

Vatican II in 1964: Major Doctrinal Advances, But Also Fissures On Addressing the Modern World

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***Abstract:** This text expands the public lecture given at the Pontifical College Josephinum on November 19, 2014. After treating the importance of re-receiving the Second Vatican Council, the text introduces the Council documents in both their chronological and hierarchical order. A significant portion of the Council's sixteen documents come together in their inner coherence when they are arranged according to the relation between doctrine and ecclesial roles and practice. The doctrine is that of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, completed and promulgated November 21, 1964. Ten other Vatican II documents, that is, the nine Decrees on ecclesial, pastoral, and apostolic action, along with the Declaration on Non-Christian Religions, have their doctrinal bases in *Lumen gentium*. In the decrees, Vatican II was clearly a Council of reform, oriented toward promoting better practice, but this was less a decision of the Council's will than a set of consequences flowing from its ecclesiological doctrine. Finally, on "lights and shadows" over Vatican II in 1964, the article reviews both positive outcomes of that year and events which upset some Council participants. A rift of long-term importance emerged in the critical turn of Henri de Lubac against what he saw as secularizing tendencies emerging in the Catholic world and in theological positions advanced by some Council experts.*

Introduction

Two articles on the Second Vatican Council have gone ahead of this essay.¹ The present contribution takes up key developments in the Council during its third period of work in 1964. I present these details with a profound sense that the Coun-

1. Jared Wicks, SJ, "Vatican II Taking Hold of Its (and Pope John's) Council Goals, September 1962 - May 1963," *Josephinum Journal of Theology* 19 (2012), 172-86; and "Vatican II's Turn in 1963: Toward Renewing Catholic Ecclesiology and Validating Catholic Ecumenical Engagement," *Josephinum Journal of Theology* 19 (2012), 194-206.

cil of fifty years ago was clearly an epoch-making ecclesial event. The Council of 1962 to 1965 was for Catholics the beginning of the era of church history which continues now and in which we still live. Vatican II was a turning point – a decisive shift in which the Catholic heritage of teaching and practice showed its dynamic character by reformulations, new configurations and a new style, thus offering a new impetus for faith and witness, which, if one is rightly positioned to receive it, can still have a deep and salutary influence.

However, we must also admit that in many places the Catholic people received the Council's elegant teaching and uplifting norms of practice very imperfectly. Nearly twenty years after Vatican II ended, in 1983 and 1984, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger gave lectures and interviews marked by incisive analyses of the very poor communication of the rich contents of the Vatican II documents.² In May 1985, Pope John Paul II told the Belgian bishops that “the Council was badly studied, badly interpreted, badly applied, and this has provoked disorientations and divisions. . . . It is necessary to bring a remedy.”³ Many of us know from our own extended families and circle of acquaintances the low level of religious engagement of many “emerging adult” Catholics, as the Notre Dame sociologists, Christian Smith and associates, have made clear, especially in their book of early 2014, *Young Catholic America. Emerging Adults In, Out of, and Gone from the Church*. The argument is that their parents, not all, but a critical number, did not receive the salutary influence of the Council so that they could pass it on.⁴ To be sure, some very impressive emerging adult Catholics are living an exemplary Catholic engagement, but they are dwarfed by the large number of their contemporaries “out of and gone,” and so sadly lacking Vatican II dimensions in their spiritual lives.

Consequently, it is urgent to open doors to encountering Vatican II, for a “re-reception” of its doctrinal and spiritual riches. About these riches, the Australian Jesuit, Gerald O’Collins, says that after his fifty years of study of the Vatican II documents, re-reading them these days often leaves him astonished over their “golden bits” of teaching and guidance.⁵ Here, by concentrating on what Vatican II gave us in late November 1964, ways will open to find intellectual and spiritual bits of gold in the Council. It can uplift our minds and hearts – by Vatican II’s grand configuration of elegant texts on being the Church of Christ and on living out calls to service of the world as the people of God.

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2. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, “Sources and Transmission of the Faith,” *Communio* 10 (1983), 17–34, a lecture given on successive days in Lyons and Paris in January 1983 on the “crisis of catechetics.” Also, Vittorio Messori, ed. *The Ratzinger Report. An Exclusive Interview on the State of the Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985), based on a lengthy interview of August 15, 1984, and published as well in Italian, German, French, Portuguese and Spanish.
 3. Reported by Gerald O’Connell in the first part of his chronicle of the 1985 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the Reception of Vatican II, in *The Month* 19 (1986), 44.
 4. *Young Catholic America. Emerging Adults In, Out of, and Gone from the Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). See especially Ch. 1, on the many formational failures in the years 1965–80 in transmitting Catholic faith and values to those who are today the parents of the 18 to 23 year-old emerging adults.
 5. *The Second Vatican Council. Message and Meaning* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2014), in the Preface, p. ix.

