

GOVERNANCE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

Manum suam misit hostis ad omnia desiderabilia eius:
quia vidit gentes ingressas sanctuarium suum, de
quibus praeceperas ne intrarent in ecclesiam tuam.

Lamentations of Jeremiah 1: 10¹

This is a review of the Response of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference² to a report into the way the Catholic Church in Australia should in future be governed, prepared by a group, largely comprised of lay men and women (the 'Project Team'), at the direction of the Bishops Conference.

Preliminary

The Catholic Church is, as Belloc said, "the one thing in this world which is different from all other", a divine thing in the midst of the mundane. Its founder was God; its enlivening spirit is God; its end is union with God the Father of each of its members who die in the faith and without mortal sin. The Catholic Church endures because she is of God, the spotless Bride of Christ, Who is her Head.

The Second Vatican Council, initiated by Pope John XXIII and completed by Pope Paul VI, produced, it has been said, a revolution in the Catholic Church. It did not. It did, however, produce a revolution in the attitudes of the vast majority of the clergy—popes, cardinals, bishops, priests and religious—towards her teachings. The result was not immediately obvious, but with the passage of time it has become clear. The Council's bishops, with the assistance of Pope Paul VI, produced a counterfeit church—"the church of Vatican II"—which, since the Council's close, has operated in parallel with the Catholic Church. This "church" has assumed the Catholic Church's mantle and purported to conduct itself with her indefectibility, with her infallibility—*ad libitum*. The reality has been well expressed by the former Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò.

"For sixty years, we have witnessed the eclipse of the true Church by an anti-church that has progressively appropriated her name, occupied the Roman Curia and her Dicasteries, Dioceses and Parishes, Seminaries and Universities, Convents and Monasteries. The anti-church has usurped her authority, and its ministers wear her sacred garments; it uses her prestige and power to appropriate her treasures, assets, and finances."³

It is *demonstrable*—that is, capable of certain proof from causes—that, despite the insistence of every Pope since John XXIII, the Second Vatican Council *was not* an ecumenical, or general,

¹ Third Lesson, Matins, 1st Nocturn, *Holy Thursday*. "The enemy has laid his hand on all her possessions—she has seen the pagans, those whom Thou didst command should not enter Thy church, filling her sanctuary."

² https://drive.google.com/file/d/1okB3jSsJ4dYAt_0GzrIjyVZS2l1cZBtC/view

³ *Catholic Identity Conference*, October 24th, 2020, *How the Revolution of Vatican II serves the New World Order*, reproduced at https://www.superflumina.org/PDF_files/abp-vigano-revolution-of-vatican2.pdf

council of the Catholic Church.⁴ The proof *a priori* is buttressed by innumerable heterodox contentions found in the Council's documents, and by the multiple evils that have befallen the Catholic faithful as a result of this counterfeit church's assumption of the Catholic Church's authority.⁵ Not the least of those evils was put in place in 1969 when Pope Paul VI compelled the faithful to accept, in substitution for the Church's canonised liturgy, a liturgy embodied in a "new Roman Missal" in breach of Church legislation specifically prohibiting such an act. Paul VI crowned this illegal act with another: he neglected to promulgate his "new Missal". Despite vehement claims to the contrary the "new Missal" (and the distorted liturgy it pretended to mandate) has never been lawful in the Catholic Church.⁶

Since the close of Vatican II, then, a Catholic bishop must be understood as exercising two offices—'wearing two hats'—contemporaneously, one as bishop of the Catholic Church, the other as functionary ('bishop'?) of this counterfeit and schismatic "church". Catholic theology has long maintained that the state of the soul of a priest does not affect the validity of the sacraments he administers (*Summa Theologiae* III, q. 68, a. 8; Council of Trent, Session VII, c. 12: Dz. 855; DS. 1612). Accordingly, a bishop may validly exercise his ministry as Catholic bishop while behaving, the while, as a 'bishop' of this schismatic church.

To know whether a pope or bishop is acting as Pope or Bishop, or whether he is acting as a functionary of this "church", which—taking a cue from its preoccupation with the democratic—we will refer to as *the Synodal church of Vatican II*, it is necessary to analyse what he does. If what he does or what he says departs from what is fitting to his office, the Catholic faithful may treat its Catholic content with respect, and its schismatic content with the contempt it deserves.

For instance, a bishop may administer the Sacrament of Confirmation and, provided he observes the form and intention of the sacrament, he will do so validly. Before doing so, however, he may defer publicly to the wraith of some aboriginal tribe whose people used frequent the area in which his Cathedral is situated. In this action he will not be acting as bishop of the Catholic Church but as a functionary of its counterfeit, indulging Vatican II's respect for religions (or pseudo-religions) other than the one true religion of which he is a bishop. He may permit the presence of females among those assisting him on the sanctuary. In doing so he will not be acting as a bishop of Christ's Church, for the aberration of female altar servers was introduced by a Pope besotted with the secular doctrine of feminism. It may concern our bishop that in indulging these aberrations he is offending his episcopal oath, but his peers do the same: 'How,' he may ask himself, 'could our shared opinion be wrong?'

