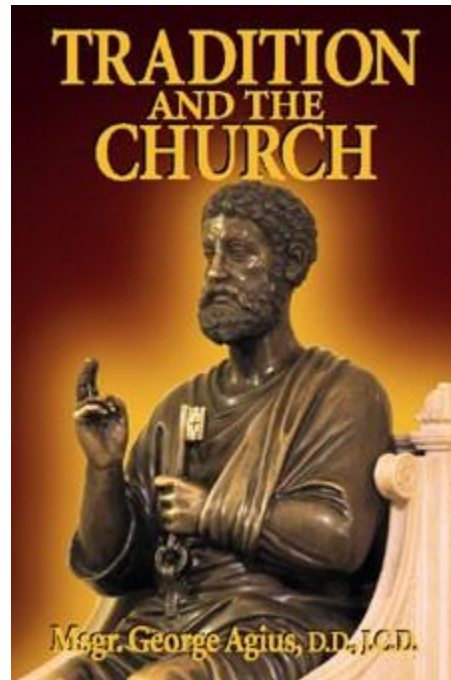


## **A Summary of Tradition and the Church by Msgr. George Agius**



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Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers, Inc, 2005

ISBN: 978-0895558213

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[You can purchase the full text at Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

## About the Author

Msgr. George Agius, D.D., J.C.D. was a priest that served in the various dioceses throughout the United States and abroad, and studied in Rome with the (then) future pope Pius XII. He spent much of his life and priestly ministry studying in order to help meet the challenges that confronted the Church in the 1920's. It was during this time that he wrote *Tradition and the Church*, which was originally published in 1928, largely in response to Protestant doctrines of Sola Scriptura and private judgment.

## General Introduction

Every question of Christian Doctrine touches Tradition. We must ask then what Tradition is and what it consists of. For the Protestant, Scripture alone constitutes the Rule of Faith, to the exclusion of all other things; for the Catholic, the Church, combined with Scripture, forms his Rule of Faith. Moreover, Protestants believe that it is an important doctrine and role of each individual believer to judge the scriptures and to interpret them personally. The rejection of Divine Tradition has caused Protestantism to fall into total disarray. That same Divine Tradition is nothing else other than the Apostolic succession of the eternal and infallible Church. The issue for the Protestant then is not just one of what Church, but more fundamentally of whether there is a Tradition at all. If there is, then it must be the Catholic Tradition.

## Chapter #1: General Notions of Tradition

*Tradition Means Whatever is Delivered, as well As the Way and Means by Which the Object Delivered Came to Us:*

The proper source of Revelation lies in the word of God, which is both written and unwritten. We sometimes say that the written is contained in Scripture, while the unwritten is contained in Tradition. By unwritten we do not, of course, mean that it has never been written down, but merely that it is not contained *explicitly* in the Scriptures. It was transmitted by the Apostles to their followers, and afterwards written down.

The word Tradition objectively means whatever is delivered or transmitted. However, there is another sense of Tradition apart from the objective, and that is the active. This refers to how the objective Tradition is transmitted to us and is a sufficient condition for the knowledge of the objective Tradition. In other words, active Tradition must by its very nature include the objective Tradition, and likewise the objective Tradition presupposes an active Tradition. They are materially equivalent. Tradition must always be understood in this composite sense. The active Tradition is the Church, because it is by the continued succession of the Church that Tradition is delivered to us.

*Traditions, Not Being All of the Same Kind Have a Different Value and Authority:*

Traditions are written, oral or practical. They are also distinguished by whether or not the object conveyed is dogmatic or disciplinary. Dogmatic tradition would include the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception, and disciplinary would include the practice of not eating meat on Fridays. Tradition can also either be local or universal, they can impose obligations or they can advise, they can be constitutive (i.e. constitutes a doctrine in and of itself) or inhesive (e.g. speaks to a doctrine that is found in Scripture). Most importantly, traditions are either divine or ecclesiastical.

*Traditions are Either Divine or Ecclesiastical:*

Traditions fall into these categories based on whether or not they derive from God or from the Church, respectively. Divine traditions belong to the Faith, while Ecclesiastical traditions belong to discipline. Divine

traditions are all dogmatic truths that must be believed and are revealed directly by God either in Scripture or through His Apostles, or by Christ Himself. Ecclesiastical traditions are legislative. The best rule of discernment is this: if the Church never dared to change a tradition, or to dispense with it, it is surely divine.

