

Pope Paul VI on the Renewal of Vatican II as an Act of the Church Drawing from Her Treasure Things both Old and New

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IN VARYING ways all of the popes associated with Vatican II—John XXIII, Paul VI, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI—have been deliberate in stressing the essential continuity between the preceding Catholic Tradition and what the Council taught. For Pope Paul VI, one of these ways entailed referring to or commenting on the text of Matthew 13:52 to convey that the teaching of Vatican II and the renewal that it initiated stand in a twofold relation to the apostolic Tradition. On the one hand, the relation is one of continuity, conveyed through an emphasis on the Church's fidelity to her Tradition. She retains, safeguards, and continues to believe and teach what has been revealed and handed on. This is what is old (*vetera*). On the other hand, the relation is one of development, conveyed through observations regarding the necessary adaptation of the Tradition for pastoral reasons. By adjusting to the demands of the times in which she lives and deepening her understanding of the patrimony of faith, the Church arrives at a deeper understanding of the deposit of faith and produces new expressions of the old (*nova*). As the subject of a living Tradition, the Church herself is the "scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven." Like a head of a household, the Church has a storehouse out of which she is able to bring "what is new and what is old" (*nova et vetera*).

The significance of the many passing references Pope Paul made to this text in Matthew becomes clear in light of the occasions on which he elaborated at greater length on the text in order to emphasize that the Church exists in a dynamic fidelity to her own essential identity. A particular point

of his attention is the Second Vatican Council. While dynamic fidelity is a characteristic of the entire Catholic Tradition, Pope Paul was concerned to affirm that this is a feature of the twenty-first ecumenical council. For him Tradition itself is the storehouse in which *nova et vetera* exist together. Tradition, and thus also the Church, possess the quality of being simultaneously faithful and innovative, conservative and progressive, essentially unchanging yet adaptable. To grasp this is necessary in order to understand the true nature of the Council's *aggiornamento* envisioned by Pope John XXIII and by Pope Paul VI. Pope Paul understood this *aggiornamento* to be the "guiding principle" of Vatican II and the "goal and task" of his own pontificate.¹ Thus, the effort to understand this *aggiornamento* in terms of the *nova et vetera* theme is fundamental for seeing the Council through the eyes of Pope Paul VI, and for an accurate evaluation of his pontificate.

Since each member of the Church, as well as various groups and associations of the faithful, participate in the Church's life and mission, it is not surprising to find the Pope invoking the passage of St. Matthew, not only when considering the Church as a whole, but also when addressing religious communities and encouraging them in their efforts to respond to the Council's call for "accommodated renewal."² He also saw the *nova et vetera* theme at work in the pontificates of the popes who preceded him, beginning with Leo XIII. At the same time it is a principle of the life of the local Church, as several of his *ad limina* addresses make clear. All of this shows that in Pope Paul's mind Vatican II should be considered a new expression of the Church's faith, drawn from the storehouse of Tradition, and thus faithful to that Tradition while at the same time actualizing that Tradition in a new way.

Predecessors Compared to the Wise Head of Household

Pope Paul was vividly conscious of the legacy of papal teaching that preceded Vatican II and that, in many respects, the Council endeavored to synthesize. Writing in his first encyclical about dialogue and the "pastoral approach and method" that he and the Council were appropriating perhaps more consciously and critically than his predecessors, Pope Paul considered Leo XIII to be "almost as a personification of the Gospel character of the wise scribe, who, like the father of a family, 'knows how to bring both new and old things out of his treasurehouse' (Matt 13:52)."³ What he understood by this becomes clear in what immediately follows.

¹ See *Ecclesiam Suam*, 50.

² The phrase is found in the descriptive title of *Perfectae Caritatae*, Decree on the Accommodated Renewal of Religious Life, and appears several times throughout the decree (see *Perfectae Caritatae*, 1, 2, 4, 7, 18, 25).

³ *Ecclesiam Suam*, 67.

Pope Leo “assumed his function as teacher of the world by making the object of his richest instruction the problems of our time considered in the light of the Word of Christ.”

In this text, what Pope Leo XIII taught in order to address the new situations in the world at the time is *nova*, while the “light of the Word of Christ” as it was received by the Church from the Lord, lived, and developed up to the time of his pontificate is *vetera*. The same is true of Leo’s successors. In the language of the Council, the “course of events leads men to look for answers” to the fundamental questions about what it means to be human, about the purpose of human existence. The Church is convinced that “people are waiting for an answer to these questions” and her mission is to show how they are all answered in Christ.⁴ Pope Paul commends Pope Leo for turning to the treasury of the Church’s faith in order to respond to the perennial questions of man as these questions were being posed in the new circumstances of the time.

Pope Paul describes the pontificate of Leo XIII in terms borrowed from Vatican II, terms that indicate that in the social teaching of Leo XIII there is perceptible one of the fundamental intuitions of John XXIII regarding Vatican II. The Council was to address the crisis of humanism by taking up a consideration of the fundamental problems facing mankind at that time.⁵ This is what stood out in the mind of Cardinal Bea, as qualified a witness as any: “Pope John has told us that the first idea of the Council came to him in connection with the problems concerning all men and particularly that of peace.”⁶ According to Cardinal Bea, the radio broadcast of John XXIII, just four weeks before the opening of the Council, was “a solemn warning” occasioned by a review of the documents that had been prepared for the Council. In this message the Pope identified “a whole series of world problems to be debated by the Council, but which in fact were not dealt with in the nearly seventy schemata” that had been drafted in preparation for Vatican II.⁷

This seems to be corroborated by an account of Pope John reviewing the draft texts or schemata that were the fruit of years of preparatory work, and that were to serve as the foundation for the Council’s initial deliberations. Upon entering the Pope’s office, one of his close collaborators saw

⁴ *Gaudium et Spes*, 4, 9. See also *Gaudium et Spes*, 18, 21, 22.

⁵ On this subject one can profitably consult John Kobler, *Vatican II and Phenomenology: Reflections on the Life-World of the Church* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1985), 7–8, 30.

⁶ Augustin Cardinal Bea, *The Church and Mankind* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1967), 3.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

him bending over the pile of texts with a ruler. The Pope was measuring the height of the stack of texts, and said: "You see here! There are thirty centimeters of condemnations in this schema."⁸ In the terms of the *nova et vetera* theme, Cardinal Bea's words and this anecdote amount to saying that the schemata were replete with *vetera* but lacking in *nova*. In view of Pope Paul's reading of Leo XIII, they lacked the dynamism of the Catholic Tradition as it had expressed itself in Pope Leo's pontificate and his drawing the new out of the old.

The *nova et vetera* theme appears again in Pope Paul's homily on the tenth anniversary of the death of Pope John XXIII (June 2, 1973), in which he sought to correct serious misperceptions about his immediate predecessor. This homily was not so much a long-delayed eulogy as the seizing of a pastoral opportunity to repeat once more the vital importance of a faithful and balanced understanding of the life of the Church. He was aware that some regarded Pope John and the Council he convoked as ruinous for the Church. Some considered him the Pope of "liberation from the chain of tradition, the promoter of an arbitrary 'updating' [*aggiornamento*] lacking pre-determined limits."⁹ As Pope Paul saw it, though, John XXIII was an innovative Pope, who knew how to discover the vital fecundity of the Gospel message and "how to draw the new and the old from the inexhaustible treasure of the Gospel (Matt 13:52)." This applies, especially, to the Second Vatican Council.

Addresses to Bishops on their *Ad Limina* Visits

Bishops' *ad limina* visits were a frequent occasion for Pope Paul to invoke the passage on *nova et vetera*. To the bishops of England he gave a general reminder that they must be faithful stewards of the faith entrusted to them: "Fidelity to the faith of our Fathers: the faith in all its purity, with

⁸ Robert Rouquette, *La Fin d'une Chrétienté*, I (Paris: Cerf, 1968), 319. Rouquette recounts this story in the context of making the point that although there was a great discrepancy between Pope John's vision for the Council and the preparatory documents, the Holy Father did not interfere with the distribution and discussion of those documents, confident that the college of bishops would be the providential agent of the reform he was convinced was needed but which he had not himself worked out in detail.

⁹ Pope Paul had addressed this earlier, in his speech of November 18, 1965: "This word [Italian: *aggiornamento*; Latin: *acomodatio*], which described [Pope John's] goal, certainly did not have the meaning for him which some try to give it, as if it allowed for the 'relativization,' according to the spirit of the world, of everything in the Church—dogmas, laws, structures, traditions. His sense of the doctrinal and structural stability of the Church was so vital and strong that it was the basis and foundation of his thought and of his work."

all its exigencies, in all its power; the faith with its inexhaustible treasure of *nova et vetera* (Matt 13:52).” He added: “Your own Cardinal Newman understood so well the demands of this fidelity, and how the organic development of Christian doctrine must be in complete harmony with pure apostolic faith.”¹⁰ After recalling to the Swiss bishops that they faced “a certain number of new questions or initiatives that require care and mature consideration,” Pope Paul stressed that “it is necessary to proclaim the Gospel in the present context in terms that are able to reach the new generations.” There is need for “a witness of charity and justice adapted to the needs of today.” Laity and clergy zealously desire to respond to these needs, but if the solutions they propose are to be fruitful and enduring, he insisted, they must keep certain things in mind. In responding to various religious needs while respecting legitimate sensibilities, they must be faithful to Revelation and to all the teachings of the Magisterium and, he specified, to canonical regulations and decisions of the Holy See. Pope Paul referred to all of these as the *nova et vetera*. Presumably, this means that the response to actual needs and sensibilities are *nova*, while Revelation, Magisterial teaching, and canonical regulations are *vetera*. The bishops’ duty is to assure that the *nova* and *vetera* are kept in balance, and to see that their collaborators are formed in such a way as to assure that they are able to safeguard this balance. They should take Vatican II as their guide: “The Second Vatican Council, and the authoritative directives for its implementation, outline how to think about this and the way to follow.”

