

APPENDIX I

Quo Primum Has Not Been Revoked

*“Neve Præsules, Administratores, Canonici, Capellani et alii quocumque nomine nuncupati Presbyteri sæculares, aut cujusvis Ordinis regularis, ad Missam aliter, quam a nobis statutum est, celebrandum teneantur: neque ad Missale hoc immutandum a quolibet cogi et compelli, præsentives litteræ ullo umquam tempore revocari, aut moderari possint, sed firmæ semper et valide in suo existant robore, similiter [auctoritate apostolica] statuimus et declaramus.”**

The most desperate arguments have been advanced in order to cast doubt on what is the clear and obvious meaning of this most solemn pronouncement. It is a time-honoured principle and rule that a law is to be understood according to the proper signification of its terms, and this principle is also enshrined in the present Code under Canon 17, which reads: “Ecclesiastical laws *are to be understood in accord with the proper meaning of the words* considered in their text and context.” “The presumption”, explains the Canon Law Society Commentary, “is that the legislator said what was meant; hence, the meaning of the text should not be changed on the bases of factors which are not expressed in the law itself.” (p. 36)

The clear signification of the words in the solemn declaration leaves no room for any positive doubt about what is meant. The clause, “*Neque ... præsentives litteræ ullo umquam tempore*

* See p. 7 for the English translation of this portion of *Quo Primum*.

revocari, aut moderari possint, sed firmæ semper et valide in suo existant robore, similiter statuimus et declaramus”*, expresses a precise and univocal meaning: namely, that the **document cannot ever be revoked or modified** — **it is an irreformable document**. The clause **cannot** legitimately be construed to mean anything other than that which it clearly and unequivocally states. It cannot be legitimately maintained, for example, that “*præsentesve litteræ ullo umquam tempore revocari aut moderari possint*”** means that no one under the rank of Pope may revoke or modify, but that a Pope can revoke or modify *Quo Primum*, since the statement does not refer to persons but to the document itself. The noun *præsentesve litteræ* is the subject of the verbs *revocari* and *moderari* expressed in the passive voice: the *document itself*, therefore, is declared to be incapable of revocation or modification. *Quo Primum* is solemnly declared to be intrinsically incapable of revocation or modification: the irrevocability of *Quo Primum* is a proper attribute pertaining to the very nature of the document itself. By declaring definitively that *Quo Primum* can never be revoked or modified, St. Pius V has *infallibly taught* that ***Quo Primum is of itself irreformable***.

Furthermore, since the declaration was made in a solemn and definitive manner: if we must defer to the judgements of theologians, canonists and scholars, who will explain to us that the meaning of a solemn declaration is different from that meaning which it has

* “We likewise statute and declare that this present document cannot ever be revoked or modified at any time, but remains always firm and valid in its force.” *Quo Primum*.

** German Translator’s note: It is a grave error to accept this expression *in this context* as a merely juridical phrase. The argument that there have been other documents which contained the same phrase and were abrogated by later popes is not valid, since those documents (e.g. the suppression of the Jesuit order) dealt with purely disciplinary matters. The principle *par in parem potestatem non habet*, is applicable in the case of a pope and his successor only in matters of discipline and ecclesiastical governance. Substantial changes in the liturgy or the creation of a new liturgy is a matter of faith and not a merely disciplinary matter, as is clearly seen from the context of the papal oath of coronation, the principle *lex orandi - lex credendi*, the above quoted popes and papally approved theologians, the documents of the Council of Trent and various documents following *Quo Primum* in the Roman Missal. The very important distinction between the juridical and moral rights and obligations is, therefore, in its application to *Quo Primum*, purely academic.

clearly expressed, or will tell us which definitive pronouncements are infallible and which are not, then, without doubt, the concept of papal infallibility will have plainly collapsed and utterly failed. If the true meaning of a solemn papal declaration is to be construed as something in any manner different from or incompatible with the proper literal sense expressed in the declared formulation, then the declaration is, in the proper sense of the word, objectively erroneous. It is, therefore, inadmissible to attempt to interpret *Quo Primum* according to a sense that would give its solemn pronouncement any sense of meaning or qualification of meaning that is literally or logically incompatible with its properly expressed literal sense.

Quo Primum is no “merely ecclesiastical law” (can. 11) that can be revoked, but has been enacted into ecclesiastical law *as a particular application of divine law*, and therefore has been definitively declared to be irreformable. It has been solemnly and infallibly declared to be irrevocable. *Quo Primum* has been infallibly declared to be irreformable because the rite of Mass codified in the Tridentine Missal is the “received and approved rite” [*Iniunctum nobis*] of the Roman Church that has been “handed down by the Holy Roman Church” (*a sacrosancta Romana Ecclesia ... tradita*) [*Quo Primum*]. The statutes of *Quo Primum*, therefore, pertain to Divine Law insofar as they constitute a particular application of the Divine Law that has been expressed in its general formulation in the Tridentine Profession of Faith [*Iniunctum nobis*], the Council of Trent [*Sess. VII, can. XIII*], and the Council of Florence [*Decretum pro Graecis*]. Hence, *Quo Primum* is far from being a mere disciplinary matter of ecclesiastical law, but is a definitive application of the Divine Law as has been expressed by the *extraordinary magisterium* of the Church, and therefore any attempt to revoke it, or to suppress the Roman Rite, would be an act that incurs the wrath of God and the holy apostles Peter and Paul.