The Sixteen Vatican II Documents, Chronologically and Hierarchically

In 1964 the Council held the third of its four working periods of daily meetings in St. Peter's Basilica. The third period's last meeting, on November 21, 1964, marked the second time the Council completed documents and Pope Paul VI gave his assent and promulgated them as norms of teaching and service in the church for the salvation of the world.

To give the solemn event at the end of the 1964 period its proper context, the following list indicates the sixteen documents of the Council in their chronological order, from 1963 to 1965, according to the dates of their completion and promulgation by Pope Paul VI at the five solemn "sessions" of the Council.

The Vatican II Documents - Chronologically

Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy

Sacrosanctum Concilium (SC), Dec. 4, 1963

Decree on the Mass Media

Inter mirifica (IM), Dec. 4, 1963

Dogmatic Constitution on the Church

Lumen gentium (LG), Nov. 21, 1964

Decree on Ecumenism

Unitatis redintegratio (UR), Nov. 21, 1964

Decree on the Catholic Eastern Churches

Orientalium Ecclesiarum (OE), Nov. 21, 1964

Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops

Christus Dominus (CD), Oct. 28, 1965

Decree on the Training of Priests

Optatum totius (OT), Oct. 28, 1965

Decree on Up-to-date Renewal of Religious Life

Perfectae caritatis (PC), Oct. 28, 1965

Declaration on the Church's Relation to Non-Christian Religions

Nostra aetate (NA), Oct. 28, 1965

Declaration on Christian Education

Gravissimum educationis (GE), Oct. 28, 1965

Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation

Dei verbum (DV), Nov. 18, 1965

Decree on the Lay Apostolate

Apostolicam actuositatem (AA), Nov. 18, 1965

Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World

Gaudium et spes (GS), Dec. 7, 1965

Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests

Presbyterorum ordinis (PO), Dec. 7, 1965
 Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity
Ad gentes (AG), Dec. 7, 1965
 Declaration on Religious Liberty
Dignitatis humanae (DH), Dec. 7, 1965

This list gives the results of the final event of the 1964 Council period in the second cluster of three documents promulgated November 21, 1964: on the Church, Ecumenism, and the Catholic Eastern Churches. Three more solemn sessions followed during the final period in 1965, when the Council brought in its ample harvest from the hard work that extended from preparations begun in 1960 through the four working periods.

But the same sixteen documents of the Council can also be listed in a “hierarchical” order according to their solemnity and the kind of content issued to the church and the world in each of them.

The Vatican II Documents - “Hierarchically”

Dogmatic Constitution on the Church
Lumen gentium (LG)
 Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation
Dei verbum (DV)
 Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy
Sacrosanctum Concilium (SC)
 Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World
Gaudium et spes (GS)

Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops
Christus Dominus (CD)
 Decree on the Training of Priests
Optatum totius (OT)
 Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests
Presbyterorum ordinis (PO)
 Decree on the Lay Apostolate
Apostolicam actuositatem (AA)
 Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity
Ad gentes (AG)
 Decree on Up-to-date Renewal of Religious Life
Perfectae caritatis (PC)
 Decree on the Catholic Eastern Churches
Orientalium Ecclesiarum (OE)
 Decree on the Mass Media
Inter mirifica (IM)
 Decree on Ecumenism
Unitatis redintegratio (UR)

Declaration on Christian Education

Gravissimum educationis (GE)

Declaration on the Church's Relation to Non-Christian Religions

Nostra aetate (NA)

Declaration on Religious Liberty

Dignitatis humanae (DH)

The classifications in this “hierarchical” ordering of the Council documents are those of “constitutions” (four in number), “decrees” (being nine), and then three “declarations.” One text promulgated in 1964 stands at the head of this list – and deservedly so, as we shall see.

The four constitutions begin with the dogmatic text, *Lumen gentium*, which is an ample statement of the Church's self-understanding as the people of God become the body of Christ and now on worldly pilgrimage. The widely-used designation given by the opening words, *Lumen gentium* (“light of the nations”) concerns the radiant light of the Risen Christ reflected from the Church for all the human family. Never forget: the church is a “moon,” not the sun. The second constitution concerns the Word of God, *Dei Verbum*, received in the saving message of the Gospel and in Scripture – promulgated in 1965.⁶ The third constitution treats the Church's liturgical worship, in listening, adoring, and giving God all honor and glory through, with, and in Christ. The fourth and final constitution gives the principles, in a pastoral key, of human graced existence and action in the world of today. More will come about *Gaudium et spes* below, because during the 1964 third period, the Council discussed a draft of it in fifteen meetings spread over three weeks. These four constitutions are the primary and fundamental statements of Vatican II's teaching and guidance for faithful life and action on the part of all believers.