What did Pope Paul think would happen if this balance of “new” and “old” is not upheld? It is typical of his intellectual and spiritual dispositions to sound the warning against two opposing dangers.¹¹

¹⁰ *Ad limina* address to the bishops of England, November 10, 1977.

¹¹ An outstanding example of this is Pope Paul’s address of September 27, 1974, to the Third General Assembly Synod of Bishops, in which he outlined their purpose as “comparing the traditional conception of the activity of evangelization with the new openings that appeal to the Council and the changed conditions of the times.” Then he made the characteristic appeal for balance: “This will certainly entail a preferential regard for the structures and institutions of the Church experienced through centuries; but, without disavowing the past or destroying acquired values, it will strive serenely to remain open to all that is good and valid found in new experiences, thus reconciling *nova et vetera*, especially when movements that work in collaboration with the hierarchy are treated. In any case, you will make your own the Pauline maxim: ‘Test all . . . and retain what is good’ (1 Thess. 5:21).” Pope Paul returned to the *nova et vetera* text just three days later, in another address to the Synod Fathers: “We are sure, venerable Brothers, that remaining faithful to the ‘faith transmitted to the saints once for all’ (Jud 3) and drawing from its treasures things both ‘new’ and ‘old’ (Matt 13:52), you will correspond to this expectation” (September 30, 1967, address to Synod of Bishops).

Those who neglect or want to thwart them [the “new”], by invoking fidelity to the past, are unfaithful to the mission of the Church today and to her responsibility for tomorrow. Those who go beyond them in order to follow their personal inspiration build on sand a Church without roots. One and the other diminish the Church’s unity and credibility.¹²

The “new” can be embraced in a way that prejudices against the “old,” and the “old” can be clung to in a way that prejudices against the “new.” The vitality of the Tradition can be smothered by a paralyzing fear of stepping into the “new” as well as by unprincipled pastoral initiatives that are not consistent with the “old.”

In his opening address to the Council, Pope John had exhorted the participants: “Our duty is not just to guard this treasure, as though it were some museum-piece and we the curators, but earnestly and fearlessly to dedicate ourselves to the work that needs to be done in this modern age of ours, pursuing the path which the Church has followed for almost twenty centuries.”¹³ Pope Paul would make his own this reference to a museum: “The Tradition is not a museum. . . . It is a plant that blooms with every spring, a sap that continually renews itself.”¹⁴ The Tradition is not like a fossil of something that once was living, that has been frozen in time. Rather, it is a living reality that continues to grow and to shape history.

In an address to the bishops of France, Pope Paul evoked the “great crowd of witnesses,” that is, the numerous French saints, whose “faith, charity, and apostolic zeal were so resourceful because they were, first of all, faithful.” It is precisely their fidelity that made them resource-full, able to draw from the treasure of the Church’s faith in order to bring its virtualities to bear upon the needs of their times. Employing an analogy between the natural and the supernatural orders, the Pope asserted that all living things must be faithful to their origin, from which they receive the principle of their development. For Christians this origin is the Church, from which they receive their spiritual being. As a result, the Church is also the principle of their spiritual lives, which must develop in fidelity to the Church. The Church “lives, indeed, within time, yet her living tradi-

¹² *Ad limina* address to the bishops of Switzerland, December 1, 1977.

¹³ In different terminology he repeated himself in a letter to the bishops of January 6, 1962: “We, the bishops of God’s Church, have some serious rethinking to do on the serious responsibilities of our pastoral office. True, by God’s grace we have safeguarded, and continue to safeguard, the integrity of Catholic doctrine as taught by the Holy Gospels, revered Tradition, the Fathers of the Church, and the Roman Pontiffs. That much is to our credit. But it is not enough. God’s command goes further: ‘Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations’ (Matt 28:19).”

¹⁴ Address during a pilgrimage to Subiaco, September 8, 1971.

tion integrates the *nova et vetera* of the Gospel.” Fidelity to the Church assures our communion with those who have gone before us, our fathers in faith. A mechanical kind of mimicking of their methods will not suffice; rather, he said, we must take to ourselves the secret of their living flame.¹⁵

The same Gospel that was a treasure of resources for the saints of old offers the riches of its resources to those who are faithful to it today. Those who strive to promote the Church’s mission today can be resourceful, in the sense of creatively adaptive, because they are resource-full, that is, they have access to the rich resources of the Gospel that is the treasure from which both *nova* and *vetera* can be drawn.

Similarly, to the bishops of Eastern Germany Pope Paul urged that their ministry be “a ministry of faithfulness with respect to the extraordinary treasures of Christian Tradition” as well as a “ministry of what is new.” The latter will be conducted with “evangelical audacity” in order to promote the reception of what Vatican II taught and to address “the things that emerge from the needs of today of your Christian community within its own time and place.” This, the Holy Father stated, is “the very evangelical meaning of the father of a family, who draws from his storehouse ‘things both new and old’ (Matt 13:52).”¹⁶ Once again, the proper disposition with respect to the Tradition as *vetera* is fidelity, while evangelical bold confidence is the disposition with respect to the Tradition as *nova*.

Nova et Vetera Identified with Tradition

Pope Paul’s most extensive treatment of *nova et vetera* and Matthew 13:52 in relation to Vatican II came in his General Audience of August 7, 1974. He observed that the phrase *nova et vetera* is a condensed formula that contains “the solution of the relationship between our religious knowledge and history.” The name of this solution is Tradition. The Pope then turned to engage in a pastoral reading of the signs of the times (though he did not evoke this phrase from Vatican II).

He noted that talk of tradition clashes with the contemporary fascination with the future. The future is the source from which modern man is disposed to derive his primary sense of duty, while he has shaken off any sense of obligation to the past. As for tradition, today’s mentality thinks of it as a heavy chain, “esteeming [traditional] values as worthless, antiquated, anachronistic, surpassed.” Thought of the prior age produces a “furious and revolutionary” impatience. The past is a burden for those who think only of embracing “the adventure of an unknown future.” They think they will be impeded if they have “to submit to the prudence and the experience of

¹⁵ *Ad limina* address to bishops of France, June 20, 1977.

¹⁶ *Ad limina* address to bishops of Eastern Germany, September 29, 1977.

the preceding generation.” He observed that education has succumbed to this way of thinking. Having taken a “pragmatic and utilitarian direction,” it fails to recognize the values that appear to be opposed to the promise of future progress.

It is clear that the Pope is aware that such a general, cultural attitude toward the idea of tradition cannot help but have its effect on the members of the Church. It is a sign of the times that presents a particular challenge to the tension of living in the world but not being of the world. In the case at hand, disregard or even disdain for tradition is unhealthy even on the natural level. This is why the Holy Father’s reflections are first directed to a consideration of history and its important role in human life.

History, he asserted, is “mother of the past and of the future” and preserves “perennial values.” The decisive point on which he insists is that these values are “not so much generated by history, but generative of history.” Were they man-made they would be subject to human will and could be altered at will. In fact, though, they have a certain precedence or priority that is rooted in the relation of creation to Creator. The “inexorable dynamism” of time “teaches us the intrinsic insufficiency of [created] things and stamps them with their fundamental definition as ‘creatures,’” and this “launches the intelligent spirit toward the eternal question: where is the Creator?”

The Pope’s train of thought seems to be that the handing down of objective values on the natural level finds its supernatural complement in what has been revealed and transmitted in sacred Tradition. Man’s natural tendency to discover and to adhere to values imbedded in human traditions, themselves rooted in the relation of creation to Creator, has a parallel in the sphere of faith. The Gospel’s “objective content comes to us from a precise history.” It embraces the entire sweep of time and history, and even “reaches into the future when Christ will come again (*donec veniat*—Matt 10:23).” This interpretation of the flow of time “gives to history a meaning, a logic, a possibility of being intelligible and synthetically ordered.” In the eyes of faith, then, the past “is definite, historical, indelible.” He finds confirmation of this in Vatican II: “Therefore, the Christian economy, as the new and definitive covenant, will never pass away and we now await no further new public revelation before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Tim. 6:14; Tit. 2:13)” (*Dei Verbum*, 4). We find our support in one salvific Tradition.

Pope Paul goes on to distinguish between the essential content of Tradition as divine revelation and the various traditions that are “customs, styles, transitory and mutable forms of human life, without the charism of truth that makes them unchangeable and obligatory.”

[T]hese purely historical and human traditions not only contain many contingent and short-lived elements, with regard to which freedom for critical judgment and for reform remains, but they often demand to be criticized and reformed due to the facility with which human things grow old, or become distorted, and they need to be purified and also replaced. It is not without reason that we speak of “updating” [*aggiornamento*] and renewal [*rinnovamento*] . . .

Frequently the innovation we seek “is an effort to return to the origins and to draw from the ancient and authentic sources of Tradition the strengths and the programs for a renaissance to happen (‘ressourcement,’ as an expressive French neologism has it).” Tradition is “the treasure from which the wise Christian extracts old things and new things.” For this a special charism is needed, the ecclesiastical Magisterium, which is assured, especially in decisive moments, the assistance of the “Spirit of truth” (Jn 14:17; 16:13).

