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## **I. Prenotes for a Reading of Vatican Council II's Constitution on the Church**

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ON THE CONSTITUTION  
ON THE CHURCH

# Prenotes for a Reading of Vatican Council II's Constitution On the Church

C. G. AREVALO, S.J.

"**L**UMEN GENTIUM", the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church,<sup>1</sup> will undoubtedly be considered as the present Council's *chef-d'oeuvre*,<sup>2</sup> a document which will be the object of much study and comment in the months and years to come.

## I: TOWARDS "LUMEN GENTIUM"

The best sort of introduction to the Constitution would be a detailed history of the evolution of the text itself; we will try to trace a little bit of this history later. Even a cursory reading of P. Antoine Wenger's or the Abbé Rene Laurentin's

<sup>1</sup> These notes, patched together to fill a need, are an attempt to give some background-matter for a first reading of the Constitution "Lumen Gentium". The words 'patched together' best describe their character, and they are published here only because it was felt that they might be of use to others. Such as they are, it is hoped they may introduce the great text of the Council to some readers. This is their only purpose. (A substantial portion of the present article has been published in the mission periodical, *Teaching All Nations* [Hong Kong]. Many pages, however, have been rewritten for this issue, and other material added.)

<sup>2</sup> Speaking of the *Constitution on the Church*, the editors of *Herder Correspondence* (Vol. 2, no. 2, February 1965, 40) say: "This (i.e. the *Constitution*) is the centre of the Council, around which the other decrees, disposed of or still under discussion, may be grouped, only loosely and unevenly, it is true, but still in a unity. The high point of the Council, at least doctrinally and dogmatically, has already been reached and left behind with the passing and promulgation of this *Constitution*."

books on the conciliar sessions<sup>3</sup> will serve to show the broad lines of the development the schema underwent, and perhaps even more importantly, the growth within the Council (better

When one sees the growing list of books, pamphlets, articles already written on the Constitution on the Liturgy, one is at a loss to say whether the anticipated flood of comment on the Constitution "Lumen Gentium" is something we should welcome or something we should rather dread.—One item we do look forward to is Yves Congar's promised commentary in the *Unam Sanctam* (Paris: Editions du Cerf) series. Cf. *Choisir* (Geneva, Switzerland), April 1965, 31.

P. Congar's *bloc-notes* published in *Informations Catholiques Internationales*, and later gathered together in his *Reports from Rome*, published by Geoffrey Chapman (London: 1963, 1964, 1965) contain much material for an instructive study of the document. We may also mention the articles of P. Georges Dejaifve of Eegenhoven-Louvain, for the most part published in *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*. These studies together make up a remarkably rich introduction to many of the current themes in ecclesiology. P. Dejaifve's introduction to "Lumen Gentium" appears in the January 1965 issue of the *NRT*, 3-22, entitled "La 'Magna Charta' de Vatican II."

<sup>3</sup> P. Antoine Wenger, editor of *La Croix*, characterized as both "a journalist who sees and a theologian who discerns," has published a book on each of the three sessions (*Vatican II*, Editions du Centurion, Paris, I: 1963, II: 1964, III: 1965) remarkable for their breadth of coverage and theological knowledgeableness. René Laurentin's series on the Council, *L'Enjeu du Concile* (Editions du Seuil, Paris: three books to date, a preparatory volume, followed by the *bilan* of each of the first two sessions; the American periodical *Cross Currents* [1963] has published the English version of the report on the first session) has already established its value for an understanding of *Vatican II*'s theological dimension. While we are on this subject, Michael Novak's *The Open Church, Vatican II: Act II* (New York: Macmillan, 1964) might be mentioned as of importance for studying the theological currents at play within the Council. Bernard Lambert's *De Rome a Jerusalem: Itinéraire spirituel de Vatican II* (Editions du Centurion, Paris, 1964) is an excellent theological analysis. Perhaps some translator can give us at least an abridged English version; it is a work which deserves a large circle of readers everywhere. For the student of theology, *L'Eglise en Marche*, one of the *Cahiers de la Pierre-Quivire*, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris 1964, is indispensable for an analysis of "Lumen Gentium." Although published before the third session, it discusses some of the Constitution's most important topics: the Church as Body of Christ; the question, 'Who belongs to the Church'; sacramental and collegial structures of the Church as communion and mission; the holiness of God's people; the pilgrim Church.

still, within the mind and heart of the Church both inside and outside the walls of St. Peter's basilica) of the understanding of the *mystery of the Church*. Romano Guardini's prophetic statement: "the Church is coming to life within the souls of men,"<sup>4</sup> already so richly fulfilled during the decades which preceded and followed World War II, was verified again, paradigmatically, in the first and above all the second session of Vatican II, in the discussions—so fruitful for both the Council Fathers and the rest of the Church—during which the schema *de Ecclesia* gradually grew towards the pattern and assumed the character of the Constitution we now possess.<sup>5</sup>

. . . the true significance of the Constitution and of the other conciliar documents on the Church lies not simply in what they teach, rather, and more especially in the doctrinal development that has taken place during the Council while they were being discussed and composed . . . The first draft of the document on the Church, proposed to the Council at the first session . . . largely represented the ordinary ecclesiology found in the manuals. After the discussion during the first session, it had to be completely rewritten. The new text was subjected to a long discussion during the second session. Taking account of the views of the Council Fathers, a third draft was prepared and proposed for voting at the third session. This series of votes still permitted the bishops to put in requests for modifications. Only after these last modifications had been studied, attended to and again presented to the Council, did we get the present text approved by the final vote of the Council Fathers and promulgated by the Pope on November 21, 1964. Comparing the three texts, we are overwhelmed by the doctrinal evolution that has taken place. The future historian will marvel at so fast a change in so few years. In order to estimate the true significance of the Constitution and the other conciliar documents we must take into account the extraordinary doctrinal development and seek to define the direction in which this evolution has taken place.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Romano Guardini, *The Church and the Catholic*, New York: Sheed and Ward, 1935, p. 11. The original work, in German, was first published in 1922. Cf. Pierre Charles, "La théologie dogmatique, hier et aujourd'hui," in *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, 59 (1929), 816.

<sup>5</sup> See the citation following, from Gregory Baum's commentary on the Constitution. The development of the text—evolution would be a better word—would make a fascinating study, once the fuller *Acta* are made available. One thing Vatican II has given the Church: no end of topics for *doctorandi* in theology and Church history!

<sup>6</sup> This lengthy quotation is taken from the recent *Deus Books* (Paulist Press, Glen Rock, N.J.) edition of the Constitution on the

A well-known Belgian theologian, P. Georges Dejaive of Eegenhoven-Louvain, has voiced the opinion that the Constitution "was born like a premature springtime; that it is a flower rich in promise rather than a slowly-ripened fruit; it is in this document . . . that one finds the clearest reflection of the transformation which has taken place in the Church during the past three years, the change which is carrying the Church over, no less, from the era of the Counter-reformation, to a period which I would not hesitate to call the ecumenical age."<sup>7</sup>

### *Renewal in the Theology of the Church*

Anyone who has watched the astonishing theological awakening which has taken place all over the Catholic world among bishops and priests and in all ranks of the Church since Pope John summoned the Council will find it easy to agree with the remarks just cited; we must immediately add, however, (and we are sure P. Dejaive would be in full accord here) that the sudden flowering of the last thirty months was (albeit obscurely) prepared for by an ecclesiological renewal of proximately at least as many years. The lines of development along which this renewal went we have tried very summarily to indicate in some notes previously published in *Teaching All Nations* (April, 1964);<sup>8</sup> we do not have the space to rehearse the history here. But as one sees more clearly whither the renewal was leading, it becomes increasingly more difficult to characterize in brief formulae the growth of its central themes.

"From a juridical and apologetic view of the Church to an ecclesiology that is resolutely trinitarian, christocentric, pastoral"; "from the focus on the pyramid of authority to a rediscovery of the concentric circles of communion"; "from a hierarchiology to a theology of the life of the people of God"—

Church, edited by Edward H. Peters, C.S.P. The Commentary, from which these lines are cited, is by Gregory Baum, O.S.A., the well-known Council *peritus* from St. Michael's College, Toronto.