Then, moving down the hierarchical column, there are the Council's nine decrees which aim to guide practice and action in particular roles of service in and by the Church. The decrees address bishops, priests, lay apostles, missionaries, persons consecrated for life and service in religious communities, Catholics of the Eastern traditions, communicators via the media, and the whole Church in its ecumenical engagement with separated Christians, so “that they may be one” as our Lord prayed to the Father on the eve of his saving death. The fact that Vatican II issued *nine* decrees is often forgotten in discussions of the Council's continuity with what went before it in the Catholic Church. By these decrees, Vatican II mandated *change* in ways of action of the whole church and of performance in their roles by particular

6. Another article, still to come, on the 1965 final period of the Council, will include treatment of the contents of *Dei Verbum*, which will show that it is the truly foundational document of the Council, because it concerns the Word of God by which, when proclaimed, believers are drawn into the community of the Church. *Dei Verbum*, thus, should be first in a “theological” ordering of the Vatican II documents. See, on this, Jared Wicks, SJ, “Vatican II on Revelation – From Behind the Scenes,” *Theological Studies* 71 (2010) 637–60, at 640–41.

members. In its nine decrees, and in parts of its other documents, Vatican II was clearly, in intent and purpose, a council of reform.⁷

Finally the list names the declarations in which Vatican II speaks mainly *ad extra* to the world in the Declarations on Non-Christian Religions and on Religious Liberty, that is, the human right of immunity from coercion in living one's personal religious convictions. As declarations, these might seem less important than the documents above them, but this can deceive. The texts on world religions and religious liberty fit together with a document promulgated in the final session of Vatican II, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. We have to ask whether here, in this cluster of three momentous and innovative orientations *ad extra*, the Council was perhaps reaching one of its important goals and finalities? These documents on personal and social life in the world correspond to a central point of the Council's aims and purposes as given by Popes John XXIII and Paul VI. Could it be that a "final cause" gave to Vatican II a central dynamic, under the surface, driving toward the identity of a servant church, formed by Christ's own *pro-existence*, for the benefit of the whole human family in solidarity with its joys and hopes, grief and anguish (*gaudium et spes, luctus et angor* – GS no.1). This question will be central in the planned presentation still to come, fifty years after the Council promulgated these texts as part of its final act in 1965.

A first conclusion can arise from this review of the documents issued by Vatican Council II, whether in their chronological or hierarchical orders. When one ponders the subject matters indicated by the English titles, a response of amazed admiration can well arise over the vast range of topics on which Vatican II spoke through its documents. This Council was no simple undertaking. A person who is informed about all the significant subject-matters on which Vatican II taught, decreed, and declared will never describe the Council by short formulas, like "opening windows to the world" or "catching up with the times." One does hear such characterizations, but they *reduce* simplistically and unbearably Vatican II's huge labors and the wide span of topics that the Council addressed.

However, the very breath and range of the topics make a further question also arise inevitably. *How* should one put the sixteen documents together into coherent sets or clusters, to escape fragmentation or a sense of overload by so many teachings and directives issued by Vatican II?

7. The Liturgy Constitution of December 4, 1963, sets forth doctrine in Chapter 1, nos. 5-13, but then turns to encouraging and prescribing *new liturgical practice*, both in the immediately following nos. 14-46 on general aspects and all through Chapters 2-7 mandating renewal of Eucharistic worship, sacraments and sacramentals, the liturgy of the hours, the liturgical year, sacred music, and sacred art and church furnishings. Similarly, the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation of 1965 expounds doctrine in Chapters 1-5, on revelation, tradition, and Scripture, but then turns to *reforming practice* in Chapter 6, on Scripture in church life. I called attention to a key aspect of *Dei Verbum's* Chapter 6, in "Scripture Reading Urged *vehementer* (DV, no. 25): Background and Development," *Theological Studies* 74 (2013), 555-80.

Vatican II's Coherent Unfolding of Ecclesiology into Decrees on Roles and Practice

One way to find coherence among the Council documents is to take guidance from the Council of Trent, held from 1545 to 1563, over eighteen years, but with two suspensions of its meetings. Trent had to give doctrinal clarifications on teachings espoused by the Lutheran and Calvinist Reformations. Trent carried out this requirement of its times in its doctrinal decrees on original sin, on God's grace to convert and justify in its interaction with human freedom, and on each of the seven sacraments. But Trent was as well a reform council of notable reach in its pastoral orientations, in thirteen reform decrees on the bishops and their clergy, parishes, and whole dioceses. The young Fr. Angelo Roncalli, who was to become Pope St. John XXIII, studied the archival records of Trent's reforming impact on his own diocese of Bergamo. Then he oversaw publication, in five volumes, of these records of how parishes and clergy of Bergamo were set aright and given new vitality when reformed in 1575, twelve years after Trent concluded its work with its final reform decrees.⁸

In describing Trent's reforming impact on early modern Catholic life, one customarily identifies five "pillars" put in place by the mandates of Trent: (1) that bishops *reside* continuously in their dioceses; (2) that the bishops carry out regular *visitations* of diocesan parishes; (3) that regular *diocesan or provincial synods* be held to codify norms of pastoral responsibility; (4) that *seminaries* be opened for developing in future priests an elevated spirituality and pastoral competence; and (5) that Catholic instruction follow a new *catechism* of essential teaching.