Pope Paul identified two possible deviations. The first, restrictive, limits the faith to Scripture alone, cutting it off from the living Tradition of the Church.¹⁷ The second is to proffer a personal and novel interpretation without due regard for those who have responsibility to guard the deposit of faith, that is, the Magisterium. Concerned that he not be misunderstood, the Pope explained that this does not mean that

the truths of the faith are not able to be and must not be the object of study, research, deeper understanding, and also of being expressed in given cultural environments and given spiritual moments. The doctrine of the faith is not deprived of logical and coherent development; indeed, it is readily obedient to the needs of thought and to the duties of contemplation, according to the exhortation of the same St. Paul, “to grow in the knowledge of God” (Col 1:10; cf. Eph. 1:17; cf. Newman). But faith must remain unequivocal and faithful to its essential and original meaning—uniform with itself, with what Christ proclaimed, and with what the Church, protected by the Holy Spirit, for the salvation of the men, today still proclaims, defends, and extends toward the boundless vision of the divine and ineffable reality.¹⁸

¹⁷ He clearly has the Protestant position of *sola Scriptura* in mind, inasmuch as this has come to be understood as isolating the Scriptures from the life of the Church and from the Magisterium. As the schism of Archbishop Lefebvre has demonstrated, it is also possible to fall short of the synthesis of *nova et vetera* by limiting faith to a particular historical realization of the living Tradition. Neither Scripture nor Tradition can be isolated or cut off from the living subject of both, the Church.

¹⁸ General Audience of August 7, 1974.

For Pope Paul, then, there is a comparison if not an analogy between the natural order of reason and the supernatural order of faith. Naturally, man discovers in creation perennial values that are not the product of historical processes and yet are historically transmitted as traditions. This implies a distinction between the historical situations and dynamics that can be the occasion for the discovery of these values, on one hand, and the values themselves and the capacity of human intelligence to discern them, on the other hand. These values are imbedded in the objective order of creation as having emanated from the Divine Mind, and the human mind is capable of discovering them.¹⁹ Therefore these perennial values precede man's discovery of them. They precede as well the traditions that are formed by them and by which they are transmitted. They are the generating causes of, and they give direction to, historical processes. Why? Because man is the agent that shapes history, and his decisions are a function of the values that he holds. Various traditions are the result of man's history-shaping activities.²⁰

Supernaturally, in Sacred Tradition believers discover the perennial truths of Divine Revelation. These are not the product of the historical network of man's efforts to deepen his faith; rather, they are what man comes to know by faith. Divine Revelation precedes faith, by which it is received, celebrated, lived, and reflected upon by the Church. This receiving, celebrating, living, and reflecting gives rise to Tradition, which is capable of developing. At the same time there also arise various traditions, resulting from the life of faith based on Divine Revelation. These traditions reflect Divine Revelation but are not related to it in the same way that Sacred Tradition itself is. This is to say that they are not normative. They are simply the product of lived faith at a particular time in history.

In terms of the *nova et vetera* theme it seems, then, that the *nova* can be either the various traditions giving expression to Divine Revelation as lived in a particular historical context, or a new expression of the Church's understanding of Divine Revelation that can be properly identified as belonging to Sacred Tradition. In other words, corresponding to Tradition and traditions there can be *Nova* and *nova*. The *nova* may be adaptations of pastoral *aggiornamento* at the level of a particular Church or a local Church, as Pope Paul's addresses to various groups of bishops attest. Rooted in the *vetera* of the treasury of Tradition, such *nova* are related to the *vetera* of Sacred Tradition as prudential judgments are related to universal and

¹⁹ The Pope could easily have referred to *Gaudium et Spes* 36 on this.

²⁰ Today one might speak more readily of cultures rather than traditions, recognizing that cultures are value-bearing. The Church's interest in culture is due to her interest in man. Culture stands in a twofold relation to man. It is formed by man and it comes back to form man. The same can be said about traditions.

unchanging moral principles. The teaching of Vatican II on the episcopate and collegiality provides an example of both kinds of “things that are new.” That Jesus called the apostles together and formed them as a college in which Peter’s role was to give it unity, and that He intended that their successors likewise form a college that has Peter’s successor as its head, is a matter of a development of doctrine, that is, of the Church’s understanding of Divine Revelation. It takes its place among the *Nova*, something “new” that the Church has brought out of the treasury of Tradition. That this collegiality should be exercised in the concrete institution of the synod of bishops is clearly another matter, one that takes its place among the *nova*, something “new” that is ecclesiastical tradition. The institution of the synod of bishops carries, so to speak, the doctrine of collegiality, but not in such a way that the two cannot be separated.

The Necessary Balance of *Nova et Vetera*

There has already been occasion to remark that Pope Paul’s intellectual temperament was such that he was acutely aware of the possibility of two exaggerations. Corresponding to *nova et vetera* are, respectively, pastoral adaptation to the concrete needs of the Church and fidelity. The way in which *nova* and *vetera* are related, and their necessary balance and complementarity, can be conveyed by considering the Church *ad intra* and *ad extra*.²¹

Concerning the Church’s relation to the temporal order, “there are two ways for the Church to sustain her youth, that is, to be inserted as a living religion in the fabric of the course of history.” Pope Paul described these two ways in the following way:

One, that we could say is resolved *ad extra*, is for the Church to approach the world that surrounds her, to assume its language, customs, and mentality, to the extent that this is compatible with the Church’s nature and mission to insert herself in the history that passes, to “historicize herself.” The other way, which we could call *ad intra*, according to which the Church looks within herself for the inexhaustible vitality of her truth, her traditional consistency, her spiritual wealth. Both ways are good, provided they wisely complement one another. This is very close to the Gospel binomial *nova et vetera* that we must strive to put into practice to give strength and testimony to the perennial flowering of the kingdom of God.

²¹ The *ad intra/ad extra* distinction was made by John XXIII in his radio message of September 11, 1962. The theme became an organizing principle of the Council by the initiative of Cardinal Suenens and Cardinal Montini. See Léon-Josef Cardinal Suenens, “A Plan for the Whole Council,” in *Vatican II Revisited by Those Who Were There*, ed. Alberic Stacpoole, O.S.B. (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1986), 88–105.

But unfortunately sometimes, today, in this effort of renewal, some, certainly moved by sincere zeal, become preoccupied with the first way, forgetting or neglecting the second. It happens then that many are tempted to believe only in what is new, only what is modern, only what is mixed with the experience of the contemporary world. This engenders an instinctive temptation to repudiate what was done and thought yesterday, to detach oneself from traditional theology and discipline, to put everything in question, as if one had to start afresh to build the Church today, to reconstruct its doctrines starting not so much from the data of revelation and tradition, but rather from the temporal realities in which contemporary life develops, to initiate new forms of thought, spirituality, and custom, with the pretext of infusing in our Christianity an authenticity discovered only at the present time, and comprehensible only to the men of our time. At first this process of renewal touches on and clears away transitory things and forms; but then, for some, it comes to impair essential and untouchable things and forms in the Church that are essential and that should not be touched. Then there is a danger that, though not intentionally, the mentality of the reformer adapts itself and becomes formed in relation to the currents of thought, to the way of thinking of others; and truths that are not time-bound, because divine, are sometimes folded into a historicism that deprives them of their content and stability. St. Paul seems to provide the defense, and he, the apostle who strained to be all things to all men (1 Cor 9:22), warns us that the Cross of Christ must not be made void: “*Ut not evacuetur crux Christi*” (1 Cor 1:17).

The other way, that of the Church’s fidelity to herself, is certainly what holds the true secret of her perennial youth, what makes her search into the divine treasure confided her by Christ, for the wisdom and the strength to make herself present, always living and working in the midst of the men to whom she wishes to bring the message of faith, charity, and salvation. Only in this way must she make herself correctly known in a way accessible to men. To accomplish this she must strive to know them, to understand them, to promote the practice of Christian life for them, and to give them the joy of encountering Christ. She must strive, in a word, to show herself to be “apostolic”: this art so beautiful, but so difficult!

And this is precisely what the Church today wisely and boldly strives to do through the Council, so that Christ shines forth to the world, as engraved on the base of the obelisk of the Plaza of St. Peter, always the same Christ: yesterday, today and forever.²²

Pope Paul’s penchant for pointing out the balance required for the Church as a living organism to continue to grow into the “new” while remaining faithful to the “old” was not limited to occasions when he

²² General Audience, August 11, 1965.

invoked the text of Matthew on *nova et vetera*. His remarks on the place of Latin in the Church are illustrative. To those he described as having “shallow minds or unthinking passion for the new [that] leads them to the idea that the Latin language must be totally spurned by the Latin Church,” he listed reasons why “it is absolutely clear that Latin must be held in high honor.” At the same time, “those who, out of an empty aestheticism that goes too far in seeking to preserve what is old or out of a prejudice against anything new” need to realize “that Latin must be subordinate to the pastoral ministry and is not an end in itself.” The “highest law,” he insisted, “must be the well-being of souls,” which was the governing principle of the renewal of Vatican II. “Any defense, therefore, of the rights this language has acquired in the Church must avoid at all costs impeding or constricting the renewal of pastoral service mandated by the Council.”²³

The balance of *nova* and *vetera* is not established by a fixed formula. It is, rather, the dynamic judgment of pastoral prudence regarding adaptation to new situations in the Church’s life, based on and in fidelity to Tradition. The virtue of prudence would betray itself were it simply to reproduce and apply past judgments without first determining if they are adequate to each new situation. Similarly the Church would fall short of the demands of pastoral charity were she to remain content with the pastoral adaptations of another era. Prudence is simultaneously faithful to the fixed norms of eternal law and to the demands of reasoned awareness of circumstances in the here and now. Similarly, the *nova et vetera* principle conveys that the Church’s pastoral accommodations are necessarily determinations of unchangeable truths of divine revelation in the concrete ‘today’ of the Church’s life. Since the Church exists to serve man, this means that the Church’s pastors must always weigh what is best for the good of souls. At the same time, what is best for souls has been determined in its essential outlines—by the dynamisms of human nature and the truth of divine revelation that corresponds to those dynamisms as their fulfillment. Consequently, this pastoral, prudential reasoning is circumscribed by Tradition, which stands in relation to each prudential judgment as the “old” to the “new.”

