superseded Mosaic law:

I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel? “Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life.” But what is God’s reply to him? “I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace. (Rom. 11:1–6)

Yet, referring to present-day Jews without distinction as simply “the people of the covenant”—as if Christ had never established the New Covenant in His Blood—EG goes so far as to assert that “we cannot consider Judaism as a foreign religion” and that “we believe in the one God who acts in history, and with them we accept his revealed word.”⁴⁸ The idea that those who reject Christ and the entirety of His Gospel accept with us God’s revealed word would appear to require suspension of the principle of non-contradiction, which of course is a commonplace in postconciliar thinking.

Like so many other post-conciliar pronouncements in this area,⁴⁹ EG could hardly be reconciled with the Church’s traditional teaching on the imperative of Jewish conversion as seen in the ancient Good Friday intercession for the Jews, even in the revised form promulgated by Pope Benedict only a few years ago:

Let us pray also for the Jews/May our God and Lord enlighten their hearts, so that they may acknowledge Jesus Christ, savior of all men.... Almighty and everlasting God, who desires that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of truth, mercifully grant that, as the fullness of the Gentiles enters into Thy Church, all Israel may be saved. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Nor can EG be squared with the teaching of Pius XI, only 37 years before Vatican II, as seen in the aforementioned Act of Consecration to the Sacred Heart, which is still recited

by traditionalists today on the traditional Feast of Christ the King: “Turn Thine eyes of mercy toward the children of that race, once Thy chosen people. Of old, they called down upon themselves the Blood of the Savior, may it now descend upon them a laver of redemption and life.”

EG, in sum, rhetorically erased the necessity of the Church for the salvation of Jews and Gentiles alike, reducing her role to merely “proclaiming Jesus as Lord and Messiah” in case anyone is interested. Francis’s manifesto gave the impression of a formal doctrinal change that was simply impossible: a blatant contradiction between the traditional teaching of the Church on Jewish conversion and a novel view that has arisen only since Vatican II—whose documents nowhere actually teach that the Old Covenant was “never revoked.” Faced with the apparent contradiction, however, the neo-Catholic polemic does not hesitate simply to declare that the preconconciliar teaching was wrong. For example, ridiculing the traditionalist writer John Vennari for noting the contradiction, the neo-Catholic commentator Jeffrey Mirus threw Pius XI under the bus:

In fact Vennari proceeds to hang himself with his own rope. He contrasts the attitude of Di Noia and the contemporary Magisterium with that of Pope Pius XI who, in a prayer consecrating the world to the Sacred Heart, referred to the Jews as “once Thy chosen people.” He seems not to realize that this very phrase is theologically unfortunate.

At the very least, it is contrary to what St. Paul teaches, namely, that God’s election of the Jews is permanent.... Pope Pius XI taught no heresy, of course, though the wording of this prayer may have been a bit careless.⁵⁰

To the neo-Catholic mind it is inconceivable that any recent papal statement regarding the Jewish people might be “theologically unfortunate,” “contrary to what Saint Paul teaches,” or even “a bit careless.” Only the Popes before 1962 are viewed as susceptible to error, no matter how many of them taught the same thing in succession. But, as this work argued thirteen years ago,⁵¹ this is the essence of neo-Catholicism: a dogged defense of recent theological novelties invariably held to trump the teaching of any pre-conciliar Pope or line of Popes, even though none of these novelties has ever been imposed with the solemnity of Pius XI’s prayer for the conversion of the Jews to be recited by the entire universal Church. Tellingly, Mirus referred to a “contemporary Magisterium,” “the Magisterium of the Council,” and “the modern papacy” rather than simply the Magisterium, recognizing implicitly that a contradiction had indeed arisen which requires a temporal qualifier to signify a “before and after” state in Catholic doctrine. This time-bound approach to doctrine was completely unknown in all the centuries before Vatican II, when no one spoke of any such thing as a “contemporary Magisterium.” With Saint John Chrysostom the traditionalist declares: “Is it tradition? Ask no more!” With the “spirit of Vatican II” the neo-Catholic declares: “Is it contemporary? Ask no more!” Hence the neo in neo-Catholicism.

In sum, given Francis’s spate of amazing claims concerning the spiritual lot of atheists, Protestants and non-Christians, why would anyone in the world feel the least necessity to be baptized and join the Catholic Church? Why would anyone abandon what EG calls the “treasures” of his own religion, especially when those “treasures” are now said to be of benefit to Christians in living what are merely “their own beliefs” in Christ? That “interreligious dialogue” is at war with evangelism should be obvious from the utter failure of postconciliar Churchmen, Francis included, even to hint faintly that those outside the Church are in danger of damnation. The divine commission to make converts

has been transmogrified into a proclamation of “joy,” with the grave necessity of belonging to the Church for eternal salvation—a defined dogma of the Faith⁵²—dismissed as “fundamentalism.” With Francis, the capital error of the “para-Conciliar ideology” identified by Msgr. Pozzo in 2010 had received a bold new impetus: “mission is limited either to a mere witnessing to one’s own faith or to working in solidarity and fraternal love to bring about peace among peoples and social justice.” This means, in essence, that the divine commission is rejected *de facto*.

Scriptural Oddities

Still another element of Bergoglianism involves a persistent abuse of Sacred Scripture during the Pope’s daily meditations at Casa Santa Marta and elsewhere. For example:

- Christ only “pretends to be angry” with His disciples.⁵³
- Mary might have wanted to say “Lies! I was cheated!” when her Son was crucified.⁵⁴
- The Pharisees were “rigorists” concerning marriage, when in fact Our Lord rebuked them for allowing divorce.⁵⁵
- Matthew resisted his calling by Christ and clung to his money—“No, not me! No, this money is mine,” when in fact he followed Christ immediately.⁵⁶
- The Gospel is merely a “reflection” on the “gestures” of Christ and the Church in their works of corporal mercy and the Church “does not give lectures on love, on mercy... .”⁵⁷
- Saint Paul declared: “I boast only of my sins,” when in fact he boasted only of his infirmities, not his offenses against God.⁵⁸
- Christ’s miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes is “more than a multiplication, it is a sharing, animated by faith and prayer.”⁵⁹

The last-quoted example was profoundly suggestive of a skeptical Modernist reading of the Gospel. By way of comparison, even Pope Paul VI presented the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes as literally and simply a multiplication, not a “sharing” of food: “With exceptional, inexhaustible prodigality, the loaves then began increasing in number in the hands of the Son of God.”⁶⁰ Recognizing the seriousness of problem, the neo-Catholic commentariat provided another example of its function as the “firemen” of the postconciliar crisis, rushing to stamp out little fires in the hope that no one would notice that Rome is burning. The neo-Catholic apologist Jimmy Akin, for example, activated the neo-Catholic “what the Pope really meant” emergency protocol: “Here’s where I think he [Francis] phrased himself awkwardly.” Akin offered the following encouragement:

First of all, note that he *does* [Akin’s emphasis] call it a miracle involving multiplication. He refers to it as “the miracle of the Multiplication of the Loaves.” This tells us that he may not be denying the multiplication when he stresses sharing but is instead stressing a particular aspect of the event.⁶¹

Having determined that the Pope might not have been denying the literal miracle recounted in all four Gospels as a prodigy of divine power and a prefigurement of the Holy Eucharist, Akin offered a preposterous suggestion for reconciling Francis’s “sharing” of loaves and fishes with the Gospel’s miraculous superabundance of the same food,

precisely so that no sharing would be necessary:

I think the point he was trying to make is that God accomplished the miracle through an act of sharing, but it wasn't the crowd sharing the food it was hoarding. It was the Apostles *sharing the five loaves and two fish* [Akin's emphasis].

Did Akin seriously expect anyone to believe that Our Lord "inspired" the otherwise selfish Apostles to share the superabundant food He had created for the multitude, and that this is what the Pope "really" meant? Even a commentary by another Catholic Answers apologist, one Steve Ray, undermined Akin's desperate contrivance. Wrote Ray in 2008 on the heterodoxy of any sort of "sharing" interpretation:

For some theologians and priests, the real miracle was not the multiplication of loaves, but the act of caring. Jesus was able to convince selfish people to share: the real miracle....

Except for the Resurrection, the multiplication of loaves is the only miracle told in all four Gospels. It was considered important enough to include in all four. And here we come to the next big problem. If these events were so important, why do the writers not offer the slightest clue that sharing was the primary import of the event?

[62](#)

Here one saw for the umpteenth time how the neo-Catholic establishment is perfectly willing to defend the truths of our religion against shifty Modernist interpretations and outright denials, unless and until it becomes inexpedient to do so. When it was only nameless "theologians and priests" who were the target of Catholic Answers' criticisms, there was no hesitancy in affirming a right reading of the Gospel account. But when a Pope compromised the integrity of the Gospel, Catholic Answers, tightly integrated into and dependent upon the continued favor of the *Novus Ordo* establishment, attempted to deny the obvious lest it be denounced as "more Catholic than the Pope" if not "schismatic."

At any rate, Akin's effort was for naught. Francis, being nothing if not persistent in his themes, later made even clearer his view that the miracle of the loaves and fishes did not involve anything so crudely superstitious as an actual physical multiplication of the food:

[Jesus] takes a little bread and some fishes, he blesses them, breaks them and gives them to his disciples to share with the others. And this is the way the miracle proceeds. It is certainly not magic or idolatry. By means of these three actions [taking, blessing and giving], Jesus succeeds in turning a "throwaway" mindset into a mindset of communion, a mindset of community....

And we can imagine this now: we can imagine how they kept passing the loaves and fishes from hand to hand until the food reached those who were farthest away. Jesus managed to generate a current among his followers: they all went on sharing what was their own, turning it into a gift for the others; and that is how they all got to eat their fill. Incredibly, food was left over: they collected it in seven baskets.[63](#)

One thoroughly disgusted priest theologian, often a critic of traditionalist positions, was finally compelled to issue (albeit anonymously) a public protest:

Thus, the ensemble of what the Pope really preached ... about the loaves-and-fishes event leaves us to draw the inescapable conclusion that, along with so many modern historical-critical biblical scholars, he has taken on board the well-known, century-old rationalistic "demythologization" of this Gospel miracle. So we are left to wonder what other miracles of Jesus he may think require the same treatment.... 'Papa Bergoglio' has made one of his major priorities clear in the title of his Apostolic Exhortation, "The Joy of the Gospel". But how much real "joy" will we find in "the Gospel" (singular) if "the Gospels" (plural) on which the Good News of salvation is based turn out to be a historically unreliable blend of fact and legend?[64](#)

Insults for the Faithful ... but Not the Faithless

Another unique element of the Bergoglian papacy is a seemingly endless fusillade of insults directed overwhelmingly toward pious and tradition-minded Catholics. Perhaps the first scandal in this regard was his widely reported mockery of Catholics who had counted the Rosaries in their spiritual bouquets for him, belittling them before an audience of youngsters as people who “return to practices and to disciplines that I lived through—not you, because you are not old....Please don’t laugh.”⁶⁵

The papal ire, however, was especially elevated when it came to traditionalists. In the first year of his pontificate alone, Francis derided his straw man targets as “Pelagians,” “restorationists,” and “legalists,” who in their hearts do not believe in the Risen Lord but rather indulge in “triumphalism” and a “triumphalist” liturgy.⁶⁶ He made light of their supposed need for “exaggerated doctrinal ‘security’” (note the contemptuous quotation marks around the word security) and their wanting “everything clear and safe” so that they “always look for disciplinarian solutions.” Such undesirables, he declared, “stubbornly try to recover a past that no longer exists” and “have a static and inward-directed view of things” that reduces their faith to “an ideology among other ideologies.”⁶⁷

In general, the Pope’s primary targets *du jour* for public mockery were seemingly observant Catholics who, according Francis, are really frauds without true faith:

- They “masquerade as Christians” and are “slaves of superficiality,” slaves of rigidity”;⁶⁸
- are “mummies in a museum”;⁶⁹
- are “melancholic Christians” with “faces [that] have more in common with pickled peppers than the joy of having a beautiful life”;⁷⁰
- are “Christians [who] are closed, they are trapped, sad.. .”;⁷¹
- “cling to a nostalgia for structures and customs which are no longer life-giving in today’s world”;⁷²
- are guilty of the “self-absorbed promethean neopelagianism of those who ultimately trust only in their own powers and feel superior to others because they observe certain rules or remain intransigently faithful to a particular Catholic style from the past”;⁷³
- are “pastry shop Christians, luscious cakes, sweet dainties. Delectable, but not real Christians”;⁷⁴
- are guilty of “an ostentatious preoccupation for the liturgy, for doctrine and for the Church’s prestige, but without any concern that the Gospel have a real impact on God’s faithful people and the concrete needs of the present time”;⁷⁵
- “feel superior to others because they observe certain rules or remain intransigently faithful to a particular Catholic style from the past”;⁷⁶
- exhibit “a supposed soundness of doctrine or discipline” that “leads instead to a narcissistic and authoritarian elitism” whose sufferers are “not really concerned about Jesus Christ or others”;⁷⁷
- are “querulous and disillusioned pessimists, ‘sourpusses’”;⁷⁸
- are “hypocrites” who “disguise themselves ... as good people: they make themselves up like little holy cards, looking up at heaven as they pray, making sure they are seen—they believe they are more righteous than others.. .”;⁷⁹
- are “Christian hypocrites ... only interested in their formalities.... They close the door to the grace of God. We

have so many in the Church, we have many!”⁸⁰

Where exactly did Francis see these legions of unworthy pew Catholics he was denouncing almost daily? Fifty years after the “conciliar renewal” began, in Europe only a single-digit percentage of the population still attends Mass every Sunday outside of traditionalist communities. Yet the same Pope who had asked: “Who am I to judge?” respecting homosexuals in the hierarchy could not seem to restrain himself from judging as pious fakes ordinary Catholics who were at least practicing the Faith. On the other hand, for atheists like Scalfari, “gay persons,” the divorced and remarried—essentially the whole sinning world—there was only the presumption of good faith and talk of God’s infinite mercy.

By the end of 2013, Francis had publicly insulted practicing Catholics so many times that one commentator was able to compile “The Pope Francis Little Book of Insults,” updated throughout 2014 as Francis continued a barrage of insults against his own subjects.⁸¹ Conspicuously absent from this constant bombardment of inadequate Catholics, however, was the least reference to those who openly reject basic morality, doctrines, dogmas and disciplines of the Faith, deceiving themselves and leading others to hell. To be sure, hell and even damnation do make an appearance now and then in Francis’s freewheeling homilies and off-the-cuff remarks, but only to further a rhetorical attack on safe targets such as Mafiosi⁸² and arms dealers.⁸³ During one of his improvised public addresses, Francis even tossed off a rather problematical blanket excommunication of all Mafiosi, regardless of the specific nature of their crimes or the level of their involvement: “Those who in their life have gone along the evil ways, as in the case of the mafia, they are not with God, they are excommunicated.”⁸⁴ No such excommunication was hurled against those whose “evil ways” include heresy, fornication, sodomy, divorce and remarriage, abortion, or the political promotion of contraception, abortion, “reproductive rights,” “gay rights” and “gay marriage” while claiming to be Catholic.

“Transforming Everything”

Beyond the other rhetorical elements surveyed thus far, in 2013 Bergoglianism was revealing itself as yet another demand for massive innovation in the Church as the restless “spirit” of Vatican II continued the search for its incarnation in a new ecclesial “vision.”⁸⁵ Nowhere was this aspect of Bergoglianism more apparent than in *Evangelii Gaudium*, already cited here in other contexts. Appearing in November 2013, this sprawling 50,000-word affair, spanning 223 typeset pages, presented Francis’s “vision” for reform of the entire Church, straining the hortatory genre beyond all reasonable limits. In a papal document of this length one would naturally expect to find orthodox Catholic teaching, and that was there. Francis was, after all, the Pope, even if he didn’t like to call himself that and refused to add the traditional pontifical “P.P.” to his signature on this or any other document. Then again, in a document of this length one would also expect to find a good deal of what had made Francis so beloved by the worldwide mass media after only a few months in office: radical bombshells about how wrong the Church was and how much Francis must do to make it right, in all humility. That too was there—in great abundance.

EG breathes the cocksure, outmoded ecclesial progressivism of the 1970s, long since shown to be a total failure, as a bold new prescription for the Church. Francis did not

disappoint the media, whose reception of EG was ecstatic. Rave reviews in *The New York Times* (“Francis Sets Down Goals for an Inclusive Church”), *USA Today* (“Francis Calls for Big Changes in the Roman Catholic Church”), *The Los Angeles Times* (“Pope Francis Calls for Decentralized Church in Manifesto”) and *Fox News* (“How Pope Francis is reenergizing the Catholic church: New pontiff celebrated by liberal Catholics”) were typical of the eruption of liberal rapture over “Francis the Awesome.” The liberal media loved EG even more than Francis’s scattered utterances in other forums, plus the interviews by Scalfari and *America*.

The media loved EG for another reason: it left no wiggle room for the neo-Catholic excuse mongers. The indefatigable explainers of What The Pope Really Meant To Say, Or What He Would Have Said If He Had Said What He Meant Rather Than What He Said, Which Was Misinterpreted And Taken Out Of Context were powerless to explain away page after page of progressivist rhetoric of just the sort one would expect from a liberal Jesuit from the seventies. *The New York Times* noted that while during the first nine months of his pontificate Francis only “parceled out glimpses of his vision for remaking the church,” with EG he has “announced his agenda in his own unfiltered words, reaffirming the impression that he intends to jolt the church out of complacency and enlist all Catholics in his ambitious project of renewing the church [sic] by confronting the real needs of people in need... .”⁸⁶

EG simply could not be explained away. The only alternative available to neo-Catholic defenders of novelty was to praise it as if nothing were amiss. Hence the liberal media, the Modernists and their neo-Catholic enablers were all over the moon about EG. Michael Sean Winters of the *National Catholic Reporter* exulted: “At times, the text is lyrical, like an aria. At other times, it has all the accessibility of a recitative. Either way, it is a song.” Say it loud and there’s music playing. Say it soft and it’s almost like praying. Comments like these were a sure indication that EG had little to do with concrete Catholic teaching and very much to do with a new papal personality cult.

Francis sang his progressive song with voluptuous abandon: “I dream of a ‘missionary option’, that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today’s world rather than for her self-preservation.” Had not the Church already endured something along these lines called “the renewal of Vatican II”? Yet, Francis was now seriously proposing a massive reprise of this disaster. His own antithesis between the Church’s “self-preservation” and what he had in mind could not have been more telling.

In the same vein Francis declared: “certain customs not directly connected to the heart of the Gospel, even some which have deep historical roots, are no longer properly understood and appreciated. Some of these customs may be beautiful, but they no longer serve as means of communicating the Gospel. We should not be afraid to re-examine them.” After fifty years of a liturgical revolution that had razed the superstructure of Catholic worship, along with unprecedented “reforms” in virtually every other aspect of the practice of the Catholic faith, which customs were left to “re-examine”? Moreover, how could a beautiful custom, deeply rooted in Church history, not be a means of communicating the Gospel? Traditionalists posed the question, even if no one else would:

What on earth was Francis talking about?

As outlined in EG, Francis's "dream Church" involved nothing less than a deconstruction of the papacy in favor of a synodal model that would govern by the national bishops' conferences. Francis left no doubt of his intention:

[I] am conscious of the need to promote a sound "decentralization" Since I am called to put into practice what I ask of others, I too must think about a conversion of the papacy [to] ... help make the exercise of my ministry more faithful to the meaning which Jesus Christ wished to give it and to the present needs of evangelization.... We have made little progress in this regard. The papacy and the central structures of the universal Church also need to hear the call to pastoral conversion....

[A] juridical status of episcopal conferences which would see them as subjects of specific attributions, including genuine doctrinal authority, has not yet been sufficiently elaborated. Excessive centralization, rather than proving helpful, complicates the Church's life and her missionary outreach. (EG 16, 32)

One must be frank: Francis's opinion that the traditional exercise of the papacy is unfaithful to "the meaning which Jesus Christ wished to give it" was the height of progressivist hubris. The ecclesial crisis represents precisely a practical breakdown in the papacy as Christ established it: the rock on which the Church was founded, the principle of ecclesial unity, the authority that binds in heaven and on earth. The erosion of papal authority since the Council—except where it has been exercised brutally to enforce the regime of novelty—has meant a collapse of faith and discipline like no other in Church history. Incredibly, however, Francis now proposed to finalize the collapse by giving juridical reality to autocephalous national churches à la the schismatic Orthodox. EG specifically cited "the dialogue with our Orthodox brothers and sisters" through which "we Catholics have the opportunity to learn more about the meaning of episcopal collegiality and their experience of synodality." (EG 246)

If Francis were to succeed in implementing his dream, it would be the final triumph of the novelty of "collegiality." And if it were to happen, one can be certain that the neo-Catholic papalators would continue to perform their paradoxical role of undermining the papacy by "blindly and indiscriminately defend [ing] every decision of the Supreme Pontiff," to recall the words of Melchior Cano, theologian of the Council of Trent. They would defend even the Pope's decision to attack his own authority by a paradoxical exercise of that authority against the integrity of the Petrine office. Catholics of this mentality, to recall Cano's words, "are the very ones who do most to undermine the authority of the Holy See—they destroy instead of strengthening its foundations."⁸⁷

The sheer scope of Francis's ambition as seen in EG was staggering, suggesting an element of delusion. The document envisions a "reform" of literally everything in the Church and the world:

- "a new chapter of evangelization,"
- "new paths for the Church's journey,"
- "new narratives and paradigms,"
- "a new order of human relations,"
- "a new way of living together in fidelity to the Gospel,"
- "new contributions to theological reflection,"

- “new directions for humanity,”
- “new signs and new symbols, new flesh to embody and communicate the word,”
- “a new mindset which thinks in terms of community and the priority of the life of all over the appropriation of goods by a few,”
- “a new political and economic mindset,”
- “new forms of cultural synthesis,”
- “new processes in society,”
- “new horizons for thought” and “a new social situation....”

EG resonated with the platitudinous cant of the reformist avant-garde of forty years ago. Francis’s “dream” was precisely what—in EG—he criticized publicly in the thought of others: “empty rhetoric, objectives more ideal than real (EG 231)....” Apparently, no one was supposed to notice that during Cardinal Bergoglio’s tenure as Archbishop of Buenos Aires (1998–2013) there was no Catholic renewal but rather a drastic decline in every index of ecclesial well being, especially the number of priests and religious.⁸⁸ The Bergoglian legacy was in keeping with the overall decline of Latin American Catholicism, with millions of Catholics defecting to Protestant sects during a “renewal” that had replaced the bread of traditional Roman Catholicism, which had made Latin America Catholic in the first place, with the stones of a trendy “renewal” that resembled nothing so much as badly done Protestant worship. “I wasn’t being fed” has practically become the mantra of ex-Catholics turned Protestants—a development that did not appear to trouble Francis in the least.

Irony of ironies, for all its talk of a more open-minded conception of the Church’s mission, EG was a narrow-minded document, rooted in parochial, seventies-era Latin American prejudices against the Rome-centric Church. EG exhibited the blinkered perspective of a reformist mentality that refused to concede the indispensability of what the post-Vatican II “reforms” had so disastrously suppressed: liturgical tradition, a militant opposition to error as a sign of contradiction in the world, the Church’s monarchical constitution as a reflection of the kingship of her divine Founder, and her very existence as a fortress against the Adversary. We have seen (cf. Chapter 11) how the dismantling of the “fortress Church, standing in opposition to the modern world and rejecting all new ideas” pertains to the essence of the neo-Catholic idea. EG appeared to propose demolishing what little was left of the bastions. Instead of leaving his prejudices behind in Buenos Aires along with his Pinocchio Mass⁸⁹ and his lighting of the Menorah,⁹⁰ the very symbol of the destroyed Temple in Jerusalem, Francis seemed determined to impose his outmoded parochial progressivism upon the entire Church, come what may.

One might be tempted to laugh at the vacuous grandiosity of it all, and it was far from clear how EG could be categorized as part of the papal magisterium at all. As Cardinal Raymond Burke, then head of the Apostolic Signatura, rather diplomatically put it, EG is “a distinct kind of document, and I haven’t quite figured out in my mind exactly how to describe it. But I would not think that it was intended to be part of papal magisterium. At least that’s my impression of it.” But EG could not simply be ignored and put on the shelf, along with all the other dubious papal *obiter dicta* of the past fifty years, for it enunciated a full-blown ideological program—Bergoglianism in full swing—unlike anything the

Church had yet seen from the papacy, even in the endlessly turbulent postconciliar epoch. It represented a quantum leap of the restless spirit of “reform” the Council had unleashed, a final synthesis between the Church and the “modern world” which, if taken seriously, would require another ecclesial revolution that would make Vatican II seem a non-event in comparison.

And that seemed to be precisely Francis’s intent. CNNs story on EG put it most succinctly: “Pope Francis: No more business as usual... .”⁹¹ The article reported that EG called “for big changes in the Roman Catholic Church—including at the very top—saying the church needs to rethink rules and customs that are no longer widely understood or effective for evangelizing.” That is exactly what EG advocated, and the forthcoming 2014 Synod would reveal that intention with explosive effect.

The Franciscan Friars Affair

Meanwhile, during the summer of 2013, Francis had revealed the practical element of the Bergoglian program: the iron fist inside the rhetorical glove. In July the Pope had taken action in keeping with his programmatic condemnation of “restorationists” by placing the Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate (FFI) into the ecclesiastical equivalent of a receivership.

Praised by both John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI as a shining example of a conservative implementation of the Council according to the elusive “hermeneutic of continuity,” the FFI came under persecution after it exercised its right freely to choose between the 1962 Missal or the Missal of Paul VI, as recognized and universally proclaimed by *Summorum Pontificum*. By 2013 the order had become bi-ritual, but with a growing preference for the traditional Mass. Not surprisingly, the FFI were flourishing in the same manner as all the traditionally oriented orders in what was otherwise the wasteland of the postconciliar Western church, which had fewer priests in 2013 than it had in 1970.⁹² Vocations were plentiful and the FFI were able to reopen and restore to vibrant centers of Catholic spirituality two monasteries in Italy, at Sassoferrato and Colfano, which had been abandoned by the dwindling mainstream Franciscan order, decimated by the conciliar “renewal.” By 2013 the FFI had established more than 30 traditional Mass centers in Italy alone, with more in other countries; and its numbers had swelled to 200 priests, 360 brothers and the 400 nuns of the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate, making the FFI the second largest traditional order recognized by Rome, after the Fraternity of Saint Peter. The FFI seminary, filled to capacity, was providing a traditional priestly formation, including training in the traditional Latin Mass precisely as contemplated by Pope Benedict’s 2007 Instruction on the Implementation of *Summorum*.

Clearly, something had to be done to put a stop to these “restorationists,” even if they were bi-ritual. On July 11, 2013, by order of Pope Francis, the FFI were placed under the supervision of an “Apostolic Commissioner,” Father Fidenzio Volpi, appointed by João Braz Cardinal de Aviz, Prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. The decree of appointment suspended the FFI’s general chapter and placed Volpi at the head of all communities of the FFI, removing its head and co-founder, Father Stefano Manelli, from all authority. As one neo-Catholic commentator conceded, the process leading to the decree had begun with a complaint by a mere five

dissident friars who claimed they had “found it impossible to dialogue with Father Manelli about the governance of their tripartite community.”⁹³ In other words, the five dissidents sought to overthrow their superior because they could not alter the order’s increasingly traditional direction.

A complaint from a few dissidents in a religious order is something the Vatican has routinely ignored when the grievance relates to the heterodoxy or heteropraxis now endemic to the dying mainstream orders. But here the complaint concerned an alarming return to “pre-Vatican II” Catholicism, requiring immediate corrective action. The result was an “apostolic visitation” toward the end of Pope Benedict’s reign (not personally ordered by the Pope), but with no appointment of an apostolic commissioner. On the contrary, the Ecclesia Dei Commission had affirmed the right of the FFI’s superiors to introduce the traditional Mass, and no adverse action had been taken under Benedict.⁹⁴

Under Francis, however, the resurgent regime of novelty was retrenching furiously. It began in earnest with the targeting of the FFI by measures reminiscent of a totalitarian political reeducation program. In order to provide justification for the appointment of Volpi and the removal of Father Manelli, the Congregation relied on an ambiguously worded poll of a sampling of the friars regarding unspecified “problems” in the order. But the poll results failed to demonstrate that a majority had ever requested a Vatican takeover. Rather, if anything, a majority was opposed to any externally imposed solution of the mysterious “problems.” After the poll was picked apart by traditionalist critics,⁹⁵ Father Alfonso Bruno, the leader of the five dissident friars who was installed as acting Superior General by Volpi, scoffed that “[i]t is of no importance, for the purpose of this evaluation [regarding the need for an Apostolic Commissioner was necessary] what the proportion among the various responses was.”⁹⁶ In other words, the takeover would have happened no matter what the majority of the friars wanted. The poll was a fig leaf concealing a naked abuse of power against a religious order whose moral and doctrinal integrity were beyond question.

And an abuse of power it was. Father Bruno revealed the real reason behind the takeover—as if anyone with any knowledge of the crisis in the Church didn’t know: “It was likewise ascertained that in their conception of the ancient Rite certain authorities of the Institute have assumed a position I would define as ‘crypto-Lefebvrian,’ that this type of celebration was in itself superior, and therefore preferable, to that in the vernacular language: which manifests a conflict with the Magisterium of the Church in liturgical matters.”⁹⁷ In other words, the belief that the traditional Mass was superior to the New Mass was now deemed more intolerable than the rampant heterodoxy, heteropraxis and sexual scandal that had been corrupting the seminaries and decimating the mainstream orders for decades. But then it should have come as no surprise that the traditional Mass was the bull’s eye on the target at which the takeover was aimed. And it was Pope Francis who had personally directed the arrow:

In addition to the above, the Holy Father Francis has directed that every religious of the congregation of the Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate is required to celebrate the liturgy according to the ordinary rite and that, if the occasion should arise, the use of the extraordinary form (*Vetus Ordo*) must be explicitly authorized by the competent authorities, for every religious and/or community that makes the request.

In commanding the FFI to celebrate the New Mass exclusively and forbidding the

celebration of the traditional Mass, Francis set aside what Pope Benedict had established in *Summorum* as the universal law of the Church. In an article entitled “For the First Time, Francis Contradicts Benedict,” Sandro Magister—no traditionalist—was barely able to conceal his outrage:

The decree installs an apostolic commissioner ... at the head of all the communities of the congregation of the Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate. And this in itself is cause for astonishment. Because the Franciscans of the Immaculate are one of the most flourishing religious communities born in the Catholic Church in recent decades, with male and female branches, with many young vocations, spread over several continents and with a mission in Argentina as well.

They want to be faithful to tradition, in full respect for the magisterium of the Church. So much so that in their communities they celebrate Masses both in the ancient rite and in the modern rite.... But precisely this was contested by a core group of internal dissidents, who appealed to the Vatican authorities complaining of the excessive propensity of their congregation to celebrate the Mass in the ancient rite....

[W]hat is decreed contradicts the dispositions given by Benedict XVI.... And now what will happen, not only among them, but in the whole Church? ... The fact is that one pillar of the pontificate of Joseph Ratzinger has been cracked. By an exception that many fear—or hope—will soon become the rule.⁹⁸

Predictably enough, neo-Catholic commentators rushed to defend the Pope’s suppression of the Latin Mass in the FFI communities. The neo-Catholic flagship organization *Catholic Answers*, for example, mocked traditionalist concerns about “Pope Francis’s presumed dark intentions toward the extraordinary form liturgy,” and the author of the piece warned in schoolmarmish tones of “worrisome tendencies in the [traditionalist movement]” which Francis was surely addressing here. Apparently, *Catholic Answers* did not perceive any “worrisome tendencies” in the free-falling *Novus Ordo* establishment, racked by scandal, spreading apostasy, and a near-total loss of vocations throughout the West.⁹⁹ As had happened so often before, the neo-Catholic cover-up would be exposed by subsequent events. In a few months Pope Francis would order further measures that effectively destroyed the Franciscan Friars as an order before Father Volpi ultimately died of stroke in 2015.

Spreading Alarm

Confronted with the deluge of appalling papal words and gestures, the neo-Catholic excuse factory labored as never before to explain what the Pope “really meant”; to blame the press accounts on bad translations or quotations out of context; and, of course, to condemn traditionalists for remarking the obvious. One of the more desperate attempts at damage control, capturing the desperation of all the others, was a video entitled “The Most Misunderstood Pope in History.”¹⁰⁰ Typical of this cadre of defenders of the indefensible is the neo-Catholic blogger Mark Shea, whose writings in this area can only be described as fulminations. Critics of Francis, he declared in an interview with the ultra-liberal *America*, are “utterly hysterical about him, displaying unhinged panic that in some cases leans toward sedevacantism because they just cannot cope with him.”¹⁰¹ Shea would later adopt the theme that traditionalist critics of “the Francis effect” are “hysterical reactionaries” gripped by “reactionary panic”—the language of someone defending precisely a revolution against its opponents.¹⁰² And indeed the media were by then routinely hailing “the Francis revolution.”¹⁰³

Confounding all such efforts, however, Francis later authorized every one of his

explosive interviews, conversations and press conferences, including those with Scalfari, to be published in book form, under his signature, by the Vatican publishing house.¹⁰⁴ Thus did “there is no Catholic God” and all the other rhetorical outrages become part of the “Bergoglian magisterium,” which is not to be confused with the Magisterium of the Catholic Church.

With the rise of Bergoglianism, however, fracture lines began to appear for the first time in the neo-Catholic establishment’s decades-long defense of the indefensible. Francis had simply gone too far along the trajectory of what Francis had described as the Council’s supposed “dynamic of reading the Gospel, actualizing its message for today.”¹⁰⁵ By late 2013 even prominent members of the Catholic “mainstream” had had enough and were speaking out. A sampling of these protests demonstrates that the problem with Francis does not exist in the fevered imaginations of “radical traditionalists,” as the neo-Catholic polemic would have it, but rather was coming to be seen by Catholics outside the traditionalist movement as an objective threat to the Church’s credibility and mission. Consider the following: no less than Germain Grisez (cited here in [Chapter 8](#)), a world-renowned moral theologian who is hardly a traditionalist, gave *Inside the Vatican* permission to publish his blistering objection to the Pope’s rhetoric:

I’m afraid that Pope Francis has failed to consider carefully enough the likely consequences of letting loose with his thoughts in a world that will applaud being provided with such help in subverting the truth it is his job to guard as inviolable and proclaim with fidelity. For a long time he has been thinking these things. Now he can say them to the whole world—and he is self-indulgent enough to take advantage of the opportunity with as little care as he might unburden himself with friends after a good dinner and plenty of wine.¹⁰⁶

The equally prominent moral theologian Janet Smith, a neo-Catholic *doyenne* whose writings are cited repeatedly here,¹⁰⁷ produced an article for the neo-conservative journal *First Things* under the bitter title “Are We Obsessed?” Smith had this to say about Francis’s musings, couched in ironic observations about her friends:

In fact, I don’t think the Holy Father was speaking about my friends, when he states: “We cannot insist only on issues related to abortion, gay marriage and the use of contraceptive methods.... [W]hen we speak about these issues, we have to talk about them in a context.” My friends definitely talk about these issues “in context,” in fact in many contexts.... [T]heir reason for boldly and sacrificially and ardently addressing these issues is precisely because they love Christ and the Church and want others to do so.

[Francis] also said: “The church’s pastoral ministry cannot be obsessed with the transmission of a disjointed multitude of doctrines to be imposed insistently.” ... Again, I don’t think this statement refers to my friends since there is nothing “disjointed” about the way they present doctrines nor do they “impose” them “insistently.” They make the call to conscience that John Paul II makes....

I also began to realize that the Holy Father was not speaking of the same context in which I live and labor.... He seems to think that many people are hesitant to embrace Christianity or Catholicism because they believe that they are beyond redemption and that the Church is a judgmental, intolerant institution that won’t accept them.... I think most people think they are not sinners and not in need of redemption. They do not think having abortions, using contraception, using pornography, fornicating, masturbating, or engaging in homosexual acts are immoral actions. They think what they are doing is fine and they are fine just as they are.

Pope Francis finds the homily a proper place to teach moral truths but thinks priests have gotten the order wrong. Where is he hearing these homilies that hammer on moral truths at the expense of preaching the gospel? ... [V]irtually none of us have heard it done! We have heard homilies on abortion—perhaps at most once a year—while homilies on contraception and homosexual acts are so rare as to cause astonishment and generally earn the pastor an influx of hate mail.¹⁰⁸

George Neumayr of *The American Spectator* produced a series of increasingly critical commentaries on the Pope's statements:

- "Francis's papacy may not so much move the Church into the future as back to the recent past, circa 1970...
."109
- "The Pope's scolding of 'small-minded' restorationists for 'pastoral' incompetence is laughable in light of his own order's disintegration.... Oh-so-pastoral Jesuits, heal thyself."[110](#)
- "Indeed, the need for a St. Paul to correct him [Francis] grows with each passing week as his pontificate emboldens the Church's enemies and undercuts her friends and most loyal members."[111](#)
- "No, this is not an Onion parody. This is the Catholic Church, circa 2013, under the hope-and-change pontificate of Francis—the one Jon Stewart, Chris Rock, and Jane Fonda have been waiting for.... Anyone who is familiar with the cocky clichés of lightweight, dilettantish modern Jesuits will understand the import of this interview and hear all of its dog whistles... ."112
- "Pope Francis let it be known that he is eager to run the ball into the end zone for team spirit-of-Vatican II, and now that small-minded, rule-bound restorationists like John Paul II and Benedict XVI aren't around anymore to tackle him he has an open-field run... ."113
- "Were St. Ignatius of Loyola alive today, he wouldn't recognize Francis as a Jesuit. He might not even recognize him as a Catholic."[114](#)

Father Michael P. Orsi of the Ave Maria School of Law, writing in *The Washington Times*, issued this scathing review of the effects the Pope's utterances were having on the Church's witness concerning social issues:

Pope Francis assured his interlocutor that he is a loyal son of the church and accepts the church's teachings on the aforementioned issues. This addendum, however, is not good enough to mitigate the damage his words have caused.... His remarks have effectively given a sword to those who want to stifle them.

Most affected are those who have borne the heat of the day in the culture-war protests against abortion and same-sex marriages. The once-sure moral support that these groups enjoyed under past popes has been undermined....

[T]he pope's words provide a sword for those critical of the church's moral teachings on life and of the purpose of human sexuality.... [T]he pope's musings have provided cover for Catholic politicians who support liberal abortion laws and legalization of same-sex marriage....

The pope's "big tent" approach for Catholicism is bound to diminish the church's presence as a moral force in society.... If there is only a distant and muffled voice on the life and human sexuality issues, how will people know that they are transgressing God's laws?.... This is neither pastoral, nor merciful. As Jesus said, only "The truth will set you free."[115](#)

A piece by John-Henry Westin of Lifesitenews.com took Francis to task under the title "Here's how Pope John Paul II handled the charge of 'obsession' with abortion." Westin quotes John Paul II's reply precisely to the charge (related by Vito Messori) that his "repeated condemnation of any legalization of abortion has even been defined as 'obsessive' by certain cultural and political factions...." Said the late Pope:

It is ... very difficult to speak of obsession in a matter such as this, where we are dealing with a fundamental imperative of every good conscience—the defense of the right to life of an innocent and defenseless human being....

[I] categorically reject every accusation or suspicion concerning the Pope's [my] alleged "obsession" with this issue. We are dealing with a problem of tremendous importance, in which all of us must show the utmost responsibility and vigilance. We cannot afford forms of permissiveness that would lead directly to the trampling of human rights, and also to the complete destruction of values which are fundamental not only for the lives of

A Historic Open Letter

Perhaps most telling of all, however, was an “Open Letter to Pope Francis,” published in September by Lucrecia Rego de Planas, mother of nine and a prominent non-traditionalist laywoman and former editor of one the most popular Spanish language Catholic web portals. She had met Cardinal Bergoglio several times during Catholic events in Central and South America. Her public remonstrance with Francis bears substantial quotation for the historical record:

[I] must tell you that I have also suffered (and suffer), from many of your words, because you have said things that have felt like low blows to my sincere intentions of loyalty to the Pope and the Magisterium....