<sup>7</sup> G. Dejaive, "La 'Magna Charta' de Vatican II," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, Janvier 1965, 5.

<sup>8</sup> *Art cit.*, especially on pp. 204-211. (Cf. notes *ibid.*, 216-17).

these are convenient summaries, but they only begin to describe the multi-phased theological thrust that was at once inwards toward the center (toward the Risen Christ, Christ living in the Church, present and active in word and sacrament), and outwards from the liturgy and the sacramental life to the task of the Church and the Christian in the world, outwards toward the great opening of doors and reaching out of minds which the ecumenical movement has become, and then as it were all at once—centrifugally—into a new understanding of the Church's relationship with all of mankind, with mankind's unfolding history and with all of terrestrial reality, and into a new realization of the pilgrim Church's eschatological dimension as Kingdom of God....<sup>9</sup>

#### THE FIRST SCHEMA

This transformation of the ecclesiology of the last phase of Counter-reformation theology into the ecclesiology of the springtime of the ecumenical age becomes visible when the first draft of the schema, prepared by the preparatory commission and presented to the Council Fathers towards the end of the first session (30 November 1962) is compared with the definitive conciliar document.<sup>10</sup>

The first schema contained eleven chapters: On the nature of the Church militant; on the members of the Church militant and on the necessity of membership in the Church for salvation; on the episcopate as the highest degree of the sacrament of Order and of the priesthood; on residential Bishops; on the states of evangelical perfection in the Church; on the laity; on the magisterium of the Church and its authority; on authority and obedience in the Church; on the relationship between Church and State; the Church's duty to proclaim the Gospel to all men; on Ecumenism. (The schema on the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God and Mother of men,

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Charles Davis, "Past Trends and Present Tensions," *The Clergy Review*, 48 (1963) 417 ff. and Yves Congar's *Sainte Eglise*, Paris: Cerf, 1963, pp. 450-695. Also the remarkable paper given by Eduoard Schillebeeckx, on "The Church and Mankind," published in *Concilium*, Volume I (Paulist Press, Glen Rock, N.J., 1965), pp. 69-101.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. footnotes 5 and 6, above.

originally a separate document, was made a part of the schema on the Church, by vote of the Council on 26 November 1963).

The fate this schema met is sufficiently known; as the citation already given from Father Baum says, it had to be completely recast and rewritten. The debates have been recorded elsewhere;<sup>11</sup> here we will merely enumerate some headings under which the criticisms directed at the schema and its individual chapters may be listed.

### *Criticism of the Schema*

The first chapter, on the nature of the Church on earth, was criticized for presenting too juridical a view of the Church as the mystical Body of Christ. Also other scriptural images of the Church were too summarily treated. Cardinal Koenig pointed out that the Church's relationship to Christ was hardly touched on: this strange lacuna in the text had to be filled in with an entire chapter, one German bishop felt, on Christ as *Caput et Dominus Ecclesiae*. There was too unilateral an emphasis on the Church's visibility and on its *romanita*; an almost complete passing-over of the "spiritual realism" of the Greek Patristic tradition, in which the ontology of grace was the primary element in one's belonging to Christ and his Church; not the juridical tesserae of membership. ("*Per baptismum*," the Council of Florence said, echoing Patristic thought, "*membra Christi ac de corpore efficimur Ecclesiae*" [DB 696].) A convergent reproach was directed at the schema's almost complete silence on the holiness of the Church, and thus on its eschatological character. The Church on earth is holy in its divinely-established structure and institution, but it remains—this side of heaven—ever *purificanda et consummanda* [Cardinal Bea].

The chapter on membership in the Church, a topic so

<sup>11</sup> E.g., A Wenger, *Vatican II, Premiere Session*, pp. 147-163; Xavier Rynne, *Letters from Vatican City*, New York: Farrar, Strauss, 1963, pp. 214-239. See R. Laurentin's report on the first session, in *Cross Currents*, 1963; also *Documentation catholique; Informations catholiques*, etc. etc.

much discussed in contemporary theology, was seen as tied down to the narrow confines of the textbook theses; it repeated Pius XII's teaching in *Mystici corporis* and the Holy Office's letter *Suprema haec sacra*: it did not go beyond this to see the whole matter in broader perspective. Once again, the center of attention was not the meaning and grace of baptism as seen in Scripture and Christian tradition; not the theology of the baptismal character, but rather the juridical criteria, the canonist's rules of thumb.

As for the episcopate and its role in the life of the Church: the schema stated that the episcopate was the supreme degree of the sacrament of the priesthood, but without bringing to light the real meaning of the priesthood itself. The threefold pastoral power was spoken of, without relating it to the mission of the Church and its ordination to the *diakonia* of all Christian authority. Jurisdiction remained in the focus of reflection, not the theology of the sacrament of Orders; episcopal consecration seemed almost a peripheral value. The notion of collegiality, so central in the whole developing theology of the Church and the episcopate, hardly showed its head; bishops seemed to be little more than vicars of the Roman Pontiffs. What had to be rediscovered in the text was the sacramental and pastoral dimension of the episcopate; the relation of the episcopal powers to the mission and holiness of God's people; the collegial aspects of the bishop's office and mission in the Church; the relationship of the bishop with Christ the High Priest, with the people of God, with the priests who assist him in his pastoral ministry.

The chapter on the laity, although admittedly more successful than most, was not sufficiently clear on the meaning and fulness of the priesthood of the faithful, nor on the proper 'consistency' of the laity's role in the mission of the Church—this role was envisaged in much too clerical a manner, and the laity looked on too much as "hired help" or, in Karl Rahner's words, "an object in a clerical sanatorium for the cure of souls".

Similar remarks were made on most of the other chapters: the chapter on religious was criticized as making them appear

radically distinct from the rest of the Christian community. Once again, the optic was too juridical; even here, where one would expect its fullest development, the Christian vocation to holiness was left very much in the shade. The chapter on the teaching authority of the Pope and the episcopate merely echoed the classroom textbooks: the magisterial office was not shown in its relation to the belief of the entire Church as community of faith; the meaning of the papal teaching authority within and over-against that of the episcopal college was not clarified; the active part of the laity in the Church's possession, transmission and understanding of faith was not collocated in sufficient light.

In the matter of obedience in the Church, the schema tried to come to terms with a serious problem (the so-called "crisis of authority"), but the solution it proposed did not seem to do justice to all the elements of the problem, notably to the true meaning of Christian freedom as rooted in the new life of grace and conditioned by the obedience of Christ, and to the spirit of service which must characterize all exercise of power in the Christian context. The discussion of the relationship between Church and State should have been projected more profitably against the background of the relationship of the Church to the world (the Church seen as *anima huius mundi*); the question of the freedom of conscience should have been touched on.

Even in the chapter on the Church's missionary duty there was too large a preoccupation with juridical matters: what was needed was a broader theological vision, greater attention to the common responsibility of the entire episcopate in the concerns of evangelization of the world, the matter of the unimpeded preaching of the Gospel set in relation to the right of all men to arrive at the truth [Cardinal Montini], a dynamic view of the Church fulfilling the mission towards mankind entrusted to her by Christ.<sup>12</sup>

The intervention of Bishop De Smedt of Bruges (Belgium)

<sup>12</sup> Cf. G. Martelet, S.J., in a study prepared for the *Etudes et Documents* series, 9, 30 Avril 1963.

will be remembered as a particularly forceful summation of the griefs voiced against the preparatory commission's schema: it was not sufficiently impregnated with the rich theological thought on the nature and life of the Church which fuller contact with the sources of tradition in recent years has developed; its theological perspectives were narrow and uninspiring; it breathed a spirit of "triumphalism" and clericalism so alien to the humility and service and self-sacrifice preached by Christ and the Gospel; it was excessively juridical in tone and concern, with its emphasis on rights and duties and competences; it was not ecumenical in spirit, not sufficiently open to the great ideals and concerns which inspire mankind today: what men needed to see in the Church in our time was above all that the Church is the devoted and loving mother of all men for whose sake she incessantly renews the redeeming self-giving of Christ.<sup>13</sup>

### *The desired perspective*

Another way of describing what seemed to many Council Fathers and theologians to be lacking in the schema might be this: what was wanted was an angle of vision on the Church which stresses the actuality of God's activity within her, the primacy of "Christian ontology" over juridical structures, a perspective which gives a fuller understanding of her human and historic reality, indicating the tension in her being and life between (in relation to the kingdom of God) what she *is* already and what she is yet to become.<sup>14</sup>

After P. Congar, this perspective may be thus developed;

(1) Needed is an underlining of the initiative, the calling, the action of God: he not only founded the Church once upon a time; he brings it into being even now, he *realizes* it unceasingly until the end of time.

