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CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM: IS IT THE SAME CHURCH?

Vatican II can be described as a turning point in the history of the Catholic Church. Prior to this event the Church considered herself a "perfect society" in no need of change. Existing both now and in eternity, she called herself "the Church of all times." After the Second Vatican Council, she described herself as "dynamic," "progressive," a "new Church," and a "Church of our times." She claimed to be adapting herself and Christ's message to the conditions of the modern world.[1]

But she sent out a mixed message. In the face of the drastic modernizations introduced, she also claimed that "nothing essential was changed" and that "she was only returning to primitive practice." While many accepted these assertions without thought, others found them self-contradictory. The net result was a confusion of loyalties which the subsequent forty-five years have done little to alleviate.

Human reason tells us that Truth—assuming that such a thing exists—cannot change. Catholics hold to certain truths by definition, namely, that Jesus Christ is God, that He established a "visible" Church which He promised would continue until the end of time, and that this Church is the Catholic Church.[2] They further hold—or should—that this Church preserves intact and teaches the truths and practices Christ revealed.[3] It is a matter of faith that only within this Church is to be found the fullness of Christ's teaching, the Apostolic Succession, and the sacraments which are a visible "means of grace."[4]

Throughout history there have been many who denied that the Catholic Church was the entity that Christ established—denied it on the grounds that she had added false doctrines invented by men; that she had distorted the original message (which amounts to the same thing); or that she failed to retain the original deposit intact. If she is guilty of such, she by definition departs from "unity" with the original body—the "One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church." If we are to call ourselves "Catholic"—and our salvation depends upon our adhering to her teachings—then we must be sure that our beliefs and actions conform to what Christ and the Apostles originally taught.[5] Putting it differently, if we would call ourselves Catholic we must be sure that we are in the same Church which Christ founded, and that this Church has faithfully retained the original "deposit of the faith" given over to it by Christ and the Apostles.

No one disputes the fact that after Vatican II, the Catholic Church was different.[6] The fundamental question is whether the changes introduced were mere "window dressing," or whether they involved fundamental points of doctrine and practice. If the latter is the case, one would be forced to conclude that the post-Conciliar Church is no longer the same as its pre-Vatican II counterpart.[7]

The problem can be posed on many levels—that of doctrine: Whether she has retained intact the Revelation which Christ and the Apostles entrusted to her as a "precious pearl"; whether or not her liturgy is valid in the same sense that it has always been considered such; whether or not her new Canon laws are consistent with those by which she governed herself throughout the ages; whether or not she has retained intact the Apostolic succession; and whether or not those who have sat in the chair of Peter since Vatican II speak with Peter's voice (authority). The answer to the query posed at the start of this chapter—"Is it the same Church?"—will by and large depend upon the answers given to these questions. In general, it can be stated that traditional Catholics claim it is not, while those who would accept and justify the changes introduced by Vatican II and the post-Conciliar "Popes" strongly argue that it is.[8] This leads us to a series of secondary questions: Did Christ intend that His Church should continuously adapt itself to changing circumstances? Are there certain areas where adaptation is legitimate, and others where it becomes a distortion of the original message? Are the changes introduced since Vatican II significant or are they just a matter of minor details? Do the Popes, as Vicars of Christ on earth, have the authority to make these changes? Is it possible that the Catholic Church, over the course of centuries, has deviated from the patterns established by her Founder to such a degree that it was incumbent upon her present leaders to bring her back to some original state of purity? This book will attempt to answer these questions.

Immediately we have a problem. Who is to speak for the Church? People who claim the title of Catholic no longer constitute an intellectually coherent group of individuals. Catholics today can be roughly divided into those that are "traditional" and those who are "post-Conciliar"—though even here the lines of demarcation are far from distinct. And post-Conciliar or "*Novus Ordo*" Catholics conform to a spectrum that ranges from "conservative" to "liberal," while traditional Catholics vary in how they view the recent "Popes."[9] The problem is that each of these groups claims to represent the "true" Church and quote the documents of the Church in defense of their particular view. In an attempt to sort out the issues we shall quote only unequivocal sources of information. However, there is this caveat: The pre-Conciliar sources are invariably unambiguous and to the point. The post-Conciliar documents are verbose and ambiguous, and

can be quoted on both sides of any issue. Given this situation, selection is unavoidable. We shall attempt to be as just as possible.

