

Comments on a Recent “Traditional” Catholic Book

by

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Source: *Studies in Comparative Religion*, Vol. 17, No. 1 & 2 (Winter-Spring, 1985).

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“Take away the queen-bee from the swarm of bees, and you may have as many bees as you wish, but you will never have a hive.” (Joseph de Maistre on the Pope)

Few Catholics would disagree with the statement that Vatican II changed the Church. What is in question is whether or not these changes are such as to have created an entirely new Church under the old name. While most Catholics have followed the course of events without much thought or personal commitment, others find themselves divided into various “camps”. For the sake of convenience I shall classify these as: (1) Those who recognize that a new Church has been created and see the post-Conciliar Church as the necessary evolution of Christianity along the lines intended by God and hence approve both its doctrinal and liturgical innovations. Among these I would include those who believe things have gone as far as they should, and those who feel still further adaptations are in order. These I shall in the present essay call “liberal Catholics”. (2) Those who dislike the changes but feel they are legitimate because they have the approval of the papacy. As such they accept Vatican II, the new sacraments and the statements of the post-Conciliar “popes” in the most conservative manner possible. These I shall call “conservative *Novus Ordo* Catholics”. And (3) those for whom Vatican II and its sequelae represent a sharp break with the Church’s past and who seek to retain intact their Catholic faith and practice as it was up to the time of Vatican II. These I shall label as “traditional”. I am fully aware that members of all three categories claim the title traditional and that individuals can often have a foot in more than one camp. Despite these defects, the classification has the advantage of paralleling those in other pluralistic religions such as “reform”, “conservative” and “orthodox” among the Jews and “low”, “middle” and “high” Church Anglicans.

The principal characteristic of the latter entity—those whom I have called “traditional”—is the desire to retain the Faith intact as it was handed down from the Apostles. It is they who adhere to the teachings of the Church and by and large insist on the usage of her time-honored rites. Yet, despite the fact that the ancient Church presented a monolithic structure, one

unfortunately finds traditional groups splintered into an almost endless variety of positions, each championed by some individual or group claiming that it alone represents the true Church. Why is this so?

Those who would know the exact nature of the teaching and practice of the traditional Church have available to them countless catechisms and documents that can be considered “orthodox”, that is to say, that teach the pure faith and sound doctrine. The problem is not so much what the constant teaching of the Church was and is, but how to apply them to the present extraordinary circumstances. It is here that confusion reigns supreme, precisely because there is no longer any recognized authority that can lend magisterial support to one position over another.

The most significant issues involved are their attitude towards the post-Conciliar “popes”, towards the new sacraments and towards the documents of Vatican II. Thus some traditional Catholics claim the present “popes” are true and valid popes, but that we are free to disobey them where they depart from Tradition. Others hold that the post-Conciliar “popes”, despite their formal heresy, retain their jurisdiction. And finally, others claim that since the death of Pius XII there has been no valid pope, and that we are in a situation best described as “*Sede Vacante*” (the Chair of Peter is vacant). Similar confusion reigns with regard to the post-Conciliar “sacraments” and the authority of the documents of Vatican II. Proponents of these various positions publish journals, bulletins and books—often containing valuable material—but all aimed at supporting a given position and attempting to persuade the reader that this and only this position can be validly held. It is my intent in the present paper to discuss one such position—that expounded in America by Ursula Oxfort which in many ways is similar to that of the Abbe Georges de Nantes in France.

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Let me say from that start that both these individuals have published interesting and useful materials. The Abbe’s *Liber Accusationis in Paulum Sextum*, his exposure of the impostures as at Medjugorje, and his more recent open letter to Cardinal Ratzinger are cases in point. In a similar manner, Ursula Oxfort has made many illuminating comments on the events at Vatican II. Her position is summarized and clearly stated in a recent book entitled *A Critical Study of the Second Vatican Council* (Christian Counter-Revolution, P.O. Box 369, Lake Worth, Florida 334600, U.S.A.). The present essay will attempt to assess this book, not so much in terms of a review, but rather as a point of departure.

Miss Oxfort, a native of Fulda in West Germany, entered the Discalced Carmelites prior to Vatican II. The changes wrought by this dubious Council forced her to leave and subsequently to enter the lists in defense of the Faith. She has published a previous text entitled *The Heresy of Pope John XXIII* and edits a bulletin entitled *Christian Counter Revolution*. She brings to this task a considerable knowledge of mystical theology and a great deal of pertinent research.

It was she, perhaps before anyone else, who pointed out the dubious nature of John XXIII's "Inspiration". Roncalli claimed to have received, while "recollected in humble prayer" a "divine invitation for the convocation of an ecumenical Council" in order to achieve the "unity of all Christians", and described the experience as "a flash of heavenly light". As Miss Oxford notes, inspirations of this nature can come from God, but they can also come from natural causes and even from the devil. Whatever the case, one thing is clear: instead of communicating these interior words to his confessor, as even a pope should do, he bluntly rejected the advice of his cardinals and proceeded to make these words the historical foundation of a new Ecumenical Council. Now Miss Oxford may well be correct in suggesting the origin of Roncalli's fall is a false and satanic inspiration to inaugurate a Council, but considerable evidence can be garnered to show that this individual had long since departed from "pure faith and sound doctrine", and that his revolutionary plans preceded his election to the Chair of Peter by years, if not by decades.

Miss Oxford's position is then developed along several parallel lines. I shall try to outline it in brief summary.