The parallel between the relation of prudential judgments to universal moral principles, on one hand, and the relation of the *nova* to the *vetera* of Tradition, on the other, holds an additional point of comparison. Just as prudence cannot be reduced to being an intellectual virtue, so the acts by which the *nova* is drawn from the *vetera* are not simply detached, intellectual calculations. Prudence presupposes the rectitude of the will, that is, the

²³ Address to Latinists, April 26, 1968.

moral virtues, and thus a certain connaturalization of the prudent person to the good. Similarly the judgments leading to the *nova* depend upon a connaturalization by love with respect to the content of Tradition.²⁴

The Renewal of Religious Orders

When encouraging religious in their undertaking of the renewal called for by the Council, Pope Paul does little more than summarize what Vatican II understood by accommodated renewal in *Perfectae caritatae*. What he adds to the actual text of this decree, though, is a reference to Matthew 13:52, as in the following:

To all the religious families we will say: it seems to Us that, in the present ecclesial season, they must respond to two demands: that of the fidelity to the wish of the Founders and the Foundresses, what was originally recognized and approved by the authority of the Church; that of the renewal according to the spirit and the dictate of the Council, which—as well you know—has been stated for you especially in the Decree *Perfectae Caritatis*. We tell you that it is evangelical wisdom—you remember the example of the head of the household, who draws from his treasure *nova et vetera* (cf. Matt 13:52)—to respect both of these lines. Consider it, therefore, as the straight railway that not only prevents dangerous veers, but also guarantees the path on the way to the holiness.²⁵

In a general audience the Pope indicated that while “some have mistaken the meaning of the new directions and exhibited a greater readiness to destroy and to suppress than to preserve and to develop,” in fact this is not reflective of the Council’s intentions. Quoting an address from a year earlier to Abbots and Abbesses, he said:

the Council is not to be thought of as a kind of cyclone or revolution that would overturn ideas and practices and allow for unthinkable and rash novelties. No! The Council is not a revolution but a renewal. . . . While elaborating the Constitution on the Liturgy, the intention of the Council Fathers was clearly shown: not to impoverish the Church’s treasury of sacred music, but to enrich it; not to dissociate, but to unite

²⁴ This is, perhaps, what Pope Benedict XVI had in mind when he stated: “It is clear that this commitment to expressing a specific truth in a new way demands new thinking on this truth and a new and vital relationship with it; it is also clear that new words can only develop if they come from an informed understanding of the truth expressed, and on the other hand, that a reflection on faith also requires that this faith be lived. In this regard, the program that Pope John XXIII proposed was extremely demanding, indeed, just as the synthesis of fidelity and dynamic is demanding” (Address to the Curia of December 22, 2005).

²⁵ General Audience of July 27, 1977.

fidelity to the tradition and openness to renewal; to bring together, in summary, the “old” and the “new,” *nova et vetera*, in a wise equilibrium, following the example of the scribe of the Gospel (Matt 13:52).²⁶

Along similar lines, in an address to participants in the National Congress of the Pontifical Mission Societies, Pope Paul asserted that in missionary work, as in every field of pastoral life, a challenge arises when traditional understandings are confronted with new conditions that require a new openness and new methods that appeal to the authority of the Council. The solution is to strike a balance between a serene openness to what is new “without disavowing the past or destroying acquired values.” It is the synthesis of *nova et vetera* that draws on “the contribution that the Church has given in its teachings in the doctrine of the Council and the experience of its missionaries.”²⁷

Even when he does not make an explicit reference to the text of Matthew, Pope Paul consistently thinks in terms of the “new” and the “old” when addressing religious. For example, when speaking to a general chapter of Discalced Carmelites, several themes associated with *nova et vetera* appear. First, he places their deliberations in the context of Vatican II by referring to them as an *aggiornamento* encouraged by the Council. Then he refers to their order as one that is both ancient and modern [*vetusto e moderno*], thereby attributing to it this aspect of the mystery of the Church herself. Next, he briefly describes the process of accommodated renewal for this Order in terms reminiscent of the theology of *ressourcement*. This Order must “think again about its origins” and “look back in order to go forward in the right direction,” for “the way forward is pointed out by its point of departure.” Finally, he recalls the metaphor of a tree, stating that “the tree draws life from its root.”²⁸ Just as the newness of annual leafing depends upon the health and maturity of the old roots, so the hoped-for fruits of *aggiornamento*, the *nova*, are a function of the life-giving nutrients provided by the founder’s charism, the *vetera*.

The Renewal of the Liturgy

The Second Vatican Council had clearly stated that the introduction of any innovations into the liturgy could be justified only if they were genuinely and certainly required for the good of the Church. In addition, they should not have the nature of being an invention of something brand new and unfamiliar; rather, “care must be taken that any new forms

²⁶ General Audience of April 5, 1967.

²⁷ Address of September 20, 1972.

²⁸ Address of June 22, 1967.

adopted should in some way grow organically from forms already existing.”²⁹ The use Pope Paul VI made of the *nova et vetera* theme in conjunction with the liturgical renewal may be considered his reiteration of this fundamental principle.

When speaking to the Consilium for the Liturgy, the Pope underscored that “the liturgical renewal [*renovatio*] should not be understood as rejection of the sacred patrimony of the previous age and a rash acceptance of whatever is new.” What the Council Fathers intended and insisted on, rather, was that “alterations must be congruent with sound tradition.” After quoting *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 23, that “any new forms adopted should in some way grow organically from forms already existing,” he concluded: “This is why that reform should be called wise, because by suitable reason it is able to make the *nova et vetera* coalesce.”³⁰

With regard to sacred music, “the intention of the conciliar Fathers was clearly shown: not to impoverish the Church’s treasury of sacred music, but to enrich it; not to dissociate but to associate fidelity to the tradition and openness to renewal. It was, in a few words, to unite, in a wise balance, following the example of the scribe in the Gospel, the ‘old’ and the ‘new,’ *nova et vetera* (Matt 13:52).”³¹

In another address to the Consilium for the Liturgy the relation between the “new” and the “old” was developed by means of a metaphor to convey the idea of organic growth.

The proper implementation of the Constitution on the Liturgy requires of you that the “new” and the “old” be brought together in a bond that is both suitable and beautiful. What must be avoided at all costs in this matter is that eagerness for the “new” not exceed due measure, resulting in insufficient regard for or entirely disregarding the patrimony of the liturgy handed on. Such a defective course of action should not be called renewal of the Sacred Liturgy, but an overturning of it. The liturgy, in fact, displays a similarity to a hardy tree, the beauty of which shows a continual renewal of leaves, but whose fruitfulness of life bears witness to the long existence of the trunk, which acts through its deep and stable roots. In liturgical matters, therefore, no real opposition should occur between the present age and previous ages; but all should be done so that, whatever be the innovation, it be made to cohere and to concord with the sound tradition that precedes it, and so that from existing forms new forms grow, as though spontaneously blossoming from it.³²

²⁹ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 23.

³⁰ Address of October 14, 1968.

³¹ General Audience of April 3, 1967.

³² Address of October 29, 1964.

Renewal, *Aggiornamento*, and *Nova et Vetera* in Evangelization

In an address to the College of Cardinals, the text of Matthew 13:52 figures into an extended reflection on the renewal of Vatican II. Reflecting on the upcoming synod of bishops on evangelization, Pope Paul described the world to which the Church brings the Gospel as secular, self-sufficient, and closed to God. Then he asked the pointed question whether the Church's response has been effective. Are our pastoral methods sufficiently adapted? Have we discovered what might be called an evangelical rhetoric that can help overcome the indifference to the proclamation of the Gospel that seems to typify the disposition of contemporary men? He continued:

The methods of another time, corresponding to the necessities of a different sociological context, are not adequate in a society and for a mentality that are profoundly changed. Now, the updating [*aggiornamento*] of pastoral methods has been one of the purposes of Vatican II, and We have not failed continually to recall its necessity in Our teaching. But if We want to make a frank and calm examination of conscience, We cannot say that the updating [*aggiornamento*], to which the bishops (*Christus Dominus*, 17), the priests (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 13) and the laity (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 6, 8, 14) have been called, has fully achieved its objective. The conditions of the society in which we live require us all, therefore, to review the methods again, to search by every means to study how to bring to modern man the Christian message, in which alone he can find the answer to his questions and the strength for the fulfillment of human solidarity. For this We have asked our brothers in the episcopate to study together, in the next Synod of Bishops, evangelization in the contemporary world. It is a way to recall and to respond to the conciliar teaching, that we examine ourselves regarding our total fidelity to the duty of Christ's ministers and dispensers of the mysteries of God (cf. 1 Cor 4:1). In this way, We think, this effort, which is so close to Our heart, can continue to contribute to the happy synthesis of *nova et vetera*, of tradition and of reform, to preserve and to update [*aggiornare*] the patrimony of the faith so that its intangible wealth is introduced in a convincing way to the men of our time.³³

In this text "the happy synthesis of *nova et vetera*" serves to explain the meaning of the *aggiornamento* of Vatican II. The updating concerns methods and means of pastoral ministry. Yet, since the means are inseparable from the essential content of Tradition, Pope Paul can say that the patrimony of faith itself is both preserved and updated by prudent *aggiornamento*. The pastoral goal is clearly identified as an effective presentation of the Gospel to the men and women in the world at the time.