Trent pursued twin goals, namely, to define and clarify doctrine and to reform pastoral practice. The connection with Vatican II is that a large block of its production mirrors just this duality of doctrine and reformed practice. But while Trent's decrees came out in an accidental juxtaposition of doctrine and practice, the Vatican II documents show a coherence and inter-dependence in their content. First in the hierarchical list is the major doctrinal account of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church. It is first because the Vatican II decrees, along with one declaration, then unfold pastorally and practically different topics of the doctrine set forth in *Lumen gentium*. Vatican II's ecclesiological constitution gives a large part of the council a notable coherence.

The following outline indicates how *Lumen gentium* not only enunciated doctrine but, as well, in the same constitution, laid the basis for renewed Catholic practice as set forth in the Council's nine decrees. Furthermore, the conciliar constitution and decrees began trajectories along which Catholic teaching moved in the years after Vatican II.

8. I show this in "Tridentine Motivations of Angelo Roncalli / Pope John XXIII before and during Vatican II," *Theological Studies* 75 (December 2014), 847-62.

Lumen gentium (LG) and the Council's Implementing Decrees and Declarations [with further post-conciliar documents for updating]:

I. The Mystery of the Church (LG nos. 1- 8)

II. The People of God (LG nos. 9-17)

no. 13 - Diversity among particular churches → **OE, Decree on Catholic Eastern Churches**

[John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Oriente Lumen* (1995)]

no. 15 - Catholics share with non-Catholic Christians in realities of truth and sanctification which the others receive in their churches and ecclesial communities. → **UR, Decree on Ecumenism**

[John Paul II, Encyclical, *Ut Unum Sint* (1995)]

no. 16 - The non-Christians: Jews, Muslims, and others - all of whom God's grace seeks to lead to good living and salvation, but evil threatens them. → **NA, Declaration on the Church's Relation to Non-Christian Religions**

[Congregation of Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction: *Dominus Iesus* (2000)]

no. 17 - The Church's missionary effort to bring Christ's salvation to the whole world. → **AG, Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity**

[Paul VI, Post-Synodal Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975)]

[John Paul II, Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (1990)]

III. The Church's Hierarchical Constitution (LG nos. 18-29)

nos. 18-27 - Bishops and the episcopal college → **CD, Decree on Pastoral Office of Bishops**

[John Paul II, Post-Synodal Exhortation, *Pastores gregis* (2003)]

no. 28 - Priests → **OT, Decree, Training of Priests; PO, Decree, Ministry and Life of Priests**

[Synod of Bishops, *The Ministerial Priesthood* (1971)]

[John Paul II, Post-Synodal Exhortation, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (1992)]

IV. The Laity in the Church (LG nos. 30-35) → **AA, Decree on Lay Apostolate & IM, Mass Media**

[John Paul II, Post-Synodal Exhortation, *Christifideles Laici* (1988)]

V. The Universal Call to Holiness in the Church (LG nos. 30-42).

VI. The Consecrated Life of the Evangelical Councils (LG nos. 43-47) → **PC, Decree on the Up-to-Date Renewal of Religious Life**

[Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelica Testificatio* (1971)]

[John Paul II, Post-Synodal Exhortation, *Vita Consecrata* (1996)]

VII. The Church's Eschatological Character and Union with the Heavenly Church
(LG nos. 48-51)

VIII. The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, in the Mystery of Christ and of the Church (LG nos. 52-69)

[Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation, *Marialis Cultus* (1974)]

[John Paul II, Encyclical, *Redemptoris Mater* (1987)]

This is, first, an outline of *Lumen gentium's* eight chapters (indicated by Roman numbers I to VIII). The outline adds for Chapters II and III some particulars of the chapters' numbered paragraphs. The outline also lists in bold each of Vatican II's nine decrees and one declaration, placing each in connection with a passage in the ecclesiology constitution. The Vatican II commissions responsible for drafting and revising most of the decrees took principal orientations on roles and practice from what *Lumen gentium* said doctrinally. Practice is to rest on doctrine, not simply on the will and mandate of an authority.

During the third period of Vatican II, the Council leadership insisted on intensive work to complete *Lumen gentium* by the end of the 1964 period, because only with that Constitution in its final form could work proceed to complete the remaining pastoral and practical decrees. These decrees are not expressions of *the will* of the council majority, but are consequences *from stated doctrines* of the Dogmatic Constitution.

The derived character of Vatican II's decrees already suggests the rich contribution of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church in the overall strategy of the council. But *Lumen gentium* itself deserves our attention, since it is a singular expression of the church's self-understanding. A pointer toward the pre-conciliar soil out of which this teaching grew is that the first and last chapters, on the "mystery of the church" and on Mary "in the mystery of Christ and the Church," correspond to the first and final chapters of Henri de Lubac's book, dense with ideas from the church fathers, published in 1953 and translated as *The Splendor of the Church* in 1956.