My serious problem is that I have devoted much of my life to the study of Sacred Scripture, Tradition, and the Magisterium, with the aim of having firm reasons to defend my faith. And now, many of these solid foundations turn out to be contrary to what my beloved Pope says and does....

Let me explain with some examples:

I cannot applaud a Pope who does not kneel in front the Tabernacle or during the Consecration as the rite of the Mass requires, but I cannot criticize him, because he is the Pope! ...

I cannot feel happy that you have eliminated the use of the paten and kneel - ers for communicants; and delight even less that you never go down to give Communion to the faithful, do not call yourself “the Pope,” but only “Bishop of Rome,” do not use the fisherman’s ring. But I cannot complain, because you are the Pope!

I cannot feel proud that you have washed the feet of a Muslim woman on Holy Thursday, since it is a violation of liturgical norms, but I cannot make a peep, because you are the Pope, whom I respect and I must be faithful!

I was terribly hurt when you punished the Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate because they were celebrating the Mass in the ancient rite, since they had the express permission of your predecessor in *Summorum Pontificum*. And to punish them, means going against the teachings of previous popes. But to whom do I complain about my pain. You are the Pope!

I did not know what to think or say when you publicly mocked a group that had sent you a spiritual bouquet [of rosaries], calling them “those who count the prayers”; spiritual bouquets being a beautiful tradition in the Church, what should I think if my Pope doesn’t like and mocks those who offer them?

I have a thousand “pro-life” friends who, being excellent Catholics, you upset a few days ago by calling them “obsessed and obsessive.” What should I do? Comfort them, falsely softening your words or hurt them even more, repeating what you said to them, for the sake of wanting to be faithful to the Pope and his teachings?....

A couple of weeks ago you said that “what we are experiencing is one of the best moments of the Church.” How can you say that as Pope when we all know that there are millions of young Catholics living in concubinage and so many other millions of Catholic marriages using contraceptives; when divorce is “our daily bread” and millions of Catholic mothers kill their unborn children with the help of Catholic doctors; when there are millions of Catholic businessmen who are not guided by the social doctrine of the Church, but by ambition and greed; when there are thousands of priests who commit liturgical abuses; when there are hundreds of millions of Catholics who have never had an encounter with Christ and do not know the most essential doctrine?...

When you said it, beloved Pope, I panicked, wondering if you meant it. If the captain does not see the iceberg before us, it is very likely we will crash into it....

Whenever you talk about the “shepherds smelling of their sheep,” I think of all those priests who allowed themselves to be contaminated by the things of the world and have lost their priestly aroma to acquire a certain smell of rottenness. I do not want shepherds who smell like sheep, but sheep that do not smell of dung, because their pastor takes care of them and always keeps them clean.

A few days ago you talked about the vocation of Matthew with these words: “I’m impressed by the gesture of Matthew. He clings to his money, as if saying: ‘No, not me! No, this money is mine’.” I could not help but

compare your words with the Gospel (Mt 9, 9), against which the same Matthew says of his vocation: “And Jesus went forth from thence, he saw a man who was sitting at the tax office, whose name was Matthew, and said unto him, Follow me. And he rose and followed him.”

I cannot see where it is grasping for money (nor see it in the painting of Caravaggio). I see two different accounts and wrong exegesis. Who should I believe, the Gospel or the Pope, if I want (as I really want) to be faithful to the Gospel and the Pope?

When you spoke of the woman who lives in concubinage after a divorce and an abortion, you said that “she now lives in peace.” I wonder: Can a woman who has voluntarily abandoned the grace of God live in peace? Previous Popes, from St. Peter to Benedict XVI, said that it is not possible to find peace apart from God, but Pope Francis has affirmed it. What should I support, the Magisterium of the ages, or this novelty? Must I affirm, starting today, in order to be faithful to the Pope, that peace can be found in a life of sin?...

I met Cardinal Bergoglio at an almost familial level and I am a faithful witness that you are an intelligent, likeable, spontaneous, very witty, and very clever man. But I do not like how the press is publishing all your sayings and quips, because you are not a parish priest; you are no longer the Archbishop of Buenos Aires; you are now the Pope! And every word you say as Pope, acquires ordinary magisterial value for many who read and hear you.

...With the examples I have given you (although there are many others) I believe I have made clear the pain of uncertainty and perplexity that I am living.^{[117](#)}

As these examples indicate, within less than a year of Francis’s election, Catholic opposition to his crowd-pleasing revolutionary rhetoric could no longer be dismissed as the grumbling of “radical traditionalists.” The loyal opposition would grow with each passing month.

By the end of 2013, as the alarm of concerned Catholics increased, Francis was receiving a degree of adulation from the world never before seen in the annals of the papacy. He had become literally the first Pope in Church history to be universally lauded by “the rulers of the world of this darkness ... the spirits of wickedness in the high places.” (Eph. 6:12) Even Barack Obama, declared that he was “hugely impressed” by Francis.^{[118](#)} The new Pope’s crowd-pleasing “revolutionary” utterances and gestures had earned him unprecedented hosannas for a Pope: named “Person of the Year” by the world’s most prominent left-liberal news magazine (*Time*) and the world’s leading “gay” magazine (*The Advocate*) and featured on the cover of the world’s leading “rock culture” magazine (*Rolling Stone*)^{[119](#)} and by the rock video outlet MTV. Even the trashy libertine magazine *Esquire* joined the adulation by naming Francis “Best Dressed Man of the Year,” using the occasion to mock the red shoes, “opulent jewelry and fur-lined caps” of the overdressed Pope Benedict.^{[120](#)} There was even a laudatory article by Barack Obama in *Time*, hailing Francis for his “message of inclusion, especially for the poor, the marginalized and the outcast.”^{[121](#)} All of these tributes and innumerable others, which Christ Himself warned his disciples are the world’s kiss of death,^{[122](#)} had come at the expense of Francis’s predecessor and indeed at the expense of the papal office itself. No wonder the world now lauded Francis as nothing less than “the Superman Pope.”^{[123](#)}

Rejecting the “Superman” label, Francis protested during one of his innumerable press interviews that “the pope is a man who laughs, cries, sleeps well and has friends like everyone else—a normal person.”^{[124](#)} He evidently failed to perceive that the world’s praise had nothing to do with his person but rather with the crowd-pleasing words and gestures by which he had distinguished himself from all his predecessors—at their

expense. As one approving journalist observed: “It is precisely because Pope Francis has acted so different from his predecessors that the world has fashioned this superhuman image of him.”¹²⁵ With Francis, it seemed, the world was finally getting what it wanted: a Pope who would cut the Catholic Church down to size once and for all, ending its role (already radically diminished) as the last remaining obstacle to the conquering march of the Zeitgeist.

So matters stood at the end of 2013. But an announcement in October of that year signaled that the coming year would see another quantum leap in the advance of the regime of novelty. On October 8, Pope Francis convoked “the Third Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops,” thus reactivating another of the novelties introduced by Paul VI: the episcopal Synod in Rome at which invited prelates would deliberate on matters of faith and morals much in the manner of Protestant assemblies. The stated topic did not bode well: “The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization.” The very title was replete with implications of how wrong things had gone in the Church since the Council: the Church was now reduced to evangelizing her own members, who had been steadily defecting from the faith throughout the pontificate of John Paul II, especially in the area of marriage and procreation, producing what John Paul himself had lamented as “silent apostasy.”

Nor could one take any comfort in the phrase “pastoral challenges,” which implied what the Synod would quickly reveal itself to be: an exercise in debating how Catholic moral teaching could be affirmed in principle but abandoned in practice by means of “pastoral” exceptions to meet the “challenges” of the “modern world”—a potentially vast addition of non-doctrinal “reform” to The Great Façade. That fear received early confirmation when, in November, the General Secretariat of the Synod sent to all the world’s bishops a Preparatory Document containing “8 groups of questions on marriage and family” which implied that the Church’s “positions” on divorce and remarriage, cohabitation, “gay marriage” and contraception were now fair matter for debate—precisely in the manner of Protestant assemblies such as the Anglicans’ annual Lambeth Conference. And such a debate would indeed occur, with increasingly alarming results that had even mainstream commentators raising the prospect of schism.

With the Synod of Francis the post-conciliar revolution, like a hurricane passing over warm water, would gain new energy and strength. But the Synod’s proceedings and outcome would tax the excuse-making capacity of even the most determined neo-Catholic apologists for the regime of novelty, while even eminent cardinals and bishops would finally stand up and say: Enough.

1. “The Horror!: A Buenos Aires Journalist Describes Bergoglio,” March 13, 2014, @ roratecaeli.blogspot.com.

2. For the author’s own entirely optimistic, and indeed laudatory, view of the new Pope on the day of his election, see “Pope Francis Discussion,” www.youtube.com/watch?v=wGkfAzcQ2iQ. See also @ fatima.org “Pope Francis: the Marian Dimension” (“That the new Pope’s first devotional act was to visit the world’s oldest Marian church in order to venerate a Marian icon of such august provenance evidences a Marian piety of the most traditional sort.”) and “Speaking Truth to Power” (praising various statements by Francis when he was the Archbishop of Buenos Aires).

3. Cf. Chapter 1 and note 7.

4. David Wiley, BBC News Europe, March 16, 2013. Accessed at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-21813874>.

5. Harriet Alexander, “Pope washes feet of young Muslim woman prisoner in unprecedented twist on Maundy Thursday,” *The Telegraph*, March 28, 2013, @ www.telegraph.co.uk.

6. Cf. Chapter 7.

7. See Michael Voris, “Fighting Over Feet,” March 30, 2012, @ www.youtube.com.

8. Antonio Socci “Pope Bergoglio’s ‘Politically Correct’ Peace,” *Libero*, September 14, 2014; translation at rorate-caeli.blogspot.com/.

9. Press conference of Pope Francis During the Return Flight, Sunday, 28 July 2013, @ vatican.va.

10. Sandro Magister, “The Prelate of the Gay Lobby,” July 18, 2013, chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it.

11. Jimmy Akin, “Pope Francis and the Vatican ‘gay lobby’—10 things to know and share,” *National Catholic Register* blog, June 12, 2013.

12. John Hooper, “Pope Francis’s judgment in question after priest named in gay sex scandal,” theguardian.com, July 21, 2013.

13. Rachel Donadio, “On Gay Priests, Pope Francis Asks, ‘Who am I to judge?’,” July 29, 2013, @ nytimes.com.

14. Cf. *Familiaris Consortio* (1981), n. 84: “the Church reaffirms her practice, *which is based upon Sacred Scripture*, of not admitting to Eucharistic Communion divorced persons who have remarried. They are unable to be admitted thereto from the fact that their state and condition of life *objectively contradict that union of love between Christ and the Church which is signified and effected by the Eucharist*. Besides this, there is another special pastoral reason: *if these people were admitted to the Eucharist, the faithful would be led into error and confusion* regarding the Church’s teaching about the indissolubility of marriage.”

15. Damon Linker, “Is Pope Francis Leading the Church into Schism?,” *The Week*, April 29, 2014, @ theweek.com.

16. Antonio Spadaro, S.J. “A Big Heart Open to God,” *America*, September 30, 2013, @ america-magazine.org.

17. The author’s English translation of the piece appears @ remnantnewspaper.com. Paragraph breaks added.

18. John-Henry Westen, “Pope Francis thanks two conservative Catholics for their criticisms: report,” November 19, 2013, @ lifesitenews.com.

19. September 11, 2013, “Pope Francis writes to *La Repubblica*: ‘An open dialogue with non-believers,’” @ repubblica.it.

20. Lecture at the 10th Workshop for Bishops, February 1991, Dallas, Texas. Paragraph breaks added.

21. See, e.g., [Chapter 8](#).

22. “The Pope: how the Church will change,” *La Repubblica*, October 1 2013, @ repubblica.it. Paragraph breaks added.

23. “Pope Francis Says Atheists Who Do Good Are Redeemed, Not Just Catholics,” huffingtonpost.com, May 22, 2013 (with video of homily in Italian). It will not do to say that Francis was referring only to the *objective* redemption of all humanity, for he declares that an atheist need only “do good” in order to be redeemed *subjectively* and without the act of faith.

24. John Allen, “Francis and the perils of an improv Pope,” ncronline.org, June 13, 2013.

25. “Pope to Ark Community: we must focus on unity not divisions,” radiovaticana.va, October 28, 2014.

26. Cf. Chapter 3 and note 13.

27. See, e.g., [Chapter 13](#) and its analysis of the *obiter dicta* in the commentary regarding other religions in *Dominus Iesus*, none of which are proposed as binding Catholic doctrine.

28. *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 15. Hereafter *EG*.

29. Jimmy Akin, “Pope Francis on ‘Proselytism,’” October 21, 2012, @ catholic.com.

30. *EG* 35, nn. 35, 40, 49.

31. *EG*, n. 125.

32. Apostles’ Creed; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, I.II.2, Art. 7.

- [33.](#) Cf. Chapter 3.
- [34.](#) *EG*, nn. 250, 251.
- [35.](#) *EG*, n. 254.
- [36.](#) *EG*, nn. 252, 253.
- [37.](#) From Leo XIII's Act of Consecration of the World to the Sacred Heart, promulgated along with the encyclical *Annum Sacrum* (1899); cf. Chapter 13.
- [38.](#) *EG*, n. 253.a
- [39.](#) Cf. Hilaire Belloc, *The Great Heresies* (1938), Chapter 4: "The Great and Enduring Heresy of Mohammed."
- [40.](#) "APPEAL OF THE HOLY FATHER: In these days the international community is following with deep concern the difficult situation of Christians in Pakistan who are often victims of violence or discrimination. Today I express my spiritual closeness to Ms Asia Bibi and her relatives in particular, *while I ask that full freedom be restored to her as soon as possible*. I also pray for all those in similar situations, so that their human dignity and fundamental rights may be fully respected." General Audience, November 17, 2010, @ w2.vatican.va (with video).
- [41.](#) See, e.g., "Saudi court gives death penalty to man who renounced his Muslim faith," Reuters, February 24, 2015, @ reuters.com.
- [42.](#) See, e.g., "Kuwait: New Death Penalty for Blasphemy," Gatestone Institute Report, June 14, 2012, @ gatestoneinstitute.org.
- [43.](#) Fr. John Zuhlsdorf, "What Did the Imam Really Say?", July 20, 2014, @ wdtpers.com.
- [44.](#) June 9, 2014, @ eyeofthetiber.org.
- [45.](#) Address at University of Regensburg, September 12, 2006 @ w2.vatican.va (quoting the Byzantine emperor Manuel II Paleologus in his dialogue with a Persian follower of Mohammed).
- [46.](#) *EG*, nn. 247, 249.
- [47.](#) *EG*, n. 249.
- [48.](#) *EG*, n. 247.
- [49.](#) Cf. chapters 8 and 13.
- [50.](#) Jeffrey Mirus "Joseph Augustine Di Noia: A Faulty Traditionalist Condemnation," July 9, 2012, @ www.catholicculture.org.
- [51.](#) Cf. Chapter 11.
- [52.](#) Cf. Chapter 13.
- [53.](#) Homily of November 29, 2013, @ www.news.va/en.
- [54.](#) www.youtube.com/watch?v=PkzlvQ9IogQ.
- [55.](#) Homily of February 28, 2014, @ rorate-caeli.blogspot.com.
- [56.](#) Interview with *America* magazine @ americamagazine.org/pope-interview.
- [57.](#) General Audience of October 9, 2014, @ en.radiovaticana.va.
- [58.](#) Homily of April 9, 2014 (in Italian with video) @ www.news.va/it.
- [59.](#) Angelus Address of June 2, 2013, @ w2.vatican.va (in Italian with video).
- [60.](#) "*Con eccezionale, inesauroibile larghezza i pani crescevano di numero nelle mani del Figlio di Dio.*" Homily of March 16, 1969, @ w2.vatican.va.
- [61.](#) Jimmy Akin, "Pope Francis on the 'parable' of the loaves and fishes: 11 things to know and share," January 1, 2014, @ ncregister.com.
- [62.](#) Steve Ray, "Loaves and Fishes: Fashionable Priests and the 'Miracle of Sharing'" in *This Rock*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Jan. 2008) accessible @ catholic.com.

[63.](#) Homily of July 9, 2015, in Ecuador @ w2.vatican.va (Spanish text). Translation in “Does Pope Francis Really Believe in the Gospels?” @ remnantnewspaper.com.

[64.](#) Father X, “Does Pope Francis Really Believe in the Gospels?” August 18, 2015, @ remnantnewspaper.com.

[65.](#) “Pope on Traditional groups: ‘Pelagian current. It’s like turning back 60 years! They count rosaries.... Please, don’t laugh,’” June 10, 2013, @ rorate-caeli.blogspot.com.

[66.](#) “Pope Francis: Triumphalist Christians ‘do not believe in the Risen Lord,’” September 10, 2013, @ rorate-caeli.blogspot.co.

[67.](#) Cf. Interview in *America* magazine, loc. cit; and “Pope to Latin American Religious: Full text,” June 11, 2013, @ rorate-caeli.blogspot.com.

[68.](#) Homily of June 27, 2013, @ <http://en.radiovaticana.va>.

[69.](#) Daniel Burke, “Pope Francis: No More Business as Usual,” November 26, 2013, @ religion.blogs.cnn.com.

[70.](#) “Pope: Sad Christian faces are like pickled peppers,” CNA/EWTN News, May 10, 2013, @ catholicnewsagency.com.

[71.](#) “Pope Francis: Friday homily focuses on scandal of preaching,” December 13, 2013, @ en.radiovaticana.

[72.](#) *EG*, n. 108.

[73.](#) *Ibid.*, n. 94.

[74.](#) Robert Imbelli, “Pastry Shop Christians,” October 4, 2013, @ commonweal.com.

[75.](#) *EG*, n. 95.

[76.](#) *Ibid.* n. 94.

[77.](#) *Ibid.*

[78.](#) *Ibid.*, n. 85.

[79.](#) Homily of March 18, 2014, @ <http://en.radiovaticana.va>.

[80.](#) Homily of Jan. 4, 2014, @ <http://en.radiovaticana.va>.

[81.](#) Laurence England, “The Pope Francis Little Book of Insults” @ thatthebonesyouhavecrushedmaythrill.blogspot.com. Several of the quotations provided here were discovered or recalled through this source.

[82.](#) “Pope Francis to mafia: repent or ‘end up in hell,’” *The Guardian*, March 22, 2014, @ theguardian.com.

[83.](#) “Pope Francis blasts arms dealers, decries indifference to war,” February 24, 2014, *National Catholic Reporter* @ ncronline.org.

[84.](#) Delia Gallagher, “Pope Francis takes on the Italian mob,” *CNN*, June 23, 2014, @ cnn.com.

[85.](#) Cf. Chapter 14.

[86.](#) Laurie Goodstein and Elisabeta Povoledo, “Pope Sets Down Goals for an Inclusive Church, Reaching Out ‘on the Streets,’” November 26, 2013, @ www.nytimes.com.

[87.](#) Cf. Chapter 8 and note 53.

[88.](#) See official Church statistical table for the Diocese of Buenos Aires at <http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/diocese/dbuea.html>.

[89.](#) See a video of the affair at <http://www.israelunseen.com/new-pope-jorge-bergoglio-celebrated-hannukah-as-cardinal-of-buenos-aires/>.

[90.](#) *Ibid.*

[91.](#) Daniel Burke, “No More Business as Usual,” *CNN*, November 26, 2013, @ religion.blogs.cnn.com.

[92.](#) In 1970 there were 419,728 Catholic priests in the world. By 2014, after almost fifty years of the “springtime of Vatican II,” there were only 414,313—undeniable evidence of a catastrophic loss of priestly vocations. Cf. Statistical Tables, Georgetown University CARA project, at <http://cara.georgetown.edu/caraservices/requestedchurchstats.html>.

93. Michael J. Miller, "Hype and Hope for the FFI," *The Catholic World Report*, December 16, 2013, @ www.catholicworldreport.com.

94. "In addition, the same article (by Tornielli) attributes to Benedict XVI the decision to send an apostolic visit. This is not accurate: it was rather a decision of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life." Official Statement of the FFI @ <http://www.immacolata.com>. Under Benedict the Ecclesia Dei Commission issued a rescript confirming that the FFI's implementation of *Summorum* was in conformity with the mind of the Pope as expressed in both *Summorum* and the Instruction *Universae Ecclesiae*, n 8a, discussed above. See Official Response of the FFI at <http://www.immacolata.com> (citing Ecclesia Dei rescript).

95. The relevant polling questions failed to define "problems" and misleadingly combined two alternative solutions for the "problems" into one: an external apostolic commissioner or an internal solution by way of an Extraordinary General Chapter. Thus, the poll data failed to show majority support for an apostolic commissioner. See an analysis of the published poll data by *Rorate Caeli* at <http://rorate-caeli.blogspot.com/2013/12/important-deep-dive-into-vatican.html>. A defender of the move against the FFI, Michael Miller of the neo-Catholic journal *Catholic World Report*, responded to *Rorate*'s analysis by backing away from his own analysis. He now admitted that only 49.3% of the friars surveyed—who were not all of the friars in the first place—had indicated that even an *internal* solution in the form of an Extraordinary Chapter was needed, with 34% having responded that there were no "problems" at all. Contrary to his earlier confident report that the dubious poll supported the appointment of an apostolic commission, Miller now stated: "Caution is often needed when drawing conclusions from statistics." See Miller, "A Reply to the Anonymous Critic at *Rorate Caeli*," *Catholic World Report*, December 19, 2013, @ www.catholicworldreport.com.

96. "Le Ragioni di Padre Bruno [The Reasons of Father Bruno]," *La Nuova Bussa Quotidiana*, September 28, 2013. Accessible at <http://www.lanuovabq.it/it/articoli-le-ragionidi-padre-bruno-7386.htm>. ("Si è parimenti accertato che nella concezione del rito antico alcune Autorità dell'Istituto hanno assunto una posizione che definirei 'cripto lefebvrina', essendo considerato questo tipo di celebrazione di per se migliore, e dunque preferibile, rispetto a quella in lingua corrente: il che è in manifesto conflitto con il Magistero della Chiesa in materia liturgica.")

97. Ibid. "Si è parimenti accertato che nella concezione del rito antico alcune Autorità dell'Istituto hanno assunto una posizione che definirei 'cripto lefebvrina', essendo considerate questo tipo di celebrazione di per se migliore, e dunque preferibile, rispetto a quella in lingua corrente: il che è in manifesto conflitto con il Magistero della Chiesa in materia liturgica"

98. Sandro Magister, "For the First Time, Francis Contradicts Benedict," July 29, 2013, @ chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it.

99. Michelle Arnold, "Pope Francis and the Franciscan Friars," July 20, 2013, @ www.catholic.com.

100. ChurchMilitant.tv, video @ at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6mvPZuoBDxE>.

101. Sean Salai, S.J., "Bloggling Pope Francis: An Interview with Mark Shea," *America*, September 17, 2014 at americamagazine.org.

102. Mark Shea, "Mercy for heterosexuals? Everybody is fine!," October 13, 2014 at patheos.com.

103. See, e.g., John Allen, "Four New Echoes in 'Francis Revolution'" in *National Catholic Reporter*, January 13, 2014; Andrea Tornielli, "The Francis revolution: No flattery, no valets, no pomp, no ceremony" in *Vatican Insider*, July 9, 2013 at vaticaninsider.lastampa.it; (and later) Patricia Miller, "The Pope Francis revolution: Inside the catastrophic collapse of the Catholic right" in *Salon* at salon.com.

104. See a video report on the publication at www.romereports.com/pg159699-all-of-pope-s-interviews-and-press-conferences-published-together-in-new-book-en.

105. *America* magazine interview, September 30, 2013, @ americamagazine.org.

106. Robert Moynihan, Letter #90, "Editorial on the Pope's Interview" @ themoynihanletters.com.

107. Cf. chapters 11 and 12.

108. Janet E. Smith, "Are We Obsessed?," September 25, 2013 @ firstthings.com.

109. "Reading the Papal Tea Leaves," March 20, 2013, @ spectator.org.

110. "When Paul Corrected Peter: Laity and clergy should reject, respectfully, the liberalism of Pope Francis," September 25, 2013, @ spectator.org.

111. Ibid.

- [112.](#) “The Pope They’ve Been Waiting For,” October 10, 2013.
- [113.](#) Ibid.
- [114.](#) Ibid.
- [115.](#) Michael P. Orsi, “The Pope’s Blurred Red Lines,” washingtontimes.com, September 26, 2013.
- [116.](#) John-Henry Westin, “Here’s How Pope John Paul II handled the charge of ‘obsession’ with abortion,” October 2, 2013, @ lifesitenews.com.
- [117.](#) “An Open Letter to Pope Francis,” English translation by Rod Pead @ christianorder.com.
- [118.](#) Bonnie Maulkin and Reuters, “Barack Obama ‘hugely impressed’ by Pope Francis,” October 3, 2013, *The Telegraph* online @ telegraph.co.uk.
- [119.](#) Mark Binelli, “Pope Francis: The Times They Are A-Changin,” *Rolling Stone*, January 28, 2014. As the author of the *Rolling Stone* tribute exulted: “In less than a year since his papacy began, Pope Francis has done much to separate himself from past popes and establish himself as a people’s pope.”
- [120.](#) “The Best Dressed Man of 2013: Pope Francis” @ www.esquire.com.
- [121.](#) Barack Obama, “Pope Francis,” *Time*, April 23, 2104.
- [122.](#) “Woe to you when men shall bless you: for according to these things did their fathers to the false prophets (Lk. 6:26).”
- [123.](#) Jena McGregor, “Pope Francis’s Superman Image,” *Washington Post*, March 6, 2014, @ washingtonpost.com.
- [124.](#) Gerard O’Connell, “Francis: the Pope is ‘a normal person,’ not a Superman,” March 5, 2014, @ vaticaninsider.lastampa.it.
- [125.](#) Ibid.

Year of the Synod

By the beginning of 2014, the rebound infection of the Church by the “para-Conciliar ideology” had become a full-blown relapse of Vatican II fever, as the progressivist priests and prelates who are the disease-causing agents surged unchecked in the ecclesial bloodstream. They had been invigorated by a Pope so fond of publicly staged “surprises,” all tending to the diminution of traditional Roman Catholicism, that *Respice in Me* (“look upon me”) could serve as the motto of his pontificate.

One small but telling example of the overt insurrection “the Francis effect” had encouraged was the oration of an unbearably smug Monsignor in Pennsylvania who, blithely negating the apostolic authorship of the Gospels and ridiculing the corrected translation of the New Mass, exulted that thanks to Francis the Church would no longer be preoccupied with “silly rules and rubrics, and pulling things out of centuries past that don’t speak to the Church in the modern world,” such as Communion *in lingua* and “the restoration of the Latin Mass.” Unlike his rule-bound predecessor, Pope Francis was concerned with “the mercy of Jesus Christ”; and thus the far more important question whether, concerning the divorced and remarried, “we have the whole thing wrong, are we punishing people who have made a mistake rather than forgiving them?” According to the Monsignor, nothing had been done over the previous fifty years to “bring the Church into the modern world”—apparently he had been in a coma since 1965—but under Francis, “starting today, you and I are going to begin to implement Vatican II.”¹ Unbelievable as it was, after only a year under Francis it seemed the neo-Modernist/neo-Catholic narrative of the chimerical “true Council”² and the need to implement it at last had returned to page one. The conciliar Ground Hog Day had begun anew.

This Monsignor was not some ultra-progressive outlier whose views were not representative of the way the Church was moving under Francis, for every word he said had already been suggested by Francis’s own plenitude of progressivist pronouncements during the previous year. Nor was this a matter of merely the Pope’s spontaneous remarks to journalists by “the most misunderstood Pope in history.” As we have seen, in *Evangelii Gaudium* Francis had made the Monsignor sound rather conservative with statements unprecedented for a Roman Pontiff, including disparagement of “those who long for a monolithic body of doctrine guarded by all and leaving no room for nuance,” and the “self-absorbed promethean neopelagianism of those who ... feel superior to others because they observe certain rules or remain intransigently faithful to a particular Catholic style from the past.” And it was Francis who had thrown open the doors to further radical changes in the Church with his declaration that “[m]ore than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges...”³

The Rebirth of Walter Kasper

Exactly how far Francis seemed willing to go was revealed at the “Extraordinary Consistory” of cardinals held on February 20, 2014, in preparation for the first session of

the Synod in October of that year. This gathering marked the astonishing return to prominence of none other than Cardinal Walter Kasper. The first edition of this book identified Kasper as one of the Church's most notorious postconciliar Modernists,⁴ who, among other heresies, has rejected the historicity of the Apostolic Succession, the infallible declaration of Pope Leo XIII on the absolute invalidity of Anglican orders, and the Gospel accounts of certain of Christ's miracles. Yet, Francis had praised Kasper as a "clever theologian, a good theologian" on no less an occasion than his first Angelus address as Pope, citing Kasper's theology of "mercy," which would become the watchword of the tumultuous year of the Synod.⁵ The media, including the liberal Catholic press, were soon hailing Kasper as "the Pope's theologian."⁶

Kasper's keynote address to Extraordinary Consistory, the only address Francis called for,⁷ was a two-hour oration Francis later praised as "a beautiful and profound presentation... ."⁸ Not surprisingly, given his history of ecclesial subversion, Kasper called for a "pastoral solution" that would allow certain divorced and "remarried" Catholics, living in a state of public adultery, to receive Holy Communion. The proposal involved nothing less than the overthrow of the Catholic doctrine on the indissolubility of Holy Matrimony through a radical change in "pastoral practice." Kasper's address was supposed to be delivered in secret with no copies being provided to the press—an early sign of the manipulation of the Synod process in order to achieve a predetermined result. Inevitably, however, the address was promptly leaked, and the full text appeared in the Italian daily *Il Foglio* under the sensational headline "A Secret, Exclusive and Extraordinary Document."⁹

Kasper's proposal came in the section of the address entitled "The Problem of the Divorced and Remarried." In the first place, a divorced Catholic married in the Church cannot "remarry," as any subsequent civil ceremony is not a marriage, but rather "none other than disgraceful and base concubinage, repeatedly condemned by the Church... ."¹⁰ So the Church has always insisted in keeping with the teaching of Our Lord Himself that "Every one that putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her that is put away from her husband, committeth adultery" (Lk. 16:18). That obvious objection aside, Kasper—with the evident approval of Francis—was following the *modus operandi* of every Modernist who contrives to undermine some aspect of the Faith: label it a "problem" for which there must be a "solution." In this case, Kasper advocated a "change of paradigm" respecting the Church's perennial practice of excluding the divorced and remarried from Holy Communion to protect the sanctity of the Blessed Sacrament. According to Kasper, "between the Church's doctrine on marriage and the family and the 'real life' convictions of many Christians, an abyss has been created." But this "abyss" is nothing other than the same "silent apostasy" John Paul II had lamented not long before his death. For a Modernist like Kasper, however, the proper response to apostasy is to accommodate it. Now, however, this "solution" appeared to have papal support! The "continuing process of decay" remarked by Cardinal Ratzinger concerning the postconciliar epoch had reached new depths.

Kasper introduced his revolutionary proposal for a change in practice with the disclaimer: "I wish only to pose questions, limiting myself to indicating the direction of possible answers." The Modernist typically employs "questions" to sow doubts about

what the Church has always taught, only to supply “answers” which suggest that the Church has hitherto erred and must rectify her error. One of Kasper’s “questions” involved another outrageous implication: “The question that is posed in response is: is it not perhaps an exploitation of the person who is suffering and asking for help if we make him a sign and a warning for others? Are we going to let him die of hunger sacramentally in order that others may live?” In other words, for centuries the Church had cruelly inflicted spiritual starvation on the divorced and remarried by not allowing them to receive Holy Communion because of their adultery, sacrificing these poor souls for the benefit of the pious.

This rank calumny of Holy Church was Kasper’s “beautiful and profound” assessment of her perennial practice for protection of the Holy Eucharist from sacrilege by open adulterers—a practice John Paul II had reaffirmed a mere 33 years earlier in his Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, following the Synod of 1980:

[T]he Church reaffirms her practice, which is based upon Sacred Scripture, of not admitting to Eucharistic Communion divorced persons who have remarried. They are unable to be admitted thereto from the fact that their state and condition of life objectively contradict that union of love between Christ and the Church which is signified and effected by the Eucharist. Besides this, there is another special pastoral reason: if these people were admitted to the Eucharist, the faithful would be led into error and confusion regarding the Church’s teaching about the indissolubility of marriage.¹¹

Twenty-six years later, Pope Benedict XVI again reaffirmed the Church’s invariant traditional practice in *Sacramentum Caritatis* (2007), his post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation following the Synod on the Eucharist in 2005: “The Synod of Bishops confirmed the Church’s practice, based on Sacred Scripture (cf. Mk. 10:2–12), of not admitting the divorced and remarried to the sacraments, since their state and their condition of life objectively contradict the loving union of Christ and the Church signified and made present in the Eucharist.”¹² Benedict, John Paul II and two different Synods had affirmed the traditional discipline as intrinsically connected to divine revelation. Yet here was “the Pope’s theologian” openly proposing to overthrow it in an address Francis had wished to be kept secret.

Kasper praised the “heroic virtue” of abandoned spouses who never remarry, only to declare immediately that, nevertheless, “many abandoned spouses depend, for the good of the children [!], on a new relationship and a civil marriage which they cannot abandon without committing new offenses.” These new relationships, Kasper declared, “prove their new joy, and even sometimes come to be seen as a gift from heaven.” So Kasper’s “profound and beautiful” view of divorce and “remarriage” was that the good of children is served when a parent takes up with a new lover and brings him or her into the former marital home, destroying the children’s respect for the sanctity of marriage while inflicting profound trauma and often permanent psychological harm upon them, and that this adulterous relationship can even be seen as a gift from heaven. Not even during the worst days of the postconciliar revolution had the Holy See countenanced such a despicable subterfuge, which hid the evil of divorce behind a lie about its “benefits.” “Woe to you that call evil good, and good evil.... (Isaiah 5:20).”

Kasper then discussed “two situations” involving the divorced and “remarried.” The first concerned those whose marriages in the Church might well have been contracted invalidly but who have not obtained a decree of annulment and are now in second

“marriages” by way of civil ceremony. Showing exactly how devious he is, Kasper argued that the Church cannot simply make annulments easier to obtain because, as he rightly observed, the spouse opposing annulment justly protests that “we lived together, we had children; this was a reality that cannot simply be declared null....” So Kasper proposed, not to avoid laxity in granting annulments, but rather to dispense with the traditional annulment process altogether.

Many pastors, he argued, are “convinced that many marriages celebrated in a religious form were not contracted in a valid manner,” and the traditional presumption of validity should now be viewed as a “fiction.” But, without an annulment, how can a marriage in the Church be ignored at the “pastoral” level? Kasper proposed that since the annulment process is only a matter of ecclesiastical law, the Church could simply allow a local bishop to empower a priest “with spiritual and pastoral experience” or the diocesan penitentiary or episcopal vicar to make some sort of “pastoral” decision that the prior marriage in the Church ought not to impede reception of the Blessed Sacrament because it was probably invalid. But who would defend the marital bond against such “pastoral” determinations and who would review the local “pastoral” decision? The potential for marital chaos and the destruction of the divinely ordered nuclear family is self-evident.

The second situation Kasper presented is that “most difficult situation” of a marriage that was “ratified and consummated between baptized persons,” yet “the communion of married life is irremediably broken and one or both of the spouses have contracted a second civil marriage.” In other words, a valid Catholic marriage is followed by a civil divorce and an adulterous civil union on the part of one or both spouses. Here Kasper contended that “[t]he early Church gives us an indication that can serve as a means of escape from the dilemma.” What dilemma? The one Kasper had invented. When a Modernist wishes to attack some element of the Faith through a change in discipline, he typically appeals to some alleged practice of the Church around 2,000 years ago. Kasper’s bogus Modernist scholarship, devoid of a single citation to a patristic source quoted in context, need not detain us, nor his fraudulent claim that the Council of Nicaea (325) authorized the admission of the divorced and remarried to Holy Communion. Kasper has been ably refuted elsewhere.^{[13](#)}

Having invented an historical foundation in the always-useful “early Church,” Kasper—again, the only speaker Francis had permitted to give a formal presentation to the “secret Consistory”—laid out a five-point plan for the *de facto* approval of divorce and remarriage in the Catholic Church. He presented this as “a way beyond rigorism and laxity”—meaning, of course, a way to laxity:

If a divorced and remarried—1. Repents of the failure in his first marriage, 2. If he has clarified the obligations of his first marriage, if going back is definitely excluded, 3. If he cannot abandon without other offences to his commitments in the second civil marriage, 4. If however, he makes an effort to live in the second marriage to the best of his possibilities, starting from the faith and bringing his children up in the faith, 5. If he has the desire for the sacraments as the source of strength in his situation, must we or can we deny him, after a time of a new course (metanoia) the sacrament of penance and then Communion?

Kasper claimed this was not “a general solution,” or “a wide road for the great masses,” but rather “a narrow way on the part of probably very few of the divorced and remarried, interested in the sacraments.” But, as Catholics had witnessed time and again under the postconciliar regime of novelty, novel exceptions quickly swallow the rule, and the rule

comes to be viewed as an unreasonable encumbrance on “renewal” in the Church. Kasper assured the closed-door gathering that his “solution” called for “discretion” and was “not compromise between rigorism [i.e., what the Church has always required] and laxity [i.e., what Kasper wished to achieve].” Kasper was right. This was no compromise between rigorism and laxity; it was simply a prescription for laxity.

But Kasper’s “beautiful and profound” proposal to authorize mass sacrilege was in fact positively evil, as seen immediately from the objections that would be raised against it by cardinals, bishops, priests and members of the laity:

First, having “repented” of the “failure” of a sacramental marriage, the divorced and remarried person still remains in an adulterous second union based on nothing more than a civil ceremony. Here Kasper attempted to patch the gaping hole in his argument by defending civil marriage, arguing that a civil marriage “with clear criteria is distinct from other forms of ‘irregular’ cohabitation, such as clandestine marriages, common law couples, above all fornication and so-called primitive marriages.” On what authority did Kasper so declare? On the authority of his own opinion, which the Pope had endorsed as “beautiful and profound.”

Second, the idea that the Church could countenance “living in the second marriage to the best of [its] possibilities” without the traditional requirement of abstinence from sexual relations was nothing short of monstrous. Consider what Kasper was really saying: that a couple living in an adulterous union should “perfect” it and persist in it until death, thus defying Saint Paul’s very warning that “neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers ... shall possess the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6–10).”

Third, even more monstrous was the idea that someone living in a continuous state of adultery, having repented only of the “failure” of a sacramental marriage, could be allowed regularly to approach the confessional without having to confess, repent of, and promise before God to cease his continuing adultery.

Fourth, and most monstrous of all, was the idea that an adulterer in this situation should have recourse to Holy Communion as a “source of strength” while he continued to enjoy the fruits of an adulterous relationship.

In a most infuriating Modernist fashion, Kasper had presented his suggestions for the subversion of Holy Matrimony under the guise of defending its indissolubility: “The indissolubility of sacramental marriage and the impossibility of a new marriage during the lifetime of the other partner is part of the tradition of the Church’s binding faith that cannot be abandoned or undone by appealing to a superficial understanding of cheapened mercy.” So Kasper piously affirmed in the very process of appealing to a superficial understanding of cheapened mercy. His proposal, he claimed, would be a way for the Church “to tolerate that which in itself is impossible to accept.” On the contrary, Kasper was proposing to accept that which is impossible to tolerate.

Echoing Francis’s own declaration in EG (47) that “the Eucharist ... is not a prize for the perfect”—as if that were an issue—Kasper declared that “[a] pastoral approach of tolerance, clemency and indulgence” would affirm that “the sacraments are not a prize for those who behave well or for an elite, excluding those who are most in need....” On that bizarre premise, everyone in a state of mortal sin would be entitled to receive Holy Communion just because he is in a state of mortal sin, while those who “behave well” would be hogging spiritual goods they did not require.

What Kasper was really after was the Catholic Church’s defection from the indissolubility of marriage in practice while affirming it in principle (the defection in principle could always come later). Insulting Holy Church yet again, he declared to the Extraordinary Consistory that his “solution” was necessary to “give witness in a credible way to the Word of God in difficult human situations, as a message of fidelity, but also as

a message of mercy, of life, and of joy.” In other words, until now the Church, including Francis’s two immediate predecessors, had been without credibility and mercy toward the divorced and remarried, her discipline joyless and lifeless, because she had heeded Our Lord’s divine warning that the divorced and “remarried” are guilty of adultery! Kasper’s “beautiful and profound” conclusion was thus an implicit attack on God Himself. But that, after all, is what Modernism always entails.