1. The ideas contained in the documents of Vatican II are at the heart of the Church's problems—they are heretical. But the Church is preserved because these documents are by their very nature fallible. This is because Paul VI "avoided proclaiming in an extraordinary manner dogmas endowed with the note of infallibility". She notes in passing that Paul VI also claimed the documents were part of the "Supreme Ordinary Magisterium", but assures us that "Errors in papal teaching are possible...in matters which do not involve papal infallibility" and hence these documents, despite the fact that they are part of the Supreme Ordinary Magisterium, carry no guarantees of truth. What then has happened as she sees it is that there has been "a collapse of the unity of the Magisterium" and that "we are living at a time when the words of Christ, 'He that heareth you, heareth Me' are no longer applicable".

2. John XXIII was a true and valid pope, and he only realized at the end of the first session of the Council that he had been misled. He persisted in being an orthodox Catholic until "January of 1963 when he decided to continue the Council in knowing opposition to the will of Christ". At this point he became a heretic, but continued to retain the Papacy in a juridical sense and hence all his actions and decisions were valid and binding. To quote her directly, "nothing changed in the jurisdiction of John XXIII after he turned notoriously heretical in January 1963, or after he published his Marxist peace concept in *Pacem in Terris* three months later. Pope John remained Pope John until he died. And the hidden heresies of his Council remained in the Church even after he died". I might add that her position is not always clear. At one point she says "it is the mystical doctrine of St. John of the Cross in particular, as it is 'proposed by the ordinary and universal Magisterium,' which is frontally opposed, denied and controverted in the documents of Pope John XXIII which brought Vatican II into existence," and elsewhere that "the voice of the Vicar of Christ could no longer be heard. It was drowned in the Revolution".

3. The reason John XXIII retained his jurisdiction as Pope is because his heresy remained

hidden. “Papal heresies must be recognized as such by the Church (a large number of Catholics, including bishops) so that they can be unanimously opposed and rejected.” And this is also true for the subsequent “popes” such as Paul VI and John Paul II. Thus it follows that all their acts—such as the canonizing of saints and the introduction of the *Novus Ordo Missae*—must be valid.

4. Let there be no doubt about where Miss Oxford stands on the issue of the New Mass. “We have,” she tells us, an absolute, infallible statement of Pope Paul VI that ‘nothing has been changed in the essence of our traditional Mass.’” Traditional Catholics who declare the New Mass intrinsically invalid are guilty of “grave dogmatic errors”. The author further assures us that even though the New Mass is a “pastoral tragedy,” in her experience “it is possible to follow the essential parts of the New Mass in the spirit and prayers of Trent”.

5. Miss Oxford agrees that a heretical pope is *ipso facto* deposed—thus following the opinion of Bellarmine. However she states that this heresy must be clearly manifest to all or most of the faithful and that such is not the case with any of the post-Conciliar “popes”. To quote her directly, a “pope who falls into heresy does not *ipso facto* lose the pontificate, but continues to reign until his defection from the faith becomes public knowledge... a heretical pope cannot err when defining. However, what he can do is hold the door open for other minor heretics in the Church to attack and subvert the sacred dogma and sacred tradition. Therefore, even though Paul VI himself did not invalidate the New Mass when promulgating it in 1969, he opened the door to never ending attacks on Christ in the Blessed Eucharist .. How can one summarize Miss Oxford’s position? She clearly falls between the classifications given at the start of this essay. According to her the post-Conciliar “popes” are heretical, but not manifestly so and hence retain their authority. The *Novus Ordo Missae*, while being a “grave pastoral error” is unquestionably valid. Vatican II is the evil tree that is to be opposed. The principle errors of Vatican II are the “false mysticism of John XXIII, a false irenicism, and the demand to reword the message of Christ.” And thus she tells us: “A clear stand against the Johannine Revolution, in my opinion, is the call of the hour!” Beyond this however I am not clear as to what she recommends. Perhaps the best answer is to quote her directly:

There is no doubt that *The Wanderer* journal [which strongly holds to the “conservative *Novus Ordo*” position—ed.] has on its staff stout defenders of Catholic orthodoxy. But what does their battle for the preservation of the faith amount to? In the face of the momentous threat of the Johannine Revolution it amounts to perpetuating “the mixed state of affairs in which we stand” and “to keep the revolutionary process at its present stage”. As Professor Oliveira points out, “the Counter Revolution neither is nor can be conservative” in the sense of “hugging alike that which is good and bad in the Church today”, thus attempting to coexist in perpetual harmony with good and evil. The important question we are facing now is this: will the conservative stronghold of the Catholic Church in America, represented by organizations such as Catholics United for the Faith, *Una Voce*, or the supporters of *The Wanderer* [all “conservative *Novus Ordo*”—ed.]

continue in their policy of upholding the authority of Vatican II at any cost (they already sacrificed the Tridentine Mass), or will they face up to the issue of an heretical Council and heretical [but not deposed—ed.] popes?”

I have excluded many important and insightful comments about the Council and its sequelae because I have been concerned only with her fundamental position—her attitude towards the post-Conciliar “popes”, towards the *Novus Ordo Missae* and towards the Council. I shall, in what follows, discuss each of her statements in detail.