The grasp of this truth undercuts "hierarchiological thinking". ("God once upon a time established the hierarchy and gave it its

<sup>13</sup> Xavier Rynne, *Letters from Vatican City*, New York: Farrar, Strauss, 1963, pp. 218-219.

<sup>14</sup> Yves Congar, "Le moment ecclésiologique actuel," *Etudes et Documents*, 8 Février, 1963, n.4. (Also some notes taken at a conference given at the Gregorian University, Rome, 5/11/63.)

powers and thus has sufficiently provided for his Church until the end of time" — a sort of deist view of the Church.) It also places on the first plane what is really essential, really primary: the "ontology of Christian grace", not the structure of institution. What come first are the divine call and action; the christic life and grace; the concrete living out of this life by redeemed and graced men within the reality of their daily human existence and within the reality of the Christian community and the "real human world" — as men who have died and risen in Christ's death and resurrection, as men who bear witness by their whole lives to the reality of the paschal mystery. (An "ecclesial anthropology".)

(2) The Church's nature and its being cannot be truly seen except in reference to its mission on earth. The Church exists as called by God, as sent by God: called to the worship of the living God and to the witness of the redemption God has wrought in Christ; sent to bring the Gospel of salvation to all men. The Church is a *sacrament* of the Gospel and of salvation; a sacrament of God's word and God's grace given in Christ for the world and all men. The Church is sacrament in its most dynamic sense: *action* which is the meeting and encounter of grace. The Church is not something merely given, laid on the counter (so to speak), a static structure. No, the self-giving of God, his ever-renewed call and action in Christ is, in a true sense, englobed within the Church, just as Christ's mission and self-giving lives within his sending forth of his Church. Thus the actuality of God's action in Christ's salvific work remains unceasingly present and real within the Church, because God is in Christ and in the Church realizing his saving mystery. (When we look on the Church and the ecclesial means of salvation from an eschatological perspective, this means we see them as at work in the ongoing process of realizing God's salvific design.)

For eschatology is to be "understood within a perspective of the unity of God's plan, as *that toward which* the whole arrangement is moving, giving meaning to each of its several stages, since it is present to them and within them. Everything tends toward the Kingdom of God, toward a realization and consummation of the whole work. The present, the history which we ourselves are living, derives its meaning from its relation to this expectation. But its relationship with the coming Kingdom is one of tension, and not of preparation only. Both of these two aspects are equally true and should be grasped together. It is the union of these two that gives the Church its very status and its situation: which is to be both *already* and *not yet* the Kingdom of God."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Yves Congar, Foreword to Frank B. Norris, *God's Own People*, Baltimore, Helicon, 1962, p. V.

(3) Thus an ecclesiology that will be true to the dynamic reality of the Church (as just described) must think and speak of the Church dialectically. (The *resourcement* of our times, our renewed contact with the Scriptures, the Fathers, and the concrete apostolic and missionary life of the Church today all impel us to this.) The Church is both divine and human. It is *in via*, on pilgrimage; and yet it is anticipatively already the term of wayfaring. It is both historical and eschatological, involved in the life and movement of this world and yet transcending it already; it is both sacrament of salvation and salvation already present in our midst; means toward communion and communion in fact, means of grace and the spiritual locus of grace itself (its visibility in the world); it is *sancta* and *sanctificans*, *congregans et congregata*, the ministry which serves unto salvation and already the community of the called and saved. The Church is all these things because the Church on earth possesses the Spirit in the conditions of *fallen* and redeemed humanity, in the concrete "flesh" of man tainted in Adam and renewed indeed in Christ, but still (in Luther's phrase) *simul iustus et peccator*, in daily need of unceasing forgiveness and renewal from God's mercy in Christ.

It was to satisfy demands like these, strongly urged by Bishops alive to the gains of contemporary ecclesiology and to the imperative "*quid dicis de teipsa?*" which the modern world addresses to the Church, that the schema was sent back to the drawing-boards at the end of the first conciliar session.

#### THE SECOND SESSION

The De Ecclesia text was rewritten, during the recess (or intersession) between the first and second sessions, following the lines indicated by the speeches given at St. Peter's in the preceding December. The first draft of this revised schema, made up of four chapters (on the mystery of the Church, on the hierarchy, on the Church as People of God and especially on the laity in the Church, and on the universal call to holiness), was a significant advance over the earlier document. Proof of this was the massive vote of approval it received as a generally acceptable basis for discussion in the 38th. general congregation (1 October 1963). It was to undergo considerable revision before the second session was over; further changes were to be introduced, for the most part in the interest of the same preoccupations and desires which led the Council Fathers to ask for a complete rewriting of the text which had been

placed in their hands towards the end of the previous November (1962).

The account of the discussion of the new text (the *forma prior* of the present Constitution) is to be found in the various reports of the second session which are available in print.<sup>16</sup> This discussion was, in the opinion of knowledgeable theologians who were present, genuinely fruitful; even the changes which have found their way into the final text cannot indicate just how profitable the wearying hours of speeches, in the end, proved to be. (We might recall Fr. Baum's words, cited earlier in this article, on the doctrinal growth which takes place within the Church as bishops and faithful follow the conciliar discussions.)

"The Council has not wasted its time," P. Congar wrote at the end of the session. "It brought out more clearly the principal features of a new visage of the Church...and has placed the episcopal power in its proper place in the structure of the Church, which is not purely monarchical. It has committed the Church to a dialogue with other Christians, and this presupposes a reciprocal attitude, until such time as it commits her more fully in the mission to and the dialogue with the world."<sup>17</sup>

#### THE THIRD SESSION

The "forced marches" of the third session of the Council,

<sup>16</sup> Cf., for instance, Vol. I, no. 1 of *Herder Correspondence* (English edition), 6-13, and G. Martelet, "Horizon théologique de la deuxième session du Concile," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, May 1965, 449-468. Also Xavier Rynne's book on the second session, *Letters from Vatican Council II: the Second Session* (New York: Farrar Strauss, 1964), pp. 38-157 and Michael Novak's *The Open Church*, pp. 88-210. The schema de *Ecclesia* took twenty-three days to discuss, half the total number of days allotted for the entire session. Most of the more important speeches given during the session will be found in the *Deus Book*, *Council Speeches of Vatican II*, edited by Hans Küng, Yves Congar and Daniel O'Hanlon (Glen Rock, N.J., 1964). An added reason for not delaying on the second session is precisely the availability of this latter paperback publication.

<sup>17</sup> Yves Congar, *Report from Rome: II*, London: G. Chapman, 1964, pp. 126-127.

with the Council presidency and moderators constantly pressing for an accelerated pace, covered an almost unbelievable amount of ground. The debates on the two chapters of the schema *de Ecclesia* which had not yet been discussed (Chapters 7 and 8, on the eschatological character of our vocation and our union with the heavenly Church and on the Blessed Virgin in the mystery of Christ and the Church) were disposed of in two days (September 16-17, 1964), and the Council went on with unabated instance through the rest of its agenda. "Beyond doubt, never in the history of the Church has a conciliar assembly been required to deliberate and decide on so many serious and delicate matters in the space of so short a time."<sup>18</sup>

On 21 November 1964, in the last session, three decrees were voted on by the Council Fathers and promulgated by Pope Paul VI: the dogmatic Constitution "Lumen Gentium", the decree "Orientalium Ecclesiarum" on the Catholic Oriental Churches, and "Unitatis Redintegratio" on the Ecumenical Movement. The final vote on "Lumen Gentium" was: 2,151 in favor, 5 against.<sup>19</sup>

In the address he gave at the closing of the session, Pope Paul VI referred to the Constitution in these terms:

The doctrine on the Church has been described and studied, and thus the doctrinal task of the First Vatican Ecumenical Council has been completed. The mystery of the Church was explored, and the divine plan of its fundamental constitution was outlined. Once again we thank God for this happy result and we allow our souls to be filled with a legitimate joy. From now on we can enjoy greater understanding of divine thought relative to the Mystical Body of Christ, and from this we can draw clearer and safer rules for the life of the Church, greater energy for her incessant effort to lead men to salvation, further hope for the progress of the reign of Christ in the world.

