

Vatican II in 1965: Bringing in an Ample Harvest of Renewed Doctrine and Directives of Service

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Abstract: *This is a fuller version of the public lecture given at the Pontifical College Josephinum on October 8, 2015, on Vatican II's Fourth Period in 1965, when the Council engaged in a "harvesting" that yielded eleven completed and promulgated documents. The essay selects three developments for treatment, beginning with the late accentuation of Christology in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern world (Gaudium et spes), especially in Number 10, Paragraph 2. The article goes on to present the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (Dei verbum), promulgated November 18, 1965. This Constitution speaks of its doctrinal continuity with the Councils of Trent and Vatican I, but on God's revelation Chapter I of the new Constitution notably enriches what had been tersely stated by Vatican I. Dei verbum gives the evangelical content of divine revelation which culminates in the saving words and deeds of Christ. This soteriological content, it is argued, makes Dei verbum the theological starting point of all that Vatican II taught and decreed, especially on the Church and Catholic worship. The article's third section calls attention to the energetic opposition by the "International Group of Fathers" to Vatican II's developing texts on the Church's relation to non-Christian religions, especially to the Jews (Nostra aetate), on religious liberty (Dignitatis humanae), and the Church's many-sided relation to the modern world (Gaudium et spes). Joseph Ratzinger interpreted these Council texts in 1975 as a "counter-syllabus" to the catalogues of errors issued with great effect by Popes Pius IX (1864) and Pius X (1907). From this, the International Group appears as fomenting refusals to move in concert with the Church's developing tradition under the lead of the sometimes adaptive magisterium. On tradition and the magisterium, an Appendix offers passages of the theological letter of 1976 addressed by Pope Paul VI to Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, who led the International Group during Vatican II.*

This essay on “bringing in the harvest” of Vatican II attends to the documents of the Council’s Period IV, from September 14 to December 8, 1965. The completing and promulgating of Vatican II Constitutions and Decrees had begun at the end of Period II (December 4, 1963), with the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy and the Decree on the Mass Media. Harvesting continued at the end of Period III (November 21, 1964), with the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, the Decree on Ecumenism, and the Decree on the Catholic Eastern Churches. To these five completed texts, Vatican II added in Period IV of 1965 no fewer than eleven further documents, completed laboriously and under considerable pressure of time. Council work in 1965 included three Public Sessions at which the Council members formally approved the final texts of eleven documents by large majorities of votes, after which in each Session Pope Paul VI promulgated the texts.¹

Public Session VII, October 28, 1965

Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church (*Christus Dominus*),
 Decree on the Training of Priests (*Optatam totius*),
 Decree on the Up-to-Date Renewal of Religious Life (*Perfectae caritatis*).
 Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (*Nostra aetate*),
 Declaration on Christian Education (*Gravissimum educationis*).

Public Session VIII, November 18, 1965

Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People (*Apostolicam actuositatem*),
 Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei verbum*).

Public Session IX, December 7, 1965

Declaration on Religious Liberty (*Dignitatis humanae*),
 Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church (*Ad gentes*),
 Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests (*Presbyterorum ordinis*),
 Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et spes*).

We recall here how the “decrees” of the Council look to action in roles of service in the life of the Church, for example in the decrees just listed, by bishops, priests, lay apostles, and missionaries. Earlier I showed how the nine Vatican II decrees have doctrinal bases in sections and passages of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church.² Taking account of such connections brings out a systematic unity which organizes a large block of the sixteen documents of Vatican Council II.

In what follows, attention will fall selectively on three developments during the Council’s Period IV: (1) on how the Pastoral Constitution came to have a remarkable *Christological grounding* for its dialogue with the modern world; (2) on how

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1. Appendix 1, below, relates the itinerary through which a Vatican II draft text had to pass before becoming a final text officially promulgated.
 2. See J. Wicks, “Vatican II in 1964: Major Doctrinal Advances, But Also Fissures On Addressing the Modern World,” *Josephinum Journal of Theology* 20/1 (2013, published 2015), 4–19, especially pp. 10–14. This and my other two lectures on Vatican II can be accessed at: <http://www.pcj.edu/journal-theology/past-issues>.

the Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei verbum*, gives what should be taken as *the theological starting point* of all Vatican II teaching and reform measures; (3) on an understanding of *Gaudium et spes*, along with the Declarations on Non-Christian Religions and on Religious Liberty, as forming Vatican II's *counter-syllabus* by which the Church set aside a critical hostility to aspects of modernity which had marked Catholic thinking for over a century. On the third development, we will note how an energetic minority of Vatican II members opposed this fundamental change of ecclesial attitudes in envisioning modern history and the world that emerged during this history.³

1. Christological Convictions to Ground Dialogue with the Modern World

On October 8, 1965, the Council held the last meeting, or General Congregation, at which the members spoke on the draft of the eventual Pastoral Constitution, to complete a discussion begun on September 21. Three speakers treated issues of its final chapter on war/peace and the international community of nations. But other speakers were critical of the text as a whole and insisted on needed revisions. Their main desire was to transform the schema's social and historical account of human problems into a discourse arising from central Christian convictions about Jesus Christ.

Bishop William Philbin, of Down and Connor, Ireland, noted how the schema abounded in duties people should carry out in sectors of life in the modern world. But Bishop Philbin wanted this explicitly connected with Christ, the one hope of the world. Christ should not be only the teacher of natural law and social duties, but even more the source of the needed grace for fulfilling the duties. As it addresses the modern world, this text must proclaim with confidence the only remedy for our time and every time: "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever!" (Hebr 13:8). Bishop Philbin insisted that the text be revised so as make Christ's role and grace a central theme.⁴

Another speaker was Archbishop Gabriel Garrone (Toulouse, France) who gave his report as President of the commission responsible for revising the schema before the Fathers would vote on it. Archbishop Garrone assured the assembly that the commission had been attending carefully to their comments on the schema, both in the speeches in St. Peter's (numbering 160) and in the written evaluations and suggested revisions (already over 400 pages) they were handing in on the

3. Surveys of Vatican II's Period IV are Joseph Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II* (Paulist Press, 2009; originally published 1966), 199–266, and John W. O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 247–89. The former work gives a theologian's vivid recollections from his service as a *peritus*, from shortly after Vatican II ended. The latter work is a historian's account, written when he could draw on the Council's published *Acta* and selectively follow lines taken in a huge secondary literature.