The Fundamental Premise of Miss Oxford’s Text

Miss Oxford’s fundamental premise is that that everything resulted from a false inspiration—the “flash of light” received by Roncalli shortly after his election to the Chair of Peter. I have no objection to the idea that this “inspiration” was false and even satanic in origin and certainly concur with her that it is an example of “false mysticism”. However the roots of the present crisis in the Church are not so simplistic. One must seek the origins of Vatican II in the revolutionary forces that came to the fore with the French Revolution and in the liberalism which from that time sought to adapt the Church to the modern world, a world characterized by its rejection of the Kingship of Christ and the deification of man *qua* man. The traditional Church strongly opposed these tendencies throughout the last two hundred years as witnessed by a host of encyclicals that culminated in the *Syllabus of Errors* (Pius IX) and *Lamentabili* (Pius X). Despite protests to the contrary, John XXIII was a modernist from his youth (cf. Giancarlo Zizola’s *The Utopia of Pope John XIII*), and as a young priest was removed from his teaching position at the Lateran University because of this. (Also for teaching the false mysticism of Rudolph Steiner!) His entire subsequent life bears witness to his desire for an *aggiornamento* between the Church and the modern world. Hence, I am much more inclined to believe that the source of his “inspiration” was his commitment to the Revolution, a commitment he brought with him when he became the supposed Vicar of Christ. As for Vatican II, it was not so much the result of his false inspiration as the culmination of a long-fought battle to reverse the *Syllabus of Errors* and to bring its condemned propositions into the bosom of the Church—above all that proposition which stated that “the Roman Pontiff can and should reconcile himself and come to terms with progress, with liberalism and with modern civilization”.

From this it follows that the principal errors of Vatican II go beyond “the false mysticism of John XXIII, a false irenicism and the demand to reword the message of Christ”. In fairness to the author, I think she makes this clear within her text and it is here that she has much to offer. For the sake of clarity these errors can be classified as the acceptance of four principles: Evolution and Progress, which allows for the alteration of dogmas and inculcates the need constantly to adapt religion to the modern world; Anthropocentrism, the idea that man *qua* man is the highest value, that his innate dignity is self-validating, and that hence the function of the Church is to be in the service of mankind; The absence of a sense of the Sacred in its attitude towards liturgical

innovation and the ignoring of metaphysical principles (Miss Oxford informs us that the Fathers at Vatican II spent two weeks debating whether or not to ban all mysticism from the Church!). From these flow, among other things, a false ecclesiology, i.e. that the Church of Christ only “subsists” in the post-Conciliar Catholic Church, a false teaching about the nature of religious liberty having its source in the dignity of man who is intrinsically good in himself, a false ecumenism which denies the unitive nature of truth and justifies the “dialogue” between truth and error “on an equal footing”, a “benign” Church which no longer wished to condemn errors, and an erroneous concept of collegiality which implicitly denies the hierarchal nature of the Church and the authority of the pope. All this can be summarized in the single word “modernism”, which is an irreformably condemned heresy, and indeed, as Pope Saint Pius X stated is the “summation of all the heresies”. Vatican II attempted to legitimize all that Pius IX and Pius X condemned.

Miss Oxford’s Views on the Ordinary Magisterium

When Miss Oxford tells us that the documents of Vatican II are fallible because Paul VI “avoided proclaiming in an extraordinary manner dogmas endowed with the note of infallibility,” one is forced to disagree with her. For one, the documents are not fallible in the sense that they are capable of containing error, but rather, *in se*, erroneous. They teach false doctrine under the guise of being “pastoral”. And secondly, the fact that Paul VI “avoided proclaiming...dogmas...in an extraordinary manner” in no way means that he excluded them from that infallibility which is attached to the Ordinary Magisterium—indeed, he has on several occasions made it clear that he considers them part of the “Supreme Ordinary Magisterium”. According to Vatican I, “all those things are to be believed by divine and Catholic faith which are contained in the written or unwritten word of God and which are proposed by the Church as divinely revealed, either by a solemn definition or in the exercise of its ordinary and universal magisterium” (Session III). Magisterial statements carry infallibility even when not proclaimed in “an extraordinary manner”. Paul VI, master of the ambiguous statement that he was, certainly intended that we consider these documents—at least those segments identified as being part of Revelation—as magisterial and hence that we believe them with “divine and Catholic faith”. Now God could never ask us to believe error with “divine and Catholic faith” and certainly doctrines “proposed to us by the Church as divinely revealed” are infallible, whether or not they be proclaimed such “in an extraordinary manner”. In order to understand the pertinence of this issue we must consider the nature of the Church’s Magisterium.

Christ established His Church as a hierarchal institution, and intended that this entity—the “Mystical Body of Christ”—be the extension of His presence on earth (Eph. 5:23). As such the Church has by her very nature the function and obligation of preserving intact and delivering to us the Message (teachings and inculcated practices) of Christ. In order to enable His Church to do this, Christ left us, not written works, but rather a “living Magisterium” which He endowed with His authority and to which He promised His assistance. This function, the transmission of

the “deposit of the Faith,” constitutes tradition, and hence the true Church and this Magisterium is by its very nature “Traditional”.

This living Magisterium resides “in the Pope and also in the Bishops in union with him”. The point is important, for there are not two Magisteriums, but one. The teachings of the Magisterium may be expressed in an ordinary manner, or in an extraordinary manner, but as long as they “are proposed by the Church as divinely revealed” they are to be believed with a “divine and Catholic faith”. To understand this fully it is necessary to consider the function of the “pope and the bishops in union with him” and the Church’s teaching on infallibility.

The Function of the Pope and the Source of his Infallibility

The Church, by God’s will, is a hierarchal institution. At its “head” is the pope, the Vicar of Christ, the “rock” on which the Church is founded. He is endowed with all the unique authority of Jesus Christ “who is the shepherd and bishop of our souls” (1 Pet., 2:25), and depending on Him, the pope is also—but vicariously—the shepherd and bishop of the whole flock, both the other bishops and of the ordinary faithful (John 21:15-17). He is the evident and effectual sign of the presence of Christ in the world, and it is through him that Christ who is invisible in the bosom of his Father visibly presides over all the activities of this enormous Body and brings it under His control. As Dom Grea has said, “the pope is with Jesus Christ—a single hierarchical person—above the episcopate, one and the same head of the episcopate, one and the same head, one and the same doctor, pontiff and legislator of the universal Church” or more precisely, “Jesus Christ Himself is the sole Head, rendered visible, speaking and acting in the Church through the instrument whom He provided for Himself. Christ proclaims Himself through His Vicar, He speaks through him, acts and governs through him”. When Christ speaks, acts, and governs through the pope, the pope is endowed with infallibility, a quality which derives, not from him as a private person, but from his being “a single hierarchical person” with Christ.