⁴ Arguing from a philosophical viewpoint, the present author has shown this in various papers including *What went wrong with Vatican II*, https://www.superflumina.org/PDF_files/vatican_ii_www.pdf pp. 6 et seq. The late Fr Gregory Hesse S.T.D., J.C.D. essayed it from a theological stance. He argued that an ecumenical council is in the nature of a sacramental and, as with any sacrament, three things are required for its validity, matter, form and intention. The matter and form may have been present, but the utterances of Pope John XXIII demonstrate a lack of the requisite intention. The two arguments, grounded in lack of intention, arrive at the same conclusion.

⁵ Cf. the author's *The Heresies taught by Vatican II* at https://www.superflumina.org/PDF_files/heresies-taught-by-vatican-2.pdf

⁶ Cf. *The Status of the Novus Ordo Missae* at https://www.superflumina.org/PDF_files/status-novus-ordo.pdf

What drove the bishops of Vatican II under John XXIII's influence was the idea that the Catholic Church needed reforming, "brought up to date". A principal element was the perceived need to involve the laity in her management, a step in the direction of democracy characteristic of Protestant sects. But an heretical tendency worse than Protestantism was at work. In *Lumen Gentium*, nn. 9 et seq., the Council (quoting *I Peter 2: 10*) offered a new description of the faithful as *the People of God*. This phrase, Cardinal Ratzinger was later to say, "expresse[d] the historical nature of the pilgrim Church that will not be wholly herself until the paths of time have been traversed and have blossomed in the hands of God".⁷

But the Church is not traversing "the paths of time". She is outside time, timeless; a perfect society [Leo XIII, *Immortale Dei* (November 1st, 1885), n. 35, Dz. 1869; DS. 3171; *Sapientiae Christianae* (January 10th, 1890), nn.17, 25]. The Church is already "wholly herself". The Council bishops were in error, and the source of their error was the heresy of Modernism:

"Modernists [pose a] conflict of two forces [in the Church]... The conserving force... is found in tradition... represented by religious authority which feels hardly, or not at all, the spur of progress. The progressive force... lies in the individual consciences and works in them... Already we observe, Venerable Brethren, the introduction of that most pernicious doctrine which would make of the laity the factor of progress in the Church..." (Pius X, *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* September 8th, 1907, n. 27)

It was Modernism at work at Vatican II, the heresy which ends in atheism (*Pascendi*, nn. 14, 39). It is no accident that after the Council there occurred, throughout the world, a Gadarene slide into atheism.

There is a province in the Church for the laity, as the (First) Vatican Council made clear:

"All faithful Christians, but those chiefly who are in a prominent position or engaged in teaching, we entreat, by the compassion of Jesus Christ, and enjoin by the authority of the same God and Saviour, that they bring aid to ward off and eliminate... errors from Holy Church and contribute their zealous help in spreading abroad the light of undefiled faith". (Constitution *Dei Filius*, 1870; Leo XIII, *Sapientiae Christianae*, 16)

But there is no place for them in either her teaching or her government.

"The office of preaching (of teaching) lies by divine right in the province of the pastors, the bishops whom the Holy Spirit has placed to rule the Church of God." (*Sapientiae Christianae*, 15)

The office of the laity is to defend the Church and to promote her teachings, as a man will act to defend and support the authority of his mother. With its erroneous conception of the Church as "a work in progress" Vatican II sought to elevate the laity beyond their station.

There was another effect of the Council's mischievous activity, a flattening of the distinction between priest and faithful which diminished the immense dignity and worth of the priesthood. This was reflected in the Council's teaching that the presence of the faithful was

⁷ *The Ecclesiology of Vatican II*, September 15th, 2001; Address to the Pastoral Congress of the Diocese of Aversa, Italy. He also said that the phrase would serve as an ecumenical bridge to allow recognition of intermediate degrees of belonging to the Church—which is heretical—and to put more in evidence the human element in the Church.

essential to the celebration of Mass (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* n. 14). It is not. It never has been. The priest, the *alter Christus*, celebrates Mass. The faithful merely assist.

The anti-Modernist oath, instituted by Pius X in 1910 and taken annually by every member of the clergy, included this profession:

“I sincerely hold that the doctrine of faith was handed down to us from the apostles through the orthodox Fathers in exactly the same meaning and always in the same purport... [and that it is not] a philosophical figment or product of a human conscience that has gradually been developed by human effort and will continue to develop indefinitely...”

Again, it is no accident that, in July 1967, Paul VI authorised its suppression. No bishop or priest could endorse the heresies taught by the Second Vatican Council and swear to follow faithfully his duties as a priest of the Catholic Church.

After the Council, bishops felt that their calling, their focus, had changed—as indeed it had. For they were no longer simply bishops of the Catholic Church; they had acquired another, and conflicting, office. The handbook of their behaviour was no longer the Church’s tradition, manifest in the teachings of their predecessors, spelled out in the tomes of dogmatic and moral theology, but the collected *Documents of Vatican II*. Yet again, it is no accident that since the Council, for the most part, the Church’s bishops have refrained from acting like bishops. They do not uphold the Church’s teachings in faith and morals before the world; they remain silent.