4. *Acta Synodalia Concilii Vaticani II* (henceforth AS), Vol. IV, Part 3, 729–32. Philbin's recommendation of Hebr 13:8 entered *Gaudium et spes*, in no. 10.2, to be cited below. It also echoes in *GS* 45.

schema. Garrone assured them that the commission was going to revise the text to make it conform to their often insistent recommendations. One point stood out as a topic for revision. Many of the Fathers, he said, had found the text too philosophical in treating modern problems and in proposing ethical solutions. It was also too optimistic about good in the world of today, lacking a realistic sense of human life as combat (*colluctatio*) with Christ against sin and against the malign enemy of the human good.⁵ In the revision, already started, the Mystery of Christ will be foundational, by a strong profession at the beginning of Christ's light and grace, so this might radiate into the treatments of the human vocation and today's major problems of human and social life.⁶ Archbishop Garrone hopes that a prophetic flame will come to permeate the revised version on which he and his fellow commission members are setting to work.⁷

The commission responsible for the text on the Church in the modern world, headed by Archbishop Garrone, was a mixed commission joining members and *periti* from the Doctrinal and Lay Apostolate commissions of the Council. They had already met on September 23, 1965, to prepare for revising the draft on the Church in the modern world in the light of the members' interventions during Period IV. Ten sub-commissions were set up, corresponding to the draft chapters, with each sub-commission including four to six Council Fathers and a group of six to ten *periti*.⁸

This discussion of late September and early October 1965 was on a draft which had the same structure as the eventual *Gaudium et spes*. After a short Preface (nos. 1-3), an "Introductory Exposition" in six sections set forth the condition of human beings amid the ever-changing historical features of the modern world (nos. 4-9). Then Part I, in four chapters, treated human dignity, the person in society, and human creative work, adding an account of the Church's role in the world. Part II then set forth doctrine to meet the urgent challenges of social life in five sectors of life in the modern world, namely, marriage and the family, cultural development and access to culture, economic life, duties in the political community, and fostering peace through action in the community of peoples.⁹

5. Abp. Garrone noted that some recommendations wanted the text to give a profound account of the human drama, "cum vita hominis in mundo colluctatio sit cum Christo contra peccatum et contra Malignum" (AS IV/3, 737). The need for this point at an important place in the Pastoral Constitution goes back to Karl Rahner's suggestions to the German bishops. See note 11, below.

6. In the promulgated Pastoral Constitution no.10.2 makes this profession of Christ, including a citation of Hebr 13:8, so as to echo Bp. Philbin's October 8 speech. At the time, the schema's chapters of Part I on the human vocation already concluded with Christological passages, now found in GS, nos. 22, 32, 38, and 45. But Abp. Garrone had become convinced that Christology was so basic that the later reader should encounter it earlier in the Constitution and so not see nos. 22, 32, 38, and 45 as theological afterthoughts to a historical and social-psychological analysis.

7. Abp. Garrone's report is given at AS IV/3, 735-39.

8. For the membership lists, see Giovanni Turbanti, *Un concilio per il mondo modern. La redazione della costituzione pastorale «Gaudium et spes» del Vaticano II* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2000), 632-34.

9. The full text is given in AS IV/1, 435-516.

What is behind the imperative voiced by Abp. Garrone on October 8, 1965, namely, to revise the schema on the Church in the Modern World to make it more insistent on Christ and his grace? The call for a Christological basis, as a starting point, had been heard from the first day of discussion when the Cardinal Archbishop of Lima, Peru, had urged that the section proclaim Christ's gospel forthrightly and show the meaning of human life from our Lord's death and resurrection.¹⁰ The next day the Cardinal Archbishop of Munich, Germany, speaking for ninety-one Fathers, insisted that the Church speak to the world out of its faith-convictions, to show that it has deeper insights into the human situation than do secular disciplines of historical and social analysis.¹¹ The coadjutor-bishop of Bangalore, India, spoke for sixty-two Indian bishops to insist that the text show from the start the central position of Christ, in whom creation reaches its fulfillment.¹² On September 24 the Bishop of Mainz, Germany, called for revisions to make the text a properly theological account—one in which the Church says about the world what the world cannot on its own know and say about itself. This is that Christ is the head and foundation of the universe and that human beings overcome sin and reach their supernatural end only through Him who offers light and life for all.¹³

Thus, when Archbishop Garrone presented the agenda of the revisers of the schema, his emphatic words on the role of Christ in the coming text were taking up a recurrent theme urged by the Vatican II membership. Nine days later, on October 17, it was the *peritus* Joseph Ratzinger who delivered a formulated text which started a development toward a key addition to the schema of the Pastoral Constitution,

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10. See the September 21 intervention of Card. Juan Landázzuri Ricketts in AS IV/1, 561–64, especially 562–63.
 11. The September 22 address of Card. Julius Döpfner is in AS IV/2, 28–33, especially 31. Card. Döpfner's text included points made by Karl Rahner when he spoke to the German and Scandinavian bishops before Period IV of the Council. Rahner criticized the schema for disregarding the situation of the world in the light of the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ. A Christian theology of history has to note that after God's saving intervention in Christ, the antagonism between the Evil One and Christ's disciples is not lessened but has become more bitter. See the account of Rahner's criticism given by Joseph Komonchak, "Le valutazioni sulla *Gaudium et spes*: Chenu, Dossetti, Ratzinger," in *Volti di fine concilio*, eds. Joseph Doré and Albert Melloni (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2000), 115–153, at 118–19; and in abbreviated form as "Augustine, Aquinas or the Gospel *Sine glossa?* Divisions over *Gaudium et spes*," in Austen Iveleigh, ed., *Unfinished Journey. The Church 40 Years after Vatican II* (London: Continuum, 2003), 102–118, at 104–05.
 12. Bishop Simon Lourdisamy spoke on September 23, as given in AS IV/2, 380–83. See especially p. 382 on Christ.
 13. Bishop Hermann Volk's intervention is at AS, IV/2, 406–10. At the beginning he said, "Nostrum autem est ea dicere, quae mundus ex seipso scire nequit, . . . theologicum scilicet aspectum ipsius mundi" (p. 406). See also pp. 407–08, for Volk's dense account of Christ in creation and human history, which should not only appear in the final paragraphs of the chapters of Part I as done in the schema but should be declared forthrightly near the beginning, so as to bring out Christ's essential role in creation and in the redemption of human beings from sin. Bp. Volk had been Professor of dogmatic theology in the University of Münster prior to his appointment as bishop of Mainz in 1962. To succeed him, the Münster Theology Faculty called Joseph Ratzinger to its dogmatics chair in 1963.

namely, its Christ-centered point of departure for treating the human calling.¹⁴ Part of Ratzinger's suggestion included this:

The Church places its hope in the kingdom of the man who is at the same time true God and in whom the kingdom of God and the human kingdom coincide. In him, as well, she learns the true expanse of the human calling, which extends to participating in God himself. . . . Human beings, whose calling infinitely transcends their own essence, can find no equilibrium in themselves, because their desires are always greater than finite realities and are never fulfilled by them. In the face of Jesus Christ crucified, moreover, the Church knows that humans are . . . wounded by that divine love that embraces them and makes their hearts restless. . . . Thus the Church believes that the definitive answers to the pressing questions of the human race are found in Christ, true God and true man. Therefore she intends to respond to these questions of today in the light that God makes resplendent in the face of Christ (2 Cor 4:6).