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. Dejaifve, *art. cit.* (see fn. 2, above), 5.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. the instructive article by the editors of *Herder Correspondence* (English language edition), 2 (1965), 38-52: "The Third Council Session: Achievements, Crises, Projects," and the "Table of Debates and Votes." See also the NCWC's *Council Daybook, Vatican II, Session 3*. (Cf. fn. immediately following.)

We like to think that the doctrine of the mystery of the Church illustrated and proclaimed by this Council will, from this moment, find a positive echo in the minds of Catholics. Especially it will let the faithful see the real face of the Bride of Christ more fully delineated and revealed; it will let them see the beauty of their mother and teacher; . . . it will let them admire . . . a forward-moving realm in which divine and human elements blend in order to reflect on believing humanity the outlines of the Incarnation and the Redemption, the whole Christ our Saviour, to use the expression of St. Augustine.<sup>20</sup>

## II: "A GREAT DOCUMENT"

What over-all judgment may be passed on the Constitution, "the longest dogmatic text ever voted on by a Council"? What are its great themes, the key ideas which give it value and relevance, the qualities—as a conciliar document—which characterize it? On what points does it advance our understanding of the Church?<sup>21</sup>

The Abbot of Downside, Dom B. C. Butler, has said, "I have no hesitation in saying that the Constitution is a great document, even though, being the fruit of the Holy Spirit's working in imperfect human beings, it is a stepping-stone and not a final accomplishment."<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Pope Paul VI, address of 21 November, 1964. *Council Day-book, Vatican II, Session 3*, edited by Floyd Anderson, NCWC: Washington, D.C., 1965, p. 8.

<sup>21</sup> The citation in the previous sentence is from P. Yves Congar, in his *bloc notes* for *ICI*. —Hans Küng's "The Council: End or Beginning?" in *Commonweal*, 12 February 1965 is a most interesting balance-sheet on the third session. He discusses the Constitution on the Church on pp. 632-633. The article suffers perhaps from more than a touch of rhetoric, but (at least) Küng has not yet given us a dull page. —See also Francis X. Murphy, C.S.S.R., "The Theology of the Church: The New Approach," *Catholic World*, March 1965, 346-353.

<sup>22</sup> In the Paulist Press edition of the Constitution, p. 13.—One has the feeling, reading through the discussions on schema 13, that the Council is, in a true sense, already moving ahead of the Constitution . . . How long will it take for the rest of us to catch up with it?

Cf. the excellent articles ("Impressions conciliaires, 1964") by Ph. Delhay in *L'Ami du Clergé*, 1964 (*vid. index*) and 1965, on Schema XIII. Also M.D. Chenu, "Les Signes des temps," *NRTh*, Janvier 1965, 29-39.

Bishop van Zuylen of Liège has called it the main achievement of the Council, "a marvelous theological document" which will allow historians to call Vatican II the Council of the Church.<sup>23</sup>

P. Dejaifve has written that although "it does not have the sobriety of the old conciliar texts," although "it abounds with repetitions and is not always too well-ordered logically," still these defects are due, among other things, "to a lack of time, and . . . due to the concrete circumstances under which a Council—laboring under the pressure of strong tensions—has had to develop." "The great merit of this Constitution," he adds, "is that, far from canonizing a past moment, or even conserving a present one, it prepares the future. In this regard, it seems to me that the Church has best 'realized' in this Council its catholicity and its apostolicity, the two aspects of its own mystery which open it out upon the world where it is called to live and to grow."<sup>24</sup>

#### HIGH POINTS OF THE CONSTITUTION

In an effort to indicate the highlights of the Constitution, a rapid reading of some of the document's earlier commentators,—those especially with obvious competence,—might be of use.<sup>25</sup> Such a survey (if it deserves the name) yields the following catalogue, set down with only a token attempt to group together congruent points:

(1) The Constitution is marked by a language and manner, breathes an atmosphere which can be termed biblical; it is predominantly pastoral in tone unmarred by the usually

<sup>23</sup> Vid. *The Tablet* (London), 28 November, 1964, "The Conciliar Mind," 1336 and "Catholicism, Reaction and Obedience," 1339, for some reflections on "the monumental document" on the Church.

<sup>24</sup> Dejaifve, *art. cit.* (fn. 2), 21.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. inter alia: *The Constitution on the Church*. Study-Club edition. (Deus Books, Paulist Press) Glen Rock, N.J., 1965. Foreword by Abbot Basil C. Butler, O.S.B.; commentary by Gregory Baum, O.S.A.; George Tavard, AA., NCWC press release, *Pittsburgh Catholic*, 15 October 1964;

Giovanni Caprile, S.J., "Aspetti positivi della terza sessione del Concilio," *Civiltà Cattolica*, 20 February 1965, 317-341;

forbidding terminology of the lecture room. Its approach is almost wholly positive, without condemnations and anathemata. The virtues just noted give it a breadth and openness which make it an excellent basis for interconfessional dialogue and discussion. Its ecumenical spirit is noteworthy; its attitude toward the other Christian Churches and non-Roman Catholic Christians is invariably one of friendliness and sincere respect.

(2) The dominant presence of two great themes: (a) the *Mystery of the Church* as a divine-and-human reality, as an object of faith; and (b) the *Church as People of God* have important consequences, because these two key notions include, or gather around themselves, ecclesiological elements which are in the center of our renewed understanding of the reality of the Church. What are some of these elements?<sup>26</sup>

John J. King, OMI, "Vatican II: Third Session," *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, LXV (January 1965), 292;

Editors, *Herder Correspondence* (English language edition) 11 (1965), 40-44 (a good summary of some points raised during the third session);

Francis X. Murphy, CSSR, "The Theology of the Church: the New Approach," *Catholic World*, March, 1965, 346-353;

Georges Dejaifve, SJ, "La 'Magna Charta' de Vatican II," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, Janvier 1965, 3-22;

Maurizio Flick, SJ, "Il volto esteriore e il volto interiore della Chiesa," *Civiltà Cattolica*, 3 April 1965, 48-57;

*La Croix*, 31 October 1963, interview with Msgr. Gerard Philips, one of the "Fathers" of the revised schema of the Constitution;

Ambrose McNicholl, OP, "Vatican II: Third Session," *The Thomist* 29 (1965), 79-113.

<sup>26</sup> A few recent books on the Church which may be profitably consulted in studying the first two chapters, especially, of the Constitution: Patrick J. Burns (editor), *Mission and Witness*, Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1964; *The Church, Readings in Theology*, compiled at the Canisianum, Innsbruck, New York: P.J. Kenedy, 1963; Frank B. Norris, *God's Own People*, Baltimore: Helicon, 1962; Jerome Hamer, *The Church Is a Communion*, translated by Ronald Matthews, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1964; Yves M. J. Congar, *Sainte Eglise: Etudes et approches ecclésiologiques*, Cerf: Paris, 1963, and *Chrétiens en Dialogue*, Cerf: Paris, 1964; M.J. Le Guillou, *Le Christ et L'Eglise*, Editions du Centurion: Paris, 1963; J.M.R. Tillard, *L'Eucharistie, Paque de l'Eglise*, Cerf: Paris, 1964; Michael Schmaus, *Katholische Dogmatik* III, 1: *Die Lehre von der Kirche* [5], 1958; F. Holbock-

The Church is seen first and foremost as a spiritual fellowship of the baptized, *congregatio fidelium*, a community of those who have received the Gospel by faith, and desire to live it out in love and deed, thus bearing authentic witness to the presence and victory of Christ's cross and resurrection. Before everything else the Church is a communion, a *koinonia*, whose common bond is the Trinitarian life (the divine agape) shared by God with men in Christ, through the sending of the Spirit into their hearts. Baptism; inward faith and genuine love lived in witness of Christ's Gospel, his death and resurrection; the sacramental life wherein God bends down in unceasing self-giving to man to renew and refashion human existence and the world; the eucharistic assembly where men gather to hear God's word spoken to them through the mediation of his Church, and where the Church, as God's *ekklesia*,

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Thomas Sartory, *Mysterium Kirche in der Sicht del theologischen Disziplinen*, Salzburg: Otto Muller, 1962 (Vol. 1); Eduoard Schillebeeckx (editor), *Concilium: Vol. I, The Church and Mankind*, Glen Rock, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1964; Alois Winklhofer, *Über die Kirche: Das Geheimnis Christi in der Welt*, Josef Knecht: Frankfurt am M., Journet, *L'Eglise du Verbe incarné*, II, Paris: Desclee de Br., 1951 (of enduring value); Felix Malmberg, S.J., *Ein Leib, Ein Geist, vom Mysterium der Kirche*, Freiburg im Br.: Herder, 1960.