The pope is then, not only the Vicar of Christ. He is also a private person (an ordinary human being) and a private theologian (doctor). It is only, however, when he functions as “a single hierarchical person” with Christ that he is endowed with infallibility. It is only then that Christ’s teaching “he who hears you, hears Me” applies. And it follows logically that his authority is extended through those bishops who “are in union with him” in governing and teaching the flock. The bishops have no independent authority apart from him for the simple reason that in his function as pope he is united to Christ, from whom all authority derives. Thus it is that he is called the “Bishop of bishops” and he “confirms” them in their doctrine and not the other way around. Thus it is that no statement of an ecumenical council has authority until it receives his approbation.

The pope then has an almost limitless authority, or to use theological terminology, jurisdiction. These are conferred on him by his investiture in his function. But jurisdiction—unlike Orders—can be lost when the mission with which an individual is entrusted is lost or

renounced. How then can a pope lose his authority or jurisdiction? He can lose them when he dies (physical death), when he loses his reason (madness), when he loses the faith (heresy), or when he separates himself from the Church (schism). At such a point the pope is no longer a pope because it is the very nature of this bishop's function and ministry to be the Vicar of Christ and nothing else.

The Pope is a Member of the Believing Church

One further point. The Church is often described as having a two-fold character. There is the "believing Church" and the "teaching Church". All Catholics, whatever their hierarchical rank, belong to the believing Church, but only those in the hierarchy—the pope and the bishops in union with him—belong to the teaching Church. As such, a pope is bound by all the irreformable decisions of the teaching Magisterium which preceded him. Hence it is that an individual who rejects one iota of the Catholic faith prior to his election—one who is not truly a Catholic—cannot be validly elected to the Chair of Peter.

Is the concept of a "bad pope" tenable? Strictly speaking, no. Being the instrument of Christ, a pope as such is necessarily "good". Such adjectives applied to popes relate to the state of their soul and not to their function. A sinner like anyone else, the pope, even when he functions as Christ's minister, can be, as a human being, in a state of grace or one of mortal sin. It is a teaching of elementary theology that the state of a minister's soul has no influence or effect on his ministry, because this effect comes totally and exclusively from Christ who is its source. Thus it is that whenever a pope is functioning in his office of pope, Christ speaks, acts and governs through him. There is never any justification for a member of the believing Church to disobey a valid pope when it is Christ who speaks, acts, and governs through him. And just as one cannot speak of a "bad pope", so also one cannot speak of a "heretical pope", of one who is only "materially" pope, or of one who is only "juridically" a pope. Assuming a valid election, assuming that the individual was a member of the "believing Church", either a man is or he isn't a pope. He can never be "half a pope".

The Limitations of a Pope's Authority

I have said that the Pope's authority is virtually unlimited. It is precisely because he is the Vicar of Christ that the Pope has full powers within his charge. However, being unlimited within his charge, these powers are limited by it. In order fully to understand this doctrinal point, let us once again recall the nature of his charge.

The ecclesiastical hierarchy was instituted by God to teach, that is to say, to transmit the deposit of the faith. At the head of this teaching Church, Christ appointed a Vicar to whom He gave full powers "to feed the faithful and the shepherds" (John 21:11-17). Consequently, it is within the bounds of this function, the transmission of the deposit of the faith, that the Pope has "full powers". It was precisely that he might transmit the deposit of the faith—in its entirety—"in

the same meaning and the same mind” (Ds. 1800¹)—that Christ gave him full powers and further specially prayed that his faith “would fail not” (Luke 22: 32). “For”, as Vatican I clearly taught, “the Holy Spirit has not been promised to Peter’s successors in order that they may reveal, under His inspiration, a new doctrine, but in order that, with His help, they may carefully guard and faithfully expose the revelation as it was handed down by the Apostles, that is to say, the deposit of the faith” (*Pastor Aeternus*, Ds 1836).

Hence it follows that the Pope can and must make all his determinations entirely within the bounds of orthodoxy, and this is true whether they concern the reformation of the Liturgy, of Canon Law, or, to use the phraseology of earlier Councils, the reformation of the entire Church “in its head or in its members”. The pope may indeed abrogate all the decisions of his predecessors, even those deserving of special mention, but always and only within the limits of orthodoxy. It goes without saying that under such circumstances any changes introduced would only affect matters that are mutable and never the faith itself. A pope who presumed to abrogate the smallest iota of dogma, or even attempted to change the meaning of the Church’s constant teaching, would necessarily step outside the bounds of orthodoxy, outside the limits of the deposit of the faith. He would in doing so, teach a new doctrine and a “new gospel”, and as such would be subject to the anathema pronounced by Saint Paul in his Letter to the Galatians (1: 8-9).

Given these facts, Miss Oxford’s contention that there has been “a collapse of the unity of the Magisterium” and that “we are living at a time when the words of Christ, ‘He that heareth you, heareth Me’ are no longer applicable” cannot be true. All that can be said is that the pope or popes responsible for teaching things contrary to the irreformable Magisterium that preceded them are not true Vicars of Christ—if indeed they ever were such, and that Christ’s words do not in any way apply to them.