³³ Address to the College of Cardinals, June 22, 1973.

Pope Paul did not explain precisely what he meant when he referred to the “methods of another time,” but one readily surmises that he had in mind the practices of the Church before the great changes that had occurred, changes which led to an increasing alienation of men from the Church as they embraced a secularism of independence from God and the Church. During the centuries of the age of Christendom the Church played the major role in shaping society, whereas now she had been marginalized and deemed irrelevant by a growing number of people. Pope Benedict XVI incisively described this situation. On their part, modern men “practically no longer wanted to allow the Church any room” and this culminated in a widespread stance of “stubbornly proposing to make the ‘hypothesis of God’ superfluous.” On her part, the Church had become defensive, responding with “a bitter and radical condemnation of this spirit of the modern age.” By the time of Vatican II both sides had moderated and a certain openness to one another had developed.³⁴

In a manner consistent with this view, not too long before becoming Pope, Cardinal Ratzinger wrote: “This is precisely what the Second Vatican Council had intended: to endow Christianity once more with the power to shape history.”³⁵ In cultures marked by profound political consciousness and that think in terms of power, this statement could easily be misunderstood as a desire for domination. In fact, though, the power to shape history is the power to influence men in the depths of their freedom and consciences, since it is men who give history its shape. Yet how can the Church reach men in their freedom and consciences if it cannot communicate effectively with them, if it cannot express its faith in modes that, while being faithful to the essential content of that faith, are familiar to those she addresses? Should learning a new vocabulary be a prerequisite for modern men, or men of any age, to hear the Gospel? Is such a pre-evangelization necessary? The Church’s answer to this last question is an emphatic Yes. Only, it is not the men of the ages who must first learn the Church’s language, but the Church that must first learn the languages of men. The Church adapts her message to the language, categories, and mentalities of men in order effectively to bring the Gospel to them. This brings a transformation of the way they think, and this new way of thinking, based on faith in the Gospel, becomes the source of their actions that transform history.

What Cardinal Ratzinger was saying is that history should be shaped by God’s will, and since the Church exists in order to bring God to men, her mission is to shape history through those who submit their freedom

³⁴ Address to the Curia, December 22, 2005.

³⁵ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, “Introduction to Christianity, Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow,” in *Communio* 31 (2004): 482.

to God as they encounter Him through the Church. It is, then, in fidelity to her own mission that the Church remains faithful to Tradition and that this very fidelity becomes an exigency for renewal or *aggiornamento*. What is clear about the passages in which Pope Paul turns to the text on *nova et vetera* is precisely that this fidelity is twofold, or bipolar. It is fidelity to God, Who reveals, and fidelity to man, for whom He reveals. "In being thus faithful to God and to the men to whom He sends us, we shall then be able, with prudence and tact, but also with clear vision and firmness, to make a correct assessment of opinions."³⁶

This is precisely what the Council itself taught when it asserted that the Church is "driven by the inner necessity of her own catholicity."³⁷ Renewal, or *aggiornamento*, is not an unprincipled accommodation to the spirit of the modern world. It is, rather, the concrete form of being faithful to the Church's own God-given, inner dynamism to meet the challenges of her mission first by self-examination and conversion: "Every renewal of the Church is essentially grounded in an increase of fidelity to her own calling."³⁸ By recommitting herself to mission and to service of mankind, the Church draws on her ancient sources of vitality and finds therein things that were always there, potentially, but are now drawn out as the "new" that is needed for the fulfillment of her mission.

The contrast of the situation of the Church in the 1960s and 1970s to its situation in a former age was deeply etched in the consciousness of Paul VI. How could it be otherwise for the Successor of Peter who understood Vatican II in terms of *aggiornamento* and took this as the theme of his pontificate? In another age "the Church lived in close association with contemporary society, inspiring its culture and sharing its modes of expression." This closeness made the exercise of the apostolic office of preaching and teaching "relatively easy." Today, however, "a serious effort is required of us to insure that the teaching of the faith should keep the fullness of its meaning and scope, while expressing itself in a form that allows it to reach the spirit and the heart of all men, to whom it is addressed."³⁹ That Pope Paul was thinking here of the well-known passage of Pope John XXIII in his opening address to the Council is confirmed by the fact that he goes on to quote it.

In the same apostolic exhortation the Pope was especially concerned to urge bishops, regarding fidelity to the Tradition, to "be attentive lest

³⁶ Apostolic Exhortation on the Fifth Anniversary of the Close of the Second Vatican Council (*Quinque Iam Anni*), December 8, 1970.

³⁷ *Ad Gentes*, 1.

³⁸ *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 6.

³⁹ *Quinque Iam Anni*, December 8, 1970.

this necessary effort should ever betray the truth and continuity of the teaching of the faith.” He went on to warn against the temptation of “an arbitrary selection” that would play to “what our ears like to hear” and avoidance of “what does not please contemporary taste.” Then he sounded a cautionary note regarding the use of sociology. While it is “useful for better discovering the thought patterns,” anxieties, and even modes of opposition to the Gospel of contemporary men, it is not the criterion of truth.

Man’s Questions and the Church’s Answers: Dialogue and Signs of the Times

In the same apostolic letter just discussed, Pope Paul followed his exhortation to vigilance in safeguarding the truth of the faith with an important call for balance. The necessary concern for fidelity to the faith should not deter pastors from listening to the people around them in order to discern the profound questions they are asking about the meaning and purpose of life.

All the same, we must not be deaf to the questions which today face a believer rightly anxious to acquire a more profound understanding of his faith. We must lend an ear to these questions, not in order to cast suspicion on what is well-founded, not to deny their postulates, but so that we may do justice to their legitimate demands within our own proper field which is that of faith. This holds true for modern man’s great questions concerning his origins, the meaning of life, the happiness to which he aspires and the destiny of the human family. But it is no less true of questions posed today by scholars, historians, psychologists and sociologists. *These questions are so many invitations to us to proclaim better, in its incarnate transcendence, the Good News of Christ the Savior.*⁴⁰

These questions, as the Council indicated and as Pope John Paul II clearly held, arise from the depths of the human spirit as it encounters the world and seeks ultimate answers. They are, then, the “ever ancient but ever new questions concerning the mystery of existence that are indelibly imprinted on the human heart.”⁴¹ This is a key to understanding the reading of the “signs of the times” and how this relates to the *nova et vetera* theme. Every era in the economy of salvation has its own distinctive signs, but they can be reduced to man’s search for God as this is expressed in his

⁴⁰ *Quinque Iam Anni*. Emphasis added.

⁴¹ Pope John Paul II, Special Audience of April 29, 1993, for Presidents of the Episcopal Conference Commissions for Catechesis and other participants in a workshop on preparing local catechisms.

search for fulfillment and the questions about the meaning and purpose of his existence that preoccupy him.⁴² This search of man for God is itself a manifestation of God's search for man, since He has planted the desire for Him in our hearts. To read the "signs of the times" is to discern the concrete indications of man's search for God and of God's search for man. This presupposes a precise understanding of human nature and of the ways of God. It explains why so many magisterial texts, especially *Gaudium et Spes* and the social encyclicals, include a survey of man's situation.

When the Church reads the "signs of the times" to ascertain man's situation and the forms in which the perennial questions about the meaning of life are posed, she responds by drawing from the treasury of her Tradition things both "old" and "new." They are always "old" and "new" because the questions are "ever ancient and ever new." This dynamic of man's questions and God's answers through the Church is the essential conceptual framework for the dialogue of salvation, which is the mode of the Church's mission of evangelization.

What Inspired Pope Paul's Use of Matthew 13:52?

Pope Paul did not indicate what source might have inspired his use of the Gospel passage on *nova et vetera* as a hermeneutical principle for the renewal of Vatican II. Pope John XXIII had referred to the text only twice, both times prior to the Council. In neither instance was it a question of invoking the *nova et vetera* theme in relation to the Council. Still, the points he made and supported by the reference to Matthew 13:52 concern the hermeneutics of continuity in the Church's life. It should not be overlooked, in this context, that the spirit of Vatican II is the spirit of Catholicism. The twenty-first ecumenical council certainly has several distinguishing characteristics that differentiate it from other councils.⁴³ It is, nevertheless, an act of the apostolic authority of the Catholic Church, established by Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit, and for this reason it must be understood as having in common with all other councils that it is an "authoritative rereading of the Gospel"⁴⁴ in order to respond to

⁴² The theme of man's questions and God's answer to them in Christ is a major component of the pastoral style of *Gaudium et Spes*. It became a hallmark of the pastoral magisterium of Pope John Paul II, reaching a summit in *Veritatis Splendor* (especially chapter one) and *Fides et Ratio*. The latter encyclical discerns that one of the distinctive and most worrisome "signs of the times" at the end of the second millennium was man's resistance to asking the fundamental questions about life and its meaning.