*As a General Rule, Tradition Must be Considered In Its Strict Sense:*

The only sense of Tradition that we must regard it in is the one that means those things delivered to us orally or practically.

*All Traditions Approved by the Church Should Be Respected and Believed:*

Because all traditions derive either from God or from the Church who was granted authority by God, they demand our respect and obedience.

## Chapter #2: The Constitution of the Church

*An Outline of the Constitution of the Church Throughout the Centuries:*

The Church was instituted by Christ Himself and is necessary for the salvation of mankind. The Church is an unequal society, composed of the clergy and the laity. The clergy are responsible for the administration of the Church. Supreme authority lies in the bishop of Rome.

*The Constitution of the Church is Substantially Unalterable:*

Because the Church was instituted by God Himself, it is unalterable. To set up a new authority is to set up no authority at all, because authority lies only in the Catholic Church. Authority is also a necessary part of the Christian religion, and as such the Church is a necessary part.

*Before Founding the Church, Christ Proved His Divinity:*

The scriptures are abundantly clear that Christ claimed to be of Divine nature. Christ not only claimed to be of Divine nature, but also lived as such and expounded such a perfect doctrine that only God could have taught it. Christ definitively proved His divinity.

*Authority is Necessary in the Church:*

Faith is obedience to a master, and obedience implies that there must be an authority (i.e. the master). Authority and obedience, then, are essential to the Faith and constitute its soul and body. Christ conveyed His authority to the Church, and so obedience to the Church is obedience to Christ.

*Christ communicates His Authority to the Apostles:*

After His Resurrection, Christ communicated His authority to the Apostles and conferred the Primacy on Peter. After this, what the Apostles preached and taught was free from error (i.e. infallible), and this is the fundamental act of creation of the Church.

*The Apostles Assert Their Full Authority:*

According to 2 Cor 5:20, the apostle considered themselves ambassadors of Christ, exhorting on behalf of Christ and teaching for Him. Paul even claims that should an Angel contradict his teachings, the believer must agree with Paul because of his divinely instituted authority (Gal 1:8-9).

*Obedience by the Faithful Was Due to the Apostles:*

The Faithful must obey those whom Christ appointed as their rulers. As such, all men are subject to the Apostles in matters of salvation. If they refuse to hear them, they refuse to hear Christ.

**Chapter #3: Establishment of Divine Tradition, That Is, of an Apostolic Succession: An Ever-Living and Official Body to Govern the Church**

*Introduction:*

It is not in the realm of Christian thought to consider what Christ might have done, only what He did do. Because He did institute this Church, it does not matter if some other form of Church or Tradition would have worked. Only what Christ has chosen matters for us. The Church He instituted must of a necessity exist today and be necessary for salvation.

*Christ Established a Perpetual Apostolic Succession:*

Jesus declared the Apostles teachers to all nations for all time. Obviously, as they did not live for all time or go to all nations, this capacity as teacher must be passed on to others.

*A Closer Analysis of Christ's Words in Matthew 28 and in John 14 Shows a perpetual Apostolic Succession:*

The words of Christ in these chapters show that each Apostle was the recipient of the new Revelation which was to be completed by them and nobody else. Second, each Apostle had divine authority over the Universal Church. Third, their authority was all subordinate to Peter and in communion with Peter as the head of the Apostles.

*The Apostles Chose and Instructed Their Successors in Office:*

As Christ commanded His Apostles to teach and preach and give witness all over the world, so the Apostles commanded those people that succeeded them as Bishops. Thus began the chain of Apostolic succession that will last until the end of time.

*Not All the Gifts, with Which Christ Enriched the Apostles, Passed to Their Successors in Office:*

There is a distinction in the graces given to the Apostles. Some were extraordinary (e.g. the reception of new Revelation, personal infallibility when teaching that revelation, authority over the Church without boundaries) and some were ordinary and belonged to their status as Bishops (e.g. infallibility when in communion, authority over a specific part of the Church, the capacity to ordain and function as priests). Only the ordinary powers of the Apostles as Bishops passed on to their successors, not the extraordinary powers. In Peter's case, the primacy of his office was part of the Ordinary powers of the Bishop of Rome, and is passed along to the successive Bishops of Rome.