See also A. Michel, *Ami du Clergé*, nos. 2, 3, and 8 of the current year.

Other references on the mystery of the Church: Piet Fransen, "The Church and the Trinity," in *Mission and Witness*, pp. 117-140; for the biblical images especially, see the articles under the word *Eglise* in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, fasc. XXV-XXVI, by Pedro Tena (*ekklesia*) and above all Robert Brunet's beautiful contribution, "Figures et Images de l'Eglise," columns 384-401; Robert S. Pelton, ed., *The Church as the Body of Christ*, Notre Dame University: Notre Dame, Ind., 1963, articles by B. Ahern, W. Burghardt, and B. Cooke, pp. 45-124; A. de Bovis, *What Is The Church?* Faith and Fact series (London: Burns & Oates, 1961).

On the Church's mission and missionary work, cf. A.M. Henry, *A Mission Theology*, translated by Albert J. Lamothe, Fides: Notre Dame, Indiana, 1965; L.M. Dewailly's *Envoyés du Père: Mission et Apostolicité*, Editions de l'Orante, Paris, 1960 (bibliography, pp. 141-144); *Liturgy and the Missions: Nijmegen Papers* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1960); *Teaching All Nations: Eichstatt Papers* (Herder and Herder: New York, 1961), both edited by Johannes Hofinger, S.J. Vide also Charles Couturier, *The Mission of the Church*, translated

worships God in and through Christ;<sup>27</sup> the reality of every day life lived in the spirit of faith and self-giving to the brethren,—these are the essentials, these things are on the first plane.

(3) The theology of the People of God both deepens and broadens these perspectives. The Church is a people—like Israel—living very much in history: a people involved in the vicissitudes of the human family, in the temporal order and its multitudinous concerns, in the one community of men with its one chronicle and a common destiny, a *plebs sancta* wholly in the world, yet striving to be not of it<sup>28</sup> (precisely by seeing beyond its merely visible horizon to the eschatological vision, ours by revelation, in which this world is truly seen and alone understood).

(4) The new understanding of what the laity is within the Church derives from this view;<sup>29</sup> the Church is the fellow-

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by A. V. Littledale; Baltimore: Helicon, 1960 (bibliography, pp. 143-144), and articles in the periodical *Christ to the World*.

On the *Church and salvation*, Maurice Eminyan, *The Theology of Salvation*, Boston: St. Paul editions, 1960, and Yves Congar, *The Wide World, My Parish*, translated by Donald Attwater, Baltimore: Helicon, 1961.

On the *charismata*, one recent work is: Karl Rahner, *The Dynamic Element in the Church*, in the *Questiones Disputatae* series, New York: Herder and Herder, 1964.

In *Concilium's* fourth volume, on ecumenism, Hans Küng has contributed a stimulating essay. "The charismatic structure of the Church," (pp. 41-61) which deserves careful reading.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Albert Decourtray, "Esquisse de l'Eglise d'après la Constitution *De Sacra Liturgia*," *Maison Dieu*, No. 79, 1964, 40-62; George Tavard, "The Mystery of the Church in the Liturgical Constitution," *Worship*, 39 (1965), 11-16, and "The Liturgy: Manifestation of the Church," *Teaching All Nations*, 1 (1964), 204-218.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Congar's article on the People of God, in *Concilium*, I, *The Church and Mankind*, "The Church: the People of God," pp. 11-37; A. Winkhofer, *op. cit.* (fn. 26), pp. 68-91, 315-8.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *inter multa*, A. Barruffo, "I laici nella costituzione conciliare sulla chiesa," *Civiltà Cattolica*, 1 May 1965, 229-241; Gregory Baum's commentary in the Paulist Press edition of the Constitution, fn. 25 above, pp. 39-43.

ship of Christians who, from within, are laboring to bring earth and man and human life to their finest fulfillment in Christ. Hence the emphasis on the power and grace given by baptism and confirmation to every Christian, on the reality of the charismatic gifts given by the Spirit to whom he will within the community, on the need and even duty of honest and responsible criticism within the Church, on the meaning of the Christian life in terms of service to other men and in terms of poverty lived as witness to the values of eternal life and fraternal love.

(5) Hence the acknowledgement of the reality of sin and sinfulness in the Church, i.e. in the faithful who are in fact redeemed and graced, but, while in pilgrimage, ever in need of forgiveness and renewal in spirit; always in danger of mistaking their own human creations for the divine reality, of raising up human laws, institutions, systems, into idols; weak, erring and unstable, yet relying in humbleness on the hope of the divine promises and on the divine fidelity.<sup>30</sup>

(6) Hence on the other hand the splendid reaffirmation of the universal call given to Christians by virtue of their baptism (and all that implies) to the heights of Christian holiness.<sup>31</sup>

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For other references on the theology of the laity, perhaps these titles will suffice: Y. Congar, *Jalons pour une théologie du Laïcat*, revised 1964 edition, Cerf: Paris; G. Philips, *Naar een volwassen Christendom*, Louvain, 1960. Worth noting are two short studies: Albert Dondeyne, *Priest and Layman*, London: Sheed and Ward, 1964 and E. H. Schillebeeckx, "The Layman in the Church," in *The Struggle of Minds: Vatican II*, Dublin: Gill, 1963, plus the pertinent chapters in Jerome Hamer, OP, *The Church Is a Communion*, G. Chapman: London, 1964, pp. 97 ff.

See also P. Congar's article "Laienstand" in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, VI, columns 733-740 for bibliography, up to 1961, and A. Michel, *Ami du Clergé*, 15 April 1965, 228-232.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Baum, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-26, and some of the speeches published in *Council Speeches of Vatican II*, edited by H. Küng, Y. Congar, D. O'Hanlon, Deus Books, Paulist Press: Glen Rock, N. J., 1964. Hans Küng's pages on this topic in *The Council, Reform and Reunion* are well-known. See also *Teaching All Nations*, 2 (1965), 165.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Ghislain Lafont, OSB, "Les voies de la sainteté dans le peuple de Dieu," in *L'Eglise en Marche*, Cahiers de la Pierre-Qui-Vire, Desclée de Br.: Paris, 1964, pp. 147-209; M. M. Philippon, OP, *L'Eglise*

this is the *marturia* of the Christian to which his insertion into the Christian community and into its Christic self-giving life necessarily commits him.—The religious life is, as it were, only the full flowering of this *marturia*. It is not a life which separates religious men and women from the "lowly herd" of the faithful or raises them to some superior condition of privilege and prestige. Rather, it collocates them more deeply and more resolutely within it, for it is meant to be the Christian life itself set in full focus (above all in its eschatological dimension); it loses its meaning when it ceases to be the fullness of a wholly Godward existence, of the most complete self-giving for the brethren, of that joyous freedom which Christian faith and self-dispossession engender, when it is no longer the perennially fresh witness to the utter devotion and apostolic poverty, the labor and service, the death and the resurrection of the Lord.<sup>32</sup>

(7) Without for a moment denying the Christian authority of Pope and Bishops, the Constitution collocates them within the Christian *koinonia* not primarily as administrators but as the recipients of the apostolic mission of preaching the Gospel and leading their flocks to the fountains of grace, and for this purpose the recipients of spiritual authority and powers.<sup>33</sup>

*de Dieu parmi les hommes*, Desclee de Br.: Paris, 1964, pp. 185 ff.; B. Haering, CSSR, "La vocation de tous à la perfection, trait fondamental de la morale chrétienne," *Laïcs et Vie Chrétienne parfaite*, Rome: Herder, 1963, pp. 117-160.