The Catholic faith can be described as an interconnected series of "facts" that, taken in conjunction with one another, form a consistent body of teachings and practice. It is as hard to isolate any one aspect of "the Faith" from the total content, as it is to determine where a spider's web originates. Yet one has to start somewhere, and so it is that we initiate this study with what is called the "Magisterium" or the "teaching authority" of the Church. For those who are unfamiliar with this concept, let it be stated at once that this "teaching authority" follows as a logical consequence of Christ's establishing a "visible" Church. In doing this, He established a hierarchical institution and intended that this entity—the "Mystical Body of Christ"—be an extension of His presence on earth (Eph. 5:23). As such, this Church, by her very nature, has the function and obligation of preserving intact and delivering to us the Message (teachings and inculcated practices) of Christ. "Going therefore, teach ye all nations . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20). Those entrusted with this function of "feeding His sheep . . . in His name" were given no authority to teach any other truth "in His name" than that which He Himself established. Hence He also said, "He that heareth you heareth me" (Luke 10:10). It further follows that, as the Apostle Paul put it: "Even if an angel from heaven should teach you a gospel besides that which you have received, let him be anathema. . . . For I give you to understand, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man; for neither did I receive it of man, nor did I learn it; but by the Revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:6-12).

THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH'S MAGISTERIUM

In order to enable His Church to teach in His Name, he left us, not written works,[10] but rather a "living Magisterium" ("the Pope and the bishops in union with Him") 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 (literally, "what is handed down") and hence the true Church and the Magisterium are by their very nature traditional.[11]

> The Church teaches and has always taught that there is a divine Tradition, that is the sum of truths which have been divinely revealed to the Apostles, has been handed down without error through the genuine Magisterium of Pastors.[12]

Before considering the nature of this teaching authority to which all Catholics owe assent, it is important to stress that it is dependent, not on man, but on God. It follows that the teaching of the Magisterium is infallibly true. If it is not, then it is Christ who has lied to us. Defenders of the post-Conciliar Church often state that the Magisterium of the Church resides "in the Pope and the Bishops in union with him." Such a statement, while true, cannot be taken in isolation. Used to defend the changes in doctrine, rites, and laws that this new Church has introduced, it becomes a classical case of *suppressio veri* and *suggestio falsi.* The statement is true only when the Pope and the bishops in union with him have themselves, in their function as *depositi custodies* (guardians of the "deposit" of the faith as in 1 Tim. 6:20), in no way departed from or gone against that which was delivered to the Church by Christ and the Apostles.[13]

This principle has been expressed in a variety of ways. One of the clearest is that the hierarchy—those responsible for preserving and expounding the Magisterium must be members of the believing Church before they can become members of the teaching Church. The Pope, in his function as Vicar of Christ, is "one hierarchical person" with our divine Master. As such, he cannot teach other than our Master would, and cannot but be a member of the believing Church. It is because the Pope is in union with Christ that the bishops must be in union with him and we the laity (who have no teaching function as such) in turn with them.[14]

The Church has always taught that an individual Pope can stray from sound doctrine in his personal and public life.[15] Should this be the case prior to his election, the election is deemed invalid;[16] should he openly embrace doctrines that contradict this deposit after his election, and obstinately adhere to them, he would become a public heretic, and as such he would no longer be Pope.[17] Such is only logical since, from the moment he publicly embraced heresy with obstinacy, he would cease to be a believing Catholic or the Pope, to say nothing of being Christ's representative and a "*Pontifex*" or "bridge" between this world and the next. The oft-quoted maxim of St. Ambrose to the effect that "where Peter is, there is the Church" is valid only insofar as "Peter" remains rooted in orthodoxy or "pure faith and sound doctrine."[18] And when he is not, then as Cardinal Cajetan taught, "Neither is the Church in him, nor is he in the Church."[19] Cornelius Lapide, S.J., puts it bluntly:

> Were the Pope to fall into public heresy, he would *ipso facto* cease to be Pope, yea, even to be a Christian believer.[20]

Again, even in our times people place a high value on "moral purity." Orthodoxy is "intellectual purity," and as such an indispensable prelude

to grace. Seen in this light—and far from "telling other people what to believe"—orthodoxy is no more than a reference to the primacy and priority of truth.

Thus the Pope and his function is limited precisely by that authority which is the basis of his own authority. As Christ's representative on earth his monarchical function and quasi-absolute power to command is limited by the fact that he must act, not on his own behalf (which would be despotism), but on behalf of Christ, his Lord and Master. Vatican I teaches this in a *de fide* manner:

> The Holy Spirit is not promised to the successors of Peter so that, through His revelation, they might bring new doctrines to light, but that, with His help, they might keep inviolate and faithfully expound the revelation handed down through the Apostles, the deposit of faith.[21]

This teaching of the Church is made particularly clear in the statement of Pope Pius XII:

> Nor against this may anyone argue that the primacy of jurisdiction established in the Church gives such a Mystical Body two heads. For Peter in virtue of his primacy is only Christ's Vicar; so that there is only one chief Head of this Body, namely Christ (*Mystici Corporis Christi*).

