

SCHISM?

Vatican II, was intended by Pope John to be a pastoral, not a doctrinal council. He made this clear in his opening address when he asserted that the doctrinal needs of the Church were still perfectly satisfied by the work of Trent and Vatican I. This pastoral aspect is evident in the texts of Vatican II. Yet, many a 'theologian', on the pretext of the so-called 'new theology', were able, through some 'periti', to introduce in the conciliar documents that most definite characteristic of their 'theology', *ambiguity*. A man on the know, Cardinal Heenan, in *The Tablet*, puts it thus: 'There are hundreds of papers in the Vatican archives which presumably will reveal to scholars of the future the proceedings in secret commission meetings. Clerical journalists have described the intrigues and quarrels which led to the acceptance or rejection of conciliar documents. The more significant activities within the commissions have not yet been fully revealed. The framing of amendments for the vote of the Fathers was the most delicate part of a commission's work. A determined group could wear down opposition and produce a formula patient of both orthodox and modernistic interpretation.'

The effect of this and other influences is the confusion created in almost every field of doctrine, and the relegation of the *magisterium*, most especially that of the Pope, to the voices that clamour in the desert. Again quoting Cardinal Heenan: "...The ordinary magisterium of the Pope is exercised in his writings and allocutions. But today what the Pope says is by no means accepted as authoritative by all Catholic theologians. An article in the periodical *Concilium* is at least as likely to win their respect as a papal encyclical. The decline of the magisterium is one of the most significant developments in the post-conciliar Church."

That this lethal effect on the faith can in no way be attributed to the Council is clear from the words of Paul VI: "It will be said that the Council authorized such treatment of traditional teaching. Nothing is more false, if we are to accept the work of Pope John who launched that *aggiornamento* in whose name some dare to impose on Catholic dogma dangerous and sometimes reckless interpretations."

The voice of the universal Shepherd, further continues. In his Christmas address to the College of Cardinals and members of the Curia on Dec. 23, 1968 he stated: "Certainly We cannot remain silent about the sorrow it causes Us to see Our intentions and even Our words misunderstood or distorted at times; nor about Our fear that a certain number of Our sons — fortunately few, but still too many, as far as We are concerned — and through their efforts, others who are less firmly grounded and more vulnerable, will depart from the right path and, attracted by a love for novelty and change, will have the words of the Apostle addressed to them: "*A veritate quidem auditum avertent, ad fabulas autem convertentur,*" "They will turn away their hearing from the truth and turn aside rather to fables (2 Tim. 4:4).

"This, and not any timid outlook on things, dictates Our insistence on themes which We regard as fundamental for doctrinal orthodoxy and the good order of the Church, and which seem to have lost their clarity or certainty for some people — including, unfortunately, priests and people dedicated to religious perfection. This is true both with regard to the teaching of the faith and to matters concerning the principles of so-called Church discipline, the latter is nothing more nor less than a free, voluntary and binding acceptance of the relations of mutual trust and respect between a divinely derived authority and obedience—relations that are absolutely necessary for anyone to enter into the mystery of Christ's obedience."

From the start the doctrine of faith has been the bond of union. Consequently, the bond, once broken, can no longer be *unam sanctam, one holy... Church*. Faith, once altered, means schism even to the *alterers* stubbornly continuing within the fold (to reform the Church from within, as they do say). From the beginning the alteration of faith meant "not belonging": *Ex nobis prodierunt, sed non erant ex nobis*"; "those rivals of Christ came out of our own number, but they had never really belonged" (1 John 2:10)

With these considerations, the following words of Pope Paul on Maundy Thursday this year can be well understood: "There is talk of renewal in the doctrine and in the conscience of the Church of God; but how can the living and true Church be authentic and persistent if the complex structure that forms it and defines it a spiritual and social "mystical body", is today so often and so gravely corroded by dissent and challenge and forgetfulness of its hierarchical structure, and is countered in its divine and indispensable constituent charism, its pastoral authority? How can it claim to be a Church, that is a united people even though locally

broken up and historically and legitimately diversified, when a practically schismatic ferment is dividing it, subdividing it and breaking it into groups which are more than anything else zealous for arbitrary and fundamentally egoistical autonomy, masked by Christian pluralism or liberty of conscience? How will it be able to be built up by activity that would like to be called apostolic, when this is deliberately led by centrifugal tendencies and when it develops, not the mentality of communitarian love, but rather that of partisan polemics, or when it prefers dangerous and equivocal sympathies, which need to be met with unyielding reserve, as against friendships founded on fundamental principles, marked by indulgence towards mutual defects and needing concurrence and collaboration?

"There is still talk of the Church, of the Catholic Church, our own: but can we say to ourselves that in her members, in her institutions and her work she is truly living by a sincere spirit of union and charity, which makes her worthy to celebrate our most holy daily Mass without hypocrisy and without the unfeelingness of habit? Have we not amongs us those "schismatics", those "dissensions" sadly denounced in St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians?"

The implications here are vital to all Christians, most especially to bishops and priests. Many, fortunately, have started to realize the ominous consequences for those who, in conscience, are responsible for such state of affairs in the Church. The newly created Cardinal Danielou for one has declared: "It is impossible that the Church be reduced to nothing less than a madhouse of subjective opinions. The Church is responsible before Christ for the authenticity of the deposit of faith, and when heretical opinions on the divinity of Christ, on the resurrection of the dead and on eternal life are uttered, when opinions are expressed contrary to the Christian faith, I believe that the Church is rigorously obliged to condemn them. . . This does not mean to reprimand or limit someone's research. It means to exercise what is required by the Church's responsibility."

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