Kasper’s “beautiful and profound” proposal had raised the stakes in the post-conciliar revolution to heights that had never seemed possible before, even during the worst days of the 1970s. Fr. Brian Harrison ably summed up the situation in a letter to *Inside the Vatican*:

[W]on’t this reversal of bimillennial Catholic doctrine mean that the Protestants and Orthodox, who have allowed divorce and remarriage for century after century, have been more docile to the Holy Spirit on this issue than the true Church of Christ? Indeed, how credible, now, will be her claim to be the true Church? On what other controverted issues, perhaps, has the Catholic Church been wrong, and the separated brethren right?

Admitting [the divorced and remarried] to Communion without a commitment to continence will lead logically to one of three faith-breaking conclusions: (a) our Lord was mistaken in calling this relationship adulterous—in which case he can scarcely have been the Son of God; (b) adultery is not intrinsically and gravely sinful—in which case the Church’s universal and ordinary magisterium has always been wrong; or (c) Communion can be given to some who are living in objectively grave sin—in which case not only has the magisterium also erred monumentally by always teaching the opposite, but the way will also be opened to Communion for fornicators, practicing homosexuals, pederasts, and who knows who else?

Let us make no mistake: Satan is right now shaking the Church to her very foundations over this divorce issue...
[14](#)

Diabolical was not too strong a word for Kasper’s proposal. And it signaled with absolute clarity what was in store for the Church at the Synod in October: the beginning of the final move in the consolidation of the regime of novelty. First the conciliar “reformers” had come for the Roman Rite, which they destroyed. Then they came for the Church Militant, which they disarmed and surrendered to the spirit of the age. Now, at the Synod, which threatened to become Vatican II rebooted, progressivist bishops and their apparatchiks would be coming for the moral law itself under the guise of a search for “pastoral solutions” to “challenges facing the family”—more of the seditious slogans by which the ideology of Vatican-II-ism had already eclipsed the doctrines of the Faith.

Turning Matthew on His Head

A week after Kasper’s “beautiful and profound” attack on Holy Matrimony, the Pope delivered a sermon (February 28) evincing the element of Bergoglianism discussed in the previous [chapter](#): the twisting of Scripture to suit rhetorical needs. In this case, Francis turned the famous account in Matthew 19:3–9 on its head in order to justify his apparent preoccupation with finding a way to admit objective public adulterers to Holy Communion. He spoke of the Pharisees’ attempt to trap Our Lord respecting divorce and His reply that in marriage “the two become one flesh.” Yet, he conspicuously omitted any mention of Our Lord’s declarations immediately following: “what God hath joined together let no man put asunder” and “whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that shall marry her that is put away, committeth adultery.”

The key verses intentionally passed over in silence, Francis somehow converted Our

Lord's fearsome vindication of the absolute indissolubility of marriage during His encounter with the Pharisees into a thinly veiled suggestion that present day Catholics are Pharisaical for upholding without compromise Our Lord's teaching against the Pharisees!:

[W]hen this love fails, because it fails so many times, we have to feel the pain of the failure, we have to accompany those persons who have experienced this failure of their own love. Not to condemn them! To walk with them! And to not take a casuistic attitude towards their situation.¹⁵

Ironically, the Pope's twisting of Matthew 19 into a reprimand of those who defend Christ's teaching on the indissolubility of marriage required precisely what he condemned in supposedly "rigorist" Catholics: casuistry. This curious sermon provoked some obvious questions:

- What did Francis mean by "love fails"? Marital love is not a mechanism that breaks down under stress through no fault of the operators; it is a continuing act of the will, aided by the grace of Holy Matrimony. It is not the sacramental marriage that fails, for that is an indissoluble bond until death, but rather one or both spouses in the obligation to respect the bond "for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part." The results of that moral failure are indeed tragic, but life is filled with tragedies the Church cannot simply sweep aside in the name of cheap mercy.
- Who, according to Francis, was "condemning" the divorced and remarried? Perhaps it was Our Lord Himself, who called them adulterers in the very verses Francis had omitted from his verse-twisting. But no one was "condemning" particular individuals in the sense of judging the state of their souls, not even the imaginary "rigorists" the Pope seemed to see under every bed and around every corner at a time when laxity is all but universal in the Church.
- What is the "casuistic attitude" to which Francis referred? Perhaps it is the Church's "rigoristic" bimillennial insistence—maintained by John Paul II and Pope Benedict—that the divorced and remarried, without exception, are not permitted to partake of the Blessed Sacrament unless they commit to ceasing their adulterous relations.
- How exactly should we "walk with" the divorced and remarried other than to lead them in the way the Church has always indicated?

Cardinal Kasper had clearly been assigned the task of finding a way to "walk" with the divorced and "remarried" by proposing "solutions" that would allow people living in adultery to be treated as if they had been validly married by civil authorities—despite the continued existence of a sacramental marriage with an abandoned spouse.

The Purge of Conservative Bishops

While Francis was elevating Cardinal Kasper to preeminence in the Church, he was also conducting a systematic purge of notably conservative bishops which began in March of 2014 and continued well into the following year. Some colorable claim or other could be made for the forced resignation, removal or stripping of authority in each of these cases—the details need not detain us—but none of them involved scandal remotely approaching the endemic sexual and financial corruption of the world's liberal episcopates, including massive litigation and diocesan bankruptcies arising from the homosexual predation of boys and young men by priests, bishops and even cardinals. All of the victims of this selective enforcement fit the same general profile as the FFI: doctrinally and liturgically conservative, friendly to the traditional Mass, able to attract vocations, and subject to demands for punitive measures by liberal agitators:

- March 2014—Franz-Peter Tebartz-van Elst, Bishop of Limburg, Germany.
- September 2014—Rogelio Ricardo Livieres Piano, Bishop of Ciudad del Este in Paraguay (who has since died).

- March 2015—Mario Oliveri of the Albenga diocese in northern Italy.
- April 2015—Robert Finn of Kansas City-St. Joseph, Missouri.
- June 2015—Archbishop John Nienstedt of Minneapolis.

An ideological motive for the purge was all but admitted by Father Lombardi in a statement by the Vatican Press Office concerning the summary removal of Bishop Livieres. The reason, said Lombardi, was not alleged financial mismanagement or the appointment of an accused child molester as diocesan vicar—a priest the Vatican itself had recommended!—but rather what Lombardi called “relations within the episcopacy and in the local church, which were very difficult... .”¹⁶ For one thing, Livieres’ seminary was full while the rest of Paraguay was bereft of vocations. Nicole Winfield of the Associated Press reported what was already obvious to traditionalist observers:

[T]he removal underscored the deep ideological shift in the Catholic Church with Francis in charge. Vatican watchers say it is highly unlikely that Pope Benedict XVI would have removed either Livieres or the “bling bishop,” [Tebartz-van Elst] since both had strong supporters among the more conservative prelates in Rome who appreciated their firm orthodoxy in the face of opposition from more progressive parts of the church.... Francis has made clear his disdain for traditionalist Catholics, finding them self-absorbed retrogrades who are out of touch with the church’s evangelizing mission today.¹⁷

On the other hand, not a single theological or liturgical liberal in the entire world episcopate has ever been subjected to such discipline under Francis, promoting even the liberal commentator John Allen to query publicly: “Does Pope Francis have an enemies’ list?”¹⁸

But while conservative episcopal heads were rolling, Francis installed as Bishop of Osorno, Chile, the notorious Juan Barros, a close associate of the even more notorious Fr. Fernando Karadima, found guilty in a trial at the Vatican in 2011 of sexually abusing boys and sentenced to a life prayer and penance. Barros (already a bishop) was installed despite multiple allegations linking him to Karadima’s crimes, including witnessing and doing nothing about them. As *The New York Times* reported, Francis would not be dissuaded from his decision even by “weeks of protests, candlelight vigils and letters to Pope Francis”¹⁹ or the attempt by members of the faithful physically to prevent Barros’s installation in the local cathedral. Nor was Francis moved when members of his own vaunted “sex abuse advisory board,” created to enforce his equally vaunted “zero tolerance” policy for clerical sexual abuse, expressed “concern and incredulity about his decision ... despite allegations from victims that he covered up for Chile’s most notorious pedophile.”²⁰

Later in the year, Francis gave a dramatic further demonstration of his double standard by appointing Cardinal Godfried Danneels to the Synod on the Family despite massive evidence, including a tape-recording, of his deliberate cover-up of hundreds of instances of homosexual molestation of boys by Mgr. Roger Vangheluwe and other clerical predators when Danneels was Archbishop of Mechelen-Brussels and Primate of Belgium from 1979 until 2010.²¹ The appointment of Danneels to a Synod on the Family must rank as one of the major disciplinary farces of the postconciliar epoch, which is saying a great deal. Danneels, declared the *Rorate Caeli* blog, “is a one-man symbol of all that is wrong and wicked with the Hierarchy, the epitome of the worst meaning of the word ‘clericalism’, the opposite of anything that could represent authentic reform and

restoration—a man who abused the spirit and annihilated Belgian Catholic families, and protected those who abused the bodies of children, a man who after leading Catholicism in his country into the ground should have been relegated to degradation and penance for the rest of his life yet still receives papal honor to influence a Synod on the Family!”²²

The Telephone Call Heard ‘Round the World

By April 2014, all reasonable doubt about whether Francis favored “the Kasper proposal” was eliminated by the Pope’s own behavior. In that month, Francis, identifying himself as “Father Bergoglio,” personally telephoned one Jacqueline Sabetta Lisbona, an Argentine woman who had written to him to complain that she had been denied Holy Communion at her parish because she had civilly married a divorced man and was considered to be living in state of public adultery in keeping with the Church’s bimillennial discipline. Lisbona reported that “She spoke with the Pope, and he said she was absolved of all sins and she could go and get the Holy Communion because she was not doing anything wrong.” She also reported that the Pope said, in response to her mention of the refusal of the local parish priest to admit her to Holy Communion: “some priests are more papist than the Pope.”²³

The Vatican offered no denial of Lisbona’s stunning account. Quite the contrary, the Vatican’s English language spokesman, Father Thomas Rosica, told the press “It’s between the Pope and the woman” and “[t]he magisterium of the church is not defined by personal phone calls.”²⁴ The Vatican Press Office spokesman Father Federico Lombardi published this consummately ambiguous “official” non-denial:

Several telephone calls have taken place in the context of Pope Francis’ personal pastoral relationships. Since they do not in any way form part of the Pope’s public activities, no information or comments are to be expected from the Holy See Press Office.

That which has been communicated in relation to this matter, outside the scope of personal relationships, and the consequent media amplification, cannot be confirmed as reliable, and is a source of misunderstanding and confusion.

Therefore, consequences relating to the teaching of the Church are not to be inferred from these occurrences.²⁵

In other words, the telephone call was just as Lisbona had described, which is why Lombardi conspicuously avoided stating that her account was false in any respect.

Rushing to the ramparts, neo-Catholic commentators struggled to conceal the latest scandal. Unable to call Lisbona a liar, because the Vatican had not really disputed her account, Jimmy Akin declared that “regardless of what may or may not have happened in the case of Mrs. Lisbona, it provides no basis for other divorced and civilly remarried people to disregard the Church’s practice.”²⁶ No basis, that is, except a random papal telephone call at the Pope’s whim. At any rate, like so many other emergency interventions by the neo-Catholic first responders, this one would prove futile. Later in the year, Sandro Magister published an article reporting that when Francis was Archbishop of Buenos Aires he had “authorized the *’curas villeros’* the priests sent to the peripheries, to give communion to all, although four-fifths of the couples were not even married.” As for the telephone call to Lisbona, Magister observed that Francis was merely attempting to move the Church toward the “solution” he had first suggested during the “Who am I to judge?” in-flight press conference the year before:

This is one of the ways in which Jorge Mario Bergoglio exercises his absolute powers as head of the Church. And when he pushes the whole of the Catholic hierarchy to follow him on this road, he knows very well that communion for the divorced and remarried, numerically insignificant, is the loophole for a much more generalized and radical sea change, toward that “second possibility of marriage,” with the consequent dissolution of the first, which is admitted in the Eastern Orthodox Churches and which he, Francis, just shortly after his election as pope said “must be studied” in the Catholic Church as well, “in the context of pastoral care for marriage.”²⁷

Emboldened by the Pope’s apparent support, the Synod’s proponents did not even bother to conceal their intentions for their forthcoming coven of progressives: the Synod on the Family would be an attack on the family. Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, President of the Pontifical Council for the Family expressed the threat this way: “The goal of the Synod of Bishops on the Family is not just to repeat doctrines but to find solutions for remarried divorcees and for everyone.” Everyone? Here it should be noted that it was Paglia who had told the press in February 2013: “In the world there are 20 or 25 countries where homosexuality is a crime, I would like the church to fight against all this.”²⁸

But what “solutions” for the divorced and “remarried” did progressives like Paglia have in mind, given that for 2,000 years—up to and including the teaching of both John Paul II and Benedict XVI—the Church had offered the only solution permitted by obedience to the teaching of Christ Himself: confession, absolution, and an end to adulterous relations, even if the couple must remain under one roof for the sake of the children. There was no need for a Synod on the Family to “find” the same solution the Church has always insisted upon in fidelity to the Gospel. But then there was no need for the Second Vatican Council either, as John XXIII’s own assessment of the Church’s robust condition before the Council demonstrated.²⁹

Vatican II Fever had reached a height at which not even the teaching of the very Pope that Francis himself would canonize two months after the Extraordinary Consistory, along with John XXIII, would stand in the way. The geriatric neo-Modernists Francis had given a new lease on life, including most of those who made up his Council of Eight, had already declared *Familiaris Consortio* a dead letter. The very Coordinator of the Council, the amateur saxophonist Óscar Andrés Rodríguez Cardinal Maradiaga, age 71, could not have been bolder:

That [*Familiaris Consortio*] was 30 [sic] years ago. For most people today the type of family we had then does not exist any more. And it is true: There are divorces, patchwork families, single parents, things like surrogate mothers, marriages without children and same sex couples. These things were not even on the horizon in 1980. All of this demands answers for today’s world. It is not good enough to say: We have the traditional teaching. Of course, the traditional teaching will continue to be there. But the pastoral challenges require answers for today. And these answers do not come from authoritarianism and moralism. This is not a “New Evangelization”, no, no!³⁰

Precisely how little credibility Rodríguez had was evident from his transparently disingenuous claim that the Church knew nothing of divorces, single parents, and marriages without children in the 1980s. As for surrogate motherhood, John Paul II had condemned the practice in 1987,³¹ while “same-sex couples” are as old as sodomy. But the rationale for the Synod itself was likewise lacking in credibility. In fact, it was premised on a grand deception: that there was suddenly an urgent need for novel “pastoral solutions” to the moral defection of vast masses of Catholics, rather than a reaffirmation and renewed promotion of the Church’s infallible moral teaching, which the post-Vatican

II hierarchy had in general either buried in silence or failed to defend with anything approaching the requisite fortitude.

As Rodríguez further stated in the quoted interview: “On the day of John Paul II’s canonization, Francis invoked the help of the papal saint in the upcoming Synod on the family.” Invoking the intercession of John Paul II at a Synod whose radical proponents were openly declaring their intention to ignore his teaching might have represented an apex of audacity in the pronouncements of postconciliar “reformers.” And this was the very head of the Pope’s handpicked council of advisors speaking.

The proposal to find “solutions for remarried divorcees” was only part of the looming threat of the Synod. The entire “synodal process” smacked of an effort to determine Church practice on the basis of what people who reject Church teaching would like to see. In that regard, the Synod’s *Instrumentum Laboris* (working document) referred to the earlier “Preparatory Document” containing a survey filled with loaded questions which give the impression that Church teaching is a matter for debate and discussion at the “pastoral” level. Although the questionnaire was directed solely to the bishops, many bishops promptly distributed it widely or posted it on diocesan websites to obtain “input” from priests and even random members of the laity who wished to speak for “the People of God.” The result, quite predictably, was that a questionnaire intended for the bishops became an opinion poll generating what the *Instrumentum Laboris* called “significant reflection among the People of God” regarding “new demands of the People of God” requiring “an openness to the new demands emerging in our time.”³²

The resulting poll revealed that “the People of God” have a problem with the Law of God. Half a century after the imaginary “renewal of Vatican II” supposedly began, the *Instrumentum* admitted: “[t]he People of God’s knowledge of conciliar and post-conciliar documents on the Magisterium of the family seems to be rather wanting,” that “many Christians, for various reasons, are found to be unaware of the very existence of this teaching,” and that “even when the Church’s teaching about marriage and the family is known, many Christians have difficulty accepting it in its entirety.”³³ It is of course inconceivable to the ideologues of Vatican II that what the *Instrumentum* described was their own catastrophic failure in attempting to “update” Church teaching by restating it in more accessible language. Instead—one could only laugh at the suggestion—the document called for yet another updating:

The language traditionally used in explaining the term “natural law” should be improved so that the values of the Gospel can be communicated to people today in a more intelligible manner.... Moreover, this proposal insists on using language which is accessible to all, such as the language of symbols utilized during the liturgy.³⁴

Apparently, such teachings as “Thou shalt not commit adultery” or “What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” were now too obscure for “the People of God.” According to the *Instrumentum*, after half a century of imaginary renewal, “the People of God” found even the Ten Commandments incomprehensible. In that regard, the proposal to use “the language of symbols” to teach the natural law on marriage and procreation was interesting. Perhaps the Vatican could devise a “No Adultery” meme depicting a couple in a compromising situation with a diagonal line through the image. Or perhaps parish priests could employ liturgical dancers or sign language to depict the consequences of marital infidelity instead of the usual boring (albeit never given) homilies on offenses against

Sixth Commandment (including contraception).

If only the *Instrumentum* could be dismissed as a joke. A joke it was not. It was the working document for a gathering of progressive prelates who threatened to make Vatican II look like the Council of Trent by comparison. Nor did the progressives intend to stop at Kasper's proposal to admit public adulterers to Holy Communion. The *Instrumentum* sounded ominous notes of "gay-friendliness." Concerning "same-sex unions" the document stated:

The episcopal conferences amply demonstrate that they are trying to find a balance between the Church's teaching on the family and a respectful, nonjudgmental attitude towards people living in such unions. On the whole, the extreme reactions to these unions, whether compromising or uncompromising, do not seem to have facilitated the development of an effective pastoral programme which is consistent with the Magisterium and compassionate towards the persons concerned. (¶ 113)

Using polling data as a kind sociological survey to relativize the moral question à la Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws*, the *Instrumentum* tilted decidedly in favor of a "non-judgmental" acceptance of "gay marriage" at the "pastoral" level, while maintaining lip service to the moral law. After all, who could be against "a respectful, non-judgmental attitude" toward anyone, including those whose "unions" happen to be based on sodomy? Who are we to judge?

Moreover, to say that "extreme reactions" toward "same-sex unions" include both the compromising and the uncompromising was to say—as if the faithful were too stupid to notice—that there must be some degree of compromise. Continuing with its Montesquieu-like use of sociological data to suggest that the matter of "unions" between sodomites is to some extent morally relative, the *Instrumentum* observed:

Episcopal conferences supply a variety of information on unions between persons of the same sex. In countries where legislation exists on civil unions, many of the faithful express themselves in favour of a respectful and nonjudgmental attitude towards these people and a ministry which seeks to accept them. This does not mean, however, that the faithful give equal [!] status to heterosexual marriage and civil unions between persons of the same sex. Some responses and observations voice a concern that the Church's acceptance of people in such unions could be construed as recognition of their union. (¶ 115)

The *Instrumentum* thus pitted responses from "many of the faithful," who favor "a respectful and non-judgmental attitude towards these people and a ministry which seeks to accept them," against merely "some responses" which "voice a concern that the Church's acceptance of people in such unions could be construed as recognition of their union." Clearly, according to the *Instrumentum*, the majority of "the People of God," whose opinions were never supposed to have been solicited in the first place, were in favor of a "ministry" that would respectfully and non-judgmentally accept "gay couples" in the Church. This was the same "People of God" who, as the *Instrumentum* admitted, were widely ignoring God's law—the same "People of God" whose "new demands" the *Instrumentum* presented to the forthcoming Synod as matters for serious deliberation and decision, as if the Church were a now democracy governed by "the will of the people."

As the commencement date of the Synod's first session approached, however, opposition to "the Kasper proposal" was already forming in the clerical ranks, including designated participants in the Synod's forthcoming first session. Kasper's frontal attack on the indissolubility of marriage was so alarming that Cardinal Burke, then Prefect of the Apostolic Signatura—Francis would remove him from that position after having already

removed him from the crucial Congregation for Bishops—publicly condemned it in a video interview. Burke observed that if Kasper’s proposal were accepted, the martyrdom of Saints Thomas More and John Fisher would be senseless.³⁵ It was reported that during the Consistory “85% percent of cardinals who spoke up after Kasper were against Kasper’s proposals.” Yet Kasper was still “enjoying the spotlight of Francis’ admiration.”³⁶

The opposition reached a pre-Synod crescendo with the publication in September, only days before the Synod’s commencement, of *Remaining in the Truth of Christ*, a collection of essays in defense of the traditional doctrine and practice concerning the indissolubility of marriage to which no fewer than five cardinals contributed: Cardinal Burke, along with cardinals Walter Brand-muller; Carlo Caffarra; Velasio De Paolis, C.S.; and, most tellingly, Gerhard Ludwig Muller, no less than Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.³⁷ It was clear that at the Synod “the Pope’s theologian” and his “modest proposal” would encounter a determined roadblock from the upper hierarchy—and with explosive consequences, as we shall see. Kasper replied to the publication of the book with an interview in *America*, offering the suggestion that “there are people who are not in full agreement with the present pope, but this kind of thing is not totally new, it happened also at the Second Vatican Council. Then there were people against the ‘aggiornamento’ of John XXIII and Paul VI, though perhaps not in this organized way. Even Cardinal Ottaviani, the Prefect of the Holy Office at that time, was against the intentions of the majority of the Council.”³⁸

In other words, the Synod was being prepared for precisely the purpose of which its traditionalist critics had already given an early warning: yet another round of revolutionary “updating” of the Church. Traditionalist observers of the postconciliar scene, long accustomed to the way things go in the regime of novelty, had been sounding the alarm almost from the moment the words “Synod on the Family” appeared on the Vatican website. A month before *Remaining in the Truth of Christ* appeared, this writer warned: “STOP THE SYNOD.”³⁹

As Cardinal Pallavicino (aka Pallavicini) famously observed in defense of the Council of Trent: “To convoke a general council, except when absolutely demanded by necessity, is to tempt God.”⁴⁰ The absolute necessity of Trent was self-evident. The absolute necessity of Vatican II was non-existent. The unnecessary Synod, like the unnecessary Council in whose name it had been called, tempted God by convoking an assemblage of prelates whose malign intentions had already been publicly declared. The outcome was dreadfully predictable.

Enter “the God of Surprises”

On October 13, 2014, the controllers of the first session of the Synod on the Family—to be distinguished from the Synod Fathers at large, as we shall see—issued a document without parallel in the entire history of the Church. The Synod’s “*Relatio post disceptationem*” of that date, commonly known as the “midterm report,” was released to the press and published on the Vatican’s website before the Synod Fathers had even seen it. Thus was revealed a synodal game plan according to which the Synod was to serve as a kind of mini-Vatican III, unleashing a new “spirit” upon the Church the results of which,

if that were possible, would have been even more catastrophic than what has been wrought by the ineffable but uncontainable “spirit of Vatican II.”

The midterm report would have undermined the entire teaching of the Church in the area of sexual morality had it been adopted by the Synod majority as its final report. To summarize its now infamous provisions:

- That homosexuals “have gifts and qualities to offer to the Christian community” and that the Church must ask whether it is “capable of providing for these people, guaranteeing ... them ... a place of fellowship in our communities” and “accepting and valuing their sexual orientation....” (¶50)
- That, despite vaguely referenced “moral problems,” in “homosexual unions, there are instances where mutual assistance to the point of sacrifice is a valuable support in the life of these persons,” and that “the Church pays special attention to ... children who live with same-sex couples”—as if this were now a normal situation accepted by the Church without objection. (¶52)
- That divorced and “remarried” Catholics could be admitted to the Sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion, with no commitment to cease their adulterous relations, “on a case-by-case basis, according to the law of gradualness, which takes into consideration the distinction between a state of sin, the state of grace, and ... extenuating circumstances.” (¶47)
- That the “law of gradualness,” which relates to spiritual progress in understanding and accepting revealed truths of the Catholic religion, be applied to permit “gradual” acceptance of God’s moral law, binding on all men—a Modernist notion contrary to the explicit teaching of John Paul II in *Familiaris Consortio* that there is no such thing as a “gradualness of the [moral] law,” as if there were different degrees or forms of precept in God’s law for different individuals and situations.” (¶¶13, 14, 47)
- That the Church must recognize the “positive elements” of “civil unions and cohabitation” in a bizarre application of the notion that there are “positive elements present in other religions” (citing Vatican II’s *Nostra Aetate*), producing what one critic rightly described as a kind of “moral ecumenism” that would more or less legitimize all kinds of relations the Church has always condemned as adulterous. (¶¶18–20)

The Pope personally authorized the publication of this disastrous document. The respected Vatican commentator Robert Royal reported on EWTN’s *The World Over* that Francis had reviewed the midterm report on the Saturday before its publication on Monday, October 13.⁴¹ This was no great revelation, however. Publication at vatican.va and distribution to the world press without Francis’s prior approval would have been impossible. In an interview with Catholic News Service, Cardinal Burke, whose pending removal as head of the *Signatura* had already been announced, immediately observed that there is “a very serious responsibility to try to correct as quickly and as effectively as possible the scandal caused by the midterm report.”⁴²

The brutal power play of publishing the midterm report without prior input or even review by the Synod Fathers at large, along with other attempts to manipulate the Synod’s outcome (such as the secrecy of the proceedings and no publication of the bishops’ interventions or the language-group documents), led to the more conservative Fathers’ “revolt” on October 16. Cardinal Pell literally “slammed his hand on the table and said: ‘You must stop manipulating this Synod!’”⁴³ Pell’s protest was addressed to the Synod’s General Secretary, Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri, but seated next to him was the man everyone in the room knew was the ultimate controller of the proceedings: Pope Francis, who was seen constantly passing notes to Baldisseri and was reportedly stone-faced as Cardinal Pell launched his dramatic protest.⁴⁴

The midterm report, which appeared to have been written even before the Synod began,

was practically a transcript of the most radical proposals of the German bishops, above all Cardinal Kasper, whose theology of “mercy” Francis had been praising publicly from the beginning of his pontificate. Kasper subsequently revealed to the press that he had twice met with Francis before the Synod regarding his proposal to allow public adulterers to receive Holy Communion and that “I agreed upon everything with him.” He would later retreat from this claim, which neither Francis nor the Vatican Press Office had ever denied.⁴⁵

The German neo-Modernist overplayed his hand, however, when he was recorded by the Vaticanist Edward Pentin disparaging the African bishops at the Synod as insufficiently receptive to the planned “opening to gays” and “mercy” for the divorced and “remarried.” According to Kasper, “Africa is totally different from the West.... Asian and Muslim countries, they’re very different, especially about gays. You can’t speak about this with Africans and people of Muslim countries. It’s not possible. It’s a taboo.... But they should not tell us too much what we have to do.”⁴⁶ The fallout from Pentin’s publication of a transcript of these remarks, after Kasper had falsely denied making them, forced the appointment of a token African Cardinal, Wilfrid Napier, to the drafting committee for the final report. Napier had denounced the interim report as an irreparably harmful attempt to preempt the Synod’s decisions: “We’re now working from a position that is virtually irredeemable. It’s [the interim report] not what we were saying (in the synod hall). It’s not a true message!”⁴⁷ But Francis had already stacked the drafting committee with six additional progressives chosen by him in a departure from the Synod rules, which provided for drafting by the elected Synod working groups. As Associated Press reported: “The bishops themselves elected a host of known conservatives to lead the working groups hammering out details of the final report. In an apparent bid to counter their influence, Francis appointed six progressives to draft the final document.”⁴⁸

Because the midterm report’s contents were so patently offensive to Catholic teaching, the Synod at large, even as weighted in favor of progressives, refused to adopt it as part of the final report. The final report rejected the “opening” to homosexuals and their supposedly special “gifts” and the “valuing” of their orientation, the “case-by-case” admission of the divorced and “remarried” to Holy Communion, the application of the “law of gradualness” to the moral law and the idea of an “ecumenical” focus on “positive elements” in adulterous relations between baptized Christians. Further, the requisite two-thirds majority of the Fathers failed even to adopt three paragraphs in the final report that still aroused serious concern, although all three (quite disturbingly) did obtain simple majorities:

52. The synod father [sic] also considered the possibility of giving the divorced and remarried access to the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist. Some synod fathers insisted on maintaining the present regulations, because of the constitutive relationship between participation in the Eucharist and communion with the Church as well as the teaching on the indissoluble character of marriage. Others expressed a more individualized approach, permitting access in certain situations and with certain well-defined conditions.... The subject needs to be thoroughly examined....

53. Some synod fathers maintained that divorced and remarried persons or those living together can have fruitful recourse to a spiritual communion. Others raised the question as to why, then, they cannot have access “sacramentally.” As a result, the synod fathers requested that further theological study in the matter might point out the specifics of the two forms and their association with the theology of marriage.

55. Some families have members who have a homosexual tendency. In this regard, the synod fathers asked themselves what pastoral attention might be appropriate for them in accordance with the Church's teaching: "There are absolutely no grounds for considering homosexual unions to be in any way similar or even remotely analogous to God's plan for marriage and family." Nevertheless, men and women with a homosexual tendency ought to be received with respect and sensitivity. "Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided [quoting CDF document] ." ⁴⁹

These paragraphs, evidently the result of Francis's stacking of the drafting committee, still left an opening to revisiting the same agenda presented as practically *a fait accompli* in the rejected midterm report (although it appears that the rejection of ¶ 55 was due in part to the progressives' refusal to accept a denial of any sort of analogy between true marriage and "homosexual unions"). Because even these watered-down statements did not achieve the required two-thirds majority, however, they were not actually part of the Synod's final report. Hence, the media widely (and not unfairly) reported the outcome as a "defeat for Pope Francis." One headline is typical: "Catholic bishops veto gay-friendly statements leaving Pope Francis the loser." ⁵⁰

Here the role of Pope Francis in controlling the Synod became too obvious for even the most committed neo-Catholic apologist to deny. Not only did Francis order the outrageous midterm report distributed to the world's bishops, as if the Synod had never rejected it, he also ordered that the three rejected paragraphs be included in the final report, as if the Synod had not voted them down under its rules requiring a super-majority. As the ultra-progressive and "pro-gay" Synod Father, Cardinal Vincent Nichols, exulted, Francis had "torn up the rule book." A headline in *The Washington Post* said it all: "How the bishops defeated Pope Francis, who has 'torn up the rule book.'" ⁵¹

Francis had only begun to fight. In his closing address to the Synod, he invoked "the God of surprises" as he appeared to inveigh against all parties to the Synod's "debate." But although Francis wagged his finger briefly in the direction of "the so-called 'progressives and liberals,'" there was no mistaking the bull's eye of the target at which he had been firing pejoratives over the past twenty months—namely, those he deemed afflicted by:

the temptation to hostile inflexibility, that is, wanting to close oneself within the written word, (the letter) and not allowing oneself to be surprised by God, by the God of surprises, (the spirit); within the law, within the certitude of what we know and not of what we still need to learn and to achieve.... From the time of Christ, it is the temptation of the zealous, of the scrupulous, of the solicitous and of the so-called—today—"traditionalists" and also of the intellectuals. ⁵²

What was this if not an open call for subversion of bimillennial Church law and discipline in favor of some gnostic discovery the Church had yet to make, something not too progressive yet not "rigid" either—meaning, obviously, something progressive. No one was fooled, and certainly not the press. The next day *The Washington Post* reported on what had obviously been a fit of pique from the thwarted progressivist Pope: "'God is not afraid of new things!' Francis boomed on Sunday, a day after warning of 'hostile rigidity' and 'so-called traditionalists.'" ⁵³

Eight days after having led the "revolt" of the party of "hostile inflexibility" against the Synod's manipulation, Cardinal Pell gave a homily to the participants in the Third Annual *Summorum Pontificum* pilgrimage in Rome (delivered by his secretary on account of his illness). His remarks could not have been more telling:

The story of the Popes is stranger than fiction, but the contribution of the many good Popes far outweighs the sins and mistakes of the minority. Today we have one of the more unusual popes in history, enjoying almost unprecedented popularity. He is doing a marvelous job backing the financial reforms.... “May the Lord preserve the Holy Father, Pope Francis, and give him life, keep him safe on earth and deliver him not into the hands of his enemies.”⁵⁴

Given the Synod in which he had just participated, whose headlong rush toward a predetermined outcome he had been brought to halt by a most extraordinary protest in the presence of the Pope, it could not be easier to read between these lines. Nor, given the outcome of its first session, could one be anything but wary about the forthcoming Ordinary Synod of 2015. As Robert Royal observed in his post-Synodal report:

But don't get comfortable just yet. If this Synod has demonstrated anything, it's that Catholics need to be quite vigilant about what's going on, even in Rome. Pope Francis called on young people at World Youth Day in Rio to “raise a ruckus” (*hacer un lio*). Instead of hoping that somehow a tidy process can be anticipated, we all need to emulate those bishops who stood up and stopped what was not just a matter of a few mistranslated words and a flawed drafting process and document release.

It was all of those things and more. But it was also an indication of *resurgent radicalism within the Church*—which overplayed its hand and drew attention this time.⁵⁵

Yet Royal had not mentioned the gatekeeper of the resurgent radical threat that now required such vigilance on the part of the faithful: the man who had sat in the center of the dais throughout the Synod's stormy sessions, passing note after note to Cardinal Baldisseri, whom Cardinal Pell had stood up so courageously to oppose shoulder-to-shoulder with Cardinal Burke and the other “zealous” and “inflexible” cardinals who had contributed to *Remaining in the Truth in Christ*. Other commentators were not so circumspect. Francis's demagogic final address to the Synod he himself had so clearly primed for explosive conflict compelled one former admirer to issue a lamentation eloquently representative of the growing ranks of disillusioned and indeed horrified Catholics outside traditionalist circles. It merits quotation at length:

The Synod last year broke many things. But most particularly, it broke my human faith in the sincerity of the pope. I was prepared up to that point to believe that, somehow, human explanations existed for the calamitous blend of moralising, unilateral rule bending (ultramontanists can remove that snarl from their lips right this minute) and bizarre sponsorship of some of the worst parties to don a cassock.

But the Synod was different. The Synod seemed—to my human eye; *dico humane*—to show Pope Francis in hyper-cynical mode. He appointed the most appalling specimens to drive the Synod agenda, and drive it forward (or backward, I suppose) they did, to the open fury of many bishops and cardinals. When the most offensive parts of the *Instrumentum Laboris* failed to secure the right support, the pope insisted on their being kept in the final documentation anyway. All this I could understand, even if I was horrified by it. Horrified, simply horrified.

Then came his final address to the Synod.... As if the whole world could not see that he himself had poured out the petrol that set this Synod aflame, he delivered a final address (admittedly in his usual finger-wagging style) ticking off everybody on all sides of the debate. Maybe this is thought clever among Jesuits: start a fire, enjoy the conflagration and then reproach those who question whether it should have been bigger, as well as those who thought lighting fires was just plan stupid.

I'm afraid I was more horrified by this address than by anything else. It seemed like a stupendous monument to manipulation. It was simply abusive. It was spiritual bullying. Francis looked to be using his power—openly, overtly, with a transparency that shocked me to the core—simply to shut down criticism of his abuse of power.

And this was our father in Christ? My heart closed down.⁵⁶

In the month following the Synod came confirmation of Francis's brutal removal of

Cardinal Burke as head of the Apostolic Signatura. It was an unprecedented humiliation for a Vatican cardinal of such high rank, integrity, and distinguished service to the Church: demotion to the titular post of Patron of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta. Although he would remain in Rome, he had been handily “removed from the Roman Curia and from any position of governance in the Church.”⁵⁷

In that same month, however, a new episcopal opponent of the regime of novelty emerged on the world scene: the aptly named Bishop Athanasius Schneider of Kazakhstan. Bishop Schneider leveled a withering indictment of the Synod’s midterm report and the fraudulent manner in which it was presented as if the Synod had approved it. His words also merit quotation at length for the historical record:

During the Synod there had been moments of obvious manipulation on the part of some clerics who held key positions in the editorial and governing structure of the Synod. The interim report (*Relatio post disceptationem*) was clearly a prefabricated text with no reference to the actual statements of the Synod fathers. In the sections on homosexuality, sexuality and “divorced and remarried” with their admittance to the sacraments the text represents a radical neo-pagan ideology.

This is the first time in Church history that such a heterodox text was actually published as a document of an official meeting of Catholic bishops under the guidance of a pope, even though the text only had a preliminary character.

Thanks be to God and to the prayers of the faithful all over the world that a consistent number of Synod fathers resolutely rejected such an agenda; this agenda reflects the corrupt and pagan main stream morality of our time, which is being imposed globally by means of political pressure and through the almost all-powerful official mass media, which are loyal to the principles of the world gender ideology party.

Such a synod document, even if only preliminary, is a real shame and an indication to the extent the spirit of the anti-Christian world has already penetrated such important levels of the life of the Church. This document will remain for the future generations and for the historians a black mark which has stained the honour of the Apostolic See.⁵⁸

At the Synod the regime of novelty had unmistakably entered its ultimate phase: from the devastation of the Latin liturgical tradition and a *de facto* suspension of the Church’s divine commission to make disciples of all nations for the sake of “dialogue” and “ecumenism,” the regime was now moving toward an attack on morality itself. That movement was placed beyond all doubt by the so-called *Lineamenta*, issued to the world’s bishops on December 9, 2014, along with the Synod’s final *Relatio* or report. The purpose of the *Lineamenta* was transparent: to steer the second session of the Synod in October 2015 back in the direction from which the “revolt” of the conservative majority had diverted it. While the first time around the party line of the progressives had been that they were merely examining the “pastoral application” of doctrine without altering doctrine as such—as if the two things could be separated—that approach had failed to achieve the desired result. This time, therefore, doctrine had to go. The bishops literally were told not to limit themselves to the application of doctrine in addressing a series of loaded questions clearly written to suggest that the Church’s traditional discipline was now open to “re-thinking”:

The *Lineamenta* has a series of questions aimed at knowing how the document is received and to generate an in-depth examination of the work initiated during the Extraordinary Assembly. It is a matter of re-thinking “with renewed freshness and enthusiasm, what revelation, transmitted in the Church’s faith, tells us about the beauty, the role and the dignity of the family” (*Relatio Synodi*, n. 4)

The proposed questions which follow and the reference numbers to the paragraphs in the *Relatio Synodi* are

intended to assist the bishops' conferences in their reflection and to avoid, in their responses, a formulation of pastoral care based simply on an application of doctrine, which would not respect the conclusions of the Extraordinary Synodal Assembly and would lead their reflection far from the path already indicated.⁵⁹

The suggestion that it “would not respect the conclusions of the Extraordinary Synodal Assembly” to approach pastoral care “based simply on an application of doctrine” was little short of an outright lie. It was precisely the attempt to downplay doctrine in favor of “pastoral” accommodations of public adulterers and practicing homosexuals that the Synod’s first session had rejected. But, as the *Lineamenta*’s blatantly leading interrogatories made clear, the participants in Synod II were expected to find ways to do what Synod I had refused to do. For example:

With regard to the divorced and remarried, pastoral practice concerning the sacraments needs to be further studied, including assessment of the Orthodox practice and taking into account “the distinction between an objective sinful situation and extenuating circumstances” ([¶ 52](#)). What are the prospects in such a case? What is possible? What suggestions can be offered to resolve forms of undue or unnecessary impediments?