It will be argued that the popes are endowed with the quality of personal infallibility. This is true not in so far as they are persons or private doctors, but in so far as they are popes. Such has always been the teaching of the Church and follows logically from the fact that the popes, as Vicars, as “single hierarchal persons” with our Lord, teach what Christ teaches. The infallibility of the teaching Church, and hence of the Pope, proceeds from the mission given to her and him by Christ: to speak in the name of God. Now, just as there are not two distinct Magisteria, so also there are not two different sources of infallibility—that of the Church and that of the pope. Rather, the pope partakes of the infallibility of the Church—or as the official text puts it, “when he speaks *ex cathedra*...he has the same infallibility as that with which the divine Redeemer invested His Church when it is defining a doctrine concerning faith or morals; and that, therefore, such definitions of the Roman Pontiff are of themselves, and not from the consent of

1. Editor’s note: “Ds.” here and elsewhere refers to Heinrich Denzinger’s (1819-1883) monumental work, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma* (Latin title: *Enchiridion Symbolorum*), a compendium of all major pre-Vatican II conciliar decrees of the Catholic Church.

the Church, irreformable (Ds. 1839)".

The Meaning of “*Ex Cathedra*” and the Reason for the Definition of Papal Infallibility

When does a pope speak *ex cathedra*? In Holy Scripture the word “*cathedra*” is synonymous with “master” or “teacher” (Ps. 1: 1; Matt. 23: 2; Luke 20: 46). Once again, the teaching of the Church is manifest and clear. He teaches *ex cathedra* “when, serving in the capacity of Pastor and Doctor of all the faithful, he defines in virtue of his supreme Apostolic authority that a doctrine with regard to faith and morals must be held by the whole Church”. Four conditions are required:

1. The Pope must be functioning as Pastor and supreme Doctor. It is not his teaching as a private or particular Doctor that is in question, but his teaching as the universal Doctor.
2. He must be dealing with matters of faith or morals, and it is only the proposed doctrine—not the adjoining considerations—the “*obiter dicta*”—that is covered by infallibility.
3. He must intend to define; his teaching must be given with authority and with the intent that it be believed by the entire Church.
4. He must manifest his intention to bind all Catholics. For this there is no need for him to use special formulas or attach anathemas to his statements. All that is required is that he clearly and in an unquestionable manner manifest his intention to compel the entire Church to accept his teaching as belonging to the deposit of the faith.

Now, it is obvious that by the very nature of his function as the Vicar of Christ, this authority has always been with Peter and his valid successors. Why was it necessary that it be defined in an extraordinary way at the time of Vatican I? The answer to the question is very instructive.

Now the Church does not define a doctrine “in an extraordinary manner” unless it comes under dispute or is denied by a significant number of the faithful. Nor does a doctrine so defined become more true than it was before.

The Church “has the duty to proceed opportunely in defining points of faith with solemn rites and decrees, when there is a need to declare them in order to resist more effectively the errors and the assaults of heretics or to impress upon the minds of the faithful clearer and more profound explanations of points of sacred doctrine...Not because the Church has defined and sanctioned truths by solemn decree of the Church at different times, and even in times near to us, are they (truths not so defined) therefore not equally certain and not equally to be believed. For has not God revealed them all?” (*Mortalium Animos*)

In the decades prior to Vatican I, pope after pope had condemned liberal Catholicism—the *Syllabus of Errors* being but a summary of such condemnations. Those who came under such

strictures attempted to defend themselves by claiming that their attitudes had never been formally condemned by the teaching Magisterium and that such documents represented but the private opinion of the pontiffs. Thus it was that the personal infallibility of the Pope came under question. During Vatican I furious debates were waged on the subject. The liberals were perfectly aware of the fact that if they voted for the definition of infallibility they would condemn themselves. Every conceivable objection capable of preventing, or of at least postponing the definition, were put forth and strongly supported by those who labelled themselves “inopportunist”. One orthodox bishop, Anthony Claret—later canonized—was so upset by these attempts that he died of a heart attack during the debate. The cases of Popes Liberius, Honorius I, Paschal II, Sixtus V and others were brought forth in an attempt to influence the Fathers against defining something the liberals claimed was both unnecessary and insane. Needless to say these liberals were supported, not only by the press, but by powerful men of the world, and even governments. Simultaneously with the Council, the Masons held an “anti-Council” in Naples which proclaimed several principles as essential to the dignity of man and which were later incorporated into the documents of Vatican II (*Approaches*, No. 89, 1985).

Unlike John XXIII, whose machinations in favor of the liberals at Vatican II are spelled out in considerable detail by Miss Oxford, Pope Pius IX, aware of his responsibilities, did everything in his power to fulfill his obligations towards our divine Master. Listen to the comments of Cardinal Manning:

The campaign against the Council failed, of course. It failed because the Pope did not weaken, he met error with condemnation and replied to demands to modify or adapt Catholic truth to the spirit of the age by resisting it with the firmness and clarity of Trent—and despite the prophecies of her enemies that the declaration of Papal Infallibility would mark the death blow to the Church, she emerged stronger and more vigorous than ever. This of course evoked the full fury of the City of Man. The hatred of the world for the Church was made manifest, and at the same time manifested the divine nature of the Catholic Church; for the hatred of the world was designated by Christ Himself as one of the marks of His Mystical Body which must not only teach Christ crucified, but will live out the mystery of His crucifixion and resurrection until He comes again in Glory.... Had Christ been prepared to enter into dialogue with His enemies, had he been prepared to adapt, to make concessions, then He would have escaped crucifixion—but of what value would the Incarnation have been? Pope Pius IX followed the example of Christ whose Vicar he was and, as the highest point attracts the storm, so the chief violence fell upon the head of the Vicar of Christ.... (Three Pastoral Letters to the Clergy of the Diocese).