<sup>32</sup> A whole library of new books on the religious life has come into existence since the first announcement of the Council. Among the most recent ones we might note *Les Religieux aujourd'hui et demain*, by J. Urtasun, A. M. Charue et al., Paris: Cerf, 1964, and *La Vie Religieuse dans L'Eglise du Christ*, by F. Vandenbrouche, R. Carpentier, et al., Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1964. See *Theological Studies*, 26 (1965), 318-321. We might recommend P. René Carpentier's various essays as of special interest and value from the ecclesiological point of view. For Karl Rahner's views, see "Passion and Ascese," in *Schriften zur Theologie*, III, Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1964, pp. 73 ff. and John D. Gerken's *Toward a Theology of the Layman*, New York: Herder and Herder, 1963, esp. pp. 54 ff. Also, Jean Daniélou, "La place des religieux dans la structure de L'Eglise," *Etudes*, Fevr. 1964, 147-155.

<sup>33</sup> On the sacramentality of the episcopate, cf. the bibliographical notes in A. Michel's commentary on chapter III, *L'Ami du Clergé*, 25 Fevr. 1965, 120. On chapter 3's other themes, cf. fn. 35, below.

Bishops have, as a class within the Church, genuine responsibility for the ministry of word and sacrament over all the earth; their concern is not limited by diocesan boundaries, but collegially embraces the entire world.

(8) Christian authority is self-giving and service, *diakonia*.<sup>34</sup> The Bishop, first among all Christians, must live the self-giving of Christ, for the Christian vocation is essentially turned outward in devotion and service rather than inward in the holding-on to privilege, power and place. As the Bishop much reflect Christ the shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep, so his priests likewise must mirror in their life and action this laying down of one's life for the brethren.

(9) Noteworthy in the teaching on Bishops is the marked emphasis on the sacramental element of *Orders*, as against the element of jurisdiction. Although the Constitution refuses to involve itself in matters still under theological dispute, it stresses the pastoral office (the pastoral power and mission) of the Bishop as deriving from his consecration (which confers what can be termed "radical jurisdiction"): once again the sacramental dimension, the "ontology of Christian grace" is placed on the first plane. The bishopric is not primarily an administrative—jurisdictional office; it is a responsibility for the word and sacrament in relation to God's people and the salvation of men.

(10) The teaching on the *collegiality of the episcopate*, which as Pope Paul VI himself said, completes the vigorous reassertion of the papal primacy and infallibility in Vatican I, would take too long to develop here.<sup>35</sup> But it is a decisive coming-to-explicit-realization within the Church's

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<sup>34</sup> One reference on this important theme will have to suffice: Yves Congar's *Power and Poverty in the Church*, London: G. Chapman and Baltimore: Helicon, 1964, reviewed elsewhere in this issue. In *Hechos y Dichos*, Marzo 1965, J. Ma. Gonzales Ruiz takes up the question, "La autoridad como servicio?" on pp. 257-260. "Pero yo diría que esto es poco todavía. La autoridad como servicio, sí; pero más aún, como *indigencia*."

<sup>35</sup> On chapter III of the Constitution, see the bibliographical notes in *L'Ami du Clergé*, 25 Fevr. 1965, p. 120 (by A. Michel), and Wilhelm Bertrams, SJ, *The Papacy, the Episcopacy and Collegiality*, trans.

consciousness, of this reality in her own structure and life. It should do much to correct the woefully one-sided "monarchical view" of the Church which the last century or two have made dominant; and the concrete implementation of collegiality within the next few decades will probably bring changes into both administrative structure and day-by-day Catholic life which even more hardy theologians can not now predict.<sup>36</sup> Of primordial importance is the *spirit of collegiality* to which the doctrine of collegiality challenges all, from Pope and bishop to the most ordinary of the faithful; the implications of a spirit of fraternal collaboration and willingness to learn on all levels which more than anything else should tear down the juridicism and clericalism against which so much has been said, by the Bishops themselves first of all, during this Council.

(11) Of special interest is the "official adoption" of the notion of *catholicity* as signifying not so much a geographical-spatial characteristic, but as springing from the inner nature and life of the Church itself. P. Congar long ago said that "catholicity is above all else the capacity of the Church's principles to assimilate, perfect, sublimate, win and unite to God the whole of man, all men and all values."<sup>37</sup> That the Church is catholic means that everything that is human and good has a place within her life, for all these things are meant

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Patrick T. Brannan, SJ., Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1964.—Ladislas M. Orsy, SJ., has written two excellent articles on the topic of collegiality in *America*, 5/30/64 and 5/15/65. Also *L'Eglise en Marche*, pp. 91-146.

Almost nothing has been said in the text on the points of doctrine developed in Chapter III of the Constitution: the "technical points" regarding collegiality, relationship between Pope and Bishops, the role of priests in the Church, the restoration of the diaconate, etc. We hope to discuss the teaching of Chapter III in a later study.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Karl Rahner, in the Pastoral Theology volume of *Concilium*: III (Paulist Press, Glen Rock, N.J., 1965), and also (1963) in *Bishops: Their Status and Function*, Compass Books, London: Burns Oates, 1964. Also Josef Ratzinger, "Pastoral Implications of Episcopal Collegiality," *The Church and Mankind, Concilium*, I, pp. 39-67.

<sup>37</sup> From *Chrétiens Désunis*, quoted in *The Church's Mission in the World*, by Louis and Andre Rétif, Deus Century Books, Glen Rock, N.J., 1964, pp. 67-8.

to be brought to fulfillment by the Redemption.<sup>38</sup> The Church's catholicity is thus an expression of the transcendence and universality of the Redemption itself operating within her, and it demands a necessary and desirable diversity and pluralism within Catholic life: for the inner life of faith and love in Christ can enter within, and bring to fruition, any and all human cultures, civilizations, modes of thought, feeling, and expression—purifying what is flawed humanly and morally within them, and assuming, healing and sanctifying what is of true human value, by the power of the crucified-and-risen Saviour. This understanding of what catholicity means and what it implies is present in various sections of the Constitution, as well as in its companion documents, the Constitution on the Liturgy, and the decrees on Ecumenism and the Oriental Churches.<sup>39</sup>

(12) Even briefly we should also note the themes: *first*, of "the mystery of Christ in the poor and the preaching of the Gospel to the poor" which, as Cardinal Lercaro said in his well known declaration at the Council's first session, should be "at the heart and centre of our doctrinal and legislative work...";<sup>40</sup> *secondly*, of the relationship of the Church to mankind and the

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<sup>38</sup> On the notion of catholicity, *vide* Congar, in the encyclopedia *Catholicisme*, Paris: Letouzey, vol. II, 1949, col. 722-725; J. Witte, "Die Katholizität der Kirche, eine neue Interpretation nach alter Tradition," in *Gregorianum* 42 (1961) 193 ff. (For a bibliography, U. Valeske, *Votum Ecclesiae*, München: Claudius Verlag, 1962, pp. 107-110.) A. Retif, *The Catholic Spirit*, Faith and Fact Books, London: Burns Oates, 1959. Pope Paul VI, in an address given at his audience of 8 December 1964, stressed this renewed understanding of catholicity. —Cf. "Le pape: Ce que 'catholicité' veut dire," *Information catholiques internationales*, Janvier 1965, 25.

<sup>39</sup> See the remarks re: adaptation, the authority given to territorial commissions of Bishops, etc. in the liturgical constitution; e.g., in article 37. Cf. J. Hofinger, "Why Adapt the Liturgy?" in *Teaching All Nations*, I (1964), 219-232, and in the April 1965 issue of the same periodical, apropos of ecumenism, the remarks on pp. 166-167, on "diversity within unity."