If we are to be in submission to the "teaching authority of the Church," it is essential, in these latter days, when so many of our shepherds are walking "after their own [pseudo-intellectual] lusts," when they have become "men speaking perverse things," "vain talkers and seducers . . . erring and driving into error,"[22] that we define these and related entities with clarity. Our failure to do so will only result in our giving assent to what is false, or else of our ascribing to "obedience" a false meaning that subverts the truth itself. The Church has never asked us to give our assent to error, or to submit to illegal and sinful commands in the name of "obedience." We owe obedience to Christ—"one must obey God rather than man" (Acts 5:29)—and if we owe obedience to any authority in the Church it is precisely because that authority represents Christ. Should someone command or teach something in the name of Jesus that is manifestly against what God commands and teaches, we would be bound to disobey them and reject their novel doctrine.[23] As St. Ignatius of Antioch stated in his *Epistle to the Ephesians* in sub-Apostolic times:

> Do not err, my brethren. . . . If a man by false teaching corrupt the faith of God, for the sake of which Jesus Christ was crucified, such a one shall go in his foulness to the unquenchable fire, as shall also he who listens to him.

Under normal circumstances the Popes and the bishops in union with him would take great care to teach only what had always been taught. They function to preserve and interpret the Magisterium. If in their definitions they seemingly add to the body of the Church's teaching, it is never in contradiction to what has already been taught because truth can never contradict itself. (There are circumstances where a pontiff must teach magisterially about issues that arise—as for example when the birth control pill became available, Pius XII taught that it could be used for medical reasons, but not as a means of birth control.) If in the present situation we find that there is a conflict between what is being magisterially taught today and what has always been taught in the past, then it is by the constant teaching of the Church that the present hierarchy must be judged. A Catholic cannot judge another person's soul, but he is obliged to judge another person's teaching. If he could not distinguish between what is Catholic and what is not, he would have no obligation to be a Catholic. To judge that what is being taught today by the post-Conciliar Church contradicts the constant teaching of the Church for the last two thousand years is not to judge anyone's soul but to fulfill our responsibility as Catholics.

Notes

[1] Certainly many of the forces let loose at the Second Vatican Council had been at work in the Church over the past two to three hundred years—if not from the very moment of her foundation. Vatican II brought those forces into the heart of the Church and made them part of her official teaching.

[2] A Church must be "visible" or we could never be able to identify it as such. We identify this Church by means of her teachings and practices which have been constant throughout the ages. Protestants believe in an "invisible" Church, or rather, several invisible Churches.

[3] Strictly speaking, Revelation ended with the death of the last Apostle.

[4] Melchior Canus, a theologian at the time of the Council of Trent (1545-1563), capsulated this principle in the following terms: "We have only one master or doctor, Jesus Christ, both God and man, the same yesterday and today. It is through Him that God the Father has done all things. . . . Jesus Christ is thus the primary source of all truth and all certain knowledge, both in the natural and supernatural order. . . . Insofar as this Church represents God on earth, insofar as God Himself is incorporated in her, this Church is the natural and supernatural necessary and infallible organ of the faith and of divine reason" (quoted by Rohrbacher, *Histoire Universelle de l'Église Catholique* [Letouzey et Ane, Éditeurs: Paris], Vol. 10, p. 118).

[5] This book is written by a Catholic primarily for Catholics. Protestants intrinsically recognize this principle in that they claim to be returning to the original Christianity. It is their belief that throughout the ages the Catholic Church has distorted and changed the original "deposit" beyond recognition. The term "Catholic" means universal. It is pertinent

to quote St. Augustine on this point: "We must hold fast to the Christian religion, and the communion of that church which is Catholic, and is called Catholic not only by her own children, but even by all her enemies. The heretics and followers of schisms, whenever they talk not with their own but with strangers, despite themselves, call nothing else the Catholic Church but the Catholic. For they cannot be understood unless they call her by the name which she bears throughout the world" (*Lib. de Unit. Eccl.*, Chap. 7, n. 12).

[6] As one quip put it: "In the pre-Vatican II Church nothing changed but the bread and wine. In the post-Vatican II Church everything changed except the bread and the wine."