In time, Number 10, Paragraph 2, of the Pastoral Constitution evolved further from Ratzinger's text, by the suggestions of others, to become a "Christological Credo," in three articles, affirmed as the Council turned to treat in its main parts the human vocation and principal areas of human and social problems.¹⁵ This is one of Vatican II's great texts on Jesus Christ, from a document which as a whole has often been "mis-remembered" by not taking these lines into account:

The Church firmly believes (*firmiter credit*) that Christ, who died and was raised for the sake of all (cf. 2 Cor 5:15), can through His Spirit offer human beings the light and the strength to measure up to their supreme destiny. Nor has any other name under heaven been given by which they can be saved (cf. Acts 4:12). She likewise believes (*similiter credit*) that in her most kindly Lord and Master is to be found the key, the center, and the goal of human beings and of all human history. The Church also maintains (*affirmat insuper*) that beneath all changes there are many realities which do not change and which have their ultimate foundation in Christ, "the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebr 13:8). Hence under the light of Christ, the image of the unseen God, the firstborn of every creature (Col 1:15), the Council proposes to address all people in order to shed light on the mystery of

14. See J. Wicks, "Six Texts by Prof. Joseph Ratzinger As *Peritus* Before and During Vatican Council II," in *Gregorianum* 89 (2008), 233–311, at 246–49 (Introduction), 291–93 (text in English), and 309–11 (the Latin original of the proposed amendment).

15. It was Thomas Gertler who called GS 10.2 a "Christological Credo" in his study of the text in *Jesus Christus-Antwort der Kirche auf die Frage nach dem Menschen* (Leipzig: St. Benno Verlag, 1986), 107–14.

human life and to cooperate in finding the solution to the outstanding problems of our time. (*GS* 10:2)¹⁶

For commemorating and celebrating the conclusion of Vatican II fifty years ago, I heartedly recommend a meditation on this precious formulation of *GS* 10.2. The paragraph added during Period IV expresses just how the Catholic Church turns to the world as its dialogue partner. It is with an explicit and firm conviction about the Christological basis of what it offers to the conversation on the human calling (*GS*, Part I, Chs. 1–4) and on areas in which problems need solving (*GS*, Part II, Chs. 1–5).

2. *In Dei Verbum: Christ the Savior as God’s Central Revelation of Himself to Us*

On November 18, 1965, in Period IV’s second Public Session, Vatican II completed and promulgated its “Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation” (*Dei verbum*). This came three full years after the Council had treated critically an earlier text on God’s word, “The Sources of Revelation” (*De fontibus revelationis*), in November 1962.¹⁷ Thus the Constitution on the word of God evolved in a process which was nearly coterminous with the public, historical life of the Council itself. Because of this, the history of *Dei verbum* offers precious insights for understanding Vatican II in a manner going beyond reductive “sound bite” formulas or “bumper sticker” slogans about the Council.

Dei verbum is as well especially valuable for helping us understand the place of Vatican II in the modern history of Catholic teaching. The Constitution says explicitly in its Prologue that its teaching follows in the footsteps (*inhaerens vestigiis*) of the Council of Trent (1545–63) and Vatican Council I (1869–70). *Dei verbum* relates to Trent and advances along its path in Chapter II, on “the transmission of divine revelation,” by the Gospel in apostolic preaching and teaching, by the Church’s living tradition, by the Scriptures, and by the Church’s teaching office or magisterium (nos. 7–10). *Dei Verbum*’s further chapters III through VI, on Holy Scripture, have bases in both Trent and Vatican I,¹⁸ but they are much more a coherent updating of teachings given in the encyclicals on Scripture issued by Popes Leo XIII, Benedict

16. The importance of this passage was recognized by Pope John Paul II, who cited it in full in the Conclusion of the Apostolic Letter of November 10, 1994, on the coming of the new millennium, *Novo millennio adveniente*, no. 59.

17. On the 1962 debate and its outcome, that is, Pope John XXIII’s removal of the schema on the “sources” from the immediate Council agenda, see J. Wicks, “Vatican II Taking Hold of Its (and Pope John’s) Council Goals, September 1962–May 1963,” *Josephinum Journal of Theology* 19 (1962), 172–86, at 180–83.

18. See the texts of Trent’s Session IV (1546), both on the Canonical Books and Apostolic Traditions and on the Latin Vulgate and Rules of Interpreting Scripture, given in *The Scripture Documents. An Anthology of Official Catholic Teachings*, ed. Dean P. Bécharad (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2002), 3–6. Also, see the text from Vatican I (1870), on biblical inspiration and interpretation, in the same anthology, 16–17.

XV, and Pius XII.¹⁹ But since beginnings have major importance, one should attend carefully to *Dei Verbum's* first chapter, on revelation itself and on faith. Its predecessor is Vatican I's Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith (*Dei Filius*). The latter document had influenced deeply the notion of God's revelation and of faith's response as these were taught and held by generations of Catholic theology teachers and their students from 1870 to 1965.

On God's revelation, Vatican I's *Dei Filius*, in Chapters II and III, give a quite terse account of *what* God reveals to the human race, namely, "Himself and the eternal decrees of His will" (. . . *se ipsum ac aeterna voluntatis suae decreta humano genere revelare*). Vatican I illustrated this revelation by a single Scripture text, the opening verse of Hebrews, "In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; in these last days, he spoke to us through a Son" (Hebr 1:1-2, from the Latin Vulgate with the verbal forms *loquens* . . . *locutus est* to indicate God's revelatory action).