The world episcopate of the Catholic Church was thus being directed by the Synod controllers—including Francis himself—seriously to consider whether and how to introduce the Orthodox acceptance of divorce and remarriage into Catholic practice, just as Francis had first suggested during the in-flight news conference at which he had uttered his infamous “Who am I to judge?” respecting “gay persons” in the Catholic clergy. Even more disturbing, if that were possible, was the newly introduced distinction between “an objective sinful situation and extenuating circumstances,” as if “extenuating circumstances” could somehow eliminate the sacramental impediment posed by continuing public adultery. It was difficult to avoid the sense of an almost apocalyptic turn for the worse in the postconciliar revolution in the Church, now more than fifty years in duration.

“A Great Darkness Envelops Rome”

Concurrently with the Synod debacle, Francis was revealing another element of the Bergoglian program: the systematic rehabilitation of “liberation theology,” condemned by both John Paul II and Benedict XVI as a heretical amalgam of the Gospel and Marxian social analysis according to which the “poor in spirit” of the Gospel account become the “proletariat” of the Marxist class struggle for the revolutionary overthrow of existing governments and Christ becomes their revolutionary leader. As John Paul II admonished the Latin American episcopate: “This conception of Christ as a political figure, a revolutionary, as the subversive of Nazareth, does not tally with the Church’s catechesis.”⁶⁰ Hence, during his pontificate the CDF under the future Pope Benedict issued two condemnations of “liberation theology,” in 1981 and 1984.

But under Francis, the first Jesuit Pope, that was then and this is now. First came the publication in *L’Osservatore Romano* of lengthy passages from one of the works of Gustavo Gutierrez, the very “father” of liberation theology. Then came the rehabilitation of the Marxist priest-activist Miguel d’Escoto Brockmann. Suspended from the priesthood by John Paul II in 1984 on account of his involvement in the Marxist Sandinista government of Nicaragua as its Foreign Minister, d’Escoto was restored to priestly ministry by Francis on August 1, 2014. This despite d’Escoto’s continuing involvement in leftist politics after his suspension, including presiding over the General Assembly of the

United Nations in 2008. As Antonio Socci observed: “Once Bergoglio was elected, d’Escoto, ‘smelled the air’ and wrote to the new Pope asking for the end of his suspension ‘a *divinis*’ so that he could begin again celebrating Mass. The request was immediately granted.”⁶¹

Only a day later, d’Escoto, unrepentant and evincing nothing less than the same fanatical Marxism on account of which he had been suspended in the first place, declared during an interview with a Nicaraguan television station: “The Vatican may silence everyone, then God will make the stones speak, and may the stones spread his message, but He didn’t do this, He chose the greatest Latin-American of all time: Fidel Castro.... It is through Fidel Castro that the Holy Spirit sends us the message. This message of Jesus, of the need to struggle to establish, firmly and irreversibly, the kingdom of God on this earth, which is his alternative to the empire.”⁶²

For Socci, one of the most prominent Catholic voices in Italy, a journalist, author and public intellectual of the first rank, the d’Escoto rehabilitation was the last straw. Over the course of 2014, Socci (like this author) had been transformed from a vocal defender of Francis into one of the harshest critics of the Bergoglian agenda. Now he made no effort to conceal his outrage:

The kid-glove treatment Bergoglio used on the powerful and famous “companion” D’Escoto, contrasts with the iron-clad-fist used to hit a holy, humble religious—Father Stefano Manelli, Padre Pio’s spiritual son and founder of the Franciscans of the Immaculate. Father Manelli had written to the Pope too, but his letter wasn’t even taken into consideration.

His orthodox, disciplined religious family, full of vocations, has been annihilated by the will of Bergoglio himself, in so far as he had applied Benedict XVI’s *Motu Proprio* on the liturgy. He was just too orthodox.

Father Manelli has never been disobedient to the Church, has never deviated from sound doctrine, has never thrown himself into politics like D’Escoto and has never praised Communist tyrants....

Today, in the era of Bergoglio, we’re going back to Rahner, to that philosophy which has already done untold damage to the Jesuits and the Church. In this abysmal emptiness Catholics are again being tossed about here and there “by every wind of doctrine,”⁶³ subordinate to every ideology and contaminated by any and all heresies.

A great darkness envelops Rome.⁶⁴

Still another non-traditionalist voice of the Italian Catholic press had had enough of “the Francis effect.” Two months after Socci’s broadside, Sandro Magister, known for his moderate and cautious commentary, gave a scathing interview to the Italian journal *Oggi*.⁶⁵ Noting “the contradictions inherent in the character of Mario Bergoglio,” Magister observed that, unlike Benedict XVI, who had called for Asia Bibi’s pardon, this “very talkative Pope” had nothing to say about the plight of this woman, still awaiting execution in Pakistan for “insulting the Prophet.” Further, said Magister, while “Bergoglio has said repeatedly that he didn’t want to make compromises with doctrine, that he was with the tradition of the Church,” he had “opened discussions [at the Synod], like the ones on Communion for the divorced and remarried, which effectively touch the very foundations of the Church.... Because it is inevitable that Communion for the divorced and remarried will result in the acceptance of second-marriages, and so to the dissolution of the sacramental bond of matrimony.” By patently favoring the “Kasper proposal,” it was Francis who had effectively “opened hostilities” in the Church by “proposing again today exactly the same theses defeated in 1993 by John Paul II and Joseph Ratzinger, the latter

being the Prefect of the Holy Office at the time.”

Referring to “another recurring practice of this Pontificate: reprimands to one side and the other,” Magister noted, however, that “if we want to make an inventory, the scoldings aimed at the traditionalists, the legalists and the rigid defenders of doctrine appear to be much more numerous. On the other hand, whenever he has something to say to the progressives you never understand who he is really referring to.” And then there was this indictment, which a commentator of Magister’s mainstream respectability would never have countenanced respecting John Paul II, Benedict XVI or indeed any pope in Church history:

Francis’ popularity is more conspicuous outside the Church, even if it isn’t eliciting waves of conversions. Actually, with him there seems to be a certain pleasure in outside culture, even hostile, to Christianity.... In seeing the Head of the Church shifting towards their positions, which he seems to understand and even accept.... But, in all of this, he hasn’t drawn near to Christianity. The Christianity from the mouth of Bergoglio is no longer provocative, does not create problems as in the past, it can be treated with courtesy, superiority and detachment. Christianity matters less.

Despite the mounting evidence of a dangerously wayward pontificate, the neo-Catholic commentariat continued to deny or explain away the obvious. A prime example is a piece by William Doyno, Jr. appearing in *Inside the Vatican* at the end of 2014.⁶⁶ Doyno studiously ignored (a) every one of Francis’s explosive pronouncements in interviews, press conferences and *Evangelii Gaudium*; (b) the Synod debacle, including Francis’s relentless promotion of the “Kasper proposal,” the scandalous midterm report and the revolt of the conservative Fathers against the Synod’s manipulation by Francis’s handpicked controllers; (c) Francis’s “permission” to the woman in Argentina to receive Holy Communion while living in adultery; and (d) Francis’s incessant public attacks on traditional Catholics as legalists, rigorists and Pharisees at the same he was uttering “gay-friendly” sentiments, elevating notorious Modernists to important positions and rehabilitating “liberation theologians” silenced by John Paul II and Benedict XVI.

Cherry-picking a few of Francis’s more orthodox and far less conspicuous statements (e.g., a pro-life statement at a children’s hospital) while ignoring a mountain of contrary evidence, Doyno doggedly attempted to construct an image of “Francis the Faithful,” implacable foe of all compromise of doctrine and discipline and staunch defender of the unborn and traditional marriage and family. In response to Magister’s observation that “Christianity matters less” under Pope Bergoglio, Doyno cited “Francis’s daily [!] invocation of the words of Jesus to attack corrupt and lazy Christians who pay lip service to the Gospel.” But Magister was hardly talking about politically safe daily attacks on “corrupt and lazy Christians”—meaning observant Catholics, demagogically derided as cold-hearted legalists and Pharisees by the same Pope who had declared “Who am I to judge?” respecting homosexual clerics. Magister was referring to the Pope’s approach *ad extra*. The world recognized that with this pontificate, compared with Benedict XVI’s, Christianity was indeed “no longer provocative, does not create problems as in the past, it can be treated with courtesy, superiority and detachment” by world opinion. That is what had earned Francis the world’s almost hysterical praise after the Benedictine Respite, during which Benedict had been universally ridiculed and despised as “God’s Rottweiler.” Doyno seemed oblivious to the immense spiritual significance of the dramatic contrast: “If you had been of the world, the world would love its own: but because you are

not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.... Woe to you when men shall bless you: for according to these things did their fathers to the false prophets.”⁶⁷

Trotting out the Big Bertha of his argument, Doino referred to the Pope’s address to the European Parliament and Council of Europe on November 25. According to Doino, “Far from shrinking from battle, the Pope laid into Europe’s secularists good and hard.” That was simply not so. Francis had merely presented the standard post-Vatican II line that Christianity—not the Catholic Church, of course—politely offers a “contribution” to a Europe that must, naturally, continue to observe state secularity:

A Europe which is no longer open to the transcendent dimension of life is a Europe which risks slowly losing its own soul and that “humanistic spirit” which it still loves and defends.... I consider to be fundamental not only the legacy that Christianity has offered in the past to the social and cultural formation of the continent, but above all the contribution which it desires to offer today, and in the future, to Europe’s growth. This contribution does not represent a threat to the secularity of states or to the independence of the institutions of the European Union, but rather an enrichment.⁶⁸

Risks losing its soul? Slowly? Europe had long since lost its soul, along with its close ties to the Church. A vague appeal to “the transcendent dimension of life” and the “humanist spirit” would hardly bring it back. Moreover, what sort of “enrichment” could a generic “Christianity” offer to secular states that refuse to be Christian in their laws and institutions as enjoined by the social teaching of every Pope before Vatican II? Moreover, even this weak tea was presented merely as Francis’s opinion: “I consider to be fundamental....” etc. Precisely as Magister observed, what Francis “considered” apt could “be treated with courtesy, superiority and detachment” by the Europeans powers that be. And indeed it was. The speech offended no one, as it was only expected that Francis would say something vaguely Christian in the usual post-Vatican II mode. In essence, however, he had affirmed post-Christian Europe’s total independence from the authority of the Church, and thus Europe’s continuing apostasy with all its ruinous consequences. Very far from the lips of Francis was the truly courageous social teaching of great pre-conciliar Popes before a defiant world, such as Pius XI’s *Ubi Arcano Dei*, promulgated only forty years before the Council:

Because the Church is by divine institution the sole depository and interpreter of the ideals and teachings of Christ, she alone possesses in any complete and true sense the power effectively to combat that materialistic philosophy which has already done and, still threatens, such tremendous harm to the home and to the state. The Church alone can introduce into society and maintain therein the prestige of a true, sound spiritualism, the spiritualism of Christianity....

[T]he Church is able to set both public and private life on the road to righteousness by demanding that everything and all men become obedient to God “Who beholdeth the heart,” to His commands, to His laws, to His sanctions....

Since the Church is the safe and sure guide to conscience, for to her safekeeping alone there has been confided the doctrines and the promise of the assistance of Christ, she is able not only to bring about at the present hour a peace that is truly the peace of Christ, but can, better than any other agency which We know of, contribute greatly to the securing of the same peace for the future.... For the Church teaches (she alone has been given by God the mandate and the right to teach with authority) that not only our acts as individuals but also as groups and as nations must conform to the eternal law of God. In fact, it is much more important that the acts of a nation follow God’s law, since on the nation rests a much greater responsibility for the consequences of its acts than on the individual.

When, therefore, governments and nations follow in all their activities, whether they be national or international,

the dictates of conscience grounded in the teachings, precepts, and example of Jesus Christ, and which are binding on each and every individual, then only can we have faith in one another's word and trust in the peaceful solution of the difficulties and controversies which may grow out of differences in point of view or from clash of interests.⁶⁹

That is exactly the kind forthright declaration of the authority of Christ and His Church over the nations of Europe that really would constitute "[laying] into Europe's secularists good and hard." And that is why it is exactly the last thing Francis would have said.

Alarm in the Hierarchy

As 2015 approached, alarm over the Bergoglian program, having already spread far beyond traditionalist circles into the ranks of "mainstream" Catholics, now extended even into the Vatican apparatus itself. In February, the African Cardinal Robert Sarah, no less than head of the Congregation for Divine Worship, openly denounced as heretical the entire synodal project of creating "pastoral" exceptions to the application of doctrine, throwing down the gauntlet to the Synod's controllers:

The idea that would consist in placing the Magisterium in a nice box by detaching it from pastoral practice—which could evolve according to the circumstances, fads, and passions—is a form of heresy, a dangerous schizophrenic pathology. I affirm solemnly that the Church of Africa will firmly oppose every rebellion against the teaching of Christ and the Magisterium.⁷⁰

In that same month, it was revealed that the Synod's Secretary General, Cardinal Baldisseri, had prevented *Remaining in the Truth of Christ* from reaching the Synod Fathers by mail before their first session. The esteemed Vatican correspondent Edward Pentin (who had exposed Cardinal Kasper's racially condescending remarks about the African "taboo" concerning "the Kasper proposal") reported on the sordid affair: "A source told me that Baldisseri was 'furious' the book had been mailed to the participants and ordered staff at the Vatican post office to ensure they did not reach the Paul VI Hall."⁷¹ Under Francis, the Vatican apparatus he was supposed to be making transparent was exhibiting the characteristics of a banana republic dictatorship.

Even before the Synod's first session had commenced, Bishop Athanasius Schneider summed up the state of affairs a mere year after Francis's elevation to the papacy. Here too we are presented with a statement of historic import worthy of quotation at length:

I am not a prophet. We can only presume. But, if you look at the history of the Church, the deepest crisis was in the fourth century, that was Arianism. This was a tremendous crisis, all the episcopacy, almost all, collaborated with the heresy. Only some bishops remained faithful, you could count them on the fingers of one hand. This crisis lasted more or less 60 years

Then the terrible crisis of the so-called Obscure century, the 10th century, when the papacy was occupied by some very wicked and immoral Roman families. They occupied the papal chair with their corrupt sons, and it was a terrible crisis.

The next period of harm was the so-called exile of Avignon and was very damaging to the Church, causing the great occidental schism. All these crises lasted some 70-80 years and were very bad for the Church.

Now we are, I would say, in the fourth great crisis, in a tremendous confusion over doctrine and liturgy. We have already been in this for 50 years.... Nevertheless we have all the beauty of the divine truths, of divine love and grace in the Church. No one can take this away, no synod, no bishop, not even a Pope can take away the treasure and beauty of the Catholic faith, of the Eucharistic Jesus, of the sacraments. The unchangeable doctrine, the unchangeable liturgical principles, the holiness of the life constitute the true power of the Church.

The real crisis of the Church is anthropocentrism, forgetting the Christocentrism. Indeed, this is the deepest evil,

when man or the clergy are putting themselves in the centre when they are celebrating liturgy and when they are changing the revealed truth of God, e.g., concerning the Sixth Commandment and human sexuality.⁷²

If the real crisis of the Church today involves an anthropocentric amnesia concerning the Church's Christological mission, that crisis would become even deeper in the year of the Synod's second session.

On the cusp of the New Year, December 17, another of Francis's unpleasant surprises exploded on the world scene. His behind-the-scenes maneuvering over the previous eighteen months had—so the story goes—resulted in the “breakthrough” of the Obama administration's agreeing to resume diplomatic relations with Cuba, including the reestablishment of the U.S. Embassy and a recommendation that Congress end the trade embargo and Cuba's designation as a Sponsor of State Terrorism, thus beginning a process of “normalization” involving an eventual restoration of trade and tourism. In return, Raul Castro had promised nothing beyond the release of a single prisoner, one Alan Gross, a U.S. government contractor, while the persecution of the Catholic Church in that communist jail cell of an island continued with no guarantee of any loosening of government restrictions on the Church's activity.⁷³ Castro, second in command under his brother Fidel for nearly fifty years, has a long record of summarily executing, imprisoning without trial or simply massacring opponents of the Castro regime and those attempting to flee it, including women and children.⁷⁴

Obama's official statement on the “breakthrough” revealed that Francis had “issued a personal appeal to me, and to Cuba's President Raul Castro, urging us to resolve Alan's case... .”⁷⁵ Although Mr. Gross, a Jewish American, received the benefit of Francis's personal intervention, there is no indication that Francis sought any concessions for Catholic political prisoners in Cuba or greater freedom for the Church as a *quid pro quo* for the “breakthrough.” Francis's diplomatic meddling outraged many members of the Cuban émigré community. Said one, who had been a political prisoner on the island for sixteen years: “I'm still Catholic till the day I die, but I am a Catholic without a pope.”⁷⁶

Raul Castro, an apostate with the blood of countless innocent Catholics on his hands, later declared (following a warm visit with Francis at the Vatican): “I will resume praying and turn to the Church again if the Pope continues in this vein.”⁷⁷ Obama was quite happy to use Francis as political cover for his essentially unilateral concessions to the dictator: “I want to thank His Holiness Pope Francis, whose moral example shows us the importance of pursuing the world as it should be, rather than simply settling for the world as it is.”⁷⁸ Both the Abortion President and the current mass-murdering prison warden of Cuba were rather fond of Francis as opposed to the Catholic Church. Meanwhile, with the “synodal journey” that Francis extols, faithful Catholics were witnessing precisely an effort to settle for the world as it is rather than as it should be.

1. Saint Patrick Church Erie, PA, “Gospel & Homily 10-07-13: Divorce & Remarriage in the Church,” www.youtube.com/watch?v=JsaoEc9YH3s.

2. Cf. Chapter 12.

3. *EG*, n. 49.

4. Cf. chapters 8 and 13.

5. Available at vatican.va (calling Kasper “a clever theologian, a good theologian...”).
6. David Gibson, “Cardinal Kasper is the Pope’s Theologian,” *National Catholic Reporter*, June 3, 2014, @ ncronline.org.
7. Available in Italian at [http://www.ilfoglio.it/media/uploads/2011/VaticanoEsclusivo\(1\).pdf](http://www.ilfoglio.it/media/uploads/2011/VaticanoEsclusivo(1).pdf). All translations are by the author.
8. “Transcript: Pope Francis’ March 5 interview with *Corriere della Sera*,” Catholic News Agency, March 5, 2014; accessed at catholicnewsagency.com.
9. *Il Foglio*, March 1, 2014; accessed at www.ilfoglio.it.
10. Pius IX, Consistorial Allocution, September 27, 1852.
11. *Familiaris Consortio* (1981), n. 84.
12. *Sacramentum Caritatis*, n. 29.
13. See, e.g., Roberto de Mattel, “What God hath joined together... and The Cultural Revolution of Cardinal Kasper: Families are under attack and *this* is what the Cardinal is worried about?” *Il Foglio*, March 1, 2014, @ rorate-caeli.blogspot.com.
14. *Inside the Vatican*, February 2014 (edited); reprinted in full by *Catholic Family News*, www.cfnews.org.
15. Homily of February 28, 2014, @ www.news.va/en.
16. Edward Pentin, “The Strange Case of Bishop Livieres’ Removal,” September 30, 2014 *National Catholic Register* @ ncregister.com.
17. Nicole Winfield, “Pope removes divisive bishop in Paraguay,” Associated Press, September 25, 2014, @ yahoo.com.
18. *Crux*, November 4, 2014, @ cruxnow.com.
19. Pascale Bonnefoy, “Angry Protest Over New Bishop in Chile,” *The New York Times*, March 21, 2005, @ nytimes.com
20. Nicole Winfield, “Sex abuse panel upset at bishop’s appointment,” March 27, 2015, *The Boston Globe* @ bostonglobe.com.
21. Cf. Alexandra Colen, “The Fall of the Belgian Church,” June 24, 2010, *The Brussels Journal* @ brusselsjournal.com. Colen is a practicing Catholic, a member of the Belgian parliament and one of the leaders of the movement of parents that demanded accountability for Danneels.
22. “Shock with the appointment of Danneels to a Synod on the Family—and the memories of a 2010 tape,” September 11, 2014, *Rorate Caeli* @ rorate-caeli.blogspot.com.
23. Carol Kuruvilla, “Pope Francis cold call: Argentinian woman claims pontiff phoned with message for divorced Catholics,” *Daily News*, April 23, 2014, @ nydailynews.com.
24. Ibid.
25. Vatican Radio, “Fr. Lombardi responds to reports of Pope’s call to Argentinian woman,” April 24, 2014, @ <http://en.radiovaticana.va/>.
26. Jimmy Akin, “Did Pope Francis tell a divorced and civilly remarried woman she could receive Holy Communion?” April 23, 2014, @ ncregister.com.
27. Sandro Magister, “Francis’ Patient Revolution,” October 24, 2014, @ chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it.
28. Alessandro Speciale, “Vatican signals options for protecting gay couples,” *National Catholic Reporter*, February 3, 2014, @ ncronline.org.
29. Cf. Chapter 11.
30. Interview with *Kölner Stadtanzeiger* of Cologne, Germany, January 20, 2014; translation at <http://catholicchurchreform.com/voices7.html>.
31. Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Instruction on Respect for Human Life in its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation: Replies to Certain Questions of the Day,” February 22, 1987.

- [32.](#) *Instrumentum Laboris* (2014), nn. 18, 158 @ Vatican.va.
- [33.](#) Ibid, n. 13.
- [34.](#) Ibid, n. 30.
- [35.](#) EWTN interview, July 18, 2014, @ www.youtube.com/watch?v=6jfiEPvRyBA.
- [36.](#) David Gibson, “Cardinal Walter Kasper, ‘Pope’s Theologian’, Enjoying Spotlight of Francis’ Admiration,” May 20, 2014, huffingtonpost.com.
- [37.](#) *Remaining in the Truth of Christ*, ed. Fr. Robert Dodaro, OSD (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2014).
- [38.](#) Gerard O’Connell, “Cardinal Kasper: Some Fear a Domino Effect at the Synod on the Family,” *America*, September 29, 2014, @ americamagazine.org.
- [39.](#) “Stop the Synod!”, August 12, 2014, @ www.remnantnewspaper.com
- [40.](#) In Henry Edward Manning, *The Vatican Council and its Definitions* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1870), p. 24.
- [41.](#) See video of @ www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mo2ATzolxHM&list=PLoB89Ao5F9F6D3E47#t=1248.
- [42.](#) CNSnews.com, interview with Terence P. Jeffrey, October 30, 2014.
- [43.](#) Susan Wells, “Cardinal Pell: ‘You Must Stop Manipulating this Synod!’” *Aleteia.org*, October 18, 2014.
- [44.](#) Josephine McKenna, “Conservative Catholics Strike Back Against Synod Document Welcoming Gays,” *Religion News Service*, October 14, 2014.
- [45.](#) Interview in *Il Mattino*, September 18, 2014; translation provided by *Rorate Caeli*. Under probing questions by Raymond Arroyo, Kasper would later admit that the claim of explicit papal “approval” of the “Kasper proposal” was exaggerated, but the Pope’s implicit approval could hardly be doubted. See video interview @ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xeRQltA_inE.
- [46.](#) Carl E. Olson, “Card. Kasper denies he gave interview. Journalist posts recording of interview,” *Catholic World Report*, October 16, 2014.
- [47.](#) Gerard O’Connell, “Pushback at the Synod on the Family,” *America* magazine, October 14, 2014.
- [48.](#) Nicole Winfield, “Rollback: Bishops seek to balance opening to gays,” AP report, October 14, 2014.
- [49.](#) *Relatio Synodi*, English translation at vatican.va.
- [50.](#) *The Guardian*, October 14, 2014.
- [51.](#) Terrence McCoy, *The Washington Post*, October 20, 2014.
- [52.](#) *Address for Conclusion of the Third Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops*, October 18, 2014, @ w2.vatican.va.
- [53.](#) Ibid.
- [54.](#) George Cardinal Pell, Homily at 10th Anniversary of *Iuventutem*, October 28, 2014, @ zenit.org.
- [55.](#) Steve Jalsevac, “Robert Royal’s synod call to vigilance for the next year,” October 17, 2014 @ lifesitenews.com.
- [56.](#) “Cynicism, silence and love: a story in three movements,” by “Ches” @ thesensiblebond. blogspot. The author identifies himself as someone who had abandoned “the SSPX milieu.”
- [57.](#) Diane Montagna, “Cardinal Burke Removed as Head of Vatican’s Highest Court: Becomes Patron of the Order of Malta,” November 8, 2014, @ aleteia.org.
- [58.](#) Izabella Parowich, “Bishop Athanasius Schneider on the Synod on the Family,” November 5, 2014, @ lifesitenews.com.
- [59.](#) *Lineamenta*, December 9, 2014, Preface and Part I @ Vatican.va.
- [60.](#) Address to Third General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate, January 28, 1979, @ vatican.va.
- [61.](#) “Socci—’DARKNESS IN ROME: Liberation Theology Triumphant as Work of John Paul II & Benedict XVI is Completely Wiped Out,’” translation by rorate-caeli-blogspot.com, September 9, 2014.

[62.](#) “In New Declarations, Priest Pardoned by Pope Francis Says, *‘The Holy Spirit Sends Us Jesus’ Message through Fidel Castro,*” translation @ [rorate-caeli.blogspot.com](#).

[63.](#) An allusion to the homily by Cardinal Ratzinger at Mass for the opening of conclave that elected him Pope @ [vatican.va](#).

[64.](#) “Socci—’DARKNESS IN ROME: Liberation Theology Triumphant,’” loc. cit.

[65.](#) “Under Bergoglio, Christianity Matters Less—A Contradictory Pope,” November 13, 2014; English translation @ [roratecaeli.blogspot.com](#). The interviewer’s questions have been omitted for the sake of brevity.

[66.](#) William Doino, Jr., “Francis the Faithful: A Reply to the Pope’s Critics,” December 1, 2014, @ [insidethevatican.com](#).

[67.](#) Jn. 15:19; Lk. 6:26.

[68.](#) Address to the European Parliament, November 25, 2014 @ [W2.vatican.va](#).

[69.](#) *Ubi Arcano Dei* (1922), nn. 42–45.

[70.](#) Hilary White, “Detaching ‘pastoral practice’ from Catholic doctrine is a ‘dangerous schizophrenic pathology’: Vatican cardinal,” February 23, 2015, @ [lifesitenews.com](#).

[71.](#) Edward Pentin, “Vatican alleged to have intercepted Synod book,” February 25, 2015; quoted in Pat Archbold, “Cardinal Baldisseri Has to Go,” February 26, 2015, @ [ncrregister.com](#).

[72.](#) “Bishop Athanasius Schneider: ‘We are in the fourth great crisis of the Church.’” Interview with *Catholic Herald*, June 6, 2014, @ [catholicherald.co.uk](#).

[73.](#) Cuba denies any connection of the “breakthrough” to a separate prisoner swap in which three Cuban agents imprisoned in the United States were exchanged for one U.S. spy imprisoned in Cuba.

[74.](#) Cf. “New Castro, Same Cuba,” November 18, 2009, Human Rights Watch Report @ [hrw.org](#) and “Raul Castro’s Long History of Crimes Against Humanity,” February 25, 2008, @ [www.cubademocraciayvida.org/](#).

[75.](#) “Statement by President on Cuba Policy Changes,” December 17, 2014, @ [www.whitehouse.gov](#).

[76.](#) “Cuban-American Catholics feel betrayed by Pope,” December 21, 2014, AP report @ [nationnews.com](#).

[77.](#) Scott Neuman, “Raul Castro Says Pope Inspiring Him to Return to Church,” May 10, 2015, National Public Radio report @ [npr.org](#).

[78.](#) “Statement by President on Cuba Policy Changes,” loc. cit.

The Gathering Storm

If, as the press rightly surmised, the conservative “revolt” at Synod 2014 represented a defeat for Francis in his effort create an “opening” to Communion for the divorced and “remarried” and to “homosexual unions” in the Church, his words and gestures during the new year indicated a continuing determination to reach the same result, along with an increasingly alarming progressive drift in his pontificate.

The “Rabbitgate” Affair

In January, Francis’s already astonishing torrent of deprecations of orthodoxy and orthopraxis, hitherto aimed at ill-defined groups of the faithful or “so-called traditionalists,” took a nasty personal turn. During the in-flight press conference on the way back from his trip to Manila, he did something else the Church had never seen in two millennia: publicly denouncing a woman he had met in a parish somewhere because she had trusted in God to see her through an eighth pregnancy. Indulging for the umpteenth time an apparently insatiable desire to speak to the press, Francis added these infamous words to a string of pronouncements the likes of which no Pope had ever uttered:

This does not mean that the Christian must make children in series. I rebuked a woman some months ago in a parish, who was pregnant eight times, with seven C-sections (cesareans). “But do you want to leave seven orphans? This is to tempt God!” He [Paul VI] speaks of responsible parenthood.¹

Incredibly enough, the very Vicar of Christ provided the world media with enough identifiers to make it obvious to everyone who knew this woman that the Pope had personally accused her of being an irresponsible mother who had sinned mortally by tempting God. It apparently did not occur to Francis that the woman had exhibited heroic virtue by accepting all the children God had given her with the assistance of a procedure modern medicine routinely provides to mothers all over the world facing difficult pregnancies.

Not yet done with the poor woman, Francis went out of his way to denounce her again toward the end of the press conference. It came in response to a reporter’s loaded question about whether poverty in the Philippines is related to the fact that the average Filipino woman has three or more children:

That example I mentioned shortly before about that woman who was expecting her eighth (child) and already had seven who were born with caesareans. *That is an irresponsibility* [said with emphasis]. “No but I trust in God! [mocking the woman’s faith].” But God gives you methods to be responsible. Some think that, excuse me if I use that word, that in order to be good Catholics we have to be like rabbits. No. Responsible parenthood! This is clear and that is why in the church there are marriage groups, there are experts in this matter, there are pastors, one can seek and I know so many, many ways out that are licit and that have helped this. You did well to ask me this.

These words were a font of revelation about the shockingly crude mentality behind them. What sort of Pope would publicly denounce as a reckless tempter of God a faithful Catholic woman who had trusted in His providence—a trust so obviously rewarded with many children safely delivered? What sort of Pope would use this woman as an example of Catholics who think they must “be like rabbits,” thus lending credence to the world’s

vicious caricature of Catholic motherhood? Further, what sort of Pope would refer to “many, many ways out” of pregnancy, as if parenthood were a trap from which Catholics need an escape hatch? And what did Francis mean by “many, many ways out,” given that abstinence, either permanent or periodic, is the only licit way to avoid conception, and this only for grave reasons? But the embarrassment did not end there. Francis continued with these remarks about Filipinos living in poverty:

Another curious thing in relation to this is that for the poorest people [*le gente più povere*], a child is a treasure. It is true that you have to be prudent here too, but for them a child is a treasure. Some would say “God knows how to help me” and perhaps some of them are not prudent, this is true. Responsible paternity. But let us also look at the generosity of that father and mother who see a treasure in every child.²

Why did Francis think it “curious” that for the poorest people a child is a treasure? Why did he say that “here too”—meaning among the very poor—“you have to be prudent,” as if to suggest that the very poor are entitled to be somewhat less “responsible” in begetting children because for “them” a child is a treasure and they have no other treasure? All in all, the man the press had been idolizing as a humble and tender pastor of the poor—by way of invidious comparison with his predecessor—here revealed not a little condescension toward them. And even when the inevitable “clarification” came two days later, with the Pope this time reading a prepared statement at his Wednesday audience address praising large families and affirming that every child is a gift from God, there was not even the hint of an apology to the woman he had just calumniated before the entire world precisely because she had courageously accepted eight of those precious gifts from God.

In the aftermath of the latest Bergoglian indignity, the neo-Catholic bloggers on “Team Bergoglio” desperately wrenched the “be like rabbits” remark from its context of the particular woman Francis had publicly denounced, arguing that the Pope was merely generalizing about Catholic teaching. But for some, the effort at this point was half-hearted. Even at Patheos, an Internet clearinghouse for neo-Catholic correctness, one read the following from the neo-Catholic *doyenne* Simcha Fisher: “Look, this is our Pope. He’s kind of a blabbermouth, and sooner or later, he’s going to irritate just about everybody.”³ Not everybody, however, but only observant Catholics. Antonio Socci, growing increasingly disgusted, drove home the following devastating point: “if she [the woman] had said she used the Pill or had divorced, he [Francis] would have said ‘Who am I to judge?’” The Pope whose media-driven theme is “mercy and compassion”⁴ had displayed an utter lack of mercy and compassion for Catholics striving heroically to live their faith in conformity with the Church’s demanding yet liberating teaching.

“Rabbitgate” may have been as much a turning point in the Bergoglian pontificate as Watergate was for Richard Nixon—a fitting development for a papacy that was being conducted as if it were a presidency. The blogosphere was soon bristling with the protests of Catholic mothers who had had multiple C-sections and Catholic parents of eight or more children who were finally noticing what traditionalists have been observing for nearly two years: there was something gravely amiss with this papacy, something the Church had never experienced before. As one contributor to the resolutely middle-of-the-road *aleteia.org* observed: “if Facebook is any indication, many large Catholic families are a lot less enamored of Pope Francis after ‘rabbits.’”⁵ Although the same people had

generally accepted without protest all of the Pope's prior scandalous words and deeds, leaving mostly traditionalists to raise objections, this time Francis had struck rather too close to home for the "conservative" Catholic rank and file; new eyes were being opened. As the same writer observed: "If Francis after rabbits is diminished for you, so be it. Jesus Christ still reigns." Here, for once, someone in the neo-Catholic sector of the blogosphere had proposed a realistic perspective on the papacy.

The widening perception that Francis is a loose cannon may well be a crucial factor in solidifying the hierarchical and lay opposition that will be necessary to prevent the train wreck he has clearly had in mind for Synod 2015, if the boasting of his handpicked leader of the Council of Eight is any indication. As Cardinal Rodríguez Maradiaga revealed days later, with all the recklessness that had earned him the title "Mad Dog" Maradiaga:

The Council propelled institutional renovations, following the logic of the Spirit. These reforms encompass all levels of the ecclesial organization.... But the institutional and functional changes—alone in themselves—proved insufficient, superficial.... The Pope wants to take this Church renovation to the point where it becomes irreversible.⁶

No denial was forthcoming from Francis or the beleaguered Father Lombardi.

Hugs for Transsexuals

Also in January the Catholic faithful, by now habituated to the regular detonation of Bergoglian bombshells, read the news that on Christmas Eve the Pope had made another his famous telephone calls: this time to a female "transsexual" in Spain who had undergone "gender-reassignment surgery," i.e., surgical self-mutilation. This disturbed woman was now calling herself Diego Neria Lejárraga. As with others who had received one of Francis's "cold calls," Neria had written him to complain about unsympathetic treatment "he" had received from insufficiently open-minded Catholics. These intolerant rigorists apparently included Neria's own mother, who had pleaded with her "not to change his [sic] body while she lived." "Neria waited until a year after her mother's death" before she "contacted a plastic surgeon and started changing his [sic] body."

Francis invited Neria and "his" purported "fiancee" to the Vatican for a personal audience, even offering an envelope of cash to reimburse the "transsexual couple" for their travel expenses. As reported by the Pope's official biographer, Austin Invereigh, the meeting took place on January 24 at the papal residence. Neria described it as "marvellous, unique and intimate" experience, with the Pope embracing "him" and expressing pleasure at the "couple's" plan to "start a family."⁷ As Invereigh further reported, during his Christmas Eve telephone call to Neria, a surgically mutilated woman pretending to be a man, Francis declared: "God loves all his children, however they are; you are a son of God, who accepts you exactly as you are. Of course you are a son of the Church!"

Here was yet another example of how Francis said one thing but did another to the world's constant delight: having criticized "gender theory" in a book published a month before because "it does not recognize the order of creation,"⁸ a month later he personally telephoned, affirmed in her actions and welcomed to his residence for a warm embrace a woman who had disregarded the order of creation by hiring a surgeon to mutilate her because she had "chosen" to be male.

Another Papal Dispensation for Public Adultery

In March, Francis reportedly issued another of his dispensations from the Church's discipline respecting public adulterers and the reception of Holy Communion. This time a lifelong friend, Oscar Crespo, brought to the Pope's attention the complaint of a woman from Buenos Aires, one Claudia Garcia Larumbe, who had divorced and was now living out of wedlock with another man and "longed to confess and receive communion." She had been unable to write to Francis in time for Crespo's visit to Rome but had asked him to intervene on her behalf. According to Crespo, the Pope replied: "'go back and tell her that she can.' I was surprised by his response and I said to him, 'but isn't that forbidden?' He said, 'just tell her the Pope says that she can.'" Larumbe told the press that "she was speechless and emotional after receiving the Holy Father's personal dispensation to partake in the key Catholic sacraments."⁹

The Vatican was once again reduced to a non-denial by Father Lombardi: "If the Holy Father did have this conversation it forms part of his personal relationships and was a private conversation which does not have any bearing on the teaching of the Church." The claim that personal papal dispensations from bimillennial Church discipline, reported to the world, have no bearing on Catholic teaching was as disingenuous as it was revealing. Under Francis, the Vatican Press Office was at pains to defend Church teaching against repeated undermining by the Pope's "private" gestures. But here Francis had only done precisely what he did as Archbishop of Buenos Aires: authorize Holy Communion for people living in adulterous relationships. Francis had already made it clear from his promotion of "the Kasper proposal" at the Synod that this was his fixed and invariant notion of "mercy."

In fact, only days later, Francis continued his "mercy offensive" with yet another blast from the pulpit against unidentified "doctors of the law" in the Church:

A man or woman who feels sick of soul, sad, who has made many mistakes in life, at a certain time feels that the waters are moving ... the Holy Spirit is moving something ... or they hear a word or think, "Ah, I want to go!" [to Church]. And they gather up their courage and go. And how many times in Christian communities today will they find closed doors! "But you cannot, no, you cannot [come in]. You have sinned and you cannot [come in]. If you want to come, come to Mass on Sunday, but that's it—that's all you can do." So, what the Holy Spirit creates in the hearts of people, those Christians with their "doctors of the law" mentality, destroy.... Who are you to shut the door of your heart to a man or woman who wants to improve, to return within the people of God—because the Holy Spirit has stirred his or her heart?¹⁰

The obvious import of this demagogic outburst was not lost on Father John Zuhlsdorf, one of the world's most popular Catholic bloggers and commentators: the Pope was continuing to agitate for the admission of divorced and remarried Catholics to the Sacraments. Wrote Zuhlsdorf:

But it seems to me that he [Francis] has set up a straw man: who the heck are these "doctors of the law" whom he has been disparaging with some frequency? I think he means those who argue that people who are divorced and civilly remarried should not be admitted to Holy Communion because they are objectively living in a state that is inconsistent with our understanding of the Eucharist.¹¹

Indeed, whom else could Francis possibly have been talking about?

The "Jubilee of Mercy"

A month later the “mercy offensive” continued with the “Bull of Indiction” for an “Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy.” This remarkable document, in which the word mercy appears 167 times, literally suggested that the Catholic Church had forgotten how to be merciful but now, under Francis, would at last rediscover the quality of mercy:

Perhaps we have long since forgotten how to show and live the way of mercy. The temptation, on the one hand, to focus exclusively on justice made us forget that this is only the first, albeit necessary and indispensable step. But the Church needs to go beyond and strive for a higher and more important goal.... The time has come for the Church to take up the joyful call to mercy once more. It is time to return to the basics and to bear the weaknesses and struggles of our brothers and sisters... [12](#)

The claim that the Church had become a harsh mistress, focusing exclusively on justice to the exclusion of mercy, was absurd on its face. The reality since the Council was exactly the opposite: a spreading spirit of utter laxity in which justice had been completely forgotten and replaced by a distorted notion of mercy which, to the neglect of souls, avoided all condemnation of sin and error. The result after half a century of ecclesial drift was that Catholics in the main had become just as liberal as Protestants concerning contraception, abortion, divorce and “gay marriage.”