[7] Many Catholics who adhere to the "new" Church—the Church after Vatican II, object to the title "post-Conciliar." However, it is the hierarchy of this new Church which has itself coined this designation. It was used by Paul VI's representatives sent to remonstrate with Archbishop Lefebvre at Econe. Paul VI has also used the phrase "Church of the Council" and John XXIII called it a "new Pentecost." Not to be outdone, John Paul II has called it a "new Advent."

[8] It would be more accurate to say that traditional Catholics believe the true Church cannot change, while modernists, who deny the fixity of truth, and hold that religion is a matter of "feeling," believe it can. The majority of post-Conciliar Catholics have been unconcerned with these principles and have gone along with the changes because they find them easy to accept. The new Church makes far fewer demands on its members.

[9] Many conservative post-Conciliar Catholics describe themselves as traditional. The phrase "*Novus Ordo* Catholics" follows from the fact that they attend the New Order of the Mass. By and large traditional Catholics insist on the traditional rites of the Church, but differ on whether or not they accept the post-Conciliar "Popes" as Catholic. Inevitably confusion reigns.

[10] The Scriptures were written down at various times after his death—the Apocalypse some 80 years later. The Canon of Scripture was not put together till the year 397. Hence Scripture is seen by the Church as an aspect of Tradition rather than as an entity existing by itself.

[11] The word "traditional" comes from the Latin *trado*, to hand down. The word "religion" comes from the Latin *religare*, to bind. One can speak of being "bound" to Tradition, but in reality this is nothing other than to be bound to the origin or center, that is, to the "Word" which "was in the beginning." To conform to Tradition is to keep faith with the origin; it is to dwell in the primordial purity and in the universal norm. Protestants base their beliefs on Scripture alone, while for Catholics Scripture is part of Tradition.

[12] Tanqueray, *Dogmatic Theology* (Desclee: N.Y., 1959).

[13] As the French Bishops stated in their 1976 Congress at Lourdes, a meeting convened to discuss the terrible crisis facing the Church in France: "The unity of the Church comes before everything else and is guaranteed only by being at one with the Pope. To deny this is to exclude oneself from this unity." Another example is provided by Fr. Normandin in *A Priest Out in the Cold*: When the Most Rev. Paul Gregoire, Archbishop of Montreal, deprived Fr. Normandin of his parish because he insisted upon offering the traditional mass, the bishop said: "My conscience imposes a serious obligation on me to obey my superior, the Pope. I prefer to be wrong with him rather than to be right against him." Either the Archbishop doesn't know his theology, or he isn't a Catholic.

[14] Laymen do not have a public teaching function, though of course they have an obligation to teach those under their authority such as family members, and must be able to respond to questions posed to them even by casual acquaintances.

[15] The Pope's "infallibility" does not make him a robot. He has free will and like the rest of us is fully capable of sinning.

[16] Pope Paul IV, in his Apostolic constitution *Cum ex Apostolatus officio* (1559) states that, "if ever it should happen that . . . a reigning Roman Pontiff, having deviated from the faith, or having fallen into some heresy prior to his nomination . . . as Pope . . . , the election is null and void, even if all the Cardinals have unanimously consented to it. It cannot become valid . . . despite the crowning of the individual, despite the signs of office that surround him, despite the rendering of obeisance to him by all, and no matter how long the situation continues, no one can consider the election as valid in any way. Nor can it confer, nor does it confer, any power to command in either the spiritual or temporal realms. . . . All their words, all their actions, all their resolutions, and all that results from them, have no juridical power and absolutely no force of law. Such individuals . . . elected under such circumstances, are deprived of all their dignity, position, honor, title, function, and power from the very beginning."