There was more. Any attempt a bishop might have made after the Council to fulfil the duties of his office was thwarted by Vatican II’s demand that he treat his power as moderated by the authority of the local episcopal conference; that, in the management of his diocese, he defer to his priests, involve the laity. These are not requirements of the Catholic Church but part of the Council’s demand for deference to the secular and its preoccupation with the democratic. Priests discovered they could not rely on their bishop to support them. Bishops found that if they took a stand on Church teachings, they were unlikely to be supported by the Pope.⁸ This collapse of authority had started at the top with John XXIII’s *Opening Speech* to the Council’s bishops.⁹ There were to be yet more disturbing consequences.

Instances of sexual abuse among clergy and religious, from occasional occurrences in the 1950s and 1960s, grew to something of a plague. The bishops’ weakened authority, reflected in that of the superiors of religious orders, was revealed in the neglect that characterised their responses to the evils that resulted. American commentator, George Weigel, is surely correct in arguing that the descent into aberration was part and parcel of Vatican II’s abandonment of principle. (*The Courage to be Catholic*, New York, 2002) If, after the Council, bishops had behaved like bishops rather than functionaries of this counterfeit “church”, these evils would never have got out of hand. The regime of sanctions available was adequate to enable them

⁸ Let the reader study the experience of the Archbishop of Washington vis a vis Pope Paul VI in ‘the Washington case’ in George Weigel’s *The Courage to be Catholic*, cited hereafter in the text.

⁹ “Nowadays... the Spouse of Christ prefers to make use of the medicine of mercy rather than that of severity. She considers that she meets the needs of the present day by demonstrating the validity of her teaching rather than by condemnations.” *Opening Speech*, October 11th, 1962

to deal with those who had betrayed their vocations. They would, moreover, have treated the faithful these had harmed with charity, assuring them of their protection and compensation. But it was a signal mark of the Council's influence that it led to substantial failures in charity.¹⁰

The reason is that the Council was *schismatic*, and schism is a sin against charity. (*Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 39, a. 2, ad 3). The Council's bishops cut themselves away from the Catholic Church by abandoning the Church's understanding of apostolic tradition in favour their own Modernistic version.¹¹ It is worth quoting St Jerome (as St Thomas does in article 3 *ibidem*):

"[A]t the outset it is possible to find a difference between schism and heresy: yet there is no schism that does not devise some heresy for itself that it may appear to have... a reason for its separation from the Church." (*In Ep. ad Tit.* iii. 10)

And, indeed, the Council was not only schismatic but heretical, as has been detailed above.

The Catholic Church is indefectible, one and holy. In her *indefectibility* she remains, and will remain, the Institution of Salvation founded by Christ until the end of the world. In her *unity* she is an undivided thing. The faith she proclaims is one, not divided as the faiths of the Protestant sects are divided. She is one household, a visible household, "the City on the mountaintop which cannot be hidden". In her *sanctity* she reflects the holiness of God Who founded her. She is holy in her origin, holy in her purpose, holy in her means, and holy in her fruits. It is impossible, *if he acts as a Catholic bishop*, for a bishop to ignore these properties and the ultimate destiny of the faithful in his charge as he governs his diocese.

This, then, is the setting in which we are to weigh the Response of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference to the report of the Project Team "on the governance and management of... the Catholic Church in Australia".

The Response—considered in itself

By way of preamble it should be said that no bishop of the Catholic Church needs the assistance of any other bishop to exercise plenary authority in his diocese. He has the fulness of the priesthood; he is the one, *and only*, manager, administrator or governor, in his diocese, faculties recognised in canon 391 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law ("*CIC*"). He has no superior save the Pope. Why should he think it necessary to join in some action his peers may think desirable when managing his diocese? There are occasions when bishops should act together, as on questions of faith and morals, but why should they commit themselves to follow a common protocol in matters merely administrative? Why, consistent with the well-known theological maxim,¹² should there not be liberty in such a non-essential matter?

Secondly, there is no reason why a bishop should think himself incapable of putting his own diocese in order. Why should assistance from outsiders be considered necessary? Bishops

¹⁰ Typified by the treatment accorded the partially blind Cardinal Ottaviani as he sought to defend the rite of Holy Mass on October 30th, 1962. (cf. Ralph M. Wiltgen SVD, *The Rhine flows into the Tiber*, Tan Books, 1967, p. 28)

¹¹ Contrast *Dei Verbum* n. 8 with the First Vatican Council's definition and commentary in *Dei Filius*, Dz. 1787; DS. 3006; & Dz. 1800: DS. 3020

¹² *In essentia unitas, in dubiis libertas, in omnibus caritas*

are not lacking in intelligence, or incapable of mustering to their aid what is necessary for some end. There is something insidious in attempts to codify episcopal behaviour.

1. In May 2019 the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference issued a press release. It said, *inter alia*,—

“If there is to be a restoration of trust and credibility in the Church in a way that will make it a safe place for all who come to it and that will enable it to proclaim its Gospel mission, there must be ‘real social and cultural transformation’. This can only occur if all of the People of God are involved in the way the Church is governed.”