*The Apostolic Succession is not Impaired by the Absence of the Extraordinary Charisms:*

The successors of the Apostles were granted all the graces they needed in order to effectively govern the Church. No new revelation is to be expected, and as such the successors of the Apostles succeed them only as Bishops and not as new Apostles.

## Chapter #4: Necessity of an Apostolic Succession

### *Introduction:*

Without a Magisterium (i.e. divine teaching authority of the Church) the Faith can be neither universal nor one. Universality of Faith is presenting the same Revelation to all men in all ages and places, according to their intelligence. Unity of Faith is that uniformity of belief and profession which is identical in every member of the Church

### *The Last Word of the Church on Religious Unity:*

Because the Revelation to the Catholic Church was full and complete, the Church can accept no compromise or conditions on the Revelation. It is thus never possible to deny even the tiniest article of the Faith in order to reconcile with our departed Brethren.

### *Universality of Faith Cannot be Attained Through the Scriptures Only:*

Sola Scriptura is a doctrine that is intrinsically flawed because it fails to make the Church Universal, as Christ prayed for it to be. For the first 1500 years of Christianity most Christians were illiterate and yet managed to receive the same Faith as others through the auspices of the Church. To learn the Faith you must have a Master or Teacher, and text alone or Scripture alone cannot possibly provide all the unity that is needed. If this is contested, a simple look at what Protestantism looks like today will prove the case.

### *Universality of Faith Cannot be Affected by Immediate Revelation or Scientific Demonstration, but Only by the Living Authority of the Church:*

God does grant special revelation to some specifically favored souls, but this is extremely rare and it cannot provide the Unity of Faith that God intended for His Church. Also, scientific demonstration or personal judgment cannot bring the Christian world together in Unity. Humans are not infallible and cannot infallibly reach the entirety of the Faith on their own.

### *Without Church Authority There can be No Unity of Faith:*

As we have shown, no other methods of achieving Unity of Faith are truly effective, and authority is necessary, and Christ granted authority to His Church. Only the Church can affect Unity of Faith.

### *Universality and Unity of Faith Have been Lost by All the Oldest Denominations of Protestantism:*

Protestants believe that each individual reader of Scripture will be guided to the truth by the Holy Spirit and thus Unity of the Faith will be achieved. This obviously has not occurred, and even Martin Luther disagreed with other Protestants about the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit cannot contradict Himself, and so it is impossible for Protestants to achieve Unity of Faith in this manner. Consequently, the majority of Protestant faiths have now declared that Universality of the Faith and Unity of the Faith are no longer essential.

*Universality and Unity of Faith Do Not Exist In the Protestant Denominations of Today:*

Protestantism of today (1928) is no better. They are now split into two groups, the Modernists and the Fundamentalists. Modernists follow the dictates of their private judgment, while Fundamentalists follow the ‘creed’ of their denomination and Scripture. Protestants are still splintered, and even further splintered than in the past, over their doctrinal conceptions. As such, they must reject the necessity of the Unity of the Faith or authority in the Church. One Protestant said: “If I had to recognize any authority in the Church, logic itself convinces me to turn to the Catholic Church” (D. Shenkel).

*The Successors of the Apostles Are the Infallible Guardians of the Deposit of Faith:*

Christ is with the Apostles and their successors to the end of the world, by His own admission (cf. Matt 28:20). As such, God insures that the succession and the Deposit of Faith are guarded infallibly against error.

*Those Who are Charged with the Infallible Guardianship of the Deposit of Faith are also Its Infallible Teachers:*

The essential principle of Divine Tradition is the perpetual and infallible keeping of the original sense and of the specific understanding of the Faith by the successors of the Apostles. As such, those who guard the faith as successors can also infallibly teach what the Faith means as its infallible interpreters.

## Chapter #5: Testimony of the First Centuries

*Introduction:*

Some Protestants will claim that the Church accepted tradition up until either the Apostles died or the Scriptures were written, at which point the Early Church became Sola Scriptura. This is impossible, as demonstrated by historical research and Church history.

*The Apostolic Churches were Ruled by Tradition As Well as by the Scriptures:*

Historical testimony shows that the whole of Christian antiquity during the time of the Apostles held to Tradition. Authors such as St. Clement (ordained by St. Peter) and St. Ignatius (disciple of St. John) stringently defend Tradition.