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Paul Gauthier, *Christ, the Church and the Poor*, trans. E. Fitzgerald, G. Chapman, London, 1964, pp. 153-157; *Les Pauvres, ces autes frères séparés*, Paris: Editions S.O.S., 1963; Desmond O'Grady, "The Poor: French vs. American Viewpoint," *Catholic World*, June 1965, 177-182.

world today, the question of the meaning and role of the world in the salvific design of God. (What of the merciful action of God outside the Church? When the Church turns to the world, is it merely to meet an enemy at work there? Or is it also to meet Christ living and laboring already within the web of human history, "in the movements and developments of society, in the moral struggles of men," in all true human and earthly values?)<sup>41</sup> Since it is in Schema 13, however, that the

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<sup>41</sup> E. Schillebeeckx, OP, "The Church and Mankind," in *Concilium*, Vol. I, pp. 69-101.

Thomas E. Clarke, SJ, "The World is already Christic," in *America*, 29 May 1965, 800-803 (an excellent *status quaestionis*);

Gregory Baum, in his "Report from Rome" in the *Commonweal*, at the close of the third session of the Council, from which we cite the following lines (*Commonweal*, vol. 81, 4 Dec., 1964):

What is the real theological problematique of the document? [i.e. of Schema XIII]. The question of family morality in incidental. The real question concerns the meaning and role of the world in the salvific plan of God. Here theologians are by no means agreed. In much Christian vocabulary, which follows the usage of the fourth Gospel, "the world" means mankind blinded by sin and ignorant of salvation. In contemporary Catholic theology (and there are parallels in some contemporary Protestant theology) much thought has been given to God's merciful action outside of the Church.

Reflecting on the definitive Yes which God has said to mankind in the Incarnation of His Son, in the universality of Christ's sacrifice and the once-for allness of His victory in the Resurrection, these theologians say that with Jesus something has changed in the history of mankind. With Jesus, all mankind received a new orientation towards salvation and grace. Because of Christ, God's merciful action touches the hearts of all men. In the Church we know what God's will is, we know that his name is Love and that He desires to save and transform us; but this redemptive action of God which we joyfully acknowledge in the Church is present not only in the Church but in the entire human family.

If this is so, then the Church, in turning to the world, does not only meet her enemy there; she also encounters the wonderful things which God has already done there. The Christian, the man of faith, is able to detect the Gospel in some of the manifestations of human life and culture. God also speaks outside the Church; but until now we have not trained our ears to listen to Him in history, in the movements and developments of society, in the moral struggles of men.

These are the theological dimensions of the schema on the Church in the modern world.

Council will attempt more explicitly to address itself to these themes, we can merely note that "Lumen Gentium" already contains passages pointing in their direction.<sup>42</sup>

(13) The Blessed Virgin Mary is seen, as the Gospel and the most authentic Christian tradition have always seen her, in the closest relationship with the entire economy of salvation; with the Church, God's people, whose "eschatological ikon" she is, its "sure hope and solace" during its pilgrimage on earth.<sup>43</sup>

(14) The missionary task of the Church is considered as springing from her profoundest reality, and from this too (from her *catholicity* and *apostolicity* above all) flows the fundamentally missionary vocation of every Christian, as well as the essentially missionary value of Christian existence as witness to the Gospel.

"The two characteristics which the Constitution has most heavily underlined...are the *Church-as-community* (as communion) and the *Church-as-missionary*, a communion which goes beyond the frontiers of the Roman Church to rejoin all Christians, an apostolic dynamism which places her at the service of the world, in self-forgetfulness and in sacrifice, in the way of the Master. In the decades to come, the key-texts on the people of God, on collegiality, on the laity, will surely leave their mark on the Church's consciousness and they will work a change whose breadth and depth we cannot at present foresee."<sup>44</sup>

#### THE PEOPLE OF GOD

If we were to ask what the central axis is around which

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<sup>42</sup> E. Schillebeeckx, "The Third Session of Vatican II," *DO-C*, Rome, no. 172A.

See also *Herder Correspondence*, "The Council and the Problems of the Age," 2(1965), 53-58, esp. p. 56.

<sup>43</sup> On the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Council, see René Laurentin in one of the *DO-C* research papers published by Documentatie Centrum Concilie, "Mary and the Church." See chapter VIII of "Lumen Gentium."

<sup>44</sup> G. Dejaifve, *art. cit.*, 21.

the Constitution turns, the heart (so to speak) of "Lumen Gentium", the answer would surely be that it is the notion of the Church as God's holy people. The history of the second chapter of the Constitution need not be retold in detail here; suffice it to say that the Coordinating Commission, due largely (it seems) to Cardinal Suenens' urging, had it inserted between the chapter on the Mystery of the Church and the chapter on the hierarchy, sometime before the start of the Council's second session.

The intent behind the Coordinating Commission's directive was, according to P. Congar:

The intention was, after having shown the divine causes of the Church in the Holy Trinity and in the incarnation of the Son of God: (1) to show this Church also in the process of constructing itself in human history; (2) to show this Church expanding and reaching various categories of men who are unequally situated in relation to the fulness of life that is in Christ and of which the Church is the sacrament; (3) to explain what all the members of the People of God hold in common on the plane of the dignity of Christian existence, prior to any distinction among them based on office or state.<sup>45</sup>

In some of the paragraphs immediately preceding, and in an earlier article, we attempted to sketch the more obvious implications of the theology of the People of God.<sup>46</sup> This is not the place to return to and develop the same themes (touched on already at various points in this article). But one important implication remains to be pointed out, and we can do this only briefly here, following for the most part a text written by one of the "prophets" of our contemporary renewal in the understanding of the Church, the great Dominican theologian, M. D. Chenu.<sup>47</sup>

### *A Royal, Priestly, Prophetic People*

When the Church presents herself to mankind today as

<sup>45</sup> Y. Congar in *Concilium*, Vol. 1, p. 11.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. *Teaching All Nations*, I (1964), our article on "The Liturgy: Manifestation of the Church," esp. pp. 207-210 and the references there given.

<sup>47</sup> M. D. Chenu, OP, "Temoignage: L'Eglise, peuple messianique," *Informations catholiques internationales*, no. 224, 15 September 1964, 31-32.

God's people, what in fact is she saying to the world of herself? In the terms of *I Peter 2*, she speaks of herself as the spiritual temple, built of living stones around the living stone—the cornerstone—which is Christ himself; as a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ; as “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a dedicated nation, a people claimed by God for his own, to proclaim the triumphs of him who has called [it] out of darkness into his marvelous light.” “You are now the people of God, who once were not his people; people once outside of his mercy, you have now received his mercy.” (*I Peter 2:4-10*)

The Church as people of God is a *royal priesthood*, a priestly people. *Priestly*: this means that the Christian community mediates the presence and action of God to men, mediates God's entering into the world and human history. *Royal*: we are not to take this adjective as implying a theocracy or anything like it, in the political sphere. God's people forms a royal priesthood because it brings into being the spiritual dominion of God, the eschatological reality which Christ's life, death and resurrection has once and for all begun, and toward whose completion he enlists the labor of those who form one Body with him.

The people of God is called to be a *prophetic people*, proclaiming the great saving deeds of God; men giving witness to God's Word by their lives, their worship and their words, making known God's saving plan to their brethren in the midst of the gropings of their earthly pilgrimage, pointing through darkness to God's marvellous light. This prophetic function is the witness to God's victory already radiant in the oneness and love which binds the Christian community together, in whose presence men are to discern the presence of God, in Christ, among men.