Lumen gentium's Chapter I treats the Church as proceeding from the Triune God and then seen through several biblical designations and images. This first chapter entered the text as a replacement chapter in 1963, when the Fathers agreed to set aside an earlier draft of Chapter I, "on the church militant." Ch. II, on the people of God, came from remnants of that discarded chapter combined with matter which had earlier introduced the chapter on the laity. The great survey of the whole "people of God" in Ch. II, numbers 9 to 17, stands in the promulgated text *before* Chapter III, on the ordained hierarchy, and Chapter IV, on the laity. These following chapters then explain the ordained hierarchy and the laity in their own dignity and distinct roles as subjects of ecclesial action. But the two, hierarchy and laity, come back together in Ch. V as addressed by God's call to holiness, directed to all who are incorporated into the Church - to all without exception. Chapter VII, on the union of the earthly and heavenly Church, came into *Lumen gentium* after promulgation of the Constitution on Liturgical Renewal at the end of Period II in 1963, since it is in worship that the church is most fully herself, especially in its Eucharistic prayer,

acting in communion and concert with the angels and saints who give God all honor and glory in heaven.⁹ These observations just skim the surface of *Lumen gentium*, a great Catholic text, which – even though 50 years old – still gleams with gold all through its sixty-nine paragraphs.

We can note selectively how three of the Vatican II decrees, oriented to action and pastoral practice, follow from the doctrine of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church. First, no. 15 of *Lumen gentium* – on the Christian “elements” that non-Catholics receive and cherish in their own communities – gives to the Decree on Ecumenism an important doctrinal foundation. That decree makes a high claim in its opening words, “The restoration of unity (*unitatis redintegratio*) among Christians is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council.” That claim was not an invention of Cardinal Augustin Bea’s Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, but comes from two official statements of the Council’s goals and aims, namely, Pope Paul VI’s opening discourse of Period II (1963) and the first lines of the Constitution on the Liturgy. Ecumenism arises from Vatican II’s ecclesiology, as shown by the promulgation of the decree on the same day with the Dogmatic Constitution.¹⁰

Second, *Lumen gentium*’s Chapter III, nos. 18–27, on bishops and the episcopal college, grounds the dependent Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops. This decree is valuable to all of us, even though we are not bishops, because of its account of what is a “local church,” that is, a diocese, which is a portion of God’s people, entrusted to the bishop with his clergy, for being formed in the Holy Spirit through the Gospel and the Eucharist. In such a particular church the church of Christ – one, holy, catholic, and apostolic – is truly present and active (no. 11). That is a concise but precious specification of “local church” in the Catholic sense.

Also, in no. 17 the Constitution states the missionary dedication of the Church to bring Christ to the world, as it concludes the chapter on “the people of God.” This served as the foundation of Vatican II’s Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity completed and promulgated on the Council’s final working day December 7, 1965. Along with its mandate of missionary action, the Decree *Ad gentes* in fact offers a concise Catholic ecclesiology which developed in a calm atmosphere, untroubled by the tense arguments that had accompanied the redaction of Ch. III of the Constitution on the Church, on bishops and their collegiality. Read *Ad gentes* for its precious seams of gold, both theological and spiritual.

The outline also indicates that *Lumen gentium* has further power to unify documents and make them cohere. Note the references in brackets to thirteen official Catholic documents issued after the Council. In these, the Council’s teaching prolonged itself into fresh formulations. The Council’s mandated roles and actions were updated for the vitality the Church. For example, *Lumen gentium*, no. 15, along with the Decree on Ecumenism received an *aggiornamento* in Pope St. John

9. Christopher Ruddy brings this out, with much more, in “‘In the end is my beginning’: *Lumen gentium* and the Priority of Doxology,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 79 (2014), 144–64.

10. For grounding ecumenical action, I identified “main moves” during the genesis of *Lumen gentium* in “Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue: On Foundations Laid in 1963–64,” *Concordia Theological Journal*, 39 (2013), 296–309, treating the moves to recognize the contributions of the separated communities on pp. 301–02 and 306–07.

Paul II's encyclical of 1995, *Ut unum sint*, on the irrevocable commitment of the Church to moving along the ecumenical way. Also, the Council's Decree on the Training of Priests, arising from *Lumen gentium*, Chapter III, no. 28, was further actualized in John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation on priestly formation, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (1992). That papal text harvested what the Synod of Bishops had produced on priestly formation in 1990.

These further developments in continuity with Vatican II clarify the character of the Council's nine decrees of 1963-1965. They were first implementations, set forth in the era of the mid-1960s. As documents on action and practice in history, the decrees in time needed further updating and nuancing, as given by more recent interventions of the Magisterium. Thirteen of these are named in brackets, as documents which recalled, refreshed, and further plotted the realization of Vatican II in our Catholic life. The further documents reveal the dynamic trajectory of Vatican II in its further applications down to today.