⁴³ See the address of Pope John XXIII, of November 14, 1960, to the Preparatory Commissions. The text can be found in *The Pope Speaks*, vol. 6, 376–85.

⁴⁴ Pope Benedict XVI, address of April 20, 2005.

the questions of the day. Or, as Pope John broadly described ecumenical councils, Vatican II was to be an act by which the Church renews herself. "What, in fact, is an Ecumenical Council if not the Church's renewal of itself in the encounter with the presence of the risen Jesus?"⁴⁵

Such rereading of the Gospel and renewal in the encounter with the risen Lord must be subject to the principle contained in the *nova et vetera* theme, namely, continuity in essentials and adaptation and development as a result of a deeper understanding of the Gospel and the need to address new situations, problems, and questions. This is clear in Pope John's homily on the occasion of the episcopal consecration of twelve cardinals of the order of deacons.⁴⁶ He drew attention to the historical alterations that had taken place in the institution established to assist the Successor of Peter in his governance of the universal Church. "It is quite natural," he said, "that the college of cardinals should develop and adapt to new exigencies of the apostolate," clarifying that this cannot concern anything in the Church that has been divinely instituted. Concerning matters of ecclesiastical institution, which are thus subject to adaptation, for reasons of pastoral expediency "it happens that along the way we need to modify it [the College of Cardinals], in keeping with the new requirements of pastoral zeal, or to correct disparities in regimen and procedure, in view of a better responsiveness and a more perfect ordering of the persons, offices, and initiatives." His homily thus identifies a principle of the Church's life that has been at work in this history of development and adaptation of the College of Cardinals, which includes his own recent modifications. All of this leads him to state: "This consecration is a magnificent fusion of the 'old' and the 'new'. Without doubt the singular character of this event is realized in these words of the Lord. This is the mystery of *paterfamilias qui profert de thesauro suo nova et vetera* (Matt 13:52)."

Pope John's other use of the *nova et vetera* text came in an address to those participating in a general chapter of the Order of Preachers.⁴⁷ The chapter, he said, was an event characterized by reception and fidelity to the founding and history of their Order, while at the same time asking how to respond to new times and situations. This will require that "new duties and considerations will interact with the old," and "this faithfully corresponds to the words of the Divine Redeemer, who said: '*omnis scriba doctus . . . similis est homini patri familias, amiliis, qui profert de thesauro suo nova et vetera*' (Matt 13:52)." The Pope continued, connecting this with a passage of St. Paul: "You as yet are connecting the new, brought out of

⁴⁵ Radio Message of September 11, 1962.

⁴⁶ April 19, 1962.

⁴⁷ September 25, 1959.

your treasure, with the old; and in this way you comply with the perennial precept, which St. Paul set forth in these words: 'but be reformed in the newness of your mind, that you may prove what is the good, and the acceptable, and the perfect will of God' (Rom 12:2)."

These two references to Matthew 13:52 by Pope John XXIII are chronologically closest to Paul VI as papal utilizations of the *nova et vetera* theme as a biblical foundation for the changes, development, and adaptation of ecclesiastical institutions in response to diverse circumstances, events, and challenges confronted throughout history. There are others that can be noted. Nearly a century before Vatican II, Pope Pius IX took up the *nova et vetera* theme in an allocution occasioned by a religious art exposition in Rome.⁴⁸ He first asserted that religious truths remain "essentially immutable" and that "all the truths divinely revealed have always been believed" and "have always been a part of the deposit confided to the Church." Then he stated that "some of them must from time to time, according to circumstances and necessity, be placed in a stronger light and more firmly established" and said that this is the meaning of the passage on *nova et vetera* in Matthew 13:52. He identified the "old" with the continuous teaching of "the doctrines which are now beyond all controversy" and the "new" with "new declarations giving a firm and incontestable basis to those doctrines which, although they have always been professed by her, have nonetheless been the object of recent attacks." In this text, the *nova et vetera* theme is invoked as a biblical foundation for the development of the Church's teaching rather than the modification of ecclesiastical institutions. Pius XII had also alluded to our text in his exhortation on the development of holiness in the life of priests.⁴⁹ "Whoever sets before himself his own sanctification and that of other people must be equipped with solid learning that comprises not only theology but also the results of modern science and discovery so that, like a good father, he may draw 'from his storeroom things new and old' (Matt 13:52) and make his ministry always more appreciated and fruitful." Presumably, theology correlates to the "old"—divine revelation and the entire Catholic Tradition—and modern science to the "new."⁵⁰

⁴⁸ May 16, 1870. Text in *The Church*, trans. Mother E. O'Gorman (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1980), 208–9.

⁴⁹ Apostolic Exhortation, *Menti Nostrae*, of September 23, 1950.

⁵⁰ This might be seen in connection with the encouragement in texts of Vatican II that use be made of the human sciences as helps in discerning the signs of the times, that is, the concrete situations in which those the Church is called to serve find themselves, so that she can adapt her pastoral actions. On the encouragement of the Council to make use of these sciences, in *Fides et Ratio* 61, John Paul II referred to

Prior to Paul VI, then, there was precedent in the use of Matthew 13:52 to address the two fundamental dimensions of the renewal of Vatican II, pastoral adaptation (*aggiornamento*) of ecclesiastical institutions and the development of doctrine.⁵¹ This is far from establishing a direct causal influence of these precedents on Pope Paul VI.

There is another papal precedent to Pope Paul's use of *nova et vetera*, though in this case it does not come with an explicit reference to Matthew 13:52. Pope Leo XIII referred to "certain Catholic philosophers who, throwing aside the patrimony of ancient wisdom, chose rather to build up a new edifice than to strengthen and complete the old by aid of the new" [*veteris nova augere et perficere*].⁵² New discoveries and understandings do not dismantle the previously acquired wisdom but build upon it, augment it, and complete it.⁵³ This dynamic understanding of growth in collective wisdom over the centuries in terms of the "new" and the "old" was part of the theological culture at the time of Vatican II. Some theologians invoked the Latin phrase *veteris nova augere et perficere* as an axiom of theological procedure when commenting on Vatican II and as a guiding principle for their theology.⁵⁴

Gaudium et Spes 57 and 62. In addition, see: *Optatam Totius* 2 and 20; *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 32; *Christus Dominus* 17.

⁵¹ Examples of adaptation of ecclesiastical institutions include the restoration of the permanent diaconate, the catechumenate for adults, revision of the lectionary and of the Liturgy of the Hours, and pastoral councils. Another institutional adaptation, the synod of bishops, corresponds to one of the most significant doctrinal developments that took place at Vatican II, namely, the teaching on the collegiality of the episcopate.

⁵² *Aeterni Patris*, 24.

⁵³ As Pope Benedict XVI pointed out, they can also bring about corrections. "The Second Vatican Council, with its new definition of the relationship between the faith of the Church and certain essential elements of modern thought, has reviewed or even corrected certain historical decisions, but in this apparent discontinuity it has actually preserved and deepened her inmost nature and true identity" (Benedict XVI, Address to the Curia of December 22, 2005).

⁵⁴ For example, John Courtney Murray, S.J., referred to *vetera novis augere et perficere* on several occasions in connection with the pontificate of John XXIII and Vatican II. See his articles: "Things Old and New in 'Pacem in Terris,'" in *America* 107 (April 27, 1963): 612–14; "La libertà religiosa e l'ateo," in *L'ateismo contemporaneo* 4 (1970): 109–117; "The Issue of Church and State at Vatican II," in *Theological Studies* 27 (December 1966): 580–606. These articles are conveniently available online at: woodstock.georgetown.edu/library/Murray/0_murraybib.html. Another example is Bernard Lonergan, S.J. See the article on Lonergan in *The Boston Collaborative Encyclopedia of Modern Western Theology*, at: people.bu.edu/wwildman/WeirdWildWeb/courses/mwt/dictionary/mwt_themes_840_lonergan.htm.

The relatively infrequent use of the passage on *nova et vetera* prior to Paul VI suggests that it is perhaps more likely that one of several references in the documents of Vatican II had influenced his use of the theme. The teaching of *Dei Verbum* 16, that “God, the inspirer and author of both Testaments, wisely arranged that the New Testament be hidden in the Old and the Old be made manifest in the New,” could easily be adapted in conjunction with the text of Matthew’s Gospel on *nova et vetera*. It appears in *Lumen Gentium* 25, on the teaching office of bishops,⁵⁵ and there is also a vague allusion to it in *Gaudium et Spes* 91.⁵⁶ Though there is no explicit reference to Matthew 13:52 in *Dignitatis Humanae* 1, it clearly underlies the passage:

This Vatican Council takes careful note of these desires in the minds of men. It proposes to declare them to be greatly in accord with truth and justice. To this end, it searches into the sacred tradition and doctrine of the Church—the treasury out of which the Church continually brings forth new things that are in harmony with the things that are old.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Regarding Matthew 13:52 in *Lumen Gentium* 25, Gerard Philips simply commented that “the bishop contributes to the development of the knowledge of what is revealed, as the father of a family concerned to bring the new and the old from his treasure. In the understanding of those who hear him, he assures a life rejuvenated by very old truths, and in this way the fertile field of revelation produces fruits that are increasingly rich” (*L’Église et son mystère au deuxième Concile du Vatican. Histoire, texte et commentaire de la Constitution Lumen Gentium* [Paris: Desclée, 1967], Vol. I, 322). This appears to refer to what *Dei Verbum* teaches about the development of sacred Tradition, though *Dei Verbum* was promulgated after *Lumen Gentium*. Interestingly, the reference to Matthew 13:52 in the context of the episcopal teaching office was present in the original schema *De Ecclesia* prepared for the Council, and remained present in every subsequent draft of *Lumen gentium*, apparently without any discussion or comment. This can be concluded from consulting the biblical index of the very useful synopsis of all the material in the *Acta Synodalia* on *Lumen Gentium*, ed. Francisco Gil Hellín (Libreria editrice Vaticana, 1995). Each of the seven entries for Matthew 13:52 is found in one of the drafts of *Lumen Gentium*. Note that the index is inaccurate on two counts: the references indicated as appearing on pages 627 and 689 are actually on pages 629 and 690, respectively.