Given this reality, where exactly did Francis see the supposed victims of an imaginary pandemic of rigorism in the Church? Who in particular were the “brothers and sisters” whose “weaknesses and struggles” the Church was supposedly refusing to bear? In view of the general decline of morals in the Church, the only reasonable conclusion is that Francis was referring to divorced and civilly “remarried” Catholics and others living in a state of adultery; Catholics employing artificial contraception (a large majority today); Catholics excommunicated *latae sententiae* because they had obtained, performed or materially cooperated in an abortion; and “partners” in “homosexual unions,” whose “precious support” for each other had received such sympathetic treatment in the Synod’s scandalous midterm report (which Francis had ordered circulated to the world’s bishops despite its rejection by the Synod Fathers). The suggestion of a kind of amnesty on sexual sins was supported by Francis’s surprise announcement in the Bull concerning the Season of Lent in 2016:

I intend to send out Missionaries of Mercy. They will be a sign of the Church’s maternal solicitude for the People of God.... There will be priests to whom I will grant the authority to pardon even those sins reserved to the Holy See, so that the breadth of their mandate as confessors will be even clearer. They will be, above all, living signs of the Father’s readiness to welcome those in search of his pardon. They will be missionaries of mercy because they will be facilitators of a truly human encounter, a source of liberation, rich with responsibility for overcoming obstacles and taking up the new life of Baptism again. [13](#)

These “Missionaries of Mercy” would apparently be empowered to grant absolution over and against the contrary judgments of local ordinaries and confessors in the parish churches. Otherwise, what would be the point of sending them into the dioceses? For one thing, there are no longer “sins reserved to the Holy See” for which such “missionaries” would be needed to act in the Pope’s name. Formerly, only the Holy See could grant absolution for five specified sins: (1) discarding or stealing a consecrated Host; (2) physically assaulting the Supreme Pontiff; (3) granting absolution to a priest’s partner in sexual sin; (4) consecration of a bishop without a papal mandate; (5) priestly violation of the seal of confession. Under the 1983 Code of Canon Law, however, the local ordinary or a parish priest designated by him can now absolve those sins. Only the canonical penalties

that might attach (excommunication or loss of office) still require the Holy See's remittance; but the remission of penalties is not the same as absolution, which is what the "Missionaries of Mercy" will be empowered to grant.

Moreover, telltale phrases in the Bull indicated that the "Missionaries of Mercy" were conceived as "super-confessors" authorized to grant absolution where it had otherwise been denied. The phrase "authority to pardon even those sins reserved to the Holy See, so that the breadth of their mandate as confessors will be even clearer" could reasonably mean only that "sins reserved to the Holy See" were merely examples of the "breadth" of this "mandate," which would extend much further. As for the phrase "living signs of the Father's readiness to welcome those in search of his [sic] pardon," were the world's parish priests not already prepared to welcome those in search of pardon? If anything, pardon has never been easier to find in the local confessional or "reconciliation room." In many dioceses and parishes everything from contraception to adulterous second unions was already being excused or tolerated in practice and "absolution" routinely granted to objective mortal sinners without any firm purpose of amendment. Yet Francis apparently had even more leniency in view. Again, if this were not the case then what was the point of the "Missionaries of Mercy"?

The notion that these new super-confessors would be "facilitators of a truly human encounter...." involved remarkable condescension toward the institutional Church, as if Francis must singlehandedly remedy its failure to provide a "truly human encounter" between priest and penitent. As for the super-confessors being "a source of liberation, rich with responsibility for overcoming obstacles," how was this not a dead giveaway for a plan to use specially deputed priests to grant "absolution" where it had been rightly denied—to people living in adulterous "second marriages," among others—should the next session of the Synod fail to deliver what Francis and the Synod controllers still clearly wanted? Or if, God forbid, the Synod should overturn the Church's perennial refusal to admit public adulterers to Holy Communion, was it not obvious that the super-confessors would be authorized, like a kind of ecclesiastical SWAT team, to swoop down and "overrule" or at least intimidate prelates and priests who might be insufficiently cooperative in "the Francis Revolution"—especially the African hierarchy in its declared resolve (per Cardinal Sarah) to "firmly oppose every rebellion against the teaching of Christ and the Magisterium"?

Forward!

On March 7, 2015, Pope Francis commemorated the 50th anniversary of the first Mass celebrated by Paul VI in accordance with the new version of Missal circulating in 1965, never officially promulgated as the *Novus Ordo Missae*. Ironically, the Mass that Francis celebrated on this occasion bore little resemblance to the still predominately Latin order of Mass employed by Paul VI. The commemoration took place at the very parish where Pope Paul had launched his liturgical revolution: the Ognissanti in Rome. Standing next to him as he made the following concluding remarks outside the church was none other than Cardinal Kasper, whose titular parish this was:

Thank you so much, thank you so much for your hospitality, for the prayer with me in the Mass; and we thank the Lord for what He has done in the Church in these 50 years of liturgical reform. It was in fact a courageous gesture of the Church to draw close to the People of God, so that they could understand well what she does, and this is

important for us, to follow the Mass in this way. And we cannot go back; we must always go forward, always forward and whoever goes back is mistaken. We go forward on this way.

Here was a determined renewal of all the blind progressivism of the past fifty years of the regime of novelty. The Church must go “forward, always forward.” The Church “cannot go back.” Neither “forward” nor “back” was invested with any particular meaning, nor did “forward” relate to any particular goal. Completely ignored was the manifest “collapse of the liturgy” lamented by Cardinal Ratzinger, who had attempted to repair the damage while Pope. The “liturgical reform” was resolutely hailed as a gift from God in the midst of post-Catholic Europe, in which the percentage of Catholics attending Mass every Sunday was now in the single digits and what John Paul II had called “silent apostasy,”¹⁴ less than two years before his death, was evident everywhere.

In stark contrast was a letter from Pope Emeritus Benedict, only months before, to the annual gathering of International Committee *Summorum Pontificum*: “I am very glad that the *Usus antiquus* [the traditional Latin Mass] now lives in full peace within the Church, also among the young, supported and celebrated by great Cardinals....”—a telling reference to Cardinal Burke and a few others who had dared to “go back” to the Church’s timeless liturgical tradition. In the same missive the “retired” Pope, still clearly in full possession of his faculties, offered this assessment of the sorry state of the postconciliar novelties of “dialogue” and “interreligious dialogue”:

It is presupposed that the authentic truth about God, in the final analysis, is unattainable and that at most the ineffable can be made present with a variety of symbols. This renunciation of the truth seems realistic and useful for peace among religions in the world. And nonetheless this is lethal to faith. In fact, faith loses its binding character and its seriousness if everything is reduced to symbols that are ultimately interchangeable, capable of pointing only from far away to the inaccessible mystery of the divine.¹⁵

Sandro Magister, citing Benedict’s letter, rather archly referred to “The ‘*Evangelii Gaudium*’ of Pope Emeritus Benedict.”¹⁶ But in 2015 Francis’s personal manifesto in EG would be supplanted by another book-length document, this time a formal papal encyclical involving yet another addition to the regime of novelty: a call for “ecological conversion” to address an “ecological crisis.”

A Prominent Priest Speaks Out

In May, during an urgent international gathering of pro-life leaders in Rome to organize worldwide opposition to the progressives’ plans for the forthcoming second session of the Synod, the renowned pro-life cleric Fr. Linus Clovis voiced the growing alarm of Catholics around the world concerning the increasingly disturbing contours of the Bergoglian program:

The Church’s traditional enemies—and this is vocalized, articulated in *Time Magazine*, *Rolling Stone*, *The Advocate*, and so on—approve of him, he appeared on their front cover many times over the past two years. I came across a quote from someone who knew him in Argentina. “Apparently, he loves to be loved by all and please everyone, so one day he could make a speech on TV against abortion, and the next day, on the same television show, bless the pro-abortion feminists in the Plaza de Mayo; He can give a wonderful speech against the Masons and, a few hours later, be dining and drinking with them in the Rotary Club.”¹⁷

So, how can you make a decision about a man like this, who is everybody’s friend? Our Lord tells us: “Nevertheless,”—this is 12th chapter of St. John’s Gospel—“Nevertheless, many of the authorities believed in him, [Our Lord] but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it lest they should be put out of the synagogue, for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.” Am I making judgment? I don’t think so. I’m

quoting scripture. Where the die falls, let it rest.¹⁸

Citing the public scandal of Cardinal Dolan's applauding the "coming out" of the "gay" football player Michael Sam—"Bravo! ... I would have no sense of judgment on him ... God bless ya!"¹⁹—Fr. Clovis linked the scandal directly to the current pontificate's deleterious effects:

When a bishop—a Catholic bishop—can applaud sin publicly, it causes us to tremble. But this is essentially the "Francis Effect." It's disarming bishops and priests, especially after the Holy Father said, "Who am I to judge?" If I as a priest say Mass, preaching, and I make a judgment about a sin, one breaking the Ten Commandments, I would be condemned for judging. I would be accused of being "more Catholic than the pope." There used to be a saying—rhetorical—"Is the pope Catholic?" That's no longer funny.

The Radcliffe Appointment

On May 16, 2015, Francis appointed to the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace the notorious "pro-gay" clerical subversive Timothy Radcliffe. Radcliffe had been publicly promoting "gay sexuality" in the Church for years before his appointment. In 2006, for example, he wrote that "gay sexuality"—that is, sodomy—"can be generous, vulnerable, tender, mutual and non-violent. So in many ways, I would think that it can be expressive of Christ's self-gift. We can also see how it can be expressive of mutual fidelity, a covenantal relationship in which two people bind themselves to each other for ever."²⁰ Radcliffe's views were echoed in the 2014 Synod's midterm report, which referred to the "precious support for the partners" supposedly provided by "homosexual unions." In a bizarre twist on gay propaganda, however, Radcliffe had expressed opposition to "gay marriage" only because it "demeans gay people by forcing them to conform to the straight world."²¹

At a "religious education" lecture in Los Angeles in 2006, Radcliffe declared: "We must accompany [gay people] as they discern what this means, letting our images be stretched open.... This means watching 'Brokeback Mountain,' reading gay novels, living with our gay friends and listening with them as they listen to the Lord."²² One is reminded here of Francis's own infamous declaration two years earlier: "If someone is gay and he searches for the Lord and has good will, who am I to judge?" Radcliffe had also "spoken up in support of the German bishops' desire to admit the divorced and remarried to Communion," meaning "the Kasper proposal" Francis had implemented in his own way as Archbishop of Buenos Aires and had been promoting as Pope since the moment of his election.²³

Radcliffe's views are so offensive to faith and morals that in 2011, under Pope Benedict, the Vatican prohibited his appearance to address the general assembly of Caritas International. Even the neo-Catholic flagship EWTN suspended its usual coverage of Ireland's Divine Mercy Conference for the sole reason that Fr. Radcliffe was the keynote speaker.²⁴ Yet, Francis had just approved the elevation of Radcliffe to the dignity of a papal consultor, reportedly grooming him to be head of a proposed new "department of human ecology" at Peace and Justice. According to Cardinal Turkson, it was none other than Radcliffe who was "entrusted last summer ... to draft a first draft of Pope Francis' upcoming encyclical on ecology."²⁵

1. Video @ www.youtube.com/watch?v=s6n402BDFGU#t=212.
2. Full English transcript @ catholicnewsagency.com, January 23, 2015.
3. “About the Pope’s ‘don’t be like rabbits’ remark UPDATED,” January 20, 2014, @ patheos.com.
4. See en.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/01/15/pope_francis_arrives_in_the_philippines_for_three_day_visit/1118331.
5. Tom Hoopes, “Pope Francis after Rabbits,” January 26, 2015, @ aleteia.org/.
6. “Cardinal Rodriguez Maradiaga: Pope wants to take ‘Church renovation’ to ‘irreversible’ point: Previous reforms were ‘insufficient, superficial’, Church reform to be ‘deep and total’,” January 20, 2015, @ rorate-caeli.blogspot.com.
7. Austin Invereigh, “‘Of course you are a son of the Church’, Francis tells transgender man,” January 26, 2015, @ cvcomment.org; see also “Francis welcomes in private audience same-sex ‘couple’: transsexual ‘former woman and ‘wife’” @ rorate-caeli.blogspot.com (including a translation of the Spanish newspaper interview and a confirmation of the meeting in the Italian Bishops’ Conference newspaper, *Avvenire*).
8. Joshua J. McElwee, February 13, 2015, “Francis strongly criticizes gender theory, comparing it to nuclear arms” @ ncronline.org.
9. “Pope ... tells divorced woman ‘living in sin’ that she COULD receive Holy Communion, claims confidante.” *Daily Mail* online, March 12, 2015, @ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk>.
10. Homily of March 17, 2015, Casa Santa Marta @ radiovaticana.va; video of homily available @ <https://youtu.be/-DAiPS41CZc>.
11. “Pope Francis and ‘Doctors of the Law,’” March 18, 2015.
12. *Misericordiae Vultus* (2015), n. 10 @ vatican.va.
13. *Ibid.*, n. 18.
14. *Ecclesia in Europa*, June 28, 2003.
15. Quoted in Sandro Magister, “The ‘Evangelii Gaudium’ of Pope Emeritus Benedict,” October 28, 2014 @ chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/.
16. *Ibid.*
17. A reference to the Open Letter to Pope Francis, discussed above.
18. Steve Skojec, “Leading Pro-Life Priest Laments the Francis Effect,” May 14, 2015, @ onepeterfive.com.
19. “Cardinal Dolan Says ‘Bravo’ to Gay Football Player Michael Sam,” March 7, 2014, @ nbcnewyork.com.
20. Anglican House of Bishops report of Working Group on Human Sexuality, p. 77 @ https://www.churchofengland.org/media/1891063/pilling_report_gs_1929_web.pdf. See also, Lisa Bourne, “Vatican appointee says gay sex can express Christ’s ‘self-gift,’” *Life Site News*, May 19, 2015, @ lifesitenews.com.
21. Bourne, op. cit.
22. *Ibid.*
23. “Fr. Timothy Radcliffe: Controversial thinker and new Vatican consultant,” Catholic News Agency, May 21, 2015, @ <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com>.
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid.*

The Regime of Novelty Goes “Green”... and Red

On June 18, 2015, *Laudato Si'* (LS) was presented to the public at a Vatican press conference. Like so many of Francis's gestures and utterances, the world would sing its praises as a great leap forward for “the Francis revolution.” The Pope's choice of presenters augured well for the world's resounding approval: an Orthodox bishop, John Zizioulas; Hans Joachim Schellnhuber, an atheist and one of the world's leading “sustainable development” gurus; and Carolyn Woo, President of Catholic Relief Services, notorious for its heavy financial support of the pro-abortion, pro-contraception group CARE.¹

Let it be said at the outset that there is much in this document that is entirely consistent with Catholic social teaching, including its perfectly legitimate criticisms of the excesses of capitalism and the evils of technocracy and its call for solicitude for the plight of the poor, although its 185 pages somehow managed to overlook completely the decisive role of secular nation-states and socialist policies in the socioeconomic problems it identifies. Nor can it be denied that the Roman Pontiff has every right to admonish Catholics to be responsible stewards of creation, avoiding abuse of natural resources and personal waste and extravagance in their lives.

But LS was intended as much more than a presentation of such sound moral advice. It was Francis's second book-length manifesto, written with the assistance of Radcliffe, Schellnhuber, Jeffrey Sachs and other atheist “climate science” ideologues,² as well as the writings of Leonardo Boff,³ infamous proponent of liberation theology and earth-worship, who was twice silenced by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith under John Paul II before he declared his abandonment of the Catholic priesthood. Addressed to “every person living on this planet,” LS marked the beginning of the next paradigm shift in the regime of novelty: “ecological conversion,” the latest distraction from traditional Catholicism.

Enter the New Paradigm

First of all, as expected—and dreaded—by traditionalist and “conservative” Catholics alike, LS committed the prestige of the Holy See to the junk science of “climate change” alarmism. In an unparalleled abuse of the papal office, LS, announcing an “ecological crisis,” adopted the following patently dubious or grossly exaggerated scientific and factual claims, gratuitously asserted without supporting references:

- “The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth.” (LS 21)
- “In many parts of the planet, the elderly lament that once beautiful landscapes are now covered with rubbish.” (LS 21)⁴
- “A very solid scientific consensus indicates that we are presently witnessing a disturbing warming of the climatic system.” (LS 23)
- “Humanity is called to recognize the need for changes of lifestyle, production and consumption, in order to combat this warming or at least the human causes which produce or aggravate it.” (LS 23)

- “ [A] number of scientific studies indicate that most global warming in recent decades is due to the great concentration of greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide, methane, nitrogen oxides and others) released mainly as a result of human activity.” (LS 23)
- “Concentrated in the atmosphere, these gases do not allow the warmth of the sun’s rays reflected by the earth to be dispersed in space. The problem is aggravated by a model of development based on the intensive use of fossil fuels, which is at the heart of the worldwide energy system.” (LS 23)
- “Warming has effects on the carbon cycle. It creates a vicious circle which aggravates the situation even more, affecting the availability of essential resources like drinking water, energy and agricultural production in warmer regions, and leading to the extinction of part of the planet’s biodiversity.” (LS 24)
- “Carbon dioxide pollution increases the acidification of the oceans and compromises the marine food chain.” (LS 24)
- “If present trends continue, this century may well witness extraordinary climate change and an unprecedented destruction of ecosystems, with serious consequences for all of us.” (LS 24)
- “The melting in the polar ice caps and in high altitude plains can lead to the dangerous release of methane gas, while the decomposition of frozen organic material can further increase the emission of carbon dioxide.” (LS 24)
- “Climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods. It represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day.” (LS 25)
- “The exploitation of the planet has already exceeded acceptable limits and we still have not solved the problem of poverty.” (LS 27)
- “The replacement of virgin forest with plantations of trees, usually monocultures, is rarely adequately analyzed. Yet this can seriously compromise a biodiversity which the new species being introduced does not accommodate.” (LS 39)
- “In some coastal areas the disappearance of ecosystems sustained by mangrove swamps is a source of serious concern.” (LS 39)
- “Particularly threatened are marine organisms which we tend to overlook, like some forms of plankton; they represent a significant element in the ocean food chain, and species used for our food ultimately depend on them.” (LS 40)
- “Many of the world’s coral reefs are already barren or in a state of constant decline.... This phenomenon is due largely to pollution which reaches the sea as the result of deforestation, agricultural monocultures, industrial waste and destructive fishing methods, especially those using cyanide and dynamite. It is aggravated by the rise in temperature of the oceans.” (LS 41)
- “We know that technology based on the use of highly polluting fossil fuels—especially coal, but also oil and, to a lesser degree, gas—needs to be progressively replaced without delay.” (LS 165)
- “Reducing greenhouse gases requires honesty, courage and responsibility, above all on the part of those countries which are more powerful and pollute the most.” (LS 169)

LS also provides recommendations for a “green” lifestyle: “using public transport or car-pooling, planting trees, turning off unnecessary lights ... avoiding the use of plastic and paper, reducing water consumption, separating refuse...” (LS 211). Here the Vicar of Christ is made to look faintly ridiculous: providing the world with an environmental to-do list and fretting about “the increasing use and power of air-conditioning” (LS 55) while humanity exhibits all the signs of moral degradation that have preceded divine chastisement throughout salvation history. And this while Francis lives in an air-conditioned five-star hotel, located in a perfectly manicured Roman enclave, and embarks on numerous elaborate voyages in fossil-fueled charter jets to every corner of the globe to greet adoring crowds. In just a few days, Francis the world traveller generates a “carbon footprint” vastly larger than what the ordinary man his “recyclical” lectures about

environmental profligacy will create in an entire lifetime. The Roman Pontiff had joined Al Gore and the rest of the environmentalist jet set. As one rightly disgusted, non-traditionalist commentator wrote:

A strain of inadvertent comedy runs through “*Laudato Si’*.” Il Papa assumes the posture of governess to the world—Mary Poppins on the Throne of Peter. Who else could align the magisterium of the Catholic Church with exhortation to turn off the air conditioner, shut the lights, and be sure to recycle? For this Christ died: to atone for petroleum products. And for carbon emissions from private cars carrying only one or two people.⁵

In another abuse of papal authority, LS prescribes globalist governmental solutions to the posited “ecological crisis,” including:

- “[e]nforceable international agreements ... since local authorities are not always capable of effective intervention” (LS 173);
- “[g]lobal regulatory norms ... to impose obligations and prevent unacceptable actions....” (LS 173);
- “systems of governance for the whole range of so-called ‘global commons’” (LS 174);
- “stronger and more efficiently organized international institutions, with functionaries who are appointed fairly by agreement among national governments, and empowered to impose sanctions” (LS 175);
- “to guarantee the protection of the environment and to regulate migration a true world political authority.... [quoting Benedict XVI]” (LS 175).

It is undeniable that environmental abuses occur all over the world and that in many places they pose a threat to the common good. Nor can anyone reasonably object to prudent environmental protection regulations or sensible measures to reduce energy consumption and waste generation, particularly at the level of individual responsibility. What can be questioned, however—what Catholics have every right to question—is whether the Roman Pontiff has any business weighing in on such technical questions with hotly disputed scientific opinions and vaguely proposed political solutions, including international treaties, regulatory frameworks with the power of sanction, and world government.

Furthermore, the environmental issues LS catalogues are already being addressed in one way or another by governments at various levels without the need of papal exhortations to do this or that. Some of these regulations have actually worked, especially where air and water pollution are concerned. But Francis, exceeding his authority, demands more, rejecting “a false or superficial ecology which bolsters complacency and a cheerful recklessness.” According to LS, it is cheerfully reckless to think that “apart from a few obvious signs of pollution and deterioration, things do not look that serious, and the planet could continue as it is for some time (LS 59).” How can a Pope know that beneath the obvious signs of pollution and deterioration lurks a threat to the very existence of “the planet” despite the appearance of environmental soundness in most parts of the world? Of course, he cannot. Francis had no competence whatsoever to assess the viability of Planet Earth, and the encyclical’s fundamental assumption that God created “a fragile world (LS 78)” now on the brink of environmental Armageddon slights Providence while exalting a worldly ideology to which he had rashly lent the prestige of the Petrine office.

Aside from abusing papal authority, LS’s foray into the ideological fever swamp of environmentalism and globalism to propose solutions to “the present ecological crisis (LS 15)” exhibits dangerous naivete. Its demand that we “ensure that solutions are proposed

from a global perspective (LS 164)” will only play into the hands of the same multinational corporations that have captured every bureaucracy ever created to control them. For example, the multinationals are already working with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) to implement the “Sustainable Development Goals” (SDGs) that typically involve population control and the promotion of abortion and contraception, promoted by multinationals themselves with massive corporate donations to various entities of the culture of death. As UNIDO boasts: “UNIDO’s business partners represent a broad spectrum of industry sectors.”⁶ The Vatican itself endorsed proposed draft SDGs at a “climate change conference” held at the Vatican two months before LS appeared, moderated and co-hosted by the pro-abortion, population control fanatic Jeffrey Sachs.⁷ Goal 4d, endorsed by the Vatican, requires that governments “Ensure universal sexual and reproductive health and rights...”.⁸

After corporate lobbying and legalized bribery, the SDGs and other regulations governments adopt in response to the “ecological crisis” will not hinder multinationals in the least, but rather will burden small and mid-size businesses and ordinary citizens. In fact, multinationals love the “green” gimmicks SL endorses, such as “separating refuse” for recycling (LS 211), around which they can build new industries. The recycling scam, for example, “reveals major market interventions by multinational firms, motivated by economic goals....” There are big corporate gains to be made from forcing ordinary people to separate their garbage, as Francis recommends in his self-arrogated capacity of environmental consultant to the world. Having dragooned the citizenry into the recycling game, the multinationals now boast of their “green marketing” and make “often-exaggerated claims about the ‘recycled’ [i.e., remanufactured] content of their products.”⁹

The Teilhardian Connection

Francis’s dabbling in scientific matters in which a Pope has no competence or authority to teach is not limited to “climate science.” In LS he presents an evolutionary view of human origins that simply accepts evolution as fact: “the speed with which human activity has developed contrasts with the naturally slow pace of biological evolution (LS 18).” The assertion is gratuitous, having no apparent purpose other than to demonstrate that Francis is an enlightened modern Jesuit who certainly does not accept anything so superstitious as the Fourth Lateran Council’s dogmatic definition concerning creation *ex nihilo*:

We firmly believe and confess without reservation that there is only one true God ... the creator of all things, visible and invisible, spiritual and corporeal, who by his almighty power from the beginning of time made at once (*simul*) out of nothing (*ex nihilo*), both orders of creatures, the spiritual and the corporeal, that is, the angelic and the earthly, and then the human creature, who, as it were, shares in both orders, being composed of spirit and body.¹⁰

Quite the contrary, eight months earlier, Francis was pleased to inform the Pontifical Academy of the Sciences that “[w]hen we read the Genesis account of Creation we risk imagining that God was a magician, complete with a magic wand, able to do everything.... And thus creation went ahead for centuries and centuries, millennia and millennia, until it became that which we know today, precisely because God is not a demiurge or a magician.”¹¹ Thus, for Francis, creation *ex nihilo* is “magic” of which not even God is capable. Even the omnipotent Creator must create by evolution. The implications of Francis’s thought in this regard need not be elaborated.

The same would apparently be true as to the creation of Eve from Adam, which strictly precludes her supposed prior evolution from “hominids.” Francis seems to view this as a laughing matter: “The fact is that woman was taken from a rib ... (he laughs with gusto). I’m kidding, that’s a joke.”¹² But as Father Brian Harrison has shown,¹³ the creation of Eve *ex Adamo* is an infallible teaching of the universal ordinary Magisterium, a doctrine the Church has always held. Thus Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical on marriage, *Arcanum*, declared as follows regarding “the never-interrupted doctrine of the Church” on the origin of marriage:

We record what is to all known, and cannot be doubted by any, that God, on the sixth day of creation, having made man from the slime of the earth, and having breathed into his face the breath of life, gave him a companion, whom He miraculously took from the side of Adam when he was locked in sleep. God thus, in His most far-reaching foresight, decreed that this husband and wife should be the natural beginning of the human race, from whom it might be propagated and preserved by an unfailing fruitfulness throughout all futurity of time.¹⁴

With good reason, then, did Saint Pius X identify the special creation of Adam and the creation of Eve from Adam as facts standing at the foundations of the Faith.¹⁵ In LS, however, we see nothing of the kind. Instead, we see the following, with a footnote citing “the contribution” of none other than Teilhard de Chard in:

The end of the way of the universe is in the fullness of God, which has already been achieved by the risen Christ, fulcrum of the universal maturation.... The final end of other creatures is not in us. Instead, all advance, together with us and through us, toward the common destination, which is God, in a transcendent fullness where the Risen Christ embraces and illuminates everything. The human being, in fact, gifted with intelligence and love, and attracted by the fullness of Christ, is called to lead all creatures back to their Creator (LS 83).¹⁶

That is, all the animals advance “through us” to a common destination in Christ, “fulcrum of the universal maturation,” who Himself has “achieved” the “fullness of God” by the Resurrection. This is so, according to Teilhard, because man is but the latest stage in an evolutionary convergence of all things at the absurd Omega Point that Teilhard invented to attempt a reconciliation of the Catholic faith with the neo-Darwinian pseudo-science, as he insisted we must. For as he declared in his *The Heart of the Matter*: “It is Christ, in very truth, who saves—but should we not immediately add that, at the same time, it is Christ who is saved by Evolution?”¹⁷

As should be apparent, Teilhard’s “contribution”—aside from his involvement in the Piltdown Man fraud—was a mountain a pseudo-poetic gibberish laced with heresy, which is why his works were condemned by the Holy Office under John XXIII only months before the commencement of Vatican II:

[I]t is sufficiently clear the above-mentioned works abound in such ambiguities and indeed even serious errors, as to offend Catholic doctrine.

For this reason, the most eminent and most revered Fathers of the Holy Office exhort all Ordinaries as well as the superiors of Religious institutes, rectors of seminaries and presidents of universities, effectively to protect the minds, particularly of the youth, against the dangers presented by the works of Fr. Teilhard de Chardin and of his followers.¹⁸

Another aspect of Teilhard’s “contribution” was his promotion of eugenics in a book to which the infamous atheist and eugenicist Julian Huxley—Teilhard’s promoter and patron—wrote a laudatory introduction:

So far we have certainly allowed our race to develop at random, and we have given too little thought to the

question of what medical and moral factors must replace the crude forces of natural selection should we suppress them. In the course of the coming centuries it is indispensable that a nobly human form of eugenics, on a standard worthy of our personalities, should be discovered and developed.¹⁹

Yet, in LS, this heretical mountebank for the first time achieves the honor of a favorable reference to his imaginary “contribution” in a papal encyclical, concerning a subject—evolution—that could have been avoided entirely. But it seems Francis was resolved to use LS to establish his evolutionist credentials. Thus, while affirming that man has “infinite dignity” and “unique worth” (LS 65, 90), when it comes to the source of that dignity and worth—man’s rational and immortal soul—Francis proposes the following: “The human being, although supposing also evolutionary processes, involves a novelty not fully explainable by the evolution of other open systems (LS 81).”²⁰ And just what is this “novelty” not “fully explainable” by evolution? LS provides an answer that evinces a rhetorical aversion to the very concept of the soul:

Each one of us has in himself a personal identity capable of entering into dialogue with others and with God himself. The capacity for reflection, reasoning, creativity, interpretation, artistic elaboration, and other capacities demonstrate a singularity that transcends the physical and biological realm.... The qualitative novelty involved in the emergence of a personal being from within the material universe presupposes a direct action of God, a peculiar calling to life and to the relation of a Thou to another thou.²¹

LS avoids any mention of what the Church’s pre-Vatican II social teaching consistently and forthrightly affirmed: that the ground of all man’s rights and duties on this earth is his rational and immortal soul, infused at the moment of his creation and made for eternal life.²² In Pope Leo’s landmark social encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, for example, we read the following:

It is the soul which is made after the image and likeness of God; it is in the soul that the sovereignty resides in virtue whereof man is commanded to rule the creatures below him and to use all the earth and the ocean for his profit and advantage. “Fill the earth and subdue it; and rule over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and all living creatures that move upon the earth.”²³

Likewise, in Pope Leo’s *Libertas* we read:

For, while other animate creatures follow their senses, seeking good and avoiding evil only by instinct, man has reason to guide him in each and every act of his life ... because he has a soul that is simple, spiritual, and intellectual—a soul, therefore, which is not produced by matter, and does not depend on matter for its existence; but which is created immediately by God, and, far surpassing the condition of things material, has a life and action of its own.

When, therefore, it is established that man’s soul is immortal and endowed with reason and not bound up with things material, the foundation of natural liberty is at once most firmly laid.²⁴

To stress the centrality of the concept of soul in Catholic teaching, Leo added: “the Catholic Church declares in the strongest terms the simplicity, spirituality, and immortality of the soul... .”²⁵ This is because the welfare of souls, both here and hereafter, is the primary end of Catholic social teaching, as Pius XI affirmed in his own landmark social encyclical *Quadragesima Anno*:

But if we examine things critically with Christian eyes, as we should, what are all these compared with the loss of souls? Yet it is not rash by any means to say that the whole scheme of social and economic life is now such as to put in the way of vast numbers of mankind most serious obstacles which prevent them from caring for the one thing necessary; namely, their eternal salvation For what will it profit men to become expert in more wisely using their wealth, even to gaining the whole world, if thereby they suffer the loss of their souls?²⁶

In sum, it is only on account of his rational and immortal soul that man has the “capacities” LS mentions. Man is not merely the highest and best development of evolution, given a “qualitatively novel” Teilhardian turbo-boost by some vague “direct action” of a Great Evolver, who is “not a magician.” Specially created by God for an eternal destiny, man must look first and foremost to the protection and salvation of his immortal soul. That is the message “every person living on this planet” needs to hear at a time of all but universal apostasy. But that is not the message LS seeks to convey. Instead, LS declares: “Christian thought sees human beings as possessing a particular dignity above other creatures” (LS 119). That tepid phrase alone, uttered by the very Vicar of Christ, will embarrass the Church until the end of time.

Elements of the Environmental Religion

Beyond the embarrassments of the junk science, naive political proposals and Teilhardian evolutionism is the fundamental development that LS represents. It signals the next stage in the *de facto* postconciliar abandonment of the Church’s divine commission to make disciples of all nations. LS calls for universal “ecological conversion,” which would not (of course) involve embracing any particular religion, much less adherence to the teaching of the Catholic Church on faith and morals, but rather “a genuine and profound humanism to serve as the basis of a noble and generous society.” LS specifically recalls John Paul II’s endlessly invoked but entirely imaginary pluralistic “civilization of love,” repackaged in environmentalist rhetoric. (LS 231)

LS, in short, is a papal embrace of the quasi-religion of environmentalism, involving what the encyclical, quoting a French Protestant humanist, describes as “an effort to decipher the sacredness of the world....” (LS 85) What one encounters here seems to have been prefigured, with uncanny accuracy, in a speech delivered by the author Michael Crichton to the Commonwealth Club in 2003:

Today one of the most powerful religions in the Western World is environmentalism. Environmentalism seems to be the religion of choice for urban atheists. Why do I say it’s a religion? Well, we must look at the beliefs.

If you look carefully, you see that environmentalism is in fact a perfect 21st century remapping of traditional Judeo-Christian beliefs and myths. There’s an initial Eden, a paradise, a state of grace and unity with nature, there’s a fall from the state of grace into a state of pollution as a result of eating from the tree of knowledge, and as a result of our actions there is a judgment day coming for us all.

We are all energy sinners, doomed to die, unless we seek salvation, which is now called sustainability. Sustainability is salvation in the Church of the environment. Just as organic food is its communion, the pesticide-free wafer that the right people, with the right beliefs, imbibe.^{[27](#)}

The elements Crichton outlined are all to be found in LS, even if the document employs a certain amount of Christian content in aid of its primary function as an environmentalist gospel proclaimed to “every person living on this planet” regardless of his religion or lack thereof. (LS 3) There is, first of all, the concept of environmental sin:

This sister [earth] now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she “groans in travail.” (Rom 8:22) (LS 2)

Quite remarkable here is a classic environmentalist personification of the earth, seriously depicted as “among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor.” Utterly indefensible is an element of Bergoglianism repeatedly examined here: the twisting of Scripture for rhetorical purposes, and this at the very beginning of the document. Saint Paul does not teach in Romans that the earth “groans in travail” because of man’s abuse of natural resources. Rather, it is man who groans in travail, along with all other creatures, on account of Original Sin:

For I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us. For the expectation of the creature waiteth for the revelation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him that made it subject, in hope: Because the creature also itself shall be delivered from the servitude of corruption, into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. For we know that every creature groaneth and travaileth in pain, even till now. And not only it, but ourselves also, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption of the sons of God, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope. (Rom. 8:18–24)

Saint Paul speaks of an eschatological “groaning” of man and the whole of fallen nature in anticipation of the world to come, not the earth groaning because man has polluted the soil, air and water (hardly an issue in Saint Paul’s time). The hope of which Saint Paul speaks is the divine rescue of man by “the adoption of the sons of God,” not rescue of “the planet” from man’s abuses by “ecological conversion.” LS hides the very point of Saint Paul’s luminous teaching, which is actually at odds with the encyclical’s entire theme. For Saint Paul declares that only Christ’s redemption and the grace it obtained can elevate fallen man in this life and restore a corrupted natural order at the end of time. Until then, “the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come.” LS’s grotesque abuse of the Epistle to the Romans calls into question the credibility of the whole document.

Equally discrediting is this abuse of Our Lord’s own words in an effort to enlist Him in the environmentalist cause:

Jesus took up the biblical faith in God the Creator, emphasizing a fundamental truth: God is Father (cf. Mt 11:25). In talking with his disciples, Jesus would invite them to recognize the paternal relationship God has with all his creatures. With moving tenderness he would remind them that each one of them is important in God’s eyes: “Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God.” (Lk 12:6) (LS 96)

By omitting Our Lord’s words immediately preceding and following the cropped quotation, LS again conceals the real import of Holy Scripture:

[I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!] Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. [Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.]²⁸

In context, Our Lord is not teaching “the paternal relationship God has with all his creatures” but rather that a man’s soul is worth more than many sparrows sold at a trifle for human consumption at man’s pleasure. That teaching has nothing to do with “respecting creation.” It concerns the revealed truth that the death of even one immortal soul is infinitely worse than the death of any lower creature, indeed worse than the death of all the lower creatures on earth taken together. But that truth would not serve the rhetorical purpose of denouncing man’s crimes against “the planet,” so Our Lord’s reference to sparrows is plucked from its context as an affirmation of man’s infinite worth.

Having no Scriptural support for its novel concept of environmental sin, LS cites the view of the Eastern Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew. The concept of schism having been abandoned entirely by the postconciliar mentality—except when it comes to the SSPX and other “extreme traditionalists”²⁹—Orthodox prelates are now apparently to be considered sure guides for the instruction of the Catholic faithful. As LS declares in its opening passages:

Patriarch Bartholomew has spoken in particular of the need for each of us to repent of the ways we have harmed the planet, for “inasmuch as we all generate small ecological damage,” we are called to acknowledge “our contribution, smaller or greater, to the disfigurement and destruction of creation”.... “For human beings ... to destroy the biological diversity of God’s creation; for human beings to degrade the integrity of the earth by causing changes in its climate, by stripping the earth of its natural forests or destroying its wetlands; for human beings to contaminate the earth’s waters, its land, its air, and its life—these are sins.” For “to commit a crime against the natural world is a sin against ourselves and a sin against God.”

Now of course it is sinful to waste or wantonly despoil the resources with which God has endowed the earth as His gift to man, just as it is sinful to waste any blessing God bestows. But a waste of natural resources is not a “crime against the natural world,” which has no capacity to be the object of a moral offense. But in the judgment of a schismatic cleric who refuses submission to the Roman Pontiff, every man shares in sinning against “the integrity of the earth,” including each individual’s small but supposedly blameworthy contribution to “changes in its climate”—as if “a change in climate” were *ipso facto* immoral. Following the schismatic prelate’s lead, Francis would later decree that each year on “the same date as the Orthodox Church,” September 1, the Catholic Church will observe a “World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation” in order to implore God’s “pardon for the sins committed against the world in which we live.”³⁰ There would be no Day of Prayer, however, to implore God’s pardon for the apostasy and moral depravity of a once-Christian civilization.

With LS the Environmental Sin becomes the functional equivalent of Original Sin, tainting every member of the human race. And, just as Crichton indicated, the result of Environmental Sin and the consequent “fall of man” is Environmental Judgment Day. As LS declares in appropriately apocalyptic tones:

It is not enough to balance, in the medium term, the protection of nature with financial gain, or the preservation of the environment with progress. Halfway measures simply delay the inevitable disaster.... (LS 194)

Doomsday predictions can no longer be met with irony or disdain. We may well be leaving to coming generations debris, desolation and filth. The pace of consumption, waste and environmental change has so stretched the planet’s capacity that our contemporary lifestyle, unsustainable as it is, can only precipitate catastrophes.... (LS 161)

The effects of the present imbalance can only be reduced by our decisive action, here and now. We need to reflect on our accountability before those who will have to endure the dire consequences. (LS 161)

Francis’s doomsday warnings stand in marked contrast to *Evangelii Gaudium*, wherein he quoted favorably John XXIII’s opening address to the Fathers of Vatican II, famously belittling pre-conciliar “prophets of doom,” including many of Pope John’s own predecessors:

In this sense, we can once again listen to the words of Blessed John XXIII on the memorable day of 11 October 1962:

“We feel that we must disagree with those prophets of doom who are always forecasting disaster, as though the

end of the world were at hand. In our times, divine Providence is leading us to a new order of human relations which, by human effort and even beyond all expectations, are directed to the fulfilment of God's superior and inscrutable designs, in which everything, even human setbacks, leads to the greater good of the Church."³¹

The apparent contradiction is easily resolved, however: the preconciliar prophets of doom, including beatified or canonized Popes, were speaking of doom in the sense of civilizational apostasy involving a rebellion against Christ and His Church and the errors of "modern liberty." For them, the civilizational crisis was Christological, not ecological. As Pope Pius XII warned only thirteen years before the "springtime of Vatican II" began:

Venerable Brethren, you are well aware that almost the whole human race is today allowing itself to be driven into two opposing camps, for Christ or against Christ. The human race is involved today in a supreme crisis, which will issue in its salvation by Christ, or in its dire destruction.³²

In keeping with Pope John's fatuous optimism, Francis dismisses such papal preoccupations. What does preoccupy him—enough to produce a 185-page manifesto—are prophecies of doom by environmentalists, many of whom are atheists and public opponents of the Church's teaching on marriage and procreation. One such is the aforementioned Jeffrey Sachs, who was invited some seven times to address Vatican ecology conferences and contributed to a number of Vatican documents on ecology. At the United Nations and elsewhere, Sachs has consistently promoted abortion as a "lower-risk and lower-cost option' than bringing a new human life to the world."³³ As Francis's fellow Jesuit James V. Schall observed in a polite but devastating critique of the Pope's environmentalism:

The suppositions on earth-warming and planetary destruction that the Holy Father maintains as inarguable are, in fact, neither scientifically unchallenged nor neutral on moral grounds.... Ecology and environmentalism are ... not just pious theories about caring for the Earth. We have here an overarching theory for the control of population in which contraception, abortion, limited families, "gay marriage", cloning, euthanasia, and state control of both begetting and children are necessary and interconnected components....