One does not have to be an expert in theological matters to know that, if the Conciliar Fathers found themselves incapable of magisterially refuting every one of these objections, and

of showing in a peremptory manner that, throughout the preceding Nineteen Centuries not one Pope—even among those whose lives had been scandalous in the extreme—had ever erred in his function as Pope, in his teaching function as the universal Pastor and Doctor, the Church could never have solemnly promulgated this dogma. Indeed, if the issues and facts had not been made absolutely clear, the adversaries of infallibility and the enemies of the Church would certainly have published abroad all the supposedly false teachings of previous Popes and used this as a means of making the Church appear ridiculous.

When the final vote came, the adversaries of this dogma, foreseeing how things would go, left Rome in order to avoid personally participating in this decision. They however, not wishing to be ejected from the Church, declared in advance their acceptance of the decision—a decision that ultimately depended, not on the Council, but on the pope promulgating the Council's teaching.

Unable any longer to deny this principle, the liberals in the Church rapidly took another tack. “The pope is infallible,” they say, “and such is certain, for the Church has proclaimed it as a dogma. But be careful! The pope is not infallibility every time he opens his mouth.” And under the pretence of defending this dogma by sharply defining its limits, they cleverly stressed the concept that the pope only uses this privilege on rare occasions—once or twice in a century. And today we hear the same cry from those who would defend the post-Conciliar changes—nothing “*de fide*” (*i.e.* no part of the extraordinary Magisterium), they claim, has been changed. “The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light” (Luke 16: 8).

A Brief Summary of Points Made

We can at this point come to certain definite conclusions. (1) Christ instituted a hierarchal Church which was his own mystical body and as such the prolongation of His presence in the world. (2) He revealed to this Church certain truths and entrusted these to it as a precious pearl—the deposit of the faith. (3) He established a Magisterium in order to keep intact the deposit of revealed truths for all time and to assure their availability to all mankind. (4) This single Magisterium of the Church is entirely in the pope, the Vicar of Christ, and through him in all the bishops that are in union with him. (5) Inasmuch as these truths are revealed to us by Christ, they are infallibly true. In order to protect them intact, and “in the same meaning”, He endowed His Church under the direction of His Vicar with authority to teach them and guaranteed that such teachings and explanations would be infallible. The pope, when he functions in his capacity as Vicar of Christ, as one hierarchal person with Our Lord, is to be obeyed as if he was Our Lord. (6) When the pope teaches in this capacity—in an *ex cathedra* manner—he teaches infallibly. (7) There is no need for the pope to use special formulas or attach anathemas to his *ex cathedra* teachings about faith or morals. All he has to do is to make it clear that they are part of the deposit of the faith, that he is teaching in his capacity as the Doctor of Doctors, that he intends to bind all the faithful to their acceptance.

Because the infallible nature of the Ordinary Magisterium is currently open to debate, several pertinent quotations are given:

...All those things are to be believed by divine and Catholic faith which are contained in the written or unwritten word of God and which are proposed by the Church as divinely revealed, either by a solemn definition or in the exercise of its ordinary and universal magisterium (Vatican I, Session III).

As often, therefore, as it is declared on the authority of this teaching (Magisterium) that this or that (truth) is contained in the deposit of divine revelation, it must be believed by every one as true. If it could in any way be false, an evident contradiction follows: for then God Himself would be the author of error in man..." (Leo XIII, *Satis Cognitum*).

This Magisterium (the ordinary and universal) of the Church in regard to faith and morals, must be for every theologian the proximate and universal rule of truth, for the Lord has entrusted the Church with the entire deposit of the faith—Holy Scripture and Tradition—to be kept, to be upheld and to be explained. In the same manner, we must not think that what is proposed in the encyclicals does not require in itself our assent because the Popes did not exercise their supreme magisterial powers in them. Our Lord's words "He who heareth Me" also applies to whatever is taught by the ordinary Magisterium of the Church (Pius XII, *Humani generis*).

Obedience (to the Magisterium) must be perfect, because it is required by the faith itself and it has this in common with the faith that it cannot be partial. Moreover, if it is not absolute and perfect in every point, the reality of obedience is destroyed and only pretence of obedience is left.... In defining the limits of obedience owed to the pastors of souls, and above all, to the authority of the Roman Pontiff it must not be supposed that it is only to be yielded in relation to dogmas of which the obstinate denial cannot be disjoined from the crime of heresy. Nay, further, it is not enough sincerely and firmly to assent to doctrines which, though not defined by any solemn pronouncement of the Church, are by her proposed to belief as divinely revealed in her common and universal teaching, and which the Vatican Council declared are to be believed "with Catholic and divine faith". But this likewise must be reckoned amongst the duties of Christians, that they allow themselves to be ruled and governed by the authority and leadership of bishops, and above all, by the apostolic see" (Pope Leo XIII, *Sapientiae Christianae*).

The Post-Conciliar “Popes”

Time and space do not allow for a lengthy review of the many errors embraced by the post-Conciliar “popes”. Suffice it to say that should they have infallibly taught any error—even one—then they declare themselves traitors to their charge and clearly manifest that they are no longer popes. One denies the faith and truth when one denies even one teaching of the Church.