A final point in this vein is to note how Chapter Five of *Lumen gentium*, on God's universal call to holiness, has no implementing decree of the Council and no further application in a post-conciliar document. Why this omission? One observer who saw this outline made the point that God's call of all to holiness does not look to documents, but to persons and communities. The implementation must be lived and it is being done so, with special concreteness in the post-Vatican II ecclesial movements and new communities - all fostering holiness of life, especially in lay Christians - such as the Focolari, Emmanuel, Sant'Egidio, Cum Christo, and Communion and Liberation.¹¹

Lights and Shadows over Vatican II's Third Period of 1964

Lights. Fifty years ago Vatican II completed a very demanding agenda of work.¹² The Period began on September 14, 1964, with an opening session which included the first public concelebration of the Eucharist, at which Pope Paul VI presided and twenty-four Council members from nineteen nations joined him around the expanded high altar of St. Peter - using thin missals of a rite created *ad hoc* by Msgr. Annibale Bugnini.

The third period as a whole was remarkable in the way the work moved rapidly and efficiently on fourteen documents, which were then in different stages of their development. The three texts promulgated on November 21, on the Church, Ecumenism, and the Catholic Eastern Churches, were well along when the period began, but their amended paragraphs had to gain approval one by one, with initial votes possibly being to approve *iuxta modum*, that is, with a further requested amendment. The responsible commission had to assess these amendments for their

11. The observer was Rev. Timothy Hayes, pastor of St. Timothy parish in Columbus.

12. A comprehensive account is *History of Vatican II*, 5 vols., gen. ed. Giuseppe Alberigo, vol. 4, *The Church as Communion. Third Period and Intersession*, edited in English by Joseph Komonchak (Maryknoll: Orbis and Leuven: Peeters, 2003), chs. I-VI, pp. 1-452, and Ch. VII, pp. 617-40. More concise on the Council in 1964 is John W. O'Malley, SJ, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 199-246.

coherence with the text's established main directions, after which the accepted amendments were put to a further vote of rejection or approval by all the members.

The remaining decrees and declarations were treated expeditiously during the 1964 period, sometimes in discussions of only two days, but the Council members regularly offered common comments on texts, in interventions prepared in meetings of episcopal conferences before the period began. Among the draft decrees, those on the life and ministry of priests and on the missions drew sharp criticism for not yet being in accord with the pastoral priorities of the Council, followed by votes to send them back to the responsible commissions for re-drafting and later review and possible acceptance.

Two of the constitutions destined to be promulgated in 1965 came before the Council during the third period. The amended text on revelation, tradition, and Scripture met a mostly cordial welcome in five days of discussion - a decisive step toward the Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum*, which will have its own set of practical decrees in its Chapter VI on Scripture in the life of the Church. *Dei Verbum* gleams brightly today in many golden formulations.¹³

The longest stretch of work on one document during the 1964 period was the fourteen plenary meetings during which the Fathers commented on draft chapters of what became a year later the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. No less than 171 speakers made clear that much re-drafting was still needed to complete this momentous document. It had no conciliar precedents, although the papal social encyclicals had enunciated norms for action in the social fields. Still it was a shift in Vatican II's work, after dealing with liturgical worship, divine revelation and Scripture, ecclesiology, and relations with other Christians. The draft on the Church in the Modern World addressed concrete contemporary issues and problems, like world peace and a just socio-economic order. It was a new-style Council text, as John O'Malley nicely said, "it projected an image of the church as a helpmate to all persons of good will, whether Catholic or not, whether Christian or not, with the Church as a beacon of hope for a better world."¹⁴

Shadows. In his one-volume history of the council, O'Malley adds to the title of the chapter on the third period of 1964, a subtitle, "Triumphs and Tribulations." I have mentioned several "triumphs." But what brought these "tribulations"?

Every detailed historical account of Vatican II tells about the choppy waters through which the good ship Vatican II sailed during the final week of the third period in 1964. The histories list three dramatic incidents that occurred, all of which involved the relation between Pope Paul VI and the Council majority.

13. Hanjo Sauer relates the 1964 advance toward the Dogmatic Constitution on Revelation in *History of Vatican II*, vol 4, *The Church as Communion*, 196-231. I related the preparation of this advance in "De revelatione under Revision (March-April 1964)," in Doris Donnelly, et al., eds., *The Belgian Contribution to the Second Vatican Council* (Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 461-94.

14. O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 233. Norman Tanner treats the 1964 debate on this text, in *History of Vatican II*, vol 4, *The Church as Communion*, 270-331, with sections on the human vocation, Christian responsibilities, marriage and the family, promotion of culture, economic life, and international issues of war and peace.