*Tradition and Scripture Ruled the Church in the Last Half of the Second Century and All of the Third Century:*

The same course of writing and holding onto Tradition can be demonstrated in the Third Century as well. St. Irenaeus defends Tradition in the last half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century against Gnostics and other heretics. Tertullian declared that heretics are not even allowed to argue from the Scriptures because the Scriptures were written by Catholics, and Catholics knew what they meant. It was therefore impossible for someone to take Catholic Scriptures and tell Catholics what the Catholic author supposedly meant, especially when there were still people living who had spoken to those authors and believed in Tradition.

*In the First Centuries of the Church the Practical Manner of Judging the Truth or Falsity of Doctrine was Based on the Fundamental Principle That all Revelation Is Kept and Delivered in its Integrity only Through the Common Consent of the Pastors and Doctors:*

History shows us that people did not immediately have recourse to Scriptures to decide what was true about the Faith, but that they looked to the rulers of the Church who had authority to tell them what the Faith was. Thus, the Early Church soon began to adopt Creeds to define the Faith and an understanding of the body of Tradition that was not added to or changed.

*In the First Centuries, When a New Doctrine Appeared Among the Faithful, the Feeling of the Church Was So Aroused, That She Used All Possible Ways to Put an End to it:*

The Church was so adamantly against introducing any new doctrine into Tradition that when a heretic or schismatic proposed a foreign doctrine or something novel, the entire Church rose up against it. The Bishop in the area the doctrine arose condemned those involved, and also informed the Roman Pontiff of the crises and the neighboring Bishops as well.

*The Church Has Always Been Ruled by Scripture and by Tradition:*

The testimonies of the Church Fathers both before and after the Nicene councils are identical in regards to the Faith and the use of Scripture and Tradition. St. Augustine is a staunch defender of Tradition.

*The Explanation Offered by Protestants on The Testimonies of Tradition of the Early Church Cannot be Accepted Because the First Christians Interpreted Scripture According to Tradition:*

Some Protestants will contend that the early writers in the Church were only using Scripture as the basis for their writings and theology, and hence it was the Scriptures that brought about the unity and harmony of the Early Church. They fail to notice those same writers defending Tradition and the essential presupposition that any interpretation of Scripture that the Fathers use is the one that the Church authorized. The Scriptures exist in so far as the Church brought them into existence and gave them to the faithful, not vice versa.

## Chapter #6: Existence of Tradition

*There is No Reason Why Revelation from its Nature should Necessarily Be Restricted to Scripture:*

Because God is infinitely perfect, anything that humans can do well God must be able to do perfectly. Hence, if man can express his thoughts both in writing and in words, God also can do so. Therefore, God is not restricted to using only Scriptures.

*After the Creation and Fall of Man, Down to The Coming of Christ, Tradition Always Existed:*

The earliest faith of the Hebrews was handed down orally at least until the time of Moses. For much of that time people could not even write or read, and so Tradition was the only method of transmission of the Faith.

*The Church Always Believed Theoretically in Tradition:*

There are many dogmatic truths that must be believed but are not contained in Scriptures. This existed for both the Hebrews and for us. The Church has always accepted this, as can be seen in one of the early councils of the Church which declared: "If any one denies Ecclesiastical Tradition, whether it is written or not, let him be anathema (i.e. cut off from the Church)."

*What the Church Believed Theoretically She Also Professed Always in her Practice, that is, Truths and Rites Which are Not Contained in The Scriptures:*

The Church also contains many rites and liturgies that are not enumerated in Scripture and pass down to us through Tradition. She has always believed in these practical Traditions, and so has also professed her belief in Tradition both theoretically and practically.

## Chapter #7: Aberrations of Protestantism

*Protestantism is Inconsistent:*

Protestants insist on dogmas not contained in scriptures, such as Sola Scriptura. This is intrinsically inconsistent, because Scripture does not contain these truths. Scriptures do not explicitly declare the doctrine of the Trinity, the substitutionary theory of the Blood of the Atonement, the immediate and visible second advent of Christ, and yet Protestants declare that you must believe these things to Christian. The mere existence of any declaration that a Protestant must believe something is inconsistent with the original supposition of private judgment and Sola Scriptura. Each Protestant should have to decide for himself, in order to be consistent.