The Holy Father is certainly against abortion, euthanasia, and population control. What seems unclear to many is how advisers who hold these practices necessary in view of theories of ecology are at all helpful to what the Pope is really after. We all should be on the side of growth and virtue, not death and control.³⁴

Finally, LS proposes the same way of "salvation" suggested in Crichton's prescient speech twelve years ago: "sustainable development." Quoth Francis:

The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change.... I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all.

Thus the way of environmental salvation for "the whole human family" must involve "a global ecological conversion" (LS 5) embracing all of mankind and a "reconciliation" according to which "we must examine our lives and acknowledge the ways in which we have harmed God's creation through our actions and our failure to act (LS 210)."³⁵ Which is not to suggest that LS is teaching that nonbelievers must believe in such a thing as God's creation. Quite the contrary, as a manifesto addressed to "every person living on this planet," LS is at pains to excuse itself for presenting religious content at all:

Why insert [!] in this document, addressed to all persons of good will, a chapter referred to the convictions of faith? I am well aware that, in the fields of politics and philosophy, there are those who firmly reject the idea of a Creator, or consider it irrelevant, to the point of relegating to the realm of the irrational the richness that religions

can offer for an integral ecology and for the full development of the human race. Others view religions as constituting a subculture that is merely to be tolerated. Nevertheless, science and religion, which furnish different approaches to reality, can enter into an intense dialogue fruitful for both. (LS 62)³⁶

Never in Church history has a Pope spoken of the “convictions of faith” as something whose “insertion” into a papal encyclical had to be justified to atheists. But then no Pope has ever written an encyclical that really has nothing to do with Catholicism as such.

Christian Environmentalism?

The obvious objection to the analysis presented thus far is that, at least in certain passages (principally [chapters 2](#) and [6](#)), LS proposes a theistic or “Christian environmentalism” as opposed the secular version constituting a quasi-religion. The point, however, is that as to “every person living on the planet” LS presents those elements of the secular religion Crichton rightly discerned, even if it attempts to “baptize” them for “Christians” (never identified as Catholics) while leaving everyone else to approach the document from the secular humanist perspective of the hypothetical good-willed atheist.³⁷

The attempt to “baptize” various modern isms following the Council has always had very bad results for the Church. Consider, for example, the “Christian humanism” of Jacques Maritain, the “Christian Marxism” of “liberation theology,” the “Christian evolutionism” of Teilhard de Chardin and the “Catholic ecumenism” adopted from a movement of Protestant origin condemned by Pius XI in 1928.³⁸ The prudential decision by postconciliar churchmen, including the Popes, to venture an accommodation of Church teaching to isms deemed “good elements” of “modern thought” has invariably compromised the witness of the Gospel as a sign of contradiction to the world and thus the witness of the Church herself. The salt loses its savor and becomes merely the blandest Catholic seasoning for a movement originating outside the Church and hostile to her divine claims. For the sake of such accommodations, the Church in the postconciliar epoch has programmatically de-emphasized or altogether suppressed elements of Catholicity likely to offend world opinion.

The fatal compromise involved in LS’s attempt at “Christian environmentalism” is glaringly evident, for example, in the editorial emasculation of Saint Francis’s Cantic of Brother Sun, the very foundation of the encyclical’s call to “ecological conversion.” LS strips out every word of the Cantic referring to man’s subjection to an omnipotent God and the dire fate that awaits him for disobedience to the divine commands. Neutered by the removal of its specifically Catholic content, the Cantic is reduced to praise of creatures. Boldface and strikethroughs indicate the lines excised from the Cantic (quoted at LS 87) without so much as an ellipsis to indicate what has been censored:

~~Most High, all powerful, good Lord,
Yours are the praises, the glory, the honor,
and all blessing.~~

~~To You alone, Most High, do they belong;
and no man is worthy to mention Your name.~~

Be praised, my Lord, through all your creatures,
especially through my lord Brother Sun,

who brings the day; and you give light through him.
And he is beautiful and radiant in all his splendor!
Of you, Most High, he bears the likeness.

Praise be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon
and the stars, in heaven you formed them
clear and precious and beautiful.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind,
and through the air, cloudy and serene,
and every kind of weather through which
You give sustenance to Your creatures.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water,
which is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.
Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire,
through whom you light the night and he is beautiful
and playful and robust and strong.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Mother Earth,
who sustains us and governs us and who produces
varied fruits with colored flowers and herbs.

~~Praised be You, my Lord,
through those who give pardon for Your love,
and bear infirmity and tribulation.~~

~~Blessed are those who endure in peace
for by You, Most High, they shall be crowned.~~

~~Praised be You, my Lord,
through our Sister Bodily Death,
from whom no living man can escape.~~

~~Woe to those who die in mortal sin.
Blessed are those whom death will
find in Your most holy will,
for the second death shall do them no harm.~~

~~Praise and bless my Lord,
and give Him thanks
and serve Him with great humility.~~

In particular, the suppression of the lines “Praised be you, my Lord/through our Sister Bodily Death” and “Woe to those who die in mortal sin /Blessed are those whom death will find in Your most holy will” conceals the Canticle’s true nature as a trope rather than a tribute to creatures as such. The Canticle is really a robustly Catholic eschatological paean to the entire natural order in its fallen condition, death included, as what God has ordained for man’s eternal salvation and his avoidance of the eternal fire.³⁹ But Saint Francis’s praise of “our Sister Bodily Death” from his saintly and eternal perspective

hardly comports with the encyclical's worldly and ecological perspective, from which, as Fr. Schall writes, "[s]ins and evils are transformed into social or ecological issues that require political and structural remedies."⁴⁰

From Pro-Life to "Pro-Embryo"

An even more dramatic sign of the compromises required to promote a "Christian environmentalism" agreeable to the world is LS's treatment of man's most outrageous attempts to interfere with the natural order established by God at the moment of Creation: abortion and contraception. Despite its obvious ecological implications, not to mention its commonly abortifacient effects producing death in the womb on a massive worldwide scale, contraception receives not a single mention in LS's 185 pages. As for abortion, the cold-blooded murder of human beings in the womb is described only in terms of the "human embryo" and is treated as if it were just another form of disrespect for the environment. Abortion, LS declares, is "inconsistent" with "concern for the protection of nature" (LS 120), "compromises the very meaning of our struggle for the sake of the environment," making it "difficult to hear the cry of nature" because "everything is connected" (LS 117),⁴¹ reflects a lack of "sensitivity towards the acceptance of the new life" and thus diminishes "other forms of acceptance that are valuable for society." (LS 120)

Astoundingly, the first mention of abortion comes 65 paragraphs after Francis's complaint about the "increasing use and power of air-conditioning" (LS 55) and 87 paragraphs after the following lamentation over the extinction of plant and animal species:

It is not enough, however, to think of different species merely as potential "resources" to be exploited, while overlooking the fact that they have value in themselves. Each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know, which our children will never see, because they have been lost for ever. The great majority become extinct for reasons related to human activity. Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us. We have no such right. (LS 33)

Note the tone of moral indignation, the reference to a tragic and irreplaceable loss of animal and plant life, the consequent diminution of the glory owed to God, the loss to our children from not being able to see these extinct plants and animals, the loss of the "message" the extinct species would convey, the clear assignment of moral culpability for these heinous extinctions, and the unambiguous declaration of wrongdoing: "We have no such right." By comparison, the passages pertaining to the "human embryo" are devoid of the same elements of moral outrage: no reference to the systematic extermination of human beings, often on the basis of class discrimination (sex-selection and fetal disability); no reference to the tragic loss of life—in this case infinite; no reference to the glory owed to God, who is infinitely offended by the mass murder of innocents; no reference to the loss our children suffer from the extermination of their own brothers and sisters in the womb, nor to the "message" these millions of murdered human beings would have conveyed had they been allowed to live; no clear assignment of blame to the perpetrators of the abortion holocaust; and no declaration that we have no right to engage in this slaughter of the unborn. Something else is resoundingly absent: there is no mention that the hundreds of millions of victims of abortion have been deprived of the sacrament of Baptism. Even the "Catholic appendix" at the end of LS makes no mention of this spiritual catastrophe.

One must ask how it is possible to take seriously a call to respect God's creation in an encyclical that mourns the loss of plants and animals as an offense against God "we have no right" to commit, but then, many pages later, only weakly criticizes the destruction of "human embryos" because it "compromises the very meaning of our struggle for the sake of the environment," is inconsistent with "concern for other vulnerable beings," and "everything is connected." Perhaps it would be enough to say that any encyclical in which a papal condemnation of excessive air-conditioning appears 62 paragraphs before the first muted mention of legalized mass murder is a mockery of the papal Magisterium. The way in which this "pro-embryo" encyclical treats the infinite value of even a single human life in comparison with plants and animals shocks the *sensus catholicus*. The abortion holocaust rages on while LS eulogizes extinct fish, mammals and flowers our children will never see, never mentioning the murdered children our children will never see.

Is this how the Pope addresses "questions which are troubling us today, which we can no longer sweep under the carpet" (LS 19): by discussing air-conditioning and the loss of extinct plants and animals before mentioning the genocide of innocent children, described as "embryos" even though they are ripped limb-from-limb by vacuums and forceps or butchered at the very point of delivery, with their organs sold for profit by Planned Parenthood? Is this how the Vicar of Christ defends the sanctity of life against a world gone mad: "Christian thought sees human beings as possessing a particular dignity above other creatures"?

The World Applauds

For these reasons, it should be obvious why, in spite of what neo-Catholic spokesmen hyped as a "strong condemnation of abortion,"⁴² this "pro-embryo" encyclical delighted the leaders of the culture of death. The pro-abortion General Secretary of the United Nations had this to say: "His [Francis's] moral voice is part of a growing chorus of people from all faiths and all sectors of society (who) are speaking out for climate action...." Barack Obama dared to invoke the God his entire career had mocked in calling on everyone to heed Francis (as opposed to the Catholic Church): "As we prepare for global climate negotiations in Paris this December, it is my hope that all world leaders—and all God's children—will reflect on Pope Francis's call to come together to care for our common home."⁴³ Joe Biden, who "has spent his entire life ignoring popes and smearing Catholics" had suddenly become "a pope wonk, 'echoing themes' and outlining 'components'" in *Laudato Si'*.⁴⁴ Administering the world's kiss of death, Biden declared: "We have a good one now," respecting Francis.⁴⁵

The world could appreciate the big picture to which neo-Catholic apologists were blinded in their sifting of the document's orthodox words and phrases while ignoring its overall thrust. And what the world perceived in LS was the Church's further retreat into social impotence; her continuing *de facto* absorption into the New World Order as one of its polite cooperators, offering secular advice with some unexceptionable religious accents, offered almost apologetically. Quite simply, the world knew a victory for its point of view when it saw one. For this was the first papal encyclical whose primary concerns were not religious, much less Christian, still less Catholic or even "pro-life." LS was all about the "ecological crisis," "global ecological conversion" (including vague ethical prescriptions without reference to any religious duty), "respect for the environment,"

“exploitation of the planet,” “reduction of pollution,” “development of poorer countries and regions,” “planetary inequity,” “radical decisions” to “reverse the trend of global warming,” “achieving the goal of eliminating poverty” and, of course, the very mantra of environmentalism: “integral and sustainable human development.”

Aside from the “Catholic supplement” of its last few paragraphs, where one finds elements of Catholic doctrine not integrated into the preceding 174 pages, there was—by design—nothing indispensably Catholic about this papal encyclical. Its novel call for “ecological conversion,” addressed to all people, atheists included, was not proposed to bring men to God but rather to develop “an authentic humanity.” Echoing the nebulous progressivism of *Evangelii Gaudium*, LS proposed a transformation of the human race involving inchoate remedies no secular humanist would find the least objectionable because they are utterly devoid of religious meaning or indeed any meaning at all: “radical change”; “a new synthesis”; “new models of progress”; “new convictions, attitudes and forms of life”; “a new lifestyle”; “a new start”; “new paths to authentic freedom”; “a new beginning”; “new habits”; “a new ecological sensitivity”; and a “new, integral and interdisciplinary approach.”

One exasperated commentator, joining the growing ranks of Catholics disillusioned with Bergoglianism, put it this way: “There is everything and nothing in every description of Pope Francis, as there is everything and nothing in ‘*Laudato Si*’ And in the end there is everything and nothing in ‘*Evangelii Gaudium*,’ the pastoral apostolic exhortation that Pope Francis has frequently indicated as his ‘Magna Charta.’”⁴⁶ But that is precisely what pleased the world respecting both documents. Hence the media were delighted to report LS’s declaration of “the urgent need for us to move forward in a bold cultural revolution (LS 114),” knowing full well that this “revolution” would not involve anything like the vast movement of religious conversion by which the world had become Christian under the supernatural influence of the Holy Catholic Church.⁴⁷

Even LS’s Catholic “appendix” is rendered acceptable to worldly sensibilities. Not until paragraph 216, at page 164, does LS first suggest that “[t]he rich heritage of Christian spirituality, the fruit of twenty centuries of personal and communal experience, has a precious contribution to make to the renewal of humanity.” Here, however, Francis merely states: “I would like to offer Christians a few suggestions for an ecological spirituality grounded in the convictions of our faith....” Francis’s “suggestions,” limited to generic “Christians,” involve nothing more than the following:

- being concerned about the environment;
- having a “healthy relationship with creation”;
- recognizing “our errors, sins, faults and failures”;
- acknowledg[ing] “the ways in which we have harmed God’s creation”;
- “self-sacrifice and good works”;
- “developing our individual, God-given capacities”;
- being aware that “each creature reflects something of God and has a message to convey to us”;
- recognizing that “God created the world, writing into it an order and a dynamism that human beings have no right to ignore.” (LS 216–222)

Limiting himself to Christians, Francis once again abuses Our Lord's reference to the sparrows God does not forget: "We read in the Gospel that Jesus says of the birds of the air that 'not one of them is forgotten before God' (Lk 12:6). How then can we possibly mistreat them or cause them harm? I ask all Christians to recognize and to live fully this dimension of their conversion." (LS 221) The suggestion that Our Lord's reference to sparrows in this context is a divine call to avoid harming them, when in fact He refers to them being sold for human consumption as things worth far less than any man, exemplifies perfectly the "ecological" distortion of the Gospel that pervades the entire document.

All in all, the divinely revealed and established religion, never identified as Catholicism, is reduced to a form of "spirituality" arising from a "personal and communal experience" not radically distinguishable from any other communitarian spirituality. Hidden from view throughout are the direct revelation by God Incarnate at the foundation of His Church, the commission she alone received from Him, and the authority of a perennial and infallible Magisterium that has defended the doctrines of the Faith (as opposed to opinions on ecology) since the time of the Apostles. Accordingly, LS contains not one reference to the social encyclicals before Vatican II with their eminently Catholic and spiritual themes. These words from Pope Leo's *Rerum Novarum* bring into stark relief the difference in orientation between the Church's traditional social teaching and the world-pleasing tenor of *Laudato Si'*: "Life on earth, however good and desirable in itself, is not the final purpose for which man is created; it is only the way and the means to that attainment of truth and that love of goodness in which the full life of the soul consists."

The Real Significance of *Laudato Si'*

In the end, the Pope's and the Vatican's own unaltered way of life—including air-conditioned facilities—will demonstrate that the "ecological conversion" Francis proposes to save the world from the "ecological crisis" is just another slogan to displace traditional Catholic teaching in the postconciliar epoch. To read the windy locutions of LS is to appreciate the astonishing eclipse of the integral Faith in our time: "An authentic humanity, calling for a new synthesis, seems to dwell in the midst of our technological culture, almost unnoticed, like a mist seeping gently beneath a closed door. Will the promise last, in spite of everything, with all that is authentic rising up in stubborn resistance?" (LS 112)

A mist. Nothing could better describe the "grand vision" supposedly enunciated by this encyclical, quite in accord with the always-misty "spirit of the Council." This "mist" that will give rise to a "new synthesis" and "an authentic humanity," whatever that means, bears no resemblance to the simple truth presented by the pre-Vatican II social encyclicals *Laudato Si'* systematically ignores. As Pius XI declared in *Quadragesimo Anno*:

[P]receding this ardently desired social restoration, there must be a renewal of the Christian spirit, from which so many immersed in economic life have, far and wide, unhappily fallen away, lest all our efforts be wasted and our house be builded not on a rock but on shifting sand.... If human society is to be healed, only a return to Christian life and institutions will heal it. For this alone can provide effective remedy for that excessive care for passing things that is the origin of all vices; and this alone can draw away men's eyes, fascinated by and wholly fixed on the changing things of the world, and raise them toward Heaven. Who would deny that human society is in most urgent need of this cure now?^{[48](#)}

Far from LS's pages is anything resembling the pre-conciliar Popes' insistence on social regeneration in Christ with the guidance of the Church He founded. As Pope Saint Pius X declared concerning misguided efforts to entangle the Church in worldly undertakings for the promotion of a universal brotherhood, if "the highest possible peak of well being for society and its members is to be attained through fraternity or, as it is also called, universal solidarity, all minds must be united in the knowledge of Truth, all wills united in morality, and all hearts in the love of God and His Son Jesus Christ. But this union is attainable only by Catholic charity, and that is why Catholic charity alone can lead the people in the march of progress towards the ideal civilization."⁴⁹ Elsewhere in the same document Saint Pius X insisted upon the reality that political modernity has blotted from historical memory:

Society cannot be set up unless the Church lays the foundations and supervises the work; no, civilization is not something yet to be found, nor is the New City to be built on hazy notions; it has been in existence and still is: it is Christian civilization, it is the Catholic City. It has only to be set up and restored continually against the unremitting attacks of insane dreamers, rebels and miscreants. OMNIA INSTAURARE IN CHRISTO.⁵⁰

In LS the Church's divinely ordained role in the elevation of the human race is definitively reduced to a mere "contribution" to a secular "renewal of humanity." Nowhere does LS even intimate what the great popes before the Council declared with unflagging apostolic zeal and courage: that the Church offers the only secure foundations for humanity's true renewal in the life of sanctifying grace mediated to the social order through the Church and her sacraments, and in society's conformity to the Law of the Gospel—in short, the Social Kingship of Christ:

As with individuals, so with nations. These, too, must necessarily tend to ruin if they go astray from "The Way." The Son of God, the Creator and Redeemer of mankind, is King and Lord of the earth, and holds supreme dominion over men, both individually and collectively.... Therefore the law of Christ ought to prevail in human society and be the guide and teacher of public as well as of private life. Since this is so by divine decree, and no man may with impunity contravene it, it is an evil thing for the common weal wherever Christianity does not hold the place that belongs to it. When Jesus Christ is absent, human reason fails, being bereft of its chief protection and light, and the very end is lost sight of, for which, under God's providence, human society has been built up. This end is the obtaining by the members of society of natural good through the aid of civil unity, though always in harmony with the perfect and eternal good which is above nature. But when men's minds are clouded, both rulers and ruled go astray, for they have no safe line to follow nor end to aim at.⁵¹

Rather, confirming the postconciliar Church's submission to the *Zeitgeist*, Francis had elsewhere declared: "We are no longer in that era. We are not in Christianity. Today we are not the only ones that produce culture, we are not the first nor the most listened to."⁵² Of course this was in one sense a simple statement of fact; but it was also a declaration of surrender, as if, for the first time salvation history, social metanoia had become impossible even for God. But as the great Romano Amerio observed: "Faith in Providence thus proclaims the possibility that the world might rise and be healed by a metanoia which it cannot initiate but which it is capable of accepting once it is offered."⁵³ There is no such offer forthcoming from the Church of dialogue and ecumenism, and now environmentalism. Confirming this as well, as we have seen, Francis declared: "Proselytism is solemn nonsense."

And so the world is well pleased with *Laudato Si'*. Whatever elements of orthodoxy it contains are, therefore, quite beside the point. What matters from the approving worldly perspective is this: that in the midst of a civilizational descent into total depravity and the

bloody persecution of Christians by Muslim fanatics in nation after nation, the Vicar of Christ has issued a manifesto on an “ecological crisis” that recklessly embraces the ideologically driven claims of “climate change science”; implicitly disclaims any call to social transformation in Christ; calls for world government and global regulatory frameworks, inevitably controlled by atheists and other non-believers, to “protect the environment” and remedy “global inequity”; and even treats the abominable crime of abortion inoffensively as a mere lack of respect for human embryos. LS is a document that complies fully with the terms of the Church’s surrender to political modernity and the conquering spirit of the age, its blandly Christian content scrupulously confined to Christians while its generic moral exhortations to “every person living on the planet” involve no reference to the duties imposed by revealed religion or even (especially where contraception and abortion are concerned) the natural law respecting adultery and murder.

LS, in short, exhibits precisely what Saint Pius X condemned in the pan-religious, utopian Sillon movement in France: “an inconsistent and impotent humanitarianism.” The Christ that LS presents, where it mentions Him at all, is the one we have seen throughout the postconciliar epoch, that caricature described by Pius X:

We wish to draw your attention, Venerable Brethren, to this distortion of the Gospel and to the sacred character of Our Lord Jesus Christ, God and man, prevailing within the Sillon and elsewhere. As soon as the social question is being approached, it is the fashion in some quarters to first put aside the divinity of Jesus and then to mention only His ... compassion for all human miseries, and His pressing exhortations to the love of our neighbor and to the brotherhood of men.

True, Jesus has loved us with an immense, infinite love, and He came on earth to suffer and die so that, gathered around Him in justice and love, motivated by the same sentiments of mutual charity, all men might live in peace and happiness. But for the realization of this temporal and eternal happiness, He has laid down with supreme authority the condition that we must belong to His Flock, that we must accept His doctrine, that we must practice virtue, and that we must accept the teaching and guidance of Peter and his successors.

Further, whilst Jesus was kind to sinners and to those who went astray, He did not respect their false ideas, however sincere they might have appeared. He loved them all, but He instructed them in order to convert them and save them. Whilst He called to Himself in order to comfort them, those who toiled and suffered, it was not to preach to them the jealousy of a chimerical equality. Whilst He lifted up the lowly, it was not to instill in them the sentiment of a dignity independent from, and rebellious against, the duty of obedience. [54](#)

Thus, it is no surprise that despite its pious tones, “Judeo-Christian” references^{[55](#)} and a timid, ecologically framed defense of “the human embryo,” *Laudato Si’* is the first papal encyclical ever to receive the world’s unanimous praise. For this was an encyclical addressed to what Rome now apparently conceded to be an irrevocably post-Christian civilization, written by the head of a Church which had become, in practice, post-Catholic in its activity *ad extra*—so much so that the Vicar of Christ had practically apologized for “inserting” the “convictions of faith” into a papal encyclical. *Laudato Si’* is another milestone in the history of what Bishop Athanasius Schneider has called the “fourth great crisis” in the history of the Catholic Church.

The “Liberation Theology Tour”

In the month following the release of *Laudato Si’*, Francis added immensely to his already enormous carbon footprint with what one wag called a “liberation theology tour” of Ecuador, Bolivia and Paraguay. In Bolivia, Francis delivered what his fellow Jesuit, Father James Schall, called an “apocalyptic and utopian address” to something called “The

Second World Meeting of Popular Movements.” The address, in which the word *change* appears 32 times, amounted to another papal manifesto presenting what Schall described as Francis’s “vision of the world and what is wrong with it. He is telling us—not asking our opinions. He has already made his conclusions.... It describes both how terrible things are and how idyllic they can be.”

By terrible, however, Francis did not mean spiritually or even morally terrible, but rather—in keeping with the new ecological paradigm—terrible in the sense that, as Francis declared: “Every significant action carried out in one part of the planet has universal, ecological, social and cultural repercussions.” Even Francis’s expected attack on the excesses of capitalism, certainly an element of the Church’s social doctrine, conformed to the new paradigm of Ecological Sin and the Ecological Judgment Day:

An unfettered pursuit of money rules. This is the “dung of the devil.” The service of the common good is left behind. Once capital becomes an idol and guides people’s decisions, once greed for money presides over the entire socioeconomic system, it ruins society, it condemns and enslaves men and women, it destroys human fraternity, it sets people against one another and, as we clearly see, it even puts at risk our common home, sister and mother earth....

Time, my brothers and sisters, seems to be running out; we are not yet tearing one another apart, but we are tearing apart our common home. Today, the scientific community realizes what the poor have long told us: harm, perhaps irreparable harm, is being done to the ecosystem. The earth’s entire peoples and individual groups are being brutally punished. And behind all this pain, death and destruction is the stench ... of the “dung of the devil.”⁵⁶

Schall’s critique of the “Bolivian Manifesto” was no mere neo-conservative complaint that Francis had been too hard on the free market and its supposed wonders. Rather, he focused on the disturbing truth about Francis’s entire vision: that it was political, economic and worldly in the manner of a leftist politician. Schall’s assessment summed up the traditionalist diagnosis of the “invasion of the Church by worldly thinking”⁵⁷ Paul VI had too late lamented:

There is little room for a common sense middle, for a view that the world might just go on its own way as it has for millennia. It was a “second commandment” (“love thy neighbor”) and not a “first commandment” (“Seek ye first the Kingdom of God”) exhortation. It was closer to Joachim of Fiore⁵⁸ than to Augustine of Hippo.

As far as I could judge, we find, in this particular address, almost no trace of traditional Christian concerns with personal virtue, salvation, sin, sacrifice, long-suffering, repentance, eternal life, or an abiding vale of tears. Sins and evils are transformed into social or ecological issues that require political and structural remedies. Problems are at the same time said to be “global” and “individual.” Pope Francis urges individual action and global refashioning.⁵⁹

Moreover, even Francis’s political and socioeconomic prescriptions were an outdated Seventies-era melange of Latin American socialism, anti-colonialism and useless demagogic ranting about how there must be “no family without lodging, no rural worker without land, no laborer without rights, no people without sovereignty, no individual without dignity, no child without childhood, no young person without a future, no elderly person without a venerable old age.” Francis did not seem to notice that Latin American socialism itself was a massive impediment to the justice he demanded and that not merely capitalist excesses, which are real enough, but the post-Christian nation state and mass democracy were fonts of injustice and immorality. Wrote Schall:

Very little is said about actual governments, their make up, or their effects. Almost never do we hear of the

modern state, with its bureaucratic hand in almost everything, with its theoretic basis in voluntarism, to be an independent and central problem. For many, it is the state itself that causes most of the dangerous problems that the Pope is worried about. Pope Francis has a theory of tyranny, but not, as in the classic writers, a theory of the tyranny of the state, including the democratic state, as such.⁶⁰

During his stay in Bolivia, Francis accepted from Bolivia's President, Evo Morales, a notoriously anti-Catholic autocrat and demagogue, the "gift" of the now infamous "Communist Crucifix," in which the Holy Cross is replaced by a hammer-and-sickle, the very emblem of an ideology that had claimed scores of millions of Christian victims. Desperate, as always, to explain away the latest papal scandal, the neo-Catholic first responders, led by the EWTN flagship publication *National Catholic Register*, rushed to the scene with a false report that on the video of the encounter the Pope had said "That's not right!" when Morales presented him the blasphemous artifact.⁶¹ What Francis actually said was "I didn't know that," meaning that he did not know that the "Communist Crucifix" was modeled on a work by Fr. Luís Espinal Camps, whom the *Register* risibly characterized as "a missionary in Bolivia, who was killed in 1980 during the Bolivian dictatorship." In fact, Camps was a Spanish-born Jesuit radical whose priestly career was given over to liberation theology, political activism, screenwriting and yellow journalism promoting Marxist ideology.

Yet again Francis himself undid the neo-Catholic cover story. The Vatican's own transcript of the in-flight press conference on the way back to Rome from Paraguay⁶² reveals that Francis not only defended the "gift" as valid "protest art" but was taking it back to Rome with him:

[Y]ou can qualify it in the genre of "protest art." For example in Buenos Aires, some years ago, there was an exhibit of a good sculptor, creative, Argentine, who is now dead. It was protest art, and I recall one, it was a crucified Christ on a bomber that was going down, no? It's Christianity, but a criticism that, let's say, Christianity allied with imperialism, which is the bomber....

[I]n this concrete case, Fr Espinal was killed in 1980. It was a time when liberation theology had many different branches with Marxist analysis of reality. One of the branches was. Fr Espinal belonged to this.... Espinal was an enthusiast of this Marxist analysis of the reality, but also of theology using Marxism. From this, he came up with this work.... Making a hermeneutic like this, I understand this work. For me it wasn't an offense, but I had to do this hermeneutic, and I say it to you so that there aren't any wrong opinions....

No, it's [the Communist Crucifix] is traveling with me.... The two honors will be in the Shrine of Our Lady of Copacabana, to Our Blessed Mother, while the Christ is coming with me.⁶³

Thus, Francis was not denying the objectively blasphemous character of the "Communist Crucifix"—an object so horrific the *Register* at first desperately pretended that the Vicar of Christ had not received it favorably. Rather, he declared that for him it "wasn't an offense" because he had conducted his own personal "hermeneutic," which also considered use of Christ's sacred corpus to criticize Christianity as an ally of "imperialism" by affixing the corpus to a dive-bomber—a blasphemy he called "creative" work on the part of a "good sculptor" from Argentina. In short, the current Vicar of Christ approved the blasphemous abuse of the sacred image of Christ's crucified Body for purposes of leftwing "protest art." Was any further comment necessary concerning the mentality of the man who had delivered the Bolivian manifesto?

Francis completed his Latin American tour in Paraguay, which has thus far resisted the Latin American trend of plummeting membership in the Catholic Church. Some ninety

percent of Paraguayans still identify themselves as Catholic. The country's President, Horacio Cartes, a member of Paraguay's right-wing Colorado Party, did not experience the bonhomie Francis had displayed with the leftist leaders of Ecuador and Bolivia. Rather, Francis insulted him with a monumental diplomatic gaffe, falsely suggesting that the Paraguayan government had kidnapped someone whose name Francis could not even remember, based on something someone had told him moments before, which he admitted he did not even know to be true:

Before ending, I'd like to make reference to two things. In doing this, as there are political authorities present here, including the President of the Republic, I wish to say this fraternally. Someone told me: "Look, Mr so-and-so was kidnapped by the Army, please do something to help!". I do not know if this is true, or if it is not true, if it is right, or if it is not right, but one of the methods used by dictatorial ideologies of the last century, which I referred to earlier, was to separate the people, either by exile or imprisonment, or in the case of concentration camps, Nazis and Stalinists excluded them by death.... I was given this information here. I was asked to make a request about someone I do not know. I did not manage to grasp the surname of the person involved.

As Sandro Magister reported, "the name that Francis had not 'grasped' was that of Edelio Murinigo, an official abducted more than a year ago not by the regular army of Paraguay—as the pope had understood—but by a self-proclaimed 'Ejército del pueblo paraguayo', a Marxist-Leninist terrorist group active in the country since 2008. And yet, in spite of his stated and emphasized ignorance in the case, Francis was not afraid to use the paltry and confused information gathered shortly beforehand to 'fraternally' accuse the blameless president of Paraguay of nothing less than a crime compared to the worst misdeeds of the Nazis and Stalinists."⁶⁴

Francis's seeming addiction to ill-considered, off-the-cuff remarks had for the umpteenth time caused scandal. But this was nothing compared with the continuing scandal of his Synod on the Family, which was looming large once again.

1. "Catholic Relief Services gave over \$13 million to pro-abortion group in 2012," *Life Site News* report, July 10, 2013, @ lifesitenews.com.

2. Cf. Voice of the Family, "Professor Schellnhuber: climate science and the 'population problem,'" June 26, 2015, @ lifesitenews.com.

3. "[n]ot long after becoming Pope, Bergoglio privately got in touch with one of the liberation theologians most reviled by Rome—the former Franciscan priest Leonardo Boff, who was condemned to 'obsequious silence' and suspended from his religious duties by the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith for his theology. Pope Francis asked Boff to send him his writings on eco-theology in preparation for a major encyclical Francis is considering on environmental matters." Paul Vallely, *Pope Francis: Untying the Knot* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 138; cited in John Vennari, "Francis' Enviro Text—The Boff Connection—Religion at the Service of Ecology," June 24, 2015, @ cfnews.org. Vennari documents Boff's obvious influence on the encyclical.

4. LS provides no examples of "beautiful landscapes" now covered by rubbish, as opposed to landfills and other unattractive areas. Nor is there any explanation why it is the "the elderly" in particular who complain about rubbish-filled landscapes.

5. Maureen Mullarkey, "Where Did Pope Francis's Extravagant Rant Come From?," *The Federalist* online, June 24, 2015, @ thefederalist.com.

6. Cf. "UNIDO Business Partnerships in Action" @ <http://www.unido.org>.

7. Cf. Stefano Gennarini, J.D., "Who is Jeffrey Sachs and why was he at the Vatican," May 14, 2015, @ lifesitenews.com.

8. Cf. "Vatican endorsement of UN development goals threatens unborn children," *Life Site News* report, April 30, 2015, at lifesitenews.co.

9. Alan Schnaiberg, “The Recycling Shell Game: Multinational Economic Organization vs. Local Political Ineffectuality,” Northwestern University Working Paper @ www.ipr.northwestern.edu.

10. Denzinger (DZ), 43rd ed., § 800.

11. “Quando leggiamo nella Genesi il racconto della Creazione rischiamo di immaginare che Dio sia stato un mago, con tanto di bacchetta magica in grado di fare tutte le cose. Ma non è così.... E cost la creazione è andata avanti per secoli e secoli, milknni e milknni finché è diventata quella che conosciamo oggi, proprio perché Dio non è un demiurgo o un mago.” Discorso del Santo Padre Francesco in Occasione dell’Inaugurazione di un Busto in Onore di Papa Benedetto XVI [Speech of the Holy Father on the Occasion of the Inauguration of a Bust in Honor of Pope Benedict XVI], delivered at the Second Plenary Session of the Pontifical Academy of the Sciences, October 27, 2014, @ W2.vatican.va. Translation by author. The Vatican’s translation “sanitizes” these remarks, including the key phrase “capable of doing everything” (*in grado di fare tutte le cose*).

12. Interview in *Il Messaggero*, June 29, 2014, @ www.ilmessaggero.com (“Il fatto è che la donna è stata presa da una costola ... (*ride di gusto*). Scherzo, la mia è una battuta.”)

13. Brian Harrison, “Did the Human Body Evolve Naturally?” in *Living Tradition*, Jan.–Mar. 1998, No. 73–74 @ <http://www.rtforum.org/lt/lt73.html>.

14. Leo XIII, *Arcanum* (1880), n. 5.

15. In 1909 the Pontifical Biblical Commission, then an arm of the papal Magisterium to which obedience was owed, issued a decision answering NO to this question: “Is it possible ... to call in question the *literal and historical meaning* [of the Genesis account] where there is question of *facts* narrated in these same chapters which pertain to the *foundations of the Christian religion*....” Among these *facts*, said the Commission, are “the special creation of man; the formation of the first woman *from* the first man.” Cf. DZ §§ 3464, 3514.

16. Translation by author. The Vatican’s English translation is not faithful to the official Italian version, including the key Teilhardian phrase *fulcro della maturazione universale*—“fulcrum of the universal maturation.”

17. Teilhard de Chardin, *The Heart of the Matter* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1976), p. 92.

18. “Warning Concerning the Writings of Father Teilhard de Chardin,” Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office, June 30, 1962; available @ ewtn.com. As even EWTN notes: “in 1981 the Holy See reiterated this warning against rumors that it no longer applied.” EWTN commentators have since observed a conspicuous silence concerning Francis’s explicit endorsement of the work of this heretic in LS.

19. Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1975 [1959]), p. 282.

20. “L’essere umano, benché supponga anche processi evolutivi, comporta una novità non pienamente spiegabile dall’evoluzione di altri sistemi aperti.” Translation by the author. Perhaps to spare Francis—and the Church—some embarrassment, the Vatican translated “although supposing also evolutionary processes” as “even if we postulate a process of evolution,” and “qualitative novelty” as “uniqueness.”

21. “Ognuno di noi dispone in sé un’identità personale in grado di entrare in dialogo con gli altri e con Dio stesso. La capacità di riflessione, il ragionamento, la creatività, l’interpretazione, l’elaborazione artistica ed altre capacità originali mostrano una singolarità che trascende l’ambito fisico e biologico.... La novità qualitativa implicata dal sorgere di un essere personali all’interno dell’universo materiale pre-suppone un’azione diretta di Dio, una peculiare chiamata alla vita e alla relazione di un Tu a un altro tu.” Translation by the author.

22. There is only passing reference to “soul” in 185 pages discussing man’s place in creation. It occurs at paragraph 233, near the very end of the document. But even here the soul is slighted: “The ideal is not only to pass from the exterior to the interior to discover the action of God in the soul, but *also to discover God in all things*” Even this faint mention is limited to the context of “offer [ing] *Christians* for an ecological spirituality... .” (LS 216)

23. Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum* (1891), n. 40.

24. Leo XIII, *Libertas* (1888), n. 3.

25. *Ibid.*, n. 4.

26. Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), n. 131.

27. Michael Crichton, Speech to the Commonwealth Club (2003); quoted in Iain Murray, *The Really Inconvenient Truths: Seven Environmental Catastrophes Liberals Don’t Want You to Know About—Because They Helped Cause Them* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2008), pp. 84–85.

- [28.](#) Lk. 12:4–7, English Standard Version cited in *LS*.
- [29.](#) Cf. Chapter 9.
- [30.](#) Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis for the Establishment of the “World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation,” August 6, 2015, @ w2.vatican.va.
- [31.](#) *EG*, n.84.
- [32.](#) *Evangelii Praecones* (1951), n. 70 @ W2.vatican.va.
- [33.](#) Stefano Gennarini, “Who is Jeffrey Sachs and why was he at the Vatican,” loc. cit.
- [34.](#) James V. Schall, S.J., “Apocalyptic and Utopian: On Pope Francis’ Bolivian Manifesto” July 24, 2015, @ catholicworldreport.com (commenting on the Pope’s later address in Bolivia, where he received and accepted a hammer-and-sickle “crucifix” from Bolivia’s leftist president).
- [35.](#) Quoting the Australian bishops’ conference.
- [36.](#) The author’s translation, as the Vatican’s English rendering does not do justice to the original. For one thing, the Vatican translation eliminates the key word “insert” applied to the mention of faith in *LS*. Herewith the original Italian: “*Perché inserire in questo documento, rivolto a tutti le persone di buona volontà, un capitolo riferito alle convinzioni di fede? Sono consapevole che, nel campo della politica e del pensiero, alcuni rifiutano con forza l’idea di un Creatore, o la ritengono irrilevante, al punto da relegare all’ambito dell’irrazionale la ricchezza che le religioni possono offrire per un’ecologia integrale e per il pieno sviluppo del genere umano. Altre volte si suppone che esse costituiscano una sottocultura che dev’essere semplicemente tollerata. Tuttavia, la scienza e la religione, che forniscono approcci diversi alla realtà, possono entrare in un dialogo intenso e produttivo per entrambe.*”
- [37.](#) “The fool hath said in his heart: There is no God.” Psalm 14.
- [38.](#) Cf. Chapter 3.
- [39.](#) Eight paragraphs later, *LS* does mention in passing that the Canticum “goes on to say: ‘Praised be you my Lord, through those who give pardon for your love.’” But even here there is a misleading omission. The period in the quotation conceals the rest of the verse: “and bear infirmity and tribulation.” It seems Saint Francis’s praise of bearing infirmity and tribulation would spoil the argument for an “ecological conversion” requiring a “world political authority” and vast new regulatory frameworks for a utopian effort to “save the planet” while “eliminating poverty” (*LS* 175).
- [40.](#) James V. Schall, S.J., “Apocalyptic and Utopian: On Pope Francis’ Bolivian Manifesto,” loc. cit.
- [41.](#) The supposed “interconnectedness” of all beings, as if man were part of one common organism—the earth—is a key feature of the thought of Boff. Cf. Vennari, op. cit, at note 8.
- [42.](#) John Burger, “What You Need to Know About the Pope’s Encyclical on the Environment,” June 19, 2015, @ aleteia.org.
- [43.](#) Danny Wiser, “Obama calls for world leaders to heed Pope Francis’s message,” June 19, 2015, @ catholicherald.co.uk.
- [44.](#) Frank Walker, “Joe Biden is a ‘Laudato Si’ expert,” June 17, 2015, @ pewstetter.com.
- [45.](#) Joby Warrick, “Biden on Pope Francis: ‘We have a good one now,’” *The Washington Post* June 16, 2015, @ washingtonpost.com.
- [46.](#) Andrea Gagliarducci, “Pope Francis: the world behind ‘Laudato Si,’” June 22, 2015, @ mondayvatican.com.
- [47.](#) See, e.g., “The Guardian view on *Laudato Si*: Pope Francis calls for a cultural revolution,” *The Guardian* online, June 18, 2015, @ theguardian.com.
- [48.](#) Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, nn. 127, 129, 141.
- [49.](#) Pius X, *Notre Charge Apostolique* (1910).
- [50.](#) Ibid. See, regarding the quoted social encyclicals, “The Lake Garda Statement,” July 9, 2015, to which this author contributed, accessible @ rorate-caeli.blogspot.com/2015/07/the-lake-garda-statement.html.
- [51.](#) *Tametsi Futura Prospicientibus* (1900), n.8
- [52.](#) Message to International Pastoral Conference on the World’s Big Cities, November 29, 2014, @ en.radiovaticana.va.