(1) What can be termed “tribulations” began quietly on November 10, with the distribution of a very technical “explanatory note,” coming from “higher authority,” that is, Pope Paul VI, through the Doctrinal Commission to officially interpret Chapter III of *De ecclesia* on episcopal collegiality and the Pope. This note set in relief the Pope’s singular role, by his office, in which he “may exercise his power at any time, as he sees fit.” The note was read out to the Council Fathers on November 16, to the great delight of leaders of the Council minority, such as the Cardinals of Palermo and Genoa (Ernesto Ruffini, Giuseppe Siri), who had opposed collegiality as weakening the doctrine of papal primacy taught by the First Vatican Council. The “explanatory note” brought these Cardinals and other reluctant council Fathers to give their assent to the constitution. Some grumbles circulated, for example, from Fr. Giuseppe Dossetti, the *peritus* of Cardinal Lercaro of Bologna. But when the whole Constitution, *with* the explanatory note attached, came to a vote on November 19, the outcome was a practically unanimous approval: 2,134 *Placet* / *Non placet*, 10.¹⁵

(2) A tribulation, suffered especially by the American Vatican II cardinals and bishops, concerned a vote to accept a revised text on Religious Liberty as the working basis of the Council on this topic. The vote was scheduled for November 19. But Bishop Luigi Carli (Segni, south of Rome), one leader of the organized minority group, protested to the Council’s rules committee (“Administrative Tribunal”) that what had been distributed was not a simply a revision of the earlier text, but practically a new document, on which the members should not vote on November 19, but only after further open discussion.¹⁶ The Tribunal and Council of Council Presidents agreed with Bp. Carli’s intervention and Paul VI refused to override their decision. So it was announced on the 19th that the vote was being postponed, that is, to the fourth period, nine months in the future. The American bishops were deeply upset and they gathered nearly 500 signatures of petitions to the Pope to allow the vote – which he did not do.¹⁷

(3) Another tribulation, for some, also involved Pope Paul VI, this time regarding the text of the Decree on Ecumenism. He had been seeing the results of work on evaluating amendments by the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity before they were printed and distributed to the council members. But in the press of business during November 1964, this documentation had not come to the Pope before

15. L. A. Tagle treats this episode in *History of Vatican II*, vol 4, *The Church as Communion*, 417–45.

16. Yves Congar had read over the revised text on October 14, 1964, before it was printed, and foresaw the “tribulation” that came. He wrote that day in his diary, “Hardly anything is left of the previous text. In these circumstances a new discussion is needed. I find that there is certain superficiality in this approach. The redactors (especially Pavan and Murray) have no idea of the difficulties that their text will raise.” Y. Congar, *My Journal of the Council*, trans. M. J. Ronayne, OP, and M.C. Boulding, OP, ed. Denis Minns, OP (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2012), 626. In his Council diary, Congar repeatedly notes the obligation of the commissions’ *periti* to propose emendations of prior texts always with careful annotations showing their basis in the oral and written comments by the Council Fathers on an earlier draft.

17. Also set forth by L. A. Tagle, *History of Vatican II*, vol 4, *The Church as Communion*, 395–406.

the text was printed with its final amendments entered and other amendments rejected. Before the votes to accept the whole text as amended, petitions began arriving daily on the Pope's desk appealing against the Secretariat's decisions regarding certain proposals not received in the text about to be proposed for a final vote in the council. The papal theologian, Fr. Luigi Ciappi, OP, along with Fr. Charles Boyer, SJ, of the Gregorian University, drew up a list of forty such rejected contributions on which the Pope might well request reconsiderations of the final amendments. Paul VI studied them, marking with a blue pencil twenty-one changes on which he did not call for any further consideration. This left nineteen points, some of just one word, for forwarding to the Secretariat for their last minute consideration before voting to make the revised draft definitive. A small group from the Secretariat, Frs. J. Willebrands, G. Thils, E. Lanne, and P. Duprey, worked through the night to rephrase the ecumenism text accordingly.¹⁸ And so the Council Fathers received on a mimeographed page the final emendations of the text before the global vote taken on November 20 (*Placet* 2,054 / *Non placet* 64, which became only 11 at the solemn session the next day).

Each of these incidents was upsetting for groups of Council members and their expert theological advisors. But their importance diminishes when we take a broader, long-term perspective. The Constitution on the Church, *with* the explanatory note, and the Decree on Ecumenism, *with* the late amendments, both came through their final votes quite successfully at the end of the final week of the 1964 period. By what Paul VI did (and did not do), a small group of reluctant cardinals and bishops were won over to accept the two texts. Most of all, for fifty years these two documents have contributed greatly to Catholic ecclesiology and to ecumenical dialogues. The "speed bumps" which they hit in November 1964 have played no appreciable role affecting their wider reception. The promulgated texts on the Church and Ecumenism were celebrated on their fiftieth anniversary in 2014 around the world, for they have proven themselves as they were issued on November 21, 1964.