⁵⁶ “Drawn from the treasures of Church teaching, the proposals of this sacred synod look to the assistance of every man of our time, whether he believes in God, or does not explicitly recognize Him” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 91).

⁵⁷ It is clear from the recommendations for changes to the text that the bishops were aware that Matt 13:52 was the underlying base for this sentence (see *Acta Synodalia* IV/V, 113). The reference to *nova et vetera* appears for the first time in the *textus reemandatus*, approved by the Coordinating Commission on May 11, 1964. There does not appear to be any explanation for its introduction in the official reports or (*relationes*) accompanying the presentation of the text for discussion by the Council Fathers.

It may be presumed that this was intended to express the Council's consciousness of engaging in doctrinal development or *aggiornamento*, with particular emphasis on the harmony or constant accord of the new with the old.⁵⁸ Given the well-known contentions that accompanied the drafting of this document, it is not surprising that such a statement should be found here. At the same time, it may be taken more generally as an expression of the spirit of the entire Council.⁵⁹

Besides the use of Matthew 13:52 in papal teaching and Vatican II, the *nova et vetera* theme was well established in the theological culture of the time. Others also saw the passage on *nova et vetera* as an apt scriptural text for understanding the work of Vatican II, or at least as a point of reference to indicate a certain continuity or comparison between Jesus' relation to the Old Testament and the relation of the Church and Tradition to the fullness of revelation in Christ. Louis Bouyer, for example, linked it to the Council's *aggiornamento*.⁶⁰ Without referring to Vatican II, Yves

⁵⁸ The Latin has: "... haec Vaticana synodus sacram ecclesiae traditionem doctrinamque scrutatur, ex quibus nova semper cum veteribus congruentia profert."

⁵⁹ The comment of John Courtney Murray in this regard is relevant: "... religious freedom is not the most important issue before the Council, nor the most difficult, except insofar as it raises the issue of development of doctrine, which is the issue underlying all issues at the Council" ("This Matter of Religious Freedom," *America* [Jan 9, 1965]: 43; conveniently available at: woodstock.georgetown.edu/library/murray/1965k.htm). More amply: "The problem of the development of doctrine was in reality the fundamental problem underlying all the other problems treated by the Council. The Council itself showed, perhaps as never before in history, that the Church itself does not accept the error of archaism, which consists in the desire to halt the Church's growth in her understanding at any level of evolution—scriptural, patristic, medieval, modern, contemporary—and to refuse the possibility of new growth. No other conciliar text challenges this error as directly as *Dignitatis humanae*. No doubt this is the reason why it encountered so much opposition. This is certainly also its ultimate theological significance. And perhaps in this significance one finds implicitly contained the significance of the entire Council, which bears witness in multiple ways to the growth of the Church: growth in its historical consciousness, in its human consciousness of human dignity, in its ecumenical consciousness of its ministry of reconciliation, and above all in its evangelical consciousness that the Church has of herself and of the word that was entrusted to her by God—a word that is not only the 'word of truth' (James 1:18), but also and identically the word of freedom" ("Vers une intelligence du développement de la doctrine de l'Église sur la liberté religieuse," in *Vatican II: La Liberté Religieuse*, ed. J. Hamer and Y. Congar [Paris: Cerf, 1967], 147).

⁶⁰ "Aggiornamento goes hand in hand with the opening out to the world, and surpasses it. What John XXIII wanted, what the Council had tried to begin ... was the *aggiornamento* of the judicious scribe who searches for the *nova et vetera* in a treasure with which he had become unfamiliar" (Bouyer, *The Decomposition of Catholicism* [Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1969], 44).

Congar made a passing allusion to it in his theology of Tradition.⁶¹ Not quite forty years before the Council, Cardinal Journet launched the journal *Nova et Vêtera*, which was intended to serve the purpose of what amounts to a new evangelization (though it would be more than fifty years later that Pope John Paul II popularized the phrase). Journet said that the Church needed a deepened understanding of her own Tradition in order to respond to the new developments and situations of the historical period in which she lives. In his inaugural article, which includes a reference to Matthew 13:52, he set forth a theology of *ressourcement* and *aggiornamento* a generation before Pope John XXIII employed the latter term to signify the spirit of Vatican II.⁶²

Conclusion

Pope Paul VI frequently turned to the *nova et vetera* theme of Matthew 13:52 to convey that the Second Vatican Council was faithful to the essentials of Catholic Tradition while introducing certain new modes of expression and steps forward in the Church's understanding of that Tradition. It was also faithful to the Tradition as it adapted various elements of ecclesiastical institution and structure in order to respond more effectively to the pastoral challenges of the Church of the time. The self-conscious way in which Vatican II set out to initiate an ecclesial renewal explains that, while *nova et vetera* and Matthew 13:52 are evoked here and there by his predecessors, reference to it became frequent for Paul VI. Earlier popes were certainly aware that the Catholic Tradition does not stand still, that there is need for continual contact with developments in philosophy and the sciences, and that the Church needs to attend to the circumstances and situations in which she exercises her mission. Still, the deliberate and systematic way in which Vatican II set out to renew the Church called for a justification for this renewal. It especially called for a demonstration of the continuity in the Catholic Tradition. For Pope Paul VI, and even for the Council itself, the letter and the spirit of Matthew 13:52 served to convey precisely that the Church was being faithful to her own God-given dynamism by engaging in the renewal of Vatican II.

This note of fidelity to what is "old" must be understood precisely. It is not a question of making changes, as if these were somehow desirable

⁶¹ *The Meaning of Tradition* (New York: Hawthorne Books, 1964), 109.

⁶² See the article, "Introducing the English Edition of *Nova et Vêtera*: The Influence of Charles Cardinal Journet," by the Editors of *Nova et Vêtera* (2003): 1–9. The attention Paul VI paid to the theology of Journet has been researched by Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., "Paul VI et le cardinal Journet. Aux sources d'une ecclésiologie," *Nova et Vêtera* (1986): 161–74.

in themselves, and then turning to the Tradition as a kind of governor that would play the role of keeping exuberance in check. If that were the case, then the Tradition would become merely a factor of limitation, when in fact it is itself the living source of what grows out of it in an organic fashion. Fidelity to the Tradition requires *aggiornamento*. Pope John XXIII seems to have restricted his understanding of *aggiornamento* to the updating of ecclesiastical institutions, in order to make them more effective instruments of the Church's pastoral solicitude. At the same time he clearly saw that the success of the Council depended upon a thoroughgoing spiritual renewal on the part of the Church's members.⁶³ Paul VI made this updating of the life of Christ in the members of the Church the central element of his understanding of conciliar renewal. "This strong invitation to holiness could be regarded as the most characteristic element in the whole Magisterium of the Council, and so to say, its ultimate purpose."⁶⁴ For him, the renewal of Vatican II was a call to conversion. Corresponding to ongoing conversion on the part of the Church's members is a constant need to adapt the Church's human structures to bring them more in line with the demands of the Church's mission. In addition, the Church's Tradition must be reflected upon anew in every age and, at times, in the deliberate and formal way that took place at Vatican II. To place that Tradition in a museum in order to preserve it would be a fundamental form of betrayal of that Tradition.

Naiveté was not a fault of Paul VI. He recognized that "the apostle's art is a risky one."⁶⁵ This acknowledgment came in the context of asking: "To what extent should the Church adapt itself to the historic and local circumstances in which its mission is exercised? How should it guard

⁶³ Especially relevant are passages in his encyclical *Paenitentiam Agere* (July 1, 1962). For example, Pope John envisioned spiritual renewal in relation to ecumenism: "The salutary results we pray for are these: that the faith, the love, the moral lives of Catholics may be so re-invigorated, so intensified, that all who are at present separated from this Apostolic See may be impelled to strive actively and sincerely for union, and enter the one fold under the one Shepherd" (*Paenitentiam Agere*, 25). He asserted that "renewal of Christian life . . . is one of the principal aims of the coming Council" (*Paenitentiam Agere*, 27). This would be echoed in the first sentence of the first conciliar text promulgated at Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. The Council's aim, he wrote "will be to render more effective that divine work which our Redeemer accomplished." If everyone engages in conversion to repudiate living according to principles that are not worthy of "each in his own station in life, he will be enabled to play his individual part in making this Second Ecumenical Vatican Council, which is especially concerned with the refurbishing of Christian morality, an outstanding success" (*Paenitentiam agere*, 34, 36).

⁶⁴ *Sanctitatis Clarior*, Motu proprio of March 19, 1969.