*The Principle of Protestantism—Considered As the Main Foundation and Reason for its Separation From the Catholic Church—Is an Open Contradiction:*

Because of the above facts, the principal reasons for Protestants leaving the Church (e.g. Sola Scriptura and Private Judgment) are open logical contradictions. Faith consists in the submission of the intellect to a higher authority, and that is exactly the opposite of the Reformation's ideas.

*In the Belief and Practice of Religion, Our Separated Brethren Profess and Perform Many Things, Which are not Written in the Scriptures. They Know Them Only from Tradition:*

Some of these practices include the belief in the Trinity, following the Catholic Church in celebrating the Lord's Day on Sunday instead of Saturday. Some of the beliefs they hold seem to openly contradict Scripture, such as the permissibility of eating strangled meat or blood, taking oaths in certain circumstances, and the celebration of Sunday instead of Saturday. All of these things may in fact or are in fact permissible, but the only way to know that is from Church Tradition.

## Chapter #8

*Introduction*

It is impossible that the Church became 'corrupted' in the first centuries of its existence. This is due to the fact that the Apostles were still alive when the first generation of Christians were being taught, and those Christians were alive and teaching the second and third generations.

*The Traditions of the Church are not Subject to Corruption:*

Because the Traditions were written either in Scripture or by the Fathers, it is impossible that they could become corrupted over time. It would be easy to point back to what the Fathers wrote and notice the distinction if there was one.



*Tradition, Approved by the Church, is a Supernatural and Absolute Certitude in Every Century of the Church:*

Because the Church has been granted divine authority and is infallible in its teaching of Tradition and Revelation, whatever the Church declares as Tradition is absolute and certainly true in all ages and times.

*The Canon or Rule of St. Vincent of Lerin is True in an Affirmative, not in an Exclusive Sense. It is Simply the Way to Find Out the Apostolicity of a Certain Doctrine in Order to Repel Novelty:*

St. Vincent of Lerin said “We must hold what has been held always, everywhere, and by all; this is truly and properly Catholic ... this can be obtained if we follow universality, antiquity, consent.” This statement must be taken in its sense of its affirmation of what is Tradition, not in its exclusive sense. That is, there may be implicit doctrines of the Church that were not always known by everyone, but were implied in the Church’s explicit doctrines. Those implicit doctrines can become clear and be explicitly stated without breaking St. Vincent of Lerin’s rule.

## Chapter #9: Means and Ways by Which Tradition is Safely Transmitted

*Introduction:*

Tradition is transmitted by the infallible and ever-living Apostolic Succession of the Church.

*The Solemn Judgment of the Church is an infallible Proof of Divine Tradition:*

Because the Church is the infallible teacher of Tradition, whatever it solemnly declares as dogma must be believed and professed by all and is essential to the Faith. It is not permissible to abstain from even one of the Dogmas of the Church.

*The Symbol [Creed] of the Apostles is truly “Apostolic,” Not only in Doctrine, But in Origin:*

The Apostle’s Creed is rightly called Apostolic because it came to us through those taught by the Apostles. The truths contained in it were enumerated by the Apostles and passed on to the successive generations of Christians, who wrote it down in the form of the Apostle’s Creed

*The Nicene—Constantinopolitan and Athanasian Symbols are a Vindication of the Mystery of The Most Blessed Trinity:*

The Creeds that followed the Apostle’s Creed were enumerations on that Creed and more clearly explained points of dogma and doctrine that had been disputed by heretics. Thus the Athanasian Creed revolves around the Trinity, and the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed focuses on the Incarnation of Christ, the Procession of the Holy Spirit, and the general dogmas of the Faith.

*The Common Belief of the Fathers and the Analogy To Reason Prove That the Consent of the Faithful is a Rule of Divine Tradition:*

When the Catholic people as a whole proclaim that a doctrine or an institution is true and practice it, that is a safe sign that the doctrine is part of divine Revelation whether contained in the Scriptures or not. So long as the Church remains unified and universal, the body cannot be separated and so what it proclaims as a whole must be true.