The first sentence is misleading in its confusion of Christ's Church with her ministers—*first distinction*. The Church is—has always been; will always be—a safe place for all who come to her, because she is of God. It is otherwise with her ministers, many of whom have shown *they are not of God*. The problems that arose after the Council were not problems with the Church, but with her ministers. Whether these needed—whether they continue to need—“real social and cultural transformation”, they certainly needed—they continue to need—real theological and moral transformation.

The sentence contains a further error; it fails to distinguish the activity of the intellect from that of the will. A failure to conform to the rule of morals is a failure *of the will*, not of the intellect—*second distinction*.¹³ You may *inform* the intellect, but you *train* the will. If a bishop, priest or religious has failed in the past to conform to the rule of morals, no *social and cultural transformation* is going to alter his behaviour; that can only be done by prayer and penance aiding a will imbued with a firm purpose of amendment. Does this sound familiar?

The sentence that follows is also misleading. The phrase “People of God” embraces an error of Vatican II, as has been shown, a *heterodox* understanding designed to further the Council's Modernistic aims. The Catholic Church has “faithful”; the church that has “People of God” is the schismatic *Synodal church of Vatican II*.

2. The Bishops Conference's release anticipated the report of the Project Team, entitled grandiloquently “The Light from the Southern Cross” published in August 2020.¹⁴ The report is extensive, 208 pages in length, with seven chapters and four appendices. It is riddled with acronyms; marvellous in its detail, a model of bureaucratic complexity. A readers' guide is offered to aid in its navigation, and no wonder! But the report is grounded in serial departures from Catholic principle. There is so much wrong that it is difficult to know where to start an analysis.

The first part of Chapter 1 (abridged here for the sake of succinctness) runs as follows:

“The disclosures of the 2013 to 2017 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Australia highlighted the major failures of ecclesial governance and leadership. Although the Royal Commission brought into relief the fact that the abuse of children occurred in

¹³ This is an error found frequently in secular courses designed, as its promoters think, to prevent a repetition of erratic behaviour.

¹⁴ <https://international.la-croix.com/uploads/files/03-FINAL-Southern-Cross-Report-010520-SinglePage.pdf>

many religious and civic institutions, it also made clear the institutional and theological specificity to the problem within the Catholic Church. This specificity has fuelled calls for cultural and practical renewal and reforms within the... Church...

“The Royal Commission’s recording of the repeated failures of the Catholic Church’s authorities to hold to account alleged and (or) proven perpetrators of the sexual abuse of children echo the conclusions of other inquiries... Many inquiries have concluded that poor governance practices and culture within diocesan and parish structures contributed... to tragic outcomes for victims of abuse and their families. A commitment to healing the consequences of those past failures must include reforming those practices.

“The final report of the Royal Commission commented adversely on the Church’s practices in respect to decision-making and accountability and their impact on the protection of children and the response to concerns about, and allegations of, child sexual abuse. The Commissioners said:

In accordance with contemporary standards of good governance, we encourage the Catholic Church in Australia to explore and develop ways in which its structure and practices of governance may be made more accountable, more transparent, more meaningfully consultative and more participatory, including at the diocesan and parish level.

This led to recommendation 16.7:

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference should conduct a national review of the governance and management structures of dioceses and parishes, including in relation to issues of transparency, accountability, consultation and the participation of lay men and women. This review should draw from the approaches to governance of Catholic health, community services and education agencies.

“In their publicly released response to the Royal Commission of 31 August 2018, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and Catholic Religious Australia accepted the recommendation and entrusted the conduct of this governance Review... to the Implementation Advisory Group... In doing so [they] noted that the Review should be conducted ‘in light of [theological principles foundational to the nature of the Church]’. The Permanent Committee of the [two entities]... authorised [and]... established the Governance Review Project Team... [After amendments and the consideration of certain issues the] GRPT project plan was publicly released on 1 May 2019.

“The Royal Commission’s recommendation and the terms of reference refer primarily to dioceses and parishes... But other Church... institutes... and associations... have played, and continue, to play a critical and pivotal role in the life of the Church... For this reason, this report has examined... these relationships and how governance and management of all Church Authorities can contribute to the wellbeing of the People of God...

“This Review accepts the findings of the Royal Commission and other investigations. [Its] genesis and parameters... however, as with the decision to call the Fifth Plenary Council for Australia, do not arise solely or even primarily from the findings and recommendations of those inquiries. The consequences of good or poor governance practices... affect all aspects of the health and integrity of the Church, and thus the well-being of the People of God. The results of these failures are evident in, for example, documented instances of fraud and financial misconduct in dioceses and parishes and inappropriate relationships between clergy and other Church personnel and vulnerable adults. The failure to utilise the knowledge, skill and expertise of lay women and men has also been a significant contributor to poor past governance practices.”

The report's authors would not deny that their thinking is steeped in the lore of Vatican II and its attitude of deference to the secular. "This report," they say in its epigraph, "outlines, for Australia, a way to discern a synodal path: a new praxis of church governance." The voice of the prophet, Daniel, is quoted, but only after we have heard from Australian poet, Henry Lawson. The reader is then invited to take inspiration from aboriginal dreamtime stories. The authors see their authority as determined by the teachings of the Council exclusively. They adopt its terminology, its preoccupation with the laity, its false understanding of the Church as a work in progress, and its appeal to the democratic.