Now the popes of Vatican II, to give but one example, have proposed to the universal Church as revealed, a new doctrine on religious liberty, one already condemned by the previous irreformable Magisterium. Those who would dispute this statement are referred to the Athanasian Creed, the 4th Lateran Council, Vatican I (Ds. 3008) and the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas (*Summa* IIa IIae Questions 8 to 16). No wonder then that Pope Pius IX stated in his Encyclical *Quanta Cura* that religious liberty as embraced by Vatican II “was contrary to the teachings of Holy Scripture, the Church and the Holy Fathers,” that it was “an erroneous opinion, fatal in the greatest possible degree both for the Catholic Church and for the salvation of souls”. No wonder he used his full Apostolic authority and stated that “we wish and order that all Catholics hold these opinions (religious liberty as well as other) as absolutely reprov’d, proscribed and condemned”. Despite the fact that he described it as an “error” and not a heresy, and despite the fact that he attached no anathemas to this statement, and despite the fact that it is part of the “ordinary and universal Magisterium”, it falls within the criteria given by Vatican I and must be considered infallible and accepted “with divine and Catholic faith”. As opposed to this, Pope Paul VI declared that the Documents of Vatican II are part of the Supreme Ordinary Magisterium, and on the strength of his supposed Apostolic authority, promulgated for the glory of God that this same false principle of religious liberty was true and “conformed to divine revelation” as “received from Christ and the Apostles”. He further stated that it had been “guarded and transmitted” by the Church “over the course of time” (*Dignitatis humanae*). The contradiction between these two teachings could not be more flagrant. “Papal” witness to this is provided by John-Paul I who stated publicly from the Chair of Peter that “for years I have taught that only truth has rights. Now I have convinced myself that we have been wrong”. In proclaiming this, Paul VI and all those who knowingly follow him are clearly teaching a “new gospel”, and as such are subject to the anathemas pronounced by St. Paul in his letter to the Galatians.

What then of the divine assistance promised to Peter? This is indeed a special grace with which the Papacy is endowed. However, grace builds on nature and never destroys it. The Pope is not a robot and despite his high estate, remains a free agent. It is true that Our Lord will never abandon us—much less His pope—so long as we do not abandon Him. One must assume then, that in the situation where a pope declares himself outside the believing Church and endows error with the supposed cover of infallibility, that he has abandoned Our Lord. Once this occurs he not only rejects the divine assistance that goes with his office but automatically places himself outside the “Ark of Salvation”. In refusing to follow such an individual we place ourselves in disobedience, not to Christ but to an individual who has himself abandoned our Lord, which of

us would dare to use the hand that has been severed from the body, or to walk with the foot that no longer forms part of the living organization? It further follows that the teaching of the Abbé De Nantes that a heretical pope is incapable of error when he defines a doctrine *ex cathedra* is absurd.

Catholics who believe the post-Conciliar “popes” are “acting in good faith” forget that they are accusing Christ of having broken his promise of assistance. As Pope Leo XIII clearly noted, after affirming that the teaching of the Church’s Magisterium are certainly true, “if such could be false, it would follow—which is evidently absurd—that God Himself would be the author of man’s error. ‘Lord (could we dare say it), if we are mistaken, it is Yourself who has deceived us’”(Satis Cognitum). Let us note that in this Encyclical the Pope does not tell us to disobey the Magisterium when it is in error. Rather he makes it clear that the Magisterium of the Church cannot err. Once again it follows, indeed, it is “manifestly clear”, that when a teaching is obviously in error, in spite of all contrary appearances, the one from whom the teaching comes cannot be the Magisterium, or if he had been such at one time, he is so no longer. It cannot be said of the teaching of both Pius IX and Paul VI—to quote the Fathers of the Council of Chalcedon (461)—that “It is the faith of the Fathers of the Church; it is the faith of the Apostles, and it is what we believe. Through Leo (the then Pope), Peter has spoken”.

All this is in no way to judge the souls of the post-Conciliar “popes”. It is their acts we judge, as indeed we must. If God did not endow us with the ability to distinguish truth from error, he could never hold us responsible for adhering to the truth and rejecting falsehood. Listen to Dom Geuranger (author of *The Liturgical Year* and an individual whose sanctity was vouched for by St. Theresa of Liseaux):

When the shepherd turns into a wolf the first duty of the flock is to defend itself
As a general rule, doctrine comes from the bishops to the faithful, and it is not for the faithful, who are subjects in the order of Faith, to pass judgment on their superiors. But every Christian, by virtue of his title to the name Christian, has not only the necessary knowledge of the essentials of the treasure of Revelation, but also the duty of safeguarding them. The principle is the same, whether it is a matter of belief or conduct, that is, of dogma or morals.

One further point. The Church as always admitted the possibility that a pope can fall from his high station by embracing heresy. As Bellarmine stated, “a professed heretic is no longer a Catholic and hence is no longer a Pope... The universal teaching of the Fathers is that by this fact alone, heretics lose all ecclesiastical jurisdiction and dignity... A Pope turned obvious heretic, by this very fact ceases to be a Pope and the head of the Church because he ceases being Christian and a member of the Church...” (*De Romano Pontifice*). St. Antonin of Florence expresses a similar opinion. “In the event of a Pope becoming heretical, he would be, by this fact alone, and without any other sentence, separated from the Church. Indeed, a head separated from the body cannot, as long as it stays separated from it, be the head of this same body from which it cut itself

off. Consequently a Pope who would have separated himself from the Church by heresy, would cease by this very fact, to be head of the Church; he could not be heretical and remain Pope, because, being out of the Church, he cannot possess the keys of the Church” (This statement carries with it the official approval of Pope Pius IX).