*The Constant and Unanimous Consent of Catholic Schools on Matters of Faith is a Certain Proof of Divine Tradition:*

While the Schools do not have teaching authority and do not act as official witnesses of the Church, we are able to arrive at the knowledge possessed by the Apostolic Succession through the testimony of these Schools. Thus, whatever the Catholic Schools teach as Matters of Faith that is taught unanimously amongst them all at all times is certainly proof that it is a Divine Tradition.

*The Ancient Ecclesiastical Monuments Are an Ever-living Expression and a Visible Confirmation of Catholic Christianity:*

The tomb markings in the crypts of the Early Church and the decorations of the earliest churches all bear witness to certain dogmas contained only explicitly in Tradition that were believed by the Church. These artifacts bear witness to the fact that the Church was not ever ‘Sola Scriptura’, but believed in Tradition as well.

## **Chapter #10: The Fathers and Doctors of the Church**

*The “Fathers” and “Doctors” Were in Every Century the “Luminaries” of the Church:*

To be declared a Father or Doctor of the Church means that the presentation of doctrine given by the person must be especially pure and correct. The person also must possess an extraordinary level of personal sanctity, and typically the nearer that the writers are to Christ and the Apostolic times the more revered is their testimony.

*The Fathers Distinguish the Scriptures from Tradition as two Different Parts of Revelation:*

The Fathers are unanimous in making this distinction about the ways in which Revelation is passed on. None of the Fathers reject Tradition in any way and regard the passing on of Scriptures and Tradition as both valid transmissions of Church beliefs.

*The Unanimous Consent of the Fathers of the Church in Matters of Faith and Morals is a Rule of Divine Tradition:*

When the Fathers of the Church consent on certain doctrines which belong to the Faith and the Church does not contest them, this is a sure sign that the Fathers are illuminating Divine Tradition. Likewise, if the Fathers of the Church explain a certain doctrine that is not explicitly declared by the Church, it is a dangerous sign of temerity to disagree with them.

*The Consent of Some of the Fathers, When the Others Are Silent, Or Not Contradicting, Is a Sure Argument of Divine Tradition:*

When some of the Fathers speak to a doctrine and the others are silent and not contradicting, it is a sure sign that the doctrine is Divine Tradition. Typically, other Fathers are silent because they respect the ability of the original writers to deal with the issue, or the issue has already been settled, or is not of concern in the geographical area where the silent Fathers were writing.

*The Consent of Either All the Western, or of All the Eastern Fathers, or Even of a Very Few Of the Fathers, When the Rest Do Not Contradict, Is a Sure Argument of Divine Tradition:*

Likewise, the consent of even a very few of the Fathers when all of the others do not contradict them is a sign that they are illuminating Divine Tradition.

*Although the Fathers of the Church Are Not Infallible, Their Authority Is so Great That, Whenever Any One of the Fathers Does Not Appear To Be of One Mind with the Others, We Must Be Very Cautious Before Declaring That He is in Error, Or Not in Accord With The Rest of Them:*

Because the Church Fathers were such saintly men and so valiantly defended the Faith against heretics, when it seems that one of them is declaring a doctrine differently than the others, it is important to examine his meaning in every light in order to determine that it is not in some way in accord with the rest of the Fathers.

*The Fathers Did Not Advocate the Sufficiency Of the Scriptures to the Exclusion of Tradition:*

None of the Fathers at any point advocated the doctrine of Sola Scriptura or Private Judgment. On the contrary, they fought against any notion even close to that, and argued that the Church's Tradition was essential to the Faith.

*The Opinion, or Doctrine, Approved by Some of The Fathers, that Christ Will Reign Upon Earth With the Just for a Thousand Years Does Not Impair the Statement that the Consent of the Fathers, or of the Faithful, Is a Sure Proof of Divine Tradition:*

Some of the earliest Church Fathers spoke of a doctrine called Millennialism, but it was never unanimously accepted or even consented to without at least some debate amongst the Fathers. Many Fathers declared that there was insufficient understanding at that point in time to make a declaration on it, and so it was possible to agree or disagree without rejecting the faith. Unanimously, the Fathers later rejected this as a doctrine, and so this does not impair the earlier statement regarding the consent of the Church Fathers as a sign of Divine Tradition.