The Royal Commission's adverse comments about "Church practices"—no matter what the members of that secular body may have thought—do not reflect the truth. It was not the Catholic Church but her erring ministers, priests and religious, who chose to reject her explicit teachings in matters of morality. That a secular body should be incapable of making the distinction does not excuse a group of allegedly Catholic commentators making the same mistake. The philosophy underlying the thinking of the members of the Project Team and a consideration of various of their recommendations are set forth in the Appendix.

3. The Bishops Conference published its Response to the report in December 2020. Its members were at pains to say it was an *initial* response. Can it be interpreted consistently with Catholic principle? From the outset, the tone is not encouraging.

The by-line on the heading page reads: *Co-Responsible Governance in the Catholic Church in Australia*. It adopts, uncritically, the language of Vatican II and indulges in its utterances proximate to heresy. It praises the Project Team for its work in highlighting areas for further investigation "as part of the continuing process of renewal in the Church, which is always a work in progress" (p. 2). With its claim of the bishops' ongoing commitment "to making the Church (sic) a child-safe environment", and its assertion that, while the Royal Commission recognised that other institutions had failed in respect of child abuse, "the record of the Catholic Church... was particularly shameful" (p. 3), it repeats the Project Team's solecism of identifying the Bride of Christ with her erring ministers. The logic (illogic) in which they engage is consistent: if "We are the Church", and *we* are fallible human beings, the Church must be fallible too!—regardless of what Popes and Councils may have taught in the past; regardless, that is, of the Church's constant teaching *before* Vatican II.

On page 4 the Conference bishops endeavour to defend their Catholicity. They insist the Church is one, holy, Catholic and apostolic—in the world, but apart from it. But they depart from orthodoxy when they assert the Church to be "an incarnation of divine and human faith, hope and love". The laity work together, they say (p. 5), with bishops and priests "as ministers of the Gospel" in "co-responsibility", and Christ's triple gift of teaching, sanctifying and governing "is shared by all the baptised". This rejects the teaching of the (First) Vatican Council cited above, and diminishes the unique and indelible character of the ordained priest

to “a sharing [in this threefold gift] in a particular way”. On page 6, under the heading, *Evolution in Church Governance* they say:

“Many of the Church’s largest institutions and most influential ministries are now led by lay people, many by lay women, as are most positions in diocesan chanceries and on most governing or advisory bodies in the Church.”

One will look in vain in the Response, or in the Project Team’s report it refers to, for Catholic, and spiritual, solutions to the evils exposed by the Royal Commission. There is no mention of Original Sin, or the weakness which it has left in human nature; no mention of the powers of the Christian soul, the Virtues (faith, hope, charity, prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude), the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, that serve to counter this weakness, or of the Beatitudes. There is only the most oblique mention made of the need for growth in holiness of priestly life. There is no mention of the fact that, at root, the appalling behaviour in which aberrant clergy and religious engaged after the Council sprang from serial failures in charity.

The Conference bishops seem blind to distinctions. In confusing the Church with her ministers they have a convenient institutional scapegoat for the sins of their predecessors (and their own shortcomings). In focusing on the intellect at the expense of the will, they are able to imply that past aberrations resulted from lack of knowledge, rather than lack of virtue. By looking to means, rather than ends, they can consider themselves free to ignore motivation, and focus on the material modes of evading personal responsibility the Project Team offers.

The only occasion the Conference seems to express itself in a Catholic fashion occurs in a note, in the nature of a caveat (on page 14), that “it is vital to recognise that vocation is first and always a calling and gift from God, to which a person responds, not a job for which a panel chooses him”. But the circumstances in which they invoke *I Peter* 2: 10 (page 5) only assist in diminishing the dignity of the priesthood and expose them to the peril of the condemnation of the Council of Trent.¹⁵ When they do refer to the formation (or ongoing formation) of seminarian or priest—as in their spiritual direction, pastoral supervision, retreats, sabbatical and renewal programs, academic studies, further ministerial training and ‘therapeutic’ processes (p. 15)—it is in the context of involvement of “[l]ay people including lay women”.

Their reiteration of Vatican II’s errors, and their failure to address the evils of past behaviour from a Catholic viewpoint, confirms that, notwithstanding their claim to be doing so, the members of the Bishops Conference are not speaking as Catholic bishops in their Response, but as functionaries of its counterfeit. The body they call “the Church” in the Response is not the Catholic Church, but *the Synodal church of Vatican II*.

This schismatic entity should not be thought of as a Protestant sect, but as a Modernist one. Even though he may acknowledge God’s authority in principle, the Protestant rejects His authority as to *what he should believe* in favour of his own, in accordance with the Lutheran

¹⁵ If anyone says that sacred ordination is... only a certain rite for selecting ministers of the word of God and of the sacraments: let him be anathema. Council of Trent, Session XXIII (July 15th, 1563), canon 3; D. 963: DS. ...

principle. The rejection of God's authority in one matter disposes him to reject it in others to the point where he may reject it completely. The next step is Atheism. Modernism, in contrast, disposes its adherents for atheism directly because it guts Revelation of its divine reality completely. It reduces the transcendent to the mundane as it endeavours to explain, materially and humanly, what is immaterial and divine. Many a Protestant rejects Modernism quite as vehemently as does the Catholic Church.