### *A Messianic People*

*The Church is the messianic people.* P. Chenu suggests that the hardening, along juridical and institutional lines, of the historical reality of the Church on earth and of her understanding of herself—during the centuries of the papacy's strug-

gles against the secular power and especially (during the counter-reformation period) against the anti-institution, anti-hierarchy theses of classical Protestantism,—has obscured the profound significance of this. Various sects at various times have tried to appropriate for themselves forms of messianism which were—at best, corrupted and misguided apocalyptic movements, and at worst, serious dangers to the stability and reality of the Church-as-institution. (But this very phenomenon reveals something of the Church's messianic character.) In our time, the messianic hope is most powerfully embodied in ideologies whose vision excludes God and eternal life and thus diminishes (if it does not entirely corrupt) the true meaning of human existence and the authentic grandeur of our human destiny.<sup>48</sup>

But the Church, as God's people, remains in its very being the living witness of God's loving design for mankind and the bearer of the most genuine and deepest hopes of men. The Christian community holds Christian hope within itself as its pillar of flame as it makes its way through the desert and wilderness. And Christian hope is to be taken, not as that "pale moral confidence which we painfully hold on to in the midst of the sin and struggles and failures" which form part of our existence, but as that "fearless force of our faith in Christ the Saviour, not merely for our personal salvation," but for the assured victory of the community of the faithful. For Christian hope does indeed light up the destiny of mankind, and assures men while they are still journeying towards the world to come, that God's promises will be fulfilled, and that the ageless yearning in their hearts for freedom, for lasting peace, for authentic brotherhood and love, is already being realized by the power of God's *agape*—operative in Christ the Lord and in his Body which is the Church.<sup>49</sup>

For, after all, what is the kingdom which the Messiah

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*—For some convergent reflections see Thomas E. Clarke, "Our Christian Destiny," *America*, 23 June 1962.

<sup>49</sup> Chenu, *art. cit.*; cf. the message of the Conciliar Fathers to all men, 20 October 1962 (see the note in col. 1407 of *Documentation Catholique*, 59 (1962), and Chenu's "L'Eglise des pauvres," *La Maison-Dieu*, 1965, no. 81, 9-13.

came on earth to inaugurate? Is it not a people and a land over which God's peace rules as the all-pervading air, a people among whom justice and brotherhood are triumphantly and enduringly established and the truest equality obtains, where God is at last "all in all?" So the prophets of the Old Testament envisioned the coming of God's kingdom, and it was toward this that all of God's providence over Israel was directed, and for this that (so the Hebrews trusted) the Messiah would liberate them from bondage. The coming of Christ was truly the beginning of this kingdom, and now as the Risen Lord he associates his people, those who have given themselves in faith and love to him, in the work of bringing to being, inchoatively in time and within history, the reality of this city of redeemed and grace-renewed men. The people of God are thus the messianic people, and their task is to build in and with Christ the Saviour God's "reigning" in the world.

As Christ bore in himself the messianic hopes of Israel, and planted on earth the seeds of his Father's kingdom, so his people are meant to take up his mission and work, to bear in themselves in turn the hopes of all mankind, to carry forward through the ages the promises made to Abraham, to win for all their brethren the peace and brotherhood God means them to have.<sup>50</sup>

Thus is the Church as God's people truly the sign raised up for all men to see, by means of which the triumph of God's work of salvation is already shining, *ecclesia Christi, lumen gentium*.<sup>51</sup>

### THREE KEY WORDS

In the conclusion of his precious little book, *Power and Poverty in the Church*, Père Congar characterizes the "style of presence in conformity with the Gospel" which is asked of the Church today in these three terms, "compact with the

<sup>50</sup> Chenu, *art. cit.* See also his article on "Les signes des tempes," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, Janvier 1965, 29-39 and "L'Eglise des pauvres," *Maison Dieu*, no. 81, 9-13.

<sup>51</sup> Chenu, *art. cit.* in fn. 47, above. Cf. the radio address of Pope John XXIII, on September 1962, in *Civiltà Cattolica*, 1962, vol. 3, 521-526.

greatest possible spiritual meaning: *koinonia*, *diakonia*, *marturia* (fellowship, service, witness)." He points out that the World Council of Churches has made these three terms the tripod of its program of action, and adds that "every initiative inspired by the Gospel leads instinctively in this direction." "These three supreme realities could be the starting point of a positive programme of Christian life in the world."<sup>52</sup> In a sense, these words are prophetic: for if we should try to capture the thrust of the dogmatic constitution, no better ones than these can be found to gather up its deepest spirit and to light up the ways of the Church for the future: *koinonia*, *diakonia*, *marturia*. The Church is a fellowship in the crucified and risen Saviour, whose mission is to bear witness through worship and loving service to the redeeming love of God at work in mankind unto unity in Christ Jesus—until his return.

#### CHARTER FOR THE FUTURE

We have said too much already on "Lumen Gentium", and yet what has been said has missed perhaps the most important point: that this great conciliar document finds its deepest significance as a charter for the future.

"The value of the Constitution... is largely potential. It is a document not immediately directed to practical changes. But its worth for the Church and for the future of Christianity will depend largely on our willingness to understand and communicate its message, and to give practical expression to its implications."<sup>53</sup>

To these words of Abbot Butler, we may add P. Dejaifve's convergent reflections. "The great merit of this Constitution lies in this: far from canonizing the past, or even consecrating a present, it rather prepares the future."<sup>54</sup>

At the risk of ending on a rhetorical note, it must be said that the first duty which the Council imposes on us is a duty

<sup>52</sup> *Power and Poverty in the Church*, (cf. fn. 34) pp. 137 ff.

<sup>53</sup> C. Butler, foreword to Paulist Press edition, *The Constitution on the Church* (cf. fn. 25), pp. 13-14.

<sup>54</sup> G. Dejaifve, *art. cit.* in fn. 25, p. 21.

of reflection on and attempt at a real understanding of the teaching of the Constitution. And it cannot be really understood, except by allowing it to spell out its meaning in prayer, in action, in suffering, in life. Those who have "kept their noses closest to the text" as it developed through nearly three years of discussion, revision and growth, tell us most forcefully that we have not yet begun to realize what the Constitution is really teaching us, what its unfolding will mean in the life and development of the Church.

*"Duc in altum"*

To conclude: perhaps one of the best things we can say about "Lumen Gentium" is that it is a document which truly embodies the legacy Pope John XXIII left to the Church: a far-seeing, vibrant, fearless faith in Christ who is the Lord of history and who is leading us, beyond the horizons of our little human fearfulness, into the large courage of his own divine designs for mankind. And the spirit to which the Constitution summons us we meet in the remarkable words Pope John spoke in his Christmas message of 22 December 1960:

We have trust in God, and in His light. And we have trust in men of good will, glad that our words awaken in all upright hearts the answering heartbeat of virile generosity.

And yet, from time to time, some quiet voice, speaking almost in tones of prophecy, will reach our ear and whisper exaggerated fears that then stir up disheartening fancies.

St. Matthew, the first of the evangelists, tells us how Jesus, in the evening of a long and trying day, went up alone on a mountain to pray. On the lake below, His followers' boat was tossed about by the winds, and at night Jesus came down and moved quietly over the waves and cried out to His disciples: "Have confidence, do not be afraid. It is I." Peter said, "Lord, if it be you, bid me come to you across the waters." And Jesus said to him, "Come!" And Peter, leaving the boat, set out to meet the Divine Master. But the violence of the wind frightened him and as he began to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Jesus quickly stretched out his hand, took hold of him and said, "Man of little faith, why did you doubt?" And when they were all back together in the boat, the wind ceased.

Beloved sons! Even in the night, there on the lake, the meaning of this incident is enchantingly clear. The lowly successor of Peter

no longer experiences the temptation to be afraid. We feel strong in the faith, and with Jesus at our side, we can cross not only the little lake of Galilee, but even all the seas in the world. For salvation and victory, the word of Jesus is enough.<sup>55</sup>

It is fitting that we should end these pages on "Lumen Gentium" with the moving words of Pope John.

For those who have accompanied this Magna Charta of Vatican II from its early beginnings to its final text and its triumphant approval on 21 November last year, who have "lived and suffered" with it during the debates in the Council hall and in the commission meetings, know that beneath the solemn Latin phrases one can hear a new and imperious "*Duc in altum*" already ringing; that it even now summons the Church into the large uncertainty of the future which lies before her, the future where God's new hour already challenges her courage, her fidelity and her love.

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<sup>55</sup> Pope John XXIII, "Vidimus gloriam," 22 December 1960, in *The Pope Speaks*, 7 (1961-62), 82. Cited in Cardinal Doepfner's book, *The Questioning Church*, London: Burns Oates, 1964, p. 33.