⁶⁵ *Ecclesiam Suam*, 88.

against the danger of a relativism which would falsify its moral and dogmatic truth? And yet, at the same time, how can it fit itself to approach all men so as to save all, according to the example of the Apostle: 'I became all things to all men that I might save all?'⁶⁶ The question is not whether the Church should adapt in order to approach all men. It is only a question of how this is to be done. For Pope Paul the Church is, like Christ Himself, a physician whose mission is to heal those who are sick.⁶⁷ There is a risk that in the process of healing others the physician might contract the very diseases he is fighting, but this risk should only be a motive to take cautionary measures. It should not result in a fear that prevents the physician from seeking out those who are sick. As Pope John Paul II put it:

In continuing the great task of implementing the Second Vatican Council, in which we can rightly see a new phase of the self-realization of the Church—in keeping with the epoch in which it has been our destiny to live—the Church herself must be constantly guided by the full consciousness that in this work it is not permissible for her, for any reason, to withdraw into herself.⁶⁸

The solicitude of Paul VI to implement Vatican II resulted in the *nova et vetera* theme being linked with a number of key concepts: sacred Tradition, fidelity to God and to man, *aggiornamento*, balance, reading the signs of the times, evangelization, dialogue. An exhaustive treatment of the *nova et vetera* theme would entail developing in depth his thought on these subjects. This study must be content to have established that the *nova et vetera* theme finds its home in this family of concepts and to have indicated in a general way some of their relationships.

The treasure from which the Church draws things both "old" and "new" is sacred Tradition. The Church's essential disposition toward this Tradition is fidelity, yet, since this Tradition is ultimately God's answers in Christ to the ever ancient and ever new questions of man, fidelity to Tradition is also fidelity to man. Fidelity to man requires a pastoral reading of the signs of the times in order to guide the prudential judgment about how to configure a meaningful response to man's questions. When man's situation is new and the expressions of his questions are correspondingly new, the Church's response will draw from the living Tradition of past responses,

⁶⁶ *Ecclesiam Suam*, 87.

⁶⁷ Yves Congar noted that Paul VI often employed the image of the doctor turning with love toward a sick person, and the Good Samaritan. See *Le Concile de Vatican II. Son Eglise, Peuple de Dieu et Corps du Christ* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1984), 22.

⁶⁸ *Dives in Misericordia*, 15.

the *vetera*, which take the form of new expressions, the *nova*. At the same time, the Church understands these new questions in terms of her patrimony of faith, the *vetera* from which she draws. This is the *aggiornamento* of Vatican II, which engages in *ressourcement* with the conviction of faith that the answers to today's questions and pastoral challenges have already been given in divine revelation as it has been lived and reflected upon by the Church. *Aggiornamento*, then, is a balance of fidelity and pastoral boldness as the Church fulfills her mission of redemption through a dialogue of salvation, the essential terms of which are man's basic questions about life's meaning and the answer God has provided in Christ.

This is especially clear in an address of Paul VI to the Commission to Study Problems of Population, Family, and Birth. Though the *nova et vetera* theme is not invoked to make a point about Vatican II, the principle it is called upon to make accurately conveys the pastoral purpose of the Council:

Your research covers many spheres. On the one hand, it requires a better knowledge of the laws of physiology, of psychological and medical realities, of demographic movements, and of great social changes. On the other hand, and above all, it requires knowledge of the sphere of the superior light that content of faith and the traditional teaching of the Church project on these facts. Like an attentive mother, in every age the Church is solicitous to give a response adapted to the great problems that men face. To this end, she welcomes, according to the counsel of the Lord, the *nova et vetera*, in order to give to the divine leaven of the Gospel all of its richness and to obtain for men the abundance of supernatural life.⁶⁹

There are, then, two distinct but related significations of the word *nova* in the texts of Pope Paul VI. It can refer to the new things, the *rerum novarum*, which are the new situations in which men live and the corresponding questions that arise and which the Church must address. It can also signify the Tradition as newly understood and newly expressed, and the adaptations of ecclesiastical structures, institutions, and traditions. By themselves the new situations are not the *nova* that is derived from the *vetera* of the Church's Tradition. Rather, they are the occasion, the catalyst as it were, for a fresh reflection on the treasury of the Church's faith. The resulting insights are the *nova* that are the Tradition as it has come to be more deeply understood, and the new traditions or institutions are historical carriers of the Tradition, though they are not to be identified with it.

Pope Paul identified two positions that effectively dismantle the complementarity, synthesis, and balance of *nova et vetera*. He saw that there

⁶⁹ March 27, 1965.

are two ways to upset the proper balance: either to side with the *nova* in a way that neglects or rejects the *vetera*, or to side with the *vetera* in a way that excludes the *nova*. What should be a duality of complementarity can end up being a dualism of fundamental opposition on the level of concepts. And conceptual opposition does not remain confined to that order. It leads to division among Catholics on the level of ecclesial allegiance, as though one had to choose between a Church of the *vetera* and a Church of the *nova*. For the Church to maintain her genuine catholic unity, that is, her dynamic and missionary unity, a unity that goes out to all people, inviting and embracing all that is true, good, and beautiful, and purifying all that is not, Pope Paul VI stressed that the principle of *nova et vetera* is a responsibility for the Church. If it is chiefly the responsibility of bishops to discern the signs of the times and to adapt the pastoral apparatus of the Church to the needs of contemporary men, religious are no less called to engage in an accommodated renewal, as are the laity, since by Baptism they become participants in the saving mission of Christ as it is continued through the Church.⁷⁰ If *nova et vetera* is essential to the mystery of the Church, then by the *sensus fidei* all who participate in that mystery also participate in and contribute to the dynamic process of the *nova* constantly emerging out of the *vetera*. The persistent concern of Paul VI was to exhort the members of the Church to carry forward the renewal or *aggiornamento* called for by the Council by maintaining the necessary balance of *nova et vetera* in order to be faithful to the normative synthesis of “new” and “old” in Jesus Christ.

As the history of the Council and the post-conciliar period demonstrates, this was no merely theoretical concern. The tendency to oppose *nova* and *vetera* was, and remains, a serious challenge to the interpretation and implementation of Vatican II. Pope Paul realized that the two deviations from the correct synthesis of *nova* and *vetera* are rooted in personal dispositions. He experienced them firsthand in the course of the Council and afterward, and the responsibility of his office as “the visible principle and foundation of the unity of the bishops and of the faithful”⁷¹ required that he address the issue. The *nova et vetera* principle serves to assure both the unity of the universal Church and the Church’s diachronic unity, so that the Church of today retains the essential identity of the Church throughout the ages.

It is significant that in the texts examined in this article Pope Paul did not invoke Matthew 13:52 to establish a general principle that could be applied to particular cases, questions, or subjects related to one or another

⁷⁰ See *Lumen Gentium*, 33.

⁷¹ *Lumen Gentium*, 23.

teaching or adaptation of Vatican II. His purpose was to recall this general principle as a guiding standard for the interpretation and implementation of the Council. He may have judged that the Council's balance of *nova* and *vetera* was sufficiently clear and that on the level of specific content he could only repeat what it taught and enacted. His frequent references to the *nova et vetera* theme, then, would be intended to provoke a self-examination on the part of his addressees. If the *nova et vetera* principle was operative at Vatican II and explains its dynamic and missionary fidelity to Sacred Tradition, then this principle is an essential condition for the faithful and accurate interpretation of the Council. The fundamental conviction of Paul VI was that the key to the faithful interpretation and implementation of the Council is to read its documents in the same spirit in which it was convoked, conducted, and concluded. His numerous evocations of the *nova et vetera* principle provide the evidence to conclude that the spirit of Vatican II is nothing other than the spirit of the Catholic Tradition itself, a spirit that adheres faithfully to the "old" and, precisely in the name of that fidelity, brings forth what is "new." Taking the Lord's words on *nova et vetera* to describe the spirit of Vatican II indicates that for Pope Paul the conciliar spirit is in fact the spirit of Christianity itself, the spirit of Catholicism.

Pope Paul's use of Matthew 13:52, then, reveals the heart of his understanding of Vatican II. At the Council, the Church rediscovered the dynamism of her own catholic unity. She experienced in a "new" way the "old" truth about her own mystery, rooted in the mystery of Christ. It is a mystery of continuity and fulfillment, of permanence and development. The text of Matthew's Gospel on the scribe who, like a head of household, knows how to draw from his storehouse both *nova* and *vetera*, serves to make a direct link between the Council and the mission of Jesus, who fulfilled the promises of the Old Covenant by establishing the New Covenant. The realization of the Church's mystery is at the same time definitively accomplished and continually developing. Her universality and unity are both indefectibly established and ever increasing in extension and perfection. Vatican II, then, is both an end and a beginning. It is an end to things judged by the Council Fathers to have accompanied the Church for a period of her pilgrimage of faith for a time as historically, culturally, pastorally, and theologically contingent in nature and no longer adequate as expressions of her mystery and as conducive to her mission in the current historical epoch. It is a beginning to things judged as more in keeping with her mystery and mission in this same historical epoch. For Pope Paul VI, all of this is contained in the *nova et vetera* theme, in which the Church finds an adequate way to express her consciousness of

this dimension of her own mystery. Perhaps more deliberately and consciously than ever before, at Vatican II the Church did what she always does in order to be faithful to her mystery and mission. She entered more deeply into her own mystery in order to be faithful to all that is essential to that mystery while adapting herself to the exigencies of her catholic unity at this point in her history. The renewal of Vatican II should be understood as having been, for Pope Paul VI, an act of the Church drawing from the treasure of her own mystery and the deposit of faith things both old and new. N-V