There is a parable that illustrates the difference in theological approach between Catholicism and Modernism. It appears in the narrative of the action of Mary, sister of Lazarus, in chapter 12 of the Gospel of St John, read at Mass on the Monday of *Holy Week*. Six days before Our Lord suffers His Passion, Mary anoints His feet with a pound of costly balsam whose perfume fills the house. Judas Iscariot complains at the waste. The balsam and its odour stand for the teaching of Christ's Church whose influence pervades her household, and the defender of its expense is Christ Himself. The money into which the nard might have been converted stands for the materialism with which Modernists are content, and its advocate, Judas, stands for the theft of the Church's patrimony in which Modernists engage.

The Response—as it affects God's Holy Church

Because Australia's Catholic bishops recognise no distinction between the actions they perform as bishops (their 'Catholic actions') and those they perform as functionaries of *the Synodal church of Vatican II* (their 'schismatic actions'), it is inevitable that there will be ongoing harmful consequences to the Catholic Church in Australia in what they do as a result of the Response. Without seeking to be comprehensive, these include:

- a) affirming, implicitly if not explicitly, the contention that the Church is complicit in the crimes committed by their predecessors and by the priests and religious who betrayed promises and vows, it being implied that this resulted from the rigour of the Church's laws;
- b) extending the areas of interference by members of the laity in the exercise of their office of teaching;
- c) extending the areas of interference by members of the laity in the exercise of their office of governing the Church;
- d) continuing to diminish the immense dignity of the priesthood by following the Council's false conception of the sacrament of Orders as but a sharing in the priesthood of "the People of God";
- e) continuing to defer to the secular and to the Protestant in their public utterances; and,
- f) continuing to refrain from exercising the powers of their office as successors of the Apostles of acting and speaking publicly in defence of the faith and of moral principle on issues that daily arise.

There are many disillusioned priests currently celebrating the *novus ordo missae*, an inevitable effect of Vatican II's diminution of the dignity of their office. It may never have occurred to them that they have been ordained in a defective, schismatic, rite. This is not to say they have not been *validly* ordained, but that they have not been *licitly* ordained. It may be hoped that

the growing opposition among the Catholic faithful to the heterodox behaviour of Pope Francis, as of those inside and outside the Vatican who support him, will serve as a catalyst for such priests to ask themselves “Am I a priest of the Catholic Church, or a priest of *the Synodal church of Vatican II?*” They might pose themselves a further question to determine the issue: “Would I be prepared to embrace the terms of the anti-Modernist oath?”

What price a Totally Catholic Bishop?

One of the inevitable effects of the heterodoxy in which Vatican II indulged was a loss of the sense of vocation, both to the priesthood and to the religious life. Thousands of priests and religious abandoned their vocations. Australia’s bishops found themselves increasingly constrained to pass the management of Catholic institutions to lay people, particularly in the teaching of children. Having caused the problem (denigration of priestly and religious life), Vatican II now provided a solution in accordance with its protocols.

The members of the laity whom the bishops employed in diocesan schools were, at first, exclusively Catholic, but it was not long before institutions under their supervision began to employ persons who were not Catholic at all—Protestants, agnostics, atheists. The abandonment of moral principle in the world, a further scandalous effect of the Council’s teachings, meant that, inevitably, children attending Catholic schools would come to be taught by adulterers, fornicators and the homosexually inclined.

There can be no education without indoctrination. No teacher can help himself; as he teaches he passes to his pupils his world view, or ‘philosophy’. The indoctrination he conveys may be the most fitting for his charges, and then it will be the doctrine of the Catholic Church, for that is most fitting which is of God. But if he passes another doctrine, because it will depart in some degree from the truth, his charges will be harmed, whether in a small degree or a greater one. This was the peril to which the children of faithful Catholics were exposed soon after the conclusion of Vatican II. But something worse was in the offing.

The doctrine Catholic teachers taught began to lapse from that of the Catholic Church to that of its *counterfeit* with its Modernist abandonment of the insistence that no one can be saved outside the Church. This evil soon bloomed; parents discovered that their children were abandoning the faith in which they had worked to nurture them.¹⁶

Two generations of children educated at so-called Catholic schools have passed, and the vast majority have lost the faith and embraced the easy protocols of secularism. Vatican II’s insistence, against the teaching of the Catholic Church, on “religious liberty” has borne its fruit in the rise of the dominant world religion—belief in ‘no-God’—atheism.

¹⁶ Astute Catholic parents soon realised the perils attendant on sending their children to ‘Catholic’ schools and taught them at home. The result is a strong minority of Catholic young people who find themselves proselytising those who ought to have been their fellow-Catholics.