Miss Oxford’s Position on the Novus Ordo Missae

And so we are brought back to yet another contention of Miss Oxford—namely that Catholics are bound to recognize the intrinsic validity of the *Novus Ordo Missae* because Paul VI used his infallibility in declaring that it changed nothing “essential” in the traditional Mass. Here once again I find her position confusing. While assuring us that “it is possible to follow the essential parts of the New Mass in the spirit and prayers of Trent”, she also informs us that Paul VI did not “abrogate” the Apostolic Bull *Quo Primum* (protecting the Mass of All Times), and that Paul VI’s use of the phrase “we wish” did not constitute an absolute command that the faithful use his new concoction. (In passing, it is worthy of note that Pope Saint Pius X used the phrase “we wish” in introducing his Apostolic Bull *Divino Afflatu* reforming the Roman Breviary).

Let it be clear that, if the Pope is speaking “as a single hierarchal person” with Christ, he has the right both to abrogate the Apostolic Bull *Quo Primum* and to introduce new rubrics for the Mass. Those who recognize in him the Vicar of Christ have absolutely no grounds for disobeying his wishes.

But there are two basic reasons why traditional Catholics reject the *Novus Ordo Missae*. For one, they question Paul VI’s authority—i.e., his jurisdiction—in introducing this rite, if such it can be called. A person who endows error with magisterial authority, can no longer be a single hierarchal person with Christ, for Our Lord, the source of all truth, cannot contradict Himself, and cannot be the source of error. Truth by its very nature is “one”. Having done such a thing, he not only clearly manifests that he is no longer—if he ever was—the living Magisterium, and further that he is no longer a member of the believing Church. Having lost his authority, he can in no way change the traditional rites of the Church, even with regard to rubrical matters. Now the point is of some importance because many conservative *Novus Ordo* Catholics such as Michael Davies hold that the validity of the new sacraments—specifically that of “orders”, is based precisely on the fact that despite their clear and obvious defects, they were instituted by a valid pope.

The second reason lies in the *Novus Ordo* itself. Those who accept this rite in obedience must also accept the definition of this rite as found in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal which accompanies and explains it. Let us recall this supposedly Magisterial statement:

At the Mass or the Lord’s Supper, the people of God are called together, with a priest presiding and acting in the person of Christ, to celebrate the memorial of the Lord or eucharistic sacrifice. For this reason Christ’s promise applies

supremely to such a local gathering together of the Church: “Where two or three come together in my name, there am I in their midst...” (Matt. 18:20).

Now, if we are to take this statement in its plain and simple meaning, it is not the priest but the people of God who celebrate the memorial of the Lord. The phrase “with a priest presiding...” is prepositional. Further proof of this contention is found in the fact that throughout the rite itself, the president always uses the word “we” and that nowhere in the entire document is the priest described as the celebrant. (cf. Father Richstatter’s *Liturgical Law Today*). The “people of God” have absolutely no power to celebrate the Mass for they are not the recipient of the sacrament of “orders”. Thus no Mass as such occurs. Again, he makes his heresy clear in that he further states that Christ is no more present in his Mass than he is when one gathers one’s family together for evening prayers. The fact that Paul VI may have expressed his belief in the sacrificial nature of the Mass in other documents has no bearing on the nature of this particular rite. One could of course point to many other defects in this rite, but these alone make it clear that it departs from orthodoxy and those who accept the rite in obedience are equally obliged to accept it in the meaning that Paul IV intended.

Of course, it is “possible to follow the essential parts of the New Mass in the spirit and prayers of Trent”. We are only too familiar with the “pretzel mentality” of those who read into the documents of Vatican II a completely orthodox meaning. But the rite, as Cardinal Ottaviani stated, “teems with insinuations or manifest errors against the purity of the Catholic religion” and has “every possibility of satisfying the most modernistic of Protestants”. Indeed, he further stated that “the *Novus Ordo* represents, both as a whole and in its details, a striking departure from the Catholic theology of the Mass as it was formulated in Session XXII of the Council of Trent”. Even if Miss Oxford can see the essentials of the traditional rite within Paul VI’s New Mass, she must at least admit that our children will understand it in the plain meaning of the words.

* * *

As I mentioned earlier, I remain unclear as to what Miss Oxford recommends to the traditional Catholic. She holds the post-Conciliar “popes” to be heretics but claims they retain their jurisdiction which places us in the position of having to obey them. She considers the *Novus Ordo Missae* to be intrinsically valid and by her own practice encourages Catholics to patronize this rite. At the same time she claims that Paul VI in no way abrogated the Apostolic Bull *Quo Primum* (a highly debatable issue) and that hence Catholics can, if they choose, attend the traditional rites. It is primarily the documents of Vatican II that are in her eyes heretical, and the exposure of this is “the call of the hour”. Finally, she lends her approval to a host of organizations such as Catholics United for the Faith, Una Voce, *The Wanderer*, TFP (American Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family and Property), and of authors like Father Chenu, the Abbé Georges de Nantes, Dietrich von Hildebrand, all of whom are—however regretfully—within the post-Conciliar establishment.

For myself, I can see no other alternative than to remain Catholic as the term was always understood. This means accepting all the infallible teaching of the Church and recognizing that those who teach error under the cover of infallibility are no longer members of the hierarchy—if indeed they ever were such. It means the total rejection of the documents of Vatican II which can in no way be considered magisterial. This is not to deny but that some truths are to be found therein, but these truths are so mixed with error and so ambiguously stated, as to require the rejection of the whole. The Church has never advocated that the faithful be fed the truth laced with generous portions of poisonous error. The same applies to authors who are not clearly traditional. And finally, one must reject all the sacramental changes as being either introduced with no authority and/or as being of such dubious status as to be, in the practical order, invalid. “In confecting the sacraments, all priests are obliged to the ‘*medium certum*’...one may not follow a probable opinion and use either doubtful matter or form. Acting otherwise, one commits a sacrilege”.