But closer study of Vatican I on revelation shows that that Council was mainly concerned to clarify aspects which qualify and surround the content of God's revelation, as called for and made urgent by some directions taken in nineteenth century theology. God revealed Himself and the decrees of his will (1) in a *supernatural manner*, requiring an elevating grace of apprehension and conveying some truths ("mysteries") lying beyond the reach of human reason and research—all of which, however, fits with our supernatural calling to the vision of God. The divine locution in revelation has been (2) *accompanied by outward signs*, especially the miracles of Jesus and the fulfillment of prophecies, to show even to reason the *credibility* of God's word. Further, in Vatican I's account, the revealed content, even though involving supernatural mysteries, is nonetheless, once it is received in faith, (3) *open* to believers' rational inquiry for gaining beneficial and religiously fruitful insights into its meaning, that is, in theology. Thus, in the 1870 Dogmatic Constitution, *what* God revealed of Himself and his decrees has a supernatural character, is credible to reason, and is penetrable by intellectual investigation of its meaning in theology. On revealed content—the message and account of God—Vatican I stated a bare minimum, while expanding on three qualities that needed emphasis in 1870 and which mark God's revelation and affect our reception of it in faith.

But, from Vatican II, *Dei verbum's* Chapter I on revelation fills out amply the revealed *content* God gives us, a content that is salvific and has a redemptive or soteriological focus, that is, the revelation of God-with-us in Christ both to liberate us human beings from sin and death and to lead us into communion with Himself. This begins in *DV's* Prologue, which evokes the beginning of the First Letter of John, on the apostolic message gathering hearers into communion both with the apostles and with the Father and the Son. In its unfolding across history, God's revelation culminates in Jesus Christ, who mediates divine revelation and sums it up (*DV* 2), even recapitulating all that God reveals (*DV* 7). The Christ-event shows God to our human family, by our Lord's presence and epiphany, by his words and deeds, by

19. Pope Leo XIII, *Providentissimus Deus* (1893); Pope Benedict XV, *Spiritus Paraclitus* (1920); and Pope Pius XII, *Divino afflante Spiritu* (1943). The texts are in in *The Scripture Documents*, ed. Béchar, 17-59, 81-110, and 115- 36.

his signs and miracles, and especially by his death, resurrection, and sending of the Spirit—all of which fuse together to reveal God as Emmanuel, who is with us to free us from the shadowy realm of sin and death and raise us to eternal life (*DV* 4). This then is the ample account of God’s saving address in deed and word to humankind.

Faith, then, is in us what Vatican I stated, “the full submission of intellect and will to God who reveals,” to which Vatican II characteristically adds the personalist expression that in faith “one freely commits oneself entirely to God.” Faith is also, for *Dei verbum*, open to deepening, toward which the Holy Spirit’s gifts gently lead not only individual believers but indeed the whole community of faith (*DV* 5).

Vatican II stated revelation’s evangelical content in five paragraphs, citing and referencing no fewer than thirty-two biblical passages, including Hebrews 1:1-2 (no. 4). It gives us a text which, if remembered rightly and appropriated, can contribute much to the personal and community *rejuvenation* in faith and life about which Pope St. John XXIII spoke, doing this more often than he spoke about *aggiornamento*.²⁰ *Dei verbum*, in Ch. I lays a fine basis for preaching, which should never pass over Christ the Savior in silence. From him, the center of God’s word to us, the listening people can come to truly know “the joy of the Gospel.”

Furthermore in the inner logic of the sixteen Vatican II documents, *Dei verbum*’s account of divine revelation stands in the first place.²¹ It formulates for our time, simply speaking, *the Gospel*. Regarding the rest of Vatican II’s teaching and reform decrees, *Dei verbum* gives the proclamation by which the Church comes to be assembled as the *congregatio fidelium* and the priestly people for worship—as the Constitutions on the Church and on Divine Worship set forth. This revealed gospel is the message that all church ministries and apostolates, treated in the nine reform decrees, serve and promote. The same gospel creates the horizon of understanding within which Catholic Christians view the world and its structures for promoting the coherent unfolding of the human vocation—as set forth in *Gaudium et spes*, especially in no. 10.2. Consequently, the Vatican II Doctrinal Commission said at one point that the Constitution on Divine Revelation is in a certain way (*quodammodo*)

20. See J. Wicks, “Tridentine Motivations of Pope John XXIII before and during Vatican II,” *Theological Studies* 75 (2014), 847–62, especially 852–53 and 856–57.

21. I stated this view first in “Vatican II on Revelation—From Behind the Scenes,” *Theological Studies* 71 (2010), 637–50, at 640–41. Richard Gaillardetz agrees on the priority of *Dei Verbum*, because it opens with the Church in the posture of humble listening. “Vatican II and the Humility of the Church,” in *The Legacy of Vatican II*, eds. Massimo Faggioli and Andrea Vicini, SJ (New York & Mahwah NJ: Paulist, 2015), 87–108, at 99–100. This is opposed to the view that takes the Constitution on the Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*) as the key to the Council texts, as argued by Massimo Faggioli, in “*Sacrosanctum Concilium* and the Meaning of Vatican II,” *Theological Studies* 71 (2010), 437–52, in *True Reform. Liturgy and Ecclesiology in Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2012), and by Gerald O’Collins, in *The Second Vatican Council. Message and Meaning* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2014), 57–88. This latter position has been contested on good grounds by Christian D. Washburn in “The Theological Priority of ‘Lumen gentium’ and ‘Dei verbum’ for the Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council,” *The Thomist* 78 (2014), 1–29; and “The Second Vatican Council and the Theological Authority of ‘Sacrosanctum Concilium’ as a Constitution,” *Nova et Vetera* 13 (2015), 1093–1124.

the first of all the Council's documents.²² Many editions of the documents place *Lumen Gentium* at the "head of the book." But a few interpreters have seen more deeply and hold that we contextualize the ecclesiology of Vatican II better when we place it (*LG*) after *Dei verbum*, to give the whole corpus of documents, including its ecclesiology, the starting point of the opening reference to the Church in the Constitution on Divine Revelation, that is, the indication that it is "hearing the word of God reverently and proclaiming it confidently" (*Dei verbum religiose audiens et fidenter proclamans*).²³

But how has *Dei Verbum* been received? One astute American observer, Fr. Robert Imbelli, traces the post-Vatican II Catholic fragmentation and polarizations to the eclipse of just what *Dei Verbum* gives us, namely "the enlivening and unifying center of the faith. That center is Jesus Christ himself . . . Absent this concrete and vivifying center, fragmentation and division ensue." Neglect of *Dei Verbum* shows itself in theologies of plural ways of salvation, popular in recent decades. Neglect of this center motivated Pope Benedict XVI to write his volumes, *Jesus of Nazareth*. The way ahead, Fr. Imbelli argues, is a comprehensive re-reception of the Council that moves in the Christocentric direction that *Dei Verbum* has affirmed.²⁴