## Chapter #11: The Intellect of the Church

*The Catholic Church is the Subject of Divine Tradition; the Deposit of Faith is the Object:*

Divine Tradition is split into its subjective and objective sense. The object is the thing delivered (i.e. the 'tradition' itself). This is the Deposit of Faith. The subject is the method by which it is delivered, and this is the Church.

*The "Catholic Intellect," Instructing and Moving the Church in her Solemn Definitions, or Manifesting Itself in the Consent of the Apostolic Succession Under the Assistance of the Holy Ghost, is the Infallible Interpreter of Scripture:*

The "Catholic Intellect" is a way of referring to the Magisterium of the Church. It is through the Church's 'intellect' that it declares the meaning of its Tradition, and as the Church is guided by the Holy Spirit until the end of time and is infallible, the "Catholic Intellect's" interpretation of Scripture is also infallible.

*The Authentic Interpretation of the Church on Any Scriptural Texts is the Supreme "rule of Intelligence," Which Must Simply be Followed:*

When the Church declares what the Scriptures mean on any particular point, the declaration is absolutely true. It would be heretical from then on to bend those Scriptures to mean something other than what the Church has taught.

*The Authentic Interpretation of the Church Is a “Rule of Intelligence” in a Negative and An Affirmative Sense. If the Church has not Specifically Set Forth Any Authentic Interpretation, She is the “Supreme Canon of Interpretation” in a Negative Sense:*

By affirmative sense, we mean that if the Church has spoken as to what Scriptural text means, we must hold to that as revealed and true. If the Church has not yet spoken on a Scriptural text, then we must not bend that text to mean the opposite of anything the Church has taught or to oppose the Church on any grounds. This is the ‘negative sense’ of the “Rule of Intelligence”. Because Scriptures cannot contradict themselves, we can be sure that no part of Scriptures not yet taught explicitly by the Church will explicitly deny any other part.

*In any Scriptural Doctrine the “Catholic Intellect” Helps and Leads to the Truth in a Positive Way:*

Because the “Catholic Intellect” contains the whole body of Tradition handed down by the Apostles and can perfectly understand it, the “Catholic Intellect” is essential in learning the Truth of the Scriptures. It is only by the “Catholic Intellect” that one could fully understand the Angel Gabriel’s greeting to Mary and know that it ultimately means she is the Immaculate Conception, for example.

*The “Catholic Intellect” is Not an Obstacle to A Progressive and Fuller Knowledge of the Scriptures:*

It is impossible to understand the Scriptures properly without the infallible authority that helped in their creation. As such, the “Catholic Intellect” is never an obstacle to understanding the Truth, but always aids in the process. At any point that the “Catholic Intellect” becomes an obstacle, it is a sure sign that the interpretation is incorrect.

## Chapter #12: Relation of Tradition to Scripture

*In its Relation to Scripture, Tradition Comes First Chronologically:*

Because Tradition existed both in the Old Testament and in the New Covenant before writing, it is obvious that it existed chronologically before Scriptures.

*According to the Order Established by Christ, No One Can Have a True Christian Knowledge of the Scriptures without Divine Tradition. Tradition thus Precedes the Scriptures Historically and Theologically:*

Because there is a distinction between the knowledge ‘of the Scriptures’ and the knowledge of ‘what the Scriptures mean’, it is impossible to interpret them accurately without knowing the original intent and meaning of the authors. Only Divine Tradition can carry on that meaning infallibly, and so Tradition precedes our understanding of the Scriptures by allowing us to interpret them (cf. 2 Pet. 1:20-21). Thus, Tradition precedes Scriptures both historically and theologically.

*Tradition, Not the Scriptures, Was Intended by the Apostles to Rule the Church of Christ:*

The Apostles did not ever explicitly declare that Scriptures would be the rule of the Church, and some of the Scriptures were not even written by the Apostles themselves. It is impossible to surmise that the Apostles intended Scriptures to be the rule from Scriptures alone, especially because Scriptures never state this. It is obvious from the statements of the Apostles even in Scriptures that the Apostles intended Tradition to rule the Church.

*In Comprehension, Tradition is Broader Than The Scriptures:*

Tradition's objective sense is that which is delivered as doctrine in any form. In this sense, the body of what has been delivered is broader than the body of the Scriptures, and contains more information.