But there is another "tribulation" to examine. This is the beginning in 1964 of the first serious fissure or rift within the majority of Council members and *periti* who had worked together, in an earlier drama of Vatican II, to set aside many of the first drafts given to the Council by the preparatory commissions.

Another drama began in 1964, which was especially articulated in the diary notes of Council expert Fr. Henri de Lubac, the esteemed proponent of renewal from the early Christian sources, as in *The Splendor of the Church*, already mentioned. His diary for the second half of 1964 contains many expressions of concern and alarm, because some theologians are interpreting the draft on The Church in

18. L. A. Tagle, *History of Vatican II*, vol 4, *The Church as Communion*, 406-17. Two examples: in UR, no. 23, do non-Catholics, when reading Scripture, *find* God speaking to them in Christ (amended text), or *seek* God (final text). Another amendment forwarded by Paul VI for no. 22 offered a different way of expressing the Catholic reservation over the Lord's Supper as celebrated by the other communities because it suffered, in its celebrant, from a *defectus* (often translated "lack" or "absence," but possibly indicating "imperfection" or "flaw") regarding the Sacrament of Ministerial Ordination.

the Modern World in a way portending a serious danger.¹⁹ De Lubac told people, in conversations and letters, to be careful, even wary, so that this text not become such a Catholic “opening to the world” that it makes easy an invasion of the church by the world and its secular concerns. He sensed here an overshadowing of “the eternal and divine vocation of human beings.” For de Lubac, it is only in the light of our true human destiny that the text should encourage action aiming to foster culture, economic and political well-being, and world peace.

In France, before going to Rome for the third period, de Lubac heard popular slogans about the Church in Council “opening herself to the world,” but after listening carefully, he noted a drive to make common cause with unbelievers for secular progress in a manner tending to marginalize Christian dogma, prayer, and intimacy with God.

During the Council period of 1964, De Lubac thought journalists were not perceiving a central point, namely that the Council’s reforms – updating worship, ecumenical outreach, and affirming religious freedom – arose from a purified and deepened Christian spirit. About this, popular reports were falling silent. The schema on the church in the modern world was exerting a magnetic attraction toward problems of the temporal order, without a countervailing insistence on the human “eternal vocation” – which de Lubac had treated in his works on nature and grace.

A troubling notion seemed to be entwined with the “church and world” theme, namely, that the world where humans strive for justice is already substantially Christian beneath its surface, in personal ethical dedication and drive, but independently of evangelical revelation. In the notion, the proclaimed Gospel and faith simply bring about a passage from the implicit to the explicit. In Rome, de Lubac heard the Flemish Dominican Edward Schillebeeckx lecture on “church and world,” shortly before the Council treated the schema.²⁰ De Lubac thought he heard an analysis of the world as implicitly Christian by God’s subtle influence amid human existence and action to develop the world and society. According to this view, the church only discloses explicitly God’s nearness and influence, which already reached individuals who apply themselves to develop the well-being of family, the economy, and their city and nation. Christianity is a *disclosure*, not a *mediation*, of grace and spirit bringing forth constructive action. In this view, de Lubac saw a neglect of the basis of an evangelical dedication to service in the world. In contrast, he noted, how deep, how reflective, and how Christian is the thought on the same issue of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin!

19. H. de Lubac, *Carnets du Concile*, ed. Loic Figureux, 2 vols. (Paris: Ed. du Cerf, 2007). I presented de Lubac’s diary as a resource for a deeper knowledge of the Council in the review article, “Further Light on Vatican Council II,” in *Catholic Historical Review* 95 (2009), 546–69, at 546–62. There, pp. 556–62 presented and documented his many critical observations of 1964–65, while also giving references to his and others’ published laments over post-Vatican II phenomena. On the latter phase, see Christopher J. Walsh, “De Lubac’s Critique of the Postconciliar Church,” *Communio* 19 (1992), 404–32.

20. See “Church and World,” in E. Schillebeeckx, *World and Church* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1971), 97–114. De Lubac published a critical response in Appendix B of his *Brief Catechesis on Nature and Grace* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1984), 191–234.

A rift is opening, which in time will lead to the founding of *two* Catholic journals, *Concilium* organized by E. Schillebeeckx (with Hans Küng, Karl Rahner, and Johann Baptist Metz) and *Communio* inspired by H. de Lubac (with Hans Urs von Balthasar, Joseph Ratzinger, and Walter Kasper). But more important for the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World will be the 1965 “Panzer offensive” mounted especially by German theologians and bishops who applied the diagnosis of de Lubac to the draft of the pastoral constitution. They got valuable input from a counter-schema from Poland presented by Archbishop Karol Wojtyła. *Gaudium et spes*, consequently, gained greatly by late revisions to give it a striking, even golden, Christocentrism, about which more will be said in my forthcoming sequel to this report, which has treated Vatican II’s third period and its results of 1964. ■