[53.](#) *Iota Unum*, p. 761.

[54.](#) Pius X, *Notre Charge Apostolique*.

[55.](#) Cf. LS, 15, 67, 76, 78.

[56.](#) “Address to Second World Meeting of Popular Movements,” July 15, 2015 @ w2.vatican.va.

[57.](#) Cf. Chapter 2 and note 44.

[58.](#) A deluded Franciscan visionary and esoteric philosopher (d. 1202) whose a Utopian vision of a new age of love and universal peace wrought by the Holy Spirit inspired a Joachist following after his death. His errors concerning the Trinity were condemned by the Lateran Council in 1215. A work by his Joachist followers, which claimed that Joachim’s three books would surpass the New Testament, was condemned by Pope Alexander IV in 1256. Cf. “Joachim of Flora,” *Catholic Encyclopedia* @ newadvent.org.

[59.](#) James V. Schall, S.J., “Apocalyptic and Utopian: On Pope Francis’ Bolivian Manifesto,” loc cit.

[60.](#) Ibid.

[61.](#) Pat Archbold, “Why Did Catholic Media Get the Commie-Crucifix Story Wrong?,” July 14, 2015, @ onepeterfive.com. Archbold, who once wrote for the *Register*, recounts how “some of Catholic media outlets refused to correct what was shown to be a false narrative, leaving stories with erroneous reporting on their websites without correction for days after updated information was available.” The *Register* was among those outlets, which refused to correct its false report for several days despite having been alerted to the facts by Archbold himself.

[62.](#) “In-Flight Press Conference of His Holiness Pope Francis from Paraguay to Rome,” July 13, 2015, @ w2.vatican.va.

[63.](#) The “two honors” were another depiction of Christ on a hammer and sickle, dangling from a chain, and a medallion depicting a condor, the Bolivian equivalent of the American eagle, both of which Francis had allowed Morales to drape around his neck on camera.

[64.](#) Sandro Magister, “Father Lombardi, the Mouth of Truth,” July 29, 2015, @ chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/.

Synod II

In the weeks before *Laudato Si'* appeared, the progressive forces that had used the 2014 session of the Synod on the Family as a beachhead from which to attack the Church's teaching on marriage and procreation, with the blatant encouragement and support of Francis, were preparing the second wave of their assault to be launched in October 2015, when the "God of surprises" Francis had invoked during his denunciation of "so-called traditionalists" was scheduled to make an appearance at Synod II.

The "Shadow Synod"

On May 5, the presidents of the bishops' conferences in Germany, Switzerland and France conducted a one-day "shadow Synod" at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome to plot further subversion of the synodal process in October. A cabal of liberal prelates, including the "gay-friendly" Cardinal Reinhard Marx of Germany and Bishop Markus Büchel of Switzerland, an open advocate of women's ordination, met in private session with their selected theologians and press attaches. As Edward Pentin reported based on predictable leaks from the session:

One of the key topics discussed at the closed-door meeting was how the Church could better welcome those in stable same-sex unions, and reportedly "no one" opposed such unions being recognized as valid by the Church.

Participants also spoke of the need to "develop" the Church's teaching on human sexuality and called not for a theology of the body, as famously taught by St. John Paul II, but the development of a "theology of love."

One Swiss priest discussed the "importance of the human sex drive," while another participant, talking about holy Communion for remarried divorcees, asked: "How can we deny it, as though it were a punishment for the people who have failed and found a new partner with whom to start a new life?"¹

Pentin revealed that one of the "specialists" advising the cabal on Synod II was the notorious Fr. Eberhard Schockenhoff, a suit-and-tie neo-Modernist subversive who holds himself out as a "moral theologian." Wrote Pentin: "Faithful German Catholics are particularly disturbed about the rise to prominence of Father Schockenhoff, who is understood to be the 'mastermind' behind much of the challenge to settled Church teachings among the German episcopate and, by implication, at the synod on the family itself." Schockenhoff was evidently one of the commanders of the Panzer division that was planning to crush all opposition under its tank treads in October. He is, as Pentin noted, a "prominent critic of *Humanae Vitae*, as well as a strong supporter of homosexual clergy and those pushing for reform in the area of sexual ethics... "Naturally, Schockenhoff advocated the admission of public adulterers to Holy Communion in keeping with the "Kasper proposal." Schockenhoff has also "praised the permanence and solidarity shown in some same-sex relationships as 'ethically valuable'" and has "urged that any assessment of homosexual acts 'must take a back seat'" on the grounds that the faithful are becoming "increasingly distant from the Church's sexual morality," which appears "unrealistic and hostile to them." In general, wrote Pentin, Schockenhoff advocates that the Church's teaching on sexual morality be "liberated from the natural law" and based instead on the "life experience of the faithful." In other words: the

institutionalization of sexual immorality in the life of the Church, precisely as suggested in the bogus “midterm report” of Synod I, which Francis and his Synod controllers had failed to ram down the throats of the Synod majority.

Marco Ansaldo, a reporter for the Italian far-left newspaper *La Repubblica*, revealed that the proposals he had heard behind closed doors from Schockenhoff and others were “revolutionary, uttered by clergymen.”²

The Pontifical Council on the Family Militates Against the Family

In June, the Pontifical Council for the Family showed itself to be a nexus for the plotting of the progressives to overthrow Church teaching on marriage and family at Synod II. The Vatican publishing house released the results of three seminars the Council had conducted earlier in the year in the form of a book entitled *Family and Church: an Indissoluble Bond*. Traditionalists are well used to deceptive titles and slogans in postconciliar documents, and this one was no exception. Even EWTN reported with alarm that “[o]n the whole, the book suggests a ‘penitential path’ that would allow the divorced-and-remarried to receive sacramental Communion while still engaging in sexual relations.”³

The seminars, which had been conducted by the head of the Pontifical Council, Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, were overwhelmingly weighted in favor of speakers advocating Holy Communion for the divorced and remarried, an acceptance of “homosexual unions” and a relaxation of the “ban” on contraception, only one speaker standing firm for the traditional doctrine and discipline. The speakers included none other than Eberhard Schockenhoff, who was invited to argue “the possibility of an evolution of ecclesiastical doctrine on marriage” which would surpass a mere “statement that the Church cannot modify her praxis without betraying her traditions.”

Blueprint for Subversion

Given these developments, the next one was hardly surprising: on June 23, the General Secretary of the Synod on the Family, Cardinal Baldisseri, issued the *Instrumentum Laboris* or working document for Synod II, to commence on October 4. To study this document is to understand that the “defeat for Francis” the media had recognized following Synod I was only the end of a battle in a war that was just beginning. To the 62 paragraphs of the final report of Synod I, which had rejected Communion for divorced and “remarried” Catholics and the recognition of “homosexual unions,” the *Instrumentum* added 85 paragraphs of “responses,”⁴ “observations” and “scholarly contributions.” The added verbiage placed both issues squarely back on the table, as if Synod I had never happened.

Moreover, the three paragraphs that had failed to receive the requisite two-thirds majority at Synod I and thus should have been excluded from its final report under the Synod’s rules,⁵ namely paragraphs 52, 53 and 55, discussed earlier,⁶ were now presented as part of the final report’s “definitive text.” A commentary by Voice of the Family (VOF), a worldwide alliance of lay Catholic leaders from pro-life/pro-family organizations that had been formed to defend the family against the Synod on the Family, put it most succinctly, however mildly: “This violation of the synod’s rules casts serious doubt on the integrity of the synodal process.”⁷ But the synodal process had lacked integrity from the outset, and that had not changed in 2015.

Hegelian Morality

As VOF's commentary observed, the "interpretive key" to the whole *Instrumentum* is classic Modernist doubletalk: the Synod's task, the *Instrumentum* declares, is "to read both the signs of God and human history, in a twofold yet unique faithfulness which this reading involves."⁸ The notion that the Church's constant teaching on marriage and family is subject to "human history" is pure Cardinal Kasper, whose heretical ravings (as quoted by VOF) include the following:

The God who is enthroned over the world and history as a changeless being is an offense to man.... We must resist this God, however, not only for man's sake, but also for God's sake. He is not the true God at all, but rather a wretched idol. For a God who is only alongside of and above history, who is not himself history, is a finite God. If we call such a being God, then for the sake of the Absolute we must become absolute atheists. Such a God springs from a rigid worldview; he is the guarantor of the status quo and the enemy of the new.⁹

The correspondence between Kasper's historicized God and the "God of surprises" Francis had invoked at the conclusion of Synod I was not easy to miss. Further doubletalk appears in paragraph 7 of the *Instrumentum*, which contains the absurd affirmation that "[p]eople are becoming increasingly aware of the dignity of every person—man, woman and child," only to admit to the exact contrary:

- Only a minority of people lives, supports and encourages the Catholic Church's teaching on marriage and the family....
- Marriages, whether religious or not, are decreasing in number, while separation and divorce is on the rise....
- Young people are displaying a fear to make definitive commitments, including a commitment concerning a family....
- Extreme individualism, increasingly becoming widespread, focuses uppermost on gratifying desires....
- The development of a consumer society has separated sexuality from procreation... .
- An increasing decline in the birth rate ... is related to poverty or the inability to care for children, and, others, to accept responsibility and to the idea that children might infringe on freely pursuing personal goals.

Confronted with a collapse in sexual morality and the disintegration of marriage and family in country after country since Vatican II, however, the *Instrumentum* does not propose that these "pastoral challenges" be met by a vigorous reaffirmation of the Church's infallible doctrine and intrinsically related Church law and discipline. Quite the contrary, in the 85 paragraphs the *Instrumentum* tacks onto the final report of Synod 2014, the "opening" to adulterous "second marriages," cohabitation and "homosexual unions" in the midterm report reappear like a cork bobbing to the surface from a sunken ship.

"Integrating" Public Adulterers

Paragraph 121 of the *Instrumentum* calls for eliminating "forms of exclusion [in] liturgical and pastoral practice" respecting the divorced and "remarried" and their "greater integration" into parish life as part of "raising the sensitivity of the Christian community." The way is thus opened to public adulterers' not only receiving Holy Communion but serving as godparents, catechism teachers, lectors and "extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist" at the *Novus Ordo* Mass, as if their public adultery were no longer of any account in the Church. This was precisely as Francis had suggested seven months earlier in an interview with the Argentine daily *La Nacion*, republished in English by *America*

magazine, the same liberal Jesuit organ that had published his “revolutionary” interview of September 2013 referring to the Church’s supposed “obsession” with abortion, contraception and “gay marriage.” Quoth Francis:

It is not a solution if they go to communion. This alone [!] is not a solution, the solution is integration. They are not excommunicated, that is true. But they cannot be godparents at baptism, they cannot read the readings in the mass, they cannot give communion, they cannot teach catechism, they cannot do some seven things. I have the list here. Stop! If I take account of this it seems they are excommunicated de-facto....[10](#)

Putting aside the other prominent roles Francis would have people living in adultery assume in the Church, it was simply unbelievable that a Vicar of Christ would regard it as an injustice that those Christ Himself condemned as adulterers cannot be godparents, when the very function of a godparent is to provide a Christian model for the godchild. Here Francis’s argument was simply demagogic:

“Why can’t they be godparents?” He said people say no because they ask “what witness will they give to their godchild?” But it could be the witness of a man and a woman who say, “Look, I made a mistake, I slipped up on this point, but I believe the Lord loves me, I wish to follow God, sin does not conquer me, but I carry on.” Can there be more Christian witness than this? he asked. He compared such people to cases of “these corrupt, political fraudsters that we have” that “come to be a godparent and are married well in the church.” Would the church accept such a man? And what witness would he give to his godchild? Francis concluded, “we must change things a little” in terms of behavioral norms and values.

For Francis, living in an adulterous second “marriage” was merely “slipping up” on the part of a person of who still wishes to “follow God”—while continuing to engage in sexual relations with someone to whom he or she is not married! And if the Church would allow “corrupt, political fraudsters” to be godparents, why not divorced and “remarried” Catholics too? The resort to such crude, almost childish rhetoric by a Roman Pontiff on a fundamental matter of faith and morals had no precedent in 2,000 years.

Without specific reference to Francis, Bishop Schneider outlined the enormity of what Francis was promoting:

When a godfather or a godmother or a catechist conducts a lifestyle that publicly contradicts the Sixth Commandment and the indissolubility of the Christian marriage, then he or she surely cannot be an example of a life of faith. The same is valid for extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist. The advocacy for the admission of divorced and remarried to the task of godparents and catechists cannot ultimately be for the true spiritual good of the children, but turns out to be an instrumentalization of a specific ideological agenda. This is a dishonesty and a mockery of the institution of godparents and catechists who by means of a public promise took on the task of educators of the faith. In the case of godparents or catechists who are divorced and remarried, their life however, continuously contradicts their words, and so they have to face the admonition of the Holy Spirit through the mouth of the Apostle Saint James: “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (James 1:22).[11](#)

As far as Holy Communion for public adulterers is concerned, the *Instrumentum* continues to pursue the idea that it can somehow be permitted. Citing responses to their own loaded questions in the *Lineamenta*, in paragraph 123 the Synod controllers declare: “a great number agree that a journey of reconciliation or penance, under the auspices of the local bishop, might be undertaken by those who are divorced and civilly remarried, who find themselves in irreversible situations.” This “journey of reconciliation or penance” is clearly not the one the Church, following the teaching of Christ Himself, has required throughout her history: that the couple repent of their adulterous relations, vow to end them, and practice chastity if they must remain together for the sake of children. That bimillennial discipline, reaffirmed by John Paul II in *Familiaris Consortio* 84 as “based on

Sacred Scripture,” is deviously demoted to a mere “suggestion” to “follow a process which includes ... a decision to live in continence”—a “decision,” not a requirement of divine law.

Rather than what the Church always required in fidelity to the Gospel, paragraph 123 refers to “a way of penance” involving a “process of clarifying matters after experiencing a failure and a reorientation which is to be accompanied by a priest who is appointed for this purpose,” who “might come to a sufficient evaluation as to be able to suitably apply the power of binding and loosing to the situation.” In other words, a parish priest would be able to admit public adulterers to Holy Communion on a “case-by-case basis,” precisely as the rejected midterm report had proposed. This was “a clear restatement of the proposal made by Cardinal Kasper, and others” at Synod 2014.¹² But how can either reconciliation or penance occur in someone who continues an adulterous sexual relationship? For this reason alone “the Kasper proposal” is utter nonsense. Yet here it was again, front and center in the *Instrumentum* after having been rejected at Synod 2014.

Taking up another of Kasper’s sophisticated arguments, paragraph 124 of the *Instrumentum* reports that “[s]ome synod fathers maintained that divorced and remarried persons or those living together can have fruitful recourse to a spiritual communion. Others [i.e., Kasper and company] raised the question as to why, then, they cannot have access to sacramental Communion. As a result, the synod fathers requested that further theological study in the matter....” But no “further theological study” is required, for someone living a state of continuous adultery with no intention of ceasing the adulterous relations is hardly able to make an act of spiritual communion.¹³ As even the *Instrumentum* (§125) admits: “spiritual communion ... presupposes conversion and the state of grace....” It is utterly incoherent to suggest that divorced and “remarried” Catholics can live in a state of grace while continuing to engage in sexual relations outside of marriage, at the same time they are told their adultery requires “reconciliation and penance,” precluding any possibility of inculpable ignorance of grave sin.

Despite its resounding rejection by Synod 2014, the bogus principle of “the law of gradualness” respecting conformity the moral law is obstinately reintroduced at paragraph 121 of the *Instrumentum*:

Before integrating persons who are divorced and civilly remarried into pastoral life, some recommend that: pastors duly discern the impossibility of abandoning their situation and the life of faith of the couple in the new relationship; the process be accompanied by raising the sensitivity of the Christian community to receive these persons; and this work be done according to the law of gradualness ... while respecting the maturation of consciences.

This passage is replete with subversion: first, the suggestion that divorced and “remarried” Catholics currently lack “integration” in parish life, which must now be accomplished for the first time; next, the suggestion that people living in adultery can have “a life of faith ... in the new relationship” without renouncing its sexual aspect; then, the recommendation by “some” for sensitivity training of the “Christian community” to allow it to “receive these persons”—as if they had been excluded from the Church in the first place. In fact, Catholics who attempt a civil remarriage without a valid annulment of a sacramental marriage are still members of the Church, excluded from Holy Communion only because of their own freely willed decision to enter into and continue adulterous sexual relations.

This crucial paragraph of the *Instrumentum* concludes by announcing that the “work” of “reintegrating” public adulterers into parish life shall be accomplished according to the “law of gradualness.” But this “work” is completely unnecessary as “integration” is achieved by repenting and desisting from adulterous relations in keeping with the Church’s constant disciplinary practice rooted in divine revelation. According to the *Instrumentum*, however, people engaged in continuous public adultery should be allowed “gradually” to come around to following the moral law—meaning, of course, never—after first being “integrated” into parish life. This is precisely the error John Paul II explicitly rejected in *Familiaris Consortio*.¹⁴

Finally, in the mode of Kasper, paragraph 42 of the *Instrumentum* seditiously depicts the indissolubility of marriage as a mere “ideal in life which must take into account a sense of the times and the real difficulties in permanently maintaining commitments.” According to this “sense of the times,” the Church needs to “proclaim a message which might give hope and not be burdensome, so that every family may know that the Church never abandons the family....” The telltale phrase “every family” clearly connotes the families arising from civil divorce and remarriage or cohabitation on account of the “real difficulties” in “permanently maintaining commitments.” The Church must now understand these “real difficulties” in order to “give hope and not be burdensome.” The implication is inescapable: the Church’s doctrine on the absolute indissolubility of marriage and the adulterous nature of second civil “marriages” and the intrinsically related sacramental discipline have to go.

The Elimination of Sin

Reprising the rejected midterm report’s preposterous “moral ecumenism,” which would focus on the “positive elements” in illicit sexual relations, the *Instrumentum* attempts to validate not only civil marriage but also cohabitation by depicting them as stages in the development of sacramental marriage:

- Persons “living together or those civilly married” are described as having a “sacramental marriage ... in a virtual state or in its initial stage or not yet specifically defined,” to whom the Church should show “an appreciation for the commitment already made ... acknowledging adherence to those elements proper to the divine plan....” ¶157
- Cohabiting or civilly married couples are favorably depicted as engaged in “a gradual discovery of ‘the seeds of the Word’ which lie hidden, so as to value them until the fullness of union in the Sacrament might be achieved....” ¶199
- Civil marriage and “living together” are justified as “very often not a result of prejudice or an aversion to sacramental union but instead linked to cultural or contingent situations,” which are nevertheless “a sign of a relationship which wants to be built and opened to the prospects of personal fulfillment” and can provide “an enduring bond, stable and open to life, [that] can be considered a condition for embarking on a journey of growth which can perhaps lead to a sacramental marriage.” ¶102
- Sacramental marriage is reduced from a divine institution to “a possible good which ought to be proclaimed as a gift to enrich and strengthen married life and the family, instead of as a difficult ideal to achieve,” thus clearly implying that “married life” is possible without sacramental marriage. ¶102

The net result is the abolition of the concept of “living in sin,” with civil marriage and cohabitation now to be viewed as lying on a continuum of goods, devoid of moral opprobrium and even praiseworthy as far as they go. There is no longer any clear distinction between moral and immoral unions, but rather all unions are to be viewed as more or less good in the same manner as all religions according to “ecumenism” and

“interreligious dialogue.” In one of its 85 added paragraphs ([¶ 83](#)), the *Instrumentum*, citing the conveniently amorphous constituency of “some,” makes the analogy explicit: “Based on the existence of religious and cultural pluralism, some wish that the Synod retain and value the image of a ‘symphony of differences.’.. [P]astoral care on behalf of marriage and family needs to appreciate the positive elements present in different cultural and religious experiences, which are a *praeparatio evangelica*, that is, ‘a preparation for the Gospel.’ An encounter with people who have chosen the path of awareness and responsibility towards the authentic goods of marriage can establish an effective collaboration for the promotion and defense of the family.” In other words, the “symphony of differences” should include non-sacramental “unions” of various kinds along the path leading to “the authentic goods of marriage.”

In short, the *Instrumentum* would join the practical religious indifferentism of Church authorities in the postconciliar epoch to a moral indifferentism respecting extra-marital sexual relations. Here too, “dialogue” would replace the proclamation of the truth. In added paragraphs the Synod Fathers never adopted ([¶¶ 81, 78](#)), the *Instrumentum* declares that “pastoral care ought to take into consideration the need of communicating with others in a manner open to dialogue and free from prejudice, especially in cases where Catholics, in matters of marriage and family life, do not live or are in no condition to live in full accord with the Church’s teaching.” The duty to live according to the moral law with the assistance of grace is replaced by a Pelagian blanket excuse for immorality based on nothing more than the same fallen human nature the Church was instituted to overcome with her Sacraments and infallible moral guidance.

Rather than telling people the truth about their situation—the first of act of charity—the *Instrumentum* literally calls for silencing the Church’s voice of moral authority: “The Christian message ought to be preferably proclaimed in a manner which might inspire hope ... which does not moralize, judge or control, but bears witness to the Church’s moral teaching, while, at the same time, remaining sensitive to the circumstances of each individual.” How does the Church bear witness to her teaching without moralizing, judging or seeking to control immoral behavior through such sanctions as the bar to receiving Holy Communion for public adulterers, the excommunication arising from procuring or cooperating in an abortion and indeed the threat of damnation for unrepentant mortal sinners? The answer is that she does not bear witness, which is exactly what the *Instrumentum* envisions. What the alarmed President of the Polish Bishops’ Conference said concerning the scandalous midterm report at Synod 2014 applies equally here: the Synod on the Family “should be an incentive to fidelity, family values, but instead seems to accept everything as it is.”¹⁵

Continued Opening to “Homosexual Unions”

Even the “opening” to “homosexual unions” reappears, albeit more faintly, in the *Instrumentum*. While repeating the forthright declaration by the Fathers of Synod 2014 that “[t]here are absolutely no grounds for considering homosexual unions to be in any way similar or even remotely analogous to God’s plan for marriage and family,” the *Instrumentum* speaks of “assistance in defining the specific character of such unions in society,” as if there were a place for such unions so long as they are defined. There is no trace of the Church’s teaching that Catholics must oppose the legalization of any such

“unions” and refuse to cooperate in their legal implementation.¹⁶ Instead, the *Instrumentum* calls for “a more thorough examination of human nature and culture which is based not simply on biology and sexual difference”—as if marriage could be based on anything other than biology and sexual difference, without which both marriage and family would be impossible. For this very reason, only twelve years earlier, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith under John Paul II had warned that “[t]he inevitable consequence of legal recognition of homosexual unions would be the redefinition of marriage, which would become, in its legal status, an institution devoid of essential reference to factors linked to heterosexuality... .”¹⁷ Even here, then, the *Instrumentum* gives off the whiff of subversion.

Embracing Women’s Liberation

In another of the 85 added paragraphs (¶ 3), the *Instrumentum* hails the so-called emancipation of women: “Many quarters are witnessing an emancipation of women which is clearly indicating a woman’s role in the growth of the family and society.” The *Instrumentum* fails to address women’s virtual enslavement in modern society, with its inculcation of contraception—which the *Instrumentum* never mentions—as a civic virtue and its coercion of women to enter the work force. Quite the contrary, the *Instrumentum* declares that in “western countries, the empowerment of women requires a rethinking of the duties of the spouses in their reciprocity and common responsibility towards family life.” Thus the *Instrumentum* lends support to the feminist attack on traditional marriage and family, which has long belittled the mother who stays at home as a “barefoot and pregnant” victim of male oppression.

Only in “developing countries” does the *Instrumentum* note a problem with “the exploitation of women and the violence done to their bodies and the tiring tasks imposed on them, even during pregnancy,” which problem it describes as merely being “oftentimes compounded by abortion and forced sterilization...” Compounded? In “advanced countries,” however, neither contraception nor abortion is presented as even part of the problem. Instead, the *Instrumentum* cites “the desire for a child ‘at all costs’ [which] has not resulted in happier and stronger family relationships, but, in many cases, has actually exacerbated the inequality between women and men,” and it laments that “[s]terility in a woman ... brings social discrimination.” What “inequality” does the *Instrumentum* have in view? Evidently the “inequality” arising from a woman’s capacity to bear children and the particular burdens motherhood entails. Nowhere in its 147 paragraphs does the *Instrumentum* even intimate that contraception, voluntary sterilization and abortion—or, for that matter, divorce itself—are primary threats to the very existence of the family throughout the world. A document purporting to defend the family stealthily yields ground to the modern evils that strike at its foundation.

The *Instrumentum*’s brief for women’s liberation ends with its call for “a greater appreciation of their responsibility in the Church, namely, their involvement in the decision-making process, their participation—not simply in a formal way—in the governing of some institutions; and their involvement in the formation of ordained ministers.” What further feminization and democratization in the Church have to do with a purported Synod on the Family is far from clear.

Helping Children Discover “the beauty of sexuality in love”

At the same time it yields ground to the sexual Zeitgeist, the *Instrumentum* undermines the right of parents to resist its advances against their children, declaring: “the family, while maintaining its privileged spot in education, cannot be the only place for teaching sexuality. This calls for devising, within the framework of the pastoral support of families, true and proper programmes which are addressed to both individuals and couples—with special attention to those at the age of puberty and adolescence—so they can discover the beauty of sexuality in love” (¶86). In other words, parents must submit their children to undefined “sex education” programs because they are presumed incapable of handling the matter themselves. The *Instrumentum* evinces complete indifference to whether such programs are administered by Catholic or public schools, noting tepidly that “in some countries” there are “formation programmes imposed by public authority whose content is contrary to a properly human and Christian conception. In this regard, conscientious objection on the part of educators is decidedly a right to be upheld.” Decidedly!

VOF’s report rightly notes that this paragraph of the *Instrumentum* is “a direct attack on the rights of parents” as primary educators of the children.¹⁸ Far from the pages of the *Instrumentum* is Pius XI’s insistence that:

By nature parents have a right to the training of their children, but with this added duty that the education and instruction of the child be in accord with the end for which by God’s blessing it was begotten. Therefore it is the duty of parents to make every effort to prevent any invasion of their rights in this matter, and to make absolutely sure that the education of their children remain under their own control in keeping with their Christian duty, and above all to refuse to send them to those schools in which there is danger of imbibing the deadly poison of impiety.¹⁹

Moreover, as Pius XI cautioned, even where parents decide that “some private instruction” is needed—certainly not in classrooms full of impressionable children—“every precaution must be taken” because “often in the very things considered to be remedies against sin, we find occasions for and inducements to sin itself.” Thus, even a father, when discussing “a matter so delicate” in private with his own son:

should be well on his guard and not descend to details, nor refer to the various ways in which this infernal hydra destroys with its poison so large a portion of the world; otherwise it may happen that instead of extinguishing this fire, he unwittingly stirs or kindles it in the simple and tender heart of the child. Speaking generally, during the period of childhood it suffices to employ those remedies which produce the double effect of opening the door to the virtue of purity and closing the door upon vice.²⁰

There is not a word in the *Instrumentum* about “opening the door to the virtue of purity and closing the door upon vice.” Rather, the emphasis is on “teaching sexuality” and helping children “discover the beauty of sexuality in love.” We have already seen the outcome of these sex-laden programs in both public and Catholic schools, which involve precisely what Pius XI condemned: stirring or kindling a fire that ought to be extinguished in children. Consigning the pre-conciliar warnings against “sex education” to the regime of novelty’s ever more crowded memory hole, the *Instrumentum* pays no heed to Pius XI’s condemnation of the very thing it advocates:

Another grave danger is that naturalism which nowadays invades the field of education in that most delicate matter of purity of morals. Far too common is the error of those who with dangerous assurance and under an ugly term propagate a so-called sex education, falsely imagining they can forearm youth against the dangers of sensuality by means purely natural, such as a foolhardy initiation and precautionary instruction for all

indiscriminately, even in public....

Such persons grievously err in refusing to recognize the inborn weakness of human nature, and that law of which the Apostle speaks, “as warring against the law of my mind” (Rom. vii, 23), and also in ignoring the experience of facts, from which it is clear that, particularly in young people, evil practices are the effect not so much of ignorance of intellect as of weakness of a will exposed to dangerous occasions, and unsupported by the means of grace.²¹

Synod of Doom

As the length of this discussion suggests, the added text of the *Instrumentum* dwarfs the Synod’s final report in significance. What it lards into the synodal proceedings has little or nothing to do with defending traditional marriage and family as opposed to subtly and not so subtly undermining both in the name of the “God of surprises,” acting through the “signs of human history.” Whatever his subjective disposition might be—and it certainly cannot be judged here—Francis practically admitted as much with a bizarrely inapposite reference to Christ’s miracle during the wedding feast at Cana during a homily in Ecuador two weeks after the *Instrumentum* appeared. Twisting Holy Scripture to his needs yet again, he declared:

Shortly before the opening of the Jubilee Year of Mercy, the Church will celebrate the Ordinary Synod devoted to the family, deepen her spiritual discernment and consider concrete solutions and help to the many difficult and significant challenges facing families today. I ask you to pray fervently for this intention, so that Christ can take even what might seem to us impure, like the water in the jars scandalizing or threatening us, and turn it—by making it part of his “hour”—into a miracle. The family today needs this miracle.²²

How the water Christ turned into wine was impure, threatening or scandalous was not explained; it was yet another example of the abuse of Scripture to suit rhetorical requirements. But here Francis revealed what the neo-Catholic commentariat had resolutely ignored from the beginning of the “synodal journey”: that the “concrete solutions” the “God of surprises” would supposedly reveal to the Synod could hardly be what the Church has always prescribed in her teaching on marriage, family and sexual morality. The reference to a “miracle” that would change impure, threatening and scandalous water into wine could only mean that Francis expected “the God of surprises” to turn public adultery, cohabitation and “homosexual unions” into tolerable behavior. The media did not fail to notice: “Pope says families need a miracle, hints at ‘scandalous’ changes for the church.”²³ If it were otherwise, if the Pope intended simply to affirm doctrine and discipline and the necessary connection between the two, what was the point of the *Instrumentum* and the whole “synodal process”? VOF’s report summarized the entire travesty in one devastating sentence: “The *instrumentum laboris*, in common with the *relatio post disceptationem* [midterm report] and *relatio synodi* of the Extraordinary Synod [final report of Synod 2014], threatens the entire structure of Catholic teaching on marriage, the family and human sexuality.”

By August of 2015, even certain elements of the mainstream Catholic press were beginning to awaken to the possibility that the “Kasper proposal” had really been the “Francis proposal” all along. On August 21, the resolutely mainstream *Catholic Herald* of England ran an article by Fr. Raymond de Souza, a Canadian parish priest and prominent Catholic commentator, under the provocative headline “Does Francis think Cardinal Kasper is right?” The subheading was even more provocative: “Every time the ‘Kasper proposal’ has been rejected, Pope Francis has kept the discussion going.”²⁴ Exactly so. Fr.

de Souza's piece was prompted by yet another of Francis's insinuation-laden addresses on the subject of divorced and "remarried" Catholics:

Today I would like to focus our attention on another reality: how to take care of those that, following the irreversible failure of their marital bond, have undertaken a new union. The Church is fully aware that such a situation is contrary to the Christian sacrament. However, her gaze as a teacher always draws from a mother's heart; a heart which, enlivened by the Holy Spirit, always seeks the good and the salvation of persons. That is why she feels obliged, "for the sake of truth," to "exercise careful discernment of situations." That is how St John Paul II expressed it in the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (n 84), pointing out, for instance, the difference between one who has suffered the separation and one who has caused it. This discernment must be made.²⁵

Once again Francis had posited an "irreversible failure of the marital bond," which cannot "fail" because it is indissoluble until death and only the fidelity of one or both parties can fail. Equally revealing was the phrase "new union," as if any new union were possible in the presence of an indissoluble sacramental bond. Tellingly, Fr. de Souza observed, Francis had mentioned *Familiaris Consortio* 84, but only to note its call for "careful discernment of situations" while passing over in silence its reaffirmation of Church discipline prohibiting the admission of public adulterers to Holy Communion: "To quote that passage only in relation to 'careful discernment' and to omit John Paul's specific answer to the question at hand is to invite the conclusion that Pope Francis does not agree with St John Paul's teaching."

Had Francis in fact rejected the constant discipline of the Church going back to the apostolic age? Following the trail of papal breadcrumbs, Fr. de Souza further observed that Francis had also quoted Benedict XVI, but only from a speech in Milan about "discernment and wise pastoral support" for the divorced and "remarried" while pointedly ignoring Benedict's own Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* (2007), following the 2005 Synod on the Eucharist, in which the pontiff had repeated John Paul II's reaffirmation of "the Church's practice, based on Sacred Scripture, of not admitting the divorced and remarried to the sacraments, since their state and their condition of life objectively contradict the loving union of Christ and the Church signified and made present in the Eucharist."

Indeed, the Synods of 1980 and 2005 had both upheld the Church's discipline, as Benedict noted in *Sacramentum*. Yet, a mere nine years after the most recent Synod, Francis had convoked still another whose controllers seemed determined to overthrow a 2,000-year-old practice mandated by the very words of God Incarnate. Fr. de Souza stated the conclusion that should have been obvious to neo-Catholic "normalists" from the beginning:

Both St John Paul and Benedict XVI spoke explicitly on the inadmissibility of the divorced and civilly remarried to the sacraments. Pope Francis quotes his predecessors raising the question, but does not quote their answer. The most plausible explanation is that he does not agree with it, even though the Holy Father has not said explicitly that the teaching of *Familiaris Consortio*, confirmed by Benedict XVI, is wrong. On August 5, though, he clearly gave that impression. Whether that impression is correct or incorrect will be the drama which preoccupies the synod.

For experienced traditionalist observers of the postconciliar scene, this "drama" was not in the least surprising. From the moment it was first announced, traditionalists fully expected the "Synod on the Family" to devolve into a Synod Against the Family at which the constant teaching and discipline of the Church would come under furious attack—just as it did at Vatican II, whose ambiguity-ridden texts bedevil the Church to this day.²⁶ And, just

as at the Council, a “Rhine group” of German-led theologians, first and foremost cardinals Kasper and Marx, were plotting to subvert the proceedings in a Modernist direction. This time, however, the plot involved a synod of bishops—in itself a novelty introduced by Paul VI—which, unlike an ecumenical council, would not be protected by the Holy Ghost from promulgating outright error, as the blatantly heterodox midterm report had already demonstrated.

Like the conciliar “opening to the world,” the “liturgical renewal,” the “springtime of Vatican II,” the “universal call to holiness,” and “the new evangelization,” the “Synod on the Family,” “pastoral challenges to the family” and “the God of surprises” were demagogic slogans behind which lurked the next advance of the regime of novelty’s endless parade of failure. The Synod on the Family could well be viewed, therefore, as a Synod of Doom—a looming menace to the Church’s moral edifice. The threat was so clear that even before the *Instrumentum* was published nearly 500 priests in England, hardly known for its robust traditional Catholicism since the Council, signed a petition pleading with the participants in Synod 2015 “to make a clear and firm proclamation of the Church’s unchanging moral teaching, so that confusion may be removed, and faith confirmed.” The signatories declared: “we affirm the importance of upholding the Church’s traditional discipline regarding the reception of the sacraments, and that doctrine and practice remain firmly and inseparably in harmony.”²⁷ Confronted with rising clerical and lay opposition to the Synod’s patently manipulated agenda, including the now famous “Five Cardinals Book” (*Remaining in the Truth of Christ*), which Cardinal Baldisseri had prevented from reaching the Synod Fathers by mail, Francis denounced the opposition as malicious gossipers: “Everyone—cardinals, bishops, priests, men and women religious, lay faithful—we are all called to pray for the synod. This is what is needed, not chatter and gossip!”²⁸ Only two days before, as if by coincidence, Cardinal Kasper likewise recommended prayers for the Synod. His stated reason for the request could not have been more revealing: “We should all pray for it [the Synod] because a battle is going on.”²⁹ A battle indeed! But for what intention were the faithful expected to pray respecting the outcome of this battle: that the Synod would “affirm the importance of upholding the Church’s traditional discipline regarding the reception of the sacraments, and that doctrine and practice remain firmly and inseparably in harmony,” as the “gossipers” hoped, or that the “gossipers” would be defeated by “the God of surprises,” who was apparently still intent on advancing the “Kasper proposal”?

In sum, the Catholic mind staggers before a spectacle the Church has never seen before, even in the darkest days of hierarchical corruption: an open and concerted effort at the Church’s apex to use an official gathering of prelates in Rome, under the guidance of a pope, to undermine her authority and infallible teaching on marriage, procreation and sexual morality. We are truly confronted with what must be the worst example yet in Church history of the moral defection of hierarchs of which Our Lord speaks to Saint Catherine of Siena, Doctor of the Church, in *The Dialogue*:

So, were the prelate, or any other lord having subjects, on seeing one putrefying from the corruption of mortal sin, to apply to him the ointment of soft words of encouragement alone, without reproof, he would never cure him, but the putrefaction would rather spread to the other members, who, with him, form one body under the same pastor. But if he were a physician, good and true to those souls, as were those glorious pastors of old, he would not give salving ointment without the fire of reproof. And, were the member still to remain obstinate in his evil doing, he would cut him off from the congregation in order that he corrupt not the other members with the putrefaction of

mortal sin.

But they act not so today, but, in cases of evil doing, they even pretend not to see. And do you know why? The root of self-love is alive in them, wherefore they bear perverted and servile fear. Because they fear to lose their position or their temporal goods, or their prelacy, they do not correct, but act like blind ones... ³⁰

The Silences of Francis

As the Church under Francis suffers a new and even more acute phase of the disease process that has afflicted her for the past half-century, Francis continues to exhibit a preoccupation with social, political and economic issues in which he has no competence. Resurgent Islam is threatening the very existence of Christianity in the Middle East and establishing itself as a nexus of terrorism in the very heart of Europe, yet Francis has devoted 185 pages to an “ecological crisis” whose very existence is debatable. He has not (as of this writing) devoted even a single page in any papal document to a crisis even *The New York Times* was constrained to address in a Pulitzer-quality essay only a month after *Laudato Si*’ appeared: “Is this the end of Christianity in the Middle East?”³¹ When ISIS soldiers beheaded twenty-one Coptic Christians on a beach in Libya in February of 2015, one of the butchers held up his bloody knife before the camera and vowed that ISIS would “conquer Rome by Allah’s permission.”³² The previous October the cover of the ISIS magazine depicted the ISIS flag flying atop the obelisk in Saint Peter’s Square. “There is no particular concern in the Vatican,” said Father Lombardi at the Vatican Press Office.³³ Francis himself had nothing to say. While ISIS was extirpating Christianity from Iraq and massacring all who resisted or simply got in the way, an Iraqi priest who had been tortured by ISIS jihadists issued a public plea on August 26: “Please, if there’s anyone who still thinks ISIS doesn’t represent Islam, know that you are wrong. ISIS represents Islam one hundred percent.... Wake up! The cancer is at your door. They will destroy you. We, the Christians of the Middle East are the only group that has seen the face of evil: Islam.”³⁴ Here too the Vatican evinced “no particular concern.” And Francis had nothing to say.