This analysis exposes in one area, that of education, the reality that confronts Australia's bishops generally. Catholic schools are Catholic now in name only. They do not teach Catholicism but 'comparative religion' where Catholicism is treated as just another man-made religion. A bold bishop, one who realises that he is a Catholic, not a 'bishop' of its *counterfeit*, will set about curing the evil. He could take the radical step of abandoning his schools completely to the private sector, depriving them in the meantime of the title "Catholic", and transferring the schools' undertakings to state authorities. He could direct his efforts then to supporting parents in educating their children privately, or in the home. Alternatively, he might institute a radical reform of curricula and teaching staff with a ruthless application of Catholic principle so that, in time, his schools become Catholic once again.

If Australia's Catholic bishops are to resume to the full their status as successors of the Apostles they must separate themselves from the protocols of Vatican II and reject every appearance of being functionaries of the schismatic church which is its fruit. It would be a start for one or more of them to lodge a dissenting voice to the Response of the Bishops Conference to the report produced by the Project Team.

Of all the world's bishops the one who seems best to understand the present state of the Church and the influence its counterfeit exercises over its ministers is Archbishop Viganò.

"Holy Church, according to Christ's promises, will never be overwhelmed by the *gates of hell*, but that does not mean that she will not be—or is not already—overshadowed by her infernal forgery... "A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars" (Rev 12: 1). The moon lies under the feet of the Woman who is above all mutability... that Woman, who is at once the image of Mary Most Holy and of the Church, is *amicta sole*, clothed with the Sun of Righteousness that is Christ, "*exempted from all demonic power as she takes part in the mystery of the immutability of Christ*" (Saint Ambrose)... We know... that even the *synthesis of all heresies* represented by Modernism and its updated conciliar version, can never definitively obscure the splendour of the Bride of Christ, but only for the brief period of the eclipse that Providence, in its infinite wisdom, has allowed, to draw from it a greater good."¹⁷

A bishop who acknowledges the rift between the *orthodoxy* of the Catholic Church and the heterodoxy of the *Synodal church of Vatican II*—one who understands, and accepts, the truth that his oath binds him to reject Vatican II "and all its works, and all its empty promises"—is bound in conscience to change his behaviour. In the best sense of the word, he has to undergo conversion. It is inevitable this will occasion him great suffering, for the overwhelming majority of bishops, priests, religious and faithful will be against him. But Christ will be with him—and *that is all that matters*.

Michael Baker

April 4th, 2021—*Easter Sunday—Solemnity of the Resurrection of Our Lord, Jesus Christ*

¹⁷ *Catholic Identity Conference*, October 24th, 2020. See footnote 2.

Appendix

The report of the members of the Project Team entitled *The Light from the Southern Cross* is in the nature of a manifesto. It purports to set forth a program for the future management of the Catholic Church in Australia but it is grounded in heretical principle.

A. In its section 6.5 we find this statement:

“The Church seeks to be a community that enacts Jesus’ message of love, dignity and equality, which was so prevalent in the early Christian communities. Today, however, many Catholic women and men experience pain at the failure of the Church to enable the fuller participation of women. The most visible indicator of the barriers to full participation is that the hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Australia, as in the Church across the world, remains exclusively male.”

The paragraph is riddled with theological error.

1. It misunderstands the nature of Christ’s Church *in limine*, reducing that divine thing to parity with that of some man-made religion. The Catholic Church does not “seek to be” anything; she is not a mere collection of *men* (using that noun to indicate *genus*, not *gender*) that yearns for some vaguely expressed future fulfilment. She is not ‘on the way to’ perfection, she is perfect already because instituted, and sustained, by Almighty God. She is not some human institution. Her end is not some human expectation. It is man’s salvation via the Sacraments instituted by Christ.
2. It ignores the explicit teaching of Sacred Scripture on the place of woman in God’s creation as man’s helper (*Genesis 2: 18*)—*equal to man* as a person created in the image and likeness of God, *not equal to man* in either function, or priority. To spell it out, for those who choose to be scandalised by the Catholic Church’s failure to conform to political correctness, i.e., feminist ideology, man was not created for woman, but woman for man (*I Corinthians 11: 9*).
3. It ignores, by implication, Pope John Paul II’s teaching in the motu proprio, *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* (May 22nd, 1994), that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women, a document that elaborates formally, and definitively, consistent with the maxim *eodem sensu, eademque sententia* of St Vincent of Lerins, what the Church has maintained for 2,000 years.
4. It rejects the Church’s position, handed down in apostolic tradition, that women have no part to play in her liturgy; that is, it rejects *a practice established in His Church by God Himself* that service in the Church’s liturgy is reserved to men. It is no excuse for this rejection appealing to Pope John Paul’s break with apostolic tradition in 1994 for he did so by subverting the Church’ tradition to the demands of feminist ideology.

In its section 7.3 the report quotes Vatican II’s misconception (in *Dei Verbum* n. 8) of what is meant by apostolic tradition—

“[The] tradition that comes from the Apostles develops in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit. For there is a growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down. This happens through the contemplation and study made by believers... through a penetrating understanding of the spiritual realities which they experience and through the preaching of those who have received through episcopal succession the sure gift of truth. For as

the centuries succeed one another, the Church constantly moves forward toward the fulness of divine truth until the words of God reach their complete fulfilment in her.”