And, I add, *Dei Verbum's* account of God's revelation summed up in Christ is the doctrinal basis of the most striking passages in Pope Francis's exhortation, *The Joy of the Gospel* (2013). For example, "All revealed truths derive from the same divine source. . . . In this basic core, what shines forth is the beauty of the saving love of God made manifest in Jesus Christ who died and rose from the dead" (no. 36). Further, bearers of the Christian message should be "always keeping in mind the fundamental message: the personal love of God who became man, who gave himself up for us, who is loving and who offers us his salvation and friendship" (no. 128). Vatican II's *Dei Verbum* taught on God's revelation of Himself in Christ as God-with-us to rescue and save, which Francis has actualized in *The Joy of the Gospel*. More recently, on June 22, 2015, the Pope visited the principal Waldensian church of Turin, where he spoke of the fraternal bond linking Protestants and Catholics. "This bond is not based on simply human criteria, but on the radical sharing of the foundational experience of Christian life: the encounter with the love of God that

22. The Commission said this in its explanatory *Relatio* accompanying the late 1964 revision of *De revelatione*. The point was a defense of the ample intention stated at the end of no. 1, that is, that by this updated teaching the message of salvation may be heard in the whole world, be believed, and so lead to hope and love. This can stand here, so the Commission argued, because from one viewpoint the passage was introducing the whole body of Vatican II's main documents. See AS IV/1, 341. The formulation of the intended world-wide result came from St. Augustine, *De catechizandis rudibus*, Ch. IV, no. 8.

23. Recently Robert Imbelli maintains that among the four constitutions of Vatican II, "*Dei Verbum* deserves to be considered a 'first among equals.' The reason is simple. Unless God revealed himself fully through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit, then the church is without foundation and the liturgy a merely human construct." *Rekindling the Christic Imagination. Theological Meditations for the New Evangelization* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2014), xv.

24. Imbelli, *Rekindling the Christic Imagination*, xvi-xvii.

is revealed to us in Jesus Christ and the transforming action of the Holy Spirit who assists us in the journey of life.”²⁵

3. The Dissenting Minority of Vatican II Opposing the Council’s “Counter-syllabus”

During the General Congregation of October 8, 1965, from which this article started, an incident took place that is worth recalling. The Council’s General Secretary took the microphone at one point to sharply admonish some of the Council Fathers who were passing out pamphlets and pages of texts to their fellow council members. The General Secretary said this was bothering many who are listening to speeches on the church in the modern world. This private activity is greatly annoying, *valde fastidiosum*, to the Fathers who are attending to the Council’s main work on its constitutions and decrees.²⁶

This intervention by General Secretary Pericle Felici calls attention to an aspect of Vatican II which many Council participants recall vividly, but is rarely noted by historians. This is the huge number of pamphlets and declarations that individuals and groups circulated during Vatican II, exerting themselves to get their texts into the hands of as many of the Council Fathers as they could reach. One group engaged in this activity was the “International Group of Council Fathers,” the *Coetus internationalis Patrum*,²⁷

The Group had begun slowly during Period II of Vatican II by organizing Tuesday afternoon conferences by speakers who offered the Fathers in attendance critical reviews of the schemas coming up on the Council agenda. The Group gained for Period III of 1964 a working space, the secretarial help of two Claretian priests, and a mimeograph machine—all furnished by the Claretian curial Cardinal Arcadio Larraona. The *Coetus* also opened a small office near St. Peter’s where Council Fathers could pick up the Group’s ever more frequent circulars and especially the amendments (*modi*) prepared by the Group’s *periti* for attaching to a vote of approval with a reservation (*placet iuxta modum*) on the texts then being completed on the Church and ecumenism. Leading the *Coetus* was an organizing and planning committee headed by Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, C.S.Sp. Other leaders were

25. Given in the Zenit daily bulletin of June 23, 2015 at <http://www.zenit.org/en>.

26. AS IV/3, 735.

27. The *Coetus* appears regularly in Ralph Wiltgen, S.V.D. *The Rhein Flows into the Tiber* (Rockford, IL: Tan Books, 1985; original, 1967), 148–50, 178–80, 247–51, and 278. See also Luc Perrin, “Le *Coetus Internationalis Patrum* et la minoranza conciliare,” in *L’evento e le decisioni. Studi sulle dinamiche del concilio Vaticano II*, eds. Maria Teresa Fattori e Alberto Melloni (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1997), 173–87, and Joseph Framérée, in *History of Vatican II*, vol. III, *The Mature Council. Second Period and Intersession, September 1963–September 1964*, eds. Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph Komonchak (Maryknoll: Orbis, and Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 170–75. A favorable account is spread throughout the second half of Roberto de Mattei, *The Second Vatican Council. An Unwritten Story* (Fitzwilliam, NH: Loreto: 2012; original Italian, 2010), beginning with the birth of the *Coetus* on pp. 305–10. Very informative is Philippe Roy-Lysencourt, *Les membres du Coetus internationalis patrum au Concile Vatican II* (Leuven: Maurits Sabbe Library & Peeters, 2014).

Bishop Luigi Carli (Segni, Italy), Bishop Antonio de Castro Mayer (Campos, Brazil), Archbishop Geraldo de Proença Sigaud, S.V.D. (Diamantina, Brazil), and Abbot Jean Prou, O.S.B. (Solesmes, France).²⁸

Before Period IV opened, the Group's leadership had petitioned Pope Paul VI to give it status as an entity of the Council which could, at appropriate moments, give critical and dissenting "minority reports" on schemas in addresses before the whole Council at General Congregations. In the name of Paul VI, the Secretary of State, Cardinal Amleto Cicognani, responded with a sharply worded refusal, including a critique of the title, *Coetus internationalis Patrum* as liable to inspire similar alliances, which would become factional pressure groups infringing on the freedom of the Council Fathers in dealing with Vatican II affairs.²⁹

In early October 1965, when the deadline approached for handing in written comments on the draft text on the Church in the modern world, the *Coetus* circulated a text to which 334 Council members signed on in agreement. The text called for adding a passage to the schema's statement on atheism by which the Council would also restate earlier papal condemnations of communism, thereby speaking against the form of atheism then exerting a wide, malevolent influence.³⁰ Two days later, on October 11, the same Group distributed to as many Fathers as they could reach an invitation to reject, by votes of *non placet*, the final emended schema of the Declaration on the Church's Relation to Non-Christian Religions, which spoke to the relation to Jews in its famous no. 4.³¹ All during Period IV in 1965, the *Coetus* also marshalled particularly vehement oppositions to the drafts that Vatican II eventually promulgated as the Declaration on Religious Liberty (*Dignitatis humanae*) and the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et spes*).