What was of particular concern to Francis in the month of August was deforestation in Argentina caused by the planting of soy beans: “It hurts me in my soul when I see deforestation to plant soy. It will take thousands of years to recover. Look after the woods and water.”³⁵ Typical of the uniformly bitter comments by ordinary Catholics on this news at Reuters was the following: “Sometimes I think I will go insane. The Pope is against growing food to feed people?!?!? It’s funny the Pope has never said it hurts him to see Americans funding Planned Parenthood and it’s [sic] mass murder of babies and selling the body parts industry.”³⁶

In an article in *Il Libero* published in late August 2015, Antonio Socci distilled into one blistering commentary the anguish of Catholics around the world after two and a half years of a papacy like no other the Church has ever seen:

[O]n the overall theme of the extermination of Christians he has spoken different times. Yet, he has always done so very late, in a generic way, without naming the causes or condemning the executioners and even—which is worse—delegitimizing the possibility of interventions by “international police” to protect populations threatened by massacres (interventions that had been desperately requested by the bishops of those places).

When Bergoglio waxes to a theme he speaks of it in a heartfelt, vigorous, continuous and cutting way, as with immigration, which—according to him—we should welcome en bloc, without hesitation, paying the costs of it.

Nothing of the sort is seen in defense of massacred Christians. For that matter, he has never skimmed on words of esteem for the Islamic world, even to the point of pronouncing ecumenical concepts of dubious orthodoxy....

Why does the Bergoglio Party intervene strongly against Italian politicians, but not against the Islamic or Communist regimes where Christians are on the cross?

The tardy and generic words spent on the persecuted Christian communities are not in the least comparable to the care he has lavished—for example—on ecology. To defend the survival of “algae, worms, small insects and reptiles” he wrote an encyclical, but for the persecuted Christians—no. He declared the 1st of September a world day of prayer for the ecosystem, but for the massacred Christians—no (and they are the most persecuted group of humans on the planet).

Obviously the ecological encyclical is not concerned only with worms and reptiles, but also thunders against the use of plastic cups and air-conditioners (which he, however, uses at Santa Marta). By contrast, he has never thundered and hurled lightning bolts at the butchers of Christians....

Obama is the biggest fan and sponsor of Bergoglio, who carefully avoids attacking the fanatical laicist politics of the same Obama against life, family and gender, frontally opposed to the Catholic Church.

But, as I have said, the Bergoglio Party is one thing, the Catholic Church another. Are they opposing realities?

In fact, Bergoglio comes down hard on places of rebirth in the Faith (for example against ... the Franciscan Friars and Ratzingerian bishops and cardinals). Further, with the Synod, he has placed a kind of time bomb under the doctrinal cathedral of Catholicism.

He has even declared to Scalfari that “there is no Catholic God.” This is Bergoglio. And his party.^{[37](#)}

By the time this second edition is published, the second session of the so-called Synod on the Family will be about to commence. As of this writing, a Filial Petition pleading with Francis to stand up for the Church’s traditional teaching and discipline has reached 500,000 signatures, including five cardinals and 117 bishops (overwhelmingly from Third World countries) and even politicians such as Rick Santorum.^{[38](#)} Francis’s response has been utter silence. He was silent as well when once-Catholic Ireland voted by popular referendum to legalize “gay marriage”—the first country in the world to do so in that manner. “The Pope’s theologian,” however, defended the vote. Quoth Kasper: “A democratic state has the duty to respect the will of the people; and it seems clear that, if the majority of the people wants such homosexual unions, the state has a duty to recognize such rights.”^{[39](#)} A month later, the United States Supreme Court imposed “gay marriage” on all fifty states. From Francis, nothing but silence.

And yet, when it comes to demanding the unrestricted immigration of Muslims into Europe, decrying “inequality,” sounding the alarm about harm to the ecosystem, or any of the other political, scientific or socioeconomic matters that seem to interest him, Francis cannot stop talking. The clearly disgusted Robert Royal, whose mainstream Catholic journalist credentials are undisputed, said of Francis: “He’s the pope least prepared to do public commentary in about 150 years, and yet he’s waded in on Cuba, Scottish independence, Greece, Israel, international economics, etc., in which it’s clear he knows very little.”^{[40](#)}

After two and a half years of the Bergoglian pontificate, with one scene after another of Francis basking in popular adulation and praise from the media, one has the distinct impression that Francis views the Petrine office as a bully pulpit from which to preach on the issues that matter to him, as opposed to defending the deposit of Faith. At the same time, he displays an astonishing obliviousness of the perilous state of the Church and the

world around him—so much so that he finds the experience of being pope immensely enjoyable rather than the rack of sorrows it was for his predecessors, especially Benedict. Francis has confirmed this impression with his own words. When asked by his old friend and successor as Archbishop of Buenos Aires, Cardinal Mario Poli, why the once-dour Cardinal Bergoglio was smiling all the time now that he was pope, Francis said literally this: “It’s very entertaining to be pope.”⁴¹

Meanwhile, the ticking time bomb Socci mentioned is set to explode in the Synod’s midst as the forces Francis has unleashed in the Church furiously attack fundamental principles of morality made subjects for debate by the will of the Pope himself. Predictions about the outcome are perilous, but this much is certain: the needless struggle Francis has provoked will involve opposing factions of cardinals and bishops brought to Rome to contend with each other over matters long ago settled by the Magisterium. That being so, even if outright disaster is avoided, as it was at the Synod’s first session, barring a miraculous intervention or some stupendous unforeseen circumstance, the net result cannot possibly be a fortification of the Church’s infallible teaching on marriage, procreation, family and human sexuality. Given the relentless trend of the regime of novelty for the past half-century, arrested only briefly during the Benedictine Respite, at best only further erosion of the Church’s remaining bastions seems possible.

A Question of Resistance

By the end of August of 2015, the sense that Francis was a Pope to be viewed warily rather than followed unquestioningly had penetrated very deeply into the Catholic mainstream, where such thinking had never been countenanced before. The neo-Catholic ideologues will of course go on defending every papally approved ecclesial novelty to the bitter end, no matter how disastrous, for that is what their ideological commitment demands. Other non-traditionalist commentators, however, are no longer so burdened. For example, William Oddie, writing for the *Catholic Herald*, lamented that perhaps it was time to recognize that one could place too much faith in popes when they are not defending the Church’s infallible teachings. After drawing unfavorable comparisons between Francis on the one hand and John Paul II and Benedict on the other, and unburdening his distress over *Laudato Si’*, Oddie expressed exasperation with the Bergoglian program: “It may be, who knows, that I am expecting too much from my Pope.... I thought that was what popes were for: defending and articulating the Magisterium.”⁴²

But that is what Popes are for. And the growing recognition that Francis is not doing what Catholics have a right expect from a pope may well be the good that God is drawing from the evil of the ecclesial crisis Francis has succeeded in raising to a fever pitch. The Bergoglian pontificate has made clear to many who never saw it before that, as Cardinal Ratzinger wrote some five years before he became Pope, in a work these pages cited in 2002: “In fact, the First Vatican Council had in no way defined the pope as an absolute monarch. On the contrary, it presented him as the guarantor of obedience to the revealed Word. The pope’s authority is bound to the Tradition of faith.... The authority of the pope is not unlimited; it is at the service of Sacred Tradition.”⁴³ Honest observers can longer deny, even if they cannot yet quite admit, that Francis simply does not think he is “bound to the Tradition of faith” but rather feels free to indulge his dream of “transforming

everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today's world rather than for her self-preservation."⁴⁴ The Church now has at her head a pope who openly declares in an apostolic exhortation that, for him, the Church's self-preservation is of secondary importance and that "[m]ore than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges... ." ⁴⁵

What is a Catholic to do in the face of such declarations by a Roman pontiff? Thirteen years ago this book made the case, based on Tradition itself, for "licit resistance to the Pope" where necessary to defend the Church against papal imprudence or recklessness.⁴⁶ Thirteen years later it is all the more clear that Catholics are bound to do what Saint Robert Bellarmine counseled:

Therefore, just as it is lawful to resist a Pontiff invading a body, so it is lawful to resist him invading souls or disturbing a state, and much more if he should endeavor to destroy the Church. I say that it is lawful to resist him, by not doing what he commands and by blocking him lest he should carry out his will; it is not lawful, however, to judge, punish or even depose him, because he is nothing other than a superior.⁴⁷

More is required of the faithful than the attitude of supine resignation Oddie expressed (citing the advice of a priest friend): "And don't be upset by the Pope. Popes come and popes go. A great one is a wonderful bonus: we just had two in a row. But it's the Church we depend on." It will hardly do to treat the Pope as a dispensable "come and go" figurehead whom the faithful can simply ignore whenever he teaches and governs badly. For though it is indeed "the Church we depend on," the Pope is by divine ordination her center of unity, so that a wayward pope strikes at the very heart and thus the health of the Mystical Body and its individual members. Precisely on account of the indispensable function of the Petrine office, a wayward pope must be opposed and his plans impeded by a loyal opposition, just as Bellarmine, a Doctor of the Church, teaches.

But such resistance is no solution to the crisis. It merely mitigates as much as possible the damage a wayward pope can do until a successor faithful to Tradition provides the leadership without which the restoration of the universal Church is impossible. How ironic, then, to see within the same constituency that habitually defends every papal word and deed, no matter what, a rising attitude that this pope is not so important after all—a reaction doubtless prompted by the spectacle of a pope whose words and deeds, as any honest observer must admit, are utterly indefensible. Ironic as well is the contrasting traditionalist insistence on the integrity of the Petrine office as essential to the good order of the ecclesial commonwealth, necessitating that Francis be opposed rather than dismissed like some minor character in a play who makes a fleeting appearance onstage and then exits stage left with no effect on the plot or the *dramatis personae*.

In the end, it is of course the Church's divinely guaranteed indefectibility that will save her from the terminal consequences of what the regime of novelty has wrought over the past half-century of ecclesial drift and decay. The question, however, is when and how the human instruments God will deign to use for the immense task of ecclesial restoration will rise to their duty in sufficient numbers, led by a pope who will provide more than a pause in the regime's advance but finally bring it to an end. Another question is what the Church and the world will look like at that dramatic moment in salvation history.

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- [44.](#) *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 27.
- [45.](#) Ibid., n. 49.
- [46.](#) Cf. Chapter 10.
- [47.](#) Cf. Chapter 10, n. 282. I cite here a new translation by Ryan Grant. *De Controversiis: On the Roman Pontiff* (Mediatrix Press: 2015), Book II, Chapter 29, p. 303.

Conclusion

The Thirteenth of October

Praised even by Barack Obama, Pope Francis is the first pope in the history of the world to receive universal acclaim from the powers that be, including the first invitation ever extended to a pope to address a joint session of the United States Congress. At the same time, Francis presides over the most advanced state of doctrinal and disciplinary erosion in Church history. The correlation is impossible to overlook. And the reason for it must at last be stated clearly for the sake of truth. As one anguished priest, not given to rashness and often a critic of traditionalist contentions, was compelled to write: “God in his inscrutable Providence and just wrath has evidently decided to punish the weak, corrupt, neo-Modernistic post-Vatican II Church: he has allowed a bunch of compromising cardinals to elect one of the most dreadful popes in history.”¹

A Prophetic Date

Where is Heaven in the midst of this drama? As always, very near indeed. As near as a mother who warns her children of dangers in their path and what they must do to avoid them. In 1973, the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared repeatedly at Akita, Japan, to Sister Agnes Sassagawa, who, like Padre Pio, received the mark of the stigmata. On April 22, 1984, Bishop John Shojiro Ito approved the apparitions as worthy of belief, along with miraculous events surrounding a wooden statue of the Virgin.² Bishop Ito’s letter of approbation contains a text of Our Lady of Akita’s words to Sister Agnes during one of the apparitions. In this text, the Virgin warned:

....The work of the devil will infiltrate even into the Church. One will see cardinals opposing other cardinals ... and bishops confronting other bishops. The priests who venerate me will be scorned and condemned by their confreres; churches and altars will be sacked; the Church will be full of those who accept compromises and the demon will tempt many priests and religious to leave the service of the Lord.³

Bishop Ito, wrote Howard Dee, the Philippine ambassador to the Vatican, “was certain Akita was an extension of Fatima, and Cardinal Ratzinger personally confirmed to me that these two messages, of Fatima and Akita, are essentially the same.”⁴ As if Heaven itself wished to stress the connection, the quoted prophecy of Our Lady of Akita took place on October 13, 1973, the anniversary of the Miracle of the Sun at Fatima, which occurred on October 13, 1917. As even the secular press reported at the time, a crowd of 70,000 witnesses, including atheist reporters, saw the terrifying event, which prompted many fallen-away Catholics to repent on the spot and return to the practice of the Faith.

As this work noted thirteen years ago, it was also on October 13, 1962 that Cardinal Achille Liénart seized the microphone out of order and derailed the Council’s entire preparation by demanding democratic consultations and voting on the conciliar schemas and the makeup of the committees that would draft the Council’s final documents. He later boasted that he “had deflected the course of the Council and made history.” This work noted as well Romano Amerio’s observation that Liénart’s seemingly spontaneous (but actually carefully planned) gesture was “one of those points at which history is concentrated for a moment, and whence great consequences flow.”⁵ We are living with those consequences at this very moment in history.

On October 13, 2014, the Synod on the Family was compromised by the publication of a shameful midterm report that was neither written, nor adopted, nor even seen by the Synod Fathers before its publication to the world with the approval of Francis. To recall the words of Bishop Schneider quoted earlier: “This is the first time in Church history that such a heterodox text was actually published as a document of an official meeting of Catholic bishops under the guidance of a pope....”

Looking at human history in general, one could easily construct an “amazing” coincidence of major events with a particular date on the calendar. But when the scope is limited strictly to Catholic ecclesial affairs over the past century, the repeated coincidence of the 13th of October with turning points in Church history is arresting, and causes wonder over what will happen on October 13, 2015, which falls in the middle of Synod II. Again, predictions are perilous, but here the Fatima event seems to provide prophetic guidance concerning the Synod in particular, as well as the ecclesial crisis in general. In 2008, Cardinal Carlo Caffarra, the Archbishop of Bologna, gave an interview in which he revealed that the last surviving Fatima visionary, Sister Lucia, had sent him a letter in the 1990s in which she warned that “the final battle between the Lord and the reign of Satan will be about marriage and the family. Don’t be afraid, because anyone who works for the sanctity of marriage and the family will always be fought and opposed in every way, because this is the decisive issue.”⁶

It is thus no surprise that Cardinal Caffarra, suitably informed by the Fatima visionary, is one of the five Cardinals who contributed to *Remaining in the Truth of Christ*—the same book kept from reaching the Synod Fathers by Cardinal Baldisseri, the General Secretary handpicked by Francis. In his contribution to the Five Cardinals Book, Cardinal Caffarra observes that it is impossible to admit a divorced and civilly remarried person to Holy Communion because in Holy Matrimony “the married person is ontologically, in his being, consecrated to Christ, conformed to him,” “the conjugal bond is put into being by God himself,” and the “[t]he spouse remains integrated into such a mystery, even if the spouse, through a subsequent decision, attacks the sacramental bond by entering into a state of life that contradicts it.” Moreover, the consequence of admitting such persons to Holy Communion, with no renunciation of adulterous sexual relations, would be to “persuade, not only the faithful, but also any attentive person of the idea that, at its heart, there exists no marriage that is absolutely indissoluble, that the ‘forever’ to which every true love cannot but aspire is an illusion. There is no doubt that this conclusion contradicts Jesus’ words regarding matrimony.”⁷

And yet Cardinal Caffarra’s opponents at the Synod will attempt to foist upon the Church precisely what is ontologically impossible without abandoning the very words of Christ, and they are having their day with the obvious encouragement of Francis. “The work of the devil will infiltrate even into the Church. One will see cardinals opposing other cardinals, and bishops confronting other bishops.” So Our Lady warned at Akita. And so, it appears, did she warn Lucia of Fatima. It is fitting to recapitulate here a citation from the first edition: the Fatima-related prophecy of Cardinal Pacelli, uttered only 31 years before the Second Vatican Council. Said the future Pope Pius XII in the light of the Fatima event:

I am worried by the Blessed Virgin’s messages to Lucy of Fatima. This persistence of Mary about the dangers

which menace the Church is a divine warning against the suicide that would be represented by the alteration of the faith, in her liturgy, her theology and her soul. I hear all around me innovators who wish to dismantle the Sacred Chapel, destroy the universal flame of the Church, reject her ornaments and make her feel remorse for her historical past.⁸

During his pilgrimage to Fatima in May of 2010, Pope Benedict exposed the connection between the Fatima prophecies and the ecclesial crisis in a most dramatic way. When asked about whether the Third Secret of Fatima related to the clerical sexual scandals that had erupted into a world media event at the time this book first appeared, Benedict, answering a question he had personally selected beforehand, revealed that in the Secret “are indicated future realities of the Church which are little by little developing and revealing themselves.... As for the novelty that we can discover today in this message, it is that attacks on the Pope and the Church do not come only from outside, but the sufferings of the Church come precisely from within the Church, from sins that exist in the Church. This has always been known, but today we see it in a really terrifying way: that the greatest persecution of the Church does not come from enemies outside, but arises from sin in the Church.”⁹

Africa, Fatima, and Hope

As the corrupt hierarchies of Western nations prepared to send their representatives to Rome to plot for the institutionalization of “sin in the Church” under the guise of “pastoral discernment,” the prelates of Africa declared their intention through Cardinal Sarah to “oppose every rebellion against the teaching of Christ and the Magisterium.” In June of 2015, five African cardinals and 45 African bishops met in Ghana to prepare for the Synod in keeping with Cardinal Sarah’s earlier statement of opposition to its progressivist agenda. One outcome of that gathering was a compilation of the participants’ contributions in the form a book entitled *Christ’s New Homeland—Africa: Contribution to the Synod on the Family by African Pastors*, to be published days before the commencement of Synod II on October 4. The book includes Cardinal Sarah’s opening remarks to the gathering, as follows:

I encourage you to speak with clarity and with one credible voice and with filial love of the Church. Be conscious of the mission of the Church; protect the sacredness of marriage which is now being attacked by all forms of ideologies that intend to destroy the family in Africa. Do not be afraid to stress the teaching of the Church on marriage.¹⁰

On August 25, the Bishops of Ghana issued a joint statement declaring unequivocally the revealed truth the Synod controllers were determined to undermine:

[S]acramental marriage is instituted by God as a permanent and indissoluble union between one man and one woman; open to life and love. Thus, other forms of unions such as homosexual unions and adulterous unions are inimical to the mind of the Creator. They undermine the integrity of the human being and the family and as such should never be promoted or supported in our society.¹¹

The Bishops also vowed to “[s]peak against and help fight the radical promotion of abortion, the use of condoms and other forms of contraception by various international groups and organizations through international platforms and humanitarian aid.”

In July, the Bishops of Nigeria addressed the developments concerning which Francis and the Vatican had been so conspicuously silent:

The recent rise in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender activism, the popular vote in the Republic of Ireland and the Supreme Court decision in the United States of America will tend to provoke a notable and rapid shift in public opinion about the nature and meaning of marriage and family as it has been known for millennia. This, in many countries, has inevitably led to powerful legislative and judicial manoeuvres to redefine marriage in order to include “same-sex marriage.” We wish to state that this is a sad, unjust and lamentable situation based largely upon a distorted perception of natural law, the will of God and human nature....

As Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria, we are ... also concerned for the influence which some of these trends could have on morality and values. We therefore hereby express our concern with regard to the persistent and continuous propagation and globalization of the homosexual lifestyle and the effort to redefine marriage which is a distorted view of human sexuality, coming especially from the Western world.¹²

We call on our leaders to be circumspect. Accepting this western trend by officially endorsing homosexual unions or “same-sex marriage” will be devastating and detrimental to our nation, Nigeria as it will lead to the inevitable deconstruction of the family and the society at large with other serious but negative implications.

In an interview with the French Catholic pro-family journal *Famille Chrétienne*, Cardinal Sarah expressed Africa’s defiant nay to the decadent Western views for which Synod I had become a forum, vowing that Synod II would be different:

At the synod next October we will address, I hope, the question of marriage in an entirely positive manner, seeking to promote the family and the values that it bears. The African bishops will act to support that which God asks of man concerning the family, and to receive that which the Church has always taught....

Why should we think that only the Western vision of man, of the world, of society is good, just, universal? The Church must fight to say no to this new colonization.¹³

How ironic indeed that Francis, who had denounced “new forms of colonialism which seriously prejudice the possibility of peace and justice” in his Bolivian manifesto, did not seem to notice the new form of Western colonialism being opposed by the prelates of Africa, who were staunchly defending the “taboos” of Catholic moral teaching—as Cardinal Kasper had called them—and whose united front now posed the single largest impediment to what the Synod’s controllers hoped to achieve.

Seeing these developments, one wonders about yet another connection between Fatima and the events now unfolding. During the same encounter in 1931, at which Cardinal Pacelli expressed his fears for the future of the Church in the light of Fatima, the Cardinal spoke also of his great hopes for Catholicism in the undeveloped nations, noting that the efforts of Pius XI were producing many vocations there and that in “the Church of tomorrow ... the peoples of color will participate in the government of the Church.” Chided by a member of the Curia that his hopes were unrealistic, Pacelli replied: “The undeveloped nations will save the Church. A day will come when the civilized world will deny its God, when the Church will doubt as Peter doubted. She will be tempted to believe that man has become God.”¹⁴

Have we not arrived at that day of ecclesial self-doubt? And do we not witness precisely the prelates of Africa leading the forces battling at the Synod to “save the Church” from the consequences of that doubt? Of course, it is not men, not even bishops and cardinals, who will “save the Church,” but rather God, acting through human instruments, who infallibly and in all ages secures Christ’s promise of her indefectibility even when the cause seems lost. And in the inscrutable designs of Providence, even Francis himself—in spite of himself—could become an instrument of that inevitable restoration. After all, he began his pontificate by having it consecrated to none other than Our Lady of Fatima,

revealing yet again the enduring connection of the Fatima apparitions to the course of ecclesial events in our age.

In fact, it may well be that the intercession of the Blessed Virgin has obtained the grace of a most unexpected harbinger of ecclesial restoration. On September 1, 2015, Francis made the following stunning announcement concerning his Year of Mercy, commencing December 8:

*A final consideration concerns those faithful who for various reasons choose to attend churches officiated by priests of the Fraternity of St Pius X. This jubilee Year of Mercy excludes no one. From various quarters, several Brother Bishops have told me of their good faith and sacramental practice, combined however with an uneasy situation from the pastoral standpoint. I trust that in the near future solutions may be found to recover full communion with the priests and superiors of the Fraternity. In the meantime, motivated by the need to respond to the good of these faithful, through my own disposition, I establish that those who during the Holy Year of Mercy approach these priests of the Fraternity of St Pius X to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation shall validly and licitly receive the absolution of their sins.*¹⁵

One could query why Francis “established” the validity of SSPX confessions for only a year when by his “own disposition” he could have confirmed their validity permanently and even clarified their past validity to relieve the “uneasiness” of those who might doubt it. Is God’s mercy in the confessional like a faucet that can be turned on for a time—in this case exactly 365 days—only to be turned off again on a stated expiration date? Would that not involve precisely the kind of pharisaical legalism Francis habitually denounces when it comes to “so-called traditionalists”?

That objection aside, however, this development extinguishes any further claim by neo-Catholic commentators that the clergy and laity of the SSPX are “schismatics.” For if they truly were, the Pope would have no jurisdiction over them, the Church would view all their sacraments (including Confession and Holy Matrimony) as valid in the same manner as those of the truly schismatic Orthodox, and the Pope’s announcement would therefore be entirely nugatory. But Francis clearly presumes that the Society’s adherents, clergy and laity alike, are simply Catholics inhabiting a canonical gray area, who exhibit “good faith and sacramental practice” but find themselves in an “uneasy situation from the pastoral standpoint.”

The concept of *schism* cannot rationally apply to Catholics in “an uneasy situation.” And it must be said that this “uneasy situation” arises entirely from the Vatican’s longstanding refusal to clarify it with a decree as simple as the one Francis has just issued, applied across the board and permanently to the SSPX’s administration of the sacraments. At this point there is nothing to prevent it except the continuing unreasonable demand that the SSPX “bow and scrape to the new paradigm.”¹⁶ Perhaps Francis’s phrase, “I trust that in the near future solutions may be found to recover full communion with the priests and superiors of the Fraternity,” signals that full regularization is soon to come. And perhaps it will be declared in the same manner as this announcement: unilaterally and without prior notice even to the Society (which learned about it in the press).¹⁷ At any rate, none other than Francis the ecclesial revolutionary has—indeed in spite of himself—at least helped prepare the way for what this work predicted during the reign of John Paul II: an ecclesial restoration that “is no nostalgic dream, but an inevitable provision of God’s providence.”¹⁸

And yet, under Francis, the Church’s restoration is still encountering a new level of

fierce resistance, as shown by a development that occurred literally as these pages were leaving the author's hands on their way to publication.

Francis Introduces “Catholic No-Fault Divorce”

Perhaps in recognition of the reality that the Synod had become a battleground from which he cannot emerge victorious in terms of a majority vote, on September 8, 2015, less than a month before the commencement of Synod II, Francis dropped his next bombshell—easily the biggest of his pontificate to date. In two *motu proprio*s tendentiously entitled *Mitis Index Dominus Iesus* (“The Lord Jesus, Gentle Judge”) and *Mitis et misericors Iesus* (“The Meek and Merciful Jesus”), covering the Latin and Eastern Churches respectively, Francis all but demolished the rigorous process established centuries ago by Pope Benedict XIV to avoid the abusive granting of declarations of matrimonial nullity.¹⁹

The twin documents, drafted in secret by Francis's specially appointed papal commission on “reform” of the annulment process, were published on only twenty-four hours' notice to the press and placed under embargo until 90 minutes before the press conference. Neither the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith nor any other competent Vatican dicastery had been consulted on the project, which took less than a year.²⁰ Apparently, according to Francis, the same “gentle judge” who had condemned divorce and remarriage as nothing but adultery now expected His Church to make annulments much easier to obtain because “charity and mercy require that the same Church as mother becomes closer to the children who consider themselves separated [from her].”²¹ Francis did not explain what charity and “mercy” have to do with a question of fact, law and justice: whether a couple has validly contracted a sacramental marriage.

Under the “reforms” Francis has sprung on the Church, the traditional marriage tribunal can now be composed of a majority of lay people, who need not have canon law training, or even reduced to a lone priest. The traditional second judgment to confirm the initial decision is abolished, thus removing a centuries-old check on error at the diocesan level. Appeals may be rejected summarily if deemed “dilatatory,” i.e., made for purposes of delay. The enhanced potential for cruel oppression of an abandoned spouse and children by a spouse who has “moved on” is obvious.²²

The new norms provide that a couple in agreement can obtain a “quickie” annulment according to a “fast-track” process in which the local bishop will act as judge, with or without canon law training.²³ The idea that a couple's *agreement* should affect the nature of proceedings to determine the objective truth about the existence of a marriage has devastating implications. As one professor of canon law put it: “the church is providing a path that looks like the Catholic version of no-fault divorce.”²⁴ The abbreviated process rather hastily concocted by Francis's *in camera* commission allows an absurdly brief 30 days' notice to those who must participate once grounds for requesting annulment are reduced to a written “formulation of doubt,” and an even more absurdly brief 15 days for the defender of the marriage bond to present his observations and defenses in support of the marriage.²⁵

Worse still, the “reforms” appear to invent new criteria for “fast-track” annulment proceedings that could readily be confused with grounds for the annulment itself: “lack of

faith [!] that results in simulation of consent or an error that determines the will; *brevity of married life*; *abortion procured to prevent procreation*; stubborn persistence in an extramarital affair at the time of or just after the wedding; improper concealment of sterility or of a serious and contagious disease; concealment of children from a previous relationship; concealment of incarceration; entering marriage for reasons completely foreign to married life; unplanned pregnancy of the woman; physical violence inflicted to extort consent; lack of use of reason proved by medical documents; *and so on* [!].”²⁶ The respected canonist and civil lawyer Edward Peters immediately remarked the potential for disaster:

[C]onfusion will—and already has, judging from questions I have already received from the faithful—erupt as to whether these factors are not just reasons to hear a case speedily, but are themselves proof of matrimonial nullity.... Of course, in no time, this list of reasons to hear nullity cases quickly will lengthen greatly [as per the phrase “and so on” in the new canon]. And why not? If physical violence to extort marriage consent justifies a speedy hearing from a bishop, should not physical violence inflicted during the marriage also qualify? If pregnancy at the time of the wedding is grounds for a quick process, should not drug or alcohol or sexual abuse qualify as well?²⁷

In the very *motu proprio* by which he overturns the traditional procedures, Francis himself admits: “It did not however escape me that *a shortened procedure may endanger the principle of the indissolubility of marriage*....”²⁸ His remedy for this danger, incredibly enough, is that the judge in the new process will be “the Bishop himself, who by virtue of his pastoral office is, with Peter, the greatest guarantor of Catholic unity in faith and discipline.” The contention that Modernist bishops already clamoring for outright acceptance of divorce in the Church will somehow be prudent and exacting judges of claims of matrimonial nullity invited mockery, which immediately ensued.²⁹

In the midst of the canonical earthquake Francis has triggered, Edward Pentin, writing for EWTN’s *National Catholic Reporter*, reported on the emergence of a “seven-page dossier, obtained by the German newspaper *Die Zeit*,” in which “senior Vatican officials have voiced discontent and are ‘beside themselves’ over the Pope’s ‘reforms’ which, they say, have ‘introduced *de facto* Catholic divorce.’”³⁰ Pentin revealed that “the papal commission that drafted the *motu proprio* *had been ordered to keep silent* throughout the drafting process, probably to avoid the reforms being thwarted by the CDF and others in the curia” and “*even the commission did not see the final draft*....” Further, “an Italian cardinal along with two others ‘fiercely’ tried to prevent the *motu proprio* being published before the synod but without success.”

In short, the “reforms” of the annulment process, like the scandalous midterm report of Synod I, were conceived in secrecy and imposed by brute force. And, as the head of Francis’s papal commission, Msgr. Pio Vito Pinto, declared on the pages of *L’Osservatore Romano*, Francis now expects of the bishops:

a “conversion,” a change of mentality which convinces and sustains them in following *the invitation of Christ, present in their brother, the Bishop of Rome*, to pass from the restricted number of a few thousand annulments to that of the immeasurable unfortunates who might have a declaration of nullity—because of evident absence of faith as a bridge to knowledge and therefore the free will to give sacramental consent—but are left outside the current system.³¹

Thus, according to Pinto, Christ Himself is acting through Francis to increase “immeasurably” the number of annulments granted throughout the world, apparently

based primarily on the nebulous new criterion of “lack of faith” at the time of the marriage. But how can an alleged “lack of faith” be defined and determined with any juridical certainty, especially given the obvious motive to dissemble by parties to sacramental marriages seeking to escape them? As Father John Zuhlsdorf observed almost a year before this development: “I can’t imagine what would happen in tribunals far and wide were some ‘solution’ like this adopted and somehow enshrined in a change to the Code of Canon Law.”³² Francis, however, has done just that, while offering no guidance in the matter.

As Antonio Socci protested, what Francis has done by his fiat will open the floodgates to *millions* of annulments.³³ But this appears to be exactly what Francis wishes. As these pages leave the author’s hands, then, it would appear that the Church’s restoration, though inevitable, will at this point have to involve nothing short of a miracle, probably after dramatic events for humanity have finally incapacitated the regime of novelty.



Five years ago, speaking at the very site of the Fatima apparitions, Pope Benedict expressed the hope that “the seven years which separate us from the centenary of the apparitions [in 2017] hasten the fulfillment of the prophecy of the triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, to the glory of the Most Holy Trinity.”³⁴ That prophecy remains unfulfilled only because God has ordained that the Roman Pontiff shall be the human agent whose obedience in an act of faith—the Consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart—is the *sine qua non* of its fulfillment. The Message of Fatima itself is a heavenly confirmation of what this work observed thirteen years ago: “in the papal office alone lies the power to cause or to cure a crisis throughout the Church.”³⁵ Benedict, however briefly, had demonstrated this power to the good, bringing about the beginnings of a cure with but a few decisive acts of papal governance, and this despite a shy and retiring disposition and fierce opposition from within and without the Church. Francis, it must said, has demonstrated the immense harm abuse of that same power can cause in a very short time, especially in a pope filled with confidence in his own ideas, cheered on by a vast gallery of admirers in the Church and secular society. Yet, with his concession to the Society of Saint Pius X, even Francis has shown, albeit in a very limited way, the power of the Roman Pontiff to set right immediately what has gone wrong in the Church.

These new chapters must end, therefore, where the original work concluded: with the Pope and his intentions. No matter what Francis has said or failed to say, done or failed to do thus far, for the Pope currently reigning the faithful are obliged to make their own Christ’s prayer for Peter, which surely applies to his most recent successor in this time of what Sister Lucia of Fatima called “diabolical disorientation” in the Church:

And the Lord said: Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren. (Lk. 22:31–32)

1. Father X, “Pray for the intentions of the Holy Father. Really?”, August 25, 2015, *The Remnant* @remnantnewspaper.com.

2. I was privileged to meet the seer at her home in Japan, although she was bound to silence concerning the apparitions.

3. Cf. “The Apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Akita, Japan, to Sr. Agnes Sasagawa” @ ewtn.com. Cf. letter

of episcopal approbation @ http://campus.udayton.edu/mary/resources/akita_apparition.html.

4. “Mary Today,” *Inside the Vatican*, November 1998, pp. 30,33.

5. Cf. Chapter 3, notes 19 and 20.

6. “Cardinal: ‘What Sister Lucia told me: Final Confrontation between the Lord and Satan will be over Family and Marriage,’” English translation @ roratecaeli.blogspot.com.

7. *Remaining in the Truth of Christ: Marriage and Communion in the Catholic Church* (Kindle Locations 1974–1976). Ignatius Press. Kindle Edition.

8. Cf. Chapter 3, note 1; in Roche, *Pie XII devant l’Histoire*, p. 53. The veracity of this biography of Pius XII was disputed at the time of publication (1972) by one Emile Poulat, a Modernist theologian of socialist orientation. In 1955, Poulat renounced the priesthood and married after none other than Pius XII condemned the “worker-priest” movement of which Poulat was a member. Poulat was precisely the sort of “innovator” the future Pius XII had in view, with an obvious motive to attack the book, although it does not appear he addressed the cited passages or provided any convincing evidence that any part of Msgr. Roche’s account is false. Cf. Poulat’s obituary @ www.lemonde.fr, November 25, 2014.

9. “sono indicate realtà del futuro della chiesa che man mano si sviluppano e si mostrano.... Quanta alle novità che possiamo oggi scoprire in questa messaggio e anche che non solo da fuori vengono attacchi al Papa e alla chiesa, ma le sofferenze della chiesa vengono proprio dall’interno della chiesa, dal peccato che esiste nella chiesa. Anche questa lo vediamo sempre ma oggi lo vediamo in modo realmente terrificante che la più grande persecuzione alla chiesa non viene dai nemici di fuori, ma nasce dal peccato nella chiesa.” “Intervista Concessa Dal Santo Padre Benedetto XVI ai Giornalisti Durante Il Volo Verso Il Portogallo” @w2.vatican.va.

10. Tellingly, Vatican Radio censored all but the first sentence of this statement in its report on the gathering, whereas Voice of the Family quoted it in full. Compare “Bishops of Africa Unite in Defence of Catholic teaching on the Family,” June 19, 2015, @ voiceofthefamily.info and “The Church in Africa must speak with one voice on the Family,” June 12, 2015, @ en.radiovaticana.va.

11. “Bishops of Ghana issue powerful pro-life, pro-family rallying cry,” August 25, 2015, Voice of the Family report @ lifesitnews.com.

12. “Nigerian Bishops resolved to defend marriage,” July 16, 2015, @ voiceofthefamily.org (with link to Statement).

13. Sandro Magister, “Synod. Africa’s Hour,” June 15, 2015, @ <http://chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it>.

14. Ibid., p. 53.

15. “Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis, According to Which an Indulgence Is Granted to the Faithful on the Occasion of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy,” September 1, 2015, @w2.vatican.va.

16. Steve Skojec, “Bishop Schneider and the SSPX,” loc. cit.

17. “Communique of the General House of the Society of St. Pius X on the letter of Pope Francis at the approach of the Holy Year (September 1, 2015),” September 1, 2015, @ sspx.org.

18. Cf. Chapter 13.

19. Cf. Bull *Dei Miseratione* (1741).

20. Edward Pentin, “Pope Attacked Over Motu Proprio; Cardinal Kasper Reasserts His Proposal,” September 11, 2015, *National Catholic Register* @ ncregister.com.

21. *Mitis Iudex Dominus Iesus* (Preface).

22. Cf. Preface, I and new Canons, 1673, §§1–4; 1679; 1680, §2; 1682, §1; and 1687, §4.

23. Ibid., new Canons 1683, 1685–1686.

24. Abby Ohlheiser, Michelle Boorstein and Sarah Pulliam Bailey, “Pope Francis announces biggest changes to annulment process in centuries,” September 8, 2015, *The Washington Post* @ washingtonpost.com.

25. *Mitis Iudex Dominus Iesus*, new Canons 1685–1686.

26. Translation by Edward Peters, J.D., J.C.D. in “A second look at *Mitis*, especially at the new fast-track annulment process,” September 14, 2015 @ canonlawblog.com.

[27.](#) Ibid.

[28.](#) *Mitis Iudex Dominus Iesus*, Preface at IV.

[29.](#) See, e.g., Chris Jackson, “Gems from Recent Annulment Coverage,” September 9, 2015 @ remnantnewspaper.com: “Whew! When the canon law prof said this looks like no-fault divorce I started to get really nervous. But then the Pope stepped in with the ultimate safeguard—the local bishop! I’m so relieved. As we all know, these bastions of orthodoxy will leave no stone unturned in protecting the sanctity of marriage by excruciatingly applying traditional Catholic principles to every single one of the ‘fast-track’ trials.”

[30.](#) Edward Pentin, “Pope Attacked Over Motu Proprio,” loc. cit.

[31.](#) “The Reform of the Matrimonial Process for the Declaration of Nullity: Willed and Decided by Francis,” *L’Osservatore Romano*, September 8, 2015 @ www.osservatoreromano.va.

[32.](#) “I find your lack of faith ... invalidating,” October 22, 2013 @ wdtpers.com.

[33.](#) Antonio Socci, “After 2000 years, divorce is imposed in the Church. The schism becomes more imminent.” September 12, 2015 @ antoniosocci.com.

[34.](#) Homily at Fatima, May 13, 2010, @ w2.vatican.va.

[35.](#) Cf. Chapter 14.

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Table of Contents

CONTENTS

Foreword to the Second Edition

Author's Preface to the Second Edition

Introduction

PART I The Scope of the Problem

CHAPTER 1: Defining Terms

CHAPTER 2: The Problem of Novelty

CHAPTER 3: Viruses in the Body of Christ

PART II Accusation and Defense

CHAPTER 4: Liturgical Minimalism

CHAPTER 5: Making a Virtue Out of Doing Nothing

CHAPTER 6: The Charge of "Integrism"

CHAPTER 7: Private Judgment?

CHAPTER 8: Pitting One Pope Against Another?

CHAPTER 9: Schism?

CHAPTER 10: A Question of Resistance

CHAPTER 11: A Nest of Contradictions

PART III Toward a Solution

CHAPTER 12: Returning to the Council? A Case Study

CHAPTER 13: Dominus Iesus: An Ambiguous Answer to Heresy

CHAPTER 14: The Great Façade

PART IV Thirteen Years Later

CHAPTER 15: The Benedictine Respite

CHAPTER 16: The Rise of Bergoglianism

CHAPTER 17: Year of the Synod

CHAPTER 18: The Gathering Storm

CHAPTER 19: The Regime of Novelty Goes "Green"... and Red

CHAPTER 20: Synod II

CONCLUSION: The Thirteenth of October