*The Nature Itself of the Scriptures is an Evidence That They are not the Principal, Nor the Only Means, Instituted by Christ for the Propagation And Preservation of the Church:*

As the Scriptures are personal letters of the Apostles and even address individuals of the Church at the time, sometimes even giving specific advice for scenarios that can never repeat themselves (e.g. Paul telling Timothy to take wine for his stomach problems), the Scriptures bear witness to the fact that they were not written as a permanent guide to the Church. There is no central structure to them, they do not systematically lay out doctrine as one would expect in a rulebook for the Church, and they touch on topics that are entirely personal. They bear witness to the opposite of Sola Scriptura, mainly that they were meant to be an aid in ruling the Church and not its sole source of information.

## Chapter #13: Development of Tradition

*Introduction:*

Because Tradition is so complex and so broad, it is possible that some things are not yet understood. Thus, Tradition can still develop. It does not develop in the sense that something new or novel is added, but it develops in the sense that we can further understand something implicitly stated in Tradition.

*All Catholic Revelation Must Be Believed, If not Explicitly, at Least Implicitly:*

Because the entirety of the Deposit of Faith has been given to us, it is essential that it be believed in its entirety. It is not essential that it all be believed explicitly, because there are some things which are not fully yet explained or declared by the Church. It is however essential that what has been solemnly declared is explicitly believed, and that the individual gives an assent of faith to what the Church as a whole implicitly believes.

*It is Possible that not All Revelation Was at All Times and Everywhere Explicitly Declared and Believed in the Church:*

It is possible that through the guidance of the Holy Spirit who came to 'teach us all truth', and through human study of Tradition and the questioning and controversies caused by heretics, that what was once only implicit in Tradition could become clear and be pronounced explicitly. Therefore, there could have been a point in time when the Church as a whole did not explicitly believe something that it later declared and explicitly believed.

*Many Truths Held Today as Revealed Were not Always so. They May Have Been Even Denied Without Shipwreck of the Faith:*

Many of the truths that we believe today are like this, in that they were not always explicitly declared by the Church. In the past, it would have even been possible to deny some of these things without absolutely abandoning the faith, because they were not yet fully explained. Once they were fully explained, full agreement with them became essential.

*Those Truths, Which Were not Always Explicitly Believed as Revealed Could Never Have Been so Obscure That An Opposite and Negative Consent Could Ever Have Prevailed Against Them:*

It is impossible that an implicit belief was ever so confusing and obscure that a person could validly declare the exact opposite of that belief.

*The Definitions of the Church on Any Revealed Truth Contain not only Some of the Truth, But the Truth Pure and Simple:*

Whatever the Church defines about a specific dogma is entirely the truth about it. It is not possible that at some later date it could be understood in a different or fuller way, because the original declaration was the entire simple truth about the dogma.

## Chapter #14: Completeness of Revelation

*Catholic Revelation must not Be Confounded with Private Revelation:*

Catholic Revelation came to its end at the death of St. John, the last of the Apostles. It must not, as such, be confused with the revelation that God gives to some very special souls. Those revelations are meant for those people in particular, and not for the Church as a whole.

*Catholic Revelation has So Come to an End That It Excludes the Formation of a New Church, Or of Another Testament of a More Perfect Order, or with a More Abundant Divine Communication of the Truth:*

Because the Deposit of Faith contains the entire truth in its most abundant way, it is impossible that something could be added to it or that a new revelation could be given that would form a new Church or a new Deposit of Faith.

*Catholic Revelation was Completed by the Holy Ghost Through the Apostles. No Other is To Be Expected:*

The completeness of Truth has been given to us in Christ and the Deposit, and so we cannot expect additions to the completeness.

*The Catholic Church Has Always Considered Revelation, Both in Doctrine and in Practice, as Closed Forever:*

The truth is absolute and so cannot be changed. Thus, any novelty or change in the faith must be heresy, as the addition of truths to the Faith has been forever sealed because it is complete.

*The deposit of Faith is Greater and More Complete the Closer It Is to the Plenitude of Time, That Is, to Christ:*

In the history of salvation, the truths revealed to man have become closer to fullness as history approached Christ. What the Patriarchs knew as revelation before the Jewish faith was established under Moses was not quite as complete as Moses' understanding. Likewise, our Deposit of Faith is not only fuller, but completely full, because it is revealed by Truth Himself in Christ.