Early in Period IV the *Coetus* circulated a mimeographed booklet of criticisms of the schema on religious liberty, a copy of which Bp. Carli submitted as an attach-

28. See Roy-Lysencourt, *Les membres du Coetus Internationalis Patrum*, 21-76, for brief biographies of the five leaders and a list of references in the *Acta Synodalia* to the Council interventions of each. The author goes on to treat the cardinals sympathizing with the group, the "fellow travelers" and occasional backers among Council Fathers, and the *per-iti* of the *Coetus*, particularly Fr. Victor-Alain Berto, Fr. Raymond Dulac, and Fr. Georges Frénaud, O.S.B.

29. See the texts in AS VI/4, 373-74 (petition of July 25, 1965, signed by Abp. Lefebvre, Abp. de Proença Sigaud, and Bp. Carli) and 410-11 (August 11, 1965, answer of Card. Cicognani). The Cardinal's response is given in English in Roberto de Mattei, *The Second Vatican Council*, 431, with a critical observation based on the imagined existence of a "Rhein Alliance" of Vatican II progressives, as popularized by Ralph Wiltgen, in *The Rhein Flows Into the Tiber*.

30. Roberto de Mattei narrates the circumstances surrounding this intervention in *The Second Vatican Council. An Unwritten Story*, 469-81, giving the text of the proposed addition to the schema on pp. 474-75. Such an insertion would have gone directly against Pope John XXIII's fundamental orientation of the Council, in his inaugural address of October 11, 1962, to not continue further the well-established Catholic practice of condemning errors but instead to attract people to what is true and good by confidently showing the validity and beauty of Catholic teaching.

31. R. de Mattei, *The Second Vatican Council*, 462.

ment to his own written comments on the emended text on religious liberty.³² During Period IV, Archbishop Lefebvre spoke in the aula on September 20, 1965, against the schema on religious liberty, claiming that its doctrine came from Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and Voltaire, who had aimed to destroy the Catholic Church. When 19th century liberal Catholics took up the position of the schema, they were condemned by Leo XIII.³³ Several contrasting addresses in favor of the text on religious liberty then followed, for example, by Cardinal Giovanni Urbani of Venice on behalf of thirty-two Italian bishops and from Cardinal Joseph Lefebvre, Archbishop of Brouges, France, who deftly refuted each of the objections of opponents like his fellow Frenchman (but no relation) Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre.³⁴

On September 22, 1965, Abp. Proença Sigaud voiced opposition against the schema on the Church's relation to the modern world. For him the schema adopts a phenomenological method which rejects objective truth and immutable metaphysical principles. The Church already has a finely articulated *corpus* of teachings related to the world of today, which are at hand in the twenty volumes of discourses by Pope Pius XII (1939-58), from which the Council ought to be drawing, instead of taking up the dangerous "Teilhardian" ideas of the schema.³⁵

The counter arguments by the *Coetus* did have an influence, as shown in the numbers of *non placet* votes by the Fathers on the documents especially opposed by the *Coetus* during Period IV. These occurred both in Congregations, after the whole text was amended, and then in the Public Sessions just before Pope Paul VI's promulgation. There were ca. 2000 voting members in the Congregations, of which the number rose to 2300 in the Public Sessions. On the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, especially the Jews, 250 Council members voted *non placet* during the Congregation, which fell to 88 in the Public Session of promulgation by the Pope. On Religious Liberty, 249 members were opposed in the Congregation, of whom 70 held to their *non placet* votes in the presence of Paul VI on the day of promulgation. Similarly on the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern world, 251 members opposed it in the Congregation, with 70 opposing it at the December 7, 1965, Session of promulgation by Paul VI.³⁶ Thus when these final

32. *Acta Synodalia*, IV/1, 683-92. Carli claims that the present-day system of religious liberty has its basis in laicism, religious indifferentism, and agnosticism, against which the Council has to declare immutable, eternal principles drawn from the encyclicals of Leo XIII and Pius XII. Earlier, the two Brazilian leaders of the *Coetus*, Abp. Proença Sigaud and Bp. de Castro Mayer had sent in a lengthy critique of the same schema when it was still Ch. V of the schema on ecumenism (AS III/3, 648-57).

33. AS IV/1, 792-94.

34. See O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 254-57, on the speeches favoring the religious liberty text, along with the outcome of the vote taken shortly after, showing 1997 Fathers favorable and only 224 opposed to working ahead on the basis of text on religious liberty recently revised by the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, which shepherded the text through the conciliar process.

35. AS IV/2, 47-50.

36. See, for the Congregation of October 15, 1965, the record of 1735 *placet* and 250 *non placet* votes on the Church's relation to non-Christians, especially the Jews, in AS, IV/4, 824. But in the Public Session of October 28, when it was clear that Paul VI approved and was going to promulgate the Declaration *Nostra aetate*, the votes of *placet* were 2221

texts were completed and approved, just over 12% of the Council members rejected them, but when the Pope stood ready to approve and promulgate them, a minority of 3% still dissented from the documents' teaching. In contrast, on Vatican II's Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops, 13 voted *non placet* in the Congregation, which fell to 2 in the Public Session of October 28, 1965. On *Dei verbum*, there were 27 *non placet* votes, out of 2115 voting during the Congregation of October 29 on the completed text, but only 6 of *non placet* in the Public Session of November 18. On the Church's missionary activity, 18 voted *non placet* in the Congregation, but only 5 held to this in the Public Session of December 7.

So, Vatican II ended with a minority in disagreement with three of its Period IV documents, namely, those relating to other religions, to religious liberty in civil society, and to encountering the modern world in respectful dialogue. This minority, we know, became in time the serious wound of the post-Vatican II Catholic Church which is the schism begun by Archbishop Lefebvre and which is today given focus and ongoing life by the Sacerdotal Society of St. Pius X. One should note the substantial issues of the Period IV dissent by the *Coetus* on issues quite different from that of Latin in the liturgy and only the Roman Canon in Eucharistic celebration.

To grasp more deeply the significance of the International Group of the Fathers at Vatican II and of the documents they opposed during Period IV, we can well consider Joseph Ratzinger's characterization of the three Vatican II documents against which the Group directed its dissent and redoubled its efforts to gain adherents to its rejection. Ratzinger said the following in an article of 1975 on Vatican II's Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*:

We might say that (in conjunction with the texts on religious liberty and world religions) it is a revision of the *Syllabus of Errors* issued by Pius IX [1864], a kind of counter-syllabus.³⁷ . . . [T]he *Syllabus* established a line of demarcation against the determining forces of the nineteenth century: against the scientific and political world view of

against 88 of *non placet*. Similarly, at the Congregation of November 19, 1965, on the amended text on religious liberty, the votes *placet* were 1954, against 249 of *non placet* (AS, IV/6, 780), but at the Public Session of December 7, these shifted to 2308 of *placet* against 70 of *non placet* for the Declaration *Dignitatis humanae*. Finally, on the text on the Church in the modern world, the penultimate vote on December 6, 1965, gave it 1736 votes of *placet* against 251 of *non placet* (AS IV/7, 641) which on December 7 became 2308 of *placet* and 70 of *non placet* just before Paul VI accepted and promulgated the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*.