This statement is heretical; it contradicts the Church’s teaching in the [First] Vatican Council on April 24th, 1870 in the Constitution *Dei Filius*.¹⁸ Hence, the Project Team is in error when, relying on the accuracy of Vatican II’s teaching, it asserts—

“Each member of the body of Christ will have legitimate insights into the understanding of the self-revelation of God in the midst of the People of God. A church, a diocese, or indeed a parish that ignores the voice of the faithful in the discernment process does so at the expense of the very movement of God in their midst...”

B. The report resembles a white-paper of a parliamentary sub-committee addressing a social issue. It recommends that there should be “shared management” of the Church among “the People of God”, including women. There should be involvement of qualified lay persons, “subject-matter experts”; compliance with secular safeguards; attendance at courses for induction, courses for leadership, courses ongoing. Its recommendations recall those exercises, the mandatory requirement for yearly attendance at which have plagued members of the secular professions for forty years. Such “courses” are unnecessary (a waste of time and energy) for the competent, and their mandating dishonours the profession generally by treating the body of its members as no better practitioners than the few incompetent among their number. They exemplify the evils that afflict a society which rejects common sense in favour of the tenets of materialism, referred to hereafter.

The report makes some eighty-six recommendations (hereafter “R...”) offering solutions to perceived problems in the conduct of the management of the ministers of the Catholic Church. Its members hope their report will “radiate out so as to reveal models of synodality that the global Catholic Church can embrace”. They advise adoption of secular standards of care; professional standards, “best practice” standards. There should be consultation with the laity including women (R.18; R.29.1) in the selection of ordinands for the priesthood. Similarly, in respect of candidates for the episcopacy (R.9), there should be consultation involving “a larger number of lay people than currently”; and, among the necessary qualifications of a candidate should be his experience “in dealing with abuse”—as if immersion in the knowledge of its evils was a necessary precondition for exercising the office of a successor of the Apostles! In furtherance of their promotion of the democratic principle, they advise the Bishops Conference to recommend changes to canon law to make diocesan councils mandatory (R.50, 51, 52).

C. The Project Team’s approach reflects the immersion of its members in the philosophy of materialism whose apparent profundity derives from its glossing over, or refusal, of distinctions to the point where its adherents will not acknowledge the harm that flows from doing so. Materialism confuses the subjective with the objective; does not hesitate to indulge in logical contradiction to reach its conclusions; focuses on the material to the exclusion of what is formal (and distinctive) in man, and human society. It is a fitting ground for the

¹⁸ See *The Heresies taught by Vatican II* at https://www.superflumina.org/PDF_files/heresies-taught-by-vatican-2.pdf

Modernist heresy whose name derives from modern philosophy and its twin errors of materialism and subjectivism.

Insofar as it can, materialism rejects the natural order, and any hierarchy the natural order establishes. It rejects any claim that man is bound by a natural moral law, insisting that all reality, as far as possible, is subject to human will. Materialists are not concerned with the rule of morals or the need of men to live virtuously. "Society," Aristotle noted, "is a union of the diverse." Materialism reduces it and its institutions to the uniformity of the herd, and its members to entities to be regimented. If there is one distinctive characteristic of the Project Team's report, it is its endeavour to regiment the bishops and the clergy.

The classic instance of materialism's degradation of man, and society is, of course, the Marxist-inspired Communist state. It is remarkable that people living in so-called 'free' Western democracies should have embraced materialism's facile protocols—but perhaps, not so remarkable when one considers that it has more to do with the ideology the West shares with the East—belief in 'no-God', or atheism—than with political theory. Nor is it an accident that the Project Team should be moved to materialist solutions when the 'theology' they have embraced is that of Modernism which, as Pius X taught in *Pascendi*, ends in atheism.

D. Consistent with its materialist bent, the Project Team advocates that the Bishops Conference embrace the politically correct category of "inclusiveness" (R.42). "Inclusiveness" is grounded in an insistence on *material* identity to the exclusion of any *formal* distinction. The members of each 'class' must be given equal consideration no matter what the context. Its subjects are categorised (*inter alia*) according to sex, racial type, ethnic background, 'gender identity', 'sexual orientation', age, social class, physical ability, or disability, religious value system, ethical value system. Its advocates pay no attention to the infinite variety of talents given to men. These must give way before a 'dumbing-down' which emulates the degradation of intellectuals which was such a feature of Russia following the 1917 Revolution.

The devotees of "inclusiveness" do not concern themselves that there are activities peculiarly suited to women that are not suited to men, and vice versa; that the disabled, the elderly or the very young, may be disqualified by their condition from engaging in some activity; that 'sexual orientation' or 'gender identity' are arrived at subjectively, rather than objectively, i.e., derive their force from ideology, rather than reality, and must, therefore, produce harm in their adherents, as well as harm in those with whom they come in contact; that, similarly, an 'ethical value system' may be grounded in nothing more than ideology which will result, inevitably, in harm to adherents and contacts alike.

E. From all the above it can be seen that in preparing their report the members of the Project Team were labouring not, as they thought, in support of the Magisterium of the Catholic Church, but in support of the magisterium (small 'm') of its counterfeit, *the Synodal church of Vatican II*.