[17] Cardinal St. Bellarmine teaches: "*Papa hereticus est depositus*." A Pope may of course be in error on a given point, but may retract when his error is pointed out. (He has theologians to consult with so as to avoid such mistakes.) What is required is that he persist in an error after being made aware that it is an error, or to use the theological term, that he be a *formal* and not just a *material* heretic. This "formality" adds the sin of "obstinacy" to the heresy. Pope Honorius I was condemned by the Third Council of Constantinople, the Sixth Ecumenical, in the following terms: "After having taken account of the fact that they (his letters to Sergius and Sergius' writings) are not in conformity with Apostolic dogma, and the definitions of the Holy Councils and all the Fathers worthy of approbation, and that, on the contrary, they uphold false and heretical doctrines, we reject them absolutely and denounce them as a grave threat to the salvation of souls. . . . It is our judgment that Honorius, formerly Pope of Rome, has been cast out of God's Holy Catholic Church and made anathema." Pope Leo (d. 683) on whom fell the necessity of confirming such statements, wrote: "We declare anathema those who instigated these new errors . . . [including] Pope Honorius who was shown to be incapable of enlightening this Apostolic Church by the doctrine of Apostolic Tradition, in that he allowed its immaculate faith to be blemished by a sacrilegious betrayal." All admit that there was no obstinacy in his error, and the majority that the letter, being private, was not a papal act and hence not *ex cathedra*. Most hold that Leo II condemned him for his carelessness, but did not anathematize him (See *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1908). Pope Paschal II (1099-1118), having been imprisoned by the Emperor Henry V, was forced to make concessions and promises that were impossible to reconcile with Catholic principles (relating to the investiture of ecclesiastics by temporal rulers), and St. Bruno, Guido of Burgundy, the Archbishop of Vienna, the future Pope Callistus II, as well as St. Hugh of Grenoble (among others) told him that "should you, in spite of our absolutely refusing to believe it possible, choose an alternative path and refuse ratification of our decision (that you must retract the agreements with Henry V), may God protect you, for were this to be the case, we should be forced to withdraw our allegiance from you." The Pope retracted. Other examples could be given (Rohrbacher, *Histoire Universelle*, Vol. 6, p. 380).

[18] "Pure faith and sound doctrine" is the *Catholic Encyclopedia*'s (1908) definition of the term "orthodoxy." The modernist attempt to paint orthodoxy as a sort of fanatical rigidity belies the fact that there are certain things about which we are meant to be rigid. If we were not meant to be rigid about the truth, we would not have had any martyrs. "What came ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken in the wind?" (Matt. 11:7). The Church is founded upon a rock, and not on shifting sands.

[19] Cited by Journet in *L'Église du Verbe incarné* (Sheed and Ward: London/New York, 1954), Vol. II, p. 840.

[20] Cornelius Lapide, S.J. (d. 1637), *Commentaria in Scriptura Sacram* (Parisiis, Ludovicus Vives, 1893). This commentary, running to some thirty volumes, is one of the great masterpieces of the traditional Church. Unfortunately, only those on the New Testament have been translated into English. This is the common teaching of the Church. "As Cajetan says, 'He who is not a Christian can in no way be the Pope.' He cannot be the head who is in no way a member and he who is not a member is not a Christian. But a manifest heretic is in no way a Christian as says Cyprian in his Book IV, Epist. 2; as says St. Athanasius in his second sermon against the Arians; as says St. Augustine in his book *De gratia Christi*, Chapter 20; as says St. Jerome (*contra Lucifer*) and many others. Hence it follows that a manifest heretic cannot be the Pope" (Fr. Joaquin Saenz y Arriaga, *Sede Vacante? Paulo VI no es legitimo Papa* [Editores Asociados, Urraza: Mexico, 1973], p. 112). Canon Law clearly states that "a cleric who publicly abandons the Catholic faith loses every ecclesiastical office *ipso facto* and without any declaration" (2314). The subject will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7.

[21] Henry Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, a classical source of Catholic doctrine, cited hereafter as Denzinger. The English translation, entitled *The Sources of Catholic Dogma* (B. Herder: N.Y., 1955) is in some places defective.

[22] These phrases are Scriptural and are cited from the introductory paragraphs of Pope St. Pius X's encyclical *Pascendi* against the modernists. The *didaskolai* (as in the Second Letter of Paul to Timothy) have, to paraphrase St. Vincent of Lerins, "always been with us, are with us now, and always will be with us."

[23] As St. Francis de Sales said: "Obedience is a moral virtue which depends upon justice." (Faith, Hope, and Charity are theological virtues, and therefore of a higher order.) Even the Jesuit vow of obedience states: ". . . in all things, except what your conscience tells you would be sinful." As St. Thomas Aquinas says: "It sometimes happens that commands issued by prelates are against God; therefore, in all things are prelates not to be obeyed. . . . Not in all things are prelates to be followed, but only in those things which accord with the rules which Christ has laid down" (*Summa* II-II, Q. 104, Art. 5, and his *Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* 2:14). As St. Catherine of Siena wrote to Pope Gregory XI: "Alas Holy Father, there are some times when obedience can lead directly to damnation." She proceeded to quote to him the Scriptural passage: "If the blind lead the blind, they shall both fall into a pit" (*Lettres de St. Catherine de Sienne* [Editions P. Tequi: Paris, 1886], Letter I). The virtue of obedience is stressed in Catholicism because it is a means to interior perfection, but such is true only within the bounds of a traditional setting. It should not be forgotten that Satan also has those who obey his commands.

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Features in

The Destruction of the Christian Tradition: Updated and Revised
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