37. At this point, Ratzinger inserted an explanatory footnote on Pius IX's *Syllabus of Errors*: "*Syllabus* was the designation given to the catalogue of eighty statements in which Pius IX took a critical stand with regard to the spiritual and political problems caused by secularization. The *Syllabus* was sent to the bishops in 1864 and led, especially in France, to sharp disagreements." The document collected censures already issued by Pius IX in twenty-four of his discourses and encyclicals from 1847 to 1861. See the entry "*Syllabus Errorum*," in *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd edition, eds. F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingston (OUP 1997), 1565–66. The text of the *Syllabus* is in DH 2901–2980.

liberalism. In the struggle against modernism [1907 and after, under Pius X] this twofold delimitation was ratified and strengthened.³⁸

Ratzinger added a remark on “[T]he one-sidedness of the position adopted by the Church under Pius IX and Pius X in response to the situation created by the new phase of history inaugurated by the French Revolution.” But Vatican II set out to overcome this one-sided set of positions, based on a complicated network of causes which had come together to form the background of the Vatican II documents of the “counter-syllabus” on religions, religious liberty, and the relation of Church and world. On the Pastoral Constitution, Ratzinger added: “Let us be content to say here that the text serves as a counter-syllabus and, as such, represents on the part of the Church, an attempt at an official reconciliation with the new era inaugurated in 1789.”³⁹

On the designation “counter-syllabus,” adopted by Joseph Ratzinger, we note that it does not refer to a revocation of the condemnations issued by Popes Pius IX and Pius X. When Ratzinger wrote his essay for the German edition of *Communio* in 1975, his readers would have known well the content of the three Vatican II documents under discussion, which do not revoke previous censures. The documents are, however, in sharp contrast to earlier papal ways of addressing the world, in being positive, respectful, and uplifting in their content. They contrast starkly with the *Syllabus* of 1864 and with the anti-modernist catalogue issued by the Holy Office in 1907 with Pius X’s approval, in the sixty-five censured positions of *Lamentabili*, to which the Pope’s encyclical *Pascendi* (also 1907) added a developed account of condemned modernist thinking. These papal documents dominated by censures of error were for many people, including many Catholics, prominent characteristics of the “face” of the Catholic Church well into the 20th century. In Vatican II, the Catholic Church turned a quite different “face” to the world as it declined to issue censures but chose instead to speak to and about the world in respectful, hopeful, and encouraging ways.

38. Joseph Ratzinger, “Church and World: An Inquiry into the Reception of Vatican Council II,” in *Principles of Catholic Theology. Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 378 – 93, citing p. 381. This essay appeared originally in *Internationale katholischen Zeitschrift Communio* 4 (1975), 439–54. On “liberalism” in J. Ratzinger’s usage, see the entry, “Liberalismus,” in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, 2nd edition, vol. 6 (1971), 1007–10. The entry on “liberalism” in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*’s first edition (1967), vol. 8, pp. 701–06, is comprehensive, and already notes a change, as found in John XXIII’s *Pacem in terris* (1963). But the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, in its 2003 second edition, vol. 8, pp. 540–42, is more concise and highlights subjectivist tendencies and the condemnations of Popes Pius IX and Pius X. The concise entry in *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd edition, pp. 977–78, refers on one hand to a liberalism of secular and anthropocentric humanism (which Newman rejected as opposed to dogmatic truth), but there was also the liberalism of nineteenth-century orthodox believers who favored political democracy and ecclesiastical reform. Therefore attention to context is needed for grasping the intent of references to “liberalism.”

39. Ratzinger, “Church and World,” 381–82.

The minority dissent fostered by the *Coetus*, which became vocal and persuasive to a shifting number of Vatican II members during Period IV, contrasted with the Council's majority and with Popes John XXIII and Paul VI. The Vatican II majority and the papal leadership were at one in charting and following a new direction that left behind the condemnations of modernity originally framed by Pope Pius IX in 1864.⁴⁰ The vociferous minority was refusing to move on with the Church's living tradition as guided by the magisterium.⁴¹ The life of the Church, and consequently also the magisterium is—as we tend to forget—often *adaptive* to new situations and insights. It can adopt a different tone and change its rhetoric, to express a developing new outlook. This characteristic was especially strong in the key documents of Period IV of Vatican Council II and remains a characteristic essential to any global interpretation of the Council.

Appendix 1

The Itinerary of a Vatican II Document

A Vatican II document began with initial drafting by a Preparatory (1960–62) or a Conciliar commission, followed by approval, both by a central commission and by the Pope, for the text's distribution to all the Council members. The intermediate central commissions for evaluating drafts produced by particular commissions were, first, the Central Preparatory Commission (1961–62) and then, after the Council began, the Commission for Coordinating the Council's Labors. After distribution of the text to the Council members, the draft came on the Council agenda for discussion during which the members evaluated its content and formulations both orally during General Congregations in the Council Hall (St. Peter's Basilica) or in written comments submitted to the responsible commission. After sufficient discussion, a vote was taken on accepting the draft as the basis of further work, which needed a two-thirds majority of those voting. If this majority was not attained, the draft returned to its commission for thorough revision. But if the draft was basically accepted, the commission would revise it to make it conform to the Council members' evaluative

40. On the origin of the stand by the *Coetus* on behalf of Catholic positions against strains of modern thought and politics, see Philippe J. Roy, "La préhistoire du *Coetus internationalis Patrum*. Une formation romaine, antilibérale et contre-révolutionnaire," in *La théologie catholique entre intransigeance et renouveau. La réception des mouvements préconciliaires à Vatican II*, eds. Gilles Routhier, Philippe J. Roy, and Karim Schelkens (Louvain-la-Neuve: Collège Érasme, and Leuven: Universiteitsbibliotheek, 2011), 321–54. Roy describes here the theological and formational directions received by the *Coetus* leadership and *periti*, in the years 1920–30, especially in the French Seminary in Rome and at the Gregorian and Lateran Universities. At the time, Roman theological and spiritual *formatores* propagated antimodernist convictions as they worked to prepare their students for militant efforts on behalf of an integrally Catholic society and against liberalizing currents in theology, politics, and culture. This became, at Vatican II, an important factor in the underlying motivation of the leaders and adherents of the *Coetus internationalis Patrum*.

41. See Appendix 2, below, giving a passage on tradition and Vatican II from Pope Paul VI's theological Letter of October 11, 1976, to Archbishop Lefebvre.

comments. The revised draft then came back to the members for voting, section by section, whether for approval (*placet*), rejection (*non placet*), or approval with reservation (*placet iuxta modum*) accompanied by a reformulation offered as an amendment. The responsible commission then processed the offered amendments with the aim of greater clarity, stronger documentation, or fine-tuning of the teaching or directives, and then brought the text back once more to the assembly for approval, by votes during a General Congregation, both on the amendments and on the whole completed text. The final step was the formal approval by Pope Paul VI and the Council Fathers during a Public Session, leading to the Pope's promulgation of the text as a Constitution, Decree, or Declaration of Vatican Council II.

Appendix 2

Excerpt from Pope Paul VI's Letter to Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre

October 11, 1976

NOTE: In June 1976 Abp. Lefebvre disobeyed Pope Paul VI's order not to ordain seminarians of the Econe Seminary to the priesthood. Nonetheless, the Pope received the Archbishop for a lengthy conversation at Castel Gandolfo on September 11, 1976. A month later, on the anniversary of the opening of Vatican II, Paul VI responded with a letter composed in Latin. After explaining that the Archbishop is fomenting rebellion, the Pope clarified the nature of tradition, based on Dei verbum, Ch. II, in order to correct the Archbishop's thinking. He went on to defend the decrees of Vatican II against charges of departing from the fundamental tradition of the Church. The Letter's full text is given in English translation in Origins 6 (December 16, 1976), 416-20.

Let us come now to the more precise requests which you formulated during the audience of September 11. You would like to see recognized the right to celebrate Mass in various places of worship according to the Tridentine rite. You wish also to continue to train candidates for the priesthood according to your criteria, "as before the Council," in seminaries apart, as at Econe. But behind these questions and other similar ones, which we shall examine later on in detail, it is truly necessary to see the intricacy of the problem: and the problem is theological. For these questions have become concrete ways of expressing an ecclesiology that is warped in essential points (*Illae enim quaestiones evaserunt modi certi atque concreti, ut aiunt, declarandi ecclesiology, quae in capitibus praecipuis falsa esse cognoscitur*).

What is indeed at issue is the question - which must truly be called fundamental - of your clearly proclaimed refusal to recognize in its whole, the authority of the Second Vatican Council and that of the Pope. This refusal is accompanied by an

action that is oriented towards propagating and organizing what must indeed, unfortunately, be called a rebellion. This is the essential issue, and it is truly untenable. . . .

You say that you are subject to the church and faithful to tradition by the sole fact that you obey certain norms of the past that were decreed by the predecessor of him to whom God has today conferred the powers given to Peter. That is to say, on this point also, the concept of “tradition” that you invoke is distorted (*traditionis notio, ad quam provocas, est vitiata*).

Tradition is not a rigid and dead notion, a fact of a certain static sort which at a given moment of history blocks the life of this active organism which is the church, that is, the mystical body of Christ (*Traditio enim non est quiddam quasi immotum et mortuum, vel factum quoddam staticum, ut appellant, quod certo ac definito tempore historico vitam instituti organici et actione praediti, quod est Ecclesia seu Corpus Christi mysticum, coerceat*). It is up to the Pope and to councils to exercise judgment in order to discern in the traditions of the church that which cannot be renounced without infidelity to the Lord and to the Holy Spirit—the deposit of faith—and that which, on the contrary, can and must be adapted to facilitate the prayer and the mission of the church throughout a variety of times and places, in order better to translate the divine message into the language of today and better to communicate it, without an unwarranted surrender of principles.

Hence tradition is inseparable from the living magisterium of the church, just as it is inseparable from sacred scripture. “Sacred tradition, sacred scripture and the magisterium of the church . . . are so linked and joined together that one of these realities cannot exist without the others and . . . all of them together, each in its own way, effectively contribute under the action . . . of the Holy Spirit to the salvation of souls” (*Dei verbum*, 10).

With the special assistance of the Holy Spirit, the popes and the ecumenical councils have acted in this common way. And it is precisely this that the Second Vatican Council did. Nothing that was decreed in this Council, or in the reforms that we enacted in order to put the Council into effect, is opposed to what the 2,000-year-old tradition of the church considers as fundamental and immutable. We are the guarantor of this, not in virtue of our personal qualities but in virtue of the charge which the Lord has conferred upon us as legitimate successor of Peter, and in virtue of the special assistance that He has promised to us as well as to Peter: “I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail” (Lk. 22:32). The universal episcopate is guarantor with us of this.

Again, you cannot appeal to the distinction between what is dogmatic and what is pastoral to accept certain texts of this Council and to refuse others. Indeed, not everything in the Council requires an assent of the same nature: only what is affirmed by definitive acts as an object of faith or as a truth related to faith requires an assent of faith. But the rest also forms part of the solemn magisterium of the church to which each member of the faithful owes a confident acceptance and a sincere application.

You say moreover that you do not always see how to reconcile certain texts of the Council, or certain dispositions which we have enacted in order to put the Council into practice, with the wholesome tradition of the church and in particular with the Council of Trent and the affirmations of our predecessors. These are, for

example: the responsibility of the college of bishops united with the sovereign pontiff, the new *Ordo Missae*, ecumenism, religious freedom, the attitude of dialogue, evangelization in the modern world. . . . It is not the place, in this letter, to deal with each of these problems. The precise tenor of the documents, with the totality of its nuances and its context, the authorized explanations, the detailed and objective commentaries which have been made, are of such a nature to enable you to overcome these personal difficulties. Absolutely secure counsellors, theologians and spiritual directors would be able to help you even more, with God's enlightenment, and we are ready to facilitate this fraternal assistance for you.

But how can an interior personal difficulty—a spiritual drama which we respect—permit you to set yourself up publicly as a judge of what has been legitimately adopted, practically with unanimity, and knowingly to lead a portion of the faithful into your refusal? If justifications are useful in order to facilitate intellectual acceptance – and we hope that the troubled or reticent faithful will have the wisdom, honesty and humanity to accept those justifications that are widely placed at their disposal – they are not in themselves necessary for the assent of obedience that is due to the Ecumenical Council and to the decisions of the Pope. It is the ecclesial sense that is at issue.

In effect you and those who are following you are endeavoring to come to a standstill at a given moment in the life of the church. By the same token you refuse to accept the living church, which is the church that has always been: you break with the church's legitimate pastors and scorn the legitimate exercise of their charge. ■